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Name: Alan Lloyd  
Regiment: The Royal Navy

Date transcript  
Transcribe by:

Timecode	What said
01:00:00	Start of Film 1
01:00:01	My name is Alan Lloyd. I joined the Navy as an Artificer Apprentice and retired after 24 years' service in 1979 as a Chief Petty Officer or a Radio Electrical Artificer 1st class. I was born and raised in Nottingham from where I joined the Navy and apart from my parents being there it was probably the last time I lived in the city. Beyond that naval establishments and anywhere else that I happen to find work.
01:00:35	<b><i>When was that?</i></b>
01:00:36	When I left the Navy?
01:00:38	<b><i>No, when you joined?</i></b>
01:00:39	I joined the navy in 1955. To be an artificer there is a five year apprenticeship so that the upper age limit for it was 16 years and 8 months when I went in. Of course your man's time didn't start until you were 18, so 22 years on top of that I came out in 1979 when I was 40 years old. But to a pension of course.
01:01:07	<b><i>Why did you join the navy?</i></b>
01:01:09	For the same reason a lot of people do I suppose, I was looking for something different as far as a job went and when I was at school, I went to grammar school, which was one side of Nottingham and I lived the other side of Nottingham and every morning getting the bus over I used to see this long line of the same faces not very happy shall we say, and I thought " this is not going to be for me". My father was in the Army but that didn't interest me. It was the travel I suppose side of it, so the navy seemed the ideal solution. I went into the careers recruiting office in Nottingham I was young enough for them to say I could go for the apprenticeship which gave me a complete skill. In those days it was a full five year apprenticeship. So yes, mainly for the variety, the travel.
	Start of Film 2
01:02:07	<b><i>How did you find the transition from civilian life as a young boy into that naval apprenticeship?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:02:14	No problem at all. I mean I went straight from school to work. I mean it applies to any sort of thing had I gone to an office in Nottingham or into a factory it was from an education environment to working environment.
01:02:33	<b><i>What about the discipline then?</i></b>
01:02:37	That was something I got used to. I knew there was going to be discipline. I coped with it, it didn't bother me. I didn't resent the discipline side of it so no problem as far as that went.
01:02:54	<b><i>So what did you train to do then? Tell me a bit about your training.</i></b>
01:02:58	Naval Apprentices, the Artificers are the engineers, the specialists. Basically you have got the engine room side of it engineers who deal with the ship's propulsion systems, engine's and such; the electrical people who deal with the ship's electronics, radio, again self-explanatory, radar that side of it. Ordinance, weaponry gunnery and such and then within the Fleet Air Arm you have got an equivalent of people specializing in aircraft radar and radio plus electronics aircraft engines aircraft armament etc. So they are the specialists - the engineers.
01:03:48	<b><i>So you get grounding across all of those, do you?</i></b>
01:03:53	When you joined up you are an artificer apprentice. You spend the first 16 months at a place called HMS Fisgard which is at Torpoint in Cornwall. And you are all apprentice there where you did a basic training in metalwork, woodwork. There was also school classes for further education like GCEs things like that. A term was about four months, three times a year and so in the final term you were then assessed and put into your own specialist group, whether you are going to be electrical, or you are going to be ordinance or you were going to be engineering. The rest of the apprenticeship was training in the environment you are going to be working in and in different parts of the country. The engineers went to HMS Caledonia which was in Scotland, the electrical people and the radio people to HMS Collingwood which was in Fareham.
01:04:57	<b><i>And you?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:04:59	Well I went to Collingwood as a radio electrical engineer, the aircraft people went to Arbroath in Scotland. Now the electrical side then stayed together within the electrical category but with no division between be air and the ground side until the eighth term and then you were re-categorised whether you are going to be specialising in the ship electronics or aircraft electronics. I got put into the air side so I did the last three terms which was a year at the air electrical school which was a place called HMS Ariel which is outside Worthy Down. I believe it is now an Army establishment with the Royal Army Pay Corps. There. So basically I spent the apprenticeship, started at Fiskard then went at Collingwood and then finished training four years later and went out into the fleet for the fifth year hands on.
