

'... it takes passionate pilgrims, vague aliens and other disinherited persons to appreciate the "points" of this admirable country'

— Henry James, *English Hours*

'This is one of the lessons of travel — that some of the strangest races dwell next door to you at home'

— Robert Louis Stevenson, *Across the Plains*

I

The 11.33 to Margate

Everyone seemed to be going to China that year, or else writing rude things about the Arabs, or being frank about Africa. I had other things on my mind. After eleven years in London I still had not been much in Britain. I had not set foot in Wales or even East Anglia. People joked about Bognor Regis. I had never been to Bognor Regis. But I joked about it too! And where was Porlock? And was Northern Ireland a nightmare and Scotland breathtaking? And what exactly were the Lincolnshire Wolds? What I knew of Britain I had got from books. Britain was the most written-about country in the world. That was the problem, really. You read one book about China and you think you've got a good idea of the place; you read twenty books about Britain, even *English Traits* and *Rural Rides*, and you know you haven't got the slightest.

I lived in London for half the year, and the rest of the time went away. I had come to dislike the city. 'A man who is tired of London is tired of life' — no, I was tired of hunting for parking places, tired of the crowds and the scribbled-on walls, the dirty old buildings and the ugly new ones. I was sick of London traffic and London presumptions and London smugness. And the grey underwear on London clothes-lines hanging limply under baggy clouds made me sad. London did not regard itself as a city but rather as an independent republic. Sometimes it seemed as big as Belgium; it could take a whole day to cross it by car. I was also bored with London books, which had titles like *Britain: What Went Wrong?* and *Is Britain Dying?* London people said that what was wrong with Britain was wrong with the western hemisphere. Like many other London people I had never really been in Britain. This floating kingdom was a foreign country.

Britain was nearby, but 'nearby' was misleading. Distances in Britain were meaningless – so many places were so hard to get to, or else hated outsiders, or were names of villages that no longer existed: so much of Britain lay buried. I knew a little bit about some parts because in Britain there was an oral tradition that took the place of travel, like the Bognor jokes and Scotland was breathtaking and Cornwall was creepy and South Wales was awful and Rye was ever so lovely. Everyone appeared to know everything. It was word of mouth. Scotland had the Highlands, Cambridgeshire the Fens, and Norfolk the Broads – the words called up peaks and thickets and puddles. Northerners sounded to me as though they had learned English in language labs. In London, I had once mistaken a Welshman for a Dutchman – something in his inquiring voice. As for the Irish, I had never personally known anyone in London who took an Irishman seriously unless the Irishman was armed. 'Bogtrotters,' people usually said. 'Micks are friendly!' I had never met a soul in London who had been to Northern Ireland.

I did not know anything, and I was beginning to think that I was as bad and lazy as everyone else.

Once, from behind a closed door, I heard an English woman exclaim with real pleasure, 'They are *funny*, the Yanks!' And I crept away and laughed to think that an English person was saying such a thing. And I thought: They wallpaper their ceilings! They put little knitted bobble-hats on their soft-boiled eggs to keep them warm! They don't give you bags in supermarkets! They say sorry when you step on their toes! Their government makes them get a hundred dollar licence every year for watching television! They issue driving licences that are valid for thirty or forty years – mine expires in the year 2011! They charge you for matches when you buy cigarettes! They smoke on buses! They drive on the left! They spy for the Russians! They say 'nigger' and 'Jewboy' without flinching! They call their houses 'Holmleigh' and 'Sparrow View'! They sunbathe in their underwear! They don't say 'You're welcome'! They still have milk bottles and milkmen, and junk-dealers with horse-drawn wagons! They love candy and Lucozade and leftovers called bubble-and-squeak! They live in Barking and Dorking and Shellow Bowells! They have amazing names, like Mr Eatwell, and Lady

Inkpen, and Major Twaddle and Miss Tosh! And they think *we're* funny?

The longer I lived in London the more I came to see how much of Englishness was bluff, and what wet blankets they could be. You told an Englishman you were planning a trip around Britain and he said, 'It sounds about as much fun as chasing a mouse around a pisspot.' They could be deeply dismissive and self-critical. 'We're awful,' they said. 'This country is hopeless. We're never prepared for anything. Nothing works properly.' But being self-critical in this way was also a tactic for remaining ineffectual. It was surrender.

