

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## Press Gang

Press Gang

As I walked out on London Street  
A press gang there I chanced to meet  
They asked me if I'd join the fleet  
On board of a man-o-war, boys

Come brother shipmates tell to me  
What kind of treatment they give you  
That I may know before I go  
On board of a man-o-war, boys

When I got there to my surprise  
All they had told me was shocking lies  
There was a row and a jolly old row  
On board of a man-o-war, boys

The first thing they done they took me in hand  
They lashed me with a ?tar of a strand?  
They flogged me till I could not stand  
On board of a man-o-war, boys

Now I was married and me wife's name was Grace  
'Twas she that led me to shocking disgrace  
It's oft I'd curse her ugly face  
On board of a man-o-war, boys

When next I get may foot on shore  
To see them London girls once more  
I'll never go to sea no more  
On board of a man-o-war, boys

recorded by Ewan MacColl on "Black And White" (1982)

"From medieval times, the English crown claimed the power to press able-bodied subjects into the navy for the defense of the realm.

With the passage of time, the power was abused and the press gang, invading the small towns and roaming the countryside, became a truly feared 'tradition', as witnessed by the scores of press gang songs. In 1853 the long service system was introduced and the need for press gangs virtually disappeared."

MJ