

The Barmaid Problem in Britain (1880 -1920)

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Abstract

This paper examines the debates surrounding attempts to restrict the career of barmaids in Victorian hotels. It argues that the early attempts to prohibit barmaids were largely concerned with labour issues. Male hotel workers feared the incursions of female labour in the bar more than in other hotel occupations due to the pivotal role of the bar in developing careers in hotel management. It is by understanding Victorian attitudes to wealth creation that we can gain insights into the development of rigid hierarchical structure of labour in the modern hotel.

In the late nineteenth century, the barmaid emerged as a social problem in Britain and in the colonies. By the turn of the century, women were beginning to make inroads into non-traditional occupations. In preference to the arduous work of domestic service, women were entering secretarial and administrative occupations in relatively large numbers. Accompanying these changes, public discourse focused on what constituted appropriate work for women. Curiously, certain types of hotel work were deemed to be unsuitable for women while other types of hotel work were considered highly suitable for women. By the mid nineteenth century the barmaid had been defined as a "social problem. " Most attempts to explain the barmaid problem have focused on the moral and social issues, linking the debate with the rise of the temperance movement.¹ To understand why the barmaid was the focus of intense public scrutiny, it is necessary to explore the changes occurring in the hotel industry at the time of the debate. This paper argues that the barmaid issue was as much concerned with labour-supply considerations as it was with social issues. Male hotel workers embarked on a deliberate campaign to secure exclusive rights to the higher status, higher paid positions within the bar. Women were to be confined to lesser positions in the back-of-the-house.

Arguably, women's role in the preparation and service of food and beverage made them particularly suited to hotel work. In fact the early history of inn-keeping in Britain highlights a long tradition of women occupying key roles as brewers and innkeepers.² By the mid nineteenth century, this traditional female role was seriously threatened. Given that the discourse surrounding the barmaid occurred at a time when the hotel itself was undergoing social transformation, the debate should illuminate the social roles of employees.

Numerous attempts to control women's participation rates in the hotel industry occurred between 1880 and 1908. Following several unsuccessful attempts to prohibit hotels from employing female bar staff, reformers focused on controlling hotel work through limitations on working hours and conditions. Curiously, the legislation almost exclusively dealt with barmaids. Despite persistent debate about the appropriateness of table service as a career for women, there were no parallel attempts to introduce legislation to control waitresses or any other hotel work for women. At the national level regulatory reform met with limited success. Two bills introduced in Parliament in 1896 and 1908³ were both defeated narrowly. At the regional level, however,

¹ Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp 45 -56

² Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* contains a detailed discussion of brewing as a female role during the middle ages.

³ *Bill to Limit the Hours of Employment of Women as Bar Assistants*, 1896 (203), VII, 667 and *Bill to Restrict the Employment of Barmaids*, 1906 (345). This bill was never presented but was eventually subsumed under the *Licensing Act* (1908) in Clause 36

attempts to curtail women's participation were somewhat more successful. In Glasgow, for example, the non-employment of barmaids was made a condition of license renewal from around 1890 so that by the turn of the century the barmaid was practically unknown in those regions.⁴ Similar prohibitions were exercised in Manchester.⁵ In the colonies, especially in New Zealand and Australia, similar initiatives met with mixed success.

There are two distinctive features of the public debates surrounding female hotel employees that are worthy of further investigation. Firstly, the focus of statutory reform was on front-of-the-house positions.⁶ Consequently waiters, waitresses and bar attendants came under close scrutiny whereas back-of-the-house positions such as book-keepers, chambermaids, scullery maids, pantry maids and domestic usefals were virtually ignored. Secondly, the barmaid was perceived as a more serious social problem than her counterpart, the waitress. In spite of only marginal success in efforts to prohibit the barmaid, the issue persisted on the public agenda for more than three decades. Why, then, did the barmaid come in for a disproportionate amount of public criticism while her sisters in other avenues of hotel work escaped attention? What can the position of the barmaid tell us about the more general aspects of gender relations in Victorian work-places?

