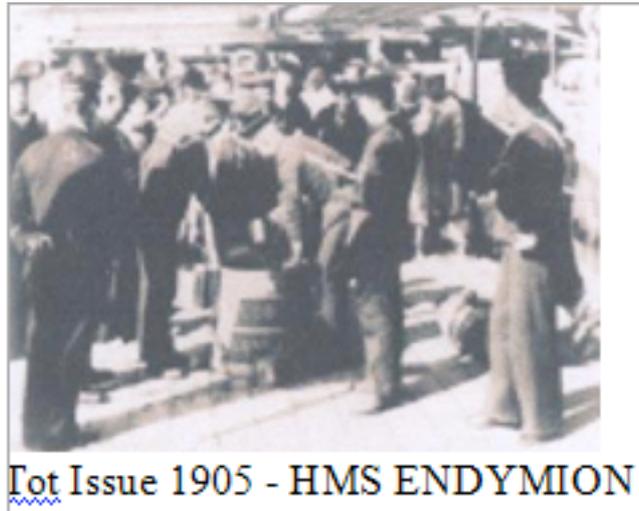


The Royal Navy "Tot"



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Royal Navy Rum 1st Unofficial Issue 1655 RN Rum 1st Official Issue 1731
Last Day of Issue 31 July 1970 Last person and ship in the World to receive the 'Tot'
was HMS FIFE

A standard naval tot of rum consisted of an eighth of a pint of rum (which was over 50% ABV, and was traditionally named "overproof"). Generally spirits are about 40% in comparison.

Labelling spirits today as overproof or underproof is derived from the early method of treating Jamaica rum in the naval victualling yards before it was issued to the warships. The rum used to arrive in England at 140 degrees overproof after which it was reduced to 95.5 degrees underproof by having water added to it. A small amount of the mixture was poured over some grains of gunpowder and then a magnifying glass was used to ignite it. If the burning alcohol managed to stay alight then it was said to be "proof". And if it didn't light then it was underproof. If it exploded then it was overproof. Proof spirit today is legally defined as that which has a specific gravity of 12/13 (92.3 percent) at 51°F, and of course they don't do the gunpowder/magnifying glass test any more.

Once a rating reached the age of twenty he was entitled to draw his tot. Senior Rates were entitled to drink this neat, however Junior Rates had "2 in 1" which meant that it was mixed with two parts water to one part rum. The reason for this was so that the rum could not be stored and saved for another day. The rum was a blend from different countries in the Caribbean, most notably British Guyana, British Virgin Islands and Trinidad.

So now to tell you a 'tot dit' about what ship and where the last tot was officially issued and drank in Her Majesty's Royal Navy HMS FIFE was in Pearl Harbour on the 1st August 1970.



As you know this was the day after the end of the tot because HMS FIFE had left Kobe, Japan and had sent the Leading Regulator ashore at Midway for the mail. This was classed as giving leave so that the ship could therefore claim the US rate of Local Overseas Allowance (the helicopter taking him ashore and the ship then caught up). The Commander (Supply & Secretariat) obtained permission from the Captain to have 'Up Spirits' early which was about 09:00 having got alongside and being greeted by Hawaiian dancing girls in grass skirts on the jetty.

The ship had crossed through the International Date Line during the evening so whilst in harbour the date and clock was then put back again from the 1st August 1970 to 31 July and approximately two hours later the last and final official tot in the Royal Navy was issued. The Senior Rates from 3 Mess had the honour of being pall bearers at the burial at sea ceremony to be held on the deck of the demise of the navy's rum ration. A Junior Rate had his birthday on the 31st July 1970 so he was given the privilege of being the first and very last person in the RN to receive the tot.



The pall bearers marched to the fo'castle on the starboard side, facing the harbour to the stern with rifles reversed and the pipe-band playing dirges and at a slow march and greeted by 'off caps'.

The pall bearers included, Chief Petty Officer Writer Roland 'Nick' Carter, CPO Cook and CPO Elee. Draped over the rum barrel was the Union Flag. Ropes were attached to the barrel as though it was 'going over the side' but there were strict rules governing all rum measures and whilst it was ceasing the Cdr.(S) had still to account for the barrel. Half-way through the proceedings an

Admiral's barge from Pearl Harbour HQ passed by with a Japanese Admiral onboard flying the Japanese flag. On seeing the 'burial at sea party' they stopped and saluted as they thought with all what was going on it was for real but imagine their embarrassment when they saw a rum barrel going over the side and 'Jack' started performing their dancing in the hula hula skirts that the remaining ship's company had dressed up in.

The Hawaiians completed a TV programme about the event and ex-Commander Banfield had taken several colour slides which unfortunately he no longer holds.