



**A Collection of
Sea Shanties
and
Sea Songs**

For the diversion of the hearty crew of the HMS Bundy

Compiled by Dave Johnson 2025

ShipMates

A-Rovin'

A Pump Shanty

Shantyman

In Sydney Town there lived a maid,

Crew

Mark well what I do say!

Shantyman

In Sydney there lived a maid,

An' she wuz mistress of her trade,

Crew

I'll go no more a-ro-o-vin' with you fair maid.

A-rovin', a-rovin', Since rovin's bin my ru-i-in,

I'll go no more a-rovin', With you fair maid.

Assisted Passage

Words and music by Harry Robertson, a Scottish-born, Australian seaman, engineer, folk-singer, songwriter, poet and activist.

Verse

Don't take a trip like me, me boys, don't sail across the sea,

To Botany Bay I'm headed and I'm bound in misery.

Chorus

Oh the whaling barque is rolling bad

It makes our irons clang,

As we pitch across the ocean

For to join the prison gang.

ShipMates

Away, Rio!

Shantyman

The anchor is weighed and the sails they are set,

Crew

Away, Rio!

Shantyman

The maids we are leaving we'll never forget,

Crew

For we're bound for the Rio Grande,

Shantyman & Crew

And away, Rio! Aye, Rio!

We're bound away this very day,

For we're bound for the Rio Grande!

Being a Pirate

Written by American songwriter Don Freed and adopted by shanty groups all over the world.

Verse

Being a pirate is all fun and games,

'Til somebody loses an ear.

It drips down your neck, and it falls on the deck,

'Til someone shouts, "Oy, what's this 'ere?"

You can't wear your glasses, you can't pull the lasses,

Your friends have to shout so you'll hear;

Chorus

Verse first 2 lines...

It's all part of being a pirate;

You can't be a pirate with all of your parts.

Oh, it's all part of being a pirate;

You can't be a pirate with all ~~of~~ ² your parts.

ShipMates

Blow the Man Down

A Long Drag Shanty

Shantyman

Come all ye young fellows that follows the sea ,

Crew

Way hey, blow the man down

Shantyman

All pay attention and listen to me

Crew

Give me some time to blow the man down.

All

Oh, Blow the man down bullies Blow the man down to me

Way hey, blow the man down

Blow the man down bullies Blow him a-way

Give me some time to blow the man down.

Boney

*Long Drag Shanty recounting the times of war with Napoleon
Bonaparte*

Shantyman

Boney was a warrior

Crew

Away, a- yah!

Shantyman

A warrior and a terrier

Crew

Jean Francois!

ShipMates

Bounty Was A Packet Ship

Tells the story of the infamous William Bligh and the mutiny on his command, the Bounty. It may not be historically accurate but Bligh was certainly a martinet.

Shantyman

Boun-ty was a packet ship

Crew

Pump ship, packet ship

Shantyman

Cruising on a trading trip

Crew

In the South Pacific

Cane Killed Abel

Words by seaman/folksinger Merv Lilley, with a tune by singer/songwriter Chris Kempster (1933-2004). Kempster's role in the Australian folk movement was a significant pioneering one - as a singer, songwriter, composer, collector and teacher.

Shantyman

I was a cane cutter but now I'm at sea.

Crew

Stool it and top it and load it my boys.

Shantyman

Once Cane killed Abel but it won't kill me.

Crew

Stool it and top it and load it my boys.

ShipMates

Codfish Shanty, The

Collected by Maryjean Officer and Norm O'Connor and published in 'Tradition' 1966. Extra verses Dave Johnson.

Shantyman

Melbourne girls, ain't got no combs,

Crew

Heave a-way, heave a-way,

Shantyman

They comb their hair with cod-fish bones,

Crew

And we're bound for Aus-tral-ya.

Shantyman and Crew

Heave a-way, my bully bully boys,

Heave a-way, heave a-way,

Heave a-way, why don't you make a noise,

And we're bound for Aus-tral-ya..

Cyprus, The

Collected by Ian Coggins from Maeve Chick, Hobart Tas in 1968 and published in Australian Tradition in March 1969.

