

“100 Rings” in Bedfordshire for Captain Sir Tom Moore

“Would it be possible for bells across Bedfordshire to ring on the day of Captain Tom’s funeral?”

This was the request from Bishop Richard to Bedfordshire bellringers the day after the sad announcement that Captain Sir Tom Moore had passed away after a short stay in Bedford Hospital.

Several emails later, and a covid-secure plan was in place. It was permissible to *leave home to attend or visit a place of worship, to attend a funeral or event related to a death*. A single bell would be tolled 100 times at as many churches in the county as possible on the day and time of the funeral.

As time passed we thought that that the funeral might have gone ahead without publicity at the request of the family. However, on Tuesday 23 February confirmed that the service would be taking place the following Saturday and so the plan was activated!

So, *100 Rings for Captain Sir Tom* took place at 12 noon on Saturday 27 February. Bells were tolled, chimed or clocked in over 50 Bedfordshire churches, very reassuring since there had been no ringing for months and we anticipate a significant post-covid ringing recovery exercise.

At Campton a socially distanced churchyard clear-up finished early so we had a ready audience for our 100 tolls. At Milton Ernest a Dakota flew over the village on its way to the fly past in Captain Tom’s honour. A bell was clocked at Marston Morteyne, where Captain Tom lived. At Clifton a church bell and a church school bell were rung and at nearby Shefford 25 - 30 people, including the mayor, paid their respects to Captain Tom outside whilst the single bell was chimed by the churchwarden, assisted by the Rector who counted to 100. And much more besides.

Captain Sir Tom Moore had become one of Bedfordshire’s famous residents in less than a year, raising £33m for the NHS. He was an incredibly popular and well respected man who took easily to the form of stardom he carved out by his positive outlook and his optimism. We will never forget the walking and his trademark ‘tomorrow will be a good day’, providing a beacon of hope in difficult times. And some will always wonder how his conversation with the Queen went on the date he was knighted! Most of his family made moving presentations at the funeral service at Bedford Crematorium, which was shown on TV.

Thank you to all who participated and to Bishop Richard and Bedfordshire clergy for their encouragement and support.

Well done Captain Sir Tom! It was fantastic (one of his words!) to be just a small part of it.

John Loveless (Bellringer at Campton, Bedfordshire)