The establishment of champagne in Britain, 1860–1914



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Short abstract

This thesis is the first to study the history of champagne in nineteenth-century Britain, a period in which the usage and style of champagne changed fundamentally. From a sweet, lightly effervescent wine drunk on its own or with desserts, it became a fully dry and fully sparkling wine drunk throughout the meal. The central questions I address are why these changes occurred and what role the marketing and branding of champagne played in these changes. This analysis integrates production studies (including marketing and branding) and consumption studies by drawing on the rich vein of contemporary consumption data and the evidence of the day-to-day practice of the London agents of the French champagne houses. The thesis demonstrates that champagne was able to develop uniquely powerful brands that were managed in ways that closely prefigure the marketing practice of modern luxury brand owners.

Historiography

Whilst there have been many books on the subject of consumption in the last three decades, very few of these have focused on drinkers and drinking. There have also been many different approaches to consumption studies from sociologists, anthropologists, literary scholars and historians and this work draws on all those traditions. My own interest lies in the changing daily habits of consumption and I have therefore drawn extensively not just on the historical scholarship but also on the writings of modern experts on branding and marketing to understand how consumer choice is currently

understood and managed. The commercial importance of food and drink means much work has been done in these areas – not excluding wine. The history of drink in the last three centuries, however, has had relatively little interest until recently. Recent works by John Burnett, Charles Ludington and James Simpson illuminate the general history of wine in Britain but, though there are many general books on champagne, there has only been one history, that published by André Simon in 1905. Simon, agent for a champagne producer, was well placed to understand the trade and his work remains an important source. I have endeavoured to review all these works through the lens of the nineteenth-century British press and the archives of selected champagne producers and their British distributors.

1. Framing the market: wine in Britain, 1800-1914

Chapter One surveys the British wine market between 1800 and 1914. It looks at the market performance of different wines over time in the context of the rapid rise in light (i.e. unfortified) wine sales after Gladstone's liberalisation of both the duties on wine and the licensing system in 1860–62. Using market performance data derived from government statistics supplemented by analysis of newspaper advertisements for wine and archival data from the market-leading distribution firm of W. & A. Gilbey, it examines the importance and impact of a number of century-long drivers of change: notably the 'temperate turn' in British society, the continuing concerns over adulteration and sharp practice in the trade and the consequent persistent but patchy growth in attempts to brand wine. By the end of the 1860s, champagne was established as a wine not just of the elite but also of the new commercial middle class, and it continued to hold its share of the overall wine market until sales slipped in the five years immediately prior to World War One. After looking at the nineteenth-century history of other wines, the

chapter closes with an introductory overview of the champagne market, focusing on the changes in its taste and style and its unique ability to sustain frequent price rises which the thesis will link to its role as an important marker of social status.

2. 'A smart agent and lavish expenditure': the distribution and marketing of champagne in England 1860–75

In the fifteen years after Gladstone's liberalisation of the wine market, entrepreneurial London agents acting for French producers largely took control of the marketing of champagne. They exploited the fast-growing market, evolving new distribution strategies and dealing with the challenges posed by counterfeit wines and 'namealike' brands. In particular, Adolphe Hubinet, the agent for the French house of Pommery and Greno, started to develop highly effective branding and marketing strategies that would in the following decades build Pommery into the most expensive and well-known brand in the British market. Using the archives of the French champagne houses, the Gilbey's archives and the coverage of wine in a range of contemporary British sources that includes the national and provincial press and the specialist wine trade press, the chapter outlines how champagne's new marketing template was developed and exploited by Pommery and other brands. However, increasing popularity brought its own challenges and the chapter concludes by looking at the pressures on champagne that might have caused price-led deterioration of quality of the type that resulted in both claret and sherry losing their reputation in the British market.

3. 'Taste changes very fast': consumers and consumption, 1860–75

In the first of two chapters on the consumers and their perspective on the market, I examine how the consumption of champagne changed between 1860 and 1875 and how these changes affected the taste and image of champagne. The chapter first analyses why

it became so popular and socially powerful amongst men and women across a broad range of society. Specifically, it points to the importance of the dinner party and how it contributed to changing champagne from slightly less sweet than the European standard to very dry. Producer archives and sales records are used to confirm this shift to dry wines but the main sources for this chapter are the press, novels and songs of the period, as well as the flood of new wine books aimed at introducing a new public to the ever-increasing range of wine that was becoming available on the British market. Despite the range of information about wine that such books and articles in the general press communicated, most informed contemporaries agreed that the great majority of consumers were incapable of judging the quality of different champagnes. The market began to segment: lower-price wines for public dinners, race meetings and public or semi-public events; higher-priced and heavily branded wines for dinner parties where social capital was on display.

4. 'Votaries of fashion?': changing consumer tastes, 1876–1914

The second of the two chapters on consumption shows how champagne became steadily more embedded in the habits of late Victorian society. It focuses on illustrating and understanding the social and marketing dynamics that cemented champagne's role as a powerful marker of status and a symbol of personal hedonism. Using similar sources to Chapter Three but also drawing on the rich data contained in *Punch* cartoons, this chapter examines the role of women in champagne choice and consumption, the power of the label and the importance of fashion as a driver of choice. It also considers the role of premium pricing. Despite the concern expressed by the general and trade press at the steadily rising price (at a point when prices of other wines were stable or falling), consumers continued to respond to the 'illusion of scarcity' that the champagne houses

fostered, notably through the introduction in the mid-1870s of vintage-dated wines which took the market by storm in the 1880s and 1890s. Though such expensive wines were beyond the pocket of many in the middling classes of society, they too adopted the champagne habit, which became part not just of the celebrations of the wealthy but also of the day-to-day rituals of men in the commercial and professional classes. Though champagne's appropriation of personal 'celebration' was certainly not complete before World War One, the foundations for this shift from the public to the private were laid in the period 1876–1914. The chapter concludes by examining consumer signalling in the light of modern thinking about identity and status.

5. 'The magic of brand': the marketing and branding of champagne, 1876–1914

The final chapter of the thesis returns to the perspective of the champagne industry to analyse firstly how and why its branding and marketing changed after the mid-1870s and what effect these tactics had on consumers, and secondly, how their approach compares to that advocated by modern luxury marketers. The first intensification of the branding and marketing came with the introduction of vintage-dated wines (of which Pommery 1874 was the first and most important). These created what modern marketers have called the all-important 'illusion of scarcity' in products that are, in fact, readily available and enabled the producers to push up prices considerably. Secondly, the period saw successful development and increasing differentiation of the house brands which effectively side-lined the merchant's own brands regardless of any cost advantage to consumers. I look at two different attempts to create new 'challenger brands' and analyse the reasons for their failure. Increasingly, new and secondary brands entering the market attempted to appropriate the 'cachet' of the Champagne region, and the final sections of the chapter look at the French-led initiatives centred on the Paris Expositions

of 1889 and 1900 that laid the foundations for the successful creation of ‘Champagne’ as an exclusive territorial brand. ‘If it’s not from Champagne, it’s not champagne’ is still central to all the modern champagne trade’s marketing. The chapter closes with a case study of Moët & Chandon, who were the first to integrate the themes of the territorial brand into a marketing approach specific to the United Kingdom and, in doing so, set the tone for the marketing of the immediate post-war era.

The thesis as a whole demonstrates firstly the importance of champagne’s in the development of product branding, a process in which its role as a social marker in Victorian society was central. Secondly, it reaffirms the importance of intermediaries in the history of consumption. It is not enough to focus solely on producers and consumers. Lastly it shows the crucial role that the champagne industry played in the development of territorial branding, which has become central to food and drink marketing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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Abbreviations and short forms used

AMVC	Archives Maison Veuve Clicquot
APJ	Archives Perrier-Jouët
APR	Archives Pol Roger
BNA	British Newspaper Archive
BSM	Gilbey Archive, Bishop's Stortford Museum
CCH	*Compilation de la correspondance de Hubinet*, ed., André Flocquet, Pommery Archive, Reims
Diageo	Diageo Archive, Menstrie
Punch	*Punch, or, The London Charivari*
Ridley's	*Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*

Note All quotations given in the text are in the original language. Where appropriate translations have been given in the footnotes.

Introduction

Nineteenth-century champagne was a wine made new through English agency.[1] In 1800, champagne was as often still as sparkling. When sparkling, it was almost universally sweet – a wine to be drunk after rather than with food. In colour it was grey or amber (even red).[2] By 1900 champagne in Britain was typically pale gold, unequivocally sparkling, almost universally dry and principally drunk with savoury dishes in restaurants and at home. Young elite males in London's West End clubs initiated these changes in the 1850s and French producers adapted their wine to meet the evolving demands of what became their most important market.[3]

The drinkers also changed. The revised duty structures that Gladstone's budgets of 1860-62 put in place sparked a fifteen-year boom in light (i.e. unfortified) wine. Total wine consumption more than doubled by the mid-1870s before falling slowly to 1914.[4] The wine and spirit distribution firm of W. & A. Gilbey created a highly successful network of 2,500 'grocer wine merchants' that penetrated every town of any size in Britain and brought wine of guaranteed quality and good value within the reach of hundreds of thousands of middle-class drinkers.[5] Champagne was a principal beneficiary

[1] Contemporary sources rarely used the terms Britain or British. The general and trade press and the London agents used 'England' or 'English' as their default unless specifically referring to another country in the United Kingdom. When using material derived from such sources I have normally followed this usage, except where it is clear from the context that Britain as a whole is being referred to.
[2] For the early status of champagne, see B. Musset, "Les Vins De Champagne Et Leurs Consommateurs," in *Le Champagne: Une Histoire Franco-Allemande*, ed. C. Desbois-Thibault, W. Paravicini, and J.-P. Poussou (Paris, 2011).
[3] Musset, "Les Vins De Champagne," p. 118 estimates that 0.7% of champagne exports went to England in 1764-67. By 1873 UK champagne sales were around 30% of worldwide sales of around 22 million bottles (author's estimate from British government statistics and French production figures). Until the mid-1870s almost all sparkling wine was from Champagne. After that period, increasing volumes of sparkling wine from the Saumur were sold. This was generally regarded as 'champagne' until at least the 1880s and there is no way to distinguish between these two in official statistics.
[4] G.B. Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation: A Contribution to the Study of the Liquor Problem in the United Kingdom from 1800-1935* (London, 1940), Table 11, p. 363.
[5] Diageo Archive, 10100204/12. 'Material sent to Agents', Gilbey's circular of 2 August 1880.

of Gladstone's changes; volume sales rose more than three-fold between 1860 and 1875 and the evidence of novels and newspapers suggests that champagne became a – perhaps even *the* – respectable alcoholic drink for wives and daughters of middle- and upper-class men, though it continued to be advertised to and drunk by elite men.[6] Lastly – unlike other sectors of the British wine market – the champagne trade was, by the end of the period, dominated by powerful brands. These brands – names such as Veuve Clicquot, Moët & Chandon and Pommery – although owned by French producers, were in many ways the product of the activity of their London agents.

Though champagne was central to a broad range of public and private events, it never accounted for more than ten per cent of total wine consumption, itself a small fraction of total alcohol consumption.[7] George Wilson, the first great British statistician of alcoholic beverages, judged that wine was 'in no sense a national beverage'. He characterised it as 'mainly luxury drinking by a limited class'.[8] Inasmuch as wine consumption peaked at 2.5 litres per capita in 1870–74 compared to beer at over 140 litres per capita in that same period he was right.[9] But, even if the experience of drinking champagne was confined to few, the idea of champagne was very widely spread in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Peter Bailey has noted, 'within a few years [of the 1860s] there could have been few music hall goers who were not familiar with the

[6] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 335. For women drinking, see A. Trollope, *Miss Mackenzie* (London, 1936), pp. 103-4. For the continuing consumption by elite males, note the Prince of Wales' claimed 'endorsement' of specific champagne brands as the primary 'dinner drink', as reported in *Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*, 12 January 1885, p. 26.
[7] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 2, p. 335. This data reflects legitimate imports rather than any wines of dubious origin; the current (2016) sparkling wine share of the UK market is circa 10%; champagne has just over 1% share. See USDA Foreign Agricultural Service GAIN report, "UK Wine Market Report 2016," (2016),p. 4. [https.//gain.fas.usda.gov. Accessed 22 November 2016.]. Britain remains the number one export market for champagne. See Comité Champagne, "Economy of Champagne: Key Market Statistics," https://www.champagne.fr/en/champagne-economy/key-market-statistics. [Accessed 8 November 2017.]
[8] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 31.
[9] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 2, p. 335.

idea and image of champagne – if not with its consumption'.[10] It was an integral part of the extensively reported Derby Day shenanigans (vividly depicted in William Frith's painting of that name).[11] On the Epsom Downs and for the men and women in the music hall audience, champagne evoked good times and financial (and sexual) success from 'Poplar to Pall Mall'.[12] For the guests at Victorian dinner parties it was not only a mark of status but also a social solvent that eased the rule-bound formalities of the mid-Victorian dining-room. For the wealthiest it was a stimulant to sociability and sensuality. Champagne became central to a broad range of public and private events. How did it achieve this position and how much did it owe to its long history in the British market?

The history of champagne

The province of Champagne in north-east France had been the first region in the world fully to commercialise the production of sparkling wine. Names of vineyard areas such as Sillery and Ay became familiar to wealthy British consumers in the eighteenth century. Favourable chalk soil (which facilitated the easy construction of deep cellars), proximity to the wealthy markets of Reims and Paris and a position at the crossroads of major European trade routes compensated for a cool climate in which the grapes ripened late and the natural fermentation was frequently halted by winter frosts. In spring, when the temperatures rose again, the fermentation might re-start. The carbonic acid gas created in such refermenting wines produced the sparkle. However, refermenting wines were a commercial problem for growers and merchants. They spoiled easily and quickly became unsaleable. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of sparkling wine was noted, and sufficiently

[10] P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 112, 114.
[11] M.J. Huggins, "Art, Horse Racing and the 'Sporting' Gaze in Mid-Nineteenth Century England: William Powell Frith's the Derby Day," *Sport in History* 33, no. 2 (2013), pp. 125-8. See also *Morning Post*, 7 June 1870, p. 5.
[12] See lyrics of 'Champagne Charlie' in A. Lee, *Champagne Charlie: The Great Comic Song* (London, 1867). The name of the character was variously spelled 'Charley' or 'Charlie'. The latter is more usual.

appreciated for English merchants in the early modern period to adopt the practice of adding molasses to the wine in the cask to provoke a second fermentation.[13] Christopher Merret, an English scientist, was the first to document this phenomenon in a paper presented to the Royal Society in 1662, giving rise to the idea that an Englishman 'invented' champagne.[14]

When André Simon published the first (and only) history of champagne in Britain in 1905, Merret's paper was unknown. However, Simon, agent for a champagne producer, was well placed to understand the trade and his work remains an important source. His history of the 'trade in England' began with the 'merry-making' of the Restoration. In this account, Charles II 'had learned to appreciate Champagne' whilst in exile in France where it was already a favourite at the court of Versailles. On his return, he and his court 'longed for some new wine, more original, lighter, more exhilarating and extravagant than then known'.[15] Champagne – aided by the intermediary skills of the exiled Marquis de Saint-Évremond – became that wine. Contemporary references in poems and plays from 1676 onwards attest to the popularity in fashionable society of this new drink and link it to courtly celebration and aristocratic hedonism.[16]

Champagne continued to be a drink of the courtly and aristocratic elite in Britain throughout the eighteenth century, but its French producers remained unable to solve the quality problems it presented. Though a 1728 edict of Louis XV permitted the producers

[13] T. Stevenson, "No Merret in Digby," https://wine-pages.com/columnist-articles/no-merret-in-digby-taking-issue-with-an-eminence-grise/. [Accessed 16 July 2016.]
[14] See W. Charleton and C. Merret, *Two Discourses: I. Concerning the Different Wits of Men, II. Of the Mysterie of Vintners* (London, 1669), p. 227. Merret wrote: 'Our Wine-Coopers of latter times use vast quantities of Sugar and Molasses to all sorts of Wines, to make them drink brisk and sparkling'; for a satirical French perspective on Merret's central role in the champagne 'secret', see B. Simmat and P. Bercovici, *Champagne! Le Dom Pérignon Code* (Paris, 2012), p. 7.
[15] A.L. Simon, *History of the Champagne Trade in England* (London, 1905), pp. 5-6.
[16] The earliest *Oxford English Dictionary* quotations for 'sparkling' in relation to wine date from 1422. The first use in connection with champagne is recorded by the *OED* as 1676 in G. Etherege, *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (London, 1676), Act IV, Scene 1.

to ship in bottle rather than cask to diminish the risk of spoilage in cask, this did not fully address the problem.[17] Not only did spoilage rates remain high but the pressure of carbon dioxide broke a high proportion of the flimsy glass bottles of the time. The development of stronger bottles by English glassmakers using higher temperature furnaces gradually solved the latter problem in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but breakage rates ('la casse') remained a significant problem until the late nineteenth century.[18]

Spoilage remained a threat until the discoveries of Pasteur and other late nineteenth-century scientists, but by the mid-1840s the champagne producers' still imperfect control of the process was sufficient to commercialise champagne worldwide. From annual sales of around 300,000 bottles in the late eighteenth century, worldwide sales reached 6.5 million in 1845 and over 30 million by the turn of the century.[19] There is little precise data on British imports or sales of champagne before the 1860s but, according to Simon, 117,000 gallons of champagne were imported in 1835. By the early 1860s, the data suggest that consumption in Britain was around 450,000 gallons, a quadrupling of the market.[20] This figure accords well with the 1864 claim made by the gourmandising barrister, A.V. Kirwan, that consumption of champagne had doubled since 1848.[21]

The nineteenth-century success of champagne produced further problems for the producers. Before 1850, 'champagne' was a decidedly elastic term and, frequently, a

[17] For the text of the Conseil du Roi's decree, see H. Vizetelly, *A History of Champagne: With Notes on the Other Sparkling Wines of France* (London, 1882), p. 59, n. 1; see also R. Phillips, *French Wine: A History* (Berkeley, 2016), p. 119.
[18] For a mid-nineteenth-century view of the continuing problem of 'la casse', see A. Maizière, *Origine Et Développement Du Commerce Du Vin De Champagne* (Reims, 1848), p. 5; Nicholas Bidet, the eighteenth-century writer on champagne, put the breakage figures as high as 80 % in bad years. See R. Gandhilon, *Naissance Du Champagne: Dom Pierre Pérignon* (Paris, 1968), p. 188.
[19] R. de la Morinière, *L' Evolution Du Commerce Des Vins De Champagne* (Reims, 1907), p. 9.
[20] Simon, *History of Champagne*, pp. 167-8.
[21] A.V. Kirwan, *Host and Guest: A Book About Dinners, Wines, and Desserts* (London, 1864), pp. v, 369. Kirwan said his was 'a household book on the subject of Dinners, Desserts, Wines, Liqueurs, and on foods in general' based on his own experience in France and England as 'a diner out of some magnitude, and, as far as my means allowed, a giver of dinners'. He gave no source for his statement on consumption.

decidedly dubious liquid. In the strictest sense, champagne was understood by contemporaries to be sparkling wine produced in the Champagne region of France. However, it was being used as a generic term for 'sparkling wine' of all forms from at least the 1820s.[22] In the 1850s large quantities of counterfeit champagne were being made in England from imported French grapes or even rhubarb.[23] In the 1860s, if not before, cheap sparkling wines made in France were being sold in very large quantities at regular auctions in London and elsewhere.[24] Nonetheless, unlike the producers of other wines, the champagne houses were not only able to enforce their terms on the marketplace but also to develop what I will argue constituted the world's first set of luxury brands. These brands were managed in ways that modern brand directors would recognise. Their success reinforces the arguments made by branding and business historians such as Duguid that the origins of branding lie at least as much in Britain and France in the nineteenth century as in the USA in the early twentieth century.[25]

Approach and methodology

The primary question for this thesis is what drove the nineteenth-century changes to champagne's style and usage that I have outlined above. The second question is to consider how and why champagne in the nineteenth century was uniquely able to develop powerful brands. Answering the first question requires investigation of the role of

[22] See 'One of the Old School', *Wine and Spirit Adulterators Unmasked*, 2nd ed. (London, 1828), pp. 106-7 for how to pass gooseberry wine off as 'champagne' to both consumers and the excise authorities.
[23] C. Redding, *Wine Duties' Reduction. An Abstract of the Evidence Given before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, Upon the Import Duties on Wines, in May and June, 1852, with a Draft of the Chairman's Report* (London, 1852), pp. 170-1. See *Western Times*, 22 October 1859, p. 2 for an exemplar advertisement for Taplin's 'English Champagne'.
[24] For details of J.G. Winn's frequently rigged auctions, see *Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*, 8 March 1866, p. 15
[25] P. Duguid, T. da Silva Lopes, and J. Mercer, "Reading Registrations. An Overview of 100 Years of Trademark Registration in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States," in *Trademarks, Brands, and Competitiveness*, ed. T. d. S. Lopes and P. Duguid (London, 2010), pp. 15-16.

branding and marketing. How far were the changes driven by consumers; how far by the producers of champagne and their agents? I will also consider the extent to which those responsible for these brands anticipated modern marketing practice for luxury brands and, consequently, what role champagne played in the evolution of modern branding and marketing. This is a market in which the integration of production studies (including marketing and branding) and consumption studies is made possible by the ability to access both the rich vein of contemporary consumption data and the evidence of the day to day practice of the London agents of the French champagne houses. By comparison with other wines in the British market, champagne was able to develop uniquely powerful brands that were managed in ways that closely prefigure the marketing practice of modern luxury brand owners.

Branding and branding history are at the heart of this thesis, and some explanation of the relevant terminology is needed. During the nineteenth century, the usage of the term 'brand' began to expand. The older sense of burning a mark onto livestock or wooden containers persisted but in the period 1860-75 the term also began to be used to refer directly to a specific product rather than to the identification mark itself. From 1860 onwards, advertisers began to use phrases such as 'Moët and other brands of champagne'. Product names such as the 'Comte de Champagne' (champagne) or 'Royal Arms' (sherry) became more common.[26] From being a mark of quality and ownership, the 'brand' became the thing itself. This issue is explored in detail in Chapter Two where I will argue that in the period 1860-75 the term 'brand' began to acquire its modern meaning, in which branding is seen as more than just a name or symbol and becomes a shorthand for the differentiating promise that is made to the consumer; a promise which involves not

[26] For 'Royal Arms' sherry ('a princely drink') see *Wexford Independent*, 4 January 1860, p. 3. For the fictive 'Le Comte de Champagne' brand of champagne, see *Reading Mercury*, 13 July 1867, p. 3.

just tangible physical attributes but also intangible symbolic values and the consumer's personal experience of that product.

During the 1860s, a number of French champagne producers (also known in English as 'houses', from the French 'maisons') laid the foundations for powerful 'masterbrands' whose names and symbols on labels and corks served to authenticate and differentiate their products.[27] The trade and general press used the terms 'shipper brand' or 'house brand' to describe this strategy. A 'masterbrand' strategy uses the corporate (or 'house' name) as a guarantee of quality linked to essentially descriptive names of individual products; for example, 'White Dry Sillery' from Moët & Chandon.[28] As the century advanced, so the producers began to differentiate themselves not just by logotypes or other brand marks but by differences in style, approach and values. In other words, they started to position themselves against different consumer needs. After the mid-1880s, some of the houses also began to shift from a single masterbrand strategy towards a sub-brand strategy in which the product name was given greater weight and emphasis on the pack and in communication. Thus, in 1926, Moët & Chandon began to distribute the Dom Pérignon brand of champagne which gave greater weight to that name than to the parent name.[29]

Branding was a major challenge for the nineteenth-century wine trade. Wine merchants in general were not trusted. Because most wine was shipped in cask to England and bottled *in situ*, there were few, if any, guarantees of quality or barriers to

[27] There is no single, authoritative guide to the many, often interchangeable, terms used by branding practitioners. Generally I have followed the thinking of J.-N. Kapferer, *Strategic Brand Management: New Approaches to Creating and Evaluating Brand Equity* (London, 1992), pp. 107-33.
[28] The Sillery district had been known for champagne since at least the mid-eighteenth century. See *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 5 December 1752, p. 3 for an early reference.
[29] For the launch of Dom Pérignon, see Chapter Five.

adulteration.[30] To export sparkling wine in wooden casks was almost impossible, since the pressure opened up the staves and allowed air to enter and spoil the wine. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, only champagne – which had been exported from France since the early eighteenth century – could realistically create the powerful brands that came to characterise the trade by the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century.[31] Initially, branded wines were viewed with suspicion. Merchants with elite customers demanded that labels be removed from champagne bottles.[32] By 1883, however, newspapers were complaining of a 'tyranny of brands' in the wine industry.[33]

The relatively scant history of branding has largely been written from an American mass-market perspective.[34] Following Alfred Chandler, the American perspective on branding claims greater efficiency and brand creation success for the organisational and distributive skills of the American-style corporation.[35] However, Teresa da Silva Lopes argues that family firms – such as the champagne shippers and their London agents – are more effective at generating and employing the marketing knowledge required to drive branded success in the drinks market.[36] Paul Duguid has also taken a European point of view, arguing that it was French willingness to legitimate 'noms imaginaires' (i.e. composed words such as Bo-vril), rather than the more restrictive

[30] Tea had similar problems. See E.D. Rappaport, "Packaging China: Foreign Articles and Dangerous Tastes in the Mid-Victorian Tea Party," in *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World*, ed. F. Trentmann (Oxford, 2006), pp. 125-6.
[31] For the failure to brand in other wine categories, see J. Simpson, *Creating Wine: The Emergence of a World Industry, 1840-1914* (Princeton, 2011), pp. 81-2, 93, 95-6.
[32] Noted by Adolphe Hubinet, the Pommery & Greno agent. See *Compilation de la Correspondance de Hubinet*, 4 January 1862.
[33] *Morning Post*, 22 June 1883, p. 6.
[34] J. Mercer, "A Mark of Distinction: Branding and Trade Mark Law in the UK from the 1860s," *Business History* 52, no. 1 (2010), pp. 17-42; for the 1728 and 1735 royal decrees authorising the Champenois to export in bottle, see N. Faith, *The Story of Champagne*, 2nd ed. (London, 2016), p. 49.
[35] A.D. Chandler, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, 1994), p. 169, 267-8. Chandler notes the greater 'efficiency' of the US system but accepts that 'it was in branded, packaged products – food and drink, tobacco and consumer chemicals – that the British industrialists of the Victorian era made their mark'.
[36] T. da Silva Lopes, *Global Brands: The Evolution of Multinationals in Alcoholic Beverages* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 4-10.

Anglo-American approach to trademark law, that enabled modern branding.[37] Although many of the champagne shippers branded under family names, the industry pressed for protection of 'noms imaginaires' such as 'Veuve Monnier' (created by an Anglo-French entrepreneur and the subject of a case study in Chapter Five).[38] By the mid-1870s the previously powerful merchant-branded champagnes had largely been replaced by what I will argue was the world's first set of luxury brands, considered and managed as such.[39] As *Ridley's* noted in a 1911 retrospective, a 'smart agent' was central to success in the British market and, by analysing the activities of both the shippers and their agents, I will demonstrate the extent to which London intermediaries were able to initiate, rather than merely execute, branding and marketing activity.[40]

In considering the development of brands in the nineteenth-century wine trade, I will use the terminology and concepts of modern branding scholars and practitioners. Clearly, this is potentially ahistorical. The current terminology of marketing and branding derives mostly from the twentieth century. It is noticeable from the letters of Adolphe Hubinet, the London agent for the French champagne house of Pommery & Greno from 1861 to 1895, that he frequently struggled to find appropriate terminology for the marketing issues and concepts with which he had to grapple. Sometimes, as I will note in Chapter Two, he resorted to military analogies. However, I believe that modern marketing and branding concepts provide a valuable lens through which to evaluate the practices of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to articulate issues and

[37] P. Duguid, "Developing the Brand, 1800-1880," *Enterprise and Society* 4, no. 3 (2003), pp. 405-41; P. Duguid, "French Connections: The International Propagation of Trademarks in the Nineteenth Century," *Enterprise and Society* 10, no. 1 (2009), pp. 3-37.
[38] Mercer, "Mark of Distinction, " p. 32.
[39] C. Cox, *Luxury Fashion: A Global History of Heritage Brands* (London, 2013), p. 6 has case histories of long-lived luxury brands but few of these were considered or managed as luxury brands in the nineteenth century.
[40] *Ridley's*, 10 January 1911, p. 58. The journal's fuller assessment of the elements of successful champagne marketing will be covered in Chapter Two.

behaviours in ways that contemporaries could not. Comparing nineteenth-century practice to that of modern luxury brand marketers not only throws light on a somewhat neglected area of branding and business history but also enables us to assess the sophistication of the nineteenth-century practitioners dealing with commercial problems and the management of consumer choice.[41] There is no good reason to believe that fundamental consumer motivations such as differentiation, status acquisition and display, or the need for reassurance, have changed significantly since the nineteenth century, although both the means of communicating such needs and the forms of consumption which satisfy such needs have done.

Consumption histories have proliferated in the last three decades and the focus of the field has begun to change.[42] John Brewer has pointed to two trends underlying this growth: the first, a tendency to use mass consumption (typically acquisition rather than use) as an index for progress towards a state of Western modernity, the second, a countervailing trend towards small-scale histories of the everyday that stress agency and experience.[43] I will argue that the act and context of consuming a good clearly denotes its value to the individual and its role in society.[44] Secondly, I will argue for the importance of consumer agency. The champagne houses and their agents exploited rather than created consumer trends. Thirdly, following Trentmann's recent work, I will argue that the story of consumption cannot be written simply from the restricted perspectives of

[41] Duguid and Church have both made significant contributions to this field but gaps remain. See Duguid, "Developing the Brand," passim; R. Church, "Advertising Consumer Goods in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Reinterpretations," *Economic History Review* 53, no. 4 (2000).
[42] See the 1999 analysis of the field in S. Pennell, "Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 2 (1999), p. 563; the "Birkbeck Consumption Bibliography," www.consume.bbk.ac.uk/news/progdocs/consumption%20biblio.doc. now has over 2,000 entries. [Accessed 21 July 2017.]
[43] J. Brewer, "Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life," *Cultural and Social History* 7, no. 1 (2010), pp. 87-109.
[44] Pennell, "Consumption and Consumerism," p. 552.

consumers and producer.[45] This research therefore looks at the actors at every stage of the value chain: from grower and shipper to end user.

The burgeoning of consumption histories has not created a unifying approach. Trentmann and Brewer argue that consumption may be charged with social meaning or may be entirely individualistic, concerned with the production of self and identity, and that this complexity 'poses a challenge for analysis and interpretation'.[46] Alan Warde notes that the study of consumption is served by many disciplines, including history, sociology, economics, psychology, literary studies and anthropology. He concludes that '[a]s yet, no combination of these provides a persuasive framework for understanding eating'. His suggestion, which I support, is that the analysis of eating (and drinking) is best analysed through studying the formation, persistence and change of habits.[47] I will argue that habits and choices in the wine market are charged with issues of national and social identity. In this I follow Julie Fromer whose close study of literary texts dealing with tea in Victorian England has shown how the business of beverage raises issues of origin, adulteration, packaging and branding.[48] This thesis will use the changes in the taste for champagne in the nineteenth century as the basis for an analysis of personal and commercial habits.

Whilst drink has become a focus of anthropological interest over the last decade, historians have paid little attention to wine in the second half of the nineteenth century. Eating has been well studied recently by historians such as Rachel Rich and literary

[45] F. Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (London, 2016), pp. 174-5, 317-20; see also M.-E. Chessel, "Des Empires Aux Objets: La Fabrique Des Consommateurs," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 64, no. 1 (2017), pp. 167-8. Chessell explores this point explicitly.
[46] J. Brewer and F. Trentmann, *Consuming Cultures: Global Perspectives, Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (Oxford and New York, 2006), p. 1.
[47] A. Warde, "Eating," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. F. Trentmann (Oxford and New York, 2012), pp. 376-9, 389.
[48] J.E. Fromer, *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England* (Athens, 2008), pp. ix, 22, 28-9.

critics such as Gwen Hyman; drinking alcohol less so.[49] Brian Harrison's seminal *Drink and Victorians*, published in 1971, paid little attention to wine drinking.[50] John Burnett's *Liquid Pleasures*, which points to the rapid pace of change in British tastes, particularly in the period 1650-1750, covers beverages both alcoholic and non-alcoholic.[51] Charles Ludington's valuable work provides a more detailed analysis of the history of wine but unfortunately ends with the debate over Gladstone's tariff changes in the 1860s which attempted to wean the British from their preference for fortified wines and spirits. He does not review the long-term consequences for British drinking habits of this initiative.[52] In *Creating wine: the emergence of a world industry, 1840-1914*, James Simpson's incisive chapter on the ultimate failure of the attempt to create a British mass market for wine identifies two primary explanatory factors: climate-driven variability of quality and the consequent failure to create 'impersonal exchange mechanisms' which could give purchasers confidence. This remains the only recent work of substance to address the late-Victorian British market, but it does not deal extensively with champagne.[53] In particular, Simpson's work does not address the social and cultural issues around champagne, a drink which acquired a central role in British society and social life.

Debates on British society in the last forty years have paid considerable attention to the issue of class. Until the 'linguistic turn' of the early 1990s, these discussions focused primarily on two areas. The first was a Marxian-influenced analysis of the nature and structure of class in Britain. The second, exemplified in the work of Perkin,[54]

[49] R. Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption: Food, Space and Identity in London and Paris, 1850-1914* (Manchester, 2011); G. Hyman, *Making a Man: Gentlemanly Appetites in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Athens, Ga., 2009).
[50] B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (London, 1971). The 1984 edition does not change this perspective.
[51] J. Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (London, 1999).
[52] C. Ludington, *The Politics of Wine in Britain: A New Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 2013).
[53] Simpson, *Creating Wine*, pp. 81-110.
[54] H.J. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London, 1969), pp. 271-2.

Rubinstein[55] and Cannadine,[56] examined the relative power and influence of industrialists, commercial and financial entrepreneurs, and landed interests, as part of a wider discussion of the nature and sources of social control. The work of Stedman Jones fundamentally changed the terms of debate. His 'Rethinking Chartism', which animated the embryonic 'linguistic turn', argued that it was essential to break the 'direct relationship' between social being and social consciousness.[57] This influenced subsequent scholars to consider class as a discourse and hence as a social construct rather than an 'objective reality', whilst more recently Kidd and Nicholls, writing in 1999, argued for a more 'culturalist' approach to class in which, as Simon Gunn put it, 'modes of consumption and styles of life' are more important than 'identities based on production and capitalist ownership'.[58]

Developing the 'culturalist' perspective, this thesis will show how champagne was used by different social groups at different sites of consumption, in different ways and for different purposes. Ideas of celebration, success, and excess were the lowest common denominators linking these diverse usages and diverse subjects. Currently, champagne and celebration are largely synonymous but the development of this link and its extension from public to private celebrations has not been fully explored. John Gillis has explored the development of Christmas rituals during the Victorian period, and I build on this work to explore the changing nature of celebrations at the turn of the century and the steadily

[55] W.D. Rubinstein, "The Victorian Middle Classes: Wealth, Occupation and Geography," *The Economic History Review* 30 (new series) (1977), n. 3, p. 623: 'up to 50% of the richest were still landowners in the 1880s'.
[56] D. Cannadine, "The Theory and Practice of the English Leisure Classes," *The Historical Journal* 21, no. 2 (1978), p. 448.
[57] G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 101.
[58] S. Gunn, "The Public Sphere, Modernity and Consumption: New Perspectives on the English Middle Class," in *Gender, Civic Culture, and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, ed. A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (Manchester, 1999), p. 12.

greater involvement in all forms of celebration by individuals from a broad spectrum of society.[59]

Public and private dinners were key venues for Victorian celebrations. The private dinner party is well-studied. This 'English phenomenon' (as Robert Tombs has it) was a central indicator of a household's social, cultural and financial capital.[60] After the mid-century, as Nancy Ellenberger suggests in *The Transformation of London Society*, the Victorian upper classes 'retreated into increasingly private and controlled entertainment held within the home'.[61] John Tosh confirms this view.[62] What Peter Bailey calls 'increasingly sophisticated access rituals' controlled access to the home, and such social rituals fell into the feminine domain.[63] The role of the 'social general' delineated by Elizabeth Langland was expressed both in the tea ceremony in the entirely feminine drawing room and the rather more contested area of the dining room.[64] Kathryn Gleadle sums up the role of the dinner party as 'the ideal venue for facilitating interaction between business and family networks, both probable sources of marriage partners'.[65] Such parties were competitive performative spaces for young women (and young men) to demonstrate

[59] J.R. Gillis, "Ritualization of Middle-Class Family Life in Nineteenth Century Britain," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 3, no. 2 (1989), p. 214. Gillis has argued that the 'ritualization' of everyday life took place in the second half of the nineteenth century; J.R. Gillis, "Making Time for Family: The Invention of Family Time(S) and the Reinvention of Family History," *Journal of Family History* 21, no. 1 (1996), p. 8.
[60] R. Tombs and I. Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (London, 2006), p. 421.
[61] N.W. Ellenberger, "The Transformation of London 'Society' at the End of Victoria's Reign: Evidence from the Court Presentation Records," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 22, no. 4 (1990), p. 636.
[62] J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1999), pp. 23-4.
[63] Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance*, pp. 17-18.
[64] E. Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca, NY. and London, 1995), pp. 40, 43. See also J. Gloag, *Victorian Comfort: A Social History of Design from 1830-1900* (London, 1961), p. 60. Gloag emphasises that Victorian dining-room furniture and decoration were 'emphatically male', whilst S. Pearson, *Week-Day Living, a Book for Young Men and Women* (London, 1882), p. 109 stressed the importance of flowers on the mahogany tables; 'A Member of the aristocracy', *Manners and Tone of Good Society, or, Solecisms to Be Avoided* (London, 1879), p. 97.
[65] K. Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 80.

their fitness not just as romantic but also as social or political partners.[66] I will argue that in the rule-bound setting of the private dinner party, champagne played a key liberating role.

Although the role of civic and associational dinners in British society has been touched on by several scholars, the literature does not fully reflect the level of reporting and commentary on such events in contemporary records.[67] In considering such usage, I will return to the importance of 'consuming'. Drinking together was a means of lubricating commercial and social transactions. The apparently obligatory champagne that fuelled such events was an important component in the daily lives of commercial, professional and upper-class men. Work on Victorian society has increasingly suggested that, as Gunn put it, this was an era of 'disjuncture and discontinuity', an era when individuals and households strove to cement and improve their position in a world of 'mutable social status'.[68] This research will show how and why champagne came to be an important marker of cultural, social and financial resource for the men and women moving in prosperous society.

From the 1860s, champagne was consistently termed by politicians and the press as the 'luxury of the rich'.[69] Gladstone's reduction of duties on wine in 1860 was

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[66] B. Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 190.

[67] For civic culture in general, see S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2007). For contemporary views on the importance of public dinners, see London *Evening Standard*, 10 August 1880, p. 2; see also E.L. Blanchard, *A Handy Book on Dinners. Dinners and Diners at Home and Abroad* (London, 1860), pp. 26-31; for a more detailed French perspective, see K.M. Guy, "Oiling the Wheels of Social Life: Myths and Marketing in Champagne During the Belle Epoque," *French Historical Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999), pp. 230-2.

[68] A.J. Kidd and D. Nicholls, "Introduction," in *Gender, Civic Culture, and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, ed. A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (Manchester, 1999), pp. 5-6; Gunn, "The Public Sphere," p. 25; Fromer, *Necessary Luxury*, p. 19.

[69] See *John Bull*, 18 July 1863, p. 9; *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 18 May 1888, p. 3; *London Daily News*, 5 December 1899, p. 3; when George Goschen, as Chancellor, imposed an extra tax of 3 shillngs per dozen on bottled sparkling wines he and other politicans used the term frequently. See, for example, *Derby Mercury*, 28 March 1888, p. 7.

characterised by many newspapers in terms of rich against poor. For *Reynolds's Newspaper*, the 'necessaries of the poor and hard-working are to be kept dear in order that the luxuries of the idle and the rich may be obtained cheap'.[70] Nonetheless, it was a luxury to which ordinary men might reasonably – even greedily – aspire. This apparent democratisation of luxury was linked to the late nineteenth-century condemnation of the 'luxury of shabby gentility' described by Matthew Hilton. Contemporary critics deplored the destruction of the ability of the shopper to 'foster taste, discrimination, individuality and independence'.[71] Such issues formed the core of the turn-of-the-century work of Simmel, Veblen and Sombart on consumers' behaviour. At the heart of their work lies the idea of emulation. For Simmel (followed more recently by Berg in *Luxury and Pleasure*), the many were emulating the fashion of the few.[72] For Veblen, conspicuous consumption patterned pecuniary emulation.[73] Sombart's theory prioritised emulation of eighteenth-century courtesans who embodied a love of luxury.[74] In the twentieth century, Elias developed the idea of the 'civilizing process' (though this unilinear approach has been criticised), and stressed 'figuration', a term referring to the way in which larger social movements blended with individual agency to produce behavioural emulation.[75] Bourdieu focused less on emulation (which he nevertheless accepted) and more on distinction and differentiation.[76] I will draw on these arguments and those of historians of consumption to

[70] *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 12 February 1860, p. 1.
[71] M. Hilton, "The Legacy of Luxury: Moralities of Consumption since the 18th Century," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 4, no. 1 (2004), pp. 101-3.
[72] G. Simmel, *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (London, 1997), p. 197; M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 29, 41-2.
[73] J. Lears, "Beyond Veblen: Rethinking Consumer Culture in America," in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. S. J. Bronner (New York and London, 1989), p. 75.
[74] W. Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1967), pp. xx, 169; S. Mintz, "Response," *Food and Foodways* 16, no. 2 (2008), p. 156.
[75] N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, revised ed. (Oxford, 2000), pp. 457, 481.
[76] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London, 1984), p. 6.

suggest a three-stage process driving changes in taste and, ultimately, changing the perception of branded goods.

Sources

To explore these questions on the position of champagne in the nineteenth century, I have drawn on a range of sources covering both production and consumption. For the production studies side of this research, I have primarily used three sets of archives. The first set comprises the privately held archives of the French champagne houses. I have principally used those of Veuve Clicquot, Perrier-Jouët, Pol Roger, Laurent-Perrier and Pommery, all of which had a particular interest in the British market. These archives generally hold originals of the in-bound letters (including those from their London agents), copies of outbound letters (which are now mostly very faded and hard to decipher), and, in some cases, the sales ledgers. These latter – especially those of Pol Roger, Veuve Clicquot and Perrier-Jouët – have been extremely useful. They provide evidence (in more or less detail) of what wines were sold to which customers in the period 1850-1914. Not all the runs of ledgers are complete, nor are they all fully accessible, but they form an essential source for any student of champagne.[77] Secondly, I have consulted the guardbooks of champagne labels held by the Archives Départementales de la Marne, in Châlons-en-Champagne, which show the evolving iconography of champagne branding. The third set of archives is that of the pre-eminent distribution firm of W. & A. Gilbey which, operating through a network of several thousand high-street agents in Britain, held at its peak as much as 8-10 per cent of the UK

[77] In general, I have focused on firms with a strong interest in the British market in the nineteenth century. I have not attempted to cover all the extant archives, many of which are uncatalogued and/or hard to access. Regrettably, I was unable to access the archives of the Comité Interprofessional du Vin de Champagne (CIVC), the successor body to the original Syndicat de Commerce des Vins de Champagne.

wine and spirits market.[78] The Gilbey's archives provide unrivalled data on consumption patterns across Britain and the fluctuating preferences of British consumers. I have also used the archives of the Houses of Parliament, several Oxford and Cambridge colleges and some London clubs in an attempt to provide data on what was consumed.[79]

Turning to consumption I have made extensive use not just of the novels of the period and the many books on wine aimed at the new middle class (for which see Chapter Three), but also of the British national and provincial press. One of the principal sources has been the on-line British Newspaper Archive (BNA), which has now digitised around half of the British Library's collection of historic newspapers. The digitisation process has, to date, focused on regional and provincial newspapers published before 1900. The value of this archive lies in its ability to represent and illuminate the habits and attitudes of the whole country rather than simply the capital, and I have used it in a number of ways. The search process enables identification of the usage of any given term throughout the period in articles or in advertisements. Thus, I have been able to track how often and when both generic terms such as 'champagne' (for example) and specific brand names were used. By searching for specific phrases such as 'wine bar', it is possible to throw light on the growth of such venues from the 1860s through to the end of the century. Many of the data charts in this thesis are based on this methodology and, unless otherwise specified, cover the entire United Kingdom.

I have also used the BNA qualitatively by searching for references to specific subjects. For instance, a search for 'champagne cellars' identifies relevant material relating to this subject. I have used the same process to search for information about

[78] The Gilbey material is held at two separate venues: the Diageo Archive in Menstrie (mainly corporate material) and the Bishop's Stortford Museum (material from the personal collection of Sir Walter Gilbey). Between them, these archives have extensive collections of price lists for Gilbey's and its competitors, promotional material, scrap books and some early letterbooks.

[79] This material is, in general, unrevealing. It usually gives brand names but rarely detail on vintage dates or the style of wine consumed.

specific wines, brands of champagne and individuals involved in the wine trade. As an example, this has enabled me to ascertain the identity and background of the otherwise obscure agents of the champagne houses in the period before 1860. The vagaries of optical character recognition and the multiple usages of some search terms (for example, 'port') make such searches problematic and non-exhaustive, but the BNA nonetheless represents an enormously valuable resource. I have supplemented this resource with searches not just of British national newspapers such as *The Times* but also of the British periodical press, which I have accessed primarily through the Gale Cengage databases.[80] In addition I have made extensive use of the cartoons published in *Punch* during the period 1850-1914.[81]

A second major source has been the wine trade press in Britain and France. The principal British source has been *Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular* (hereafter *Ridley's*), which provided extensive monthly coverage of trade activity for the entire period. I have also used the *Wine Trade Review*, which was a later competitor to *Ridley's.*[82] *Ridley's*, in particular, provided regular statistical updates on the trade, reports on all the key issues facing the trade, including legal cases, features on specific sectors, regular columns on advertising and new product introductions as well as trade circulars to customers and letters from merchants. For the French view of the British market I have mainly used the weekly *Moniteur Vinicole*, which provided coverage of the entire period.[83] I also read widely in *Vigneron Champenois*, a local newspaper edited and

[80] The *19th Century UK Periodicals* is a searchable full text database of a steadily growing number of British periodicals.
[81] *Punch* was read in hard copy at the Bodleian Library Oxford and the library of St John's College, Cambridge.
[82] *Ridley's* was read in hard copy at the Guildhall Business Library in London. The *Wine Trade Review* was read at the British Library.
[83] *Moniteur Vinicole* and *Vigneron Champenois* were read in hard copy at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. Copies of *Vigneron Champenois* are also available in the Bibliothèque Carnegie in Reims and in the public library in Epernay.

published by the Bonnedame family, which acted as an informal trade journal of the French champagne industry in the late nineteenth century.

Structure

Chapter One will consider the broad market for wine between 1800 and 1914: largely stagnant before 1850, followed by rapid growth after 1860 to a peak in the mid-1870s and a slow fall thereafter. What drove these changes and how did they affect the types of wine consumed on different occasions and the branding of those wines? Chapter Two will focus on the marketing of champagne in the fifteen years following Gladstone's liberalisation of the duties. Using the archives of the French champagne houses, the Gilbey's archives and the coverage of wine in a range of contemporary British sources including the national and provincial press and the specialist wine trade press, this chapter outlines how champagne's new marketing template was developed and exploited by Pommery and other brands. In these chapters, the firm of W. & A. Gilbey will be used to illustrate the development of the British market, while the long-established firm of Veuve Clicquot and the new firm of Pommery & Greno will illustrate the important role of the London agents in developing the market for champagne.

Chapters Three and Four will take a consumer perspective on the champagne market, examining how consumption of champagne changed between 1860 and 1914, and how these changes affected the taste and image of champagne. The first of these two chapters covers the period from 1860 to 1875, the period during which wine consumption rose rapidly to its peak in the mid-1870s and a new template for champagne marketing was developed by London agents of the French houses. The second covers the years from 1876 to 1914. It starts with the launch in 1876-7 of the first true vintage-dated champagne, which did much to cement champagne's role as a marker of status, and

finishes with the onset of war in 1914, by which time per capita consumption of wine had sunk back to the levels of the late 1850s.

These two chapters focus on champagne's social role. Why did champagne become so popular and socially powerful? In particular, they point to the importance of the dinner party and how it contributed to changing champagne from slightly less sweet than the European standard to very dry. As the century progressed, champagne became steadily more embedded in the habits of late Victorian society, and Chapter Four focuses on illustrating and understanding the social and marketing dynamics that cemented champagne's role as a powerful marker of status and a symbol of personal hedonism.

Finally, Chapter Five returns to the perspective of the champagne industry. It first analyses how and why champagne's branding and marketing changed after the mid-1870s and what effect these tactics had on consumers. Secondly, it compares the champagne trade's approach to that advocated by modern luxury marketers. It will use the general failure of merchant own brands and two producer brands – Veuve Monnier and Laurent-Perrier's Sans Sucre – to illustrate how a group of premium brands came to dominate the market. The success of the premium brands will be analysed through two different cases: the first focuses on the success of vintage-dated wines, a move initiated by Pommery, and the second deals with the powerful house of Moët & Chandon, which developed a strong and integrated campaign tailored to the British market, and exploited the French champagne trade's ground-breaking creation of the world's first territorial brand, a move that provided the template for the later development of the French *appellation controlée* system in the 1920s and 1930s.[84]

[84] See A. Stanziani, "Wine Reputation and Quality Controls: The Origin of the A.O.C.s in 19th Century France," *European Journal of Law and Economics* 18, no. 2 (2004), pp. 157-8, 164.

The style and branding of modern champagne have deep roots in nineteenth-century practice and, in analysing what drove the major changes to the style and usage of champagne between 1860 and 1914, I will focus by turn on the respective roles of producers and their agents on the one hand and consumers on the other. I will argue that champagne throws light both on the changing nature of British society in the Victorian era and on the history of branding and marketing. Champagne was, in essence, a wine made new in nineteenth-century Britain.

1. Framing the market: wine in Britain, 1800-1914

Introduction and objectives

In 1898, *Ridley's* published a 'Retrospect' on the English wine trade by an anonymous merchant whose memories reached back more than half a century. After recalling the 'white cravats [and] huge, frilled shirt-front' of merchants in 1843 ('a costume the present generation will hardly realise as business-like'), the writer highlighted a similarly striking contrast in wine consumption. In 1843, 'claret and other French wines, including champagne, had but a limited demand'. Statistics of consumption proved his point. French wines accounted for just 5 per cent of wine consumption in that year. By 1898, French wine accounted for more than 35 per cent of all consumption in a wine market that had nearly trebled in size.[1] The writer went on to note that whilst champagne sales in 1843 were negligible, at least the merchants made a 'handsome profit'. 'Nowadays', he complained, 'after English Merchants have made Brands popular, the French shipper takes advantage thereof and absorbs almost all the profit'.[2]

How and why had the consumption of French wine risen nearly twenty-fold in two generations? How had brands taken such a uniquely powerful hold in the champagne market and why had the margins of English merchants been so reduced? This chapter looks at the broader market for alcoholic drinks of all kinds in the nineteenth century in order to ask how the market changed in the period 1800 to 1914 and why. In particular, why did the market for wine rise so fast in the 1860s before peaking in the mid-1870s and then – like all other alcoholic drinks – start to fall with declining levels of per capita

[1] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 12, pp. 365-6.
[2] *Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*, 11 June 1898, p. 443.

consumption? Most contemporaries ascribed the rise in sales to the changes to duty levels and the licensing regime that William Gladstone enacted in his 'memorable' – even 'revolutionary' – budgets of 1860, 1861 and 1862.[3] Lower duties on unfortified wine and a liberalised retail licensing structure fostered a boom in the sales of wine in general, and French wine in particular, but this is not the whole story.

I will argue that a combination of increasing affluence and a growing 'temperate turn' in British society particularly favoured the consumption of light wines between 1860 and 1875. Increasing affluence and growing affordability enabled a fast-growing group of middle-class consumers to adopt the light wines that had previously been the preserve of a wealthy few. The switch to light wine amongst both wealthy elites and new middling classes was also driven by a 'temperate turn' in British society. This 'turn', I will argue, reflected not the teetotal ambitions of the temperance movement but a growing Victorian aversion to drunkenness and the fear that highly alcoholised and frequently adulterated fortified wines were dangerous to consumers. The temperate turn also reflected the growing appeal of other forms of recreation which, in turn, tended to reduce the disposable income available for the purchase and consumption of alcohol.

To understand these changes, this chapter sets the wine market in perspective. The first section will look at the consumption of alcoholic drinks in Britain between 1800 and 1914, examining both the rise in per capita consumption up to the mid-1870s and the subsequent slow decline to 1914. Prior to 1860, wine consumption grew slowly before Gladstone's changes to the duty and licensing regimes initiated a consumer and retailer boom. The second section will cover the dominant distributive firm of W. & A Gilbey, the principal beneficiary of this boom, whose surviving sales records provide almost the

[3] For the Licensed Victuallers' Association the budget was a 'social and fiscal revolution'. See *Ridley's*, 8 May 1860, p. 11; the wine distributing firm of W. & A. Gilbey called it a 'great revolution [...] in the national taste', see Diageo Archive,100255/47, (Agent Circular 1867). *London Society*, 15, no. 85 (January 1869), p. 59, spoke of 'the revolution which is slowly being effected in the national tastes and habits'.

sole detailed evidence for the nature and extent of changes to popular taste. Much of champagne's success in the second half of the century came through displacing other alcoholic drinks on different social occasions amongst both the British middle and upper classes, and the Gilbey's data provides the wider context to the growth of the champagne habit and champagne brands. The final section of this chapter will examine the distinctive champagne production process which enabled the producers to create powerful brands unmatched in any other sector of the nineteenth-century wine market.

Alcohol consumption, 1800-1914

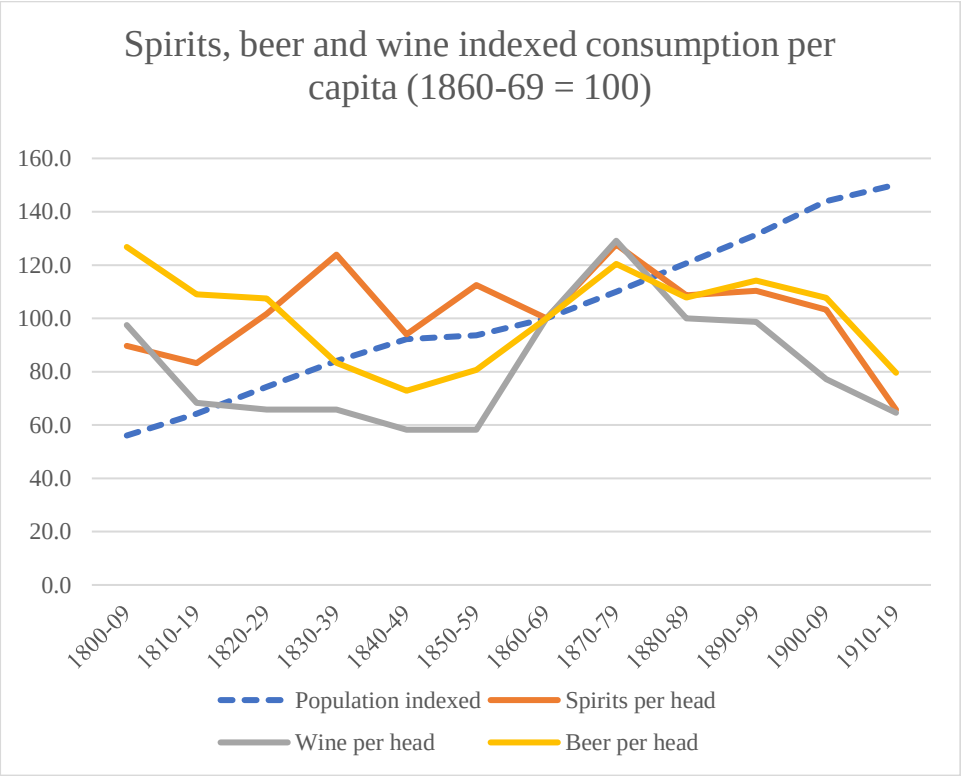
During the period from 1800 to 1914, alcohol consumption per head and perceived prosperity went largely hand in hand. Consumption stagnated during the Napoleonic Wars before starting to rise slowly in the 1820s as the economy recovered. Figure 1 below shows how the pace of growth accelerated during the 1840s and 1850s before peaking in the mid-1870s during the period of Britain's rapid industrialisation. Consumption then fell for a decade during a period of perceived economic depression, before a slight rise to the early 1900s and then a further fall which resulted in per capita consumption in 1914 dropping back to the levels of the 1850s.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Britain was a beer- and spirit-drinking country rather than a wine-drinking one.[4] In 1800, annual consumption of wine was just over two litres per head, compared to 2.5 litres of spirits and nearly 150 litres of beer per head. Whilst per capita consumption of spirits rose (albeit unevenly) in the first half of the century, wine consumption declined steadily. In 1860, equivalent per capita consumption

[4] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 31.

figures were nearly four litres of spirits and 115 litres of beer, compared to one litre of wine.[5]

Figure 1: Indexed per capita consumption of alcoholic drinks, 1800-1919



Source: Based on Wilson, *Alcohol and the nation*, Table 2, p. 335.

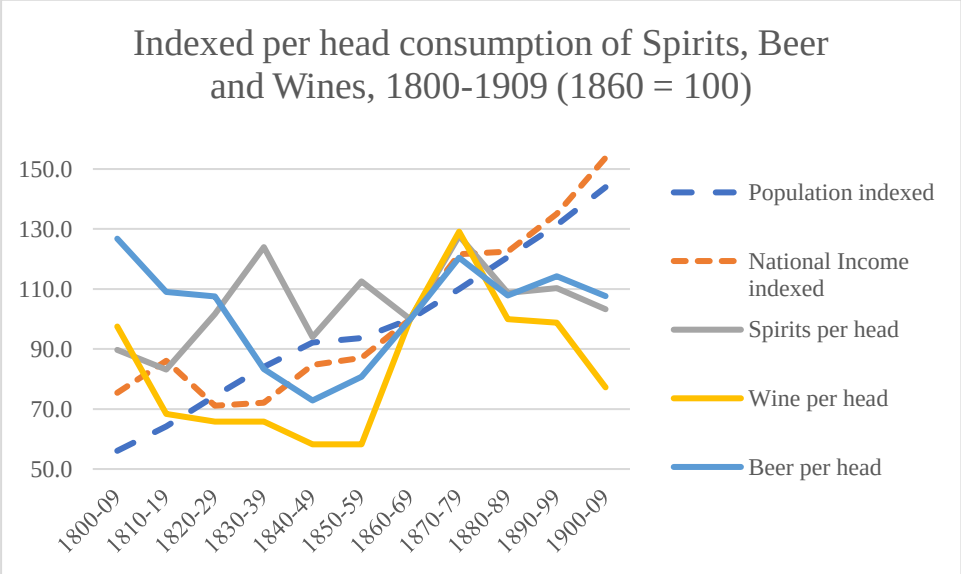
The three main types of alcoholic drink – beer, spirits and wine – gained and lost share at different rates during the period. The composition of each of these three categories also changed. In the first half of the century, gin and whisky took share from brandy and rum and, unlike other spirits, whisky consumption continued to rise after the mid-1870s.[6] Subsequent 'booms' in Scotch whisky in the 1880s and 1890s further affected consumption of other spirits.[7] Preferences in the beer market shifted over the course of the century towards brews that were lighter both in colour and alcoholic

[5] See Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 2, p. 335.
[6] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 2, p. 335.
[7] For the booms of 1883 and 1896, see *Ridley's*, 12 August 1896, p. 506. Scotch whisky, like champagne at a later date, became a 'gambling counter' for speculators.

strength. Mild and bitter beers took share from the darker porter.[8] The shift to lighter beers was paralleled within the wine category with light (i.e. non-fortified) wines gaining share at the expense of fortified wines such as port, sherry and their analogues produced outside the Iberian Peninsula in regions such as southern France.[9]

Wine consumption peaked at 2.5 litres per head in 1870–74; beer consumption, which had fallen steadily after 1800 climbed back to more than 140 litres per head in that same period; spirits rose to just over five litres per head. As Figure 2 below shows, per capita consumption started to fall after 1875. Thereafter, it failed to keep pace with national income. A brief revival in the 1890s was followed by a steep fall in the early twentieth century.

Figure 2: Indexed per capita consumption of alcoholic drinks, 1860-1909, compared to population and national income



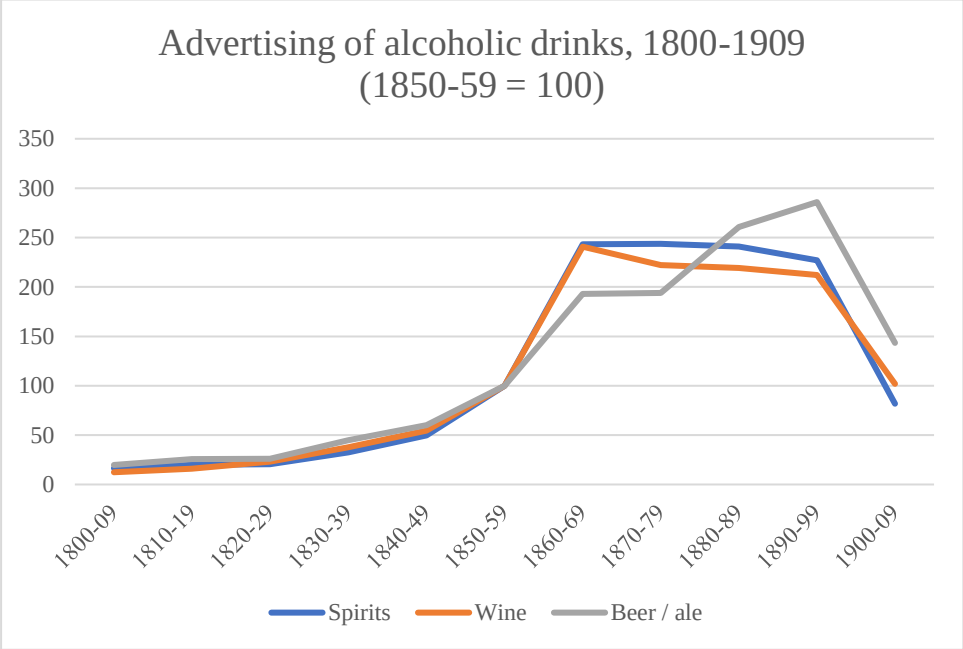
Source: Based on Wilson, *Alcohol and the nation*, Table 2, p. 335; P. Deane and W.A. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1688-1959.*[10]

[8] See www.europeanbeerguide.net [Accessed 25 July 2016].
[9] See *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 12, p. 366.
[10] P. Deane and W.A. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1688-1959, Trends and Structure* (Cambridge, 1962), Table 3, p. 8 (population), Table 57, p. 166 (national income).

Newspaper advertising for alcoholic drinks confirms the picture of slow growth up to the 1860s, followed by rapid growth until the 1870s, and then plateauing for thirty years. As figure 3 below shows, nationally, the number of newspaper advertisements for wine gradually increased from a few hundred a year at the beginning of the century to just over 5,000 per year in the decade 1840-49. The number doubled in the decade 1850-59 and then rose a further 150 per cent in the decade 1860-69. The total number fell slightly over the next thirty years before halving in the decade 1900-09.[11] These figures should be set against the growth in the number of newspapers represented in the BNA: from 61 in the decade 1800-09 to 263 in 1840-49 and 488 in 1860-69, after which the numbers fell slowly to 373 in 1900-09.[12]

[11] Advertising analysis of British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) (hereafter BNA) for period 1800-1909 conducted 5 November 2016. Although the BNA's OCR is error-prone and the categorisation of text as 'advertisements' or 'articles' is also problematic, there is no reason to doubt the broad outlines presented in Figure 3. See B. Lake, *British Newspapers: A History and Guide for Collectors* (London, 1984).
[12] Analysis of BNA conducted 5 December 2017.

Figure 3: Advertisements for 'spirits', 'wine' and 'beer and ale' in the British press, 1800-1909



Source: BNA. Analysis of advertisements for 'wine', 'beer/ale' and spirits (aggregated from individual references to 'brandy', 'whisky', 'gin' and 'rum'), 1800-1909. All BNA content tagged as 'advertising' (as distinct from 'articles') was searched separately for the terms listed above on 5 November 2016 and the results tabulated for each decade.

Contemporary commentators linked both the initial growth and subsequent fall in consumption to the state of the economy. According to a 1911 retrospective in *Ridley's* on the development of the wine habit in Britain, the sales boom of the 1860s and 1870s was not simply caused by the 'duty question'. In their view:

> the consumption of Wine increased owing to the general prosperity that prevailed in this Country. The commercial classes grew rich rapidly and many became possessed of incomes justifying their indulgence in luxuries they had hitherto been debarred from. Wines then being the luxury of the wealthy classes, the nouveaux riches took to drinking Wine as a mark of their prosperity.[13]

[13] *Ridley's*, 8 December 1911, pp. 871-2.

In the largely continuous period of slow decline after 1876 *Ridley's* consistently invoked economic difficulties to explain poor sales. In 1879, it noted that 'economy was the order of the day', in 1884 and 1905 it blamed the 'badness of the times', and in 1893 the 'agricultural depression' took the blame.[14] Wine merchants made similar claims. Giving evidence to the Select Commission on Intemperance in 1878, Robert Holdsworth, the Chairman of the Wine Dealers' Association, attributed the decline in consumption after 1874 to 'the decrease in wages, and the decrease in trade of every branch'.[15]

This analysis was reaffirmed by twentieth-century historians. In *Alcohol and the Nation*, Wilson concluded that the single greatest influence on the consumption of alcohol was the level of affluence in society. He was clear that the 'periods of trade depression in the late 'fifties and 'seventies, in 1894, 1904 and 1909, are obviously reflected in the variations in consumption'.[16] Harrison, in *Drink and Victorians*, agrees that the consumption of alcohol 'fluctuated with good and bad times'.[17] Yet the general decline in sales took place during an almost continuous period of economic growth.

Overall, the sixty-year period from 1850 to the First World War was characterised by rising population, higher incomes per capita, lower prices and consistent growth in the British economy. More people were employed, and both the middling and labouring classes had higher levels of disposable income.[18] As Figure 2 above shows, national income per capita started to rise steadily from 1820, and Barry Supple's analysis has shown that this rise continued after 1870 with a near doubling between 1870-74 and 1910-13. The consumer price index peaked around 1814 and thereafter fell until the late

[14] *Ridley's*, 12 August 1879, p. 288; 9 August 1905, p. 604; 11 March 1893, p. 155.
[15] Select Commission on Intemperance, vol. XIV, para 2006.
[16] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, pp. 309-10.
[17] B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (Keele, 1994), p. 213. Note that both Wilson and Harrison were writing before the idea of an economic crisis in the 1870s and 1880s had been challenged.
[18] For the impact of increasing affluence in another sector, see F. Carnevali and L. Newton, "Pianos for the People: From Producer to Consumer in Britain, 1851–1914," *Enterprise and Society* 14, no. 1 (2013), p. 40.

1860s. Prices continued to fall for most of the period after 1860 and the overall effect was that the 'real' national income per capita grew at an overall rate of 1.6 per cent in the period from 1860 to 1913. Salaries grew as a percentage of the national income from 6.5 per cent in the 1860s to 10.8 per cent in 1913, strongly suggesting a rise in the numbers of middle-class households.[19] Yet, despite the economic prosperity of the period as a whole, consumption largely stagnated for twenty-five years after the mid-1870s before starting to fall in the early twentieth century.

There are two possible explanations for this stagnation. The first is that, despite the overall evidence for increased prosperity, consumers at the time did not share this perception. Both the wine trade and the general press believed in the 'badness' of the times.[20] The *York Herald*, writing in 1880 on the 'agricultural depression', was clear that 'all classes of society have been increasing their expenses in a proportion that the profits of average years will not sustain, and it will do us no harm to pull up a little'.[21] In a widely-reported letter to his superiors in the Board of Trade, the statistician and economist Robert Giffen concluded in 1881 that whilst the 'consuming power of the population' had increased since the late 1860s, the country was suffering from an 'extreme agricultural depression'.[22] The wine trade shared the public perception of depression. In 1886, the wholesale distribution house of Southard lamented the difficult trading conditions, asking rhetorically, 'how can it be otherwise when nothing is doing in land, coal, iron, or cotton?' *Ridley's* agreed that the trade had been affected, referring first

[19] B.E. Supple, "Income and Demand, 1860-1914," in *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, ed. R. Floud and D. N. McCloskey (Cambridge, 1981), vol. 2, pp. 122-3 and Table 6.1.
[20] For a recent rejection of the narrative of mid-70s boom and a decade of depression, see K.T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 283-4.
[21] *York Herald*, 9 February 1880, p. 8.
[22] See, for example, *North Devon Journal*, 19 January 1882, p. 3. There were more than 100 references in the press to his letter and his conclusions on the 'depression'.

to the prosperity of the early 1870s, and then to 'general depression' in 1878, 1885 and 1895.[23]

Lower prices for agricultural products directly affected the landed classes who formed a substantial part of the market for expensive wine and spirits. As early as 1883, Adolphe Hubinet, the Pommery & Greno agent in London, was complaining that 'les aristos qui buvaient notre Brut sont bien pauvres en ce moment; leurs fermiers ne peuvent plus les payer et la sobriété a l'ordre du jour'.[24] The pressures on wealthier classes were exacerbated by further financial problems in the 1890s when *Ridley's* noted that a 'wave of financial disaster', including the Baring crash and the Argentine default, had directly affected sales of wine and champagne.[25] In a later retrospective on the declining market at the beginning of the twentieth century, it laid the blame on the tax rises of the early 1900s, imposed in part to pay for the costs of the Boer War.[26]

The real decline in the wine market came, as Figures 2 and 3 above show, in the years leading up to the First World War. Wine consumption per head started to fall from around 1900 and by 1914 was lower than it had been since the late 1850s. Spirits fell steeply from around 1905 and only beer consumption continued to track population growth. Contemporary trade commentators broadened their analysis to take in a variety of social factors, notably the competition from other activities for consumers' time and money. In 1906, *Ridley's*, noting a further decrease in wine consumption, pointed to the belief that 'much of the money which formerly found its way in the Wine Merchant's

[23] *Ridley's*, 12 June 1878, p. 170; 12 January 1885, p. 6; 12 January 1895, p. 1.
[24] *Compilation De La Correspondance De Hubinet*, 3 February 1883. 'The aristos who drink our Brut are very poor at the moment; their farmers can't pay them and sobriety is the order of the day.'
[25] *Ridley's*, 12 September 1892, pp. 491-2. K.J. Mitchener and M.D. Weidenmier, "The Baring Crisis and the Great Latin American Meltdown of the 1890s," *Journal of Economic History* 68, no. 2 (2008), pp. 463-8.
[26] *Ridley's*, 8 December 1911, p. 872.

pocket is now being spent in Motors and travelling and other up to date amusements'.[27] But it also discussed the issue of temperance. Had this affected sales?

