

The History and Development of Barrack Square



The Swan Bells is located in Barrack Square behind the six jetties currently servicing the Swan River.

To the indigenous **Noongar** people, the river was known as *Derbal Yaragan* ('brackish place of the turtle' in English) and was created by the *Wagyl* or Rainbow Serpent in the Dreamtime.

The European history of the river began when it was given the name *Zwaanrivier* (or Swan River) after the many black swans observed by the Dutch navigator **Willem de Vlamingh** when he travelled nearly 20 kilometres up the river on January 10, 1697 just past the area where the Belltower now stands. Here he was forced to stop by the mudflats surrounding **Heirisson Island** (near the Causeway). There is now a memorial to Willem de Vlamingh on the foreshore behind jetty 6 at Barrack Square which features a sundial.

Prior to European settlement much of area was mudflats along the river's edge which was subsequently reclaimed to provide extra land for the growing colony and to reduce the breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

The Swan River was vital to the economy of the colony and strongly influenced the patterns of settlement when the **Swan River Colony** was settled in 1829. Shipping was able to travel up river from Fremantle, the original landing site, to Perth the site chosen as the capital, and on to Guildford where good agricultural land was being developed.

There were four jetties servicing the river trade by the 1840's, Mill Street, William Street, Barrack Street, and Pier Street, which was rebuilt about 1845. Ferry services ran daily to Fremantle and twice weekly to Guildford. Pleasure cruises began in the 1870's.

In 1881, when the railway between Fremantle and Guildford was completed, the transport focus shifted away from the river. However recreational use of the river increased and ferry services grew to service the expanding riverside suburbs, the Zoological Gardens (now known as the Zoo), and the Chinese market gardens across the river.

Barrack Square was purpose built in 1905-1907 by reclaiming land on the Swan River, replacing an earlier jetty and forming a public park, to cater for the increase in river transport and recreation due to the huge influx of people brought to WA by the gold boom of the 1890's.

Barrack Square has undergone some changes in design and names since it was constructed. At one point it was called Flagstaff Square, but with its Union Jack design, it became known as Union Jack Square. In 1939, it was renamed Harper Square after the Lord Mayor of Perth but later reverted back to Barrack Square.

Finally in 1998 the jetties and Square underwent a major redevelopment that included the construction of the Swan Bells.

Link to the Curriculum Framework

Strand: Time, Continuity and Change

Substrand: Time and Change

TCC 3.1 The student understands that there have been significant events, people and ideas in communities and societies at particular times in the past.

Substrand: Understanding the Past

TCC 3.2 The student understands that at particular times there are various factors that result in change.

Strand: Place and Space

Substrand: People and Places

PS 3.2 The student understands that the use people make of different places is affected by natural and built features.