
18.3 Drink and farming in the modern world

Room 107

*Convener: John Chartres**Chair: TBA*

A three-paper session exploring drink production and perceived threats to food supply in early modern and modern Britain; the privatisation of common lands and the development of viticulture in revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France (Dr Noele Plack); and wines, brands and consumers in the New World wine industry –1880-1914 (Prof. James B. Simpson).

18.31 John Chartres – Drink versus bread and feedstuffs in Britain, c.1600–1914

Periodically, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as in previous periods, the principles of the assizes of bread and of ale were invoked in periods of dearth to present the manufacture of beers as threats to the consumer. From the later seventeenth century, there was an additional perceived threat, in the distilling of spirits, that was rarely seen as a direct threat to human subsistence, at least in England, but was perceived as a danger to the pig producer, and to poultry keepers, and thus an indirect danger to the food supply. The first part of this paper will explore the evidence for these perceptions, and attempt to outline the commitment of potential cornlands to drink production, and thus to evaluate the alleged threat. From the middle years of the nineteenth century, in some sectors earlier, Britain externalised elements of its food supply, and this included increasing quantities of Caribbean sugar, which were fed into traditional drink industries, reducing dependence upon home-produced malting barley, and changing market conditions for many barley growers. If alcoholic drink had been a genuine threat to the nation's bread before the 1830s, it had ceased to be such from the middle of the century. As the UK globalised its food and drink markets.

John Chartres is Professor of Social and Economic History at the University of Leeds, current President of the British Agricultural History Society, former Secretary and Editor of the *Agricultural History Review*. Publications include contributions to the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, volumes V, VI, and VII; 'Leeds, Regional Distributive Centre of Luxuries in the Eighteenth Century', *Northern Hist.*, XXXVI (2000); 'The Eighteenth-century English Inn: a Transient "Golden Age"?' in Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty, eds, *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (2002); 'England: Early Modern Period', in Joel Mokyr, ed, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Economic History* (2003), II; 'Spirits in the North-east? Gin and Other Vices in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Helen Berry and Jeremy Gregory, eds, *Creating and Consuming Culture in North-East England, 1660-1830* (2004); 'A special crop and its markets in the eighteenth century: the case of Pontefract's Liquorice', in R. W. Hoyle, ed., *People, Landscape and Alternative Agriculture: Essays for Joan Thirsk (AgHR, Supplement Series 3, 2004)*; 'Foodstuffs Trade, Early' in J. B. Hattendorf, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Maritime History* (2007); and 'Producers, Crops and Markets, 1600-1800', in J. Broad, ed., *A common agricultural heritage? Revising French and British Rural divergence (AgHR, Supplement series 5, 2009)*.

18.32 Noelle Plack – Common land, wine and the French Revolution, c.1789–1820

Recent revisionist history has questioned the degree of social and economic change attributable to the French Revolution. This paper will test these ideas by examining the Revolutionary, Napoleonic and Restoration attempts to transform the tenure of communal land in one region of southern France, the department of the Gard. The time span is significant. For although relatively few legal divisions of common land occurred in the region during the 1790s, the Revolutionary attempts to privatise common land unleashed a torrent of illegal partitions and usurpations. These actions, which were primarily undertaken by poorer peasants, would later be checked and regularised by laws passed by Napoleon and Louis XVIII. By analysing the results of the legislative attempts to privatise common land, this paper will also highlight how the Revolution's agrarian policy profoundly affected French rural society and the economy. Not only did some members of the rural community, mainly smallholding peasants, increase their land holdings, but

certain sectors of agriculture were also transformed. The expansion of commercial viticulture in the region, which includes the *Côtes-du-Rhône*, was a direct result of the privatisation of common land in this period. This finding is important as it sheds light on the growth which occurred in viticulture in the south of France before the monocultural revolution of the 1850s. It is also significant because it testifies to the considerable impact that the Revolution had on rural socio-economic structures.

Noelle Plack has a PhD from the University of Birmingham, 2004. She is currently Reader in French History at Newman University College, Birmingham, UK. Her research interests are the French Revolution in its rural dimension and her current project seeks to explore how wine was produced, traded and consumed during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic decades. Her publications include: *Common Land, Wine and the French Revolution: Rural Society and Economy in Southern France, c.1789-1820* (2009); 'Making and Ending the French Revolution: Nobility, Bourgeoisie and "the People"' *European History Quarterly*, 39:1 (2009); 'Collective Agricultural Practices and the French State: Aspects of the Rural Code from the eighteenth to the twentieth century' in N. Vivier, *The State and Rural Societies: policy and education in Europe 1750-2000* (2008); 'Drinking the Fruits of Revolution: Common Land Privatisation and the Expansion of Viticulture in Languedoc, c.1789-1820' *European Review of History* 13:2 (2006); 'Agrarian Reform and Ecological Change during the Ancien Régime: Land Clearance, Peasants and Viticulture in the Province of Languedoc', *French History*, 19:2 (2005).

18.33 James Simpson – Wine, brands and consumers: vertical coordination in the New World wine industry, 1880–1914

The wine industry was organised very differently in the Old World and New World in 1914. Growing conditions for grapes were consistently more favourable in the New World, and this led to the appearance of specialist family grape growers, which permitted wine producers to exploit the increasing economies of scale to be found in the winery. This in turn allowed the production of relatively large batches of homogenous table wines, which could be sold under brand names. The paper looks at the rapidly changing wine industry in Argentina, Australia and California, and argues that an important factor to explain the major organisation differences in the three countries was the nature of market demand for wine. In both Australia and California producers had to develop new markets among consumers who were accustomed to drinking beer or spirits rather than wines, while in Argentina brands had limited success because consumers wanted wines which were cheap and with a high alcoholic strength, attributes which offered producers limited stimulus to develop brands.

James Simpson (JS) has a PhD from LSE. He is now Professor of Economic History at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. He has published papers in the leading economic history journals, and is author of *Spanish agriculture: the long siesta, 1765-1965* (1995, Spanish edition, 1997), and *Creating Wine: the Emergence of a World Industry, 1840-1914* (forthcoming September 2011).