



# The Branch

Newsletter of the  
**WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

April  
2017

## **BED BLOCKING & NHS IN CRISIS** **WRFA EXPRESSES CONCERNS TO THOSE IN POWER**



**Baroness Scott OBE**

So many WRFA members and their close relatives have recently been caught up in the serious problems relating to the care of the elderly and treatment available from the NHS that a letter has been sent to all Wiltshire Members of Parliament and also to the Leader of Wiltshire Council, Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE.

The decision to send this letter expressing concern was taken at the February meeting of the WRFA Executive Committee. The wording of the letter was approved by all EC members with the exception of the Chief Fire Officer because it was



**Claire Perry MP**

agreed that it would be inappropriate for anyone holding his office to align themselves with criticism of those in power.

The letter emphasised to the Baroness and MP that the frequency with which our members were finding the service they needed from either the Wiltshire Council and/or the NHS fell well short of being acceptable. The pressures that were now manifesting themselves in the NHS and the care services for the elderly were entirely predictable because it has been known for a considerable time that longevity is increasing. There are therefore an increased number of elderly people requiring health care and the support of social services. Yet, both the NHS and the Wiltshire Council appear to have lacked the foresight and common sense to plan for what everyone knew was coming.

Baroness Scott was very quick to reply by letter. Her reply mentions that the council's *Better Care Plan* was very successful in reducing cases of bed blocking across all three acute hospitals in 2015/16. However, the Council Leader goes on to admit that this situation has recently deteriorated back to the bed blocking levels experienced in 2014/15. Baroness Scott claims that "the Council continues to work closely with its NHS partners through our Health and Wellbeing Board to improve the whole system of care..".

In her reply dated 24th February, Claire Perry MP begins with the words, "I strongly believe that it is important to ensure that as people get older they are able to receive the dignified care they deserve. Therefore I support my Government's commitment to make sure this is a country that works for everyone and that the most vulnerable in society can access the support they need." The letter goes on to mention the funding increase that the Government has already made available to local authorities to deal with the demands of care in the community and the additional funding in the pipeline. Altogether, Claire Perry claims that this makes a national increase in funding of £900m over the next two years.

The only other MP to reply is Andrew Murrison MP. He sent an email drawing attention to a statement he made last November in which he calls for the NHS to be given more money.

## APRIL 1st Annual Subscriptions Due

**Just a friendly reminder that annual subscriptions to our Association fall due on 1st April.**

If you have not made arrangements to pay by bank standing order or through the automatic deduction from the Fire Pension paid in April, please send your cheque made out to *Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association* to the Treasurer, John Craig, 12a Gaisford Chase, WORTON, Devizes SN10 5RX.

You may also use the BACS system to pay online and the account details you will need to do this are:

Account Name: *Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Assocn.*

Sort Code : 77-50-05

Account Number : 28196668



### Government Commissions Full Statutory Inspection of AVON FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

For the first time ever the Home Office has commissioned a full statutory inspection of a fire authority. The fire authority under scrutiny is **Avon Fire & Rescue**. The inspection has been ordered by the Minister for Policing & Fire Service, Brandon Lewis. The action is in response to what the Home Office describes as 'serious wide-ranging allegations over the authority's governance in relation to spending, contracts, complaints, discipline and culture'.



**Kevin Pearson**  
CFO of Avon Fire & Rescue

The Minister has justified setting up the investigation by explaining that the allegations made known to him were serious and persistent and the Fire Authority chose not to carry out its own full investigation. The inspection team is led by Dr Craig Baker. It is expected that his team will require at least three months to produce a report with recommendations.

### TERRORIST ATTACK

The members of this association wish to express sympathy to those bereaved by the terrorist attack upon Westminster and for those injured by it.

Our hearts go out to all caught up in this heinous crime at the same time as we salute all members of the emergency services who acted in the highest traditions of their respective services.

Special thoughts are for PC Keith Palmer who lost his life guarding a very vulnerable entrance to Parliament when unarmed.



## People & Places

### Len & Yve make friends with “Al. E. Gator”



Yve and Len Benwell recently spent a holiday in Sri Lanka and while there saw a lot of the native wildlife. They made friends with a baby alligator known to all by his name, “Al. E. Gator” and Al evidently found meeting the couple highly amusing judging by the way he can be seen laughing in the photos above.



