

Bishopwearmouth Pubs Profile (Listed) – The Dun Cow

Project Pub REF: 002

HER REF: 4473

Location: [Streetview, 2020.](#)

NGR: NZ39305702

Name of Pub: The Dun Cow

Any explanation of the pub's name or changes of name?: It has been suggested by locals that the name 'Dun Cow' relates to the local legend of the quest by tenth century monks to find a suitable resting place for the body of St. Cuthbert. According to twelfth century chronicler, Symeon of Durham, the monks came to a halt near Warden Law, a little hamlet near Houghton-le-Spring, and discovered they couldn't transport the bier any further. One of the monks, Eadmer, then had a vision of St Cuthbert who urged him to take the casket to 'Dun Holm'. None of the monks knew of such a location, however they overheard a passing milkmaid saying that she was missing her dun cow, and another young woman replying that she had seen it travelling towards 'Dun Holm'. The monks saw this as a sign from St. Cuthbert and followed the milkmaid to what was described as a 'wooded hill-island formed by a tight gorge-like meander of the River Wear'. This is where the monks laid Cuthbert's coffin, and according to legend, is where the city of Durham was founded. ([Sunderland University, accessed May 2022.](#))

Any previous names?: Brown Cow, Swans, Rosies (Ron Lawson, 2019).

What did it look like in the past?

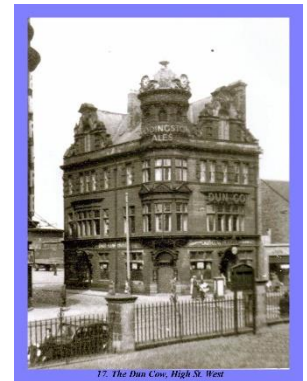


Image 1: The previous Dun Cow on the same site, which the current Dun Cow replaced in 1901.

Image 2: The Current Dun Cow under construction c.1901.

Image 3: The Dun Cow and Empire Theatre, n.d – c. 1901.

Image 4: The Dun Cow c.1901.

Current Photographs:



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Historic Environment Record: Dun Cow, public house on High Street West. 1901 by Benjamin F. Simpson. For R. Deuchar. Sandstone ashlar with grey granite plinth, black marble door nook shafts; Lakeland slate roof. Vigorous free Baroque style. Three storeys with left corner tower. Blocked corner entrance. Panelled doors with overlights. Segmental-headed windows. Entablature has original DUN COW HOTEL and SUPPLIED BY R. DEUCHAR LTD on fascia. Turret has curved mullion and transom windows. Sash windows on first floor. Round-headed dormer. Turret has scroll-sided clocks projecting from high fishscale dome with spike finial. The inside of this extraordinary Edwardian pub has etched panels, bevelled mirrors, fine plasterwork and a grand fireplace amongst its features of note, but particular praise is reserved for the bar. The Dun Cow has been described by the Campaign for Real Ale as having 'one of the most stunning bar-backs in Britain - a splendid traceried Indo-Gothic web, blowing out to form platforms on which bottles can be displayed'.

Historic England Description : GV II Public house. Dated 1901. By Benjamin F Simpson. For R Deuchar. Sandstone ashlar with grey granite plinth, black marble door nook shafts; roof of graduated Lakeland slate. Vigorous free Baroque style. EXTERIOR: three storeys, one window to High Street West with left corner tower; four windows on left return to Garden Place. Polished black shafts rise from plinth to support moulded segmental door hoods on big scrolled brackets; blocked corner entrance, panelled doors with overlights at centre front and under gable on left return. Ground floor windows have segmental head to lower light below transom, and mullioned upper lights, three in windows flanking corner and two in others. Entablature has original 'DUN COW HOTEL' and 'Supplied by R. DEUCHAR Ltd.' applied letters on fascia, and cornice breaks forward on long brackets to round corner turret. Second floor sill string and top entablature are continuous. Turret, on richly carved brackets, has curved mullion and transom windows, those on first floor with pedimented entablature. High Street West front has entablature to shallow canted five-light bay window, mullion and transom, on first floor; five sashes above grouped 2:1:2 by rusticated jambs. Top entablature has wide modillions to gutter cornice. Corniced blocking course supports shaped gable with generously proportioned side consoles and rusticated pilasters. Round-headed dormer below elaborate keystone with cartouche, date damaged, and top scroll pediment. At corner, blocking course supports arcaded drum of turret with fat tapered columns and keyed arches to entablature. Left return has similar treatment to front gable, with date and initials in dormer, flanked by plainer narrow bays and linked to corner turret by one further plainer bay. Steeply pitched roof has tall ashlar chimneys set in mid slope and at ends. Turret has scroll-sided clocks projecting from high fishscale dome; spike finial swept from disc. INTERIOR reported to have high quality back bar fitting in Indo-Gothic style.

