BREWERY HISTORY

Brewery History (2015) **162**, 76-80

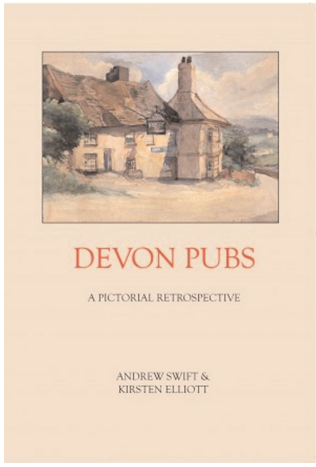
BOOK REVIEWS

Devon Pubs: a Pictorial Retrospective
By Swift, A. & Elliott, K.
Bath: Akeman Press
2015, Pp.370, £15
ISBN 978-0-956-0989-8-6

This plainly-designed, weighty paperback is justified in its subtitle: every pub mentioned is accompanied by a black-and-white photograph, amounting to an instant collection for those less inclined to spend more than a decade rooting through stacks of old postcards, as the authors have done.

In a market crowded with remixes of the same hackneyed 'tales of old inns' the mission statement that opens the book is reassuring. In it, the authors declare their intention to avoid ghost stories (thank goodness) and evidence-free yarns cooked up by brewery PR people or enterprising publicans:

> Where we have been able to put flesh on anecdotal bones, we have done so where we have not, we have ... resorted to equivocations such as 'it is believed that' ... in the hope that others may take up the challenge of getting to the root of the matter.



The main body of the text provides commentary on the photographs, which are ordered alphabetically by town and village. In many cases, the authors' commitment to evidence leaves them without much to say beyond the name of a landlord or the date of demolition.

Other entries for pubs the authors know well elicit heartfelt but sometimes jarring polemics that would suit a Campaign for Real Ale newsletter: 'This picture ... may not seem that exciting, but, for those who remember the Toby Jug at Bickington, it is heartbreaking.' If a book of facts and photographs can have a thesis or message, this one does: it is that too many pubs have been lost, either through demolition or repurposing, or have lost their essential character through careless renovation, living on in a kind of zombie state. This narrative, emphasised in entry after entry, does become rather repetitive and might have been better presented in a standalone essay elsewhere in the book, or left unstated. The facts, after all, speak for themselves.

As well as the primary text there are several 'box outs' with nuggets of information not belonging to any one pub in particular. For example, the intriguing Ashburton Pop gets a half-page. Cider and Tom Cobley each get what amounts to an essay over a couple of pages. Among the end matter is a superb and lengthy piece on Devon White Ale, previously published in the pages of this journal, which scholars of beer styles may find worth the asking price in its own right. There is also a well-illustrated directory of Devon's lost breweries one of which, Plymouth's Hoegate Brewery, gets its own essay-length treatment.

The photographs are the main event and are of varying levels of interest. There are many more exterior shots than interior and too many are of rather plain buildings marked only with a small sign. Often, those buildings

are at one side, or in the distance, as part of a general view rather than the focus of the image. The best exterior shots, however, are a real treat: riots of hand-painted livery, bold signage and architectural follies such as the striped Bavarian-style shutters adorning the Ebrington Arms at Knowle in a picture from the 1930s.

Elsewhere, the presence of people works wonders in bringing photographs to life: the face of a schoolboy, forlorn, in the doorway of a flooded pub; a severe looking landlady in skirt and aprons standing by the gate; an indistinct figure in flat cap leaning on a lamppost, a faint suggestion of tipsiness in his pose; and a bewhiskered, weskitted Abraham Beer standing proudly in front of his pub, The 'Who Would Have Thought It' in Milton Combe.

The handful of interior images are also often quite moving. There is a real punch to the gut from the first in the book, a shot of the Harbour Inn, Axmouth, where daylight through a window picks out wooden surfaces, and the smell of woodsmoke almost seems to wisp from the page.

