



AVON FIRE & RESCUE

Magazine

Spring 2008

For employees of Avon Fire & Rescue Service



**Staff recognised at
Annual Awards**

Money saving prize up for grabs in our fantastic competition!



Welcome



From the Chief

Welcome to the spring edition of AF&RS Magazine.

The start of the New Year brought unwelcome news from the Government regarding our budget settlement and also saw criticism in the media over our wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign.

I can assure you that the budget settlement will have no impact on the fine service we continue to deliver to our local communities. However, Elected Members, senior managers and the Treasurer to the Fire Authority will continue to monitor the budget situation to ensure that this position can be sustained.

We always try to give our staff the full story, through a variety of sources including the Bulletin, magazine and Chief Memos. And now, I'm pleased to say our Intranet site is up and running – a key tool in enabling us to give staff up-to-the-minute information. You will be able to find out more about our Intranet on page 18.

Regarding our recruitment campaign, I was interested to read the views of a member of staff which you can read on page 22.

I hope you enjoy reading what's been happening within our service over recent months – if you have anything you would like feature in the magazine, contact the Media & Communication Team.

Kevin Pearson

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

On the cover

Firefighters test out Swift Water Rescue techniques on the River Avon at Bathampton Mill - February 2008

Welcome

We welcome your comments on the magazine – if you have something to say or have an idea for stories, get in touch!

You can reach the magazine team by calling 0117 926 2061 extension 217, email pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk or by writing to Media & Communication Team, Avon Fire & Rescue Service, Temple Back, Bristol, BS1 6EU.



We've gone green! This magazine has been printed using vegetable-based inks on recycled paper.



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Innovation – After months of preparation, the Avon Intranet was launched to staff late last year. **18**

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Round-up

THOUSANDS of 999 calls from Devon and Somerset could soon be handled by Avon Fire and Rescue

Avon to take fire calls for other areas

The set-up to take neighbouring fire calls is a key part of the Avon Fire and Rescue Service's plans to take tens of thousands of calls from its neighbouring areas.

It would be a significant service, as it would mean that the service could respond to calls from a much larger area than it currently does.



We're in safe hands: Calverton Primary School pupils, from left, Zerran Sumner, 12, Jasmine Pritchard, 11, and Kayleigh Cross, 11, try on firefighters' gear with the help of Patchway crew members Saba Williams, Jeff Rogers, and Jon Westwood

THOUSANDS of 999 calls from Devon and Somerset could soon be handled by Avon Fire and Rescue

"We are talking through how that will work in practice and at what point we start taking calls." "We will initially take them for six months."

Terry Walker, Avon Fire and Rescue Service's chief executive, said taking on calls from Devon and Somerset would be a significant service, as it would mean that the service could respond to calls from a much larger area than it currently does.

The Taunton centre will co-ordinate fire crews across the South West, from Gloucestershire to the Scilly Isles.

It is part of a £340million drive for nine regional control centres.

The Fire and Rescue Authority in Taunton said the £4 billion project would allow the authority to win the tender for the job.

What's hit the headlines over the last few months?

During Fire Safety Week in **November** we revealed that half of homes in Avon that had experienced a fire in the past seven months did not have a working smoke alarm; car washes involving crews from Yate (03), Blue Watch Speedwell (11) and Patchway (04), Green Watch Avonmouth (05) and Southmead (06) and the Youth Development Centre at Bedminster raised almost £4,000 for the Warwickshire Firefighters' Families Fund (see page 13); and crews from across Avon responded to 19 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) in a 36-hour period.

In **December** the Government delivered a festive blow by announcing lower than inflation grant proposals for the next three years; Bristol Rugby gave its backing to our RoadSkills campaign through a presentation to its young Academy stars; and 12 people were rescued from their homes after fire broke out in a flat in Patchway.

A variety of well-respected organisations including the Chief Fire Officers' Association and the Asian Fire Service Association, alongside the Fire Minister, Parmjit Dhanda MP, came to our defence in **January** after our Positive Action practices for whole-time recruitment were criticised in the media; lessons in British Sign Language paid off for Ff Ian Hunt from White Watch Southmead (06) when he was able to communicate with a deaf driver whose car had caught fire in Lockleaze; and Control dealt with over 200 calls for help after 30mm of rain caused flooding during a Friday afternoon.

Swift water rescue techniques were put to the test by crews from Bedminster (15) and Bath (12) in **February** during the second of three training sessions in North Wales (see page 19); White Watch Kingswood (10) incorporated the Sparks package into the Chinese New Year celebrations of a primary school in Mangotsfield; and more than 30 appliances and 100 firefighters from across the service were mobilised to a large fire at an Avonmouth trading estate.

999 hoaxers face being cut off

FIREFIGHTERS were called to more than 4,000 false alarms and hoax calls in the past nine months, new figures show.

The figures, from the largest fire and rescue authority in the country, show that the number of false alarms has risen by 10 per cent since last year.

Since March, there have been 1,741 false alarms caused by mechanical problems with alarm systems and 578 hoax calls.

New rules have been introduced to tackle the problem, including a crackdown on hoaxers using mobile phones, who face losing their contract and a ban on using their phones to make hoax calls.

They seem to be having an effect as the number of calls by the end of March is expected to be 4,000, down on last year's 4,400.

The brigade says nearly three-quarters of hoaxers get the message after being warned by the police.

The number of false alarms has risen by 10 per cent since last year.

In September, the service time taken to respond to false alarms was 10 minutes, compared with 12 minutes in the same period last year.

If the service were to take all the false alarms, it would cost the taxpayer £1.5 million a year.

Firefighters have been warned that if they do not stop making false alarms, they will be prosecuted.

It is a warning that comes as the service is preparing for the summer months, when the number of calls is expected to rise.

The service is also working on a new system to identify and track down hoaxers.

The new system will use a database of known hoaxers and will allow the service to identify and track down those who are making false alarms.

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Clive says thanks to life-saving 999 team

Teenager risks life for pets

Probe into arson attacks at fuel station

A fire at a fuel station in Patchway has led to a probe into arson attacks.

The fire broke out at the station on Tuesday night and caused significant damage to the building and the fuel tanks.

The fire was caused by a petrol pump that had been tampered with by a teenager.

The teenager was caught on camera and is now facing charges of arson.

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Pair escape river drama of stranded houseboat

Two people have escaped a dramatic rescue after their houseboat was stranded in a river.

The houseboat was stuck in the river for several hours and was in danger of sinking.

The two people were rescued by firefighters and were taken to hospital for treatment.

