

The Politics of Drink
in England,
from Gladstone
to Lloyd George

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By

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For my family,
Mary, Juliana, and Sable

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PREFACE

In 1971, the *Journal of British Studies* published my article, “Temperance and the Liberal Party—Lord Peel’s Report, 1899.” Shortly afterwards I began the present book. As it took me five decades to complete my manuscript, I lost the opportunity to be pioneering. Interest in other topics such as the Good Templars help explain repeated delays. I did not completely neglect the topic of the postponed book, as I published related articles and entries in reference works. The long gestation made for a better book, or so I hope. There remain rough spots, especially in the final chapter. In my mid-80s and in ill-health, I am sorry that I did not do more when I was young and enjoyed good eyesight.

Problems challenged me almost to the end. I was within about a week of completing my manuscript when my hard disk failed. I discovered that my backup did not work. A reminder to have backups of backups! Swallowing my frustration, I rewrote the book based on earlier drafts that I had emailed to myself six or seven weeks earlier. Sorry if I left out things that were part of the lost manuscript.

I have no reason to complain. Early in 2021, I was twice hospitalized after my family, terrified that I was unresponsive, called an ambulance. I am grateful to my wife Mary Fuller for her indispensable help in my recovery. Although still unsteady on my feet, I am comfortable at my computer.

This is a book about politics centered on Parliament, party leaders, and pressure groups. I have written elsewhere about the temperance movement and the licensed drink trade. They appear in the present book but are not prominent in it. For a more rounded view of the drink question, I offer my book *Temperance Societies in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (2020), four recent articles in *Brewery History*, earlier articles (one as old as 1974), many entries in biographical collections and historical encyclopedias, and a few book reviews, most of them listed in the bibliography. The opening chapter of my new book borrows from “Worrying about Drink,” *Brewery History* (2016).

I am grateful to my friend David W. Gutzke for source references that supplement my own research and for advice on chapter ten. I also am grateful to my nephew Michael Rinella for help with illustrations. Chuck Angel of Miami’s IT made a Saturday morning house call to help me with

a Microsoft Word problem. Adam Rummens and Amanda Millar of Cambridge Scholars Publishing were indispensable. The Miami University interlibrary loan service provided important books and articles that allowed me to complete my work in a small college town in southwestern Ohio. Most of all, I thank the many libraries in England and their manuscript and rare print collections for making my book possible. I also thank the many historians whose work improved my own. Although I cite recent scholarship, I have written principally based on primary sources. The exception is the last chapter on the war years which was not part of my original plan.

THE MAKING OF THIS BOOK

I began my work as a historian of the English temperance movement “in virtual isolation [while] a young assistant professor at one of Indiana University’s ‘parking lot’ branch campuses.”¹ My doctoral dissertation (1964) had nothing to do with temperance or drink or even the late Victorian and Edwardian years, so how did I stumble upon this fresh line of research? It was an accident. Reading an old volume (published, 1936) in the *Oxford History of England*, I was struck by R.C.K. Ensor’s brief reference to the Licensing Act of 1904. Intrigued, I began research on it. I quickly realized that what happened in that year could not be understood without a larger context. After reviewing the skimpy secondary literature, I traveled to London for archival research in the late 1960s. A summer at the British Museum enabled me to write an article for the *Journal of British Studies*, “Temperance and the Liberal Party--Lord Peel’s Report, 1899,” published in May 1971 and reprinted in 2008.²

For years I spent nearly every summer in England doing archival and rare print research. I visited temperance and drink organizations, as well as reading extensively in temperance and drink trade periodicals. I quarried the papers of politicians and read major newspapers and other periodicals, as well as parliamentary debates, royal commission evidence and reports, and a small mountain of polemical literature. I then put my manuscript aside to pursue different research.

The sites where I consulted primary sources often have changed. I first read Good Templar annual proceedings at the Order’s Birmingham headquarters where I squatted on the floor while a charwoman mopped around me. Afterwards the records moved to the United Kingdom Temperance Alliance library. The Institute of Alcohol Studies inherited this collection. I followed the London publicans as their headquarters moved from Bedford Square to smaller quarters on Kilburn High Road and finally to Farnham in Surrey when they merged with a provincial retail organization. The London Metropolitan Archives later acquired the licensed victuallers’ records, as well as the papers of the Brewers’ Company (Brewers’ Hall) that I had consulted at the Guildhall library. The archives for the brewers’ defense organizations at Portman Square were hard to enter. I first was told that during the Second World War enemy aircraft had destroyed the relevant manuscripts, a couple of years later that they existed

but I would not be permitted to see them, and finally I got a warm welcome. The manuscripts are now at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, while the books formerly at Portman Square are now at Oxford Brookes University as part of the National Brewing Library. The manuscripts include those of the Country Brewers' Society, the Brewers' Society, and the National Trade Defence Association. I read other Birmingham-based NTDA records at the Staffordshire Record Office. I consulted the papers of Sir William Harcourt when they were unsorted in trunks in a storage room at his ancestral home, then at the Bodleian when they were only partly catalogued, and finally when full citation information was available. My Harcourt references vary in format depending on when I took my notes. A few other manuscript collections have moved. For instance, the papers at the Beaverbrook Library are now at the House of Lords Record Office. The Hambleden papers that I consulted in London are now at the W.H. Smith Archive in Swindon. Rare print and manuscript material that I read in Sheffield at the Livesey-Clegg House is now at the University of Central Lancashire. The papers of Lord Salisbury that I saw at Christ Church, Oxford, are now at Hatfield House.

