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Shanties: A Brief Primer (pt 1)

By: jnemes

The first thing to realize about shanties is that they were, first and foremost, practical things, intended to synchronize repetitive action aboard a ship. In this aspect they are generally similar to military cadences, save that instead of synchronizing running, they coordinate heaving or hauling actions, pushing and pulling. The second thing to realize is that the term does not refer to every song sung at sea; songs sung by sailors while not on the lines or at the capstan, when off duty, were merely sea songs, songs with maritime flavor but no cadence value. The format of a shanty is almost always a call and response, with the shantyman responsible for knowing all the various lines and the rest of the sailors only required to know the response. The shantyman position was not necessarily an official one; nor would a sailor necessarily be hired as a shantyman; often by dint of experience, an old hand would lead them, and not in fact pull his weight upon the lines or capstan, saving his energy for the shanty, which was of course, vital to the operation thereof.

The origin of what one might call the “classic” shanty stems naturally from what is called a “sing-out”, simple, non-musical chants used to coordinate work, much like the later shanty, where upon certain syllables all the men would perform the action, thus causing a spike of force upon the rope or the capstan-bar. Work songs from ashore considerably influenced the development of the shanty, particularly songs of slaves in America and the West Indies, developed for field work. So too do dockyard songs cross-pollinate. Additionally, since we are here concerned with songs in English, traditional Irish and English songs also greatly influenced the development of the shanty. Needless to say, the trans-Atlantic voyages in particular brought sailors into contact with a wide variety of songs of varying sorts, from work songs to ballads, all of which, to some extent, influenced the shanty.

All shanties have specific purpose; a shanty appropriate for one task will not serve at all for another. As alluded to before, there are two types of shanties: hauling shanties and heaving shanties; the former for working the ropes to control the sails, the latter for manning the capstan and similar. Hauling shanties are divided into long-drag (halyard), short drag, sweating-up, bunt, hand-over-hand, and stamp-and-go, the first two of which are for tops'ls, t'gallants, and royals, the third for sheets controlling the tack and clew, the fourth for sail-stowing, and the last two for braces, jibs and stays'ls. The heaving shanties are concerned with the anchor capstan, mechanically raising sails via capstan, warping in and out of dock, and for pumps.

As I teach shanties, my principal source will be what could be termed a shantyman's bible, Shanties from the Seven Seas. This volume contains over four hundred shanties and sea songs, and was compiled by Stan Hugill, often termed the Last Working Shantyman; he was shantyman on the Garthpool, a Limejuice Cape Horner, the last British commercial sailing vessel, on her final voyage in 1929. Do note that, since shanties were living, breathing, folk songs, there are no canonical lyrics, and I will alter lyrics as I see fit, to reflect versions I prefer or to censor the more objectionable content, primarily of the racial variety. If you want to know more, I'd be happy to lend out the book briefly, you need just ask.

We had an event

By: eeb

Things that happened at the event:

* Literal worms sang some camp songs
* Promised our solidarity to the union
* We learned that twrights dad has, in fact, got it going on
* Every song is a Disney song if you try hard enough
* Christmas came early
* Sea shanty singing
* Kiss kiss fall in love
* Streetlights
* Streetlights
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* Streetlights

Bad Math Jokes

By: kicohen

“What kind of math do cavemen do? Calculus BC”

“Why did the mathematician walk into the bar? His i’s were imaginary”

“How did the math teacher get to the conference? On a Cartesian plane”

Exec’s new names

By: jnemes & jthreefo

**Mike** - Manvo Windaher

(Michael: Manveru)

(winda = woof, -her = lord)

**Skye** - Helle Raucotári

(rauco = demon, -tári queen)

**Dillon** - Ëaro Erulehto

(Erulehto = Jeremy)

**Erin** - Íverin Heriyaulion

(heri = lady, yaulion = of cats)

**Zora** - Amaurea Ambaculuina

(amba = top, culuina = orange (in color))

**Joe** - Úvo Turpoicaron

(Joseph: Úvitéru)

(tur = master, poicaron = of cleaners)

**Murphy** - Ëarohtar Aranturma

(aran = king, turma = shield)

Haul Away Joe

By: jnemes

Hey, don't yer see that black cloud a-risin'? (Timme!)

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

Hey, don't yer see that black cloud a-risin'? (Timme!)

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

When I wuz a little boy, so my mother told me,

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

That if I did not kiss the girls, my lips would all grow mouldy.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

Now first I met a Yankee girl, an' she was fat an' lazy,

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

And then I met an Irish gal; she damn near drove me crazy.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

I courted then a Frenchie gal; she took things free an' easy.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

But now I've got an English girl, an' she sure is a daisy.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

King Louis wuz the King o' France before the revolution,

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

But then he got his head cut off; it spoiled his constitution.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

Saint Patrick wuz a gentleman, an' he came of decent people.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

He built a church in Dublin town, an' on it set a steeple.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

From Ireland then he drove the snakes, then drank up all the whiskey.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

This made him dance an' sing a jig, he felt so fine an' frisky.

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

'Way haul away, we'll haul for finer weather!

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

'Way haul away, we'll haul away together!

Ch: 'Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!