

Roll Cotton Down

Tim Walsh retired sailor Devonport Devon
Collected by Cyril Tawney
pub The English Folksinger Sam Richards and Tish Stubbs
Adapted and arranged Paul Wilson



Not too fast, with a bluesy swing - crotchet round 96

Hi Support

Tune

Lo Support

Oh it's ten long years since I left my home Roll cot-ton down Oh

5

5 ten wear-y years since I left my home Roll cot-ton down And we'll

9

9 roll her up and we'll roll her down Roll cot-ton down And we'll

Roll Cotton Down

13
8 roll her up and we'll roll her down Roll cot-ton down

13
8 roll her up and we'll roll her down Roll cot-ton down

13
8 roll her up and we'll roll her down Roll cot-ton down

Oh it's ten long years since I left my home

Roll cotton down

Oh ten weary years since I left my home

Roll cotton down

Chorus

And we'll roll her up and we'll roll her down

Roll cot-ton down

And we'll roll her up and we'll roll her down

Roll cot-ton down

Verse 2

Oh I shipped aboard of a Yankee clipper

Roll cotton down

'Twas the first time I sailed with a blue nosed skipper

Roll cotton down

Chorus

Verse 3

Oh the mate was drunk and the skipper not sober

Roll cotton down

And he drunk more rum till he keeled right over

Roll cotton down

Chorus

Verse 4

Now when you go to sea try a blue nosed schooner

Roll cotton down

You'll pay off in hell either later or sooner

Roll cotton down

Chorus

Bluenose - A puritanical person: Someone who tries to impose a strict moral code on others
also Bluenose Canadian - A native or inhabitant of Nova Scotia.

Stan Hugill notes - The white cotton-stowers used this shanty for screwing the huge bales of cotton into place in the dark holds, heaving at the levers of the screws on the same words of the refrains as sailors would at the halyards. Once the cotton season was over these men would ship 'foreign', taking these 'cotton chants' with them for use at halyard and capstan, hence a new infusion of shanty blood - African-American blood - entering into the field.

Mixed choirs should try for a gender split on each part, but put a few strong (male?) voices on the tune the biggest range - the first and third lines of each verse could be taken by a male soloist or small group and this would contrast well with the full harmony of the refrain line and chorus