

Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association



NEWSLETTER THE BRANCH March 2020

HEALTH & CARE CRISIS DEEPENS



Now that we have a government in power with a massive majority in Parliament there is a growing impatience that Prime Minister Boris Johnson is still talking about dealing with the crisis in social care that he has publicly acknowledged but has so far failed to act to introduce measures to relieve the problems.

The newly appointed Chief Medical Officer, Chris Witty, has announced his concerns that the NHS risks being overwhelmed by the surge in the elderly population that require health and social care. The long promised Green Paper setting out the Government's plans has still not appeared. Chris Witty has pointed out that rural areas



Prime Minister
BORIS JOHNSON

are struggling to cope and only a "health revolution" can avert the collapse in services to the elderly that he fears is rapidly approaching.

The elderly expect to see Downing Street taking action soon to deal with the crisis.



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions to the WRFA fall due on **1st April**. Prompt payment by all members would be greatly appreciated please.

Cheques should be made payable to
**Wiltshire Retired Firefighters
Association**

**Contact the treasurer, JOHN CRAIG, if
you need help 01380 726343**



NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTION TO THE WRFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Would you like to fill one of these chairs on our Executive Committee?

From early February this Association is required to invite nominations for election to the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Nomination forms to nominate yourself (with members proposing and seconding) or proposing other members are available from the website www.wrfa.org.uk or from the Secretary/Treasurer 01380 726343.

The following will be elected or re-elected at the AGM in June.

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Secretary/Treasurer

North Area Representatives (Three Posts)

Central Area Representatives (Three Posts)

South Area Representatives (Three Posts)

Non-Specific Area Representatives (Two Posts)

Honorary Auditor

There are normally only EC meetings in May, October and February.

Area Reps are expected to live in or very close to the areas they have been elected to serve.

CFO Ben Ansell is an ex-officio members of the EC and is not elected.

Our President is appointed by the EC. The post is currently held by Jerry Willmott

NORTH AREA : Cricklade, Swindon, Marlborough, Ramsbury, Pewsey, Chippenham, Malmesbury

CENTRAL AREA : Devizes, Warminster, Trowbridge, Calne, Westbury

SOUTH AREA : Salisbury, Wilton, Amesbury, Ludgershall, Mere, Tisbury



Health Matters



CHRIS WANNELL

Our Chairman, Chris Wannell, has been at a low ebb recently and in continual pain and disability. He has been diagnosed as suffering from inflammatory rheumatism by the GP and has been referred to a consultant at RUH, Bath. He has also been troubled by a loss of balance that has caused him to have several falls. We sincerely hope that Chris can be given early treatment that will bring relief. You are in our thoughts and prayers, Chris.

REVD CHARLES SUTHERLAND

Charlie has continued to be troubled by a heart complaint and has required frequent recent hospital visits, some of them by ambulance. His consultant has diagnosed a heart valve problem and it is possible that he will have surgery to replace the faulty valve with one from a pig's heart. We wish for Charlie that the surgeons can bring about a rapid and sustained improvement in his health.



MAURICE BETTERIDGE

Maurice is suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and now is also having problems with his eyes for which he is having regular treatment. He has been forced to give up driving and is not finding life very easy. He is often having to attend hospital for short periods of treatment as an in-patient.

We wish Maurice well and hope that the treatment he is receiving will bring him relief.

WASH YOUR HANDS

To reduce the risk of infection from viruses such as coronavirus and other 'bugs', get into the habit of washing your hands frequently, or cleansing with an anti-viral gel available from pharmacists. Take this precaution particularly after handling items such as supermarket trollies that have been touched by many people.



