

Reluctant Heroes

This Island race has many sons who natural went to sea,
Saltwater in their veins stemmed from our history,
They did not sail to fight a war or oppose the mighty Hun,
These merchant men were hardy souls they did not want a gun.

But when the conflict started and the nation called to fight,
The mariners of Britain were targets day and night.
From Galley boy to Master, of the liner and the tramp,
From Engineer to Bos`un - all men that swung the lamp.

Even though civilians, from the shires and from the town,
They turned and did their duty to the public and the crown,
Torpedoed, bombed and shot at, they carried on their trade,
The lifeline of the country - with a seagull serenade.

They brought fuel and ammunition so the aircraft could defend,
Food and goods were ferried until the bitter end,
The price to pay was heavy to haul those precious tons,
With only guts to fight with - of our seafaring sons.

Life at sea is fraught enough with peril every quarter,
But try a bomb right through the plates and crushing tons of water,
This may come at any time while toiling or repose,
With little chance and many dead - we will remember those.

For six long years they persevered and hardly went ashore,
Everything was given - you could not ask for more,
They did not seek publicity or actively dissent,
Just climbed aboard and steamed away wherever they were sent.

When the war was over - the foe called it a day,
Our Mariners shipped out again - in their peaceful way,
Now when you see a monument to our fighting kin,
Salute our Merchant Navy - and our valiant crews within

by Joe Earl