After retirement from teaching, I returned to the manuscript that I had begun with the naive expectation of a quick book. In fact, it has occupied most of my professional life. Revisiting my treasure trove of source materials after so many years, I wish that my penmanship had been better. Scribbles in smudged pencil are especially difficult. Sometimes photocopies have blurred. It does not help that, in my mid-80s, genetic cornea scarring makes my vision fuzzy. Citation details are not always consistent. I have page numbers for some newspaper articles and not others.

The focus of this book is England and not Britain or the United Kingdom. The political and religious situation in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales differed from that in England. Moreover, the licensed drink trade was more powerful in England than elsewhere. By the late nineteenth century full-day Sunday closing affected retail drink sales (other than for hotel guests) in Scotland, Wales, and most of Ireland. Parliament had no stomach for complete Sunday closing in England. In the early twentieth century Scotland uniquely acquired the right of prohibition by local option, a right rarely exercised.

My book outlines the politics of drink from the early 1870s when William Gladstone was Prime Minister until the early 1920s when David Lloyd George resided at 10 Downing Street. Concern over drinking by workingmen was widespread, but there was no consensus on how to address the problem. My book may be regarded as a sequel to Brian Harrison's

Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872.

A central theme for my book is the repeated disappointment of frustrated pressure groups.³ Beginning in the early 1880s, party discipline grew, as did the government's control over legislative time. This meant that the pledges that pressure groups obtained from parliamentary candidates mattered less. Leaders retained discretion about priorities. I argue that the drink controversy peaked near the turn of the century when moderate drinkers and some abstainers promoted alternatives to prohibition. It revived briefly during the First World War.

This book combines thematic and chronological chapters at the price of some duplication. Crucial decades demand the most detail. From 1888 to 1908 the debate over the sale of alcoholic beverages mattered more in national politics than during any earlier or later time. The First World War provides a kind of epilogue when wartime patriotism and a coalition Cabinet kept pressure group politics largely out of view and allowed Government flexibility.

Writing is a collaborative process, and I have reason to be grateful to the many historians cited in footnotes. Without them I could not have written this book. I am especially indebted to David W. Gutzke. We have exchanged ideas since the 1970s when we discovered our overlapping research plans recorded in register entries at the Guildhall library.

I thank the archives and libraries to which I owe so much. I also am grateful for research grants from Indiana University, Miami University, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I have borrowed from my articles in the *Journal of British Studies*, *Histoire sociale*, and *Brewery History*, and to a lesser extent from some of my other publications that I cite when relevant.⁴ This book was written while I was mostly confined at home during the Covid 19 pandemic as also had been the case when I was writing my related book, *Temperance Societies in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (2020). Further complicating my work, my original manuscript when near completion was lost when my hard drive failed as did my backup. Moreover, in 2021 I was seriously ill.

Notes

¹ David M. Fahey, "Chance and Change," *Social History of Alcohol Review* 34/35 (1997): 8.

² Reprinted in Moria L. Plant and Martin A. Plant, eds., *Addiction* (4 vols.; Routledge, 2008).

³ I outlined my interpretation in an early article, “Drink and the Meaning of Reform in Late Victorian and Edwardian England” *Cithara* (May 1974), and further developed it in “The Politics of Drink: Pressure Groups and the British Liberal Party, 1883-1908,” *Social Science* (Spring 1979). I summarized my interpretation in entries for the Conservative and Liberal parties in Jack S. Blocker, Jr., David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrrell, eds., *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History* (ABC-CLIO, 2003) and occasionally referred to it in entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals*.

⁴ “Temperance and the Liberal Party—Lord Peel’s Report, 1899,” *Journal of British Studies* (May 1971). “Brewers, Publicans, and Working-Class Drinkers: Pressure Group Politics in Late Victorian and Edwardian England,” *Histoire sociale* (May 1980); “Worrying about Drink,” *Brewery History* (Summer 2016); “E.N Buxton (1840-1924): Liberal Brewer, Big Game Hunter and Conservationist,” *Brewery History* (Spring 2019); “Brewers, Publicans, and Staff in Late Victorian and Edwardian Licensed Trade Societies,” Part I *Brewery History* (Summer 2019); Part II (Winter 2019).

CHAPTER ONE

DRINK AND SOBRIETY

My book describes the politics of drink in England from the early 1870s, when Gladstone was Prime Minister, until the early 1920s, when Lloyd George occupied 10 Downing Street. These were years when most everybody who was anybody regarded drink as a problem, although without agreement on what the problem was and even less on how to address it. Total abstainers were few. Those who worried about the excessive drinking by urban workingmen almost always drank themselves.

The place to begin our story is with Brian Harrison's *Drink and the Victorians* (1971). After its publication, other British historians accepted Harrison's argument that alcoholic drink and the temperance movement mattered, although they seldom chose to write about it.¹ Despite the acclaim that Harrison's book and accompanying articles received, the drink question in Britain remained a marginal topic.² Harrison himself moved on to other things.³ Although an epilogue to *Drink and the Victorians* explored the socialist critique of drink, it concluded its detailed narrative in 1872. A revised edition (1994) made no important changes. Harrison's pioneering work left much undone. Other books on drink and sobriety only slowly appeared.

