

The Royal Oak Parramatta

The following story from the book 'About that Shout' by author Gary J Carter,
Is part of the history of the pubs in Parramatta.

Credit for some of this research is given to the Parramattan Historian Joseph Harding
(1870- 1949).

The Shamrock, Rose and Thistle 1830's



John Tunks was publican in the 1830's
Etchings courtesy of Collinridge Rivett's family

The **Royal Oak Hotel** located at 387 Church Street corner Ross St, North Parramatta, is one of the most historic hotels not only in Sydney, but all of Australia. It may have been established as early as 1813, with a publican named John Metcalf (1783-1850) an emancipated convict.

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In 1823 **John Tunks** son of **William Tunks** (*a 'First Fleeter' from the supply ship Sirius*), ran the **Shamrock, Rose & Thistle**, on the present site, i.e. the N.W corner of Church and Ross Streets.

In 1832 John Andrews held the license, he was John Tunks brother-in-law. Andrew's committed suicide by hanging himself from the stable rail, in the horse stables at the rear of the property that year, after this tragedy John Tunks took over the publican's license again in July 1832. When horse racing was carried out in Parramatta Park, a number of visiting horses were stabled at the Royal Oak; those stables are still there today.



Royal Oak Stables

Picture by G J Carter 2016

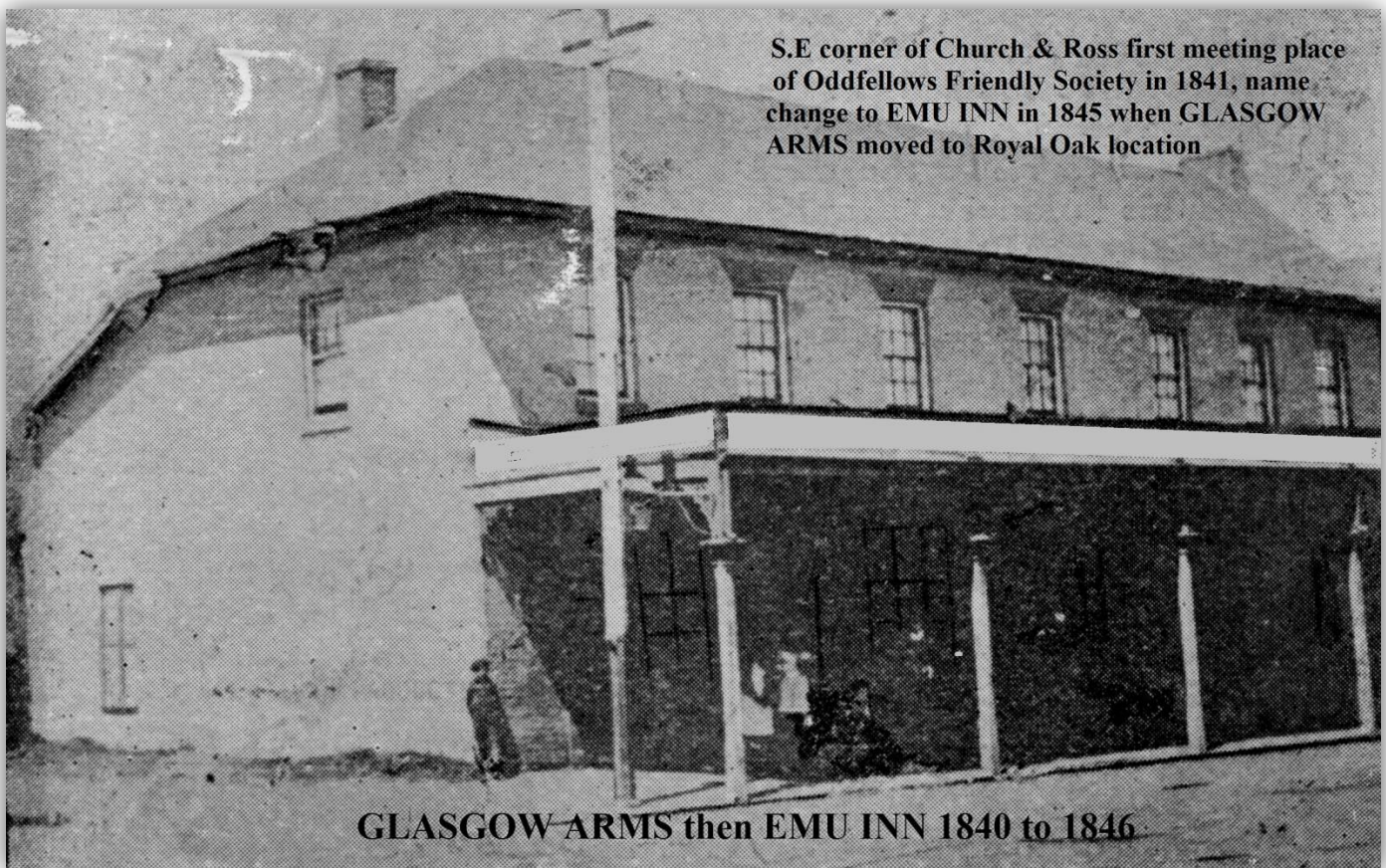
At a later date there was also an Inn on the S.E corner on a block also owned by John Tunks. In 1841 a William Livingstone was running this site as the **Glasgow Arms**. The 2nd 'Manchester Odd Fellows Order in Australia' was established at this Inn in November 1841.