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Fire jobs safe for now after budget cut worry

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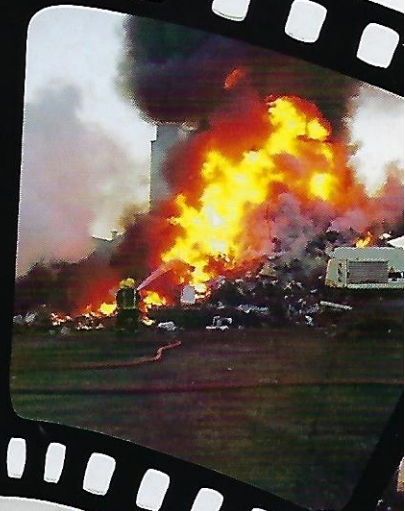
The service has announced that it will not be making any cuts to its workforce.



Pledge: Terry Walker

Saturday 5 January
Houseboat heads towards weir
11.31 Riverside, Saltford

Thursday 6 December
Billy the horse rescued from watery ditch
14.23 Jacklands, Tickenham, Nailsea



Monday 10 February
Blaze hits Avonmouth scrap
metal yard
17.01 St Andrew's Road,
Royal Portbury Dock,
Avonmouth

Sunday 7 October
Teenagers cut free following
road traffic collision
08.33 Wellington Hill West,
Henleaze

Tuesday 22 January
Pilning house gutted by
severe fire
12.59 Wick Road, Pilning

Saturday 9 February
TL comes to the rescue of
trapped owl
09.48 Beach Road, Kewstoke,
Weston-super-Mare



Round-up



Southmead CSC opens its doors!



In January the Chair of Avon Fire Authority, Councillor Terry Walker, officially opened the Community Safety Centre (CSC) at Southmead Fire Station.

Southmead is the seventh of our fire stations to house a permanent CSC.

As well as providing an opportunity for people to engage with their local firefighters, the resources can also be used by groups and organisations to host meetings or conferences at no cost.

To house the CSC part of the station on Southmead Road was renovated, creating a meeting room equipped with modern IT equipment, internet access and information on fire safety.

The CSC also provides free hot drinks to people who use it and has full disabled access.

Station Manager at Southmead Fire Station, Robert Leppier, said: "We believe this is a fantastic resource that several local groups have already started making use of.

"We are delighted to be able to offer a modern meeting place at no charge.

"Hopefully while people are with us they will chat to our staff, look at our leaflets and start thinking about

safety issues that may affect them."

Since its launch Safer Bristol and the NHS have made use of the resource as a base for meetings. Avon staff learning British Sign Language have also been studying in the new meeting rooms.

Hot on the heels of Southmead, will be a unique CSC due to open its doors in Hartcliffe later this year.

The centre will be a first for AF&RS as it is not based at a fire station, but part of the newly redeveloped Symes Avenue shopping complex.

The once run-down rank of shops has been the scene of a dramatic redevelopment and now features new retail units, a library and community rooms.

AF&RS has secured a lease on one of the offices which should provide a unique opportunity to interact with members of the public from our target groups as they shop.

AF&RS also has CSCs at fire stations in Speedwell, Yate, Temple, Weston-super-Mare, Bath and Keynsham, alongside Headquarters.



Community events



Tuesday 20 November
Safer cooking packs
handed out to Bath Spa
University Students



Friday 2 November
RoadSkills presentation
launched at South West
Bristol Post-16 Centre,
based at Ashton Park
School in Bower Ashton

**Monday 17
December**
Green Watch
Avonmouth stage their
annual pantomime to
local primary schools

Thursday 7 February
White Watch Kingswood
celebrate Chinese New Year
with a meal and a Sparks
presentation at Barley Close
Primary School, Mangotsfield

Our people

More support for GAFSIP

The end of the year was a busy time for supporters of Gambia and Avon Fire Services in Partnership (GAFSIP).

In November Chris Millard, Darren Thomas, Chris Geake, Steve Putnam, Jan Morris, Dave Price and Greg Dautre headed off to the African country for a fortnight.

The group visited The Gambia to train their counterparts at The Gambia Fire and Ambulance Service (GFAS) in using new breathing apparatus sets and safety boats.

The following month saw two of our firefighters hitting the road for a 3,700 mile journey from Bristol to The Gambia in an ambulance.

Watch Manager Adrian Mantle, from White Watch, Bedminster (15), and Firefighter Pete Marsh, from Red Watch, Bath (12), set out on the three-week journey as part of 'Lost in Transits' – a convoy of two ambulances and a minibus taking part in the Plymouth to Banjul Challenge.

Pete and Adrian (pictured above right) were joined by GAFSIP supporters, mother and son duo Lynn and Carl Powell from the Forest of Dean, and Gill Loats and Trevor Jones from Young Bristol.

Adrian has written a report on his experiences and you can also find out more about the duo's trip by logging onto our website www.avonfire.gov.uk

The two, who undertook the epic journey to raise funds for GAFSIP, were given the ambulances by Wessex Ambulance Trust. On arrival in The Gambia the ambulances, and minibus from Young Bristol, were handed over to GFAS.



“ It was certainly a relief to see familiar faces from the Gambia Fire Service when we approached the border from Senegal to The Gambia. One of the challenges of the trip had been the negotiation of the border crossings.

The formalities could sometimes take hours to complete while paperwork was examined and money exchanged. With their help we were out of Senegal and into The Gambia in less than half an hour. If only it had been that easy at Tangiers, where we entered Morocco after the crossing from Spain by ferry.

There we spent a bewildering five days wrestling with the Moroccan customs system. As with all these challenges, they were daunting at the time but I'm sure the others will have looked back as I have and realised that the experiences made for a more interesting trip.

Certainly the four nights we spent camped in the car park at Tangiers port, a frustrating 50 metres from the exit gate, helped towards creating a team spirit within the group. As we had come from different walks of life it was slightly odd to be suddenly faced with such a test so early into the trip. Something that could potentially wreck our hopes of getting to The Gambia at all.

Looking back the rest of the journey seems straightforward after that experience. We had no further major hold ups and no problems with the vehicles beyond a couple of flat tyres. ”

WM Adrian Mantle

Fire Investigation Dogs

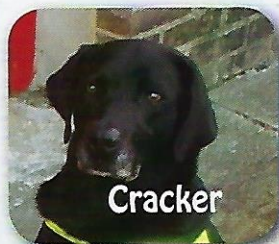
Watch Manager Ken Bennett is part of the service's Arson Task Force and is regularly involved in the investigation of suspicious fires. He is also the service's dog handler and looks after our fire investigation dogs Kilo and Cracker, who both live with Ken.

Cracker is a seven-year-old black Labrador and Kilo is a Springer Spaniel, who is six years old. Both are incredibly hyperactive and love being around people, but when working, they take their roles very seriously.

