

alcohol

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ALERT



**Government's Alcohol Strategy -
All day opening**

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Time for l

The long-awaited White Paper on the reform of the licensing laws has been presented to Parliament by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw. The most significant changes proposed are: the lifting of restrictions on opening hours, the transferral of the licensing powers previously exercised by the magistracy to the Local Authority, and the establishment of one category of on-licence. These come within the framework of a complete overhaul of the licensing laws.



Home Secretary Jack Straw

The Home Secretary, in his Foreword to the White Paper, draws attention to both the complexity and antiquity of the present arrangements. He goes on to say that, whilst the law as it stands ties business up in unnecessary red tape and imposes unjustified restrictions on the individual, there "are too few effective sanctions against premises attracting trouble." Mr Straw also says: "The rules governing the admission of children to licensed premises are obscure...The controls on under-age 'off-sales' are inadequate." He points out that at the moment there is little or no accountability to local residents.

Although the White Paper acknowledges that "alcohol and crime have always been linked", it makes no reference to the wider alcohol problems nor to the question of overall consumption. The Home Secretary is, however, at pains, to emphasise the importance of alcohol to the economy: "Most adults take alcoholic drinks...We spend around £25 billion a year on this [sic]." The drinks industry is one of the "biggest areas of

employment growth". The proposals in the White Paper seek to find a balance between personal freedom allied to healthy economic growth and the problems which inevitably arise when alcohol is consumed irresponsibly.

Open all hours

The explicit intention of granting "flexible opening times, with the potential for up to 24 hour opening, 7 days a week" is to minimise the public disorder problems perceived to arise from the present fixed times. This move is being taken on the basis of evidence not available to anyone outside government or the alcohol industry. A table included in the summary of proposals shows the number of public order incidents in a "typical metropolitan city centre". The figures indicate that pub closing time is irrelevant, since the same number of incidents occur at eleven o'clock as at four and five o'clock in the afternoon. By far the most difficult time is three in the morning, the time clubs close in London. There is no indication in the

Reform:

Proposals for the Modernisation of Our Licensing Laws, published by The Stationery Office, available on 0845 023474 or e-mail book.orders@theso.co.uk

White Paper why these figures incline the government to the belief that the “eleven o’clock swill” is the direct cause of public disorder. Nor is there any commitment to collect the necessary data to find out if the desired result is achieved. The industry has long lobbied for flexible and longer opening times, presumably with a view to increased sales.

In its recent opinion poll carried out for the Institute of Alcohol Studies, NOP Solutions found that 59 per cent of the population thought it would be a bad thing to extend drinking hours at night.

Local accountability

It is made clear that extended opening will be “subject to consideration of the impact on local residents.” This will in part be achieved by giving local authorities the duty of issuing licences, both those required by premises and the new personal variety. The reasons the government gives for this move are:

- accountability (“we strongly believe that the licensing authority should be accountable to local residents whose lives are fundamentally affected by the decisions taken”)
- accessibility (“many local residents may be inhibited by court processes, and would be more willing to seek to influence decisions if [these are] in the hands of local councillors”)
- crime and disorder (“local authorities now have a leading statutory role in preventing local crime and disorder, and the link between alcohol and crime persuasively argues for them to have a similar lead on licensing”).

The NOP poll found that over 90 per cent of the public think that local residents should have the right to object to late night opening by pubs and clubs.

It is explicitly stated that the drink industry “had...doubts” about

councillors sitting as a licensing authority and the White Paper is at pains to allay any thought that the process might be made more difficult. There will be an appeals procedure which, although the government says that “licensing is not a judicial function”, will involve a Crown Court judge sitting with two magistrates. A complaint against the granting of a licence will have to be backed up by evidence that a nuisance or disorder will be caused. This will not be easy for a private citizen, especially in the case of new premises. The paper says that “a hearing should take place only following the laying of a reasonable objection relevant to the prescribed purposes of crime and disorder, or public safety or unreasonable public nuisance, with the burden of proof falling on those laying the objection.” This presumably will involve many individuals in legal costs if they are to have any good chance of success since both the licensing authority and the brewery or whatever organisation is making the application will have professional legal advisers. It is nowhere explained what an unreasonable public nuisance is or indeed how there can be a reasonable one.

The Premises Licence

It is envisaged that a new premises licence will authorise the sale and supply of alcohol, the provision of public entertainment (including plays and films as well as music and dancing), and the provision of refreshment throughout the night. Any applicant for a new licence will be able to opt out of the provisions which are not relevant to his business. All applications will have to be accompanied by an operating plan which will include “details of the proposed measures to be taken to prevent crime and disorder.” The decision whether to

grant a licence will be based solely on considerations of crime and disorder, public safety, and “unreasonable” public nuisance. “Licensing authorities should not be able to take into account commercial matters such as the economic demand for a new venue” and so the process should not mirror the planning process. There will be a presumption in favour of granting the licence in the absence of objections.

The premises licence will apply equally to pubs, clubs, cafés, restaurants, bars and the wide variety of places of entertainment which has grown up in recent years. It is perfectly reasonable for parents to be able to take their children or for young people under 18 to go into many of these and the government believes that the present complex arrangements are both outdated and discredited in the eyes of the public. The proposal is that there will be a presumption that people

Home Office Minister Mike O’Brien



under 18 will be free to enter licensed premises “unless the licence holder has opted out of the facility”. Given that children will have this new opportunity, the White Paper addresses the laws relating to age of consumption. The government’s intention that “children should normally be allowed to enter licensed premises at the discretion of the personal licence holder will therefore be balanced with a clear prohibition on the consumption of alcohol by those under 18 anywhere on the premises.” The one exception will be in the case of children of 16 and 17 who at present may drink “beer, cider, or porter” with a table meal. In the words of the White Paper this “offers opportunities for younger age groups to learn about moderate and sensible consumption in the context of family meals” and the concession will therefore be widened to include wine. There must, however, be “a supervising adult”.

Personal Licences

Individuals will now be granted personal licences to insure that “anyone responsible for the sale of alcohol is aware of his or her obligations and is capable of fulfilling them.” There will be an accredited professional qualification and its possession would lead automatically to the granting of a licence. “There would be no need,” says the White Paper, “for the licensing authority to try to form its own view of applicants’ knowledge and character.” Furthermore, it will be a commercial decision on the part of the employer as to whether a particular personal licence holder operates a small concern or a complicated, large-scale business.

Personal licence holders will have to give warning of their arrival to the relevant licensing authority which will have the power to endorse his licence should breaches of the law occur.

Talking Tough

It is proposed that there will be a cumulative series of penalties for breaches of licence leading to its loss on the third occasion. The government’s view is that it is “the function of the

courts to punish individual offenders and the function of the licensing authority to examine the corporate responsibility for the premises where offences have taken place.”

The White Paper repeatedly describes attitude to breaches of licence and the wider crimes of disorder associated with drinking alcohol as “tough”.

Throughout the White Paper there is an assumption that the problems associated with alcohol confined to public disorder and nuisance. Many will

see the absence of any mention of the health effects of the consumption of alcohol as an omission which weakens the document’s impact. This is particularly so at a time when the government is formulating a national alcohol policy (see Alert, no.2, 1999). Some professionals in the field argue that the complete redrafting of the licensing laws should have taken place in the context of that strategy and not as a completely separate exercise based solely on premises of legitimate freedom of choice and economic growth. ■

Drink-driving cave-in to alcohol lobby



Before the last general Election the Labour Party made it quite clear that one of its aims was to lower the drink-drive limit from 80mg alcohol per 100ml of blood to 50mg. For three years there has been speculation as to when this measure would be

taken. Alert has reported on a number of occasions the increasingly cautious statements of ministers, in particular Lord Whitty, and the likelihood that the government would backtrack on its commitment. Now it has given way to pressure from the drink industry and rural pub lobby and rejected the overwhelming support for the introduction of the wrongly labelled “one-pint limit” to combat drink-driving.

The decision has been taken to ignore the advice of police, magistrates, and the medical profession, who are all in favour of lowering the blood alcohol limit to 50mg. For the time being the limit will remain at 80mg. This policy was contained in the the Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions (DETR) document, *Tomorrow’s roads: safer for everyone*, published in March. The purpose is to set out the government’s road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets for the year 2010.

Consultation carried out by the

DETR showed that there was a convincing majority in favour of the lower limit: 206 respondents were in favour of 50mg, while 163 wanted to keep the existing limit. At the same time, opinion surveys indicated that 75 per cent of respondents were in favour of a 50mg limit or one that is lower still. Only about 20 per cent want the limit to stay at its present level. Interestingly, given that young men are the largest alcohol consuming group, the strongest support for the 80mg limit comes from men over 25.

The department’s report on the

consultation, which is available separately from “Tomorrow’s roads”, says that the response shows very clearly the concerns of two overlapping interests about a lower limit: those of the alcohol industries and those of rural communities generally. Both are concerned primarily about the viability of rural pubs if a lower limit is adopted and properly enforced.

“Pubs and hotels can be a locally significant source of employment, and those in rural areas are particularly dependent on access by cars.”

Organisations that oppose any reduction in the limit include the brewers, distillers, and other drinks manufacturers, as well as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Road Haulage Association, and the national association of local councils.

Those in favour of a 50mg limit include the Automobile Association, the British Medical Association, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Magistrates’ Association, the Transport Research Laboratory, and the Honourary Medical Advisory Panel on Alcohol.

As a result of the intense pressure from the drink industry, ministers

appear to have looked around for a way out of their previous commitment.

