

(Soon May) The Wellerman (Come)

Traditional New Zealand whaling song, c. 1860-70.

This shanty refers to ships owned by the Weller Brothers, who were major suppliers of shore whalers. Employees became known as " wellermen ". Instead of wages, workers at bay-whaling stations were paid in slops (ready made clothing), spirits and tobacco.

The song describes how the crew hopes that " wellerman " will bring them supplies. Tonguing refers to the tonguers, the part of a shore team responsible for butchering the whale after it had been caught. While its authorship is unknown, it was likely written by a teenage sailor or shore whaler.

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Capo III

FF Version

There once was a ship that put to sea, the
 She had not been two weeks from shore, when
 Before the boat had hit the water, the
 No line was cut, no whale was freed, the
 For forty days, or even more, the
 As far as I've heard, the fight's still on, the



name of the ship was The Bil - ly of Tea. The
 down on her a right whale bore. The
 wha - le's tail came up and caught her. All
 Cap - tain's mind was not of greed. But
 line went slack, then tight once more. All
 line's not cut and the whale's not gone. The



winds blew up; her bow dipped down, oh
 Cap - tain called all hands and swore, he'd
 hands to the side, har - pooned and fought her, when
 he belonged to the whale - man's creed, she
 boats were lost, there were only four, but
 Wel - ler - man makes his re - gu - lar call, to encourage



blow, my bul - ly boys, blow. Chorus
 take that whale in tow. Soon may the
 she dived down be - low.
 took the ship in tow.
 still that whale did go.
 the Captain, crew, and all.



Wellerman come, to bring us su - gar and tea and rum.

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