Despite the vast number of images, the book is not comprehensive. Looking up specific Devon pubs of our acquaintance we found several absent. There are no entries for Dartmouth, though the grand Royal Dart at Kingswear across the water is present. This is presumably as a result of both limited space and because available images dictated the content to a certain degree.

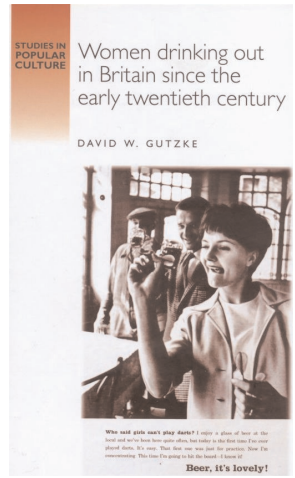
Anyone researching the history of a particular pub in Devon could do worse than to start here. Others will find it fairly 'dippable' as long as they do not demand tales of smugglers and spectres in every entry.

JESSICA BOAK & RAY BAILEY

Women drinking out in Britain since the early twentieth century
By Gutzke, D.W.
Manchester: Manchester University Press
2015 [2014], Pp.304, £17.99
ISBN 978-0-7190-5265-1

As the author states quite plainly in his introduction, 'This is the first book about women's advance into the man's world of pub, club and beerhouse that examines drinking habits covering a century' (p.1). The tendency to overlook women when it comes to researching the British public house, particularly in the twentieth century, fades into insignificance when compared to the myopic views held by the vast majority of breweries during the same period. One cannot come away from reading this book without feeling both indignant and sad at those within the trade - brewers, retailers, pub designers and marketers - and those who influenced it - especially politicians and the church - who either ignored or consciously discriminated against women. Yet it would be wrong to portray these views as consistent and universal, attitudes oscillated widely over the century, as well as between different regions and classes, most often as a consequence of factors far beyond the control of the drinks industry.

Such differences were obvious in the Edwardian period. As Gutzke points out, women from the poorer sections of the working class were far more likely to frequent pubs than women higher up the social scale. The introduction of designated areas - women's' saloons and bars - in the 1890s did encourage the latter to enter certain pubs, but these were, more often than not, confined to the wealthiest areas of cities, especially London. However, for the most part, women who did drink in pubs were viewed as morally suspect.



With the outbreak of the First World War the number of women frequenting pubs increased dramatically, instigating what Gutzke describes as 'the first time popular drinking habits had fundamentally altered since the 1850s' (p.252). The authorities were far from happy with the situation and the author draws upon Stanley Cohen's concept of 'moral panic' to elucidate their reaction. Perceived excessive drinking, especially by women, came to be portrayed as a threat to the very existence of the nation. To counter this danger sweeping measures were introduced; for example, in Middlesbrough, women were all but banned from entering public houses.

The influx of women into pubs was seen by some brewers as an opportunity for change. A form of social experimentation had taken place in three areas of Britain during the war, most notably in Carlisle, where a government body, the Central Control Board, had controlled the production and retail of beer. As those familiar with David Gutzke's previous major work, *Pubs and Progressives*, he places great emphasis on the role of 'Progressive' brewers, epitomised by Sydney O. Nevile of Whitbread. Nevile had sat on the Central Control Board and had noted first-hand how the improved public house, as they came to be known, could bring respectability to public drinking, rehabilitate brewers' reputations and expand the pubs' clientele. In the region of £160,000,000 was spent rebuilding or significantly improving pubs in the interwar period, making them more attractive to women.

Their numbers were further boosted by the outbreak of the Second World War. In contrast to the previous conflict, the pub now took on a more positive role, signified by the emergence of the term 'the local'. This, together with other factors such as 'the undertaking of service work; the war's disruptive impact; higher wages; disappearance of social constraints when migrating to a new area; and the pub's roles in both people socializing and courtship rituals' (p.55) all helped facilitate women's admittance to pubs. Gutzke estimates that as many as three-fifths of all adult females were using pubs during the Second World War.

