



*Sea shanties, forebitters  
& other songs of the sea*

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## **What are Sea Shanties?**

Sea shanties are traditional working songs sung at sea aboard merchant sailing ships. Performed by a 'shanty-man' with the sailors joining in on the choruses, the songs' purpose was to maintain morale and synchronise effort when the sailors were performing different tasks, such as raising the anchor, setting and trimming sails and pumping the ship.

## **Bend yer backs my bully, bully, boys... heave away, heave away!**

Each Shanty has a specific rhythm timed to the job at hand. Shanties would generally be sung only when performing work tasks and not when sailors were 'off watch' or ashore.

## **Downtime**

Off-watch sometimes the sailors would gather together at the foc'sle head at the front of the ship and sing different longer form songs known as forebitters named for the bits (large bollards) that they sat on in the forward (fore) part of the ships .These songs were occasionally accompanied by musical instruments if any of the crew played. The shanties themselves were almost always sung un-accompanied.

## **Why are we still singing shanties today?**

They are living history of the most accessible kind, allowing us to connect with the lives and loves of the sailors of old and the world that they lived in. The songs themselves are often tragic, frequently humorous and some-times brutal or bawdy, and all have great tunes and choruses that you can learn very quickly.

## **Did pirates sing sea-shanties?**

Jack Sparrow might have you believe that... but as far as we know, there is little evidence of this. The shanties we know today come from the period 1820-1920 in the age of sail, mainly from the "Western Ocean packets" - sailing ships running across the Atlantic on a scheduled crossing.

## **Types Of Shanties**

### **Short Drag / Short Haul Shanties**

These shanties were used for difficult tasks requiring short bursts of energy over a short time eg bunting /furling the sails eg “Haul on The bowline”

### **Long Haul (Halyard) Shanties**

Long haul shanties were for tasks of longer duration such as raising sails or hoisting a yard. As the work was harder, more time was given between the pulls. The chorus could include from one to three pulls with the verses giving the crew a chance for a “breather”.

### **Capstan Shanties**

The Capstan was a large rotating drum into which long wooden handles 'capstan bars' were inserted, the sailors would “breast the bars” pushing the drum round for tasks such as raising an anchor—a job that in deep water could take up to five hours.! Here a sustained rhythm and longer choruses were used in the shanties eg “Rollicking Randy Dandy Oh!”

### **Pumping Shanties**

Wooden ships almost always leaked and pumping was often a near constant task on older ships. This was a hard, long, back-breaking task . Pumping shanties and capstan shanties were often used interchangeably. Various different types of pumps were used as technologies advanced.

### **Outward Bound & Homeward Bound Shanties**

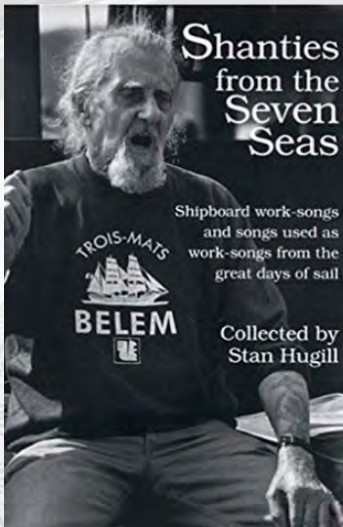
As well as being categorised by task , some shanties can also be categorised by whether they were “outward” or “homeward bound”. Sailors, being a superstitious lot would never sing homeward bound shanties when outward bound or vice versa. Songs like “Leave her Johnny leave her” were sung only at the very end of the voyage and improvised verses often contained criticisms of the food, the ship, “the old man” etc as the sailors knew they could do this without repercussions once tied up at home port.



# Maintaining the tradition

## How did the songs come down to us?

The shanties we have today are the result of song collectors from the 1920s to the 1970s who travelled around the world interviewing old 'salts' .



In the UK Stan Hugill, the last working shantyman wrote the bible on shanties "**Shanties from the Seven Seas** " a fantastic book capturing not only 400 shanties, but the stories behind them and explanations of how and why they were used.

Folksingers Ewan McColl and A.L. Lloyd in particular were instrumental in bring shanties back into the limelight.

The shanty's content has been a bit bowdlerised (sanitised) over the years but there is still quite a bit of salt in their content, enough to give us a picture of how life was back in the age of the western ocean packet ships.

## The Digitised Seas

Today a lot of young people are interested in shanties thanks to the the computer games industry! French games company Ubisoft who released their piratey themed game "Assasins Creed Black Flag" several years ago, recording and including about 60 shanties for the game. Videos compiling these songs on youtube now have over a million hits! Young people all over the world are arguing whether "Rollicking Randy Dandy Oh" outranks "General Taylor" as a capstan shanty which is a healthy thing for the future of the shanties!

## Festivals

Over 20,000 people attend the Sea shanty festival in Falmouth which is the UK's largest . Shanty festivals are held regularly all over coastal England and internationally, particularly in France, Holland, Germany Sweden, Norway, the US and Australia.

Poland actually plays host to the worlds largest shanty festival with literally hundreds of thousands of attendees, held in Krakow surprisingly as its location is over 500 miles from the nearest sea!

Ours we think... is the first in Oban.

## Singarounds

Shanties in their very nature are made for everyone to quickly learn and join in with. Singarounds, generally held at the end of the night after the main concerts have taken place are the heart and soul of a shanty festival where you can lead a song yourself or join in with others . Often the shanty groups from the event will drop in to the singarounds to help to rise the roof in song.



# Alabama John Cherokee (Capstan Shanty)

This is the story of John Cherokee.

*Alabama John Cherokee!*

An Indian man from Miramichi.

*Alabama John Cherokee!*

*Wey, hey, yah!*

*Alabama John Cherokee!*

John Cherokee was an Indian man.

They made him a slave down in Alabam'.

They made him a slave on a whaling ship.

Time after time they gave him the slip.

They caught him again and they chained him tight.

Kept him chained both the day and night.

Gave him nothing to eat and nothing to drink,

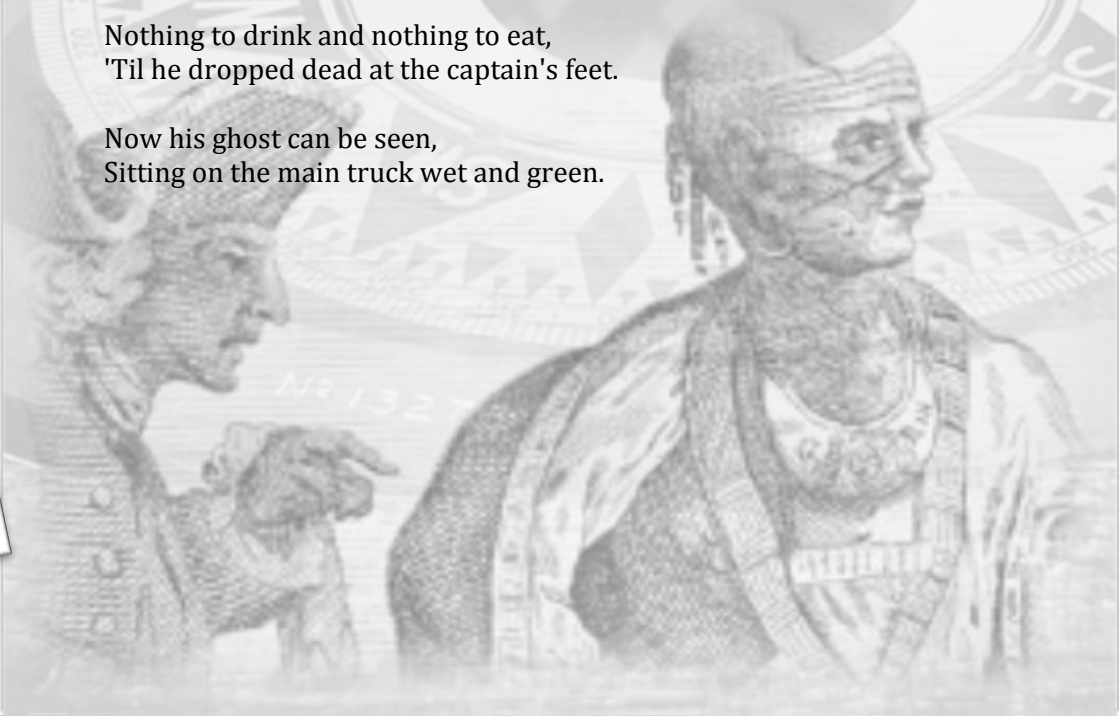
Until his bones began to clink.

