



# The Branch

December 2020

The Magazine of Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association



## Happy Christmas



We wish all WREFA members, families  
and friends a very  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
and a  
**HAPPY & HEALTHY**  
**2021**





**EDITORIAL**  
**MOVING BACKWARDS INTO THE FUTURE**  
**IS THE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE DRIFTING TOWARDS THE NEED TO RENATIONALISE?**

It appears to me that there is growing evidence that the fire & rescue service in England is drifting slowly but surely into the structural disharmony that existed before the World War 2 and that led the wartime coalition government to take central control of the shambles by nationalising in August 1941 creating the NFS. The NFS ended on 1st April 1948 and local authority control of the fire service was legally reinstated but very sensibly systems were put in place to try to stop fire brigades, as they were called then, wandering too far off a centralised path. Very fortunately this

was successfully achieved through bodies such as the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC) and the Fire Service Examinations Board. Excellent training for all ranks from Leading Fireman to Chief Fire Officer was delivered through the Fire Service College which did much to standardise training and career development throughout the service. The Fire Service College, held in high esteem throughout the



world then is now playing a much reduced influence on the FRS. The CFBAC and the Fire Service Examinations Board have both been scrapped.

The largest fire authority in England refused to change its name to “fire & rescue service” and retained the proud title London Fire Brigade. The LFB has just reintroduced the ranks of Leading Fireman, Sub Officer and Station Officer taking the LFB further out of step with the rest of the UK Fire & Rescue Service.

It was interesting to see the recent announcement from Tom Winsor, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. He believes that the boundaries between the 43 English and Welsh police services are an inhibition to their ability to deal with criminals the most dangerous of which are becoming ever more sophisticated. Mr Winsor has proposed a pooling of elements of the police service that could be interpreted as a first step towards nationalising the police service as has happened in Scotland. The proposal has full backing from the Home Office and the Police Federation. Given his dual responsibilities I cannot help



Tom Winsor

wondering how long it will be before Mr Winsor puts forward the proposal to wrest back some or all of the centralised control of the fire & rescue service by part or total nationalisation.

The Grenfell Tower public inquiry has already revealed weaknesses in the LFB. In recent years the same or very similar deficiencies in training and operational performance have probably crept into most

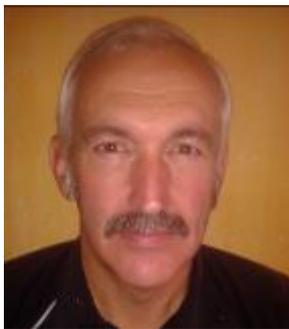
FRSs while attention has been diverted away from the those issues towards diversity and equality. Where is the central direction coming from to put matters right?

**John Craig**

## People & Places

### ANOTHER MEDAL FOR SIMON

Simon Routh-Jones was awarded the CBE in the delayed Queen's Birthday Honours for services to the fire & rescue service. Simon is currently Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services (Scotland) and he has announced his intention to retire from that post on social media in advance of the Scottish Government advertising the vacancy that will exist from 1st April 2021. Well done, Simon!



### LUDO HAS MOVED

Ludo Macaulay has moved house from Coombe Bissett to Shrewton. We wish Ludo, Helen and family a time of health and much happiness in their new abode.



### SWINDON FIREFIGHTER'S SACKING BRINGS CASH AWARD

A firefighter based at Swindon was dismissed after a years service and then appealed to industrial tribunal. The tribunal ruled that the dismissal was unfair because Dorset & Wiltshire FRS had not followed due process. The appellant was awarded £6,765.00. The firefighter's misconduct leading to the sacking included giving an officer the 'V' sign, flirting with a female while attending an incident and sleeping through an emergency call due to wearing ear plugs.



### NEW MEMBER

**Christine Sutherland** has joined the WRFA and we are delighted to welcome her. Christine is the widow of Rev. Charles Sutherland who died in July. Rev Sutherland was a full member of the WRFA by virtue of his service to Wiltshire Fire Brigade as Brigade Chaplain. Christine lives in Devizes and in company with her husband has been a regular supporter of WRFA social events.



