

# PROMOTING THE PINT: ALE AND ADVERTISING IN LATE VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN ENGLAND<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** According to historians, most nineteenth-century brewers did little to promote sales of their product, few alcoholic drinks having been widely advertised by their manufacturers. In general, it appears most English brewers believed a good product was their best form of advertisement. Despite not pursuing bold advertising strategies, many English brewers appear to have relied on indirect or “below the line” methods of advertising, some of which are still employed in the marketing world. Although most brewers continued to register their addresses in trade directories and regularly place notices in local newspapers, many also realised the commercial value of a strong public role, often spending far greater sums on community events than on printed publicity. Viewed in this way, nineteenth-century brewers displayed more creativity when it came to advertising their wares than they have been given credit for by the trade’s historians.

According to historians, most nineteenth-century brewers did little to promote sales of their fermented products. In fact, few alcoholic drinks appear to have been widely advertised by their manufacturers. Not surprisingly, the popularity of certain ales was more often described as the result of chance or even accident rather than well-conceived business strategies. Over the years, such arguments have retained credibility due to the fact that most brewers seem to have advertised only in newspapers. Moreover, usually such publicity is not regarded as a conscious attempt to attract public attention, for it was generally limited to a few lines and meant to inform customers that the latest brewed products were ready for public sale. As a result, historians more often describe these notices as information rather than advertisement. In general, it appears most English brewers believed a good product was their best form of advertisement.

While few English brewers pursued what could be described as bold advertising strategies, many more appear to have relied on indirect methods of advertising, some of which are still recognised, if not actually employed in the marketing world today. Indirect, or “below the line” advertising, as it is referred to in contemporary marketing parlance, has received far less attention than more overt “above the line” methods. Although not as easily identifiable

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as print advertising,<sup>2</sup> indirect mediums of publicity have a prehistory. In fact, such methods of publicity were so well developed in the nineteenth century that one can even argue that they predate “above the line” advertising techniques. Although most nineteenth-century brewers registered their addresses in trade directories and regularly placed notices in local newspapers, many clearly realised the commercial value of a strong public role. For example, brewers contributed far greater sums to community events than they spent on printed publicity. This strategy, however, has not always been recognised by historians for its promotional value. Not only did such methods promote awareness of products, but many expressed a detailed set of values with which consumers could associate by purchasing particular products. Furthermore, breweries drew favourable public attention in a number of other ways. Some enjoyed royal visits or warrants, while others participated in various international exhibitions where they often competed for a number of prestigious prizes; in any case, such events and honours were always widely publicised. Finally, a number of brewery employees, such as salesmen and draymen, also fulfilled certain promotional roles at breweries. This, however, has often been overlooked as the role of brewery sales staff and brewery labourers has generally not been addressed by business or labour historians. Nevertheless, viewed in this way, nineteenth-century brewers appear to have displayed more creativity when it came to advertising their wares than they have been given credit for by the trade’s historians.

## I

Like the majority of the early Victorian business community, and unlike some exceptional entrepreneurs, including, most notably, the itinerant medical practitioner or quack, nineteenth-century brewers engaged in very little “deliberate sales promotion advertising.”<sup>3</sup> Porter, for example, England’s drink of preference throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was rarely advertised in print, neither were the paler Burton ales, first brewed in the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, the popularity of India Pale Ale was initially described as the result of an accident rather than a successful advertising campaign or even linked to the return of English soldiers who generally drank most of the product when abroad protecting and enlarging the colonies.<sup>5</sup> William Molyneux, in an early history of Burton-on-Trent, did much to reinforce this myth, if not actually invent it. He describes the success of India Pale Ale to have been the result of the wreck in the Irish Channel of a vessel containing a cargo of approximately 300 hogsheads, of which several casks were washed ashore and sold in Liverpool for the benefit of the underwriters. By this means, in a very rapid manner, the product’s fame spread throughout Great Britain after 1827. On April 10, 1908, the *Stratford Herald*, one of many provincial papers to bolster this theory, relates another version of the tale in which a ship destined for Calcutta was wrecked off Sandwich. Apparently, this episode sparked a similar rage for Burton ale on the

Kentish shores. Though widely publicised myths, such tales held much power and may even have inspired Sir Thomas Lipton to explore new markets when the entrepreneur was a passenger on a ship stranded in the Red Sea. To the annoyance of the ship's master on this occasion, Lipton, sensing a business opportunity, stencilled "Drink Lipton's Tea" on some of the bales of cargo before they were jettisoned from the vessel.<sup>6</sup>

Over the years, the notion of success in brewing through accident, as captured in what might as well be described as the "shipwreck theory," has not been challenged, perhaps due to the fact that most brewers hardly carried out any market research and appear to have advertised only in newspapers.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in the past such print publicity has not been regarded by scholars as a conscious attempt to attract public attention, for it was generally limited to a few lines in a local periodical. Notices placed in the *Stratford Herald* by the town's brewers and largest employers, Flower & Sons, for example, rarely stand out from those placed by the locality's smallest businesses. Not surprisingly, the firm's expenditure on print advertising in 1875 as indicated in its balance sheet for that year totalled only 13s.<sup>8</sup> In comparison, the Norwich brewers, Steward & Patteson, also spent "very little" on local advertising.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, historians of the trade, such as Peter Mathias, have described these notices as information rather than advertisement.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it appears most English brewers, like other manufacturers of food and drink in the nineteenth century, believed a good article was its own best advertisement.<sup>11</sup> The same appears to have been true among vintners. Though many used a hanging sign, otherwise known as a bush, to attract customers, it was generally regarded that "good wine needs no bush."<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, no amount of advertising could save a poor product.<sup>13</sup>

