CAMRA
Sunderland & South Tyneside

Ron Lawson of the Sunderland Antiquarian Society died in June 2026. His legacy is thousands of pub photographs, now stored in the Society offices in Sunderland. He also left behind five scrapbooks full of newspaper clippings, of pub and brewery related stories, from the Sunderland Echo. They cover the early 2000's and I have scanned in some examples which I hope will be of interest.

Subjects covered include :-

- Ambitious plans for Double Maxim.
- The future of the Vaux Breweries site.
- Pub Reviews
- CAMRA Good Beer Guide News
- CAMRA Ladies

Thanks to Katy Wheeler of the Echo for allowing their use. All are credited to The Sunderland Echo

(An obituary of Ron Lawson can be found in Issue 76 of CAMRA Angle ***https://www.sst-arch.camra.org.uk/dl.php?id=291615*** *)*

Ken Paul November 2026.

Major supermarkets agree to stock bottles of Double

Maximum impact as our ale goes national

2.4.2001

By JOHN HOWE
Deputy news editor
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WEARSIDE'S favourite tipple has stormed back on to supermarket shelves in a major boost for the company that rescued it from the scrapheap.

Sunderland's famous Double Maxim Beer was relaunched last year with an expensive makeover, in a bid to capture a slice of the lucrative bottled ale market.

Six months later, bosses at the Sunderland-based Double Maxim Beer Company have celebrated striking a deal with Britain's big five supermarkets.

Double Maxim will be stocked at Northern branches of Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco. Safeway will be stocking it nationwide.

The move will boost production at the family-owned Robinson's Brewery, in Stockport, Cheshire, where Double Maxim is now brewed and bottled.

Doug Trotman, director of the Double Maxim Beer Company, said: "Things are going really well at the moment and we have had a very good response from the supermarkets, which has been a major breakthrough for us. Things will start to hit home across April and May, which is really big news for us."

The beer has already made a return to ex-Vaux pubs, following negotiations with owners Pubmaster and Enterprise Inns.

Today's development will see Double available in hundreds of new outlets as the company underlines its bid to make the beer one of the top six bottled ales in Britain by 2005.

Mr Trotman also hinted that the company may be adding other beers to its range, raising the possibility of a return for Samson.

He said: "We would like to go to other brands eventually, but at the moment we are concentrating on Double Maxim and the next step is getting it nationwide, which Safeway has already decided to do."

Double Maxim marks its centenary this year, following its launch in 1901 to celebrate the return of Major Ernest Vaux's Maxim Gun Detachment, part of the Northumberland Hussars, from the Boer War. In 1938, Maxim Ale was increased in strength and renamed Double Maxim.

The company is drawing up plans to mark the centenary at Christmas.



DOUBLE YOUR MONEY: Doug Trotman (left), with fellow Double Maxim Beer Company director Mark Anderson.

From April 2001

15 weeks to turn out a drop of gold

12.6.01

Picture by John McCormick/No. 65929



IT'S LOOKING GOOD! Sunderland University brewing student Andrew Kohnen has come all the way from Canada to tempt Wearside taste buds with Canadian Gold.

AFTER just 15 weeks of training, a computer company manager who travelled thousands of miles to study brewing on Wearside, has secured a place for his first ale on the bar of a well-known pub chain.

Andrew Kohnen decided to embark on an intensive brewing course with Sunderland-based consultancy Brewlab after hearing the success story of a fellow Canadian who now has his own brewery.

Andrew, 33, completed his final exams yesterday and for his final assessment he produced a German-style lager, Kölsh.

The directors of Brewlab, Dr Keith Thomas and Dr St John Usher, were so impressed that they asked him to brew a batch to sell to local outlets under the name Canadian Gold.

Now Fitzgerald's pub, in Green Terrace, is selling the ale, which is being produced by Brewlab's Darwin Brewery.

Andrew, who was inspired by his mother's great uncle who had owned a brewery in his family's native Germany, said: "I had always been interested in brewing but never got round to doing anything about it.

"So, when I was told about Brewlab by a former student who has now established his own brewery in Canada, I got in touch.

By BEVERLEY ADDY
Assistant news editor
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"The course has been fairly intensive. It is, however, very thorough and teaches you all you need to know about setting up a micro-brewery and producing your own ale.

"I never would have thought that in such a short space of time I would be selling my own brand in a public house, but this is terrific and it has made the journey very worthwhile."

Dr Thomas said: "We have had candidates from all over the world and when they can see their own ales being served behind a bar at the end of the course, it's the first step on the road to becoming a successful brewer."

Although Andrew's first success is a lager, his creative talents have been fired by traditional British beer.

"Right now, my favourite flavours are the British bitters. I noticed them the minute I stepped off the plane. Back home it's all prepackaged lager and ale with hardly any difference between them.

"I am hoping to educate them back home."

Andrew now plans to establish his own micro-brewery in Canada.

From June 2001

Famous Wear beer crosses the Atlantic

6·8·01



STATESIDE SUCCESS: Doug Trotman (below) and Mark Anderson celebrate Double Maxim making an impact across the Atlantic.

DRINKERS in the United States are developing a taste for a famous Wearside beer.

They are discovering the delights of Double Maxim, which used to be brewed by Vaux.

After the Sunderland brewery closed, in 1999, the brand was kept going by former Vaux directors Doug Trotman and Mark Anderson.

Now they have won a big order from America, helped by the international trade team of Business Link Tyne and Wear, based in Sunderland.

The beer has a major presence in the pubs and clubs of the North East and the Double Maxim Beer Company was also

By RAY NICHOLS
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keen to export, being particularly interested in the U.S. market.

John Doolan, of Business Link, heard that the export organisation Trade Partners UK was bringing a group of Californian buyers to London, and the company was invited to meet them.

Arrangements were made for Doug to speak to a buyer from Trader Joe's, a Pasadena-based retailer with 120 outlets.

An order for two 40ft containers – 42,240 bottles – was later received.

Doug said: "We are delighted that we have been able to find a new market for this beer."

He added: "We have doubled this month's turnover due to our export sales and anticipate they could represent 20 per cent of our total sales by the end of our second year in business."

John added: "The Double Maxim experience is a good example of what can be achieved if all parties work together.

"This company has a winning formula, a great product, an enterprising culture and the assistance of their local international trade team."

The Double Maxim Beer Company employs four people and its office is at the Business and Innovation Centre in Sunderland. The brewing is done in Stockport.

From Sept 2001

Picture by Tony Colling/No. 67902



CRATE EXPECTATIONS: Tony Buckley with the Double Maxim due for export to the Falkland Islands.

The Falklands – penguins, sheep and Double Maxim

24/9/01

A FAMOUS Sunderland beer, which is proving a hit in the United States, could soon be the toast of the Falkland Islands.

A batch of 35 cases of Double Maxim is heading for the remote islands and many more could follow.

The beer is being sent out by Sunderland-based Gibbons International Ltd, suppliers of a wide range of goods to the marine and catering sectors.

The company, with headquarters in Southwick, has been dealing with the Falklands for many years through the Falkland Islands Trading Company.

Gibbons manging director Tony Buckley has visited the islands and is in regular contact.

He read in the press that Double Maxim was proving successful in America and thought it would go down well in the Falklands.

"There are quite a few Northerners based on the Falklands with the armed services and also a lot who serve on the ships which call in at the islands," he said.

"They know the excellent reputation of Double Maxim and it will also be sold in pubs on the islands for the first time.

"I think it could become very popular and we look forward to sending many more pallets over."

The Double Maxim will be taken by road to Brighton where they will be loaded on to a ship for the six-week journey.

● Double Maxim was made by Sunderland's Vaux Brewery before it closed in 1999.

The brand has been kept going by former Vaux directors and the Double Maxim Beer Company has its office on Wearside. The beer is brewed in Stockport.

From Sept 2001

Vaux Breweries survivor is still going strong around the world



FROM THE BEGINNING: Double Maxim bottles, dating from 1903 at far left, right up to the present centenary bottle.

2·10·01

Double Max celebrates 100 years of supping!

By BEVERLEY ADDY
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DOUBLE Maxim, the North East's oldest brown ale, and Sunderland's best-known beer, is celebrating its 100th birthday today.

Double Maxim is one of the few surviving beer brands from Vaux Breweries, in Sunderland, which closed in 1998.

It was bought by former Vaux directors Doug Trotman and Mark Anderson, who set up the Double Maxim Beer Company, which now generates sales of more than £500,000 in 50,000 cases of Double Maxim a year.

"Double", as it is affectionally known by some drinkers, or Maxim Ale as it was originally named, was first brewed in 1901 to celebrate the return of the Maxim Gun detachment from the Boer War.

The detachment was part of the Northumberland Hussars, commanded by Major Ernest Vaux, a member of the Vaux family which owned the breweries.

To mark the centenary, the Mayor of Sunderland, Coun Ken Murray, today received the first of 300,000 specifically-numbered, limited edition bottles of Double Maxim.

Mr Trotman said: "We have been overwhelmed by the response to Double Maxim since it was relaunched in September last year.

"Sales have been growing rapidly and we were delighted when we won export orders to the U.S.

"We are confident that we will double current sales to £1million and 100,000 cases of beer within the next two years.

"We wanted to mark this important landmark in Double Maxim's history with a special bottling, which I am sure will become a collectors' item."



CELEBRATION BREW: Double Maxim Beer Company director Doug Trotman with the Double Maxim display at the National Glass Centre

A special exhibition of memorabilia is in place at the National Glass Centre where the limited edition bottles are on show alongside historical bottles of Double Maxim dating all the way back to 1901.

For those looking for a tipple today, the brand sells widely through major supermarkets such as Tesco, Sainsburys and Asda, pub groups such as Pubmaster and Enterprise Inns and independent pubs such as Bass Breweries and Beer Seller and is widely available in the city.

Double Maxim also exports to the U.S. and orders were recently received from the Falklands Islands.

