

## Bishopwearmouth Pubs Profile (Unlisted but extant) – Vesta Tilleys

Project Pub REF: 006

Location: Streetview, 2020.

NGR: NZ 39329 57010

**Name of Pub:** Vesta Tilleys

**Previous names:** Previously known as Black Bull, Cottage Inn, Scotts and Outpost (Ron Lawson, 2019).

**Any explanation of the pub's name or changes of name?:** Vesta Tilley was a music hall entertainer and widely recognised as the best-known male impersonator of her era, becoming the highest earning woman in England by 1890 (Bishopwearmouth Village Atlas, 2021). She opened

**Current Photographs:**



© Sam Neal, August 2022. Photograph showing Vesta Tilleys.

**Historic Photographs:**



**Image 1** - Early photograph of The Black Bull showing two workers in the front and 'BLACK BULL' signage standing proud on the roof and statue of a bull above the door.

**Image 2** – Photograph of the Black Bull in the mid-20th century.

**Image 3** – Photograph of the ground floor of the Black Bull in the mid-20th century.

the Empire Theatre which sits almost adjacent to the pub.

**Building Description:** Vesta Tilleys (previously known as Black Bull) is a three storey public house of painted and rendered brick construction. The principal elevation which fronts onto High Street West has a shop front style to the ground floor which comprises a large window to the west with a decorative pilaster and to the east of this are three classical style columns with a recessed entrance. To the first floor, there are four original timber sash windows with horns, the central two being 1/1 and the outer being 2/1. All have painted stone surrounds. The windows to the second floor sit on a painted stone string course and are all original 1/1 timber sashes with horns and painted and molded stone surrounds.

#### Map regression



**Map 1** - 1887 Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via National Library of Scotland].

**Map 2** - 1919 Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via National Library of Scotland].

**Map 3** - 1946 Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via National Library of Scotland].

**Map 4** - Modern Ordnance Survey Map (25") [Accessed via Historic England, Search the List].

Historic OS mapping of 1887 shows Vesta Tilleys as part of a row of buildings fronting High Street West with a linear, rectangular plan form. Little change had occurred by 1919 and again by 1946, however modern OS mapping shows that the buildings to the east have subsequently been demolished and Vesta Tilleys is now an end of terrace unit.

#### Who worked here?

The following information has been extracted from The Pubs of Bishopwearmouth, Ron Lawson (2019).

##### Owner:

1823 – 31: George Robinson

1843: Richard Brown

? John Potts

? Mrs. Margaret Potts

May 1895: Lease – Alexander Smithfield

Dec 1896: Lease assigned to Robert Fenwick & Co Ltd

Feb 1904: Lease assigned to Robert Deuchar & Co Ltd

Oct 1912: Edward Linard Lucas

June 1935: Conveyance from A.F. Maling and another to Robert Deuchar

June 1935: Mortgage (R. Deuchar) to Mark Fenwick and William Wayman Gibson

Jan 1960: Newcastle Brewery Ltd

Jan 1962: Scottish & Newcastle Breweries Ltd

Sept 1998: Camerons Brewery

##### Trade Directory:

? : George Thwaites

1772: ? (Cottage Inn)

1820 – 34: Thomas Whitfield

1841 – 48: Isabella Whitfield

1849 – 51: William Hall  
1851: J. Green  
1853: Sarah Mitchell  
1855 – 57: John Sparrow  
1858 – 1859: Stephen Hodgson  
1861: Eleanor Cummings  
1861: William Cummings  
1864: William Bowey  
1864 – 66: William Jackson  
1866 – 67: William Weatherburn  
1871 – 77: Mrs Louisa John

**License Holder:**

Sep 1872: Mrs Louisa John  
Dec 1885: John Potts  
June 1888: John Dunn  
June 1895: Alexander Smithfield  
Aug 1898: Philip Bach  
Oct 1899: Henry Stephenson  
June 1902: James Leighton Charlton  
Apr 1904: George Childs  
Aug 1905: Thomas Jackson  
Aug 1906: James Hodgson  
Jan 1934: Thomas Clark  
Nov 1949: John Hart Simpson  
Mar 1972: Joseph Drosi  
Nov 1972: John Thompson  
Jan 1974: Brian Gray  
Feb 1974: Robert McDermont  
Jan 1981: Derick Edward Turner  
1986: Ronnie Stappard  
Mar 1986: Kevin Prince  
Sep 1988: Angela Kathryn Ward  
May 1989: David Pye  
July 1993: Andrew Green  
Sep 1995: Tyrone Shovelin/Stuart Ireland  
Dec 1995: Neil Craggs/ Stuart Ireland  
Sept 1999: Craig Rickaby  
Sept 2001: Lynne Marie Nightingale  
Jan 2002: Brenda Rackley  
Feb 2003: Brenda Rackley and Shiela McGrath

**Who drank here?:** From an assessment of historic newspapers, it appears as though regular customers at the Black Bull were societies holding annual/monthly meetings. These included the Society of Engineers and the Pressed Glass Maker's Society.

**Brewery link:** Unfortunately, there is no evidence to suggest a possible brewery link.

**Story timeline:**

All images accessed via British Newspaper Archives.

