

From Then to Now... A Tale of Transformation

by Lynn Matthews

It's May Whitsuntide 1969

I'm 8 years old, sat on the train with my red bucket & spade.

Whistle blows, we are off! Leeds to Scarborough, all packed up and safe. Dad guarding the suitcases.

Singing to the rhythm of the train, Diddly dee, diddly dah, diddly dee, diddly dah.

York, Malton Seamer, Scarborough!

Settled into our digs on Scalby Road. Ready for the long walk to South Cliff.

"You get a better class of people at the Spa end' said me Mum.

The gardens, for that week, in that place we had time.

"See that, si thi?' said me Dad. "That's wild garlic is that!' said me Dad.

"What can you hear?' he said. "Not just seagulls tha knows. All sorts of birds in here!"

My Dad: Son of Barnsley.

Tall, distinctive. Well read, clever. Apprentice to Manager in a lifetime of graft.

Took pride in his appearance.

Collar & tie, shoes polished, even when he was on the Bowling Green.

But here, in Scarborough, when he caught the sun, he was all ruddy red in his flat cap. Tie loosened, sleeves rolled up (just a bit) to show a pale forearm. Let his guard down.

Here, he became unbuttoned.

I can see us all in the Rose Garden.

Mum is sitting, never without her needles, knitting her love in double knit wool.

Clickety clack, clickety clack, clickety clack

My Brother, head in a book or fiddling with his fishing net. 'Hey Doy... calls me Dad. I've got a bag of Monkey Nuts for you squirrels. Here you are!'

Me & Dad on the putting green; just me & him. Pulling my leg when I missed a shot.

"Eee lass; what do you call that? Get the ball & try agin'

I got to know him here. The real him. He'd laugh, eat ice cream. Relax.

Closed up like a clam when we got back home though. I craved his love.

I lived each year to year, longing for Scarborough. To be seen. To be heard.

Grew up, moved 'Down South'. Always came back to Scarborough though! Teenage Northern Soul week enders, Parents Golden Wedding and brought my own lad to feed the squirrels.

I got very ill, suffered with my health. I had cancer.

Never dreamed I'd move back North but I did!

“I want to live on South Cliff, near the gardens”

My Husband arranged it all and we moved!

Now I can be here every day, together, alone or with my dog Ramsey.

It's a place to sit, my favourite place. See the sea, hear the waves & birds singing, feel the wind. Watch children making their own memories.

I can see myself, that 8 year old girl in white socks, wool skirt & cardigan, craving her Dad's affection.

I have come to realise now that I don't need to look externally for affection, for love, for approval of others. I can just be me! I can love myself for who I am!

The gardens have been a healing space. They have helped me to appreciate the woman that I have now become. A happy, carefree space! My inner beauty mirrored in the wildlife & flowers all around me.

A place of safety, of continuity. A place of a million memories. Not many places are so special.

Here I can be ME for ME! I wake up with a smile & feel like I am on holiday every day!

I am now strong, healthy and happy. I don't have a red spade anymore, but I've remembered how to play. I thank the Gardens for holding me, for being my healing balm.