



# The Branch

September 2017

**Newsletter of the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association**

## **PETE WIXEY SERIOUSLY INJURED**

**Police investigating alleged assault by delivery driver**

WRFA member, PETE WIXEY, was injured and taken to hospital on the evening of 31st July. He was kept in Great Western Hospital for several days being treated for a badly fractured wrist, severe bruising to his left arm and hand, a fractured knee cap and facial injuries.

Pete lives at Latton and he was walking his dog in a narrow lane with a 10mph restriction in place for vehicular traffic. Pete has to use a crutch due to a disability incurred when a hip replacement went badly wrong several years ago leaving him disabled.

Pete has made a statement to the police in which he states that the driver of a Parcel Force delivery van entered the lane at excessive speed. Pete complained to the driver about his driving and what followed resulted in Pete being badly injured and the matter of a police investigation.

Pete has applied for therapy from the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY to help him recover from his physical injuries and also the emotional upset caused by the incident.

Our Association has been active in supporting Pete in a number of ways and will continue to do so. *Photo by JOHN CRAIG*



### **RECRUITING NOW!**

Do you know someone that is eligible to join this association but has yet to do so?

If you have answered "yes" to this question, please encourage them to join and notify John Craig, our secretary & treasurer.

Please remember that we are much more than just a club that organises lunches and dinners. Our annual subscriptions are very low and represent excellent value.



## LUNCH AT BOWOOD

A very successful luncheon event was held at Bowood near Chippenham on 20th August. The surroundings provided by the Kerry Suite proved ideal for our event and the high quality of the food and the service set the seal on it. All went home well satisfied by another WRFA social function. **Photos by John Craig**



## THE MANOR HOUSE, POTTERNE “Work in progress”



The Manor House, Potterne, is soon to be sold. Completion of the sale for residential use rests on the would-be purchaser being satisfied that a separate entrance to the car park used by the fire personnel has been constructed.

This has meant removing a section of the 400 year old brick wall that many WRFA members once knew as the enclosure for the walled garden.

Photos by John Craig





## Health Matters

Who has been on the sick list?



### NICK GLENISTER

Several months ago Nick needed surgery to sort out his 'waterworks' and the recovery process was much assisted by therapy provided by the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY.

Nick spent time at Harcombe House in Devon and is full of praise for the staff, services and facilities there.

An initial misunderstanding when he first applied for the help of the Charity was soon sorted out with help from the WRFA and the final outcome was to Nick's satisfaction. This proved to be another example of the benefit of being a WRFA member.

### YVONNE KUHN

Yvonne recently suffered from a severe eye infection that necessitated her being in Salisbury District Hospital for ten days. Hospital treatment as an in-patient for an eye infection is uncommon but the good news is that Yvonne has made a full recovery. This is reassuring because she needs both eyes in working order to see what Charlie is up to.

Keep up the good work, Yvonne.



### PETER CAPES

Peter has been in hospital recently as an emergency admission following an accident sustained while he was carrying out some redecoration work. He fell from a step ladder and crashed against a heavy item of furniture fracturing several ribs and puncturing one lung. He was in extreme pain and Julie was a witness to the accident that caused her considerable upset too. In hospital, Peter had to have a tube inserted through the chest wall as a drain.

Peter is now home and slowly recovering and is considering applying to the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY for therapy to assist him along the path to full health. Peter celebrated his 70th birthday on 20th August.

### DEATH OF REG BYRNE

Reg Byrne passed away age 96 in Great Western Hospital on 22nd August. Reg was one of the oldest members of the WRFA. **A full obituary paying tribute to him will be published in the December edition of 'THE BRANCH'.**



## SUPPORT FROM MAYOR OF DEVIZES

**Councillor Jane Burton** was the Mayor of Devizes for 2016/17. She chose the **Fire Fighters Charity** as one of three that she wanted to support through The Mayor's Appeal. Our charity benefited by a donation of **£2,500** and the photo right shows the presentation of the cheque by Councillor Burton to Richard Lake and Mike Cleaver who both serve at Devizes Fire Station

Photo by Wiltshire Gazette & Herald



## ALF MORETON'S FUNDRAISER

Alf Moreton recently organised a concert to raise cash for the **Fire Fighters Charity**. It was staged at the *Forester's Arms* in Melksham and starring in the concert as the lead singer was Alf's daughter, Julie. A number of bands performed.

