



# The Branch

September 2016



**Newsletter of the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association**

## EX-FIRE OFFICER'S CONVICTION QUASHED

Former Dorset fire officer, **DAVID BRYANT**, has been released from jail after his conviction was quashed by the Court of Appeal. He had already served over two years of an eight and a half year jail term. David, a highly respected former officer in charge of Christchurch Fire Station, was wrongly accused of sexual assault by a man that the appeal court accepted was a fantasist and a serial liar.

David's accuser falsely claimed that he had been assaulted by David and another firefighter who has since died. The assault was claimed to have taken place at Christchurch Fire Station in 1978 when the accuser was aged 14. David was found guilty of buggery by a majority verdict even though there was no corroborating evidence to support the accusation.

David's wife, Lynn, stood by him throughout and organised a team of lawyers, private investigators



**DAVID & LYNN BRYANT**

Photo by Russell Sach and reproduced by his kind permission  
First published in the *Daily Telegraph*

and friends to thoroughly investigate the case in the way the Dorset Constabulary failed to do. This in depth probe into the allegation soon revealed enough evidence for an appeal to be lodged and this recently resulted in David being released from prison and the case being quashed.

## NEW MEMBER! SANDY FRASER JOINS US

**ALEXANDER FRASER**, better known as 'Sandy', has been warmly welcomed into membership of our Association.

Sandy retired as a retained leading fireman at Ramsbury and then moved with his wife, Sue, to Lincolnshire.

Sandy and Sue are not enjoying good health at the moment but they report enjoying receiving news of happenings in Wiltshire through the WRFA. Sandy and Sue are sent very best wishes and kind regards.

## NOT JUST A 'DINING CLUB'

Just recently, it has come to notice that some members are viewing the WRFA as little more than a dining club and because they are either not able or unwilling to attend meals arranged by the Association, they see little value in remaining in membership. The Executive Committee feel the need to emphasise that arranging the occasional social event is but one way that a service is provided. The WRFA gives considerable welfare support to members on a 24/7 basis but because much of this is done in confidence, the majority of the membership are unaware of it.

# SUMMER DINNER PARTY

The Sign of the Angel, Laycock

10th August 2016



The fine dining dinner menu was sampled by WRFA members at the *Sign of the Angel*, Laycock. As always, we thoroughly enjoyed being in each other's company and the ambience was helped by being allowed to dine in this very old pub restaurant. We were only offered twenty one places due to the restricted size of the dining room and these were soon taken up.

Photos by John Craig

Unfortunately, the service was very slow and it appeared that a second party had been booked into another dining area for dinner and the kitchen and serving staff were evidently at full stretch trying to cope.



## People & Places

### CHARLIE BECOMES AN OCTOGENERIAN

Although this publication normally bans topless pictures on page 3, just this once an exception has been made.

Only those used to seeing **Charlie Kuhn** nearly naked will have recognised him instantly.

Here he is celebrating his 80th birthday while on holiday with his family in Gran Canaria.

After retiring from Wiltshire Fire Brigade after serving at Salisbury, Charlie pursued an interest in preserved steam railways and qualified as a signaller on the 'Watercress Line' in Hampshire. Congratulations, Charlie!



### BRUCE & JANET BRINGLOE

Bruce Bringloe recently had his heart pacemaker replaced. Unfortunately, the new one is not yet working properly and further medical investigations are in progress as we go to press.

Janet has had problems with her thyroid gland for which she is having treatment.

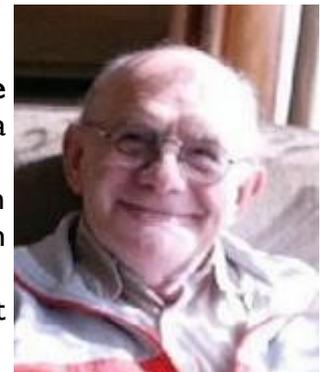
We wish them both a return to good health very soon.

### MAURICE ARMOUR

As we go to press it is with concern that news reached us that **Maurice Armour** is in Salisbury District Hospital. He is recovering slowly from a heart attack and a bleed on the brain.

Maurice served in the London Fire Brigade and we are proud to have him as a member of this Association. He now lives with his wife, Jean, in Warminster.