Nothing to drink and nothing to eat,

'Til he dropped dead at the captain's feet.

Now his ghost can be seen,

Sitting on the main truck wet and green.





## The 'Balena' (Scottish Whaling Song)

On the noble fleet of whalers, out sailing from Dundee.  
Well manned by British sailors to work them on the sea.  
On the western ocean passage there's nane that can compare.  
Wi the smartest ship tae make the trip that's the "Balena" I declare.

Chorus

***Oh when the wind is on her quarter and her engine runnin' free.  
there's no another whaler a-sailing from Dundee  
That can beat the aul' "Balena" sae you needna try her on  
For we'll challenge a' baith large and sma' frae Dundee tae St. John***

There's the new built "Terra Nova", she's a model without doubt  
the "Arctic" and "Aurora", you've heard sae much about.  
There's Jacklin's model mail-boat, the terror of the sea  
Couldn't beat the aul' "Balena" boys, on a passage frae Dundee.

And it happened on the Thursday four days after we left Dundee  
Was carried off the quarter boats all in a raging sea  
It took away her bulwark, her stanchions and her rail  
And left the whole concern boys, a-floating in the gale.

Bold Jacklin carries canvas and fairly raises steam  
And Captain Guy on the "Arran" boat, goes ploughing through the stream  
But Millan says the "Eskimo" could beat the bloomin' lot  
But to beat the aul' "Balena" boys, sure they'd find it rather hot.

An' now that we've landed where the rum is mighty cheap  
We'll drink success to the Capt'n, for ploughing us ower the deep  
And a health to all our sweathearts, an' tae oor wives sae fair  
Not another ship could mak that trip as the "Balena" I declare.



# Black Ball Line

I served me time in the Black Ball Line, *Timme,*  
*way,hay,hay hoorah oh,*  
In the Black Ball line I wasted me prime, *Hoorah*  
*for the Black Ball Line.*

Just take a trip to Liverpool,  
To Liverpool that packet school.

Yankee sailors ye'll see there  
Wiv red-topped boots and short cut hair.

There's Liverpool Pat with his tarpaulin hat And  
Paddy McGee that packet rat.

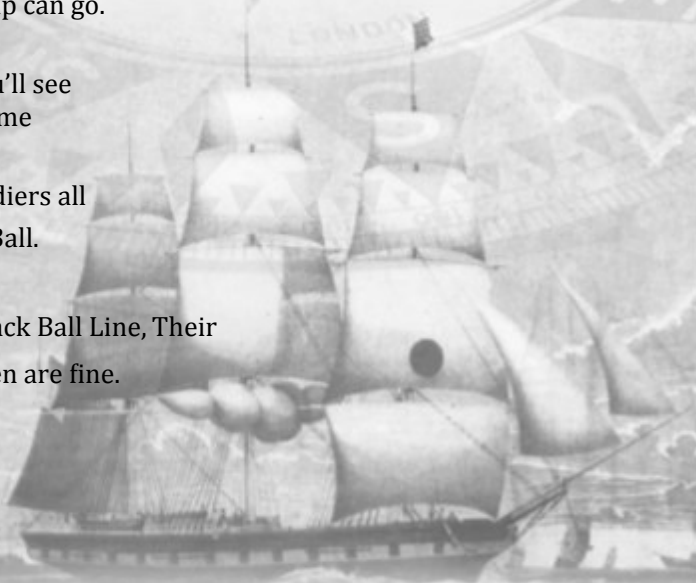
Around Cape Stiff with the the mains'ls set  
Around Cape Stiff all wringing wet.

They'll carry yer through the frost and snow,  
They go where no other ship can go.

The finest weevils there you'll see  
Six legs a piece for you and me

There's Tinkers, tailors, soldiers all  
All sailorboys under Black Ball.

So here's a health to the Black Ball Line, Their  
ships are stout and their men are fine.



# Blood Red Roses (Halyard Shanty)

Our boots and clothes is all in pawn

**Go down, you blood red roses, go down!**

And its flamin' drafty 'round Cape Horn,

**Go down, you blood red roses, go down!**

**Oh, you pinks and posies,**

**Go down, you blood red roses, go down!**

It's 'round that cape stiff we all must go

Around Cape Stiff through the ice and snow.

Oh my old mother, she wrote to me,

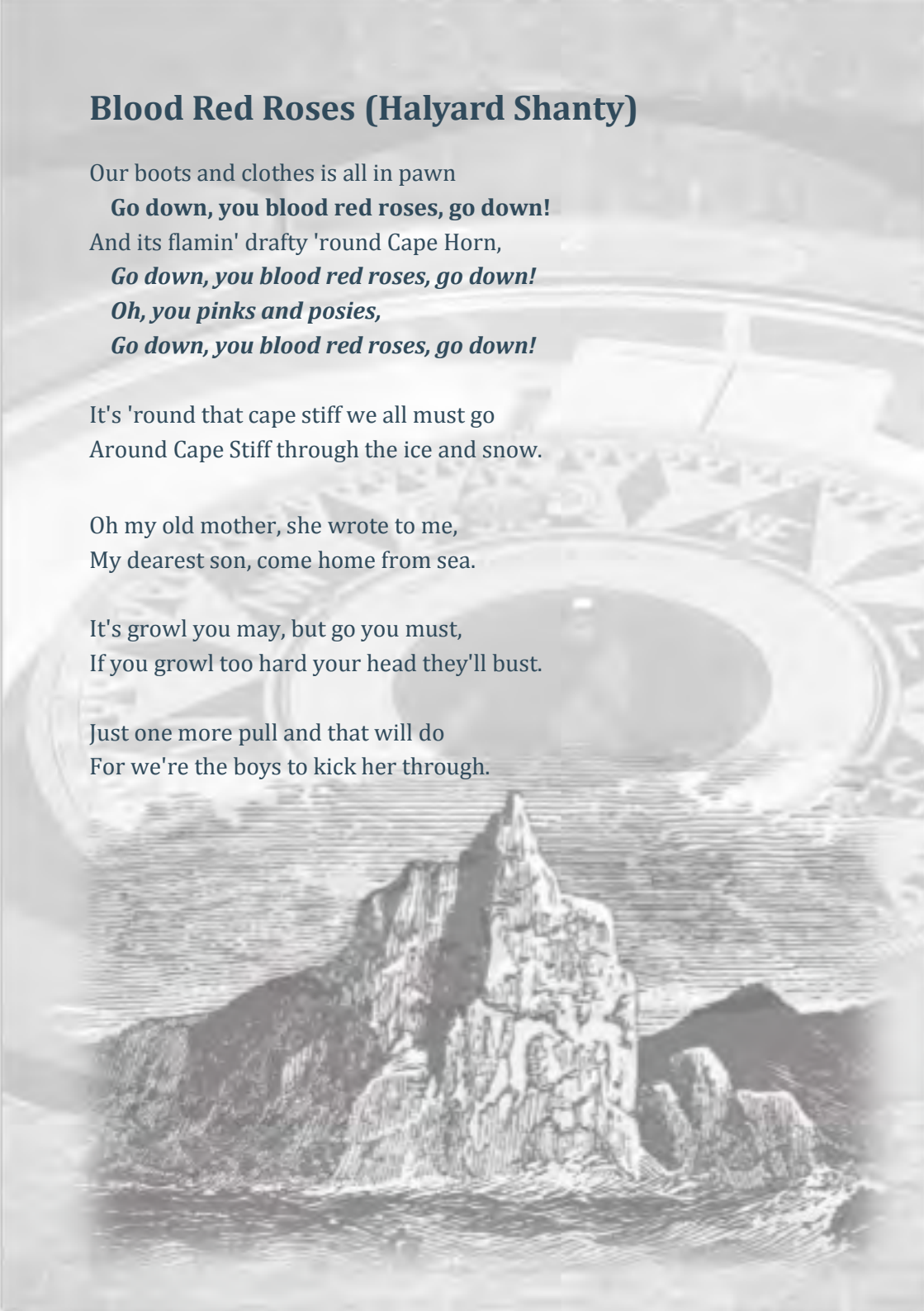
My dearest son, come home from sea.