01:06:07	I then went to a shore establishment. It was the Royal Naval Air Station at Lossiemouth where I spent about six months there getting a good grounding of all aspects of an air station. Because again, although I say aircraft radio and radar on air station you have got ground radio equipment as well so you are doing both sides of the fence. I then got moved from Scotland down to a place called HMS Goldcrest near Haverfordwest in Brawdy where I spent a couple of years there. Good to start off and then the place closed down while they lengthened and strengthened the runway. Although they very much depleted the ships company they were still a few people left around but honestly not really enough to keep you occupied. You can do nothing for so long. This categorisation and splitting people that I told you he found out that they had actually channelled far too many people into the air side of the electronics world than the ship's side and they had got an imbalance. So they came out through Fleet Orders asking for air people like myself to do a commission on the ship side, on board, but it would be on an aircraft carrier. So I then went to HMS Centaur working on the ships radio equipment, radar etc. for 2 years so that was my first ship.
01:07:54	<b><i>How was that?</i></b>
01:07:56	That was OK, I mean naval shore establishments are OK but it is the transition to the closed world of a ship is when you get your first taste of the navy proper. You have got the ships company there somewhere between about 1500 to 1600 people, almost a small village basically. Exactly the same, some people are sleeping some people are working some people are relaxing etc. Yes it is a big change. You are partially prepared for it, I enjoyed it.
	<b>Start of Film 3</b>
01:08:36	<b><i>It must have been a magnificent feeling walking the gangplank, a beast as big as that?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:08:40	I don't know, a little bit of what the hell is going to happen from here but yes it was easy to get into the rhythm of things. I don't think I had any particular problems apart from just learning what life at sea was like. I mean how do you find your way round something as big as an aircraft carrier to start with from your work, your recreation? Getting used to the various routines. Although a ship in peace time is not fighting. In any force you are training for the eventuality of war. So what you are doing basically is rehearsing and rehearsing. In the case of an aircraft carrier flying your aircraft sending them out bombing things like that, and you providing the back up.
01:09:45	I joined her in 1962, halfway through a commission in fact she had just come back from the Middle East, the first of the dust ups with Kuwait when a guy called Kassim was trying to take over the country. I joined her just towards the end of that commission and again I suppose it was an ease in because we were within UK waters. I got as far as visiting Hamburg on her. At that particular time she was the first carrier to visit Hamburg, the first British aircraft carrier, since the Second World War. So quite a bit of publicity, lots of people coming out to see the ship, and things like that.
01:10:34	She then went into a refit that was sort of a major overhaul that I got involved in, then, yes when she had finished that, we first did a trip into the Mediterranean, Gibraltar, Malta, Marseilles and that was about it. Then we came back for another short maintenance period and then we went to the Far East so basically as far as I was concerned it broke me in with the travelling. I did a short hop, I did at middle one and then the last bit was out Singapore and the farthest I got was Hong Kong. I didn't get to Australasia, I didn't get to Japan, but it's a big world.
01:11:18	<b><i>How were your sea legs? Did you how to any rough rides? Going out towards the Pacific. That is a big ocean.</i></b>
01:11:19	Just getting used to the movement of the ship for a start. An aircraft carrier for some reason, will Centaur did it and so did the Ark, don't just tip like that. She used to pick up in an arc and then drop right down so you are living with that continual motion all the time. You just get used to it; you don't notice it after a while. The mess deck that I was in on the Centaur was mid ships about three, four, five decks down so that I could hear the thump with the aircraft flying it was just something that was going on. My job was looking after the radio ship side, not getting involved with the aircraft. If we hit a storm or anything like that, the only thing it does is make you very very tired. After a couple of days of being bounced around shall we say, it's wearing on you. And as I said to you anybody who suffers from seasickness has my deepest sympathy. It must be awful.
01:12:38	<b><i>When you crossed the equator did they look after you?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:12:40	I did. Indeed. I have still got my crossing the line certificate. It was, (we were on our way from, mind you that was,) Yes I did cross it on the Centaur because we were on our way down to Mombasa which is just south of the equator. Oh yes with the full trappings, Neptune coming on board with his court and the mermaids and all the rest of it, the newbies all being dunked etc. Yes it was a great social day. Anything like that on board a ship that gets a change away from routine you can specifically plan. If the flight deck is clear, aircraft aren't flying so OK - open it up and you've got a hockey field up there for a start, all various other types of sport, so crossing the line was one of the biggest ones. I still remember it anyway it was a great day.
