



GOING DOWN THE PUB

An introduction to British pub culture

Daniel Harkin

Johanna Piirainen

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TAMPEREEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Tampere University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

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DANIEL HARKIN & JOHANNA PIIRAINEN

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The objective of this study is to shed some light on the past and present of the British pub. The emphasis is mainly upon the pub as an institution, from a socio-economic point of view. Going to the pub is an integral part of life in any area, rural or urban, of the British Isles. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, having a pint or two at the local is taken for granted.

This thesis consists of two main chapters, the first of which provides a look at the pub of the past, with the second focusing on contemporary pub culture. Our three points of interest are: the surroundings and social significance of the pub, food and drink, and the characters that make the pub (i.e. staff and regular customers). These chapters, which are based on theoretical sources, will be supported by first hand interviews with long term professionals of the pub industry.

The methods used in this study include interpreting and analysing theoretical material from an array of sources, i.e. books, articles, websites and other publications. In addition, themed interviews with pub owners and managers are conducted and further analysed. Because pub-going in Britain is so commonplace, finding objective and cohesive research worthy of reference, proved to be anything but easy. For instance, researching Finnish sauna habits would probably present similar problems.

The results of this study indicate that even though the public house has had its fair share of ups and downs, it has survived and evolved no matter what the circumstances. Whether laws and acts were enforced to restrain it, or civil movements were launched to hinder it the pub pulled through. All in all, the public house is showing no signs of dying out.

Key words: public house, inn, tavern, alehouse, beer, real ale, British pub

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Hotelli- ja ravintola-alan koulutusohjelma

DANIEL HARKIN & JOHANNA PIIRAINEN

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Opinnäytetyö 51 sivua, liitteet 1 sivu
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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoite on selvittää Brittein saarten pubikulttuurin menneisyyttä ja nykypäivää. Pubia tarkastellaan instituutina, ja työn pääpaino on pubin sosiaalinen ja taloudellinen asema Britanniassa eri aikakausina. Pubissa käynti on erottamaton osa kulttuuria ja jokapäiväistä elämää maan joka kolkassa, niin kaupungissa kuin maaseudullakin.

Opinnäytetyö koostuu kahdesta pääluvusta. Ensimmäisessä luvussa paneudutaan pubin historiaan, ja toisessa luvussa tutustutaan pubin nykyaikaiseen olomuotoon. Työssä tutustutaan yksityiskohtaisemmin pubin sosiaaliseen merkitykseen, ruoka- ja juomakulttuuriin, sekä pubikulttuuria ylläpitäviin henkilöihin, kuten kanta-asiakkaisiin ja omistajiin.

Lähteinä on käytetty kirjoja, lehtiartikkeleita ja internet-sivuja. Kirjoitettua teoriatietoa tukemaan on tehty teemahaastattelu, johon vastasivat pubikulttuurin asiantuntijat. Pubissa käymisen kulttuuri on Britanniassa itsestäänselvyys, joten objektiivisen ja tieteellisen informaation löytäminen aiheesta osoittautui haasteelliseksi.

Tutkimus osoitti, että vaikka pubit ovat kokeneet paljon olemassaolonsa aikana, ne ovat onnistuneet selviytymään vaikeuksista ja kehittymään yhteiskunnan vaatimalla tavalla. Useita lakeja ja aloitteita on säädetty pubin toiminnan rajoittamiseksi sekä valtion johdon, että kansalaisaloitteiden tahoilta, mutta kyseinen instituutio on selvinnyt haasteista voittajana.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Our main aim is to look at the pub as an institution; its history and its present day status in the community. The pub has been a meeting place, an entertainment venue and even a matter of political debate for large and small groups of people since its birth. In the past, only the church was able to compete for popularity, and on the other hand, controversy. Today, the pub may no longer function as a post office, a doctor's reception or a farmers' market, but it still is an integral part of everyday life in Britain.

We hope to justify our efforts on two accounts. Firstly, our work will try to serve as a guide for young people who plan to work and/or study in the restaurant business in Britain. Our second, equally important, goal is to clarify the visible effects of a long and colourful history on the present day pub experience. Furthermore, the commonly unobserved subtleties of pub-going will not be overlooked. Our humble wish is that our endeavours will contribute to a deeper understanding of British customers and their behaviour in the pub and restaurant environment.

We both share a strong interest in pub culture, both professionally and sociologically. We have considerable experience in this field, due to one of us being born and raised in Northern Ireland, and the other having worked and studied in several locations in the UK. Living and studying in Finland provides an intriguing perspective on this topic, as pub culture itself is a very young, but ever-expanding phenomenon in this otherwise so very different way of life.

2 AN OVERLOOK INTO THE HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC HOUSE

2.1 Ye Olde Ale House

Over the centuries the public house has meant to British society much more than just a place for a drink. Besides being the supplier of provisions, pubs have been the centres for recreation and ritual events, for instance weddings. Moreover, the significance of the public house as an employer and a modifier of architecture in towns cannot be overlooked. Possibly only monarchy and church can compete with the significance of this distinctively British institution. (Fowler 2000, 18) As the authorities have always looked on pubs with some degree of suspicion, regarding them as potential centres for drunkenness and disorder, the history of the pub is well documented from the late fifteenth century (Pub History Society 2011).

In the past there were three main types of establishments from which people could buy alcoholic drinks, namely the inn, tavern and alehouse. All three terms are used in an overlapping way in the history, with the general term 'public house' becoming more popular during the eighteenth century. The inn was defined, both in everyday life and by the law, as the supplier for the travellers. Inns developed in the later Middle Ages, gradually taking the place of monasteries as the main provider of accommodation. The great inns of England's major towns had dominating presence and grand exteriors that did not go unnoticed by the contemporaries. A number of the inns later adopted the title of 'hotel'. (Jennings 2011, 20, 24)

The tavern, dating back to the same period of time as the inn, was a specialist establishment for the sale of wine. Only a permitted number of taverns were allowed to operate in specified towns, which resulted in their clientele being more upmarket. Notably outnumbering the latter two were the alehouses which were widespread in towns as well as the countryside by the early fourteenth century. Alehouses were the everyday social drinking places for the lower classes, although many of them pursued to be more respectable thus starting to make the transition to public house during the seventeenth century. Although previously considered an upscale drinking place the status of the tavern declined in the mid eighteenth century. The tavern lost its distinctive status as it became legal for the alehouses to sell wine as well. Furthermore, it became apparent for

the magistrates that taverns were used for sexual encounters. Men were known to have indecent relations in private rooms of taverns and paying for it with a bottle of sherry, for instance. (Jennings 2011, 22-23, 31)

The evolutionary process of the pub was initiated by the Romans. They brought to Britain two innovations that have had a major effect on the evolution of the public house, namely roads and wine. The development of road systems meant that people would travel and that brought the need for refreshment and sustenance. With the roads Romans built *Tabernae* (the first *inns*), where they would have sat down and played chess. With a drink in hand, of course. (Haydon 2005, 11-13)

This development was later maintained by the Normans, whose conquest took place in the early eleventh century. The Normans built a vast network of places of worship, thus creating the need for accommodation and provisions for the pilgrims. Many monasteries and abbeys offered temporary lodging, as well as brewed their own beer. These brewery centres formed the basis for the later development of inns and alehouses. (Watson 2012. History of the Pub)

Permanent alehouses started to appear in numbers in the thirteenth century. Before this alehouses had been an inseparable part of domestic dwellings. Also, taverns were experiencing a rapid growth in England, especially in London and other major port towns. Taverns, that were supposed to only sell wine, started in time trading ale as well. There were 354 taverns and 1334 alehouses in London in 1309, and the mere number of drinking places was enough to cause alarm. Violence and disorderly behaviour increased. (Haydon 2005, 32-33)

As the number of alehouses kept on climbing, and inns took over the basic responsibilities of providing for travellers, there was a considerable decline in the role the church had previously played. Part of the reason was the fact that alehouses now sustained many of the services formerly offered by the church; a meeting place, a warm room with a fire and a space to distribute news. The Chequers Inn in London even had an oratory and a chaplain to perform church services in the house. Numerous attempts, including an effort to keep alehouses closed on Sundays, were made to try and preserve the role of the church. (Haydon 2005, 50-51)

Spirits were becoming increasingly popular in the sixteenth century, regardless of the foul taste. In Renaissance Europe men were making new discoveries in arts, music, physics and medicine, while in England men were trying to perfect the art of distilling a chicken. It was actually quite common to take an old chicken, grind its every bone into powder, put it in a bag with a pound of raisins and boil it up. (Haydon 2005, 53)

The barbaric behaviour of the intoxicated public triggered the Puritans to raise their heads and become active. They attacked, among other deadly sins, sloth and gluttony, but their favourite target was drunkenness. At that time there was no social stigma attached to getting drunk as everyone did it, and drinking was very much a well-liked pastime. (Haydon 2005, 58-61)

The alehouse played an important role in England during the Civil War from 1641 to 1651. The most crucial change in authorities' attitude towards the alehouse was that all the policies of suppression stopped, as the demand for sustenance rose because of the armies on the move. Furthermore, alehouses were a significant source of revenue in funding the war. Many of today's pubs in England date from the time of the Civil War, and owe their preservation for the important events that took place at their premises. (Haydon 2005, 69-70)

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the rise of spirits, especially gin. Several factors contributed to its popularisation, the greatest of reasons being the fact that it was constantly available. England was frequently at war with wine producing countries such as France, Spain or Portugal. This resulted in an unstable supply of wine, as well as brandy and other imported spirits. (Haydon 2005, 85) Furthermore, at the same time the Parliament opened up the distilling trade and the retail sale of spirits, the aim of which was to support agriculture (Jennings 2011, 34). Also, the restrictions and taxes induced for producers of beer and ale made brewing a far less profitable business (Haydon 2005, 86).