The dogs are called to incidents where the cause of a fire is unknown and it is their role to search through the debris to find any accelerants, which may have been used in the fire. They have been trained to recognise petrol, diesel, paraffin, lighter fuels, white spirit and acetone, along with a number of other substances.



Dogs are sometimes used to investigate the cause of fires because their noses are much more sensitive than humans. Dogs have 200 million scent receptors in their noses, compared to five million in humans. They can cover a large area in a very short space of time and are trained to ignore obstacles, obstructions, sights and sounds while at work. This means that the dogs can find and locate minute quantities of ignitable liquid traces much more quickly and accurately than electronic equipment.



While Ken, Cracker and Kilo primarily work for AF&RS, their services are often called upon by other fire and rescue services, which do not have their own fire investigation dogs.

Recently Ken and the dogs were asked by Cornwall Fire Brigade to attend the investigation into the cause of the Penhallow Hotel Fire in Newquay and spent two days sifting through the rubble in the hope of finding out how the fire started.

Ken, Cracker and Kilo also have a key role to play in deterring potential arsonists across the service's area, and they regularly attend a wide range of community safety events. In the last year they showcased their work with interactive demonstrations at events including the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta and visiting young people in schools where talks are given on the dangers of fire and the consequences of deliberate fire setting.

Fire investigation dogs were first trialled in 1986, with the first dogs deployed operationally in 1989. It was not until 1993 that they were considered to be useful to fire and rescue services in the UK. Lancashire and West Midlands fire and rescue services were the first to introduce fire investigation dogs in 1997 and now more than 10 services have their own teams.

Our people



Volunteer

Each week **Lynn Brimmell** from Creative Services lends a sympathetic ear to young people from across the country in need of advice as part of her volunteer work with the charity ChildLine.

Our Design and Production Manager works a four-hour weekly shift as a counsellor on the charity's confidential helpline at its South West base in Exeter.

A mentoring course at work which featured an element of counselling sparked Lynn's interest in the subject and in 2006 she began researching organisations which would provide training.

Lynn said: "I came across ChildLine while looking on the internet, but at the time I did question if counselling young people who are often in very difficult situations would be something I'd be able to do.

"However, I asked for more information and on reading through was convinced this was the right choice. I began my training in January last year and started on shift on 1 May later that year."

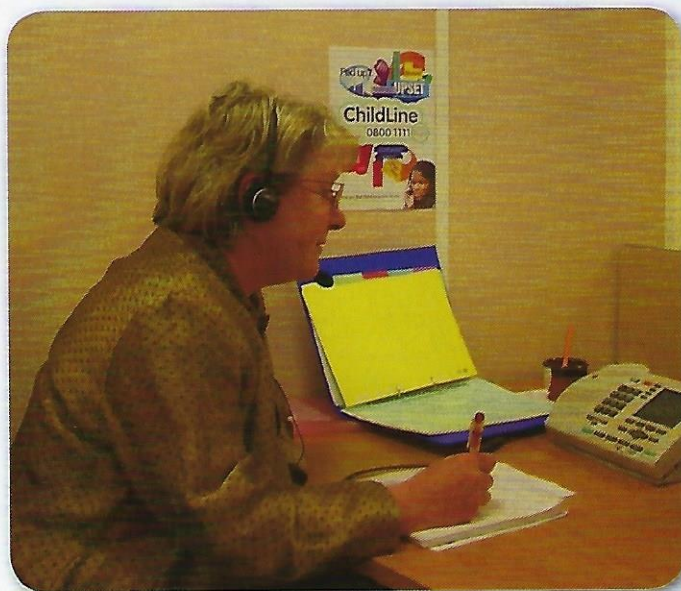
ChildLine is a free, confidential helpline for children and young people who feel unsafe or unhappy. The charity's counselling volunteers, like Lynn, offer young callers comfort, support and, where necessary, practical advice and protection.

"The calls can be very varied and every call brings a different situation. Some people might find this a bit daunting, but I really love the job."

She added: "There is so much support available and as the people I work with are counsellors, they are really good listeners too. It's a lovely environment.

"If I've had a particularly distressing conversation there is no pressure to keep taking calls. There are briefs and de-briefs at the start and end of every shift and if I have any concerns at any point I can talk to the shift supervisor."

The charity is always looking for volunteers, Lynn added: "ChildLine provides a vital service for young people, but the sad fact is that while the charity counsels around 2,300 young people each day, there are many more who can't get through."



Lynn is happy to talk to anyone who would be interested in becoming a volunteer counsellor for ChildLine – you can reach her by calling our main switchboard number 0117 926 2061. To contact ChildLine direct log onto www.childline.org.uk or call 0844 892 0205.

If you know of a child or young person who needs to talk to someone confidentially, give them ChildLine's freephone number 0800 1111.



Christmas round-up

The Christmas period brought out the festive spirit in Avon with quizzes, meals, charity collections and pantomimes keeping everyone busy.

Yatton's (19) annual Christmas Fayre proved popular with residents with over 300 people turning out for the event.

As well as enjoying cakes and crafts on sale, locals were also given fire safety advice and, as a result, a number of Home Fire Safety Visits were generated. Proceeds from a raffle held on the day raised £562 for the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund (FSNBF) – now known as The Fire Fighters Charity.

A 'Carol Float' featuring Santa Claus built by firefighters from Pill (08) once again delighted young children and adults alike at the switching on of Pill's Christmas lights. The crew also took the fire safety message out to local residents as the float paraded through the streets during the week before Christmas.

Pill's Station Manager Denis McCann said: "The last week before Christmas is hectic in most people's lives, but this event gives us an opportunity to publicise our safety messages as a gentle reminder rather than in an overt way."

A collection held by the crew as they walked alongside the float raised £1,200 for The Fire Fighters Charity.

Shoppers in Yate and at The Mall in Cribbs Causeway also gave generously to The Fire Fighters Charity during December. Crews from

Patchway (04) and Avonmouth (05) collected around £6,600 for their efforts at The Mall, while Yate (03) raised over £1,400 at Yate Shopping Centre.

The theatrical exploits of Green Watch Avonmouth (05) and Bath (12) ensured the service kept up its pantomime tradition.

Interpretations of the classic stories Hansel and Gretel, by Avonmouth, and Dick Whittington, by Bath, went down a storm with audiences.

Pupils from three local primary schools, along with fellow crews and family members were invited to watch Avonmouth's production, which incorporated fire safety messages into the tale. Colleagues and families of Bath's actors were treated to the performance during the weekend before Christmas.

Meanwhile at Headquarters, teams were encouraged to pit their wits against each other for the Avon Women's Network Christmas Quiz. The competition went down to the wire, ending in a tie-break between the teams 'Whatever' and 'Up Jacob's Creek without a paddle'. After a tense stand off, 'Up Jacob's Creek without a paddle' were declared the winners.

