



# KelticDead Music

## Stories, Tunes and Songs in the Traditions of our Celtic Dead

To the Four Ayrts to Guide Us, and  
For the Four Winds to Get Us There!

The mission of the **KelticDead Music** initiative is to find tunes and songs from around the world that have Celtic, Folk, World, Americana, and Seafaring origins, and arrange them into simple sheet music formats for folk musicians to use and share. In addition, the KDM initiative provides the in-depth stories with possible lyrics that follow the video-based, **KDM Broadsides** for a more complete music-education experience.



## KelticDead Music Broadside

*All the selections and sheet music content provided in the **KelticDead Music** initiative are from traditional, made-public, made-public with credits, or cited credits where applicable. This material content is the personal interpretations of the subject and provided by Patrick O-Shaun Young, **KelticDead Music**.*

## Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her

The “whaling industry” was a hard, brutal life, but in the mid-1800s it was one of the few industries available for the Scots and Irish during the time of the Great famine that afflicted thousands throughout Great Britain and Europe. That famine was caused by a potato blight.

Those that boarded the “packet” ships would be out to sea for months or years at a time. For some, separating from that life on the sea was a hard adjustment.



*A picture showing how the whalers would cull the “sperm” whale from the herd and harpoon it using small double end row boats or “whale boats” manned by 4 to 6 men.*



The reason for the whaling industry was to acquire the blubber of a certain type of whale that produced an oil that burned cleanly in lamps. The blubber of the whale was distilled on the packet ship and then sold to markets, usually to light street lamps in Scotland before electricity came along.

Other oils were also available, such as camphor oil which was cheaper to make and just as clean. Petroleum based oils came later in the late 1800s. While important to the British Isles, whale oil was never really competitive commercially in the global markets, but it was an option in those times.

## Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her

The sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) is the largest toothed whale (carnivore) with an enormous "square-shaped" head and having the largest brain of any animal on earth.

The name "sperm whale" came about from early whalers who mistook the waxy oil found in the spermaceti organ in the head as sperm. Whalers also described the sperm whale as the "right whale" for having the most abundant blubber for creating "whale oil."



Lyrics:

Oh, The times was hard and the wages low;  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her.  
You can go ashore and take your pay,  
It's time for us to leave her.

**Chorus:**

**Oh, Leave her, Johnny, leave her.**  
**Oh, leave her, Johnny, leave her.**  
**For the voyage is done, and the winds do blow.**  
**It's time for us to leave her.**

And her stern was foul and the voyage was long,  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her.  
And the winds was bad and the gales was strong,  
It's time for us to leave her.

**Chorus**

Oh, We'll leave her tight - we'll leave her trim  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her  
Oh, We'll heave the hungry packet in  
It's time for us to leave her.

**Chorus**

Lyrics continued:

Oh, leave her, Johnny, - with a grin  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her  
For there's many a worser we've sailed in  
It's time for us to leave her.

**Chorus**

Oh, now it's time - to say goodbye  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her  
For the old pierhead's a-drawing nigh  
It's time for us to leave her.

**Chorus.**

Scientists roughly estimate that there were about 1.1 million individual whales in 1700, and the population dropped by about 67% to 360,000 individuals by the 1990s due to whaling. Large-scale, commercial whaling ceased in about 1980, but it's not clear whether the sperm whale populations have since increased or are still decreasing. (\*)



Sperm whales face other human-caused threats, such as entanglement in fishing gear, being struck by ships and dying from human pollution. Recently, scientists have discovered that offshore windmills have also killed the whale populations due to conflicting sounds made by the windmills themselves which disrupt the whale's navigation capabilities. As for the United States the sperm whales they are included on the U.S. Endangered Species List and protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. (\* Internet sources.)

## Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her

Arrangement by KelticDead Music

Seafaring



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_Z\\_4ZMQGT8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_Z_4ZMQGT8)

**Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her** is typically played with a sad and yet, supportive mood by his more seasoned shipmates, as a young man leaves a whaling packet ship to go ashore after the voyage. As mentioned, sea voyages in the 1850s could last for years, and often, it became the only life that these young sailors knew. It is often sung as a Capella, but I sang it with instrumental support.

I start the tune with a Dannan, Hora-styled, Irish-tuned bouzouki both in the lower C Major and in the upper C Major to give that unique sound. As I started the lyrics, I also brought in a Mezzo-C whistle by Kerry, and joined by playing a bodhran with just my fingers. My friend, **Earnie Taft**, fiddle as supportive harmony while in the lyrics and played it to the end of the selection.



Shaun,  
That KelticDead Guy  
Patrick O. Young

Visit <https://www.reverbnation.com/kelticdead2> for a growing list of KDM audio and video broadsides.

For this and other free, PDF, KelticDead Music Story Broadsides visit the growing list of stories at

<https://kelticdeadmusic.org/story-broadsides/>

### KelticDead Music Initiative

is a private, on-line music-education initiative. All the music projects are recorded with live, acoustic instruments and performed in accordance with simplified sheet music arranged in eight bar formats (whenever possible) in accordance with the guidelines that are within the Celtic music traditions. For more music videos and stories visit ...

<https://KelticDeadMusic.org>