It seems fair to suggest therefore that historians who have addressed the subject of advertising in this way have merely been influenced by the society which they inhabit. In the branded world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where advertising is a highly visual phenomenon, usually associated with trademarked images and ads which facilitate communication between peoples of different countries and cultures, it is difficult to imagine alternative means of publicity. In comparison, any means of product promotion prior to the appearance of modern advertising campaigns simply appear underdeveloped. Not surprisingly, most literature on the history of advertising has concentrated on the period since 1880, when such cultural artefacts proliferated.<sup>14</sup> In the last decades, historical works have returned to promotional culture, in order to emphasise the formative role which advertisements played in the creation of a consumer society.<sup>15</sup> As such, their concern is again primarily with visual culture.<sup>16</sup> Among other things, scholars in this field have argued that the images of mass marketing successfully manipulated consumers' preferences to such an extent that they purchased products for which they hitherto had no need, while some have even suggested it defused and neutralised industrial unrest.<sup>17</sup> While views on the influence of print advertising continue to differ,

there is some consensus that the history of advertising in England between 1800 and 1940 can be divided into three general stages, beginning with the period of industrialisation between 1800 and 1855 when advertising was first recognised as a “commercial weapon.”<sup>18</sup> The second stage (1855-1914) is described as a period of “great expansion,” sparked by the removal of taxation on newspaper advertising and evidence of increased professionalism in the advertising industry.<sup>19</sup> The interwar period, the third stage, when a recognisably modern marketing industry emerged, is not surprisingly also described as “the golden age of advertising.”

Within the big picture, historians have more recently identified some important trends. For example, it has been argued that, between the years 1780 and 1810, the most prolific advertisers were professions, shopkeepers and artisans, rather than manufacturers.<sup>20</sup> From 1800, there is also a noticeable decline in the use of special events to mark the arrival of particular goods, advertising having been transformed into a more routine activity.<sup>21</sup> From the mid-Victorian period, advertising in general grew more spectacular, allegedly the result of the impact of the Great Exhibition.<sup>22</sup> Advertising as spectacle, however, emerged years earlier. For example, any discussion of early marketing of consumer goods, as argued by Roy Porter, must take into account the patent medicine sellers, who had established their reputations as the result of flamboyant public performances, many promoting their products with eye-catching newspaper advertisements and verbose hyperbole.<sup>23</sup> As a direct result, patent medicines and the methods used to promote them, though pioneering, brought advertising into disrepute and became associated in the minds of many middle-class readers with fraudulent and false claims.<sup>24</sup> At a time when respectability was becoming a widespread aspiration in English society, many manufacturers, professional people and members of the business community chose to distance themselves and their products from such suspect publicity methods and adopted a more minimalist approach to advertising.<sup>25</sup> Exactly what this encompassed, however, has rarely been discussed by historians.

One particularly memorable example of the manner in which individuals advertised in more subtle, or at least indirect, ways comes from work relating to Josiah Wedgwood, the Staffordshire potter. Eschewing handbills as too down-market, and for the same reason reluctant to promote his ceramic wares through paid advertising in the newspaper press (alongside ads placed by medical quacks and the like), Wedgwood nevertheless devised highly effective methods to communicate information about his wares to consumers. Perhaps the most novel way in which he advertised his ceramics involved producing a copy of one of the most celebrated exhibits at the British Museum, the Portland Vase, a blue-black and white Roman glassware pot. As the centre-piece of a “travelling upper-class roadshow” in the 1780s, the vase drew considerable public attention, as well as potential clients for further copies of the vase itself and Wedgwood’s latest line, “Jasperware,” together with his complete range of ornamental goods.<sup>26</sup> The exhibition also generated much

secondary publicity through newspapers and word of mouth, which cost the potter nothing. Equally important, while it allowed Wedgwood to generate much inexpensive yet highly effective publicity, it also permitted him to appear very different from the self-advertising puffs he so despised, despite the fact that he so clearly shared a number of the characteristics attributed to such blatant showmen, including the ubiquitous vendor of patent medicines.

Interestingly, Wedgwood's past provides additional examples of such subtle or minimalist advertising techniques. For example, when faced with difficulties in promoting the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1765, Wedgwood is to have been advised by the Birmingham industrialist Samuel Garbett to generate some additional publicity by arranging a facetious attack on the canal in the midland newspapers.<sup>27</sup> Faced with such public criticism, Wedgwood would then be free to respond to his fictitious adversaries in print without appearing to be the promotional animal he in fact appears to have been. Equally important, Garbett cautioned Wedgwood concerning the wording of his article as too obsequious an address to the great would only diminish the stature of the canal's promoters.

A final example of such indirect methods of advertising has (very intentionally) been drawn from the memoirs of a medical practitioner who worked in the south west of England during the nineteenth century. Looking back on his career in Bristol, Augustin Prichard, besides discussing his most memorable cases, acknowledged the importance of indirect forms of advertising to medical gentlemen wishing to set themselves apart from their respectable colleagues, let alone their quack counterparts. His list begins with the legal cases that filled the papers and advertised the work of doctors in ways they were unable to do in an age of professionalisation without being "looked upon as black sheep."<sup>28</sup> Charity work provided further opportunities to place one's name before the public, medical staff and donors being acknowledged in printed hospital annual reports. Finally, he recounts in detail a balloon ascent he witnessed while an apprentice at the Bristol Infirmary in 1843. Captivated by the flight, which was in those days a rare occurrence, Prichard recalls the reaction of his master, Dr. Harrison, to the event, advice which he regarded as excellent throughout his career and recounts verbatim: "If I were just beginning to practice as you are, I should go up in that balloon, and then everybody would know you." Having emphasised gentility as an ideal, doctors, such as Prichard resorted to far more subtle methods of advertising than were practiced by the "quack." But, while this has been acknowledged in the case of medical practitioners, this was equally relevant to many manufacturers. For example, as the work of David Gutzke so effectively reveals, brewers equally aspired to gentlemanly status.<sup>29</sup> Brewing, after all, was an occupation that many young men from well-to-do families turned to should they have failed to enter the army, church or a learned profession.<sup>30</sup> As a result, they and many other English businessmen in this period found themselves, much like their medical brethren, as recently argued by Lori Loeb, "carefully negotiating a

complicated balance between gentility and financial interests.”<sup>31</sup> Often, this meant behaving very differently from the “quack,” or simply not appearing to engage in any deliberate sales strategies. While historians to date have spent much time decoding the cultural significance of advertising’s visual imagery, the absence of such commercial artefacts, as is made clear by the examples above, though far more difficult to read, can be equally significant.