We send our best wishes to both Maurice and Jean and hope to hear that he is home soon.



### PETER MILLS

Peter Mills is not yet recovered from the surgery to remove a bowel abscess and he is still in considerable pain only made bearable by strong analgesics.

The wound made by the surgeon is proving very stubborn to heal and he needs a daily visit by the Community Nurse to redress it.

We wish for better news of Peter in the days and weeks ahead and hope to be able to make more positive reports about his recovery soon.

Despite his ill health, Peter continues working hard for the WRFA and the BFSAs.

## People & Places (continued)



### GRACE & JOE NASH

Joe and Grace Nash are 'on the mend' after needing some running repairs.

Grace was recently diagnosed with a tumour in the abdomen and surgery to remove it was carried out in Gloucestershire at the end of July. The good news is that the operation has been declared a complete success and the prognosis is very positive and encouraging.

Grace and Joe spent time with family in Warwickshire to allow recovery time for Grace. This not only was of great benefit to Grace but it also helped Joe who is in recovery himself from surgery on his knee and hip.

Joe and Grace live in Tetbury.

Keep up the good work, both of you!

### MALCOLM & SYLVIA EASTWOOD

Malcolm and Sylvia Eastwood are viewed as staunch friends of the WRFA and we are delighted to see them at many of our social functions.

Malcolm is continuing to make a good recovery from a major and very complicated heart operation carried out in Southampton.

Sylvia followed Malcolm's 'time on the table' with her own bout of surgery to chop off bunions on both feet. That surgery too has proved to be very successful.

Malcolm has recently been appointed to the voluntary post of chairman of the newly created Home Office Fire Pensions Board, a body trying to monitor the five different fire pension schemes now in operation in the UK. Despite being a man of some importance, as you can see from the photo Sylvia knows how to keep Malcolm in his place!



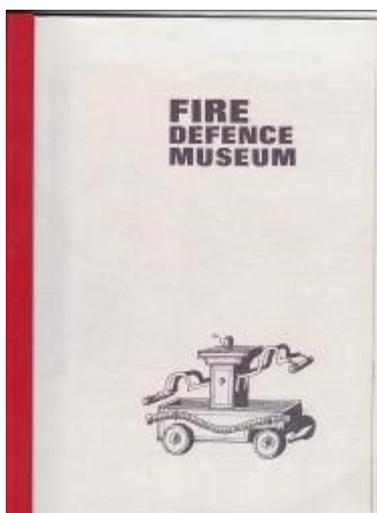
### MANOR HOUSE STABLE BLOCK

The old stable block attached to the Manor House, Potterne, was used to house the exhibits for the **Wiltshire Fire Defence Museum**.

In 1977 ambitious plans were made to convert the stable block into a proper museum that would on occasions be open for public viewing. However, the plans never came into full fruition although the block is still used to store the exhibits.

The future of these is yet to be determined.

See also pages 13 and 14 for more about The Manor House.



## BLUES & TWOS NEWS

### Update on the EMERGENCY SERVICES



### FBU CLAIM FIREFIGHTERS “ILL EQUIPPED” FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCY CALLS

There is growing concern within the **FIRE BRIGADES UNION** that the increasing use of fire crews to provide first responder service to 999 medical emergencies is bringing firefighters up against major trauma cases such as strokes for which they are not trained or equipped. Concerns are particularly acute in the south west of England where the South Western Ambulance Service is often relying upon the fire & rescue service to make a much faster response to 999 calls than a paramedic and/or ambulance crew can. The Chief Fire Officer of Cornwall, Paul Walker, has responded by issuing a statement claiming that his firefighters are trained “to provide an immediate lifesaving emergency medical response.”



### INDIAN RESTAURANT OWNER JAILED FOR BREACHES OF FIRE SAFETY LAW

The owner of a curry house on The Boulevard in Weston-super-Mare has been jailed for six months for failing to comply with fire safety laws. The Avon Fire & Rescue Service brought the prosecution after the

owner wilfully ignored two improvement notices. The offences related to lack of fire alarms, blocked exits and a failure to carry out fire risk assessments. In addition to the jail sentence, the owner was ordered to pay £1,500 court costs.