From Oct 2001

Federation proud to bring back one of country's most famous brands



Picture by Peter Berry/No. 68303

15.10.0

RAISING A PINT: Federation Brewery marketing manager Mike Berriman with the relaunched Samson beer.

Brewery raises glass to its flagship beer

SAMSON is back!

The flagship beer, which was brewed in Sunderland by the former Vaux brewery, has returned.

Samson, a smooth draught beer, is now being brewed by the Federation Brewery, based at Dunston on Tyneside.

Federation, employing 330 people, including former Vaux workers, sees it as another milestone in the push to become established as the regional brewery, not simply a Tyneside brewery.

Samson was extremely popular in Sunderland, but its origins go back about 70 years when it was a favourite drink with the steelworkers of Teesside.

It later became established throughout the Vaux area, particularly Sunderland, Teesside and Yorkshire.

It was relaunched, with a new image, in 1998 and, at the time of the Vaux closure in 1999, was still immensley popular.

By RAY NICHOLS
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The brand name passed to the Vaux parent company Swallow and then to Whitbread, which took Swallow over.

The brand then passed to Interbrew but remained dormant.

Talks, which have been taking place for a long time, resulted in Federation buying the brand to brew the beer at Dunston.

For Mike Berriman the decision is particularly satisfying.

He was marketing manager at Vaux and is now marketing manager with Federation.

He said: "I am over the moon. It was a brand close to my heart. To be given the chance to bring back one of the most famous regional brands in the country is something to be very proud of."

He added: "We were very keen to get our hands on Samson because we believe it will be an excellent addition to our portfolio.

"The mission statement of Federation is to become the North Eastern brewery and we see Samson as an integral part of that statement.

"The aim is to continue to have brands that fit all sectors of the market place.

"This is big news for Wearside. The relaunch in 1998 followed a lot of research, giving the beer a new image and direction while retaining its character."

Jim Murray, who was head brewer with Vaux, has been working with the Federation team as a consultant, overseeing the introduction of Samson.

Mr Berriman said great attention had been paid to getting the ingredients which were used in the past.

He said the main outlets for Samson would be pubs and clubs and added: "We hope to sell it in outlets which used to sell it.

"Samson is a drink to be savoured. We hope to attract former enthusiasts back and also to introduce new drinkers to it.

"It offers drinkers more choice and I think its comeback will hit a chord on Wearside. We will be stating that it was previously brewed by Vaux.

"Not only is this great news for Federation, it offers people a regional choice in a market which has tended to be dominated by national brands."

● The return of Samson follows the return of another favourite which was brewed by Vaux – Double Maxim.

After the brewery closed, Double Maxim was kept going by former Vaux directors Doug Trotman and Mark Anderson.

The Double Maxim Beer Company was formed and the beer is proving popular in the U.S.

From Oct 2001

Re-opening time as real ale makers bring back tradition to city

A new brewery? We'll drink to that!

11.3.2002

By RAY NICHOLS
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SUNDERLAND has its own brewery again, less than three years after Vaux closed.

The new brewery is nowhere near the size of the Vaux operation, having only six employees, but the owners hope it will grow.

The Darwin Brewery Ltd is a micro-brewery, based at Hendon, and provides bottled and draught real ale.

To mark its link with Sunderland, it has produced a beer called Sunderland Best.

It brews a total of 12 brands, including Durham Light and Richmond Ale.

The company has moved from Crook, where it was based for five years.

The relocation enables it to have bigger premises and to increase the workforce from four to six.

One of the owner-directors is Dr St John Usher, who works at Sunderland University as a biochemist.

He is an expert in fermentation microbiology and has spent most of his working life in brewing, including a stint with Whitbread.

Other owner-directors are Dr Edward Taylor and Dr Keith Thomas.

Dr Usher said: "We may be small but we have brought brewing back to Sunderland. It was a great shame when Vaux closed.

"

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lar



Huge welcome for ale makers as they move into bigger premises

From Mar 2002

Brewery name change

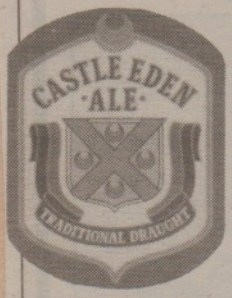
20/7/02

A MAJOR name in the brewing industry has finally been consigned to the history books after more than two centuries.

Castle Eden Brewery is no more after company chiefs opted to abandon the name which has been synonymous over the decades with producing fine beers in East Durham.

The move comes after the Peterlee-based brewer recently took over Hartlepool-based Camerons.

After moving into Hartlepool's Lion Brewery, Castle Eden bosses have now announced they are going to adopt the Hartlepool brewery's name.



SURVIVOR: Castle Eden Ale will keep its name.

The Castle Eden name will live on, however, through products including Castle Eden Ale.

Managing director Dave Soley said: "After considering a number of options, I am delighted to announce the new company name will be Camerons Brewery Limited.

"Our new home is Hartlepool, where the Lion Brewery has been established for over 100 years, and it is therefore appropriate that we should adopt a name with a marvellous heritage as well as a reputation for brewing quality beers.

"It is our aim to build Camerons into a successful and respected independent regional brewery based in the North East."

From July 2002



HOPING FOR EXPORT SUCCESS: Doug Trotman (right) with fellow Double Maxim Beer Company director Mark Anderson

Brewers set their sights on American beer market

CALIFORNIA dreaming is the name of the game for the team behind the rebirth of Sunderland's best-loved beer.

By KEVIN CLARK 24.10.02
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It is now two years since the Double Maxim brand was rescued from the rubble of the Vaux brewery closure by former directors Doug Trotman and Mark Anderson.

The pair set up the Double Maxim Beer Company to continue brewing a beer first produced to mark the return of the Maxim Gun detachment from the Boer War in 1901.

The detachment was part of the Northumberland Hussars, and commanded by Major Ernest Vaux, of the brewing family.

The new company has already secured national distribution through the Sainsbury's, Morrison's and Safeway supermarket chains and is selling well throughout pubs across the North East.

Hopes are high that the company can pass the £1million sales and 100,000 cases mark in the next year and now the team is looking further afield.

"Overall, it is very much going as planned, especially in the domestic market," said Doug.

"It would probably be fair to say the export trade has taken longer to build up than we would have liked, but that's life.

"We are currently in the process of creating a number of opportunities overseas and hope to have news of this early in the New Year.

"In particular, we have already had some overseas sales in the form of exports to California in the U.S.

"I saw the buyer from there again last week and we are hoping to expand our base there, but again, that is something that needs to be confirmed."

From Oct 2002

City's pubs make it to top in real ale bible

17·10·2

By BEVERLEY ADDY
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ONE of Sunderland's oldest pubs, a bar run solely by volunteers and a seafront watering hole are among the new entries in Camra's Good Beer guide.

The Kings Arms, Deptford; Ryhope Catholic Club and The Smugglers at Roker are now among the top 5,000 pubs in Britain.

They have won places in this year's Campaign For Real Ale's tome for discerning drinkers launched today, which each year logs the top pubs as voted for by local branches.

At the Smugglers, on Roker Promenade, landlady Donna Gibson said they were building up the pub's real ale reputation by putting on exclusive beers, some brewed by Sunderland University students, and cask ciders

Her partner, Paul Walsh, said: "It is encouraging that small pubs can see a result from their efforts with live music and real ale."

At the Kings Arms, Farringdon Row, Deptford, Martin Thompson, manager of the nearby Ropery – one of three pubs run by Kings Arms owner Daryl Frankland – said: "We have increased the number of real ales. Now we have four on all the time, and we hope to move that up to six."

The Kings Arms, with its open fire and classic wooden interior, is built on one of the oldest pub sites in Sunderland.

Ryhope Catholic Club, at Dinsdale Cottages, Dinsdale Street, is not open Tuesdays and Thursdays so none of the volunteers who keep the club running was around last night to explain how they kept their beer – Castle Eden Ales and guest beers – up to the stringent benchmark of Camra.

There are a host of other Wearside pubs among the Tyne and Wear entries and scores under the County Durham heading.

Among the Durham entries are the street-corner Colpitts, the Court Inn, Garden House and Swan and Three Signets.

Also new under the County Durham heading are Bowburn's Cooperage pub, Chester-le-Street's Butcher's Arms, Neville's Cross Free House, and the Salutation in Framwellgate Moor.





RYHOPE CATHOLIC CLUB, Dinsdale Cottages, Dinsdale Street: Castle Eden Ale and guest beer.

The club comprising a simple comfortable lounge bar and a small games room is run entirely by volunteers.

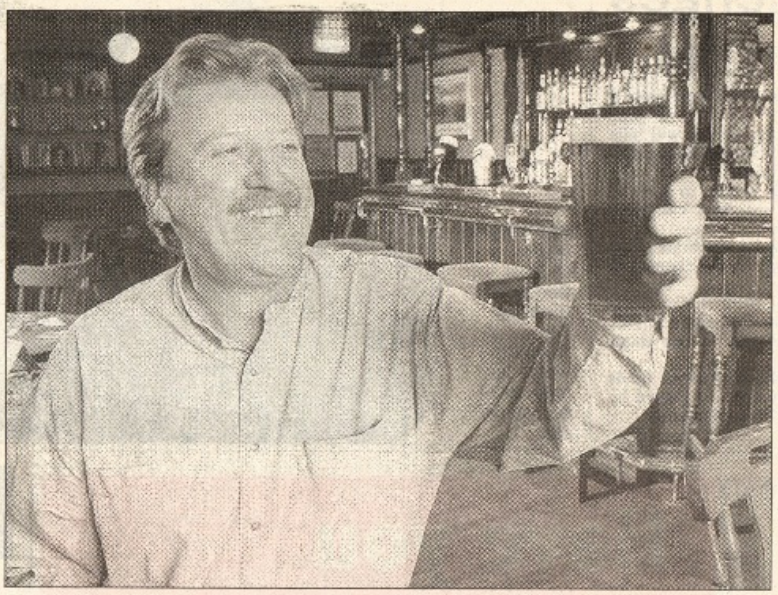
Despite the limited opening hours it has a good reputation for the quality of its cask beers and was elected local Camra club of the year 2000. Both regular and guest beers represented excellent value. *An oasis in a cask beer desert .*

THE SMUGGLERS, Roker promenade. In the In Brief section. Next to the beach with a single lounge bar serving ale from local Darwin Brewery and guest beers. Pictured is licensee Donna Gibson.

