

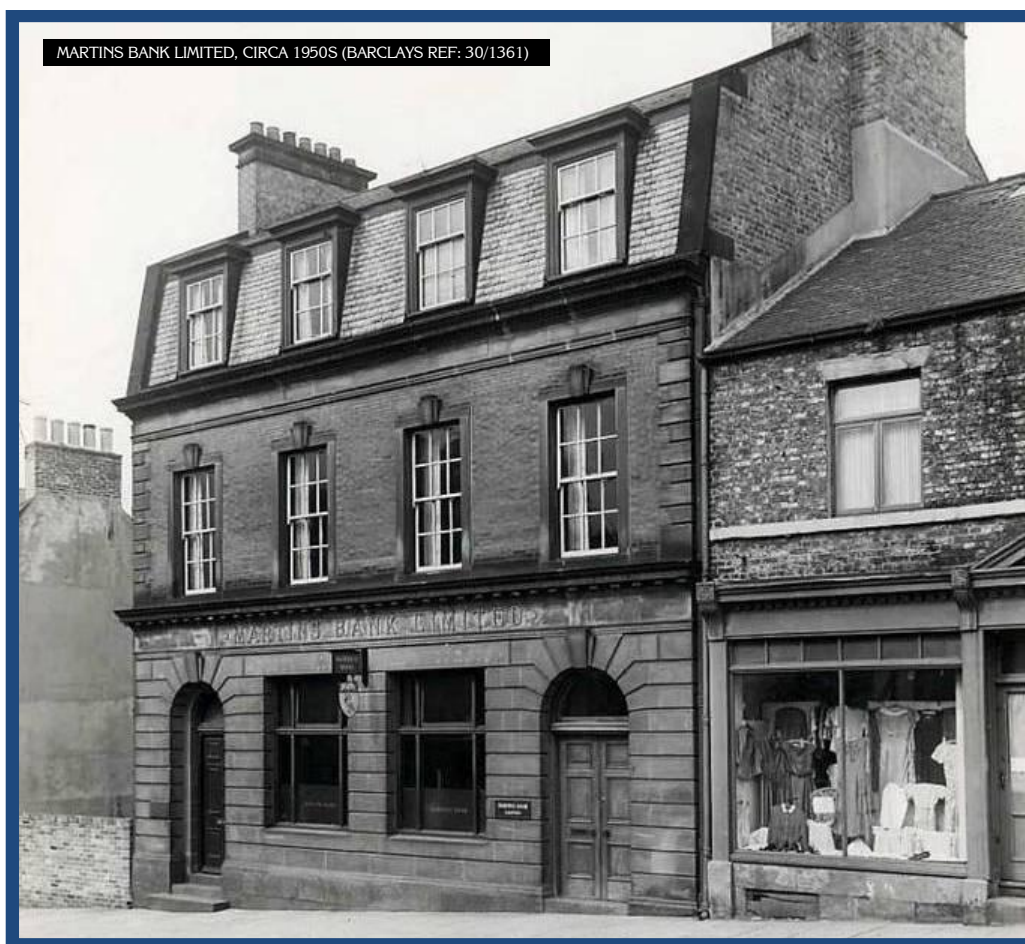


# PUBLIC HOUSES

## THE OLD BANK

The Old Bank bar opened at 16/18 Sunderland Street on December 19th 2008. The building originated as a branch of the North-Eastern Banking Company in the mid 1800s, and was managed for twenty-seven years by Mr Harry Shepherd Allison.

Afterwards, it was used as a DIY business premises before becoming a wine bar with various names (Strikes Wine Bar, Heaven 17 Wine Bar, Flynn's Bar, Kelly's Bar and Jak's Bar). The property has had many owners over the years, including: trustees of St John Ambulance Brigade; Allied Irish Bank; Bishop's Inn Ltd; Courage Ltd; and John's Developments Ltd.



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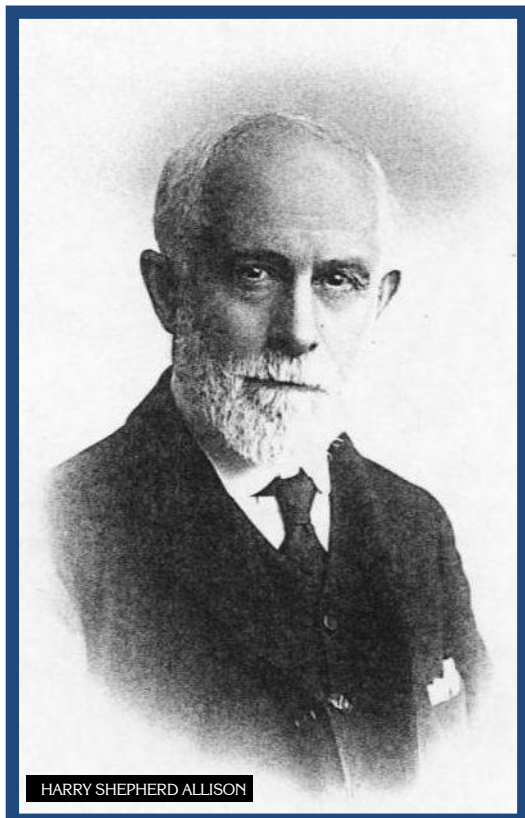
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The building still features a secure vault from the banking days. This is accessed via a winding set of stone stairs and large iron clad door (take the keys in with you, as it closes behind you!). Two original bank safes remain.



