

Company Argus-Hermes Radar course at Chelmsford

To sail as "A Shell man", I also required a radar certificate as one of my jobs would be to look after this most important piece of equipment. The radar is classed as an essential piece of navigational equipment, thus the person looking after it had to have the appropriate officially recognised certificate.

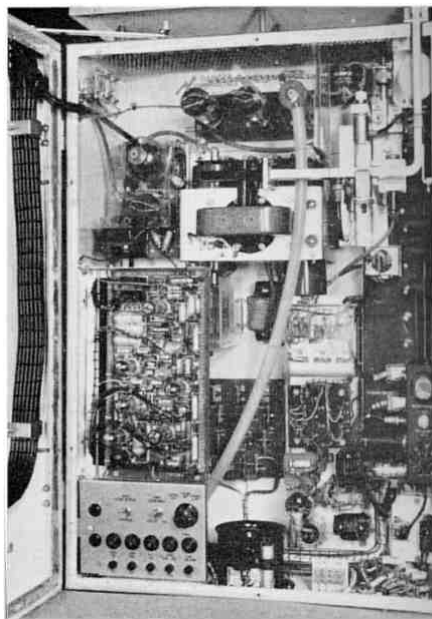
An official Board of Trade certificate took 6 months, and cost the company a lot of money. Shell and Marconi were happy if I had a Marconi internal course (only 6 weeks) on one of their radars. This also fulfilled the DOT requirements if the ship I was sailing on carried the radar I had trained with. As the Argus-Hermes radars were fitted to quite a few of the Shell fleet, I was given the shorter course. As things turned out, it was actually rather good.

The Argus-Hermes radars were perhaps not the newest technology, but incorporated some interesting features and circuitry. They were powerful and quite complex systems, with impressive performance figures too. All radars are complicated, but these had some features which up until now, had been limited to much larger Naval systems. We were only a small group, and all got on well together. The others were accommodated in small hotels or guest houses. I could stay at home during the course as the Marconi training school was not far away from where I lived in Chelmsford.

Just across the road was a pub where we went for lunch, and met up for considerable after-hours drinking at night!. One of our number was a huge, red bearded, Irishman. It was not unknown for him to spend the entire night in the pub, and still be up and ready the next morning. It was quite an impressive performance!



Radiolocator 4



Argus-Hermes Transciever



Marconi Hermes

The instructor was good, enthusiastic, and knew his subject well. We all had piles of circuit diagrams, manuals and operating instructions which luckily we did not have to carry around. We used to leave them in the classroom, except perhaps if we needed to study something in the evening. Needless to say, we tended to socialise rather more than we studied in the evenings, and the instructor also sometimes used to join us as he lived not too far away. We were on full pay, plus expenses, so money was not a problem. This tended to make our pub meetings very convivial indeed.

Despite the "cheapo" nature of the course, I came away with a lot of information, a pretty good working knowledge of this radar system, as well a new respect for alcohol!

Below. Here John Bourne, inspector in charge of radar training, centre, gives instruction to two radio officers

