

Lagerland Lost?
**An experiment in keeping drinkers off the streets in
central Coventry and elsewhere**

Malcolm Ramsay

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Editor: Kevin Heal
Home Office Crime Prevention Unit
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

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Crime Prevention Unit Papers

The Home Office Crime Prevention Unit was formed in 1983 to promote preventive action against crime. It has a particular responsibility to disseminate information on crime prevention topics. The object of the present series of occasional papers is to present analysis and research material in a way which should help and inform practitioners whose work can help reduce crime.

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Foreword

Even if they would not in fact harm anyone, people who choose to drink alcohol in the street may be intimidating to the public at large. However, despite the anxiety such drinkers may cause, there are limits to the practicability and desirability of introducing any new restrictions. In the face of these conflicting considerations, the Home Office enacted a number of experimental byelaws, to control public drinking in the central parts of various towns and cities.

The first such byelaw came into effect in central Coventry on 1 November 1988. Shortly before, a survey was carried out of over 1,000 people using the city centre, as the first stage in a before/after evaluation. The results, which confirmed that the sight of public drinkers evidently exacerbated fear of crime, were presented in Crime Prevention Unit Paper 19, *Downtown Drinkers: the Perceptions and Fears of the Public in a City Centre*.

The implication of the first survey, as noted in the foreword to *Downtown Drinkers*, was that the byelaw “might foster some broader sense of reassurance” on the part of the people of Coventry. As the present report shows, there was indeed a modest but undeniable reduction in fear, to judge by various behavioural indicators. Likewise, there was a drop in incivilities – specifically, in insults by strangers. Enforcement of this new measure did not prove to be particularly taxing for the police in Coventry, nor, by and large, in the other six places with similar byelaws.

This report, which also draws attention to some of the snags and limitations of the byelaws, should help to inform public discussion and debate over the future of this type of social control.

J A CHILCOT

Deputy Under Secretary of State
Home Office, Police Department
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MALCOLM RAMSAY

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The how and why of 'alcohol-free zones'

It was Christmas Eve – in Coventry, in 1984 – when late night revellers rampaged through the city centre. Countless shop windows were smashed by young people who had spilled out from pubs and clubs. Barely a week later, there was a second swathe of devastation, only marginally less severe. This time it was New Year's Eve.

These events came as the proverbial last straw for a local businessman, who was the chairman of the retail section of the city's Chamber of Commerce. With others, Mr Rod Drew set up a committee to supervise what soon became the formidably-titled 'Coventry City Centre Alcohol Related Crime Project'. Membership of this steering committee was notably broad. There were representatives of the retailers, the licensed trade, brewers, police, licensing justices, the City Council, the local polytechnic, the Alcohol Advisory Service, and the Home Office.

Drawing on detailed analyses of patterns of crime and disorder in the city centre which were compiled regularly by the police, the Coventry committee pursued a wide-ranging series of initiatives. For instance, various types of educational material were produced and distributed to different types of outlet; while efforts were made to try and improve late-night transport, so as to facilitate dispersal of drinkers.

As well as the committee, others were active, too. The YMCA opened an alcohol-free disco and bar as a 'fun pub' for young people. For their part, the police stepped up visits to licensed premises, and generally made it clear that they were going to keep a close eye on any alcohol-related problems. In effect, central Coventry in the late 1980s was something of a testing ground for a wide range of measures intended to ensure sensible patterns of drinking.

Such, then was the background – a variety of interlocking initiatives involving a range of agencies – against which the committee developed its most dramatic proposal: that the city centre should be turned into an 'alcohol-free zone', under a special byelaw. Consumption of alcohol would only be permitted inside pubs, clubs and licensed premises. No longer would anyone be free to roam – or strut or stagger – round the city centre, swigging from bottle or can of alcohol. Only soft drinks, or at least low-alcohol or non-alcoholic ones, would be permitted.

Measures of this kind have been tried in a number of overseas countries, although not always with total success. In England and Wales – and, indeed, in Scotland – some strictly limited restrictions were introduced comparatively recently, involving certain football grounds or trains carrying supporters. Understandably, there was, and for that matter still is, concern over the way that any more wide-ranging restriction on public drinking would erode cherished freedoms. After all, most people enjoy the occasional drink out of doors when English weather permits – perhaps on a picnic by the sea, perhaps outside a pub (whether in a garden or on the pavement), or perhaps in some other circumstance.

Not surprisingly, Coventry's novel proposal for a byelaw to put a stop to outdoor drinking did not immediately receive a wholehearted welcome when

it was formally presented to the Home Office by Coventry City Council. After all, if the aim of the byelaw was to stave off drunken and disorderly behaviour, the police already possessed a wide range of powers, under national legislation. Why did these need to be extended any further?

One reason for the acceptance of Coventry's proposal was that 1988 became 'the year of the lagerlout', marked by major concern in the media and elsewhere over the disorderly antics of hard-drinking young men, soused in lager. In the light of this and all the other factors, the Home Office opted for a careful experiment to test out Coventry's proposed byelaw. Half a dozen other local authorities were invited to participate alongside Coventry. Many others also wanted to join the experiment, but had to be asked to wait at least until the end of an initial trial period, scheduled to last for two years.

Besides Coventry, the authorities involved in the two-year experiment were those for Bath, Chester, Scarborough, Stockton-on-Tees, Rushmoor (Aldershot together with Farnborough) and Restormel (Newquay plus St Austell). Another steering committee was set up: this one comprised representatives from both the Home Office and the seven local authorities. It had the task of overseeing the whole experiment.

In each of the seven places, the byelaw was framed in the same cautious way. The offence which was created was not one of consuming alcohol within a designated zone but – to protect anyone who might not have known about the byelaw – that of continuing to drink in public, after being warned to stop by a police officer. The involvement of the police in enforcing a byelaw, rather than council officers (as is more usual), reflected the need for fair and consistent enforcement, possibly in the face of physical resistance by some individuals.

Each local authority negotiated with the Home Office precisely which streets and open places were to be included within the scope of their respective byelaws. With encouragement from the Home Office, the area which each of them finally selected was relatively small. Typically, it involved a limited central zone with major shopping and entertainment facilities: sometimes more than one such zone was delineated within a single local authority area. The idea was to limit the scope of the byelaw, so that its enforcement would not present too much of a problem to the local police. There was always the possibility of drinkers being displaced to other, nearby locations. However, there was never any prospect of stopping out-of-doors drinking on any grand scale. The main aim was to curtail it where it caused actual trouble.

Even on this modest basis, some of the seven local authorities were slightly surprised at the amount of trouble and effort to which they were put. They had to draw up a comprehensive list of all components of their 'alcohol-free zones'. This was not just a matter of stringing together street names. Where, say, private but publicly accessible land existed alongside a road – as is not infrequently the case in front of shops – the consent of each owner of any such land had to be obtained, so that their plot could be included in the byelaw. Failure to have done this could have led to ridiculous anomalies.

Once each local authority had worked out the dimensions of its 'alcohol-free

zone', it still had to have street signs ready for use on the day the byelaw came into operation. These, of course, did not come cheap – but had to be plentiful. Coventry spent approximately £10,000, which purchased around two hundred signs, and included the cost of putting them up (together with some additional advertising).

Eventually, everything was sorted out. The process was quicker in some of the seven places than in others. Not surprisingly, Coventry was ready first. Its byelaw went into operation on 1 November 1988. One after another, the other six local authorities got their byelaws into action over the following six months. In each case, the byelaw was valid only for an initial two years. Experiments in law enforcement are comparatively rare events. But, with the implementation of the seven byelaws, a fascinating situation had been engineered. How would everything work out?

Results of the 'before' survey in Coventry

Both the Home Office and the various local authorities had an interest in the outcome of the byelaws, and in monitoring them as carefully as possible. For its part, the Home Office concentrated its research effort on Coventry. There were a number of reasons for this choice. Being the flagship for the whole venture, Coventry's action was well publicised. Success or failure might reasonably be expected to be clear-cut. Secondly, Coventry's 'alcohol-free zone' was very well defined, by the inner ring-road encircling the central area. This suggested that enforcement would not be unduly problematic. Thirdly, there was no established tradition of outdoor drinking in front of pubs – not even at chairs and tables – in central Coventry. Had there been, that might have caused complications, as was to happen in Bath. Another point in Coventry's favour was the fact that the byelaw was just one of a number of initiatives spawned by Coventry's multi-agency committee, rather than something which materialised on its own. Finally, Coventry was the largest of the various places involved in the experiment: this, too, gave it an extra importance.

The research strategy chosen by the Home Office was the classic – not to say obvious – one, involving a 'before' and then an 'after' snapshot. First, a substantial survey was carried out in central Coventry, shortly before the byelaw took effect in November 1988. Those interviewed were users of the city centre. Most were visitors, rather than residents – the area being essentially non-residential. How did these members of the public perceive crime and disorder in their local city centre (as it was for nearly all of them)? What were their experiences, their views, their fears, their patterns of self-protection? And, once the interviewees had answered these general questions, how did they feel about the impending byelaw? When the byelaw had been in operation for a year, the whole process was repeated, with a second survey which followed the format of the first as closely as possible. Taken together, the two surveys – which each involved around 1,200 people and were both carried out by the same market research company (NOP) – constituted a firm basis for a thorough analysis of any changes.