The middle and upper classes did not drink gin, since it was not considered a refined drink. Beer and ale, on the other hand, had been a vital part of the nation's diet for a thousand years, and they were regarded being of a high nutritional value. For the poorer people cheap gin proved to be a disaster. Gin made its victims incapable to work and led to the premature death of tens of thousands of people. Adulteration of gin was widely

popular, and there was little proof for the working class that the beverage they were drinking was actually gin. (Haydon 2005, 91-93)

Gin was sold in the taverns and in the street by hawkers. It was also available in prisons, workhouses and at public executions. This new generation of gin 'shops' was a great concern for the authorities, and significant efforts were made to reduce the number of establishments selling spirits throughout the eighteenth century. (Jennings 2011, 37) It was the minor reforms that proved to be more successful; alehouses were issued with a rule book, new licenses were refused, more duties and taxes as well as Sunday closing were introduced. The change towards the more Puritan way of thinking was also the result of the industrial revolution, as sober workforce was needed. (Haydon 2005, 100)

The nature of the alehouse evolved a lot during the eighteenth century. Social, economic and scientific changes, as well as the gin fever, left their marks on the institution. However, the alehouse itself had not changed much from its fifteenth century counterparts. It was slightly less rough on the edges and with a few more comforts. By the end of the eighteenth century the alehouse was nearly a thing of the past, having given way to the beer shop and the public house. (Haydon 2005, 102)

People started to slowly realise that the alehouse could actually be a profitable business, and alehouse keeping was no longer seen as a secondary source of income. As the century progressed, it became more and more common to see purpose built public houses with special rooms set aside for different functions and social classes. At the time, England was becoming a more class conscious society with an increasing desire towards respectability. The top of the society turned their backs on pursuits they had until that time shared with the working class, and the taverns and inns aspired to cater for the more upmarket clientele. (Haydon 2005, 104,109)

The loss of the American colonies in the late eighteenth century caused a profound change in the mood of the nation. The economic impact and a deep sense of humiliation caused the need for restoring the national dignity. Nationwide sobriety was seen as the first step and, yet again, alehouse became the villain. Curbs on music, dancing, singing and gaming were imposed. Alehouse licenses were denied for ridiculous reasons and it became prohibited to pay wages in pubs. (Haydon 2005, 118)

The early nineteenth century was the time for a substantial amount of changes and influences. The vast effects of urbanisation and industrialisation caused confusion in the society, as did the change in distribution of wealth. At that time Britain was considered the most powerful nation in the world. A quickly expanding empire provided cheap raw materials, new market opportunities and an increase in agricultural productivity. These factors favoured a boom in trade, especially in the drink trade, and attracted the attention of free traders who dominated the economic ideology of the century. (Haydon 2005, 180-182)

The principles of free trade did not fit very well with the drink industry, since the brewers and alehouse keepers had formed close two-way ties throughout the centuries. Moreover, the new legislation aimed at reducing the number of premises serving alcohol. Soon larger brewers outbid smaller ones, and by the early nineteenth century twelve largest breweries controlled seventy five per cent of the market in London. It became difficult for the smaller businesses to find a steady supply of beer, and consequently the number of gin shops started to increase. (Haydon 2005, 183-184)

In 1830 the Duke of Wellington pushed through the Beer Act, which abolished all duty on beer and gave the right of any householder to sell alcohol. All the previously suppressed illicit alehouses started trading again and every blacksmith and craftsman took advantage of the opportunity to sell beer for their customers. For instance, Liverpool witnessed fifty new beer shops opened every day. (Haydon 2005, 187) Additionally, the arrival of the railway and purpose built hotels contributed to the decline of the inns that offered accommodation. This diminution of functions and the number of new beerhouses encouraged the growth of the gin palace. The Beer Act also destabilised the whole trade. Many landlords decided that since their profit margins of selling beer were cut they would provide another more profitable commodity, gin. (Jennings 2011, 80-81)

Gin palaces carried a resemblance to retail spirit and wine stores, not so much to the public house. Shop fronts were fashionably styled and eye catching in order to lure the patrons in. There were usually no seats, no food on offer, but only a long counter behind which were the serving girls. Volume of turnover was the key to the success of gin palaces. This was seen as one of the major marketing discoveries in the nineteenth century. (Haydon 2005, 194)



PICTURE 1. The Gin Shop (Cruikshank 1836)

Gin palace was, above all, an urban phenomenon to be found in the growing towns and cities of England. It represented an escape from the poverty and, for the first time in history, money was made out of the poor who were constantly drunk. (Jennings 2011, 85) The middle class was offended because the poor were running rampant in such lavish surroundings, as gin palaces were to be found on principal highroads, not in the slums. (Haydon 2005, 196) The atmosphere of an urban gin shop is clearly visible in Picture 1.

The 1850s and 1860s witnessed the growth of opposition to drink from both the temperance movement and the society as a whole. The upper classes stopped using the public houses and drinking was considered a major social problem. Despite all this, the public house persisted as an institution. It is from this time that one can begin to think of an establishment called 'the pub', the term comprising rural beerhouses, taverns and inns, as well as modern gin palaces. (Jennings 2011, 88)

Until the First World War the pubs were open most of the time. Historically, restrictions in opening times had comprised of closing during the hours of holy service on Sundays and at night time. During the war opening hours were severely reduced. What is more, a number of pub practices, such as treating or giving credit, were made illegal (Jennings

2011, 183). It was also prohibited to serve a soldier or a sailor with intent to make them drunk. The local magistrates held the power to even close down a public house if found breaking these rules. (Haydon 2005, 256)

The Central Control Board was established in 1915 in order to improve national efficiency and to control the drunkenness of the nation. The body consisted of politicians, civil servants, labour representatives and brewery men (Jennings 2011, 185). The aim was to make people realise that domestic inefficiency cost lives at the front. Another objective was to reduce the alcohol consumption of women, who used to sneak into pubs while their husbands were at work. (Haydon 2005, 256)

The Central Control Board was given the objective to increase the efficiency of workforce and to prevent it from drunkenness in selected areas where war work was in progress or where servicemen gathered. These areas were chosen by the local military authorities, and later investigated by the Board. Initially only immediate surroundings of military areas were covered, but quickly the process was applied to larger districts in order to create a 'protective fringe' around the grounds of armed forces. In the end, most of the nation was covered by the Board with the exception of sparsely populated agricultural areas. (Jennings 2011, 185)

The Board had extensive powers that varied from the power to close any premises to the right to ban the buying of rounds in pubs. Plainclothes policemen were appointed to observe if the publicans abided by the regulations appointed. Heavy fines were imposed on uncompliant landlords and customers alike, thus creating somewhat rebellious attitudes towards the Board. (Jennings 2011, 188) On the other hand, the Board strongly encouraged the serving of food in pubs, and even established canteens nearby licensed premises to ensure the nourishment of the workforce (Haydon 2005, 259).

The fall in alcohol consumption, which the First World War had induced, proved to be permanent. The economy was in state of depression for most of the inter-war period. Especially affected were the staple industries of coal and steel mining, shipbuilding and textile manufacturing. At the same time beer prices soared, and visits to the pub became more and more infrequent. (Jennings 2011, 194-195) Along with the economic perspective, the public attitude towards moderation and sobriety grew stronger for a number of reasons; a generation of drinking men had died, the postwar epidemic of Spanish flu

took more lives than the war had and the supply of beer was no longer a problem (Haydon 2005, 270).

The most prominent changes concerning the pub had to do with housing. A massive slum clearance and house building programme took place during the inter-war years, with over four million new homes being built in urban areas. Whilst slum clearance demolished many pubs, the licensing system severely limited their replacement. For instance, in Bradford the number of pubs fell by a third, and the 35,000 people living in Wytheshave housing estate in Manchester had to cope with just one pub. (Jennings 2011, 195-196) Contemporary author and journalist George Orwell has described the mood of the nation appropriately:

As for pubs, they are banished from the housing estates almost completely, and the few that remain are dismal sham-Tudor places fitted out by the big brewery companies and very expensive. For a middle-class population this would be a nuisance--it might mean walking a mile to get a glass of beer; for a working-class population, which uses the pub as a kind of club, it is a serious blow at communal life. It is a great achievement to get slum-dwellers into decent houses, but it is unfortunate that, owing to the peculiar temper of our time, it is also considered necessary to rob them of the last vestiges of their liberty. (Orwell 1937. *The Road to Wigan Pier*)

In contrast to the First World War, beer and pub were regarded as key elements of the war effort during the Second. They were seen as the ally, not the enemy, and temperance voices quieted down. Pub-going had a vital role in maintaining the moral of the nation, as it provided human contact and a sense of camaraderie in warm surroundings. (Jennings 2011, 209) People from all walks of life enjoyed a drink together in the middle of the turmoil of the war (Picture 2.).