## ABOUT THE “JABS”

At the time of going to press the air was filled with mixed messages about vaccination against Covid-19. It all depends which newspaper you read or which news broadcast you catch as to how you formulate an idea of when, if and how the UK population will be immunised against Coronavirus. The facts as we go to press are that



we do not yet have an approved vaccine against Covid-19. There are three that have come through trials to show very promising results but neither the Pfizer vaccine, the Moderna vaccine nor the Cambridge vaccine have been given formal approval by the relevant safety bodies for roll out.

The scrutiny of new vaccines by the approval bodies normally can take years. The indications are that the approvals for the three vaccines mentioned above will be done in months, perhaps weeks.

Then comes the challenge of manufacturing the vaccines in massive quantities and transporting them to the places where the “jabs” will be given. We are told that the NHS has placed orders for millions of doses but my experience of getting a flu jab this year revealed that the vaccines are not necessarily going to be available on the desired timescale. There was a shortage of flu vaccine within the NHS this year and an emergency order had to be placed in America for a type of vaccine that had not actually been cleared for being given to the public.

Assuming that the vaccine doses arrive and are transported to a vaccination centre, where is the NHS going to get the staff from to stick the needles into us? First indications coming from the Secretary of State, Matt Hancock, were that we would go to GP surgeries for vaccinations. Oh dear, that plan was soon shot down by a group representing health care workers including GPs who accused the government of not thinking through the plan. Important work would have to be left undone to free up staff qualified to give injections.



When stuck for an answer to a problem like this governments in the past have usually turned to the military and/or voluntary bodies to rescue them. It was therefore no surprise to learn that the NHS has called upon that magnificent organisation, St John Ambulance, to not only provide staff trained to give vaccinations but to train thousands of other volunteers to provide support staffing to the vaccination centres when they eventually begin to appear.



The claims that a portion of the population most at risk from the virus will be vaccinated by spring next year does seem to be very optimistic. The more realistic estimate seems to be that it will not be until Christmas 2021 that the vaccination programme will be nearing roll out completion. So, until then, keep safe.

**John Craig**



**HEALTH MATTERS**  
Update on members dealing with illness



**GEORGE PRATT**  
George is in considerable pain in his foot that has been diagnosed as gout. He is on medication that will hopefully dissolve the uric acid crystals in the joints in his foot and bring relief. He is finding life difficult because of his failing eyesight. We wish him and Sue all the very best.

**PAUL JAYCOCK**  
Paul recently had to seek medical help for severe pain in his back and loss of feeling in his legs. This was diagnosed as a trapped nerve in his spine that required surgery. The NHS treatment on offer was many months in the future and so Paul opted for private treatment at New Hall Hospital. He is still in pain but hopes this will decline as his recovery progresses. We hope you are soon fully recovered. Paul.



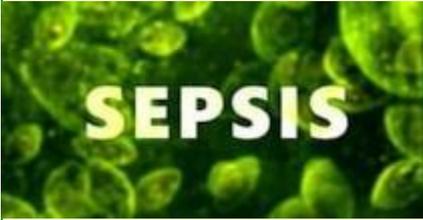
**CHARLIE KUHN**  
Charlie has tripped in his garden and fallen at his home in Salisbury. Fortunately, he did not sustain any fractures but this is remarkable because he sustained cuts and considerable bruising. *“It has shaken me up quite a bit”*, Charlie has told *The Branch*. Charlie is otherwise well and enjoying being an octogenarian. Take it more easily, Charlie!

**HAROLD PORTER**  
We have been following closely Harold Porter’s fight against bowel cancer. The great news is that he is now “cancer free” after extensive surgery at Cheltenham Hospital to completely remove the malignant tumour that scans have shown had not spread. Harold is now home slowly regaining his strength. At age 95 he is an inspiration and we salute him and the NHS team who have treated him so remarkably well. Well done, Harold!



## Health Matters (continued)

### MIKE PINNEGAR



Mike Pinnegar is yet another WRFA member to have been struck down by **sepsis** that nearly ended his days. On August bank holiday he felt unwell and was diagnosed by the out-of-hours doctor as having a urinary tract infection (UTI). Penicillin was prescribed but Mike got worse and collapsed causing Sue to have to call for the out-of-hours doctor again. It was soon

realised that Mike was very ill and in urgent need of being admitted to Great Western Hospital from his home in Royal Wootton Bassett. The UTI had developed into the life threatening condition known as SEPSIS.