Unexpectedly – but happily – the results of the first survey proved quite

interesting in their own right. Consequently an interim report was produced, entitled *Downtown Drinkers: the Perceptions and Fears of the Public in a City Centre* (Ramsay, 1989). There have been a good many crime surveys by now, either national or local, but scarcely any have been geared specifically to a major city centre and its problems (see however Anderson and others, 1990). Most crime surveys are carried out on a residential basis, but in this case, where the focus was comparatively narrow, and concerned with an essentially non-residential area, on-the-street interviews were employed. Obviously this limited the number of questions that could be asked. The questionnaire and further information about the two surveys are presented in the appendices to this report.

Briefly, there were a number of points which emerged from the first survey, all of them specifically in relation to this city-centre area. Many people feared that they might be victimised on their visits to central Coventry. However, actual experiences of victimisation were comparatively rare. For instance, exactly half the sample feared that they might be assaulted in the city centre – although only 2 per cent had actually suffered in this way over the previous twelve months (still 2 per cent too many, of course). Various sorts of avoidance strategy were adopted quite widely, by way of personal crime prevention. Of particular interest was the fact that 59 per cent of the interviewees said that they sometimes avoided certain sorts of people – ‘drunks, winos and tramps’ being the most commonly cited category. Substantially fewer reported avoiding ‘groups of people’, or young men, or anyone else.

Furthermore, public drinkers were widely perceived as representing a common problem. Although generally only quite small groups of drinkers gathered in the city centre – and then just intermittently – they were evidently rather conspicuous, and a focus for fear. The first survey revealed a strong association between, on the one hand, fear of crime in general and, on the other hand, expressions of concern over the public drinkers. One sign of this was that, among those interviewees classed as being ‘generally fearful’ (or worried), as many as 69 per cent rated public drinkers as a common problem. By contrast, of the other ‘less fearful’ group of respondents, only 41 per cent thought that public drinkers were a common problem. While it was impossible to say what the precise nature or direction of these links might have been, there was clearly a good chance that, if public drinking were successfully curtailed in the city centre, this might reduce levels of fear.

There are other good reasons, too, for thinking that the sight of people drinking in public might be fear-inducing. A number of criminologists both in this country and in the United States have emphasised the importance of ‘incivilities’ (see, for instance, Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Maxfield, 1987; Box and others, 1988; Crawford and others, 1990). They have highlighted a connection between fear of crime and a whole range of incivilities: for instance, litter, or aggressive-looking groups of youths or, indeed, drunks and winos. While most people hardly ever see a crime in progress, such proxy ‘signs of crime’ are all too common, and tend to push up levels of fear.

Fear reduction through firm police action against incivilities therefore sounds

like a promising formula. There is however a snag. The incivility which one person perceives may just be another person's playfulness (Phillips and Cochrane, 1988). There has indeed been a debate "between those on the right ... who argue that the police are justified in acting against disorder even when a crime has not been committed and libertarians who see the policing of order as a dangerous extension of state power" (Crawford and others, 1990). Perhaps not surprisingly, the police for their part are often rather reluctant to get caught up in combatting incivilities, given that this type of work has only a somewhat hazy place within their remit. Certainly, it falls outside the scope of 'clear-up rates' and other conventional ways of measuring police performance.

Arguably, the byelaw experiment represents a way round this dilemma over incivilities. It gave an opportunity to test the reactions of the public as well as to ascertain the impact of the byelaw on the incidence of disorder and of fear. Even before the byelaw came into operation, the preliminary survey showed both that the vast majority of local people knew of its existence and that it was an extremely popular measure. As many as 89 per cent of those interviewed said they were aware of the imperiling byelaw. Almost as many - 86 per cent - saw the byelaw as "a good idea". Nonetheless, a fair proportion still had their reservations. Three out of ten felt that the byelaw would infringe individual freedom, while six out of ten thought it would be impossible to enforce. In the light of these concerns, could the byelaw be properly enforced, without being seen to be unduly oppressive?

The effect of the byelaw on crime and incivilities in Coventry

One of the aims of the two surveys was to provide an indicator of changes in the level of disorder that would complement - and be independent of - police statistics of recorded crime. For their part, official statistics scarcely even begin to cover incivilities. Yet incivilities were the kind of low-level misbehavior most likely to be influenced by the byelaw. Also, police data can be affected by the extent to which offences are reported to the police by members of the public, and by any variations in police recording practices (see, for instance, Mayhew, Elliott and Dowds, 1989). In addition, with a tailor-made survey, it was possible to ask victims whether they felt their assailants had been drinking. Indeed, it was also possible to question all the interviewees - both victims and non-victims - about their perceptions of various forms of incivilities.

The police statistics for recorded crimes in the city centre still had their value. They showed that key categories - assaults, robberies/thefts from the person and criminal damage - seem not to have been affected by the introduction of the byelaw. Certainly the relevant figures changed very little between the second half of 1988 and the second half of 1989. (Full details are provided in the second appendix.)

A broadly similar picture emerged from the two surveys, at least in terms of assaults and muggings. Interestingly, however, the surveys revealed a reduction in incivilities, following the introduction of the byelaw. In each

sweep – in autumn 1988 and autumn 1989 – respondents were asked whether, over the preceding 12 months, they had been insulted or bothered by strangers; whether they had been assaulted; and whether they had been mugged or had something stolen from them. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of victimisation in central Coventry over twelve-month periods preceding and following the implementation of the byelaw.

	1988: 'BEFORE' (n = 1,182)		1989: 'AFTER' (n = 1,199)	
	N u m b e r	%	N u m b e r	%
Insulted by strangers	138	12	93	8
Assaulted	23	2	27	2
Mugged etc.	36	3	26	2

NOTE: Statistically-inclined readers may like to know that, for the reduction in strangers' insults, the chi-squared statistic was 10.3481, while P was .0013. For the reductions in assaults and muggings, the respective chi-squared statistics were .2743 and 1.8330, P being .6005 and .1758.

The drop in the level of incivilities – as signified by strangers' insults – is sufficiently large to be beyond dispute, given the size of the sample. Assaults increased slightly, while there were fewer muggings. However, the changes in the prevalence of these two comparatively rare forms of victimisation were trivial; they could conceivably have occurred by accident, through some normal pattern of statistical fluctuation. Only the reduction in incivilities was 'statistically significant'. For the purposes of this paper, what that term implies is that there was an overwhelming probability – greater than 95 per cent – that the reduction in strangers' insults did not happen merely by chance.

Whatever the statistical significance of the reduction in incivilities, this by itself does not prove the potency of the byelaw. Other indicators, however, were also suggestive. In particular, in the second survey, interviewees who reported being insulted by strangers were significantly less likely than equivalent interviewees in the first survey to believe that the person or people responsible had been drinking. There were also reductions as between the two surveys in the proportion of assault victims and mugging victims who reckoned that their attackers had been drinking, but these latter changes were not statistically significant. In Table 2, in which these results are presented, the most important elements of the data are the two columns of percentages; the raw numbers, being less salient (and less comparable), have been placed within brackets.

Table 2. Victims of incivilities and crimes in central Coventry: their views as to whether those responsible had been drinking, before and after the introduction of the byelaw.

	1988: 'BEFORE'		1989: 'AFTER'	
	Number and % believing the offender had been drinking		Number and % believing the offender had been drinking	
	(No.)	%	(No.)	%
Insult victims	(87)	79	(55)	65
Assault victims	(10)	56	(13)	52
Mugging victims	(10)	53	(10)	48

NOTE: These figures refer only to those victims who expressed an opinion as to whether the offender had been drinking. The result of excluding the 'don't knows' (and any cases with missing data) is that the baseline figures are slightly lower than those in Table 1. For Table 2, baseline figures were - for 1988 and 1989 respectively - 110 and 84 for insult victims; 18 and 25 for assault victims; and 19 and 21 for mugging victims. Chi-squared statistics and P were as follows: 4.4999 and .0339 for insult victims; .0532 and .8176 for assault victims; .1003 and .7515 for mugging victims.

Nobody could claim that these estimates of the influence of alcohol were clinical assessments. Still, the reduction in drink-linked insulting by strangers does suggest that the general atmosphere in central Coventry had changed for the better. The byelaw could well have contributed to this improvement. Directly and indirectly, there is plenty of further evidence - and a lack of any other single obvious factor. However, it is worth adding that the byelaw was conveniently buttressed by the nearly simultaneous introduction of all-day drinking in pubs - a point discussed later, in the section on enforcement.

The interviewees certainly sensed that, at least in some ways, the city centre had become a better place, between the two sweeps of the survey. Their perceptions of three forms of incivility are set out in Table 3. The proportion rating rubbish or litter as a common problem in central Coventry was almost identical in both years, at around nine out of ten respondents. There was however a noticeable drop in the percentage seeing unruly groups of young people as a common problem. Also, there was a far more dramatic fall - greater than 50 per cent - in the proportion who felt that people drinking in public in the city centre represented a common problem.

Table 3. Changes in perceptions of three sets of incivilities in central Coventry, before and after the introduction of the byelaw.

