

PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD 1960 to 1967

M. E. D. PATTERN SHOP - DOWN AMONGST THE SAWDUST AND VARNISH

Having told you about my other two departments I served in within Portsmouth Dockyard, I thought it only right and fair to tell you about my employment at the very beginning when I served in the M E D Pattern Shop from 1960 until 1967, when I transferred to FAW1. I hope this will be just as interesting as the other two. Please bear with me if some facts and figures are wrong, for it is well over 50 years ago; where has the time flown? But I think I am not all that far out in my recollections. I apologise for no pictures this time of the interior of the Pattern Shop in its heyday or of the sawmill. As far as I recall, there are two pictures of the Pattern Shop looking down towards the saw mill end from the Inspectors Office, and a posed shot of the men working in the sawmill. They used to hang on the wall of the Pattern Shop, near the entrance staircase, and may be in the Dockyard archives somewhere. I hope they may come to light. The day I joined, aged 16, I started work at 7am; this carried on for quite a few months until an error was discovered that I SHOULD have started AT 8AM instead. This was because I was a juvenile. Try as I might, I was unsuccessful in getting back the extra hours that I had worked; so I just had to suffer my loss. I was placed with the Joiners' section of the Pattern Shop under my Chageman, Jack Bristow. He always quoted, more or less at the start of each sentence, the quip by the famous wartime comedian Ron or Rob Wilton: "now the day war broke out, my missus----", or quietly hummed a tune or two. For the first two weeks or so, I hardly did a stroke of work. This began to make me feel quite guilty; and worse – perhaps I would get the SACK for being idle. But I need not have worried for Jack let me know there would be plenty of time for me to get stuck in and pull my weight. All I had to do was just watch and observe, get the feel of the place and routines carried out.

Eventually I got stuck in during the 3rd week, doing everything that was asked of me - although being wet behind the ears, I did make one or two mistakes but that was to be tolerated by the shop workers. It was politely pointed out what I had done wrong so that I knew what to do next time. As mentioned the Pattern Makers were at one end of the shop, and the Joiners section, also M E D, at the other. A wooden dividing screen was across where the Pattern Shop area finished and the Joiners section started, with a flexible split clear draught curtain that one could walk through. The M E D Joiners made mainly foot ladders; housing covers for the engines in launches or pinnaces; cabs for Mercury trucks or sometimes lorries, usually the flat fronted AEC Matador type; offices for the shop floors in various departments around the Dockyard (these were sent out in a "knocked down" state and re-assembled on site); and, last by no means least, re-lined shaft bushes for the warships in the hardest wood known, *lignum vitae*. That in itself was an art. The wood sections in the bush were spring-tight, forced in with a mallet. Of course, being forced fitted, to remove the old wood block linings, one tapped one end in a certain spot with the mallet and a chisel; once one was loose, the rest just sprang apart and were easy to remove. One had to be wary or keep an eye out whilst this was going on, since the blocks could fly a little and hit someone but this did not happen that often. Once the blocks were removed, it meant that the brass or gunmetal bush had to have all its red lead paint removed till the brass was bright and shiny; no verdigris in the grooves of the metal. Then the bearing was re- red leaded and when dry the blocks re-inserted. Only wooded blocks that were really badly worn were replaced, since the wood used was very expensive then and I shudder to think what it costs now in 2012. Woods used in the Joiners were Douglas Fir, Spruce, Marine Ply,

Lignum Vitae, sometimes Mahogany, and of course Yellow Pine for the Pattern Makers. Most timber arrived in plank form, although very rough of course; the Lignum Vitae was in the form of a large log. As the main wood wanted was more or less in the centre, the "heart", the rest was just waste; that is why it was so dear. Marine Ply arrived in large sheets, beautiful stuff too. Deliveries were by the PSTO(N) articulated lorries with the timber in the long trailers. The stuff was hoisted up, by the outside 3 ton crane located on a landing - one overlooking "The Parade" road, the other, also 3 ton, overlooking the Foundry Yard. On each crane was a hand wheel that one rotated to swing out the jib to collect the load and hoist it in once the timber had reached the landing. GREAT CARE had to be taken when one opened the swing metal gates on the landing to allow the timber lengths to come into the Pattern Shop; one false move and you could plunge to your death either in "The Parade" or the Foundry Yard. Anyway it was obvious common sense, I was ALWAYS very wary when I was asked to help in a load of timber. The hoist overlooking "The Parade" had a small cabin with glass windows, whilst the one overlooking the foundry yard had only a steel lid to the crane control box. The hoist motors were inside the Pattern Shop. One funny incident that I caused, although at the time was a little serious, occurred when we had a delivery of Deal planks. Skilled Labourer, Jack (Chuff) Hannam, who worked the outside hoists, had lifted a large load for the Joiners off the waiting lorry below. The timber finally arrived level with the landing. As I cranked the winding handle to swing the hoist jib back in, a gust of wind got hold of the load of timber and span it like a top. "WHOA, DAVE, WHOA!" yelled poor old Chuff. Too late! 20sq ft of best quality grade Deal planks slammed into the crane cabin. "CRASH! TINKLE! TINKLE!" the hoist cabin windows went in a shower of glass. Poor old Chuff was white as a sheet; the timber had just missed him by inches! Chuff regained his composure and then was most upset that the hoist would be out of action until the cabin windows could be repaired and the cabin itself, which also had some minor splintering of the plywood of which it was made of. He then called me every blue name under the sun he could think of. Upon hearing the crash, Jack Bristow rushed outside. "OW MI GAWD! You okay, Jack?" Jack nodded in the affirmative and then told my Chargeman what had happened. Jack Bristow gave me a rollicking at first for my carelessness but then Chuff said that, on the spur of the moment, he had blamed me when in fact I was totally innocent; the wind had unexpectedly sprung up and caught the timber stack before I could react in time. No more was said on the matter, although it had to go in the accident book even though luckily no one was hurt.

Timber for the Joiners was stored in racks in the Pattern Shop, whilst the Pattern Makers had their own store on the floor below. This meant that the hoist overlooking the Foundry Yard had to be used as well. The timber was wheeled about on small wooden flat bogie trucks with steel wheels and a pull rope. Besides all of this, on the first floor of the Pattern Shop, the Joiners had their glass store. Here was stored 1/4 inch thick window glass, in a small room screened off from the wooden pattern store and kept locked. The glass was used for the wooden small offices the Joiners made as previously mentioned. It was delivered via the double doors on the first floor that overlooked Victoria Road, No. 8 Dock and No. 2 Basin. There was a hoist as well worked by toggles. The glass came in sheets, 12ft x 6ft; one had to take great care not to get one sheet smashed to smithereens or to cut oneself on the edges. Usually the glass required was measured and cut in the glass storeroom. Only once was one whole sheet taken from the store room and carried upstairs to the Pattern Shop Pattern Makers end, taking great care also NOT to hit the low arch in the ceiling or when one went through the covered glazed lobby to the Pattern Shop over the cast iron and steel staircase.