### PM GIVES ASSURANCES ON REFORM PLANS FOR THE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Prime Minister Theresa May made some comments at a speech recently delivered to a conference dealing with the reform of the fire & rescue service that were intended to allay some fears.

The major concern dealt with was the fear that the Government would launch into the reform programme without having thought it through properly and would, in effect, be making it up as they went along. The PM gave a certain tacit reassurance on this point.

The other big worry is that the reforms will be so radical and wide sweeping that the fire & rescue service will not be recognisable by



the time the reform programme is completed. This drawing together with the police service is feared will have a damaging effect upon the special relationship that the fire & rescue service enjoys with the public. The Prime Minister gave an assurance that the reforms will recognise and preserve the important distinction between operational policing and fire fighting.



## MONEY MATTERS



### PENSION SAVERS LOOK TO GOLD BULLION

Savers can now buy gold bullion direct from the **Royal Mint** to store in their pensions. From 2014, it has been possible for investors to include gold bullion within their **self-invested personal pensions (Sipps)** it is only very recently that purchase of gold bullion direct from the Royal Mint has been allowed. The Royal Mint will store your gold in a secure vault for annual fees equal to 1% of the value of your gold.

Gold doesn't tend to move in the same way as

stocks or property which makes it attractive as an investment in uncertain economic times. In the two weeks following the Brexit referendum vote the Royal Mint saw sales of 100g gold bars soar by seven times.

However, a word of caution is necessary because other than gold bullion, you cannot hold gold coins and other 'commemorative' gold products in your Sipp, and could involve you in a nasty tax penalty.



### PENSIONERS MISSING OUT ON STATE PENSION TOP UPS BECAUSE THEY CAN'T GET ONLINE

Very low take up rate for the new Government scheme to boost the pension pots of thousands of pensioners is being blamed on the fact that many of those eligible to claim don't have access to the internet. Their only alternative to making a claim online is to make a phone call at 12p per minute.

The scheme allows the chance to buy a state pension top-up amounting to a maximum of £25 per week in exchange for a lump sum payment.

**The scheme was launched in October 2015 and applies to men born before April 6th 1951 and women born before April 6th 1953.**

The scheme is twice as generous as even the best annuities that are available and ought to be attractive to elderly savers that can get very little return on their savings because of the extremely low interest rates.

To date less than 4,000 pensioners have signed up for the top-ups when the Government is expecting 132,500 people to take advantage of the scheme before it closes in April 2017.

### POLAND, THE PLACE TO VISIT WHEN £ IS WEAK

Post Office Travel Money are recommending Warsaw in Poland as the place where the £ stretches furthest since its value dipped against many foreign currencies. The £ gives best value in Warsaw for visits to live shows, galleries and museums when compared against 16 other international cultural hotspots.





## SOCIAL EVENTS



**A solid gold sovereign manufactured at the Royal Mint and on sale at the on-site shop there.**

### **THE ROYAL MINT**

A day trip to visit THE ROYAL MINT in Wales is under serious consideration.

The likely date will be during the autumn. Tickets for the actual tour of the Mint cost £11.50

There will be the cost of coach travel to be added but this could be subsidised.

The coach will arrive in time for lunch in the on-site restaurant and the tour of the mint factory will take place in the afternoon, lasting about 90 minutes

For more details or to record an interest in booking please contact JOHN CRAIG.  
01380 726343

Registering interest commits you to nothing



## **Ladies Lunch Lamb on the Strand BA14 6LL**



**Saturday October 22nd 2016  
1.00pm**

**Menu and Booking form with this newsletter or on  
Website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk)  
Social events page**

## Sustainability Review Leads To Changes in Our Charity



**Ken Seager QFSM**

The FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY has not been able to raise the funds it needs to maintain its resources and services to past levels and the Board of Trustees has led an in depth review of the Charity under the title 'Sustainability Review'.

The review is now over, consultation with staff affected by its recommendations have been consulted and the review is now in the early stages of being implemented.

Because the review has led to some staff redundancies, the Board of Trustees led by its Chairman, Ken Seager QFSM, has come in for some criticism and a request for answers to many questions. Ken Seager has responded to this by putting together a comprehensive document setting out the questions that have been directed at him and the answers to them. This document has been sent to all Company Members and Life Patrons.

