



The Branch

June 2021

THE MAGAZINE OF THE WILTSHIRE RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSN.

OUR SOCIAL LIFE IS BACK!

Unless the Government is forced to amend the plan to ease restrictions imposed to deal with coronavirus pandemic the WRFA is booked to hold our first post-lockdown meeting and social event. This is planned for **SUNDAY 1st AUGUST** and it commences with coffee or tea served in the **Wycombe Suite, Bowood Hotel, near Calne at 10.30am.** The **AGM** will follow at **11.00am.** A two-course **Lunch** will be served at **1.00pm.**



**Roast Beef
with red Wine Jus**



**Roast Chicken & Bread
Sauce , Thyme Jus**

**Booking form
can be downloaded from
SOCIAL EVENTS page
of our website
www.wrfa.org.uk
or one comes attached to hard
copy issue.**



**Sticky Toffee Pudding
with Ice Cream
Butterscotch Sauce**



WARNING
Voting members who only
attend the lunch will be ex-
pected to do dish washing.
Marigold gloves provided



Eton Mess



NEW MEMBERS



JIM TWOMEY

Jim has been warmly welcomed into membership after recently retiring from Dorset & Wiltshire FRS after serving for over forty years as an 'on call' member of the service based at Wilton. Few will match Jim's length of service and we hope that he and his wife Johanna will enjoy many years of happy fellowship with us.

We look forward to enjoying their company at many social events in the future.

RECRUITMENT

After a very quiet period of recruitment recently we have seen a welcome stimulus to recruitment. This is due in no small part to the work of Executive Committee member, **Louise Fielding**, and honorary WRFA member, **Michael Grimshaw**.



Louise Fielding

Louise lives in Devizes and Michael lives in Tetbury and works in sales management fulltime in Chippenham and as a 'on call' crew manager at Chippenham. They are trying to bring the benefits of being a WRFA member to as many eligible people as possible and they would like to have your help. Who do you know who is not a WRFA member but could be?



Michael Grimshaw

There is a very good chance that most readers of 'The Branch' are acquainted with one or more former members of the fire & rescue service or are the widow or widowers of the same and they have not yet joined WRFA. Perhaps they have never heard of us! Please bring us to their attention and refer them to our website www.wrfa.org.uk. It is not necessarily to have served in Wiltshire. We have members all over the UK and overseas. Five years or more service in a fire brigade or service either as a firefighter or in corporate support qualifies you.

PEOPLE & PLACES

PETER EDGE

Peter is a WRFA member and he stood for re-election to Wilton Town Council and Wiltshire Council in the May 6th polls. Peter was elected to serve again on Wilton Town Council but was narrowly beaten to the Wiltshire Council place. Peter is currently Deputy Mayor of Wilton and next May will become Mayor for the second time. He founded two local businesses in parallel with serving for many years as a retained firefighter. He is also President of Wilton Rotary Club. We offer our sincere congratulations and best wishes.



ROBERT SCOTT QFSM, MBA, FIFireE

Newly appointed to head H.M Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services (Scotland) is Robert Scott who was formerly Assistant Chief Officer in Scottish Fire & rescue Service for the last seven years of his nearly thirty years service. He left the Service in 2017 to go into business by forming his own company offering fire safety advice. He took up the inspectorate appointment on 1st April filling the post vacated by the retirement of Simon Routh-Jones. We wish Robert much success.



ROY WILSHIRE OBE, QFSM, FIFireE

The Government of the day used to turn for advice on fire related matters to the now disbanded Fire Service Inspectorate. It then chose to appoint H.M. Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue but then decided to merge that role with the Chief Inspector for Constabularies. It has just decided to create an appointment for someone who knows something about the Service that they and the Civil Service can use to do their bidding and perhaps even give views on pertinent matters. They have appointed Roy Wilshire, the former Chairman of the National Fire Chiefs Council and ex-CFO of Hertfordshire.



MARK HARDINGHAM

The vacant very important post of Chairman of the National Fire Chiefs Council has been filled by Mark Hardingham who has left the post of Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service. He will therefore be looked to as the man charged with getting the NFCC to provide the guidance and focus needed to bring the Service through the no doubt turbulent times ahead. We wish him well.





