

INTERVIEW WITH SEAN CULLEN BY DAVE WELSH OF HISTORYTALK 12 MAY 2011

(Sean initially came over to London from his native Republic of Ireland in the late 60s to take up occasional temporary work, a factory hand role at the Wall's meat factory in North Acton and a stint as a salesman at Harrod's being among the varied positions he held. Sean then settled permanently in London in 1970 and trained on a government-sponsored scheme as a carpenter, finishing off his training scheme with his subsequent employer. Sean plied his trade on many building sites for the best part of a decade – Harry Neill being one of the major employers he worked for – before tiring of the uncertain, casual and peripatetic nature of the work and seeking greater security. After initially joining the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Direct Labour Organisation, where he remained for a year, Sean then spent the next 30 years of his working life with Hammersmith & Fulham Council's equivalent organisation before taking redundancy in 2008. Sean was an active trade unionist throughout his working life, serving in various union posts for the T&GWU and then UCATT.)

(Interviewed by **Dave Welsh** at Historytalk, 12/05/2011)

Dave Welsh: Sean, I'd like to start by asking you about when you left school, when that was, and what you did when you left school in terms of work.

Sean Cullen: I went to college in Dublin. I didn't get on too well with the studying so I used to spend a lot of time working. I used to come to Britain. I first came in 1967. I worked in **Wall's factory** in **Acton**, packing bacon or something like that. I didn't get as far as the ice cream [Wall's had a separate Ice Cream factory in Acton]. Then, other times, around about Christmas, I worked as a **salesman** at **Harrod's**, selling pots and pans and various other things. Probably about 1970, I came to settle here. I knew I wasn't going any place at college and I wanted to be a **carpenter**. I knew about the schemes that there were here; **training schemes**. You spent 6 months in full time training and then you were taken on by a company and the next 18 months were spent training with them, so it was fast tracking. They may still exist, I'm not sure.

Dave Welsh: Why did you want to be a carpenter?

Sean Cullen: I just wanted to work with my hands, you see.

Dave Welsh: And was there any history of that in your family?

Sean Cullen: Not carpentry as such, no. My background would be in farming. My father did get into business but he was still involved in farming. I just liked the idea. I knew that I was going to do that, so I didn't really bother with college, and I had finished there. So, for a couple of years I worked labouring on sites and then about,

72/73 something like that, I started on the training. I worked for a number of firms. I probably won't be able to remember them all.

Dave Welsh: Some of the big firms – big building firms? Waites? I can't remember which ones?

Sean Cullen: I'm not quite sure. I think one of the firms was **Harry Neill**. Some smaller contractors as well. At that time there was plenty of work, so you just moved about.

Dave Welsh: And this is all in West London?

Sean Cullen: Practically all in West London, yes. I worked outside of London as well for just short periods. In '72, during the strike, I was working at Lancaster Gate. The strike was on for 10 weeks.

Dave Welsh: What was that about?

Sean Cullen: That was the national strike.

Dave Welsh: That was over pay or conditions?

Sean Cullen: Well, pay and conditions; but essentially pay. It was a major strike. **UCATT** had just been formed. Conditions were bad and money wasn't good. I suppose the time was ripe for having a go. As I remember, the union wasn't really in control of the strike. It was the rank and file, so that's why it was fairly successful, I think.

Dave Welsh: So how was it organised on your side, for example? What did you do in terms of picketing or other things?

Sean Cullen: We were asked to come out and there was an agreement that we would come out. We picketed and it was solid. Not everybody, obviously, would picket but those that did, like myself, would have been entitled to strike pay. A lot of people just moved off and found work with small builders or something like that. It was a strike that had attitudes escalating on a weekly basis. Putting more and more people on; you had time to consolidate. So, overall, it was a successful strike. I think thanks mainly to the rank and file organisation, **Charter**, throughout London, who were the significant movers.

Dave Welsh: Were you involved in that?

Sean Cullen: I had been in Charter when it was coming up. Sometime after I returned to work I did the carpentry training and then spent the next couple of years with various contractors. After I got fed up of just being moved about and not knowing where you're going to be from week to week, I joined the **Local Authority**. First of all, I worked locally here in **Kensington & Chelsea**. I worked on the canal; just round the corner [in Ladbroke Grove].

Dave Welsh: Up near Sainsbury's?

