



The Branch

July 2022

Magazine of Wiltshire Retired Firefighters Association



**This Association
sincerely thanks Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
for the 70 years
of devoted service to
The Nation and Commonwealth.
God save the Queen**

PEOPLE & PLACES

LUDO AT THE PALACE

We have already reported with joy the award of the MBE to Ludwig ('Ludo') Macaulay. The normal investiture arrangements had to be amended due to the pandemic and Ludo opted for attending a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 6th May; he had already been sent the medal.

Ludo was allowed to be accompanied by Helen and his two daughters, Jennifer and Leonie. HRH Prince Charles was very close to the Macaulays as he circulated among the guests. Ludo's MBE was awarded for service to community and the Fire Fighters Charity. Even a casual glance at the huge list of his fund raising work leaves no doubt the award is richly deserved.

We are proud of you, Ludo!



Former CFO CRENNELL



CFO ODIN

QUEEN'S FIRE SERVICE MEDAL

In the Queen's Birthday Honours List **Mick Crennell** who retired as CFO of Avon FRS in March was awarded the QFSM. He had served for a total of 30 years and had been CFO since 2018. The CFO of Hampshire & Isle of Wight FRS, **Neil Odin**, was also awarded the QFSM. We offer our sincere congratulations to both recipients.



SOCIAL EVENTS



Lunch at The Hourglass , Devizes



Sunday 7th August 2022

This events begins at 11.00am in the function room of this very popular gastro pub on the side of the Kennet & Avon Canal. The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will precede the lunch. Coffee or tea will be available throughout the meeting.

Anyone attending who is not required to attend the AGM may wish to sit on the terrace and watch the canal traffic pass by while enjoying drinks.

LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT 12.30pm

One course £15.00 Two courses £23.00

BOOKING FORM ON WEBSITE





HEALTH MATTERS

News of those
dealing with health



BRUCE BRINGLOE

Bruce has a medical condition that causes his blood pressure to fluctuate abnormally resulting in him frequently losing consciousness. The condition is untreatable. To give him some security of mobility Bruce is taking steps to obtain a mobility scooter. We wish Bruce and Janet the best of luck.



ALBI RICHARDSON

Albi has had two recent spells in GWH to receive treatment to correct a problem with his heart rhythm. His medication has been altered and the condition has been cured. He is now waiting for surgery to correct a hernia. We hope all goes to plan for Albi moving forward from here.

MARGARET CRAIG

Margaret has had surgery to remove a cataract from her right eye recently. The same operation was carried out on her left eye a year ago. The treatment in both cases was carried out by Newmedica at Frome Community Hospital and was funded by the NHS. The treatment has been successful and Margaret can now keep a close eye on what John is up to!