PROSTATE RADIOTHERAPY THAT CAN 'HALVE SIDE EFFECTS'



Thousands of men with **prostate cancer** are set to benefit from a new radiotherapy technique that halves side effects. A new way of 'curving' the radiation beam in order to irradiate just the tumour in the prostate is being adopted by many UK hospitals. The treatment is very effective particularly if the cancer is detected in the early stages. The current methods of radio-therapy do sometimes cause damage to organs near the prostate creating side effects such as impotence and/or incontinence. The new method of treatment is known to significantly reduce these side effects. The studies and trials of the new technique have been funded by **Cancer Research UK** . Most radio-therapy centres in the UK and over 40 hospitals have been involved in testing the technique.





Services Access Line

Customer Care Team

0800 389 8820

GETTING HELP

Many former members of the fire & rescue service are under the false impression that once they have left the service they are no longer entitled to the support and services provided by the **FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY**. Once you have served in a fire & rescue service in any capacity (including non-uniformed support services) for five years you are entitled to the support of the Charity for life.

This support takes many forms. Life can become challenging at the most unexpected times and when it does the Fire Fighters Charity stands ready to support you through the difficult and stressful times. Whether you are recovering from illness or injury, trying to cope with a chronic illness or disability or struggling to make ends meet at home, the Charity is here to help. There is help available to meet your mental, physical and social needs.

The first step in acquiring the support you need is to telephone the Customer Care Team on the number displayed at the head of this page.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

The Fire Fighters Charity is keen to keep in touch with people eligible for support even if there is no immediate need for the services of the charity. A database is being compiled on which you may have entered your preferred contact details. Those personal details will be covered by the Data Protection Policy operated by the Charity.

Registering with the database makes it easier to keep yourself updated with what is happening in the Charity. Registration is performed through completion of a very simple pre-paid form obtainable from the charity by phoning 01256 366566 or completing the form online by going to www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/keep-in-touch

GIVING SUPPORT TO THE CHARITY

There are numerous ways that support can be given to the **FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY**.

One of the most effective is to join the **REGULAR GIVER SCHEME** and this enables anyone to commit to paying by direct debit a regular sum to the Charity. If you are a tax payer this can be a gift aid donation.

You can also join the Lottery run by the Charity and by doing so you might win a £25,000 first prize or one of the many smaller prizes. To join the lottery phone 01256 366566.

Also, you can take clothes and fabric to be recycled to a fire station with a yellow bin outside marked as a recycling deposit point in aid of our Charity.

A FINAL SALUTE

To those members who have recently answered their
LAST CALL



GEORGE JOHNSON BEM



George Johnson died on Christmas Eve. He was very well known throughout the Marlborough area and the feeling of deep sadness and loss was reflected by the huge numbers who attended his funeral service on 10th January which was held at the North Wilts Crematorium and conducted by Revd. Canon Henry Pearson. George's coffin was carried on his last "shout" by the 1943 veteran turntable ladder owned by Chris Wannell and known to us all as 'Martha'. Before conveying George to the crematorium with great dignity and style 'Martha' carried George on a last tour of the town. This tour included a circuit of Marlborough College where George had worked for many years. In the main street, the cortege paused outside the Polly Tea Rooms, where George had shown outstanding courage during the 1966 fire there. Donations made in George's memory have been kindly passed to the WRFA and the sum given was £584.00. **Rest in eternal peace, George.**

RUTH CRUDGE



With much sorrow the news was received that Ruth Crudge had died in hospital from a brain haemorrhage on 12th January 2020. Ruth was the partner of a WRFA member, the late Bert Goodship who predeceased her. Ruth lived in Devizes and had a wide circle of friends and a loving and supportive family. Her funeral was held at St Andrew's Church, Devizes on 29th January. The church was filled with mourners and most attended the wake at The Bear Hotel, which was one of Ruth's favourite places to meet friends regularly. **Rest in eternal peace, Ruth.**



Social Events



WRFA SPRING LUNCH WYNDHAM ARMS

Hindon Road
DINTON

29th March 2020

1.00pm

Ample easy parking
Last date for booking 22nd March
Booking form on the website
www.wrfa.org.uk
or with hard copy newsletter



