

Transcription of an interview conducted 24 March 2018

Interviewee: MARTYN WHITE (MW)

Interviewer: ALEX BEARD (AB)

Peckham, England

Transcription: JAREK ZABA

[00:01] AB: Hello this is Alex Beard. This morning we're in Peckham on the 24th of March 2018. And today I'm joined by

MW: Martyn White. Erm - er born on the 20th of the 6th 1990. Er at Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton, London.

[00:21] AB: Great thank you. I wonder if you can start by just telling us about - what is Deliveroo?

MW: So Deliveroo is a delivery service built around an application so essentially people get to order food through an application on their phone or laptop from a restaurant that may actually not deliver. May not do deliveries normally and I think that's where the idea come-came from. Erm so you'll have a certain number of riders in your area and they'll be using bicycles, cars or mopeds. And there'll be a certain amount of restaurants in your area that you can pick up from. You order some food from that restaurant and it gives you an estimated delivery time from-from either that rider or driver.

[01:04] AB: So how did you get involved with it?

MW: I had recently left my full time job to attempt to set up my own business which was selling fabrics on a - on a market stall basically. So while I was in the process of setting that up but still living in London it made sense to be able to get some easy income er in a flexible way so to be able to work on either in the mornings or in the evenings at times that suited me.

[01:35] AB: So where do bike - bicycles fit in with Deliveroo?

MW: I think mainly in cities they work really really well. An-in a lot of cases, when you're talking about relatively short distances over a couple of miles. Bikes are actually just a lot quicker than cars you can, you can cut through er traffic if there is any quite quickly. Erm. And you can take routes that cars can't take. Erm so along river paths things like that. Erm so a lot of the time across short distances they're actually a lot quicker.

[02:07] AB: So when you are working for Deliveroo, what does a typical shift look like?

MW: So you get given - when you first start you have to pick a zone. A zone you're gonna have to work in so obviously you're gonna have to get to that zone if you don't already live in it. You switch on the app and pretty much straight away I'd say unless it's sort of a Monday morning most - most shifts pretty much straight away, you open the app it tells you what area that you're in and that you're online. And orders just straight coming through. So someone would have ordered something from a restaurant that's close to you. The application would pick you up that you're the closest rider, you accept the order and then you just have to make your way to the restaurant. Erm. Lock up your bike. Walk inside with the

Deliveroo bag, pick up the food and then get it - get as quick - quickly as possible to the customer's house.

[02:53] AB: Are timings ever an issue? Do they give - is it a tight window you have or-

MW: Not really. They - your times on - on your delivery times. Er and they do tell you at the end of every month sort of who the fastest rider was and stuff like that. And I think they probably would pick you up if you - if you were being extremely slow. But the zone they get you to work in is - is actually normally pretty good. Quite doable. And after a few shifts you start to get to know the area that you're in quite well. It really isn't that big. Erm on-on a bike anyway. So the times have never really been an issue no.

[03:29] AB: So you're - you're on your bike but how are you transporting these meals? Presumably there's special equipment.

MW: Yeah. So you get given a pretty big bag actually which takes a bit of getting used to. You can't sort of - there's a sort of big bag on your back which is a thermal bag and then there's another thermal bag that sits within that. So the food sits within the inner thermal bag and then it's all in a big bag that you strap onto your back. A big square sort of cube bag. Which takes a bit of getting used to cos normally when you're cycling you can - you can look behind. Look behind you for oncoming cars relatively easily. Which you can't do with the bag on your back so you have to sort of developing a new way of-of riding so that you can stay safe as well.

[04:09] AB: And is that something that you're given or do you have to buy it when you join? Or

MW: You do have to buy it. But you-you have to purchase the bag and the jacket, you have to be wearing - or unless you already have a hi vis jacket but you definitely have to purchase the bag. And you can purchase the helmets and lights from them as well and it's just taken off your first few salary packets.

[04:29] AB: OK. Do you remember how much it is roughly?

MW: Errm. I think the bag was about 50 pounds. Er and they sort of take - depending on how many hours you've worked. I think they say they won't take more than 50% of your weekly salary packet. Erm. So yeah if you - if you've only worked 100 pounds worth of shifts. That only - they'll take it off of you. If you've only worked 50 pounds of shifts they'll take half the money and the rest next time.

[04:54] AB: OK yeah, I get it. So what do you think's in it for - for restaurants? [05:00] Why do you think it's sort of ballooned in popularity over the last few years.

MW: I think for restaurants it means - so for a lot of restaurants that don't already have a delivery service in place. So they don't employ their own delivery riders. It's great for them because they can make meals in the way they normally would, they might have to purchase some sort of packaging that they can put food in. And people they're not employing or paying turn up to the restaurant, grab the food and take it to their customers who can now enjoy their food from home. Rather than - rather than having to come to the restaurant. So I'm sure it's a big source of extra income. And for people who don't employ their own riders I think pretty much the same. It's - it's just an extra source of where peo-where people can order from. So they get to post their food on Deliveroo so they've got an added stream of people finding them through the application rather than having to call their restaurant specifically and

order the food from them. So I think it works really well for the restaurants. And I think it's summit they're really pleased about.

