HAYLER, GUY

Guy Hayler (1851-1943) was a noted campaigner for the prohibition of alcohol for recreational consumption. He was also an active Freemason, achieving the rank of Master Mason in 1885,[1] and Grand Counsellor of the Grand Lodge of Good Templars.[2]

Early in the twenty-first century we are much more concerned with drugs other than alcohol, though both in their various ways can lead to serious health problems; and drugs, now being illegal, offer more or less unlimited opportunities for crime and its associated violence exactly as alcohol notoriously did during the American era of prohibition. There certainly remain campaigns against both, though not now generally associated with dissenting religion and radical politics.

This was not so in the nineteenth century, when drugs were legal (which does not mean that they had no serious effects) but alcohol was the universal and identifiable curse. The licensing of premises to sell alcoholic beverages dates back to 1552, and was based on the need to ensure some form of standard and the collection of taxes, but it was not until almost three hundred years later that concerted efforts began to impose limits on its consumption. Until then it was universally accepted that it was a matter solely for the individual to determine his or her level of consumption. Even under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, when almost every form of enjoyment was banned – in essence everything even vaguely connected with illicit sexual behaviour – there was no attempt to impose controls on alcohol. In the following century the enemy was not beer but gin (and imported liquor of all kinds), and various Acts of Parliament sought to diminish the social disorders so famously depicted by William Hogarth.

Far from discouraging drinking, the idea was developed to divert the drinker to fluids less damaging than spirits. In 1830 the Beerhouse Act encouraged the opening of very many new public houses that were allowed to sell beer but not spirits. The objectives were various, but one was to kill off the remaining, still powerful, addiction to spirits. Someone could now sell beer without having the agreement of the local justices, simply on payment of an annual licence fee.

The movement towards total abstinence seems to have begun in about 1820, and it made rapid inroads into the much more relaxed notion that temperance was the ideal, depending on individual will and with whatever minor restrictions and taxes there might be on sales. By the 1860s things were going further, for example with total bans on alcohol in some places such as parks bequeathed for the public good and the estates of any wealthy landowner committed to the new cause. As always, campaigners for reasonable behaviour were slowly forced out of the public eye by those who made louder noises. 'Signing the pledge' for total abstinence was by no means uncommon. Several attempts to introduce partial prohibition were made in the House of Commons up to the 1920s, when the last to try was T Lief Jones (known by some as *tea leaf Jones*), a Hayler associate. Nevertheless both Scotland and Wales were successful in obtaining Acts. The first-ever piece of Welsh-only legislation

passed by the Westminster Parliament, the Sunday Closing (Wales) Act 1881, shut pubs on Sundays, and remained partly in force until 1996. The Temperance (Scotland) Act of 1913 allowed local areas to vote on whether to allow alcohol to be sold and it is still in force, though rarely used. England remained largely untouched until very restrictive provisions on opening hours arrived in the First World War, not relaxed for many decades.

Hayler was among the prominent campaigners for total abstention. He had been born at Battle on 5 November 1850. Guy campaigned against what he saw as worst sins of his day: alcohol and war. The absence of major European wars before 1914 meant that his interest – one might say obsession – with alcohol was at minimal risk of distraction.

His father was George, a tailor born at Sedlescombe, and his mother Mary Wood Hayler from Wittersham (his father's second wife). The choice of Guy's Christian name, with its resonance of revolutionary activity, is consistent with his father's support for Chartism. Significantly, the family was dissenting, being Congregationalist.

Guy had five older siblings or half-siblings: by 1851 James was apprenticed as a tailor, presumably to his father; George was a turner and Henry a french polisher (aged 13). Henry went to the USA in 1853 as a pioneer in Iowa and did well; he was to die in 1909.[3]

Ann (23) and Mark (12) had no recorded occupation. The children were all born at Battle. Where they lived is not wholly clear – the census return for that year is not specific – but the family website entry says that it was in the cottage next to the Abbey Gate. Cresy's report of 1850 suggests that they were at what is now 2 or 3 Abbey Green.[4]

By 1861 George, his two younger sons and two daughters-in-law were recorded as living at 14 Stone Street, Hastings, one of the streets then leading off Queen's Road. Mary had apparently died at Hastings at the beginning of the year.[5] (George followed her in 1866.) According to the family report Guy left the area at the age of 14, which would have been in about 1864. He had been converted to the cause of temperance at the very early age of six, presumably with the support if not at the insistence of his parents, at a blacksmith's shop in Hastings run by one Noakes. This was Stanton Noakes of 1 Fountain Road, a name no longer used.

By the late 1860s Guy had gone to London, where he found work as a painter and decorator.

