



The Branch

December 2016



NEWSLETTER OF THE WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

“THANK YOU” CFO DARRAN GUNTER



On 1st December 2016 Darran Gunter retired as Chief Fire Officer of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. He had been in post since 1st April 2016 when the amalgamated service came into being. As the CFO (Designate) Darran Gunter had the responsibility for leading the planning work needed to bring the amalgamation of the two fire and rescue services together so that the public continued to receive the normal high quality of service. It is a testimony to his leadership skills and strategic planning competence that the first year of the new service has been so successful.

At a lunch hosted by the British Fire Services Association in Salisbury on 28th November 2016 the Chairman of the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association, Chris Wannell, presented Darran Gunter with a statuette as a thanks for the generous support that he has given to the work of our association. In making the presentation, our Chairman wished Darran and his wife, Alison, much happiness in retirement.

At the same lunch CFO Gunter was presented with the BFFSA Commendation Medal in recognition of his outstanding career and services rendered to the wider fire service community.



WRFA REMEMBRANCE

Devizes Town Hall 10th November 2016



Our Association marked Remembrance on 10th November 2016 in the way that has become our custom. In the evening members of the Association and guests gathered at the Assembly Room in Devizes Town Hall and after a delicious dinner served to us by Sweetpea Catering the Devizes Town Band entertained with a superb concert that included community singing of songs that linked back to the troops in the trenches of the First World War. The band was under the musical direction of **Sharon Lindo**. A special musical item was then introduced. As a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and because the Somme is in Picardy, the song *Roses of Picardy* was sung to us by **Matt Dauncey**. This time of remembrance is of particular importance to Matt because his maternal grandfather was killed in the blitz in London while serving as a fireman in the London AFS. He also had a great, great uncle who was killed at the Battle of the Somme. The Act of Remembrance brought the evening to a close. This was conducted by WRFA member, **Revd. Canon Henry Pearson**.



ABOUT THE NEW CHIEF



BEN ANSELL becomes Chief Fire Officer of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service on 1st December 2016. We wish him much success and happiness in his new post.

Ben was born in Fareham, Hampshire, and joined **Dorset Fire Brigade** in **1994** at the age of 22.

He quickly progressed through the junior officer posts while serving in the Poole and Dorset areas of the county.

He was seconded to the **Fire Service Inspectorate** and led a team that was reviewing seven fire & rescue services. He returned to Dorset as Assistant Chief Fire Officer and when the amalgamation with Wiltshire took place last April he was appointed as the **Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Director of Operations)**.

Ben's qualifications include a Post Graduate Certificate in Strategic Leadership from Warwick University. He obtained a BA (Hons) First Class Degree in Sport, Health and Physical Education from the University of Wales.

Ben is a keen sportsman and enjoys running, cycling and water sports, activities that he likes to share with his family.

Soccer is a particular interest for Ben and he is highly qualified as a coach. He has for a number of years coached a women's soccer team and under his management they have enjoyed considerable success.

The family home is in Broadstone near Poole where Ben lives with his wife, Kate and three children.

Ben is a very active and keen supporter of the **Fire Fighters Charity** and is involved both with fundraising for the charity and also assisting beneficiaries.

Professionally, Ben strongly supports the wider use of **fire sprinklers** and is in fact the strategic lead on fire sprinklers for the Chief Fire Officers Association.

Ben has written declaring his intention to continue the support for our Association that we have enjoyed from Darran Gunter.



New Members

REVD. DAVID WAKEFIELD

David Wakefield has been warmly welcomed into membership recently. David first joined Wiltshire Fire Brigade as a retained fireman at Malmesbury but he later transferred into the fulltime service and rose to the rank of station officer.

His strong Christian faith gradually called him into service of the Roman Catholic Church and he was ordained as a deacon at the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Devizes.

He resigned from the brigade to take up an appointment managing a Christian retreat establishment in Somerset which he has since left and returned to Devizes where he lives with his wife, Liz.

