

Siôn Caffell

Worker

b 1947

Grew up in Archway. He worked in Swiss from mid 1960s to early 1970s. Got job aged 19. As a library assistant I worked at Holborn Central Lending, Music and Music Cataloguing; and at Kentish Town Library. I got promoted to a new post of Counter Supervisor at Swiss Cottage Library in April 1970 and I worked at Swiss Cottage until October 1971 when I left as go to Library School at the College of Librarianship, Wales in Aberystwyth as a Trainee. Loads of stories - probably quite technical. Wants to talk about: How the building functioned as the administrative centre for Camden and fitting so many staff in etc. Did the architect do a good job. Also wants to talk about what it was like to work there - customers at Swiss worse than elsewhere "I pay your wages" attitude. He also wants to talk about how well it has coped with change. Left Camden and went to Wales where he was responsible for new libraries being built and staffed - all helped by his experience at Camden in the 1970s.

"My job at Swiss Cottage, as one of two counter supervisors, was just that to be responsible for managing all the library assistants (about 20) manning the in and out lending activities in the foyer area and the logistics of getting the books back on the shelves, trapping requested items, chasing overdue items and sending out the two Book Recovery officers (ex-policeman)."

"When I visited the Swiss at 60 celebration it was a unnerving to see all the counter infrastructure swept away and to see a somewhat minimal self-service operation. Clearly the volume of transactions has plummeted. Also amazing was to see that the reference and music libraries have disappeared and to learn that there were no qualified librarians to advise the public. I hope that last point isn't true and would say that Google isn't really a substitute for a librarian in finding the information you need. However, I must say that Swiss Cottage library at 60 is in wonderful condition an inspiring place to have worked in and a place to be happy to be seen walking out of."