

PROFILE

ALAN HARBER - MILKMAN

Imagine waking up at 3 o'clock in the morning and getting ready to start delivering your goods at 4am! Imagine doing this 3 days a week for the past 5 years in all sorts of weather? I asked myself these very questions as I shuffled around my kitchen trying to adjust to the fluorescent light looking to make myself a cup of coffee. I was scheduled to meet up with milkman extraordinaire Alan Harber, a franchisee of Brazier Dairies of Chesham. He hires his float (nicknamed Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh because of the EAW registration) and buys his stock from the dairy to deliver his wares in the Chiltern parish of Sarratt and outlying farms.

I had been warned by the dairy managers that I'd hear Alan before seeing him, as he is a whistler of note. True enough, before I work out the tune he's whistling, he extends a warm hand and introduces himself. A strong set man with muscular arms and shoulders squeezes my hand and hopes I'm up to a long day ahead. He sets to loading his float and I'm surprised to see him handling a vast amount of milk crates, bread, cheeses, eggs, orange juice, biscuits. "I sell more than milk. I sell a service. If the customers buy milk, I might as well sell them some other necessities"! Once he's fully loaded (he does it all himself at a double quick pace!), he invites me to sit alongside him warning me that the seats are not very comfortable and "that it is probably going to get worse as the day moves on"!

The sky is a fantastically deep blue as the first streaks of orange try to break through the stubborn clouds. I settle back into my seat and Alan mentions that he's a twitcher (serious birdwatcher!) and a dedicated walker. "Keeps me happy and gives me something to do. That and my radio are my companions. I love the quiet although sometimes it can be a little too quiet out on your own". With a clink of bottles Alan begins his jog up 300 driveways for the day.

From the dogs to the postman, everyone acknowledges Alan. He's a mini celebrity in Sarratt. He's often seen selling his wares on the 3rd Sunday of every month at the Sarratt Sunday morning market. A lane comes alive as we enter to the sounds of clinking bottles and "Good morning" to the whistling Alan. You get a true sense that in some wonderful way, the milkman really does bring a bit of sunshine into the lives of the residents.

Written by Mykell Nicholaus