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## Drinking Customs of the English : From Gin Palaces to Pubs

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## Drinking Customs of the English: From Gin Palaces to Pubs

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### 1. THE ISSUES

England has been called a “country of pubs.” In English history, pubs were not merely establishments for drinking. They also served as centers for entertainment and socializing and provided a convenient place for the general public to gather. By performing a variety of functions, including offering a place for the payment of wages and arranging insurance, pubs were firmly entrenched in the everyday life of the English. However, the image of the pub that the English and the rest of the world today have was actually established only in the late-19th century, between approximately the years 1880 and 1890. For example, the majority of pubs in London were established after the year 1880, and the unique style of drinking that takes place in pubs is believed to have become entrenched in English society only from the time when the venue itself came into being.

What, then, is the unique style of drinking in pubs? Let us imagine ourselves entering a pub. It may be anywhere in England. In most towns, the pub would be easy to locate. Unique signboards with intricate designs identify the building. These signboards do not necessarily give greatest prominence to the name of the pub. In recent years, it is the name of the brewery that supplies beer to the pub that is frequently given greatest emphasis, though the traditional name of the pub will be found there too. This relates to the special circumstances in the period when the current style of drinking in pubs became entrenched in England. (This issue will be discussed later)

The overwhelming choice of drink in a pub is beer. It may be stout, as represented by Guinness, or a relatively heavy bitter beer in which the carbonation is the natural result of the fermentation process. Serious beer drinkers reject pressurized beer and chilled lager, though these too will be available, along with an increasing number of foreign specialty beers. But the

unexpected success of the Campaign For Real Ale over the last thirty-five years has ensured that the main drink on offer is a naturally-fermented bitter beer which is neither chilled, pressurized or pasteurized, much as it would have been a hundred years ago.

In any event, one places the order over a counter and the pub keeper on the other side fills a glass from the beer pump. Payment is completed when the order is delivered. There are light snacks such as pies and Scotch Eggs, but the majority of customers order only beer. Most customers drink their beer standing, either at the counter or near small tables placed within the pub. Some will sit on stools. Others will command a place on a comfortable-looking chair near the fireplace. Still others will retire to a somewhat more chic adjoining room to sit on a sofa. In any event, the customers, all with a pint (or half-pint) of beer, engage in conversation and laughter, or play billiards or darts. There is no background music to disturb the customers' conversations, though pubs popular with young people may have juke-boxes.

Looking around the establishment one sees old posters and lithographs on the walls, glass adorned with beautiful lettering, and frequently a beer stein (tope) shaped in the form of a fat old man. The mirrors found everywhere on the walls are particularly noticeable. Until some years ago, class distinctions were clear in the drinking environment. The public bar frequented by the working classes and the saloon bar for people in a class above such working people had separate entrances, but this feature is rarely seen today. Nevertheless, numerous pubs still have "snob screens" for providing privacy and preventing recognition of other customers. As explained earlier, this image of the pub and its drinking customs became entrenched in English society around 1880, a period that reportedly "created 8 or 9 out of every 10 English cultural aspects." Needless to say, the history of the pub is much older than this, but in terms of current drinking habits and the ambiance of the pub that provides the forum for such drinking, what we now call the English pub was "created" in the late 19th century.

The term "pub," an abbreviation of "Public House," came into common use in English society in the late 1860s. It is believed the process leading to the birth of the nomenclature "pub" and the method of drinking in these establishments is related to technological innovation and changes in the social system that brought about (or needed to bring about) changes in the then existing ways of drinking.

In historical research to date, the issue of drinking in England has for the most part been viewed as a social problem resulting from the physical and mental depravity of the working class and tends to be discussed in terms of the movements calling for prohibition (temperance) or for provision of alternative entertainment (so-called rational entertainment) in attempts to lure the working class away from liquor. However, there has also been a certain amount of research that attempts to locate the unique culture of the working class in drinking environments. In both approaches, the main focus is on the results of drinking rather than on the drinking style itself. For this reason, the manner in which people actually imbibe liquor has usually been either ignored or neglected.

This paper will concern itself with the manner in which the English drink by focusing on the way pubs, and drinking styles in pubs, became entrenched particularly in the Victorian era.

