

THOMAS SEELEY CROME, ALIAS TONY OLSON

(ed. note - The following autobiographical sketch was contributed by Tom Crome. See IBRO newsletter #14 for a copy of his ring record.)

Born July 18th, 1912, Crook County, Durham, England. (Fighting 1927-1932). Nothing Sensational or Exciting, during the early days of Upbringing. The usual Hard Slog and Poverty, of many families of that Era, First World War, to the Mid 20s.

Going to School in Bare Feet, having the Luxury of Bread and Jam, and Oxo Cube, sometimes, Broken Biscuits, as and when available. Never, a Bright Pupil at any Subject, except for Sports, such as running, jumping and climbing, rough and tumble etc. Lived with a Widowed Aunt, my Mother's Aunt, up until leaving school.

Odd jobs like Paper Seller, Donkey Attendant on the Beach during Summer School Holidays, all for the Reward of mere Coppers. Often running away for days on end, unable, to break the Ties of Family Bond. A job of Butcher's Errand Boy, kept me in line, for a short while, then suddenly, I did do a Bunk. This was in the way of Stowaway, to where, not a Clue, nor really why? Almost a couple of weeks at Sea, only known by one Guy, the Ship's Bosun, who found me in one of the Lifeboats. He kept me going with Grub, and a Promise, to try and get me ashore un-noticed. The Boat being one of the CAIRN LINE, Trading between the Tyne, and Canada, usually being first and last boats in, before the Big Freeze up.

Arriving in smoother waters of the St. Lawrence River, and feeling much better, after Sickness, I thought I would chance a bit of a stretch. Unfortunately, who spotted me, but one of the Officers, that was Curtains for Thomas. After long and intensive Interrogation by the Captain, I got a Good Fatherly talk to, a Reprimand, and Signed on as a Deck Hand, at 4 pounds monthly. Fully expecting, to be handed over to Authorities on return, I was safely put ashore with a Promise, that IF?? I was to do it again, and be caught, I would be fed to the Sharks.

After a spell of Dole Que, and still no earnings, I settled for Emigration, where to, but Canada, the easiest Colony, to get back home from, should the case may be. On the way over, a bit of a Rough passage in October of 1927, I got engaged in a couple of arranged Bouts with Liner Crew, S.S. MONTCALM a Canadian Pacific liner of 20,000 Tons. The first bout against a Stokerhold Trimmer, was for real, he was determined to beat my Brains out, however, he WAS Controlled with a Caution. Second bout two days later, more evenly matched, and made me Friends with the Crew, a couple of whom remained Pals until Decease.

Dis-embarking at Quebec, and a Train journey to Montreal, then a walk across the road to Hostel, just outside the Station. Having got a glimpse at accommodation, this PUT ME OFF at once. Eight of us, in the same room, all sleeping on the Floor, Really made me Reject the situation. From then on, just could not get myself settled or acclimatised.

No job I was sent to, could settle me down. After a spell of Running away, I was dispatched to a Re-Habilitation Centre, Prison Farm, for the want of a better word. Did I stay, Not Likely, NO One spoke English, only French, so, I was off in a matter of minutes. Was walking back to Montreal, when I got a lift, Luckily, an English couple. The Detention Center, was at St. Annes, Quebec.