



The Branch

February
2015

Newsletter of the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association

FIRE “NEAR-MISS” IN MEMBER’S HOME

One of our member’s, **ROB JACKSON**, and his wife, Sarah-Jane, came very close indeed to having a house fire recently. An electronic tablet was being charged when six-year s old Stanley, noticed that the body of the charging unit was becoming abnormally hot. He alerted his older sister who raised the alarm with Rob and Sarah-Jane. They immediately disconnected the charger but not before the heat damage shown in the photo had occurred. The retailer was notified of the problem and negotiations are “work in progress”.

This incident is one of many that have occurred in the UK and some of these have actually led to an outbreak of fire. The massive increase in the number of charging units being sold to support mobile phones, tablets, lap top computers etc means that some of these devices will introduce the risk of fire if they are sold with a fault in them or develop one in use.



Rob and Sarah-Jane Jackson



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE SOON

Yes, it’s nearly that time again! Annual subscriptions to our Association fall due on **1st April**.

The sum due remains at only **£10.00** and I have yet to come across a member who does not feel that this is good value for money.

You can pay by cheque or by standing order or by credit transfer using the BACS system or by automatic deduction from pension if you receive your fire pension through Wiltshire Council. Let’s make this the year when everyone pays on time, please. **JOHN CRAIG** Secretary/Treasurer

PEOPLE & PLACES



GOLDEN WEDDING

The Association extends heartiest congratulations to **Peter and Frances Mills** who celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary in early January. The photo (left) shows the happy couple almost hidden behind the bouquet sent by the WRFA with a card of congratulations and best wishes.

Peter is a tireless worker for both our Association and the BFSa and we rejoice with him and Fran on having reached this wonderful occasion in their marriage.

NEW MEMBER

The WRFA has been delighted to welcome **Ken Harrison** into membership recently. Ken is a retired civil servant living with his wife, Margaret, in Chippenham. In his younger days, Ken served for 8 years in the AFS reaching the rank of sub officer and only leaving the fire service when the AFS was disbanded.

Before he retired, Ken served at Bureau West in London Road, Devizes and held a senior management post there. He took responsibility for organising the office fire team and this provided an opportunity for him to maintain his interest in fire safety matters. For a time he also served as a stakeholder for Wiltshire FRS but this is a consultancy system no longer active. We extend a warm welcome to Ken and Margaret.



GRANDPA NEIL & GRANDMA ROZ

There has been a 'nappy' event in the family of Neil and Rozella Wright. The safe arrival of their first grandchild, who has been blessed with the names **Beau Willow**, has brought much happiness to their family.

After a relatively trouble free pregnancy, Beau's mum, Kelly, was forced into having a caesarean section but all has gone well since the delivery.

We offer Neil, Roz and all the family our warmest congratulations. Welcome Beau, you are beautiful.

Health Matters



News about those dealing with illness and health issues

JANE COX

Jane underwent hip replacement surgery at GWH Swindon late last month and is now home recuperating and benefitting from lots of TLC from John. Jane has experienced some unusual bouts of post-operative pain, mainly when she is trying to sleep at night, and the intention is to seek a follow-up consultation with the surgeon as soon as possible. We wish Jane a full and rapid recovery and hope that she is soon on her feet again and free from all pain. Get well soon, Jane.



JIM BETTS

Because of the chronic blood disorder from which he is suffering, Jim has had to have two short stays in Salisbury District Hospital during which he received treatment for infections. He is now very much better and a recent examination by his consultant produced an encouraging report.

During one of his stays in SDH, Jim found himself in the next bed to Mo Betteridge (see below). It must be a first for two members of the WRFA to be in hospital so close together!



MAURICE BETTERIDGE

Maurice became ill soon after Christmas and when the doctor diagnosed that he had developed pneumonia he was admitted to SDH, Odstock. The treatment he received there soon enabled him to return home to Ludgershall where Yvonne is keeping a very close eye on him and insisting that he takes things easy until all traces of his illness are behind him.

We wish Mo a very speedy and complete recovery.

Get well soon, Mo.



FLU VACCINE "USELESS"

All the time and money invested by the NHS this year in giving flu jabs to the elderly and vulnerable seems to have been wasted because the strain of influenza that is sweeping the UK is not the type to which the jab gives protection. The number of UK deaths from flu this winter is the highest for 15 years.