A pump and crew from Melksham Fire Station attended in support of the concert and children enjoyed the opportunity to play on the fire engine. The grand total donated to our Charity was **£1,701**

## HOW TO GET HELP

Members of the WRFA are frequently needing to call upon one or more of the wide range of services on offer from the **FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY**.

Should you need to do so, contact the **HELPLINE** on the number below between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday

**0800 389 8820**



# AVON FIRE AUTHORITY

## “A Total Mess”

The publication of a Home Office investigation report into the Avon Fire Authority in July has subjected it to much press and media attention.

The investigation was the first ever carried out under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999.

The investigation team was led by Dr Craig Baker who produced a 63 page report that levels strong criticism of the way the Avon Fire & Rescue Service has been run.

The Home Secretary commissioned the investigation after receiving a succession of complaints and allegations about the conduct of the top management and some of



**Cllr. Donald Davis**

“When members were being asked to make decisions with material financial implications they should have been presented with option appraisals, clear business cases and full costings.....”

Page 23, para 84  
The Baker Report  
July 2017

the members of the fire authority. The fire authority failed to satisfy the Secretary of State that the allegations were being properly investigated which would in any case have required some of those accused to have investigated themselves. It was therefore determined that the proper course of action was to set up a statutory investigation as the law permits.

Dr Baker’s report claims that the culture that has existed for some years created a situation where the long– serving Chief Fire Officer, Kevin Pearson, and his senior managers, were not being properly monitored and challenged by the then chairman of the fire authority and the fire authority in general.

One particular area of concern to Dr Baker was the claim by CFO Pearson to have voluntarily taken a cut in salary of 22%. The lead up to this was that in 2009 CFO Pearson retired and was re-employed the next day with his pension being abated.

The investigation uncovered that these actions were taken with minimal scrutiny by the Fire Authority and in fact the report indicates that no proper business case was ever presented in support of them. Two years later, the CFO accepted a 22% cut in salary but the impact of this on CFO Pearson was later reduced by an adjustment to his pension arrangements that restored much of the take home pay he had lost.

The Chairman of the Fire Authority upon whom much of Dr Baker’s criticism falls is no longer in the chair and he has been replaced by Councillor Donald Davis who has publicly given his opinion that the authority is “a total mess”. Soon after making this remark to the media, Chief Fire Officer Pearson and DCFO Houghton were suspended pending investigation into a number of charges. CFO Pearson has issued a press statement after being suspended alleging that he is the victim of a ‘witch hunt’ and the charges against him have been trumped up.



## PRIVATE or NHS ?

Waiting times for common types of surgical treatment are creeping up again. What are the options ?

### KNEE & HIP REPLACEMENT

**NHS** Waiting times vary but the **average** for England at the moment is **seven weeks**. 14% of patients have been waiting more than 18 weeks.

In England, you **cannot choose your surgeon** but you can select the consultant-led team.

The NHS has a variety of **hip and knee implants**. Your consultant should discuss the options with you.

Once in hospital, you will normally be in a **shared ward** separated by gender.

Most NHS wards have limited **visiting hours**.

Treatment is **Free at the point of use**.

**PRIVATE** You will be able to book a time mutually convenient to you and your surgeon. If using medical insurance, you must get approval from the insurer first. You can research and **choose your own surgeon**, but if using medical insurance you must choose from an approved list provided by your insurer.

You will have a **private room with en suite**.

**Visiting hours are more generous** in private hospitals.

If you are not insured, the cost of a **knee or hip replacement** will average at about **£11,500**.