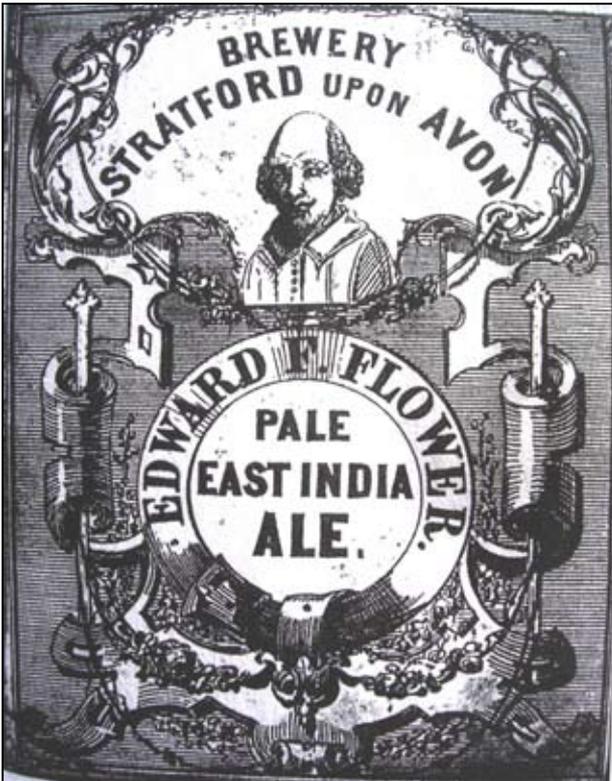
## II

As early as the 1860s, brewing industry periodicals recognised the hesitancy of their English members to advertise their products. In contrast to their English counterparts, American brewers advertised more aggressively, and the public had come to expect this from successful firms. As emphasised by other historians, advertising was a “foreign implant.”<sup>32</sup> Across the Atlantic, contemporaries claimed, customers did not buy from businesses which did not advertise.<sup>33</sup> Not only did this message register among members of the British brewing trade, but many believed they could learn from American entrepreneurs.<sup>34</sup> Already by the 1880s, conditions appear to have changed substantially from mid-century. For example, in 1886 the editors of the *Brewers’ Journal* reprinted Thomas Macaulay’s dictum suggesting “advertising is to business what steam is to machinery.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, in most cases, it was increased competition which made brewers more receptive to these ideas.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, American firms’ marketing techniques continued to outdo those of their English rivals, especially at trade shows. For example, visitors to the brewers’ hall at the Chicago World Fair in 1893 found American beer bottles to look “brighter and more showy” than those of their foreign competitors; each package appeared to “act as its own advertisement.”<sup>37</sup> In general, American exhibits were described as “brilliant with colour,” while those of the English were remembered as “dull.”<sup>38</sup>

At the very least, late-nineteenth-century brewers had learned that the exploitation of trademarks was one way in which to set their products apart from those of their competitors; this particular avenue of advertising was opened by legislation which amended patent law to include trademarks in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and brewers, along with manufacturers of tobacco and soap, led the way with registration.<sup>39</sup> Evidence from Flower & Sons’ ledgers suggests the Stratford firm (established in 1831) was first granted exclusive use of Shakespeare’s name and image in 1875, the year of the Trade Mark Act’s passage.<sup>40</sup> Thereafter, the Bard appeared on the brewery’s buildings, correspondence and especially their labels, which were affixed to both bottles and casks. Even small provincial breweries, such as Hereford’s Charles Watkins & Son, as it was known in 1884, protected their brands with trademarks. Success in advertising, however, also encouraged imitators, and defending one’s own brand could be an exhausting process. No one realised this more than did the proprietors of Bass, Burton’s largest brewery, whose trademark, a red triangle, was infringed more than that of any other English firm during the

late nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> According to the firm's managers, since registering the image under the Copy Right Act of 1842 "they had had their time pretty well taken up in defending the right to that mark."<sup>42</sup> For a small provincial brewer like Charles Watkins, however, defending the firm's "Golden Sunlight" trademark was also an expensive process and often consumed funds which could have been spent on generating further positive publicity.<sup>43</sup> In the case of the Hereford brewers, it may even have contributed to the death of its owner and manager, Henry Watkins, who in 1888, soon after a court appearance to defend his Golden Sunlight brand, threw himself into the River Lugg without explaining his actions.<sup>44</sup> In this same year, however, another more fortunate provincial brewer, Charles Flower, retired from business, never having had to defend his trademark in court. Clearly, in some circumstances, a brewer's location was a greater protection than could be offered by the courts. By the late nineteenth century, due to successive dramatic festivals, Shakespeare had already become so closely associated with Stratford that it would have seemed absurd for any other firm to attempt to claim the bard's image.

**Figure 1. Early bottle label containing Shakespeare's image, Flower's Brewery, c.1840.**



*Source: Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office (SBTRO), Flower & Sons Brewery, Company Scrapbook, DR 227/121.*

**Figure 2. Cask label depicting Shakespeare's likeness, Flower & Sons' Brewery, c.1860**



*Source: Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office (SBTRO), Flower & Sons Brewery, Company Scrapbook, DR 227/121.*

Besides designing distinctive labels, brewers attempted to generate business through the distribution of many other visual aids, including posters, showcards and enamel advertisement signs.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, most brewers' travellers distributed business cards among customers and expected that their reputations, as well as information pertaining to their products, would be conveyed by way of clients' informal social networks. While early business cards usually listed a brewery's products and prices on the reverse, price-updates in the form of printed notices were also sent to customers during periods when breweries could satisfy larger orders; it was at such times that brewers also placed their short advertisements in local newspapers. Moreover, some recognised the added value of doing business in unique environments. Flower & Sons' location, for example, allowed the firm to produce more memorable price lists than those printed by other breweries and linked the firm to Stratford's emerging Shakespeare industry. A particular nineteenth-century pamphlet, for example, was described as "one of the prettiest Shakespeare souvenirs imaginable," for it depicted views of Shakespeare's Birthplace and Anne Hathaway's Cottage, among many other of the region's well-known sites.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, besides helping to develop the town's Shakespeare industry through the construction of a Memorial Theatre, by regularly promoting this local literary connection the firm's directors also inadvertently ensured the town's economic survival

beyond the brewery's closure in 1969.