The family account continues:

> Somebody handed him a handbill advertising a meeting to be held in the Exeter Hall, 26 King William Street. This proved to be a great temperance rally and my grandfather became immersed in the cause. He was given the role of steward and attended all the public meetings. In 1870 when he was twenty, he joined another branch of the movement called the Good Templers, an organisation that had Lodges in different parts of the country. This particular lodge was over William Tweedie's bookshop in the Strand and it was here that he had the good fortune to meet my grandmother Elizabeth Harriss.

Exeter Hall, which was to be demolished in 1907, was a great centre for radical causes, among them having been the abolition of slavery. It was also a centre for temperance activity:

> The first temperance meeting was held on June 29th, 1831, and was one of the greatest on record. It was followed by a long series of others, and in 1853 the committee of the London Temperance League invited the famous orator, John B. Gough, to come over from the United States. On August 2nd of that year, a notable meeting was held at which he received a great reception. His power surpassed all expectations, and in the three visits he paid to England, he delivered, altogether, over 100 temperance addresses in Exeter Hall. Sir Wilfred Lawson's Local Option resolution in 1879 [his parliamentary attempt at allowing local areas to ban alcohol] was also supported by a great meeting.[6]

Anne Elizabeth Harriss was from a well-to-do middle-class family in Lambeth. They married at St Mark's, Kennington on 29 July 1874. They would have eight children: one in London, six in Hull and one in Newcastle on Tyne.

> In the year of their marriage they moved to Hull where they ran Haylers Temperance Hotel. On the advertising card I have describing it, there are engravings of the coffee rooms, billiard room, smoke room, commercial room, club room and reading room. It looks quite an impressive place. My grandfather was also busy at this time organising public meetings and getting involved in all aspects of the Temperance movement.

Temperance establishments might be unusual today but up to the 1960s they were not uncommon and were to be found even in the West End of London. (Locally there was another at Bulverhythe, too.)

After the marriage he was appointed the secretary of the Hull branch of the United Kingdom Alliance, the leading temperance organisation, and the couple moved there. Hull was a prosperous merchant and shipping port and therefore a good place for any young man to launch a career. In 1889 he rose to a bigger job at Newcastle on Tyne:

> After sixteen years they left Hull for Newcastle, where my grandfather became full time secretary of the North of England Temperance League. He worked incredibly hard here organising hundreds of rallies, demonstrations and public meetings. One of the most successful events was a grand bazaar opened by Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise. He was now becoming well known as a powerful orator.

Undated photograph of Guy Hayler, almost certainly late nineteenth century.

Although prohibition was overwhelmingly a working-class movement it had its upper-class adherents. Lady Henry Somerset (1851-1921) was one such, and she was also a promoter of women's rights. Hayler caught the eye of another upper-class woman, Rosalind Howard, Countess of Carlisle (1845-1921), the châtelaine of Castle Howard in Yorkshire. She had joined the anti-alcohol movement in 1881 and used her authority to ban alcohol from the Castle Howard estate, including a condition of abstinence by her workers. She shut as

many pubs as she could. She much admired Hayler and when he was suffering from overwork in Newcastle she offered him a home and work at Bulmer on her estate. This lasted only a short time because he inherited a substantial sum from an uncle and moved to Surrey. Anne died at their home Courtfield, 4 Avenue Road, South Norwood in 1941 and Guy died there in 1943.

Hayler never wavered in his commitment to the cause and remained active in it until his old age. His remarks on Adolf Hitler were not quite as controversial then as they would be now, even if his confidence in the Führer's ability to wean the Germans off beer and wine was more than a little hopeful:

> Some British prohibitionists were given to admiring, a trifle wistfully, the way the Nazis were tackling the drink problem in Germany. In his presidential address to the 1937 meeting of the World Prohibition Federation in Warsaw, Guy Hayler said the fight against inebriating poisons had enjoyed official patronage and leadership since the advent of Herr Adolf Hitler in 1933.[7]

Hayler's international involvements were considerable. He went to the USA on various occasions to help and to learn from prohibitionists there, and in 1909 he became the founding honorary president of what became the World Prohibition Federation and edited its *International Record* until his death.[8] He was a prolific writer of reports and pamphlets, and even has a novel to his name (perhaps needless to say, on the subject of teetotalism).

