

Rainbow Cottage

It was a lovely sunny evening in June, when Lynne and Bob, relaxed in their garden, in Hampshire. Life was good, business was going well, and Bob was looking forward to retirement. As the sun gradually started to set, Bob turned to Lynne, and with a smile suggested, "Lynne, why don't we go away for a day or two." Lynne was surprised, but pleased, "but where." Bob leant back in his chair, and said, "How about a weekend in a Devon cottage." Lynne responded with great enthusiasm, "ok, that sounds good to me I will just nip indoors, and bring out my Laptop."

After a minute or two, Lynne re-appeared and opened up the computer. "What should we Google for? Bob," Bob thought for a while and responded with his idea. "How about an oldie world thatched cottage, near the sea or something like that." Lynne duly obliged, with enthusiasm, and after searching for a few minutes, several items appeared, but one in particular caught Lynne's eye. "How about this Bob, an old cottage on the edge of the village of Yealmpton, close to the South Hams, and the sea." "That sounds brilliant" replied Bob, "What is it called?" "Rainbow Cottage" advised Lynne. On a closer look, it appeared that Rainbow Cottage had a thatched roof, and fitted the exact specification of the oldie world theme, kept in a traditional style, by its owners' Pauline and George Smith. It would appear just the place, even down to oil lamps, and the owners' appearance; dressed in period Victorian clothes, just to add to the atmosphere.

Both Pauline and George felt an immediate affinity to the location and accommodation. Rainbow Cottage appeared delightfully fixed in another time. Lynne immediately booked the cottage online for the following weekend which to their surprise was available, due to a cancellation. Lynne and Bob could hardly contain their excitement as they eagerly discussed the peculiar setting and unusual features of a dwelling which appeared out of the ordinary, but captured their imagination and hearts. Quite remarkably it emanated all the qualities of a place belonging indefinitely to the past.

Friday morning quickly arrived and with a mood of quiet expectation Lynne and Bob prepared for the journey ahead, wondering where their journey would lead them, and what experiences awaited them in Yealmpton. With eagerness and anticipation Lynne and Bob loaded up their car with some essentials; luggage, food, and their cycles which they neatly positioned on a rack on the back of their car. Finally after careful preparation, and with the satnav correctly coded, off they went heading along the M27, westwards towards Devon.

Lynne and Bob discussed their thoughts on the subject of the unusual and curious cottage which awaited their arrival. The whole experience so far radiated a mysterious aura of excitement. Lynne and Bob hoped it would be all they imagined. Their journey went well with few holdups, with a short stop near Dorchester, to visit Thomas Hardy's cottage, to enjoy a quick look around, followed by a sandwich and coffee. It was early evening before Yealmpton finally appeared in view. Reassuringly the satnav announced; "You have arrived."

On arrival the couple opened the car doors and walked carefully towards the cottage with excitement, so as not to disturb anything, not even the soil beneath their feet, trying not to adjust the picturesque setting in any way. Hardly believing they had reached their destination, and with the front door firmly in sight, they were only moments from the experience they had imagined from the time they set eyes upon this infectious little cottage with all its mystery and intrigue. Bob grabbed hold of a chain to the right hand side of the door and as by magic, a bell sounded from within, which seemed to echo throughout the cottage's entire interior. Within a minute or two, a lady opened the door, dressed exactly as pictured in the advert. "Good evening, you must be Lynne and Bob," " I'm Pauline" "please do come in."

Pauline led the way into the lounge, where a man sat beneath a low beamed ceiling. "Welcome to Rainbow Cottage," said George in a broad Devon dialect, " best grab a seat, 'ee must be tired, after that journey from Hampshire." Pauline dis-appeared into the kitchen, and re-emerged with some coffee and biscuits. "We live across the road" said George, "I'll show 'ee around, and then leave 'ee to it." Lynne and Bob followed George, on the tour of the old cottage. "Wonderful," said Bob, the smell of the oil lamps that lit their way added to the feel of the place, and emitted a comfortable warm glow, reminiscent of a past era.

Pauline and George, wished the couple a goodnight, and made their exit through the front door. Lynne looked at Bob, "crumbs, what a place". "It sure is different" Bob replied, as he unloaded a few essentials from the car. The tired travellers then made their way to the bedroom. "Goodnight love" said Bob, as he kissed his wife on the cheek, "Sleep well" as he then proceeded to blow out the candle, on the bedside table.

