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 for a more complete music-education experience.

*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 from various internet sources and the personal interpretations of the subject is provided by **Patrick O-Shaun Young, KelticDead Music**. All graphics are either public domain or cited where applicable. Validation and verification are left up to the reader.*

Wellerman

Also known as
Soon, May the Wellerman Come!

This seafaring song is believed to have come out of the South Pacific around the 1850s when the whaling industry was at its height in New Zealand. Unlike other “sea shanties” this song is more in line with the sea-faring ballad traditions concerning the life and times of sailors aboard the “packet ships” that hunted the South Pacific “right whales.



In this seafaring tale, the men aboard the ship snared a right whale, and the captain, being of of the whalerman’s creed, would not let the whale go. The sailors aboard the ship lost their whale boats and had to follow orders, and would not let go of the whale. Thus, they were trapped aboard the ship until they either hauled the whale in or they ran out of food and supplies.

The only break in this standoff were the frequent visits from the **Wellerman Ship Company** which brought sugar, tea and rum.

The Weller Brothers and The Weller ShipCompany

Three brothers migrated into the New Zealand area in the 1830s. Edward, George, and Joseph Brooks were English-born merchants who pioneered commercial, shore-based whaling into the South Island of New Zealand from Sydney, Australia.

The early ‘sealers’ and whalers had been operating on the New Zealand coast for a number of years, and the brothers cast their prospects across the Tasman seas from Sydney for new businesses in the new land. They fitted out the ship ‘Lucy Ann’ of 214 tons, and loaded it with muskets, gunpowder, grog, hardware, clothing, stores and whaling equipment and set out for New Zealand.

In addition, they built up a steady trade in timber, spars, flax, potatoes, dried fish, Maori artefacts, and even tattooed Maori heads which were in high demand back in Sydney.

Wellermen

The Weller enterprise also sought trade with the English markets as well. Edward saw a profitable trade with whale products in the United Kingdom, and in 1833 they sent a trial shipment to London. The cargo arrived safely, but as New Zealand had not yet been proclaimed a colony, their shipment was regarded as foreign traders. The English authorities put an impost of £26 per ton on whale oil as “Weller Bros.” despite their Sydney domicile.

The brothers made strong representations to the home Government, but to no avail, and in face of the handicap, the trade with the U.K. had to be abandoned. The station at Otakou with its numerous buildings quickly decayed as noted in 1843 by Edward Shortland.



Made Public Image. Maori Chieftain/King, “Te-hira-Te-Kawau.”.

The “Wellermen.”

The Weller brothers initially engaged in whaling on the Otago Peninsula in 1831 to 1833. They sold provisions to whalers in New Zealand from their base at Otakou, which they named, “Otago.” Their employees became known as the “wellermen.”

Unlike whaling in the Atlantic and northern Pacific, the whalers in New Zealand practiced shore-based whaling which required them to process the whale carcasses on land. At its peak in 1834, the Otakou station was producing 310 tones of whale oil per year. The Otakou station became the center of a network of seven stations that were highly profitable for the Wellers, employing as many as 85 people at the Otago station alone.

It was from this industry that the Wellers branched out into other industries such as timber, spars, flax, potatoes, dried fish, and Maori artefacts.

In 1835, Joseph Weller died in Otago from tuberculosis, and the two other brothers felt the need to abandon the station even as they branched out into massive land purchases in New Zealand.

By 1840, George and Edward Weller were among many other merchants and land speculators who met Governor Hobson at the time to fight for numerous claims that now had to be approved from the appointed Governor of New South Wales, Sir G. Gipps who negated all past purchases which then had to be approved by the Crown.



Made Public Image. Maori Woman.



The litigation that followed was, by George Weller’s own account, “utterly ruinous.” After a protracted litigation the Court rejected every one of their claims and no grant could be made. By 1841, the Otakou station closed, and the Weller Brothers slipped out of history.

Made Public Photograph. Edward Weller later wrote a book about the Weller enterprise.

KelticDead Music Broadside

Wellermen



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 (Huh!)

Chorus
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



South Pacific “Right” Whale.

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 (Ugh!)

Chorus

Before the boat had hit the water
The whale's tail came up and caught her
All hands to the side, harpooned and fought her
When she dived down low (Ugh!)

Chorus

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

Chorus

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. (Ugh!)

Chorus

As far as heard, the fight's still on;
The line's not cut and the whale's not gone
The Wellerman makes his regular calls
To ‘courage Captain, crew, ‘n’ all.

Chorus

Southern right whales (Eubalaena australis), known locally as tohorā, are baleen whales that were once abundant in New Zealand waters but were hunted to near extinction, with the population dropping from an estimated 30,000 pre-whaling era to fewer than 100 individuals by the mid-20th century.

The species is slowly recovering, with the total New Zealand population estimated between 1,000 and 5,000 individuals, growing at a rate of approximately 4–7% per year.

KelticDead Music Broadside

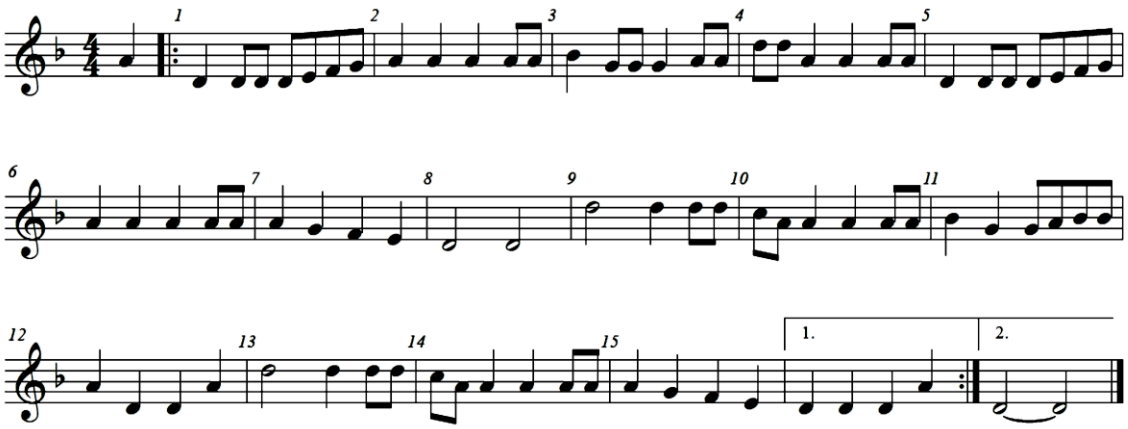
Wellerman

Soon, May the Wellerman Come

Arrangement by KelticDead Music

Seafaring- Australian

140



https://on.soundcloud.com/yUgCKnEfBNjuw3mR2p

KelticDead Music arrangement.

Shaun Young used a Kerry Mezzo C Whistle, Killarney C Whistle, a low-octave, Irish-tuned, Bouzouki/Mandolin and voices.

Earnie Taft provided the fiddle.



Shaun Young



Earnie Taft

Also play the KelticDead Music YouTube Video Broadside

Wellerman

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