PICTURE 2. A woman enjoys a drink with sailors in a pub during the Second World War 1944 (The Telegraph 2011).

One reason for the increase in drinking was the nature of the war. London, being in the front line of the Germany's *blitzkrieg* in 1940, saw a substantial rise in beer consumption. People regularly died in raids, therefore tipping was not condemned since each night could be your last. Also, with food and clothing items rationed, beer was about the only thing people could spend their income on. The demand of alcohol was further increased by the overseas service personnel, especially American troops who started to arrive in significant numbers at the end of 1942. (Haydon 2005, 284-285) According to the publicans of that time, Americans were gladly accepted to pubs as long as they remembered that locals wanted to meet their friends, not strangers, in public houses. Although the welcome for the overseas allies was not the warmest, they seem to have fond memories of the British 'watering holes'. In the words of the Agent-General of Ontario: "God bless the British licensed house. It saved our lives from loneliness – it is a glorious institution, and may it live and prosper for ever". (Jennings 2011, 210)

The postwar era saw a continuing decline in the number of public houses because of the 'better and fewer' policy favoured by the authorities. Their argument was that fewer public houses resulted in less drunkenness and disorder, which was partly true, given that most of the incidents happened in areas where public houses were most prevalent. The authorities' scheme was, however, based on a misconception. There were more pubs in poor areas, because the richer ones kept the publicans out, and there was also a greater market in ill-fated areas since the poor people drank more. Furthermore, drunkenness was more likely to be a factor of the extent of industrialisation of an area. The concentration of pubs appeared to be greater because of a higher population density, giving the impression that there is a link between the prevalence of pubs and drunkenness, whereas the actual link was between the industrialisation of a town and its drunk-

eness. The close correlation of drinking and unemployment was also more apparent in an industrial area where the diversity of labour opportunities was limited. (Haydon 2005, 282-283)

In the 1960s brewers realised that their retail outlets were grossly undervalued. To protect the industry from swindlers, national brewing companies had to be created rapidly. Therefore, mergers and acquisitions ruled the pub industry leading the way to the creation of the modern market with national domination by a handful of gigantic brewing companies. (Richmond & Turton 1990, 18)

The industry concentrated so quickly that by 1976 the seven largest companies dominated the UK beer sales with a substantial share of 91 per cent. The intention of the brewers was to achieve a national market, produce national brands and acquire as many places to sell their product in as possible. Consequently, the main source of public house closures was no longer the magistrates, but the brewers. (Haydon 2005, 297-299)

Brewers have never been slow to close unprofitable pubs, the effects of which were clearly visible in rural areas where brewery mergers tended to create regional monopolies. Brewers even resorted to deception in order to close down country pubs, simultaneously avoiding the rage of the villagers. They refused to allow improvements to the premises until the state of the building attracted the attention of magistrates. The improvements suggested were then viewed as unreasonable and uneconomic. (Haydon 2005, 300)

The vast advantages of nationally recognised brands and large advertising budgets gave the brewing companies enormous influence over the industry. The development was further contributed by the public who had not, since the First World War, paid much attention to what they were drinking as long as it was cheap. Although this is partly true in our day it is a reversal of the traditional position where quality of beer was the key perspective and a matter of regional pride. (Haydon 2005, 302)

Competition between breweries was carried on through the improvement of premises rather than price cutting, since the real competition was against other leisure activities people could spend their income on (Haydon 2005, 302). After the devastating economic effects of World War Two, pub-building and -improving did not get going again until

the mid-1950s. The actual planning remained traditional, but materials used were, inevitably, cheap and modest. (CAMRA 2012) Throughout the late 1900s the brewery companies spent substantial amounts of money in pubs in order to make them more enticing, and to eliminate the old image of it being a place for the middle-aged and elderly people. The investments made have truly paid off, as the pub had been restored to the centre of the social interaction. (Haydon 2005, 305)

There has been some debate in recent years about the degeneration of the public house. The number of pubs peaked as long ago as 1869 and the figures have been falling ever since. Some of the reasons include the constantly widening array of alternative leisure activities, and the increased importance of the home as a place to spend time in. Furthermore, the pub has historically been rooted in working class communities that have been disappearing in big city slums as well as rural villages. On the brighter side, small scale regional breweries using traditional methods have become more popular during the past 10 years. This shows the people's desire for a return to diverse and varied selection of beers that reflect local tastes. (BBC History Magazine 2009) Also, while there have been numerous media scares concerning binge drinking in the UK, it is spirits and spirit based drinks that come under the fire. The pub and beer have established themselves firmly as an essential part of community life. (Watson 2012. History of Beer)

2.2 A Tankard of Ale and a Ploughman's Lunch

It appears that the great British pub actually started life as a great Italian wine bar, as the Romans were the first ones to build wine shops along the roads to quench the thirst of the troops. Ale, however, was the native tittle, and it seems that the Romans quickly adapted to provide the locals with their drink of choice. Ale and beer have since formed a part of the staple British diet, especially since the brew was a much safer option than drinking the water of that time. By the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066, many monasteries and abbeys started brewing their own beer. The ones who were better at brewing sold their produce far beyond village borders. (Historic UK 2012) The expansion of Christianity did not reduce the nation's thirst for ale. Many Pagan rituals, which involved drinking, were continued by the church, and ales were even brewed especially for Christian festivals or to raise funds. (England and English history 2012)

The word ale has been used for over a thousand years in England, and it originally meant an alcoholic beverage made with malted barley, yeast and water, but without hops. The ale of the time was cloudy, full of proteins and carbohydrates making it an excellent source of nutrition. The introduction of hops in the 15th century made the ale taste bitterer, but hops also made it preserve for longer. From this time onwards, the hopped variety was called beer, and the unhopped one ale. By the end of the century beer had almost entirely replaced the old English ale. One prominent figure who favoured ale was Queen Elizabeth. When she was travelling through the country during the sixteenth century, she always sent couriers ahead to taste the local ale. If the quality was not satisfactory, a supply would be shipped to her from London. (England and English history 2012)

Coffee and tea were introduced in Britain in the mid 17th century. The unreasonable prices ensured that they remained a delight for the more affluent part of the nation. A few decades later cheap spirits, such as brandy from France and gin from Holland, found their way to the public houses offering a more accessible commodity for the lower classes. (Historic UK 2012)

The tavern thrived in towns during the eighteenth century. The essential difference between the taverns and alehouses of that time was the fact that taverns were places for leisure and pleasure for the professional classes, as the alehouse was a place of necessity for the poor. What is more, taverns were licensed to sell only wine, and usually served food as well. However, the pub of the past was certainly not a place for a meal. If you were lucky, you might have had a cold sausage roll, a piece of cheese or a sandwich. By the end of the century competition caused the decline of the tavern. They lost their monopoly on selling wine, the gin palaces drew away some of their clientele and drunkenness was now frowned upon amongst the middle class. (Historic UK 2012)

The amounts that people drank in the eighteenth century are considerable in today's standards. Average consumption per head was from twelve to sixteen pints per week, although a proportion of this was 'small' i.e. weaker beer consumed by women and children. The figure for an individual male was considerably higher, particularly the coal heavers (who unloaded ships in the harbours along the river Thames) could gulp down a staggering eight pints of strong beer per day. To this one must add the vast amounts of gin consumed. The levels of alcohol devoured were rooted in a number of

beliefs and practices. Beer was an essential part of a diet, and it was believed to contribute to strength and health. Also, many customs included the raise of a toast, for instance weddings, funerals and a new job. (Jennings 2011, 123-124)

Unlike most drinking places they replaced, the gin-shops served no food and had no seating. They were usually designed for quick turn-over, as the poor had little money, they were not encouraged to stay once they had spent whatever little they had. (Pubs.com. The history) The divorce of eating and drinking was seen particularly harmful. Following the example set by gin palaces some pubs found that savings could be made by abandoning victualling. At the same time, many alternative food outlets were set up to cater for the nation. The connection between the pub and provision of food was not re-established until at the turn of the twentieth century, and only within the last few decades it has become unusual to come across a pub that does not serve food. (Haydon 2005, 177-178) Contemporary author Richard Yates portrays the eateries in Victorian London:

For the aristocratic and the well-to-do there was Dolly's Chop House, a wonderful old room, heavy-panelled, dark, dingy, with a head waiter in a limp white neckcloth, but with good joints, and steaks and chops and soups served in a heavy old-fashioned manner at a stiff old-fashioned price. We impecunious juniors, however, ventured seldom into these expensive establishments. For us there were cheaper refectories, two of which achieved great celebrity in their day: Ball's Alamode Beef House where was to be obtained a most delicious "portion" of stewed beef done up in a sticky, coagulated, glutinous gravy of surpassing richness; and Williams's Boiled Beef House in the Old Bailey, which was well known throughout London. Williams's was a place to be "done" by anyone coming up for the London sights; and there were always plenty of country squires and farmers, and occasionally foreigners, to be I found there, though the latter did not seem to be much I impressed with the excellence of the *cuisine*. In those days, too, we used to lunch at places which seem entirely to have disappeared. The "Crowley's Alton Ale-house" is not so frequently met, with as it was thirty years ago. The "alehouses" were, in fact, small shops fitted with a beer-engine and a counter; they had been established by Mr. Crowley, a brewer of Alton, on finding the difficulty of procuring ordinary public-houses for the sale of his beer; and at them was sold nothing but beer, ham sandwiches, bread and cheese, but all of the very best. They were exceedingly popular with young men who did not particularly care about hanging round the bars of taverns, and did an enormous trade; but that was in the pre-Spiers & Pond days; and, I am bound to say, all the facilities for obtaining refreshments, and generally speaking the refreshments themselves, have vastly improved since then. (Yates 1885)

