



July 2017

The Branch

Newsletter of the WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

GRENFELL TOWER Will Lessons Be Learnt This Time?

The disastrous 'towering inferno' style fire at Grenfell Tower, Kensington, is known to have taken at least 80 lives. It is impossible at this time to be more certain of the number that died because of the level of destruction and the difficulty of gathering information on exactly who was in the 24 storey high-rise block at the time of the fire.

The public inquiry has yet to get under way led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick and there is also a police investigation in progress.



It is usual in the immediate aftermath of such major disasters for those with an interest in the incident to resist the temptation to comment until the inquiry has reported. However, the 'damping down and turnover' operations were still in progress at Grenfell Tower and also the search for victims when the 'blame game' started. We have seen politicians from the opposition unable to resist the temptation to try to make political capital from the huge death toll and economic impact of the fire. We have seen at least one former government minister broadcasting that his failures in office that could be connected with the disaster were the fault of his civil servants that provided him with advice.

Perhaps what is driving these injudicious outbursts is the demand for justice to be delivered immediately from the public. Inquiries tend to take a long time in reporting. Also, there does appear to be a very strong chance that a number of people may find themselves being prosecuted for criminal offences linked to the fire and others may fear their reputations being seriously harmed by facts that are likely to come out at the public inquiry and/or the police investigation.

The problem that must be troubling the Government is the fact that in 2013 the coroner gave a verdict on six deaths caused by a fire at another high-rise block in London called Lakanal House. Fire spread was aided by the external cladding.



Sir Ken Knight

The coroner issued a list of recommendations that included a call for the building regulations to be reviewed and the retro-fitting of sprinklers to high-rise blocks to be given serious attention. The government appears to have done little to satisfy the coroner's recommendations and had they done so, some would argue that Grenfell Tower would not have happened.

The Chief Fire Adviser to the Government at the time of the Lakanal House coroner's inquest was Sir Ken Knight. He wrote a report in which he gives the opinion that it would be too expensive and impractical to retrofit sprinklers to high-rise blocks. This report was the subject of

Continued from front page

strong criticism from several quarters at the time of its publication. Since the Grenfell Tower blaze, Sir Ken has come in for considerably more criticism for his anti-sprinkler stance.

Nick Ross, the broadcaster and safety campaigner, has been in the fore front of encouraging the wider use of life safety sprinklers in the UK since I invited his help in 1999 to drive the sprinkler campaign forward. Nick wrote an article in the *Daily Mail* on 30th June 2017 giving his views on Grenfell Tower. His article pulls no punches and lays much of the blame for the disaster on the fire advisers (all ex-CFOs) that have not, in Nick's opinion, done nearly enough to guide the law makers along the path that would have prevented Grenfell House and Lakamal House fires from taking lives. Nick is particularly direct in his criticism of Sir Ken Knight. Nick calls it 'ironic' that Sir Ken has been called out of retirement to chair a national committee set up to provide guidance on fire safety in public buildings. Will it be a case of "lesson learnt" with regard



Nick Ross

to sprinklers, one wonders? I suggest we should not anticipate too much. Getting a civil servant to admit that he/she was wrong is almost unheard of.

Besides the matter of sprinklers, there is the stubborn resistance from the civil servants in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the repeated calls from several sources for the building regulations to be reviewed. Despite growing pressure that dates back long before the Grenfell Tower fire for the DCLG to instigate a review of building regulations, they have simply denied that there is any need for a review. Even lay persons that have little technical understanding of building regulations are now voicing the opinion that there must be something very wrong with regulations that have allowed the fitting of cladding to the exterior of buildings when such types of material are banned in other countries including the USA and Germany.



Dany Cotton

In the aftermath of such a dreadful fire disaster the search for the guilty will pick up pace. I can only imagine that there are a number of individuals that are not sleeping very well about now knowing that the part they have played in the disaster will be the subject of close scrutiny by the Moore-Bick Inquiry, the police investigation and the fire investigation by the LFB.