SUMMER LUNCH & AGM

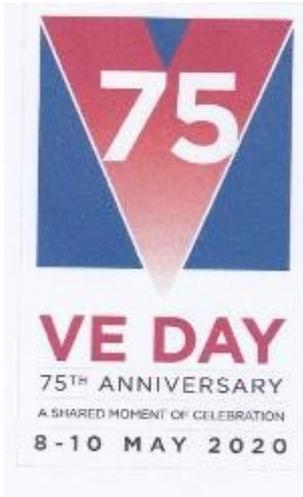
(Note change of date & venue)

14th June 2020

AGM at 11.00am Lunch at 1.00pm

BOWOOD GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

Please note your diary and watch for booking form on website



THEY SERVED WITH PRIDE

As the time in May 2020 rapidly approaches when the nation will mark the 75th Anniversary of VE Day we focus on our members who served in **WORLD WAR II**

FREDA'S STORY

FREDA HART is 98 and lives in Marlborough. She has been a members of WRFA for several years and is the oldest member of the association. Freda is a native of **Stoke on Trent** and when war broke out she was a teenager who like many others was called up to do "war work". Initially, the Government sent her every day to make munitions in a factory in Crewe. She hated it and so was attracted to apply to join the fire service by a newspaper advertisement. She applied at her local fire station and the enrolment process was simple and swift. An officer showed her a row of folded uniforms on the floor and invited her to find one that fitted her.



Freda is justifiably proud of the Defence Medal awarded by King George VI

She was in ! Ahead of her were four very interesting and challenging years of service in what was to become the **National Fire Service** in August 1941. At that time Freda was one of 70,000 women doing very valuable service in the fire service and by the end of the war the number of women in the service had increased to 92,000.



Photo London Fire Brigade/Mary Evans Photos

The firewomen performed a wide range of duties including staffing station watch-rooms and regional control rooms. Other duties included acting as drivers for cars and lorries, conveying messages by motor bike, and catering.

Freda was chosen to specialise in fire control work and she was soon posted to the fire control located in a mansion at **Pire Hill, Staffordshire**.



Freda's Story (continued)



No.9 Region of the NFS encompassed Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. Freda remembers well that every emergency call that passed through Pire Hill was reported to Regional HQ in Birmingham and then onto Home Office in London.

Freda's leadership qualities were recognised and she was sent on a five week course to the NFS College at Saltdean, in East Sussex. On completion of this training Freda was promoted to Leading Firewoman and posted to **Shrewsbury**. There she was allocated a car and a driver and her duties involved visiting all the fire stations in Shropshire to ensure that the firewomen serving there were performing their duties to a high standard and giving instruction to advance their training.



NFS College, Saltdean. Freda is on rear rank, third from right. (photo Freda Hart)

In 1944 when the preparations for the D-Day landings were being made, Freda was sent to **Southampton** to support No.6 region of the NFS. Whilst there she met Stephen Hart, a member of the crew of the cruiser HMS Manchester. Although their association in Hampshire had been very brief, Freda received a phone call from Stephen to propose marriage. Freda accepted and four days later, after a special licence had been granted, they were married. The marriage lasted for 61 years until Stephen passed away. They had four children, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Stephen knew when he proposed that HMS Manchester was about to be sent on convoys to the Russian port of Murmansk and it was going to be another very tough assignment. The ships had already been involved in extremely heavy fighting on the Malta convoys and had been badly



FREDA'S STORY (continued)

damaged. Repairs took ten months and were carried out in Philadelphia, USA. Freda had to cope with the tragic loss of her brother in 1940. He was fighting the rearguard action at Dunkirk with the Grenadier Guards. Guardsman Meade was taken prisoner when the ammunition ran out. The Germans accepted the surrender of the British troops and then executed them, committing a war crime by doing so.



When asked if she enjoyed serving in the NFS, Freda replied, "Yes, every minute of it."

Men and women of the NFS ready to march in the Victory Parade in London.