## 2. FROM PUBLIC HOUSE TO PUB

As mentioned earlier, “pub” is an abbreviation of “Public House.” It is a term that came into common use in English society in the latter half of the 19th century and continues to be used to this day. “Public House” referred to an establishment where anyone able to pay could obtain food and drink. In the period after the middle ages, the following three types of Public Houses are said to have existed:

**Inns.** — Begun in the Roman age and reaching their zeniths in the 18th century in the age of carriages, inns were fundamentally places offering overnight accommodation. Food and drink were also sometimes provided.

**Alehouses.** — Common in the 14th and 15th centuries, alehouses were drinking establishments serving ale (low alcohol beer produced without hops). No meals were served.

**Taverns.** — Relatively sumptuous meals were served at taverns along with alcoholic beverages, mostly wine. To digress a little, for a time taverns functioned as a sort of singles bar but eventually couples entering such establishments were required to produce certificates proving them to be married and the singles bar function moved on to other establishments.

These three types of Public Houses were differentiated not by exterior appearance or interior ambience but by the respective functions they fulfilled. From these three types was forged the “single Public House” in the mid-19th century. This is not to suggest that the functions of the three earlier types of Public Houses were entirely integrated into the pub. On the contrary, it is more correct to say that it was through the disappearance of functions such as entertainment, meals, and overnight accommodation which had no direct bearing on the pub’s function as a drinking establishment, that the unique style of drinking in the “single Public House” was born. This fact is clearly evidenced by the differences in the exterior and interior structures between pubs in the Victorian age and the Public Houses that preceded them.

When discussing the emergence of a new style of drinking in the Victorian pub, the role of a fourth type of Public House other than the three mentioned above cannot be ignored. The fourth type of Public House does not refer to the beer houses that sprang up as a result of the Beer Act of 1830 but, ironically, to the gin palaces that rapidly increased as a reaction to the law. Changes in the design of gin palaces, which reached their golden age in the latter part of the 19th century, established the prototype for pubs, and the style of drinking in these establishments exerted a decisive influence on pubs.

## 3. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THAT FUELED THE GIN FEVER

It is a well-known fact that 18<sup>th</sup>- century England was beset with “gin fever,” and that people were troubled over its negative impact on the working-classes. Two famous works of art by the satirist William Hogarth, depicting “Gin Alley” and “Beer Lane,” crystallized the nationalistic associations of the two drinks: gin destroys the body and soul of the poor working man, while beer, by contrast, nourishes and protects the English body.

Through the Beer Act of 1830 promulgated by Lord Wellington, taxation on beer was abolished and anyone paying 2 guineas to the (direct) tax collector could brew and sell beer. Selling wine or distilled spirits, on the other hand, was subject to a fine of 20 pounds. In other

words, by lowering the price of beer through deregulation of brewing and sales, the Beer Act attempted to promote a shift to beer and away from gin among the working classes.

During the whole of the 18th century, gin (or the damage caused by gin) tends to be discussed against the backdrop of poverty and unemployment that the working class faced, but the true reason for the popularity of gin was that the price was low compared to other liquor and that, for a pittance, one could become inebriated. Why, then, was gin so inexpensive?

The alcoholic beverages consumed by the English in the three types of public houses mentioned earlier (inn, ale house, and tavern) were, for the most part, ale, beer (which is ale produced using hops), and wine. In the latter half of the 17th century, the Dutch liquor gin joined their ranks and consumption of this new entry rapidly surpassed that of ale and beer. What is important to understand is that this change had nothing to do with changes in English taste, but was the result of outside political and economic forces.

The reason 18th century England became a gin-drinking society is eminently simple. Gin is an alcoholic beverage made by distilling grain, the type and quality of which is relatively unimportant, and flavoring was in stable supply, unaffected by the international situation. From the 17th century, and particularly from the latter half to the end of the 18th century, England was periodically and chronically at war with France, which meant that the supply of imported French wine (and brandy) was highly unstable. As an alternative to French wine, a treaty was executed in 1690 to import wine from Portugal, which maintained a peaceful relationship with England, and this continued uninterrupted until 1831. Portuguese wine (“port”) achieved popularity to a certain extent, and for this reason, the 18th century in England has been characterized as the “century of port.”

However, the strongest association we have when we refer to 18th - century English society is probably not the “century of port” but rather the “century of gin.” Production and consumption of gin can be estimated from tax collections, and according to this estimation the production of gin was as follows, peaking in the year 1748 (see table).

