

## Johnny Bowker

Oh! do, me Johnny Bowker, come rock 'n' roll  
me over,

**Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, do!**

2. Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, come roll me  
down to Dover,

**Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, do!**

3. O do, me Johnny Bowker, let's all go on a  
jamboree,

**O do, me Johnny Bowker, do!**

4. Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, the watches are  
cala-la-shee,

**Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, do!**

5. Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, the Old Man he's  
a soaker.

6. O do, me Johnny Bowker, the chief mate  
he's a croaker,

7. Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, the bosun's  
never sober.

8. — I bet ye are a rover.

9. — the sails he's a tailor.

10. — the chips he ain't no sailor.

11. — in London lives yer lover.

12. — in Bristol there's another.

13. — come haul away the bowline.

14. — the packet she is rollin'.

15. — we'll either break or bend it.

16. — we're man enough to mend it.

17. — we'll haul away an' bend 'er.

18. — me sweatheart's young and tender.

13. — we're chasing down to Dover.

13. — oh one more pull and choke her

**Oh do, me Johnny Bowker, do!**

[Tie it up]?

This version by [The Shanty Crew](#)

### Notes

Foresheet sweating-up shanty. Hugill gives 23 verses.

**Alternatives:** Johnny Boker, Johnny Booker, Johnny Bowker

**Hugill, Stan, 1994, *Shanties from the Seven Seas* :**

This is a foresheet song, used for "sweating up", to give a final drag on a halyard to gain the last inch, at tacks and sheets and sometimes for bunting a sail, although this latter job was considered for the prerogative of Paddy Doyle.

My friend Mr T.E.Elwell told me that in ships in which he served it was usually sung when there was an "all hands" job at the fore, main, or crojik sheets. Instead of do he always sang haul.

"Do" was grunted out staccato, or rather the word was sung to its correct note and then a rising, gasped-out "ugh" would follow as the pull came.

Doerflinger believes it to be related to negro and minstrel duties since the name Johnny Boker often appears in such songs and he refers to a minstrel song with a refrain which ran:

"Oh Jonny Boker, help dat Nigger, do Jonny Boker do!"

In the recent story of the Great Eastern — ***The Iron Ship*** - reference is made to the singing of her seven-foot bosun of "Adieu my Johnny Boker", to which the crew roared out responses, many unfit for the ears of the ladies in the Grand Saloon!

A version once used in Newfoundland to help haul portable huts across the ice and also to move boats on the land is to be found in ***Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*** (Greenleaf and Mansfield):

And it's o my jolly poker,  
And we'll start this heavy joker,  
And it's o my jolly poker-O!

Hugill, Stan: ***Hauling on the Foresheet***  
from ***Shanties of the Seven Seas***, 1994.