The origins of the modern barmaid can be traced to the early nineteenth century when the modern hotel was emerging.⁷ This was a transitional period for the public house. Small neighbourhood taverns which had once served a regular local clientele gave way to grander premises serving a casual, transient trade. Originally indistinguishable from the private home, the exterior of a modern hotel began to adopt a commercial-looking facade. Hotel interiors, too, were transformed away from the intimate parlour reminiscent of a private home, to the more impersonal space. The large open taproom of the past was slowly being replaced by a solid bar-

⁴ Mrs Margaret Mc Donald, Joint Committee on Employment of Barmaids commissioned by the National Union of Women's Workers in a letter to the *Times*, 7 February, 1903. Many of the Select Committees and Royal Commissions also refer to the success of Glasgow and Manchester in restricting womens' employment behind the bar.

⁵ References to Manchester are vague

⁶ Front of the house is a common expression in the hotel industry to refer to those staff who experience significant levels of customer contact in their work. In modern hotels, of the house positions carry higher social status and career opportunities than back of the house positions.

⁷ The term hotel is used in generic sense throughout this paper. There were in fact, a number of distinct types of retailers of alcoholic beverages: alehouses, inns, taverns, lodging houses and gin shops. Each had its own clientele and particular style. By the mid nineteenth century the demarcations were beginning to decline but strong regional variations remained. See Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History* esp. Chs 12-14 for a detailed analysis.

counter which separated customers and staff. The advent of the bar-counter was a significant innovation in hotels since it separated hotel space into public and private. This distinction soon became institutionalised as 'front of the house' and 'back of the house.'

As part of the modernisation process, the division of labour was also undergoing change. In traditional hotels, labour remained functionally unspecialised. A female employee was more likely to be a "maid servant" carrying out a range of duties including cooking, serving and cleaning, although her duties were inevitably confined to indoors.⁸ A male employee, meanwhile was expected to sell home brewed ale in the streets as well as on the premises in order to boost his master's takings.⁹ Not only did the advent of the bar-counter, separate customers and staff, but it also facilitated job specialisation. Servants and chamber-maids remained in the back of the house while the barmaid and waitress specialised in customer service in the front-of-the house.

As the size of the pub was enlarged, districts could no longer support the proliferation of corner pubs. Trade became increasingly competitive and many houses failed to survive. Natural attrition, however, failed to reduce the number of pubs significantly and by the late nineteenth century there was a serious oversupply problem in the larger towns. In order to survive, professional hotel management skills and innovative competitive strategies were required. The barmaid, herself, provided one such competitive weapon. It soon became sound managerial practice to employ attractive barmaids as a lure to entice customers. It was in this context that the barmaid emerged as a social problem.

Many contemporaries commented on the good looks of barmaids they had encountered. In the 1860s Munby, while walking through London, looked into a hotel window and observed "two barmaids, of superior aspect; quiet young women, dressed in ladylike fashion, .. pouring out gin as fast as they could."¹⁰ As early as the 1820s, many customers were drawn to Thompson's Hotel of Holborn Hill to scrutinise "four handsome, sprightly and neatly dressed young females, but of modest deportment."¹¹ Billy Holland's barmaids contests provided steady publicity during the 1860s.¹² Trade officials, for their part consistently disputed barmaid's abilities to attract trade,

⁸ Rural hotels with a small staff complement continued to exhibit relatively unspecialised labour. For example one hotelkeeper noted that "in a house hovering between a public house and a hotel...[an assistant] would do a little book-keeping, a little still room maid business, and have to serve customers." *Select Committee on Shop Hours*, p. 139

⁹ Peter Clark, *op cit*, Ch 12

¹⁰ D.Hudson (ed), *Munby: man of Two Worlds*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 279

¹¹ Quoted in Peter Bailey, "The Victorian Barmaid as a Cultural Prototype," *Gender and History*, vol 2, no. 2 1990, p.151

arguing instead that the barmaid was a better worker than her male counterpart.