### DEATH OF LYNN BRYANT

Only six months after her husband, David, was released from prison after having his conviction quashed, very sadly Lynn Bryant has passed away. David is a retired fire officer who served at Christchurch Fire Station. He was falsely accused and convicted of a sexual assault alleged to have taken place upon a man on the fire station. Lynn organised private detectives and friends to carry out a much more thorough investigation than that done by the Dorset Constabulary and the results when placed before the court convinced the judge that David was innocent. Dorset Police are refusing to apologise for the part they played in sending David to prison for something that he hadn't done.

### WRFA VISIT TO ROYAL MINT

On 16th March a party of 14 from the WRFA enjoyed what is called **The Royal Mint Experience**.

The factory is well experienced in how to attract visitors and provide them with a very enjoyable short visit .

The Royal Mint is in South Wales at Pontyclun, not far from Cardiff.

There is a cafe open for visitors to use and our party took refreshment there before starting on the 90 minute factory tour at 1.30pm.

Not only were the visitors shown the new coins being minted but they were each allowed to actually make their own coin. A visit that will be repeated later in the year.



A new one pound coin



**HEALTH  
MATTERS**  
New of those who are  
or have been unwell



**CARING FOR THE ELDERLY**



On the front page of this newsletter is a report about the letter written by this Association to all Wiltshire MPs and to the Leader of Wiltshire Council. The full text of replies from Baroness Scott of Bybrook and Claire Perry MP has now been published on our website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk). The only other MP to respond was Dr Andrew Murrison who by email referred to a statement he made last November that contained his view that the triple lock system for calculating rises in state pension should be stopped and the money saved handed to the NHS.

**KEN BEARD MBE**

Ken is still in SDH, Odstock at the time of writing. He is in Pembroke Ward. At 92 years of age he is very frail and almost totally blind. He finds the days rather long and so appreciates anyone visiting him for a chat that can spare the time. Maurice Betteridge has been keeping contact through regular visits to see Ken which is deeply appreciated.

**STOP PRESS ; just as this edition of THE BRANCH went to press the news broke that very sadly Ken passed away at 10.30pm on 26th March. Funeral details will follow.**



**BOB ("DAN") GURNEY**

Over the winter period Dan had two periods in Great Western Hospital having contracted sepsis after surgery just before Christmas. He was eventually discharged from hospital but continued to feel unwell. A further visit to hospital to see a consultant in March has resulted in him being told that he needs another operation but this cannot be performed for another three months. We wish Dan and Janet well and continue to pledge the support of the WRFA to see them through this stressful time.

**BRUCE BRINGLOE**

Bruce has a number of ailments with which he is coping . One of these is a hernia and he is joining the queue of WRFA members that are waiting for surgical treatment . We wish Bruce a speedy and full recovery from the operation when it does eventually take place. Janet has jokingly put out an appeal for a roll of Gaffa tape to hold Bruce together.



## Health Matters (continued)



### TONY ANDREWS

Tony has at last seen a consultant about his severe back pain. The diagnosis given means he needs a complex operation on his spine but under the NHS he has been offered no treatment for at least nine months.

So, Tony becomes yet another WRFA member joining the queue of those needing urgent surgical treatment but not finding it available unless he resorts to treatment outside the NHS.

We know how painful and disabling is the condition that Tony has and we wish him a speedy resolution to the ill health.

### MAUREEN PERRY

Maureen reports that she is slowly coming to terms with having lost John last year and also her ankle injury is gradually mending with the aid of physiotherapy.

Maureen has very wisely availed herself of the services of the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY and this has been very helpful to her.

Maureen has family in Cornwall and has been spending some time with them as she makes her way along the path to recover. We send our best wishes to Maureen.



### DAVID HANN

We are very sorry to learn that David Hann, who lives in Wilton, is very seriously ill. We are grateful to Glenn Foreman for keeping us informed and we sincerely wish David well. It is understood that David is not in hospital at the moment but is home receiving palliative care.

### ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM (AAA)

We are mourning the loss of our good friend, fellow WRFA member, Des Fellenor (see page 7). His death is a stark reminder to those of us that have not yet availed ourselves of the AAA screening on offer free from the NHS. Aneurysm means a dangerous swelling and weakness in the wall of the major blood vessel called the aorta. If an aneurysm bursts it usually has

fatal results as was the case for poor Des.