### CATARACT SURGERY

**NHS** In England the **average** waiting time for elective eye operations is **six weeks**. 9% of patients have been waiting longer than 18 weeks.

You can choose the consultant led team **but not the consultant**.

You will be offered **monofocal lenses** which means you will still require glasses for reading and driving etc.

The procedure normally only lasts **about 30 minutes** so you should be allowed home the same day.

**PRIVATE** You can arrange the **time of your treatment** with your surgeon **to suit you** but if paying by a medical insurance you must first get the authorisation of your insurer before proceeding.

You may choose your surgeon but if you are insured, your insurer will wish to approve your choice of surgeon.

You may be offered a **variety of lenses** but if the operation is covered by insurance the terms of the policy may limit your choice.

The **average cost** of a cataract operation is **£2,500**.



**SOCIAL  
EVENTS**



**WRFA ACT OF REMEMBRANCE  
11th November 2017**

**Devizes Town Hall Assembly Room**

**Cash Bar from 6.30pm**

**Two Course-Dinner at 7.00pm**

**Concert by Devizes Town Band at 8.30pm (approx)**

**Followed by the**

**ACT OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Conducted by Revd. Canon Henry Fielding**

**Booking form with this newsletter or download one from  
the 'Social Events' page of the website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk).**

**Christmas Concert**

**By the**

**Band of the Royal Marines**

**28th November 2017**

**7.30pm Cheltenham Town Hall**

**John Craig organising a group**

**booking for the WRFA**

**Contact him for tickets.**

**01380 726343**



## DRIVING A HYBRID

**John Gentleman QFSM shares his experience of being a hybrid car owner**

**Why buy a hybrid car?** Although I am now on my third hybrid, this is perhaps a difficult question for me to answer. They are certainly not cheaper than their equivalent petrol or diesel engine models but they are more economical to run. When they first appeared on the market they were exempt from the London congestion charge and they qualified for nil rated VED. For a high mileage regular commuter, particularly to London, a hybrid car would seem a very viable option.

So, as a low mileage (5 to 6k per year) motorist, who has no wish to regularly drive into London, you can appreciate my difficulty in giving a logical answer to the question posed.

Having ridden several times in a **Toyota** hybrid car, I was very impressed with the concept and although I would not regard myself as an ardent conservationist, I felt I should consider a hybrid for my next car. Although a devotee of the Honda marquee and an owner of their Jazz model, in May 2011 I turned to Toyota who were seriously pushing a hybrid version of their **Auris** model. A test drive left me suitably impressed and the rest is history. Six years on and I am now on my third Auris hybrid automatic. I found driving a hybrid a different experience. In common with some non-hybrid cars this button has a power button which activates the hybrid system as long as what passes for an ignition key is inside the car and the foot brake is pressed.



John Gentleman



Toyota Auris Hybrid

At this point, you can select 'electric', 'eco' or 'power' modes but nothing happens until you select 'drive', then the car can move off silently. When in 'electric' mode the car picks up speed to about 20mph, a clever computer disengages the electric motor and the car goes into petrol mode. The reverse happens when the car reduces speed and at stop it is silent again. There is another clever bit in between when, for example, in slow

moving traffic with the speed varying from crawl to about 25mph the hybrid system switches between electric, petrol and electric in tandem, or petrol only. The status of the hybrid system can be displayed on a touch screen and on the dashboard. Contrary to what you might think, the car does not have to be plugged in to charge the batteries although some of the more recent hybrids are plug-ins. In addition to charging from the engine, the system also utilises the energy generated when braking and decelerating to charge the batteries.

