

THE GRAND OLD LADIES

(Dave Evardson)

In the Albion one chilly evenin'
I was warmin' meself by the fire
When I spied in the corner an old fisherman
Who I thought I'd engage to enquire
If I stood him a pint could he tell me
Any trips he'd a mind to recall?
Well he gave me a wink, then he parked his drink
Sayin': Aye lad - I've sailed wi' 'em all

We called 'em the Grand Old Ladies
That took us to the Arctic Grounds
Here's a tribute paid to the ships that made
The Trawlin' Trade go round
The Trawlin' Trade go round

Well he'd signed on wi' Bannister's & Boston's
Then wi' Moody's & Mudd's & Macrill's
Aye & Cooks & Kelly's & Letten's & Jeff's
Old firms he remembered 'em still
And he'd crewed every' Crampin's Cricketer
All o' Consol's great soccer teams
Then wi' Northern's pride, & wi' Ross's Big Cats
He 'ad sailed wi' 'em, diesel & steam

He recalled the Remillo & Resolvo
The Clifton & Northern Crown
The Bellona, the Barnett, the Bradman too
The Hondo & the Huddersfield Town
He recounted the pride & the glory
When trawling was in its prime
Wi' the Wolves & the Everton, the Grimsby Town
He'd sailed with 'em all in his time

In the Great War he'd fished in the North Sea
Every trawler at war he could name
And the four hundred crewmen who lost their lives
For the owners' reward & acclaim
When the Howe ran ashore on Bear Island
He was there at the rescue, he said
And he'd stood on the deck with a starvin' crew
When the Sargon returned from the dead

Then he spoke of them early steam trawlers
The Aries & Zodiac too
When he said that 'ud be eighteen-eighty-three
Well of course it was then that I knew
Though the stories he'd told were enthralling
I said: Dad, you've been stringin' me along
Then he fixed me with a stare, & he asked me:
Where
Have the Grand Old Ladies gone?

I returned to the bar for a refill
Where I scowled at the barman & moaned
Sayin': That there old fella can spin some yarns
He replied: Aren't you drinkin' alone?
Of the old man I'd left in the corner
Not a sign or a trace could I see
But the walls still echoed his ghostly refrain
And the names he'd recounted to me