

Chronological History of Avon Fire & Rescue Services



The Avon Fire & Rescue Service was established in May 2004 and is an amalgamation of those local Fire Brigades formerly known as the “County of Avon Fire Brigade” and encompassing parts of the adjoining Counties of South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath City and Bristol Fire Brigades.




The aim of this Chronological History is to create a permanent record of the personal achievements of colleagues who have served the Fire Brigade locally, and to bring back to life those special notable events which remain forever in the memories of Firefighters throughout the history of our service.




These historical notes have been edited and merged from varying individual research sources and therefore rely on the original author for their accuracy. Our records are by no means exhaustive and to this end would welcome any items of special interest our readers may wish to submit for inclusion. We also wish to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this project and in particular, those giving their kind permission to reproduce the pictorial content.

Chriss Deverill M.B.E. Avon Fire & Rescue Service Pensioners Association.




1877	27 th March	<p>“Formation of Bristol Police Fire Brigade”</p> <p>As a result of discussions with Insurance Company’s and the Police Force, the Corporation agreed to the forming a Municipal Fire Brigade. A steam engine, drawn by horses hired from the Bristol Tramways, was purchased. At this point Insurance Company’s ceased to function, whereby presenting free of charge some of their engines and ancillary equipment to the City.</p> <p>The Bristol Central Police Station in Bridewell Lane had been in use since 1844, so with the creation of the new Bristol Police Fire Brigade, the building was now taken over as their combined Headquarters.</p>	
1898	1 st September	<p>“Bristol’s Colston Hall Destroyed by Fire”</p> <p>It was in the early hours of the morning when a fire was discovered in Clark’s four-story clothing factory in Colston Street, Bristol. According to press reports, flames were already through the roof by the time fire crews from the nearby Bridewell station arrived and spreading to the adjoining Colston Hall, the city’s premier public meeting venue.</p> <p>The aftermath of this devastating fire shows the auditorium, with only its walls remained standing, the hall’s impressive organ having been completely destroyed.</p>	
1906	27 th March	<p>“Fire Constable Arthur Wale Killed in Shoe Factory Fire”</p> <p>Fire Constable Arthur Wale, aged 46, of the Bristol Police Fire Brigade was crushed to death while fighting a fire at Derhams Boot and Shoe Factory on Barton Street in the St James area of Bristol.</p> <p>The funeral cortege shows his coffin draped in the Union Jack and flowers as it passes through the crowds on a four-horse drawn hearse, with Fireman and Policemen walking alongside.</p> <p>Arthur was buried with full Fire Brigade Honours at St Mary Redcliffe Cemetery in Bristol.</p> <p><i>“For a full account of the Arthur Wale story, please visit our “Historical Accounts Page”</i></p>	




1916	2 nd August	<p style="text-align: center;">“Inspector Charles James Harrison Killed in Fire at Shipway and Son”</p> <p>The fire that destroyed Shipway and Sons General Fancy Goods Dealers in Old Market Street, Bristol, also claimed the life of Inspector Charles James Harrison. With the fire extinguished, Charles was carrying out a final inspection on the second floor, when without warning, the floor collapsed taking him down into the cellar, along with a mass of flooring, furniture and other debris.</p> <p>Inspector Charles James Harrison’ funeral took place on August 5th with full Fire Brigade Honours. His coffin was carried on a Fire Tender, draped with the Union Jack on which was placed his helmet, belt and axe.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“For a full account of the Charles James Harrison story, please visit our “Historical Accounts Page””</i></p> 
1928	13 th October	<p style="text-align: center;">“The Charfield Train Crash”</p> <p>The accident occurred at around 5.20 a.m. at Charfield, in South Gloucestershire, when a goods train was being shunted off the main line to make way for the oncoming Newcastle-Leeds-Bristol passenger mail express. However, the maneuver was not quite completed before the express train arrived and collided with the goods train. The momentum of the engine carried it under the bridge, with the passenger carriages piling up against it. The situation was made worse by the fact that the carriages were gas-lit, the impact causing cylinders to rupture and the gas to ignite.</p> <p>The tragedy caused 15 people to lose their lives, with a further 23 suffering serious injuries.</p> 
1930	5 th November	<p style="text-align: center;">“New Central Fire Station for Bristol Police Fire Brigade”</p> <p>The new Central Fire Station in Bridewell Street was also designed to accommodate the Bristol Police Fire Brigade Headquarters, and to this end residential accommodation was provided on the top floor for senior officers and their families. The station living quarters were located at first floor level, including kitchen, mess room, lecture room and offices. Adjacent to the appliance room on the ground floor was Brigade Control, with an enclosed drill yard to the rear of the station giving access to a five-story drill tower and vehicle workshops.</p> <p>At this time, firemen worked on a continuous duty system, who with one days leave a week, had to live at or near the Fire Station. Single men had dormitory accommodation at the station, whilst married men and their families occupied houses in nearby Silver Street.</p> 




