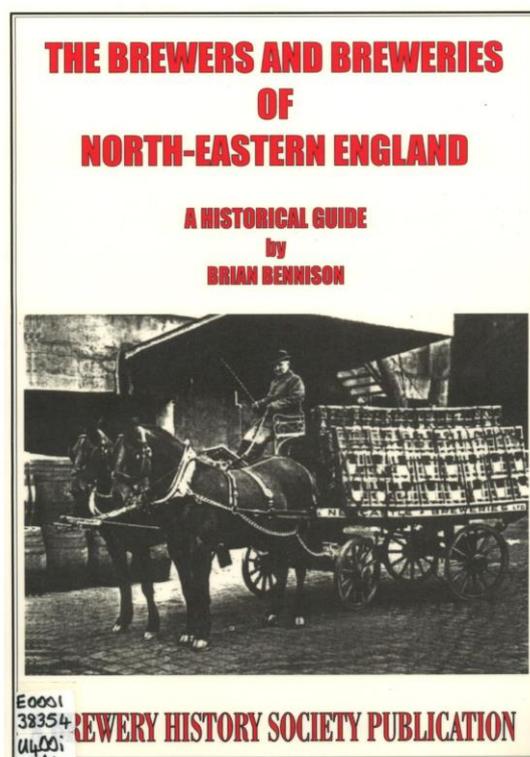


The Brewers and Breweries of North East England

by **Brian Benison**

(2004)



As reference books go, it might seem at first sight that this would be one for the subject-specialist. It is, after all, chiefly a comprehensive index – fulfilling the brief of the title – a historical guide to brewing in the North East, defined as Northumberland and County Durham, from the 18th Century to the year 2000. It is arranged alphabetically by place-name, starting at Allendale and ending at Wylam, which is ideal if you have a particular town or village to research. The only drawback, as a customer pointed out to us, is that it doesn't come with free samples.

The information in the book is pulled together from three sources: official statistics, as brewing has always been a thoroughly regulated business; from trade directories; and from 'descriptive accounts', very often drawn from local newspapers. The text is interspersed throughout with black and white illustrations, images of brewing ephemera, such as bottle labels, photographs, awards and advertisements. These have a charm all of their own. Who could fail to be tempted by

'Pratt's celebrated INVALID STOUT –
Known all over the World for its Excellence and Purity –
For Tic and Nervous Complaints put half a Bottle into a saucepan and heat it on the fire.
It makes the weak, strong! The strong, stronger!'

Four and a half pages are devoted to Darlington, a total of 35 entries, again arranged alphabetically. Some of the names here will be familiar to current residents, The Turk's Head, The Hole in the Wall, The Fleece, The W heatsheaf and many others. What may be more of a surprise is to discover just how many brewing establishments there have been in the town over the years, and that a number were headed up by women. Mrs Alcock in Skinnergate had a 'brewhouse, malting, granaries .. and an extensive common brewery' in 1785. Elizabeth Best was brewing at the Bridge End Brewery in the early 1880s, Anne Dennison at the Fleece Inn, Blackwellgate around 1850. The Hinde family in Ridsdale Street were licensees before turning to brewing: George Hinde's grandmother ran the W heatsheaf and his mother, the Hole In The Wall.

DARLINGTON

Mrs Alcock, *Skinnergate*.

In 1785, a half-share was offered in the 'new erected freehold messuage, brewhouse, malting, granaries, stables, and appartances in an extensive common brewery'. Thirteen years later the same brewery went on sale when in the possession of Alcock.
[NC 30.7.1785, 5.5.1798]

Thomas Basnett, *Skinnergate*.

A dwelling house, wine vaults, malkiln and common brewery - operated by Thomas Basnett and Matthew Dennison - were offered for sale in 1781, following Dennison's bankruptcy. Basnett appears to have carried on singlehandedly, but by 1789 was seeking a buyer for a half share in the business. In 1791, the brewery in Skinnergate was said to be in the possession of John Chapman and Thomas Basnett.
[NC 3.11.1781, 23.5.1789; NA 23.4.1791]

Henry George Berryman, *The Turk's Head, 26 Bondgate*.

Berryman, was listed as a brewer c.1880. (Directories had showed John Swinbank brewing in 1850, although on his death in 1852 he was described as an innkeeper.)

One of the longer entries illustrates the way the business can be read as an entire social history in microcosm. The fortunes of The Lion Brewery in Hartlepool, owned by the massively successful Camerons are outlined over a couple of pages. The first premises were erected in 1852 by a man who died two years later, his widow taking over the brewing. The first Cameron arrived on the scene in 1865. From then on it is a tale of steady expansion and takeovers. (They acquired Plews and Sons of Darlington in 1925.) Towards the end of the nineteenth century Cameron and his wife provided free meals to those who were unemployed after the closure of rolling mills, breakfasting 2,500 poor people. One of the firms they took over at Stockton had hydraulic lifts powered by gas in 1898; a pneumatic malting was opened in 1908. By 1974 Cameron's had some 750 licensed houses. Though it was itself taken over eventually, the name was preserved and still going strong in 2001.

Definitely worth a browse, even if you didn't know you had an interest in the trade - the book is full of curiosities. We discover that Kelly's Brewery in Hurworth opened in a former circus kennels. The Whitworth Hall Brewery in Spennymoor, ancestral home of Bobbi Shafto, re-opened for a short run in the 1990's in the cellar. Would you fancy a pint in Newcastle at The Dog public house in 1833? The Brewhouse drew its water from the river...