

BOOK REVIEWS**A History of Drink and the English, 1500-2000**

By Jennings, P.

London: Routledge

2016, Pp.xii & 218, £95.00

ISBN 978-1-8489-3555-6

A History of Drinking: The Scottish Pub since 1700

By Cooke, A.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

2015, Pp.xi & 268, £19.99

ISBN 978-1-4744-0762-5

Drink and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland:**The Alcohol Trade and the Politics of the Irish****Public House**

By Kabel, B.

London: I.B. Tauris

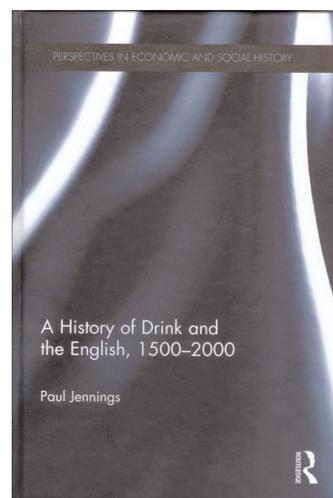
2015, Pp.305, £69.00

ISBN 978-1-78076-641-6

Over the last twelve months three books have been published which focus, to varying degrees, on beer, brewing and pubs in England, Scotland and Ireland. Although each tackle specific subjects within particular geographical regions, there are many aspects which are comparable, where similarities occur and equivalent influences can be perceived. Consequently, it seems appropriate to assess them together and see if an overall picture emerges.

The book with both the greatest remit and longest historical reach is Paul Jennings' so making it the most ambitious of the three. The author's aim is to provide a history of all alcoholic drinks in England over a 500 year period, a project which, he states, rests on a number of assertions. Most generally, it is proposed that

alcohol is of central importance in most human societies. Although there are obvious exceptions to this, alcohol is the most well-known and widely used substance employed to affect human consciousness. The second assertion is that alcohol is ambivalent, that is, throughout history its consumption has been perceived both positively and negatively. Jennings is correct in stating that it is the latter which has taken the lion's share of historical analysis and wants to try and redress the balance by also investigating the beneficial aspects of drink. The third assertion 'is that the history of drink reflects broader economic, social, cultural and political developments in society and it can only be properly understood by analysing their interplay' (p.3). He quotes the Finnish scholar, Pekka Sulkunen, who wrote how 'we can look through the window not only from society to alcohol but also from alcohol to society' (p.3). What this entails is the need to go beyond a purely historical analysis and draw upon other disciplines in order to obtain a better understanding of alcohol consumption. The penultimate assertion is that alcohol needs to be studied in a global context - drink and the culture around it are influenced by factors beyond national barriers (the intro-



duction of hops from Europe and the preaching of American temperance advocates being just two instances). Jennings' final assertion is that, in tandem with the one just made, there are also local and regional variations. For example, what and where people drink can differ between localities as can the legal regulations effecting consumption.

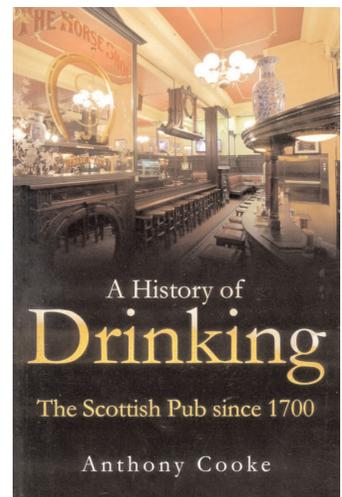
With these assertions in mind the author then goes on to investigate drink over seven chapters, each concerned with a particular theme; drinking, producers and sellers, places and spaces, meanings, drunks, anti-drink, and regulation. This thematic format, when applied to such a long period, works well, each chapter providing a succinct analysis of the topic to hand. At this point it should be stated, and this is especially pertinent for readers of *Brewery History*, that the drink which plays by far the greatest role in *A History of Drink and the English, 1500-2000* is beer. Wine and gin are touched upon, but not other alcoholic drinks.