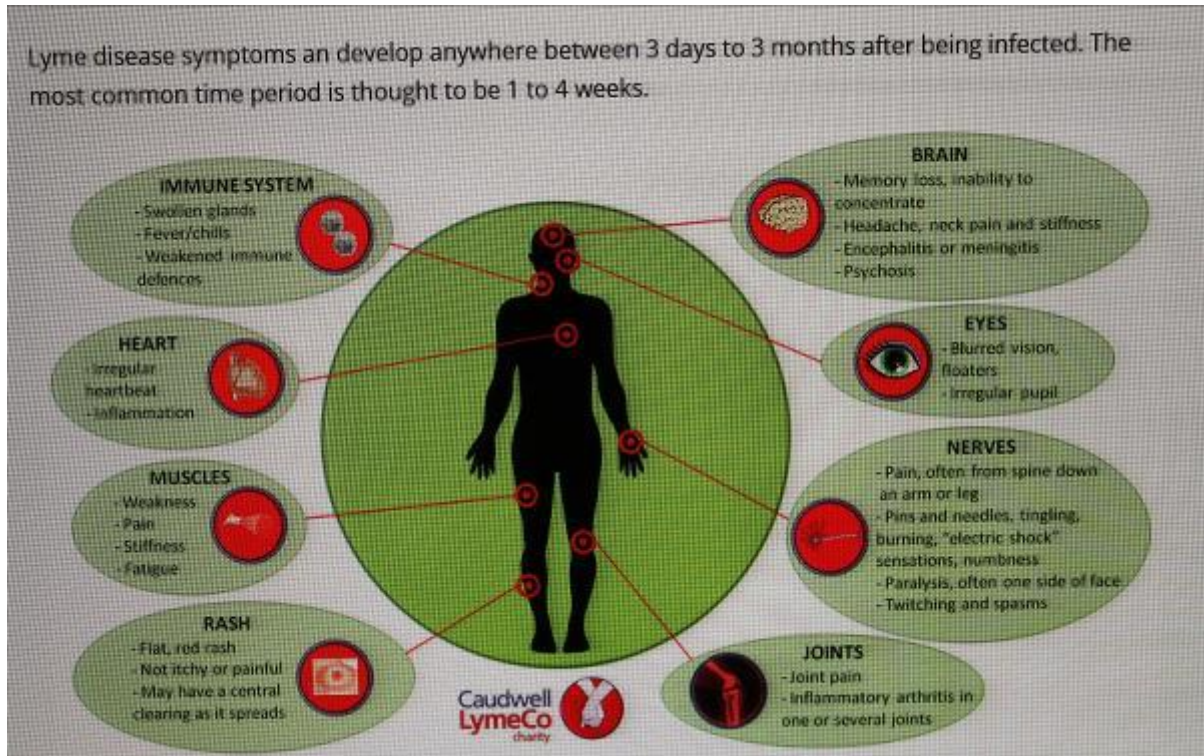


PETER CAPES

Peter has had a course of radiotherapy to treat his prostate cancer and this meant daily trips from his home in Dorset to hospital in Poole. He found this a demanding experience but there is every hope that the zapping of the cancer will result in a cancer-free Peter. He has beaten two other types of cancer and we all hope this third battle with the 'Big-C' is just as successful. Best wishes, Peter.

LYME DISEASE

With the arrival of summer more people will be taking to outdoor pursuits and enjoying the countryside. This does put more people at risk of **tick bites** that can lead to *Lyme disease, an infection that attacks the nerves, brain, heart, joints eyes and can cause skin rashes.* The disease is spreading throughout Europe at the alarming rate of 14% year on year increase.



The symptoms of Lyme disease often mimic other diseases and diagnosis is therefore not easy. One distinctive symptom unique to Lyme disease is the *erythema migrans rash*, often referred to as the “*bull’s eye rash*”.

Early treatment with antibiotics should give a high probability of the patient making a complete recovery. Sadly, about a third of those infected never make a complete recovery and the disease has proved fatal in some cases. There are an estimated 9,000 new cases in the UK every year. Lyme disease is the most common and fastest spreading vector-borne disease in Europe, yet it is the most under researched illness in the western world.

If you are venturing into fields, parks, forests and other places where ticks might be picked up, try to cover as much of your skin as is practical and examine yourself for ticks when leaving the area of risk. The ticks feed on human and animal blood. They transfer the *Borrelia Burgdorferi* bacteria to set up the infection. Therefore, if taking a dog into an area of risk from tick bites examine the pet as soon as possible after exiting the area of risk and remove any ticks found. Remember that, as with fire, prevention is better than cure.



Cost of Living Crisis



Every day seems to bring news that the cost of living crisis is worsening. Food banks are reporting having more requests for free supplies than ever and donations of food and money are decreasing as a result of many who previously donated having to tighten their belts. Inflation is running at about 10% and this is the worst it has been for decades.

The Government is being urged to do more to ease pressure on household budgets and the announcement of a windfall tax on energy suppliers seemed to be a step in the right direction. The 'promise' to restore The Triple Lock to the system of calculating the rise in state pension next year would seem to be another positive step but *next April is a long way off when the cupboard is bare now*. The question for millions on low income is "*how do we survive until this crisis goes away, if it ever does?*"

The Executive Committee wishes to assure all WRFA members that they are committed to doing as much as possible to assist members and their families. We cannot give direct cash hand-outs but we can and do try to provide a service while keeping the financial impact on members as light as possible. One example of this is that the comments about the high cost of the Spring lunch at The Rose & Crown, Salisbury have been heeded. The quality of that meal was superb as was the venue but even with a generous subsidy to the ticket price it was still a relatively expensive event. Much effort has gone into finding a venue for the lunch and AGM on August 7th that satisfies all our needs for such an occasion including offering a very high quality Sunday lunch at a very competitive price (see page 2). ***It is now up to members to make all the effort expended worthwhile. Please support this event including the AGM.***

If you are a member who is really finding it hard to make ends meet, you are advised to request help from either the ***Fire Fighters Charity*** or the ***Members Welfare Fund of the British Fire Services Association. (BFSA MWF)***

SEE BELOW



To contact the FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY
Call **0800 389 8820**
(phone line open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm.)