More about HEALTH



Maureen and Gerry, smiling again after 6 years

MAUREEN'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Gerry and Maureen Barnett wish THE BRANCH readers to know of their delight at a remarkable turn around in Maureen's health just before last Christmas. Six years ago, Maureen had a knee replacement operation at GWH, Swindon. She was discharged in excruciating pain and told to take pain killers and exercise the joint. It was later discovered that Maureen had suffered a fractured femur during the surgery that went undiscovered and was obviously the source of her acute and persistent pain.

Things went down hill from that point and the affected leg became shortened and the foot was set at a 45 degree angle to normal and this meant that Maureen was forced into using a wheelchair, The only exercise she could take was an occasional swim but towards the end of last year while in the pool another swimmer collided with her and injured her bad leg. The pain was unbearable but Maureen was very

Insistent that she was not going anywhere near GWH if she could avoid it so Gerry took her to their home in Swindon. Slowly, the injured limb returned to its previous condition but now Maureen felt pain in her back on the good side of her body so Maureen and Gerry decided to pay for a consultation with an osteopath who had treated Maureen for back pain previously. The osteopath finished the successful treatment on Maureen's back but then became interested in her bad leg that was stopping her from walking and making her a cripple. Offering no promises of the outcome, the osteopath called Darren, set about treating Maureen's bad leg. After three sessions, remarkably Darren had made great improvements to Maureen's poorly leg. Swelling was reduced and the foot returned to its normal position. The NHS had told Maureen that her leg was permanently shorter by 2 inches and she should wear wedged shoes to cope with this because nothing more could be done. Darren proved them wrong and has shown that the leg shortening was due to the way the pelvis was twisted and physiotherapy sorted that out so no special shoes are required and the use of the wheelchair is history in Maureen's case. Maureen can and does take regular walks with Gerry in a way they thought was a shared pursuit that was gone for ever.

There is no disputing that the NHS is a wonderful institution and great things are achieved by it. However, the NHS is not perfect and Maureen Barnett's case is a classic example of 6 years of pain and crippling disability that was caused by the NHS in the first place and then it failed to put right what was wrong.

We are delighted at this news from Maureen and Gerry and THE BRANCH thanks them for sharing it with us.

PARKINSON'S - HOPE FOR NEW TREATMENT

Scientists believe they have found the tipping point in the brain that triggers Parkinson's Disease. This breakthrough in medical research brings the hope of new therapies. The research is being done at Cambridge University where the level at which a protein in the brain becomes toxic has been identified. The study has been published by Dr Celine Galvingnion who states *"for the first time we have been able to provide a mechanistic description of the molecular events that can ultimately lead to the development of the disease."*

One in every 500 in the UK has Parkinson's which is incurable at the moment.



NHS 111 PHONE LINE BLAMED FOR A & E CRISIS

The head of the College for Emergency Medicine has told MPs that the main cause of the pressure being experienced by hospitals A & E departments is the increase in the number of patients being sent there by the NHS 111 helpline. This service ran into trouble immediately it was introduced to try to cover for GP doctors being out of touch except during surgery hours. Dr Mann told MPs that you cannot blame patients who present themselves at A & E when they have been advised to seek treatment there by the 111 telephone call takers.

It was hoped that the introduction of the 111 service would significantly reduce the pressure on A & E and calls on the ambulance service but the opposite has happened.





Ken's Page
Chairman of Trustees
Writes



LIBOR MONEY A WELCOME BOOST BUT WE MUST KEEP FUND-RAISING

Readers will know that in the autumn budget statement in 2013, the Chancellor announced that he was making available £10million from fines paid by banks for fixing the over-night inter-bank lending rate (so called Libor rate) to the emergency services charities in recognition of the contribution made to the UK by the blue light services. Since then a lot of hard work has been put in by the Fire Fighters Charity making the case for some of the available funds. It has been a long and meticulous process but it is now bearing fruit.

We know that £1 million is to be made available to us for the identified projects between now and the end of the financial year in April 2015. At least half will be spent on funding emergency services workers through various therapy programmes. The remainder will enable us to to accelerate our plans to buy specialist physiotherapy treatment equipment (such as the intriguingly named ant-gravity treadmills) and to extend our solar panel arrays to reduce our power costs and to do our bit for the environment.

I am a bit concerned that our volunteers might think that this boost means we can ease up on our fund raising efforts. I'm afraid that's not so. Like a generous gift from an old aunt for your birthday when you were a child, this grant helps us to do things we wanted to do earlier than we could otherwise have done them (buying a bike , in my case!) It does not address our underlying need for regular, dependable income in the region of £10million each and every year to enable us to continue to deliver quality services to our beneficiaries.

If we are to continue to offer the same range and quality of services in the future, we need to keep searching for new ways to generate funds. We are trying hard to be novel and innovative in this regard, but however clever we might be, at the end of the day it all comes down to the generosity of our supporters., because we have no funding besides public donations.