On admission to GWH Mike was taken straight to intensive care. He had pneumonia as a complication of the sepsis. He was treated with antibiotics intravenously and slowly he began to fight back against the infection.

Mike is now home and gradually regaining the ability to walk and get back to normal for a man of 73 years. He cannot praise enough the staff at GWH who brought him back from the brink of death.

Very wisely, Mike intends applying for the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY to help him along his road to a full recovery.

We wish Mike and Sue a merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

## WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is an attack by bacteria on the body's immune system. There are many ways that the bacteria can gain entry to the body and it can be from something as simple as a cut, scratch or blister.

Once established as an infection unless successfully treated with antibiotics the body goes into a downward spiral of collapse. One after another the vital organs shut down and death can rapidly follow unless there is positive and appropriate treatment.

The patient may be confused and to use a layman's term, may appear to be "losing the plot". Uncontrollable tremors and shakes is another warning sign of sepsis.

Breathing rate is increased as the patient struggles for breath. A much increased heart rate is also very likely as sepsis takes hold. If the patient has not passed urine or only passed very little in the previous 12 to 18 hours this could be another sign of sepsis. Raised temperature and fever are likely to indicate sepsis when associated with the other signs and symptoms.

Delay in calling for expert medical help can lead to a poor prognosis. It is very important that when you or someone else is unwell with a form of infection vigilance is maintained to detect any early signs of sepsis. If in doubt, dial 999.



# WRFA STILL WORKING FOR MEMBERS

This Association prides itself on giving the best possible service to its members in all circumstances. The present pandemic has forced restrictions on our services that are frustrating. For example, we had hoped that by now the control measures would have started to be so successful that we could arrange a Christmas Celebration Lunch but it is now obvious that this will not be possible.

The Executive Committee members are always keeping in mind those **members who live alone** particularly in the present pandemic crisis. We have put in place a programme for **keeping in regular telephone contact** with our members who are isolated and living alone.



Normally in the approach to Christmas members living alone would receive a welfare visit from an Executive Committee member who would deliver a Christmas card and a gift. The visit would provide an opportunity to discuss how the WRFA can be of further service. Such personal contact is currently ruled out by the Covid-19 threat but all those who would have been visited will receive through the post a card and gift followed up by a phone chat.

## HELPING OUR BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED MEMBERS

We have a number of members who have either lost their eyesight completely or have deteriorating eyesight to the point that they cannot read text even if it is enlarged. When it became known that some of our members who are so affected make regular use of *The Talking Newspaper*, an audio version of the local weekly newspaper, we began to investigate whether it was feasible to produce **an audio copy of 'THE BRANCH'**. The Executive Committee has now given its blessing to this project which is "work in progress".



Memory stick

The process will involve recording the latest edition of 'THE BRANCH' onto a USB memory stick. These will be duplicated so that we have enough to send out by post to all our members who want our magazine in this format. The recipient will then play the memory stick on a simple device. Those members who already

use *The Talking Newspaper* will already have a memory stick player. Those who don't have such a unit will be provided with one. They are designed for ease of operation by those with little or no eyesight.

The memory sticks can be returned for reuse. Postage is free for the blind/partially sighted.



An example of a typical USB/memory stick player

## VULNERABLE PATIENTS LEFT IN LIMBO OVER CARE BILLS FUNDING

The pandemic is being blamed for an estimated 25,000 elderly folk with conditions like dementia have been left in limbo waiting to find out if crippling care bills of up to £100,000 a year will be funded by the state.

In March health chiefs halted assessments of whether patients could have their care bills paid by the NHS while services focused on Covid-19.

But even before the lockdown authorities had been



displaying an increasing reluctance to fund care bills hiding behind assessments that wrongly claimed that devastatingly disabling diseases did not qualify the sufferer for state funding of their care. This has resulted in at least one court case that was won by the Wiltshire plaintiff and the judge forced the NHS to cough up the £200,000 they had refused to pay until sued.