In addition to the fact that gin was the only spirit that was not affected by relations with France and was always in stable supply (Scotch whisky was still a regional drink of Scotland), growth in the consumption of gin was influenced by the incentive measures of William III of

**Table.** Amount of gin produced in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Britain.

1710	2,200,721 gallons
1722	3,379,695 gallons
1727	4,612,275 gallons
1734	6,074,562 gallons
1751	7,049,822 gallons

[Haydon 1994]

Orange who assumed the throne in 1689 as a result of the Glorious Revolution. William III, whose preference was a gin called “Geneva,” banned all imports of distilled spirits upon assuming the throne and raised the tax on ale to 3 shillings a barrel. The tax hike was justified by the fact that the alcoholic content of ale in those days was high (higher than that of beer today); indeed, the period from the end of the 17th century to the 18th century is known as the “age of strong beer.” Using this pretext, taxation on ale was increased annually until it reached 5 shillings a barrel in 1692. In 1697, taxation on malt was introduced, followed by taxation on hops in 1710, resulting in still further increase in the price of beer.

On the other hand, taxation on gin and other distilled spirits was significantly cut in 1690, with concurrent abolishment of monopolistic production of distilled spirits. The production of gin was thus being actively promoted. In fact, whereas the production of gin quadrupled in the period from William III to Queen Anne spanning the years from 1684 to 1710, production of beer decreased by 12% and, in the case of stout, by as much as 22.5%. Thus, the rapid increase in gin consumption and the attendant problems this occasioned was not a product of changes in the taste or mindset of the people, but can best be described as the result of the international relations of the age.

By 1720, the negative impact of gin became noticeable in the cities and in particular in London, and calls for regulation could be heard. The Gin Act of 1729 regulated the sale of gin in the streets, and a license fee of 20 pounds per year was levied on the production of distilled spirits. Taxation on gin was also raised, but this was soon repealed. The Gin Act of 1736 (although the law applied to all distilled spirits, the main target was gin) raised the license fee to 50 pounds (with a penalty of 100 pounds for unauthorized production), and the tax was raised significantly to 20 shillings a gallon, but this increase, too, was repealed in the autumn of the following year in the face of strong protest.

It was in the year 1751, curiously the same year that Hogarth drew *Gin Alley*, that an effective law was finally passed. Three years before, in 1748 (the year gin consumption peaked), the public’s anger towards gin was galvanized by a tragedy in which an inebriated nanny threw a baby, cradle and all, into a fireplace and caused the baby to burn to death. The Gin Act of 1751 effectively shifted the target of taxation from retailers of gin to distillers and, additionally, prohibited the sale of gin to retailers who did not display their license. As a result, increase in the consumption of gin was at last checked.

#### **4. INCREASED CONSUMPTION OF GIN AS A RESULT OF THE BEER ACT**

The prohibition movement that began in the 1830s (in fact, this should more accurately be described as a temperance movement) frequently debated the hazards of gin. In these debates, a typically English (or, perhaps, “England-oriented”) concept often surfaces: that gin is an evil drink, while beer is healthful. In response to these debates, taxation on gin (and rum) became heavier while, in contrast, regulation of beer brewing and sales was gradually moderated. (Taxation on Scotch Whisky and Irish Whisky had already been reduced significantly in 1823 in Scotland and in 1824 in Ireland.)

However, despite the attempted restrictions on gin, consumption continued to be in excess of beer consumption. Increased consumption of gin in the 1820s was in stark contrast to the

decline of beer consumption. A structural problem in the licensing system that was based on the special contractual relationship between brewers and pub keepers can be pointed out as being behind this phenomenon.

From around the beginning of the 19th century, the English pub (although this abbreviated term was not yet in common use at that time) was allowed to apply for a license from the Justice of Peace, conditional upon being supplied by a specific brewery. In other words, when the supplying brewery is changed (that is to say, when the type of beer is changed), the license was automatically revoked. This licensing structure determined the relative position of power between the brewer and the pub keeper, and ultimately led to the birth of the new style of drinking now associated with pubs.

For example, in the case of Whitbread, a long established London brewery, by 1805, 82% of its production was sold to pubs with which it had special contractual relationships. In the 1810s, about half the pubs in London had such a relationship with breweries. At about this time, it became common to display the name of the brewer prominently on pub signboards. By the 1830s, it was the custom to keep the same signboard even when the pub keeper changed, as long as the supplying brewer remained the same. The tangible and intangible inconvenience experienced by the pub keeper as a result of this arrangement, and in particular the price differential that reduced his profits from beer sales, is believed to have led pub keepers to encourage customers to choose gin rather than beer.