Sean Cullen: Yes. The new just on the other side of the bridge, they had a depot there; the Council had a depot there. I spent a few months there; less than twelve months, and then I just gave up the job and spent the summer mainly in Portugal. When I came back I think I had some odd jobs but not long afterwards I joined *Hammersmith and Fulham [Council]*.

Dave Welsh: So that would be the DLO – the Direct Labour Organisation.

Sean Cullen: Yes, the same as in Kensington. I spent career at Hammersmith & Fulham, it must be about 3 years ago [that I left].

Dave Welsh: When did you go to Kensington & Chelsea, then? Was that mid 70s or late 70s?

Sean Cullen: I spent nearly 30 years with Hammersmith & Fulham, so if I go back it was about 32 years ago.

Dave Welsh: So that's 1978.

Sean Cullen: 1978. Probably the year before.

Dave Welsh: Can you say a bit about joining UCATT? You, as a carpenter working on a site, what made you join a union? Why did you join the union in your view?

Sean Cullen: Well, I suppose I had been somewhat politicised from my time at college. I had some involvement in the '68 occupations and various things like that that were going on. I think, fairly quickly you realise that the building industry in particular is crying out for and needs unions. Membership was stronger; it was higher then, than it is now. The organisation was still lacking. So every new site had to have a new start, should I say. You might get a visit from an organiser or you may not.

Dave Welsh: So it was down to the people on the site very much, was it?

Sean Cullen: Very much, yes; you just tried to improve the conditions.

Dave Welsh: Because this was the time of 'The Lump'.

Sean Cullen: Well, it depends how you describe 'The Lump'! 'The Lump' is more prevalent now but they call themselves self-employed.

Dave Welsh: What was it, then?

Sean Cullen: Basically, you were given a day's pay as a lump in your hand. It could be on a daily basis or a weekly basis, depending on just what was available. I suppose, really, 'The Lump' was encouraged. It's hard to know. I think the employers used it as a tool to prevent organisation, possibly; it may well be. In the beginning,

I'm not sure they did. I think they came to appreciate that it was a tool that they could use later on. I don't know when 'The Lump' began.

Dave Welsh: In the 60s, maybe.

Sean Cullen: Quite possibly it was earlier because the industry was a casual industry, effectively. It was impossible to get continuity of employment like you got when you got taken on by a firm; you got regular work. Up until the 70s, I suppose, most of the work was done by the main contractors. So I think that, from the 70s and after the strike, the use of sub-contracting became more prevalent. Then, with that, you had the labour-only contractors. The effect of the strike was to lump the labour on the contractors.

Dave Welsh: They supplied the labour.

Sean Cullen: They supplied the labour; no interest on the site. In the beginning, most of them were just paying 'The Lump'; no stamps, no insurance, no holidays.

Dave Welsh: When you were paid, you were paid off. You may come back next week; you might not.

Sean Cullen: Exactly, yes. It was more or less 'hire and fire' by the day.

Dave Welsh: Of course it means that you can also weed out 'troublemakers', as they saw it.

Sean Cullen: Yes, exactly.

Dave Welsh: The Charter group: was that inspired as a rank and file organisation by politics?

Sean Cullen: Yes, by politics. The leading lads in the Charter group would practically all have been members of the Communist Party. That's probably unfair, I wasn't a member so I didn't know exactly who were members and who weren't, but I had a fair idea. Certainly in London it's fair to say [that was the case] and probably across the country as well. I think all the leaders were in it, but I don't think it was exclusive of other groups. Although they were members of the British [Communist] Party, I didn't think that there was anybody, how would I put it.....

Dave Welsh: Controlling it, I suppose.

Sean Cullen: I didn't feel excluded from the discussions or decisions because I wasn't a Party member.

Dave Welsh: Did UCATT have meetings on-site or off-site? How did UCATT organise its members?

Sean Cullen: I think that all the unions were based on a branch system, but in UCATT there was no such thing as a site branch. You were assigned to the nearest

geographical area. So in a branch meeting you'd have a dozen working for different firms, for every member present; and that militated against organisation, as well. On the other hand, you shared their experience, hearing from other sites. You'd be advised, '*do this or do that, or do the other*', so you learned a lot at the branch meetings.

Dave Welsh: Where did you have branch meetings, then? Where were they held in those early days?

Sean Cullen: In the early days the first union I joined was the T&GWU. They met off the Edgware Road, near Church Street Market.

Dave Welsh: There's a pub on the corner there, isn't there?