Men over 65 are particularly known to be in the "at risk" age group for AAA. Therefore all NHS GPs are able to arrange for a patient falling within this age range to be screened for AAA.

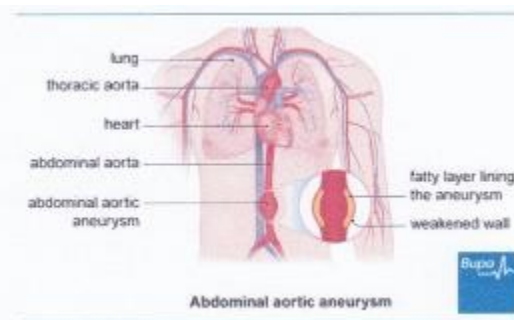
The screening is painless and involves an ultra sound scan being carried out on the abdomen. It usually only takes about 10 minutes. The technician will give the results to the man being scanned immediately and will also inform the GP. What could be more simple?

If your aorta is normal you will never need to be rescanned.

If you have a small to medium sized aneurysm you will be invited back for regular monitoring of its size.

If the scan reveals a large aneurysm that is dangerous you will be referred for surgical repair of the aorta and this will usually be done as a matter of urgency.

Get your scan done NOW, unless you have already had it done.



## SOCIAL EVENTS



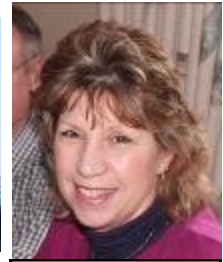
Cakes , tea and good company

### CREAM TEA TIME

Win Huggett and Louise Fielding are two Central Area representatives on the Executive Committee. Instead of carrying out the Christmas visits to the WRFA widows in their area they tried an experiment last Christmas and invited their ladies to a cream



Win



Louise

tea at the Lowden Garden Centre . This proved to be a great success and was soon followed by another. Win and Louise intend running a few of these get-togethers with cake and tea throughout each year. They are primarily intended for ladies but any man that would like to attend will be made welcome. Interested? Watch for the next one being advertised.



**Saturday 29th April 2017**  
**7.00pm**

### SPRING DINNER

Replaces the STEAM event

**Foxham Inn**

**Near Chippenham**

**Members and spouses/partners £22.00**

Booking forms on the website or in hard copy with this edition

## WRFA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & SUNDAY LUNCH

**Sunday 4th June 2017**

**Rose & Crown Hotel, Salisbury**

**AGM at 11.00am in Cathedral Suite**

**Lunch at 1.00pm in the Orangery**

**Three-courses**

**Members and spouses/partners £22.00**

**Non-member guests £29.95**



# OBITUARY



## DESMOND (DES) JOHN FELLEENOR 1932 - 2017

Des died in an ambulance taking him to hospital on 16th February. He died from a burst aorta in his abdomen.

Des was born in 1932. He took up several types of employment on leaving school before doing National Service in the Army from 1950 to 1952. He joined the Territorial Army after completing his national Service. This brought him a meeting with Vivien whilst he was acting as a driving instructor. They were married in 1959.

In 1962, Des joined the Ministry of Defence Fire Service at Colerne. When that base closed he was transferred into the Air Force department Fire Service and was posted to RAF Lyneham. Over many years he served out detached duties at over twenty other RAF stations and also served on the Queen's Flight.

In parallel with his fulltime fire service duties for the RAF, he joined the Wiltshire Fire Brigade at Chippenham as a retained fireman. In 1982, Des was honoured with the award of the Fire Brigade Long Service & Good Conduct Medal. On reaching the age of 60, Des retired from the Defence Fire Service.

After retiring, Des put his driving skills and experience to good use by being a voluntary driver for the local hospitals conveying patients to and from their hospital appointments. He also drove vehicles for the local Moonrakers Club. He took up employment for a coach firm and drove as far as Scotland as well as doing some of the local school runs.

Des enjoyed playing skittles and played a match on only the Monday before he died.

Des was a stalwart member of the WRFA and attended many social events and gave the Association his enthusiastic support whenever he could. We shall miss him very much.

He is survived by his wife Vivien, son Lindsay and grandchildren Ned and Edie.

Rest in peace, Des.

### THANK YOU

Des Fellenor's funeral service was held at West Wiltshire Crematorium, Semington on 1st March.