As has been mentioned earlier, the Beer Act of 1830 lowered the price of beer that had been higher than that of gin. The expectation was that gin would be ousted from its top position and that a certain degree of normalization in drinking habits would be realized. By this act, beer shops that were allowed only to handle beer steadily increased and indications were that the shift from gin to beer would be successful.

However, the ironic fact was that it was gin rather than beer that experienced increased consumption in the 1830s. The 1820s and 1830s are known as the period in which the per capita consumption of alcoholic beverages by the English peaked. Here, it must not be forgotten that this peak came not from increased consumption of beer but rather from that of gin. The Beer Act did not have the expected effect of arresting consumption of gin, but rather merely categorized gin as "illegal" and "illicit." The "Age of Gin" thus continued on from the 18th century and into the 19th century.

Again ironic is the fact that for the "Age of Gin" to pass and the "Age of Beer" to arrive in England, depended upon the arrival of "the other public house" (the gin palace) promoted by the Beer Act. More fundamentally, the mechanism that caused people to gather in pubs came into full play as a result of the gin palace.

## 5. THE GIN PALACE AS DRINKING MECHANISM

The increase in the consumption of gin in the various cities of England in the 1820s and 1830s was not the result of the flavor of gin or its cheapness. It was, rather, the product of the influence that gin palaces had (or contrived) on the way the product was imbibed.

The popularity of the gin palace was of epidemic proportions. For example, Charles Dickens describes this new venue for drinking as follows:

“The primary symptoms were inordinate love of plate-glass and a passion for gas-lights and gilding. The disease gradually progressed, and at last attained a fearful height. Quiet dusty old shops in different parts of town, were pulled down; spacious premises with succored fronts and gold letters, were erected instead; floors were covered with Turkey carpets; roofs supported by massive pillars; doors knocked into windows, a dozen squares of glass into one... onward it has rushed to every part of town, knocking down all the old public-houses and depositing splendid mansions, stone balustrades, rosewood fittings, immense lamps and illuminated clocks, at the corner of every street.” (From “Gin-Shops” in *Sketches by Boz*)

Walls decorated in gold, a veritable castle dazzling with plate-glass and gas lamps — this was the gin palace that took the place of the gin-shops of the past as venue for the drinking and retail of gin. Though Dickens writes critically, the huge structures called gin palaces that took the place of the old pub attracted people in droves. Their popularity was supported by the various mechanisms that utilized the most advanced technology and concepts of the day. In this sense, the gin palace may be called a product of the age, the 1830s.

The innovative quality of the gin palace rested primarily in its exterior appearance. First, as Dickens points out, there were the “plate-glass, gas lamps and gilding.” The gas lamp was introduced to England, and in particular to London, in the 1820s, thus brightening and bringing



**Figure 1.** A gin shop in London, 1830s (from the illustration of Charles Dickens’s *Sketch by Boz*, by George Cruickshank).



life to the streets at night. In an attempt to make full use of the light that lit the streets, the gin palace used plate-glass in abundance in its windows. The illumination from the gas lamps would reflect off the plate-glass creating an extraordinary effect. Gin palaces that stood shining at street corners at night must have appeared to be palaces of light to the people of the age. The pub that underwent changes in the latter part of the 19th century learned to exploit the psychological effect of the gas lamp and glass from these gin palaces.

Secondly, there is the enormous size of the structures. Such size not only meant that huge amounts of money were required to build the gin palaces, but that the greatest concern of their proprietors was how to increase gin sales and thereby obtain return on their investment. What is noteworthy is the fact that size also dictated to an extent the interior decoration of the gin palaces.

In contrast to the splendor of the exterior designed to attract attention, the interior of the gin palace was extremely austere. There were no chairs or tables in the shop; in place of these, a long bar counter separated the proprietor from customers. The waitresses who served from within the counter were called barmaids. Customers would receive their gin from these barmaids and drink standing. No meals of any kind were provided. The ceilings were high to prevent a feeling of congestion and mirrors and plate-glass adorned all corners of the shop. The gin palace's spare decor was the key to solving the problem of space, which was the major factor limiting large social gatherings in urban facilities. In what was a large single-floor shop, gin barrels would have been prominent in the midst of customers.

