



The Branch

November 2015



Newsletter of WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION



Merry Christmas



WFRS CAROL SERVICE

All members of our Association, their families and friends are warmly invited by the Chief Fire Officer to attend the Carol Service to be held on

17th December 2015

at St Andrew's Church, Long Street, Devizes

Seasonal refreshments will be served in the church hall after the service.

This will be the last Carol Service held by Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service before the amalgamation with Dorset FRS so please try to support.



REMEMBRANCE EVENT



9th November 2015



Top table members and guests



(Above) Canon Henry Pearson leading the Act of Remembrance



Enjoying the superb dinner provided by Sweetpea Catering of Melksham

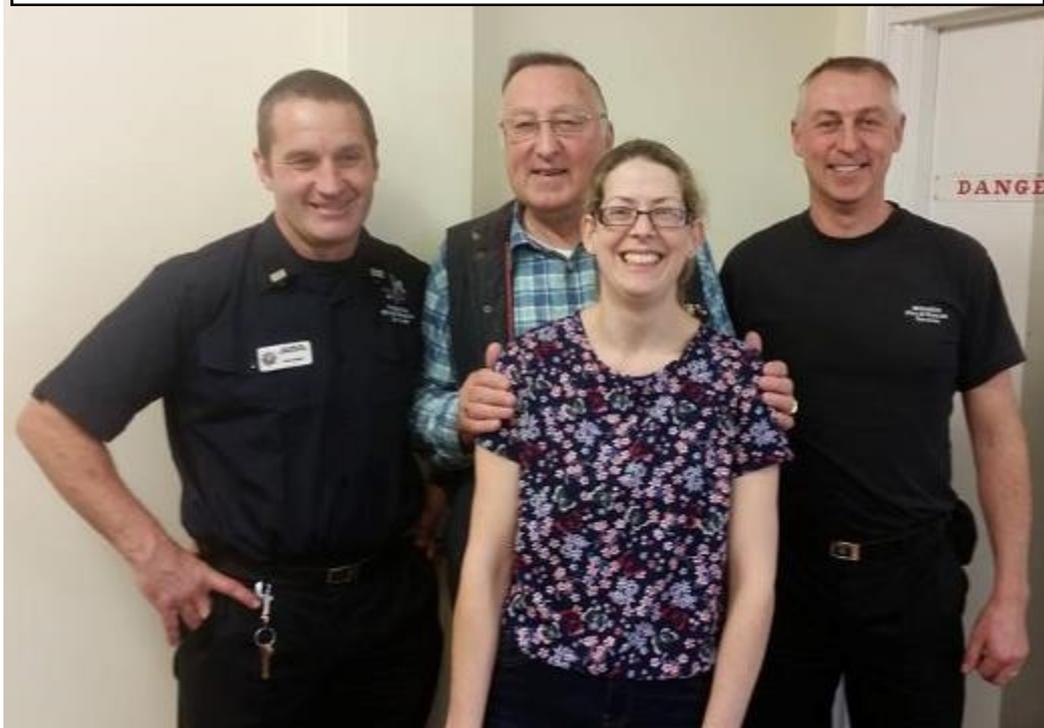
(Photos courtesy of John Cox)

Paying homage to those that have given their lives in defence of this country in time of war has become an important event in the calendar of this Association. As in previous years, the event was held this time in the beautiful Assembly Room of Devizes Town Hall. The evening commenced with a delicious two-course hot meal served by Sweetpea Catering of Melksham. We were then treated to a concert by Devizes Town Band and the programme included a sing-along to some songs made popular in wartime.

The most important part of the event was the very poignant **Act of Remembrance**. This was conducted by WRFA member, Revd. Canon Henry Pearson and included the recital of the poem *In Flanders Field* by John Craig, the Last Post, two minute's silence, Reveille, the Royal British Legion exhortation spoken by Jerry Willmott and the Kohima Epitaph spoken by Dan Gurney. A retiring collection for the RBL Red Poppy Appeal raised £65.00.