The story that confronted Harrison and his successors was not a simple one. Although teetotalers always were a minority, many drinkers supported new restrictions on the sale of drink. Unfortunately, they did not always agree with one another about what should be done. The temperance movement too was not united about what it wanted. Those who made or sold drink also were divided.

Drink and the Victorians ambitiously researched drink, temperance, the role of Parliament and of pressure groups. The first approach to drink that Harrison discussed was free licensing. For a fee of two guineas the Beer Act of 1830 offered beer house licenses.⁴ Unlike public houses, beer houses sold only beer and cider and had shorter hours.⁵ Allegedly, competition created by the new drink sellers would cleanse the trade in beer.⁶ In 1869, at the height of *laissez faire*, free licensing of beer houses was abandoned nationally. Almost nobody (except William Gladstone [1809-98]) proposed

that it be revived. Free licensing did not appeal to brewers, as more licenses would reduce the value of existing licensed property. Nor did temperance reformers want to provide extra opportunities to buy drink.⁷

Harrison devoted the core of his book to the temperance movement. Respectability was its key theme. Harrison divided the temperance movement's formative period, from the late 1820s to the early 1870s, into three overlapping stages. Each was more radical in objectives than its predecessor. The middle and upper classes dominated the anti-spirits agitation in the early days of the English temperance movement. Drunkenness, not drinking, was condemned. Later respectable workers demanded teetotalism. They were utopian radicals who rejected theological pessimism about sinful human nature. They sought to educate others through what was called moral suasion. They combined communal self-help with individual self-improvement. Next came a prohibition movement, partly inspired by the experiment in the American state of Maine, which supplemented the voluntarism of personal abstinence with legal coercion.⁸ After Harrison's time-periods, disinterested or non-commercial management of the retail drink trade (the Gothenburg scheme) offered another solution to the drink question.⁹

Harrison argued that the reformation in drinking habits was only loosely related to the organized temperance movement. The speed of the railroad, by curtailing the drink seller's role in providing the traveller with refreshment, did more for practical temperance than did temperance agitation.

Harrison minimized class conflict. Middle class advocacy for the reduction or the prohibition of drink could not be reduced to economic motives alone. Not all workingmen rejected temperance reform as class oppression.¹⁰ Instead of social control exercised by elites, moral reform joined together different social classes or at least some of their members in class collaboration. Temperance had its strongest roots in Nonconformist culture.

Harrison characterized the licensing crisis that erupted in the early 1870s as "a turning point in temperance history." By then the organized temperance movement had proved itself to be a political force, the prohibitionists within it had shown a destructive half-heartedness toward any licensing reform which allowed the drink trade to survive, and the Liberal Party had begun to be identified with aggressive temperance legislation. The Liberals were friendly to local control, the strategy proposed by prohibitionists and by advocates of other local options.¹¹ The Liberals disliked monopolies, and in the absence of free licensing the drink trade had taken on the appearance of a privileged monopoly.

Harrison was a historian of the drink trade as well as of the agitation on behalf of sobriety, but he did not investigate normal or moderate drinking in depth.¹² For the “wet” side of his story, Harrison described how the licensed trade began to awake as a political force, eventually allied with the Conservative Party. A study of Oldham in South Lancashire by another historian contrasts the 1830s, when the drink trade was “the mainstay of the radical vote,” with 1865, when nearly eighty per cent of drink sellers voted Tory.¹³ The drink trade could count on the Conservatives to defend property rights, even rights as legally ambiguous as those of license holders, and the freeborn Englishman’s liberty to choose to buy drink. The licensed trade accommodated itself to changing attitudes. It insisted that drinking did not mean drunkenness. It could be moderate, responsible, and respectable.

Recently Thora Hands complained that historians say little about normal or moderate drinkers. Instead, they focus on drunkards and other pathological drinkers. She sees this as a limitation in Harrison’s work. She argues that his *Drink and the Victorians* “fails to deliver an analysis of Victorian drinking.”¹⁴ Her own book removes the spectre of the drunkard from a central position in the story of drink.

With a short overlap, the present book succeeds Harrison’s chronologically.¹⁵

The upper and middle classes construed the drink problem in class and gendered terms. They took for granted that the urban workingman constituted the problem, together with the public houses and beer houses where he drank his beer.¹⁶ What alarmed the upper classes was in fact not new, that workingmen drank a great deal of beer and some of them got drunk.¹⁷ Few teetotalers belonged to the elite classes. Instead, they were working class or lower middle class, for example, Good Templars and Rechabites, members of large fraternal temperance societies. They agreed with the elite analysis that situated the problem in the pub.¹⁸

Those who drank at pubs rarely ate there. Explaining his focus on closing public houses, Sir William Harcourt (1827-1904) explained that he was against “tippling,” drinking apart from meals, and was not against drinking at meals.¹⁹

The upper and middle classes regarded their mealtime wine drinking as respectable.²⁰ Even the lower middle class could afford cheap wines. Since the 1850s the upper and middle classes had drunk in privacy at homes or in semi-privacy at clubs and restaurants. Rarely did they drink beer. The propertied classes regarded drinking beer at public houses as vulgar, lacking in respectability and manly discipline. In a House of Lords debate over Sunday closing legislation, on 8 May 1880, Lord Salisbury

defended the rights of beer-drinkers but acknowledged: "I do not drink beer myself."²¹

Reformers focused their attacks on the pub and only indirectly on its beer and the drinker.²² Temperance people and their Liberal allies directed their fire not at the publicans but at the wealthy brewers who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries owned or controlled almost all the pubs.²³ Reformers did not emphasize licenses for off-premises consumption other than those of grocers who allegedly tempted middle-class women who could hide drink purchases amid ordinary groceries.

