



The Branch

October 2013

Newsletter of WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS
ASSOCIATION



FIREWORKS OVER SALISBURY

THE BRANCH comes to you at the time of year when Bonfire Night approaches and I thought it appropriate to use this magnificent photograph of Salisbury Cathedral spire bathed in light from fireworks to dress the front page. Retired members of the fire & rescue service will all have their own recollections of incidents linked to fireworks and 5th November celebrations.

This photograph is published by courtesy of WRFA member, Tony Oliver, who took the picture from his own back garden. To view more examples of his skill with a camera, go to his website www.aropics.com.

JOHN CRAIG



WRFA WEBSITE LAUNCHED

Our Association now has its own website <http://www.wrfa.org.uk>. Our webmaster is JOHN COX, Vice Chairman of the Association. Make sure you log onto the site at regular intervals to keep right up to date with our busy association's news and events.

SALISBURY LUNCH On 29th September our Association held another very successful event at the Grasmere House Hotel in Salisbury. The picture shows just a few of the 60 that attended enjoying the beautiful grounds of the hotel that overlook the river and the cathedral. The standard of catering and service was superb and all declared that the price charged was excellent value for money. **Photos by TONY OLIVER**



Alan and Barbara House representing Hampshire FRS Past members Association are pictured (centre) above with WRFA Chairman, Chris Wannell (right) and our Secretary, John Craig, with their ladies.



FBU TAKE STRIKE ACTION



The FBU picket line at Trowbridge Fire Station photo by permission of Wiltshire Times

The Fire Brigades Union called its members out on strike for four hours on Wednesday 25th September 2013 in pursuance of the dispute that the FBU has with the Coalition Government over changes to the fire pension scheme that will require fire fighters to work to age 60 before being able to retire on pension. The FBU has about 40,000 members of whom 18,000 actually voted in the legally required ballot before the strike could take place. Of those that did vote, 80% are said to have voted for strike action. The strike may be followed by further industrial action if the Government does not concede to the FBU's demands. Avon Fire & Rescue Service called upon retired fire fighters to help crew fire appliances but such measures proved unnecessary in Wiltshire. Two fires were dealt with during the strike period, one in Swindon and the other in Salisbury. They involved a washing machine and a light fitting. The fire crews working normally easily coped with both incidents.

Claims that the dog in the above photo is not actually a paid up member of the FBU and was enticed onto the picket line with a bowl of 'Chappie' and a Bonio biscuit are yet to be confirmed.



As THE BRANCH goes to press, there is strong indication that the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority is about to grant local negotiating rights to the RFU, the representative body formed in 1976 to represent the 'on call' (retained) members of the fire & rescue service.

The RFU came into being as the first national strike by the Fire Brigades Union approached in the winter of 1977/8. The FBU strike lasted for 9 weeks and the RFU did not support the strike action and subsequently promoted itself as having a voluntary 'no-strike' policy.

THE CFO SAYS "THANK YOU"

The Chief Fire Officer of Wiltshire FRS has published his thanks to those who helped keep pumps crewed and on the run during the September FBU strike.



In Wiltshire, during the strike by the FBU there were 18 pumping appliances available to respond to emergency calls and this compares very favourably with what passes for normal level of fire cover during the daytime in the middle of the week.

The FBU is considering what further action to take.



Health Matters

News of those facing health challenges

Health topics and retired folk

Feedback from members



PATRICK (“Pat”) HOPE

Pat has recently been told that his bowel cancer has returned. This time, the tumour is inoperable and he is therefore terminally ill. He reports not being in any pain at the moment and is facing up to this bad news with fortitude. The Association has promised to give Pat as much support as possible.

MIC POUND

Following surgery for prostate cancer, Mic reports that he has been given an “all clear” by the consultant and we share in his joy at receiving such good news.

YVE BENWELL

Yve has had an irregular heart beat for some time. Recently, she had heart surgery that it is hoped will ease the problem in time. Her condition is not suited to the fitting of a pacemaker. We wish Yve well and hope that her heart condition responds well to the surgery .

DAVE BERRY

Dave is still recovering from an Achilles heel tendon problem but at least he has been able to get rid of the surgical boot that so restricted his movement for many weeks. However, there is still a way to go until he is fully fit again. We wish Dave well.

