

Sea Chantey

Blow the Man Down

Halyard Chanty, Collected by J. Colcord, 1938

As I was a-walkin' down Paradise Street
To me way – hey, blow the man down!
A pretty young damsel I chanced for to meet
Give me some time to blow the man down.
Oh, blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
To me way – hey, blow the man down.
Oh, blow the man down, bullies, blow him right down!
Give me some time to blow the man down!

She was round in the counter and bluff in the bow,
So I took in all sail and cried, "Way enough now."

I hailed her in English, she answered me clear,
"I'm from the Black Arrow bound to the Shakespeare."

So I tailed her my flipper and took her in tow,
And yardarm to yardarm away we did go.

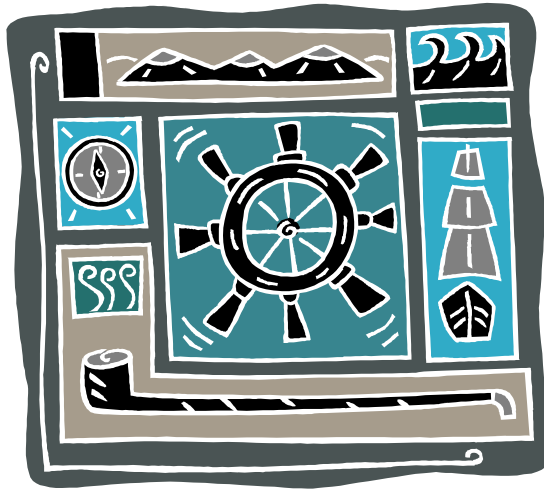
But as we were going she said unto me,
"There's a spanking full-rigger just ready for sea."

That spanking full-rigger to New York was bound;
She was very well manned and very well found.

But soon as that packet was clear of the bar,
The mate knocked me down with the end of a spar.

And as soon as that packet was out on the sea,
'Twas devilish hard treatment of every degree.

So I give you fair warning before we belay;
Don't ever take heed of what pretty girls say.



Sea Chanteys

Chantey.

To sing, speak, read in a sing-song tone. Probably from the French word, "chantez," the command to "Sing!"

Early chanteys were words yelled out, with the work being done on the emphasized syllable or word. Later, chanteys became songs involving a lead singer then a chorus of response from the crew. Chanteys helped people work

together as a unit. The songs focused workers attention on the job and took minds off the difficulty of heavy tasks. Songs for hauling on ropes were different from songs used to march around a capstan. A singer often improvised verses because the song had to keep going until the work was finished

Songs passed from person to person. Few songs were ever written down. The roots of sea music are the Anglo-Irish and the African-Caribbean traditions. African-Caribbean music tends to tell a story or present a poetic image within each verse. It is rhythmically oriented, often syncopated, open to improvisation and often employs harmonies. Songs in the Anglo-Irish tradition tend to be sung in unison. They often tell a single story throughout. A distinct American style of chanting came from these two traditions, resulting in work songs that told stories, used harmonies and had hard driving rhythms.

Grasso, Glenn, Compiler/Editor. *Songs of the Sailor. Working Chanteys at Mystic Seaport*. Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc. Mystic Seaport, Connecticut, 1998. ISBN 0-913372-84-6

Some Useful Sources:

Bullen, Frank T. and W.F. Arnold. *Songs of Sea Labour (Chanties)*. The Orpheus Music Publishing Company, Moorgate Station, London, 1914. {Location: UCLA M 1977 S2B873}

Colcord, Joanna C. *Songs of the American Sailormen*. NY: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1938. (including sketches of men at work singing shanties) [Location: UCLA: ML 3780 C67r 1938]

Short-drag shanties: Haul on the Bowline (p. 42) Paddy Doyle (p. 43)

Windlass or capstan shanties: Rio Grande (p. 86), A-Rovin' (p. 87) Stormalong (p. 88) The Codfish Shanty (p. 91) Good-Bye, Fare You Well ! (p. 113) Leave Her, Johnny (p.119)

Halyard shanties: Blow the Man Down (p. 53-58) Reuben Ranzo (p. 70) The Drunken Sailor (p. 78)

Forecastle songs: Rolling Home (p. 125) Old Sailor's Song (p. 138) The Sailor's Grave (p. 162) Home Dearie, Home (p. 167) Boston (p. 168) The Girls Around Cape Horn (p. 177) The Boston Come-All-Ye - or, Song of the Fishes (p. 188) There She Blows (p. 189) Blow Ye Winds (p. 191) Coast of Peru (p. 194) Diego's Bold Shores (p. 196) Rules of the Road (p. 204)

Shay, Frank. *American Sea Songs and Chanteys from the Days of Iron Men and Wooden Ships*. NY: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc, 1948.