A 'temperate turn'?

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain had a reputation as a very drunken society. The German traveller, Johann Wilhelm Archenholz, wrote in 1788 of the English taste for 'strong drink' and the London preference for 'tout ce qui est fort et enivrant'.[28] Ludington locates the 'historical apex' of British elite and middling male drunkenness in the period between 1780 and 1820 when aspirants to political leadership proved their masculinity through consuming to excess.[29] Though some commentators continued to bemoan British drunkenness throughout the century, both French and English writers of the 1850s contrasted the early nineteenth-century period when drunkenness was general, even 'fashionable', with the greater restraint of the mid-century.[30] Sobriety did not become an established value until the 1840s but its effects rippled across the second half of the century. Each succeeding generation saw itself as more temperate than its predecessors. For instance, commending the 'increased sobriety […] of the present day' in 1886, the *Western Times* was clear that the 'three-bottle man is dead and buried'.[31] This shift, which I refer to as a 'temperate turn', can be linked to an emphasis in Victorian society on values of self-restraint and discipline which lasted at least until the 1890s.[32]

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[27] *Ridley's*, 8 September 1906, p. 750.
[28] '[W]here they like everything that's strong and intoxicating'. J.W. Archenholz, *Tableau De L'angleterre Et De L'italie* (Gotha, 1788), p. 126.
[29] Ludington, *Politics of Wine*, pp. 183-6.
[30] H. Taine, ed. *Taine's Notes on England* (London, 1957), p. 116; G. Dodd, *The Food of London* (London, 1856), p. 513. Later writers tended to focus on claims of drunkenness amongst specific groups such as the 'labouring classes' or women (for which see Chapter Four). See, for example, *Graphic*, 9 November 1895, p. 586 (women); *Graphic*, 5 July 1890, p. 3 (labouring classes).
[31] *Western Times*, 2 October 1886, p. 2.
[32] See C. Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890* (Los Angeles and London, 2007), pp. 140-59 for an Eliasian view of the transition for nineteenth- to twentieth-century behavioural codes; for an alternative view suggesting Victorian society was less self-restrained than commonly imagined, see P.K.

This temperate turn did not take the form of total abstention from alcohol as the teetotal wing of the British temperance movement demanded. Rather, there was a steadily increasing tendency to drink less alcohol, an increased emphasis on the value of wine and a growing shift from fortified wines high in alcohol to unfortified low (or light) alcohol wines, a trend which favoured claret and champagne.[33] The leaders of the temperance movement in the early part of the century saw wine as a 'temperate' beverage and their stance was echoed by both the general press and the wine trade itself.[34] As early as 1849, the *Morning Post* argued that 'natural' (i.e. unfortified) wine was an instrument of moderation and a promoter of general health.[35] From the 1860s to the 1900s, Gilbey's assiduously promoted the same line, arguing that 'light wines are […] grateful and beneficial to the palate and health'.[36] The trade press echoed the argument that Britain not only benefited from the effect of light wine but was also becoming steadily more temperate. Thus, in 1883, *Ridley's* editorialised that the 'truth is that all classes of society – thanks mainly to the example set by the higher classes – are daily becoming not merely temperate, but abstemious'.[37]

Whilst the drinks trade accepted that Britain as a whole was becoming more temperate, its members consistently denied, in public at least, that the temperance movement was driving this change. The wine trade's view was summed up by *Ridley's* in

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Andersson, "How Civilized Were the Victorians?," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 20, no. 4 (2015), pp. 439-41.

[33] G.J. Mulder, *The Chemistry of Wine*, ed. H. Bence Jones (London, 1857), p. 384. Alcohol percentage for port and sherry is given as around 20%, champagne as 14%, claret as 10%. Champagne became progressively less alcoholic as the practice of adding spirit diminished during the century.

[34] For the 1839 'schism' in the temperance movement which pitted 'moderationists' and 'gradualists' against teetotallers, see Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians (1994)*, p. 132.

[35] See, for instance, *Morning Post*, 12 January 1849, p. 5 for the beneficial effect of wine on children affected by the 'Tooting Disorder', a form of cholera, and the *London Evening Mail*, 2 February 1855, p. 2 for the controversy over the lack of port wine supplies in the hospitals during the Crimean War.

[36] For publicity material citing the benefits of light wine, see 100433/79 (June 1863 circular), 100433/80 (1883 advertisement), 101184/10 (1891-2 publicity material); for a Gilbey's letter claiming that 'powerful strides in the cause of Temperance reform might be made should the Government by a master-stroke reduce the impost upon light Wine of low alcoholic strength to even double the tax upon beer', see *Ridley's*, 12 November 1900, p. 711.

[37] See, for example, *Ridley's*, 15 May 1883, p. 154.

1882, when it commented that the decline in wine consumption had little to do with the temperance movement since the 'the great majority of those who enrolled themselves in the ranks of the Blue Ribbon Army belong to the class whose potations […] consisted principally of Beer and Spirits'.[38] Four years later, in 1886, the minutes of a Board meeting at Gilbey's recorded that Crosbie Gilbey, a Director, had suggested that 'the decline in our business was due of course partly to the temperance movement', though he also pointed to increased competition and a possible loss of quality in some lines.[39] But his was apparently a rare voice of concern. In the general press, the *Scotsman* argued in 1907 that the decline in whisky consumption after the peak production year of 1898-9 was attributable to 'material causes […] which affect the spending powers of the great masses of the community, as well as the cult of sobriety itself'.[40] Before the war-time restrictions introduced in 1915, the distillers appeared largely unconcerned by the temperance movement, whose efforts were mostly focused on licensing reform which affected the distillers no more than it did the bulk of the wine trade.[41] The evidence from *Ridley's* and the general press cited above suggests, however, that the 'cult of sobriety' was a significant contributory factor in declining consumption.

When the sales of wines and spirits began to fall sharply in the early twentieth century, the trade focused on increasing competition for disposable income. Between 1906 and 1911, *Ridley's* four times cited 'motor cars and travelling' as countervailing attractions to alcohol.[42] Wilson, writing in 1940, supported this analysis and further

[38] *Ridley's*, 12 September 1882, p. 265.
[39] Diageo, 100433/unknown (archive's reference number missing), 'Directors' Minutes, 1883-1893', p. 95, minute dated 18 March 1886.
[40] *Scotsman*, 21 May 1907, p. 5.
[41] R.B. Weir, "Obsessed with Moderation: The Drink Trades and the Drink Question (1870–1930)," *British Journal of Addiction* 79, no. 4 (1984), pp. 100-03. Weir concluded that from Distillers Company board records 'it was not impossible' to conclude that the temperance movement never existed.
[42] See *Ridley's*, 8 September 1906, p. 750; 8 October 1907, p. 727; 8 July 1908, p. 605; 8 December 1911, p. 870.

suggested that ‘educational and moral causes’ and social changes might also have had an effect. He pointed to competing luxuries such as tobacco and gambling, the growing importance of increased thrift, and a greater variety of recreational facilities of all kinds.[43] Sir Alexander Walker of the whisky firm John Walker & Sons had reached a similar conclusion in 1931. Summarising fifty years of experience in the trade he wrote:

> I have never ceased to urge that temperance must come from the education of the public to a wider culture and interest in nature, arts and sports, and I am glad to think that this has come about [and] the inordinate consumption of alcohol for the sheer delight of intoxication has practically ceased.[44]

In summary, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, increasing affluence gave individuals in middling and upper-class circles the purchasing power to spend more on alcohol. Clearly, some turned away from alcohol but, from the 1890s onwards, for those who continued to consume there was increasing competition from other leisure pursuits for their discretionary spending – competition which was growing in attraction in an increasingly temperate society. In the decade before 1914, newspaper headlines reported ‘Britain’s diminishing wine bill’ and ‘Diminution of wine drinkers’.[45] Not only were there fewer adverts for wine but the available selection also shrank.[46] As the following sections on wine consumption before 1860 and Gladstone’s reforms and their impact will show, the ‘temperate turn’ in British society, which Gladstone was keen to foster, profoundly changed not just the appetite for wine but also the types of wine consumed.

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[43] For detailed discussion of each of these factors, see Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, pp. 241-71; Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians (1971)*, chapters 16-17 confirmed that by 1900 the remaining temperance reformers were losing their prime place amongst social reformers: 'the temperance movement by the 1890s seemed to be distracting the working man from his proper concerns' (p. 382); L.L. Shiman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1986), pp. 4-5 makes it clear that after the failure of the 'local option' in 1895, increasingly isolated local temperance communities took the place of a co-ordinated national campaign.

[44] Quoted in Weir, "Obsessed with Moderation," p. 97.

[45] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 June 1906, p. 4; *Suffolk Evening Star*, 13 July 1908, p. 2.

[46] In place of the six to eight clarets and ports advertised by Gilbey’s agents in the 1860s, most advertisements listed only one claret and one port. See, for example, *Surrey Comet*, 29 June 1907, p. 4.

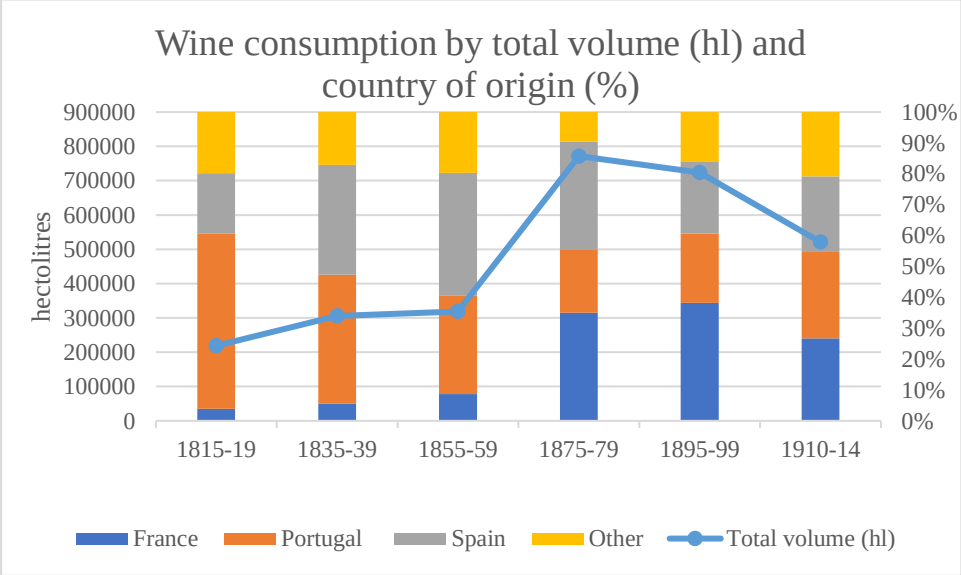
Wine consumption, 1800-1860

Wine consumption was held back after the end of the Napoleonic Wars by high tax levels which reached over 13s. per gallon between 1804 and 1824. Though wealthy Britons had cellars of remarkable range and variety, such consumption was limited to a very small, wealthy group.[47] Duty levels were cut to 7s. 3d. per gallon in 1825 and, as both contemporaries such as Cyrus Redding and more recent scholars have noted, the consumption of French wine rose approximately threefold over the next few years.[48] Despite this reduction, French wine was still taxed more heavily than spirits and Nye has judged that the overall effect of the long-term high duties on lower alcohol wine from France was 'to virtually prohibit the import of the cheaper classes of French wine'.[49] This had two consequences. First, consumption per head remained nearly static, reaching only one litre per head per annum by the late 1850s. Secondly, the market continued to be dominated by port and sherry. The former enjoyed advantageous tariff rates and had been popular amongst all classes throughout the eighteenth century; the latter was a more recent introduction to the mass market acceptable to both men and women. Both these wines were fortified with added spirit, partly for reasons of taste and partly to preserve the wines during the sea voyage from the Iberian Peninsula.[50]

[47] See *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 15 May 1817, p. 4 for the sale of the 'celebrated cellars' of Alex Davison, the prize-agent and government contractor, which raised £5,000. See Ludington, *Politics of Wine*, p. 92 for John Hervey's wine purchases, 1702-42, including a range of wines from France plus purchases from Portugal, Spain, Germany and Italy; for duty levels, see Simon, *History of Champagne*, pp. 167-70.
[48] C. Redding, *A History and Description of Modern Wines* (London, 1833), p. 383; Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 11, p. 361. It is possible that Gladstone would have been aware of this effect from Treasury sources.
[49] J.V.C. Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes: The Political Economy of Anglo-French Trade, 1689-1900* (Princeton and Oxford, 2007), p. 35. Nye (p. 65) estimated that had duties on and per capita consumption of French wine remained constant at late-1600s levels, imports of French wine would have been at least 15-20 times higher in the first half of the nineteenth century.
[50] For the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century history of port and sherry, see Ludington, *Politics of Wine*, pp. 121-62 (port) and pp. 221-37 (sherry).

As Figure 4 below shows, until the 1860s, Portugal and Spain produced more than 70 per cent of all wine consumed in Britain. Only after Gladstone's reforms did consumption of light wine from France start to rise, reaching just under 40 per cent by the turn of the century.

Figure 4: Wine consumption by total volume and country of origin

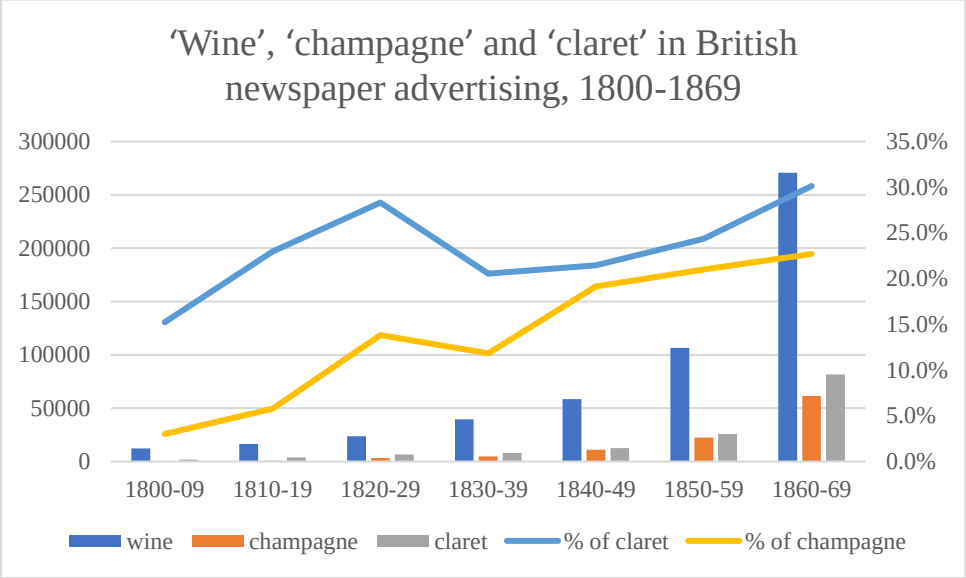


Source: Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Tables 1, 2 and 4, pp. 331-336.

From the 1840s onwards, however, both advertising and journalistic and literary sources strongly suggest that the dominance of port and sherry was threatened. Albeit from a low base, champagne and claret were becoming more popular, particularly in London, from the beginning of the 1840s.[51] Advertisements for wine (Figure 5 below) largely mirror the national consumption data, showing a rapid rise in the 1820s after the duty reduction, a dip in the 1830s and then a renewed rise in the proportion of advertisements featuring claret and champagne from 1840 onwards.

[51] HC Deb 10 February 1860, vol. 156 c. 838.

Figure 5: Advertising for 'wine' and 'champagne' in the British press, 1800-1869

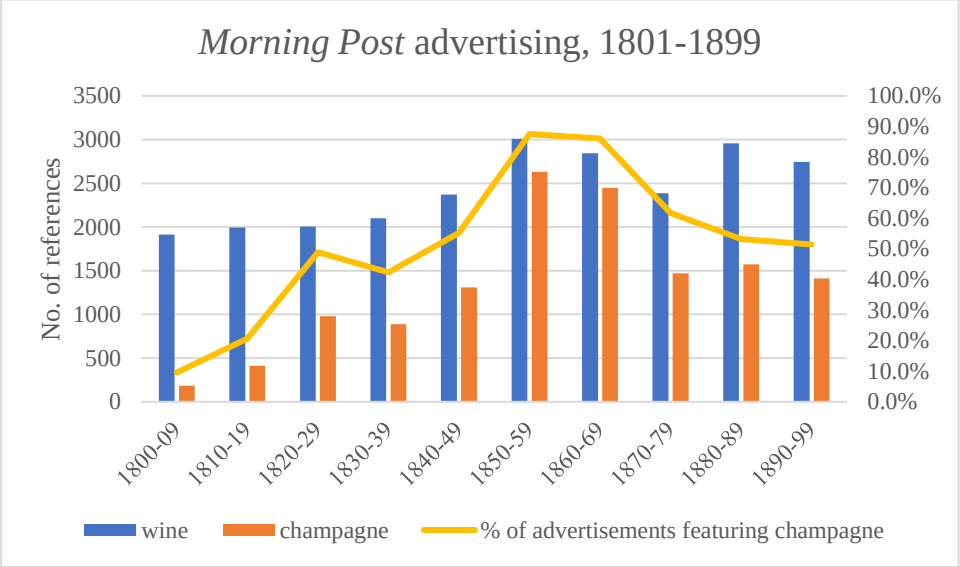


Source: BNA analysis of the use of the terms 'wine' and 'champagne' in advertising between 1800 and 1909 in 708 British newspapers in the BNA database (as of November 2016).

That London was the locus of early nineteenth-century growth in wine consumption is shown by data from the *Morning Post*, a London newspaper for the elite and a prime vehicle for advertising luxury products.[52] As Figure 6 below shows, advertisements for wine were already high in the first quarter of the century with far less striking relative growth in the 1850s and 1860s. As early as the 1820s more than 50 per cent of wine advertisements featured champagne and the figure rose to 80 per cent in the 1850s and 1860s before dipping slowly in the later part of the century.

[52] W.H. Hindle, *The Morning Post, 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper* (London, 1937), pp. 144, 148. It was seen as the paper of the 'fashionable world' in the 1820s and the 'aristocratic and landed interest' in the 1830s and 1840s.

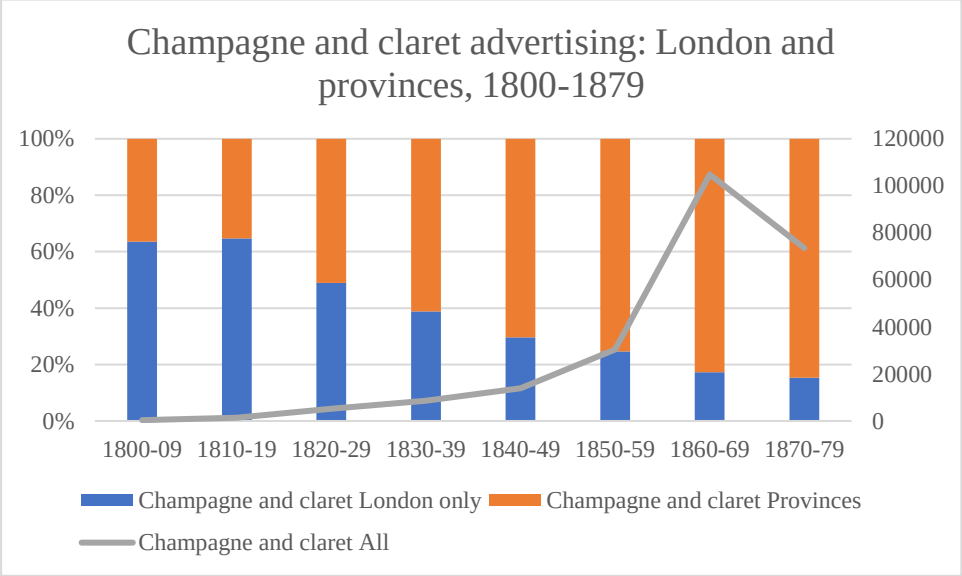
Figure 6: Advertising in the *Morning Post,* 1801-1899



Source: BNA. Methodology as Figure 5 above.

Advertising data (Figure 7 below) confirm the diffusion out of London. Until the late 1820s, London papers carried the bulk of advertising for champagne. In the 1830s and 1840s this dropped to 20-30 per cent and from the 1860s onwards was down to around 10 per cent. As the volume of advertising for champagne rose in absolute terms, so the dominance of London decreased.

Figure 7: Champagne advertisements, 1800-1919



Source: BNA analysis of all newspapers advertising champagne. Conducted 4 October 2017.

The sole detailed source of regional consumption data confirms this tentative picture of wine and champagne diffusing slowly from London to the provinces, as well as from the upper to the middling classes. The evidence comes from the mail order sales of Gilbey's in the late 1850s. A single ledger survives with data from 1857. Though over half (58 per cent) of their customers came from London and the South East, the North and Midlands already accounted for nearly 30 per cent of sales, with 16 per cent from the Midlands and 12 per cent from Lancashire and Yorkshire. At this date the orders were dominated by sherry or sherry-type wines (>50 per cent), port (>25 per cent) and spirits (>10 per cent). The company started to shift from their direct sales model to the broader coverage offered by a high-street retail model in 1859 before Gladstone's first budget. Following the duty reductions they began to extol the virtue of wine as a 'beverage to the poorer classes of the country'.[53] They clearly saw the potential for a broader market than

[53] Diageo, 100433/79, 'June 1863 circular'.

the gentry clients who dominated the 1857 sales ledger.[54] However, only 25 per cent of the initial stock provided to their 'agents' (i.e. retailers contracted to sell only Gilbey's wines and spirits) was unfortified, with four clarets, one hock and two champagnes.[55] The inclusion of two champagnes suggests that though their sparkling wine sales were negligible (< 1 per cent of 1857 sales) Gilbey's saw the possibility of trading up customers to this increasingly widely advertised and popular wine. Nonetheless, 75 per cent of the stock was fortified. This focus on fortified wines and spirits was what Gladstone wanted to change.

Gladstone's 1860-62 budgets and their impact

The historic reasons for the dominance of fortified wine were summed up in an 1861 speech in Rochdale by Richard Cobden, who had negotiated the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty of 1860 which paved the way for Gladstone's reductions in duty:[56]

> [W]e have laid on such an enormous amount of duty that nothing but wines of the very strongest character, the effect of which could suddenly be felt in the head, were ever thought worth purchasing. When a man had to pay 6d. or 9d. for a glass of wine containing a few thimblefuls, he wanted something which would affect his head for his money; he would not buy the fine, natural and comparatively weak wines of France.[57]

Gladstone shared Cobden's belief that duty levels set originally for political reasons distorted behaviour by inducing individuals of the poorer classes to opt for highly alcoholic liquids rather than the lower alcohol and less adulterated French wines. In his

[54] Of 182 customers whose social status was indicated, 'Esquire', 'Reverend' and military or medical titles accounted for 65 per cent. See 100433/188, 'Gilbey Day Book, February-November 1857'.
[55] See Diageo, 101184/22, 1859 letterbook, for stock list in letter of 1 October 1859 to John Rees of Carmarthen.
[56] For Gladstone's view that the reduction in wine duty was the chief commercial incentive to France, see A.A. Iliasu, "The Cobden-Chevalier Commercial Treaty of 1860," *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (1971), p. 89, n. 52.
[57] Quoted in Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes*, p. 32.

1860 budget speech, Gladstone expressed his concern that wine remained a 'rich man's luxury' and his determination to make light wine the drink of the British people.[58]

His changes to the duty payable on wine and the associated changes to the licensing system were the catalyst for the dramatic impetus given to wine consumption after 1860.[59] In his budgets of 1860, 1861 and 1862, Gladstone reduced the tariff on light wine from 5s. 9d. per gallon to 1s. per gallon. This reduction took place in stages between February 1860 and early 1862 as part of a switch to tariffing based on the level of alcohol rather than the origin of the wine. Wines under 26º proof paid 1s. per gallon tax; fortified wines between 26º and 42º paid 2s. 6d. per gallon. Though the alcohol levels were slightly altered at various points during the rest of the century and some extra duties were imposed, the basic principle of tariffs based on the level of alcohol has prevailed ever since. The immediate effect was a nearly 60 per cent jump in wine consumption in 1861 over 1860, whilst articles in *Ridley's* suggested that the market was becoming 'inundated with Red wine' and that the increased consumption 'far exceeds the most sanguine calculations'.[60]

Gladstone's second initiative was to liberalise the licensing structure to ensure wider distribution of wine and spirits and to break the monopolistic control exercised by an alliance of existing licensees and magistrates under the sway of local brewing interests.[61] This liberalisation took two forms. Firstly, he enabled grocers and other general shopkeepers to retail wine for off-premise (i.e. home) consumption on payment of

[58] W. Gladstone, "Financial Statement," 10 February 1860, vol. 156, c. 812-89.
[59] A. Briggs, *Wine for Sale: Victoria Wine and the Liquor Trade 1860-1984* (London, 1985); Simpson, *Creating Wine*, p. xxxvi: 'the potential of this market changed dramatically with Gladstone's legislation'; Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes*, p. 31: 'caused Britain to modify her tariffs dramatically'; for a detailed discussion of Gladstone's initial budget speech, see Ludington, *Politics of Wine*, pp. 252-4.
[60] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 332; *Ridley's*, 7 August 1860, p. 3; 8 May 1861, p. 1.
[61] J.R. Greenaway, *Drink and British Politics since 1830: A Study in Policy Making* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 20-3.

a fifty-shilling license. This was less than a quarter of the license cost for those who dealt exclusively in wines and spirits. Secondly, all eating establishments, including confectioners and pastry cooks, were permitted to sell wine for on-premise consumption, provided only that their owners were 'of good character', a test to be assessed not by the local licensing magistrates but by the excise.[62] The scaremongering predictions of the Licensed Victuallers that to grant such licenses would be 'to legalise nighthouses and to sanction orgies and debauchery' were ignored and by 1870 more than 3,000 licences had been issued.[63] With these changes to the licensing laws, the cornerstones of Gladstone's hoped-for revolution in British taste were in place. The nascent demand evident in the market in the 1850s and identified by firms such as Gilbey's was immediately fuelled by Gladstone's highly-publicised reforms.

Gladstone's overall aim was to improve the health of the nation by encouraging the consumption of unfortified 'natural' wines.[64] He spoke of the 'desperate struggles' of the poor to acquire such wines (particularly in periods of sickness) and of his wish to make light wine a national drink not just for the middling, but also for the labouring classes, whose long-established preference was for the adulterated and fortified wines that contemporaries characterised as 'black, strong and sweet'.[65] Like Cobden, he believed lower duties would not only bring down the price but also reduce the incentive to adulterate wines, since the current tariff levels invited 'persons of inferior character […] to counterfeit the article on which you have laid such heavy duties'.[66] Lowering tariffs

[62] 'On-premise' (or 'on-trade') is the standard term in the alcohol trade for products sold for consumption at point of sale rather than for consumption elsewhere ('off-premise' or 'off-trade').
[63] For numbers of licences issued 1861-1880, see Briggs, *Victoria Wine*, p. 37. For Licensed Victuallers' protests, see *Era*, 19 February 1860, p. 6.
[64] *Financial Statement*, c. 849.
[65] *Financial Statement*,cc. 838, 873; *Ridley's*, 6 November 1858, p. 10; See Redding, *Wine Duties' Reduction*, p. 66 for evidence from a wine merchant who 'always avoided that class of [black] wine' and did not know how it was produced.
[66] Gladstone beseeched the House to 'remember the immense masses of evil [...], fraud and adulteration to which it [the present system] gives rise'. See *Financial Statement*, cc. 848-9; see also Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures*, p. 149 and passim, for a broader perspective on adulteration of drinks in the nineteenth century.

was not enough on its own. As Gladstone told the journalist and politician Edward Baines shortly after his budget speech, 'all my wish is first to open some new, and cleaner channels for consumption, secondly not to create a new monopoly'. In Harrison's words, he was 'convinced […] that free trade and sobriety went hand in hand'.[67] The wine trade press agreed on the importance of this liberalisation. *Ridley's* argued in 1861 that 'unless the House brought the consumption of Wine down to a lower stratum of the population, the reduction [in duties] would not prove effectual, and in order to effect that object, there must be an alteration of the Licensing system'.[68] Following the initial changes, they argued in 1862 that the remaining 'restrictions in the way of obtaining Licences should be removed as speedily as possible'.[69]

Contemporaries in Britain and France generally welcomed the reduction in duties but expressed doubts about the likelihood of the 'lower stratum of the population' adopting light wine.[70] The *Glasgow Herald* quoted with approval an editorial in *The Times* that questioned whether 'the lower, or even the middle classes, will ever take to foreign wine'.[71] The *Belfast News-letter* was blunter, claiming that the belief that 'wine will become the comfort of the poor man […] is a delusion'.[72] On the other side of the Channel the *Moniteur Vinicole*, the mouthpiece of the French wine industry, was immediately enthusiastic about the duty change. The paper expected the trade to double or triple in a few years but counselled that it would take time before wine became the

[67] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians (1971)*, p. 229, quoting British Library, Additional Manuscripts 44530 (Gladstone Papers), f. 160.
[68] *Ridley's*, 6 September 1861, p. 13.
[69] *Ridley's*, 6 March 1862, p. 2. The possibility of extending the free licensing movement championed by Gladstone was halted by problems in Liverpool in 1866. See Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians (1994)*, pp. 231-2.
[70] A sample of 50 articles in the British press in the week immediately following the budget shows 35 broadly favourable to the duty reduction, seven neutral and eight opposed, the latter largely because of concerns over the licensing changes. Four printed letters were from individuals, mostly opposed to the changes. BNA analysis conducted 20 August 2014.
[71] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 February 1860, p. 4.
[72] *Belfast News-letter*, 13 February 1860, p. 3.

'luxury of the poor'.[73] Their primary – and prescient – concern was that Britain lacked the commercial and retail infrastructure needed to stock and sell good quality wine. They warned wine-growers to avoid sending the 'dregs of the barrels' and made clear their view that until there were shops and bars selling wine by the bottle or the glass there was little chance that the English would learn how to drink wine.[74] The doubters in the press were partially right. As *Ridley's* put it in a 1908 article on sixty years of the British wine trade:

> the reduction in Duty on Claret from five shillings and ninepence to one shilling a gallon may have brought the rich man's luxury within the poor man's reach, but it does not appear to have brought it any nearer his mouth, for neither then nor since has light Claret become the beverage of those who earn their bread by manual labour. Among all grades of the middle classes, however, the boon was promptly appreciated and the taste for Bordeaux rapidly and widely developed.[75]

Even if the poorest classes did not take to wine, the middling classes did and the effect of Gladstone's changes on the retail trade was immediate.[76] Within a week of the budget speech in early February the first advertisements boasting of 'Reduction in Wine Duties' began to appear.[77] By mid-March they were the norm.[78] New merchants competed aggressively to exploit the new market. As *Ridley's* memorably put it in its 1908 retrospective:

> [t]he demand was so considerable that all sorts and conditions of shopkeepers rushed into the Trade almost as impetuously as, ten years before, inexperienced youths had flocked to the goldfields of Ballarat. Grocers, Confectioners, Florists, Druggists, most of them knowing no more about Wine than they knew of the

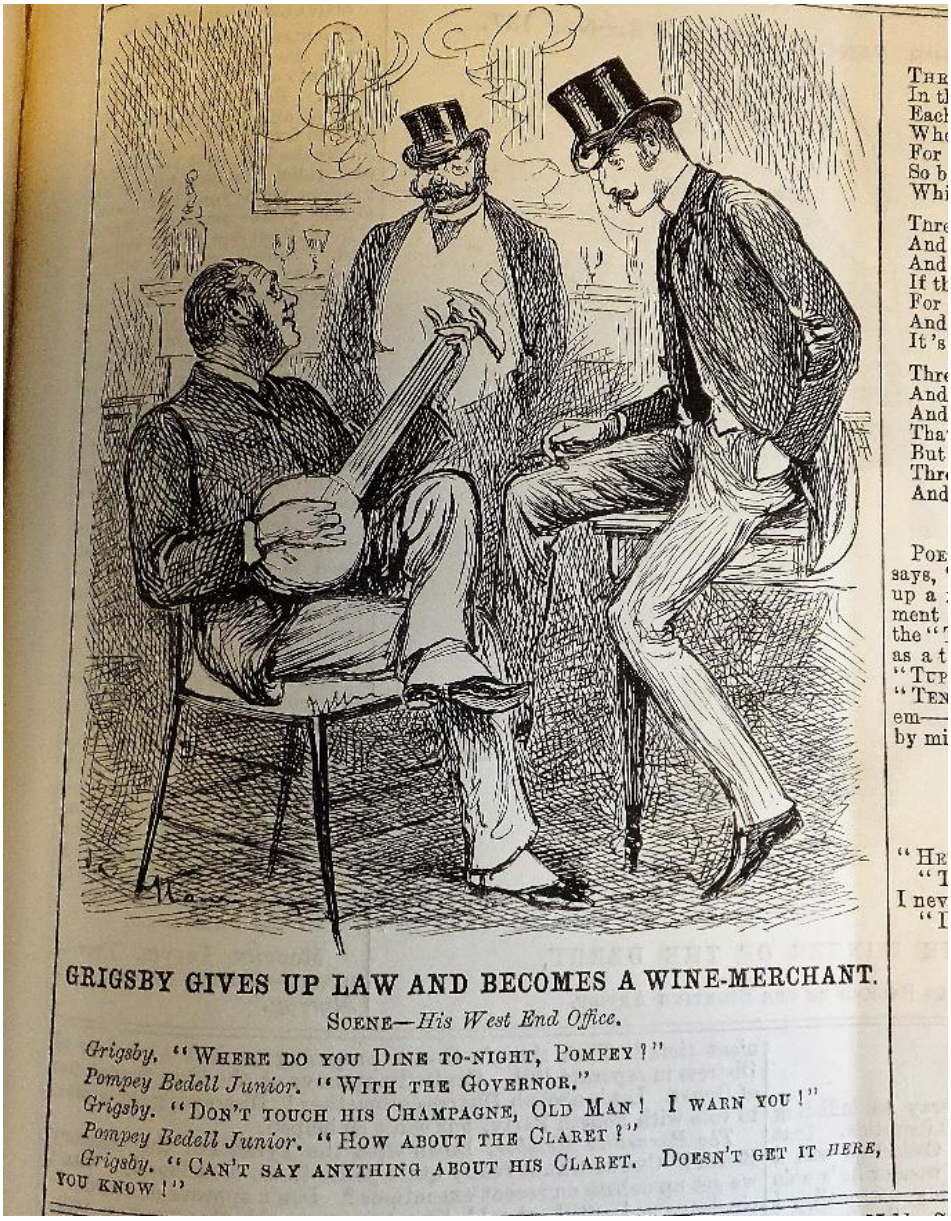
[73] *Moniteur Vinicole*, 16 February 1860, p. 54: 'il y a loin encore, si on ne s'y méprenne pas, du jour présent à celui où, selon la philanthropique expression de M. Gladstone, le vin deviendra en Angleterre le luxe de la pauvre'. ('There is a great distance, if we are not mistaken, from the present to the day when, according to the philanthropic expression of Mr Gladstone, wine will become the luxury of the poor in England.')
[74] *Moniteur Vinicole*, 15 March 1860, p. 86; 19 April 1860, pp. 127-8; 16 September 1860, p. 298.
[75] *Ridley's*, 9 January 1908, p. 52. The red wine of Bordeaux had been known as 'claret' for more than 200 years by this time.
[76] For further evidence on the wine trade's ability to reach the poorest districts, see H. P. Gilbey's evidence to the Commission on Intemperance in 1878 (page 55 below).
[77] *London Standard*, 18 February 1860, p. 1.
[78] See, for example, advertisements from Gilbey's in the *Oxford Journal*, 10 March 1860, p. 5 and European and Colonial Wine Company in the *Sheffield Independent*, 10 March 1860, p. 1.

> enchorial inscription on the Rosetta Stone, procured cheap licenses and filled their shop-windows with cheap Wines.[79]

The expansion of retailing pulled in not just urban outlets but also many mail order companies who competed aggressively on price using both press advertisements and posted circulars at the reduced 'half-penny' rate introduced by Rowland Hill in the early 1860s. The volume of trade circulars of all forms (not simply those advertising wine) was such that the 1867-8 report of the Postmaster General estimated that the 'reckless and extravagant fashion of advertising by circular' led to an annual waste of three million pieces of undeliverable mail.[80] Often advertised wines were merely 'decoy ducks' – cut-price offers that led to the sale of higher margin products.[81] Such dubious practices permeated the trade from top to bottom. As this 1883 *Punch* cartoon (Figure 8 below) makes clear, becoming a wine merchant was seen as the last refuge of well-connected young men who had failed in every profession of repute. Here a failed lawyer is portrayed as purveying dubious champagne to his friend's father.[82]

[79] *Ridley's*, 9 January 1908, pp. 52-3.
[80] G. Fryer and C. Akerman, eds., *The Reform of the Post Office in the Victorian Era and Its Impact on Economic and Social Activity* (London, 2002), p. 693.
[81] For an 1820s' denunciation of this practice see 'One of the Old School', *Wine and Spirit Adulterators Unmasked*, p. 120. See also *Tamworth Herald*, 18 July 1880, p. 7.
[82] *Punch, or, the London Charivari*, 26 May 1883, p. 249.

Figure 8: The mid-century view of wine merchants



GRIGSBY GIVES UP LAW AND BECOMES A WINE-MERCHANT.

SCENE—*His West End Office.*

Grigsby. "WHERE DO YOU DINE TO-NIGHT, POMPEY?"
Pompey Bedell Junior. "WITH THE GOVERNOR."
Grigsby. "DON'T TOUCH HIS CHAMPAGNE, OLD MAN! I WARN YOU!"
Pompey Bedell Junior. "HOW ABOUT THE CLARET?"
Grigsby. "CAN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT HIS CLARET. DOESN'T GET IT *HERE*, YOU KNOW!"

Source: *Punch*, 26 May 1883, p. 249.

The result was a climate of pervasive distrust. Most wine was imported in cask and bottled in London, a process that offered ample opportunity for incompetence or malpractice.[83] Misrepresentation, adulteration and under-size bottles were all

[83] See HC Deb 1 May 1899 vol. 70 cc. 957-8 claiming the bulk of wine was still shipped in cask.

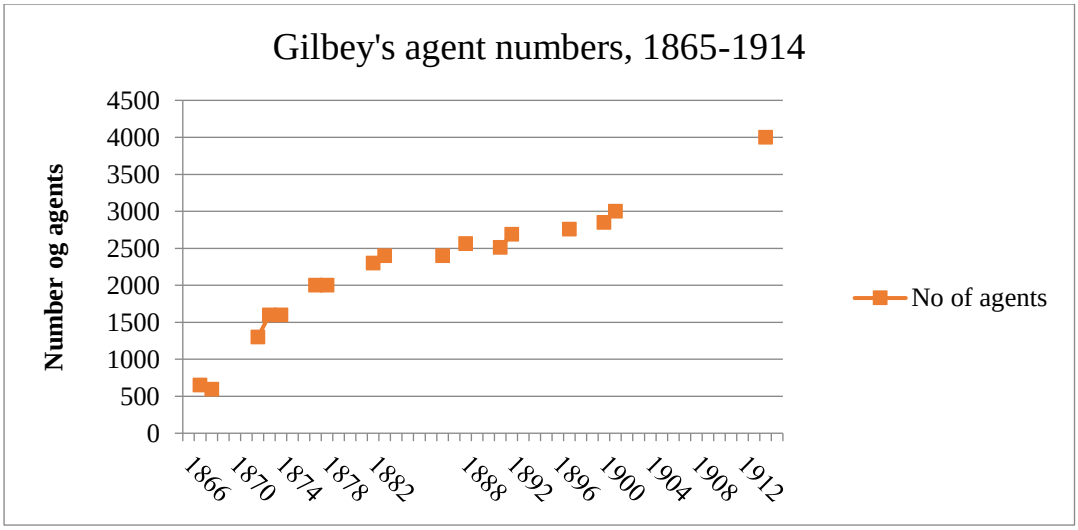
commonplace.[84] In consequence, it was very difficult to establish trusted brands, and those who were able to do so – such as Gilbey's – benefited proportionately.

The role of W. & A. Gilbey in developing the British market

The distributive firm of W. & A. Gilbey was probably the major beneficiary of the liberalisation of the licensing regime and the duty reductions.[85] The Gilbey's customer proposition was summed up in the 'system of business' (their term) that they consistently stressed in all publicity and pricing material. At the core of this system were three concepts: quality, value and purity, each backed by specific points of what would now be called 'brand collateral'. For example, the concept of 'value' was validated by publishing government figures showing that they were the leading importers of wine into the United Kingdom.[86] The business system was designed to achieve two goals. The first was to make wine nationally available; the second was to give its customers every possible reassurance on quality. National availability was achieved by recruiting agents in most British towns of any size. As Figure 9 below shows, Gilbey's had 2,000 agents by the mid-1870s and 3,000 by 1900. This gave them access to most significant settlements in Britain and an unrivalled list of customer names and addresses which they assiduously updated and sold to for the next sixty years.[87]

[84] E. Lynn, "Wine, No Mystery," *Household Words* 17, no. 41 (1858), p. 322 for the 'chemical messes [...] and sweet-smelling falsehoods' of wine and its marketing. See also the advertisements for 'The One Wine Company' attacking bottles of 'spurious extraction' as neither 'honest, legal, nor convenient' and promoting their own 'Imperial pints as 'regular in measure'. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 16 August 1868, p. 8.
[85] For a detailed analysis of Gilbey's success, see G. Harding, "'Competition Is Useless': How Gilbey's Retail and Marketing Innovation Dominated the British Wine and Spirits Market, 1857–1922," *History of Retailing and Consumption* 2, no. 1 (2016). The Cadiz, Oporto, and Light Wine Association claimed 1200 'respectable family grocers' as agents in 1864 but the company and its owner had a well-deserved reputation for sharp practice and dishonesty. See *Ridley's*, 9 April 1863, pp. 7-9.
[86] By 1860, Gilbey's were using 'government returns' to claim leadership in gallons imported. See 100433/79, '1860 price list'.
[87] In 1866, more than twenty agents were operating in towns with populations under 2,000. The two smallest settlements listed each had a population of 500. See 100433/79, 'List of agents with turnover over £250'.

Figure 9: Gilbey's agent numbers



Source: Diageo, annual price lists and circulars. The 1912 figure probably includes overseas agents.

Giving evidence to the 1878 Select Commission on Intemperance, Henry Parry Gilbey, one of the company's founding partners, claimed to supply around half of the nation's grocers. Though they made attempts in the 1880s to target the 'working classes', these were not very successful, and the town centre locations of their agents suggest that in general their customers were the middling classes in British towns and cities and the upper groups of provincial society.[88] Their network of agents excluded the poorer 'East End districts' of cities and smaller towns and villages.[89] Gilbey's conclusion in his 1878 evidence was that among the 'lowest class […] I do not think […] there is even a per-centage of them to be entered as customers for our goods'. From the last quarter of the century, Gilbey's marketing material was explicitly segmented by class and by product, with their full 'Prices Current' list of 'superior wines' going to the 'gentry and

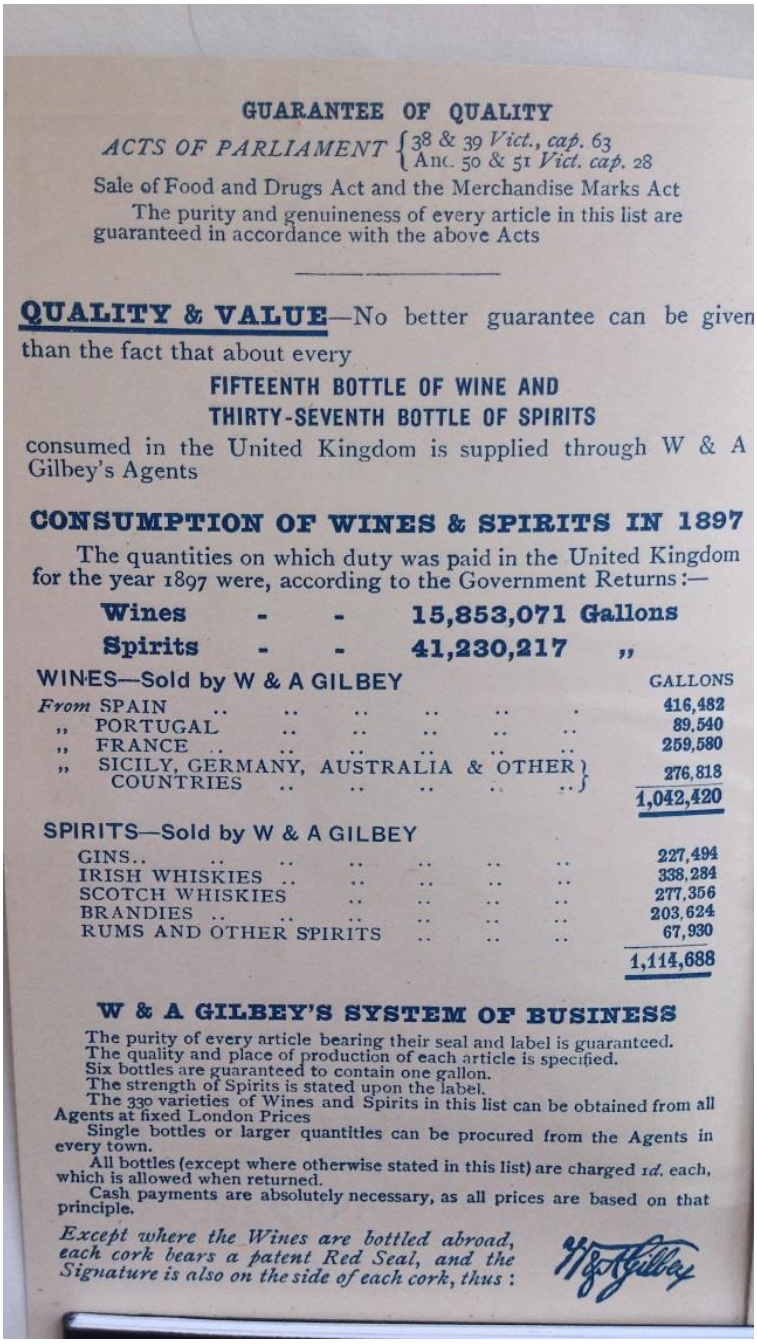
[88] 100433/80, Memo to agents, September 1881, accompanying 'Enlarged Price List'. These lists were not sent to the 'Working Classes'. Gilbey's never attempted any breakdown of their customer base and no suitable evidence survives on which such an analysis might be attempted.
[89] Parliamentary Papers, "Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Intemperance: Together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix," 5 August 1878, c. 1996-5009.

professional classes', the 'Selected' list going to 'middle-class consumers', and 'Bottle Slips' for lower-priced products going to the labouring classes.[90] The scale of their business made wines and spirits nationally available at prices that others found hard to match. Not for nothing did *Ridley's* say of Gilbey's in 1868 that 'competition is useless'.[91]

The second crucial element of the Gilbey's proposition was the quality, value and purity of their products. At the centre of their promise to consumers was the 'Castle brand' which rapidly grew to encompass as many as four hundred products. This meant that consumers buying from Gilbey's agents no longer needed the self-confidence to deal with an elite merchant (and accept his high prices) or the detailed knowledge necessary to pick out the drinkable from the undrinkable in the circulars of English entrepreneurs or foreign producers selling direct into the British market. The 'Castle brand' products had a clear label, a 'Red Seal' and the W. & A. Gilbey signature on the cork as proof of quality. A 'Castle Grand' sub-brand was used for the premium products in the range, including four of the seven champagnes. The marketing both claimed that each product had been tested by analysts to ensure its purity and guaranteed that the bottles were full measure. Thus, Gilbey's addressed consumer concerns about the adulteration of wine in the same way that Horniman's innovative use of packaging was a response to the Victorian fear of adulterated tea.[92] Another vital element of the business system (Figure 10 below) was the guarantee of consistent 'quality and value', which Gilbey's attributed to their scale and buying power.[93]

[90] 10433/80. See agent memos and circulars of September 1881, 11 October 1883 and October 1884.
[91] *Ridley's*, 10 August 1868, pp. 9-10.
[92] Rappaport, "Packaging China," pp. 125-46.
[93] The 1867 price list claimed that Gilbey's quality advantage lay in 'buying [...] large purchases, coupled with a correct and independent system of selection by comparison'. See 100255/47, Annual circular.

Figure 10: The Gilbey's Business System



GUARANTEE OF QUALITY

ACTS OF PARLIAMENT { 38 & 39 *Vict., cap.* 63 / Anc. 50 & 51 *Vict. cap.* 28

Sale of Food and Drugs Act and the Merchandise Marks Act

The purity and genuineness of every article in this list are guaranteed in accordance with the above Acts

QUALITY & VALUE—No better guarantee can be given than the fact that about every

FIFTEENTH BOTTLE OF WINE AND THIRTY-SEVENTH BOTTLE OF SPIRITS

consumed in the United Kingdom is supplied through W & A Gilbey's Agents

CONSUMPTION OF WINES & SPIRITS IN 1897

The quantities on which duty was paid in the United Kingdom for the year 1897 were, according to the Government Returns:—

Wines - - 15,853,071 Gallons

Spirits - - 41,230,217 ,,

WINES—Sold by W & A GILBEY	GALLONS
From SPAIN	416,482
,, PORTUGAL	89,540
,, FRANCE	259,580
,, SICILY, GERMANY, AUSTRALIA & OTHER COUNTRIES	276,818
	1,042,420

SPIRITS—Sold by W & A GILBEY	
GINS	227,494
IRISH WHISKIES	338,284
SCOTCH WHISKIES	277,356
BRANDIES	203,624
RUMS AND OTHER SPIRITS	67,930
	1,114,688

W & A GILBEY'S SYSTEM OF BUSINESS

The purity of every article bearing their seal and label is guaranteed.
The quality and place of production of each article is specified.
Six bottles are guaranteed to contain one gallon.
The strength of Spirits is stated upon the label.
The 330 varieties of Wines and Spirits in this list can be obtained from all Agents at fixed London Prices
Single bottles or larger quantities can be procured from the Agents in every town.
All bottles (except where otherwise stated in this list) are charged 1*d.* each, which is allowed when returned.
Cash payments are absolutely necessary, as all prices are based on that principle.

Except where the Wines are bottled abroad, each cork bears a patent Red Seal, and the Signature is also on the side of each cork, thus:

W & A Gilbey

Source: Diageo, 101184/19, 1897 Prices Current.

The Castle brand was a significant marker in the history of modern branding and marketing. It was arguably the first true range brand (in which a single name covers a range of diverse products sharing the same values, as distinct from individual product brands such as 'Sunlight Soap' or 'Oxo') and antedates the Heinz range of canned

products developed in the 1880s by more than twenty years.[94] The Castle brand was also the first brand of any sort to achieve mass recognition not under the name of its producer but in its own right.[95] Before 1860 some names of Bordeaux châteaux and Burgundian domains such as Romanée Conti and a few names of champagne shippers, notably Clicquot, Moët and Roederer, were known, but most wine was advertised under the name of the British merchant.[96] After 1860, extensive advertising made the names of both Gilbey and the Castle brand highly familiar.[97] In 1869, Gilbey's *Treatise on wines and spirits of the principal producing countries* could boast that:

> the different wine countries are now so thoroughly opened up by modem commerce, that we have an almost infinite variety to choose from, sufficiently varied indeed to meet every caprice of fashion or taste.[98]

Their price lists proved the point. By 1865, Gilbey's price list had more than 170 varieties of wine from all the major wine-producing countries in Europe. Twenty years later, their agents could draw on a heavily advertised list of nearly 250 varieties sold at uniform prices by 2,500 agents across Britain.[99] The scale and sophistication of the Gilbey's business was unmatched in nineteenth-century retailing.[100]

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[94] Though Henry Heinz was a consistent advocate of strong branding, the '57 Varieties' line did not appear until 1896, see N. Koehn, "Henry Heinz and Brand Creation in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Business History Review* 73, no. 3 (1999), p. 396.

[95] The Lever example cited by Church, "Advertising Consumer Goods," p. 634, was later; J.-N. Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking* (London, 2008), p. 230. Kapferer states that range brands have a 'single brand name and promote through a single promise a range of products belonging to the same area of competence'.

[96] *Christie's sales catalogue*, 27 February 1844, lists the wine in the sale of the Duke of Sussex's extensive cellar. None of the wines had a producer name; two lots of champagne and two lots of claret bear the name of a British merchant. A BNA sample of advertisements from fourteen different merchants between 1-14 January 1850 lists 171 wines of which five bore the name of a foreign producer or property.

[97] The BNA has over 50,000 Gilbey's advertisements in the period 1860-1909. Analysis conducted 10 October 2017.

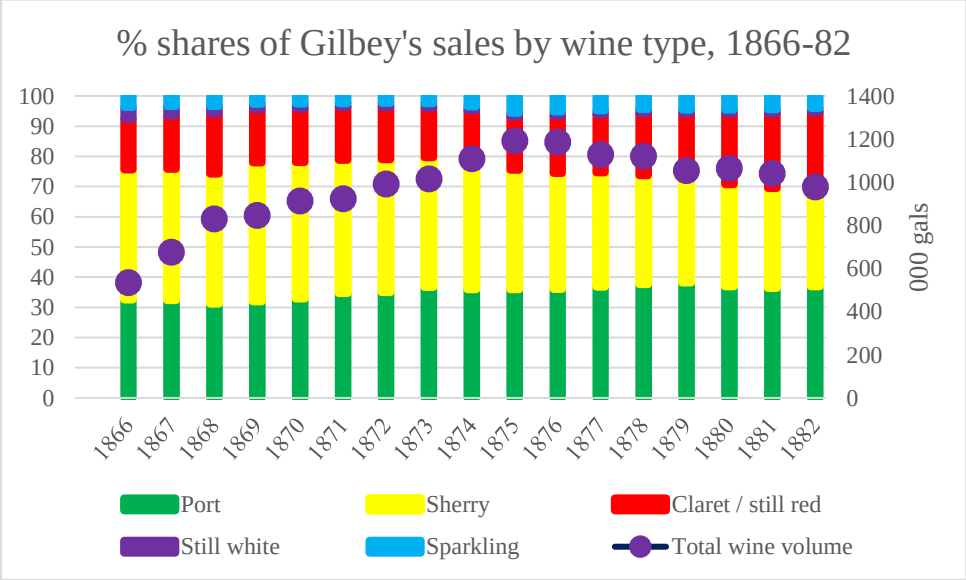
[98] A. Gilbey, *Treatise on Wines and Spirits of the Principal Producing Countries* (London, 1869), p. 3.

[99] *Kentish Gazette*, 28 November 1865, p. 2; *Reading Mercury*, 7 February 1885, p. 7

[100] For justification of this claim see Harding, "Competition Is Useless," passim. There are few scholarly studies of individual British retailers in the nineteenth century and no modern work on Gilbey's as a retailer. Mathias' work on Lipton and Allied Retailers does not suggest equal sophistication; see P. Mathias, *Retailing Revolution: A History of Multiple Retailing in the Food Trades Based Upon the Allied Suppliers Group of Companies* (London, 1967), pp. 47-114, 116. Lipton failed in an attempt to enter the wine market.

All these elements of the Gilbey's business system were in place by the early 1860s. The extent of their success with the lower-priced light wines in the British market can be seen by comparing Gilbey's sales in 1857 and 1866. In 1857 they sold around 2,000 cases in total, with over 50 per cent of the sales coming from fortified Cape wine. Less than 10 per cent of their orders were for light wines. In 1866, the next year for which sales data are available, the firm sold nearly 180,000 cases of which nearly 20 per cent were unfortified.[101] Their surviving sales data (Figure 11) from the period 1866-1882 provide clear evidence on how British middle-class wine consumption changed over this period.

Figure 11: Gilbey's wine sales, 1866-82



Source: Diageo, 100204/4, 'Sales, 1866-82'.[102]

[101] The 1859-60 sales figures come from a Gilbey's price list and circular of early 1860, see Diageo, 100433/79. Subsequent annual circulars gave only total volumes imported rather than sales. The 1866 sales figures come from a different source; an internal collation of annual sales figures covering the period 1886-1882, see Diageo, 1003204/4.

[102] The data for this chart is drawn from the handwritten records of Gilbey's annual sales, which list sales by product line. I have aggregated (for example) all the seven different sparkling wines to produce a single figure for the purposes of analysing the overall split of wine types.

Gilbey's sales of unfortified wine (of which claret represented over 70 per cent) more than trebled between 1866 and 1882; sales of fortified wines rose at a slightly slower rate until the mid-1870s before starting to decline. After the late 1870s the percentage share represented by unfortified wines started to rise, reaching 28 per cent in 1882. French wine in general, and claret and sparkling wine in particular, were the main beneficiaries of the shift to unfortified wines. On the national market, French wine rose from 27 per cent market share in 1870 to 42 per cent by 1880 before falling back to 33 per cent in 1900 when competition from other European countries (particularly Portugal) and Australia was making inroads.[103] As the disparity between Gilbey's sales of French wine and the national data suggests, their clientele remained relatively loyal to fortified wines. By the late 1860s they were sending out more than 2.5 million circulars annually for the company's 'shilling port and sherry'.[104]

This was despite Gilbey's consistent insistence in their publicity material on the importance of light wines as a temperate beverage. From the mid-1860s onwards, their circulars and price lists stressed the link between light wines and temperate drinking. For instance, they argued in 1867 for the importance of diluting wines with water and in 1877 they claimed that:

> For many years W& A Gilbey have lost no opportunity of urging the advantages derived from the consumption of Light Natural Wines as beverages, and they have recently seen with satisfaction therefore, that both the Press and Medical Profession also lose no opportunity of recommending these Wines from a medical and temperance point of view.[105]

[103] Note that this is national data. The Gilbey's figures were rather different, see note 102 above. Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 11, pp. 362-3; N. Faith, *Australia's Liquid Gold* (London, 2003), p. 80: Australia's exports to Britain rose from 87,000 cases in 1885-6 to more than 300,000 in the mid-1890s.
[104] R. Coopey, S. Connell, and D. Porter, *Mail Order Retailing in Britain: A Business and Social History* (Oxford, 2005), p. 16. As a comparison, note the boast of Whiteley's department store that it could send 2.5 million catalogues and circulars per year in 1915.
[105] Diageo, 101184/7, 'Summer season 1877 price list'; 100255/47, 1867 Annual circular.

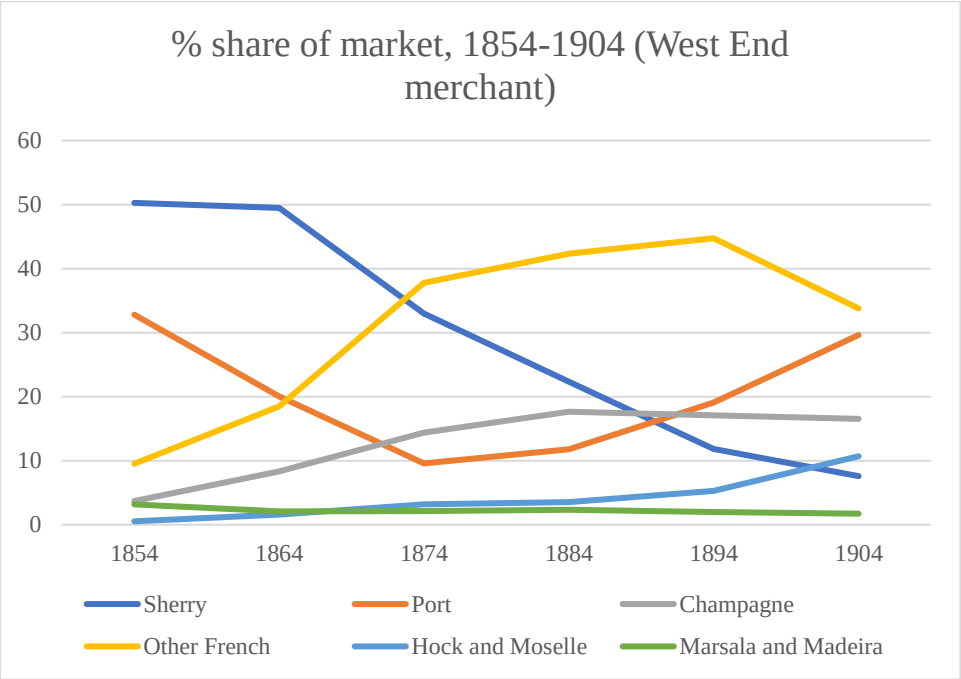
In 1883, they used as the basis for an advertisement an article from the *British Medical Journal* which argued that 'it is of public interest to encourage its consumption, both upon grounds of health and temperance [since] it is to the interest not only of the medical man, but of the moderate consumer, – we had almost said, indeed, the total abstainer, – to encourage its consumption, both upon grounds of health and temperance'.[106]

However, this message appears to have had more success with upmarket customers, since the shift away from fortified wine appears to have been significantly greater amongst the British elite. Sales figures from an 'un-named West End merchant' published by *Ridley's* in 1905 (Figure 12 below) show that, by 1904, light wine accounted for over 60 per cent of sales compared with only 25 per cent in 1860, despite a steady resurgence in port from the late 1870s onwards.[107] Sherry dropped from over 50 per cent of sales in 1854 to 33 per cent in 1864 and fell to under 10 per cent by 1904. Port dropped from over 30 per cent share in 1854 to under 10 per cent by 1874 but by 1904 had climbed back to just under 30 per cent. Although the sales of this merchant cannot necessarily be regarded as representative, they suggest that those who lived in and bought their wines in the West End shifted to light wines earlier than the middle-classes who shopped at Gilbey's stores in provincial high streets.[108] In 1873, 20 per cent of Gilbey's sales were of light wines; by 1881-2 this had risen to 30 per cent, supporting the

[106] Diageo, 100433/80, 'Price list and circulars, 1865'; an extract from the *British Medical Journal* of May 1882 was used as the basis for the advertisement but the source was quoted as the *London Medical Record* of 15 June 1883.
[107] *Ridley's*, 8 November 1905, p. 842. The journal cited an un-named 'West End House' as the source for a table of market shares by wine type from 1854 to 1904. This is the only substantive source of wine sales by type apart from the Gilbey's data. *Ridley's* text makes it clear that this house was chosen to represent the elite market.
[108] For further evidence of the switch from port, see J.L.W. Thudichum, *A Treatise on Wines* (London, 1894), p. 319. 'Much has been written and said regarding the injurious character of strongly-brandied port wine, and in consequence the more polite classes of society have almost entirely turned from port wine, and do not drink it any longer.'

hypothesis of a general ‘temperate turn’ but indicating that the upper classes started to shift to light wines earlier than Gilbey’s more middle-class customers.[109]

Figure 12: Wine shares by type, 1854-1904



Source: Un-named ‘West End house’, cited in *Ridley’s*, 8 November 1905, p. 842.

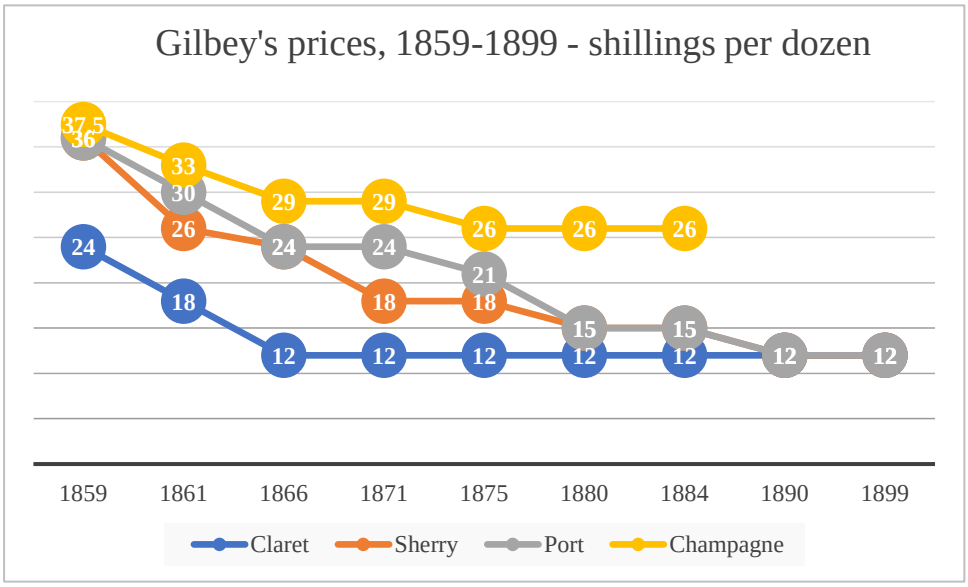
Pricing and quality: the challenge to claret, sherry and port

The pricing of wine was a significant factor in the nineteenth-century wine market. Vendors used low pricing to drive sales of claret, sherry and some sectors of the port market.[110] This led to reductions in the quality of all three wines. Only champagne was generally able to drive up prices and (as will be discussed in later chapters) improve quality. The downward pressure on the prices of the most popular wines is shown in Figure 13 below, which draws on Gilbey’s advertised price lists. The 1859 figures show

[109] 100204/4, 'Sales analyses, 1866-82'.
[110] Writing on the wine trade in 1868, E.L. Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine* (London, 1868), p. 79 deplored the prevalence of 'unscrupulous underselling'. The firm of H. R. Williams headlined their advertisements with the line ‘The Cheapest Wine in England’, see, for example, *Oxford University and City Herald*, 18 May 1861, p. 16.

the prices before Gladstone's reductions in the duty levels. There was a rapid drop of 20-25 per cent in the prices of the entry-level 'Castle A' range of wines and by the middle of the 1860s the prices had dropped a further 10-30 per cent. Slight rises for port and sherry in the prosperous 1870s were succeeded by further drops in the price of these two wines, whilst the price of the entry level Gilbey's Castle A claret stayed at 12s. per dozen bottles for more than fifty years, despite the company losing money on these 'shilling wines'. Cheaper lines of port and sherry were introduced under the 'Castle 1' nomenclature in the 1860s.

Figure 13: Gilbey's prices, 1859-99



Source: BNA, prices from a range of newspapers, accessed 19 November 2016.

The low price of claret was a consequence of aggressive competition in the 1860s between a range of importers. British merchants such as H. R. Williams (dubbed the 'pioneer of cheap claret' by *Ridley's*) started to price Bordeaux wine at 1s. a bottle in the early 1860s and competitors had to follow.[111] Under the name 'Gladstone claret' it gained

[111] *Ridley's*, 10 February 1869, p. 14.

wide currency among middle- and lower-middle-class drinkers as a ‘dinner wine’ to accompany food.[112] The huge growth in demand for low-price commodity claret was to the detriment of the wine’s quality and reputation.

The quality problem was exacerbated by poor harvests from the 1860s onwards (mainly caused by oidium, a form of rot, and phylloxera, a virulent infestation spread by parasitic aphids), and the concurrent decline in the reputation of fine claret brands such as Châteaux Margaux and Latour.[113] In 1862, *Ridley’s* complained that blending stronger wines from the south of France into the wines of Bordeaux ‘destroys the distinctive characteristics of flavour and bouquet’; in 1865 the journal attacked the advertisers of ‘cheap claret’ who provided a ‘supply of low rubbish to the 10,000 simpletons who rise every day from their beds’.[114] The dismissal, in Trollope’s *Phineas Redux*, of the ‘goblet of Gladstone’ as undrinkable probably reflected the author’s prejudices, but it may not have been far from the truth to suggest that such wines were of low quality.[115] Much so-called claret was the result of mixing wine produced from dried raisins with genuine French wine and in 1887 the *Daily Telegraph* proclaimed that ‘[a]n immense proportion of the wine sold in England as Claret has nothing to do with the banks of the Garonne’.[116]

[112] See *Ridley's*, 10 February 1869, p. 14, for the 'christening' of Gladstone claret. For a competing brand see Findlater’s advertisements for ‘Chancellor’s Claret’, e.g. *Dublin Evening Mail*, 6 October 1865, p. 1.
[113] *Ridley's*, 10 November 1908, pp. 985-6. ‘The disappointment of a generation of drinkers at the poor quality of indifferent Wines with real Chateau Brands has worked as much ill to the drinking of Claret as adulteration and the selling of other poor unbranded stuff can be credited with.’
[114] *Ridley’s*, 8 May 1862, p. 5; 7 January 1865, pp. 9-10.
[115] For a series of negative references, see Trollope, *Last Chronicle of Barset*, vol. 2 (London, 1867), p. 350, where the port-drinking traditionalist Mr Toogood makes ‘very stinging remarks about the claret drinking propensities of the age’; *Ralph the Heir* (1871) ‘offered sherry, port and Gladstone’; *Phineas Redux*, (1873), vol. 1 (Oxford, 1937), p. 102, ‘goblet of Gladstone’. For Trollope's good judgment of wine and preferences in claret see R.C. Terry, *Trollope: Interviews and Recollections* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp. 224-6.
[116] *Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 1887, p. 7; see also J.-F. Audibert, *L'art De Faire Le Vin Avec Les Raisins Secs* (Marseille, 1881). This immensely popular book by Audibert, who described himself as the 'créateur et promoteur' of the raisin wine industry, went through eight editions in two years.