One group of people that have come out of the fire with their reputations enhanced is the London Fire Brigade. Those of us that have served as firefighters know the exceptional operational challenges that presented themselves to the LFB at that 40-pump job. Dany Cotton had to take charge of a disaster only a short time after her appointment as London's Fire Commissioner. The normal operational procedures didn't fit the extreme rescue and fire

fighting needs if accounts written by some of those that were in the thick of it are accurate. I have seen these on social media. I saw a senior LFB manager (I must not call him an 'officer' in these times) stating that the LFB claim to have rescued 65 people from the building. I suspect that this is an estimate because the rescues were being performed under chaotic circumstances not of the Brigade's making. What is beyond doubt is that the work done by Dany and the men and women working with her at Grenfell Tower will long be applauded and remembered by the people, not only of Kensington, not only of London, but of the whole of the UK.

A review of fire service pay is in progress. You can be sure that the Government will be regretting that the fire & rescue service has received such a boost in public esteem just as they are trying to negotiate a pay deal with the FBU.

JOHN CRAIG

Annual General Meeting

Breaking with tradition, the AGM of our Association was held in the morning this year. It took place on Sunday 4th June, 2017 in the superb surroundings afforded by the Cathedral Suite and the Orangery at the Rose & Crown Hotel, Harnham Road, Salisbury. This venue was ideal for our requirements.



CFO Ansell presents one of the new Dorset & Wiltshire FRS plaques to the WRFA. Jerry Willmott received it surrounded by the WRFA members that were fortunate enough to be able to attend the meeting.

Although not protracted in length the meeting, chaired by our President, Jerry Willmott, transacted some important business.

The highlight of the event was an address delivered by Chief Fire Officer, Ben Ansell. He brought us right up to date with what is happening, not only in the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service, but on the national scene too. Drawing his first class presentation to a close, the CFO presented the WRFA with one of the first plaques to be produced bearing the coat of arms of the Dorset & Wiltshire FRS.



**Coat of Arms of
Dorset & Wilts FRS**



A delicious three-course lunch was served to us in the new Orangery



HEALTH MATTERS

News of those dealing with health challenges.



BOB (“DAN”) GURNEY

Since the April newsletter was published, Dan has continued to experience ill health that has required him to spend time in hospital in Oxford and also in Swindon. At the time of going to press he is home being cared for by Janet.

We continue to be on standby to help both Dan and Janet in whatever way we can. We hope that real progress towards full health will soon be Dan's experience.



ALBI RICHARDSON

Albi recently passed out at home in the bathroom. Ever the perfect gentleman, Margaret reports that he collapsed into the recovery position !

A few days in GWH, Swindon followed and antibiotics were needed to get Albi up and running again.

He has recovered so well that at the time of going to press he and Margaret are enjoying a holiday in Devon. Keep up the good work, Albi.

JEAN ARMOUR

Jean is in the middle of a lengthy course of dental treatment that will require her to make regular visits to the dental surgery for several months.

She hopes that the pain of having had to have several teeth extracted and replaced with dentures will bring benefits in the long run.

She is also hoping to obtain a mobility scooter soon to allow her to get out and about.



Health Matters (continued)

ROGERT TOMBS

A wound on Roger's leg became infected in April and it turned into SEPSIS. This required him to spend several days in RUH, Bath where initially he was quite poorly until the antibiotics took control. Fortunately, he was discharged from hospital just in time to attend our Spring Dinner at Foxham.

SUE GUEST

Sue has had two recent operations to treat cancer and is home in Swindon at the moment but needs further surgery soon. We send Sue our very best wishes and will monitor her progress through the future treatment and all the way along her path back to recovery.

JANE COX

Jane has had two short but quite dramatic spells in RUH, Bath recently. The causes were identical. She suffered a dislocation of one of her artificial hips on both occasions. This caused immense pain and John did not hesitate to call paramedics using 999.

Jane was taken to A & E where the hip joint was put back together and, as a precaution, she was detained in hospital for a short time.

Jane reports that she had excellent service from the ambulance service and from A & E at Bath.

Jane hopes that her hip joint behaves itself from now on because she has been told to expect to have to have surgery if it happens again.



