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Training, Information Systems - Anne Bailey (née Minard) In the WRNS from 1969 to 1986

I graduated in 1969 with a Physics degree from Bristol University. Not knowing what to do afterwards and not fancying industrial research jobs or school teaching, I luckily met a family friend who was a senior WRNS Officer (Elizabeth Bell). She explained that the WRNS employed science graduates as Met forecasters and, as my parents' wartime naval experiences had been happy, this sounded a good option and I made the necessary applications.

I went through the selection process for Direct Entry WRNS Officers and this involved an interview panel and medical. They explained to me that, although they were not currently recruiting forecasters, they wanted to introduce women to the Instructor Branch as teachers. Despite my reservations about school teaching, by this time I was very enthusiastic about the prospect of Service life and decided that this was a good way ahead. The WRNS seemed equally keen to have me as they waived the eyesight requirement that I had failed at the medical.

As a result I joined *Dauntless* in September 1969 for a month of basic new entry training along with about 20 others young women, three of whom were also Direct Entry; the rest were joining as WRNS ratings. This period of initial training was followed by two months of port experience at RNAS Culdrose, living on the lower deck and experiencing the work of the Navy's different specialisations and branches. The time at Culdrose was an eye-opener for me but I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I joined Royal Naval College, Greenwich in January 1970 for the three-month WRNS Officer Training course, which was good fun, but it was not until the April that I had my first experience of teaching. I went back to Greenwich for the Short IOs course, which comprised a month of theory and practical exercise, followed by another month of teaching practice out in the field. I did this at *Daedalus*, teaching air engineering apprentices some subjects where I was only one lesson ahead of them in knowledge. After that I was deemed fit for my first proper appointment.



Instructor Officers' Short Course 1970 at Royal Naval College, Greenwich with Course Officer Lieutenant Commander Frank Feast

I joined the Maths Group in *Collingwood* and found myself the only woman in a group of about eight young Schoolies, several also in their first appointment. They had joined the Royal Navy only three months earlier and were already Lieutenants whereas I had been in the WRNS almost a year but was only a Third Officer; we were all doing exactly the same job and this seemed grossly unfair at the time. Nevertheless I enjoyed *Collingwood*; I was teaching maths, mechanics and basic digital theory to artificer and mechanic apprentices, and courses in electrical mechanics for petty officers and leading rates. They were all quite surprised to find themselves taught by a woman and were much kinder to me than they might have been. Some years after this I would often meet an elderly Chief, who would say, 'I remember you – you taught me maths in *Collingwood*'.

After almost three years of this, I began to feel that the powers that be might have forgotten about me, although they did select me for promotion to Second Officer. There had certainly been no talk of a new appointment. Eventually a new position was found in Faslane at the Polaris School which was entitled Training Evaluation, but after I arrived I found there was hardly a job there to be done. The Officer-in-Charge was not keen to have a woman on his staff; after a couple of months of doing nothing much I went to work in the WRNS Admin Office until a new appointment could be found. This period could not be called a success and I felt that no long-term plan for this experimental WRNS Schoolie had really been made.

Six months later I went to *Fisgard* to teach maths and mechanics to artificer apprentices again. This was much more up my street and another enjoyable appointment. By this time the WRNS and Instructor appointers seemed to have got their acts together and my next job was at the Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon, teaching the computer language FORTRAN to engineering undergraduates. This expanded my knowledge of programming and computer techniques which was to stand me in good stead for the future. After a couple of years of this, I moved back to the Portsmouth area and to my next appointment in *Centurion*, as a Systems Analyst in the Drafting Section of Computer Division. However, by this time I felt that my best skills lay in teaching so I asked for a move back to artificer training and went to *Caledonia* in 1978 and started maths and mechanics teaching again.

At the end of this appointment – 11 years since I joined up – it was deemed that I should have a general WRNS job for the good of my career. Incidentally *Caledonia* was the first job where I was relieved by another WRNS Schoolie, Jill Ingram. I went to *Dryad* as WRNS Radar Training Officer and the WRNS Unit Officer, where I was one of the last to hold this appointment before that role was abandoned. I was selected for promotion to First Officer during this appointment, which was relatively late in the zone for WRNS Officers, and certainly late in comparison with male Schoolies who had this promotion automatically. After this I did the RN Staff course at Greenwich in 1982; on completion I remained at the Staff College to assist with the installation and management of a small office computer system, and teaching Staff College staff and students about word processing.



Anne Bailey carrying out training at HMS *Collingwood*

At about this time the prospect of sea jobs came along. I decided at this point in my career, this was not something I wanted to volunteer for, especially as there would not have been any further Instructor jobs available for me afterwards. So I spent the rest of my 16 years at Greenwich and left the Service in 1986, still wearing blue stripes.



Postscript 2018:

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the WRNS as a Schoolie, despite a couple of unsatisfactory jobs, and with the IT experience I had gained at Greenwich in my last job, I managed to find good gainful employment on leaving.