### III

Despite the production of some highly decorative and original publicity material, few English brewers pursued what could be described as aggressive advertising strategies. Instead, many more appear to have relied on indirect, or "below the line" methods of advertising. Like medical practitioners and many nonconformist industrialists, most brewers took a minimalist approach to promoting their business ventures. Furthermore, by concentrating solely on print culture, historians have overlooked many successful promotional activities that were undertaken by some of the industry's more innovative firms. Although most brewers registered their addresses in trade directories and regularly placed notices in local newspapers, many also recognised the commercial value of a strong public role. For example, brewers contributed far greater sums to community events than they spent on printed publicity. This strategy, however, has not always been recognised by historians for its promotional value, though, admittedly, evidence of such activities does not always survive in company records.<sup>47</sup> But neither was sponsorship a rare occurrence in this period. The introduction of tax relief for charitable donations in the third decade of the twentieth century merely stimulated, rather than started, such benevolence. Throughout the nineteenth century, brewers regularly subscribed to charities and supported activities outside their local parishes often in efforts to confirm their respectability. So, too, very importantly, did many less respectable men of business in attempts to buy genteel status with fortunes made from less dignified pursuits.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, their motives hardly differed from those of other charitable industrialists. According to Brian Harrison, it was brewers' need for self-advertisement and public contracts that primarily attracted them to large-scale philanthropy.<sup>49</sup>

In 1875, the same year that Flower & Sons spent 13s. advertising in Stratford's local paper, the *Herald*, the brewery set aside hundreds of pounds in order to support societies and events in those communities where their products sold best. For example, the Stratford, Campden, Henley, Abergavenny and Torquay Races each received between two and ten pounds yearly.<sup>50</sup> Organisers of regattas in Durham, Dartmouth and Evesham, as well as sporting clubs in Tiddington, Alcester and Llandudno also benefited from brewery sponsorship. Besides the widows of their own deceased workers, the brewery supported those of men formerly employed by the Great Western Rail Company, who delivered much of their ale throughout England, along with those who resided in Studley, Warwickshire, for less obvious reasons. Moreover, already closely tied to agricultural activities, the brewery subscribed to Bromsgrove's and Warwick's agricultural societies, supported poultry and cattle shows in Stratford, Moreton and Nuneaton and even sponsored a horse show in Bidford in 1887, presumably because the company had purchased many of their horses from breeders in the area over the years. Flower & Sons' contributions to such

events were always recognised in any printed matter distributed by organisers, while their donations to various societies were recorded in subscription lists. Even when no publicity material was issued, often a personal appearance at fairs and festivals reminded all gathered participants of the firm's financial support. In general, such appearances almost certainly made a greater impact on the public than did a few advertisements, whether placed in newspapers or conspicuously posted along the thoroughfares leading to such well-attended events.

Breweries drew favourable public attention in a number of other ways. Like the most fortunate of spa proprietors, some brewers benefited from royal visits, breweries having been industrial showpieces of the Victorian period and were usually included in high-profile celebrity tours of the country. In 1902, for example, King Edward VII visited Bass's Brewery in Burton where he commenced a 400-barrel brew, named, naturally, "King's Brew," the strongest ale ever produced by the firm.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, a year earlier, the king granted a royal warrant of appointment, a true sign of quality, to Watney's, among a number of other companies, as brewers to his Majesty.<sup>52</sup> Alternatively, the power of royal example in subsequent years could equally assist those hostile to the brewing trade as was made evident by the "King's Pledge" in 1915.<sup>53</sup> Among the signatures of many other famous guests, a register belonging to Barclay, Perkins & Co. records the names of Bismarck, Napoleon III and Constantine, Grand Duke of Russia, not all of whom possessed positive advertising value historically.<sup>54</sup> Flower & Sons also attracted considerable publicity when the family hosted literary figures, such as Charles Dickens and the playwright-wit Douglas William Jerrold, whose tours of Stratford and, not unusually, the brewery were revealed in press reports which drew attention to the company's more unique innovations, though never mention the announcements were often paid for by the host firm.<sup>55</sup> Instead of going about their business modestly, numerous brewers engaged in a process which can be described, if one were to reverse Veblen's useful concept, as "conspicuous" production.<sup>56</sup> In this tradition, countless breweries publicly celebrated their own distinct business achievements. Allsopp & Sons' directors, for example, claimed to be the exclusive suppliers of ale to Sir George Nare's arctic expedition.<sup>57</sup> Bass's King's Brew eventually travelled with Robert Falcon Scott to the Antarctic in 1910.<sup>58</sup> Though much publicised, such sponsorship was nothing new. The reputation of Burroughs Wellcome's pharmaceutical products, for example, had increased considerably as the result of similar publicity.<sup>59</sup>

Most brewers, however, benefited from publicity generated less adventurously. For example, a number of brewers' ales collected prizes at international exhibitions, a fact regularly advertised on many firms' labels. Although a more common mode of transport in the nineteenth century, brewers' heavy horses also attracted considerable attention when away from their stables, not least because they outsized every other animal travelling on British thoroughfares. Many competed in shows when not used for deliveries.<sup>60</sup> Courage's horses,

for example, took part in the Olympia and Albert Palace Shows in 1887 and the Battersea Show in 1886.<sup>61</sup> John Smith's competed in York on May Day at the turn of the last century.<sup>62</sup> Horses belonging to the City Brewery in Oxford "obtained prizes at almost every horse show" in these years.<sup>63</sup> Launched in 1885, the London Cart Horse Parade grew to be one of the largest of its kind. At the turn of the century, more than 700 horses entered the competition to compete for cash prizes, one of which was awarded to Flower & Sons in 1900.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, as the use of horses declined in the first years of this century, their motorised replacements attracted as much, if not more, attention due to their novelty. This opportunity was certainly not missed by the Rowntrees, whose motorised cocoa tin attracted much attention during its three-month tour of the north of England in the early twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps no brewer's vehicle stood out like Worthington's bottle-shaped motorcar, which appeared in 1906 and was regarded as a good advertisement in the days before drink-driving campaigns.<sup>66</sup> By 1907, London hosted an annual commercial vehicle parade where a number of these novel advertisements filled the streets of the capital.<sup>67</sup> As these became more common, the tables turned once again and those brewers who had been slow to discard their horse-drawn drays again drew much favourable public attention.