From Oct 2001

More Wearside pubs than ever before gain entries in Good Beer Guide

Raise your glasses to our city's real-ale havens



Pictures by Peter Barry/No. 74438

TOAST TO SUCCESS: Colin Carter prepares to sample a pint of Spitfire at the Saltgrass.

23·9·02

By LYNNE MILFORD
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SUNDERLAND pubs have almost doubled their entries in the Campaign for Real Ale's (Camra) Good Beer Guide.

Seven city pubs have won the backing of beer connoisseurs in The 2003 Good Beer Guide.

Bob Fairlie, manager of the Ivy House, in Worcester Terrace, said their entry was down to believing in the basics.

He said: "We're a traditional English pub and serve traditional ale.

"We've been in the Good Beer Guide lots of times and even won an award from Caskmarque, but Camra are the real people."

Mr Fairlie added: "Being in the guide does make a difference."

Bar worker Kristina McClay, 24, from Ashbrooke, Sunderland, added: "Timothy Taylor's Landlord tends to go down well, particularly on Thursdays when we have bands on. The students like to go through the lot."

Matt Aldiss, manager of Fitzgeralds, agreed, adding: "We place maximum emphasis on our real ales, and the Good Beer Guide is the bible of beers."

He added: "We have some regulars who travel around the country and they use the Good Beer guide to look for places to drink."

Fitzgeralds, on Green Terrace, Sunderland, has won a place in the guide for nine out of the last 10 years

Mr Alldis said: "We only missed out on that first year on a technicality over a false handpump, but we soon changed that."

Gordon Watson, 54, is a regular in Fitzgerald's. He said: "It's one of the best pubs in town for real ale. You know it's the real I am."

He added: "Its cheaper because it's so strong that you drink less."

The Ropery also featured in this year's guide, for the third year running.

Manager Martin Thompson said: "We're really pleased, because it shows that we are consistent.

"Some people come for the real ale, some come for the whole package. We have live music four or five nights a week, and even karaoke."

He added: "Being in the guide is an advantage. We have a mailing list for our gigs and people come from Northumberland and as far as North Yorkshire and right across the country. They wouldn't stay if the beer was bad."

The Saltgrass was another pub to get noticed by Camra.

Colin Carter, 52, a part-time tutor in Basic Skills at City of Sunderland College, often drinks there.

He said: "Real ale has a nicer flavour than the keg stuff, if it's kept well.

"I did have the Camra guide but I don't buy it every year.

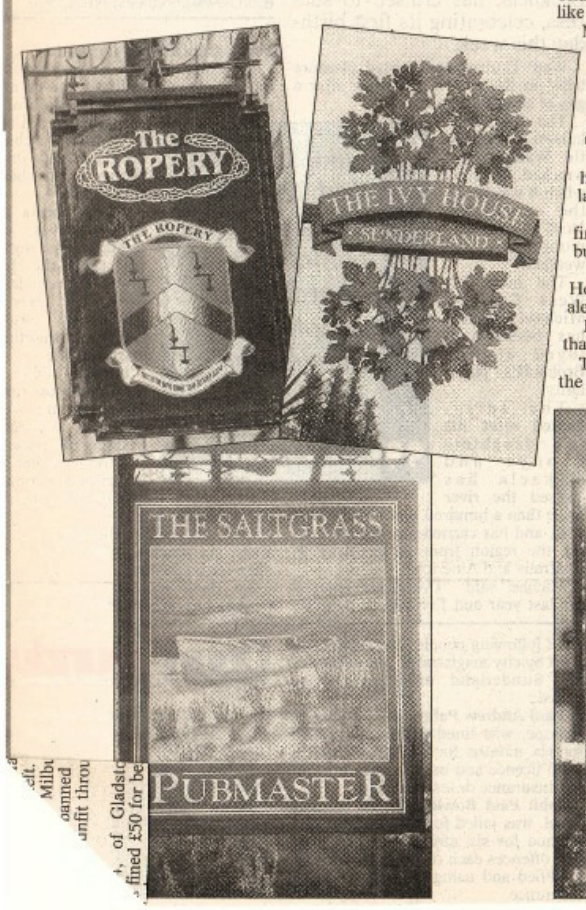
"I sometimes use the Good Beer Guide on holiday, but a mate gets it so I rely on him. My favourite is Timothy Taylor's Landlord, or Summer Lightening."

Other entries for Sunderland included the Kings Arms, the Monument in Penshaw and the New Derby in Roker.

Entries for Durham City were Cathedrals on Court Lane, Old Elvet, Colpitts on Hawthorne Terrace, Court Inn on Court Lane, the Dun Cow on Old Elvet, the Elm Tree on Crossgate, the Half Moon on New Elvet, and Hogshead on Saddler Street.

Mike Benner, head of campaigns for Camra, said: "The number of pubs featured in the guide is the same each year, so it's good for drinkers."

"We use locals because they visit pubs more than once and can prove their consistency. It's more accurate that way."





CHEERS: Ivy House barmaid Kristina McClay with the range of real ales which gained the pub another entry in the Good Beer Guide.

From Sept 2002

Tim Martin's landlord asked if he wanted to buy the pub. He did. Now he owns 490...

Unstoppable Wetherspoon is even taking on McDonald's

By Sarah Bridge

Tim Martin, founder of the JD Wetherspoon pub chain, has always stood out from the crowd. This may have something to do with the fact that he is 6ft 6in tall and weighs 17 stone.

And the former rugby player has never been shy about being in the spotlight or giving his opinions – whether on planning authorities, brewing companies or the behaviour of drinkers in his pubs.

'I have thrown out several people,' he admits. 'Obviously, they thought they could take on someone my size. And they did! Mind you, that was some time ago.'

Nowadays, Martin does battle with rather more formidable foes – pub giants Nomura, Punch and Bass, as well as companies outside the drinks sector, such as US giants Starbucks and McDonald's.

The man who bought his first pub 21 years ago, having ditched his chosen career as a barrister, now owns 490 pubs. And after floating the company nine years ago, he is worth an estimated £151 million.

Martin was born in East Anglia, but the family went to Northern Ireland where his father worked for Guinness. They later moved to New Zealand when Martin was nine. Despite returning to Ulster six years later, Martin retains his Kiwi accent, tempered with a touch of Belfast lilt.

I knew from Day One that I had a winning formula

After school, he studied law at Nottingham University. He moved to London to complete bar exams and dine the requisite number of times at Inns of Court.

Martin says: 'I did just enough to be able to say, "I am a barrister", then I gave it up.' After all that studying? 'I realised it just wasn't for me,' he says simply.

While living in north London, Martin looked for a good pub in which to have a drink. He found it in Muswell Hill, some miles from where he was living. 'It was a tiny pub called Marlers,' he recalls, 'about 500 square foot and it was one of the first pubs to have been converted from something else. It used to be a betting shop.'

Even though Martin was a poor student, he was still prepared to trek across the city for a good pint.

This started him thinking that running a pub was a 'decent way to make a living'. And that was when the landlord of his regular haunt said: 'I'm sick of running this pub – do you want to buy it?'

Martin certainly did, and Marlers pub soon became Martin's. 'A handy name change,' he recalls – 'I saved on lettering.' However, a high-spirited drinker threw a blackboard through the pub window one New Year's Eve, prompting Martin to change the name to Wetherspoon – after a teacher in New Zealand he remembered who could not control his class.

And so the JD Wetherspoon brand took shape. 'Almost from Day One I knew I had a winning formula,' he says. 'I knew that with the right beer, of the right quality, at the right price in the right pubs, the world was my lobster.'

Martin was going against the received wisdom of the time that there was no money in beer – 'but I knew that the company was expandable.

'It was strenuous to begin with because I was running the pub myself, but once I had other people involved it was more a case of expanding into other locations.'

Martin's main task then became battling with planning authorities and the licensing system to open his second venture, based in a former motorcycle showroom in nearby Crouch End.

'This type of thing had rarely been done before,' he remembers, 'because there was almost a cartel with the planning and licensing people to block new pubs'.

Armed with 'the most charismatic lawyer in town', Martin gained licences in areas previously closed to new premises – in suburbs and shopping malls.

The Wetherspoon pubs are mostly in non-traditional buildings, ranging from former cinemas and banks to toilets and even a funeral parlour.

But it wasn't just location that was different. In an industry that traditionally concentrated on selling as many pints as possible, Martin introduced pubs without music or games machines, no-smoking areas, and even fine wines.

Wetherspoon introduced the Californian wine Fetzer to its pubs six years ago and now accounts for three-quarters of all US light wines sold in British licensed premises.

Today, Martin has US giant Starbucks and McDonald's in his sights. 'We sell coffee that's half the price of Starbucks,' he says proudly, 'and we're competing with McDonald's on the food front.'

In answer to McDonald's offer of a four-ounce burger at £2.99, Wetherspoon introduced a six-ounce burger at the same price, naming it 'Sorry Ronnie'. It was a daring move against the usually litigious burger chain, and sure enough, Wetherspoon's legal department received a call. 'They threatened to start selling beer,' says Martin, laughing.

A strategy of reducing reliance on beer sales seems to be working. Beer accounts for just half of turnover, compared with 80 per cent 10 years ago.

But for Martin, 490 pubs is not enough. 'We're looking to get up to 1,000 pubs in the next seven to eight years and we know we can do it,' he says. Rather than buying up blocks of pubs, Wetherspoon tends to buy outlets in ones and twos. It expanded by 20 pubs last year.

'As well as pushing hard for coffee, food and wine, we're also in the hugely unfashionable traditional ale market,' says Martin.

