

**MURIEL
RURIAL
IN
THE
VOICE**

Muriel Rurial in the Voice

The “nearly “ complete works of Muriel Rurial are now available in the attachments - “nearly” because a few editions are missing from our printed collection.

The story of Muriel is told in the following extracts from more recent editions.

*Thank
you*



September 2016

to Muriel Rurial who has decided to put aside the pen. Muriel has contributed to the Voice since the Autumn of 2002, providing monthly entertainment, intrigue and sometimes bemusement. Muriel will be missed (although Richard of Kent Aloominum may have mixed feelings!).



March 2022

KENT ALOOMINUM

News of the planned redevelopment of the Kent Aluminium site reminded me of the affection in which the shop was held by “Muriel Rurial” (and no doubt by many villagers). Here is one of Muriel’s pieces from the Voice archives (August 2007).

Margaret Jeffery

MURIEL RURIAL

I wandered into Kent Aloominum; I had missed the whole process of buying something in there. The friendly staff with their gentle humour. The lovely floorboards, worn smooth by generations in search of the right tool, screw, flex, cable, elbow, bend, rod, brush And the aroma as we step across the threshold is pure luxury.

I stand there drinking in the smells of a time gone by, that remains here still preserved by Richard and his crew of “assistants fantastique”. I make my way to the shelves housing screws, nuts, bolts, washers. Chrome, black, brass, round head, flat head, counter sunk; and there I dip my

hands into the bins where they are housed and let them run through my fingers, like gold.... Ahhh. And the power and the glory is that I can buy one or two of these gems. I don't have to buy a packet of twelve and throw eleven away, or put them in a drawer where I'll never need them, or remember where I've put them if ever I do need them... There are mugs of tea on the counter. There are always mugs of tea on the counter because it's relaxed, informal in there. Where they'll take a sip in between serving, but you never feel that the tea is more important than you.

And beyond those bins of gold, more wonderful things for me to deftly touch and delight in. Hooks, measures, penknives, wire wool, thermometers, sandpaper and it doesn't end there. No Sir! Because just when you're feeling sad, thinking you've exhausted the wonderful experience that is Kent Aloominum, you discover, like the second layer of a box of chocolates, a small archway that leads to a veritable cornucopia of articles on offer. Through the archway then, like a child at Christmas entering Santa's Grotto, I find mousetraps, goldfish bowls, mothballs, budgies' ladders, rubber bones, fish tank divers. Ohhhh it's wonderful.

Then making my way back through that magic archway, the pièce de résistance, a small almost secret area where Chubb, Yale, Mortice, Union, car, in fact every conceivable type of key is cut. Keys that you know will never fail you when you get them home. For it is there that the best key cutting in the whole world is performed. All hail Des, genius of the spinning, cutting wheel....

Onward, destination the plumbing fittings. Where I plunge my hands into the plastic bends, elbows, traps and tees and rattle them around. Sometimes spilling them out of the bins to tumble onto the floor. But Richard is never cross, he simply looks up and smiles. An expression that says "It's OK Muriel, we know, we know....".

Sometimes, on rare occasions, I may leave without purchasing anything. But it doesn't matter, I'm not frowned upon if I don't spend any money. Nobody is. Sometimes I, like others, am merely seeking advice. Advice that is glaringly obvious to the cognoscenti of hardware who staff Kent Aloominum but never look down upon us bumbling "do-it-yourself" fools. No it doesn't matter but, on this occasion, I did buy something. I bought another watering can. I couldn't resist it, they were displayed out front in an amazing display, Richard informed me as I was paying, was entitled "a cavalcade of cans", £3.95 each. Well actually I bought two, as just one missing spoilt the symmetry of the display.

Oh how I love Kent Aloominum ... But hand on heart now Muriel, is it the staff, the products, the smell, or is it something more profound than that?