Just over a year ago, David was diagnosed with a tumour that had invaded his sinus passages and was life threatening. He opted for a very complex operation and was in theatre at John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford for 12 hours. He is now making a remarkable recovery, and the full story of his recovery will be published soon in THE BRANCH. He will be operated on again on 1st December to restore a tear duct. We wish David continuing progress in health.



JAMES ("JIM") GUY

Jim's face will be familiar to several WRFA members because he is a good supporter of WRFA social events that he says are excellent and he always enjoys them. The fact that he lives in Essex does not deter him from being a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of our association.

He was introduced to the WRFA by his long term mate and former RAF colleague, the late Keith Penfold. Both shared service together as members of crash rescue crews in the RAF.

Jim and his partner, Gloria, maintain a close and supportive friendship with Kath Penfold, one of our widow members who still lives in Cricklade. You are sure to see Jim, Gloria and Kath at future WRFA events. Do make them very welcome.

AN APPEAL

Recently a case came to light of a former retained member of WFB and his wife that needed a considerable amount of help.

When he retired from the service, it was, of course, open to him to join this Association. However, he chose not to do so.

I suspect that this is now a decision he regrets because friends have made a cry for help on their behalf that cannot be met because he is not a WRFA member and he is too ill to join now.

Our constitution is quite clear and specific. WRFA resources are for the support of members who have been properly joined and paid their subscriptions. Many members benefit from being in membership and have good reason to be grateful. The Fire Fighters Charity can often help but has limitations on its powers too as this man and his wife have found. The message is JOIN THE WRFA. There is often something to lose by not doing so.

OBITUARY

ERNEST "ERNIE" LEWIS



Ernie passed away at his home in Potterne on 30th October 2016. He was born on 12th June 1916. He had suffered for a short time from lung cancer.

Ernie had a distinguished war record. As a 19 year old soldier, he was in the 3rd Tank Regiment when the regiment landed on Omaha Beach in Normandy on D-Day 6th June 1944. Ernie was involved in fierce fighting as the British, Americans and Canadians fought their way deeper into occupied France, Belgium and then Germany. At one point, Nazi anti-tank guns knocked out all the Sherman tanks in Ernie's unit and he was the only survivor when his tank was hit. He was wounded but soon recovered enough to re-join the regiment as it fought on to the end of the war. Just before his death, Ernie was awarded the Legion d'Honneur by the French Government in recognition of him being one of the first troops to land in France on D-Day to begin the liberation of France.

In later years, Ernie set up home in Pewsey and joined the Wiltshire Fire Brigade as a retained fireman serving at Pewsey Fire Station. He served with such competence and dedication that he was eventually appointed as the station officer in charge of the station.

His first wife having predeceased him after a long illness, Ernie started a romance with a brigade officer, Margaret Quick, and they eventually married and enjoyed a happy marriage until Margaret passed away four years ago.

Ernie's funeral was a requiem mass at the Church of Our Lady The Immaculate Conception, Devizes. Our Association was well represented. David Wakefield, a WRFA member and deacon of the Roman Catholic Church, assisted the priest to conduct the mass. John Craig, Secretary & Treasurer of the WRFA read a passage from the Bible. Several other WRFA members attended. The wake was held at the George & Dragon, Potterne. Rest in peace, Ernie **JOHN CRAIG**



Social Events



Cllr. Joan Burton
Mayor of Devizes

CHRISTMAS FESTIVE LUNCH

20th December 2016

12.30pm for 1.00pm

Bear Hotel

Market Place Devizes

Three-courses for £17.50

Guest of Honour

The Mayor of Devizes

Raffle in aid of the

Fire Fighters Charity



Group Visit to

THE ROYAL MINT

Pontyclun, Wales

Negotiations are in progress to arrange for a group of WRFA members to visit.