1940	19 th August	<p>“German Bombers Attack Oil Tank Farm at Llanreath.”</p> <p>A group of three German Junkers Ju88 bombers, escorted by two ME109 fighters, flew in over the Pembrokeshire coast and dropped their bombs onto the oil tanks high above the West Wales town of Pembroke Dock. Four of the bombs fell short, exploding in open country, but the resulting detonation from one direct hit on a tank of 12,000 tons started a blaze that would eventually spread to 11 out of the 18 tanks on the site and take more than 600 firemen from 22 brigades, 18 days to put out.</p> <p>The bombings of the oil tanks at Llanreath caused one of the biggest fires seen in the UK since the Great Fire of London. Five Cardiff firemen sadly lost their lives and many others were seriously injured.</p>  <p><i>Llanreath Oil Tank Farm. 20th August 1940</i></p>
1940	22 nd October	<p>“Bristol Firemen Receive Bravery Awards Following Pembroke Dock Incident”</p> <p>Following the Pembroke Dock incident, of 19th August 1940, eight Bristol Firemen received the George Medal for Gallantry and their colleague Patrol Officer Sadler received the British Empire Medal.</p> <p><i>left to right standing. Patrol Officer Frederick Revelle, Patrol Officer Maurice Day, Fire Constable Albert Thomas, Patrol Officer Maurice Sadler and Auxiliary Fireman Lewis Watts.</i></p> <p><i>left to right seated. Fire Constable Charles (Bert) Arkell, Fire Sergeant Ernest Smith. Fire Sergeant William Philpott. Fire Sergeant Walter Bryant</i></p> 
1940	24 th & 25 th November	<p>“Bombing Raid on Bristol Kills Five AFS Firemen”</p> <p>The attack commenced at 18:21hrs and became concentrated around Bristol City Centre, in particular the areas of Broad Quay, Old Market, Stokes Croft and Park Street, where the devastation was the greatest.</p> <p>The AFS had been quick to respond and within 30 minutes of the warning some 897 part-time personnel had reported for duty. Across Bristol some 307 incidents were logged before the 'All Clear' sounded just after midnight.</p> <p>As daybreak broke, the reality of the night raids sadly became clear, with over 200 people reported as having lost their lives, including five Bristol AFS firemen named as: - Fireman Reginald Gigg, Fireman Gilbert Vincent, Patrol Officer Herbert Wiltshire, Fireman Stephen Wood and Patrol Officer Cyril Marshall.</p>  <p><i>Park Street, Bristol. Monday 25th November 1940</i></p>


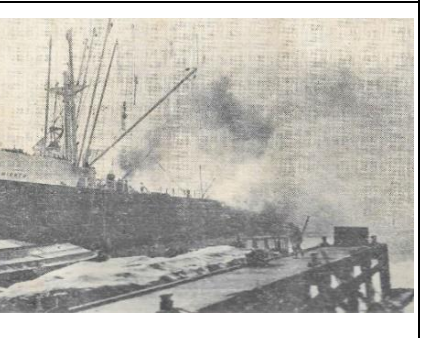


1940	December	<p style="text-align: center;">“Bristol Fire Brigade Bereavement Fund”</p> <p>The Bristol Fire Brigade Bereavement Fund was founded by Company Officer Geoff Bennett as a result of two early fatalities during the Bristol Blitz. A dark shadow was cast on the whole Division when Patrol Officer Wiltshire was killed by a bomb which scored a direct hit on the trailer pump, he was in charge of at the bottom of Stokes Croft in Bristol. The second death was that of Leading Fireman George Perry, who lost his life whilst attempting to rescue two elderly ladies from a fire in Whiteladies Road, Bristol.</p> <p>Back at the station both squads decided that something had to be done to help their widows, so it was decided that Geoff would make a collection of one shilling per head from all personnel throughout the Redland Division, which was to be passed onto the bereaved families the following day.</p> <p>The first President of this voluntary scheme was Chief Fire Officer J.Y. Kirkup and with Geoff Bennett as Secretary/Treasurer, the “Bristol Fire Brigade Bereavement Fund” was officially launched.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“For a full account of the Geoff Bennett story, please visit our “Historical Accounts Page”</i></p> 
1941	3 rd January	<p style="text-align: center;">“Eight Firemen Killed at Posada Restaurant Disaster”</p> <p>The night was one of the winters bitterest and the lot of the fire-fighters was perhaps the worst for as water streamed from their jets, huge icicles formed on the buildings, while great sheets of ice on the roadways added to their misery. Although much property was saved, the night saw eight local firemen, two Fire Watchers, a Police War Reserve Constable and an Ambulance Driver, loose their lives.</p> <p>All eight firemen and the Police Constable died in Bristol’ High Street, where for some time the Fire Service had been fighting to save the Posada Restaurant. Towards midnight, the bombers came over again and despite the falling high explosive bombs, firemen continued to pour water onto the building which was well alight. It was then that a heavy bomb fell at the back of Oliver's shop opposite, sending burning debris in all directions, and bringing down a number of nearby buildings. Both Oliver's and the Posada Restaurant were raised to the ground, thus causing the firemen to be buried under tons of fallen masonry.</p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>High Street, Bristol. 4th January 1941</i></p>
1941	11 th & 12 th April	<p style="text-align: center;">“Six Bristol Firemen Killed in Good Friday Air Raid”</p> <p>The second phase of bombing raids on Bristol this day began just after midnight, which over the next four hours would prove particularly devastating, both in structural damage to property and loss of life. During the night, some 262 pumps and fire crews were drafted in from surrounding areas, and with their help, the fires brought under control by 07:00 hrs.</p> <p>The night’s actions were however very costly for the Fire Services, with six personnel losing their lives, four of whom were working at Wright's Printing & Publishers in Colston Avenue when a large high explosive bomb landed nearby.</p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Colston Avenue, Bristol. 12th April 1941</i></p>