Why is my house full of articles purchased there. Things I don't need, things I did need but now have dozens of. Why do I keep returning? Well I don't know, and perhaps there are those of you out there who

experience the same need, the same longing as I do. Others who, like me, in our quiet moments of honest reflection, consider our motives for patronising Kent Aloominum beyond our needs, and arrive at the same frank conclusion. It's nostalgia and a longing for the way things were. And "K A", like other certain aspects of our village, symbolises a world all but vanished in today's society.

Go in there and experience it. Sense the ghost of tradesmen past as you negotiate the aisles. Hear the buzz and screech of keys being cut, drowning out the humorous banter of staff. See all walks of life wandering the store, consulting scraps of paper – reminders of materials required, mumbling softly to themselves the mechanics of a projected task.

Stroll through those doors that transport us back to the way we once were all those years ago throughout England. Briefly wallow in that atmosphere this fine store evokes. And after? Well, would you be interested in buying a couple of watering cans from me? I've got dozens of 'em.

MR

February 2023

MURIEL RURIAL

I have heard the sad news that the person who for many years contributed to this magazine under the name of Muriel Rurial has died. That person sought to maintain their anonymity to the extent that articles were sent to me by post rather than risk anyone seeing them being delivered to the house. However, for those who wondered who it was, I feel that I can now confirm that "Muriel" was Derek Freeman who lived in Black Horse Mews and drove a black cab. He loved many aspects of village life and was concerned about it changing. Here is one of his articles from October 2010.

Margaret Jeffery

Muriel Rurial

A FAIRY STORY

Once upon a time there was a little village in Kent where strangers exchanged greetings, church bells rang out and, if you so desired, you could purchase just a handful of nails.

Also there was a sweet shop, a tiny greengrocers, a bakers - so many friendly individual stores. Best of all, a charity shop. A place where people worked, not for money but for the pleasure it gave them knowing it was for the good of others.

In this village the community spirit thrived as it had done for generations. Drama groups, WI and a fair share of eccentrics added to its appeal. A place very few people moved away from...

Now in every fairy story there is a villain. Dragons, trolls, ogres fulfilling their role in fairy tale folklore. And that little village in Kent was

no exception.

Their villain was a giant. Nothing new there you might say but this giant was different. His voice was not booming, it didn't shake fruit from the trees; he never wore twelve league boots that set houses trembling as he strode past. His was a subtle villainy, disguised in a cloak of goodness.

He promised so many good things and benefits for the people. Things like food, clothes, household items, in fact everything they ever needed, and all this for less than they could have imagined. He spoke kindly to the Mayor and those official people in their comfortable offices. Those who would decide the fate of the village folk; folk who trusted them to represent them.

The giant promised those officials help in village projects and suggested he might also build houses himself, that others might live there. What a generous giant he was.

Of course, chain of office and its underlings did not want to upset the giant, after all, look at the benefits he promised to bring to the village. And so it was agreed, despite protest from those in the village who recognised the giant's selfish schemes; it was agreed that permission be granted...

Soon building work began and a huge place befitting a giant was completed. It housed everything the giant promised and even things he "forgot" to mention: a café, an opticians, a chemist, everything, all under that huge roof.

And steadily, one by one, the little shops in the village were forced to close. But the giant was very generous, he recognised their plight and bought their shops from them and the land they occupied. What a kind, friendly giant he was. Then later he built more houses that filled with people and they too shopped in his store.

Bigger and bigger the giant's stake grew until the village was no more. Swallowed up to be part of a small town. A place where there are lots of new houses, car parks, bright advertising hoardings proclaiming the giant's name. A place where community spirit is no more. A place where strangers hurry by without a "good morning"; where, even if you so desired, you could not buy just a handful of nails.

The giant never goes back there, he is far too busy continuing his good work. Surely he is the kindest, most generous giant there has ever been. In fact at this very moment he sits in his ivory tower, scanning the map, pondering where he might go next.

For the good of the people, of course.

MR