The event raised almost £500, split between the Frenchay After Burns (FAB) Club and The Stroke Association.

And HQ staff enjoyed turkey and trimmings served up by members of the Senior Management Board at the annual Christmas lunch.



Looking Back

Avon's magazine has seen many changes since it was first introduced following the formation of Avon Fire Brigade in 1974.

Here we take a look back at some of the topics of interest during the last three decades.

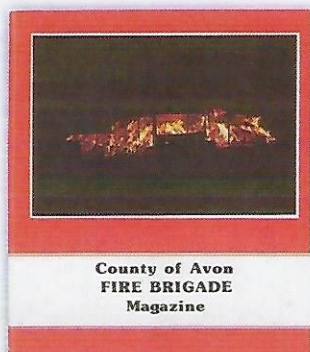
Avon Link – Winter 1974

Edited by Mel Denman from Headquarters, Avon Link was produced by a committee – Mel, Colin Morris from 'A' Division, Tom Jackson from 'B' Division, John Barnes from 'C' Division and Gordon Jennings 'Civilian Staff'.



In his introduction to the first edition of the magazine, Chief Fire Officer Tom Lister reflected on the reorganisation that had taken place on 1 April of that year. The magazine, he said, was an opportunity to make all staff aware of current Brigade activities: "I welcome the issue of such a publication as a means of bringing together all personnel from all parts of the county."

- The magazine also featured a report on A1 Temple's new Water/Ladder Tender, costing £11,500. Built by HCB Angus on a Dodge K8-50 chassis, the water tank held 400 gallons.
- Banwell Fire Station featured in the 'Spotlight on Stations' section – the building was first given to the parish in 1887.



County of Avon Fire Brigade Magazine – 1984

Chief Fire Officer Fred Ponsford discussed his impending retirement in this edition of the magazine, edited by Brian Sharp.

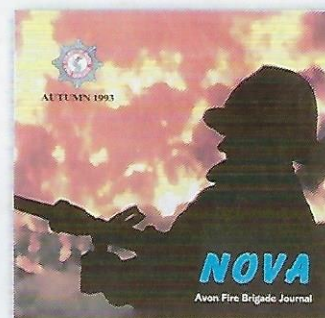
- The magazine also featured news on a book written by Sub Officer Andrew Eddy

from C1 Weston-super-Mare. 'The West Mendip Way' had been selling well since its publication, said the magazine.

- A report on the first Ian Chalmers Memorial Trophy Race, now an annual date in the Service's calendar, appeared in this edition. The event was won by Alan Lawson in 25min 13secs, closely followed by Tony Chapman in 27m 03s and Kevin Escott in 27m 19s.
- Leading Fireman TH Moore from Keynsham and Fireman KP McInerney from Temple were given the much-coveted Bronze Medal for animal life saving – believed to be the first fire service recipients of the award for over 20 years. Certificates of Merit were also presented to the crews of Keynsham and Temple for their role in the rescue of a horse trapped in the River Avon at Keynsham.

Nova – Autumn 1993

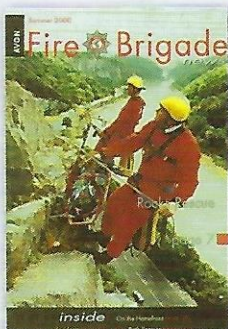
Uncertainty over the future of the Avon Fire Brigade formed the bulk of the letter from the Chief Fire Officer, with suggestions that the County of Avon could be disbanded under plans by the Local Government Commission.



Also in the magazine:

- Members of White Watch A1 Temple helped the BBC Natural History Film Unit in filming seagulls that had set up home on the roof at Headquarters. Bird enthusiast Peter Rock had been ringing seagull chicks at HQ since 1981 – a total of 230 birds.

- Bristol to Bordeaux Cycle Ride – Members of Green Watch A1 got on their bikes for this challenge in aid of Frenchay Hospital Children's Burns Unit. The team – John Gamlin, Dave Lukins, Dick Green, Bob Jerome, Dave Amesbury, Neil Griffiths, Jim Wemyss, Steve Box, Russ Bennett, Adrian Mantle and Stewart Brown – covered 466 miles during just five days.



Avon Fire Brigade News – Summer 2000

Retiring Chief Fire Officer John Terry used his column to say farewell to his colleagues: "I will miss the people, the friendship, the humour and the dedication and professionalism that goes with the job."

- Dave Price was named "Firefighter of the Year" by Fire magazine for his actions in the rescue of the occupant from a house fire in Midsomer Norton and, as a result, featured in the television programme, 'The British Bravery Awards'.
- There was also a focus on Rope Rescue and the activities of Bath Fire Station.

Crews rally round in wake of Warwickshire tragedy

The charitable spirit of Avon's fire crews was evident once again in the weeks following the deaths of four firefighters at a blaze in Atherstone-on-Stour in Warwickshire in November.

In the wake of the tragedy a charity – the Warwickshire Firefighters' Families Fund – was set up to help the relatives of the men who died.

Soon after, firefighters from Yate (03) were joined by members of Blue Watch Patchway (04) and Speedwell (11) at a car wash held at the fire station. Their efforts brought in around £3,000.

Car washes were also staged by members of the Youth Development Centre at Bedminster (15) and by Green Watch Avonmouth (05) and Southmead (06).

As a result, over £4,000 has now been handed over to the fund.

Veterans' Day, Bristol, 28 June

A free event to mark Veterans' Day will be taking place in Bristol on Saturday 28 June this year to celebrate the contribution veterans have made to the safety and security of the UK and local communities.

The amphitheatre on Bristol's harbourside will play host to military bands, drill demonstrations, stalls and exhibitions, displays of military vehicles and equipment and an exhibition marquee with talks from veterans and displays.

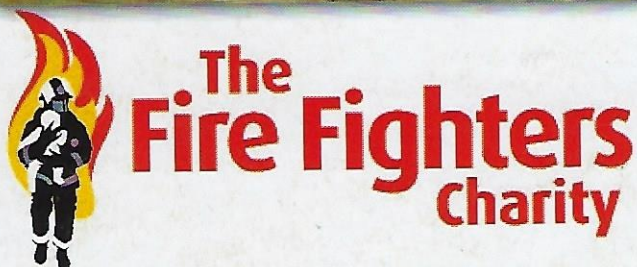
Veterans from various campaigns are being encouraged to contact the Veterans Day organisers so that they can receive their UK Armed Forces Veterans Lapel Badge.

Local veterans who have so far missed out will be presented with their Veterans' Lapel badge by the Lord Mayor. Anyone who has served in the armed forces who would like to apply for their UK Armed Forces Veterans' Lapel Badge and have it presented during the Veterans' Day celebrations should contact the Events Officer on 0117 922 3254.