Yet, when peace came, vast numbers of women turned their back on the pub - why? For Gutzke one reason was that Progressivism had all but disappeared from the brewing industry. This was partly due to the fact that many of the leading lights of the movement had died, but also that the government restricted the building or rebuilding of public houses well into the 1950s - pubs had thus become less attractive places to visit. Women also had to deal with a powerful societal rhetoric which extolled 'home, husband and dependency over work, freedom and greater autonomy' (p.64). This ideology was particularly effective with regards to younger women, those that had not experienced the opportunities that war time work had provided.

By 1949 only just over 10% of women visited a pub at least weekly and it took nearly 25 years for this to increase to 20%. Women's continued rejection of the pub rested on many elements, a prime one being that many were physically unattractive to them. Gutzke highlights the influence of Ben Davis, estate design consultant with Allied Breweries, on pub interiors for the three decades following the war. In contrast to the Progressives love of well-lit rooms with pale furnishings, Davis had an 'unshakable belief in brown as the colour for public and saloon bars … "What brings women customers into a pub", he intoned, "is either the men themselves or the masculine atmosphere"' (p.146). However, during Davis's 'reign' countervailing influences were at work, even within the trade. Beer sales slumped after the war and many brewers turned to women, if only half-heartedly, as a 'new' market. Stouts, such as Mackeson's, were advertised as female friendly, an alternative to bitter which was perceived, by the brewers at least, as unattractive to women. Yet it was lager that became the main focus of the brewers' attempts to entice women back into the pub. Barclays and McEwan's lager advertisements included affluent looking men and women from the late 1940s onwards. In 1959 Ind Coope launched Skol lager, one of the first beers to be specifically targeted at women, even having its own stemmed goblet.

The number of women frequenting pubs was, however, relatively unaffected by these campaigns. What did change was the demographics of those going to the pub. The 1970s saw a dramatic increase in middle class men and women entering public houses. The reasons behind this are unclear, but the introduction of food and wine together with a move away from Davis's brown interiors appear to have played a part. Women also had more disposable income as increased numbers were going out to work and their pay rose due the Equal Pay Act. The

1970s also saw the opening of the first in a chain of pubs that would have a major impact on the trade. In 1979 Tim Martin bought a small pub in Muswell Hill and the J.D. Weatherspoon chain was launched.

Martin, together with Sydney Nevile, are the heroes of this study and it is worth citing one paragraph at length.

> Martin exemplifies my thesis that changes in all facets of the cultures of drinking would be imperative for women to influence significantly public drinking. In implementing a new approach, Martin as an outsider displayed remarkably sensitive feelings - virtually absent among rival drink retailers - towards women. Whether placing cash registers on bars facing customers, eliminating staff name tags in bars or employing women in all positions of the company, Martin created a feminized environment where the masculine culture of drinking was confronted and subtly undermined (p.292).

What comes across in this important book is that changes in the pub drinking habits of women are more often than not the result of external factors, not the policies of brewers or pub owners. As a work dedicated to women drinking outside the home it cannot fail to be also about drinking men as well. The result is the best overall investigation into the twentieth century British pub that this reviewer has read. If there is only on flaw it is the lack of any serious analysis of women working on the other side of the bar. Studies such as Diane Kirby's *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* and Susan Upton's *Wanted, a Beautiful Barmaid: Women Behind the Bar in New Zealand, 1830-1976* are prime examples, but also show that this is a subject worthy of a book to itself.

It is hoped that the publication of a paperback version of *Women Drinking Out in Britain Since the Early Twentieth Century* will bring about the recognition it deserves.