Hotel work provided a popular source of employment for young women from a variety of backgrounds. Many preferred the bar to domestic service, governessing or factory work. Many were the daughters of publicans; others came from retailing families; even clergymen's daughters found their way to the bar.¹³ By the end of the century, the shift away from domestic service was demonstrable and of great concern to the upper middle classes who relied on a ready supply of cheap labour.

A number of aspects of bar work made it more appealing than employment in factories or domestic service. The work was not physically strenuous. The work environment was attractive. Wages were marginally higher than domestic servants. A barmaid could generally expect to earn 10 -15s per week while a manageress earned 12 -38 s per week.¹⁴ The real difference in wages arose in the practice of tipping. Most barmaids expected to more than double their wages from gratuities or gifts. The practice of treating barmaids to drinks was widespread, although not condoned by many publicans. Nevertheless barmaids found ways to get around house rules on treating. One barmaid noted that

if a glass of wine is offered, a girl may ask to have a box of chocolates instead, and [these]... are resold to the manageress, so that treating is really a gift of money.¹⁵

Gifts of clothing or substantial discounts on clothing from clients in the retail trade were highly valued by barmaids. Most hotel staff received one week's annual leave with continuance of salary.¹⁶ Virtually all barmaids lived in and received free board and lodging in addition to their wages. Unlike her sisters in domestic service, the barmaid's free time was her own. Publicans noted "considerable demand from young girls for positions in [their] houses"¹⁷ while the middle classes were complaining of the servant problem. It is hardly surprising that girls were abandoning domestic service in favour of the bar. It afforded them relative autonomy at work, better pay and better conditions.

¹² Emily Soldene, *My Theatrical and Musical Recollections*, Downy London, 1897 quoted in Peter Bailey, *op cit*, p.151

¹³ Orme, *Report on Conditions*, 1894 p.209; see also *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892, pp 360-1 for a discussion of the parentage of girls

¹⁴ Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p.204

¹⁵ Eliza Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p.204

¹⁶ Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p. 206

¹⁷ *Select Committee on the Shop Hours Bill*, 1892,p. 139; p.142

At the risk of idealising the barmaid's conditions, it should be noted that the hours were relatively long. Most bar attendants worked a split shift, to use modern parlance. Despite wide variations in customs of individual hotels, it is possible to identify a generalised picture.¹⁸ Shifts began when the bar opened between 6 and 9 o'clock in the morning and ended at the close of trade around midnight. In most hotels, bar attendants were expected to be on duty for the entire shift seven days per week. In larger hotels, where multiple bar attendants were employed, the early shift was rotated amongst the employees so that everyone had an opportunity to start late. All staff were entitled to three meal breaks of forty minutes to one hour's duration as well as one hour for 'dressing' at mid morning. In addition, most staff rested for three to four hours during the afternoon when trade was quiet, although employers expected them to forgo their break in the event of a busy trade. A half day off per week and one free Sunday per month was also common. The 'relay system' where teams of barmaids changed shift after eight to ten hours was uncommon and confined to the larger hotels such as Spiers and Ponds¹⁹ and the railway refreshment rooms. Barmaids in small hotels and rural hotels tended to work longer hours than girls in larger houses. The average barmaid worked around 70 hours per week²⁰ A higher figure of one hundred and five hours per week was frequently cited as the norm for bar staff.²¹ The long hours worked by hotel employees was a major grievance for both men and women alike.

Many licensed victuallers preferred women as bar attendants. As one employer noted, women are better attendants than men; they are not so expensive; they are not so clumsy; they are not so wasteful; they do not break so many things; men are liable to drink; men are liable to other vices, such as betting and other things that

¹⁸ This is a composite picture derived from a variety of evidence *including Select Committee on Shop Hours Bill*, 1892; *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892; Eliza Orme, *Report on Conditions of Work of Barmaids, Waitresses and Book-keepers Employed in Hotels, Restaurants, Public Houses, and Other Places of Refreshment*, 1893-4

¹⁹ Evidence given by J. Ellis, Secretary of Spiers and Pond's Hotel Group to *Select Committee on Shop Hours*, 1892, pp 145-152