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From the written works of Joseph Harding (1870- 1949);

Re- The Glasgow Arms. On July 18th 1845 a note in the local paper reads;

“William Livingstone is opening his new premises on the N.W corner of Ross and Church Streets North Parramatta (nearly opposite his late residence). He thanks his friends for their liberal patronage at his old house and trusts to be honoured with continuance of their favours at the new one, where they will find an equally well selected stock of choice wines and spirits. Greatly extended accommodation come from the capaciousness of the premises. Several convenient apartments will be solely devoted bodies which were in the habit of frequenting his late establishment. A billiard room with a full size table will be open on Tuesday next, at which experienced markers will always be in attendance.”



Glasgow Arms then Emu Inn 1840 to 1846

Site pic. C1900 from Joseph Harding file Parramatta Historical Society

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The term “*solely devoted bodies*”, may relate to the Manchester Odd Fellows Order in Australia, which may have wish to remain anonymous at the time.

In 1839 records show that a John Tunks (1795-1848), built a new dwelling, (after operating an Inn on the same site for 15 years) located on the N.W corner site. The Inn had the same name, the **Shamrock, Rose & Thistle**. There were various licensees up to 1845. In 1845 year Livingstone moved across the road and renamed the **Shamrock, Rose & Thistle** the **Glasgow Arms**. John Jones from the **White Hart** in Macquarie St took over this S.E site and renamed his Inn **the Emu**, it lasted only one year, following this there was years of court battles and intrigue over the site.

In August 1845 and again on October 22nd 1845 Livingstone held Balls and sold tickets for 10/6 a double. In 1846 the publican John Booth (from **Strong Man**) was listed as licensee, (a patron with the same name is still a local). In 1850 William Sproules was licensed as publican of the **Shamrock, Rose & Thistle**.



The license was transferred from William Livingston back to John Tunks in 1848, but he died in May of that year and was buried at St Johns Cemetery and his wife ran the hotel for a year. The monumental mason for St Patrick’s Cemetery, John W Curran, (a relation of bridge builder David Lennox) had the license from 1850 to 1852.

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George Sheffield changed the name to the **Royal Oak** in 1853. From 1859 to 1863 William Wilcockson was running the site as the **Royal Hotel**, then in 1864 John Ferris took it over and called it the **Royal Oak** as per the picture below.



