

# Object Summary

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## Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Raymond Agius

### Date

29 March 2022

### Primary Maker

Raymond Agius

### Dimensions

36 minutes 08 seconds

### Extent

1 digital audio recording (WAV)

### Object Type

Oral history

### Collection

Malta Dockyard Oral History project

### Museum

Malta Maritime Museum

### Registration Number

MMM.AV0109

### 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. In 1971, Raymond joined the the yard as a fitter apprentice. After successfully completing his apprenticeship, he was stationed at Manoel Island Yacht Yard. However, the work failed to fulfill his full expectations, prompting him to explore alternative career paths abroad in 1978.

### Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) (00:30) He entered the yard in 1970. He placed 4th in the entrance examination, and at that time it was the custom that the higher place applicants chose the trade of Fitter. He was inclined to technical trades as he had already done some practical work. (04:45) At that time the dockyard was passing through some turbulent time, however as apprentices they were spared from this situation. The training centre was in a way an area beyond the problems affecting the yard. (04:45) The start of the apprenticeship, it was a good experience, treated as a grown up and differently than just a student behind a desk. The system of teaching was very good, and all the students learned different trade. The instructors were excellent and they were experienced. They

taught us with passion rather than as instructors. The training and the practical objects that were made during the first year, were necessary objects for the future of the apprentices. (10:00) The training was based of repair work where the tradesman did not just exchanged parts, but had to understand and invent means and ways how to solve the problems that faced them. (11:15) He liked the time that he spent at the drawing office. He learned a lot on how to manage and work with different people. He was involved with the Chinese when they were importing a lot of equipment for the work that they were carrying out in Malta at that time. (14:45) During his apprenticeship, he liked a lot working in the boathouse. The skills at the boathouse were very high. These were probably lost with time. (16:30) He was allocated at the Manoel Island, which was interesting but small as compared to the shipyard. There were a lot of different characters. He remembers one foreman who used to repair ship propellers, which was a very interesting work. He considers that there were a lot of highly skilled workers. (21:30) At the shipyard, he learned the tricks of the trade, that are very important to know. These tricks can only be learned during the practical training and not possible to find in books. (25:45) On completion of his apprenticeship, he went to Manoel Island. He recalls working on the engine of an ex-navy boat. Working in a confined machinery space. He also recalls working on Libyan Naval ships, also involving working on cannons. Eventually life circumstances made working at the Manoel island very difficult, so he asked for a transfer. He was eventually transferred to the Dockyard on the boring machines. He remembers Mr. Baldacchino, who was very strict in appearance, but eventually turned out to be very cordial.