²⁰ Eliza Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p.203

²¹ Mrs Margaret Mc Donald, in a letter to the *Times*, 7 February, 1903 claimed that 98 to 103 hours was the norm for London barmaids: rural barmaids were thought to work longer hours again; Mr Edward Short and Mr Charles Tees in evidence before the *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892, p. 359 and p 362 ; letter signed by 40 individuals to *Times*, December 12, 1907; Mr E. Whitewall in evidence before the *Select Committee on Intemperance*, 1878 also suggested that in excess of 100 hours was the norm for barmaids. Interestingly the figure of 105 hours corresponds with the hotels maximum hours of trade permitted under the Act. Hence, there was an assumption that bar staff worked without a break as long as the hotel was open for business.

are a danger in that occupation.²²

It is difficult to establish precise participation rates for female hotel workers. The precise numbers of barmaids will probably never be known. The 1901 census mentioned a figure of 27,701.²³ Industry representatives repeatedly argued for a the higher figure of 80,000 to 100,000 girls. Given that barmaids only constituted a small percentage of the female work-force, it is surprising that the barmaid question generated such heated debate.

Barmaids' conditions first came to the attention of authorities from two independent sources. The Early Closing Association pressed the Select Committee on Shop Hours Bill to restrict the hours of women and young persons to 74 hours per week.²⁴ The question of regulating hotel hours only emerged in the early twentieth century. Coincidentally, the hours question and the barmaid problem were debated simultaneously so that the two issues became intertwined. Pubs had been ignored by both Shop Hours legislation and Factories Acts due to their position. An anomaly industrial relations, the public house did not fit within conventional classifications of either shop or factory. As service providers, pubs had not come under the jurisdiction of factory inspectors. Consequently the hours of employment remained unregulated until well into the twentieth century. Real or imagined, there was a general perception that barmaids worked excessively long hours and the Early Closing Association wanted to bring hotel workers conditions in line with other industries.

Three months prior to the Shop Hours enquiry, representatives from the Barmen's Union gave evidence on the excessive hours worked by barmaids to the Royal Commission on Labour.²⁵ The barmen argued for barmaids' hours to be reduced to 60 hours per week. It is significant that this figure is considerably lower than that recommended by the Early Closing Association and lower than women expected to work in other industries. The Barmen's Union was a new organisation, struggling to obtain members and in danger of expiry.²⁶ The Secretary of the Union, Mr Charles Tees was of the view that the bar was totally unsuitable work for women.²⁷

²² *Select Committee on Shop Hours*, p. 138

²³ Quoted in Times, 12 December, 1907. There is reason to suspect that this figure may have been under-represented since in small hotels, particularly those in rural centres labour remained unspecialised and many employees may have listed themselves as domestics Miss Orme also reports on the publicans habit of listing all staff as *domestic servants*. *Report on Conditions of Work*, p. 197

²⁴ *Select Committee on the Shop Hours Bill*, 1892 p. 71

²⁵ *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892, pp 358-364

²⁶ *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892, pp 358- 59; p.363

²⁷ Mr C. Tees in evidence before *Royal Commission on Labour* stated on three separate occasions that the "most definitely did not consider it suitable." See p. 363,

He argued that the long hours of standing were dangerous to their morality and good conduct.²⁸ Although membership of his union was open to women, it is hardly surprising that women preferred to join the rival Barmaid's Union.²⁹ In light of Tees' status as a barman and inside knowledge of the trade, his evidence on working conditions must have been particularly damaging for barmaids.

Edward Short, a barrister and friend of Tees, claimed to have long standing interest in the affairs of barmen and barmaids and gave evidence that long hours of standing caused exhaustion and "acute physical agony, and so they [barmaids] take to drink." ³⁰ Both witnesses agreed that the bar was unfit work for women and were desirous of closing that avenue of employment to women altogether.³¹ However, if they failed to obtain a total prohibition on employment of barmaids, this pair had a contingency plan. Their stated object was to reduce barmaids hours to 60 hours per week.³² In addition, they recommended the implementation of the relay system for women.