Hayler was of course not a single-issue man, as his letter to Asquith, the prime minister, makes clear (31 December 1915):

> Dear Sir,
>
> If it is true that the Government has decided in favour of Conscription, the unity of the nation is gone, and evil times are in store for thousands in this land.
>
> For one, and I know there are many more, I shall fight this evil thing for all I am worth. It may mean withdrawing from all the work in which we have been engaged in since this deplorable war began, but in fighting militarism in Germany we never looked for it being planted in our own country.
>
> From those I have already seen, who are opposed to conscription, there must be thousands who will not willingly allow it to become law. If you force it through Parliament you will want an army to enforce it.
>
> As an old radical I emplore [sic] you not to permit this wrong being done.
>
> Yours very truly,
>
> Guy Hayler

The family continued in the same strain. Guy's son Glen Herbert Hayler was called up in the next year and court-martialled for disobeying orders. In his defence he stated, in part:

> At the local tribunal, I stated that I was a conscientious objector, and that my objection to war was of long standing. I was brought up in a home where the principles of peace were taught. Under my father's roof have slept men and woman from all parts of the world, who were engaged in trying to benefit their fellows. Listening to their conversations, I began to understand something of the idea of the brotherhood of man.

> Later, by reading and study, I was able to reason these things out for myself, and I came to the conclusion that war was absolutely wrong; that men, the wide-world over, were brothers, and that international matters, as national matters and local matters, could best be settled by peaceful means. To accomplish this end, men should refuse to slaughter one another, or to assist in any way the organisation of militarism. This led me to the conclusion that under no circumstances could I ever become a solder, nor assist in the preparation or conduct of war. Parliament has recognised that such as I exist, and I therefore claim absolute exemption on the conscientious grounds. In taking my stand on what I sincerely believe to be the right, I can only say these are my firm convictions, and by these I must stand.
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> At the appeal tribunal, my father gave evidence that these principles had been held by me from boyhood; that I had declined, while at school, to be drilled by a military officer, and had taken a strong religious stand against war. I also explained to the appeal tribunal that as a Christian I was opposed to all war. I endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to convince both the tribunals of the sincerity of my views on these matters, but they failed to appreciate the strength of my religious convictions. The Chairman of the local tribunal declared that I had no conscious, and the appeal tribunal refused not only to give me the protection to which I am entitled by law, but even to permit me to appeal to the central tribunal.

Nevertheless he was sentenced to six months' detention.[9] Glen survived the war and married in 1920, living to 1986 when he died at Worthing; his son (Guy Ralph, an architect) married and had children at Brighton, dying there in 1969. His daughter Catherine married at Worthing and also had children. So at least part of the family returned to Sussex.

A fate similar to Glen's befell his brother Mark Henry Chambers Hayler (1887-1986), who was imprisoned on various occasions for his resistance to conscription. He loyally followed his father in his campaigns, becoming executive secretary of the World Prohibition Federation in 1925, and editor of the Federation's journal after Guy died. (The journal ceased publication in 1968.)

As we know, the elder Guy did not achieve his objective, even partially. Public houses are now open throughout the day throughout Great Britain, even on Sundays, and usually children are admitted; alcohol is easily obtainable from supermarkets at prices far lower than in pubs. But if drunkenness was a curse in the past, it still is. It remains closely associated with poverty, domestic and street violence and, together with alcoholism, creates serious pressure on an already-overstretched health service. Guy's crusade was far from ignoble, even if when it succeeded in the United States it led to much worse rather than to better conditions.

Notes on sources

Except where otherwise stated or where the source is from census or BMD records. The main work is *The Hayler Family & Bulmer* by Shirley Hare, written in July 1986 and typed by Dr Jonathan Hare of the University of Sussex in January 2006. Among its pictures is the one above. It was read at www.creative-science.org.uk/bulmer.html. Further information was found in Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, Ian R. Tyrrell: *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: a global encyclopedia*, 2003, read at http://www.lodgetemperance.org.uk/history/founding-members/bro-guy-hayler/

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[1] http://www.lodgetemperance.org.uk/history/founding-members/bro-guy-hayler/
[2] *Daily Mail*, 23 April 1897.
[3] *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 10 July 1909.
[4] *Report of the General Board of Health on a preliminary enquiry into the sewerage, drainage, and supply of water, and the sanitary condition of the inhabitants of Battle in the County of Sussex* (Edward Cresy, CE, 1850).
[5] The death of Mary *Wood* Hayler is recorded for January 1861. No other deaths in Battle or Hastings between 1851 and 1861 come as close as this to meeting the requirements of her name.
[6] http://studymore.org.uk/aexeter.htm
[7] See Peter Fryer: *Mrs Grundy, studies in English prudery* (Dennis Dobson, 1963), which contains an extended account of the temperance campaign in Britain.
[8] http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20063495
[9] http://www.creative-science.org.uk/glen.html