	1988 'BEFORE'	1989 'AFTER'
	%	%
Percentage seeing rubbish/litter as common problem	89	89
Percentage seeing unruly young as common problem	66	62
Percentage seeing public drinkers as common problem	52	23

NOTE: Percentages refer to perceptions of these problems as very or fairly common. Full sample: 'don't knows' included.

The comparatively modest but statistically significant fall in the proportion perceiving unruly youngsters as a common problem could conceivably be interpreted as a side-effect of the new byelaw. After all, previously, the on-street drinkers in central Coventry had often – though not always – been young people rather than older 'winos'.

The reduction in the proportion of interviewees who saw public drinkers as a common problem was certainly considerable: from over half in the 'before' survey to less than a quarter in the second sweep. On the other hand, at the latter stage, over one in five respondents still believed that public drinkers represented a common problem. This was despite the fact that enforcement of the byelaw – which is discussed in detail in another section – was fairly thorough. Especially by day, contravention were rare. Yet for a small but appreciable minority of the interviewees, the issue of public drinking remained unresolved.

Why did some people continue to perceive public drinkers as a common problem in central Coventry? One obvious explanation – that, as a group, these respondents happened to be ignorant of the existence of the byelaw – can largely be ruled out, as inapplicable. This was because hardly anyone – only 7 per cent of the interviewees – was unaware of the byelaw (though, not surprisingly, a somewhat disproportionate number of those 7 per cent felt that public drinkers constituted a common problem in the city centre).

Table 4 points to a rather more convincing explanation as to why some people continued to see public drinkers as a common problem. Arguably, their sense of fear was just too deeply rooted for them to be able to take on board the real changes which a larger group of people did indeed notice. The drop in incivilities and the broad measure of success in the implementation of the byelaw simply failed to register so fully with those respondents who were particularly fearful of crime in all its forms.

The various pairs of contrasting attributes which are set out in Table 4 increase in their importance, as one looks down the table. There were clear contrasts between the perceptions of men and women; between those interviewees with well-paid jobs and those in more poorly paid occupations;

and between the young or middle-aged and the elderly. But, indirectly, these contrasts reflect varying predispositions to be fearful. If one focuses directly on fear, its overriding importance becomes clear. For this purpose, respondents have been divided into two roughly equal 'fear groups': on the one hand, those who could be classed as 'generally fearful' (by virtue of their answers to a string of questions about fear of various types of victimisation) and, on the other, those who were 'less fearful'. (Further details of how this was done are given in the note which follows the table). The contrast between the two fear groups is the sharpest of all. Over twice as many of the 'generally fearful' interviewees perceived public drinkers as a common problem, as compared with those who were 'less fearful'.

Table 4. Perceptions of different groups as to whether public drinkers constituted a common problem in central Coventry, at the time of the 'after' survey.

OVERALL GROUPINGS	CONTRASTING PAIRS OF SUB-GROUPS AND THEIR VIEWS			
	Extent to which each sub-group perceived public drinkers as a common problem			
		%		%
GENDER	Female	26	Male	21
OCCUPATION	C2 or DE	26	AB or C1	21
AGE	Aged over 60	30	Aged 16-60	22
FEAR LEVEL	Generally fearful	34	Less fearful	15

NOTE: These percentages are based on slightly reduced sample sizes (between 1161 and 1171), since 'don't knows' have been excluded. Chi-squared statistics and P were 4.2326 and .0397 for gender; 4.1310 and .0421 for occupation (actually that of the head of household); 6.8522 and .0089 for age; and 52.5014 and <.0001 for fear level. Overall, just under one in four interviewees rated public drinkers as a common problem.

The scale on which the 'generally fearful'/'less fearful' division was based was formed by taking answers to questions 2a, 2b and 2c; by scoring those answers (on a scale of 1 to 4, from 'very worried' to 'very unworried'); and by classifying each case so that scores of 3 to 7 counted as 'generally fearful' and higher scores as 'less fearful'.

Fear of crime not only erodes the quality of people's lives; it can also, in conjunction with other factors, prevent them from recognising – and drawing comfort from – actual improvements in the environment in which they live. The whole issue of fear of crime is so crucial and so complicated that it is explored in greater detail in the next section.

Effect of the byelaw on patterns of fear in Coventry

Even the best-laid schemes of civil servants and social researchers sometimes come slightly unstuck. In the case of the Coventry experiment, in which measurement of fear was a crucial component, there was a series of rapes locally, in between the first and second surveys: a potential complication for the research design. In fairly swift succession, two rapes and a further attempted rape were carried out in the summer of 1989, by a man posing as a cab driver, who cruised around the city-centre area late at night. This series of sexual assaults would have been fresh in the minds of many of the women interviewed in the autumn of 1989, at the time of the second survey. The

impact of that rapist's crimes was certainly discernible from the survey data, as will become evident in the course of this section. But, while the additional fear generated by the rapist's activities apparently made some difference to female interviewees – if one compares the results of the two surveys – the difference was not sufficiently great to cancel out completely the effects of the curtailing of public drinking and of the reduction in low-level disorder in the city centre, discussed in the previous section.

Measurement of fear of crime is never straightforward, even in ideal circumstances. Before looking in detail at any figures, it is worth emphasising that, for many people, the roots of fear run deep, intertwined with all sorts of other feelings and emotions. If one asks people how worried or fearful they are of particular sorts of crime – the traditional approach – their answers will tend to reflect a wide variety of things, including their personal feelings of vulnerability, their past experiences, and their general concern over a troubling social issue, quite apart from their estimates of the current risks of those types of victimisation. For this reason, researchers are tending to argue for new ways of measuring fear (see, for instance, Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; or Home Office, 1989). Certainly there is little doubt that if one relies merely on the more basic type of attitudinal question, levels of fear can seem extraordinarily inelastic, or hard to change. Use of other, more precise indicators can provide a sharper and more sensitive snapshot. So although this section starts with responses to the customary questions – 'how worried are you about being insulted (or assaulted, etc) in the city centre' – these should only be seen as the first word on the subject, and not the last.

As Table 5 shows, levels of fear changed only marginally between the two surveys, in response to the initial string of time-honoured questions. Overall, there were small reductions in levels of fear, at least where assaults and muggings were concerned. For women, however, fear of sexual attack worsened to a limited extent. Similarly – separating out the responses of men and women – women's fears of insults and assaults increased, whereas those of the men decreased slightly. In all likelihood, these differences between the sexes reflect the impact on the multiple rapist, who was still at large at the time of the second survey. Arguably, it was only because women's fears were already so keenly felt that their level of worry did not increase even more sharply in these circumstances.

Table 5. Levels of fear about certain types of crime and disorder in central Coventry, before and after the introduction of the byelaw.

Incidents about which people were worried	WOMEN		MEN		EVERYONE	
	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Insults	45	47	28	27	37	37
Assaults	58	60	41	38	50	49
Muggings	71	69	47	45	59	57
Sex attacks (women only)	60	62	NA	NA	NA	NA

NOTE. Looking separately at each of the three pairs of columns, none of the differences as between the two years were statistically significant, for any of the four types of incident.

This table – and the next two – is based on the full samples, the 'don't knows' being included (there were not many).

Use of these broad, almost hypothetical questions on the subject of fear is virtually guaranteed to mask the full impact of the byelaw. Its introduction was however followed by behavioural changes on the part of the public – changes which could be taken to indicate a reduction in fear.

Both surveys included a series of more tightly targetted questions on the way that people actually behaved (or felt they had behaved) in central Coventry. Interviewees were asked whether – specifically as a precaution against crime and disorder while visiting the city centre – they 'ever' avoided particular sorts of people; or took along a companion; or avoided certain streets or places; or if they 'ever' kept away from the city centre altogether. Using this set of indicators, it is apparent from Table 6 that, especially for the men, the byelaw was promoting a greater sense of confidence.

Table 6. Adoption of personal strategies specifically to avoid crime and disorder in central Coventry, as shown by both the 'before' and 'after' surveys, for men and women.

	WOMEN		MEN		EVERYONE	
	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Avoid people	65	64	53	46	59	55
Take companion	49	47	28	23	39	35
Avoid places etc.	66	64	46	44	56	54
Avoid city centre	70	67	55	53	63	60

NOTE. For the men, the reduction in avoidance of people was statistically significant (chi-squared statistic = 5.1287; P = .0235). The reduction, for men, in taking a companion, was close to being statistically significant (chi-squared statistic = 3.5478; P = .0596). For everyone, the reduction in avoidance of people was almost statistically significant (chi-squared statistic = 3.5808; P = .0585). For everyone, the reduction in taking a companion was close to being statistically significant (chi-squared statistic = 3.3063; P = .0690). None of the other reductions even approximated to statistical significance.

The proportion who reported that they sometimes avoided certain types of people fell, overall, from 59 to 55 per cent. Statistically, this was virtually – although not quite – a 'significant' difference: there was only a six per cent probability that it could have occurred by chance. For the male interviewees, this contrast between the two surveys was even sharper. At the time of the first survey, 53 per cent of the men said that they sometimes avoided particular kinds of people: this figure dropped to 46 per cent a year later. Statistically, this was a highly significant result (there was only a 2 per cent chance that it could have occurred by accident). However, the reduction in fearful behaviour hardly extended to the women at all.