Late Victorian pubs usually offered coffee and food in the morning and hot dinners at the evening. They allowed customers to bring their own food, and even cooked it for them, providing mustard, salt and pickles. Food vendors visited the pubs selling fried fish, baked potatoes and sheep's trotters, sometimes displaying the goods outside a public house like early takeaways. Especially in the north of England publicans served free salty snacks to keep their punters thirsty. (Jennings 2011, 130)

The invention of the drum roaster in the early 19th century made the creation of very dark roasted malts possible, contributing to the flavour of porters and stouts. In contrast, when the twentieth century arrived, the need for standardisation and speed of manufacturing beer led to the development of pasteurised, over processed drink. The giant breweries made smaller producers out of business or took them over. Keg (pasteurised) beers and lagers were, and still are, popular within the industry. They have a long shelf life, they do not need any special handling or treatment, they are consistent in quality and they do not deteriorate when transported. Thus, there is little wastage making the profits higher, but unfortunately at the same time restricting the choice of drink for the customer. (England and the English history 2012)

In the 1960s eating out became fashionable, and cafes and restaurants were booming. Pubs fought back, and used improved food and settings to tempt in whole families. The first hot meals being served in a pub were pies, which were prepared by the landlady for lunchtime. Pies were soon joined by mash potatoes, jumbo sausages and baked beans, often served from behind a glass at the bar counter, as seen in picture 3. For the pubs the amounts of food served caused a problem, as created huge amounts of washing up and clearing away to be done, which ate away the profit margins. Soon enough, someone had the bright idea to minimise the amount of washing up, and the 'basket food' was born. Everything was served in a basket; chips, scampi, fried chicken and sausages being the most popular choices. (Delplanque 2009)



PICTURE 3. Trays of shepherd's pie and bowls of baked beans served in a pub (Delplanque 2009).

The 1970s brought the trend of more civilized eating, introducing us prawn cocktails, black forest gâteau and steak and chips (The Hairy Bikers 2012). Between 1977 and 1984 food sales in public houses grew by 375 percent (Jennings 2011, 219). Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s were very much an era of changing palates. In addition to the boom in eating out, wines and spirits gradually became more popular and the demand for healthier foods and lighter beverages rose. (Haydon 2005, 291) However, it was not until the 1990s when real chefs started appearing in pubs creating more complex menus; the early form of a gastro pub was born. In 2003 nine out of ten pubs in Britain served food, and the 'pub grub' has certainly come a long way since pickled eggs. (The Hairy Bikers 2012)

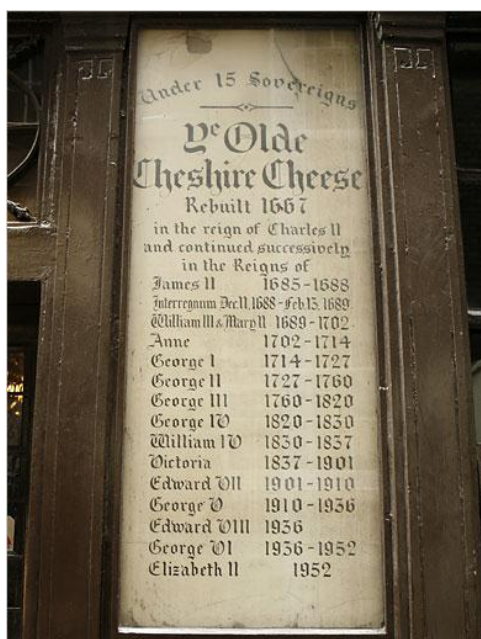
2.3 The punter and the landlady

Over the centuries hundreds of thousands of people have run pubs. It still remains an ambition for many a drinker, even though not many realise how hard the work is. There is no clear rule about who became publicans, but some popular routes in getting involved with the trade have been discovered. (Pub History Society 2011) One prominent route was from within the trade itself. For instance, inn servants and household assistants commonly aspired to become publicans after serving in the industry in lower occupations for several years. Keepers of chandler's shops, formerly selling candles as

well as table beer, were the largest single group entering the industry. One other route into the trade was from occupations with a limited life span – in sport, the military and the police to name a few. Former cricketers, footballers and professional boxers ran public houses during their retirement. To many more in unrelated occupations the beer trade simply represented a business opportunity. Blacksmiths, carpenters, bakers, tailors, farmers and even undertakers usually carried on their occupations alongside the sale of drink. For example, in Leeds at the end of the 1830s over a half of the 235 alehouse keepers pursued another trade on the same premises. Indeed, dual occupation remained common in rural areas well into the nineteenth century. (Jennings 2011, 90-91)

Where the publican carried on another profession it was his wife who was left in charge of the pub. In general women were seen as essential business partners and marrying a woman with experience in the trade was considered a good move. The typical host of a public house was indeed a couple, whereas single women publicans always constituted a significant minority. For instance, over the period 1840-1939 in London only one of every ten publicans was a single woman or a widower. In most cases they picked up the control of a pub previously held by a male relative, as it made good sense for the owner, increasingly a brewery company, to permit the pub to continue. It was certainly easier than installing a temporary tenant. (Jennings 2011, 93)

Running a public house was very much a family business. Children and other relatives, above all single and widowed family members, worked in a family company especially where the licensee was alone. The pub trade commonly descended generations, sometimes to a remarkable degree of continuity. (Jennings 2011, 94) A great example is the Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, which is one of the oldest pubs in the City of London, and once a favourite retreat of author Charles Dickens. The earliest incarnation of this pub was a guest house belonging to a thirteenth century Monastery. The building was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 only to be rebuilt the following year. The succeeding proprietors are depicted in Picture 4. (London Evening Standard 2008)



PICTURE 4. The fifteen sovereigns of Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese (London Evening Standard 2008).

Larger houses relied upon staff as well, and usually employed several live-in servants who were predominantly young and female. Their duties would have contained normal household chores from babysitting to cleaning, as well as waiting on customers and clearing up after them. In some cases tasks were even more varied. In a beerhouse in St Albans the publican kept a cow, and the servant made butter and delivered milk in addition to serving in the taproom. Running a pub was not plain sailing, as it was quite common in the nineteenth century for the staff to work even up to a hundred hours per week. (Jennings 2011, 94-96)

The publicans were for the most part middle aged, i.e. on average in their forties. Although the profession was not valued very high in the society, pub keepers were generally respected and well liked characters. People depended upon them in case of an emergency and enjoyed their company and sociable nature. Sociability had a serious drawback, namely a fondness for drink, and many publicans paid the price in their health and life. From 1880 to 1882 the mortality from alcoholism among pub keepers was five times greater than the general rate, and suicide rate almost double the average. (Jennings 2011, 97)

The path from the early ale house keeper to the modern publican has been an eventful one. As early as AD 975, the king of Kent saw the need to restrict the number of ale

sellers to one per village. Furthermore, standard size drinking vessels to be used in alehouses were introduced. Concurrently he learned a lesson that had to be relearned numerous times during the next thousand years, namely to legislate between an Englishman and his ale is to lure disaster. Far from viewing the King's dictation as a restriction favouring sobriety, people everywhere took it as a challenge to drink more than the next man. (Haydon 2005, 3)

In the 12th century women had a significant role in ale brewing. Although they worked hard in miserable conditions, the job of an ale wife was not valued high. If found brewing bad ale, the ale wife was likely to be shunned by the community, or even damned by the church to spend an eternity with plenty of fire and brimstone. At this time it was not unrespectable for women to be seen in alehouses, though it would have been unusual for married women to visit an establishment alone, since unaccompanied women could very well be mistaken for 'working girls'. (Haydon 2005, 10-11)

A growing number of alehouses and the formalising of the traditions of alehouse, tavern and inn were the trends of the fourteenth century. The good yeomen of England spent most of their spare time in alehouses, when they should have been, by King's order, practicing with the long bow for the ongoing Hundred Years' War. The lack of motivation to master the art was considered a threat to national security, and the King was forced to prohibit cards, dice, football and cock fighting among other activities carried out in alehouses. (Haydon 2005, 13)

The profession of an ale-conner was a very important one for several hundred years. The position was created by William the Conqueror for the purpose of keeping ale prices and quality in line throughout the Kingdom. The ale-conner was an expert judge of beer, and he also had the authority to condemn a batch of beer or lower its price if it did not meet his standards. This position still exists in England, and an ale-conner is paid a small annual bursary with free beer as a part of the deal. (Ale Conner 2011) According to a legend, an ale-conner would demand a tankard of ale, pour some of it on a wooden seat and sit on a pool of ale for about half an hour. If he could rise from his position without his pants sticking to the bench, the ale was deemed to be fit for sale. Conversely, if his pants stuck to the seat the sample was judged unfit to drink. The idea behind this experiment (although they would have not known it at that time) is the fact that a

fully fermented quality beer would not contain enough residual sugar to cause the ale-conner's pants to get stuck. (Hornsey 2003, 286)

The law set in 1377 required an establishment to place an ale stake outside their house when a new batch of ale had been brewed. Selling a brew without placing a stake on the premises or selling more than one batch under the same stake was a serious offence. The stake was usually a branch, a bush or even a broom. In cities, with considerable competition for the trade, it seems that ale house owners would compete in erecting the longest pole in order to attract more patrons. (Hornsey 2003, 286) This custom is depicted in Picture 5.



