

MidCon 2017

convention booklet

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NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

WELCOME

The committee welcomes you to the 38th **MidCon** convention, the seventh to be held at the Hallmark Hotel.

Last year was the first this century where numbers declined from the previous year, but it could have been just a blip, as it looks like this year will see numbers grow again year-on-year. That probably means we've got quite a few first timers attending who are wondering what it is all about. If you fall into that category then seek out the *Beginners' Guide* (should be found on the registration desk) and give it a read.

If you are still a bit apprehensive about how to get started, or worried about doing the wrong thing, then seek out one of the committee members and ask for a bit of advice.

This year we have included photos in this con booklet of the committee members to make it easier to spot them/harder for them to hide; if you are reading this booklet online then you can go straight to the rogues' gallery by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/midconteam>.

We are acutely aware that it can be daunting and confusing when you first turn up, as **MidCon** is very much a catch-as-catch-can type of set-up, with no games scheduled, no obvious way of determining how to get playing a game (if you have not turned up with a gaggle of friends), and no real system of claiming table space.

We've made a few provisions for tackling this problem - more on those in a moment - but let us just briefly explain how the playing of games (generally) works at **MidCon**.

If you have a game you want to play, grab a table, set it up, and wait for people to approach you and ask if you are looking for players.

If you do not have a game you want to play, look for someone or some people who have just set up a game but have not yet started, and ask them if they are looking for players. Sometimes

they'll say they are not looking, and are just waiting for Eric to return from the bar, but sometimes they'll welcome you to the game.

Either way, once you've got a little gaggle of gamers, you tend to stick with them until the next meal break.

It's all a bit free-form, and very different from those cons that schedule Game X to start at Time Y. Personally, I am not a big fan of Game X and I can never seem to get up in time to eat breakfast and then be at the gaming table by Time Y, but each to their own.

MEET THE NEW CON; SAME AS THE OLD CON

Other than that, the con should be much the same as it usually is, though it would be wise to check this booklet to see if we have altered the locations of our traditional offerings.

There should be some crib cards knocking about listing the main details of the con, such as meal times, times of events (quiz, Bring & Buy, etc.) and what to do if the hotel is invaded by people attending a Donald Trump fancy dress party.

Most of the space in the Hallmark Hotel will be available to us across the entire weekend, with the dining room in the Hallmark Inn available after breakfast on Saturday and Sunday.

If you have visited a games convention before, this booklet should suffice as your go-to guide to the con, and you probably only need to skim read it to find out if we've been rude about you. If you are totally new to this kind of thing, then the next section is for you.

HAVE NOT SEEN YOUR FACE BEFORE

If this is your first time at a **MidCon**, or any convention for that matter, then feel free to make this fact known to the person on the registration desk (who will most probably be the committee chairman, Jeremy Tullett). Chances are he'll give you some advice on how to get started in your first game, and he might even introduce you to fellow committee member, Dave Clasby.

Dave C is a local lad and a keen board gamer, but only discovered **MidCon** relatively recently, and he volunteered to help **MidCon** first-timers get quickly into the swing of things.

To that end, we have set aside a table in the Garden Room specifically for first time attendees. The idea is that when they arrive, they'll have a table to play on that is right in the thick of things; someone from the committee will either sit and play with them or rustle up some relatively friendly (i.e. non-cut-throat) players who will play the first game with them.

Once they have settled in, the idea is the newbies move off into the **MidCon** maelstrom, freeing up the table for the next lot of fresh meat. Of course, it probably won't work like that, and if space is really tight and no one appears to be using the "newby table", feel free to ask a member of the committee if it is OK to commandeer it.

One thing that is a bit odd about **MidCon** is that it does not appear to have a games library - a repository of games from which anyone can pick up and play (before returning it to the games library).

Appearances can be deceptive, however, and you'll see bags and bags and bags of games lying around near the walls of the gaming room; these aren't part of any central games library, but it is common practice at **MidCon** for gamers to seek out the owner of a game they want to play and ask if they can borrow it. As often or not, the owner will be happy to lend out the game and of course the expectation is that the game will be returned safely, with all the bits bagged up and what-not. In the case of Steve Jones, if you borrow a game from him you'll also have to remember to colour-code the elastic bands with the colour of the cards the bands surround.

FEEDBACK PLEASE

Despite our projection of omnipotence, even the committee can't see everything, so if you do encounter any problems over the course of the

weekend or if you have any suggestions of things that we could do to improve the **MidCon** experience for you or for everyone, do let us know. Please don't hesitate to talk to us during the convention rather than waiting to the end, especially if it is in relation to something that we can help you to resolve.

The best place to look for a Committee member is at the Registration Desk in the Garden Room, but you should be able to spot us by looking out for our large, brightly coloured badges (and our generally sunny disposition). A committee member will frequently show his boat¹ over the road at the Hallmark Inn gaming area. To make it easier to recognise us, we've added photos of the committee members in this booklet.

We also welcome feedback on social media, by email, at the bar and whatever other means you'd like to use.

We do have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MidConBoardgames> so you can leave feedback there, if you wish; alternatively, if you are reading this ahead of the con (unlikely, as traditionally it is posted on the web site about 3.28 seconds before the con starts, but we live in hope) then you can use Facebook to float ideas for the con, or arrange game sessions.

We also have a guild on Boardgamegeek (<http://www.boardgamegeek.com/guild/1872>), which can be used for much the same thing as is suggested for Facebook in the paragraph above.

Occasionally, a forum thread flares into life, (such as <http://tinyurl.com/midcon2017>) where people can discuss what games they want to play, travel arrangements and all sorts of con-related stuff.

The feedback we have received from the Hallmark staff has been really positive on each of our years here, and we are enjoying the unusual status of being preferred guests as we

¹ Boat race = face

continue to be good humoured, reasonable and generally cause the hotel less bother than the average customer. This situation is purely down to you all, so thank you very much for making **MidCon** a success.

