



The Branch

JUNE 2015



Newsletter of **WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

FIRE DANGER FROM KIDDIE'S PLAY CLOTHES

Paul Fuller, a former principal officer in Wiltshire Fire Brigade, is heading a new national campaign aimed at eliminating the danger to children posed by play and fancy dress garments that ignite readily and burn fiercely. Paul is now the Chief Fire Officer of Bedfordshire and until recently was the President of the Chief Fire Officer's Association.

The real danger to children was highlighted when at Halloween last year, the small daughter of TV presenter, Claudia Winkleman, suffered severe burns when her witches costume purchased for £5.00 came into contact with a candle flame and ignited. Horrified adults found it very difficult to extinguish the burning garment and were not able to do so before the little girl received extensive burns.

The law throughout Europe requires that children's nightwear



CFO PAUL FULLER



CLAIRE PERRY MP

meets high standards of flame resistance but incredibly the same safety standards do not apply to fancy dress or play clothing. This is a loophole that Paul's campaign is hoping to close but it will take politicians to sit up and take notice before the law is amended.

I have already written to my Member of Parliament, **Claire Perry MP** and although as a junior minister at the Department of Transport, she has no direct responsibility for fire safety or trading standards, she has replied that she will pass on my thoughts to colleagues in Government. In her reply, Claire Perry also mentions that she is aware of the work done by the BBC Watchdog programme that focused on the fire accident to Claudia Winkleman's daughter. Paul Fuller featured strongly in this programme and was also interviewed on BBC National News putting the concerns of

the Chief Fire Officer's Association across in very lucid and powerful broadcasts. Paul has written to me quite rightly pointing out that many members of the WRFA are grandparents and some may even be great grandparents. It is therefore possible that those blessed with such descendants could find that the little ones are at risk to a similar incident to that described above. The very least we can do to help the campaign is to write to our MPs as I have done to mine.

In our professional careers, few of us will not have seen with our own eyes how fire can cause terrible injuries and when the victim is a child who could not be moved by the pain and disfigurement that results.

So, the plea to all our members is to invest a little time and the cost of a stamp and some stationery and dash off a letter to our respective MPs in support of the very commendable campaign being headed by a former colleague of ours.

Contact me if you need further guidance and detail.

JOHN CRAIG

SUNDAY LUNCH & AGM

Cumberwell Park Bradford-on-Avon



Our AGM was held on 31st May after a delicious lunch served at Cumberwell Park. Our President, Jerry Willmott, presided over the meeting that saw all the Executive Committee members re-elected except for Jim Betts who has been forced to stand down by ill health. The President spoke in high praise of the service that Jim has given to the WRFA over many years and wished him well for the future. Tony Andrews (photo above) was elected to take Jim's place as one of the South Area representatives. The Chief Fire Officer, Simon Routh-Jones, gave a very informative and interesting update on fire & rescue service matters.



Jim and Lesley Betts pictured here at a previous social event. Sadly, Jim's ill health prevented them from attending this year's lunch and AGM





Health Matters

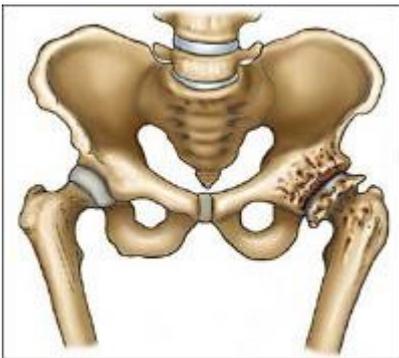
News about medical issues



MAUREEN PERRY

Maureen has been very ill recently but is recovering from that health setback. However, she has now injured a leg in an accident at home and is trying to get well from that as soon as possible because she is the carer that husband John most relies upon.

John and Maureen are well known to the staff at Jubilee House in Penrith, the therapy centre run by the Fire Fighters Charity. They are due to have another time of treatment and respite care there in August and they can't wait to return there. Get well soon, Maureen!



NHS "WASTING £MILLIONS"

A report soon to be released exposes the way that the NHS wastes £ millions and will publish recommendations that the Government will expect to see introduced. The review is the work of Lord Carter of Coles who was asked by the Health Minister to conduct an in depth probe into how the NHS hospitals are being managed . One of Lord Carter's revelations is that about £17m is being wasted annually on hip operations when cheaper replacement joints are available that last longer.