Verse

There was a ship, the "Cyprus" was her name,

She sailed from Hobart Town.

Three and thirty convicts were aboard;

All Macquarie Harbour bound, were they;

Chorus

All Macquarie Harbour bound.

ShipMates

The Dead Horse Shanty

For the first month at sea the sailors were paying off their advance of a month's pay (flogging a dead horse). Then they celebrated by making a horse effigy and throwing it overboard.

Shantyman

I say old man your horse will die

Crew

We say so for we know so.

Shantyman

Poor old man your horse will die.

Crew

Poor old man.

Drunken Sailor

Stamp-and-Go shanty

Shantyman

What shall we do with a drunken sailor

Shantyman + Crew

What shall we do with a drunken sailor

What shall we do with a drunken sailor

Earl-eye in the morning!

Shantyman

Way hay and up she rises

Shantyman + Crew

Way hay and up she rises

Way hay and up she rises

Earl-eye in the morning

ShipMates

Haul Away Joe

This is a 'tack and sheet' shanty collected by Stan Hugill from maritime veteran Paddy Griffiths.

Shantyman

When I was a little boy, my mother then she told me,

Crew

Way! Haul Away! We'll haul away Joe

Shantyman

If I did not kiss the girls, my lips would grow all mouldy,

Crew

Way! Haul Away! We'll haul away Joe.

Way! Haul Away! We're bound for better weather,

Way! Haul Away! We'll haul away Joe

Haul on the Bowline

Short Drag Shanty

Shantyman

Haul on the bo'lin,

The fore and maintop bo'lin,

Crew

Haul on the bo'lin,

The bo'lin' haul!

ShipMates

Heave and Go

A Norwegian shanty sung in English. Ports would have been a mix of cultures where songs and stories would have been swapped.

Shantyman

Come, all ye jolly sailors bold,

Crew

Heave and go, my Nancy O !

Shantyman

Listen till my tale is told,

Crew

Heave and go, my Nancy O !

The Last Shanty

By Tom Lewis, popularised by Nathan Evans

Shantyman

Well me father often told me when I was just a lad

A sailor's life is very hard, the food is always bad

But now I've joined the navy, I'm aboard a man-o-war

And now I've found a sailor ain't a sailor any more

Shantyman & Crew

Don't haul on the rope, don't climb up the mast

And if you see a sailing ship it might be your last

Just get your civvies ready for another run-ashore

A sailor ain't a sailor, ain't a sailor anymore

ShipMates

Leave her Jollies

A Long Drag Shanty from the singing of Australian sailor Jimmy Cargill

Shantyman

Oh the work was hard and the wages low,

Crew

Leave her Jol-lies, leave her!

Shantyman

The seas were high and the gales did blow

Crew

And it's time for us to leave her.

All

Leave her Jollies. Leave her.

Oh Leave her Jollies. Leave her

For the voyage is done and the winds don't blow,

And it's time for us to leave her.

ShipMates

Maggie May

A popular foc'sle song, this version is a compilation of versions by John Manifold collected by himself and others.

Verse

Oh gather round you sailor boys and listen to my tale
And when you've heard it through you'll pity me.
I was a god-damned fool in the port of Liverpool
The first time that I came home from sea.
I was paid off at the Hove for the trip to Syd-ney Cove.
And two pound ten a month was all my pay.
Then I started drinking gin and was neatly taken in
By a little girl they all call Maggie May.
Chorus

Oh Maggie Maggie May they have taken you away
To slave upon that cold Van Diemen's shore.
For you robbed so many sailors and you dosed so many
whalers
You'll never see old Lime Street any more.

ShipMates

Paddy Lay Back

This call-and-response chantey was usually sung at the capstan. "Take a turn around the capstan, heave a pawl refers to the hinged metal pieces at the base of a capstan.

Shantyman

'Twas a cold and dreary morning in December [December]
All of me money, it was spent, [Spent, spent]
Where it went to, Lord, I can't remember [Remember]
So down to the shipping office I went [Went, went!]

Crew

Paddy lay back, [Paddy lay back!]
Take in the slack, [Take in the slack]
Take a turn around the capstan,
Heave a pawl! [Heave a pawl]
About ship's stations, boys, be handy [Be handy!]
We're bound for Valipariso 'round the Horn!

