

Newsletter of the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association



The Branch



September 2015

A SALUTE TO OUR RECORD BREAKING QUEEN



The Queen on a recent visit to a Norfolk fire station.

Photo courtesy Norfolk FRS

On 9th September 2015, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II becomes the longest serving monarch in British history, exceeding the length of the time that Queen Victoria ruled.

As the years have gone by, the respect and affection in which Her Majesty is held by her subjects has grown steadily.

Although she has personally expressed the wish that little fuss is made of occasion, the nation will wish to celebrate and congratulate the Queen, focusing in doing so upon her sense of duty and commitment to serving her people in the UK and the Commonwealth.

The WRFA adds its congratulations and best wishes to Her Majesty.

COMMUTATION ; THE MILNE CASE

A retired Scottish fire officer by the name of Milne has successfully brought a case against the Government Actuarial Department (GAD) resulting in him being awarded £36,000 additional commutation. The case has opened up the potential for many other fire and police pensioners to receive more commutation. GAD is said to be producing amended commutation tables that will be supplied to pension paying .

authorities. WRFA is writing to Wiltshire Council to try to find out when those due for extra commutation can expect to receive the money they are owed.



LADIES LUNCH



On 6th September a group of ladies associated with WRFA enjoyed each other's company at a lunch arranged at Cleeve House, near Seend. A two-course meal was served and the brilliant sunshine enhanced the first of such occasions held by our association. Executive Committee member, Win Huggett, managed the event expertly on the day and the consensus view was that this experiment had been worthwhile and such events should be repeated but at a pub restaurant type establishment.

NEW MEMBERS

It is always a pleasure to welcome new members and two have joined very recently.

ANN FITZGERALD Ann served for five years in the fire service starting at the tender age of only 15 in the AFS based at Swindon Fire Station. She later was appointed to the London Fire Brigade as a semi-operational fire fighter but family matters later brought her back to Wiltshire where she worked in Fire Control until leaving to take up a career in nursing. Ann is married and lives in Swindon with her husband.

MICHAEL HYDE Michael served in West Yorkshire Fire Service for 30 years retiring in 2005. He served at Rotherwell, Gipton, Leeds and Bramley. He still lives in Leeds with his dog and discovered our association through our website. He found the information it conveyed so helpful that, although so distant from Wiltshire, he has asked to become a member of WRFA.

We warmly welcome Ann and Michael and hope that their membership will bring them manifold benefits in the years to come.

People & Places

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



John & Margaret Craig had a special golden celebration in July organised by their family to mark their 50th wedding anniversary. The event took the form of a lunch held at the Bear Hotel in Devizes. The couple were delighted to have members of the close family joining the party all the way from North Carolina in USA.

Yve's Muddy Run For Charity

Yve Benwell committed to a challenging charity fun run on September 5th in Swindon to raise money for cancer research. The distance was 5 kilometres over very muddy terrain and Yve finished exhausted but triumphant. Her appearance was not in keeping with her immaculate normal appearance in public but the nearly £550 raised made her valiant efforts well worth while.



FREDA'S SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

Freda Hart recently celebrated her 90th birthday and we congratulate her and wish her all the best for the future. Freda served in the AFS and NFS in Staffordshire throughout World War II and moved to Marlborough with her husband after the war. She has been a widow for a number of years. Freda is now one of our oldest members .



ON THE MOVE



Several WRFA members have moved house recently. Anyone wishing to contact any of those mentioned below should first contact the Secretary/Treasurer who will arrange for the member to pass contact details to the enquirer.

JULIE AINSWORTH

Julie and Ken Ainsworth have moved from Trowbridge to Barwell in Leicestershire.

JOHN LAKEY

John Lakey and Karen have recently moved back to England after several years in Cyprus. They have set up home near Ludlow in Shropshire.

PHIL APPLEBY

Phil and Eileen Appleby have moved from Down Ampney in Gloucestershire to Blunsdon in Wiltshire.