Now we come to the shop staff, those in charge and those I recall working with in the Joiners. I have already dealt with the names of the Pattern Makers in my previous

recollections but, to be fair, I think there are a few more that I missed first time round and have now remembered, so apology to all. We will deal with these first. Ben Frampton was the one in charge of the Pattern Store and had his own little place as well on the first floor. It was he whose job I took over when Ben retired in 1964 and had showed me the ropes of the job. His sidekicks were Percy Rolls and Leonard Betts. Paddy Doyle being on the patterns-to-be-painted bench. Albert Hardacre worked the Pattern Shop milling machine with his colleague Nobby Clark; their machines were located in the Joiners' area but at the far end by the windows that overlooked Ivy lane. They made all the core boxes for the patterns. Albert had a little sweet and tobacco shop in Marmion Road, Southsea, and often brought in sweets and such like for us to buy. Usually below the shop price as well! Strictly speaking it was against the rules to sell stuff like that, private business, but as everyone kept quiet, there was no bother. Tim Danvers was the Pattern Maker apprentice who later advanced to become a top draughtsman in the M C D dept. There was another Ian (just forget his surname) also a Pattern Maker apprentice, who studied the cello in his spare time, sometimes bringing it in to give us a recital; he was quite promising as well. He left the Dockyard eventually and I have no idea whether he took up a musical career in a symphony orchestra.

The main people in charge were, Jack Janes, the shop Inspector, then 2 Joiner Chageman Jack Bristow, Jack Eddy; the latter went mainly onboard ship refits to see what work was required for the Joiners to repair or make. Bernie Wyatt was the negotiator and Union rep. Then the Joiners: Herbie Weeks, Les Howard, Edgar Dean, Ernie Bonniiface, Jim Walsh, Bill Aktinson, Norman Hudson, Roy Dudmann, Fred Phillips, Alfie Brooks, Cocker Reid, Len Gutteridge and Reg Stainer. Cocker Reid was the Hi-Fi expert and could fix anything wrong with ones record player (remember those?), radio, speakers, tape recorders, etc at very decent price, and also advise on the Hi-Fi you were after. Some folk brought in their portable transistor radios to be fixed, which strictly speaking was forbidden. Cocker would call round to your home. Fred Phillips! As a joiner he was USLESS! Glue would seep out from all his dovetail joints and the job would NOT be square either! Many a time that Jack Bristow and him had a verbal scrap; on one occasion he smashed up the job he had been doing. This resulted in a huge row with Jack Janes, the shop Inspector, and sending Fred off home on suspension for the rest of the day. Roy Dudman, however, was a fantastic cartoonist and often did comical cartoons of us all.

The shop labourers were: Jack(Chuff) Hannham, Jack Butler, Paddy Mc Garry, Cecil Green, an ex-policeman, Clifford Adams, and yours truly. Jack Butler though was a bit of an alcoholic, his favourite tippie being rough "Scrumpy Jack" or near 100% raw cider! Hence his face looked like a pickled walnut. His local, if you could call it that, was just outside the old Main Gate by the Hard - "The Apple Tree" on the corner of Queen Street, and he always had a liquid lunch instead of a main hot meal during the lunch hour break. These days the pub has changed way beyond recognition and is now called "The Ship and Castle", one of those trendy wine-and-meal bistro places. Sometimes Jack would come back a little tipsy and several times he got done for being so. On one occasion, Jack thought that something I had said referred to him. It actually did not concern him whatsoever but, as he was a little drunk, he picked up a small lump of scrap timber and clouted me on the right side of my head. Luckily the blow was not that hard - but enough for me partially to collapse and to make me feel dizzy and sick. "That will teach yer to talk about me behind my back, you blank blank little heathen!" Jack's actions caused utter uproar in the Pattern Shop Joiners' section. I was just a lad aged 16 going on 17 in 1961. Alfie Brooks, whose woodworking machine was in a space alongside the toilet block on the outside landing space that overlooked the foundry yard, rounded on Jack and pinned him to the wall. "How DARE YOU hit him, he is just a BOY!" he roared. Bleeding slightly from a small cut on the side of

my head, I was told to sit down for the moment by one of the other Joiners. This action prompted the immediate presence of Jack Janes, the shop Inspector. He dashed out of his office and confronted Jack Butler. "In my OFFICE NOW!" thundered the Inspector. Of course he could smell the alcohol on Jack Butler's breath. The upshot of it all was that Jack Butler received the sack on the spot; he had to report to the senior Foreman of our department, Mr Dugan. The charges were: 1 being drunk on work duty; and 2 striking a junior employee; both quite serious. Jack Butler had been pulled up a few times already over being slightly tipsy and had been warned that the next time, he would be sacked!

Clifford Adams was the Joiners' Lister truck driver. His Lister was one of the old petrol ones in navy blue, the number 44RN58 as far as I recall, with pneumatic tyres and kept at night



in the Iron and Brass foundry trimming shop annexe. His job was to go round with the Joiners that went on work "afloat" (ships in refit in dry dock), taking their tools and any joinery work constructed in the Joiners' shop for the warship concerned. One day, Paddy MacGarry, Chuff, and myself, played a joke on Clifford. Every so often we had to test the fire hoses dotted around the Pattern Shop. There was one located by the doors that led to the landing that overlooked "The Parade" road. Being a fine day, the water would dry up in no time. We played the hose on the landing floor, but not to flood it with too much water, and on NO

ACCOUNT to squirt it over the metal guard fence around the landing into the road below. The hoses were only tested to check for leaks in the hose itself or from the metal nozzle. Drill over and no leaks, we were about to put away the fire hose when Paddy Mac Gary spotted Clifford astride his Lister truck going south, coming back from the job he had just done. "You watch this!" said Paddy grinning and aiming the hose at Clifford. Trouble was Clifford saw our actions from above and stopped his Lister just before he would turn left and dive under the Foundry arch into the Foundry yard. It was a battle of wills! Talk about "High Noon" and Garry Cooper! Clifford revved up his Lister, whilst Paddy waited with the hose to squirt him! Suddenly Clifford charged forward. Paddy opened the fire hose to soak him but was just that bit too late for, although he missed him, he had NOT done missed some other poor innocent Lister driver who had picked up a load of castings from the Foundry and was emerging from under the Foundry arch. The said driver was travelling VERY SLOWLY! "WOOSH!" A solid jet of ice-cold water hit the innocent Lister driver leaving him like a drowned rat! "CRIPES! WHOOPS! SCARPER QUICK! PUT THE HOSE BACK!" yelled Paddy realising what he had done and had gone wrong in spectacular fashion! We did as bid and prayed to God that we would not be found out. We could all be suspended for a week, or WORSE the SACK! Of course, the Lister truck driver went barmy and threatened blue murder to those responsible. Glowing with indignation and leaving a wet trail as he walked, he stormed up to the Pattern Shop to make a complaint. Despite intense enquires we all kept quiet and were lucky to get away with it. Paddy did NOT go and try that game again!

Paddy though had a lot of money worries; he was always in debt. Twice it happened to me - my wages were stolen from my wallet one week and again the week after that. I foolishly had left them in my wallet, which was in my jacket in my small locker cupboard - and unluckily the lock to it was broken. I reported the thefts to the Dockyard Police, who took the details but warned me it was unlikely I would ever get the money back. I had a sneaking suspicion it was Paddy who had done the deed but, as no tangible proof was ever likely to

surface, I just had to learn and to suffer the hard way. Of course, my Mum and Dad were outraged over the affair.

My weekly wages were the princely sum of £2.10s, or just over that amount, excluding National Insurance. The following year, they went up by 75p or slightly more. I apologise if I am wrong in my estimation, and no doubt will be corrected by someone who has exact records. Before the replacement scheme came out around about 1964/5 I think, which was DIBS, Dockyard Incentive Bonus Scheme, all work was done to a JPC, Job Price Contract. A price for the job was thrashed out and relevant paperwork drawn up. The Inspector signed the forms, thus binding the contract for the job to be carried out. All this paperwork was confidential, and I got into very hot water once with the Pattern Shop Inspector, Mr Hutchings, for accidentally revealing a JPC document to someone I shouldn't. I think I got the way JPC worked but my apology if I have got it wrong; I am sure someone would correct me on this matter.