**“ It (the review) was prompted by a lack of income certainty, but in the process it has caused us to think long and hard about the future services the FRS community will need from us and how best to deliver them” Ken Seager**

Four years ago the Board of Trustees acknowledged that an additional **£1m** per year would have to be raised to keep the Charity running. After four years when the Charity has run in deficit, it has become clear that action has to be taken to deal with the situation and the first step in doing so has been to carry out the sustainability review. Attempts to encourage an increase in income through fundraising have so far failed. Ken Seager has highlighted the concerns relating to the fact that those still serving in fire & rescue services have been turning their backs on the Regular Giving Scheme.

Put very simply, by making the therapy centres at Penrith and Littlehampton the main centres for delivery of rehabilitation therapy and using the Devon centre to provide all the recuperation services needed, some reorganisation of staff has been possible leading to savings. Harcombe House in Devon will still provide some rehabilitation therapy but this will not be its primary role. Initially, 49 notices of redundancy were issued to staff. After the completion of the consultation with those affected, 13 staff members took voluntary redundancy, 27 were successfully redeployed to new roles within the FFC, 7 were made redundant by having their contracts terminated.

### **QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE WRFA**

*Are you signed up to the Regular Giver Scheme?*

*If you have answered 'yes' to the above, when did you last review the amount that you have promised to give regularly?*

*Have you heard of the 'DONATE FOR A MATE' scheme.*



## THE MAYOR HELPING WITH FUND RAISING

The Mayor of Devizes, **Councillor Jane Burton**, has very kindly chosen the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY as one of three charities for which she will be fund raising through the Mayor's Appeal this year.

The Mayor is well acquainted with the work of the fire & rescue service because she has a son serving at Devizes Fire Station.

At the WRFA Christmas Festive Lunch arranged to take place on 20th December 2016 at The Bear Hotel, Devizes, the Mayor and her consort, Mr Richard Burton, will be the guests of honour.

The occasion will be used as an opportunity to fund raise for the Fire Fighters Charity.



**Jill Tolfrey**  
CEO of Fire Fighters  
Charity

### CEO OF FFC OFFERS TO MEET US

**Jill Tolfrey**, the Chief Executive of the Fire Fighters Charity has written to the WRFA Secretary/Treasurer, offering to come to Wiltshire to meet with the Executive Committee and any other members that would like to attend .

In the letter making the offer of the meeting, Jill expresses her appreciation for the support and understanding that the WRFA is giving as the trustees and senior managers get to grips with the challenging task of turning the sustainability review from words on paper into the changes that will strengthen and protect our Charity

Details of the when and where for the meeting with Jill are yet to be finalised but will be promulgated when arrangements are in place.

Jill is exceptionally busy and the fact that she is prepared to devote time to coming to see us speaks of the respect she has for the WRFA.

## HOW TO CONTACT OUR CHARITY FOR HELP

The first step in asking the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY for help is to call the **HELPLINE**

**0800 389 8820**

**Open Monday to Friday**

**9am to 5pm**





**BOOK  
SHELF**  
Sharing news & views  
about books



**JEWISH PARTICIPATION  
in the FIRE SERVICE  
in the SECOND WORLD WAR  
Last Voices**

**Author: Martin Sugarman**

I have read several books about the work of the UK fire service during World War II and I thought that I had covered all the angles until I came across Martin Sugarman's book. I never expected that there would be a history attached to firemen and firewomen that shared the same faith, in this case the Jewish faith.

The author has compiled a very impressive number of personal accounts of Jewish members of the AFS, NFS and local authority brigades before they were nationalised. Hours of work must have gone into researching this book and the work was certainly worthwhile because the book records the outstanding contribution made by those who recounted their experiences to the author.