1941	22 nd May	<p style="text-align: center;">“Formation of The National Fire Service”</p> <p>The traumatic experiences of the blitz caused local crews and appliances to be drafted into the larger towns and cities, where many were confronted with unexpected and frustrating difficulties during firefighting operations. The most significant problem was the hose couplings of different brigades did not marry up, especially where standpipes did not fit local hydrant outlets. This situation eventually brought demands on the Government, with an urgent request for the standardization of appliances and equipment.</p> <p>In May 1941, over 16,000 fire brigades, both regular and AFS, were brought together to form the National Fire Service (NFS), whereby with Government funding, one co-ordinated Fire Force was created to handle fire protection throughout the UK.</p> <p>Many of the Fire Brigades throughout the South West of England became part of No.17 Fire Force within Region 7, the Headquarters of which was established at "Crete Hill" in Westbury-on-Trym, near Bristol.</p>	
1941	July	<p style="text-align: center;">“The National Fire Service Benevolent Trust”</p> <p>The National Fire Service Benevolent Trust was originally set up by London Fire Brigade, when generous donations started to come from the International Association of Fire Fighters of America, to relieve distress amongst Fire Service dependents affected by the Blitz.</p> <p>To administer these monies, together with other donations received from South Africa, Canada, Mexico, Nigeria and South America, it was agreed to expand this into a Nationwide fund, whereby providing much needed help and assistance throughout the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Under the scheme, death grants of £15 were provided to assist the unfortunate widows of firefighters; and allowances of four shillings a week were made to each orphan up to the age of 14 years.</p>	
1942		<p style="text-align: center;">“The Bristol Fire Brigade Benevolent Fund”</p> <p>With casualties mounting within the local fire community it was determined that a fund, separate to the Bereavement Fund, should be set up to administer the generous donations coming in from business and the general public to help fireman who suffered injuries and financial hardships.</p> <p>A properly organized Bristol Fire Brigade Benevolent Fund was therefore established, with an Executive Committee elected to meet on a regular basis, not only receive donations, but also to consider requests for help from firefighters, many of whom were seriously injured or lost their homes during the air raids.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Johnny Lyn, Joe Mitchell</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alderman A.L. Duggan, Fred Stallard, Alderman C.H. Smith, Hugh Lovell</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Geoff Bennett</i> <i>Mrs. Barbara Booth</i></p>	




1942	27 th April	<p style="text-align: center;">“Fireman Leonard Henry Smith. Killed During the Bath Blitz”</p> <p>The second blitz attack on the City of Bath was to claim the life of forty-nine-year-old motor maintenance engineer and part-time AFS Fireman Leonard Smith, who was manning a pump in The Circus, when an unexploded bomb suddenly went off nearby, killing him outright. Leonard was the only Bath Fireman killed during enemy action on the City and was missing for three days before he was eventually identified by his fireman's uniform.</p> <p>Leonard was accorded full National Fire Service Honours, with a helmet resting on the Union Jack covering the coffin. He was carried on a fire tender and with 50 firemen marching behind Fire Force Commander J. Cutts (No. 17 Area) as the cortege took Leonard to his final resting place at Haycombe Cemetery.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“For a full account of the Leonard Henry Smith story, please visit our “Historical Accounts Page”</i></p> 
1942	Autumn	<p style="text-align: center;">“Canadian Firefighters Join Bristol Fire Brigade”</p> <p>Volunteer Canadian Firefighters arrived in the UK between May and December 1942. After training at their base near Southampton, they were sent in fifty-man detachments to Southampton, Bristol, Portsmouth and Plymouth in the South West of England. Known as "target towns," these were important ports and very vulnerable to German air attack. The Bristol company of Canadian Fire-fighters were based at an operational fire station, purpose built for them by the NFS in the grounds of Clifton Theological College at Stoke Hill, Bristol.</p> <p>In recognition of their invaluable support during the hostilities, this special badge was designed to mark the co-operation and friendship of a unique Fire Brigade family.</p> 
1943	17 th August	<p style="text-align: center;">“Inaugural Meeting of the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund”</p> <p>Since the formation of the previous National Fire Service Benevolent Trust in July 1941, the total donations had risen to £90,000, including £30,000 from America and a further £2,000 from other Countries. Over the same period, more than £45,000 had been paid out to thousands of beneficiaries throughout the British Isles. It was evident to the dedicated volunteers handling the distribution of grants that long term provision must be made so that support to widows and orphans could be maintained for as long as necessary.</p> <p>Representatives from the Bristol area attended the inaugural meeting, when Sir Andrew Murray became the first Chairman of the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund (FSNBF). Under his leadership, the new National Fund took over the amalgamation into one charity, the many other Fire Service Funds, which had grown up in the Regions and Fire Forces.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“There was however, some resistance from the Bristol Committee and whilst supporting the new charity, they decided to maintain the Bristol Fund and continued to pay out additional grants to local beneficiaries”</i></p> 


