

Gender, Class, and Public Drinking in Britain During the First World War

DAVID W. GUTZKE*

During World War I respectable upper working-class and lower middle-class women, who had shunned public drinking for almost a century, began patronizing the pub in unprecedented numbers. In threatening the pre-war gender status quo, they provoked intense opposition from authorities who seemed committed to a counterattack once the war ended. Attracting such women's custom was a major incentive for brewers espousing the reform of the public house, ensuring that a wartime trend became a post-war tradition. Yet, unreformed slum pubs, unregenerate regional subcultures, unco-operative magistrates, and unsympathetic feminists all prevented the attainment of full equality in public drinking in the inter-war era.

Pendant la première guerre mondiale, les femmes respectables de la classe ouvrière supérieure et de la classe moyenne inférieure qui avaient évité de consommer de l'alcool en public pendant près d'un siècle, se sont mises à fréquenter les pubs en nombre sans précédent. En menaçant le statu quo entre les hommes et les femmes, elles ont provoqué une opposition intense de la part des autorités, qui semblaient déterminées à contre-attaquer une fois la guerre terminée. L'espoir d'attirer la clientèle féminine a fortement incité les brasseurs à se prononcer en faveur de la réforme des établissements ouverts au public, pour qu'ainsi une tendance apparue pendant la guerre devienne une tradition, une fois les troubles terminés. Pourtant, des pubs non réformés des quartiers pauvres, des sous-cultures régionales ancrées dans le passé, des magistrats récalcitrants et des féministes manquant de compassion ont empêché d'atteindre l'égalité complète en ce qui concerne la consommation d'alcool en public pendant l'entre-deux-guerres.

CLASS AND GENDER more sharply defined drinking habits in the nineteenth century than in any previous era. In Georgian inns diverse customers drank, ate, socialized, and enjoyed leisure activities. By the early Victorian

* David W. Gutzke, associate professor of history at Southwest Missouri State University and author of *Protecting the Pub: Brewers and Publicans Against Temperance* (1989), is writing a book on the improved public-house movement in Britain. The author would like to thank Trevor Lloyd, Dominic Capeci, Jr., Jessica Gerard, David Fahey, and William Rorabaugh for their helpful comments and suggestions.

period, however, inns and pubs lost not only their respectable clientele but their own respectability. Their limited but loyal clientele was primarily working class in composition, supplemented by a small, lower middle-class contingent. Gender modified class drinking habits, inhibiting women far more than men. Women probably accounted overall for 25 to 30 per cent of all pub patrons, about the same proportion as in arrests for drunkenness, but scarcely represented a cross-section of the working class. Age, marital status, and income imposed insuperable barriers to acceptability. Young, unmarried women seldom ventured into the pub alone, lest they be mistaken for prostitutes. Middle-aged or older wives, the preponderant women in pubs, displayed two types of drinking behaviour: during the week the poverty-stricken — the largest group — drank with each other, while on the weekend wives from the lower-middle classes downwards might accompany their husbands.¹

According to conventional historical wisdom, the amount of alcohol people drank, though not traditional drinking habits, altered substantially during World War I.² Arthur Marwick insists that wartime commentators exaggerated reports of respectable women patronizing pubs. Continuity is also the theme of studies by scholars of the inter-war era. Jane Lewis argues that segregated leisure persisted for middle-class women and probably for those socially below them. Regional studies, such as Lyn Murfin's of the Lake counties, corroborate this view.³

Yet novel drinking habits did emerge during the First World War, when upper working- and middle-class women began patronizing pubs in unprecedented numbers throughout the country. This was a momentous social transformation; the entry of numerous respectable women into pubs from

1 David W. Gutzke, *Protecting the Pub: Brewers and Publicans Against Temperance* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1989), pp. 32–34, and “‘The Cry of the Children’: The Edwardian Medical Campaign Against Maternal Drinking”, *British Journal of Addiction*, vol. 79 (1984), pp. 71–72; Carl Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1880–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 118–120; George B. Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation: A Contribution to the Study of the Liquor Problem in the United Kingdom from 1800 to 1935* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1940), pp. 430–432; Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815–1872* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), pp. 45–46, 319; Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200–1830* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 115, 131–132, 148, 306–312; Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900–1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), p. 66.

2 In the most recent comprehensive survey, Trevor Wilson, though ignoring patterns of alcohol consumption, sees women's social status as materially unaffected by the war. Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 724, 728.

3 Arthur Marwick, *Women at War, 1914–1918* (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), p. 132; Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870–1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), pp. 135–136; Lyn Murfin, *Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 84; see also Susan Pyecroft, “British Working Women and the First World War”, *Historian*, vol. 56 (1994), pp. 699–710.

mid-1916 represented the first major shift in popular drinking habits in more than a century. Far from being a transitory phenomenon, this wartime trend became a post-war tradition. The catalysts of change were complex: new government policies (restricting and dividing licensing hours, raising prices while cutting alcoholic strengths, espousing greater gender equality in drinking, and advancing new ideas about architecture and functions of pubs); wartime shortages drawing new groups of women into the economy; women losing male companionship and enduring loneliness; and bereavement creating an emotional need for solace.

Women's altered drinking habits provide a different perspective on brewers' quest to improve public houses in the 1920s and 1930s. Historians generally assume that plummeting total beer consumption during the war, which after 1918 failed to recover much of its lost ground, or fears of American prohibition spreading to Britain caused astonishing investments in a radically redesigned pub. In fact, however, the war had already created a wider base of female pub patrons, specifically young upper working- and middle-class women. The desire to retain them as customers provoked the improved public house movement in the 1920s and 1930s, as brewers quite consciously introduced amenities already pioneered in the state-managed scheme at Carlisle aimed at attracting respectable women.

Until the First World War, respectable women had seldom drunk in public houses. This Victorian prohibition was part of a much wider set of restrictions. Evangelical condemnation of many public entertainments as immoral, along with the ideology of separate spheres, which defined public areas as men's space and the home as women's, led to a strict code regulating women's leisure activities outside the home by the early Victorian period. With London's streets and pubs often thronged with prostitutes, ladies feared they might be accosted as such. Parents were concerned that an innocent, naive young woman might be engaged in conversation, perhaps plied with drink, leading to seduction or an unsuitable marriage. In the City and the West End, all women faced sexual harassment from men idling in the street in their non-working hours. Practical problems also confronted females in the city: no respectable public transportation (hansom cabs were forbidden, as they hid the occupants from the public gaze) and nowhere to relieve themselves or to obtain refreshments.⁴ Catering establishments typically contained separate, private compartments for an exclusively male clientele. Confectioners' and pastrycooks' shops offered ladies the sole public places for refreshment.⁵ Early Victorian urban ladies limited their

4 Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992), pp. 51–52; Anna Sproule, *The Social Calendar* (Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press, 1978), pp. 58–59.

5 Robert Thorne, "Places of Refreshment in the Nineteenth-Century City", in Anthony D. King, ed., *Buildings and Society: Essays on the Social Development of the Built Environment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 235.

public leisure activities chiefly to visiting each other's homes. When they had to move about in public, on shopping errands, for instance, unmarried women had to be chaperoned, accompanied by a married woman, a male relative, or a servant.⁶

One public activity fully sanctioned by the mores of the day was philanthropy. While this work concentrated on home visits to the poor, fund-raising bazaars placed ladies in the public space and arguably contributed to the growing leisure activity of shopping. This became a major source of amusement from the 1860s, when department stores developed, attracting women by offering the necessary restrooms and restaurants. Omnibuses and then railroads eventually provided respectable, open, and, in the case of railroad carriages, socially segregated means of cheap and regular transportation. By the 1880s, tea rooms, restaurants, and public lavatories met ladies' needs outside the department store. Spiers & Pond restaurants adjoining railway stations, those of Frederick Gordon & Co. (offering ladies' boudoirs and "retiring rooms" staffed by female attendants), and elegant establishments in London's West End vied to attract female diners. By the end of the century there were even ladies' clubs.⁷

Ladies did not stop for refreshment in a public house. Early and mid-Victorian pubs were recognizably the preserve of the working classes. Middle- and upper-class men shunned them, preferring to drink in private houses or in gentlemen's clubs. Medical and religious critics, especially Evangelicals, as much as the influence of the ideal of domesticity, gave public drinking an unsavoury image. Publicans initially failed to recognize the need for privacy and segregation that increasingly became vital to respectable, class-conscious drinkers.⁸ When the government combated the gin-drinking craze in 1930 by creating beer houses — cheaper and less exclusive watering holes than pubs — the overall reputation of public drinking plummeted.