Other promotional methods were more deliberate and also displayed more creativity than did a few printed lines in a local journal. For example, in 1885, the *Brewers' Journal* wrote of H. J. Turner, a brewer from Moseley, Birmingham, who introduced presentation clocks as "a novel mode of popularizing [his] beers."<sup>68</sup> Well-designed and durable, Turner's clocks advertised his ale on mantel-pieces in hotels, clubs and restaurants. While such methods very clearly extended advertising into the shop,<sup>69</sup> or more accurately, into the pub, other brewers were bringing their message into the home and office. Morgan & Co. and Bullard & Son, both of Norwich, for example, supplied their customers with colourful office calendars.<sup>70</sup> The proprietors of the Worksop and Retford Brewery, on the other hand, issued "a very attractive and nicely-got-up almanack and year book."<sup>71</sup> A similar diary was sent to the customers of John Davenport & Sons of Birmingham, though it proved most useful to sporting enthusiasts, "as it contain[ed] in addition to a budget of miscellaneous information a comprehensive chronology of racing, sporting and athletic events, names of winners, starting-price ready reckoner, football fixtures, &c."<sup>72</sup> Many other brewers distributed clay pipes through their tied houses, pubs themselves having been described as "one of the most efficient marketing methods of the present day."<sup>73</sup>

Like other retail outlets, pubs became subordinate to the needs of selling and advertising.<sup>74</sup> It could even be argued that few brewers needed billboards and elaborate newspaper ads when tied retail outlets were three-dimensional advertisements for their products. In the case of rural brewers like Flower & Sons, these grew from a dozen tied houses in the middle of the nineteenth century to more than a hundred in the first years of the twentieth. By developing a

concentrated presence in particular areas, advertising their brands was hardly necessary, a lesson learned and revived more recently by modern retailers.<sup>75</sup> Curiously, few brewers appear to have made the most of such direct access to consumers during these years, most striving solely to create a strong tried trade through the strategic purchase of public houses. Only a few appear to have researched their markets in any detail. Such analysis and advertising as we know it really appeared at breweries only during the interwar period.<sup>76</sup>

If modern marketing methods were slow to evolve, so, too, were standard print advertisements. For example, the majority during the first half of the century stressed quality and purity, very likely due to the perceived and often real threat of adulteration at the time.<sup>77</sup> In this way, provincial brewers were also able to set their merchandise apart from the less standardised products brewed by publicans, while also not associating themselves with the puffery of quacks. Due to the public's sceptical reception of scientific methods at breweries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the rhetoric of purity and quality lasted and was used by brewers to counter claims that beer was now being "doctored."<sup>78</sup> The granting of a free mash tun to brewers with the passage of the 1880 Beer Act only reinforced ideas that chemistry was being used to discover substitutes for "honest malt and hops."<sup>79</sup> Finally, should the public have begun to accept new methods of brewing and simply been able to read more wordy advertisements, temperance campaigns had kept brewers on their guard for much of this period, and although this movement had begun to decline by the end of the Victorian period, an arsenic scare in the British brewing industry ensured that brewers' advertisements would continue to emphasise primarily the quality and purity of fermented products.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the static nature of print promotions over the century should only add to the importance of alternative forms of publicity.

While custom appears to have restricted some innovations at breweries, it did occasionally provide other benefits. Traditionally dressed in a red cap and white top coat, the drayman, like the brewery traveller by whom he was occasionally accompanied on his rounds, was generally regarded by many as a form of mobile beer advertisement.<sup>81</sup> In numerous brewery histories, for example, draymen are commonly described as "picturesque."<sup>82</sup> Moreover, they spent much time among firms' clients and subsequently developed important links with customers. In contrast to their employers, who frequently stressed the good feeling which characterised relations between master and servant, draymen often stressed the bonds which existed between themselves and the firm's customers.<sup>83</sup> No other employee maintained such steady contact with customers and rarely were their routes changed over the years. Few brewers did not recognise the importance of the drayman's public role. Such was their promotional power that many continued to feature in brewery logos and print advertisements in the early twentieth century.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, each action outside the brewery could either improve a firm's image or, just as often, cost the firm sales. Consequently, in 1896, brewery director Archibald Flower, who

appears to have recognised the phenomenon of negative advertising, reprimanded a drayman “who should have exercised more courtesy and politeness” following an accident, regardless of fault.<sup>85</sup> Draymen were more regularly admonished for trotting, which often led firms to incur fines should wagons have travelled along public routes at more than two miles an hour. While Flowers demanded their draymen to pay such fines, Guy Senior of the Barnsley Brewery in South Yorkshire demonstrated a different approach to these matters and gladly paid any penalties due to their ““first-rate” advertising value.”<sup>86</sup> Not only did Guy Senior willingly pay his fines, but he also promised to pay £10 to a local hospital for every subsequent conviction, another great publicity stunt. Admittedly, accidents involving drays would have been far more difficult to project in any positive light, but these seem to have attracted little attention during this period, despite their frequency.