PICTURE 5. An ale stake outside an alehouse (Brewsters Brewing Company 2011).

The latter part of the fourteenth century brought little change for the ale brewer. Keeping an alehouse was, and would be for the next 300 years, considered a very low occupation, barely a step away from total poverty. In addition, brewing ale and running an alehouse was not for the faint hearted. A typical day for a London alehouse keeper started at 6 a.m. shopping for provisions. At 9 a.m. the malt market would open and around noon there would be lunchtime rush. Alehouses were kept open until 9 p.m. when the church bells rang for all the fires to be put out. There were not many options for the alehouse keeper, though, since the law dictated that once you had started brewing ale you were obliged to brew it. Ceasing to brew or pushing up the price was punishable by law. (Haydon 2005, 17-18, 21)

The alehouse had a significant role during the English Civil war (1642-1651). Demand for beer rose to satisfy the thirst of armed forces on the move. Since the burden of

providing for the troops was no longer required from private households, the role fell heavily on the alehouse. It was not very likely for the publican to be compensated for the costs, thus driving many publicans up the wall. What is more, duties on ale and beer were imposed in order to gain revenue for fighting the war. Alehouses also commonly doubled as court rooms in trials. (Haydon 2005, 59-60)

Inns provided services for travellers and their horses along the major routes, thus being an essential element in the country's growing transport network. Inns offered food and accommodation, catered for travellers' horses or provided their own for hire. The scale of the largest inns is hard to fathom. The grander ones had over sixty bedrooms and stabling for fifty horses. Inns were usually several storeys high, especially in urban areas, with galleried courtyards and lavishly decorated rooms with finest linen and silver cutlery. (England and English history 2012) There is a wealth of travellers' tales depicting the comfort, or lack thereof, of the inns around the nation. Sharing beds was quite common at that time, which proved to be a bit problematic at times. A gentleman called John Cannon recorded of his night at the Hart Inn in Hampshire: "My bedfellow in his sleep grasp'd me and cry'd out, Ah my dear Peggy, thinking he had been in bed with his wife, but I soon made him sensible of ye mistake by awaking him". (Jennings 2011, 41-42)

From about the middle of the eighteenth century inns also participated in providing postal services, and were very much involved in establishing one of the first forms of public transport, namely the stagecoach. Inns were also important bases for the carriage of goods, with yards where carts could load and unload, warehouses where commodities could be stored and rooms where carrier and customer could meet. (Jennings 2011, 41-42)

Inns and public houses provided a base for a wide variety of trading activities. They functioned as markets for agricultural produce, leather and textile goods and even horse trade. The yards of inns were used by blacksmiths, butchers and travelling salesmen as a place for the purchase and sale of goods. Itinerant workers, such as dentists, tailors, vets and opticians, found the public house to be a convenient place close to the day by day activities of townspeople. Many of the innkeepers were not educated, some were even illiterate, but all the activities taking place on the premises raised their status, thus making it a position of influence and power. (England and English history 2012)

The single most significant change during the nineteenth century was the growth of brewery control over public houses. At the beginning of the period roughly two-thirds of publicans brewed their own beer, with the exception of London where brewers already dominated the production. Over the course of the century a small number of major brewers came to control the manufacturing of beer. Along with this came the development of the so called tie, whereby a publican agreed to sell the product of a particular company. At first it was not a deliberate strategy, but arose from the need of sufficient capital that large breweries could offer, because the rising value of land, the increasing cost of setting up a public house and the higher premium put on the lease (as the number of licenses was restricted) all made it more expensive to get into the business. The benefits of the tie for the breweries included for instance a reduction in delivery costs and the ability to estimate sales. (Jennings 2011, 98) As seen in Table 1, by the beginning of the twentieth century the number of publicans brewing their own beer had fallen to under a half.

TABLE 1. The number of retail brewers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Haydon 2005, 167).

| Year | Retail Brewers |
|------|----------------|
| 1830 | 1, 269 |
| 1839 | 18, 017 |
| 1880 | 6, 157 |
| 1914 | 880 |

The real loser in the nineteenth century was the existing publican. He had bent over backwards to follow the magistrates' orders, and became indebted for a brewery company. Publican's livelihood was dependent upon retailing beer, the price of which had fallen to under a half almost overnight following the Beer Act in 1830. Simultaneously, the spirit duties were heavily reduced in England, Scotland and Ireland in order to reduce smuggling, which had been running rampant at the French border. By doing so, the government wanted to encourage the distillation of English gin. Many licensees opted to provide the more profitable commodity, gin, realising that the public house had to adapt in order to hold their own. (Astral Travels 2003)

The gin craze was further reinforced by the rapidly changing society; long-established institutions were declining, reforming and moulding themselves to face the new industrial age. The era of the stagecoach faded, and along came the railways which changed the society with concepts of immediate travel. The seemingly endless engineering achievements affected the society forcing it to rethink its values and replacing old ways with industrial concepts. On top of that, the massive effects of urbanisation and the changing patterns of wealth distribution within the society caused social turmoil. All of these reasons put together caused the gin drinking to soar overnight. (Haydon 2005, 163-164)

The effects of cheap drink were devastating, especially for the lower classes. Contemporary author Charles Dickens reflects the topic in his essay titled 'Drunken besotted men, and wretched broken-down miserable women':

Well-disposed gentlemen, and charitable ladies, would alike turn with coldness and disgust from a description of the drunken besotted men, and wretched broken-down miserable women, who form no inconsiderable portion of the frequenters of these haunts; forgetting, in the pleasant consciousness of their own rectitude, the poverty of the one, and the temptation of the other. Gin-drinking is a great vice in England, but wretchedness and dirt are a greater; and until you improve the homes of the poor, or persuade a half-famished wretch not to seek relief in the temporary oblivion of his own misery, with the pittance which, divided among his family, would furnish a morsel of bread for each, gin-shops will increase in number and splendour. (Dickens 1836)

Following the peak years of beer consumption in the 1870s, a general depression severely affected the industry in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This fuelled the final development towards an almost total control of the trade by the brewery companies, since their financial aid was essential in keeping the public houses in business. The publican thus went from being independent to being dependent on a brewery company, which usually owned the premises and sometimes even the fixtures and fittings of the pub. The publican was essentially a tenant who had to comply with the brewery's rules and wishes, the most prevalent of which was the fact that the public house had to sell more or less exclusively its owner's products. In most cases the tenant ran the daily operations and kept the profits made from sales. Occasionally, the brewery appointed a manager who was in charge of the premises. They received a wage from the brewery and sometimes a commission on sales. (Jennings 2011, 100-101)

The tied system as a whole provoked a great deal of hostility. Breweries were depicted as ruthless and monopolistic businessmen selling inferior beer at high prices. Tenants had the rowdiest of voices, as they disliked the strenuous nature of the tie, and the overall context of increasing impersonality and inflexibility. Tenants purchasing supplies from other sources and those getting into financial difficulties were got rid of. The impact of brewery money and control was not all bad, though. Pubs were rebuilt and refurbished in unprecedented measure in order to entice customers in. (Jennings 2011, 102) Brewery companies created establishments that were distinctive features in the townscape. Prominent advertising boards, glass and mirror work and elaborate wood carvings were among the improvements financed by the brewery companies, as is seen in Picture 6. The design of these majestic pubs was a specialist task, and many breweries hired a house architect for the job. (Johnson 2011)



PICTURE 6. Elaborate wood and glass details (Johnson 2011).