Rogues' gallery







Changes to the name and branding of the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund (FSNBF) took place in March when the organisation became The Fire Fighters Charity.

The charity will now be extending its current services for operational and support staff and their families to include a small number of burns victims – and initially it is planned that this will be open to child burns victims only.

What is The Fire Fighters Charity?

The Fire Fighters Charity provides help to serving and retired fire service staff (both operational and support), their widow/ers and young dependants through the provision of sheltered accommodation, recuperative facilities, rehabilitation and therapy and financial support for those who need it.

The charity currently has three rehabilitation and therapy centres in the UK – at Harcombe House in Devon (pictured above) and in Cumbria and Sussex – and hopes to introduce a fourth in Eastern England next year.

Is change necessary?

With numerous charities now vying for your pound in an increasingly competitive market, The Fire Fighters Charity had to move with the times to remain modern and relevant. Research within fire services in the UK revealed that while 97% of staff knew the charity existed, only 27% knew its proper name – and members of the public who were surveyed did not recognise the charity at all.

A large cross section of people provided feedback on the existing name and logo, as well as potential future names, and charity and branding specialists were brought in for advice. The Fire Fighters Charity was by far the most popular name among fire service staff and key stakeholders.

These findings were presented to the charity's Board of Trustees and following consultation with volunteer Company Members, the charity elected to change its name in November 2007.

Why extend services to people from outside the fire service?

At present, the charity is funded almost entirely by support from the fire service community, which currently raises a staggering £8m per year and means around 11,000 people can benefit from its services.

Sadly, as is so often the case, this is not enough. Each year an estimated 5,000 serving and retired operational and support staff miss out due to a shortfall in funding to the tune of about £6m annually. With the fire service community already contributing so much (and Avon's staff doing their bit by raising over £102,000 last year), the charity will have to turn to the general public for donations.

Research identified that the FSNBF was not a charity recognised by members of the public and so was a cause they felt little empathy for. The rebrand and widening of the beneficiaries was something that the organisation felt would be necessary to gain more public support.

However, this broader beneficiary base will not adversely affect those currently under the charity's duty of care, said Roy Lawrenson, Chief Executive of The Fire Fighters Charity.

He added: "Please be assured that whilst our name and logo has changed, the charity remains as committed as ever to supporting serving and retired fire service personnel and their families during times of need.

"The charity has a proud history, and now also has a very exciting future. With the dawn of our new name, we now have the tools to successfully fundraise within the public arena. Coupled with the fantastic support which the fire community continues to offer, I am confident that our charity can go from strength to strength."

I donate to the charity through regular giving - do I need to change my standing order/direct debit details?

In a short answer, no. The charity's regular giving scheme continues to be a good source of income and those of you who choose to donate in this way will not have to make any changes to your standing order or direct debit. The only change that will take place however, will be the change to the charity's name as it appears on your bank statement.

Helpline service

Avon's current and retired staff can now access support on a range of issues associated with illness, injury or unforeseen emergencies through The Fire Fighters Charity's helpline.

The charity can provide advice on a wide range of issues, from entitlements to state benefits through to social care and - where necessary - referral onto other professional agencies.

The Fire Fighters Charity can also provide short term assistance by providing hardship grants. Above all, the helpline promotes independence and seeks to provide assistance where there is a shortfall in provision from local authorities or other statutory providers.

The level of assistance is judged on each individual's assessment of need. To find out how the charity can help, contact the helpline either by email, helpline@firefighterscharity.org.uk or call 0800 389 8820.

Station reps needed!

Nomination forms for The Fire Fighters Fund Station Representatives will soon be winging their way to stations and locations.

Anyone can become a representative for their station - reps will be expected to attend four meetings a year held within the Avon area.

Watch Manager Steve Quinton, Secretary for The Fire Fighters Charity said: "Ideally we'd like to have a representative for every station - two or more would be great."

For more information on becoming a station rep contact WM Steve Quinton at Green Watch Bedminster (15).

Innovation



The Intranet is here!

The reason behind the mysterious posters on station and throughout our locations towards the end of last year was finally answered on 10 December with the launch of Avon's new Intranet site.

Our growing site boasts a number of useful features for both work and social life at Avon and is becoming a central place for staff to turn to for up-to-date information about the service.

Among the many areas featured in the site are document and form archives. These are updated regularly and hold important documents such as FiRe Alerts, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and HR policies.

The Intranet is a good first port of call for information about the service – there are pages on each department and station, including who works where, roles and useful contact details. Staff can also learn about good work reporting, the partnerships we are involved in, and the latest news and incidents.

But the Intranet is not all about work. Also contained within the site are sections on the many discounts our staff are offered with local businesses, a 'bring and buy' section, the latest football match reports and a calendar of up-and-coming dates of sports and social events. There are also many photo archives dotted around the site, including one for most stations.

The latest statistics show that so far the Intranet has had an average of over 6,500 hits a month, proving staff are voting with their feet, or 'mouses'. This is backed up by the positive comments received from around the service and the increasing numbers of people who want to be involved in the site.

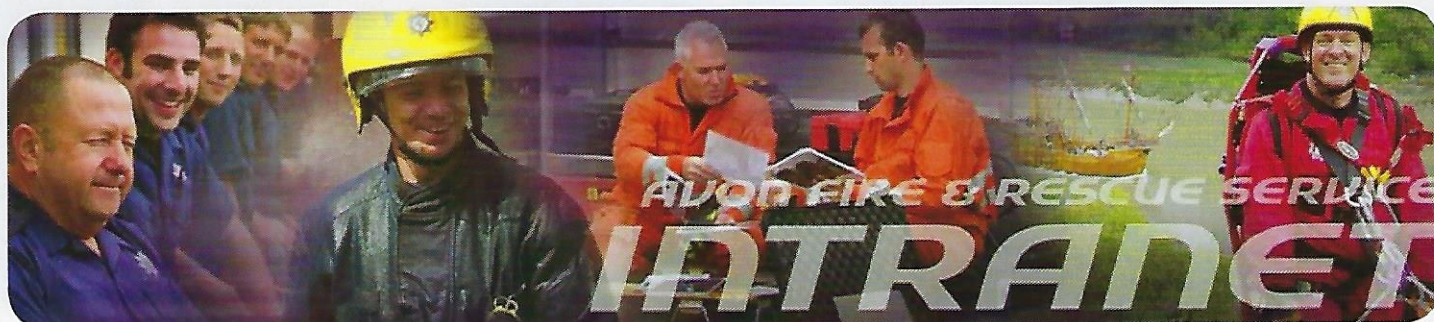
Ruth Baker, Avon's E. Communication Officer, said: "The Intranet is for staff, by staff and our aim is for a site which is up-to-date and relevant for all.