To contact BFSA MWF
Call Peter Mills 01672 520466
Or John Craig 01380 726343

Calls will be dealt with as confidential.



999 NEWS

**A peep at what has been happening
in the Blue Light Services**



ANGER AT BEMBRIDGE

A lady in her 50s died in hospital after being injured when her flat caught fire just a short distance from Bembridge Fire Station on the Isle of Wight in February. The pump at Bembridge was off the run due to there being insufficient 'on call' firefighters on call to turn out. The incident has stirred angry words from some local folk and the Service has responded by appealing for more men and women in Bembridge to step forward and become on call firefighters.



Photo 'Island Echo'

ANGER AT ARSON ATTACK ON MALMESBURY ABBEY

Local feelings are reported to be running hot in Malmesbury because there was an arson attack on the 12th century Grade 1 listed heritage building recently. Three wheelie bins were pushed up against the Abbey and ignited during the evening. The fire is thought to be the work of youths and police have arrested a 16 year old male. Their investigations are continuing.

The local fire station is staffed by 'on call' (part-time) firefighters and it is only 400 metre from the Abbey but the fire engine could not respond due to there being insufficient crew. The Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service has used the incident to boost its calls for more local people to join the service as 'on call' firefighters in the hope of making cover from the station more reliable. Members of the public fought the fire with portable extinguishers from a nearby hotel and some shops. They did a good job in controlling the fire until a fire appliance arrived from Chippenham, ten miles away.

The press and media have reported that the town is being troubled by an increase in vandalism and the arson attack is the most recent and most serious example of this outbreak of anti-social behaviour.



Left : flames licking the Abbey walls.



Above : Malmesbury Abbey

UK AMBULANCE SERVICE IN CRISIS

The NHS Ambulance Service is under performing so badly that it has been declared by its chiefs to be in a state of crisis. Waits for the arrival of an ambulance very often far exceed the target times even for the very serious category of calls. Some WRFA members have experienced this themselves as was reported in the last edition of 'The Branch'.



Ambulances often have to queue outside hospitals before patients can be admitted and this logjam is said to account for about a third of the delayed attendances. Statistics gathered by the NHS show that the number of incidents regarding a threat to patient safety while they were in the care of the ambulance service has rocketed by 77% in the last year. It is recorded that patient deaths have occurred due to delayed attendance of an ambulance.

WILTSHIRE POLICE MISSING 999 TARGET

The Home Office recently published the statistics showing how quickly 999 calls were being answered in Police control rooms throughout the UK. The national average was shown to be 16.1 seconds and Wiltshire Constabulary took on average 16.63 seconds. Ideally, the calls should be answered in under 10 seconds.



The Police & Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire, Philip Wilkinson, has assured the public that steps are being taken to improve call answering times and he is calling for improvements within weeks, not months.

TEN FIREFIGHTERS KILLED IN BANGLADESH BLAZE

On June 4th fire broke out in a container depot at Sitakund, Bangladesh. There followed a series of explosions and the fire took 86 hours to extinguish by which time 48 people had been killed and 450 injured. Ten firefighters were among the dead. The Army was called in to assist the fire service. It was thought that the containers held textiles and clothing but subsequent inquiries have shown that hydrogen peroxide was also stored in some containers. This storage of chemicals was unauthorised.



Bangladesh has an appalling record of industrial accidents including fatal fires.

Fire Services National Museum Trust Ends

The ambitious and optimistic plan to create and sustain a **Fire Services National Museum Trust** came to a very sad ending in January when under supervision from the Charity Commission the trust was closed and taken off the register of charities. For about ten years the trustees had struggled to put the trust on a sound footing and the charity in the hope that a suitable base could be found where the historic items could be put on display and given preservative maintenance.



**SWINDON'S OLD
TURNTABLE LADDER**

No doubt many WRFA members will recognise this machine and seeing the photo will evoke memories of the fires that Wiltshire Fire Brigade fought with its help.

Photo courtesy of Neil Wallington

However, there followed a sequence of unfortunate circumstances and the trustees, led by the chairman, Neil Wallington, had to move from the site they had occupied for a time at Weedon, Northamptonshire. A place to garage the vehicles and other items was found on a farm at Petersfield but it was always going to be a stop-gap.

As problems and debts accumulated the seven trustees became only three; Neil Wallington, Stewart Kidd and Michael Hebard. The Charity Commission became aware of the difficulties being faced by the charity and carried out an investigation. A fire service preservation enthusiast and expert, Dr Barry Hutchinson, then came to the rescue of the trustees. Dr Hutchinson has the means to fund the upkeep of the museum exhibits and to occasionally display them at his home in Wetherby, Yorkshire.

