

THE RED DUSTER (DUBLIN FIREMAN)

(Ron Baxter)

Tune: Ross Campbell

Stitched up in canvas, a weight at your feet;
Wrapped in the Red Ensign, consigned to the deep.
The engine was silent, the wind played an air,
As it blew through the rigging, as they left you there.

You old Dublin fireman, you told them the tales -
Of the convoys, the U-boats, the Bear Island gales;
The tankers a-blazing, turning night into day -
You old Dublin fireman, you sure earned your pay.

But why did you sail, then, beneath Britain's red flag?
The Free State was neutral, and peace could be had.
You'd no love of Britain, as your Fenian songs tell;
Yet you sailed on those convoys, to Murmansk and Hell.

This question they'd ask, you'd reply with a smile,
"You can't sail a tanker across Erin's Green Isle!"
You'd then change the subject, and shoot them a line,
And leave them all guessing the reason you signed.

You sailed forty years, now your voyage is through;
But marked on the chart is the spot they left you.
Stitched up in canvas, your beads in your hand,
Wrapped in the Red Duster, far from Erin's Green Land.

Notes (RJC):- During the Second World War, many thousands of seamen from the neutral Irish Free State served under the "Red Duster" - even despite deep Republican convictions. Their reasons for doing so were sometimes never revealed, even to close shipmates.