Summary of Research by John Tunman:

The 'Old' Dun Cow - Little is known of its early history as a public house. A directory of 1820 (1) lists a Brown Cow on High Street Bishopwearmouth, with Timothy Thompson as the occupier. It has been suggested that there were further entries in directories in the 1820s and 1830s (2), but these have not been found by the author. A directory from the late 1840s (3) has an entry under the category of "Hotels, Inns and Taverns" under the name "Board" at 4 High Street with John Swan in occupation; he had been there since at least 1841, as he appeared in the census of that year (4), with his wife, two children and one other person, probably a servant. The Swan family owned the Dun Cow for over 40 years, Sarah Hannah Swan, his widow, being the publican, although by this time she was living elsewhere. It seems that by 1851, John Swan who was 44, was by now a widower (4). Living with him was Sarah Hannah Baird, a 37 year old widow and annuitant, who was his sister-in-law. They clearly married at some point, but by 1861, Sarah Hannah Swan (formerly Baird) was a widow again – John Swan had died (4). By 1871, though still the publican, she was living elsewhere, at 1 Thornhill Crescent (4). As noted previously, she continued to own the pub until sometime after 1881 (4), presumably up until her death. By 1891, the publican was resident at the Dun Cow and named as Frances Cooper, a 44 year old widow, with her 2 sons and a boarder living with her. The boarder was a barman, so it may be assumed he worked in the pub (4).

From 1887 the license holder had been Richard Temple Rochester, aged 29 in 1891 (2) He died, aged 32, in 1894 (5) and his widow, Mary Elizabeth Rochester, briefly held the license for about 18 months afterwards. There were a further 2 licensees in the period to 1889 (2), when the premises were auctioned.

The auction took place on March 8th 1899 (6), and there was a detailed description of the accommodation of the old building given in the advertised sales particulars:

“Comprising Spacious Circular Bar, Snug or Family Department, well-appointed Smoke or Sitting Room and Bar in the Rear, Excellent Cellars, Office, with Nine Rooms Overhead, w.c., and conveniences.

Also the

VALUABLE BUSINESS PREMISES

Adjoining the “Dun Cow” and now in the occupation of Mrs Queenan, comprising Spacious Shop and Six Rooms, yard, w.c. and conveniences.

Both PROPERTIES will be offered in ONE LOT and are FREE FROM GROUND RENT”.

The successful bidder was Robert Deuchar Ltd, of Newcastle, and by June 1899 the licensee was Farquhar Deucher.

Before moving on to look at the building which replaced the original Dun Cow it may be worthwhile to note that, in common with other public houses, in the 19th century it was a venue for inquests into the deaths of residents of the nearby area. One particularly sad case involved a man who had died at his lodgings in Eden street West. He was 51 years old and had been unable to work for many years. His landlady of 23 years had died and it seems he was worried about having to find somewhere else to live. He poisoned himself, and died. He left a considerable sum of money - £31. 8s. 6d, to the grand daughter of his landlady (7).

It seems the pub played host to the Sunderland and District Wednesday Medal Competition (football) in 1899 (8) and may have had similar roles previously. On at least one occasion a public meeting was held there (9); again this may have been replicated at other times. However, there is no evidence of it having been a venue for auctions, or frequent lodge meetings, unlike the nearby Londonderry.