By the beginning of this year the 60 plus fire engines in the possession of the FSNMT had been reduced to just 8, the others having been sold to meet debts. ***One of the machines transferred into Dr Hutchinson's care is Swindon's old Merryweather Turntable Ladder, pictured above.***

Hours of toil went into trying to keep the FSNMT viable but alas in the end it just wasn't to be.

THE DROUGHT & HEAT WAVE 1976



I am writing this in mid-June and we have just “enjoyed”, depending on your situation, a couple of days of high temperature that is being described by some as a mini-heat wave. There is a discernible note of apprehension from some commentators who say that such hot weather so early in the summer is worrying if it is the prelude to a much more prolonged period of hot and dry weather. This has caused me to reflect on memories of the Great Drought of 1976 and in particular the enormous strain it placed on the UK fire brigades and indeed any fire fighting unit, public or private. I have no doubt that members of the WRFA who served through the summer of 1976 will have a myriad of stories to tell as indeed I do.

Before relating some information about the firefighting problems, here is a very brief mention of the ‘big picture’. The drought really started in September 1975 with rainfall being well below average throughout the autumn and winter. The water authorities hoped and expected that the winter rains and snows would top up the reservoirs but this didn’t happen. So we and the rest of the Northern Hemisphere were not in a good position when the summer of 1976 began to become very hot and dry.

As the situation became a crisis and water supply to many communities was restricted to having to queue up with a bucket for water from a street standpipe, the Labour Government appointed a Drought Minister and his name was Dennis Howell.



Left : Dennis Howell meeting folks queuing for water.



Right : Not the usual use for a fire hydrant but they came in handy when water rationing became a necessity.

The Great Drought of 1976 (continued)

The freak weather soon began to have a serious impact on the incidence of fire in the UK. All brigades were soon finding that at about 11.00am as the sun reached its height the fire calls began to start coming in thick and fast. The rural brigades were particularly busy. At the time I was serving as the Brigade Training Officer in Suffolk in the rank of Divisional Officer and East Anglia is a rain shadow area even in normal times. We were therefore particularly vulnerable to wild fires and also fires in any structures such as thatched property and hay barns.

Water for firefighting in rural areas was even more scarce than normal with the majority of open water sources such as ponds and lakes having dried up and streams reduced to a trickle. You considered yourself lucky if you found a supply that gave you a good jet. The use of beaters for dealing with grass and standing crops was often all you had and exhausting work it is using a beater in heat wave temperatures. Cases of firefighters collapsing with heat exhaustion became quite common.



Photo by Bournemouth Echo

Fires that would normally merit an attendance of four pumps or more often had to be dealt with by a single pump and crew. It was hard for Fire Control to tell the sender of an assistance message that he wouldn't be getting any help. The mutual aid arrangements between brigades made under the Fire Services Act soon became stretched to breaking point and calling for help from a neighbouring brigade was often met with a refusal because they were about to ask for help themselves.



Fire crews were very often directed by radio from one fire to another. Retained crews were particularly stressed and it was a real worry that they were not able to be rested as much as they should have been. The wholetime crews had a much easier life because they worked their shifts, often with overtime, but then could go off duty for rest and refreshment.



The climate change experts tell us we must expect more summers like 1976 and drought conditions in UK may be a feature of our future summers. The firefighting resources in 1976 were far greater than exist now, yet still we struggled. Food for thought?

JOHN CRAIG

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

MATTHEW MAGGS



We have been delighted to warmly welcome into membership MATTHEW ('Matty') MAGGS who joined the WRFA on 1st April after retiring from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. In his 32 years of service in Wiltshire he became well known and well respected in the several postings at which he served and his career peaked with his last posting being as Station Commander at Trowbridge since 2016.

Matty lives in Trowbridge and is married to Louise. He enjoys golf which he says is a game he plays "really badly". We look forward very much to enjoying the company of Matty and Louise at many of our social events. A very warm welcome to Matthew and Louise.

PAULINE GILLIAM-HILL

Pauline was recently widowed when her husband, Patrick, passed away (see page 14). Pauline has taken the wise decision to join WRFA so that we can maintain contact with her and provide support and friendship to her in the years ahead. Pauline lives alone in Dilton Marsh.

Pauline has an interest in handcraft projects, particularly those related to making dolls houses. We extend a very warm welcome to Pauline with the additional offer to be here for her if she needs us.