BRUCE BRINGLOE

Bruce was taken to hospital recently by ambulance when he was taken ill at home in Devizes.

After a few days undergoing tests and treatment he was discharged home and returned to the care of Janet and the GP.

Bruce reports that he has good days and not so good days but enjoys his daily walks around Devizes town centre which is very close to home.

We hope that Bruce keeps his health on an even keel from now on and gives Janet no more frights necessitating her dialling 999.

SEPSIS

We have had several members taken to hospital recently suffering from sepsis, an infection that can be life threatening.

The early signs and symptoms of sepsis are :

- Fever, with high temperature
- Shivering and shaking, low body temperature
- Confusion
- Very high pulse and respiration rates

If you suspect SEPSIS, call 999. It is vital that sepsis is diagnosed and treated without delay.

BE ALERT FOR THESE SYMPTOMS



DELAY IN TREATING SEPSIS CAN BE FATAL

People & Places

NEW CHAIRMAN ELECTED FOR FIRE AUTHORITY

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority has a new Chairman.

At its meeting on 27th June 2017 **Councillor Spencer Flower** was unanimously elected to become Chairman.



Cllr Spencer Flower

He replaces Cllr Rebecca Knox who has been Chairman since 1st April 2016 when the new fire authority came into being.

Cllr Knox remains on the Fire Authority but did not wish to stand for re-election to the chairmanship because of her commitments as Leader of Dorset County Council. She is intending to continue with her role on the Local Government Fire Services Management Committee.

The Authority's Vice Chairman will continue to be Cllr Garry Perkins (Swindon Borough Council).

Cllr Flower serves on Dorset County council, representing Verwood.



PETER EDGE ELECTED MAYOR

WRFA member, Peter Edge, has been elected Mayor of Wilton and his wife, Pam, is the Mayoress.

We warmly congratulate Peter and Pam and wish them a year in office filled with enjoyable and rewarding experiences. Peter lost his seat on the Wiltshire Council in the recent local election and as a result he is no longer eligible to sit on the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Authority.

Peter has also retired from his business providing and maintaining fire and intruder alarms.

FBU REJECTS PAY RISE OFFER

Firefighters are the first group of public sector workers to be offered a pay deal that breaches the 1% cap imposed by the Government. The national Joint Council for Fire & Rescue Services has offered a pay rise from July 2017 of 2% with a further rise of 3% on 1st April 2018. The offer includes the possibility of a further rise in 2018 followed by others in 2019 and 2020 but these come



with no guarantees. The FBU has refused to accept the offer on the grounds that it is insufficient to reflect the additional duties its members are now undertaking relating to medical emergencies and terrorism. Negotiations will continue later this month.

SELLAFIELD FIREFIGHTERS VOTE FOR STRIKE



The firefighters that protect the nuclear plant at Sellafield have voted for strike action over a pay deal that they regard as unsatisfactory. They are members of the GMB Union. The offer on the table is for a 5% rise but the union's pay claim is for a rise of 12% to reflect the additional duties undertaken by firefighters at the plant including helping to provide medical services.



**OUR
SOCIAL LIFE**
planned
for members to enjoy.



CARVERY LUNCH
Sunday 20th August 2017
1.00pm
BOWOOD HOTEL
Derry Hill, Chippenham
£20.00 to members, spouses
or partners.



BOOK NOW, using form provided with this news-
letter or download from www.wrfa.org.uk
'Social Events' page.

What else is planned?
NOTE YOUR DIARY !