Lord Carter has spent the last year carrying out his investigation that involved inspecting the work of 22 leading hospitals. In addition to the hip joint fiasco, Lord Carter found many other areas of waste such as the hospital that was losing £10,000 per month from staff claiming too much annual leave. Another hospital visited was found to be spending a massive £5.44 on every pair of latex rubber gloves used. One hospital saved the NHS an amazing £230,000 in a single year simply by sourcing materials and equipment used in surgery in a more cost effective way.

Lord Carter's report will show how better management of annual leave rotas can save the NHS £400m per year while cutting product lines from 500,000 to 10,000 could save an astonishing £1 billion by 2020.

LIFE -SAVER BLOOD TEST AFTER SURGERY

Scientists have discovered how a simple blood test can alert medics to which patients are most at risk of developing life-threatening complications after surgery. The test works by checking monocyte activity in the body with an accuracy rate of about 90%. Changes to the immune system in a person caused by monocytes are responsible for the onset of conditions such as pneumonia, sepsis. Around 37,000 people die in the UK every year from sepsis alone. The new test it is hoped will alert doctors to the patients most at risk after surgery and enable personalised treatments to be prepared before trouble strikes.



PEOPLE & PLACES



Yve Benwell

Could this be a MUD LIFE CRISIS?

Yve to run 5k
through MUD
For Cancer Research UK



Yve Benwell is a former clerical officer with Wiltshire Fire Brigade and is an active member of our Association. She is married to Len Benwell who is also a member of the WRFA. Yve has decided that as the least fit person she knows it is time to do something about it and at the same time raise some money for a very worthwhile cause. Most readers will be aware of the Cancer Research *Race for Life* events, but how many of you are aware of the **Pretty Muddy Challenge?**

A 5k muddy obstacle course where women can run, walk and climb all over cancer!

Yve has herself beaten cancer twice now and knows how vital it is that research can continue so that one day we may be able to live in a world where cancer well and truly gets beaten. It is a sad fact of life that most people have now been touched by cancer in one way or another, personally, a family member or friend.

To help prepare for the event which is being held on **September 5th** at **Lydiard Park, Swindon**, Yve has joined a gym (formerly a swear word in her vocabulary), is dieting (“yet again” according to Yve) and is fundraising. Yve is looking for **people to sponsor her efforts**. There are a couple of ways for anyone wishing to sponsor her. You can go online and donate through **www.justgiving.com/yvonneusher-benwell** or for the less techie of you a cheque payable to CANCER RESEARCH UK can be posted to Yve at ‘Dragons Lair’, 46 Berton Close, Blunsdon, SN26 7BE. Yve has set herself the target of raising £500 and is hoping that she may be able to smash the target. We have been promised photographs of the event once it has taken place and I am sure that you agree that it is well worth supporting Yve in her brave endeavours.

JOHN CRAIG

Laser Treatment for Cataracts being considered by NHS



It has long been known that a laser treatment called FEMTOSECOND is very effective in treating cataracts in the eye. However, because of the cost, £2,500 per eye, the treatment has not been available on the NHS. However, Moorfields Eye Hospital in London is now making laser treatment available on the NHS for the first time.

Cataracts are very common in elderly people and hitherto the only treatment offered by the NHS is to have the cataract suctioned out and a plastic lens inserted to replace it. The operation usually only takes 15 minutes per eye and has to be performed under local anaesthetic but in a small number of cases complications can arise. The femtosecond laser treatment results in a lower incidence of complications. It only takes about a minute for the laser pulse to make an incision in the cornea and then break up the cataract. It is hoped that if the trials being conducted at Moorfields show good results femtosecond treatments will become an NHS treatment option.



British Fire Services Association Commendations



John Craig being presented



Peter Mills receives his medal and certificate



At the Annual General Meeting of the WRFA held on 31st May 2015 at Cumberwell Park, Bradford-on-Avon, The British Fire Services Association Commendation Medal was presented to John Craig and Peter Mills, both of whom have given many years of service to the BFSA and to the wider fire service community. The presentations were made by Chief Fire Officer Simon Routh-Jones.

The medals were accompanied by a framed certificate bearing the citation for the award.