The evidence given by Tees and Shortt is inconclusive and contradictory. Tees pressed the point that bar attendants worked an excessive 105 hours per week. Yet, when questioned by the commission on the hours of barmen, he became elusive. For example, when pressed on this point he spoke of barmen's afternoon breaks and half day holidays but would not concede that these applied to barmaids.³³ He claimed an intimate knowledge of barmaids' conditions in spite of the fact that in fifteen years' experience, he had rarely worked in a house with women, preferring to work in male-only establishments.³⁴ Despite the claims that his union represented both sexes, Mr Tees had been unable to persuade any barmaids to give evidence at the Commission. Instead, his colleague, Mr Edward Shortt was brought forward to represent

²⁸ Shortt and Tees were interviewed jointly by the Commission. Their evidence is so intertwined it is difficult at times to disentangle it. Consequently, I have only used those statements which can be directly attributed to one witness. Shortt was somehow connected with a Miss Gough, a temperance reformer, who ran a home for barwomen who desired to leave the trade.

²⁹ *Royal Commission on Labour*, p.359. Note that there are allusions, although hazy, that the Barmaid's Union was more successful than Barmen's Union.

³⁰ *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1892, p.359

³¹ *Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 362

³² *R.C. on Labour*, p.362

³³ *Ibid*, pp, 362 -3

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 363

barmaid's interests since "they [barmaids] had no union secretaries to represent them."³⁵ Yet, in another part of Shorrt's evidence he claimed to be familiar with officials of the emergent Barmaids' Union.³⁶ It is hardly surprising that the Commission were sceptical of their evidence noting the number of contradictions.

That the Barmens' Union should press for ceiling on the hours for barmaids and not for themselves hints at a hidden agenda. The barmen's pressure for maximum hours was in fact, it was a masterpiece of industrial strategy. The sixty hours maximum would force employers to adopt a relay system in order to cover normal trading hours. Thus any hotel employing women would need more staff. However, given that most barmaids lived on premises, few employers would have been able to supply the necessary sleeping quarters to accommodate two shifts of permanent staff.³⁷ Most barmen, on the other hand, did not live-in. Consequently, they would have an advantage over women. Furthermore, reduced hours for barmaids, if adopted, would ameliorate the wages differential between men and women, causing female to be a less attractive proposition.³⁸

That a reduction of hours could lead to the potential displacement of females had been widely discussed within industry circles.³⁹ Publicans believed that they could still manage with one shift of girls if hours were reduced to 74.⁴⁰ This figure did not suit Tees and the barmen. In order to make employment of barmaids unattractive to hotel-keepers, Tees argued for the substantially lower figure of 60 hours as a ceiling for females. It was indeed fortunate for barmaids in Britain, that Tees and his cohorts were unable to persuade officials of the merits of their claim. Maximum hours would almost certainly have effected the demise of the barmaid.

Barmen had good reason to fear that their jobs were threatened by female labour. During the Crimean war, many hotel-keepers had begun to employ women to make good the losses of male labour⁴¹ and by the late nineteenth century numerous publicans showed a distinct preference for female labour.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 1892, p.359

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 358

³⁷ *Select Committee on Shop Hours*, 1892, p.136

³⁹ Tees evidence was heard in December, 1892 while numerous licensed victuallers gave their testimony to the Select Committee in May of that year.

⁴⁰ *Select Committee On Shop Hours*, 1892 p. 96

⁴¹ Peter Bailey, *op cit*, p. 151

As the specialisation of labour progressed, rigid social hierarchies, based on a sexual division of labour emerged in hotels. Assistant commissioner, Miss Eliza Orme noted that "barmaids and waitresses rank higher than waiters or domestic servants... book-keepers are considered socially superior to ordinary barmaids. " ⁴² Within the ranks of barmaids, a further sexual division of labour occurred with women exclusively serving in saloons and better class of bars while barmen attended to the bottle and jug departments. Miss Orme also noted the tendency "in the roughest class of public-houses [barmaids were] being replaced by barmen. "⁴³ One witness described the division of labour to the Shop Hours enquiry;

if you go into the department which has sawdust on floor and a spittoon in the corner you will find a man serving; if you go into another which has a cloth on the floor and a cushioned seat you will find it is almost exclusively the case that a barmaid attends to that department. ⁴⁴

Barmaids not only enjoyed superior working conditions than barmen, they served a better class of customer and therefore had access to higher wages through gifts and gratuities.

