

A Sailor ain't a Sailor

By Tom Lewis (1987) on album Surfacing. Bunting Tosser is Royal Navy slang for the junior officers who set and hoist signal flags. Although dating from the period of signalling by flags, it has survived as a general term for naval signallers. Black Tot Day (31 July 1970) was the last day on which the Royal Navy issued sailors with a daily rum ration. In 1655 the daily rum ration was a half pint per man.

My father often told me when I was just a lad
A sailor's life was very hard the food was always bad
But now I've joined the Navy aboard a man of war
And now I find a sailor ain't a sailor anymore

Chorus

*Don't haul on the rope don't climb up the mast
If you see a sailing ship it might be your last
Just get your civvies ready for another run ashore
A sailor ain't a sailor ain't a sailor anymore*

Old Killick of the mess he says we've got it soft
It wasn't like this in his day when he was up aloft
We like our bunks and sleeping bags but what's a hammock for?
A swinging on the deck or a lying on the floor?

They gave us an Aldis lamp so we could do it right
They gave us a radio to signal day and night
We know our codes and ciphers but what's a semaphore
A bunting tosser doesn't toss the bunting anymore

They gave us an engine the first went up and down
With some more technology it soon went round and round
We know of steam and diesel but what's a mainsail for
A stoker ain't a stoker with a shovel any more

Two cans of beer a day and that's your bleeding lot
They gave us an extra one since they stopped the tot
So put on your civvy clothes we'll find a pub ashore
A sailor's still a sailor just like he was before