

REMEMBRANCE POEM

Don't speak to me of heroes until you've heard the tale
Of Britain's merchant seamen who sailed through storm and gale
To keep these lifelines open in our nation's hour of need
When a tyrant cast a shadow across our island breed.

Captains, Greasers, Cabin Boys, Mates and Engineers
Heard the call of duty and cast aside their fears
They stoked those hungry boilers and stood behind the wheel
While Cooks and Stewards manned the guns on coffins made of steel.

They moved in icy convoys from Scapa to Murmansk
And crossed the Western Ocean never seeking thanks
They sailed the South Atlantic where raiders lay in wait
And kept the food lines open from Malta to the Cape
Tracked by silent U-Boats which hunted from below
Shelled by mighty Cannons and fighters flying low.

They clung to burning lifeboats where the sea had turned to flame
And watched their shipmates disappear to everlasting fame.
They never knew the honour of medals on their chests
Of marching bands and victory and glory and the rest
The ocean is their resting place, their tombstone is the wind,
The Seabird's cry their last goodbye to family and friend.

Freighters, Troopships, Liners and tankers by the score
Fishing boats and coasters, 2,000 ships and more
Flew the Red Duster as they sank beneath the waves
And took those courageous heroes to lonely ocean graves.

I speak not of a handful but 30,000 plus
Some whose names we'll never know in whom we placed our trust.
Their legacy is freedom to those who hold it dear
To walk with clear horizons and never hide in fear
So when you speak of heroes remember those at sea
From Britain's Merchant Navy who died to keep us free.

Anon