01:13:46	<b><i>And how was Centaur at a ship? You have served on a few Was it a good ship, was it a happy ship?</i></b>
01:13:52	I don't honestly think I had a bad one. It was very very lucky. The people I was working with I got on with very very well. Mess deck, I was in a Petty Officers mess. It was a mixed mess; you've got people in different trades to yourself. We only had a small mess deck, only 18/19 of us, we got on very well as a group I found it extremely happy. The only time it wasn't, we had a dreadful accident on Centaur, I joined her in the June time and we were in the Irish Sea somewhere off the Isle of Man and there was a leakage of steam in the boiler room, super-heated steam which is hot and regrettably five people actually lost their lives in that accident. Not that apparently they would have still a chance anyway, they were in a confined compartment, steam pipe burst and basically that was it. I don't think I ever would like to be in that situation (pause) there was an atmosphere throughout the ship when that happened. I suppose because the ship gives you a kindredship, all of the same, esprit De corps, call it what you like. What had happened to them affected everybody else within the ship. And I think, in a way, it probably helped the people who were closely involved to cope with it.
01:15:40	<b><i>Is that the worst accident you have ever had in a ship?</i></b>
01:15:42	Yes it was. I mean, the occasional aircraft unfortunately had a heavy landing. We had one went off, missed the wire→ and went off into the sea and sank. Those, funnily enough, seem to be more remote, I don't know why. There was something like the accident in the boiler room; everybody was involved in that. We had a guy in the mess deck who was in that boiler room and when they broadcast what had happened practically everybody in the mess looked at his bunk. It was about six o'clock in the morning when we all found out and thankfully he was in there. It is a difficult thing to put into words, is very much esprit de corps which I think is prevalent in the Navy.
	<b>Start of Film 4</b>
01:16:38	<b><i>So after you had been on the Centaur what was your next ship?</i></b>



Timecode	What said
01:16:42	I then went ashore again. I went to the Royal Naval Air Station at Yeovilton, which is down in Somerset and having come from working on the ships electronics I then went into the ground radio department at Yeovilton, in other words maintaining the big stuff. The transmitters I'd been working on board ship or a variation of them. They had Buccaneers, (no the Buccaneers were at Lossiemouth) they had Sea Vixens were the main aircraft they had there & Gannets. I was in the workshop looking after ground radio equipment and getting the aircraft equipment when something went wrong with it and it could not be fixed site then the unit was taken out and brought to the workshop and then you would repair, strip it down completely and hopefully repair it or get it down to a level where you can I mean not like today's computers where you just unplug and plug in a new board, I mean I'm talking about things like valves and resistors and such stuff were you could get down to component level and change them. And that was basically an 8 (pause) 9 until 5 job, Monday to Friday for most people are you always had a skeleton staff in because quite often he would be flying on a Saturday - from the airfield so he would need to the staff in there.
01:18:18	<b><i>Did you ever do any work that would then cause problems, bad work that caused problems?</i></b>
01:18:30	Thankfully no. It was something you were always worried especially if it was a piece of equipment that was going in an aircraft. Not so bad as if an engine's stops, the aircraft is going to fall out and the sky then but if the radio equipment goes down it is still going to cause problems and especially if – I think what you are more worried is that it's not a stupid mistake you made, if you had thought about it you were responsible for it.
01:19:04	I had about a year doing that. Now naval establishments have a NAAFI and most of them, like the air station, have an all ranks club within the establishment. Which is run by a committee consisting of a senior rate, a Chief Petty Officer, and representatives from throughout the station (the different departments) who run the club. There is a bar, a small restaurant, arranging dances, social functions than getting the ladies in from outside the area. How I wound up with it I am not quite certain but I was asked to take over the Chairmanship of that club. I had a year there as the club manager trying to arrange the functions, arrange the groups, running meetings is trying to provide the things that the ships company wanted to be done in the club.
01:20:05	<b><i>What do you mean by ladies from out of town?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:20:08	I mean an air station you have got far more fellas you've got a few Wrens there, so if you are going to have a dance the sailors have got a have someone to dance with. So there are quite a few of the girls from the surrounding area came in for when we had a dance. They were always good do's anyway. We normally got a decent group in fact I seem to remember one of my biggest mistakes; there was a group around about that time, just starting, called Dave Dee, Dosey, Beakey, Mitch and Titch something like that. I mean they weren't even a name then, they were just on circuit and I was offered them for about £19.50 for a gig and I turned them down. And look at what they went on to later on. If ladies from ashore sounds a bit derogatory, a quite a lot of them let's face it did probably turn into romances
01:21:10	No. I chucked that in because in April 1966 I got married. And I figured that my future bride was not going to take kindly to me being out every night until midnight on certainly three or four nights a week when there were socials. I had got a committee there. I worked on the principle that if we had something on I was always in the club anyway making sure that everything was alright, plus the fact is something had gone wrong I could give a first-hand report to the ships Commander so that he knew exactly what had happened. And I figured that she wasn't, well it wasn't the ideal thing being newly married. So I quit that. We got married in the April and about two months later got a draft and that's when I went out to Singapore to the RAF station at Changi.
