

## The Smacksman

1. Once I was a schoolboy  
I stayed at home at ease  
Now I am a smacksman,  
I plough the ragin' seas.  
I thought I'd like seafarin' life,  
but very soon I found  
It was not all plain sailin', boys,  
when out on the fishin' ground.

**Coil away the trawl warp boys,  
let's heave on the trawl.  
When we get our fish on board  
we'll have another haul.  
Straightway to the capstan  
and merrily heave around,  
That's the cry in the middle of the night,  
"Haul the trawl, boys, haul."**

2. Every night in winter,  
as reg'lar as the clock  
We put on our old sou'westers,  
likewise our oilskin frock,  
And straightway to the capstan  
and merrily spin away,  
That's the cry in the middle of the night  
'As well as in the day.

**Coil away the trawl warp boys,  
let's heave on the trawl!  
When we get our fish on board  
we'll have another haul.  
Straightway to the capstan  
and merrily heave around,  
That's the cry in the middle of the night,  
"Haul the trawl, boys, haul."**

3. Now when we get our fish on board  
we have them all to gut;  
We put them in baskets  
and down the ice-locker put.  
We ice them down we save them  
We ice them all quite well,  
Keep them from all chafe, my boys,  
Like an oyster in his shell.

**Coil away the trawl warp boys,  
let's heave on the trawl!  
When we get our fish on board  
we'll have another haul.  
Straightway to the capstan  
and merrily heave around,  
That's the cry in the middle of the night,**

**"Haul the trawl, boys, haul."**

Sam Larner sings verses 1 and 3 at  
<https://youtu.be/VDp6KBc3Gs4>

Tom Brown sings three verses at  
<https://youtu.be/Rmi1bTs6f3s>

Ian Page sings more verses at <https://youtu.be/g-NkSvNp12E> with old photos !

### Notes:

Song from Norfolk fisherman Sam Larner (1878-1965)

### Alternative titles

Heave on the trawl, The Smacksman.

See also my notes on a very similar song [Haul, Boys, Haul](#)



*A sailing smack near Brightlingsea, Essex, 2006*  
by Chris55 via [Wikimedia](#)

**Trawl** - A sturdy bag or net that can be dragged along the bottom, or towed at various depths above the bottom, to catch fish.

**Capstan** - the capstan could be used to pull any line, not just the anchor cable.

**Sou'wester** - collapsible, wide-brimmed, oilskin rain-hat

### Trawling today

You might like to watch the video about life on a modern Newfoundland trawler at  
[https://youtu.be/qKm4Sr\\_DpY](https://youtu.be/qKm4Sr_DpY)