

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 modern shanty group  
[Stormalong John](#).

Watch them sing at a blustery maritime festival  
[youtu.be/fdnb9JfER18](https://youtu.be/fdnb9JfER18)

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.