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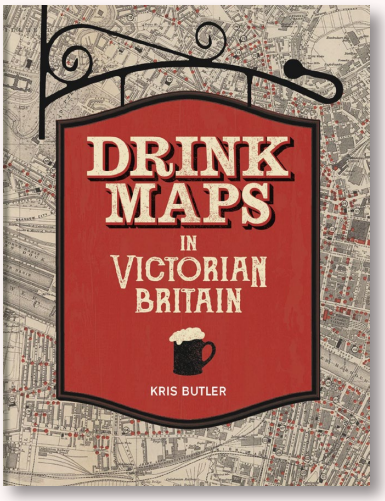

DRINK MAPS IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

By Kris Butler

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Today—through mapping or map-driven tools like Google Maps and Yelp—the internet provides easy access to the names and locations of establishments selling alcohol, but this convenience is a relatively recent phenomenon. Historically, collections of this information have been available, but not for use by the public, and most emphatically not for the convenience of those seeking alcoholic libations. In Britain, between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, directories—known as "drink maps"—were compiled and published by a variety of crusading temperance societies as key tools in their campaigns against the recreational use and sale of alcohol—especially amongst the working classes.

In *Drink Maps in Victorian Britain*, Kris Butler examines the historical rise and spread of temperance drink maps, detailing the varying forms they took and their evolution over time. "Made with an agenda that was adamantly hostile to drinking alcohol" (1), drink maps were employed as tools to educate the country's magistrates and to encourage them to reduce the availability of alcohol. Despite the overall, long-term failure of the temperance movement, these drink maps exemplify one way cartography has historically been used as a political tool.

The book is chronologically organized, guiding the reader step by step, stage by stage, through the evolving landscape of the Victorian temperance movement. It lays out how the movement came to create the drink map, and how the approach of these activist societies developed and progressed throughout the era, explaining the relationship between the maps and the social and legal contexts that influenced their design and led to their widespread publication across Victorian Britain. Butler enriches her argument by including narrative vignettes alongside official legal sources in order to capture the personal implications of the movement.

The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought increased urbanization to Britain, as well as growing concern about the social ills to be found in overcrowded cities. Drinking was no longer a private activity, but a public one (6), and the consumption and availability of alcohol became a growing public concern. A plethora of societies arose, all attempting to combat widespread alcohol consumption using a variety of methods and approaches. One of these methods was to create "drink maps"—each designed for a specific city or urban area in Britain. Drink maps showed areas with heavy concentrations of licensed public houses and beer shops, plus off-license vendors such as grocers and other small retailers where alcohol could be purchased and/or consumed. Butler details which cities and neighborhoods were mapped, and how often, over the many decades of drink maps' popularity and use.

Drink maps used the spatial distribution and concentration of drink vendors as a proxy for the availability of alcohol, and for the extent of its consumption. They framed alcohol consumption as a public health issue—primarily

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among the lower class (19, 92)—and Butler argues that this strategy and tactic were largely inspired by John Snow's 1854 map of a cholera outbreak in London's Soho. Snow's map visualized geographic concentrations of disease outbreaks, helping to reveal hotspots and demonstrate how cholera was being transmitted throughout the city. In adopting Snow's approach, the temperance crusaders aimed to depict alcohol consumption—and, by extension, drunkenness—as a disease. By using bold visualizations, they also hoped to broaden support for a movement that was often limited by its roots in moral arguments thundered from church pulpits (9).

The maps were targeted particularly at magistrates—lower court judges, often unpaid and usually appointed from the local gentry. Magistrates often had limited knowledge about law and procedure, and, as wealthier gentlemen, they were normally rather isolated from lower class social milieus. They did, however, exercise jurisdiction over the licensing of pubs and clubs—in what were known as Brewster Sessions—so temperance activists saw them as a key audience for their proselytizing. During these annual sessions, magistrates reviewed any violations of licenses; were presented with memorials, deputations, and signed petitions; and then approved, renewed, or objected to the license applications (59). Magistrates were not required to listen to or read the presentations, so it was vital to draw their attention and interest. Starkly rendered in red and black ink, drink maps served as striking visual tools deployed to persuade the presiding magistrates to restrict the renewal of alcohol licenses by fostering a sense of alarm about the effects of a drink-sodden populace on public order.

Besides limiting the sale of alcohol, advocates had a second goal—that of slowing or halting its consumption. This was to be achieved by promoting temperance, or even total abstinence from consumption of alcoholic beverages, primarily among the lower class (19). Results were lackluster, and drink maps proved to be more powerful as a political tool to influence government officials than the general public.