About the only negative feedback we have had from the hotel - we've had it more than once – concerns consuming food and drink on the premises that was not purchased at the hotel. It is entirely possible the hotel staff would be prepared to turn a blind eye to a crafty Kit-Kat, a pernicious Pringles tube or a surreptitious sausage roll being devoured in the Garden Room, but they find it hard to ignore a stack of pizza cartons or, worse still, an empty bottle of booze.

So, please have a bit of courtesy and a bit of discretion.

Also, please refrain from what we refer to as “German beach towel” practice, which is to claim a table by leaving a pile of game boxes on it. Space gets tight, particularly on a Saturday afternoon, and while the committee will make allowances for when the Bring & Buy is happening or the quiz is taking place, we generally take the view that 15 minutes is long enough to wander around the con trying to drum up players for that game of *Pandemic Exploitation*, after which the table space should be surrendered if someone else wants it.

CONVENTION FACILITIES

THE GAMING ROOMS

This year, **MidCon** has access to four named gaming rooms in the Hallmark Hotel throughout the weekend, plus the dining room over the road at the Hallmark Inn on the Saturday and Sunday.

The Garden Room at the back of the hotel is the largest space and offers the most facilities close at hand. The doors at the back of the room open out on to the garden itself, which is also a gaming option if it's not too stormy outside, or you are feeling heroically northern, but are also a fire exit. Please be responsible if you are

sitting close to this exit and make sure that you don't block the exit with chairs or bags chock full of games. Thanks!

The Garden Room will contain the registration desk, games stall, the **MidCon** bar and the serving area for **MidCon** meals, as well as the table(s) for the Diplomacy. Across the main corridor from the Garden Room is the Edale Room, which is our second general gaming room, generally slightly quieter than the Garden Room and with less through-traffic.

The Darleydale Room at the front of the hotel is the 18XX dot station and beyond that along the same corridor you will find the Milldale Suite, which is a good location for those large games or those seeking a quiet location.

As in previous years, the lounge area at the front of the hotel is also available for gaming, for those who prefer the comfier chairs or larger tables offered here. The lounge is just past the hotel bar, which may also have space available for gaming, but is more likely to be a place to sit with a drink than a game. All of these rooms are covered by the hotel's free Wi-Fi, which has proven to be rock-solid to date. You can find a plan of the hotel on the back of this very booklet if you should require it –or even if you do not.

THE BARS

There are two bars at the Hallmark: the main bar (situated close to the main entrance) and the Garden Room bar (situated in the Garden Room). The Garden Room bar is our own private bar, and will be open from lunchtime on Friday until midnight, re-opening again at 11.00am on Saturday and Sunday. The main bar at the front of the hotel will be open all day. The bars WILL shut at midnight because of the hotel's licence conditions (no cash transactions after midnight); however, it will still be possible to buy drinks (including the ales available in our private bar) from the main bar, provided that those drinks are charged to a room. Technically, this is only meant to be available as room service, but the main bar may well remain in service as a credit-only facility after midnight

depending on how much custom there is. We've generally been well looked after in this regard in previous years.

Coffee and tea will be available from the Garden Bar at £2-a-go as well as the fabulous selection of proper beer. We will have a range of cask beers available at the Garden Bar over the course of the convention. The hotel doesn't normally do "real" beer, but as in previous years, they have allowed us to select our beers from a quality brewery. This year your beers are: Gold (*Gold!*) (4.2%) – a golden bitter; Hoplite (4.2%); Cleopatra (5%) – pale with a hint of Apricot; Spartan IPA (5.3%) – Indian pale ale; Eagle (4.5%) – a dark porter. We will also have cider this year though.

MidCon is supplied by the Derwentio Brewery, a micro brewery here in Derby, and as in previous years, we will stock the initial range and then re-up as required over the weekend. The hotel will not want to take any of the beer back from us, so we do need to consume all of it. This has proved beyond us the last two years.

GAMING AT THE HALLMARK INN

As we dashed near ran out of space at peak times last year, we have again arranged this year for the dining room to be available for gaming this year on the Saturday and Sunday.

With any luck, this year we'll remember to shift a couple of boxes of real ale over to the Hallmark Inn bar.

GENERAL TIMETABLE

The con starts at 9.00am on the Friday but checking in to your room at the Hallmark Hotel or the Hallmark Inn will not be possible until the stated 2pm check-in time. Both the Hotel and the Inn are able to store your luggage before you get your room key.

Games typically start after breakfast on Saturday and Sunday (about 9am for the earliest players). People do carry on playing games until the small hours, which can even become the

medium hours on the Saturday night and Sunday night, for the hardcore few.

The convention theoretically closes at 6pm Sunday, when our booking of the games rooms expires, but an increasing number of folks stay overnight on Sunday as well. There will be no problem about continuing to play into the evening and even with Hallmark Hotel guests gaming through part of Monday as well, as has happened in previous years. You may well be asked to move to the public lounge on Sunday night should the hotel staff want to clean up the gaming rooms, which certainly tend to resemble bomb sites by then, so please bear this in mind if you are looking to set up something with thousands of pieces on Sunday evening.

MEAL TIMES

Breakfast 7.30-10.00 Breakfast is served in your hotel restaurant (in the Hallmark Hotel or Hallmark Inn).

Lunch 12.00-13.30 A **MidCon** lunch menu is available from the Buffet table in the Garden Room, near the bar. Since you are all so keen to turn up early, this is now available on Friday lunchtime as well as Saturday and Sunday.

Dinner 18.00-19.30 Also served from the Buffet table in the Garden Room, still near the bar. The main bar in the hotel serves bar food "all day" for those wanting something different. This includes posh burgers, high-end sandwiches, fish and chips and the like, but not as cheap a rate as the fare available for **MidCon** from the Garden Room. In addition, the Brasserie is open throughout the evening to give you yet another on-site food option. You may want (or need) to book this in advance, as it's open to all. A considerable number of local pubs and restaurants are listed later in this booklet. A monumental amount of local research has been put in to this section of the booklet by heroic philanthropists.