PEOPLE & PLACES

(L to R) Mark Shipway, Len Benwell, Michelle, Rob Evans



KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOUR (or a bright red fire appliance)

Whilst travelling in the car recently with her two young daughters aged 21 months and 4 years, **Michelle**, our daughter, had very good reason to be thankful to the crew of Red Watch from Swindon Fire Station.

The vehicle in front of our daughter's car was being driven in a very dangerous manner—braking when pulling away, only to brake again (a typical “cash for crash” technique). Becoming frustrated and not in a position to overtake, our daughter sounded her car horn (ok, we know she would have been better not to have done so) when the driver of the said vehicle decided to stop and get out of his car. He approached Michelle's car and she had the foresight to quickly lock all the doors and close the windows. The other driver started banging on her car windows and door, insisting she get out of her car. He was shouting abuse and threats. Naturally, Michelle was very frightened as was her eldest child and the youngest just started crying as this seemed the right thing to do! Luckily, the crew of Red Watch was returning to station and saw the whole incident so they stopped to offer assistance. The lads sent the abusive driver and angry driver on his way ensuring that they had recorded his car details including registration because Michelle was too upset to do so. They stayed with Michelle until it was certain she was fit to continue her journey safely. During the time they were talking Michelle also reassured the children and mentioned to the eldest, Lily, that the nice men were firemen just like ‘Pop’ used to be, and it transpired that most of the guys know Len and had enjoyed serving with him.



In these days we are too quick to criticise when things go wrong and not to offer thanks and praise when it is due. I was delighted when Michelle told me that she had written to **CFO Simon Routh-Jones** praising the crew that had come to her assistance. Red Watch was on duty a few days later and Michelle and Len popped into Swindon Fire Station to say thank you in person to the crew. Naturally, they stayed for a cup of tea and a long chat! **YVE USHER-BENWELL**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Do you have a good news story to share in THE BRANCH. Don't hesitate to send it in.



Health Matters
News of members and their ailments



ROB JACKSON

Rob has recently been in hospital to have his sinuses drilled out. The surgery was performed at the Emerson Green NHS Treatment Centre in Bristol. Rob is now home recovering in the tender loving care of his wife, Sarah-Jane. We hope you are soon fully recovered, Rob.

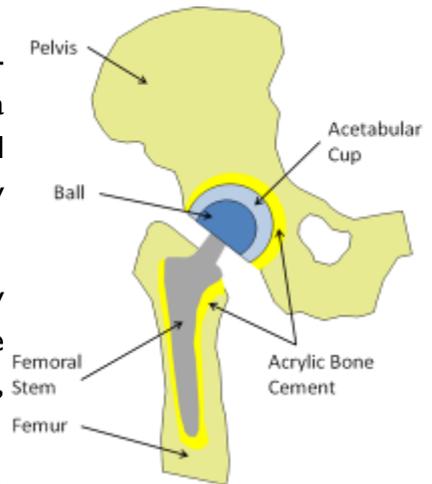


PETE WIXEY

Pete Wixey has been into Southmead Hospital for surgery to replace his right hip joint. He reports that the operation has been a complete success and he is delighted at the improved mobility and pain reduction that this has brought. Pete reports very favourably on Southmead Hospital and the treatment that he received there.

However, he is now suffering severe pain in his back and he may need another operation to deal with the vertebrae that are causing the trouble. He is in the care of Great Western Hospital, Swindon now waiting to be called in for treatment.

Pete's wife died suddenly quite recently. Our Association is on standby to support Pete in any way we can.



JOHN CRAIG

John has recently had an operation at Ridgeway Hospital, Wroughton known as a trans urethra restructure of the prostate. In fire brigade language, he has had a “rebores” to stop an enlarged prostate gland restricting his ability to pee. All the bits of prostate chopped out were sent for biopsy and they were not cancerous. John is now home requiring no follow-up treatment and has been able to resume his duties for our Association with little interruption.