Prosperity of the society induced a number of specialist shops, i.e. tobacconists, grocers and even brothels that took functions away from the alehouse. Even so, the public houses became wealthier because of the unprecedented amount of leisure time the people had. (Haydon 2005, 110) During the nineteenth century the chief elements of a jolly night out were, in addition to drinking, talking, playing games and music. Topics of conversation usually circled around village gossip, sports, work and current affairs. The variety of pub games was enormous, ranging from smoking contests and skittles (a kind of a bowling game) to billiards and darts. The British weather is probably responsible for the popularity of indoor games. (Independent Guide to Traditional English Pubs)

Some of the more adventurous games customers engaged themselves in were the fighting of a fox and a badger and rat killings carried out by stray dogs. The more violent games seemed to vanish by the First World War, but the legal blood sports, like fox hunting, continued to begin and end at public houses. Gambling was at the height of the fashion, since it had been banned by the church and the state for so many years. Cricket, wrestling, football, bowling and horse racing all took place in the alehouse, or at least in close proximity to it. (Haydon 2005, 111) Throughout the century gambling for money was illegal; therefore the games were played for beer or cigarettes. Music in pubs most commonly meant informal pub songs, and the first man to start singing customarily received a complimentary pint from the publican. Singing contests were also held, with teams on both sides of the pub and musicians accompanying with a fiddle or a piano. (Jennings 2011, 126-128)

In addition to providing a venue for recreation, pubs continued to perform a range of other functions. The new purpose-built hotels had gradually replaced the inns, but pubs still catered for the travellers, as most pubs still had at least a few rooms for lodgers. The pub also functioned as a meeting place for a number of clubs, societies, trade unions and political groups. (Jennings 2011, 132)

The early twentieth century was a time of decline for the public house, and even more for the landlord. Design and construction of public houses was passed over to a planning system that was made up of officials (magistrates and town halls, to name a few) who had none or little to do with the industry. Besides the planning board the trade had to deal with such bodies as the Trust Houses and the Public House Refreshment Association that both believed that the profit motive for landlords encouraged the drunkenness of the community. These bodies set a standard on how a respectable and improved public house should look like. As a result of this unification pubs lost a lot of their character, and magistrates were eager to learn how to make full use of their power over the public house. (Haydon 2005, 266, 270)

The First World War dramatically changed the use of the pub, as well as the way it functioned. Opening hours were severely reduced, eliminating early morning, afternoon and late night drinking in order to fight the alleged evil effects of drinking on the war effort. In another words, restricted drinking was introduced in order to ensure a sober workforce and to prevent accidents, particularly in the munitions factories. These regu-

lations were not removed until the 1980s. (BBC History Magazine, 2009) The war created further difficulties for the publican as providing for soldiers was a legal obligation, and although their keep was subsidised, its cost was very much resented by otherwise very patriotic publicans. The greatest changes for publicans and their customers were however in the price, strength and availability of beer. As a result of tax increases and the rising cost of raw material the price of beer escalated doubling in the first two years of war. Added to this, brewing of beer was restricted and limits placed on the strength of beer brewed. (Jennings 2011, 187-188)

Adding to the plight of the publican was the growing number of alternative leisure activities. Music halls, cinema and sport as a mass spectator pursuit all provided more opportunities for leisure. Increased disposable income also made it possible for people to go on holidays and spend money on furnishing their houses, making them places for relaxation. Hence, a drink at the pub did not cease to be part of the leisure world, but its central role was definitely reduced. (Jennings 2011, 133)

The war years also witnessed a noticeable change to the pub's customers as women started to enjoy a drink at their local. Because of the war, they were drawn into the workforce in large numbers. Income and growing independence, and a desire for company, led more women into the pleasant world of the pub. This inevitably aroused hostility and the licensing bench urged the publicans to discourage women's drinking. Clergymen were also eager to condemn this liberal trend with 'loose women' gallivanting in pubs. It took a lot of effort from committees of women to make the Control Board believe that women could drink at the pub unaccompanied without succumbing to promiscuous activities. Pub habit began to move up the social scale, drawing in some first timers from the lower middle- and working class women. The state control scheme, the aim of which was to improve pubs, was greatly influenced by these newfound, more affluent, customers. The philosophy comprised fewer licenses, the provision of food and weaker, or non-alcoholic, beverages, new pub designs and a socially broader clientele. The movement was carried forward by a number of committed brewers, driven by the ideology of improvement, and also by their belief in its commercial sense. For them the war had demonstrated that reduced beer consumption did not necessarily mean less profit. Widening the social base of the pub goers would enhance the sale of more expensive and thus more profitable beers. What is more, the necessary expenditure on im-

provement would disadvantage smaller brewers, and license reduction would further narrow down competition. (Jennings 2011, 189-190, 197)

The state control scheme, promoted by some favourable politics, gradually started to achieve their objectives. Birmingham was in the frontline of improvement, the enhanced British Oak being the flagship pub with car parks, bowling greens and a children's playground. It also featured a function room for concerts and meetings, and a fully equipped restaurant. (Jennings 2011, 198) Brewers in the London area were eager to follow. Money was lavishly spent especially on the Downham Tavern, first opened in 1930. It was the only pub to be included in the new estate plan, and had to cope serving a population of 29, 000. Keeping this in mind, it was no wonder that it comprised of two big lounges, a concert hall for 1,000 people, tea room, a children's room and even a couple of tennis courts. Naturally, the goal was to reconstruct the tavern into a family establishment rather than a drinking den of the past. A considerable part of the building was demolished and rebuilt as a supermarket in the 1990s, leaving a relatively small public house licensed for 280 people. The remaining part of the tavern is depicted in Picture 7. (Downham Town Talk)



PICTURE 7. The once grand Downham Tavern (Downham Town Talk).

In oral history, publicans found their trade being rich and rewarding. As one landlady expressed it:

Many times we didn't even have a night off, we just stopped in the pub and played darts with the lads. It was more a friendly, homely atmosphere. All your customers were friends. All my life I've had pleasant memories, I've

had fun, I've really enjoyed it. If I wet tomorrow, I've no regrets. My husband was the same, he loved the licensed trade. He didn't have hobbies – his work was his hobby.

Thus the prevailing social tone of the pub had changed. It was considered a place for refreshment, enjoyment and companionship. The traditional essence of pub life was articulated in the idea of a 'local'. (Jennings 2011, 204-205)

The number of brewers continued to decline after the wars. Further takeovers and mergers resulted in just a handful of brewers not only producing the vast majority of beer, but also owning the best part of pubs. The Big Six, Allied Breweries, Bass Charrington, Courage, Scottish and Newcastle, Watney Mann and Whitbread, were national brewers reaching the whole nation. (Independent Guide to Traditional English Pubs)

The collapse of heavy and manufacturing industry, such as shipbuilding and steelwork, in the 1970s caused a major decline in the number of pubs. The troubles effectively removed an essential support of the urban male-dominated pub and recession caused the demand for beer fall sharply during the late twentieth century. Demographic change boosted the trend, as the working class, who had always formed the majority of pub goers, escaped the cities and moved to council estates in the suburbs. The inner-city housing was now prominently occupied by immigrants from the New Commonwealth, for many of whom the pub was not a part of their cultural heritage. (Jennings 2011, 214)

In the late 1980s the old tie between the pub and the brewer was seen as unhealthy and restrictive, the brewers being both the manufacturer and the retailer. The government recommended that each of the big brewers should own no more than 2,000 pubs in their control. As a result, around 12,000 pubs were sold off. On the other hand, some brewers decided they would be better off as mere retailers and sold off their breweries instead. New retail pub chains were thus formed, but the consumer choice only seemingly increased as many of the new pub chains still bought their beer from the Big Six. What is more, the pub chains had been sold and bought so many times it was hard to find out who owned what. (Independent Guide to Traditional English Pubs)

Sadly, England's pub heritage has been greatly neglected. Of the tens of thousands of public houses only a tiny percentage has retained anything of their original form. Fortunately, many of those who have survived a mauling by brewers, developers, Luftwaffe

and vandals with at least a feeling of the 'real thing', are now listed by the English Heritage or the National Trust. In addition to the listed status, which offers some protection against further development, some of the pubs have been lucky enough to be owned by enlightened brewers who have not only preserved their pubs, but have bought pubs of outstanding historic value and restored them. In the end, no matter whether you like your pub modern or being from 'ye olde worlde', with around 60,000 pubs across the UK you are sure to find the one that suits your fancy. (CAMRA 2012)

3 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PUB OF TODAY

3.1 See you at the Red Lion!

There are around 61,000 pubs in Britain. About 700 of those are called The Red Lion, slightly less than that are called The White Horse, slightly less than that are called The Rose and Crown and so on. These are not pub chains, they are simply popular, easily remembered names, which may or may not have a reference in British cultural or political history. Needless to say, British pub-goers are spoiled for choice, as pubs range from little more than an ordinary living room with two tables and a few chairs, to a three-storey complex with seats for more than 1,000 customers. Tourists often come to Britain seeking the ‘typical British pub’. Some are disappointed to find that there is no such thing, but the clever ones are those who realise that the pubs are all typically British. (SIRC. Passport to the Pub)

The term ‘typical English/Irish pub’ and the actual image that it conjures up for people (not only tourists, but natives also) are contradictory to each other. For instance, in Victorian times, pubs or inns were furnished and decorated according to the fashions and availabilities of that particular time. They were called ‘The Prince of Wales’, ‘The Crown’, or ‘The Queen’s Arms’, among various other monarchy - related names. These pub names are still very common, but karaoke machines on a Friday night and the plastic tables and chairs in a modern beer garden can hardly be called Victorian, even if the pub is called ‘The Sovereign’, and has been called that for the past 150 years. Many passionate pub-goers and real ale drinkers, in their quest for the ultimate, original, ‘ye olde’ ale house experience, overlook the fact that the pub, as the heart and soul of the community, the warm and welcoming beacon to all and sundry, has always been original, and has always given the public what they want, regardless of time or circumstance. In a way, the pub has always been modern and up-to-date. (Brown 2004, 334, 336 – 337, 339)

Theme pubs are an excellent example of the aforementioned distortion. The vast number of different styles and pub concepts has increased astronomically during the last 50 years. This categorising and constant searching for new trends and quirks to integrate with ‘fresh’ pub business ideas has all but run its course, and perhaps the most promi-

ment outcome is the theme pub themed as 'the pub'. This phenomenon is parallel to that of pubs advertising 'warm, flat beer, crappy food and lousy service'. Although this already began in the 1980's, it was a novelty then; everybody had been praising their own products and customer service in the most imaginative ways for decades, even centuries. All of a sudden, this blatantly outspoken, seemingly ignorant anti-advertisement started bringing the punters in by the hundreds and thousands, simply because it was absolutely unheard of and had to be seen. (Brown 2004, 337; SIRC. Passport to the Pub)