Wetherspoon? Perhaps I got the name wrong

He is keen to sell ales from microbreweries. 'I reckon there's a really big market for it, so long as we can provide beers of good quality,' he says.

Martin is also experimenting with 10 former Wolverhampton & Dudley pubs, plus two of his own, which have been rebranded as Lloyds No 1, based mainly in Essex.

'They have a lighter, airier feel about them,' he says. However, while sales are up by 70 per cent since he bought them, Martin says they need to increase by another 30 to 40 per cent before he can be certain about expanding the brand.

But what of the teacher who gave his name to the chain? Does he know of his legacy? 'He was a really nice fella,' recalls Martin, 'though I haven't spoken to him since.

'I later found out that there are no Wetherspoons in the New Zealand phone directory, so it looks as if I got his name wrong.'

Martin roars with laughter. 'Appropriate really. It fits in with my accidental way of life.'



Mine's a pint: Tim Martin is a real-ale fan, but beer accounts for only half Wetherspoon's turnover

LIFE LINES

Family: Wife, Felicity, four children.

Home: Secluded country retreat near Exeter.

Favourite pub: Hamilton Hall, Liverpool Street station, London. 'That's our biggest and I'm sticking where the money is.'

Favourite beer: Abbot Ale from Greene King and Shepherd Neame Spitfire.

Is he recognised in his own pubs? 'Only when I walk in with a short skirt and high heels.'

From April 2001

Honest ladies ... all you have to do is try it

Real ale ... can it win *REAL* women?

REAL ALE campaigners CAMRA are trying to improve their favourite drink's image among the ladies. The move follows the finding that less then a quarter of women have tried real cask ale in a pub.

Reporter KEVIN CLARK and photographer ANGIE BURN visited Fitzgerald's, in Green Terrace, Sunderland, to put real ales to the acid test.

"IF YOU can persuade women to try real ales, they are as likely to enjoy them as men," reckons Fitzie's boss Matt Alldis.

"But there is a stereotype of real ale as a bloke's drink that is so strong only a small minority of women drink the stuff."

Matt believes many female drinkers still believe real ale is going to be thick, heavy and high in alcohol, and don't appreciate what a variety of tastes, textures and strengths are available.

The Campaign for Real Ale hopes to overturn that perception with the launch of a range of 10 "female friendly" brews, unveiled at the Great British Beer Festival in London.

The campaign is being fronted by a modern version of the Sumerian Goddess of Beer, Ninkasi, said to have created her recipe some 4,000 years ago and worshipped by both men and women at a time when women brewed the beer and ran the taverns.

"We think real British beer is something to be proud of and it should be marketed to women as well as men," said Mike Benner, head of Campaign and Communications at CAMRA.

"Almost all the advertising we see on our TV screens for beer is too laddish, too lager-based and a real-turn off for women."

Franc Jennings is a typical example of the kind of woman the campaign is targeting, and describes herself as "a real lager drinker".

Franc is in Fitzie's with friend Melanie (rose wine) Tyson, and the pair are persuaded to try a couple of real ales.



NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCED: Melanie Tyson and Franc Jennings.

Mordue's Sunderland Pride is a light, golden ale, specially created for Fitzgerald's by the award-winning North Shields brewery, while Mauldon's Black Adder is, as its name suggests, a darker, heavier brew.

Franc is expecting the Mordue's, which has the same colour as a lager, to have the same flavour, too, but is disappointed.

"It leaves a funny taste," she says.

The Black Adder is a bigger hit. "It is very liquoricey," she says. "I like it – but I couldn't drink a lot of it."

Melanie is happier with Sunderland Pride. "I could possibly imagine myself going into a pub and ordering that," she says.

But what do the professionals think? Claire Ord, Faye McAnaney and Caroline Smith spend all day pulling pints – but would they sink one?

Claire admits to indulging occasionally, but Faye and Caroline are virtual real ale virgins.

Sunderland Pride gets a qualified thumbs-up from all three girls – distinctly qualified in Faye's case.

"It does not taste as bad as I thought it would," she admits.

Claire reckons the brew is "all right", and Caroline adds: "It's quite fruity."

The Black Adder is less of a hit.

"I can't put my finger on why, but it's horrible," says Caroline.

Faye thinks "the first one was better", and doesn't like the aftertaste, but Claire is (sort of) pleasantly surprised.

"It is not as horrendous as I thought but I still could not drink a lot of it," she says.

Pictures No. 73639



CLAIRE ORD



FAYE McANANEY



CAROLINE SMITH

From Aug 2002

27.4.01

More beer vicar?

GUY RICHARDSON and MARK PAYNE went in search of a friendly town pub – and they found one at ...

Down the Pub



YEARS ago, when it was a vicarage, sweet tea accompanied glasses of sherry in the genteel parlour – but it's a long time since The Chesters was home to a man of the cloth.

Today pints of draught beers and lager are enjoyed by the regulars who crowd into the oak-clad bar of the Chester Road watering hole.

Step inside, and the oak-clad bar room takes you back to a gentler age. The soft lighting and polished brass fittings make the Chesters the typical friendly English town pub – an image Colin Noble, assistant manager, has worked hard to preserve.

At the bar older regulars rub shoulders with both students from the nearby university and families with young children.

Colin said: "We have got a lot of locals and regulars, courting couples and single people over the weekend.

" We are busy practically every night, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. We are used as a meeting place. The young people come and have a few drinks and then go down into town. Then it quietens down with the more mature people and regulars left."

The owners of The Chesters pride themselves on a hearty menu of pub grub favourites.

Scampi and a serving of chips and garden peas is available for £3.75, with a juicy 8oz gammon steak with salad and fries for £3.95, while Wearsiders' tastes for the Far East are catered for, with chicken tikka masala and naan bread for £4.25.

From the bar, pints of John Smiths, Stones or Worthington bitter sell for £1.71, while Theakston, Boddingtons and Caffreys Irish Ale come in at £2.09.

A pint of Stella Artois is "reassuringly expensive" at £2.28, while Carling and Fosters are £1.88 a pint, and a glass of the house wine comes in at £1.80, and special offers are available during the week to tempt the tastebuds of drinkers.



Beer ★★★★
Food ★★★★
Furnishings ★★★★★
Toilets ★★★
Disabled Access ★★★★
Kids ★★★★★
Atmosphere ★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

From April 2001

Down the Pub

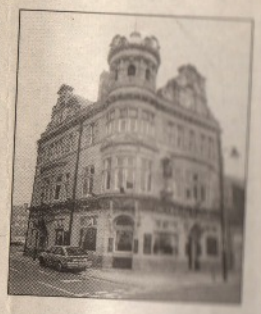


Rosie's Bar in High Street West, Sunderland, will forever be known as The Dun Cow. Reporter ROB FREETH popped in for a pint and found that while the name remains the same, there are changes afoot.

29.6.01



Picture by Malcolm Murray/No. 66201



FEATURE FIXTURES? Licencee Richard Cooney and manager Steve Rudd in the Feature bar at Rosies Bar, and above how to recognise the pub.

Rosier future at Rosie's?

ROSIE'S is one of a handful of traditional pubs left in Sunderland city centre; it has sadly not been doing too well of late.

Owner Scottish and Newcastle Retail has decided to offer the premises as a tenancy and early indications are this could be the start of a revival.

Former Vaux engineer Richard Cooney has taken over the pub on a trial basis and he possesses several advantages from the drinker's point of view.

Richie, 37, worked at Vaux from boyhood and knows how to set up a cellar. He also knows what his customers expect even before they walk through the door.

Cold lager is one of those expectations and this has been met by the introduction of delicious draught Budweiser, which is double-cooled to ensure it is just right.

Bottled beer drinkers are also looked after, as Richie explained: "The fridges behind the bar are not very big and can soon empty when it's busy. But we have got plenty in the kitchen upstairs and a lift straight down to the bar.

"It annoys me getting a warm bottle when I drink around the town, but you will always get a cold one in here, now."

A small point, but a good indication of Richie's drinker-friendly approach to the job. It may be all the Dun Cow needs, because the premises themselves are in good order and all the fixtures and fittings are clean and tidy.

Speaking of which, no review of this pub would be complete without a mention of that famous intricately carved back fitting, which is still there.

"People come in just to look at it," said Richie. "We've had visitors from Japan and Australia in the past few weeks. We don't mind, but I wish a few of them would buy a drink as well!"

If they did, they would find the Budweiser on offer at £2.10 a pint, John Smith's at £1.60 and Fosters at £1.80. Expect to pay an extra 30p or 40p at weekends.

The days of afternoon specials at £1 a pint are long gone. "Couldn't afford to do it," said Richie, bluntly. "In any case, those sort of offers can attract the wrong sort of customer.

"My manager, Steve Rudd, is a dab hand in the kitchen and we are starting to offer snacks at lunchtimes to try to get back some of the office and shop workers the pub used to attract."

Night time sees the music cranked up a bit, although the pub still attracts slightly older customers than some of the nearby theme bars.

Kids are welcome during the day and disabled access is reasonable because the pub is all on one level.

Opening hours are still being fine tuned, but it's basically lunchtimes and evenings through the week and all-day at weekends.

CHECKLIST

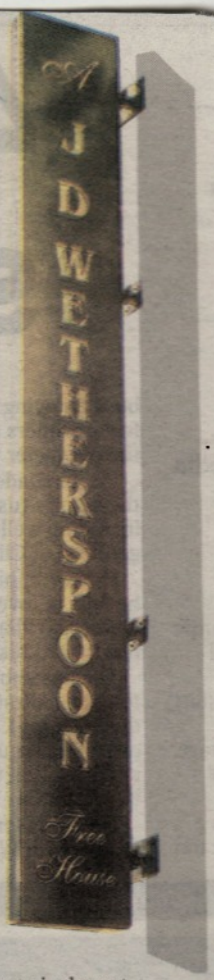
Beer ★★★
Food ★★★
Furnishings ★★★★
Toilets ★★★
Disabled access ★★★
Kids ★★★
Atmosphere ★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

From June 2001



BEST BAR NONE: Duty Managers at William Jameson's, Jillian Perry and Julian Kent.