The likely date is Saturday 18th March

Ticket price £11.50

Transport details when it is known how many tickets are ordered.

Watch website for more details & booking form



SPRING DINNER

A Three-Course Dinner

The likely venue is

STEAM MUSEUM

Kemble Drive, Swindon

29th April 2016

Full details not yet available

WATCH WEBSITE

For confirmation and booking form





Health News
updates on members
dealing with ill health



JOE NASH

Joe suffered a mild stroke recently. While at home with Grace he suddenly lost the ability to speak which was very alarming. Although this affliction proved to be temporary he was diagnosed as needing surgery to correct a blockage to the blood flow in his carotid artery in his neck. This was soon done in Gloucestershire and he is now rejoicing in feeling much better. He is full of praise for the quality of treatment that he has received under the NHS. Keep up the good work, Joe.

DAVID WARD

In November, Executive Committee member, David Ward, had a knee replacement operation. This was carried out at The Circle (Reading) Hospital. The operation was a success and Dave was soon home in Marlborough with Denise and beginning to make progress towards a recovery that will mean less pain and more mobility. However, It is doubtful that David will be fit enough to join in the Christmas WRFA celebrations. We wish you a rapid recovery, David



JERRY WILLMOTT

Our President, Jerry Willmott, has recently had a replacement knee joint replaced. The first artificial joint served him for several years but then wore out and needed replacement. This was done at The Circle (Bath) Hospital. Jerry has made very good progress since the operation although it required a lot of determination on his part to work through the pain aftermath of the surgery and do the necessary physiotherapy. Jerry hopes to be well enough to accompany Pat on a Christmas Cruise that will mean them missing our Christmas Lunch. Happy Christmas cruising, Jerry.

PETER WELLS

Peter was rushed into RUH, Bath in November suffering from a heart attack. Fortunately, investigations proved that it was not as serious as first feared and after a period of preparatory treatment, he was operated on to insert a stent at the back of his heart. This has restored the blood flow through a blocked blood vessel and he is now home and looking forward to celebrating Christmas with Pat and the family. However, he has been advised by his doctors to regard this frightening episode as a warning and review his life style so that a recurrence can be avoided. Very best wishes, Peter.





Health News (continued)



PETER MILLS

As we go to press, Peter is still in Woodpecker Ward at Great Western Hospital, Swindon. By the time you read this it is likely he will have been in GWH for 9 weeks. He has a number of ailments that are testing the skill and ingenuity of the medical teams responsible for his care.

We are all really concerned for Peter and also for Frances who has to carry the worry of not seeing any rapid improvement in Peter's health.

Our hope and prayers are that 2017 will be a much better year for Peter and his family. Happy Christmas and get well soon, Peter.

TONY ANDREWS

Tony is still suffering a lot of back pain and reports that it seems highly likely that he will eventually require surgery to deal with it.

For the moment, he is still undergoing tests and scans to help the consultant pinpoint the problem and give an accurate diagnosis. A recommendation for corrective treatment will no doubt follow this.

We appreciate the debilitating effect of the pain that Tony is suffering and sincerely hope that New Year brings him the relief from it that seems so long in coming. Get well soon, Tony, and happy Christmas.



REVD. DAVID WAKEFIELD

David went into John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford for surgery to restore a tear duct that was removed when he had surgery to remove a tumour from his skull a few months ago. The story of his remarkable recovery from both these operations is nothing short of inspirational because he was only months away from death if the 12 hour operation to remove the tumour had failed.

The full story of David's recovery, that he describes as being a miracle, can be read in the next edition of *THE BRANCH*.

David, we rejoice with you in the amazing recovery that you are making. Happy Christmas!

SLIPPY SLIPPERS HAZARD

The wife of a WRFA member recently fell down stairs. She could easily have sustained injuries confining her to a wheelchair for the rest of her life or even worse consequences. Fortunately, she got away with just bruising and shock. The cause of the fall was the carpet slippers she was wearing that had no grip left on the soles. Pensioners are vulnerable to accidents caused by worn or ill fitting slippers. If you are in this situation, why not ask Santa Claus to bring you a new and safer pair this Christmas?