"To achieve this we have a number of 'Intranet Champions' from each department, who ensure that the information on their pages is current and, most importantly, correct."

In the months before and since the launch, Ruth and the 'champions' have worked hard to make sure the site fulfils the many different needs of the service. The site was created by a huge variety of staff so it has something for everyone.

To further spread the message and discover what operational staff needed from the site, Ruth also held consultations on station. More of these consultations are coming up and you can request one for your Watch.

*If you want to become an 'Intranet Champion' or have something to say about the site, email web@avonfire.gov.uk



Equipment and training

Firefighters take to the water

Our ability to respond to water-related incidents continues to be enhanced with firefighters from Bath (12) and Bedminster (15) learning new techniques in swift water rescue.

The crew's skills have been put to the test as part of training to enable them to become Instructors in Water Rescue. Once qualified, the team will cascade this training down to their colleagues at Bath and Bedminster.

During training sessions carried out in the chilly October and February waters of North Wales, the 11-strong group carried out a range of techniques including aggressive and defensive swimming, tethered swims, wading, paddling, V and Y lowers, cinches, cable ways and throw lines.

The group also rehearsed a series of swift water rescue scenarios back home on the River Avon in Bath at Widcombe, Monkton Coomb and Bathampton Mill. Volunteers from the Media & Communication Team acted as casualties for the day.

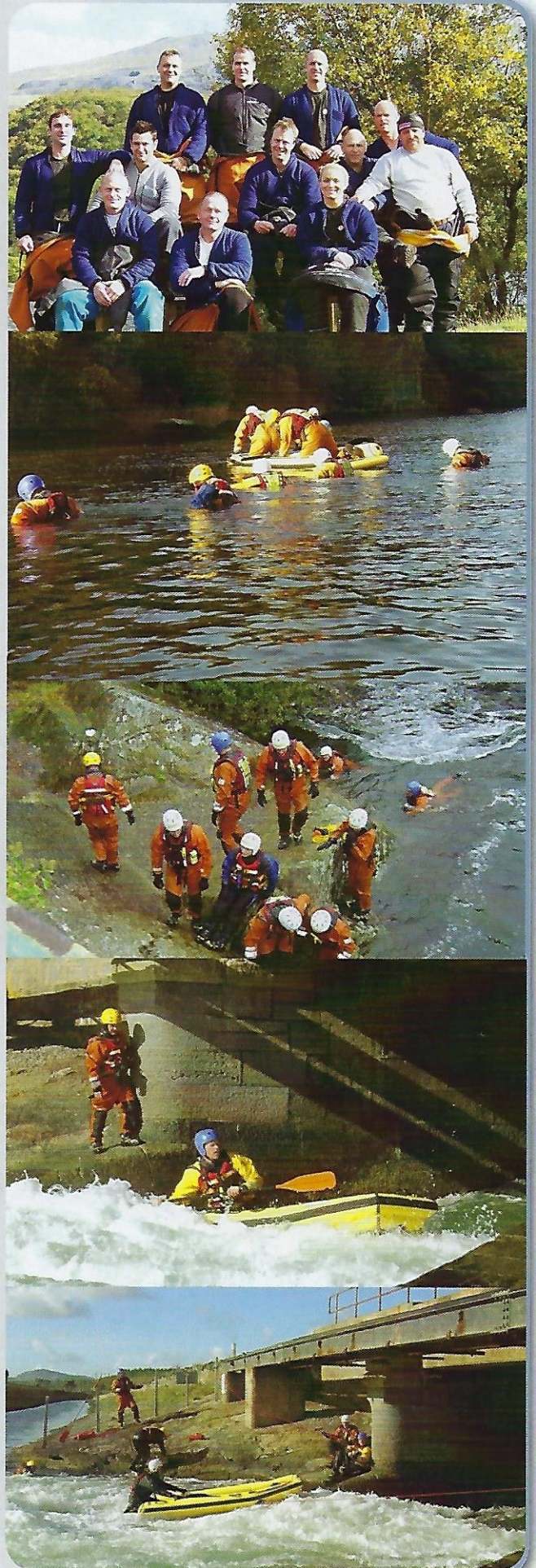
As the name would suggest, swift water rescue is deployed during incidents where time is of the essence – to people trapped in fast-flowing streams, rivers or floodwater.

Watch Manager Kevin Escott from Red Watch Bath (12), has been heavily involved in bringing the training to Avon. He said: "The inland waterways of the area are becoming increasingly busy and are used for a variety of hobbies, travel and jobs.

"As a result we need to be prepared to respond to a range of incidents – not only to protect the public, but also to ensure our firefighters' safety when carrying out rescues.

"And while last summer's floods did not affect the area, these types of weather events are something we need to make sure we are ready for."

*Our water resilience is also set to be bolstered with the new hovercraft at Weston-super-Mare and safety boat covering the Bristol harbourside going 'on the run' later this year. We will be covering these new appliances in the next edition of the magazine.



Avon staff recognised for their achievements

Avon's Annual Awards ceremony took place in November, celebrating the successes of our staff, members of the community and organisations we are in partnership with.

Held at the Cadbury House Hotel in Congresbury, the event is the second Annual Awards ceremony to be hosted by Avon. It was deemed a huge success, with members of staff from across the service coming together to celebrate with family, friends and members of the public.

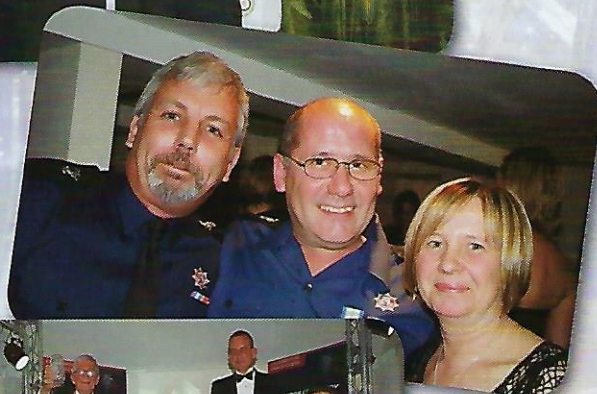
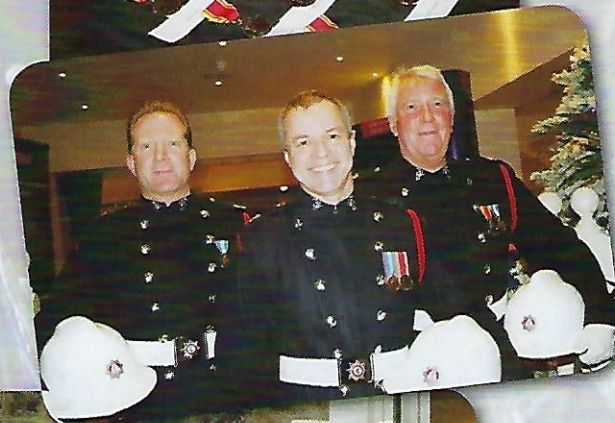
This year three new awards were added to the nine presented last year – Top Team, Outstanding Contribution to GAFSIP and Supplier of the Year.