DAVE BERRY

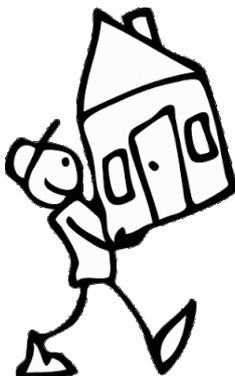
Dave has recently moved from Swindon to Cinderford in The Forset of Dean.

BRUCE BRINGLOE

Bruce and Janet have just moved from Blount's Court in Potterne to a bungalow in the centre of Devizes.

Mr. G. LAW

Mr G. Law has recently moved from Swindon to Wroughton.



Please keep this Association updated with any changes to your contact details such as postal address, phone numbers and email addresses.

Failure to do so is likely to cause you to miss out on information of relevance to you and will result in publications such as 'SHOUT' magazine going to the wrong address.



Health Matters

News about members that are facing health challenges



HEATHER HILL

While on holiday with Colin in North Wales recently, Heather was taken ill with a problem affecting her kidneys. She was admitted to hospital in Bangor. We wish her a speedy and complete recovery. Now that she is home convalescing.

JOHN PERRY

John and Maureen Perry have recently had a further period of therapy and respite care at Jubilee House, the Fire Fighters Charity centre at Penrith in Cumbria. These visits are a much valued source of regular comfort and support to the couple.



JOHN CRAIG

John will be in Ridgeway Hospital at Wroughton for an estimated three days for an operation to reduce the size of the prostate. The surgery is scheduled for 24th September. It is not anticipated that John will be away from his duties to the WRFA for very long and he promises to resume normal service as soon as possible.

JIM BETTS

Lesley Betts has supplied the information that Jim's treatment has not been successful and he is now receiving palliative care. Our thoughts and prayers are with Jim, Lesley and their family .

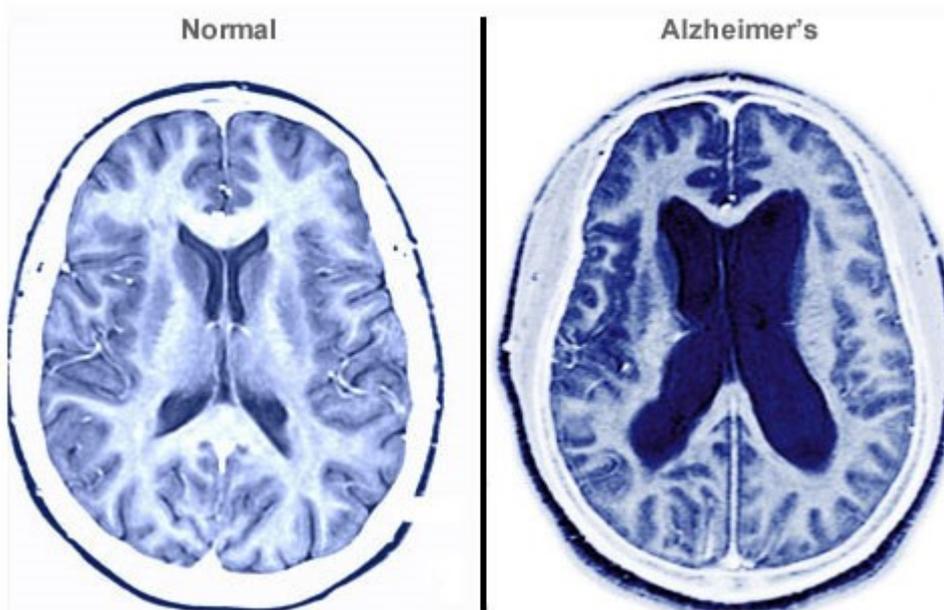


Health Matters (continued)

ASPIRIN MAY HELP FIGHT CANCER

Cancer treatments could be more effective if combined with aspirin, a study has suggested. Aspirin has been found to suppress a cancer molecule that allows tumours to evade the body's immune defences.

Experts have declared the study results to be "exciting" because they give hope that drugs costing very little could make a huge difference in fighting some cancers.



ALZHEIMER'S & DEMENTIA

Who at pension age has not experienced momentary forgetfulness and asked themselves the question "Am I getting Alzheimer's or dementia?"