Is it time for new slippers ?



**BLUES & TWOS
NEWS**
About the Emergency
Services



HOME OFFICE INQUIRY

The Home Office has just announced its intention to investigate how the Avon Fire & Rescue Service is being managed after persistent allegations have

reached Whitehall. Some of the allegations are of a personal nature against the Chief Fire Officer, Kevin Pearson. Others are more general and relate to such matters as how diversity policy is implemented. The inquiry will no doubt also probe into the departure from Avon FRS in recent times of three principal officers under what are being described as “unusual circumstances.” Kevin Pearson was appointed as CFO in 2001. He joined the service in Cleveland in 1980.



CFO Pearson

BFSA MEDAL PRESENTATIONS



LEFT TO RIGHT : John Craig (Vice President BFSA) , CFO Darran Gunter, Malcolm Eastwood, Frank Turner (Chairman, BFSA) , Canon Woodhouse (BFSA Chaplain)

A luncheon was held on 28th November 2016 at the Rose & Crown Hotel, Salisbury to facilitate the presentation of medals awarded by the **British Fire Services Association**. The recipients of the **BFSA Commendation Medal** were **CFO Darran Gunter, Malcolm Eastwood (a former CFO of Hampshire)**. **Canon Thomas Woodhouse, Chaplain to the BFSA**, was awarded the **20years long service Silver Medal**. The medals were presented by Frank Turner, Chairman of the Governing Council of the BFSA. Photo by **Graham Howgate**



Dr Jill Tolfrey being welcomed by our Chairman, Chris Wannell.



Andrew Lynch

At the AGM of the Fire Fighters Charity on 10th November 2016 **Ken Seager** stood down after completing 5 years of successful service as Chairman of Trustees. He has been succeeded by **Andrew Lynch** who has distinguished himself as an editor of fire service publications throughout the world fire community. Ken handed over the Chair after beginning the task of leading the implementation of the Sustainability Review.



Ken Seager

On 2nd November, the WRFA Executive Committee members were delighted to host a visit from **Dr Jill Tolfrey**, Chief Executive Officer of the Fire Fighters Charity. The meeting was held at the Rose & Crown Hotel in Salisbury. Dr Tolfrey gave a very impressive and lucid PowerPoint presentation on the reasons behind the Sustainability Review, its impact of beneficiaries and staff, and the challenges facing the Charity in the immediate future. The Executive Committee found this information most helpful and reassuring.

However, Dr Tolfrey made it perfectly clear that fundraising has to be improved if the Charity is to survive without drawing on investments to balance the books. The review has meant some staff redundancies and cost trimming in many other areas. It is now up to the fire community to address the need to increase the income of the Charity.

THE REGULAR GIVER SCHEME

Because about 10,000 fulltime posts have been taken out of the UK FRS by the need to make cuts across all fire and rescue services, the Charity has lost a lot of income because those leaving were signed up to the Regular Giver Scheme. **Our hope is that eventually ALL MEMBERS OF THE WRFA will commit to being members of the Regular Giver Scheme.** Are you already signed up and if so, when did you last review the amount you donate? If you are not yet signed up please do it NOW.