And once again winners in most of the categories took home with them a specially commissioned teardrop shaped awards, made by Bristol Blue Glass. The eight-inch, solid blue and clear glass ornaments bear the Avon badge and are mounted on a wooden engraved base.

Green Watch, Avonmouth (05), the winners of the Fleur Lombard Award for outstanding contribution to Community Safety, picked up a smaller, crystal glass version of the original award that resides in reception at Headquarters.

During the event, which was hosted for the second year by BBC Points West's David Garmston, 20 years Long Service medals were presented to staff by the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Lady Elizabeth Gass.

A special commendation was also made to Helen Hill, an employee of St Monica Trust in Bedminster, who helped firefighters during a blaze at Monica Wills House in December 2006. Helen was given a standing ovation when she collected her award, for which part of the citation read: "There is no doubt that the prompt actions of the initial attendance and the assistance afforded to crews [by Helen] entering the premises averted the potential for serious loss of life."



2007 award winners

Fleur Lombard Award for Community Safety –
Green Watch, Avonmouth (05)

Highest Performing Station – Bedminster (15)

Most Significant Innovation – Student Advocates
Kaleb Debbage and Justin Boulton for the 'Stick
People' campaign

Supplier of the Year – Imagine IT

Glyn Duck Award for Outstanding Contribution to
GAFSIP – Chris and Mary Millard

Values Champion – Denis McCann

Partnership of the Year – Knowle West Media
Centre

Top Team – Creative Services

Outstanding Contribution to Equalities and Diversity
– Zoë Baker

Outstanding Sporting Achievement – Three Peaks
Team: Nick Baldwin, Pat Foley, Rob Atkin, Mike
Collin, Steve Higgins and Matt Osborne

Employee of the Year – Watch Manager Kevin
Escott, Red Watch Bath (12)

20 years Long Service medals were presented
to: Haydn Beynon, Steven Box, Nicholas Carlier,
Gary Carr-Smith, Lee Davis, Andrew Gane, Louise
Garland, Christopher Harding, Helen Hemmings,
Graeme Keel, Mark Long, John Pain, Ross
Parsons, John Rides, Gary Thompson, Jonathan
Western and Mark Yandell.

Awards were also presented to Norman Ryley,
Blagdon (23), in recognition of his 42 years service
and Dave Hares, Winscombe (24), in recognition of
his 43 years service.

Lorraine Abrahams received a commemorative
glass award for over 20 years service with AF&RS
and Sheena Arshed received a 20 year local
government certificate.



The way I see it

It is very rare that I am moved to write in response to a story I have seen in the papers about the service, but the ridiculous articles I saw about the recent recruitment drive and 'Have a go' days made me put pen to paper.

As someone who might be considered to have benefited from positive action (had that term been around), I can honestly say I've never felt more saddened at the behaviour of, what I hope is, a very minor section of my colleagues.

But you don't need to be from a minority group in the service – be that due to race or sex – to feel utterly ashamed by the comments from 'an anonymous firefighter'. Anyone with an ounce of intelligence or interest in the subject would have bothered to find out the truth behind the story before spouting off to journalists.

As someone who has taken the selection tests, surely he or she knows how difficult they are and how many people who apply and get through the first round, don't make it much further?

I didn't know much about this subject when I thought about writing something for the magazine, so I did a bit of research. What I did find made me realise how wrong my anonymous colleague has it.

According to the Government's website, www.direct.gov.uk

"Positive Action is where an employer provides support or encouragement to a particular group. It is only allowed where a specific group is badly under-represented among those doing particular work or filling particular posts in an employer's workforce.

The employer is allowed to provide special training to members of the group. They can also encourage members of the group to apply to do the work or fill the posts (for example, by saying that applications from them will be particularly welcome).

This does not mean that employers can discriminate in favour of the members of the group when it comes to choosing people to

do the work or fill the posts, that is unlawful discrimination.

Positive Action is not the same as 'positive discrimination', which is where members of a particular group are treated more favourably. Positive discrimination is unlawful."

While I may not agree with everything that is happening with the service and the changes that have happened over recent years, I am still proud to say that I work for Avon Fire & Rescue Service and I'm sure I'm not alone.

I question the motives of those who seek to undermine the service and appeal to them to stop – by trying to ruin the organisation's reputation, you are also making us all look bad in the eyes of the public. If you're not happy here, then leave. As we all know, there are many more willing (and clearly more suitable) candidates for your job.

Do you have a burning issue that you would like to share with readers?

If you have a topic you would like to get off your chest, please write to us in no more than 350 words. All articles must be accompanied by a name, address and daytime telephone number. If you wish to remain anonymous, please state this at the end of your article.

**Send your comments to:
The way I see it
Media & Communication Team
Avon Fire & Rescue Service HQ
Temple Back
Bristol
BS1 6EU
Or email: pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk**

Comments published in 'The way I see it' are from individuals and do not necessarily represent the views of AF&RS. The Editor reserves the right to edit any comments submitted.

Sports and social

Football



The 2007 / 2008 season has turned out to be a vintage one for the football team which produced consistent form to progress well in two national cups and reach the final of the South West Cup.

A settled team and a series of solid performances saw the players into the quarter final of the British Cup, the semi final of the English Cup and the final of the South West Cup.

Player / Manager Neil Punt has been pleased with the application of his regular squad of around 18 players, which this year has also been joined by some new faces.

Neil added: "It's been a long time since we've done so well and in particular go such a long way in national cups.

"It's a major achievement and hopefully we'll do as well, if not better, next season."

During the British Cup campaign, the team secured wins against Buckinghamshire and tournament favourites Leicestershire, before succumbing to Cornwall in the quarter finals.

Avon beat the Cornish side earlier in the year, as well as Kent, during the English Cup, but their success was cut short at the semi final match against Hampshire

With hopes in both national cups dashed, all focus switched to the South West Cup and a semi final tie against Wiltshire in March.

Avon posted a strong performance in the first half and could have scored a hatful. Goals from Caswell and Pugh-Jones put the side in the ascendancy, although they endured a nervous end to the game as Wiltshire pulled a goal back.

Fortunately Avon held on and secured a place in the cup final which was played at Taunton Town FC in April. A full match report from Taunton will appear in the next magazine.

