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**Tramshed to close? Forward
with the Ram, Merton crawl**

Save the Tramshed

Decision expected soon about the future of a famous South London Landmark

THE TRAMSHED in Woolwich, theatre and pub, is under threat of demolition due to plans for the re-development of the area. For about 20 years, writes LOUISE JOSELYN, there have been plans for revamping this area of Woolwich, but now action appears imminent.

The final plans are to be submitted to Greenwich Council by the private developers sometime in April. It is expected that the Council will approve them but they must then be passed to the GLC for final approval. The Council claims that it has no idea whether the plans involve the demolition of the Tramshed or not, only that its site is in the area for redevelopment. However, they are known to include provision for a supermarket (to add to at least three already established in Woolwich), a multi-storey car park and 35 shop units.

Built in 1911, The Tramshed was not, in fact, a tramshed! It was a transforming station, where the electricity was generated for the trams until the last one ran about 1953. The great shed then lay derelict until 1973 when Ewan Hooper, founder of the Greenwich Theatre,

spotted it as a possible building for a theatre specifically for more popular entertainment. Hooper raised what money he could and received a lot of support in the form of voluntary work from the locals.

The theatre ran for about a year, then unfortunately had to close due to lack of funds. The committee decided that one of the main reasons



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Design Editor: Mike Hammersley
Copy Editor: Ron Atkins
News Editor: Keith Wildey
Contributing Editors: Mostyn Lewis
Louise Joselyn
Distribution: Robin Bence
Advertising: Caroline Bennett
(101a High Street,
Ruislip, Middx.
Tel. 943 1122)
Subscriptions: Stan Tompkins

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for the financial problems was having to run the bar. Terry Malone, a member of the Tramshed Theatre Board, and his friend Colin Smith decided that they would manage the catering, and the board agreed to let them have this concession in return for some investment in the Theatre side. So the Tramshed reopened in June 1975 and has been running pretty successfully ever since.

The bar sold Fuller's beers, mainly because of the Brewery's support for the Greenwich Theatre. However by January 1976, Terry and Colin had decided that not only would they dispense all their Fuller's beers by handpump but would serve as many different beers as they could. This decision came about primarily because they thought that traditional beer was much more in keeping with the atmosphere created by the extraordinary architecture of the Tramshed, but also because Colin and Terry were keen to try many of the beers themselves.

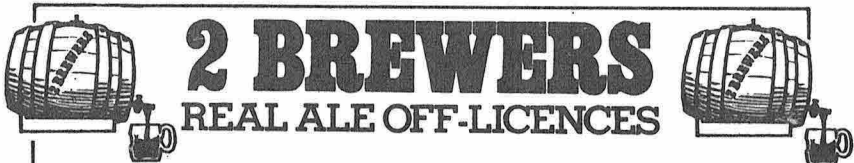
Today, Fuller's beers are always available, as well as a selection of five or six from a range including Devenish's Wessex, Everard's Beacon and Tiger, Wadworth's 6X, Bateman and Raven, and there is

usually a cask of Old Peculier not too far away.

When the first whispers of the latest development plans were heard a few months ago, Terry and Colin started up a petition and campaign to save the Tramshed. Already they have nearly 5,000 signatures.

It has been suggested that if the plans do call for the demolition of the Tramshed, provision for a new building will be incorporated. Although this may be quite acceptable to the Theatre side of the Tramshed, "no alternative building will be suitable to replace the Tramshed bar" cries Colin Smith.

Will the Council have the foresight to provide a deep, cool cellar - so necessary for keeping beer well? (The cellar in the Tramshed now is built into the pit formed where the heavy generating machinery was sunk into the ground). No-one yet knows the precise details of the plans. Along with other plans for different areas controlled by the Council, these will be on show at an exhibition to be staged by the Council later in April. Thus hangs the fate of the Tramshed - it would be a shame to see it go.



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