

A “Red Ensign Day”.

www.ss-tregenna.co.uk

Not all that would want to attend, can make Tower Hill, with age and illness and the travel etc, maybe expense also. I checked the National news on most TV channels on my return home from the Merchant Navy’s Remembrance Day Service in London on Sunday 2nd September 2007 and scoured the press the next day September 3rd, "The Designated Day" that the Merchant Navy Association, took on the Government and red tape to achieve. Possibly better coverage may ensure future attendance.

For a “Flag day”, a day of remembrance, a specific day to remember those that died to save us all. To honour and remember the brave men, that perished to keep our countries lifelines open. I know of many, that cannot make London, but would not miss a local service, Nothing wrong with that, as for many even the local remembrance is a struggle to attend and these brave people, will continue to attend for as long as possible.

But unless I missed reports, cannot read every paper or see every bulletin etc. Where was the press? The media? Where was the support from the editors and reporters? Etc? What saddened many was to see no reports on this “ DAY OF TRIBUTE”

Paul Flynn MP stated “There was one service that lost one in three of all who took part. In total there were 24,000 deaths inflicted on those serving in the Merchant Navy. Most were on the Atlantic convoys. They kept Britain fed and ensured our survival. It is impossible to overemphasise the supreme importance of their role. But it is still unrecognised by the mass of the public. Yet, today's tribute to them was largely ignored by press and public”.

The Merchant Navy Day Commemorative Services And Re-union is now held on the Sunday nearest to Merchant Navy Day, 3rd September every year. This Annual service in memory of Merchant Seafarers who died in World Wars I and II and in conflicts up to the present day. “They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them”

We look upon our press and news media to report such important events, to inform the public and educate those that do not know. Possibly to tell those that do not care, why they should. In the main there is a reasonable amount of reports on some aspects of the part played by merchant seamen in the defence of our nation. But! what a time to forget? The very day that we should all remember. Winston Churchill stated himself that the war would or could not be won, without the actions of these brave men.

I stood next to a young boy at Tower Hill, he watched the ceremony with the order of service open in front of him, tears in his eyes, he attempted to recite all responses to prayers and sing every song. All is not lost and with luck, future generations "Will Not Forget" with luck our National papers and TV news will join in next year and then thereafter in memory of the Men, Women and Children " Still Not Home From The Sea.

“Lest we Forget”.

They flew the red ensign for us...

Statistics are often cold and unmeaning but of the 4,996 merchant ships lost by the Allies, 2,284 flew the Red Ensign and of the 62,933 seafarers who perished, 31,908 were serving aboard these ships.

Incredible as it may sound today, it is a fact that when a merchant ship was sunk the pay of those serving in her stopped that day – and pay was not resumed until a seafarer “signed on” another vessel. Following a sinking, seafarers were given one month’s “survivors leave” - without pay – but anytime spent in a lifeboat or in a raft was deducted from the leave period – provided the seafarer survived! On the Murmansk run, survival time in a lifeboat was measured in minutes rather than hours due to the intense cold. (**British & International Sailors’ Society** : www.biss.org.uk)

We at Tregenna find it hard to believe that MN Day is not news worthy.... ?

[Her Name Was Tregenna](http://www.hernamewas.tregenna.co.uk) is a site created as a tribute to the Captain and men of one particular ship, though it now carries additional material.

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Let me tell you why it’s so important to remember our merchant seafarers on 3rd September

Merchant ships are not built for war and merchant seafarers are not trained for war but none of this prevents both ships and the men and women manning them from responding to the “call of arms” when their country is in danger. Even today, merchant seafarers are often called upon to trade on hazardous waters but the hazards associated with this – not to mention the everyday hazards of seafaring – are accepted as being “part of the job”.

Let’s go back to the Second War for stories and statistics that speak eloquently of the danger that is ‘all in a days work’ for our seafarers. The Donaldson Line passenger vessel MV ATHENIA sailed from Glasgow on 1st September 1939, bound for Montreal, with some 1,100 passengers leaving to escape an inevitable war.

At 11.15 hrs on 3rd September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany And the Master of MV ATHENIA – now 250 miles northwest of Inishtrahull, Northern Ireland – opened his sealed instructions from the Admiralty and as darkness fell, the ship introduced her “blackout regulations” regime and switched off navigation and deck lights.

On that same evening – rather less than 12 hours after war was declared – MV ATHENIA was torpedoed by the U-30 and sank with the loss of 112 LIVES – 19 of them crew members – the first Merchant Navy casualties of World WarII.

By a savage irony, the last man to die in that war was also a merchant seafarer whose ship was attacked in the North Atlantic three days after the European war had “ended” by a submarine who had not received the recall message. (BISS : www.biss.org.uk)

In July 1941 the Rt Hon Winston Churchill spoke these words to the Country, "The Merchant Navy, with Allied comrades night and day, in weather fair or foul faces not only the ordinary perils on the sea, but the sudden assaults of war from beneath the waters or from the sky. Your first task is to bring to port the cargoes vital for us all at home or for our armies abroad and we trust your tenacity and resolve to see this stern task through."

"We are a seafaring race and we understand the call of the sea. We account you in these hard days worthy successors in a tradition of steadfast courage and high adventure, and we feel confident that that proud tradition of our Island will be upheld today whenever the ensign of a British merchantman is flown".

Next year and then after, we at Tregenna will write and remind the press in advance and hope that Every Editor and News Broadcaster Will Do “His or Her Duty” : “Lest We Forget”

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