ShipMates

Press Gang, The

*Words by Michael Watson and published in 'Coles Treasury of Song',
tune by David Johnson 2005. A version with identical words and a
different tune was collected by Ron Edwards from Stan Dean of
Cairns, Qld.*

Verse

Sit round the galley fire, my lads, and listen while I sing,
I'll tell you all how I was pressed when George the Third was
king;

In eighteen 'three the war broke out, and so, to man the fleet,
The pressgang seized all landsmen that ashore they chanced to
meet.

(Chorus not till after 2nd verse)

Yeo, heave ho! Here's to all the lasses, O,
Cheerily, lads, 'time aboard soon passes, O,
Yeo, heave ho! Sing and fill your glasses, O,
Cheerily, lads! Who'll serve the King?

Reuben Ranzo

Shantyman

Pity Reuben Ranzo,

Crew

Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.

Shantyman

Oh, pity Reuben Ranzo,

Crew

Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.

ShipMates

Roll the Old Chariot Along

Shantyman

Oh, a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm

Shantyman & Half Crew

Oh, a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm

Shantyman & All Crew

Oh, a drop of Nelson's blood wouldn't do us any harm

And we'll all hang on behind.

Shantyman & All Crew

So we'll roll the o-old chariot along

And we'll roll the golden chariot along.

So we'll roll the o-old chariot along

And we'll all hang on behind!

South Australia

A composite version of this very popular sea shanty.

Shantyman

In South Australia I was born,

Crew

Heave away, haul away

Shantyman

In South Australia round Cape Horn,

Crew

And we're bound for South Australia.

Shantyman and Crew

Heave away, you ruler king,

Heave away, haul away,

Heave away, you'll hear me sing,

And we're bound for South Australia.

ShipMates

Stormalong

AKA Mister Stormalong - a pumping shanty from the Stan Hugill Collection

Shantyman

Old Stormy he is dead and gone

Crew

To me, way, you, Stormalong

Shantyman

Old Stormy he is dead and gone

Crew

Ay Ay Ay Mister Stormalong.

Strike the Bell

The bell signified the end of the watch and in hard weather it couldn't come quick enough.

Shantyman

Up on the poop deck and walking about,
There is 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.

Shantyman & Crew

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.

ShipMates

Tassie Whaler

Words of a longer poem by EJ Brady abbreviated and set to music by Robyn and Graham Jenkin. Edwin James Brady (1869–1952) was a minor Australian poet. He worked as a wharf clerk, a farmer, and journalist, editing both rural and city newspapers.

Shantyman

Got a Tassie ship to sail in

Crew

Blow, my bully boys, blow;

Shantyman

Went to Southern Ocean whalin',

Crew

Blow, my bully boys, blow;

Shantyman

Struck a berg one night and sunk it, Freezn' cold but couldn't
funk it-

Crew

Blow, blow, blow, blow, Blow, my bully boys, blow.

Water Witch, The

The Water Witch was a whaling barque of 236 tons built in 1820, commandeered by convicts in 1840. She last hunted whales in 1892.

Verse

O, a neat Little packet from Hobart set sail,
On a cruise round the west'ard for monster sperm whale;
For a cruise round the west'ard where stormy winds blow,
Bound away in the Waterwitch to the west'ard we'll go.

Chorus

Bound away, bound away, where the stormy winds blow,
Bound away in the Waterwitch to the west'ard we'll go.

ShipMates

Wellerman

The Weller brothers from Sydney founded a whaling station in Ontago (NZ) in 1831 and serviced it from Sydney.

Verse

There once was a ship that put to sea
The name of the ship was the Billy O' Tea
The winds blew up, her bow dipped down
O blow, my bully boys, blow (Huh)

Chorus

Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
One day, when the tonguin' is done
We'll take our leave and go

Whisky-oh Johnny-oh

A Long Drag Shanty

Shantyman

Oh whisky is the life of man and has been since the world began

Crew

Whisky, Oh Johnny Oh Rise em up from down below
Whisky, Whisky, Whisky, Oh Up aloft them yards must go
Rise em up from down below