

The Tyrant of the Bar: The 1902 Glasgow Licensing Courts and the Barmaid
Question

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ABSTRACT

In 1902, the Glasgow Licensing Court magistrates declared that any establishment employing barmaids would lose their license unless they let go of their female employees. This dissertation provides a detailed analysis of the events in Glasgow. It places them in the context of the historical study of women's rights at the beginning of the twentieth century.

This study touches on the subjective aspects of immorality and the legal methods available in the period. It examines the debates and arguments made surrounding the abolition of a profession. Much of the scholarship around this event relies heavily on the information provided by the archives of the temperance movement. This dissertation examines this knowledge by incorporating the voices of legal dissent and the work of other campaigners and by reviewing the people affected by the legislation.

The focus on Glasgow highlights the complexities of the Barmaid Question, and several accepted myths are expelled. While the magistrates did restrict licenses, there was not a direct ban on the barmaid, and it was possible to find women working in the bar trade in Glasgow post-1902. This does not mean there were no severe consequences to the recommendations, but these are assessed to create a fuller picture.

The work repositions the women in the bar trade back into their history. Still, it also uncovers the real driving force behind the Barmaid Question within the social purity movement and the women campaigners therein. It is, therefore, a legislative history, a work history and a women's history.

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STATEMENT

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

1. Introduction

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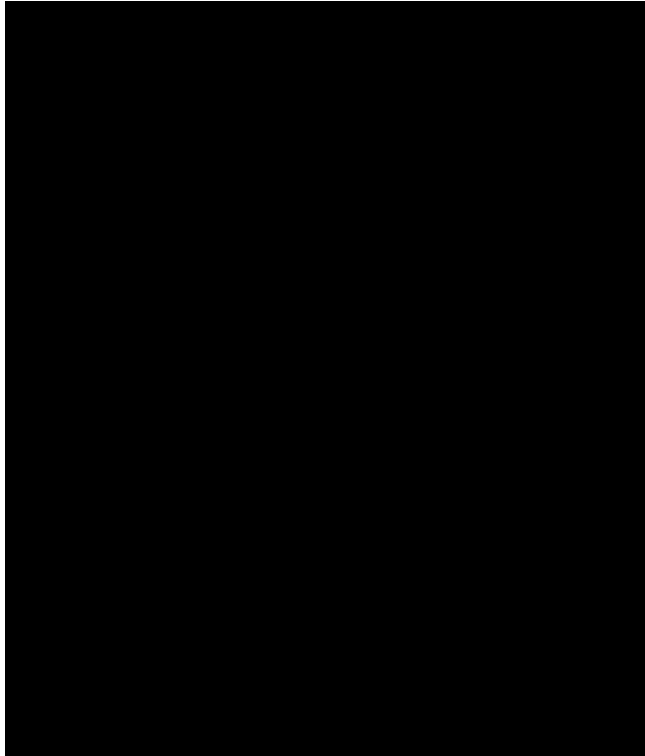


Image 1 – The Tyrant of the Bar (*Weekly Dispatch*, p.4, 17 January 1904)

In 1904, the *Weekly Dispatch* published an article on the Barmaid Question, a debate about the campaign to restrict women working in the bar trade.¹ The article contained a cartoon image entitled The Tyrant of the Bar (above), which shows a woman pouring a glass of beer behind a bar while two perturbed men look on; she is dressed in the typical 1900s style. The joke was about the dichotomy of the image of the barmaid discussed by those who wished to abolish her work and the actuality of the woman behind the bar. However, neither 1904 nor the London barmaids interviewed by the *Weekly Dispatch* began the Barmaid Question. It started in Glasgow in 1902 when, on the seventh day of the Licensing

¹ *Weekly Dispatch*, p.4, 17 January 1904.

Courts, the magistrates' declared that no license would be granted to premises that employed barmaids, effectively criminalising women's employment behind the bar.

This work looks at Glasgow and the impact of its use of municipal powers. David Beckingham, the leading historian of this event, states that the Licensing Courts 'are most detailed when addressing things that were going wrong, but by understanding the definition of the exceptional it is possible to understand the everyday'.² Courts are a valuable resource for the voices of the oppressed. The courts show us what is expected of a society within a period of history, but they are of greater value when the rules and regulations change. The everyday experience becomes exceptional with the introduction of new rulings, which start with basic definitions that must then be tried and tested within the courts.

Chapter Two investigates the ideological underpinnings of the campaign to legislate against women in the bar trade, focusing on the historiography of the social purity movement, the arguments of lead campaigners and the leading role Glasgow played in driving these arguments into practicality. The biography and archives of Margaret MacDonald, a female rights campaigner and foremost champion for the abolition of women in the bar trade, are used in conjunction with the arguments that proliferated between newspapers. Through this, it is possible to identify the elements of the profession that abolitionists considered so objectionable to be made illegal (or at least highly restrictive). The term abolitionist is used throughout to distinguish between those who wished to abolish the practice of women working in the bar trade and the temperance

² The University of Nottingham, 'Inspiring People – David Beckingham', <<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/research/inspiring-people/david-beckingham.aspx>> [accessed 5 January 2024].

movement. These campaigners were often connected to the temperance movement, but not every campaigner was, so a term distinct from the temperance term of prohibition is required. The term women in the bar trade is used unless the information applies only to those identified as barmaids; as Chapter Three explores, the terminology about women's work in the bar trade was complex.

Chapter Three looks at the legislative debates over the definitions of women's roles within the bar trade, examining how successful the courts achieved the campaigners of Chapter Two's objectives. Using the newspaper reports of the courts during a new regulation, the ideal of regulation and the shifting definitions via legal challenges allows for an exploration of the everyday world. There is also an advantage of the period to the reporting, via the historiographical concept of the lawyer-reporter article, a report with legal knowledge which reports events without adding opinion.³ Much of the reportage in newspapers under the heading Licensing Courts is lawyer-reporter. The alternative is the lawyer-journalist article, which expresses their legal opinion on events. These are found in the newsholes outside the Licensing Courts columns or in opinion pieces in magazines. This is an advantage to the historian as a whole day's Licensing Court would be reported verbatim in the local newspaper. In this regard, the paper that carried the 1902 Glasgow Licensing Court information was the *Glasgow Herald*.

Chapters Two and Three focus on the arguments for the abolition and its impact in Glasgow; Chapter Four takes these arguments and, using research from the National Records of Scotland, examines how these apply to the women of Glasgow in the 1901

³ Judith Rowbotham, Kim Stevenson and Samantha Pegg, *Crime News In Modern Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

census. The advantage of the events in Glasgow happening in 1902 is that many of the women in the 1901 census described as barmaids were still working in the profession in 1902. The claims of the campaigners and magistrates are challenged by taking a sample of these women and investigating their lives post-1902 via the records available in the genealogical archives. The historiography of the Barmaid Question relies heavily on the information provided by the courts and the abolitionists. This creates a lop-sided view of the debate that marginalises the people most affected by the recommendations and campaigns. Using the National Records of Scotland archives, these women's lives are used to counterbalance the current historiographical narrative.

Localised crime history gives the historian an insight into the lives of working women. This work explores and expands current knowledge about the Barmaid Question. This microhistory provides greater depth to an element of social purity history currently missing from the historiography. The 1902 Barmaid Question was an attempt at a local level to influence a new national social purity debate in the United Kingdom. By grounding it back to Glasgow and investigating deeply into the local sources, it will examine what happens when your job not only becomes illegal but immoral.

2: The Perception of the Barmaid at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

On the Ninth of March 1903, Reverend Oliver Dryer of Glasgow stood before an International Order of Good Templars (IOGT) demonstration in Kirkcaldy and stated before the crowd that ‘No man who had any respect for his daughter would allow her to be employed in a public house’.¹ While it is not surprising that the temperance movement would object to places that served alcohol, by the early 1900s, the focus of the temperance movement was not on alcohol as a product but on those serving it or, more precisely, women serving it. Understanding the reasoning behind this attitude requires understanding feminist philanthropy at the end of the nineteenth century and how its perceptions of gender, class and morality shaped the image of the barmaid. This involves understanding the concept of the social purity movement, comprised of a ‘loose network of campaigning groups, populist, feminist, and nationalist in their political zeal’.² The work of Walkowitz and Bland trace the use of social purity as a philosophical framework for the public and philanthropic endeavours of various groups from the campaign to abolish the Contagious Diseases Act of 1869 through the issues raised by the *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* of 1885 and the implementation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Moving into the 1890s, a shift in ideology, explored by Bland, led to a split approach to promoting social purity, culminating in Josephine Butler’s break with the British Women’s Temperance Association (BWTA).³ The rise of female influence due to the expansion of their political power via the various local government and municipal acts of the late 1890s was parsed through the framework of these groups. Using the concepts that Megan Smitley describes

¹ *Fife Free Press and Kirkcaldy Guardian*, p.3, 14 March 1903.

² Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) Chapter 3. Perlego eBook.

³ Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast, Feminism, Sex and Morality*, (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001).

as legal and moral suasion, the use of legal and didactic means to control society, these predominantly female societies wished to demonstrate the suitability of women (or at least themselves) for complete enfranchisement.⁴ Laite and Caslin join Bland further in looking at the work of the social purity movement post-1910, the concerns over the White Slave trade and the rise and reaction to post-World War One female social emancipation.⁵ However, there is a gap in the historiography of the social purity movement between the late 1890s and the 1910s. The reforming and philanthropic zeal of the various groups were not hibernating in this period; instead, they focused on the barmaid and involved a development of thought in social purity ideology that would provide a forerunner to concerns in post-World War One Britain.

The Social Purity Movement and Glasgow's Role

Key to the Barmaid Question's relationship to the social purity movement is a shift in the 1890s to a new form of repressive vigilance. Identified by Bland in the 1882 writings of Doctor Elizabeth Blackwell, this form of thinking about moral society and the role women play in it would develop into later campaigns of legislation, firstly at the municipal level and then onto the national level. Here, Blackwell is concerned with a way 'of dealing with vice by means of law' and coincides with Smitley's use of moral and legal suasion.⁶ Brand refers to Blackwell's use of the term repressive, which was crucial for the social purity reformers of the late nineteenth century and can be confusing when social purity is

⁴ Megan Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere, Middle-class Women in Civic Life in Scotland c.1870-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009). Perlego eBook.

⁵ Julia Laite, *The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey*, (London: Profile Books, 2021). Samantha Caslin, *Save The Womanhood! Vice, Urban Immorality and Social Control in Liverpool, c. 1900-1976*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

⁶ Elizabeth Blackwell, *Wrong and Right Methods of Dealing with Social Evil, As Shown by English Parliamentary Evidence* (New York: A. Brentano & Co., 1883). p.43.

associated with several ideas termed part of the progressive movement of the period.⁷

However, it is used here to describe laws intended to control the morality of others.

Regarding working-class women, the reformers were fundamentally motivated by the legislation of morality around sexual intercourse, sexuality, and sexual agency. The historiography of the social purity movement focuses entirely on the sex trade, which explains the marginalisation of the Barmaid Question within the analysis. Reading Blackwell shows that the Barmaid Question was just as much part of the social purity campaign as the elimination of brothels and the prosecution of sex workers, through her lauding of Glasgow as the exemplar of progressive municipalism, which ‘includes repressive law, municipal vigilance and organized beneficence’.⁸ Aspinwall's work documents the links between Glasgow and the US Progressive movement. Glasgow was a forerunner in tightening morality in the nineteenth century, pushing the legal boundaries of increased municipal powers to achieve results. This use of ‘municipal regulation... to raise the moral character of the community’ was necessary to the social purity movement as these powers were available politically to women.⁹ While unable to vote in national elections, women in Glasgow had the right to the municipal vote by 1881, reiterated in the UK-wide 1894 Acts, albeit with the conditions that she owned her property and, if married, ‘that a husband and wife shall not both be registered in respect of the same property’.¹⁰

⁷ See the works of David Gutzke, *Pubs and Progressives* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2006); Ian Tyrell, ‘Transatlantic Progressivism in Women’s Temperance and Suffrage in *Britain and Transnational Progressivism* ed. D. Gutzke (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) pp.133-148; and Bernard Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia, Glasgow and The United States 1820-1920*. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984).

⁸ Blackwell, p. 50.

⁹ Blackwell, p. 59.

¹⁰ *Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1894* (57 & 58 Vict. c.58) [Online] <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/57-58/58/contents>> [Accessed 5 January 2024], *Municipal Elections Amendment (Scotland) Act, 1881* (44 & 45 Vict. c.13) [Online] repealed sections available only <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/57-58/58/schedule/1/enacted>> [Accessed 5 January 2024]

These municipal elections allowed voters to create wedge issues that informed the choice of councillors, provosts and magistrates, allowing those with minimum power to control those who influenced the legislation. It should not be surprising for Glasgow to use magistrates' powers to regulate women in the bar trade. At this point, Glasgow had a reputation as 'the Holy Grail, the New Jerusalem for the chivalric reformers'.¹¹ Its use of repressive law had focused on those in the sex trade; it was now time to push the municipal levers further and reform the morality of society by tighter regulation on the bar trade.

