AN ORAL HISTORY OF BREWING IN 3 LONDON BREWERIES

INTERVIEWEE: Jeff Hack-Davies

DATE OF BIRTH   1976, Perivale

PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS   Father: car mechanic

                                    Mother: worked in care agencies and nursing

INTERVIEW LOCATION   Fuller's Brewery, Chiswick

DATE OF INTERVIEW   15 March 2019

INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth Knowles   SUMMARISER: Celia Holman

Jeff started work at Fuller's in 1998 until present day. He is currently Engineering and Projects Manager, in charge of maintenance and utilities. He had done an apprenticeship as an electrician and heard via a family member (who didn't work at the brewery) of a job opportunity. His wife also works at the brewery. He feels "lucky" to have been able to spend his working life at the brewery, and "privileged" to have worked at a site with such history and heritage.

First days at work: he remembers "how quickly the week would pass" as the work was so varied. Walking around the site, he remembers the sound of the kegging line and the "steam rattling through pipes". His daughter commented: "how do you put up with that disgusting smell, Dad?" but for him it was "lovely".

One of the best thing about Fuller's was that you had opportunities all the time to learn as much as you wanted to learn - it was a "steep learning curve" but "you always got help."

In recent years, a lot of money has been spent on automating the process. He describes his various roles over the years, the main thing being how varied the work has been and still is - "we cover everything" and "take a lot of pride" in their work.

Two lines are named after members of staff: Brendan and Richard. Other pieces of equipment have also been given names: Gladys, Tom and Tim. One piece of kit is known as the "biscuit tin". Boilers are named after previous boiler men: Big Brian, Little Brian and Dave.

Perks: "where you stop?" Fuller's brewers are very well trained and qualified. Drinks on Fuller's on a Friday. The greatest perk is the "great people in every department."

H&S: "each year, we try and make the site safer" yet "so many dangers" remain due to the nature of the business (high pressure etc). Each team has a dedicated "safety champion" - it's "everyone's responsibility".

Disputes: "never".

Les Birchmore (sp? who is more fully described towards the end of Jeff's interview, with his lamb chops moustache and his readiness to always get his hands dirty and to innovate) and Lee Hassel (sp?) really stand out for him as people he has worked for, along with Duncan Munroe (sp?) - "good coaches, good mentors". So many, in fact, "a great team".

Hierarchy: more "collaborative" than hierarchical. "Workers are listened to."

He speaks of the spirit of collaboration that exists between not just departments, but also with other brewing companies, sharing knowledge and innovations.

One of the big changes has been "responsible drinking" - staff allowance now rather than beer tokens that could be exchanged for a beer at any time.

Cultural mix: not changed much, speaks of workers of African origin that always been present during his time. More East Europeans in the workforce these days.

Women: describes women in senior roles

Sense of community: "we are a family", and he speaks of sporting events (an inter-brewery competition across several sports), perhaps more so previously than before, less so now due to change in shift patterns.

Work romances: "lots at Fuller's, too many to name", his wife included. "Many, many couples"

Best things: "Sense of ownership, sense of empowerment"

Worst things: life has changed at Fuller's because of external changes to the business. The long hours, of your own making at times: "You don't go home because of your dedication to the job!"

Main changes: automation, increase in skillset of the engineers "you've always got to update your skills" to understand software etc, brewers have to "move with the times" in the beers they develop, increase in competition with other breweries, production line comes first, tea break second.

Briefly describes "Family Shareholders Day" (every other year) and "Open Day" with stalls etc.