



BOOK SHELF
Book reviews
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SHERLOCK

The Fire Brigade Dog

Author: Paul Osborne

Reviewed by John Craig

This is a charming book that I thoroughly enjoyed. Yes, I admit that this is partly due to the subject matter because I love dogs (and all animals) and I am fascinated by the subject of fire fighting and fire investigation. Even so, I feel that this is a publication that will appeal to people who do not necessarily share my above mentioned enthusiasms.

The book is written by a London Fire Brigade manager

called Paul Osborne who is the handler for a remarkable Cocker Spaniel sniffer dog called 'Sherlock'. Together, Paul and *Sherlock* form part of the LFB's fire investigation unit. The dog has been trained to detect by smell hydro carbons such as petrol or paraffin that might have been used as accelerants by someone starting a fire. The book tells that *Sherlock* is very good at his job and enjoys nothing more than being taken to the scene of a fire and, after his specially crafted fire boots have been put on him, he gets to work sniffing the debris.

Even if *Sherlock* does not detect the presence of accelerants in the debris, this is in itself useful information to the human fire investigator.

The author describes a number of cases where *Sherlock's* skill has detected the residue of hydro carbons at a fire scene and this has proved crucial in determining the cause as being arson.

As you work your way through the pages of the book you are made to appreciate that as well as being a much valued and highly respected member of the LFB, *Sherlock* is a dearly loved member of Paul's family. His wife and children adore *Sherlock* and acknowledge the special bond that exists between Paul and *Sherlock*.

Before Paul and *Sherlock* met, Paul was one of the LFB members that attended the 7/7 terrorist attack in central London. Paul was filled with a feeling of helplessness on that dreadful day and those feelings continued to trouble him as PTSD until he began to work with *Sherlock*. The positive contribution that *Sherlock* makes to Paul's life in many ways is having a healing effect.