The interior decor of the gin palace was designed to prevent customers from lingering. In order to recoup on the enormous investment in the structure, mechanisms for increasing customer turnover were internalized throughout the shop. The increased number and width of doors was one of them. Through these mechanisms, the gin palace changed the drinking style of the people. In a word, the gin palace changed the relationship between proprietor and



**Figure 2.** Inside a pub opposite the Royal Victoria, popular theater in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (1859). Its structure in pursuit of the quick turnover was similar to that in gin shops.



**Figure 3.** Barmaids were a draw at pubs. (c.1850)

customer to the inorganic and non-emotional relationship of a retailer and customer. In fact, one third of the gin palace's customers came not to drink but with a refillable bottle to buy gin to take out.

In the 1830s, concurrent with its heyday, the gin palace was subjected to intense criticism by the temperance movement, which argued that gin represented the physical and spiritual depravity of the poor and the working class. At the same time, a process of change had begun in which the public house refrained from serving meals and acted primarily as a drinking house. In this process, the innovative mechanism provided by the gin palace with respect to "drinking" was internalized in the pub while, at the same time, the pub promised recovery of the element of hospitality that the gin palace had lost.

## **6. A PARTING WITH THE GIN PALACE**

In the Victorian Age (1837-1901), attitudes towards drinking changed dramatically through laws that extended regulations not only to those selling liquor but also to those imbibing the product. This change focused attention on the very fact of drinking, such as when, where and what sort of person may drink, including judgment on whether drinking is wrongful or otherwise. Due to space limitations, details on the laws promulgated and their effects as well

as influence on drinking habits have to be omitted. However, suffice it to say that among such laws were the 1839 law that mandated beer houses to close from midnight on Saturdays to noon on Sundays and the 1854 amendment of this law that banned pubs from opening on Sundays.

As numerous laws on drinking were promulgated, pubs began to undergo a parting of ways with the gin palace. Again, their divergence was most clear in terms of the exterior appearance.

The pub in the Victorian Age, unlike the gin palace (or the public house that preceded this) that had only one floor, had two or more stories and was characterized by the fact that the interior was subdivided into small sections by function. This was the result of a regulatory law (Aberdare Act) passed in 1872 that required pubs to be 2 storied or higher and promoted the vertical expansion of structures. This regulatory law was the last straw for the huge single storied gin palace. It strengthened penalties on drunkenness and was unprecedented in that it laid the burden of dealing with such drunkenness on the pub proprietor.

The second floor (or above) of the pub provided space for clubrooms for clientele of a higher class than the working person, or for dining and entertainment reminiscent of a music hall (usually called a "saloon" or "song supper room"). In 1843, saloons were required to register as theaters and eating and drinking by the audience was banned. This entertainment function that was a spin-off of the pub was soon absorbed into the music hall, a new entertainment facility for the masses, and it remained popular as a place for "drinks and entertainment" until the cinema ousted this form of mass entertainment from its predominance after the First World War.

In the first part of the 19th century, the first floor tap room was furnished with tables and chairs and provided space for eating and drinking, but as the pub strengthened its function as a place for drinking in the latter half of the century this room commonly came to be called the "bar." Furthermore, just as the entertainment function separated itself from the pub to become the music hall, other functions moved to buildings other than the pub. Gambling moved to casinos, eating to restaurants, and accommodations to hotels. In particular, with the coming of the age of the railway, numerous station hotels were established, spurring the decline of the inn.

Although a characteristic of the pub in the latter half of the 19th century was the presence of gas lamps and glass that emulated the gin palace, the difference was that in the case of the pub a combination of these items was used to enhance the interior of the establishment. With liberalization of economic activities in the 1840s, items on which tax was levied decreased dramatically, and this had direct impact on the enhancement of the interior decoration and adornments used in pubs.

One such instance was the abolishment of the Glass Tax that came in 1847. This further encouraged the use of the combination of glass and gas lamps to create a comfortable brightness inside pubs. Around the same time, drinking out of glasses became common in pubs. It is no exaggeration to say that the beautiful color of beer when poured into a glass increased the popularity of the drink. There are even those who would say that human preference with respect to alcoholic beverages seems to have little or no direct relation to the taste of the drink itself.

Increased awareness of the importance of not only lighting but also interior ornaments in creating a comfortable ambience in the shop was another feature of Victorian pubs in the latter half of the 19th century. In addition to the wallpaper boom that began around 1841, posters, lithographs, clocks, mountings, glass cases and furniture were used to adorn the pub.