The fire and rescue service community, both serving and retired, has a proud record of standing by its own charity, and I thank you all for that. The generosity of the Chancellor is a welcome uplift, but we still have to depend on you all to do your bit so we can keep helping people in need.

You can find out ways in which you can help on our website www.firefighterscharity.org.uk

Thank you as always for all you do for our charity. Until next time, stay well and keep safe.

KEN SEAGER QFSM



SIGN UP NOW FOR THE
FIRE FIGHTERS LOTTERY
Jackpot prize £25,000 every month
Join the fun today by getting your joining form from
JOHN CRAIG Tel: 01380 726343

FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY HELPLINE NUMBER 0800 389 8820



To make your need known ring the helpline

0800 389 8820

ROD PRIDDLE

Fire Officer

Author

Historian

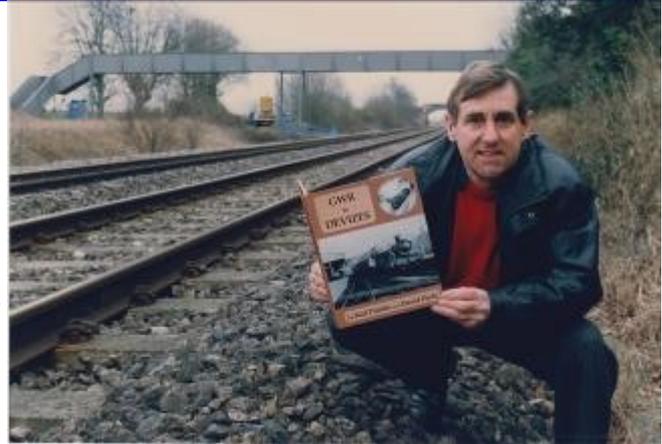
ROD PRIDDLE retired from the brigade in 1990 and since then he has spent some of his time researching and writing mainly historical subjects with a Wiltshire element. It will be seen below that the first two publications were generated by the locations in which he found himself living whilst serving.

Rod was born in Bath during World War 2 but grew up in Taunton where, on leaving school, he worked for **Somerset Fire Brigade** at its HQ. He joined **Bristol Fire Brigade** during the 1962/63 prolonged winter of snow. After ten years serving at the brigade HQ in Bridewell Street he transferred to **Wiltshire Fire Brigade** serving initially at **Amesbury**. Rod had by then developed an interest in air force history having had numerous probing conversations with an uncle who had served throughout the war as a pilot flying primarily Wellington and Mosquito aircraft. His father-in-law had been subjected to the same in-depth questioning because he had completed a tour of operations as a rear gunner on Lancaster bombers and had been awarded the DFM.

Amesbury was the perfect location for Rod to further develop his interest with the airfields of Boscombe Down, Netheravon, Upavon and Old Sarum on or close to his station ground. These establishments required regular visits for familiarisation purposes. All had a rich air force pedigree stretching back to the early days of flying. Other former airfield sites from the same era and close to Amesbury were Stonehenge, Lake Down and Larkhill of which the latter could be said opened with the birth of aviation in the last century when flying commenced there in July 1909.

It was not long before Rod decided the history of Wiltshire's airfields warranted researching and recording for reference by future generations. It was also important to record the of those who had served or lived near the sites. The subject had not been covered in book form so Rod commenced his research into the then 34 past and present airfields with a view to undertaking the writing when time permitted.

Six years after arriving at Amesbury Rod was transferred to Brigade HQ with a new home at Chirton. The village is a quarter mile from Patney village through which ran the main West of England railway. Some remains of Patney and Chirton Station were still evident at the time, the station having been the terminus for the Devizes Branch line which was closed by Dr Beeching in 1966. A number of Rod's neighbours had worked at the station or used it as passengers and they had stories to tell and photographs taken over the years following the station opening in October 1900. Rod was persuaded to write a history of the station to cover a number of editions of the village magazine. This led later to researching and writing the history of the complete thirteen mile branch line from Patney to Holt. During the research he found one of the most rewarding aspects was talking to those who had been with the GWR prior to World War2, and hearing of their experiences. As with the fire brigade,



Rod on track and displaying his book 'GWR to Devizes'.

railway staff moved from one post to another and changed locations. Rod admired the dedication of one man he spoke to who worked at Devizes but who had also worked a signal box at Frome. He lived in Bromham and would cycle to the signal box to be on duty at 6.00am ; probably not a journey and mode of transport that would be undertaken today. Not all the stories told by the railwaymen were suitable for publication but after meeting a considerable number of men and women, it was obvious their work ethic, camaraderie and way of life was very much comparable to that of fire brigade personnel. Not very many of the railway staff Rod met are alive today but a couple are and he still meets them for reunion lunches.