COME & JOIN US!

If you are one of the following you are eligible to apply for membership of the WRFA and we should be delighted to receive your application.

- Have at least 5 years service in any fire fighting service (not necessarily in Wiltshire)
- Widow or widower of a person who served in any firefighting service.
- Overseas applicants will be considered.



BOOK SHELF

Passing on tips about books members
have enjoyed

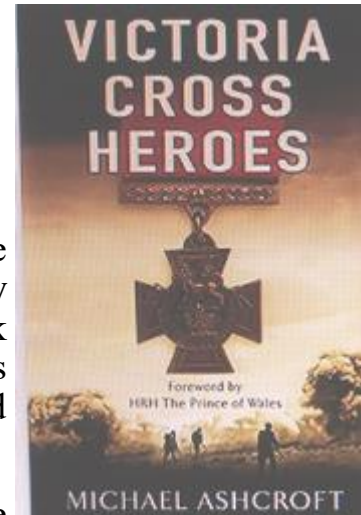


VICTORIA CROSS HEROES

Author : Lord Michael Ashcroft

Reviewed by Michael Grimshaw

The inspiration to read this book came from visiting the Imperial War Museum before Remembrance Sunday 2021 with my fellow drill instructor, Rick Clarke of Suffolk FRS. The museum holds and displays all the Victoria Crosses held by the trust set up by Lord Ashcroft who is an avid collector, businessman and philanthropist.



Since its inception by Royal Warrant in January 1856 the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1,355 times with the latest being Private Johnson Beharry in 2004 for his actions in saving his crews in two ambushes. He is the only VC holder since 1965 to survive the action for which the Victoria Cross was awarded. The collection owns 142 of these medals and the majority are on display in the Imperial War Museum within its own hall.



Michael Grimshaw

The book initially outlines why the medal was initially struck and the need for a medal that covered all ranks. Queen Victoria herself had a part to play in the design of the medal, in particular the inscription "*For Valour*" as the government of the day wanted "*For the brave*" and Queen Victoria knew all her services were brave so it had to stand for more. The book details the background of each medal in the trust collection dating from the Crimea War of 1854 to 1856 up to the latest medal of 2004. Each of the entries is accompanied by the citation in the *London Gazette* for the medal and it makes graphic reading of the valour shown by all the services to protect our freedoms and democracies since its inception.

It has been thought in recent years that the advances in today's battlefield technologies means that it is almost impossible to demonstrate the rigid grounds for the award of a VC and therefore the medal is all but obsolete. However, the actions of Colonel H Jones and Sergeant Ian McKay in the Falklands and that of Private Beharry in Iraq prove this not to be true.

THE LAST SALUTE



PATRICK GILLIAM-HILL

1922 : 2022

Hotel clerk, ARP fire watcher, Royal Navy signaller, professional and amateur singer, long distance lorry driver, airfield fire rescue crew, antique dealer, voluntary school teaching assistant. These are just some of the employments Patrick fitted into his very long life. He was born a Londoner on **13th June 1922** when fire brigades were only just replacing horse drawn fire engines by motorised machines! He died peacefully at home in West Lavington with family around him on **30th April 2022**, just seven weeks short of his 100th birthday.

His early education was carried out at boarding school and when he left school he was employed as a clerk at the **Savoy Hotel, London**. When the war broke out and air raids began Patrick volunteered for extra duties at night perched on the hotel roof as a fire watcher. His job was to deal with incendiary bombs that fell on the roof and report any that the London Fire Brigade needed to attend. He was slightly wounded when an incendiary burst close enough to him to damage his ear drums. Patrick used his superb singing voice to work as a **professional entertainer** for a few years.

He was conscripted for military service in 1941 and joined the **Royal Navy** to be trained as a signaller. For a time he was posted to a shore base in South Africa. On being demobbed he joined the Ministry of Defence Air Force Fire Department and served for many years at **RAF Lyneham**. Tragedy struck him and his family when his first wife died in 1968 leaving him with a boy and four girls to cherish and raise which he did with commendable dedication. Patrick was remarried in 1971 to Pauline who survives him and is joining our Association.

Patrick became well known in the Devizes area as a singer with several local amateur operatic and theatre groups. His jovial personality won him many friends and he is sorely missed by us all. The funeral service and burial took place on 6th June 2022 at All Saints Church, West Lavington.

May he rest in eternal peace.

John Craig

DISCLAIMER

Views and opinions published in this magazine are not necessarily shared by the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service