And when an English person said 'we' he did not mean himself – he meant the classes above and below him, the people he thought should be taking decisions, and the people who should be following. 'We' meant everyone else.

'Mustn't grumble' was the most English of expressions. English patience was mingled inertia and despair. What was the use? But Americans did nothing but grumble! Americans also boasted. 'I do some pretty incredible things,' was not an English expression. 'I'm fairly keen,' was not American. Americans were show-offs – it was part of our innocence – we often fell on our faces; the English seldom showed off, so they seldom looked like fools. The English liked especially to mock the qualities in other people they admitted they didn't have themselves. And sometimes they found us truly maddening. In America you were admired for getting ahead, elbowing forward, rising, pushing in. In England this behaviour was hated – it was the way the wops acted, it was 'Chinese fire-drill', it was disorder. But making a quick buck was also a form of queue-jumping, and getting ahead was a form of rudeness – a 'bounder' was a person who had moved out of his class. It was not a question of forgiving such things; it was, simply, that they were never forgotten. The English had long, merciless memories.

There were no blank spaces on the map of Great Britain, the best-known, most fastidiously mapped and most widely trampled piece of geography on earth. No country was easier to travel in – the British invented public transport. And yet I had seen practically nothing of it. I felt ashamed and ignorant, but when

I began to think about travelling around Britain, I became excited – because I knew so little. I wanted to write about it.

Writing about a country in its own language was a great advantage, because in other places one was always interpreting and simplifying. Translation created a muffled obliqueness – one was always seeing the country sideways. But language grew out of the landscape – English out of England, and it seemed logical that the country could only be accurately portrayed in its own language. So what was I waiting for?

The problem was one of perspective: How and where to go to get the best view of the place? It was also a problem in tone – after all, I was an alien.

The British had invented their own solution to travel writing. They went to places like Gabon and Paraguay and joked about the discomforts, the natives, the weather, the food, the entertainments. It was necessary to be an outsider, which was why they had never written about Britain in this way. But it was a mystery to me why no one had ever come to Britain and written about its discomforts and natives and entertainments and unintelligible dialects. The British, who had devised a kind of envious mockery of other cultures, and who had virtually invented the concept of funny foreigners, had never regarded themselves as fair game for the travel writer. They did not encourage aliens to observe them closely. They were like a tribe that plundered abroad and were secretive and inhospitable at home. The British did not make me think of Shakespeare but rather of head-hunters – their travel writing a literary version of head-shrinking that had never been used on them. I was eager to try.

But it was also a problem of itinerary. In a place that was criss-crossed with ant-trails, a kingdom of bottlenecks and private property and high fences, my route was a problem, because there were too many routes. To take all the trains would be no more than a mediocre stunt. The buses did not go to enough places. A bicycle was out – too dangerous, too difficult – another stunt. A car was too simple, and anyway I had lived in London long enough to know that driving on English roads was no fun. My route was crucial. It was the most important aspect of travel. In choosing a route one was choosing a subject. But every mile of Britain had a road through it, there was a track across every

field, a footpath in every acre of woods. Perhaps this was why I had never travelled in Britain: I had been unable to decide on the route.

And then I had my way: narrowly, around the entire coast. It answered every need. There was only one coast, it was one undeviating route, and this way I could see the whole of Britain. In many respects, Britain *was* its coast – nowhere in Britain was more than sixty-five miles from the sea. Nearly the whole of the coast was unknown to me. And so as soon as I decided on this coastal route for my itinerary I had my justification for the trip – the journey had the right shape; it had logic; it had a beginning and an end; and what better way was there to see an island than circumambulating its coast?

The greatest advantage in this tour was that a country tended to seep to its coast; it was concentrated there, deposited against its beaches like the tide-wrack from the sea. People naturally gravitated to the coast, and they wore fewer clothes there – it was normal on the coast to be semi-naked, exposed.

The best trains – the slow, sweet branch lines – plied the coast. Many of these branch lines were doomed. Some people said that none would be left in ten years, and most people agreed that the impending railway strike, planned for the early summer, would kill the branch lines. There were also the green buses – I had sometimes seen them filling a country lane, but I had never ridden on one. And there were footpaths.