1944	15 th May	<p style="text-align: center;">“Firemen Make Ultimate Sacrifice During World War II Hostilities”</p> <p>At 6pm on 24th November 1940 Bristol experienced its first Blitz, but the air raids were not confined to the city, as by the end of local hostilities in May 1944, key targets including Avonmouth Docks, Filton Airfield, Bristol Aeroplane Company Works Filton, Parnell Aircraft Factory Yate, Weston-Super-Mare and the City of Bath were also targeted by the Luftwaffe.</p> <p>Exact numbers of local Firemen killed during this period are unclear, as few records have survived to identify the many AFS and part time colleagues killed whilst engaged in fire-fighting duties.</p> <p>Research to date has however identified 47 Firemen, twenty-six of whom from Bristol Fire Brigade are remembered on the Roll of Honour shown here, but this does not take into account those colleagues who died of their injuries after 1944.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>If you are looking for a Friend or Relative who may have lost their lives whilst carrying out firefighting duties within the current Avon Fire & Rescue Service area, please visit our “In Memoriam” page.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Should however their name not be listed; we would like to hear from you”</i></p>	
1945	5 th February	<p style="text-align: center;">“Colston Hall Once Again Destroyed by Fire”</p> <p>The Colston Hall had been completely destroyed by a devastating fire in 1898, but with public support, work soon commenced to restore the building to its former glory. Narrowly escaping the relentless campaign of air raids all over Bristol during World War II, the Colston Hall was yet again to be consumed by fire and caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette.</p> <p>The main Bridewell Fire Station was but a short distance from the Colston Hall, but by the time fire crews arrived, the building was already well alight. On entering the hall, firemen reported the organ was a mass of flames, but little could be done to save the main auditorium which by now was already reduced to pieces of charred wood and hot metal.</p>	
1948	1 st April	<p style="text-align: center;">“Bristol Police Fire Brigade Abolished under 1947 Fire Services Act”</p> <p>The Fire Services Act of 1947 was passed to transfer firefighting functions from the National Fire Service to Fire Brigades maintained by Councils of Counties and County Boroughs. Bristol once again had its own Fire Brigade, but with a difference. It was not re-established as a Police Fire Brigade, controlled by a Sub-Committee of the Watch Committee, but as an individual Corporation Department functioning under its own control, with a Chief Fire Officer placed in charge of six fire stations and a strength of 250 personnel.</p> <p>To mark the return of the Fire Brigade to Local Authority control, the Bristol Flag was once again raised at the Bridewell Street Headquarters Fire Station by The Lord Mayor Alderman Charles Gill, with newly appointed Chief Fire Officer Joseph Kirkup overseeing proceedings.</p>	

1948	5 th July	<p>“Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service Merged Following Nationalisation”</p> <p>As a consequence of the Nationalisation of the Health Services throughout the Country, the responsibility for the organization of an efficient Ambulance Service within our Cities, devolved upon the Fire Brigade, which were then given the title of Bristol Fire Brigade & Ambulance Service and Bath City Fire Brigade & Ambulance Service respectively.</p> <p>Ambulances were kept on all whole-time fire stations, where in busy periods, firemen were seconded to drive ambulances.</p>	 <p>Station Two Stoke Hill.</p>
1951	6 th September	<p>“Explosion and Oil Fire at Regent Oil Company in Avonmouth”</p> <p>While a cargo motor spirit and gas oil was being pumped ashore from the “MV Fort Christina” into a storage tank at the Regent Oil Company compound on Avonmouth Dock, an explosion occurred, resulting in two employees receiving fatal injuries. The subsequent fire spread rapidly to involve twelve tanks containing some four million gallons of oil.</p> <p>Thirty-eight hours after the initial call, the fire was finally brought under control. It is estimated that eight hundred and fifty-three Fire Fighters from twenty-four other Brigades, with sixty appliances were at some time involved with this incident.</p>	
1951	24 th November	<p>“Bristol Fire Brigade Investigation Causes Change in Law”</p> <p>It was a busy Saturday morning in the St. Pauls area of Bristol, where a Shel-Mex petrol tanker was discharging a delivery to M and M Motor Mart on Ashley Road. Suddenly there was a massive explosion, which completely destroyed the three story garage premises, trapping many casualties under the rubble. With the ever increasing danger of further collapse, fire crews battled for five hours in hazardous conditions, before the last of these were finally released.</p> <p>Eleven people were to lose their lives on this fateful day, including the garage owners, their employees, and two man crew of the petrol tanker. Flying glass, debris and burning petroleum spirit engulfed the neighbourhood, severely injuring numerous members of the public, together with two small boys who had been admiring motorcycles in the garage window at the time.</p> <p>For their heroic efforts during the rescue operation, Firemen Edward Rudd, Frank Goddard, John Sweet and Lionel Crew were each awarded Certificates of Merit for their bravery.</p> <p>An investigation into the Ashley Road incident by the Bristol Fire Brigade Fire Prevention Department, revealed the explosion occurred when petrol vapour from an overfilled storage tank under the building was ignited by an unprotected solid fuel stove in an adjoining room. Following their subsequent recommendation to the Home Office, a supplement to the Fire Services Act was introduced, including new legislation and safety regulations for the storage and use of petroleum spirit.</p>	

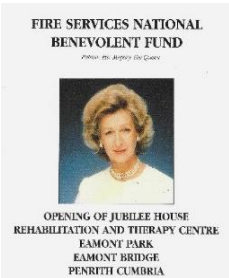



1953	February	<p>“Bristol Firemen sent to East Anglia Following Devastating Floods”</p> <p>One of the worst peacetime disasters in Britain was unfolding around the coast of East Anglia. High tides combined with strong winds and a deep area of low pressure in the North Sea caused a storm surge which brought huge waves crashing into coastal Communities. More than three hundred people were killed in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Essex on the night of 31st January/1st February.</p> <p>Firemen from all over the country were called in to help with the aftermath of these devastating floods, including twenty-four Firemen from Bristol Fire Brigade.</p>	
1955	13 th March	<p>“Firemen Avert Devastating Explosion in Hold of SS Sarmienta”</p> <p>A fire had broken out in number two hold of the “SS Sarmiento” berthed at X Shed, Royal Edward Dock in Avonmouth. Firemen risked their lives in a desperate battle to prevent the fire spreading to 1,000 tons of explosive nitrates stored in the hold, where any resulting explosion would have the potential of claiming many lives and destroying a large part of Avonmouth Docks.</p> <p>At the height of the blaze, flames leapt 100 feet from the bottom of the hold to the top of the foremasts. Six thousand gallons of water per minute were pumped into the hold and with the sea cocks opened, fire crews finally brought the incident under control.</p>	
1955	14 th May	<p>“Bristol Jet Squadron C.O. Killed as Vampire Crashes near Avonmouth”</p> <p>Squadron Leader Geoffrey Mercer, Commanding Officer of 501 Squadron, was returning to base at Filton when his Vampire jet crashed on the Chittening Estate in Avonmouth, narrowly missing the Regent Oil Company tank farm. At the moment of impact, the aircraft exploded and burst into flames, instantly killing the thirty two year old Squadron Leader.</p> <p>Fire crews from the Green Lane Station at Avonmouth, with Station Officer Beaumont in charge, were on the scene within ten minutes of the crash and pumping water from a nearby pond, were able to cover the wreckage in foam, thus preventing any further explosions.</p>	
1957	6 th November	<p>“Test Pilot and Fourteen Crew Killed in Downend Air Crash”</p> <p>A long-range prototype Bristol Britannia airliner, G-ANCA, was returning to her base at Filton with a crew of fifteen following a test flight to gain American safety certification. At 1,500 feet and turning to make her landing approach, the aircraft suddenly banked steeply to the right and began a rapid descent above Downend and Staple Hill. Despite valiant efforts by her crew to rescue the emergency, the aircraft crashed through trees and seriously damaged a row of ten homes in Overndale Road, Downend, South Gloucestershire.</p> <p>All fifteen of G-ANCA's crew died instantly, but miraculously nobody on the ground was seriously hurt. Subsequent investigation failed to conclusively establish the cause of the tragedy, but faulty wiring of G-ANCA's autopilot was strongly suspected as the reason for her sudden loss of control.</p>	



