

The Bonnie Ship The Diamond

1. The Diamond is a ship, my lads
 For the Davis Strait she's bound;
 The quay it is all garnishéd
 With bonnie lasses 'round.
 Cap'n Thompson gives the order
 To sail the ocean wide -
 Where the sun it never sets, my lads
 Nor darkness dims the sky.

**And it's cheer up my lads
 Let your hearts never fail,
 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

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

**For it's cheer up my lads
 Let your hearts never fail,
 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

3. Here's a health to the Resolution
 Likewise the Eliza Swan,
 Here's a health for the Battler o' Montrose
 And the Diamond, ship of fame.
 We wear the trousers o' the white,
 The jackets o' the blue.
 When we return to Peterhead
 We'll have sweethearts anew.

**For it's cheer up my lads
 Let your hearts never fail,**

**For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

4. So it will be bright both day and night
 When the whalin' lads come home,
 With ship full up with oil, boys
 And money to our name.
 We'll make the cradles all to rock, And the
 blankets all to tear,
 And every lass in Peterhead sing
 "Hushabye, my dear".

**For it's cheer up my lads
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 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

5. The Diamond is a ship, my lads,
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You can reminisce with an old BBC recording
 of **The Watsons** singing at
<https://youtu.be/9wWDnXUAPWI>
 or sing from on-screen lyrics with **Lissa
 Keole** at <https://youtu.be/835uHUarw3k>
 or hear **Carl Peterson** and view old prints of
 ships at https://youtu.be/b_J-4ygR3zs

			
<p>Copper tripods at Blubber Box Quay, Peterhead. They were used to boil (try out) tons of blubber for hours to render it into valuable oil. Oil was used for lamps and lubrication, for the jute mills at Dundee, in industrial soap & cosmetics and in margarine and ice cream.</p>	<p><i>A bottle of unrefined whale oil</i>, by Kurzon, from a Wikipedia article.</p>	<p><i>Whale oil lamp in brown-glazed earthenware with candle bowl for the wick and base drip pan</i> by Claus Ableiter, now in Nordiska Museet, Stockholm,</p>	<p>Corset of baleen (from the mouths of baleen whales). From the video Whaling in Peterhead - https://youtu.be/hvmlqYjq0gw?t=40.</p>

Notes:

Other names: The Bonnie Ship the Diamond, The Diamond

A traditional Scottish song; versions were collected by **Grieg and Duncan** in 1905 and **AL Lloyd** in 1937.

The **Davis Strait** lies between Greenland and Canada's Baffin Island.

About Whaling

"The whale that the whalers went to catch was called the '**Right Whale**', because it was the right whale to hunt.

"The sailors got into rowing boats, chased after the whales and threw iron harpoons with long ropes attached. A whale might pull the boat along for hours, or might even hit the boat with its tail and fling the sailors into the icy water.

"When the whale was caught and slaughtered, its fat was cut into chunks and boiled down into oil. The oil was used for lamps, for heat and to oil machinery. The whalebones were very strong and supple, and were used for many things."

There is a fact-filled **video** about **Whaling in Peterhead** at <https://youtu.be/hvmlqYjq0gw?t=40>.

History of The Bonnie Ship The Diamond

A.L. Lloyd, in sleeve notes of LP *Leviathan!* wrote Sad events lie behind this most spirited of whaling songs. By the 1820s the relatively milder northern waters were fished clean, and whalers were having to search in more distant corners of the Arctic, notably round ... Northwest Greenland.

In **1830**, a fleet of **fifty** British whaleships reached the grounds in early June, [earlier than] expected. But the same winds that had helped them also crowded the Bay with ice floes and locked most of

the fleet in, including the Diamond, the **Resolution**, the **Rattler** (not Battler) **of Leigh** (not Montrose), and the **Eliza Swan**. Twenty fine ships were crushed to splinters and many bold whalersmen froze or drowned.

The **Eliza Swan** was among those that got free and brought the sad news home.

Our song must have been made only a season or two before that tragedy, for the Diamond's maiden voyage was in 1825. One wonders if the man who made the song was up in Melville Bay the year of the disaster, and whether he was lost with his ship.

The **Scots Language Centre**, Perth writes about another ship of the same name from Aberdeen www.scotslanguage.com/articles/node/id/383:

"The Diamond sailed to the Davis Strait every year from 1812 to 1819 ... from Aberdeen, as sung in other versions [of the song].

"The whalers would be away for several months, so their **womenfolk dressed in their best shawls** to see them off...

"**In 1819** the ships named in this song were waiting in April ...for the pack ice to melt, but the wind changed and they were all caught and frozen in. The sailors knew this might happen and they had put tree trunks inside across the hulls to make the ships stronger. One by one the ships were squeezed flat, but the sailors knew by the sounds that this was going to happen and they could escape onto the ice. They lived in tents made from the sails and burnt their ships' timbers for warmth.

"They suffered greatly, but after many months they were rescued and came home. They left the Bonnie Ship the Diamond and the other ships behind, crushed flat by the Greenland ice.

For a discussion on which date / ship is in this song, see [mudcat.org thread 45251](http://mudcat.org/thread/45251) .

Map indicating Davis Strait, lying between Greenland and Nunavut, Canada,
by [David Kernow](#), from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