I had an impression that there was a continuous footpath that went around the whole coastline of Great Britain. Every part of the coast I had seen so far had had such a footpath. Usually it was a muddy twelve-inch path, with a brisk figure approaching in plus-fours and thick-soled shoes and a crackling plastic mackintosh, and carrying a bag of sandwiches and an Ordnance Survey map. I imagined this person to be just another feature of the British coast, like the old gun emplacements, and the iron piers, and the wooden groynes, and the continuous and circling footpath. But if there was not a footpath around the kingdom there was certainly a beach, and I could walk along the beach – from Fishguard to Aberystwyth, for example, where there was no connecting train. I would try to walk as much as possible; I would take trains if they were interesting lines, or if the weather

was bad; and if I had to, I would take buses. It was so easy to speed through this country I would have to make strict rules in order to slow myself down.

'England resembles a ship in its shape,' wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson in *English Traits*. He was wrong: books by pious aliens were full of kindnesses of this sort. England, of course, resembles a pig, with something on its back. Look at it. It is a hurrying pig; its snout is the south-west in Wales, and its reaching trotters are Cornwall, and its rump is East Anglia. The whole of Britain looks like a witch riding on a pig, and these contours – rump and snout and bonnet, and the scowling face of Western Scotland – were my route.

No British journey could be original. Defoe had done the whole of Britain by road, Daniell and Ayton had sailed around it, Cobbett had gone throughout the south of England on horseback, and more recently H. V. Morton and J. B. Priestley had gone in search of England, banging up and down in the thirties and forties. There were Britain-by-train books and Britain-by-bus books, and books about cycling around. Some people had walked around Britain and written about it. The most impressive recent hike was that of a man who had walked every inch of the coastline. It was seven thousand miles, but he had been in a hurry. He had done it in ten months and practically walked his legs off – given himself two severe pressure fractures in his leg bones. I read his book. The trouble with travel stunts was that the trick was the thing; it was all a form of tight-rope walking and the performer never took his eyes off his own feet.

I wanted to look around and see Britain for myself. I did not intend a stunt, or a test of strength, or a public display. In fact, quite the opposite; and later, tramping the coastal path or riding the slow trains, I sometimes felt like the prince in the old story, who because he distrusts everything he has been told and everything he has read, disguises himself in old clothes and, with a bag slung over his back, hikes the muddy roads talking to everyone and looking closely at things, to find out what his kingdom is really like.

And I wanted to see the future. Travel is so often an experiment with time. In Third World countries I felt I had dropped into

the past, and I had never accepted the notion of timelessness anywhere. Most countries had specific years. In Turkey it was always 1952, in Malaysia 1937; Afghanistan was 1910 and Bolivia 1949. It is twenty years ago in the Soviet Union, ten in Norway, five in France. It is always last year in Australia and next week in Japan. Britain and the United States were the present – but the present contains the future. A season of travelling with my eyes open in Great Britain, I thought, could not fail to show me what was to come. I was a little impatient with distant countries and past decades, but I was not looking for progress or invention necessarily. There was a deterioration and decay that seemed to me more futuristic than utopian cities of steel and glass.

And then an English friend of mine – just yapping – said, 'The seaside belongs to everyone.'

I knew this was exactly right and that I wanted to leave immediately.

I chose to travel on May Day. It was London's Labour Day, celebrated by marching union men and speeches in Trafalgar Square. But in some English villages a May Queen was chosen and crowned with a garland, and there was dancing around a maypole while a watching know-it-all, Major Uprichard, leered at fifteen-year-old Tracey Rivett in her garland and said, 'It's all phallic symbols, of course. Years ago, when we ran around painted with woad, these jollities turned into orgies. You see, the maypole has a desperately obvious significance ...'

Recently, May Day had been renamed and politically neutralized as Spring Bank Holiday. In the south of England it was associated with a day-trip to a coastal resort. It was traditionally a time when people headed for the beach, and since the fifties it had been the day when gangs of youths fought each other with clubs and chains, in Southend and Margate. The English were creatures of habit. And that was the reason I chose Margate.

I left Waterloo East on the 11.33, and at Gravesend I put down my newspaper. Pocahontas – Mrs John Rolfe – was buried at St George's church. The town bore the name Gravesend because, east of it, the dead had to be buried at sea. We approached the River Medway, the joined towns of Rochester and Chatham. My

carriage was less than a third full – perhaps because it was a late train – or was it the low grey sky and the uncertain light? It was cool and damp; the weather forecast was ‘scattered showers’ – it was the forecast for Britain nearly every day of the year. It was no day for the beach.

