

INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BREWING, RETAIL AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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If your ale may endure a fortnight, your beer through the benefit of the hop shall continue a month ... And if controversy be betwixt Beer and Ale, which of them shall have the place of pre-eminence, it sufficeth for the glory and commendation of the Beer that, here in our own country, ale giveth place unto it and that most part of our countrymen do abhor and abandon ale as a loathsome drink.

Reginald Scot, *A Perfite Platforme for a Hoppe Garden* (1574)¹

Reginald Scot's sixteenth-century work on the benefits of hop culture serves as a fitting reminder of the intertwined historical relationship between techniques of production, questions of preservation and distribution of concern for retailers, and matters of consumer taste. This special edition of *Brewery History* focuses attention on this relationship through four papers exploring different aspects of production, retail and consumption of alcohol in England in the period between the fifteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century. Together, the essays offer several new ways of looking at key debates within the field of 'drinking studies'.

As a growing and interdisciplinary field, drinking studies investigates an enormous range of historical and contemporary issues surrounding the production, trade, marketing, regulation, restriction, medicalisation, and consumption of alcohol. Among the extensive list of research areas that Craig Heron identifies as particularly central for alcohol and drinking studies are 'economic development, labour relations, consumer practices,

family life and living standards, the dynamics of work and leisure, the formation of social classes, the norms and practices of gender (especially masculinities), the cut and thrust of moral reform projects, the nature of popular politics and state formation, the shaping of regional and national cultures, and, in general, the relationship between the moral and the material dimensions of capitalist society.'² And that is just in Canada.

In the necessary process of developing a more limited remit of investigation for this special edition of *Brewery History*, then, the activities of two interdisciplinary research networks have been fundamental: the Centre for the History of Retailing and Distribution (C.H.O.R.D.) and the Warwick Drinking Studies Network (W.D.S.N.). In September 2011, the Centre for the History of Retailing and Distribution, based at the University of Wolverhampton, hosted a conference on 'Food and Beverages: Retailing, Distribution and Consumption in Historical Perspective'. This conference provided an opportunity for dialogue between historians, economists, business studies and marketing specialists, archaeologists, sociologists, and anthropologists exploring particular practices in the trade, sale and consumption of food and drink in societies as diverse as contemporary Greece, nineteenth-century Brazil, and Ancient Rome. Across two days of stimulating discussion, numerous papers dealt with: gender relations and identities involved in alcohol consumption, the public and private spaces where alcohol is sold and consumed, innovations in brewing technology, the development of commercial networks, and governmental approaches to licensing, regulation and taxation of alcohol. A particu-

lar area of convergence for several papers presented at the conference centred on the significance of ale and beer in early modern England, and from this convergence our special edition of *Brewery History* has developed. The participants in this edition agreed that a collective effort to explore the history of ale and beer in early modern England from the multiple perspectives of production, retail and consumption would produce a volume highlighting intersections between these different fields of investigation that often remain separate. The hope was that this novel approach would generate alternative perspectives on some of the important debates in the history of drinking in the early modern period.

Facilitating dialogue between multiple, diverse perspectives in the discussion of important debates in the field of drinking studies is one of the major aims of the W.D.S.N., which has also played a key role in bringing this special edition of *Brewery History* to fruition. The network is an interdisciplinary research group that brings together scholars who work on any aspect of drink and drinking culture in any society and in any time period, together with interested professionals and observers outside academia. Symposia and conferences organised by the W.D.S.N. are intended to act as fora for the cross-disciplinary interrogation of a single organising research theme or methodology. For instance, the September 2011 symposium on 'Drink and the Life Cycle' brought together speakers from the disciplines of classics, history, film studies, human geography, anthropology, and marketing to discuss the significance of alcohol for people of different ages, generations, and stages of life across time and space. Moreover, the network's February 2013 conference 'Biographies of Drink' will consider the economic, political, and socio-cultural dynamics of alcohol consumption, production and trade in different historical and cultural contexts through an organising methodology of case studies - or "biographies" - of particular drinks, drinking spaces, drinking groups or individual drinkers. Participants include specialists in the fields of design aesthetics, literary studies, history, anthropology, social geography, gender studies, psychology and medicine, amongst others. In this spirit of cross-disciplinary dialogue, the W.D.S.N. organised two panels for participation in C.H.O.R.D.'s conference on 'Food and Beverages: Retailing, Distribution and Consumption in Historical Perspective', where the crucial exchanges on the production, retail and consumption of ale and beer

in early modern England that form the basis of this volume originally took place.