Most travellers and agents also fulfilled a certain promotional role at breweries.<sup>87</sup> According to C. H. Tripp, who produced one of the first guides to brewery management, this role only grew in importance in the late Victorian period when customers no longer came to the brewery to make their purchases.<sup>88</sup> As salesmen were in regular contact with a brewery’s customers, these employees, more than any other, advertised the firm to the public. Similarly, a firm’s network of salesmen and agencies served as a conduit not only for goods, but for information to customers about the company.<sup>89</sup> Those most familiar with the duties of the commercial traveller in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period went so far as to refer to them as the “intelligence department” of firms.<sup>90</sup> Peter Mathias’s work adequately demonstrates the ways in which the hours a brewer spent away from his business could both hurt and help his employers.<sup>91</sup> In the same way, a salesman’s personality and conduct on his journeys, especially his ability to empathise, could either aid or injure sales, especially in an age which witnessed very little direct advertising.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, as well as being industrious, the ideal traveller, as described by members of the brewing trade, was “a well-educated superior commercial man,” a “jovial fellow” who could “take and give a joke in almost any society.”<sup>93</sup> Brewers were not alone in the belief that a salesman’s or agent’s “contacts and aplomb would succeed where big business was at stake.”<sup>94</sup> Not surprisingly, Flower & Sons’ managers also sought to hire very personable travellers, familiar with the regions to which they were assigned.<sup>95</sup> Besides being expected “to add at least 100 barrels a week to the trade,” candidates were expected to exhibit “pleasant manners.”<sup>96</sup> Like other brewers, Flowers was hesitant to appoint an “ordinary traveller to deal with [their] most important hotels.”<sup>97</sup> Familiarity with a particular locality, however, often induced employers to overlook some of a traveller’s other shortcomings. Although “a man of very peculiar talkative manner, strange to people who [did] not understand him,” Arthur Fagge compensated for his deficient mode of speech by an unrivalled familiarity with Stratford’s regional markets,<sup>98</sup> he remained a well-regarded member of the firm’s staff for several decades. Those misrepresenting their

ability to generate sales, on the other hand, were rarely given very long to improve their exaggerated records. For example, claiming to “command a large trade” in the capital, A. J. Ebsworth was hired as a London agent by Flowers in 1868.<sup>99</sup> However, approximately a month into his term, Ebsworth was reprimanded for his failure to increase the firm’s pale ale trade. Instead, it appeared “he had no connexions”,<sup>100</sup> Ebsworth was dismissed in November, having been with the firm only five months.

**Figure 3. Edward Pole, brewer’s agent, ‘Going to Upton for Orders’, as drawn by Edgar Flower, c.1865**



Source: Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office (SBTRO), Flower & Sons Brewery, Company Scrapbook, DR 227/121.

Well-connected travellers, however, were not necessarily more popular with brewers, as was proved soon after Flower & Sons hired Cheltenham brewer Edward Pole as an agent. Pole, like the firm’s home-office staff, realised he could contact greater numbers of potential customers by attending events at which they congregated, rather than track each down individually. Instead of frequenting a local corn exchange or agricultural market, however, Pole regularly attended fairs and race tracks. Consequently, when relations between Pole and Flowers soured, the practice was used to discredit the innovative salesman in court where he faced various charges, including “nonaccounting,” as opposed to embezzling, a far more serious offence.<sup>101</sup> In his defence, Pole claimed he had received several orders for the Stratford brewers by attending races at Worcester and Upton, among other courses, and had greatly increased his business contacts in this way. Apparently, the jury sympathised with Pole, for, despite his other faults, they decided in his favour. Perhaps more interestingly, as a result of the firm’s difficult relationship with Pole, one of the brewery’s directors and member of the Royal Academy, Edgar Flower,

attempted to capture the particulars of the case in a sketch which he shared with other board members and was subsequently preserved in the company's scrapbook. Though never used for promotional purposes, it, more than any other image produced by the firm in these years, comes closest in appearance to the sort of image that appeared in advertisements a generation later and overshadowed the more subtle advertising techniques favoured by brewers in Victorian England.

#### IV

Though the small, wordy advertisements favoured by brewers in the nineteenth century were only slowly being replaced by promotions featuring personalities and story-lines at the end the Victorian period, the histories of individual firms reveal a number of colourful characters and episodes, similar to, if not more interesting than, those which consumers could follow in print a generation later. In order for events, such as Edward Pole's trial and sales methods, to be more than interesting anecdotes and be placed firmly in a business history framework, however, alternative approaches to the firm and advertising during this period are required. By combining the study of business with social and cultural history, as has been suggested elsewhere, and is attempted here, histories of firms may reveal nineteenth-century entrepreneurs to have been more creative advertisers than in past studies.<sup>102</sup> Most brewers understood the importance of promotional activities, only few wished to associate themselves with techniques more common to quacks than gentlemen. As a result, these businessmen pursued more subtle avenues to promote their products, including sponsorship and a continued reliance on carefully-selected salesmen and agents.

While it has been argued that no history of advertising can be complete without acknowledging the importance of alternative promotional methods, such an approach to the history of advertising naturally complicates certain considerations, especially its economic aspects. For example, any cost analysis of publicity becomes far more difficult to calculate. While total national expenditure on advertising in England was estimated to be £10 million in the early years of the twentieth century,<sup>103</sup> what percentage of a brewer's hospital subscription in a previous century, to take one of many practical difficulties, can be considered an advertising expense? Entrepreneurs' public roles and benefactions, however, need to be considered in this context and can not always be regarded as decisions which discouraged boards from advertising product lines more heavily.<sup>104</sup> Though many of the examples contained in this article do not challenge the fact that some English businesses continued to employ "amateurish marketing techniques" right into the twentieth century, clearly even provincial brewers understood the power of advertising in its various forms, a fact which needs to be recognised if we are to comprehend the success attained by a number of these entrepreneurs during this period.<sup>105</sup> In the case of Flower & Sons, it seems absurd to suggest that a provincial

brewer could have built a company with a strong regional trade and reputation by spending a mere 13s on print advertising in 1875. In actual fact, the firm spent hundreds of pounds annually in order to develop its reputation and create a recognisable regional presence. In fact, so successful was this campaign, that, when the brewery was finally acquired by Whitbreads in 1969, the Flowers “brand,” like the products of so many other provincial breweries, continued to be sold by its new owners, outliving the original firm by many decades. The brand’s strength, however, was never solely the result of direct advertising. It was the result of considerable investment in the communities where brewers lived and worked and where their products had long been sold and consumed.

