

BOOK REVIEWS

Pubs and Patriots: The Drink Crisis in Britain during World War One

By Duncan, R.

Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

2013, Pp. x + 262, £70

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On 19 May 1915 the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) came into being under the wartime provisions of the Defence of the Realm Act. Thus began what Rob Duncan, author of *Pubs and Patriots*, fairly describes as ‘the most radical experiment in drink control ever attempted in Britain’. Operating under the chairmanship of the charismatic diplomat Lord D’Abernon, the C.C.B. introduced strict closing hours (only fully repealed under the 2003 Licensing Act), restrictions on the buying of rounds and limits to the sale of alcohol on Sundays. It also took direct control of the drinks trade in a number of areas, most notably the entire region around

Carlisle and Gretna. Here it bought up pubs and breweries, and embarked on a form of state management that drew on the ‘Gothenburg System’ experiments of the late 19th century, while also establishing ‘pub improvement’ principles that would be

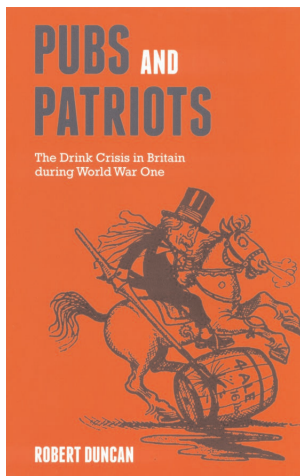
developed by brewers such as Whitbread in the inter-war years.

In detailing the work of the Central Control Board during World War I, *Pubs and Patriots* fills a hitherto glaring gap in the literature on the history of drinking and alcohol policy in the U.K. While many general histories of pubs, brewing or drinking culture discuss the C.C.B., sometimes in detail, it has not enjoyed the kind of focussed analysis afforded to the Georgian ‘gin craze’, the Victorian temperance movement, interwar pub improvement or, indeed, the Beer Orders of 1990. This book, then, is a welcome contribution to our understanding of that period, and provides a wealth of documentary detail not previously collected in one place.

Duncan’s study benefits from meticulous research into parliamentary papers, contemporary news reports and official documentation produced by the Central Control Board itself. Following a broad introductory chapter on alcohol debates in the early 20th century, it covers the period from 1915 to the Board’s final meeting in late 1921. Individual chapters explore themes including the impact of the outbreak of War on debates around drink, the politics of the C.C.B.’s formal establishment, the ‘Carlisle Experiment’, women and drink during the War, and the changing post-War conditions that led to the Board’s demise.

Duncan’s analysis, however, makes no claims to neutrality. Far from it. Indeed, his stated goal is to

rehabilitate the reputation of the drinking community who were condescendingly believed to be unable to control their drinking habits, [and his core argument is that] the political and social controversy surrounding the drinks issue [in this



period] was merely a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the socially malevolent predictions of temperance ideology crystallised around perceived failures in the execution of total war.

It is, of course, entirely reasonable to challenge the notion that the work of the CCB was motivated purely by a tangible threat to the war effort posed by feckless drinking among the working class - indeed, John Greenaway has demonstrated previously that the 'threat' of industrial inefficiency was as much an issue of policy framing as a response to a new risk. Robert Duncan does very well here to support that position, demonstrating the extent to which Lloyd George used the figure of the drunken shipyard worker as a means of deflecting attention from a stalling war effort. He also provides excellent documentary evidence of the extent to which Lloyd George's famous 'Bangor Speech' - and his near-obsession with the drink question more broadly - were seen in many quarters as, to quote Lord Rosebery, nothing more than 'humbug and hypocrisy'.

Pubs and Patriots also presents useful data on the decline in consumption leading up to the outbreak of war, further supporting the argument that political clamour for action on alcohol was motivated by interests other than an immediate threat to efficiency (though, of course, even a reduced consumption level could be a threat to productivity under war conditions). Duncan also provides an excellent overview of the tension between the C.C.B.'s programme of state purchase and the Ministry of Food's policy of restricted supply following the food crisis of 1917 - and lends weight to the argument that the decline in consumption at this time was driven by the taps being shut of at the supply side as much as changes to the demand culture in the wake of the C.C.B.'s new licensing regulations.

However, it is also the case that in putting the argument this starkly Duncan relies on a disappointingly uncritical acceptance of the conventional view that temperance was merely a middle-class crusade dominated by moral puritans and pious finger-waggers. Few historians of temperance would accept this caricature and much of the research in the field (most recently Annemarie Mcallister's 'Temperance and the working class' project) has directly challenged it. Duncan's depiction of temperance as a monolithic attack on working class culture and freedom is all the more surprising given the

prominent role that Phillip Snowden (author of *Socialism and the Drink Question* [1908]) played in the C.C.B. Socialist temperance, Duncan suggests, was simply another expression of the nannying desire to control people rather than, as was argued by Snowden, John Burns and others, a belief that the drinks industry was an especially pervasive (and oppressive) arm of capitalism more broadly. Expressed in classically Marxist terms, socialist temperance asserted that the pubgoers and landlords may have been working class but - critically - the owners of the means of production (i.e. the brewers) were not: so the freedom to drink, while pleasurable, was just another way of maintaining the economic status quo. From this perspective, the constant attacks on the C.C.B. emanating from Lord Beaverbrook's newspapers were not, as Duncan tends to suggest, authentic expressions of popular opinion but rather the defence of one capitalist interest by another.