John Ferris was publican when this photo was taken in 1864

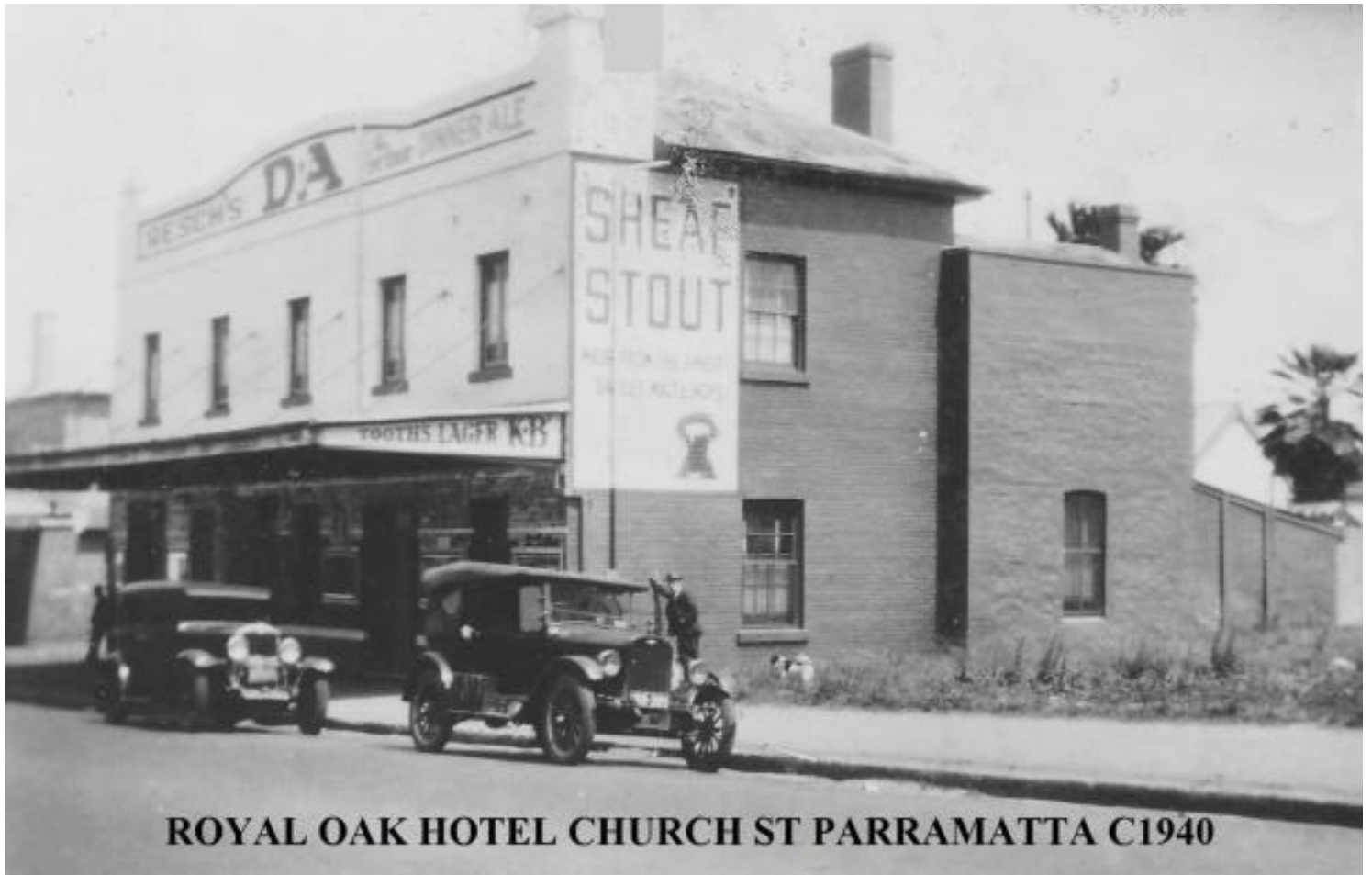
Resource Shylie & Ken Brown S.A.G 5/6392

In 1872 the sum of £910 was paid by John Tunks (the son of John Tunks senior), to purchase the site. Over the following years many of the local publicans, like Tiernan, Neich and Morris were involved with the Royal Oak. Around 1900 Syd Morris carried out renovations that led to its appearance today.

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John Tunks descendant, the present-day John Tunks, unveiled a wall plaque indicating the significance of the site. Also present was Ms Amy Walsh, niece of the present publican (Robby Walsh), who accepted a copy of Joyce Cowell's book '*Memorial to a Marine*' from Mavis Baird, (*that Marine being William Tunks, John's father, a 'First Fleeter' from the supply ship Sirius*).

She thanked the Tunks descendants association for adding to her family's knowledge of the hotel's heritage. In the dining area there is a great display of pictures of many old Parramatta Inns. Modernisation took place early in the original building c1900. A parapet covers the roof and some of the windows have been changed, except those along Church Street where the original 12-paned windows are intact.



Site pic. C1900 from Joseph Harding file Parramatta Historical Society

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Site pic. C1900 from Joseph Harding file Parramatta Historical Society

Church Street, North Parramatta, the view includes the Post Office and a small horse drawn vehicle, c1900s - 1910s, looking north from Grose St.

This Post Office was also run by a member of the Tunks Family.

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The Royal Oak Hotel as it is today

Picture by G J Carter 2016

In 2017 Parramatta Eels fans will tell you that game day starts at the Oak, (the Royal Oak Hotel that is) and ends at the Oak. Sadly for the 180 year-old iconic pub, the days are numbered. In 2018 there is a possibility that the hotel will have to make way for the Parramatta Light Rail, which will run from the CBD down to Church St.