





Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

## Vintage Festival

A few weeks ago we went to an event in a nearby park which celebrated the vehicles and lifestyle of the middle part of the 20th century. There were classic cars, motorbikes and scooters, and stalls selling items from earlier eras. The first thing we saw on entering the park gates were rows of vintage cars, in every colour and shape, all gleaming, polished and perfect in every detail. They were parked on the grass in spaced out rows, with plenty of room for admirers to wander around and inspect the chrome work and elegant interiors. The older visitors were reminiscing on when they owned such cars and were obviously enjoying seeing them again, restored to a condition probably better than when they first left the factory. It was difficult to imagine that these cars were the ultimate in modernity at the time.

There were stalls selling every sort of vintage item, household goods, gadgets, and toys, but mostly clothes stalls, with genuine vintage shirts and dresses in gaudy colours and bold designs, boots and belts, hats and handbags, and all the accoutrements that went with them. Quite a few people were already dressed in their forties, fifties and sixties outfits, and I had to remind myself that they were not necessarily reliving those times, as many of them would not have been born then. But they faithfully copied the look, including hairstyles, so they did appear to have walked out of the pages of a magazine, a poster or a colour film of those periods. This was an opportunity to try out different fashions from the past, exciting and fun for the younger people, and a trip down memory lane for the older people, especially as all the items for sale were genuine ones, with the expected wear and tear apparent on them. So, nostalgia and novelty, all within reach for various age groups, but not so far back in time as to be alien or strange.

There were several large tents dedicated to different time periods. One had a dance floor, with fifties style music and people dancing in the styles popular then. Another had toys of the sixties and seventies, including a row of computers all loaded with very basic early computer games, simple to play and only requiring fast reactions rather than thinking or strategy. The forties tent had another dance floor with wartime music and dancing, and a cake table with everything made to Ministry of Food recipes. In the opposite corner were two tables containing a large array of children's toys and games, many of which I recognised and remembered as still being available in the sixties. On the tent walls were reproductions of posters on how households can help the war effort, reducing wastage and volunteering for various duties. Outside the tent was a shelter, a mock-up of a little Dig For Victory vegetable patch and a warden sitting reading his wartime newspaper. From the far corner of the park enclosure came the sound of wartime songs, some jolly, others wistful and emotional, an encouragement for the people of the time to share their troubles and appreciate their triumphs.

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I left the event briefly to do some shopping but on the way to the supermarket I glimpsed a lot of scooters zooming down the high street. After shopping I quickly returned to the park and found all the scooters parked down the centre of the area. They were in all colours and sizes, and my favourites were the ones with lots of extra headlamps on the front and a multitude of wing mirrors at the sides. Scooters always look like fun, as they are low and stable looking, and gentler than motorbikes. I did ride on such a scooter when I was about eight, when my uncle invited me to sit behind him on a short journey around the streets. It was quite alarming as I had to hold on to him and there was nothing behind me to help keep me on, and especially hair-raising when we leaned over sideways as we went round corners. I am sure it is more pleasant to be the one holding onto the handlebars and to be in control of the speed and direction.

I was delighted to see an old Routemaster bus parked on the grass. These were the ones I got on every day to school, with no closing doors and an open back entrance, wonderful chrome bell pushes both up and downstairs, and an especially interesting concertina leather blind that the driver could pull down behind him to block the passengers' view of his cab. In the main display area there was also a modern single decker bus that had been converted into a snack vending bar, the Omnibus Kitchen, which can be driven around to any such event. This is my ideal bus and I suppose one could go further and make a complete home out of it, rather like a long red caravan with all comforts and facilities included. I shall think of it every time I see my normal identical bus approaching, especially on the way home when things are getting a little peckish. (864 words)