

The Diamond

A Scottish whaling song written in the late 1820s and first recorded by Ewan McColl in 1957 (LP: Thar She Blows). Over-fishing in the Greenland sea during the early 19th century had a devastating toll on the whale stocks. A new hunting ground, the South-West Fishery, was discovered in the region of the Davis Straits and it was mostly here that The Diamond fished.

The Diamond is a ship, my lads
For the Davis Strait we're bound
The quay it is all garnish-ed
With bonnie lasses 'round
Captain Thompson gives the order
To sail the ocean wide
Where the sun it never sets, my lads
Nor darkness dims the sky.

Chorus

*And it's cheer up my lads
Let your hearts never fail
When the bonnie ship the Diamond
Goes a-huntin' for the whale †*

Along the quay at Peterhead
The lasses stand aroon
Wi' their shawls all pulled around them
And the salt tears runnin' doon
Now don't you weep, my bonnie lass
Though you be left behind
For the rose will bloom on Greenland's ice
Before we change our mind

<more>

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 trousers o' the white
The jackets o' the blue
When we get back to Peterhead
We'll have sweethearts enou'

It will be bright both day and night
When the whaling lads come hame
In a ship that's full of oil, my lads
And money to our name
We'll make the cradles for to rock
And the blankets for to tear
And every lass in Peterhead sings
"Hushabye, my dear"

<Chorus x 2>

In 1830, a few years after this rollicking song was made up, The Diamond, Eliza Swan and The Resolution along with seventeen other whaling ships were caught in the pack ice of Melville Bay. Most ships were wrecked and many sailors lost their lives. The Eliza Swan was among those that got free and brought the sad news home.