HEALTH MATTERS

**News of members & friends
dealing with illness**



ANGELA FOREMAN

Angela has started a series of medical investigations that recently included a colonoscopy during which polyps were removed. She is now awaiting the results of biopsies. We are so sorry to learn that Angela is in a lot of pain at the moment and we sincerely hope that this does not continue for long and she is soon pain-free. All good wishes go to both Angela and Glenn.



JOHN CRAIG

Our secretary/treasurer is experiencing pain in his right hip and both knees and is seeking medical help. The damage was done when mowing a lawn with a very steep gradient. It could be that he has to join the queue for joint replacement that so many of our members have had done.

MARGARET CRAIG

John's better half underwent a cataract replacement operation at the Newmedica Eye Clinic in Frome recently. The waiting list for treatment in the Devizes NHS treatment centre was 52 weeks. The Frome clinic waiting list was 6 weeks. Newmedica performed the surgery under contract to the NHS. Margaret's recovery is on track. She can see what John is up to now much more clearly!



WHARTON JELLY FOR JOINT REGENERATION

A new form of treatment for worn out knee and hip joints is called WHARTON JELLY. The jelly is produced from the umbilical cords of babies and it has been passed as a safe alternative to cortisone injections or joint replacement. It is not an instant cure but if injected into the worn or damaged joint it begins the process of restoring the cartilage the loss of which is causing pain and disability



Health Matters (continued)

"I haven't seen you for a long time, Mr Smith"

"That's because I've been ill, Doctor."



SEEING YOUR DOCTOR

During the lockdown the Government approved of NHS doctors in general practice introducing different ways of working that in effect restricted patients having face-to-face consultations with their doctor. Telephoning the surgery became normal. The prime minister has now asked for the old system of being seen and examined by a GP to be reintroduced but the GPs are claiming that they need more resources to do this. A massive list of patients needing to see their doctor has built up.

NHS CHANGES TARGET FOR A & E

The NHS has decided to abandon the target that required patients attending Accident and Emergency Departments to be seen within 4 hours. This has not been achieved for the last five years. A new system is being considered that introduces several elements of quality assessment making it more complex.



U-TURN ON PROSTATE CANCER DRUG

The National Institute for Health & Care (NICE) has reversed its decision to ban the use of the drug **abiraterone** by the NHS on the grounds of cost. The manufacturers, Janssen, initially quoted £3,000 as the cost of one month's treatment. The NHS 'bean counters' have negotiated a lower price of £2,300 per month. It is used to treat prostate cancer.

Aberitone works by slowing the flow of testosterone to the tumour in the prostate extending the patient's life by several precious months.

AUDIO VERSION OF 'THE BRANCH'

The Executive Committee of the WRFA has always placed great importance on trying hard to keep in touch with members and giving them all the opportunity to keep right up to date with what is happening in our Association. The website plays a great part in achieving this and our magazine, *The Branch*, it is known is playing a useful part in providing a link with members, every single one of whom we value very much.

Reading the website and the magazine is fine but you need to have enough vision to do so. It is known that some of our members have impaired vision making reading print difficult if not impossible and some have lost their sight completely.



USB MEMORY STICK

Some of our members with impaired vision already make use of a service called, *The Talking Newspaper* which provides a sound recorded version of the local news. The news is recorded onto a USB, sometimes called a memory stick. This can be plugged into a memory stick player and the recipient can listen to the recording as many times as they wish. The USB is sent post-free in a small wallet through the Royal Mail and when the user has finished with the recording the USB is sent back to be recycled and re-used. There is no charge for the postal service.

The Vice Chairman of the WRFA, John Cox, who is also our webmaster, has put a lot of work into researching how our Association can upgrade its service to visually impaired members by offering an audio version of editions of *The Branch* recorded onto USB memory stick just like the talking newspapers. The necessary equipment has been purchased and this edition of our magazine is the first that will be issued as an audio version to those who would like to use such a service.

If you already use the talking newspaper it follows that you must already have a USB player of some sort.