Book Shelf Member's reviews of books



LABRADOR

The Story of the World's Favourite Dog

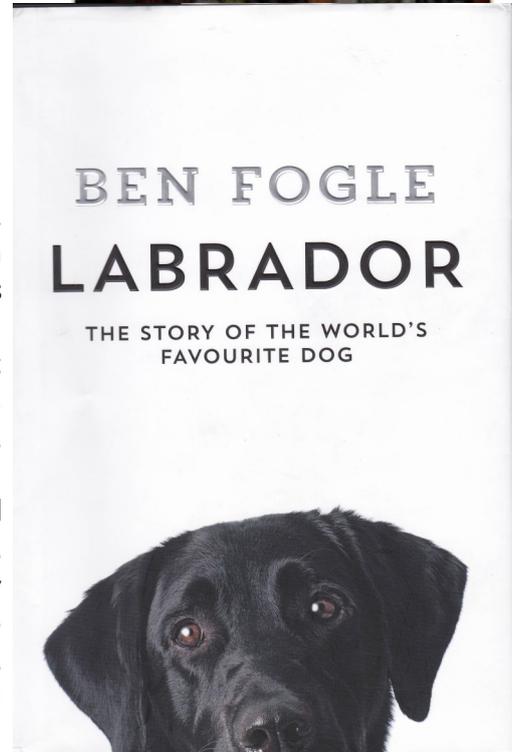
Author : Ben Fogle

Reviewer : Ann Fitzgerald

Ben Fogle is a presenter, writer, adventurer and dog lover. His passion for animals and their conservation has taken him all over the world and he is much renowned for his work.

Labradors are the most popular breed of dog worldwide; fantastic companions, hunters, trackers, retrievers, guides and rescuers. The complete package whether black, golden or chocolate brown.

Ben goes in search of what makes Labradors so special and interweaves his own story of his beloved black Labrador, Inca, into the history of this very special creature. I defy anyone to get past the first three pages without a tear to their eye. Mine, I freely admit, was a full blown weep, demolishing Mark's and Spencer's waterproof mascara and half a box of tissues!



Ben visits Canada and discovers the most amazing tales of the early Labradors' antics and surprising facts that we never imagined. He goes on to explain how they were accepted into the Kennel Club GB after many decades of proving their worth. I found this section of the book a bit tedious but a necessary evil if the complete history of the breed was to be understood.



BEN FOGLE

The Labrador has morphed from the fisherman's friend of a century ago in Canada into the dependable and 'beddable' creatures they are today.

Ben captures so well that true love between man and dog which I am sure many of us have cherished. They offer a tonic to the many ills of the world. We have much to learn from the this loyal, kind, happy and optimistic being.

This is but a précis of a lovely book that truly 'lifts the soul'. Do give it a go !

ANN FITZGERALD

Owner of the most nose, greedy, lazy, naughty, loving and very enthusiastic chocolate labrador.

Ben Fogle's book is published by William Collins

ISBN 978-0-00-754901-6

HAVE YOU READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

If you have and you would like to share your opinion of a book you have just read, please submit your review to the editor of **THE BRANCH**, John Craig.

Please include in your review details of the publisher and the ISBN number.

BOOK SHELF is awaiting your contribution!

A FIRST RATE LADDER DOG! (true story)

Firefighters often come into contact with pets and other animals in the course of their duties. Many animals owe their lives to the valiant work of the fire and rescue service.

During World War II members of the National Fire Service (NFS) in London frequently found dogs and cats that had been separated from their homes and owners by enemy action. Sometimes the pet's owners were injured or killed by bombing and the dog or cat had lost both their home and the care of their owner. In such circumstances, it became common for the NFS crews to take the dog or cat back to the fire station to be cared for until their owner could claim them or the pet could be rehomed. Although this was an entirely unofficial service to the public, anyone that had lost a dog or cat during a raid would usually make the fire station their first port of



A wire haired terrier

call in the hope of finding their pet there under the care of the NFS men and women.

A wire haired terrier called 'Mick' joined the NFS under such circumstances. His owners were both killed in an air raid and the NFS crew found the traumatised dog and took him into their care.

Mick took to life on the fire station immediately and soon made himself very popular with the station personnel. He took a great interest in all that went on and he particularly enjoyed watching the fire crews carrying out their daily training drills in the station drill yard.

Mick was fascinated by ladders. To the great amusement of his human colleagues, Mick soon learnt to climb ladders.

