

Legs

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The Politics of Drinking . . . and more

It was proper 'taters out there today, but the sun jabbed your eyes out from a crazy blue sky, and that's the only excuse Brighton needs to get its legs out. I don't wear shorts myself. If you saw my legs you'd know why. Only an exclusive handful of people have seen my legs (including the midwife) and they are sworn to silence on the matter.

Because it's Brighton, nobody's bothered if you don't conform to its eccentricities. That doesn't stop me wondering whether I ought to try to fit in. I've thought about a tattoo, but I wouldn't know where to put it. The calf seems the trendy position, but nobody's going to see it there, for reasons I've already gone into. I've thought less about a piercing, not being keen on invasive procedures. The other thing I feel slightly naked without is a guitar. Everyone seems to have a guitar slung on their back. I don't know whether they can all play. After all, it could be an air guitar. Or just a case. But I bet they can. Brighton is an extraordinarily musical place.

Last week I went to what I believe is called a 'gig'. When I started going to gigs they were still called concerts. I don't go to many gigs these days, but this was for a good cause – Love Music, Hate Racism. And who can disagree with that. There were three local bands plus an 'open mike' spot, spelt 'open mic', which never looks right to me. So on top of the advertised acts there was a procession of people from the audience getting up to do a turn. Disturbingly, they were all hugely talented. I knew some of them personally, and it was quite a shock. As though you had discovered your best mate was a Methodist or something.

As the evening went on I gradually realised that practically everyone in the audience had been on stage at some point, singing in a voice that was not their own, or playing an instrument.

When I was a boy everyone told me I had 'pianist's hands' which I thought meant I could play the piano. But I had to give up the lessons. My teacher insisted on it.

So here I was, the only spectator in a world of performers. But that's Brighton. And being Brighton, they really don't mind a bit.