Worrying about drink meant worrying about an urban society undergoing complex socio-economic, cultural, and political change. It meant worrying about the future.

Despite broad support for some kind of reform, legislation about drink was almost always bitterly divisive. Drink reform became a partisan issue. Although most reformers and brewers were willing to compromise, they disagreed on what for them would be an acceptable compromise.

Did contemporaries exaggerate the extent that the drinking problem was a workingman's problem, a public house problem, a beer problem? Expensive wine intoxicated too. Part of the reason why the philosopher T.H. Green (1836-82) became an ardent temperance reformer was that his older brother was a binge drinker who had been expelled as a drunkard from colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge.²⁴ University students, born to privilege, often were hard drinkers, for instance, the members of the Bullingdon club at Oxford who included Lord Randolph Churchill (1849-95) and the future Lord Rosebery (1847-1929).²⁵ During parts of their lives politicians such as H.H. Asquith (1852-1928), a Liberal, and F.E. Smith (1872-1930), a Tory, were famously drinkers.²⁶ So was Winston Churchill (1874-1965) who loved Pol Roger champagne.²⁷ Sir William Harcourt, the main exponent of prohibition in the Liberal leadership, was no teetotaler. His son's journal for 13 November 1885, reports that he and his father "had drunk about [three and a half] bottles of claret during the evening" and added: "that is what comes of talking local option and temperance."²⁸ A.J. Balfour's brother Eustace died an alcoholic. Albert Victor, Prince of Wales, was another heavy drinker.

David Lloyd George (1863-1945) rarely is seen as a tippler, but as a young temperance reformer he enjoyed a drink. His diary entry for Saturday, 12 August 1882, reports that over the course of this single day he had drunk a glass of port, two glasses of beer, and a glass of porter, "so that's keeping the Blue Ribbon Pledge grandly," he joked.²⁹ Teetotalers showed their commitment to total abstinence by wearing a blue ribbon.

Respectable households sometimes contained what a recent historian has called a “perfumed alcoholic.”³⁰ Bored women of the comfortable classes consumed alcohol covertly and excessively. Tonic wines were popular.

Was William Gladstone (1809-98) alone in regarding drunkenness among the higher classes as “outrageous,” while over-indulgence among the poor was “excusable [and] not unnatural”?³¹ He spoke for an earlier age when heavy drinking was considered a nuisance instead of a threat to national survival. The revolution in attitudes can be seen in the contrast between two other prime ministers, William Pitt the Younger (died in office, 1806), who allegedly drank several bottles of port a day, and Andrew Bonar Law (resigned and died, 1923), who was a teetotaler.³²

Despite colorful exceptions, drinking moderated among the upper classes during Gladstone’s lifetime. Reporting on a famous London club, one of its members reported that in 1838 Athenaeum members typically drank a pint of sherry at dinner and afterwards a pint of port, but by 1889, only a quarter pint of claret or other light wine. The club had to sell a quantity of port because of a lack of demand for it.³³ Algernon Bourke took over management of White’s in 1888.³⁴ On 1 July 1896, he testified to the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws that alcohol consumption had fallen among the upper-class men who belonged to his and other West End clubs. During the hot summer months, many members of White’s preferred non-alcoholic barley water to a whiskey and soda.

Ironically, concern about drink grew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, despite a decline in per capita drinking. The upper and middle classes worried more about the drink problem as it became less acute. During the years 1875-79 England and Wales averaged 40.5 gallons of beer per capita. Per capita consumption then declined unevenly with downward zigs and upward zags. For instance, after falling earlier, it rose for several years late in the century. Average consumption in 1895-99 reached 34.5 gallons. After this period of greater consumption, “consumption of beer fell in every year from 1899 to 1909: in England, by some [cumulative] 14 per cent.” During the years 1910-13 England and Wales averaged 29.4 gallons of beer per capita. Wartime saw a sharp decline in the alcoholic strength of beer. Per capita United Kingdom consumption of beer fell in 1918 to 10 gallons.³⁵

By 1901 the number of pubs declined by almost 16,000 from an 1869 high of 118,499.³⁶ Many of those that lost their licenses were seedy beer houses and not fully licensed public houses.³⁷

In the United Kingdom the percentage of working-class income spent on alcohol declined from over fifteen per cent in 1876 to under nine

per cent in 1910. Food, clothing, shoes, furniture, and other consumer goods became cheaper, so real wages grew sharply from the mid-1870s until the mid-1890s. Beer prices remained steady, making beer relatively expensive.³⁸