Barmaids generally were not expected to do the heavy work in the bar. ⁴⁵ At the close of trade, heavy cleaning and lifting was carried out by barmen while barmaids performed the administrative duties associated with managing the bar. They would write up inventories and balance cash registers. Barmaids were given a great deal of autonomy in running their bars.

Provided that barmaids generated a constant source of trade, publicans left them to perform their duties without rigid supervision. Thus, barmaids learned a great many business skills and developed administrative competencies. Indeed, many barmaids were able to develop careers as manageresses of public houses or departments within the house. Miss Orme interviewed hundreds of manageresses who gained their position after serving as a barmaid for a time. One publican gave evidence of the confidence and the control over money entrusted to barmaids.⁴⁶ It appears that it was a custom of the trade for proven barmaids to be offered positions of authority

⁴² Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p. 210

⁴³ Orme, E., *Report on Conditions*, p. 198

⁴⁴ *Select Commission on Shop Hours*, p.70

⁴⁵ *Select Commission on Shop Hours*, p. 137

⁴⁶ *Select Committee on Shop Hours*, 1892 p. 139

in the hotel after a suitable period of service.⁴⁷ Similarly a barmaid, upon her marriage might be invited along with her husband to manage an hotel.⁴⁸ An apprenticeship serving in a better class of bar was a precondition for a hotel management career. The prevalence of barmaids in superior bars limited the opportunities for barmen to develop careers.

Parallel efforts to control female access to other hotel departments were unnecessary since they did not lead to careers in the same way as the bar. There is some evidence the feminisation of the hotel dining room was already well in place before the barmaid was defined as an agenda item. Moreover dining room staff were subject to rigid supervision and control unknown in the bar.⁴⁹ The lower status afforded waitresses reflected the relative levels of autonomy. Similarly back-of-the-house, with the exception of book-keepers was viewed as dead end with respect to career development. In a particularly revealing statement given to the Select Committee, one publican noted that back of the house employees were "looked upon as domestic servants."⁵⁰ Like domestic servants, back-of-the-house employees came under the watchful supervision of the publican's family. In addition, they were expected to be 'on-call' at all hours and like servants in private homes might be expected to attend to the publican's children as required. Several publicans stressed that any legislation to reduce hours should only apply to barmaids and not to domestic servants. Clearly, the barmaid occupied a unique position in the hotel. The pivotal role of the bar combined with the barmaid's ability to attract custom provides the key to understanding the barmen's concerns.

Why should the bar take centre stage in the hotel industry? At least part of the explanation can be found in Victorian attitudes to the economic contribution of services such as hotels. As a provider of community services; lodging, provision of food and beverage, entertainment, recreation, relaxation and a refuge from the frantic pressures of work. The benefits provided by hotels are largely ephemeral and intangible. Post-industrial England placed little value on the provision of services while it placed a high value on manufacturing. Wealth was defined as the excess value of production after the cost of labour. Victorian economic theorists stressed the importance of tangible goods in the creation of wealth. J.S. Mill summed up Victorian attitudes in the following statement :

When a tailor makes a coat and sells it, there is the transfer of the price from the

⁴⁷ Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p. 210

⁴⁸ Orme, *Report on Conditions*, pp 210 -212 cites many cases where women have been offered managerial roles after marriage

⁴⁹ This hypothesis is at best tentative. Evidence from Australia at the same time notes the rigid supervision of dining room staff. Photographic material also hints an aura of rigidity. Further research is required to compare bar work and dining room work places.