Charities who represent the elderly such as Age UK are saying that they are extremely worried by the situation. For many of those in limbo a delayed decision regarding their care funding will really be decision denied because they will have passed away before their case is given the assessment it requires and deserves.

There is further concern being expressed by legal experts that when the logjam of application

assessments is finally lifted the rush and pressure to clear them will result in unfair decisions.

Even before assessments were paused there was growing evidence that the assessments were in many cases being done in slipshod manner with phone calls being substituted for face-to-face meetings with the applicant.

Under national rules, any patient with **significant health problems** should have their **care and nursing fees paid in full** if the condition is deemed to be the main reason help is needed.

There are indications that the NHS has begun to try to deal with the backlog of applications for funding but with the Covid-19 showing no signs in the short term of being brought under control the health service continues to have an excuse for not treating care funding as being high on the list of where to allocate funds.

# A303 STONEHENGE TUNNEL



The Government has given approval for the controversial scheme for a road tunnel carrying a section of the A303 creating an underground bypass for the Stonehenge heritage site. WRFA member, LES FIELDING, retired as a senior officer in Wiltshire Fire Brigade in 2005 and he has since become a fire engineer with an international reputation for his expertise in tunnel safety. Here is his assessment of the likely safety provisions based on information available from Highways England.

## INTRODUCTION

After more than 30 years since the concept of a tunnel to remove the A303 from the landscape at Stonehenge the latest proposal for a two-mile tunnel out of site of the monument gets Government approval against the recommendations of planning officers. A £1.7bn road improvement scheme for the A303 will complete the dual carriageway between Countess Roundabout at Amesbury and Berwick Down. The objectives will be achieved by providing a high quality dual two-lane all-purpose carriageway on the A303 trunk road between Amesbury and Berwick Down. The village of Winterbourne Stoke will also be bypassed.



LES FIELDING



Photos and illustrations by HIGHWAYS ENGLAND

## THE TUNNEL

The tunnel will be a twin-bore tunnel with cut and cover portals. A boring machine will be used to cut the tunnel.

The tunnel structure will have a fire resistance to withstand temperatures up to 1300 degrees centigrade for two hours to prevent any structural failure in the event of fire.

## TUNNEL SAFETY

It is expected that the tunnel will be provided with the most up-to-date safety systems to protect tunnel users and provide and facilitate effective maintenance and emergency response for all potential disturbances to normal operation including road traffic collisions, hazardous spillages and fire.

*(continued on page 10)*

## TUNNEL OPERATION

Operation will be monitored remotely at one of Highway's England's Regional Control Centres either Bristol or Godstone. Tunnel service buildings will also be provided, built underground at each portal. These house all the tunnel electrical and communications systems. Maintenance operatives will carry out maintenance interventions from these facilities.

