

AN ORAL HISTORY OF BREWING IN 3 LONDON BREWERIES

INTERVIEWEE:	Charlotte Donohoe
DATE OF BIRTH	1980, Fulham
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS	Father: worked for British Gas Mother: worked for social services
INTERVIEW LOCATION	Fuller's Brewery, Chiswick
DATE OF INTERVIEW	27 March 2019
INTERVIEWER: Raj Gill	SUMMARISER: Celia Holman

Charlotte started work in 2000. She was “not long out of school” and started on the switchboard which was “quite dated.” She still works there and “wouldn't want to work anywhere else”. There has always been a “fantastic atmosphere” and she has made some really good friends in all departments. Charlotte met her husband at Fuller's about 16 years ago, and they have been married for 11 years and now have a daughter.

The first thing she noticed was the “really, really strong smell” and the ‘beep, beep, beep’ of the forklifts (“it was torture”) and the workers shouting to each other. Working conditions have been modernised over the years, but she is happy that not by too much - “the building is beautiful”.

She knew people by their numbers as well as by their names - she memorised all staff by number. It was so busy on reception that there was no time to look up a number. It's even busier now, with some 1,000 calls a day coming in as the nature of the business has expanded.

Perks: “they really look after you” with health schemes and the share-save scheme. Work was also very social, with many “nights out”, less so now that she is mother of a young child. “I'm really blessed” with all the perks of the job.

She's had a few “drunken characters” coming into reception, one of whom demanded a pint from reception! She was stuck in reception for about 40 minutes before she was able call security, pretending that she was ordering a pint for her ‘visitor’.

H&S: got much stricter over the years, with barriered walkways protecting pedestrians and the wearing of high-vis jackets when walking about the site.

Disputes: can't remember any, but a few injuries [no details given].

Fuller's Friday: last Friday every month, staff get free drinks at the pub adjoining the brewery.

Manager Beryl: was like a “second mum”. She passed away suddenly from a heart attack, and all the brewery gathered round, and one of the directors came down and sat with Charlotte on reception. Charlotte still misses her. Other workers: “I can see us always having a connection” and you “look forward to coming into work.” She calls the workforce her “Fuller’s family”.

Hierarchy within the brewery: directors over the years “I think they’re brilliant”, people you can really talk to.

The workforce has increased in size over the years, but the role of women and cultural mix is largely unchanged over the course of her time at the brewery.

She describes some of the days out that the workers enjoyed, and how she met her husband at one of the “Fuller’s Fridays” in the pub adjoining the brewery. One of the her co-workers went on to be a bridesmaid at her wedding and another is godmother to her daughter.

‘I can’t fault working here’ and “Fuller’s have been so good to me.” She will “always be grateful” for her job-share agreement which allowed her to have her family life and her work life with her good friends. One change has been that graduates and apprentices move on more quickly than when she first started working.