

METRO LIFE

Comedy

Alan Carr steers clear of Derek Acorah **22**

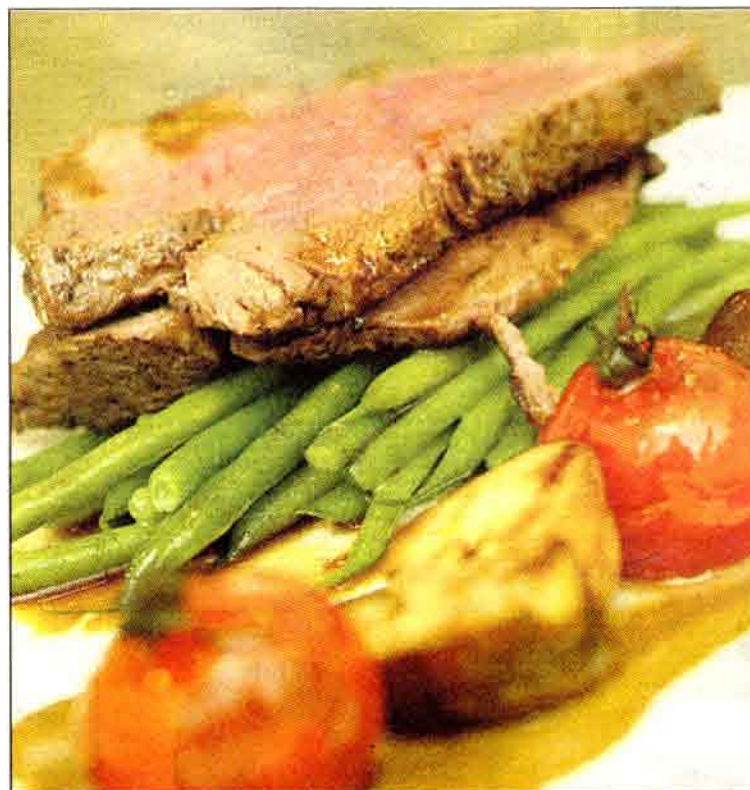
Win gig tickets 23 • Reviews 24-25 • Tonight's television 26-28 • Listings 29-30

Gig

Polished retro-rock with IV Thieves **23**

Music

Just Jack's back to play with the big boys **23**



A big hit: Wymeswold's Hammer And Pincers may not be sure if it's a restaurant or a gastropub but it certainly impressed with its outstanding food

Right on the nail

In recent months, there have been several high-profile closures at the fine-dining end of the market in Leicester, notably The Opera House, Stones and Entropy Bar's restaurant. But out in the county there appears to be a steady stream of pubs converting to offer good food and, occasionally, as in the case of the Hammer And Pincers, very good food.

Situated in the rolling countryside between Loughborough and Melton Mowbray, just off the A46 from Leicester, Wymeswold is a two-pub village. That's fortunate for drinkers

FOOD & DRINK

Hammer And Pincers ★★★★★

because with its cool, updated interior and dramatic modern artwork, the Hammer And Pincers is more upmarket restaurant than pub. The menu makes that clear, with options including a seven-course tasting menu at £35 that features the likes of seared foie gras with caramelised endive tatin and curried scallops with cumin-spiced cauliflower purée. This time, though,

we chose from an equally inviting dinner menu.

My starter of porcini mushroom soup (£5.75) set the bar very high for the rest of the evening. It was a wonderfully smooth affair with earthy flavours, given an even headier aroma by white truffle oil. The soup was fleshed out with several whole mushrooms that had a great meaty texture and a delicious flavour from being lightly caramelised. Also lurking within were julienned leeks and the dish was set off with a quenelle of cream and Parmesan that melted into the soup. Excellent stuff, as were the breads offered, including a tasty walnut and raisin loaf.

My friend's tempura prawn brochette (£6.25) was leagues ahead of other versions Metro has tried, brought to the table so freshly cooked that steam emerged from the light, crisp batter. The prawns were firm and well flavoured, the sweet chilli jam exceptionally zingy and a salad of beansprouts and peppers was crunchy and fresh, with an oriental touch from a sesame and coriander dressing.

