

Brewing Stories

INTERVIEWEE	Richard Fuller
DATE OF BIRTH	1960
PARENTS OCCUPATIONS	Father worked at Fullers from 1924, becoming chairman of the Brewery. Mother was a housewife.
Interview Location	Boardroom at Griffin Brewery
Interviewer: Chris Kaufman.	Summariser: John Maguire.

Richard started work at the brewery in 1984, and has been there until the present day.

Richard was born in London. His father, who was 58 when Richard was born, was chairman of the brewery. In the early part of his working life, Richard had a small business which operated in the forestry and agriculture space. He made the decision to sell his share and came to work for the family business in 1984. His first job was as an Inns Area Manager. He headed up PR for 4 years before becoming Sales Director, a job he held for 20 years. His current role is Corporate Affairs Director – managing the way the business engages with government, the community, industry bodies, and any other relevant external parties. When asked in the interview why he placed such emphasis in engaging with MPs, he explained that they played an important role in lobbying the government.

When he started work at the Brewery, Richard remembers the cultural challenge of working in a structured environment, as opposed to working for himself. He also mentioned coping with rush hour traffic. He found his feet by realising that working in an organisation, like working for himself, was all about managing relationships with other people. As a schoolboy, he had a holiday job filling poly pins at the brewery in 1976. His impression then was that the company was very old fashioned and resistant to change. Since then much has changed. Although the numbers of the workforce has remained pretty much the same, they are now predominantly “white collar” as manual processes have become automated, and the pub business has expanded.

When asked about memorable incidents at work he mentioned the visit by Prince Charles to the brewery in 1995 as part of the 150 year celebrations. Richard was very impressed with Charles, the way he knew people’s names and had an understanding of the brewing processes. When Charles was asked about this he explained that his routine was to read and memorise as much as he could from his briefing notes while he ate breakfast.

When asked about industrial relations, he felt that overall they have been good, although he mentioned one strike that took place in reaction to the company’s decision to cut the number of draymen assigned to a lorry from 4 to 3. He talked about the business moving from being “paternalistic to modern”. As Chiswick moved upmarket, and as the focus of people based activity at the site moved away from manual work to sales, marketing, brand development, etc., this has meant that fewer local people now work at the site. Benefits in kind, such as housing have been replaced by better remuneration and pension packages. As a result of these changes brewery centred sports and social activities have dwindled, although there is still the “Thank Fullers its Friday” meet at the Mawson Arms once a month, and the shindig at the Grosvenor Hotel every 5 years

As a member of the family in a family owned business, Richard would like to be remembered for his part in changing the company so that it is sustainable and in place for future generations. This is, understandably, a careful interview, but Richard presents as an articulate, genial interviewee.