

AN ORAL HISTORY OF BREWING IN 3 LONDON BREWERIES

INTERVIEWEE:	Brendan Bray
DATE OF BIRTH	1951
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS	Father: lorry driver Mother: housewife (9 children)
INTERVIEW LOCATION	Fuller's Brewery, Chiswick
DATE OF INTERVIEW	March 22nd 2019
INTERVIEWER: Chris Kaufmann	SUMMARISER: Celia Holman

Brendan worked at Fuller's 1966-2014. He started as a brewing boy ("mainly cleaning"), and learnt his craft "on the job", becoming a brewer in 1977, just before the period of modernisation that came in the 1980s.

Brendan's first day at work was "a labyrinth of floors, doors and corridors." He describes some of the dangers of his early career - the open coppers, and working 3 storeys up without a harness, and the dim working conditions. It was "physically demanding work". The "Head Brewer was God", with his 3 under brewers. It was "a bit like the Army". Equally demanding of respect were the "bottling women" - a "tough bunch" and "woe betide you if you were cheeky".

The owners were "very visible, very approachable". Members of the Fuller and Turner families joined the workforce, rotating through departments until they "found their enthusiasm".

In the canteen, "everyone ate the same food", but the "rough and ready" manual workers ate at bare tables, whilst the office staff had tablecloths. However, there were many social activities at which all workers mixed - snooker, darts, football, and outings. "Football brought us all together", with women also competing. There were inter-brewery athletics competitions. Overall, there was an "easy going" atmosphere, with rare incidents of racism (very much "the exception rather than the rule").

Brendan describes a "congenial" working atmosphere, with few strikes. There were long-service pay awards and a Christmas bonus of a week's pay.

He describes the "upgrades" that took place over his working life. When he arrived, much was manual or belt driven - "like Frankenstein starting up the monster" - with brass, copper and wood the main materials. There was still a cooper on site, playing a "big role" making and repairing barrels - "the skill, it's amazing". However, in the late 1970s, aluminium and stainless steel started to be introduced. There was no on-site laboratory until 1976. Brewing became more consistent as a result.