I did sometimes get lucky, with my wages being bumped up quite a bit when I went on "Afloat Work". Technically speaking that was when one went aboard ship to do work either in dry dock or at jetty berth, rather than working in the workshop. Also you worked through your lunch hour but you had a bonus as you were allowed to clock out a half hour earlier at Out Muster, 1630 hours. However in my case, it was not on board ship but going all round the Dockyard with Cocker Reid, inspecting and testing the wooden step ladders allocated to many of the departments. I was delighted, and thought it a great adventure, to go and see parts of the Dockyard I had never seen before. This was also a JPC job, so I would get a share of Coker's bonus too. The testing of ladders, which were in several lengths, from 6ft to over 30 ft, was quite basic. One looked for splits in the rungs or the ladder shafts, if the ladder had warped, had broken foot rungs, and so on. Weights of various sizes were also hung from the ladder to see if the wood was still structurally sound and would not break. On one side of the ladder shaft was the dept. and centre number to which the ladder belonged, the safe working weight it could take, and the date of the test and its next due date. That was my job - using small pots of meths-based paint and a small artist paintbrush. Any doubtful ladders would have the condemned sign painted on - a circle with a cross in the centre - and be placed to one side for collection by Clifford and return to the Joiners' section for either repair or break-up for scrap. Of course the heads of the department were notified that their ladder or ladders were NOT to be used and were to be repaired or scrapped. With such a lot of places to cover, and that many ladders, the job took the whole week to complete; even then you had barely covered the whole Dockyard. The week following my stint with Cocker Reid, my wages bumped up to £18.10s. I thought I was in clover! But one must remember wages and prices related to each other; when ones rent was £2 10s a week, the grocery bill £2, Electric, Gas, Water and Rates on top, it did not leave that much for oneself really so one still had to budget carefully.

In late 1962, Jack Janes retired and a Mr Harold Hutchings took over as Shop Inspector. He was one of the old school - a real holy terror, just like my old secondary school masters. I hated and feared him. He spoke with a soft West Country burr, had grey hair, a goatee beard, and grey-blue eyes that could pierce right through you, particularly if you had done something wrong. He was hot on most things and, if not to his liking of workmanship, he would let you know in no uncertain terms. Rabbit jobs, those little things unauthorised you made for yourself or for someone - from the finest, Her Majesty's Dockyard and Government, materials were totally frowned upon, especially by Mr Hutchings!

It was the start of the Pop music craze then, and all the up-and-coming pop music groups; every young hot-blooded male wished to be a pop star! Of course those would-be aspiring musicians would work in secret on their instruments but soon as "Happy Harold", as we

called him, or sometimes “Beardy”(behind his back of course), went down the shop, those guilty parties rapidly hid their craft in the pull drawers of their workbench. One chap was not quick enough and was caught red-handed. This resulted in him being read the riot act by “Happy Harold”, with the proviso that everyone else who had been crafting these guitars, ukuleles and even a violin of sorts, had to give them up. Every instrument that had been crafted, some nearly complete, varnished and only needing the strings, Mr Hutchings stamped on with his feet or smashed them just like Roger Daltry of “The Who”. He called a meeting of everybody in the shop and told us in no uncertain terms this practice was to STOP! And with the final remark, “and if I see ANYMORE, guitars, violins, or whatsoever, they will GO RIGHT THROUGH THE BLOODY BAND SAW! Right GET BACK TO WORK!” Chastened, we all slunk back to our duties. Trouble was, the innocent had to suffer with the guilty which I thought was most unfair. However one chap, just forgot who, defied him and successfully made his acoustic guitar and managed to smuggle it home. I had a go, wanting to make a bass guitar; I had only made the guitar body, solid sort, in the shape of those Fender Star Cruisers or something, like Hank Marvin of the Shadows. It was in solid mahogany too. But rather than get caught red-handed, and with the likelihood of getting the sack, I rapidly disposed of it before “Happy Harold” had even seen it.

The staff of the wood sawmill section were as follows: Bill Crowson, head mill man; Bill Don and Dick Whittington (no relation to that pantomime character either). The sawmill had crosscut circular saws, circular saws, mechanical planers (the blade revolving at 3,000 rpm), sanding discs, and band saws. Circular saws and the planers were LETHAL! One had to watch ones fingers or else they would be lost like pork sausages! This happened to poor old Dick Whittington one day, losing his left 2nd finger. It was so quick, Dick never felt a thing. I shall NOT reveal the gory details, as I do not want the reader to faint or throw up. All I will say is that despite best possible and rapid first-aid and the casualty being rushed to the Dockyard Surgery and subsequently the Royal Hospital emergency department, Dick’s finger was not saved. Band saws were also dangerous; the continuous loop of the metal blade could snap at any time and might wrap round ones throat, although the band saw had a safety guard. It was wise not to take things for granted. The blade only broke if: 1, the blade had got blunt and the tough wood fibres could snag it; or 2, the weld joint where the blade was fixed together, flush smoothed, weakened with constant use. The operator would be working the band saw and after a few moments there would be a loud bang followed by a clatter of steel as the blade came off its wheels and coiled up like a spring. The saw was shut down the old broken blade removed and a new one replaced. Our band saw blades were regularly inspected. Those that needed re-sharpening went up to the Factory workshop; if the weld joint was suspect, the blade was snapped to bits, a brand new one issued, and the broken bits of the old one were safely disposed of. Jack Bristow, the Chargeman of the Joiners, eventually retired in 1963; Jack Eddy taking over, with a new deputy Chargeman taking over when he was on leave – joiner, Les Howard. I forgot to mention the Joiners had made for themselves, or their Chargemen rather, their own wooden office - Bernie Wyatt occupying one small section. The electric fluorescent tube lighting was installed by the duty electricians Roy Ralph and his mate Tom Chalmers. They covered all Foundries and the Pattern Shop. Shop lighting was of the green tin shade sort with white enamel glass reflectors and big single screw-in clear 100-watt bulbs; the offices had fluorescent tubes; ordinary bayonet plug 100 watt bulbs in glass jam jar style shades were in the toilet block. New mercury vapour brilliant shade lights went into the Pattern Shop and saw mill in about 1974 - a great improvement all round; but then I had long gone downstairs to the Foundry as previously described.

Eventually the shop lift was life expired and was replaced with a spanking new one - all metal with folding metal gates on each floor and a small window so that one could see when