Sean Cullen: I don't think that it was in a pub that we met. We had a Community Hall as I remember. But then, when I did my training, I joined UCATT. I ended up in a branch in Fulham that was predominantly London Transport people.

Dave Welsh: Where were they from? Were they from West Brompton or somewhere?

Sean Cullen: Parsons Green.

Dave Welsh: Parsons Green, yes, the Direct Labour.

Sean Cullen: Yes, there was a joiners shop there. The secretary was a joiner in the shop there. It was just one of those things. When people applied to join, UCATT put them in these local branches. They weren't exclusively in that branch but mainly they were London Transport people. There were also a good few exhibition people, because the exhibitions at the time were [big employers locally].

Dave Welsh: What, at Olympia?

Sean Cullen: Olympia and Earl's Court: they were the two at the time; I can't think of any place else. Well, the hotels had really big facilities but those two [were the main places for exhibitions]. Then, some like myself would be site workers. When I joined Hammersmith and Fulham Council I was assigned that branch.

Dave Welsh: Yes, so that would have been a branch within the Council itself, as such.

Sean Cullen: No, it was within the geographical area. The Council didn't have a branch as such. You see, the branches were discouraged. Basically, there was a fear that if you had a branch structure based on site, an employer might get into a position to manipulate the branch. I heard that there were some sites that did have branches based on the site but that wasn't the norm.

Dave Welsh: On a site, typically so, the one you were at in Lancaster Gate, was it just the one union, or were other trades in their own unions, like the electricians [for instance]?

Sean Cullen: At that time, the plumbers were a separate union; the electricians were a separate union. The labourers and drivers would mainly be in the T&G. The rest of the trades were allied to UCATT. The ladders might have belonged to the General and Municipal and Boilermaker's union. Then there was FTAT, the furniture makers, who would mostly have been factory-based.

Dave Welsh: So you had all these unions on one site.

Sean Cullen: Yes, you could have.

Dave Welsh: Did that make it easier or harder to organise?

Sean Cullen: It made it more difficult. The problem was that you had a degree of competition. Some of them that didn't get satisfaction in one place might change to the other and back again, and things like that. It could be disruptive. Then, of course, you have a situation like with myself, even within UCATT you might have a dispute. The joke was that the carpenters would be coming back to work and other trades would be going out. It wasn't always like that but it did happen at times. You would have different disputes going on [with the various trades]. Of course, they would be on site in different numbers at different times.

Dave Welsh: Can I just ask you just a bit more about the Lancaster Gate strike? What was the site itself? What was the building that was being built at Lancaster Gate?

Sean Cullen: It was a refurbishment of fine Georgian houses. They were about five floors high. Practically about half the street was built up and it was refurbished into a hotel. I think that they were reversing the process or something. They were beautiful; really fine places. They had been vandalised but, anyway, that was progress!

Dave Welsh: So you were then called out as part of a national dispute at that site, and you would have picketed it?

Sean Cullen: Yes, it would have been picketed daily. As it happens, the people did respond and there was no picketing. Most of the time, what we would do then, we would be looking for other places to go and picket.

Dave Welsh: So it would be what you would now call secondary picketing; before it was outlawed by Thatcher.

Sean Cullen: Yes, sometimes you'd have some organisation inside that possibly needed a little bit of assistance or encouragement. So there'd be a few of us shouting outside with placards. Sometimes there might be practically no organisation because some of the jobs were more prestigious than others. There was a lot of

hotel building going on which would have obviously had NDS; probably some of the rooms had already been let and they were still a hole in the ground. Well, I suppose, basically, we were looking for the pressure points sometimes around there.

Dave Welsh: And there was a feeling of confidence, was there? An expectation that you could win.

Sean Cullen: I think so, yes. I don't recall much resistance to it; people agreed with it. Everybody was going to benefit from it, anyway; not just with wages, but conditions.

Dave Welsh: This was in 1972?

Sean Cullen: Yes, it started about June and went on until September.

Dave Welsh: That was a time when there was the Heath government coming in and being overturned by the first miners' strike. The building dispute is before all that happened in '73/'74, when you had the 3 Day Week.

Sean Cullen: Yes, the builders' dispute was before then.

Dave Welsh: So maybe that strike was itself part of a general build up?

Sean Cullen: It could well have been, yes, because it was probably unprecedented for builders to have a national strike; usually it was just a local site, maybe it might have extended to one of the bigger firms; secondary picketing about their jobs. As far as I know it probably was the only national strike that they had and it was countrywide and more or less the same tactics. Of course, out of that came the Shrewsbury picket trials.

