

## Bishopwearmouth Pubs Profile (Unlisted but extant) – The Engine Rooms

Project Pub REF: 009  
HER REF: 1734

Location: [Streetview, 2020](#).  
NGR: NZ39355706

**Name of Pub:** The Engine Rooms

**Any explanation of the pub's name or changes of name?:** 'The Engine Room' more than likely refers back to the buildings former use as a fire station.

**Current Photographs:**



© Sam Neal, August 2022. Photograph showing the Engine Rooms.

**Historic Photographs:**



**Image 1** – Photograph showing the building in use as fire station. early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Sunderland Antiquarian Society)

**Image 2** – Plans of the Sunderland Fire Station (<https://www.macq.org.uk/the-history/the-fire-station/>)

**Historic Environment Record:** Shown as Central Fire Station on Ordnance Survey third and Modern fourth editions. The fire station opened in 1907, the same year that the nearby Empire Theatre and law courts opened. All three buildings were designed by Sunderland architects William Milburn (1850-1935) and Thomas Ridley Milburn (1862-1943). William had already designed the imposing Langham Tower in Sunderland in 1891. They designed Thornhill United Methodist Free Church in 1902, the Sunderland and South Shields Water Company Offices in 1907, a children's hospital in 1912. The Milburn brothers had acted as supervising architects on the Empire Theatre, South Shields, which was designed by Frank Matcham. They went on to build theatres all over the country (including Southampton, Cardiff, Birmingham and the Dominion Theatre in London) for the Moss Empires chain. In 1929 the brothers were appointed supervising architects to the North East Coast Exhibition of 1929. After World War Two they were elected to the R.I.B.A. Council. Brick with decorative stone dressings. The main elevation has five arched openings for the fire engines. These are now blocked up and filled with painted murals. There are five windows above with stone surrounds. In-between the windows are four circular carvings of flaming torches, brightly painted. There are many original features such as windows, holes for firemans poles, glazed tiles and equipment hooks. There is a fine oil painting of the fire station by Ron Henderson, which is held by the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service at Sunderland East Community Fire Station. Within the superintendent's house there has been extensive internal renovation.

*Sources: Tyne and Wear Industrial Monuments Trust, 1978, Sunderland Town Centre Plan - Sites of Interest; GE Milburn and ST Miller (eds), 1988, Sunderland – River, Town and People; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/oldsunderland-fire-station-57960/print/info>; Archaeological Services Durham University, 2015, Sunderland Fire Station - Archaeological Assessment; Ainsworth Sparks Associates, Fire Station, Dun Cow Street -Building Archive*

**Building Description:** The Engine Rooms is a large, two storey building of red brick construction with decorative stone dressings and balustrading. The principal elevation which fronts onto the High Street has five, semi circular arched openings to the ground floor with key stones. These openings, which are now infilled with glass panels, were historically used as entrances for fire engines. Above these to the first floor, there are five 12/12 timber sash windows with stone surrounds, decorative keystones and brick aprons. Between each of the windows are four stone flambeaux of flaming torches and fire buckets which highlight the use of the building.

**Map regression**



The building first appears on the 1919 OS map as 'Central Fire Station' and replaced an earlier row of terraces and street referred too as 'Swan Court'. At this point, the building is historically surrounded by other municipal and civic buildings such as Central Police Station, Public Baths and Wash Houses, the Empire Theatre and Palace Theatre, with most of these buildings being constructed around the same period of time. There is little change to the plan form of the building between 1919 and 1946. Modern OS mapping shows that the surrounding dwellings have since been demolished and the building has subsequently been extended slightly to the rear, though the original plan form is still largely identifiable.

**How long has it been a pub/ previous uses**

The building was in use as a fire station from its construction in 1907 until its closure in 1992. It subsequently became redundant, and remained so for the next 22 years until it was redeveloped with grant funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. The building was then converted into a pub/venue and retains much of its internal fixtures and fittings such as coat hooks, firemans holes openings and original glazed tiles. (*Bishopwearmouth Village Atlas, 2021*).

**Who drank here?:** Unfortunately, as this is a relatively modern pub, there is no evidence to suggest who drinks here.

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

**Other links**

**Architects:** The building was designed by prolific local architects W.M and T.R Milburn whose other notable designs in Bishopwearmouth include The Empire Theatre and The Magistrates Courts.

**Story timeline**

- 1907/8** – The Central Fire Station, designed by notable local architects W.M and T.R Milburn, is constructed.
- 1992** – The fire station officially closes and the building remains redundant for the next 22 years.
- 2017** – Following a grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, the building re-opens as The Engine Room pub.

**Sources consulted:**

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

British Newspaper Archives. Available at: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>  
CAMRA (2020) The Engine Room. Available at: <https://whatpub.com/pubs/SUN/6786/engine-room-sunderland>  
National Library of Scotland Ordnance Survey Maps. Available at: <https://www.nls.uk/maps>  
Ron Lawson (2019) A Historic Look at the Pubs of Bishopwearmouth.  
Trade Directories. Available at: <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4>  
Sunderland Culture (nd) The Engine Room. Available at: <https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/our-venues/the-fire-station/the-engine-room/>

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**Date: 12/09/22**