24.8.01

Billy's best for lunch!

Reporter KEVIN CLARK, in honour of that age-old journalists' tradition, spends a lunch hour in the William Jameson pub, in Sunderland city centre.

Down the Pub

SETTING foot inside the William Jameson at lunchtime on a Tuesday was like taking a step back in time.

It may be a good few years since the closure of the Binns store, in the building at the corner of Fawcett Street and Borough Road, but this was like the first day of the January sales all over again.

The place was absolutely heaving – literally standing room only – and it took crime reporter John Corney and I a good five minutes to find a free table.

On arrival at the bar I found would-be diners unable to place an order until they had been able to find themselves a table.

There are a number of factors combining to make the William Jameson such a popular lunchtime haunt, not least value for money.

Beer starts at just £1.10 a pint for John Smith's Extra Smooth, there's a good range of well-kept and reasonably priced handpulls, and even the most expensive stuff is cheap, as duty manager Justin Kent explained.

"We don't sell anything for more than £1.79 a pint – and that's Stella Artois," he said.

"And that's not much for Stella, when you can go into Newcastle and find yourself paying £2.35 a pint for it."

Food is another area where the pub does well. The menu is decent – John's duck in plum sauce wrap got the thumbs-up and my barbecue chicken burger was substantial – and with a range of selected meals available at two for £5, most budgets should be able to stretch.

It's not haute cuisine, of course, but in a pub like this you pretty much know what to expect and you won't be disappointed, and even though the place was heaving, we hadn't long to wait – a "must" if you're popping in during a tight lunch break.

A definite bonus is the range and quality of the real ale on offer.

"We have 12 hand pumps and sell about eight beers at a time, of which two are guest ales," said Julian.

Regular fixtures include Spitfire, Courage Directors' and the excellent Abbot Ale, which John and I sampled.

A healthy number of drinkers all day ensures there's always a good atmosphere (and with half the pub non-smoking, an unusually clear one).



CHECKLIST

Beer ★★★★★
Food ★★★★
Furnishings ★★★
Toilets ★★★
Disabled access ★★★
Kids ★★★
Atmosphere ★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

From August 2001



Picture by Kevin Brady/No. 67406

CALLED TO THE BAR: Martin Thompson in the bar of The King's Arms, Deptford.

31.8.01

Daryl's kingdom

Down the Pub



DAVID CROSBY samples the atmosphere at The Kings Arms, in Beach Street, Deptford, Sunderland.

THE King's Arms, Sunderland's new free house, stands on the banks of the Wear in the shadow of the Stadium of Light.

Although it is new as a free house, the Deptford ale house, is a pub with a history.

Affectionately referred to by regulars as "The King's", the building goes back to the 1800s, and owner, Daryl Frankland is keen to stress that it is "very much untouched".

It has one of the oldest licences in Sunderland. The first reference to the building being used as a pub is documented in 1854, when Thomas Stobart bequeathed the "freehold pub known by the sign of the King's Arms" to his nieces.

Daryl took the pub on in May 1993 and bought it from Pubmaster in March this year.

There are plans to develop the beer-garden and Daryl is considering introducing food.

The King's is popular on match-days and has shown 106 live Sky games this year – including pay-per-view games. It attracts a healthy weekend crowd, and there are snacks on the bar at Sunday lunchtimes.

At the back of the building is an immaculately presented beer-garden, which often features barbecues and live music when the weather is fine.

Daryl is eager to use the pub's free-house status to provide a wide range of popular drinks, and there is plenty of choice.

He said: "The benefit of being a free house is that we can pick and choose our beers to suit our customers and our aim is to get the pub back in the Good Beer Guide."

Beer drinkers will be happy to hear that there is a choice of four real ales, and the free house has scope to rotate the drinks as it wishes. Timothy Taylor Landlord, at £2.10 a pint, is a permanent fixture and has proved very popular. Flowers Original and Wadworth 6X are available at £1.95 a pint, and there is always a real ale, usually Deptford Bitter at £1.50 a pint.

The King's Arms and The Ropery are the only pubs in Sunderland to sell GB lager, by Interbrew, at £1.95, and it is well worth a try. Heineken is on sale at the same price, and Stella Artois is £2.30 a pint. The Irish and Scotch whisky lines are worth a try, too.

Woodpecker comes at £2 a pint and Dry Blackthorn cider is to be introduced soon. Boddington's is £1.80 a pint, Whitbread Best Scotch, £1.65, and Guinness £2.20.

Happy hours offer reductions on week days from 4.30pm till 7pm.

CHECKLIST

Beer ★★★★★
Food ★
Furnishings ★★★★
Toilets ★★★
Disabled access ★★
Kids ★★★
Atmosphere ★★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

Life just gets better for discerning drinkers!

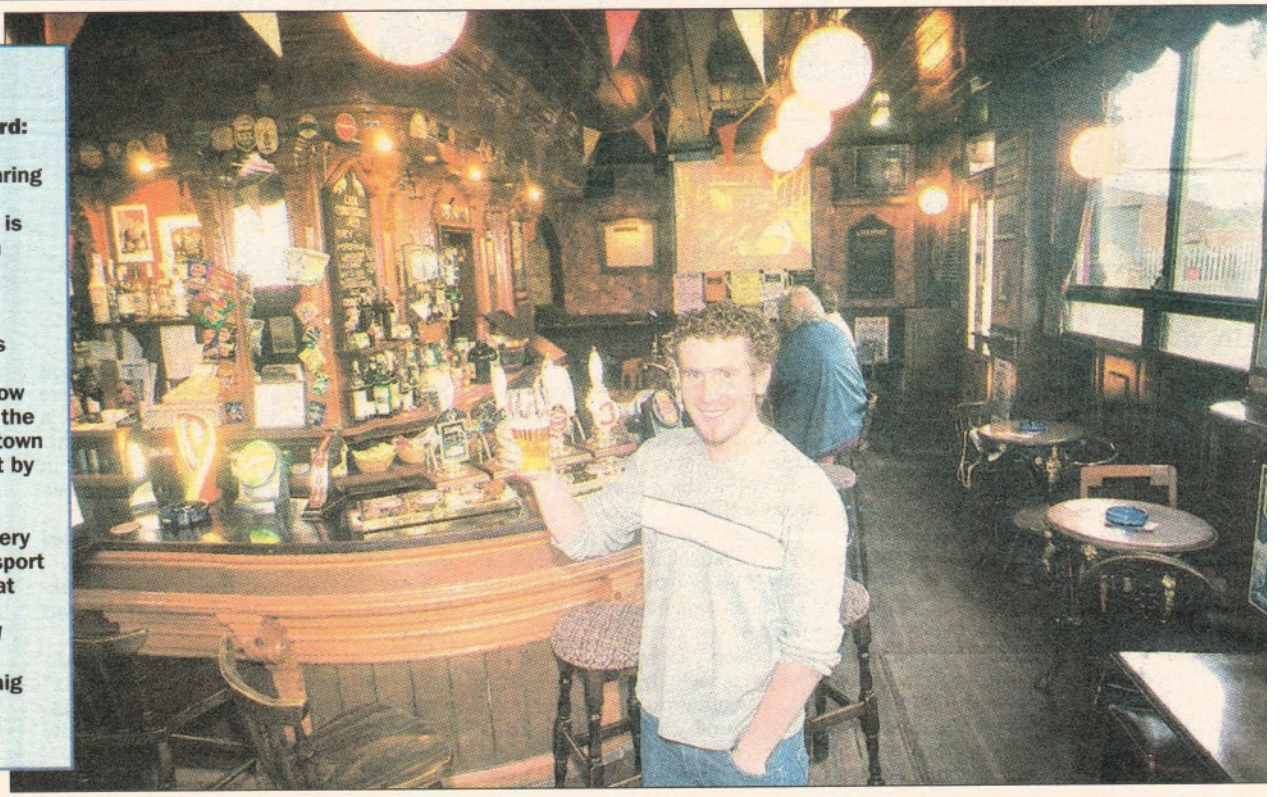
THE KINGS ARMS, Farringdon Row, Deptford: Beer range varies.

Single-roomed pub bearing a fine wood-panelled exterior, the King's Arms is one of the oldest pubs in Sunderland. The bar has bare floorboards, wood panelled walls and partitions, a small games area has table football.

The back bar and window screens are original and the pub is one of the few in town that have not been spoilt by "progress".

Under the same management as the Ropery and Saltgrass, free transport runs between the three at weekends. It stages live music at weekends. *Well worth a visit*.

Pictured is barman Craig Herron



From October 2001

Fitzie's fits the bill!

8-11-2001

City pub's beers are top draw for real ale fans

By **BEVERLEY ADDY**
Assistant news editor
beverley.addy@northeast-press.co.uk

WEARSIDE pubs have lost out for the third year running to a South Tyneside ale house in the local Camra pub of the year contest.

But one Sunderland hostelry did scoop third prize – Fitzgeralds, on Green Terrace in the city centre, came joint third with Dougie's Tavern in Hebburn.

Members of the Sunderland and South Tyneside Branch of Camra, the Campaign for Real Ale, voted the Riverside in South Shields their pub of the year for the third time in a row.

Runner-up in the competition was the Alum House, also in South Shields.

But at the top Wearside pub, Fitzgeralds, there's always plenty of real ale on the go, with 10 barrels of different ale on at any one time and once one ale runs dry it is replaced with something new.

Manager Matt Alldis, who has been in charge there for three years and worked behind the bar before that, said: "We can get through 18 barrels of beer a week. It's like a constant beer festival.



Picture by Peter Berry/No. 68745

CHEERS: Fitzgeralds' landlord Matt Aldiss toasts scooping third prize in Camra's local Pub of the Year contest.

"We attract everyone from students to well-to-do folk – a real cross-section of people. But we don't attract the trouble-makers. We get people travelling from all over the North East to try the beers.

