



## The Pie At Night: In Search of the North at Play

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## **The Pie At Night: In Search of the North at Play** Stuart Maconie

Factory, mine and mill. Industry, toil and grime. Its manufacturing roots mean we still see the North of England as a hardworking place. But, more than possibly anywhere else, the North has always known how to get dressed up, take itself out on the town and have a good time. After all, working and playing hard is its speciality, and Stuart Maconie is in search of what, exactly, this entails what it tells us about the North today.

Following tip offs and rumour, Stuart takes trip to forgotten corners and locals' haunts. From the tapas bars of Halifax to the caravan parks of Berwick Upon Tweed, from a Westhoughton bowling green to Manchester's curry mile, via dog tracks and art galleries, dance floors and high fells, Stuart compares the new and old North, with some surprising results.

The *Pie at Night* could be seen as a companion to the bestselling *Pies and Prejudice*, but it is not a sequel. After all, this is a new decade and the North is changing faster than ever. This is a revealing and digressive journey and a State of the North address, delivered from barstool, terrace, dress circle and hillside.

## **The Pie At Night: In Search of the North at Play Details**

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Author : Stuart Maconie

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## From Reader Review The Pie At Night: In Search of the North at Play for online ebook

### Derek Issacs says

"A companion to Pies and Prejudice," says Maconi, about this, his second book about the North. He writes in a very chatty style and the book itself is almost as good, or is as good, as a travel companion. I have written down loads of places that he mentioned and that I want to visit when I go back home to the North (as I do most years), places of which I had never heard before reading this, even though I am a northerner. I think he rambles ( no pun intended) in parts but I kept on turning the pages. It is all very tongue-in-cheek. I am happy to say that I have experienced much of the entertainment scenarios of which he has written, and of those I haven't, I wished I had.

A quick and humorous read as usual.

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### Jennifer says

Reading Stuart Maconie is a bit hit and miss. He has a fine way with words but sometimes what he is saying is either confused or wrong (in my opinion) or otherwise A Bit Irritating.

Very early in this book he asserts that the middle class non-Northerner is sitting in front of the telly of an evening, so that's what he is setting the wonders of the Northern working class nightlife against, and it seems a very shaky foundation.

However, that premise is largely left behind by a very solid book which I now need to go back over and make notes on all the things I'd like to do, see, hear, read, watch as a result. At one point he lists a serious of pastimes that have not made it into the book (he is fibbing about am dram since he mentions his own on several occasions). This means there's scope for another book. Quite impressively this one didn't feel like a rehashed topic because it was looking specifically at entertainment (the night time is a bit loose) I felt he got the balance right in terms of space devoted to each aspect.

I thought there might be some cozy nostalgia here... in practice it felt more akin to a series of milder PTSD flashbacks.

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### Pamela Fellows says

#### Biased Review

Brilliant book. Being from the North and immensely pleased and proud that I am , perhaps a bit biased. Interesting historical facts, well written, funny. I find all this author's books, entertaining, educational and honest.

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## Paul McFadyen says

A solid 7 out of 10 for me.

Being a Northerner (and almost a near neighbour, at least for a small shared portion of our lives), I will chirpily devour a new book by Stuart Maconie, a real champion of these parts, especially when he returns to the subject of "our" part of the world.

This one covers plenty of bases: sport, art, theatre, music, drinking, the countryside etc. and as an advert for all sorts of lesser-known (to me) places to visit, it's excellent - there's a strong chance that our 2016 Summer mini-break has been planned around at least a couple of the locations/venues named in this book.

He's good at meeting people and teasing individual stories out - there's always someone sharing a great tale or anecdote, everywhere we go & it's really the people in the book that make it, as well as the warm, wry & affectionate way Stuart views his world.

A few things didn't work for me - the book veers a little too often towards Manchester-centricity (is that even a word??) which I do understand, given that the author has spent a large part of his life looking that way, as well as working and playing there, but it feels slightly unbalanced to me; then again, maybe because I work there against any personal preference & I chuffing hate travelling to the place, I'm more than a bit biased myself. Nice to see a mention of the Briton's Protection though, also my favourite pub in Manchester (and a regular haunt in the early Noughties) which \*almost\* makes up for it.

I also found myself glazing over a bit during the "walking" chapter - knowing how much Stuart loves a walk and the countryside, it was probably always slightly inevitable that he'd be drawn to write about it eventually (and the Lake District, too), but it's not a subject that grabs this reader. Still, he makes it clear that he is treading where other greats have literally written the book(s) and you may love this part, so that's all the criticism from me on this topic.

Overall, an easy read and an engaging one - keep it up, sir.

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## Brian Clegg says

I've never been a fan of the 'hello sky, hello grass,' Fotherington Thomas school (or should that be skool?) of travel writing that is packed with purple prose and lengthy descriptions of scenery. What does the trick for me is a travel book that explores the (often humorous) interaction between the writer and people and places, preferably with more urban and suburban adventures than countryside and wilderness. When it comes to plain humour, the master of this genre is Bill Bryson (even if he did freewheel a little in his latest), but if you want a combination of humour; wry, intelligent observation and lyrical writing, the trophy has to go to Stuart Maconie.

Whether he is exploring his experience as a music journalist in Cider with Roadies, the north in Pies and Prejudice or more southerly climes in Adventures on the High Teas, Maconie delivers. Now he has returned to his first love, the north of England in The Pie at Night. Rather than being a straight travelogue, here Maconie concentrates on 'the north at play', from crown green bowls and the worst league football team ever, to food and drink, seaside fun and, inevitably, music (where Opera North even shows him it's possible to enjoy opera).

