

1. Was you ever in Quebec?  
Stowin' timber on the deck  
Where you'd break yer bleedin' neck  
Riding on a donkey!

**Way hey, away we'll go  
Donkey riding, donkey riding,  
Way hey, away we'll go  
Riding on a donkey.**

2. Was you ever round Cape Horn  
Where it's always fine and warm?  
Wish to God you'd never been born  
**Riding on a donkey. ...**

3. Was you ever in Cardiff Bay?  
Where the girls all shout "Hooray -  
Here's comes Johnny with his 6 months' pay"  
**Riding on a donkey. ...**

4. Was you ever in Vallipo?  
Where the gals put on a show,  
Wriggle their arse with a roll and go  
**Riding on a donkey. ...**

5. Was you ever down Mobile Bay?  
Screwin' cotton all the day?  
A dollar a day is a white man's pay.  
**Riding on a donkey. ...**

6. Was you ever in Mirramashee?  
Where you tie up to a tree,  
And they 'skeeters do bite we,  
**Riding on a donkey ...**

**Way hey, away we go  
Donkey riding, donkey riding,  
Way hey, away we go  
Riding on a donkey.**

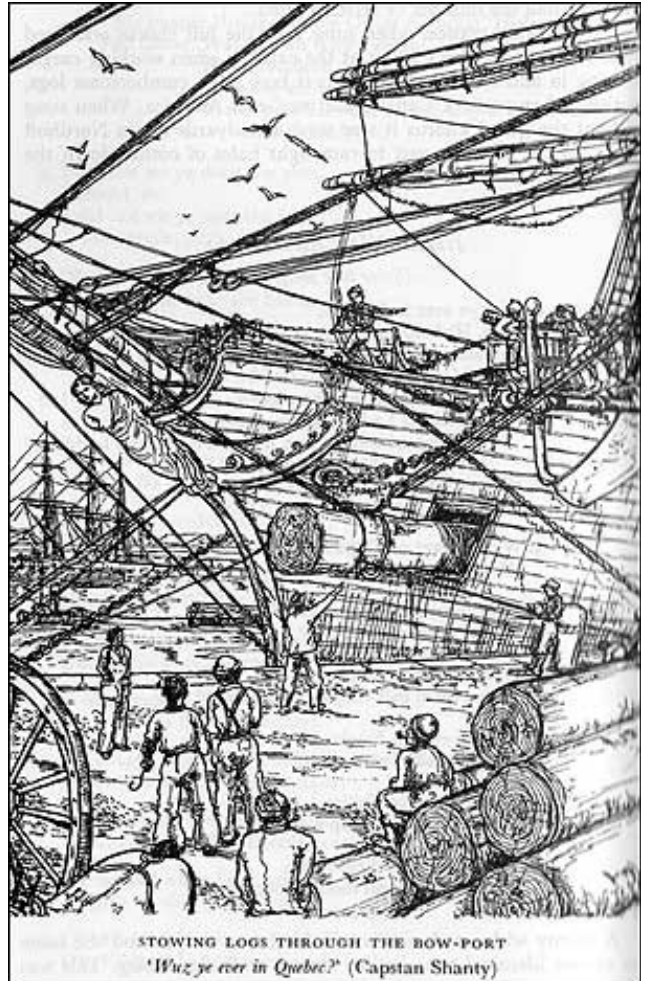
Those are the verses chosen by Fisherman's Friends at [youtu.be/iv41emP7c1w](https://youtu.be/iv41emP7c1w)

Shantymen chose by voyage or home town:

Was you ever in Timbuktu?  
Where the gals are black and blue,  
And they wriggle their arses, too,  
Riding on a donkey. ...

5. Was you ever in Canton?  
Where the men wear pigtailed long,  
And the gals play hong-ki-kong,  
Riding on a donkey. ...

7. Was you ever on the Broomielaw?  
Where the Yanks are all the go,  
And the boys dance heel an' toe,  
Riding on a donkey. ...



Stowing logs through the bow-port  
'Was ye ever in Quebec?' (Hugill)



Map of South America showing Callao and Valparaiso (Vallipo)

Part of a map at [www.sacredearth-travel.com](http://www.sacredearth-travel.com)  
"In Darwin's Footsteps ... voyage of the Beagle".

### Notes:

A **capstan** shanty for loading cargo or lumber also a **stow-away** shanty. or a **walk-away**, **runaway** or **stamp-and-go** shanty!

**Other names:** Donkey riding, Riding on a donkey, Was you ever in Quebec?

This is common verses plus my favourites. Listen to Fisherman's Friends at [youtu.be/iv41emP7c1w](https://youtu.be/iv41emP7c1w)

Stan **Hugill**, 1994, ***Shanties of the Seven Seas*** says:

Donkey Riding was very popular among the **timber droghers** both in Liverpool and in Canadian ports, and was used as a capstan and a **runaway** song when working cargo. [Hugill] got the song from Spike Sennett, who said it was just as popular at sea as in port.

Many work songs used by seamen and dockers to stow cargo (in particular lumber and cotton) were the same as those used for capstan and other jobs at sea.

Much improvisation was given to this song, and many indecent lines found in the regulation verses.

### Notes on the words

**Donkey** - a donkey engine, used for loading and unloading cargo. I can only find steam-powered donkey engines described.

"Dead Horse" on [Mudcat.org](http://Mudcat.org) writes: It is possible that Donkey Riding was an expression used by \*proper seamen\* to poke fun at those who used the donkey engine to do their work for them. This was turned around by those \*lubbers\* who loaded cargoes more quickly, got in & out of port sooner, so managed to keep their ships profitable, while the old die-hards found themselves \*on the beach\* and jobless.

**Timbuktu** - inland but on the River Niger.

**Vallipo** - Valparaiso is in Chile, here shortened by sailors to Vallipo. Can also be given five syllables as Vallaparaíso,

**Screwing cotton** - compressing it so more of it can be stowed the hold

**Mirammashee** - Miramichi, river and port in New Brunswick, Canada, exporting timber until 1825 and had a dockyard 1773-1825.

More towns are given in other versions. The shantyman would make up as many as needed.

*Logger operating a donkey engine, Washington state, 1908.*  
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