

# Object Summary

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## Oral history of the Malta Dockyard:

### Emmanuel Attard

#### Date

30 November 2020

#### Primary Maker

Emmanuel Attard

null

#### Dimensions

49 minutes, 10 seconds

null

#### Extent

1 digital audio recording (WAV)

#### Object Type

Oral history

null

null

#### Collection

Malta Dockyard Oral History project

## Museum

Malta Maritime Museum

## Registration Number

MMM.AV0002

## Description

This recorded interview was made as part of the Malta Dockyard Oral History project by the Digitisation Unit, Heritage Malta, under the direction of Joe Meli. Emmanuel Attard entered the dockyard as an engine fitter in 1955 during the Admiralty period. He remembers the transition period from Naval to Commercial yard. He eventually moved to a position of a recorder where he monitored employees' work schedules and other work related to the workers' attendance data. He retired from the shipyard in 1999.

## Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) (00:30) 46 years working in the Dockyard-Emanuel attended elementary school in Birgu and later De La Salle College. His father was a harbour pilot and sent him to school to join the Dockyard. At school he learned Italian and French. (04:00) Entering the dockyard, apprenticeship- He attended the shipyard for the exam, which he passed and was placed in the 72nd position. He chose the trade of a fitter. In the shipyard there was a system where you were in school for three days and the other two days in the workshops, depending on the trade chosen. Then after six years one became a tradesman. (06:00) After the Second World War, Malta was a warfare state and rundowns were taking place in the dockyard. After the apprenticeship, Emanuel decided to apply as a recorder, and remained in that position for 20 years. He remembers that there was no safety equipment and also remembers how a crane came loose from its cable, but over time things got better. He worked at the shipyard for 46 years, from 1938 to 1999. (10:30) Accident and events-He mentions that there were several accidents and one had to be very careful while working. He then mentions the accident in which the Um El Faroud exploded and nine people died. The Dockyard was in the hands of the Admiralty, and in 1955 the British

Governor wanted rundowns to take place, but when Bailey came, the workers were divided in two; that is, the British Government kept half of the 12,000 workers which were the seniors and the young ones went with Bailey. During 1955 and 1958, people emigrated to America, Canada and Australia, and during this time Mintoff was in power and wanted the British Government to give more money to the Maltese government, but the British refused and as a result Mintoff resigned. Therefore, the British appointed four of their people as shipyard managers. Emanuel claims that he was paid Six Pounds a Week (Sitt Liri fil-gimgha). He also mentions that they made an uproar when the workers were divided in two groups. (21:00) As a recorder, he monitored employees' work schedules, and if someone had to take an hour off, Emanuel was the one who was notified. He recounts an incident when he was on duty and a security guard asked if a particular worker had clocked out, and a day later they heard that the same worker was found dead at Buskett. Another accident occurred when a small merchant ship entered the drydock and four people fell in into the drydock (bacir) and died. Once he was involved in an accident when a ship collided in No.4 dock, which was used for trading, and Emanuel fell into the sea and was pushed under water. (29:30) Education, travel abroad, further work-The entrance examinations were corrected in England. And during the 6-year apprenticeship period, they were not allowed to marry. Moreover, since they were a British colony, the exam included mathematics, English language and geography. (30:30) As a recorder and a member of the Union he went to Vienna for 20 days and was instructed about the Union. He states that there were several strikes and revolts; one was when there was a minesweeper in No.3 dock, where a person was about to pour petrol on the ship while at the Dockyard, and the police pointed a gun at him to stop him. (32:30) Another accident occurred in Gajn Dwieli when a bowser crashed into a bus while leaving the shipyard. Emanuel claims that he was never dissatisfied with the work in the dockyard. Attard, states that when Mintoff was back in power, he was called by Agatha Barbara, minister of education, who told him that they needed machinists and asked him to find four more, including himself to help her. He got Form 1 students to teach them in the workshop.