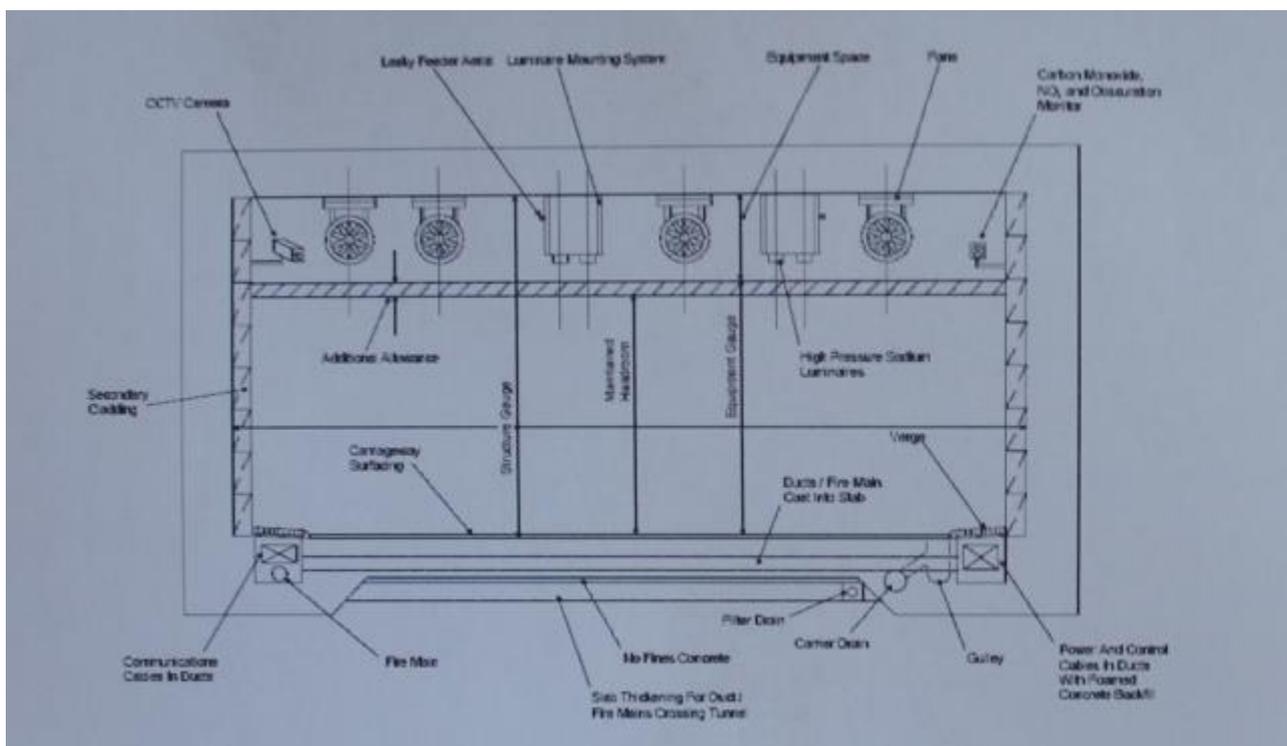
Inside the tunnel there will be equidistantly spaced cross passageways at between 100m and 150m spacing dependant on agreement with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.

In case of emergency, the Control Centre operator will activate control signals to close the affected lanes, providing information to motorists on lane control signs and variable message signs. In the event of an incident requiring a bore or the full tunnel to be closed this will be achieved by closure signals and barriers along with diversion signage to direct traffic away from this section of the A303.

Tunnel safety systems will include :

### *INCIDENT DETECTION*

- VIDEO AUTOMATIC INCIDENT DETECTION, which will detect :
  - Slow moving and stationary vehicles
  - Wrong way vehicle travelling in the reverse direction
    - Pedestrians and animals
      - Debris
      - Smoke
- LINEAR HEAT DETECTION using digital heat detectors fitted to crown of tunnel
- ALARMS will also be fitted to cross passageways doors, emergency road-side telephones and fire extinguishers, so operator is immediately aware of their use.



### *SAFETY FACILITIES FOR USERS*

- Emergency points fitted with emergency road-side telephones and fire extinguishers at 50m centres on near-side verge and at each passageway.
- Illuminated evacuation signage showing distance to nearest cross passageway, escape route or portal.
- Public address voice alarm messages broadcast in tunnel and by car radio break-in.
- (continued on page 11)

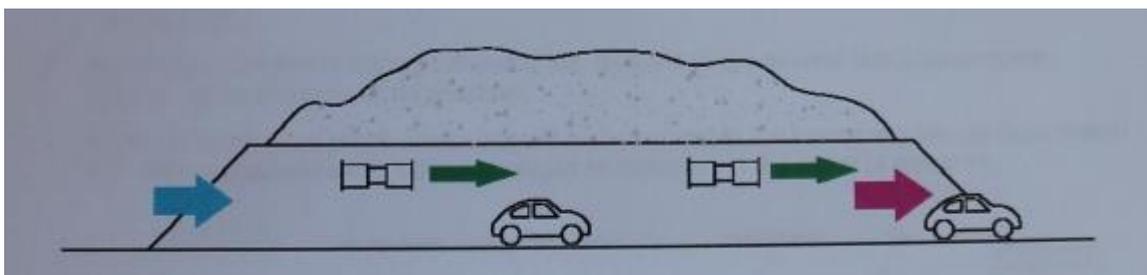
### *TUNNEL LIGHTING*

- The tunnel will be fully illuminated using LED lighting.
- Normal lighting will be provided to ensure appropriate visibility day and night for drivers in the entrance zone as well as within the tunnel.
- Safety lighting will allow a minimum of visibility for tunnel users to evacuate the tunnel in their vehicles in the event of a power supply breakdown. Evacuation lighting will provide direction to tunnel users who are evacuating on foot. This may include the use of reflective marker strips at low level to guide evacuees towards an adjacent cross passageway or portal.

