



## Protocol & Ceremony – The Ships Bell

Bells are used to indicate the time and regulate the sailors' duty watches on board a ship.

Unlike civil clock bells, the strikes of the bell do not accord to the number of the hour. Instead, there are eight bells in each sequence (watch), one for each half-hour of a four-hour watch. Bells would be struck every half-hour, and in a pattern of pairs for easier counting, with any odd bells at the end of the sequence.

The purpose of the two dog watches is to make an odd number of watches in the 24hrs, thus giving everyone different watches each day.

The reason for the no striking of five bells in the last dog watch? In 1797, five bells was to be the signal for the Navy mutiny at the Nore. The plot was discovered and the mutiny quelled. However, thereafter the Admiralty decreed that five bells would never be struck again on British ships.

Hence we have as below

British Royal & Merchant Navy Clocks from 1797	
Middle Watch	<b>00:30</b> 1 bell <b>01:00</b> 2 bells <b>01:30</b> 2 bells, pause, 1 bell <b>02:00</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells <b>02:30</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 1 bell <b>03:00</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 2 bells <b>03:30</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 1 bell <b>04:00</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 2 bells
Morning Watch	<b>04:30 - 08:00</b> Same as previous watch
Forenoon Watch	<b>08:30 - 12:00</b> Same as previous watch
Afternoon Watch	<b>12:30 - 16:00</b> Same as previous watch
First Dog Watch	<b>16:30</b> 1 bell <b>17:00</b> 2 bells <b>17:30</b> 2 bells, pause, 1 bell <b>18:00</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells
Last Dog Watch	<b>18:30</b> 1 bell <b>19:00</b> 2 bells <b>19:30</b> 2 bells, pause, 1 bell <b>20:00</b> 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 2 bells, pause, 2 bells
First Watch	<b>20:30 - 00:00</b> Same as Middle watch