Vivien Fellenor has asked that her thanks be published in this newsletter for all the messages of sympathy and support that she received when the news of Des's passing became known. The kindness shown meant a lot to her.



## REFORM OF THE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Having made it abundantly clear in recent statements, both written and oral, that the 'Fire Minister', Brandan Lewis MP, is determined to either lead or force the fire & rescue service down a path leading to radical change the Home Office has now set out its structure for delivering this in a letter dated 20th February, 2017.

The letter was addressed to **all Fire Authority Chairs, All Chief Fire Officers, Representative Organisations and Fire Sector Bodies**. The WRFA has acquired a copy of this very important letter. The full text of the letter has been posted on our website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk).

The comments made by the minister seem to project his feeling of frustration that reforms are happening too slowly in the Service and he is determined to speed this up.



Brandan Lewis MP

The letter is headed **EQUIPPING OURSELVES TO DELIVER FIRE REFORM**. The opening paragraph reads as follows:

*Home Office Ministers have set out a fire reform programme which will boost efficiency and collaboration; transparency and accountability; and diversity, flexibility and professionalisation of the workforce. To deliver this ambition, we are working with the sector to transform the fire landscape, including the creation of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), an independent inspection regime and a professional standards body. This letter sets out the organisational changes within the Home Office to reflect the creation of these new institutions and to better equip us to support reform in the fire sector.*

The letter goes on to detail the changes in the internal structure of the Home Office and these clearly reflect the Government's wish to see policing and fire & rescue drawn closely together.

A new joint directorate has come into being from 13th March 2017 under the title **Home Office Police & Fire Directorate**.

The new Directorate will be headed by a civil servant, David Lamberti.



Peter Holland

Mr Peter Holland, who has held the post of Her Majesty's Chief Fire & Rescue Adviser for several years, will see his job disappear under the restructuring. For a few months he will stay at the Home Office under the title of Strategic Fire & Rescue Adviser before he finally leaves the Home Office on 31st October 2017.

The advisory role he has played we are informed by the above mentioned letter will be taken over by the National Fire Chiefs Council, a soon to be created independent inspection body. There will also be a new professional standards body.

Of course, many of the retired members of the FRS will be intrigued by the mention of the creation of an independent inspection regime and a professional standards body because we did have these until the Government abolished the Fire Service Inspectorate and the Fire Service Examinations Board.

It will be very interesting to see how the two new bodies differ from the defunct Fire Service Inspectorate (FSI) and the Fire Service Examinations Board (FSEB). I can only comment as an outside observer on how the FSI functioned but I was proud to make a contribution to the work of the FSEB, an organisation that I saw with my own eyes doing an outstanding job in setting and maintaining high standards of professionalism throughout the UK. I was one of many that said at the time the FSEB was abolished that Whitehall had made a big mistake. It appears history has proved this to be correct. With the incidence of fires and also fire deaths increasing, it is to be hoped that the new Directorate will give this some priority as well as matters such as equality and diversity. **JOHN CRAIG**



## BATTLE TO SAVE STUDLEY GREEN SPRINKLERS ENDS IN VICTORY



For 12 years JOHN CRAIG campaigned for sprinkler systems to become a recognised part of providing protection from fire in domestic property in the UK. His was a voice in the wilderness until in 1999 the breakthrough occurred when West Wilts District Council (now defunct) listened and acted upon advice to fit domestic sprinklers to a 112 houses they rented at Studley Green in Trowbridge. This became **the first housing estate in Europe to have the benefit of fire sprinklers in addition to smoke alarms**. This pioneering venture captured widespread attention . Even the Home Office was forced , reluctantly, to take notice. **Nick Ross**, a popular TV character well known for his work

in crime prevention projects was immediately enthused by the Studley Green development and threw his weight and expertise at the disposal of the brigade and the industry. Lo and behold, even the other chief fire officers in the UK woke up and began to question whether Wiltshire Fire Brigade, led by this crazy crank of a CFO, might possibly be onto something!

So it is that since Studley Green, slow but sure progress was made in convincing many that sprinklers in places where people had their dwelling was common sense and economic sense at that. The Chief Fire Officers Association has come down off the fence and supports the wider use of sprinklers even though it still irritates the Home Office at Whitehall who cling by their civil service finger nails to the policy that smoke alarms are sufficient protection providing they are hard wired versions. But only recently, Derbyshire FRS has recently bowled the Home Office a 'curved ball' by using a house fire that claimed the lives of six children who slept through the bleeps of the smoke alarm and will never awake. Had sprinklers been fitted and operative those children would be alive today. Alarms with a recorded voice rather than bleep seem likely.