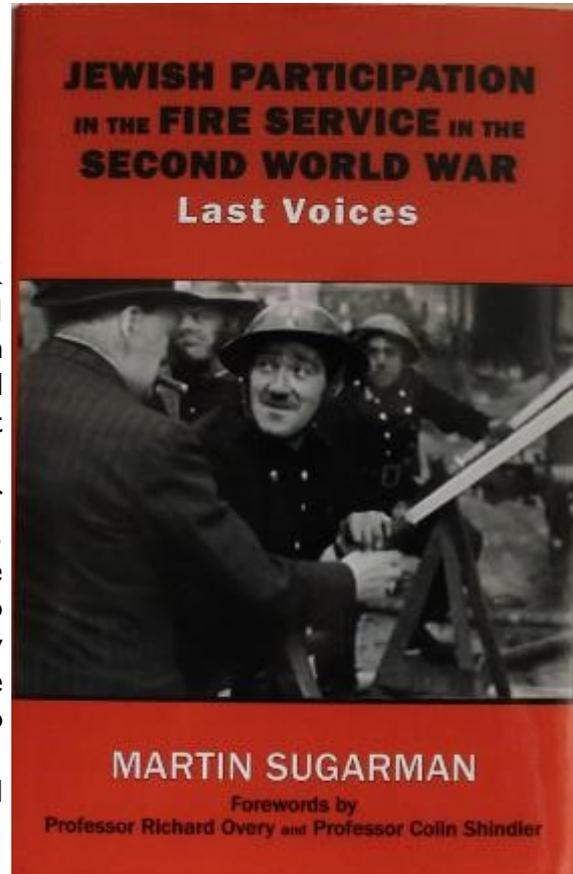
A significant number of the Jewish firemen and women were actually killed on active service and it is fitting that their sacrifice is recorded in the book .

There are very many acts of great bravery recorded in this book but the one that stood out to me was the story of **Fireman Harry Errington GC**. He was the only member of the London Fire Brigade to receive the George Cross during the war, the highest award for bravery that a civilian can receive.

Harry was Jewish and was born into a Yiddish-speaking , poor family who were Polish immigrants. The family name was originally Ehrengott but they changed it once they were settled in London. Harry was born into a tiny two-bedroom flat in Poland Street, Westminster in 1910. Like so many of his Jewish community, he suffered anti-Semitism frequently, particularly in matters of employment. Harry trained as an engraver after leaving school but then changed to become a tailor.

Three weeks before the outbreak of war, Harry joined the London AFS. He was serving at a garage in Rathbone Street close to his home in Poland Street . The garage was being used as a temporary fire station. On the night of 17th September 1940 when Harry and the rest of his crew were awaiting a call out in the basement of a school not far from the garage where their trailer pumps towed by taxis were kept. The school received a direct hit from a bomb and fires were started in addition to the partial collapse of the building. Harry received third degree burns and other injuries but single handed he rescued two of his colleagues that were trapped and severely injured. The book records Harry's gallantry in far more detail than I have space here. The book is worth reading for Harry's remarkable story alone.

**JOHN CRAIG**





**WRFA  
WALKING GROUP  
Out of County Walk  
2016**



On the 12th July 2016 the **Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Walking Group** went on their annual out of county trip to Worcestershire. On this occasion 11 members travelled to Bewdley near Kidderminster and enjoyed two days of splendid walking in and around the beautiful **Wyre Forest Nature Reserve** and the **Timpley Reservoir** on the River Severn near Upper Arley. On day one we travelled to Bewdley and visited the **Bewdley Museum and Tourist Information Centre** where refreshments were enjoyed in the splendid cafe prior to the first walk. The museum provides interest and learning opportunities for people of all ages and abilities through the varied displays and on site activities. Visitors can enjoy visual craft demonstrations, audio histories, hands-on activities, written histories, imaginatively displayed artefacts, tactile displays and sensory herb garden with water feature.

The first walk was **Dowles Brook Circular Walk**. The walk is 4.5 miles following the delightful Dowles Brook through the Wyre Forest National Nature Reserve, which is 550 hectares and one of the largest ancient oak woodlands in England. The weather wasn't too kind at the start of the walk with some heavy downpours of rain, but that didn't dampen spirits and the sun soon came out to make the journey very enjoyable.



**Information on the walk that starts on the old railway line.**

The old railway line now used for recreational access is all that remains of the once busy Bewdley to Wooferton line. The line closed in 1964 as part of the government's attempts to reduce the cost of running British Railways. When you are alongside the brook you may catch sight of a dipper, this type of stream or brook is ideal habitat for this small brown bird with a white front.

If you are lucky you may see the Dipper flying straight and fast just above the water or sitting on a rock where its constant dipping movement gives the impression of a bird incapable of sitting still!

