

About ammunition manufacturing and the opening hours of English pubs

Introduction

In my article *Uniforms Postcards - Army Ordnance Corps* I referred to the many female munitions workers who, under often difficult conditions, produced the huge quantities of ammunition that were demanded from the front.

As an interesting apropos of this, it can be mentioned that today's English and Welsh opening hours for pubs were until recently based on legislation from the First World War, where they wanted to ensure against, among other things, munitions workers showed up to work drunk.

The time period for serving alcohol is limited

On 8 August 1914, the English Parliament passed "*The Defense of the Realm Act*", which i.a. regulated freedom of the press, introduced letter censorship and gave the government extended powers to put the country's economy on a war footing.

As early as October 1914, the opening hours of pubs in London were curtailed, and in October 1915 further steps were taken to minimize the opportunities to consume alcohol - the opening hours were even shorter and it was also forbidden to buy alcohol for others (= give rounds).

The intention was to ensure that vital arms and ammunition production, whose production capacity at the end of the war numbered more than 3 million men and women and more than 20,000 factories, suffered as little damage as possible from intoxication.

Women Munitions Workers



English women manufacture ammunition, c. 1916.

The card is No. 9 in a concurrent series issued to support the sale of war bonds. The campaign's theme *Feed the Guns with War Bonds* is printed on the back.

The drawing conveys an impression of very orderly conditions; the text on the back also emphasizes that the motif is produced in accordance with *the Ministry of Information*.

Later development

From different sides, however, it is also stated that the precautions could be an accommodation of politically influential temperance movements, with which the first Minister of Munitions, and later Prime Minister, Lloyd George, sympathized. One would, among other things, promote public health by protecting "*the lower classes*" from *the "scourge of alcohol"*, cf. also the later development in the USA in connection with the Prohibition era. Lobbying is by no means a modern phenomenon...

The subject is - and has long been - the subject of a sometimes heated debate in England, where the latest development (2005) provides an almost completely free framework within which the individual pub can place its opening hours.

Closing

My mission here is not to promote one point of view or the other; I just want to draw attention to this interesting angle on the subject of munitions manufacture during the First World War.

Thanks to Torstein Snorrason, who made me aware of the connection.

Sources

1. The National Archives - Britain 1906-1918: Civilians & War 1914-1918.
2. The Defense of the Realm Act.
3. Licensing - a Brief History.
4. Lessons from history: Alcohol licensing.

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