In this way, drinking beer in a relaxed environment gradually became entrenched in the pub scene. There was a clear parting of ways from the concept that emphasized customer turnover in the gin palace. The brightly lit and comfortable pub, combined with the miserable housing conditions of the working class of the day, attracted people to the pub and functioned to keep them there longer.

## **7. CHANGES IN THE CLIENTELE**

The process by which the various functions of the pub moved elsewhere coincides with the process by which the regular clientele of pubs shifted to the working class.

In the first half of the 19th century, the pub was the center of a labor movement represented by Chartism and was the object of close scrutiny by the authorities. As a result, pubs were required to undergo strict screening, spurred also by the prohibition (temperance) movement, in order to obtain a license to operate. At the time, workers received their weekly wages at the local pub on Friday or Saturday evenings. Called the “pay table” system, it naturally fueled drinking by the working class. The system of wage payment in the same place where drinks are served created an inseparable relationship between the worker and the pub. It can be said that this system allowed pubs to stay in business. For this reason, when the pay table system was abolished in the latter half of the 19th century, pubs could no longer remain profitable without new initiatives.

It is probably true to say that the regulatory law of 1872 that forced gin palace proprietors to assume responsibility for customer drinking behavior was the last straw in the struggle for the survival of the gin palace. As with the 1820s and 1830s, the mid-1870s was a period in which the per capita consumption of alcohol by the English peaked. But this time, it was not due to the consumption of gin but rather the consumption of beer, such consumption being not in the home or workplace but in pubs. Although the beer house that appeared as a result of the Beer Act of 1830 disappeared early in the latter half of the century, consumption of beer without food in the brightly-lit pubs steadily increased. The increase in beer consumption was at least partly the result of the prohibition movement that was “anti-gin.” At the same time, the pub’s popularity meant that the pub was subjected to all of the criticisms leveled earlier at the gin palaces concerning responsibility for all problems that may occur in the process of serving alcoholic beverages.

## **8. PUBS WITHIN THE LICENSE STRUCTURE**

The 1880s and 1890s are known as the golden age of the English pub. This golden age can be considered to be the result of a growing prohibition movement, friction between Justices of the Peace and the licensing commission, quarrels between the brewers and pub proprietors brought on by the special contract system, and rivalry among pub proprietors themselves.

The origins of the current physical space of the pub and the way alcoholic beverages are consumed there can be traced back to around 1880. Under the Liberal Party government that was called the “anti-beer government” formed in that year, taxation on malt and sugar was abolished and a new tax on wort (malt before fermentation) was introduced. Until recently,

taxation on wort caused the price of beer to rise and consumption to decrease on a relative basis. In other words, the pub became an unprofitable business. Moreover, under the Liberal Party government, obtaining a license to sell alcoholic beverages became exceedingly difficult and numerous pubs were denied renewal of their licenses.

In these circumstances, pubs that were established in newly urbanized areas needed to abide by the guidance provided by the Justice of Peace or the licensing commission and invest in the structure and interior in order to obtain a license. For example, the floor space required for obtaining a license was considered essential in establishing a pub's respectability. Mirrors and glass, indispensable components of the interior adornment of the pub, were recommended as a means for monitoring the activities of customers.

Whether or not a license was granted had much to do with whether the number of pubs in a given region was considered optimal. The case of license refusal by the licensing commission (Kendal District) in Westmoreland in the year 1887 provided an important precedent for future pub proprietors. The case involved a female pub proprietor by the name of Miss Sharp who, having had her application for license renewal refused citing "too many pubs in this district" as the reason, litigated against Mr. Wakefield, chairman of the licensing commission, for "misfeasance." This litigation, which in 1891 resulted in the plaintiff's defeat, clearly revealed that in obtaining or renewing their licenses, pub proprietors were in a decisively weak position with respect to the Justice of the Peace or the licensing commission. With this precedent, it is said that pub proprietors became highly conscious of the building and interior structure of their establishments. As a result, the exterior dimensions of pubs became even larger than in the past.