There were women in pubs, but most were precisely the type of female who made it impossible for ladies to enter these establishments: prostitutes habitually prowled the pub for customers. Respectable working-class women did enjoy drinking in pubs without disgrace or danger, but only when escorted by male friends or husbands.⁹ Within pubs the presence of barmaids, drawn from labouring families, guaranteed some social respectability;

6 See, for example, Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 24–25.

7 Thorne, "Places of Refreshment", pp. 239–241; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, pp. 46–49; David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 222–226.

8 Thorne, "Places of Refreshment", p. 233; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 307.

9 Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 311–312; Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 26; L. C. B. Seaman, *Life in Victorian London* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1973), p. 135; see also note 1 above.

only in patriarchal Scotland, where pub culture acquired its most misogynous aspect, were they banned completely.¹⁰ Working-class and even lower middle-class women also could safely go to music halls.¹¹

In the late nineteenth century lower middle- and working-class women acquired alternative refreshment facilities through chains of outlets called multiple shops. Pearce & Plenty, Lockharts, the Aerated Bread Co., and Joseph Lyons all embraced the same market strategy: to sell non-alcoholic beverages and light meals on a small profit margin. Lyons tea shops, with their standardized prices and wide meal selection, succeeded in attracting clerks, typists, and lady shoppers.¹²

By the Edwardian era, therefore, women of all classes had become accustomed to seeking refreshment in public places, as they increasingly took part in activities outside the home. A few ladies even began using respectable pubs in which compartments and snugs ensured privacy. In some cases, pubs were starting to set aside special private bars, often called "women's bars", as an attraction.¹³

During World War I, rising concern about drink impeding the war effort prompted the government to commence a new policy of regulating selective areas through the Liquor Traffic Central Control Board (CCB). Created in May 1915, the CCB addressed insobriety with radical ideas that transformed virtually every aspect of drinking — from hours, liquor strengths, and taxes to retailing and social customs. Shorter, broken licensing hours ranked as one of the key changes. Wartime curbs cut opening hours from between 16 and 19½ hours daily (except on Sundays) to 5½ hours, with an afternoon dry spell of several hours. Two-thirds of the old drinking regime vanished, shutting licensed premises 3½ hours for every one they remained open.¹⁴ Sales of take-away alcohol, called off-consumption, were limited to 2½ hours daily (but not on weekends) for spirits and 4½ hours for beer.¹⁵

10 M. Mostyn Bird, *Women at Work: A Study of the Different Ways of Earning a Living Open to Women* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1911), p. 84. For a detailed study of barmaids, see V. Padmavathy, "The English Barmaid, 1874–1914: A Case Study of Unskilled and Non-Unionized Women Workers" (Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University, 1989).

11 Dagmar Hoher, "The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850–1900", in Peter Bailey, ed., *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), pp. 81–85; Sproule, *The Social Calendar*, pp. 47–48.

12 J. F. C. Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain, 1875–1901* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1990), p. 168; D. J. Richardson, "J. Lyons and Co. Ltd.: Caterers and Food Manufacturers, 1894–1939", in Derek Oddy and Derek Miller, eds., *The Making of the Modern British Diet* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 163–165; Thorne, "Places of Refreshment", pp. 243–245.

13 Edward Ezard, *Battersea Boy* (London: William Kimber, 1979), p. 142; Thorne, "Places of Refreshment", pp. 246–247; see also Denis Stuart, *County Borough: The History of Burton upon Trent, 1901–1974: Part I: Edwardian Burton* (Burton upon Trent: n.p., 1975), p. 235.

14 Henry Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade: A Contribution to National Efficiency, 1915–17* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1918), pp. 136–137. Before the war only Sunday licensing hours were interrupted with a long afternoon break.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 148. On- and off-consumption licensing hours had been identical in the pre-war era. Another retailing method, home delivery, quite popular in Edwardian working-class neighbourhoods,

Drinkers had less time in which to consume weaker, dearer liquor. Diluted spirits and beer,¹⁶ together with a cap on output, made drunkenness less likely and more costly: beer more than doubled and strong spirits nearly quadrupled in price.¹⁷ Inside licensed premises, several cherished customs that allegedly caused insobriety — treating, credit, and bonus servings — were outlawed.¹⁸

Pervasive insobriety disappeared during the war. Arrests for drunkenness, already down one-quarter in 1915, decreased another two-thirds over the next two years. Still weaker beer at comparably higher prices in 1918 cut drunkenness by almost a further two-fifths. When the war ended, arrests were reaching less than one-fifth the level of 1914.¹⁹ Sceptics then and later would dispute the role of the CCB's regulatory regime in facilitating sobriety, crediting instead the absence of vast numbers of young men in uniform serving abroad. One flaw with this claim is that the level of drunkenness declined sharply among women too, most of whom remained civilians. A second factor is that men in military service came primarily from the 18 to 30 age cohort, but the death rate from cirrhosis of the liver — typically afflicting the middle aged and elderly — plummeted for the civilian population. The impact of CCB restrictions alone can be exaggerated, however. Among civilians, mortality rates from cirrhosis of the liver varied insignificantly between areas under or outside its regulation. Clearly something else was promoting social change than the CCB edicts.²⁰

More positive was the CCB adoption of the guise of enlightened reformer. Soon after the war began, military authorities in many port or garrison towns banished local women from licensed premises after 6 or 7 p.m. From its inception, the CCB endorsed gender equality in drinking, rejecting discrimination against some adults solely based on sex. No sooner had the

persisted under more stringent rules (*Ibid.*, pp. 163–164). The Edwardian growth of this system is explored in Gutzke's *Protecting the Pub*, pp. 203–216.

16 In Great Britain, the average standard gravity of beer, a rough index of alcoholic strength, declined from 1053° (1913) to 1030° (April 1918), though brewers could brew stronger beer in limited quantities with correspondingly heavier taxes. Higher gravities were allowed in Ireland. Arthur Shadwell, *Drink in 1914–1922: A Lesson in Control* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1923), pp. 83–84. For the extent to which spirits (whisky, rum, and gin) were diluted, see Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade*, pp. 149–152.

17 Because of the varying strengths of beer, the average price increase differed markedly. Drinkers could still buy beer at pre-war prices of 3d/pint, but it was much weaker. The most potent beers cost 8d/pint beginning in 1919. Spirit prices rose from 8d/quartern to 1s 8d and 2s 6d, depending upon alcoholic content. Shadwell, *Drink in 1914–1922*, pp. 85–86.

18 In the Edwardian era only credit had been hedged with some restrictions, though not regarded as a licensing offence. Extra large servings were commonly called the “long pull” or over-measure. Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade*, pp. 156–159.

19 Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, pp. 432, 435–436.

20 Reginald G. Smart, “The Effect of Licensing Restrictions during 1914–1918 on Drunkenness and Liver Cirrhosis Deaths in Britain”, *British Journal of Addiction*, vol. 69 (1974), pp. 115–118.

CCB acquired authority over Plymouth in November 1915 than it struck down the country's last exclusive order, restoring to women the same drinking rights as men.²¹

Why did the CCB protect women from discriminatory policies? This stance especially appealed to the government, which dreaded a renewal of pre-war violent strife with the suffrage movement and which highly valued homefront harmony. Early in the war, H. H. Asquith, then Liberal Prime Minister, promised one leading feminist organization, the Women's Freedom League, that the government disavowed any interest in seeking to control the spread of venereal disease by reinstating the Contagious Diseases Acts.²² Sir Edward Henry, London's Chief Commissioner of the Police, had discovered first-hand the political clout of women's organizations. In November 1914 he had persuaded the capital's brewers and retailers voluntarily to bar women from purchasing alcohol before 11:30 a.m. as a strategy for placating military authorities concerned about the drunkenness of soldiers' wives. An outraged Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, wrote to Asquith, denouncing the ban as illegal and reiterating her organization's aversion to dissimilar treatment of the sexes. Evidently rebuked by the Cabinet, a chastened Henry had occasion almost a year later to recall his precipitate action. When asked about the possibility of eliminating alleged growing intemperance among women by prohibiting them totally from pubs, he retorted curtly: "I cannot discriminate between the sexes without bringing a hornet's nest about my ears."²³ Predictably, regulatory bodies such as the CCB adhered to the

21 From October 1914, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was imposed not just in Plymouth, but in Cardiff, Grantham, and elsewhere to exclude women from pubs. In most cases these sweeping restrictions, quickly deemed illegal, had been rescinded. *Second Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *P.P.*), 1916 (C. 8243), vol. 12, p. 16; Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade*, pp. 25, 27; *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*, February 4, 1916; Lucy Bland, "In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War", in Julia Brophy and Carol Smart, eds., *Women-in-Law: Explorations in Law, Family and Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 28–31. Part of the impetus for such regulations derived from anxiety about immorality, prostitution, and soldiers contracting venereal disease. Lynne Amy Amidon, "'Ladies in Blue': Feminism and Policing in Britain in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1986), chap. 4; Paul Ferris, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth-Century History* (London: Michael Joseph, 1993), chap. 4.

