New pub name trends revealed – Are ‘Inns’ in or out? Is royalty trending again?

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New data from ukphonebook.com reveals the changing preferences in pub names over the past three years, as well as an updated list of the most popular pub names

York, UK –
New data from ukphonebook.com has revealed the changing trends in pub names over the past three years, as well as an updated top 10 list of most popular names.

With a database of 4 million businesses, ukphonebook.com used its business search to find all the pubs registered in the UK. It analysed the data to find the most popular new pub names since 2020.

Trends in pub names since 2020

ukphonebook.com pulled data from 2020 to 2023 to see which new pub names are most popular and which ones have grown – or shrunk – in popularity.

The 10 most popular are – as expected – topped by The Red Lion.

Most Popular 2023

RED LION

ROYAL OAK

CROWN (INN)

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

WHITE HORSE

WHITE HART

NEW INN

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26	ROSE CROWN
27	KINGS ARMS
28	PLOUGH (INN)

And it’s no surprise the most popular new pub name in the last three years is also The Red Lion. But there are some significant naming trends over the past three years:

- **Royal British Legion** has dropped out of the top 10. This is down to the reduced presence of the institute itself, rather than naming trends.
- **The George** is a new entry on the list. Ten of the 87 pubs that carry this name were registered in the last three years – possibly named after the future heir to the throne, Prince George.
- **The Plough** has also just dropped out the top 10. This has been replaced by the Coach and Horses.
- **Victoria** themed pub names have risen from 43rd most popular over all to 9th in the past three years. Eight of the 66 Victoria pubs got their name since 2020.
- **New Inn** has dropped out of the top 10, with just six pubs taking this name in the past three years.
- **Bulls** are also making a comeback. The Black Bull and Bulls Head rose up the rankings in the past three years with 10% of pubs taking these titles named in the past three years.

Position	Most popular since 2020
25	RED LION
26	ROYAL OAK
27	WHITE HORSE
28	CROWN
29	KINGS ARMS
30	GEORGE

6 CROWN INN

7 COACH HORSES

8 VICTORIA

10 WHITE HART

Looking at which types of pub names have become more popular, animal-themed names have risen in popularity – with 6.5% more pubs named after animals in the past three years.

Royal names have also seen a 7.7% increase – possibly inspired by the coronation of King Charles.

Most popular name type since 2020

Animal

Royalty

Tree / Plant

Machinery / Tools

Vehicle

Location

History

Age

Space

Sport

Religious

After that, however, the other themes have all dropped. Sports, Religion and Food have inspired zero people to name pubs after them in the past three years – no Cricketers, no Angels, and no Shoulders of Mutton.

Are you ‘Inn’ or out?

Another new trend is the inclusion of ‘Inn’ as part of a pub’s name.

Inns – historically, places along a road where travellers could stop and rest – have inspired many pub names in the past. But times are changing.

There are 2,264 (28%) UK pubs with ‘Inn’ in their title. However, since 2020 only 16% of new pubs have chosen to include ‘Inn’ as part of their name.

This could be due to the popularity of shorter names – The Crown instead of The Crown Inn. Or it could be that many new pubs simply don’t consider themselves Inns because they don’t offer rooms.

What is the most popular pub name in the UK?

The most common pub name in the UK is The Red Lion, with 468 pubs using this classic name.

LION

YAL OAK

YAL BRITISH LEGION

3	THE NEW INN
4	THE CROWN INN
5	THE WHITE HART
6	THE ROSE CROWN
7	THE WHITE HORSE
8	THE KINGS ARMS
9	THE PLOUGH INN

Coming second on the list is The Royal Oak, with 433 pubs taking this name. Royal British Legion sneaks into the top three with many members only clubs using this name. There are over 400 registered RBL clubs in the UK, though not all have the same pub name.

Kevan Wilding, founder of Pubwiki, said: “Pub names are really interesting if looked at from an earlier date. There were many thousands of beer houses opened in the 1850s with a sign outside giving a beer house its name. Some of these went on to become the modern-day locals we still know.

“In Hertfordshire, for example, nearly every other building in the high street was once a pub. But later the licensing laws became stricter.”

The Royal theme continues throughout the top ten with The Crown Inn, White Hart, Rose and Crown and King’s Arms all inspired by the UK’s rich history.

The Plough Inn sits at the bottom of the top 10 with 206 pubs.

Nik Antona, National Chairman for CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) said: "The array of weird and wonderful pub names are part of the charm and experience of frequenting your local.

“Pubs are part of the fabric of community life across the UK, providing a safe place to meet and socialise, offering a community hub for activities and events. As well as being vital to local economies, they help bring people together, tackling loneliness and social isolation.”

Most popular pub names by type

Eight of the top ten most popular pub names are inspired by royal connections. However, there is obviously a lot of overlap – for example, the classic Red Lion is both an animal and inspired by royalty.

Animal-themed pub names made up 34% of all names, with royalty accounting for 17.6%.

Position	Most popular name type
1	Animal
2	Royalty
3	Machinery / Tools
4	Tree / Plant
5	Vehicle
6	Art
7	Location
8	Age
9	Space
10	History
11	Religious
12	Sport
13	Food

In third place was machinery and tools (9.1%) – largely down to pubs called The Plough, Cross Keys, and the Wheatsheaf. Nature (8.8%) inspired nearly 700 pub owners when choosing their names – drawing on both the rose and oaks. Again, these have royal connections, especially the rose.

Vehicles (8.7%) rounded out our top 5, with everything from pubs being located near railways to coastal pubs opting for ships and anchors in their names. However, these options are becoming less popular as Britain moves away from its seafaring and manufacturing peak.

If you're looking to book a pub, use the ukphonebook.com business search function to find one near you and it's most up-to-date contact details.

Company Contact:

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Edge45

T. 01904373005
E. jonathan.brown@edge45.co.uk
W. https://edge45.co.uk/

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