

## Book Review

**The Carlisle State Management Scheme: Its Ethos and Architecture. A 60 Year Experiment in Regulation of the Liquor Trade**  
by Olive Seabury  
Pp. 208. Bookcase: Carlisle, 2007.  
£15.  
ISBN 978-1904-147-30-5

As a member of one of the first groups of students enrolled in the new Open University in 1972, Olive Seabury studied the arts and crafts movement and more broadly architecture. From this early interest has come a popular history of the Carlisle State Management scheme, which the Government had then decided to end after almost half a century of experiment as a laboratory to showcase the benefits of government control. Few brewers mourned its passing. By the early 1970s, arguments over nationalization, heatedly debated and seriously contemplated during World War I, had long since lost their potency, purpose and interest.

Hers is certainly not the first popular survey of the topic. Long ago, John Hunt wrote *A City under the Influence* (1971) when Carlisle's demise was imminent. Rather surprisingly, scholars also have displayed little interest in the

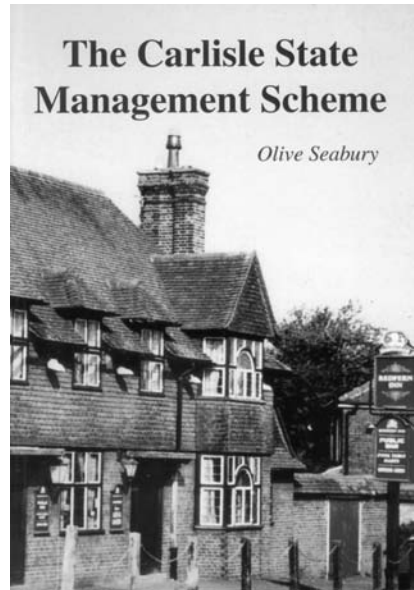
subject. Around the same time as Hunt's pamphlet appeared, R.M. Pennent published a short scholarly article examining the scheme's post-1921 history, while Michael Rose offered an interpretative essay exploring why the wartime Liquor Traffic Central Control Board failed to provide the precedent for further nationalization of the brewing industry.<sup>1</sup> More recently, in Lyn Murfin's history of the lake counties, the impact of the Carlisle scheme is briefly examined through oral history interviews.<sup>2</sup> One chapter of Gutzke's recent book analyzes the Carlisle scheme's role as a catalyst for the improved pub movement in interwar England.<sup>3</sup> Soon Robert Duncan's revised doctoral dissertation should provide the scholarly treatment the subject has so long needed.

Until then, Seabury's book fills some important gaps. Her most original contribution comes in the book's second part, where she writes about the background, work and accomplishments of Carlisle's chief architect, Harry Redfern, not just during World War I, but in the post-1918 years. Here and throughout the rest of her book she has selected rare photographs of the pubs, including their interiors, and reproduced architectural plans of many of them. With these photographs, Seabury's book gives the

Carlisle pubs perhaps for the first time a visual impact unavailable elsewhere. Wisely, whenever possible, she chose historical photographs taken at the time of the work being completed rather than later ones with better resolutions. Basil Oliver's book on pubs affording an architectural perspective from a leading interwar practitioner can supplement her commentary.<sup>4</sup>

To her credit, Seabury consulted a wide array of secondary studies as well as the printed (but unpublished) evidence of the Royal Commission on Licensing (1929-31). She also undertook research into the voluminous records of the Central Control Board, deposited at the Public Record Office (though excluded inexplicably from her bibliography).

Her book provides copious detail of the Carlisle experiment, but virtually no analysis. The wider historical significance of the Board's wartime activities - from its scientific inquiries into drunkenness to its critical philosophic contribution to a new approach to modifying excessive drinking - is never address. Had she consulted the autobiography of Sydney Nevile, who worked closely and fruitfully with Lord d'Abernon (Chairman of the Central Control Board),<sup>5</sup> she would have been pointed towards an answer. 'The adoption of Lord d'Abernon's policy of improvement,' wrote Nevile, 'inspired much constructive effort in the [brewing] Trade in the post-First War years.' Rather surprisingly, she says little about Nevile, who joined the Board in 1917, despite his



lengthy testimony before the Royal Commission in 1930 and voluminous correspondence about the Board's work (which forms part of the PRO collection).

What also seriously limits the usefulness of her book is the absence of references. As a general overview of the topic, with interesting photographs and architectural plans, her book makes a contribution, and underlines the need for further research. Now what is necessary is an analytical monograph placing the Board's work in its proper historical setting.

## References

1. Punnett, R.M. (1966) 'State Management of the Liquor Trade,' *Public Administration*. 44

pp.193-211; Rose, M.E. (1973) 'The Success of Social Reform? The Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), 1915-21,' in Foot, M.R.D. (ed.), *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western, 1928-71*. Paul Elek: London. pp.71-84.

2. Murfin, L. (1990) *Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties*. Manchester University Press: Manchester. pp.75-88.

3. Gutzke, D.W. (2006) *Pubs and*

*Progressives: Reinventing the Public House in England, 1896-1960*. Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb. ch. 3.

4. Oliver, B. (1947) *The Renaissance of the English Public House*. Faber & Faber: London. ch. 3.

5. Nevile, S.O. (1958) *Seventy Rolling Years*. Faber & Faber: London. p.118.

**David Gutzke**