With an almost audible sigh of relief, “Tomorrow’s Roads” says: “However, there is a European context to this debate. The European Commission is currently reviewing its existing proposal for a Directive on the drink-drive limit. Though we do not yet have details, it is likely there will be continued pressure for a harmonised 50mg overall limit in Europe, and possibly even lower limits for specific categories of driver. If the UK acted unilaterally, we could end up having to readjust to new European regulations soon afterwards. We therefore intend to deal with proposed reductions in the European context.”

Alcohol policy experts point out that the vast majority of member states in the EU already have the lower limit and that any move now by the United Kingdom Government would hardly be likely to confuse the issue.

Furthermore, any EU Directive is unlikely to appear for several years since officials in Brussels are known to be reluctant to act because of widely differing views held across the union.

There is, of course, a public health

context, as well as the European, and this is grimly illustrated by the transport research laboratory’s calculations which show that reducing the limit to 50mg would save 50 lives and prevent 250 serious and 1,200 slight injuries every year. The transport department report regards this as a conservative estimate which must stand as some sort of reproach to the ministers’ continued inactivity.

The consultation report sets out powerful evidence to show that lower limits have led to improvements in road safety. This has been the case in a number of Australian states after a reduction to 50mg enforced alongside other measures such as increased breath testing. France, Sweden, Canada, and several states of the USA have all reduced their limits with similar results.

An official source said the government feared that a reduction in the drink-drive limit would cause a political backlash. “To reduce the limit again would be like asking people not to eat beef off the bone – they would just continue to do it.” How this squares with the three quarters of the population which wants the 50mg limit the “source” did not say. ■



"Her Majesty the Queen honours Maria Cape with the MBE for her work in the Campaign Against Drink Driving."

Alcohol Concern on Government

Alcohol abuse in children and young adults is on the increase, according to a new report from Alcohol Concern. *Britain's Ruin* is designed to put pressure on the Government to produce its long-awaited strategy to tackle alcohol problems. It was not a good sign that the responsible minister from the Department of Health, Yvette Cooper, failed to attend the launch.

Young People and Women

The potentially disastrous trend in youthful drinking outlined in the report may well attract the greatest attention. Work done at the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital has also shown that, from 1985 to 1996, there was a ten-fold increase in admissions of children aged 9 to 16 under the influence of alcohol. All needed resuscitation from alcohol overdoses or had injuries from drink-related accidents or assaults. After drinking, one in seven of 16 to 24-year-olds had unprotected sex, twenty per cent had sex they wish they had not, and ten per cent were unable to remember if they had had sex the previous night. Forty per cent of 13- and 14-year-olds were "drunk or stoned" when they had their first sexual experience.

Doctors put the blame for this increase in teenage drinking squarely at the door of alcopops; sweet drinks designed to be attractive to the taste of young people, which have an alcoholic strength of up to 5 per cent. These young drinkers are less capable of coping with intoxication than adults. It has also been shown that early debut in drinking greatly increases the possibility of dependency and other problems associated with alcohol later in life.

Britain's Ruin refers to the latest research into alcohol abuse irrespective of age group and points out that women are drinking much more (see page 8) Because more women are working, they have the money and opportunity for social drinking. The report stresses what has long been known but seems to make little impression on those who formulate policy that, at a conservative estimate, one in twenty-five adults is alcohol-dependent and many suicides are related to drink.

Government's approach

If the Government's approach to the problem has been characterised by ministerial vacillation, then many experts have seen the influence of the drink industry as lying at the root of this wavering on the part of ministers, the best example of which is the case of the possible lowering of the drink-drive limit. The sad history can be traced throughout the columns of *Alert* since the Labour Government came to power. Alcohol Concern emphasise once more the importance of this issue and are again asking ministers to lower the legal limit from 80 mgs of alcohol per 100 mls of blood to 50mgs in line with European Union recommendations.

The report urges the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider what is known as "trigger taxation" on alcohol which would be put into force if consumption increases. In addition, *Britain's Ruin* is looking for improved NHS treatment for alcohol abusers and for screenings to reveal indications of alcoholism. There is ample evidence that brief interventions at an early stage are effective.

Social Exclusion and Health

It is a government priority "to tackle the causes of social exclusion and to bring about neighbourhood renewal." The report points out that alcohol is a factor in many of the causes of social exclusion: poverty and low income, family break-up, unemployment, lack of education and training, housing and homelessness, crime and anti-social behaviour, inequalities in health, and mental health problems. Alcohol Concern quotes research which indicates that problem drinking "is twice as common in the poorest than in the most affluent of socio-economic groups, and higher levels of consumption have been consistently observed in some deprived groups such as unemployed people and those who are homeless."

puts pressure

The problem of access to specialist alcohol services is highlighted as a “key issue in addressing social exclusion.” Provision is inconsistent with rural areas being especially poorly served.

It is no longer possible to ignore the rôle of alcohol, or minimise its importance, as regards mental illness. “Alcohol problems are a significant factor in male teenage suicides” and a study by the Royal College of Physicians is quoted as showing that these are directly attributable to rises in consumption. 65 per cent of all suicide attempts are linked to excessive drinking.

“For all age groups, alcohol dependency contributes considerably to hospital admissions for mental health problems, and heavy drinking is linked to psychiatric morbidity including clinical depression.” Figures provided by the Department of Health show that “during a 12 month period there were 72,500 hospital admissions with a diagnosis of mental and behavioural disorders due to alcohol, including 31,300 admission for alcohol dependence syndrome.”

The burden placed on the National Health Service is shown by the 15 per cent of acute admissions which are attributable of alcohol misuse. Other studies quoted by the report indicate that one in sixteen of all hospital admissions, acute and non-acute, and one in eight of Accident and Emergency attendances are alcohol-related.

Crime and Disorder

Alcohol is particularly associated with crimes of violence and aggressive behaviour. Something in the order of 13,000 violent incidents occur in or near licensed premises every week. “In 41 per cent of contact crime, including assaults and muggings, the offender has

been drinking” and 61 per cent of the 125,000 facial injuries sustained each year are the result alcohol-related violence.

A survey of probation officers cited in *Britain's Ruin* shows that approximately “30 per cent of their clients and 58 per cent of remand and sentenced prisoners had severe alcohol problems.”

Alcohol Concern stresses the importance of including automatic assessment of an offender’s alcohol problem and appropriate referral in any sentencing. It would be possible to extend the Drug Treatment and Testing Orders, currently available to the courts, to alcohol. “A particular target group would be offenders with alcohol problems who present a serious risk of reoffending.” It has been shown that specialist alcohol services have

proved effective when operating within gaols but these “are not consistently available across the prison service. This results in missed opportunities for changing attitudes towards alcohol use before offenders return to the community.”

Costs

Alcohol Concern is also suggesting that a cross-departmental ministerial unit on alcohol, such as previously existed, should formulate policy. At the moment the Government is concentrating on curbing illegal drug use instead of alcohol abuse which causes 33,000 deaths a year besides costing the country something in the order of £3.3 billion a year. The most significant effect is on industry where £2.8 billion is lost through sickness, unemployment, and premature death.



"Spring, 1999, Doug Touhig, MP, joint chairman of the all-party alcohol misuse committee, previously referred to as the All-Party Group on Alcoholic Misuse, launches Alcohol Concern's Proposals for a National Alcohol Strategy for England - the nearest we have got so far."

In addition, Alcohol Concern states that it costs the National Health Service £200m to treat drink-related illness.

Alcohol-related road accidents cost £189 million, and criminal activity linked with alcohol abuse is responsible for another £68m.

The study can leave the Government in no doubt as to the disastrous impact of alcohol abuse on individuals and society.

Britain's Ruin shows that, in marriages where one or both partners have a drink problem, divorce is twice as likely to occur as in those not affected by alcohol.

Something in the order of two thirds of men who assault their partners do so under the influence of drink. Forty-one per cent of violent crimes, including assaults and muggings, are committed by somebody who has been drinking.

The Director of Alcohol Concern director, Eric Appleby, said: "Given this catalogue of problems, we would like to see the Government's promised National Alcohol Strategy introduced as a matter of urgency."

Alcohol Concern wants to see:

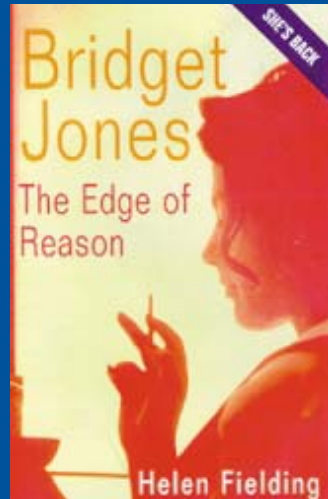
- drink-drive limit cut from 80 milligrams to 50mgs of alcohol per 100mls of blood
- police given wider breath-testing powers
- bans on the sale of glass bottles in pubs
- high-profile annual alcohol awareness campaign
- better alcohol education for young people
- more money for treatment and counselling
- training for staff selling and serving alcohol

Alcohol Concern published its *Proposals for a National Alcohol Strategy* for England over a year ago but so far the Government has failed to act – although proposals were promised for earlier this year. The Department of Health did move in the direction of producing a strategy when it appointed John Poleglass to oversee its formulation. This move caused some concern among observers. Alert (Issue

No.3, 1999) commented: "Mr Poleglass has been seconded for this task from the sales department of Bass Breweries, usually regarded as one of the most aggressive

companies when it comes to marketing its products including the notorious alcopop Hooper's Hooch." ■

Women abusing alcohol



As reflected in the advent of the unsavoury "ladette" and the chord struck by the fictional Bridget Jones, women in the United Kingdom are abusing alcohol at record levels, according to a recent report.