The ‘New’ Dun Cow –



Following the auction of the public house and adjoining shop, Robert Deuchar Ltd lost no time in submitting plans for the redevelopment of the whole premises they had acquired. At a meeting of the Building Committee on 4th September 1899, plans for the redevelopment were “disapproved” (ie refused). The report of the meeting gives a good description of the proposal:

“It was proposed to pull down the public-house and adjoining premises, and erect a hotel 3 ½ storeys high, with billiard room, dining and coffee-rooms on the first floor, while the second floor and attics would be bedrooms, sitting room &c.” (10)

A later scheme did gain the approval of the Building Committee, and tenders for the rebuilding were invited in December 1900 (11). There was opposition to the grant of a provisional license in 1900, where an argument was made against

extending the drinking area of the new premises. For the applicant, Farquhar Deuchar, it was argued that the drinking area in the new building would be practically the same as the old. This was accompanied by a more detailed description of the proposed premises:

“On the ground floor there would be a bar, and behind that a sitting room, and in regard to the adjoining house it was proposed to have a staircase and a manager’s private room, so that there was no increase in the drinking accommodation there. On the second floor there was to be a billiard-room, dining-room and coffee-room It was proposed to spend £5,000 or £6,000 over the new building”.

Opposing the application, the case was made that there was no necessity of any enlargement of the public house; the premises were close to the Londonderry, which nobody had been interested in buying; this being the case, there could be no requirement for the Dun Cow (12).

Nevertheless, the provisional license was granted, and confirmed on completion of the construction of the new premises (13). However, given the limited frontage of the Dun Cow to High Street West today, it must be assumed the approved scheme did not include the adjoining premises which were auctioned as part of the sale in 1899.

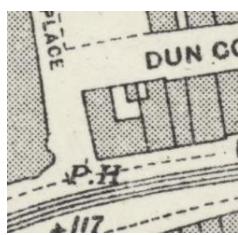
There is little information from newspapers about the new Dun Cow, its role in the social life of the town etc, or reports of cases brought to the attention of the magistrates. It suffered damage through enemy action during the Second World War, being one of 7 public houses given permission in 1943 by the magistrates to repair damage so caused (14).

Although anecdotal, it is known that it was a popular venue for artistes appearing at the Sunderland Empire, situated across Garden Street, to have a drink.

References:

- (1) Commercial Directory, 1820
- (2) A Historic Look at the Pubs of Bishopwearmouth, Ron Lawson p 31
- (3) Whites Directory 1847
- (4) Census of Population 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891.
- (5) SDE 02/01/1894 p 2 col 5
- (6) SDE 03/03/1899 p 2 col 3. It was also advertised on 15/02; 02/03; and 06/03/1899
- (7) SDE 11/10/1888 p 3 col 1
- (8) SDE 08/02/1899 p 3 col 3
- (9) SDE 25/03/1885 p 3 col 4
- (10) SDE 05/09/1899 p 4 col 2
- (11) SDE 17/12/1900 p 2 col 1
- (12) SDE23/08/1900 p 3 cols 1-4
- (13) SDE 04/02/1903 p 3 col 4
- (14) SDE 30/06/1943 p 5 col 6

Map regression



Map 1 – Rain's Eye Plan c.1785 [accessed via Sunderland Antiquarian Society].

Map 2 - 1897 Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via National Library of Scotland].

Map 3 – 1919 Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via National Library of Scotland].

Map 4 - 1946 Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via National Library of Scotland].

Map 5 - Modern Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via Historic England, Search the List].