Dave Welsh: Can you say a little bit about that? Were you at all involved?

Sean Cullen: Only as far as that I helped out from meetings and that, and supported the branch. I wasn't involved directly. I would have attended some meetings.

Dave Welsh: Were you a Shop Steward or a Branch Officer? Did you take up a position with the union?

Sean Cullen: Yes, at Lancaster Gate I was a Shop Steward. I was still in the T&G. There were one or two UCATT stewards as well but I wouldn't call it an organised site. Basically, there was too much movement. You would think that you had the bulk of the membership one week and the next you'd find that half of them had left.

Dave Welsh: Well, imagine today where you have to do balloting, and you have to supply presses; location of work place; it would have been impossible, wouldn't it?

Sean Cullen: Yes, it would have.

Dave Welsh: How did you feel being a Shop Steward? Did you feel it was an enjoyable task or a difficult one?

Sean Cullen: It was difficult because conditions were very bad. The biggest problem I found was that there was a sort of an acceptance. There was no such thing as a Portaloo or anything like that and you were lucky if there was a bucket. I suppose in London it was quite normal to go to the pub at lunchtime or, indeed, at the 11 o'clock break or the 3 o'clock break. So that was what people did to relieve themselves.

Dave Welsh: And then you wouldn't have had hard hats?

Sean Cullen: No, they existed but getting people to wear them [was the problem]. You had to wear them compulsorily, eventually. I think the builders' strike was a factor. Overall, you'd be surprised that people wouldn't necessarily wear them.

Dave Welsh: You look at building sites now and they're all very enclosed. You've got hoardings around them. Building sites then were much more open, weren't they?

Sean Cullen: They were; anyone could practically walk in off the streets before. You'd look around and there might be a crowd of kids climbing up the scaffolding. It was scandalous; it was meant to be secure.

Dave Welsh: Yes, and Health and Safety clearly was not a priority.

Sean Cullen: Certainly not by the employer, no. But the culture of Health and Safety was very weak. It was difficult trying to raise people's expectations as to what they should have. I remember on one of the jobs, we'd got a reasonable canteen and we spent ages trying to get it enclosed from the dust. We didn't get that done so then we had trouble chasing people out of it because it was the warmest spot. I didn't want them being there but they would bring their work with them. They might be cutting up materials, and the materials could have been anything: asbestos, as you know, was quite common then. You're told it wasn't asbestos or CFO; maybe some of it was but you never knew because there was no testing done.

Dave Welsh: So asbestos was being routinely used?

Sean Cullen: Well, it could have been asbestos but, it was routinely used, yes. So what we were using on that site may have been asbestos. I suspect it was more or likely asbestos.

Dave Welsh: Did the strike win, as such? Did it gain concessions?

Sean Cullen: Yes, I can't remember what the wages were at the time but we were putting in for something like a pound an hour – big money! We didn't get the pound an hour but a pound an hour on a reduced week. But I think that we got £6 a week increase, which must have been at least 25%, if not 30%.

Dave Welsh: Oh, so it was quite a significant victory, then?

Sean Cullen: It was, yes.

Dave Welsh: What hours did you do for that? How many hours did you basically work?

Sean Cullen: Normal hours would have been 8 to 6 or 7:30 to 5:30.

Dave Welsh: Monday to Friday?

Sean Cullen: Monday to Friday but most sites would have been open at least on Saturday mornings. If there was any pressure the site would be open on Sundays as well. What used to both amuse and annoy me was that people would come looking for work. The first question that many would ask would be, *'Is there overtime?'*, and I would say, *'yes, after the 40 hours, there's overtime.'* They would say, *'no, no, we're talking about after 6 and Saturday and Sunday.'* Again, that was the long hours culture.

Dave Welsh: So, when you first went to Kensington & Chelsea and then Hammersmith [and Fulham] to work for the DLO - the Direct Labour Organisation- how different was that, then? Were conditions better?

Sean Cullen: Better conditions, of course; conditions applied! Although there were some, like myself, who made up the conditions as they went along.

Dave Welsh: Give me some examples of what you would have done as part of the DLO? You would have been contracted to work.

Sean Cullen: With Kensington, it was just all maintenance; day-to-day maintenance. The contractor (DLO) had two depots. There was one in the south of the borough, too. You had a number of plumbers; perhaps heating fitters; electricians; carpenters and probably bricklayers; and some joiners as well. It would be fairly minor and sometimes large enough repairs.