OUT OF HOURS CARE

The last Government allowed GPs to walk away from providing “out of hours” care for their patients and this is now deemed to have created a crisis because the A & E Departments of acute hospitals are finding that they are doing the work previously done by family doctors during times. The Coalition Government respond to this by asking GPs to keep surgeries open for massive cash incentives to do so is being pushed towards the GPs.

However, the GPs are saying that they are already at risk of “burn-out” because of increased workloads and the only real answer is to provide more GPs. However, it takes between seven and ten years to train a GP.

The 111 telephone service was launched very recently to replace NHS Direct but it has not proved to be universally successful. Because the call takers are not clinically trained and carry out assessments and give advice based on tick-box guidance, many mistakes have been reported. The service was flawed at the time of launch.



JOE NASH

Joe lives in Tetbury. He has recently had a heart pacemaker fitted which he says is a great help. He recently has a road accident when his car was in collision with another. He states that he was not to blame and fortunately, there were no serious injuries to anyone but his car was badly damaged.

JOHN PERRY

John continues to have difficulty with breathing and is under further investigation for lung problems. He and Maureen had two-weeks therapy at the Fire Fighters Charity Centre in Penrith from which they both gained benefit. However, John’s lung problems flared up while he was at Jubilee House and this limited the physiotherapy that he could be given.

ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM SCREENING

Free screening tests for the above are now available for all men over 65. More details from John Craig or consult your GP surgery.

SEPSIS

The importance of fast diagnosis & treatment



Sepsis is a killer! It kills as many people in the UK as lung cancer and it kills as many people as breast, prostate and bowel cancer combined. 37,000 UK deaths every year are down to sepsis.

Yet, it is a treatable condition that patients have a good chance of surviving **but only if diagnosis is fast and accurate and treatment with antibiotics and fluids is rapidly given.**

Herein lies the problem. Research has shown that only one in eight of the sepsis patients who died while in the care of the NHS were given the effective treatment early enough. Too often, doctors and nurses miss the signs of sepsis and assume it is a less serious affliction.

So concerned is the charity www.sepsisuk.org about this that it is recommending that the relatives of a seriously ill patient should not be reluctant to challenge the doctor(s) with the question , **“could it**

be sepsis?

Sepsis can be acquired in a number of ways such as through a wound that could be as minor as a cat scratch or bite. It is also associated with pneumonia.

The above mentioned charity is campaigning for greater awareness of sepsis both within the medical profession and outside of it.

Sepsis is the reaction of the body to an infection that causes the immune system to go into overdrive resulting in the successive collapse of vital organs.

The signs to look for when you suspect sepsis are:

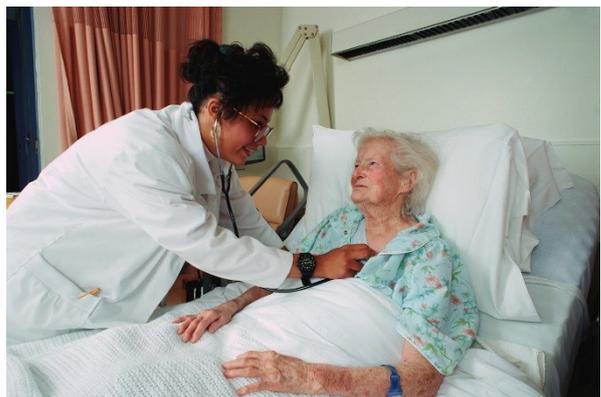
- Very high (or very low) temperature
 - Very rapid pulse
 - Cool skin
- Patient exhibiting signs of confusion
- Failure to pass urine in the last 12 hours

If more than one of the above signs are noticed, sepsis should be suspected and the patient should be taken to hospital without delay.

A third of sepsis patients who are diagnosed correctly at an early stage and who get the appropriate treatment survive and make a full recovery.

Remember, doctors are human beings and are therefore fallible. Deaths resulting from doctors missing the early signs of sepsis are not uncommon.

Be alert for sepsis and ask the doctor, “is it sepsis?”



OBITUARY

DENNIS JAMES SMITH

Dennis Smith passed away in a care home in Salisbury after a long illness. His funeral service took place on 10th September at Salisbury Crematorium and the WRFA was well represented at it.

