

As you walk around the bluestone buildings, remember that the meat canneries were once a far bigger complex, with a highly developed technology. Men from many trades worked here - coopers, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, butchers, cooks, carriers and boat-men.

Australia is famous for its sheep and the wool they produce. By following the numbered posts along this half-hour trail, you will be introduced to a factory which processed the meat of over two million sheep from 1868 to the early 1880s. The factory employed from two to three hundred men at peak times and became Australia's leading meat cannery, producing over half a million cases of tins of preserved meat and over 46,000 casks of tallow.

### 1. Tins and Tallow

The area of the meat cannery included the boiling-down department where fat was converted into tallow for use in soap and candle making, and the store-room where the tins were painted, labelled and packed ready for export.

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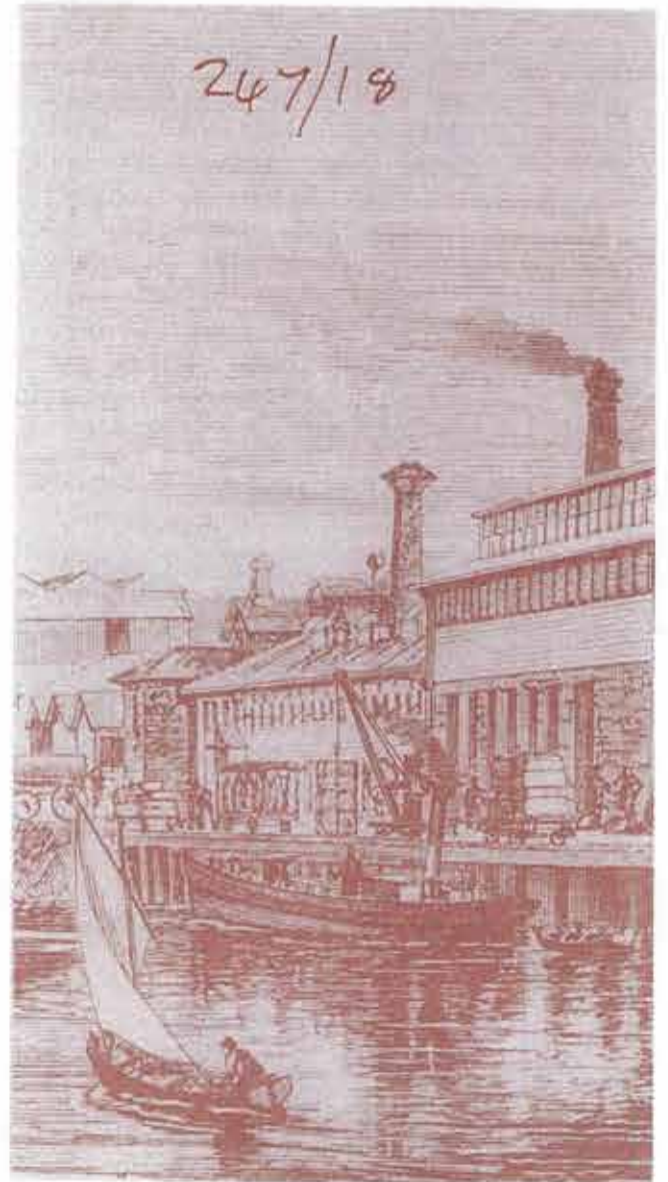
### 2. Chimney

This bluestone base of the meat cannery's main chimney was re-discovered during digging in 1986. The chimney probably dates from 1868 and was demolished some time after 1920. It connected to the factory's three "Cornish" boilers which produced steam for the meat-preserving and boiling-down processes and for running the steam engine. Smoke from the boiler fires ran through an underground flue, part of which is buried. Another part is still visible near the chimney.



The Meatworks from the River c. 1870s.

# MEAT TRAIL



Living Museum of the West, Pipemakers Park  
Van Ness Avenue, Maribyrnong

The large bluestone building was the main part of the meat-cannery from 1874 to 1886. Some of the bluestone rear wall may have been part of Joseph Raleigh's boiling-down works, built in 1847, and renovated by the Melbourne Meat Preserving Company in 1868. Raleigh's works boiled down thousands of sheep and helped to save the pastoral industry in a time of depression.

### 4. Preserving Department

Fuel was fed down the sloping face of the bricks to the fires which could be controlled by a damper which came through the wall behind what is left of the chimney.

Parts of this building date from the late 1860s, with most of the surviving bluestone being from the early 1870s. Scottish fire-bricks were imported from the 1860s and used in the ovens in the back wall of the Visitor's Centre. The fire-hole and flue and the remains of a square chimney were uncovered in 1986 during drainage works.

