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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **Is Hobart's oldest building underneath the Bank Arcade?**

The humble Bank Arcade on Liverpool Street is a classic 1950s shopping arcade. But look closely and you can see that it's built within much older buildings dating back to the 1830s and 1860s. And its basement might just contain the remains of Hobart's oldest building.

The upstairs rooms of the Bank Arcade have been used for offices, boxing and billiards while, at street level, there's been all manner of shops, from the takeaways and small businesses of today to news agencies, hairdressers and a dolls' hospital in years gone by. The building's basement has been home to the Majestic Dance Academy, card games and a jazz venue.

But according to Bank Arcade owner John Short, the basement of the Bank Arcade might be much older than the rest of the building. Archaeology has revealed parts of the building date back to the early nineteenth century, and that it used to be accessed from the rivulet rather than Liverpool St. One of its earliest uses was as a shop and warehouse for a whale oil merchant who was also one of the first Europeans to set foot on the site that became Hobart.

Mr Short has discovered a window, entrance and wall that evidence suggests was built in 1806 with an earlier timber building beneath that — at least three years before construction had even begun on Hobart's oldest known building, The Commissariat (now part of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery). The building under the Bank Arcade is still in use, humbly serving as a storage room for the shops above.

Thirty Hobart residents have the opportunity to explore the Bank Arcade's history and peer into its basement as part of this weekend's Open House Hobart. The tours are sold out but there are more than 40 buildings to explore over the weekend. More info at [openhousehobart.org](http://openhousehobart.org)

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