As the research material mounted up it became obvious that it was deserving of publication. With brigade duties taking priority there were often lulls of several months without the book progressing and it was still far from complete on retirement in 1990.

As with his arrival at Amesbury good fortune shortly came Rod's way when he joined the British Rail Fire Safety Dept. Where Graham Birt BEM and Bill McGill were already employed following their earlier retirements. Rod feels it was probably they who influenced his appointment. The course of his duties was of considerable benefit in obtaining further material for the book. He came across a store room at Bristol Temple Meads station that was a 'gold mine' of old plans and correspondence, some dating back to the days of Brunel. It was also surprising that that GWR equipment could still be found in use on stations some 40+ years after the railways were nationalised. Authors on completing a manuscript often find difficulty in finding a publisher., especially for a first manuscript. Rod has been fortunate in this respect finding publishers for his books at first attempt. The railway manuscript, which was completed in 1994, was acquired by a publisher in Bath who had 2000 copies produced. **GWR to Devizes** appeared in bookshops two years later.

Fired by success, Rod re-erected the material on airfields history that had been put on one side for years. The timing was just right as still living were some of those

who had served on the various airfields. A number of the airfields were used for training purposes, Wiltshire being a reasonably safe distance from the east coast and attack from that direction by enemy aircraft. A number of airfields were used by operational units with Colerne the busiest and equipped primarily with fighter squadrons giving cover to Bristol, Bath and south coast shipping. From Keevil, Ramsbury and Blakehill Farm gliders left with troops and equipment for the D-Day landings, Arnhem and the crossings of the Rhine, The late Chief Fire Officer of Avon, Fred Ponsford, was a glider pilot on all three of these operations. He was a colleague of Rod's when they served together in Bristol Fire Brigade and he contributed a considerable amount of information from the time of his initial pilot training at Tilshead to the landings made in Europe.

Many days were spent at the National Records Office in Kew researching information from the station and squadron operational records books. It became obvious from these that very many hundreds of airmen lost their lives while training in Wiltshire. Some were returned to their towns and cities but many were buried in churchyards close to the airfields to which they had been attached. Lyneham and Upavon cemeteries are just two with many casualties. Haycombe in Bath was where many non-British airmen and Germans were taken. There was poignancy in the case of some losses such as the pilot buried at a church in East Harnham on the day he should have been married there. The greatest loss of life from an aircraft crash in Wiltshire occurred at Stourton in February 1945 when a Dakota transport took off from RAF Zeals and struck cloud covered trees on a nearby hill. The 20 airmen on board lost their lives with the pilot being the only survivor. After the war he took his own life being unable to live with having killed his colleagues. Rod talked with residents of Zeals who had witnessed the aftermath of the accident and they persuaded him to raise a memorial cairn at the scene of the crash. He managed to trace many of the relatives of those



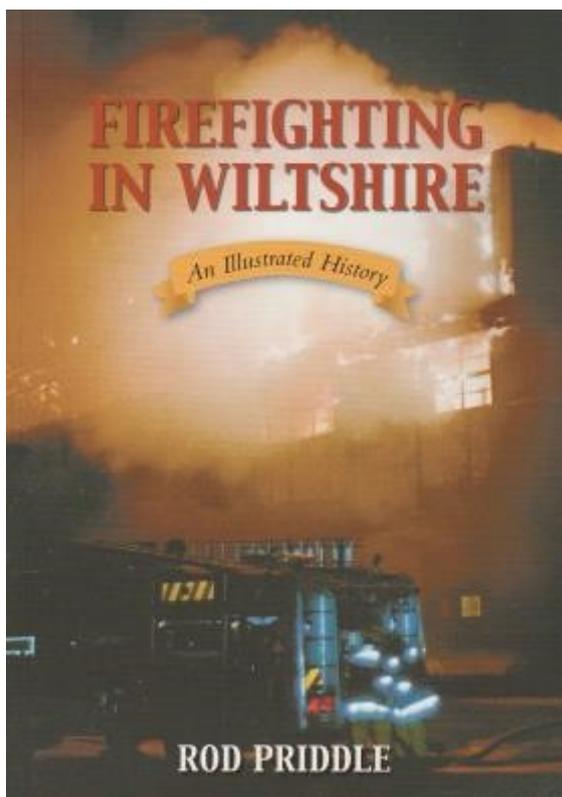
Rod Priddle in the cockpit of a Spitfire

Killed and raised the finance for the memorial to be built. At the unveiling ceremony in 1999 120 relatives, representatives of the RAF, RAAF and RCAF and residents of Zeals attended and Rod arranged for a Dakota to fly low over the memorial in tribute.