The focus on the women working around alcohol was a new development in the role of magistrates regulating the bar trade. At the turn of the twentieth century, magistrates around Scotland engaged in what the *Scots Law Review* described as 'publican baiting', using their legal powers to reduce the number of public houses by rescinding licenses.¹² There had been attempts previously to limit the bar trade before 1902 'to reduce or restrict licences, especially in Glasgow' mainly through the denial of renewals or decision not to approve renovation works.¹³ A system and attitude were in place, with magistrates associated with the temperance movement under the watch of Lord Provost Chisholm making decisions on the Licensing Courts. In the lead-up to 1902, the politics of temperance intertwined with the social purity movement, as discussed by Bland, with a new desire from female temperance followers 'to move their campaign into the *public* sphere'.¹⁴ When they looked at the public sphere and alcohol, they discovered women were already working there, just not in the name of temperance.

¹¹ Aspinwall p.151.

¹² *Scots Law Review and Reports of Cases in the Sheriff Courts of Scotland*, p.145, May 1902.

¹³ *SLR*, p.145, May 1902.

¹⁴ Bland p.111.

The Historiography of the Barmaid Question

Within the historiography, the discussion about the barmaid primarily concerns image and perceptions, with the work of Peter Bailey informing all other interpretations. Bailey's work on parasexuality focuses on the barmaid as a sexual figure, a being which is 'deployed yet contained' and offers 'everything but'.¹⁵ Bailey's analysis has the barmaid as a decorative item, an object of the bar, which diminishes the personhood and agency of the women working in the bar trade. He further solidifies this point with the concept of the physical bar as a 'framing effect' that suggests 'that she herself might be an article for purchase or consumption'.¹⁶ Bailey's turn of the twentieth-century image of the barmaid is of a tantalising figure, out of reach and unknowable. Mullin and Beckingham take on this idea; Mullin offers, however, that there is an essential new distinction in the perception of the barmaid post-1870 through her work on the barmaid in fiction, taking the idea of Bailey further, suggesting a far more sexually dangerous figure who was a 'troubling forward new mode of dissimulation'.¹⁷ Mullin puts forward the idea of the new barmaid, part of a new consort of working-class women working outside the domestic sphere and 'shorthand for thrilling sexual modernity'.¹⁸ Unlike Bailey, Mullin regrounds the barmaid with a sexual agency, although this agency is formed constantly from an outside source. Mullin does not use the barmaid's voice but refers to plays, literature and songs about the barmaid. Beckingham explores the concept of the barmaid as part of the 'landscape of

¹⁵ Peter Bailey, 'Parasexuality and Glamour, The Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype' in *Sexualities in History, A Reader* ed. Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay (London: Routledge, 2002) p.222.

¹⁶ Bailey, p.225.

¹⁷ Katherine Mullin, *Working Girls, Fiction, Sexuality, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 171.

¹⁸ Mullin, p.180.

sociability’, the removal of which helps control the space of the public house.¹⁹ His concerns are with the ‘chronotype’ of the bar, being the ‘spatial geographies’, and how they shift when the barmaid is added or removed.²⁰ Again, The barmaid is considered part of the furniture; however, Beckingham has distinguished the variations in the type of women serving, albeit through the kinds of establishments that a barmaid in Glasgow may appear in, disassociated from her individuality. She is the railway barmaid, the restaurant barmaid or the theatre barmaid. This disassociation is understandable; the barmaid's voice hides in the primary sources, and someone else speaks for or about her. Even when there is a representation, such as this report, often no name is attached.

“You have no idea how hard it is to be pleasing everyone all day long,” remarked one. “But what can we do?” said another to our representative. “It is the only business we know, and this order of the magistrates is a shame”.²¹

It is impossible to tell whether these remarks were said or added as something that a barmaid may say. Only through the courts is there a presentation of the voice of women working in the industry, but even then, expectations and position mediate the words. The Glasgow 1902 Licensing Courts questioned two women about the experiences of the barmaid, but these two women were in charge of the bars in two high-end establishments with one, Miss Morrison, ‘who has been over 15 years in the service’.²² The testimony was for their employers, and while it would reflect how they perceived their industry and the work within the bar trade, it is a sparse account compared to other sources. The

¹⁹ Beckingham, David, ‘Banning the Barmaid: time, space and alcohol licensing in 1900s Glasgow’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 18:2 (2017), 117-136 (p.120).

²⁰ Beckingham, p. 118.

²¹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, p.4, 05 April 1902.

²² *Glasgow Herald*, p.11, 23 April 1902.

historiography focuses much on how the barmaid is perceived and not on who is doing the perceiving. Bailey discusses the barmaid through imagery, particularly painting, and he focuses on the transgressive nature of painting, which places ‘the invisible observer - the male stranger’ as the interpreter of the scene.²³ Mullin’s work on the barmaid, as explored through literature, the stage, and song, also focuses on male perceptions as a writer, reader or viewer. Even Beckingham, in his work, quotes exclusively from male voices, the newspaper editorials, the lawyers, the magistrates and, notably, from Labour MP James Ramsay MacDonald, a speech in Parliament.

Ramsay MacDonald’s wife, Margaret MacDonald, was the key driving force in the campaign against the employment of barmaids. Beckingham acknowledges this in the footnotes of his work; Mullin, in her analysis of the events surrounding Glasgow, does acknowledge Margaret MacDonald as fundamental to the prohibitionist cause but does not examine her perceptions and instead puts Glasgow as the starting point for her, which ‘brought social purists and temperance activists together with Salvation Army workers and senior clerics’.²⁴ Mullin argues that Glasgow, via ‘the British Women’s Temperance Association bypassed Parliament altogether’ to remove women from the bar trade, to be later taken up by the social purity movement post-1902.²⁵ However, this timeline of events does not tally with the information surrounding the debates about the barmaid before the Glasgow Licensing Court nor the fully formed arguments and decisions made after the magistrates’ recommendations.

²³ Bailey, p. 230.

²⁴ Mullin, p.185.

²⁵ Mullin, p.184.

The Barmaid Question: Key Figures and Debates

The beginning of the debate over the Barmaid Question is difficult to pin down; Mullin put the start with a scandal at the Criterion Hotel in 1881.²⁶ However, in all subsequent discussions about the Barmaid Question, this case does not arise again, nor is it used as a warning; it is fair to say that this event was not the catalyst. The Barmaid Question arises from a miasmatic state; no one event starts the discussion; it solidifies within Glasgow and moves on to a national debate before dissipating again. Consequently, it can be classified as a moral panic under the conditions set out by Stanley Cohen.²⁷ Walkowitz describes the social purity movement as being constructed of panics that feed on each other.²⁸ This panic is less a sudden appearance of a folk devil and more an expansion of ideology to encompass a new devil-like figure which will be formed as it progresses. In understanding the perceptions of the barmaid by those wishing to abolish her profession, the work of Margaret MacDonald is critical; sources include her biography written by Ramsay MacDonald after her death, in the book *Women as Barmaids* written by the Joint Committee on the Employment of Barmaids (JCEB) and within the archives of the Women's Library in the London School of Economics.²⁹ Margaret MacDonald was instrumental in setting up the JCEB; the committee first appeared in newsprint in February 1903.³⁰ Frances Balfour's letter to the *Evening Mail* on 16 April 1903 explains how -

At the conference last held at Edinburgh in October last year an unsuccessful attempt was made to induce the council [National Union of Women Workers (NUWW)] as a whole to take the step now made independently by the joint committee on the employment of barmaids.³¹

²⁶ Mullin, p.181.

²⁷ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The creation of the Mods and Rockers*, 3rd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002).

²⁸ Walkowitz, Chapter 4 Perlego eBook.

²⁹ Joint Committee on the Employment of Barmaids, *Women As Barmaids*, (London: P.S. King & Son, 1905)

³⁰ *Liverpool Weekly Courier*, p. 7 14 February 1903

³¹ *Evening Mail*, p. 7, 16 February 1903.

Miss S. Perkins' account, in a letter to Ramsay MacDonald, placed the establishment earlier with Margaret MacDonald as the instigator.

Mrs. MacDonald first raised the question of the employment of barmaids in connection with the Nat. Union of Wmn Workers, and also founded the Joint Committee of the Employment of Barmaids, I think in 1902.³²

The establishment of the JCEB connects firmly to the 1902 Glasgow Licensing Court. However, this does not mean MacDonald was not already engaged with the issues surrounding women and alcohol; her and others' opinions on the Barmaid Question were already in development before the creation of the JCEB. Frances Balfour's letter shows that MacDonald used the new interest to further her philanthropic work and attempt to connect it to the NUWW. However, it failed and caused the union to take sides outwith the organisation into groups such as the abolitionist JCEB, the anti-abolitionist Freedom of Labour Defence, headed by Lady Frances Balfour, or the Barmaids' Political Defence League led by Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper. Gore-Booth debated with MacDonald at a meeting of the NUWW in Manchester in November 1903.³³ From this point, there was a new dynamic within the perceptions of the barmaid that would challenge the developed perceptions. It was about pushing back against the images of the barmaid and shifting ideology, as those wishing to ban the profession tried to express what they found objectionable.

³² LSE Archive Perkins, S. R. MS. account of Mrs. MacDonald's work on the barmaid question; and copies of letters and of extracts from letters from Mrs. MacDonald to Miss Perkins, 10 June 1905-18 July 1911. pp.9-60. p. 9.

³³ *Manchester City News*, p.3, 21 November 1903.

Critical to understanding the Barmaid Question is the use of terminology by the social purity movement, notably the word ‘girl’ to describe women in the bar trade. MacDonald almost exclusively uses the word ‘girl’ when she depicts the barmaid. In his biography of Margaret MacDonald, Ramsay MacDonald quotes her expressing the work as ‘not a question of adult women choosing a profession for life... but girls lured into a trade that will throw them out soon’.³⁴ Within this quote are MacDonald's fundamental perceptions of the barmaid; the barmaid is a girl and *not* an adult, and creating this image of the barmaid as a child makes her protection worthy and necessary. This feeds into social purity concerns, particularly about the exploitation and vulnerability of the young. Ramsay MacDonald makes this clear with his description of Margaret MacDonald's work on barmaids, describing her as ‘like a knight hearing for the first time of the Minotaur and the offerings of the beautiful youth sent to him’.³⁵ This refers to the *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by W.T. Stead, who, in his investigative article, referred to the procurement and sale of children into the sex trade and used the minotaur legend, which relates to child tributes, as its title.³⁶ Ramsay MacDonald's use of this reference is deliberate as Margaret MacDonald's work was about the abolishing of women in the bar, not men and, as Walkowitz notes, ‘Stead's revisions and deletions, moreover, were as telling... [as he omits] ... the young men who served as tribute’.³⁷ The tributes in the Minotaur legend were also young men; by making it just about girls, the comment refers to Stead's article. Margaret MacDonald is presented as a new Stead, back for the next fight to preserve the children of Great Britain and Ireland. It is most certainly as children that Margaret MacDonald saw these women workers.

³⁴ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, 5th edn, (London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd, 1920), p. 162.

³⁵ MacDonald, p. 160.

³⁶ *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon Reprinted from the Pall Mall Gazette*. (London: F.A.O Roberts).

³⁷ Walkowitz, Chapter 3 eBook.

Woman to her was something sacred, something different in essence from man. The woman was the mother, and, to her, contained everything that was holy. The mother with the infant at her breast always received her homage and her worship.³⁸

MacDonald placed women as mothers and presumably married, and their work was primarily focused on the domestic. If they were to work, it was due to necessity rather than choice and ‘society has not only the right but the duty to legislate for women about her characteristic function’.³⁹ Further, if barmaids were not women but girls, then they were subject to the social purity concept of ‘the sanctity of childhood... and a view of adolescence as a period of social dependency’.⁴⁰ This allowed campaigners like MacDonald to justify the prohibitions through a moral framework. Care was taken to state clearly that MacDonald ‘never attacked barmaids for being immoral’; another example of social purity thinking, which placed a natural morality on women that could be taken away.⁴¹ MacDonald considered the barmaids as naïve targets of an immoral industry that used them as ‘decoys to increase the sale of drink’ and focused on ‘her youth and good looks and the way she does up her hair’.⁴²

This points to the social purity obsession with sexuality and sexual agency, which, as Bland states, saw ‘women as ‘pure’, inherently modest, and barely sexual’, and this concept of sexuality was at the forefront of the perception of the barmaid.⁴³ Bailey describes the barmaid of this time as the ‘moral salamander’, the creature that can exist in the fire of sexuality without being burned.⁴⁴ MacDonald’s perceptions point to a different creature, identified by Bland in the 1920s as the ‘Butterfly Woman’, a figure ‘deploying

³⁸ MacDonald, p.157.

³⁹ MacDonald, p.170.

