

### **Carmen Blaauboer & Taco de Bruin: *A peculiar postcard from the past***

While cleaning up the archive of the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ), we came across an intriguing postcard from 1935 (Figures 1a, b).

The front side shows a picture of the research vessel 'Dana', while the text on the back side reads:

*Dear Dr. Verweij,*

*Copenhagen, 3/7 35*

*During the shipwreck of the "Dana" in the North Sea, I have lost i.a. some letters received before we left Esbjerg. Among these was a letter from Hardenberg giving me his address in Holland, where he should stay in July-August. As he intended to visit the laboratory here in Copenhagen, I ought to write to him. Can you give me his address in Holland?*

*With best regards*

*Yours sincerely Å Vedel Tåning*

In itself, this may not be very remarkable, just one colleague asking another colleague for the address of a third one, but there are some aspects which draw particular attention.

First the ship Dana. The ship depicted was actually the Dana II, the second research vessel carrying the name Dana, in what has become a long-standing Danish tradition (the current vessel is the Dana IV, while plans to build Dana V are underway). This Dana-II has definitely earned its place in the history of oceanography. Acquired by

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Denmark in 1920, it was one of the two vessels called *Dana* used to carry out the four famous 'Dana-Expeditions' between 1920 and 1930.

In late 1921, the vessel, with Prof. Johannes Schmidt (1877-1933) as Chief Scientist, sailed for the waters South of Spain and Portugal, then crossed the Atlantic, went through the Panama Canal and performed measurements in the Pacific Ocean. The scientists onboard were the first to study the Oxygen Minimum Zone (OMZ) and the expedition returned home having discovered numerous new species and having made multiple important discoveries. Afterwards, Schmidt published his well-known theory about the breeding of the eels, based on the data he obtained from the Atlantic Ocean measurements.

The fourth and final Dana Expedition was from June 1928 until June 1930, again with Prof. Johannes Schmidt as Chief Scientist. This Dana Expedition was a 65,000 nautical miles cruise around the World and officially known as 'The Carlsberg Foundation's Oceanographical Expedition round the World 1928-30 under the Leadership of Professor Johannes Schmidt'. Nature wrote that "From North Iceland and the Davis Straits southwards to Brazil, and from the Baltic and Black Sea in the east to the United States and Panama in the west, Prof. Schmidt and his collaborators have studied methodically the physical, chemical, and biological conditions of the waters from surface to bottom." <sup>1</sup>

The addressee, Dr. Jan Verweij (1899-1981), was between 1931 and 1965 director of what was first known as the Zoological Station of the Nederlandse Dierkundige Vereniging (Dutch Zoological Society) and from 1960 onwards as the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, NIOZ. Under his leadership the institute grew from a small, purely biological research station into a large, multidisciplinary oceanographic research institute.

The second interesting aspect are the sender and receiver of the postcard.