REMEMBRANCE EVENT

11th November 2017

6.30pm

Devizes Town Hall

Two-course dinner

Concert by Devizes Town Band

Act of Remembrance



CHRISTMAS LUNCH

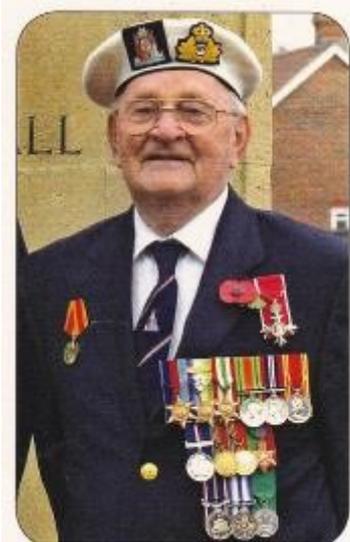
Bear Hotel, Devizes

16th December 2017

1.00pm

*Follows on from last year's highly successful
event at the same venue.*

OBITUARIES



Kenneth Raymond Frank BEARD MBE

**Born 25th April 1925
Died 26th March 2017**

Our Association recently lost one of its most respected and highly honoured members when Ken Beard passed away in Salisbury District Hospital.

Ken's long life was remarkable for many reasons, not the least of which was the strong theme of "*service to others before self*" that so clearly motivated him .

While still a teenager, Ken joined the Royal Navy, keen to

play his part in fighting for his country. He trained as a gunner and served on a Flower class corvette, a type of ship featured in the famous film '*The Cruel Sea*'. Ken certainly saw more than his fair share of how cruel the sea could be. His ship was in the thick of the action on some of the Arctic convoys taking supplies to the Russians. It was only very recently that Ken was one of the survivors of those convoys that received a medal from the Russian Government , followed by the Arctic Star, a somewhat belated award created by the David Cameron government.

After the Arctic ordeal, Ken's ship was deployed to the Mediterranean to escort merchant ships trying to relieve the siege of Malta imposed by the Germans and Italians.

After being demobbed from the Royal Navy at the end of the war, Ken returned to his home town of Ludgershall where he became a baker. He also joined the Wiltshire Fire Brigade as a retained fireman. He served with such distinction as a fire fighter that he rose steadily through the ranks to become the station officer in charge. A fair, firm and kindly man, Ken was widely appreciated and respected for running a very efficient fire station.

Ken's desire to serve led him to offering himself for election to the Town Council and also to Kennet District Council. Ken showed himself to be a councillor that really did go the extra mile to serve his constituents and he was re-elected many times. He was created an Alderman of both Kennet District Council and Ludgershall Town Council. In 2016, he was granted the Freedom of Ludgershall, a rarely awarded honour.

Another richly deserved honour that meant a lot to Ken was the Member of the British Empire. Never has the MBE been more deserved than in Ken's case.

Ken married and was sadly widowed several years ago when his much loved wife predeceased him. They had two sons and were very proud of their grandchildren too. A better role model for a family than Ken would be very hard to find.

The funeral service took place at St James Church, Ludgershall on 4th May 2017. The very well attended service was conducted by Revd. Claire Maxim. A guard of honour was provided by members of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. A senior officer from the Royal Navy also attended. The Member of Parliament, Claire Perry, attended to head the party of politicians both serving and retired.

The WRFA was represented at the funeral by our President, Jerry Willmott, John Craig, John Cox Maurice Betteridge and John Gentleman.

Ken leaves behind him a fine example of what true public service means. I know that he took great pleasure and satisfaction in doing good for others and much of this was done quietly and confidentially without drawing the attention or the praise it deserved. We are already missing Ken very much. May he rest in eternal peace. **JOHN CRAIG**

OBITUARY



MARGARET BREWER

born 1st March 1950

died 24th May 2017

Margaret Brewer was the wife of Tony Brewer who served for many years in a very senior non-uniformed post at Wiltshire Fire Brigade Headquarters. Tony retired as an Assistant Chief Fire Officer heading all administrative and finance departments of the Brigade. Tony and Margaret set up home in Worton.

Tony and Margaret met when she was just sixteen and this began a relationship crowned by a long and very happy marriage. They were blessed with children, two boys and a girl.

The last five years of Margaret's life were made very difficult because she became ill with cancer of the pancreas. Survivable rates from that form of cancer are very poor and so it is a tribute to the skill of those treating and nursing Margaret plus her own courage and determination that she fought the disease for so long before eventually it overcame her.