	<b>Start of Film 5</b>
01:22:13	The navy had what was called the Naval Aircraft Support Unit at the RAF Station. The job was to maintain types of each aircraft in the far east so that if the carrier was east of Suez in serious damage to an aircraft, damage to the airframe or something like that it couldn't fly what they would do they would offloaded to us on a one for one basis. We would give them a replacement to keep their numbers up and then we would get it back to air worthiness so that it was ready next time another one came in that was broken and we did a one for one swap there.
01:23:00	So most of the time was in that fourth line servicing, the in depth servicing of the aircraft but if there were carriers in Singapore; pilots have to keep their flying hours up to what they used to do was put this squadrons ashore at the RAF Station and they would then do their flying from there. We will provide backup for the aircraft to keep them flying while the carriers were in. So they would two types, in the long periods when we get and how carriers around it would be in depth maintenance, repair stuff like that, it was back up and keeping aircraft flying over the couple weeks or so fort when the carriers were a in and I was there for about 2 ½ years.



Timecode	What said
01:23:53	So living and messing in the RAF establishment. So another complete change, another a different service environment, another way of life. In fact I suppose to a certain extent quite a few places in my career I have strayed off the normal career progress of an electronics engineer into little diversion like that. And again I found it very interesting. Of course living ashore in somewhere like Singapore, a place I'd never been to. One thing we did do, although there were married quarters out there, we actually hired a bungalow which was amongst the local Singaporeans so our neighbours were people who were born and raised on the Island, so we got to make some very good friends, some of whom I' still in contact with. The highlight of the visit was we arrived in October 1966 and in December 1967 our son was born in Changi Hospital. So he has got two birth certificates.
01:25:14	From there, back to back to Brawdy down in Wales but it was only a short stop. I had a couple of months leave to take with having been abroad for so long and the day after I joined Brawdy I was given a draft which was sending me to the Ark Royal later on that year so I only had about two or three months at Brawdy before I went down to Plymouth. Ark was in the dockyard at the time I joined her. She was in the middle of a £3million. three year refit which was causing an awful lot of stir in the press. Especially a guy at the Express called Chapman Pincher who was having a go at the wastage of money, the government wasted expense etc. She finished the refit, I joined her in 1969, she finished the refit at the beginning of 70 and I stayed with her until November 72.
01:26:20	<b><i>Did you want to join the Ark Royal? Was she the pride of the fleet then?</i></b>
01:26:28	Ark Royal was the fleet carrier. She was very good publicity, I mean shortly after I left her the BBC producers that series "Sailor", that 12 part series. When we were on her the BBC did a programme on her off Portland in Lyme Bay which was the first totally live outside broadcast. Ark was involved, a Royal Fleet Auxiliary, other ships as well and they didn't lose a break in transmission throughout the whole hour of that documentary. Mind you they rehearsed enough before the programme went out. So anything like that, Ark was normally at the forefront as far as publicity was concerned. The Queen Mum launched Ark Royal, the third one that I'm talking about. She came down and for the commissioning ceremony and she always shown an interest in the ship. So that gave you a link with it as well.
01:27:37	<b><i>Did you as a naval person want to join Ark Royal?</i></b>
01:27:44	I had no choice. I got a draft to her, I was going. You can volunteer for something, like Singapore. I volunteered for that. I thought "no way", and damn me I got it within three or four months of putting the request in. The draft that I got to Ark was just a routine draft. You will join her on such and such in time.
01:28:10	<b><i>And how was that after being ashore for some time? Thinking back to your return to the ocean, how did you find Ark Royal?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:28:17	She was bigger than Centaur, she had 2,500 ships company, but no, a ship is a ship basically. The routines, the system, the day to day procedures were exactly the same.