22 These acts, passed in the 1860s, required compulsory examination and, where necessary, treatment of prostitutes for venereal disease. Suzann Buckley, "The Failure to Resolve the Problem of Venereal Disease Among the Troops in Britain during World War I", in Brian Bond and Ian Roy, eds., *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History*, vol. 2 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1977), pp. 66–68.

23 Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Conference of Chief Constables with the CCB, HO 185/259, September 24, 1915, pp. 65–66; Evidence by Sir Edward Henry to the Women's Advisory Committee, HO 185/258, November 17, 1915, pp. 11, 24; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (November 12, 1930), p. 2102.

government's priorities, even when individual members might privately dissent. One CCB member, the Rev. Henry Carter, though not a staunch feminist, imputed representatives from labour and women's organizations with convincing the CCB that dealing with women differently "would have been opposed to a modern view of justice as between the sexes".²⁴

Not only attitudes but behaviour altered during the war. Two different types of respectable middle- and lower-class women, for whom public drinking had been hitherto unacceptable, now went to pubs: single women without men and wives with husbands abroad in uniform who had joined the work force for the first time owing to the wartime demand for labour. Necessity forced them to break with the pre-war tradition of joining their husbands in pubs for a drink just on weekends. Deprived of male companionship, affection, and sexual relationships, lonely women, commonly in their twenties, sought solace in the company of other similar women in the pub. Their large numbers, coupled with far fewer men drinkers and more women running pubs for husbands away at war, also helped to make the pub respectable. Here women could commiserate with each other over the loss of men to the services and offer emotional support to quell fears for their safety. Soon drinking in the pub would serve for many yet another purpose — part of a mourning ritual.²⁵

The very behaviour of these respectable women betrayed their class origins. Poverty-stricken women, alone among females in not shunning public drinking, had entered Edwardian pubs covertly through back entrances, crowding together in segregated rooms or passages. Those few higher up the social scale who drank unescorted in public fraternized in special single-sex rooms called women's bars. During the war, respectable women from the middle and upper working classes instead walked conspicuously through front doors as "bold as brass", complained northern chief constables in 1917. New female patrons displayed other unusual traits: best rooms or saloon bars (socially the most exclusive with the highest prices) proved more popular than traditional women's bars; and moderate drinking and

24 Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade*, p. 168. He doubtless had in mind the irate Women's National Liberal Association and Women's Total Abstinence Union, which had lobbied the Home Secretary as early as November 1914. See *Brewers' Journal*, November 15, 1914.

25 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 30–31, 1930), pp. 451, 455, 457–458, 486; Lewis Melville, *The London Scene* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1926), pp. 35–36; Joan Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story* (London: Robert Hale, 1979), pp. 82–83; *Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *P.P.*, 1917–1918 (C. 8558), vol. 15, p. 24; Deborah Thom, "Women and Work in Wartime Britain", in Richard Wall and Jay Winter, eds., *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 318. Some observers thought married women accompanied by husbands accounted for part of women's increased use of pubs. Ernest Selley, *The English Public House as It Is* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1927), pp. 130–131; Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890–1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Paperback ed., 1985), p. 122.

fashionable attire reigned. They were not tarted-up prostitutes. Against women pub customers in Bristol, its Chief Constable asserted, "no possible imputation could be made as regards loose character". Employed lower middle- and working-class women, chiefly shop assistants and factory workers, comprised the bulk of the city's new pub drinkers.²⁶

Respectable women began using licensed premises in numbers unequalled in history from mid-1916.²⁷ In that year a government report first publicized this development²⁸ and cited the waning stigma against women drinking publicly as an explanation: "The prevailing opinion among young people of both sexes no longer acts as a restraint and does not condemn a young woman for having a glass of beer or stout in a public house with or without her men friends," the report observed.²⁹ Sceptics would contend that, with many men away in service, static numbers of women merely seemed larger, but the 1916 report disagreed, stressing that women were more numerous "not only actually but relatively to the population". Commentators from various backgrounds confirmed this finding. One observer reported in October 1916 that he had never seen more women in pubs.³⁰ "Women today are using the licensed house in numbers that would have appeared incredible three years ago," a correspondent of the *Brewers' Journal* wrote in April 1917. The pervasive female presence in Woolwich pubs in the spring of 1918 astonished Lenny Smith, knowledgeable of several working-class neighbourhoods as a member of a women's police patrol. Further north in working-class Salford, Robert Roberts recollected the surprise at unac-

26 Sydney O. Nevile, *Seventy Rolling Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 108; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 21 and 30, 1930), pp. 395, 451-452, 456-457.

27 One study of three Lancashire towns also noted that decent working-class women more frequently entered pubs during and after the war and viewed decreasing drunkenness as a direct result. Drunkenness had been declining rapidly (1915 and early 1916) before respectable women in substantial numbers began using licensed premises, however. Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 122; Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 432.

28 In 1915 a newspaper had conducted two surveys of drinkers in some Birmingham pubs as the basis for arguing that women had recently come to outnumber men. These pubs, comprising just 5% of the city's licensed premises, were not randomly selected. The data were further flawed by the creation of an undefined category, the general public, which accounted for one-third of the customers. If most of them were men, women would have been the second largest group, with about 40% of the total. "Women and Drink: Excessive Consumption in Birmingham", *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 5, 1915.

29 *Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *P.P.*, 1917-1918 (C. 8558), vol. 15, p. 24; see also the testimony of a Hull magistrate, *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 21, 1930), p. 390; and *Brewers' Journal*, July 15, 1917. The new trend of business women eating at restaurants, alone or with other women, during the war reflected the same phenomenon. Marwick, *Women at War*, p. 127.

30 *Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *P.P.*, 1917-1918 (C. 8558), vol. 15, p. 24; *Brewers' Journal*, October 15, 1916; see also *Licensing World*, July 7, 1917; and Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation to Another, 1839-1944: A Book of Memoirs* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944), p. 167.

accompanied wives drinking in the local pubs' best rooms.³¹ In a one-hour period in another Lancashire factory town, Blackburn, local authorities counted 2,000 women in 200 pubs. Even in smaller towns like Dalton-in-Furness in Cumberland, women braved male hostility and entered drink shops. "You'd got to get used to it", mused a beerhouse keeper's daughter, "because ... it got all going then."³²

When the government nationalized the brewing industry in four small but militarily important areas throughout 1916, the CCB directly confronted the issue of women in licensed premises.³³ Carlisle, the biggest, most urban of these areas, raised particular problems because men fanatically devoted to the pub as a male sanctuary, together with the aberrant influx of numerous swilling navvies, had escalated drunkenness, perpetuating pre-war drinking habits. Numerous Irish navvies and labourers employed in building the munitions factory at Gretna poured into the district from the autumn of 1915, enlarging Carlisle's population over the border by 10,000 and more the next year. Good wages, inadequate housing, and few leisure activities produced horrific drunkenness, though Carlisle had been placed under CCB authority late in 1915. At their apex in June 1916, arrests for intoxication reached 33 weekly, four times the amount one year earlier. Ironically, women drinkers demanded attention not because of their drinking as excessively as men but because of their deplorable, segregated drinking conditions.³⁴ Only with a more activist role could the CCB achieve gender equality in public drinking.

Drink premises in Carlisle and Gretna typified the Victorian gin palace with what one newspaper reporter called "meretricious glitter" and "frowsiness". Exteriors boasted multiple front and back entrances, huge signboards, prominent liquor advertisement, bottle displays, and vast gaudy mirrored windows. Inside, partitions and snugs divided rooms into small, drab, ill-lit, unhygienic, smoky, stuffy areas with tawdry decor. Spanning the seatless public bar, bar counters facilitated "perpendicular drinkers". Smoke room customers got seats, but paid for them with dearer pints. Drinkers

31 Anonymous to Editor, April 12, 1917, *Brewers' Journal*, April 15, 1917; Lock, *The British Policewoman*, pp. 82-83; PRO, Report on Drinking Conditions among Women and Girls in Woolwich and District, MEPO 2/1710; Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (1971; New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 204.