The market analyst Datamonitor finds that women's drinking is likely to accelerate faster than in many other countries as young professional women fall into the male habit of drinking after work as a means of winding down.

The favoured drinks of women aged between 18 and 25 are premium bottled lagers and pre-mixed spirits rather than the pints of draught bitter and shorts favoured by men, the report says. It adds that the increased number of women who have gone through higher education and are employed at higher levels in business had led to a generation with different drinking patterns. The changed style of bars, away from the male atmosphere of the traditional pub, has made it easier and pleasanter for women to drink without the company of men.

Datamonitor looked at the drinks industry in the eight countries of the European Union, including the United Kingdom, and the United States, measuring consumption in units of alcohol per week (a unit being a pub measure of spirits, half a pint of beer or a small glass of wine). Alcohol consumption by British women was 9.4 units a week. Although this figure is lower than in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, by 2004 it was expected to be 11.8 units, lower only than Germany on 14.3 and France at 12.9.

Richard Robinson, who specialises in analysis of the drink industry for Datamonitor, said the research indicated that "many consumers follow a 'debits and credits' system which sees them feeling that one session of 'being good', such as going to the gym, earns them an indulgence such as an alcoholic drink. Consumers feel more comfortable about their alcohol intake as they feel able to justify it to themselves." In Helen Fielding's best selling book, soon to be made into a Hollywood movie, Bridget balances 'vg' against 'v.bad' days for drinking, smoking and the fluctuations of her weight. "There has been a bit of a flip in attitudes, with people saying they are not going to devote all their energies to getting a body beautiful but want to enjoy themselves at the same time," said Mr Robinson.

A spokesman for the Institute of Alcohol Studies pointed out that "women are in many ways more susceptible to the health dangers of alcohol abuse. There is no neat equation between over-indulgence one day and abstinence the next. It's a risky attitude. Women are increasingly contributing to alcohol problems in families, a field where men have long had the dubious distinction of leading."



Brewers Overcharge

In a new report, the United Kingdom's big breweries are accused of unfairly pegging prices and using unfair tactics to drive competitors out of the market.

These breweries stand accused of consistently increasing the price of a pint at a rate above inflation. The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has set up an investigation whilst consumer groups have called for legal action to ensure that there is greater choice and cheaper prices.

Considering the line taken by the industry's budget submission, which set out to blame higher taxation for a wide range of problems, the OFT's exposure of the brewers' hypocrisy might cause even this sympathetic government to take any future statements on their part with a pinch of salt: "The producers, importers and retailers of alcoholic drinks in the UK join in condemning the consequences for the UK jobs and international competitiveness from past government policy of high taxation of alcoholic drinks. Higher taxation depresses home sales, encourages cross-border shopping to the detriment of the UK revenue and the domestic industry, encourages fraud and other crime and sends the wrong signals to our export markets. Duties on alcoholic drinks in the UK are too high and should be reduced." The submission to the Chancellor was made by the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association, the Scotch Whisky Association, The national Alcohol Producers Association, and other pillars of the drink trade.

British brewers are not alone when it comes to dirty tricks and an exploitative attitude to the customer. Some of the most powerful brewers on the continent, including Carlsberg and Heineken, are suspected of illegal market-sharing agreements among themselves. Investigators from the European Commission have raided offices in



Denmark, Holland and Belgium, but the companies continue to proclaim their innocence.

Bass, Scottish & Newcastle, Whitbread, and Carlsberg-Tetley between them account for more than 80 per cent of the beer production in the United Kingdom and critics accuse these companies of keeping prices unnecessarily high. A report published by Credit Suisse First Boston confirms that beer prices in the UK have risen faster than anywhere



else in Europe, other than in the Republic of Ireland.

The average price of a pint of lager has increased from 92p in 1987 to £1.93 in 1999. Figures show that, had taxation and inflation alone been taken into account, the price would today only be £1.77. The Office of Fair Trading is expected to produce a report in August. "The fact that prices have not come down is clear evidence of abuse of the consumer," said a spokesman for the Consumers' Association. "We welcome the OFT's investigation and hope it will be referred to the Competition Commission so the market can be properly regulated."

It is not only the customer and the groups which speak on his behalf who resent the behaviour of the big brewers. Independent public houses and smaller

breweries say that the leading producers in the UK should also be investigated for taking unfair advantage of their control of the marketplace. They claim that the breweries peg the price of a pint in areas they control, dump vast quantities of cut-price beer to drive out competitors, and sell off public houses which have a legal right to sell guest ales.

"The market is anti-competitive," said Peter Haydon, general secretary of the Society of Independent Brewers. "The big breweries will sell beer at high prices where they manage the pubs, but when there is the threat of genuine competition they will offer massive discounts that the smaller breweries can't compete with."

In 1987 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission insisted that more than 10,000 pubs owned by the breweries should offer "guest" beers to ensure competition. The big brewers' attitude was exemplified by Bass who promptly sold off most of the pubs involved.

Bev Robbins, a landlord and owner of the Kempton Brewery in Brighton, said, "I used to sell my beer directly to a dozen pubs. Not one pub buys from me now on a regular basis. They have all been sold off to companies which don't take guest beers. Everywhere you go now it's the same beers - Carling, Carlsberg, John Smith and Bass."

The breweries deny any unfair practices. "Consumer choice drives the market," said a Bass. "This is a free and competitive industry." As the lady said, "He would say that, wouldn't he?" ■



Cannabis and Government rejects Runciman Inquiry's recommendations

In 1997 The Police Foundation, with the co-operation of the Prince's Trust, set up an Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act of 1971. The distinguished membership was chaired by the Viscountess Runciman and the ink on the report was scarcely dry before the Government had made clear its intention of ignoring it. Perhaps Lady Runciman reflected on the difficulties her father-in-law had in negotiating a settlement of the Sudetenland problem with Adolf Hitler. Government sources rejected the report and the Prime Minister himself went on record as strongly dissenting from its conclusions.

Although the report covers the application of the 1971 Act to all drugs, it was the chapter on cannabis which attracted the most attention. Lady Runciman clearly hoped to stimulate informed debate about a contentious subject which few would claim to be adequately dealt with at the moment. Respected journalists, such as those quoted here, doctors, policemen, and politicians all had their say but, faced with the government's straight refusal to countenance any suggestion of a new approach, the debate will remain hypothetical.

Among the report's recommendations are that cannabis and its derivatives should be down-graded to Class C and that its possession should no longer be an imprisonable offence. As T.E. Utley pointed out in the Daily Telegraph, ordinary people might legitimately question the fairness of laws against cannabis when President Clinton and Mo Mowlam openly talk about their criminal use of the substance in the past. Whether these

two public figures are an advertisement for drug use is, of course, a matter of individual judgement. Rather more importantly, whilst acknowledging that the changes to the law proposed in the report might lead to wider use and increased dependency, Lady Runciman suggests that these would be minor problems compared to the advantages. The changes, say the report "would lead to a law that fits better with public attitudes, and overcomes the present inhibition on accurate education about the dangers of cannabis, especially the long-term risks."

A major concern of the members of the inquiry was to minimise "the adverse, unnecessary, and disproportionate criminal consequences for very large numbers of otherwise law abiding, usually young, people." The recommendations "are intended to support the education, prevention, and treatment elements of a broader health agenda, which itself reflects the relative risks of different drugs including cannabis."

The point is made that, as long as cannabis remains illegal and widely used as it is, it will be the drug which takes up most enforcement and court time. At present, it is suggested, the huge number of arrests and prosecutions indicate that the law is not acting as a deterrent. The report's authors are convinced that the present concentration on cannabis tends towards the lessening of respect for the law. "The evidence strongly indicates that the current law and its operation creates more harm than the drug itself."

The report claims to set out more effective and less coercive ways of reducing the harms associated with cannabis use, which it by no means minimises. It will be a matter of regret to those with an involvement in both drug policy and treatment if the entire report is ignored because a section of it is politically contentious.

The report *Drugs and the Law* is published by The Police Foundation and is available from The Secretary, Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, 1, Glynn Street, Vauxhall, SE11 5RA (020 7582 3744).

At the same time a working party of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Physicians has produced a report, *Drugs: Dilemmas and Choices*, published by Gaskell, London. It provides an overview of the historical background of the misuse of drugs, the causes of their use, the research which is taking place, and the key issues of the moment.

d the Law -

Press comment on the Runciman Inquiry's report has been surprising to many observers. The Independent, which has led the campaign for the legalisation of cannabis, and the Guardian might have been expected to be friendly, but The Telegraph, The Daily Express, and The Daily Mail also looked favourably on its conclusions whilst criticising what they saw as the Government's irrational and knee-jerk reaction:



Simon Jenkins, former editor of the Times, who was a member of Lady Runciman's enquiry.

Although most "facts" about drugs tend to be prejudice thinly veiled in anecdote, two generalisations seem robust. Britain has the toughest drugs laws of any major Western country, yet it has the highest consumption of drugs and the worst addiction rate. Only a fool would say that these generalisations are unconnected.

Simon Jenkins in The Times

Despite this paper's instinctive reservations over a more relaxed approach to drugs, we believe that the issue deserves mature and rational national [sic] debate.

Daily Mail editorial

The "war against drugs" of which politicians and police officers like to speak resembles those permanent wars between superpowers that are a feature of George Orwell's 1984: it is never won, though its "victories" are constantly trumpeted. There is a very big demand for drugs that cannot be curtailed by law, and there are possibilities for supply so great that the law can do no more than push the price up...