⁴⁰ Bland, p.112.

⁴¹ MacDonald, p.162.

⁴² MacDonald, p. 159, MacDonald, p.162-163.

⁴³ Bland, p.116.

⁴⁴ Bailey, p.227.

the image of bright lights and burnt wings'.⁴⁵ Bland's reference is to a 1920s woman, alongside the flapper, seen as 'naïve, unstable, irresponsible and easily led' and 'susceptible to bad influences and drawn to the consumption of bad substances'.⁴⁶ While the women Bland describes are primarily concerned with drug-taking, night clubs and illicit sex, the fears and imagery surrounding them do not describe a new 'female morality and behaviour that occurred after the war'.⁴⁷ Instead, the imagery of the woman who would become the 1920s 'Butterfly woman', and all the social purity concerns therein, was found forming around the Barmaid Question, as seen in Mullin, who quotes *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* in which a Girl's Friendly Society read a pamphlet of 'The Work of Society in Refreshment Rooms' that states 'Girls whose faces were their fortune were attracted to bars as moths to a flame'.⁴⁸ Here, two new concepts of the barmaid are seen: firstly, the barmaid is the flighty creature whose impulsive choice will inevitably burn her, and secondly, the idea of the barmaid beyond those working in public houses to those operating refreshment rooms.

Beyond Social Purity: The Barmaid Working Hours

The Barmaid Question did not only focus on moral issues but also on working conditions and hours. This was used as the initial salvo of those seeking the abolition of barmaids, but it was also the most firmly argued against. Making an argument for morality was harder to prove. Although many anecdotal claims were in the book JCEB *Women as Barmaids*, none were backed up by discernible evidence. As with the Criterion Hotel case, there were cases in the press of assaults and death, all of which could have been used as examples of moral

⁴⁵ Lucy Bland, *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 62.

⁴⁶ Bland, p.56.

⁴⁷ Bland, p.55.

⁴⁸ Mullin, p.169, *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, p.9, 18 May 1890.

danger. Instead, the book strips any claim of identifiable elements, perhaps to preserve anonymity, although as the cases had been reported in the press, there was no anonymity to preserve. None of the arguments in *Women as Barmaids* can be independently verified. Much of the information has been decontextualised to avoid sensationalism but also avoid counter-investigation. This may be a response to the aftermath of the *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, which led to the court case that convicted W.T. Stead and revealed that specific facts behind the event had been manipulated. Moreover, the JCEB needed a new investigation, as a previous 1893 independent investigation by Eliza Orme reported in the Royal Commission on Labour's *The Employment of Women* had not been damning enough to make a strong case for abolition.⁴⁹ Orme's work was thorough, and although, like *Women as Barmaids*, it did not name those working in the trade, it did list the witnesses by number and tally this with information on general location, hours, wages and sleeping arrangements. Orme also questioned what was said to her, with one example of a witness giving extreme information on several points; she later went to the situation presented and interviewed those there and came away with a different impression; she published both claims rather than rely on one narrative.⁵⁰ The importance of this is due to the arguments on working conditions; much of the public debate in newsprint focused on the hours of the barmaid. In the run-up to the Licensing Court of 1902, C.M. Gough, the secretary of the Morely Rooms, an establishment with the aim 'to find new occupations for those who desire to cease being barmaids', expressed her opinions of the work in the Scottish newspapers, stating.⁵¹

And then the long hours and the bad food and lodgings! Ninety-nine hours a week is the average length of hours a barmaid works. Unfortunately, barmaids do not

⁴⁹ Eliza Orme, 'On the conditions of work of Barmaids, Waitresses and Bookkeepers in Hotels, Restaurants, Public-houses and other places of Refreshment' in *The Employment of Women* by Royal Commission on Labour, (London: Eyre and Spottiswodde, 1893), pp. 197-232.

⁵⁰ Orme, p. 200.

⁵¹ Orme, p. 210.

come under the supervision of any Act such as the Factory Act and the Shop Assistants' Act, and publicans take advantage.⁵²

This is at odds with the information provided by Orme, who, from her sampling, states.

The large proportion of licensed places of refreshment with hours ranging between 60 – 70 per week agrees with the statement of most of the contractors that they are aiming at a standard of 10 hours a day and something less on Sunday.⁵³

Orme mentions five reports of barmaids working over 100 hours, although one was the case where subsequent enquiries led Orme to doubt the veracity of the information. This can explain the differences in perceptions of barmaids' working hours. Orme was questioning women and employers who were working, with one giving an account of a bad situation, which Orme later discovered had dismissed the barmaid as she had been 'altogether unsatisfactory'.⁵⁴ Gough, instead, ran a charity home that housed women exiting the bar trade; securing a place in this home was necessary to create connections for new employment. On this basis, the loss of a situation had to be down to the employer, not the employee, and Gough would only ever hear stories of bad employment practices. Orme's reporting of women working over 100 hours would become the cornerstone of the abolitionist argument; however, what was not amplified was the majority of these reports were about seasonal working hours—these seasons involved working fifteen-hour days, with no days off on Sundays or holidays. The pay was better when the hotels were busiest, and tips were generous. One of the witnesses states that 'it was no unusual thing when a family was leaving the hotel for the gentlemen to give her 10s when he paid his bill', given that her weekly wage was 15 shillings, then that tip was worth two-thirds of her wage.⁵⁵ Seasonal work was temporary, and the women in it had chosen to work long hours to earn

⁵² *DEP*, p. 5, 19 April 1902.

⁵³ Orme, p. 203.

⁵⁴ Orme, p. 200.

⁵⁵ Orme, p. 199.

substantial wages and gratuities. One witness states that the holiday work was ‘so long that she never attempted to return after the season’.⁵⁶ Campaigners took these occasional conditions to be the norm. Concerns about long hours were coupled with a lack of breaks, constant standing and the conditions of the bar itself.

The JCEB cited the work of Orme in *Women as Barmaids*. However, it was selective in its choice of quotes; Orme did not support their cause, but the JCEB wished to cherry-pick arguments to justify themselves. Extreme examples from Orme were used to create eye-catching arguments for the JCEB. The JCEB claimed the report stated, ‘the chief drawbacks of the calling from the point of view of health are the excessively long hours, the want of fresh air, the constant standing, and the temptation through fatigue to indulge in stimulants’.⁵⁷ However, this was not Orme’s assessment of the situation; regarding the need for air, she states that ‘as a rule the conditions which affect customers as well as servants are made as good as they can to benefit the trade.’⁵⁸ Orme also provided a more nuanced view in her report about the temptation to drink alcohol to excess; the JCEB saw the temptation to use alcohol as a stimulant during the work, but the publicans, who worked around the product, identified it as a depressant. Orme’s work stated, ‘All publicans, managers, and persons in the position of employers that a drunken servant is quite impossible in a licensed house’ and ‘that there is [not] any more temptation to drink as a barmaid than in any other occupation’.⁵⁹ Further, the concept of the bar as a dark, dank, stuffy place detrimental to the barmaid lay at odds with the idea of the bar as the bright, shimmering bauble that drew men in with its glittering lights and glamorous barmaids. Orme complains about the lack of seating; it makes a particular feature of the

⁵⁶ Orme, p.199.

⁵⁷ JCEB, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Orme, p. 205.

⁵⁹ Orme, p. 207-208.

research, as it is the most common complaint among those in the bar. However, if standing and varicose veins were complaints for abolishing the barmaid, it would appear unreasonable, as many who defended the position expressed. Eva Gore-Booth stated

Regulation which has for its aim the amehoration (sic) of the hours and conditions of work, sanitary and other, is not to be confused with a totally different issue, the proposal by a gradual process of weeding out to supplant one set of workers with another.⁶⁰

Gore-Booth argued that if the issue was about the working conditions and the lack of seating of the women employed, then the conditions needed to be fixed rather than the work abolished. MacDonald inadvertently had already agreed on this point when she said, in response to Mrs Allan Bright and Lady Frances Balfour,

every reform in the condition of women is surely not to be postponed until the occupation of domestic servant is made as safe as that of typewriter and the hours of the shop assistant as short as those of the factory operative.⁶¹

When contemplating women's work, MacDonald called for shop assistants' hours to be reduced but did not prohibit women from working in a shop. Therefore, despite the arguments, MacDonald's desire for abolition is not about working hours; had it been poor air and long hours, the campaign would have focused on overhauling them. The critical point was about the conditions, particularly the moral conditions MacDonald saw as 'putting women's womanhood upon the market in any form, from the grossness of the streets to the seductiveness of the bars'.⁶² Despite all the protests of seeing the barmaid as moral, Ramsay MacDonald placed Margaret MacDonald's position of the barmaid on the

⁶⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 27 January 1904, quoted in *The Political Writings of Eva Gore-Booth*, ed. Sonja Tiernan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) p. 18.

⁶¹ *Evening Mail*, p. 6, 18 February 1903.

⁶² MacDonald, p.162.

same spectrum as those engaged in sex work, figures who were ‘the white slaves of the bar’⁶³, sitting within the throughline of social purity philosophy throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Case Study: The 1905 Glaswegian Temperance Bar

These perceptions of the bar trade and applications of social purity philosophy are best exemplified by comparing how the temperance women saw themselves in a similar situation. In *The Feminine Public Sphere*, Megan Smitley gives details of a news report in the *Scottish Women's Temperance News* of a temperance tent set up in Glasgow by the BWTA in 1905, three years after Glasgow’s Licensing Courts.

The restaurant was draped in blue and white; a tasteful setting in which the white-robed waitresses looked so winsome that some of the onlookers enquired if they were all angels inside. It was known as the ‘Bachelor’s Tent’ on the show-ground, so popular was it with the young men, who seemed to breakfast, dine, tea and sup daily under its canvas roof. Often the would-be diners had to form a queue at the door and wait their turn for admission.⁶⁴

The social purity complaints about the barmaid are laid bare here; the temperance waitresses were doing the same role so derided of barmaids. However, the language changed, and the servers were not portrayed as victims or temptresses. Instead of being decoys, they are winsome; they are not butterfly women with fragile wings; instead, they are angels. The nickname the ‘Bachelor’s Tent’ indicates that young men were drawn to the tent by the image of the waitresses. The reasoning given by the 1902 Licensing Courts was that they were protecting ‘young men being induced by blandishments of the barmaids to stay longer in a place of refreshment’.⁶⁵ None of this applied when it was the BWTA’s

⁶³ JCEB, p. 18.

⁶⁴ ‘Glasgow BWTA Tent’, p. 115. BWTASCU Collection cited in Smitley, Chapter 3, Perlego eBook; *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

refreshments; instead, it was encouraged. Smitley even lauds it: ‘...for young middle-class women refreshment tents represented an opportunity to socialise and to launch a public career.’⁶⁶ These positive perceptions were never applied to the barmaid; her job was, according to campaigners, hard, fatiguing leading to the ‘average respectable life of a barmaid last[ing] only three years’.⁶⁷ There was no admittance of opportunity or socialisation for the barmaid unless it was to impugn her morals. The moral perception of the barmaid that coalesced around 1902 was that of Cohen’s folk-devil, started by the male perceptions of the barmaid, picked up and turned demon by the social purity movement combined with the temperance movement; her work in the bar trade misrepresented to create concern about exploitation amid references to ‘white slavery’. In contrast, the Glaswegian BWTA of 1905 were proud of their waitresses, the ‘young middle-class, often the daughters and young relations’ and their allure for the young men of Scotland.⁶⁸ While temperance Reverend Dryer of Glasgow may not have wished his daughters to serve in a public house, the daughters of the BWTA could respectably weaponise glamour in the cause of temperance.

⁶⁶ Smitley, Chapter 3, Perlego e-Book.

⁶⁷ *GH*, p.11, 23 April 1902.

⁶⁸ Smitley, Chapter 3, Perlego e-Book.

3. Licensing Courts and the Barmaids: Legal Definitions, Powers and Results

The lore of the Barmaid Question states that in 1902, Glasgow banned the barmaid, a ban lifted in the 1940s.¹ However, the simplicity of this statement belies the complexities of the powers of the Licensing Court and their results, the comprehension of which is vital to understanding the Barmaid Question. While many newspapers of the time described the event as a ban within their titles, they also described the process and legislative mechanism required to create this nascent ban. There was no direct ban on women in the legislation, although later attempts by the abolitionists would try to enact this within the Scottish 1903 and English 1908 Licensing Acts. It is vital to clarify the precise phrasing of the restrictions imposed by the magistrates due to the slippage of terminology over the years. The magistrates stated that license holders were

Not to employ females at bars in ordinary public-houses, restaurants, railway station refreshment rooms or theatres, also hotel bars used by the general public, excepting females who are license-holders attending personally to their shops, or wives or daughters of license-holders assisting in such shops, or female assistants attending dining-tables in licensed premises where a bona fide restaurant business is carried out.²

This phrasing differs significantly from the recommendations in place in the run-up to the 1902 Licensing Court; in 1900, the magistrates stated that owners forgo the ‘employment of females as attendants behind the bars of ordinary public houses’.³ Further, in 1901, they said that ‘no females should be engaged in a public-house proper’.⁴ This is in response to the renewal of a license for premises that also served food to the customers; however, the amount of food sold was not considered enough to classify it as part of the restaurant trade.