The Rain's Eye Plan of circa 1785 shows a building on the site now occupied by the Dun Cow. However, it was a modest structure, a low 2 storey building, and quite unlike the 19th century illustration of the building which was demolished around 1900 to make way for the current structure, which was a substantial building of three full storeys plus dormers. It is therefore concluded that the earlier building either underwent substantial modifications, or perhaps more likely, was completely rebuilt, probably in the early 19th century. Historic OS mapping of 1897 shows a row of terraced buildings with the end one being noted as an 'Inn'. By this point, the street is called 'Dun Cow Street' which suggests that the pub's presence within Bishopwearmouth had been well established by this point. By 1902, the building had been demolished and replaced with a new 'Inn' with a distinctive 'L' shaped plan form that is still recognisable today. Modern OS mapping confirms that the building has remained largely unaltered since its construction, however the surrounding and adjoining buildings have now largely been demolished.

How long has it been a pub?: The "Commercial Directory" of 1820 refers to a pub known as the Brown Cow, landlord Timothy Thompson, on High Street Bishopwearmouth.

Who worked here?

The following information has been extracted from Ron Lawsons Pubs of Bishopwearmouth (2019) and embellished by John Tunman.

Owner:

1823 – 31: ? Fairlamb

1872: Margaret Thompson

Jul 1899: Robert Deuchar Ltd

Trade Directory:

1820: Timothy Thompson

1823 – 31: Ayre

1834: Chapman Braithwaite

***1841 – 53:** Robert Swan

1855: Sarah Hannah Swan

1856 – 79: Sarah Hannah Swan

1881 – 87: Sarah Hannah Swan

NB - Robert Swan was the landlord in 1841; married with 2 children. By 1851 he was a widower and living with him was Sarah H Baird, his sister-in-law. By 1861 he had married her, but had himself died, leaving Sarah Hannah Swan as the landlord. Even up to 1881 she was the landlord but no longer living there. Thus the name Swan was associated with the Dun Cow for over 40 years (Censuses and Trade Directories).

License Holder:

Oct 1887: Richard Temple Rochester

Feb 1894: Mary Elizabeth Rochester

June 1895: William Bell

Dec 1898: Robert Clark

June 1899: Farquhar Deuchar

Census:

1841 – John Swan 34, head, married, Publican; wife Paulina, 32; daughter Emma, 8; and son Robert 5; and one other, Sarah Parkinson, probably a servant

1851 – 4 High St: John Swan 44, head, widower, Spirit Merchant; daughter Emma, 18; Sarah H Baird, widow and annuitant, sister-in-law, 37; Anne Baird, niece, 15; Mary A Wilkinson, servant, 18.

1861 – 4 High St: Sarah Hannah Swan, 47, head, widow, Wine & Spirit Merchant; Ann Baird, daughter, 25; John W H Swan, son, 7; John Gowan (?), brother, 67, Salmon fisherman; Mary Haswell, servant, 31; Mary Parker, House Servant, 20

1871 - At 1 Thornhill Crescent: Sarah Hannah Swan, 57, Spirit Dealer; Ann Baird, daughter, 35; Mary Ann Fawcett, Domestic Servant, 21; Hannah Sargbine, Servant, 21.

1881 – At 1 Thornhill Crescent: Sarah Hannah Swan, 67, head, widow, Wine & Spirit Dealer; Ann Baird Swan, daughter, 45; John William Holborn Swan, 27, son, Architect & Builder

1891 – At High St: Frances Cooper, head, widow, 44, Publican; John Nelson, son, 18; William Nelson, son, 16, Ship's Plater; Alfred Rushton, 36, boarder, Barman.

1901 – No entry; premises presumably being rebuilt

1939 Register – 8 High St West: John Pearson, b 03/08/1883, Hotel Manager; Sarah J W Pearson, b 13/03/1883, Unpaid Domestic Duties; Francis E Pearson, b 28/02/1913, Plater's Help

Who drank here?

From a search on the British Newspaper Archives, it appears as though some of the main clientele at the Dun Cow were the Palantine Building Society and ship building sawyers.

