

# The fireman's 'Ringing of the Bell' tradition



The ceremonial ringing of the bell in memory of those who died in the line of duty (LODD) is an age old tradition of the fire services that dates back over 150 years. Also known as necrology and commemorated annually on International Fire Fighter's Day, the tradition reflects respect and honour to those who gave their lives to their duty.

The men and women of today's fire service are confronted with a more dangerous work environment than ever before. We are forced to continually change our strategies and tactics to accomplish our tasks. Our methods may change but our goals remain the same as they were in the past; to save lives and to protect property, sometimes at a terrible cost. This is what we do, this is our chosen profession, this is the tradition of the fire fighter.

The fire service of today is ever changing but is steeped in traditions 200 years old. One such tradition is the sound of a bell.

In the past, as fire fighters began their tour of duty, it was the bell that signalled the beginning of that day's shift. Throughout the day and night, each alarm was sounded by a bell, which summoned these brave souls to fight fires and to place their lives in jeopardy for the good of their fellow citizen. And when the fire was out and the alarm had come to an end, it was the bell that signalled to all the completion of that call.

When a fire fighter had died in the line of duty, paying the supreme sacrifice, it was the mournful toll of the bell that solemnly announced a comrade's passing.

Usually done after the reading of the Fireman's Prayer, the ringing of the bell is the final event of a line of duty death ceremony that announces a comrade has come home for that final time. After each set of ringing the bell three times, the fingers of a gloved hand gently grab the bell to silence it before

sounding the next ring of three. At the final toll of the third pull, the bell is left alone to ring out.

We utilise these traditions as symbols, which reflect honour and respect on those who have given so much and who have served so well. To symbolise the devotion that these brave souls had for their duty, a special signal of three rings, three times each, represents the end of our comrades' duties and that they will be returning to quarters. And so, to those who have selflessly given their lives for the good of their fellow man, their tasks completed, their duties well done, to our comrades, their last alarm, they are going home.

## September 11

In memory of all who died during the attacks on 11 September 2001, the bell is rung five times in series of fives (5 x 5 x 5 x 5 x 5). Multiplied out this equals 3 125, a number very close to the number of people who died as result of the attacks. ⚠