In 1900, *Ridley's* lamented the 'wretched industry that has sprung up […] manufacturing "British" Claret, "British" Port and so on'.[117]

The pressure on pricing also affected sherry and port. Sherry suffered from both quality and branding failure. As Figures 11 and 12 above show, sherry sales fell overall, especially amongst elite groups. In the 1850s sherry appears from newspapers and novels to have been both the standard 'dinner wine' and the alcoholic stimulant of choice for women and many men.[118] In 1860 it had around 50 per cent market share, but by 1900 its share was down to around 25 per cent. Its reputation was severely damaged in the 1860s and 1870s by loudly expressed concerns over quality debasement and high alcohol levels.[119] In 1873, a *Times* article prompted by the publication of the second edition of Robert Druitt's highly successful 1865 *Report on Cheap Wines* (which the newspaper credited as 'almost the first public confession that wine should be drunk as a beverage rather than taken as a dram'), gave its analysis of the development of the British wine market. Pre-1860 port and sherry (both of which were described as 'more like brandy than wine') dominated the table. Claret was drunk only by a few and 'was generally unpalatable to tastes vitiated by ardent spirits'. But, the article continued, '[w]ealth was rapidly increasing and the demand for wines as liquids proper to appear on every well-

[117] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1900, p. 242.

[118] Numerous references to sherry can be found in Trollope's novels. Before 1860, sherry was the universal 'dinner wine' to accompany food, whilst claret and port were taken after the table had been cleared and the ladies had withdrawn. Sherry was also the chosen stimulant not only for men in the hunting field but also for women who took flasks on the train. See, for example, the character of Lizzie Eustace in A. Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (London, 1876), p. 599; see also A. Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?* (London, 1864), p. 51 for 'Aunt Greenow' taking sherry on the platform; A. Trollope, *He Knew He Was Right* (London, 1869), pp. 123-4. The authorial voice claims that 'a glass of sherry will often "pick up" and set in order the animal and mental faculties of the drinker'.That some women carried sherry flasks with them is also attested from the butler's evidence in the proceedings of the Charles Bravo murder case in 1876. See 'The Balham Mystery: a complete record of the "Bravo" poisoning case', 1876, University of Oxford, *John Johnson collection of printed ephemera*, Broadsides: Murder and Executions folder 9 (22).

[119] J.L. Denman, *What Is Wine?* (London, 1874), pp. 3-4, 'what Englishmen drink under that name is a be-plastered, unfermented, and alcoholised compound, unwholesome and unworthy of a people of taste [and] directly prejudicial to health, and destructive of the national taste'.

furnished table was increasing in like proportions'. Demand outstripped supply and 'the art of the fabricator came into being to furnish the deficiency'.[120]

Sherry was particularly damaged by the 'concoctions of Hamburg and Cette'.[121] These two centres of nineteenth-century fraud created 'wines' from a variety of ingredients, sometimes including grapes but always heavily laden with spirit which concealed the taste. Such wines were renowned for their poisonous effects on head and stomach.[122] Simpson has suggested that sherry's declining reputation in the 1860s and 1870s led to lower sales and lower prices, to which the only counter of the merchants in Jerez and Britain was increased production of 'adulterated and cheap imitation wines'.[123]

The decline in quality led to a change in the usage of sherry. Though the finer grades retained a place at the dinner table as an accompaniment to soup, its role as the universal 'dinner wine' was much reduced. In 1879, a French witness to the Wine Duties Committee claimed that:

> [t]wenty years ago an English dinner began with Sherry, and ended with Port. At an ordinary table d'hôte of twenty guests, eighteen would have Sherry and Port, one perhaps had Claret, and the other water. Now out of the same number twelve take French wines, Claret, Champagne, Chablis, or Sauterne, – one or two Hock, and the others Sherry, Port, and water.[124]

As Chapter Three will demonstrate, elite consumers moved to champagne-only dinners or to a broader repertoire which matched individual wines to specific courses. Sherry continued to be available as an alcoholic stimulant from the cask in wine bars and taverns,

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[120] "Wines and Their Uses," *The Times*, 13 September 1873, p. 4.
[121] Cette, known as Sète since 1928, is a port town to the west of Marseille. W. Loftus, *The Wine and Spirit Merchant. A Familiar Treatise on the Art of Making Wine* (London, 1865), pp. 96-102. The author recommended 'avoiding altogether the productions of Hamburg, Cette, and Marseilles', another centre of counterfeit wine.
[122] *Saturday Review*, 5 August 1876, pp. 163-4. An article clearing Spanish sherry of such claims in "Analytical Commission on Sherry: Its Production, Composition, and Character," *Lancet*, 29 October 1898, pp. 1135-40 was too late to affect the market and anyway did not discuss the 'fictitious wines which are [...] concocted only too freely elsewhere'.
[123] See Simpson, *Creating Wine*, Chapter 8, in particular pp. 171-8.
[124] *Ridley's*, 12 May 1879, p. 162.

although port probably took share in this market. It was not only the decline in quality which affected sherry sales but also the profusion of styles.[125] The producers' lack of understanding of the process of fermentation and the natural vagaries of the sherry production process meant there were scores of different styles of sherry on the market. The result was customer confusion and lack of trust.[126] In 1883, *Ridley's* expressed surprise that the Spanish producers had not even tried to develop a 'trade mark that warrants it as the genuine product' of Jerez.[127] Nor did individual producers establish proprietary brands. By 1884, sherry's reputation was effectively destroyed, an outcome that, as *Ridley's* remarked, would have seemed inconceivable in 1869.[128]

Port suffered from similar accusations of adulteration and high alcoholic content but recovered more quickly thanks to a combination of deliberate re-premiumisation and the establishment of stronger brands. For Druitt, writing in 1865, port was a 'drugged chalice';[129] for James Denman it was 'charged with alcohol' and he cited an advertisement from *The Times* claiming to produce 'fair Port and Sherry by fermentation without a drop of the grape juice'.[130] However, the accusations that elderberries and logwood were used to colour the wine had largely died away by the late 1860s and by 1874 *Ridley's* implied that sales had recovered.[131] Gilbey's sales data show a climb in port volumes from 1866 through to the late 1870s before they began to decline in line with the rest of the market. However, port's share of the total Gilbey's sales fell from 20 per cent to 17 per cent and the total share of wine sales represented by port and sherry fell

[125] Attempts in 1881 and 1891 to introduce 'sparkling sherry' failed. High prices and wrangles over trademarks were blamed. See *Ridley's*, 12 April 1881, pp. 106-7; 13 June 1881, p. 188; 11 July 1891, p. 409.
[126] *Ridley's*, 12 March 1892, p. 163.
[127] *Ridley's*, 12 December 1883, p. 366.
[128] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1884, p. 132.
[129] R. Druitt, *Report on the Cheap Wines from France, Italy, Austria, Greece, and Hungary*, 2nd ed. (London, 1873), p. 66.
[130] J.L. Denman, *Wine as It Is Drunk in England and as It Should Be, Pure, Wholesome and Refreshing* (London, 1865), p. 26.
[131] *Ridley's*, 12 November 1894, p. 228.

from over 90 per cent in 1866 to under 70 per cent in 1882.[132] In the mass market, port was consumed on its own in public houses and private homes. Compared to claret, the taste of port was less affected by cigarettes, and the habit of drinking port after dinner appears to have continued amongst both middle-class and elite consumers.[133] Vintage-dated port (negligible in the Gilbey's sales data) appears to have regained both reputation and share in the 1890s, but the main factor behind port's revitalisation in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was Gilbey's highly successful 'Invalid Port', which was launched in 1885 at 2s. 6d. per bottle as a strongly branded and highly advertised product primarily targeted at medical men and their patients. It had no differentiating ingredients or benefits, but it was very heavily marketed as a support for those suffering from colds or influenza, a near epidemic disease at the turn of the century. It was a 'marked success' immediately and, in 1891, Gilbey's sold 113,000 bottles during the influenza outbreak in May and June.[134] Thereafter the port market was split between the high-volume, low-cost products aimed at the 'invalid' market and the low-volume vintage port market.

Overall, the post-1860 British wine market was vibrant. Sales rose fast as newly prosperous middle classes came into the market. New retailers made wine much more widely available, but rising sales brought intense price-based competition which led to quality failure and hampered attempts to brand wine. Champagne, as Chapter Three will

[132] 100204/4, 'Sales 1866-82'.
[133] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1894, pp. 5-6. 'The custom of drinking Wine with dessert is not dying out altogether [as] is shown by the demand for Port, to which smoking, although perhaps undesirable, is less detrimental.'
[134] The 113,000 bottles sold during the 1891 epidemic represented approximately double annual sales for all sparkling wines and all white wines and matched total annual sales for gin. See Diageo, 100433/80, 'Note on Special Wines for Invalids' dated March/April 1892. For the duration of the 1891 influenza epidemic see H.F. Parsons, "The Influenza Epidemics of 1889-90 and 1891," *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 1597, pp. 303-8. Even were they to buy from reputable merchants, consumers could not know how – or even whether – the wine would develop and mature satisfactorily. In short, with claret as with sherry, there was a failure of branding. The annual sales of 'Invalid Port' may have been as much as ten per cent of the total port market, see Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 366.

demonstrate, was uniquely well-positioned to exploit the British market. It became a symbol of financial and social status for the new professional and commercial classes. It appealed to women as well as men and, importantly, it was strongly branded, which provided both reassurance on quality and a visual symbol of social achievement.

The champagne market

The long-term success of champagne in the nineteenth century rested primarily on its producers' growing ability to control both the production process and the broader value chain of growers, distributors, agents and merchants. Three aspects of this control were central to the development of champagne. First, increased control of production in the 1860s and 1870s enabled each producer to customise the wine to the demands of individual customers by adjusting its colour, sweetness and effervescence. Second, and more importantly for the long-term development of champagne house masterbrands, the producers were able to blend base wines from different vineyards and different vintage years to produce consistent and differentiated house styles which were (and are) largely independent of the annual variations in growing conditions. Third, the wine had to be shipped in bottle to avoid the danger of spoilage. These three factors meant that producers of champagne held significantly more control over branding and distribution than did producers of other wines which in the nineteenth century were typically shipped in cask and bottled by merchants in London.

In the 1860s, customer taste in champagne was changing rapidly (see Chapter Three). The increasing demand from the mid-1840s onwards for highly effervescent wines could be satisfied by adding sugar to the wine before the second fermentation in bottle. The more sugar, the more powerful the fermentation. Then, by varying the nature and level of the 'dosage' of the final wine after fermentation and before shipment, the

colour, alcohol level and sweetness of the wine could be adjusted.[135] The 'liqueur de dosage' varied by customer but in essence it was a mix of cane sugar, old wine and (for some markets) cognac or other spirit. Added cognac satisfied the short-lived mid-century preference for amber-coloured wines as well as boosting the alcohol content. The level of sugar in the dosage dropped steadily from the 1860s onwards and in the following chapters I will examine the reasons and implications of this change. As the level of sugar in the wine dropped, so the underlying taste and quality became increasingly evident to the consumer. The style of the wine was also affected by the mixture of grapes used in the base blend. Wines were typically made from a mix of 'white' grapes (increasingly Chardonnay) and the 'black' Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes. The higher the proportion of 'black' grapes, the deeper the colour and the more powerful the wine.[136] Working with these different components, from the 1860s onwards the houses started to develop subtly differentiated individual 'house styles' which, in time, formed the functional basis of brand differentiation.

The final component of the champagne houses' control of the market was their control of the physical branding of their product. Because the wines were shipped in bottle, the producers were able to control the branding and guarantee the quality. From the 1860s onwards, they increasingly controlled the 'get-up': the design and text of the label and neck label, the branding of the cork, the design and colour of the 'muselet' or metal cap covering the top of the cork, and the colour of the foil that was then wrapped

[135] The dosage was usually given as a percentage. Broadly speaking, 3% dosage corresponds to 3 grams per litre of residual sugar in the wine, though this depends on the level of natural fruit sugar in the wine. I have used the % sign when discussing dosage levels as that was standard contemporary practice.
[136] For the blending skills of Dom Pérignon see Gandhilon, *Naissance Du Champagne*, pp. 136, 164.

around cork and muselet.[137] Different levels of branding on each of these elements were used to signify the identity and quality of the wine in the bottle.

This producer control was never absolute. Not only the diseases and pests discussed above but also the weather were beyond their control. For example, poor weather in 1909 and 1910 wiped out the annual harvest. Phylloxera significantly affected yields and quality in the Champagne region from the early 1890s until well after the First World War.[138] Moreover, the underlying chemistry of the complex production process was not fully mastered until the late nineteenth century and, in warm years, there was a significant rise in breakage rates in the cellar as the pressure of fermenting wine shattered bottles, setting off a chain reaction that some likened to the rattle of small-arms fire.[139] Lastly, customers retained some control of the physical branding until well into the last quarter of the century. Powerful buyers negotiated the use of their own name on the label and the level of house branding on the cork.[140] Nevertheless, as the market expanded so the level of control enjoyed by the producers developed and their growing financial strength facilitated the growth of powerful brands.

As we have seen in the Introduction, the British market for champagne between 1835 and the early 1860s quadrupled. This accords well with the growth in sales of Perrier-Jouët champagne. Unlike competitors such as Veuve Clicquot which focused on Russia and Germany, Perrier-Jouët had specialised in the British market since the mid-1830s. Their sales to Britain doubled between 1849 and 1859, before rising another 60 per cent in the following five years to more than 100,000 gallons in 1864.[141] Veuve

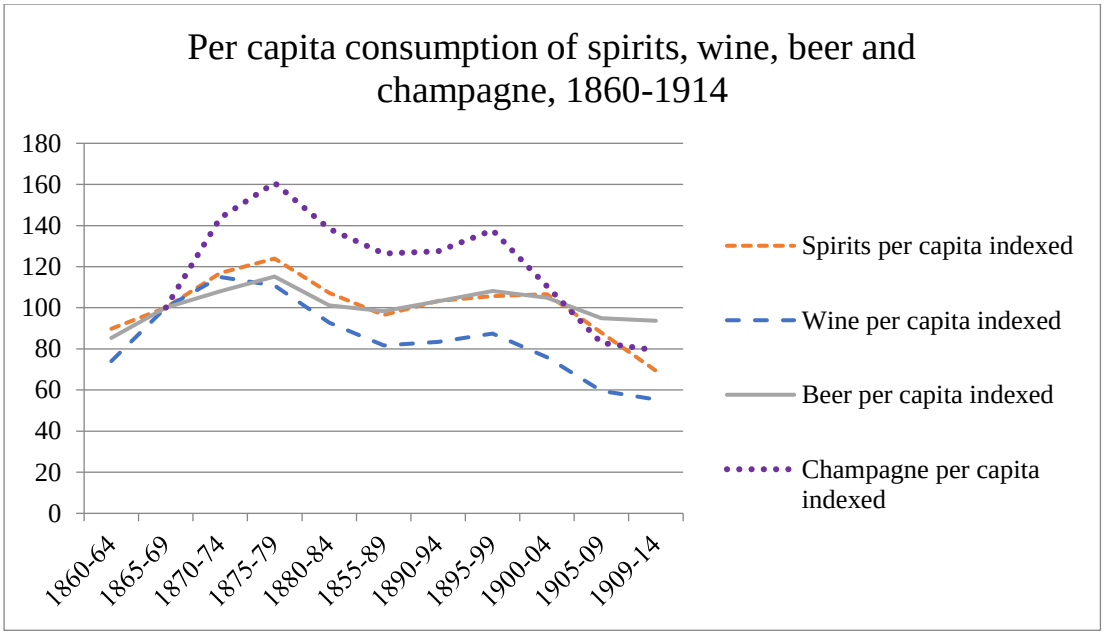
[137] There is limited work on the cork and muselet. For the latter see G. Clause, *1844-1994. 150e Anniversaire De L'invention De La Capsule Et Du Muselet* (Châlons-sur-Marne, 1994).
[138] For the impact of phylloxera on Champagne see C. Campbell, *Phylloxera: How Wine Was Saved for the World* (London, 2004), pp. 238-41.
[139] For 'mutinous' champagne bottles see E. Dixon, "A Bottle of Champagne," *Household Words* 11, no. 256 (1855), p. 56. At this date 15 per cent breakage was standard, 30 per cent 'exceptional'.
[140] APR, Conrad Reuss letter of 21 October 1876 to Pol Roger notes the determination of a customer to put his own name on the corks. Reuss refused.
[141] Archives Perrier-Jouët, 'Livres de Factures', 9 A001, 9 A003-10.

Clicquot, which had typically sold less than 1,000 gallons per year into the British market in the 1840s and 1850s, registered extraordinary increases from 1860 onwards. From sales of over 5,000 gallons in 1860, sales quadrupled in 1861 and had doubled again by 1864, reaching more than 40,000 gallons per year. The British market became of crucial importance to Veuve Clicquot in this period. From less than 1 per cent of global sales before 1860, Britain accounted for 25-30 per cent of total sales by the end of the 1860s.[142] Britain rapidly became the focus of many of the other French champagne producers.

The number of French champagne houses with a strong interest in the UK market was around eight to ten in the 1860s, rising to scores in the 1890s as the market grew. Not all houses retain full sales records and estimating the overall size of the market is problematic for the reasons given above. However, using data from Wilson, Simon and *Ridley's* annual summaries of government data, it is possible to estimate the scale of the market in the UK for French white wine. Combining this data suggests that the UK champagne market was around 500,000 gallons by the early/mid 1860s, rising to a peak of more than 1.5 million gallons by the late 1870s. On a per capita basis (Figure 14), sales of French champagne rose faster than any other wine, although total volume consumption, which plateaued around the 1.5 million gallon mark between the mid-1870s and mid-1890s, was down to 1.2 million gallons by 1904 and never subsequently represented more than 10 per cent of total UK wine consumption.[143]

[142] Archives Maison Veuve Clicquot, 'Livres de Factures', 1A 1A 076-082.
[143] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 2, p. 335. These data reflect legitimate imports rather than any wines of dubious origin.

Figure 14: Per capita consumption of spirits, wine, beer and champagne



Source: Data from Simon, *History of the Champagne Trade in England*, pp. 168-70; Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 2.

During the 1890s, champagne sales varied between 5 to 6 million bottles a year, around 20-25 per cent of French total exports. After 1900, the figure never exceeded 5 million and was down to below 3.5 million by 1913.[144] Other sparkling wines, mostly from the French region of Saumur and from Germany, added a further 10 per cent to these numbers. By comparison, claret sold around 10 million bottles annually and port around 13 million.[145]

A significant factor in the decline of champagne sales in the period 1900-14 was the lack of good vintages. Only 1904 and 1906 were unequivocally successful; 1909 and 1910 were disastrous years marked by appalling weather conditions. Prices for wines from well-regarded vintages rose to such an extent that many consumers appear to have

[144] See the annual returns published each January in *Ridley's*.
[145] Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 12, pp. 366-7.

stopped buying at a time of economic pressure.[146] As we have seen, contemporaries believed that the appeal of other consuming luxuries, from motor cars and holiday travel to golf, tended to curb champagnes sales. The extent to which the broadly temperate turn in alcohol consumption affected champagne specifically is hard to ascertain. However, there were frequent references in *Ridley's* to declining consumption of champagne at royal garden parties and similar social events. In 1907, for example, the journal reported that a recent royal garden party had had 8,300 guests but total consumption of alcohol had been fewer than 500 bottles of champagne and eighteen bottles of whisky, suggesting less than half the guests had taken a glass.[147] The rest of the wine and spirits trade was also in decline in this period, giving credence to the argument that economic pressures and competition for the consumers' discretionary income were the main forces in driving down consumption.

Although prices of vintage-dated wines rose, the prices of standard wines showed little change and they continued to be widely available. There were no changes to the prices of the six champagnes offered by Berry Brothers, the London merchants, between 1907 and 1911.[148] Even though the entry-level Gilbey's champagne switched to a vintage wine in the early 1900s, the price remained at the 1864 level.[149] The French champagne houses had large reserves of wine and this stock was supplemented by cheaper wines produced by 'aerating' still wine from the south of France, Germany or Spain.[150]

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[146] For an explicit linkage of price increases and reduced sales, see *Ridley's*, 10 August 1911, p. 558; 9 January 1912, pp. 5-6.
[147] *Ridley's*, 9 July 1907, p. 486.
[148] Berry Brothers & Rudd, "Price Lists, 1907-14." Private communication.
[149] See *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 5 June 1908, p. 5, showing 'Castle 1 champagne, vintage 1900' at 32s., the same price charged in 1864 for a non-vintage wine. See *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 September 1864, p. 2.
[150] Still wines 'aerated' with carbon dioxide were acceptable (perhaps undetectable) to many drinkers, see *Leeds Mercury*, 17 April 1911, p. 4. The use of wines from outside the Marne area was the underlying cause of the riots of 1910-11 which pitted growers against the major producers. For a succinct summary of the causes of the riots, see Simpson, *Creating Wine*, pp. 149-52; for a more detailed account, see K.M. Guy,

Although price was used by some consumers as a marker of status (as Chapter Three will show), it was unlikely, after 1860, to have acted to exclude customers interested in wine.

What is striking about champagne in the British market in the 1860s and early 1870s is the scale of the shift in availability. In the first half of the century, high-quality French champagne was sold by the case through elite merchants to elite men on and for occasions of formal celebration.[151] By the 1860s and 1870s, champagne of French origin (though not necessarily from the Champagne region) could be bought by the bottle in most grocers and in hundreds of city-centre wine bars for individual consumption by the bottle or the glass. The rapid expansion of the Gilbey's network of thousands of local agents made wine accessible to the majority of the population. Champagne was an integral part of Gilbey's list. By 1864, they offered six different champagnes at a range of prices from 2s. 8d. to 5s. per bottle. Victoria Wine, established in London and the South East as a local wine merchant in 1865, had a similar offer and, in addition, also sold champagne by the glass.[152]

The many retail stores were supplemented from the 1870s onwards by specialist wine bars (also known as 'wine shades'). In 1884 the *Dublin Weekly Nation* referred to a London 'cultus of the wine bar' and estimated that there were around 600 retail establishments in the capital. Nor were wine shades or wine bars confined to London. Analysis of British newspapers (Figure 15 below) suggests a similar level of interest in the North and a significant interest in the Midlands.[153]

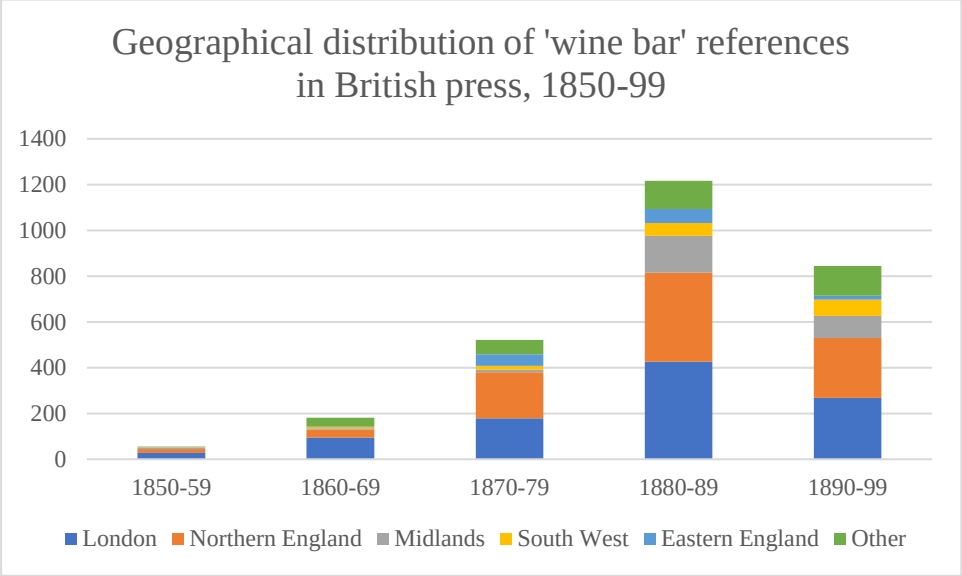
When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity (Baltimore, Md. and London, 2003), pp. 158-85.

[151] For example, all the wines of Charles Wright ('Wine-merchant to the Royal Family') in the 1820s were advertised by the dozen or cask. See *Morning Advertiser*, 18 March 1824, p. 1. The wines of Foster & Ingle, a reputed London merchant, were still advertised with only prices per dozen well into the 1850s. See London *Standard*, 15 February 1858, p. 1.

[152] See Briggs, *Victoria Wine*, pp. 45, 52.

[153] BNA search for 'wine bar' conducted 11 October 2017.

Figure 15: References to 'wine bar' in the British press, 1850-1899



Source: BNA search, 11 October 2017. The term 'wine bar' was searched for in articles and advertisements and the results tabulated for each decade.

The strength of the wine bar culture in the North was confirmed by T.H.S. Escott's 1881 remarks on the social life of Manchester and Liverpool. He claimed that 'wine-shades, bodegas, and saloons abound both above and under-ground'.[154] The Bodega chain of wine bars started in Manchester in 1868, moved into London in 1872, and eventually grew into a nationwide chain with its own brand of champagne, supplied by Veuve Clicquot as well as an extensive range of branded champagnes.[155] Such data accord well with other references in the press to middle-class 'commercial men' using wine bars for social and business purposes.[156] The increase in the number of restaurants followed a similar trajectory. The apparent importance of this growth in public consumption to the champagne market is confirmed by the early twentieth-century suggestions in *Ridley's* that champagne consumption was increasingly shifting to restaurants and hotels, a view

[154] T.H.S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits*, vol. 2 (London, 1880), p. 86.
[155] Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 121; for the Bodega's purchase of Veuve Clicquot champagne see AMVC, 'Livres de Factures', 1A 1A, 85-6.
[156] *Dublin Weekly Nation*, 26 January 1884, pp. 9-10.

that will be examined in more detail in later chapters. More outlets did not necessarily mean more consumption, but the consequence in Britain was greater availability of wine across the country. Wine (including champagne) became part of the grocers' offer on most high streets from the 1860s. From the 1870s it was increasingly available in wine bars and other licensed premises, whilst the expansion of the restaurant sector from the 1880s onwards further increased availability. The improvements in physical distribution were matched (in all but the restaurant sector) by continued low prices for the most popular wines.

Conclusions

In the long-term, the improvements in distribution and availability of wine did not lead to increased consumption. By 1905, as several newspapers noted, total consumption was below that 'of any year since Mr. Gladstone's celebrated budget in 1860'.[157] The market revived slightly immediately after World War One, but consumption did not regain the levels of the 1870s until after World War Two.[158] Though the Gilbey's stores were geographically accessible to the 'labouring classes', they did not adopt wine as a daily beverage in the way that Gladstone had hoped. Nonetheless, his reforms had an enormous effect on Britain. His reduction in the duty levels gave impetus to the 'temperate turn' which played a significant part in the overall decline in alcohol consumption. By 1910, it was widely reported that 'fashionable' barley water had become so popular among 'young bloods' in the clubs of St James's and Mayfair that, unlike beer, it was no longer supplied free of charge.[159]

[157] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 June 1906, p. 4.
[158] For consumption up to 1937, see Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, Table 12. Only the exceptional year of 1919 saw higher consumption than that of the mid-1870s peak.
[159] *Londonderry Chronicle*, 4 October 1910, p. 2; *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 8 October 1910, p. 12.

Gladstone's reforms also shifted the balance between different classes of wine and the way in which wine was consumed. After 1860, light wine became far more popular both as a drink on its own and as an accompaniment to food at the dinner table. Between 1878 and 1912, France replaced Portugal as the leading supplier of wine to the UK. Claret (and in elite circles, champagne) replaced sherry as the standard 'dinner wine'. Grocers and new popular wine merchants such as Victoria Wine made wine at low prices readily available. Although the price of vintage-dated champagnes rose steadily (an issue whose implications will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four), both claret and cheaper grades of sparkling wine rose little in price, despite tax increases in the 1888 and 1899 budgets.[160]

However, the drive throughout the nineteenth century to maintain low prices to win custom led hard-pressed suppliers into temptation. To maintain prices and volume sales, producers of sherry, port and claret all cut back on quality. Cheaper, highly-coloured and more alcoholic wines from the south of France were added to Bordeaux wines in poor years. Colouring agents were used to reproduce the depth of colour anticipated by the British market; added spirit made up for deficiencies in alcohol levels. Wines were shipped 'raw' with little or no time allowed for maturation in cask before bottling.[161] Press publicity of trade 'scandals' fed public concern over adulteration, but the deeper problem was that natural variations in the weather meant wines could not generally be produced to a consistent standard from year to year. Simpson has shown how climate-driven variability of quality led to the consequent failure to create 'impersonal exchange mechanisms' (i.e. brands) which could give purchasers confidence. This

[160] See Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation*, p. 319.
[161] This subject has been extensively studied by Stanziani. See, for example, A. Stanziani, "Information, Quality and Legal Rules: Wine Adulteration in Nineteenth Century France," *Business History* 51, no. 2 (2009); see also A. Stanziani, "La Falsification Du Vin En France, 1880-1905: Un Cas De Fraude Agro-Alimentaire," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 50, no. 2 (2003).

branding failure was central to the industry's failure to create a British mass market for wine.[162]

But champagne and (to a lesser extent) port were the exceptions to this failure. Champagne, in particular, could be blended to ensure that customers could be certain of getting the same taste profile from one year to the next. The champagne producers' ability to control the production process, by blending for consistency and by adjusting the sugar levels and the degree of effervescence to customer preferences, was central to the development of powerful champagne brands (as will be seen in Chapters Two and Three). However, the development of powerful brands was not a given. Champagne producers were not immune to the pressure to lower price and quality to make their wine more popularly available and affordable. By the late 1860s, press reports began to suggest that champagne was becoming an 'everyday drink'. There was an incipient democratisation of champagne. The following chapters will demonstrate the pressures on producers and the different strategies they and their London agents used to exploit the growing market whilst maintaining champagne's status as a premium product and addressing the implications of Britain's temperate turn.

[162] Simpson, *Creating Wine*, pp. 81-110.

2. ‘A smart agent and lavish expenditure’? The distribution and marketing of champagne, 1860-76

Introduction

A ‘happy combination of good quality, a smart Agent, and lavish expenditure’ was *Ridley’s* retrospective assessment in 1911 of what it took to be successful in the British champagne market in the nineteenth century.[1] This quotation from the foremost contemporary British wine trade journal underlines the importance of the agent in building a successful champagne brand. The champagne shippers, by and large, had little or no direct experience of the market and the central argument of this chapter is that from the 1860s onwards, entrepreneurial agents took the initiative in developing marketing strategies and advising the shippers on the taste and style of their wine.[2] The years 1860 to 1876 were the period of greatest growth and, arguably, greatest change in champagne in the British market. Volume sales tripled, the number of brands in the UK market rose tenfold, brand awareness soared and the incipient switch to dry wines was firmly consolidated.

The objective of this chapter is to explore how these changes came about. It was not simply the power of consumer demand that drove the market changes. The London-based agents of French champagne houses came to play a central intermediary role in both shaping and satisfying the changing demand for champagne. It was the agents, not the producers, who articulated and advised on the conflicting demands of product

[1] *Ridley’s Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*, 10 January 1911, p. 58.
[2] One notable exception was Charles Perrier of the firm of Perrier-Jouët, whose father sent him to work with the firm’s London agent in 1834. See J.-P. Devroey, *Perrier-Jouët: The Essence of Champagne* (Paris, 1999), pp. 56-61.

customisation and volume production. The UK customers' demand that champagne be produced to their specific requirements caused difficulties for the producers. As Henri Vasnier, the 'man of business' for the firm of Pommery & Greno, once wrote in exasperation in 1871 to Adolphe Hubinet, his London agent, 'le champagne, on ne le prépare pas comme une omelette'.[3]

The distinctive champagne production process detailed in Chapter One enabled the champagne houses to customise the product by adding a liquid 'dosage' of sugar candy and (often) spirit to the wine to vary its colour and to make it drier or sweeter. This process not only enabled the shippers to respond to the rapidly evolving shifts in consumer taste but also helped, in the longer-term, to develop differentiated house styles such as the sweeter Veuve Clicquot wines or more powerful Pommery wines.[4] Without the ability to vary the style of the wine to meet changing customer requirements on an annual basis, champagne could not have maintained its aspirational image; without consistent and differentiated house styles, successful branding of individual shippers would not have been possible. The agents were responsible for negotiating the 'dosage' of each new order whilst working with their principals to develop a differentiated house style that would ensure long-term customer loyalty. To exploit the British market, the agents developed innovative marketing and distribution strategies. In a fast-changing and wary market, their strategies laid the foundations for increasingly powerful differentiated brands developed by the 'Grandes Maisons'.

Champagne, like British business generally in the nineteenth century, depended on a well-developed mercantile system in which agents played a key role. Somewhat paradoxically, the flexibility and sophistication of this mercantile system has been held

[3] *Compilation De La Correspondance De Hubinet*, 27 June 1871. 'You cannot make champagne like an omelette.'
[4] *Wine Trade Review*, 16 January 1864, p. 4: 'myriads of sweet draughts' (Clicquot); for the development of the Pommery style, see A. de Polignac, *Madame Pommery: Le Génie Et Le Coeur* (Paris, 1994), p. 39.

responsible for the relative decline of British business in the last quarter of the century.[5] This view, espoused by Chandler, suggests that because their mercantile system was so sophisticated, British companies had little incentive to develop either the internal structures or the expertise needed for in-house marketing and sales functions.[6] However, Popp, in his study of John Shaw, the early nineteenth-century Wolverhampton hardware factor, has argued that the use of intermediaries such as agents and factors need not be a block to later structural integration. Furthermore, Church has shown that in many ways British firms were pioneers in the development of branding and innovation strategies; developments that were matched by innovations in selling and distribution.[7] The champagne trade in nineteenth-century Britain shows not only the effectiveness of the mercantile system but also levels of branding and marketing innovation that were unmatched in the wine industry until after World War Two.[8] Furthermore, the development of the champagne brands predates the mass-market brands examined by Church and pushes back the timeline of branding history into the 1860s and 1870s.

The evolution of branding

Beverages played a major role in the evolution of branding in the nineteenth century and, before turning to the specifics of the champagne trade, I will consider two linked brand-related issues. The first is the question of what brands stood for in the minds of their owners and consumers; the second, the shift in common parlance between 1840 and 1875

[5] For an acknowledgement of this claim, see J.F. Wilson, *British Business History, 1720-1994* (Manchester, 1995), p. 88.
[6] Chandler, *Scale and Scope*, pp. 170, 261-3, 292. In W.A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2004), pp. 4-5, the smaller scale of British businesses is presented as a barrier to brand development.
[7] A. Popp, "Building the Market: John Shaw of Wolverhampton and Commercial Travelling in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Business History* 49, no. 3 (2007), pp. 321-47, 342; for branding and innovation, see Church, "Advertising Consumer Goods," pp. 621-45.
[8] For a succinct summary of the changes in wine production and marketing since 1950, see R. Phillips, *A Short History of Wine* (London, 2001), pp. 307-33.

by which the term ‘brand’ came to stand for the thing itself rather than simply the mark. As noted in the Introduction, until the 1840s the term ‘brand’ was normally used to denote a mark of origin, usually ownership but sometimes place of origin, burnt onto wooden containers, including the casks used to transport wines and spirits.[9] As the drinks industry moved towards selling in bottle rather than cask during the 1840s and 1850s, the ‘brand’ was switched to the cork which became the primary guarantee of both origin and quality.[10] As we will see below, in the late 1850s Edouard Werlé equated his Veuve Clicquot ‘brand’ purely with the quality of his product. Quality defined the brand rather than the brand defining the quality.

In the 1860s, however, the Veuve Clicquot brand began to acquire other differentiating connotations. In the early 1850s, King William of Prussia had acquired the ‘contemptuous soubriquet of M. Clicquot’, supposedly on account of his fondness for the wine.[11] By 1862, this well-known fondness was cited by a London newspaper as the reason why Clicquot’s wine had become the ‘new fashion’, and a year later the ‘world famous Madame Clicquot’s wine’ was dubbed the ‘Champagne des Souverains’ after it was served to the crowned heads of Europe at the Frankfurt Congress.[12] Later in the 1860s the Pommery brand also started to acquire differentiating values. In 1868, it was ‘puffed’ as the wine supplied to the ‘principal Continental courts’; in 1872 the first of a number of eulogistic articles on the Pommery cellars appeared.[13] This publicity, as I will later show, appears to have been the result of a deliberate strategy on the part of Adolphe Hubinet, the Pommery agent. Such accretions to the perceptions of Clicquot and

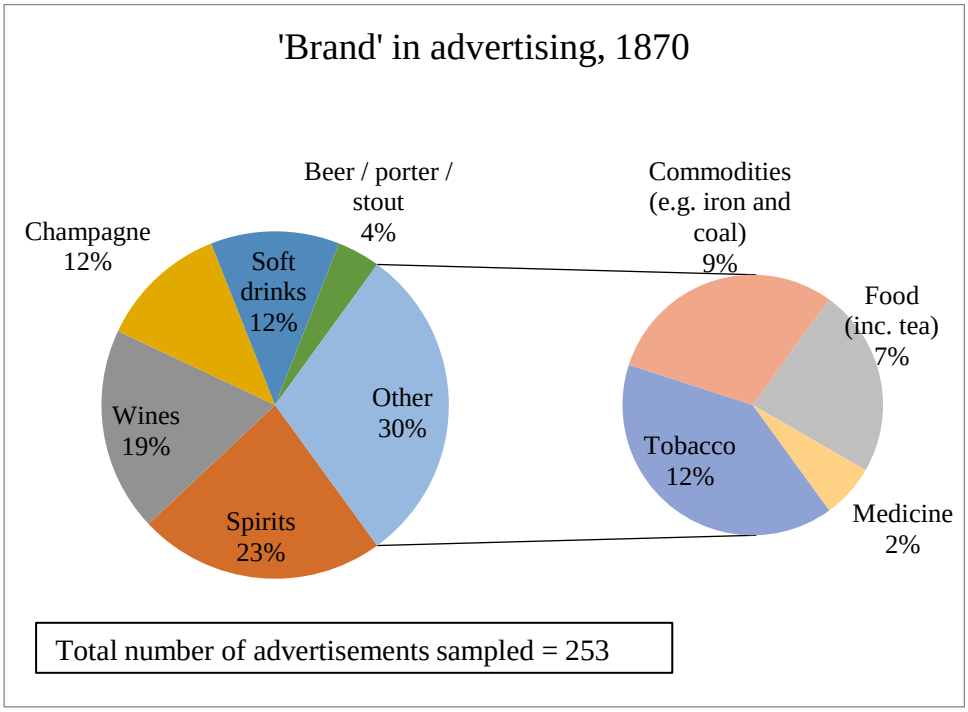
[9] The term was also used for the marks of ownership branded onto livestock.
[10] See, for example, the *South Eastern Gazette*, 1 January 1850, p. 1. Advertisements for Swinfen’s Soda Water directed readers to ‘Observe! The corks are branded “Swinfen”’. For a Clicquot caution see Glasgow *Evening Citizen*, 28 June 1867, p. 3.
[11] See *Illustrated London News*, 18 March 1851, p. 230.
[12] *London Daily News*, 29 September 1862, p. 2; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 22 August 1863, p. 3.
[13] *Yorkshire Post*, 10 July 1868, p. 2; *Cheshire Observer*, 9 November 1872, p. 2. This latter, originally from the *Daily Telegraph*, was reprinted by at least seven regional papers.

Pommery supplemented rather than replaced the long-standing linkage of brands to quality. As mid-1860s advertisements for the wines of author and merchant Charles Tovey stressed, their 'quality [was] certified by Mr Tovey's brand and trademark'.[14] Whilst the full transition to the idea that a brand should encapsulate a set of differentiating values took decades, the foundations of this enduring principle of brand management were laid in the 1860s.

The second shift, in which the term brand came to stand for the thing itself, took less time. As early as 1839, the popular author Captain Frederick Marryat referred in his *Diary in America* to 'certain brands' of Madeira fetching up to forty dollars per bottle.[15] By 1850, a Brighton wine merchant was advertising 'Champagnes of the finest brands' and a Dublin merchant was promoting his own 'Connolly brand' of port and sherry.[16] Such usage was commonplace by the early 1860s, and an analysis of advertising at the end of the decade (Figure 16) shows the importance of beverages in the development of branding. In 1871, an article in a Birmingham newspaper noted that 'we buy our wine or our iron very much by the brand', and Table I below shows the extent to which alcohol and branding had become inseparable.[17] Again the older usage of 'brand' as mark continued, but the broader sense became steadily more used and the term steadily more linked to 'noms imaginaires'.[18] In 1889, an entrepreneur set up a short-lived 'Best Brand' company selling only 'the finest and best known brands of liquor'.[19]

[14] *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 8 September 1865, p. 1. In common parlance, 'brand' and 'trademark' were frequently used as synonyms. See, for example, the *Hull Packet*, 7 February 1868, p. 4 for an advertisement from the Litre Wine Bottle Company reassuring potential purchasers that 'All cases, Bottles, and Corks will bear the Brand or Trade-mark of the Company, without which none are genuine'.
[15] F. Marryat, *A Diary in America, with Remarks on Its Institutions (Part Second)*, vol. I (London, 1839), p. 113. These remarks were reprinted in at least two regional newspapers, see, for example, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 24 July 1840, p. 4.
[16] *Brighton Gazette*, 2 January 1850, p. 1; *Dublin Mercantile Advertiser*, 4 January 1850, p. 1.
[17] *Birmingham Daily Courier*, 6 March 1871, p. 4.
[18] See the *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 December 1885, p. 1, for 'Golden Goblet brand' champagne.
[19] *Ridley's*, 8 September 1889, p. 211.

Figure 16: The use of 'brand' in advertising



Source: BNA analysis of all advertisements including the word 'brand' in the weeks 1-7 January 1870 and 1-7 July 1870, carried out on 5 December 2017.

The role of the agent in the mid-nineteenth-century wine trade

The mid-nineteenth century wine business was fragmented. There were many players in the chain from growers to consumers, each with their own area of expertise and knowledge. As Duguid's studies of the complex port market have shown, agents played a vital role in transforming the international commodity chain into a 'coherent continuum'.[20] The British market itself at the mid-century was structurally inefficient. Bonded warehouses for the receipt of imported wine were inadequate; there were few retail outlets and most merchants outside major cities had little knowledge of dealing with anything but fortified wines, whose high levels of alcohol rendered them microbiologically stable.[21] This section will argue that shippers depended on agents not

[20] For the complexity of the port trade, see P. Duguid, "Networks and Knowledge: The Beginning and End of the Port Commodity Chain, 1703-1860," *Business History Review* 79 (2005), passim.
[21] For a dismissive French critique of the British trade structure, see *Moniteur Vinicole*, 29 January 1860, p. 34; 9 February 1860, p. 54; 15 March 1860, p. 86.

just for market information but also for increasingly proactive marketing and branding initiatives. Agents played an important role not just in taste-making but also in brand-building. It was generally agents, not shippers, who managed and directed the branding activities of their French principals; agents, not shippers, who provided the platform on which champagne built its takeover of the fast-growing and increasingly complex British market. Unlike the Gilbey's agents described in Chapter One, these agents had no retail role. Their remit was essentially distributive but increasingly marketing-centred. In the British market, they were not only the key intermediary between the producers and the 'customers for distribution' such as merchants, clubs and hotels, but they also took on the role of building the brand.

The producers needed the agents for several reasons. Most of the champagne house principals lacked direct knowledge of the British market. Although the founder of Perrier-Jouët had sent his son Charles to work in London for an extended period in the early 1840s, first-hand knowledge of this important market was rare. Edouard Werlé's son Alfred made at least one short visit in the 1850s, but Jean-Rémy Moët (who had the largest share of the British champagne market for most of the century) relied initially on itinerant 'travellers' before appointing Lightly & Simon as agents in 1844.[22] This lack of knowledge meant it was essential to have agents who knew the British market. To reach high-value clients, producers needed access to reputable merchants. New houses without such contacts struggled. Hence, when producer Pol Roger was persuaded by Conrad Reuss in 1876 to switch from his lucrative private-label business in which his wines were sold under the name of another house, to operating under his own brand name, a key part of Reuss' pitch was his network of contacts built up through his control of other prestige

[22] For the announcement of the appointment of Lightly and Simon, see *Globe*, 28 August 1844, p. 1. Unlike agents, travellers took no responsibility for stock. They were itinerant order-takers.

wines. Pol Roger's wines had been sold into the UK market for some years under the Perrier-Jouët name, but Reuss apparently persuaded Pol Roger that building a brand would provide a long-term asset for his descendants.[23] The subsequent partnership between the house of Pol Roger and Reuss Lauteren and successor firms lasted for over a century; so too that between Perrier-Jouët and the Boursot family.[24] The tensions in such relationships will be discussed below, but, in general, the links were long-lasting.

The few studies of nineteenth century agents have suggested that agent-principal relationships are inherently unstable. Nicholas has argued that this instability arises from informational asymmetries. Decision problems are caused because agents have the market knowledge that principals lack, whilst agents lack the product knowledge of the principals. Conflicts therefore arise over levels of stock holding, promotional effort, price optimisation and appropriate service levels. Nicholas suggests that agents are essentially motivated to 'cheat', either by relaxing into dependence on orders that arise from the principal's prior or ongoing investment in the brand or by under-pricing for short-term market advantage.[25] His model suggests that principals attempt to control agents by means of sales commissions, responsibility for bad debts and enforcement of mandatory stockholding on agents.

[23] 'Pol' was M. Roger's first name but his sons Maurice and George adopted it after his death in 1899 as part of the family surname. For the history of Pol Roger, see C. Parzych and J. Turner, *Pol Roger* (London, 1999). The family legend is that Reuss persuaded a reluctant Pol Roger to embark on building a brand so as to provide a long-term asset for the family. Reuss's letters continually stress the importance of establishing the brand; see letters of 1 August 1876, 21 October 1876 and 24 January 1877 held in the uncatalogued Pol Roger archives.

[24] Pol Roger finally established a UK sales subsidiary in 1990, taking over responsibility from the firm of Dent & Reuss. See http://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2011/10/coming-of-age-patrice-noyelle-pol-roger/ [accessed 6 January 2016]; Devroey, *Perrier-Jouët*, pp. 59-60.

[25] S. Nicholas, "Agency Contracts, Institutional Modes, and the Transition to Foreign Direct Investment by British Manufacturing Multinationals before 1939," *Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 3 (1983); see also B. Musset, "L'expérimentation D'une Nouvelle Pratique Commerciale: La Maison Moët D'epernay Et Ses Commis Voyageurs (1790-1815)," *Entreprises et Histoire*, no. 66 (2012). Musset confirms several of Nicholas' points in his analysis of Jean-Rémy Moët's early experience with travellers.

The broader debate over the role and effectiveness of agents centres on the choice between market-based solutions (i.e. agents) or firm-based solutions.[26] When the cost of monitoring agents outweighs the benefits of local market knowledge then the principals will tend to establish fully or majority-owned sales organisations as an integral part of the firm.[27] The wine trade, perhaps because of its emphasis on personal relationships and implicit market knowledge, does not conform to this model.[28] Though the letters exchanged between principals, such as Pommery, Perrier-Jouët, Veuve Clicquot and Pol Roger, and their agents confirm that there were disputes, these did not generally lead to termination of the relationship. The principals were keen to build their brands faster; the agents complained about their principals' lack of flexibility and speed of response to the changes occurring in the UK marketplace.[29] However, these disputes led neither to frequent changes of agent nor to forward integration into the establishment of wholly owned subsidiaries by the French houses, partly because of the personal links that grew up between principals and agents, and partly because changing to another agent risked the relationships already developed in the British market.[30]

The recruitment criteria for agents, the decision process and the contractual details throw light on the motivations and pressures on both sides of the agent-principal relationship. Before 1860, the background of agents appears to have been very varied. The Moët & Chandon agency, Lightly & Simon, were freight and shipping agents and

[26] M. Prat, "Between the Firm and the Market: An International Comparison of the Commercial Structures of the Cotton Industry (1820–1939)," *Business History* 51, no. 2 (2009), p. 181.
[27] See also A. Popp, "Barriers to Innovation in Marketing in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Merchant-Manufacturer Relationships," *Business History* 44, no. 2 (2002), pp. 23, 31-3.
[28] Explicit market knowledge is usually defined as publicly available and contrasted with implicit (or tacit) market knowledge which is often based on personal experience.
[29] See, for example, Archives Pol Roger for Conrad Reuss's 1877 letters replying to Pol Roger's rebukes on the slowness of his brand-building actvities. APR, 23 February 1877; 22 March 1877.
[30] For the close personal links between agent, principal and customers, see APR, 7 August 1876 (Pol Roger to Conrad Reuss); 9 August 1876 (Reuss to Pol Roger) dealing with family affairs; 9 December 1876 (Pol Roger to Reuss) with hunting together; 14 February 1877 (Pol Roger to Reuss) with condolences over a family bereavement.

continued that trade well into the 1860s.[31] James Mathieu and Adolphe Boursot, agents for Perrier-Jouët from the mid-1830s onwards, were both of French extraction; the former was an import-export agent, the latter a book-keeper and accountant.[32] The Ruinart agent for England appears to have been a family member; in Ireland their agent was a Dublin grocer.[33] Adolphe Hubinet, the Pommery agent, was a Frenchman who had been working for a London and provincial wine merchant.

Little is known about the reasoning of the principals in these cases, but the extensive correspondence of Edouard Werlé of Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin illustrates his thinking in the 1850s and 1860s. Werlé, the controlling hand of Veuve Clicquot (and its sole proprietor after the death of Madame Clicquot in 1866), had reluctantly concluded by 1860 that an agent was essential in the British market. In 1859 he had written to Robert Votkins that :

> depuis que je dirige les opérations de ma maison; je ne me suis jamais servi d'un agent, voyageur ou représentant pour activer la vente de mes vins. Par le bon choix, la pureté et la bonne présentation des vins, j'ai cherché à établir la réputation de ma marque.[34]

Merchants applied to him direct and he sold direct to those merchants. But, lacking an agent, Werlé had to negotiate with too many individual merchants to resolve satisfactorily conflicts of interest over pricing and customers.[35] Despite his familiarity with the market and long-established connections, he came to the decision to enlist an agent for his British trade. At least five candidates put themselves forward, all of whom had (or claimed) deep

[31] Lightly & Simon were in the shipping business by 1826, see *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 4 August 1826, p. 4. They were still active in the late 1860s, see *Morning Post*, 7 August 1868, p. 1.
[32] Devroey, *Perrier-Jouët*, pp. 54 (Mathieu) and 59-60 (Boursot).
[33] P. de Gmeline, *Ruinart. La Plus Ancienne Maison De Champagne De 1729 À Nos Jours* (Paris, 1994), p. 84 (John Ruinart); *Dublin Evening Packet*, 12 July 1834, p. 1.
[34] AMVC, 'Lettres particulières d'Édouard Werlé', letter of 23 July 1859. '[S]ince I have run the operations of this house I have never made use of an agent or representative to sell my wines but have relied on the purity and good presentation of my wines in seeking to establish the reputation of my brand.'
[35] See AMVC, Box 063. K.C.025, H to O for letters to Edouard Werlé from Robert Selby of 19 March 1861 concerning Campbell's of Dublin and 20 and 25 May 1861 concerning Bulloch Lade's underselling.

knowledge and extensive contacts within the British wine trade.[36] In 1860, Werlé agreed a deal with the London wine merchant, Robert Selby, who became his British agent.[37] Subsequent letters show that he had concluded that product quality was not enough on its own to guarantee the success of his firm in the British market and that Selby could be a 'precious' collaborator.[38] His fear was that his firm would face hostility from all those merchants accustomed to dealing direct, but he recognised that the increased complexity of the trade meant that intermediaries could and would play one merchant off against another to the detriment of Veuve Clicquot.[39] Thus, the evidence suggests that by the 1860s those French houses aspiring to build a brand in the UK recognised that a London-based agent was essential to this process.

Selby was chosen on the basis that he was a good taster who knew both the trade and the market; he also came with the added benefit of a son who was energetic and similarly knowledgeable. The sole doubt in Werlé's mind was whether Selby was creditworthy.[40] Parsimonious terms of seven per cent commission were agreed after intensive negotiation and a letter to Werlé's son Alfred suggests that some of the disappointed candidates, such as the long-established firm of Charles Cunningham, may have been rejected for requiring a ten per cent commission (which Selby demanded but

[36] See, for instance, letters dated 14 and 20 March 1860. The two letters from J. Hornblower to Edouard Werlé focus on his 'large business' in sherry and his wish to exploit these connections for champagne as well.
[37] Robert Selby was a London wine-merchant with a long interest in importing French wine who held the sole agency for importing 'Masdeu Wine' from Messrs Durand of Perpignan and Paris. See *Liverpool Mail*, 25 June 1853, p. 1. He first advertised his sole agency status for Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin's wines in 1860, see *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 July 1860, p. 1.
[38] AMVC, letter of 12 March 1860 from EW to RS. 23 March 1860. 'Lettres particulières d'Édouard Werlé'. He continued to haggle over the commission level claiming, reasonably, that Veuve Clicquot was already a well-known brand.
[39] AMVC,'Lettres particulières', 23 July 1859 and 23 September 1859; for pricing problems see Robert Selby's letter of 7 January 1860 threatening to withdraw from his role unless Werlé halted his practice of supplying customers direct.
[40] Selby had been made bankrupt in 1847 but had settled with creditors and was trading successfully by the early 1850s. See the *Morning Post*, 15 May 1847, p. 6, for the bankruptcy.

failed to achieve). Werlé justified the low commission to his son on the basis that exploiting an existing brand was a very different task to that of building a new brand.[41] Though there were subsequent disagreements over Veuve Clicquot's reluctance to stop selling to pre-existing contacts, the relationship lasted up to and beyond Robert Selby junior's death, at which point the agency was continued by his son J.B. Selby. Many such agency relationships lasted for decades. The Bollinger link with the Mentzendorff agency lasted over a century; the Pommery relationship with Hubinet, his chosen successor Lucien Loffet and his successors for more than seventy years.[42] What was required of an agent was the ability to coordinate production, maintain pricing consistency, enforce the conditions set by the principal, sell energetically and, above all, take responsibility for the marketing and branding in an increasingly complex market.

The fifteen years following Gladstone's liberalisation of the duties and licensing structure saw a keen struggle between, on the one hand, the many distributors and retailers who sought, legitimately or otherwise, to exploit this fast-growing market and, on the other hand, the premium producers and their agents who sought to protect and develop their embryonic brands in an increasingly sophisticated market. The number of British merchants selling champagne rose considerably. As *Ridley's* noted, there was a 'gold rush' of inexperienced new entrants to the wine trade.[43] At the premium end of the trade, Adolphe Hubinet estimated in 1862 that there were 1,200 merchants worth visiting in London; by 1876 Conrad Reuss, representing Pol Roger, counted 1,500.[44] The

[41] AMVC, 'Lettres particulières', 23 September 1859, Edouard Werlé wrote to his son Alfred to detail Selby's strengths and to ask him to check out the 'honorabilité' of Selby.
[42] See *Eastbourne Gazette*, 16 December 1914, p. 5. The agency agreement ended in 1932; by 1934, Pommery had a directly owned agency. See A.L. Simon, *Champagne* (London, 1934), p. 137. See also P. Clark, "The Society's Other Founder," https://www.iwfs.org/americas/a.j.a.-symons. [Accessed 13 September 2016.]
[43] See Chapter One, pages 51-2 for fuller discussion of this issue.
[44] Hubinet to Vasnier, CCH, 15 January 1862; Reuss letter to Pol Roger, APR, 20 June 1876. *Post Office Directory of the Wine and Spirit Trades*, (London, 1884), pp. 296-314 indicates a similar figure to that of Reuss.

complexity of the market was increased by the growth in the numbers of clubs, hotels and restaurants.[45]

Strengths and weaknesses

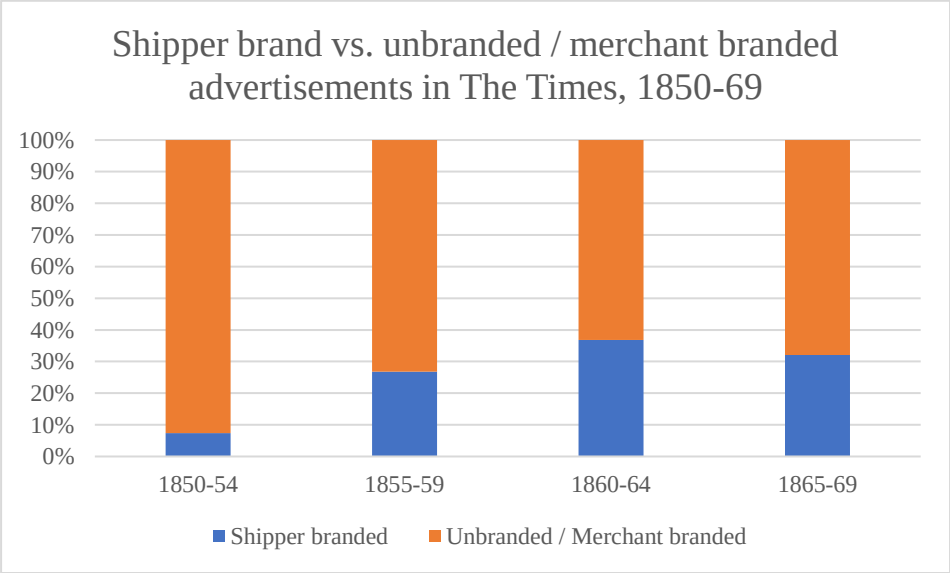
From a marketing and branding perspective, champagne in 1860 had both considerable strengths and significant weaknesses. The strengths lay primarily in the reputation of champagne; the weaknesses in the lack of legal protection for both the term 'champagne' and its embryonic brands. This lack of legal protection threatened both the integrity of champagne itself and the confidence of its consumers.

The reputational strengths derived from champagne's origins and history. Firstly, the region of Champagne had long been accepted as the source of the finest sparkling wine.[46] Secondly, it was presented as the wine of the elite. The public perception of champagne will be explored in detail in Chapter Three; here it is enough to note that two-thirds of the ninety-five articles referring to 'champagne' in the British press in the randomly chosen month of July 1855 dealt with elite celebrations of some form: evening balls, civic dinners and events, high-stakes wagers, and commercial celebrations of all forms from the opening of new chemical works in Tredegar to the arrival of SS *Caradoc* in Bristol.[47] Repasts with champagne were typically 'sumptuous' or 'elegant'; the guests usually 'distinguished', 'aristocratic', and sometimes even 'royal'.

[45] J. Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London, 2006), pp. 227-8 for the development of railway hotels. J. Flanders, *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London* (London, 2013), p. 290 notes that the term 'restaurant' appeared in English only in the 1860s. A. Milne-Smith, "A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen's Clubs of London, 1880–1914," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006), pp. 799-800, notes that the fastest growth in London's clubland was after 1870 but that it had started with Soyer's improvements at the Reform Club in the 1840s.
[46] A. Henderson, *The History of Ancient and Modern Wines* (London, 1824), pp. 151-3; C. Redding, *A History and Description of Modern Wines* (London, 1851), pp. 96-8.
[47] Analysis of all British Newspaper Archive articles referring to 'champagne' between 1 and 31 July 1855, conducted 22 January 2017. The 'other' category includes references to the quality of parliamentary oratory, place-names or surnames, and the use of champagne by foreign politicians and soldiers.

By the 1860s, the names (or *marques*) of a number of French shippers were already well-known and highly regarded. As Figure 17 shows, the proportion of advertisements in *The Times* carrying shipper brand names rather than regional names such as 'Sillery Mousseux' or 'Epernay Champagne' grew steadily up to the mid-1860s; after this point the increasing popularisation of lower-priced unbranded or merchant-branded champagne appears to have temporarily reversed this growth.

Figure 17: Champagne advertisements in *The Times*, 1850-69



Source: Analysis of champagne advertisements in *The Times*, 1850-69 conducted October 2015.[48]

By 1860-64, the proportion of shipper-branded advertisements had reached just under 40 per cent. The most prominent advertisers were Moët & Chandon and the several firms bearing the name 'Clicquot'. Other known names were Mumm and Roederer (both with two different firms using the name), Perrier-Jouët and Ruinart.[49]

[48] The analysis of *The Times* conducted on 12 October 2015 covered every advertisement referring to champagne published on the first Saturday of each month between 1 January 1850 and 31 December 1869.
[49] BNA analysis conducted 15 October 2017. Three brands only (Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Perrier-Jouët) were advertised regularly in 1850-59, another eight occasionally. In 1860-69, seven were advertised regularly (the above three plus Roederer, Pommery, Mumm and Ruinart). A further twenty-plus were advertised occasionally.

The multiple firms using the names of Clicquot, Roederer and Mumm show that there was an incipient problem of what would now be called 'passing-off'. This indicates the primary problem facing agents operating in the British market in the 1860s and 1870s.[50] The British legal system operated on the principle that a man's name is his own. The 1853 case of *Burgess v Burgess* (father and son both dealing in rival 'Essence of Anchovy' products) established that 'rival firms might legitimately use identical titles so long as they each have an owner with such a name'.[51] Whilst action could be taken if there was a credible claim that a competitor was attempting to deceive purchasers into believing they were buying the goods of another manufacturer, this was hard to prove. The legal position began to change in both France and Britain during the late 1860s and early 1870s, but until then the agents in the British market had to rely primarily on 'cautions' in the press, which told customers to beware 'imitations' and to rely on the brand on the cork. Richard Symonds, the agent for Montebello, issued as many as a thousand 'caution' advertisements during the 1860s, whilst both Selby, the agent for Veuve Clicquot, and the competing firm of Eugene Clicquot took out multiple advertisements aimed at protecting their own brands in the 1860s.[52]

The lack of legal remedies for trade mark abuse presented a significant commercial threat to the producers.[53] Werlé had early recognised the threat of counterfeiting and adulteration to the creation of champagne brands. In his view half the

[50] The legal definition of 'passing off' is to 'make false representation likely to induce a person to believe that the goods and services are those of another'. See *Duhaime's Law Dictionary*, www.duhaime.org [accessed 24 January 2017].
[51] See Mercer, "Mark of Distinction," p. 20.
[52] For Montebello cautions, see, for example, *Oxford Times*, 13 April 1867, p. 4; for Veuve Clicquot caution see *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 October 1860, p. 1; for Eugene Clicquot caution and claim that his trade mark had been established since 1844 see *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 11 September 1869, p. 6.
[53] There were a number of new corking systems patented in the late 1860s and early 1870s to address problems of leakage and lack of security. 100433/79, 'June 1867 memo to agents' claimed of a new cork that Gilbey's had patented that it offered 'perfect security against fraud or error'.

consumers who had experienced a counterfeit wine would never return to that brand – hence his determination to protect Veuve Clicquot from any form of adulteration.[54] His firm was among the first and most determined of all trade mark litigants in the British courts. It took suit in 1863 against a London warehouseman, Henry Wakeham Stears, to 'restrain the latter from in any way dealing with spurious Clicquot's champagne, the corks of which bear a colourable imitation of the Trade Mark of the said Veuve Clicquot'. The case turned on Selby's evidence on the branding of the genuine corks and the verdict was that Wakeham Stears was dealing in 'spurious and inferior wine fraudulently palmed off as Veuve Clicquot's'.[55] Moët & Chandon's agent took similar action against 'fabricated trade marks' in three cases in 1863 involving wine fabricated in Germany and vended in Liverpool. Though it was often difficult to prove that the ultimate vendors of the wine must have known that the trade marks had been falsified, the series of successful cases in the 1860s had the effect, so *Ridley's* reckoned, of 'breaking the neck' of the swindles in the UK.[56] In fact, the problem recurred in 1874 when a 'skilled bottler' who had once worked for Moët & Chandon installed the technology to brand corks in his London cellar.[57]

These legal cases were facilitated by the passing of the Merchandise Marks Act of 1862 which was intended to prevent the 'forgery of trade marks and the false marking of merchandise'. However, the protection afforded to marks was far from perfect. The burden of proof lay with the accuser, there was no provision for search warrants, and the possession of such items as 'dies and instruments for forging trade marks' was not made a misdemeanour.[58] In this respect the law lagged behind the French system. Nevertheless,

[54] AMVC, 'Lettres particulières', letter to Robert Votkins (a prospective London agent) dated 23 July 1859.
[55] *Ridley's*, 13 February 1863, p. 12.
[56] *Ridley's*, 12 November 1879, p. 376.
[57] *Ridley's*, 9 July 1873, pp. 2-3; 12 January 1874, p. 34.
[58] This was one of the difficulties with the 1862 Act; see H.B. Poland, ed. *Trade Marks: The Merchandise Marks Act, 1862. 25 & 26 Vict. C. 88* (London, 1862), pp. 9-10.

as contemporaries noted and later scholars such as Duguid have confirmed, it was drinks firms such as Clicquot and, in the beer market, Bass, who took the lead in such trade mark actions.[59] The British agents were a key part in these actions: they not only monitored market activity and gathered evidence of illegal behaviour, but also initiated action in the British courts. However, they could do little about a second major abuse which had to be countered in the French rather than the British courts.

This second, and in many ways more troubling, problem was also trade mark related. A series of court cases in France in the 1860s and early 1870s gave newly-established 'namealike' brands such as Théophile Roederer the right to trade against existing companies with the same last name. Judgments deprecated the actions of the syndicates which identified bearers of famous names and established them as figureheads for new companies, but nevertheless accepted the principle that a man had the right to trade under his own name. In such cases, the verdicts insisted only that the labels should display the first name of the offender and the date of foundation.[60] Sold into the British market, such marks undoubtedly strengthened the awareness of names such as Clicquot but at the expense of the reputation of the original brand. The turning point which neutralised this significant threat to the major champagne houses came in 1874. This was the case of Moët & Chandon versus Henri Moët of Belgium in 1874. This prohibited Henri Moët from continuing to trade under his own name. As *Ridley's* put it, this verdict

[59] See Duguid, "Developing the Brand."; R. Cox, *A Manual of Trade-Mark Cases Comprising Sebastian's Digest of Trade-Mark Cases*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1892), pp. 130-6, 297, 318. See also D.M. Higgins and S. Verma, "The Business of Protection: Bass & Co. And Trade Mark Defence, Circa 1870–1914," *Accounting, Business & Financial History* 19, no. 1 (2009), p. 9. Bass's activity and expenditure in defence of their trademarks in the 1850s and 1860s was extensive. It was claimed by their London manager, Thomas Coxton, that they spent £700-800 on defending their trade marks in 1860-62.

[60] See *Ridley's*, 7 April 1865, p. 3. The judgment against Théophile Roederer, whilst condemning the new firm's 'imitation of the labels and vignettes of Louis Roederer' and the similarity of other elements of the packaging as 'dishonest competition', nonetheless allowed that firm to continue to trade with Théophile Roederer as figurehead and bookkeeper to a syndicate of German entrepreneurs.

must have ‘agreeably surprised’ Moët & Chandon, but it concluded that ‘no fair dealing trader will be inclined to doubt the moral soundness of the verdict’.[61] This verdict in the French courts recognised the value of the champagne shippers’ names and the threat from counterfeiting.

The difficulties faced by the major houses in protecting against adulteration and passing off were compounded by the lack of any legal protection for the term ‘champagne’ itself. The British Merchandise Marks Act and common usage accepted that the term ‘champagne’ could be freely used provided that the label bore some further indication of the place of origin.[62] This weakness was not remedied until a series of court cases in France in the 1880s and 1890s (see Chapter Five). Until then the term ‘champagne’ was in effect a generic. As *Ridley’s* put it in 1892: ‘To the British consumer every White Sparkling Wine is Champagne of a kind, be it known as German, Swiss, Italian, or what not.’[63] That distributors and merchants of all stripes were able to make unfettered use of the term was both a cause and a consequence of the spread of the ‘champagne’ habit beyond its traditional market of wealthy elites. By capitalising on these weaknesses of champagne in the 1860s, second-tier shippers in France and distributors and merchants in Britain made lower-priced ‘champagne’ both popular and popularly available. Some of this wine would have been made from grapes grown outside the Champagne region; some from British gooseberries, rhubarb or pears.[64] Regardless of origin, it was a significant threat.

[61] *Ridley's*, 12 September 1874, p. 203. Roederer, Clicquot and Heidsieck had all lost similar cases.
[62] See *Ridley's*, 12 March 1891, p. 141 which argued that the use of the term ‘Saumur-Champagne’ was ‘in strict accord with our English law as laid down by the Merchandise Marks Act’.
[63] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1892, p. 52.
[64] See, for example, *Monmouthshire Beacon*, 19 January 1850, p. 2: ‘[m]ost of the second-rate champagne sold in this country is prepared from the juice of acid fruits – such as the gooseberry [and] a species of pear is now grown for the purpose on a large scale in Herefordshire’.

These lower-priced wines were behind another threat to champagne's position in the British market that posed a further challenge to agents. As this and following chapters will show, the upward tide of wealth flooding through British society in the 1860s, which culminated in the boom of the early 1870s, enabled the leading houses to establish their reputation and their brand names amongst status-conscious consumers; however, it also threatened to devalue the reputation of champagne as a category, as it did port and sherry. The very success of individual houses prompted the use (and abuse) of these brands by other players in the value chain. The brand and reputational power so created made the shipper brands highly attractive both to the 'advertising merchants' who sold off the page and to the new 'stores' established in the 1860s and early 1870s, such as the Civil Service Supply Association (1865) and the Army and Navy Co-operative Stores (1871). Both these channels used established brand names as low-priced 'call-birds' (also known as 'decoy ducks') with which to attract their mainly middle-class members and further erode the share of traditional merchants.[65] Coupled with the growth in low-priced secondary brands, this broader distribution of lower-priced wines threatened to undermine champagne's elite image.