The comprehensive history of Wiltshire's military airfields was published in 2003 under the title **Wings Over Wiltshire**. A number of reprints have followed.

Before completion of the book Rod had been approached by a local family to compile a book from notes recorded by a late relative who had been a pilot with the RAF throughout the war. He continued flying military aircraft until the early 1960s. He had been a scholar at Dauntsey's School before joining the RAF. The book charts his early pre-war training, his flying of different types of aircraft during the war, having to swim for his life when the ship carrying him to West Africa was torpedoed, flying civilian aircraft to and from Europe for a shady customer when demobilised and his return to flying military aircraft until retirement. The book was published in 2004 under the title **Adventures on the Infinite Highway**.

Other published books have included eight volumes of primarily World War 2 RAF poetry written by personnel serving through the long six years. This was poetry primarily with serious themes conveying the inner thoughts and feelings of men who were unsure of their short-term future. The poetry was collated over a number of years and in ensuring the copyright to use them Rod found himself talking to several former aircrew who were well known for their exploits in Fighter and Bomber Commands. The series of books opened doors that gave him access to surviving World War 2 aircraft.



Firefighting in Wiltshire

In addition to the books about the history of railways and airfields, Rod Priddle, has also compiled an illustrated history of fire fighting in Wiltshire. The book was first published by Tempus Publishing of Stroud in 2008.

Given Rod's interest in airfields, it is ironic that the cover of this book carries a picture of the fire in 1992 at

RAF Hullavington

OBITUARIES

Patrick John (“Pappy”) Hope

Our member, Pat Hope, died after a long battle with cancer and his funeral service was held on 30th January at Salisbury Crematorium. The massive attendance at the Christian service conducted by the Revd. Rosemary Richter told its own story of how well respected Pat was. He was born in 1928 and did National Service in the Royal Navy after which he worked for a short time as a locomotive fireman on the railway. He then joined Wiltshire Fire Brigade and served at Salisbury until his retirement on reaching the age limit. He was a very popular member of the brigade.

Pat was married to Jeannie in 1950 and together they established a very happy home. They had four children, David, Annie, Phil and Ken. Sadly, Jeannie died in 1996. David followed Pat into the brigade and also served at Salisbury until he too retired.

Pat worked in an electrical store after retirement from the brigade but he had several serious health problems with which to contend. These included a triple heart by-pass and a triple A aneurysm. He came through these serious health problems but was afflicted by cancer of the colon later and this disease eventually led to his death.

At the funeral service, a pump and the duty crew from Salisbury formed a guard of honour and the Chief Fire Officer was represented by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, John Aldridge. Our Association was well represented by a large contingent of our members that included the Secretary/Treasurer, John Craig., and Executive Council members Ludo Macaulay, Jim Betts and Tony Andrews.

Rest in Peace, Pat.

Pamela Frances Wixey

Pam Wixey collapsed and died soon afterwards on 17th December 2014. Pam was the wife of WRFA member, Pete Wixey and they lived in Latton. Pam was a stalwart support to Pete throughout his time of service at Cricklade in Wiltshire Fire Brigade. Pam became Pete’s devoted carer when a hip replacement operation went wrong leaving him disabled and for a long period he was confined to a wheelchair. Pam’s resilience and dedication during these difficult years of their long and happy marriage bore strong testament to the type of lady Pam was.

Pam will be sorely missed especially by her loving family.

The funeral service was held in Christian style at Kingsdown Crematorium on 8th January.

Rest in peace, Pam.

Sheralyne Gale

With great sadness the news was received that Sheralyne , wife to our member, Dave Gale, had passed away very suddenly on 24th January , age 67. Her funeral service is at 11.30am on 12th February 2015 at West Wilts Crematorium, Semington and the wake will be at The Quarryman’s Arms in Corsham. Our condolences have been expressed to Dave and his family.

Rest in peace, Sheralyne.