Dennis was born in 1927 and he spent most of his working life on the railways, much of the time as an engine driver. He was also a valued member of the retained section at Salisbury Fire Station. Dennis was a committed trade union member and for many years was secretary of the local branch of ASLEF.

Dennis was married to Joyce for 62 years. Sadly, in 2010, Dennis suffered a stroke that left him severely disabled.

Joyce visited Dennis everyday in hospital and then in the care home where he spent his last years.

By his life style, Dennis showed himself to be a man who cared deeply about the welfare of other people and the way he sought ways to put himself at the service of others reflected great credit upon him. His diligence and devotion to duty fitted him very well for both his fulltime and part-time employments.

Rest in peace, Dennis.



WAVERLEY ABBEY INSIGHT SERIES

INSIGHT INTO BEREAVEMENT

Wendy Bray and Diana Priest

INSIGHT INTO BEREAVEMENT

A very useful and well written book giving guidance on dealing with bereavement has come to my notice. It is entitled **INSIGHT INTO BEREAVEMENT**, written by Wendy Bray and Diana Priest. We tend to associate the word 'bereavement' with the death of a loved one but the authors point out that bereavement can take many forms, including the loss of a job, the break up of a relationship, the loss of a home.

Each bereavement will follow a similar path of loss; disbelief, grief and then adaptation.

This book gives practical advice on how to deal with bereavement. Publisher: Crusade for World Revival

ISBN 1-85345-385-4

JOHN CRAIG

HELP WITH BEREAVEMENT

SHEILA HALE was bereaved in June when her husband, Mike, passed away. Sheila is now a widow member of the WRFA and she has recently availed herself of a two-week recuperation break provided by the **FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY**. Sheila, accompanied by her daughter, Alison, attended the Marine Court Therapy Centre at Littlehampton. Sheila reports in glowing terms of the service provided by the charity and states that she very much enjoyed her time at Littlehampton and found it very beneficial.

A HERO IN OUR MIDST KEN BEARD MBE

You only have to have a casual glance at the very impressive array of medals that our member, KEN BEARD, is entitled to wear to realise that you are in the presence of a man who has given exceptional service to his Sovereign, his country and mankind in general. Ken served in the Royal Navy during World War II and is one of only about 300 men still alive that served on ships forming the Arctic convoys that sailed from England to Russia taking vitally important war supplies. The Germans threw everything they could muster at the convoys; U-boats, aircraft and surface ships and many vessels were sunk with the loss of over 3,000 lives. The Arctic waters were so cold that few that survived a sinking lived for more than a few minutes in the icy waters. Ken was a gunnery rating on a Flower class corvette, a small escort warship of the type that was featured in the classic film *The Cruel Sea*. Churchill described the voyages of the Russian convoys as "the worst journey in the world".

Shamefully, when the war ended, no campaign medal was struck for the survivors of the Arctic convoys. This was due to the fact that by then, the politicians who had remained warm and cosy while the sailors died and froze, did not wish to draw attention to the fact that this country had given so much aid to Russia; we were locked into a "cold war" with the Soviets at that time. It has taken over 60 years to remedy this injustice.



Ken Beard MBE



The Prime Minister, David Cameron, recently approved the creation of a new medal, the Arctic Star, to be awarded to the few survivors of the Arctic convoys still alive. The medal is called the Arctic Star and the recipients received their 'gong' through the post. To the credit of local politicians, it was thought that this method of delivery needed to be enhanced and a special ceremony was arranged at Wiltshire County Hall in September that was attended by most of the medal recipients domiciled in Wiltshire. Our Ken was included and the picture on the left shows him in white beret in the company of Claire Perry MP and other medal recipients.

Photo courtesy of Gazette & Herald.

As might have already been judged by the astonishing array of medals worn by Ken, the Arctic Russian convoys were only a part of his war service. His ship went on to take part in escorting convoys sent to relieve the beleaguered island of Malta in the Mediterranean. Here again, the outstanding job done by the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy will live on in history for ever but it took the sacrifice of many ships and their crews to keep Malta from being invaded and prevented from playing a crucially important part in the war against the Germans and Italians.

