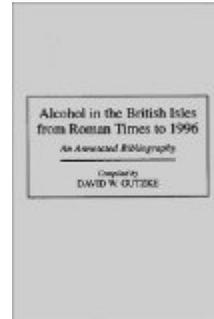


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David W. Gutzke. *Alcohol in the British Isles from Roman Times to 1996: An Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1996. xvii + 266 pp. \$69.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-29420-4.

Reviewed by David M. Fahey (Miami University (Ohio))
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Alcoholic Drink in British History

Exhaustive research and well-informed annotations make this fully indexed bibliography of almost 2,200 alcohol-related historical studies an indispensable reference work for anybody interested in the history of drink in Britain. Not counting forty-five pages of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs, the brewing and retail sale of beer take up over eighty pages of references, the temperance movement another twenty pages. There are shorter sections on whiskey, wine, and cider, science and technology, regulation, crime and medicine, and other topics. The compiler, David W. Gutzke (Southwest Missouri State University), published a book in 1989 on the fight against prohibition waged by late Victorian and Edwardian brewers and publicans and has two related books in progress, a social history of the English publican and a monograph on the so-called reformed public house in the early twentieth century. He has an unrivaled knowledge of British drink bibliography and, on the basis of his sharply argued annotations, appears to have sampled virtually all the material that he lists. Since I am mentioned in his acknowledgments, I should admit my relative ignorance: for every item that I suggested to him I have found in the published volume another twenty new to me. I am especially grateful to Gutzke for references to articles in local and specialized periodicals and for informing readers where rare items can be found.

Although this is an exceptional bibliography, it has its limitations. Some readers may be disappointed that it excludes primary material. This is a bibliography of historical studies. Nor does it encompass historical works

that include important sections on alcohol or temperance but focus on something else. There are typographical errors, such as rendering Tom Honeyman's surname into Honeymoon, and a few other minor slips: for instance, a dissertation in progress listed as completed, an entry in the *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals* assigned to the wrong author, and a biography of F. R. Lees attributed to his son (who in fact wrote only the introduction). None of these errors amounts to much.

Gutzke cites the promotion of research as one rationale for his bibliography. Despite what will appear to most readers to be a surprisingly rich literature, most of it less than twenty-five years old, he criticizes British alcohol history as fairly primitive, too often narrow in focus and unimaginative in methodology. He complains that most research has "ignored largely women, labor relations, the concept of class, and oral history; focused on the nineteenth century and, to a much smaller extent, the medieval era [to the neglect of other periods, such as the twentieth century]; avoided exploring broad trends; and borrowed remarkably little from the study of alcohol in other western countries (notably the United States) or the social sciences" (p. xii).

Something that Gutzke does not mention I find curious. Although a few Americans, Australians, Canadians, and other outsiders have written about the temperance movement in Britain, almost nobody except for local people (and Gutzke) writes about the British drink trade. Perhaps the explanation is that the historical profession

in other English-speaking countries pays little attention to the business of the making and selling of alcoholic drink in their own national histories. It is drink as a social problem and a political controversy that interests historians in most Anglophone countries. Since there is no bibliography comparable to Gutzke's for the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, I cannot easily find evidence to test the merits of my suspicion. Perhaps the absence of such a bibliography says something.

My principal uncertainty concerns the audience for the book. Who will use it, and how? Is there really a scholarly field of British alcohol history that deserves Gutzke's careful and exhaustive work? At least on this side of the Atlantic it is difficult to be sanguine. In Britain where more is published much of it is antiquarian or nearly so. Most important, many of the authors listed in the bibliography are indifferent to the work of others also listed in it. Do business historians read tem-

perance history? Do enthusiasts for the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) who write about pubs read social history? Like Gutzke, I am a longtime member of the Alcohol and Temperance History Group. Reluctantly, I must confess that the ATHG's collective subject has failed to achieve the coherence of, say, environmental history and the status, even less so. I realize that Gutzke intends his book to promote new and more sophisticated research and so overcome some of the problems that I have identified. I hope that my pessimism about audience is unjustified, and that historians and other social scientists will respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by British alcohol history. They can build on a first-rate bibliography.

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