Both Peter and John declared themselves to feeling delighted and very honoured to be recognised for their continuing work for the fire service community. Photos by courtesy of Terry Thomas, Malmesbury

Louise Fielding

Louise Fielding, who, with husband Les, has graced many a WRFA social event, has been honoured with a long service award by the Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.

The award is made for 20 years service and recognises the loyal and outstanding work done by Louise at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at Potterne.

Louise works in the Human Resources department.

Warmest congratulations on an honour richly deserved.



Louise Fielding

WRFA REMEMBRANCE EVENT

An opportunity to wear medals earned is at the WRFA Remembrance Event on Saturday 7th November, 2015. An evening event at the Town Hall, Devizes. Dinner followed by band concert and then the Act of Remembrance. Note your diary and watch for details on the website www.wrfa.org.uk



Joe & Grace at Marine Court

Joe Nash joined the fire service in Wiltshire and his career path later took him to Warwickshire and finally to Gloucestershire where he served his time as the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Joe now lives with his wife , Grace, in Tetbury. Joe is a member of the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association. In recent times, Joe's health has suffered a setback due mainly to a replacement knee operation that became seriously infected. But with the pain and disability of the knee came other complications. Not surprisingly, this



resulted in Joe feeling very low in spirits, particularly when all the NHS consultant had to offer concerning the pain were the words, "you'll just have to live with it."

On the advice of John Craig, Joe contacted the **FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY** using the Helpline. Very soon, Joe was booked into **Marine Court, Littlehampton** for a week of recuperation with Grace attending too. However, there was still a problem because Joe's ailments meant he could not drive very far. Into the breach stepped the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association to give the couple a lift to Littlehampton and home again. John Gentleman chauffeured them there and John Craig did the needful to get them back to Tetbury. Littlehampton is the ideal location for folks that have no transport of their own because Marine Court is very close to the sea front and is also close to bus and rail links to many places of interest and delight within easy travel distance. These include Bognor Regis, Brighton, Worthing, Arundel, Chichester ,Portsmouth and Southsea. Did the break do the couple any good?

Here in an extract from a letter sent by Joe to John Craig is the answer.

"Grace and I are deeply indebted to you and John Gentleman for the transportation taking us to Marine Court where we spent seven wonderful days of recuperation. Your suggestion that a visit to Marine Court would certainly aid my recovery was absolutely true. The centre is a superb place to receive treatment and is staffed by professional dedicated and caring



Joe and Grace outside the Ronnie Greene Wing, Marine Court

people, always ready to help and generous with their time. I must confess that prior to my visit I had very little idea of how the centre functioned and was very surprised at the way the staff coped with all the problems and we can recommend it beyond measure. All of this is part of the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY that needs to be supported by generous donations. I am deeply thankful to be part of Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association, a very progressive and forward thinking group. Thank you so much.

Joe Nash "

Photos by John Craig

To contact the Fire Fighters Charity Helpline

0800 389 8820

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

OBITUARIES

Keith James William PENFOLD

After years of struggling with ill health, Keith Penfold passed away in Great Western Hospital on 26th April 2015. He was born on 16th November 1933 and enjoyed a successful career as a firefighter in the Royal Air Force. He was a founder member of the RAF Fire & Rescue Association and was highly regarded by all that served with him. He was married to Kath for over 50 years and they had three children, Lynn, Kevin and Michael. The funeral service was held at St Sampson's Church, Cricklade on 13th May 2015 and it was well attended by family and friends, including many former RAF colleagues. The WRFA was represented by John Craig and Robert Gurney. The order of service had many acknowledgements to Keith's military service including the playing of the RAF March Past, the singing of a hymn to the 'Dambuster's March' tune and the sounding of the Last Post. Rest in Peace, Keith. JMC



Sir Reginald DOYLE KBE

The death of Sir Reginald Doyle occurred after a short illness on 6th June. Known to his many fire service colleague's and friends as Reg, he served in the Royal Navy before joining the Fire Brigade in Birmingham in 1954. In 1963 he was appointed ADO in Devon and he then was promoted to D.O.I in Gloucestershire in 1967. In 1969 he was appointed Assistant Chief Officer In Lancashire and he reached Chief Fire Officer rank in 1973 in Worcester. A reorganisation created the Hereford & Worcester Fire Brigade and Reg was appointed to head that service. He moved as CFO to Kent in 1977. He was appointed to the Fire Service Inspectorate in 1984 and became head of the FSI in 1987 when appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services.

