

## The Bonnie Ship The Diamond

1. The Diamond is a ship, my lads  
 For the Davis Strait she's bound;  
 The quay it is all garnishéd  
 With bonnie lasses 'round.  
 Cap'n Thompson gives the order  
 To sail the ocean wide -  
 Where the sun it never sets, my lads  
 Nor darkness dims the sky.

**And it's cheer up my lads  
 Let your hearts never fail,  
 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond  
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

2. Along the quay at Peterhead  
 The lasses stand aroun'  
 Wi' their shawls all pulled around them  
 And the salt tears runnin' down.  
 Now don't you weep, my bonnie wee lass  
 Though ye be left behind,  
 For the rose will bloom on Greenland's ice  
 Before we change our mind.

**For it's cheer up my lads  
 Let your hearts never fail,  
 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond  
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

3. Here's a health to the Resolution  
 Likewise the Eliza Swan,  
 Here's a health for the Battler o' Montrose  
 And the Diamond, ship of fame.  
 We wear the trousers o' the white,  
 The jackets o' the blue.  
 When we return to Peterhead  
 We'll have sweethearts anew.

**For it's cheer up my lads  
 Let your hearts never fail,**

**For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond  
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

4. So it will be bright both day and night  
 When the whalin' lads come home,  
 With ship full up with oil, boys  
 And money to our name.  
 We'll make the cradles all to rock, And the  
 blankets all to tear,  
 And every lass in Peterhead sing  
 "Hushabye, my dear".

**For it's cheer up my lads  
 Let your hearts never fail,  
 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond  
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

5. The Diamond is a ship, my lads,  
 For the Davis Strait she's bound  
 The quay it is all garnishéd  
 With bonnie lasses round.  
 Captain Thompson gives the order  
 To sail the ocean wide -  
 Where the sun it never sets, my lads,  
 Nor darkness dims the sky.

**For it's cheer up my lads  
 Let your hearts never fail,  
 For the Bonnie Ship the Diamond  
 Goes a-fishin' for the whale.**

Sing along with **David Coffin** at  
<https://youtu.be/3PU6VBJwFuc>  
 Reminisce with **The Watersons** at  
<https://youtu.be/9wWDnXUAPWI>  
 or view of prints of ships and hear **Carl  
 Peterson** at [https://youtu.be/b\\_J-4ygR3zs](https://youtu.be/b_J-4ygR3zs)

			
<p>Copper tripods at <b>Blubber Box Quay, Peterhead</b>. They were used to boil (try out) tons of blubber for hours to render it into valuable oil. Oil was used for lamps and lubrication, for the jute mills at Dundee, in industrial soap &amp; cosmetics and in margarine and ice cream.</p>	<p><i>A bottle of unre-fined whale oil</i>, by <a href="#">Kurzon</a>, from a Wikipedia article.</p>	<p><i>Whale oil lamp in brown-glazed earthenware with candle bowl for the wick and base drip pan</i> by <a href="#">Claus Ableiter</a>, now in Nordiska Museet, Stockholm,</p>	<p><b>Corset of baleen</b> (from the mouths of baleen whales). From the video <b>Whaling in Peterhead</b> - <a href="https://youtu.be/hvmlqYjq0gw?t=40">https://youtu.be/hvmlqYjq0gw?t=40</a>.</p>

### Notes:

**Other names:** The Bonnie Ship the Diamond, The Diamond

A traditional Scottish song; versions were collected by **Grieg and Duncan** in 1905 and **AL Lloyd** in 1937.

The actual ship's name was The Bonnie Ship The Diamond

The **Davis Strait** lies between Greenland and Canada's Baffin Island (see map)

### About Whaling

"The whale that the whalers went to catch was called the '**Right Whale**', because it was the right whale to hunt.

"The sailors got into rowing boats, chased after the whales and threw iron harpoons with long ropes attached. A whale might pull the boat along for hours, or might even hit the boat with its tail and fling the sailors into the icy water.

"When the whale was caught and slaughtered, its fat was cut into chunks and boiled down into oil. The oil was used for lamps, for heat and to oil machinery. The whalebones were very strong and supple, and were used for many things."

There is a fact-filled **video** about **Whaling in Peterhead** at <https://youtu.be/hvmlqYjq0gw?t=40>.

### History of The Bonnie Ship The Diamond

**A.L. Lloyd**, in sleeve notes of LP *Leviathan!* wrote Sad events lie behind this most spirited of whaling songs. By the 1820s the relatively milder northern waters were fished clean, and whalersmen were having to search in more distant corners of the Arctic, notably round ... Northwest Greenland.

In **1830**, a fleet of **fifty** British whaleships reached the grounds in early June, [earlier than] expected. But the same winds that had helped them also crowded the Bay with ice floes and locked most of the fleet in, including the Diamond, the **Resolution**, the **Rattler** (not Battler) **of Leigh** (not Montrose), and the **Eliza Swan**. Twenty fine ships were crushed to splinters and many bold whalersmen froze or drowned.

The **Eliza Swan** was among those that got free and brought the sad news home.

Our song must have been made only a season or two before that tragedy, for the Diamond's maiden

voyage was in 1825. One wonders if the man who made the song was up in Melville Bay the year of the disaster, and whether he was lost with his ship.



*Map indicating Davis Strait, lying between Greenland and Nunavut, Canada,* by [David Kernow](#), from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

The **Scots Language Centre**, Perth, [www.scotslanguage.com/articles/node/id/383](http://www.scotslanguage.com/articles/node/id/383) : writes about the ship and the song as follows

"The Diamond sailed to the Davis Strait every year from 1812 to 1819 ... not from Peterhead but from Aberdeen, as sung in other versions [of the song].

"The whalers would be away for several months, so their **womenfolk dressed in their best shawls** to see them off...

"**In 1819** the ships named in this song were waiting in April ...for the pack ice to melt, but the wind changed and they were all caught and frozen in. The sailors knew this might happen and they had put tree trunks inside across the hulls to make the ships stronger. One by one the ships were squeezed flat, but the sailors knew by the sounds that this was going to happen and they could escape onto the ice. They lived in tents made from the sails and burnt their ships' timbers for warmth.

"They suffered greatly, but after many months they were rescued and came home. They left the Bonnie Ship the Diamond and the other ships behind, crushed flat by the Greenland ice.

For a discussion on which date and which ship is being described in this song, see [mudcat.org thread 45251](http://mudcat.org/thread/45251) .