Please note the earlier admonishment about those naughty types who bring takeaways or off-licence booze into the hotel. This is a big no-no.

QUIZ

David Norman runs the **MidCon** quiz, which is held at 10pm on Saturday, pub quiz style, in The Milldale Room. Teams of four work best, but there is room for some flexibility with the numbers if required (e.g. a team of three is allowed, or just one if it is Webley). There's no advance sign-up required, so if you wish to enter, just turn up. That said, the quiz is always incredibly popular, so be prepared to arrive early if you want a decent table or be a long way away from the speakers spewing out what passes as music these days.

DIPLOMACY

Believe it or not, there are still people knocking around who think the majority of people at the con are there for the Diplomacy (rather than the beer).

Held in The Garden Room, right next to the bar, there are usually enough players around to ensure several rounds take place over the weekend and they are always on the look-out for more. Games will be played to end after Fall 1907, keeping the game duration to around four hours. The scoring system is C-diplo 73, which basically means that you get most points for topping the board, no matter what your centre count is. The Avalon Hill 5th Edition rules will apply, although in any rules dispute, the Tournament Director's decision is final.

Find out more about the Diplomacy scene in the UK at <http://www.ukf2fdip.org>

THE COMMITTEE

MidCon is brought to you by the following gamers, who will be happy to assist you throughout the weekend.

Jeremy Tullett has been chairman of **MidCon** for flipping ages and has overseen the renaissance of Britain's longest-established board games con. He manages the booking of the rooms and all things Hallmark related. Ran the Diplomacy tournament under the previous management; has played at the EDC and WDC Diplomacy conventions and is a one-time

National Diplomacy champion. These days he prefers shorter games that aren't called Puerto Rico or Agricola (e.g. the rather splendid Splendor). He is usually found at the convention registration desk, hiding behind a laptop.

Most likely to say: *This is a games convention, not a beer convention*



1 Jeremy Tullett

David Norman generally looks after convention advertising and is also the designer of the "Convention Booking System". A keen Diplomacy player and frequent visitor to EDC and WDC, his claim to fame is that he has soloed boards in tournaments in different countries on consecutive weekends. David also runs the Quiz on Saturday evening and does any shouting when mass punter attention is required.

Most likely to say shout: *Does anyone want to hear those questions again?*



2 David Norman

John Harrington administers the **MidCon** web site (that's Midcon.org.uk), is senior beer bore

on the committee and also ruins ^[sic] the second-hand games sale (he also proofreads this booklet - ineptly).

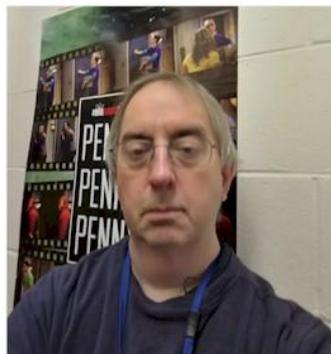
Most likely to say: *I think I forgot to claim my dividends eight turns ago*



3 John Harrington

Peter Card runs the Bring & Buy stall with John, and is assistant beer bore on the committee. As likely to be seen at a miniatures war games convention as he is at a board games convention, he's definitely got the coolest surname on the committee from a games playing perspective, and his first name isn't Dave.

Most likely to say: *This game would be much better if the miniatures weren't so small*



4 Peter Card

Dave Simpson produced this document, but John did the 2017 edits so if there any errors then blame John. Dave ran EDC at **MidCon** in 2011, after which he was suckered into joining the committee – and he's still running the Diplomacy at the con. Now a regular EDC / WDC attendee and still the only non-French

winner of the European Grand Prix of Diplomacy, Dave won the Diplomacy World Team Championship in 2015 (admittedly with two other people).

Most likely to say: *I'll support you into Piedmont if you buy me a beer*



5 Dave Simpson

Dave Clasby is a well-known face in the Derby board gaming scene. A vegan, cyclist and Guardian reader – now there's an unusual combination (up there with redneck, NRA member and Donald Trump supporter) – his remit, among other things, is to suggest ideas that make **MidCon** more accessible to the increasing numbers of people who have not been attending the con since the year dot.

Most likely to say: *I've got to move further away from the con so I can feel better about not driving here*



6 Dave Clasby

BUYING GAMES AT MIDCON

SPIRIT GAMES

The Spirit Games stall will be open from Friday afternoon until Sunday evening, and as their shop is local they may well be able to bring stuff along next day that isn't on the stall if you ask them nicely. Or contact them in advance and they'll reserve stuff for you.

Spirit Games have a monopoly on selling new games at *MidCon*, so if you wish to sell your own latest design, you should discuss this with them or the Committee. You certainly shouldn't even try selling a pile of stuff you just bought at Essen. You can find Spirit Games conveniently set up in the Garden Room next to the window, so you can see what it is you are looking at.

SECOND HAND GAMES (BRING & BUY)

The Bring & Buy sale this year will be held in the designated meeting room in the Hallmark Inn. Yes, that will mean schlepping your games across the road to the other venue, unless you've had the foresight to park in the Hallmark Inn car park. Committee member John Harrington is running it, ably assisted by first lieutenant and fellow committee member Peter Card.

Sellers – early birds

If you want to log the games you have for sale early doors, then you should find some Bring & Buy forms on a desk somewhere, most likely in the hall near the back door (that leads to the garden & car park). If you can't find the folder with the forms, ask at the Registration desk.

The folder will be available on the Friday and until about 9.15am on the Saturday. Grab what you need, and fill out the details: name of the game, your name, and the price you are asking (you may change this price later in the sale process).

Each line on the Bring & Buy form should have a game ID, so what you need to do after completing said form(s) is grab some post-it notes (these might be on the Registration desk

or near the folder) and on each post-it note put the following information: Game ID (e.g. 009) – as per the Bring & Buy form; Price.