Margaret and Tony were never so happy as when they were helping and improving the lives of others. They lived out their Christian faith in many ways and one of these was to play a major part in the local branch of the project to extend aid to the Chernobyl Children. Margaret and Tony hosted many children whose homes were overshadowed by the nuclear disaster. By hosting children even for a few weeks in Worton Margaret and Tony gave a much needed and appreciated boost to the health of the youngsters. They formed strong and lasting friendships as a result of their contacts in Belarus.

Margaret's funeral service was held on 9th June 2017 in the beautiful Christ Church in Worton where the Brewer family have worshipped for many years. The church was filled with mourners that gave testimony to the way that Margaret had touched the life of so many others during her life.

The service was conducted by Rev David Howard who not only gave his own sincere tribute to Margaret but read the very moving words of Tony, the children and the grandchildren.

The wake was held at Devizes Town Hall and this was very well attended too.

Tony chose not to join the WRFA on his retirement but he has a great many friends within the Association and I have not given up hope that he will one day apply to join.

Margaret leaves behind her a legacy that challenges all to live our lives in service of others and always seeking opportunity to bring joy and comfort to those that need it.

Rest in eternal peace, Margaret.

JMC



Obituary



Maureen Johnson

Died 2017



Maureen Johnson, the wife of WRFA member, Maurice Johnson OBE, QFSM, passed away in Maurice's arms on 11th May 2017. She had been suffering with cancer for six months.

Maureen and Maurice met in 1956 when they were both "sweet sixteen". Their first encounter with each other on a recreation ground did not run smoothly because Maureen wore her hair in a pony tail in those days and Maurice could not resist the temptation to pull it! However, the relationship blossomed into love and they married in 1961 in their home town of Eastbourne. Maurice was serving in Eastbourne Fire Brigade at the time after having transferred from London Fire Brigade. Maurice progressed through the fire service ranks and moved between brigades several times. His career was crowned with his appointment as Chief Fire Officer of Oxfordshire. Maurice has paid warm tribute to the way that Maureen supported him in the most wonderful way throughout his career, often sacrificing herself to assist him in his chosen profession.

As the CFO's spouse, Maureen made it clear to all that she just wanted to be known as 'Maureen', once saying to a surprised young fireman , "*there are no epaulettes on my nightdress.*"

Maureen enjoyed many interests including reading, swimming, keep fit, gardening, quizzes, dining out and sunbathing ! She was also keen to support Maurice in his interests especially his devotion to angling. She did not accompany him on his frequent fishing expeditions but was very supportive of him having the hobby that often required her to host Maurice's angling companions.

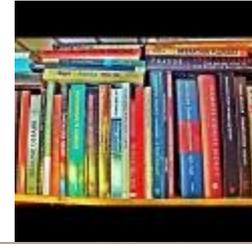
Maurice served as a senior officer in Wiltshire Fire Brigade for a time and many members of WRFA will remember Maurice and Maureen with great affection and will be mourning with Maurice Maureen's passing.

Maurice describes Maureen as , "*a wonderful person, no one could have asked for a better partner.*" Rest in peace, Maureen



