

Mackay

As foreman o Wick Cooperage, tae
Aberdeen I wis bound
In a ship that was well loaded wi
Ma barrels tied doon sound
The fishin fleet had already sailed
Lang afore the first daylight
But when we did leave the harbour,
The day was like the night, night
The day was like the night

The sky was dark and forebodin
It wis pickin up a gale
As we headed south, the waves were
black
And it began tae hail
The ship did reel and flounder
A huge wave swamped the sail
We swarmed like ants to man the ropes
But each man's heart did fail, fail
But each man's heart did fail

We watched with dread and horror
As the fishing boats were tossed
And swallowed by the ragin sea
All sight o them was lost
A huge black wall o water
O'erwhelmed our helpless boat
A sickenin crack, the mast did snap

All cargo swept off-board, board
All cargo swept off-board

We reeled about like drunken men
Cryin oot tae the heavenly one
As a great sea billow bearin down
Revealed our certain doom
Dead ahead there stood a harbour wall
We were helpless with dismay
Then, that huge wave lifted us up and o'er
We were safe oot o harms way, way
We were safe oot o harm's way

In Lossie's quiet haven
We were thankful for dry ground
Our hearts so full of gladness
To that wondrous savin hand
A sober, tired man I was
When my family I did reach
They hardly recognized me
For my dark hair was now white, white
My dark hair was now white

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Aberdeen I wis bound
In a ship that was well loaded wi
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Sandy Mackay

Sandy Mackay was the foreman of a fishing station in Helmsdale, which employed 16 coopers. Mr Gow from Wick was his master.

The year was 1861 and Sandy was on a voyage from Helmsdale to Aberdeen, when the ship was caught in a terrible storm in the Moray Firth. The crew watched in horror as around them, other ships floundered and sank. All the men set about lightening the ship, throwing all cargo into the raging sea. The mast was struck repeatedly by the huge, crashing waves and men were thrown to the deck by pieces of mast and lay there helplessly, clinging on to anything to stop themselves from being swept overboard. Not all survived, their helpless and terrified cries whipped away in the roaring gale.

Sandy saw how helpless the situation was. He could see they were heading for the harbour wall at Lossiemouth and he was powerless to prevent the ship from being dashed to pieces against it's looming structure. As the bare deck was awash with yet another wave and the crew battled to hold on to the ropes, he signaled to the men who were left to make their way forward. And there, in that desperate situation, they prayed to God for mercy.

As Sandy finished praying, the ship was lifted bodily by a great sea billow and carried over the treacherous harbour wall and deposited safely into the calm waters of Lossiemouth harbour. A crowd was gathered on the pier watching, one of whom knew Sandy. But as the men were helped off the ship, he did not recognize his friend, as Sandy's hair had turned totally white.

Back in Helmsdale, news had reached the village post-office by morse-code that many ships had been lost in the storm. Sandy's wife, Bell had good friends supporting her, as she waited in dread and fear for more news. Gordon Ross had been around daily, and on this day had asked if he could go and pray alone upstairs. Shortly afterward, there was a clatter as Gordon thumped back down the wooden stair, "Bell!" he shouted, "Sandy is safe!" And with certainty, Bell knew this was true.

Later, when Sandy returned home, they asked Gordon how he had known that Sandy was safe. "Well," said Gordon, "The word I was given was Psalm 107, verse 30: 'They reel and stagger like drunken men and are at their wit's end... then they are glad because they be quiet. So he bringeth them to their desired haven.'"