

# THE Tatler

& BYSTANDER 2s WEEKLY

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## THE LIGHTER SIDE OF MARCHING

It is one of the signs of the times that what is meant to be a highly organized protest, the annual Aldermaston march, has a distinctly social side to it. The organizers would no doubt be put out to hear it, but there are similarities with the Young Conservatives, who for years kept their membership surprisingly high largely because they gave such good dances. The Tatler is, of course, not a political magazine and takes no sides on an issue like nuclear disarmament. But there are some aspects of this Easter phenomenon that can be explored for their entertainment value, and it was with this idea that Keith Money was asked to photograph the village where the fun starts and ask some residents how it strikes them. Malcolm Bradbury has written an accompanying reflection on protest-marching as a diversion, and Francis Kinsman breaks into verse. *The new Easter parade* begins on page 647. . . .

Also in this issue: A second instalment in Barry Swaebe's delightful *Young Family* series (page 661) . . . a trend-spotting article by Gordon Wilkins, *Has the big car had it?* (page 682) . . . and some spring reminders for gardeners and flower lovers, beginning with Sylvia Lamond's article *The English garden loses heart* (page 656). For details of further garden touches see . . .

*The cover:*



*Illustrating the serious business of getting a good show of flowers indoors, the cover girl waters her ambitious jardiniere (from the Chintz Shop, 25 Walton Street, S.W.3). Photograph by RONALD COHEN. On page 673 and onwards Full bloom ahead! examines what's new for the gardener, indoors and out*

*Next week:* Holidays in Britain. . . .



**F**IXED anything up for Easter? If not, let me recommend Aldermaston this year. It's good exercise; you'll probably get your picture on the television; and all the best people will be there. In my set, at least, the annual Aldermaston march is one of the great social occasions of the year. "Well, see you at Aldermaston," we all say to one another, confident that, even if we don't encounter one another before then, we'll be certain to come face to face on the march somewhere.

What's so nice about Aldermaston is that it's so well equipped; it makes protesting a real pleasure. Some

## THE NEW EASTER PARADE

*Actually there are two of them this year, one starting from Finchingfield and the other from Aldermaston. KEITH MONEY went to Aldermaston to photograph the people who somehow always get overshadowed by the marchers—the inhabitants.*

**MALCOLM BRADBURY** says that for a real holiday kick a good march like this takes some beating

marches can be drab and depressing affairs, with babies crying, and people sleeping overnight in ditches, and dysentery going around, and the group with the banner getting sent back by the police. But Aldermaston isn't like that at all. It has the best jazz bands—always a big attraction, this, for *our* group (as a friend of mine remarked: "What I like about Aldermaston is that it's one of the few places in England where you can hear really good jazz"). There are food wagons, mobile toilets and ambulances for people with blisters, and you can always get baby-sitting—a big draw to the young marrieds.

In short, Aldermaston is to our group what Ascot is to the Establishment. You can even get dressed up. Anaraks and jeans are formal Aldermaston wear, and if Moss Bros. really have their finger on the pulse of things you'll doubtless be able to hire them there. The whole thing is such *fun*. The police are so nice; you have busloads of tourists come to watch you; and the knowledge that you are holding up a line of cars as far back as Wales makes you feel you're really *saying* something to people.

That's what I call marching... as opposed to the debased marching you so often encounter nowadays—marching indulged in by people who aren't protesting about anything at all. Dr. Barbara Moore may have a word or two to say about nutrition, but there have been a lot of marchers on the classical, or basic, John o' Groat's to Land's End trek who haven't anything to say about anything—who have, in fact, been doing it for the publicity or, worse still, the money. One can only call it a craze. In medieval Europe it was the Dance of Death, and in America in the 'thirties it was flagpole-squatting. Most recently in England it has been marching. It is difficult to see why, and I can think of only two possible reasons. One is that it is a reaction against the motor-car, and the other is that, in England, if you want to get from one end of the country to another, it is quicker to walk. CONTINUED OVERLEAF



*Signpost in Aldermaston village points towards the focus of all the trouble: the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. Another sign of modern upheavals in this ancient village is that the manor house, nearby Aldermaston Court, is now occupied by Associated Electrical Industries*

*Aldermaston willows make cricket bats for the London firm of Stuart Surridge. Mr. Martin Cooper and Mr. David Luker, who fell and split the selected wood, observed that the marchers don't seem to be cricketing types: "Riff-raff and foreigners mainly—but one can't help having a chuckle sometimes"*