HARRY SHEPHERD ALLISON

The Houghton branch was used by many locals, including: the Rector and Churchwardens, who held a current account there between 1898 and 1918; the New Town Sunday School, which had a current savings account there between 1908 and 1914; and Houghton Rector, Rev Reginald Heart Yeld, who had dealings with the bank when a portion of Glebe land was leased as a bowling green in 1909.

Harry Shepherd Allison, the long serving bank manager, arrived at the Houghton branch of the North-Eastern Banking Company in 1881. At the time he still lived in Sunderland but would walk to Houghton-le-Spring every day. In 1894 he married Jennie Bailey of Newbottle and the happy couple moved into Bank House, the residential space above the branch in Houghton. Sadly the happiness was short lived as Jennie died from influenza not long after giving birth to the couple's

first child, Philip. Harry remarried in 1896 and he and his new wife, Edith Bell, had five children together at Bank House. In 1908, he was transferred to the bank's head office in Newcastle upon Tyne, by which time it had been taken over by Martins Bank Ltd.

Paul Allison, of Amberley, New Zealand, is a grandson of Harry Allison. Here he retells a story about his family's time at the bank:

*"Fights and disorderly behaviour among the miners were commonplace on pay day when their wages were often dissipated on drink. One story about my grandmother gives some hint of a self-possessed and resourceful woman though remembered by us as a gentle and self-effacing soul. Living above the bank premises meant an ever-present possibility of having to deal with intruders. Large sums of money in notes, securities and bullion were housed in the vaults of small branches and the Houghton branch was no exception.*



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*One evening Granny retired to bed before Grandpa and, on entering the bedroom, became aware of a pair of strange boots protruding from under the bed, boots that were clearly attached to a pair of feet. She merely remarked quietly to herself, "Oh dear, I've left my book downstairs," and quietly withdrew taking the candle with her and locking the door quietly behind her. She alerted my grandfather who called the local constable and an arrest was made. Doubtless extreme poverty had driven this robber to his action; children went about in rags and walked barefoot to school for only a few, the Allison children among them, could afford the boots that were common in those days."*



EDITH ALLISON (NEE BELL)

The Houghton branch of Martins Bank had the sort code 11-79-40 and telephone number of Houghton-le-Spring 3200. It opened on weekdays between 10 o'clock and 3 o'clock, and Saturday's between 9 o'clock and half past eleven.



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Former Houghton resident, Harry Smith, recollects the days when the bank was open for business.

*"I knew the old bank as a branch of Martins Bank in the 1940s. As a young apprentice I was often in there on messages, as our boss banked there. We once had the job of painting the outside of the building. See those top windows, we didn't have a ladder long enough to reach them so me and a lad called George Davison had to go out from inside and stand on that ledge. Well, one outside with a rope around his waist and the other holding the rope inside. Health & safety? It would need a few hundreds of pounds worth of scaffold to get the job done now! I can't remember the chap's name but the manager of the bank at the start of the War went off to France and spent years as a prisoner of war."*

It is thought that the branch became a Barclays Bank before its closure in the 1970s. In 1979 planning permission was granted by Sunderland Borough Council for "use of former bank premises for storage of DIY materials" and in 1982 planning permission paved the way for the conversion of a "derelict warehouse to wine bar".

The wine bar's names changed over the years and in 2008 it became known as the Old Bank with a nod to the past. The Old Bank's proprietor was James Dunning and his wife, who offered customers a wide range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages in modern, comfortable surroundings with wi-fi Internet access. The Old Bank even had its own website ([www.theoldbank.co.uk](http://www.theoldbank.co.uk)) and obligatory Facebook group. Sadly this modern venture ceased trading in October 2009.

After a period of being empty, the Cutting Lounge, ladies and gents hairdressing, opened there in August 2011.

Paul Lanagan

PAUL LANAGAN BA HONS  
LOCAL HISTORIAN  
H-L-S HERITAGE SOCIETY



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THE OLD BANK ON SUNDERLAND STREET, 2011



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## TIME LINE

The following time line shows details of noteworthy occurrences, bank managers and bar proprietors for the property during its time as a bank and then as a bar:

**1881** - Harry Shepherd Allison arrived at the North-Eastern Banking Company, 16/18 Sunderland Street.

**1898** – Records show that this property was a branch of the North-Eastern Banking Company. The property was still a bank in 1914.

**1900s** – Contrasting photos from 1916 and 1920 show that the property's frontage was altered and heightened.

**1908** - Harry Shepherd Allison left the bank 16/18 Sunderland Street after 27 years.

**1909** – Thomas C Jacques, who lived here, died and was buried at Houghton Hillside Cemetery in June 1909.

**1911** – 18 Sunderland Street – Joseph C. Kennedy, aged 34 years, bank manager.

**1914** – North Eastern Bank; Joseph Charles Kennedy.

**1938** – 18 Sunderland St – Martins Bank Ltd, H Walker, manager.

**1940s** – Property was a branch of Martins Bank.

**1944** - A Wartime circular from Martins Bank Limited, dated February 1944, mentions: "D.Waud of Houghton-le-Spring from whom nothing had been heard for a long time is now reported a prisoner in Japanese hands."