The funeral service details were not yet to hand at the time of going to press but it is expected that the service will be held in late June or early July in Headcorn, Ashford, Kent.

Reg leaves behind many who will remember him with great respect and affection. His contribution to the fire service at all levels more than justified his knighthood.

Sir Reginald was not a member of the WRFA. May he rest in peace.

John ROBERTS

The sad news of the death of John Roberts has been announced. John was 86. He was not a member of the WRFA and so details of his circumstances are sparse as this newsletter went to press.

John is remembered as a long serving member of the Ramsbury retained unit in Wiltshire Fire Brigade. He reached the rank of station officer and was in charge of the station for several years in the early 1980s.

John's funeral service will be held on Monday 22nd June at 1.00pm at Holy Cross Church, Ramsbury. Donations in his memory may be made to the Fire Fighters Charity and a children's charity yet to be notified. Rest in peace, John



Money Matters

Financial Issues and Fire Pensioners



FAIRER COMMUTATION

The battle with the Government Actuarial Department (GAD) to obtain fair commutation of pension for fire fighters and police officers who retired in the early years of this century appears to be entering its final phase. The test case taken by a retired firefighter has been considered by the Pensions Ombudsman and he has ruled in favour of the complainant and against GAD. There is a one month period within which GAD could appeal against the decision but by the time this newsletter is published it is very probable that the time to appeal will have expired.

The Scottish Government was very swift to announce that it accepted in full the decision of the Ombudsman.

We are now in a period of waiting to see how GAD reacts. It is reasonable to expect that they will follow the Scottish lead and then issue new commutation tables that will give a clear indication of who is in a position to claim a revised commutation payment. When the issue first came to light rumours were circulating that the cash sums involved were going to be very substantial. Now those rumours are being toned down and the sums payable to those eligible for them will depend very much on the date of retirement. What is beyond doubt is that whatever payments are made they will be tax free and subject to 5 per cent interest.

TRIPLE LOCK ON STATE PENSIONS A THREAT TO DEFICIT REDUCTION ATTEMPTS

A highly reputable financial body has warned that the so called triple lock applied to UK state pensions could become such a financial burden to the Government in a few years time that the

UK will be plunged back into deficit. The triple lock is a formula to ensure that the state pension is increased annually and the Conservative Party has held firm to it as illustrating its desire to help pensioners. However, the Office of Budget Responsibility has issued a grim forecast that the nation's finance will be forced back into deficit if the triple lock guarantee continues at a time when the ageing population is increasing rapidly. The only way to avoid the problem if the triple lock remains is to raise taxes or cut spending in other areas of budget responsibility. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, has announced his ambitious plans to impose tighter controls on government spending and may even resort to introducing new laws to achieve this. However, the number of pensioners claiming state pension in the next twenty years is expected to jump by 8% throwing into doubt the chancellor's plans of success in keeping the Nation in surplus.



George Osborne

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION?

There are still a few WRFA members that have not yet paid the annual subscription of £10.00 due on 1st April. If you are one of them, before you receive the reminder from the Treasurer, please send him your cheque made out to 'Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association.'