Make sure you slap the right post-it note on the right game and **make sure you return the Bring & Buy forms and the unused post-it notes**. At the appropriate time (see schedule below), bring the games along to the Bring & Buy and lay them out on the tables.

Sellers – Saturday's all right for selling

Assuming you have not been an early-bird organised type (see above), you can bring your games for sale along to the Bring & Buy stall any time between 10.00am and 10.30am.

1. Report to the Bring & Buy reception desk and tell whoever is manning the desk how many games you have for sale.

2. You will then be given one or more Bring & Buy forms and some post-it notes.

3. Complete the forms, providing the following details: name of the game, your name, and the price you are asking (you may change this later).

4. Now do the post-it note thing, putting the following information on each note: Game ID (e.g. 009); Price.

5. Put the post-it notes on the relevant games, and your games on display on the Bring & Buy display tables.

6. Return the forms and unused post-it notes to the Bring & Buy registration desk. When the buying session is over, sellers may collect any unsold games and monies owed if they are not going to be around to do so after the evening session. In other words, we'd prefer to get back to do some gaming rather than hang around handing out money after the first session.

There will be a second session of selling in the early evening. Sellers will be offered the opportunity to amend their selling prices by popping over to the Hallmark Inn between 6.00pm and 6.30pm and informing the Bring &

Buy team of the new prices. Don't forget to adjust the prices on the post-it notes as well. During this session, people who did not register games for sale in the first session may register games, as per the procedure listed above.

Between 7.15pm and 7.30pm sellers should come and collect their unsold games and/or proceeds. Please note 5% of all sales will be deducted to cover the cost of hiring the room.

Buy, buy, baby; baby, buy, buy

The buying part is relatively straight forward. Turn up for the first buying session between 10.30am and 11.00am. Grab a game you want to buy, and take it to the Bring & Buy desk. Hand over the post-it note from the game and the requisite amount of money. Bugger off and play the game, or buy some more games. Do it all again between 6.30pm and 7.00pm.

SECOND HAND GAMES SALE SCHEDULE

10.00 – 10.29	Sellers bring their games to the sale
10.30 – 11.00	Buyers let in to spend, spend, spend
11.10 – 11.30	Sellers can collect unsold games and proceeds from sales
18.15 – 18.29	Sellers may bring more games to the sale & adjust prices of unsold games
18.30 – 19.00	Buyers let in to spend, spend, spend
19.10 – 19.25	Sellers collect unsold games and proceeds from sales

EATING OUT IN DERBY

The Hallmark Hotel has its own Brasserie, but for those who wish to leave the hotel to eat, there are at least eight restaurants within a short distance of the hotel and a considerable number more in the city centre, which is a 20-30 minute walk. If that's too long a walk, there is a taxi rank directly outside of the hotel.

There are also several takeaways in Midland Road and some shops and a cash point in the train station. There is also a cash point outside the Post Office in Midland Road. **Please do not bring your take-away meals and alcoholic drinks into the hotel.** The former undermines the food sales, which we have asked them to

provide, and the latter breaches their licence conditions.

Here is a list of venues that you may wish to try. Most places are busy on Friday and Saturday nights, so booking is strongly advised if you plan to go mid-evening; however, some of the restaurants in Midland Road and London Road do 'early bird' offers if you have ordered and/or eaten by 7pm.

Please do let us know about where you went this year for inclusion in next year's booklet – as you can guess we've been entirely reliant on the local gamers' knowledge and feedback from the past few years when compiling this list. As this guide is made from personal experiences, it is worth using the web for additional information.

RESTAURANT LIST

(Listed in rough order of distance from the hotel. **New entries are indented**) Note: Midland Road is the road with the car park entrances; London Road is the main road at the end of Midland Road.

Hallmark Hotel Brasserie. 0 yards.

Used by several groups, and impressions were generally favourable. Incredibly convenient.

Antibo 01332 201700 21 Midland Rd, Derby, DE1 2SL. Italian, 50 yards

A 'modern' Italian restaurant, with tiled floors, and thus rather noisy. Popular with parties, and often busy. The food is decent and the location convenient.

Shalimar Gold Restaurant 01332 366745 15 Midland Rd, Derby, DE1 2SN Indian, 250 yards

Since 2014, this has moved closer to the hotel and has gone up market, and now gives Anoki a run for its money.

Mansion House 6-7 Midland Rd, Derby, DE1 2SN. Steaks, etc., 100 yards

Has become well-established and increasingly popular in recent years. Started out as a wine bar selling food, now seems to be going for the posh food market, while selling wine with it.

Viceroy 01332 209991 8-9 Midland Rd, Derby, DE1 2SN Indian, 250 yards

The staff has a tendency to rush the clients, especially the ones on 'early-bird' sittings. The food, though, gets the approval of the customers.

Anoki 01332 292888 129 London Rd (R), Derby, DE1 2QN. Indian, 250 yards

Gourmet Indian cuisine. Pricey, but worth it. Probably only one of two restaurants in the immediate vicinity that it is worth dressing up a bit for (because you'll feel out-of-place if you don't). Worth booking a table, unless you go early (i.e. before 7pm). Very large operation.

Bella Mora 01332 360850 147 London Rd (R), Derby, DE1 2QN. Italian, 250 yards.

Booking strongly advised as the web reviews are hugely positive, so custom is likely to be increasing.

Pepitos Ltd 01332 360663 127 London Rd (R), Derby, DE1 2QN. Tex-Mex, 300 yards.

Chilli peppers with everything, including the ham and pineapple pizza, and the steaks. Hugely popular, so booking definitely advised.

Mogal E Azam 01332 294040 2-3 Midland Road, Derby, DE1 2SN. Indian, 100 yards.

Yet another Indian arrives in London Road. We went there just after it opened, and ladies were being given a rose on departure – so no danger of *MidCon* forcing a run on those. Food was good, and had a different twist to it from the other Indian restaurants in the area. Worth a go if you've had enough of the others in Midland Road.