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#### ENDNOTES

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4. K.H. Hawkins and C.L. Pass, *The Brewing Industry: A Study in Industrial Organisation and Public Policy* (London: Heinemann, 1979): 20; O. MacDonagh, “The Origins of Porter,” *Economic History Review* (EHR) XVI (1964): 530.

5. W. Molyneux, *Burton on Trent* (London: Trubner, 1869): 230-1.

6. J. Mackay, *The Man who Invented Himself: The Life of Sir Thomas Lipton* (London: Mainstream, 1998).

7. P. Shinner, “The Brewing Industry in Nineteenth Century Grimsby,” *Journal of Local and Regional Studies* 16, 1 (1996): 22.

8. Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office (SBTRO), Ledger B1, 1875-1887, DR 227/9.

9. Unfortunately, exact expenditure on advertising is not outlined by the company’s historian, who merely states that the firm spent “very little” on local advertising. See T. Gourvish, *Norfolk Beers from English Barley: A History of Steward & Pateson, 1793-1963* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, 1987): 45.

10. Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England*, 136; C. Wischermann, “Placing Advertising in the Modern Cultural History of the City,” in *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives*, ed. C. Wischermann and E. Shore (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 1.

11. R. Wilson, “The Changing Taste for Beer in Victorian Britain,” in *The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry Since 1800*, T. Gourvish and R. Wilson, eds, (London: Routledge, 1998): 94; see also Francis Goodall, “Marketing consumer products before 1914: Rowntrees and Elect Cocoa,” in *Markets and Bagmen* ed. R. P. T. Davenport-Hines (Aldershot, Hants.: Gower Publishing Company, 1986): 21; R. Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution, 1862-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 52-4.

12. B.B. Elliott, *A History of English Advertising* (London: Business Publications Ltd. [in association with B. T. Batsford Ltd.], 1962): 2.

13. T.A.B. Corley, “Marketing and business history, in theory and practice” in *The Rise and Fall of Mass Marketing*, ed. R.S. Tedlow and G. Jones (London: Routledge, 1993): 98.

14. R. Church, “Advertising consumer goods in nineteenth-century Britain: reinterpretations,” *EHR* 53 (2000): 621. See also M. Hilton, “Advertising, the Modernist Aesthetic of the Market-

place? The Cultural Relationship Between the Tobacco Manufacturer and the ‘Mass’ of Consumers in Britain, 1870-1940,” in *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II*, ed. M. Daunton and B. Rieger (Oxford: Berg, 2001): 45-69.

15. B. Fine and E. Leopold, *The World of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1994); M. Schudson, *Advertising, the uneasy persuasion* (London: Routledge, 1993).

16. See, for example, Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*; Wischermann and Shore, *Advertising and the European City*.

17. S. Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990); R. Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); S. Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977).

18. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, 1982; Church, “Advertising consumer goods in nineteenth-century Britain,” 626.

19. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, 67.

20. Church, “Advertising consumer goods,” 628.

21. *Ibid.*

22. T. Richards, *The Commodity Culture in Victorian England, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1991): 18; Wischermann, “Placing Advertising,” 10.

23. R. Porter, *Quacks: Fakery & Charlatans in English Medicine* (Stroud, Gloucs.: Tempus, 2000); See also R. Porter, *Health for Sale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

24. Church, “Advertising consumer goods,” 633; L. Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994): 5; Elliott, *A History of English Advertising*, 102-3; Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, 24.

25. *Ibid.*

26. A. Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression* (London: Sage, 1991): 6.

27. J. Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977): 24-5.

28. A. Prichard, *Some Incidents in General Practice* (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1898): 12.

29. D. Gutzke, “The Social Status of Landed Brewers in Britain Since 1840,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 17 (1984): 93-113.

30. B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994): 59.

31. L. Loeb, “Doctors and Patent Medicines in Modern Britain: Professionalism and Consumerism,” *Albion* 33 (2001): 407.

32. Wischermann, “Placing Advertising,” 12.

33. *Brewers’ Journal*, April 15, 1867.

34. *Country Brewers’ Gazette*, July 4, 1883.

35. *Brewers’ Journal*, February 15, 1886.

36. *Ibid.*, July 15, 1890. A little more than a decade later, the journal also periodically printed a column, entitled “Hints on Advertising,” which was written by a recognised authority on advertising, such as H. E. Morgan of W. H. Smith in November 1905.

37. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1893.

38. *Ibid.* The performance of English entrepreneurs in other industries has often been interpreted as equally dismal, see, for example, G. Tweedale, “English versus American hardware: British marketing techniques and business performance in the USA in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries,” in Davenport-Hines, ed., *Markets and Bagmen*, 67 and 70.

39. D. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969): 198; R. Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution, 1862-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 25.

40. SBTRO, DR 227/109. According to an article in *Punch*, dated April 29, 1865, Flower & Sons was described to brew an ale “not unworthily called SHAKSPEARE [sic].”

41. In the 1880s, infringements of the firm’s trademark reported in the pages of the *Brewers’ Journal* alone numbered approximately twenty. At one point in 1886, one case was reported each month for a period of five months, see *Brewers’ Journal*, August 15 - December 15, 1886. Perhaps having foreseen these tendencies, Guinness’s managers designed their labels “as accurately as a

Bank of England note." Each set contained the names of the agent for whom it was intended and were numbered so as not to allow for duplicates, see *Brewers' Journal*, September 16, 1865.

42. *Ibid.*, August 15, 1892.

43. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1888.

44. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1889.

45. For more information on early posters, see M. Jones, *Time, Gentlemen, Please!* (London: PRO Publications, 1997).

46. SBTRO, DR 227/121.

47. Sponsorship is still not always regarded as advertising by the general public, though the government clearly categorises it as such, see, for example, R. Shaw, *The Spread of Sponsorship in the Arts, Sport, Education, the Health Service & Broadcasting* (London: Bloodaxe Books, 1993): 11. Recent histories of advertising also clearly demonstrate that by advertising their authors imply printed publicity only. See Jones, *Time, Gentlemen*; Loeb, *Consuming Angels*.