Part of my irritation with the new fever comes from the fact that, to the serious marcher, it is both insulting and confusing. When I was at university, marching really *meant* something. We'd all sit around in the common room, in that fallow, tired moment after lunch when you can't quite make up your mind what to do with the rest of the day, and someone would say: "We could go to the pictures." Someone else would say: "Or maybe we could have a march." Then some person with a talent for compromise would say: "We could march down to the pictures." And a few minutes later you'd see us, wearing duffel coats and tight black trousers, stepping it out along the main road, and trying to decide, on the way, just what it was we were protesting about.

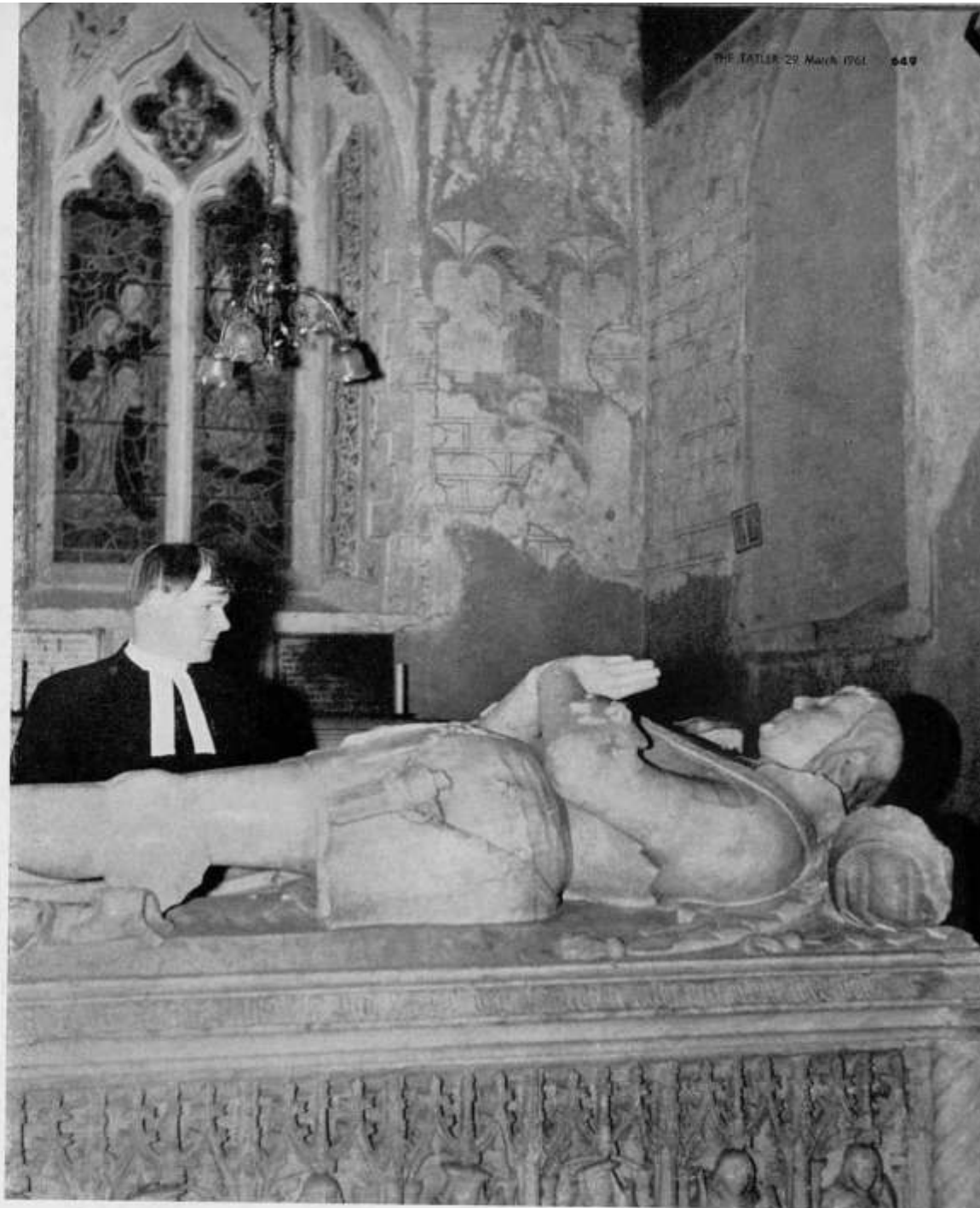
Nowadays marching has been debased, and more than one dedicated marcher, separated from his group in the Midlands somewhere, has tagged on to the back of the wrong march and found himself in Land's End instead of

