

AN ORAL HISTORY OF BREWING IN 3 LONDON BREWERIES

INTERVIEWEE: Kenneth (Ken) David Wellbelove
DATE OF BIRTH 1956, Wandsworth
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS Father: Post Office/British Telecom
Mother: housewife
INTERVIEW LOCATION Young's Brewery, Wandsworth
DATE OF INTERVIEW 20th March 2019
INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth Knowles SUMMARISER: Celia Holman

Ken worked at the brewery from the late 1970s onwards (with a brief hiatus in the States). He got his first job as a heavy goods mechanic via a fellow mechanic who already worked at the brewery. Ken eventually became the Foreman of the garage. "It was the best thing I ever done" coming to work at Young's. His working life was not pressured and he was well paid. His working life was a very enjoyable one as "everybody cared about each other."

Born in Wandsworth, Ken was already familiar with the brewery - his mother had brought him down in the pram to see the horses. When he started Ken recalls "Victorian conveyor belts" and "everything was moved by rolling chains with gears". It was "really quaint" and all the engineers knew "everything inside out."

He describes a typical work day as garage foreman. His working day would start at 6am, with those involved with the brewing having been on site from 4am onwards. "It was never, heavy pressure work" and by 5pm the working day was over, several tea breaks later.

He mentions a signwriter who would handpaint many of the lorries' liveries, with the mechanics being taught how to do it.

Perks of the job: "Working here was the biggest perk." He describes bonuses, special pay packets for holidays, the share-save scheme, the final-salary pension. "Young's has been very, very good to me."

Delivering the large heavy wooden barrels: "it was an art" as the draymen handled the barrels with such skill.

The Sample Room: had to be 'staff' i.e. foreman up, to use it. He describes a very smokey atmosphere, and "all you could hear was laughter."

He describes some of the inter-brewery sporting events (he used to play squash). A lot of activities centred around "food and beer" - "happy, happy days."

He describes the work of Peter the farrier. All the animals on site created an atmosphere that was “surreal”. He recounts an episode where he took the ram in a van to a pub. He talks in detail about some of the horses, and how he would go down to the stables. He describes the on-site exercise yard for the horses. One time, the farrier allowed him to make a shoe - “it was really hard work!”

Drinking habits: “you’d be amazed how many were teetotal”.

Mr Young was “old school eccentric” and he tells several stories about his involvement with him.

He recalls the closure of the brewery. Speaking of the yard and the horses, and the brewery in general: “After all that time, it should be treasured.”