(photo by courtesy of Margaret Craig)



Doctor's Strike Called Off

The BMA's Dispute with the Government enters a Negotiation Phase

The bitter dispute between the Government and the British Medical Association over junior doctors' contracts entered a new phase on 30th November when both sides agreed to "meaningful negotiations". This positive step meant that the BMA called off the strike by junior doctors that was scheduled to start on 1st December. For his part, the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt MP, agreed not to impose new contracts on the doctors until agreement had been reached. Mr Hunt expressed pleasure at the development because he had been complaining that the BMA had for two years been refusing to negotiate.

A deadline of 3rd January has been set for bringing the negotiations to a conclusion. The BMA has stated that if a settlement satisfactory to them has not been reached by the deadline, the threat of strike action will be applied again.

Both sides in the dispute are claiming that their actions are intended to protect patients. Mr Hunt further asserts that the need for new contracts stems from his desire to see the improvement in doctor cover over all days of the week.

Care Homes Crisis

Those involved in the care homes business have given a stark warning that there is a grave financial crisis that may well see many private homes closing or being sold off. In response to this, in his Autumn Statement, George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced his approval to local councils raising the council tax by 2% providing the additional funds this produces are ring fenced for use in social care. The care home industry has welcomed this but said that 2% is insufficient to meet all of the shortfall in funding and the crisis, although lessened, will still persist into 2016.



ORGAN DONATION IN WALES CHANGES TO OPT OUT SYSTEM



An important change to the law governing organ donations will apply in Wales from 1st December 2015. Like the rest of the UK, to become an organ donor, it was necessary to register your approval to donate your organs before death. The change to the law in Wales means that all adults over the age of 18 will be deemed to have opted in to the organ donation system unless they take positive action to opt out. There are 7,000 people awaiting organ transplants in the UK and the Welsh system is being monitored with great interest by the whole of the NHS.



ABOUT MONEY



STATE PENSION INCREASE “BEST FOR 15 YEARS”

In his Autumn Statement to Parliament, Chancellor of the Exchequer, **George Osborne**, announced that from April 2016 the UK basic state pension will increase by £3.35 to £119.30 per week. In the 2015 Election Manifesto, the Conservatives pledged that the state pension would continue to be protected by the “triple lock”. This arrangement means that every year the state pension will be increased in line with wages, prices or by 2.5%, whichever is the highest.



George Osborne

Those on a public service pension like the Fireman’s Pension Scheme must wait to see if the triple lock is applied to calculate the amount paid to pensioners from next April.



Malcolm Eastwood

BOY’S MONEY FIGHT STARTED

Many readers will know that those joining the old Firemen’s Pension Scheme at between the ages of 18 and 20 were required to pay pension contributions that did not count towards their pensionable service. Thus, a fireman aged 18 would need to complete 32 years service and pay pension contributions for all of that time in order to be eligible for a 30 year pension. This was known as the ‘Boys’ Money’ scheme.

A start has been made on making a legal challenge to ‘Boys’ Money’. Early indications suggest that it may have been unlawful. However, it must be stressed that the outcome of this case is very uncertain and is sure to take years rather than months to reach any judgement. The Secretary of the Association of Principal Fire Officers, Stuart Errington, is spearheading the challenge, ably assisted by Malcolm Eastwood. Malcolm is well known to many WRFA members and is a prominent member of the Hampshire FRS Past Members Association.

FIRE PENSION BOARDS

A requirement of the **Public Service Pension Act 2013** is that all fire authorities must set up a **Pension Board**. These are generally comprised of an equal number of members representing pension scheme members and elected members of the fire authority.

Anyone in receipt of a fire service pension with a query or complaint should in the first instance refer the matter to their pension provider. If this does not give satisfaction, the matter can be referred to the Pension Board for decision.