"On matchdays we are incredibly busy with real ale drinkers.

"I think we were picked because of the selection and quality of ales we keep and it's a friendly and polite atmosphere."

The competition is open to all pubs in Sunderland city area and South Tyneside which are judged on consistently good quality real ale with branch members voting for their favourite.

In the 24-year history of the branch, this is only the second time that a pub has scored a hat-trick of first prizes. In addition, the pub was voted CAMRA's North East Pub of the Year in 2000 – the first and only time that a pub in South Tyneside has taken the title.

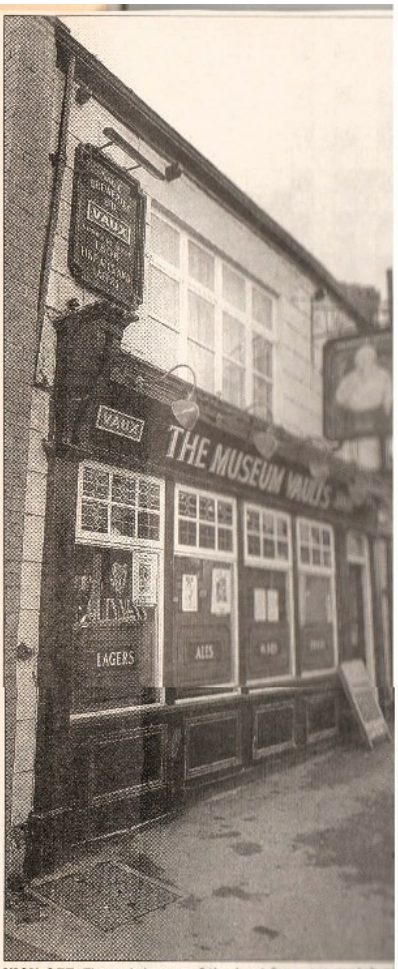
The Riverside, in Commercial Road at the top of Mill Dam, has featured in every edition of Camra's flagship publication, the Good Beer Guide, since 1996.

The pub sells four permanent cask ales: Theakston Cool Cask, Courage Directors, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Black Sheep Special, two ever-changing guest ales, many from new small breweries, many rare in the area, and a changing traditional cider or perry.

From October 2001







KICK-OFF: The pub is one of the best for a pre-match p

MUSEUM PIECE: Taste the past at the Vaults.

18·1·02

Same again at the Vaults

18·1·02

WHEN this ever-changing world in which we're living makes you give in and cry ... head for the Museum Vaults.

It's the very unchanging-ness of the Vaults which always makes it a pleasure to go back to.

There's no brewery designer team inspired refit here, no artfully arranged bric-a-brac, just the detritus of a quarter of a century in the hands of the same woman – Elsie Wilson.

The Vaults used to be a regular post-Echo meeting place a few years back, but as people have moved on and new responsibilities have arrived, we've all just slipped out of the habit.

The last time I was in for any time was to watch Sunderland romp back into the Premiership with a 5-2 demolition of Bury on the TV in the back room.

Stepping back through the door this week, I was delighted to find the place just as I had left it. The hand-pulled Samson may have made way for Tetley's, but otherwise there's remarkably little difference.

The decor's still the same, the furnishings are as before and there's still a real fire burning in the grate in the cosily familiar front bar.

Elsie is still the licensee, but her daughter Sara was behind the bar on my visit and explained the Vaults' appeal.

Down the Pub

KEVIN CLARK stepped out of the city centre Museum Vaults three years ago – and stepped back in this week to find everything just as he left it.

"We used to have outside toilets and we've got inside toilets now, but that's really the only great change that has happened," she said.

"We decorate occasionally, but we always leave it the same. People would go mad if we changed things around too much.

"We did have new carpet recently – nothing too drastic though. It's like being in your own front room."

Pre-match, the Vaults is one of the best pubs in the city (and there's always the chance of catching a glimpse of legendary A Love Supreme artist Mr Robin Brown), with the footie game in the back room a particular hit with the kids.

For Mum and Dad, there's handpull Tetley's, Stones, John Smith's, Worthington, Caffrey's Guinness, ciders and lagers.

CHECKLIST

Beer ★★★★
Food n/a
Furnishings ★★★★
Toilets ★★★
Disabled access ★★
Kids ★★★
Atmosphere ★★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

From January 2002



REAL-ALE LOVERS' PARADISE: The Harbour View pub at Roker, Sunderland. Below, barmaid Lisa Donachie.



REPORTER Laura White docked at the Harbour View in Roker to sample its acclaimed selection of real ales.

12.4.02

Only here for the beer

A SUNNY springtime walk around Roker's smart marina and seashore left my friend and me gasping for a drink.

The first real day of spring and the long-awaited sight of the sun had us lacing up our walking shoes and setting off on a wander.

But the morning stroll went on to turn into an afternoon pub crawl, as our walk-induced thirst demanded slaking with a few beers.

We called into a few Roker pubs along the way and finally stumbled across the Harbour View, a pub which had been recommended to me a number of times by real-ale enthusiasts.

My friend, a big real-ale fan, was spoilt for choice by the guest ales and had difficulty deciding which one to try first.

The pub has four handpulls on offer at any one time, and they change regularly. When we called in there was a choice between Pedigree, Mansfield Bitter, Black Sheep and Bass, all priced at £1.98 a pint.

A regular listing in the Camra Good Beer Guide, the Harbour View is a magnet for those in search of a child-free, old-fashioned pub.

There are no darts teams, chicken-in-a-basket menus or children's ball pools in sight – just a bar serving good beer.

"People come back time and time again for the beer, and we have a good reputation for serving a nice pint," said owner Betty Thompson.

"First-time visitors to the pub always return and that is the best indication we are doing things right.

"The Harbour View is a good, friendly pub with a lovely atmosphere. Our emphasis in on the beer. We don't have darts teams or things like that. People come here for a good pint."

The pub is open all day and is busy at teatime, when workers call in for a drink before dinner, and by evening is usually packed with revellers.

Although a menu is not offered, staff will make sandwiches and snacks to order if drinkers feel peckish.

Down the Pub

CHECKLIST

Beer ★★★★
Food N/A
Furnishings ★★★★
Toilets ★★★★
Disabled access ★★ **(specially adapted toilet, but no ramps)**
Kids N/A
Atmosphere ★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

From April 2002



EMPTY: The Bridge Hotel, in High Street West, Sunderland.

Hotel in line for revamp

12.7.2002

A WEARSIDE hotel that was the scene of a brutal murder four years ago is in line for another revamp.

A company called Sunniside Properties, based in Witton-le-Wear, County Durham, wants to restore the Bridge Hotel in High Street West and turn it into offices.

The Grade II listed building has been vacant for several years and is now derelict.

In 1998 it was the scene of the brutal murder of popular landlord Jimmy Byrne, who was battered and stabbed to death.

Psychiatric patient Andrew Douglas was given life for the murder of the 61-year-old Irishman.

Two years ago the hotel was bought by Ultimate Leisure, which owns Bill Stickers and Chase in Park Lane.

The company planned to turn the building into student flats, but the idea never became reality. The licence was later transferred to another city-centre bar development.

By SIMON MARKS
Local affairs reporter
simon.marks@northeast-press.co.uk

Now Sunniside Properties has bought the historic building with the aim of carrying out an extensive refurbishment.

Sunderland Council has backed the company up with a grant of up to £155,000 to carry out the work, the final sum to be negotiated between the council and developer.

Sunniside intends to repair the structure of the building, restore its outside and refurbish the interior so it can be used for "modern office suites".

The cost of the work will top the £500,000 mark.

The Labour councillors on the cabinet were keen to support the scheme.

Council deputy leader Coun Bryan Charlton said: "This is an area where we're doing a lot of development and it would be foolish not to pursue this. It's an excellent project."

Coun Brian Dodds called it an "imaginative" scheme to bring the area back into life.

Council leader Coun Bob Symonds added: "There've been a lot of buildings pulled down in the past and it's time there was a change of attitude."

The nearby West Sunniside area of the city is earmarked for restoration work to turn it into an area with quality housing and small, artistic businesses.

The former bank building opposite the Bridge has also been restored over the past year after becoming so dangerous that parts of High Street West had to be closed off.

From July 2002

A toast to a little gem of a pub



REAL-ALE PARADISE: The Saltgrass at Hanover Place, Deptford, Sunderland.

TUCKED away in the depths of Deptford lies The Saltgrass, a hidden gem of a pub with a welcoming atmosphere and a warm coal fire.

For 200 years, the building has stood on its Hanover Place corner, and has been employed as a pub for the last 150.

It is one of those rare hostelries which is easy to enter, and almost impossible to leave.

Unlike many pubs nowadays, the "The Salty" has adopted an "if it's not broke don't fix it" maxim – preserving its traditional appearance.

It boasts one of the best selections of drinks around.

The pub is a stalwart of Camra's real ale guide and regularly serves Bass, Cumberland, Pedigree and Bombardier.

But the choice doesn't end there. The Saltgrass consistently has guest ales on offer, with Waggledance, an old Vaux favourite now brewed by Young's in London, coming next week.

Furthermore, there are about 36 whiskies – most of them malts – which always include five Irish.

For lager drinkers, there's Stella, Carling and Carlsberg, as well as a variety of bottled beverages.

Tenant Daryl Frankland celebrates his 15th anniversary in charge on Wednesday, and says customers past and present are welcome to come down and buy him a drink!

Happy hour prices apply from 4.30pm until 7pm, Monday to Friday, but this is extended

Down the Pub

until 9pm on Tuesdays as a run-up to the quiz, which features general knowledge, music and pictures.

Manager Jimmy Cleugh, who has been in the pub trade since 1967, said: "The bar hasn't really changed much. It hasn't been modernised and spoilt like a lot of other pubs.

"We have acoustic music in the lounge on a Thursday night from The Acoustic Rogues, and will soon be having live music on a Saturday night."

Tasty food is served Monday to Saturday from noon until 2.15pm, and Sunday lunches, which have proved popular, are available between noon and 3pm.