32 *Brewers' Journal*, February 15, 1917; Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 80, 82.

33 For the evolution and extent of state management, see Michael E. Rose, "The Success of Social Reform? The Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), 1915-21", in M. R. D. Foot, ed., *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J. R. Western, 1928-1971* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973), pp. 71-84; Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade*, pp. 197-225. The post-1945 history of nationalized areas is discussed in R. M. Punnett, "State Management of the Liquor Trade", *Public Administration*, vol. 44 (1966), pp. 193-211.

34 Nearly 270% more men but just 24% more women were arrested for drunkenness in 1916 than in 1915. Twelve times as many men as women were apprehended in 1916. *Alliance Year Book for 1931*, p. 277.

received nothing more here or in the public bar: no food, games, entertainment, or even comfort. One critic not unjustly dismissed such pubs as “poky little drinking dens”.³⁵

Into these cramped, seedy quarters, their unwelcoming, uncompromising masculine culture ascendant, respectable women dared not venture. “Men in certain parts of the city”, Albert Mitchell acknowledged as General Manager of Carlisle, “would not have the women drinking with them.” Decent women were deterred by periodic fights between rival groups in Carlisle’s most depressed areas and by the persisting social stigma of public drinking in less violent localities. Prostitutes mingling with prospective customers in public bars would have been equally off-putting. Only the most downtrodden women, therefore, sought leisure in the pub. Ostracized by male solidarity in main drinking rooms, they resorted to drinking in peripheral unclaimed space — doorsteps, passageways, and “jug and bottle” (off-licence) departments.³⁶

Its avowed goal of gender equality challenged, the CCB introduced imaginative policies aimed at elevating the pub’s image. The CCB also saw its rehabilitative role partly as a rejoinder to what local authorities elsewhere demanded with growing shrillness, the exclusion of women from licensed premises.³⁷ Architectural changes instituted under state management revolutionized assumptions about exteriors, layout, and functions of the pub, destroying sharp distinctions between hotels, restaurants, and private clubs for the privileged on one hand and drink premises for the poor on the other. No longer would class and gender segregate leisure activities in public spaces.

Reformed licences lost all trappings of classic Victorian gin palaces. Outside, back entrances were closed, a discreet shrunken house name appeared above the door or on the wall, and subdued green curtains graced unadorned windows. “There is no more indication that the house is a public-house than is absolutely necessary,” remarked an amazed *Birmingham Daily Post* reporter. Interiors, too, bore the reformers’ stamp. Partitions and secluded snugs disappeared, transforming stifling, gloomy, dark rooms into cavernous quarters, as striking for their vastness as for their light, openness, and ventilation. Redolent of posh hotels, the seats, tables, chairs, and truncated bar counters promoted sociability as consciously as the waiters who

35 Shadwell, *Drink in 1914–1922*, p. 79; *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 26, 1917; Selley, *The English Public House*, p. 89; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (April 29, 1930), p. 1022.

36 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (April 29–30, 1930), pp. 1026, 1058; Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 80–81; Arthur Sherwell, *Carlisle and Its Critics: Allegations Tested by Facts* (London: Temperance Legislation League, 1923), p. 22; *Committee on the Disinterested Management of Public Houses, Report, in P.P.*, 1927 (C. 2862), vol. 10, p. 16; Ernest Selley, *Drink Control in Carlisle: History and Fact* (London: P.S. King & Son, n.d. [1928]), p. 9.

37 See below.

replaced bar service in saloon bars. CCB reformers also laboured to introduce aesthetic decor, described by one enthusiast as “utility with beauty”. White cloths and flowers bedecked tables, and artistic prints and lithographs, illuminated with shaded lamps, lined walls and projected a homelike quality.³⁸

Immense, undivided café or restaurant rooms, creating a hybrid between pubs and restaurants, most symbolically rejected traditional pub architecture. At the Gretna, redesigned from a disused post office and opened in July 1916 as the first reformed pub, a café with 180 seats took up four times as much space as the sitting room, the chief drinking area. Across the Scottish border at Annan, Gracie’s Banking housed a large dining hall seating 200 and more. At the less publicized state pubs at Enfield, Middlesex, catering reached startling proportions. Into their dining halls the Greyhound packed 350 and the Royal Small Arms Tavern 600 seats.³⁹ Such huge dining facilities reflected one of the CCB’s main goals: the provision of substantial meals.

The CCB’s pre-eminent accomplishment was introducing respectable women directly into the bar premises. They literally gained ground in what had been a sacred male sphere. “We have endeavoured to make better provision for women who are equally entitled to drink as men,” declared the CCB General Manager in 1930. Indeed, the CCB promoted respectable female customers in what had been solely male drinking rooms as a tactic for restoring the pub’s tarnished image. Rejecting deeply entrenched male prejudice that denied women seats and access to the bar, the CCB welcomed those accompanied by husbands or male friends into the smoke room. To safeguard their reputation in a region in which only prostitutes had enjoyed mixed-sex drinking, the CCB created sex-segregated rooms, primarily in pubs in impoverished localities renowned for brawling. Intended for the unescorted woman, these “women’s departments” discouraged her with small, unappealing, spartan rooms, which served tea or coffee as well as alcohol. “Nothing has been done to ... tempt any woman to make a prolonged stay,” the CCB General Manager emphasized. All women were now banned from the public bar, the cheapest room in Carlisle pubs where

38 *Carlisle and District Direct Control Area: The General Manager’s Report to the Board for 1918*, in *P.P.*, 1919 (C. 137), vol. 24, p. 8; PRO, Ernest Selley’s Report of a Visit to Carlisle, HO 190/843, February 1917, p. 18; *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 26, 1917; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (April 29, 1930), p. 1030; Ernest Edwin Williams, *The New Public-House* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1924), p. 141; Rev. G. Bramwell Evens, *The Truth about Direct Control in Carlisle: As Administered by the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)* (London: P.S. King, n.d. [1917]), p. 26; *Fourth Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *P.P.*, 1918 (C. 9055), vol. 11, p. 18. Economic constraints prevented renovation of all state-managed houses before the end of the war.

39 Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade*, pp. 174; Selley, *The English Public House*, pp. 97–98; *Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *P.P.*, 1917–1918 (C. 8558), vol. 15, pp. 14–16.

prostitutes fraternizing with men had been so objectionable.⁴⁰ Admittedly, the CCB's strategy avoided banishing women altogether from licensed premises as a sop to male working-class hostility, but slum women lost drinking equality. By defining unescorted women in rooms with bars as potential prostitutes, moreover, the CCB effectively stigmatized all poor women. Women factory or munitions workers, who patronized barless café rooms serving food and alcohol, escaped such denigration.

The clientele in state-managed pubs changed significantly. Reconstructed pubs, with their openness, better decor, and meals, repelled slum women who had habituated traditional licensed premises. "Before they altered it," one poverty-stricken woman confessed, "I could nip in and have a glass and come out again without anybody knowing." The redesigned local affronted her deeply: "Now you has to go in and have your drink with the rabble!" Bereft of back doors, opaque glass exterior windows, partitions, and snugs, renovated state-managed public houses simply seemed too public. "There's no privacy now," grumbled one unreformed publican. "If a woman wants a drink she has to go where she's seen, and she doesn't like it." The impoverished woman drinker either excluded herself from licensed premises or accepted segregation in women's bars.⁴¹ Isolated from men in public bars, prostitutes needed to find other venues for plying their trade.

There were really two simultaneous developments: poverty-stricken lower-class men and women withdrew from the improved house, while respectable upper working- and middle-class drinkers of both sexes now confidently began frequenting it. Acknowledging this transformation, Sir Edgar Sanders, Carlisle's first state manager, related an incident of how villagers, so aggrieved at a model pub monopolizing the village custom, had walked two miles instead to another resembling their beloved demolished local. To the new state house, he noted, went "an entirely different class" from those who formed the pub's customary clientele. Some women, especially those employed from the upper working class, consumed meals in dining rooms; others broke with convention, joining male escorts in smoke rooms. "You can take the missus there and have supper, and have a glass of beer with it. Jolly fine," attested one pleased husband.⁴²

40 The Joiner's Arms, Pheasant Café, Goliath, and Irish Gate Tavern had women's departments. Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 81, 88, n. 87; Selley, *The English Public House*, pp. 99, 101; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (April 29, 1930), p. 1029; PRO, HO 190/843, J. S. Eagles (CCB General Manager) to A. F. Harvey, December 19, 1922; PRO, HO 185/22, J. S. Eagles to A. E. Mitchell, January 4, 1923; PRO, HO 185/227, A. F. Harvey's Report of a Visit to Carlisle and Annan, p. 3, July 3-7, 1917; *Committee on the Disinterested Management of Public Houses, Report*, in *P.P.*, 1927 (C. 2862), vol. 10, p. 16.

