

## Hardy Allen

I joined the Navy from Totnes Grammar School in May 1952 as 1 of 200 or so Artificer Apprentices. I chose to be an Engine Room Artificer Apprentice because I was quite good at doing things in the workshops but moderate in the classrooms - mainly because I didn't have the interest in schoolwork any more.

Anyway, I passed out of HMS Fisgard after the first 16 month phase of the 4 year course. I've forgotten where abouts I was in the group but it seems that I did quite well. I am making these assumptions because, after 8 more months in HMSCaledonia in Rosyth, I was sent for by the Captain and informed that I had been selected to become an Engineer Officer, to join other cadets at Dartmouth College, before going to the Royal Naval Engineering College at Manadon, Plymouth., and to get myself measured up for my new uniform by the Gieve's man who was waiting next door! Yes, life was very exciting!

And so those early months and indeed years of my training by the Royal Navy really were where all my life long values and standards were learned and practiced on a daily basis. The Navy made me into the man that I became.

And I have no regrets whatsoever.

Sea time is really what young men joined the Navy for and so it didn't waste too much time before we were sent off to sea as cadets in HMS Triumph for an 8 month Ship initiation. Promotion to Midshipman bought a new seagoing appointment to HMS Theseus and my Introduction to the well known Captain (Crap) Miers. I was the cox'n of his personal fast launch and it was a daily routine to collect him at 0730 from the quay at Bincleaves Jetty, Portland Harbour and deliver him back at the end of his working day. His booming voice could be heard from 300 yards!

My engineering training continued at the College at Manadon for the next two years along with all the other vital continuation training to make sure that we didn't forget what we were and who we were to become - officers in the Royal Navy!

And finally at the age of 25 I became a watchkeeping engineer of the carrier HMS Albion for 2 years or so. Whilst still a Lieutenant I was appointed to the carrier HMS Centaur, then a spell as a Divisional officer at HMS Raleigh, another basic training facility for young engineering mechanics at Torpoint In Cornwall.

My most challenging seagoing appointment was as the Engineer Officer of the diesel engined HMS Chichester, commanded then by the well known and widely respected seaman Commander Tim Sex. A prolonged round the world journey with little or no support sorts out the men from the boys. Or so I'm told.

My fifth and last carrier was HMS Eagle where a couple of years passed very quickly indeed. A very busy ship.

My last memory of importance concerned my last appointment to Chatham dockyard, in charge of refitting the non nuclear bit of HMS Churchill. I was by then coming up to 40, hadn't been selected for promotion to commander which was a considerable disappointment to me and I had a growing family and no money to speak of. Time to get a grip on things. I began to read the Sunday papers where they advertised for technical people at quite good salaries in interesting parts of the world. One job caught my eye- Chief Engineer, European Operations with Air Products Ltd (who? look them up!) at New Malden, Surrey. The starting salary was more than 50% over my Naval salary.

I applied for the job and after several meetings and interviews, was offered the job! I immediately wrote my letter of resignation which, with me coming up to 40 and a navy that was getting smaller, seemed to offer no problems. Except that my admiral said I couldn't be spared at that particular time.

I returned to AirProducts and explained the situation and to my surprise and delight said they would wait. And so, several months later my 24 year career with the Royal Navy came to a quiet end and my 18 year career with this splendid American Company got under way.

