

ABBA nights: John Wells

It's the evening of Saturday, April 6, 1974. I'm a 23 year old post graduate fine art student, in my first year of postgraduate at Reading University in the UK.

It's a weekend, and I've decided to catch a train to Brighton as nightlife at Reading is boring at the best of times, compared to the buzzy social whirl in my old art school town. Besides, all my friends still live there, no one wishes to leave after we graduated the previous year.

Someone told me of a party somewhere off the seafront, maybe in Hove. I'm wearing my best. I've been to the art college bar for a beer but it's early and not many of my cronies there yet. I decide to try the party. I cross Grand Parade and the gardens, the lights of The King and Queen public house twinkle in the fast falling dusk. Passed the statue of George IV, his attention seemingly oriented across the Steyne to the sea. I duck through the India Gate, the onion domes of the Royal Pavilion silhouetted against a rosy sunset.

The Pavilion Gardens are deserted. Something must be happening tonight. The dome of the Royal Stables loom to my right. I can hear music. I pause at a pair of giant blue doors, and put my ear against them and hear - 'My, my, at Waterloo Napoleon did surrender'

It was ABBA - a moment of history was being made that night.