

# Three Score and Ten

*William Delf*

D Bm G

5 D A7 D

9 Bm D

13 A7 G D D Chorus

16 Bm G D G

20 D A7 D

24 Bm D G A7

29 D A7 D

1. Methinks I see a host of craft  
Spreading their sails alee.  
Down the Humber they do glide  
All bound for the Northern Sea.  
Methinks I see on each small craft  
A crew with hearts so brave  
Going out to earn their daily bread  
Upon the restless wave.

**Chorus**

And it's three score and ten  
Boys and men were lost from Grimsby town.  
From Yarmouth down to Scarboro  
Many hundreds more were drowned.  
Our herring craft, our trawlers,  
Our fishing smacks, as well  
They long defied that bitter night  
And battled with the swell.

2. Methinks I see them yet again  
As they leave this land behind.  
Casting their nets into the sea  
The herring shoals to find.  
Me thinks I see them yet again  
They're all on board all right  
With their nets rolled up and their decks cleaned off  
And the side lights burning bright.

**Chorus**

3. Me thinks I've heard the captain say,  
"Me lads we'll shorten sail,  
With the sky to all appearances  
Looks like an approaching gale".  
Methinks I see them yet again  
And midnight hour is past,  
The little craft a-battling there  
Against the icy blast.

**Chorus**

4. October's night brought such a sight  
'Twas never seen before.  
There were mast and yards and broken spars  
A washing on the shore.  
There were many a heart in sorrow,  
Many a heart so brave,  
There were many a fine and hearty lad  
That met a watery grave.

**Chorus**

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"Threescore and Ten" is a song by William Delf about the great storm of 1889 that caused much destruction and loss of life all along the east coast of Great Britain - as the song says, from Yarmouth down to Scarborough. (The seaman of East Anglia always talk of 'down' for north and 'up' for south).

John Conolly, of Grimsby, writes of this song:

"In the 1880's, a series of great gales wrecked hundreds of fishing boats along the East coast of Britain, and many men were lost. William Delf was a Grimsby fisherman who tried to help the widows and orphans by writing poems about these disasters and selling copies of them, the proceeds going to the dependents of the men lost at sea. The "Threescore and Ten" poem was one of his better efforts, but nobody seems to know how it acquired a tune and a chorus.

The song as it is now known was discovered by a Yorkshire collector, Mr. Nigel Hudleston. He recorded it as sung by some fishermen at Filey, on the Yorkshire coast about 100 miles north of Grimsby."

It is listed in the **Roud Index** as #16873.

It was recorded by Louis Killen, The Watsons, The Clancy Brothers, Bok, Muir & Trickett and others.

I learned it first from The Clancy Brothers and later from Bok, Muir & Trickett's **Turning toward the Morning** album.