The popularisation of champagne

Contemporary reports suggested that champagne might lose its luxury image. In 1860, the *Belfast Morning Advertiser* claimed that 'a glass of champagne and a sponge-cake for half a crown have undoubtedly become luxuries within the grasp of the million'.[66] By 1867, the *Wrexham Advertiser* was claiming that 'we have reached a point where […]

[65] For the impact of the Co-operative Stores on the wine market, see *Ridley's*, 12 November 1878, p. 334; for their broader impact, see J. Hood and B.S. Yamey, "The Middle-Class Co-Operative Retailing Societies in London, 1864-1900," *Oxford Economic Papers* 9, no. 3 (1957).
[66] *Belfast Morning News*, 14 September 1860, p. 8.

people drink champagne and Moselle as ordinary beverages.[67] *Ridley's* wrote in 1870 that '[c]hampagne [has] descended from its position as a luxury, and among a large class, become a want'.[68] The data on distribution and consumption from the 1860s and early 1870s also suggest that champagne was becoming both more popular and more widely available. During the 1860s and early 1870s the consumption of wine and the number of retail and licensed outlets increased substantially. For example, the number of merchants in Norwich increased from 24 in 1853 to 32 in 1865 and 58 by 1875.[69] Although older-established elite merchants such as Hedges & Butler continued to trade, they faced greatly increased competition both from new retailers selling in the off-trade for home consumption and from the many new clubs, hotel chains and restaurateurs offering wine for on-premise consumption. These new outlets made wine far more readily available for consumption both within and outside the home. Increased competition also drove down prices and, as suggested in Chapter One, tended to deteriorate the quality of the product.

Dickens' *All the Year Round* claimed in 1873 that 'some of the best champagne in the world, and some of the very worst, gets into the London market'. For those without 'long purses', the article continued, 'trash hawked under the forged brand of some famous maker' was all they could expect. For the article's author, 'champagne, like sherry, illustrates the fact that demand is pretty sure to be followed by its faithful handmaid supply'.[70] In other words, the popular demand for champagne had led to its debasement. But, as Christopher Berry has argued in *The Idea of Luxury*, luxuries can never be democratised; they remain luxuries. This incipient popularisation of a previously elite product represented a considerable threat to the premium producers of champagne.[71]

[67] *Wrexham Advertiser*, 26 October 1867, p. 3.
[68] *Ridley's*, 10 October 1870, p. 18.
[69] Kelly's Directories Ltd., *Post Office Directory of the Norfolk Counties* (London, 1853, 1865, 1875).
[70] "Best Bins," *All the Year Round* 10 (new series), no. 244 (1873), p. 324.
[71] C.J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 31-2. Although Berry argues that luxuries can never be democratised, it is clear that objects or products can lose

Democratisation has been defined by Howland as 'enabling […] middle-class individuals […] to readily transform their economic capital into cultural capital and thus enact distinction-signifying performances'.[72] This, as Chapter Three will show, was one of the key motivators for purchasing and serving champagne. This present chapter focuses on the effects on the trade of the increased availability and lowered price of champagne.

Champagne's increased availability was driven by new distributors and lower prices. Gilbey's was only the most significant of the new retailers. In the mid-1870s their sales of champagne reached nearly 100,000 bottles per year but from 1875 they were also selling over 120,000 bottles per year of 'Sparkling Saumur', a wine of near-equivalent quality priced at half the cost of champagne.[73] Whilst there are no data for the London Co-operative Stores' sales of champagne in this period, this retailer was regarded by competitors and the trade press as a very significant player not only in London but also for a radius of up to fifty miles around the capital.[74] These retail outlets were supplemented by catering companies which sold wine for both on-premise and off-premise consumption.

The most important operator in the fast-developing catering and restaurant sector from the 1860s onwards was the pioneering firm of Spiers & Pond.[75] Starting with railway station refreshment bars, they expanded into a range of restaurants and other catering outlets in London.[76] There is little data on the consumption in such catering

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their luxury status; see also M. van der Veen, "When Is Food a Luxury?," *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2003), p. 409.

[72] For the concept of democratisation, see P.J. Howland, "Distinction by Proxy: The Democratization of Fine Wine," *Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2-3 (2013), pp. 325-40. Contemporaries used phrases such as 'champagne for the million'; see *Ridley's*, 8 May 1860, p. 11; 12 November 1866, p. 2.

[73] Diageo, 100204/4, 'Sales analyses 1866-82'.

[74] Hood and Yamey, "Co-Operative Retailing Societies," pp. 309-22. This remains the major source of information on the early co-operative stores; for their impact on pricing up to 50 miles from London see ibid., pp. 316-17. In 1896, the Co-operative Wine Association took 6,000 dozen bottles of Piper Heidsieck champagne that had been returned from the United States, see *Ridley's*, 12 November 1896, p. 664.

[75] See R.G. Spiers, *Searching for Spiers: A History* (Chorleywood, 1996).

[76] For their barmaid's 'hauteur' see Anonymous, *Tempted London: Young Men* (London, 1888), p. 60.

outlets, but it was substantial. In 1867, Hubinet reported to his principals that Spiers & Pond were asking for £214 to get the Pommery name on '100,000 wine bills' (i.e. restaurant wine lists).[77] Spiers & Pond also sold direct to consumers from a retail store in London and through advertisements in a range of London and local papers.[78] The Bodega chain of wine bars operated on a similar basis. Founded by Robert Lavery in 1868, the company grew rapidly to twenty outlets in major UK cities. In addition, it not only set up temporary bars in major exhibitions but also sold direct to consumers.[79] The purchasing power of firms such as Gilbey's, Spiers & Pond and the Bodega chain enabled them to buy advantageously, whilst their highly visible presence in the public eye would have deterred them from deceiving the public. Not so the 'advertising merchants' who sprang up in the 1860s.

Wine merchants had been using press advertising since the early eighteenth century, but the volume of such advertising expanded ten-fold from the first to the second half of the nineteenth century. Between the periods 1855-59 and 1860-64, the number of such advertisements rose from an average of around 2,000 per annum to more than 5,000 per annum.[80] *Ridley's* first began to inveigh against 'advertising cliques', 'advertising firms' and the 'advertising system' in 1860.[81] In 1861, it claimed that the 'enormous extent to which the modern system of advertising is now carried, is regarded by many dealers as highly objectionable, but there is no help for this state of things'.[82] Though

[77] At this point Spiers & Pond were selling 5,000 bottles per year. See CCH, 11 February 1867; 21 February 1867. Their proposal was not accepted.
[78] See, for example, *Morning Post*, 5 June 1872, p. 1 for an advertisement for Spiers & Pond's Central Wine Depot in London and its mail order service.
[79] Lavery claimed to have sold 2,000 bottles of champagne (plus four hogsheads of claret and 3,000 gallons of sherry) in a single day at the Manchester Exhibition in July 1869. See *The Times*, 28 July 1869, p. 9.
[80] BNA search of advertisements for 'wine' shows 150,000 insertions between 1800-49; rising to 1.15 million in 1850-99. Search conducted 8 November 2017.
[81] *Ridley's*, 7 June 1860, pp. 3-4.
[82] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1861, p. 1.

some advertisers stressed the purity and 'choice' quality of their wines, the bulk of such advertisements focused exclusively on price.[83]

These advertisers fell into two broad groups: those offering unbranded or merchant-branded wines through retail or direct sales, and those whose tactics were to exploit powerful brand names and offer highly advantageous prices either via spurious auctions or through direct sale. Those selling under their own names often stressed their ability to source direct from growers; those selling through auction used known names (such as Moët) to attract consumers.[84] Auction sales were widely regarded with suspicion, particularly when large quantities of wines of a particular sort were offered. In 1846, *Ridley's* described one lot of auctioned 'champagne' as a 'a compound of sugar and water, manipulated with flavouring ethers and fortified with bad spirit'.[85] The sale at auction by J. Bearn of 70 cases of Moët & Chandon and 100 dozen 'Moselle Champagne' in Northampton in 1863 may have been of this nature or may have featured wine bought on the 'grey market' in France.[86] Advertising merchants adopted similar tactics; hence the 'perpetual injunctions' that Moët & Chandon took out and publicised against Frederick Symons and two other named merchants for selling champagne bearing counterfeited trademarks.[87] Around the same time, a man named Robert Abbott was operating what was probably a 'call-bird' operation using low-priced wines to attract customers who were then sold other products.[88] Claiming to be an ex-employee of one of London's

[83] For example, The European and Colonial Wine Company, which advertised heavily in the 1860s, claimed not only that their wines were pure but that they offered a 'saving of at least 30 per cent'. For a typical advertisement, see *Era*, 1 January 1860, p. 16.
[84] See *Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser*, 16 November 1860, p. 2, for an advertisement for Thomas Stapleton's 'Foreign Vineyard Association' which stressed its links with growers.
[85] *Ridley's*, 6 October 1864, p. 10.
[86] *Northampton Mercury*, 22 August 1863, p. 1.
[87] See *Cork Examiner*, 30 March 1864, p. 1, for 'Perpetual Injunction'; *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 June 1863, p. 4, for an earlier 'caution' from Moët & Chandon's London agents. The Merchandise Marks Act of 1862 came into force on 1 January 1864 and was followed by many such injunctions.
[88] *Ridley's*, 8 March 1864, p. 2. The journal described how 'clap-trap advertisements […] make a great show […] of quoting, in their freely circulated price lists, a well-known leading brand, such as Moët's

better-known merchants, he ran advertisements in at least a dozen London and provincial papers offering nothing but Moët & Chandon champagne for 'ready money' at 53s. per dozen, a significant discount on the standard price of around 58-60s. for 'first-class' wine.[89]

Press advertising was not the only tactic. The probability is that merchants such as Symons and Abbott would also have used posted circulars which were one of the most common promotional devices in the mid nineteenth century. The introduction of a 1/2d. rate for printed circulars in 1855 led to a fall in hand-delivered bills and a rapid rise in posted material.[90] Described in one article as a 'bombardment', such material, as we shall see in Chapter Three, aroused not only consumer annoyance but also wariness of advertising, of 'common articles' and of outright fraud.[91]

The challenge for the British merchants and retailers was how to provide customers with the reassurance that their product was not just a 'common article'. Innovative brand development and management were the central tools for consumer reassurance. W. & A. Gilbey were the pioneers, using their 'Castle' brand, a key component of their 'system of business' discussed in Chapter One, to address customer concerns over quality, value and purity. Whilst the very first Gilbey price lists featured Moët champagne, this individual product brand was replaced by a range of Castle brand

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Champagne, at the nominal cost-price, and thereby attract the uninitiated portion of the consuming public'. The London *Standard*, 18 September 1867, p. 5, supported the refusal of French champagne houses to supply unless wine merchants agreed to a certain price for the wine since 'there now exists in this country a class of wine merchants whose system of business is practically to build up their reputation [by offering] Clicquot and Moët's champagnes, Martell's, Hennessy's, and Otard's brandies, &C, [...] at prices barely remunerative to themselves'.

[89] See, for example, *Leeds Mercury*, 29 July 1863, p. 1. For 'first quality' wine the going rate was around 58-60s. per dozen. See, for example, Ross, McKergow's advertisements in *Leicester Journal*, 24 January 1868, p. 4.

[90] T.R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London, 1982), p. 92. Specialist delivery companies flourished in London and other major cities. The scale of the circular business was such that, in his 1868 report, the Postmaster-General estimated that 3.5 million circulars were wasted every year in London by advertisers since they 'failed to find the persons to whom they were sent'. See Fryer and Akerman, *The Reform of the Post Office in the Victorian Era and Its Impact on Economic and Social Activity*, p. 693.

[91] For a complaint about bombardment by 'paper pellets', see 'A Country Parson's Letter-Bag' in *Leisure Hour*, 13 February 1869, p. 102.

champagnes from late 1861 or early 1862. As *Ridley's* later acknowledged, Gilbey's eschewal of shipper brands meant they could never be accused of using 'call-birds' whilst their quality was always good and their prices fair.[92] Gilbey's marketing for their wines (including champagne) initially focused almost exclusively on the advantages offered by their 'Business System'. In the price lists that were sent out regularly through a centralised mailing list to over 2.5 million customers, their champagnes were described as lower-priced versions of wines 'usually sold under special brands and at high prices'.[93] Unlike their premium competitors, Gilbey's made little use of press coverage or endorsements to promote champagne.[94]

At the end of the period 1860-76, however, Gilbey's initiated a new direction in the marketing of sparkling wines. This was the launch in 1874 of 'Sparkling Saumur' as a lower-priced alternative to champagne and one with strong medical approval. A medical endorsement from the *Lancet* in 1859 was first used in advertisements in the middle of that year.[95] Letters from hospital doctors recommending the use of Gilbey's wines as stimulants appeared in provincial and medical papers in the 1860s, and *Ridley's* had little doubt that these letters and endorsements were paid for in some way by Gilbey's.[96] The medically inspired marketing angle found for the Sparkling Saumur brand was buttressed with a category challenger price benefit, offering consumers the benefits of sparkling

[92] *Ridley's*, 11 June 1898, p. 421.
[93] As a comparison note the boast of Whiteley's department store that it could send 2.5 million catalogues and circulars per year in 1915. See also Coopey, Connell, and Porter, *Mail Order Retailing*, p. 16; for more detail on Gilbey's marketing and early adoption of centralised mailing lists see Harding, "Competition Is Useless," pp. 61-2. For the copy, see Diageo, 101184/10, 'Price lists, 1865-74'.
[94] The only endorsement they received was when the Prince of Wales was toasted in Gilbey's champagne by the Cape Town freemasons in 1865. See *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 3 October 1860, p. 3.
[95] See, for example, *Paisley Herald*, 4 June 1859, p. 8.
[96] See *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 30 November 1869, as reported in *Ridley's*, 10 November 1869, p. 17, which thought it an unreasonable 'puff'. See *Ridley's*, 12 December 1870, pp. 18-20 for its conclusion that the firm 'have doubtless made this paragraph [endorsing their port wine] pay well'.

wine at a significantly lower price. Within a year of launch in 1874, Gilbey's Sparkling Saumur sales had overtaken champagne sales in their stores.[97]

The Gilbey's approach differed from that of other merchants in its emphasis on brand building, its use of medical endorsement and its capacity to communicate effectively with a national audience comprising the customers of thousands of local retailers. Less effective competitors were neither able to match the Gilbey's nationwide networks of agents nor develop either individual product brands or coherent range brands.[98] The less reputable 'advertising merchants' had no weapons to fall back on bar the use and abuse of others' brand names and (if one is to believe *Ridley's* often repeated complaints) illusory lower prices. *Ridley's* believed the company to be a long-term force for good in the market and their judgment that 'competition is useless' reflected their view of Gilbey's marketing capacity.[99] Could the launch of Sparkling Saumur have been an early acknowledgement on Gilbey's part that their own brand champagne was becoming a less effective challenger to the increasing power of the shipper brands? In the early 1870s it appeared as if champagne might have become a 'wine of the million'. However, despite the resources and strategic clarity of Gilbey's, their own brand could not dominate the market as it had done with claret and other wines and, in the 1880s, Gilbey's had to cede the ground to the French shipper brands and the marketing template that they developed. The development of this template owes much to the man many regarded as the most successful agent of the nineteenth century wine trade, Adolphe Hubinet.

[97] 100204/4, 'Sales analysis, 1868-82'.
[98] For failed attempts to build competing agent networks see Harding, "Competition Is Useless," p. 53.
[99] *Ridley's*, 10 August 1868, pp. 9-10.

Adolphe Hubinet and the role of the agent

To many contemporary commentators on the champagne trade, the embodiment of the ideal agent was Adolphe Hubinet of the Reims champagne house of Pommery & Greno. Given that by no means all the surviving archives are accessible to scholarly scrutiny, the claims of any single agent must inevitably be tentative, yet the evidence of his letters and the comments of contemporaries in the London champagne trade suggest that Hubinet played a key role in the initial development of a new marketing template for premium champagne. Certainly Pommery, apparently at his instigation, played a vital role in the subsequent refinement of the marketing and branding strategies that led to the ultimate triumph of the shipper brands in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. In the passages which follow I make extensive use of his surviving letters.[100] This is not to say that there were no other agents of similar effectiveness, but no other agents had their talents and success so widely recognised by their trade contemporaries. As wine merchant and writer Louis Feuerheerd wrote in 1898, 'the man who first introduced dry champagne into this country was the late Mr. Hubinet, who, being the agent for Madame Pommery, brought it into the English market with wonderful energy and success'.[101]

The increasing scale of the British champagne trade after 1860, and the growth of new retail outlets capable of buying direct from the producers demanded changes in the marketing of champagne. By the 1860s the business model of the traditional elite merchants met the needs of neither the new commercial clients, such as restaurants and hotel chains with their own distribution points, nor the growing numbers of middle-class customers. The business model of the traditional elite merchants was based on stocking a

[100] Though the archives of Bollinger and Moët & Chandon still survive they are not readily accessible to scholars. The archives of other major players in the London market at this period, such as de Venoge, Ayala and Irroy are now lost.
[101] H.L. Feuerheerd, *The Gentleman's Cellar and Butler's Guide* (London, 1899), p. 70.

range of wines, charging high prices and offering long credit terms to the nobility and gentry. There are neither good studies of such merchants nor known archival records, but unsympathetic depictions in nineteenth-century fiction and retrospective glimpses of the mid nineteenth-century merchants in the trade and general press strongly suggest their inability to satisfy either price-conscious middle-class consumers or the new commercial clients.[102] To deal effectively with these new customers, the champagne trade had to develop new marketing strategies. Hence the importance of agents and the importance of Hubinet.

Little is known of Hubinet's life outside his professional role.[103] His business letters rarely reveal personal details, but scattered evidence from the comments of contemporaries and newspaper reports enables a brief picture of this highly influential agent to be developed. Hubinet was French and by his early twenties he was working in London for the firm of C. M. Tourtan, importer of wines and spirits. It appears that there was some form of personal connection with the Pommery family and at the age of twenty-three he was recruited by Madame Pommery to take over the house's somewhat moribund London agency.[104] In 1866 he married Alice Sharpin, the daughter of a Scarborough hotelier, but then went through a widely reported divorce after she left the marital home in Finchley Road to cohabit with Thomas Wooding, who was described as a 'greengrocer's clerk'.[105] Before the divorce Hubinet was recorded as staying at a number

[102] *Ridley's*, 11 June 1898, p. 443. Neither Hedges & Butler nor Berry Bros have satisfactory histories, but see D. Wheatley, *The Seven Ages of Justerini's* (London, 1949), for a racy account of Justerini & Brooks.
[103] The only scholarly work on Pommery is S. Piotrowski, "Réseau Et Stratégie Commerciale D'une Maison De Champagne, À Travers L'étude De Sa Correspondance Commerciale. L'exemple De La Maison Pommery, 1858 - Fin Du Xixème Siècle" (Université de Reims Champagne-Ardennes, 2001). This unpublished master's thesis used the house correspondence to explore the commercial networks of Pommery & Greno between 1851 and the end of the century. I have not been able to access the outbound letters cited by Piotrowski and have focused on Hubinet's inbound letters.
[104] Advertisements in *The Times* confirm E. Rowcliffe as agent in 1857 and 1858; Augustus Kniep in 1860. See *The Times*, 12 April 1858, p. 13, for Rowcliffe; 21 November 1860, p. 13, for Kniep.
[105] For the marriage, see *Hull and Eastern Counties Gazette*, 26 July 1866, p. 8; the fullest account of the divorce is given in *Leeds Times*, 8 February 1873, p. 2.

of well-established hotels in London and Brighton, but the evidence of his marriage and divorce does not suggest a man high in the social scale.[106] His low initial five per cent commission level probably reflects his youth and relative lack of experience in the trade. However, he was highly successful as Pommery's agent. His commission rose and, perhaps more importantly, he steadily gained responsibility over sales not just to the UK but also to the Americas and the British colonies.[107] By the end of his life he was head of Pommery's agencies worldwide, having relinquished his direct UK responsibilities to Lucien Loffet, a long-term colleague.[108]

Hubinet was recruited in late 1860 and threw himself into his role with apparently indefatigable energy and attack, covering thousands of miles by train in extensive (and intense) provincial sales trips and building up strong personal relations with important and influential merchants in every city and major town in Britain.[109] From his frequent letters to Madame Pommery and Henri Vasnier in Reims, it is possible to observe the development of Hubinet's strategy for building the Pommery brand.[110] His overall objective was to build the reputation of Pommery amongst elite consumers whom he believed had the power to influence both others in their set and their social inferiors.[111] In addition to Hubinet's own personal sales exertions, the interlocked strategies he adopted focused on the following: securing a strong position with major customers for distribution such as leading West End clubs and hotels, product placement (both real and virtual),

[106] CCH, 4 September 1861. This letter asks for higher expenses to cover the cost of staying in the hotels to which he was pitching for business.
[107] On 1 February 1877, Reuss wrote to Pol Roger that Pommery had given Hubinet an 'interest in the whole of their business' and he was therefore transferring another agency to Reuss. APR.
[108] The business was formally handed over to Loffet in 1895, see CCH, 20 July 1895.
[109] For the development of a close relationship with Robert Little of Liverpool, see CCH, 11 February 1863; 18 March 1863; 2 February 1864; 24 August 1866.
[110] Hubinet wrote to his principals at least once a week, more often twice. A few replies are included in the Flocquet compilation. Others, if they still exist, are not accessible in the Pommery archives.
[111] CCH, 5 March 1865: 'nous nous ferions déguster par la crème de la crème des sujets de la Reine VICTORIA'. ('We'll be tasted by the cream of British society.')

developing a distinctive positioning for Pommery and its wines, price maximisation and lastly the proactive cultivation of the press to ensure positive coverage for Pommery.

Central to the establishment of a strong position with the major customers was his willingness to customise the wine to the taste of his customers by varying the level of the dosage of the wine shipped to them by the French house. Others did the same, but in Hubinet's letters can be seen the tension between this tactical requirement and the strategic necessity to build a consistent style and positioning for the Pommery brand. For example, the negotiations with one London merchant took six months and a range of samples of different levels of sweetness, colour and age.[112] By 1863, and regularly thereafter, he was urging Madame Pommery to have the courage to produce steadily larger bottlings (*cuvées*) on the grounds that (as he put it in 1871) 'nos admirateurs […] ne peuvent jamais compter boire le même vin deux fois'.[113] Such larger bottlings, he further argued, should always be blended for a consistent style that he characterised by words such as 'délicatesse' and 'finesse'.[114] His approach – which will be explored in more detail below – was clearly based on close observation of the champagne market and champagne consumers in both London and provincial towns.[115]

Hubinet's approach demonstrates the importance attached to face-to-face selling. His 1860 contract with Pommery specified that he should travel for six months per year and his second 1861 tour took in twenty-nine locations in six weeks including Bath, Cambridge, Newcastle, Belfast and Dublin.[116] Hubinet slept on trains (or so he said) and

[112] For negotiations with Messrs. White, see CCH, 1 August 1861; 11 September 1861; 6 February 1862.
[113] CCH, 1 February 1863 ('courage'); 12 March 1871: 'our admirers can't count on drinking the same wine twice in a row'.
[114] CCH, 11 November 1861; 21 October 1865.
[115] CCH, 23 March 1863. 'His tastings are always done with shippers or a circle of consumers and they contribute a lot to our understanding.' The process was analogous to the fashion industry practice of 'collective selection' described by H. Blumer, "Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection," *Sociological Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1969), pp. 282-4.
[116] He was perhaps not as indefatigable as he appeared. In 1865 he had to keep to his room in Edinburgh for a week because of 'nervousness'. See CCH, 16-30 June 1865.

at each new town he would taste samples with important local merchants, ascertain the local taste for champagne and identify which of the Pommery products might be most suitable, subject to fine-tuning the dosage levels.[117] Further samples would then be sent and discussed by letter before any deal was secured. His initial assumption was that it would take two visits to convert a merchant, but it often took longer. For instance, it took a year of tastings and many samples to convert the influential Liverpool merchant Robert Little.[118]

Most such tastings were competitive. The customer (or potential customer) would solicit a range of samples from different houses. Having drawn up a short-list, the customer would then hold a blind tasting of the top contenders in the presence of their agents. According to Hubinet, the tastings of the London merchants Messrs. White, 'sont toujours faites entre négociants ou par un cercle de consommateurs, elles contribueront beaucoup à nous faire connaître'.[119] At these carefully managed events, wines would be decanted into numbered bottles and then tasted by the client. They would then be ranked and (frequently) re-tasted the following day to make sure of the quality. Nor was that necessarily the end of the process. The successful house would frequently be asked to re-submit the wines in a range of different dosages and blends. As Hubinet commented in a later letter to Reims, 'le goût se modifie très vite', and the customers for distribution had to be sure the dosage levels of the wines would suit when delivered some months later.[120] If and when the order was finally won, it would be relayed back to the principals with full details on the *cuvée* and dosage, the bottle size, how the wines were to be corked and

[117] CCH, 4 March 1861; 11 March 1861; 21 June 1861.
[118] The first contact was reported in a letter of 11 February 1863; a sale was finally achieved a year later. See CCH, 2 February 1864.
[119] Tastings 'are always held with *négociants* or a circle of consumers; they [the tastings] are very important in getting us known'. For a full description of the tasting protocol see CCH, 1 August 1861.
[120] CCH, 23 March 1863: 'taste changes very fast'.

wired, what text or other marking was required on the corks, labels and cases, and the timing of the shipment.[121] Each customer had differing requirements and the agent had to ensure these were faithfully executed whilst still maintaining a level of brand discipline, including pushing for use of the shipper name rather than the customer name on labels or corks.[122] This elaborate and lengthy process was probably unique to champagne. Other wines such as claret or burgundy could not be customised to taste in this way. For these wines, it is probable that cask samples from one or more merchants would be tasted, assessed for future development and then ordered for later bottling and delivery.[123]

Equally important was the commercial role of agents. They had the task of checking on the creditworthiness of potential customers, advising on credit terms as well refusing orders when appropriate and chasing debts (for which they were often at least partially responsible). Thus in 1865 Selby telegraphed Werlé to cancel an order placed by Mr. Leaveaux of the Cadiz and Oporto Light Railway because he distrusted his manner of doing business. Subsequently Selby had long discussions by letter over the conduct, creditworthiness and honesty of Bulloch Lade, a prominent firm of Glasgow wine merchants whom he suspected of breaking terms by selling the wine at a lower price than his principals had stipulated.[124] Agents did not set the commercial terms on which wines were vended – that was the responsibility of the principal – but the agents had to enforce these terms. Veuve Clicquot, like Moët & Chandon, set minimum order quantities. Agents also had to report on and take action against vendors of counterfeit wine. As we have seen, this was a particular issue for Selby since Veuve Clicquot was involved in a

[121] See *Aberdeen Journal*, 6 December 1872, p. 7 for a perspective on the differing national tastes and the British preference for ‘gold foil and pink paper’.
[122] The London merchant, Hamick, required corks branded 'P&G Reims' but no labels. See CCH, 29 April 1863; see also Conrad Reuss to Pol Roger, APR, 6 September 1876.
[123] I know of no comparable records of agent or merchant practice for other wine types.
[124] *Ridley's*, 7 October 1865, p. 22. When he went bankrupt the journal described Leveaux as the 'Mephistopheles of the wine trade'.

considerable number of legal cases.[125] Though Werlé was a demanding principal who set exacting targets, his disputes with Selby focused less on the latter's failings than on Werlé's continued insistence on acting independently of his agent. Selby eventually won these battles after threatening to withdraw his sales efforts in the UK.[126]

Alongside their commercial role, shaping the wines of their principals was the central task for agents. They reported back on both the evolving taste of British customers and on the pricing, quality and standing of competitors' wines. Thus, Hubinet reported in February 1862 that the current taste in London's West End Clubs was for 'un champagne blanc, très sec [et] moelleux', that could be sold to members at 4s. per bottle; the Pommery wines were too sweet and too 'rough'.[127] A year later he reported that the Pommery wines were still harsher and more bitter than the competing Roederer wines and that the ideal wine for London taste was 'un vin tout particulier: un champagne très sec, sans raideur, avec peu de mousse et beaucoup de bouquet'.[128] London taste was not at that point the national taste. Outside the capital, in Newcastle, Liverpool and the Scottish mercantile cities, the preference was for sweeter wines; in Leeds there was the same preference for sweeter wines but they demanded a certain 'bitterness'.[129] Tastes converged over the next fifty years; by 1895 none of the provincial towns ordering Pol

[125] Selby had to investigate reports of counterfeit wine sold under the Clicquot name. See, for example, AMVC, 'Lettres particulières', 12 August 1861 for problems with George Moss of Liverpool.
[126] For Selby's ultimatum to Veuve Clicquot and repeated demand that Werlé should not undermine his position by accepting orders from Bulloch Lade, see 7 January 1860; 20 May 1861. See also 25 May 1865 for Selby's acknowledgement of Werlé's letter to Bulloch Lade supporting his firm's rights as Veuve Clicquot's British agent.
[127] CCH, 15-16 February 1863; Pommery wines were 'trop sucrés et raides'. In this context 'raide' suggests rough, fiery or perhaps stiff (as opposed to mellow or 'moelleux').
[128] CCH, 18 April 1863: 'de la dureté, une certaine acreté'; 10 May 1863: 'a very dry champagne, no roughness, with little mousse and lots of bouquet'.
[129] CCH, 21 June 1861 deals with different regional tastes. Adolphe Boursot, the Perrier-Jouët agent, made the same point in 1850: 'les vins qui conviennent pour le Nord ne conviennent pas pour le Sud - Dans chaque county, le goût est différent & sans guide on s'expose à des erreurs'. ('The wines which work for the north don't do for the south; the taste is different and without guidance, one will be exposed to errors.') See APR, letter of 26 August 1850. This divergence may have been a consequence of less exposure to champagne. See Chapter Three for further discussion of the development of the taste for drier wines.

Roger champagne demanded anything sweeter than 'Extra Dry' at 2% dosage.[130] Hubinet's role was to report these variations in taste back to his principals and persuade them to produce samples that would meet the preferences of his customers. He would comment, often acerbically, on the samples sent to him and give his advice on how the different *cuvées* should be blended, and he would also buy in samples of competitors' wines to be sent back to Reims. To gather his information, he relied not just on the verdict of potential customers but also on his own observations, citing dinner parties he had attended and society gossip about the preferences of the Prince of Wales' set for dry wines.[131]

However, Hubinet was far from a passive observer. He not only argued consistently and vehemently in his letters for drier wines but also stressed the importance of creating a house style characterised by finesse, delicacy and elegance. '[S]oignez à la finesse avant tout', he instructed Vasnier in 1865.[132] This style should be created via wine-making practices that would enable this house style to be replicated in ever larger *cuvées*.[133] In his judgments Hubinet reflected not his own taste but that of his customers. His personal preferences were for the sweeter wines that the French generally preferred and his view (which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four) was that fashion drove changes in taste.[134] Nonetheless, his determination to ensure that the Pommery wines matched the English taste and his ability to summarise succinctly to his principals what different markets required were central to Pommery's success.

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[130] APR, 'Livres des Expeditions', 1895.
[131] CCH, 11 May 1867, reports on the growing preference amongst ladies of the 'aristocracy' for drier wines and on 16 May 1867 cites the dinner menus of the Prince of Wales and the tastes of his cronies such as Henry Chaplin and Sir Fred Johnstone. For the importance of larger *cuvées*, see letter of 12 March 1871. See also APR, 17 May 1877. 'The Prince of Wales has done us the honour yesterday evening of drinking [...] several bottles at Twickenham in the Club des Princes d'Orléans - voilà l'annonce.'
[132] CCH, 21 October 1865; de Polignac, *Madame Pommery*, p. 39; offering drier wine than competitors would be a 'specialité plus marquée', he later suggested. See CCH, 30 October 1871.
[133] CCH, 23 October 1865.'[L]a réputation de délicatesse, d'élégance, que nous avons déjà acquise'.
[134] For Hubinet's taste for wines at 3% rather than lower dosage, see *Ridley's*, 12 June 1878, p. 181.

The Pommery commercial and brand development strategy

Hubinet was also central to the development of Pommery's commercial strategy, which appears to prefigure the later modus operandi of the premium champagne trade in Britain. In 1861 he proposed a strategy of focusing on the principal clubs and hotels because, he claimed, that would give the brand exposure. Such customers were predominantly, but not exclusively, in London. He bombarded the house with requests for different samples to meet the needs of these institutions.[135] In August of that year, his day-to-day contact at Reims, Henri Vasnier, wrote to suggest that since the response to these samples had been so varied, Hubinet should switch his focus to the provinces. Hubinet rejected this strategy, insisting on the importance of targeting the most prestigious venues and asking for a higher level of expenses to support the cost of dealing with such establishments.[136] Having considered the idea of advertising Pommery on the Spiers & Pond wine lists, he appears to have rejected it as too 'promiscuous', possibly because at that stage the firm was primarily known for railway catering (including champagne).[137] Gaining exposure in 'grand' establishments was not simply a matter of getting Pommery wines into the set of wines that were tasted to decide which champagne the club or hotel might stock. Hubinet needed to be present at the blind tastings held by clubs and hotels to build relationships and to show his commitment to his own wines, which he (like other agents) was expected to recognise even when they were served blind.[138]

[135] CCH, 24 March 1861. 'Je propose de travailler spécialement les grands hôtels et les Clubs. C'est un moyen expéditif pour promoter [sic] la Marque et qui lui donne du relief.'
[136] CCH, 5 August 1861 (for Vasnier to Hubinet); 4 September 1861 (for Hubinet reply).
[137] For the history of Spiers & Pond, see Spiers, *Searching for Spiers*, passim; and R.G. Spiers, *Spiers and Pond: Restaurateurs, Cricket Promoters and Hoteliers Extraordinaire* (Tring, 2008); CCH, 11 February 1867 details the opportunity and his concerns. Hubinet's letter was in English.
[138] APR, 30 June 1883 records the 'amusement' amongst other agents when Hubinet lost a £20 bet on which was his own wine.

From an early stage, it was clear that Hubinet wished to create a distinctive and exclusive positioning for Pommery. In his mind this entailed not only identifying Pommery with the dry wines that were becoming more popular in Britain but also using price as a marker of exclusivity. Letters from other British agents of champagne houses – such as Adolphe Boursot for Perrier-Jouët and Selby for Veuve Clicquot – often expressed concern that their principals' wine was too expensive for the market. In the 1860s, Hubinet took a similar line, complaining in 1862 that only Roederer had a higher price. However, by the early 1870s he had changed his strategy.[139] In 1871 he went on the offensive with Justerini & Brooks, a major customer, asking Vasnier for evidence of the pricing of Grand Cru wines over the previous ten years to show the customer that price rises should be accepted.[140] In 1872 he complained that Pommery's Paris office was selling too cheaply and towards the end of his life he wrote exultantly that Pommery's wine was on restaurant lists at two shillings more than that of its competitors: 'je me suis toujours efforcé d'en arriver là, c'est très important'.[141] The role of pricing will be further explored in Chapter Five but it should be noted here that modern marketing theory is in agreement that high prices can act as a proxy for quality in the minds of consumers.[142] Hubinet's letters suggest that he had this issue in mind. Certainly, quality was a central consideration for Hubinet. His advice in 1871 was that Pommery should follow the example of the Bordeaux producers and not release wine in a poor year. In years of acceptable quality, the aim should be to produce 200,000 bottles of 'vins irréprochables'

[139] CCH, 1 April 1862.
[140] CCH, 18 November 1871.
[141] CCH, 10 March 1872; CCH, 24 September 1890. 'I have always striven to get to that point it's very important.'
[142] F. Vigneron and L.W. Johnson, "Measuring Perceptions of Brand Luxury," *Journal of Brand Management* 11, no. 6 (2004), p. 489.

because those bottles would drive the sales of another 100,000 which could be of lesser quality.[143]

If high quality at a high price was one part of his desired positioning for Pommery; the second imperative was to create a defined house style that would differentiate Pommery from its rivals and strengthen the brand.[144] As early as May 1861 Hubinet was urging his principals to focus solely on dry and very dry wines and in August of that year he began a campaign to reduce the total number of products under the Pommery name and to have but a single name on the label. If, he argued, customers saw only Pommery on the label it would maximise brand recognition and build both awareness and long-term loyalty.[145] In 1867, he again insisted that 'il faut rester dans les vins secs et nous mettre en avant partout comme tels sans diviser nos forces et avoir deux genres que si fassent la concurrence'.[146] Hubinet's push for drier wines, fewer products and simpler labels was based on observation of his customers, but it did not necessarily chime with his principals' beliefs. Vasnier opposed the shift to concentrate exclusively on drier wines because of the risk that a run of poor harvests would wipe out the house's reserves of older wines. For similar reasons, he objected to the demand for fewer products and larger production runs for the core products. In poor years the house might not be able to afford to buy in the necessary stocks of grapes to guarantee being able to commit to the production runs of 100,000 or 200,000 bottles necessary to ensure that customers could repeat order in the confidence that they would get the same wine with each order.[147]

[143] CCH, 12 March 1871.
[144] CCH, 9 July 1871.
[145] CCH, 1 August 1861.
[146] CCH, 1 May 1861 and 28 November 1867, 'we must stick with dry wines and push them everywhere and not divide our forces and have two types in competition with each other'. This is an example of Hubinet's use of military terminology.
[147] CCH, 14 June 1871.

Hubinet's core argument was one of consistency.[148] His general stance was summed up in the 1871 outline of a story he wanted the *Illustrated London News* to run.[149] He described Pommery's wines as 'genre "secs", vins prônées pour l'Aristocratie Anglaise', whom he identified as 'les vrais connaisseurs'.[150]

Active press management was a further strand of Hubinet's brand-building activity. Throughout his career in London, he courted, cultivated and smoothed the path for influential journalists. In 1870, when Edward Levy (or Levy-Lawson), editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, was visiting Reims, Hubinet asked Vasnier to 'do what he could' for him since he 'reçoit beaucoup et prône toujours nos vins' ('always recommends our wines').[151] Two years later, a lengthy *Daily Telegraph* eulogy of the Pommery cellars was reprinted in at least nine local papers around the UK.[152] Hubinet made no use of direct advertising of Pommery's name, allowing merchants to advertise the wines on their own account.[153] His contemporaries saw his ability to manipulate the press as evidence of his strategic and tactical flair. In 1876, Conrad Reuss urged Pol Roger to show favour to a *Daily Telegraph* journalist since he 'could make Pol Roger's reputation as he had that of Madame Pommery'.[154] Contemporaries recognised as a remarkable coup a Derby Day cartoon (Figure 18) from *Punch* of 1878, which showcased Pommery's wines.[155] *Ridley's*, with sarcastic understatement, called it an 'advertisement of no mean merit'. As the cartoon shows, Pommery was not the only brand to be featured, but no other agent received, as Hubinet did, the journal's implicit recognition of his strategic awareness and

[148] See APR, 9 August 1876. The letter shows that fifteen years after Hubinet, Conrad Reuss was looking forward to the time 'quand [...] nous n'avons qu'un seul vin - comme Madame Pommery'.
[149] CCH, 18 September 1872.
[150] CCH, 9 July 1871: 'dry wines, recommended for the English aristocracy'.
[151] CCH, 24 August 1870.
[152] See, for instance, *Cheshire Observer*, 9 November 1872, p. 2.
[153] See *Liverpool Daily Post*, 2 April 1866, p. 1 for an example of the extensive advertising campaign run by merchants William Allison in 1866.
[154] APR, 1 August 1876: 'peut faire la réputation de la marque Pol Roger ainsi comme il a fait pour Madame Pommery'.
[155] *Punch*, 8 June 1878, p. 263.

tactical adroitness, and no other brand received more *Punch* endorsements than Pommery.[156]

Figure 18: 'Derby Day reinforcements', 1878



Source: *Punch*, 8 June 1878, p. 263. Note the preponderance of the Pommery & Greno brand name.

Product placement was the final strand of Hubinet's model. He assiduously courted the buyer for the Royal Cellars and went to great lengths to get Pommery wines onto the table of the Duke of Wellington, on one occasion to introduce the wines to the Prince of Wales and, on a second, for a Volunteers dinner hosted by the Duke.[157] He sponsored the 1872 opening of Sefton Park in Liverpool, reporting to his principals that

[156] *Ridley's*, 12 June 1878, p. 181.
[157] CCH, 29 April 1863, 17 May 1863; D. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven and London, 1990), pp. 406-15. This pursuit of the aristocracy has similarities with the recruitment of aristocrats as company directors in the 1880s/1890s.

there would be extensive publicity in the local papers.[158] Such activity continued throughout his career, and included a courtship of Adelina Patti, the nineteenth century's most celebrated (and commercially minded) diva, who was induced to take a glass of Pommery champagne in concert intervals and, in 1899, to make it part of her wedding breakfast.[159] Such use of celebrities to endorse products was a late nineteenth-century innovation, pioneered in the UK by Pear's Soap, which Patti also endorsed – as did Lily Langtry.[160]

From these strands of linked activity Hubinet's commercial and branding model can be inferred as one of social emulation. Pommery wines were produced to meet the taste of elite customers, placed in prestige venues, and supplied to customers with news value, such as the Duke of Wellington, the Prince of Wales or Madame Patti. These connections and these events were then publicised through the press. Those who consumed Pommery champagne could hardly fail to be aware that they were consuming a premium product which was produced for 'true connoisseurs' and was not for the taste of the many. Hubinet was interested not in the popular 'million' of Victorian consumers but in what Conrad Reuss, who emulated Hubinet's model, called the 'Upper Ten Thousand', which he defined as those who made up 'la première société'.[161] Hubinet saw Pommery as a premium producer, one of 'le petit nombre de maisons privilégiées vendant les vins

[158] CCH, 13 March 1872.
[159] *Ridley's*, 10 March 1869, p. 3. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 January 1889, p. 6, reported that her interval drink during performances was a glass of Pommery; see *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 January 1899, p. 2 for the wedding breakfast menu. This was after Hubinet's death. She had previously endorsed Jules Mumm champagne in Russia and also endorsed Pear's soap, see J.F. Cone, T.G. Kaufman, and W.R. Moran, *Adelina Patti: Queen of Hearts* (Aldershot, 1994), p. 129.
[160] For Giuseppe Verdi's judgment that she had 'no equal', see M. Moskowitz, *Testimonial Advertising in the American Marketplace: Emulation, Identity, Community* (New York, 2009), p. 125. Langtry was first used in 1882 by Pears but Patti had endorsed Mumm champagne in 1869. By the time of her death she was known as 'Testimonial Patti'.
[161] APR, Conrad Reuss to Pol Roger, 15 March 1877.

chers'. He went on to contrast Pommery with 'le grand nombre d'autres ne vendant que des vins bon marché.[162]

Strategic alternatives

Hubinet's strategy of focusing on commercial customers, eschewing direct advertising, and using the press to build the image of the brand through endorsement and product placement was far from universal in the 1860s and 1870s. Some of the 'small number' of premium competitors initially followed (or became embroiled in) more populist strategies, whilst low-priced or newly launched 'secondary' brands adopted a range of different sales tactics to try to establish their reputation with a private client base as a prelude to attacking the commercial sector which became increasingly important to commercial success.

Through accident or design, the names of Veuve Clicquot and Moët & Chandon both became associated with the music halls. In the late 1860s, the Moët brand became linked with the music hall song character 'Champagne Charlie', personified by George Leybourne in the song of that name. His rival in a battle of champagne brands was Alfred Vance (the 'Great Vance'), who sang of Clicquot.[163] Songs eulogising champagne brands sung to crowded halls by Leybourne, Vance and many others constituted powerful, though not necessarily positive, publicity – not just for individual brands which featured in the songs but also for the category.[164] For many, champagne and the music hall were nearly synonymous. In 1860, a report on Evans Music Hall in Baker Street summed up

[162] CCH, 9 July 1871. 'One of the small number selling wines at high prices, whilst a large number of others only sell cheaply.'
[163] Lee, *Champagne Charlie*. For a Clicquot song, see A. Lee, ed. *Champagne Charlie Was His Name: The Ladies' Immense Serio Comic-Song* (London, 1867).
[164] For Leybourne's life and career, see C. Beeching, *The Heaviest of Swells: A Life and Times in the Music Hall, Vol. 1, 1842-71* (Greece, 2011).

the essence of halls as 'mutton chops and Monsieur Mugginetti on the violin; Ethiopian serenaders and devilled bones: champagne and sentiment; buffoonery and gin and water'.[165] As Peter Bailey has noted, 'within a few years [of the 1860s] there could have been few music hall goers who were not familiar with the idea and image of champagne – if not with its consumption'.[166] The lifestyle that 'Champagne Charlie' eulogised and to which the 'Jolly Bricks of London' aspired was one of night-time sprees for which champagne was presented as the essential stimulant. Leybourne's fans were young men of the lower middle class, typically clerks and shop workers. Comments in newspapers from 1870 onwards suggest that the 'gents' featured in the comic songs were seen as having 'very nasty tastes and habits'.[167]

There appears to be no evidence in the archives of Clicquot or Moët & Chandon that they directly supported Leybourne, Vance or other singers, though local agents or wholesalers may have done so.[168] Champagne brands continued to be featured in music hall songs in the last quarter of the century, but premium names such as Clicquot, Moët, Chandon, and Pommery are absent. The leading brands moved away from any association with either theatres or music halls after the early 1870s, featuring neither on the boards nor in the programme advertising. The songs commissioned by secondary brands such as Canneaux, Renouf and Soyez never came close to the renown of 'Champagne Charlie'.[169]

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[165] *Birmingham Gazette*, 15 December 1860, p. 6. Evans Music Hall was linked by the 1880s with 'women of bad reputation' who had migrated to the Pall Mall Restaurant after the closure of Evans to partake of 'oysters and champagne' in the company of boisterous companions in evening dress.
[166] Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance*, p. 112.
[167] See *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1870, p. 3 for a contemporary attack on 'Champagne Charley' and the like. In 2006, the managing director of Louis Roederer expressed concern that hip-hop rappers' expressed preference for Cristal champagne was damaging to the brand, though 'we can't forbid people from buying it'. Finlo Rohrer, 'Taking the Shine off Cristal', *BBC News* [online], 8 June 2006, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/5056744.stm [accessed 21 June 2015].
[168] It is possible that the endorsements of Moët & Chandon and Veuve Clicquot (to which Leybourne later switched) were the outcome of commercial negotiations, but there is no direct evidence for this in the Clicquot archives. Beeching, *Heaviest of Swells*, p. 261 suggests that this suggestion of commercial considerations influencing Leybourne was a 'canard'. Beeching (p. 140) claims that the Moët & Chandon archives also have no evidence for commercial dealings with Leybourne.
[169] For the Soyez song, see *Ridley's*, 12 October 1886, p. 397. For Canneaux, see Bodleian Harding Mus. 5c.27.33; for Renouf see *Era*, 8 February 1874, p. 7. The Canneaux song was also sung by Ella Wessner,

Nonetheless, problematic sites of consumption such as theatres and music halls continued to be important outlets for secondary brands right through the century. The marketing was unsophisticated, consisting simply of a raft of ever-changing brands featured in programme advertisements with little more than the brand name and the price.[170]

Between the premium brands and the lesser-known, low-priced brands that generally featured in theatres and music halls was a changing group of brands that aspired to premium status. Such brands fell into two broad groups. The first (as noted above) were 'namealike' brands considered above which traded on a known name. To gain listings and private clients, brands bearing names such as Alfred Roederer, Eugene Clicquot or Henry Moët deliberately obscured the first name and exploited the surname of their longer-established and more prestigious namesakes. Evidence for their existence comes primarily from the French court cases designed to suppress them, which were brought by those whose names they had usurped. The second group included names that became familiar to consumers in the late nineteenth century but were relatively unknown in the British market in the 1860s. Firms such as Irroy, Wachter and Perinet focused on the dry character of their wines in their attempt to win favour in the British market.[171]

Though no archival records of Wachter survive, scattered references in the British periodical press allow a brief case history of their marketing to be constructed. A firm of German origin, it first came to the notice of the British trade press in 1867, when Wachter won a medal at the Paris Exhibition. *Ridley's* was scornful of such awards, dismissing them as a means to induce 'private consumers […] to pay high prices for inferior

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the pre-eminent American male impersonator, see G. Rodger, *Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, Illinois, 2010), p. 115.

[170] The John Johnson Collection has many such programmes.

[171] For Irroy, see CCH, 8 October 1865. For Perinet, see H. Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne and Other Sparkling Wines: Collected During Numerous Visits to the Champagne and Other Vinicultural Districts of France, and the Principal Wine-Producing Countries of Europe* (London, 1882), p. 118.

qualities' and noting that Wachter's medal had been for 'imitation wines'.[172] Five years later, it was well enough reputed to figure in an advertisement for a new corking system and by the late 1870s it was described as 'really fine' champagne.[173] Wachter subsequently used 'puffs' in the sporting press inserted by their UK agent, Emil Pohl, linking the wine to royalty and using the sub-brand name 'Royal Charter' for their top wine.[174] Not all agents were able to work in the same way but Pohl's success with Wachter suggests that a high-quality wine stood a good chance of gaining a positive reputation in the British market with the aid of good connections of the sort that Hubinet (and others) cultivated.

As the Wachter case suggests, 'private individuals' remained an important source of business for secondary brands which were unable to sell to 'customers for distribution' such as hotels.[175] By advertising and direct mail circulars, they could build up a 'connection', that is, a list of clients. This appears to have been a potentially useful, though uncertain, means of building brand awareness.[176] Few nineteenth-century circulars survive, but from *Ridley's* we know they used cut-price offers on leading brands as bait. By the late 1860s, postcards were also being used, apparently evoking the 'curses not loud but deep of […] many a Paterfamilias'.[177] The use of direct mail (and telegrams)

[172] *Ridley's*, 8 June 1867, p. 8. Analysis of the labels conserved in the Châlons archives suggests that only secondary brands reproduced medals on their labels; most of the prestige brands avoided such events, probably for fear of losing. See Archives Départmentales de la Marne, Wine label.
[173] *Ridley's*, 12 February 1872, p. 4; 12 January 1877, p. 3.
[174] *Morning Post*, 24 July 1880, p. 6. For sporting press advertisements boasting royal patronage, see *Sporting Life*, 29 May 1891, p. 1. Pohl had been active in the wine trade since at least 1879, see *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 16 October 1880, p. 2. For royal 'puff', see a Howard Paul article in *Hotel Mail*, 1885, quoted in *Ridley's*, 12 January 1885, p. 26. By the early twentieth century, if not before, Wachter held the Royal Warrant. See T. Heald, *A Peerage for Trade: A History of the Royal Warrant* (London, 2001), pp. 2, 30.
[175] See CCH, 29 January 1863, for Hubinet's early rejection of this strategy.
[176] The classic 'push and pull' approach to marketing relies on 'pull' from media advertising and 'push' from pricing and promotions at point of sale. The value of 'customer advocacy' is now recognised, see G.T. Urban, "Customer Advocacy: A New Era in Marketing," *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* 24, no. 1 (2005), pp. 155-9). Wachter was presumably hoping for an 'advocacy effect' by which customers would demand the brand from on-premise outlets.
[177] *Ridley's*, 10 October 1870, pp. 17-19.

expanded in the last quarter of the century but the foundations were laid in the period up to the 1870s. Nor was advertising the only route to develop lists of names and addresses. Merchants certainly, and possibly shippers too, sought out (in the words of one recruitment advertisement) 'Younger Sons of the Nobility, Retired Military and Naval Officers, and Private Gentlemen of position, having a connection amongst the nobility and gentry, to solicit orders for high-class Wines and Brandies'. Once the successful candidate has 'exhausted [his] personal friends, it's all up', noted *Ridley's*, but the merchant retained the 'names and addresses of his victims in the hands of the speculator, who manages to get something more out of them'.[178] Such private 'connections' appear to have been more important to the merchants and the secondary brands than to the prestige brands which focused on marketing to 'customers for distribution', that is the clubs, hotels and merchants.[179]

Whilst the marketing of the numerous lower-priced secondary brands in the 1860s and early 1870s may have been opportunistic and price-focused, the combined sales of these brands were not necessarily insignificant. Almost all advertisements of provincial wine merchants in this period featured unbranded or secondary-branded champagne at a 30-50 per cent discount to shipper brands and such wine evidently sold in significant quantities.[180] In the second half of the 1860s, champagne sales to Britain were between three to four million bottles per year. By no means all the sales of individual houses are known. Moët & Chandon (circa 1.2 million) and Veuve Clicquot (up to 200,000 bottles per year) were major exporters to Britain. The Pommery sales are unknown, but were probably around 200,000 bottles per year, whilst Pol Roger had significantly lower sales

[178] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1872, pp. 27-8.
[179] Hubinet was dismissive of the value of selling to private customers. See CCH, 3 January 1863, for the view that only those unable to sell to major clients would target private clients.
[180] For example, William Grey of Morpeth offered two name brands at 48s. and 68s. and two generic sparkling wines at 36s. and 29s., see *Morpeth Herald*, 12 December 1868, p. 8.

of between 4,000 and 12,000 bottles per year.[181] Though it is impossible to quantify their sales exactly, it is unlikely that the higher-priced premium brands sold much more than 1,500,000 bottles per year, leaving somewhere between 1,500,000 and 2,500,000 bottles of lower-quality wine sold at lower prices, and hence considerably more accessible to the 'million'. Nonetheless, the marketing and branding template created by the leading shippers and their agents set up the long-term dominance of the British market that these brands have enjoyed since the late nineteenth century.

Conclusions

The rapid development of the British champagne market in the third quarter of the nineteenth century demonstrates the vital role of proactive agents in an increasingly complex market. The agents had a much broader and more important role than their counterparts in the cotton and pottery industries studied by Nicholas. They were integral to shaping the wines in response to fast-changing British tastes and they played a central role in branding and marketing, thus shaping British tastes and behaviour rather than merely responding to the market. Much of the scholarly debate on the development of branding has focused on the importance of forward integration of manufacturers on the grounds that such integration is required to control the total process. However, the twentieth-century success of the French shippers and brand owners working in partnership with long-established agencies demonstrated that forward integration was not an essential component of business success.[182] Indeed, it is possible that forward integration is less a pre-requisite and more a hindrance in the drinks industry specifically,

[181] Moët & Chandon sales calculated from C. Desbois-Thibault, *L'extraordinaire Aventure Du Champagne: Moët & Chandon, Une Affaire De Famille, 1792-1914* (Paris, 2003), Table IX, p. 132, and annexe I, p. 333; Veuve Clicquot 1865 sales from 'Livre des Factures', books 7 & 8; 1A 1A 078 & 079; CCH, 12 March 1871, implies the possibility of sales of up to 300,000 bottles per year if Pommery changed its strategy; Pol Roger sold approximately 5,000 bottles to the UK in 1867, see APR, uncatalogued 'Livres d'Expéditions'.
[182] For the twentieth-century marketing of champagne see Chapter Five.

where personal market knowledge and experience are essential to success. Teresa da Silva Lopes argues in *Global Brands* that family firms – such as the champagne shippers and their nineteenth-century London agents – are more effective at generating and employing marketing knowledge than are large public companies.[183] Certainly, Hubinet's model was extremely successful in building the Pommery brand in the UK and it had commensurate benefits in the British sphere of global influence.[184] It cannot be definitively proved that this model was the pattern for future marketing of premium champagne, but, as Chapters Four and Five will demonstrate, it prefigured much of the champagne trade's marketing practice in the twentieth century.

By the mid-1870s, the marketing template epitomised by Hubinet's strategy for Pommery was essentially established. Increasingly the premium brands focused on creating fashion leadership and exclusivity via premium distribution and elite endorsement. This in turn influenced (or was believed to influence) middle-rank consumers who wanted to grace their table with a 'crack brand'.[185] The next chapter will explore the issue of market change and the role of fashion, emulation and differentiation in more detail, but if champagne's use of such a model is confirmed it appears to have been the first to take it into consumable luxuries rather than durable goods.[186] By the end of the third quarter of the century the premium brands had largely subordinated others in the value chain that stretched from grower through to the point of sale, leading to the demise of the existing own brands, such as Gilbey's Castle brand, and to the considerable

[183] da Silva Lopes, *Global Brands*, pp. 4-10.
[184] For Hubinet's conviction of the importance of the British empire as a market, see CCH, 15 March 1889. He claimed shipments of 600,000 bottles per year to the British colonies.
[185] Though McKendrick's argument that taste was spread down through society has been increasingly challenged, Hubinet and his fellows might well have accepted it. See N. McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood: An Eighteenth-Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques," *Economic History Review* 12, no. 3 (1960), p. 415.
[186] N. Mason, "Building Brand Byron: Early-Nineteenth-Century Advertising and the Marketing of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2002), passim.

difficulties faced by later entrepreneurs such as William Hudson who tried to convince consumers and customers of the folly of 'Brandolatry' or 'worship of brands'.[187] Legal protection had not yet been fully achieved by the mid-1870s for either the collective brand or the individual house brands, but the foundations for establishing the champagne shipper brands as the world's first set of true luxury brands had been laid.

[187] M.E. Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* (New York and London, 2004), p. 33. Porter introduced the term 'value chain' in 1985, defining it by reference to 'disaggregat[ing] a firm into its strategically relevant activities'.

3. ‘Taste changes very fast’: consumers and consumption, 1860-75

Introduction

The following two chapters take a consumer perspective on the nineteenth-century champagne market. In this chapter, the period 1860-75 is the focus. In the fifteen years after Gladstone’s liberalisation of the wine market, consumption effectively tripled, the style of champagne shifted considerably, and brands began to establish their grip on the market, partly in response to the consumer fear of adulteration. The next chapter will cover the period 1876-1914 when consumption fell back from the mid-1870s peak. Though overall per capita consumption fell slowly, the champagne market was buoyant for long periods, driven by the consolidation of the switch to dry styles of wine, the development and growth of the ‘vintage-dated’ sector of the market, and a growing focus on the territorial origins and integrity of champagne. Despite competition from an increasingly broad range of sparkling wines sourced from outside the Champagne region, much of which bore the name of ‘champagne’, a group of premium-priced brands was able to establish a powerful place in the market.

The drivers of such changes are complex and, at this distance, hard to establish with certainty. Broad social changes which affected the entire population, such as urbanisation and its concomitants, played a part. So too did more specific social trends such as the increasing fear of adulteration amongst some groups, or the increasing availability of wine bars, restaurants and hotels. The marketing and branding efforts of the French shippers and their London agents considered in Chapter Two played a role in both facilitating and exploiting the changes in availability, consumption and style which took place over varying time scales. Whilst the production and sale of wine can be

documented from producers' records, consumer motivations must be inferred from close reading of books and articles on wine and from a broader range of period literature, songs and cartoons. This chapter asks how and why consumers' tastes and behaviours changed.

The period 1860-75 was marked by swift changes. As Adolphe Hubinet had told his principals in 1863, 'taste changes very fast'. Some of these changes were short-lived, such as the fashion in the early 1860s for very effervescent wines – a fashion which left little mark on subsequent generations of wine drinkers. Other changes, such as the shift from sweeter to drier styles of wine, were largely complete by the mid-1870s but had far longer-term impacts on consumer habits and preferences. Hubinet's broad market model – dry wines for the aristocracy; sweeter wines for the 'merchants, shopkeepers and so on' – was already developed by 1867.[1] At that point, champagne's appeal had reached middle-class Britain; no longer solely a wine of the elite, sparkling wine had become available to the mass of the population. As we have seen, new sales channels, such as Gilbey's, the Bodega chain of wine bars and the numerous 'advertising merchants', made champagne of acceptable quality readily available at 3s. per bottle.[2] Why did consumption spread so quickly? How deep into the middling classes did it penetrate? How did the usage of champagne change and how and why did the taste of champagne change in both London and the provinces? What role did marketing and branding play in these changes? Answering such questions requires deeper investigation into the causes of this increased consumption and into the reasons for changing tastes.

Increasing consumption is not simply a matter of reduced price and greater availability. Though affordability plays an important role, it is not the sole driver of

[1] *Compilation de la Correspondance de Hubinet*, 8 April 1867.
[2] C. Tovey, *Champagne: Its History, Properties, and Manufacture* (London, 1870), p. 46. According to Tovey, a Bristol wine merchant, 'a good wholesome and invigorating bottle of champagne may be purchased at less than one-half the price charged within a very recent period'.

increasing consumption of food and drink.[3] Studies of long-term trends in consumption show that urbanisation plays a central role, bringing with it better transport links, an improved distributive and retail infrastructure and an increase in marketing media.[4] Between 1851 and 1911, the proportion of the British population living in urban areas rose from 50 to 70 per cent. Cities took a steadily greater share of the growing population; the number of small towns significantly decreased.[5] This move into urban areas was associated with higher wages and salaries and the growth of a professional and commercial middle class. Urbanisation was also linked to increasing social competition, which Perkin sees as starting in the 1830s and reaching its 'zenith' after 1880.[6] As Kearney has argued, following anthropologist Willett Kempton, 'a problem with consumption to display social status is that status is always relative, generating an unending spiral of increasing consumption, display and re-comparison'.[7]

The debate on how and why tastes change must be set against this backdrop of urbanisation and social competition. As suggested in the Introduction, I will draw upon the work of both social theorists, such as Simmel, Veblen, Elias and Bourdieu, and historians of consumption to argue for a three-stage process driving the changes in taste. Even though champagne was not widely consumed before the 1860s, its attributes and

[3] See K.W. Miller and M.K. Mills, "Probing Brand Luxury: A Multiple Lens Approach," *Journal of Brand Management* 20, no. 1 (2012), p. 42.
[4] J. Kearney, "Food Consumption Trends and Drivers," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 365, no. 1554 (2010), p. 2803; L.A. Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York and Oxford, 1994), p. 3, supports the thesis of an 'advertising craze' focused on an 'expansive middle-class market' between 1850 and the 1880s.
[5] S.A. Royle, "The Development of Small Towns in Britain," in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. M. J. Daunton (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 165-6; B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 24-7. With the exception of Manchester, all Britain's major cities grew faster than the national population growth of 28% in the 1850s to 1870s.
[6] H.J. Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London, 1989), p. 27; H.J. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 2nd ed. (London, 2002), p. 341.
[7] Kearney, "Food Consumption Trends and Drivers," p. 2804; W. Kempton, "Cognitive Anthropology and the Environment," in *New Directions in Anthropology and Environment: Intersections*, ed. C. L. Crumley (Walnut Creek, Calif. and Oxford, 2001).

reputation had become widely known in the 1840s and 1850s. In newspapers or popular novels, it was represented as a luxury that not only symbolised status and power but also had the capacity to 'change the spirit of your vision' (as a later writer neatly put it).[8] It was a socially and medically approved drink for both men and women that became strongly associated with celebration and, to some extent, a hedonistic lack of restraint. As champagne became more available and more affordable in the 1860s, this image attracted new consumers who wished to assert their social status and to enjoy champagne's apparent capacity to release temporarily the bonds of British inhibition. As new, lower-status consumers came into the marketplace, so elite consumers adapted their taste and behaviour to maintain their social exclusivity. They could do this most effectively by choosing steadily drier wines.

The direct evidence for this process of change is limited. National consumption data and the sales data from the French champagne houses analysed in Chapters One and Two show the overall growth in consumption and the shift to wines that were lower in alcohol and sugar. In this chapter, novels and popular songs provide evidence of the ubiquity of champagne as a social signifier, and I have supplemented this evidence with data from newspaper articles, advertisements and the many contemporary books on wine.

The flood of wine into the market in the 1860s and 1870s was matched by a stream of new popular books on which wines to choose, where to buy them, how to keep them and where to consume them.[9] As titles such as Druitt's *Report on the Cheap Wines*

[8] For 'change the spirit of your vision', see Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*, p. 262; see also G. Harding, "'A Change Comes over the Spirit of Your Vision': Champagne in Britain," in *Food, Drink, and the Written Word in Britain, 1820-1945*, ed. M. Addyman, L. Wood, and C. Yiannitsaros (London, 2017), pp. 107, 113-4.

[9] The most widely read appear to have been Druitt, *Cheap Wines*; F.E. Anstie, *On the Uses of Wines in Health and Disease* (London, 1877); Gilbey, *Treatise on Wines and Spirits of the Principal Producing Countries*; J.L.W. Thudichum and A. Dupré, *A Treatise on the Origin, Nature, and Varieties of Wine*, ed. A. Dupré (London, 1872); H. Vizetelly, *The Wines of the World Characterized & Classed: With Some Particulars Respecting the Beers of Europe* (London, 1875); H. Vizetelly, *Facts About Sherry: Gleaned in the Vineyards and Bodegas of the Jerez, Seville, Moguer & Montilla Districts During the Autumn of 1875* (London, 1876); Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*; J.R. Sheen, *Wines and Other Fermented Liquids from*

(1865 and 1873) and Vizetelly's *Wines of the World* (1875), *Facts about Sherry* (1876) and *Facts about Champagne* (1879) suggest, these books were designed for drinkers new to wine and looking for information to guide their choices. Beckwith's *Practical Notes on Wine* (1868) was explicit about his goal of 'bringing wines within reach of all classes'.[10] The principal target market appears to have been the middle classes. Though the books provide little hard data on who chose what wines for what purposes, the unprecedented number of such publications strongly suggests a new appetite for knowledge about wine.[11] These books give general detail on the nature and character of different wines by region whilst also profiling (often in picturesque terms) the vineyards and establishments of the principal producers.[12] There was information on storing and serving wines for home use and advertisements for or references to individual merchants and suppliers.[13] However, there was little information on matching wines with specific foods and limited guidance on the techniques for tasting wine.[14] Only Druitt paid anything more than cursory attention to how to use the senses to assess the quality of wine.[15] These books were not, in general, focused on the individual glass and its contents. Rather, they were even-handed guides for drinkers looking to understand and appreciate a new and broader landscape of wine.

By comparison, the novels and, in particular, popular songs of the period tend to emphasise champagne. Such references in novels fall into two broad categories. First,

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the Earliest Ages to the Present Time (London, 1864); T.G. Shaw, *Wine, the Vine, and the Cellar*, 2nd. ed. (London, 1864).

[10] Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine*, p. viii.

[11] The period 1830-60 saw only a handful of wine books for popular readership; notably Redding, *A History and Description of Modern Wines*, (first published in 1831); Anonymous, *Gatherings from the Wine-Lands* (London, 1855), (more travelogue than wine book).

[12] A prime example of this tendency is Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*.

[13] See, for example, Sheen, *Wines*, pp. 215-16.

[14] See also Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine*, pp. 105-6; R. Tomes, *The Champagne Country* (London, 1867), pp. 165-6.

[15] Druitt, *Cheap Wines*, Chapter IV, pp. 29-44, looks at the role of each of the senses and offers examplar tasting notes although these lack the rich vocabulary of modern notes.

there are those which use champagne as a signifier but provide limited credible detail on how the wine was consumed and by whom. Thus, in the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope and Collins, it was used to mark character. It was portrayed as the wine of status-seekers, social climbers and sensualists. The details of settings and consumption are largely incidental. In *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5), the Veneerings' social climbing is marked by champagne suppers.[16] Trollope used it to define characters, both explicitly and implicitly. In *The Eustace Diamonds* (1871) the venal and manipulative Lizzie Eustace is explicitly equated with champagne, whilst in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870), Colonel Marrable is characterised as a man whose heartless determination to 'never lack cigars and champagne' leads him to swindle his own son.[17] Some sensualists in Victorian novels take champagne to mark their taste for pleasure (for example, Jos Sedley in *Vanity Fair* [1848]); for others, it is an instrument of seduction. Major Fitz-David in Collins' *The Law and the Lady* (1875) offers it 'insistently' to Valeria, the heroine, but she has the strength of will to resist.[18]

Such novelistic references tell us little about the day-to-day usage of champagne. The one partial exception is Trollope.[19] Though Trollope himself preferred port and claret, of which he was reputed an excellent judge, his writing provides glimpses of daily and social use.[20] In his *Framley Parsonage* (1860), Mrs Harold Smith throws a party with champagne and ices to celebrate her husband's short-lived promotion to the Cabinet.[21] In *Miss Mackenzie* (1865), the wife of Tom Mackenzie (who 'either had or was supposed to have as much as eight hundred a year') insists on the importance of champagne for a

[16] C. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, ed. M. Stone (Oxford, 1952), pp. 11, 120.
[17] Trollope, *Eustace Diamonds*, p. 189; A. Trollope, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (Oxford, 1988), p. 229.
[18] W. Collins, *Law and the Lady* (Oxford, 1992), p. 74; for a fuller study of Major Fitz-David, see Harding, "Champagne in Britain," pp. 113-14.
[19] Trollope's use of wines and spirits in his novels has yet to be fully studied. For a valuable introduction see R.J. Merrett, "Port and Claret: The Politics of Wine in Trollope's Barsetshire Novels," in *Diet and Discourse: Eating, Drinking and Literature*, ed. E. Hinz (Winnipeg, 1991), pp. 107-25.
[20] Terry, *Trollope: Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 10, 244 (the testimony of his son and granddaughter).
[21] A. Trollope, *Framley Parsonage* (London, 1926), pp. 240-41.

supper party, but her innate meanness restricts the supply to one bottle. Thanks to the incompetence of the (hired) butler, the wine fails to reach the guest of honour.[22] Trollope's introduction of champagne to the celebrations and dinner tables of the new middle classes points to two issues that will be discussed in more detail later: the shift of champagne into the private home and the use of the wine as a marker of social status. All these novels – and many others featuring champagne – were very widely read either in serial form or as complete novels.[23] Although other wines feature in most novelists of the mid-nineteenth century – particularly Trollope – they do not carry the same charge of character assessment or questionable motivations.

