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Molson Coors will close Sharp’s Brewery in Cornwall in 2026, putting 40 jobs at risk

The company said weak cask ale demand made the Rock site unsustainable, even after more than £20 million in investment.

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Molson Coors Beverage Company has confirmed that Sharp’s Brewery in Rock, north Cornwall, will close in December 2026, ending brewing at the site and putting up to 40 jobs at risk after a consultation process that began earlier this year.

The company said on September 29 that it had reviewed alternatives before deciding that the brewery was no longer financially sustainable within its national brewing network. The decision affects one of Cornwall’s best-known beer producers and the brewery most closely associated with Doom Bar, one of the UK’s best-selling cask ales.

Molson Coors said it had invested more than £20 million in the Rock brewery since buying Sharp’s in 2011. According to the company, that spending increased production capacity, upgraded equipment, and supported the growth of the Sharp’s brand portfolio. Even with that investment, the brewer said shifts in consumer demand and continued pressure on the cask ale segment made the site difficult to sustain.

Simon Kerry, managing director for Molson Coors in the UK and Ireland, said the decision had been difficult because Sharp’s had been an important part of the company’s UK business for the past 15 years. He said the company’s focus now is on supporting employees affected by the closure.

The shutdown will end brewing operations in Rock, but Molson Coors said it is exploring a possible sale of the premises. The company has also agreed heads of terms with Camerons Brewery as its preferred brewing partner for key Sharp’s cask ale brands. That arrangement would shift production of those beers away from Cornwall while allowing the brands to remain in the market through another brewer.

Molson Coors said Sharp’s keg and packaged beers will continue to be produced at its breweries in Burton and Tadcaster. That means the Sharp’s brand will remain part of the company’s portfolio, but its production footprint will be spread across other sites and an external partner rather than centered in Rock.

The move is significant for the drinks industry because it points to further consolidation of brewing capacity in the UK beer market, especially in categories under pressure. Cask ale has faced years of weaker demand, and Sharp’s exit from brewing in Rock shows how large brewers are reworking supply arrangements to lower costs and

protect brands even when a historic site is no longer viable. That kind of shift can affect employment, local brewing ecosystems, logistics, and relationships across pub and wholesale networks.

For Cornwall, the closure is a blow to a regional beer industry that has relied on Sharp’s as one of its most visible names. The brewery has long had a strong identity tied to the county and to the cask ale trade. Moving production elsewhere may preserve brand availability, but it removes a major brewing operation from the local economy.

The company has not announced a buyer for the Rock site, and it has not provided further detail on the timing of the job losses beyond saying production will stop in December. It also has not set out how quickly brewing volumes for the cask ale brands would move to Camerons under the proposed partnership.

The announcement comes at a time when brewers across Britain continue to face cost pressure, changing drinking habits, and weaker trading conditions in some traditional beer categories. In that environment, companies have been under pressure to balance brand investment with factory utilization and distribution efficiency. Molson Coors’ decision on Sharp’s suggests that even established breweries with nationally recognized brands are not insulated from those changes.

Sharp’s is best known for Doom Bar, a beer that became one of the most widely recognized names in British cask ale. The end of production in Rock will therefore carry weight beyond Cornwall, both because of the brand’s place in the market and because it reflects the strain still facing cask-led brewing in the UK.