

THE BANK LINE SONG (ANDREW WEIRS)

(Ron Baxter) Tune:- What a Friend We have in Jesus

When this endless voyage is over no more tramp ships will I see
I will swear upon the Bible, Bank Line have seen the last of me.
No more trips around to Auckland, from Auckland round to Baltimore
Then round the world to San Francisco, Fiji, Guam and Singapore.

The clerk, down in the "Pool" office said "There's a berth with Andrew Weirs;
A nice wee run out there to Kiwi". He didn't say 'twould last two years.
Two years since we left the Humber, two years since I saw my wife;
My brother wrote "Some bloke keeps calling: rumours 'bout the two are rife".

Two years stuck down in the stoke-hold, shov'ling the dross the Chief has bought
Half the coal brass he will pocket; I hope one day that he gets caught.
Likewise the thieving old Chief Steward, though 4 and 3's our feeding rate
He feeds us rice and old dead donkeys, so his profit he can take.

Half the crew have gone "doo-lally"; the sparks was like that when we sailed;
Two stewards reckon they are married, the cook thinks he's the Prince of Wales.
But now we've got the "channel fever" we've got it hot and that's because
Tomorrow we pay off in the Mersey, so stick the Bank Line up your arse!

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I will swear upon the Bible, Bank Line have seen the last of me.
No more trips around to Auckland, from Auckland round to Baltimore
Then round the world to San Francisco, Fiji, Guam and Singapore.
For now we've got the 'channel fever' we've got it hot and that's because
Tomorrow we pay off in the Mersey, so stick the Bank Line up your arse!

Andrew Weirs Bank Line were tramp ships, and notorious for long trips, two years was not uncommon. The "pool" was the Shipping Office where seamen went to "get a ship". They only had three chances; if they refused all three ships offered they were suspended. As in many companies the Chief Engineer was given a "coal allowance" to buy best steam coal, so if he could get cheap coal he'd pocket the difference. The "4 and 3" [four shillings and threepence] refers to the daily "rate" per man that the Chief Steward was allowed for feeding purposes. (RB)