Ken was eventually demobbed and became a family man based in Ludgershall, Wiltshire. He was drawn to join the retained fire service in the town and he rapidly established himself as a stalwart of the unit. He eventually became the officer in charge holding the rank of station officer. Those who remember the days of serving with Ken know him to have been a very good fireman and an exceptionally competent station commander.

But that wasn't the complete story of Ken's service to his fellow man. He offered himself as a candidate for election to the Kennet District Council. He was elected as a Conservative and was held in such high regard by the people of Ludgershall and district that he served for an unbroken period of 22 years. He eventually was forced to stand down when the KDC was

abolished with the creation of the Wiltshire Council as a unitary authority. Ken was honoured before the District Council disappeared by being made an Honorary Alderman to mark his long and distinguished service. Ken suffered a stroke recently but he has shown his fighting spirit again by making a very good recovery.



Station Officer Ken Beard

At his desk in Ludgershall Fire Station.

People & Places



One Man Went To Mow

LES FIELDING has never been a man to let the grass grow under his feet. Les and Louise live in Massey Road, Devizes and there are many grass verges in the area that require mowing. Les, without being asked or seeking reward, has been keeping the verges mowed for years. One of his neighbours, Carole Berry, is a senior manager with Devizes Town Council. Carole noticed that the grass was being tended and knew that it was neither the Town



Council nor the Wiltshire Council that was forking out to have this work done and so she was intrigued to know who the “Mystery Mower” was. One day, she was driving home and spotted Les at his self-appointed duty and stopped to talk to him and thank him on behalf of all the residents in the Marshall Road area. Carole then nominated Les for an awarded that was recently presented by the Town Council in recognition of a man with exemplary community spirit. Les is a WRFA member and we congratulate him on his award . Well done, Les!

SALUTE TO A GREEN-FINGERED COUPLE



WRFA member, Phil Canter with wife, Pat



PHIL & PAT CANTER live in Ladyfield Road, Chippenham. To visit their home and view their garden and allotment is to be thrilled and delighted by how pleasing on the eye and nose that it is. Phil does the majority of the work and it is obvious that he indulges his particular love of clematis plants. In order to bring pleasure to others, Phil and Pat very kindly open their garden to public view annually as part of the *National Garden Scheme*. Money donated by visitors goes to cancer charities, a cause very close to their hearts because Pat’s sister died from cancer. News of this exceptional garden reached some of the magazines catering for horticulturalists. Phil and Pat have been featured in magazines more than once. The above photographs are published by courtesy of Neil Hepworth/’Garden News’ a publication that claims to be the fastest-growing magazine, on sale every Tuesday for just £1.00 per issue. www.greatmagazines.co.uk/gn.

PETE EAGLES : THE BIRDMAN OF BATH



WRFA member, **PETE EAGLES**, was featured in the BBC TV documentary broadcast on 3rd October 2013 entitled *The Railway*. The programme demonstrates how the staff of *First Great Western* keep the service on track (excuse the pun). Pete, a former retained firefighter at Devizes, was shown at his job of Ticket Gate Keeper at Bath railway station. Pete was very entertaining showing his command of chat-up lines in foreign languages and his mastery of the “Lost Ticket Dance” . Pete left his post to rescue a baby seagull found ticketless at the barrier. With a name like his, you might expect him to be sympathetic to a bird in distress.



More "PEOPLE & PLACES"



MARRIED AT SEA

The WRFA member, formerly known as **Dot Churchill**, was married on 27th May 2013 on the cruise ship *Cunard Queen Victoria* as she sailed by Sardinia. Dot married John Lawrence, a retired senior executive with BT. The ceremony was performed by the ship's captain, who is one of Cunard's female officers. The many members of WRFA that know something of Dot's difficult past life will rejoice with her in having found happiness again with John. The couple first set up home together in Semington but they have since moved to Fruitfields Close in central Devizes.

We congratulate Dot and John and wish them many years of happiness together.

PAUL FULLER HEADS CFOA

A former principal officer in Wiltshire Fire Brigade has been elected to the office of President of the Chief Fire Officers Association, a post he will hold for one year from September 2013. He is **Paul Fuller**, who is currently the Chief Fire Officer of the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Authority.

Paul will be in a position to advise the Coalition Government as the fire and rescue service goes through one of the most challenging times in its history. We wish him every success.



