

## **AN ORAL HISTORY OF BREWING IN 3 LONDON BREWERIES**

INTERVIEWEE: Edward (Eddie) John Geary  
DATE OF BIRTH 1950, Balham  
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS Father: commissionaire (uniformed doorman)  
Mother: cleaner  
INTERVIEW LOCATION Young's Brewery, Wandsworth  
DATE OF INTERVIEW 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth Knowles SUMMARISER: Celia Holman

Eddie started in 1968, and worked from aged 18 to 56, leaving in 2006. His father worked at Young's briefly, as a teaman in the 1970s, and his brother was a driver for another brewery. Eddie was a driver drayman for his entire working life.

His earliest memories of the brewery were as a child living nearby, smelling the hops and seeing the horses. He learnt to drive working at the brewery.

He describes the working day as drayman on the lorries, starting at 5-6am. He would be finished by 11am, as it was "job and finish". It was "hard work, very physical", but you could get home early. He describes how some of the equipment that the delivery men would use (ropes, hooks, bumpers) and how they would wear steel toe-capped boots, gloves and aprons. "It was very dangerous job if you didn't do it properly."

Health and safety: "it got a bit silly in the end".

Atmosphere at work: "everyone laughing and cracking jokes" and "we all had our nicknames". He was 'Little Fat Eddie' and there was a 'Big Eddie' (6'6") - they worked together for 18 years. - and 'Big Roy', the competitive dwarf thrower.

"Mr John" (Young) was at "ground level all the time" with his concerns for his workers. He was "lovely man to work with."

Cultural mix: Eddie describes the racial mix at the brewery - "we were all great friends".

Women in the brewery: bottling hall and canteen - "we all got on well, like a family". More women were employed as office workers over the years.

The best things about his job was the camaraderie, the early finish and the beer - "it was a great community." When he broke his leg in the late '60s, he was off work for 10 months, but the company kept his job open for him.

He remembers the heat wave of the summer of '76 when they were delivering to pubs 7 days a week. Other hot summers would be busy, and they would work overtime.

Drinking habits: there was a mess room, with beer on tap. Some workers would remain in there all day, having finished work. Eddie didn't really use his beer allowance.

In 1990, the crews went from being three-handed to being two-handed, as a cost-saving exercise. And spirit deliveries, and supermarkets and clubs, rather than just pubs. The working day got longer - "it was sign of the times".

Mr John: "everything had to be dead right" and he was "very passionate" about the beer. "Everybody loved him" and Eddie still lives in a brewery house (though no longer owned by the brewery) at a subsidised rent. He still has the letter from John Young, confirming his tenancy. He has lived there for 40 years. Youngs used to own a lot of residential property, mainly flats above pubs.

He was "choked" when he heard that the brewery was closing. But he "could see it coming" because of the physical location of the brewery in a built-up area, with delivery lorries backed up, queuing to get into the brewery.

Eddie ends by remembering his very first days at work when he was "the boy" and it was "quite intimidating but nice". He soon fitted in and became "one of the family". When he started he was one of a "pool of labourers" who would be allocated different jobs depending on what was needed that day. After a few months, he joined the transport team on a permanent basis.