The Auris model I have is a 1.8 litre petrol engine with a constantly variable (CVT) automatic gearbox. The electric drive train comprises a 60watt electric motor powered from nickel-metal hydride batteries, guaranteed for ten years. The weight penalty of the hybrid system against the smallest (1.3) petrol model is 100 kg plus, but, surprisingly, 50kg less than the heaviest (1.6) manual diesel. The manufacturer's figure for **fuel consumption is 72.4 mpg across the board**. My own experience is **low 60s** between fill ups but I regularly achieve mid to upper 70s on individual runs. With exhaust emissions rated at 89 g/km it qualifies for nil VED but from April this year a revised scale of charges came into force on **all new vehicles**. **If new today, my model would now attract a first year rate of £100 and £140 per year thereafter**. If you are considering purchasing a hybrid and would like to have a chat about it, I shall be pleased to answer any further questions, so please get in touch.

**JOHN GENTLEMAN**

## WHAT'S THE GOVERNMENT UP TO NOW?

### THE ELECTRIC CAR CONUNDRUM



In a few years time, motorists may be forced to choose between boiling a kettle and plugging in their electric car to be charged at home. The **National Grid** has issued a warning hot on the heels of the Government stepping up its campaign to rid our roads of vehicles driven by diesel and petrol engines and replace them with cars driven by electricity.

The National Grid has issued guidance based on its calculations that a car battery that is even 25% charged would take 19 hours on charge to top it up to full capacity. Furthermore, while the car battery is being charged, other power drains on the domestic circuit will have to be very small to avoid blowing the main fuse. You will not even be

able to boil an electric kettle to make a cup of tea while car charging is taking place for 19 hours. The Government does not have a good record on thinking through new policies thoroughly and a good example of this is the tax breaks given to drivers of diesel engine vehicles just a few years ago to encourage greater use of that type of engine because the “experts” said they were less polluting than petrol engines. Now the Government takes exactly the opposite view. The Government needs to do a lot more work very quickly providing the UK motorist with reassurance that it has answers to all the questions being raised by bodies such as the National Grid.



Sir Tom Winsor

### POLICE INSPECTORATE TO INSPECT FIRE SERVICES

It has been announced that Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, will also undertake the inspection of fire services and fire authorities. This expansion of his responsibilities falls in line with the Government's aim to bring police and fire services into a closer relationship.

After the announcement of the additional work for the police inspectorate, adverts were placed calling for serving fire personnel to apply for secondment to the inspectorate. The advert also invites

retirees to apply.

Some will argue that this development represents a U-turn on the part of the Government because the disbandment of the old Fire Service Inspectorate took place only a few years ago. However, the Government will defend its position no doubt by pointing out that there is no intention to recreate an inspectorate that exactly matches the old system but one that produces some significant changes to the way fire & rescue services will come under Government scrutiny. Sir Tom Winsor has not served as a police officer and his knowledge and experience of the fire and rescue service seems to be minimal at present.

The Government has also announced that it wishes to see the bringing together of the police and fire services manifesting itself by fire-fighters taking over some of the roles currently undertaken by the police. This will include searching for missing persons. Concerns have been expressed about the changes to the public perception of the fire & rescue service that such changes may cause.



## A TALE OF THE 'PEWSEY PORKERS'

*Not to be read by animal lovers, vegans,  
vegetarians or other persons of a nervous  
disposition*



To the fire crew from **Pewsey** that dealt with a barn fire near Marlborough last February, it all seemed fairly routine at the time.

Sixty tons of hay were well alight and eighteen piglets were threatened by the blaze. These were soon rescued by the fire fighters and spared a premature roasting.

The farmer, Rachel Rivers was very grateful and promised the firefighters a tasty treat in return for their hard work.

The rescued piglets grew into bigger porkers over the next six months and then were taken off to the abattoir to finish their lives as sausages.

Farmer Rivers then gave some of the sausages as a 'thank you' gift to the members of Pewsey fire crew and they soon had the barbeque going and got acquainted once again with the piggies they had rescued. But this time, there was no saving the pigs from heat and flame because they were barbequed to provide a delicious meal that was thoroughly enjoyed by those partaking of it.



However, the sausage feast did not go down well with all that heard about it. The fire station chaps put the story on social media and this attracted some adverse comment from folks that did not see the funny side of firefighters saving animals from a fiery death and then eating them later.