41 Selley, *The English Public House*, p. 88, and *Drink Control*, p. 9; PRO, HO 190/843, Selley's Carlisle Visit, February 1917, p. 20; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (May 22, 1930), p. 1132; Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 81.

42 PRO, HO 190/843, Selley's Carlisle Visit, February 1917, p. 20; *Brewers and Licensed Retailers*

CCB policies were not just causing but reflecting such monumental social changes. The peculiar circumstances in Carlisle had previously inhibited local women from following the national trend of visiting pubs in growing numbers. This development elsewhere, even in the conservative north, incited a backlash and forced the CCB to provide protection, using state-managed areas as a social laboratory.

Disgruntled departing old-timers and delighted newcomers both responded to state pubs in quite understandable ways. Touring the district in 1917, the Rev. G. Bramwell Evens noticed better conduct, with fewer acrimonious disputes and expletives. Spitting on floors or into spittoons, ubiquitous in the pre-war era, had been proscribed deliberately in the more refined environment without overt protest. "The customer feels that he has to behave himself," remarked Albert Mitchell, who compared his own attitude on entering a CCB pub with straightening his tie at a first-rate restaurant. Rough, coarse, suspicious Carlisle pub regulars would have found this as unappealing as women invading smoke rooms. Equally unpopular were what inveterate drinkers viewed as stark decor and pretentious pictures on walls. One detractor capturing the discontented spirit described Carlisle state pubs as "about as cheerful in appearance as an undertaker's shop, in the hands of the official receiver, on a wet day".⁴³

Sharp contrasts between the young in remodelled pubs and their elders in unreformed premises then and after the war in Carlisle confirmed that the CCB had not so much revolutionized drinking habits as unintentionally replaced hapless regular customers with hitherto non-pub goers. Middle-aged and elderly poor working-class drinkers, long accustomed to standing in austere, airless rooms without respectable women, eschewed the reconstructed pub; young upper working- and middle-class people, uninitiated into drinking mores, patronized it, drawn by seating, more sophisticated and less exclusively masculine decor, food, entertainment, and recreational facilities. Opened in 1916, the Gretna, with its central location and varied rooms, atypically spanned both groups, but still exhibited class and age differences: younger respectable drinkers used its novel large hall while older lower-class habitués preferred jostling at the bar. Likewise, those reformed pubs with women's bars perpetuated the drinking traditions of lower-class women. Both before and after state purchase, "poorly dressed, middle-aged and older" women drank in a secluded, single-sexed area. Upgrading, relocating,

Association, Transcript of Sir Edgar Sanders' Testimony to the Committee on the Disinterested Management of Public Houses, July 8, 1926, p. 519. I am grateful to the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association for permission to consult this material.

43 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (April 29, 1930), pp. 1033–1034; Bramwell Evens, *The Truth about Direct Control*, pp. 25–26; Arthur Greenwood, *Public Ownership of the Liquor Trade* (London: Leonard Parson, 1920), p. 180; Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 76; Lawrence Weaver, "The Public House of the Future", *Country Life*, vol. 40 (September 23, 1916), p. 357.

and officially designating it a women's bar had not changed the clientele. Perceptions had altered, however. Pubs with a more representative cross-section of the population created unease in poor working-class women whose drinking culture scorned outsiders, thrived on secrecy, and sanctioned violence. The presence of women from the upper working and lower middle classes besieged this drinking culture. They ensured that pubs — whether state-run or otherwise — catered to upscale markets. Class, drinking practices, and age hence all conditioned the response to improved premises.⁴⁴

CCB authorities pointed to their policies as responsible for widening the pub's clientele. In 1917 two-thirds fewer men and one-third fewer women had been arrested for intoxication in Carlisle than the preceding year, reaching levels only marginally higher than in 1914, when the city had no munitions workers or navvies. In 1918 drunkenness plummeted, with just 80 people apprehended, the lowest figure recorded in the city's history.⁴⁵ Intemperance had diminished, argued CCB Chairman Lord D'Abernon, as a direct result of improved surroundings affording customers comfort, respectability, and greater amenities. In state pubs, he avowed, "customers are less inclined to drink to excess than they are in houses ... designed as mere drinking bars." Relaxing at tables and conversing, eating, or watching pub games slowed customers' alcohol consumption as much as did the shorter, interrupted licensing hours. By reducing "perpendicular drinking", the hallmark of the gin palace, state pubs had revived an older tradition in which not drinking but sociability predominated. Several long-standing pub customers, for example, told Evens of their reduced drink consumption in food taverns. The notion of the pub as the local boozier, so popular with hard-drinking, poor working-class men, had been vigorously suppressed, giving these customers yet another reason for retreating to dwindling representatives of unreformed bliss, where traditional male culture still held sway.⁴⁶

Fears of a post-war reaction primarily motivated enlightened brewers to espouse reform of the English public house. Once the war ended, terminating CCB protection of female pub drinkers, local authorities seemed intent on divesting women of newly-attained drinking rights as part of a strategy for restoring Edwardian gender segregation. Some magistrates had foreshadowed post-war conservatism by excluding women from pubs. Animus against women drinkers was strongest in ports and industrial towns in northern England, the regions most committed before the war to preserving

44 Shadwell, *Drink in 1914–1922*, p. 154; PRO, HO 185/23, To the Members of the Birmingham Licensing Committee, July 1924, p. 6; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (May 22, 1930), p. 1130; Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 81; *Times*, August 8, 1917.

45 *Alliance Year Book for 1931*, p. 277.

46 *Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic)*, in *P.P.*, 1917–1918 (C. 8558), vol. 15, p. 16; *Carlisle and District Direct Control Area: The General Manager's Report to the Board for 1918*, in *P.P.*, 1919 (C. 137), vol. 24, p. 8; Bramwell Evens, *The Truth about Direct Control*, p. 8.

long-standing drinking habits. In the south, respectable women had traditionally found less opposition to their drinking in pubs, and criticism generally now declined.⁴⁷

This backlash against women should be viewed within a larger perspective. New drinking habits created anxiety as worrisome as “khaki fever” during the war, in both cases prompting much scrutiny. One symbolized social independence, the other sexual independence. “Khaki fever”, the derisive phrase characterizing how young women abandoned restraint around soldiers at the war’s outset, threatened gender relations by advancing promiscuity as an alternative to chastity, as Anna Woollacott recently argues. This also applied to public drinking, which served as an alternative to domestic abstinence. From these novel images, of course, came the new term, the “flapper”: young, single, unescorted women smoking cigarettes, liberally wearing cosmetics (formerly the trademark of prostitutes and chorus girls), daringly exposing their legs — all suggestive of their lax morality — and finally drinking alcohol in a pub, the archetypal institution of patriarchal authority. In defying established norms across such a wide spectrum, it is no wonder these women were viewed as flagrantly challenging the gender status quo.⁴⁸

However moderately they drank in pubs with a male preponderance, respectable female drinkers were criticized as feckless, disorderly, and unpatriotic, in short unfit to use licensed premises. Affronted magistrates clearly wanted licensed premises reinstated as a male domain. South Shields exemplified this attitude. There, justices of the peace openly admitted that their ambition was to have no women whatsoever guilty of intoxication.⁴⁹ Another Durham port, Hartlepool, achieved this goal late in 1917. Concerned at workingmen’s inadequate beer rations, the Chief Constable coerced licensed victuallers into banning women completely from their premises. By early 1918, with no women recently convicted of drunkenness, the Chair of the bench praised publicans for “their true patriotism”.⁵⁰ Nearby Middlesbrough magistrates, having intimidated retailers into segregating female drinkers in 1916, remained dissatisfied with nearly halving female drunkenness. Strong pressure cowed publicans into refusing women alcohol except in the handful of pubs in which it could only be consumed with

47 Thorne, “Places of Refreshment”, p. 247; Nevile, *Seventy Rolling Years*, p. 108.

48 Angela Woollacott, “‘Khaki Fever’ and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 29 (1994), pp. 342–343; Marwick, *Women at War*, p. 129; Jerry White, *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington, Between the Wars* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 192–193; Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 222, 224; Frances Donaldson, *Child of the Twenties* (1959; London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986), pp. 80–82.

49 *Brewers’ Journal*, February 15, 1917, and April 15, 1918.

