SHANTYMAN

Written by Bob Watson

Now modern ships carry mighty funny gear,
And away, get away, you shantyman.
Ain't seen a halyard in many's a year,
An' they got no use for a shantyman.
Slick new fittings are all your style,
And away, get away, you shantyman.
All very clever, but it just ain't right;

An' they got no use for a shantyman.
Shantyman, Oh, shantyman,
Who's got a berth for a shantyman?
Sing you a song of a world gone wrong,
When they got no use for a shantyman.

Levers to jerk and buttons to press
And real live sailors they need them less;
Pushing on the buttons and hauling on the levers
And they got no use for horny-handed heavers.

The cargo is stored in a polythene pack,
Raised and lowered by a dry bollocks jack;
Floating computer dressed like a ship,
Skippered and crewed by a micro chip.

Soon they'll be sailing by remote control,
An' that'll be pleasing to the owners' souls;
They'll send their ships from dock to dock,
All sat upon their arses in an office block.

New-fangled gear's no use to you
When you're off Cape Horn with your fuses blew;
Then's the time for to curse the day
You sent your shantyman away.

A sailor's life it once was hard,
Laid out aloft on a tops'l yard;
Now it don't matter if the winds blow high;
You can take force ten with your feet still dry.

Old-time ways are forgotten and gone,
For no-one listens to a shantyman's song.
Things no longer as they used to be;
It's the knacker's yard for the likes of me.

Listen at night and you might hear
A ghostly sound on the quiet air;

Is it a ghost from the distant past,
Or just a breeze in the radar mast?

Bob Watson has this to say about his song:

*"Somewhere about 1983 I heard Jim Lloyd on the BBC (Folk on Two) interviewing **The Spinners**, one of whom remarked that there was a demand for new sea songs written in the style of the old. I remember thinking; "What on earth would one write new sea songs about?" It took a year before any constructive ideas were formed, then suddenly a load of songs came pouring out of me. Amongst them was **The Shantyman**, although I don't know exactly what was the inspiration behind it. Most of my songs take a long time from first draft to finished version, sometimes years, but this song progressed faster because of the interest shown by Tony O'Neil when he saw a rough draft. Tony liked the song, but not all the verses, so I went home and rewrote some of them. This led to the song making its debut at Bracknell Folk Festival in 1984, sung by Tony, and its live recording is a treasured possession. From that first performance other people heard it and have taken to singing it..."*