SOCIAL EVENTS



MARCH MUNCH

Shake off the winter blues and come to

Upavon Golf Course

Two-Course Lunch £10.00

Friday 20th March 2015

Coffee or cash bar from 11.00am

LUNCH SERVED AT 1.00pm

Booking form with this newsletter or download from website

Notes for your diary

Annual General Meeting & Lunch

31st May 2015

At Cumberwell Park Golf Club

Ladies Only Lunch

Venue to be advised

6th September

Remembrance Event & Dinner

Devizes Town Hall

7th November 2015





Blue Light News

Snippets from the
Emergency Services



WILTSHIRE FIREFIGHTERS WORK TO KEEP HOMELESS SAFER



Trowbridge fire station staff led by Station Manager Damien Bence with one of the packs

In 2006 Wiltshire firefighters attended a distressing fatal fire in which a homeless man died trying to keep himself warm unsafely. It is not in the nature of Wiltshire FRS personnel to simply walk away from such a situation without asking themselves “*what can we do to avoid this happening again?*” This resulted in a project that has just come to fruition that provides free “stay warm” packs for homeless people in Wiltshire. The packs are being assembled and distributed county-wide from Trowbridge fire station. The packs contain blankets, warm clothing and materials to light a fire safely. **Photo by courtesy of Wiltshire Gazette & Herald**



Sean Frayne

DERBYSHIRE’S CFO ACQUITTED OF RAPE CHARGE

The Chief Fire Officer of Derbyshire, **SEAN FRAYNE**, was acquitted of a rape charge as THE BRANCH went to press. Mr Frayne’s suspension from duty was lifted by the fire authority on Friday 6th February. The case centred on an incident at a pub in 2006 when CFO Frayne admits he met a woman who made sexual advances to him and he responded to these fully. He is a married man. In 2013, the woman concerned told a female friend of what happened and the friend is alleged to have written two letters to the CFO demanding money in return for her friend not claiming that she had been raped.

The complaint of rape was made and Mr Frayne was charged even though he made the police aware of the letters. The fire authority suspended Mr Frayne from duty when he informed them that he had been charged. The trial took place at Derby Crown Court and the jury came to a verdict after only retiring for 15 minutes. Mr Frayne was acquitted of the charge but had stated in giving evidence at the trial that he considered his life was ruined.

WILTSHIRE’S CHIEF CONSTABLE TO RETIRE

Mr **Patrick Geenty** is to retire as Chief Constable of Wiltshire after being in post for less than three years. Mr Geenty is credited as having brought some stability to the service after its reputation was damaged by the conduct of some members of it. His work was praised by Mr Angus Macpherson, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire.



MORE BLUE LIGHT NEWS

Complaints Against Wiltshire Police Rise By 23 Per Cent



Complaints against the police nationally rose by 15% in 2013/14 but in Wiltshire the number of such complaints rose by 23%. This has been defended by the force who state that the reason for the huge increase is down to complaints being investigated more efficiently and increased awareness by the public in how to complain. The Chief Constable, Mr Pat Geenty, is one of the officers under investigation for misconduct together with two others concerning alleged mishandling of a sexual abuse case.



Photo by kind permission of Norfolk FRS

ROYAL OPENING OF NEW FIRE STATION IN NORFOLK

Her Majesty the Queen performed the opening ceremony for the new fire station at South Lynn in Norfolk on 3rd February. Her Majesty was accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and both took a deep interest in all that they were shown at the station by CFO Nigel Williams. As well as unveiling a plaque to mark the occasion, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh signed photographs of themselves that are now displayed in pride of place at South Lynn.

GREATER MANCHESTER ADOPT THE WATER LANCE

Greater Manchester FRS has been seeking ways to improve operational capability and this has led to the introduction of the Ultra High Pressure Water Lance. The lance has the capability of punching holes in solid objects and can bring fires under control using remarkably little water. It is hoped that the lance will make dealing with room and compartment fires much easier and safer. Live fire experiments have been carried out on derelict houses in Manchester and used in conjunction with ventilation tactics the results of using the lance have been very promising **Photo by Greater Manchester FRS**