It's growl you may, but go you must,

If you growl too hard your head they'll bust.

Just one more pull and that will do

For we're the boys to kick her through.



# Bold Reilly O

*Goodbye my darling, Goodbye my dear o Bold*

*Riley o boom a lay*

*Goodbye my sweetheart , goodbye my dear o*

*Bold Riley o, gone away*

Now the rain it is raining all the day long

*Bold Riley o, boom a lay*

And the northerly winds blow so strong

*Bold Riley o, gone away*

Now the anchor is weighed and the rags are all set

*Bold Riley o, boom a lay*

And those Liverpool Judies will never forget

*Bold Riley o, gone away*

We're outward bound for the Bengal bay

*Bold Riley o, boom a lay*

Get bending me boys it's a hell of way

*Bold Riley o, gone away*



# Bonnie Ship the Diamond (Scottish Whaling Song)

The Diamond is a ship, my lads  
For the Davis Strait she's bound  
and the quay it is all garnished  
with bonnie lasses 'round  
Captain Thompson gies the order to sail the ocean high  
Where the sun it never sets, my lads  
Nor darkness dims the sky

***An' it's cheer up my lads  
Let your hearts never fail  
While the bonnie ship the Diamond  
Goes a-fishing for the whale***

Along the quay at Peterhead  
The lasses stand aroon  
Wi' their shawls a, pulled around them  
And the saut tears runnin' doon  
Don't you weep, my bonnie lass  
Though you be left behind  
For the rose will grow on Greenland's ice  
afore we change oor mind

Here's a health to the Resolution  
Likewise the Eliza Swan  
Three cheers for the Battler of Montrose  
And the Diamond, ship of fame  
We wear the troosers o' the white  
An the jakits o' the blue  
When we get back to Peterhead  
We'll hae sweethearts a new'

An it'll be bricht, baith day and nicht  
When the Diamond lads come hame  
Wi a ship that's full o' oil, my lads  
And money to oor name  
We'll mak' the cradles for to rock  
And the blankets for to tear  
And every lass in Peterhead sing  
"Hushabye, my dear"

# Braw Sailin' On The Sea (Scottish Sea Song)

There cam a letter yestreen  
Oor ship mon sail the morn  
'Alas', cried the bonnie lass  
That ever I was born

***And it's braw sailin on the sea  
When wind and weather's fair  
It's better tae be in my love's airms  
O gin that I were there***

He's cam tae her fairm hoose  
At twelve o'clock at noon  
The lassie being proud-hearted  
She would not let him in

And it's braw sailin on the sea  
When wind and weather's fair  
It's better tae be in my love's airms  
O gin that I were there

He's taen the ring from his pocket  
It cost him guineas three  
Sayin, 'Tak ye that my bonnie lass  
And aye think weel o' me'

And she's taen the ring from her pocket  
It cost her shillings nine  
Sayin, 'Tak ye that my bonnie lad  
For I hae changed my mind'

And it's braw sailin on the sea  
When wind and weather's fair  
It's better tae be in my love's airms  
O gin that I were there

## Congo River (Topsail Halyard Shanty)

Oh say was you ever on the Congo River?

***Blows boys blow.***

Where fever makes the white man shiver.

***Blows me bully boys blow.***

A Yankee ship came down the river.

Her masts and yards they shone like silver.

An How do you know she's a Yankee liner?

By the start n bars that stream behind her?.

An How do you know she's a Yankee clipper?

By the blood and guts that flows from her scuppers.

What do think she has for cargo?

Why a dozen black sheep run the embargo.

And what do you think they had for dinner?

Why a monkeys heart and a donkeys liver.

Yonder comes the Arrow packet.

When she fires her guns boys you'll hear her racket.

Who do you think was the skipper of her?

Why Bully Hayes that foc'sle robber.

Who do think was the first mate of her?

Why Shanghai Brown from Hell's half-acre.

So blow me boys and blow forever.

blow us down that Congo River.



## Crossing the Bar (poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson)

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.



# Da sang o da Papa men (Shetland Islands rowing song)

Oot be wast o' Horn o' Papa  
Rowin' Foula doon  
Ower a hidden piece o' watter  
Rowin' Foula doon

Roond da boats da tide-lumps makin'  
Sunlicht trowe da clouds is brakkin'  
We maan geng whaar fish is takkin'  
Rowin' Foula doon

Fishy knots wir boat haes truly  
Nae misforen know  
We hae towes and bowes and cappies  
Ballast ida shot  
Peats fir fire ita da kyettle  
Tattie fir da pot

Laek a lass at's hoiden laachin  
Coorted be her vooers  
Papa sometimes lies in simmer  
Veiled wi ask an shoovers  
Da apo da wilsom water  
Comes da scent o' flo'ers

We can bide ashore nae langer  
We maan geng and try  
We'll win back, boys, if we soodna  
Scrim da moder dy  
Fir da scent o' floovers in Papa

## Drop of Nelson's Blood, A (Capstan Shanty)

Oh, a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm,  
***Oh, a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm,***  
***Oh, a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm,***  
***An' we'll all hang on behind!***

***we'll ro-o-oll the old chariot along!***  
***we'll roll the old chariot along!***  
***we'll ro-o-oll the old chariot along!***  
***An' we'll all hang on behind!***

Oh, a plate of Irish stew wouldn't do us any harm,  
***Oh, a plate of Irish stew wouldn't do us any harm,***  
***Oh, a plate of Irish stew wouldn't do us any harm,***  
***An' we'll all hang on behind!***

Oh, a nice fat cook wouldn't do us any harm.

Oh, a roll in the clover wouldn't do us any harm.

Oh, a long spell in gaol wouldn't do us any harm.

Oh, a nice watch below wouldn't do us any harm.

Oh, a night with the gals wouldn't do us any harm.





## Ebenezer, The (Forebitter)

I shipped on board of the Ebenezer,  
Every day 'twas scrub and grease her,  
Holy stone her and scrape her down,  
And if we growl they blow us down.

**Oho -ho- ho *get along boys, get along do,***  
***Handy me boys, so handy.***  
***Get along boys, get along do,***  
***Handy me boys, so handy.***

The old man was a drunken geezer,  
He could not sail the Ebenezer.  
Learned his trade on a Chinese junk,  
Spent most time down in his bunk.

The first mate's name was Dickie Green, sir,  
The cruelest brute that you've ever seen, sir,  
Walking the deck with a bucko roll,  
May the sharks have his body and the devil have his soul.

Boston Buck was the second greaser,  
He used to ship in Lime juice ships sir,  
The limey packets they got too hot,  
He cursed them all and he jumped the lot.

We sailed away before a breezer,  
Bound away for Valparaiser,  
Round Cape Horn we lost her sticks,  
The molly-hawks picked up the bits.

The Ebenezer was so old,  
She knew Columbus as a boy,  
It was pump her bullies night and day,  
To help her get across Liverpool Bay.

## Eliza Lee

Oh, the smartest packet you can find,

**Ah Hey! Wey Ho! Are you most done?**

Is the old Wildcat of the Swallowtale Line!