From January this year the Welsh Assembly passed legislation making it mandatory to fit sprinklers to new dwellings or conversions but the Home Office continues to cling to a flawed policy !

However, much alarm and despondency was rife when a few weeks ago the Selwood Housing Association that now owns and manages Studley Green announce the bizarre decision that it was going to rip out the fire sprinklers at Studley Green and fall back on smoke alarms alone. This despite all the evidence proving that to be a wrong decision including the fact that three fires have happened at Studley Green and the sprinklers have lived up to expectations. At least two lives saved and property damage kept to a minimum. When the arguments for removing the sprinklers was examined closely it wasn't hard to see that the landlords were allowing themselves to be misled by inaccurate advice and information.



Seth Wye

The industry stepped in and produced for use by the Dorset Fire & Rescue Service all the data and information to counter the dodgy material on which the housing association had based their decision. **Group Manager Seth Wye** met with the housing association's managers and with the press and TV taking a close interest in the outcome of that meeting, it was announced that on advice from Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service the decision to decommission the sprinklers had been rescinded. The people to really benefit from this are the tenants that will continue to enjoy the best domestic fire protection available. **JMC**



**The  
Book Shelf**  
Where WRFA members  
review books recently read



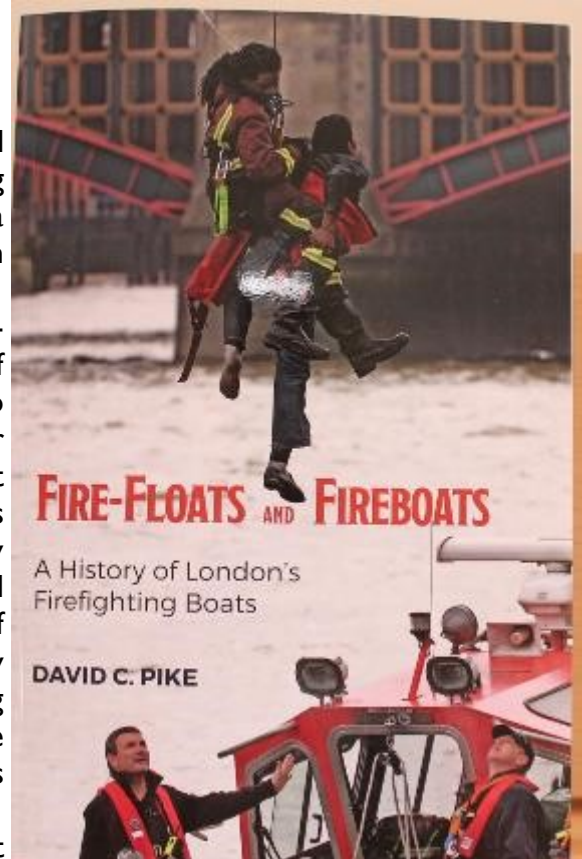
## Fire-floats & Fireboats

The history of London's Firefighting Boats  
By David C. Pike

In common with many WRFA members I have read and own many books about the history of firefighting and the latest book by David Pike will always have a place on my bookshelf. It is a particularly well written and constructed volume with 250 illustrations.

The title is accurate in that the core theme throughout the book gives the reader a detailed account of what measures have been taken past and present to provide fire and rescue capability on the River Thames in London. However, the author has not limited himself to writing about vessels but has clearly carried out in depth research into the history of fire services protecting London and has allowed himself the freedom to include in the book details of personalities and incidents that are only indirectly related to fireboats. I applaud the author for doing this because it does much to add to the value of the book both as a provider of information and as entertainment.

The book begins in Roman times and concludes right up to date by explaining some of the pressures for change now bearing down on the UK fire & rescue



Published by AUSTIN MACAULAY  
ISBN 978-1786935885

I was interested to read that James Braidwood, head of the London Fire Engine Establishment in the Victorian times and generally looked upon as being the 'Father of the British Fire Service', was slow to introduce steam powered pumps. His firemen continued to use manual pumps long after steam engines had proved their power and reliability. The reason for Braidwood's initial scorn for steam power is believed to be that he taught his firemen to get inside buildings and fight fire at close range. He had fears that the long throw of the water jets pumped out of a steam driven pump would encourage his men to stand outside the burning building and adopt what is called in the modern parlance of fire fighting "defensive tactics". Braidwood was killed at a huge warehouse blaze in Tooley Street leading his men from the front.