If you have no means of playing a USB and you wish to use this new audio service we are offering, please get in touch with the secretary/treasurer on 01380 726343 and John Craig and/or John Cox will advise you on how best you can be helped.



USB MEMORY STICK PLAYER

We already know of a number of members who it is thought might like to have the audio service but we need to draw up a mailing list showing all members who are definitely wanting to try the service. Please get in touch with John Craig if you want your name to go on the list.



FIRE NEWS

Update from the world of Fire & rescue



FIRE & RESCUE CALLS CONTINUE TO FALL

The latest statistics for fire & rescue services across the UK are for the year ending 2019. They show a continuing decline in calls made upon the Service. Here are some of the details:



- * **4% decrease in calls attended by UK Fire & Rescue Services**
- * **12% decrease in fires attended overall**
- * **9% decrease in deliberate fires**
- * **10% decrease in fire related fatalities**
- * **Fires accounted for 28% of total calls**
- * **Non-fire incidents accounted for 30% of all calls**
- * **41% of total calls were false alarms**

The figures for the year ending 2020 will be interesting to contrast because in order to provide support to the NHS during the pandemic most fire & rescue services are taking staff away from preventative and protection work. It remains to be seen what impact this will have on performance statistics.



999 CENOTAPH

The project to create a memorial to all the emergency service personnel who have died in the line of duty is now at an advanced stage. The statue will have figures of a nurse in PPE, a police officer, a search & rescue team member with his dog and a female firefighter.

Money is needed to fund the project to completion and Lesley Routh-Jones, a Wiltshire based lady who is married to WRFA member, Simon Routh-Jones, is one of the principal people involved in the fund raising efforts. We wish the project well.

ROYAL VISIT

To encourage businesses trying to recover from the lockdown, Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall visited in "walk-about" style the Clapham Old Town area of London on 26th May.

They called in at Clapham Fire Station and spoke to the members of White Watch. The Royal couple thanked the crew for their support of the NHS.



Photo London Fire Brigade

FIRE NEWS

Continued



FIRE ESCAPE HOODS NOW IN USE



Fire escape hoods in use at a fire in Bournemouth

Life-saving equipment, brought in following recommendations from Phase 1 report of the Grenfell Tower public inquiry, has been used for the first time by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.

Fire escape hoods, which help to protect the wearer from toxic fire-related gases, vapours and particles for at least 15 minutes, are currently being rolled out across the Service. They are used when people need to be evacuated from or through a smoke-filled location, and other exits, such as by ladder or smoke free staircase are not available or viable.

A procurement for the fire escape hoods started last September, with a training package made available to firefighters in February and the first supplies delivered to fire stations in March. All fire engines within DWFRS were carrying the hoods by the end of April.

Chief Fire Officer Ben Ansell said : *“The provision of fire escape hoods was a recommendation within Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower public inquiry and we worked with other fire & rescue services within the South West to agree a common approach. Although prompted by the Grenfell Tower fire, these hoods are not limited to use in high rise buildings; they are suitable for any situation where a member of the public has to be moved to safety through a smoke-filled area. Fifteen minutes of protection against toxic smoke can make the difference between life and death. At a recent fire in Bournemouth we brought 11 people to safety from a three-storey block of flats; 9 of those people were evacuated by ladder, but 2 wore our new fire escape hoods and were led to safety through the building. “*

The hoods were tested by fire crews from Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch at a series of high-rise exercises held in November and December.

This provided an opportunity to assess the hoods under operational circumstances and user guidance was issued thereafter.

Photos by courtesy of Dorset & Wiltshire FRS



FIRE NEWS (continued)

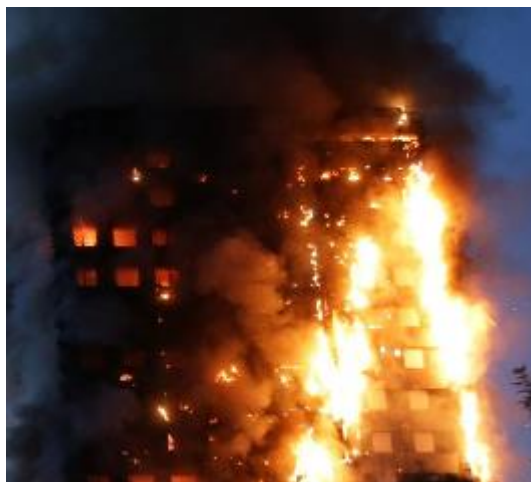


Before being placed into operational use the smoke hoods were thoroughly tested by Dorset & Wiltshire FRS at a series of exercises in Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch.

