



Captain Edward Stephen Fogarty Fegen, and HMS Jervis Bay

## **THE SAGA OF THE JERVIS BAY 1940**

In memory of HMS Jervis Bay

R. David Burns

On the fifth of November and convoy near forty  
Slow moving and scattered, no escorts to call,  
a liner, a steamer, Jervis Bay, you recall  
not armoured, light gun, no challenge at all  
Sea was quite rough and light cloudy sky  
Masthead shouts "Smoke, port beam, there a nigh"

Captain Fegen now sensing a serious plight  
of forty slow children, their chances are slight  
For the Hun's fast Cruiser the Admiral Scheer  
is reported in region and dangerously near  
will make short meal, with its twenty mile gun  
this surely must be a win for the Hun!

"Tis not well today, just listen my crew  
There's one thing only and that we must do  
We'll challenge that monster in spite of her power  
that convoy is his if we fail at this hour.  
Give me steam, speed and smoke, immediate I say  
we'll make him take notice of our ship here today"

'Put a light at the masthead and he will say " Well.  
This ship means business there's more it must tell  
she may be a kind of small surface raider  
But I'll soon put an end to this impudent stranger ".  
"You Convoy scatter, as fast as you can,  
stay clear of my bow, I'm full speed to a man".

Thus spoke Captain Fegen of Jervis the Bay  
as he turned the old ship to the path of the Scheer  
the crew understood first blast must be near  
but not a man flinched, their duty was clear  
men down below and men up on deck  
will fight to the death with that fast growing speck

The engines of Jervis just roared and shook  
but eighteen knots was not in the book  
then all at once the punishment came  
a shattering crash that shook her old frame,  
Her uppers and bridge though torn might still stay  
but that won't finish Old Jervis that day

Her engines roared still, onward she pressed  
no shot nor shell had stopped to arrest  
her hull held intact just thirty shots more,  
and flames up on deck then started to roar.  
Slowly, more slowly old Jervis came to  
Ship, Captain, Seamen done all they could do.

At last and too late the Hun cruiser turned  
to seek the convoy it'd earlier spurned  
but the darkening night had closed right in  
and the convoy dispersed so Fegen's great win  
saved thirty five ships, three thousand men.  
Mere couple of ships was all Scheer's gain

Brave Captain Fegen's, Warrior Crew  
achieved a win, so rare with so few  
'cause of his shorter range guns, so cruel,  
was unable to fire in defense in this duel  
But Lo, there's more on this saga that night  
A Swedish brave Captain returned to the site

While Jervis still burning, and burning bright  
Plucked sixty five men of Jervis's crew  
from a seaman's death, lonely, and few.  
As for their Captain like Nelson we're told  
died at this moment of triumph, so bold  
had committed himself to country and God

Now all of you mothers, fathers and sons  
of a crew in that smaller ship that night  
be proud, so proud, how bravely to fight  
in a battle so hopeless, seemed at first sight  
that all would be lost under cold oceans spray.  
But instead it was won by that proud Jervis Bay

What did the Hun High Command just say  
in talk of th' escape of this convoy prey?  
Was it caused by a big armed ship? But nay  
T'was captain and crew of our Jervis Bay.  
No matter, what history it reports today,  
their glory will stay on my walls for aye .

*Postscript*

Written in memory of Captain Edward Stephen Fogarty FEGEN, R.N.  
and his crew of the converted 14,400 ton small passenger/ freight ship  
Jervis Bay on the fifth of November 1940.

On this date, Captain Fegen, in the best traditions of the Royal Navy  
turned from his convoy HX-84 of 37 ships and faced, alone, under  
certain destruction, the approaching German Battlecruiser, Admiral  
Scheer . For over an hour, under constant fire, he maintained his  
approach at full speed until his ship was finally brought to a burning  
standstill .Meanwhile the convoy escaped into the night. For his sacrifice  
Captain Fegen was awarded posthumously, the Victoria Cross, "For  
valour in challenging hopeless odds in the giving of his life to  
successfully save the ships of his convoy"

My Father Lieutenant Wallace Burns had met Captain Fegen at some  
time before the sinking of his ship and his loss of life and it hit my  
Father very hard. If this note and poem serves as any compensation for  
those in the family lines of Captain and Crew, I also will be very  
pleased.

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