..People like substances that alter their mood, and only strict puritans believe that they should never use any of them. A cup of coffee, a glass of wine or beer, even the odd cigarette are among the legitimate pleasures of life. The reason that they do not do much harm is that they have been socialised - they are surrounded by customs and manners and jokes and friendship and all the things which make life tolerable. Alcohol and tobacco remain lethal, and alcohol, unlike tobacco, has the power to destroy the character of the person who uses it: it does so for tens of thousands of people in this country every year.

Charles Moore in The Daily Telegraph

With an extraordinary coalition lining up against them, Government ministers are in the position of small children covering their ears with their hands and crying, in response to an unwelcome request, "I won't! I won't! I won't!" Their stance is neither realistic nor effective...It is also dishonest, lumping together substances as different in their effects as cannabis, Ecstasy and cocaine.

Joan Smith in The Independent.

MY FIRST instinct...when I read Lady Runciman's suggestion that penalties for the possession of soft drugs should be relaxed was that it sounded very sensible. Quite a few of my friends take cannabis, and I would hate to see any of them go to prison for it. Nor do I think that they deserve to. If they are doing any harm to anybody, after all, they are harming only themselves...They become more dim-witted and boring as every year passes. But they are grown-ups, and that is a matter for them.

Tom Utley in The Daily Telegraph

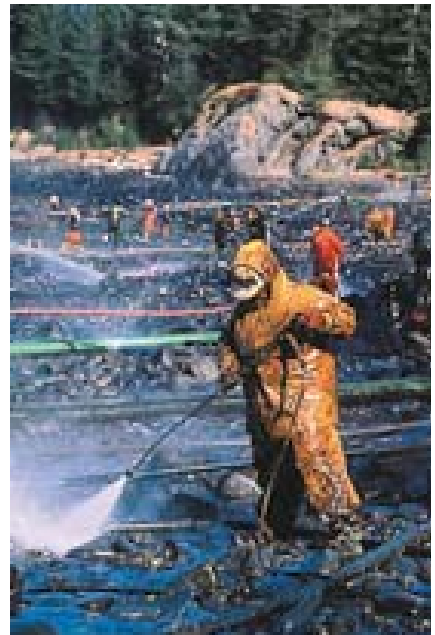
Yo, ho, ho an bottle of rum

The problem of those who sail whilst under the influence of alcohol is to be tackled by the Government, as reported in Alert (Issue No.1, 2000). The Home Office issued a Consultation Paper on Possible Legislation to Combat Alcohol Abuse at Sea.



Tugboats tow the tanker Exxon Valdez towards Naked Island for repairs after it is refloated off Bligh Reef. A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter circles overhead. April 5, 1989.

There were allegations that the Captain was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident.



Exxon Valdez oil spill workers use pressure washers to wash oil from the beach on Smith Island, Prince William Sound. The oil was impounded in the water off of the beach and skimmed from the water. May 2, 1989.



In its submission, the Institute of Alcohol Studies begins by attempting to clear up an immediate source of misunderstanding: “Our assumption is that despite the title of the consultation paper and its referring exclusively to seafarers and seafaring, given the centrality to these issues of the Marchioness disaster, the Government’s

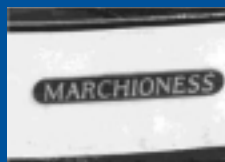
proposals are in fact intended to apply also to rivers, estuaries and other inland waterways.”

This, of course, raises the difficult question of whether any “drink-drive” legislation should apply to those operating private leisure craft. In addition, says the IAS, the task of finding satisfactory answers to the

questions posed in the consultation paper has been made more difficult by the Government’s refusal to lower the legal blood alcohol limit on the roads.

As to who precisely should be covered by the legislation, the IAS’s submission goes on to say: “We support the Government’s proposal that [it] should apply to merchant ships, fishing

d a



Marchioness Disaster

On 20th August 1989 51 people lost their lives when the Bowbelle dredger collided with the Marchioness passenger boat. The average age of those who died was 25. It is believed that alcohol may have been an important factor in the collision, and the inquest jury into the disaster recommended that legislation should be introduced to combat alcohol abuse on board ship.

vessels, and to commercial leisure craft. In regard to which members of the crew should be covered and in what circumstances, we recognise that allowance must be made for the fact that a vessel may well be the crew's home as well as their place of work." Such difficulties are not insurmountable. It should be possible to frame the law so that it applies only to crew members in safety-critical positions in the performance of their duties, most obviously those responsible for steering and navigation. It could, on the other hand, be argued that the law should apply to anyone who might have to help in an emergency. This, of course, could be the whole crew at all times, depending on the size and nature of the vessel. The IAS's view is that the blood alcohol levels of non-safety critical and off-duty crew are best left to workplace policies rather than to the law.

One of the problems highlighted by the IAS is the occasional obscurity and ambiguity of the Home Office document. For example, it is not clear from the consultation paper whether the intention is to include pleasure craft in the proposed new law, although there is one paragraph which implies that this might be the case. Curiously, this paragraph appears to refer only to pleasure craft at sea and not those on inland waterways. There is relevant legislation in force in both Norway and Finland. The Norwegian law has only

been in force for a year and there is no information as to how it is operating. In Finland, it appears, the law is rarely enforced because of the difficulties in applying it - one of which, presumably, is how to decide who is in charge of the craft at the relevant time in a boat with more than one person on board. The IAS makes the point that "the prospect of enforcing a maximum blood alcohol limit on holiday makers on, say, the Norfolk Broads or in the Solent is not one likely to appeal to the local police".

On the other hand, some pleasure craft such as speedboats and jet skis are so powerful that they represent potentially a major threat to everyone else on the same stretch of water, particularly when driven by someone under the influence of alcohol. It might be sensible "to frame the legislation to apply only to those operating motorised craft above an appropriate threshold related to tonnage, engine capacity or maximum speed."

The consultation paper asks what the alcohol limit should be. It seems entirely reasonable to expect that those in charge of vessels such as car ferries, oil tankers, and commercial ships carrying passengers, which are capable of inflicting substantial damage on people, other vessels, and the environment, should be completely sober. Given "the impossibility of enforcing a literally zero limit," says the IAS, "we favour following the model

of civil aviation and setting a maximum blood alcohol level of 20mg per cent."

It would seem sensible that for other craft the limit should be the same as on the roads. "Unfortunately, the Government's refusal to lower the limit on the roads means that there is now a discrepancy between the legal limit and what the scientific evidence shows to be the maximum blood alcohol level compatible with public safety." Since the Home Office asks for an opinion now, the IAS suggests 50mg per cent.

Whilst giving general support to the Government's proposals, the IAS says that the legislation needs to be accompanied by other measures. For example, the industry should be encouraged to adopt workplace alcohol policies. Bye-laws on inland and coastal waterways need to be effectively enforced and hire companies should make sure that all clients are aware of the dangerous mix of alcohol and sailing. ■

New Labour and Al

A personal view by Derek Rutherford

Reacting to UEFA's threat to ban the English team from the European Cup if English soccer fans continued their drunken violence, Mr Blair, Prime Minister, said, "Hopefully this will bring to their senses anyone who threatens to continue the mindless thuggery that has brought such shame to the country". But the man who said he would be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime" said nothing about one of the main causes of the thuggery, 'alcohol'. Mr Blair heads a government which believes that to deal with the problem of alcohol we should have the opportunity to drink around the clock.

The English throughout their history have had a problem with their use of alcohol. Boniface, the English Saint, writing from Germany in the eighth century complained of his countryman's reputation for drunkenness: "This is an evil peculiar to pagans and to our race. Neither the Franks, nor the Gauls, nor the Lombards, nor the Romans, nor the Greeks commit it." Four centuries later John of Salisbury wrote "Habits of drinking have made the English famous among all nations". Drunkenness and its ensuing anti-social behaviour is endemic in the culture of the English. This is why alcohol cannot be given a free market - politicians and governments have to understand that its consumption has to be controlled.

Our history shows that when controls are taken away, we go beserk.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, leaders of the Labour Party (Keir Hardie, Arthur Henderson) recognised the need to seriously tackle the alcohol problem if they were to improve society's conditions and the well-being of the people. In reacting to the news that New Labour wished to open the pubs for 24 hours Paul Routledge, the Mirror's Chief Political Correspondent, wrote (April 11): "I never expected a Labour Home Secretary to give me the freedom to have a sherbet whenever I feel like it. Labour, traditionally the temperance party, took a

moral view born of the drunkenness that afflicted the late nineteenth century when the working classes got legless from binge drinking Now New Labour has decided morality and business go hand in hand. It proposes pubs be allowed to open 24 hours a day as long as customers behave themselves. Oh what a brave new world but I don't believe it. I found my way round the licensing laws but nowhere found fellow drinkers living up to the Jack Straw rules. Nor will they now. The standard defence in magistrates' courts will be 'sorry I got drunk'. I love the idea of all day and all night drinking but I'm terrified of reality".

The effects of the hard won sobriety of the twenties and thirties lasted until the late fifties but has now disappeared. Greater availability of alcohol through more outlets; relaxed licensing laws; a sustained massive advertising campaign; and increasing sponsorship of sport by the drinks industry are responsible for the change. The aim of a growing proportion of English drinkers is to get drunk. It is fun.

The NOP poll carried out on behalf of the IAS revealed it was young people and heavy drinkers which wanted longer and longer hours to drink. It is not surprising that almost half the population knows someone who has a drinking problem.