1962	3 rd September	<p>“Vulcan Bomber XA984 and Brand-New Fire Engine Destroyed by Fire”</p> <p>The Vulcan Aircraft was positioned on the detuner at Filton for a ground run and full power check, when at around 3.30pm, power was increased to maximum reheat. Seconds later there was a sudden burst of orange flame above and below the aircraft, causing it to lurch visibly forward. Inside the cabin, the four test engineers clearly felt the shock as the engine abruptly failed and ignoring the crew ladder, immediately implemented evacuation procedures.</p> <p>Within seconds the fire took hold and as the burning fuel poured from the tanks, it began to run down a very slight slope towards the attendant Filton fire appliance, which was parked in front of the aircraft. So quickly did the fire spread, fire crews had no time to react, before the flames had completely engulfed their “pride and joy” and causing the total destruction of the multi-million-pound XA894 Vulcan Bomber.</p>	
1962	10 th December	<p>“New Brislington Fire Station Opened by The Lord Mayor”</p> <p>The official Opening Ceremony for the new Brislington Fire Station was conducted by The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of Bristol, Alderman Leonard K. Stevenson, J.P.</p> <p>The old Hemplow House Fire Station in Talbot Road had become obsolete and in pursuance of the post war policy of the Fire Brigade Committee, a new station at Brislington was built with a three-bay appliance room, housing a Water Tender Escape, Foam Trailer Unit, and a Chimney Van. Sited at the junction of Clothier Road and Bonville Road, the new station is strategically placed within the rapidly growing Trading Estate, giving fire crews easy access to the residential areas of Brislington, Knowle, Keynsham and Saltford, whilst being readily available to back up nearby Bristol and Bath City stations.</p>	
1964	September	<p>“New Convalescent Centre for Fire Services National Benevolent Fund”</p> <p>Following National Council discussions, the Benevolent Fund was to move into a new and more active field of charitable work, when the first half of Marine Court at Littlehampton was purchased, with the help of monies raised from the “Buy a Brick” fundraising campaign. This gave the Fund twelve self-contained flats where members and former members could attend for a short period on convalescence. The complex was later extended to include all twenty-four flats at Marine Court, together with two adjoining houses in Maltravers Drive and Fund Headquarters.</p>	
1966	12 th May	<p>“C.R.S. Department Store “Fairfax House” Severely Damaged by Fire”</p> <p>It was around 12:30 pm, when Brigade Control received the first call to say a fire had been discovered at “Fairfax House”, the Cooperative Retail Service Department Store located in the Broadmead area of Bristol.</p> <p>On arrival of the first attendance, crews were relieved to find all 800 occupants had been safely evacuated, but with smoke and flames issuing from the upper floors of the building, the officer in charge was prompted to make pumps six and request the attendance of a turntable ladder. The initial fire spread had been rapid, but due the prompt action of fire crews, damage was confined to localized areas within the 5th and 6th floors.</p>	

1967	18 th March	<p style="text-align: center;">“The SS Torrey Canyon Disaster”</p> <p>The Torrey Canyon was bound for the Welsh port of Milford Haven, when she ran aground on rocks between Land’s End and the Scilly Isles, where on impact, the stricken tanker immediately began to leak the 100,000-ton cargo of crude oil into the sea.</p> <p>Cornwall Fire Brigade were soon overwhelmed by the demands on their services and despite assistance from the Army and all the emergency services locally, it was necessary to bring in personnel from other Fire Brigades throughout the South West of England and beyond. The oil slick spread along the south coast of England before prevailing winds carried it to Brittany and Normandy and even as far as Spain. More than 15,000 sea birds and many other sea creatures were killed by the disaster.</p> 
1968	7 th November	<p style="text-align: center;">“National Association of Retired Firefighters Founded”</p> <p>The National Association of Retired Firefighters was founded to fight for conditions of former Fire Service colleagues, their Widows and their families. The Association covers the whole of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and consists of locally based branches, which enable members to meet and keep in touch with colleagues from within their own Brigades.</p> <p>Being part of a national organization allows retired firefighters to unite, and for their voices to be heard at a national level. NARF is also represented on other important bodies for the retired, such as the National Pensioners Convention, the Public Service Pensioners Council, Age Concern England, Age Concern Scotland, and Age Concern Cymru.</p> 
1973	5 th April	<p style="text-align: center;">“Brave Fire Crews Save MV Mergui from Disastrous Ship Fire at Avonmouth”</p> <p>The MV Mergui was at her berth in the Royal Edward Dock at Avonmouth, when a fire was discovered by Dockers in a cargo of Jute being unloaded from her No.3 hold. Jute is a vegetable fiber used chiefly for the making of sacks and coarse cloth, thus providing the perfect candidate for causing the rapid fire spread to crew quarters, engine room and ships stores, where oil ignited and exploded.</p> <p>The situation was to become a protracted major incident, with twelve pumps, foam tender, hydraulic platform and fireboat in use and upwards of eighty firemen from Bristol, Gloucestershire and Somerset Brigades in attendance.</p> <p>With the constant movement of shipping in and out of berths over a long period of time, the buildup of silt between the Mergui hull and the quay wall was to provide fire crews with a potential catastrophe. With the extra weight of water in her hold, the ship gradually settled down onto the mud, causing it to list dangerously over to her starboard side, but due to the quick thinking of fire crews, a major disaster was however averted.</p> 

