

11 – LANCASTRIA

(1999) – Paroles : Gabriel Boucheron
– Musique : Jacques Fauconnier

(Traduction de Mr John Duggan, vice-président de
la « HMT Lancaster Association »)

Amidst the confusion of retreat
In nineteen hundred and forty,
The stage is set
For the frightful drama that haunts me still :
The tale of the Lancasteria.

Soldiers and refugees,
Come in their thousands
To the port of Saint-Nazaire.
Ninety ships,
Some ready to sail,
Are assembled in the estuary.

Between the “Lambarde” and the “Couronnée”
The old liner is moored.
Of all the requisitioned ships
She is the largest and the finest.
They call her “Lancasteria”

Built to carry three thousand,
After six thousand
They ceased to count.
Officers say
That by the end of the tally
Nine thousand are on board.

Suddenly !
Sinister, from out of the sun,
Enemy bombers dive
And release their bombs on
Lancasteria, caught unawares.

Amidst eight hundred soldiers
The first bomb explodes.
The second, in hold number three.
Fuel oil gushes out
From Lancasteria’s shattered hull.

The third crashes
Down the only funnel
Into the engine room.
And lastly, the fourth,
O monstrous assassin,
Finishes off its prey.

They no longer have human form,
Those bodies burned and covered in oil.
And now the planes return
And machine-gun the survivors
Struggling in the sea around Lancasteria

Hear the cries
Of the mutilated woman
Lying by the side of the dead sailor.
What an abomination !
Cry, land of Albion,
For you poor children !

O man !
Sickened by so much cruelty,
Come and seek at Herbaudière
The heart-rending tale of this tragedy
In the little cemetery.

And in the tranquil peace,
Read this epitaph, loving and tender :
Its distress devoid of hate :
“ *Seulement sentir l’étreinte de sa main
Et entendre, encore, sa voix.* ”