

1. In Amsterdam there lived a maid  
**Mark well what I do say!**  
In Amsterdam there lived a maid  
And she was mistress of her trade.  
**I'll go no more a-rovin with you,  
fair maid.**

**A-rovin', a-rovin,  
Since rovin's been my ru-i-in  
I'll go no more a-rovin with you fair maid**

2. One night I crept from my abode,  
To meet this fair maid down the road.
3. I met this fair maid after dark  
And took her to her favourite park.
4. I took this fair maid for a walk,  
And we had such a loving talk.
5. I put my arm around her waist,  
She said, "Young man you're in great haste".
6. I put my hand upon her knee,  
Says she, 'Young man, you're rather free".
7. I put my hand upon her thigh,  
Says she, 'Young man, you're rather high'.
8. I towed her to the *Maiden's Breast*,  
From south, the wind veered sou'-sou'-west.
9. The eyes in her head turned east and west,  
And her thoughts were as deep as an old sea-  
chest.
10. We had a drink, of grub a snatch,  
We sent two bottles down the hatch.
11. Her dainty charms was white as milk,  
Her lovely hair was soft as silk.
12. Her heart was pounding like a drum,  
Her lips was red as any plum.
- The eyes in her head turned east and west  
Then she was a-heaving of her chest.
- In three weeks time I was broke and spent  
And off to sea I sadly went.
13. We lay down on a patch of grass,  
And I felt such a ruddy arse.
14. She pushed me over on me back,  
She laughed so loud her lips did crack.
15. She swore that she'd be true to me,

Then spent me pay-day fast and free.

16. In three week's time I was badly bent,  
Then off to sea I sadly went.

17. In a bloodboat Yank bound round  
Cape Horn  
Me boots and clothes were all in pawn.

18. Around Cape Stiff through ice and snow,  
And up the coast to Callyo.

19. And then back to the Liverpool docks,  
With saltpetre stowed in my socks.

Now when I got back home from sea,  
A soldier had her on his knee.

**Guitars & Music** sing just the verses in larger font  
( 1,3,5,6, 15,16,17, 19, last) at  
[youtu.be/wn4wNtZ0Bc8](https://youtu.be/wn4wNtZ0Bc8)  
Others sing fewer verses stil..

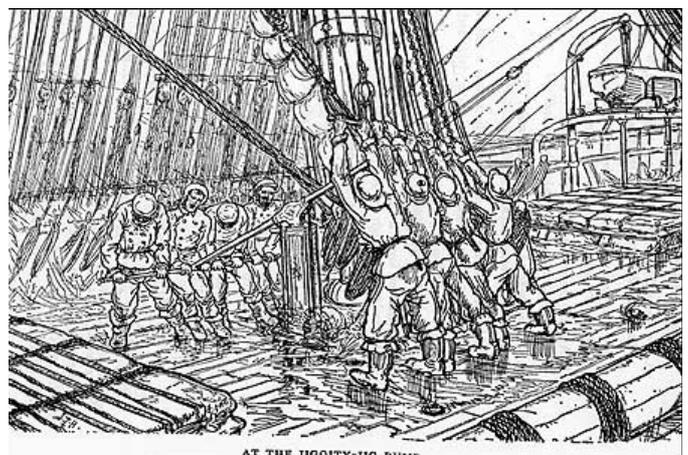
You can watch A-Rovin' from the film **Moby Dick**  
(1956) at [youtu.be/VK0jrn9sGUQ](https://youtu.be/VK0jrn9sGUQ)

### Notes:

The numbered verses are from **Hugill**..

**Pumping** often lasted for hours, so a large number  
of verses are needed..

Hugill says verses 1-6 are unaltered and for the  
others the rhyming words at the end of each solo are  
also intact.



