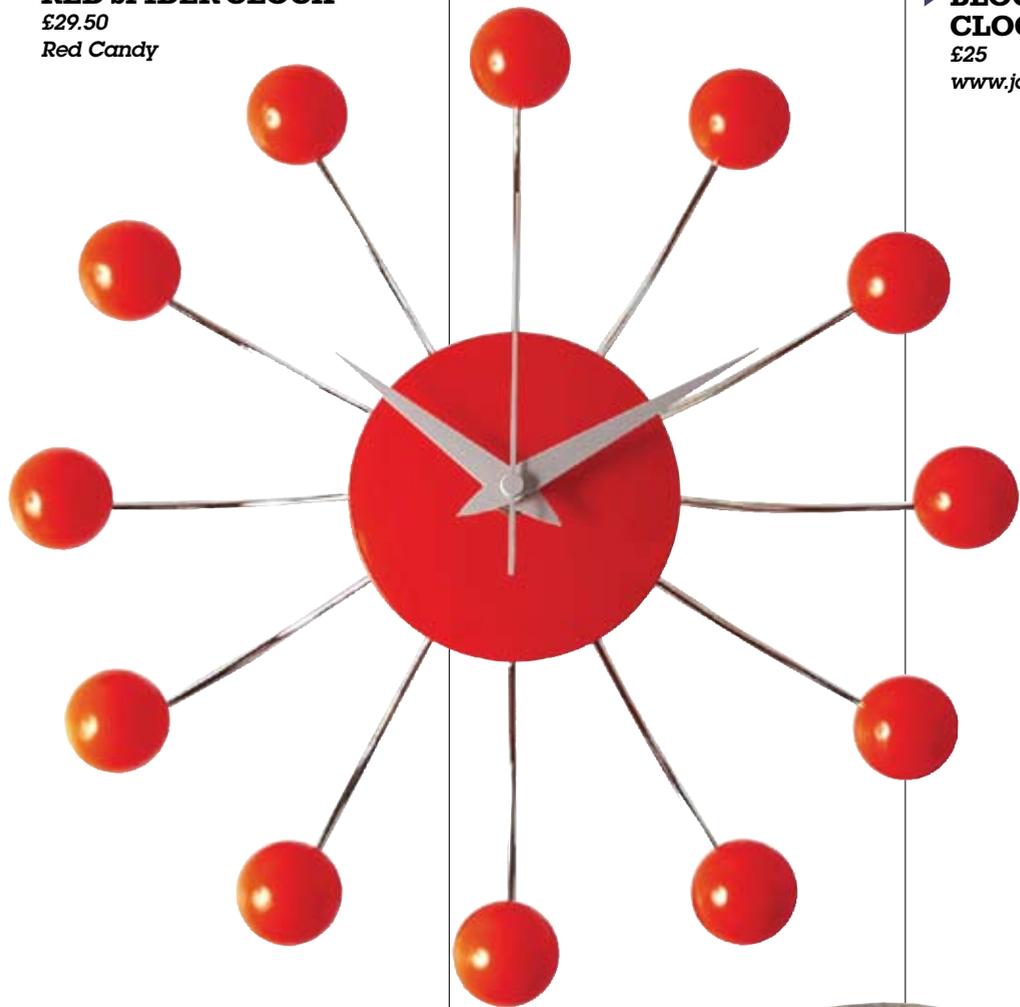


# TURN BACK TIME

SINCE THE CLOCKS GO BACK THIS WEEKEND, WHY NOT TREAT YOUR WALLS TO SOMETHING EYECATCHING...