There were also additional – more modest – signs of a drop in fear, to judge by the other behavioural indicators. Among the men in particular and, to some extent, the interviewees in general, the proportion who sometimes took along a companion, by way of protective stratagem, dropped appreciably (although in each case the difference fell slightly short of the 5 per cent probability benchmark). In addition, avoiding particular streets or places within the city centre – or, on occasion, keeping away from the city centre altogether – became less widespread: but in these two instances, the reductions really were relatively marginal.

The reduction in fear as measured by at least some of the behavioural indicators – as opposed to relying on the standard attitudinal questions (“how worried are you about...?”) – is also echoed within the varying responses from people with different occupations. This is revealed in Table 7, which focuses simply on the prevalence of insults by strangers for high-status and low-status occupational groups; on their different levels of fear/worry over this type of incivility; and on the extent to which interviewees in those two

groups avoided certain sorts of people. To be in a relatively poorly paid job, or at least to come from a household where the 'head' falls into that category (C2 or DE in market research terms or, roughly speaking, working class) results in a stronger tendency towards anxiety, not least over crime, than on the part of those who are more fortunately placed (the ABs and C1s).

Table 7. Prevalence of strangers' insults, worry about strangers' insults and avoidance of particular sorts of people, in central Coventry, as measured by the 'before' and 'after' surveys.

	AB + C1		C2 + DE		EVERYONE	
	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Insulted						
by strangers	11	8	12	8	12	8
Worry about						
such insults	32	29	40	42	37	37
Avoidance of						
certain people	59	57	59	54	59	55

NOTE. In terms of being insulted by strangers, the reduction experienced by the C2s and DEs was statistically significant (chi-squared statistic = 8.5417; P = .0035); while the reduction experienced by everyone was also statistically significant (chi-squared statistic = 10.3481; P = .0013). In terms of reduced avoidance of certain people, the change was statistically significant for the C2s and DEs (chi-squared statistic = 4.3612; P = .0368), and nearly so for everyone (chi-squared statistic = 3.5808; P = .0585).

It is apparent from the top line of Table 7 that, first, the actual extent to which the two socio-occupational groups were insulted by strangers did not vary to any great extent, in either year. At the time of the 'before' survey, 11 per cent of the ABs and C1s had suffered this incivility over the previous twelve months, as opposed to 12 per cent of the C2s and DEs. In the 'after' survey, the equivalent figures for both groups fell to 8 per cent. This drop was however statistically significant for the C2s and DEs (whereas the proportionately smaller reduction experienced by the ABs and C1s was not). Or, to express matters another way, the disadvantaged group did rather better out of the byelaw, in terms of exposure to incivilities, than did the ABs and C1s.

In each survey, although the extent to which they were insulted by strangers did not vary appreciably, the C2 and DEs has substantially higher levels of fear than the ABs and C1s. In the 'before' survey, 40 per cent of the C2s and DEs said that they feared strangers' insults, in contrast to only 32 per cent of the ABs and C1s. In the 'after' survey, these levels remained much the same as before, although they fell slightly for the ABs and C1s (to 29 per cent), while increasing marginally for the C2s and DEs (to 42 per cent). Not much can be read into that, except the inelasticity of the conventional way of measuring fear.

If however one turns to the behavioural measure set out across the bottom line of Table 7, then there is evidence that those who benefitted most from the reduction in strangers' insults (the C2s and DEs) did in fact draw some comfort from this. The proportion of C2s and DEs saying that they sometimes avoided other people fell from 59 per cent to 54 per cent: a statistically significant difference. For the ABs and C1s, the drop was smaller – from 59 per cent to 57 per cent – and it was not statistically significant. The moral to be drawn for all of this is that behavioural indicators may well offer a more sensitive way of monitoring levels of fear than the use of supposedly straightforward attitudinal questions (which in fact tap into a host of other considerations). At least in Coventry, the proof of the pudding was in the eating, and not in what people said they felt about it.

Nonetheless, even if one relies simply on the behavioural indicators, the reduction in fear in central Coventry was only a modest one. Fear is too deeply rooted to be eradicated with any ease. Yet, given that, even a small reduction in fear – albeit as measured just in one particular way – represents quite an achievement.

While the fears of the Coventry interviewees have already been discussed in some detail, a few extra points about the sort of people whom some of them tried to avoid may be illuminating. Keeping away from particular types of people was the commonest form of self-protection strategy, within the city centre (see Table 6 above); also, avoiding people (or not doing so) was a particularly good reflection of whether or not interviewees were fearful.

In both surveys, over half those interviewed said that they sometimes made a point of avoiding particular sorts of people. In the first survey, this was true of 59 per cent of the respondents (698), whereas the equivalent figure in the second survey was 55 per cent (655). Each time round, those who said that they took this type of evasive action were asked, in addition, what kinds of people they avoided. There responses are set out in Table 8. A key feature of this table is that it contains multiple responses: those interviewees who kept away from one type of person were often wary of quite a few other kinds as well.

Tale 8. Avoidance of particular types of person in central Coventry, as measured by the 'before' and 'after' surveys

Types of person avoided	'BEFORE' SURVEY (n=698)		'AFTER' SURVEY (n=655)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Drunks, winos, tramps	424	61	350	53
Groups of people	312	45	296	45
Young men	140	20	123	19
The young	107	15	60	9
Others	67	10	139	21

Whether or not they still drank alcohol in public, the various drunks, winos and tramps clearly aroused anxiety on the part of visitors to the city centre. However, these three rattle-taggle groups were not mentioned so often in the

second survey as in the first one, either absolutely or proportionately. By contrast, the proportion who cited 'groups of people' – the next most commonly avoided category – remained unchanged from 'before' to 'after' survey, at 45 per cent.

Fear of others fuels fear of crime. We cannot all be the same, yet the differences cause tensions. This is strongly reflected in the close match between the patterns of answers to the standard questions about fear of insults/assaults/muggings and to the behavioural questions about self-protection strategies. Essentially, all of these strategies – avoiding particular people, or places, or taking a companion, or keeping away from the city centre – turn on fear of others and what they might do. However, so as to keep Table 9 as simple as possible, it has been restricted merely to avoidance of particular sorts of people, the most telling of the four behavioural indicators.

Table 9. Avoidance of certain sorts of people as a self-protection strategy, by respondents with differing fear levels, in both 'before' and 'after' surveys in central Coventry

Those avoiding certain sorts of people	1988: 'BEFORE'		1989: 'AFTER'	
	Generally fearful (n = 5 8 0)	Less fearful (n = 5 9 8)	Generally fearful (n = 5 6 2)	Less fearful (n = 6 2 2)
Percentage	71	47	71	40
Number	414	283	400	254

What Table 9 shows is that, among the 'generally fearful' interviewees (whose numbers dropped only very slightly from one survey to the next), the proportion who sometimes avoided certain sorts of people stayed at the constantly high level of 71 per cent, in both years. However, among the 'less fearful' respondents (whose numbers increased, if only moderately), the proportion who sometimes avoided certain sorts of people decreased from 47 to 40 per cent. In other words, for those interviewees who were generally fearful, avoiding certain other people remained a consistently popular practice, whereas this was not the case for those who were less fearful. In effect, attitudes and behaviour were closely related.

The reduction in fearful behaviour – if not in fear itself – which has been presented in this section can be confirmed also from the section which follows. It delineates attitudes towards the byelaw, and suggests that the measure was generally felt to be reassuring by visitors to central Coventry.

Popularity of the Coventry byelaw

The byelaw was so well known and so popular at the time of the 'before' survey that it was hard to imagine further increases in levels of awareness or in the esteem with which it was held. But they did nonetheless happen.

One obvious reason for the popularity of the byelaw was that enforcement – discussed in detail in the next section – was generally successful. This may

have come as rather a surprise to some people: six out of ten of those interviewed in the 'before' survey had felt the byelaw to be unenforceable. After it was in place, there were only occasional gestures of protest against the byelaw. One such gesture received generous coverage in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (10 August 1989). Under the headline "No booze, no gigs", an article described how a local rock'n'roll band – the Jolly Dwarfs – was "quitting Coventry's music scene in protest at the city centre's street drinking ban."

At the time of the 'before' survey, 89 per cent of those interviewed said that they were aware of the impending byelaw (or were under the erroneous impression that it was already in operation). A year later, 93 per cent of the respondents claimed to be aware of the byelaw. Among those actually resident in Coventry (86 per cent of the total sample, in the 'after' survey), the level of awareness was still higher: no less than 95 per cent.

At the time of the first survey, although there was a general chorus of approval in favour of the byelaw, the 16-30 age group tended not to participate so wholeheartedly. However, a year later, as can be confirmed from Table 10, even this relatively minor element of dissent was less prominent. In the 'before' survey, 86 per cent of the total number of respondents rated the byelaw as 'a good idea overall' – but only 76 per cent of those in the 16-30 age bracket. In the 'after' survey, while the general level of assent increased significantly, to 93 per cent, the equivalent figure just for the younger age group rose relatively more steeply, to 86 per cent – halving the gap. A more widely popular innovation in social control would be hard to imagine.