Such fears are very common and understandable given the amount of publicity now being given to the increasing number of elderly folk suffering from Alzheimer's or another form of dementia.

It is therefore helpful to understand that the occasional lapse in memory, such as forgetting a telephone number, is normal but forgetting how to use a telephone is a sign that medical help should be sought.

Even if you are exhibiting signs of dementia, it does not necessarily follow that the cause is in fact Alzheimer's or dementia. There are a number of things that can impair a person's mental capacity. These include vitamin B12, depression, urinary tract infection, thyroid problems, Parkinson's disease and medication overload.

The message is clear that any hint of dementia or similar problems justify a visit to the GP.



BLUE LIGHT NEWS

Updates on the Emergency Services at home and abroad.



POTTERNE HQ TO BE SOLD

It has been announced by the Chairman of the Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority that The Manor House at Potterne, that has served as county fire HQ since 1948, is to be put up for sale as the amalgamation of the service with that of Dorset draws close. The Fire Control building that stands on the same site will remain operational and , in fact, it is about to become the fire control for both Dorset and Wiltshire.



The announcement by the Chairman also mentioned that the new fire authority is seeking premises in the Five Rivers area of Salisbury to act as the administration hub for the combined services. There will also be a slimming down of back office staff and it seems inevitable that some currently employed at Potterne will be made redundant.



DELAYED FIRE CALL

A 42 minute delay in calling the fire & rescue service led to the Assistant Coroner of Avon making several recommendations at the inquest into the fire death of Mr George Hines, an 89 year old tenant living in a council owned flat. Mr Hines is thought to have set fire to his bedroom with a cigarette and the pull cord emergency system in the room failed at about 4.00am. The monitoring

Centre sent someone to investigate after having problems communicating with Mr Hines. It was 42 minutes before the need to call the fire service was established and firefighters discovered Mr Hines to have died before they arrived. The coroner has queried why smoke alarms are not directly connected to fire control. He further advised that tenants should be advised to dial 999 in the event of fire and not just rely upon the pull chord alarm system.

SCOTLAND'S CHIEF CONSTABLE TO GO EARLY

The Chief Constable of Scotland, Sir Stephen House, is to retire early in the midst of a number of concerns about policing in Scotland. He will leave his post in early December this year instead of September 2016. Sir Stephen is 57 years old and presided since 2012 over the amalgamation of the several local police services into one national police authority for Scotland. However, not all has gone well and a particular example of this was the incident on the M9 motorway when after taking the 99 9 call, the police took three days to attend.



Two people were found to have died in the wrecked car. Weaknesses in the staffing of police control rooms have been blamed for this serious failure but there have been other matters that have raised questions about the management of the Police Scotland.

Blue Light News (continued)

HAMPSHIRE FRS APPLIANCES INVOLVED IN TWO SERIOUS RTCs

Within a recent few days, fire engines operated by Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service have been involved in serious road traffic collisions and a member of the public was killed in one of these incidents. The fatality happened on 23rd August on the A337 between Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst. A HAZMAT appliance was returning to Winchester after attending a gas leak emergency when a collision occurred with a car. The driver of the car died at the scene. One fire fighter was injured and taken to hospital.

A few days later, the second incident occurred when a fire appliance ran off the road and hit a tree. No other vehicle was involved. The collision happened at Grayshott. The appliance was on its way to a fire call. Four of the crew of five were injured and taken to hospital, one requiring medivac by helicopter.

OUR KEN QUESTIONS WEST SUSSEX OVER PUBLIC RELATIONS

In the immediate aftermath of the Shoreham Air Show disaster, WRFA member, Ken Harrison was disappointed and amazed to find that the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service website carried no information at all about the involvement of the fire and rescue service in this very serious incident. Several days after the incident, the website carried no information at all about the incident, not even basic details of the



appliances mobilised to the crash site and the stations from which they came. In sharp contrast the Ambulance Service clearly moved quickly to emphasise their role, even to the point of ambulance personnel being interviewed on TV claiming to be “first on scene” when there is evidence to show that fire crews on standby at Shoreham Airport for just such an emergency were first to arrive. Ken Harrison did not let the matter rest and contacted the PR staff at West Sussex FRS Headquarters to express his surprise at the service’s failure to keep the public informed through the website. Why have a website and then not use it?