The complex pre-war debates over the relative value of state control, municipalisation, local veto and prohibition are underplayed here, and the decision to adopt such a stridently critical position on temperance leaves the intellectual backstory to C.C.B. looking excessively black and white. Duncan's assertion that the C.C.B.'s project of trade municipalisation in Carlisle 'could have come out of any of the many temperance journals prior to and during the war', for instance, overlooks the vehement opposition to state control (and the legitimisation of the trade which it implied) from prohibitionists such as the United Kingdom Alliance. It is also striking that control campaigners are routinely described as 'vituperative', 'duplicitous' and 'hypocritical' opportunists engaged in 'tirades' against 'supposed' or 'alleged' social problems; while throughout the book working-class drunkenness is described, somewhat rosily, as 'over-exuberance'.

Pubs and Patriots provides a strong contribution to the literature on alcohol policy during World War I, and it contains excellent archival material - not least some wonderful posters, cartoons and photographs. It presents the findings of extensive documentary research and, for that, is a valuable addition to the literature. As is, sadly, the case with too many university presses, this book is prohibitively expensive (and suffers from some minor, but distracting, copyediting oversights that the publishers - charging as much as they do - have a responsibility to iron out). None of that is the author's

fault though, and this reviewer has complete sympathy on that front. However, it is the sometimes Manichean perspective on the politics of alcohol control which casts a bigger shadow over what is, in other respects, is an important and well-researched study.

JAMES NICHOLLS

The Red Lion Brewery: Hoare & Co.

By Hutchings, V.

London: Umbria Press

2013, Pp. 144, £20

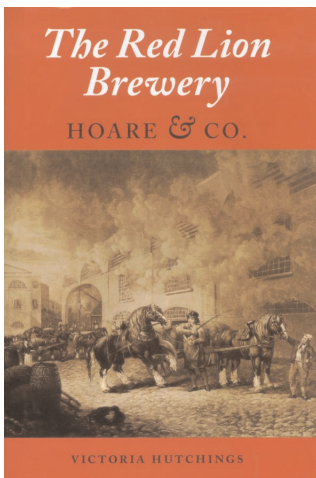
ISBN 978-0-9541275-9-6

Victoria Hutchings has produced here an interesting and attractive book which was commissioned by the Hoare family back in 2005. It traces the history of the Red Lion Brewery from a common brewer to a brewhouse between Wapping and the Tower of London. Its origins go back to the 16th century and probably much earlier, the Hoare family being only connected to the brewery for its final 150 years. Previously, back in 1693-4, it was assessed to be the most valuable brewing establishment in London. Later in its life it became hemmed in by the 1827 development of St. Kathrines and London docks.

The book details all of the movements of ownership, shareholding and inheritance as well as the benefits of

having a bank within the family. Alfred Barnard's visit in the 1880s is described and he was most impressed with what he saw and stated.

With all due respect for Dublins' porter and stouts, and from personal observation extending over a



three years tour now we can say with truth that we have not with either porter or stouts superior to Hoares brew in the three kingdoms!

The book goes on to chronicle the rise of Burton on Trent and its surpassing London as the brewing capital of the world. It explains the growth of paler beers and the subsequent decline of dark ales. Though it states the supremacy of Burton declined once the London brewers had worked out how to imitate their beer and hence how London publicans were obliged to exclude Burton beers from their houses.

I would say my favourite chapter is 8, the final one, which charts the last years of the business from 1904-38. It describes how brewers expanded their tied estates at a time when property prices were inflated. The downside shows the struggle the brewers had when they had to revalue their estates. The political climate was also shown to be a problem as it placed additional burdens upon the brewers. The 20th century was a difficult time for Hoares and lots of other British brewers. Details of planned acquisitions, mergers and takeovers are explained as is the adoption of the Toby jug trademark. The Red Lion brewery by 1933 was in need of restructuring as production facilities were inadequate, leading to offers being received from Taylor Walker and Charrington. Charrington was given serious consideration and thus acquired Hoares. After the takeover, all production was moved to the Anchor Brewery which was modern and occupied a site with room for expansion. The Red Lion Brewery had no scope to expand its four acre site, meaning the closure of the oldest business in London. The site was later sold to the Port of London Authority for a sum of £125,000.

All in all a very enjoyable book, which is lavishly illustrated. My only criticism being the beer bottle labels described as beer mats!

DAVID DINES