Bob did not sleep well, the clock on the church tower, chimed out the hour, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, two o'clock; each chime sounding louder than the previous hour, reminding him of his wakefulness. Then three o'clock arrived, and his attention was drawn to a

shuffling noise outside the window. Bob rose from the bed, and looked out. To his surprise, there was Pauline and George, placing some bottles of milk on the door step. Bob scratched his head and retired once more to bed. They sure do live a different life around here, he thought to himself.

The following morning was warm and sunny. Lynne and Bob headed downstairs for breakfast. As they reached the dining room, the smell of bacon and eggs drifted warmly in from the kitchen. Bob opened the kitchen door, to find Pauline and George, busily cooking breakfast. "Morning" smiled George, "Us thought we would surprise 'ee with some breakfast this morning, "ope 'ee likes it." Bob was totally amazed, "Yes, thank you very much, we did not realise this was on the menu." "That's no problem, don 'ee rise up hungry; hope ye both enjoy your visit here with us" said George, "Sit ye down in the dining room, and us il bring it through." Lynne and Bob looked at each other, and headed into the dining room and took a seat at the table. "There ye are me ansome, do 'ee help yoursel" said George. The couple enjoyed their breakfast, and expressed their thanks, and then headed off to explore the area. "Have a good day" shouted George, as they headed down the road.

Lynne and Bob enjoyed their day, visiting Bigbury on Sea, and the beautiful Burgh Island. The beautiful seascapes were impressive, and rejuvenating. As lunch time approached; Lynne and Bob decided to seize the opportunity and stop for some lunch outside the Pilchard Inn. They stopped for a while, taking in the view of people enjoying themselves by the sea and reflected on their own experiences so far. Their tour then continued, with a visit to the quaint old fishing village of Salcombe. All too quickly the day was drawing to a close. "I suppose, it's time we headed back to the cottage "said Bob, "time is moving on." Lynne looked at her husband,' and observed herself thinking; yes, he was still the man she had fallen in love with when she was in her teens. It seemed that this trip was meant to be. Maybe it was time for a romantic night together, back at Rainbow cottage.

Not knowing the area, Bob set the satnav to guide them back to Yealmpton. The twisting, winding roads and lanes of South Devon, were indeed different from driving in Hampshire. Fortunately, after a few miles of careful driving and some deliberation, the village appeared. Bob looked at Lynne, "I felt sure the cottage was on the left you know," Lynne looked puzzled. "Yes, you are right, but where is it." They drove through the village several times, but just could not find the cottage. "I give up" said Bob "Let's ask someone."

As they sat pondering their plight, it would seem that just by chance, a green van containing an elderly gentleman; emerged from a lane bordered on both sides by high hedges. "He may know" said Bob, "I'll ask him." The van came to a stop. "Excuse me" said Bob, "do you know where I can find Rainbow Cottage please." The old boy looked puzzled. "Rainbow Cottage" he replied. "Yes! I know Rainbow Cottage." With that he reached into his glove compartment, and retrieved a book. He started to thumb through the pages, then stopped, and turned the book to show Bob a picture. "That's it innit." "Yes said Bob." "Won't find it 'ere no more mate." Bob looked at the picture, yes sure enough, there was Rainbow Cottage, with Pauline and George stood at the door. "What do you mean, not no more" asked Bob. The old boy took a deep breath. "This ere photograph, was taken in 1300. The couple stood by the door used to run the village dairy back then." Bob laughed, "That's impossible, we saw them this morning after staying the night in the cottage." "Couldn't have done, that cottage caught fire just a month or so after this photograph was taken. The story goes in the village; that the couple were cooking breakfast, and a spark went up the chimney, and caught the thatch alight. Nothing left after that." "What about the couple" quizzed Bob. "They left the village and moved to Hampshire to start up again." Bob looked stunned. "Crumbs, thank you." "No problem" he replied, and drove off.

Bob looked at Lynne, and Lynne looked back at Bob. What have they seen or haven't they seen. They sat, and after a long silence, agreed, well, we are here now, so we might as well find some new accommodation for the night. This was eventually found near the old town of Plympton.

The following morning at breakfast, having not slept well to say the least, they decided to use their bikes to ride up to the popular cycle route; through the Plym Valley, from Plymbridge, and to return for lunch. They set off along Plymbridge Road, towards the bridge, which was a mile or two away. On route they noticed a shop on the right hand side of the road. "That's handy" said Lynne, "I'll pop in and buy some sandwiches." She entered the shop and picked out some sandwiches from the fridge, and made her way to the counter to pay. The lady turned around to serve Lynne. "Oh hello Lynne, nice to see you again." Said Pauline.

Ray Steed

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