Table 10. Attitudes towards the Coventry byelaw, as measured by the 'before' and 'after' surveys.

Positive and negative propositions: % agreeing	YOUNG (16-30)		OLDER (31+)		EVERYONE	
	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)	Before (1988)	After (1989)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Byelaw good idea overall	76	88	92	95	86	93
Happier to visit, without drinkers	59	52	77	72	70	66
Centre safer, pleasanter	58	67	84	84	74	79
Freedom infringed	37	26	26	16	30	19
Enforcement impossible	64	45	58	42	60	43

NOTE. For the purposes of this table, responses to the three positive propositions have been grouped together first, followed by responses to the two negative or critical statements. However, when these questions were originally asked, positive and negative propositions were mixed together, so as to achieve a balance. (See appendix for questionnaire.)

This somewhat simplified table is based on the full sample of respondents. For these five items they were permitted a 'neither' (neutral) option as well as 'don't know' (plus graded agree/disagree options). There were few 'don't knows' or 'neithers', except in relation to the second proposition, for which in 1989 'neithers' accounted for 25% of the total (17% in 1988). In fact, while the proportion endorsing the second proposition fell from 70 to 66% (as shown above), the proportion rejecting it also dropped, from 12 to 8% (not shown above).

Two out of the three positive propositions in Table 10 commanded even stronger endorsements in the second survey than in the first, at least on the part of the interviewees in general. It is true that the proportion who felt happier about visiting an 'alcohol-free' city centre – without any public drinkers – was lower in the 'after' survey than in the 'before' sweep (or, in other words, in actuality rather than in prospect). However, even so, roughly two out of three respondents still backed this particular proposition, which was consistently the least popular of the three positive ones, in both sweeps of the survey. (And, as is explained in the note following Table 10, the proportion actively dissenting from this particular proposition also dropped, from 12 to 8 per cent.)

Those reservations which had been widely expressed at the time of the first survey, over the practicality and fairness of the byelaw, had become less pronounced by the time of second survey. The proportion who felt that the byelaw infringed individual freedom dropped from 30 to 19 per cent, while the proportion believing that it was unenforceable fell from 60 to 43 per cent. The opinions of the younger age group moved fully in line with those of the interviewees in general, if not even more strongly.

The final picture which emerges from the direct attitudinal evidence is of the Coventry byelaw being perceived by almost everyone as a worthwhile measure, associated by more than three-quarters of the interviewees with a safer and more pleasant city centre. Expressions of reservation, initially voiced quite strongly before the byelaw had been tried and tested, had become more subdued by the time of the 'after' survey. No doubt this reflected well on the enforcement of the byelaw – which is examined in the next section.

Enforcement of the Byelaw in Coventry and elsewhere

In Coventry, the byelaw 'passed its test' not only with the public but also with the police. Two sets of interviews were carried out with junior officers, to assess the byelaw from the point of view of the men and women responsible for its enforcement. A brief overview of the results is presented in this section. So too is some supplementary information from the other six places involved in the byelaw experiment although – unlike the Coventry findings – it has not been gathered at first hand, or through systematic research. Instead, it came through regular feedback from meetings of the steering committee overseeing the byelaw experiment. Consequently, the primary emphasis of this section remains largely on Coventry.

The interviews with Coventry officers – mostly constables – took place in two phases. First, 25 officers were seen roughly five weeks from the start of the byelaw, in December 1988: they were drawn from two of the four 'shifts', or teams, whose hours of duty rotate periodically. Later, in April/May 1990, another 19 interviews were completed, this time with officers from three of the different shifts. While some modest quantitative information was gained, the samples were necessarily small, given the limited number of uniformed officers deployed in or near the city-centre area. However, the aim of these interviews was very much to enable the officers to talk freely, rather than simply providing answers from pre-selected sets of responses.

None the less, the credibility of the byelaw was clear enough, in numerical as well as qualitative terms. In the 1988 interviews, all but three of the 25 officers rated the byelaw 'a good idea', when asked their personal opinion. There was also broad agreement that – apart from isolated cases – public drinking had ceased, and that this had happened with comparatively little effort on their part. In 1990, every one of the 19 officers interviewed gave his or her personal backing to the byelaw. Indeed, one of them went so far as to say that the introduction of the byelaw had made "a hell of a difference", and that it was "a pleasure to work the town now. "

The officers' clear endorsement of the byelaw was in general tempered by an awareness that many other factors were operating in its favour. Here, different officers stressed particular points. In both sets of interviews, a number mentioned that the introduction of all-day drinking in pubs, just a few months before the start of the byelaw, had contributed to the latter's success, by enabling those so minded to carry on drinking in pubs right through the afternoon, when previously they would have been thrown out on

to the streets. Likewise, various officers felt that other police initiatives in central Coventry, such as frequent visits to licensed premises, had also played a part in helping to curb alcohol-related disorder. The heavy burst of initial publicity, the way the 'alcohol-free zone' was so neatly demarcated by the ring-road, and the unanimous backing of senior officers and local opinion-formers were also cited by interviewees. As they saw it, the byelaw was very much a home-grown product, which was right for Coventry. A couple of them even mentioned the fortuitous transformation of Broadgate – previously much favoured almost as a kind of stage by public drinkers – into a building site: a final local touch, adding that little extra bit of weight to the byelaw.

While the officers recognised that the byelaw had been helped along by other developments both local and national, they were also aware – at least by the time of the second set of interviews – that it had proved its worth in Coventry even at potentially awkward moments. Originally, in December 1988, a few of them had wondered whether the byelaw would prevail over the Christmas period, or during any hot spell the following summer. To these officers, it was still uncertain whether it would work at large public gatherings, for instance on New Year's Eve, or at the summer carnival, at both of which public drinking – and at least the potential for disorder – were well established features.

Any such doubts on the part of the Coventry officers seem to have been dispelled by the time the second set of interviews took place, in the spring of 1990. The Christmas and New Year period was tranquil both in December 1988 and again a year later. Public compliance with the byelaw remained strong even when crowds of revellers gathered – in sharp contrast to what happened in Bath. There, at the first New Year's Eve following the introduction of the byelaw, a crowd of some 2,000 people massed near to the Abbey, a good many of them drinking in defiance of the byelaw. Faced with a volatile situation, local police felt they had no option but to turn a blind eye.

Coventry's summertime carnival was, by contrast, another home win for the byelaw. The vivid write-up in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (19 June 1989) enthused: "Thousands lined the streets in sweltering heat to watch more than 70 floats wind their way through the city centre. Everyone was in party mood and had a wonderful time. And there wasn't a drink in sight." The *Telegraph* also quoted a rather terser police spokesman who stated that, in public-order terms, it had been "the quietest carnival for some time." One further reason for this outcome – in addition to the byelaw itself – was that various off-licences close to the carnival route agreed, just briefly, to suspend their sales.

In fact, when the second round of interviews with the Coventry officers took place, only passing reference was made to the set-piece events about which some of their colleagues had previously been concerned. The byelaw had become just another aspect of everyday police work. It was no particular trouble to enforce since, in the words of one young officer, "everyone knows it's there". Alcohol-related disorder had not been swept from the streets of Coventry, but at least the police had one more "handy little weapon" with which to combat it.

Asked to assess the impact of the byelaw on crime and disorder, officers

questioned in the first round of interviews had been cautious in their views. Only two of them felt there had been a general reduction in disorder: the remainder mostly believed it was too soon to arrive at a judgement – just five weeks on. Even then, however, two-thirds of those interviewed reckoned that central Coventry had been made a more pleasant place for members of the public to visit, through the elimination of public drinking, especially in the daytime. By the second set of interviews, there was a clearer consensus that the byelaw had indeed been beneficial: 12 out of 19 officers, or virtually two-thirds, considered that it had exerted a positive effect on the general level of disorder, if not of crime proper. Only one officer explicitly doubted whether any wider benefit had been gained; the rest simply felt they lacked conclusive evidence. And, this time round, when asked whether the byelaw had made the city centre a more pleasant place for the public, all 19 officers agreed it had.

One reason why the Coventry officers were broadly content with the byelaw was that, on those occasions when they did have to deal with a contravention, the outcome was rarely problematic. In both rounds of interviews, they were asked to describe any encounters they had experienced with public drinkers (up to a maximum of three such encounters). In the initial set of interviews, the 25 officers described, between them, a total of 17 encounters with public drinkers. In the second batch, some 18 months after the start of the byelaw, the 19 interviewees reckoned that, between them, they had dealt with 142 breaches of the byelaw, since November 1988: they gave a full account of what had happened in 45 instances (the majority of them having had more than three encounters with public drinkers.) In theory, all such interactions were meant to be documented afterwards at the police station – on a special form – but, by 1990, this practice had effectively ceased. On the basis of these interviews, one might hazard a guess that the police issued perhaps up to three hundred compliance warnings in central Coventry during the first year and a half while the byelaw was in force – whereas the official tally stood only at 25, as of February 1990. However, what is not open to doubt is that, by the same time, there had only been half a dozen prosecutions under the byelaw. Most contravention were resolved on the spot and, as the interviews revealed, with surprisingly little trouble.