### *LONGITUDINAL VENTILATION*

Tunnel ventilation will be provided by jet fans fixed to the soffit of the tunnel providing reversible longitudinal ventilation. The purpose of this is two-fold.

1. To manage vehicle emissions during normal operations. This will work automatically and is linked to environmental sensors at the tunnel portals and at the centre point of each tunnel. The environmental monitoring picks up NO, NO<sub>2</sub>, CO and exhaust particles using visual monitoring.
2. To manage smoke in the event of a fire. This will respond automatically to incident alarms from smoke and heat detection. This will operate in the direction of traffic. Allowing traffic beyond the incident to drive out of the tunnel and protecting people and stopped traffic behind the incident from exposure to fire and smoke. This will be provided to deal with smoke and prevent back-layering from 100-megawatt design fire.



### *FIXED FIREFIGHTING SYSTEM (FFFS)*

It is anticipated that the tunnel will be fitted with either a DELUGE WATER SPRAY SYSTEM or a WATER MIST SYSTEM both working on the deluge principles. In the event of a fire the tunnel FFFS will operate before a fire can develop above 3-5 megawatts and limit growth beyond 30 megawatts. Working in conjunction with the tunnel ventilation system this will provide a safe environment for persons to escape and for fire service intervention.

### *PROVISION FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES*

The following will be provided for emergency service response and will be closely aligned to the Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP)

- (a) Emergency layby outside each portal.
- (b) Emergency service radio communication repeater signals inside tunnel.
- (c) Emergency Service crossovers in the central median outside each portal to maximise intervention access.
- (d) Tunnel fire main to provide firefighting water from 65mm female hydrant outlet valves adjacent to each cross passageway along with dry cross connectors between tunnel bores to allow intervention tactic from the non-incident tunnel bore into the incident bore to prevent cross passageways doors from becoming obstructed.
- (e) Premises information box at each tunnel portal containing technical information and emergency plans/procedures.
- (f) Communication link to tunnel operation centre.

Dorset & Wiltshire FRS will be fully consulted during the design, construction and commissioning stages. The tunnel is planned for opening in 2025.

**LES FIELDING FIFireE, MIGHT, MIFSM**

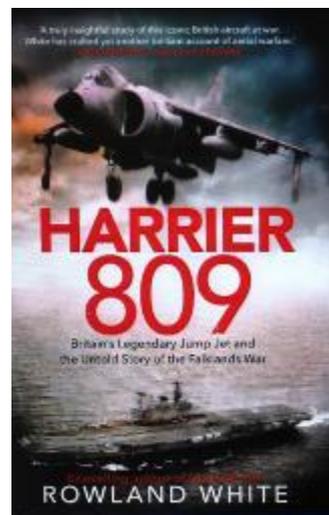


## From the **BOOKSHELF**

Members tell us of books they have enjoyed recently

**HARRIER 809**  
**Author Rowland White**  
**Published by Bantam Press**  
**ISBN 978-1-787-63158-8**

**Reviewed by**  
**JOHN COX**



This book was published in 2020 and deals with the period when war raged in the South Atlantic skies (Falklands) and includes **previously untold stories**. Following Argentina's invasion of The Falklands Britain mobilised a task force to retake the islands some 8,000 miles away.

The two frontline **Sea Harrier** squadrons 800 and 801 travelled south with the task force on the aircraft carriers **HMS Hermes** and **HMS Invincible**. These have been well served by a number of excellent previous books written by pilots who flew the Harriers. A third squadron, **809**, was hurriedly put together and barely three weeks later transported to the South Atlantic on a converted merchant ship, **Atlantic Conveyor**. The aircraft transferred to the aircraft carriers before the Atlantic Conveyor was sunk.

Whilst researching this book, the author discovered a **much bigger story** hiding in the shadows, much of which **is still classified to this day**.