the lift had arrived, the lift cage also having a folding door. This was much safer I thought than the old folding lattice gates on each floor and in the wooden lift cage. As it had a wooden floor also, I used to worry that one-day I would fall through it, the wood having rotted. But I had no fear as such for the lift was well maintained by the duty shop electricians. Sometimes the old lift stuck between floors and, once or twice, I got caught and had to climb a small ladder lowered down to me to get out at the floor above. I do apologise if I may have mentioned this before. Dry Dock No. 8 was directly opposite the entrance to the Foundry/ Pattern Shop in Victoria Road and, when it flooded up for a ship to go in for a refit or to come out, the water somehow would seep back and flood the cellar of the Pattern Shop (where up to 10,000 patterns were stored) to a depth of 3ft or slightly more. This would result in 100s of the wooden patterns floating off the metal shelves causing chaos and a mess! Mr Hutchings would almost have a fit and gave a blistering ear bashing on the phone to the YSM (Yard Services Manager) who did the undocking and docking of ships in those dry docks. Despite several attempts to cure the problem it was never solved, and we all hoped and prayed that when that dock was flooded, the cellar remained dry. One day something very funny happened to poor old shot blaster, Charlie Wareham. On one dark morning during the winter months, the early duty electrician (not our 2) who turned on all the lights did not turn up; the only lighting being 3 pilot ones up in the ceiling near the entrance to the building turned on by Frankie Booth, the Foundry Foreman writer who also had the authority to draw the main building entrance keys from the Police station at the Main Gate - signed for, the date and time, his signature also going in the book. Keys to the Pattern Shop and other foundry buildings were kept in a key cupboard near the lift shaft. Anyway, with the rest of the place in darkness, Charlie Wareham, whose cubby hole was in the cellar, with his front bicycle lamp brightly lit, wheeled his bike through the rubber doors of the side passage, through the metal doors on the right and parked it against the shot blast motor as usual. He then removed the said lamp and went down the stone steps to the cellar, not knowing what was awaiting him! At the critical moment the bike lamp died, leaving poor old Charlie in total darkness. Trouble was, Charlie had gone a bit too far down the steps and next instant found that he was waist deep in icy cold sea water! Charlie swore blue oaths and murder, for 8 Dock had been flooded up again and the water as usual had seeped back into the cellar! He emerged glowing with indignation, and water streaming off his trousers. "Enjoy your early morning swim Charlie?" said one grinning individual. "NO! I, blank, blank, DIDDN`NT!" There was an air-driven pump for the sump wells at the other end of the cellar, the end under the Iron and Brass Foundry trim shop annexe. This was rather poor and it took AGES to pump the cellar dry. The resident steam fitter, Geordie, who also had his place in the cellar, had to wade through the water and feel for the air pump valve to turn it on.

1964 saw a big change, as the M. E. D. Joiners were to go and join up with the M. C. D. Patternmakers across the way, as not that many were joining M. E. D. The M. E. D. Joiner labourers stayed on. The new Chageman, Des Adams, and Ben Morrison, after passing his Inspector exam and interview board, would step in for Mr Hutchings as and when he went on leave. Des I found to be a real gent and one of the nicest persons one could work for.

As far as cleaning up was concerned at the end of the day's work, when the Joiners were with the Patternmakers each of their labourers swept up all the shavings, sawdust and scrap wood. I, being with the Joiners of course, doing my bit; all the wood rubbish went into wicker baskets with handles to be taken to the saw mill where the entrance to the wood and shavings chute was; the door on a weight and pulley wire to open or close it. One tipped the contents of the basket onto the floor and swept it down the chute. Below the chute was the scrap wood and shavings cart. When this was full it was towed away to the sullage ground by PSTO(N) transport and a replacement empty one put back. GOD HELP YOU if you

accidentally let go of the wicker basket as you slung its contents of scrap wood shavings down the chute for the basket would jam solid in the chute thus causing a blockage. You had your ear bent by the Chargeman and secondly, WORSE, the wrath of the shop Inspector, Happy Harold! With the Joiners now gone, to speed up the sweeping last thing before we went home, Mr Hutchings had a dust flue extraction plant fitted throughout the shop. Pipes which lead off the main one to floor level had a small flap door at the bottom; the suction of the fan motor located by the archway leading to the sawmill kept it shut. One had to lift it well up in order that the sawdust and shavings swept by your broom could be sucked up and away into the shaving cart below, outside in the Iron & Brass Foundry yard. ONLY sawdust, wood shavings and ordinary dust were allowed up those dust extraction flues. If any lumps of wood, screws, nails, and the like went up it, YOU `d GET HUNG! There would be the most unholy clatter as the objects were sucked up the pipe flue, followed by very loud "BANG! BANG! BANG!" as the aforesaid items hit the suction fan before finally going down the wooden chute in the sawmill. "Happy Harold", upon hearing the noise, would rush from his office like a cork out of a bottle and play merry hell with the labourer concerned. I got caught over this matter once and received a real rollicking from him! It was not my fault for some young patternmaker had craftily hid a load of this forbidden rubbish in the pile of sawdust and shavings I was just about to sweep into the extraction flue. I glared at him when I saw him with a wide grin on his face as "Happy Harold" tore me off a strip. There was NO WAY I could prove I was innocent, since the rubbish was whisked away like greased lightning. In future I made SURE there were no such items in the dust and muck I swept up. The worst mess to clear up was from the lathes. Patterns such as T-pieces, bulkhead and deckhead penetrations had a round pipe body. This was cut first as a hexagonal profile and then placed in the lathe chuck. Switching on the lathe, the Patternmaker would use a curved profile chisel run from side to side as the wood spun, thus creating the round profile required, usually in various sizes. The same procedure was carried out when the Joiners were in residence, making the rungs for the wooden ladders they built. The pile of sawdust or rather wood shavings was quite a lot and one hoped that the Patternmaker who last used the lathe had finished. You paled to find to ones dismay that the once spotlessly clean lathe you had just done, as the Patternmaker went back on the same lathe to do more turning, was yet more mess. The place had to be more or less spotless BEFORE one went home at 1630 because of fire hazard. The place was steam heated in the winter and the risk of a fire with shavings or sawdust close to the steam radiators was low, but there was always the threat of spontaneous combustion. Straw and wood shavings can generate their own heat when packed together in a tight space; likewise with coal in a ship's bunker in the boiler room can also burst into flames. When Bill Crowson retired, Bill Don took over his role. When Bill Don followed suit, it just left Dick Whittington in sole charge of the whole mill and he stayed there until the place closed along with the Foundries in 1983.

The worse time for cleaning up was when the newly-installed Port Admiral was due to pay an inspection tour over the place. EVERYWHERE had to be as spotless as possible; but in a work place like ours this was nigh impossible, almost everyone turning jobs on the lathe, or chisel cutting or whatever. As usual, I was given the task of sweeping down the entire staircase from the Pattern Shop to the Foundry floor, including the landings, using a stiff broom and a watering can to lay the dust. Trouble was I used rather too much water and "Happy Harold" let me know in no uncertain manner! "YOU have made it like MUD old chap! RIGHT DO IT ALL AGAIN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM!" This meant I had to go over all what I had done again and, what was worse, filthy muddy streaks were on the white painted iron banister railings, meaning I had to get a clean piece of rag to wipe them spotless. After all my efforts and "Happy Harold", who checked up on me, giving me a curt grunt, would you believe it, the Port Admiral took the lift up to the Pattern Shop. The lift

was as scruffy as sick parrot; what he thought of it I do not know. You just could not win. After his visit (“very impressed with what we did”), he left to go and tour the Foundries going back down in the lift. I felt like killing “Happy Harold”; but then the Port Admiral might have decided to take the stairs after all. On these inspections one wonders if the V I P notices anything amiss - a bit of paper or rubbish being where it shouldn't. But it's done mainly to placate the senior staff or officials who accompany the V I P on his or her rounds, and the people who were supposed to keep the place spotless for the V I P visit would get their wrath. “The Admiral was NOT impressed by the state of this workshop floor - crisp packets, a toffee bar wrapper, and a empty cigarette packet were found in that corner. Do NOT let this occur AGAIN!” The officials sweep on. The person in charge of the said workshop bawled for the labourer who was supposed to have cleaned up the place and vented his wrath on him!