Perhaps the most famous of all the fireboats that served on the river in London is the *Massey Shaw*. As is only proper, the full story of the long and distinguished service performed by the *Massey Shaw* and the gallant men that crewed her is recorded in some detail by David Pike. It is particularly pleasing that the *Massey Shaw* is now enjoying a prolonged life as a floating museum in the ownership and care of the *Massey Shaw Education Trust*. She has recently been refitted and restored to pristine condition.

It isn't just fires that get a mention. On 7th January 1928 the River Thames burst its banks and flooded streets and property near the river. Thousands of buildings were affected including several of the LFB's river fire stations. Fourteen people were drowned and thousands injured.

I heartily recommend this book.

**JOHN CRAIG**

# 1958 a year of Momentous Life Changing Events

## By Dennis (“Jerry”) Willmott



I was 25 when I joined “The LFB” in 1957, well before the formation of the GLC, at which time The London Fire Brigade, whilst the country’s largest brigade, was much smaller than it now is (a mere 60 wholtime stations as opposed to the current 114) and within its geographical spread (but not within the LFB) were a number of ‘Borough Brigades’ such as West Ham, and Croydon. On January 1st 1958, on completion of my recruit’s training course, I was posted to **D61 Lambeth** on the Albert Embankment (known then as the Brigade’s “Flagship”).

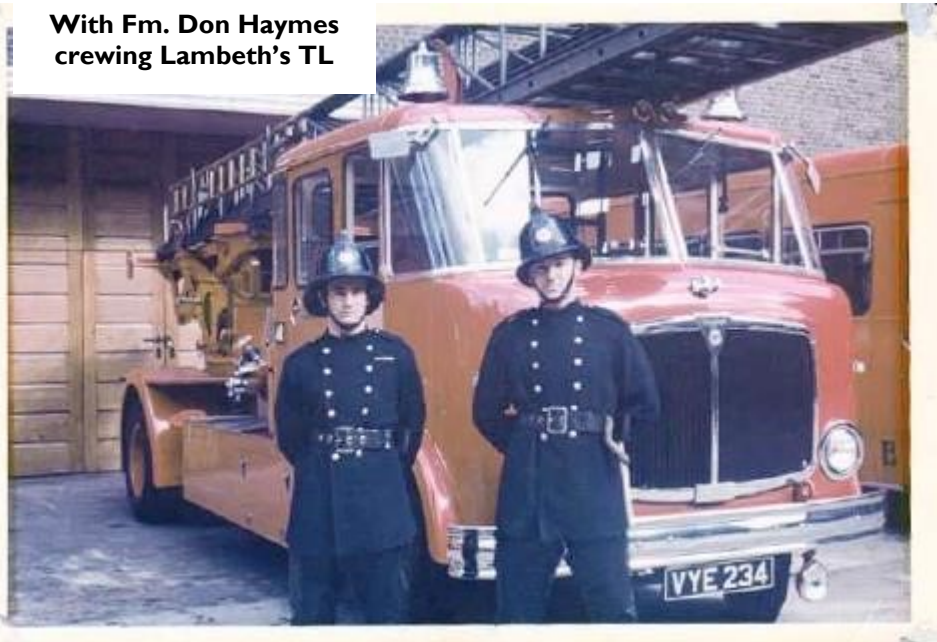
In those days of one-hour duration ‘Proto’ oxygen breathing apparatus, one was not allowed to undertake breathing apparatus training until six month’s operational experience had been acquired.

In those days before health & safety legislation, that didn’t mean that you didn’t enter smoke filled situations, it just meant that you couldn’t wear breathing apparatus while doing so. Operational experience was not a standard value, notwithstanding that stations, at that time, worked on a two shift basis (Blue & Red Watches) and a working week consisted of 60 on duty hours (23 on Sundays), firefighting opportunities varied. Fortunately for me, Lambeth (in the 50s) was “fire busy”, when many stations, even in London were not.



