

## 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](http://openclipart.org)

We'll sing along with John Benson at  
[youtu.be/9FF2w86ELaY](https://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/>)