

THE NEWCASTLE PUB

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The bar, tavern, inn, saloon, or public house is a very old feature in England. The institution is centuries old, and of course, was the ancestor of similar American institutions. Originally the pub was associated with an inn or a hotel. This is no longer true for most public houses, but still is for a few and of course most English hotels of today have a public room for dispensing food and drink. The main function of pubs has been to serve as a meeting place for people where they can eat, drink, and pass time. This function is still valid today.

The English pub of today has evolved in the last 400 years in a fashion different from that of its American counterpart. The reasons for this divergence are obvious to the student of cultural geography, and include a separation in distance, different environments culturally, politically, socially, and economically, and the different cultural groups that came to occupy each country. Suffice it to say that by the latter part of the nineteenth century the pubs on the two sides of the Atlantic were quite different and that difference has continued to this day.

Studies of taverns are not common. Most mention of this rather ubiquitous landscape element is in an economic context. Representative of this type of study would be the works of Berry and Garrison (1958) and Brush (1953). In this type of study the institution is viewed simply as an economic one and the focus of these works was not the tavern or pub. Another series of studies has as its focus on drinking and the place where it occurs. These studies range from drinking on the frontier to drinking patterns of specific groups, to the function the tavern actually had as a landscape element for these different groups (Winkler, 1967; Efron, 1954; Macrory, 1952; Clinard, 1962; Gottlieb, 1957; Rupp, 1971; Gerlach, 1981, 1974, 1978). These studies indicate that drinking places vary considerably in space and time as culture does. Thus one would expect the English pub to vary from its American relative.

THE PUB AS A LANDSCAPE ELEMENT

The pub is analyzed in this paper by noting its role and function as a landscape element and by comparing these to its American counterpart. A pub is defined as a business that sells beers, wines, and spirits to the public for consumption on the premises. This definition excludes private clubs and restaurants which are neither public nor have as their main function the sales of intoxicating drink. In the United States this would exclude golf clubs, Legion clubs, etc., while in Newcastle it excludes the working men's clubs, cricket clubs, golf clubs, etc. For purposes of examination the facets of the pub that are noted included location, building type, patrons, drinks served,

licensing, hours of operation, outside connections, foods served, games or other entertainment, and any other features associated with a pub. The data for this paper was gathered by the author over the course of one year spent in Newcastle. Field observations are the key to this study.

THE STUDY

The pub in Newcastle is easily one of the most discernable landscape features. Any stranger to the area can quickly find pubs because of their unique markings. The vast majority of pubs are tied to breweries, and this means that they almost always have a brewer's insignia or logo on their outside. In Newcastle the most common is the Blue Star of The Scottish-Newcastle Breweries. This star has a picture of the Tyne River and the Tyne Bridge within it. One additional aspect of the appearance of the pub is the outside tables and seats found with those that possess available outside space. This feature is virtually unknown in the U.S. Additionally, the names of pubs are almost always distinguishable from those of other business forms. Typical Newcastle names include: The Black Bull, The Blue Bell, Coach and Horses, Kings Arms, George Inn, Red Lion, and other easily recognizable English names. Recognition of American bars is different. American bars are characterized by names often similar to those of cafes. This is because of prohibition and the fact that Americans often tended to disguise their true function and as a consequence are less apparent, except for the beer sign (Gerlach, 1980). The English did not go through anything like Prohibition.

Pubs in Newcastle are located throughout the city limits. The greatest concentration is found near the city center; however, almost all neighborhoods have their own local. The local has been a traditional part of the English landscape for ages, and still is in Newcastle. People become very attached to a local and often continue to patronize it even after they have moved from the neighborhood. In Newcastle (as it true in many British cities) there are no laws governing the location of a pub with reference to buildings like schools and churches, such as exist in most American states; hence they are much more ubiquitous in their location (Bolton, 1984). Most American bars are located in the city center, or in outlying shopping areas, although notable exceptions occur in the upper Midwest and Northeast.

One more facet of location bears mentioning and that is the static nature of the location of English pubs, especially when compared to American bars. Although in Newcastle the number of licenses is not limited by law, acquiring a new one at a new location is often difficult, as groups who claim the new pub could cause financial or social harm can voice their opinions (Bolton, 1984). These groups or individuals effectively have kept the location of pubs confined to their current sites for many years. In the U. S. commonly the license for a bar can be moved about, providing of course that it follows the proper zoning procedures. The U.S. bar is more dynamic in locational terms.