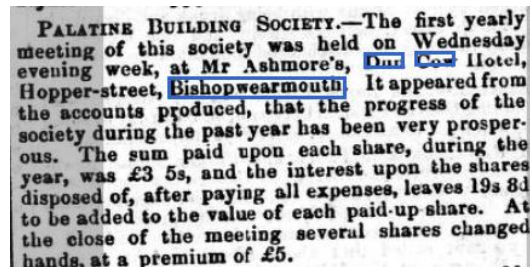
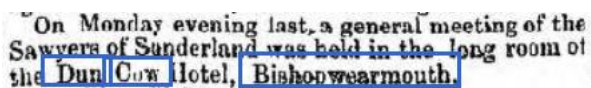
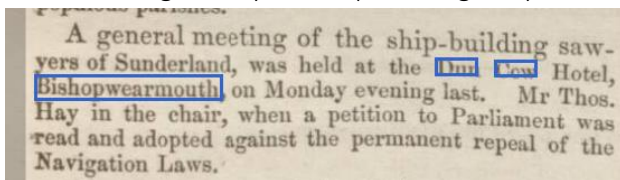


Image 1: Saturday 20th March 1847 – Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury [Accessed via British Newspaper Archives].

Image 2: Friday 26th December 1851 – Durham Chronicle [Accessed via British Newspaper Archives].

Image 3: Saturday 6th February 1847 – Northern Star and Leeds General [Accessed via British Newspaper Archives].

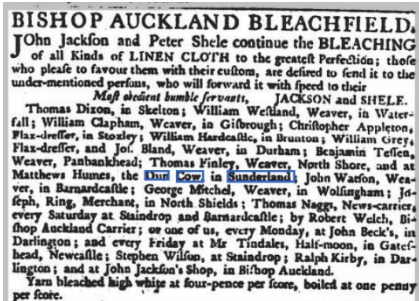
However, it is also suspected that many artistes appearing at The Empire Theatre, which is adjacent, were familiar with, and liked, the rebuilt Dun Cow.

Brewery link: The Dun Cow was designed in 1901 by Newcastle based architect Benjamin Simpson for Robert Deuchar, who was a local brewer and property developer at a cost of £2000 (Bishopwearmouth Atlas, p.253). Deuchar, born in 1831, arrived in Newcastle in the 1860's as an innkeeper at the Argyle Hotel (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography). By the late 19th century, Deuchar had rapidly diversified and built up a prosperous trade, benefitting from the brewery boom that was occurring, eventually resulting in purchasing the Monkwearmouth brewery and maltings in Sunderland (ibid). Following this, in 1897, Deuchar registered his own company Robert Deuchar Ltd, building up substantial trade in Tyne and Wearside, including the Dun Cow (ibid). By the time of his death, Deuchar had built up a portfolio of over 150 public houses and hotels, all supplied by his own brewery. His business, Robert Deuchar Ltd, ran from 1897-1959 by which point it was subsumed into

Newcastle Breweries ([Co-Curate Newcastle](#), accessed May 2022). Other pubs in Bishopwearmouth include the Royal Tent and the Hat and Feather.

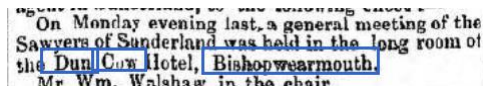
Story timeline:

All images accessed through British Newspaper Archives.



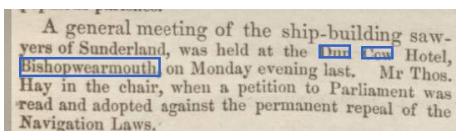
BISHOP AUCLAND BLEACHFIELD.
John Jackson and Peter Shele continue the BLEACHING of all kinds of LINEN CLOTH to the greatest Perfection; those who please to favour them with their custom, are desired to send it to the under-mentioned persons, who will forward it with speed to their
Most obedient humble servants, JACKSON and SHELE.
Thomas Dixon, in Skelton; William Wetland, Weaver, in Waterfall; William Clapham, Weaver, in Giffrough; Christopher Appleton, Flax-dresser, in Stodley; William Hardscastle, in Brunston; William Grey, Flax-dresser, and Jos. Bland, Weaver, in Durham; Benjamin Telfer, Weaver, Panbankhead; Thomas Finley, Weaver, North Shore, and at Matthews Humes, the **Dun Cow**, in Sunderland; John Watson, Weaver, in Burnardcastle; George Mitchel, Weaver, in Wollingham; Joseph, Ring, Merchant, in North Shields; Thomas Naggs, News-carrier, every Saturday at Staindrop and Burnardcastle; by Robert Welch, Bishop Auckland Carrier; or one of us, every Monday, at John Beck's, in Darlington; and every Friday at Mr Tindales, Half-moon, in Gatehead, Newcastle; Stephen Wilson, at Staindrop; Ralph Kirby, in Darlington; and at John Jackson's Shop, in Bishop Auckland.
Yarn bleached high white at four-pence per score, boiled at one penny per score.