Those getting drunk in Belgium were from all walks of life. They were



professional and skilled as well as unemployed. Many were family men. The same kind of men who can cause mayhem on our streets and in the family home after a night of binge drinking. As I write, the Sunday Times (25.06.00) reports that a sharp increase in violent crime over the past year is to be revealed in official figures. Overall a 19 per cent increase in crime in England and Wales is forecast while in some areas it will be up by over 30 per cent, at forecast. The main cause for the increase is a rise in 18 - 24 year old males committing offences. A Home Office source claims one of the main causes is alcohol.

During the 1997 General Election Mr Jack Straw, now Home Secretary, pointed out that "every year, there are almost 1.5 million victims of violent attacks committed by people under the influence of drink. Every weekend, people avoid their home and city centres for fear that they will be attacked or intimidated by drunken

cohol:

youths. This cannot continue”.

So there is recognition that alcohol-related violence does not just occur at football events – it appears endemic in our present culture.

Five years ago Allan Milburn M.P., the present Secretary of State for Health observed:

“Everyone knows that a great deal of crime – especially violent crime – is linked to alcohol. But while we regularly see new initiatives taken to tackle crime, not one of these has made a serious attempt to address the role played by alcohol.”

Yet three years into this Government no co-ordinated national strategy has been forthcoming.

What we have had is the proposal to allow twenty four hour drinking, under the guise that this will help to prevent binge drinking and give people the chance to drink ‘sensibly’.

We have now had for over twenty years the message of ‘safe’ limits and



‘sensible drinking’. Noises emanating from the Department of Health appear to confirm that this will remain the ‘core’ of Government strategy to deal with the problem when there is no proof it has worked. Indeed, the fact

that the percentage of women drinking above the guidelines has doubled over two decades surely demonstrates that the message has failed. Five years ago the last Conservative Government increased the number of safe units one could drink – not on the grounds of the consensus of scientific evidence but by pressure from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food acting on behalf of the drinks industry (when it comes to safety MAFF has such a wonderful record on BSE!).

The majority of EU Member States Health Departments accept the WHO’s European Alcohol Action Strategy to reduce overall consumption. One of the exceptions is our own Department of Health. Why are we so out of kilter with other EU health departments?

Over two years ago the Department of Transport issued a Consultation paper which said the Government was ‘minded’ to lower the legal BAC concentration for driving from 80 mg to 50 mg per cent. Extremely cautious Government estimates claimed that this would save 50 lives. Two and a half years later nothing has been done. In the meanwhile over 125 lives have been sacrificed. New Labour has not



been prepared to enhance the effectiveness of what was one of Old Labour’s greatest life-saving measures.

What impression does this leave about Government policy? It would appear that three Departments of State,

which should have as their prime concern the security, safety, health and well being of the people, are more concerned with vested commercial interests and their profits.

Both Mr Blair and Mr Straw need to realise that meteing out tougher punishment to offenders is not enough. Preventing crime is also important. Since there is good evidence that there is a relationship between total alcohol consumption and crime – if one goes up the other follows – the Government has to tackle overall alcohol consumption. They should heed Winston Churchill’s advice:

“You cannot make a country sober by Act of Parliament but what you can do by Act of Parliament is to give the people the power to make themselves sober.”

Twelve years ago Paul Johnson in the Daily Telegraph commenting on Conservative Government said:

“I am beginning to ask ~~as~~ it Government policy to take Britain down Hogarth’s Gin Lane again?” New Labour seems determined to travel this road unless, to paraphrase Mr Blair, the Government is prepared to tackle seriously one of the root causes of our social problems: Alcohol, Alcohol, Alcohol!

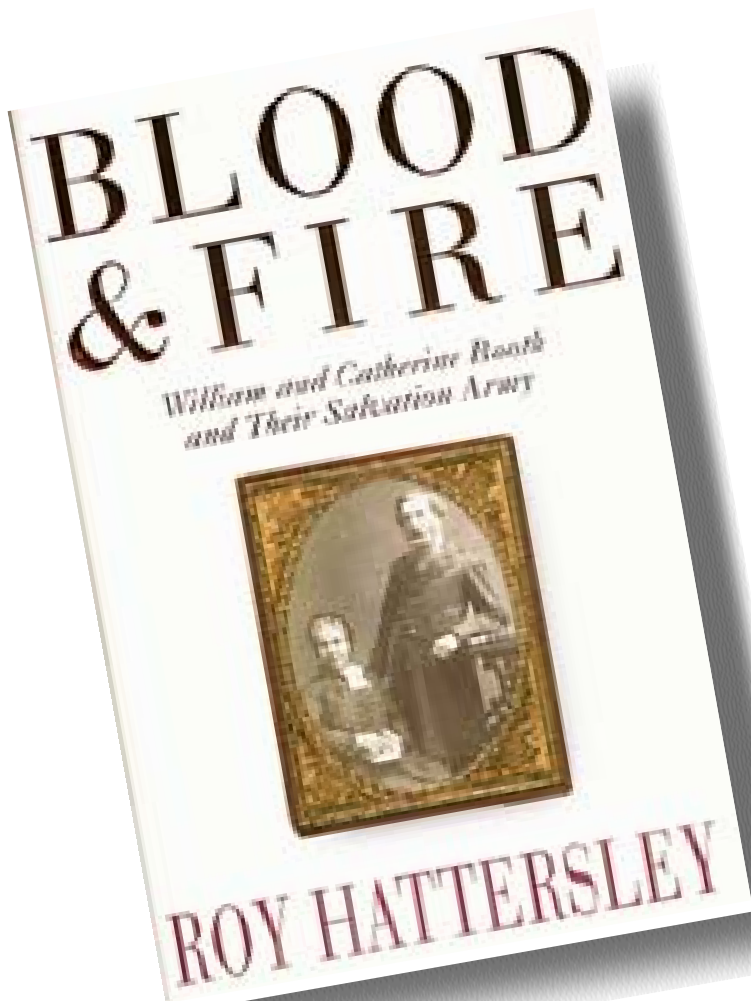
Attempting to clear up the streets with policies based on wishful thinking will not alleviate the mayhem caused by alcohol in the home and in our Accident and Emergency Departments. Populist headlines about on-the-spot fines for drunken yobs ring hollow when these are designed solely to serve the purposes of a government which rejects any thought of a reduction in per capita alcohol consumption and is hell-bent on encouraging 24-hour drinking. The report prepared for the European Union in 1998, Alcohol Problems in the Family, showed that at least 4.5 million and possibly as many as 7.7 million children were living in families adversely affected by alcohol. And this is just one aspect of the problem! The government cannot pretend to have a coherent alcohol policy until it is demonstrably no longer in cahoots with the drink industry. ■

God's apprentice

Paul Whitaker reviews

Blood & Fire: William and Catherine Booth and their Salvation Army, Roy Hattersley, Little Brown

William and Catherine Booth are two of the most intriguing figures of nineteenth century Britain. The Salvation Army is their enduring legacy. It is noteworthy that, whilst other religious movements which emerged in Victorian England have fallen by the wayside, their creation continues to attract new recruits and is a worldwide church with a membership of over a million people.



Roy Hattersley has produced an extremely well researched biography which is invaluable in understanding William and Catherine Booth both as individuals and as a partnership. Whereas Booth has often been idealised by past biographers as a saintly figure, Hattersley rightly chooses to paint the full portrait. Booth was not a saint and there were many failings in his character and life.

That is not to deny Booth's lasting achievements, although Hattersley clearly believes Catherine was William's equal, if not the dominant partner. The credit for the creation and development of the Salvation Army belongs to both of them. Without Catherine, William might finally have arrived at the same point but the journey would have taken him a great deal longer and it would have lacked the passion that Catherine instilled in him.

William himself is a perplexing character. Before coming to realise that God had a special task for him, he worked as a pawnbroker's clerk in Nottingham. Worshipping in the Church of England was followed by a fledgling career as a Methodist preacher. He reacted strongly against both. In his opinion the Church of England was sanctimonious and Methodists full of self-satisfied hypocrites. It required vision – some might say enormous arrogance – to found his own church and carve out his role as a 'soldier' against poverty and its associated evils. It was a difficult task but the Booths dared to be different



The new Connexion minister. William Booth at Redruth, 1859

and never flinched from the fight. They saw themselves as “active saints” and, in the face of derision, remained convinced of their vocation. William’s great physical and moral courage stayed with him all his days.

Booth was a man of action rather than an intellectual and much of his theology and vision came from Catherine. She was well educated and it is clear that she was the driving force in the fight against poverty, child abuse, prostitution, and the evils of drink. She was a pioneer of the cause for women’s equality in the church and was a powerful preacher. For a time it was her preaching that kept their heads above water financially. William was happy for his wife to support the family. A fervent anti-Catholic all her life, Catherine had achieved instant salvation at the same time as her husband in 1861. After this experience and their elevation to “holiness” the Booths became convinced they were instruments of God. The battle was ahead and for many years the battleground would be amongst the poor of the East End of London.

Unfortunately, it seems their

domestic life was less than harmonious. At home Catherine abandoned her belief in equality and deferred to William in everything. The Booths had eight children and, whilst Catherine was happy to be known as the “mother of the Army”, she was in fact a terrible mother to her own children. Preaching had priority over her children and she adopted a “hands off” approach to

childcare. Unfortunately, this did not extend to a physical detachment. The Booth children were regularly and severely beaten and it is evident that the parents’ elevated sense of their own piety and commitment to their work led to their mistreatment. Relations with their offspring were extremely strained. Their treatment of their eldest son was particularly harsh and it left him scarred for life. His desire to be a doctor had to be abandoned and his life sacrificed to the Army. The Booths’ eldest daughter was more favoured. Hattersley contends that the children were strange, but not as strange as they should have been

given their upbringing.

