

The Bully Boat

A capstan shanty collected by Cecil Sharp in 1914 from John Short at age 75 and following a life at sea he was one of the last shantymen. It has obvious southern USA origins – probably from the black cotton port workers to work the jack-screws; that compressed the cotton bales into the holds of ships. The nonsense cargo verses are a more recent invention/addition.

Oh, the bully boat's a-comin' don't ye hear the paddles rollin'

Ranzo, Ranzo, hoo-ray, hoo-ray!

Oh, the bully boat's a-comin'; down the river she's a-bowlin'

Ranzo, Ranzo Ray!

Ooh, the bully boat's a-comin' down the Mississippi floatin'

Ooh, the bully boat's a-comin', an' the gals is all a-waitin'

As I walked out one morning to hear the steamboat rolling

It's there I met a maiden and with basket she was laden

Ooh, I'm bound away ter leave yer, but I never will deceive yer

I'm bound away ter leave yer, my half-pay I'm gonna leave yer

Ooh, we're bound for Yokohammer, with a load o'grand pianners

Ooh, we're bound for Valparaiser with a load o'rusty razors

Oh, we're bound for Boney's Aires with a bunch o' green canaries

Oh, we're bound for old Gibraltar with a load of bricks and mortar

Ooh, I'm bound away ter leave yer, but I never will deceive yer

When I come again to meet you it's with kisses I will greet you

Ooh the bully boat's a-comin' don't ye hear the paddles rollin'

Oh the bully boat's a-comin', down the river she's a-bowlin'.