

# **ROYAL DOCKYARD APPRENTICESHIPS & CAREERS**

## **The Dockyard Apprentice Journey for a Lifetime Career** **The Rules, Regulations & Routines of being an Apprentice**

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1. The following are extracts & précis of formal papers, my own memories and knowledge of 45 years Dockyard Career experience. The details defined below were applicable to all apprentices that included their parents'/ guardians' responsibilities, when signing the formal "Deeds of Apprenticeship" for their offspring.
2. This article attempts to document and describe the pathway from school through to becoming a Royal Dockyard Apprentice and possibly to Royal Dockyard Senior Management, as a lifetime career during period circa 1950s onward. Many will recognise & remember those long ago years of their apprenticeship but there are future generations who will never experience or appreciate 'our conditions'. These papers are keeping the focus on the historical aspects of Dockyard apprenticeships served some 55 years or more ago.
3. It is extremely noticeable how the high standards and acceptance of respect, personal code of conduct and conditions experienced by youth were automatically accepted in 1950; whereas today (over 55 years later) standards appear to be totally disregarded by so many adolescents - and a poorer society exists as a result. See below: ***Annex A - 'Code of Personal Conduct - Rules applicable to an Apprentice'***.
4. Every opportunity and encouragement to become a competent craftsman, and to continue education to take advantage of the numerous openings available, lead to responsible, worthwhile and well-paid jobs for life. A successful career depended to a large extent on what the boy (or subsequently girl) made of the apprenticeship. Showing pride in craftsmanship, sense of responsibility and consideration for others was paramount. Craft apprentices were primarily trained to work with their tools, but fantastic opportunities also existed for promotion to the highest levels of management.
5. The life of a Dockyard-trained apprenticeship was considered by most as a very worthwhile and rewarding start in life. Indeed industry worldwide has acknowledged that Royal Dockyard Apprentices were the most highly trained and skilled craftsman available. These ex-apprentices were prized assets in demand, wherever they worked throughout the world. Industry & Military Services 'snapped up' Dockyard-trained craftsmen who often went on to become leaders in Industrial Engineering of many renowned Companies.
6. The Dockyard-trained apprentices through to Craftsmen, and subsequently those who went on to become Managers, were not only trained for the Dockyard but supported other Government Departments and Private Companies in United Kingdom if they left the confines of Dockyard employment - thus benefiting the economy and skills over a wide spectrum.

## ANNEX A

### ***Code of Personal Conduct & Rules Applicable to an Apprentice***

1. To become a Dockyard apprentice, the young 15 year-old schoolboy (only in the 1960's girls were able to become apprentices in specific Trades) had to sit examinations for selection and, according to strict order of precedence of results, they were then able to choose a preferred available Trade. Each Trade had an allocated number of vacancies reducing as each boy accepted a vacancy in a Trade continuing until all vacancies were filled. Many boys accepted Trades with which they were totally unfamiliar, although all apprenticeships within the Dockyard organisation were prized jobs and careers. A few boys were accepted as reserves through an aptitude & intelligence test in lieu of formal examination but would usually (if successful) only be offered minor Trades.

2 An apprentice had to undertake practical, theoretical, professional and academic training designed to produce competent individuals to carry out the practical work of a craftsman & study for period of 5 years. Compliance with a 'Code of Personal Conduct' to maintain a high standard of conduct and proficiency were essential. Apprentices had to be diligent in their work and studies, with regular attendance both during day & also unpaid evening scholastic studies. They were expected to become responsible citizens with strict rules of personal conduct being observed. These rules included:

- a. Take pride in craftsmanship. Strive for perfection.
- b. Maintain a reasonably good appearance. Avoid being untidy and unkempt.
- c. Develop a strong sense of responsibility as a member of the Dockyard community and the wider world outside the Dockyard. Charges of hooliganism, vandalism, drunkenness or theft all brought the apprentice and the Dockyard into disrepute and might lead to discharge.
- d. Develop self-respect. Treat with respect and consideration, all those with whom one came into contact.
- e. Co-operate fully in scheme of training and those responsible for it, so that utmost benefit was derived & Instructors enabled to be effective without frustrations.
- f. Avoid thoughtless actions which may harm themselves or others.
- g. Accept need for personal discipline in faithful compliance of the Rules, Regulations and Routines governing conditions of employment, duties and responsibilities.
- h. Understand that high qualities of craftsmanship and leadership received recognition that brought its rewards.
- i. Know misconduct, anti-social behaviour or failure to make satisfactory progress would incur penalties.
- j. Rules and Regulations governing conditions of employment and duties and responsibilities of all employees in the Dockyard were defined in 'Staff Regulations'.