A CHILD KILLED BY LAUDANUM.—On Monday, and by adjournment on Thursday, an inquest was held at the **Black Bull Inn, Sunderland** Street, upon the body of Isabella M'Laren, a child about one month old. It appears that on Saturday morning about four

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February 1852 – Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury: Inquest is held at the Black Bull on the death of a child.

FOOT-RACING.—The workmen belonging to Mr Errington's brass foundry, Ayre's Quay, Sunderland, assembled at the Victoria Gardens, on Easter Monday, to have some foot-racing. The sports commenced with 120 yards handicap, for which eleven started, drawn in four heats. G. Hawkie, seven yards start; J. Potts, 10; G. H., scratch; and J. Shields, 14; won their heats. The four were then placed on their respective marks, and the result was as follows:—G. H. 1st, J. Potts 2nd, and G. Hawkie 3rd. Mr George Marshall, foreman of the works, was referee. The company then adjourned to Mr Jackson's, **Black Bull Bishopwearmouth**, where supper was provided for them.

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 1865 – Shields Daily Gazette – Supper is held at the Black Bull after Foot Racing event.

**BLACK BULL INN, High-street, Sunderland**, with extensive premises behind, FOR SALE.—Apply to T. Dickenson, 27, Blandford-st.

19<sup>th</sup> February 1877 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: Black Bull Inn 'with extensive premises behind' is up for sale.

John Potts, from the Black Bull Inn, High-street Bishopwearmouth, Sunderland, will be glad to meet his town and country friends at his spacious Marquee, No. 3, west of the stands. Ales, Wines, and Spirits of superior quality. Splendid Burton Ales. Refreshments.

24<sup>th</sup> June 1879 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: John Potts sells ales, wines, and sprits in a marquee at a local event.

Potts.—On the 15th inst., at No. 11, Suffolk-street, Elizabeth Ann, wife of John Potts, **Black Bull Hotel, Sunderland**.

19<sup>th</sup> April 1882 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: Landlord John Potts' wife, Elizabeth dies.

### THE DEATH OF MR J. POTTS.

On Wednesday, Mr Coroner Maynard held an inquest at West Herrington, touching the death of John Potts, aged 60 years, formerly landlord of the **Black Bull Inn, Sunderland**, who died in a very sudden manner on Sunday afternoon last. Deceased was walking in the garden attached to his residence, when, without any premonitory symptoms of illness, he was observed to reel round and fall to the ground. When taken up the poor man was found to be dead. Dr Lyons, who was sent for, promptly attended. The medical gentleman in his evidence before the Coroner gave it as his opinion that death was due to apoplexy. A verdict was accordingly returned to this effect.

27<sup>th</sup> June 1890 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: An inquest is held on the death of landlord John Potts who died in suspicious circumstances.

The adjourned meeting of the members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was held last night at the **Black Bull Inn, Sunderland** to consider the propositions made to the men by the employers. The meeting was private, and lasted

28<sup>th</sup> January 1892 – Newcastle Daily Chronicle: The Society of Engineers annual meeting was held at the Black Bull.

TO LET, by tender, on lease for 21 years, from the expiration of present lease in May, 1895, the **BLACK BULL HOTEL, High-street, Sunderland**. For particulars, apply to the undersigned, to whom offers are to be sent on or before the 27th instant.

22<sup>nd</sup> June 1894 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: Black Bull Hotel is to be let by tender.

The Lessor does not bind herself to accept the highest or any tender.  
RANSON, NELSON, and MESNARD, Solicitors,  
43, West Riverside, **Sunderland**.  
10th June, 1894.

GLASSMAKERS SUPPORT MR CHAMBERLAIN.—At a meeting of the **Sunderland** District of the Pressed Glassmakers' Society of Great Britain, held at the **Black Bull Hotel, Sunderland** on Saturday, a resolution was adopted in favour of Mr Chamberlain's fiscal proposals.

23<sup>rd</sup> November 1903 – Edinburgh Evening News: The Pressed Glass Makers' Society of Great Britain hold their meeting at the Black Bull.

**Fire at Sunderland.**

Yesterday a fire broke out in some stables at the back of the Black Bull Hotel, Sunderland. The fire brigade was quickly in attendance, and had the flames extinguished in about 10 minutes. The fire occurred among some straw and packing cases, and caused very little damage.

23<sup>rd</sup> September 1905 – Newcastle Daily Chronicle: Fire in the stables at the back of the Black Bull.

Entries at Northumberland and Durham Collie Club show, held at the Black Bull Hotel, Sunderland, last night, were much the same as at the previous show in numbers—34 dogs being judged by Mr B. J. Hewison, of Seaton Delaval.

31<sup>st</sup> October 1935 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Gazette: Durham Collie Club Show is held at the Black Bull Hotel.

He told members of the Ship Constructors' and Shipwrights' Association at a social held by the Wear District Committee in the Black Bull Hotel, Sunderland last night: "We are anxious to see that the merchant shipbuilders are going to get a share of the work which I feel is coming along."

20<sup>th</sup> January 1939 – Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette: Ship Constructors and Shipwrights' Association holds committee at the Black Bull

**Source consulted:**

Bishopwearmouth Village Atlas (2021). Available at: <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/16351/History-of-Bishopwearmouth>  
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Completed by: Caitlin Osborne (TDR Heritage)

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