

The Wellerman

1. There once was a ship that put to sea
And the name of that ship was the Billy o'
Tea
The winds blew hard, her bow dipped down
Blow, me bully boys, blow! (Hah!)

**Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum.
One day, when the tonguin' is done
We'll take our leave and go.**

2. She had not been two weeks from shore
When down on her a right whale bore.
The captain called all hands and swore
He'd take that whale in tow. (Hah!)

**Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum.
One day, when the tonguin' is done
We'll take our leave and go.**

3. Before the boat had hit the water,
The wha-le's tail came up and caught her.
All hands to the side, harpooned and
fought her
When she dived down below (Huh!)

Soon may the Wellerman come...

4. No line was cut, no whale was freed,
The Captain's mind was not on greed;
But he belonged to the whaleman's creed -
She took that ship in tow (Huh!)

Soon may the Wellerman come ...

5. For forty days, or even more,
The line went slack, then tight once more.
All boats were lost, there were only four
But still that whale did go...

Soon may the Wellerman come...

6. As far as I've heard, the fight's still on -
The line's not cut and the whale's not gone.
The Wellerman makes his a regular call
To encourage the Captain, crew, and all.

**Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum.
One day, when the tonguin' is done
We'll take our leave and go.**

Sing with [The Longest Johns](#) from Bristol on their CD *Between Wind and Water*.

Notes

A traditional 19th century New Zealand folk song. It is tempting to think it may have been sung at the capstan.

The Longest Johns wrote at <https://thelongestsong.fandom.com/wiki/Wellerman>

"The **Weller Bros.** was a Sydney Australia shore-whaling company that operated primarily along the southern coast of New Zealand from 1830 to 1840. Though they had numerous vessels in their employ, none appear to have been named the Billy o' Tea. Anyone under the employ of the Weller Bros. were referred to as a **Wellerman**, but in the specific context of the song the Wellerman takes on the meaning of a supply ship sent by the company.

A Billy is slang for a makeshift kettle used for boiling water to make tea.

Tonguin' refers to the tonguers, part of a shore whaling team responsible for butchering the whale after it had been caught."

The rest of this web page is well worth reading.

About the words

Billy - see above

Wellerman - employee of the Weller Bros. or one of their ships.

Tonguin' - see above

Right whale - so named because it was the right whale to hunt



Southern Right Whales near Hermanus in South Africa, by [Olga Ernst](#), 2008
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