

Migrant Barracks



The Migrant Barracks were built in 1880 when the Tuckey Brother's Peel Inlet Preserving Works was established. This canning factory was the second in operation and the largest in Mandurah.

James Tuckey, with his wife and five children, sailed to the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s and came back to Mandurah in 1862 with enough money to acquire land and purchase a small coastal vessel for trading. James' sons John jnr. and Charles became involved in the Northwest Pearling industry in the 1870s, a profitable venture in which they became successful.

Charles and John invested some of the money from pearling into a new venture, C. Tuckey and Co.'s Peel Inlet Preserving Works. Charles lived in Mandurah and managed the business, whereas John left Mandurah and went into a seafaring partnership with a Fremantle merchant. He captained the ship which travelled the trading run between Singapore and Japan.

The brother's contacts amongst the Japanese community allowed them to bring Japanese fishermen to Mandurah as indentured labourers. Charles and John Tuckey were under bond to the Japanese Government to return them home after a certain time.

The migrant workers were housed in the barracks behind the cannery, near the post office in Sholl Street. The barracks were a long, low rectangular building with a shingle roof divided into six separate rooms. At its peak, the Peel Inlet Preserving Works was producing 5,000 cans of fish a day, mainly for supply to the Kalgoorlie goldfields and for export to India.



Migrant Barracks cont'd

They won a number of medals for their preserved fruit and fish at the Perth International Exhibition (1881), the Indian and Colonial (1886), the Melbourne Centennial (1888) and the Franco-British (1908).

Overfishing and disease soon led to the collapse of fish stocks. This saw the Tuckey brothers dismiss their contract labour and move their operation to the shores of the southern estuary, at Carabungup in 1905. This site closed in 1914 and marked the end of the Tuckey family's involvement in fish canning.

The wall of the building is the only evidence of the once sizeable Japanese community who lived in Mandurah for many years.

One family, the Okamotos, escaped deportation to Japan after internment during World War Two. Their descendants still live in the district today.

The major portions of the barracks were demolished in 1931 and the current wall was combined into the hardware store known as Digney's until its demolition in 2006.



The remaining wall of the Migrant Barracks, next to the post office in Sholl Street. Photograph taken (2011)