The press picked up the story and several national and local newspapers ran with it.

## UPDATE ON SMOKE ALARMS



Perhaps because of the impact made upon the public by the Grenfell Tower tragedy, a new focus has been placed on **smoke alarms**.

For decades the Government and fire & rescue services have urged the fitting of smoke alarms to residential premises.

Recently, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & rescue Service has enhanced this advice by recommending that more than one smoke alarm is installed in domestic premises. As a minimum, one per floor of the building is being recommended.

**However, just what make and type of smoke alarm should be fitted ?** In an endeavour to try to establish any difference in performance of smoke alarms, the consumer protection magazine, 'Which', recently had a study carried out. The tests were used to find out how quickly smoke alarms operated when subjected to smoke from a variety of different fires ranging from wood and cotton to fast flaming substances such as solvents and plastics. **All devices tested conformed to BSI tests** their performance was found to vary considerably. Below are the test results. for wood smoke. **Note : the Devolo alarm was not activated by some fires. \*\*\***

Make/model	Price	Response Time Seconds
<b>First Alert SA300</b>	<b>£13</b>	<b>09.32</b>
<b>EI Electronics Ei3500S</b>	<b>£16</b>	<b>09.32</b>
<b>EI Electronics Ei100B</b>	<b>£9</b>	<b>09.02</b>
<b>Kidde i9080</b>	<b>£13</b>	<b>08.50</b>
<b>Kidde 10Y29</b>	<b>£16</b>	<b>08.32</b>
<b>First Alert SA200Q</b>	<b>£11</b>	<b>08.27</b>
<b>Fire Angel ST-625</b>	<b>£12</b>	<b>08.13</b>
<b>First Alert SA720CE</b>	<b>£19</b>	<b>07.38</b>
<b>Fire Angel ST-622</b>	<b>£26</b>	<b>06.53</b>
<b>Devolo Home Control</b>	<b>£50</b>	<b>06.41 ***</b>
<b>Nest Protect Smoke Alarm + Carbon Monoxide Alarm</b>	<b>£100</b>	<b>05.13</b>

**Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service** has raised concerns about the repeated 'bleep' sounds emitted by the alarms not always waking people that are asleep. It is maintained that the sound of a human voice shouting 'fire' is likely to be more effective. Experiments have been carried out with alarms that replace the bleep with a recorded voice message. Six children slept through a bleeping smoke alarm sounding in Derbyshire and died.

## AUBREY JOHN MAY DSM, BEM



Aubrey May was a sub officer in the London Fire Brigade at the time of the outbreak of World War 2. He was a member of the crew of the London fire float named **Massey Shaw**.

In 1940, the Dunkirk evacuation called for every sea worthy small craft to cross the English Channel to bring home as many British and French troops as possible before they were killed, wounded or captured by the Nazis. The LFB assigned the 'Massey Shaw' to the fleet of non-military vessels sent to rescue the troops and Sub Officer May distinguished himself as a crew member of the fire boat.

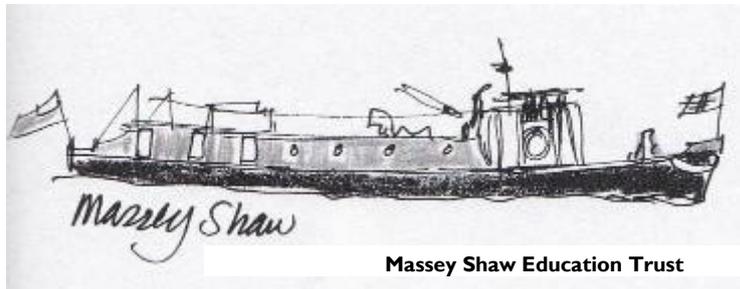
The firemen crewing the 'Massey Shaw' must have set sail for the coast of Belgium filled with apprehension. They were used to fighting fires but not enemy troops, aircraft and ships. Efforts to obtain weapons were only partially successful. They had no automatic weapons, only rifles.