Dave Welsh: So you would be based at the depot but then you would get your jobs in the morning, and then you would go out.

Sean Cullen: Basically, it was going from job to job. You could visit 3 sites or 20 in a day. Sometimes it might just be a window catch or change the lock or something like that.

Dave Welsh: On council housing estates or an office?

Sean Cullen: Yes, we did some work in the Town Hall and I suppose some of the offices but, essentially, it was the housing. With Hammersmith and Fulham Council it was different. When I started there, my first day I was still doing new builds. So I did spend a couple of months on the last of the new builds on the housing down near King Street. They were quite known for them. They had quite a large DLO. After the new build was finished, there were a lot of conversions; re-doing. Probably at the

time it was 50-50, day-to-day maintenance and conversions, but more or less after the first year I was there, the new build had been completed.

Dave Welsh: So at Hammersmith and Fulham, you were again part of a branch of UCATT.

Sean Cullen: When I joined Hammersmith and Fulham, I joined UCATT and I was put in the branch where most of the members were London Transport employees.

Dave Welsh: So, with that, were you elected to a position? Were you a Shop Steward in that period?

Sean Cullen: Yes, fairly quickly I became a Shop Steward but the branch attendance, even then, was beginning to decline. I soon was vice-president. So, fairly quickly, probably within the first 12 months; it might have been in less than 6 months, I became a Shop Steward.

Dave Welsh: Did you get time off for that?

Sean Cullen: Yes, I did. It was quite reasonable in that respect, as long as you kept people informed. If you had an appointment or things like that, as long as you would kept your appointments and inform them, they were pretty reasonable about that. I was also allowed time off for Shop Steward training and Safety training.

Dave Welsh: So, you did the training. Was it TUC courses?

Sean Cullen: I did the TUC courses, yes.

Dave Welsh: Did you find those useful?

Sean Cullen: Yes, of course, they were quite good.

Dave Welsh: In the years that you were at Hammersmith and Fulham, were there many disputes?

Sean Cullen: In the first couple of years, disputes were not uncommon. Basically, it would have been over bonuses. Then they tried reducing the workforce, and it became disputes over jobs.

Dave Welsh: So probably more into the 80s it's starting to happen.

Sean Cullen: Yes, through the 70s it probably would have been mostly about bonuses. I think also the bonus was becoming more emphasised.

Dave Welsh: Through most of this time, it's a Labour council in Hammersmith and Fulham?

Sean Cullen: The majority of it, yes. There were one or two periods when you had Tory rule. I think it was a Tory and Liberal regime. I think we had that for at least one four year period; possibly more.

Dave Welsh: And then, of course, you had the Thatcher government, which was then beginning to break up the DLOs. I seem to remember that on London Transport, the DLO at Parsons Green was done away with, round about '83. It was actually closed.

Sean Cullen: Well, I think you could go back earlier; in the 70s it started, where the likes of Hammersmith and Fulham did new build. There probably was a time when - you're going back years – previously, when they did all the new build.

Dave Welsh: So when they stopped, they didn't want the workforce.

Sean Cullen: They stopped doing new builds and then they moved on to conversions. So, still in the 70s, it would have been. There was an employers' group that set out to undermine the DLOs.

Dave Welsh: So there was an employers' campaign to destroy DLOs?

Sean Cullen: Very much so: the Tory Party and employers. They were well organised in backing attacks and, basically, it was when there wasn't much private building going on that their eyes turned to the local authorities. I don't know if it also went parallel with sub-contracting.

Dave Welsh: So that becomes much more emphatic does it, the sub-contracting?

Sean Cullen: Yes, I think from '72 onwards with 'The Lump', and then the sub-contracting itself. I'd say that it would have been something that pushed it along from that, from the big firms from then on. Through the 70s and into the 80s it was still relatively easy to get work with the big firms but there was a period, from the mid to late 80s, when you couldn't get a job with the main contractors.

Dave Welsh: So it was a complete restructuring of the industry, wasn't it?

Sean Cullen: Yes, and very often, like with myself, if they weren't owned by the big companies they were out. They perhaps had their favourite ganger men where foremen encouraged them to take on different aspects of the work.

Dave Welsh: What was the composition of the workforce? Was it mainly white? Were there many Irish people?