Worthy of mention is the central place that early career scholars have occupied within the establishment of the W.D.S.N., the organisation of many of its events and activities, and indeed in forming a core body of participants in these activities. The operation of a significant body of early career scholars within a given historical field is undoubtedly an indicator of its vibrancy. In this regard the field of drinking studies is certainly in rude health, and this special issue of *Brewery History* provides a showcase of some of the work being done by historians in the early stages of their academic careers. All four essays in the volume reflect on recent developments in the history of drinking, while simultaneously making their own contributions to the direction in which the field continues to develop.

The first essay, by Kristen Burton, focuses on brewing - an aspect of the history of drinking in early modern England that has received far less attention than the issue of alcohol consumption.³ Burton offers us a detailed account of a key process often only mentioned in passing by historians of the period: the replacement of unhopped ale by hopped beer as England's drink of choice, a process that primarily took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Crucially, thanks to the addition of hops, beer was a much more durable product than ale, which allowed its production to move from the domestic to the commercial sphere. This led to the emergence of a lucrative and prosperous brewing trade, and by 1600 London was the leading producer of beer in Europe. Burton's contribution is an important reminder that not only did the early modern period witness an important shift in what people were drinking, but it also saw the development of the brewing industry as an important sector of the economy, and the emergence of commercial brewers as an increasingly wealthy and powerful group in early modern England.⁴

The second essay, by Matthew Jackson, is concerned with the retail of alcohol in early modern England. Burton's narrative is of relevance here though: it is generally accepted by historians that the commercialisation of the brewing trade in the early modern period was accompanied by its 'masculinisation'. As it became a more profitable trade, women-who had traditionally been responsible for domestic brewing-were margin-

alised, and those who did continue to work in the drink trade were met with heightened misogyny and negative stereotyping.⁵ Jackson seeks to qualify this interpretation. Focusing on female publicans in both England and France in the period, he argues that attitudes towards these women working in the drink trade were at least ambivalent, and in many cases positive.⁶ To make his case Jackson draws on two of the prevailing trends in early modern drinking studies: one is the adoption of a European comparative dimension, and in part it is the inapplicability of the 'masculinisation' paradigm to French material that motivates him to revisit the issue in the English context.⁷ The second is to draw upon evidence from popular literature to advance our understanding of drinking culture in the past.⁸ Jackson makes the important point that the legal and regulatory records upon which historians have often relied tend to portray drinking activities in a conflictual and negative light. Literary sources, on the other hand, often permit us to identify more positive discourses about drinking and those involved in the drink trade.⁹ By bringing these key methodological developments to bear on the subject of female retailers, he is able to make a significant challenge to a long standing orthodoxy.

The remaining two essays focus on the consumption of alcohol, the aspect of drinking studies that has undoubtedly received the bulk of recent attention from scholars. Work in this area has been primarily concerned with uncovering the rituals and codes of conduct-the informal etiquette-that informed early modern drinking practices.¹⁰ Both of the essays here attempt to challenge the way historians have thought about this project. Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin explores the consumption of alcohol in a particular context: the feasts held by trade guilds, with a special focus on the London Goldsmith's Company in the period 1570-1640. The essay encourages us to think about the importance of the material and spatial aspects of alcohol consumption: for the members of trade companies, the most important elements of communal drinking practices were not so much *what* or *how* one drank, but *where* one sat in the feast hall, and the *vessel* from which one was permitted to drink. Kilburn-Toppin suggests that many historians-by focusing their attention on abstract sets of rules or conventions that were associated with how to drink alcohol and how to behave when drinking-have overlooked the important ways that physical settings and paraphernalia structured drinking practices and gave them meaning.¹¹

