A formidable woman

The history of Hobart Town's social development was filled with remarkable women whose stories are only now being better investigated. One of these was a woman named Annie Foster who became one of the city's better-known hotel publicans. Originally running a fruit shop near Elizabeth Street with her husband James Shrimpton, Annie acquired the licence to the Stowell Arms Hotel in 1871. After the death of her husband, Annie lived with a man surnamed Foster and took his name. Although neither relationship produced children, this did allow Annie to run the hotel and its extensions more skilfully than many of her rivals.

Indeed, running a hotel was one of the few professions that women were encouraged to undertake, most probably because intoxicated patrons were less likely to take offence at their instructions or refusals.

Annie proved to be well respected by the city's constabulary and related authorities. For example, although a charge for opening after-hours in 1882 led to Annie being convicted in the courts, the magistrate noted that Annie 'conducted her house very well indeed; it was neat and orderly' and he did not think there was a better managed (public) house in town.

In 1891 the owner of the hotel property died and his estate placed the hotel property on the market. Due no doubt to her business acumen and related popularity, Annie was able to purchase the property outright and then subdivide it to include two smaller shops that were subsequently occupied by pioneering members of the city's Chinese community.

Tiring of her role as publican, Annie sought to lease the hotel in 1902 but failing to find tenants she returned to run the business in 1905.

That same year a fire, the source of which was never determined, raced through part of the property that included part of the hotel and the recently subdivided shops. All structural damage was ultimately repaired and Annie maintained ownership of the property. In 1910 she placed the property on the market but it was not until c1914 that she managed to divest the property to a Mr D Saunders and moved on to other ventures.

The property was maintained as a hotel and adjoining shop complex until 1920 when the hotel closed for the final time. Various tenants continued to occupy the property until the late 1950s when council inspections reported that the resident buildings were in an extremely poor state. A decade later these buildings were condemned and found to be a 'disgrace to the city'. The city council ultimately 'resumed' the property along with its neighbouring properties and demolished the entire section of the city block. This area remained a public car park until the construction of the current University of Tasmania development.
The Chinese community come to Hobart

**Australia’s first Chinese immigrants**
Chinese emigration abroad commenced in earnest during the 1850s. Most of Australia’s early Chinese immigrants were Cantonese, from the Canton delta region of the southern province of Kwangtung. Life in the province was characterised by food shortages and social and political unrest. It was also overpopulated and suffered severe floods and droughts, leading many families to seek financial survival abroad by sending their menfolk to regions offering greater opportunity. These opportunities most famously related to mineral strikes including the Californian and Victorian gold rushes, although smaller mineral finds lured workers to other localities such as the gold and tin fields in northern Tasmania.

**The Chinese come to Tasmania**
On the 15 July 1830 nine Chinese ‘mechanics’ arrived in Launceston from China aboard the ship Nimrod. These were skilled labourers whose arrival pre-dated the main Chinese influx by some forty years. Ironically the subsequent Victorian gold rush had two major impacts on Tasmania’s labour force: it lured away the local male working population which in turn provided an opportunity for the use of Chinese labour. Mineral strikes involving gold provided an additional incentive; however, it was the discovery of huge alluvial tin deposits that drew the greatest number of Chinese miners, which in turn coincided with the end of the Victorian gold rush.

**The birth of a Chinese community in Hobart**
Although the greatest number of Chinese nationals lived and worked around the mines situated in Tasmania’s north east, several chose to venture further south and by 1891 37 Chinese were listed as occupants of Hobart. By 1921 Hobart had become Tasmania’s largest centre of Chinese migrants; they set up market gardens on the rich Derwent River flats in Glenorchy and Moonah. According to census records for that year Chinese immigrants numbered 54 in total. This included the Chinese tenants at this site.

**Chinese businesses beneath your feet**
On the very spot you are now standing, several successive Chinese businesses are known to have leased shops in the adjoining Stowell Arms and Haberdashers Arms hotels. These were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss U Long</td>
<td>Dressmaker</td>
<td>153 Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Nam Shing &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Fruiterer</td>
<td>153 Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Henry</td>
<td>Fruiterer</td>
<td>153 Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwong Wah &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Fruiterer</td>
<td>153 Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. T Henry</td>
<td>Launderer</td>
<td>151b Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. C. Henry</td>
<td>Tobacconist &amp; Fruiterer</td>
<td>153 Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Wang</td>
<td>Launderer</td>
<td>151b Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. C. Henry</td>
<td>Tobacconist &amp; Fruiterer</td>
<td>153v Elizabeth St</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the addresses cited it seems very likely that these people used two adjoining shops which were passed from one concern to another between c1910 and the 1950s.
The discovery of artefacts originating from China was limited to two localities within the buried hotel properties. The largest deposit resided in a space between the wall of the two adjoining Chinese-run shops, suggesting that one or both establishments discarded their refuse in this narrow gap between their respective buildings! As rubbish disposal by the city council was yet to be established, this was a relatively common practice.

