Bold Riley (Shanty)

The origins of *Bold Riley O* appear to be shrouded in mystery; it does not appear in Stan Hugill's 1961 shanty "bible" **Shanties From the Seven Seas** or any earlier collections. Its first appearance seems to be A.L. Lloyd singing it in 1962 on the Prestige album **A Sailor's Garland**, although he claims it started life as a Tobago Reel, he is vague about his sources. A.A. Lloyd noted:

"Shellbacks (*old veteran sailors)* manning the windjammers (*merchant sailing ships*) of the West Indies trade brought back to Liverpool and Bristol more than sugar, bananas and rum; they also brought back many songs. Some of these they kept to themselves, some they handed on to vessels sailing in other waters. Thus, the fine hexatonic (*six notes in octave)* tune of *Bold Riley O*, which started life as a Tobago reel, was sung at the halyards (*lines, or ropes, used to hoist laddies, sails, or flags*) of many an East Indiaman bound for Bombay and the Bengal ports."

Whatever its origins, it gained popularity in the second half of the last century and has been recorded by many singers, including Kate Rusby, on her first solo album **'Hourglass'.**

Meaning of ‘White Stocking’ day which appears in the lyrics of this shanty in verse 2:

In 19th-century Liverpool, it was fashionable for wealthier women to wear white stockings. Each month on 'white stocking day', women went to the shipping office dressed in their best clothes to collect the 'allotment' which was the half pay of their sailing family member away at sea. Not all sailors made provision for the women to collect this allotment, preferring to take a larger advance payment for themselves, and this problem inspired the Liverpool feminist social campaigner and MP Eleanor Rathbone to demand a fairer system of providing for sailors’ and soldiers' dependants during the First World War, eventually culminating in her Family Allowances Act of 1945.

Family Allowances Act 1945

Rathbone always viewed family endowment as a women's question, a recognition of their contribution to motherhood and to fight the economic dependence of women on men. She launched her campaign in 1918 and published her seminal book, 'The Disinherited Family' in 1924. It was of ‘immense importance' to Rathbone that the allowance be paid to mothers, but officials and ministers fought this premise to the bitter end. However, they were unprepared for the cross-party rebellion that erupted when the Family Allowances Bill was published in February 1945, stating that the money would belong to the father. MPs Mavis Tate, Nancy Astor and Edith Summerskill agreed that the issue was fundamentally one of women's rights, and with virtually no support in the House for the payment to be paid to fathers, the bill was quietly amended. It was enacted in June 1945, marking a victory for Rathbone and her 25 year campaign.

Bold Riley

(All)

Oh the rain it rains all day long
Bold Riley-o, Bold Riley
And the northern wind, it blows so strong
Bold Riley-o has gone away

CHORUS
Goodbye my darlin’
Goodbye my dear-o
Bold Riley-o, Bold Riley
Goodbye my darlin'
Goodbye my dear-o
Bold Riley-o has gone away.

(Women)

Well come on, Mary, don't you look so glum
Bold Riley-o, Bold Riley
Come White-stocking Day we'll be drinkin' rum
Bold Riley-o has gone away

CHORUS

(Men)

We're outward bound for the Bengal Bay
Bold Riley-o, Bold Riley
Get bending, me lads, It’s a hell-of-a-way
Bold Riley-o has gone away

CHORUS X 2