¹ Kirsty Mackenzie, ‘Glasgow banned female barmaids for nearly 50 years as part of temperance movement’, *Glasgow Live*, 14 Nov 2020 <https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/history/glasgow-temperance-movement-barmaids-18510688> [accessed 14 November 2023]

² *Glasgow Herald*, p. 11, 23 April 1902

³ *GH*, p. 9, 11 April 1900

⁴ *GH*, p. 9, 10 April 1901

It shows that the magistrates were, before 1902, stating they would deny licenses if women were hired within premises that served alcohol. The recommendations underwent a notable shift in terminology. In 1900, ordinary public houses were instructed to refrain from hiring women; this shifted in 1901 with the concept of the bona-fide restaurant. By 1902, the recommendations were broadened to encompass various alcohol-related businesses.

Understanding this shift explains an argument throughout the debates over the Barmaid Question: the number of women affected by the Licensing Courts and any subsequent legislation had it succeeded. If any of the 129 women listed as barmen (barmaids) were still employed in 1902, then it was possible that those employing them did not believe the recommendations applied to them.⁵ It was unclear which premises were under these recommendations until the declaration on the seventh day of the Licensing Courts, which included far more premises than public houses. Many Glasgow barmaids worked in premises that were not considered ordinary public houses; a deeper examination of the magistrates' rulings allows an understanding of what drove this ideology.

What is a Barmaid: Magistrates' Powers and Legal Definitions

The magistrates already had the power to restrict licenses to establishments that maintained good conduct. This concept of good conduct is placed within the license holder's statutory certificate with 'directions with the view of preserving good order, morality and propriety'.⁶ This resulted in an open invitation for magistrates to determine what was moral and to whom that morality applied. The use of morality to prohibit women from working was questioned with an editorial in the *Scotsman* asking, 'Have they not strained these [powers] in the spirit, if not the letter'?'⁷ A similar argument was placed before the magistrates by Mr Crabb Watt, representing several theatres who asked, 'on what occasion

⁵ *Eleventh Decennial Census of the Population of Scotland taken 31st March 1901, with Report. Vol. III* (Glasgow: HMSO, 1903), p. 336.

⁶ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

⁷ *Scotsman*, p.8, 23 April 1902.

had it been that either good order, morality or propriety had been outraged in any specific or concrete instance’?⁸ The nebulous concept of the barmaid creating a moral disturbance to the customer or herself is explored in the legal arguments with Sheriff Lee arguing for the removal of women from serving at the bar, comparing it to prior rulings on banning box partitions and internal snibs (locks) on doors; this feeds into Peter Bailey’s concept of the barmaid’s function as an object, indistinguishable from the furniture and fittings. Women working behind bars appear to be a critical element of the perceived morality. Hence, when asked the pertinent question about the definition of a barmaid, those within the courts presented an argument within Peter Bailey’s parasexual barmaid concept, albeit not entirely as Bailey defined it, as discussed in Chapter Two. Mr M’Clure, representing Daniel Brown (Ltd) and all other restaurants and hotels, interrogated this concept,

Mr. M’Clure - Would you kindly define what is meant by a barmaid?

Bailie King – There is a bar in the Queen Street premises. Any girl standing within the bar and serving liquor to men or women standing on the outside of the bar we consider barmaids. Then there is a service bar. Girls inside that bar may serve out liquor as well as food to the girls who are serving tables in the establishment. These we do not consider barmaids. The distinction is quite clear.⁹

Bailie King's distinction was anything but clear; the idea of the barmaid was attached to the concept of the bar. In Peter Bailey’s construction of the barmaid, the physical object of the bar was integral to the image of the barmaid, which is also the case here. However, the bar is a barrier with Bailey: the item that creates the ‘everything but...’ effect, whereas the bar creates a different effect for the magistrates of the time.¹⁰ Bailey identifies this effect, as discussed in Chapter Two, as a frame which puts the barmaid on display so ‘that she

⁸ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

⁹ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

¹⁰ Peter Bailey, ‘Parasexuality and Glamour, The Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype’ in *Sexualities in History, A Reader* ed. Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 222.

herself might be an article for purchase or consumption'.¹¹ For Peter Bailey, the bar protects the barmaid, whereas Bailie King's bar is the hazard, the item that highlights her moral danger. The frame of the bar, particularly the counter or the island bar (a bar with all sides available for customers to use), was of the deepest concern to the magistrates. The concept of the barmaid was a lure of the young male customer to, as Margaret MacDonald believed, 'induce men to become clients of her employer'; however, there was a distinction to be made with women in the bar trade.¹² The barmaid behind the bar was to be abolished, but the women working behind the scenes, handing refreshments through a service hatch, or those working on the floor as waitresses were allowed. These two elements would cause many appeals to the magistrates.

On 23 April 1902, Daniel Brown had his licenses postponed until new building plans were submitted or the women employed as barmaids were removed. This was appealed immediately as Brown claimed that his business was a bona-fide restaurant, and this form of female employment was allowed in the magistrates' original recommendations of 9 April 1902. Daniel Brown became influential in the defence of employing women in his restaurant bars; he appeared frequently throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, defending various licensed premises he owned. When he appealed the decision of 22 April 1902 under Daniel Brown (Limited), he upheld the right to retain six women in his Queen Street premises and forty in the St Vincent Street premises. All these women listed in the 1901 census as barmaids would take up forty-six of the 129 women in Volume III of the 1901 Scottish Census, about a third of those listed as barmaids.¹³ While it is likely that Brown was a significant employer of women in the bar trade, this number accounts for

¹¹ Bailey, p. 225.

¹² J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, 5th edn, (London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd, 1920), p. 163.

¹³ *Census Scotland 1901 Vol. III*. p. 336.

only two of his several premises, suggesting that several of the women employed, while not giving their profession directly as barmaids in the census, were used in the bar trade in some capacity that would see them disbarred from work under the recommendations of the magistrates. The magistrates give him a choice to do away with all his female employees, many of whom were not barmaids under the magistrates' definition or 'remove the bars against the wall of the shop, so that there can be no females behind the bar. (Laughter).'¹⁴ This appears to be the solution preferred by the Glasgow Licensing Courts, giving an alternative that was, in reality, not an alternative.

Remodelling the Bar and Renaming the Barmaid

Moving the counter or remodelling the bar was subject to the Magistrates' decisions. On 25 April 1903, Albert Max Thiem went before the magistrates for a licence renewal. The objections against him were 'that the licensees had made alterations on the premises without the sanction of the Magistrates'.¹⁵ This was explained as follows: while approved alterations had been made, a room was used to store building materials and was no longer part of the public space of the licensed premises. However, the chief constable and Chairman insisted that an 'application should have been made' for the new room.¹⁶ It was then suggested that 'Thiem employed females at a bar used for drinking purposes'.¹⁷ Thiem's counsel countered that the alterations created 'a service bar [that] would be attended to by a man', and women were employed precisely as per the Magistrates' recommendations of 1902, receiving the order and delivering to a table.¹⁸ Thiem was cross-examined over this, and only at the end did they concede that he was acting within

¹⁴ *GH*, p. 10, 01 May 1902.

¹⁵ *GH*, p. 11, 25 April 1903.

¹⁶ *GH*, p. 11, 25 April 1903.

¹⁷ *GH*, p. 11, 25 April 1903.

¹⁸ *GH*, p. 11, 25 April 1903.

the recommendation. Publicans would operate within the magistrates' recommendations, such as Thiem carrying out works before the 1902 Licensing Court, on the understanding that waitresses were still allowed. However, the minor variation in the remodel gave the magistrates another excuse to bring the licence holder back to court. Another example is the case of Mrs Hunter, licensee of 41 West Nile Street, who did not wish to dispense with her barmaids. According to the newspaper reports

Bailie King asked the applicant to amend the plan of the premises[...] Mr M'Millan intimated that his client had changed her mind and, in view of the fact that she had spent £2000 on altering the premises, she would consent to dispense with the barmaid rather than have the bar altered.¹⁹

This was the other power the Licensing Courts had over the bar trade: the ability to force amendments on bar areas at the cost of the licence holder. At the same time, they also had the power to deny a licence if the alterations deviated slightly from the plans. In these cases, there is a sense of what the *Scots Law Review* calls 'Publican-baiting', that the Licensing Courts, the Magistrates and the Chief-Constable were deliberately taking licensees to court in the hope of denying them their licence.²⁰ This also explains why the suggestion of Bailie King to Daniel Brown on 23 April 1902 that those wishing to retain their female staff must alter their premises was greeted with laughter, which King took to be about the Barmaid Question rather than the fact that licensees and those in the business knew the complicated process of alterations and approval.

Bailie King was only interested in the Barmaid Question, evidenced by his nearly denying a licence because it was remodelled after a fire and believed it needed a new license. This

¹⁹ *GH*, p. 10, 24 April 1902.

²⁰ *Scots Law Review and Reports of Cases in the Sheriff Courts of Scotland*, p.145, May 1902.

was legally untrue, and Mr M'Clure took him to task over his understanding of the process, stating, 'That is the most ordinary duty of the Licensing Court'.²¹ This indicates that Bailie King was selected for the role of chairman purely for his view of the Barmaid Question. Bailie King did not appear as a magistrate in the Licensing Courts before 1902. He retired as magistrate after the 1902 Licensing Courts to pursue a career of speaking at Temperance events about his role, stating that the temperance movement 'could take the laws as they were and work for them and see that they were carried out in their entirety'.²² This fits in with the social purity thinking and women's suffrage goal discussed in Chapter Two, particularly with the possibility of using municipal legislation to achieve social reforms. The magistrates could take the laws and use them to their own social and political advantage, but so too could those who were subject to those laws.

After the 1902 Glasgow Licensing Courts, there was a noticeable shift in employment terminology, with several women classified as waitresses or restaurant waitresses, in the style of those employed by Max Thiem, delivering drinks to tables that a single male attendant poured. For the larger restaurants, rearranging and renaming staff was the easiest option.

Theatre Barmaids: Crabb Watt's Defence

In 1902, Mr Crabb Watt represented the theatre's interests on the seventh day of the Licensing Courts. His primary defence dealt with the legality of the magistrate's decision on women's employment, invoking previous rulings and judges' opinions. He also challenged the legality of using a moral clause as a tool. David Beckingham discusses this

²¹ *GH*, p. 10, 01 May 1902.

²² *Coatbridge Express*, p. 2, 22 April 1903.

in his work *Banning the Barmaid*, where he analyses Crabb Watts's arguments about the claim that women only lasted three years within the profession. However, Beckingham does not wholly comprehend the argument, stating, 'I don't know what he knew' about Crabb Watts, refuting the concept of the supposed three-year fall of the barmaid.²³

However, it is made clear later in the article that Crabb Watt referred to the point.

These girls had been in the employment of the company, some of them, for eight years; many of them in the past had been in the employment of the company until they got married. Was it suggested that this was a termination of their respectability?²⁴

If the magistrates were basing their restriction on 'preserving good order, morality and propriety', then Crabb Watt argued that there was no evidence that the 'average respectable life of a barmaid lasts only three years'.²⁵ This was a fallacy, as evidenced by the women in the trade he represented, who had no previous criminal record for immorality.

Crabb Watt successfully brought to the debate the necessary legal arguments that would later inform parliamentary discussion about whether the magistrates' powers surrounding women's employment should be strengthened in the 1903 and 1908 Scottish and English Licensing Laws, respectively. This argument did not help in the short term with theatre barmaids and left the theatres with an employment issue. In 1905, it was reported in the *Daily Record* that at a meeting of the Glasgow Magistrates 'that permission should be given to refreshment caterers in theatres to employ barmaids in the future'²⁶. The main issue of the theatres and women's employment was alluded to in 1902 by Mr Crabb Watt,

²³ Beckingham, David, 'Banning the Barmaid: time, space and alcohol licensing in 1900s Glasgow', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 18:2 (2017), 117-136 (p.125).

²⁴ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

²⁵ *GH*, p.11, 23 April 1902.