The artefacts you see in this cabinet relate to the earliest period of Chinese occupancy in c1905 when a fire at the Stowell Arms Hotel saw the reconstruction of the shops precinct and the subsequent dumping of these items as fill within floor and wall cavities.
Obviously this area saw some lively interaction between the regular drinkers, authorities, house guests and management. In addition to the hotels themselves, each property boasted a number of adjoining shops which would presumably have had a far less colourful social history. So why did the archaeologists discover a rifle beneath a timber floor in the Haberdashers Arms and another down a privy cesspit?

Both of the firearms were manufactured by the Remington Arms Company in the USA during the 1890s. The barrel belonged to a gas-powered air rifle; the more complete barrel and breech belonged to a 22-calibre rifle.

Although now incomplete, the 22-calibre rifle was concealed beneath a timber floor, implying that it was intended to be hidden. The nature of the sediment in this sub-floor environment would have rotted the timber stock, suggesting that it could have been intact when placed there.

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Between the 1820s and early 1850s, Tasmania was one of the major whaling localities in the world. So-called ‘bay whaling’ saw the capture of southern right whales that frequented the shallower coastal waters during their annual migrations.

The deeper water, however, was the domain of the sperm whale which was the whale of legend given that it was much larger and more aggressive than its coastal relatives. Its capture required long voyages undertaken by oceangoing ships with their complement of chase boats and harpooners.

Whale oil was highly prized as a source of illumination as was ambergris (a stomach secretion) for the perfume industry. Bones and teeth were also collected as potential objects for carving by both bored whalers and artisans (scrimshaw).

Sperm whale teeth were found down a privy cesspit as rubbish items. But someone valued them once and either kept them as a collectible or intended to carve them as a keepsake. What is undeniable is that they were obtained at considerable risk by whaler men and much prized as a result.
The Tasmanian tiger or thylacine was the largest carnivorous marsupial to have lived in recent history. Its evolution can be traced back at least 25 million years. Fossil evidence indicates that it once lived throughout Australia and New Guinea; however, at the time of European settlement in Australia it survived only on the island of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania).

The first recorded killing of a thylacine by Europeans happened two years after settlement in 1805 at York Town in northern Tasmania. Although scientists understood that this new species was a unique one, it was considered to be a major threat to livestock. Despite being widespread throughout the island, the thylacine was not a common sight, with its maximum population never exceeding between two to four thousand. Their small numbers belied their reputation as killers which led to the establishment of a bounty program in order to safeguard the colony’s growing flocks of sheep. The Van Diemen’s Land Company privately introduced bounties in their north-western holdings as early as 1830, and between 1888 and 1909 the Tasmanian Government paid £1 per head for dead adults and ten shillings for pups.

In 1930, the last known wild thylacine was shot and killed at Mawbanna in Tasmania’s north west. On 7 September 1936, the last known thylacine died from exposure in the Hobart Zoo. Ironically, the species had been given full legal protection by the Tasmanian Government only eight weeks earlier.

Although large amounts of resources have been expended searching for wild survivors, no authenticated sightings have been made.

The extreme rarity of this iconic animal in both Australian and international annals makes its appearance at the Stowell Arms Hotel an important, if overlooked, historical event.

The thylacine’s appearance at the Stowell Arms occurred in 1870, when the licensee of the hotel (Mr Edward Tilley) placed an unusual advertisement in the Hobart Mercury newspaper on 14 September.

Obviously a marketing ploy by Mr Tilley, the animals were probably housed in one of the out-buildings behind the street-side hotel. It is unknown how long the animals were exhibited at the hotel; however, it is known that the day before this advertisement appeared in the Mercury, another article in the same paper stating that the same ‘greyhound tiger’ and ‘native bear’ were also exhibited to inmates at the Queens Asylum suggesting that the zoo was a travelling feast for the curious.

In the very unlikely event that the thylacine died during its tenure at the Stowell Arms Hotel, archaeological excavation work paid particular attention to the recovery and identification of mammal bones in case the remains were dumped on site. This proved unsuccessful, indicating that the poor animal and its fellow exhibits were taken elsewhere to a dubious destiny.