Mount Everest 01332 298060 165 London Rd (L), Derby, DE1 2SU. Nepalese, 300 yards.

This place serves food that is recognisably a variant on Indian - same names, but slightly different flavours, and not strongly coloured (so possibly more authentic). Also a little cheaper than its sub-continental rivals. Totally chaotic service with meals arriving at random intervals, if at all, but small groups may be safe. Good

Indian food not noticeably different to the standard range but above average quality.

Seven Restaurant and Café Bar 01332 332 277, Wheelwright Way, Pride Park, Derby DE24 8SQ

Located across the railway from the hotels, and close to the Harvester (see below), this is a 'modern' restaurant. The committee chairman's Saturday dinner party went there in 2016 and can report that the service is friendly, the food OK, but the background music is a bit intrusive, not helped by the multiple hard surfaces having little in the way of sound-deadening properties.

Harvester 01332 371471 Roundhouse Rd, Pride Park, Derby, DE24 8JE. 400 yards.

Have you been to a Harvester before? Across the railway from the hotels, which can cause access problems when the station ticket barriers are running, this is a typical Harvester, with the 'usual' selection of chicken, burger and steak dishes, and other stuff beside, with the main claim to fame being the 'all you can eat' salad bar. Not for food snobs.

Steliana's & Sapho's Greek Taverna 01332 385200 11 London Rd (R), Derby, DE1 2QS. Greek, 500 yards.

This place certainly has character, and sometimes has live music. If you want a Greek dinner, this is pretty good, but doesn't have many tables. Booking recommended.

Hana Puri 01332 340707 Unit FT12 Level 2, West Mall, Westfield Centre, Derby, DE1 2PQ. Indian, 700 yards.

Nandos 01332 203263 Copecastle Sq., Derby, DE1 2NQ. Chicken, 700 yards.

Pasta4u 01332 360001 8 Copecastle Sq., Derby, DE1 2NQ. Pasta, 700 yards.

These three food outlets are in the Intu Shopping Centre's food hall and are probably not open evenings.

Pizza Express Level 2, West Mall, Intu Centre, Derby, DE1 2PQ. Take a wild guess, 700 yards.

Also in the Westfield but open evenings (the side entrance to the centre is open until the cinema empties), large, the usual Pizzaexpress experience.

The Engine Shed 01332 87487 Derby College, Pride Park (immediately on the far side of the railway station).

Situated in the converted old Engine Shed house of Derby's historic Roundhouse. Derby College's catering training college students open service at lunch times and evenings, with menus reflecting excellent locally sourced seasonal produce, at a competitive price, with instruction from experienced and skilled chefs. The service can be amusing as the students don't always get it right, but they try hard. Good food, with white linen tablecloths, at a reasonable price, a hidden gem.

COSMO Authentic World Kitchen 01332 295300 London Rd, Derby DE1 2PA

"Stylish, modern chain dining room with Pan-Asian cooking stations and global banquet options." The MidCon committee chairman was unimpressed. Up-market all-you-can-eat buffet. Good value? Possibly. Nice? Probably not, unless you enjoy eating with hundreds of vultures.

Swiss Cottage 01332 344402 89-91 St. Peters St, Derby, DE1 2AB. Cafe 900 yards.

Mogul 01332 203343 41-43 Green La, Derby, DE1 1RS. Indian, 1000 yards. Good reports heard.

Cucina Cafe Restaurant 01332 346796 26-28 Green La, Derby, DE1 1RP. Spanish, 1,200 yards.

Thai Boran 01332 343933 6 Green La, Derby, DE1 1RP. Thai, 1,200 yards. Mick Haytack thinks it's good.

Little Frankies 01332 867830 39 Cornmarket, Derby, DE1 2DG. Italian, 1,200 yards.

'Instant Italian', from the people who brought you the floundering Frankie and Benny's chain. Does what it says on the tin.

New Water Margin Cantonese Restaurant 01332 290482 72-74 Burton Rd, Derby, DE1 1TG. Chinese, 1,200 yards.

Nandos 01332 371459 Assembly Rooms, Market Pl, Derby, DE1 3AH. Spicy chicken dishes, 1,300 yards.

Shing Do The 01332 345644 27 Wardwick, Derby, DE1 1HA. Chinese, 1,350 yards.

Slug & Lettuce 01332 341946 11 Iron Gate, Derby, DE1 3FJ. Chicken, steak, burgers, etc. 1,350 yards

If you know what goes on at a Slug and Lettuce, you'll know what to expect. If you don't, I shouldn't bother finding out this weekend.

Hide Burger Bar 01332 742790 Riverside Chambers, Derwent Street, Derby, DE1 3AF

"Many pubs, bars and restaurants serve a burger because, lets face it, everyone loves them, but not many places locally dedicate their destination to the great British Burger. So, that's what we decided to do, and HIDE was born. A burger bar with a small simple burger menu made from good honest ingredients, inspired by not just British food, but by local produce too."

The burgers and the cocktails are pretty good. Opening hours are a tad eccentric, so check before you go.

Blacksmith's Loft, 01332 368822, 19-20 Sadler Gate, Derby. DE1 3NH. 1,350 yards

"The Blacksmith Loft is situated within Blacksmith's Yard, off Sadler Gate. Our restaurant has been fully refurbished to the highest of standards. You can enjoy fine rustic fine dining whilst immersing yourself in the historical surroundings."

As well as our a la carte, we also offer special options for Early Diners."

Wonky Table The 01332 295000 32-33 Sadler Gate, Derby, DE1 3NR. English, 1,350 yards

Typical English menu, with prices ranging from £10 for a vegetarian dish up to £20 for the most expensive steak.

Restaurant Zest 01332 381101 51A Sadler Gate, Derby, DE1 3NQ. 1,350 yards

"Zest Derby was setup in 1998 in the centre of the city with the aim of providing fantastic, flavoursome food in a relaxed and casual environment. At Restaurant Zest, we want to bring you the great food and style of fine dining but without all the stuffiness, and with this in mind Zest has been one of the longest standing restaurants in the centre of Derby. Over 18 years on Zest Derby continues to bring you the best fresh seasonal food in a relaxed environment.