**Figure 4.** A pub, *Old Dover Castle*, Westminster Bridge Road, London, which was a model for the present pubs. (1895)



**Figure 5.** A pub, *The Crown*, located in Cricklewood London, which completely changed its structure, exterior alike, into a gigantic building at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Whenever the reins of government were passed to the Conservative Party, restrictions on licenses were moderated and the number of pubs stabilized. The combination of the two major political parties with differing opinions on pubs and drinking in pubs caused significant changes in the building structure, and in particular the exterior appearances, of pubs in the late 19th century. The changes in the exterior appearance and interiors also affected the way of drinking and enjoyment in pubs.

In fact, in the 1880s to 1890s when the reins of government were repeatedly passed between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, the number of pubs per capita decreased significantly from one for every 197 (1884) to one for every 1,444 (1893). However, this decrease was not reflected in any pronounced change in the consumption of beer. In other words, pubs simply became bigger establishments with larger capacity. This trend is particularly noticeable in the urban areas. “Larger but fewer” the concept had begun with the gin palaces and was the fundamental concept that supported the renovation rush of pubs in the 1880s. In other words, oligopoly established itself in the world of pubs. Similarly, licensed breweries that numbered 33,840 in 1870 decreased dramatically to 9,664 by 1893, and the resulting larger scale of breweries led to a rise in the value of pubs themselves.

## 9. ADVENT OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF BEER

Between August 1892 and July 1895, under the Liberal Party administration that regulated

the number of pubs, an investment boom in pubs occurred. A special contract war was waged in which breweries that had the funds to acquire pubs with inflated value used special contracts to successively acquire them. It was in the period when investment into pubs was active that a brewery called Burton entered the London market and effectively changing the preference of Londoners by producing and marketing a light colored beer with lower alcohol content than normal using the high calcium content hard water of the Trent River in central England.

Burton's pale light beer monopolized market shares in London, and its popularity was such that it soon replaced Porter, a London brand that had began to suffer from quality deterioration in the mid 1840s. Although in 1863 Porter still accounted for a 70% share of beer consumption in London, 20 years later, by 1883, this had undergone a dramatic decline to just fewer than 30%. In contrast, Burton's brewery had numbered only 10 locations in the first half of the 19th century, but by the end of the century the number had tripled to 30 locations. Other brewers, sensing a threat from Burton's success, began producing beer using water from the River Trent in order to imitate the taste and color of Burton. The victory of the pale and light Burton is exemplified in a new English word, "Burtonize," coined at that time.

The English, who previously had been drinking dark beer with high alcohol content that was above all brewed in the immediate area, thus came to prefer Burton, light in both color and



**Figure 6.** The first music hall in Britain, *Canterbury*, developed from a pub by making its entertainments attractive. (1858)

alcohol content, from the latter half to the end of the 19th century. At the same time, English beer ceased to be exclusively a local product. Discussion of technological developments that made possible the institutionalization of beer, such as the development of a malt that could be produced in a month to six weeks, is beyond the scope of this study, but suffice it to say English beer was increasingly consumed in locations distant from where it was brewed.

Around the same time, "Guinness," a brand that until then was hardly known in London and outside special contract pubs, increased the number of directly operated shops in London using massive funds obtained through public placement of stocks. Other breweries imitated the public placement of stocks employed so successfully by Guinness, thus spurring investment in pubs and further raising their value.

Whether or not public investment in a pub could be recouped depended entirely on sales of liquor. This worked to intensify competition among pubs. In an effort to attract women of the middle class and above who in the past were not considered potential customers, Ladies' Saloons began to appear that were decorated in Louis XIV wall paper and Queen Anne style furniture. In response, the consumption of alcoholic beverages among women increased in the 1890s. Further reflecting the intense competition among pubs, a distinction developed between the working class "pub" and the "saloon" of the higher classes.

The asset inflated situation ended just before the advent of the 20th century. Looking back, the intense investment in pubs not only promoted the physical enlargement of pubs but also led to the defeat of pub proprietors by the brewers. Previously, the London pub had maintained a high degree of independence (called the London System for this reason), but by 1915, 95% of pub licenses had been transferred to breweries with operations on a national scale. In other words, the new brewer-based system for providing liquor also helped the creation of institutionalized beer. Increased urbanization and the expansion of the railway network that enhanced supply routes for beer also supported the brewers' attempts at national operations. As a result, pubs in local areas affiliated with highly localized ale and beer brewers and dependent on the personality of the proprietor were forced to undergo change. The entrenchment of "drinking beer in pubs" and the style of drinking came about through the process of the conflict between the institutionalization of beer and pub culture.

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