

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. How well I do remember
When I first met Maggie May,
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 I awoke,
I was flat and stoney broke,
No trousers, shirt, or waistcoat could I find.
When I asked her where they were
she said, "My very good sir -
They're down in Kelly's pawn-shop, number
nine".

6. To the pawnshop I did go
but no clothing could I find
So A policeman came and took that girl
away
And the judge he guilty found her
of robbing a homeward-bounder
And he paid her passage out 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.**

7. She was chained and sent away
from Liverpool that day,
The lads they cheered as she sailed down
the bay,
Oh, and every sailor lad,
was only 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.**

[Stormalong John](#) sing this version at a blustery
maritime festival youtu.be/fdnb9JfER18
The Spinners' version is at
<https://youtu.be/wc4GITm7Pfy>

The Spinners' chorus is

Oh Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken her away
And she'll never walk down Lime Street anymore.
For she robbed so many sailors,
And captains of the whalers -
That dirty, robbing, no-good Maggie May.

Here's an interesting version of v 5:

5. Next day I woke in bed,
with a sore and aching head,
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.

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 - (alternative verse 5) - 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.