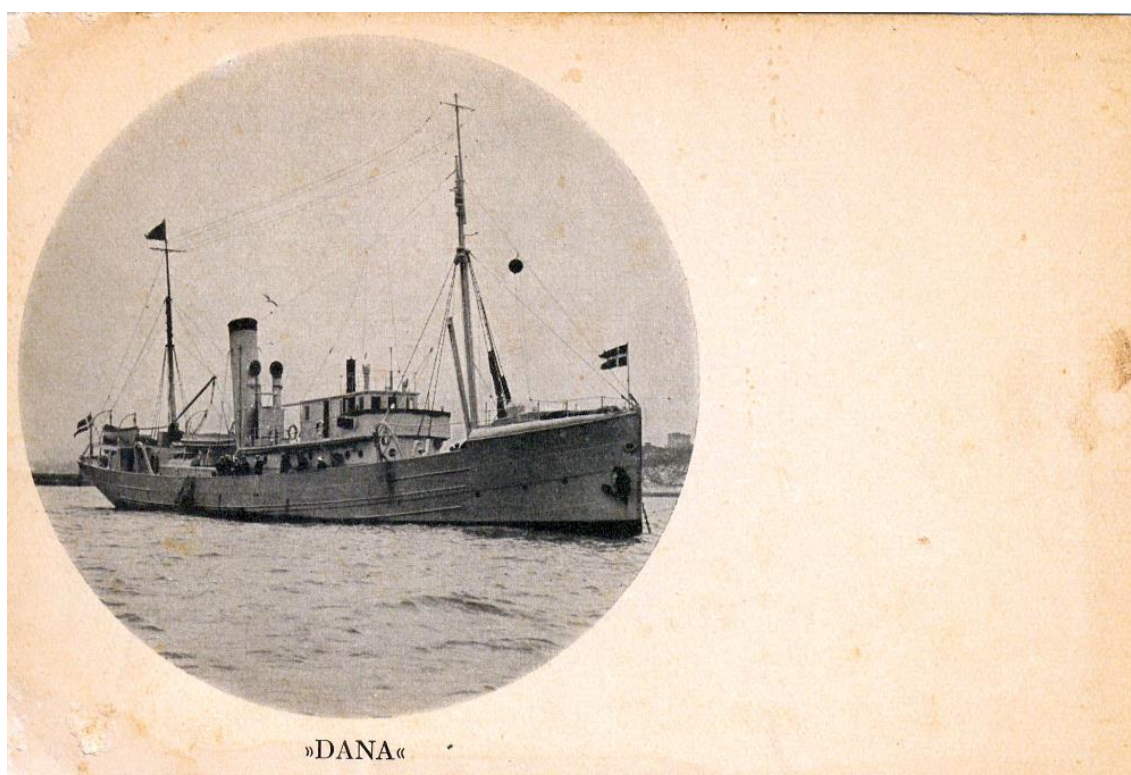


Figure 1a. Postcard sent by Å Vedel Tåning to Jan Verweij. Source: NIOZ

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<sup>1</sup> H.M.K., 1932. Nature, 129: 889–892

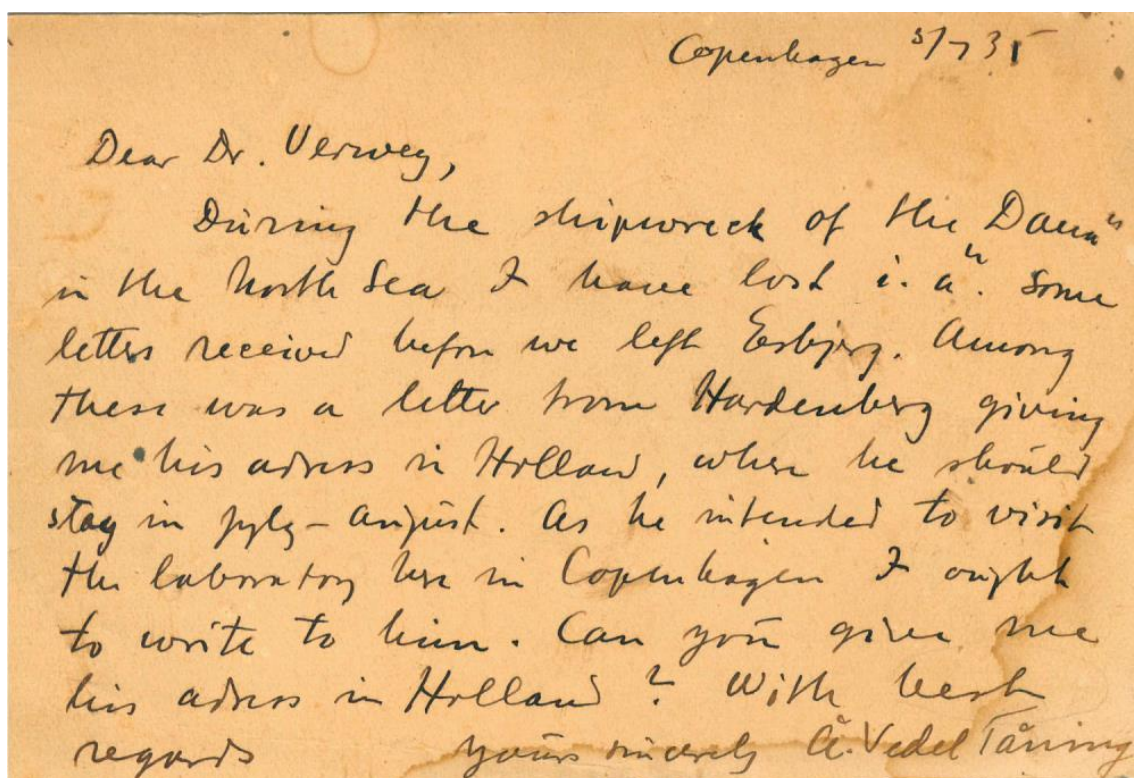


Figure 1b. Postcard sent by Å Vedel Tåning to Jan Verwey. Source: NIOZ

Prof. Dr. Åge Vedel Tåning (1890-1958) can be considered as Jan Verweij's Danish counterpart, because he was to become director of the Danish Institute for Fisheries and Marine Research in 1952. He had participated in the third and fourth *Dana* cruises mentioned before, and he was chief scientist on numerous cruises onboard RV *Dana* and other research vessels. One year before his death in 1958, he would become President of the ICES Council, ICES being the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. He was a widely appreciated scientist and science administrator, which was also shown by the many international orders bestowed upon him. Again, a link with the Netherlands, because he was Officer of the Dutch Oranje-Nassau Order.