In the somewhat brief conclusion Jennings returns to his five assertions to reassess them in the light of the evidence presented in the previous 210 pages. He argues that alcohol's role in English society has seen a gradual decline over the last 500 years, evidenced by a fall in both total and individual consumption. Drinking alcohol has shifted from being an important part of a person's diet to a predominantly recreational act. Drink has also ceased to be universal in two other respects; being replaced for many people by clean water, tea, coffee, chocolate and soft drinks and access to it being denied to children and young people with increasing severity from the mid-nineteenth century. Yet in other respects alcohol has become more prevalent, there are now a wider array of venues in which to purchase and consume it and, mainly due to the sale of drink by supermarket, the phenomenon of drinking at home continues to rise. Alcohols 'ambivalence', its positive and negative perceptions, continues. As Jennings describes, the arguments both for and against may change in their niceties, but there remains a tension between the pleasures induced by drinking and a need by some to restrain or even prohibit consumption. The author's third assertion is one of the most important and he should be congratulated for drawing upon a wide range of sources and collating them in such a readable and coherent manner. As he states, 'the history of drink is a product of interlinked economic, social, cultural and political

developments. As these are constantly changing so this is reflected in the history of drink' (p.212). The global dimension of drinking, so Jennings's believes, remains unchanged whereas local and regional diversity has diminished over the last half millennium.

A History of Drink and the English, 1500-2000 provides the reader with an excellent overview of the topic. The study does not contain any original research, but this is not surprising for a work covering such a broad subject over five centuries. Jennings should be commended for producing such an engaging narrative and his decision to organise the book thematically rather than chronologically is particularly effective. Statistics are used in a judicious manner, bolstering the arguments, but never overwhelming the text. For an introduction to the subject of drink and the English there is currently no better study and it is hoped that it will inspire readers to look deeper into the many aspects of alcohol covered by the book. The only slight reservation is that there are so few illustrations for what is a very visual subject.

The second book, *A History of Drinking: The Scottish Pub since 1700*, as the title makes explicit, also covers a long time period, although the subject matter is more narrowly focused. As Anthony Cooke writes in the introduction, 'there is no equivalent of Peter Clark's *The English Alehouse, A Social History, 1200 - 1830* (1983), or of Brian Harrison's detailed examination of nineteenth-century English pubs and the temperance movement' (p.2), the implication being that this work is an attempt to fill this gap. Indeed, the author himself asserts, 'in this book, I want to examine what went on in Scottish pubs, their social history and economic importance. I want to explore the differences between Scottish and English pubs, to set the pub in its European context, and



discuss the ways in which pubs functioned as public spaces and how this was modified by the temperance movement. I also hope to make a contribution to the history of popular culture in Scotland' (p.5). To go about this the subject is tackled chronologically, the five major chapters covering specific time periods.

The first chapter deals with the years between 1700 and 1790, an era is described as being one of rapid social, cultural and economic change which saw dramatic increases in population, urbanisation and living standards. As a consequence of these factors Scotland also experienced a sharp rise in both alcohol consumption and the number of drinking establishments. Of particular significance at the beginning of this period was the effects brought about by the Act of Union, part of which entailed the gradual imposition of a malt tax. When the influence of this was combined later in the 1700s with a decrease in the duties paid by whisky retailers, consumption of the spirit rose exponentially. The result for Scotland's major cities were similar to London's Gin Craze of the same period. The sale of beer exhibited a rapid decline apart from one type, porter. Again, just as in London, porter brewing favoured the larger producers so by the 1790s an increasing share of the beer market was being taken by commercial brewers.

The next period, 1790-1830, is characterised by a continued decline in beer consumption per head of population and a concomitant increase in spirit drinking. Yet this was not consistent across all sectors of society, Cooke arguing that during these 40 years the types of drink and venues used by different classes became more distinct. The upper and middle classes sought more private leisure establishments, in which they drank porter and wine, whereas the working class drank spirits in ale houses and dram shops. Another influence on drinking venues at this time was tourism, a phenomenon that had begun after the Highlands had become more accessible due to the construction of military roads in the early to mid-1700s and given a boost by the works of Walter Scott.