*Village store and post office is run by Mr. Heighton, who points to a tiny neon sign in his window that has brought local complaints of causing insomnia. He declares: "A few more of those marchers might wake these locals up!" His wife recalls trouble with a Russian one Good Friday. "Got his foot in the door and demanded to use the telephone"*



## THE NEW EASTER PARADE

*continued*



*Aldermaston church has parts dating from 1170. The Rev. Stanley Young, seen in the Lady Chapel (1300) with the tomb of Sir George Forster (1533), has revived many picturesque customs. He believes Berkshire would be sorry to lose the atomic station: "It is of considerable rateable value to the county"*

*The Aldermaston pottery sells no souvenirs to the marchers. Says Mr. Geoffrey Eastop: "Pots are the last thing they want to lug about with them"*

at the missile base he was headed for . . . in the midst of a crowd of people who aren't trying to alter the *status quo* at all. The low point of marching, the final insult to us all, came last year when Mr. William Butlin, our English Walt Disney, organized a mass march with large prizes for the winners. They were doing it for money.

Actually, it seemed to me, as an admittedly interested observer, that the thing was not entirely a success as a march, though it certainly succeeded in casting the spotlight on Mr. Butlin for a while. For one thing, the entry list, you'll remember, was enormous; almost everyone in the British Isles who wasn't doing anything that week joined in. And what a gallimaufry they were! There were people pushing babies in push-chairs; there were men dressed in bowlers and city suits, carrying umbrellas and briefcases; every eccentric and layabout in the country joined in.

One simply couldn't call it marching. The contingent,

CONCLUDED ON PAGE 651

**THE NEW EASTER PARADE** *concluded*

*The Old Mill hotel continues serenely undisturbed by nuclear disarmament agitation. But Mrs. Evelyn Arlott, who runs it with the help of her daughter and son-in-law, recalls that four of "them" did once turn up for lunch*



*Mr. Robert Huxman runs the Hinds Head hotel. His experience of the marchers: "Most of them seem to use the lavatories. And of course a few come in here screaming for coffee and sandwiches before plodding off"*



more than 500 strong, set off from north Scotland and began to terrorize the countryside, chasing chickens and ravaging orchards. Some produced bicycles they had thoughtfully hidden in ditches along the way; others began to hitch-hike. There was a universal lack of dedication. Some revealed that they were in the last stages of pregnancy and needed care; others disclosed that they were jobless and were counting on Mr. Butlin to support them until they found gainful labour. Some went from town to town on the route seeking national assistance and saying, when asked their trade, "I'm a marcher." I'm told that one chap managed to sneak in a small banner saying DOWN WITH THE POTATO MARKETING BOARD, but if so he was the only

one who cared. The others just destroyed our profession completely.

Well, as I've said before, protest these days is so fashionable that no sooner do you start a style than everyone imitates it. And that's how it was with marching. As soon as everyone started to take it up, I bought a car. It's funny how your attitudes change. You know, thinking about Aldermaston again, I'm not sure I shan't cut it out this year. For one thing, it won't be easy to find a place to park. And then there are too many pedestrians about anyway, without encouraging them to band together in groups. You can't help respecting those chaps for their principles, but you must admit—they do block the road.

## Unilateral Una

I'm going out tonight with Ronnie Smith and Derek Carston.

You don't know them? Well, they live in Potters Bar.

And we're travelling together in the march from Aldermaston

On the thirty-first so could we have the car?

Now, Daddy, don't be silly! It's a legal demonstration—

You appear to think it's just a sort of brawl.

There'll be triple-headed babies in another generation.

Can't you feel the need, the rightness of it all?

How can you fail to recognize the truth behind our banner.

And the seeds of the millennium taking root?

Oh, I hate it when you laugh in such a patronizing manner.

You're a beastly, bitter, cynical old brute!

No point in my explaining it, but anyway, we're going.

Think of *you* for once? You never think of *me*!

Never think of my embarrassment, with everybody knowing

That my father's a Conservative M.P.

FRANCIS KINSMAN