What precisely were the circumstances – and the consequences – when the police tackled contravention of the byelaw? Typically the situation arose fortuitously, rather than as a result of a complaint from someone else. Putting together all 62 cases which were described in detail (the initial 17 and the later 45), nearly two-thirds happened in the evening, or at night. Quite often the event followed on from the drinkers' visit to a pub or club, perhaps on a Friday or Saturday night, when alcohol-related disorder is particularly liable to happen (Tuck, 1989). Generally, young people were involved: 'winos' featured in less than a quarter of the incidents. Usually – more than three quarters of the time – a group of people was involved, although perhaps not all of them were drinking in public.

Despite all these potentially explosive ingredients – young people, in groups, with alcohol – most encounters resulted not in violent confrontation but in

swift compliance. Of the 62 cases described in detail, more than half (34) ended with the alcohol being poured away, or disposed of in a bin, following 'advice' or occasionally 'assistance' from the officer. Moving on the offenders – quite possibly keeping them under observation or even escorting them to the nearest subway under the ring-road – happened seven times, while there were 14 cases in which various other types of compliance were secured (for instance, persuading offenders to return their glasses to a pub, or simply allowing them to consume their remaining mouthfalls of drink hastily, under supervision). There were only six cases in which there was any sort of serious confrontation, including – ultimately – prosecution either under the byelaw or for some other reason. (In the one remaining case, it was unclear precisely what happened.)

In spite of the lack of problems encountered in enforcing the byelaw, the Coventry officers were never completely convinced that it gave them sufficient powers. Indeed, between the two sets of interviews they seem to have become more concerned about this. In the first batch of interviews, when the general feeling was still one of relief that the byelaw had got off to an unexpectedly good start – that it had “hardly needed the police”, as one officer put it – almost three quarters (18 out of 25) had expressed satisfaction with the extent of their powers. A year and a half later, in 1990, little more than a third (7 out of 19) took the same view, the remainder being reluctant to commit themselves to a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Several expressed clear awareness that enforcement of the byelaw depended on the public having an exaggerated perception of their powers – for instance, crediting them with a power of arrest which they did not in fact possess under the byelaw.

Other – closely related – points were also raised in the second set of interviews. Various officers felt it would be helpful to have a power of seizure in reserve, either so as to substantiate the alcoholic content of the beverage, or else to legitimise the pouring away of drinks. However, there was also a feeling, expressed by at least some officers, that the limitations of the byelaw did not matter too much, since they could always, in case of difficulties, “go straight through to PACE” (the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984, which endows them with considerable powers, including one (under Section 25) which enables them to make arrests for non-arrestable offences in certain circumstances – broadly speaking when they do not think they will be able to identify someone or rely on them to answer a summons to court. Nevertheless, the applicability of PACE in all possible circumstances involving confrontations over the byelaw remains unresolved in practice.

In addition, the provision for a warning under the byelaw caused disquiet to some officers, although there was, at the same time, a general welcome for the fact that, in practice, they did not have to undertake any formal legal process. As has previously been described, officers' preferred course of action in tackling contravention of the byelaw was simply to induce the culprit to discard the drink, rather than risk a recurrence nearby, a little while later.

A number of the officers did recognise that sometimes – perhaps particularly during the daytime, in dealing with 'winos' – it was more appropriate to warn someone, and then, if need be, to escort them out of the 'alcohol-free zone'.

(This was also much fairer to people of this type, given that their concoctions or purchases of alcohol were “like gold-dust” to them, to quote one constable’s phrase.) Also, a – hypothetical – vicar with a can, who was genuinely unaware of the byelaw, would not be asked to pour away its contents, in the rather colourful phrase of another officer.

If displacement was integral to the working of the byelaw, it did sometimes lead to small groups of drinkers congregating in, for instance, a particular park just outside the ring-road, as various officers conceded. However, they believed that any disturbance or affront to the public has been kept to as low a level as possible. A woman police constable said that, in her experience, if ‘winos’ did move somewhere particularly inappropriate (outside the alcohol-free zone), it was usually possible to persuade them to go elsewhere without too much difficulty. If there was any widening of the area in which the byelaw applied (a possibility that had been raised publicly, shortly before the interviews), there was a chance that enforcement would become only sporadic, as with legislation against the dropping of litter – or so one officer suggested.

In Coventry, although some officers claimed that they would never overlook any infringement of the byelaw, there were others who said they did occasionally turn a blind eye, in situations where they felt no-one was likely to be bothered. A number of them were quick to point out that they themselves were partial to an occasional drink out-of-doors, in the right kind of setting: a point which evidently helped to inform their personal sense of fairness.

A good many of the issues which emerged in Coventry in relation to police powers and procedures for upholding the byelaw also surfaced elsewhere. First, however, it is important to make the point that, at the meeting of the steering committee in February 1990 (some nine months since all the byelaws were in place), the other six councils reported that enforcement had not been problematic, although some committee members did foresee situations in which difficulties might arise. In each place, there had been at most a handful of prosecutions and – officially, anyway – comparatively limited numbers of warnings.

At least one of the local authorities (Restormel), or rather a senior officer from the Newquay and St. Austell area, emphasised that it was standard practice for officers to ask anyone whom they ‘warned’ about the byelaw simply to dispose of their drink immediately. On a different tack, another council (Bath) expressed unease over the ambiguity as to how long a warning remained in effect. (A small minority of committee members believed the warning procedure to be inherently cumbersome and problematic.) A third authority (Rushmoor) reported that – in a rare contested case – the prosecution had foundered because of the court’s requirement for scientific evidence that alcohol was involved (for which the byelaw made no provision).

A further issue discussed at the February 1990 meeting, which had also surfaced in the interviews with the Coventry officers, was that of displacement of drinkers from the, ‘alcohol-free zone’ to nearby areas. Three of the seven councils (including Coventry) indicated their awareness of a

amount of displacement, but they nonetheless doubted whether any particularly serious problems had occurred as a result of this.

Consistent enforcement of the byelaw is an important question, just as it is with any law. Nonetheless, what is appropriate for one place may or may not be right for everywhere else. In Bath, the curtailing of drinking at chairs and tables outside certain licensed premises (as a result of the byelaw) led to protests and, ultimately, to the council passing an amendment, exempting the relevant pavement areas, on the basis that they would be clearly demarcated and overseen by the licensees. It is still a little early to judge how well this local variation is operating, and whether or not it has any broader repercussions for the byelaw as it operates in Bath. (It is worth noting that, in strict theory, byelaws should bear evenly on everyone, irrespective of status.)

To round up, police officers who were interviewed in Coventry felt that the byelaw was working well there. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that they had their reservations over aspects of enforcement – as indeed did some officers (or local government officials) in at least certain of the other experimental locations.

Summary and conclusions

The ‘alcohol-free zones’ established in Coventry and six other places constituted a novel experiment. Developments in Coventry, the flagship for this initiative, were monitored closely by the Home Office. Only to a lesser extent did the Home Office enquire into the impact of the other six byelaws.

In Coventry, two large surveys of members of the public were carried out, involving visitors to the city centre, before and then a year after the introduction of the byelaw. These showed that:

- * Prior to the implementation of the byelaw, many of those interviewed were worried about falling victim to crime and disorder in the city centre. More than half sometimes made a point of avoiding certain people (or streets). In particular, the sight of public drinkers triggered feelings of fear on the part of many members of the public. Together, ‘drunks, winos and tramps’ constituted the most commonly avoided category of person.
- * Comparing the findings of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ surveys, there was a modest but clear reduction in fear, to judge by various behavioural indicators. This reduction could plausibly be attributed to the successful enforcement of the byelaw. Smaller proportions of the interviewees said that they sometimes avoided certain sorts of people, or that they felt it necessary to take a companion with them.
- * In addition, visitors to central Coventry were less often exposed to incivilities – specifically, to insults by strangers (besides the sight of public drinkers) - following the introduction of the byelaw, and apparently as a result of it.
- * The surveys also revealed high levels of knowledge about the Coventry byelaw, which was enormously popular locally both on the eve of its implementation and, still more strongly, a year later. In the ‘before’

survey, 89 per cent of those interviewed claimed to be aware of the byelaw, a figure that subsequently rose to 93 per cent. Similarly, 86 per cent of the survey respondents felt initially that the byelaw was 'a good idea overall', while later that also increased to 93 per cent.

Interviews carried out with police officers responsible for patrolling central Coventry showed that enforcement had been achieved without too much difficulty. Such contravention of the byelaw as did occur were generally resolved informally, on the spot: there were hardly any prosecutions. Consequently, from a legal standpoint, the enforcement of the byelaw in Coventry can only be said to have been subjected to the mildest of testing. Some of the officers there (and indeed elsewhere) foresaw situations where difficulties might arise.

However well the byelaw worked – in ideal circumstances – in Coventry, its success was not without limits. Although incivilities were reduced, the surveys and the data assembled by the local police both indicated that crime proper stayed at much the same level as before the introduction of the byelaw. And a minority of those interviewed – over one in five – continued to feel that public drinking was a problem in the city centre, one year on from the introduction of the byelaw.