**So -oh! Clear away the track, let the bulgine run!**

Chorus (after each verse):

***Timme Hey, Rig-a-jig, and a jaunting car!***

***Ah Hey! Ah Ho! Are you most done?***

***With Eliza Lee all on my knee,***

***So-oh! Clear away the track, let the bulgine run!***

Oh the prettiest sight that you can see

Is Eliza Lee all on my knee

Oh Eliza Lee will you be mine?

I'll dress you up in silks so fine

Oh when I get home from across thesea

Oh Eliza Lee will marry me

Oh when I get home a'll stay on shore

I swear I'll go to sea no more



# General Taylor (Halyard Shanty)

Well General Taylor gained the day  
Walk him along, John, carry him along  
gained the day at Molly del Rey  
Carry him to his bury'n ground

Chorus:

***To me way, hey, you stormy  
Walk him along, John, carry him along  
To me way, hey, you stormy  
Carry him to his bury'n ground***

We'll dig his grave with a silver spade  
Walk him along, John, Carry him along  
His shroud of the finest silk will be made  
Carry him to his bury'n ground

We'll lower him down on a golden chain  
Walk him along, John, Carry him along  
On every link we'll carve his name  
Carry him to his burying ground

I'd Build a ship of a thousand ton  
Walk him along, John, Carry him along  
And fill her up with good ale and rum  
Carry him to his burying ground





## Get Up Jack, let John sit down(Capstan Shanty)

Ships may come and ships may go, as long as the seas do roll.  
And a sailor lad, just like his dad, he loves his rum and bowl.  
A lass ashore, he do adore, a woman who's plump and round.  
***But when your money's all gone it's the same old song,  
"Get up Jack, John sit down."***

### Chorus

***Come along, come along, me jolly brave boys,  
There's plenty more grog in the jar.  
We'll plow the briny ocean with a jolly rovin' tar.***

When Jack's ashore he'll make his way, to some old boarding house. He's  
welcomed in with rum and gin, likewise with fork and Scousea. And he'll  
spend and spend and never offend, 'til he lies drunk on the ground.

***But when your money's all gone it's the same old song,  
"Get up Jack, John sit down."***

### Chorus

Then Jack will slip aboard a ship bound for India or Japan.  
In Asia there, the ladies fair, all love a sailor man.  
He'll go ashore and he won't scorn, to buy some maid a gown.  
***But when your money's all gone it's the same old song,  
"Get up Jack, John sit down."***

### Chorus

When Jack is worn and weather-beat, too old to sail about.  
They'll let him stop in some grog shop, 'til 8 bells call him out.  
Then he'll raise hands high and loud he'll cry, "Thank God I'm home-ward  
bound"

***But when your money's all gone it's the same old song,  
"Get up Jack, John sit down."***

### Chorus

# Greenland Whale Fisheries

'Twas in eighteen hundred and fifty-three  
In June, the thirteenth day  
That our gallant ship her anchor weighed  
And for Greenland sailed away, brave boys  
**And for Greenland sailed away.**

Chorus

***Oh, Greenland is a dreadful place  
A land that's never green  
Where there's ice and snow  
And the whale fishes blow  
And daylight's seldom Yes  
that's seen, brave boys  
And daylight's seldom seen***

The lookout on the cross-trees stood  
With a spyglass in his hand  
There's a whale, there's a whale  
There's a whalefish, he cried,  
And she blows at every span, brave boys  
**She blows at every span.**

The captain stood on the quarterdeck  
And a right cruel sod was he  
Overhaul! Overhaul!  
Let your davit-tackles fall  
And launch your boats for sea, brave boys  
**And launch your boats for sea.**

The boats were launched with the men aboard  
And the whale was in full view  
Resolved was each seaman bold  
To steer where the whalefish blew,  
brave boys  
**To steer where the whalefish blew.**

We struck that whale, and the line played out  
But she gave a flourish with her tail  
The boat capsized and four men were drowned  
And we never caught that whale, brave boys  
**And we never caught that whale.**

To lose those four brave men, our captain said  
It grieves my heart full sore  
But, oh, to lose bloody whalefish  
It grieved him ten times more, brave boys  
**It grieved him ten times more.**

The winter star doth now appear  
So, boys, we'll anchor weigh  
It's time to leave this cold country  
And homeward bear away, brave boys  
**And homeward bear away.**

## Haul Away Joe! (Short Haul Shanty)

When I was a little lad or so me mammy told me,

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

That if I didn't kiss the girls me lips they'd grow all mouldy.

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

***Way haul away, we'll haul for better weather.***

***Away haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

***Way haul away, we'll haul away for Rosie.***

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

King Louis was the king of France before the revolu-ti-on.

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

And then he got his head chopped off it spoiled his constitu-ti-on

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe***

The cook is in the galley boys a makin duff so handy

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

The skippers in his cabin boys drinkin rum and brandy

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe***

Once I was in Ireland a'digging turf and taties.

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

But now I'm on a Yankee ship a'hauling sheets and braces.

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe***

Once I had an Irish gal her name was Kitty Flannagan

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

She sold me clothes, she sold me shoes, she sold me plate and pannakin,

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe***

Once I had an Spanish girl but she was fat and lazy.~

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe.***

But now I got a Partick girl, she damn near drives me crazy.

***Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe***

## Haul On The Bowline (Short Haul Shanty)

Haul on the bowlin', so early in the morning  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**

Haul on the bowline, The old man he's a growling  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**

Haul on the bowline, the old ship she starts a rolling  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**

Haul in the bowline, Kitty is my darling  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**

Haul in the bowline, Kitty lives in Liverpool  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**

Haul on the bowlin', it's a far cry to payday  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**

Haul on the bowlin', we'll either break or bend her  
**Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul!**



## John Kanaka (Long Haul Shanty)

I heard, I heard the Old Man say,

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

"Tomorrow it's our sailing day."

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

*Chorus (after each verse):*

***Tu lai aye, oh-oh-oh, tu lai ai,***

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai.***

We'll work tomorrow, but not today.

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

Today, today is a holiday

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

Were bound away for Frisco Bay

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

Were bound away at the break of day

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

Were bound down South around the horn

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

You'll wish to Christ you'd never been born

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

Oh haul o haul oh haul away

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

Bend yer backs to make yer pay

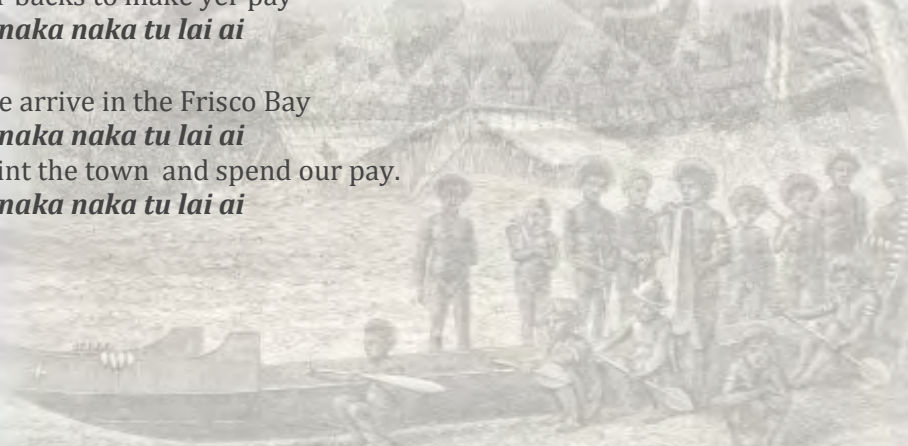
***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

When we arrive in the Frisco Bay

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***

We'll paint the town and spend our pay.