**News of the
“BLUES & TWOS”
A heads-up on the
Emergency Services**



**AMBULANCE SERVICES “FIDDLING” ATTENDANCE
TIMES**

It has come to light that some, perhaps all, NHS ambulance trusts are adopting a policy relating to the provision of defibrillators in public places in order to make their attendance times to life threatening cases look better. It is known that the South East England Ambulance Trust records that the service has met its eight minutes attendance time to a patient suffering a potentially fatal condition if there is a defibrillator within 250 metre in a publicly accessible place. The target is shown as having been met even if a defibrillator is of no use in dealing with what ails the patient. In a recent letter to the *Western Daily Press* a lady living in Somerset reported that when her husband was twice taken seriously ill, the

Ambulance Control told her to leave her husband and go to fetch the defibrillator. This would seem to confirm that the South west Ambulance Trust that covers Wiltshire is also using the location of community defibrillators as part of their policy of meeting attendance time targets.

Worst 999 Fire Response Times For 20 Years

Earlier this month the government allowed the publication of Fire Incident Response Times for the last year and they continue to show a deterioration. In fact, the statistics prove that the responses by the fire and rescue services to both fires and special services are now the worse they have been for 20 years. The Fire Brigades Union has predictably pounced on the figures as evidence that the cuts to the service are now putting the public at risk and there are more cuts expected as austerity continues to reduce fire and rescue service resources. However, there are likely to be many reasons for the slower attendance times including traffic congestion getting worse such as inconsiderate parking in narrow streets.



London ‘Bobbies’ Lack Confidence in Top Management

Only one in six members of the Metropolitan Police Force have confidence in the top ranking officers of the force according to a recent internal staff survey. Only 17% of the 47,500 members of staff in the Metropolitan Police believe that top managers are doing a good job. Only 47% think that they are treated with fairness and respect. The nation’s largest police force is headed by Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe.

London Ambulance Service placed into special measures

Inspectors have been so concerned at what they have recently discovered about the London Ambulance Service that they have called for it to be placed in special measures. The list of failings is a very long one and starts with weak management, and includes failure to properly support front-line staff, allowing equipment that is dirty and in some cases missing altogether. Failures in meeting target response times also features on the long list of concerns.



Social Events



WRFA

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Sunday 13th December 2015

Grasmere House Hotel, Salisbury

Booking form with this newsletter or

Download from website

www.wrfa.org.uk



CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

If you live alone in the Trowbridge area and do not wish to be eating Christmas Lunch alone, you are warmly invited by

Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service

To eat Christmas Day Lunch FREE

Time: From 11.00am

Place: County Hall, Trowbridge

To Book, phone 01225 756500



'MARCH MUNCH' - SUNDAY LUNCH, 6th MARCH 2016

Three-course superb lunch for only £20.00 (limited to 40 people)

WHITE HORSE INN, COMPTON BASSETT

To reserve your place call 01380 726343, menu choice available in late January

Helpline 0800 389 8820

- Below, just some of the issues with which the Charity is able to help:
- **Financial hardship**
 - **Welfare benefits**
 - **Employment issues**
 - **Housing**
 - **Bereavement**
 - **Disability**
 - **Adaptations**
 - **Rehabilitation from injury or illness**
 - **Recuperation from illness or injury**

- Who is eligible for help ?**
- **Serving fire service personnel including non-uniformed support staff and chaplains**
 - **Former fire service personnel**
 - **Serving or former Works Fire Fighters**
 - **Eligible dependants of the above three groups of beneficiaries**
 - **Individuals engaged in fire service youth work or voluntary schemes.**

The HELPLINE offers confidential and impartial guidance, advice and support. Lines are open 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. 0800 389 8820



Sign up NOW to the lottery and buy into the chance to win up to £25,000 in cash prizes.

There is a monthly draw.

Call now to join on 0870 759 8868



BECOME A REGULAR GIVER

The FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY needs £8m a year to function properly. The **Regular Giving Scheme** offers anyone the opportunity to make regular donations to the Charity by direct debit. The amount of donation is a matter for the giver's choice. If you are already a member of the scheme, when did you last review the amount of your donation?

If you wish to know more or obtain a Direct Debit form, Contact John Craig 01380 726343



Here is the latest news on the progress towards amalgamating the fire and rescue services of Dorset and Wiltshire.

