

'Cheaper Thrills' - written by Peter Poole

The buses had been swapped for replacement trains on the way to Brighthelmstone, making my arrival...early. Rain fell to save me a swim, drenching Queen's Road like spilt gin. Taxis puffed smoke from their tubular exhausts, smokers stuffed tubes in their mouths and puffed them. Doorways? The opposite of glamping, with grubby bedspreads and recumbent figures guarding miniscule collections of coins.

A towering clock proclaimed Victoria's reign, and - more usefully - the time. I was twenty minutes early, or over a hundred years late. A nearby tribute to Churchill had pulverized community streets, saved at the darkest hour, in favour of utopian concrete.

My mistaken choice of hipsterish pub meant beer brewed by an engineer, their efforts designated as 'craft'. Why? No rivets or screws on the glass. Shorn of a plastic 'Jane Austen', in return for a 'Winston' and a drink, I sought cheaper thrills in a chippy - my 'medium' portion further denuded by avaricious gulls, who dived on the polystyrene tray as Stukas upon Dunkirk.

Thus soaked, supp'd and seriously scuppered, I whipped a sketch map from my pocket - whipped away by the wind - and barely reached a venue in Bedford Place, where I was due to appear.

[Suggested performer: middle-aged, thespian type, as if coming down to perform from London. A bit vague about modern ways!]