The media form that featured champagne most heavily was popular song; all other alcoholic drinks were marginalised. As Table I below shows, music hall songs featured champagne far more heavily than any other alcoholic drink.[24]

[22] Trollope, *Miss Mackenzie*, pp. 100, 103.
[23] For the early history of serial publication and its heyday in the 1830s to 1890s, see L. Jones, "Periodicals and the Serialization of Novels," in *Encyclopedia of the Novel*, ed. P. Schellinger, C. Hudson, and M. Rijsberman (Chicago and London, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 991-6. 'A publishing phenomenon was born' was Jones' judgment on the serialisation of *The Pickwick Papers*; 'Dickens was read by just about everyone' was the judgment of R.C. Sultan, "Readership: Literacy and the Reading Public," in *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, ed. P. Schlicke (Oxford, 2000), pp. 487-8; for Trollope's success, see D. Skilton, "Anthony Trollope and Illustration," British Library, https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/anthony-trollope-and-illustration. [Accessed 15 August 2017.]
[24] Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance*, p. 112.

Table I: Champagne songs

Drink	Number of references
Champagne	24
Port	2
Hock/Moselle	2
Beer / Bass	2
Generic praise of alcohol	2
Burgundy	1

Source: Analysis of songs featuring alcohol in a range of music hall song collections from 1860 to the early 1900s.[25]

The prevalence of such songs tells us little about consumption but testifies to the widespread familiarity with the idea of champagne noted in Chapter Two. In these 'songs of licence' (to use Bailey's term), champagne fashioned, emboldened and glamorised swells, focusing on their sprees and their romantic prowess.[26] The importance of these songs – whether in performance, or in printed versions – was that they would have spread the idea of champagne as the drink of glamour and good times.

The British press played a similar role in propagating the image of champagne but reached a far wider audience. It has been estimated that, by the mid-century, 'newspapers and periodicals were more than tenfold as numerous and important as books in every subject from the most popular to the most esoteric [and] in statistical terms at least […]

[25] Analysis from *The Champagne Comic Songster: A First-Rate Collection of Popular and Humorous Comicalities*, (London, 1860); *Champagne Charlie's New Comic Songster*, (London, 1861-66); Various, "Music Hall Songs," (n.d.), University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mus. 5 c c.27; Various, "New London Songster," in *Michael Sadleir Collection* (n.d.).
[26] P. Bailey, "Champagne Charlie: Performance and Ideology in the Music-Hall Swell Song," in *Music Hall: Performance and Style*, ed. J. S. Bratton (Milton Keynes, 1986), p. 112.

more significant'.[27] By the mid-Victorian period around 70 per cent of the population probably had some reading ability and there was a long-established tradition of reading both newspapers and novels aloud for those without that ability.[28] Not only did the wine trade advertise heavily in the press, but frequent articles propagated the image of different wines. In absolute numbers, sherry and claret had significantly higher volume sales than champagne, but claret and champagne had a similar volume of references between 1850 and 1879; sherry had rather more.[29]

In the press, champagne was generally portrayed before 1860 as the wine of high-status celebration. A sampling of British newspaper articles between 1850 and 1860 shows that public and private celebrations were the largest collocate of champagne: 43 per cent of all the hundreds of champagne stories in 1850, rising to 66 per cent in 1855, before falling to 32 per cent in 1860. Typical of the 1850s references was the 'sumptuous champagne dinner' given by railway contractor George Brassey on the completion of the Bletchley to Banbury line.[30] Any reader of the advertisements would also know that it was the most expensive wine available.[31]

After 1860, the nature of references to champagne began to change. As champagne became more affordable, consumption began to shift to the home. Advertisements linking champagne to the phrase 'good value' rose from some 160 in 1850-59 to more than 900 in 1860-69 and the number continued to rise until the late

[27] J.S. North, "Waterloo Directory of English Periodicals and Newspapers, 1800-1900 (Series 3)," North Waterloo Academic Press, http://www.victorianperiodicals.com/ContentsOverview.asp#c. [Accessed 21 July 2016.]
[28] G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London, 1984), p. 413. Her estimate of literacy was between two-thirds and three-quarters; G. Sutherland, "Education," in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge, 1990), vol. III, p. 124 gives slightly higher figures of 70% (women) and 80% (men) for the mid-1860s.
[29] British Newspaper Archive analysis conducted 21 October 2017: 481,000 references to claret; 464,000 to champagne and 594,000 to sherry.
[30] *Morning Chronicle*, 27 March 1850, p. 3.
[31] See, for example, the advertisement from Hedges & Butler, showing champagne as the most expensive wine in their advertised range. See *Morning Post*, 15 August 1851, p. 1.

1880s.[32] Though the 'public' stories that characterised the 1850s continued to outweigh the references to champagne in the home, there were signs of a shift to domestic consumption. Advertisements for 'dinner champagne' showed significant increase, doubling in every decade from 1850 to 1879.[33] In *Punch,* cartoons started to appear for the first time showing in-home rather than public consumption.[34] In the early 1850s champagne was shown as the drink of monarchs and statesmen; in the late 1850s it began to be shown in domestic settings such as evening parties and household dinners.[35] This apparent trend towards in-home consumption noted in novels and newspapers cannot be substantiated from specific consumption data but is in line with the wine books of the 1860s.

Diaries and memoirs also support the argument that champagne consumption moved into the home in the late 1850s and 1860s. The diary of William Hardman (the self-declared 'Victorian Pepys') makes clear his pride in the food and drink he and his wife provided for guests. After a 'wild sort of supper party' at home for family friends in December 1862 at which he served champagne-cup, he was convinced that 'we have acquired fresh laurels'.[36] The anonymous author of the infamous *My Secret Life*, which chronicled the sexual adventures of 'Walter' from the 1850s onwards, shows champagne as a common dinner party drink. At one such party, Walter described 'the clink of glasses […], the pop of champagne corks, the clatter of knives and forks, the pull of crackers, the peals of laughter'.[37] Though there is still dispute about the authenticity and authorship of

[32] BNA analysis conducted 21 October 2017. In 1880-89 the figure was 2,879.
[33] BNA analysis conducted 21 October 2017.
[34] For a full analysis of *Punch's* references to champagne, see Chapter Four.
[35] *Punch*, 28 April 1855, p. 28 ('Poor Muggins') and 12 February 1862, p. 146 ('The New School').
[36] W. Hardman, *A Mid-Victorian Pepys: The Letters and Memoirs of Sir William Hardman* (London, 1923), pp. 114, 230.
[37] See, for example, D. Thomas, ed. *Walter, My Secret Life* (London, 1994), pp. 591-2.

My Secret Life, it is generally accepted that it is essentially correct in the domestic details of the life of a commercial or professional man in the mid to late nineteenth century.[38]

Thus, whilst champagne continued to be a drink of celebration and indulgence, it moved from being primarily a drink of public or semi-public events such as celebratory dinners or hunt balls, to become a drink that was consumed more widely and in less formal and more intimate settings. Justifying his decision to open his *Practical Notes on Wine* with a section on champagne, Beckwith claimed it to be 'universally known and as universally admired; [a wine whose] distinctive appearance and flavour […] are known to all the world'.[39] Charles Tovey, the Bristol wine merchant, confirmed the change. 'Until very recently', he wrote in 1870, 'champagne was, from its costliness, confined to the tables of the wealthy'. The reductions in duty from 11s. 6d. per case to 2s. per case had brought it, he claimed, within reach of middle-class consumption.[40] Nor, as the next section will show, was champagne confined to the middle classes.

The usage of champagne – out-of-home

Changing consumers brought changing usages and – ultimately – changing tastes. This section will focus on drinkers and their motivations and will suggest reasons why consumption grew so fast and why the champagne experience was so widespread. It will argue that different groups had different expectations and motivations. For many in the lower classes the occasional taste of champagne appears to have symbolised licence and luxury; a treat to be enjoyed if and when finances (or the generosity of others) allowed.

[38] Thomas, *Walter, My Secret Life*, pp. xvi-xxix. Thomas' introduction assesses the evidence for the much-disputed veracity of the 'Memoirs' and concludes they are substantially accurate; there has been considerable controversy over who 'Walter' might have been. The most recent study concludes he was Colonel William Haywood, a London civil engineer of considerable reputation. See J.P. Pattinson, "The Man Who Was Walter," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2002), 23-36.
[39] Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine*, pp. viii, 2.
[40] Tovey, *Champagne*, p. 46.

For the commercial middle class, it was a means to mark social or business success. For the professional and creative middle class, it was treated as an effective and acceptable stimulus to productivity. For middle- and upper-class women, it was one of the very few alcoholic drinks that appears to have been both socially acceptable and pleasing to drink. For those who entertained, it not only complemented the lighter cuisine that was beginning to emerge but also ensured that the party would be a success. This broad range of attributes not only lay behind champagne's growth in the 1860s and early 1870s but also helped to change the taste of champagne and to ensure the success of the newly developing brands in the market.

The evidence on consumption is particularly problematic for men and women of the labouring and lower middle classes. The bulk of it comes from newspaper reports which tended to focus on criminal or problematic behaviour. Most press reports related to drunken behaviour, often linked to licit or illicit celebration; others concerned licensing infringements or theft. Yet what these reports make clear is that champagne was not necessarily unknown to men and women of these classes: bottles bought to 'see what it was like', tasted at local celebrations in public or private houses, or enjoyed at a wedding breakfast.[41] The memoirs of 'Walter' suggest that most of the many servant women with whom he had sexual dealings had some experience of drinking champagne.[42] Newspaper reports also linked champagne to brothels. In 1870, for example, a cluster of stories from the press in the North-East suggested consumption of a bottle a day in such establishments; the wine bought cheap and sold at a five to six-fold mark-up.[43] Clement

[41] See *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 15 October 1865, p. 5 for an attack on the new practice of supplying champagne at wedding breakfasts to 'people whose beverage throughout life will be beer'; see *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 June 1874, p. 4 for the story of a Liverpool 'letter-carrier' who had taken so much champagne at his brother's wedding that he was still drunk the next day.

[42] See, for example, the account of Walter's dealings with Sarah Mavis. Thomas, *Walter, My Secret Life*, p. 462. Champagne is the most frequently mentioned drink in *My Secret Life*. See, for example, pp. 441 and 591

[43] *Manchester Evening News*, 30 December 1870, p. 3 (consumption); *Shields Daily Gazette*, 12 November 1870, p. 4 (pricing). See also E. Sellon, *The Ups and Downs of Life (1867)*, ed. C. Scheiner (Ware, 1996), p.

Scott's disapproving memories of the Haymarket night-houses of the 1860s recorded that 'fabulous prices were paid for uneatable meals and poisonous champagne'.[44]

As these accounts suggest, champagne played a significant role in the night-time economy of Victorian Britain. The first question that any music hall entrepreneur asked of a new act was 'will it fizz?'[45] Reminiscences of the music halls in the 1870s made it clear that female stars urged their would-be suitors to buy champagne both because they liked the taste and because it was highly profitable to the management.[46] The 'suitors' were usually depicted as young men; some students, some working in junior roles in commercial or retail establishments.[47] In this behaviour they were perhaps taking their cues from the stage. George Leybourne, who became famous both nationally and internationally as 'Champagne Charlie' for his performances of the song of that name, used champagne as a symbol of elite masculinity.

Nor was champagne consumption in the halls purely vicarious. In 1862, under the headline 'Champagne for the Million', the *Era* reported on a 'sensation' at Weston's Music Hall:

19. Sellon's account of a Portsmouth brothel in the mid-1830s suggests there was nothing new in such provision.

[44] C.W. Scott, *The Wheel of Life: A Few Memories and Recollections* (London, 1897), p. 43.

[45] Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance*. Bailey's work is indispensable to any students of the music hall and its links to champagne and in the following paragraphs I have drawn on it extensively.

[46] Anonymous, *Tempted London*, pp. 182-4; for the first person testimony of a 'ballet girl' unwittingly caught up in the notorious 1874 murder case involving Henry Wainwright, see Anonymous, "Alice Day; or, the Perils of a Ballet Girl," (London, 1874), passim. The case also showed that public houses in poverty-stricken areas of London such as Whitechapel stocked champagne. For the murder, see *Freeman's Journal*, 23 November 1875, p. 3.

[47] Edmund Yates, the Victorian journalist and theatre critic wrote that the young men of the music hall audience were mostly 'clerks, assistants in shops, youths of from fifteen beginning "life", [wearing a] low-crowned hat with turned-up brim, called [...] the "Champagne Charlie"', see *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 5 March 1867, p. 3. See also Anonymous, *Tempted London*, pp. 4-13. The author gives a later but convincing account of the lives of young men alone in London without family support.

> [t]his was nothing less than the waiters placing bottles of champagne upon all the tables in every part of the house. When the order to fire was given the continual volley of corks popping off created a good deal of laughter and merriment.[48]

But such invitations were undoubtedly rare. The improbable invitation to champagne conveyed by the songs and their implied promise of vicarious participation in the glamour of high life were designed, in Bailey's view, to flatter the audience rather than evoke reality.[49] The popular songs created a backlash. '[A] nuisance whose speedy total extinction would be conducive to the public weal' was the verdict of a London paper on the champagne 'swells', whilst a letter to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* in 1870 railed against the 'nasty tastes and habits' of the 'comic songsters'.[50]

This backlash found yet stronger expression in the wake of a series of stories in the press in the mid-1870s which suggested that colliers were in the habit of drinking champagne. A letter in *Day's Doings* in 1872 capitalised on the rumour that the answer to the question 'Why is coal so dear?' was to be found in increased wages for miners. Two miners, 'begrimed with dirt and coal dust' but drinking champagne, were accused by 'gentlemen' of unlawfully travelling in a first-class compartment on the train. The guard was summoned but the miners' tickets proved to be valid. The money for champagne supposedly came from their strike pay. The letter writer was outraged.[51] Despite the lack of evidence, the story built rapidly with dozens of further press articles, mostly hostile. The 1873 Select Committee on Coal concluded that the rising demand for iron had led to calls for higher coal production and that only then did miners' wages start to rise.[52] Yet this had little effect on the story, which was elaborated into stories of 'pheasant, venison

[48] *Era*, 5 January 1862, p. 13. Leybourne offered some audience members champagne at the close of his farewell performance in Sheffield, see *Era*, 26 May 1867, p. 13.
[49] Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance*, pp. 112-14.
[50] *Clerkenwell News*, 19 May 1869, p. 4; see *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1870, p. 3 for 'the nasty tastes and habits' of the 'comic songsters'. By the mid-1870s, 'Charlie' (or 'Charley') was a synonym for the drink itself, see *South Wales Daily News*, 27 March 1874, p. 3.
[51] *Day's Doings*, 12 October 1872, p. 13.
[52] Parliamentary Papers, "Report of the Select Committee on Coal, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendix," 18 July 1873.

and buckets of champagne'.[53] The Select Committee asked every relevant witness if they could substantiate these stories. All denied it bar one who believed it was possible that miners seeing the stories in the papers had clubbed together to see what they might be missing.[54] The tone of the articles – including those written by supporters of the miners' right to drink champagne if they could afford it – suggests that the offence lay in the appropriation of a luxury of the well-to-do.[55] Thus the social activist Millicent Fawcett argued that the 'desire for luxury on the part of the labouring classes was not merely excusable but good for those who came after them, for it was likely to raise their position in the social scale'.[56]

It is reasonable to presume that such stories – whether true or false – would have reinforced the sense that champagne was becoming ever more available to the mass of the population. When the *Wrexham Advertiser* claimed that champagne had become an 'ordinary beverage', it added that the 'tradesman takes his sparkling wines at dinner, speaking of his Sillery familiarly as "a bottle of sham" or "shammy"'.[57] By the 1860s, the name 'Sillery', originally a prestige category, had increasingly become a generic term for lower-priced and possibly adulterated wines. As *Saunders's Newsletter* put it in 1864, 'in this golden age of adulteration, no name is more extensively taken in vain than that that of champagne'. Though the 'swell [...] sipping his Sillery at Goodwood' may imagine

[53] *Exeter Flying Post*, 8 January 1873, p. 8; for Thomas Burt MP's attack on statements 'much more characterised by smartness and pungency than by accordance to fact', see the *Leeds Mercury*, 25 April 1877, p. 2.
[54] Evidence of John Normansell of the South Yorkshire district, see *Report of the Select Committee on Coal, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, p. 291, paras 7386-7.
[55] 'The social effect of these exaggerations was very pernicious. They helped to get up a feeling of distinct hostility towards the working classes.' See 'Letters of Verax', no. LXXXV in *Manchester Times*, 21 December 1878, p. 5. 'Verax' was the pen-name of Henry Dunckley, the editor of the newspaper.
[56] *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 26 November 1875, p. 1.
[57] *Wrexham Advertiser*, 26 October 1867, p. 3. The term 'shammy' first occurs as a synonym for champagne in *Sporting Life*, 8 May 1861, p. 2. Thereafter it is usually associated with racing, the dissolute or the lower classes. See, for instance, Captain Mayne Reid's story in *Sheffield Daily Telegraph Weekly Supplement*, 2 October 1875, p. 1.

otherwise, he is 'contented to drink a washy, frothy, flavourless liquid'.[58] There was, said the writer, no greater delusion than that of cheap champagne.

The linkage of the 'swell' and champagne was longstanding. Albert Smith, in his *Natural History of the Gent* (1847), satirised the hopeful young man who drinks champagne from a tankard with the singers and 'believeth that he is taken by the room for a "Lord About Town"'.[59] As repeated articles in the British press make clear, the essence of 'swelldom' was the display of wealth, status and privilege though clothing and consumption.[60] In 1867 the *Paisley Herald* condemned the 'sons of tradesmen [who] fare sumptuously every day, and eat turtle, and drink champagne as by right'.[61] Taking a slightly different perspective on wealth and consumption, *Ridley's* ascribed much of the rise in wine consumption in the 1860s to the rapidly increasing wealth of the 'commercial classes', arguing that 'Wines then being the luxury of the wealthy class the nouveaux riches took to drinking Wine as a mark of their prosperity'.[62]

Swells and the 'nouveaux riches' both affected champagne as a mark of status. In novels and newspapers, city financiers and merchants were depicted as 'fanatically attached to champagne'.[63] In Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875), champagne is a principal lubricant of the dishonesty, influence-peddling and sycophancy that the author denounced with such vehemence.[64] In Trollope's novels, hypocrisy was not limited to corrupt financiers. As we have seen, his portrayal of the Mackenzie dinner party was

[58] *Saunders's Newsletter*, 16 December 1864, p. 1
[59] A.R. Smith, *The Natural History of the Gent* (London, 1847), p. 31.
[60] See, for example, *Era*, 23 February 1868, p. 14 for the focus on dress; for a more general description of the hierarchy and consuming habits of swells, see *Leeds Times*, 12 October 1861, p. 6.
[61] *Paisley Herald*, 21 July 1866, p. 3.
[62] *Ridley's*, 8 December 1911, pp. 871-2.
[63] Anonymous, "Champagne, Considered as a Social Force," *London Society* 20, no. 116, p. 175. A *Daily Telegraph* article on champagne's link to 'diamonds […] and bill-discounting' was reprinted in the *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 28 August 1865, p. 3.
[64] N. Shrimpton, ed. *Anthony Trollope: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 218-19, for an attack on the 'commerical profligacy of the age'; A. Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (London, 1941), passim.

equally dismissive of the social pretension that underlay the serving of champagne. However, Trollope's novels clearly demonstrate the importance of balls and dinner parties in Victorian social life.

Champagne usage in-home

For young unmarried women, the home circle was particularly important.[65] Balls and evening parties, the staples of Victorian home entertainment for middle- and upper-class families, made extensive use of champagne and accounted for a substantial (though unquantifiable) share of the market. Dixon's 1855 article in *Household Words* on the growing popularity of champagne suggested that champagne's place was at balls where a 'cavalier' might offer the wine to his 'lady danceress'.[66] Trollope, writing a little later, placed further stress on the social power of champagne. His description of the spousal negotiations preceding the appearance of champagne at an annual dance in *Rachel Ray* (1863) suggests the appeal of champagne to hostesses. In this case Mrs Tappitt wants champagne for 'the look of the thing' at her party. Through a few subterfuges and a specially prepared 'beef-steak pie, made with her own hands', she persuades her husband, who 'thought nothing of it at public dinners' but balked at the cost of buying champagne for his own party, to agree. At the party, Mr Tappitt insistently offers champagne to the most socially significant female guests: '[n]ow that the wine was there [he] appreciated the importance of the occasion'.[67]

For many younger women, such celebrations were a first introduction to sparkling wine, one of the few socially approved drinks. Conduct books and newspaper articles

[65] A Matron, *The Habits of Good Society* (London, 1859), p. 66. In this account a Member of Parliament 'did not approve of any but dinner-parties' for his daughter.
[66] Dixon, "A Bottle of Champagne," p. 57.
[67] A. Trollope, *Rachel Ray* (London, 1863), pp. 108, 153.

made it clear that though unmarried young women were not normally expected to take liqueurs or red wine, sherry and champagne were acceptable in small quantities. Analysing the drinking habits of 'virtuous dancing young ladies', Francis Anstie reckoned in 1877 that their consumption at a ball could easily amount to nearly half a bottle.[68] Though the repeated linkage of champagne to ball suppers and ball flirtations was a common trope, its very frequency suggests that alcoholic drinks were tolerated if not parentally sanctioned.[69]

Medical enthusiasm for champagne may also have contributed to parental approval. It was a commonplace of the mid-nineteenth century that wine was beneficial to health. Gladstone's arguments (as discussed in Chapter One) for reducing the duty on light wine rested in part on its value to those afflicted by sickness. In Trollope's novels, dying men such as Bishop Grantley in *Barchester Towers* (1857) are sustained by wine alone.[70] Druitt's *Report on the Cheap Wines* (1865) noted the value of wine to 'everybody [who] desires to keep out of the doctor's hands'.[71] Newspaper advertisements vaunted wine's health-giving benefits.[72] Champagne itself was promoted as a specific against sea-sickness and Beckwith claimed that 'its value as a medicine is year after year more largely acknowledged by medical men'.[73] Later in the century, 'Invalid Champagne' was often sold in half or quarter bottles.[74] There is no similar evidence in the 1860s and the

[68] Anstie, *Wines in Health and Disease*, p. 7 suggested that he could produce evidence to show that in many cases the 'foregoing facts are a trifle'; in other words, actual consumption levels were significantly higher.
[69] Once the champagne is there, Tappitt is keen to offer his daughter a glass. See Trollope, *Rachel Ray*, p. 143.
[70] A. Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, 2 vols. (London, 1953), vol. I, p. 3.
[71] R. Druitt, *Report on the Cheap Wines from France, Italy, Austria,Greece, and Hungary: Their Quality, Wholesomeness, and Price* (London, 1865), p. viii. References to the health benefits of specific wines are spread throughout the text.
[72] See, for example, Findlater's advertisements for 'Chancellor's Claret', described as 'favourable to health as Wine at 12s. a bottle' in *Dublin Evening Mail*, 6 October 1865, p. 1.
[73] Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine*, pp. 6-7.
[74] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12 May 1899, p. 3.

direct medical use, though difficult to quantify, is unlikely to have been large. The volume lay elsewhere.

By the 1860s, dinner parties had become the 'focus of entertainment'. Held about once a month on average (according to Tosh's estimates), these became the principal opportunity, at least until the easing of social restrictions in the 1880s, for young women to identify, assess and impress a potential marriage partner.[75] As Davidoff has made clear, marital alliances were not lightly made. It was the 'social duty' of a young woman to enlarge her sphere of influence through marriage.[76] To the mother fell the role of governing access to the home and controlling the 'social side' of domestic life.[77] Langland's characterisation of the wife as 'social general' defines the central role women played in choreographing the drawing room and the dinner table.[78] Though the dining room was seen as a 'masculine' space, it was the hostess who directed the theatre of dinner.[79] It was the dinner table that cemented champagne's role as a 'social force'.[80] In novels and articles, champagne and flirtation were frequently coupled and, judging by frequent articles on the art of getting a dinner party going, welcomed by hostesses.[81] In 1877, *London Society* described its effects thus: '[a] murmur as of a rising storm runs round the table: badinage commences: flirtations flourish'. Men had a parallel commercial responsibility at the dinner table (and elsewhere) to form business contacts

[75] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 23.
[76] L. Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London 1986), p. 50.
[77] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 124.
[78] Langland, *Nobody's Angels*, p. 40.
[79] J. Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester, 2010), p. 41.
[80] Anonymous, "Champagne, Considered as a Social Force," p. 170.
[81] C. Reade, *Hard Cash: A Matter-of-Fact Romance* (London, 1863), vol. I, p. 94. 'As the 'Agra' crossed the line, the champagne popped and the sexes flirted.' This popular 'sensation' novel was reprinted several times during the nineteenth century.

and pursue business opportunities; the champagne on the table was equally important to these roles.

As Rachel Rich and others have shown, the rituals of the dinner party dominated the conduct books, even if their 'slavishly idealised practices' (to use Rich's term) were not always followed.[82] In 1859, *The Habits of Good Society* went so far as to claim that, 'one thing is certain, namely that a dinner party is the main institution of society in this country, and one which every class and every denomination recognises and permits'.[83] If the Victorian house was, as Tosh has put it, a 'fortress', then the dinner party was the closely guarded arena on which vital social battles were won and lost.[84] At the dinner party, the family's capital was on display both materially and culturally. For Hyman, 'the table [was] a key locus of socioeconomic display, a place of demonstration both of one's wealth and of one's inherent taste, fitness, and bloodlines'.[85] In the dining room, as Gloag's work has shown, the furniture, fittings and table dressing were designed to make a strong impression.[86] Such display was part of the 'struggle for individuality' that Cohen has identified. In her reading of Victorian society, 'once rigid distinctions of class and rank seemed to be rapidly eroding'. Wealth was not only the 'reward for a productive life' but also the means by which to differentiate one social grade from another.[87]

Food and wine were central to this domestic struggle for differentiation and distinction. Food, as Cozzi has argued, 'articulates and stratifies class lines'.[88] It is also subject to changing tastes and changing fashions. The dinner party started to change in the 1850s when service *à la française* shifted to service *à la russe*. In the former, older

[82] Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption*, p. 97.
[83] A Matron, *Habits of Good Society*, p. 301. The authors accepted the dinner party could be 'odious' but were in no doubt of its importance.
[84] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 23.
[85] Hyman, *Making a Man*, p. 3; see also A. Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport, Ct., 2007), pp. 122, 127.
[86] J. Gloag, *Victorian Comfort: A Social History of Design from 1830-1900* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 60.
[87] D. Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven; London, 2006), pp. xi, 13.
[88] A. Cozzi, *The Discourses of Food in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (New York, 2010), p. 15.

style, the dishes were served together, and from the range on offer at each stage the diners selected their own dishes and chose the wine they wished to accompany them. In the latter style, the menu was planned in advance and served in a set order to the diners.[89] This change, which was complete by the 1880s, prioritised diners as the 'audience' for a preconceived meal orchestrated by the hostess and her servants, rather than as 'participants' (to use Kaufman's terminology) who chose their own meal from a range of possible dishes.[90] This shift contributed to the increasingly ordered matching of wine to food and, ultimately, to the choice of champagne as a readily understood symbol of conspicuous consumption and social identity.

At the table the distinctive champagne bottle and the saucer glass were key elements in domestic display. Since champagne was never decanted, the bottle and its label were prominently displayed and the brand (as will be seen in Chapter Four) became part of the performative aspect of the fashionable dinner table. The saucer glass was another defining mark of champagne. The first unequivocal reference to this form of champagne glass came in an 1832 letter from Disraeli to his sister. Describing a dinner given by the wit and dandy George Bulwer-Lytton in 1832, Disraeli described how 'we drank our champagne out of a saucer of ground glass mounted on a pedestal of cut glass'.[91] By 1851, the *Illustrated London News* was writing that the 'old-fashioned long and slender champagne glass seems to be giving way rapidly before its new-fangled rival – the open, saucer-like affair perched upon the top of a thin, straight stem'.[92] After 1860 only one *Punch* cartoon shows the older form. Whitefriars Glass catalogues of the 1860s

[89] For the advantages of 'russian style', see Anonymous, *London at Table; or, How, When, and Where to Dine and Order a Dinner* (London, 1851), p. 26. Such dinners were more 'economical' and the food was both hot and 'tempting'.
[90] C. Kaufman, "Structuring the Meal: The Revolution of Service À La Russe," in *The Meal: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 2001*, ed. H. Walker (Totnes, 2002), pp. 123-33.
[91] B. Disraeli, *Lord Beaconsfield's Letters 1830-1852*, ed. R. Disraeli (London, 1887), p. 42.
[92] *Illustrated London News*, 21 June 1851, pp. 596-7.

show only saucer-shaped champagne glasses; the older style does not appear.[93] In 1880, a column on table decorations in the *Aberdeen Journal* suggested that the best use for the 'tall old-fashioned champagne glasses' to be found in second-hand shops was to fill them with 'pretty moss' and use them as table decorations.[94] The increasing popularity of the saucer glass and the rejection of the 'old-fashioned style' was emblematic of a significant change in British dining habits and drinking preferences.

The changing style of champagne

The widespread adoption of the saucer glass from the 1850s demonstrates several key aspects of Victorian drinking at the dinner table – and one major shift in style. Unlike other glassware, the saucer glass was used only for one wine, champagne. Previous champagne glasses were tapered, often with tall stems. Some might also be used as ale or cordial glasses.[95] The introduction of the saucer glass broadly coincided with the first of the two major shifts in the style of champagne between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it remained in fashion until at least the 1920s.[96] The central feature of this shape was that it prioritised the visual appeal of the effervescence. For the *Illustrated London News*:

> the reason for the change is a very obvious phenomenon. In highly-flavoured and effervescing wines no small part of the pleasure of consumption rises from the discharge of the perfumed gas with which the fluid is charged being inhaled and appreciated by the olfactory nerves while in the act of drinking; now, in the shallow, saucer-glasses the discharge takes place with great rapidity and power.[97]

[93] W. Evans, C. Ross, and A. Werner, *Whitefriars Glass: James Powell & Sons of London* (London, 1995), pp. 253-4. For the Silber & Fleming glassware catalogues, see D. Bosomworth, *The Victorian Catalogue of Household Goods: A Complete Compendium of over Five Thousand Items to Furnish and Decorate the Victorian Home* (London, 1991), pp. 131-7.
[94] *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 November 1880, p. 1.
[95] P. Bate, *English Table Glass* (London, 1913), p. 60.
[96] G.R. Francis, *Old English Drinking Glasses: Their Chronology and Sequence* (London, 1926), pp. 93-5, notes the continuing dominance of the saucer form in the mid-1920s. However, the 1931 Whitefriars Catalogue offered many champagne glasses in both 'tall' and 'shallow' forms, see Evans, Ross, and Werner, *Whitefriars Glass*, pp. 288-9.
[97] *Illustrated London News*, 21 June 1851, p. 596.

Robert Tomes, describing the fashionable champagne of the day in the 1860s in his widely circulated book *The Champagne Country*, wrote that 'the champagne which explodes the loudest and flows out the frothiest, […] is by no means the best' but made it clear that such was the public demand for this wine that 'the manufacturers do their utmost to satisfy it'.[98] This prioritisation of the visual sensation was at the expense of the taste and the aroma, both of which quickly dissipated in the saucer glass. Today aroma and taste are central to the evaluation of wine; in the nineteenth century, the priority was on the look, a practice derived from the habit of assessing port in particular by its colour and other visual characteristics.[99] The taste for extreme effervescence had passed by the mid-1860s once the novelty had worn off and drinkers realised that 'an excess of froth almost [prevented] any bouquet which the wine possesses being recognised'.[100]

The demand for visual sensation also led to the popularity enjoyed by pink champagne in the 1840s and 1850s. Writing in 1870, the wine writer Charles Tovey recalled an 1845 dinner at which pink champagne was produced. In his account, 'the saucer-shaped Champagne glasses which are now fashionable were then just coming into use, and pink Champagne (also a novelty in England at that time) looked singularly beautiful when poured into them and crowned with its snow-white foam'.[101] The vogue for pink champagne appears to have been short-lived. Vizetelly claimed in 1882 that 'manufacturers of questionable reputation sometimes employ the solution of elderberries,

[98] Tomes, *The Champagne Country*, pp. 163-4.
[99] For a fuller treatment of nineteenth-century wine knowledge and connoisseurship, see G. Harding, "'The Stock of a Connoisseur?': The Development and Commercialisation of Wine Connoisseurship in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *Connoisseurship*, ed. C. Anderson and P. Stewart (Oxford, forthcoming 2019).
[100] Vizetelly, *History of Champagne*, p. 259. An F.R.G.S., *Gleanings Amongst the Vineyards* (London, 1865), p. 31. The preference for 'moderate effervescence' was confirmed by 1865. Advertising references to 'sparkling champagne' peaked in the 1860s and fell back thereafter; see BNA analysis of incidence of 'sparkling champagne' versus all references to 'champagne' in the period 1850-1900, conducted on 13 January 2017.
[101] Tovey, *Champagne*, pp. 74-5.

known as *teinte de Fismes*, to impart the once-favourite roseate hue'.[102] Advertisements for 'pink champagne', never very common, fell steadily after 1840-49.[103] In the 1860s some champagne retained the brown or 'amber' hue that had been popular before 1850, but the pale straw colour typical of modern champagne had become the norm by the 1870s.[104] Data from Perrier-Jouët confirm this development. Between 1859 and 1864, the house's exports to the UK went from just over 50 per cent 'highly coloured' to 75 per cent 'lightly coloured'.[105] The colour change may perhaps have reflected a shift away from fortifying the wine with brandy, an almost universal practice in the first half of the century.[106]

The switch to drinking champagne with roast meat rather than with sweet desserts contributed to the most important change in the style of champagne, from the relatively sweet style popular in the 1850s and early 1860s to increasingly dry wines. Sweet wines pair badly with savoury foods. To match the meat dishes, champagne needed to be dry. As an article in the *Contemporary Review* confidently asserted, once the British diner ceased to 'drink his champagne as an after-dinner wine [and began to] drink it along with meats, vegetables, salads, and sour sauces, […] it tasted much too sweet for his thereby vitiated palate, and a less saccharine wine was asked for'.[107] This shift was linked to the adoption of service *à la russe*¸ which put more emphasis on 'made dishes' brought to the table hot and served there and then.

[102] Vizetelly, *History of Champagne*, p. 165.
[103] BNA records 54 advertisements in 1840-49. By 1870-79 this was down to 21 in total. Analysis conducted 24 October 2017.
[104] Vizetelly, *History of Champagne*, p. 259. It should have 'nothing of a yellow tinge about it'. Vizetelly noted that wines with a pale 'pinkish' tint had become more popular again after the very ripe vintage of 1874 but this was a temporary burst of renewed popularity.
[105] Archives Perrier-Jouët, 9 A 009 'Factures', 1859/1864.
[106] A Groves & Co circular claimed of the 1858 vintage that 'it will be prized by connoisseurs, who can appreciate the difference between real Champagne and loaded wine, which English consumers are unhappily accustomed to', see *Ridley's*, 7 November 1859, p. 11.
[107] G. Harley, "Champagne," *Contemporary Review* 69 (1896), p. 894.

Increasingly these lighter dishes replaced the 'huge joint' that Tovey described as 'calculate[d] to disgust the epicure'. Such lighter dishes demanded lighter wines.[108] As early as 1860, a letter to *The Times* demanded: 'When will France […] learn that champagne should be drunk with roast meat and not introduced as an incubus after dinner?'[109] The long-established English habit of drinking still, dry 'Sillery champagne' with food probably contributed to this adoption of sparkling champagne in the same role. From the 1820s onwards, the heavily fortified still wine of the Champagne district of Sillery was described as a 'vin d'entremets [i.e. between courses] which is drunk chilled and very strong. It is the most highly rated wine in England'.[110] Redding in 1833 described Sillery as '[w]hite, still, dry; of an amber colour; generally iced for drinking'.[111] It was the highest priced wine until at least the 1840s; only the wines of Montrachet, Romanée-Conti and La Tâche (now all extremely costly) were on the same level.[112] Even in 1840, Lambe & Co were selling 'old dry Sillery' for 96s. when 'sparkling champagnes' sold for between 63s. and 84s. per dozen.[113] Sillery was at this time consistently associated with the meals of the nobility. In 1833, the *Court Journal*, in an article entitled 'Gastronomy among the Aristocracy', defended English cuisine and linked it to 'super-exquisite […] Sillery'.[114] It was served to Queen Victoria at the Lord Mayor's Feast in 1851.[115] In summary, until the 1850s, Sillery was the most highly regarded wine from the Champagne region with a price to match and a role at the dinner table of elite households.

[108] A Matron, *Habits of Good Society*, p. 314.
[109] For a discussion of the shift to lighter food and the consequent preference for white wine including champagne, see also Shaw, *Wine, the Vine, and the Cellar*, pp. 154-8. See also *The Times*, 24 September 1860, p. 9.
[110] Devroey, *Perrier-Jouët*, p. 79. Pierre Nicholas Perrier's comment is given in English in the text. No source is cited.
[111] Redding, *A History and Description of Modern Wines*, p. 354. His Appendix 1 lists Sillery as one of the 'Wines of the First Class'.
[112] *Hull Packet*, 12 July 1814, p. 4.
[113] *The Times*, 18 November 1840, p. 2.
[114] *Sussex Advertiser*, 11 November 1833, p. 4.
[115] *The Times*, 10 July 1851, p. 5.

Sillery's importance to the development of champagne was that it appears to have acted as the bridge between the wine of the older and younger generations of elite families. The earliest adopters of sparkling champagne appear to have been young men in elite military messes.[116] Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* makes it clear that champagne was already a staple of military life in the 1840s. In this fictional but sharply observed account, a young cavalry lieutenant complains that his Colonel insists his officers 'must drink champagne and claret [since] ours ain't a port and sherry light-infantry mess'.[117] Although the 'sparkling champagne' that entered the market in the 1840s was initially sweet, it quickly became a dry wine that would complement savoury dishes.

The exact chronology of the switch to dry wine is unclear. André Simon, writing in 1905, claimed that the first serious attempt to introduce drier champagne into Great Britain was in 1848 when it was sold to a military club whose members disliked it. There was a further attempt in 1850 when the stumbling block was French refusal to provide dry wines.[118] Ten years later, however, Hubinet began to insist to his principals in Reims that Pommery should focus on the London clubs and their demand for dry wines. His letters record the rapid switch to steadily drier wines in the 1860s. The ideal wine, he reported in 1861, was one in which 'on pourrait se laver les mains sans les sentir collantes ensuite'.[119] By the mid-1860s the first wine without added sugar was on sale in London.[120] In the mid-1860s the standard dosage was around 8-10%; by the 1880s it was down to 2-6%, with premium brands such as Pol Roger and Pommery & Greno shipping mainly wines at the lower end of this range.[121] During this period, merchants and drinkers experimented

[116] G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (Hull, 1993), pp. 19-21. Cavalry regiments were the preserve of the 'landed interest' and the 'unquestioned snobbery' of the rich dominated the officers' messes of such regiments.
[117] W.M. Thackeray, *The Book of Snobs* (London, 1848), p. 111.
[118] Simon, *History of Champagne*, pp. 112-14.
[119] CCH, 27 November 1861: 'wash one's hands without them feeling sticky afterwards'.
[120] Simon, *History of Champagne*, pp. 112-4.
[121] See Chapter Two and Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine*, p. 4.

briefly with zero dosage (i.e., no added sugar) before returning to a dosage level of 1-6%.[122]

The interplay between dry wines, fashionable taste and the British elite whom Hubinet was targeting to build both sales and reputation was complex. Tovey explicitly linked the taste for dry wine to a refined palate, claiming that 'it's certain that whilst there are many converts from the sweet to the dry, or moderately dry, the connoisseur who has a taste for the unsophisticated [i.e. pure] wine will never venture upon a second glass of the rich or sweet'.[123] However, in the Victorian period, discussions of taste were inseparably linked to assumptions on class and upbringing. Commentators strongly suggested that experience and familiarity (and continued exposure) were essential to appreciate, even to tolerate, the very dry wine that became the fashionable style in the 1870s.[124] In an extreme (and fictional) version of this narrative, a teenage boy who 'had not been educated up to dry wines […] sickened almost unto death' after being given an unaccustomed glass of dry champagne.[125] However, this was not merely a press representation of champagne tastes. Merchants who came into money only after business success were identified by Hubinet as preferring sweeter wine. Discussing the market potential in the British overseas possessions, Hubinet wrote in 1878 that in those places such as India where the 'wine is principally drunk by born and bred gentlemen', Pommery should focus on wines at 1-2% dosage. Where the merchants were the dominant force in society, the company should supply sweeter wines.[126] There was also a

[122] Vizetelly, *History of Champagne*, p. 164, note 3. Vizetelly gives percentage ranges for different markets: England 2-6%, America 10-15%, Germany and France 15-18%.
[123] Tovey, *Champagne*, p. 80.
[124] In an 1883 letter, Hubinet noted that 'un homme qui boit moins souvent du champagne est un homme qui ne l'aime plus archi-sec'. CCH, 3 March 1883.
[125] See a short story from *Fun* reprinted in *Manchester Weekly Times Supplement*, 10 January 1874, p. 16.
[126] CCH, 13 July 1878. 'La règle presque invariable sera de demander l'Extra-Sec (West End) pour toutes les Colonies ou les militaires et les fonctionnaires civils sont assez nombreux pour donner le ton, et l'Extra-Sec (Provincial) partout où l'élément marchand tient le haut du pavé.' 'The almost invariable rule should be

fashion dimension to Hubinet's argument. Contemporary comments in the 1870s and 1880s supported the idea that champagne was a fashion wine – and that dry was the preference.[127] For instance, when Hubinet suggested in the early 1870s that provincial towns had not been convinced of the supposed merits of the fashionable drier wines, their view apparently chimed with his own expressed opinion that very few actually liked the very dry wines.[128] I will return to this issue in Chapter Four but, as noted in Chapter One, by 1880 the bulk of sales in Britain were of very dry wines.

The growing demand for increasingly dry wine is clearly recorded in Hubinet's letters to Madame Pommery. In 1861 he reported that clubs 'veulent les vins aussi secs que possible'.[129] Two years later, Hubinet noted that wines with a dosage of 4% were 'fort à la mode maintenant' in the clubs.[130] In Liverpool that year, the taste was still for wines at 12% or more, but in London another merchant with 'un clientèle des plus choisis' was demanding a wine 'sans liqueur' (i.e. unsweetened) and Hubinet complained that the Pommery wines were still at 6%.[131] By 1865, 4% was deemed right for most 'fastidious' palates; by 1867, the driest samples were at 3%. By 1871, he was demanding wines at 2% and, despite the concerns of his principals, he was insistent that the house must focus on the very driest of wines.[132]

On contemporary evidence, many champagne drinkers in the early 1860s were neither familiar with nor particularly keen on dry wines. In 1856, John Staples, the caterer, chose the 1846 vintage of Perrier-Jouët's sparkling Sillery sec with a dosage of

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to ask for Extra-Sec (West End) for all colonies where soldiers and civil servants are strong enough in number to set the tone, and Extra-Sec (Provincial) wherever merchants rule the roost.'

[127] *Ridley's*, 10 October 1870, p. 8 and 12 January 1884, p. 3. The journal bemoaned the 'marvellous influence which fashion exercises over the consumption of all descriptions of luxuries'.

[128] CCH, 11 November 1871; 23 October 1873 and 18 April 1883. Most clients 'n'aiment pas le vin vraiment sec, mais ils aiment boire des vins étiquetés "dry"'.

[129] CCH, 24 March 1861.

[130] CCH, 15 February 1863.

[131] CCH, 29 April 1863.

[132] CCH, 8 May 1871.

only 3% for the Lord Mayor's Banquet at the Guildhall. In retrospect, he thought this was a mistake, writing to Perrier-Jouët that:

> the company was far too mixed for the wine to be fully appreciated by everyone there. The [1846] is a wine for real connoisseurs, and it should not be served to Ladies and Gentlemen who are used to drinking champagnes of a lighter sort.[133]

Hubinet himself doubted whether British consumers truly liked the taste of the very dry wines that came into fashion in the early 1870s. In later life he expressed his amazement that anyone could like or drink the *ultra brut* (or undosed) wine.[134] But, as the *Saturday Review* succinctly put it in 1876, there were 'some who have, and some who affect a taste for dry wine'. The magazine added that it was 'gratifying to know that the least quantity of saccharine is used for the English market'. Its assertion, supported a few years later by Vizetelly, was that '3% [dosage is] used for finest sent to England and 8% for second quality [but] 18 to 20% for Russians, Americans and French'.[135] The broader implications of this claim will be considered in Chapter Four, but the important point to make here is that, in the judgment of nineteenth-century commentators, the English taste for champagne started to diverge significantly from that of the rest of the world around 1860.[136]

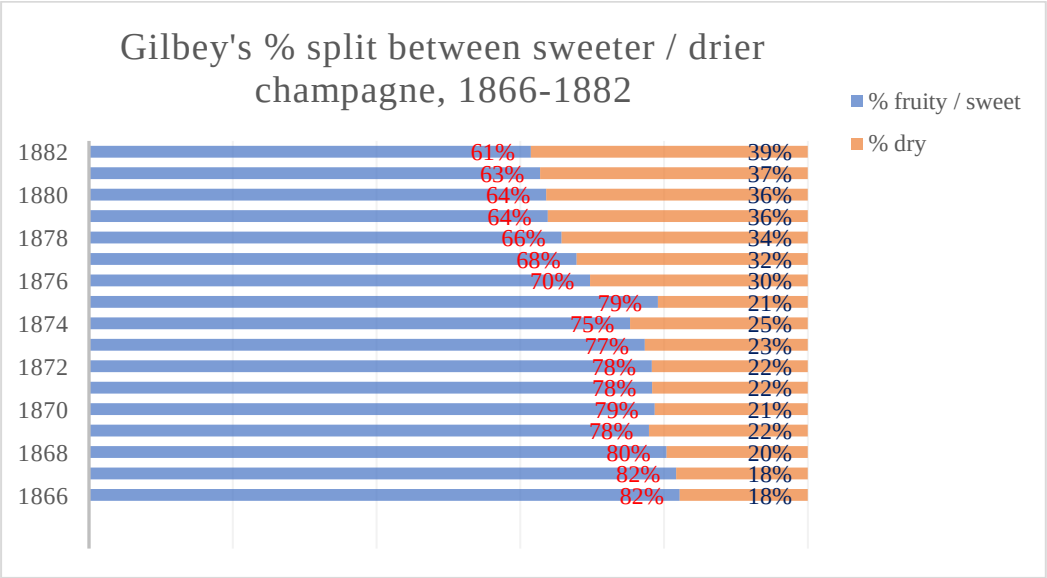
Sales figures from major houses support the contention that the British taste changed markedly in the 1860s. In 1859, 75 per cent of Perrier-Jouët's British sales were in the 10-14% dosage range. More than 90 per cent of the sales to France and Belgium were in the 16-18% range. By 1864, 75 per cent of the British sales were in the 5-9%

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[133] Devroey, *Perrier-Jouët*, pp. 80-2; G. Saintsbury, "Notes on a Cellar-Book," ed. T. Pinney (Berkeley, Calif. and London, 2008), p. 90. Saintsbury said that the change to dry champagne 'was not finally accomplished' until after 1882.
[134] CCH, 30 January 1894.
[135] *Saturday Review*, 5 August 1876, pp. 163-4.
[136] *Saturday Review*, 5 August 1876, p. 165. The article added that wine in its natural state was 'a condition which only the wines of the finest vintages can support', an issue to which I will return in Chapter Four. For the divergence in taste, see George Harley in *Contemporary Review*, 69 (June 1896), p. 894.

range, whilst sales to France and Belgium were in the 14-16% range.[137] Gilbey's, who catered more for middle-class customers, showed the same pattern of a shift to drier wines but at a slower rate. The company split their champagnes into 'fruity' and 'dry' (though they never gave exact percentages for the dosage). As Figure 19 shows, sales of the latter rose from 18 per cent by volume in 1866 to 39 per cent in 1882.[138]

Figure 19: Gilbey's sales 1866-82 by sweeter / drier wine



Source: Diageo, 'Sales Analyses', 100204/4.

The Perrier-Jouët data also shows how the preference for drier wine spread from London to provincial cities, where the taste for sweeter wine lasted longer. In 1859, provincial customers' orders accounted for only one per cent of the wine under 10% dosage; by 1864, 19 per cent of their orders were for the drier style.[139] André Simon claimed that the taste for sweet champagne lasted 'a few years longer' outside London but there is little or no evidence for its consumption in the British press, bar advertisements for Eno's Fruit

[137] APJ, 9 A 009 'Factures', 1859/1864. Perrier-Jouët at this stage did not have a strongly defined house style but supplied to customer demand.
[138] Diageo, 100204/4, 'Sales Analyses'.
[139] APJ, 9 A 009 'Factures', 1859/1864.

Salts in the late 1870s which suggested sweet champagne was 'very apt to disagree' with the liver.[140] It appears that whilst the provincial cities were slower to adopt dry champagne, this reluctance was a matter of years rather than decades.

The trope of female preference for sweeter wine lasted longer, although it is unclear how far this reflected reality.[141] The first references to female preference came in the 1840s. Thackeray claimed that no woman 'preferred dry Sillery to [sweet] sparkling champagne'.[142] *Household Words* in 1855 described champagne as the 'confectionary of wine-making' to be served at women's insistence.[143] Later articles repeated this trope of female preference but provided little evidence. An anonymous 1879 review of Vizetelly's *Facts about Champagne* claimed that champagne's most striking feature was that it was relished by both middle-aged and young men and that 'women share with regard to this wine the taste of those whom they are born to differ from'. No doubt (the reviewer added) the 'kind of champagne they are fond of is different from that which men usually prefer'. The context of this review makes it clear that the distinction was between sweet and dry champagne.[144] Yet Hubinet – a professional observer – noticed as early as 1867 that the 'ladies of the aristocracy' were no longer content with sweet wine. Not only were such women asking for wine with 3-5% dosage at a time when most wine was shipped at 6-

[140] Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 114. Simon claimed 16% wine was still being imported to Birmingham in 1868. For Enos Fruit Salts advertisements, see, for example, *Illustrated London News*, 19 June 1879, p. 72.
[141] For the enduring trope of female preference for sweeter products, see W.A. Woloson, *Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumers in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, Md., 2002), p. 3. Woloson claims that by the end of the century, 'consumer and consumed had become entirely conflated: sweets had been feminized, and women were sweet'. However, by 1900, *Hull Daily Mail*, 17 May 1900, p. 5, noted that the 'really fashionable woman no longer drinks sweet champagne'.
[142] W.M. Thackeray, *The Confessions of Fitz-Boodle; and Some Passages in the Life of Major Gahagan* (New York, 1852), p. 69.
[143] Dixon, "A Bottle of Champagne," p. 57. Dixon was the author of many of Household Words' articles on wine. See www.djo.org.uk. [Accessed 24 February 2016.]
[144] "Review of Henry Vizetelly, *Facts about Champagne"*, *Saturday Review*, 3 May 1879, p. 552.

10%, but so too were the wives of the wine merchants with whom Hubinet dealt.[145] Women were dining with men and there is no evidence from conduct books or articles that diners were offered a choice of styles.

Regardless of their personal taste, there was another factor driving both men and women towards drier wine from the 1860s onwards. This was the issue of health alluded to above. Although Edmund Dixon, in 1855, had claimed that 'I never knew a doctor recommend champagne', there had been widespread references to the use of champagne as a stimulant in accounts of Sir Robert Peel's last hours in 1850.[146] By 1865, James Sheen was writing that 'champagne and other effervescent wines are frequently recommended by the faculty',[147] whilst Anstie in 1877 was insistent that 'effervescing kinds [of wine] are the really valuable form [provided they] should not have above 6-7% of absolute alcohol and at the same time be very dry'. Sugar, he said, 'makes champagne quite unfit for the stomach of a fevered patient'.[148] The medically-oriented wine books of the 1860s indicted sugar as the key component of the 'abominable concoctions' that not only displaced good wine but also threatened the health of their consumers.[149] Druitt's widely circulated endorsement of Gilbey's 'Sparkling Saumur' wines summed up the anti-sugar case. He argued for 'the superiority of vin brut as a stimulant in many cases, more particularly dyspeptic, and others where the consumption of sugar should be avoided'.[150]

Medical endorsement therefore added to the pressure to favour steadily drier styles of champagne which made demands on the quality of the wine. Added sugar

[145] CCH, 11 May 1867. He wrote that 'les Dames de l'Aristocratie se piquent d'honneur de ne boire que des champagnes à 3, 4 ou 5% de liqueur'.
[146] See, for example, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 8 July 1850, p. 1.
[147] Sheen, *Wines*, p. 41; Dixon, "A Bottle of Champagne," p. 57.
[148] Anstie, *Wines in Health and Disease*, pp. 47-8, 51.
[149] Tovey, *Champagne*, p. 16.
[150] Diageo, 110204/12, 'Summer season list of 1879'.

disguised imperfections. Tovey warned consumers of this in his 1870 book *Champagne*, which was widely reviewed and excerpted in British newspapers. For him, 'a dry Champagne must be a perfect wine'.[151] Without sugar, any flaws would be apparent to the practised taster. The ability of sugar to hide a poor wine was widely publicised in the wine books and newspaper articles of the period. Thus, in 1860, the *Leeds Times* described the dangers posed by 'inferior wines' which it characterised as 'a miserable medley sweetened with sugar and ruinous to the digestion'. The newspaper compared such wines with the 'exquisite flavour and perfume' of the finest French champagnes which could be appreciated only by those whose palates had not been 'indurated [i.e. de-sensitised] by burning liquids'.[152]

But did the frequent reports about adulteration affect consumers' perception of champagne or their approach to purchasing? During the 1860s and 1870s British newspapers carried frequent reports and letters claiming that 'manufactured champagne' (93 instances) or 'sham champagne' (29 instances) abounded.[153] A variety of techniques and technologies were instanced, but most focused either on sweetening and fermenting gooseberry or pear juice, or on carbonating light French or German wines.[154] Wine writers made the same case. In 1873, Druitt inveighed against the 'wine forger, the wretch who prostitutes his chemical knowledge to aid in the fabrication of sham wine'.[155] James Denman, a long-time campaigner against adulterated wine, claimed in 1874 that the 'war against wine adulteration has at last become a great public question'.[156] Very few, at least in public, spoke against this claim. Robert Holdsworth, the chair of the sherry dealers

[151] *Ridley's*, 12 October 1883, p. 306.
[152] *Leeds Times*, 18 February 1860, p. 6.
[153] For 'manufactured champagne', see, for example, *Whitby Gazette*, 6 December 1862, p 3 and *Exmouth Journal*, 19 April 1873, p. 7. For 'sham champagne', see *Carlisle Journal*, 8 November 1867, p. 6.
[154] *Morning Post*, 18 May 1860, p. 4, describes the process.
[155] Druitt, *Cheap Wines*, p. 2.
[156] Denman, *What Is Wine?*, p. 3.

association, denied its truth in evidence to the 1878 Commission on Intemperance, only to be contradicted by the following witness, an analytical chemist.[157] In 1881, Tovey, another long-term campaigner against adulteration, demanded that the 'respectable portion' of the trade take action against the 'nefarious tricks which are now so prevalent'.[158] The balance of public opinion, on the evidence of the British press, undeniably tended to the belief that adulteration was both prevalent and injurious. Buying champagne of an unknown brand posed risks.

The concept of risk and risk aversion has been central to marketing since 1960 and has proven both powerful and highly versatile.[159] The evidence of many studies shows that the higher the perceived risk of a buying decision, the stronger the tendency to opt for a trusted brand name.[160] This tendency is exacerbated in highly competitive markets with conflicting marketing messages where the dominant consumer impulse is to avoid mistakes.[161] The wine writers of the period both noted and deplored this tendency. The flight to 'popular' or 'fashionable' brands' in the 1860s and 1870s infuriated both wine merchants and commentators. Beckwith attacked the system of trademarks, claiming that the 'public have come to mistrust their own judgment, and, reposing blind confidence in those who profess to take an onerous responsibility off their shoulders, they have become the willing slaves of a host of extraordinary devices'.[162] For Tovey, there was an 'absurd

[157] *Fourth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Intemperance: Together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, c. 2111 (Holdsworth); c. 2179 (Albert Bernay).
[158] C. Tovey, *Wine Revelations* (London, 1881), p. 5.
[159] For the introduction of the concept, see R.A. Bauer, "Consumer Behavior as Risk Taking," in *Dynamic Marketing for a Changing World: Proceedings of the 43rd Conference of the American Marketing Association*, ed. R. S. Hancock (Chicago, 1960), pp. 389-98; for a more recent survey of the 'major developments' in risk models and conceptualisations, see V.-W. Mitchell, "Consumer Perceived Risk: Conceptualisations and Models," *European Journal of Marketing* 33, no. 1-2 (1999), pp. 163-4.
[160] R. Elliott and N. Yannopoulou, "The Nature of Trust in Brands: A Psychosocial Model," *European Journal of Marketing* 41, no. 9/10 (2007), pp. 989, 995-6.
[161] K. Matzler, S. Grabner-Kräuter, and S. Bidmon, "Risk Aversion and Brand Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Brand Trust and Brand Affect," *The Journal of Product and Brand Management* 17, no. 3 (2008), pp. 158-9.
[162] Beckwith, *Practical Notes on Wine*, p. 80.

delusion as to the superiority of certain brands'. This was 'highly prejudicial' to consumers but had created a profitable monopoly for the major brands.[163] *Ridley's* endorsed Tovey's idea of a monopoly and deplored the fact that 'Wine Merchants generally are at so little pains to bring into notice Champagnes of equally good quality with Moët, Clicquot, or Roederer'.[164] Buying a champagne with a known brand gave the consumer reassurance about the quality of the wine whilst, at the same time, making a clear statement of taste and prosperity to the guests who shared his wine.

The weight of advertising behind popular brands contributed to their success, not by appeal to the emotions but through sheer volume of repetition.[165] Although, as we have seen, advertising in the 1860s and 1870s rarely focused on the attributes of the brands, it invested heavily in promoting specific brand names. Tovey, in his book *Champagne*, spelled out the mechanics:

> [a]dvertisements cunningly worded, extra allowance to wine merchants who will promote the sale, bribes to hotel-keepers and proprietors of steam-boats, the same to the managers of public establishments, paragraphs in newspapers that at such a dinner the Champagne was So-and-so's, and was pronounced to be of extraordinary quality; fees to waiters at hotel, and gratuities to stewards and butlers in the service of the nobility. Neither Norwich nor Bridgewater can surpass in bribery and corruption the attempts to give currency to a brand of Champagne.[166]

[163] Tovey, *Champagne*, p. 47.
[164] *Ridley's*, 10 October 1870, p. 8. The journal feared these brands would create a de facto monopoly similar to that enjoyed by Martell or Hennessy in the brandy market; for the cognac trade see T. Mollanger, "The Effects of Producers' Trademark Strategies on the Structure of the Cognac Brandy Supply Chain During the Second Half of the 19th Century. The Reconfiguration of Commercial Trust by the Use of Brands," *Business History* (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2017.1357696.
[165] There is an extensive literature on the effectiveness of advertising. See, for example, G.J. Tellis, *Effective Advertising: Understanding When, How, and Why Advertising Works* (Thousand Oaks and London, 2004). However, modern measurements of appeal or effectiveness, which assess both cognitive and affective elements, are largely inappropriate to wine advertisements of the mid-nineteenth century which offered no emotional appeal.
[166] Tovey, *Champagne*, pp. 101-2.

Tovey, as a wine merchant, was not an unbiased witness, but his account tallies with those of *Ridley's* and the general press.[167] Advertising was regarded as essential to success and the names of the main brands were kept before both the public and the key trade influencers. The circulars described in Chapter Two were widespread. As *Punch* put it in 1870 in an article headed 'Pestered by Post':

> My name happens to stand on a professional list accessible to all men. The consequence of this is that my letter-box is the daily receptacle of circulars and prospectuses sent me by all manner of cheap wine-merchants, coal-merchants, puffing tradesmen of all descriptions, joint-stock companies (limited), foreign lottery offices, charitable institutions, and appeals, chiefly clerical, to the benevolent.[168]

As with circulars, advertisements for champagne were pervasive. In the period 1860-75, Moët & Chandon appeared in more than 4,500 newspaper advertisements in around 100 newspapers. The total number of champagne advertisements was more than 100,000, with insertions in over 300 newspapers.[169] However, many premium brands did not make extensive use of the press but, like Hubinet (see Chapter Two), preferred well-placed ad hominem incentives and endorsements. Of the other well-known brands, only Clicquot had more than 500 advertisements. Roederer and Pommery had fewer than 100 between them.[170]

Such known brands carried significantly higher prices than unbranded wine but, as noted above, the high price of champagne in general was probably part of its attraction. Trollope certainly thought so. His view about wine, summed up in *The Belton Estate* (1865), was clear. 'What is there, he asked rhetorically, that any man desires […] that does not lose half its value when it is found to be easy of access and easy of possession?

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[167] *Ridley's*, 6 January 1866, p. 5. '[Wine dealers] must keep the puffing wheel revolving constantly at its maximum speed, or their Trade will rapidly decline'; see also C. Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1859), p. 16. Mitchell affirmed that the 'newspaper is the fly-wheel by which the motive power of commercial enterprise is sustained'.
[168] *Punch, or, the London Charivari*, 15 January 1870, p. 19.
[169] BNA search conducted 30 October 2017 in the 'advertising' category. This figure is one-third of the numbers for the prolific tailors Moses and Sons and Beecham's Pills.
[170] BNA search conducted 30 October 2017.

Wine is valued by its price not by its flavour'.[171] To serve champagne was to assert one's wealth (witness the sardonic aside already quoted from *Miss Mackenzie* about Tom Mackenzie's income).[172] Champagne was always recognised as producing the best sparkling wine and relative to both other sparkling wines and still wine in general, champagne was expensive. An 1860 advertisement for an Edinburgh restaurant made this clear. Claret and Hock were sixpence per half pint, Chablis nine-pence and Champagne one shilling and sixpence.[173] Branded champagne carried a higher price than unbranded wine. In retail outlets, a typical price range in 1865 extended from Veuve Clicquot at 84s. per dozen, through Moët & Chandon at 73s. to the most expensive unbranded wine at 42s. per dozen.[174]

By the mid-1870s a set of premium-priced brands had come to form a separate group in the eyes of the trade and, apparently, in the eyes of champagne consumers too. The members of this group varied over time but essentially it comprised about eight to ten houses that were already prominent in the 1860s, supplemented by a number of brands that emerged during this decade. *Ridley's* first alluded to this group in 1870, when it feared that 'after the cessation of hostilities [in the Franco-Prussian War] we may see some permanent enhancement in the value of fashionable brands of Champagne [which] bid fair to obtain […] nothing less than a monopoly'. Three years later the journal attacked the 'absurd popular prejudice in favour of buying "brands"', singling out Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Roederer which it claimed were priced at £1 per dozen more than products of equal quality that lacked such 'celebrated names'.[175] The role of

[171]A. Trollope, *The Belton Estate* (London, 1866), p. 254. Trollope's argument has similariteis with the later views of both Bourdieu and Seymour Hirsch in their commentaries on positional goods.
[172] Trollope, *Miss Mackenzie*, p. 100. See page 134 above.
[173] *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 14 October 1861, p. 3.
[174] See the *Sussex Advertiser and Surrey Gazette*, 3 January 1865, p. 8, for the very extensive list of Joseph Arnold. The marketing implications of pricing will be explored in Chapter Four.
[175] *Ridley's*, 12 December 1873, p. 282.

price will be explored in more detail in Chapter Four, but it has been a commonplace of modern marketing theory since the 1950s that high prices of luxury goods increase rather than reduce their desirability – the so-called 'Veblen effect'.[176]

In summary, then, the 1860s was a decade of profound change in the British champagne market. The wine itself became significantly drier than the wine sold in other European markets and the taste for dry wine started to spread out beyond London to the provinces. Its colour lightened and it probably became less alcoholic, in line with the general temperate turn suggested in Chapter One. Lastly, an initial preference for very high effervescence appears to have quickly subsided, though there are no producer records to prove or disprove this suggestion. These changes to the taste and style of the wine were driven primarily by a change in the style of eating and the adoption of dry sparkling champagne as a dinner wine. Though the general advice given in conduct books in the decades after 1850 was to serve champagne as soon as the main meat dish was served, by the 1880s champagne was, for many diners, the sole wine they drank throughout dinner.[177] The shift to dry wine in which imperfections could more easily be detected also had the effect of pushing consumers towards known brands whose reputation served as a guarantee against adulteration.

Conclusions

As this chapter has demonstrated, champagne had both symbolic and functional value. Functionally, it was used to stimulate the wearied, restore the sick, and enliven dinner table guests. It became the central wine at the dinner table for both men and women,

[176] H. Leibenstein, "Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers' Demand," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 64, no. 2 (May 1950), p. 189. Leibenstein defined the 'Veblen effect' thus: 'the demand for a [...] good is increased because it bears a higher rather than a lower price'.

[177] See, for example, Cassell & Co., *Cassell's Household Guide*, new and revised ed., vol. 3 (London, 1883-4), p. 262; towards the latter part of century, champagne mght be served earlier but see Feuerheerd, *Gentleman's Cellar*, p. 61. As late as 1899 this author was still associating champagne with roast meat whilst expressing his disapproval of those who drank only champagne.

particularly those women who did not take red wine. Symbolically, it was used to denote sophistication and wealth through production and display of cultural capital at the dinner table and elsewhere. It could be the occasion for the expression of the bodily disciplines of the self, projecting physical mastery, refined taste and self-control. As marketing became more sophisticated and intense in the last quarter of the century, these characteristics were increasingly exploited and stressed by the trade (as the following chapters will demonstrate).

These attributes were familiar even to those with little direct experience of champagne as a drink. Newspapers, novels, wine books and comic songs saw to that. Once the price of champagne started to fall after 1860, its consumption began to spread from the upper classes of British society to the middle and lower classes. To reaffirm their status in the eyes of their contemporaries, elite men (and some women) began to call for steadily drier wines, whilst less-experienced but wealthy members of the new middle classes increasingly opted for branded wines. Their personal taste may have been for sweeter wines but, as the *Saturday Review* had observed, they were prepared to 'affect the taste' for dry wine. In effect, they increasingly began to 'drink the label' rather than the liquid.

The rising demand for 'champagne' driven by increasing prosperity and heavy advertising began to lead in the 1860s to a 'democratisation' of champagne. As we have seen in Chapter Two, claret responded to increased demand by following a route of lower price and lower quality. At the peak of its growth trajectory in the mid-1870s, champagne could perhaps have followed that same route. But it did not. Though the market for lower quality champagne for balls and public festivities was unabated, the marketing and branding initiatives of the major French houses and their London agents ensured that champagne never lost its position as a premium product. Although cheaper champagnes

continued to be advertised and sold, the trade in the latter part of the century increasingly segmented the market to meet differing consumer demands. Unlike claret, champagne never lost its reputation as a luxury good. The principal instrument of this 're-premiumisation' was the creation of vintage-dated champagne, and the profound implications of this shift will be the focus of the following chapter on consumption from 1876 until 1914.

4. Votaries of fashion? Changing consumer tastes, 1876-1914

Introduction and objectives

In 1889, *Ridley's* expressed its shocked disbelief that purchasers of champagne might be influenced by royal endorsement. Under the heading 'Snobbery in Advertising', the journal attacked an advertiser appealing to 'the credulous but inexperienced Provincial of easy means […] whose ambitious desire to pose as a votary of fashion […] knows of no better means to accomplish his end [than buying a] Very Dry Champagne the same as we supply at Balmoral, Windsor and Marlborough House'.[1] *Ridley's* should not have been so surprised. In the last quarter of the century, branded champagne became a potent signifier of social status and a lubricant of social success. Although consumption dipped slightly after the mid-1870s peak, it recovered in the late 1880s. The evidence suggests that a small group of premium-priced and vintage-dated brands were the principal beneficiaries of this renewed upturn which lasted until the early twentieth century. By 1914, per capita consumption of wines and spirits in general was below 1860 levels, but until around 1910 champagne sales fell less far and less fast than those of other alcoholic beverages. Unlike other wines, champagne successfully resisted price-led degradation of quality. Through effective marketing and the successful introduction of vintage-dated wines from 1876 onwards, the leading shipper brands were able to enforce a significant price premium on the market.

In examining the consumption of champagne (and other sparkling wines) in the period 1876-1914, I will focus on four questions. Firstly, how did champagne maintain

[1] *Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*, 12 November 1889, pp. 547-8. The advertisement was issued by an unidentified 'well-known West End House'.

and reinforce its premium status after the increasing popularisation of sparkling wine in the fifteen years following Gladstone's 1860 budget? Secondly, how did champagne's representation in the media change? Thirdly, turning to the specifics of consumption, I will consider the gendering of consumption and the ways in which champagne was assimilated into the rituals of Victorian society. Lastly, I will examine how champagne increased its power as a marker of status and the implications of this shift at different levels of British society.

The overall objective of this chapter is to understand this fourth question: how did champagne become such a potent marker of social status and what were the implications of its power? I will argue three things. First, I will show that, despite a strand of negative coverage linking champagne to sexual misconduct, its overall representation in newspapers and magazines strengthened existing associations with power, status and luxury. Second, I will show that a clearly understood brand hierarchy developed in the champagne market. Products divided into a small group of about fifteen or so premium or 'fashionable' brands which enjoyed significant reputational and price advantage over a much larger group of secondary brands. Third, I will argue that champagne became the subject of Veblenesque 'conspicuous consumption'.

Champagne's distinctive material culture made it highly visible both in and out of home. As a positional good, champagne played a role not only at a local level amongst friends, family and acquaintances but also as a signal of social ambition and aspiration in an insecure and status-conscious society.[2] Cohen has argued that 'among the middle classes […] possessions became a way of defining oneself in a society where it was increasingly difficult to tell people apart'.[3] I will argue that consumption rather than

[2] For the Victorian 'obsession' with consumption and social status, see Hilton, "Legacy of Luxury," p. 101; for the implications of 'mutable social status' in Victorian society see Fromer, *Necessary Luxury*, pp. 19-20.
[3] Cohen, *Household Gods*, p. xi.