William Booth was a self confessed oddball. He had an intense dislike of competitive games, particularly football and cricket, both denounced as frivolous. There are many examples of Booth’s peculiar behaviour as he got older. His diet consisted mostly of vegetable soup and he insisted that all members of his household took daily cold baths. Catherine too had her eccentricities. She admonished William for his lack of abstinence from mustard which she feared would lead him astray. When her mother died she insisted that her husband attend the autopsy. The Booths had a peculiar and morbid interest all matters of the flesh, especially death. William could not understand why his children were not grateful when he had the pelt of the family dog (which he had ordered to be shot for biting a servant) made into a rug.

An enduring feature of the Salvation Army is its fight against drink.

Catherine Booth at the time she began to preach. “I only wish I had begun years ago.”





William Booth in lonely old age, his autocratic manner having driven away many of his numerous children and grandchildren.

It was Catherine who was the temperance stalwart. At the time of their meeting William's childhood pledge had lapsed and he continued to believe in the power of brandy and port to restore. Although she was fervently against the use of alcohol, Catherine drank a quantity of brandy during a cholera epidemic in London. When she confessed this to William he added his own admission: "I finished the bottle of wine last night and am more a teetotaler than ever."

Lapses apart, Booth strongly believed that a significant number of social evils resulted from the use of alcohol. He set about campaigning against moderate drinking by Methodists and, even more vigorously, against the licensed trade. Both campaigns led to much antagonism and resentment and even physical violence. Booth's views and activities were considered dangerous, and Salvationists often found themselves attacked in the streets and at meetings.

Violent opposition followed Booth for three decades. The brewers feared

evangelical teetotalers would reduce their trade; the public were aggrieved by what they saw as a unwanted intrusion into their private lives; and the police saw the Army as the cause of the trouble rather than being its victims. It was only after an outcry in Parliament that action was taken. Booth, surprisingly, understood the reasons why men were driven to drink. The tap room was in many cases the working man's only parlour and

he saw the gin palace as "a natural outgrowth of our social conditions". The Booths fought against drink by providing an attractive alternative. Brass bands, banners, marches, and street meetings were all used successfully. The Salvation Army was a very effective marketing exercise and had a highly developed corporate identity.

By the 1880s the an alliance of bishops and brewers united against the Army and much of the establishment feared that the militaristic, banner waving movement combined with an organized and militant working class posed a real threat. There were also allegations that Booth diverted funds to fund a life of luxury. Hattersley believes that incompetence and lack of financial control left the Army vulnerable to such accusations. It may be that the worst that happened was that funds donated for welfare work were instead used for evangelical expeditions. But rumours of financial impropriety haunted Booth and the Army for many years.

Booth did not draw a distinction

between the deserving and the undeserving poor: he sought to appeal to all people. At her death in 1890, Catherine had inspired William to write a call for social justice. In "In Darkest England and the Way Out" Booth wrote a challenging and powerful manifesto for the regeneration of the nation. Poverty would be banished and social evils eradicated in a New Jerusalem. Booth was no class warrior but believed in the Christian's duty to the disadvantaged and dispossessed and he was happy for these people to follow his banner. His Army was mainly composed of working people and often the most fervent were repentant sinners. Gradually, the Army and William Booth won acceptance. William came to be welcomed by the establishment he had so railed against. Towards the end of his long life he received numerous honours and made many overseas tours but his health was beginning to fail.

After an unsuccessful cataract operation he lost the sight in his left eye and his remaining good eye deteriorated. But he continued to work until full blindness heralded his promotion to glory in 1912.

Despite being autocratic and domineering, Booth was arguably the most successful evangelist of the 19th Century. The ideas and principles on which the Army was founded played an important role in changing the social climate and created a lasting impact on social justice and practices in Victorian Britain. Roy Hattersley tells the story extremely well. ■

Vital Statistics



Smoking among teenagers has fallen again in the past year - but official figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show that levels of drug use have risen and that consumption of alcohol has remained constant*. There was a decline in the proportion of pupils who drank alcohol between 1996 and 1998, but this trend has come to a standstill, at least for the time being.

The survey of schoolchildren aged between 11 and 15 showed that 9 per cent smoked regularly in the year in question, compared to 11 per cent the previous year. This is significantly down on the 13 per cent of young people who said they smoked regularly in a similar survey in 1996. This indicates that the decline is real and not merely a short-term blip.

However, 12 per cent had used drugs in the past twelve months - a one per cent increase on the figures for 1998.

Over nine thousand pupils in 340 schools were interviewed by the ONS during the autumn of 1999 and questioned about their use of drugs and alcohol and about their smoking habits. It emerged that more girls than boys smoked, with 10 per cent of them having at least one cigarette a week, compared to 8 per cent of their male peers. Although only 1 per cent of 11-year-olds smoke, something approaching 25 per cent of 15-year-olds regularly light up.

Despite the mixed message of these statistics, health ministers welcomed the drop, which was announced on World No Tobacco Day. The government recently stated its intention to reduce the number of smokers by 1.5 million over the next decade. The target for teenage smoking is to reduce the overall figure for 11 to 15 year olds to 11 per cent by 2005 and to 9 per cent by 2010.

The ONS's figures indicate that the figure has already been achieved for the younger teenagers, up to 40 per cent of

older teenagers still smoke.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said: "These figures show that the smoking rates are heading in the right direction, but we know we can't be complacent about this.

"We need to continue with health prevention measures and enforcement of the law to make sure young teenagers cannot buy cigarettes."

The figures for drug use show similar differences by age, with just 1 per cent of 11-year-olds using illegal substances in the last year, compared to a third of 15-year-olds. Cannabis was the most popular illicit drug, with 11 per cent of pupils admitting to taking the drug in the twelve months covered by the survey.

The next most commonly used substances - glue, gas and "poppers" - had only been used by 2 per cent of youngsters. Glue-sniffing, which rarely receives the publicity given to more high-profile drugs like heroin or cocaine, has the highest first-use mortality level.

Over a third of all the pupils and 62 per cent of 15-year-olds said they had been offered drugs.

20 per cent of the pupils said they had had an alcoholic drink in the last week, a figure unchanged from 1999. ■

* *Young Teenage Smoking in 1998: A report of the key findings from the Teenage Smoking Attitudes. Survey carried out in England in 1998. (The biennial report was this time extended to include alcohol and drugs.)*

Counselling to women on alcohol problems



Alcohol Concern is launching a national network of

people and agencies at the forefront of efforts to provide information, help, and counselling to women on alcohol problems. The aim of the network is to share examples of best practice and other information in order help women experiencing these problems.

The network is to be launched at a special one-day conference to be held at the College of Ripon and York St John, Lord Mayor's Walk, on Thursday, 27th July. The conference will cover everything from primary health care to domestic violence and access to help-giving services.

Keynote speakers will include Moira Plant of the Alcohol and Health Research Centre, Edinburgh; Jane Marshall of the National Addiction Centre, Maudsley Hospital; and Betsy Thom of Middlesex University.

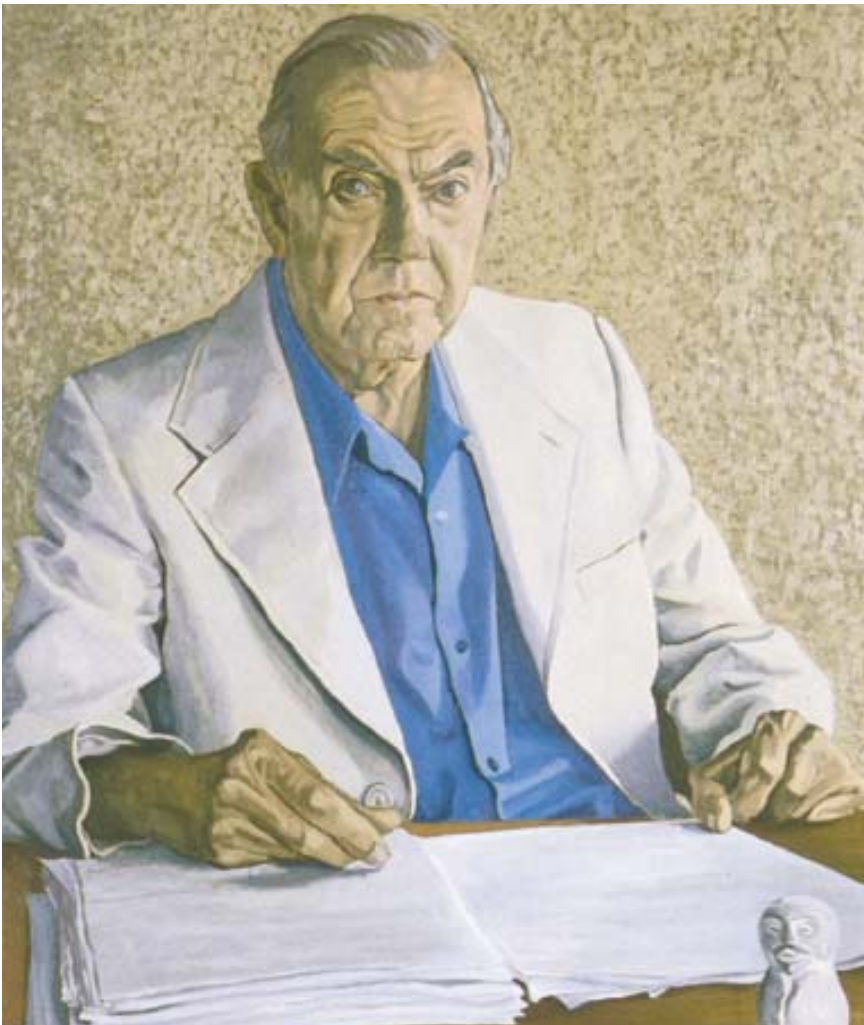
If you would like to be represented at the conference - or would like further details - please contact **Rachel Morley at Alcohol Concern, Waterbridge House, 32-36 Loman Street, London, SE1 0EE, Tel.: 020 7928 7377, Fax: 020 7928 4644, e-mail: alcon@popmail.dircon.co.uk.**

Beauty and the

Andrew Varley reviews

The Third Woman: the secret passion that inspired *The End of The Affair* by William Cash, Little, Brown and Company

Years ago - 1933, to be precise - the scholar A.C. Bradley's method of criticism was mocked in an essay called "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" William Cash, in his book about the affair between Graham Greene and Catherine Walston, does not aspire to get to the heart of the matter so unerringly. Perhaps "What was Lancelot Gobbo's inside leg measurement?" is nearer the mark.