The Ultra High Pressure Lance in Use



Book Shelf
Sharing views about books

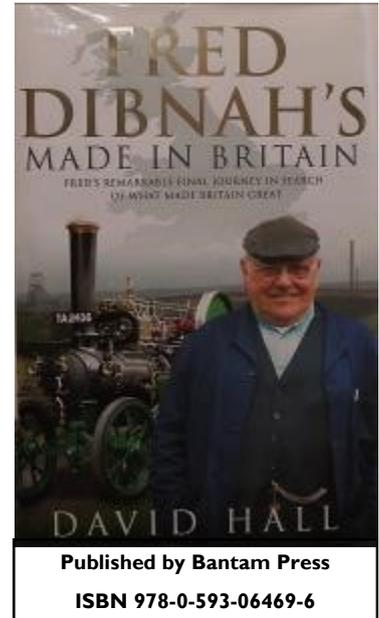


Fred Dibnah's Made in Britain

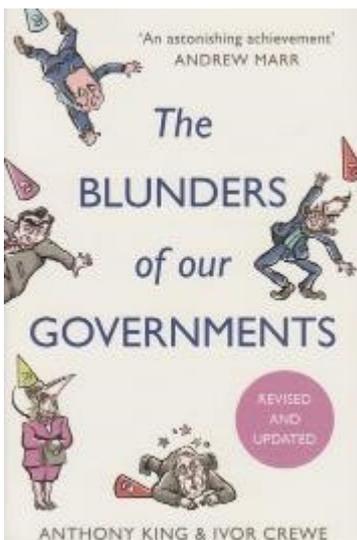
Author David Hall

I was given this book as a Christmas present and I enjoyed it so much that I knew that it would appeal to those members of the WRFA who have an interest in machines that go "puff-puff" and "toot-toot". Probably England's greatest steam engine enthusiast in recent years was the late Fred Dibnah who first came to public notice as a steeple jack based in Lancashire and then went on to become noted for his passion for steam powered machines of any kind. Fred was an endearing character and broadcasters quickly recognised the potential in him for acting as the presenter of documentaries about Britain's industrial history and , in particular, the part played by steam power in our history. The book is somewhat poignant because it is a record of the last TV documentary starring Fred that was produced by David Hall. It is poignant because Fred was dying of cancer throughout the making of the TV series and David mentions the real concerns he had that Fred might not be able to complete the TV programmes .

Fred owned and restored a steam traction engine as well as a steam roller. The book tells the story of all the trials and tribulations associated with touring to make the TV series 'Made in Britain' using the traction engine as the motive power towing a caravan that served as accommodation for Fred. The TV series



called for filmed visits to sites of special interest from an engineering point of view in both Scotland and England. These made the book of particular interest and value to any reader wanting to know more about British industrial heritage. Fred is with us no more and I feel sure that he would be proud of this book that shows him to have been what he was; a remarkably skilled engineer whose efforts to inform and/or remind us of the tremendous achievements this country made in the field of heavy engineering will be his lasting legacy. **JOHN CRAIG**



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The Blunders of our Governments

Authors Anthony King & Ivor Crewe

This book is the latest offering from King and Crewe, two erudite political analysts who have produced a book that gives well researched insight into some of the most serious cock-ups by governments in recent times . Of course, because politicians are human beings it is unreasonable to expect that those in power will never make mistakes. The point made very clearly by this book is how costly it is to the British taxpayer when Westminster and Whitehall get things wrong on a grand scale which so often happens. The chapter that I found so depressing and worrying was the one dealing with lack of accountability. I have long held the view that politicians and their civil servants are rewarded for failure rather than being punished. King and Crewe make this point and emphasis that it removes the Incentive to succeed.

The failure of so many government sponsored IT projects takes up a lot of space in the book and many readers will not be surprised to learn that the disastrous project to regionalise fire controls gets its fair share of coverage. However, even the huge waste of money associated with FiReControl project is but a drop in the ocean compared to the eye-watering sums lost on the attempt to produce an IT

system spanning the UK for the NHS. Under the banner of 'Connecting for Health' this project lost an estimated £20 billion without producing anything of value.

Confidence in those we elect is at a low ebb but I must warn readers that anyone in this frame of mind will not have their confidence restored by reading this excellent book. **JOHN CRAIG**

Dr Roger Snook MD

A pioneer in advanced medical aid at emergencies

In the early 1970s I was a station officer serving at the headquarters of Suffolk & Ipswich Fire Service. I was delegated by the CFO to be the fire brigade representative on a newly formed committee with aims to set up and then administer a service to provide doctors at the scene of road accidents and other serious trauma cases such as industrial and agricultural accidents. Most of the other members of the committee were doctors in general practice and the name of **Dr Roger Snook** cropped up often in these meetings. I soon learnt that Dr Snook was the man setting the pace for the creation of these advanced medical aid schemes that were spreading rapidly across the UK because Dr Snook was proving their worth in saving lives.

I did some research to find out more about Dr Snook and discovered that he was a consultant based in the Accident & Emergency Department of the Royal United Hospital in Bath. At that time, Bath City was blessed with fire and rescue protection from Bath City Fire Brigade and the city's ambulance service enjoyed close links with the brigade because they had stations that were next door to each other.