TWO COUNTIES FIRE CONTROL

On 8th September, the Fire Control at Potterne in Wiltshire was officially opened as the joint fire control for both Wiltshire and Dorset. This represents a considerable investment of funds and effort that effectively means the control will stay on the

Site for the foreseeable future even though the adjacent Manor House that has served as HQ to the fire service in Wiltshire since 1948 is likely to be sold to a private buyer.

Even before the merger of Dorset FRS with Wiltshire FRS was a serious consideration, the two services had agreed to amalgamating their control rooms into one to produce savings and efficiencies amounting to £millions.

The contractor for the IT project is Capita and the new system going live is seen as a vitally important step in the amalgamation of the two fire & rescue services.

God bless the new control and all that work in her!



Social Events



REMEMBRANCE EVENT



7th November 2015

Devizes Town Hall

Cash bar from 6.00pm

Two-course hot supper at 6.30pm

Devizes Town Band Concert

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

Tickets £16.50

Booking form available to download from website

www.wrfa.org.uk

or attached to this newsletter

Christmas Festive LUNCH

13th December 2015

Grasmere House Hotel, Salisbury



WRFA WALKING CLUB



Phil Appleby reports on a two-day out of county walking trip



On Wednesday 15th July, twelve of us set off from Devizes to the New Forest National Park for two days of walking in the beautiful area that stretches from Newton in the north, to Keyhaven on the coast in the south. We were staying at the Travel Lodge Motel on the A31 at Stoney Cross for one night and got there in time for a quick coffee break in readiness for the first of two walks.

This walk was a steady six and a half miles in perfect walking conditions from Stoney Cross, up to Rufus Stone where young King William (Rufus) the second got in the way of an arrow whilst out hunting. From there we walked north towards Fritham through the dense wooded forest of Kings Garn Gutter enclosure and Salisbury Trench. We returned from there to Stoney Cross on a circular route. Only once did the walk leader “pretend” to be lost. Notwithstanding this, all got back to the motel for check in and a shower with no problem, and did they mention getting lost at all ????. Has the Pope got a balcony !!!!!

That evening we went for dinner to a nearby (ish) pub called The Sir Walter Tyrell (he was the guy wot killed the King and then legged it

to France.) It was a 20 minute walk each way to the pub, which meant that we had covered a total of 9 miles over the day by the time we got back to the hotel.

The next day we were up for breakfast and out of the hotel by 0900 ready for the trip down to Keyhaven and a walk from Hurst castle to the Pennington Marshes and back to Keyhaven. We got to Hurst Castle, a fortress originally built by Henry VIII and the closest part of the mainland to the Isle of Wight, via the small ferry that runs across Keyhaven Lake to the castle. The ferry takes about 15 minutes and thankfully the weather was with us. We walked around the exterior of the fort and then along the large shingle beach that leads to Keyhaven. The 7 mile walk continued around the beautiful Lymington/Keyhaven marshes nature reserve, a veritable twitchers paradise. We then returned to Keyhaven and the lovely Gun Inn for lunch, before retrieving the Mini Bus and returning to Devizes, arriving back at around 5.30pm. If you have never been to these areas I suggest you pay them a visit—it’s wonderful !! Our thanks to the Brigade for the use of the Mini Bus. It certainly was most helpful.

ANN FITZGERALD (nee Carpenter-Walker)

A pioneering female fire fighter

Females are now well established in the British fire and rescue service and this article pays tribute to one of the early pioneers of equality and diversity in the service. Way back in the mid-1960s, Ann Carpenter-Walker left school at 15 and started work as a clerk in a Swindon printing business. Her cousin is Monica Tovey who, with her husband, Arthur, were stalwart members of Wiltshire Auxiliary Fire Service and they encouraged Ann to join the AFS too. At the tender age of only 15, she was enrolled at



Road Fire Station in Swindon and thoroughly enjoyed the training and drills carried out twice weekly under tutorage of officers such as Pete Wilkins, Greg Bates and Ron Blocksidge. Ann took great pleasure in not only the work of the AFS but also in the social contacts that she made through being a member of the fire brigade. She was sent on a course to the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-the-Marsh and there met a young lady employed in Kent's Fire Control. Her name was Cherry, later to become Cherry Chandler when she married, and Ann and Cherry became lifelong friends until Cherry died from cancer a short while ago.

