

Brewing Stories

INTERVIEWEE	Maureen Barney
DATE OF BIRTH	1944
PARENTS OCCUPATIONS	Father was a lorry driver. Mother was a housewife
Interview Location	The Tun room, Griffin Brewery, Chiswick
Interviewer: Elizabeth Knowles.	Summariser: Miranda Vickers.

Maureen was a pay roll clerk. She worked at the Griffin Brewery from 1973 until 1978 and then again from 1986 until 1996.

Maureen started her working life at Barkers in Kensington which was modern with light-filled rooms, a great contrast to her office at Fullers, which was very basic and dark. At Barkers she worked as a comptometer operator but Fullers had no such machines, so she had to learn how to do basic manual arithmetic again.

Mondays were her busiest days with checking all the sickness certificates, holiday dates and overtime papers etc. Tuesdays were spent working out wages which were paid weekly. On Wednesday she had to report to the financial director. On Fridays the workers came to collect their wages after which many of them went straight to the Mawsons Arms for a pint of beer. Mondays and Fridays were her favourite days because she got to meet all the staff as they came with their various papers and collected their wages.

Working conditions changed when the payroll system was computerised in 1975 and Maureen had to be trained to use the new machines. She found the work very enjoyable and said Fullers were excellent employers. The best things were the closeness of the staff and being treated well by the management. There were several perks for brewery staff. Those who had been employed for a year or more were given two discs per day which could be exchanged for pints of beer. Eventually the company gave employees shares to buy Fullers products which could also be sold back to the company. Maureen thought it was better giving shares rather than discs as it led to less drinking amongst the men.

There was no danger working in the offices but, until the 1980s, there was little health and safety in the brewery itself. There were between 300-400 people on the payroll and there was a union but Maureen and many of the office staff did not belong to it. When Maureen worked at Fullers the employees were mainly white English people and women were paid the same as the men. There were many social activities such as darts teams and day trips, sometimes to places in France such as Boulogne. Many local families, such as the Lockies, the Huxleys and the Ambrose family had worked at Fullers for generations.

Maureen started at Fullers aged 29 and retired at 52. She was given a very good redundancy payment and said the best thing she ever did was to work at Fullers. Since leaving in 1996, she still meets up with former workmates twice a year for a meal and a drink.