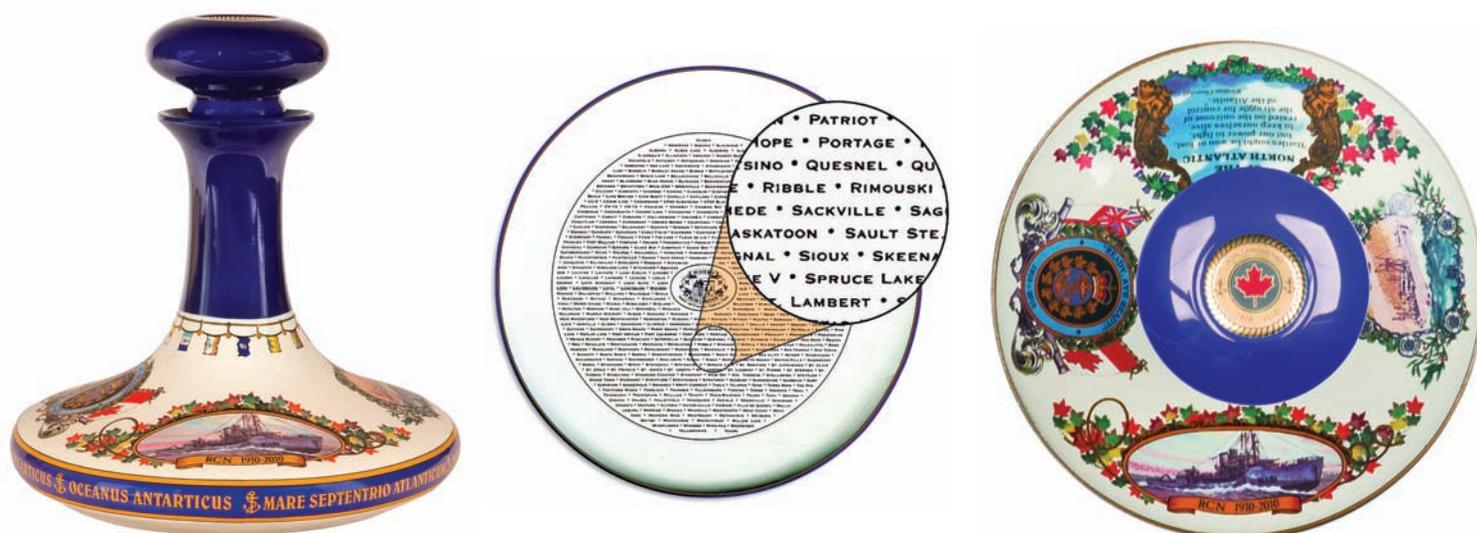


# It's a Rum Business

Jacqui Good



Rum? In the middle of the day? Every day? This seems hard to believe. But for over 300 years, a daily 'tot' of rum was the lubricant that kept the Royal Navy running. Until 1740, sailors were awarded an astounding *pint* of rum a day, without water. Before and after battle, there would be a double tot. The rum was served out by the ship's Purser, corrupted to 'Pusser.' By 1824, sailors had to make do with a mere 2.5 ounces of rum served at high noon with great ceremony. They cried "Up Spirits!" as they downed their reward.

When the Royal Canadian Navy was formed in 1910, the rum tradition continued, even during wartime. The ceremony of the tot on a tiny corvette, careening over Atlantic waves, was obviously simplified. I'm told rum could become a medium of barter, a way to buy favours or pay back debts. You could offer a 'sipper,' a 'gulper' or 'sandy bottoms' (the dregs). I'm also informed that three sippers equal a gulper and three guplers equal a tot.

Patrick Onions recalls his life onboard HMCS *Sackville* in his diary (entitled "My Life Aboard HMCS *Sackville*") posted on the Veterans Affairs Canada website. He remembers the tot of rum. He writes "while we were supposed to drink it in front of the officer, we got very adept at palming a shot glass of coke which we drank in place of the tot of rum." The sailor would then slink off to pour the rum into a bottle, accumulating enough for an upcoming party.

As the navy became more dependent on sophisticated equipment and alert technicians, the rum break became less feasible. In 1970 the British Admiralty abolished it. The Canadian Navy's own *Black Tot Day* came two years later.

There is a display case explaining the rum ritual aboard HMCS *Sackville*, Canada's Naval Memorial. And, for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian Navy, Pusser's Navy Rum has created a rum decanter featuring *Sackville* in the design. A portion of the purchase price benefits the trust which maintains Canada's last remaining corvette.

Charles Tobias, the man responsible for the revival of Pusser's Rum says,

Although I've lived in the British Virgin Islands for the past 30 years, I'm proud to say that I'm a Canadian by birth. Although I was only seven in 1940, I can still recall those early, grim days of World War II, and the major role that Canada and the RCN and the Merchant Navy played in the winning of the critical Battle of the North Atlantic on which the outcome of the war in Europe so much depended. And win it the RCN did! Remembering all these events as I do, we designed this decanter to try to capture some of that spirit. It's a tribute to all those who stood tall, and had the guts to go out in that big, cold, North Atlantic and the other oceans of the world, day after day, month after month, voyage after voyage, until the battle was won.

You can order the decanter and find out more about navy rum at [www.pussers.com/decanter](http://www.pussers.com/decanter). There will also be some decanters for sale at the HMCS *Sackville* gift shop ((902) 427-2837). 🍹

Jacqui Good likes her rum mixed with ginger beer.