Dr Snook formed the view that rather than just wait for the ambulance service to bring a casualty to him and his staff at RUH, more lives could be saved if his expertise was taken to the casualty at the site of the incident. It has to be remembered that this was ground breaking in the UK in those days and I have little doubt that many A & E consultants would not have wanted to copy Dr Snook and leave the comfort zone of their hospital department. Those of us who have attended many "persons trapped" incidents in our careers know only too well how demanding and unpleasant the work can be and for decades it was left to the fire brigade and ambulance crews to manage at the scene without any qualified medical support. Dr Roger Snook changed that for ever by his personal commitment to attending incidents to work alongside the other emergency services. He developed a set of equipment to be carried in his car so that treatments that used to have to wait until the casualty reached hospital could be given much earlier and by a very experienced doctor.



The Mediflash magnetic car lamp designed by Dr Roger Snook

I recall that the Suffolk committee mentioned earlier embarked on fund raising to provide the sets of equipment as used by Dr Snook. Much of the money needed came from sponsorship



Bath City emergency services work to free a trapped lorry driver with support on hand from Dr Snook (circa 1970)

Because he was not a member of the fire brigade or ambulance service, Dr Snook could not use blue flashing lights on his car and so getting through traffic to an incident was not easy. Dr Snook solved this by designing the 'MEDIFLASH' magnetic light to fix on his car roof that showed a green light to the front and red and white to the rear. Initially I can recall that the police and Department of Transport were unsupportive but eventually 'MEDIFLASH' was adopted nationally by act of parliament.

Harry Judge, the then Commandant of the Fire Service College, invited Dr Snook to enhance some of the relevant courses at the College by his input as a visiting lecturer. I was one of those that benefited from this instruction when I attend the Road Traffic Accident Instructors Course. Dr Snook also lectured regularly at police and ambulance colleges.

Additionally, Dr Snook advised on the design of ambulances and wrote books on the subject of rescue techniques and I cherish a copy of *Medical Aid at Accidents* that Dr Snook wrote in 1974.

All seemed to be going so well when, although still in his 50s, Dr Snook was given early retirement by the NHS. He was also stopped from lecturing at the Fire Service College. He moved from the NHS to the Military and taught rescue techniques until he finally retired at age 68 to a smallholding in a village near Bath. There, he declares himself to be extremely content working with his wife, Sue, who does delicious things with the produce that Roger grows.

I have recently met many retired firefighters of my era and without exception all share a very high opinion of Dr Roger Snook. My contact with him recently has left me with the firm impression that he still holds the fire and rescue service in high regard. Dr Snook's contribution to the development of rescue techniques has been massive. **JOHN CRAIG**

CAPTION COMPETITION



This photo of an early attempt by these ladies to enter the field of charity car washes lends itself to one of our WRFA CAPTION COMPETITIONS. Entries are invited from anyone wishing to suggest a witty caption for this photograph. The winner will receive a £10.00 gift token or a free car wash . Entries will be judged by our Chairman, Chris Wannell.

Entries using the contact form on the website or by post to John Craig, 12a Gaisford Chase, WORTON, Devizes SN10 5RX.

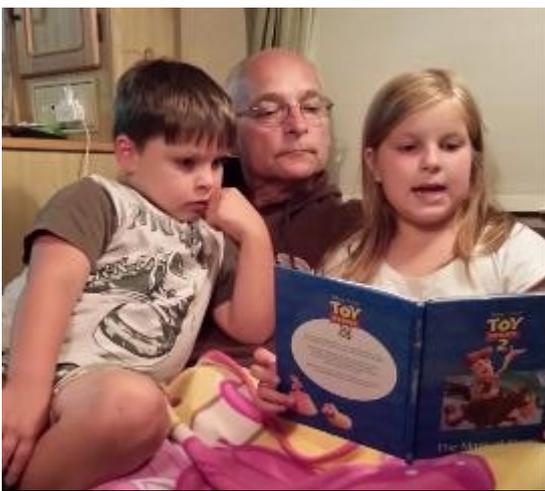


Photo by courtesy of Sarah-Jane Jackson

DECEMBER'S WINNER

There were two entries for the December Caption Competition and it was won by **Colin Hill** with...

“Now you try , Daddy...What’s this word ?”

Yve Benwell was runner-up with...

“Now, no snoring Daddy if you fall asleep before I get to the end.”.

Our thanks to Colin and Yve and also to Sarah-Jane Jackson for providing the photo and judging the entries. Colin has declined the alternative prize of Rob Jackson reading him a bedtime story and has donated his £10.00 prize to the Fire Fighters Charity

DISCLAIMER

Any views or opinions published in THE BRANCH are not necessarily shared by the WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION or the WILTSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE.

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