The creation of 809 Sea Harrier Squadron by Lieutenant Commander Tim Gedge is a fascinating story in itself. The mix of ingenuity, lateral thinking, and circumvention of bureaucracy and sheer bloody mindedness that produced an operational squadron from nothing in weeks will be familiar to those who have read '*Vulcan 607*', also written by Rowland White. The meat of the narrative is, of course, concerned with aerial combat over the islands and '*Harrier 809*' does not disappoint

We learn a lot more about the merchant ship *Atlantic Conveyor* which played a critical role and initially served as a virtual third aircraft carrier. There is a parallel and equally absorbing foray into the RAF's efforts to provide the reconnaissance that would be vital to forces trying to retake the islands. There has been much speculation over the years and this content is particularly enlightening.

This book makes a compelling read and I have no hesitation in recommending it.

**JOHN COX**

### **HAVE YOU READ ANY GOOD BOOKS RECENTLY?**

If you have and you are prepared to write a review as John Cox has done above, please get in touch with the editor of this magazine on 01380 726343

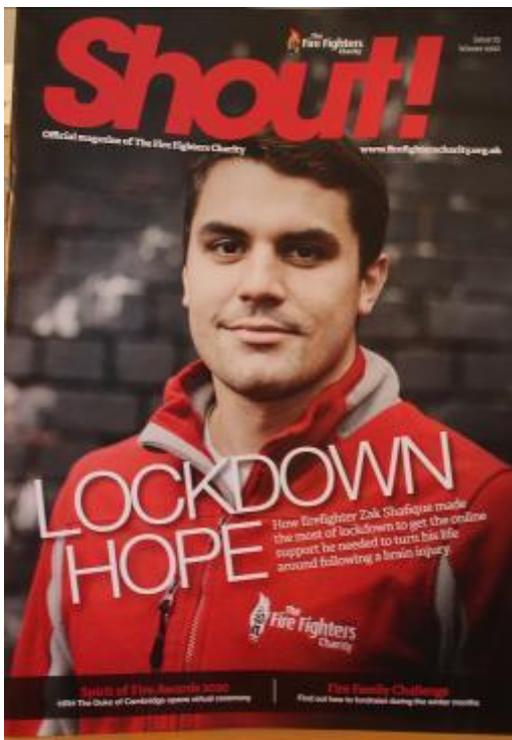


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## PET'S CORNER

Reporting on WRFA members' pets



### OLLIE

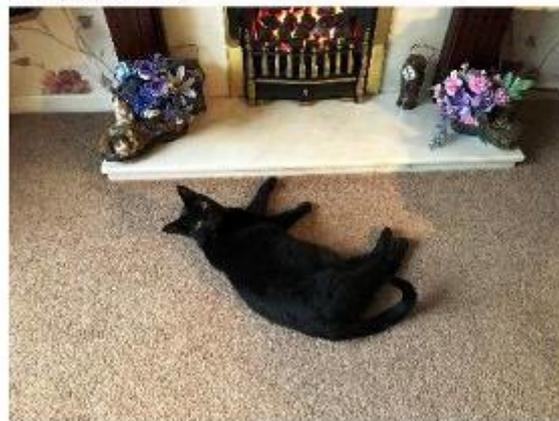
Ollie is a pedigree British Short Hair Silver Tabby. He is 8 years old and he runs the Craig household in Worton. John & Margaret adopted Ollie through the services of Cats Action Trust, Melksham. Ollie loves to be with people and when five years old his first owner realised that his business was taking him away from Ollie too often. Ollie is very contented now.

### POPPY

Poppy brings much joy to the household of John and Jane Cox. She is 8 years old and is particularly keen to spend time with John at every opportunity. Like most cats she has favourite places to perch or to doze/sleep.



I can sit where I like!



And this spot's mine!

### SEND IN YOUR PICTURES!

We intend making 'Pet's Corner' a regular feature and the editor would like to get pictures and information about your pets that you have now or have owned in the past. We have opened 'Pet's Corner' with information on two cats. What about dogs next?

### DISCLAIMER

This magazine is published by Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association. Views and opinions published in it are not necessarily shared by the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. Contact the editor by using the contact form on website [www.wrfa.org.uk](http://www.wrfa.org.uk)