

The Ballad of Sammy's Bar

1. I went down to Sammy's Bar
Hey, the last boat's a-leaving
 By the shore at Pietà
Call away the di-so.
2. And my real love, she was there
Hey, the last boat's a-leaving
 There was sand all in her hair
Call away the di-so.
3. How did sand get in your hair
Hey, the last boat's a-leaving
 Darling Johnny put it there.
Call away the di-so.
4. Been with Johnny all the day
Hey, the last boat's a-leaving
 Down at Ghajn Tuffheija Bay.
Call away the di-so.
5. He's a better man by far,
 Because he's got a Yankee car.
6. I went out from Sammy's Bar,
 Had to hire a Yankee car.
7. Fourteen days I drank no wine,
 Saving for that love of mine.
8. Then one day in Paula Square,
 At a paper I did stare!

Notes:

Song, written by **Cyril Tawney** (1930-2005)

Other names: The Ballad of Sammy's Bar, The last boat's a-leaving, Sammy's Bar.

Cyril Tawney, wrote on his web site, (according to [MainlyNorfolk.info](#))

The scene was set in **Malta** and centred around a popular submariners' rendezvous actually called *The Old Bar* but always known as **Sammy's Bar**, after the proprietor. Sammy sold a very cheap and nameless rough, white wine, which you could call the Mediterranean's answer to English farmyard scrumpy. It was sold in five-penny or ten-penny measures, and even with hardened drinkers it was customary to dilute it with lemonade. The bar was so popular with submariners because its nearness to the Submarine Depot ship, HMS "Forth", tied alongside in Msida Creek. Sailors were paid fortnightly, so finances were usually rather thin during the second week. If you didn't have enough cash for a full-blown run ashore you could always nip round to Pietà Creek, quaff three 'tenpenny Sammy's', as they were called, and return to the ship quite mellow for a total outlay of half-

9. Johnny tried a hairpin bend,
 For my love, it was the end.
10. Going back to Sammy's Bar
Hey, the last boat's a-leaving
 I don't need no Yankee car.
Call away the di-so.



Coat of Arms of Malta 1975-1988 -
 (via [Wikimedia.org](#))

Malta's coat of arms includes a Dg ajsa (di-so)!

Cyril Tawney sings at <https://youtu.be/Yh5cjdA-Crw> or buy Cyril's CD: *Navy Cuts*, Cyril Tawney

a-crown.

The bar was little more than a hole in the wall, more like a little cave than a bar, and a couple of dozen people would fill it.

... This refrain has been corrupted down the years by imperfect hearing, so that we get "the last boats are leaving" and "haul away the di-so", both of which statements [are] absurdities.

Notes on the words

Pietà - a creek in Malta

di-so - a Maltese boat; a **dg ajsa** (pronounced dysa in Maltese) is a traditional water taxi, rather like a gondola.

Tawney wrote -

If you missed the last "liberty boat", provided by the Navy to ferry sailors back to their ship, you had to hail one of the numerous di-sos (they were available all night) and that's what is happening in the song, after the last verse.
[\[Mainly Norfolk web site\]](#)

Ghajn Tuffheija Bay - in Malta (say: I'n Tuffee-ya")

Paola Square - in Malta