The Newcastle pub is an old institution and because of quirks in the licensing laws the vast majority of pubs are also housed in old buildings. As noted earlier, it is very difficult to obtain a new license at a new location, and as a consequence most pubs are located at the same site and in the same building where they have been for half a century or more. This means that the pub owner has to concentrate on renovating the building and its interior rather than on moving to a new location in a new building, which is more common in the U. S. Pubs, like many other English establishments, are still confined to their pre-war sites and structures. Because Newcastle grew to its current stature as a city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this period coincides with the age of most of the pubs.

The U. S. bar has been called a poor man's social club (Gottlieb, 1957). The same is not true in an identical sense in England. In most English cities including Newcastle, social clubs or working man's clubs are found to cater to the working class. Also clubs are found for cricket, tennis, and golf, just as they are in the U. S. The English pub is still much more of a neighborhood social club that cuts across social lines. To be sure, most neighborhoods are rather sharply divided socially and this means that the pubs are relatively uniform in the type of patrons who visit them.

The pubs are primarily a man's domain in England, just as they are in the U. S. However, in England women are also beginning to patronize the local. In Newcastle this is true because the social clubs are much more of a male dominated institution than the pub. The basic structure of the English pub is male oriented in terms of the types of drinks sold, games played, noise, and seating. In other words the English pub has not been as liberalized as its American counterpart in attempting to provide a place for women to congregate. It is changing in Newcastle, but the change is slow in coming.

Directly related to the male dominance of the English pub are the type of drinks served. The majority of the drinks sold in the pub are brewed beverages. The English go to the pub to have a pint or two. The pint is, however, not the same as the U. S. pint. The English pint is a full 20 ounces, not 16 like the U. S. measure. Most American beers are sold in 12 ounce bottles or cans, or anywhere from 8 to 12 ounce glasses. The English pub also serves much more of a variety of brewed beverages. The average pub normally dispenses on tap lager, bitters, scotch, and ale as brewed beverages along with hard cider. In fact "A visit to . . . just one English pub might provide more variety of palates than a coast-to-coast tasting trip across the United States. . . ." (Jackson, 1982). The U. S. tavern rarely has on tap more than lager, although dark beer is found in a growing number of places. In addition to the tap beverages, bottles are found of stout, brown ale, and other types of beer rarely if ever found in the U. S. One rumor that quickly needs dispelling is that the English drink warm beer. The English beers are cold, but not as cold as American beers.

When it comes to wines and distilled spirits the English pub's varieties here are quite simple compared to those of the U. S. The English are very happy drinking a few standard drinks. The most common drinks are gin and tonic and whiskey, scotch of course. Scotch whiskey is preferred for a couple of reasons: (1) it is distilled in Britain; and (2) its flavor is well pronounced when consumed with water or ice. Other spirits are found but the variety is nothing like that found in the U. S. The bar typically has an ice bucket and the customer generally adds the amount of ice he desires, as opposed to the U. S. custom of the bartender adding the ice. Additionally when buying a mixed drink in England, one usually buys the spirit, and in addition buys the mixer, unless it is water or ice. Wines are sold by the glass, but the varieties are simple. In the U. S. large numbers of exotic drinks are found that are based on virtually all of the distilled spirits. Drinks such as tequila sunrise and Harvey Wallbanger have no counterpart in England. Additionally American drinks tend to come with ice and include the mix. The inclusion of the mix often means that the bar can sell the customer a virtually non-alcoholic drink. Another difference concerns the whiskey types. American whiskeys tend to be much stronger and distinct in taste, so they can still be noticed through the mix.

Related to drinks is the manner in which they are sold. In the English pub drinks are sold at the bar. The patrons must go to the bar for drinks. This contrasts with the typical U. S. bar where drinks are sold at the bar for those there, and are also sold at the tables by a waitress, waiter or bar maid. The English pub is more of a self-service operation and this aspect of their operation adds considerably to their profitability. The American tavern is much more labor intensive.

The English pub like its American counterpart is a fully licensed and regulated institution. The licensing of pubs is done within the auspices of the local authority; in Newcastle's case it is handled by the Magistrate's office. This is really no different than the granting of licenses in the U. S., with the exception that the American license must then be approved by the proper state authority. The central government in London does not grant licenses.

In Newcastle license fees are minimal. The fee for one year is 12 pounds 50 pence or around 18 dollars at current exchange rates (Bolton, 1984). This figure is very low compared to most of the fees charged in the U. S. The pub is not seen as a revenue raising institution by the local authority, while the American example is usually regarded as an easy means of raising revenue (Gerlach, 1974). In the U. S. when one pays a high figure for a license, the person is virtually then guaranteed a good living, which is necessary to pay that fee. In England the same is not theoretically true. However, because of quirks in the licensing law, the same is true in fact as it is in the U. S.