**Hugill, Stan:**  
**At the Jiggy-jig Pump**  
from **Shanties of the Seven Seas**, 1994.

### Notes:

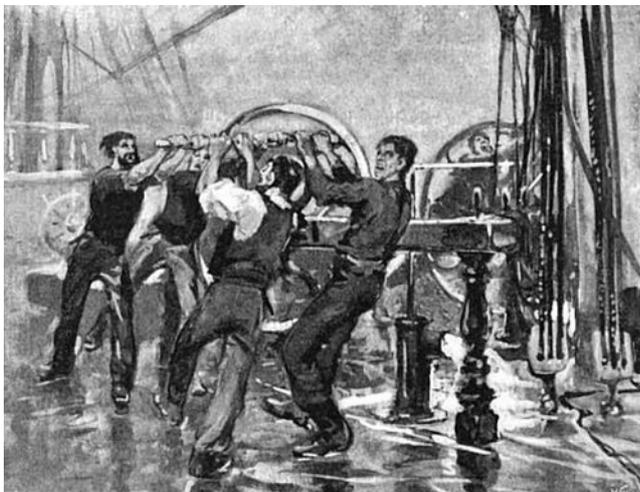
A **Pump** shanty,

**Other Names:** A-Rovin', Amsterdam, The Maid of Amsterdam.

The above version as collected by Stan **Hugill**, for ***Shanties from the Seven Seas***, 1994, where Hugill wrote :

**A-roving** was originally sung at the **pumps** and old-fashioned **windlass**. In both labours, two long levers were worked up and down by the men: a backbreaking job. These levers - in the case of pumps they were known as "brakes" - had a long wooden handle inserted in their outboard ends, enabling three or four men to grasp each brake.

Many shanties started life at the pump brakes or old-fashioned windlass levers. Later, ships began to use **capstans with a large windlass** below the fo'c'sle head and iron ships began to replace wooden ones, thereby doing away with the arduous toil of pumping ship with monotonous regularity, watch and watch. [Then] these shanties were adapted for use at the **capstan** and more modern and not-so-often-used flywheel or **Downton pump** (see image that follows).



**Symons, W:** ***Sailors working at a Downton pump***, Illustration from an article on sailor chanteys, in "***Sailors' Work Songs***" by **Patterson, J.E.** 1900. via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

[When the work changed] the rhythm very often had to be adjusted to the new type of job.

**A-Rovin'** is, I feel, always sung much too fast by modern professional singers. The words "A-rovin',

a-rovin'" should be timed to fit the downward movement of a four-foot diameter pump wheel.

The **flywheel pump handles**, like the old-fashioned levers, allowed only three or four men at the most to do the job. In the case of the [flywheel], so that many more hands could be employed, a rope known as a "bell-rope", with an eye spliced in one end, was looped over the end of each pump wheel handle, and as the wheel was about to descend the men, first on one side and then on the other, would haul on the rope, lightening the toil considerably.

The old-fashioned up and down or **Jiggity-jig windlass** for anchor-heaving was used right to the end of the days of sail in the coastal schooners and ketches of Great Britain; I have myself spent many hours at its brakes and know something of the back-breaking labour it must have caused in the larger deep-water ships of a bygone age.

**A-Rovin'** appears to be of fair antiquity. ... some say the tune is Elizabethan. As well as the shore folk-song found in Great Britain, there exist Dutch, Flemish and French versions of this tune. An English shorter version collected by Cecil **Sharp** is ***We'll go no more a-cruisin'***. And it has within recent years reappeared over the radio as ***Oh women, Oh women!*** with a touch of the cowboy and hillbilly about it!

In the version sung by Sailor John the main theme was frankly Rabelaisian - "coarse and indelicate words wedded to a haunting rhythm", as one writer has expressed it. The first 6 verses here are unaltered. After that I have tried to keep as much as possible to the story as it used to be sung at sea, Bowdlerising only at impossible places [by keeping] the rhyming words at the end of each solo intact.

I have versions from my father, from **Anderson**, a Scottish carpenter who had served in many Liverpool sailing ships, and from H. **Groetzmann**, a German seaman who had sailed for years in English barques in the West Coast of South America trade.

**In the chorus** very often: "///" was sung instead of "We'll", "roamin" for "rovin", "false maid" for "fair maid", and "overthrow" or "downfall" for "ruin".

...

The last three or four stanzas are fairly modern. Saltpetre, guano, and all kinds of nitrates were shipped from the south-west coast of South America to British and continental ports mainly in the latter days of sail.