⁵⁰ *Select Committee on Shop Hours*, 1892, p. 137; pp 142-3

customer to the tailor, and a coat besides which did not previously exist; but what is gained by an actor is a mere transfer from the spectator's funds to his, leaving no article of wealth for the spectator's indemnification.⁵¹

Given that hotels produced few products, their economic contribution was undervalued. However, hotels did have two important centres of production; namely the kitchen and the bar. By virtue of their ability to contribute to the economy, the bar and the kitchen were afforded higher socio-economic status. Employees' status derives, at least in part, from their relationship to wealth creation. Waitresses were accorded lower status because they were one step removed from the actual production of food. The bar was accorded higher status since it sold tangible commodities. The only apparent anomaly was the position of the book-keeper who "was socially superior to barmaids and waitresses."⁵² Attached to the accommodation division, book-keepers provides pure services. However, their control over a hotel's financial resources may have contributed to their social standing. In addition, book-keepers enjoyed opportunities to earn gratuities by forwarding mail and receiving business messages for guests.⁵³

It is significant that the two areas of the hotel which experienced overt resistance to the incursions of female labour are the bar and the kitchen. It is also significant that the earliest hotel schools in Britain provided courses in bar management only to men.⁵⁴ As the modern hotel emerged, it was essential that the men carved out their niche in higher status positions.

The barmaid problem was not finally resolved until 1908 when the relevant clause of the Licensing Bill was defeated. The ultimate debate was less concerned with labour-related issues and far more concerned with social and moral issues. Whereas the barmaids 'immorality' had once been seen as a symptom of long hours; morality came to be identified as the central problem in its own right. This debate, largely carried out in the pages of the *Times*, borrowed heavily from earlier evidence. The entrance of the temperance movement as principal reform agitators tended to cloud the original issues which were concerned with status and gender relations in the hotel industry.

The barmaid debate, however, is interesting in that it illuminates the modern distinction between front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house positions. Back-of-house occupations, are lower status

⁵¹ J.S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, p. 51

⁵² Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p. 205

⁵³ Orme, *Report on Conditions*, p.205

⁵⁴ *The Vigilante*, 13.9. 1939; 1.7. 1932; 7.5.1937

and more poorly paid since they are not associated production. These are the pure service positions which support production but do not, in themselves, generate income. Front-of-house positions, however, generate income and are directly linked to producing the service product. Careers in hotel management generally grew out of front-of-house experience. Bar experience was especially desirable since it exposed employees to every facet of hotel operations, from customer service, marketing, production and cash management. The bar, therefore, was central to hotel operations. For this reason, it was at the heart of a territorial dispute between men and women.

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NOTES ON BIBLIOGRAPHIC METHOD

Barmaids did not prove to be an easy topic to research. Standard indexes such as Guide to Parliamentary Reports and Times Index were consulted and yielded very little. It was necessary to use ingenuity, guesswork and exhaustive scrutiny of government publications to locate relevant material.

During the process, many sidetracks were followed uneventfully. For example, the Guide to Parliamentary reports mentioned a Bill to Restrict Barmaids dated 1906. The Hansards for this year were consulted and nothing was found. The Hansards for that decade were consulted exhaustively; a painstaking process and no record of the bill was found. It was only when the liquor control statutes were consulted that the true story emerged. This bill was never presented in its original form but was subsumed in the Licensing Act (1908) clause 36. (Incidentally, this was supposed to be consolidating legislation and therefore no new material should have been incorporated.) Other excursions down side tracks, all leading to dead ends, are too numerous to mention. Some were caused by incorrect dates/references in secondary sources; others can be attributed to my own naivete as a researcher. Because, this essay opened up a new field of enquiry, there was little choice but read all related legislation for the entire review period.

In the final analysis, it became apparent that there were two distinct debates. The first (1880-1894) was primarily concerned with labour supply issues and the second (1903 -1908) dealt with moral/social issues. However, for reasons of space, it was decided to concentrate on the nineteenth century debate.