The number of licenses granted in Newcastle is infinite, under the law. In fact, however, any individual or group can protest or claim that the granting of a new license will be detrimental to the community

(Bolton, 1984). This means that pub owners, police, or any group that has a vested interest in limiting the number of licenses in effect can do so. In Newcastle the current number of pub licenses is 172 (Bolton, 1984). In the U. S. most states, cities, or license granting bodies also limit the number of licenses and so in effect insure the economic viability of those who have one. Apparently free enterprise doesn't apply to pubs or bars.

A major difference in pub licensing between the Newcastle example and most American types concerns the granting of a license for a pub with respect to other city institutions. In Newcastle no zoning laws exist that restrict the location of a pub license to a certain locale, or to a site so many feet or meters away from any other institution. Most U. S. bars are required by law to be located in certain zones and in addition must be a certain distance away from schools or churches. The English pub has no history of being a harmful social institution like its American counterpart and thus has never been subjected to laws suggesting that it could negatively affect the customers or neighbors (Gerlach, 1974). Closely related to this concept is the age at which beer and spirits can be purchased in England, which is 18. Pubs can be visited by youth from 15 to 18 if they do not drink intoxicating beverages. In most U. S. areas youths are banned or at a minimum their presence is frowned upon, unless they are accompanied by an adult, which in most states is someone 21 or over. The English treat drink and the regulation of it more like their continental cousins than do Americans.

The licensing of English pubs is handled by local authorities, but the general hours of operation are governed by laws emanating from London. As a general rule pubs in England and Wales can be open only ten hours a day and they must close for two hours in the afternoon (British Tourist Authority, 1983). These laws governing pubs came into being during World War I, when it was discovered that munitions workers were staying all afternoon in the pub, instead of returning to work. Parliament remedied this by forcing pubs to close during the day. In Scotland pubs are now open all day, but not England (Montague, 1984). Most groups in England favor the current pub hours for a variety of reasons, owners because the wage bill is kept low, police because it is easier to watch the pubs, anti-drinking groups for obvious reasons, and customers, since they are used to these hours. The major group opposed to the current hours of operation are the tourist boards as they say the drinking hours hurt tourism (Montague, 1984). What it means in effect is that the pub customer must drink his normal allotment in a very brief time, so the pub patron drinks very fast from a large glass. Nowhere in the U. S. are operating hours like those of England found. Most U. S. examples open in the morning and close at midnight or one a.m., and some stay open later. American customers are not required to drink fast before closing time, unless they arrive at the bar at a very late hour. One additional note concerning hours deals with the last call bell. In the Newcastle pub a bell is rung at 10:30 p.m. indicating that the customer has one last chance to buy a drink before sales stop. In the U. S. last call is often announced, but in some places closing and last call are the same, and if this is the case the customer must leave. The

pub is open seven days a week, as are American bars in most places except in Bible belt areas.

The pub is not solely a place where drinks are served, although this is its main function. In Newcastle the pub opens from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and during this period it has an additional function, that of serving lunch. Pubs in the area are well known and accepted for the "pub lunch." This lunch is usually simple, consists of local foods, and is relatively inexpensive. The Newcastle pub does not have to compete with fast food chains on a serious level, and still dominates the low cost end of noon meals. The pub lunch primarily is made up of fish and chips, pot pies, sausage and chips, plowman's lunch, and occasional curries. All of these offerings are easy to fix, go well with the sale of beers, and enhance the pub's image in the eyes of the public. Lunch prices are low, 1 to 2 pounds or 1 dollar 50 cents to 3 dollars, and are primarily in existence as a means of attracting people to the pub. It can be argued that for money value, they are among the best bargains found in England.

During the evening hours, from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., lunches or snacks are served at some but not many of the pubs. The evening hours are time for drinking, not eating. The restaurants in the city, which also serve drinks, dominate the dinner trade for those who do not eat at home. The pub differs from the American bar in that it serves a meal versus the sandwich typically served in the U. S. In Newcastle micro-wave sandwiches and meals are new, and are not as common as they are in the U. S. The micro-wave is used, but not to prepare sandwiches made at some factory, and then sterilized and sent wrapped in plastic to the pub. Within limits the same types of food are found in pubs as is true in U. S. bars, the difference between the two being primarily that the pub's foods are individually prepared more than is true of the U. S. and as a consequence tend to vary more in taste. The reason this is true is simple--fast foods do not yet dominate the English lunch.

The purpose of the pub is to sell beer. Another feature to attract customers is to provide entertainment for them. The English pub does offer some of the same basic entertainment activities as does the bar. In both, televisions, juke boxes, and games are found. It is in the area of games where the difference is most notable. Electronic games are relatively recent and are found in fewer pubs when contrasted with their nearly ubiquitous presence in the U. S. The game that is still found in the pub is darts. Dart boards are common in pubs, while they are rare at best in the U. S. One game that is common in the U. S. and is growing in popularity in England is pool (Bevan, 1984). Other games like dominoes and checkers, are found in both places. The traditional games are hanging on longer in the pub than the U. S. bar probably because tradition is more important in England than it is in the U. S.