Brewing Champions: A History of the International Brewing Awards
By Tierney-Jones, A.
Wolverhampton: Brewing Technology Services Ltd. 2015, Pp.352, £12.99
ISBN-10: 0993364802

I

The history of a brewing competition may not strike you as the most exciting of topics - one can imagine page after page of beers and breweries that came first, second and third in the respective categories. And if this is what you are looking for you will not be disappointed as nearly two thirds of the book contains such lists. Fortunately, however, there is a lot more to *Brewing Champions* as Adrian Tierney-Jones has used what one can only assume to be a limited amount of material to produce a study offering a different perspective on the history of the brewing industry over the past 135 years.

The International Brewing Awards has its origins in a completion first held in 1888 during 10th Annual Brewers, Malsters, Distillers, Mineral Water Manufacturers, Licensed Victuallers, Caterers and Allied Trades National Exhibition and Market. The exhibition had begun nine years earlier and was organised by Robert Dale, who appears to have made a career out of staging such events, and would be joined later by his brother, Arthur. Together, they would oversee the exhibition for nearly half a century.

The competition was sponsored by Gillman and Spencer of Rotherhithe, manufacturers of flaked maize and brewers' preservatives, and it was a requirement of all those that entered that they use some of the firm's products in their beer. The beers were divided into various classes depending on their gravity, but, oddly, the names of the

winning beers were not announced, only the brewery, a situation which did not change until 1967. Over 100 brewers entered and it was seen by the *Brewers' Journal* as giving 'general satisfaction and were fully appreciated by the fortunate winners' (p.22).

It returned two years later, but then there was an unexplained 11 year hiatus before it was held again in 1901. The awards have acted as a barometer to the changes experienced by the brewing industry as a piece in the *Brewers' Gazette* of 1910 shows:

> The beer competition affords an excellent opportunity of forming an opinion of the character of the beers brewed throughout the country. This year the beers entered for competition were quite as numerous and fully equal to the standard of previous years. One notices, however, that some change in the popular taste is taking place. The pale ale of a dry character with its delicate hop bouquet and flavour is giving way to a sweeter beer, full to the palate, but lacking the fine qualities of the pale ale to which we have been so long accustomed (p.31).

After a gap due to the First World War the competition came back in 1919 to a much changed world, one characterised by, as the organisers stated a year later, 'the prevailing anxiety and disquiet due to labour unrest and the continuous drastic and injurious restrictions still imposed on the trade' (p.35). Significantly, it was in the same year as these words were written that Watney, Combe and Read did not enter a porter for the first time in the competition's history. The 1920s and '30s were difficult times for many brewers as, despite the decline of the temperance movement, the Great Depression and increases in beer taxation took their toll.

The Second World War meant another gap for the completion. In fact, it did not return until 1950 and it was confined to bottled beers due to the limitations still placed on the brewing industry. The awards of the early 1950s continued to reflect the changing tastes in beer. In 1952

> mild was still a popular drink and there were three classes for it in the bottled beer category and four in that for draught beer; stout still remained strong in the bottle with three classes, though none for draught. Bitter was continuing to grow in popularity, but porter had vanished while Burton was on the ropes (p.64).

Another change was heralded in 1960 when two classes were established for bottled lager.

As the century progressed the awards took on a more international flavour. In 1998, according to the *Brewers' Guardian*, 'twenty-two out of the 60 beers judged to be the best three in their class were entered by overseas brewers' (p.96). A dozen of the judges also came from overseas and 32 countries were represented.

Bill Taylor, who took over as the chair of the judges in 2011, explains that the strength of the awards comes from two sources, being 'linked to a more consumer orientated classification and judging by consensus.' (p.121) What emerges from this book, as this quote suggests, is that the awards are as much about people as they are about beer, brewers and judges in particular. They are also about the changing nature of beer, the rise and fall of various styles since the 1880s. It is the synthesis of these different factors as reflected in the awards that Adrian Thierney-Jones does so well, the result being a fresh view on the developments within brewing over a period of considerable change.

TIM HOLT