We've been recognised as Derby's Restaurant of the Year in 2012/2013 & 2013/2014 as well as having the Good Food Guide 2011, 2012 & 2013, Michelin Guide, Hardens and various Derby Food & Drink Awards all nestling in our trophy cabinet."

18 years and it's only just made it into the con booklet? We're more discerning than the Michelin guide.

Pizza Express Ltd 01332 349718 2 Iron Gate, Derby, DE1 3GL. Italian, 1,350 yards

It's a pizza chain, but without the bad features. A smart modern interior and a big range of Italian starters, pizza and pasta. Bring your money-off vouchers for a Sunday night send-off.

Excelsior The 01332 364907 6-8 Becket St, Derby, DE1 1HT. Chinese, 1,350 yards.

Mick Haytack approves of the Excelsior.

Mexico 01332 3420903 4-3 Sadler Gate, Derby, DE1 3NR. Mexican, 1,350 yards

Frankie & Benny's 01332 333210 Unit 3A/Derwent Parade, Pride Park, Derby, DE24 8BW. Italian, 1,400 yards

Another outlet across the railway line, but you'd probably get a taxi to this one.

Thai Dusit 01332 372016 8 Bold La, Derby, DE1 3NT, Thai, 1,400 yards.

Another with a reasonable reputation.

Shabab Balti House 01332 341811 11 Curzon St, Derby, DE1 1LH. Balti, 1,400 yards.

Emily's Steakhouse 01332 368863 24 Monk St, Derby, DE22 3QB, Steak, 1,400 yards.

Iberico World Tapas Tel 01332 345456, 9-11 Bold Lane Derby DE1 3NT 1,400 yards

"Iberico World Tapas brings together the rustic simplicity of Spanish tapas together with the refined ingredients of world cooking." Whatever that means - chips with everything, possibly.

Limes Bar & Restaurant 01332 613665 102 Friar Gate, Derby, DE1 1EX. Modern, 1,600 yards

Le Bistrot Pierre 01332 370470 18 Friargate, Derby, DE1 1BX. French, 1 mile

One local likes it, while another thinks it looks good without having become a customer at any point to date.

Zizzi's 01332 208297 16-17 Friar Gate, Derby, DE1 1BX4. Italian, 1 mile

A pizza chain. Can you taste the difference that a wood-fired oven is supposed to make?

Pietro 01332 34029938 Friar Gate, Derby, DE1 1DA 1 mile

Baseball Balti & Barbecue 01332 771444 193 Harrington St (no relation), Pear Tree, Derby, DE23 8NZ 1 mile

Pizza Hut 01332 660880 Wyvern Way, Chaddesden, Derby, DE21 6NZ. Pizza 1.14 miles

Nico's 01332 208220 12 Brick St, Derby, DE1 1DU 1.23 miles

Toby Carvery 01332 662504 Nottingham Rd, Chaddesden, Derby, DE21 6LZ 1.24 miles

McDonald's Restaurants Ltd 01332 296257 181-193 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8BT 1.42 miles

Balti International 01332 383044 266-268 Uttoxeter New Rd, Derby, DE22 3LL 1.43 miles

Highly rated by those who go there, this little restaurant has no alcohol licence, but you can take your own drinks, or bring them round from the nearby pub. It seems fine to me, but most of the people who like its authenticity haven't been further east than the North Sea, so opinions on that aspect of it are a bit suspect, in my view.

Masa Restaurant Tel 01332 203345, The Old Wesleyan Chapel, Brook Street, Derby DE1 3PF

"Masa is renowned to be one of the best restaurants in Derby. Set in a lovingly converted chapel, we've built a reputation for culinary excellence throughout our ten-year history at the heart of Derby's restaurant scene."

Okra Restaurant Tel 01332 987873, 5 Friar Gate, Derby DE1 1BU

"O-kra offers a unique and sensory dining experience built on a belief that our food should be authentic and enlightening."

Mick Haytack also recommends the Zing Vaa for a Chinese as "the best in Derby", but it is three miles from the hotel. For an Indian, he rates the Jaipur in Repton, but that's a 15 minute drive. For a Chinese buffet meal, MH suggests the May Sum in Babbington Lane.

Jeremy Tullett: Probably the poshest restaurant in the city centre - it certainly lays claim to be - is in the Cathedral Quarter Hotel, about a mile away. With crisp white tablecloths and nice wine glasses, it probably is worth looking smart for. I had a very good New Year's Eve meal there a few years ago.

Several of the pubs in the vicinity serve food in the evening, as listed in the next section.

Thanks to Mick Haytack for the additional information provided in this section.

DRINKING IN DERBY

As you may notice, there are a few pubs nearby. Below is a list of the nearest and also some of the better pubs at a bit more distance. I suggest looking at the Beer In The Evening web site (beerintheevening.com) for current information and customer reviews. If a nearby pub isn't in this list take it as a hint.

LIST OF PUBS

Victoria Inn Tel. 01332 740091 12 Midland Place, Derby, DE1 2RR, 50 yards.

In the last 15 years this has been variously Derby's gay pub, Derby's premier live music venue, closed, reopened, and refurbished. Currently staging occasional live music evenings, it is a considerably more user-friendly place than it once was, but probably less interesting for that.

Waterfall Tel. 01332 366517 Railway Terrace, Derby, DE1 2RU 50 yards.