Saturday 28th April 1770 – Newcastle Courant: Very early mention of the Dun Cow, in relation to linen bleaching.



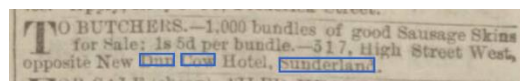
On Monday evening last, a general meeting of the Sawyers of Sunderland was held in the long room of the **Dun Cow Hotel**, **Bishopwearmouth**.
Mr Wm. Walsham in the chair

Saturday 6th February 1847 – Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser: The Sawyers of Sunderland meet at the Dun Cow.



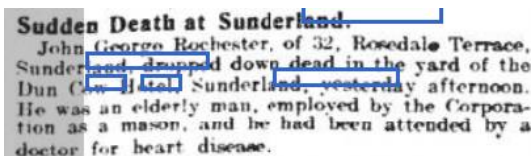
A general meeting of the ship-building sawyers of Sunderland, was held at the **Dun Cow Hotel**, **Bishopwearmouth**, on Monday evening last. Mr Thos. Hay in the chair, when a petition to Parliament was read and adopted against the permanent repeal of the Navigation Laws.

Saturday 20th March 1847 – Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury: Meeting of the ship building sawyers at the Dun Cow Hotel.



TO BUTCHERS.—1,000 bundles of good Sausage Skins for Sale; 1s 5d per bundle.—517, High Street West, opposite New **Dun Cow Hotel**, **Sunderland**.

Monday 17th November 1902 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: An advert for a butchers, but note the pub is referred to as 'New' Dun Cow.



Sudden Death at Sunderland.
John George Rochester, of 32, Rosedale Terrace, Sunderland, ~~dropped down dead~~ **dropped down dead** in the yard of the **Dun Cow Hotel**, **Sunderland**, yesterday afternoon. He was an elderly man, employed by the Corporation as a mason, and he had been attended by a doctor for heart disease.

Wednesday 27th August 1913 – Newcastle Journal: Man drops dead in the yard of the Dun Cow Hotel.

Sources consulted:

A Historic Look at the Pubs of Bishopwearmouth, Ron Lawson p 31

Bishopwearmouth Village Atlas (2021). Available at: <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/16351/History-of-Bishopwearmouth>

Brian Robert Bennison (1992) The Brewing Trade in North East England 1869 – 1939. Newcastle: University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

British Newspaper Archives. Available at: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Census of Population 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891.

Historic England, Search the List. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

National Library of Scotland Ordnance Survey Maps. Available at: <https://www.nls.uk/maps>

Ron Lawson (2019) Pubs of Bishopwearmouth.

SDE 02/01/1894 p 2 col 5

SDE 03/03/1899 p 2 col 3.

SDE 04/02/1903 p 3 col 4

SDE 05/09/1899 p 4 col 2

SDE 08/02/1899 p 3 col 3

SDE 11/10/1888 p 3 col 1

SDE 17/12/1900 p 2 col 1

SDE 25/03/1885 p 3 col 4

SDE 30/06/1943 p 5 col 6

SDE23/08/1900 p 3 cols 1-4

Trade Directories. Available at: <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4>

Completed by: John Tunman and Caitlin Osborne (TDR Heritage).

Date: 8/8/22