The fire boat was skilfully handled by Aubrey May and his colleagues. They were well used to operating the boat on the River Thames but a sea voyage was not often attempted. More detail of the amazing work carried out by the crew of the 'Massey Shaw' at Dunkirk can be found on page 14.

In recognition of his outstanding leadership throughout the Dunkirk evacuation, Aubrey May was awarded the **Distinguished Service Medal**. It is extremely rare for such a medal to be awarded to those other than chief petty officers, petty officers, seamen and equivalent ranks in the Royal Marines.

In later years, Aubrey May was appointed Deputy Harbourmaster at Alexandria and promoted to the rank of Company Officer (Station Officer) in the NFS. In 1946 a tanker was discharging petrol in the harbour when a severe leak of petrol occurred that soon ignited creating a highly dangerous incident. For his part in dealing with this emergency, Aubrey May was awarded the **British Empire Medal**. The citation for this award reads, "**Company Officer May was ashore at the time of the outbreak. Immediately he observed the fire he obtained a boat and took charge of fire fighting operations from the fire boat. In very close proximity to this blazing fire he showed complete disregard of his personal safety, and after about twenty minutes the fire was under control and finally extinguished. His courage and grasp of the situation very materially helped to prevent a serious conflagration.**"

## **'OPERATION DYNAMO' The Dunkirk Evacuation 1940 & the 'Massey Shaw' Fireboat.**



**We knew that things were not good in France. Sub Officer May had called a group of us together and said, "We're in trouble. The British Army is stranded on the beach not far from Dunkirk. Will you volunteer to go over there?" We agreed readily and scampered around getting the things we needed. There was a bit of a delay while we got a certified river pilot because they wouldn't let the 'Massey Shaw' out of the Thames without one, but we eventually got one and shoved off about 4 o'clock. At Ramsgate we tried to get some metal sheeting for the engines and some Lewis guns but as I recall we were unsuccessful. From this point we had a naval officer in charge and flew the white ensign.**



**Our crew comprised Jack Gillman, Beaumont Hinge, 'Speaky Lowe, Mr Youngman and Sub Officer May who was a really courageous bloke. ... Fireman Heyter, London Fire Brigade.**

Initially, it was thought that the 'Massey Shaw' would be used to fight the fires burning in the oil tanks near Dunkirk but on arrival it was realised that this was not going to be practical. So, the firemen devoted their efforts to rescuing soldiers from the beaches. Here the shallow draft of the 'Massey Shaw' was a distinct advantage and repeated trips between the beach and larger vessels waiting to embark troops were made. It is estimated that the fire boat took about 500 troops off the beaches in this way. This work was undertaken under constant shelling and frequent air attacks. Eventually, the fire boat sailed right up to the jetty and began taking on board troops from there.

Navigation was a problem for the 'Massey Shaw' because she had no compass and the crew had hastily purchased one before leaving Ramsgate but there was no time to swing it and reset it so it could not be relied upon to give accurate bearings. The naval officer in command of the fire boat managed by following larger vessels that were properly equipped with a working compass.

The 'Massey Shaw' returned to Ramsgate fully laden with about 100 troops. After hastily refuelling and adding some naval stokers to the crew the LFB men set sail again for a second trip to Dunkirk. They survived this and also managed to complete a third trip. At one point at night, a German aircraft spotted the 'Massey Shaw' and dropped a bomb which missed but exploded close enough to be uncomfortable.

Having displayed great bravery and skill, the 'Massey Shaw' crew sailed her back up the River Thames to dock at the LFB Lambeth River Station where they were met by a jubilant crowd and given a heroes welcome. The crew disembarked each carrying a rifle, a somewhat unusual item to be seen in the hands of a fireman. The 'Massey Shaw' is still afloat serving as a floating museum and classroom operated by the Massey Shaw Education Trust