Sean Cullen: There were lots of Irish and lots of West Indians; probably in all the jobs.

Dave Welsh: Did they get on well? They had something in common, I suppose.

Sean Cullen: Well, yes, I realise that, if nothing else.

Dave Welsh: They stick together.

Sean Cullen: Yes, certainly the Irish and West Indians combined well in the main. The preliminary stage probably had more Irish involved; the finishing stages might have been a bit different. I can't think of a reasonably big job that I was on that didn't have a number of West Indians involved as well. They had Africans but not so much.

Dave Welsh: The Irish workers: were they mainly from Northern Ireland or from the south?

Sean Cullen: I think in the London area the majority would have been from the south. There were a few from the North but most would have been inclined to go to Scotland or towns in the North of England. There were some Donegal people, who also have a long tradition with Scotland. Probably, I think, with the builders, most of them came to London rather than other parts.

Dave Welsh: Where were you living most of this time? Were you living in Hammersmith?

Sean Cullen: No. I think the first place I stayed in when I came to London was in Harlesden; followed by Acton and then Kilburn. Then I lived in Victoria and later West Kensington, Baron's Court.

Dave Welsh: You moved around quite a bit!

Sean Cullen: Then Shepherds Bush, and now I'm back in Harlesden! Sometimes I might have been renting on my own and sometimes I might have been crashing; an overnight crash turned into weeks and months.

Dave Welsh: In your time at Hammersmith and Fulham council were you part of any wider UCATT organisation? Did you go to any national meetings or was there a sense in which you were part of the people in UCATT who were fighting for the rank and file?

Sean Cullen: Besides the branch, UCATT had the branch officers' shop stewards committee. We used to have a six-weekly meeting but this was part of the official structure as well but it was rank and file. We were kept informed of what was going on.

Dave Welsh: So that worked quite well, then?

Sean Cullen: Yes, it was a good way of learning about what had happened, and giving assistance to people who might be in dispute. It was based on the London region and, within the region, I think that there were five separate divisional meetings. I don't think that there was a mechanism for the five different divisions to come together as such. But each of those divisions would have had at least two, maybe four [representatives, elected by the branches to London Region Committee], so they would have attended those meetings as well.

Dave Welsh: It sounds like the rank and file were able through this structure to hold quite a lot of power within the union, which you didn't always get in other unions; bigger ones. The rank and file were ignored or marginalised.

Sean Cullen: I think probably the advantage was that we were mainly just based in construction, although the exhibition representatives would have been involved; and some of the people from the factories, although a lot of them would have been under FTAT representation. The idea of the unions for their own industry, I don't think it necessarily kept things too narrow but I can imagine that in some of the other unions, where you have a general branch with different industries represented, it's hard to get what you wanted. I first met Linda through being involved in a study group about the DLOs.

Dave Welsh: When was this?

Sean Cullen: This would have been the late 70s, I think. There were a number of publications.

Dave Welsh: So there was a link between Linda and a group of academics?

Sean Cullen: Yes.

Dave Welsh: Was that quite a useful thing to have?

Sean Cullen: Yes, the information that they were producing was really good. It gave us arguments to put forward to the Councils and arguments to counter the employers' group.

Dave Welsh: What happened before you retired? The DLOs were being broken up, privatisation [was being implemented].

Sean Cullen: Probably when I started there were at least 300, maybe 400 people directly employed, and that just kept whittling away: new builds ended; conversions ended. Jobs were being contracted out, so it just whittled down to the day-to-day repairs. I can't remember exactly what the number of employees was reduced to, (about 120) In the end, we were broken up into two housing contracts: one for the Fulham area and one for the Hammersmith area; with small contracts to deal with the civic buildings and libraries and things like that. They were eventually contracted out to 'In Space' in the Fulham area, (which was in turn taken over by Wilmot Dixon's); in the north of the borough by Kiers. Most people got transferred over under TUPE. Some are on different contracts or have left.

Dave Welsh: So this would have been in the late 80s? Compulsory competitive tendering this is; CCT.

Sean Cullen: No, this happened in the north first. We had the compulsory competitive tendering but we managed to survive that right up until about 2006.

Dave Welsh: Right, so until quite recently it was still there. So was that when you finally left?

Sean Cullen: I left about three years ago [2008]. I was the Senior Steward on full time release. The workforce was dwindling away and I got the option of taking redundancy. That was about three years ago but it could have been yesterday, time flies and the memories [fade somewhat].