

# AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT – “BREWING STORIES”

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY – MARTYN CORNELL

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Interviewee:	Martyn Cornell
Position:	Beer and Brewery Historian
Interview Location:	Fullers Griffin Brewery, Chiswick
Date:	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
Interviewer:	Bob Hall

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Martyn Cornell is a self-taught expert in the history of UK beer and breweries. His interest in the industry started with his love from drinking beer. Unlike most interviewees on this project, he has not actually worked directly in the trade.

He has written several articles about what he has learnt and gives lectures on the subject to any groups that are interested in listening to him. His passion for his hobby is very apparent.

He starts his interview with the following quote, “If beer is the drink of the people, then the history of the beer, is the history of the people”.

He then goes on to describe how important beer has been for both social and economic history. His story starts back in the sixteenth century when small local breweries began to emerge. He relates this particularly to what was happening in and around London, and describes how the breweries grew and changed over the centuries.

Below is a summary of the topics covered during the interview in order of discussion:

- The different types of beers that were produced
- Transportation of goods both in and out of the breweries and the importance of the River Thames
- The main breweries emerging in London
- The purchasing of pubs and the “tied house”
- The effect of tax duties on the strength of the alcohol
- The takeovers of small breweries by the major companies
- The changeover from cask to kegged beer
- The campaign for traditional real ale (CAMRA)
- The closing of major breweries (land in London more profitable than the businesses)
- Changes that affected the Stag Brewery in Mortlake
- Young’s and Fuller’s becoming the last traditional brewers in London
- The current state of Young’s and Fuller’s today
- The emergence of the current trend of micro-breweries producing craft beers
- A detailed overview of the history of Young’s and the Ram Brewery
- A detailed overview of the history of Fullers’s and the Griffin Brewery
- A detailed overview of the history of Watney’s and the Stag Brewery
- Brewing and beer drinking in London today

This was followed and concluded with a 10 minute general Question and Answer session, including:

- Tips on how to start your own micro-brewery

- Why London will always be a brewing centre
- What happened when the government imposed laws on selling other beers to the major pub chains
- Major breweries selling their pubs to newly formed pub companies
- The impact of Wetherspoons and the large supermarkets
- Visions of beer and brewing in the future

Martyn has been most helpful with this project, giving lectures to the team on the history of beer and breweries, with specific attention to Fuller's, Watney's and Young's. On behalf of Matthew, Sav and all the volunteers, we take this opportunity to thank him once more.

Summariser: Bob Hall