

northern *life*

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august / september 09



The north's
biggest
what's on guide

exclusive interview with

**Terry
Waite**



Discover
Calderdale

exclusive interview with Melvyn Bragg

**The Master of
Words**

**REAL LIFE
NORTHERN LIFE**



Love in the Afternoon - On a dreary day dampened by rain soaked skies two lovers in the 'prime' of their lives ignore the adverse weather and other people's glum faces and dance joyfully in the puddles. Sometimes sheer happiness can numb you from the uninspiring and ordinary world. The name of the picture is a spin on the title of a book by Ernest Hemingway called Death in the Afternoon.



The Wife - Lots of Lancastrian married men of middle age onwards are often heard to say 'the wife' when referring to their loved one whilst sat in the pub, at the match or at work with their mates. This term of endearment is said with a slight tremor of fearful reverence. Yet each one of these men is blissfully in love with their 'other halves' and let themselves be treated like little boys i.e. mothered. This has been shown throughout comic history by such greats as Al Read and Les Dawson. The picture shows the wife dominant in her central position as she crowds out the husband whilst he softens the picture by his look of admiring love.

Northern



The Three Gossips - The three 'Graces' are the handmaidens of Venus and were believed to represent the three phases of love - Beauty, Desire and Fulfilment.

Many artists have painted and sculptured these glamour models throughout western history including Rubens, Canova etc. One of the most famous is Botticelli's sensuous triad of delight in his painting Primavera.

This beautiful and delicate depiction has been humorously transformed and transported into a Northern mill town.

No longer do their fingers elegantly entwine, or their soulful faces softly express virtue. Gone are the beautiful sensuous lips as graceful in their curves as the flowing silk of their garments. These are now replaced by cigarettes and furrowed brows, gossiping tongues of spite and unflattering outfits. Imagine their conversation of scathing tales and callous comments croaked in dry voices and spiteful spittle. You would not want to be on the other end of their opinion; much better to put your

head down and flee as the chap walking his dog in the background is doing.

Though this painting is in one sense quite scary and scathing there is also a warmer side to it. The humour of 'Northern life' is often depicted in various forms of entertainment, be it art, literature, media, theatre etc. This 'Northerness' is often imbued with a warm sense of family and community and the ability to laugh at oneself as well as others. This is a great asset that we all have - an emotional humour that helps in our day to day existence.

This personal vision that I have depicted can be glimpsed in my home town of Great Harwood. With back to back terraced houses and gloomy skies as a setting this scene is a humorous depiction of the goings on in this little eccentric town. Indeed this interesting and friendly odd-ball of a place, that doesn't really belong to any borough or boundary and isn't on the way to anywhere, keeps me warmly inspired.

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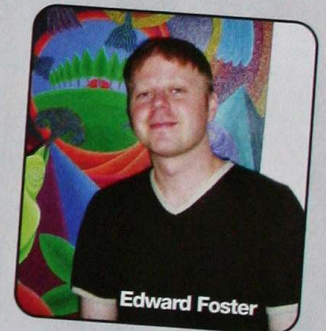
Three Pies Men - This picture is based around the greatest football team in the world - Accrington Stanley! In reality it could be a scene from any ground from Turf Moor to Ewood Park (except for the number of fans!).

The title of the piece is a play on the words 'Three Wise Men.' The three distracted fans are in pie heaven as each chomps upon his mid match morsel.

I watched Stanley play for many years before my football fanaticism faded. I still listen out for their result and sneak to the odd match. I even painted my own Accrington Stanley subbuteo team when I was a child.

Folk

When Edward Foster's pictures arrived at the Northern Life Centre we were all incredibly impressed with the thought provoking and amusing images portraying Northern Life. Here he talks about his thoughts and inspiration behind the pictures.



Edward Foster



Bacon Butty Break - Mid morning for any working man is a time when the allure of a bacon butty becomes too strong to resist. This second breakfast ritual can often be seen on any high street, as male workers too impatient to wait, devour the sacred meal standing outside the butty shop or enthroned in their badly parked van. Even artists have been seen doing this, especially in Great Harwood.