²⁶ *Daily Record*, p. 6, 02 September 1905.

albeit as a secondary argument, which also appeared in the assessment of Eliza Orme, the short hours of the theatre barmaid. Crabb Watt stated that the theatres he represented ‘were open only from seven o’clock till ten at night’, meaning three hours of service behind the bar; Orme also notes similar short hours and that ‘only between acts... that there is hard work for the barmaids’.²⁷ In 1902, the theatres were forced to remove the barmaids, who, according to the *Scots Law Review*, ‘were practically concussed into this step’.²⁸ Unlike the restaurant trade, the theatres could not take advantage of the waitresses’ loophole, nor could the theatre bar be turned into a service bar. According to Bailie King’s definition, these areas were the most typical of the counter bars, making these women the ‘ideal’ of a barmaid. However, these bars did not have the dangers ascribed to them that the abolitionists worried about; they were not a bar for ‘dalliance and loitering’ nor could anyone ‘succumb to what Sheriff Lees alliteratively denominates barmaid blandishments’.²⁹ Instead, they were fast-moving bars that opened briefly to provide a service that otherwise would ‘result in a constant nightly procession out of and into the auditorium during the performances’.³⁰ This is why Crabb Watt focuses on the legal judgment of *Wakefield v. Sharp*, where magistrates cannot ‘by evasion attempt to repeal the law which permits public-houses to exist’; the short hours for which the theatre bars were known meant that the job was a part-time job used to supplement household income. Consequently, these bars were unlikely to attract male wage earners looking for full-time employment from an early age. By removing the ability to hire women, the theatre would find it difficult to find other bartenders, which would be a ban on the bars in theatres by proxy. Hence, by 1905, there was pressure on the magistrates to treat the theatres like

²⁷ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902, Eliza Orme, ‘On the conditions of work of Barmaids, Waitresses and Bookkeepers in Hotels, Restaurants, Public-houses and other places of Refreshment’ in *The Employment of Women* by Royal Commission on Labour, (London: Eyre and Spottiswodde, 1893), pp. 200.

²⁸ *SLR*, p. 146, May 1902.

²⁹ *SLR*, p. 146, May 1902.

³⁰ *SLR*, p. 146, May 1902.

restaurants or railway refreshment rooms: two other employers of barmaids who constantly challenged the magistrates.

Railway Bars and the Tour of Carrie Nation

On 11 February 1903, a delegation of interested parties within the bar trade approached the Licensing Court in the period before the renewals of Licenses. These included representatives for Daniel Brown Ltd, Spiers and Pond and Mr Gentle, for the interests of both the Caledonian and the North British Railway Companies.³¹ They aimed to get the magistrates to reconsider the Barmaid Question before the Licensing Courts of 1903 and, where possible, address the issues of barmaids and the ‘interference on the part of the magistrates’.³² The railways representative joined in condemning the use of the Licensing Courts to restrict the restaurant trade because they were also concerned with their business as restaurants. Glasgow had several railway termini, along with railway refreshment rooms, the termini ran hotels. The delegations received a firm judgment on 18 February 1903 when the magistrates’ led by Bailie Stevenson stated

With regard to the barmaid question, it was agreed that female assistants be allowed to be employed in licensed premises where a *bona-fide* restaurant business is carried on, but where a bar is used principally for drinking purposes male attendants must be employed there.³³

This is a far more straightforward recommendation than the previous year, and while it still restricted women’s work in the bar trade, it was still a row back on the 1902 decision.

There is no mention of her being unable to pour the alcohol or serve across the bar, nor is there any mention of renovations needed to maintain women workers. Instead, women

³¹ *GH*, p. 8, 11 February 1903.

³² *GH*, p. 8, 11 February 1903.

³³ *GH*, p. 8, 18 February 1903.

could work where there was a sale of food, and as discussed in this chapter, the food was a considerable part of the takings of the bar. Regarding the hotels of the railways and the refreshment rooms on the concourse, they attached themselves to the arguments of the restaurant trade, particularly that of Daniel Brown (Ltd). Thus, they were able to keep their licenses and their female employees. This is evidenced in December 1908 when the temperance celebrity Carrie (Carry) Nation visited Scotland on a speaking tour. She was invited by the burgeoning Scottish Prohibitionist Party, a group of hardline temperance reformers, whose Leader Edwin Scrymgeour would become MP for Dundee in 1920. Nation arrived in Glasgow on 15 December 1908 after visiting the east coast of Scotland. Her appearance attracted crowds, and she often had to find somewhere to escape. This, combined with her desire to rid society of alcohol, led her to areas where she could proselytise, such as when she arrived in Glasgow and was ushered into the North British Station Hotel.

“Oh, a woman selling drink,” ejaculated Mrs. Nation to one of the hotel barmaids, “aren’t you ashamed? A man is bad enough, but to see a woman dragging down men“³⁴

This remark shows the railway hotels had retained their barmaids as Nation could talk to one in 1908. Some days later, Nation was again taking refuge from a crowd in the premises run by Daniel Brown, the licensee who appealed the 1902 Licensing court decisions. There, she encountered more women and asked, ‘Are you all employed here? She said, raising her hands in horror’, she was then told ‘there were more girls at the back waiting to see her’.³⁵ Consequently, Daniel Brown (Ltd) won their fight with the Licensing Court and could retain and employ new women for their trade six years after the recommendation

³⁴ *DR*, 15 December 1908.

³⁵ *DR*, 19 December 1908.

of the magistrates. This gives the impression that the Licensing Courts of 1902 were essentially toothless. Yet they did have significant powers; to some, those powers could bite hard.

Case Study: Sophia Bicks and the Bridge Street Station Hotel

On the seventh day of the 1902 Licensing Court, it was requested on behalf of Mrs Sophia Bicks at 6 Bridge Street that her hotel ‘should be considered separately’.³⁶ She was represented by ‘Mr W. Shaw, writer’; this title meant that Shaw was a solicitor who was part of the Society of Writers to His Majesty’s Signet who ‘have power from time to time to make acts or statutes for the good of the calling’.³⁷ This title was used as a status of achievement rather than directly attacking the legitimacy of Licensing Courts. Shaw was also listed as a writer when he appeared for the same hotel two years before 1902. In 1900, Shaw appeared for Mr John Frederick Henry Bicks for a renewal of his hotel license; Mr Bicks was unable to appear in person due to illness. The focus in 1900 was not on his barmaids but on the number of people seen entering and leaving the hotel on Sunday. The ability to buy alcohol on a Sunday was limited, but as Shaw argued, hotels were ‘bound by law to supply bona-fide travellers’, like the bona-fide restaurants, a legal sidestep in alcohol trading. 6 Bridge Street was connected to the Bridge Street station, which, until the connection to Glasgow Central in 1905, acted as an interchange by the Caledonian Railway and a terminus for branch lines.³⁸ This meant that an individual could travel from Central Station to Bridge Street, and if a customer claimed to the licensee that they had travelled

³⁶ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

³⁷ Thanks to Andrew Tickell (@peatworrier) on Twitter for the definition; *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902; The Society of Writers to His Majesty’s Signet, *A History of the Society of Writers to His Majesty’s Signet: with a List of Members of the Society*, (Edinburgh, Society at the University Press, T. & A. Constable, 1936), Google eBook.

³⁸ Joe Fisher, *The Glasgow Encyclopaedia*, (Edinburgh, Mainstream Publishing Company (Edinburgh) Ltd, 1994)

the required distance, then the licensee was obliged to serve. Whether Mr Bicks had been allowing more people into his premises on a Sunday or if the hotel had been marked as a target for the reduction of licenses is impossible to say. However, the hotel was watched five times over a year, with the number of people entering and exiting being listed. Eventually, the license was renewed with a warning that ‘there was too much Sunday drinking in this hotel’.³⁹

The Bridge Street hotel evidenced the ‘publican-baiting’ element of the Licensing Courts. One week after the Licensing Courts, on 19 April 1900, Mr John Frederick Henry Bicks died of rheumatism aged fifty-five, leaving his hotel business to his wife, Sophia.⁴⁰ In 1902, the license for the Bridge Street hotel was again challenged, this time over Mrs. Bick's employment of barmaids. Here, the baiting element can be seen; the license was approved to have a second renewal, so close a renewal was rare, and had there been an issue about Sophia Bicks taking over the license, it should have come up in 1901. It was clear that the refusal would be based on her employment of women and that those who had tried to remove the license for legitimate Sunday trading were now attempting to use the barmaids as the reason. Shaw argued that the two women employed as barmaids in her hotel were also used, ‘one as a clerk, and the other as her linen superintendent’.⁴¹ As such, the Licensing Court assessed her situation and those of others in the restaurant and hotel trade. According to the 1901 census, Mrs Sophia Bicks owned and managed the Bridge Street Station Hotel, which employed nine staff members and was also home to her five

³⁹ *GH*, p. 9, 11 April 1900.

⁴⁰ Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland (NRS), Statutory Registers Death 644/13 190; NRS, Will and Testaments SC36/51/125, p.451.

⁴¹ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

children, aged between twelve and twenty-two.⁴² The two barmaids mentioned were likely Sarah Kissick and Helen Muirhead, who were listed as barmaids within the census.⁴³ There is no mention of the women's clerking or linen duties, which suggests two circumstances: either Sophia Bicks wished to preserve her barmaids' jobs by giving them other occupations or that the work of a barmaid in the Bridge Street Station Hotel was of farther greater scope than merely serving behind the counter. Notably, both roles, clerk and linen superintendent, are high-status and skilled female roles that involve organisational and supervisory abilities. Mrs Bicks also employed a male waiter; therefore, by the 1903 recommendations, she should have still been able to maintain her staff as it was in the 1901 census. This would involve the waiter pouring the drinks and the barmaids bringing them to the customers. Unfortunately, Sophia Bicks was not in front of the 1903 magistrates; instead, she was subject to the confusion of the 1902 definition of a barmaid. After 1903, Mrs Bicks no longer appeared in the Post office directories and no longer ran the Bridge Street Station Hotel.⁴⁴ Between 1902 and 1903, she must have relinquished her role in the hotel business, perhaps to take up the offer in her husband's will.

In case she decide not to carry on my hotel business aftermentioned to allow my said wife so long as she remains my Widow the free life rent use of the heritable subjects just being acquired by me at Aberdour Fife at present known as Bleak House.⁴⁵

Bicks did not give up the business after her husband's death and fought hard to retain her workers when they were at risk of being dismissed. Had she held on after 1902, she may have been able to keep her barmaids in the same way that Daniel Brown (Ltd) had done.

⁴² *Census Scotland 1901* via <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [Accessed May 2023 to January 2024], *Post Office Annual Glasgow Directory 1901-1902*, p.77 via

<https://digital.nls.uk/directories/browse/archive/84742906> [Accessed 04 January 2024].

⁴³ *Census Scotland 1901* via <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [Accessed May 2023 to January 2024].

⁴⁴ *POAGD 1902-1903*, p. 638 via <https://digital.nls.uk/directories/browse/archive/86386075> [Accessed 04 January 2023].

⁴⁵ NRS, Will and Testaments SC36/51/125, p.451.

However, Daniel Brown was a person trading through a limited company with the money and backing it entailed. Sophia Bicks was a sole proprietor who had lost her partner, trying to keep her hotel going in the face of harassment by the Licensing Court. This was the point of publican-baiting, to keep nipping away until the licensee gave up. Bicks may not have had the money to continue the fight after paying for two Licensing Courts in 1900 and 1902. She may also not have had the energy because, in 1905, she was living in Leith (not Aberdour as the will intended), where she would die later that year of apoplexy (stroke) at age 60.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ NRS, Valuation Rolls VR 005500104-/173; NRS, Statutory registers Death 692/1 432

4. The Glaswegian Barmaids of 1901

On 24 April 1902, the *Glasgow Herald* published three letters to the newspaper directly after the section on the Licensing Courts. All were related to the magistrates' dealings on the Barmaid Question the day before. One was from a committee established 'for the help of dismissed barmaids' and stated that it was set up but not entirely run by the British Women's Temperance Association.¹ Another from A. E. McLeod Gourlay, of 10 Radnor Park Gardens, Folkestone, applauded the decision, declaring Glasgow had now abolished 'the most flagrant sin of a Christian country'.² Finally, there was one from someone named 'Indignant', a letter from one of Glasgow's barmaids. In this letter, she rails against the previous day's court and the 'deputation of ladies' who gave evidence about the 'respectable life of a barmaid only lasting three years.'³ A key issue with the study of the Barmaid Question is that the barmaid's voice was lost in a sea of temperance literature, campaign groups, social reformers and newspaper editorials. When they spoke up, the affected women had to hide their names. 'Indignant' was about to lose her job thanks to the arguments raging in the newspapers; she was also about to lose her moral standing. Summing up her predicament in the last sentence, 'Would they kindly inform me how I stand in their estimation, morally speaking, after my nine years' experience in a bar'?⁴ Like McLeod Gourlay, the people who gave their names to letters were sitting in judgment of those like 'Indignant'. McLeod Gourlay had the privilege of distance and status; Radnor Park Gardens was an affluent area in Kent, detaching the writer from 'Indignant' by class and location.⁵ Thanks to the issue of anonymity, without a name, it is impossible to tell

¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 24 April 1902, p. 10.

² *GH*, 24 April 1902, p. 10.

³ *GH*, 24 April 1902, p. 10.

⁴ *GH*, 24 April 1902, p. 10.