Three kinds of official statistics shed light on Victorian and Edwardian drinking. First of all, tax records show how much was produced or imported and presumably consumed. These statistics are organized into broad categories of alcoholic beverages: beer, spirits (whiskies, gin, rum), and wine. These statistics do not tell who did the drinking or under what circumstances.³⁹ Second, license records show how many public houses, beer houses, and other retailers had the right to sell alcohol for on-premises or off-premises consumption. They show the high density of drink shops in poor urban districts. In 1892 the port town of King's Lynn in Norfolk could boast one out of every twenty-three of its houses as being licensed to sell drink.⁴⁰ In the mid-1890s the smallest London police district (the "C" or St. James in Soho) had 545 licensed houses of all kinds in an area of only 0.70 square miles.⁴¹ In Manchester there was a licensed house for every 180 inhabitants in 1898.⁴² In 1904 the seven thousand residents of Birmingham's Floodgate Street district could drink at forty-three public houses "or about one to every 88 adults."⁴³ Third, police records for public intoxication reveal broad trends. These figures are less reliable than the other statistics as they stumble over inconsistent police standards for determining public drunkenness. Arrests for public intoxication were almost always arrests of workingmen. These statistics ignore middle- and upper-class drunkenness that rarely happened in a public place.

Liverpool, a port city with a large Irish population, often was stigmatized as the most drunken city in England.⁴⁴ Prosecutions for public drunkenness exceeded 21,000 in both 1870 and 1875 but fell to less than 10,000 in the 1890s.⁴⁵ Nationally arrests for public intoxication fell drastically after 1901.

Despite the problems with police arrests as evidence of drinking, these statistics bring into doubt the existence of a new national drinking problem. As Paul Jennings has argued, there was "a real decline in the incidence of drunkenness."⁴⁶

Generalizations about drink consumption are guesses. In 1882 a special committee of the British Association (consisting of Leone Levi and others) estimated that the working classes drank 75% of the beer and spirits and 10% of the wine, with the remainder being consumed by the middle and higher classes.⁴⁷ Joseph Rowntree (1836-1925) and Arthur Sherwell (1863-1942) estimated that that each year men of all classes averaged 73 gallons of beer, 2.4 gallons of spirits, and slightly less than a gallon of wine. Supposedly, women drank only half as much as men, while children under

the age of fifteen did not drink. Rowntree and Sherwell may have underestimated consumption by regular drinkers. Receipts for a York workingmen's club reported that "the typical member consumed nearly two pints daily."⁴⁸

Statistics blur the fact that the beers consumed varied greatly in taste, color, price and alcoholic content. "Pale, bitter ales made great headway in the 1840-1900 period, the golden age of British beer drinking."⁴⁹ Englishmen also drank Guinness, a dry stout brewed in Ireland. They rarely drank lagers. Advertising by brewers, although limited, became more common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁰

In the early 1860s the Government encouraged wine drinking. Import duties were lowered, and licenses to sell wine were made easy to obtain. Thousands of so-called "grocers' licenses" made inexpensive wines readily available. Despite these reforms, wine consumption remained low. Working-class women sometimes drank wine, but wine was nearly always an upper class and upper middle-class drink. The lower middle class could afford cheap wines. In *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892) by the Grossmith brothers, the clerk Charles Pooter entertains with champagne.

Although in the nineteenth century tastes shifted away from fortified wines, port and sherry made up half the wine consumed as late as 1914 and were consumed with food as table wines. The new trend by the 1880s saw champagne drunk with the first courses, claret (a red from Bordeaux) with the roasts, and brandy or port at the end of the meal.⁵¹ When dining in mixed company, males of elite classes extended mealtime drinking after the women withdrew. The gentlemen then smoked cigars and drank brandy or port.

Both elites and the poor drank spirits. Rum was almost exclusively a workingmen's and sailors' drink, but gin and whiskey crossed class lines. By the 1860s workingmen drank less gin than whiskey. The fashion of things Scottish promoted by Victoria encouraged whiskey drinking. Lighter "blended whiskies" from Scotland were heavily advertised. By the end of the nineteenth century, whiskey had largely replaced gin among the elites, although many gin cocktails remained popular, as were other mixed drinks. The Prince of Wales cocktail, supposedly created by or for the Queen's son, included rye whiskey, Angostura bitters, Maraschino, and champagne.

The popularity of gin and quinine in the tropical empire helped gin and tonic become a summer drink in England.⁵² Sometimes ladies at teatime served gin, calling it "white wine." Gin was made in England, particularly London. "London dry gin" was popular, with its rival being the sweeter "Old Tom gin." Sloe gin, flavored with sloe berries, was a female favorite.