Photo JOHN CRAIG



PATRICK ALSO SERVED

Patrick Gilliam-Hill is 97 and lives in West Lavington with his wife, Pauline. Patrick is a member of the WRFA by virtue of his ser-



with the Fire Section at RAF Lyneham.

During World War II Patrick served as a civilian fire watcher in London during the Blitz. He survived that to see service in the Royal Navy.

After being trained as a signaller he was posted to



a sea plane base in South Africa. The aircraft and crews from the base were tasked with carrying out anti-submarine patrols.

After retirement from the MoD Fire Department at Lyneham, Patrick set up his own antiques business that he ran for many years from a shop in Shrewton

Although neither he nor Pauline have been blessed with good health in recent years, Patrick still does his best to attend WRFA social events and he particularly enjoys The Remembrance Event in November.

PEOPLE & PLACES



WRONGLY JAILED DORSET FIRE OFFICER

In a case that should have Dorset Constabulary bowing their heads in shame, Christchurch based retired fulltime fire officer, **David Bryant**, was jailed for the rape of a man who was later found to be a serial liar. David's wife, Lynn, along with all who knew David, never believed the accusations and led an investigation to launch an appeal. This quickly revealed the shoddy investigation done by the police and the appeal was successful in 2016.

Tragically, Lynn died soon after David's release. It is widely believed that the stress of the case contributed substantially to her death.

Now the fight to get David compensation is in full swing. He was in jail for three years and the Court of Appeal found in his favour and felt that his accuser, Danny Day, should have been regarded as a blackmailer because of a letter he sent to David threatening to make the false claim against him.

Remarkably, Day was paid £11,000 compensation after David's false conviction to compensate him for a crime that never took place.

Rupert Butler, David's barrister, lodged a claim for compensation for David in 2018. The claim was for a sum of almost £200,000. The Ministry of Justice is now stating that any compensation paid should be reduced by the cost of David's "bed and board" whilst he was falsely imprisoned.

MALCOLM EASTWOOD HANDS OVER THE CHAIR OF FIRE PENSIONS BOARD

In the interests of taking better care of his health Malcolm Eastwood has announced his intention to step down as Chairman and member of the Fire Services' Pensions, (England), Scheme Advisory Board. He has served with distinction on the board for four years and he leaves it on 31st March 2020.

Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of fire service pensions will know that the last few years have brought some very significant issues to the fore, not the least of which is the legal

case recently won by the FBU that has thrown fire pension schemes and other public service schemes into turmoil. Malcolm took on the post of Chairman when the Home Office advertised it as requiring a commitment of about 16 days per year. The reality turned into a requirement of about 70 days per year for which Malcolm refused to take payment. We wish Malcolm good health and well deserved peace.



The State of the (Fire) Nation

Report by H.M. Chief Inspector of Constabulary And Fire & Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor



Attending floods is not a statutory responsibility of the English fire authorities.

In his first annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services has produced a detailed report that might be summarised as one that mixes a few positive remarks with some very sharp criticisms of where the service in general has gaps in its performance.

Sir Thomas acknowledges the strong commitment from fire-fighters to protect the communities they serve and states that the service's greatest strength is how it responds to emergencies. He does, however, comment that in some FRSs

non-statutory duties are being undertaken at the expense of statutory duties that are not properly resourced. (Although flooding is a statutory duty of the FRS in Scotland and Wales the Government has refused to make it a core statutory duty in England.)

Strong concern is expressed by Sir Thomas at his disappointment at the way the service has fallen short in carrying out fire safety inspections. Referring to it as a

“worrying theme” , Sir Thomas states, ***“In particular, some services are not doing enough to make sure buildings are safe for the public.”***

Another concern mentioned in the report is the “ unjustifiable variation’ in the level of service the public receives across the country.

This comment perhaps links with the section of the report that accuses the Fire Brigades Union of wielding influence in some services that is contrary to the public interest. Whilst recognising the value of strong union



The service is falling short in ensuring buildings are safe for the public

representation and the proud history the FBU has of protecting the rights of their members Sir Thomas takes a hefty swipe at the FBU by proclaiming that **“...the FBU should not unduly dictate how fire services are provided”**.