The subject matter could hardly be better: Greene, the novelist with a worldwide reputation, obsessed with sin and passion; Walston, arguably the ideal woman, beautiful, rich, intelligent, and highly-sexed - but fated to die in a haze of alcohol. Mr Cash reduces this combination to banality, bringing to the task the peripheral skills of an investigative journalist and an unerring eye for irrelevant detail. His failure to understand the creative forces of fiction is a sad reflection on the English Department of the University of Cambridge, where, we are told, he studied; his struggle with the language ("I" is said to be a possessive pronoun), an embarrassment to his prep school masters. Careless and lazy writing abounds: the smoke from Chesterfield cigarettes is described as "exotic"; the famous scene in *Brideshead Revisited*, when Charles Ryder and Anthony Blanche drive out from Oxford to dine in what is clearly The Spread Eagle at Thame, is said to take place in Dorchester; there are many unintentionally hilarious remarks, such as the self-revelatory comment on "heroines of literature, from Stendahl to Flaubert...", which, one would have thought, is not a very great distance even for Mr Cash - certainly shorter than the hundred miles between Oxford and Dorchester. These may be trivialities - and there are a hundred more examples - but it is through such trivialities that an author loses credibility.

Any writer of fiction uses his own experience and shapes it to his artistic purposes - a truism to you and me, a scoop to William Cash. It is refracted through his imagination and the dictates of plot and character. Sometimes the events and people he describes are recognisable: Lord Alconleigh in Nancy Mitford's novels is her father, Lord Redesdale; the long-distance diner Blanche is to a large

Bottle

extent based on Brian Howard but with elements of Harold Acton. Neither of these, of course, have to develop. They are party turns. It is not quite the same thing when it comes to central characters or elements of the plot. They have a life of their own which will transform the originals. It is a second-rate storyteller with little or no imagination who transcribes his own experience with only the names changed. Of course, plenty of these are selling a lot of books. On the other hand, and at a more profound level, a writer can describe someone in his fiction as they might have been under other circumstances or, especially in the case of a lover, as they were in his own mind. All these things are obvious enough and relevant to the relationship between Greene and Lady Walston, as she became when her millionaire husband was ennobled for services to the Labour Party. Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair*, is in the news at the moment because of the film which has been released recently. The book itself has enjoyed something of a vogue, to the extent, Mr Cash tells us, of his friend Miss Elizabeth Hurley underlining striking passages in green ink. It is possible that the vogue reflects modern day interest in the process and consequences of adultery than in the operation of divine providence.

It has become something of a conversational cliché to say that it is necessary to be a Catholic to understand *The End of the Affair*. I have no idea whether this provides an excuse for Mr Cash or not but the spiritual implications of the novel and that vital element of the actual relationship between Greene and Walston are cursorily treated. For all Mr Cash's wonderment at detecting parallels between the fiction and the real events, it would be a curious novelist who, in writing a book about an adulterous

relationship where the beloved is ultimately lost, not to another man, but to God, did not draw on his own affair with a woman whom he met after being asked to stand as sponsor at her reception into the Catholic Church. Catherine Walston's motive in making this request to a man she had never met is unclear. Vivienne Greene remained convinced that her husband was already in the sights of the sexually rapacious Walston. Whatever was the case, their affair began not long after they finally met and continued on and off from the end of 1946 until the late fifties.

Attractive women, especially if they are rich, intelligent, and badly-behaved are treated quite differently from other mortals. Sexual and intellectual power is a powerful combination. Evelyn Waugh, whilst always susceptible to female beauty, was an acute observer of his friends' failings and something of a martinet when it came to social propriety. Whilst he would have regarded prudery as hopelessly middle-class, adulterous behaviour between fellow Catholics under his own roof was something he was unlikely to tolerate. Nevertheless, he was deeply impressed by Catherine Walston, partly because she refused to be overawed by him, something which he always found appealing, and urged Greene to bring her on visits to his house. There is no doubt that she had immense powers of attraction and a kind of distracted goodness which made her alcoholic decline, swigging Jameson's with the appalling Fr O'Sullivan even more tragic.

Unfortunately, in Mr Cash's account, Catherine Walston comes over as something of a tiresome monster. In the flesh, of course, it was a different proposition and, for most men, a seductive assault from her was hard to resist. She took a delight in exercising sexual power over priests. A

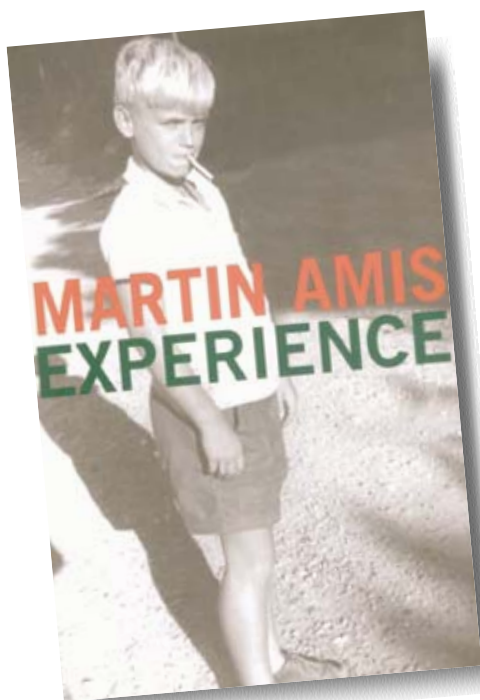
theoretical explanation of this which appeals to Cash is that, since Henry Walston was in many ways the archetype of the complaisant husband, she needed to find someone from whom to provoke a reaction and selected God. Perhaps this idea fits too neatly with the bleak interior world of Greene's characters. There may be a simpler answer. It is not uncommon for addicts to find ways of bringing the house down around their ears, to find an escape in general ruin. Walston's solution may simply have been on an eternal scale. Greene again, of course. Is there a link between an addiction to sex, or at least to the power of seduction, and an addiction to booze? Proponents of the Addictive Personality would say so and common sense indicates that there must certainly be at least a possibility.

Greene's reading of the French theologian, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, inclined him to a kind of Catholic fatalism. Of course a cynic might say that it is very convenient if you are able to persuade yourself that sleeping with a beautiful millionairess is all part of the divine plan. Walston herself found this holy sinner approach to life attractive and, at a less tortuous level, sex, seduction, and booze can be glamorous. In the end, however, when they have been indiscriminately indulged, they become degrading. Psychological theories, Greene's view of humanity, and heterodox theologians apart, Catherine Walston's life was marked with the fatalism of the alcoholic. In becoming a Catholic, she was offered a release from her demons but, in the very act of reception, she began a relationship which could only make a mockery of her religion. In the end, self-loathing and the bottle do not spare even the rich and lovely. She saw herself as an Emma Bovary and their deaths were not dissimilar. ■

Amis père and Am

In the first of two articles Andrew Varley looks at issues raised by Kingsley Amis' letters and by his son, Martin's, autobiography.

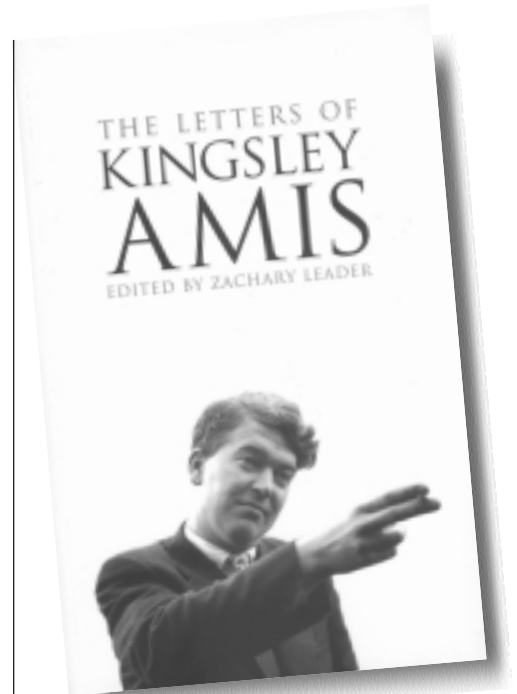
Kingsley Amis' letters make painful reading¹. In one of the many he wrote to Philip Larkin² he remarks that posterity is in for a treat when their correspondence is published. Well, now we have the opportunity of judging how much of a treat Amis' contributions are. Sometimes his letters are scatological, affected, posturing, and plain silly; sometimes they are brilliant, witty, and full of insight.



