

## **AN ORAL HISTORY OF BREWING IN 3 LONDON BREWERIES**

INTERVIEWEE:	Val Hobson
DATE OF BIRTH	1947
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS	Mum worked for Whitbreads and dad for Heidleberg
INTERVIEW LOCATION	Fuller's Griffin Brewery, Chiswick
DATE OF INTERVIEW	March 15 2019
INTERVIEWER: Bob Hall	SUMMARISER: Celia Holman

Val Hobson worked at Fuller's Brewery in Chiswick for 30 years, from 1978 onwards. Throughout the interview, she speaks positively about being "part of Fuller's".

Val came to work in the company's IT (Information Technology) department, and continued to work there throughout her career at Fuller's. When Val arrived, the IT department consisted of just two people. By the time she left, there were 14 people employed. She oversaw the change from "big old machines" to PCs.

Starting work, an early observation was that "barrels have the right of way" as they were rolled about the brewery. She missed the sound when they were no longer rolled around as much. Val remembers the smell of the brewing when you emerged from the subway under the main road next to the brewery. The work environment was "old fashioned but fun", and in her line of work she very quickly got to know all of her co-workers. She very quickly felt "part of Fuller's". There was a real sense of community - "it was lovely."

Val's role was to put in new systems as technology advanced. She helped put in several new pay-roll systems, for example. Part of her role was to encourage and "talk around" co-workers who might be resistant to change.

One of the perks of the job was the "staff account", an annual allowance that can be spent at the on-site shop. Now retired, Val still has this perk, currently £240/year (50% of the 'working' allowance). She also participated in the company share scheme, being able to buy a new car when she retired.

Val took an active part in inter-brewery sporting and social activities, and was especially successful at darts. She still meets up with co-workers, and bumps into people she used to work with shopping on Chiswick high street.

Speaking of relationships between co-workers: "Everyone just got on." She remembers when the beer dispensing machine was withdrawn, and workers held a mock 'wake' around the machine, complete with a wreath. The final words of the tongue-in-cheek ceremony: "The management giveth and the management taketh away." She also recalls

staff putting a doormat, a bottle of milk and a stuffed cat outside the finance officer's new office door that resembled a front door rather than an office door.