Expectations were high for our main courses, and we weren't let down. Meat at the Hammer And Pincers comes from the village butcher, Collington's, which has its own abattoir. How much that local provenance played a part I'm not sure, but my friend's beef fillet (£16.95) was sensational. Excuse the cliché but this did melt in the mouth and its rich, almost gamey flavour was deeply satisfying. It was complemented by a

pancetta and thyme rosti, spinach, roasted onions and carrots and an intense carrot purée.

I chose the lobster risotto with shellfish nage (£16.50). The lobster meat was not the most delicate I've encountered but the nage – a lightly foaming, deeply flavoured broth – was excellent. It came with a winning combination of perfectly cooked rice, herbs and wonderfully fresh peas and baby broad beans. The Australian Sunnyclyff Colombard Chardonnay we picked was a disappointment, though: light enough for the seafood but lacking depth and character. We thought it overpriced at £16.

Desserts (all £5.75) featured a chocolate tart of rare richness; excellent light pastry with a delicate chocolate crust hiding a molten inside. This was a skilled piece of patisserie, enlivened with some seriously alcohol-soaked griotte cherries and a toasted almond ice cream. A vanilla-poached peach was neatly done but lacked a bit of sweetness or the oomph it might have gained from a slug of alcohol.

There were a couple of errors from our young waiting staff but nothing that really detracted from the high level of cooking on display.

Gastropub or restaurant? Who really cares. What matters is that the Hammer And Pincers is currently among the best places to eat in the East Midlands.

Tim Burke

5 East Road, Wymeswold, near Loughborough, Wed to Sun noon to 2pm, Tue to Sat 6pm to 9.30pm. www.hammerandpincers.co.uk

APPETISERS

Food and drink news

■ Carol Thatcher might be best known for eating insects on I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!, but she turns her attention to the sausage sandwich later this month. For British Sausage Week (Oct 30 to Nov 5), Thatcher (pictured) tours the country with a panel of experts, visiting Nottingham on November 1, in search of the nation's finest bread and banger combinations.

www.britishtsausageweek.com

■ The Leicestershire And Rutland Restaurant Awards have rolled around once again, with the winners announced last week. The big prize for

restaurant of the year went to The Horse And Trumpet in Medbourne (Tel: 01858 565000), which also picked up the fine-dining award, while the newcomer award went to Red Veil (Tel: 0116 251 9171) in Leicester.

www.lrra.co.uk

■ Leicester's Mexican restaurant Chimichanga was only around for a short while but apparently outlasted its welcome. The owners have now rebranded it as a branch of their mini-chain of Italian diners, Prezzo. It now offers such Italian antipasti as deep-fried squid (£4.50) or more filling fare such as lasagne (£7.95).

22 Silver Street, Leicester, daily noon to 11.30pm. Tel: 0116 251 3343. www.prezzoplz.co.uk

mark.ward@ukmetro.co.uk

IN TOWN TONIGHT

COMEDY

Patrick Monahan

Irish-Iranian funnyman Patrick Monahan headlines, with Paul Kerensa and Mark Charlton among the support acts

Tonight, The Looking Glass, 68-70 Braunstone Gate, Leicester, 8.30pm, £7, concs available. Tel: 0116 255 9002.

www.ship-of-fools.org.uk



GIG

Gipsy Kings

Globetrotting sounds from the Catalonian world music fusion group plugging their Pasajero LP

Tonight, Royal Concert Hall, Royal Centre, Theatre Square, 7.30pm, £36.50.

Tel: 0115 989 5555. www.gipsykings.com

THEATRE

The Marriage Of Figaro

Ranjit Bolt directs a new version of Beaumarchais' satirical play, which later inspired Mozart's opera

Tonight until Sat, Peepul Centre, Orchardson Avenue, Belgrave, Leicester, 7.30pm, £7, £5 concs. Tel: 0845 310 3344.

www.peepulcentre.com

BOOKING NOW



The Magic Numbers

Dripping with harmonies, The Magic Numbers quickly won the public over last year with their unchallenging but highly melodious debut album.

The four-piece have recently completed a follow-up, giving them the perfect excuse to head out on the road this winter

Nov 12, The Great Hall, Assembly Rooms, Market Place, Derby, 7pm, £16. Tel: 01332 255800 www.themagicnumbers.net

RATINGS GUIDE

Excellent	★★★★★
Very good	★★★★☆
Good	★★★☆☆
Adequate	★★☆☆☆
Poor	★☆☆☆☆

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