1973	2 nd June	<p>“Bristol Fire Brigade Headquarters and Central Station Relocated”</p> <p>When the Brigade transferred their Headquarters and Central Fire Station to Temple Back in Bristol, it effectively severed a ninety-five-year link with the former Bridewell Street site, thus becoming fully operational on 18th February 1973.</p> <p>In the presence of The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor (Alderman Walter Jennings JP), Public Safety Committee Chairman (Councillor R. Wilmot), Chief Fire Officer (Tom Lister) and Honoured Guests, the official opening was conducted by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Fire Service (Kenneth L. Holland Esq., C.B.E., O.St.J., M.I.Fire E.)</p>	
1974	1 st April	<p>“The County of Avon Fire Brigade”</p> <p>Created in April 1974, the new County of Avon Fire Brigade was an expansion and amalgamation of the former Bristol Fire Brigade, who merged with those adjoining local stations from within the neighbouring counties of South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath City Fire Brigades.</p> <p>With the new Brigade came a dramatic increase in the number of fire stations, ranging from the original six Bristol whole-time to twenty-two, thirteen of which responded to the retained duty system. The new Brigade was also broken down into three divisions, with Brigade and “A” Division Headquarters in Bristol, “B” Division at Bath and “C” Division at Weston-Super-Mare.</p>	
1978	22 nd September	<p>“Official Opening of Munson House, Littlehampton”</p> <p>As the use of Marine Court at Littlehampton continued to grow, the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund recognized the need to provide less abled facilities for injured fire fighters requiring convalescence. In 1977, a detached house adjacent to Marine Court, and situated at No 6 Maltravers Drive, was purchased by the Charity and within the year, had been converted into separate flats and refurbished with disabled facilities.</p> <p>At a special ceremony, the Home Office Assistant Under Secretary of State, Norman Ross, opened the new facility at Littlehampton by renaming No 6 Maltravers Drive “Munson House” in honour of former London Auxiliary Fireman Fred Munson, who was severely injured during the Blitz of 1941. Fred was also in attendance as the Fund’s special guest on that day when he proudly cut the ceremonial ribbon.</p>	
1981	April	<p>“Harcombe House Estate Purchased by Fire Charity”</p> <p>Built by a member of the Wills Tobacco Company in 1912, Harcombe House Estate extends over 300 acres of pastureland, forest and lakes. More recently, an open air swimming pool was added, together with twenty-eight detached three-bedroom chalet style bungalows near the main house.</p> <p>The Harcombe House Estate was purchased by the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund in 1981 to provide accommodation for the ever increasing demand on convalescence and less abled facilities required for Fire Fighters injured on duty and or their dependents in need of care and recuperation.</p>	

1990	19 th April	<p>“Opening of Ronnie Green Wing by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra”</p> <p>Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra is pictured here with Fund Chairman, J.R. Watson QFSM at the official opening of a new extension to the Marine Court Complex at Littlehampton, West Sussex, marking the culmination of a three year £1.14 million project, to provide additional accommodation and less abled facilities for members of the Fire Service requiring rehabilitation following sickness or injury.</p> <p>The naming of “The Ronnie Green Wing” is a fitting tribute to the memory of a founder member of the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund, who as Honourary Secretary, became the principle architect for the development and growth of the charity since the war years and the driving force responsible for the setting up of the Marine Court Convalescence Centre at Littlehampton in 1964.</p>	
1991	4 th May	<p>“The Firefighters Memorial Charitable Trust Fund”</p> <p>The Firefighters Memorial Charitable Trust Fund was set up in 1991, to commemorate the lives of those Firefighters who were killed in the line of duty during the Second World War, 1939-1945. The Trust Deed allowed for the erection and maintenance of a Memorial Statue and the staging of an Annual Service of Remembrance.</p> <p>A symbolic site on the south side of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London was secured and, on the 4th May 1991 a memorial, then named ‘Blitz’, was unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. The Memorial is the work of sculptor John Mills, depicting a Fire Officer and two Firemen, cast in bronze engaged in firefighting duties. On its base, also cast in bronze were the names of the 997 men and women who, sadly, lost their lives during World War Two.</p>	
1993	10 th February	<p>“The Fire Services National Benevolent Celebrate Their Golden Jubilee”</p> <p>To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the FSNBF, a reception was held at London’s Guildhall, in the presence of Patron of the Charity, Her Majesty The Queen, who was met by the Lord Mayor and City Alderman, together with Chairman of the FSNBF, Firemaster Ian Adam (pictured right)</p> <p>Some 900 guests were invited, including representatives of every British Fire Brigade. Former Bristol Company Officer and a Founder Member of the FSNBF, Geoff Bennett was one of six special guests introduced to The Queen. Long serving Benevolent Fund Representatives from Avon also included, Monty Britton, John Clark, Sue Nicholls, Ian Satherley, Ron Marchant, Betty Peat, Fred Hooper, Eric Pimm, Penny Deverill and Chriss Deverill</p>	
1994	4 th August	<p>“Fatal Fire at GATX Petroleum Tank Site Avonmouth”</p> <p>At 06:50 hours, fire crews were dispatched to the Royal Edward Dock complex at Avonmouth, where various large storage tanks within the compound, contained a range of product including Petroleum Spirit, Carbon Tetrachloride and Chloroform.</p> <p>On arrival, the Officer-in-Charge was informed that one of the site workers was missing, but due to the hazardous conditions and intense petroleum spirit fire, it was some three hours before the missing casualty was eventually discovered, severely injured and within the tank bund wall. It was 3. o’clock in the afternoon before a crew from Speedwell were able to recover the casualty from its location and place in the care of the Coroner’s Office.</p>	