“There is also considerable variation across the sector as to what constitutes high risk premises, and how often they are inspected.”

Some might have expected the report would make comment on the fact that many services seem to be struggling to keep pumps on the run due to a frequent short fall in crews available. In fact, Sir Thomas reports that the inspection of services has revealed that “levels of operational staff have largely been maintained” but a drop in the numbers of personnel engaged on protection duties has been clear.

(Continued on page 13)

On the working of culture in the fire & rescue services, Sir Thomas writes: *“We have come across some outstanding examples of culture in some services. The best cultures are inclusive and diverse, with committed staff working to common goals. But the culture in some services is toxic. We have come across cases of active bullying and harassment. Disturbingly, some people we spoke to seemed to find the poor treatment of staff by other colleagues amusing.”*

Sir Thomas stated that he believes the fire & rescue service would benefit from a **code of ethics** This will reinforce to everyone how they should expect to be treated and how they should behave towards others.

Sir Thomas concludes his report with : **“Without reform, the sector will continue to be beset by barriers that prevent progress, perpetuating outdated ways of working and ineffective and inefficient practices. Ultimately, it is the service to the public that suffers.**

But there are opportunities to be seized. English fire & rescue services are seen around the world as being some of the best. If the reforms I have suggested in my assessment are carried out fully, they will secure major improvements for the sector and cement it as world-leading in the years to come.”



Sir Thomas Winsor

ABOUT SIR THOMAS WINSOR

Given that he is in a position to exert so much influence over the fire & rescue service and also the police service, it is reasonable that people should want to know something about Sir Thomas Winsor’s background.

He was born in December 1957 at Broughty Ferry, Dundee. He attended a comprehensive school and then went on to study law at Edinburgh University. His early days after graduating were spent as a solicitor in Dundee and he later enhanced his qualifications with a Diploma in Petroleum Law in 1983.

After a short period with a leading law firm in Edinburgh, Sir Thomas moved to London and joined the City law firm Norton Rose, specialising in energy law and project finance. He then played a significant part in the design of the regulatory regime for the electricity industry in Northern Ireland.

In 1999 Sir Thomas was appointed as International Rail Regulator which brought him into conflict often with Railtrack.

In October 2010 the then Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, appointed Sir Thomas as H.M.Chief Inspector of Constabulary and these duties were expanded in 1917 to include the fire & rescue service.

Sir Thomas was knighted in the Queen’s New Year’s Honours List on 1st January 2015.

LITHIUM FIRES

A 21st Century challenge to firefighters



Lithium is now used as the electrolyte in lithium ion batteries that are now in ever increasing use throughout the world. They are used to power small devices like mobile phones and larger ones such as tablets and lap-top computers ranging up to cars and heavier vehicles such as buses. In the batteries the electrolyte is a lithium

salt in an organic solvent which is highly flammable. Lithium ion battery fires are usually caused when the comparatively fragile casing of the battery is damaged and punctured. A short circuit often results causing a spark and the electrolyte is soon burning fiercely.

Burning lithium ion batteries generate intense heat and large amounts of smoke and gas. The gas emissions contain fluorides and firefighters must consider them a severe toxic risk and wear suitable respiratory protection and also avoid skin contact.

To extinguish a lithium fire the best method is to use a Class D fire extinguisher in the case of a medium to small battery. Specialist extinguishers are on the market that contain vermiculite particles that are discharged from the extinguisher in the form of a mist.

The mist forms a film over the fire that dries instantly forming a barrier between oxygen in the atmosphere and the burning battery.

The extinguishers are more costly than the usual Class, A, B or C extinguisher. Depending on the size of extinguisher retail prices range from about £80.00 to £400.00.

Some fires involving the larger batteries may have to be allowed to burn out with firefighters protecting surrounding exposure risks.



DISCLAIMER

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www.wrfa.org.uk