The years between 1830-1914 were dominated by two factors; a massive rise in the Scottish population and the birth of the temperance movement. The first of these meant that by 1911 50% of all Scots lived in one or two-roomed households compared to just 7% in England and Wales. Cooke believes that this level of overcrowding

made the urban pub an attractive place of escape for the Scottish working man. By this time significant differences between pubs north and south of the border can be seen, the two major ones being that in Scotland most were owned by private individuals who sold predominantly whisky (in 1838 Scots drank 23 pints of spirits per head, mostly whisky, to England's seven pints per head annually) whereas in England a vast number of pubs were owned by breweries and sold chiefly beer. This period also saw the birth of one of the most important movements to affect the drinks industry, temperance. The first temperance society in Britain was founded in Greenock, Renfrewshire in 1829, the second following later that year in Glasgow (the first such society in England appeared in 1830 in Bradford and was established by a Scottish worsted manufacturer). A number of general factors regarding temperance across Britain have been noted by researchers, but Cooke perceives a unique aspect to the Scottish movement, one that was anti-Irish and anti-Catholic. He notes that temperance societies were particularly active in areas that contained high proportions of immigrant Irish workers. The movement became increasingly influential throughout the nineteenth century and legislation, such as the Forbes Mackenzie Act of 1853, saw tighter restrictions on the sale of alcohol in Scotland than in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Scotland's experiences between 1914 and 1945 were similar in many respects to the rest of Britain. For example, the influence of temperance peaked and then slowly declined, the state took control of the production and retail of alcohol in a two locations (one, the Invergordon-Cromarty area being wholly in Scotland) and women came to play a more active role in the workforce, including the drinks industry. One particular factor that was unique to Scotland was the effects of malt shortages which impacted on the production of whisky far greater than on beer. Consequently, consumption of the former declined (in certain places replaced by a drink which combined cheap red wine and methylated spirits) and the latter increased. Another effect was an increase in the sales of Guinness, Ireland being excluded from the restrictions on using malt, especially on the west coast of Scotland.

The final chapter, that dealing with the years from 1945 to the present day, highlight the impact of a decline in restrictive legislation, but also touches on a variety of

subjects from the influence of CAMRA to the higher proportion of alcohol related diseases in Scotland than in the rest of Britain. It also relies more heavily on personal interviews and anecdotes which, to a degree, softens the academic tone of the book. This is exaggerated by two appendices, one a selection of the author's favourite Scottish pubs and the other a discussion of which is the country's oldest. Two other slight criticisms can be made. Firstly, the chronological format of the book does lead to a somewhat repetitive feel as the same topics are returned to in each chapter, and secondly, Cooke's ambition to set the Scottish 'pub in its European context' is not realised, no European countries appear in the ten page index. One comparison that is tackled to a degree is that between the Highland and Lowland Scotland and more may have been made more of this, at times, significant distinction.

Despite these criticisms *A History of Drinking: The Scottish Pub since 1700* does provide a much needed examination of the Scottish pub, a subject that has been neglected for far too long. Primary sources, especially accounts by those that visited pubs over the 300 year period covered by the study, offer interesting and informative insights. Furthermore, the author's analysis is backed up by a good use of statistics and the book is well illustrated throughout. What one takes away after reading this book is how important the pub is for the author and not just on an intellectual level, his genuine affection for this Scottish institution is obvious.

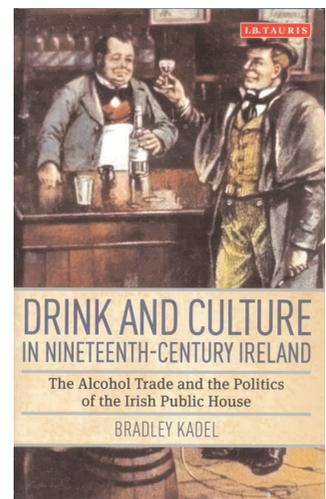
The final book to be covered by this review, *Drink and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: The Alcohol Trade and the Politics of the Irish Public House*, is the most focused of the three, covering a period from the 1830s to 1918 and laying key emphasis on organisations formed to defend various aspects of the drinks trade. Thus, it does not set out to compare Irish drink and the establishments in which it was consumed with those of the rest of Britain (although this can be easily inferred by the reader, especially after having read the previous two works).

What will come as no surprise, more than anywhere else in Britain, is the significance of politics in all subjects relating to drink. When, in the 1830s, the Drink Question came to the fore Parliament in London was not ignorant of the fact that in Ireland the majority of revenue came from taxes on retail licenses and drink. On

the other hand, they were also concerned with the association, real or not, between poorer drinking venues and seditious activities. Consequently, and in part due to political lobbying by the Dublin based (LVA), considerable concessions were gained for the Irish trade. Yet certain Irish specific laws were enacted - the Liquor Licensing Act of 1836 included one article which 'granted to police the legal authority to arrest and detain any individual for simple drunkenness' (p.21). This addition to the Act was the work of Captain Thomas Drummond, undersecretary for Ireland, and for the author the most influential figure in the transformation of the Irish public house. He firmly believed that by suppressing drunkenness and 'low' public houses Irish rebellion could be suppressed and between 1836 and 1839 40,000 individuals were detained of which 16,000 ended up in prison.