A large, airy, bar with Sky Sports and the usual array of mass-produced beers. Quite nice as these places go, as it isn't usually rammed. It has tables big enough for playing games, should anyone wish to decamp from the hotel

The Brunswick Inn Tel. 0.1332 290677, 1 Railway Terrace, Derby, DE1 2RU, 200 yards

Considered the best pub in this area until we discovered the next one along, the Brunny is Everards-owned but also brews its own beer, and generally has a number of guest beers. We used to source **MidCon**'s beer here until they let us down one year. Has lots of small rooms for a quiet game of 18AL (the staff don't mind that sort of thing). Food is good quality pub grub, like pies served until 5.00pm Friday and Saturday, but there is no food served on Sunday – last time we checked, a few years back. This is the place to go if you can't wait for the Friday evening **MidCon** buffet; a dozen or so gamers turn up on the Thursday before **MidCon** to play games in the pub in the afternoon, before repairing to the Alex for evening drinks.

Part of the original 1840s railway cottage development, this Grade II listed building has heaps of old world charm, unlike the staff. Manager looks like he'd like to introduce the concept of Unhappy Hour.

The Alexandra Tel 01332 293993. 203 Siddals Road, DE1 2QE. 230 yards.

An even better pub, in the opinion of professional drinker Paul Oakes and rank amateur John Harrington. Walk past The Brunny and carry on away from the hotel for about 30 yards and you'll see this place. A Freehouse owned by Castle Rock brewery (a very good thing) with some really cheap B&B rooms. With big selection of Castle Rock beers and some guest beers too, this is the best pub within staggering distance of the hotel. Sublime cold pies, a rabbit (pet, not pie); railway memorabilia heaven (check the pub clock) - what else do you want? The Scorpion Chilli Chocolate is an ideal gift for people you do not like very much.

Royal Telegraph, 73 London Road, Derby, DE1 2QS, 500 yards.

A wannabe J D's pub, but only sells Marston's (one of the few FTSE 350 companies that knows how to use an apostrophe). OK for the basics, but if this is the fare you're after, then you're better off going for the real thing, and it's not that far to...

Babington Arms (Wetherspoon's) Tel. 01332 38364711-13 Babington La, Derby, DE1 1TA 900 yards.

Tesco with hand-pumps. Serves food, with a good choice of ales. It's a 'Spoons, so cheap food and beer that should still be in date – but only just - by the time you finish it.

The Smithfield, Meadow Road, Derby, DE1 2BH, 1000 yards.

A bit further north from the Alex, across the park, then the river. Has recently changed hands and been refurbished. Now serves food and a limited range of real ales.

Exeter Arms 01332 346679 Exeter Pl, Derby, DE1 2EU 1000 yards.

Located just north of the A52, The Exeter Arms is a traditional real ale pub and Dancing Duck Brewery Free House. Stocks six excellent real ales and does food 12-9 (12-4 Sunday). Small pub, wooden floors, tables, chairs. Crowded on a Saturday night.

The Jorrocks Tel. 01332 346852 41 Iron Gate, Derby, DE1 3GA4, 1300 yards.

Its narrow frontage gives it a quaint Dickensian appearance. Good real ales.

Standing Order (Wetherspoon's) Tel. 01332 207591 28-32 Iron Gate, Derby, DE1 3GL, 1500 yards.

Located towards the city centre through the pedestrian area from the Exeter. The word in brackets is all the information you need, Shirley (and co.). Serves food with a choice of ales, cheap. Better architecture in here than the other 'spoons, but this one is further from the hotel.

Ye Olde Dolphin Inn Tel. 01332 267711 5a Queen St, Derby, DE1 3DL, 1500 yards.

North from the Standing Order. Said to be Derby's most haunted pub, it is attractive enough, with a half-timbered façade. This genuinely old building has a number of tiny wood-panelled rooms inside, but is not otherwise remarkable. Good pub, albeit upmarket, that serves food, and a good choice of ales. Just around the corner is...

The Silk Mill Ale & Cider House 19 Full St, Derby DE1 3AF, 1500 yards.

Reopened a few years ago, with a slight renaming. Serves a selection of real ales and ciders and also serves British food "with a twist". Popular with those heading for the Silk Mill comedy club.

The Flower Pot 23-25 King Street, Derby, DE1 3DZ, 1600 yards.

North of the Dolphin, a gem of a pub, many lovely beers, tucked away around a corner at the northern end of the central part of the city, on the A6. No food in the evenings.

**Falstaff Free House Tel. 01332 342902 74
Silver Hill Rd, Derby, DE23 6UJ, 1600 yards.**
Good real ales. The Seven Stars is nearby.

**The Seven Stars, Tel 01332 340169, 97 King
Street, Derby, DE1 3EE, 1600 yards.**

Also serves real ales, but “if you’re in Derby and only have time to visit one pub, this probably isn’t it” says one review online. Only one beer when Pete Mason went - and no food either. Head further north to...

**The Five Lamps, Tel 01332 348730 25
Duffield Road, Derby, DE1 3BH, 2000 yards.**

Food: 12 - 8pm Sun: 12 - 5pm. The highlight of MidCon 2012 for Pete Mason, despite the 20 minute walk to get there. Friendly staff, excellent pub food at a reasonable price and more beers than you can shake a stick at.

Our thanks go to Pete Mason for providing additional input in to this section. Additional thanks go to Pete Mason’s Liver.

FURTHER GAMING OPPORTUNITIES

There's an extensive calendar of gaming conventions scattered across the country throughout the year (but they can't be as good as **MidCon**, obviously).

Unless you didn't give an address when registering at one of several UK board-gaming conventions, you will get a copy of **Queen's Lane Advertiser (QLA)** posted to you several times a year and this fine publication lists most of the forthcoming UK cons on its front page.

If you know of a convention that isn't listed there, you simply have to let the QLA guys know. Even better, hand a copy of the QLA to the convention organiser and suggest they get in touch.

There's also a lot of games related stuff on the web, so for starters, try these web sites...

Royal Society of Gamers: A UK based gaming podcast with an extensive map of UK games clubs (now with worldwide reach too).

Games Lore: Telford games shop which also hosts a large list of games clubs on their web site.

