

AN OLD GARDEN SHED

I am an old garden shed – a *very old* garden shed. I have maintained this position for many years – since the beginning of the last century, in fact.

I was first put together after a magnificent old house was built some 50 yards away from where I now stand. I began life as a ‘Summer House’, so that the owners could fling open my two big glass doors which folded right back in order to place their deck chairs in line with the sun, to relax, bathe in the warmth, and to enjoy the balmy summer evenings. I was very smart in those days – I had a balustrade along the front, topped by a hand-rail and protected by an overhung roof which, in turn, protected my people from the rain and the sun. The ladies from the big house wore long skirts and would sport wide-brimmed hats, often carrying a parasol. It was not at all like now-a-days – but I won’t go into that!

They had gardeners who worked very hard on the surrounding land, planting beautiful roses, hollyhocks, lupins, delphiniums, placed to create a kaleidoscope of colour. Beech trees, lime and sycamore, mere saplings, were added to the scene amongst already old oaks, tall and majestic, providing pleasant shade along with myself - the summer house. When I was no longer required and the activities of the owners became less demanding, there were still exciting times when couples would seek shelter from the rain and prolong their stay here – an excuse, I thought– but I won’t go into that either.

In time, everything was changing, not only the style of ladies’ clothes – quite unrecognisable from earlier days – but my interior was altered too. I became a ‘shed’. The glass doors were replaced by a wooden one, although I retained two small windows, one on either side of the door, allowing just enough light for me to see around. I had become more useful as a storage area, although I am pleased to say the garden around me was still well attended and always very beautiful, cared for by the people living in the house, men and women, throughout the years. I became useful then, as garden tools and a machine which actually *cut* the lawn, were housed in my care.

One day, a strange contraption with two wheels they called a ‘bicycle’, was pushed in and left with me, followed a few years later by two smaller similar contraptions which arrived, handled by two excited children. Before this, I would sometimes see prams in the garden, often left close to me to provide shade for them, I suspect – so I was still useful, in a funny sort of way. I continued to appreciate the lovely garden which boasted more colour every year, as some branches from the developing trees were trimmed to allow the sun to work its wonders on nature, which continued to flourish.

Then the time arrived when the children, now grown up, moved away from the big house, leaving another family from which an older man came to look at me very carefully. He then started to put up shelves on two sides, then brought a chair and added a third shelf he called a 'desk'. Another man called an 'electrician' whatever that may mean, entered with wires and switches, helping to make me into an 'office' I heard the men say. I was sad to think my days as a Summer House had really ended, and realised my purpose was now totally different. No longer would ladies and gentlemen come to me to relax and admire the view, and treat me as 'special'. Even now, someone is painting my outside with a very smelly substance – I heard it called 'creosote' to keep me strong, I heard. What is the world coming to?

But I have still retained those lovely memories whenever I look back over the years. The beautiful garden remains to remind me and cheer me up. After all, I *am* a very old shed and I am happy that I have served my purpose at least, whatever and whenever I was needed. I have those memories which I hope will preserve me – along with the creosote for many years.

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