3. Staff Regulations controlled your working life and existed for purpose of ensuring the smooth and efficient working of the whole Establishment by laying down the rules of co-operation between employees and Management. Strict observance and understanding was necessary.

4. Conduct & discipline warnings of a long list of banned activities, which if offended against, would carry liability to punishment including probable discharge. The list included:

- i. Contravention of the Official Secrets Act;
- ii. Engaging in private occupations conflicting with apprenticeship duties;
- iii. Trading, money lending, book-making, betting;
- iv. Making or repair of private articles;
- v. Smoking in unauthorised places, bringing beer, wine or spirits into place of work;
- vi. Idleness and negligent workmanship;
- vii. Repeated late attendance; absence without leave; malingering;
- viii. Taking up, or depositing, others clock card;
- ix. Insubordination; inebriety; turbulence; causing danger by fire; damage to Government property;
- x. Smuggling, embezzlement, unlawful possession of Government stores;
- xi. Offences against the law; Offences giving rise to Civil or criminal proceedings;
- xii. Offences against Dockyard traffic regulations.

5. All apprentices were issued with a basic kit of tools, either free or at subsidised cost, appropriate to their specific trade. A tool chest was also supplied free. Pay would be stopped if tools were lost or negligently broken. Tools were not permitted to be removed from the Dockyard during the apprenticeship.

6. Leave (2 weeks) with pay plus public holidays. Sick leave was available in supportable cases. Working Hours – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year only had privilege to work 0800 – 1615 Monday –Thursday, and 1545 on Friday. Late arrival - up to 1/2 hour after 'in muster' time meant loss of pay. Any later they were not allowed to commence work until next 'in-muster' time. 3<sup>rd</sup> year onwards worked the standard Industrial 42 hours / week with attendance from 0700 – 1630. (1 hour unpaid lunch break, but 20 minutes breakfast break paid)

7. Meal vouchers and travel warrants if living away from home &, in some circumstances, help with lodgings rent could be paid. Safety, Infectious diseases, accidents, injuries all had defined conditions in the rules. Apprentices were encouraged to partake in physical education, sports clubs activities, etc as part of Dockyard social life.

8. The apprenticeship included basic craft training in workshops and afloat aboard ships under refit, construction or maintenance. Work had to be undertaken with efficiency and confidence relevant to their Trade. Dockyard School (and later College) studies were compulsory with recognised national examinations in City & Guilds, Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) & Higher National Certificate (HNC) in technical & academic subjects being followed. Continued attendance at School / College depended on own efforts and progress; marked idleness or indifference could lead to dismissal of the apprentice from the academic studies. Also failure to pass examinations jeopardised future career promotion or progression in other Industries.

9. An apprentice & parent / guardian were bound by Law having signed the “Deed” to serve the full 5 years apprenticeship. The employer could cancel the “Deed” either because it was clear that the apprentice was not making the grade (and would fail to meet the standards for a competent craftsman) or because of bad conduct or poor attendance that had not improved after due warning.

10. The final completion of the apprenticeship was formally acknowledged after final trade tests and acceptance standards had been reached for the particular trade. Rules were intended to control the working life and not intended to make life hard or to be “screwed down”. The prime function was to ensure efficiency over the whole Establishment by everyone involved from top to bottom.

11. Drawing Office training and instruction was available to apprentices during the 4/5<sup>th</sup> year, provided studies and general conduct were satisfactory. This was voluntary, comprising one evening a week and/or during the daytime hours for period up to 5/6 months. Instruction in Mechanical/Electrical/Constructive drawing and, in some instances, ‘onboard ship trials work’ associated with drawing office duties was undertaken.