Photos by courtesy of Dorset & Wiltshire FRS

More FIRE NEWS

LEGAL DISPUTE OVER CLADDING REMOVAL



The arrangements for keeping safe the thousands who live in tower blocks with the very dangerous external cladding have run into more trouble. The Government has provided £5 billion for a fund to which managing agents of the many affected buildings can apply to obtain a grant to pay for the removal of the cladding.

The agents have jointly refused to sign the contracts setting up the grants because they claim that the wording makes them legally and financially liable for the other fire safety measures after the cladding has been removed. If they signed up to this it would make most of the agents insolvent. The Government claims that the wording of the contracts is being misinterpreted. The legal argument drags on while the deadline for applying for the grants has now passed.

EMPHASIS BACK ON DIRECT ENTRY

Insufficient progress made on recruiting people from outside the fire & rescue service into senior appointments



Pressure coming from politicians, the inspectorate and those campaigning for equality and diversity has caused a renewed focus on filling senior appointments in the fire & rescue service with managers recruited from outside the service as direct entrants. One of the obvious risks associated with such a policy is placing operational command at incidents in the hands of managers who lack experience of the service from ground roots level. The service will have to support the direct entrants in ways that help them overcome this challenge and maintain the confidence of the firefighters being supervised and managed on the fireground.

Bringing in more direct entrants it is believed will assist the service in reforming by making even more progress with diversity and equality issues than has been made to date. There is a mixed picture of progress on these matters throughout the UK. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) will be playing an important role in guiding the service through the steps it will need to take to make the direct entry scheme a success and give opportunity to those who bring fresh ideas and the benefit of their experience in other fields to drive the fire & rescue service forward.

More FIRE NEWS



AMBER HEATH FIRE ALERT ISSUED

Dorset & Wiltshire FRS has issued an 'Amber Alert' warning of the increased risk of fire in heaths and forests as the May Bank Holiday approached. Although the weeks preceding the holiday saw near record rainfall levels the forecast for hot and sunny weather over the early June period gives reason to fear a glut of fires involving scrubland and trees. At a similar time of year in 2020 a fire at Wareham Forest needed massive fire fighting resources provided by several fire authorities to deal with it. The fire burnt for weeks.

(photo by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service)



OLD BRIGADE STANDARDS

Good news! The standards formerly used by Wiltshire Fire Brigade and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service have been donated to the Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association. The standards are in excellent condition, not a moth or bullet hole to be seen! Expect to see them on special and appropriate occasions.

USE 999 TO CALL FIRE SERVICE

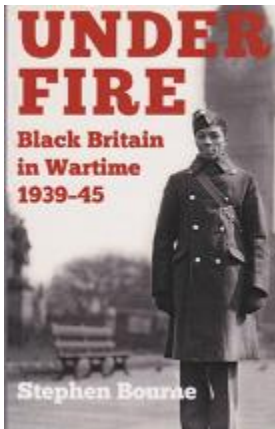
Avon Fire & Rescue Service is concerned that some people are resorting to using the 101 telephone service to report fires which means that a fire call made on 101 is connected to the police and not to the fire & rescue service. There is an inevitable delay in the proper service being sent to such incidents.

This has happened enough times to merit Avon FRS and Avon & Somerset Police issuing joint guidance to the public to use **999** to report fires. Simon Shilton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, has said to the public, *"this is about helping us to help you."*





Book Shelf Book Review Page



UNDER FIRE **Black Britain In Wartime 1939-45** **By Stephen Bourne** **Reviewed by BRIAN WATTS**

Anecdotal first-hand testimony from Black Britons who supported Britain during the Second World War, superbly researched and written by author, Stephen Bourne.