I'm probably more than a little biased as I have a similar background in some ways to Maconie - we both come from a Lancashire mill town (Wigan and Rochdale respectively) but have made our careers elsewhere, which makes it very easy to feel every bit of Maconie's hymns of praise to northern life that some might find less easy to identify with. But I defy anyone not to enjoy the author's enthusiasm for everything from the most brash northern entertainment to sophisticated food and drink.

Perhaps the only thing that seems a little odd is his admission to not liking the observational humour of many modern stand-up comedians, when Maconie's own humour is very much about people and their little quirks. I love, for instance, his remark 'I'm reminded of the time I asked for Scotch and Dry Ginger in a Salford boozier and the barman said, "What do you think this is, Life on Mars?"' Yet there is a difference - most of the stand-ups I've seen mock those they describe, but Maconie's gaze is usually a beneficent one.

Maconie introduces us to a good roster of human characters, but it is the characterful places that dominate whether we are visiting a station buffet that sounds more fun than any pub I've ever been in or the eerie beauty of the Trough of Bowland. He can make the Lake District seem wonderful, but then absolutely captures one of my favourite buildingscapes, Salford's Media City: 'I love the light and the water, the facilities, the campus-like feel of the place. I love the fact that at night it feels like Blade Runner, like Tokyo. It excites the child in me just like those fairground lights and floodlight did and do.' If you've ever been there at night, you will know exactly what he means.

I'm sure southerners get fed up of us northerners droning on about how special it is in t't north (especially if we have chosen to live elsewhere). But I hope *The Pie at Night* will give a glimpse of some of the reasons behind that love affair - and for those of us who are northern, however long we've been away, it will generate delightful pangs of memory. Is it a little over-rosy? Possibly - but it works wonderfully well.

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### **Michael Rumney says**

Stuart Maconie reflects on how northerners play and since I found this in the biography section of my local library I assumed it was going to be more about his life. Yes there some snippets, how he learned about classical music by taping radio 3 and borrowing records from his library but mostly it's about geography of the north and its history with leisure.

The geography angle is a little strained in that great chunks of the book are located in Birmingham, the midlands and the Swindon Railway works.

The book on the whole is factual served with slices of dry humour which felt as if Maconie was talking to the reader and he did like to name drop especially names connected with his pop world.

This book through the author shows the north has its own identity which he celebrates.

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### **Paul says**

When you think of the North of England an industrial landscape would come to mind, with the factories, mills and heavy industry. It is a hardworking place; but it knows how to have a good time and play hard too. Maconie decides that he needs to dust off his suit, polish his shoes and go out on the town in search of a good time.

Using the best intelligence that he can get, Maconie travels round the north, revisiting the classic haunts of leisure from Blackpool to the dogs, football and rugby of course. Any day off is enhanced by going out for a curry before walking it all off with a stroll across the moors. He hears a brass band, before trying something

out of the ordinary and after all that needs a restorative pint.

This is another good book and kind of a companion book to The Pie at Night by Maconie as he travels back and forwards across the North finding out what they do in their leisure time. It is not particularly challenging to read, mostly as he writes in such an easy going and chatty way. That does not mean that he is not perceptive and it is laugh out loud in places too, as he has a knack of getting to the spirit of the event he is partaking in whilst not taking it too seriously. Another one of his that was worth reading.

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### **Suzie Grogan says**

I want to write like Stuart Maconie. Sharp and witty but warm and with a real affection for his subjects - here focusing once again on his native north of England in the sort of follow up to Pies and Prejudice from about 10 years ago. Here he looks at how people spend their evenings and the cultural focus of their spare time and despite his sometimes comedic descriptions, this has, at heart, something serious to say about what is and isn't important in Britain today.

I wouldn't gripe, but would love to discuss with him some of the feelings he attributes specifically to those living north of Watford; I think 'ordinary' Londoners and SWesterners have many of the same interests. We aren't all media types from Islington eating tiny portions in gastropubs. My family were fanatical Hackney speedway fans (before it ended up under the Olympic Stadium) and there is some fabby art stuff going on in Bristol. But these are small things really - my only issue with the book is that in hard back it has a surprising number of typos....

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### **Jonathan says**

A companion work to his earlier book Pies and Prejudice this book focuses on 'leisure' pursuits in the north. I can't really say anything more than this is a must read

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### **Gill Thomas says**

I love Stuart Maconie's commentaries and there are some 'gems' in this book. The thing for me was that because Stuart is male, it was definitely a perspective from a male - one too many sport references for me. But the chapters I liked, I really liked so hey ho :)

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### **Jon says**

Professional Northerner writes thinly researched book about not very much. Potboiler.

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### **Janet Panter says**

Not as enjoyable as some of the others I've read. This was a bit more heavy-going.

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## **Emma says**

Another great book by Stuart Maconie, Love the chapters on the seaside and football.

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## **Louise Culmer says**

Stuart Maconie's affectionate look at the various ways northerners amuse themselves, covering music, sport, fell walking, heritage sights, art, restaurants etc. Some activities he says he left out due to lack of space, among these are 'growing giant leeks' though that has been covered adequately in Harry Pearson's delightful 'racing Pigs and Giant marrows' (likewise pigeon racing, also covered by Mr Pearson). It is quite entertaining, though there are occasional moments when I find myself wondering, for instance, why he is so averse to the idea of men doing anything with other men that doesn't involve women. He seems to find the idea of men without women alarming (he expresses no such reserve about all-female group activities). Sometimes his attempts to curry favour with female readers come across as slightly absurd. For instance when discussing professional chefs he quotes someone as having said 'women have been cooking for a thousand years, men have been cooking for about five minutes' which is patently untrue. Men have always been professional chefs, all those sumptuous banquets in medieval castles, tudor palaces etc, were cooked by men. However, these minor irritants aside, this is quite an interesting book if you want to know about life and leisure in the north of England.

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## **Michelle Witcombe says**

Another funny book

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