It has been confirmed that the new service will be occupying part of Wiltshire Council's Five Rivers Community Campus in Salisbury from April 2016.

The campus will be home to a new 'strategic hub', providing

- A central workplace for the management team and some support functions.
- A number of flexible working options for our personnel as part of the wider approach to working across Dorset and Wiltshire, and
- A meeting place for teams, departments and the new Fire Authority.

The costs of establishing the new hub are being met from a Transformation Grant from the Government which is also covering other set-up costs such as consolidating ICT systems.

The new hub is NOT a headquarters. The service wants to change the way it works to reflect how it will have staff across two counties, and that means moving away from traditional and out-dated structures.

No decisions have been made about the long-term future of any existing premises. A detailed review of the whole Service estate across Wiltshire and Dorset is underway.

Over the coming few months, officers and members will be working to agree a budget for the new Service that will have to be agreed in February 2016.

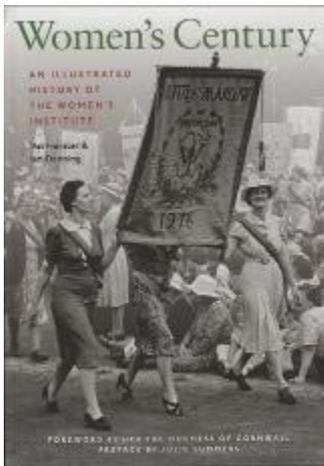


The staff of Brigade HQ assemble at the Manor House, Potterne, on 1st April 1998 to mark the 50th anniversary of Wiltshire Fire Brigade. The future of this building remains undecided as yet.



BOOK SHELF

Book reviews by members



WOMEN'S CENTURY

An illustrated history of the Women's Institute

Authors : Vorster & Denning

I was so pleased to be asked to review this book. As a long time member of the W.I. I was looking forward to getting a copy for my members to share and here it was in my hands to review. I have read other W.I. Publications over the years and not all have lived up to the 'hype' ; many being a costly disappointment. **However, what a fabulous book this is!**

It starts with a brief history from the forward thinking Canadian, Adelaide Hoodless, who in the late 1890's began a movement aimed at educating women in domestic science and child rearing. It meanders to the beginnings of the W.I. in the UK, namely in Anglesey in North Wales in 1915. The first English W.I. Formed two months later in Sussex..

The easy-to-read book narrates the progress of the W.I. through the decades to the present. Indeed to the Centenary that was celebrated this year. It charts the war years, women's rights, education campaigns, needlecraft, not to mention cookery, tea making and, of course, a rather famous calendar!

It outlines how Lady Denman, the first Chairwoman of the W.I., led an enthusiastic initiative to buy a college. This turned out to be the Marcham House near Allington, known as 'Denman'. vibrant to this very day with a varied menu of residential and day-courses for members, non-members and (wait for it) MEN.

The text of this book is powerful and enlightening but equally so are the wonderful photographs chronicling the history and changes over the decades.

The W.I. Is a wonderful organisation embracing women at its core. The warm welcome is special and no one need feel lonely. The motto '**Inspiring Women**' is truly deserved.

This book needs to sit on a coffee table where it can be picked up at will , not be hidden in a bookcase.

Every chapter will inspire and hearten you. What a wonderful Christmas /birthday present it would make for and woman or spouse/partner. At a retail price of only £14.99, it is a real bargain.



Ann Fitzgerald

Review written by ANN FITZGERALD

'Women's Century' is published by Third Millennium

ISBN 978 1 908990 50 1

Foreword by HRH Duchess of Cornwall

AN UNUSUAL QUERY

Have you seen this picture when dealing with a fire?

