



# Wellerman

Photo: Otago Nautical Map

## The Weller Brothers

In 1831, British-born Edward, George, and Joseph Weller established a whaling station at Otakou on New Zealand's South Island. Their company supplied essential goods, including luxuries like sugar, tea, and rum, to whalers in the region. Employees of their supply ships were referred to as "wellermen."

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## The Billy o' Tea

The song mentions the ship "Billy o' Tea." While no historical records confirm the existence of such a vessel, the name likely symbolizes the common practice of naming ships after everyday items or cherished commodities, reflecting the sailors' connection to familiar comforts.

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## Right Whale

The "right whale" mentioned in the song refers to a species that was highly sought after by whalers due to its high blubber content, which yielded substantial amounts of whale oil. These whales were considered the "right" ones to hunt, hence the name.

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## Tonguing

In the context of the song, "tonguing" refers to the process of cutting strips of blubber from the whale's carcass to render into oil. This labor-intensive task was essential in the production of whale oil, a valuable commodity during the 19th century.

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## The Wellerman's Role

The chorus expresses the crew's anticipation for the wellerman's arrival with supplies like sugar, tea, and rum. These provisions were not just luxuries but also served as morale boosters for the crew during long and arduous whaling expeditions.

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## Modern Popularity

In 2021, Scottish singer Nathan Evans's rendition of "The Wellerman" went viral on TikTok, sparking a renewed global interest in sea shanties and bringing this traditional folk song to the attention of a contemporary audience.

# Wellerman

Anon. arr. The Longest Johns  
transcr. Bruce Yang

Anonymous

$\text{♩} = 96$   
*mf*

Tenor

1. There once was a ship that put to sea, and the name of that ship was the Bil-ly o' Tea, the  
had not been two weeks from shore when down on her a right whale bore. The  
fore the boat had hit the water the whale's tail came up and caught her. All  
line was cut, no whale was freed, the captain's mind was not on greed! But

(Verse 3 only)

Bass

came up and caught her.

6

A.

*sfz*  
Huh!

T.

wind blew hard, her bow dipped down, blow, me bul-ly boys, blow! Huh!  
cap - tain called all hands and swore, he'd take that whale in tow.  
hands to the side, har - pooned and fought her, when she dived down be - low.  
he be - longed to the Whale-man's Creed she took that ship in tow. *sfz*

Bar.

Huh!

B.

*sfz*  
Huh!

10 *mf*

A. *mf*  
 Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

T. *mf*  
 8 Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

Bar. *mf*  
 Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

B. *mf*  
 Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

14

A. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

T. *8* One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go. 2. She  
 3. Be  
 4. No  
 5. For

Bar. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

B. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

18 *mp*

T. *8* for-tydays or ev-enmore, the line went slack then tight once more, all boats were lost, there were on-ly four and

Bar. *p* Oo Oo

B. *p* Oo Oo

24

T. *8* still that whale did go.

Bar.

B.

26 *mf*

A. *8* Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

T. *mf* Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

Bar. *mf* Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

B. *mf* Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

30

A. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go. *mf*

T. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go. 6. As

Bar. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

B. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

34

A. and the whale's not gone!

T. far as I've heard, the fight's still on, the line's not cut, and the whale's not gone! The

Bar. and the whale's not gone!

B. and the whale's not gone!

38

A. to en - cour-age the cap - tain, crew and all!

T. Wel-ler-man makes his a - re - gu - lar call to en - cour-age the cap - tain, crew and all!

Bar. to en - cour-age the cap - tain, crew and all!

B. to en - cour-age the cap - tain, crew and all!

42

*mf*

A. *mf*  
Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

T. *mf*  
8 Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

Bar. *mf*  
Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

B. *mf*  
Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

46

A. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go\_\_\_\_\_

T. *mf*  
8 One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go\_\_\_\_\_

Bar. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go\_\_\_\_\_

B. One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go\_\_\_\_\_

50 *f*

A. *f*  
Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

T. *f*  
8 Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

Bar. *f*  
Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

B. *f*  
Soon may the Wel-ler-man come to bring us su-gar and tea and rum.

54 *rit.* *mp*

A. *mp*  
One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

T. *mp*  
8 One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

Bar. *mp*  
One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.

B. *mp*  
One day, when the ton-guing is done, we'll take our leave and go.