

Strike the Bell

1. Up on the poop-deck and walking about,
There is the second mate, so steady and
so stout.
What he is a-thinkin' of he doesn't know
himself,
And we wish that he would hurry up and
strike, strike the bell!

**Strike the bell, Second Mate,
let us go below.
Look out to wind'ard, you can see
it's going to blow.
Look at the glass, you can see that
it has fell
And we wish that you would hurry up
and strike, strike the bell!**

2. Down on the main deck and working
at the pumps
There is the starboard watch a-longin'
for their bunks.
Look out to wind'rd and see a great swell
We wish that you would hurry up and
strike, strike the bell!

3. Aft at the wheel-house, old Anderson stands
Grasping at the helm with his cold mittened
hands,
Looks at the compass though the course is
clear as hell,
We wish that the second mate would
strike, strike the bell.

4. For'ard on the fo'c'stle head and
keeping sharp lookout
Yonder John is standing longing for to shout:
"Lights are burning bright, sir, and
everything is well."
And he's wishin' that the second mate would
strike, strike the bell.

5. Out on the poop deck our gallant captain
stands,
Looking out to wind'ard with his spy-glass
in his hand.
What he is a thinkin' of, we know very well:
He's thinkin' more of short'nin' sail than
striking the bell!

**Strike the bell, Second Mate,
let us go below.
Look out to windward, you can see
it's going to blow.
Look at the glass, you can see that
it has fell,
And we wish that you would hurry up
and strike, strike the bell!**



Johnny_automatic, 2007
Old Bell,
Illustration from an old
sheet music cover,
via openclipart.org

We'll sing along with John Benson at
youtu.be/9FF2w86ELaY

Notes:

A pumping shanty.

Names: Strike the bell, Strike the Bell Second Mate.

Strike the bell - in this case **eight bells**, signifying the end of the watch.

Second mate - the mate in charge of the starboard watch.

Stan Hugill on his album: *Stan Hugill Reminisces* wrote

"Several shore songs use this tune. There is

a Welsh one, *Twll Bach y Calo*,
a Scottish one, *Ring the Bell, Watchman!*,
an Australian one, *Click Go the Shears*.

The sailors' version was popular in Scandinavian and German ships.

"The whole theme is based on the fact that it was a common custom for the mates in sailing ships to take in, or set, sail, or tack or wear at eight bells (midnight, 4am, 8 am, midday, 4pm or 8pm) when they could use both the watch about to 'go below' **and** the watch coming on deck—in other words 'all hands'.

"The men in this song are awaiting the second mate to strike eight bells so they can get below to their bunks before the 'Old Man' decides to take in the canvas."



Scatchard, John, 2014, *Two men at the yards, standing on a footrope and setting the sail* on the Statsraad Lehmkuhl (<https://lehmkuhl.no/en/>)