***John Kanaka naka tu lai ai***



# Leave Her Johnny (Pumping / **Warping** Shanty)

Oh, the work was hard and the wages low,

***Leave her, Johnny, leave her!***

I guess it's time for us to go

***and it's time for us to leave her!***

***Leave her Johnny leave her***

***Oh leave her Johnny leave her***

***for the voyage is done and the winds don't blow***

***Leave her Johnny leave her***

Oh, I thought I heard the old man say,

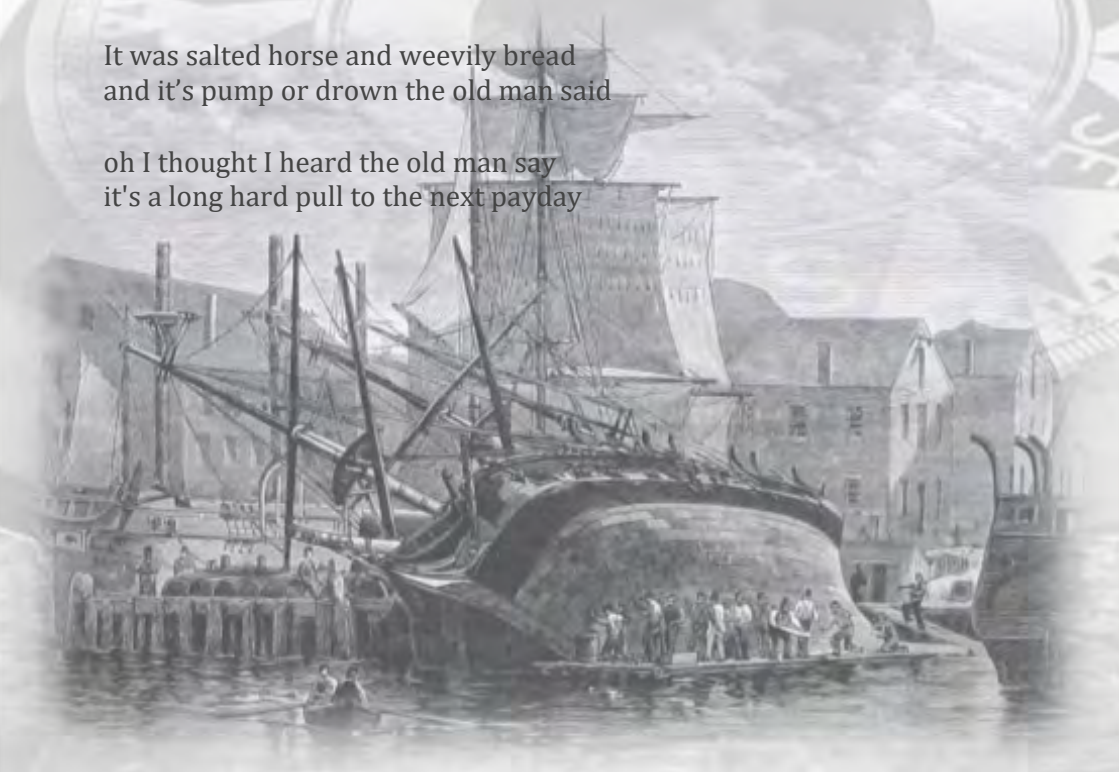
Tomorrow you will get your pay.

The winds blew foul and the seas ran high  
we shipped 'em green and none went by

The skipper was bad and the mate was worse  
he blow you down with a spike and curse

It was salted horse and weevily bread  
and it's pump or drown the old man said

oh I thought I heard the old man say  
it's a long hard pull to the next payday



# Lowlands Away (Pumping Shanty)

I dreamed a dream the other night  
***Lowlands, lowlands away, my John***  
I dreamed a dream the other night  
***Lowlands, my lowlands away***

I dreamed I saw my own true love  
I dreamed I saw my own true love

She came to me all dressed in white  
All dressed in white like some fair bride

The sea green weed was in her hair  
The sea green weed was in her hair

And in in her bosom fair  
a red red rose my love did wear

No sound she made, no word she said  
And then I knew my love was dead

Then I awoke to hear the call  
“All hands on deck... all hand’s a haul “



# Mingulay Boat Song

*Hill-yer-ho, boys! Let her go, boys!  
Bring her head round, and all together.  
Hill-yer-ho, boys! Let her go, boys,  
Sailing homeward to Mingulay.*

What care we though, white the Minch is?  
What care we, boys, for windy weather?  
When we know that every inch is  
bringing us nearer to Mingulay.

*Hill-yer-ho, boys! Let her go, boys!  
Bring her head round, and all together.  
Hill-yer-ho, boys! Let her go, boys,  
Sailing homeward to Mingulay.*

Wives are waiting by the pier head,  
They've been there since the break of day oh  
Heave her head round and we'll anchor  
'Ere the sun sets on Mingulay.

*Hill-yer-ho, boys! Let her go, boys!  
Bring her head round, and all together.  
Hill-yer-ho, boys! Let her go, boys,  
Sailing homeward to Mingulay.*



# Noah's Ark Shanty (A long time ago)

In Frisco Bay there were three ships

*To me way, hey, hey-oh*

In Frisco Bay there were three ships

*A long time ago*

And one of them ships was Noah's old ark

All covered all o'er wi' hickory bark

They took two animals of every kind

They took two animals of every kind

The bull and the cow they started to row

The bull and the cow they started to row

Then said old Noah with a flick of his whip

“Come stop this row or I'll scuttle the ship”

The bull struck his horn through the side of the ark

And the little black dog he started to bark

So Noah took the dog, shoved its nose up the hole

And ever since then dogs' nose has been cold

It's a long, long time and a very long time

A long, long time and a very long time a long time ago

# One More Day (Capstan Shanty / Homeward)

Oh, have you heard the news, me Johnny

**One more day**

*We're homeward bound tomorrow*

**One more day**

*Chorus*

**Only one more day, me Johnny**

**One more day**

**Come rock and roll me over**

**One more day**

Don't you hear the old man growlin' Johnny

Don't you hear the mate a howlin'

Don't you hear the caps'n pawlin' Johnny

Don't you hear the bosun bawlin'

Oh, we're homeward bound tomorrow Johnny

We'll leave her without sorrow,

Only one more day a-workin', Johnny

No more yer' bloody shirkin' Johnny

Put out your long-tail blues my Johnny

For our trip is nearly through Johnny

No more gales or heavy weather

Just one more day we'll be together

## Pique La Balene (French halyard shanty)

Pour retrouver ma douce amie

*Oh mes boués, ouh là ouh là là.*

Pour retrouver ma douce amie

*Oh mes boués, ouh là ouh là là.*

Chorus (after each verse):

*Pique la baleine, joli baleinier*

*Pique la baleine, je veux naviguer.*

Aux mille mers j'ai navigué.

Des mers du nord aux mers du sud.

Je l'ai retrouvée quand j'm'ai noyé.

Dans les grands fonds, elle m'espérait.

Tous deux ensemble on a pleuré.

En couple à elle, j'm'suis couché

## Poor Old Man /Poor Old Horse (Ceremonial Shanty)

A poor old man came ridin' by  
*And we say so and we hope so.*

A poor old man cam ridin' by  
*O, poor old man!*

They say old man your horse will die,  
O, poor old man your horse will die

For a month a rotten life we've led,  
while you lay in y'er feather bed.

For thirty\* days we've ridden him,  
And when he dies we'll tan his skin,

And if he lives, we'll ride him again,  
we'll ride him with a tighter rein,

We'll yank him aft t' th' cabin door.  
where we hopes we'll ne'er see him no more.

It's up aloft the horse must go,  
We'll hoist him high and bury him low.

We'll sink him down with a long hot ball  
May the Sharks have his body and the devil have his soul



## **Pull Down Below**

Oh, I went to church and I went to chapel

**Pull down below**

I went to church and I went to chapel

**Pull down below**

*Oh, Hielan' laddie,*

*Pull down below*

*Hielan' laddie, bonnie laddie,*

*pull down below*

On the road I found a saddle

I found a saddle and an empty poke

I found a saddle and an empty poke

But where the hell was the bleedin' moke?

The moke is gone and I'll go to...