**Proto BA set**  
Photo by John Craig

**With Fm. Don Haymes**  
crewing Lambeth’s TL



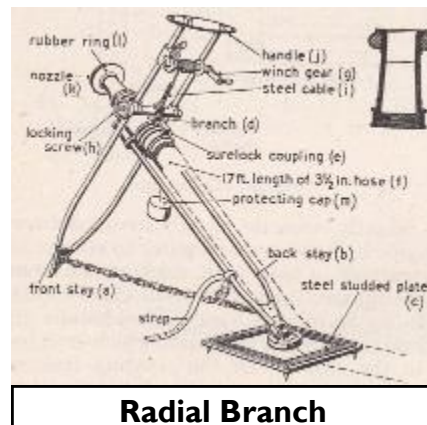
### **THE SMITHFIELD MARKET FIRE ; JANUARY 1958**

Whist on January 28th 1958, Lambeth’s pumping appliances were not on the predetermined attendance for the ‘Smithfield Fire’ our Emergency Tender and Command Vehicle were. I recall on at least three occasions throughout the incident that lasted over a week. I rode Lambeth’s pump that carried three Proto BA sets as transportation. This was a great privilege as we were not yet qualified to wear BA and were normally therefore confined to riding the pump escape that carried no breathing apparatus despite it being designated as a rescue appliance. On one occasion at Smithfield, two of us were manning the Canteen Van. I recall that hot Bovril was very popular. I did not go below ground. All my activities were on the very cold surface, freezing water and ice covered most surfaces, and icicles hung from hoses, appliances and buildings. This was very cold but thankfully it did not reach the –40 degrees that I had experienced in a Korean winter sme six years earlier as a member of the Norfolk Regiment).

On arrival at the fireground, crews dismounted and huddled together in any shelter they could

find for warmth, while awaiting deployment, as individual crews or collectively with other crews. Deployment was to a number of traditional, large fire commitments, i.e. BA, hose running, water supply identification, radial branch operators. There were a number of radial branches in operation. These large branches were the Brigade's "heavy artillery" and some were deployed to bring down high and precarious structures which was a dangerous activity not only for the radial branch crews but for other crews concealed in the vicinity.

There is much that occurred at the Smithfield fire that is commendable, unbelievable courage, hard and continuous work with considerable discomfort endured throughout multiple return visits to the fireground. There was also the tragic loss of two valued lives early in the incident. However, there was also much that in my humble and, at that time, inexperienced opinion that was wrong. From subsequent enquiries and reports it is now clear that there were a number of very significant inadequacies in the deployment, support and safety of breathing apparatus (BA) crews. Lessons were rapidly learned with faults honestly admitted, documented, corrected and shared with the rest of the UK fire brigades.



**Radial Branch**



**Smithfield Market fire ; point of entry and exit for the underground smoke logged areas. Photo copyright LFB /Mary Evans)**

There were however, other significant areas of onsite and support mismanagement errors and inadequacies, the avoidance of which should have been a matter of everyday basic common sense, but they were not.

Only six months before the fire I had left the Royal Norfolk Regiment in the rank of Sergeant, a rank to which I had been promoted when only 20. I was accustomed to discipline and controlled management of large numbers of men and/or equipment, particularly under hazardous conditions.

I was therefore surprised and disappointed to see that despite the fact that the Brigade members at that time were almost exclusively ex-servicemen or fire service veterans of World War Two, similar disciplined, common sense dictated management did not appear to obtain here. Appliances mainly, but not exclusively, pumping appliances were arriving from all points of the compass and from a multitude of Brigades. There appeared to be no marshalling control, and vehicles pulled up and parked wherever their officer-in-charge's fancy took him. All too often this was very close to the fire itself. Whilst each appliance had a 'nominal roll board' which was handed into central control and retrieved prior to leaving the fire ground, there appeared to be very little planning or strategic organisation to the parking of vehicles. Neither was there planned or co-ordinated recording of the commitment of BA wearers to the sub-basement, the seat of the fire. The same applied to the initial deployment of support crews and individuals prior and subsequent to their commitment to the fray. **(Continued on page 13)**

The Smithfield incident was classified as a “40 pump” fire but as experienced firefighters will know there were in addition to this number, and adding to the manic confusion, many more “special” and ancillary vehicles deployed. One report that I read subsequently estimated that over 100 LFB vehicles attended. In addition to the obvious ( even to me as a raw recruit) hazard posed by an inability to move vehicles in the event of an escalation of the incident, it was impossible, once parked, to extract most of these appliances, when eventually crews were returned to stations. I recall that, on return to station, the officer-in-charge of my appliance being instructed to take which ever appliance first came to hand from among the confusion. When multiplied by the continuing movement of crews to and from the fire, this resulted in crews taking appliances from stations and even Brigades other than their own. As I recall the situation, weeks were to elapse before the appliances and equipment were restored to their proper homes and owners. As can be imagined, the “loss” of equipment, real or opportunistic, was immense and its replacement must have been hugely expensive.