BOOK SHELF

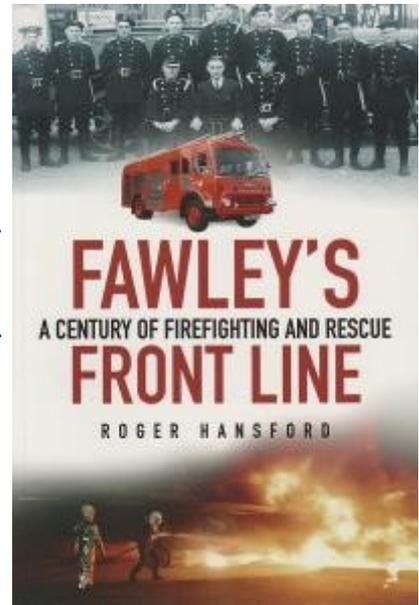
Sharing views and news
about books

FAWLEY'S FRONT LINE

A century of firefighting and rescue

Author: **ROGER HANSFORD**

The book has been welcomed as an authoritative account of the development of local authority fire and rescue service and that of Exxon-Mobil corporation from the start of the twentieth century. Highlights from the book include the significant part played by Leading Fireman Malcolm Rumsey in developing a high standard of training during the 1980s. Also of particular interest is that throughout the nineties a picture emerges of constant debate about the level of fire cover in the Waterside area. , notably, the station at Hardley had opened with 15 wholetime personnel, subsequently reduced to 13 in 1994 and then to 8 in 1995. In January 2000 Hardley Fire Station was regarded from day crewing to retained. The author makes it clear that the decisions reflect the different motivations of those involved in the changes of cover. The local people appreciated and were satisfied with the service received.



Publisher 'The History Press'

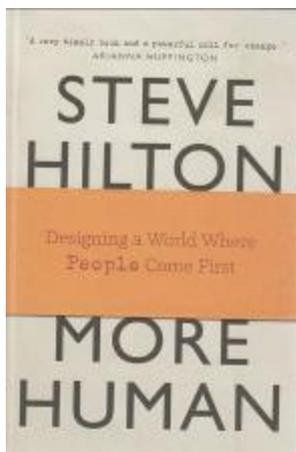
ISBN 978-0-7524-9857-7

The book is also to be commended for providing a detailed account of the major exercise codenamed 'Exercise Shannon' held in May 2012. In this account the author has virtually presented a reference document for those planning similar exercises in the future. Particularly those in respect of the petro-chemical industry.

The text in the book is very well supported by a generous number of photographs that do much to add to the reader's interest and make the book attractive.

Overall, a useful work of reference.

KEN HARRISON



MORE HUMAN

Designing a world where people come first

Author : **Steve Hilton**

I had just read about a UK NHS Ambulance Trust that was not turning out the nearest ambulance crews to 999 calls if they were near the end of their shifts and therefore likely to have to earn overtime payments when I came across this book by Steve Hilton. He is expounding the theory in this publication that those heading businesses, public services, national and local government and quangos should put the interests of the people they exist to serve before their own. One can only hope that those heading NHS ambulance services will buy a copy of Steve's book!

According to my local book shop, this book is creating a lot of interest and is flying off the shelves. Steve was a senior political advisor at No.10 Downing Street and apparently admits to having played a major part in drafting the Conservative Party manifesto for the 2010 election. He remains a close friend of David Cameron but now lives in USA and in his recent book explains that he has changed his views on many issues that has caused him to write 'More Human'. Whatever your political allegiance, I strongly recommend this book that is sure to provide food for thought.

JOHN CRAIG



SOCIAL EVENTS



CANAL BOAT TRIP

(Horse Drawn)

July 11th 2015

From Kintbury Lock

£20.00 includes buffet lunch

Depart at 11.30am

Return at 3.30pm

**Booking form with this newsletter
or download from website**



VISIT TO ARMY MUSEUM OF MEDICAL SERVICES

Keough Barracks, Mychett, (near Aldershot)

AUGUST 14th 2015

**WRFA party will leave from FRS HQ, Potterne at
10.00am**

**No booking form, just notify JOHN CRAIG if you wish
to attend.**

Entry to Museum is free. Proof of ID needed

LUNCH FOR LADIES

Sunday September 6th 2015

**Ladies connected with WRFA are invited to a
Carved Buffet Lunch**

CLEEVE HOUSE, SEEND CLEEVE

£10.00

**Booking form soon available on website or by
request from JOHN CRAIG 01380 726343**

Transport can be arranged





BLUE LIGHT NEWS

Keeping WRFA members in the loop
on matters relating to
the 999 Services



UK's First Tri-Service Safety Officer Appointed

In an experiment that is sure to be closely watched by many other fire & rescue services, Cornwall Fire & Rescue Service has appointed the first man to be a TRI-SERVICE SAFETY OFFICER. Andrew Hitchens is the first in the UK to take on roles in the fire, ambulance and police services simultaneously. Andrew is an 'on-call' firefighter, an emergency first responder for South West Ambulance Trust and has been trained to discharge certain specific types of police roles under the heading of 'crime and disorder'. Andrew's home station is at Hayle.