There were four elderly people in the carriage. One was reading a paper with a headline that said, ‘My Battle With Drugs’. Another old person had been saying as I passed, ‘It was one of those merciful releases –’ There were three families, parents and children, neatly dressed for their outing. A bang outside brought a young woman squinting to the window and her expression said: It sounded like a car backfiring – but that was what they always said about dangerous explosions these days. A little girl was laughing and gasping, and holding a bottle of Tizer: ‘It went down the wrong way!’

An Englishman across the aisle did an extraordinary thing, for an Englishman. He asked me a question.

He said, ‘Walking?’

I was dressed for it – knapsack, all-purpose leather jacket, oily hiking shoes, and (because we were approaching the coast) I had my map unfolded. I was obviously a foreigner, which made his question a safe one. Class-consciousness tended to keep the English rather watchful and buttoned-up. But this was a Bank Holiday train to Margate. Class was hardly an issue here.

Yes, I said, I was walking and also riding – depending on the weather.

‘The weather’s been letting us down,’ he said. The weather in England was not a neutral topic. It was full of personification; it involved struggle and conflict. It could be wayward, or spiteful, and then people said, ‘It’s been trying to rain all day.’ Or it could be toiling on your behalf: ‘The sun’s been trying to come out.’ Or, as the man said, it could be lazy and selfish; it could let you down. People imagined British weather to be something like the British character: it was a British-like miasma up there hovering and doing things to you.

We talked about the weather, this miasma. The man shared the English relief that spring had come. It had been a hard snowy winter, the country had seized up. So this was the annual gift, but it was unimaginable. It was impossible to anticipate the

beauty of spring-time in England. It was sudden, mild, fragrant, and full of colour – magic rising out of the mud.

Then he said, ‘American?’

Yes, I said, but did not elaborate. I said, ‘I’ve always wanted to go to Margate.’

‘You should go to Canterbury instead.’

They always said that, the natives. They sent you to traipse around the sights – the ruins, the churches, the hot streets – and they went to a simple lovely place and had beer under a tree.

‘Full of history,’ he was saying. ‘Lovely town, beautiful old cathedral. You could change at Sittingbourne.’

No, I thought: No sightseeing; no cathedrals, no castles, no churches, no museums. I wanted to examine the particularities of the present.

I said, ‘Where are you going?’

I guessed that his name was Norman Mould. It was one of my small talents to be able to tell a person’s name by looking at him. Those old people up front – they were the Touchmores. The little girl drinking the Tizer – Judith Memery. The man behind the *Express* – Roger Cockpole. And so forth.

Mr Mould said, ‘Ramsgate,’ and that was the first indication I had had – his flicker of satisfaction and his willingness with the word and the way he said it, ‘Ramsgit’ – that Ramsgate was probably posher than Margate. But I also thought: That’s another reason I don’t want to go to Canterbury, Norman. I want to go where everyone else is going.

‘It’s like this Falklands business,’ Mr Mould was saying, but now he was talking to the woman next to him, his wife, Nancy Mould, who was reading a newspaper.

In the next few weeks that was to be a common phrase. Politics would come up, or sometimes it was race, or religion; and then someone would say, *It’s like this Falklands business* . . .

The war had not yet started. The Falklands had been overrun by Argentine troops, and British ships had encircled the islands and had declared an exclusion zone for a radius of two hundred miles. No shots had been fired, no men had been killed; there was little news. Most people assumed this was bluster, and bluff, and counter-bluff, and that after a period of time the Argentines would climb down. Two nights before this, the American

president had smiled at a British journalist on a BBC news programme and said, 'I don't see why there should be any fighting over that ice-cold bunch of rocks down there.'

Mr Mould, across the aisle, had turned away from me. Our conversation had ended, and now I saw why: he was eating. He had taken out a bag of sandwiches and a thermos jug and he and his wife had covered their laps with the newspaper (*British Convoy In War Readiness Off Falklands*) and were sharing lunch. The English became intensely private and rather silent when they ate; their gestures were guarded and economical and precise. They were tidy and self-conscious. Suddenly, eating, they were alone.

It was then that the door at the end of the car banged open and I heard the tramp of heavy boots, and laughter and shouts.

'I fucking will do 'im if he don't fank me next time!'