The late 1800s was a period of widespread social and economic changes, and public controversy about the spike in alcohol consumption led to a number of court cases that challenged the decisions about alcohol licenses. The legal contestation was often from proprietors whose applications to renew their longstanding licenses were denied. In 1883, a court in a small town in Lancashire (northwest England) greatly expanded the power of magistrates in these matters. In deciding the case of *Kay v. The Justices of Over Darwen*, the judges "held that 'The Beer Dealers' Retail Licences (Amendment) Act, 1882,' gives the licensing justices power to refuse the renewal of existing off licences without there being any grounds for such refusal." From this point, even without any violations having occurred, magistrates could deny applications to renew existing licenses. Butler posits that this decision led directly to an explosion in drink map production—and a major offensive by temperance activists—resulting in the publication of over eighty-five different drink maps in the following years (89). Many of these drink maps explicitly cite *Kay v. The Justices of Over Darwen* on their backs and include directions about how this decision could be used to fight drinking (72). The author eloquently argues that prior to this result there was no one singular purpose or strategy regarding the creation of drink maps, but that after the decision "the focus became razor-sharp" (104). The maps clearly seemed to be working, and temperance groups like the United Kingdom Alliance even provided local chapters with publication templates for maps, alongside their other templates for various anti-alcohol materials (92).

Yet Butler's extensive analysis demonstrates that this appearance was deceptive. Temperance advocates may have felt that drink maps were successful, but when Butler examines the political and social impact of these maps, and their efficacy in curbing the accessibility of alcohol, they are found wanting. Chapter five, "Drink Maps in Manchester & Norwich," follows one of these campaigns over an extended period of time. Three successive drink maps of the city of Norwich demonstrate the limited success the movement enjoyed in meeting its goals. The first publication was released in 1878 and was likely the first temperance map to explicitly use the words "Drink Map" in the title and on the map itself. While earlier maps may have been known colloquially as drink maps, the official titles instead used words like "licenses," "public houses," or "spirit dealers." The second Norwich map was published fourteen years later, in 1892, and eleven years after that, the final map was published in 1903. Interestingly, that third map was the last of its kind to utilize the label "Drink Map" on its face, signifying the end of the era (128–134). Each of the three maps records the number of licenses that had been granted and denied in the city, and allows us to see that any decrease in the number of public houses was, at best, marginal. It would seem that the

temperance movement, even with effective tactical help from the maps, was ultimately unable to significantly reduce alcohol consumption in Norwich. This analysis lends strong evidence in support of Butler's overall argument that drink maps were not particularly effective.

Butler's thorough analysis of Victorian drink maps—supported with detailed research on the legal and social context surrounding them—establishes a strong argument, grounded in the existing artifacts. The primary limitation of this work, Butler notes, lies in the relatively small number of drink maps that survive. Although many of these maps were published in editions of thousands, only about twenty-five are known to exist today (161)—a small number, but one that allows her to review and analyze all the available source material. She compensates, in part, for this limitation by utilizing other types of archival sources, like Royal Commission reports, legal declarations, newspapers, and letters to provide supporting information. Somewhat disappointingly, Butler does not provide an account of her investigative process for discovering and collecting either the drink maps or the supplemental materials, but the absence of this methodological information does not subtract from the scope and persuasiveness of the research conducted.

Although there is a substantial amount of literature and scholarship about historical alcohol abolition and temperance movements, there has been a major lacuna in academic discourse about drink maps specifically. Butler's analysis fills a gap in cartographic scholarship about the history, application, and impact of drink maps—weighing the significance and role of drink maps as a tool for social change within the context of the Victorian temperance movement. The research presented shows how Victorian drink maps served as a strategic method of persuasion for social and legal change.

Drink Maps in Victorian Britain is an interesting, important, and insightful read—laying out cartographic connections to, among other things, social and legal dynamics. The textual information, descriptions, and analysis are accompanied by images of drink maps, advertisements, and other illustrations from the era—drawing the reader's interest and building upon the literary experience with visual appeal and pertinent context. The work brings to the fore a little known but important historical example of cartography applied as persuasion and strategy. Finally, it makes insightful connections between societal issues, governance, and the role maps and mapmaking played in Victorian Britain. Butler's research is compelling, and the presentation draws in the reader. Concluding with a call for readers to be on the lookout for any unidentified drink maps, or as Butler affectionately phrases it, "hidden treasures" (161), an invitation is extended for continued scholarly development on this topic.