### 3. Bluestone and Brickwork

### 8. Cooking Department

The early buildings in this area, built by Raleigh and extended by the M.M.P.C., were a collection of structures on several levels. Following the 1873 fire, these were rebuilt as the present building, possibly re-using much of the original stone. The size of the building and the large internal space are unusual for a mid 19th century industrial building and indicate the scale of the operation on this site. Another interesting feature is the all-iron roof construction which was probably also an attempt at fireproofing the works.

Hume Pipes first set up in these buildings, and the concrete foundations show where the machinery was once located.



The Kitchen, Australasian Sketcher, 19.4.1873



Preserving pan, Australasian Sketcher, 19.4.1873

Tramlines ran from this building to the storage rooms and the wharf. Some may have been re-used by Hume Pipes and others may still be buried, along with the foundations of other long-forgotten buildings, below the tons of fill which has been dumped on the river flats to reclaim the low swampy land.



Above and cover, Illustrated Australian News, 5.10.1868

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Australian Bicentenary Authority.

Pipemakers Park has been developed by the Board of Works as a Bicentennial Project. More information on the history of the site and the Western Region can be obtained from the Living Museum Visitor Centre.

Ph. 3183544, 6897293.



SDH = Exemplar, Destination, & Negative Numbers

The meat cannery probably had its preserving department in this area. An etching of 1868 gives an idea of what the factory looked like from the river. Alterations were made after a spectacular fire in 1873 and by the Hume Pipe Company in the 20th century, but the main bluestone building still standing is over 115 years old.

Remains of another system of brick flues, once connected with a chimney, can be seen along the back of the building. Bluestone light-wells allowed light to enter windows which were below ground level. These provided light to the preserving department which ran along the whole length of the upper part of the building. The Melbourne Meat Preserving Company was renowned for its hygienic and well-lit premises. Every Saturday the buildings were whitewashed.

A report from 1882 tells how the cans of meat were transferred from the kitchen by means of lifts and placed in the preserving pans suspended from a travelling crane. The cans were lowered into huge tanks heated by steam and then into cooling tanks. The process of cooling and sealing the meat involved great care and technology which was continually improving.



At its peak, the factory employed forty tinsmiths who were well paid, but often only had unreliable seasonal work.

As you walk around the buildings notice some of the construction details. Massive cast-iron wall brackets hold the stone-work in compression. The walls are made with two layers of stone with a rubble inner core. Lines on the hand-made bricks show where they were stacked on each other in the kilns during firing. Some bricks are early machine made-bricks from Hoffman's brickworks at Brunswick.

### 5. Stable and workshop

The two smaller bluestone rooms were once part of a more substantial building in the meat-cannery days. In the early years of Hume Pipes, the small room at the end was used as a stable for the horse "Tommy". He used to pull the dray carting stone from the nearby quarry to use in making concrete pipes. Horses provided transport around the site and to the Melbourne markets and docks before trucks were introduced from the 1930s.



### 6. The Works in the 1870s.

A photo of the meat-works employees outside this bluestone building in about 1875-80 gives an idea of the factory at that time. You can guess what the workers did by their dress. Butchers with aprons, tinsmiths with thick sacking around their waists, foremen or managers with coats and watches. This building dates from 1872 when the company extended its operations by adding a new tinsmiths' shop and machinery room to help meet the increased export demand.



Meatworkers in the 1870s.

Originally there was a second storey of timber with louvres in the top to ventilate the smoky tinshop. Notice the windows and doors in the photo. These match the bricked-up openings you can see in the wall.

### 7. A Missing Building

The open area between the existing buildings was once the scene of great activity. This was a two-storey stone and timber building with the butcher-shop on the ground floor, and the tinsmith's shop above. The rear wall and piers can still be seen and in the end walls there are blocked-up arches and windows. Tramways ran through the factory and lifts and elevators connected sections on different levels.

Tinsmiths made the tins here from imported tin-plate (steel coated with tin). The lids, with a small hole left in them, were attached after the cans were filled with meat. After initial cooking, the holes were soldered as steam escaped from the can to ensure a good seal and to prevent contamination.



The Tinshop, Australasian Sketcher, 19.4.1873

At the northern end of the building a separate room has cast iron columns, riveted iron beams and no windows. An example of fire-proof building developments of the time, this room was probably used for storing tallow, a highly flammable by-product of the meatworks. Tallow was stored and exported in wooden casks made on-site by coopers.

