



# The Branch



February 2016

Newsletter of **WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

## British Heart Foundation Features Glenn Foreman In New Guidance Publication

Many readers will know that WRFA member, Glenn Foreman, has undergone several major heart surgeries in recent times and these have eventually stabilised his heart condition. This has been publicised by the **British Heart Foundation** charity in a new leaflet intended to inform and encourage those facing similar health problems to those that Glenn is approaching with such fortitude and determination. Below is reproduced one page of the publication.

We sincerely hope that Glenn continues to feel great benefit from the treatment he has received from some of the best cardiac surgeons in the country.

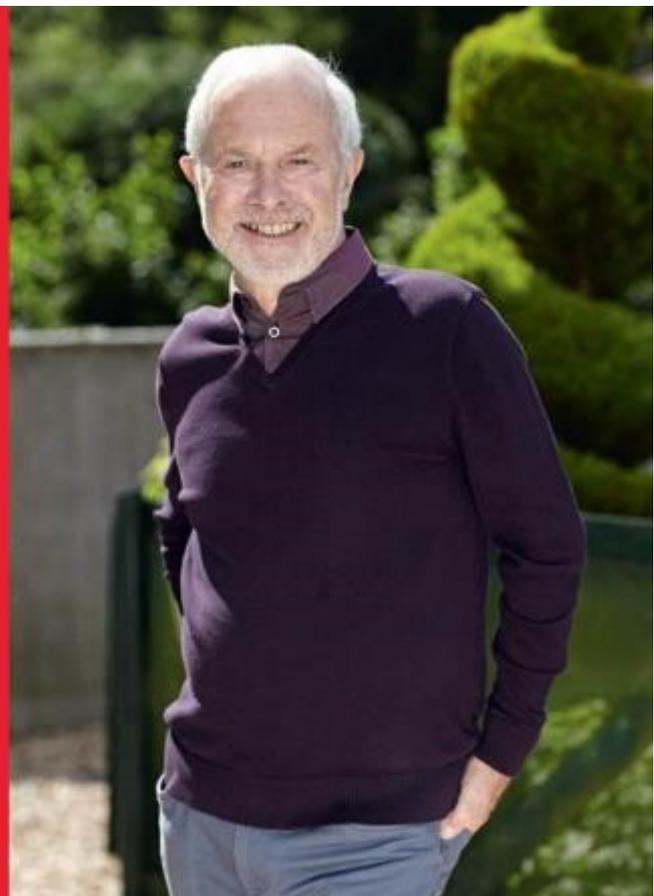
Glenn and his wife, Angela, live on the southern outskirts of Salisbury and support WRFA social events whenever possible.

### GLENN'S STORY

Glenn, now 68, had a heart attack in 1999. Following treatment, it was found that he had frequent ventricular ectopics and episodes of ventricular tachycardia.

"At first, they thought I had vertigo, but after wearing a 24-hour ECG monitor, they found I had an abnormal heart rhythm. I was referred for an ablation at my local hospital. They attempted the procedure in 2011 and 2012, but unfortunately they both failed. I was eventually referred to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, and finally on the fourth attempt they managed to significantly reduce my abnormal heart rhythms, which was tremendous!

My advice to someone with these problems is to not lose heart – if you have an unsuccessful ablation then try again, persistence definitely paid off for me. I now have heart failure, but the ablation gave me a much better quality of life, and more energy to do things and feel better in myself. I'm really glad I kept trying."



## WRFA CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Yet again, the **Grasmere House Hotel**, in Salisbury provided our Association with an outstanding meal. This time the occasion was our Christmas Festive Meal that was very much enjoyed by those that attended. (Photos by John Craig)



**Our President, Jerry Willmott, hosting guests from Hampshire**

## PEOPLE & PLACES

### MEDALS FOR THE CHIEF



Queens Fire Service Medal

With much pleasure members of our association welcomed the announcement in the Queen's New Year Honours that the award of the **Queens Fire Service Medal** for exemplary fire service had been made to **CFO Simon Routh-Jones**. This announcement came only days after the CFO was presented with the **BFSA Commendation Medal** at the Carol Service. As Simon's long service draws to its end it is good to see his contributions recognised in such a tangible manner. Warmest congratulations are offered to Simon.