The planner of the Pattern Shop was Joe Petworth. He checked all the new and refurbished wooden patterns prior to them going to the foundry below - that all the information written on the casting voucher was also painted on the wooden pattern and core boxes if any. Once checked and okay, also all records going in a big ledger book, the Pattern Shop labourers took them down via the lift. The patterns were then carefully stacked in the “Slingsby” hand truck and taken to the Foundry planner, Bert Butcher. If I may venture here for the moment - in my time in the Pattern Shop the wood patterns were painted black, with all the casting voucher info in yellow paint on the main body of the pattern and on a black patch on



the core box. Core prints, to show where the casting was hollow, were just varnished wood. Core boxes were also varnished wood, the core channels picked out in black. M. C. D.

patterns were coloured likewise, except the information was done in fine white ink. The colours of the pattern, bright red with black core prints, or red core boxes with black channels, the info of the voucher done in black felt pen, did not come in till about 1975, I think. Examples can be seen at the Apprentice Exhibition in No. 7 Boat House. The Inspector's writer was Reg Wellman. One day, having a friendly pretend boxing match, I accidentally hit him. He staggered, clutched his mouth and bled slightly. I had no idea that the day before he had been to his dentist to have all his remaining teeth out and be fitted with dentures. ON NO ACCOUNT was he to touch his mouth, except to rinse it, and he had to eat soft foods so that his gums would heal up nicely and the dentist could then take the mould to make his dentures. I profusely apologised for the accident. Trouble was he had to see the dentist in the next 2 days, with the result that poor Reggie's gums had set in a SQUARE shape. The dentist went barmy. Reg explained what had happened but the dentist would have liked to get hold of me and give me treatment WITHOUT ANAESTHETIC or read me the Riot Act! Reg, I think, was the ONLY MAN IN THE ENTIRE UK to own a pair of SQUARE SHAPED GNASHERS! Of course as you are aware in my other story about "The Foundries", when I first started with them, for the first 6 months I was a JINX or JONAH so I did also cause a few headaches in the Pattern Shop. Harry Godfrey, patternmaker, had just finished a large T-piece pattern, brand new as well, which had to go down to the Steel Foundry for a very urgent batch of steel castings to be made. I may venture here for the moment - ALL flanges on STEEL CASTINGS were WIDER and THICKER than the gunmetal ones. The pattern had only been finished the day before, so the glued branch bit of the "T" was still a bit weak. Of course yours truly, so intent on carrying out my duties, failed to see the pattern sitting in the Slingsby push truck, its branch bit sticking out. I briskly passed by with a load on my sack truck for the Joiners down the other end of the Pattern Shop. "Crack! SMASH!" The branch bit broke CLEAN OFF and was now lying on the floor with its shattered ragged end sticking out like a sore thumb! Poor Harry paled at what I had just done. "OH MY GOD, DAVE! LOOK AT WHAT YOU HAVE JUST DONE!" I suddenly felt sick at my total carelessness; I SHOULD have WATCHED where I was going. If "Happy Harold" found out, he would not just go barmy; I would be read the RIOT ACT! I profusely apologised for my actions. "How AM I going to REPAIR THIS? It's for a VERY URGENT JOB! I shall have to cut a new bit now and fit it in; that will take 2 days!" Before it could be hidden or hushed up, it got WORSE, for talk of the devil "Happy Harold" happened to go down the shop to see the Joiner's Chargeman on some matter and noticed the damaged brand new pattern. Upon enquiry, "Happy Harold" led me back to his office where I received an almighty rollicking for being careless and was warned me NOT to let it happen again.

You will recall I mentioned about "would-be Pop Stars" and all those rabbit guitars and what not. Well, it was the start of the "swinging 60s", although to be fair it did not gain momentum until about 1966; the post World War 2 era, the grim and grey 1950s having just given way to the start of a new decade - brighter and more optimistic for the younger generation. My favourite heart throb was the late and wonderful Alma Cogan, who regularly had her own TV shows, and of course famous for her spectacular 300 yard skirt dresses, petticoats that she designed and had made up. My household did not get a TV until 1957 or colour until 1972. You may be wondering what has all this to do with the Pattern Shop. I am just coming to that. One day in February 1961, reading my Daily Mirror during tea break, I came across the Showbiz column by Donald Zec (friend to all the Stars in showbiz) with the bold headline "**NEW SINGING POP STAR SENSATION DISCOVERY!**" Her name? - Helen Shapiro. This pretty dark hair girl, aged 14 then, smiling at me from the publicity photo certainly grabbed my attention. I was SMITTEN; I WAS STAR STRUCK! I wanted to know more about her and, of course, hear her brand new debut single (remember them, 45

rpm?) “Don’t Treat Me Like a Child”. Nobby, the one who worked the milling machine for making core box channels, had a large radio up in his cupboard which was not on that often and also against the rules. However the following week it was on and, by chance, Helen Shapiro’s debut single came out over the airwaves. Her voice took me by surprise, rich and slightly deep, yet very mature for a 14 year old. That was IT! I was HOOKED from then on. I coveted everything about her: photos and articles from newspapers, magazines and the like, badgering the joiners and pattern makers for the article on her from their paper if it was not in my own. Most let me have it, although the next day, since their wives had to read the paper as well. Only 1 or 2 totally refused. I did NOT have the sense to go to WH Smith to get the same copy paper as they had with my Pop Star in on the way home; but in any case the paper I wanted was more than likely to be sold out. Alfie Brooks, the joiner, also ran a mail order catalogue; “John England” or something and, lo and behold, Helen was in it modelling dresses for the teens and in FULL COLOUR! Poor old Alfie, I badgered him something rotten for the pages with Helen in them. “NO! GO AWAY! NOT YET, YOU MAY DO when the replacement autumn / winter edition comes in.” Notice the word “MAY”, so poor I was left to worry and fret about whether I would get those pages from the spring and summer edition when it was expired. Usually I was lucky.

I also found the addresses of the main national newspapers and wrote off for details of the prices, postage and sizes of the press photos of my pop star, also asking for a set of contact prints so that I could choose the poses I wanted. I then got into the habit of badgering poor old Joe Petworth for a loan to get the photos I wanted, saying I would square up with him next payday. Joe at first did not mind but, as time went on although I paid him back on time, he said that enough was enough, and refused me further – in which he was right in one way, I had no right to ask him for loans so in future I made sure I waited till I could afford to buy them. I also got into the habit of getting my pop star glossy photos from the national papers, sent to me C/O M. E. D. Pattern Shop, HM Dockyard, Portsmouth instead of my home address. This was also strictly against the rules. The real reason I did it was that I was IMPATIENT; I COULD NOT WAIT. But also my parents were both out at work then and the postman would not be able to put the packages through the letter box because of their size - 8x10 or bigger, so that I had to call in the following evening after work with some ID to the “undelivered” desk in the old main post office in the City centre near the railway station. One of my duties also was to collect and deliver the shop internal mail and of course that from the Post Office - all items put in a carry box and locked shut. The mailroom was located in North Corner Office block where the head messenger and his colleagues sorted out all the mail for the WHOLE DOCKYARD, internal and from the Royal Mail daily deliveries. Each batch of mail was in its own pigeonhole, waiting to be collected by the persons from the relevant department the mail and taken back to the workshop. The head messenger sighed as I came in with a lot of mail from the Pattern Shop, as I found to my delight awaiting in our pigeon hole amongst the usual mail was a large buff envelope with “PLEASE DO NOT BEND” on the front. I carefully took the mail out and placed it in the box to take back to the Pattern Shop. “NOT more photos of your favourite pop star?” he said. “Err yes, they are smashing, from the Daily Express,” I said with a broad grin on my face. I delivered the mail in the box back to the Inspector’s writer Reg Wellman, making sure that “Happy Harold” had NOT seen my personal mail - or else I would be in hot water. The only private mail really allowed were postcards from the chaps on holiday to their workmates; all other Royal Mail was STRICTLY BUSINESS! Of course in the end I had gone too far and one chance too many, for one day my order for photos of my favourite pop star arrived as usual; after delivering the mail carry box back to the Pattern Shop, “Happy Harold” took the box off me directly instead of my handing it to Reg Wellman. I just paled - for I had had no chance to remove my latest batch of photos. I knew what was about to

come and awaited the fireworks as “Happy Harold” went through the box of mail and came across mine! He went barmy and summoned me into his office to explain. After my explanation he said in no uncertain terms, “YOU DO NOT use this address to receive your



personal mail. In FUTURE you will use your HOME ADDRESS! DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?” I nodded silently. “RIGHT! GET OUT OF MY OFFICE!” and, to make things

worse, he tore up the package with the photos. My heart sank to my boots; I had to order another set of the same photos - a waste of my hard-earned cash. We all learn the hard way sometimes.