'You fucking won't, you wally!'

'Fuck off - I will!'

They were loud - ear-splitting - but the picnicking English people across the aisle, and the elderly people, and each young family in its own pew, did not hear a thing. The picnickers went on eating in their tidy way, and everyone else became silent and small.

'- because I fucking said I would!'

I had seen their heads at Chatham passing by the windows of the carriage. I had hoped they would move on to another carriage, and they had. But they were loud and violent and could not sit still, and now that we were past Gillingham ('... the headquarters of the religious sect known as the Jezreelites, or the New and Latter House of Israel') they had entered this carriage. There were seven of them. They called themselves Skinheads.

Their heads were egg-like - completely hairless. But it was not baldness, there was no shine; they were pale grey shaved domes, with the bright white snail-tracks of scars tagged over them. It was the size of the heads that I found alarming. A head without any hair is a small thing. It can look like a knob with eyes and ears. A human being is changed remarkably by hairlessness - the appearance is hardened and the person looks insectile and dangerous. They had tattoos on their heads, small symbols and words, and tattoos on their earlobes, and earrings. They were

dressed identically in short leather bomber jackets, with T-shirts underneath. The backs of their hands were tattooed. The Union Jack was the commonest tattoo among them. They wore very tight jeans that were a bit too short, the cuffs reaching the tops of vicious high-laced boots. The boots were shiny; these boys were oddly clean, their faces were very white.

'Look at that fucking bloke out there - what a silly cunt -'

'ey, leave off, you fucking wally!'

They were frolicking on the seats, thumping each other, and still shouting. Mr and Mrs Mould were drinking tea out of plastic mugs.

'The long-range forecast called for fine weather,' one of the Touchmores whispered.

Then, behind me, I heard, 'Daddy -' It was a child's small voice: *Dud-day*.

'Please, darling, I'm reading.'

'Daddy, why -'

'Yes, darling?'

'Daddy, why are those men saying "fuck off"?''

'I don't know, darling. Now do please let me read my paper.'

His voice was nervous, as if he had been holding his breath. I had certainly been holding mine. The seven Skinheads had disturbed the Sunday peace of this joggling train; they had brought uneasiness to the car. They were fooling, but their fooling was violent and their language was terrible and reckless. I am sure that everyone else in the car was paying close attention to our progress along the line. We had passed Sittingbourne and Faversham and were headed towards Whitstable.

'There, Daddy, they just said it again. "Fucking hell."'

'Hush, darling. There's a good girl.'

'And that one said fuck, too.'

'That's enough, darling.' The man's voice was very subdued. He did not want anyone to hear. But he was just behind me, and his daughter was next to him - she could not have been more than five or six. I caught a glimpse of her. Her name was probably Sharon.

'Daddy -'

Dud-day.

'- why don't they put them off the train?'

The man did not reply to this. He probably would not have been heard in any case. The Skinheads were screaming, and running in the aisle – one had the word *Skin* tattooed on his neck – and one little Skinhead, a boy of about thirteen, also tattooed and shaven, and wearing an earring, was yelling, 'You fucking cunt, I'll fucking kill you!' and kicking at another Skinhead, who was older and bigger and laughing at this little infuriated Skin.

Herne Bay had a reputation for ruffraff, but the Skinheads did not get off at Herne Bay. They were still swearing and kicking the seats and pushing each other as we pulled out of Herne Bay. And at Birchington-on-Sea ('grave of D. G. Rossetti, d. 1882, memorial window in the church'), one Skinhead screamed, '*I'll fucking kill you right now for saying vat!*'

They had been an awful irruption, and they had brought a sense of terror to the carriage. Such language, such fighting! The day was damp-grey and peaceful, but these monkey-faced boys with their tattoos and their tiny heads had made it frightening. And all the while, the decent English people with lowered heads and mugs of tea were pretending that nothing was happening; and the Skinheads were behaving as if no one else existed – as if they were alone in the railway carriage. In that sense they were very English Skinheads.

We came to Margate. The Skinheads pushed to the door and fought their way out. Then we got out, politely – no, you first, I insist. None of us was harmed, but I think most of us would have said it was unsettling, the way you feel with drunks on board, or crazy people. We had felt threatened. I had meant to describe our progress to the coast, and when I had seen the mist over the Cooling Marshes I had wanted to recall the opening chapters of *Great Expectations*. It was too late for that. It was so hard to remember Dickens or Merrie England or 'this sceptr'd isle' or the darling buds of May so near to seven roaring Skinheads. All I could think was: 'We will fight them on the beaches ...'