CFO Routh-Jones

### HONOUR FOR CFO PAUL FULLER



CFO Paul Fuller

**Chief Fire Officer Paul Fuller**, who commands Bedfordshire & Luton Fire & Rescue Service was another officer closely associated with Wiltshire to be recognised in the Queen's New Year Honours list. CFO Fuller received the **Commander of the British Empire** medal. On his rise to become a CFO, Paul served in Wiltshire Fire Brigade reaching the rank of Assistant Chief Officer. The CBE is rarely awarded to members of the fire and rescue service and such an award usually comes in recognition of significant work done on a national scale. CFO Fuller is currently heading the campaign to tighten the law concerning the flammability of children's play clothing & costumes.

### CHRIS WANNELL LEADS ATTACK ON "CRAZY" TRAFFIC DIVERSION



Chris Wannell

Our Chairman, **Chris Wannell**, has been outspoken in criticism of Wiltshire Council's traffic diversion plan when in early February a short part of the High Street in Royal Wootton Bassett is to be closed for road works. Speaking as a very highly respected town councillor, Chris has attacked the Wiltshire Council for imposing a diversion that will add 30 miles to the journey of any driver taking it. Chris's views attracted a lot of media attention and he appeared on television to explain in detail where he thought the Wiltshire Council has gone wrong. Put simply, Chris criticised council managers for following guidance documents without applying common sense.



## HEALTH MATTERS

News and views about those coping with health challenges



### JOE NASH



JOE NASH

At about the time this newsletter is published, JOE NASH is due to have a hip replacement operation at the Winfield Hospital in Gloucestershire. Joe and Grace live in Tetbury. Joe had a knee replacement operation a few years ago that was followed by a serious infection and he has been limited in his mobility ever since and has dealt with constant pain with great fortitude and patience. The medics now think that much of his pain and disability is caused by a worn out hip joint and a replacement should improve his quality of life. Joe, we really are hoping this is how things work out for you.

### JOHN & MAUREEN PERRY



MAUREEN PERRY

**Maureen Perry** is soon to be having day surgery at New Hall Hospital to correct a foot problem. We hope that the recovery process is rapid and the operation is a complete success. **John**, has spent time in SDH, Odstock recovering from sepsis and a lung infection, We wish them both better health in the rest of the year.



JOHN PERRY

### ROD & SUE PRIDDLE



ROD PRIDDLE

With sincere regret it is reported that Rod Priddle lost his wife, Sue, who died in early January in the BUPA care home in Market Lavington. Sue was diagnosed with cancer in August last year and the chemo therapy treatment caused serious complications. At her own request, there was no formal funeral service.

Very understandably, Rod is finding coping with his grief to be very hard indeed. Theirs was a very long and happy marriage. Rod has received many messages of sympathy and condolence from former fire brigade colleagues with whom he served in Bristol and Wiltshire and he has asked that his appreciation for this support be published in The Branch.

# REMEMBERING FLEUR LOMBARD QGM



**Firefighter Fleur Lombard QGM**



**The wreath laying party**

**Fleur Lombard** was the first female fire fighter in the UK to lose her life in the line of duty in peacetime. She died fighting a supermarket fire in Staple Hill, Bristol on 4th February, 1996. She was 21 years old. On the 4th February this year, the 20th anniversary of Fleur's death, a poignant ceremony was held at the site of the memorial plaque close to the place where the fatal fire occurred.

Serving members of Avon Fire & Rescue Service were joined by retired members and also representatives of the police and ambulance services at a wreath laying ceremony in honour of Fleur's memory. Fleur came originally from Derbyshire and she joined Avon Fire & Rescue Service in 1994, winning the Silver Axe trophy as the top recruit on her basic course.

The fire that took Fleur's life was started deliberately by a security guard working his first day of duty at the store. It is alleged that he was seen punching the air in glee before the fire fighters arrived. Fleur was ordered into the building with another fire fighter as 'buddy' and then a flashover occurred that caused Fleur fatal burns. Fleur was post humorously awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal. The fire fighter working with her, Robert Seaman, realising that Fleur had not accompanied him out of the building, made valiant attempts to re-enter to rescue her. For this, he was awarded the George Medal.