Anyway in January 1962, Helen Shapiro went on her VERY FIRST nationwide tour of one night stands and, would you believe it, PORTSMOUTH Guildhall was the VERY FIRST port of call. I tore down there soon as possible to get a good seat, sitting about half way down in the stalls for the princely sum of 75p or in old money 15 bob, which was a lot of money. After the wonderful, first house concert was over, I and 200 other boys tore round to the stage door pleading and hoping that our dreamboat would make an appearance and sign autographs. We were all in for a shock. The Management and Helen's tour Manager told us in no uncertain terms "ON YOUR BIKE! Miss Shapiro will NOT be coming out to sign autographs!" We all went home with our hearts in our boots. I suppose they could not risk their latest, white-hot pop star very valuable sensation being mobbed by the masses! The same thing occurred when Helen came to Portsmouth Guildhall again that same year in October 1962; again I went home with my heart in my boots. To cut a long story short, I had to WAIT 17 years before at last I finally met my star idol when she came to Southsea in 1976 at the long gone Vermont Hotel - a 3 day cabaret in Charlie's Bar with the Bill Wyman band. I could not believe it; I thought I was dreaming when at last we finally met.¹ But come

¹ Helen is one of the most GENUINE, SINCERE and lovely persons in showbiz one could ever meet. We got on like a house on fire and could have chatted all night! So is her husband the actor John Williams whom she married in 1982, her previous 2 marriages ending in divorce. Since that time over the years I have met Helen many times - at concerts, in Plays and Musicals and what have you, and of course the fan club get together in London. In 2002 Helen retired from showbiz. She had done all what she had wanted to do in Showbiz; secondly she was not getting any younger and found the touring tiring; and thirdly the costs of touring were going through the roof. It was by chance in 1987 that she became a born-again Christian, even though she is Jewish. Having realised that all what she had done before her had been merely a preparation for this moment and that this was her eventual destiny, she embraced it whole-heartedly and has never been happier. So these days she goes around the country and abroad, giving gospel testimony evenings. I have her gospel CDs, including her latest "What Wondrous Love is This". They are sensational. Yes I have been to a few of her gospel evenings and lovely they are too. Helen still sings her old hits in the gospel evenings and she has also made a DVD about how she found Jesus. In 2010, on Express FM local Portsmouth radio, local city resident and radio presenter, Robin Kay, of the History Show, put out an appeal on behalf of Dave Allen and former group member, Mick Cooper, for pop memorabilia, photos, records, concert programmes, autographs, clothes, guitars, books or annuals of pop music in Portsmouth 1950s and 60s. Dave Allen was the Portsmouth University lecturer on media and the arts. He is now retired but he and I keep I touch. The stuff wanted was for an exhibition at the City Museum on the pop music scene in Portsmouth. I contributed quite a lot of my Helen Shapiro items - photos, records, concert and theatre programs plus personal handwritten letters by Helen to me. Dave was overwhelmed by my kindness and trust in making my souvenirs available on loan. I was invited to the exhibition opening night and reception. What really would have been spectacular was one of Helen's stage dresses that she wore all those years ago in 1962. My favourite one was in ice-blue satin with a full skirt and semi-Spanish ruffle cut zigzag style. Helen hated those dresses; she would have preferred to have worn something slinkier but her Management and Record Company said "no". She got rid of all of them in the early 1970s. I offered to buy that very dress off her for a fabulous souvenir, the money going to her favourite charity. She wrote back and said if only she had known earlier I could have had it. Even today she has no idea where it has gone. She is still size 10. I have also met 2 members of the Honeys, a local Portsmouth girl trio who toured with all the big stars, including Helen. It was hoped that Helen might be able to pay a visit to the pop music exhibition but she was too busy to make it. I have been interviewed by Robin Kay in a series of broadcasts on the History Show about the DOCKYARD FOUNDRIES and also on EVERY art deco cinema in Portsmouth and surrounding areas. I am also in the new publication of Dave Allen's and Mick Cooper's pop scene in Portsmouth 1950s to 1960s. Robin also interviewed me about Helen as well. I have Helen's autobiography and also met her song composer John Schroeder and have his book as well. Joiner, Alfie Brooks, who ran that mail order catalogue had in it a annual for sale. It was called "The ATV book of Stars" and Helen, in that wonderful dress of hers which I liked, was on the front and back cover. I ordered it at a shilling a week, or 5p; it cost 10/6 in total or 52 ½ pence, a lot of money in 1962. When I first met Helen in that Southsea hotel, I told her about the Foundry in Portsmouth Dockyard and my job. I was worried she would be bored to death but she was fascinated and thought my work most interesting.

on Mr DAVID BARBER, enough of the showbiz history lesson, get back into the Dockyard SHARPISH!

One day, whilst doing the usual mail delivery for the Pattern Shop, the wooden box I was carrying had not been fastened securely. It was a breezy day and had been raining to boot, puddles on the pavements everywhere. Suddenly a gust of wind flipped open the mailbox and its contents of papers and envelopes flew high into the air before settling down all wet and soggy on the pavement. Trouble was that a very important document as written by "Happy Harold" to the Senior Foreman, Mr Dugan, and with Mr Dugan's reply attached, was now a large messy blotch of running ink and smudges. To say that "Happy Harold" would be most upset was an UNDERSTATEMENT. Mr Hutchings was awaiting this reply, which was urgent! I would be HUNG FROM HMS VICTORY's HIGHEST YARD ARM for this! I paled as I saw the mass of smudge and illegible writing on the paper. I hastily stuffed all the papers etc back into the wooden box and was wondering what my punishment would be when the shop Inspector saw the mess. Then I had a brainwave; I could say that a bad bit of pavement caused me to trip up, that the action made the box spring open as it hit the pavement, and the wind whipped them out before I had the chance to stop the papers escaping. Then my heart sank, as I knew he would say that I should have made sure the box was more securely fastened. But it was a white lie risk that I was prepared to take. Surprisingly I got away with it, although I did get my ear bent about the important document; but not so severely as I might have had if the truth had been known about my actions. Because of my age, it was compulsory for me to have a full medical exam at the Dockyard Surgery once a year by the Naval Officer Doctors. It was for EVERYTHING, and I MEAN everything. I got read the riot act one day about my teeth and was ordered to see my local dentist to have treatment forthwith. I also had to report back when they were done, and woes betide me if I had failed to do so.