The Skinheads had come to the coast at Margate to fight. There was something nasty and purposeful about them. Everywhere, those tiny heads on big shoulders and the clumping of their jack-

boots. Their enemies were the Mods. Mods wore knee-length army coats and crash helmets, and they rode motor scooters. They buzzed up and down the promenade. The Skinheads gathered across the promenade from the amusement arcade called 'Dreamland', in a little park, several hundred of them – all those shaven heads.

It was bleak and cold, and the wind pressed from the leaden-coloured Channel. I kept reminding myself that it was the first of May. But there was a holiday crowd at Margate, too, milling around, toting children, wearing hats that said *Kiss Me Quick – Squeeze Me Tight*.

On the Margate Sands I went for a stroll and then looked back at the town, at all the boarding houses jammed tightly on the terraces like plaster prizes on the shelf of the coconut shy, *Vacancies* signs in the empty windows, and canned laughter and real shrieks from 'Dreamland', and Indian families walking in groups of twelve on Marine Parade, and the Skinheads and seagulls and Mods in helmets, and the broken fingernails of their dirty hands, and scores of policemen, and the low sky and the dank foreshore and the dark corrugated water of the Channel, and a pop song playing – *Kick it – Kick it to death*: I could connect nothing with nothing.

Some people wore summer clothes in a hopeful goose-pimpled way, but most were warmly dressed. I saw a number of people wearing scarves and gloves. Mittens in May! There were about ten people standing on the sandy beach, but no one was swimming. They were peering at an oil slick that was a smooth puddle in the sea. On the sea wall there were scribbles saying WASTED YOUTH and ANARCHY and NAZIS ARE THE MASTER RACE. There were rain showers in the east, over the water, tall grey verticals hanging closely like wet towels on a line. It was no day for the seaside, and yet no one looked disappointed. Ten minutes later, when it started to drizzle, no one ran for cover.

Margate had never been fashionable. It had never even been nice. It had become a watering-place because doctors in the eighteenth century believed that sea water was healthful – not only sitting in it, or swimming, but also washing in it, and especially drinking it, preferably in the morning. It was the quest

for good health that brought people to Margate and later to Brighton. It was the making of the British seaside resort, not only the notion that sea air was a sexual excitant – this may be true – but also that sea water was good for the bowels: 'A pint is commonly sufficient in grown persons to give them three or four sharp stools.'

The first bathing machine in the world appeared at Margate. It was a changing-room on wheels and, pushed a little distance into the sea, it preserved a prudish swimmer's modesty. Books about sea water and health became best sellers. In 1791, the Royal Sea-Bathing Infirmary was founded on the western cliffs of Margate. But nothing improved the tone of the place. In 1824, a traveller wrote, 'From an obscure fishing village, Margate, in the course of little more than half a century, has risen into a well-frequented, if not fashionable, watering-place.' A hundred years later, Baedeker's *Great Britain* described Margate as 'one of the most popular, though not one of the most fashionable watering-places in England'. So it had always been crummy and Cockneyfied, just like this, people down from London for the day shunting back and forth on the front in the cold rain, and walking their dogs and gloomily fishing and looking at each other.

I had thought of staying. I'll find a boarding house, I thought, and spend the rest of the day milling around and watching the progress of the gang-fight between the Skinheads and the Mods. I'll have fish and chips and a stick of Margate rock and a pint of beer. Tomorrow, after a big English breakfast, I'll sling on my knapsack and set off for Broadstairs and Ramsgate and Sandwich, along the coastal path.

The Skinheads had started scuffling, pulling Mods off their motor scooters. The policemen went after them with raised truncheons. I had no stomach for this. And did I have to spend the night here to confirm what I could easily predict? I was repelled by the tough ugly youths, the aimless people, the nasty music, the stink of frying, the gusts of violence. I decided not to stay. Why should I suffer a bad night in a dreary place just to report my suffering? I wanted to see the whole coast in a fairly good mood. So I kept walking, I strolled down Marine Parade,

past the ruined pier, and I climbed out of Margate in the rain that cold May afternoon, and started my tour around the kingdom's coast.