**The memorial plaque for Fleur after the recent wreath laying ceremony.**

**Photos on this page by kind permission of Avon Fire & Rescue Service**



**BLUE LIGHT  
NEWS**

**Some updates on the  
Fire, Police and Ambulance  
Services.**



**BATTLE AGAINST FIRE SERVICE CUTS IN LEICESTERSHIRE GOING  
THE FBU'S WAY**

CFO Richard Chandler's original proposals to make £1.5m cuts in the Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service budget by 2020 have been ditched and an alternative plan supported by the Fire Brigades Union will go before the Combined Fire Authority this month. The rethink came as a result of a massive public outcry against the CFO's plan that would have seen the central fire station at Lancaster Place closed and 88 wholetime posts removed. The Fire Brigades Union, strongly supported by a large cadre of retired fire fighters, campaigned in the press and media against the CFO's proposed method of saving money and 14,000 members of the public signed a petition very quickly. Under the revised plan, central fire station will remain open and so will Kibworth retained station that was also earmarked to close. The FBU approved plan requires only 29 posts to go without compulsory redundancies. Loughborough will lose one pump and the second pumps at Melton Mowbray, Market Harborough and Coalville will be replaced by 'tactical response vehicles' that require a much smaller crew than a fully functional appliance. Market Harborough and Lutterworth will have their status raised from 'On Call (retained)' crewing to becoming fulltime crewed stations.



**CENTRAL FIRE STATION  
LEICESTER**

Opened in 1927, this 8-bay station has provided fast attendance to fire calls within the inner city area. The CFO's proposal to close this station and a one-pump retained station provoked strong reaction against it from the Fire Brigades Union and the general public. An alternative set of proposals that includes keeping the central station open have been put before the Combined Fire Authority and the FBU is hailing this as a victory.

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE FBU'S FIGHT AGAINST CUTS SET TO FAIL**

In contrast to what is happening in Leicestershire, the FBU has failed to prevent plans to close Painswick retained fire station going ahead. Additionally, the status of Cirencester Fire station will be downgraded to a retained unit from previously having had some fulltime fire fighters on the establishment. CFO Stewart Edgar calls the changes "matching our resources to community risk".

## Blue Light News (continued)

### WILTSHIRE POLICE WORST AT CATCHING BURGLARS

If you are a burglar, your chances of having your collar felt are very small if you commit your crimes in Wiltshire. This is the conclusion to be drawn from new statistics just published by Churchill Home Insurance that show Wiltshire Constabulary has the worst record of solving burglaries in England and Wales. Over a year, only 8.3 % of every 100 burglaries were solved. No doubt stung by this revelation, the Force has defended itself by pointing out that the figures lump together burglaries on both domestic and non-domestic properties. If the domestic burglaries are separated out they show a slightly better detection rate. Churchill Insurance has justified publishing its survey by stating that it is important that householders are made aware of potential threats.



Just some of the 200 diners enjoying Christmas Lunch provided free by Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service volunteers.

Photo by courtesy of Wiltshire FRS

### TROWBRIDGE CHRISTMAS LUNCH FOR THE LONELY

Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service again organised a festive Christmas lunch in Trowbridge to which persons who would otherwise be dining alone on Christmas Day were invited. Free of charge. This has become an annual event and its popularity has meant that it has outgrown the Trowbridge Fire Station facilities and the event was held very successfully at County Hall with the kind co-operation of Wiltshire Council. Over 200 people thoroughly enjoyed the festive meal and the fellowship that went with it. This initiative by brigade staff reflects great credit upon the service and further enhances its reputation as a public service that goes the extra mile when it comes to caring.

# LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE

## How the FIRE FIGHTER'S CHARITY has come to the aid of another WRFA member

In the Spring of 2015 I was knocked over by my Labrador and another dog having fun in a local park . I fell straight onto my knees. I managed to stagger back to my car in pain and with dented pride having refused help from passers-by. The bruising and pain was severe but, typical nurse, I didn't seek medical help. Month's later I limped into my GP's surgery with an unrelated problem but she was most concerned about my knees. I was dispatched to hospital immediately for X-rays. Within 24 hours she was phoning me to say I had soft tissue injuries and severe **osteoarthritis** in both knees, of which I had been unaware.



Ann Fitzgerald

I gradually became quite disabled and very kind occupational therapists equipped the house and garden with an array of aids to keep me mobile. This was lowering both mentally and physically. My life changed drastically from a full social life from which I gradually withdrew.

At about the same time I met John Craig when he came to speak at the W.I. of which I was a member. I struggled to stand to introduce him and after his talk he was interested in my case and my service in the Fire Brigade almost 50 years ago. I joined the WRFA and John said that I qualified for the rehabilitation services and all other support on offer to me from the **Fire Fighters Charity**. I could hardly believe it when I was offered a week's rehabilitation at **Harcombe House, Devon**. My husband, Colm, drove me down in early December to this beautiful house 12 miles south of Exeter in a pretty rural valley. He left me there to travel home in daylight. I was despondent to say the least. I was using a walking stick, in pain and everything was a struggle physically and mentally. The reception staff reassured me that I would get better during my stay but I was far from convinced. I spent the afternoon in my room wondering why I had let John persuade me to leave my comfort zone.