**Knowles Mill** located near the end of the walk, is one of 6 mills that once operated along the Dowles Brook. You are welcome to cross over the bridge



and view the mill that is now in the care of the National Trust. We stopped for lunch on day one beside Dowles Brook. After the walk the group stayed at the Travel Lodge in Kidderminster and enjoyed a very nice evening at the Watermill public house.

**“After the walk we stayed at the Travel Lodge, Kidderminster and enjoyed a very nice evening at the Watermill public house”**



On day two we travelled to **Upper Ardley** for the 3.5 Upper Ardley Circular Walk. A circular walk taking in tranquil riverside walking, cooling tracks through ancient woodland with the opportunity to explore Britain’s industrial heritage in the form of the **Victoria Bridge** and the **Severn valley Steam Railway**. The walk begins at the walk information board next to the old ferry crossing.

Prior to the walk group members met a fellow walker who is a retired school teacher walking from John-o-Groats to Lands End. David Mulligan, from Bolton, is taking on the huge challenge to raise money for blind children, an issue close to his heart because he himself is registered blind. David set out from John-o-Groats on the northern coast of Scotland on June 17th and hopes to arrive in Lands End by the end of July. A quote from David’s blog on his website , **“It’s been another day of meeting nice people...In Arley apart from a delicious cake and tea , we had donations from such friendly people including the Wiltshire Fire Brigade (retired) walking group.”**



**DAVID MULLIGAN , third from the right**

The weather was excellent for the walk on the second day and the group travelled along the River Severn to the **Timperley Reservoir** and enjoyed a beautiful scenic view across the Severn Valley. Just after a pleasant stop for lunch at the reservoir, there was a great view of the steam train travelling on the **Severn Valley Railway**.

After the walk everyone enjoyed light refreshments at the **Upper Arley Tea Rooms** before the return trip home to Wiltshire.

The WRFA WALKING GROUP would like to register grateful thanks to the Dorset & Wiltshire FRS for allowing the use of the mini-bus for this trip. **PHIL APPLEBY**

# LOOKING BACK AT THE MANOR HOUSE , POTTERNE

A sign post (right) that no longer tells the truth.

The Manor House, Potterne will soon be up for sale and is no longer a fire brigade headquarters.



Purchased in 1948 by Wiltshire County Council to be the Chief Fire Officer's residence, the fire authority soon divided the building up into use as accommodation for other senior officers, a control room and general offices. It is believed the price paid for the property was £6,000.



Once a hive of activity, the 400 year old Manor House stands quiet and empty awaiting a buyer. A building that served the fire service in Wiltshire well as its headquarters from 1948 , this Grade II listed building is now to be put up for sale after a short time being downgraded from HQ to "support offices"



## THE MONKEY PUZZLE TREE

Just days before the Manor House ceased to be the Service HQ, a mighty gust of wind blew down the famous Chile Pine (Monkey Puzzle) tree that has stood in the garden behind the house for an estimated 250 years.

Many saw this arboreal calamity as a symbol of the happy and productive days at The Manor House coming to an end.

Who will buy the Manor House and to what use will it be put?



## POTTERNE CHURCH FETE

Always viewed as a focal part of village life, the Potterne Church Fete was often held at the Manor House by permission of the Chief Fire Officer.

The list of happy social occasions held at The Manor House during its use by the Wiltshire Fire Brigade is endless.

## Looking back on THE MANOR HOUSE (continued)



### JOHNNY MORRIS

The Manor House acted as venue to many very successful dinners to which celebrities were invited. Johnny Morris of TV 'Animal Magic' fame was one of our guests.



### BILL CHADWICK MBE

On the occasion of the WFB's 50th anniversary, former CFO Bill Chadwick presented a clock set into the brigade badge at The Manor House.



### 'THE CAKE LADY'

It became a tradition that any member of staff at The Manor House celebrating a birthday with an '0' in the number was baked a cake by Margaret Craig that was consumed at a staff coffee break.

### The Manor House 'Family'

Brigade HQ staff were joined by Fire Authority members for this group photograph in April 1998. The house was originally a family home and still retained a family atmosphere during its time of use as the Wiltshire Fire Brigade HQ.



### **DISCLAIMER**

None of the views and opinions published in this newsletter should be regarded as necessarily shared by the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service

EDITOR. John Craig contact via contact form on website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk)