Soon May the Wellerman Come

Words & music: Traditional

Chords in parentheses – Guitar capo V

Dm (**Am**)
There once was a ship that put to sea
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
The name of the ship was the 'Billy o' Tea'

The winds blew up, her bow dipped down
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
Oh! Blow, my bully boys, blow — Huh!

B♭ (**F**) **F** (**C**)
CHORUS: Soon may the Wellerman come
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
B♭ (**F**) **F** (**C**)
One day when the tonguin' is done
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
We'll take our leave and go

Dm (**Am**)
She had not been two weeks from shore
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
When down on her a right whale bore

The captain called 'All hands!' and swore
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
He'd take that whale in tow — Huh! **CHORUS**

Dm (**Am**)
Before the boat had hit the water
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
The whale's tail came up and caught her

All hands to the side, harpooned and fought her
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
When she dived down low — Huh! **CHORUS**

Dm (**Am**)
No line was cut, no whale was freed
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
The captain's mind was not of greed

For he belonged to the whaleman's creed
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
She took that ship in tow — Huh! **CHORUS**

Dm (**Am**)
For forty days or even more
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
The line went slack then tight once more

All boats were lost, there were only four
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
But still that whale did go — Huh! **CHORUS**

Dm (**Am**)
As far as I've heard the fight's still on
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
The line's not cut and the whale's not gone

The Wellerman makes his regular call
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
To encourage the captain, crew and all — Huh!

Optional chord addition (last line):
A (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**) **Gm** (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
… captain, crew and all

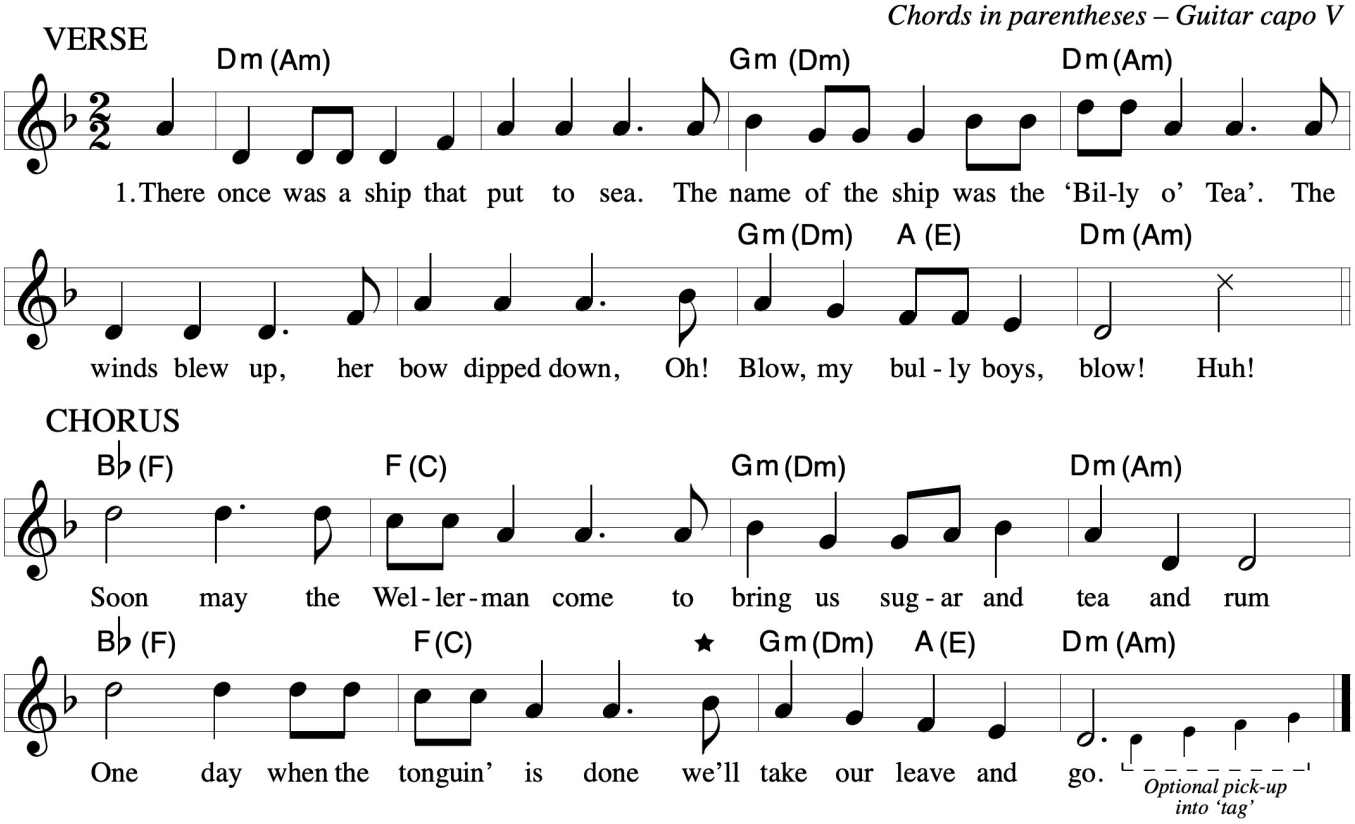
B♭ (**F**) **F** (**C**)
CHORUS: Soon may the Wellerman come
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
B♭ (**F**) **F** (**C**)
One day when the tonguin' is done
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
We'll take our leave and go – oh, oh, oh!

B♭ (**F**) **F** (**C**)
Soon may the Wellerman come
Gm (**Dm**) **Dm** (**Am**)
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
B♭ (**F**) **F** (**C**)
One day when the tonguin' is done
Gm (**Dm**) **A** (**E**) **Dm** (**Am**)
We'll take our leave and go

Soon May the Wellerman Come

Traditional

Chords in parentheses – Guitar capo V



2. 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 — Huh! CHORUS

3. 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 — Huh! CHORUS

4. No line was cut, no whale was freed
   And the wind's blowing up from the sea
   The captain's mind was not of greed
   She took that ship in tow — Huh! CHORUS

5. 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 — Huh! CHORUS

6. As far as I've heard the fight's still on
   The line's not cut and the whale's not gone
   The Wellerman makes his regular call
   To encourage the captain, crew and all — Huh! CHORUS *x 2*

The song Soon May the Wellerman Come *is a New Zealand folksong and was collected in the mid-1960s by Neil Colquhoun (1929-2014). According to Colquhoun its source was a Mr. F. R. Woods who, at that time, was aged in his 80s and had learned the song from his uncle. Neil Colquhoun led the early New Zealand folk group The Song Spinners.*

Around 1833 three English brothers – Edward, George and Joseph Weller – established a provision supply base for the whalers at 'Otago' (an approximation of the Maori name Otakou). A visit from the 'Wellermen' or 'Wellerman' was always looked forward to by the whalers.