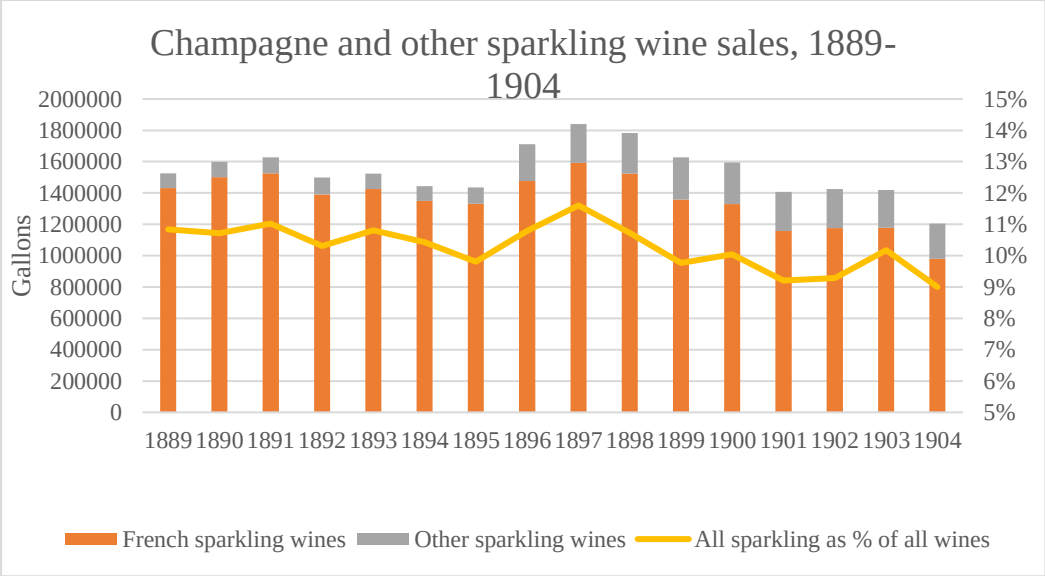
merely possessions was also a key to defining status. Lastly, the cult of dry champagne informed claims of British superiority in a global context, leading to the claim in 1911 that 'if Champagne is now consumed so extensively all the World over it is, to a very large extent, due to the fashion which was set in this Country, and which spread from here to all parts of the World, of drinking Champagne as a dry and more natural Wine'.[4] To drink dry champagne of a 'fashionable' brand was to assert not only personal sophistication and financial resource but also British position in the world.

The success of premium champagne

As Chapter One indicated, champagne consumption had grown faster than that of other wines in the 1860s and 1870s, but thereafter it performed broadly in line with the rest of the wine trade, benefitting from an upturn from the late 1880s until the turn of the century. As Figure 20 shows, from the mid-1870s to the outbreak of World War One, sparkling wines generally maintained an overall share of approximately ten per cent of the wine market, though this began to drop in the early twentieth century.

[4] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1911, p. 282. As noted in Chapter One, a similar claim for a British 'culinary triumph' had been made in 1879.

Figure 20: Champagne and other sparkling wine sales, 1889-1904



Source: Simon, *History of the Champagne Trade in England*, pp. 168-70.[5]

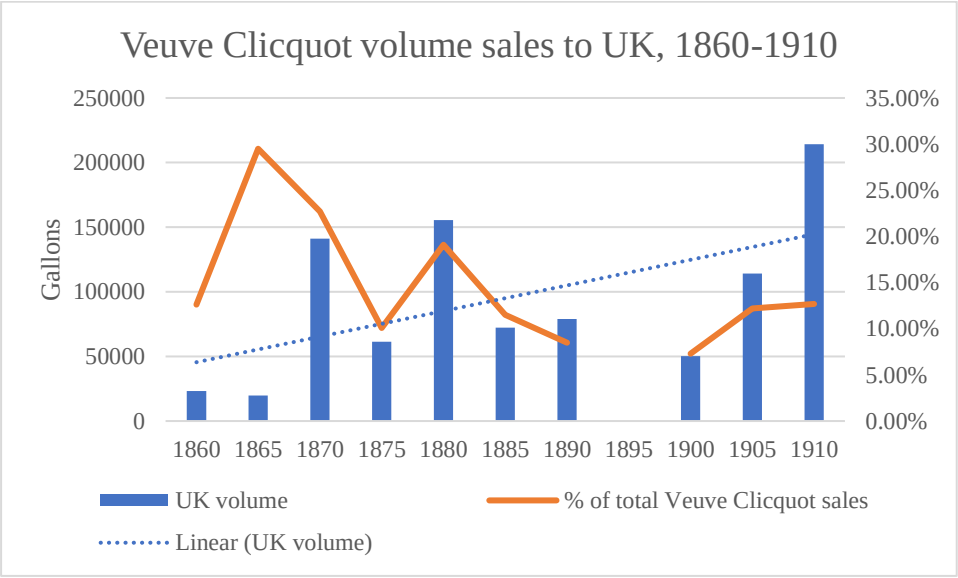
The government data for 1889 to 1904, the only period for which official statistics are available, show the beginnings of this slow decline. Once past the sales peak created by Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, sparkling wine's share of total consumption fell from thirteen per cent to nine per cent in 1901 and the decline continued into the years before World War One.[6]

Though sales fell slowly after the mid-1870s with a slight revival in the 1880s, there is evidence to suggest that there was a shift back to premium wines. The incomplete Veuve Clicquot sales figures (Figure 21) show that sales of this premium brand appear to have recovered immediately before World War One, though this may represent a re-

[5] Note this figure includes both champagne and other French sparkling wines such as 'Sparkling Saumur'.
[6] As noted in Chapter One, changes to tariffs on wine through the nineteenth century and consequent changes to government recording practice mean that there is no official figure for the category except between 1889 and 1904. Under the headline 'Run on Champagne', the *South Wales Echo*, 2 April 1897, p. 2, reprinted a *Daily Mail* interview with Charles Heidsieck of the eponymous champagne house claiming that Joe Lyons, of the Trocadero restaurant, had been the first to prophesy that 1897 would be a 'big year' for champagne.

stocking effect after the poor harvest of 1908. By this point, the importance of Great Britain to the overall Veuve Clicquot sales had dropped from the 1860s level of more than 30 per cent of the house's sales, but Britain was still important, representing just under 15 per cent of their volume sales in 1910.[7]

Figure 21: Veuve Clicquot sales to UK, 1860-1910

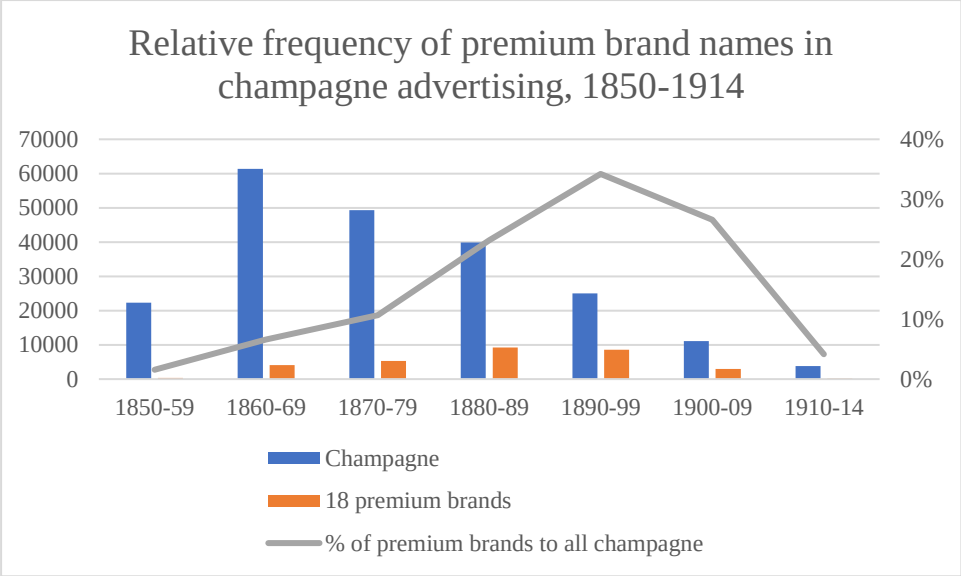


Source: Archives Maison Veuve Clicquot, Livres de Factures, 1860-1910.[8] The 1895 figures are missing from the Veuve Clicquot archives.

Further indirect evidence supports the argument that the trade was able to resist the potential threat of democratisation and consolidate a premium positioning after the mid-1870s. Analysis of all champagne advertising in the British press (Figure 22) shows that while most merchants continued to feature both premium and other brands, the number of 'lines' featuring the names of premium brands of champagne rose relative to both consumption and to those featuring unbranded or secondary brands.

[7] 1910 was also a very bad year and some of the sales may have been caused by concerns over future supply. *Ridley's*, 10 January 1911, p. 16; 8 February 1911, supplement (p. 11).
[8] Archives Maison Veuve Clicquot, 1A 1A 077-95, Livre V (no modern marking), LV 1602, 1604, 1608, 1609.

Figure 22: Premium brand names in champagne advertising, 1850-1914



Source: British Newspaper Archive analysis conducted 4 April 2017.[9]

As Figure 22 shows advertisements for specific premium brands (based on price and contemporary assessment) rose from under ten per cent of all champagne advertisements before 1880 to 20 per cent in the decade 1880-89 and then to a peak of 34 per cent in the decade to 1899. The decline in the last years before World War One was probably a consequence of the poor harvests of 1908-10, which meant that there were no good new vintages to advertise. Whilst not conclusive, the advertising data suggest that until 1909 thousands of local merchants believed it was important to stock and advertise these wines. A further indication of the premiumisation of the market is the steadily increasing percentage of advertisements featuring vintage-dated wines.

Vintage-dated wines were a phenomenon of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There had been famous vintages before that date – for example, 1842, 1846 and

[9] The brands were: Ayala, Bollinger, Clicquot, Geisler, Deutz & Gelderman, Goulet, Heidsieck, Irroy, Jules Mumm, Krug, Laurent Perrier, Moët & Chandon, Perrier-Jouët, Pol Roger, Pommery, Roederer and Wachter. All were cited more than once by *Ridley's* as being among the group of premium brands.

1857 – but the vintage dates rarely featured in the marketing of champagne.[10] Dates were not given on corks or labels and only a handful of advertisements gave the vintage date.[11] In this, champagne differed from port and claret which had made extensive use of the vintage date in marketing and advertising since the early part of the century.[12] The switch to labelling and advertising vintage-dated champagne came with the 1874 vintage, which was first marketed in 1877-8. Climatically, 1874 was an exceptional year with perfect growing conditions. The summer and autumn were so warm that the grapes had a great deal of natural sugar, and this enabled Pommery & Greno to produce their wine with no added sugar. André Simon, who started his career in Pommery's London agency, claimed this to be 'probably the first strictly speaking vintage and Brut or Nature Champagne shown in England'.[13] In fact a 'Brut Nature' wine had been widely advertised by the firm of Roper Frères from late 1876 onwards, but this was never vintage dated.[14] Simon may be regarded both as well informed and potentially biased but it is clear that Pommery 1874 rapidly achieved a remarkable reputation and a price to match. By 1882, the market price was 110s. per dozen, compared with the launch price of 71s. By 1884, the price had reached 150s. per dozen, testifying both to the success of the Pommery wine and the overall strategy of focusing on vintage-dated wines.[15]

[10] The earliest champagne vintage chart yet identfied is in A. Webber, *Wine: A Series of Notes on This Valuable Product and Subjects Suggested Therefrom, Together with Some Important References* (London, 1888), pp. 138-9; another was published the following year in W. Guthrie, *Remarks Upon Claret, Burgundy and Champagne*, 2nd ed. (London, 1889), p. 38.
[11] Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 141. For one of the less than two dozen earlier advertisements giving an explicit vintage date, see *Saunders's News-Letter*, 26 June 1865, p. 1.
[12] Peter Vareilhes was advertising the 'oldest Claret, vintage 1759' in *Dublin Courier*, 24 August 1763, p. 2; the London merchant, Henry Fearon, was making use of vintage-dates for port in 1833, see the *London Courier*, 26 January 1833, p. 1.
[13] The terms 'Brut Nature' or 'Brut Zero' are now typically used to denote such a wine.
[14] See, for example, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 30 December 1876, p. 6.
[15] *Wine Trade Review*, 15 April 1882. For the 1884 auction price, see *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 June 1884, p. 7.

Vintage-dated champagnes created the perception of rarity and exclusivity. Whilst there were occasional press reports suggesting imminent shortages, it was clear to any informed consumer that the stocks in the cellars of the French merchants ran into many millions of bottles.[16] This abundance had the potential to create problems for the trade. If a product is readily available, as stories of colliers' consumption of champagne in the early 1870s may have suggested, it loses part of its cachet. Furthermore, abundance brings the temptation to under-price competitors to gain sales. The introduction of vintage-dated wine addressed this problem in two ways. Firstly, it played into a long-standing British habit of valuing wines in general, and port in particular, on the basis of the vintage year.[17] Second, and more importantly, introducing vintage-dated wines created what Kapferer has called 'abundant rarity'.[18] The issue for luxury firms is how to prevent high penetration destroying luxury status. If a product is priced at a level that makes it freely available, it diminishes the ability of the purchaser to signal rank via luxury purchase.[19]

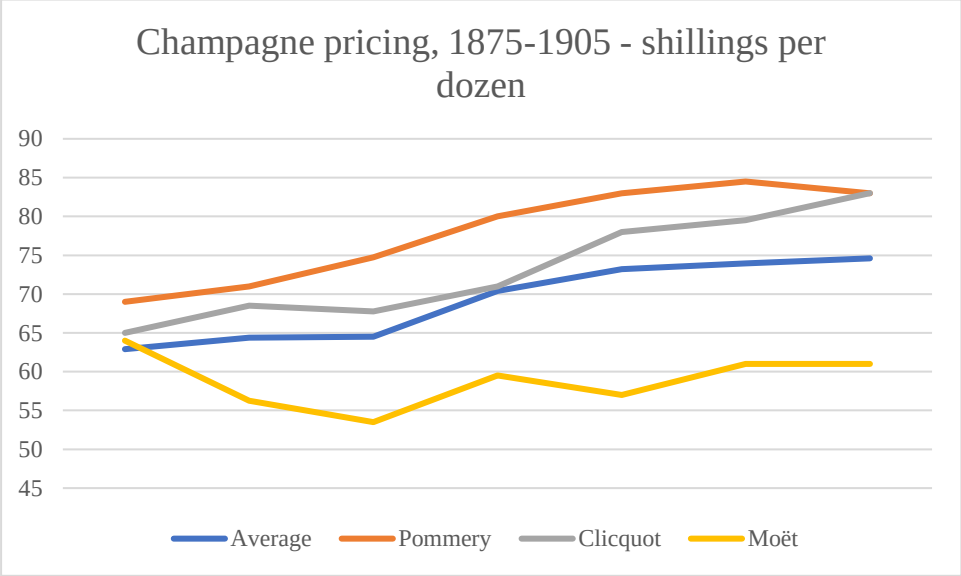
A central component of modern guidelines for owners of luxury brands is summed up in Kapferer's 2012 guidance: 'always increase the average price'. As Miller and Mills have also stressed, 'the ability to pay particularly high prices' is linked to the 'desire to impress others'; in other words, price has a social meaning.[20] To make Pommery the highest-priced wine was, as discussed in Chapter Three, a prime goal of Adolphe

[16] See, for instance, *Nottingham Evening Post*, 23 September 1890, p. 3, for an editorial rebutting the story that phylloxera would put champagne 'in danger of extinction'.
[17] S. Bradford, *The Story of Port: The Englishman's Wine* (London, 1978), p. 87. Bradford claims that in 1862 the 'vintage cult was in its infancy' but Trollope's novels of the late 1850s suggest it considerably pre-dated the 1860s; see A. Trollope, *Doctor Thorne* (Cambridge, 2000), (first published 1858) vol. III, p. 70; Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, vol. II, p. 79.
[18] J.-N. Kapferer, "Abundant Rarity: The Key to Luxury Growth," *Business Horizons* 55, no. 5 (2012), pp. 453-62.
[19] The broader principles of luxury brand marketing will be discussed in Chapter Five and compared to the practice of the twentieth and early twenty-first century marketers.
[20] Miller and Mills, "Probing Brand Luxury: A Multiple Lens Approach," p. 47, reiterate the importance of high price.

Hubinet, whose actions appear to anticipate contemporary models of premium marketing. However, agents such as Hubinet could not fully control the price of their wine. They could only set the price charged to merchants. The price paid by the consumer reflected the reputation and appeal of the wine in question. Overall, the premium sector of the champagne trade in the late nineteenth century was able to push through steady price rises to merchants, and, as Figure 23 shows, the average price for premium champagne rose 20 per cent between 1875 and 1905, with Pommery and Veuve Clicquot showing the greatest gains. By comparison, as noted in Chapter One, the price of Gilbey's claret fell between 1859 and 1871 and was stable thereafter.[21]

[21] For Gilbey's pricing, see Figure 13 above. A complete index of the price of claret is difficult given annual price changes caused by vintage variation and the very different prices of the different estates. The *Daily Telegraph,* 12 January 1892, p. 2 noted that champagne was the 'only wine that is rapidly increasing in price'.

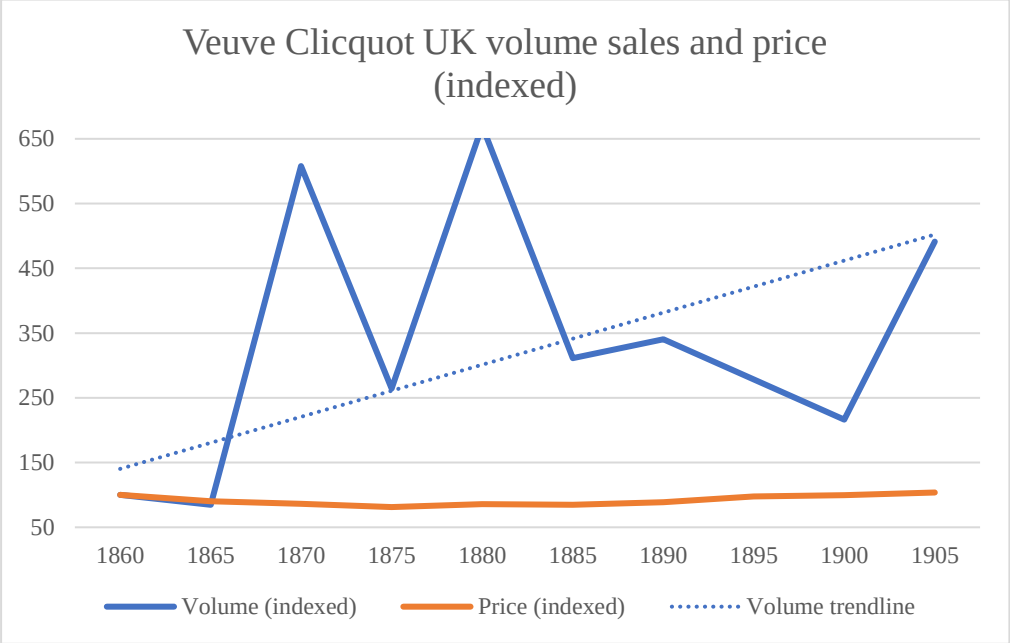
Figure 23: Champagne pricing, 1875-1905



Source: Simon, *History of the Champagne Trade*, p. 184.

Data from the Veuve Clicquot sales records (see Figure 24 below) also tend to confirm that volume growth was unaffected by price rises. After an initial fall in the 1860s, the price in the British market rose by just under 30 per cent between 1875 and 1905. Over the total period the sales rose sharply in the 1860s before falling slightly in the 1880s and 1890s and then recovering after 1905.

Figure 24: Veuve Clicquot volume sales and prices (indexed)



Source: Prices from Simon, *History of the Champagne Trade*, p. 184, supplemented by analysis of press advertisements for 1860-1870; sales volume from AMVC, 1A 1A 077-095.[22]

The steadily rising price of champagne from 1870 onwards at a time when wine prices were generally falling created concern in the trade.[23] In 1873, *Ridley's* was 'staggered' by the high prices charged by the 'Champagne Princes'. In 1884, the journal 'again caution[ed] our friends at Reims and Epernay that there are limits even to the price which the British public will pay for its luxuries'.[24] However, in 1888, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Goschen, proposed an extra duty of 5s. per dozen on wines imported in bottle (mostly sparkling wine), he argued that the extra cost involved would be largely irrelevant to the 'club man, who lives in chambers and pays few rates or taxes'. Fellow parliamentarians concurred that this was a 'luxury of the rich', and the main concern in the trade was lower-priced sparkling wines rather than the

[22] The dip in sales post 1870 almost certainly reflects the impact of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.
[23] Supple, "Income and Demand, 1860-1914," p. 122.
[24] *Ridley's*, 12 July 1873, p. 170; 12 April 1884, p. 132.

premium brands.[25] In 1903 *Ridley's* had to accept that the 'high prices that people are found willing to pay for the crack brands of the 1892 Vintage is really astonishing'.[26] By 1911, a leading article on 'Champagne Prices and the Consumption of Champagne' accepted that prices had risen 75 per cent since 1860 but that consumption had nonetheless doubled, concluding that 'it is very curious that each increase of price was following by a corresponding increase in the consumption'.[27] This evidence from the trade press and the Veuve Clicquot data above suggests that premium pricing played a significant role in confirming champagne's status as an exclusive luxury product and justifying the required advertising spend.

The impact of premium-branded champagne

Contemporary testimony suggests that pervasive advertising led to high consumer awareness not just of champagne in general but of the major brands in particular.[28] High awareness created a 'ladder' of brands, whose ranking and value was well known amongst interested consumers. Because champagne was generally consumed from strongly branded bottles, those partaking would have known how much their host had paid for his wine. The general view at the time was that very few consumers could differentiate in quality between the premium-priced wines and the less well-known but lower-priced secondary brands. In the words of the *Sheffield Independent* in 1880, 'though many people know good wine from bad, not one in a thousand can distinguish good from very good'.[29] Though low price was apparently more important to those

[25] G. Goschen, "Financial Statement," 26 March 1888, 324, c. 268-365; A. Provand, "Financial Statement," 9 April 1888, 324, c. 763-4.
[26] *Ridley's*, 12 March 1903, p. 164.
[27] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1911, p. 280.
[28] For a general view of nineteenth-century wine advertising, see G. Harding, "'Advertisements of Every Kind to Bring Their Brand into Notoriety': Branding and 'Brandolatry' in the Nineteenth-Century Champagne Trade in Britain," *Journal of Wine Economics* 12, no. 4 (2017), pp. 378-85.
[29] *Sheffield Independent*, 15 July 1880, p. 5.

buying in volume for a ball or civic function, the fact that consumers were willing to pay a price premium for the leading brands suggests that image was at least as important as quality.

From the mid-1870s onwards, advertising to consumers became steadily more pervasive and more innovative. The widespread but largely price-focused newspaper advertising of premium wines was reinforced by other media. Sandwich men walked the streets bearing placards. Consumers in public spaces such as railway stations were confronted with 'tablets' bearing the name of the house.[30] The 'tablets', which bore little more than the name of the producer, were a subject of intense concern for agents who competed to place them in the offices of London merchants.[31] Tablets in public spaces were commonplace, but direct advertising of this public form was apparently supplemented by more private media. In 1891, Cavendish Tate, a firm of hotel advertising contractors, wrote to leading houses in the champagne trade claiming that their 'system of lavatory advertisement is the most powerful plan ever devised for securing the attention of the moneyed classes to advertisements at a time when they have leisure to read them, and when every description of literature is sure of unusual notice'.[32] The consumer response is unknown. Possibly less intrusive was the sales pressure supposedly brought to bear by women moving in high society who were reputedly hired to sell champagne to their dancing partners.[33] It is impossible to be certain about the nature or extent of such unorthodox communication tactics but their appearance in the press reinforces contemporaries' perception of the pervasiveness of champagne advertising.

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[30] For a brief description of tablets on the walls of a London bodega, see J.-K. Huysmans, *Against Nature* (Harmondsworth, 1959 (first published 1884)), p. 138.
[31] Tovey, *Champagne*, pp. 102-3. Archives Pol Roger, 'Letter Book', 28 March 1877 notes Conrad Reuss's acknowledgement of the arrival of the tablets he had requested and his belief that they will produce a good effect through their 'elegance'.
[32] *Ridley's*, 12 December 1891, pp. 679-80 for calculations on 6.75 million annual 'opportunities to see'.
[33] *Sheffield Independent*, 29 January 1880, p. 5; *Shields Daily Gazette*, 1 March 1880, p. 4.

Other forms of advertising focused on the point of consumption. When dining in a hotel or restaurant, the customer was increasingly likely to be handed a 'wine card' on which producers had bought the right to include their brand name.[34] Nathaniel Newnham-Davis, Britain's first restaurant critic, noted in the 1890s that whenever he was dining with a woman, the wine card was always presented open at the page listing the champagnes on offer.[35] Lastly there was pressure from waiters incentivised by per cork payments from the shippers to choose one brand over another. Such 'corkage' was the subject of numerous complaining letters in the general press.[36] Merchants who could not afford this level of support for their own brands were equally affronted. As 'An Old-Fashioned Wine Merchant' complained in a letter to *Ridley's* in 1890, 'the Champagne shippers in general have not relied on fine quality alone, but to advertisements of every kind to bring their names and their Wines into notoriety'.[37] There are no accessible records of total spending on such advertising, but *Ridley's* estimated in 1908 that it ran into 'millions' of pounds.[38] Such advertising made the names of the premium brands highly visible to consumers of all social grades.

The contemporary consensus was that consumer behaviour rather than manufacturer manipulation drove pricing. Though an 1882 letter to *The Times* from a group of 'merchants of some standing' denounced a 'Champagne ring', the lively

[34] *Ridley's*, 12 August 1890, p. 417. The going rate was £500 per year for listing on the Gordon Hotels' wine cards. The first unequivocal reference to the 'wine card' in a British hotel appears to be for the Victoria Hotel, in *Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 March 1859, p. 1 but the great majority come from the period from the early 1870s to the mid-1890s. The wine card's potential as an advertising medium is not referred to in the provincial press until the 1890s, see *Gloucester Citizen*, 20 March 1891, p. 4.
[35] N. Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners: Where and How to Dine in London* (London, 1899), p. 16; Newnham-Davis was described by restaurant critic Giles Coren as the man who created the key tropes and format of the restaurant review. See G. Coren, "Review of HKK, London," *The Times* (2 February 2013), http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/magazine/article3670540.ece. [Accessed 12 February 2016.]
[36] See, for example, London *Standard*, 14 November 1890, p. 2, whose correspondent claimed that prices of 'premium brand corks can be as high as 1s. per cork' and that some of the 'oldest-established and high-class brands are supported by this iniquitous practice'.
[37] *Ridley's*, 12 September 1890, p. 497.
[38] *Ridley's*, 10 November 1908, p. 991.

correspondence that followed in a number of papers which had covered the original letter suggested that consumer desire for known brands was the driver of price. *The Times*' correspondent suggested that 'no sooner does a Champagne brand become known in England than it rises immediately out of all proportion to its value', estimating that the premium for becoming a 'fashionable' brand was in the order of 12-20s. per dozen.[39] On the average price of around 70s. for 'fashionable' brands, this was a premium of 20-30 per cent for little or no perceptible improvement in quality. However, correspondents in the provincial press largely disagreed with the idea of a 'ring': 'wine merchants' customers [are] not the fools that this gentleman represents them as being'; there was no ring of any form; 'it is people's fault entirely that they pay so dearly for champagne […] so long as the public demand a fancy label and brand on a cork they must continue to pay a fancy price for it'.[40] As the letters suggested, the power of the premium brands did not depend on a distinct quality advantage.

Contemporaries were increasingly convinced that consumers bought premium brands on name value rather than product quality. An 1880 article in the *Morning Post* boosting the brand of Deutz & Geldermann claimed that 'there is a fashion in champagne as there is in hats'.[41] *The Times* in 1881 noted the complaint that the 'public run after a few brands in an irrational manner' but went on to say that 'contemptible as [this] may seem to a person who is versed in the mysteries of the trade, the public cannot be indifferent to the brand'. Champagnes, the newspaper said, varied hugely in quality and the 'person who dines at his club or a hotel must go very much by the brand, and he would be greatly disconcerted if all the names with which he was familiar were struck out

[39] *The Times*, 7 June 1882, quoted in *Ridley's*, 12 June 1882, p. 194. A letter in *The Times*, 21 September 1867, p. 10, from a wine merchant had earlier estimated a 30 per cent premium.
[40] *Dublin Daily Express*, 28 June 1882, p. 7; *Globe*, 17 June 1882, p. 2; *Shields Daily Gazette*, 17 June 1882, p. 5.
[41] *Morning Post*, 13 April 1880, p. 7.

of the lists, and were replaced by a multitude of others of which he know [sic] little'.[42] This judgment, whilst not conclusive, is entirely in line with what has become known of consumer behaviour over the last fifty years. André Simon, writing the history of the champagne trade in 1905, concurred:

> The public which had hailed the advent of a genuine low-priced Champagne, was very soon disgusted with the beverage sold as Champagne under a name or fancy label, and the result was the introduction and growing popularity of known 'brands,' in which the public felt some confidence might be placed.[43]

Confidence was the key. Yet, as in the 1860s and 1870s, contemporaries did not always take this view. In 1883, *The Times* changed tack to inveigh against the 'tyranny of brands'.[44] Guthrie in 1889 protested that consumers' tendency to affix a 'fictitious value […] because the bottles bear certain brands […] is very unreasonable'.[45] For *The Times* in 1891, consumers' willingness to pay ever-rising prices was nothing but the 'magic of brand'.[46] By 1893, *Ridley's* was concerned by the focus on the brand name, claiming that consumers 'must be able to call their Wine a crack brand of a crack vintage, and to this, quality is a secondary consideration'.[47] Its concern was that champagne had become or would become a fashion item. Was this true and, if so, how did it affect the market?

Ridley's consistently returned to its 1884 suggestion that champagne's 'immense hold' on British wine drinkers was a result of the 'marvellous influence which fashion exercises over the consumption of all sort of luxuries'.[48] The role of fashion in changing taste was first explored by Georg Simmel in 1904. He defined it as 'the imitation of a given example' and described how as soon as the lower classes started to copy a particular style of behaviour, the upper classes 'adopt a new one which in its turn

[42] *The Times*, 15 June 1882, p. 11.
[43] Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 101.
[44] *Morning Post*, 22 June 1883, p. 6.
[45] Guthrie, *Remarks Upon Claret, Burgundy and Champagne*, p. 28.
[46] *The Times*, 3 April 1891, p. 14.
[47] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1893, p. 217.
[48] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1884, p. 3.

differentiates from the masses and thus the game goes merrily on'. Simmel's argument was developed in 1950 by Harvey Leibenstein, who suggested the existence of both 'snob' and 'bandwagon' effects.[49] The snobs wish to distinguish themselves from the majority; the 'bandwagoners' wish to emulate fashion leaders and thereby achieve status in their own right. As the middling-class 'bandwagoners' acquired the taste for sparkling wine, so the 'snobs' moved to drier wine to maintain their distance. Contemporary marketing research has confirmed this process. The 'snob' effect in champagne appears to have started in the 1860s as consumers moved to drier wine, but it intensified in the 1880s as the trade's marketing became more aggressive and effective.[50]

In the context of fashion in champagne, the 1879 decision by Gilbey's to remove the labels from their Castle champagne is significant. The label on the bottle was replaced (at least for a period) by a very small neck medallion. Their agents were given a somewhat evasive explanation that 'purchasers should not be compelled to impart to his household and friends exact details relative to the prices and qualities of the Wines and Spirits which he in his own judgment may decide on serving'.[51] Because champagne was very rarely decanted (a 'heathenian practice'), the Gilbey's label on the bottle was clear evidence that the consumer had opted for an own label rather than a 'well-known French wine' at 15-20s. more.[52] Hence, it seems highly probable that the decision was taken to remove the label because it would betray the provenance of the wine and the lack of a fashionable brand.

[49] See Leibenstein, "Bandwagon Effects," p. 188.
[50] See V. Di Giovinazzo and A. Naimzada, "A Model of Fashion: Endogenous Preferences in Social Interaction," *Economic Modelling* 47 (2015), pp. 13, 16.
[51] Diageo, 110204/12, 'Note on Champagnes: discontinuance of labels', Confidential Memo to Agents dated 28 February 1879. The label was replaced by a small 'medallion' hung around the neck of the bottle.
[52] *Dublin Daily Express*, 23 June 1882, p. 7. The same writer noted that champagne bottles were occasionally covered with a napkin to hide the brand name.

However, the demand for a name brand was by no means entirely fashion-driven. In 1882, *The Times*, again supported its claim that 'the public cannot be indifferent to the brand' with the editorial argument that:

> [m]ore than any other wine champagne differs in quality. It ranges from the most delicate of beverages to the vilest decoctions [so the] person who dines at his club or a hotel must go very much by the brand, and he would be greatly disconcerted if all the names with which he was familiar were struck out of the lists, and were replaced by a multitude of others of which he knows little'.[53]

Because the brand was on the cork (which was harder to counterfeit than the label) consumers could be reassured. For the wine writer and wine merchant Louis Feuerheerd, the brand on the cork was 'a direct guarantee for the liquid in the bottle', a point of view reinforced by the almost unanimous shift in the 1890s to putting the vintage date on the cork rather than simply on the label.[54] A circular from the house of Southard in 1901 reiterated Feuerheerd's point. The consumer, it wrote, 'prefers having a guarantee of some sort' and the sight of the shipper's brand and vintage date on the wine list provides that 'confidence'. However, the circular continued, the 'price is so outrageously high, that they give up ordering the Champagne and fall back […] on whisky'.[55] Although the premium brands were able to maintain high prices, there was still a strong demand for cheaper champagne.

From the 1870s onwards, it appears that the producers became increasingly aware of the possibilities and advantages of segmenting the market. The advertisements of the 1860s listed champagnes in order of price. They did not usually specify the occasions or usages of differently priced wines. From the mid-1870s, however, until well into the twentieth century, the firm of Roper Frères focused their advertising on usage occasions.

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[53] *The Times*, 15 June 1882, p. 11.
[54] Feuerheerd, *Gentleman's Cellar*, p. 67; Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 144.
[55] See H.P. Southard & Co., *An Outline of the Foundation and Development of the House of Southard's with a Review of the Wine and Spirit Trade since 1861* (London, 1945), p. 58, circular dated 28 August 1901.

In 1879, their wine was described as a ‘sound wine at a low price’, and their extensive press advertising positioned their wine as ‘best value in the market’ for a wide range of events from balls and garden parties to wedding breakfasts, yacht races and ‘festive celebrations’.[56] In 1890, the British-controlled firm of Godard Frères (whose wine was advertised at the very low price of 25s. per dozen) explicitly segmented the market into three categories: ‘the highest priced qualities either for the satisfaction of the connoisseur or sumptuous demands – the middle-priced Wines for the more solid requirements of ordinary social uses – the cheaper Wines coming in as useful beverages of an agreeable and lightly stimulating character’. The firm claimed that their wine was ‘pre-eminently suited to supply this last-mentioned desideratum’ and that its low price was because of ‘the cheapness of Wine in the locality of its production’.[57] In England, the term ‘champagne’ could with impunity be applied to any sparkling wine until the early twentieth century and it is most probable that Godard’s wine was produced not in Champagne but in the Saumur region of France.[58]

The popularity of ‘Saumur Champagne’ in the last quarter of the century is evidence of the middle-class taste for sparkling wine and the appeal of the lower-priced Saumur wines. The firm of Bouvet-Ladubay which, together with the rival house of Ackerman-Laurance, dominated the British market for Saumur wine, increased sales from 600,000 bottles in 1870 to over one million in 1880, two million in 1890 and around three million by the early twentieth century, close to the total volume of champagne sales.[59] As

[56] *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 24 May 1879, p. 7; *Hastings and St Leonard’s Observer*, 1 August 1896, p. 5. In total Roper Frères placed more than 1,500 advertisements in the British press between 1879 and 1909.
[57] *Ridley's*, 11 October 1890, p. 540. The journal's ironic comment was that this segmentation was a 'stroke of genius'. For Godard Frères’ price, see *Illustrated London News*, 28 September 1889, p. 417.
[58] For ‘Hungarian champagne’ see *Derbyshire Times*, 5 June 1875, p. 7; for one of the thousands of ‘Saumur Champagne’ advertisements see *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 December 1890, p. 1.
[59] "The Sparkling Wines of Saumur: La Maison Bouvet-Ladubay," *The Wine & Spirit Trade Record* (1903), p. 3.

noted in Chapter Two, Gilbey's 'Sparkling Saumur' had been an immediate success in the mid-1870s. By 1881 it was selling well over double the volume of champagne.[60] There were yet cheaper wines made by carbonating, sweetening and fortifying still wines from the Rhineland, though these were known to carry the risk of a headache or upset stomach the following morning. It was accepted, to quote Charles Tovey, that 'John Bull […] saves his pocket at the expense of his stomach'.[61] Consumers clearly bought on price, particularly if they were purchasing for large events such as balls, civic dinners or public celebrations. At the very bottom end of the market were counterfeit wines supposedly made from 'sugar, and the juices of pears, gooseberries or birch juice' or even 'petroleum'.[62] Such stories would probably have left a lingering doubt about quality in readers' minds and the 'risk-aversion' principle may have pushed them towards known brands at a higher price.

Widespread press comment suggested that consumers were clearly aware of the hierarchy of price. In 1893, *Ridley's* wrote that 'vintage wine [is] more than ever a branded article whose market value is known'.[63] It was not only vintage champagnes whose value was known. Pricing data from the provincial press (Table II below) suggests that Godard Frères' segmentation into price and usage bands was essentially correct.

[60] Diageo, 100204/4, 'Sales analysis, 1868-82'.
[61] Tovey, *Champagne*, pp. 20-1.
[62] *Dundee Courier*, 22 August 1892, p. 2. This story appears to have been prompted by news of the outbreak of phylloxera in the Champagne vineyards and the consequent threat to supplies. Similar stories appeared in major newspapers during the 1880s and 1890s, despite *Ridley's* rebuttal. See *Ridley's*, 12 September 1892, pp. 504-5. For 'sparkling petroleum', see *Ridley's*, 12 October 1893, p. 525.
[63] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1893, p. 217.

Table II: Approximate price ladder

Segment	Price range (shillings per dozen)	Exemplar brands
Premium brands for 'sumptuous use'	65-80	Veuve Clicquot, Pommery, Moët & Chandon top brand
Medium-priced 'known brands' for 'ordinary social use' (a)	50-65	2nd / 3rd quality of known brands, e.g. Perrier Jouët second quality or Moët & Chandon 'White Dry Sillery'
Medium-priced secondary / merchant brands for 'ordinary social use' (b)	40-50	Shipper brands such as Roper Frères or premium own brands
Cheaper 'stimulating beverages'	25-40	Tertiary brands such as Godard Frères; lower-priced own brands

Source: Primarily drawn from Skinner and Rook advertisement in the *Nottinghamshire Evening Guardian*, 23 December 1885, p. 2 supplemented by data from other advertisements of the 1880s and 1890s.[64]

On *Ridley's* evidence, a significant section of the champagne-drinking public was strongly aware of the prices of premium wines. In 1898 the journal claimed that 'a vintage champagne has […] almost as definite a market value as have Railway or industrial shares, which the general run of the public have no difficulty whatever in ascertaining'.[65] In 1905, Moët & Chandon claimed their 1892 vintage, which had sold at 84s. per dozen in 1896, was now worth 150s., a compound appreciation of 'just under 7 per cent'. They urged consumers to buy the 1900 vintage (also at 84s.) on the basis that 'to buy Champagne is safer than to buy Consols [government bonds], for Consols may fall in price, but good Champagne must inevitably rise in value'.[66] There is no subsequent evidence to suggest that this optimism (which *Ridley's* mocked) was justified, but it shows the confidence of the early twentieth-century champagne trade and their

[64] There are no consistent series of merchant advertisements that can be tracked over time. I have therefore identified thirty advertisements from this period which gave prices and brand names.
[65] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1893, p. 217; 12 July 1898, p. 499.
[66] *The Times*, 26 September 1905, p. 5.

presumptions as to the mindset of their consumers, who were implicitly presented as members of a sophisticated, commercially-minded elite with a keen eye for the value of conspicuous consumption.

The (re)presentation of champagne

The representation of champagne in the period 1876-1914 emphasised luxury, power and privilege. Compared to the period 1860-75, there was less stress on the disinhibiting and democratising attributes of champagne. The consumption of the lower classes, the servant classes and those affecting the status of gentlemen was presented as ill-regulated and often illicit.[67] This presentation was common to novels, newspapers and magazines. It not only illustrates the attributes and image of champagne that were consumed by readers but, by inference, creates a picture of how and when champagne itself was consumed. Because so few records survive of individual consumption, this evidence, though imperfect, is important. Household budgets drawn up in this period often mention wine, but they very rarely indicate how that expenditure might be allocated between different wine types.[68] Neither the sparse official data nor the shipper data indicate how, for example, female consumption differed from male consumption. For the consumption habits of the generality of British society, I rely on the provincial rather than the national press. Although the absolute volume of references to champagne fell in this period in line with overall consumption, these newspapers clearly show how sparkling wine was used in the rich associational life of British towns.[69] For the consumption habits of the men and women of the British middle and upper middle classes, the substantial corpus of *Punch*

[67] For 'men in petticoats' treated to champagne, see London *Standard*, 20 June 1870, p. 7.
[68] For a series of budgets see *Cornhill Magazine*, 10, no. 59 (May 1901), pp. 656-66; 10, no. 60 (June 1901), pp. 790-800; 11, no. 61 (July 1901), pp. 48-61 and 11, no. 62 (August 1901), pp. 184-91.
[69] See P. Leary, *The Punch Brotherhood: Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London* (London, 2010), p. 9 for David Cannadine's endorsement of this view.

cartoons is an important source.[70] *Punch* was written for this group and represented to them the life and lifestyle of the elite of British society.[71]

Champagne dominated the cartoons of alcoholic drinks in *Punch* between 1875 and 1913 which associated it very clearly with power, privilege and the pursuit of status.[72] As Figure 25 below shows, champagne featured in over half of all cartoons showing any form of alcohol. Many of these images showed only the distinctive shape of the champagne bottle, but 20 per cent of the cartoons showed an identifiable brand name. Some of these branded cartoons were linked to a specific politician, others to a type (e.g. an 'Alderman'). The prevalence of specific brand names (and vintage dates) further distinguishes this corpus from other cartoons in the magazine, which used brand names both less frequently and in a less personalised manner.[73]

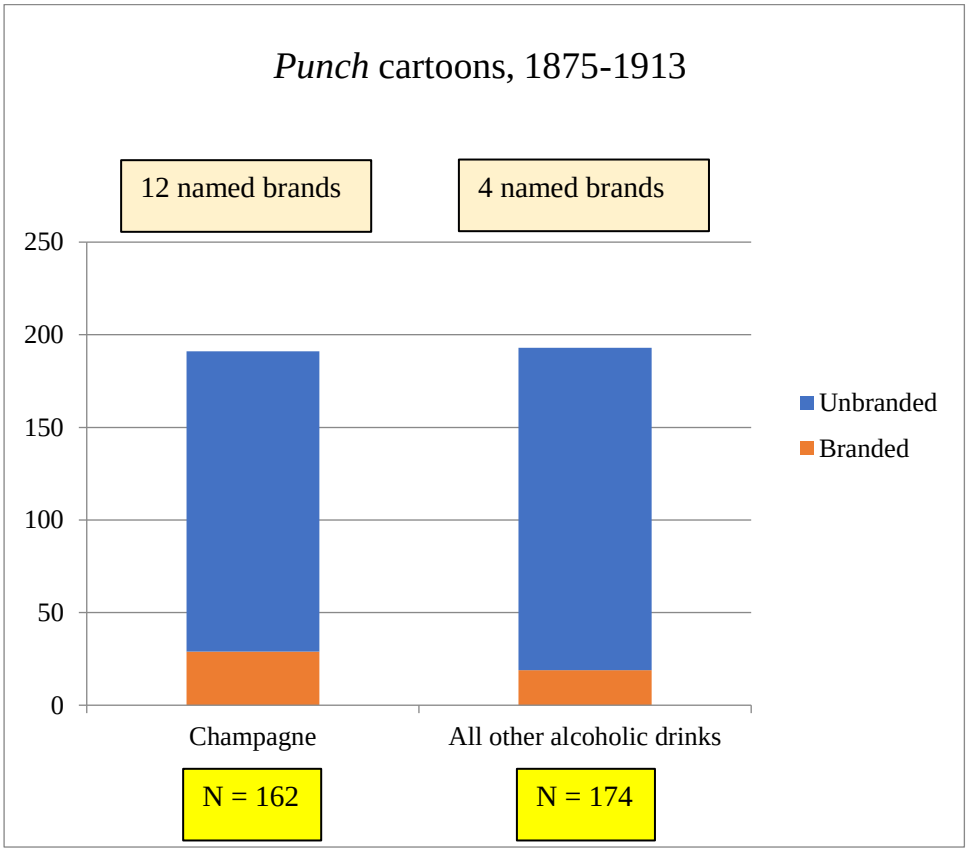
[70] M.H. Spielmann, *The History of Punch* (London, 1895), p. 102. Spielmann characterised the magazine as moving from 'middle-class downrightness' in the 1860s and 1870s to a greater focus on the drawing room in the 1880s and 1890s.

[71] For the magazine's readership, see F. Morris, "John Tenniel, Cartoonist: A Critical & Sociocultural Study in the Art of the Victorian Political Cartoon" (University of Missouri - Columbia, 1985), p. 247. Shirley Brooks, the magazine's editor between 1870 and 1874, once said that he assumed all readers of the magazine also read *The Times*; see R. Price, *A History of Punch* (London, 1957), p. 69.

[72] Leary, *Punch Brotherhood*, p. 5, has pointed to the danger of using the cartoons as evidence without 'proper consideration of the[ir] context and origin' but champagne in these 'cuts' is an indicative prop rather than the main story.

[73] One cartoon associates Lord Salisbury with Kinahan's 'LL' whisky; several make unsurprising reference to the well-known brewers Sir Michael Bass, MP for Derby, 1848-83, and Samuel Allsopp, MP for Staffordshire East, 1873-80. Brands such as Bryant & May (matches) and Huntley & Palmer (biscuits) are occasionally used as props. None have the persistence or salience of champagne brands.

Figure 25: *Punch* cartoons, 1875-1913



Source: *Punch*, 1875-1913.[74]

Champagne was used as a visual signifier by many of the *Punch* cartoonists, but the majority of the cartoons with an identifiable brand name were drawn by Linley Sambourne, who was associated with the magazine from 1867 to 1910.[75] Despite his 'passion for accuracy', Sambourne did not, in general, use other brand names in his work, which suggests (though there is no corroborating evidence) that he believed the details of wine type, vintage date and brand name to be meaningful to the magazine's readers.[76] The

[74] This analysis is based on reviewing all issues of *Punch* between 1875 and 1913.
[75] For a brief account of Sambourne as a cartoonist, see A. Larson, "The Last Laugh: Selected Edwardian "Punch" Cartoons of Edward Linley Sambourne" (University of North Texas, 2001). Sambourne's use of photographs as reference material and his precise style may have facilitated the use of brand names but the cartoons were subjected to continual editorial oversight which would have checked any inappropriate use of brand names; for the Sambourne household, see S. Nicholson, *A Victorian Household* (Stroud, 1998).
[76] L. Ormond, *Linley Sambourne: Illustrator and Punch Cartoonist* (London, 2010), pp. 119, 146 notes that 'absolute accuracy' was important to Sambourne.

brand names featured were exclusively those of the premium brands, numbering twelve in total, led by Pommery, Heidsieck and Ayala. Similarly, the vintage dates given (1859, 1874 and 1884) were all very highly rated and (at the date of pictured consumption) extremely expensive. No interested reader would have missed the significance of those brands and those dates. Champagne in *Punch* was presented as the drink of the wealthy and the powerful.[77]

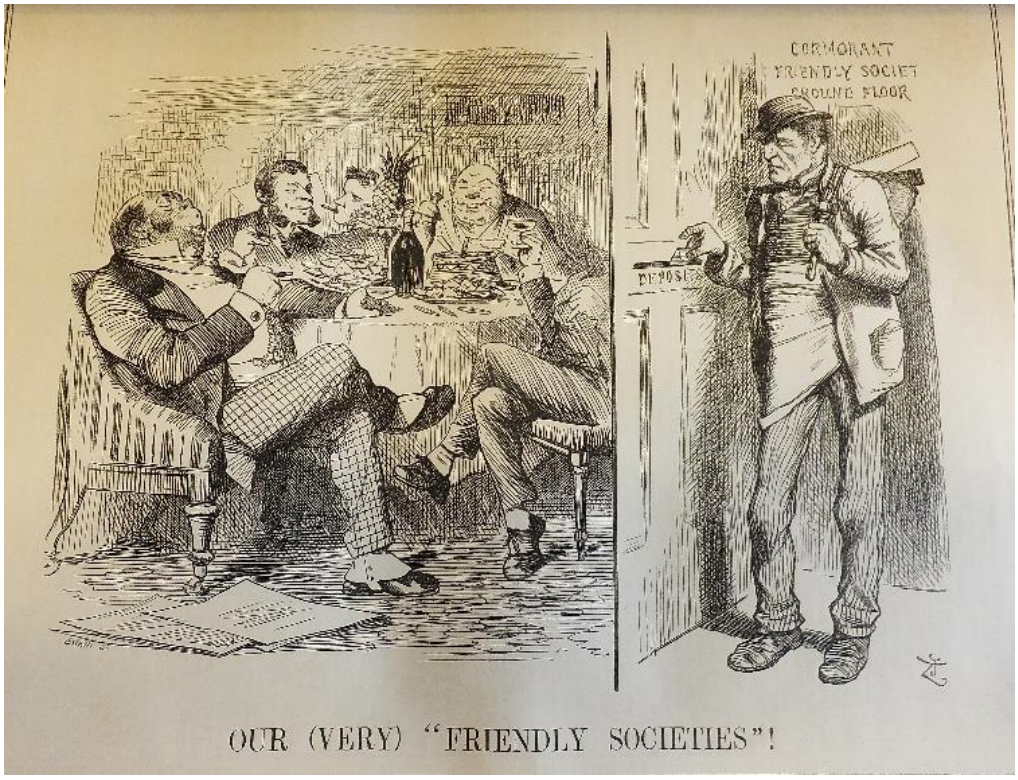
A dominant feature of *Punch's* elite representation of champagne was the link with London politicians. Of the 23 cartoons of parliamentary drinkers published between 1875 and 1913, seventeen show champagne, three whisky and three feature other or unidentifiable drinks. A further four link champagne to the politicians of London's Guildhall. Identifiable politicians such as Disraeli or Speaker Henry Brand are treated with relative decorum; unidentified Guildhall politicians are typically caricatured as afflicted by greed and digestive problems.[78] A persistent theme of these cartoons is parliamentary celebrations, whether end-of-session dinners or individual politicians celebrating a victory.[79] The mass of the people are explicitly excluded from such celebrations.

The use of champagne as a marker of privileged exclusivity and the abuse of power was a second frequent trope of *Punch* cartoonists. For example, in 1893, an obese and over-bearing 'New King Coal' was shown with a large glass and a bottle of

[77] Staff in the 1860s apparently believed miners in Newcastle read the magazine. See Morris, "John Tenniel, Cartoonist: A Critical & Sociocultural Study in the Art of the Victorian Political Cartoon," pp. 245-6.
[78] Disraeli is most often depicted with Mumm champagne, which may reflect a personal preference or more probably his reputation for inscrutability, see *Punch*, 31 March 1877, p. 144. The bottle is labelled 'Mumm's the word'; for 'The Alderman's Nightmare', see *Punch*, 24 November 1883, p. 242.
[79] For a champagne-fuelled end of session dinner, see *Punch*, 3 July 1886, p. 3. See J. Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 73, 93 for the greater populism of the 1880s and the importance of wealth in early nineteenth century party politics.

champagne bearing the vintage date of 1874, by then extremely expensive.[80] Three cartoons associate champagne with pineapples (a common signifier of luxury in the nineteenth century) in the context of wealth gained or enjoyed at the expense of others. In Figure 26 below, financiers luxuriate on the deposits of the excluded poor.[81]

Figure 26: The celebrations of the affluent



Source: *Punch*, 20 March 1886, p. 139.

At another level of society, sharply dressed bookmakers were shown commandeering a table at which to drink their bottles of Ayala champagne.[82] In other images, champagne is used to mock the extravagance of the idle rich or the ignorance of the vulgarians. Thus, the *nouveau riche* 'Sir Gorgius Midas' is depicted as ostentatiously calling for champagne

[80] *Punch*, 19 August 1893, p. 74. 1874 was also the date of the Astley Deep pit explosion that killed 51 miners, see *Manchester Courier*, 16 April 1874, pp. 5-6 for a contemporaneous report.
[81] *Punch*, Christmas 1892, unpaginated, for 'Bah, Bah Black Sheep' showing a speculator with bottles of branded champagne; 20 March 1886, p. 139, for 'Our (Very) Friendly Societies' directors indulging in champagne and pineapples at depositors' expense.
[82] *Punch*, 25 June 1881, p. 291.

as an instrument of patronage or power with the caption suggesting that only 'an Englishman can afford to drink it', whilst the comments of the caddish ''Arrys' (lineal successors to the 'gents' of the 1860s) display pretension and ignorance.[83] Such cartoons may not be depicting actual consumption, but they underline the association of champagne with money and display.

Common to many of these depictions of champagne was the idea of celebration. In the pages of *Punch*, associational dinners of politicians, artists, volunteers, farmers and writers take champagne with evident enjoyment, whilst both rich and poor take sparkling refreshment at race meetings and individuals wager bottles of champagne on the outcome of private bets.[84] In parallel with such public or semi-public events, guests at private celebrations and dinners ('May Merriments', 'Joyous July', 'The Festive Season', New Year's Eve) enjoyed the benefit of champagne. Half the thirty or so private dinners and the great majority of balls and evening parties depicted in *Punch* during this period show champagne bottles or glasses on the table or being handed by servants. With the exception of the race crowds, the drinkers were generally from the middle and upper classes. When lower-middle or working-class consumers were occasionally depicted, the context – even if celebratory – was usually illicit. An 1890 cartoon (Figure 27) showed a slipshod builder sharing a bottle of champagne with the surveyor he has bribed to certify that a wall does not need to be rebuilt. The bottle and glass shape made their choice of celebratory drink clear.

[83] Spielmann, *The History of Punch*, p. 506 claims that 'Sir Gorgius' was 'drawn without exaggeration from real life' by George du Maurier; for Sir Gorgius, see *Punch*, 20 August 1881, p. 78; 7 December 1882, np; 26 July 1890, p. 42. For the ignorance of an 'Arry see 'To Him French Was Unknown', *Punch*, 14 October 1876, p. 164.

[84] See, for example, *Punch*, 17 July 1880, p. 14 for an anniversary dinner of the 'Volunteers' on Wimbledon Common; 7 May 1881, p. 206 for a Royal Academy banquet; 28 April 1883, p. 194 for a 'bottle of Piper' on a bet; 2 June 1888, p. 257 for champagne at the Derby.

Figure 27: Champagne and corruption



Source: *Punch*, 6 September 1890, p. 119.

The majority of *Punch* drinkers were male and middle-aged but neither women nor younger consumers were wholly excluded. Though dinner party images show women with champagne glasses in front of them they were never shown drinking. The only women taking a drink were those who have, in some way, crossed a behavioural boundary; for instance, the woman with a cigarette and a glass in hand declaring to her husband that she is 'dieting on Italian vermouth'. The only female champagne-drinker raising a glass was a sharply-dressed 'Skittish Grandmother'.[85] Younger consumers of champagne were portrayed as members of the 'jeunesses dorées', drinking on their own, with other men or (occasionally) with girls of uncertain background.[86] Thus the overall image of champagne presented through the pages of late nineteenth-century *Punch* was of middle-aged, male drinkers with wealth and power, whose status enabled them to dominate, even exploit, others. This image, which reflected the magazine's turn in the

[85] *Punch*, 17 January 1900, p. 53; 5 March 1892, p. 120.
[86] *Punch*, 28 November 1896, p. 262; 15 September 1883, p. 132.

later nineteenth century towards the upper middle-class establishment of the day, supports both the argument that champagne re-premiumised after the mid-1870s and the contention that it was associated with social climbers such as 'Sir Gorgius' and the ''Arrys'.[87]

The gendering of champagne consumption

A somewhat different perspective on women's consumption of champagne comes from the works of female novelists around the turn of the century. The few direct voices of women writers suggest that champagne was viewed as dangerous: a marker of corruption and hypocrisy, a symbol of unwanted luxury, a provoker of unwelcome amorous attention, an undeniable pick-me-up that could turn to addiction. Thus, in a *Word to Women* (1898), Mrs C.E. Humphry ('Madge') feared that there was a danger that 'girls brought up to drink wine' were at risk of 'learning to like wine too well'.[88] Mary Braddon in *Phantom Fortune* (1883) depicted champagne as a 'universal panacea' that was used to overcome her heroine's 'feeling of exhaustion and prostration which follows days and nights spent in society', but the 'glass of Heidsieck' appears by the end of the novel to have turned to an addiction.[89] Though such sensation novels portrayed women as being at risk of addiction, other sources suggest that champagne was widely accepted as a beneficial stimulant for both sexes.

For men and women caught up in the commercial or social world, especially those in the public eye, champagne was not just a medicinal stimulant but an accepted social 'pick-me-up'. In 1880, the *Dublin Daily Express* editorialised that 'there can be no doubt

[87] For the magazine's increasingly 'gentlemanly view' of the world, see Leary, *Punch Brotherhood*, p. 123.
[88] C.E. Humphry, *A Word to Women* (London, 1898), pp. 64-5.
[89] M.E. Braddon, *Phantom Fortune* (London, 1883), p. 131.

that the busy, active and exciting life which nearly all men and most women, lead in these feverish days lays a tax upon the nerves more than upon the muscles and [that] Champagne helps to repair the mischief, for a time at any rate'.[90] Newnham-Davis reported fifteen years later that '[t]ired man in our atmosphere feels often that champagne is the one wine that will give him his life again' and devoted a subsequent column to dining in the House of Commons with the 'Rising Legislator' who explains that 'I have got to speak tonight and therefore we must have champagne'.[91] This belief in champagne as a stimulant may have been strengthened in the mid-1890s by the launch of Laurent-Perrier's 'Coca-Tonic Champagne', which was advertised as 'a unique nerve tonic and stimulant' for all nerve disorders caused by 'overwork, work, or disease'.[92] Advertisements in London papers claiming that this blend of vintage champagne and coca extract was 'invaluable to those whose looks or constitution suffer from the exertions and excitement of a London season' suggest that women were the target.[93]

What was striking in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the emphasis on the harm done by society's demands on women. In *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), Ella Hepworth Dixon describes how the 'girl [in society] must dance till her feet ache horribly, the room swings round, and the pink dawn comes creeping in behind the drawn blinds and [then] comes the stifling crowded supper room, with indigestible food and sweet champagne; the young men who move nearer and look at her with strange eyes'.[94] Marie Corelli, writing of the 'sham' of marriage in 1898, implicated champagne

[90] *Dublin Daily Express*, 21 May 1885, p. 2. S. Gunn, "Translating Bourdieu: Cultural Capital and the English Middle Class in Historical Perspective," *British Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 1 (2005), p. 54 deals with the emerging split in the late nineteenth century between 'mental culture and manual labour'. Champagne was depicted as the drink for those who worked with their minds.
[91] Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, pp. xx, 186.
[92] For an example of 'Coca-Tonic' advertising, see *Aberdeen Journal*, 5 March 1897, p. 7.
[93] *Bristol Mercury*, 26 May 1894, p. 6; *Illustrated London News*, 20 July 1895, p. 91. A 'doctor's letter' refers to the value of the wine for a female patient.
[94] E. Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of a Modern Woman* (London, 1894), pp. 28-9.

in the ‘sale and bargain’ that she described as the ‘whole raison d'être of the “season”’.[95] Champagne is the most common drink in society novels and this essentially negative presentation may reflect growing awareness of the pressures on women rather than a simple trope of high society habits.[96]

Champagne was a powerful agent in the performance of the manifold incarnations of femininity demanded of women in the Victorian period. As noted in Chapter Three, in both middle-and upper-class households much continued to depend on the dinner parties and balls which remained major opportunities (at least until the easing of social restrictions in the 1880s) for young women (and their parents) to identify, assess and impress a potential marriage partner. Marital alliances were not lightly made, and young women needed to cast off the reserve and shyness demanded of young girls and adopt the more outgoing characteristics demanded of the successful marriage candidate.[97] Hence, dinner parties were competitive performative spaces for young men and women to demonstrate their fitness not just as sexual but also as social or political partners. [98] In this highly ritualised environment, young women of the middle- and upper-classes were in a liminal position, and a number of contemporary accounts suggest that champagne gave young women the confidence to express themselves and their personality, and hence suggested their ability to perform a future role as a successful hostess.[99] Vizetelly, describing a dinner party of the late 1870s, observed that attempts to make conversation with a ‘young lady just out’ elicited only monosyllables. But, he noted, then you hear ‘the

[95] M. Corelli, "The Modern Marriage Market," ed. M. Corelli (London, 1898), p. 31.
[96] J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1994), pp. 25, 31. Harris notes the pressures but doubts (p. 91) the view that ‘marriage in this period was primarily an exercise in economic calculation and emotional repression’.
[97] B.C. Alexander, *Victor Turner Revisited: Ritual as Social Change* (Atlanta, 1991), p. 17. As Gleadle, *British Women*, p. 88, noted, women were on average more than four years younger than their husband.
[98] Griffin, *The Politics of Gender*, p. 190.
[99] As late as 1891, *Queen*, 7 March 1891, p. 382, was reporting that in ‘many aristocratic families […] the young ladies [are] not present at table until they are of an age to be “introduced”’.

magic word “champagne” … and a change comes over the spirit of your vision’. The traditional ‘*more Britannico*’ is overcome and the young lady shows an ‘astounding aptness for repartee’.[100] Neither did the pressures on women to perform on the social stage lessen once they had become established in their own household.

Women as hostesses (and guests) had a crucial role in Victorian society. As Linda Young has shown in her acute account of ‘gentility’, there was a ‘gendered bifurcation of family responsibility [in which] men worked to make money and women spent it to represent the family honour’.[101] In their role as ‘social generals’ (to use Langland’s term) champagne was a means to make social performances a success.[102] As Chapter Three noted, champagne and social success were linked. As guests rather than hostesses, women’s performance was equally important. Although Newnham-Davis’ late nineteenth-century restaurant reviews are ritualised in form and content, they clearly demonstrate the performative skills of his range of female dining companions. The ideal companion is well-dressed, knowledgeably appreciative about the restaurant décor and food and, most importantly, a good conversationalist with the ability to gossip informatively about fellow-diners and to play her part in making the ‘conversational running’.[103] Never is there any hint of the possibility of inebriation or impropriety.

Restraint was presented as an essential component of consumption by both sexes, but it was only women who were given explicit guidelines on acceptable use. *Queen*, the women’s magazine, counselled that a ‘young lady would not drink more than one glass of champagne during dinner [whilst a] married lady would perhaps drink a glass and a half

[100] Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*, p. 262. A reference to a ‘dowager’ suggests an upper-class milieu.
[101] L. Young, "Gentility: A Historical Context for the Material Culture of the Table in the 'Long 19th Century', 1780-1915," in *Table Settings: The Material Culture and Social Context of Dining, AD 1700-1900*, ed. J. Symonds (Oxford, 2010), p. 136.
[102] Langland, *Nobody's Angels*, pp. 9, 40.
[103] Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, passim. For making the 'conversational running', see p. 218 and pp. 33, 168, 186, 198, 213.

of champagne'.[104] Other sources are less explicit about quantity, but conduct books urged similar restrained behaviour for both women and men. Over-indulgence was a dangerous faux pas. In the 1890s, *Manners for Men* made clear that a man who 'exceeds in this way' would not receive a repeat invitation to dinner.[105] The dangers of lack of restraint stretched beyond social disapproval.

Champagne, with its capacity for rapid inebriation, was implicated in sexual misconduct. By the end of the nineteenth century this linkage was increasingly widely reported. Press reports fell into two main categories. First was the association of champagne with women of easy virtue. This, as William Acton's *Prostitution* (first published in 1857) confirms, was a trope dating back at least to the 1850s.[106] In the 1870s and 1880s the provincial press often reported the disorderly houses that were regularly prosecuted for selling alcohol without a licence; in such cases the two most common drinks were champagne and brandy.[107] Visitors to such houses were sometimes offered a 'fizzer' by the owner of the establishment.[108] Champagne also featured in W.T. Stead's series of articles about child prostitution in the *Pall Mall Gazette.*[109] 'Night clubs', which began to feature in press stories from the 1890s onwards, were similarly associated with champagne (usually sold at high prices) and good-looking 'doves' in search of 'the money of other people'.[110] The second category was linked to the 'society' divorce cases

[104] Quoted in *Diss Express*, 3 September 1880, p. 3 and other provincial papers. At this point a bottle of champagne was expected to serve twelve glasses though glasses were beginning to get bigger in this period, see *Aberdeen Mercury*, 4 August 1888, p. 2.
[105] 'A Member of the aristocracy', *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. 104; C.E. Humphry, *Manners for Men*, 2nd ed. (London, 1897), p. 68.
[106] W. Acton, *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities* (London, 1857), p. 102.
[107] See, for example, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1880, p. 8.
[108] See *Leicester Chronicle*, 11 June 1870, p. 7, for the entrapment of a brothel owner who offered her client a 'fizzer'; *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 23 January 1888, p. 3, for 'Immoral Sunderland'.
[109] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 July 1885, p. 4; 8 July 1885, p. 2.
[110] See 'The Corinthian Lady' in *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph*, 18 March 1893, p. 12. This piece, written by R.C. Lehmann, originally appeared in *Punch.*

that were increasingly featured in the national and provincial press in the late nineteenth century.[111] For instance, the *Morning Post* in July 1895 featured two divorce cases in which champagne was implicated. In the first, a pint of champagne delivered to an allegedly adulterous couple was treated as evidence of improper closeness; in the second, a woman's purchase of champagne at a hotel lunch for her presumed lover in Eastbourne was similarly treated as improper despite her claim that her husband would have done the same for the guest.[112] However, there are no signs that such reportage affected the popularity of champagne. The scale and nature of allusions to champagne in *Punch* did not alter; nor did the approving references to the ubiquity of champagne in the conduct books show any change.[113]

Regardless of any reputational shadows, champagne was consistently presented as women's favourite drink. As discussed in Chapter Three, the sweeter taste profile of champagne compared to other wines in the 1860s was the initial basis of the (mostly male) claims for female preference and this claim was consistently repeated through the last decades of the nineteenth century. Not only was champagne presented as women's favourite, but it was, in general, itself gendered female. Poems praise 'My Lady Champagne'; cartoons such as this 1890s drawing (Figure 28) submitted to *Punch* present it as female.

[111] See, for example, the reporting of *Tasker* v *Tasker* in *Morning Post*, 19 July 1895, p. 7; reporting of *Crown* v *Clarke and Watson* in *The Times*, 22 January 1895, p. 3.
[112] For the case of *Worrall* v. *Worrall and Jones* see *Morning Post*, 15 July 1895, p. 7. The defendant's behaviour was characterised by the opposing lawyer as 'very suspicious'.
[113] See G.E. Campbell, *Etiquette of Good Society*, revised ed. (London, 1893), pp. 112, 137, 142, 173, 198 for the use of champagne.

Figure 28: Miss Bottleneck



Source: Spielmann, *The History of Punch*, p. 556.

Figure 29: Veuve Clicquot fancy dress



Source: Champagne bottle fancy dress ensemble, c. 1904, Fashion Museum, Bath and North East Somerset Council.

There was a vogue in the 1880s and 1890s for women to go to fancy dress balls dressed as champagne bottles (see Figure 29 above).[114] The two press articles that give brand names cite Veuve Clicquot, whose wine was described by Henry Vizetelly as 'light, delicate, elegant and fragrant'.[115] Words such as 'elegant', 'charming', 'soft' and 'delicate' frequently recur in Victorian descriptions of champagne and strengthen the

[114] I have traced six references in the press to wearing or making champagne fancy dress for women, including *Queen*, 24 January 1891, p. 141. The vast majority of the 400 or so fancy dress costumes detailed in A. Holt, *Fancy Dresses Described, or, What to Wear at Fancy Balls*, 5th ed. (London, 1887), p. 51, are of named female characters from history or fiction. The only costume of a specific product is 'A Bottle of Champagne'. Fancy dress events appear to have become fashionable in the 1860s, but the press linkage of fancy dress and champagne only occurred in the 1880s and 1890s. BNA analysis conducted 30 October 2017.