I'll sail away to Backaloo

Oh, hoist 'er up and away we'll go

Hoist 'er up from down below

Oh, give 'er sheet and let 'er go

We're outward bound to Backaloo

# Ranzo Ray

Oh the bully boat's a-comin' can't ye hear her paddles turnin'

**Ranzo, Ranzo, ray, hooray!**

the bully boat's a-comin' can't ye see her paddles churnin'

**To me hilo, me Ranzo Ray!**

Ooh, we're bound for Yokohammer, with a load o'grand piannas (2x)

Oh, we're bound for Giberr-altar with a load o bricks an' mortar (2x)

Oh, we're bound for Bonas Airees with a bunch o' green canaries (2x)

Oh we're homeward bound to meet you, it's with kisses we will greet you (2x)

We've roamed the whole world and soon we'll be off Dover

We've roamed the whole world over like a proper deep sea rover

Oh the bully boat's a-comin' can't ye hear the mate a callin'

The bully boat's a comin' and soon we will be dockin'

## Reuben Ranzo

Oh, poor old Reuben Ranzo,

***Ranzo, me boys, Ranzo***

Oh, poor old Reuben Ranzo,

***Ranzo, me boys, Ranzo***

Oh, Ranzo was no sailor

So he shipped aboard a whaler

He washed once in a fortnight,

He said it was his birthright.

Because he was so dirty

The skipper give him thirty.

Aye the skipper give him thirty

But his daughter begged fer mercy.

She give him rum and water,

And a bit more than she oughta.

She taught him navigation

Away above his station

Now its Captain Ranzo

The hardest bastard on the go

## Rio Grande

oh say was you ever down the old Rio Grande?  
away-eh-hey for Rio!  
It's there that the river runs down golden sand!  
And we're bound for the Rio Grande!

Then away, boys, away,  
Away-eh-hey for Rio,  
So fare thee well, my Liverpool girls,  
For we're bound for the Rio Grande.

So it's pack up your donkeys an' get underway,  
The girls we are leavin' can get our half-pay.

Goodbye to Kitty & Sally & Sue,  
Ye Paradise Street judies, it's goodbye to you

Cheer up, Mary Ellen, and don't look so glum,  
On white-stocking day you'll be drinking hot rum

Our ship went sailing over the bar,  
We've pointed her bows to the old Southern star.

We've a bully good ship & a bully good crew,  
A bully good mate and a good skipper too

We're a Liverpool ship & a Liverpool crew,  
We could can stick to the coast but We're damned if we do!



## Roll Alabama Roll (Halyard Shanty)

When the Alabama's keel was laid

***Roll, Alabama, roll!***

It was laid in the yard of Jonathan Laird

***Oh, roll, Alabama, roll!***

It was laid in the yard of Jonathan Laird

It was laid in the town of Birkenhead

Down the Mersey river she sailed then

And Liverpool fitted her with guns and men

To the Western Isles she sailed forth

To destroy the commerce of the North

to Cherbourg harbour she she sailed one day

For to take her share of the prize money

There many a sailor lad met his doom

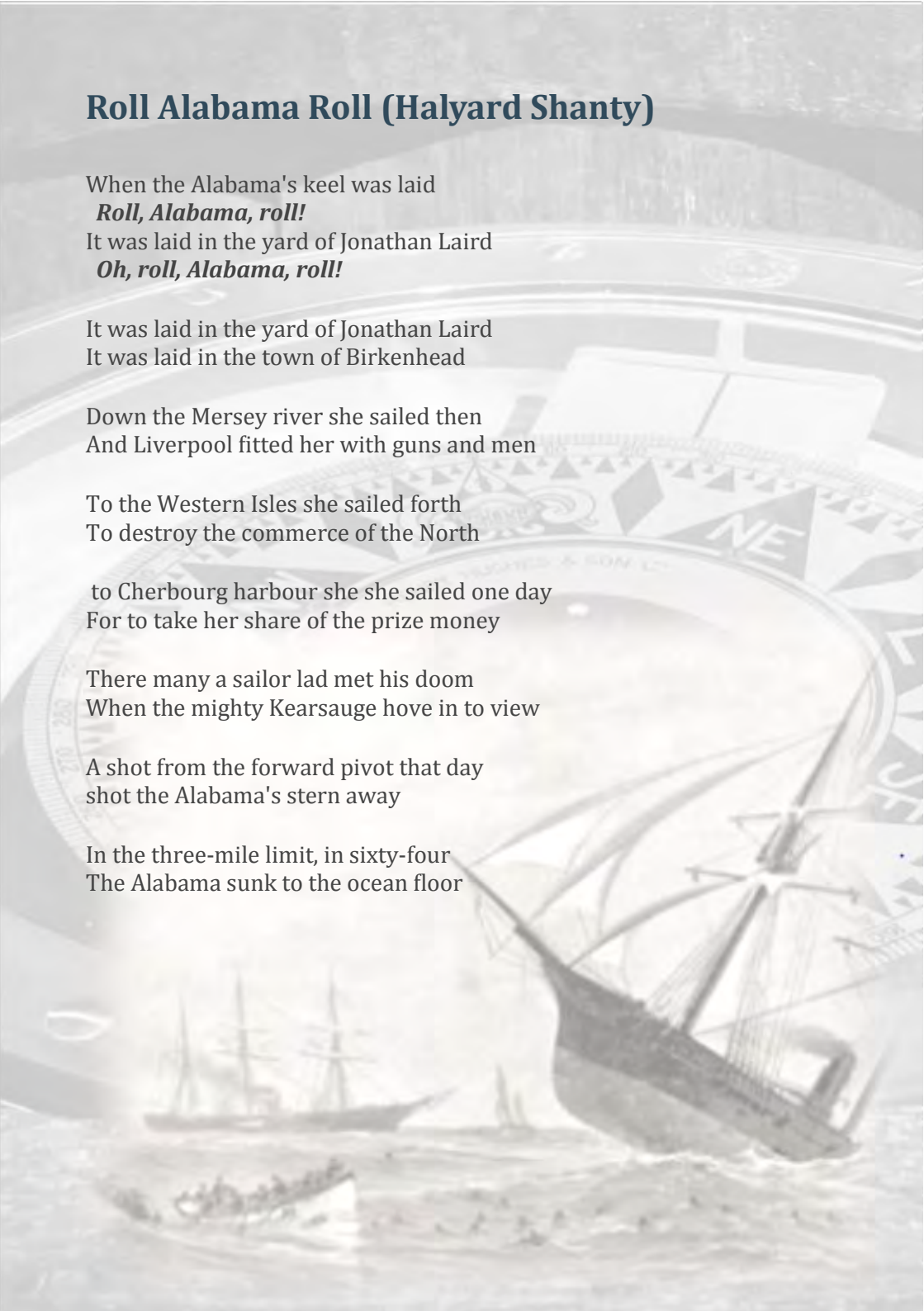
When the mighty Kearsauge hove in to view

A shot from the forward pivot that day

shot the Alabama's stern away

In the three-mile limit, in sixty-four

The Alabama sunk to the ocean floor



# Roll Boys Roll

Oh we're rollin' down to Trinidad to see Miss Sally Brown

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

Oh rollin' down to Trinidad to paint the bleedin' town

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

She's lovely up aloft, an' she's lovely down below

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

She's cause she loves me and that's all I want to know boys

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

She's lovely on the foreyard, she lovely on the main boys

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

She's lovely in the summertime, she's lovely in the rain

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

Ol' Captain Baker, how do you store yer cargo

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

Some I stows for'ard, boys, an' some I stows aft'er

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

Oh, there's forty fathoms or more below, boys

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

Oh, forty fathoms or more below, boys

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

Oh, way high yar, an' up she rises

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

Oh, way high yar, the blocks is different sizes

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

Oh, one more pull, don't ya hear the mate a-bawlin'?

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

Oh, one more pull, and there's an end to all our haulin'

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

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Oh, one more pull, don't ya hear the mate a-bawlin'?

**Roll boys, roll boys roll**

Oh, one more pull, and there's an end to all our haulin'

**Way hey, Miss Sally Brown**

## Rolling Down To Old Maui

It's a damned tough life, full of toil and strife that we whaler men undergo.  
And we don't give a damn when the gale has stopped how hard the wind did blow.  
We're homeward bound! 'tis a grand old sound on a good ship taut and free,  
And we don't give a damn when we drink our rum with the girls on old Maui.