⁵ The National Archives, *Census England and Wales 1901*, RG 13/848 via <www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 04 January 2024].

who ‘Indignant’ was; however, there is authenticity to her letter. ‘Indignant’ directly responded to the arguments used the day before in Court. There is a sense of the individual behind the letter; the concern, anger and resentment are there, along with the question, ‘From what source have they obtained their information that they take upon themselves to make such an imputation?’⁶

Chapters Two and Three explored the claims the campaigners and magistrates made about the barmaids' work, life, and well-being. Claims were used to justify the restrictions on their work, backed up with anecdotal evidence and presented by those with an ideological interest in the abolition of women in the bar trade. Testing these claims requires information collected independently of the arguments presented.

Searching Census Data and The National Records of Scotland: Methodology and Restrictions

The barmaids of the 1902 Glasgow Licensing Court can now be excavated in part due to the information contained within the genealogical databases available. However, this requires skill in using multiple databases covering the same information. Finding the names of the women listed as barmaids involves access to the Findmypast database, which has advanced features, including a keyword search function. From this, various elements can be searched for, including occupations. Using the optional keyword search, filtering to the 1901 census and the location of Glasgow City, 113 names of women whose occupation is listed as a barmaid can be found.⁷ This information is compared with the information in the 1901 census returns for Scotland volume II regarding the country's occupational

⁶ GH, 24 April 1902, p. 10.

⁷ The National Archives, *Census Scotland 1901*, via <www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 04 January 2024].

breakdown to verify the search's effectiveness. In the Burgh of Glasgow (Females), under section XX, Food, Tobacco, Drink, and Lodging, part IV – Boarding, Lodging, and Dealing in Spirituous Drinks, the census reported that 129 women listed their profession as barmen (barmaid). This initial data excavation already helps explain a particular discrepancy in the information surrounding the debates over the Barmaid Question.

Both the *Aberdeen Daily Journal* and the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported on a meeting of Glasgow restauranters. ‘It was stated that if the proposal of the Magistrates were carried into effect, upwards of 2000 women would be thrown out of employment’.⁸ The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* reported that ‘the trade reply that to carry out the order would simply throw 1500 barmaids out of employment’.⁹ Ten days later, the same newspaper reported, ‘An official return has been made which shows that are 106 barmaids employed in Glasgow’.¹⁰ This claim was repeated in *The Scotsman* on the same day.¹¹ These three figures highlight a significant disparity in how women were counted within the bar trade. It would be natural to assume that there was either some exaggeration or underreporting of these figures. However, as stated above, there were 129 women in 1901 employed as barmaids. This corroborates the figure of 106 stated on 15 April 1902, considering that some bars would have removed women from their jobs before the Licensing Courts. However, looking further at the census breakdown, there was a category entitled ‘*Other in Inn Hotel, Eating House – Service*’. This category had 1340 women employed. Combined with the number of female barmen (barmaid), this total would be 1469, far closer to the number reported on 15 April.¹² While the census report was not specific about what job the

⁸ *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, p 4, 28 March 1902; *Edinburgh Evening News*, p 2, 28 March 1902.

⁹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, p. 2, 5 April 1902.

¹⁰ *DET*, p. 3, 15 April 1902.

¹¹ *Scotsman*, p 4, 15 April 1902.

¹² *Eleventh Decennial Census of the Population of Scotland taken 31st March 1901, with Report. Vol. III* (Glasgow: HMSO, 1903), p. 336.

category entitled ‘*Other in Inn Hotel, Eating House – Service*’ consisted of, it is most likely to be that of waitress.¹³ As discussed in Chapter Four, the definitions of a barmaid presented by the magistrates were wide-ranging and contentious, with many unsure of where the restaurant waitress would stand under the 1902 Licensing Courts decision. A similar keyword search for the 1901 census in Glasgow on the Findmypast database for the term ‘waitress’ brings up 1,152 individuals, meaning that 86% of 1340 females listed under Others could be waitresses and subject to similar restrictions in the bar trade.¹⁴

While it is possible to search for the 1901 Scottish data on the Findmypast website, any Scottish census data post-1911 must be found in the National Records of Scotland archive, also known as ScotlandsPeople. Access to this data is determined by fee payment, prohibitively restrictive for academic research, outside two locations, the Reading Rooms at the Edinburgh Public Records Office and the Mitchell Library in Glasgow.

Consequently, the information found within the Findmypast database has to be sampled, given the time constraints of accessing the official locations of the data. Using a spreadsheet of the information gathered from the Findmypast database, it is possible to track some individual women from the census through the Scottish archives.

ScotlandsPeople is detached from all other UK and Irish ancestry and genealogical websites, so its information relates only to Scotland. Women born elsewhere or those who moved to other countries are missing specific data points. The National Records of Scotland allows researchers on-site to view all records up to and including the present day. However, it does not allow the researcher to print information within set date ranges. These are 100 years for birth certificates, 75 years for marriage certificates, and 50 years for

¹³ *Census Scotland 1901 Vol. III* p.336.

¹⁴ *Census Scotland 1901 Vol. III* p.336, *Census Scotland 1901* via <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [Accessed May 2023 to January 2024].

death certificates. The women of the 1901 census straddle some of these date restrictions, so any information that can not be published will be given in redacted form.

Finding specific women within national records can be challenging for the researcher. Marriage, or any subsequent remarriage, can cloud the research path, particularly as the women identified as barmaids in 1901 were mainly single. The spelling of names can vary between their birth certificate, the 1901 census data, and maiden name entries on marriage certificates. Notably, in Scotland, the name 'Jean' can cause headaches for the researcher, as the name can also be transcribed as 'Jane', 'Janet', 'Jeannie', 'Jess', and many other variations. Further, maiden names can be forgotten on death certificates, as they are usually filled by relatives who may not know this information. Another source of confusion can be that in the 1901 census, the barmaid decided not to give a real name. An example is the barmaid employed at the Central Station Hotel, whose name is 'May Fair'; while it is possible this was her name, the fact that her birth location was given as 'England' instead suggests that she was pulling the enumerator's leg.¹⁵ However, this does not mean tracing an individual woman from the 1901 census is impossible. A key certificate to find is the death certificate, which is highly detailed. While the 1901 census will not give an accurate date of birth, only giving the year, this information, along with the name, is enough to narrow down the death certificates. The National Records of Scotland's Reading Room's search function on death certificates includes maiden names and provides more data, making it possible to trace the individual. The death certificate contains information relating to all marriages (or confirms single status) and parents' names (where known), and it is often signed by a close relative such as a descendant. From there, it is straightforward to find the necessary information. It can be more complicated if

¹⁵ Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland (NRS), 1901 Census 644/7 44/1 p.2.

the death certificate cannot be located, possibly due to the individual leaving Scotland. In this case, if not found on an initial sweep of the 1911 census or marriage certificates, the individual may be found via other people or information within the 1901 census data, particularly relatives with distinctive names.

Of the 116 names found in the Findmypast database, 70 (60%) were sampled this way. The following further information was discovered.

Table 1 – Additional Records Found for the Sampled Data (Source: National Records of Scotland [NRS])

Marriage Found	1911 Census	1921 Census	Death Certificate
30 (43%)	22 (31%)	19 (27%)	28 (40%)

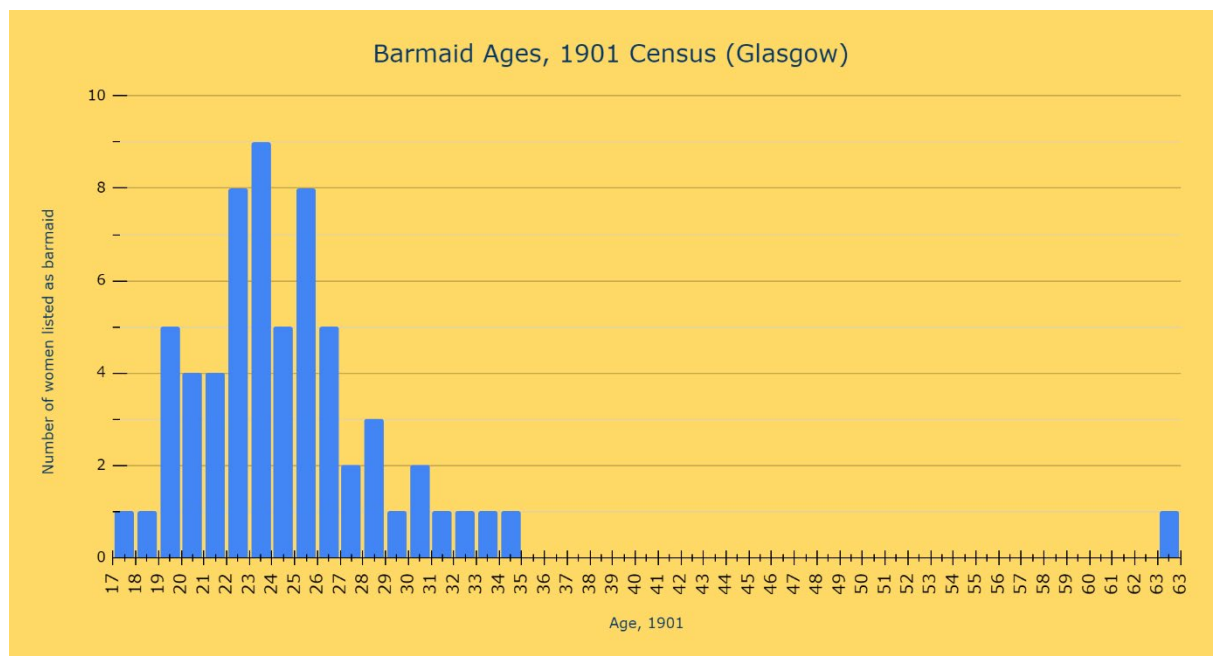
It must be noted that these additional records span different individuals; it was sometimes possible to find the 1921 census information but not the 1911 census or a death certificate but no other information. Marriage Found has been derived from information from marriage certificates, census data and death certificates. Of those sampled, 20 (29%) names provided no other information beyond the 1901 census.

All sampled names were researched on the National Records of Scotland database for the 1901 census. This resulted in seven names of the seventy sampled showing transcription errors, including two male names, one occupation that was not a barmaid and four names unfindable in the records, possibly due to mistranscription of the name. These entries are marked with a star (*).

The 1901 Barmaid Data: Age At Employment

The previous chapters examined the various concerns over women's employment in the bar trade. From there, the information found in the records can examine several substantial arguments by the abolitionists. Starting with the assertion, as stated previously in this chapter, that the barmaid had 'only three years of a respectable life' combined with the argument by the Joint Committee on the Employment of Barmaids (JCEB) in *Women As Barmaids* 'after the age of thirty-five, the ordinary barmaid finds it impossible except in a few cases to get work'.¹⁶

Graph 1 – Age of Barmaids from the Sampled Data (not including *) (Source: NRS)



¹⁶ Joint Committee on the Employment of Barmaids, *Women As Barmaids*, (London: P.S. King & Son, 1905), p. 9.

The claim that it was rare to find barmaids beyond the age of thirty-five is accurate from this data. The age of the barmaid clusters around the ages of twenty to thirty; there is one outlier of a sixty-three-year-old woman, Mary Drennen, who, on closer inspection of the census, gives her occupation as ‘formerly barmaid’.¹⁷ As an occupation in 1901, being a barmaid was a young woman’s job. Nevertheless, the reasoning derived by the abolitionists as to the cause of this was deeply spurious. *Women As Barmaids* states, ‘the business can hardly be said to need learning, so that in this respect extreme youth is not hindrance’.¹⁸ However, it is demonstrated in this data and the data collected by the JCEB that the barmaid age range was, on average, from twenty to thirty; this was not extreme youth in terms of the workplace regarding working-class women. As noted in Chapter Three and above, the waitress was another common profession for women in the bar trade; crosschecking with the Findmypast database, as was done to find the Glasgow barmaids, brings up eighteen waitresses in Glasgow who are fourteen years old.¹⁹ This indicates that being a barmaid was not an entry profession; within the bar trade, it is far more likely that women would have another job before becoming a barmaid. Being a barmaid did not need to be the end of a career progression. *Women As Barmaids* does admit that for those beyond the age range of the barmaid, ‘there are a certain number of positions attainable as head-barmaids and manageresses’.²⁰ Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three, the job of a barmaid could be only one facet of the work done by the women. Sarah Kissick and Helen Muirhead were described as having other work, ‘one as a clerk, and the other as her linen superintendent’.²¹ Skilled and responsible roles could lead to better-paid work later; being a barmaid did not preclude women from finding work as waitresses again. These arguments are backed up by the information gathered from the 1901 Glasgow barmaids.

¹⁷ NRS, 1901 Census 644/12 48/ 12.

¹⁸ JCEB, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Census Scotland 1901*, via <www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 04 January 2024].

²⁰ JCEB, p. 9.

²¹ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902.

Examining the information on the twenty-three marriage certificates found post-1901, fourteen certificates list female occupations. This is not to say that any other woman was unemployed at the time; listing the female occupation was a secondary concern on the form.