[115] *Manchester Courier*, 16 January 1890, p. 5; *Morning Post*, 21 February 1884, p. 5. The other brand cited was Jules Mumm. A Veuve Clicquot fancy dress costume from the early twentieth century survives in the Bath Museum of Costume. For Clicquot wines, see Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*, p. 178.

argument that the wine was associated with contemporary ideals of femininity.[116] Nor was the gendering of champagne confined to imagery. That women's patronage was important to champagne sales was a common trope of the trade in the 1890s and early 1900s. For example, the London merchants, Southard & Co. stated confidently that 'as long as there is a lady in the land, we think that there is no fear that the consumption of Champagne will disappear; for whilst many a host will not hesitate to give his men friends Claret, Burgundy, or Port, where is the man who would dare entertain his lady friends without Champagne?'[117] Certainly, when dining with a single female companion, the drink chosen by Newnham-Davis or his guest was (with two unsurprising exceptions) always champagne.[118]

Although champagne's acceptability to women would have encouraged its consumption in both public and private spheres, it remained a wine with firm masculine approval. There is no indication from *Punch* or the pages of the press that men rejected champagne. Men celebrating or dining together without female company took champagne as a matter of course. The *Dublin Daily Express* said in 1885 that 'any one who has the most cursory acquaintance with public places of resort must have noticed how friends in a certain class of society, meeting casually, will "crack" a bottle of champagne, as in old days they would have ordered two glasses of whisky'.[119] Sherry remained the only other commonly consumed wine with both male and female approval. Like champagne, it could

[116] For 'charming' see Alfred Roederer advertisement for a wine with 'charming dry flavour, lovely bouquet, delicacy and finesse' in *Daily News*, 18 December 1899, p. 7, see also *Manchester Courier*, 26 April 1884, p. 9 and *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 13 December 1882, p. 2; for 'elegant' see the 'Ladies Column' of *Wrexham Advertiser*, 28 April 1894, p. 2; for 'pretty' see Cockburn advertisement for 'a good and pretty wine' in *Scotsman*, 28 August 1880, p. 1 and M.E. Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (London, 1862), vol. 2, p. 61 for 'pretty bottles of Veuve Clicquot and Moët'.
[117] Quoted from *Ridley's*, 12 October 1889, p. 701.
[118] The two exceptions are a young girl ('Miss Bright-Eyes') taken to her first restaurant dinner at her father's suggestion who takes lemonade and a would-be novelist looking for social colour. See Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, pp. 78-9, 60.
[119] *Dublin Daily Express*, 21 May 1885, p. 2.

be taken either as a sweet or dry wine.[120] It is probable that men drank more champagne; it is possible they preferred dry wine, though several late nineteenth-century commentators suggested this preference was for the sake of appearance. According to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (in a frequently reprinted article), 'most men – unless they be daily drinkers of this most pleasant wine – prefer it moderately sweet'.[121] The shift to dry wine noted above – which was also adopted or affected by some women – was a key element in this general acceptance and will be explored further below.

Champagne in the rituals of Victorian society

A continuing marker of male enthusiasm for champagne was its role in both ordinary and extra-ordinary celebrations. Though champagne has become strongly linked with celebration, there has been little work on the nature of this link. The most significant is the brief study by the anthropologist Mary Anne Thornton on the role of sparkling wine in an Austrian village.[122] Thornton observed that sekt was associated with formal celebrations whilst schnapps was associated with friendship, intimacy and mutual support. More recent studies have suggested that champagne is generally linked to celebration, but the limited analysis tends to ascribe this to the visual appeal of champagne's bubbles and its capacity for rapid inebriation and consequent disinhibition of drinkers.[123] As noted in Chapter Three, the historical evidence shows conclusively that

[120] For a sweet sherry described as a 'ladies' wine' and a dry sherry described as a 'gentleman's wine', see *Scotsman*, 8 April 1872, p. 3.
[121] *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 25 October 1884, p. 2. The piece was reprinted in at least eight other papers, including *Edinburgh Evening News*, 5 November 1884, p. 3.
[122] M.A. Thornton, "Sekt Versus Schnapps in an Austrian Village," in *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*, ed. M. Douglas (London, 2003), pp. 102-12; see also A. Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia," *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 3 (1981), p. 508. Appadurai's concept of homogenising and heterogenising foods makes a similar point. The former increase intimacy; the latter indicate distance and status.
[123] S.-S. Chang, "Having Champagne without Celebration?," *European Journal of Marketing* 48, no. 11 (2014), passim.

champagne was linked to public celebrations from the early nineteenth century, including events such as balls which were at least semi-public. The association with private celebrations is less conclusive but suggests that champagne took until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century to shift from a wine of public celebration to one of private celebration.

There appear to have been two further significant shifts in the 1870s and 1880s. The first was the adoption of champagne for the small celebrations of daily life that, in the late nineteenth century, became almost routine for sections of the British middle class. As Barbara Fiese's work on families has shown, routines are repeated over time, sometimes in private, sometimes in public. Typically, they encode instrumental communication or behaviour. [124] Though routines principally serve to get things done, they may nonetheless be celebratory, as the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* commented in its 1890 attack on the 'interchange of liquid civilities', giving as an example the 'bottle of champagne shared at a fashionable club in celebration of some unimportant event such as an unexpected meeting'.[125] By contrast, rituals are vital components in the stories that people use to affirm their identity. Rituals imply an audience; they are used for symbolic communication with others.

The second significant shift in this period was the adoption of champagne for more intimate family rituals such as Christmas. John Gillis has argued that the mid-century was a period of '*re*ritualization' as Victorian middle-class society developed a series of rituals such as the 'Victorian Christmas' designed to reinforce the symbolic value of 'home'.[126] The limited evidence of private celebrations does not allow us easily

[124] B.H. Fiese et al., "A Review of 50 Years of Research on Naturally Occurring Family Routines and Rituals: Cause for Celebration?," *Journal of Family Psychology* 16, no. 4 (2002), p. 382.
[125] *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1890, p. 7.
[126] Gillis, "Ritualization of Middle-Class Family Life," p. 214. Gillis has argued that the 'ritualization' of everyday life took place in the second half of the nineteenth century; Gillis, "Making Time for Family," p. 8.

to determine the role that champagne played in the intimate celebrations of families, couples or individuals. The evidence from novels and British newspapers in the period 1850-1900 suggests that the champagne habit took many decades to fully colonise Christmas festivities.[127] In the 1850s and 1860s, press advertisements for Christmas hampers were dominated by port, sherry, brandy and whisky. Champagne was sometimes offered as an added inducement to purchase in the form of a promotional 'gift'.[128] An extensive sampling of the British provincial press in the period 1860-79 revealed no articles referring to champagne consumption at Christmas. Anthony Trollope's *Orley Farm* (1862), which features five separate Christmas meals by characters of different social positions, makes no mention of champagne. Port is the most common festive drink, with claret, brandy and whisky also mentioned.[129] In the 1870s and 1880s, the first articles (as distinct from advertisements) appeared that suggested a linkage between Christmas and champagne consumption, though many of these are incidental references from court cases or jokes about the quality of champagne offered by 'economical dinner-givers'.[130] Such references became more frequent in the 1890s and there was an increasingly widespread assumption that 'Christmas festivities' would involve champagne.[131]

However, until the turn of the century, champagne was not represented as a wine of wholly private celebration. The earliest literary representation of such private

[127] The following remarks are based on a random sampling of 250 press references in the BNA to 'champagne + Christmas' in each of the decades in the period 1850-1900, analysis conducted 1 July 2017.
[128] *Wigan Observer*, 18 December 1869, p. 7.
[129] A. Trollope, *Orley Farm* (London, 1951), pp. 204-47.
[130] For example, *Aberdeen People's Journal*, 11 May 1878, p. 6 included a reference to two bottles of champagne bought for Christmas and New Year by a clerk accused of murdering his wife. For the 'economical dinner-giver', see *Worcester Journal*, 26 January 1874, p. 6. The *Morning Post*, 26 December 1884, p. 4 referred to the 'champagne sparkle' in the eye of a 'spinster aunt' unaccustomed to alcohol.
[131] For example, a journalist takes tea in preference to champagne since 'Christmas is Christmas and a liver is a liver'. See *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 12 January 1895, p. 16.

celebration appears to be an 1898 short story which depicted a poor married couple who pawn a gift to buy a 'ready cooked chicken, some slices of tongue and a small bottle of champagne' for a Christmas dinner.[132] Two years later, in a story entitled 'The Promotion', the narrator, a commercial clerk, recounts how, after being promoted, he buys a small bottle of champagne to celebrate: 'it cost half a crown but the price for this wine is always pretty stiff. I also took back with me in my bag a tinned tongue and some pears […] I need not add that supper that night was a perfect banquet'.[133] The paucity of references reinforces the argument that champagne was primarily a wine of public or semi-public celebration.

Champagne had been part of the 'extraordinary celebrations' of the wealthy from the early nineteenth century and before. This did not change. What changed was the depth of champagne's penetration into the social and commercial life of the British middle class. In the last third of the nineteenth century, champagne conquered middle-class drinkers with no heritage of champagne consumption. In *Facts about Champagne and other Sparkling Wines,* Vizetelly's hyperbolic paean to champagne, the author went so far as to claim that its 'eclipse would almost threaten a collapse of our social system'.[134] For Vizetelly, it was the 'essential adjunct' not just to the collective celebrations incumbent on the opening of railways, the launching of ships, inauguration of public buildings and the entertainment of foreign dignitaries, but also to celebrations of self-interest. He instanced its role in loosening purse strings, launching new products, ensuring the success of first nights at the theatre and reviving flagging bidders at auction sales. It was central

[132] *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 26 December 1898, p. 4.
[133] B. Pain, *Eliza Stories* (London, 1984), p. 53; G. Grossmith and W. Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* (Ware, 1994), pp. 168-9. The Pooter stories of champagne celebrations predate Pain's stories by around twelve years but the use of champagne is clearly for the purposes of display and status rather than for private celebration; see C. Hosgood, "Mrs. Pooter's Purchase: Lower Middle-Middle-Class Consumerism and the Sales, 1870-1914," in *Gender, Civic Culture, and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, ed. A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (Manchester, 1999), pp. 146-50.
[134] Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*, pp. 108-13.

to the celebrations occasioned by successfully rigging markets or fixing horse races. Contemporary press reports and comments substantiate each of Vizetelly's claims for champagne's centrality.

The proliferation of associational celebrations in Britain during the last third of the nineteenth century enabled men to demonstrate their place in local and national society. They also provided the opportunity to renew friendships and to make useful connections. Sports club celebrations – Britain's apparently distinctive contribution to champagne celebrations – played an important role.[135] After the mid-1880s, the ritual of drinking champagne from the winner's cup as it went around the room became a common trope, with newspaper reports of the period linking champagne with football, cricket, rifle shooting, cycling, athletics and baseball.[136] This practice, which presumably borrowed from the well-established loving cup tradition, was not mentioned by Vizetelly and the newspaper evidence suggests it post-dates his book. Such celebrations were often linked to the exercise of local power. When a Chelmsford football team won the 'Charity Cup', it was the Mayor who paid for it to be filled with champagne.[137] Suggestions that the champagne was paid for by a local businessman or politician reinforce the argument that such celebrations reflected not just a sense of belonging but also the middle-class desire to impose a level of social control through patronage and sporting discipline (which Simon Gunn has noted in his work on Victorian public culture).[138] It is noteworthy that

[135] See Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 187, for the 'breath-taking speed' at which sports clubs grew.
[136] The earliest reference yet found is for the Sussex Football Association Challenge Cup, which was filled with champagne and drunk at a dinner held in April 1884. See *Mid-Sussex Times*, 15 April 1884, p. 5. For cricket, see *Sheffield Independent*, 26 January 1880, p. 4; for rifle shooting, *Portsmouth Evening News*, 30 May 1890, p. 2; for cycling, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 20 June 1890, p. 6; for athletics, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 19 June 1900, p. 7; for baseball, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 1900, p. 4.
[137] *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 6 May 1910, p. 3.
[138] See Gunn, *Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 27. The involvement of Tory democrats in popular culture and sport in the 1880s and 1890s supports this analysis. See J. Lawrence, "Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914," *English Historical Review* 108, no. 428 (1993), pp. 638-9.

there are no such reports dealing with the lower-status sports of pedestrianism or prize-fighting.[139]

The alignment of champagne and horse-racing that Vizetelly observed is indisputable.[140] An article from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, reprinted in the *Hull Packet* in 1880, remarked that when the 'Englishman is celebrating high festival he considers it the proper thing to drink champagne and eat lobster salad [which] consequently appear in profusion at all our steeplechases'.[141] *Punch* cartoons repeatedly make the same point. However, apart from some secondary brands, such as Pfungst's Carte D'Or, which advertised the availability of their champagne at named racetracks in racing periodicals such as the *Sporting Times*, there is no evidence for the manufacturers or their British agents attempting to promote celebratory rituals of any form or any sport. In this, British practice differed from that in France.[142]

The public banquet was a strong British tradition which was as powerful in the last quarter of the century as in the previous quarter. The London *Standard* declared in 1880 that 'everything, indeed, is an excuse for a dinner. […] A dinner celebrates the downfall of a Ministry, the discovery of a new planet, or a previously unknown sea; it welcomes a Monarch and does honour to the election of a parish beadle'.[143] Champagne, as Sheriff Campbell Smith observed in a letter published in the *Dundee Courier*, was a 'wonderful solvent of the starch and buckram that superabound in all the professions'.[144] Vizetelly also commented enthusiastically on champagne's ability to dissolve English reserve which he saw as central to the appeal of champagne in the British market. There was a further motive: champagne's ability to loosen the purse-strings of dinner guests. By

[139] W. Baker, "The State of British Sport History," *Journal of Sport History* 10, no. 1, pp. 58-60.
[140] See also Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 162.
[141] *Hull Packet*, 19 April 1880, p. 4.
[142] *Sporting Times*, 21 March 1885, p. 8.
[143] London *Standard*, 10 August 1880, p. 2.
[144] *Dundee Courier*, 10 February 1890, p. 2.

their response to the toastmaster's appeals, men demonstrated that they were prepared to pay their way in society.[145] Such dinners, like the sports clubs' celebrations, were exercises not just in belonging but also in power and patronage.

Celebratory dinners were for the wealthy and well connected of local society, rather than the general populace, but by the turn of the century public celebrations that involved much of the British population had developed. An article in the *Hull Daily Mail* in April 1897, under the heading 'Loyalty and Champagne', predicted that champagne would be the 'Diamond Jubilee Drink' and claimed, correctly, that 'a very much larger quantity of champagne has been sold in England this season than has been known for a long time'.[146] The relief of Ladysmith and the lifting of the siege of Mafeking both sparked street celebrations with champagne.[147] For example, the 'working classes' in Bakewell enjoyed 'almost unlimited quantities of champagne' after Ladysmith whilst a 'shilling champagne supper was given by the local Tory party in Hastings to celebrate the relief of Mafeking.[148] It is probable that such celebrations were driven by political calculation, but they also demonstrate how champagne had become a wine of popular as well as elite celebration.

As this section has made clear, the representation (and usage) of champagne was complex, even conflicted. It was represented in the press as a wine of luxury, power and

[145] Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*, p. 263. Champagne was 'that great unloosener not merely of tongues but of purse-strings as is well-known to those secretaries of charitable institutions which set the wine flowing earliest'.
[146] *Hull Daily Mail*, 2 April 1897, p. 4. The merchant J. R. Parkington claimed that the years 1896 and 1897 were the two highest ever for champagne importation. See *Morning Post*, 21 April 1898, p. 8. The *South Wales Echo*, 2 April 1897, p. 2 reported that Heidsieck were shipping 8-10,000 cases per week to meet the demand.
[147] *Derbyshire Times*, 14 March 1900, p. 6 (Ladysmith); *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 26 May 1900, p. 3 (Mafeking). For a broader perspective on 'Mafficking' and the limited political significance of the Mafeking celebrations, see G. Stedman Jones, "Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class," *Journal of Social History* 7, no. 4 (1974), pp. 460-1.
[148] *Hastings and St Leonard's Observer*, 26 May 1900, p. 2.

privilege – the drink of powerful men. Yet even in the press this representation was ambiguous. An 1877 Christmas short story depicted the wardens of a workhouse drinking champagne with such gusto that they fail to hear the 'frail taps' of an orphan boy who consequently freezes to death on their doorstep.[149] The flaunted luxury was achieved at the expense of the poor and disadvantaged. The power could be greedy and abusive, turned against women and excluding of the lower classes of society. The shadow of addiction lay over its use as a medically approved stimulant by society women. The successes it celebrated were clouded by the taint of corruption. It remained a wine of public display rather than intimate celebration. The success, power and privilege that champagne encoded were increasingly manifest to any reader of the British press in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a time when champagne became absorbed more deeply into the rituals of British society, more clearly linked to the performance of femininity, and more explicitly linked (as the *Punch* cartoons show) to the power of money. To put a 'crack brand' of champagne on the table was to assert wealth and status. The final sections of this chapter will explore how champagne functioned as a marker of status at every level of society.

The marking of status

The society of the late nineteenth century was insecure. As Fromer has suggested, in a middle-class environment of 'mutable social status and indeterminate signs of moral character', daily consumption was the only 'reliable guide' to social position.[150] Champagne both affirms and tests her insight. I will argue in this section that whilst champagne was indeed a guide to social position, it was also an instrument of social

[149] *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 22 December 1877, p. 3. Figure 26 above shows a similar trope of poverty knocking forlornly at the door of the powerful.
[150] Fromer, *Necessary Luxury*, p. 19.

striving. The desire to consolidate, even to improve, social position was perhaps the primary source of the Victorian obsession with consumption and material position described by Matthew Hilton.[151] In this fluid society, individuals sought both to celebrate their membership of the group and to enhance their own status within it. Status was expressed in many ways but primarily it was through those with whom you associated and what you consumed where and with whom. For consumption to affect status it has to be visible to others.

In the late Victorian and early Edwardian period the ordering of society resists easy generalisation.[152] Though the terms upper, middle and lower class came into everyday use between 1880 and 1914, precise definition of these terms (as noted in the Introduction) has proved problematic.[153] As Gunn has argued, by the late nineteenth century, the middle class denoted 'a mode of existence rather than an instrument of collective action'.[154] It is generally agreed that 'once rigid distinctions of class and rank seemed to be rapidly eroding' and lifestyle was becoming an increasingly powerful mode of differentiation. Bell and Gunn have argued that '[d]rawing lines, distinguishing between oneself and those below and above one, was very important to the late Victorian middle classes, perhaps precisely because many of them felt so uncertain about their own status'.[155] The work of Perkin, Cannadine, Crossick, Loeb and, more recently, Gunn

[151] Hilton, "Legacy of Luxury," p. 101.
[152] D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven and London, 1998), p. 121. Cannadine argued that there was 'no such thing as the late Victorian and Edwardian middle class: it was far too protean, varied and amorphous for that'; G. Crossick, *The Lower Middle-Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London, 1977), pp. 11-12, argued that even though there had been 'very little work on the middle class', finding a clear definition was problematic.
[153] Gunn, "Translating Bourdieu," p. 53.
[154] Gunn, "Translating Bourdieu," p. 24.
[155] S. Gunn and R. Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London, 2003), p. 44; see also D. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, Circa 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995). Though Wahrman's focus is on the first half of the century, his study is still relevant to discussion of the issue.

suggests a striving yet frequently precarious middle class.[156] This group – perhaps ten per cent of the population at most and earning between £300-£1000 per annum – was divided 'vertically as well as horizontally'.[157] In Perkin's depiction they were 'ever more graduated in income and status [and] came to express those finer distinctions in prosperity and society position physically'.[158] Comportment and consumption were defining attributes of that 'mode of existence'. The 'external image […] was an essential proof of gentility' and entertaining at home or in public places was central to the projection of image.[159] Possessions and consumption became a powerful means to signal social position and social aspirations.

That luxury possessions can be used to denote status is an idea with a long history. Veblen was not the first to explore the idea, but his 1899 concept of 'conspicuous consumption' has remained a powerful reference point for extensive debates on what Hirsch has termed 'positional goods' and the mechanics of 'signalling devices'.[160] Though these debates continue, a series of general points are largely undisputed. Firstly, consumption is socially dependent. As Hirsch put it, 'the satisfaction that individuals derive from goods and services depends […] not only on their own consumption but on consumption by others as well'.[161] Thus, to be effective, positional goods must be visible

[156] Crossick, *The Lower Middle-Class*, p. 21. His judgment that 'individual ambition at work was built centrally into the employment atmosphere' has not been challenged.
[157] Perkin, *Professional Society*, p. 83; Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, p. 3.
[158] Perkin, *Professional Society*, pp. 27, 29.
[159] Satire though they are, Mr Pooter's social engagements and social mishaps make this point clearly. See Grossmith and Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, passim.
[160] T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London 1924); For the 'positional economy', see F. Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (London, 1977), pp. 27-9. N.J. Ireland, "On Limiting the Market for Status Signals," *Journal of Public Economics* 53, no. 1 (1994), pp. 91-2.
[161] Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth*, p. 1.

to others.[162] Secondly, the more expensive the good, the more effective the signal.[163] In Arjun Appadurai's stimulating definition, luxury goods are those whose principal use is 'rhetorical and social'.[164]

Though modern discussion of the concept of luxury has largely rejected the binary distinction of 'necessary' and 'luxury', there is no commonly agreed definition of luxury.[165] However, luxuries are typically classed as 'indulgent', 'refined' and 'sensuous'; moreover, importantly, most writers agree that luxury products serve to differentiate consumers.[166] Appadurai suggested in 1986 that luxury goods are 'incarnated signs' in a special register of consumption characterised by restriction to elites, complexity of acquisition, semiotic virtuosity, specialised knowledge required to consume and high degree of linkage to body, person and personality.[167] Kapferer and Bastien reject the concept of a continuum or spectrum of luxury, since luxury must necessarily stand apart from 'standard' consumer goods in order to fulfil its function as a social marker, and they argue that its role is to create social stratification. For them, the 'DNA of luxury […] is the symbolic desire (albeit often repressed) to belong to a superior class'.[168] Although modern marketers such as Kapferer and Bastien agree that luxury

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[162] A. Chao and J.B. Schor, "Empirical Tests of Status Consumption: Evidence from Women's Cosmetics," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 19, no. 1 (1998), p. 124, find that the higher the visibility of the item the greater the tendency to 'status buy'; L.S. Bagwell and B.D. Bernheim, "Veblen Effects in a Theory of Conspicuous Consumption," *The American Economic Review* 86, no. 3 (1996), pp. 366-7, confirm this finding.

[163] Ireland, "Status Signals," p. 91, affirms that 'signals have to be costly to be credible'. G. Corneo and O. Jeanne, "Conspicuous Consumption, Snobbism and Conformism," *Journal of Public Economics* 66, no. 1 (October 1997), pp. 63-4, confirm this assertion.

[164] A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 38. He rejects the view that luxury goods are simply those which are not 'necessities'.

[165] C. Tynan, S. McKechnie, and C. Chhuon, "Co- Creating Value for Luxury Brands," *Journal of Business Research* 63, no. 11 (2010), p. 1157. The authors note the differing definitions from marketeers and academics and suggest - against much scholarly opinion - that there is a continuum from ordinary to luxury.

[166] For 'indulgent', see Berry, *Idea of Luxury*, p. 39; for 'sensuous', see Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism*, p. 60; for 'refined', see van der Veen, "When Is Food a Luxury?," p. 406.

[167] Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*, p. 38. These tests will be examined in Chapter Five.

[168] J.-N. Kapferer and V. Bastien, "The Specificity of Luxury Management: Turning Marketing Upside Down," *Journal of Brand Management* 16, no. 5-6 (2009), p. 314.

goods must have a strong 'personal and hedonistic component', they confirm that their primary role is to 'convert the raw material that is money into […] social stratification'.[169] Though some of Veblen's examples of 'conspicuous consumption' are now outdated (for example, knowledge of the 'occult sciences'), his concept remains highly relevant. It takes in the power of 'non-productive consumption of time' (in which he tellingly includes 'the latest proprieties of dress, furniture and equipage'), the power of the 'limited edition' and the importance of 'training and the formation of right habits of thought with respect to what may be called the physiognomy of goods'.[170]

Champagne in the late nineteenth century very closely fits the criteria outlined for effective positional goods.[171] Firstly, both the bottle and its label were clearly visible on the table. Secondly, as we have seen, there was a clear brand/price ladder. Consumers with any interest in the market knew which brands were the most expensive and most prestigious. Thirdly, though it was widely available in non-vintage form, the creation and marketing of vintage-dated wines (Veblen's 'limited editions') in the period after the launch of the Pommery 1874 gave champagne the 'illusion of scarcity'.[172] Furthermore, the premium brands of champagne met Veblen's insistence that the luxury consumer must believe that by paying more he was consuming a higher quality product.[173] Anticipating Trentmann's stress on the importance of understanding the 'pleasure of consuming', Loeb has suggested that in this period the middle class shed its 'puritanical focus for a more

[169] Kapferer and Bastien, "Specificity of Luxury Management," p. 314.
[170] Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, pp. 41, 45, 163-4, 157.
[171] Champagne meets most, though possibly not all, of Appadurai's tests of luxury products. See Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*, p. 38.
[172] B. Catry, "The Great Pretenders: The Magic of Luxury Goods," *Business Strategy Review* 14, no. 3 (2003), p. 10. Limited editions, according to Catry, represented the shift from 'actual to more virtual supply constraints'; the work of Vigneron and Johnson, "Measuring Perceptions of Brand Luxury," pp. 486-7, confirms that not all luxury brands are equal and that perceived rarity is vital to luxury brand success.
[173] Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, p. 73.

hedonistic emphasis'.[174] Champagne was light in alcohol but a pleasure to drink.[175] It was also highly flexible (to use another of Trentman's criteria).[176] Champagne could be served at any time of the day from breakfast to midnight and beyond; it could be consumed on its own or with meals; it was appreciated by men and women. Lastly, dry champagne supports the contention of both Veblen and Bourdieu that products which signal the users' sophistication are essential to create distinction and differentiation. Gunn has further emphasised the importance of the body as an instrument of cultural capital.[177] Thus in 1881 an 'enthusiast on dry side of fizzies' (to quote the *Hampshire Telegraph*) reported proudly of his 'truly magnificent' Pommery Brut 1874 that he 'had four men to dine with me yesterday, and not one of them could drink it'.[178] The sub text here is that none of his guests had had the long experience which Victorians deemed necessary to appreciate a truly dry wine. This combination of attributes – some inherent in the product, others engineered by the marketers – made champagne the perfect drink for those wanting to display their sophistication and their status.

The many-layered pursuit of status occurs at all levels in society. As Paul Johnson has put it, 'virtually all people, even the very poor, use their power to consume not just to meet basic needs […] but also to define their social position'.[179] Sociologists of status distinguish between the local, societal and national level. The local applies to those who are at approximately the same level of society, such as friendship and family groups. The

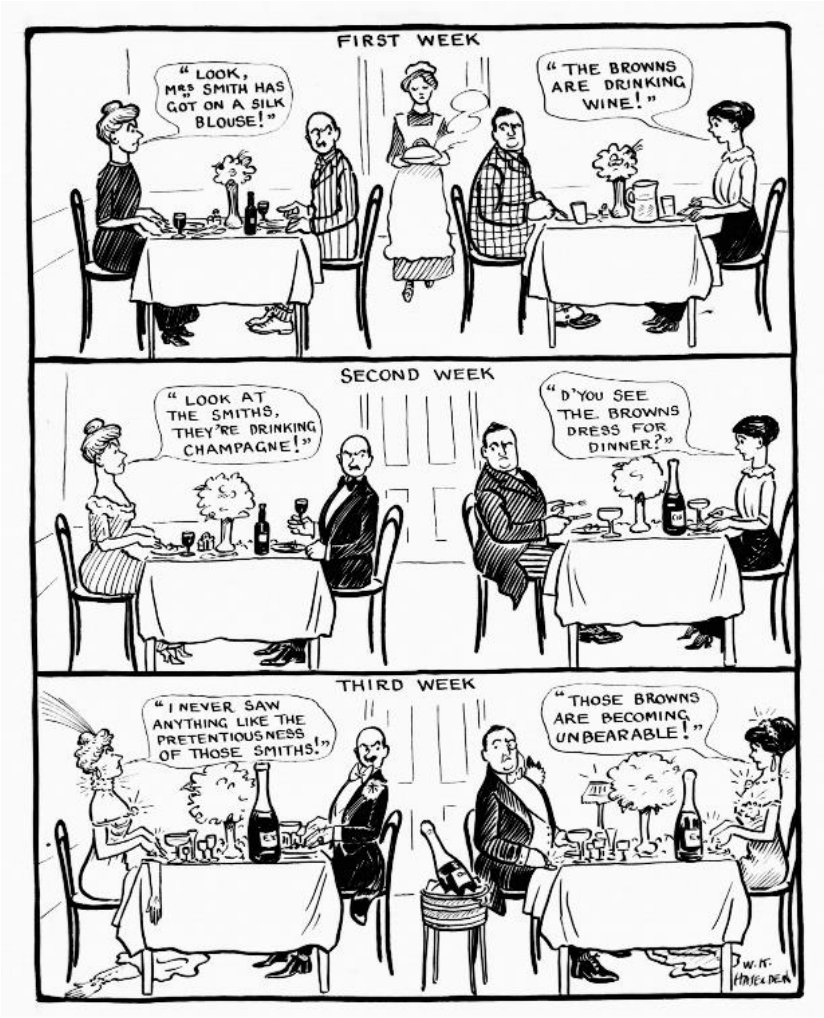
[174] M.J. Huggins, "More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 3 (2000), p. 586; Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, p. 3.
[175] Frequent articles in the last quarter of the nineteenth century noted that champagne had less alcohol than most other wines and spirits. Thus, *Arbroath Herald*, 26 December 1895, p. 5, 'every pint of port, sherry, or Madeira contains four ounces of alcohol; every pint of champagne three ounces'. Though light in alcohol, champagne is quick to inebriate as the embedded CO^2 pushes the alcohol into the bloodstream more speedily.
[176] Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, pp. 13, 80.
[177] Gunn, "Translating Bourdieu," p. 60.
[178] *Hampshire Telegraph*, 8 January 1881, p. 6.
[179] P. Johnson, "Conspicuous Consumption and Working-Class Culture in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 38 (1988), p. 29.

societal level is when an individual or household aspires to move above what Ireland has termed their 'true status type'.[180] The pursuit of status can also involve a claim for national superiority. I will argue that each of these three levels is relevant to the case of champagne. Though the data from champagne house sales provide circumstantial support for many of these claims, I also make use of evidence from novels and the periodical press.

At the local level champagne was used to affirm status within a known group. The champagne-only dinner that John Galsworthy (the son of a wine merchant) provided for his fictional Forsyte family party illustrates this mindset. Writing in 1908 about the 1880s, Galsworthy described how, after a glass of sherry with the soup, nothing but dry champagne was served. In the world that Galsworthy depicts, '[e]verything from sculpture to champagnes was assessed for price and worth' – but only the champagne is branded.[181] At a lower level of society, W. K. Haselden's *Daily Mirror* cartoon of 1911 (Figure 30) makes a similar case. Two couples, unknown to each other, but apparently of similar position try in their turn to outdo the other – with champagne as the end point.

[180] Ireland, "Status Signals," p. 91.
[181] J. Galsworthy, *Man of Property* (London, 1970), pp. 24, 32, 97. Heidsieck and Veuve Clicquot are named brands. Galsworthy's father was a successful wine merchant who did business with Adolphe Hubinet; CCH, 5 September 1867.

Figure 30: Social competition at the Central Hall, 1911



Source: *Daily Mirror*, 29 November 1911, 'When they all dine together at Central Hall'. Note that the 'Smiths' have a second bottle in the ice-pail in the final week.

In this example, the social gains are presumably transitory. When the holidays finish the couples will separate. The champagne has done its positional work without the need for a branded wine. However, should the competition be to establish or reaffirm a place in the next level up of local or urban society, champagne offered two mechanisms for social advantage.

Firstly, the known ladder of champagne brands and prices allowed hosts to signal their wealth and their claim to status by selecting a specific wine bearing a known name

or vintage date. To 'In Vino Veritas', an 1882 correspondent to *The Times*, the 'preposterous figures now quoted, for the sole pleasure of a fashionable brand' were proof of consumers' gullibility.[182] Gilbey's 1879 decision (see page 185 above) to remove the labels from their own brand of champagne strongly suggests their fear that the Castle brand would send an unwanted 'signal' to the guests that the host had saved money at their expense. With 'vintage Wine being more than ever a branded article whose market value is known', the presence of such a wine reinforced the message about the hosts' financial resources. *Ridley's* said of such consumers that:

> They are told it is the proper thing to have such and such a vintage and such and such a brand; but whether it is the worst cuvée, or the Shipper's fourth or fifth quality Wine, never enters their head. They put it on the table as so and so's 1884's; they think they have done the right thing and are perfectly happy.[183]

Such evidence is, of course, not conclusive. The wine might have been purchased purely for household use, but no *Punch* cartoon shows a household meal with champagne; it is either taken on its own or as part of a social dinner of some form.

Second, at the level of society, was the practice of associating champagne with British and foreign royalty which intensified in the late nineteenth century. Champagne advertisers and publicists tried hard to foster this link, and their practices will be explored further in Chapter Five.[184] The references became far more numerous and encompassed both advertising and public relations.[185] Such 'puffs' focused not on the preference for champagne but on the brands of royal choice. For instance, an 1885 piece in the *Hotel Mail* puffed Pommery's 1880 as the wine of the Prince of Wales, and Wachter's Royal Charter 1878 as Princess Alexandra's.[186] Wachter advertised extensively the patronage of

[182] *Ridley's*, 12 June 1882, p. 194; Quoted from *The Times*, 9 June 1882, p. 4.
[183] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1893, p. 217.
[184] *Guernsey Star*, 21 January 1883, p. 4.
[185] See *Cork Constitution*, 13 July 1878, p. 1, for Binet's advertising of their wine as the 'Great Fashionable Dinner wine, the Wine of the Elite'.
[186] Reported in *Ridley's*, 12 January 1885, p 26.

the Queen and the Prince of Wales.[187] There is no direct evidence for the effectiveness of such promotional messages, but the volume of such communication suggests the advertisers were convinced of its value. As the 1889 letter to *Ridley's* noted, such royal endorsement might well persuade the 'credulous but inexperienced Provincial of easy means'.

The shift to drier wine noted in Chapter Three appears to have reached its extreme in the late nineteenth century. In 1867, the Pommery agent Adolphe Hubinet had correctly forecast to his principals the advent of 'la vogue en Angleterre pour les vins secs', but by the 1890s he was convinced that the professed British liking for dry wine was pretence intended to display sophistication. In 1894, when very little wine was shipped to Britain with more than 2% dosage, he reported on his meeting with one of the 'rare' English consumers who truly liked dry wine.[188] The consumer press agreed. The *Guernsey Star* described how when:

> the fashion [for dry wine] went to the extremes, [it was] pathetic but amusing also to watch the wry faces of ladies while they sipped wine which they would have confessed to be positively disagreeable if they had spoken out their minds.[189]

The following year, the London *Standard* wrote in reference to dry wine that 'it is astonishing how people get reconciled to drinking anything, provided it be the fashion to do so'.[190] An article in the *Caterer* referred to a 'cult' of dry wine.[191] A turn-of-the-century article suggested that:

[187] See, for example, *Sporting Life*, 25 April 1896, p. 4.
[188] CCH, 28 December 1867; 30 January 1894. In Hubinet's view, such wines had to be kept for a decade before they could be drunk for pleasure ('sans se tenir à la table').
[189] *Guernsey Star*, 21 October 1884, p. 4.
[190] London *Standard*, 21 May 1885 quoted in *Ridley's*, 12 June 1885, p. 238.
[191] See *Ridley's*, 12 August 1892, p. 451.

> those who are new to London should bear in mind that it is now considered the thing for even young girls to be *difficile* epicures and sound judges of wine. The really fashionable woman no longer drinks sweet champagne.[192]

These articles confirm a general trend which reflected not only a desire to keep up with the fashion of the day but also a determination to differentiate the consumer from the common run of drinkers – another example of Leibenstein's 'snob' effect.[193]

At the national level, dry champagne was also at the centre of a British claim to culinary superiority over France. In her work on tea, Fromer has shown how 'the power of English identity [was affirmed] through the consumption of global commodities'. Britain took pride in the economic resources that enabled it to be a 'consumer of the world's goods'.[194] The champagne discourse was subtly different. At the core of the argument was the British preference for dry wine. It was accepted that, as Tovey put it in 1870, 'a dry Champagne must be a perfect wine'. He noted it was in the producer's 'pecuniary interest […] that a taste for sweet wine should predominate' because sugar covered up defects, but, according to *Ridley's*, the dry wines drunk in England 'must be, and are, composed of the finest and most expensive growths of the Marne'.[195] 'For once', claimed a contributor to the *Saturday Review*, 'the English have been more intelligent in a matter relating to the table than the French, and […] it is in their appreciation of champagne that they have achieved this solitary triumph'.[196] By virtue of wealth and discrimination the British believed they got the best of champagne. Certainly, the British purchased drier wine.

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[192] An 1884 article printed in several papers claimed that 'very few ladies really like dry champagne', see, for example, *Guernsey Star*, 20 October 1884, p. 4. For the counter-claim see *Hull Daily Mail*, 17 May 1900, p. 5. None of Newnham-Davis' female guests explicitly chose sweeter styles of champagne, though three drank Veuve Clicquot wines which were generally reputed to be sweeter than other premium brands.
[193] Leibenstein, "Bandwagon Effects," p. 199.
[194] Fromer, *Necessary Luxury*, pp. ix, 28.
[195] Tovey, *Champagne*, p. 80. This verdict was quoted in a number of newspapers in 1870, e.g. *Bristol Mercury*, 15 October 1870, p. 6. See also *Ridley's*, 12 October 1883, p. 305, rebutting an attack on the quality of champagne supplied to England.
[196] *Saturday Review*, 3 May 1879, p. 553.

In global terms Britain continued to be an outlier. As noted in Chapter Three, the British preferred wines with 2-4% dosage, whereas Americans favoured 4-8%, the French 8%, the Germans 11-13% and the Russians 14-16%.[197] Analysis of the Pol Roger sales shows that from 1880 onwards the median dosage for sales to Britain varied from 1-2%. The median dosage sent to other European countries dropped gradually from 13% in 1880 to 10% in 1900. After 1900, hotels and restaurants in Continental tourist destinations dropped the dosage to around British levels whilst sales to private clients in mainland France ranged between 6% and 11%.[198] The British trade saw in this disparity evidence that the 'English taste in Champagne is so fine and discriminating that the best grades of the Wine are always shipped to this Country'.[199] By 1908, *Ridley's* was insisting that:

> Champagne Shippers must acknowledge that, if Champagne is now consumed so extensively all the World over, it is to a very large extent, due to the fashion which was set in this Country, and which spread from here to all parts of the World, of drinking Champagne as a dry and more natural Wine.[200]

The limited evidence suggests that the French did not disagree. Pierre Hamp's 1908 novelisation of the champagne process from vineyard to end customer has the producer saying to his London agent that 'L'Angleterre est le premier pays du monde pour apprécier le bon champagne. On ne vous fera avaler de la limonade comme aux Français, qui aiment nos rinçures de fûts, bien sucrées'.[201]

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[197] *Contemporary Review*, no. 69 (June 1896), p. 894.
[198] APR, Livres de Ventes, 1877-1915. The last entry of every page was sampled for the analysis. It should be noted that Pol Roger sales were biased to the British market. I have not been able to sample equivalent data from other houses.
[199] *Ridley's*, 8 December 1908, p. 1076; this claim had first been made fifty years previously, see A.B. Reach, *Claret and Olives, from the Garonne to the Rhone, or, Notes Social, Picturesque, and Legendary, by the Way* (New York, 1853), p. 193.
[200] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1911, p. 282.
[201] 'England is the best country in the world to appreciate good champagne. No-one makes you guzzle down lemonade like the French, who go for the rinsings of our barrels, well-sugared'. P. Hamp, *Vin De Champagne*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1936), p. 78. Hamp, known as the 'poet of jobs', was the pseudonym of Henri Bourillon.

Conclusions

Even though champagne sales dipped in the years before World War One, it retained its place at the apex of the British wine hierarchy. As one of the first post-war wine books put it, 'champagne […] is the wine of wines. There is no substitute'.[202] The British trade press were emphatic that 'England still sets the fashion in Champagne and the Brand which is popular with us is [certain] to very rapidly gain a World-wide renown and sale'.[203] The singular shift in British taste towards steadily drier wines from the 1860s onwards and champagne's increasing use as the principal 'dinner wine' in elite circles demanded that the French producers continually raise the quality of their product, paying attention to every aspect of viticulture and vinification and linking their wine to a specific geographical region. The shift to dry wine also rendered champagne a powerful marker not just of financial but also of cultural resources. In the Victorian discourse on champagne, it took sophisticated consumers to appreciate this most sought-after wine.

Status competition in British society provided a fertile territory for the development of premium-priced and vintage-dated dry champagne sold under the brands of powerful French shippers. The steadily developing linkage between champagne and celebrations of all forms brought many new consumers into the market whose needs were met by new producers offering wine on more affordable terms. None of this was serendipitous. The strategic ingenuity and heavyweight expenditure of the London agents cemented the position of the leading brands, while French determination to establish, protect and promote the regional appellation of Champagne secured the market against lower-cost imitators. Yet agents and shippers alone could not have created and sustained the long-term positioning of champagne as the wine of 'great occasions'; it also required

[202] A.E.M. Foster, *Through the Wine List* (London, 1924), p. 46.
[203] *Ridley's,* 8 April 1911, p. 282.

the status-conscious British consumers. The final chapter will return to the activity of the agents and their French principals to show how the relationship between brands and consumers was so effectively managed.

5. ‘The magic of brand’: the marketing and branding of champagne, 1876-1914

Introduction

Between the mid-1870s and the outbreak of the First World War, drinking champagne became a powerfully branded marker of social status. As Chapter Four has shown, having the ‘right’ brand on your table was important, to the extent that the top brands commanded a premium of 15-25 per cent over products of equal quality but less renown. This, said *The Times*, was the ‘magic of brand’.[1] It is not surprising that the pursuit of renown through marketing and branding became increasingly important to the late nineteenth-century champagne trade. The London agents and their French principals had to respond to consumers’ changing tastes whilst attempting to develop and strengthen their own individual brands. The environment was challenging. There was a ‘fashion in champagne’, and brand preferences and taste preferences evolved quickly. In this chapter I will argue that the ‘Grandes Maisons’ or ‘Grandes Marques’ (that is, the top-ranked shippers), working both individually and collectively, developed and exploited innovative brand management practices that still form the basis of the strategies of the luxury brand managers of the present day.

Modern marketing theories of luxury brand marketing focus primarily on the ‘mass luxury’ model. Branding scholars argue that there has been a shift from an exclusive ‘old luxe’ based on connoisseurship and rarity with discrete marks of provenance to a more accessible ‘democratic luxury’ model in which intrinsic product

[1] *The Times*, 3 April 1891, p. 14.

quality and symbolic power are made visible through logos or trademarks.[2] Although Kapferer and Bastien have attacked the proposition that there can be a 'spectrum' of luxury, they nonetheless accept that luxury purchases need not be confined to the elite of the day.[3] Focusing specifically on champagne, Christian Barrère has argued that the 'paradigm of mass luxury' was a creation of the 'Great Houses' of Champagne.[4] This chapter will examine the day-to-day practice of the champagne houses and their London agents in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It will argue that they anticipated modern marketing practices to build a group of powerful brands with widespread reputation and appeal some thirty years before the development of the 'mass brands' of the early twentieth century, a development that American scholars such as Chandler have attributed to the creation of the 'modern' vertically integrated company.[5] In particular, it will show how the producers and their agents managed this set of luxury brands in ways that closely prefigure the marketing practices of twenty-first-century marketers.

Managing luxury brands

From the writings of modern branding scholars, it is possible to build a generally accepted template for luxury brand management. This recognises the general adoption of

[2] Miller and Mills, "Probing Brand Luxury: A Multiple Lens Approach," pp. 41-2.
[3] Kapferer and Bastien, "Specificity of Luxury Management," pp. 311-14.
[4] C. Barrère, "A Strange Story: When Crisis Leads to Wealth. The Institution of Champagne Wine as a Luxury Good," *Business History Conference* 8 (2010), pp. 16, 20.
[5] See M. Wilkins, "The Neglected Intangible Asset: The Influence of the Trade Mark on the Rise of the Modern Corporation," *Business History* 34, no. 1 (1992), pp. 67-70, 85-6, for the US perspective. T. da Silva Lopes and P. Duguid, *Trademarks, Brands, and Competitiveness* (London, 2010), pp. 15-25, offer a European-centric rebuttal of this view. Although much of what the London agents did would have been recognisable to Josiah Wedgwood and Thomas Bentley, there is little evidence from the British press that Wedgwood's impact on business and marketing was then recognised. Contemporary biographies of Wedgwood focused on his achievements as artist, ceramicist and family man. See E. Meteyard, *The Life of Josiah Wedgwood, from His Private Correspondence and Family Papers in the Possession of Joseph Mayer, F. Wedgwood, C. Darwin, Miss Wedgwood and Other Original Sources with an Introductory Sketch of the Art of Pottery in England* (London, 1970), for Wedgwood as ceramicist and artist; S. Smiles, *Josiah Wedgwood: His Personal History* (London, 1894), for the family man.

a broad-based mass luxury model in which a luxury product can, potentially, be available to anyone with the economic resources. Firstly, the company needs to maximise its control over the value chain, including distribution.[6] Only with that control can it achieve two further critical goals: price management and restricted distribution. Price management is central both to prevent underselling, which might diminish the reputation of the brand, and to ensure that prices can be raised regularly.[7] In general, the higher the price achieved relative to competitors, the more powerful and more appealing the brand appears to consumers.[8] Restricted distribution is important because it allows the producer to control the environment in which the product is displayed or merchandised. More importantly, it contributes to the 'illusion of scarcity' which is central to modern luxury brand management.[9] If a product is too readily available it will lack the cachet necessary to act as a marker of social status.

Vintage-dated wines exemplify the care and craftsmanship of the producer. They draw attention year by year to the intrinsic quality of the product. In this and other sectors, care and craftsmanship are often linked to both the 'heritage' and the 'authenticity' of the product and are portrayed as guaranteeing consistent quality over time.[10] To achieve this, modern marketers advocate involving customers in the manufacturing process, either by making the production site a place of pilgrimage or by showcasing the care and resources that go into the selection of raw materials. Though

[6] Kapferer, "Abundant Rarity," p. 456. Kapferer's 'anti-laws' of marketing for luxury brands are central to the following discussion.
[7] B. Parguel, T. Delécolle, and P. Valette-Florence, "How Price Display Influences Consumer Luxury Perceptions," *Journal of Business Research* 69, no. 1 (2016), p. 342 and passim.
[8] J. Allsopp, "Premium Pricing: Understanding the Value of Premium," *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management* 4, no. 2 (2005), p. 187. '[S]pending more is a sign of self-worth which authenticates success and status.'
[9] Catry, "The Great Pretenders," pp. 10, 11.
[10] S. Brown, R.V. Kozinets, and J.F. Sherry, "Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning," *Journal of Marketing* 67, no. 3 (2003), p. 21; M.B. Beverland and S. Luxton, "Managing Integrated Marketing Communication (Imc) through Strategic Decoupling: How Luxury Wine Firms Retain Brand Leadership While Appearing to Be Wedded to the Past," *Journal of Advertising* 34, no. 4 (2005), pp. 103-4.

individual products may, on occasions, be used as exemplars in advertising, the recommended approach is usually to focus on the heritage and resources of the 'house' itself rather than on the specific products. The house and its products are then linked via endorsement to individuals or institutions whose approval is used to confirm the quality of the product and assert its symbolic relevance to aspiring customers. In this context, a global reputation may also be invoked.[11] Though the decisions of the brand manager will be led by commercial logic, the actions of the company will always be presented as driven by the need to maintain or improve product quality.[12]

For 'brand manager' in the nineteenth-century British champagne trade read London agent. None of the houses had their own organisation in Britain and, as we have seen, agents such as Hubinet and Reuss played a vital role in marketing and branding. They fought with competitors for the custom of key points of distribution: clubs, hotels and restaurants in London, and hotels in major provincial cities. Contracts secured, they managed the day-to-day branding of their products, negotiating with customers the nature and extent of the branding on labels and corks. They continuously reported on changing consumer trends and customer demands and, based on this market insight, they made recommendations to their principals not only on the month-by-month maturation and dosage of the house's products but also on the longer-term development of a differentiated house style and the pricing of the products. Most importantly, they sought to create and exploit favourable publicity for their brand by associating it with elite consumers. As Chapter Two showed, not every house followed the same practices, but

[11] J.L. Nueno and J.A. Quelch, "The Mass Marketing of Luxury," *Business Horizons* 41, no. 6 (1998), pp. 62-3. The authors confirm many of the other elements listed in these paragraphs.
[12] M.B. Beverland, "The 'Real Thing': Branding Authenticity in the Luxury Wine Trade," *Journal of Business Research* 59, no. 2 (2006), p. 254.

the exceptions tended to be the new or lesser-known 'challenger' brands seeking to build up a reputation amongst consumers through innovative communication tactics.

The champagne shippers' control of the value chain steadily intensified during the second half of the nineteenth century. The success of sparkling wine from the 1850s onwards led to the growers concentrating on producing base wines for that market.[13] Though mono-production was never absolute, the lower-quality and much lower-priced still wines of the region were far less profitable for the 10,000 growers.[14] However, producing the base wine for champagne locked them into supplying the hundred or so major shippers, since the growers generally had neither the capital to vinify on their own account nor the resources to build a brand in their own name. Even a wealthy landowner and vine grower such as the entrepreneurial Charles Benoit, who owned one of the most highly-rated vineyards in the Champagne region, failed in his determined efforts to bypass the major houses and build his own brand.[15] This gave the shippers significant power which the growers' attempts to combat were largely ineffective.[16] Though individual shippers exploited their ability to source cheaper grapes from outside the historic territory of Champagne, the champagne trade as a whole was able to steadily improve quality.[17] The frequency and impact of the continuing scare stories in the British press about 'spurious' or counterfeit champagne made with pears, apples or cheap wine

[13] Barrère, "Champagne as a Luxury Good," p. 18.
[14] The fate of the few remaining red wine producers was sealed by falling prices and the costs of phylloxera treatment and replanting. See Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, p. 112.
[15] See C. Benoit, *Domaine De Mont-Ferré. History of the Champaign-Wine and of the Re-Formation of the Estate of Mont-Ferré* (Rheims, 1889); for a broader view, see S. Wolikow, "Soulèvement Du Monde Vigneron Et Construction De La Champagne Viticole," in *Vin Et République, 1907-2007* (Paris, 2009), pp. 274-5. For Benoit's continued attempts to promote and sell direct to British consumers, see *Ridley's Wine and Spirit Trade Circular*, 12 May 1883, pp. 146-7, 172; 12 May 1884, p. 177; 12 November 1890, p. 593.
[16] For the troubled history of the early attempts to create grower organisations in Champagne, see Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, pp. 99-110.
[17] This practice led not only to complaints in the English press but also to riots and civil disturbance in the region immediately before the First World War. For a longer-term perspective on the development of the Champagne vineyards, see S. Wolikow, ed. *La Construction Des Territoires Du Champagne (1811-1911-2011)* (Dijon, 2013), pp. 9-22; for the twentieth century, see Wolikow, "Soulèvement Du Monde Vigneron," pp. 273-81; see also Barrère, "Champagne as a Luxury Good," pp. 12-15.

cheaply carbonated noticeably diminished.[18] The last widely reported scandal was in 1873-4 when Benoni Le Blanc was convicted of selling fake champagne under the brand names of Moët & Chandon and Louis Roederer.[19] The disputes in the French courts over the right to use well-known surnames such as Roederer also declined in the last quarter of the century and the 'namealike' brands mostly either ceased trading or were bought up by the owner of the original brand.[20]

Control over the value chain was largely matched by control over price, particularly visible in the champagne trade's ability to raise prices on a consistent basis. Although there were always individual merchants underselling listed prices, the general trend was consistently upwards. In 1911, as we have seen, *Ridley's* noted – correctly – that 'the consumption of Champagne in this Country has more than doubled during the last fifty years, in spite of the fact that the price of this Wine has increased about seventy-five per cent'.[21] Houses took different steps to maintain prices. In 1890, Moët & Chandon attempted to restrict sales of their 'P.C.' (or 'Première Cuvée') Champagne to specified agents who were contracted 'to sell at no less than a fixed price'.[22] This provoked trade concern and complaints from contracted agents that they were being undersold by other merchants.[23] *Ridley's* argued that the restriction relegated the merchant to the status of a 'vendor of patent medicines', to which the Moët's agent retorted that the 'onus of

[18] References peaked at over 200 in the decade 1860-69 and halved every decade thereafter. By the 1900s annual numbers of such references were in single figures. British Newspaper Archive analysis conducted 19 January 2018.
[19] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1874, p. 34. For general press coverage see, for example, *Morning Post*, 17 December 1873, p. 7.
[20] *Ridley's*, 11 January 1890, p. 42, reported a French court's decison to refuse to allow 'one Couvreux' to run a firm under the name of Alfred Pommery, 'a gentleman who has not yet obtained his majority'; *Ridley's*, 12 November 1898, p. 778, reported that the brand of Alfred Roederer was 'recently bought up for funeral purposes by the House of Louis Roederer'.
[21] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1911, p. 280. The prices of the two most commonly advertised grades of Gilbey's Castle Claret did not change between 1863 and 1900. See Figure 13 above.
[22] *Ridley's*, 11 January 1890, p. 47; Desbois-Thibault, *L'extraordinaire Aventure Du Champagne*, p. 134. Agents received 4-8 per cent commission on sales.
[23] *Ridley's*, 12 October 1897, p. 669.

responsibility [for quality] in Champagne falls upon the shipper whose name it bears'.[24] The argument died down and, although underselling continued, it became a steadily less important issue.[25] In that sense the shippers and their agents had gained control.

Adolphe Hubinet of Pommery took a rather different approach to pricing. On the evidence of his surviving letters, he focused less on underselling and more on price maximisation. From 1870 onwards, he argued consistently for price rises and insisted that Pommery should aim to become the highest-priced wine on the market.[26] Though he monitored the economic circumstances of his key customer groups and recognised when times were difficult, he never appeared to regret his insistent recommendations that Pommery should be the most expensive wine on the market.[27] Writing to customers in 1879 to justify a price rise, he insisted that it was the consequence of Pommery's determination to buy the 'best growths' at the highest prices. In 1890, as noted in Chapter Two, he wrote exultantly to Henri Vasnier to announce that he had achieved his goal of making Pommery wines the most expensive in London restaurants.[28] A *Ridley's* analysis of champagne price rises between 1872 and 1883 shows that the Pommery price rose by 20s. per dozen; at no other house did the total rise exceed 15s.[29] This scale of rises consistently worried the journal but, in a 1911 retrospective on the trade, the editor conceded that *Ridley's* had been wrong to warn of impending 'ruin'. Noting that the price rises had begun in 1870, the editor concluded wryly that 'it is very curious that each increase of price was followed by a corresponding increase in the consumption'.[30] The

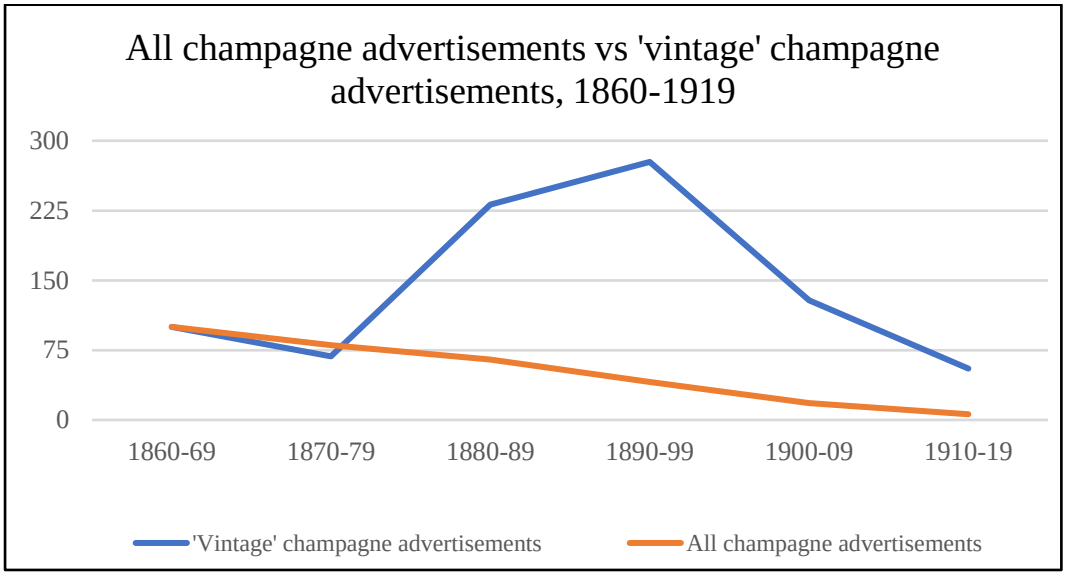
[24] *Ridley's*, 12 November 1897, p. 792; 12 January 1898, p. 68.
[25] *Ridley's*, 14 April 1903, p. 266.
[26] *Compilation De La Correspondance De Hubinet*, 26 April 1863.
[27] CCH, 15 March 1889. 'Dites carrément que depuis quelques années c'est notre Marque qui a le plus de vogue […] que c'est notre vin qui est coûté au prix le plus élevé.'
[28] CCH, 24 September 1890.
[29] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1911, pp. 281-2. In this period only two houses reduced prices at any point, despite large harvests in 1874 and 1875.
[30] *Ridley's*, 8 April 1911, p. 280. The 1870 price rises were justified by the threat to supplies occasioned by the Franco-Prussian War.

trade's willingness to raise prices on a consistent basis vindicates the later conclusion of marketing academics that luxury brands should make price a positive weapon in their armoury.

A second potent tool was the 'illusion of scarcity'. As champagne became more readily available and heavily advertised brands such as Roper Frères increasingly focused on cheaper products for events such as 'mess dinners' and 'social gatherings', the premium brands had to ensure their brands were not devalued.[31] As analysed in Chapter Four, Pommery's role in exploiting the 'splendid vintage' of 1874 and the consequent positive consumer response became the catalyst for the production and advertising of vintage-dated champagne. The first two houses to do so in the British press appear to have been Veuve Clicquot and Moët & Chandon in mid-1877, but others soon followed.[32] As Figure 31 below shows, the number of champagne advertisements using the term 'vintage champagne' or 'champagne vintage' more than doubled in the decade 1880-89 compared to the decade 1870-79, and the number rose again in 1890-99 before then falling away.

[31] For a typical Roper Frères advertisement, see *London Daily News*, 12 December 1879, p. 2.
[32] For Veuve Clicquot, see the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 6 July 1877, p. 1; for Moët, see *Halifax Courier*, 21 April 1877, p. 8.

Figure 31: The terms ‘vintage champagne’ and ‘champagne vintage’ in advertising 1860-1909



Source: BNA analysis conducted 20 November 2016.

Vintage-dated wines proliferated. Seven of the vintages of the 1880s were contemporaneously advertised as vintage-dated wines, even though later vintage guides judged only three or four of those years as above average.[33] As noted in Chapter Four, consumers began to affect connoisseurship and to fetishise vintage-dated wines, demanding to have a ‘crack brand of a crack vintage’ on their table.

Though the steady intensification of the demand for dry wine after the mid-1860s was central to the British market, it appears that this was consumer- rather than trade-driven. As we have seen, Hubinet himself believed that consumers affected a taste for dry wine rather than truly preferring it, but he pushed for steadily drier wines in the UK market and, as noted above, he was credited by the turn-of-the-century merchant and wine writer Louis Feuerheerd with its introduction.[34] Although the Pommery 1874 which he launched in 1877 won later renown as the first wine to be shipped to the UK with no

[33] The count of vintage-dated wines is taken from BNA advertising; the number of above-average years from the guide in Simon, *Champagne*, pp. 129-31.
[34] Feuerheerd, *Gentleman's Cellar*, p. 70. Feuerheerd praised Hubinet's 'wonderful energy'.

added sugar, the first advertisements in the British press for a 'natural Champagne, being entirely free from all sweetness or liqueur' were for Roper Frères' 'prize medal champagne' in late 1876.[35]

The shift to dry wine was directly linked to improved quality in a narrative of British superiority. Charles Tovey had written in 1870 that 'none but the wines of the first quality are palatable in their natural condition'.[36] The London *Standard* in 1885 endorsed this argument, claiming that 'the national taste for dry Wines is one of the reasons for the best qualities coming to this country'. It explained that sweet wines were both cheaper and easier to produce since the sugar hid any defects.[37] Not all years were suitable for the production of fully dry champagne. To be palatable without added sugar, the wine needed some natural sugar from ripe fruit. Writing to his principals in Reims, Hubinet focused on this quality argument. In marketing communications, he stressed Pommery's investment in the very best of each year's crop as evidence of his firm's commitment to quality. Thus, in 1889, he secured an extensive profile of Pommery & Greno in the *Illustrated London News*, claiming that the prices of Pommery's purchases that year were 'the highest ever known […] a transaction of magnitude never equaled in the trade by any firm or company'.[38]

This piece also focused on the cellars which Hubinet had consistently pushed as a corporate asset. The Pommery cellars were accepted as the 'finest of all', a judgment based not just on their scale, architectural and technological sophistication, but also on their hospitality.[39] Articles on the cellars of Reims and Epernay had started to appear in

[35] de Polignac, *Madame Pommery*, pp. 38, 41. By late 1878, the 1874 Pommery was already a 'renowned vintage', see the *Yorkshire Post*, 9 December 1878, p. 1. For the Roper wine, see *Bell's Life in London*, 16 December 1876, p. 6.
[36] Quoted in *Western Mail*, 17 December 1870, p. 2.
[37] London *Standard*, 21 May 1885, quoted in *Ridley's*, 12 June 1885, p. 238.
[38] *Illustrated London News*, 23 November 1889, p. 666.
[39] *Examiner*, 19 July 1879, p. 937.

the British press in the early 1850s and generally emphasised their extent and their gloom.[40] Hubinet began to promote his firm's cellars in 1871 with a different copy strategy. He requested from Vasnier a draft article on the 'Caves Pommery' and highlighted the key points needed for the British market. He promised to get it and any photographs Vasnier could provide to his contact at the *Illustrated London News*.[41] Potential clients were invited to visit the cellars and newspaper articles stressed the hospitality provided to guests.[42] The resulting 1889 *Illustrated London News* article was reprinted in at least a dozen provincial papers.[43] Further articles appeared in the 1890s as a result of Hubinet's journalistic connections.[44] Other houses, notably George Goulet, tried to work the same seam but never secured as much coverage as Pommery.[45] Whilst Hubinet's letters do not directly explain his motivation in exploiting the cellars, it seems likely that this was part of a well-formed communication strategy that not only involved customers but also contributed to the image of Pommery as a go-ahead and well-resourced firm with very high-quality wines. Though accepting that champagne was a 'gift of nature', the *Illustrated London News* piece stressed that it 'owes much of its prized qualities to the skill of modern manufacturers'. The article covered the 'steam-lifts', the 'electric light' and the network of 'private telephones' at Pommery.[46]

The volume of references to Pommery in newspapers and magazines was not a matter of chance. The evidence from Hubinet's own letters and from *Ridley's* was that he

[40] See the *Armagh Guardian*, 23 October 1852, p. 6. This piece on the Moët & Chandon cellars was carried in a number of papers across Great Britain.
[41] CCH, 9 July 1871.
[42] *Buckingham Advertiser*, 21 October 1876, p. 6.
[43] See, for example, *York Herald*, 13 December 1889, p. 6. The precisely similar copy used in each case suggests this was organised by or for Pommery.
[44] CCH, 21 June 1889, for negotiations with 'Wagons-Restaurants' in Paris about tourist visits to the cellars; 14 November 1893, for a proposed article in a trade journal.
[45] For a 'paid-for' feature on the Goulet cellars, see G. Hennelle, *Album of Taste and Fashion, and Book of Commercial and General Information* (London, 1877), unpaginated. For a newspaper article on the Goulet cellars, see *Dublin Daily Express*, 27 December 1883, p. 2.
[46] *Illustrated London News*, 23 November 1889, pp. 663-6.

cultivated influential journalists and newspaper proprietors. After the publication in *Punch* of the 'Derby Day Reserves' cartoon showing Pommery as the most prominent brand (see Chapter Two), *Ridley's* noted that this was 'an advertisement of no mean merit'. The journal depicted Hubinet and the

> Prime Minister of Punch […] having a quiet tête-à-tête, with a bottle of the choicest three per cent liqueured between them, for neither cares greatly or takes for choice the Brut; the former endeavouring to extract some 'happy thoughts' from his old and valued friend that might be conducive to the further exaltation of his highly-priced Wine'.[47]

Hubinet also cultivated the proprietors and journalists of the best-selling newspaper of the period, the *Daily Telegraph*.[48] The strategy probably also had support from Vasnier in Reims, who was well aware of the power of the newspapers. In 1888, there were rumours in France concerning the credit-worthiness of Pommery. Vasnier – Madame Pommery's 'man of business' – was credited with devising and executing a high-profile marketing coup that removed all doubts about the resources of the house. This was Madame Pommery's purchase of Millet's 'Les Glaneuses' for 300,000 francs and its presentation to the French government.[49] A dozen or so British newspapers carried the same story giving the value as £12,000.[50] Hubinet made similar use of gifts in the service of public relations, including £2,000 to the Wine Trade Benevolent fund in 1896.[51] He sought out and supported celebrity clients such as the singer Madame Patti.[52] The consequence of this activity was a high level of press coverage. Shortly before his death in 1897, Hubinet wrote to Vasnier to claim that '[i]n London when a champagne is mentioned in theatres or

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[47] *Ridley's*, 12 June 1878, p. 181.
[48] CCH, 24 April 1883, for negotiating a 'puff' for a Pommery-supported dinner at the National Liberal Club; 8 March 1891, for wine to be sent to a journalist writing a story on Pommery. Analysis of BNA 'articles' for 1880-99 conducted 8 June 2017 suggests that Hubinet's boast may have had some substance (though all single-word terms are subject to significant OCR fallibility).
[49] See de Polignac, *Madame Pommery*, pp. 51-2.
[50] *St James's Gazette*, 21 September 1889, p. 11.
[51] CCH, 6 February 1896.
[52] See *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 January 1889, p. 6, for her consumption of a glass of Pommery champagne at concert intervals.

in newspapers, it is always Pommery, le vin à la mode'.[53] This renown was the product of a long-held and well-executed strategy that expertly used the press to boost the Pommery brand.

Hubinet's approach appears to match closely the present-day marketing template for luxury brands. His focus on premium distribution, his emphasis on price maximisation and his use of the press not for direct advertisement but to boost the reputation of the brand as the choice of the British elite was highly successful. By the early twentieth century, Pommery was behind only Moët & Chandon in total sales and dominated the premium market ahead of Clicquot and Louis Roederer.[54] *Ridley's* described these three brands in 1898 as part of the 'eminent corps' of French houses that had emerged in the 1870s, adding that Pol Roger was a later addition to this set.[55] The Pol Roger agent, Conrad Reuss, was in a very different position to Hubinet. Reuss had extensive experience in the British wine trade but apparently never dealt with a champagne brand until he successfully pitched to Pol Roger of the eponymous French house in 1875.[56] Until that point Roger had sold his wine to Perrier-Jouët, under whose name it was bottled and successfully sold into the British market. Thus, though the wine was of high quality, the Pol Roger name was unknown and Reuss faced the challenge of overcoming trade resistance to 'take up a New Brand'.[57]

Significantly, Reuss's successful strategy resembled that of Hubinet. He focused on securing elite distribution – clubs in London, hotels elsewhere – and sought the endorsement of the British elite, which he then leveraged in the press and on the labels on

[53] CCH, 30 January 1897.
[54] Desbois-Thibault, *L'extraordinaire Aventure Du Champagne*, p. 229. At this point Pommery was selling around three million bottles per year, Veuve Clicquot around two million and Louis Roederer one million.
[55] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1898, p. 78.
[56] According to family tradition at Pol Roger, Reuss argued that by selling under Pol Roger's own name, 'something of permanence' would be bequeathed to descendants. Personal communication from Christian Pol-Roger, 14 October 2015.
[57] Archives Pol Roger, 2 April 1880. Reuss to Pol Roger.

the bottles. A successful pitch to the Royal Household enabled him to sport the 'royal bands' on the bottles.[58] Secondly, Reuss concentrated on marketing to the wine trade, going to considerable lengths to secure the placement of 'tablets' in merchant offices and successfully soliciting the support of both *Ridley's* and the *Wine Trade Review*.[59] He apparently paid Vizetelly for laudatory copy in the latter's books on champagne.[60] By the mid-1880s, the Pol Roger wine was being advertised at a slightly lower price than Pommery and Veuve Clicquot but at the same price level as most premium brands.[61] Sales increased from 100,000 bottles to 300,000-400,000 between 1880 and 1914 with around 90 per cent of the sales consistently going to the British market. Like Hubinet, Reuss insisted on the importance of adhering to a 'type'; that is, to develop and maintain a house style.[62] By 1908, Pol Roger had become one of the preferred brands of Winston Churchill and it has been consistently successful in the British market since then. Reuss lacked Hubinet's flair with the press, but the two men knew and respected each other, and evidence from the former's letters suggests that Reuss consciously adopted Hubinet's approach.[63]

The power of the premium brands such as Pommery and Pol Roger dismayed other members of the wine trade. Though the best-known shipper brands retailed at a significant premium to secondary brands, they produced little or no profit for the

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[58] APR, n.d. [July 1883].
[59] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1898, p. 78. The journal added Pol Roger to its short list of 'eminent' brands in 1898, following Pommery and Clicquot.
[60] APR, 29 March 1877, 14 May 1877. The latter letter refers to editorial approval on Vizetelly's copy. Vizetelly, *History of Champagne*, p. 213; the same paragraph was used in Vizetelly, *Facts About Champagne*, p. 115.
[61] *Nottingham Evening Post*, 22 December 1885, p. 2.
[62] APR, date illegible but between 1880 and 1882.
[63] For the first evidence of Churchill's taste for Pol Roger, see H. de Billy, "Liquid History," *No. 3* (2017), p. 5; for Reuss's approach, see APR, 31 March 1877 (precise date illegible), letter from Conrad Reuss acknowledging he was copying the Pommery strategy on tablets and labels; late February 1877 Reuss letter noting the closeness in style and quality between the two brands. In 1877 Reuss took over the British agency for the Bordeaux house of Lalande from Pommery. See letter of 1 February 1877 in APR.

merchants. Shippers such as Moët & Chandon increasingly sought to control the price that their agents and merchants could charge but were unable to prevent 'advertising merchants', who acquired their wine through unapproved channels, from offering Moët-branded wines at cut-price rates, and thereby putting further pressure on retailers. The merchants' fear was that reputations for quality and knowledge built up over time would be rendered valueless and that they would be reduced to distributors of branded products. The debate over the own-brand issue and the semi-capitulation in 1882 of even such a well-financed and determined proponent of the own-brand system as Gilbey's demonstrates the weakness of own-brand champagne and the strengths of the branded approach, as will be seen below.

