

ON PATROL

By
J.W.A. Malthouse

Upon the sea a destroyer was on patrol,
Over all menace helping to keep control,
Proving to all our command of the wave -
Showing still that a way to peace we pave.
Day and night the patrol goes on,
And never will stop till the war is won,
Sweeping and clearing the ocean wide,
Giving the foe no place to abide.

Upon his bridge see the captain stand,
Shielding his eyes with his ungloved hand;
He views the sea like the Promised Land,
Eager for glimpse of the Deutschland
Or any other such battleship
That for long has given our Navy the slip.

For hours on end he keeps faithful watch,
Training his eyes on every blotch,
For he never knows where the foe he may see
And must make the most of what light there be.

3.

At any moment a U-boat may rise,
Just to have a peep round for a prize
Or simply coming up for fresh air,
Of danger totally unaware.
But it's not very often they do that now—
They've had too many bolts loosened in their bow!
And so their nerves cannot be very steady,
Knowing that our lads are always ready.

Every day brings fresh proof of our might:
The U-boats don't come on top till night,
And they're gradually getting more like rabbits—
Once they are scared they change their habits;
Yet still our destroyers know where they park,
Even if the night be stormy and dark:
They run them down, like a pack of grey-hounds,
Learning their neighbourhood by sounds
Picked up by detectors as they are homeward bound.

And yet we must say
Our Navy don't have it all their own way:
Sometimes for experience we've had to pay,
For an easy victim is sometimes a snare
To catch some unwitting one unaware.

4.

Why, a trawler might lead us into a trap
Or prove able to give our knuckles a rap!
For they're often armed raiders, under cloak,
Doing all that they can our supplies to choke

So across the ocean our Navy must steer,
Patrolling the sea-lanes far and near,
Seeking U-boats and raiders on the lurk
To make them repent of their dirty work
Of mine-laying where neutral ships must pass.
These scoundrels won't always go free, and at last,
Even if they hit and run, it's clear
They will make a slip - and their end is near!

Now every day fresh dangers arise,
But our Navy's not taken by surprise!
They're ready new menaces to fight
And to face the enemy's hidden spite—
There's the peril of the bubble mine
Sown here and there on our shipping line.
Yet, whatever the situation be,
Foes can't do their work invisibly;
And so we have one consolation:
We can always give them a demonstration.

5.

Thus on our Navy great burdens lie
As daily new perils they must defy.
To sweep the seas free of mines they have sworn,
And, like an Armada, at break of dawn
They sally forth to the danger post
Knowing, and yet not counting the cost,
They may be attacked (as well as mined)
By submarines and aircraft combined.
And so the guns are manned and ready
And the crews are bright and steady;
Life jackets are worn by every one
In case his might be a lucky one.

Daily battles of sweepers and layers begin—
Soon they show the mine-layers who will win.
To work sweeping wires needs more than gift,
Above all when they're being cut adrift,
For if one be caught in the sweeping gear
God help the ship that the mine is near!
Shrapnel helmets are worn all the time
By the men who have to explode the mine—
A task that's done by rifle fire
As the mines are cut loose by the sweeping wire.

6.

Now every man at his station stands by
To meet attack from the sea or sky,
And the spotters are watching eagerly
For air-raiders, who on the sly
Could swoop down and mow them to ground
Before the gunner could fire a round.

So the human spotters keep up their watch
Their glasses focussed on every blotch,
Watching the planes as they go to and fro
Learning whether they're friend or foe;
And if raiders make towards our coast
The information is sent post-haste
In time to prepare a nice hot reception
To put them out of reach of redemption!

Each half-hour the spotters are relieved
So that their eyes are not deceived,
For, as every oculist will state,
The strain on their eyesight is very great.
Their mind, too, might begin to wander
If they stopped on any longer—
A thing we know would never do,
For something would happen to make us all rue.

7.

Meanwhile, operators must unravel
All radio signals as they travel
And warn our coastal defence in time
To stop a seaplane from sowing a mine.
These workers, listening, tuning in,
Are doing their bit to help Britain win.
Swift to record an S.O.S.
And helping to aid vessels in distress.

Alertness is written upon their face,
Whether signals are near or far from their base,
For to miss a single call might mean
The loss of many a gallant man
And misery to those who survive
Before assistance could arrive.

Everywhere on the vessel all is astir;
Engineers make sure that nothing's a-blur,
For their engines must be clean and bright
And every nut and bolt be tight,
And the mighty engines with oil be fed
To be ready for full speed ahead,
For on these engines the captain relies-
With their support the foe he defies.

8.

Now we go further down, into the hold,
To find tales of bravery not often told.
Here the stokers, stripped to the waist,
Are proud of the furnace they seem to baste
As they spray oil upon the fire
In a heat that makes one gasp and perspire
And so we leave our brave lads behind . .
May Providence to them ever be kind!

Thus, night and day, our Navy patrol
Upon the U-boats inflicts great toll.
Soon the menace will be under control,
Mine-layers prevented from reaching their goal;
Soon the enemy will have lost their start
And then our Navy will break their heart;
Their shores the foe will be loth to leave
And they will be anxious for a reprieve.

So to our Navy we owe so much—
It keeps the whole of the Empire in touch,
And with an enemy barring our way
A great price for freedom we'd have to pay
But for our Navy, patrolling the sea
To keep it safe for you and for me,

9.

That our merchant ships may go to and fro,
Bringing back food we cannot grow,
And plenty of other things as well,
So that treasures in our land will swell
And missionaries may carry the Gospel
Free and unchallenged by forces hostile.

We are not fighting for our own ends:
With others we're always prepared to be friends
So that all may live quietly one with another,
And small countries look on the strong as their mother.
But we will not side with the lover of war!
Woe to who touches the lion's paw,
For he shall be struck by the might of the law!

So the fight will go on to the end.
Soon we shall find out who is our friend.
Even the blind, who cannot see the danger,
But relies for his news on a perfect stranger,
Has not lost faith in his Redeemer,
Knows the Nazi lord's just another dreamer.

So over the seas our Navy rides,
Over all menace taking great strides,
Proving to all our command of the wave-
Showing still that a way to peace we pave.
Day and night our Navy patrol
Over all shipping keeps firm control,
Guarding the neutral as a friend
And baulking the enemy till the end.

John William Arthur Malthouse

born at Bulwell, Nottingham on 30th March 1912

Married Ivy Gertrude Kendrick at Rushall on 6th June 1942.

Children: Margaret Anne, Geoffrey Edward and Maureen Valerie.

Died at Easthorpe, Southwell on 26th June 1997