Paramedics being recruited from overseas

In a bid to overcome its problems in filling vacancies for qualified paramedics, the South West Ambulance Trust is inviting applicants from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The first of twenty successful applicants will arrive in September and managers have promised that they will be subject to a rigorous programme of induction to ensure that they have all the skills, including the English language, needed to perform their duties competently.

New Smoke Alarm Legislation

New regulations applicable to smoke alarms in rented properties will come into effect in October this year. The new law will require landlords to install smoke alarms on each storey of their property before the tenancy starts and the alarms must be in working order when tenants move in. The Government expects this new legislation to save about 36 lives per year.



CFOA Lead on Ageing Safely



As part of its policy of trying to direct resources where they can be most effective, the **Chief Fire Officers Association** has developed a **National Older Persons Strategy** intended to put older people at the heart of fire and rescue service activities. The strategy has been developed in conjunction with the Department for Work & Pensions, Age UK, RNIB and Action for the Blind. Concern within CFOA is felt by the fact that fire deaths among the elderly population are rising for the first time in 30 years.

“CHARLIE THE CHAPLAIN”

Former Fire Brigade Chaplain Working to Support Prostate Cancer Research

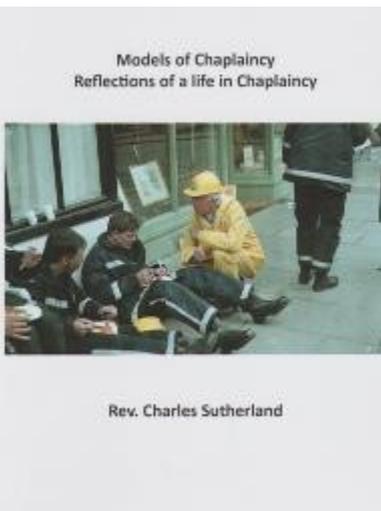
Many WRFA members will have met Rev. Charles Sutherland because he is also a member of our Association by virtue of his service to Wiltshire Fire Brigade as Chaplain for 8 years. Now in his 80s and living with his wife, Christine, in Devizes, Charles has become a fervent supporter of research into prostate cancer.

One method that ‘Charlie the Chaplain’ has used is to set down in a booklet some of his thoughts and experiences relating to his work as a chaplain. Charles was not only a chaplain in the fire service but he has provided chaplaincy support to acute and mental hospital as well as being a Royal Air Force chaplain to a V-bomber base. All profit from the sale of the booklet is sent to Prostate Cancer Research. So far Charles has raised nearly £1,000 but hopes to exceed that as the sale of his booklet gathers pace.

Of course, much of the work of a chaplain has to be done in confidence and Charles has been very careful not to put anything in the



Charlie the Chaplain



booklet that breaches any confidences and in the few cases where people are named he has only done so after gaining permission to do so.

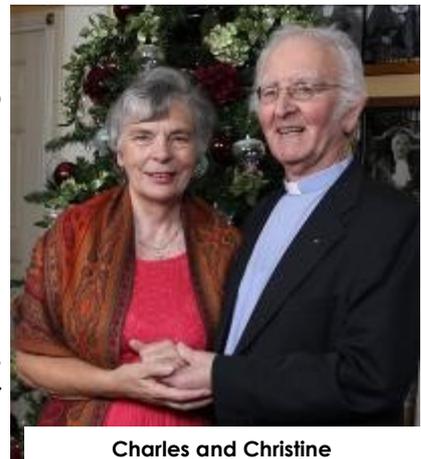
When Charles set out to write the booklet, it was not his intention to produce a guide to chaplaincy work. He simply wanted to put down on paper some of his experiences and anecdotes relating to his involvement in different types of chaplaincy. However, what he produced turned into a short but powerful document that was quickly recognised as being of help to those considering going into a chaplaincy role. It is known for certain that the booklet is being used by at least one theological college and many copies are in the hands of those currently serving as chaplains in the fire & rescue service and in other organisations.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about what a chaplain is required to do and how he or she does it. The most common misunderstanding is that the chaplain’s main role is to evangelise and “bible thump” and while doing so to promote their particular denomination in preference to all other s and all other faiths. Charles clarifies this point in his booklet without in any respect making an apology for being a follower of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Charles was diagnosed with prostate cancer several years ago and in his case the disease is being held in check by regular medical consultations and appropriate treatments. Charles is keen to encourage men reaching middle age to have regular checks with their GP to catch any sign of prostate cancer as early as possible. Prostate cancer kills about 10,000 men in the UK every year and Charlie is certainly doing what he can to reduce that number and support much needed research into one of the most common types of cancer affecting males.