Harcombe House, near Chudleigh



**A view of the beautiful grounds surrounding Harcombe House**

I joined about a dozen others at dinner that night , all men except for two of ‘us girls’ ! From the moment I sat down I laughed , something I had not done for months. The fire service banter and humour was just as it was all those years ago! Everyone was in the same boat, although all the others had been in accidents of various kinds. I retired to my room less anxious and more positive.

The next day I was seen by the Head Physiotherapist for assessment. She was amazed I could even stand let alone walk because my leg and buttock muscles were non-existent and all my weight fell directly through my diseased and injured knee joints. But she said there was HOPE and this was music to my ears. I quickly embraced the tough regime I was given because I had to get my life back to some normality. The programme started within an hour. Two 90 minute sessions in the gym and two 60 minute sessions in the hydrotherapy pool per day.

***...but she (the Head Physiotherapist) said there was HOPE and this was music to my ears....***

Just when I thought I could rest, I would be sent to a lecture or for psychotherapy. Both were fantastic—lots of information on pain control, nutrition and coping measures etc. We had to eat five meals a day full of protein and carbohydrates that I found hard but we were told it was necessary to give the energy for the exercises. A member of staff was usually present in the dining room to supervise us but I managed to pass food slyly to a young firefighter who was always ravenous.

Within 48 hours I had abandoned my stick and my pain was under control. I slept at nights which I hadn’t done for months. It was a miracle and I was eager to increase my exercise regime. I continued to improve throughout the week.

***Within 48 hours I had abandoned my walking stick and my pain was under control.....It was a miracle!***

## **LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE (continued)**

It was very hard work but the results are well worth it. The muscles are now fired up and working and I have joined a local gym to maintain the hard work afforded to me.

The social life in the evenings at Harcombe House was fun in the bar. Again, the banter and laughs second to none. I was made to feel human and worthy again.

Sadly there is no replacement surgery suitable for my specific problem, but I now have my life back on course and I'm gradually sending my disabled equipment back because I don't feel I need it. I know I have a disability but I can now cope with it. I can laugh and act a bit daft as I used to do.

**The social life in the evenings at Harcombe House was fun in the bar. Again, the banter and laughs were second to none.**



It costs our Charity £1700 per week per rehab patient. The very highest quality staff are employed to provide the care. Recuperation is also available at a very nominal charge.

The staff say the uptake could be improved **and I would urge anyone with a physical, or psychological problem, or just feeling “worn-out” to consider one of the Charity’s centres of excellence. You would not regret it.**

Thank you, John, for your gentle push. You and Harcombe House have improved my life by 80%. I continue to be monitored by Harcombe House staff and I may return there for a 'top-up' in the Spring. Bring it on, as they say.

**ANN FITZGERALD**



**Helpline 0800 389 8820**

**Lines open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm**

**Want to support the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY?**

**Here is how you can do it**

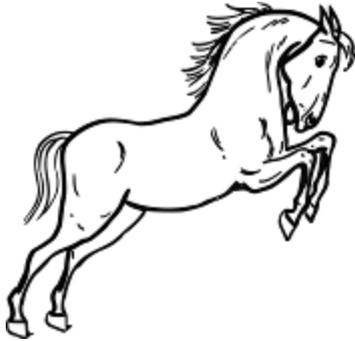
- **Join the ‘REGULAR GIVER SCHEME’**
- **Join the FIRE FIGHTERS LOTTERY**

**To obtain more details or the forms needed to join the above, please contact JOHN CRAIG**

**01380 726343**



## Social Events



Fine Dining at the  
**WHITE HORSE INN, Compton Bassett**

Lunch on Sunday 6th March 2016

Full details on website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk)

Or phone 01380 726343



**Rose & Crown**  
**Harnham, Salisbury**



**Three-Course Lunch 8th May 2016**

Dine in restaurant overlooking the river and with superb view of the  
Cathedral.