GOLDEN WEDDING

PATRICK & MARGARET ASHILL recently celebrated their Golden Wedding with a cruise on the River Rhine. The couple are honorary members of the WRFA and are now living in Bromham, near Bedford.

Margaret is the daughter of the late Bill Chadwick, former CFO of Wiltshire Fire Brigade and Patrick is the son of the late Edward Ashill, former CFO of Hampshire.

We offer congratulations and best wishes for the future.



SOCIAL EVENTS

**What's in store to help
WRFA members enjoy life
more.**



Booking form with this newsletter or by download from website



Christmas Festive Lunch

14th Dec. 2013

**Marsh Farm Hotel
Royal Wootton Bassett**

WRFA WALKING CLUB All welcome!



For more details, phone Phil

07801723625

WRFA ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

9th November 2013 6.30pm

Devizes Town Hall

Two-Course Dinner

Band Concert

Act of Remembrance

Booking form with this newsletter or by download from website

<http://www.wrfa.org.uk>





The Fire Fighters Charity

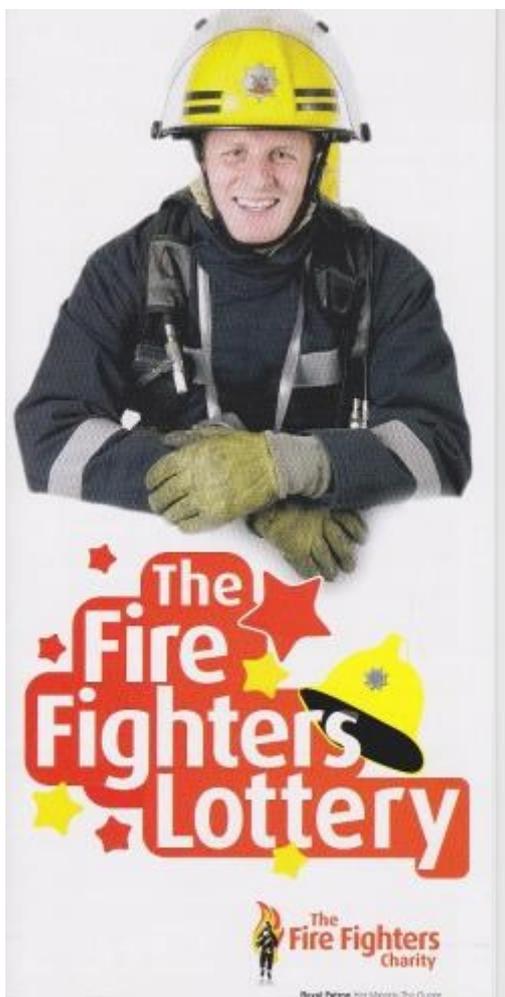
HELPLINE 0800 389 8820

Lines open Monday to Friday 9am to 5am

If you need the help of the Fire Fighters Charity, your first step is to telephone the Helpline and make known your need. You may be assured of a warm and sympathetic reception and your call will be treated in confidence

HAVE YOU JOINED THE LOTTERY?

Forms available from John Craig



**BE SURE TO GET YOUR
COPY OF
'SHOUT'**



'SHOUT' is the magazine published by the charity aimed at keeping retired members in touch with it. You should receive the latest issue of the magazine by mail about now. If you have not received your copy, please contact

JOHN CRAIG

01380 726343



Esther Rantzen launches new helpline for the lonely

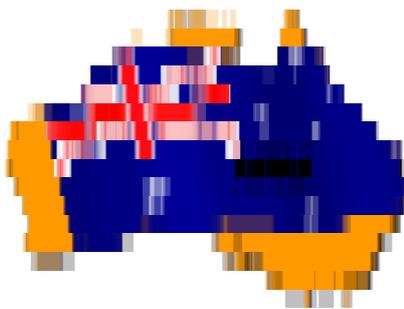
Building on the success of the Childline telephone helpline she founded, Esther is now starting a telephone helpline for the elderly and lonely

The new charity is to be called **SILVER LINE** and it has already received funding to facilitate its launch from the Government, BT, Comic Relief and the National Lottery. Esther has herself experienced loneliness and understands the stigma that can be attached to the isolation that comes with it. There will be no agenda laid down for those who wish to ring Silver Line. Any subject is open for enquiry or discussion and a bank of telephone friends will be recruited by the charity from which callers can, if they wish, arrange to receive regular phone 'chats'.