Pubs have been themed in various ways since the 1930's. Theming strategies have ranged from a television and a few fake trophies making up a sport pub, to a painstakingly gathered collection of original 19th century memorabilia to create the atmosphere of a pub of that era. In between there are establishments boasting fake palm trees, seats from old cars, and even a pub with a floor made out of gravestones. Nowadays, it could be said that it is almost impossible not to theme a pub, as people go to different pubs depending on what they offer. They might go to one pub for the excellent food, another to watch football, and yet another for its prime selection of real ales. Some pubs, in an effort to widen their customer sector, or just to liven things up a bit, have had their interior refurbished in a modern, trendy style, swapping the authenticity of dark wood tables and simple bar stools for large, comfortable sofas, white tables and a brightly lit bar counter. All this, combined with table-top menu cards suggesting a cocktail followed by a lunch in the hottest fusion-kitchen style sets a very different backdrop to the pub experience. This so-called 'mucking about' with a huge part of British heritage has been frowned upon by self-proclaimed beer aficionados and supporters of the traditional British pub. (Brown 2004, 341, 344 - 345)

No matter how the pub, as a national institution and an everyday part of life, has been twisted, turned, taken apart and put back together again, the importance of the pub in British culture can be undermined by no-one. According to the British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA), more than 30 per cent of the British adult population visits a pub at least once a week. Ernst & Young, one of the largest accounting companies in the world, recently conducted a survey concerning British pubs. They calculated that the British government receives tax revenues to the value of around £9 billion per year, solely from the production and sales of beer. A pint sold in a pub, of course, yields almost twice the amount of tax of a pint sold in a grocery shop. (Uren 2009)

The pub is not only important to Britain itself. What visit to any part of Britain would be complete without a night at the pub? Nearly all tourists will testify to this. A research by the BBPA shows, that 85 per cent of tourists actually prefer British pubs to the bars in their own countries. As the pub industry has taken massive blows in recent years (which we will look into presently), due to a drop of beer sales and consequential pub closures and job losses, the tourism sector has strengthened its co-operation with the government and the pub industry itself, in order to help one of Britain's most important pulling factors survive. (Uren 2009)

The number of pubs in Britain reached its peak as early as 1877, and has been declining to this day (Brown 2004, 342). In recent years, the industry has been tackling massive problems such as a decrease in beer consumption, an increase in alcohol duty, and ever-expanding competition from supermarkets. The smoking ban of 2007 affected a lot of establishments which lacked comfortable terraces or outdoor smoking areas. (Uren 2009)

Beer consumption has fallen drastically between 1979 and 2008. During this time, the amount of beer purchased per capita has gone down by 33 per cent. This, added to the fact that alcohol consumption as a whole has also dropped, has spelled out difficult times for publicans. A rise in alcohol taxes has also made its impact, as the extra amount of tax per pint has to be included in the price paid by the customer. (Uren 2009)

3.2 “Pint of lager and a Chicken Tikka, please!”

Perhaps the most famous pub dish of all, the Ploughman's Lunch, is still a favourite in traditional pubs all over England. The term itself is dated back to 1837 by the Oxford English Dictionary, although in those times, it meant the actual packed lunch that a ploughman may have taken to work with him, and not something which would have been served in a pub. Today, the Ploughman's Lunch differs greatly from one pub to the next. It usually contains, however, bread, cheese, lettuce or some other salad vegetables, English pickle, and perhaps apple or grapes. This, the steak and ale (or kidney) pie, and Shepherd's pie are among the traditional pub dishes you will find in almost any pub with food service. (Welford 2010)

The aforementioned folly of the pub industry has been combatted by a lot of publicans by putting more emphasis on pub food. This has proved successful for many, as many pubs now offer good quality home-cooked food for a reasonable price. This has been especially noticeable in London, where eating at a decent restaurant can be very expensive. Pub chains offer a huge range of meals to accommodate the widest taste spectrum possible. Everything from burgers to Indian cuisine is served, and individual meals are pretty much the same in a certain chain throughout the British Isles. An interesting phenomenon, especially in West London, is the integration of Thai cuisine with the ordinary London pub. This began 20 years ago, when foreign food in pubs was still relatively unheard of. There are pubs in London which have signs emphasizing their 'traditional British' status, as well as signs boasting authentic Thai cuisine. The latter claim is not a lie, as a great many of these pubs employ Thai chefs, who use fresh, traditional ingredients in their cooking. (Lander 2009)

Some pubs, called gastropubs, a phrase coined around 15 years ago, have taken their cooking to another level altogether. A British pub was awarded two Michelin stars for the first time this year. The Hand and Flowers in Marlow, Buckinghamshire, was acknowledged by the Michelin guide 2012. Their cuisine can hardly be called traditional pub grub (how about cod served with caviar hazelnuts and Greek cress?), but the Hand and Flowers does maintain its pub image as a place where you can go for a pint, without being expected to dine. (Wallop 2011)

In the 1970's, there were six national breweries who had all but monopolized the producing of beer, as well as owning most of the pubs in Britain. These were called the 'Big Six', namely Bass Charrington, Allied Breweries, Courage Imperial, Whitbread, Scottish and Newcastle and Watney Mann. Between them, these giants bought out a vast number of publicans in the private sector, and started producing and importing lagers and ciders which were easy and cheap to make, and were also easily kept in kegs or on the shelf in bottles for long periods of time. Naturally, the real ales which were prized by publicans and customers alike, were ousted by these new, trendy, and most importantly, excellently marketed and advertised brands. (Ainsworth 2005)

These new lagers were enjoyed particularly by younger people, because of their cool image, portrayed irresistibly in well made TV-advertisements. The real ales had become something old and stuffy for the older gentlemen in their quiet country pubs; they were

seen as quintessentially British and a bit passé, whereas the newly discovered brands, such as Foster's and Stella Artois, were linked with a cultured outlook and good taste. (Brown 2004, 300 - 302)

The rise of the new brands was all well and good, until an unsavoury phenomenon raised its ugly head: the so-called 'lager lout'. As drinking lager became more and more trendy, young people with money were able to purchase and consume large quantities of it, even though it was considerably more expensive than the obsolete traditional British ales. This binge drinking resulted in a worrying increase in violence in previously peaceful and well-thought-of communities. Suddenly, the lager lout was frowned upon, and to order a pint of lager would raise eyebrows in some establishments. This development was tackled by the young people who had no wish to be associated with lager louts or trouble-makers. Drinking something from a clearly labeled bottle was an easy way to differentiate oneself from the hooligans who ordered a generic pint of lager or 'fizzy'. (Brown 2004, 304- 305)

CAMRA, or the Campaign for the Revitalization of Ale, was founded in 1971 by four young men, namely Graham Lees, Bill Mellor, Michael Hardman and Jim Makin. They had had enough of the Big Six monopolizing practically every aspect of the brewing industry. These young revolutionists staged demonstrations in the form of funerals for closing breweries, made petitions for people to sign, and soon after they established a newsletter called What's Brewing, which offered the latest news on the industry. The name of the organization was changed to the Campaign for Real Ale, which it is called today. The term 'real ale' was actually invented by CAMRA members themselves, and it even became an entry in the Oxford English Dictionary. (CAMRA; Brown 2004, 277 - 280)

CAMRA has been very successful in its efforts, having even been described by Michael Young of the National Consumer Council as 'the most successful consumer movement in Europe'. The Big Six gradually started to realise, that CAMRA was a worthy opponent, and began, slowly but surely, to give room to smaller breweries and taking their products into pubs that they owned. The 'real ale' business has since then been revitalized, and today British beer drinkers enjoy a wider and better quality selection of British ales than ever before. (Brown 2004, 280)

3.3 All my locals

As we return to our local pub, after a foray into foreign beers and food from every corner of the earth, we realise that we must make a choice. Our local is not necessarily the closest pub to our homes, as it was in the beginning of pub history, when there might have been only one pub for dozens of miles around. We might have a favourite pub for food, for playing snooker, or for live music. But if we are only in pursuit of a nice drink and perhaps a chat with the staff, how do we make that choice? (SIRC. Passport to the Pub)

As in real ales, the choice of different styles of pubs is wider than ever, even though the sheer number of pubs has decreased. Family pubs are becoming very common, especially around shopping centres and densely populated areas. They might have a children's corner inside the pub, safely out of the way of other customers, complete with various toys and games, and sometimes even with staff to look after the children. Some family pubs also have a backyard, which is perhaps adjacent to a beer garden. This often features swings, a sandbox, and other amusements to keep the kids occupied while his or her parents enjoy a drink. Family pubs almost always serve food, and of course cater to children's tastes. (SIRC. Passport to the Pub)

Student pubs are usually lively establishments with a lot of activities, including quizzes, board games and also traditional pub games, such as pool. Prices will be understandably low, even more so if you have a student card. Happy hours and special offers are very common in student pubs, as money is always an issue with students. (SIRC. Passport to the Pub)

The most popular, glitziest pubs are called circuit pubs. They are usually found on the main street or very close to the centre of town. The term 'circuit pub' comes from the practice of 'pub crawls', wherein a party of people go around a certain route, stopping at all the pubs on that route for one or two drinks. This is a very common pastime for young people on Friday and Saturday nights, so circuit pubs are often packed on weekends, whereas they might be extremely quiet on week days. (Brown 2004, 341)

Perhaps the closest to a traditional British pub is the one found in the middle of an ordinary street among houses, or on a housing estate. These are usually away from the main veins of the town, and are unknown to tourists. The customers are almost all local residents, and they know each other, as well as the staff, very well. In some cases two or even three generations of the same family frequent the same pub. All in all, a pub like this can be every bit as traditionally British as a quaint, 250 year-old country pub, and a visit to one can be an experience to be remembered. (Brown 2004, 340, 343 – 344; SIRC. Passport to the Pub)

4 THEMED INTERVIEW

The main factor of a themed interview is that instead of detailed questions, the interview focuses on a few pre-selected issues. This allows the researcher and the interviewee to engage in a more relaxed and unrestricted conversation (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001; 48).