Challenging the premium brands

From the 1870s onwards, merchants were urged by both the wine trade press and correspondents in the general press to create their own brands on the basis that this would not only increase their profits but would also provide consumers with wines of equal quality at lower prices.[64] This, as noted in Chapter Two, had been the practice of the first half of the nineteenth century for most types of wine, but after 1860 the champagne brands had steadily gained a national reputation and considerable pricing power. In 1874, *Ridley's* argued that the 'exorbitant ruling quotations for leading brands afford a good opportunity to our Merchants of pushing the sale of Champagne, bearing their own names on the corks'.[65] In 1879 the journal claimed to know of a 'good many firms' who have introduced champagne under their own names and done so with 'satisfactory pecuniary results'.[66] This may have been the case, but *Ridley's* neither provided names nor offered

[64] See *Eddowe's Journal for Shropshire*, 14 June 1882, p. 5, for 'In Vino Veritas' letter to *The Times* making this point.
[65] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1874, p. 5.
[66] *Ridley's*, 12 July 1879, p. 277.

successful models for such brands and it was lukewarm in its support for the most vociferous exponent of the own brand approach.

Presenting himself as a consumer champion, the wine merchant and 'champagne expert' William Hudson asserted vehemently that 'worship of brands' meant that consumers of champagne were paying a premium for top-name champagnes which in blind tastings they could not differentiate from lower-priced merchant brands. He coined the term 'brandolatry' to describe this behaviour and, drawing on his extensive experience as a wine merchant and champagne taster, launched his own O.N.P. brand.[67] O.N.P. stood for 'Opinion not Prejudice', and in the early 1880s Hudson set up tasting galleries at major consumer exhibitions where consumers were introduced to blind tasting with blue glasses.[68] He insisted on the 'value, indeed, upon the necessity, of *tasting without prejudice*, and buying, almost irrespective of Mark or Brand'.[69] Hudson's talent for self-promotion was distrusted by his contemporaries, but his call for merchants to brand wines with their own names was widely echoed. From the consumer point of view, however, such wines had little to offer beyond a price benefit. Hudson's O.N.P. brand was fifteen per cent cheaper than the premium brands whose quality it claimed to match. The 'Launcelot' brand of the London firm of Robert James claimed to be twenty per cent cheaper.[70] Such names were unknown to the public since they were rarely or sporadically advertised. At best, they offered (but could not guarantee) equivalent quality at a lower

[67] When Hudson later launched another brand, he claimed to have tasted '1088 different kinds of wine' for Spiers & Pond in the calendar year 1889. See *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 21 March 1890, p. 3
[68] Blue (or black) glasses disguise the colour of the wine and are still used for blind tasting purposes.
[69] See *London Daily News*, 2 October 1880, p. 4 for his 'Tasting Rooms' at the second 'National Exhibition and Market' at the Agricultural Hall in London. For Hudson's fuller manifesto on 'the present condition of the wine and spirit trade', see Diageo, 100433/80, 'General observations on the […] Wine and Spirit Trade', dated October 1882.
[70] G.A. Sala, *In a Wine Cellar in Store Street* (London, 1881), p. 17.

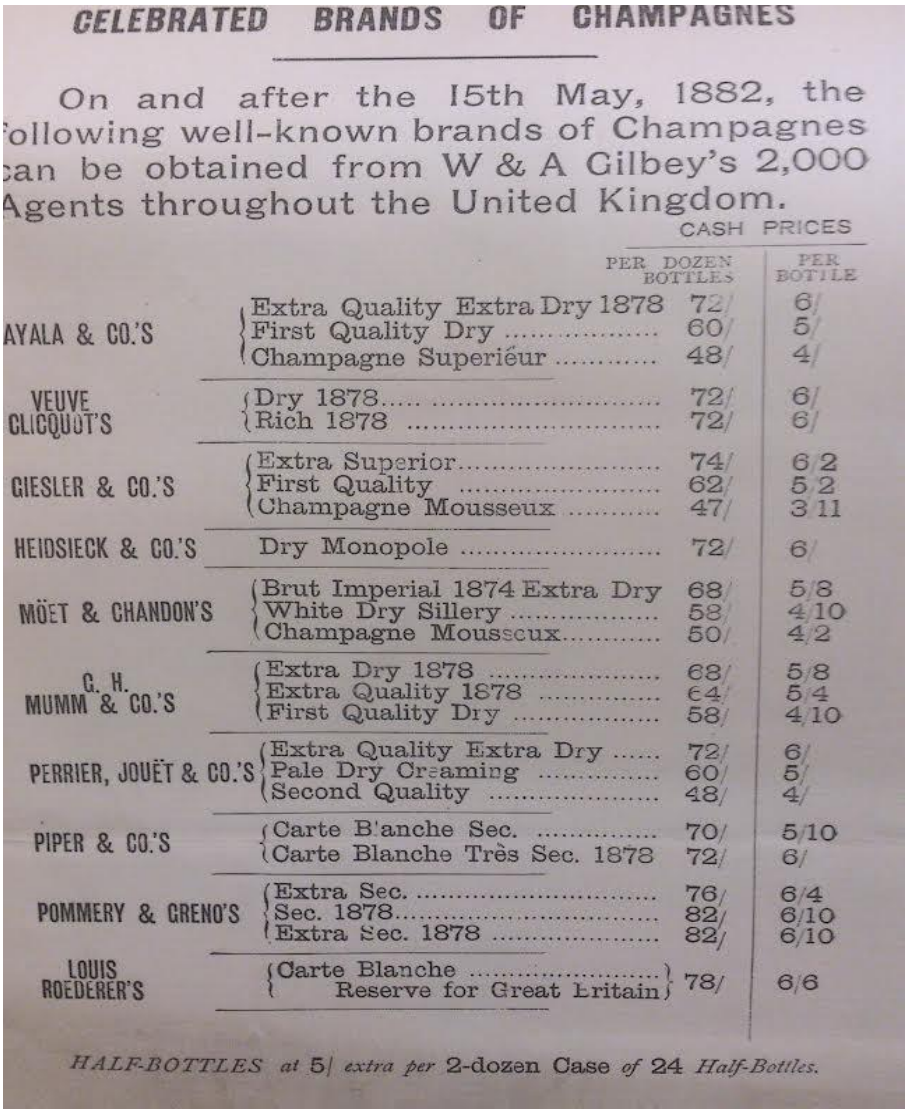
price. Though they may have remained on merchant price lists for some time, none of these merchant brands appears to have had more than short-term local publicity.[71]

The combined effect of the shift to vintage-dated wines and the increasing power of the premium brands was powerfully demonstrated by Gilbey's decision in 1882 to abandon promotion of the 'Castle Brand' champagnes in favour of a range of ten 'Celebrated Brands' such as Ayala or Veuve Clicquot (see Figure 32 below). In doing so they were acknowledging that the premium-priced brand names such as Pommery and Veuve Clicquot had generated a far greater consumer pull than their Castle brand. The switch from an exclusive own-brand policy to one of promoting established shipper brand names was a major step for Gilbey's.[72] They had stopped listing Moët champagne in the late 1850s and for twenty-five years sold all wines and spirits under their own label. Their justification for the switch to promoting name brands was the need to compete on price with the London 'Stores'.[73] In taking this action, Gilbey's was responding directly or indirectly to customer demand. They feared that if they did not list these brands, their agents were likely to 'break conditions' and buy in stock on their own account to meet customer demand.[74] In the 1880s, both their 'Celebrated Brands' and the Gilbey's own range moved almost exclusively to vintage-dated wines. By 1892, all their eight own-brand wines were vintage-dated.[75] In 1893, *Ridley's* commented that consumers were

[71] The longest period of sustained advertising for such a brand yet observed is the eight-month campaign in 1873 for the 'Vine Leaf Brand' of champagne advertised by the Surrey firm of Purser & Co. See, for example, *Surrey Comet*, 29 November 1873, p. 4.
[72] When Gilbey's sold a parcel of Lafite wine in 1878, *Ridley's* expressed 'some astonishment [that] they should, even partially, have abandoned the system under which they had achieved such signal success'. See *Ridley's,* 12 July 1878, p. 208.
[73] 100433/80, Sparkling wines price list, summer 1882.
[74] The most expensive was Pommery and Greno 1878 vintage at 82s. per dozen and the cheapest was Moët's Brut Imperial 1874. The price for Castle Grand was 72s. per dozen. The list of 'Celebrated Brands' (or 'Fashionable Brands') changed frequently and it is clear from the company archives (and customer complaints) that the firm bought small quantities of stock on the London market as and when they became available. Many of the brands were apparently sold at a loss. See N. Faith, *Victorian Vineyard: Château Loudenne and the Gilbeys* (London, 1983), p. 108. For a customer complaint, see *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 15 May 1885, p. 4.
[75] Diageo, 101184/10, 'London Monthly Tariff', 1892.

rejecting merchant brands since 'they must be able to call their Wine a crack brand of a crack vintage'. Quality, added *Ridley's*, was a 'secondary consideration' to most consumers.[76]

Figure 32: Gilbey's 'Celebrated Brands'



CELEBRATED BRANDS OF CHAMPAGNES

On and after the 15th May, 1882, the following well-known brands of Champagnes can be obtained from W & A Gilbey's 2,000 Agents throughout the United Kingdom.

		CASH PRICES PER DOZEN BOTTLES	PER BOTTLE
AYALA & CO.'S	Extra Quality Extra Dry 1878	72/	6/
	First Quality Dry	60/	5/
	Champagne Superiéur	48/	4/
VEUVE CLICQUOT'S	Dry 1878	72/	6/
	Rich 1878	72/	6/
GIESLER & CO.'S	Extra Superior	74/	6 2
	First Quality	62/	5 2
	Champagne Mousseux	47/	3 11
HEIDSIECK & CO.'S	Dry Monopole	72/	6/
MÖET & CHANDON'S	Brut Imperial 1874 Extra Dry	68/	5/8
	White Dry Sillery	58/	4/10
	Champagne Mousseux	50/	4/2
G. H. MUMM & CO.'S	Extra Dry 1878	68/	5/8
	Extra Quality 1878	64/	5/4
	First Quality Dry	58/	4/10
PERRIER, JOUËT & CO.'S	Extra Quality Extra Dry	72/	6/
	Pale Dry Creaming	60/	5/
	Second Quality	48/	4/
PIPER & CO.'S	Carte Blanche Sec.	70/	5/10
	Carte Blanche Très Sec. 1878	72/	6/
POMMERY & GRENO'S	Extra Sec.	76/	6/4
	Sec. 1878	82/	6/10
	Extra Sec. 1878	82/	6/10
LOUIS ROEDERER'S	Carte Blanche / Reserve for Great Britain	78/	6/6

HALF-BOTTLES at 5/ extra per 2-dozen Case of 24 Half-Bottles.

Source: Diageo, 100433/80, 'Price list and Circulars, 1865-74'.

[76] *Ridley's*, 12 April 1893, p. 217.

Simpson and Duguid have both suggested that the ability of strong producers to control supply chains was central to the development of modern brands. Duguid (as noted in Chapter One) has argued that brands 'emerged from tensions among small producers, distributors and consumers'.[77] Such tensions surfaced in 1897 when the long-established London merchant Corney & Barrow attempted to 'break' Moët & Chandon's fixed-price system which forbade merchants from underselling the published prices.[78] In a letter to the shipper, Corney & Barrow argued that the system was an

> [i]nterference [with our rights which] seriously hurts our self-respect […] and reduces [the merchant] almost to the level of the Penny-in-the-Slot Machine which performs its functions without intelligence or volition. If the principle involved gains ground, the Merchant will become a mere Dispenser of Branded Articles at prices fixed by the Proprietors, and will eventually be dispensed with himself.[79]

Moët & Chandon's agent accepted that merchants had done much to build up the champagne houses' brands but argued that, whether or not the trade liked it, 'branded Champagnes […] have become purely [a patent article] so much so as any other commodity packed and prepared for Market by the Producer. […] The onus of responsibility in Champagne falls upon the Shipper whose name it bears'. Rubbing salt in the wound, they agreed with Corney & Barrow. The 'Distributor of Champagnes' was indeed little more than a penny-in-the-slot machine, but under the Moët system he not only 'obtained his penny but [made] a handsome profit in addition'.[80]

Central to the Moët & Chandon argument was the uniqueness of champagne: it was the only wine that was consistently bottled and branded by the producer rather than the London merchant. This contention was not generally disputed. Most merchants

[77] Duguid, "Developing the Brand," pp. 407, 430; see also P. Duguid, "Brands in Chains," in *Trademarks, Brands, and Competitiveness*, ed. T. da Silva Lopes and P. Duguid (London, 2010), pp. 150-1; Simpson, *Creating Wine*, pp. 95-6.
[78] *Ridley's*, 12 October 1897, p. 669, 12 November 1897, p. 735.
[79] *Ridley's*, 12 November 1897, pp. 799-800.
[80] *Ridley's*, 12 January 1898, pp. 67-8.

accepted that champagnes were, for most consumers, differentiated solely by the brand name.[81] Teresa da Silva Lopes has defined a brand as a 'legally defensible proprietary name, recognized by some categories of consumers as signifying a product with dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need'. Such differentiating characteristics can be both tangible and intangible, functional and emotional.[82] Because champagne shippers could control the blending to minimise, even eradicate, the quality variations associated with other wines, they could dominate the value chain.[83] As Simpson has argued, the champagne producers were the most successful of all producers in establishing brand names, informing consumers of wine quality, and associating the drink with the needs of the rapidly changing lifestyles of the middle and upper classes in rich urban societies during the nineteenth century'.[84] Jean Baudrillard has argued that the 'function of commodities [...] is not just to meet individual needs, but also to relate the individual to the social order'.[85] Champagne is proof of this. As the Gilbey's decision to remove the labels from their Castle brand of champagne indicated, an own-brand product sent a negative rather than a positive message to most consumers. Own- or merchant brand champagnes lacked what Moët & Chandon were later to call 'popular cachet', hence explaining the failure to establish own-brands in the 1880s and 1890s.[86]

It was not only own-brands that struggled to establish a viable position in the British market. In the late nineteenth century, two entirely new brands attempted without

[81] The 'In Vino Veritas' letter called champagne the 'patent medicine branch of the Wine trade'. See *Ridley's*, 12 June 1882, p. 194.
[82] da Silva Lopes and Duguid, *Trademarks, Brands, and Competitiveness*, p. 5.
[83] Simpson, *Creating Wine*, pp. 26-7.
[84] Simpson, *Creating Wine*, p. 132.
[85] J. Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (Boston and London, 1989), pp. 28-31, 30; J. Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis, MO., 1981), p. 83.
[86] Moët & Chandon advertisement in London *Evening Standard*, 10 December 1902, p. 2.

success to break in to the circle of premium brands. The first, Veuve Monnier, was a shipper brand created by an English entrepreneur using a French name. The second, 'Sans Sucre', was a new sub-branded product launched under the umbrella of an existing shipper brand, Laurent-Perrier, by their London agents Hertz and Collingwood. The two brands adopted different strategies. The strategy of Veuve Monnier was to focus its resources on gaining listings in the major hotels, restaurants and clubs, supported by an extensive and resourceful public relations campaign master-minded by William Hudson. The second – Laurent-Perrier's 'Sans Sucre' – concentrated on consumer communication for its distinctive products, creating a high-profile press advertising campaign backed up by a series of innovative consumer promotions, which dismayed the traditional trade. The first ended in the bankruptcy courts; the second in a retreat to the French market. Taken together they provide valuable insights into the nature of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century champagne market and the role of branding in that market.

'Veuve Monnier et ses fils', as extensive reporting of subsequent court cases made clear, was the invention of an English financial promoter with connections to the champagne industry in Reims.[87] During the 1880s, Veuve Monnier was distributed through public auctions, but in 1889 the company began to use advertisements which positioned it as a popular champion in a category dominated by high-priced premium brands.[88] The advertisements offered 'common sense reasons' for preferring Veuve Monnier to other champagnes, notably that it was 25 per cent lower in price than 'other brands of the same standard'. In the copy can be seen the hand of William Hudson,

[87] The principal surviving sources for Veuve Monnier are London and provincial newspapers. The brand was advertised in the press from 1880 onwards and received (or paid for) extensive publicity around the time of its flotation. The bankruptcy and subsequent criminal proceedings were covered in detail in both the general and the trade press. For the 'conception' of the brand see *Ridley's*, 12 February 1896, p. 129. For an analysis of the 'Veuve' phenomenon, see Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, pp. 34-5.
[88] For a public sale advertisement see, for example, London *Globe*, 21 November 1885, p. 4. For a representative early display advertisement, see *Globe*, 18 February 1889, p. 8.

previously a campaigner against 'brandolatry'. Veuve Monnier advertising referred to the 'worship of brands', declaring it to be a 'national weakness'.[89] The advertising was consistently concentrated on London newspapers, and the proposition of 'best value in the market' was maintained throughout the brand's short life as a public company.

Veuve Monnier made extensive and innovative use of both consumer- and investor-focused communication in the press between 1889 and 1895. Hudson had a high-profile reputation in the wine trade and was presumably hired by the stock promoter John Gassiot Austin to boost the public image of the company.[90] Hudson's first promotional initiative was a piece of 'market research'. In September 1890, *Ridley's* reported that a 'well-known trader' had caused the collection of champagne corks at Epsom and Henley. At Henley, 167 corks were collected of 49 brands of champagne. The leading brand – 'strange to say' suggested *Ridley's* sarcastically – was Veuve Monnier with seventeen. This, thought *Ridley's,* was a 'puff'. Questioning the methodology, the journal noted that 'the possibility of rigging the market [was] too patent to need any comment'.[91] A month later Hudson organised a blind tasting at the Criterion Restaurant in London in an apparently successful attempt to get his wines listed there:

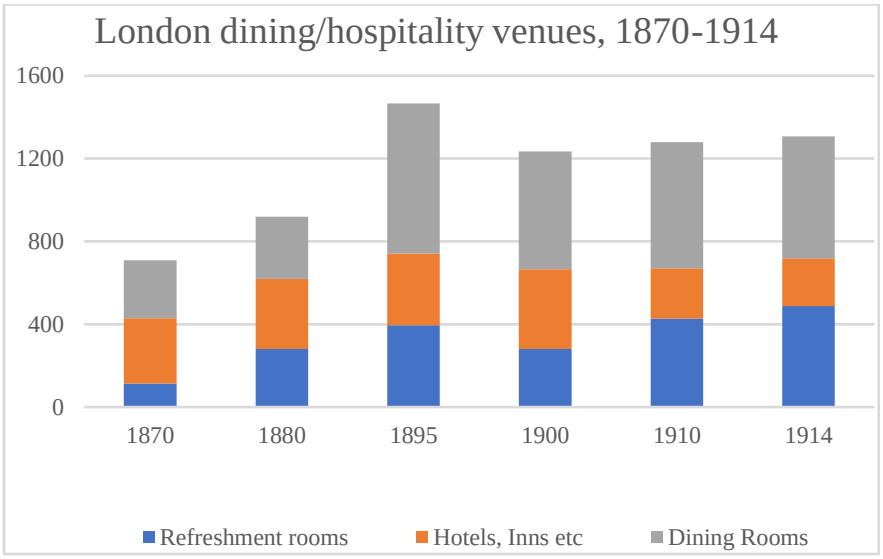
> each guest was asked to state on the back of his invitation card which of the two Wines served he preferred. [...] The two Wines were Veuve Monnier and Veuve Pommery, 1884. In the result it was found that fifteen of the twenty guests preferred Veuve Monnier. Two bottles were sent to Mr. Delacoste, and […] he gave us a large order.[92]

Hudson's approach was strategically sensible since, in the 1880s and 1890s, restaurants, many of which were housed in new luxury hotels, came to play an

[89] *Globe*, 30 October 1889, p. 4.
[90] Hudson's 'schemes for re-modelling the Wine Trade' were many. See *Ridley's,* 12 March 1885, pp. 107-8; *Ridley's*, 12 August 1884, p. 275 called him 'the irrepressible'.
[91] *Ridley's*, 12 September 1890, p. 485.
[92] *Ridley's*, 12 February 1896, p. 130.

increasingly important role in London social life. As Rachel Rich's work (Figure 33) has shown the total number of London venues rose quickly in the 1880s and 1890s.

Figure 33: London hospitality / dining venues, 1870-1914



Source: Rachel Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption*, p. 146.

Not only did the number of restaurants rise but restaurant-going also became socially acceptable. Restaurants were venues where men could host dinners and where women could dine without fear of tarnishing their reputation. This was a significant change wrought over less than thirty years.[93] In an 1890 promotional piece for the Trocadero restaurant, the theatre critic Clement Scott observed of the dining-out establishments in 1860s London that 'all these places were essentially devoted to men. Women were rarely seen at any restaurant whatever in a public room. Their presence there would have been considered fast, if not disreputable'.[94] By the 1890s, this had fundamentally changed, even if women eating on their own were sometimes regarded

[93] Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption*, pp. 106, 136; J. Burnett, *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating out in England from 1830 to the Present* (Harlow, 2004), pp. 143, 148.
[94] C. Scott, *How They Dined Us in 1860 and How They Dine Us Now* (London, 1890), p. 6.

with suspicion. As Rich has also observed, restaurants, with their separate but highly visible individual tables, 'were perfectly designed for performing'.[95]

The focus on restaurants and hotels was a central but problematic part of Hudson's strategy for Veuve Monnier. Confirming the worth of Hubinet's strategy of the 1860s onwards, he and Austin apparently spent the better part of a large 'advertising' budget on buying listings for their wines.[96] A 'publicity fee' of £500 per year was paid to Spiers & Pond for 'advertising our brand', but the contract made no guarantee of sales. Testifying in court in 1896, Hudson stated emphatically that 'in working up a new brand you have to go down on your hands and knees to get them [hotels, restaurants and clubs] to take it'.[97] Veuve Monnier's problems stemmed not just from the advertising expenditure but also from the fact that they booked anticipated sales as firm income.[98] When the sales did not materialise, the firm collapsed. Five years earlier, Hudson had vigorously defended the hotel chains' practice of demanding what became known as 'compulsory commissions'. Like Spiers & Pond, the Gordon Hotels demanded a listing fee of £500 with no guarantee of sales. Additionally, a showcard displayed in the 'bars and dining rooms' would cost £50 per year.[99] The Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne (the body formed in 1882 to represent the interests of the 'Grande Marque' champagne houses) called such demands 'as exorbitant as they are unjustifiable'.[100] The consensus of the heated correspondence in *The Times* and other newspapers was that,

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[95] Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption*, pp. 137-9; see also R. Machray, *The Night Side of London* (Philadelphia, 1903), pp. 69-70.
[96] The difference was that Hubinet did not 'buy' the listings but submitted his wines to competition.
[97] *Ridley's*, 12 February 1896, pp. 128-9.
[98] The firm spent approximately £2,000 per year on advertising. See *Wine Trade Review*, 15 June 1895, p. 454.
[99] *Ridley's*, 12 June 1886, p. 227; 12 July 1886, p. 269. The railway companies ordered only a small stock - perhaps a single case - and re-ordered only as required. Whilst some work has been done on the architectural importance of the nineteenth-century hotels, there is very little on their social impact or commercial practices.
[100] *Ridley's*, 12 August 1890, pp. 417, 418. Translation by the journal.

whilst the best-known brands were not asked for a fee, the task facing the agent of an unknown brand of champagne was not only 'herculean but unpleasant', since the only alternative to buying space on the wine list was, in the words of 'One Who Knows', to 'go and make your Brand known'.[101]

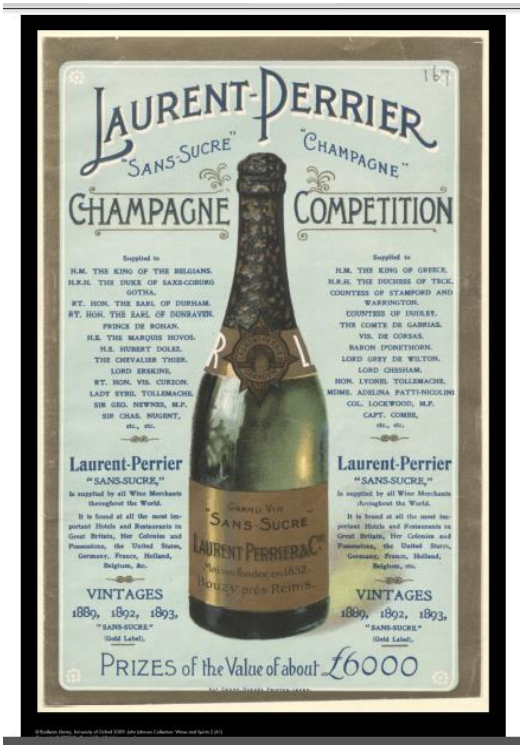
Laurent-Perrier's attempts to make 'Sans Sucre' known were equally unsuccessful despite a powerful product proposition. The development and marketing of Sans Sucre is less well documented than that of Veuve Monnier and, in the absence of relevant Laurent-Perrier archives, can only be reconstructed from the British press.[102] As the name Sans Sucre suggests, this was positioned as a low-sugar champagne.[103] Launched in 1894 by Laurent-Perrier's London agency, Hertz and Collingwood, its early advertisements focused on its suitability for those with medical conditions such as diabetes and gout that prohibited them from drinking ordinary champagne.[104] The claims were backed up by testimony from Dr Mortimer Granville, a noted authority on gout, as well as an endorsement from the *British Medical Journal*. Medical endorsement remained a key element of the copy strategy although the advertising in 1895 increasingly stressed the flavour of the wine, before the final evolution of the copy which emphasised the 'natural processes […] which Nature has determined'.[105]

The promotional campaign for Sans Sucre organised by Hertz (Figure 34) was felt by the traditional trade to take champagne into dangerous territory. The focus of their

[101] *Ridley's*, 12 July 1886, pp. 278-9.
[102] The Laurent-Perrier archives were badly affected by a fire in the post-war period. Information from personal communication, October 2016. No documents survive from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.
[103] The sugar-free claim caused controversy in the trade. Analytical reports appeared to show Sans Sucre had fractionally more sugar than Moët & Chandon's 'Nature sans sucre'. See *Ridley's*, 12 October 1894, pp. 584-9 for a challenge to Hertz's claims on sugar levels; see London *Standard*, 15 February 1895, p. 1, for Moët & Chandon's 'Nature sans sucre'.
[104] In the absence of any documentation from the Laurent-Perrier archives it is unclear who took the lead in the development of Sans Sucre. Jacob Hertz, the main force behind the agency, appeared to claim that the initiative and the process were his alone. *Ridley's*, 12 July 1895, p. 441. *Vigneron Champenois*, 23 May 1895, denied the process was in fact original.
[105] London *Standard*, 11 June 1896, p. 9.

concern was a consumer promotion launched in 1898 (Figure 34). The promotional flyer claimed that 'Brandolatry' had 'made the introduction of a New Wine a very difficult task, although of the highest class and superior in flavour and bouquet'.

Figure 34: Laurent-Perrier Sans Sucre promotion, 1898



Source: John Johnson Collection, Wines and Spirits box 2, item no. 61.[106]

Consumers were invited to collect and send in corks from Sans Sucre bottles to win prizes of a total value of 'about £6000'. Twenty-five corks secured a pair of gilt-handled scissors (for ladies) or a 'four-bladed pocket knife' (for gentlemen); a thousand corks a 'diamond and ruby bracelet' or a 'gold hunter watch'. The concern expressed by *Ridley's* was that the promotion was aimed at the 'lovely woman, whom they consider responsible

[106] John Johnson Collection, Wines and Spirits box 2 (61). http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_verZ39.88-2004&res_dat=. Most of the theatre programmes are in the 'Entertainment' collection.

for the Liquor ordered for dinner, lunch or supper, both at home and afield'. The journal feared it 'savours very much of appealing to the support of the *Demi-monde*'.[107] There is some limited evidence from other papers that Hertz and Collingwood targeted women in particular for both Sans Sucre and their other champagne, 'Coca-Tonic Champagne'. The 'Ladies Column' published in a number of West Country newspapers was sent samples of Sans Sucre in 1894 and 1895. As noted in Chapter Four, Laurent-Perrier advertisements for dry champagne infused with 'coca leaf', which appeared in London papers in 1896 and 1897, also focused on women.[108] However, there is no evidence that other champagne shippers (or their agents) tried similar tactics, and it is clear that Hertz's approach to marketing was atypical for the period and, ultimately, unsuccessful.

Veuve Monnier and the Laurent-Perrier Sans Sucre and Coca Tonic stand out as exceptions to the common run of champagne marketing and advertising in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Neither campaign was successful in establishing the reputation of the brand. Veuve Monnier's backers ran into serious cashflow problems and the company eventually went bankrupt in 1895, though its wine continued to fetch high prices in auction sales.[109] Sans Sucre disappeared from the British market after 1900, although it continued to be sold in France by Laurent-Perrier; Coca-Tonic ceased to be branded with the Laurent-Perrier name after 1895 and ceased to be advertised after late 1896. In general, the trade's use of the press reverted to the earlier nineteenth-century approach of advertising through wine merchants rather than on their own account, though there were exceptions such as the 'Duc de Marne' brand which traded on the reputation of

[107] *Ridley's*, 12 May 1898, p. 353; 12 December 1898, p. 841-2. The promotion ended badly when Hertz and Collingwood were sued for refusing a prize on the grounds that the corks had been collected by a restaurateur. See *Ridley's*, 12 April 1900, p. 244. See also *Morning Post*, 29 March 1900, p. 7.
[108] *Bristol Mercury*, 26 May 1894, p. 6; *Illustrated London News*, 20 July 1895, p. 91. A 'doctor's letter' refers to the value of the wine for a female patient.
[109] See, for example, *Morning Post*, 29 April 1901, p. 10.

champagne itself with advertisements headed 'The King of Wines'.[110] In effect, its invented name appropriated what is now known as the 'territorial brand' of champagne.[111]

Although producers selling into the British market at times adopted 'French' brand names such as Veuve Monnier or Duc de Marne, they did not adopt the colourful posters typical of French Belle Époque advertising.[112] Nor did they adopt the celebratory labels linking champagne to life events such as marriage and baptism, sporting occasions such as cycle races, or the aviation galas that gripped France just before World War One.[113] This form of marketing was largely designed to drive up domestic consumption in France, which suffered during the 1880s when the general economic downturn in Britain and elsewhere reduced export sales.[114] Sales to the French domestic market rose nearly 500 per cent during the 1890s, led by entrepreneurial producers such as Eugene Mercier, whose publicity exploits gripped not only France but much of the rest of Europe.[115]

The British market was affected by the downturn, but that did not lead to the occasion-specific labels favoured by the cheaper champagnes on the French market which were designed to boost domestic share. The Archives Départmentales de la Marne hold a few examples of labels commemorating the death of famous individuals, and these may have been issued on the British market. An example is the 'Archer Up' label 'deposed' in 1887, shortly after the suicide of Fred Archer, perhaps the most successful, driven and

[110] See, for example, *Leeds Mercury*, 1 November 1901, p. 3.
[111] See, for example, *Western Morning News*, 13 December 1901, p. 7 for a full-page advertisement.
[112] For the Parisian poster 'revolution', see M. Martin, *Trois Siècles De Publicité En France* (Paris, 1992), pp. 107-12. Martin does not mention champagne as a key advertiser. Though there is no evidence either way, it seems likely that the more conservative British market would not have welcomed such hedonistic and sexually provocative advertising.
[113] For Belle Époque marketing of champagne through posters of fashionable occasions and labels of significant events, see Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, pp. 32-3.
[114] Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, p. 79.
[115] For Mercier's advertising, see F. Crestin-Billet, *Eugene Mercier: The Showman of Champagne* (Epernay, 1996), pp. 154-93. For the sales increase, see Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, p. 15.

ruthless jockey in British racing history.[116] On the evidence of the British press and theatre programmes, even the lower-cost products were named and labelled in the style set by the premium brands, which focused on the name (actual or invented) of the 'house'.[117]

Defining and protecting the proprietary brand

In the 1860s, as Chapter Two showed, the champagne producers were pioneers in developing their house brand names to guarantee the house of origin and thus the quality of the champagne bearing that name on cork or label. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the industry turned to collective action to define and protect not just the use but also the meaning of the term 'champagne'.[118] In so doing they created a new form of brand which rested essentially on the geographic origin of the wine.[119] This was the territorial brand (also known by economists as a collective brand).[120] A long-running dispute over the right of French producers in regions outside Champagne to use the term 'champagne' was settled in a seemingly conclusive court judgment at the French Appeal Court (the 'Cours de Cassation') in 1887. This ruled that the term 'champagne' could only be applied to 'un vin récolté et fabriqué dans la région dénommée'.[121] The 1887 judgment was the fruit of a long campaign of legal action by the Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne, the group of thirty-five champagne houses that came together in

[116] Archives Départmentales de la Marne, *ADM*, folio 30, no. 792; for Archer's life, see W. Vamplew, "Archer, Frederick James [Fred] (1857-1886), Jockey," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).
[117] See, for example, John Johnson Collection, London Playbills Comedy box 1 (33) for 1887 champagne advertisements. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=.
[118] See G. Harding, "Inventing Tradition and Terroir: The Case of Champagne in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Making New Worlds: Wine, Terroir, Utopia*, ed. J. Dutton and P. J. Howland (London, forthcoming 2019).
[119] For the territorial brand in Champagne, see S. Charters and N. Spielmann, "Characteristics of Strong Territorial Brands: The Case of Champagne," *Journal of Business Research*, no. 67 (2014), pp. 1461-7.
[120] D. Menival and S. Charters, "The Impact of Geographic Reputation on the Value Created in Champagne," *Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics* 58, no. 2 (2013), p. 173.
[121] R. Hodez, *La Protection Des Vins De Champagne Par L'appellation D'origine* (Paris, 1923).

1882 to secure the principle that 'il n'est de champagne que de la Champagne'.[122] The 1887 judgment was not finally confirmed until 1889, but it was the trigger for a highly significant second phase of collective action.[123]

The Syndicat's own summary of the judges' decision at the 1887 hearing in Angers was that 'les vins récoltés et manutentionnés en Champagne ont seule la droit de porter ce nom'.[124] Wines grown or vinified outside the area could not use the name 'champagne' on their labels. A variant of this same line is still used on the official champagne websites.[125] For the Syndicat, the judgment was 'une consécration de notre droit' ('sacred vindication of our rights'), but they recognised that they could not simply rely on the law. In a letter published in the *Vigneron Champenois* by its editor, Raphael Bonnedame, the Syndicat called on its members to participate in a collective presence at the forthcoming 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. It argued that not to do so would be to leave the field open to those illicit competitors who would once again attempt to 'usurp' their place and their name. Not to put on a show would, it said, be an 'abdication'.[126] The proposal for a collective display was accepted, and the outcome was what the *Petit Journal* guide to the Exhibition called an 'audacious' display that represented the history of a bottle of champagne from vine to glass, rendered in wax figures at one-tenth scale.[127] Though there is no definitive visual evidence, the heavily illustrated report of the 1900 display strongly suggests that these same figures were re-

[122] See *www.maisons-champagne.com/fr/professionel.umc/origines-et-missions/article/les-origines* [accessed 16 February 2016].
[123] P. Vernier, *De L'évolution Du Commerce Des Vins De Champagne De 1914 À 1921. Thèse Pour Le Doctorat, Presented and Upheld 5 February 1923* (Paris, 1923), p. 14.
[124] Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne, *Propriété Du Nom De Champagne. Arrêts Et Jugements Divers* (Reims, 1905), p. 9.
[125] See www.champagne.fr, [accessed 15 November 2016]: 'Champagne only comes from Champagne, France'.
[126] *Vigneron Champenois*, 26 October 1887, p. 1.
[127] L. Descaves, "Les Produits Alimentaires," in *Guide Bleu Du Figaro Et Du Petit Journal* (Paris, 1888), pp. 229-33.

used eleven years later.[128] To ensure that the visitors understood the significance of what they were seeing, a *Notice Historique sur le vin de Champagne* was given to all visitors.[129]

In this and other booklets he wrote for the 1889 and 1900 Exhibitions, Raphael Bonnedame appears to have had three themes in mind: the process of creating champagne, the unique qualities of the region, and the revitalisation and popularisation of the legend of the seventeenth century Benedictine monk, Dom Pérignon, whom Bonnedame portrayed as the 'inventor' of sparkling wine. Firstly, he insisted that the 'inimitable qualities' of champagne were due not to 'artifice but to the special nature of the soil and geography of the province of Champagne'. He was emphatic that this was not a 'fabricated wine' (as many had alleged) but that its 'transformations' were based on 'l'utilisation ingénieuse des forces naturelles' ('ingenious use of natural forces') and 'le travail constant d'un grand nombre de générations' ('constant labour of generations').[130] His own 1893 book on Moët & Chandon insisted that 'it was of the utmost importance to show people that our wines are natural' and in the proof text he changed 'ils sont travaillés' (that is, 'worked on') to 'ils ont à subir plusieurs manutentions très délicates' ('put though very delicate operations').[131]

Second, Bonnedame focused on the unique qualities of the Champagne region. The *Quelques Mots sur le Vin de Champagne* text depicted his homeland as a paradisiacal region which represented the 'l'esprit Gaulois' ('spirit of France'). Walking to and from the harvest each day, the workers supposedly sang joyous 'songs of the countryside'.[132]

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[128] F. Blondeau, *L'exposition Du Syndicat Du Commerce Des Vins De Champagne En 1900: Rapport Général, Présenté Au Nom De La Commission Exécutive* (Reims, 1901).
[129] Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne, *Notice Historique Sur Le Vin De Champagne* (Epernay, 1889).
[130] R. Bonnedame, *Quelques Mots Sur Le Vin De Champagne* (Epernay, 1899), pp. 24-5.
[131] R. Bonnedame, *Notice Sur La Maison Moët & Chandon D' Epernay* (Epernay, 1893), p. 73. The proof text is located in the Carnegie Library CH B M 244.
[132] At least one contemporary text confirms the singing, see J. des Tournelles, *Les Vendanges En Champagne* (Reims, 1900), p. 10.

Unlike the Anglophone writers of earlier in the century who depicted the 'peasants' as crafty, suspicious and greedy, Bonnedame painted a picture of the Champenois as sober, moral and courteous, whilst the women had all the gifts: ''beauté, grâce, esprit et les qualités de coeur qui en font des femmes exceptionnelles'.[133] His presentation of Champagne as an arcadian terroir had been foreshadowed in the *Vigneron Champenois* a few years earlier when the newspaper ran a poetry competition which he helped to judge.[134] The newspaper appealed to the 'vast federation' of French poets to reflect in verse how 'le vin de Champagne est le lien de tous les grands, de tous les nobles sentiments qui nous agitent, nous, Français'. 'Buvons ce necteur de Cocagne' was the rallying cry of one of the winners, thus linking Champagne to the mythical land of medieval plenty.[135] Stylistically, the illustrations to the *Notice Historique* show vineyard work as it had been fifty years earlier. These illustrations contrast strongly with advertisement pages of his newspaper, which carried detailed drawings of the latest vineyard technology required to spray the vines against mildew or inject them with chemicals in the vain attempt to combat phylloxera.[136] Bonnedame's powerful depiction of a unique and original terroir still echoes through contemporary champagne marketing.[137]

The third of Bonnedame's themes was that of the man he called the 'inventor' of champagne. His writing, whether for the Exhibitions or in his other works on the

[133] Bonnedame, *Quelques Mots Sur Le Vin De Champagne*, pp. 21-5.
[134] For the genesis and results of the poetry competition see *Vigneron Champenois*, 26 March 1884, 9 April 1884 and 16 April 1884. Bonnedame was secretary to the jury.
[135] 'The wine of Champagne is the wellspring of all the great men and all the noble sentiments that inspire us, the French.' For Adolphe Chavance's winning poem see *Vigneron Champenois*, 13 August 1884, p. 3.
[136] *Vigneron Champenois*, 24 March 1886, p. 1.
[137] For a laudatory verdict, see *Vigneron Champenois*, 30 October 1889, p. 1. For the journal, Bonnedame's work showed 'la culture spéciale de nos vignes, et le travail dans nos caves [et] a mis en lumière notre industrie champenoise'. The 2017 Moët website (https://www.moet.com) describes their vineyards as the 'birthplace of the magic of champagne'.

champagne houses, helped rescue Dom Pérignon from almost sixty years of near obscurity. The 1820s mythology of the gifted cellarer at the Abbey of Hautvillers, who called to his colleagues 'come quickly for I am seeing stars', was revived.[138] In Bonnedame's account, he was the 'inventor of champagne' who knew how to make it sparkle. In fact, Pérignon probably spent his working life in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries trying to eradicate the second fermentation that caused the bubbles but made the wine prone to spoilage. It is certain that Pérignon did not invent the cork. It is extremely unlikely that he was blind when working as the 'cellarer' at Hautvillers.[139] The consensus of modern scholars is that he was an expert blender blessed with a sedulous but uncorroborated early nineteenth-century chronicler, Dom Grossard. [140] Though credited in British and French newspapers as an important figure in the history of champagne, it was not until the early twentieth century that Pérignon became generally credited as its 'inventor'. In June 1914, *Le Petit Journal*, which was then one of France's most popular newspapers, celebrated the bicentennial of Dom Pérignon's discovery of champagne with a front-page illustration.[141] Thus the myth was incarnated.

This terroir-based 'invention of tradition' – as Hobsbawm and Ranger famously put it in 1983 – was significant to the champagne industry for two main reasons. Firstly, it addressed the concern that by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries champagne was becoming ever more strongly associated with vulgarity, new money and somewhat unrefined carnality. The concern that champagne's image was becoming debased was particularly strong in France after the industry started to promote cheaper wines as a response to the dip in overseas trade in the 1880s and 1890s. Kolleen Guy has

[138] The mythology owed its substantive origins to Dom Grossard, writing of a man he never knew. See Gandhilon, *Naissance Du Champagne*, pp. 152, 179, 187.
[139] J.D. Bullock, J.P. Wang, and G.H. Bullock, "Was Dom Perignon Really Blind?," *Survey of Ophthalmology* 42, no. 5 (1998), pp. 482-5.
[140] Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, p. 28.
[141] Supplement to *Le Petit Journal*, 14 June 1914, p. 1.

vividly described how a ‘mythic past’ was brought into play to link champagne with the heritage of noble families and how the mythification of Dom Pérignon enabled the industry to invoke the ‘holy origins of champagne’.[142] By using such symbols, the industry was able to counter associations with immorality and excess and promote the image of a ‘unique beverage connected with age-old traditions’.[143] The brand names created around the turn of the century in both France and Britain further exploited this link with words such as ‘veuve’ (or ‘widow’), ‘comte’ and ‘duc’. In England, as we have seen, Gassiot Austin adopted the name Veuve Monnier for his newly created brand in the 1890s, while the brand name ‘Duc de Marne’ was used for another low-cost champagne brand that was intensively marketed in Britain in the early 1900s.[144]

Secondly, the focus on the terroir of Champagne provided the ‘grande marque’ houses with an enduringly powerful narrative of place with which to underpin their marketing communication. Charters and Spielman’s research into contemporary champagne marketing has shown how the ‘territorial brand [provides] a common story which offers a collective focus for the individual enterprises’.[145] In general, the large-scale producers underpin their marketing with an emphasis on ‘regional-level geographic

[142] Guy, "Oiling the Wheels of Social Life: Myths and Marketing in Champagne During the Belle Epoque," p. 229; Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, p. 17.
[143] Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, p. 25. The connection of champagne with immorality was vividly illustrated in *Le Petit Journal*, 29 June 1914, p. 6 in which a short story described how its anti-hero ‘dreamt of nothing other than night-time bars and private rooms [‘cabinets particuliers’] where, after the champagne, mad orgies were unleashed’.
[144] See, for example, *Leeds Mercury*, 1 November 1901, p. 3. The wine was advertised as comparing ‘favourably with any of the fashionable brands now sold at more than double the price’. The BNA records more than 300 advertisements for the brand in 1900-02. For a broader discussion of the 'Veuve' phenomenon in the champagne industry, see K.M. Guy, "Drowning Her Sorrows: Widowhood and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth-Century Champagne Industry," *Business and Economic History* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1997), pp. 505-14; for the issue of nobility and champagne, see B. Goujon, "Noblesse Et Champagne (XIXe Au XXe Siècles)," in *La Construction Des Territoires Du Champagne (1811-1911-2011)*, ed. S. Wolikow (Dijon, 2013), pp. 233-48.
[145] Charters and Spielmann, "Strong Territorial Brands," p. 1463; C. Le Goffic and V. Marcilhac, "Terroir Et Marché Du Vignoble De Champagne Entre AOC Et Marques," in *La Construction Des Territoires Du Champagne (1811-1911-2011)*, ed. S. Wolikow (Dijon, 2013), p. 211. The US line in 2003 was 'If it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne'.

terroir and brand-level cultural terroir', whilst smaller producers tend to emphasise 'highly localized and personalized […] notions of terroir'.[146] The conception of Champagne as a unique terroir was also important as the basis for the development of France's Appellation d'Origine Controlée (AOC) system which took Champagne as its model when it was instituted in the 1930s.[147] Though Camembert presents a near contemporaneous parallel example, its campaign to create national recognition for a territorial brand developed after its exposure to French troops during the First World War almost a generation later.[148] It seems probable that Champagne was the first territorial brand to create an image for its region in support of its defence of legal rights – an image that Moët & Chandon exploited in the British market, the subject of the final case study of this chapter.[149]

Moët & Chandon – integrating territorial and proprietary brand

By 1900, Moët & Chandon had been established in the British market for more than a century. The Moët name came to prominence in the first decades of the nineteenth century and by 1860 it was probably the best known of all the champagne houses in

[146] J. Smith Maguire and S. Charters, "Territorial Brands and the Scale of Production: The Example of Champagne," in *6th AWBR International Conference* (Bordeaux Management School 2011), pp. 1, 5; for a broader discussion of the tensions between being 'French' and being 'peasant', see J.R. Lehning, *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 11-34; for the conflicts of local, regional and national identities in the neighbouring province of Lorraine, see D. Hopkin, "Identity in a Divided Province: The Folklorists of Lorraine, 1860-1960," *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 4 (2000), pp. 642-5.

[147] For the AOC system, see E. Barham, "Translating Terroir: The Global Challenge of French AOC Labeling," *Journal of Rural Studies* 19, no. 1 (2003), pp. 127-38; S. Wolikow, "La Formation De La Champagne Viticole Du XIXe Au XXI Siècle: La Construction D'un Territoire Viticole Singulier," in *La Construction Des Territoires Du Champagne (1811-1911-2011)*, ed. S. Wolikow (Dijon, 2013), pp. 23-4, passim; O. Jacquet and G. Laferté, "Le Contrôle Républicain Du Marché: Vignerons Et Négociants Sous La Troisième République," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 61, no. 5 (2006), pp. 1149-61.

[148] P. Boisard, "The Future of a Tradition: Two Ways of Making Camembert, the Foremost Cheese of France," *Food and Foodways* 4, no. 3-4 (1991), p. 175.

[149] Though territorial 'renown' was used in alimentary marketing from the eighteenth century onwards, this did not lead to the construciton of territorial brands. See P. Meyzie, "La Construction De La Renommée Des Produits De Terroirs: Acteurs Et Enjeux D'un Marché De La Gourmandise En France (XVIIe-Début XIXe Siècle')," *French Historical Studies* 38, no. 2 (2015), pp. 225-51; the CIVC (the successor to the SCVC) initiates around 800 legal actions annually in defence of the champagne mark. See Charters and Spielmann, "Strong Territorial Brands," p. 1462.

Britain.[150] However, whilst well known, it was not necessarily regarded as a brand of the highest status.[151] In the period 1875-1905, the price of the Moët & Chandon wines was consistently the lowest of the group of ten premium brands documented by the pioneer historian of champagne, André Simon, in his 1905 book.[152] The low price can be accounted for partly by underselling by merchants seeking to exploit this well-known name and partly by the lack of a clearly positioned premium wine. In the 1890s, their advertising and (in all probability) sales were dominated by the long-established 'White Dry Sillery' and the newly launched 'Première Cuvée'.[153] Both were non-vintage wines. The former was aimed at less sophisticated drinkers who preferred 'medium dry' wines; the latter was positioned as a 'full-bodied Club wine'.[154] The lack of a premium wine was addressed in 1879 by launching 'Brut Impérial' as an 'entirely "Brut" [wine] with only its natural saccharine and no added liqueur', and then, in the 1880s, changing the name to 'Dry Imperial' and greatly upweighting the level of advertising.[155] Unlike the other two wines in the portfolio, 'Dry Imperial' was a vintage-dated wine and the turn-of-the-century advertising increasingly stressed that it was 'Nature sans liqueur', thus positioning it as a direct challenger to Laurent-Perrier's Sans Sucre.[156]

Unlike Sans Sucre, Moët & Chandon had an established reputation and an established brand on which to base their repositioning. Furthermore, they had the

[150] In the period 1850-59, Moët & Chandon had 135 mentions in the British provincial press, compared to 90 for Veuve Clicquot and 83 for Ruinart. BNA search conducted 6 June 2017.
[151] See *Ridley's,* 8 August 1867, p. 8 on the firm getting into 'low company'; see also 12 November 1878, p. 344.
[152] Simon, *History of Champagne*, p. 184.
[153] For the launch of 'Première Cuvée' see *Sunday Mirror*, 4 January 1890, p. 6
[154] For descriptions of the two wines see repeated John Taylor advertisements in, for example, *Burnley Express*, 15 December 1900, p. 8.
[155] For the 1879 launch of Brut Impérial, see *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 21 February 1879, p. 3. In the period 1889-90, there were more than 450 advertisements for 'Dry Imperial' in the British press, spread across 40 newspapers.
[156] For the argument between Laurent-Perrier and Moët & Chandon over whose wine had least sugar content, see *Wine Trade Review*, 15 March 1895, pp. 206-7.

resources and distribution to support their communication strategy. In addition to press advertising, Moët & Chandon increasingly used other promotional techniques to win back the British market. In the mid to late1880s, they commissioned 'puff pieces' for Brut Impérial/Dry Imperial and donated magnums of this wine to a dinner commemorating the return of the Guards from Egypt. This gesture was reported in identical terms by dozens of newspapers.[157] Then, in another widely reported gesture, they volunteered to absorb the cost of new taxes on sparkling wine rather than passing it on to the consumer.[158] In 1902 they switched back to press advertising but, instead of featuring specific wines, they focused on the attributes of the *maison* and on reinforcing their British turn. That year, a display advertisement for the house headlined 'Triumphs of 1902' celebrated its antiquity ('founded at the beginning of the 17th century') and proclaimed it 'The Triumph of Quality, the Cachet of Popular Approval, and the Choice of the World's Great Nations'.[159] In 1905 they published a brochure with a strongly Anglocentric perspective written by 'A member of *The Times* advertising staff'. The Moët & Chandon taste was described as 'specifically designed to suit the taste of English connoisseurs'. The 'restorative' effects of champagne were supported by the claim that the 'Oxford and Cambridge Eights drink Champagne after rowing a hard course'. The company cast doubt on the quality of some other wines made from non-Champagne grapes and shipped to England under the name of champagne, and they boasted of their possession of '2500 acres of the finest Champagne land'. The brochure closed with the reminder that their Dry Imperial was the champagne 'best known in all the Colonies of the Empire on which the sun never sets'.[160]

[157] For the puff in *Hotel Mail*, see *Ridley's*, 12 January 1885, p. 26; for the Guards dinner advertisement see, for example, *Northampton Mercury*, 25 November 1885, p. 5.
[158] See, for example, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 1888, p. 4.
[159] See *St James's Gazette*, 3 December 1902, p. 20.
[160] 'A Member of The Times advertising staff', *Moët & Chandon* (London, 1905).

This claim to the regard of the British elite was reinforced in 1908 but placed within the broader set of champagne values inscribed in the 1900 Paris Exposition. Moët & Chandon took a 'pavilion' at the very well-attended 'Franco British Exhibition' held at White City, the newly launched exhibition venue designed by cultural entrepreneur Imre Kiralfy.[161] The pavilion was in a prime location next to the 'Royal Enclosure' and Moët & Chandon took half-page advertisements in a series of 'society' periodicals such as *Country Life*, *Tatler*, *Bystander* and *Illustrated London News*. Inside the pavilion, the visitors immediately saw three oil paintings featuring champagne. The first was of 'the Blind Monk who was the first to discover the secret of making Champagne wine "sparkling"'. This appropriation of Dom Pérignon was justified on the basis that they owned his 'original' vineyard.[162] The other two paintings showed champagne drinkers and were, reportedly, 'thoroughly Frenchy and full of life'. Further inside the pavilion was a series of three-dimensional dioramas featuring the 'gathering of the grapes' (again noting the firm's possession of more than 2,500 acres of vineyards), the process of vinification, a general view of the cellars and the 'Grand *Chantier* where the disgorging, final corking and wiring is proceeding'. The copy, which stressed the exactitude of the rendition and the lifelike quality of the figures, was identical in each of the advertisements, but the central image changed, sometimes showing the pavilion,

[161] For the background to Kiralfy's success as entrepreneur and designer and the scale and success of the 1908 Exhibition, see A.C.T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-De-Siècle Europe* (Basingstoke, 2010), Chapter 5.

[162] *Illustrated London News*, 4 July 1908, p. 24. At that point the firm did not own the 'Dom Pérignon' brand. This was an (under-exploited) property of Eugene Mercier and did not come into the hands of Moët & Chandon until 1927 when it formed part of Francine Durand-Mercier's dowry on marrying Comte Paul de Chandon-Moët. Moët & Chandon did not commercialise this wine until 1935, but it has since become a flagship of the firm. See T. Stevenson, "Dom Pérignon Oenothèque, 1966-1996," http://www.worldoffinewine.com/news/dom-perignon-oenothque-19661996-4207945. [Accessed 21 September 2017.]

sometimes a photograph of one of the dioramas.[163] Moët & Chandon's explicit use of the visual technology and copy strategy of the Paris 1900 Exposition for the British Exhibition is both striking and unique.

Moët & Chandon continued to emphasise its wholehearted commitment to the British market at least into the 1930s, and their strategy from the mid-1880s points to a long-term divergence from the approach employed by Hubinet and other agents, such as Conrad Reuss of Pol Roger. The Hubinet model focused on gaining listings for the house wine in important centres of distribution, building a reputation for quality to support consistent price rises, and eschewing direct advertising in favour of generating editorial copy. By contrast, Moët & Chandon employed an increasingly sophisticated approach to the market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Firstly, as we have seen, they segmented the market with three products at different price levels and taste profiles: White Dry Sillery, Première Cuvée and Brut/Dry Imperial. Secondly, they built up a nationwide network of controlled agents to distribute their wines. Thirdly, they used both editorial copy and, increasingly, house-generated promotional campaigns in the press and through other media (such as the 1905 booklet written by the *Times* journalist) to trumpet their focus on the British market. Advertisements in the press in the 1920s continued these themes. A display advertisement in 1920 emphasised that Dry Imperial was 'prepared specially' for England. Brut Impérial was a sweeter wine prepared for France and, if distributed in England, it was through 'unauthorised channels'.[164] In the late 1920s, a series of advertisements in popular journals such as the *Illustrated London News* and the *Sketch* reiterated the claim that Moët & Chandon had the 'largest acreage of vineyards in the Champagne district and are the biggest distributors of that Wine in the

[163] For an image of the 'chantier', see *Sketch*, 22 July 1908, p. 32. It is probable that there was also a guidebook for visitors, but I have been unable to locate an example and there is no copy in the Moët & Chandon archives.
[164] *Western Daily Press*, 7 January 1920, p. 3.

World'. The copy continued with the claim that '[t]hey export to this Country a greater quantity of Champagne than any other house'.[165] In 1936, the firm, with the involvement of their London agent Simon Bros, launched the world's first 'prestige cuvée' at double the price of the most expensive vintage champagnes under the name of Dom Pérignon, the brand that they had acquired in 1927 through marriage.[166]

Neither the history of Moët & Chandon in the twentieth century nor their post-war relationship with their London agency Simon Bros has been fully studied. It is not yet possible to evaluate the respective contributions of agent and house. None of the post-World War One advertisements carried the name of any agent. It is possible that the Moët & Chandon case provides evidence for the decline of the agent from the levels of importance reached by Hubinet, Reuss and Hertz. No other firm showed the same levels of energy and innovation in their marketing during the period from 1900 to 1939.[167]

Conclusions

The marketing and branding strategies developed by the producers and their agents in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries laid deep and enduring foundations for the modern champagne industry. There are no comprehensive studies of the modern marketing and branding of champagne, but the development and dynamics of the territorial brand have been studied in detail by a number of scholars, in particular Natalie Spielmann, Steve Charters, and their collaborators. These studies, which are based on

[165] For example, see *Illustrated London News*, 27 July 1929, p. 38.
[166] For the origins of the the Dom Pérignon Prestige Cuvée, see Stevenson, "Dom Pérignon Oenothèque, 1966-1996".
[167] Although the firm of Piper-Heidsieck used the personality of Charles Heidsieck to build publicity for the brand, this was never backed up with advertising. *Ridley's*, 12 May 1900, p. 310 nevertheless condemned his donations to the Hospital Trains appeal as 'utilising the War […] as a medium of advertising'. For other examples of Heidsieck's publicity efforts, see *Era*, 20 May 1899, p. 18 (a dinner for the Australian cricket team) and *Dundee Evening Post*, 24 May 1900, p. 2 (donation to National Bazaar Appeal).

qualitative interviews with champagne houses, cooperatives and individual winegrowers, show how the territorial brand forms the basis of modern marketing by acting as a 'shared source of value'.[168] Under the umbrella of the territorial brand, the smaller-scale producers can focus less on celebration and more on the quality of their wine which is rooted in 'highly-localized and personal land- and cultural-based notions of terroir', whilst large producers focus on owning the cultural terroir of 'celebration', and using the regional-level brand to validate quality and origin.[169] Though the overall marketing strategy has changed slightly, these developments have underpinned the communication of champagne in the last hundred years.

As we have seen in Chapter Four, the nature of 'celebration' shifted over time from being largely public to being both public and private. Private celebrations were not the object of champagne marketing in the nineteenth century; they became so in the twentieth. The hedonistic messages of the Belle Époque posters in early twentieth-century France played no significant role in the British market before the First World War but assumed a growing importance thereafter. As consumers have increasingly been able to spend discretionary income on personal celebration, so the trend towards manipulating the 'illusion of scarcity' for the purpose of price maximisation has increased. The vintage-dated wines originating in the 1870s and 1880s remain powerful, but the industry has increasingly developed the concept of 'prestige cuvées', such as Moët & Chandon's Dom Pérignon or Pol Roger's Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill.[170] The line for Pol Roger's wine is now 'Power and refinement', reflecting the original concept of Hubinet and Vasnier.

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[168] See, in particular, Charters and Spielmann, "Strong Territorial Brands," pp. 1461-7; N. Spielmann and C. Williams, "It Goes with the Territory: Communal Leverage as a Marketing Resource," *Journal of Business Research* 69, no. 12 (2016), pp. 5636-43.
[169] Smith Maguire and Charters, *Territorial Brands and the Scale of Production: The Example of Champagne*, pp. 1, 4.
[170] For Dom Pérignon, see https://www.domperignon.com/uk-en. For Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill and the 'power and refinement' line, see https://www.polroger.com/en/champagnes/4/cuvee-sir-winston-churchill [accessed 8 August 2017].

Modern growers still cite the power of the 'Veblen effect' and its positive linkage of price and quality.[171]

Without the foundations laid by the producers and their London agents in the dominant British market of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this power might not have existed. Certainly, the champagne marketing paradigm established in the nineteenth century bears close resemblance to the marketing strategies of the present day. As the primary export market and the world's dominant champagne market for more than 150 years and the source of much of its foundational marketing and branding, the champagne trade owes more to Britain than just the science of Christopher Merret.

[171] Spielmann and Williams, "It Goes with the Territory," p. 5639.

Conclusions

This thesis has demonstrated that champagne's role in the history of branding has been undervalued. Acting individually with entrepreneurial London agents and collectively through the Syndicat du Commerce de Vins de Champagne, the 'Grandes Maisons' of the French champagne trade developed powerful masterbrands and the world's first territorial brand. The branding strategies devised by London agents such as Adolphe Hubinet and Conrad Reuss created the world's first set of luxury brands; the efforts of the Syndicat established the long-term positioning and brand equity of 'Champagne'.

Champagne's role as a social marker in the British market was central to this process. Consumers' demand for a 'crack vintage of a crack brand' on their tables was a response not just to the demand for a drier wine to match the changing food on the table, but also to the social dynamics of the Victorian period. Drinking in general, and the drinking of alcohol in particular, plays a powerful role in human society and sociability. I have shown how champagne's role as a social lubricant spread through Victorian society, taking in not just the wealthy but also the middling classes and the music hall goers. Champagne has become synonymous with both public and private celebration: the former an association of long standing, the latter initiated around the turn of the century. I have shown, too, how the offer of champagne to guests or business acquaintances conferred and displayed status.[1]

Though the 'temperate turn' documented in Chapter One removed the status-conferring benefits of the excessive drinking that characterised the early nineteenth

[1] For an overview of alcohol's social role, see I. de Garine, "For a Pluridisciplinary Approach to Drinking," in *Drinking: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. I. de Garine and V. de Garine (New York and Oxford, 2001), pp. 5-6.

century, the development of champagne as a branded product met the need to display status. An underlying drive for status differentiation propelled the advance of both dry champagne and the premium-priced brands that guaranteed its quality. Bandwagon effects drove the introduction of the socially prestigious champagne onto the dinner tables of the middle classes. 'Snob' effects of the kind demonstrated by Leibenstein impelled the early adopters of sparkling champagne towards steadily drier wines in a cycle that pushed the wines down to 'zero dosage', no-sugar wines. Vintage-dated wines created the 'illusion of scarcity' essential to maintain the luxury status of a high-volume product.

Branding was integral to the development of champagne in the nineteenth century. The difficulties of importing sparkling wine in cask and the loss of effervescence if the wine were decanted meant that from early in the century the distinctive shape of the champagne bottle clearly signalled its users' tastes and status. Although the ambiguity of the usage of the term 'brand', which appears to have transitioned from a physical mark on a cask or cork in the first half of the century to an abstract concept in its own right in the 1860s, makes it hard to be precise, it appears that champagne was the first luxury product to put branded status on the table. There were earlier branded food products (for example, Burgess' Anchovy Paste) but no evidence for their presence on a formal dinner table.[2] Champagne externalised the tastes and resources of the hosts who provided it for their guests. The existence of a clearly understood price ladder meant that the label on the bottle told guests familiar with the market how much their host had spent. The Castle brand label clearly showed guests that the purchaser of the wine had economised with an own-brand product; hence Gilbey's decision to remove the label from their Castle brand champagne (and no other product) in the 1880s. Champagne became a potent marker of

[2] The first press advertising for Burgess' Anchovy Paste was in 1841. See *Hampshire Advertiser*, 16 October 1841, p. 1.

financial and social resource. Contemporaries believed that the majority of consumers could not distinguish champagnes by taste alone and so the premium brands became surrogates for true connoisseurship. In 1862, Hubinet told his principals that merchants believed labels gave the wine 'un cachet commun'.[3] Robert Tomes, writing in 1867, claimed that connoisseurs were 'rather repelled than attracted by the excessive popularity of a brand'.[4] By the 1880s such scrupulousness had evaporated. Vintage-dated wines of the premium brands came to represent the apogee of champagne connoisseurship.

It is significant that the first challenge to the powerful Gilbey's Castle brand came from champagne. Because the champagne houses, through their London agents, had developed an increasingly powerful set of brands with strong consumer appeal, Gilbey's recognised they had to compromise a long-held principle and begin to distribute not their own brand but the 'Celebrated Brands' of 'Grande Marque' champagne. That capitulation to the power of the premium brands in 1882 marked a definitive shift towards branded wine. The success of the premium brands such as (though not limited to) Pommery & Greno, Veuve Clicquot, Pol Roger and Moët & Chandon was built on a series of strategies that anticipate the luxury brand marketing strategies of the present day. Agents focused on premium distribution at premium price whilst defining and differentiating the house brands, and they anticipated the modern focus on press relations to drive sales.

Intermediaries such as distributors and retailers were as important to the development and implementation of these strategies as the agents. My thesis shows that recent historians of consumption such as Trentmann are correct to argue that the story of consumption cannot be written simply from the restricted perspectives of consumers and producers.[5] Such intermediaries play important roles in mediating between the evolving

[3] *Compilation De La Correspondance De Hubinet*, 4 January 1862.
[4] Tomes, *The Champagne Country*, p. 163.
[5] Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, pp. 317-20.

needs of the former and the commercial imperatives of the latter. The role of such intermediaries in the commercial markets of the later nineteenth century has yet to be studied in detail, but the present study points to the importance of distributive companies such as W. & A. Gilbey and individual agents such as Adolphe Hubinet and Conrad Reuss. Without their London agents, the French houses would have struggled to understand the dynamic changes in the British market and the speed of the shift to dry wines. Houses like Veuve Clicquot and Roederer, with greater emphasis on central control and less empowered London agents, were slow to react to the changes and probably lost share as a consequence, despite their long-established reputations in the British market and their powerful brands.

The agents played a central role in the development of the branding strategies of nineteenth-century champagne. They were neither passive observers of the market nor puppets of their French principals. Rather, they observed and responded to consumer trends. The successful brands they created were not imposed on consumers by force of marketing but reflected the needs and agency of those consumers. The correspondence of Adolphe Hubinet and Conrad Reuss showed a constant preoccupation not just with how to defend and advance their principals' brands, but also with what we would now call branding and marketing strategy. In these letters and in their actions, they appear to prefigure the strategies of modern scholars and practitioners of luxury marketing. Hubinet's focus on price maximisation, range limitation, the exploitation of vintage-dated wines, and the use of the press to associate champagne brands with the elites of British society foreshadowed the current strategy of the premium champagne houses. The focus of these strategies was (and is) the development not of individual products but of the masterbrands. Challenger brands, such as Laurent-Perrier's Sans Sucre, did attempt to develop product brands, but in late nineteenth-century Britain such initiatives were

largely unsuccessful against the power of the premium brands.[6] At the same time as building brand awareness, the houses – prompted by customer demand mediated through their London agents – began to develop consistent house styles. Only champagne, with its ability to blend wine from different vineyards and different vintages, was able to respond to such demand and brand the results effectively. Only champagne, therefore, could conceive of and successfully execute consistent house styles. The ability to produce consistent wines made effective branding possible.

The final – crucial – element in the development of champagne branding in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was the establishment of the territorial brand of Champagne. The collaborative efforts of the Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne established champagne as the product of a utopian terroir of timeless value. In so doing, they addressed and eventually overturned the near universal nineteenth-century belief that champagne was a 'manufactured' wine. The *Wine Trade Review* in 1864 referred to the experience of visiting 'titanic vaults with the manufacture of champagne in continual progress'; thirty years later George Harley, an 1890s expert on champagne, claimed that 'there is no such thing as a natural sparkling wine […] champagne is a manufactured article'.[7] Press articles and books on the champagne trade enthused over the modernity and sophistication of the technology employed, such as the 'telephone apparatus' in the Pommery cellars or the 'ingenious machine' made of silver and glass used to 'dose' the wine.[8] The champagne trade itself began to challenge this image in the late nineteenth century.

[6] The first globally successful product brand in champagne was probably Moët & Chandon's Dom Pérignon which was created in the 1920s. See Stevenson, "Dom Pérignon Oenothèque, 1966-1996". [Accessed 12 July 2017.]
[7] *Wine Trade Review*, 16 January 1864, p. 2; G. Harley, "Champagne," *Contemporary Review* 69 (June 1896), p. 890.
[8] *Bell's Life in London*, 12 July 1884, p. 357; Vizetelly, *History of Champagne*, p. 164. Vizetelly's chapter on the manufacture of champagne refers admiringly to the 'scientific' underpinning of the process.

The displays at the Paris Expositions in 1889 and 1900 and the accompanying booklets written by Raphael Bonnedame repositioned champagne as a wine of terroir – a change that Moët & Chandon exploited in the British market with publicity material and their pavilion at the 1907 Olympia Exhibition. Champagne was almost certainly the world's first true territorial brand, an innovation copied by hundreds of other regions and organisations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The development of champagne's image as a wine of a specific terroir was conceived by the French producers as an essential underpinning to the court victories achieved by the French producers in the 1880s, which determined that if the wine was not from Champagne it could not bear that name. This victory formed the basis not just of the protection of champagne but also of the blueprint for the French system of 'appellations controlées', which was introduced for wine in the 1930s and other products since then.

By 1914, champagne had become deeply embedded in British culture. Champagne attracted songs, jokes, characters in popular culture and racehorse names. Champagne became linked to the celebration of sporting success. The songs, jokes and sporting stories gave champagne a popular role in festivity and celebration, whilst the British espousal of dry champagne in the private entertainments of the social elite reinforced the British sense of global superiority. Here was a rare example of the British besting the French in affairs of the table. To champagne-minded British consumers, France produced champagne, but Britain made it what it was. The foundational equity of modern champagne is as much British as it is French.

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