Cheap gin was associated with drunken working-class women. Sometimes flavored with turpentine, “blue ruin” was a notorious drink. In 1907 George Robert Sims described working-class women as quieting their babies by repeatedly putting a dirty finger in a glass of gin and then into the infant’s mouth. Charles Booth quotes a policeman as describing many older women as “regular soakers.”⁵³

By the turn of the century the pub had become less central to working-class leisure. New technology for bottling beer meant that working-class drinking often took place at home. As early as the 1840s, off-sales accounted on average for a third of the takings of some houses also licensed for on-sales.⁵⁴ By the 1890s sealed bottles superseded the old jug trade. In 1872 an Englishman invented the internal screw stopper, while twenty years later an American invented the cork crown cap. Four-quart crates became popular. In 1911 Cosmo Bonsor (1848-1929) complained that Watney, Combe, Reid had sold more beer but for less profit because of the cost of bottling.⁵⁵ In 1914 bottled beer made of 58% of the gross sales of Whitbread’s London brewery.⁵⁶

Clubs also became a popular drinking place. Clubs that served drink numbered 1,982 in 1887, 3,655 in 1896, and about 8,700 in 1914.⁵⁷ Most workingmen’s clubs were orderly and respectable. Unlike public houses, clubs did not admit strangers who were more likely to cause trouble than regulars.⁵⁸

“It was ironic that just as the brewers had virtually completed their ownership of tied houses, the popularity of the public house, that old citadel of working-class leisure, declined.”⁵⁹ Tied houses were public houses controlled by brewers to secure an outlet for their beer, sometimes by owning freeholds or leaseholds and sometimes through mortgages.

Elites were conflicted over stigmatizing the public house. Although they agreed that there was a drink problem, they were divided about their support for specific reforms in part because they themselves intended to keep on drinking, in part because they were concerned about the property rights of the drink trade and the personal rights of drinkers, and in part because they disagreed about the role of law in changing behaviour. Life without the pub and the beer drunk there was unthinkable. The public house and its beer were part of the kingdom’s historic identity, older than afternoon tea.⁶⁰

In Victorian and Edwardian England drink was both a deeply rooted popular culture and a powerful economic interest.⁶¹ Public houses and beer houses outnumbered places of worship. Property rights and the Englishman’s traditional liberties made attacks on problematic drinking

difficult.⁶² Seventy-five per cent of the population was working class, so workingmen did most of the country's drinking.

The British government would have struggled without money from drink. In 1879-80 liquor taxes provided the Exchequer with 43.4 per cent of the national revenue, a proportion that fell to 38.4 by 1899-1900 as a result of the growth of other taxes.⁶³ This reliance on drink taxes prompted a facetious reformer to describe the habitual drunkard as "the sheet anchor of the British Constitution."⁶⁴

Brewers sometimes were very wealthy. For instance, in 1893 the largest estate upon which probate was paid was that belonging to a Liverpool brewer, Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, Bt., whose personal property was valued at £2,874,000 and who additionally left considerable freehold property.⁶⁵ In 1905 the brewery firm of Watney, Combe, and Reid reported the second highest valuation of any industrial company, nearly £15 million. Seventeen of the forty-seven largest industrial companies in the United Kingdom were breweries and another was a distillery.⁶⁶ Many brewers served in the House of Commons, while enough of them were elevated to the House of Lords to inspire jokes about a "beverage."⁶⁷

The governing elite did not want to provoke pub drinkers, as the Salvation Army had done with violent consequences in the 1880s. When aroused and threatened, the "masculine republic" of public house drinkers could respond vigorously.⁶⁸ Workingmen increasingly outnumbered property holders in the electorate. In the United Kingdom the parliamentary electorate grew after the Second Reform Act from 1.3 million in 1866 to 2.4 million in 1869. It then climbed to 3.1 million in 1883 and, after the Third Reform Act, to 5.7 million by 1885. By 1912, it was 7.7 million.⁶⁹

Workingmen who drank at pubs resented patronizing interference. More than a place to drink, the public house was a home away from home, a cheerful place for chat and relaxation after a day of hard work, socializing with neighbors and workmates. Workingmen drank as part of a community with implicit rules and not as solitary boozers. Male bonding initiated newcomers into the rituals of pub drinking. Tory populists sometimes benefitted from working class resentment against Liberal moral reform. For instance, in 1891 two Tory publicans ousted two Liberal temperance reformers from the local council in London's East End.⁷⁰

Workingmen who drank at a public house could be respectable. In the mid-1870s a temperance reformer who expected to find only "rough" drinkers at a Bradford public house instead found respectable customers who included Sunday-school teachers.⁷¹

A few abstainers recognized that the pub was more than a drinking place. A Congregational minister pointed out to another teetotal divine:

“very much of our temperance effort is not only handicapped, but to a large extent ineffective and abortive, because all the time the publican is catering for and exploiting what is a true and most vital human need—the need of sound fellowship and pleasant recreation, after the weariness and monotony of the daily work.”⁷²

Perhaps unfairly, heavy drinking was seen as the vice of the lowest class of workingmen, or at least they were the most likely to be arrested. “Of those charged with drunkenness in Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds in 1872, for instance, ninety-five per cent or more were semi- or fully illiterate.”⁷³ In fact, it was not just the very poor who drank too much. Highly paid workers who had not developed expectations about better housing, food, and clothing might spend their extra wages at the pub. As late as the 1870s, skilled artisans dominated the ranks of heavy drinkers.⁷⁴ Later in the century they drank less. In 1889-1890 a study of the budgets of over a thousand English working-class families found that about half the workers drank virtually not at all, while the others spent considerably less than five per cent of their incomes on alcohol.⁷⁵ Hard drinkers remained. Robert Roberts, in a memoir of Edwardian Salford, wrote about his father, a journeyman engineer. He “seldom drank less than four quarts a day.”⁷⁶

The ideal of the moderate pub drinker was not a reality everywhere. In Edwardian times, a publican at a “rough” public house described his customers as “60 per cent. Sober; 30 per cent. Occasionally drunk; 7 ½ per cent. Continual drunkards; 2 ½ per cent. Habitual drunkards.”⁷⁷ Probably the distinction was that, in contrast with a continual drunkard, a habitual drunkard could not control his drinking. Legislation in 1879 and 1898 provided for institutionalizing habitual drunkards in a retreat for inebriates.

