

# A Hundred Years Ago



1. Oh, a hundred years is a very long time,  
Oh, aye, oh!  
Oh, a hundred years is a very long time.  
A hundred years ago!
2. Oh, a hundred years on the Eastern Shore,  
A hundred years on the Eastern Shore.
3. Ol' Bully John from Baltimore,  
I knew him well, that son-of-a-whore.
4. Ol' Bully John was the boy for me,  
A bully on shore an' a bucko at sea.
5. Ol' Bully John I knew him well,  
But now he'd dead and gone to hell.
6. He's dead as a nail on the lamproom floor,  
He's dead as a nail, that son-of-a-whore.
7. A hundred years have passed and gone,  
'Tis a hundred years since I made this song.
8. They used to think that pigs could fly,  
Can you believe this bloody lie.
9. They thought the stars were set alight,  
By a bunch o' angels every night.
10. They thought the world was flat or square,  
That old Columbus never got there.
11. They thought the moon was made o' cheese,  
You can believe it, if you please.
12. They thought that mermaids were no yarn,  
But we know better 'cos we can larn.
13. They hung a man for making steam,  
They cast his body in the stream.
14. Oh, very long time an' a very long time  
'Tis a hell o' a time since I made this rhyme.
15. Oh, don't yiz hear the old man say,  
Just one more pull, lads, then belay!

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"A Hundred Years Ago" is a halyard chanty.

Stan Hugill learned two different versions of this shanty, one from an English sailor and one from an American sailor. It was sung at the t'gallant halyards.

Hugill states it may be the shanty named "Time for Us to Go" mentioned in Dana's **Two Years Before the Mast**, though that could also refer to "Leave Her Johnny, Leave Her".

A.L. Lloyd sang "A Hundred Years Ago" on his and Ewan MacColl's albums **The Black Ball Line** (1957), **Haul on the Bowlin'** (1958), and **A Hundred Years Ago** (1958).

Lloyd sang this shanty in another recording on his and Ewan MacColl's 1967 Tradition / Transatlantic album **Blow Boys Blow**. He commented in the second album's sleeve notes:

English and American folklorists fail to agree whether this shanty was first made under the Stars and Stripes or the Red Ensign. It has close associations with the Baltimore clippers, yet John Masfield heard it on British ships in his seafaring days, and the singer who gave it to Cecil Sharp knew it as an English sailors' song. It may be a seaman's remake of the mid-nineteenth century minstrel song called "A Long Time Ago".

Whatever it is, it made a good nostalgic-sounding shanty for the long pulls on the halyard.

It is included in the **Roud Folksong Index** as #926.

It was printed in Davis's **Fifty Sailor's Songs or Chanties** (1870) and Stan Hugill's **Shanties from the Seven Seas** (1987).