Copies of Charlie’s booklet are still available to WRFA members and friends by contacting me with a donation to Prostate Cancer Research that will be sent via Charlie.

JOHN CRAIG



Charles and Christine

THEATRE TRIP

PANTOMIME



WRFA will organise a trip to see the PANTOMIME, Theatre Royal, Bath

Jack and the Beanstalk

Saturday January 9th 2015

2.00pm

Stall seats £28.00 for pensioners and children

Further discount of 20% if we book 20+ seats

EXPRESSIONS OF INTENT TO ATTEND **NOW PLEASE TO**

JOHN CRAIG

Tel: 01380 726343

THE CROSS HOUSE FIRE

Cross House was a six-storey office block in multiple occupancy in Westgate Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne. On 23rd December, 1919 at about 4.00pm when the city centre was crowded with Christmas shoppers, a tragic fire broke out in Cross House. The basement contained a considerable quantity of celluloid film that posed a serious fire hazard. Many of the UK cities had recognised the need to control by local byelaws how such film was stored but Newcastle had yet to do so.

The fire was started by an electric fire in the basement near to a lift shaft. Three tons of celluloid film on wooden racks were soon involved in fire. Staff tackled the fire with portable extinguishers but did not immediately call the fire brigade and by the time the vital call was made the basement was well alight with fire and dense smoke travelling up the lift shaft to all six floors.

The fire brigade arrived to a chaotic scene with trapped occupants of the building, many of them female office staff, screaming for help from windows on every floor. Some had already begun to jump and were killed by so doing. The firemen deployed jumping sheets in an attempt to save some of those jumping from windows. Four people were caught by jumping sheet, only one of them was injured. One man missed the sheet and was killed.

The first attendance from the Newcastle City Fire Brigade included a 50-foot escape that was horse drawn. This was pitched to perform rescues but was too short to reach those trapped in the upper floor windows. **What followed must go down in history as one of the most heroic and skilful acts of firemanship ever performed in the world.**

Fireman T.W.Brown climbed the escape carrying a hook ladder that he pitched from the head of the fully extended escape to the fourth floor. **He then assisted 13 people to descend the hook ladder and transfer onto the escape ladder before climbing it down to safety.**

Having already performed extraordinary rescues, Fireman Brown was yet to accomplish even greater ones. Knowing that there were more people trapped on the 85-foot high roof, Fireman Brown transferred himself and his hook ladder to the 65-foot escape ladder and climbed to its head. He then pitched the hook ladder to the roof but because the roof had an overhanging cornice, the heel of the hook ladder was hanging in mid air and was not resting against the face of the building. Despite this highly precarious pitch, Fireman Brown managed to climb the hook ladder and get onto the roof. He then engaged in the not easy task of talking those trapped into climbing down the swinging hook ladder six-floors above street level. Fortunately, another Fireman had the good sense to climb to the head of the escape and grab the heel of the hook ladder to steady it. Brown's task in persuading those trapped to climb down the hook ladder and escape was considerably aided by the deteriorating smoke and heat conditions on the roof.

Fireman Brown was decorated by the King with the Albert Medal. He was also promoted to station officer rank.

Nineteen people were rescued by the Fire Brigade but twelve lost their lives. Nine people received serious injuries.

The work done by the Newcastle Fire Brigade received high praise throughout the city but the City Council was strongly criticised for not having provided the Brigade with adequate self-contained breathing apparatus, a motor powered turntable ladder, modern fire stations and sufficient manpower. Sadly, the history of fire protection includes very many examples of tragic fires being needed to draw attention to politicians under-funding the fire brigades for which they have responsibility. The Cross House fire was but one example of so many.

JOHN CRAIG

Fireman T.W.Brown

Hero of the Cross House fire. He was awarded the Albert Medal and promoted to station officer for his extraordinary acts of gallantry and skill.



Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus

Fire fighters at the Cross House fire needed this type of apparatus but had not been supplied with it.

DISCLAIMER

Views and opinions published in this newsletter are not necessarily shared by the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters

Association