Probably twenty-five to thirty per cent of pub drinkers were female, and they were moderate drinkers.⁷⁸ Seebohm Rowntree (1871-1954) studied two public houses in York in 1900. A pub in a slum district was visited on a Saturday in July by 258 men, 179 women, and 113 children, while one in a better neighborhood was visited by 508 men, 114 women, and 61 children.⁷⁹ A relieving officer in Hackney complained about a London pub called the George “always full of women.”⁸⁰ Charles Booth’s notebooks report: “Monday is recognized as ladies day; in Carr Street it is known as ‘çowshed’ day Poor women being known by their husband and male neighbours as ‘cows.’ Monday is their drinking day because they still have a little pocket money left; they drink in public houses which become in consequence ‘cowsheds.’”⁸¹

Although typically women drank much less than men, there were females who abused alcohol. Only among the very poor did women drink

at pubs unaccompanied by their husbands, but drinking at home could intoxicate.⁸² On 21 September 1891 a Baptist missionary in Bristol described such a woman: “Mrs Deveral, so addicted to drink that she sold the pail, teapot, lamp and her husband’s trousers to satisfy her craving.”⁸³ In 1895 Ellen Sweeney of Swansea was convicted of public drunkenness for the 279th time.⁸⁴

Who was a moderate drinker? Was a moderate drinker simply an upper- or middle-class drinker who managed not to embarrass friends and family? Some people regarded as moderate drinkers drank a good deal. Most people saw a dichotomy, drunkards and respectable moderate drinkers (like themselves) rather than all drinkers situated on a blurry and shifting continuum. In the 1860s a British physician, Francis E. Anstie (1833-74), developed what was called “Anstie’s Limit”: one and a half ounces of pure alcohol daily would not affect a normal person’s health adversely.⁸⁵ In 1883 Matthew Arnold provided an anecdotal description of a moderate drinker, himself. “As a general rule, I drink water in the middle of the day; and a glass or two of sherry, and some light claret, mixed with water, at a late dinner; and this seems to suit me very well.”⁸⁶ No doubt W.E. Gladstone also regarded himself as a moderate drinker: “a glass or two of claret at luncheon, the same at dinner, with the addition of a glass of light wine.”⁸⁷

A few moderate drinkers stood at the fringe of the organized temperance movement. A semi-teetotal pledge society was organized in 1903 with a retired field marshal as its figurehead. Members promised not to drink other than at the midday and evening meals (and, according to an American religious magazine, no more than an ounce and a half of alcohol in any day). In 1904 it affiliated with the Church of England Temperance Society, a denominational organization that admitted into membership moderate drinkers as well as total abstainers.

Coping with the workingman’s drink problem seemed to be a key to social reform. At the turn of the century, intense international economic competition aroused fear of national degeneration and calls for national efficiency.⁸⁸ The large number of volunteers for the Boer war (1899-1902) rejected because of ill health startled and dismayed the country. Appalling infant mortality threatened the future of the country. At the turn of the century what can be described as a moral panic identified women’s drinking as a danger to their children.⁸⁹

Sir George White (1840-1912) was representative of the provincial upper middle class. He was a wealthy Norfolk boot and shoe manufacturer, a prominent Baptist layman, and a Liberal MP from 1900 to 1912. Although he was a teetotaler and a prohibitionist, his concern over drink resonated widely among the middle and upper classes. The historian Barry M. Doyle

summarizes White's condemnation of drink. "[He] saw a moral and social dimension to the drink question, believing it to be the chief cause of divorce and absence from church, [but] at root his interpretation was economic." According to White,

[Drink was] more damaging to the country's resources than war, greater in cost than all local and national taxation or the rental value of all the country's houses, shops and hotels, and . . . responsible for reducing the consumption of useful goods by £70,000,000, [while in addition] drink undermined the efficiency and consumption of the individual worker and led to the loss of fifteen per cent of his work time--a figure more serious in its effects on the economy than "the worst strike which ever happened."⁹⁰

The English temperance movement peaked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹¹ At the turn of the century by a contemporary estimate, teetotalers were fewer than nine percent of the adult population. Most of them were working class, although their leaders typically were middle-class Nonconformists.

Total abstainers were not content to refrain from drink themselves. They sought to convert others, and by the late nineteenth century, almost all of them sought legislation to help create a society free of drink. There were a few exceptions who rejected making people sober by acts of Parliament. Throughout his long life the founder of teetotalism in England, Joseph Livesey, remained committed to moral suasion exclusively. He argued that focus on the traffic in drink was a mistake. Without rejecting moral suasion, most teetotalers thought it was not enough.