48. Loeb, "Doctors and Patent Medicines," 410.

49. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 58.

50. SBTRO, DR 227/9. At the time, 13s would have paid for three or four short advertisements in a local paper. See Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, 49.

51. *Brewers' Journal*, March 15, 1902; November 15, 1902.

52. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1901.

53. S. Mews, "Urban Problems and Rural Solutions: Drink and Disestablishment in the First World War," in *The Church in Town and Countryside. Studies in Church History*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979): 467-9, 476; J. Greenaway, *Drink and British Politics since 1830: A Study in Policy-Making* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 95.

54. *Anchor Magazine* (Barclay, Perkins & Company's house magazine), January 1925; A. Barnard, *The Noted Breweries of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Sir Joseph Canston & Sons). II: 77.

55. *Stratford Herald*, January 28, 1870. On another well-reported occasion in 1901, the brewery hosted Major-General Baden-Powell, who toured the plant while staying at Broadway with Edgar Flower, see *Brewers' Journal*, September 15, 1901. Clearly, more work needs to be done on the question of paid articles, which are rarely mentioned in existing histories of the press.

56. More recently, there has been a noticeable shift away from these methods. Where a previous era of firms conspicuously displayed their logos on the façades of their factories, many of today's brand-based multinationals maintain that the location of their production facilities in export processing zones is a "trade secret," see N. Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2001): 201.

57. Barnard, *Noted Breweries*, III: 151; *Brewers' Journal*, December 15, 1888; December 15, 1895. Not surprisingly, certain American brewers organised equally challenging adventures of their own. For example, in 1896 the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company commenced a round-the-world trip in order to advertise their products, see *Brewers' Journal*, July 15, 1896. One of the most innovative English brewers, however, was Allsopp & Sons, who, in June 1909, offered a 500-guinea motor car to the person who submitted the best suggestion for an advertisement to the brewery. Besides the winning suggestion, the brewery gained a number of valuable ideas as a result of such promotions, for all entries became "the absolute property of Messrs Allsopp," see *Brewers' Journal*, June 15, 1909.

58. *Brewers' Journal*, July 15, 1910; November 15, 1914.

59. R. R. James, *Henry Wellcome* (London: Wellcome Trust, 1994): 100; Jonathan Liebenau, "Marketing high technology: educating physicians to use innovative medicines," in Davenport-Hines, ed., *Markets and Bagmen*, 91. See also, Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 82-3 for a similar campaign by the Leibig Company into Africa.

60. T. C. Barker, "The Delayed Decline of the Horse in the Twentieth Century," in *Horses in European Economic History*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (Leeds: Leeds University Printing, 1983): 109.

61. J. Pudney, *A Draught of Contentment: The Story of the Courage Group* (London: New English Library): 21; and Barnard, *Noted Breweries*, II: 47.

62. Pudney, *Draught of Contentment*, 132.

63. Barnard, *Noted Breweries*, I: 463.

64. *Brewers' Journal*, June 15, 1897; June 15, 1900.
65. Francis Goodall, "Marketing consumer products," 27; Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution*, 91.
66. *Brewers' Journal*, November 15, 1906.
67. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1909.
68. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1885.
69. Wischermann, "Placing Advertising," 10.
70. *Brewers' Journal*, January 15, 1886.
71. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1893.
72. *Ibid.*, February 15, 1898.
73. Pudney, *Draught of Contentment*, 150.
74. Wischermann, "Placing Advertising," 10.
75. B. Ortega, *In Sam We Trust* (New York: Time Books, 1998): 75.
76. T. Gourvish and R. Wilson, *The British Brewing Industry, 1830-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 346.
77. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 83, 336-7.
78. E. Sigsworth, "Science and the Brewing Industry," *EHR* 3 (1965): 538.
79. *Country Brewers' Gazette*, June 6, 1883.
80. S. O. Neville, *Seventy Rolling Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958): 45.
81. Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England*, 78; H. Janes, *The Red Barrel: A History of Watney Mann* (London: John Murray, 1963): 140; W. Stanley-Smith, "Labour in the Brewhouse," in *Journal of the Institute of Brewing* 8 (1902): 137; *Brewers' Journal*, April 15, 1905. According to Stanley-Smith, the "ancient custom" of the red cap began to disappear at the end of the nineteenth century.
82. Pudney, *A Draught of Contentment*, 69.
83. *Stratford Herald*, 21 January 1898.
84. Jones, *Time, Gentlemen, Please!*, 22.
85. SBTRO, DR 227/110.
86. Pudney, *A Draught of Contentment*, 135.
87. *Brewers' Journal*, 15 March 1889. In general, the role of travellers, or salesmen, has been neglected in histories of firms and deserves further study, as is suggested in Church, "New perspectives on the history of products, firms, marketing, and consumers in Britain and the United States since the mid-nineteenth century," *EHR* 52 (1999): 429.
88. *Brewers' Journal*, March 15, 1889. Tripp's column on the practicalities of managing a brewery was republished as *Brewery Management* (London: F.W. Lyon, 1892).
89. Wernick, *Promotional Culture*, 14.
90. M. French, "Commercials, careers, and culture: travelling salesmen in Britain, 1890s-1930s," *EHR* 58 (2005): 367.
91. Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England*, 286.
92. *Ibid.*, 368.
93. *Brewers' Journal*, February 15, 1889.
94. R.P.T. Davenport-Hines "Introduction," in Davenport-Hines, ed., *Markets and Bagmen*, 10.
95. SBTRO, DR 227/106.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*, DR 227/110.
99. *Ibid.*, DR 227/106.
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.* DR 227/121.
102. Church, "New perspectives," 405.
103. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, 70.
104. For an example of such an interpretation see, for example, F. Goodall, "Marketing consumer products," 48.
105. Davenport-Hines, "Introduction," 9.