1995	19 th April	<p style="text-align: center;">“Jubilee House Centre Opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra”</p> <p>The opening of Jubilee House by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra marked a new and exciting venture within the Fund, aimed at improving the quality of life for members of the United Kingdom Fire and Rescue Services, both serving and retired.</p> <p>Located on the outskirts of Penrith in Cumbria, Jubilee House was purchased as a green field site by the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund and developed into a Therapy and Rehabilitation complex, providing physiotherapy and hydrotherapy facilities, a gymnasium and medical Centre, with an additional fourteen sheltered homes available to the wider Fire Service community.</p> <div data-bbox="1751 110 1978 386">  </div>
1996	Sunday 4 th February	<p style="text-align: center;">“Avon Firefighters Receive Bravery Awards After Fatal Supermarket Fire”</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="690 459 915 789">  </div> <div data-bbox="1052 456 1320 789">  </div> <div data-bbox="1457 446 1709 789">  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <div data-bbox="625 795 980 844" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Leading Firefighter Rob Seaman</div> <div data-bbox="1026 795 1348 844" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Firefighter Fleur Lombard</div> <div data-bbox="1432 795 1734 844" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Firefighter Pat Foley</div> </div> <p>The arson attack at Leo’s Supermarket in Broad Street, Staple Hill, Bristol, tragically claimed the life of Firefighter Fleur Lombard, when a sudden and unexpected flashover, trapped her inside the burning building. Despite the risks to their own safety, Leading Firefighter Seaman and Firefighter Foley immediately re-entered the store, only to find their colleague had sustained fatal injuries.</p> <p>In recognition of their courageous actions on this fateful day, three Avon firefighters subsequently received bravery awards for their actions. Leading Firefighter Robert Seaman was awarded the George Medal and Firefighter Pat Foley the Queen’s Commendation for Bravery. Firefighter Fleur Lombard was posthumously awarded the Queen’s Gallantry Medal & Chief Fire Officer’s Commendation.</p>


1999	September	<p style="text-align: center;">“Avon Representatives Honour Former Colleagues at Annual Service of Remembrance”</p> <p>The Avon Fire Brigade Drill Squad and members representing the Auxiliary Fire Service, Old Comrades Association, National Fire Service, Bristol Fire Brigade and Avon Pensioners Association, travelled to London for the Annual Remembrance Service, where our Brigade Standard was to be paraded for the first time</p> <p>Following the service at St. Giles Church, Cripple Gate, City of London, members assembled on the forecourt. At the direction of the Parade Marshall, Standard Bearers, Marching Contingents and Drill Squads led by a Massed Band, marched to the “Firefighters Memorial near St. Paul’s Cathedral for the laying of the wreaths ceremony, where our own Ted Howard laid a wreath on behalf of the Avon Fire Brigade Pensioners Association.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>In attendance from left to right. Denis Lucas, Tom Bennett, George Hacker, Ted Howard, John Clark, Betty Peat, Bob Gee,</i></p> </div>
2003	September	<p style="text-align: center;">“Dedication of The Firefighters Memorial by HRH The Princess Royal”</p> <p>In the year 2000 HM Government, responding to a growing feeling that a memorial to peacetime Firefighters was long overdue, invited the Firefighters Memorial Trust to consider combining such a memorial with the existing World War Two ‘Blitz’ Memorial. John Mills, the original sculptor was charged with designing a new base in bronze that would increase the height of the existing Memorial, to accommodate the names of all members of the Fire Service killed or dying because of their injuries and to widen the criteria beyond wartime London.</p> <p>As Patron of the Firefighters Memorial Trust, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal rededicated the newly elevated and renamed ‘Firefighters Memorial’, which then had an additional 1,192 names of those members of the Fire and Rescue Service who had died in the course of their duties during peacetime added to the base.</p> <p>The Fire Service Annual Memorial Church Parade is attended by Fire Fighters from throughout the United Kingdom in September each year, which concludes with a wreath laying ceremony at the Memorial in the Jubilee Walkway, near St. Paul’s Cathedral, London.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>