BOOK SHELF

Book reviews



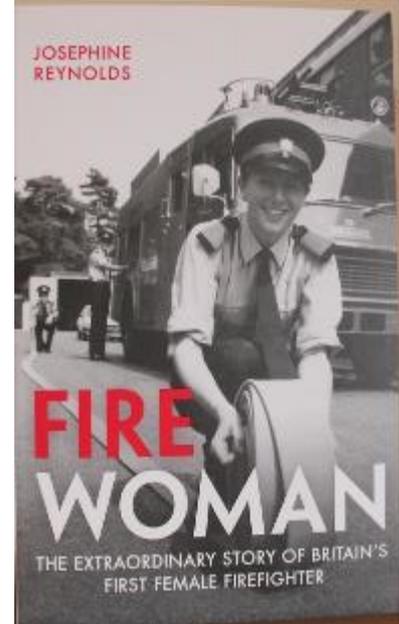
FIRE WOMAN

The Extraordinary Story of Britain's First Female Firefighter

Author : Josephine Reynolds

Reviewer : Ann Fitzgerald

When asked to review this corker of a book I must admit to being nervous as vivid memories of a former life came to the fore. I remember so well my late cousin, Monica Tovey (AFS & Swindon Fire Control) taking me to London in the spring of 1966 for an interview at London Fire Brigade HQ in Lambeth. The Brigade was recruiting to fill semi-operational posts for women, an initiative taken by the forward thinking CFO Leete. I had been in the AFS at Swindon and was desperate to be a “proper firewoman” but no such opportunities were on offer in Wiltshire. I sat as a nervous 17 year old in front of a board (bored!) of senior officers and a female Council official. They appeared more interested in my Wiltshire accent than my eagerness to be part of the new scheme. However,



Published by Michael O'Hara Books
ISBN 978-1-78243-699-7

after a whole morning's wait I was successful in securing one of the positions. I was so thrilled and proud. I was whisked off to the London Council House Stores Department where I was fitted out with a pencil skirt, a la Hardy Amies, a man's white shirt and tie, a pair of men's heavy-weight trousers (size 42" waist) complete with fetching buttoned fly, for 'dirty work'. I felt like Coco the Clown but with Mary Quant make-up of the day. A dress jacket had to be tailored for me at the local 'Burtons', a size 12....oh, how I wish.



Ann Fitzgerald

That's enough about me. Jo Reynolds was actually born in Cambridgeshire but spent her formative years in Pembrokeshire, West Wales. Coincidentally, I lived there for ten years. Jo was sixteen and a self-assured 'Goth', enjoying discos, pubs and boys but she had a burning desire to join the police force as a cadet. She worked hard at school to get the required qualifications. Sadly, no UK constabulary would give her an interview let alone a chance. In 1982, Jo's step father, a serving firefighter, heard that CFO Bruce Hogg of Norfolk Fire Service had set up a scheme to bring the fire service in line with the other emergency services. He proposed a fire cadet course aimed at 16 year old school leavers. The course was 15 months duration

Jo applied and survived a gruelling interview and assessment process to win a place on the course. She was very happy, but this was short-lived. She was the only female among 49 men on the course and life for her became tough and lonely. Her fellow fire cadets and two instructors were openly hostile. However, Jo was spirited and pulled herself together to make a big effort to socialise with those testosterone loaded men. Jo never let go of her femininity and self respect and the female cook on Thetford Fire Station where she was posted took her under her wing. The book records some of the challenging operational incidents that Jo attended. Do get hold of a copy of this book to read a full account of Jo's pioneering work as a female firefighter.

How Safe Are Our Residential Nursing & Care Homes From Fire? by Les Fielding



Les Fielding

At a time when the nursing profession is under the most severe pressure it has faced since the NHS was founded, how safe are our residential nursing homes and care homes from fire.

Many homes do not have enough night staff to effectively carry out the progressive horizontal evacuation from the room of fire origin to the other side of the fire compartmentation in the event of fire. Serious fires over recent years have brought into question this strategy where the fire compartmentation has failed in the early stages of a fire.



Newgrange Residential Care Home ; 8th April 2017 (photo Hertfordshire FRS)

NEWGRANGE RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME, CHESHUNT

Early in the morning of **8th April 2017** two people died and three more were injured by a fire at a residential care home for the elderly known as Newgrange Residential Care Home at Cadmore Lane, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. Fire crews from Hertfordshire, Essex and London attended and rescued 33 from the flames. Those rescued were taken to a nearby emergency reception centre to be given care.

On arrival fire crews found the whole roof well alight (see photo above). First attending crews carried out the 33 rescues very quickly. East of England Ambulance Service reported that three people were taken to hospital suffering from minor burns and smoke inhalation. Five ambulance crews, two ambulance officers, a hazardous area response team and a volunteer doctor were mobilised.

Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue reported that the first fire crews arrived at 5.51am and were faced with an extremely fierce fire that was well established on the first floor and in the roof. The roof later collapsed. **THE BUILDING HAD NO SPRINKLER SYSTEM.**

This fire was the latest in a series of similar fires in residential nursing and care homes.