**1952** - Mr E. Blythe became manager of the Houghton branch of Martins Bank. He was there for 12 years and retired in 1965 having worked for the company for 45 years. An informal party was held in the Burn Hotel and was attended by past and present colleagues.

**1962** – Martins Bank, telephone: 3200.

**1965** - Mr J. W. Bellerby became manager of the Houghton branch of Martins Bank, as well as its branch at Shiney Row, following the retirement of Mr Blythe.

**1968** - Martins Bank employee Mike Bryant recalled in 2011 how the Houghton Branch only had one toilet for five men and five women but you could see when the facility was in use through the gap under the door!

**1979** – Planning permission was granted by Sunderland Borough Council for “use of former bank premises for storage of DIY materials”.

**1982** - Planning permission was granted by Sunderland Borough Council for “derelict warehouse to wine bar”.

**1983** – Strikes Wine Bar: John Ronald Dawson.

**1986** – Peter Spark.

**1987** – Barbara Waggott.



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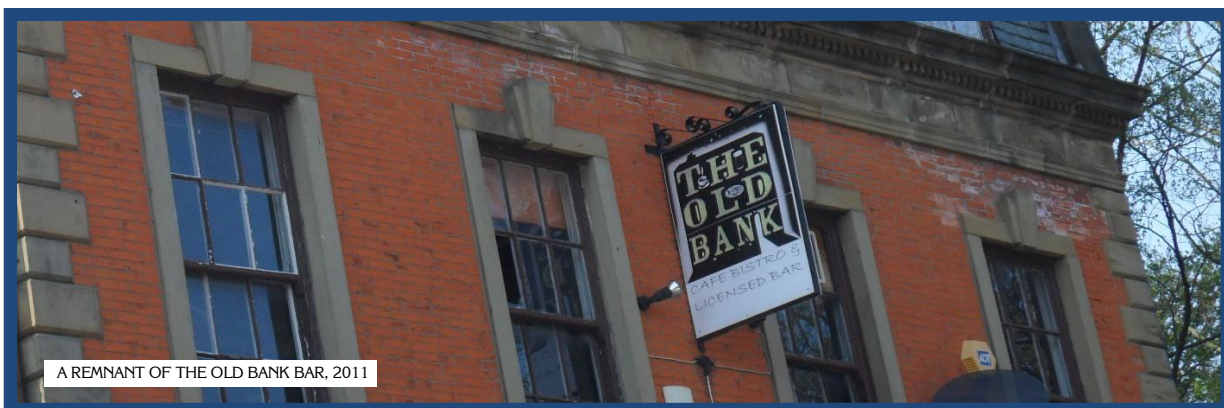
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- 1988 – Edward Liddle.  
1991 – Martin Jones.  
1992 – Stephen Armstrong.  
1993 – Margaret Miller, James Robson Smith, and Neil Ferguson.  
1994 – Norma Janet Ogilvie-Corkin, James Coldwell and Jacqui Ross Gibson.  
1995 – Peter Bowlt and John Doyle. Peter Bowlt and Alan Vest.  
1996 – advert – Flynns, live band every Saturday. Entry free.  
1998 – Peter Bowlt and Pamela Wells.  
1999 – Peter Bowlt and Stephen Mussons.  
2005 – Elizabeth Brennan and Jane Crowe.  
2006 – Planning permission granted for the Ivy Nightclub to open on the first floor. Mr Simon Brennan.  
2008 - The Old Bank bar opened on December 19th 2008 with James Dunning as Landlord. It ceased trading in October 2009.  
2011 - The Cutting Lounge opened in the former bank building in August 2011.



## BANK STAFF

The Martins Bank Archive has images of the following staff at the Houghton-le-Spring branch (indices indicate their time at Houghton):

Mr Norman Brown (1911 to 1919)  
Mr J. B. Hall (1915)  
Mr H. Jackson (1936 to 1942)  
Mr W. F. Surtees (1936)  
Mr Ben Trehwitt (1946 to 1947)  
Mr E. Summerbell (1947 to 1948)

Mr R. Smith (1950 to 1952)  
Mr E. Blythe, manager (1952 to 1965)  
Mr A. Grummett (1955 to 1957)  
Mr J. Rundle (1960 to 1962)  
Mr J. W. Bellerby, manager  
(1965 onwards)



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to Paul Allison of Amberley, New Zealand, grandson of the bank manager, Harry Shepherd Allison, who resided at the bank with his family from 1881 until 1908. Thanks go James Dunning, George Davison and Harry Smith for assistance with this article. A special thank you is given to Ron Lawson for his amazing insight and knowledge of Durham's public houses. Information pertaining to the bank's time as Martins Bank Ltd came from the Martins Bank Archive Project.

Vintage image of Martins Bank Ltd from Barclays, Ref: 30/1361

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