

The Philosopher`s Tale

MANFRED AMBROSIUS

The soft Irish brogue belies the Teutonic-sounding name. Since moving to Milton Keynes, Fred`s philosophical sense of humour has seen him through the breakdown of his marriage and an extended period of unemployment: he is bitter about neither. He doesn`t judge people and consequently has friends in different walks of life. Warm hearted, gregarious and with many a good story up his sleeve, he believes that life is what you make it. On the social level, all kinds of opportunities exist in a new city – but you won`t find them by staying at home.

I came down from London six years ago. That was an idea knived up with a friend of mine and his missus and my girlfriend at the time. It was like – we didn`t even know anything about the place – just a load of houses. We were living in a one bedroom thing

in London – stick your feet out of bed and you`re in the oven! So my mate and his woman came down first and then I ended up coming down and staying with them, working here for about three months and then BUMPH! got a house in Stacey Bushes until – how long have I been here? – six months in this flat now.

I did six years in Wolverton Works and I only gave that job up because I broke up with my old lady. That was a strange business really. I packed everything in, you know, when your whole world falls to bits – eight years, nine years with her. I decided that`s it, I`ve had enough, I`m going back to Ireland. So I went back to my old home town. I had to sleep five weeks in a tent so I decided I`m not staying here, I`m going back to Milton Keynes, at least I can get a house there, or a flat – which I did.

The way they work it is, if you come now there`s a waiting list of four years, if you live outside the area that is, for a borough council house or flat. But if you have a marriage breakup it`s only a three month waiting list. The best way to get a house in Milton Keynes is to marry someone with a house, move in with them then get a divorce and go on a three month housing list straight away – you know, citizenship!

Milton Keynes isn`t that settled. People keep moving in and out of the city and a lot of couples are breaking up. It seems like a bit of a trend nowadays. I know it happens all over the country but Milton Keynes stands out a bit more. There`s people living together for two or three years, and next thing is a divorce which makes one of the two homeless. They cater for that in Milton Keynes. They figure if you don`t have any rent arrears you`ve got a good record and aren`t a gamble.

Milton Keynes is good. What was it I heard in the pub the other day? Somebody said: “If you can`t make it in Milton Keynes you`ll never make it to heaven.” Why? You`ve got everything here, it`s great! The things I`ve done since I`ve been in Milton Keynes – horse riding, lead singer in a rock and roll band! Yeah, there`s a photograph of it in the toilet. That was good fun that was. The band was called Nasty Habit. We got on the local Channel 40 TV doing a live interview. That was a scream, that was really funny. That was about four years ago

PLENTY FOR KIDS

There's plenty for the kids here. If they want to sit in the house all day and do nothing then that's their prerogative. Admittedly it's cold now but there's the old cycle paths, so you can go anywhere – Woughton Campus, Stantonbury, Wolverton. As for the evenings, the Chieftains were here a while back, and that play 'Monkey'. Northampton's just up the road. We went to the theatre there the other week, only 70p. It was brilliant. Oxford's not far from here. Admittedly, if you haven't a lot of money it's hard, but I figure everyone's got enough money to do the things they want to do. Even on the social I figure with a couple of quid, like a fiver or tenner, you can do things. There's the cinema – only two here I know – but Newport's a nice little place. You can go there and there's quite a good pub across the road you can go to afterwards. But if you spend your money on booze you're not gonna have a lot for anything else. And I know for a fact 'cos I suffer from that! I go drinking just about everywhere in MK. I haven't really got a local

I was staying down in Peartree for a while and I ended up working behind the bar there. They had rock bands there and the bikers moved down 'cos they closed the back bar at the Starting Gate. Anyway, I got to know the bikers because of that. They're a nice bunch of blokes. Local pubs? I like the old country pubs. New pubs don't have any personality, unless you get a nice crowd of people. But that takes a while and then the breweries seem to change the staff around a lot if they don't like the way a pub's being run. They'll sack the barman and he might be the nicest guy in the world. One barman who was at the Starting Gate – Jim – he's down at Leighton Buzzard now.

Meccas And The Like

Ever such a nice bloke, but because he'd let the bikers in the brewery got rid of him to get rid of the bikers and then in the end they closed the whole place down. Turned it into a nightclub. What's that gonna be like? Meccas and the like, Guys with dicky bows and monkey suits on, throwing their weight around. Bouncers and watered-down drinks at extortionate prices, charge you three quid for the privilege of going in. I don't really like 'em.

Wolverton Works was alright if you had a good job. I started off there crane driving in the lifting shop and ended up there shunting. I loved that, it was great taking coaches in from the main line, bringing them up and distributing them between the various shops for repairs. We were just walking along with them directing the engine. It was a nice feeling 'cos people had to get out of your way otherwise they'd be killed, simple as that really. So not only was there a good amount of responsibility – nice if you can handle it – but it was pretty dangerous. You had to be fairly good at what you were doing 'cos you could be killed. I nearly had my legs taken off once. I slipped on the ice and my legs went right underneath the coach while it was still moving. The engines weigh seventy-six tons or something like that. You wouldn't have a hell of a chance if one of them crushed you.

That comic I read, you know, 2000AD, they've got Brit City in it and the whole city is run by Roberts. All the British people do is go to the seaside. They only come up

every three months to collect their leisure money. Not dole money or unemployment benefit but leisure money! 2000AD is a big part of my life. I get withdrawal symptoms if I don't get it every Saturday. I've had every one since the first one came out on the 26th February 1977. But I don't have duplicates of the ones I papered on the walls. That was a mistake really. The reason why I did it was, when I moved in I thought to myself I like this place and I don't want to leave and to make sure nobody makes me I'm gonna glue a load of these comics to the walls so if I do have to leave here I'll take the wall with me!

Next Saturday it's the three hundredth edition of 2000AD and I'm gonna have a bit of a party to celebrate. It'll be the gathering together of the Milton Keynes Mutant Association. There's a satellite in outer space that is like Las Vegas, a big gambling casino. Johnny Alpha and this bunch of guys called the Milton Keynes Mutant Association had collected all this money to go up and try to win. They did win but on the way back they were mugged. I got the name off that and I thought this is worth celebrating and because it's my birthday I decided to throw it all together. I wrote a letter to 2000AD telling them about it, so I might get the three pound winner, you never know. I don't really know who'll be coming. All my close friends will be there. They all know I'm nuts about it.