2008	28 th May	<p>“Fire & Rescue Service Monument Unveiled by HRH The Princess Royal”</p> <p>In 2005, HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services invited The Firefighters Memorial Trust to accept responsibility for ‘The Fire Service Garden’, at The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.</p> <p>Three years later, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, unveiled the new Fire and Rescue Service Monument, located within the renamed ‘Firefighters Memorial Garden’, dedicated to all those who serving, or who have served within the Fire and Rescue Services of the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The black marble lectern at the entrance to the Garden, records the unveiling of the Monument by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal and contains information about the Firefighters Memorial Trust.</p>	
2008	28 th July	<p>“Huge Fire Destroys Grand Pier at Weston-Super-Mare”</p> <p>The famous and much loved ‘Grand Pier’ in the North Somerset seaside town of Weston-Super-Mare, was built in the early twentieth century, and well known as a popular holiday destination throughout the generations.</p> <p>It is thought a small fire started in the west tower shortly before 7am, but by the time crews arrived, it was well established and spreading through the pavilion at the seaward end of the partly wooden structure. Six fire appliances and eighty firefighters battled the flames, but despite their valiant efforts, the fire spread quickly, destroying the building within two hours. Fortunately, there were no reported injuries.</p>	
2008	August	<p>“Former Bath Fireman Harry Patch Receives 1939-45 Defence Medal”</p> <p>There were celebrations at Bath Fire Station as Britain’s oldest surviving Fireman, Harry Patch, was presented with a replacement 1939-45 Defence Medal in recognition of his efforts during the Second World War, the original having been mislaid some years hence. Harry, now in his 110th year, is today better known as the only surviving veteran of the World War One trenches, having fought at Passchendaele in July 1917, and deemed to be the second oldest man in Britain.</p> <p>When war with Germany was declared in 1939, forty-one-year-old Harry Patch joined the Auxiliary Fire Service in Bath but was soon transferred to the National Fire Service and it was here he was to experience the traumas associated with firefighting during the Blitzes at Bath, Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare.</p> <p>The story of Harry Patch has been told many times, but little was known of his contribution to the Fire Services during World War Two. It was perhaps a fitting tribute for Harry to return to his birthplace to be presented with the 1939-45 Defence Medal, by the Chief Fire Officer of Avon Fire & Rescue Service, Kevin Pearson.</p> <p><i>Harry had the opportunity to meet up with former colleague Fred Hooper (picture) who had also served at Bath and Bristol during the Blitz.</i></p>	

2014	13 th October	<p>“60th Anniversary of the Band of the Avon Fire & Rescue Service”</p> <p>The band has been in existence under several different names since 1954. Following the re-organisation of Local Government in April 1974, they became known as the Military Band of the County of Avon Fire Brigade and later, changed to its current name, the Band of the Avon Fire & Rescue Service.</p> <p>2014 marked the Band's official 60th birthday, celebrated by a "family" party when all three constituent Bands got together. During the evening, their longest serving member, Norman Hill, was presented with a certificate from the Chief Fire Officer marking 60 years of continuous membership of the Band.</p> <p>As a Service Band, their style of music now covers all genres, from standard Military band marches, show tunes and light classics, together with selections from musicals, films, and popular music.</p>
2016	May	<p>“Former Sub. Officer Jeff Lovell becomes Lord Mayor of Bristol.”</p> <p>Jeff Lovell joined Avon Fire Brigade in January 1975, serving at Bedminster and Southmead stations, along with Fire Brigade Headquarters as head of the photographic and audio-visual department, before retiring from Avon Fire & Rescue Service in July 2005. Throughout his career, sportsman Jeff also represented the Brigade in rugby and cricket at local and South West district level.</p> <p>Jeff was to enter into politics, when in May 2007, he was elected as a Ward Councillor in his local community of Filwood in Bristol. Subsequent re-elections to the Council followed in 2011, 2015 and again in 2016 when he was elected as a Councillor for a further four years, the first of which he also took on the role of Lord Mayor of Bristol.</p> <p>Throughout his year long tenure, Jeff was required to chair full Council meetings, whilst representing the City at many official functions, in particular during 2016/2017 as Bristol celebrated the 800th anniversary of having a Mayor/Lord Mayor.</p> <p><i>The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Bristol, Councillor Jeff Lovell with his wife, Lady Mayoress Bridget Lovell inside the Mansion House.</i></p>
2016	9 th September	<p>“Royal Opening of New Operational Fire Station at Hicks Gate”</p> <p>The new Hicks Gate Fire Station at Keynsham was officially opened by His Royal Highness Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, where he was presented to the Chairman of Avon Fire Authority, Councillor Peter Abraham, Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson and Honoured guests.</p> <p>The Station on Hurley Hill, become fully operational on 19th April 2016 and is home to a Pumping Appliance, Foam Unit, Salvage Unit, Environmental Response Unit, and Red Cross Fire and Emergency Support vehicle, with on-site specialist hot fire and confined space training facilities.</p>



Councillor Peter Abraham. H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester

2016	16 th December	<p>“New Fire Station at Temple Back Opened by Lord Mayor of Bristol”</p> <p>Former Colleagues and distinguished guests were welcomed to the opening of the new station by Chairman of Avon Fire Authority, Councillor Peter Abraham, who with Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson, invited The Lord Mayor of Bristol, Councillor Jeffrey Lovell, to conduct the official unveiling ceremony. Jeff was however in familiar surroundings at Temple Back, which represented something of a homecoming for a retired Sub-Officer of 30 years standing.</p> <p>Avon Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters and main Fire Station have stood on the Bristol Temple Back site since going operational in 1973. Built at a cost of £4.4 million, the new Fire Station now stands on a reduced footprint of the original site, with a five bay appliance room currently houseing a Rescue Pump, Water Tender, Aerial Appliance and Rope Rescue Team Vehicle.</p>	 <p>A photograph showing three men standing in front of a plaque. The man on the left is wearing a dark coat and a medal. The man in the center is in a dark uniform. The man on the right is wearing a red and black ceremonial robe. They are standing in front of a plaque that is partially covered by a red cloth.</p>
------	---------------------------	---	--