

Memories of Arthur Hut: Last Of The Village Old-Timers

Kevin Close

Arthur Hut (Pattimore) and his wife Peggy were good friends of my late parents. They lived in a cottage at the rear of Church House in Higher Street.

I am 57 now so remember Arthur and Peggy from when I was a child. My parents and I used to visit them at the cottage.



Arthur by the cottage door

I remember it had no running water and they had a cast iron hand pump in the yard outside. The toilet was in a little stone shed at the side of the cottage, which housed a rather primitive and unsanitary plank with a large and small hole to sit on. The effluent was washed away with a bucket of water from the pump and flowed down a little channel, through a hole in the outer wall and into the vegetable garden!

Upstairs overlooked the spooky graveyard of the church. Downstairs was a massive inglenook fireplace and you could look right up the chimney and see the sky.

I remember Peggy saying that the council had insisted they had water and electricity put in, probably the early 60s. Arthur would still take his candle to bed and wouldn't use the electric as it was 'the work of the devil'. He wouldn't drink the piped water either because 'he didn't know how long it had been in those pipes'.

We used to visit quite often and I believe Peggy worked at Scott's Nursery in Merriott. She used to make some mean Christmas cakes, which were left to mature for a year after being saturated in brandy.

Arthur had a battered small flat-fronted beige van; I think it was a 1940s Morris J Series and it had sliding doors. I rode in it a couple of times when Arthur was delivering something or another.

With regard to Arthur's transport, my mum and Peggy were both long-term patients in the same hospital in the late 40s and the story is that Arthur used to visit Peggy in his Sunday Best, once driving to the hospital on a tractor!! I don't know if this is true or not but I remember him to be an eccentric character and this would certainly fit in with his personality. There are Pattimores in my family. My grand aunt, Phylis Elsie Findlay (my paternal grandmother's sister) married Cyril Walter Pattimore, hence I am researching to see if Arthur was related but have had no joy on that one yet.

My brother Nick also remembers Arthur. He said he and dad used to visit Arthur and Peggy on a Saturday morning and he'd go with Arthur in his van (which apparently 'had

everything in it') to feed the pigs. He also remembers the hand pump, which you had to prime with a bucket of water before it would work. Nick says the bucket was really old and 'grotty' but it was the best water he has ever tasted!

Footnote

Arthur was possibly the last person who spoke the unique Merriott dialect to any great extent. You can listen to a British Library recording of Arthur speaking at this website:

<http://sounds.bl.uk/View.aspx?item=021M-C0908X0066XX-0300V1.xml>

Also, there is an article, *Echoes from The Land Of Utch*, about the Merriott dialect in the *The Village* section of this archive.

After Arthur died, Peggy later married Michael Wallis, proprietor of Scot's Nurseries. Fondly remembered by many people, she died in 2008.