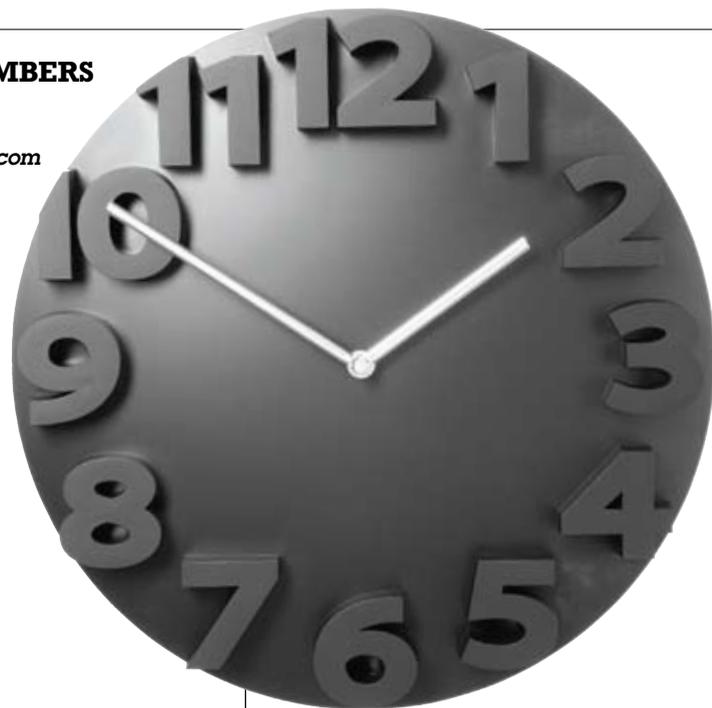
▼ **RED SPIDER CLOCK**

£29.50  
Red Candy



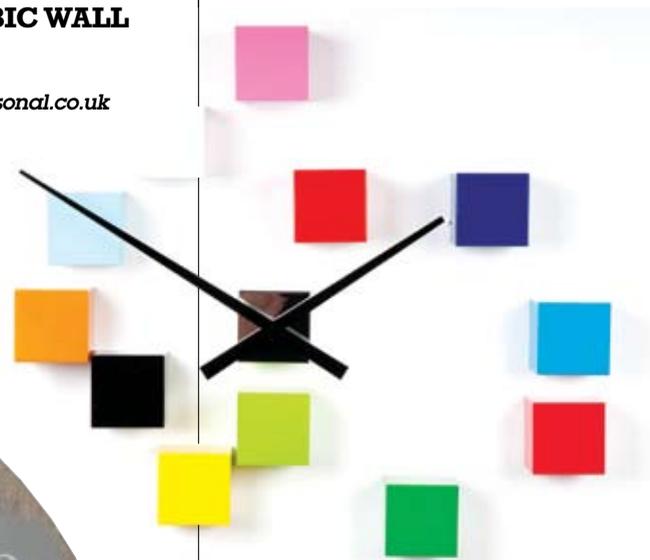
► **BLOCK NUMBERS CLOCK**

£25  
www.johnlewis.com



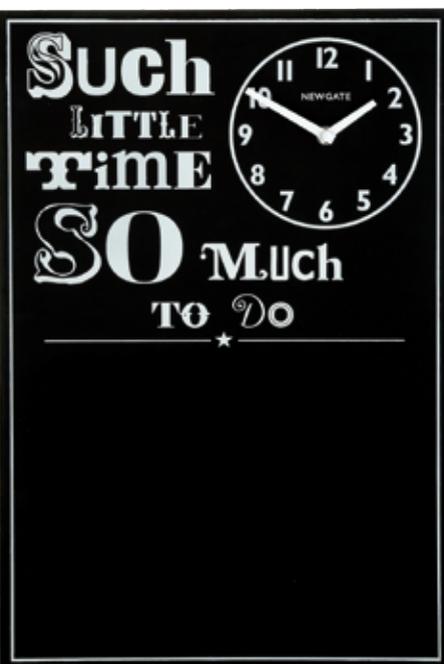
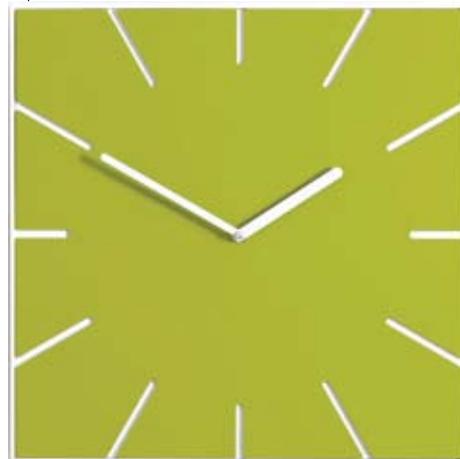
► **DIY CUBIC WALL CLOCK**

£39.99  
GettingPersonal.co.uk



▼ **GREEN SNAP CLOCK**

£130  
Rume



▲ **CHALK BOARD MEMO CLOCK**

£45  
www.johnlewis.com



► **WOODEN HEARTS WALL CLOCK**

£17.95  
www.baytreepr.com

# SWANNING AROUND

**IN THE DEPTHS OF RURAL CHESHIRE YOU'LL FIND THE SISTER PUB TO ONE OF CUMBRIA'S MOST REVERED EATERIES. AMY HOYLE CHECKS OUT THE BLACK SWAN IN LOWER WITHINGTON...**

**I'VE lived in Cheshire most of my life, but I'll be honest I'd never heard of Lower Withington, the only Withington I know is the south Manchester village between Didsbury and Chorlton.**

But Lower Withington is nowhere near Manchester; it's in rural Cheshire close to Holmes Chapel and Alderley Edge. It's also home to The Black Swan pub, which as of September this year relaunched under the wing of its big sister The Swan Inn of Windermere, Cumbria. The Swan Inn has won a multitude of awards over the years for its food, so I was intrigued to see what awaited me in Lower Withington.