The third and most curious aspect of the postcard is the word 'shipwreck'.

At 6:07 AM of 22 June 1935, during a research cruise in the North Sea with Vedel Tåning as the Chief Scientist, the German fishing trawler *Pickhuben*, H.G.92 of Cuxhaven, rammed *Dana* with great force about amidships. Within 10 minutes she sank to the bottom. Fortunately, all 22 people onboard *Dana* were rescued by the *Pickhuben*, but all personal belongings as well as 15 years of Vedel Tånings records were lost. Among these records the address of Hardenberg, as we now know from the postcard. The following official inquiry into the accident put full responsibility for the collision on the shoulders of the navigator of the *Pickhuben*, who had steamed too fast in the dense fog despite *Dana's* warning signals.

In 2005, at the occasion of the 2006-2007 *Galatea-3* expedition about to start, a Danish diving expedition found and visited the wreck of the *Dana* for the first time in 70 years. Photos of that diving expedition can be found in the reference below.

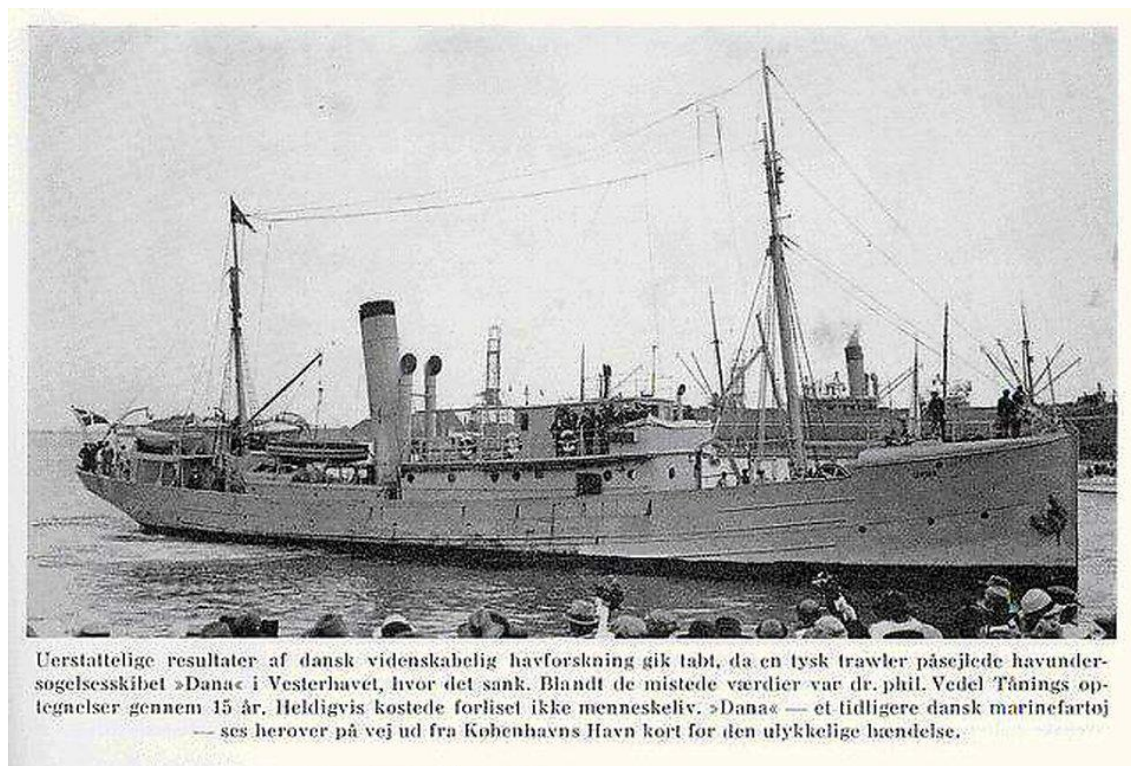


Figure 2. Danish newspaper article announcing the shipwreck of the research ship *Dana*

### References and further reading

Poulsen, B., 2016. Global Marine Science and Carlsberg - The Golden Connections of Johannes Schmidt (1877-1933). Brill, Leiden, pp.524

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dana\\_expeditions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dana_expeditions)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Schmidt\\_\(biologist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Schmidt_(biologist))

Obituary Å Vedel Tånning: <https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/article/24/2/211/744982>

Searching for the wreck in 2005: <https://www.seawarmuseum.dk/Ny-Viden--Artikler/Andre-artikler/Dykkertogtet-efter-SS-Dana-2005>

Location of the wreck: <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?244141>

A nice short video of the very first cruise of the RV Dana:

<https://www.danskkulturarv.dk/dr/havunders%C3%B8gelsesskibet-dana-ud-p%C3%A5-f%C3%B8rste-togt/>

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