Information provided by the local authorities responsible for the other six places suggested that, while the introduction of their byelaws had in the main proceeded smoothly and successfully, some important questions over enforcement remained unresolved – for instance, the length of time for which individuals remained bound by any warning, or whether (and how) the alcoholic content of beverages needed to be proved, in the event of a prosecution. Notwithstanding any such difficulties, the byelaws had been generally well received in these other six locations, although for the most part this particular conclusion was not based on detailed research such as was carried out in Coventry. Also, it is worth emphasising that these six places were all relatively small ones where, broadly speaking, the prospects for the byelaw were reasonably favourable. Even then, enforcement led on occasion to conflict or controversy, while it may also be worth noting that in one area (Aldershot and Farnborough) scarcely half of those members of the public interviewed – in the course of research carried out by the local authority – were aware of the existence of the byelaw, let alone of any positive effects.

The main findings of this report, based on the in-depth research carried out in Coventry, raise a variety of issues. A particularly crucial one concerns the striking of a balance between the individual's right to consume alcohol out in the open and the evident desire of a good many people to avoid encountering public drinkers. (And, to be more specific, one is sometimes talking about the rights of those who are homeless and lack the money to drink in pubs.) It is interesting that, even in Coventry, 30 per cent of those interviewed before the byelaw came into effect believed that it did indeed represent an infringement of the freedom of the individual. Subsequently – when it had become apparent that the byelaw was working so effectively – that figure dropped to 19 per cent, in the second survey. At least in Coventry, the byelaw

undoubtedly proved its acceptability to the public, in practice as well as in theory.

Precisely because of the strong appeal inherent in the claims of freedom from fear, it is worth emphasising that the byelaw experiment in Coventry took place in exceptional circumstances: there is a need for a degree of caution in interpreting an undoubted success story. Coventry's situation was a special one, in several important ways:

- * The area involved was limited in size, so that no-one was ever more than ten minutes walk from an unrestricted area to which they could go, or be moved on, to resume their interrupted drink.
- * The 'alcohol-free zone' was also extremely clearly demarcated, by the central ring-road, so that, effectively, anyone who was aware of the byelaw knew where it did and did not apply. Additionally, there were numerous warning notices.
- * Coventry had no tradition of open-air drinking, not even at chairs and tables outside pubs and restaurants. (Here it differed especially from Bath, where the byelaw has encountered critics in various quarters.)
- * The byelaw formed just one element – albeit a particularly important one – in a package of strategies aimed at tackling a problem of alcohol-related disorder; and this problem was one widely perceived by local people as needing serious attention.
- * Coventry's opinion formers – including the local media – were virtually unanimous in their support for the byelaw. (Here again, there is a contrast with Bath, where there has been political disagreement over the byelaw within the Council.)

Together, all these factors ensured that the byelaw was in large measure self-policing in central Coventry, and that on the limited number of occasions when the police did have to tackle a contravention they were able to do so informally and effectively (albeit sometimes adhering slightly loosely to the precise format of the byelaw). It is interesting that research recently carried out in Florida into a successful community policing scheme aimed at combatting incivilities (including public drinking), with the help of a warning citation not so different from that embodied in the Coventry byelaw, stresses the importance of factors similar to those listed just above (Wiatrowski and Vardalis, 1990).

The byelaw against public drinking worked especially well in Coventry, where it clearly helped to reassure local people and to curb incivilities. It seems also to have proved its usefulness in the other six places, although perhaps in different ways and to varying extents. However, all seven places were chosen – indeed, they volunteered themselves – precisely because of their locally and nationally perceived suitability as guinea pigs. In the light of some of the inevitable snags and limitations of a novel sort of legislation, its relevance to further places needs extremely careful consideration. So too does the precise form in which the current byelaw is carried forward, perhaps particularly over the issue of enforcement.

APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION ABOUT THE TWO SURVEYS IN COVENTRY

This appendix is based closely on the relevant parts of the methodology sections of NOP'S two technical reports. For both the 1988 and the 1989 surveys, NOP carried out the interviewing and provided the Home Office with an edited data tape. The full analysis of the data was carried out at the Home Office.

The research involved on-street interviews, at sites within Coventry's inner ring road. Although all visitors to the city centre aged 16 and above were eligible for interview, regardless of their place of residence, it was decided to make use of quotas – for age and for sex in particular – that were broadly representative of the population of Coventry (1981 census data being used for this purpose). The figures below show the original targets together with achieved percentages for the quota groups, for both 1988 and 1989.

	Original targets	Achieved levels (1988)	Achieved levels (1989)
	%	%	%
Male	48	48	49
Female	52	52	51
16-30	32	36	31
31-60	44	41	43
61+	24	21	26

In 1988, fieldwork took place over the eleven days from Friday 21 October to Monday 31 October. In 1989, fieldwork was over fourteen days, from Monday 23 October to Sunday 6 November. Although the 1989 survey was carried out across the first anniversary of the byelaw – marked by some slight extra publicity – this did not affect the outcome (there were similar patterns of responses in both October and November 1989, for all the important variables).

Within the two periods of fieldwork, interviewing was carried out during the daytime on a daily basis; in addition, evening interviewing – after 6.00 pm – was carried out on all four Fridays, three out of four Saturdays (only one in 1989), and on one Wednesday in each year (late night shopping). Fieldwork quality control consisted of some accompanying of interviewers backed up by occasional recall checks on respondents, a total of 10 per cent of the sample being checked in one or other of these two ways, each year.

At the close of the first round of fieldwork, in 1988, 1,185 interviews had been conducted, of which 981 were with residents of Coventry, 124 came from elsewhere in the West Midlands and 80 were from further away. In the course of the second round of interviewing, in 1989, 1,208 interviews were conducted, of which 1,035 were with Coventry residents, 84 came from elsewhere in the West Midlands and 89 from further away.

In each year, roughly two-thirds of those interviewed were shoppers. Work or

business was the next most common reason for visiting the city centre: this was mentioned by around 15 per cent of the interviewees, in each sweep. The remainder had a whole variety of purposes (mainly 'other' ones).

The class, ethnic and working status of both the 1988 and the 1989 respondents is shown below, as are comparisons with census data for Coventry, where possible.

	Survey (1988) n	Survey (1988) %	Survey (1989) n	Survey (1989) %	Census
AB	178	15	154	13	NA
C1	287	24	307	25	NA
C2	327	28	324	27	NA
DE	385	33	414	34	NA
White	1076	91	1117	93	92
Black	35	3	22	2	} 6
Asian	48	4	42	4	
Other	15	1	12	1	3
Working, full time	476	40	498	41	} 51
Working part-time	149	13	134	11	
Retired	117	20	290	24	NA
Unemployed	236	10	93	8	9
Other	203	17	192	16	NA

Although the sampling method was of a slightly unusual type, the figures presented above, together with some supplementary cross-checking, suggest that a reasonably balanced sample of users of the city centre was obtained.

APPENDIX 2: POLICE DATA FOR CENTRAL COVENTRY, 1987-1989

Inspired by the Coventry City Centre Alcohol Related Crime Project, the local police carried out their own detailed studies of crime and disorder in the six-monthly periods July to December, for 1987, 1988 and 1989 (a preliminary analysis was also carried out for the equivalent period in 1986). In these investigations, the focus was explicitly on the area inside the central ring road – the area covered by the byelaw, and indeed by the research described in this report. Obviously many of the offence categories – for instance, the various types of theft – could scarcely be expected to have been affected by the introduction of a byelaw curtailing public consumption of alcohol. The position is further complicated in relation to the byelaw by the fact that it was in operation during the last two months of 1988. Nonetheless, it may still be helpful to present police figures for recorded crime in central Coventry.

As has been mentioned in the main text, the crime statistics recorded by the police did not change appreciably between the second half of 1988 and the second half of 1989. This was certainly true of key offence categories where the byelaw might conceivably have had some effect, if only indirectly. These would include criminal damage (the incidence of which could not readily have been established by asking questions of the public) and the various types of inter-personal violence (woundings or assaults together with robberies and thefts from the person). Full details are presented below, both for these latter two years and for 1987. It is worth noting that the fall in the number of offences between the relevant parts of 1987 and 1988 can largely be accounted for by reductions in the number of thefts of all types.

Table. The incidence of crime in central Coventry, as recorded in police statistics for the second half of 1987, 1988 and 1989

	1987 (Jul-Dec)	1988 (Jul-Dec)	1989 (Jul-Dec)
Woundings/assaults	55	79	77
Robbery/theft from person	52	37	51
Criminal damage	272	200	196
Burglary	175	187	169
Theft from motor vehicle	850	402	448
Theft of motor vehicle	214	136	137
Theft of bicycle	203	151	120
Other thefts	814	747	763
Miscellaneous	114	80	100
TOTAL	2,749	2,019	2,061

Interpretation of crime statistics and other police data is rarely completely straightforward. For further details relating to central Coventry, readers are advised to consult the various documents on which this appendix is based. They are as follows:

West Midlands Police (1988). Alcohol-Related Crime and Disorder in

Coventry City Centre. Part II: July-December 1987.

Coventry Alcohol and Crime Project (1989). A Further Report from the Steering Committee [Appendix B].

