

JINGLE BELLS WINTER WONDERLAND TOUR 2013

SHOREDITCH TO LIVERPOOL STREET

After last year's successful Christmas expedition to Soho (which was held in February) Hickford Tours has been literally swamped with requests (two) to devise a similar event this year.

So here it is and breaking with tradition it will be held before Christmas on Friday 13th December. The first pub will be in Shoreditch, the last hostelry will be in Liverpool Street. In between we'll take in the vibrant Brick Lane area and another 6-7 pubs. It's sure to be fun and you might even remember some of it.

We'll have drinks, drinks, a smattering of A – Z list celebrities (probably) and drinks. If you're not planning to bring your own supply of nuts, food, as ever, will be taken on the hoof.

So where are we going....? Shoreditch is our first stop!

Now, many years ago if you went down to Shoreditch the locals would look like this:



or even this



But time moves on and due to the advent of things like fashion, hi-tech beards, flat caps and thick-rimmed glasses people in this part of East London all appear to now look like this:



Now don't even try to dress like this one of these individuals when we make our way down to the E1 & E2 environs. We already know that when travelling together in a group we look like institutionalised Public Sector workers. You are of course more than welcome to try and grow a beard (especially the ladies) but in the long run you'll only be fooling yourself and embarrassing your families. We don't work in fashion or media, we don't write for the Guardian and we don't know Banksy. We are what we are. WE ARE COUNCIL.

They are however, like ourselves, a friendly, welcoming and non-aggressive bunch so without further ado, here's the first pub with added beard ratings...

The Owl & Pussycat

34 Redchurch Street, Shoreditch, London, E2 7DP.



**"The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea green boat.."**

So began Edward Lear's famous nonsense poem of 1871. We all know the 3 verse tale ends with the bizarre pairing of a cat and bird marrying by the light of the moon and living happily ever after. However, the unpublished 4th & 5th verses in Lear's story tell of a different ending when the couple arrived back in London to open this pub in Redchurch

Street. After 6 months or so of wedded bliss the first flush of love began to fade like rancid quinces on a runcible spoon and the owl embarked on a torrid affair with a local Cockney sparrow from Whitechapel. When the cuckolded pussycat found out (on Christmas Day) she bludgeoned the pair of them to death with a Truman Ales hand pump before burying both of them in the cellar of the pub. The ending may have been deemed too violent for the sensitivities of Victorian readers at the time but the missing verses have been seized upon by the scriptwriters of Eastenders who relentlessly recreate pretty much the same story every bleedin' Christmas.

Beard rating: 8

Brewdog Shoreditch

51 Bethnal Green Rd, London, Greater London E1 6LA

A modern contemporary glass fronted pub a short walk away. Participants in the mini Summer Camden crawl may remember we visited one of these establishments where I paid £6 for a shot of 32% strength beer called "Tactical Nuclear Penguin". It tasted like sherry and was served in a huge brandy glass. I liked it.

Last time I was in here they had an extremely pleasant Spanish barmaid who appeared to know more about beer than any living person I have met.

The picture below is of a real squirrel that sits at the back of the bar. Drinking your beverage out of a dead animal is however the exception rather than the rule.



Beard rating: 9

Well & Bucket

143 Bethnal Green Rd, London, E2 7DG

A short stagger down Bethnal Green High Road to another pub with a load of glass. I expect that's so everyone can see how bushy your beard is when they walk past the pub.



When I was a young man this establishment used to be called the Stick of Rock and it had a lot of hairy Heavy Metal types in it like myself and Tim Geeves. Musicians would turn their amps up to 12 and give it a right old thrash. It's not like that anymore. Shame.

Beard rating: 6

We now turn away from Bethnal Green to enter the cosmopolitan world of Brick Lane which is famous for its curry houses and beigel shops. I suggest that anyone feeling peckish at this point in proceedings take advantage of this place....



....a few lumps of unleavened bread might be the just the thing to keep the energy levels going and soak up some of the alcohol. I'll buy a pint for anyone having two chopped herring beigels although you'll need to stand at least 5 yards away from everyone for the rest of the evening.

If time allowed I'd suggest we go to **The Carpenters Arms in Cheshire Street** next but it may be a little out of the way and I'll be wearing my heels. It's a shame as it's a lovely little pub. Thanks to Phil Roberts for the suggestion but this one is next...

The Vibe Bar

91 – 95 Brick Ln, London E1 6QL

On the “Bristow Ponceometer” this bar is probably going to score highly. Situated on the site of the old Trumans brewery it does however have some lovely wrought iron gate work outside. According to the website it's a “chilled and cutting edge venue”. One for the ladies.



Beard rating: 9.5

Pride of Spitalfields

3 Heneage Street E1 5LJ

Culture shock compared to the last one I think. It does however have a bloke outside with a Volvo estate who will take revellers such as ourselves on a magical mystery tour of the local area if you ask him nicely. The pub has a cat called Lenny and if you can play piano you're welcome to tickle the ivories in a good old Cockernee knees up fashion. No Elton John please.



Beard rating: 4.5

The Ten Bells

84 Commercial St, London E1 6LY

Moving away from Brick Lane we find ourselves straddling the no man's land of Commercial Street. This boozer is directly opposite the old Spitalfields market and the interior has been recently restored to its Victorian glory days. Fans of late 19thth century tiling will be especially happy at the interior of The Ten Bells as many of its original features still remain intact.

Fan of Jack the Ripper will also be pleased at the inclusion of the Ten Bells as several of the infamous murderer's victims frequented this boozer before meeting their premature end. Jamie Oliver's Great-great grandfather used to run this pub in the 1880's so he probably did them all I reckon.



Beard rating: 7.5

Williams Ale & Cider House

22–24 Artillery Lane, London, E1 7LP

Moving away from beards and into city boy territory. Prepare yourselves for sharp suited individuals lighting cigars with £50 notes and drinking bottles of Cristal out of Bowler hats. Another pub with a piano. Still no Elton John please, although Billy Joel is acceptable...just.



Beard rating: 2.2

Dirty Dicks

202 Bishopsgate, City of London. EC2M 4NR

Notorious city pub, by the time we get here it'll be full of men puking into their bowler hats.



Dirty Dick was actually a chap called Nathaniel Bentley who stopped washing when his fiancée died on their wedding day. Some say that Dickens used this story as the inspiration

for the wretched character of Miss Havisham in great Expectations. Look it up literature fans!

"It's of no use, if I wash my hands today, they will be dirty again tomorrow,"

Wise words indeed.

Beard rating: 1.9

The Magpie

12 New Street, City of London, EC2M 4TP



So we reach the final stop of this evening's tour down a small street opposite Liverpool Street station. By the time we arrive here, the Armageddon that is Liverpool Street at Christmas will be in full swing. Office workers will be openly crying. Previously pristine ladies will be limping with broken heels, laddered tights and mascara running down their faces. Men in suits will be arguing with themselves and everyone around them.

We on the other hand as professional and dedicated public sector employees will be above all of this sort of thing...won't we?

Beard rating: 1.3

And that's it folks. If you've reached this far the options are to carry on drinking \ falling over \ holding other people up or to go the f**k home! At this point Hickford Tours will wash their hands of the whole blimmin' lot of you!

Happy Christmas

Kev xxx

Last trains from Liverpool Street.

To Enfield Town	00.01
To Cheshunt	23.58
To Hertford East	23.40
To Southend-on-Sea	23.45

Last Trains from Kings Cross

To Hertford North	01.06
To Newcastle	22:00
To Edinburgh	19.30

If you're going South of the river I suggest you move North.

Pub Crawl Map