[05:57] AB: Cool. So going back to your personal experience er I wonder if you can tell us about what was your zone or what was your patch?

MW: [Laughs] Mine was erm - mine was Greenwich. Erm. That's where I was working in it which included - which included the O2. So there was a lot of sort of riding along the river up to the O2. And Friday nights, sort of Saturday nights having concerts going on and having to get the big bag through their crowds to get into all the sort of restaurants that are inside the O2. But other than that Greenwich is a really nice place to ride around so that's where I was.

[06:32] AB: Was there any kind of nightmare jobs where you knew like that this restaurant is gonna be a bit of a pain getting to or-

MW: Yy-errrm. Not so much being a pain - I mean on a Friday or Saturday before - up until about 8 o'clock it was a nightmare getting into the O2. Erm. Sometimes the security guards would just insist on checking your bag every single - obviously I know why they have to do it but they'd see you coming in like 4 or 5 times and they have to check your bag every time. There were certain restaurants as well that- that I just found [laughs] didn't use very good packaging. So I was always really worried on-on the cycle from their restaurant to erm the customer's house that-the food was gonna go over my back. And that did happen one time and I had to cut the shift early. But I won't name the restaurant.

[07:18] AB: So wh-did you have to face the customer with this [?] like ruined food?

MW: Yeah. Yeah and literally I got to the door and I had a feeling that-that something had happened. So I went to open the bag first to check it before I got to the door but they had seen me through the window. So they came out as I was opening the bag to check it and they obviously just saw that it was ruined. Luckily it was quite obvious that the food had spilled within the bag and the bottom of the bag had just fallen out because of the moisture, it was a curry so it was just the moisture had gone through and the bag had fallen out. So they could sort of could see that it was the packaging th-that that that had let us down. So they weren't too upset with me. I was obviously worried about that. But I had to cut my shift early and go home and clean the bag and all that kind of stuff.

[08:03] AB: And did they take the food anyway?

MW: They did. They were really nice. They shouldn't have. Th-they could've probably got hold of the restaurant and got another rider to bring - to bring some replacement food. I did have to call Deliveroo head office who spoke to them on the office and said they'd be able to do that. But they just said it was fine, it was only one of the dishes that had - that had come out. And the rest of the food was OK. Despite having some wet packaging.

[08:26] AB: Yeah OK. Erm. So what was your - how did you find riding around er on your bike in what's quite sort of central London area. Did you find that was difficult or-or felt dangerous at all?

MW: Yeah-er. [Pause] Not- not really. I mean Greenwich is quite an industrial area so probably the biggest thing is in that area of Greenwich area anyway sort of North Greenwich there's quite a lot of large lorries and stuff driving around and quite a lot of large roundabouts. So it's definitely something to

think about, especially with a big bag on your back. Erm. I'd say what was more difficult is - as it started to get colder when I was working sort of November, December time. That area is - I dunno if it's cos it's a new built up area but it's a bit of a wind trap, there's just - there's just tonnes of wind tunnels and stuff like so it's freezing when you're on the bike and even though you're cycling quite a lot you're doing loads of small journeys so there's not that much opportunity to warm yourself up. You're sort of cycling for five minutes and then you stop. And then-so when you set off again actually you're just freezing cos it's just wind hitting you rather than being able to warm up quite a lot. So that was probably the worst of it actually rather than the traffic and stuff like that.

[09:38] AB: Presumably that big old bag acts as a bit of a wind sail as well.

MW: [Laughs] Yeah there's time when you're sort of flying across a really big roundabout. And yeah you just get a gust of wind coming from the side and you've really got to make sure you hold your length.

[09:53] AB: So erm often I'm struck when I'm walking around and I see er groups of Deliveroo cyclists kind of like hanging out together. Are they - [10:00] tell us about that. Is there a sort of camaraderie or are they just sort of waiting for jobs or?

MW: Definitely. So the [pause] the app does tell you where the best places are to wait for jobs. And in Greenwich there was a sort of a few of those. Actually in the O2 loads of people used to sort of being going in and out of there and definitely you'll get that thing where you'll recognise another Deliveroo rider and you either get a nod if both people are busy or you can definitely have a chat about sort of what time you finish or sort of aforementioned restaurants that don't provide the right packaging, that kinda stuff. So you definitely get that. And also y-you tend to - you do meet a lot of people that just like cycling anyway, I don't think you'd be able to do it unless you - unless you really enjoyed cycling. So y-you get to talk to people about their bikes and why they ride certain bikes and that sort of thing as well so that-that's always good too.