The helpline will be piloted in the Isle of Man beginning in November this year. The intention is then to roll it out across the whole of UK during 2014.

PETER'S COMMUNITY SERVICE RECOGNISED

PETER BAXTER, WRFA member and former Assistant CFO in Wiltshire FRS, has been honoured with an award made to recognise the community work he has done since retiring from the fire service. Peter is Parish Clerk to both West Lavington Parish Council and also Worton Parish Council. The award for 'Community Leadership' was made by Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group. He is also a trustee of Age UK (Wiltshire). Peter retired after 31 years in the fire service three years ago. Congratulations, Peter!



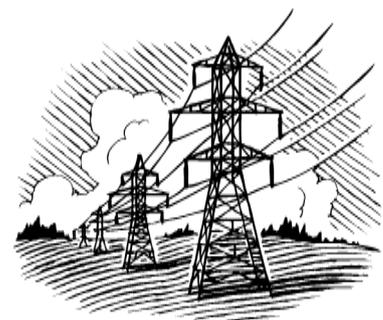
AN ENQUIRY FROM 'DOWN UNDER'

Did you serve in WFB with the late ROGER BROWN?

A relative of the late Roger Brown recently made contact with WRFA asking to be put in touch with anyone that served with Roger in the Brigade. The gentleman lives in Australia and does not wish to have his name and contact details published on the internet but is very keen to speak with or correspond with any former colleagues of Roger just to form a clearer picture of him as a personality. Any WRFA member able to help is asked to contact **JOHN CRAIG 01380 726343**

SSE TO RAISE ENERGY PRICE BY 8.2%

Exactly as some experts predicted, in the wake of the declaration by Ed Milliband that if Labour wins the 2015 election they will impose a 20 month price freeze, SSE has announced an average price rise in gas and electricity of 8.2% from 15th November 2013. Experts believe that energy companies will hike their prices before and after the freeze to ensure profit margins are not harmed long term.





THE HEREFORD INCIDENT



We live in an age when health and safety protocols and fear of prosecution has strongly influenced how the fire & rescue service of today approaches incidents that involve explosives. The account of a serious incident at a munitions factory in Hereford in May 1944 makes very interesting reading because of the comparison with how such an incident would be tackled today.

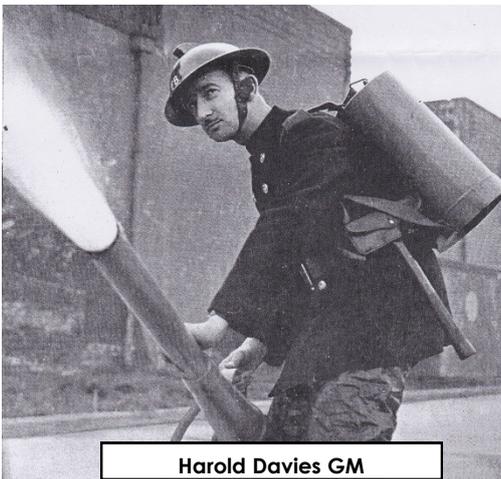
It happened in the evening at the Royal Ordnance Factory . The majority of the workers were women employed on putting the explosive filling into bombs and mines. Such work, although very hazardous, was considered of great importance to the war effort. The incident detailed below happened only days before the D-Day landings in Normandy.

A mine was being filled with powerful explosive caught fire. All around were other bombs and mines that were in a state making them liable to be touched off by a fire or explosion in their vicinity. The emergency alarm was operated and all staff regarded as non-essential for tackling the fire were evacuated to shelters but senior staff and emergency personnel such as the on site fire brigade and ambulance crew moved towards the fire.