He loved to hook his front paws over the round above him and pull himself up with great ease and competence. In fact, he did become something of a nuisance by getting in the way of the firemen trying to carry out fire fighting or rescue evolutions in strict compliance with the Fire Service Drill Book. After one occasion when Mick's fireman owner had been forced to carry him down under his arm from a flat roof to which he had ascended by ladder, the fire crews discussed whether Mick could be taught to be carried down on a fireman's back.

There followed an experiment to see if Mick would indeed take to being carried down a ladder from height perched on a fireman's back. To the surprise and delight of the fire crew Mick quickly caught on to what was expected of him and he loved being involved in carry down drills from then on.

The sight of a dog participating in fire brigade ladder and rescue work in this way was so amusing and unusual that the station personnel, most of whom were members of the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) at the outbreak of war, thought they could enlist Mick's help in raising money for charity.

From then on, whenever the public were invited to the fire station for a display, money was charged to see Mick the Fire Dog climbing a ladder and then being 'rescued' by the carry down on a fireman's back. The cash raised all went to charity.

After the war when Mick's owner was demobbed from the NFS and took up his peacetime life again, Mick went with him and lived out many more years of happiness in 'retirement' from his fire service career.



“SMOKEYPAWS”

The not-for-profit organisation providing the fire & rescue service with oxygen masks designed for animals

It is a relatively common occurrence for household pets such as dogs and cats to be involved in a fire that breaks out in the house or flat where they live. Most members of the WRFA will have had experience of rescuing pets from fires and then trying to revive them with oxygen either from a medical cylinder or from the cylinder on a Proto or Salvus breathing apparatus set. The problem was always how to improvise a mask or oxygen tent using only the kit available . Good work was done on many



occasions but not all animals could be resuscitated. It was believed that given properly designed equipment to administer oxygen to a pet there was every chance that more could be resuscitated.

In the USA a movement started to design and manufacture oxygen masks that could be used by fire fighters to administer oxygen to cats and dogs suffering from smoke inhalation.

Now, in the UK a not-for-profit organisation has been created to emulate what is happening in America.

The name of the organisation is ‘Smokeypaws’ and it has the backing of animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA .

A number of fire & rescue services have begun to equip fire engines with these animal friendly masks. Kent FRS was one of the first to do this but others

are following including Dorset & Wiltshire FRS, Avon FRS and Devon and Somerset FRS.

Smokeypaws have a website www.smokeypaws.co.uk . From that website information is available on how funds are raised to pay for the equipment supplied to fire & rescue services. It is possible to donate and nominate the particular fire station that you wish to use the mask(s) for which your donation has paid.



Those Were The Days



Those were the days when their helmets were brass,
Leather boots polished to shine like black glass,
To filter out smoke, fumes and choking thick ash,
A full set of whiskers and a jaunty moustache.

The fire horses pulled steamers and also hose carts,
Their hard work and loyalty won many men's hearts;
Those horses knew they must make ground quicker,
When on yonder skyline they saw bright flames flicker.

The pumps needed steam to throw out jets of power,
That could reach the top of a lofty church tower,
And hook ladders were used by men with no fear,
Their skill made the watching crowds gasp and then cheer.

The young, single ladies who sort after a 'hubby'
Were slim as a ceiling hook or often more chubby,
All considered themselves blessed if they lured down the aisle
A brass helmeted hero with the fire brigade style.

But sadly those lovely wives would widows become
If when doing their duty their men had to succumb
To the flames, toxic smoke or a falling hot wall,
Those brave men had lived well and then sacrificed all.

Now gone are brass helmets, horses and steamers,
But we still hold them dear, us silly old dreamers,
So let's not forget how those firemen long past
Made their mark on our history that I so want to last.

JOHN CRAIG

DISCLAIMER

Any views and opinions published in this document are not necessarily shared by the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service or the Fire Authority

*This publication is produced by the WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION
www.wrfa.org.uk.*