50 *Licensed Victuallers’ Gazette*, October 5, 1917; *Brewers’ Journal*, February 15, 1918; *Brewing Trade Review*, November 1, 1917.

substantial meals. Female drunkenness naturally fell markedly, cut by another two-thirds in 1917.⁵¹

These escalating, effective attacks on women drinkers culminated in demands that the CCB abandon its policy of gender equality. Late in 1917 Chief Constables from Newcastle, Durham, and neighbouring towns met with the CCB and suggested new rules for licensed premises. Women, they urged, should be allowed to drink while eating a meal, but otherwise banned during evening hours as a remedy for the “growing evil” of increased female drinking. Asked for statistical proof, the Chief Constables conceded that their anxiety arose not from greater female drunkenness but from greater numbers of drinking females, whose novel habit was alarming because it was likely to continue after the war. The CCB knew this was a wholly specious argument. Just days before, its representative, F. C. Hultan, had reported that, though he had visited some 300 pubs in nine areas on the northeast coast, he had found typically about a handful of women in each of 60 establishments. This, he then noted, was far fewer than he had observed in Birmingham and Leeds. Declining to endorse the Chief Constables’ proposed ban, the CCB reaffirmed support for its own policy of avoiding “differentiation between the sexes”.⁵²

Thwarted northeastern magistrates took the initiative, advocating that local brewers and retailers voluntarily restrict or eliminate women’s drinking in licensed premises. Recalcitrance, some benches warned, would jeopardize licence renewal. Only at South Shields, where magistrates portrayed themselves as protecting labourers irate at beer shortages, did retailers proscribe women from licensed premises, though just during evenings. Middlesbrough magistrates used the same pretext for proposing a national beer rationing scheme that excluded women.⁵³

Brewers viewed the CCB’s ideology of improved public houses as the only viable approach to safeguarding decent female customers from antagonistic authorities committed to reinstating the status quo. Sydney Nevile, a London brewer with fertile ideas and a progressive outlook, had long been mindful of the pivotal importance of respectable female drinkers in rehabilitating the pub. They could be encouraged with catering, he reasoned. Food did not simply retard drunkenness, but visibly counteracted the pub’s stigma as a drinking den. Already in the Edwardian era Nevile had recognized that, with food introduced into improved houses, “we stood to attract new [female] customers and broaden the basis of our trade.” According to his

51 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 22, 1930), pp. 408–409, 421, 423, 425.

52 Nevile, *Seventy Rolling Years*, p. 108; *Brewers’ Journal*, February 15, 1918; PRO, North East Coast Area: Drinking amongst Women Report, HO 185/259, October 24, 1917, p. 3; PRO, A Restriction of Sale of Liquor to Women in North East Coast Area, Deputation of County Constables from Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Durham County and South Shields, October 26, 1917.

53 *Brewers’ Journal*, February 15 and April 15, 1918; *Brewing Trade Review*, March 1, 1918.

diagnosis, revenue lost from departing prodigious drinking men, whose sozzling had so besmirched the pub's image, would be amply offset by respectable customers of both sexes who bought food and drank moderately. As a CCB member from July 1917, he had first-hand experience of its unconventional but fruitful pub reforms in which both catering and women patrons played major roles. Brewer for a small Putney brewery, he would in no sense personify the industry. Yet Whitbread & Co., the huge, distinguished London brewery, would soon underline the source of his widening influence; named its managing director, he quickly transformed the firm into one of the most dynamic inter-war pub reformers.⁵⁴

Architecturally redesigned pubs with salient features of food taverns — catering, seating, café rooms, more feminine decor, non-alcoholic beverages, and recreation — would give brewers decent premises worthy of more respectable customers. As the *Brewers' Journal* remarked, "We strongly oppose any conspiracy to exclude women from the licensed house, for it is from the patronage of women ... that we shall hope to uplift the licensed house."⁵⁵

Pub-reforming brewers focused on attracting more respectable female customers, especially from the middle class, in the inter-war years. One female magistrate in the 1920s thought wily local publicans used cleaner pubs with improved facilities as an enticement to women. Likewise Ernest Selley, first lengthy investigator of post-war drinking habits in Britain, concluded that it was women socially above "the harridan type" who had taken to visiting not just any watering hole but what he termed "the better-class public house".⁵⁶

Demographic pressure may well have provided irresistible incentives for respectable women to patronize pubs. The war did not simply aggravate an imbalance in the ratio between the sexes, but disproportionately depleted the group of unmarried middle-class men in their late twenties. Yet marriage rates and age of marriage in the inter-war era remained remarkably consistent with preceding decades, prompting J. M. Winter's hypothesis that middle-class women partly fulfilled their marital aspirations with husbands socially beneath them.⁵⁷ Close reflectors of the surrounding socio-economic area, pubs could have facilitated the quest of middle-class women for eligible upper working-class men. Dancing, the craze of the 1920s, was the other ideal forum for pursuing nubile partners. Shrewd brewers fused the

54 Nevile, *Seventy Rolling Years*, pp. 67, 140, 167–168, 174.

55 Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association, National Trade Defence Association Minute Book, February 1, 1918; *Brewers' Journal*, April 15, 1918.

56 Selley, *The English Public House*, pp. 126–129; see also *Brewers' Journal*, June 15, 1938; *Fellowship*, vol. 6 (February 1926), p. 38. For one middle-class woman's reappraisal of pubs, see Hilda Ann Salusbury, *Only My Dreams: An English Girlhood* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1990), pp. 229–231.

57 J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 256–260.

two new leisure trends for young adults, building cavernous dance halls in new or renovated pubs.⁵⁸

New female customers, asserting their class origins, carefully discriminated between pub rooms. Unlike their Edwardian working-class counterparts who could just afford public bars where perpendicular drinking commonly prevailed, respectable middle-class females frequented expensive saloon bars. Posh suburban pubs had captivated them, Lewis Melville felt, by renovated decor stressing feminine features — seats, gleaming tables, flowers, subdued gramophone music, and illustrated newspapers. Author of a book on London life in the 1920s, he attributed the fact that “more and more women ‘drop in’ to the better-conducted [public] houses” to the decline of drunkenness.⁵⁹

Brewers still more overtly lured respectable women with the lounge, an entirely new room introduced into reformed pubs soon after the war. Its name consciously linked improved pubs with up-market hotels, which used the same nomenclature. Lounges exuded respectability: upholstered seats and chairs, plants, pictures, fashionable decor, carpeting or linoleum floors, non-alcoholic advertisements, waiters, and separate female lavatories. Banished were spittoons, ashtrays, stone floors, perpendicular drinking, and even the open bar itself. In their brightness, cleanliness, and smooth surfaces, lounges projected precisely the type of clientele brewers most sought. Nor were they disappointed. To the lounge went customers whose clothing (respectable dresses and no curlers for women; bowlers, trilbies, ties, and good suits for men), drinking vessels (glasses or gills), smoking habits (cigarettes, cigars, or pipes), and beverage (bottled beer or wine for women) were emblematic of middle-class status. Men in worn suits, caps, and scarfs, drinking pints of draught beer and chewing tobacco, knew their place in vaults, taprooms, or public bars, rooms unused by northern women altogether. In Bolton, roughly twice as many women frequented big town-centre pubs, recently rebuilt or refurbished with lounges or best rooms drawing a middle-class custom, than traditional licensed premises on main streets, dominated by working-class men. Though just one-sixth of the pub’s patrons, these Lancashire women made up nearly half the lounge customers.⁶⁰

58 Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars, 1918–1939* (London: Pandora, 1989), pp. 117–119.

59 Melville, *The London Scene*, pp. 35–36; see also Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, ed., *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, vol. 9, *Life and Leisure* (London: P. S. King & Sons, 1935), pp. 262–263.