Table 2 – Occupations at the time of marriage (Source: NRS)

Occupation	Amount of Women
At Home	1
Barmaid	3
Dairymaid	1
Dressmaker	1
Hairdressers Assistant	1
Hotel Bookkeeper	1
Restaurant Waitress	6

This shows that there was work beyond being a barmaid, but it also shows that after the 1902 Licensing Courts, women did not leave the bar trade. Those who ran the trade wished to retain the services of women employed and used the subsequent definitions of who could work in the bar trade, as discussed in Chapter Three, to maintain staff. This would make no sense if, as *Women As Barmaids* states, the prime reason for employing women was ‘the attraction of girlish inexperience’.²² The women of Glasgow were retained

²² JCEB, p. 11.

because they knew the work and could do it well. For example, Emily Alford was listed as a barmaid in the 1901 census; by 1909, aged 31, she had married Charles Rait Davidson, a wine merchant's manager. In the 1911 census, she lives with Charles and her children. In 1919, her husband, now listed as a spirit merchant, died early. Emily could then employ her previous working experience and connections to become a restaurant manager by 1921, thus allowing her to provide for her family. She would live to 80, dying of cardiovascular disease.

The claim that the job of barmaid required no training relied on the presumption that there were no barriers to entry, with the JCEB claiming about hotel bars, 'experience seems to count for even less here than in the public-house bar' and then going on to use examples that states bars are looking for 'learners' to 'teach them their work'.²³ Such arguments show a lack of joined-up thinking from the JCEB. Like The Central Station Hotel, hotel bars employed numerous staff, including nine barmaids.²⁴ This made them better training grounds for barmaids than a small public house; the job could be learned from the other staff, and then as staff left for other positions, barmaids could progress to training others or leave for the public house bar, bringing their experience with them.

The *Dundee Evening Post* 10 days before the Licensing Courts included an interview with a male waiter. Here, the waiter explains that he is looking forward to the Licensing Courts decision as

it will make a big difference to us waiters [...] and better prices will be given to men who will be required. No doubt the employers will make an endeavour to get

²³ JCEB, p. 10.

²⁴ NRS, 1901 Census 644/7 44/1 p.2.

very young men into their service. But there is nothing worse in a restaurant than a young man who does not know the nature of the work, for one thing, he will break for a time at least glasses and dishes costing as much as his wages. Then he cannot be expected to know the different ways of serving dinner.²⁵

This waiter describes the work expected in the bar trade, and by ascribing it as men's work, it develops a status and training structure. It is a structure that is never contemplated when it is the barmaid doing the work, yet it is the same work.

Respectability, Death and the Maidens

An argument that made 'Indignant' write to the *Glasgow Herald* regarded the barmaid's respectability and health. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, health debates were intertwined with debates on morality. Health claims were used to bolster the abolitionists' argument by bringing in a physical element to boost moral claims. These arguments were based on concepts of the social purity movement, such as

Prolonged standing injures a woman in a way that it does not a man, and tends to incapacitate her for the normal woman's life.²⁶

There is a reason to believe that they share to the full in the abnormally high death-rate of publicans and their employees.²⁷

The race is indeed injured in no way more seriously than by anything unfitting its women physically or morally for the fulfilment of their functions as mothers.²⁸

These arguments can be checked against the information available through the National Records of Scotland. However, this requires sampling the women further and looking at those who can be traced from the 1901 census until their death. As stated, twenty-eight

²⁵ *Dundee Evening Post*, p. 5, 12 April 1902

²⁶ JCEB, p. 13.

²⁷ JCEB, p. 16.

²⁸ JCEB, p. 17.

death certificates correspond to 40% of the women sampled from these twenty-eight; the following data shows.

Table Three – Information From Full Life Records (Source: NRS)

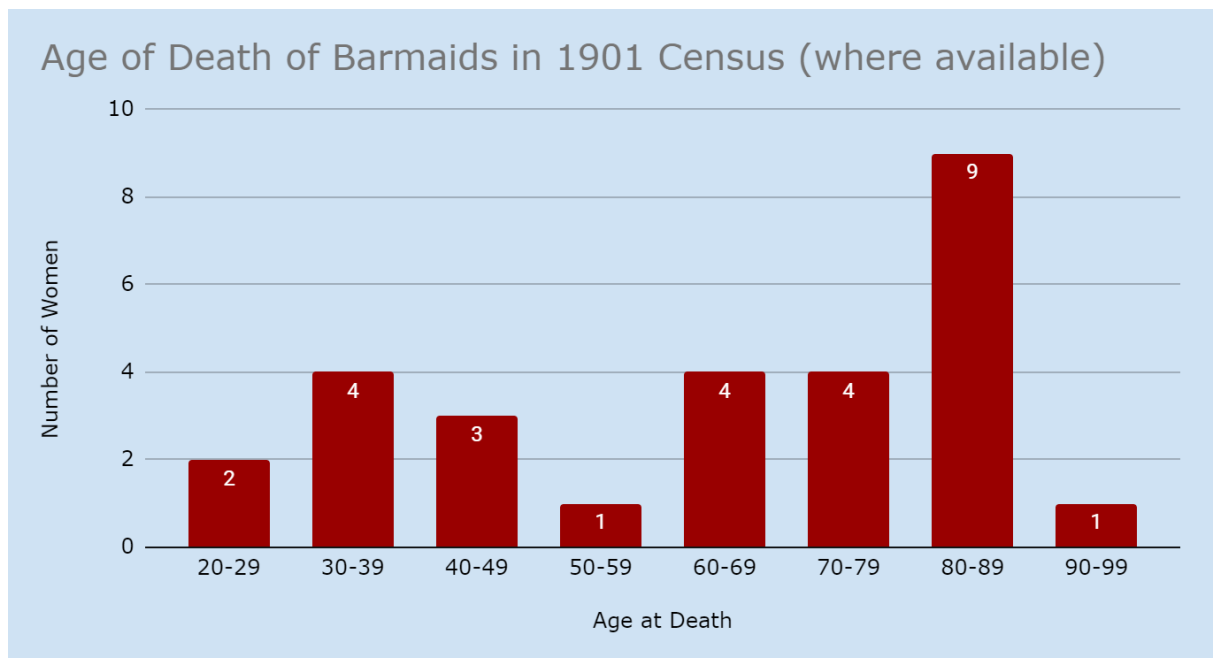
Death Found	Marriage Found	Children Found
28	23 (82%)	15 (54%)

When a death certificate was found, 82% of the women were married, and 54% had children. It is important to note here that searching for children was not a part of the research as much of that information would still be restricted for publication, so any children found were listed on either the two censuses or the death certificate. From this information, there appears to be nothing abnormal about the Glaswegian barmaids of 1901. They married, they had children, and, by all accounts, were not ‘incapacitate... for the normal woman’s life’.²⁹ Further, when the death certificate was found, it showed the ‘official statistics as to the mortality among barmaids, as a separate class’ that the JCEB were eager to obtain.³⁰

Graph 2 – Age of Death of Barmaids For Whom Death Certificates were found

²⁹ JCEB, p. 13.

³⁰ JCEB, p. 11.



This graph belies the assertions made by the JCEB and the ‘deputation of ladies’ at the 1902 Glasgow Licensing Court that the career of the barmaid led to ill-health, poverty and early death. Of the 28 death certificates found, 64% (18) lived beyond the age of 60, with most deaths occurring within the 80-89 age range, an age that many today would consider a full life. As Helen Muirhead demonstrates, those who did not marry or have children were not destitute. Helen Muirhead was a barmaid of the Bridge Street Station Hotel, discussed in Chapter Three; after her work there, she can be found in the 1911 and 1921 censuses described as a Mantle Machinist and Shop Keeper, respectively. The front-of-house and cash-handling skills that are required in the bar trade would have translated well as a shopkeeper, and she would go on to live until 81, before dying of Paralysis Agitans (Parkinson’s Disease).

Abolition: Saving The Barmaid

Throughout the arguments of those wishing to restrict women in the bar trade, there is, as discussed in Chapter Two, an underlying social purity ideology that saw these women as childish victims in need of patriarchal protection that could only be provided by legislation. This is obvious via the phrasing of the 1902 magistrates' recommendation that exempted 'wives or daughters of license-holders assisting in such shops' and the rough draft of a bill by the JCEB that exempted 'the wife or daughters of the holder of the license'.³¹ These exemptions highlight the concept of paternal protection along with assertions:

Cases of ruin which occur among barmaids almost without exception occur among girls hired out away from home, and hardly ever among those serving in their parents' establishments and under their care.³²

Poor girl, scarcely out of her teens, hitherto shielded and protected, she feels as if her father would turn in his grave.³³

Barmaids are frequently friendless, and the acquaintances they may have are seldom those likely to be helpful to them.³⁴

Again, none of these allegations are backed by any data from the JCEB; instead, it is taken for granted that the claims are valid because they are printed. The JCEB's reasons for abolition and restriction rest on the idea that these women are part of a predatory trade that isolates women and leaves them with no one to rely on. However, the evidence of the 1901 census shows otherwise.

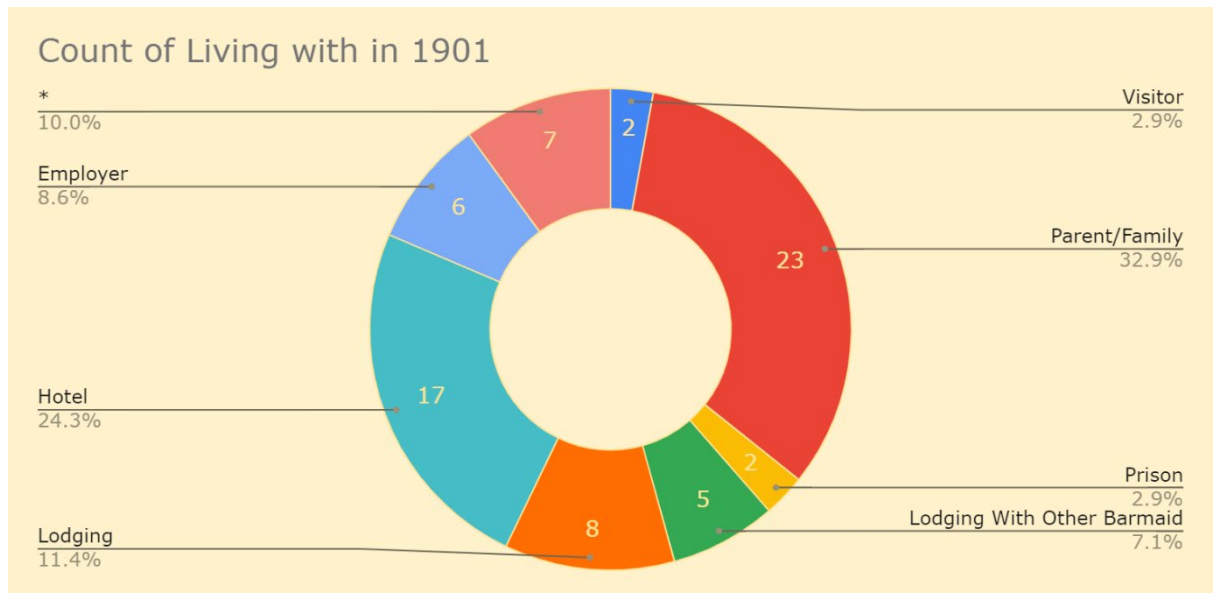
Graph 3 – Analysis of Living circumstances of Barmaids examined in 1901 Census data

³¹ *GH*, p. 11, 23 April 1902; JCEB, p. 60.

³² JCEB, p. 3.

³³ JCEB, p. 26.

³⁴ JCEB, p. 32.



Here, the data demonstrates that the most significant section of barmaids, 33% or one-third, were living with parents or direct family, including uncles/aunts or siblings. When they finished work, they stayed with family members and who would support them. Of the remainder, another 33% lived with their employers alongside other staff, including the nine who lived in the Central Station Hotel. This hotel, a building which still stands above Glasgow Central Station, hired fifteen Clerical Staff and 110 Servants, of whom 71 (65%) were female.³⁵ The barmaids accounted for nine of the 71 (13%) of the female staff, with others including a housekeeper, clerks, dessert room maids, laundry superintendant, chambermaids, housemaids, pantry workers, linen maids, cloak room attendant and stillroom maids.³⁶ To regard these women as unprotected, lacking any form of supervision or friendless is unjustified. These women were surrounded by others, including older women whose job was to keep the household of the hotel running. They were not isolated, and although they could be dismissed from the hotel if they lost their employment, this was no different from any other servant who lived in a hotel, country house or, indeed, as a

³⁵ NRS, 1901 Census 644/7 44/1, p iii.

³⁶ NRS, 1901 Census 644/7 44/1, p.1-5.

servant for a smaller middle-class home such as those for Margaret MacDonald or the residents of Radnor Park Gardens, Folkestone, where A. E. McLeod Gourlay could safely pontificate to the *Glasgow Herald* about barmaids' morals.