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ROSE COURT CARE HOME , BERMONDSEY ; 26th MARCH, 2010

The company owning and managing Rose Court Care Home, Bermondsey, London was ordered to pay fines of more than £170,000 following a fire that killed an elderly female resident.

Woolwich Crown Court heard that the fire took place on 26th March, 2010. Paula Parle, who suffered from dementia, died following the fire in her room. The fire was caused by Paula's nightwear coming into contact with a naked flame.

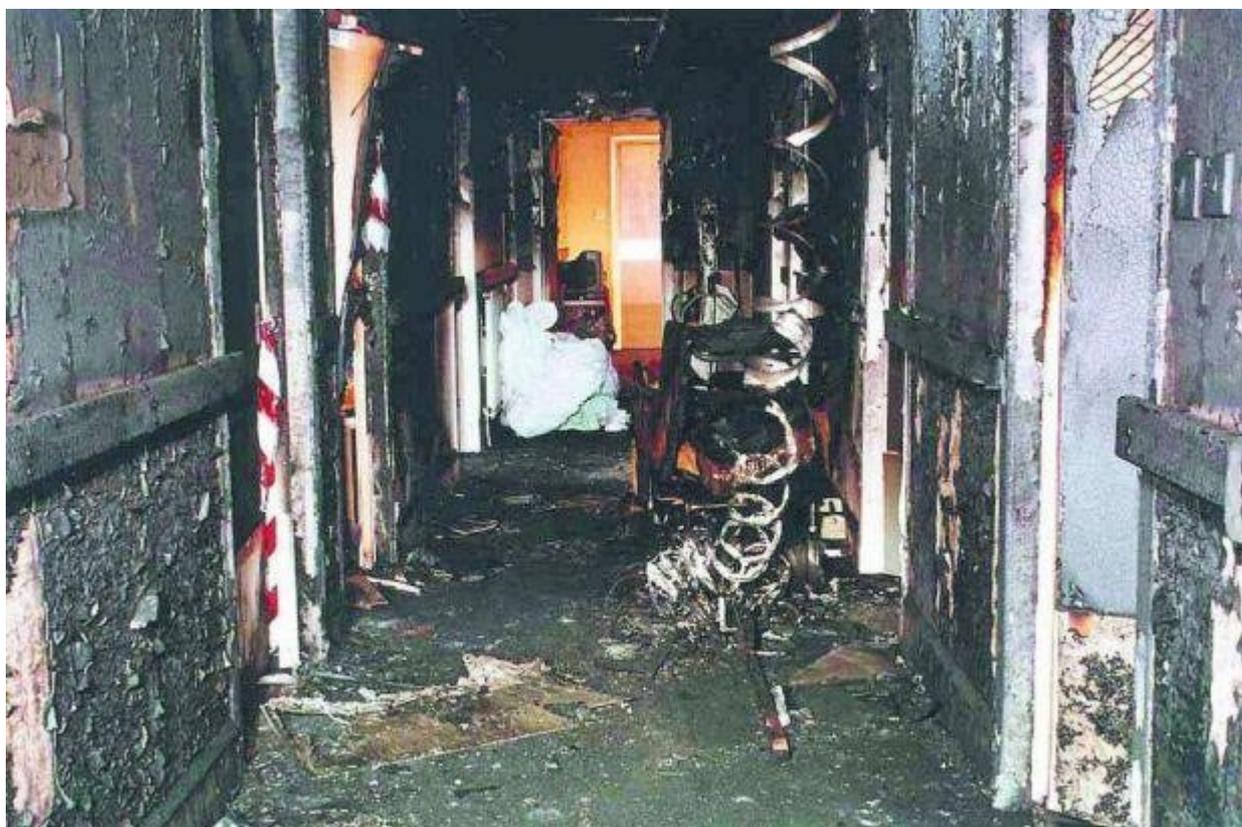
Anchor Trust, which manages the home, failed to carry out specific fire risk assessment in relation to Mrs Parle. The 74 year-old was a known smoker and her family had raised concerns to the home about her heavy smoking and access to lighters. They had asked staff to manage the amount Mrs Parle smoked.