60 Mass-Observation, *The Pub and the People: A Worktown Study* (1943; rept. ed., London: Cresset Library, 1987), pp. 33–34, 50, 67–108, 134–135, 140–145, 184–185, 204, 207; Maurice Gorham, *The Local* (London: Cassell & Co., 1939), pp. 7, 42; Charles Porte, “The Planning of Public Houses”, *Journal of the Institute of Brewing*, vol. 40 (1934), p. 33; Ben Davis, *The Traditional English Pub: A Way of Drinking* (London: Architectural Press, 1981), pp. 42–43; Jim Bullock, *Bowers Row: Recollections of a Mining Village* (Wakefield: EP Publishing, 1976), pp. 150, 155;

Reformed licensed establishments generated a clientele different in class, sex, and generation than that attracted by traditional pubs. When women could again publicly drink in Middlesbrough in the mid-1920s, they betrayed these changes. "Women drinkers today are [not] so crude as those in the pre-war era," asserted the town's Chief Constable, pointedly noting that they came from the "younger generation". Local pubs displayed unusual modern traits for tempting these young respectable women: open layouts, bright, ventilated rooms, and ample furnishings in the best or smoke rooms.⁶¹ Clare Cameron, frequenter of town and country pubs in the 1930s, claimed that male customers thought the female drinker sacrificed no status, provided "she is apparently well-to-do". Cameron identified prosperous middle-class wives and literary and theatrical women as the social class intermittently visiting pubs. Because of improved pubs and their elevated image, "licensed houses are patronised to-day much more by women of the middle classes," agreed the *Brewers' Journal* in August 1935.⁶²

B. Seebohm Rowntree reached similar conclusions when informed observers universally reported more women in York's licensed premises. Arrests for drunkenness in the town, which had followed the national downward trend during World War I, declined throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, producing a startling result: "one may pass through working-class streets every evening for weeks and not see a drunken person."⁶³ Compared with endemic Edwardian weekend violence, which required extra police, the 1930s appeared almost a temperance utopia. So thought decent females who primarily used licensed "hotels", seldom working-class watering holes.⁶⁴ Of the former's clientele, over 40 per cent were women, 15 to 20 per cent more than in other types of premises. In such improved pubs, women, often young and nearly as numerous as men, utilized saloon or smoking rooms, sumptuously decorated, with music in special concert rooms

Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence (January 30, 1930), p. 451; Nancy Banks-Smith, "The Pub that We Called Home", in Angus McGill, ed., *Pub: A Celebration* (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 183; Thomas Burke, *London in My Time* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1934), pp. 193–194.

61 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 22, 1930), pp. 406, 410, 418, 420, 424; *Licensing World*, November 26, 1938.

62 *Brewers' Journal*, August 15, 1935; Clare Cameron, "Why One Woman Likes the Pub", *True Temperance Quarterly* (February 1938), pp. 17, 19; F. Goldsbrough, "The Modern Public House", *Journal of the Incorporated Brewers' Guild*, vol. 21 (1935), p. 201. For a different view, see Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives*, pp. 165–166.

63 For every five people per thousand arrested around the turn of the century in York, there were less than two in the 1920s and not much more than one in the 1930s. B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1941), pp. 369, 470.

64 In the inter-war period publicans and brewers believed they gave inns or taverns more exalted images by calling them "hotels". *Ibid.*, pp. 352, 469–470. See also the influx of young women into a "hotel" in another northern town, Altofts, West Yorkshire. *Licensing World*, February 25, 1939.

seating 100 to 250 people. Age was a crucial determinant. Young adults under 25 flocked to licensed "hotels", accounting for between 75 and 95 per cent of the customers. York's unreformed pubs offered stark contrasts. Their *déclassé* spittoons and sawdust, perpendicular drinking, and largely impoverished clientele left young women of all classes resolutely unimpressed. Style of establishment and class and age of the customer were therefore interrelated: as one moved up socially with wider amenities and better decor, pub customers were increasingly young, middle-class, and equally divided between the sexes.⁶⁵

While the wartime habit of respectable women patronizing pubs widened in the 1920s and 1930s, this development fell short of full gender equality in drinking rights. Little was done to attract poor working-class women. Reformed pubs, which catered to respectable middle- and upper working-class females, were predominantly located not in slums, but in city centres or suburbs and on housing estates or roadways. Well into the early 1930s rowdy, violent, boozing dens perpetuated the disreputable image of public drinking in impoverished communities. Only a handful of breweries, recognizing some likely financial return, would follow the advice of Whitbread's house journal in 1926, which urged "a clean sweep ... of fixed furniture, wall papers, heavy hangings, and such 'works of art' as famous racehorses, prizefights, almanac portraits of departed statesman and other mural eyesores". Such decor all brashly bespoke male culture and exclusiveness. As a result, working-class women "do not use licensed premises to the extent they did in pre-war days", concluded the *Brewers' Journal* in 1935.⁶⁶ A rare statistical comparison was offered by Mass-Observation, a group of sociologists who had pioneered research into drinking habits in the mid-1930s. In four pubs in poverty-stricken Fitzroy Square, London, Mass-Observation found that the proportion of women was 10 to 20 per cent lower generally in 1943 than in 1897 when Arthur Sherwell had conducted the first study. With many men doubtless away in military service, the shrinking number of working-class women is especially suggestive. Women accounted for roughly one-fourth of the clientele in Fitzroy Square, but over two-fifths in five London suburban pubs surveyed by Mass-Observation the same year.⁶⁷ All this evidence strongly testifies to middle and upper work-

65 Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, pp. 351–358.

66 Selley, *The English Public House*, p. 46; Mass-Observation, *The Pub and People*, pp. 91, 104; Llewellyn Smith, *The New Survey*, vol. 9, p. 262; White, *The Worst Street*, p. 84; "The Ideal House", *House of Whitbread*, vol. 2 (January 1926), p. 44; Bullock, *Bowers Row*, pp. 148–149; *Brewers' Journal*, August 15, 1935; Burke, *London in my Time*, pp. 194–196; Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress*, p. 351.

67 The slumping proportion of women drinkers in Fitzroy Square pubs, of course, might well have begun anytime between 1897 and 1943. This census of pub customers is the only comparable one covering a broad period. University of Sussex, Mass-Observation Archive, Juvenile Drinking, File 1837 (1943), pp. 135–137, and Report on Women in Public Houses, File 1635 (March 1943), p. 3. Arthur Sherwell's statistics were published in his *Life in West London: A Study and a Contrast* (London: Methuen & Co., 1897), pp. 131–136.

ing-class women as the biggest source of the reformed pub's new female patrons.

Regional subcultures, reflecting different class and gender attitudes, also set limits on female pub drinkers. Male prejudice against them intensified as one went north, reaching a *de facto* prohibition in Scotland. Women, for example, accounted for 36 per cent of the pub clientele in South Fulham (London) in the 1930s, more than twice as much as in Bolton. Likewise, women's bars, prevalent in London, were relatively rare in Bolton. Even the sex of pub employees showed the same pattern: barmaids historically had diminished numerically as the distance from the southeast increased.⁶⁸ Among occupational groups in the midlands and north, none loathed mixed drinking as strongly or preserved their pubs as male citadels more successfully than miners. Ordinarily unescorted women, middle-aged or older, were conceded segregated back rooms, often with rear entrances, though evidently relatively few thought the lost status worth the price. Wives did accompany husbands on weekend pub visits, but even then often drank separately either in special rooms or, as in Newcastle-on-Tyne, outside.⁶⁹

Some conservative magistrates, too, stymied brewers' appeals to female drinkers through the improved pub. One common and effective tactic was the rejection of applications for altering premises or for new licences. In Newcastle-on-Tyne, for instance, justices of the peace impeded reformed pubs entirely until late into the 1920s. Elsewhere magistrates, displaying other forms of heavy-handed sex discrimination, deprived brewers of commercial incentive by pressing publicans not to serve working-class women. Publicans usually co-operated, posting placards with the stern injunction "Ladies are not served in this House." Malcolm Dillon, Chairman of the Seaham Harbour bench in Durham, applauded such signs, but recommended replacing "ladies" with "women": "a respectable woman calling herself a lady would never be seen drinking in a public-house."⁷⁰

Not just in the Seaham Harbours of the north did policy, prejudice, or pressure dissuade women from drinking publicly. Cutting across class, culture, and magistrates' hostility was distrust of the "flapper". Middles-

68 PRO, HO 190/843, J. S. Eagles to A. F. Harvey, December 19, 1922; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 22, 1930), p. 435; Mass-Observation, *The Pub and People*, pp. 106, 110, 148; Bird, *Women at Work*, p. 84.

69 Selley, *The English Public House*, pp. 123–126; Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 82–83; Banks-Smith, "The Pub that We Called Home", pp. 182–183; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 22, 1930), pp. 431, 434; Bullock, *Bowers Row*, pp. 148–149.

