

MURIEL MELL 1931-2009

It was with great sadness that we announce that David's Mum, Muriel, passed away on January 19. Muriel was an inspiration to all who knew her and she will be sadly missed by her children and grandchildren. For those who knew her, a webpage has been set up in her memory (<http://www.s555.co.uk/murielmell>). Here you can read about her life and download some of the broadcasts of the stories that she wrote.

FIELD ENGINEERING

No, this isn't some trendy term for "farming" but the chosen occupation of eldest daughter Rachael. Following her academic success at undergraduate level in 2008, Rachael completed her Engineering education at Cambridge gaining at distinction in her M.Eng degree to complement the first she had gained in her B.Eng a year earlier. Rachael matched the achievements of her cousin Sarah who also gained a distinction in her Masters (in Psychology) during 2009 at David's old *alma-mater*. Congratulations to both.



Rachael celebrating in traditional style

During her time at Cambridge, Rachael had been an active member of the University Air Squadron and had successfully applied to join the RAF on leaving university. However, the thought of several months

"militarisation" at Cranwell must have changed her mind and she began applying for jobs elsewhere. That's where the "field engineering" comes in. Rachael is now working for Schlumberger, a large international company that provides an array of services in the energy sector. The fields in question are mainly oil and, for Rachael at least, mainly in the Gulf of Mexico. She is based in Lafayette, Louisiana and currently living at Schlumberger's expense in a very swish apartment in a gated community with swimming pool, clubhouse and gymnasium. Although the work is challenging, Rachael has found time to go on a swamp safari and has been bitten by the dreaded mosquitoes at several barbecues.

The seven-week gap year

Following her graduation, Rachael spent two weeks in India with colleagues from her academic department looking at manufacturing facilities. After a short stay back home in Durham, it was off with boyfriend Guy on the gap-year adventure that she didn't have before starting University. Rachael and Guy spent most of August and September in the Far-East, visiting Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. There was a panicky moment back home when David read about British tourists perishing in a boat tragedy in Halong Bay, knowing that Rachael and Guy had planned to take just such a boat trip. Thankfully, they were not involved and Rachael returned safely to Durham with a 10-day window in which to get a visa and all the other stuff she needed to before flying out to Houston in mid-October.



Setting off (accompanied on the first leg by Guy) to her new job in America – "She's leaving home, bye, bye"

MANCHESTER LIFE

Alison is now in the second year of her Social Anthropology course at Manchester and appears to be thoroughly loving both her studies and the metropolitan life. Not much of her was seen in Durham during the long Summer break. She moved out of her hall of residence at the end of June and into a loft-style flat in central Manchester. For those who know it, Alison is living in a converted industrial building on New Wakefield Street, just off Oxford Road and bang opposite Oxford Road railway station. Its above a row of pubs and clubs (with very passable food on Sunday

lunchtimes!) and extremely lively on Saturday nights. Her Aunt Christine has been known to drop in for a cup of tea when she has been working in Manchester and is waiting for the train back to Southport.



Supergirl and super-captain

Like her sister before her, Alison has become captain of her University water polo team after a well-contested election campaign. This is a proud achievement, all the more so because it is unusual for a second-year to gain this honour. Currently, Alison is gearing her team up to compete in the British Universities Championships and is learning something about the responsibilities of leadership: like how to ration land-training provision for 8 people amongst a squad of about twice that size. As well as playing for the University, Alison still plays in the Women's National League, though Harrogate, the team she played for last year in Division One, has unfortunately folded as its players have moved onto other things. Currently, it is Sunderland which is being graced with Alison's presence and its results have improved noticeably as a result. You can follow progress at <http://www.manuniwaterpolo.co.uk/> (university) and <http://nwwpl.co.uk/> (Sunderland).

In her spare time(!), Alison has been visiting some of the local Premier League grounds, initially as a pie-seller but latterly as a wine waitress. At the time of writing she is up at the Reebok waiting-on at the Wanderer's Christmas bash.

SANDGROUNDER REPORT

Janice's Dad John is coming up to the end of his third year in Durham and continues to live in the two bedroomed flat that is just five minutes away by car. He is still managing to live independently but has become quite a bit frailer and dependent over the past year. However, with a bit of labouring from Janice, he did manage to coax another good crop of beans out of the cold Durham soil and spent most of the Autumn chomping his way through them. He also managed to terrorize several elderly women whilst in respite care but no lasting damage seems to have been done to either John or the lady residents.

THE OLD FOLKS AT HOME

Its been relatively quiet at Springwell Towers during 2009. One of the flats became empty in mid-April and

Janice decided its kitchen could do with a just a "bit of updating." What started out as a replacing a few kitchen units turned into a major whole-house refurbishment and, in typical fashion, David was still grouting the tiles in the kitchen in mid-September as the new tenant was moving in.

After the marathon effort on the flat, we finally got away on holiday at the beginning of November. Gran Canaria was our destination of choice and, despite the time of year, the weather was sunny and very pleasantly warm. We thoroughly recommend it. During our second week, brother Stephen flew out courtesy of Ryanair and a splendid time was had by all.



Cheers! Bacardi and Ron Belingo (€5 per litre!!)

Following sister Christine's example, David has recently reduced his hours of work and is now working an eight day fortnight with a long weekend every other week. Janice meanwhile is no doubt eyeing up the freed up time and wondering just how much more refurbishment she can squeeze out of her handy husband!

PROPERTY EMPIRE

Despite the credit crunch, Janice's property empire continues to flourish. Lenders have reduced their mortgage interest rates in line with the Bank of England's reductions and the business has been extremely profitable during 2009. As we are not looking to expand, the lack of new mortgage finance is not really impacting us.

AND FINALLY...

We hope this edition of Mello! finds you and yours in good health and we wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year.