As total abstainers were a minority in England, they needed allies. The two most prominent anti-drink organizations, the prohibitionist United Kingdom Alliance and the Church of England Temperance Society, did not require total abstinence as a condition for membership, and the latter had a sizeable minority of moderate drinkers.

Drink trade general election posters caricatured total abstainers as narrow-minded faddists, killjoy enemies of working-class conviviality. In contrast, English temperance reformers saw themselves as part of an international reform movement, embracing progressive values that others would belatedly follow. A generous estimate of the number of teetotalers, made in 1898 by the general secretary of a prohibition organization, claimed that there were eight million total abstainers in the United Kingdom, a figure padded with children of abstainers and members of the huge Bands of Hope juvenile temperance society.⁹² The social reformers Rowntree and Sherwell

more modestly estimated three million teetotalers. A modern estimate described ten percent of the adult population as teetotalers in 1900.⁹³

Many total abstainers were women. There even was a United Working Women's Teetotal League whose stronghold seems to have been London's laundry trade.⁴⁴ In the late nineteenth century the largest total abstinence society was the mostly middle-class British Women's Temperance Society and its successor organizations.⁴⁵ Women's temperance societies and women in mixed-sex societies played only a marginal role in the leadership of the national temperance movement.

Teetotalers were marginalized. Until the end of 1905 no total abstainer sat in the Cabinet.⁴⁶ Temperance strength in Britain was concentrated far from London, in the north of England, in Cornwall, and in Wales, as well as on Scotland. By 1890 there were 45 teetotal mayors in England and Wales.⁴⁷

It is safe to say that in England the majority of those who abstained from drink were humble men and women, content with membership in obscure local organizations. Despite the prominence of the middle class in national and regional temperance societies, most total abstainers were working class.⁹⁴ A prohibitionist leader described "the flower of the working classes in all the large towns of England" as his supporters.⁹⁵ The standard history of the Welsh temperance movement emphasizes the working-class membership of early temperance societies with self-employed shoemakers and tailors as typical members.⁹⁶

Many pioneers of what became the Labour Party such as the coal miner Thomas Burt (1837-1922) did not drink. Philip Snowden (1864-1937) claimed that a majority of Labour MPs in the Edwardian parliaments were teetotal.⁹⁷ In a contrast with other workingmen's clubs, only three percent of those affiliated with the Independent Labour Party sold alcoholic drink in 1909.⁹⁸

The late Victorian temperance movement is often identified with Nonconformity.⁹⁹ In political campaigns Nonconformist abstainers provided much of the energy for the temperance cause. In fact, temperance politics diverted them from religious activities. "Prayer Meetings were cancelled in favour of electioneering during the 1906 general election."¹⁰⁰

The elected officers and salaried officials of most national and regional temperance societies, as well as most teetotal M.P.s, were middle-class Nonconformists. This explains the reputation of the temperance agitation as middle class and Nonconformist. Yet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century many middle-class Nonconformists drank. None of the three most prominent middle-class Nonconformist politicians--John Bright (1811-89), Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), David Lloyd George--

was a lifelong total abstainer. (Bright only gave up drink when in his sixties.) The United Kingdom Alliance did not have a Nonconformist as its president until 1932.¹⁰¹

Further complicating the image of the English temperance movement, a powerful temperance movement within the Church of England lived uneasily beside that of dry Dissenters. Churches competed with chapels in the temperance movement. Finally, although English teetotallers typically were devout Christians, a few prominent reformers rejected any kind of a religion.

Generalizations about the relationship between Nonconformity and temperance need caution. In late Victorian and Edwardian England, prominent total abstainers included a Roman Catholic cardinal, Henry Manning (1808-92). In 1873, he founded a teetotal society for Catholics, the League of the Cross.¹⁰² Within a few years in London alone it had thirty-one branches with 35,000 active members.¹⁰³

Reform could be a substitute for religion. Rosalind Howard, Countess of Carlisle (1845-1921), led the National British Women's Temperance Association from 1903 until her death. She took the pledge in 1881. She was an agnostic or atheist. A bemused friend pointed out: "She believes in no form of religion, but goes to church, I hardly know why, if it is not to distribute teetotal leaflets at the door."¹⁰⁴ Her former secretary, Leif Jones (1862-1939), became president of the United Kingdom Alliance in 1906 and served until 1932. Although a minister's son, he too was an agnostic or atheist.

In 1881 an essay about the temperance work in the churches began with an apology. T.E. Williams acknowledged that "the Christian Church in this country has been slow to identify itself with the Temperance Movement."¹⁰⁵ Denominational temperance societies among the Nonconformists had few members and little money. The Bible Christians, regarded as a teetotal denomination, did not have a temperance society until 1882. The Baptists had organized one earlier (1874), but its income was only £56. In 1892 its income had grown to £567.¹⁰⁶ To a large extent, it was a society of ministers. In 1881 its membership of less than 1,100 included between five hundred and six hundred ministers.¹⁰⁷ The Primitive Methodists organized a temperance league belatedly in 1883. The New Connexion Methodists never organized a denominational temperance society.¹⁰⁸ Did this matter? Writing in 1893, Dawson Burns (1828-1909) said: "during the last seven years the Methodist New Connexion Conference has not received a minister or college student who has not been an abstainer."¹⁰⁹