70 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 22 and November 4, 1930), pp. 433, 436, 2012; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Report, 1931–1932* (C. 3988), vol. 11, p. 239; *Licensing World*, March 13, 1920, February 19, 1921, and February 18, 1922; *Committee on the Disinterested Management of Public Houses, Report*, in *P.P.*, 1927 (C. 2862), vol. 10, p. 22; Nevile, *Seventy Rolling Years*, pp. 168–170; Williams, *The New Public-House*, pp. 31–32; T. R. Gourvish and R. G. Wilson, *The British Brewing Industry, 1830–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 433–434.

brough's Chief Constable reviled their appearance in his town in the 1920s: "Very young women, fashionably dressed, with powdered and painted faces, sit amongst the men, drinking intoxicating liquors and smoking cigarettes; their dresses ... being well about the knees." Their foremost failing, he stressed, was not in being "common prostitutes", but in having loose morals. Their emancipated conduct in scorning male chaperones doubtless also aroused male anxiety. Whether in London or Newcastle in the inter-war era, unescorted women were prohibited indiscriminately after 10 p.m. in many refreshment facilities — cafés, hotels, restaurants, and pubs. Eminently respectable women seeking tea, not clients, still met firm rebuffs in the most refined establishments.⁷¹

Surprisingly, feminists disdained the reformed pub. Certainly, their pre-war claims to equality between the sexes had never included the demand for equal public drinking facilities, but now they had abandoned the liberal feminism which logically would have supported such rights. Its metamorphosis into a "new feminism", emphasizing women's maternal and domestic functions, literally repudiated the assumptions of the Edwardian suffrage movement. Feminists now spoke not of an antagonistic relationship between the sexes but of complementary gender roles; not of the inevitable ending of sexual inequality but of immutable sexual differences; not of universal human rights but of women's special needs — the refashioning of the despised Victorian concept of separate spheres. Feminists thus began embracing the rhetoric of anti-feminists, who had no interest whatsoever in fostering a reformed pub that redefined gender boundaries. In the new feminist programme — birth control, family endowment, and protective legislation — there was simply no ideological place, no way of arguing on behalf of a distinctive need, for women to drink publicly.⁷²

Class, culture, general male prejudice, and an unsympathetic feminism all inhibited but failed to reverse the trend of females drinking publicly in the inter-war era. New pubs without separate facilities anticipated the decline of segregated drinking: in a survey in 1938 of 54 improved pubs with the most progressive architecture, only three had women's bars. Clearly, with mixed drinking lounges accommodating greater numbers of women in pubs, women's bars seemed increasingly of dubious value.⁷³ After 1927 Carlisle

71 *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*, April 11, 1930; Winifred Holtby, "Ladies in Restaurants", *Manchester Guardian*, March 28, 1930, reproduced in Paul Berry and Alan Bishops, eds., *Testaments of a Generation: The Journalism of Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby* (London: Virago Press, 1985), pp. 67–70; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 22, 1930), p. 410; Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty*, p. 119.

72 Susan Kingsley Kent, "The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 27 (1988), pp. 232–253, and "Gender Reconstruction after the First World War", in Harold L. Smith, ed., *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp. 66–83.

73 E. B. Musman, "Public Houses: Design and Construction", *Architects' Journal*, vol. 88 (November

model pubs typically contained mixed saloon or smoking rooms.⁷⁴ As Albert Mitchell stated, “there is no objection to the mixing of the sexes in many of the [reformed] public houses.” This certainly explains why Filson Young, reporter for the *Morning Post*, on a visit to Carlisle expressed astonishment at the “number of women who rightly frequented these [public] houses”. According to Carlisle’s first general manager, Sir Edgar Sanders, the collapse of sex-segregated pubs or pub rooms derived primarily from the town’s improved licensed premises.⁷⁵ Elsewhere similar signs of long-term changes in drinking habits prompted comments. Maurice Gorham, author, architectural historian, and habitué of countless pubs, regarded ladies’ bars as anachronistic in 1939: “no rebuilt pub is likely to have one.” A decade later he was further contending that women received the same treatment as men in pubs. This view gained support from a 1948 Gallup poll of public attitudes: 61 per cent had no qualms about women in pubs and 75 per cent had none about them in restaurants. Mixed drinking had so wholly supplanted ladies’ bars that one guide on pub design actually characterized them as an “innovation” the following year.⁷⁶

Respectable women had been insinuated into a wider pub clientele, but neither then nor later would they comprise anything but an important minority. It was not just that the too few reformed pubs could not overcome entrenched attitudes and sexism to vanquish the historic stigma against women drinking in public, but that many who avoided pubs simply did not drink. Mass-Observation and Gallup polls in the 1930s and 1940s indicated that roughly one out of every three or four women categorized herself as an abstainer. Young middle-class women — the expected patrons of the improved pub — formed the biggest group of teetotalers.⁷⁷

Many factors thus interacted, frequently in unexpected ways, to break old drinking habits and foster new ones during the First World War. There was no grand government plan at the war’s outset for rehabilitating the public

24, 1938), pp. 833–890; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (January 29, 1930), p. 395. Some architects did include a “women’s bar”, but ensured it could be converted easily into an unrestricted area. Porte, “The Planning of Public Houses”, p. 34.

74 Basil Oliver, *The Renaissance of the English Public House* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), pp. 63, 65–66, 70–71, 74–75; *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence* (April 29, 1930), pp. 1029, 1031. In this northern town, women’s bars remained a feature of some new state pubs, such as the Crescent and Earl Grey, both built after 1932.

75 *Royal Commission on Licensing, Minutes of Evidence*, (April 29–30, 1930), pp. 1026, 1029, 1033, 1058; *Morning Post*, January 25, 1926.

76 Gorham, *The Local*, pp. 40–41, and *Back to the Local* (London: Percival Marshall, 1949), p. 111; George H. Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain, 1937–1975*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 167; Francis W. B. Yorke, *The Planning and Equipment of Public Houses* (London: Architectural Press, 1949), p. 107.

77 *News Chronicle*, June 26, 1939; Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls*, vol. 1, p. 167. Only the Mass-Observation poll conducted in 1939 correlated abstainers with class and age.

house by introducing respectable women and revolutionizing pub architecture with state-managed areas as a showcase. The CCB's radical regulatory scheme was pre-eminently a pragmatic response to a short-term but critical problem, soaring drunkenness, which jeopardized the war effort. Certainly its success in suppressing insobriety and offering protection against reactionary military and civil authorities drew respectable women into pubs, but so did joining the work force and the emotional as well as physical vacuum caused by the absence of vast numbers of men, first abroad in uniform and later too commonly killed in action. Young, employed, unmarried, respectable upper working- and middle-class women, the basis of the new pub clientele throughout most of the country, emerged in state-managed areas as a result of deliberate government policy aimed at subverting pre-war drinking patterns. Limited in scope, these reforms had far-reaching consequences. In pioneering new architectural ideas and broadening roles of the pub, the CCB gave the brewing industry the only tenable philosophy for post-war economic prosperity.

Lavishly improved and reconstructed licensed premises in the inter-war era reflected a calculated response to radical changes in the pub's customers during the war. Magistrates intent as much on opposing larger numbers of women in licensed establishments as on resurrecting patriarchal authority disturbed brewers. In adopting a pre-emptive policy of better pubs late in 1918, brewers thus looked to preserve an existing clientele of women, not to create a new one to offset slumping beer consumption or to thwart nationalization or prohibition, as scholars generally contend.⁷⁸

Brewers fell short of their goal. Class, regional subculture, and residual male prejudice as well as female abstainers thwarted full gender equality in drinking rights in inter-war public houses. The entry of women on a large scale into licensed houses during and after World War I, however, laid the foundation for their greater freedom to drink publicly in the post-1945 era.⁷⁹

78 Kevin Hawkins, "The Conduct and Development of the Brewing Industry in England and Wales, 1880-1938" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bradford, 1981), pp. 472-473; Kevin Hawkins and C. L. Pass, *The Brewing Industry: A Study in Industrial Organisation and Public Policy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), pp. 46-47; Alan Crawford, Michael Dunn, and Robert Thorne, *Birmingham Pubs, 1880-1939* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), p. 48; Robert Thorne, "Good Service and Sobriety: The Improved Public House", *Architectural Review*, vol. 159 (February 1976), p. 110; Terry Gourvish, *Norfolk Beers from English Barley: A History of Steward & Pateson, 1793-1963* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, 1987), p. 103; Robert Elwall, *Bricks and Beer: English Pub Architecture, 1830-1939* (London: Architectural Library, 1983), p. 37.

79 Vincent S. Jones, "The Post-War Pub", *Architects' Journal*, vol. 139 (May 20, 1964), p. 1143; Kathleen Hewitt, "But, My Dear, I Actually Saw Her", *House of Whitbread*, vol. 10 (Spring 1950), pp. 24-25; *Brewers' Journal*, May 19, 1943.