Rose Court put together a policy that was supposed to limit Mrs Parle's access to cigarettes and lighters and monitor her smoking, but this wasn't carried out effectively. Staff also failed to notice and respond to clear warning signs including cigarette burn marks on the carpet.

Anchor Trust representatives appeared in court on 22nd September 2010 and pleaded guilty to breaching Article 9(1) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, for failing to carry out a suitable risk assessment, and Article 11(1) of the same order, for not effectively planning, monitoring and reviewing the preventive and protective measures at the premises. The Trust was fined £60,000 for each offence and ordered to pay costs of £50,622.

London Fire Brigade Deputy Commissioner, Rita Dexter, described the incident as "preventable". She said, "*the danger signs were there but Rose Court did not regularly update the fire risk assessments of everyone in its care, which would have helped the staff realise that a smoking related fire was likely if Mrs Parle was left to smoke unsupervised. It is absolutely shocking that some of the most vulnerable people in our society are still dying from fires in places where they should be safe. Every care home needs to look at their fire risk assessments and tailor them to meet the real needs of the individual residents in their care.*"

ROSE PARK CARE HOME, UDDINGTON, GLASGOW ; 31st JANUARY 2004



The corridor at Rose Park Care Home where the fire started. (photo Strathclyde Fire & Rescue)

Rose Park Care Home Fire (continued)

On 31st January 2004 a fire occurred at Rose Park Care Home, Uddington, Glasgow. 14 elderly residents lost their lives. The report of the fatal accident inquiry (FAI) was published on 20th April 2011. The FAI was led by Sheriff Principal Brian Lockhart. The tragedy happened in Scotland but there are issues and recommendations in the FAI report that have implications for care homes in England, with similar implications for the NHS.

David Flory, Deputy NHS Chief Executive, has written to Chief Executives and SHA Estates and Facilities Divisional Managers making them aware of the issues so that they can consider the implications for the organisations they head.

Since the fire at Rose Park, fire safety legislation in England and Wales has been reviewed, clarified and consolidated into the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO). It is hoped that this letter provides sufficient helpful guidance to enable those responsible for managing fire safety in healthcare premises to ensure they are compliant with the requirements of the FSO.

BUILDING REGULATIONS

Following the Rose Park fatal fire in 2004 the **Scottish Building Regulations** were changed to **require the fitting of fire sprinkler systems** in all new care homes in Scotland.

The last review of **Approved Document B** for England had the opportunity to take lessons from the Rose Park tragedy and make a requirement to fit sprinklers in all new care homes in England and Wales also. In spite of representations for this to be done, **in the review consultation this was not done.**



CONCLUSION

Just three recent care home fires in the UK are mentioned here. Some of those reading this will remember a number of serious care home fires in the 1970s resulting in many fatalities. As a result of lessons learned from these, smoke detection was made a requirement in all care homes. Times have moved on and it is now recognised that the provision of a properly designed, installed and maintained **sprinkler system** will prevent flashover in the room of fire origin and it has even been reported that persons in the room of origin have been saved from serious injury by the activation of the sprinkler system.

Scotland made the sensible step to now require sprinkler protection in all new care homes following the Rose Park fire. **How long will it be and how many more deaths will it take before the Government will order a review of Approved Part B of the building regulations in England to follow Scotland's lead on requiring sprinklers in new care homes?**

Les Fielding

CARE QUALITY COMMISSION SAYS A QUARTER OF CARE HOMES ARE UNSAFE

This month, the Care Quality Commission has issued a report that states it found one in four of the homes inspected had safety issues that needed to be addressed. The matter of fire safety is only part of the range of issues that the CQC monitors and so some of the homes referred to as being unsafe may well have failed because of matters other than fire safety.

Nevertheless, if a need arises to go into a care home as a resident or when seeking a place for a loved one, it might be a good idea to ask to see the most recent fire risk assessment carried out on the home.

DISCLAIMER The opinions and views published in this newsletter are not necessarily shared by the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service or the Fire Authority. The editor of the newsletter may be contacted by using the section provided for this purpose on www.wrfa.org.uk