[10:51] AB: And erm - I've seen a few Deliveroo motorbikes. Is there - is there a sort of rivalry between the Deliveroo cyclists and the Deliveroo motorbikes?

MW: Not really no. More like when it is cold and windy it's quite- you're a bit jealous cos they're sort of really wrapped up. And they don't have to carry a bag. They've got it er - they've got it strapped to the back of the bike. But I think the motorbikes have it much - have a much wider zone. So normally if you see a motorbike in your zone. I'm fairly sure that means they've come from further away. So someone outside of the zone have ordered food from further away so it requires a bike rather than a - requires a motorbike sorry rather than a bicycle. So they won't normally be taking jobs that you would get.

[11:32] AB: So erm would you say that erm your experience working with Deliveroo was - was a positive one? Did you find it a good place to work?

MW: Yeah definitely. Erm. It's - it was really good exercise. Erm. When the weather was good actually I've got to say it's probably the best - it's probably one of the best sort of erm jobs in terms of what you're doing. So even when it's nice weather and you're just picking up order after order, grabbing food for people, dropping it off, just pretty much cycling back and forth in the sunshine or on a mild evening it's really good. Obviously there are times when it's freezing and it's raining and you've forgotten your gloves an-and it - so it can turn into sort of the hardest jobs in the world. But overall it's quite good esp-I

think especially for someone that's part time. Erm. I think full time there-there are issues that come around regarding holiday pay and stuff like that because you're technically self employed. So if you take time off you don't get paid unlike- unlike a normal job. But definitely I'd say as a part time rider I'd say it was much more positive than negative. A really nice way to earn some extra money.

[12:33] AB: One thing actually I've noticed about Deliveroos, often I see [pause] see uh-er a Deliveroo kind of frantically bashing at their phone screen. Clearly a bit lost. Was that - was that a theme, trying to find - cos obviously you're constantly having to find addresses?

MW: Yeah so. So the app - the app does connect you to Google Maps. So you can immediately pick an address and - and just get it on your Maps. So I would wear headphones. So I'd get the directions in my headphones. And like I said after the first few shifts you do start to get to know the area so you know roughly where things are gonna be. But every now and again you get that thing - even when you're using Google Maps normally or a satnav where Google Maps doesn't or maps in general quite know where you area. So they take you somewhere and you realise you're just - you're just not where you need to be. So there's quite a bit of just looking at the map and trying to work out where you are based on street names. And all this time the food in your bag's getting colder and colder and you're trying to wheel your bike at the same time and stuff like that. So definitely had some times where there was an extra 20 minutes on the delivery time cos I just couldn't find where I was going. So yeah it happens for sure.

[13:39] AB: And erm. Is it a bit of a pain having to constantly lock up your bike and unlock up your bike or erm or do you just not worry about that? Do you just leave it against the shop and nip in?

MW: No it definitely is a bit of a pain I found. I remember before I started actually I - I had wanted to know what the best thing to do with that and I actually found a video on YouTube of someone explaining what they normally do. And they - they would just - they were just leaving their bike just outside the place they went in. But I don't think they were in central London so I definitely wouldn't have felt good leaving my sort of pride and joy er racer outside. So yeah that's definitely a bit of - a bit of a hassle sort of having to use the sort of coil lock and the more you use those locks the more coiled they get as well. So that was-that was becoming a hassle yeah for sure.

[14:29] AB: And then. Just finally did you find that when you've been working more and more people were starting to - you mentioned there was a bit of a Deliveroo camaraderie. Did you find you sort of got to know certain restaurant owners and people started to recognise you and things like that?

MW: In - yeah in some of the smaller more independent restaurants definitely. There was an Indian restaurant right next to Westcombe Park station which was where - which was in the area where I delivered from. And I started to get to know the owners there and they were - they were sort of really nice and sort of had jokes and stuff like that. Especially when the weather was bad they always found that quite funny. Erm. **[15:00]** But a lot of the other ones were just big chain restaurants and because I tended to work Fridays and Saturdays. They were always just so busy and manic th-they just wanted to get you out of there. You were just someone in the way with a big bag. They just had to get you out of there.

[15:15] AB: So it must have been a-a a bit of a nightmare queuing up with the concert-goers with that-with that bag.

MW: I mean I did tend to try and go around them. And security normally would give you a quick check rather than making you queue. But yeah every now and again you have to queue with people and you've got people having a good time and you're a bit of a novelty in a big hi vis vest and a big jacket. So people like speaking to you as well so part of their night out which is again if you're a good mood and having good shift quite funny. [Laughs] But if you're having a bad shift it's the worst. So yeah. [Laughs]

[15:45] AB: Alright cool yeah. That's great. Thank you very much.

MW: No worries.