*Rolling down to old Maui, my boys, Rolling down to old Maui.*  
*We're homeward bound from the Arctic ground, Rolling down to old Maui.*

Once more, we sail with a northerly gale through the ice and sleet and rain.  
And them coconut fronds in them tropic lands we soon shall see again.  
Six hellish months we've passed away In the cold Kamchatka sea,  
And now we're bound from the arctic ground, rolling down to old Maui.

We'll heave the lead where old Diamondhead Looms up on old Wahoo.  
Our mast and yards are sheathed with ice and our decks are hid from view.  
The horrid tiles of the sea-cut ice that decks the Arctic Sea  
Are miles behind in the frozen wind since we steered for old Maui.

How soft the breeze of the tropic seas now the ice is far astern,  
And them native maids in them island glades are awaiting our return.  
Even now, their big black eyes look out hoping some fine day to see  
Our baggy sails running 'fore the gales rolling down to old Maui.

And now we sail with a favouring gale towards our island home  
Our mainmast sprung, our whaling done, and we ain't got far to roam.  
Our stuns'l booms are carried away what care we for that sound?  
A living gale is after us, thank God we're homeward bound!

And now we're anchored in the bay with Kanakas all around  
With chants and soft aloha oes they greet us homeward bound.  
And now ashore we'll have good fun, we'll paint them beaches red,  
awaking in the arms of a wahine, with a big fat aching head



## Roseanna (Net Hauling Song)

Oh Roseanne, my Roseanne,  
**Bye bye my Roseanna,**  
Oh Roseanne, sweet Roseanne,  
**I won't be home tomorrow**

*Bye bye, bye bye, bye bye, bye bye,*  
*Bye bye my Roseanna,*  
*Bye bye, bye bye, bye bye, bye bye,*  
*I won't be home tomorrow*

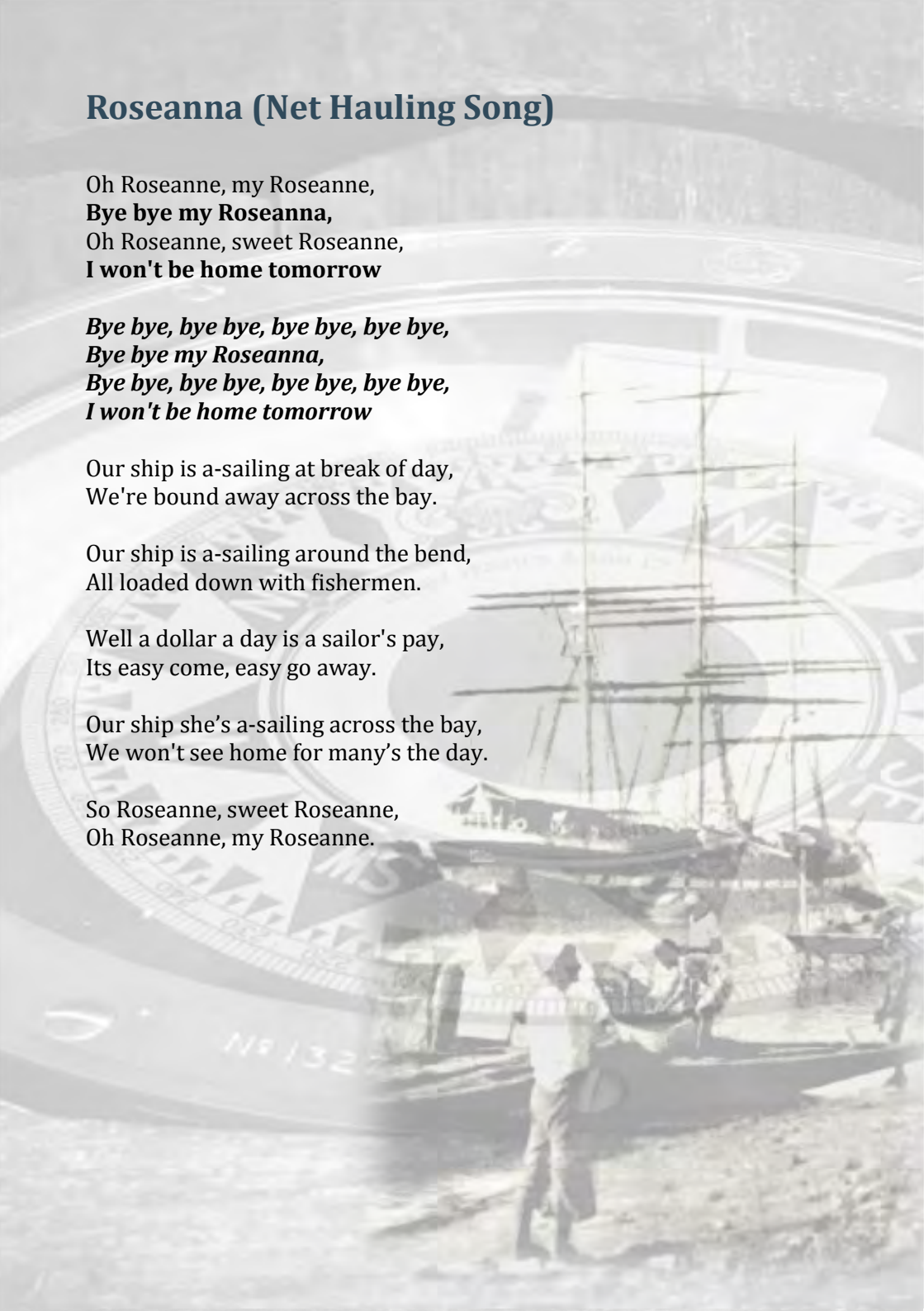
Our ship is a-sailing at break of day,  
We're bound away across the bay.

Our ship is a-sailing around the bend,  
All loaded down with fishermen.

Well a dollar a day is a sailor's pay,  
Its easy come, easy go away.

Our ship she's a-sailing across the bay,  
We won't see home for many's the day.

So Roseanne, sweet Roseanne,  
Oh Roseanne, my Roseanne.



# Shallow Brown (Halyard / Pumping shanty)

bound away to leave you  
*Shallow, oh Shallow Brown,*  
bound away to leave you  
*Shallow, oh Shallow Brown.*

shipped aboard a whaler  
shipped aboard a whaler

**Bound away for St George's**  
**Bound away for St George's**

**Massa's gonna sell me**  
**Massa's gonna sell me**

sell me for a dollar  
great big Spanish silver dollar

fare-thee-well my Julianna  
fare-thee-well my Julianna

## Shanandoah (Capstan Shanty)

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you,

**Ah-Away, you rolling river!**

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you,

**Away we're bound to go, 'across the wide Missouri-eye!**

Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,

**Ah-Away, you rolling river!**

Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,

**Away we're bound to go, 'across the wide Missouri-eye!**

Missouri she's a mighty river;

**Ah-Away, you rolling river!**

When she rolls down her topsails shiver.

**Away we're bound to go, 'across the wide Missouri-eye!**

Seven years I courted Sally,

**Ah-Away, you rolling river!**

Seven more I longed to have her.

**Away we're bound to go, 'across the wide Missouri-eye!**

Farewell, my dear, I'm bound to leave you,

**Ah-Away, you rolling river!**

Oh, Shenandoah, I'll not deceive you.

