

Object Summary



Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Anthony

Pulè

Date

23 February 2021

Primary Maker

Anthony Pulè

null

Dimensions

1 hour 22 minutes 04 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.AV0023

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. Twanny entered the shipyard as an electrical apprentice in 1956, following his brothers' footsteps. During his training at the Drawing Office, he applied for a draughtsman post and became a temporary draughtsman and after promoted to draughtsman. He was involved in various electrical work projects and retired as a leading Draughtman in 2002.

Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) Entering the dockyard-Reasons for joining(00:30)
When he was 14 years old, he followed his brothers' footsteps and started working at the dockyard as well. A lot of apprentices used to join the dockyard every year and, in his entry-year there was a total of 49 electrical apprentices that entered the dockyard, out of which three of them were armament fitters. The two chargemen in charge of them were Mr. Degiorgio and Mr. Ellul, however due to the number of electrical apprentices, two more chargemen were employed, Mr. Debattista and Mr. Anastasi. (05:15) The first year they had practical workshop training and at the same time they attended school. They also had lectures in the dockyard lecture rooms. These lectures were given by Mr. Debattista and Mr. Anastasi. Later on, during the 2nd year of their apprenticeship, they were also trained how to do electrical winding on fans which were used during the time of the Admiralty. In the workshops, they also did their own tools, in fact the first tool they did was a vice (morsa). (15:45) During the second year of apprenticeship, he spent some time in the electrical shop with the winding section and some other time with the bench fitting section. The electrical shop had different sections: the bench fitting, the machinery, the winding and the test bay.

Throughout the third year, he was sent to the different shops related with the electrical trade in the dockyard to get the experience. (17:15) During his training at the drawing office, a friend told him that there was a course being held for recruitment of draughtsman. At the time the dockyard was being transferred to Bailey, and the idea was to reconstruct the docks to take commercial ships instead of naval ones. He asked around for information on the course and got to know that only apprentices that entered the yard in 1957 (a year after his entry) were being called. Since he was interested, he went to speak to the educational officer, a certain Mr. Adams, and asked him about the situation. At first, the training department was hesitant to let him participate, trying to discourage him by telling him that there were a lot of examinations involved, etc. Eventually they agreed and was given the opportunity to participate. He was successful and became a temporary draughtsman and after promoted to draughtsman. Entering the dockyard-Swan Hunter / Bailey / changeovers (25:15) When Bailey took over the dockyard, the position of draughtsman changed a little. Before Bailey's arrival, there was just an afloat section and a section that took care of the dockyard mains. When Bailey took over only part of the drawing office, whereas the other part remained with the Admiralty Then Bailey created introduced another section in the drawing office, to work on the planned modifications of the yard facilities. Furthermore, Bailey started doing work on factories and other civil work. Bailey also introduced different work processes, where the drawings were all made in the dockyard. Whereas, under the Admiralty, the draughtmen used to make the working drawing based on drawings that were done in the UK. On the other hand, certain work on naval vessels was not required anymore. For example, work on the submarine batteries. Basically, the batteries consisted of cells, these were around four feet high, which were located in the battery room. The electrical drawing office assisted with the testing by measuring the amperage and voltage of the batteries. (33: 15) During the time of the Admiralty, the drawing offices was responsible for the testing of machinery such as cranes, motors, compressors, lifts, etc. These tests were conducted by the Drawing office-shipwrights' section. The electrical drawing office was involved in checking the electrical equipment of the machinery. (35:15) The electrical drawing office was initially situated in No.1 dock, together with all the other workshops and departments in relation to the electrical trade. The only electrical section that was not located in No.1 Dock area was the 'mains' , which

was located underground near the 'A' sub-station in Ghajn Dwieli. This was connected through subways, starting from Kordin up to Senglea Point. If he had not made the draughtman course, he would have been sent to work with the 'mains' section. As a draughtsman afloat section, they used to make the generator trials together with the assistance of the engineering drawing office. Basically, the test consisted in checking that when the load of the prime mover's varies from zero to full-load, the variation in the generator load changed only by a small percentage. These procedures changed by time, as most of the commercial ships had their own personnel to do this work. (42:30) There was a period when most sections of the Electrical Department, would ask assistance directly from the drawing office for certain things that they required. Management was not happy with this procedure and gave instructions that the procedure to follow was to go with any enquiry through the Purchasing and stores department. Then again, since the Purchasing and Stores department did not have the technical knowledge, they coordinated with the electrical drawing office. Entering the dockyard-Dockyard layout(46:30) The electrical drawing office was originally situated in No.1 Dock area. The Mechanical (engineering) drawing office was situated behind the factory (Machine Shop), while the shipwright drawing office was situated at the MCD shop, between No.3 Dock, the Melita slip, Eventually the drawing offices were combined in one area behind the factory (Machine Shop). Finally, in the late 1970s, they were moved in the new electrical complex located at Ghajn Dwieli. (58:45) He has experienced the different times and the changes in management in the dockyard and he believes that the best time for the workers was when the dockyard was managed by Bailey. The reason was that during that period there was a lot of work and the workers were doing a lot of overtime. Furthermore, workers had a lot of opportunities to go study and work overseas. The personnel in the dockyard were involved in more work and had the opportunity to show their capability. Furthermore, Bailey, considering that they had high number of employees, started diversification by doing civil work, new building work, etc. Bailey also introduced other changes, such as new working procedures and methods. For example, in the electrical section there was the introduction of using cable ties instead of the old bracket system that was used during the Admiralty. (1:09:00) Bailey left and Swan Hunter took over the management of the dockyard. Then there were various changes in the management of the dockyard. He remembers

one episode when the dockyard had a new Chief Executive, Peter Moore, who once called for a meeting with the drawing offices and addressed them quite frankly and criticized the drawing offices on their performance. Anthony decided to reply to him by explaining that the draughtsmen were involved much more in the plant maintenance work rather than direct involvement on commercial ships and that he had the wrong impression on what was the actual work of the drawing offices.