“The stimulus presented is content analyzed beforehand. This enables a distinction to be made between the “objective” facts of the situation and the interviewees’ subjective definitions of the situation with a view to comparing them.” (Flick 2006, 150, according to Merton and Kendall, 1946) The interviewees’ personal interpretations and experiences of a particular field, as a pose to scientific fact, are not only taken into consideration, but form an integral part of the process (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001; 48).

Because of a very tight schedule, we were able to gather information from only two interviewees. This being said, the interview was made in a place where going to the pub is something as natural as having breakfast in the morning. In fact, the interview proved to be a source of genuine surprise and amusement for the interviewees, as they found it odd that someone would use ‘going down the pub’ as a subject for a dissertation.

These interviews were conducted in John Paul’s Bar, Old Parish (*An Sean Phobal*), County Waterford in the Republic of Ireland. The pub, which has been there for around 200 years, was closed because of poor business for two years. A local couple, Seamus and Jean O’Donnell, took it upon themselves to re-open the pub in 2009, as they could see the community suffering for the lack of a meeting place.

When asked about the significance of the pub, the publican and the customers agreed on the fact that without a pub, the village they lived in (about 400 inhabitants), would become a ghost town. Being the only pub for miles around, John Paul’s Bar is the only place for local people to meet, have a drink and celebrate public holidays.

The publican was more enthusiastic about the meaning of staff. He said that every pub must have a publican, who is present to welcome people and supervise staff. Another important matter seemed to be the character of staff members. If extra staff was needed, it was absolutely imperative that they were known to be suitable for the job.

The next question concerned pubs' pulling factors. These varied from friendly staff and an appealing exterior to games like darts. An interesting observation was that a cosy or stylish interior had very little significance for any of the interviewees. By far the most important aspect of any pub is the company, including both customers and staff.

Pub etiquette was a curious matter to the interviewees, as the atmosphere of this particular pub was extremely relaxed. The dos and don'ts were few and far between, and they were mainly to do with legal issues, for instance the smoking ban of 2007 and customers being of age. The final question concerned Finnish customers and their behaviour in that particular pub compared to customers from other parts of the world. The publican's one-word response attested to the fact that the four Finnish customers they had had in the past had an ample appetite for alcohol.

5 CONCLUSION

From the history of the public house we have aimed to cover the main events and aspects, as the time span covered is several centuries. That being said, many of the occurrences in history are thoroughly entwined and require some background explaining. The lack of conclusive, reliable literature posed something of a problem. Especially the material concerning modern times tends to be very subjective, thus not giving a very extensive perspective on the matter at hand.

We have included a wide array of sources in our study; only trustworthy and noted authors, respectable newspapers and websites maintained by professional societies have been acknowledged. Also, a themed interview has been conducted with a professional of the bar industry, as well as a long-time customer of his. All the information gathered is examined in light of our own experiences on the subject.

Inns, alehouses and taverns were the pioneers of almost any hospitality enterprise in modern Britain. 21st century hotels, cafés, restaurants and similar venues are all in debt to the early forms of the public house. The pub, as an institution, has remolded itself time and time again, answering to the needs of the public, and to the *status quo*. In the Middle ages, the public house was the foremost provider of accommodation for travelers and pilgrims, as well as being a gathering place for local people. During the World Wars, the pub was more of a psychological safe-haven for civilians and the armed forces. In WW II, the overseas allies also availed themselves of the produce and services of the public houses.

British drinking habits have been every bit as varied as the establishments that have catered to them. Throughout the ages, officials such as the government and the church have come up with increasingly innovative and imaginative laws and acts to restrict alcohol consumption. This in turn has resulted in the public inventing ingenious ways to get around these hindering regulations. The laws, when executed, have on more than one occasion had bitter, even tragic consequences. For instance, the Beer Act of 1830, which gave the right for any householder to sell alcohol, was ill-fated. When every Tom, Dick and Harry started trading in beer, prices plummeted and profits fell. The landlords were not to be outdone by this, so they turned their attention to a more lucra-

tive commodity: gin. This had a devastating effect on the public, who were not accustomed to such a potent drink for such a low price. Especially the lower classes, who found in gin an affordable escape from a lousy reality, were constantly in a drunken stupor, and thus unable to care for their families or go to work to provide for them.

However, not all alcohol restriction laws were failures. The Central Control Board, founded in 1915, took the first sensible and appropriate steps towards a more conscientious and productive Britain, regardless of class; a people who possessed the will and ability to drink in moderation. The ongoing First World War was an effective motivator for this reform. This was also the first time that landlords, brewers and other professionals of the trade had their say in the matter, and were actually able to contribute to the legislation.

The produce of the early alehouse was little more than the ale itself. When the alewife had brewed her ale, she put some form of sign outside to notify the local people. The locals came from near and far to taste and purchase the brew. At first, the alehouse served mainly as an outlet, but in some cases the service gradually expanded to perhaps a table and a few chairs to sit and enjoy the newly acquired beverage, and from there to provisions and accommodation for travellers. During Victorian times, foreign produce became more easily accessible, so wines, brandies and other sought after goods began to find their way to the shelves and storage rooms of public houses. Although salty snacks were readily available since the late Victorian period, it wasn't until the 1960's when hot pub meals became a common phenomenon.

Now, the customers had a refreshing drink to quench their thirst, something to eat, or at least nibble at, and maybe even a chair to sit on. When people realised that it was quite easy to make oneself physically comfortable in the public house, they needed mental stimulation. They needed a pastime. This need for entertainment gave rise to a myriad of pub games and sports. Cock-fighting, fox and badger fights, and the tamer delights of skittles and throwing a penny into a box were commonplace in pubs since the early 19th century. Football, wrestling, cricket and horse-racing soon followed, although these were understandably played outside the pub, whilst bets were placed inside.

All this gaiety naturally resulted in public houses becoming immensely popular. People started spending more time there, landlords made them more comfortable, gave them

more merriment, and business was booming. The number of public houses, as well as the amount of beer consumed, both hit their peak in the 1870's, after which they both began to decline, and have continued to do so to this day.

Today's public house, although it may be a far cry from the ancient alehouse, still has its roots firmly set in that scenario. The innumerable different styles of pubs are a testimony to the constant search for something new and exciting. Pubs in a certain community can be used for completely different purposes; one for good food, another for playing pool, and yet another for the pub quiz with the best prizes. A lot of old pubs are now trying to keep in touch with their heritage, perhaps gathering items from the time that the pub was established, or redecorating in Tudor style for instance. All in all, the public house, considering its present challenges and problems, has managed to hold on to its original function as a place to meet friends and relax.

The public house has encountered many drawbacks during the last 30 years, due to the fall of alcohol consumption as a whole, the rise of energy costs, and alternative leisure pursuits. Pubs have fought these obstacles in various ways, perhaps the most effective being the improvement of pub food. Food sales have risen dramatically in recent years, to such an extent, in fact, that the food product has saved some pubs from bankruptcy.

We supplemented our research with a themed interview, which was conducted in a small pub in a remote village in the Waterford *Gaeltacht*, or Gaelic speaking area, of the Republic of Ireland. This interview, which was made possible by the publican and one regular customer of the aforementioned pub, was a very informal and unrestricted event, as any other approach would have probably met with awkwardness and perhaps even reluctance.

Our efforts to produce a coherent, if, given our schedule and the boundaries of the study, somewhat compact work, were successful. Our main problem was acquiring literature, which could provide an objective and relevant point of view of aspects concerning our work. This was an understandable dilemma, as something as conventional as going to the pub has been researched relatively scarcely. However, using contemporary articles and publications, in addition to other literature and the themed interview, proved to be satisfactory.

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7 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Themed interview questions

Interviewee 1: Seamus O'Donnell, John Paul's Bar, publican since 2009

Interviewee 2: Pat Murphy, artist, customer of John Paul's for over 20 years

Interviewee 3: Liam O'Donnell, son of Seamus and Jean O'Donnell

Personal involvement in pub culture

1. Personal information and professional history
2. Why work in a pub?

The pub and the community

3. What does the pub signify?

Pulling factors

4. The importance of staff
5. What are the first things you notice in a pub?

Pub etiquette

6. Dos and don'ts
7. Finnish customers vs, others