DAVID CROSBY

8·11·02

CHECKLIST

Beer ★★★★★
Food ★★★★★
Furnishings ★★★★
Toilets ★★★★
Disabled access ★★
Kids ★★
Atmosphere ★★★★★

Quick verdict ★★★★

From November 2002



PPicture by Tony Colling/No. 75488

TOP GLASS: Celebration time at Fitzgerald's with Michael Wynne (left), chairman of Sunderland and South Tyneside branch of Camra, handing over the branch's Pub of the Year Trophy to Matt Alldis of Fitzgerald's.

19·11·02

Cheers as Fitzgerald's is named pub of year

FITZGERALD'S is the toast of the city after being named Pub of the Year in Sunderland and South Tyneside.

The Green Terrace pub was awarded the honour by the Campaign for Real Ale in recognition of its quality and choice of ales.

With 10 real ales on tap, Fitzgerald's has the largest range of beers in Sunderland and South Tyneside.

"We are very proud to have won the award," said manager Matt Alldis. "A lot of hard work goes into keeping the quality and choice right, from the management down to the cellarman."

From November 2002

Two years on city waits to find out what will happen to this key area

Future of Vaux site still a mystery

7.6.01

SUNDERLAND is still waiting to hear what the future holds for the key Vaux site – two years after the city centre brewery closed.

The brewery shut its gates on July 2, 1999 after Swallow Group took the closure decision which enraged many Wearsiders.

Leisure group Whitbread later took over Swallow and now owns the site where buildings are being demolished.

The land is featured in major redevelopment plans for Sunderland under the Arc (Area Regeneration Compact).

The site is regarded as one of integral importance to the new-look Sunderland .

The city council put forward its ideas for redevelopment more than a year ago, consisting of mixed development, including retail, leisure and housing linked by a footbridge to the north side of the river where the Stadium of Light is located

In January, the Echo revealed that Whitbread was in talks with a property developer about the brewery site,

Negotiations were taking place with Birmingham-based J.J. Gallagher and were said to be at an advanced stage.

Whitbread confirmed at the time that it was in serious talks and it was hoped that a conclusion would be reached which was satisfactory to Whitbread, J.J. Gallagher, the community and Sunderland Council.

A spokesman said more information might be available "around May or June".

But when contacted this week by the Echo, the spokesman said: "We are not in a position to reveal what might happen with the site and what the plans are. These things do take quite a bit of time, but progress is being made."

● The Arc, expected to span 15 years, also focuses on other areas of the city, and the aim is to create 10,000 more jobs and 1,000 homes while tackling economic and social problems.

By **RAY NICHOLS**
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SLOWLY DOES IT: Vaux bottling plant, the old Avenue Theatre, being demolished.

From June 2001

Council looks to buy Vaux site for £12million and sell it on



COMMITTED TO DEVELOPMENT: Council is to buy the former Vaux brewery site and sell it to a developer.

BREWERY BUY-UP

12-11-01

By BEVERLEY ADDY and SIMON MARKS
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VAUX brewery, the city's most important development site, is to be bought by Sunderland Council with a £12million compulsory purchase order.

The Vaux site has stood derelict since the brewery's closure more than two years ago.

Potential developer J.J. Gallagher has pulled out, believed to be because of wrangles with site owners Whitbread about a price tag rumoured to be about £20million.

Councillors are expected to rubber-stamp the deal at their Cabinet meeting on Wednesday after weeks of discussion about the lack of progress.

Turn to Page 5

Two years of hope before patience snapped

July 2, 1999: The brewery finally shuts its doors after more than 160 years of brewing in Sunderland.

July 7, 1999: The Vaux signs are taken down.

July 27, 1999: Sunderland Council says it will consider any high standard redevelopment of the site.

August 6, 1999: Archaeologists call for investigations into whether an ancient Roman signalling station is buried under the brewery.

November 22, 1999: Whitbread takes over the Swallow Group, which shut down the brewery.

December 8, 1999: Tyne and Wear county archaeologist Dave Heslop says chances of a Roman fort stopping redevelopment of the site are "highly unlikely".

January 25, 2000: A £20million redevelopment plan for the site is unveiled. It includes a supermarket, events venue, hotel and housing.The plans are backed by former Vaux boss Paul Nicholson, who calls them "visionary".

February 2000: Plans are revealed to shut the Brewery Tap pub, a feature on the site for 160 years.

September 14, 2000: Supermarket giant Tesco says it is looking at a store on the site, possibly employing 450 people.

January 17, 2000: Whitbread reveals it is in talks with Birmingham developer J. J. Gallagher about the Vaux site.

January 30, 2001: Demolition workers move in to bottling plant, one of the most prominent buildings on the site. The work is unfinished.

June 2001: The Echo reveals that the future of the area is still uncertain.The only information given to us is that more information will be known in the summer.

September 4, 2001: Sunderland Council says it will bring in a compulsory purchase order of the site as a "last resort" if nothing is done quickly.

October 30, 2001: The boss of the new Sunderland Urban Regeneration Company, Bryan Sanderson, confirms he has had talks with Whitbread boss Sir John Banham, who said work would be carried out on the Vaux site "soon".

November 12, 2001: Council bosses' patience finally snaps and they recommend Sunderland Council buys the site.

From November 2001

Former boss cannot wait to see new life

13.11.2001

By BEVERLEY ADDY
Assistant news editor
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FORMER Vaux boss Frank Nicholson says Sunderland Council's bid to buy the brewery site is a positive move to rid the city of a "monument to corporate stupidity".

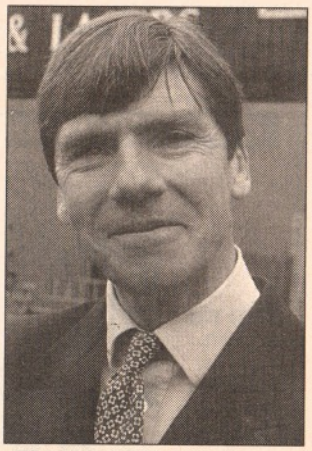
Mr Nicholson was delighted when the council's plans were revealed in the Echo yesterday that action was finally being taken to rejuvenate the site which had employed more than 600 workers.

"It's good for the council to take the lead. I'm very pleased to hear that at last someone is doing something positive. I'm fully in support of what they are doing.

"It was a deep enough scar left when the closure happened. But it is a scar that just hasn't healed. It is not just physical but mental."

But the debris of the partially demolished brewery added insult to injury not only to the former workers but the whole town, according to Mr Nicholson.

Sunderland Council cabinet is expected to vote in favour of a bid to compulsorily purchase the former Vaux Brewery site at its meeting on Wednesday.



FRANK NICHOLSON: Former Vaux boss.

The site is owned by Whitbread, which had been negotiating with JJ Gallagher, developers, over the future of the site. But Gallaghers has pulled out in a row allegedly over Whitbread's £20million price tag and now the council is set to step in offering £12million.

Whitbread will have the chance to appeal and the council could face a lengthy legal battle and public inquiry over the site's sale.

Mr Nicholson said: "I remember saying the day we closed, which was the worst day of my life, that I was praying for something to be done with the site quickly.

"As it stands, the brewery site is a monument to the stupidity and the awful grief it caused.

"People may not understand the corporate stupidity that led to its closure but they will understand the grief.

"I am sceptical as to how long this will take, because I am sure Whitbread will say 'no way'. I have expressed my doubt about whether anything will happen quickly, but the quicker this scar is healed the better. It was such a vibrant place.

"I cannot wait to see new life in somewhere that was so full of life and which has been left destroyed and derelict for the last two to three years."

From November 2001

Owners 'surprised' at council decision

15.11.2001

By SIMON MARKS
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BREWERY bosses are willing to sell the troubled former Vaux brewery site to Sunderland Council, it emerged today.

As council leaders backed a compulsory purchase on the derelict site, owners Whitbread said they could be ready to do a deal.

But brewery chiefs are "surprised" at the council's decision to go ahead with the order at a time when they say they want to sell the site.

Peter Brown works for the chartered surveyors' firm Gerald Eve and is handling the site for Whitbread.

Yesterday the council's ruling cabinet approved a compulsory purchase of the site, saying they wanted to speed up its redevelopment.

Mr Brown said: "My view is that this is very surprising.

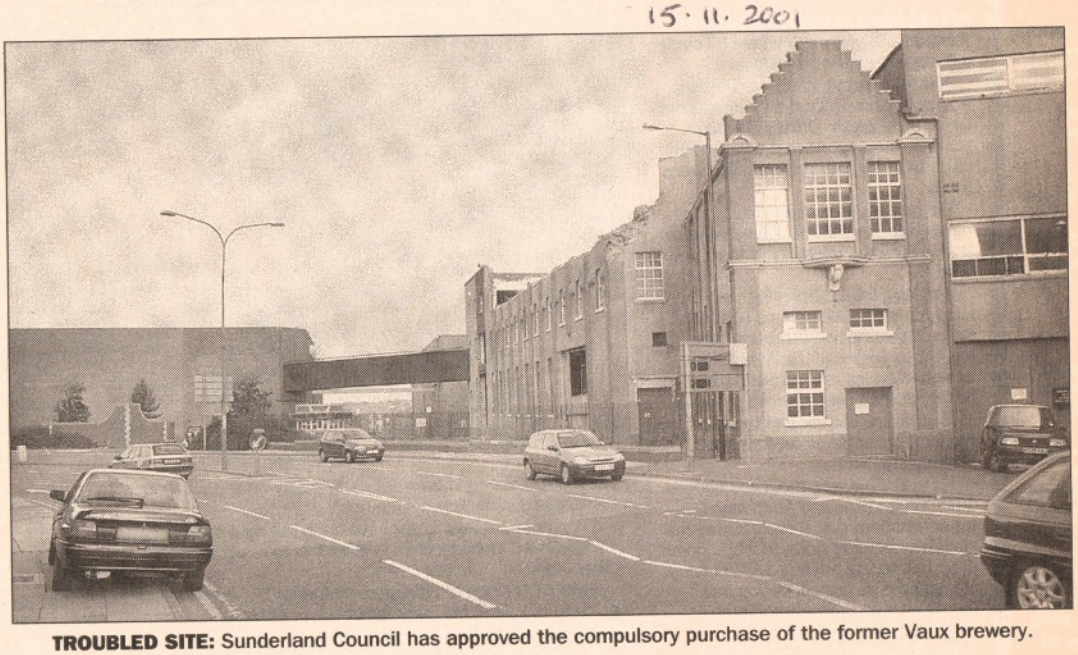
"We talked to Sunderland Council as recently as July this year about selling the site to them.

