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George Martin, 'Wizard of Pedestrianism' and Manchester's Sporting Entrepreneur

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The public house during the nineteenth century was at the heart of the Victorian community; flower shows, fruit and vegetable shows, glee clubs, amateur and professional dramatics, bowling, quoits, pugilism, foot-racing, and society meetings were provided within their grounds.² Although appearing to help rationalise recreation time, the innkeepers were 'fully aware of the profit-making potential of such an enterprise', and pioneering publicans used entertainments to attract audiences with some establishments forming allegiances with specific ventures in order to gain higher proceeds.³ Sport essentially became property of the drinks trade and it was these entrepreneurial landlords who were fundamental to the survival of sport in industrial cities, however, 'sufficient credit has never been given to the nineteenth century managers and professional running grounds for laying the foundations of the modern athletic meet', a topic in need of further exploration.⁴ This paper will provide a biographical study of one of these individuals, the innovative George Martin (1827-1865), one of Manchester's athletic sporting entrepreneurs.

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² Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885* (London: Redwood Burn, 1978), 166; Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew, 'The Pub, The Drinks Trade and the Early Years of Modern Football', *The Sports Historian*, no. 20 (2000): 2-3; Warren Roe, 'The Athletic Capital of England: The White Lion Hackney Wick 1857-1875', *BSSH Bulletin*, no. 17 (2003): 39-40.

³ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Oct. 1845, 12; Dennis Brailsford, *British Sport: a Social History* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1997), 68; Emma Lile, 'Professional Pedestrianism in South Wales during the Nineteenth Century', *The Sports Historian*, no. 20 (2000): 58; Mike Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 47.

⁴ Peter Lovesey, *The Official Centenary of the AAA* (London: Guinness Superlatives Ltd., 1979), 15; Stephen Hardy, 'Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians', *Journal of Sport History*, no. 13 (1986): 23; Geoffrey T. Vincent, "'Stupid, Uninteresting and Inhuman" Pedestrianism in Canterbury 1860-1885', *Sporting Traditions*, no. 18 (2001): 47.