BoardGameGeek: Don't claim you don't know it! Huge collection of reviews, game aids, rules translations, videos, forums, Uncle Tom Blogley and all ... about playing board games, RPG's, computer and tablet games etc. The Guilds section (under Misc.) has a games club listing. Make sure you check under the entry for the United Kingdom as the England and Wales and UK sections are moribund. A bunch of people are keeping the club entries up to date in this guild, so it's definitely worth a look.

Shut up and Sit Down: games blog in a video format, rather than an audio podcast.

BrettSpielWelt: offers instant web gaming with either downloadable versions of many of the games you see at **MidCon** to play against the computer (St. Petersburg is excellent) or live games. Many other sites like this exist, such as **Boiteajeux.net**, which is where about half the 1980's postal gaming hangs out.

VASSAL: for those who like their games to feature shooting and monster rule books, but cannot find a similarly minded person locally, this site offers a huge array of war games (and miniature games) and it truly has a global reach.

For Whom The Web Rocks: a large selection of 18XX and other games run by hobby hero Keith Thomasson via e-mail on a turn-at-a-time basis. Takes about three months to play a long game, but you can plan your turn at your leisure instead of being pinned at a computer all night.

There is also a large number of board game related happenings and groups to be found on the increasingly popular Meetup site – there's also an app for that, so no matter where you are in the world, it's quite likely that you will be able to track down some local gaming action.

Shops: Spirit (the stall here), Shire, Games Lore, Board Game Guru, and there are also

plenty of German sites that ship to the UK cheaply too.

If you've not yet been swept up by the Kickstarter crowd funding phenomenon, then you should know that there are an increasing number of board games launched there – some of them are even manufactured and sent out to the punters who paid their money. Alien Frontiers is a notable product of this platform.

LINKS TO SITES MENTIONED HERE

www.royalsocietyofgamers.com

<https://www.gameslore.com/>

<https://boardgamegeek.com/>

www.shutupandsitdown.com/

www.brettspielwelt.de/?nation=en

<http://boiteajeux.net/index.php>

www.vassalengine.org/

www.fwtwr.com/fwtwr/

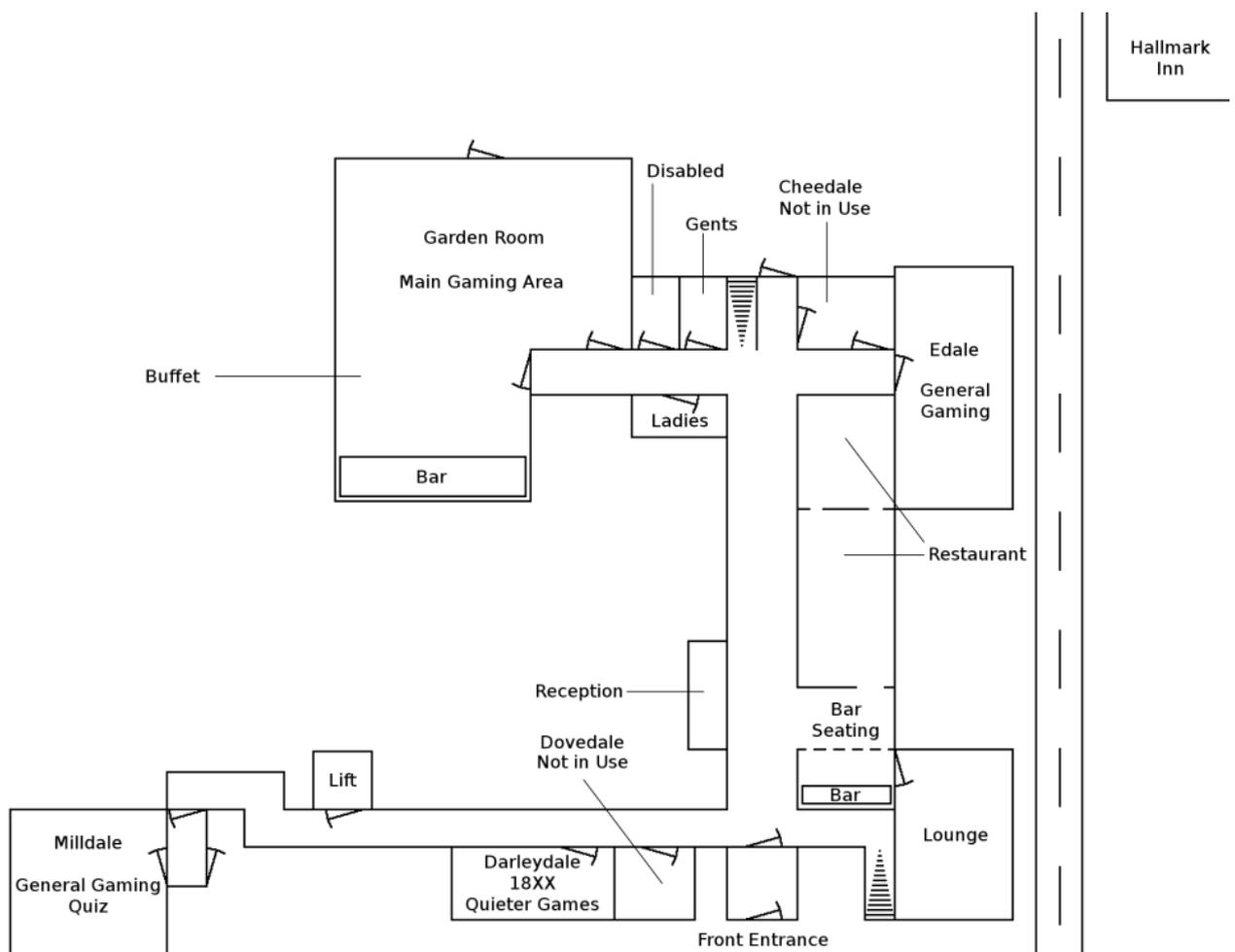
www.meetup.com/

<https://www.spiritgames.co.uk/>

www.shiregames.com/

www.boardgameguru.co.uk/

<https://www.kickstarter.com/>



1Map of Hallmark Hotel & con rooms