Although fully aware of the risks, superintendent Ovens of the factory staff calmly set up a control point from which he directed emergency operations. He was supported very quickly by the arrival of the Royal Ordnance Factory Fire Brigade led at the time by its Assistant Chief Officer, **Frederick Arthur Lewis**. He was accompanied by a crew of five firemen and they found two employees trying to smother the burning contents of the mine using buckets of sand and sand mats. Lewis examined the burning explosive after kicking away the sand mats and ordered a No.2 foam making branch to be got to work which the fire crew quickly obeyed. When all the foam compound readily available had been used, the fire crew switched to applying water, hoping that this would control and extinguish the fire before an explosion took place. However, after about 20 minutes, the mine split open with the internal heat and pressure, followed seconds later by the explosion all present had been trying to avert. The blast threw the firemen and other staff into the air and all were shocked and sustained injuries, some being buried in debris as the building collapsed about



Frederick Lewis GM

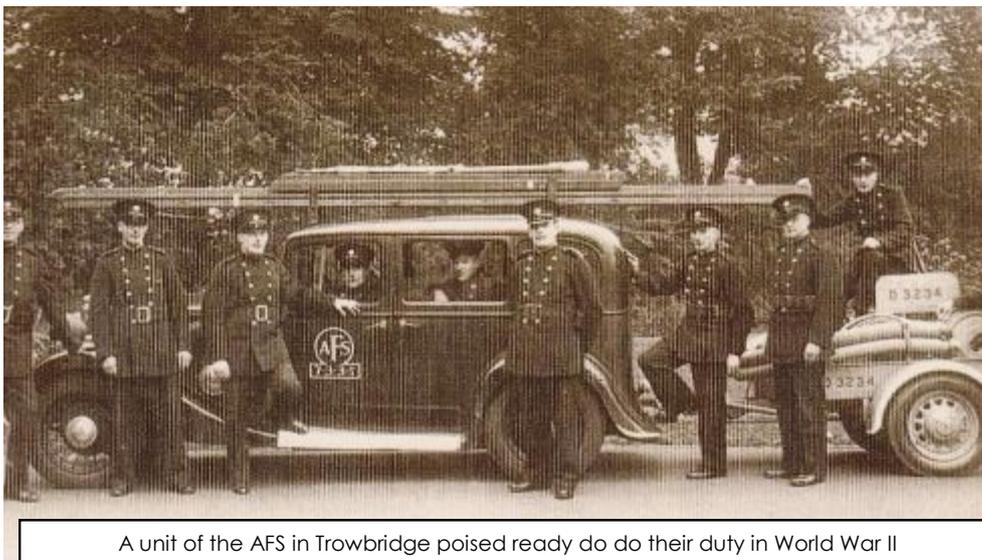


Harold Davies GM

Frederick Lewis was blown right outside the building and had some of his clothing stripped from him, but he rallied his crew of firemen and encouraged them to start rescue work and recommence fire fighting. One of them was Fireman Harold Davies who, having been blown from the building, re-entered it and carried out heroic rescue work, bringing injured colleagues to safety. When a second and much worse explosion occurred, Lewis miraculously escaped death and continued his duty for a further four hours performing multiple acts of heroism. Frederick Lewis and Harold Davies received the George Medal. Many others were honoured for their bravery at this incident.

THE AFS REBORN?

Are we seeing a form of AFS recreated?



As the dispute between the FBU and the Coalition Government rumbles on with no sign of a settlement and threats of further, longer strikes to come, fire authorities are putting contingency plans into high gear. Wiltshire coped relatively easily with the first strike of only four hours although there is no sign of complacency in its aftermath.

However, Avon Fire & Rescue Service is taking measures to produce an emergency fire fighting force that could be dubbed a rebirth of the Auxiliary Fire Service. Volunteers are being recruited and trained to provide a basic fire fighting service during periods when the FBU has called its members out on strike. The volunteers include retired fire fighters and also serving police officers. It has been reported that the police officer volunteers are giving up their rest days to be trained to perform as auxiliary fire fighters.

Questions have been asked by the public who remember the 'Green Goddess' fire appliances from the FBU strike in 1977/78. It has been reported that these ex-AFS machines have been sold, many of them being shipped to Malta.

The ambulance services now have specialist trained HART teams that are trained in the use of breathing apparatus and have protective clothing that could enable them to perform a snatch rescue of a fire victim as is so often portrayed in the TV series called

Casualty .



A 'Green Goddess' self propelled AFS pump

DISCLAIMER

This newsletter is published by the **WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**. Views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views and policies of the Association, the Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service or the Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority.

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