Booking form on website or with this newsletter



**Lunch & AGM**

**SUNDAY**

**26th June 2016**

**Cumberwell Park**

**Bradford on Avon**

**Booking form issued later**

**LADIES ONLY LUNCH**

**Saturday 22nd October 2016**

**The Lamb on the Strand, Seend**

**Watch for further details**





## The End of an Era

**On 31st March 2016 the Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service will cease to exist as it amalgamates with Dorset Fire & Rescue Service**

Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service came into being under the title Wiltshire Fire Brigade on 1st April 1948 when the fire service in the UK was denationalised. The brigade was one of the smallest in size but few would argue that it punched above its weight right throughout its proud history. Many innovations in the world of fire protection came from Wiltshire fire fighters. Just one example is illustrated right in the form of the first 2-hour duration compressed air breathing apparatus set ( twin grey cylinders) placed in service in the UK. This was a joint development with Draegar Safety.

Note to the American style helmet. Wiltshire Fire Brigade was the first in England and Wales to adopt this style of head protection, later copied by many other brigades.



In 1992 a team based on Trowbridge won the British **National Extrication Competition**, By showing their skill and teamwork in road collision rescues the Trowbridge not only became National Champions but also went to the USA to represent the UK in the International competition.

The Wiltshire team, competing against fire fighters from many nations, very commendably became runners-up to the winners. By honing their skills in this type of rescue work, the National Champions were an inspiration and encouragement to us all.

For 12 years Wiltshire Fire Brigade campaigned to promote the use of **domestic sprinklers** against a wall of antipathy and hostility starting in Whitehall. At last, the breakthrough came in 1999 and a social housing estate in Trowbridge that was being renovated was fitted with domestic sprinklers. This was the first such housing development in the UK to have sprinklers installed. The project caught the eye of the nation and brought into play broadcaster and safety campaigner, **Nick Ross** , who is pictured here at the launch of the Trowbridge (Studley Green) project with CFO John Craig.

From this modest start, progress has slowly been made until this year the Welsh Assembly passed into law a requirement for all new build residential accommodation in the principality to be fitted with sprinklers.

The campaigning for more sprinklers in housing has now been taken up by a number of fire related organisations and the example being set by Wales is being watched closely by many interested parties, but it started in Wiltshire.



## End of an Era (continued)

Wiltshire Fire Brigade reached out across the world.

Here are just a few examples of how we did it.



### GAMBIA

The Gambian High Commissioner visited Brigade HQ in 1987 to express appreciation for the Brigade donating a water tender appliance to Gambia. The machine had completed its service to Wiltshire and been taken out of service.

Group Captain Edwards (front row right) arranged for the appliance to be flown to Gambia from RAF Lyneham.

### UPPSALA , Sweden

For six years, Wiltshire Fire Brigade ran a series of exchange visits with Uppsala Fire Brigade to great mutual benefit and enjoyment. Here Wiltshire Fire Brigade officers emerge from a punishing practical training session about flashovers. Note that all had to wear Swedish protective clothing.



### ORADIA , Romania

Operation Romaid was a Wiltshire Fire Brigade led programme of giving practical aid and advice to the Romanian Fire Service in 1991. Here Clive Hall is helping a senior Romanian fire officer to try a British compressed air breathing apparatus. Not only were senior Romanian officers brought to Wiltshire but WFB personnel volunteered to deliver appliances and equipment to Oradia.



## End of an Era (continued)

### Memories of some “working jobs” from the brigade annals



#### RAF HULLAVINGTON

A fire started deliberately in January 1992 by two disgruntled airmen destroyed a former aircraft hangar used for the storage and packing of parachutes. Twenty pumps and crews could do nothing to prevent the loss because the fire was through the roof as first attendance crews approached. Just before the fire, the MoD had carried out a review of fire protection at the base with the aim of cost cutting and this resulted in a significant reduction in the resources on site to fight fires.

#### THE MALTINGS, SALISBURY

This 12-pump fire in August 1989 severely damaged a newly constructed block of shops with leased flats above. A fire investigation carried out by Station Officer Roger Tombs revealed non-compliance with building regulations that allowed the rapid unchecked fire spread at roof level. The owners of the property purchased a copy of the fire investigation report and used it as the basis of a successful law suit against the builders. The loss was estimated at £6m. The High Court accepted Station Officer Tombs as an expert witness.



#### HIGH STREET MARLBOROUGH

In June 1998 fire again struck at Marlborough High Street. The fire originated in an upper floor store above a butcher's shop. 12 pumps were ordered and although there was some horizontal spread the fire was quickly checked in the ancient roof spaces. The frequency with which severe fires happened in the centre of town led to the Brigade successfully urging the formation of a town Fire Safety Forum.



#### DISCLAIMER

THE BRANCH is published by the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association (WRFA). Views and opinions published within it do not necessarily accord with those of the WRFA, the Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority, the Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service or the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.

Website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk)

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