Mr Mallory Maltby has written to me as follows:

My Mother bought the picture shown here through Woolley and Wallis on 28th October 1981. She was an art teacher and spotted the pastel as being by Rossetti and purchased it. The auctioneer later told her that the sellers had told him that the owner's family had bought the picture directly from the London studio of Rossetti. This suggests it was hung in a substantial house from the 1970s until 1981. Unfortunately, W & W have now thrown away all the 1980s records. I have inherited the picture and am trying to research the history of the work. The picture has been enhanced to show damage from a fire. You can see smoke ingress around the edges and there is a faint circle in the top right corner where the signature should be that suggests some restoration. Most experts consider it genuine as it is identical to the version on display in the Ashmolean Gallery in Oxford. The size is 39" x 20".



It's a bit of a long shot but in trying to help Mr Maltby find out the when and where the smoke damage was caused to his picture, if any reader remembers attending a fire that involved this picture, please get in touch with me. JOHN CRAIG (Editor).



NEW MEMBER

We have been delighted to welcome **VINCE KIMBER** into full membership of our Association recently.

Vince had a very long and distinguished period of service at Pewsey Fire Station but he will also be remembered for having held office as a local official in the Retained Firefighters Union.

Vince has not broken his ties entirely with Wiltshire FRS. He continues to carry out part-time community fire safety duties.

We extend to Vince a very warm welcome.

Campaign to save Leicester's Central Fire Station

Whatever happened to Recommended Standards of Fire Cover?



Lancaster Place Fire Station, Leicester

Opened in 1927 to gasps of envy from fire chiefs throughout this land, Leicester's central fire station at Lancaster Place is now the focus of a bitter row over its threatened closure. The Leicestershire Fire Authority must trim its budget by £1.5m and the Chief Fire Officer has gone out for public consultation on his proposal to cut the wholetime establishment by a third. The key to achieving this is the closure of Lancaster Place, a magnificent eight-bay station that many very experienced fire officers, both serving and retired, point out is in a strategically advantageous position to make fast attendance to some of the city's most important risks. Listed below are some of these to which the appliances and crews based at Lancaster Place can usually respond in less than five minutes running time.

- Leicester Royal Infirmary , one of the busiest NHS acute hospitals in the East Midlands
- Leicester High Security Prison
- Core buildings of Leicester University
- Demontfort Hall, a building serving as a venue for major entertainment attractions.
- Granby Halls, a range of buildings used for exhibitions and public entertainments

Opponents of the closure proposal point out that fire service response times will triple to the above. They claim that the public consultation has shown a lack of public support for the closure of Lancaster Place that is being ignored by the hierarchy in the Leicestershire FRS. To those that devoted much effort to meeting the now defunct recommended standards of fire cover, what is happening in Leicestershire is very difficult to comprehend. **JOHN CRAIG**

RESTORERS & PRESERVERS

A salute to those that care about fire service heritage

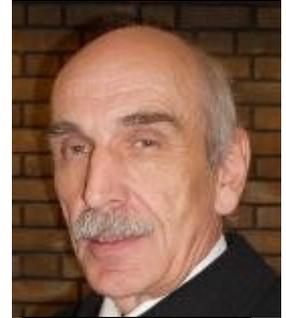
This page is a tribute to the fine work done by those that devote many hours and much money to preserving and restoring veteran fire appliances. Some of these men and women we are proud to have in membership of the WRFA.



Dave Berry has restored to pristine condition a **Leyland Lioness Pump Escape** (left)

This magnificent example of a pre-war appliance saw many years of good service in the Bristol City Fire Brigade.

Photo courtesy of Dave Berry



Dave Berry



Richard Doore is now the proud owner of a **Bedford TK Water Tender**

that put out many fire as a unit of the Suffolk Fire Service fleet before being sold into retirement and saved from the scrap heap by Richard. John Craig served in Suffolk and is seen (right) presenting Richard with a Suffolk cap badge.



Photo courtesy of Gazette & Herald



Leyland Cub Pump (above)

Commer Water Tender (Right)



Chris Wannell and his family own three restored fire engines as shown above.



60 ft Hand-operated Turntable Ladder

NFS 1942, followed by service in Essex and Somerset

DISCLAIMER

THE BRANCH is published by the **Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association**.

The opinions expressed in it are not necessarily those of the **WRFA**