"They came back and said they weren't in a position to proceed with a purchase so we talked to other interested parties.

"It's surprising they've decided to do this.

"Normally compulsory purchases are served where landowners are not willing sellers.

"But Whitbread has always been willing to sell, so it's a pretty unusual thing for the council to do."



TROUBLED SITE: Sunderland Council has approved the compulsory purchase of the former Vaux brewery.

Mr Brown stressed that Whitbread was keen to get development going on the site, despite the delays.

"They're keen to see it sold for the benefit of Sunderland," he said.

"Things have been frustratingly slow but we believe we're getting there."

After the collapse of a deal with Birmingham-based developer JJ Gallagher in the summer Mr Brown said other, unnamed as yet, developers had shown an interest in the Vaux site.

He said it was unclear just how the compulsory purchase order would now affect those talks.

"We need to talk to the council," he added.

The St Mary's Way site has lain idle since the 105-year-old brewery shut in July 1999, laying off around 600 workers.

Despite ambitious £20million plans being unveiled in January last year for it to be redeveloped for houses, a hotel and a supermarket, only a small amount of demolition of the former bottling plant has taken place.

From November 2001

Council leader to push harder to get revamp under way

What's next for former Vaux site?

20·7·02



SOON TO GO? An aerial photograph of the Vaux brewery site.

COUNCIL bosses are to push ahead with talks to get the multi-million pound rejuvenation of the Vaux site started after news of its imminent demolition.

As revealed in the Echo yesterday, shop giant Tesco, which owns the site, is hoping to get the former brewery buildings demolished within the next few weeks.

And the leader of Sunderland Council, Coun Bob Symonds, has said he will now push even harder to put the multi-million pound vision for the site's regeneration into action.

Announced in January 2000, the plans were meant to be the way forward for the site, which has lain idle since the brewery's closure in 1999.

They included plans for a hotel, supermarket, events venue and even a new crown court building.

By SIMON MARKS
Local affairs reporter
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But because of delays the plans have never come about and the site has now been sold to the supermarket chain.

And after pressure from councillors and the Echo following several dangerous fires on the site, Tesco says it will now press ahead with the demolition.

Coun Symonds said: "We are pleased that the demolition of the former Vaux site has now finally been scheduled and work will begin soon.

"This site, which has such a prominent place within the city centre, offers even more opportunity for growth within Sunderland.

"Talks with the owners of the site, Tesco, continue, and we will continue to take the views of the public into account when deciding what form the future redevelopment of the site should take."

Planners at the council have always said they wanted to see the site used for prestige developments as it is so close to the city centre.

There was some anxiety when Tesco bought the site, with former Vaux boss Frank Nicholson saying he was worried a giant supermarket "shed" could get built there.

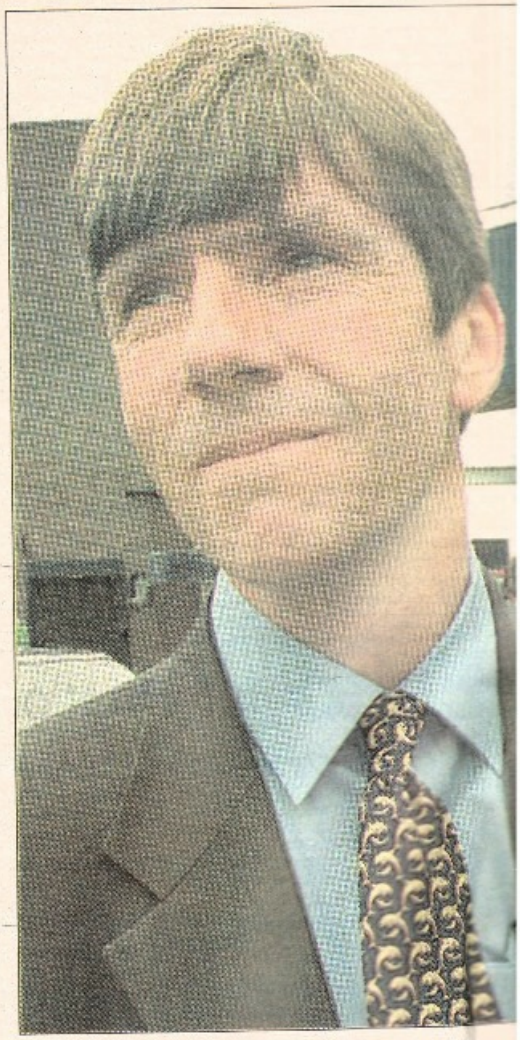
Coun Symonds said: "It is well known that the Council would prefer a mixed development on this prestigious site, in which retail would still play a part."

He only returns to civ

From February 2002

adness over idea of supermarket 'shed' on former brewery site

EX-VAUX BOSS BLASTS TESCO PLAN



FRANK NICHOLSON: Disappointed by Whitbread's decision to sell to Tesco.

THE former boss of Sunderland's Vaux brewery has spoken out against Tesco plans to build a giant supermarket "shed" on the site.

Frank Nicholson, who fought to keep the brewery open, also hit out at Whitbread, who sold the site to Tesco, for not thinking more about the impact on the city.

EXCLUSIVE

By RAY NICHOLS
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1·3·2

Mr Nicholson said: "I was very excited by t original ideas that Sunderland Council had for development, and I am very disappointed by wh Whitbread has done.

Turn to Page 5

Former Vaux boss blasts Tesco plan

From Page 1

"I suspect a majority of the population feel as I do, and are against a Tesco shed.

"It was hard enough seeing the Vaux brewery die, but there was hope that exciting new life would emerge.

"While this may be new life, it is certainly not exciting."

He said Whitbread's decision to sell to Tesco was typical of a southern-based, national company detached from the city.

The brewery closed in 1999 after Mr Nicholson, then managing director of Vaux Breweries, failed in his bid to keep it going with a management buy-out.

Whitbread took the site over and announced recently that it had been sold to Tesco.

This came as Sunderland Council was poised to bring in a compulsory purchase order because it was concerned at the lack of progress on redeveloping the flagship city-centre location.

Tesco is saying nothing about its plans, but it is thought to have in mind a superstore capable of employing 400 people.

Sunderland Council chiefs want a mixed development, involving retail, leisure and housing, and while they are not against Tesco, they do not want the site dominated by a supermarket.

Mr Nicholson spoke to the Echo as he attended the council's Fresh Thinking conference, aimed at drawing up a city centre strategy for the next 10 years.

Sunderland Council leader Colin Anderson was also at the conference, held in the Exchange Building.

He said talks were taking place with Tesco, and the council was looking at the possibilty of a joint venture with the company to develop the Vaux land.

He said Tesco was welcome in the city, in the context of a mixed development.

But added: "If they just want to plonk a supermarket there, we are facing difficulties. There has got to be far more to it than that. That site has to be sensitively developed."

A Whitbread spokesman said: "Mr Nicholson has a right to voice his opinions, but Whitbread would remind him that this large site was empty when we took it over. We did not close it down."

He said Tesco came forward with an acceptable offer.

The spokesman added: "It is flawed thinking to say we are a southern-based company which is uncaring about the impact its decisions have on Sunderland. We do a lot of business in Sunderland and employ about 1,000 people in the area."

1·3·02

From March 2002

TIME of historic pub



THE END: Bulldozers poised to demolish the Brewery Tap. Right, the pub in its heyday.

By LUKE WINTER
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TIME has been called on one of Sunderland's oldest and most popular pubs after 160 years.

Although the last pint to be pulled in The Brewery Tap, next to what was Vaux Brewery, was supped more than two years ago, there had still been hope that the pub could be saved from demolition.

But the bulldozers have moved in.

Sid Bicker, 58, who was the pub's last manager, said: "The pub was very close to my heart, and also to many people's throughout the city.

"The whole time it was left standing, I thought someone would see sense and try to save it."

Sid, who now hates even passing the site where the pub once stood, added: "It grieves me when I think that a place with so much history and character can be so easily demolished."

The Dunning Street pub, which was taking more than £100,000 per year and won a City in Bloom award less than four years ago, is now nothing more than a pile of rubble.

"The place had so much potential. There was room for a restaurant or even a beer garden," said Sid. "It was obviously never going to make enormous amounts of money, but it always did well for a historical building."

Sid, from Pallion, thought his prayers may have been answered when an Echo reader's letter proposed that the pub could be taken to Beamish Museum.

However, after much of its original bric-a-brac was taken to the Museum, plans for the building's relocation never took off.

"When I heard about the idea, I thought it would be great as a last resort. Although I would have obviously preferred the pub to have remained in its original position, anything that could have preserved it was worth a shot."

"At the end of the day it was all about money and profits. The fact that the pub had so much historical importance to the city of Sunderland was insignificant to the people who could have prevented this, which to me is very sad."



'ABOUT PROFITS': The Brewer Tap's last manager Sid Bicker

The demoliton of the Vaux s is set for completion by the end March, but a final decision any new development could be to nine months away.

Sunderland Council's plann are considering two plans – o from owners Tesco and the ot unveiled by the Sunderland A Regeneration Company – for site on St Mary's Way.

But because of their comple ty, it could take planning offic up to nine months to fina decide on each one.

And even then the matter have to be decided by the office the Deputy Prime Minist because both applications against the council's local plan.

From Jan 2003