Coincidentally, I have recently undertaken a little research into a black firefighter who was based in London during the Blitz and I'm pleased to say that Stephen has documented the story of

George Roberts within his book **George Arthur Roberts** was born in 1890. Leaving Trinidad, he arrived in London at the outbreak of World War 1 and he joined up; he was nicknamed "*the coconut bomber*" supposedly due to his ability of throwing bombs behind enemy lines! He sustained wounds from the Battle of Loos and the Somme.

After WW1 George settled in Lewis Road, Camberwell, got married to Margaret in 1920 and had two children. When WW2 began, he joined the fire service, working from New Cross Fire Station and saving countless lives during The Blitz. He was later awarded the British Empire Medal.

In 2017 when there was an online vote for people to nominate who they thought deserved a blue plaque on their home and George was declared the winner. He was not only one of the first black men to join the British Army, but was one of the first to join the fire service. Stephen writes about many black people from over the world, mainly the commonwealth, and goes into great detail about the racism and other challenges that many of them faced when helping to defend their country in our time of need..

Some of what they faced was shocking and many of the accounts really surprised and disappointed me at the colour bar and hate they faced, not least from the troops from other nations such as USA and South Africa where racism was much more extreme.

The book gives a really good insight into the way that black people went above and beyond for king and country.

For those who have Amazon Prime membership a bonus is that at the moment this book can be obtained free!!!!!!

Brian Watts

Published by The History Press
ISBN 978-0-7509-9435-4



Brian Watts



FINAL SALUTE



Graham Sidney Law



WRFA member, **Graham Law**, passed away age 76 on 25th April and we mourn with his family and friends this very sad loss.

Graham was born in February 1945 in Wroughton. At school his talent as a footballer began to shine through not only as a player of considerable skill but also as a team captain.

Graham married Sylvia in August 1967 and they were a devoted couple. Sadly Sylvia predeceased him in May 2013.

Graham joined Wiltshire Fire Brigade in 1964 and was posted to Swindon. He is still remembered warmly with respect by WRFA members who had the privilege of serving with him including Bill McGill, Brian Watts, Robbie Groom, and Keith Wright.

An injury on duty forced an early retirement from the Brigade in 1981.

In retirement Graham proved himself to be a man of many talents. One of his favourite ways to spend time was in the room in the house he called his 'Clock Room'. Inside there he enjoyed many hours of working with and repairing watches and clocks.

His other hobbies included fishing and motor biking but he particularly liked playing his ukulele. Graham was one of those rare people who had such an aptitude for music that he could pick up almost any musical instrument and in a short time he would teach himself how to get a tune out of it. The ukulele is an instrument associated with the late George Formby and accompanied by his daughter, Rachel, Graham loved to play and sing '*Leaning On A Lamp-post*'.

Graham had a very kind nature and one way this manifested itself was in his love of animals. He had a special bond with his cat, Connie.

Graham's funeral at Kingswood Crematorium was subject to the frustrating pandemic restrictions but the family kindly allowed Brian Watts to represent us all.

Rest in eternal peace, Graham.

JMC

FINAL SALUTE



GUY TADMAN

The Dorset & Wiltshire FRS has been plunged into mourning for Guy Tadman who died from acute myeloid leukaemia on April 29th. Guy served for 22 years at Trowbridge and was a watch manager when illness forced his retirement shortly before his death. Guy was first diagnosed in 2019 and a stem cell transplant gave hope that the cancer would be beaten but, alas, it was not to be.



Funeral cortege passes Trowbridge Fire Station

Guy dedicated his life to helping others and he was a well known and very popular figure in the Service and Trowbridge. He began the first Wiltshire fire station twitter account in 2013 and this proved so successful it earned him a Chief Fire Officer's Commendation. A parade of mourners turned out to say farewell to Guy as his cortege passed along Hilperton Road.

(Photos by courtesy of Dorset & Wiltshire FRS)



Chief Fire Officer Ben Ansell leads the tribute

DISCLAIMER

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