As far as food for the inner man, or in my case, youth aged 17 was concerned, I think at the time I was entitled to free lunches and I apologise if I may have this fact wrong. I had to sign and fill in some forms down at North Corner Office block. When countersigned I was given vouchers to obtain hot lunches at the old Victory Canteen near Marlborough Gate. When I reached the age of 19 nearing 20 all that ceased. One obtained meal tickets and exchanged them for the hot meal of one's choice: soup, main course, pudding. You could either get them for the whole week or just daily. The food served was plenty, very good and piping hot; although there were just one or two grumbles - you could not please everyone. Far as I also recall, the canteen had a stage used by bands whenever some workshop in the Dockyard had its annual social evening buffet or dinner and dance, or a party for the Dockyard Employees' children - the main one being at Christmas. The canteen also served Christmas lunches, a week before we broke up for the Christmas holidays. There were other canteens around the base: Marlborough Gate in Ivy Lane, 12 Dock canteen, and Murray Lane, although the latter sold mainly hot snacks, pies pasties etc. Murray Lane did later branch out to serve Fish and Chips, both to eat in or take away. I did try the Marlborough Gate canteen in later years and that was an eye opener! The ladies serving the food gave you a little more than they should, and it was delicious! As far as my favourite puddings went, the naughty Spotted Dick, Jam Roly-Poly, Treacle or sponge Cabinet, and Queen's Puddings with lashings of hot custard. When you had eaten it you KNEW you were full to bursting and could hardly move! Another favourite was Bread and Butter pudding with big juicy raisins and grated nutmeg. Any leftovers of the puddings were offered free or at much reduced price, and there were NOT many who refused second helpings; rather than let it all go to waste in the pig bins! Cheese rolls, hot pies, cakes and the like were sold from little canteen mobile trailers towed to various sites in the Dockyard. They were good but their fruit pies were not so good as those sold by the NAAFI. Their own brand was stuffed full with fruit and the pastry was so buttery



Mr. Bishop checks his watch against the pattern shop's own clock.

IT'S THEIR CLOCK!

When the Admiral Superintendent (Rear-Admiral P. G. La Niece) paid his first visit to Portsmouth Dockyard's Pattern Shop last month, he had pointed out to him one item that does not belong to the Dockyard — a large clock.

It belongs to the men in the shop, and will continue to do so as long as there is a pattern shop in the 'Yard.

Now 93 years old, the clock has an inscription in the case which reads: "This clock was purchased of Mr. Hollander, Queen Street, Portsea, by the workmen of the Pattern Shop, July, 1878, who also resolved that it should remain the property of the people of the said shop so long as it exists. Signed: Wm. Luke, Leading Man of Shop."

Fragments of the original receipt still exist and also preserved is a large part of the subscription list, when £1 10s. was raised to buy the clock movement. There are no records regarding the mahogany case — one can only draw conclusions.

LEFT IN 1896

Mr. W. G. E. Bishop, Insp. (PM), told Trident that he had gone through the old records and had found that Mr. Luke left the 'Yard in 1896, and died in 1911.

"The subscription list shows amounts of 1s., 3d. and 6d. being donated," he said. "The last person to donate to the purchase and to leave the shop was a Mr. G. W. Ingram, who left just after World War I."

In May, 1899, the clock was taken to Mr. Hollander's new premises in Osborne Road, Southsea, where it was cleaned at a cost of 7s. 6d. In August, 1917, it was taken once again for cleaning, this time to Walter Freeman, who had taken over Mr. Hollander's Queen Street premises. Again the cost was 7s. 6d.

Since then, there are no records of it ever having been taken down for cleaning or repair. And it still keeps near perfect time.

When the shop was modernised in 1968/9, it was taken down and the case was cleaned and repolished.

that it melted in ones mouth. Their cakes too were an eye opener, particularly their doughnuts - smothered in a dusting of sugar and bursting at the seams with sticky jam or artificial cream and jam. I suppose all this very-high-in-cholesterol-and-calories food was essential, since the work force did do quite a lot of very hard work and they needed the energy to cope during the working day, which burned it off. Do you remember that tin of very rich condensed sweet milk by Fussells, Blue Butterfly Brand? That made a fantastic sweet hot cup of tea; one did not need any sugar extra either. Or with cocoa - you made it up with a spoonful of cocoa powder, Cadbury's, Fry's or some other obscure brand, and a dollop of this condensed sweet milk. Mixed to a thick paste so stiff the spoon stood up on its own, and then adding boiling hot water until the mixture dissolved into a rich creamy chocolate smooth taste. On a cold winter's morning, if on board doing a ship refit, it certainly warmed one up. Of course, silly fool, I used to like having the occasional spoonful from the tin - with the result that I woke up in bed one night with a raging toothache and a prompt visit to the dentist! One of the pattern makers, Jock McAvoy, always had cocoa; never tea. Every tea break and lunch hour! I don't think it could have done his blood system or health that much good - and always mixed with condensed milk. I hope all this talk of food and whatnot has NOT started your stomachs rumbling! So before I get lynched for inciting pangs of hunger, let's go on to our final subjects of this story.

The Pattern Shop had its own time clock, a round glass dial with support brackets, and a small short case where the pendulum could be seen through its small window; the clock case I think was mahogany. "Made by E. Hollander of Queen Street, Portsea" on the white dial, with black Roman numerals and hands, and two winding holes for the key. It was set rather high up on the wall just above the Inspector's office. One of my tasks, usually on a Thursday or Friday, was to get up on the ladder and wind the blasted thing. Being nervous of heights (and still am), although I was only 6 to 8ft off the ground I asked someone to hold the ladder as I wound the clock. "Happy Harold" watched me one day, which I dreaded of all people, HIM! "GO ON GET UP THERE, YOU WON'T FALL! GOOD GOD BOY, it's NOT the north face of the Eiger or Victory main mast in a howling gale!" I did as bid. Opening the round dial, the dust caused me to sneeze, which made me drop the key and his blood pressure ro rise! Joe Petworth gave me back the key and I wound the clock. As I was almost finished, there was a loud "TWANG! BONG!" from inside the clock. I just paled in dismay. The main spring had suddenly gone. Been going since the 1870s I believe, and yours truly gave the last straw that broke the camel's back! This did not endear me to "Happy Harold" either! He went raving mad and called me all the names he could think of! I was really totally innocent of the affair; that main spring could have gone at any time. This meant a costly repair and the clock was out of action for quite a bit until the money was raised to get it fixed. The clock had been bought by the Patternmakers themselves in 1878 - having a whip round to