5. Conclusion

Glasgow magistrates' experiment in 1902 with its municipal power allowed it to exercise control over society via public morality and the control of the bar trade. The Barmaid Question, or the restriction of women in the bar trade, was primarily an issue for those who ascribed to the late nineteenth-century ideas identified as the social purity movement. The temperance movement was separate from the social purity movement, but each found a common cause with the other, drawing in several factions in the name of abolition. Recent historiography has relied on the analysis of Peter Bailey and has resultingly focused on the sexuality of the barmaid from the point of view of those observing her, whether it is the male gaze or the view of seeking the restriction of her work.

Morality plays a vital role in analysing the barmaid profession in the early 1900s. However, by focusing only on morality, the individual barmaid became lost in a fog of supposed characteristics that did not reflect the reality of their work. In addition, those who focused on the barmaid's morality would use the work of Eliza Orme to justify their cause on the grounds of working conditions. They selectively used Orme's work and manipulated data to make arguments that Orme refuted within her work. They did not seek to improve working conditions for the women, as they would have with other professions. Instead, they called for the outright abolition of women in the bar trade, even when organisations such as the British Womens' Temperance Association used the tactics they accused the bar trade of in promoting temperance. The core historical argument surrounding the Barmaid Question is that of the social purity movement rather than the temperance movement, and the Barmaid Question should be placed within that historiography.

The 1902 licensing courts attempted to abolish women's employment in the bar trade. However, the legal definitions of who was a barmaid left room for negotiation, with the fight continuing for some years and the impracticality of forcing women out of the trade in its entirety becoming obvious. In 1908, Glasgow still employed women in the bar trade, as evidenced by the tour of Carrie Nation. However, there is no doubt that individual livelihoods were affected. Those licensees with deeper pockets could show greater resilience in the face of the magistrates.

Margaret MacDonald saw the work of the barmaid profession as 'unhealthy, casual, and unskilled'; however, the data from the 1901 census on Glasgow barmaids shows anything but that.¹ The data shows that the women had average healthy lives, were married, and had children. Further, those who did not meet this turn of the twentieth-century ideal for womanhood were not left destitute or abandoned by society. It shows some were maintained in the industry even after the magistrates' recommendations, along with evidence of future employment that points to them having a skill set that was marketable for career progression, if necessary. The underlying concept of the abolitionists and the magistrates that the barmaid was unprotected in her situation is belied by the large majority of women living with family or in a situation not dissimilar to domestic servants of the period.

The barmaids of the 1902 Licensing Courts deserve better than to be remembered through the social purity and temperance lenses of the current historiography. This work seeks to redress

¹ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, 5th edn, (London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd, 1920), p. 162.

this balance by using the available historical sources to find the realities of these women.

Women like 'Indignant' who wrote to the Glasgow Herald to protest the casual way the magistrates sought to strip her of her work and moral standing.²

² *Glasgow Herald*, 24 April 1902, p. 10

Appendix: Genealogical Data of a Sample of Glasgow Barmaids from the 1901 Census

Full Name (1901)	Surname	Forename(s)	Age, 1901	Living with in 1901	Married Found	Date of Marriage	Years between 1901 census and date of marriage	Occupation at time of marriage	Evidence of Children Found	1911 Census Found	1911 Census Occupation (Excluding Married)	1921 Census Found	1921 Census Occupation (Excluding Home Duties)	Year of Death	Age at Death	Cause of Death	Father's Occupation 1901 (Or Birth)	Husband Occupation (Marriage)
Adams, Bessie	Adams	Elizabeth	30	Lodging	Yes	07-Apr-1905	4	Restaurant Waitress	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1930	49	Peritonitis due to operation	Ship Steward	Commercial Traveller
Alford, Emily	Alford	Emily	23	Lodging	Yes	02-Aug-1909	8	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Restaurant Managers	1958	80	Cardiovascular Degeneration	Railway Contractor	Wine Merchants Manager
Annan, Jeannie	Annan	Jane	22	Hotel	Yes	26-May-1903	2	-	No	No	-	No	-	1906	27	Endocarditis	Seaman	Hotel Manager
Bain, Mary	Bain	Mary	23	Parent	Yes	22-Feb-1911	10	-	No	No	-	Yes	-	1955	71	Aortic Sclerosis, Coronary Thrombosis	-	Chief Officer, Merchant Service
Bissett, Janet	Bissett	Janet	29	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Boyle, Minnie	Boyle	Mary or May	20	Hotel	Yes	06-Nov-1905	4	Restaurant Waitress	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Shoemaker	Fruit Dealer
Cairns, Mary	Cairns	Mary	30	Employer	Yes	-	-	-	No	Yes	-	No	-	1930	59	Myocardial Degeneration, Hypostatic Pneumonia	-	-
Chalmers, Jane	Chalmers	Jane	25	Prison	Yes	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chisholm, Isabella	Chisholm	Isabella	22	Employer	Yes	06-Sep-1910	9	Dressmaker	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1965	84	Cerebral Thrombosis	-	Spirit Merchant
Crawford, Louise	Crawford	Louise	25	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dalton, Agnes J	Dalton	Agnes Jeanie	25	Lodging With Other Barmaid	Yes	17-Oct-1902	1	Waitress	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	Tailor (Journeyman)	Fruit Salesman
Downie, John (Johan)*	Downie	Johan	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Drennen, Mary	Drennen	Mary	63	Children	Yes	-	-	Barmaid	Yes	Yes	-	No	-	1918	80	Senile Decay	-	Stone Mason (Journeyman)
Earle, Lillian	Earle	Lillian	19	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fair, May	Fair	May	20	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-

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Finningham, Maggie	Finningham	Maggie	25	Employer	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Hewer	-
Fraser, Jane	Fraser	Jane	34	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frazar, Tracie	Frazar	Tracie	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Gentleman, Ethel	née Campbell	Ethel	23	Sibling	Yes	30-Mar-1897	4	Hairdressers Assistant	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Rivetter	Butcher (Master)
Gibson, Minnie	Gibson	Minnie	26	Lodging With Other Barmaid	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Graham, Elizabeth*	Graham	Elizabeth	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Green, Elizabeth	Green	Elizabeth Ann Longworth	25	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	Yes	Cook (Domestic)	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gunn, Jessie	Gunn	Jessie	26	Parent	Yes	12-Sep-1902	1	Restaurant Waitress	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1965	89	Accidental fall, breaking neck and femur, Pneumonia	Hotel Waiter	Commercial Traveller
Harris, Rose	Harris	Rose	28	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Higgins, Rosetta	Higgins	Ann Jane (possible)	26	Employer	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Sugarhouse Labourer	-
Howard, Elizabeth	Howard	Elizabeth	27	Prison	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huart, Isabella	Stuart (?)	Isabella	32	Lodging	No	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1929	60	Carcinoma of the Liver, Ashtenia	Farm Servant	-
Jackson, Mary	Jackson	Mary Elizabeth	28	Visitor	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jacques, Ellen	Jacques	Ellen	25	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Johnston, Olive	Johnston	Olive	22	Lodging With Other Barmaid	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
King, John*	King	John	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kissick, Sarah	Kissick	Sarah	24	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lambert, Jeanie	Lambert	Jeanie	23	Parent	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	1911	33	Pulmonary Phthisis	-	-
Lavert, Kate	Larcet (?)	Kate	27	Lodging	Yes	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lindsay, Mary	Lindsay	Mary	22	Parent	Yes	16-Aug-1901	0	Restaurant Waitress	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1965	86	Fall breaking femur, pneumonia	Blacksmith	Mason
MacDonald, Lewina	MacDonald	Lewina	26	Employer	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix: Genealogical Data of a Sample of Glasgow Barmaids from the 1901 Census

Mackie, Jeanie	Mackie	Jeanie	21	Parent	Yes	-	-	Dairymaid	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Charwoman	1974	94	Congestive Heart Failure	Carter	Brass Moulder
Mackinnon, Elizabeth	Mackenna (?)	Elizabeth	23	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maclean, Martha	Maclean	Martha	23	Lodging With Other Barmaid	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Matthews, Alice*	Matthews	Alice Maud	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
McGeachie, Teresa	Gechie	Teresa	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
McHardy, Isabella	McHardy	Isabella	20	Family	Yes	16-Apr-1914	13	At Home	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1970	89	Cerebral Thrombosis	Post Boy	Shopkeeper

McKenzie, Jane	McKenzie	Jane	19	Sibling	Yes	28-Sep-1906	5	-	No	No	-	No	-	1928	48	Limbs crushed by lorry (Shock)	Ship Rigger	Steel Roller
McKinnon, Catherine	McKinnon	Catherine	33	Lodging	Yes	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
McMillan, Morgan	McMillan	Mary Ann	24	Family	No	-	-	-	No	Yes	-	Yes	-	1909	32	Phthisis	Ship Steward	-
McNair, Kate	McPhail (?)	Kate	24	Lodging With Other Barmaid	Yes	01-Sep-1932	29	-	No	No	-	Yes	Cook Domestic	1956	79	Aortic Valve Disease, Congestive Cardiac Failure	-	Paper Cutting Machinist
McRae, Annie*	McRae	Annie	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	-	*	*	*	*
Meek, Lucy	Meeke	Joanna Lucy	23	Hotel	Yes	06-Apr-1903	2	Hotel Bookkeeper	No	No	-	Yes	Barmaid	1954	77	Cardiovascular Degeneration	Hotel Porter	Spirit Merchant
Mellon, Elizabeth	Mellon	Elizabeth	18	Employer	No	-	-	-	No	Yes	-	Yes	-	1972	88	Ventricular Failure, Hypertension	Police Constable	-
Morgan, Rosalind	Morgan	Rosiah Small	19	Parent	Yes	19-Jan-1906	5	-	No	No	-	No	-	1921	38	Carcinoma Uterus	Engine Driver	Dairyman
Morgan, Sarah	Morgan	Sarah	21	Parent	Yes	1904	-	Restaurant Barmaid	No	No	-	No	-	1906	26	Meningitis	Engine Driver	Actor
Morrison, Euphemia	Morrison	Euphemia	31	Lodging	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muirhead, Helen	Muirhead	Helen Menzie	22	Hotel	No	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	Mantle Machinist	Yes	Shop Keeper	1959	81	Paralysis Agitans (Parkinson Disease), Bed Sores	Rope Maker	-
Munro, Mona	Munro	Mona	21	Lodging	Yes	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	1945	64	-	-	-
Nicholls, Blanche	Nicholls	Blanche	19	Parent	Yes	03-Aug-1904	3	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1925	43	Ewing's Sarcoma, Operation and	Musician	Mechanical Engineer

Appendix: Genealogical Data of a Sample of Glasgow Barmaids from the 1901 Census

																Secondary Paralysis		
Nielson, Jessie	Nelson	Jessie	19	Parent	Yes	29-Sep-1905	4	Restaurant Waitress	Yes	Yes	-	No	-	1915	33	Cerebral Haemorrhage	Shipping Agent	Iron Labourer
Parwin, Edith	Parutin	Edith	22	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Patterson, Margaret	Gallerson	Margaret	23	Hotel	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pratt, Lizzie	Pratt	Elizabeth Smith	21	Sibling	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Blacksmith	-
Pringle, Jessie	Pringle	Jessie	26	Sibling	No	-	-	-	No	Yes	Domestic Agency (own account), working at home	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richards, Ethel	Richards	Ethel Wylde	24	Sibling	Yes	09-Jun-1904	3	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Commercial Traveller	Colliery Oversman
Richards, Kate	Richards	Kate	28	Sibling	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Commercial Traveller	-
Russell, Nellie	Russell	Helen	24	Parent	No	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	Waitress (Restaurant)	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sinclair, Christina	Sinclair	Christina	25	Parent	Yes	30-Mar-1910	9	-	Yes	Yes	Private Means (Widow)	Yes	-	1947	71	Bronchopneumonia	Master Mariner	Ship Steward
Sperring, Mary	Sperring	Mary	22	Lodging	No	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stevens, Helen	Stevens	Helen	25	Visitor	Yes	-	-	-	No	No	-	No	-	1956	80	Arteriosclerolosis	-	Railway Clerk
Stewart, Margaret	Stewart	Margaret Baird	17	Parent	Yes	03-Dec-1902	1	-	Yes	No	-	Yes	-	1946	62	Strangulated Hernia	Engine Fitter	Iron Bridge Builder
Stitt, Rebecca	Stitt	Rebecca	22	Parent	Yes	07-Sep-1903	2	Barmaid	No	Yes	-	No	-	1915	36	Carcinoma on Uterus	Shoemaker	Spirit Salesman
Swan, Elizabeth	Swan	Elizabeth	20	Parent	Yes	28-Feb-1902	1	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	1941	60	Degeneration of Cardiovascular system (?) - B12 Deficiency	Blender at Bottled Store	Engine Fitter

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