# Small pubs like Weymouth’s Burdon Tap capture Britain’s historic charm amid modern challenges



The Burdon Tap, once a quaint establishment nestled in Victoria Street, Weymouth, has become a compelling part of local folklore. This small pub, which stood opposite the Burdon Hotel (now the Prince Regent), had a unique legacy of serving chauffeurs, grooms, and workmen connected to Tilleys Motor Show rooms. Despite its long and narrow dimensions—not much more than a living room in size—the Burdon Tap was a favourite local haunt, known for its intimate atmosphere. It was famously described as capable of accommodating only three drinkers at the bar, packed shoulder to shoulder, while a urinal adjacent to the pub served as its toilet.

The Burdon Tap, affiliated with the John Groves Brewery, is remembered not just for its size but for its history. Heather Byfleet, a long-time Weymouth resident, shared that her grandparents ran the pub from 1928 to 1941. Her grandmother, Eva Hawkins, managed the establishment independently after the passing of her husband, contributing to the fabric of the community. Mrs Byfleet recalls, “The Burdon Tap was like the Tardis from Doctor Who! It was bigger inside than just the public bar,” highlighting the pub’s hidden charm with additional spaces that included a private bar and living quarters. Unfortunately, the beloved pub was demolished alongside Tilly’s Garage, paving the way for a new development known as The Nightingales.

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in Britain's smallest pubs. While the Burdon Tap is often remembered, it has found itself in competition with others across the country, particularly the Smiths Arms in Godmanstone and the Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds. The Nutshell proudly stakes its claim as one of the smallest pubs in Britain, measuring a mere 15 feet by 7 feet, and boasting a rich history that dates back to 1867. This Suffolk establishment is adorned with unique curiosities, including a mummified cat believed to ward off evil spirits, and continues to draw visitors seeking a distinctive and intimate drinking experience.

The vibrant stories surrounding these small pubs contribute to their allure. One visitor's account of the Burdon Tap echoes a sense of nostalgia, recalling its cramped interior, where a single bench greeted patrons, and the barmaid stayed seated while serving. Another reminiscence reveals that the pub offered little in the way of sustenance, presenting just a solitary sandwich and meat pie, leaving much to be desired in terms of dining.

Despite their historical significance, both the Burdon Tap and the Nutshell face challenges that threaten their narratives. The Nutshell has recently had to close temporarily for asbestos removal, underscoring the difficulties faced by historic pubs in maintaining safety standards while preserving their legacies. As they navigate these modern issues, the enduring appeal of these intimate venues continues to resonate with patrons seeking not just a drink, but a slice of cultural history.

In a landscape where larger establishments often overshadow smaller ones, the stories of the Burdon Tap and its counterparts remind us of the charm and community spirit embodied in these pint-sized venues. They stand as testaments to a way of life that celebrates camaraderie and local heritage, even as they compete for recognition in a country rich with micro-pubs and historical pubs alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/25180075.dorset-pub-fit-three-drinkers-bar-time/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thenutshellpub.co.uk/> - The Nutshell is a historic pub in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, England, renowned for being one of the smallest pubs in Britain. Measuring just 15 feet by 7 feet, it has been serving patrons since 1867. The pub is adorned with various curiosities, including a mummified cat believed to ward off evil spirits. Its compact size and unique charm make it a notable landmark in the area. The Nutshell continues to attract visitors from around the world, offering a distinctive and intimate drinking experience.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/heritage/england/suffolk/article_2.shtml> - This BBC article delves into the architectural heritage of The Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. It highlights the pub's unique features, including its compact size and historical significance. The piece also touches upon the pub's resident ghosts, adding an intriguing layer to its rich history. The article provides insights into the pub's past and its place in England's architectural landscape, offering readers a glimpse into one of the country's most distinctive public houses.
4. <https://www.camra.org.uk/pub/the-nutshell-bury-st-edmunds/> - The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) provides a detailed profile of The Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. The profile includes information about the pub's history, architectural features, and its claim to be one of the smallest pubs in Britain. It also offers practical details such as the pub's address, contact information, and facilities. The CAMRA profile serves as a comprehensive guide for those interested in visiting this historic establishment.
5. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-nutshell-pub-bury-st-edmunds-england> - Atlas Obscura features an article on The Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, England. The piece explores the pub's unique claim to be the smallest in Britain, its history, and the curiosities it houses, including a mummified cat. The article provides a narrative of the pub's transformation from a fruit stand to a renowned public house, offering readers an engaging account of this distinctive establishment.
6. <https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/bury-st-edmunds/news/nutshell-pub-in-bury-st-edmunds-closed-as-asbestos-is-removed-1-6508380/> - This article reports on the temporary closure of The Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, due to asbestos removal. It provides details about the closure, the safety measures taken, and the pub's history. The piece also touches upon the pub's status as one of the smallest in Britain and its significance in the local community. The article offers insights into the challenges faced by historic establishments in maintaining safety standards.
7. <https://www.camra.org.uk/pub/the-nutshell-bury-st-edmunds/> - The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) provides a detailed profile of The Nutshell pub in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. The profile includes information about the pub's history, architectural features, and its claim to be one of the smallest pubs in Britain. It also offers practical details such as the pub's address, contact information, and facilities. The CAMRA profile serves as a comprehensive guide for those interested in visiting this historic establishment.