

# Object Summary

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## Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Mario

### Borg

#### Date

5 February 2021

#### Primary Maker

Mario Borg

null

#### Dimensions

23 minutes 53 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.AV0015

## 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. After completing successfully the 'extended training scheme', Mario joined the dockyard and in 1981 and started his 3-year apprenticeship. On completion he was sent to the boiler shop as a steel worker. He worked on various shipbuilding projects. He left the yard in 2008 during the closing-down process.

## Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) Education-Dockyard school(00:30) He entered the dockyard at the age of 18 in 1981. He applied for the extended skill training scheme and after he passed his exams, he had three choices where he could go work. These included either at the Malta Drydocks, Air Malta or Malta Shipbuilding and he opted for Air Malta. However, it was irrelevant what one chose as it was finally down to one's abilities. He was sent to the Malta Drydocks. He spent his first three years at the training centre as an apprentice where he was taught different trades including bench fitting, sheet metal, electrical, welding, gas cutting and others. After the completion of his 3-year apprenticeship period they were given the choice to decide where to continue working. He opted for the plate shop because it was central, however he was sent to the boilershop as he was more skilled in the work that is done at the boilershop. (02:30) However, before he started at the boilershop, he had spent some time working with the shipwrights afloat where at the age of 21 he was allocated to an instructor. (06:45) He spent 20 years working at the boilershop (bwejba), also known as the shiprepair shop where he was allocated to an instructor once again. His first instructor was George Schembri and after some time he had a new instructor Anglu

Agius. With his second instructor he started working on metal structures such as stairways (skajjel), mushroom-vents with a square to round shaping, and so on. After a few years, he was left to work on his own with a co-worker who they used to refer to as their 'mate' . (10:15) The boilershop was known for its more specialised quality steelwork ( "... ghax-xoghol tal-ezettezza ..." ) as it used to produce precise work to specific requirements. Entering the dockyard-Swan Hunter / Bailey / changeovers (11:30) After he spent 18/19 years working at the boilershop, there were rumours on the financial difficulties of the shipyard, and that there were difficulties on the payment of the wages, etc. Eventually the news came out that about 900 workers were to be made redundant. He was one of the selected workers to keep working in the dockyard, but the experience was not the same since they considered themselves as a group and as a family. (13:15) After another 2 years, it was rumoured again that the boilershop was going to be taken over by 'blasters' and that they were going to be sent to the fabrication shop. When this happened, he was one of the first workers sent to the fabrication shop to get used to the work. Eventually all workers were transferred from the boilershop to the steel shops. The workers were all allocated to a chargeman and eventually started to work with their 'mates' . He spent a total of five years at the fabrication shop from 2003 till 2008. During that period, he spent four months at shipbuilding yard where the the Gozo ferries, Malita, Gaudos, and Ta' Pinu were being built. Although these ferries were being built at the shipbuilding yard, some structural sections were done at the Malta Dockyard, some of which at boilershop and when completed, transported by barges to the shipbuilding yard at Marsa where these were assembled. (16:45) He was chosen amongst four others to go work at shipbuilding because there was a backlog of work. They then returned to the fabrication shop at the dockyard. Entering the dockyard-Swan Hunter / Bailey / changeovers (18:45) In the 2007/2008, there was a lot of uncertainty at the Dockyard. In 2008 there was an issue of early retirement schemes and he found another job with the company 'Alberta' and went to the HR to inform them that he was retiring. (20:45) He remembers the incident which happened at No.6 dock where four died due to the dock arm falling while they were working on it.