The report for the last six months of 1989 is not as yet available in its final form.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE (1989 VERSION)

Good morning/afternoon/evening. I am from NOP Market Research Ltd and we are carrying out a short survey on crime and disorder in the city centre on behalf of the Home Office.

Q1a. Can I just check, have you been interviewed in this survey already?

Yes..... CLOSE. DO NOT COUNT IN QUOTA

No..... CONTINUE

Q1b. I am going to read out some problems that might exist in the city centre – that is the area within the central ring road. SHOWCARD A. For each problem I read out I would like you to tell me how common or uncommon you think it is, using one of the phrases on this card.

Very Common	Fairly common	Fairly uncommon	Very uncommon	Don't know
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a) Rubbish and litter lying about

b) Unruly groups of young people

c) People drinking alcohol in public: on the streets or in gardens or parks

2. SHOWCARD B. Using one of the phrases on this card, please tell me how worried you are about any of the following things happening to you when you visit the **city centre area**.

Very worried	Fairly worried	Not very worried	Not at all worried	Don't know
-----------------	-------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	---------------

a) Being insulted or bothered by strangers

b) Being assaulted

c) Being mugged or having anything stolen

ASK WOMEN ONLY

d) Being sexually attacked or molested

Q3a. Have any of the following things happened to you in the city centre area in the last 12 months? READ OUT EACH IN TURN.
FOR EACH ONE CODED YES ASK Q3b

Q3b. Do you think the person or people responsible had been drinking before this?

	Q3a		Q3b		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	No idea

Have you been insulted or bothered by strangers?
Have you been assaulted?
Have you been mugged, or had anything stolen from you?

Q4. Do you ever avoid coming into the city centre at any time simply as a precaution against crime and disorder?

Yes
No
Don't know

Q5. When you are in the city centre, do you ever do any of these **simply** as a precaution against crime and disorder?

Yes No

a) Making sure you are with someone else rather than on your own
b) Staying away from certain streets, areas and places
c) Not walking near certain types of people
IF YES AT Q5C ASK Q6

Q6. Which types of people do you avoid walking near?

Young men
Young (unspecified)
Groups of people
Drunks/winos/tramps
Other (WRITE IN)

Q7. In November 1988 a new byelaw came into effect which made it illegal to drink alcohol in public in the city centre area. Did you know about this byelaw?

Yes - knew about it
No - didn't know about it
Not sure

Q8. SHOWCARD C. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Def agree	Tend agree	Neither	Tend disag	Def disag	Don't know
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a) The ban is an infringement of the freedom of the individual

b) I feel happier coming into the city centre now there are no people drinking in public

c) It is impossible to enforce the ban - people still carry on drinking in public anyway

d) The ban makes the city centre a safer and more pleasant place to visit

e) Overall the ban is a good idea

Q9. Could you tell me the purpose of your trip today?

- Business/work
- Shopping
- Library/dentist/doctor etc.
- Going to pub/club
- Going to dinner/meal/restaurant
- Other entertainment/leisure
- Something to do
- Other (WRITE IN)

Q10. How often, on average, do you visit the city centre area?

- Every day
- 5 or 6 times a week
- 3 or 4 times a week
- Once or twice a week
- Once every few weeks
- Only occasionally
- Never before

- Q11. Do you live in(READ OUT)
 Coventry
 Elsewhere in West Midlands
 Somewhere else
- Q12. What was your age last birthday?
 16-30
 31-60
 61+
- Q13. Respondent is
 Male
 Female
- Q14. Are you(READ OUT)
 Working full-time
 Working part-time
 Unemployed
 Retired
 Something else
- Q15. What is the occupation of the head of your household?
AB
C1
C2
D2
- Q16. Respondent is
 White
 Black
 Asian
 Other

The 1988 version of the questionnaire, essentially very similar to this one, is included in the earlier report, **Downtown Drinkers** (Ramsay, 1989).

APPENDIX 4: OTHER RESEARCH INTO THE ALCOHOL BYELAWS

After the main part of this report had been drafted, three reports were received by the Home Office. Two related to Stockton-on-Tees (covering police officers' views and public opinion respectively), while the third gave an overview of public attitudes in Rushmoor. Brief summaries are provided below.

Stockton: views of police officers

In Stockton, short questionnaires were completed by 31 officers working in the three distinct town-centre areas covered by the local byelaw (Billingham, Norton and Stockton itself). This happened in May 1990, just over a year since the measure took effect locally.

Two-thirds of the officers felt that, in the past, public drinking had been something of a problem. However, one year on from the introduction of the byelaw, nearly all felt that this had ceased to be the case. Almost without exception, the officers gave their own backing to the byelaw; they also felt that the public's reactions had been favorable. Enforcement had generally been informal, and unproblematic (while just occasionally resulting in displacement to unrestricted areas).

Stockton: views of the public

In Stockton, questionnaires were completed by 803 respondents – from a mixture of commercial and residential addresses (including some outside the scheme, in addition to those within the restricted zones, of which there were three – quite distinct – ones altogether). This happened in January 1990.

The results showed that, in the designated areas, public drinking had become something of a rarity, although it had not ceased altogether. By contrast, in the unrestricted areas, public drinking was relatively commonplace. Respondents who lived in these latter locations were substantially more likely to consider public drinking to be a "great problem". While 45 per cent of those contacted in Stockton's restricted area felt that the byelaw had been helpful, equivalent levels of approval were substantially higher in the other two – more compact – zones, at 63 per cent for Billingham and 77 per cent for Norton.

Rushmoor: views of the public

In Rushmoor (Aldershot and Farnborough), a demographically balanced sample of 814 people took part in on-street interviews in the first two months of 1990. (The byelaw had been in operation locally since June 1989).

In Rushmoor, more than 70 per cent of those interviewed said that they would tend to avoid any groups of people drinking – whereas, when asked about groups of young people, only 43 per cent indicated the likelihood of avoidance. However, despite this wariness in the face of public drinkers, less than half of those interviewed (49 per cent) stated they were aware of the byelaw – and, perhaps not surprisingly, hardly any had noticed changes in patterns of public drinking, following implementation of the new regulation. The idea of having an alcohol-free zone was nonetheless one that commanded widespread popular appeal.

APPENDIX 5: TEXT OF THE BYELAW

The core element of the byelaw was similar in all seven places. That for Coventry is reproduced below.

BYELAW: CONSUMPTION OF INTOXICATING LIQUOR IN DESIGNATED PLACES

“Byelaws made by the Council of the City of Coventry under Section 235 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the good rule and government of the City of Coventry and for the prevention and suppression of nuisances, and under Section 164 of the West Midlands County Council Act of 1980 with regard to public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces.

Interpretation

1. In these byelaws:

“The Council” means the Council of the City of Coventry:

“Designated place” means any place specified in the Schedule, excepting:

(a) any area which is within the curtilage of any licensed premises or registered club; and

(b) any place at which the sale of intoxicating liquor is, or has within the previous 20 minutes been authorised by virtue of an occasional licence or an occasional permission.

“Intoxicating liquor” means spirits, wine, beer, cider and any fermented, distilled or spiritous liquor with an alcohol content exceeding 1.2 per cent by volume.

“Licensed premises”, “registered club” and “occasional licence” have the same meanings as in the Licensing Act 1964.

“Occasional permission” has the same meaning as in the Licensing (Occasional Permissions) Act 1983.

Extent

2. (1) These byelaws shall apply to all designated places.

(2) Notice of the effect of these byelaws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons using designated places.

Consumption of Intoxicating Liquor in Designated Places

3. Any person who consumes intoxicating liquor in a designated place upon being warned by a constable not to do so shall be guilty of an offence.

Penalty

4. Any person offending against these byelaws shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds (£100).

Cessation

5. These byelaws shall cease to have effect at the end of the period of two years beginning with the date on which they come into operation.”

There then followed a lengthy schedule listing over 100 roads, more than 30 car parks and bus stations, over 60 open or amenity areas and, finally, more than 20 service areas. In a number of cases, boundaries were specified in some detail.

One point worth noting is that although enforcement of the byelaw is unusual in that it depends on the active participation of the police, the prosecution of cases in court remains a council responsibility. However, in practice, the handling of complicated cases – those featuring other offences in addition to the byelaw – would involve the Crown Prosecution Service.

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Crime Prevention Unit Papers

1. **Reducing Burglary: a study of chemists' shops.**
Gloria Laycock. 1985. v+7pp. (0 86353 154 8).
2. **Reducing Crime: developing the role of crime prevention panels.**
Lorna J.F. Smith and Gloria Laycock. 1985. v+14pp. (0 86252 189 0).
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18. **An Evaluation of Domestic Security Surveys.** Gloria Laycock. 1989. v+33pp. (0 86252 408 3).
19. **Downtown Drinkers: the perceptions and fears of the public in a city centre.** Malcolm Ramsay. 1989. v+23pp. (0 86252 419 9).
20. **The Management and Prevention of Juvenile Crime Problems.** Barrymore Cooper. 1989. v+63pp. (0 86252 420 2).
21. **Victim Support and Crime Prevention in an Inner-City Setting.** Alice Sampson and Graham Farrell. 1990. v+27pp. (0 86252 504 7).