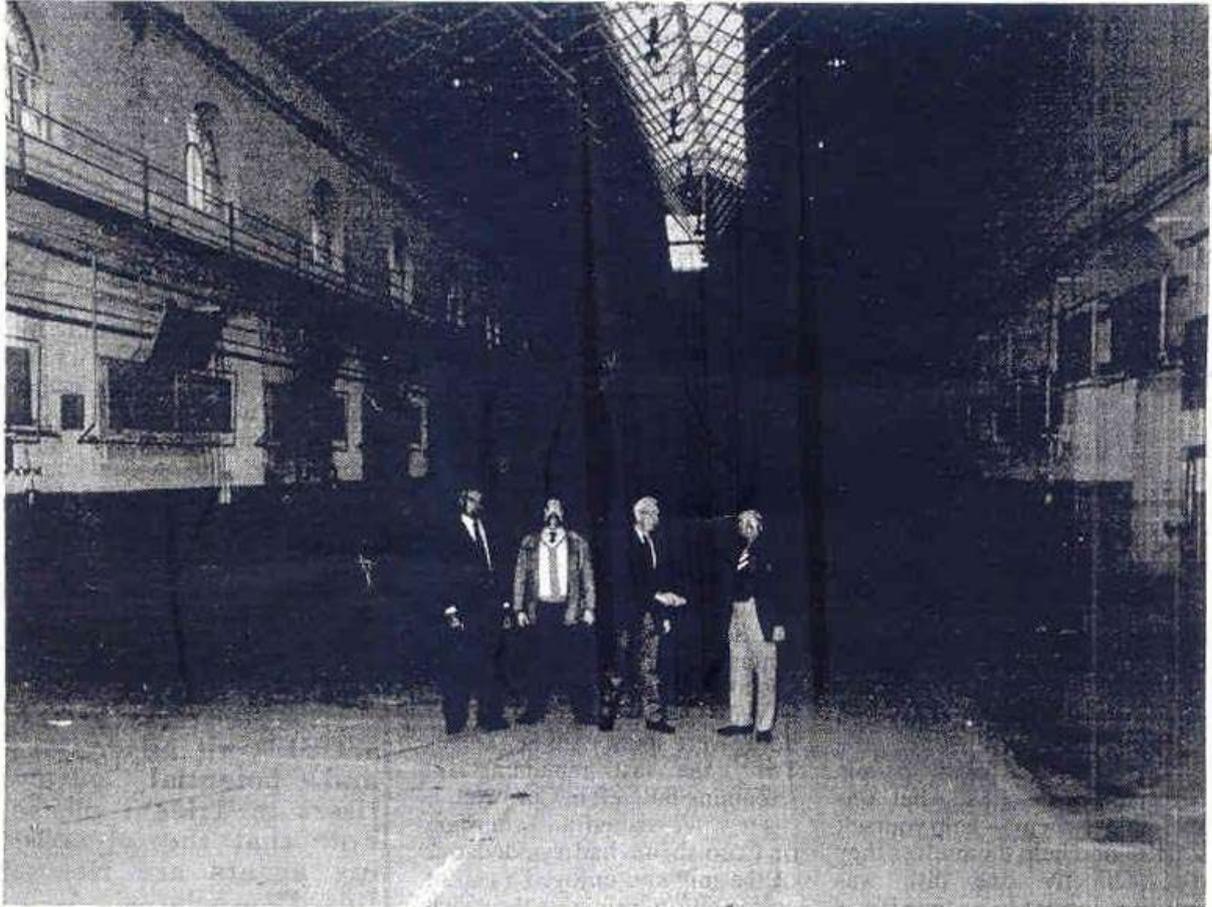
purchase it. Happily, it is now in the care of the Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust. The Pattern Shop also had its own bell. This was rung by the time recorder or the Chargeman at the start of work, tea and lunch breaks, and going home time - outmuster. It was rung when the Dockyard sirens blew announcing those times. It is now on display with the one from the Foundry.

On the day we broke up for Christmas, we only did a little work and the rest of the day we had a sort of party and a raffle. Regular as clockwork, Bill Trimboy, one of the patternmakers, won something. There would be cries of "FIX or FIDDLE!" I won something once - a nice tin of Huntley and Palmers luxury teatime assorted biscuits, and my parents were delighted. There also used to be a money tote raffle run by Alfie Cake of the Gun Shop, the money being collected by Charlie Wareham and taken over to him. Every week the cards were of a different colour: pink, blue, green, yellow, beige, mauve. There were 2 rows of columns but divided into squares. You filled in the squares with numbers from 1 to 45, alongside each other like this: 12 36, 43 28, 05 10. As quite a large number of employees had a go from all over the Dockyard, the money prizes were quite good; top whack being £50, second prize £ 40, third prize £25. The tote number blackboard was in the Foundry on which Charlie Wareham chalked the winning numbers and the date of the draw that week. In order to win, both sets of numbers ALONGSIDE each other had to match the numbers drawn; it was no good with one number either above or below. Each ticket cost one shilling to buy or 5p. I could only afford two shillings worth a week i.e. 10p. Quite a number of folk bought almost a dozen tickets and even then might not win. If there were no winners, as sometimes but not often happened, the jackpot rolled over to the following week making it a hefty £100! The numbers were put in a globe like wire basket, the handle turned, and the winning numbers dropped out of the bottom. It was all above board; no fiddles. This game was allowed as it raised a lot of money for terminally-ill people in hospital, adults and children. In order to make sure you could claim your winnings, on the main ticket you wrote your name and department, whilst you kept the ticket stub with the same numbers you had written on the main ticket. Charlie would take the tickets and money collected and deliver them to Alfie Cake; when all monies were in, the draw took place. It was quite some time until the week that I eventually won top prize!

I will not go into the last years of my employment with the Dockyard, 1982 - 1993 with the Resources Section, as it is too near the 21st century; the years through the 1960s to the early 1980s are much more interesting. I must also mention as now so long ago, that many of the names recalled are sadly no longer with us, although one or two old hands from the early 1960s may still be around. If so they must be in their near 90s, and if they read this I do wish them well and may that they get their 100th birthday card from Her Majesty. It has been a pleasure to share with you all, my experiences in working in Portsmouth Dockyard, in all those 3 departments: Pattern Shop, FAW1, and Foundries. I hope that for those of you who knew and worked with me, it also brought back happy memories. I hope also that those who never worked in Portsmouth Dockyard, visitor or local resident alike, found this new story enjoyable and interesting, with laughs along the way at the scrapes I got into, working in the **FINEST INDUSTRIAL PLACE IN THE WORLD** and the with the **GREATEST WORK COLLEAGUES ONE COULD EVER ASK FOR!** Portsmouth Dockyard!

David Barber © April 2012

END OF AN ERA



● THE last day is the longest — and it is no doubt the feeling that was felt on October 31st when Mr. Ken Snook, Foreman Foundry, turned the key for the last time on the closure of the Foundry and Pattern Shop.

Pictured are (left to right) Mr. Snook, Mr. Brian Quayle, Inspector/Foundry, Des Adams, Inspector/Pattern Shop, and Nat Watson, Inspector/Foundry. The closing down day was also retirement day for Mr. Adams and Mr. Watson.

TRIDENT DECEMBER 1983

FOOTNOTE

Below are the staff members of the Joiners Section 1960—1964 that I knew. I have covered most I hope and I apologise for any names wrong and those missing from the list as it was over 45 to 52 years ago. The Manager of the M. E. D. section when I joined was Rear Admiral Henry Charles Hogger, a very nice man. His official residence was in No.3, The Parade. I often had to take a basket or two of wood scrap on a sack truck from the M. E. D. Pattern Shop for his fire places - the wood going in the coal outhouse located in the rear garden or was it the cellar? One of the little perks of being top rank. He saw me one day and asked what Lignum Vitae wood was used for? I told him it was for lining the brass bearing shafts where the propeller or rudder stock shafts sat. "Well done, my boy, here is 10 bob for you!" A lot of money in 1960! I was flabbergasted and thought him so kind. I never did mention it or I may have been robbed or questions asked.

As far as the Pattern Shop clock goes, there was an article about it in the long-gone Trident Dockyard newspaper, under the heading: "It's their Clock!" with a photo of the shop Inspector, Bill Bishop. This I think was in 1975.

M. E. D. PATTERN SHOP, JOINER'S SECTION, 1960 - 1964/5

Inspector: Mr Jack Janes, later Mr Harold Hutchings.

Chargemen: Jack Bristow, Jack Eddy (deputy).

Inspector's Writer: Reg Wellman.

Negotiator and Union rep.: Bernie B Wyatt.

Time Recorder: Bert Burden

Shop Planner: Joe Petworth.

Joiners: Bill Atkinson , Les Howard, Herbie Weeks, Roy Dudman, Norman Hudson, Alfie Brooks, Jimmy Walsh, Len Gutteridge, Cocker Reid, Ernie Bonniiface, Edgar Dean, Fred Philips, Reg Stainer.

Saw Mill: Bill Crowson, Bill Don, Dick Whittington.

Shop Labourers: Paddy Mac Garry, Jack (Chuff) Hannam, David Barber (Yard Boy), Clifford Adams.

Lister drivers: Cecil Green, Jack Butler.