

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Captain Coulston

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You landsmen all on you I call
You heroes stout and brave
That are inclined to cross the seas
Your homelands now to leave
Come join with Captain Coulston
That hero stout and bold
Who fought his way all on the sea
And never was controlled

We sailed away from Liverpool
The weather being fine
Bound for New York City boys
It was our chief's design
We being all Irish emigrants
The truth to you I'll tell
Who in distress our homes had left
And to Ireland bid farewell
On the evening of the 25th
our captain he did cry
Clear away the deck me boys
For a strange sail I do spy
And all you Irish emigrants
Awake now from your sleep
For in a few more hours me boys
You'll be slumbering in the deep
For a pirate ship is a-coming down
Just from the Western Sea
For to rob us of our property
Going to Amerikay

Oh the pirate ship came up to us
And ordered us to stand
Your gold and precious cargo
This moment I demand
Your gold and precious cargo
Resign to me this day
For one living soul you'll never bring
Unto Amerikay

Then up and spoke our captain
With voice both loud and bold
Saying we will slumber in the deep

Before we'll be controlled
Before that we'll surrender
Our property to thee
We'll fight like Irish hearts of oaks
And gain the victory

So the battle it commenced
And the firing did begin
They wounded the captain's mate
And killed two of his men
But our Irish boys were valiant and bold
And our canons loud did roar
And we killed ten of the pirate men
And turned them overboard
Oh the cries of women and children
As in the hold they lay
And our captain and his gallant crew
They showed an Irish play
The captain's wife she came on deck
Saying I'll soon end this strife
And with a pistol ball she took
The pirate captain's life

And it's to conclude and finish
The truth I'll tell to you
Oh we never lost a single man
Excepting one or two
And the pirate ship surrendered
Just at the break of day
And we brought her as a prisoner
Unto Amerikay

recorded by Andy Irvine/Dick Gaughan on "Parallel Lines" (1981) and in
a slightly shorter version by Steeleye Span on "Ten Man Mop" (1971)

Andy notes: "Can it really be that pirates would lay in wait for
poverty stricken emigrant ships sailing to the new world? (But
see JIMJONES for similar situation. JB) Captain Coulston's wife
was well able to deal with them anyway. I heard this from the great
Brigid Tunney, the best singer I ever heard and filled out the story
from a longer version sung by Peter Donnelly of Castle Caulfield,
Co. Tyrone.

Steeleye also name Brigid Tunney as their source.

This song probably originated as just a pirate ballad and was turned into
an emigration ballad in the 19th century, which explains the
slightly confused story.

