

1. Come gather round you sailor boys and
listen to my plea,
And when you've heard my tale you'll pity
me.

For I was a god-damned fool
in the port of Liverpool
On the first time that I came home from
sea.

2. I was paid off at the Home, from a voyage
to Sierra Leone.

Four pound ten a month was all my pay.
And it jingled in me tin,
'Till I was taken in
By a girl by the name of Maggie May.

**Oh Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken
her away,
To slave upon Van Diemen's cruel shore.
For she robbed so many sailors,
and captains of the whalers
And she'll never stroll down Paradise
Street no more.**

3. When I first met Maggie May, she took my
breath away,
She was cruising up and down on Canning
Place.

She was dressed in a gown so fine,
like a frigate of the line,
So, me being a sailor, I gave chase.

4. She gave me a saucy nod, and me like a
farmer's clod
Let her take me, line abreast, in tow
and under all plain sail
we ran before the gale
And to the Crow's Nest Tavern we did go.

**Oh Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken
her away,
To slave upon Van Diemen's cruel shore;
For she robbed so many sailors,
and captains of the whalers
And she'll never stroll down Paradise
Street no more.**

5. In the morning when I woke, I found that
I was broke,
I hadn't got a penny to me name.
So I had to pawn me suit,
me John L's and me boots
Down in the Park Lane pawn-shop, number
nine.

6. Oh, you thieving Maggie May, you robbed
me of me pay
When I spent last night with you ashore.
And the judge he guilty found her
of robbing a homeward-bounder
But she'll never stroll down Paradise Street
no more.

**Oh Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken
her away,
To slave upon Van Diemen's cruel shore;
For she robbed so many sailors,
and captains of the whalers
And she'll never stroll down Paradise
Street no more.**

7. She was chained and sent away from
Liverpool one day,
The lads they cheered as she sailed down the
bay,
Oh, and every sailor lad,
he only was too glad
That they'd sent the old girl off to Botany
Bay.

**Oh Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken
her away,
To slave upon Van Diemen's cruel shore.
For she robbed so many sailors,
and captains of the whalers
And she'll never stroll down Paradise
Street no more.**

Words above as sung by [Stormalong John](#).

Here is an alternative chorus:

Oh Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken you away
And you'll never walk down Lime Street anymore.
You may search from here to China,
you'll not find a girl that's finer -
That is finer than my darling Maggie May.

And here's another version of verse 5:

5. Next day I woke in bed, with a sore and aching
head,
No shoes, or shirt, or trousers could I find.
I asked her where they were
and she answered, "My dear sir -
They're down in Kelly's pawn-shop, number nine".

Maggie May

Notes:

Capstan shanty

Hugill gives four-line verses followed by a chorus, but modern versions usually have eight-line verses, with the second stanza sung to the tune of the chorus.

Notes on the words

The Home - the Liverpool Sailors' Home (opened 1850), in **Canning Place**

Van Dieman's Land - Tasmania, a penal colony.

Paradise Street - a street of ill repute

John L's - long johns ...

A date in the 1880's is indicated for versions with the line "I had to pawn my suit, my John L's and my boots". The prizefighter John L Sullivan gave his name to "**Long Johns**" or "**John L's**",

but as Sullivan wasn't born until 1859, he didn't become really famous until after 1880.
(**Snuffy**, in [Mudcat.org](#))

Botany Bay - alternative transportation destination

Hugill, Stan, 1994, *Shanties from the Seven Seas*: says this concerning the street names in his versions:

"To include all [streets] it would appear that Maggie May's habitat stretched from **Park Lane** and **Canning Place** (old Liverpool custom house) along **Paradise Street** to **Whitechapel** including **Peter Street**.

"**Wind Street** [given in another version] is in Swansea. In the more modern versions and the skiffle number of Maggie May, **Lime Street**, Liverpool, is given as her haunt.

"A twisted version of the chorus I once heard gives Bantry Bay for Botany Bay!"



Hugill, Stan, *Whorehouse District in French Seaport*, redrawn from a French print.