Closing the volume, Mark Hailwood's essay also argues that historians need to look beyond what contemporaries thought were the appropriate ways to behave when drinking, and accord greater importance to the physiological and biological effects that alcohol had upon the behaviour of early modern drinkers. Hailwood accepts that drunken behaviour is to some extent culturally determined, but urges historians not to lose sight of the role played by intoxication itself in drinking practices. Although this is not easily recovered from historical records, he suggests that we can at least pay attention to what contemporaries themselves thought about the intoxicating effects of alcohol, and shows us another context in which popular literature is a useful source for historians of drinking. His analysis of popular understandings of alcohol's effects in seventeenth-century broadside ballads offers insights into what contemporaries thought about whether alcohol could make an individual act out of character; whether early modern people saw alcohol as a stimulant or a narcotic; and what they thought about drinking in moderation. Taken together, then, these last two essays argue that studies of alcohol consumption in the period need to go beyond simply thinking about the cultural conventions that did, undoubtedly, help to shape the ways alcohol was consumed-to also think about the ways in which material, spatial and biological contexts influenced drinking practices and the behaviour of drinkers.

These are lively times for the historical study of drinking, with a healthy number of research networks, conferences, and publications showing that the historic place of alcohol in society is finally starting to achieve the recognition it deserves as a serious scholarly subject. All the essays in the edition have been through a process of peer-review by senior academics working in the field, and represent important contributions to on-going historical debates. That said, the authors are all aware that one of the great pleasures of working in the field of drinking studies is the subject's intrinsic appeal to many non-academics, and the contributors have sought to produce pieces that will be interesting and stimulating to the academic and non-academic reader alike. It is hoped that this special edition of *Brewery History* will be as interesting and enjoyable to read as it has been for the authors and editors to produce.

References

1. Cited in Boston, R. (1976) *Beer and Skittles*. London: Collins. p.22.
2. Heron, C. (2003) *Booze: A Distilled History*. Toronto: Between the Lines. pp.xi-xii.
3. Although a recent corrective to this was an earlier special issue of this journal that explored 'Brewing Cultures in Early Modern Towns'. Kümin, B. (ed.) (2010) *Brewery History*. 135.
4. For the wealth and influence of brewers see also: Brown, J.R. (2010) 'Brewers' Tales: Making, Retailing and Regulating Beer in Southampton, 1550-1700' in Kümin, B. (ed.) (2010) op. cit.
5. This theory was developed in Bennett, J. (1996) *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. This builds on a recent vein of work emphasising that attitudes towards female patrons of drinking establishments may not have been as negative in this period as was once assumed by historians. See Reinke-Williams, T. (2010) 'Women, Ale, and Company in Early Modern London' in Kümin, B. (ed.) (2010) op. cit.
7. For attempts to think about the history of drinking in a wider European context see Kümin, B. and Tlusty, B.A. (eds.) (2002) *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
8. Of particular influence here is the work of Angela McShane Jones. See her (2004) 'Roaring Royalists and Ranting Brewers: The Politicisation of Drink and Drunkenness in Political Broadside Ballads from 1640 to 1689', in Smyth, A. (ed.) *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer. See also Hailwood, M. (2011) 'Sociability, Work and Labouring Identity in Seventeenth-Century England, *Cultural and Social History*. 8:1, pp.9-29.
9. For instance, see Taylor, A. (1999) *Bacchus in Romantic England. Writers and Drink, 1780-1830*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Earnshaw, S. (2000) *The Pub in Literature: England's Altered State*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Toner, D. (2012) 'Drinking to Fraternity: Alcohol, Masculinity, and National Identity in the Novels of Manuel Payno and Heriberto Frias,' *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*. 89:4, pp.397-412.
10. For a summary of this literature, see Hailwood's essay in this volume.
11. Kilburn-Toppin is not alone in stressing the centrality of material and spatial contexts to early modern drinking practices: see for instance James Brown's unpublished PhD thesis, (2007) 'The Landscape of Drink: Inns, Taverns and Alehouses in Early Modern Southampton'. University of Warwick.