

Aircrew

Rob Davis

Where are they now, the boys who knew
the flak and fighters, the joy of flight?
Guns or cockpit; yet they knew
the conflict long of Wrong o'er Right.

How many of us here can say
at twenty-two or twenty-three
we faced our death most every day?
To free the world from tyranny.

Their fortune on a sixpence turned;
the odds impossible to compute.
If not exploded, shot or burned,
a long way down by parachute.

When landing home, the engines cold,
gaps at the tables, pals gone missing;
perhaps tonight the luck may hold
no flak; just poppies for the kissing.

What of the mother, wife and more?
Their fears we just imagine can;
a dreaded knock upon the door,
an epitaph by telegram.

Fitters, riggers, drivers, cooks
armourers and clerks and all;
ledgers, musters, record books,
no task too large, no job too small.

We who are left do grow older
when standing by memorial bleak;
the whispering wind blows at our shoulder,
hear fifty thousand airmen speak:-
(with apologies to Sir Henry Newbolt)
"Take my Lancaster to England, land it by the shore;
fly it for the watchers down below;
if the Foe attacks my home, I'll quit my aerodrome
And I'll drive them from the Channel as I drove them long ago."