

1. 'Twas a cold and dreary morning in  
December (December)  
All of me money, it was spent (Spent, spent)  
Where it went to, Lord I can't remember  
(Remember)  
So I down to the shipping office went  
(Went, went!)

Paddy lay back (Paddy lay back)  
Take in yer slack (Take in yer slack)  
**Take a turn around the capstan**  
**Heave a pawl! (Heave a pawl)**  
**'Bout ship's stations, boys, be 'andy**  
(Be 'andy)  
**We're bound for Vallaparaiser 'round the**  
**Horn!**

2. That day there was a great demand for  
sailors (sailors)  
For the colonies, and for 'Frisco and for France  
(France, France)  
So I shipped aboard a limey barque, the  
'otspur (the 'otspur),  
An' got paralytic drunk on my advance  
('vance, 'vance).

3. Now I joined her on a cold December  
mornin' (mornin')  
A-frappin' o' me flippers to keep me warm  
(warm, warm),  
With the south cone a-hoisted as a warnin'  
(warnin'),  
To stand by the comin' of a storm  
(storm, storm).

4. Now some of our fellers 'ad been drinkin'  
(drinkin'?)  
An' I meself was 'eavy on the booze  
(Booze! Booze!).  
An' I was on me ol' sea-chest a-thinkin'  
(thinkin')  
I'd turn into me bunk an' have a snooze  
(snooze, snooze).

5. I woke up in the mornin' sick an' sore  
(saw-er)  
I knew that I was outward bound again  
('gain, 'gain)  
I hears a voice a-bawlin' at the door (daw-er)  
"Lay aft, ye sods, an' answer to yer name."  
(name, name)

6. 'Twas on the quarterdeck where I first saw  
'em (sawr 'em)  
Such an uggerly bunch I never seen before.  
('fore, 'fore)  
For there was a bum and stiff from every  
quart'er (quart'er),  
An' it made me poor ol' heart feel sick and sore

(sore, sore).

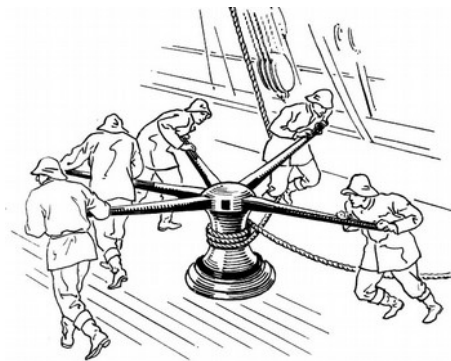
7. There was Spaniards, there was Dutchmen  
there was Rooshans (Rooshans)  
An' Johnny Crapeaux just across from France  
(France, France).  
Most of 'em could speak no word of English  
(English)  
But answered to the name of "Month's  
Advance!" ('vance, 'vance)

8. I knew that in me box I had a bottle (bot'le)  
That by the boardin'-master 'twas put there  
(there, there)  
An' I wanted something for to wet me throttle  
(throt'le)  
Somethin' for to drive away dull care (care,  
care)

9. So down upon me knees I went like thunder  
(thunder)  
Put me hand into the bottom o' the box  
(box, box)  
An' what wuz me great surprise an' wonder,  
(wonder)  
Nowt but a bottle o' medicine for the pox!  
(Pox! Pox!).

10. I wished that I was in the "Jolly Sailor"  
(Sailor)  
Along with Irish Kate a-drinkin' gin (gin, gin!)  
Aye and when that I awoke i-in the mornin'  
(mornin')  
I found that I was outward bound again  
('gain, 'gain)

11. So there was I once more again at sea,  
boys, (sea boys)  
The same ol' ruddy business o'er again  
('gain, 'gain).  
Oh, stamp the caps'n round an' make some  
noise, boys (noise boys)  
An' sing again this dear ol' sweet refrain  
('frain, 'frain).



Line art drawing of a capstan, by [Pearson Scott Foresman](#)  
from [wikimedia](#)

**Notes:**

**Capstan** shanty - and **Forebitter** (see illustration below).

The answering refrains in parenthesis may be spoken rather than sung.

**Alternative Titles:** Paddy get back, Paddy lay back, Mainsail haul, The Liverpool song, Vallaparaiser (or Valparaiso) round the Horn.

**This version:** Chris Roche on CD: *Whittlebury Song & Ale 2003*.

**Listen** to Stan Hugill, X-Seamen's Institute and David Jones sing it on YouTube at [youtu.be/3TA\\_E6ibPEM](https://youtu.be/3TA_E6ibPEM)

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

This was both a forebitter and a capstan song and a very popular one too, especially in Liverpool ships. My versions I learnt from my father and from the Liverpool Irish sailing ship man, John Connelly, who often sang the last line of the chorus in this fashion:  
"For we're bound for Vallaparaiser round the Horn"

It is a fairly old song dating back to the time of the Mobile cotton hoosiers and has two normal forms: one with an eight-line verse – this was the forebitter form; and the second with a four line verse – the usual

shanty pattern.

**Doerflinger** (says Hugill) gives a two line verse pattern as the shanty – a rather unusual form, and further on in his book he gives the forebitter with both four and eight line verses. He gives the title of the shanty as Paddy, get back and both his versions of the forebitter as Mainsail Haul.

Shay, Sampson, and Bone all suggest that it was a fairly modern sea song and give no indication that any form was sung as a shanty, but all my sailing ship acquaintances always referred to it as a shanty, and it was certainly song in the Liverpool to New York packets as such – at least a four-line verse form.

Hugill's capstan version of Paddy Lay Back has 19 verses and is given on my next page.. Hugill says that his verses from 11 onwards are fairly modern, but with the chorus of "For we're bound for Vallaparaiser round the Horn" are what was sung by Liverpool seamen engaged in the West Coast guano trade.

**Pawl** - bar preventing the capstan from recoiling (1620s)

**Vallaparaiser** - Valparaiso

**South cone** - a black cone hoisted to indicate the expectation of a gale from a generally southerly direction. The point is downward; a north cone is the other way up.



**Cruikshank** , George (d. 1878) *Saturday Night At Sea*, from the book "Songs, naval and national" by Thomas **Dibdin**, published in London in 1841.

It shows a group of sailors singing to amuse themselves while off duty.

Copied from [wikimedia](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saturday_Night_At_Sea.jpg)