The opinionated abuse he pours on other writers, usually far superior to himself, is sometimes amusing and, in its scattergun way, effective but it is half-serious and sits uncomfortably alongside his assumption of the rôle of analyst of what is and what is not good writing. If his books - with the

exception of *Lucky Jim*, his first and best - were not enough evidence, then Amis' letters would confirm anyone in the prejudice that reading and teaching Eng Lit as an academic subject is the worst possible training for a novelist. Much the same could be said for *Experience*³ the autobiography of his son, Martin. The one advantage, however, is that the background tends to cocoon the writer in a precious literary world where mutual advertisement is the rule. It is, of course, fatal to instinctive talent.

Kingsley Amis' second wife, Elizabeth Jane Howard⁴, a better but underestimated novelist (and an instinctive writer, according to her stepson), left him because of his drinking. Boozing is a *leitmotif* of his work and his life - "Alcohol infuses and even saturates his fiction", says his son. His attitudes and habits reflect his dependence on alcohol. Like many severe boozers, he could be entertaining company and, when younger, was attractive and capable of dazzling. Again, throughout his life he found people who were willing to look after him and indulge his unreasonable behaviour. Whilst Miss Howard,



understandably, gave up - and was rewarded with prolonged and vengeful abuse - his first wife, Hilly, took him on again. She and her husband, Lord Kilmarnock, provided a home and all the practical care he needed. In return he paid the household bills. People who behave outrageously, or at least go through life entirely on their own terms, often get away with it because no one around them objects, becoming what therapists might call "enablers". It is a useful tactic for the utterly selfish. As a grown man, it is possible to throw childish tantrums, to adopt habits which inconvenience everyone around, to insult, denigrate, and cavil with impunity. Perhaps these men - women, it appears to me, are more subtle - imagine that they are terrific characters. No doubt many, because they have been surrounded by acquiescence, fool themselves into thinking that they are merely receiving their proper tribute.

1. The letters of Kingsley Amis, edited by Zachary Leader, Harper Collins

2. Philip Larkin (1922-1985), the eminent poet and Librarian of Hull University, met Amis at St John's, Oxford and they became lifelong friends.

3. Experience, Martin Amis, Jonathan Cape

4. Elizabeth Jane Howard (1923-). They were married from 1965 to 1983. Her novels include The Beautiful Visit (1950), After Julius (1965), and Odd Girl Out (1971).

is fils



Martin Amis, Elizabeth Jabe Howard and Kingsley Amis.

Artists have been especially prone to this view of life and, of course, it is a commonly observed characteristic of alcoholics.

Evelyn Waugh, the greatest English stylist of the twentieth century, loathed English Department literature – he called it the “Cambridge School” – which, for him, was typified by Amis. Amis, in his turn, whilst recognising the other man’s genius, mocked his social pre-occupations and his chosen style of life. Waugh, of course, had adopted a combative persona – as someone said, part irascible colonel, part crusty don – with which to confront the world. There is a *ben trovato* story that Waugh left a party in horror, unable to bear the presence of Dylan Thomas⁵, who was by that time an alcoholic wreck. When Cyril Connolly, the host, later asked him what had been the matter, Waugh said that Thomas reminded him what he would have been like himself had he not become a Catholic. Waugh, of course, also drank a great deal and the hallucinations – “When I was off my rocker” – described in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* were in part the result of washing down narcotic sleeping draughts with crÈme de menthe after a

day’s intake of gin and wine which would have poleaxed a lesser man.

There is a photograph, taken, I should think, in the mid-fifties, of Amis doing “his Evelyn Waugh face”. By the end of his life this had become his own. Just as Waugh rejoiced in White’s Club, so Amis loved the Garrick. It is a modern convention to regard the gentleman’s club as a practical expression of mysogyny or, at least, an attempt to perpetuate the all-male camaraderie of public school and officers’ mess. The same sort of thing might be said for Northern working men’s clubs (though not, of course, for that champion of women’s rights, the MCC). Both authors were elected to their favourite clubs in middle age, Waugh in his early forties, Amis in 1973 when he was fifty-one. Waugh used White’s to let off steam. Coming up to London from the West Country, he launched into a round of lunches and dinners with cronies punctuated by long sessions at the club bar. Helping him prop it up were examples of what he most admired, self-confident noblemen who had proved their courage in war. It was, and I dare say, even today, is, a hard drinking school. The porter handles telephone calls from wives with a tactful deflection or a straight lie: “His Lordship is not in the Club, my lady.” Waugh records, in a letter to Nancy Mitford, his puzzlement at a random, expensive, and forgotten series of purchases made during a particularly vinous day. After such visits he would routinely send flowers to his hostesses on the assumption he had behaved badly. But Waugh did not escape to White’s in order to be able to drink. He felt no particular restrictions at home, other than the constraints of marital consideration, good

manners, and want of convivial company. London was the place for getting drunk to the point of oblivion. Waugh’s club represented an escape from boredom and the painful vulgarities of twentieth century life. Drink is a frequent tool in dealing with ennui but it is a very short-term solution.

Martin Amis tells us that his father



Kingsley Amis and Anthony Powell 1957, “I’m sure we can work in a couple of swift drinks after the recording” (to Anthony Powell, 10 November 1957).



Wine-tasting. Martin, Kingsley and friend.



Kingsley Amis in his study. “You’re welcome to inspect the study where I’m writing this and where at the moment there are almost as many bottles as books” (to Dale Salwak, 9th April 1980).

5. Despite thinking that the Welsh poet wrote “Miserable incoherent rubbish” (Letter to John Davenport, p.449), Amis was one of Thomas’ literary trustees.

never lost his excitement at the prospect of a treat and attributes this to a lonely childhood. Possibly so, but there is a variety of drunk who approaches every opportunity for a booze-up with the enthusiasm of a young man setting out on a promising date. This may have something to do with an enduring belief in the wonder-working powers of alcohol. Many addicts claim to remember their first drink as a kind of Damascus road experience and never forget the feeling of elation and self-confidence. Amis entered the Garrick with an enthusiasm and anticipation which can have been matched by few of the clubs members throughout its history: "Off to the Garrick," he writes to Larkin in 1984, "for my Christmas drunk there. If nothing else kept me in London that place would. Somewhere to get pissed in jovial not very literary bright all-male company." On the other hand, to Robert Conquest earlier in the same year: "Garrick shut for another 6 days but as you know I can drink anywhere." Well, obviously. Waugh similarly laments the annual closure of his club - just as Bertie Wooster does of the Drones⁶.

As he grew older, Amis' political views moved to the Right. He had been a communist whist at Oxford and later a supporter of the Labour Party. Eventually he became a vociferous supporter of American policy in Vietnam and an admirer of Lady Thatcher. He developed an inarticulate loathing of Nelson Mandela. It is not always clear with Amis' opinions whether conviction or a desire to tease came first. Waugh, on the other hand, was a genuine reactionary whose political views were the reflection of a coherent world view. That they infuriated liberals was simply an incidental pleasure. It has been observed before that, with age, Amis became more like Waugh, at least superficially. What rôle did booze play

6. The Drones was probably more like White's than The Garrick, though the membership was younger (if equally Etonian).
7. In one of the novels a Texan says, "Arcane standard, Hannah More. Armageddon pier staff."
8. Apthorpe dies after Guy Crouchback smuggles a bottle of Scotch into his hospital ward.

in this? How far was it part of the act and how far was it a cause of the act?

Waugh would have recoiled at any suggestion of points of similarity between him and Amis but there were many. They both maintained a voluminous correspondence with a circle of friends. Waugh's was more glamorous and part of the interest of his letters is the light they throw on their recipients by the nature of the subjects discussed and the tone in which they are expressed. This interest is largely absent from Amis' letters. Waugh used his correspondence and his diaries to record "convertible literary stuff". There is less evidence of this in Amis', although the plays on language, phonetic representations of peculiarities of speech⁷ and grammatical preferences are all there.

Drink plays an important part in the fiction of both Waugh and Amis. *Lucky Jim* contains what must be the funniest and most painful description of waking up with a hangover - Martin calls his father "the laureate of the hangover". *The Old Devils* is a geriatric booze-up from beginning to end. Its other strengths apart, it is a bleak portrayal of life when it appears that there is nothing else left to do - "All those hours with nothing to stay sober for". There are two pictures of alcoholic decline in Waugh: Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited* and Apthorpe in *Officers and Gentlemen*. Although

Apthorpe is one of the great comic figures of English literature, his final days and death are movingly told⁸. His earlier episodes of drunkenness are thrown into relief and the tragedy of his condition left to the inference of the reader. A possible conclusion to Sebastian's alcoholic journey is sketched out in *Brideshead* by his sister Cordelia. She sees him ending his days as one of those hangers-on who seem to be loosely attached to every monastery, performing menial tasks, disappearing on occasional benders, treated indulgently by the monks, almost a Fool of God. This is not, however, meant to be seen as a disastrous end to a promising life, but as a solution to the problem. Evelyn Waugh was well acquainted with the anarchy of drink. He knew it from his own youth and it is used in the early novels as an image of the state of man in the modern world. The champagne-fuelled wager between Adam and the drunken major in *Vile Bodies*, the 'phone calls made by Tony Last to the adulterous Brenda after a night's heavy drinking in *A Handful of Dust*, even Mr Prendergast's shooting of Lord Tangent after an unaccustomed visit to the pub in *Decline and Fall*, are designed to illustrate our helplessness at the hands of a malign fate. ■

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