The pub is a little off the beaten track, but well worth the trip out. We dined on a rather drizzly Sunday afternoon, but for warmer days, the outside holds lots of promise – a wood-fired pizza oven, plenty of outdoor seating, a boules lawn – and even somewhere to rest your pony should you be arriving on horseback.

Inside is welcoming and cosy, but not in that old man way that most pubs are decorated. The Black Swan is quirky

and bright, with smatterings of Liberty prints, clashing florals, wood-burning stoves, pom-pom lampshades and piles of cushions. It may be somewhat feminine, but actually that's quite refreshing. Behind the bar are stacks of British iconic foodstuff like Tate & Lyle Golden Syrup, Colman's English Mustard and Marmite. It's all very eccentric and what's more English countryside than that?

Of course, it's the food and drink that really decide a pub's worth and The Black Swan's menu is a mix of British pub classics and lighter, modern bites. Ordering is fun, some may say lazy, but I quite enjoyed reliving my waitressing days by jotting down our orders on the notepads provided and delivering our order to the bar.

Service was snappy and I was soon chomping on a crab tian with lime, coriander and chilli and a herb salad – it was delicious so I forgave the odd bit of stray shell that came my way.

My partner's leek, potato and roast garlic soup had sounded a tad bland but, actually, was packed with flavour and was incredibly velvet-smooth.

The Black Swan's grub isn't the cheapest, around £15 for a main, but

the portions are decent and beautifully cooked. For my main course I had a duo of fish from the specials; small fillets of buttery salmon and pollock served on a haddock and herb potato cake with chorizo, clams and a rich tomato jus. There wasn't much to fault, the fish was firm and flavourful and the clams full of fresh sea flavour but the potato cake could have done without the salt assault.

The fella's sirloin was cooked rare as ordered and served with chunky chips, onion rings, a Portobello mushroom and oven-dried tomatoes. He wolfed the lot and a dunk of one of his chips into the accompanying peppercorn sauce pleased me as it was clearly homemade and not a run-of-the-peppermill packet version. For real ale drinkers the pub's commitment to local produce continues from the kitchen to the bar with a range of cask ales including Mucky Duck brewed in Macclesfield.

If you're looking for somewhere to enjoy a drive out, a walk in the country and somewhere a little more stylish to dine, The Black Swan would be my top tip.

Call 01477 571770 or visit [blackswancheshire.com](http://blackswancheshire.com)



## SMOKIN' CHOC!

**A COLLABORATION BETWEEN CHOCOLATIER AMELIA ROPE AND THE CHESHIRE SMOKEHOUSE HAS PRODUCED CRACKING RESULTS...**

**AMELIA Rope's handmade chocolate is visually stunning but it's the depth of flavour that makes her chocolate out of this world.**

Perhaps it's her background in aromatherapy and herbal medicine that aids her flavour-pairing ability, but whatever it is, we're particularly excited about her latest partnership with local smoke specialist The Cheshire Smokehouse. The bars are made using salted cashew nuts which are smoked over maple and oak chips by The Cheshire Smokehouse. For those unfamiliar with the smoking emporium, the business was established over 100 years ago by John William Ward, who learnt his craft of 'smoking' in Canada. He set up his first small business in Cheetham Hill in 1907 and the company is still in the hands of the same family, with current owner Darren Ward – John's great-great grandson at the helm. Talking about her nutty new invention, Amelia said: "I discovered The Cheshire Smokehouse from my obsession with smoked nuts, in particular smoked nuts without any junk covering them. The smoked nuts are HUGE and full of flavour. With the smoking over oak and maple chippings the taste is one I think of utter balance. "My Special Edition bar is an unusual one, the nuts have been sprinkled over either the milk couverture (37 per cent Papua New Guinea) or the plain couverture (70 per cent Ghana)." The special edition bars are only available for a few weeks, so don't hang around if you want to try them. **£6 for 100g bar at [ameliarope.com](http://ameliarope.com)**



"Service was snappy and I was soon chomping on a crab tian with lime, coriander and chilli and a herb salad..."