01:28:40	<b><i>Did you enjoying being back on a ship then?</i></b>
01:28:42	Yes.
01:28:43	<b><i>Didn't miss home, didn't miss wife?</i></b>
01:28:45	Well obviously. Married, son that was just over a year old when we flew back from Singapore, so growing rapidly and changing quite a lot. Yes unfortunately, but that is a fact of service life or certainly with the navy. My attitude is that I went into the navy voluntary, it's part of the job. I did not perhaps like it but it is something I have got to accept. I mean my wife kept sending me photographs and obviously letters and so forth so I kept up to date that way. And thankfully when we were abroad it was for three or four months something like that, and then coming back so I wasn't losing a whole year or anything like that which probably make it a bit easier. But no, I saw it as it went with the job.
	<b>Start of Film 6</b>
01:29:49	<b><i>Are there any incidents that you recall from Ark Royal either favourably or not so favourably? Things that stand out from that service period?</i></b>
01:29:58	The first bit of it was a work up after the big refit so we were in home waters. A trip back to Liverpool, that's miles away. Ark was built there, good publicity again to take her back to the city she was built in. Oslo was another trip while we were doing the work up. From then we had another Mediterranean tour sort of thing, building like last time although I didn't exactly plan it that way, but this time the highlight was that I managed to get States side on board Ark Royal. We went to Fort Lauderdale in Florida, up to Jacksonville. I mean, I don't know if it was a coincidence or not but the Captain's wife actually came from Ft Lauderdale so maybe that's why the trip over there. And that was great. America is a place everyone wants to go and see.
01:31:05	<b><i>Some of your travel experiences obviously have born you great joy. What made life difficult for you? Was there any difficult things? Was there any moments you think god I've had enough I don't want to be in or on the ship?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:31:22	<p>Personal ones probably. Both my mother and my father passed away when I was abroad and there were difficulties getting me home in time, because I'm an only one, and getting home in time to go to the funeral, to get that type of closure, but thankfully on both occasions I did make it. The other one was while I was on Ark; my wife got pregnant with our second child and regrettably lost him at about seven months. Again I was abroad at the time so and that one I didn't get home for unfortunately. But as far as the life itself went I enjoyed it. I was lucky in the people I met. OK there were one or two obnoxious sods, on a ship that big don't have to associate with them. In a submarine it might have been slightly different.</p>
01:32:20	<b><i>What was the skipper like?</i></b>
01:32:34	<p>On Ark? A man by the name of Ray Lygo. Extremely fair, respected by most of the crew.</p> <p>There was a slight incident when he played billiards and a Russian destroyer in the Mediterranean. That got him a bit of unwelcome publicity. Funnily enough I wasn't on the ship at the time I was at home for my mother's funeral.</p> <p>Something like a carrier in those days always had in the vicinity when it was operating, either a Russian fishing vessel sprouting with masses of aerals and all the rest of it for a Russian, in fact it was a Kaitlin class destroyer if I remember correctly. When she was flying, what the ship used to do was cruise alongside Ark, watching what was going on then drop astern and then come up on the other side to keep watching. Obviously this is all second-hand as I wasn't there, but apparently one night instead of dropping astern actually pulled ahead and tried to cross Arks bows and don't make it. She stayed afloat but it put a whacking great hole in the stern of her. I think they lost a couple of seamen who went overboard and they didn't recover them. When I joined the navy I was part of the largest intake of artificers that the navy ever took. There were 220 of us which was a hell of a lot. We have even got our own little subsection within the Fiskard Association.</p>
01:34:31	<b><i>How did you see feel when you had to leave then? Why did you leave?</i></b>
01:34:36	<p>I had to. After 22 years man's time that starts from where you're 18. I had to retire at 40, that is when I went to pension. The only way I could have stayed was, had there been a shortfall in my particular job category and then you could stay for another five to make it up but if that didn't happen then I had to go to retirement at 40. And probably I was ready for it by then, I'll admit that. Although I still love travelling. To finally settle into a home environment and not being away (I say this with my tongue in my cheek) for weeks at the time or months at a time. That was what I think I was ready to do. It didn't happen but that's another story.</p>
01:35:36	<b><i>And so the of overriding memory of your time in the navy is very positive?</i></b>

Timecode	What said
01:35:44	Very positive indeed. If there was anything bad I've blotted it out. Why dwell on it? Move forward with the positive.
	End of Films

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