The last and maybe the most important aspect of pubs to be discussed concerns the pub's relations with breweries. The connections pubs have with breweries are a major point that contrasts them with American bars. In the U. S. breweries sell their beer to wholesalers

and the wholesalers then sell the beer to retailers. In America the brewers advertise and the wholesalers make an all-out effort to entice many retailers to buy beer from them. When an American brewer grants a wholesale franchise to a person or group they give the grantee the exclusive right to sell their brand in a specific area. In the U. K. it is different. There, the major breweries tend to function as brewer, wholesaler, and retailer (Watts, 1980). The brewers eliminate the middleman and also control the sales outlet. Their vertical integration thus resembles that of the American oil industry rather than the brewing and drink industry.

It is very important from the British brewer's viewpoint to control the actual sales of the product to the consumer, since such a high percentage of beer is sold in pubs. In 1976 over 77 percent of beer sold in the U. K. was sold in draught form, and the overwhelming majority of this went through pubs (Watts, 1984). A lesser amount of draught beer is sold through clubs, hotels, and restaurants. In the U. S. the percentage of beer that is sold in packaged forms for consumption off the premises is much higher.

As a consequence of the high percentage of beer sold in pubs, brewers have come to either own pubs outright or to work out long-term contracts with pub owners. The exact figures on who owns pubs are not readily available, but suffice it to say that brewers have "tied" trade that covers 75 percent of the pubs (Watts, 1984). The pubs that are not directly owned or leased are "tied" to the brewery by various contracts. Pubs which have no connection to a specific brewery are referred to as "Free Houses" and they represent a definite minority. One of the most popular ways the brewers tie pubs is to grant interest free or low interest loans to the owners for remodeling, with long-term repayment periods (Brennan, 1984). This locks the owners into a binding contract with the brewer and by improving the outlets also enhances the ability of the pub to sell more beer. For American bars to remodel they must obtain bank loans, and as a consequence they have a much higher failure rate. Additionally, English brewers can and do keep unprofitable locations operating to insure that the license will be there when the profitability picture changes, remembering that in England when a license is given up it is difficult to obtain again.

Another major plus of the brewers owning the pubs and also serving as the wholesaler is that this increases their profitability picture. It additionally means that English brewers are more regional than American ones, although by U. S. standards, England is but one region. In the Newcastle area over 45 percent of the market is controlled by Scottish and Newcastle breweries. In June of 1984 Scottish and Newcastle breweries made an attempt to purchase Cameron breweries and its 460 pubs but was forced to withdraw its purchase offer when groups complained that this would give them an unfair monopoly in the area (Financial Times, 1984).

The last reason it became important for brewers to own or control the sales of beer to customers concerns quality control. In the U. S. a

good percentage of beer is sold in packaged form. Under these conditions the beer has been pasteurized before it was bottled or canned and this insures a relative high quality product with a long shelf life. If the beer is not controlled by these processes the brewers name would be damaged. Since much beer in the U. S. is sold in packaged form this process is important as brewers do not control sales. In England most beer is sold in draught form. Real beer is beer that has not been treated to prolong its life. This type of beer has a very short life, even when it is kept at very low temperatures. To avoid having a problem with quality control, English brewers now produce about 85 percent of their draught beers as keg or in the same manner as American package beer (Watts, 1980). This allows the brewers to control quality and it also insures that the pub patron's pint of draught beer will taste the same whenever and wherever he drinks it.

Keg beer is more important to the pub for an additional reason, it is more profitable. Beer in volume can be produced and stored more easily. In the U. S., kegs are kegs, not so in England. In Newcastle they may be kegs or they may constitute large storage vats. These storage vats allow the brewers to ship beer to the pub in tanker trucks. The stored beer is then cooled and carbonated immediately before it is served. This process saves storage costs and extends the life of beer, which means greater profits. In the U. S., draught beer is kept refrigerated in the keg, which is a more expensive process.

CONCLUSIONS

The English pub and the American bar are both important institutions to the respective areas. Both serve drinks and provide entertainment for their patrons. Both are ubiquitous in their location. This is essentially what they have in common. The difference between the Newcastle pubs and American bars are greater than the similarities. English pubs are not open as much as American bars. English ones are generally more profitable. Beer consumption in the pub is more important than it is in the U. S. The pub has developed much more substantial links with breweries than its U. S. cousin. The other differences include the pub lunch, games played, and a general pattern of acceptance by the community that its U. S. counterpart has not yet achieved.