

The Lisbon Maru

(In Memory of Thomas Theodore Jones, R.N.S.R., 1918–1956)

By Glyn Jones

There was a ship,
Forgotten now,
That sailed the China sea,
With human cargo battened down,
Of men no longer free.

And misery was beneath the decks,
With cruelty hand in hand,
Turning men to human wrecks.
With every torture planned.

And thus it was this sorry sight,
Was stalked by submarine.
Unknown to them the prisoners' plight,
Sought attack unseen.

For the ship seemed lawful prey.
And flew the Rising Sun,
And its soldiers lined the decks,
For them a homeward run.

And of the prisoners trapped in the hold,
No outward sign was given,
In contradiction to Geneva laws,
A crime with no forgiving!

Torpedoes fired, the sub withdrew,
Then the rescue came,
For those on deck while plans were laid,
That prisoners should remain.

But as the boat began to list,
The prisoners were battened down,
Many too weak now to resist,
The plan to let them drown.

But British lads burst from the hold,
And gratefully breathed fresh air,
Saw enemy troops no longer bold,
No restraining crew were there.

Now the ship was sinking fast,
The sea their one salvation,
With distant islands three miles away,
They swim with desperation.

But then a miracle as human hands,
Plucked swimmers from the sea,
For Chinese fishermen left their land,
An act of bravery.

So the legend grew,
Among those who had survived,
But further memories lay ahead,
'That were too vile to die.'

(Dedicated to those who didn't make it and those who did.)