Service in the AFS opened Ann's eyes to the potential of a career in the regular fire brigade and so when still only 16 she began to make enquiries about being taken on as wholetime fire fighter. This was in the days when females "riding the reds" was only just beginning to be discussed by the top management of the service and Wiltshire Fire Brigade was not yet ready to accept females in operational posts. Ann was disappointed to be rejected by Wiltshire Fire Brigade and so she applied to London Fire Brigade. The Chief Fire Officer was L.W.T. Leete CBE and he had enough foresight to see the way the service was moving and so added to the establishment a few semi-operational posts to be filled by females. This must have been seen as a step towards the eventual appointment of women to fully operational posts. Ann was successful in gaining one of the semi-operational posts as soon as she turned 17 years of age.

Basic training was carried out at Lambeth to prepare the females for duties on the fireground such as Breathing Apparatus control and staffing incident controls. Later, Ann was posted to Croydon. She felt that she and the other semi-operational girls were welcomed, supported and warmly accepted by all ranks in the LFB.



Part of the time Ann spent under training was used to

Introduce her to the famous LFB fire boat, *the MASSEY SHAW*.

Some of the "working jobs" that stand out in Ann's memory include several serious fires in warehouses.

Just when all was going so well, Ann's grandfather became very ill and her family needed her back in Swindon. In the hope that her training and experience gained in London would persuade the

CFO Bill Chadwick to appoint her as semi-operational but all she was offered was a post in Swindon Fire Control.

Ann served in Fire Control for about a year from the end of 1968 to the end of 1969. Soon after leaving the WFB to take up a career in nursing she married but sadly the marriage failed and divorce followed in 1971. Ann later married again to her present husband, Colm, and they live in Swindon having been married for 20 years.

Ann's career in nursing brought experience of working in orthopaedics, intensive care and later she spent time as a Community Nurse in Wales.

Ann retired in 2007 but carried on doing some nursing on temporary contracts.

Ann is very active in the W.I. currently holding the post of Vice Chairwoman of the Stratton St. Margaret branch of the W.I.

Ann's other leisure activities include giving time and attention to her dog although this is somewhat impeded at present until she has knee replacement surgery .

Ann has joined this Association and it is to be hoped that we shall have the pleasure of meeting her and Colm often at some of our social events



Ann has asked that this article be dedicated to the memory of her dear friend, Cherry Chandler.

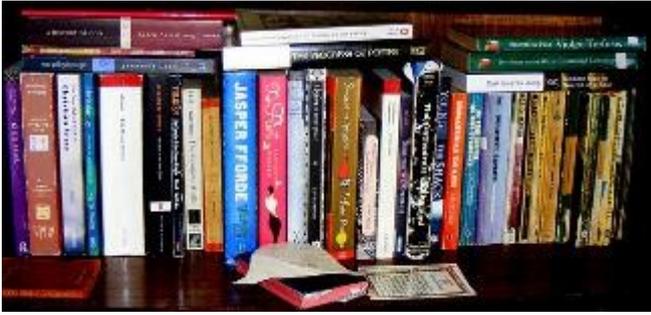
FLAGSHIP POLICE DIVERSITY SCHEME FLOPS

A controversial Government scheme aimed at parachuting professionals into senior police ranks has been branded an expensive failure. It was done in the name of improving diversity in the police service but only a handful of applications were deemed suitable for the programme.

The Police Direct Entry System allows people with the right skills and life experience to join the police service at the rank of superintendant. Successful applicants start on a salary of £62,000 per year.

The programme was launched last year in a blaze of slick publicity and this attracted 800 applications. However, once these had been sifted, only 8 were accepted to enter the programme.

Jack Dromey, the opposition spokesman on the police service, was strongly critical of the programme. He stated that such programmes risked damaging morale.



