



Kemptown goes to Ground

Roger Wheeler – *The roaming pen...*

For many years the only place you could get a coffee was at a Lyons tea shop, today coffee is available on virtually every street corner, in St James Street alone there are no less than 11 coffee shops so there is obviously a lot of money to be made in this now ubiquitous beverage. In darkest Kemp Town we have quite a few to choose from, not least of which is the latest called 'Ground' at 36 St Georges Road.

We have featured Metro Deco the new tea shop in Upper St James St and Hudson & Bridges in Church Place, all doing a roaring trade. Now we have four in St Georges Road. Kemp Town Books have long served some excellent coffee and cakes on the first floor of this little gem of a book shop. Alice's Coffee shop is just along the road which has been there for a long time and Spinelli's in College Road.



Ground opened a few weeks ago and has certainly perked up (sorry) that section of the street. Proprietors 43 year old Rick Curtis and partner Matt Orchard, 32, met when they were working in one of our local seafront boutique hotels. Hailing from Oregon in the US, Rick says that he has a passion for coffee and was quite unhappy about the quality being served in most of our hotels and restaurants. Rick had married Hilary, a Brighton girl and moved to Brighton some eight years ago.

He and Matt decided to do something about this sorry state of coffee affairs and took long lease on the former estate agents on the corner of St Georges Road and Bloomsbury Street.

In the middle of what we are told is one of the biggest recessions that this Country has known, this is very brave. The gamble seems to be working, when we visited on a rather dull September

Wednesday morning the place was buzzing. And they appear to be attracting some of Brighton's A list celebrities too. With room for just 20 people they are serving what they say is a very special coffee, all I can say that it tasted excellent. They also offer a range of teas and pastries.

Tea is supplied by a company called Jing which apparently also supply Heston Blumenthal, there's smart for you.

According to Rick they serve "the finest coffee and tea in Brighton" That may well be the case but one can only applaud a couple of young men who are prepared to put everything they have into opening a small business. We wish them well.

On then across the Old Steine, don't worry I had my passport with me, to the launch of The Dome's autumn season.

Standing on the stage of our beloved concert hall sipping a glass of red, (we certainly see life) we had some more passion. First coffee now music and dance. Passion this time supplied by Andrew Comben, Chief Executive of, what is now, the Brighton Dome and Festival. They have linked the Dome and the Festival, which makes sense.

They now have a corporate strategy, don't we all, which will see them through to 2012, it runs to 22 pages and I doubt whether anyone will ever actually read it. But it's the programme that is important and they do seem to have quite a lot going on, everyone from Joan Baez, who has been at it for 50 years and at 68 still going strong, to Alison Moyet who has a mere 26 years of performing. A candlelit performance of Vivaldi's Four Seasons - health and safety will be having apoplexy with lit candles on the Dome stage.



The Brighton and London Philharmonic Orchestras will perform their usual series of concerts.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the extraordinary Brighton Festival Chorus and Brighton Festival Youth Choir all come together on 13th December for the Christmas Concert. Their main Christmas offering is 'Chicago the Musical'. Not exactly festive seeing as its all about murder and mayhem but the songs are great.

If that's not enough hysteria we have the Brighton Comedy Festival in October, with a line-up that includes the likes of Julian Clary and The Lord of the Mince (he should know) Alan Carr, Rich Hall, Jimmy Carr and Rob Bryden amongst others.

Excuse me, but now I have to go and have a lie down.

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