The McClure

2 The McClure she left the thirteenth of March for Naples she was bound; She’s a clipper of the sailing fleet with timbers strong and sound. She carried a load of fish in bulk, rough weather for to meet, Until she reached Gibraltar she was the beauty of the fleet.

3 A sharp look out for submarines, a watch by every eye, When Allen Barrett at her wheel a submarine did spy; He told the captain and the mate if what he saw proved true, Our captain he gave orders to heave the schooner to.

4 We lowered our canvas right away, we lowered our boats that day, We knew that our schooner would be sunk and soon would row away; The lieutenant and three of her sailors have rowed on board of our craft, He placed one bomb in her fo’castle and another he put aft.

5 They ordered us to leave the ship, so we done right away, Left to the mercy of the waves to row that livelong day; And what provisions we had on board and oilskins from our crew, Our captain’s sheet and sections and coastal pilot, too.
The song and accompanying notes are reproduced here as they appear in *Come and I Will Sing You: A Newfoundland Song Book*, ed. Genevieve Lehr, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985. (Reproduced by permission.)

Tim Rogers in his review of *Come and I Will Sing You* for the *Canadian Folk Music Journal*, vol. 14 (1986), p. 63, speaks of “The ‘McClure’ ” as one of a number of “previously unpublished songs that are important additions to the extant corpus.”

(*Come and I Will Sing You* is available from the CFMS Mail Order Service: hardcover $25.00 members, $27.00 non-members; softcover $12.50 members, $14.50 non-members.)

6 We rowed the deep that livelong day 'til very late that night,
   When a good Italian destroyer that quickly hove in sight;
   'Twas by their captain's orders when us he did discern,
   He ordered all our crew on board and slacked our boat astern.

7 They asked us our nationality as you may understand -
   But we were British subjects belongs to Newfoundland.
   They landed us in Cadiz [sic] where we were cared for well,
   'Til we arrived at St John's town the sad tale there to tell,

8 Six men composed our schooner's crew, their names I did pen down:
   There's Allen Barrett and Bert Noseworthy, belongs to St John's town;
   There's Charlie Steven and William Bailey and Bert Wills was our mate.
   Those hardy sons from Newfoundland belongs to Twillingate.

1 Barry is very often pronounced Bar in Newfoundland, as it is in this song.

Built at Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, the McClure was owned by J.T. Moulton of Burgeo in the salt-fish trade. While sailing to a Mediterranean port with a cargo of six thousand quintals of fish, the McClure was sunk by a German submarine off the Spanish coast on 2 May 1917. Captain Augustus Taylor and his crew landed safely in their lifeboat at a port near Gibraltar.

There is some discrepancy as to the actual method the Germans used to sink the boat. The song, apparently composed by a member of the crew and therefore a first-hand account, has it that she was blown up by a bomb placed astern another placed in her fore. However, two published accounts state that she was either torpedoed or sunk by gunfire.