**Away we're bound to go, 'across the wide Missouri-eye!**

# South Australia (Capstan/Pumping Shanty)

In South Australia I was born  
***Heave away, haul away***  
South Australia round Cape Horn  
***We're bound for South Australia***

Chorus  
***Heave away, you rolling king***  
***Heave away, haul away***  
***Heave away, oh hear me sing***  
***We're bound for South Australia***

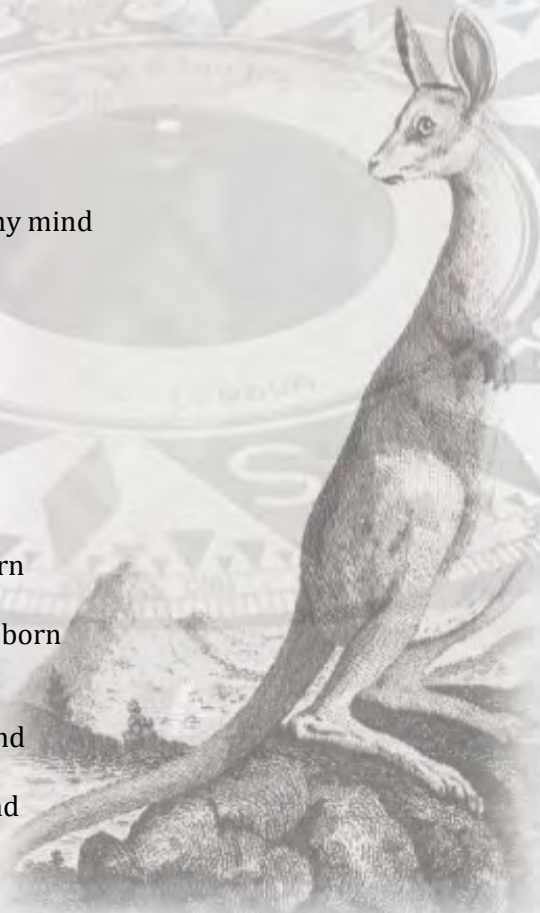
As I walked out one morning fair  
***Heave away, haul away***  
Twas there I met Miss Nancy Blair  
***We're bound for South Australia***

There ain't but one thing grieves my mind  
***Heave away, haul away***  
To leave Miss Nancy Blair behind  
***We're bound for South Australia***

Oh when I set out for the sea  
***Heave away, haul away***  
Nancy said she'd be true to me  
***We're bound for South Australia***

And as we wallop around Cape Horn  
***Heave away, haul away***  
You wish to God you'd never been born  
***We're bound for South Australia***

And now I'm on some foreign strand  
***Heave away, haul away***  
With a bottle of whiskey in my hand  
***We're bound for South Australia***





## Strike the bell (Forebitter)

Up on the poop deck and walking about,  
There's the second mate so steady and so stout.  
What he is a-thinkin' of he doesn't know himself,  
And we wish that he would hurry up and strike, strike the bell.

***Strike the bell second mate, let us go below,  
Look well to windward you can see it's gonna blow.  
Look at the glass, you can see it has fell,  
Oh we wish that you would hurry up and strike, strike the bell.***

Down on the main deck and workin' at the pumps,  
There is the larboard watch just longing for their bunks.  
Look out to windward, you can see a great swell,  
And we wish that you would hurry up and strike, strike the bell.

Forward on the forecastle head and keepin' sharp lookout,  
There is Johnny standin', a-longin' fer to shout,  
Lights' a-burnin' bright sir and everything is well,  
And he's wishin' that the second mate would strike, strike the bell.

Aft at the wheelhouse old Anderson stands,  
Graspin' at the helm with his frostbitten hands,  
Lookin' at the compass through the course is clear as hell,  
And he's wishin' that the second mate would strike, strike the bell.

Aft on the quarter deck our gallant captain stands,  
Lookin' out to windward with a spyglass in his hand.  
What he is a-thinkin' of we know darn well,  
He's thinkin' more of shortenin' sail than strikin' the bell.

# Sugar In the Hold Below (Steamboat song)

I wish I was in Mobile Bay, screwing cotton all a the day  
But I'm stowing sugar in the hold below,  
Below, below, below

*Hey, ho, below, below*

*Stowing sugar in the hold bel-ow*

*Hey, ho, below, below*

*Stowing sugar in the hold below*

The J.M. White, she's a new boat  
Stem to stern she's mighty fine  
Beat any boat on the New Orleans line  
Stowing sugar in the hold below

The engineer shouts through his trumpet  
"Tell the mate we got bad news.  
Can't get steam for the fire in the flue"  
Stowing sugar in the hold below

The captain's on the quarter deck  
Scratchin' 'way at his old neck  
And he cries out, "Heave the larboard lead"  
Stowing sugar in the hold below



# Walk Around My Brave Boys (Halyard Shanty)

The anchors are weighed and our sails are unfurled

**Ro-oh-oh-ll-down**

We're bound for the take you halfway round the world

***Walk around me brave boys and roll down***

***And we will ro-oh-oh-ll down***

***Walk around me brave boys and roll down***

In the white Bay of Biscay the seas will run high

These poor simple transports, they'll wish they could die

When the white coast of Africa, it do appear

These poor simple transports will tremble with fear

When the Cape of Good Hope, it is rounded at last

These poor simple transports will long for the past

When these great southern whales on the quarter do spout

These poor simple transports, they'll goggle and shout

And when we draw near to the New Holland strand

These poor simple transports will long for the land

And when we set sail for Olde England's shore

These poor simple transports will see them no more

And when we arrive in Olde England's shore

Those beds and these talents we'll make 'em to roar

Then sweet ladies of Plymouth, we'll pay all your rent

Go roving no more till our money's all spent

# What shall we do with the drunken sailor? (Stamp & Go Shanty)

*Way hay and up she rises*

*Way hay and up she rises*

*Way hay and up she rises*

*Earl-eye in the morning*

What shall we do with a drunken sailor (3x)

Earl-eye in the morning!

Put him in a long-boat till he's sober

Keep him there and make 'im bale 'er.

Trice him up in a runnin' bowline.

Tie him to the taffrail when she's yard-arm under.

Put him in the scuppers with a hose-pipe on him.

Keel-haul and tow him under

Wake 'im and shake 'im then we'll break 'im.

Shave his belly with a rusty razor.

Flog him with the cat at the standin' grating.

Put him in bed with the captains daughter

Have you seen the captain's daughter?



## Whip Jamboree (Capstan / Windlass Shanty)

Well now my lads be of good cheer  
For the Irish Coast will soon draw near  
In a few hours flat we'll sight Cape Clear  
Ah Jinny get yer oat cakes done

**Chorus (after each verse):**

*Whip jamboree, whip jamboree*  
*Oh you ring tailed packet rat, sheet it home behind*  
*Whip jamboree, whip jamboree*  
*Ah Jinny get yer oatcakes done*

And soon we'll be off Holyhead  
They'll be no more casts of the dipsy lead  
We'll be in your fine feather bed  
Ah Jinny get yer oatcakes done

And now the bar-ship is in sight  
Soon well pass the old Rock Light  
Oh, I will clean your flue tonight  
Ah Jinny get yer oatcakes done

And now were tyin' up at the dock  
And all the girls to the pierhead flock  
There's my Jinny in her new pink frock  
Ah Jinny get yer oatcakes done

But when we've had two weeks ashore  
We'll pack our gear for sea once more  
Bid our farewell to the Liverpool shore  
Ah Jinny get yer oatcakes done

# Compiler's notes

Sea shanties are by their very nature "fluid creatures" travelling as they did from ship to ship and port to port, verses would be often written "on the spot" by skilled shantymen, which is why we have so many different versions of the songs today, in assembling this first collection, I have endeavoured to pick out the best of the shanties and the best of the verses from various versions of them..

This is the second edition of this book, this time prepared for the Oban online Shanty Festival in 2020, I envisage that subsequent editions will follow, plans for future versions are

- More shanties of course!
- Links to samples for every song so that you can quickly learn the tunes.
- Historical background for each of the songs.
- Information about shanty groups and other maritime musicians, poets & songwriters, past and present.

The book is currently available as a free download as a PDF and it is my intention currently that Shanty festivals will, with subsequent editions be able to print the book to help raise funds for their events.



Thanks for downloading this second edition, I hope you enjoy singing the songs and passing them on.

*"Second star to the right & straight on till morning"*

**Stephen Wilson**