*“Vehicles pulled up and parked.....all too often closely adjacent to the incident.”*  
*Photo copyright LFB/Mary Evans*

It should also be remembered that, as I recall the situation, there were a number of other major incidents in progress at the same time., including a 20-pump fire at a jam factory in Southwark and I believe a couple of 12-pumpers were going at the same time. I was aware of these because Lambeth Fire Station housed one of the LFB’s two Emergency Tenders automatically on the attendance for all incidents graded “6 pumps and above”. The stink of fire emanating from the uniforms and equipment

permeated every area of the station for a very long time thereafter.

One thing I have not mentioned is that this was the beginning of my ambition to advance through the service. Even at that early stage, perhaps because of my Army service) I remember thinking, but not saying in the interests of self-preservation, “*if I cannot do better than this, I am in the wrong job.*” Subsequent ‘post incident enquiries’, carried out into the nature of the fire and the manner in which it had been dealt with resulted in a number of significant changes in the LFB operational procedures, some of which, particularly those relating to BA, were incorporated into nationally required protocols and regulations.

At a very early stage of this fire, two very experienced BA wearers, **Station Officer Jack Forte-Wells and Fireman Dick Stocking** , both from Clerkenwell Fire Station, having individually become separated from their BA teams, tragically lost their lives underground and alone in an extended maze of passages and storage areas. Subsequently, a colleague of mine, Don Haymes, and I attended the funeral of our two comrades. After the funeral, Don invited me to his flat in West Norwood for coffee and in introduction to the “two girls living next door”. In December 2018 Pat, one of those girls next door and I celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary at which time I will recall the Smithfield fire , Jack Forte-Wells, Dick Stocking and my many courageous and ever dependable comrades of the London Fire Brigade. **DJW**

# Fred Olsen Cruises



**FRED OLSEN** has teamed up with the **WRFA** to give you a very tempting 10% discount \* on your very first sailing with them, and that's on top of any current offers. Existing Fred Olsen customers can save 5% in addition to their 5% loyalty club discount.

At Fred Olsen we understand what makes a cruise holiday so special. It's sailing to incredible destinations far and wide with like minded travellers, enjoying fabulous food as you glide across the ocean, discovering out of this world experiences and making new friendships that will last a lifetime. This is why we carefully craft each and everyone of our cruises from weekend breaks to Dublin to a 108 night voyage around the globe to ensure your time on board with us is simply unforgettable.

With departure ports conveniently located around the UK and more than 200 ports of call to choose from, you can travel the whole world with Fred Olsen. Discover the spectacular Norwegian Fjords, cruise the beautiful rivers and waterways of Europe or relax on the white sand beaches of the Caribbean. Wherever you sail you'll be enjoying it all on our smaller, friendly ships.

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WHEN BOOKING WITH FRED OLSEN CRUISES ON  
0800 0355 108**

\*All bookings are subject to Fred Olsen's (FOCL) terms and conditions available on our website and on request. All prices quoted under the WRFA member's discount are exclusive to qualifying members and their travelling companions only. Bookings must be made under the hotline booking number 0800 0355 108. Proof of membership will be required at the time of booking. Offers cannot be extended to unrelated third parties and are subject to availability and may be withdrawn or amended without prior notice. From time to time FOCL may run special offers that cannot be combined with this discount, including selected travel groups special deals. All guests booked under this scheme are requested to refrain from disclosing the fare paid whilst on board. Offer is for first-time cruisers with Fred Olsen only. Fred Olsen Oceans members are entitled to a 5% WRFA discount subject to the same terms and conditions to be applied after the standard Oceans discount where applicable to this instance. Oceans terms and conditions apply E & OE.

**DISCLAIMER**—The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily shared by the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service or the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Authority