The relationship, where they did exist, between those publicans belonging to the LVA and its successor, the Licensed Grocers and Vintners' Protection Association (LGVPA), and Ribbon and Fenian societies petered out by the end of the nineteenth century. This was due not only to the actions of the authorities, but also to the drinks trade itself. The Associations, in order to protect its membership from increased legislative regulation, competition from beer houses and unlicensed shebeens and the growing temperance movement, went out of their way to portray their own members' establishments as an integral, respectable and law abiding part of Irish society, in part modelling itself on its English counterparts.

The relationship between trade associations and the temperance movement highlights the intricacies of the Irish situation - at times they were bitter enemies and at others they worked in partnership. Temperance



campaigners accused publicans of Fenian sympathies whereas they in their turn portrayed anti-drink campaigners as English outsiders and temperance legislation as Protestant inspired. Yet at other times the two sides formed a united front, although for admittedly different reasons, against, for example, beer houses and the re-election of Sir Edward Arthur Guinness in 1880.

The latter highlights one of the major differences between Ireland and England at this time. Whereas in the latter there was an ever increasing amalgamation of beer producers and retailers via the tied-house system this was not the case in the former. As Kadel explains, 'through the 1880s and 1890s the LGVPA and Guinness parted ways over such issues as the amount Arthur Guinness and Co. would pay in subscription fees to the vintners' association, the rights associated with the Guinness bottle label, discounted prices for regular customers of the brewery, and Guinness's lack of cooperation in helping eradicate loopling in the city. Later in the 1880s the association would attempt to promote smaller Dublin breweries to oppose the growing dominance of Guinness' (p.248-9). The distinction between brewers and retailers was further emphasised by the growth of pub-owning companies on the one hand and the reluctance of brewers to become involved in any aspects of the retail side of their trade, such as the setting of prices, on the other.

The distinctive treatment of the Irish drinks trade continued up to and during World War I, again due to the effective lobbying of the LGVPA. It won significant concessions with respect to the Children Messenger Act (1902) and the Children Act (1909), both of which concerned under 14 year olds entering public houses. Between 1914 and '18 the Association again won important dispensations, this time relating to the strength of beer. As in the rest of Britain the Government promoted the brewing of a weaker drink, but the LGVPA portrayed this as discriminating against Ireland. In a circular sent to the Trade and Irish MPs it was stated that 'the action of the government is either a deliberate attack on the brewing industry in this country or is the result of criminal ignorance of the conditions attaching to the brewing of the two countries. The Irish [...] have unanimously declined to brew light beer, but this country is of course thereby deprived of the advantage of the order which can be availed of by brewers on the other side. The average gravity of the Irish product

is enormously higher than that of the English and Scotch, and it is therefore palpably unjust to Ireland to apply the same conditions' (p.267). Ireland, however, could not escape the restricted opening hours that were imposed on the rest of Britain.

This is a rich, in depth analysis of one particular aspect of the Irish drinks industry, one that describes the growing influence of a trade association over some 90 years. Despite its relatively narrow remit it offers an excellent insight into an organisation which had to deal with a number of challenges, some of which were unique to Ireland. Relations within the trade, with their employees and brewers had to be navigated while simultaneously dealing with external factors such as the increasingly influential temperance movement, the British government and Irish nationalism. As a consequence, a broader picture of the Irish drinks trade emerges than one might first imagine. It is a pity that such an interesting narrative is not backed up by a single figure or photograph.

Taken as a whole these three works highlight the important role beer, brewing and pubs have played in British history. They provide a complex and fascinating picture, one in which England, Scotland and Ireland emerge with their own distinct narratives while simultaneously influencing each other. All three make the point that while politics, economics, cultural and social factors influence what, when and where British people drink this drink. Yet they also emphasise the fact that drink, and beer in particular, acts back on these factors - it is not a one way process. What becomes evident is that there are many more aspects of beer and brewing history that warrant further investigation, not least a study dedicated to Wales.

TIM HOLT