BOOK SHELF

Sharing news and views
about books

IN PURSUIT OF THE TRUTH

Author : Clive Driscoll

Published by Ebury Press



Clive Driscoll served in the Metropolitan Police for 35 years, retiring in 2014. On retirement he had reached the rank of Detective Chief Inspector and his greatest achievement among many was bringing two of the gang that carried out the 1993 racist murder of Stephen Lawrence to justice. This was a challenge that took him five years to complete and one at which many more senior ranked detectives had failed dismally. Although the trial judge commended Clive for his work on the case, he did not receive the same measure of congratulations and honour from the top ranks of the Met Police. I suppose Clive had embarrassed some in high authority by doing what they had failed to do.

Clive entered the police service comparatively late having served for four years in the London Ambulance Service that brought him experience of some very demanding situations. An example of these is the “one under” incidents; suicides of people that throw themselves under an underground train creating an awful mess for the emergency services to clean up.

Once through basic training at Hendon , Clive adopted a ‘Dixon of Dock Green’ approach to being a ‘bobby’ on the beat. He firmly believed that successful policing was best achieved by talking to people and in doing so trying to build up trust. Rather than using a police car in which to patrol, Clive preferred a bike and he states in the book that pedalling his way to incidents often got him there before colleagues in panda cars or squad cars.

Clive stuck to his belief that police officers must have lots of face-to-face contact with people throughout his long career. Outstanding in his memory of his early days as a constable was his recollections of being there at the two Brixton riots and he expounds in his book the failures by the Met senior officers to deal more effectively with these serious breakdowns in law and order.

For a time, Clive was placed in charge of a team involved in child protection and he and his colleagues compiled evidence against a list of people suspected of paedophilia. On the list was the name of a minister in Tony Blair’s government. Against his wishes, the list was revealed to others outside the team and soon after that the evidence mysteriously disappeared.

This is one of the best autobiographies that I have read in a long time. **JOHN CRAIG**

THE MILITARY WAY

In 1963 I joined a uniformed, disciplined fire service and was proud to wear the uniform and accept the military style elements of serving in a post war professional fire brigade. Many of the men with whom I served had entered the fire brigade after service in the armed forces and brought into the service a wealth of experience that fitted them very well for the duties of fire fighting and rescue.



A study of fire service history

reveals very strong links between the fire service and the Royal Navy. The 19th century fire brigades set up by insurance companies preferred to recruit ex-sailors because they were usually fit, courageous, used to working at heights, and accepted high standards of discipline. Also, because of their fear of fire at sea, sailors were naturally respectful of fire. A preference for recruiting firemen from the ranks of the navy continued well into the 20th century in many fire brigades.

With the nationalisation of the fire service in 1941 came an even greater emphasis on adopting a military style. This is perhaps not surprising given that the country was embroiled in war. I have a treasured copy of the National Fire Service Drill Book published in 1943. There are several pages devoted to giving details on how to salute in the correct manner. The instruction begins with these words :

It has been a long established practice in Fire Brigades to salute senior officers. As in other disciplined services it is generally recognised that the salute is not to the individual but a mark of respect to the Service in which both parties have a place, and to the uniform as a token of their membership of that Service.

How dated these words seem now .

Towards the end of the last century there flowed from Westminster and Whitehall pressure to demilitarise the fire service and afford fire fighters with little more respect and esteem than is given to a bus drivers or railway employees. To achieve this words such as “command” or “brigade” were outlawed and we no longer had officers in the service, only managers. Even before I retired in 2000 I was encountering anti-military attitudes at local level. I was criticised by a senior manager at County Hall for submitting committee reports that contained the words “*fire fighting*”. His argument was that only the armed forces did any fighting, we extinguished fires. I ignored his protest.

Change is inevitable and the service in which many of us invested so much could not stand still and to expect it to do so is unrealistic. However, I am glad that I retired when I did and had the pleasure of serving in times when there was still some respect left for the uniform and we were subject to discipline regulations that were on the Statute Book.

JOHN CRAIG



DISCLAIMER

Views and comments published in this newsletter are not necessarily shared by the WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION.