

Addressing the defensiveness and mixed messages young people encounter regarding 'our favourite drug'.

John Balding

## Last Orders: the first step towards an effective alcohol programme?

Professor Ted Wragg wrote an influential article on cross-curricular health education for *Education and Health* in 1990. He concentrated on the use of Health Related Behaviour data within National Curriculum subjects. His views supported our own conviction that PSE is (a) too vulnerable to timetable pressures, as a non-examinable subject, to have the security it merits; (b) that it is, in any case, delivered most effectively under other subject umbrellas; and (c) that if well planned and implemented these subjects will be enhanced, rather than 'diluted', by the health education component.

### Three new resources

We have been pursuing this 'cross-curricular' strategy in all our publications and services. Two years ago we published the first in an ambitious 3-part resource designed to bring important health-related topics into the National Curriculum domain of secondary schools. The components of this resource are:

**Sex education (CCSE)**

**Alcohol education (Last Orders)**

**Environmental education (Green Gauges)**

CCSE was described in *Education and Health* 11, 5, and further details are available on request. I now want to give readers a preview of *Last Orders*, which is about to be published. It sets out to show how a school can...

- Discover where, if at all, 'alcohol education' appears in the current curriculum provision.

- Plan in consultation with colleagues a progressive alcohol education programme, using as an optional framework the Key Stage classification within *Curriculum Guidance 5*.

- Use a short questionnaire to discover the pupils' knowledge, attitudes, and actions with respect to alcoholic drink and its use. This will help to give a more secure basis for curriculum content and timing. If repeated, for example at the end of the academic year, it offers an evaluative component — typically a weak point of school initiatives.

- Adopt or adapt the set of 21 modules designed and trialled within the following subjects:

Drama  
English  
Geography  
History  
Maths  
Modern languages  
PE  
PSE  
RE  
Science

- Involve parents and governors in developing the alcohol programme; consult governors and staff in generating an 'alcohol policy' for the school.

*Last Orders* consists of two books. The Co-

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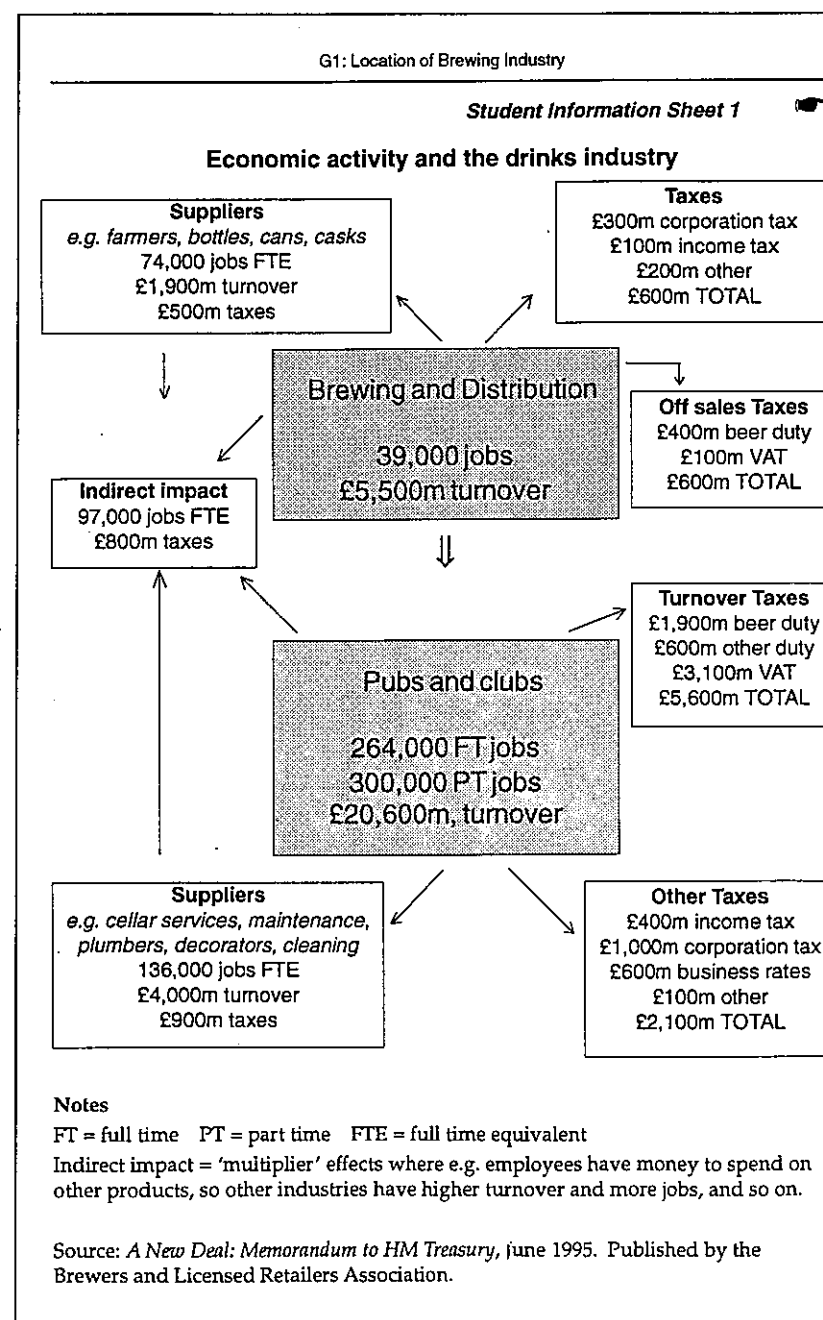
*Last Orders* costs £25.00 including postage from the Unit. Almost all the material is photocopiable for classroom use.

*PSE can be delivered most effectively under other subject umbrellas, which will be enhanced rather than diluted.*

ordinator's Guide is the 'engine room', while the Teaching Materials section is a substantial compilation of 242 photocopiable pages, describing the 21 different lessons or modules that range from a lesson to a term in length.

I have taken extracts from three of these to give the reader an idea of the breadth and depth of this new resource. The contents were developed by teachers in schools and colleges that participated in the project; all the units have been tried and found to 'work' with pupils, so that they can be taken up with confidence as they stand, or modified to suit particular circumstances.

Fig. 1. An extract from geography module G1, setting out the economic impact of the drinks industry.



### Geography: the brewing industry

Module G1 (two lessons) invites Year 11 pupils to investigate the factors that influence the location of industry and the changing patterns of industrial location, using a proposal to relocate brewery as the stimulus. Two sites are under consideration, one in Kent, the other in Herefordshire.

The pupils are asked to consider:

- The issues involved in selecting the site.
- The financial incentives for development.
- The impact on the community.

In doing this they would use the material supplied, or referenced, to investigate:

- The raw materials required.
- Logistics: consumables, workforce, distribution.
- Market volume and trends.
- Local opinion.
- Social costs and benefits of alcohol use.

Leading to:

The information sheet displaying the economic impact of the drinks industry is reproduced in Fig. 1.

A feedback sheet is also included in the materials, asking such questions as:

Does the British economy need the brewing industry?

Does the cost of alcohol-related illness exceed the economic benefits of the alcohol industry?

What is the effect of tax on alcohol consumption?

### History: Gin Lane

Module H2 (two lessons) is intended for Year 9 pupils. They discover that alcohol use and abuse, and the accompanying social concern, are not new. Changing patterns of alcohol consumption are also studied. Using Hogarth's *Gin Lane* print, they consider to what extent the figures for alcohol consumption in Britain during the period 1720–1760 reflect or contributed to the condition of the poor. An information sheet gives the estimated average daily consumption from 1670 to the present day.

The pupils learn that gin was looked upon as the 'patriotic drink', and to encourage its consumption (which benefited cereal-producing landowners) the tax was kept very low.

The feedback sheet invites them to reflect

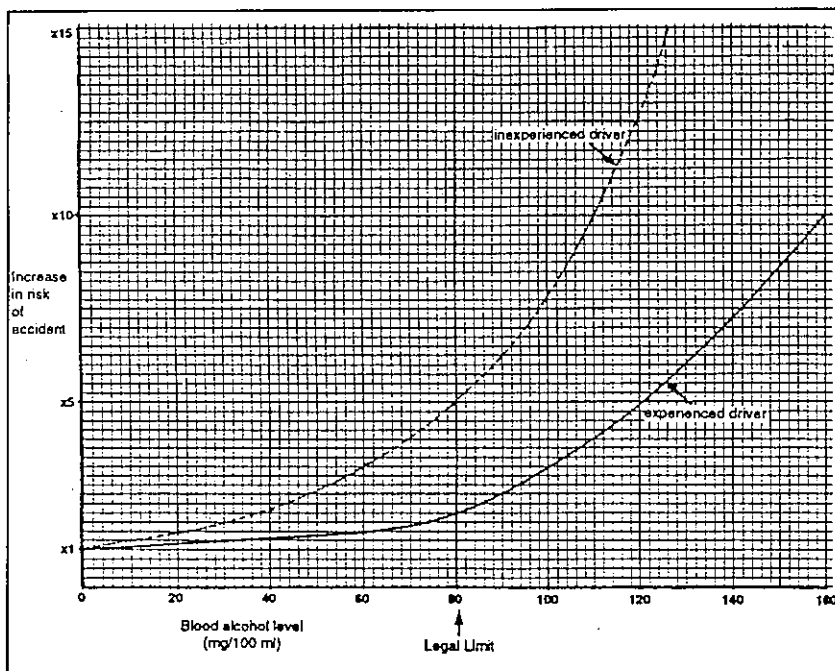


Fig. 2. A 'drink-driving' graph from mathematics module Ma1. Reproduced by permission of the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board.

upon the following questions:

- Was alcohol a social problem in the 18th century?
- Can Gin lane be taken as a true representation of London life in 1740?
- Will increased taxation reduce alcohol consumption?
- Does the British economy need the alcohol industry?
- Is alcohol less of a social problem now than in 1740?

### Mathematics: Alcohol strengths and assimilation times

Mathematics module Ma1 shows how pupils in Years 8 and 9 can learn about:

- The alcoholic strength of different drinks.
- How long it takes the body to remove alcohol from the blood system.

The unit helps fulfil the following National Curriculum requirements in Key Stages 3 and 4

under *Number*:

3. Understanding and using relationships between numbers and developing methods of computation.

4. Solving numerical problems.

And under *Shape, space and measures*:

4. Understanding and using measures.

Collecting empty bottles and cans, and using the information on the label to calculate the volume of alcohol originally present, forms one of the activities.

The time taken for the body to assimilate and metabolise these amounts can then be investigated.

In conjunction with the 'drink-driving' graph presented here, further work on alcohol units, safe drinking levels, relative strengths of different beverages, and retail and 'personal' measures of wine and spirits can all be examined.

The feedback sheets invites the pupils to put drinks in order of alcoholic strength, to compare the alcohol units within beer and whisky, and to calculate the time required for the body to process the alcohol after an evening's drinking.

### Why do we need 'alcohol education'?

My interest in this topic stems from numerous invitations over the past two decades to address or work with groups of parents, governors, teachers, senior school management teams, and school pupils on the 'problems' caused by alcohol.

These problems include health; but they also include crime, as well as a large and often hidden store of unhappiness in the home. Although our Unit is a 'health' one, it is not the medical but the social and emotional problems of alcohol use that we find the most notable. It may be that alcohol is the most important of all causes of

*Highly desirable**Useful***Knowledge**

## Effects on body of different doses:

*Today:* stages of intoxication  
(delightful, devilish, delinquent,  
depressed, dazed, dead drunk,  
dead) (jocose, bellicose,  
lachrymose, comatose)

*Tomorrow:* hangover, dehydration

*Long-term:* potential damage

## Removal from body

## Interaction with other drugs

## Fermentation

## The law

Support agencies, e.g. AlcAnon,  
AlcTeen

**Attitudes**

## Drinking by young people:

*approval*  
*motivation*

## Drinking and parents

## Drinking and teachers

## Attitudes to other social issues

(as in *Social & political* below)

## Drinking by adults:

*approval*  
*motivation*

## Coping with problem situations

**Skills**

## Refusal of unwanted drink

## Getting rid of unwanted drink

## Avoiding drink/drive situation

## Making a drink last

## Social intervention

## Round-buying

## Emergency situations:

*recovery position, resuscitation*

## More general assertiveness

## Self-esteem

## Decision-making

**Social & political**

## Accidents:

*road, home*

## Violence:

*home, community, football-associated*

## Pregnancy

## Social costs:

*crime, fire, lost days*

## Social benefits:

*employment, taxation, export*

Levels of use by young people  
and adults

## Media and advertising images

Cultural aspects

**A breakdown of the areas  
covered by the 21 *Last  
Orders* modules**

# Last Orders

*The Unit's second  
cross-curricular  
resource, aimed at  
sensible drinking.*

## £25.00

distress in the home.

Adult society and its laws may give young people contradictory messages about alcohol. Adults may be uneasy about examining their own use of this drug, but surely the home is the most important site for alcohol education. We have also found some defensiveness among adults about young people and alcohol. When I show groups of parents examples of our Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire data, revealing that the great majority of Year 10 pupils sometimes drink alcohol at home (and therefore implying that their own children probably come into this category), typical reactions include:

- *Surely they aren't drinking very much?*
- *I bet their parents don't know.*
- *That's irresponsible.*
- *Well, I do give my children alcoholic drink at home, but I think I have to teach them how to drink.*
- *Can't we talk about illegal drugs? They are really important.*

It is my hope that *Last Orders* will help schools and families address the defensiveness and mixed messages young people encounter, so that we may all better understand, and perhaps make better use of, 'our favourite drug'.