Golf fixtures 2008

Thursday 8 May, Wells, 10.30hrs, £20

Tuesday 20 and Wednesday 21 May, Royal North Devon, South West Championships

Monday 2 to Wednesday 4 June, Northumberland, Sheriffs Cup

Monday 30 June, Cotswold FDGE, 10.30hrs, £20

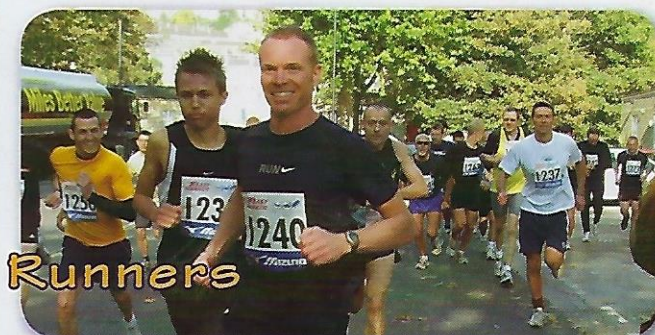
Wednesday 30 July, Filton, 10.30hrs, £20

Wednesday 20 August, The Bristol, 10.16hrs, £20, AF&RS Championships

Dates for September, October and November can be found on our Intranet site.

For more information please contact Mike Parker (Golf Captain) on 01275 818156 or 07880 792000, or Andy Potheary (Red Watch, Patchway).

Please let Mike or Andy know if you would like to attend any of these days, and remember guests are welcome!



A group of runners from Patchway Fire Station (04) were the winners of the Team Shield at October's Bath Fire Station Memorial Run.

Brian Penny finished the 3.6 mile course in the fastest time of 19m41s, while the women's race was won by Kate Winsor (25m50s), with Brett Halliwell (21m19s) winning the Under 16s event and Ron Stinchcombe (25m29s) taking the honours in the Over 50s category.

Lifestyle

Lip smacking chicken lasagne - courtesy of Blue Watch 09 Temple

Serves four

This is a good alternative for those who don't like mince or just fancy a chicken pasta dish.

Ingredients

4 fresh chicken breasts
1 large onion
Handful of sliced mushrooms
White sauce - either ready made or made with butter, flour and milk
Tin of sweetcorn (optional)
Dried lasagne sheets
Dried mixed herbs
Black pepper
Olive oil

To serve

Peas
Chips
Garlic bread



Preheat the oven to
● 180°C / 350°F / gas mark 4

● Take four fresh chicken breasts, dice them and start to fry in a small amount of olive oil.

● Finely dice a large onion and add to the pan, followed by a handful of sliced mushrooms. Cover the pan and allow to simmer for five minutes.

● You will need a basic white sauce, which you can either make using butter, flour and milk, or cheat and use a jar of lasagne white sauce (much easier and just as tasty).

● Uncover the pan and allow the excess juice to evaporate, then stir in 3/4 of the jar of white sauce and a tin of sweetcorn (optional).

● To make the lasagne, use an oven proof dish about the size of a magazine. Divide the chicken into three equal portions and put the first portion in the dish.

● Cover with dried lasagne sheets and repeat two more times. Now use the remaining 1/4 of the jar of sauce to cover the top layer of lasagne. Sprinkle with a few herbs and a bit of black pepper and pop in the oven for half an hour.

● Serve with peas, chips and fresh garlic bread.

Avonimouse



How do I attach documents and photographs to my emails?

Did you know that you can send photographs and other documents as attachments to your emails in Microsoft Outlook? Attachments can be sent when sending, replying or forwarding emails.

There are two ways you can do this:

- While in the email message, click on the paperclip icon – this will bring up a box with a list of all the documents held on your computer and on the server. Find the relevant photograph or document you wish to send and 'double click' on the title/icon. The file will then appear as an attachment to your email. Click on 'send' when ready.
- You can also insert attachments while in an email message by dragging a file from your computer into the open message.

Eco lifestyle tips

Not only has the production of the magazine gone green, we also thought you might like some top lifestyle tips that can help you play your part in saving our planet.

Did you know that producing, transporting and consuming food is responsible for nearly a fifth of our climate change effects? Every little helps, so even if you just follow one of the tips below it can help work towards a better future.

Choose local and seasonal

Choosing to buy local food and drink, that's also in season, is likely to mean that less energy has been used in its production. Food and drink that has travelled a shorter distance, not only helps reduce traffic on our roads, but also harmful fuel emissions.

Visit www.eattheseasons.co.uk to find out what's in season now.

Label watch

Look for labels that show something has been produced with the aim of reducing the negative impact on the environment. For example, energy efficient appliances or sustainable fishing.

I'm not a plastic bag

Stop picking up new plastic bags each time you shop - re-use your old ones, buy a couple of 'bags for life' or jute shopping bags to take with you.

No to food waste

Did you know that each year you're throwing money down the drain?

The average UK household spends £424 a year on food that goes in the bin - scarcely that's around a third of all the food we buy ending up in the bin.

As a result, we're sending 6.7 million tonnes of food waste to landfill each year, which produces huge amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas more than 20 times as powerful as carbon dioxide.

Buy recycled

Keep on the look out for recycled products, such as paper, kitchen rolls and toilet tissue.

Bargain tip...did you know?

If you're at the supermarket and a special offer item is out of stock, many supermarkets will give you a voucher entitling you to the same offer at another time.

ASDA calls them 'smiley vouchers', Tesco 'rain-check vouchers' and Sainsbury's 'special coupons'.

Visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com to find out what you can do to cut food waste. From the best ways to store your ripe fruit and how to save time and money in the kitchen, to tips and recipes on cooking with food that needs using up. It's a one stop shop for the 'love food, hate waste' campaign!

Brain teaser



Sudoku grid

		7			4			3
					9	7	5	
9	6		3	7				2
		3						9
		6	7	9	3	4		
2						3		
6				3	8		7	4
	5	1	9					
7			2			6		

Dingbats

Can you identify the common phrases from the clues below?

X X

pains
pains
pains
pains

1 2 3 ⁴ 5 6 7 8 9 10

CROWD

NOSTITCHON

WAY

Answers:

Sudoku grid

7	3	8	2	4	5	6	9	1
4	5	1	9	6	7	2	3	8
6	9	2	1	3	8	5	7	4
2	4	9	5	1	6	3	8	7
1	8	6	7	9	3	4	2	5
5	7	3	4	8	2	1	6	9
9	6	5	3	7	1	8	4	2
3	1	4	8	2	9	7	5	6
8	2	7	6	5	4	9	1	3

Phrases

(1) Double Cross, (2) Growing Pains, (3) For Hire, (4) Face in the Crowd, (5) A Stitch in Time, (6) Broadway

On this page we celebrate the hard work carried out by you all. Below are just a few of the letters we have received over the last few months.

Bath 12 – Red Watch

Thank you for teaching us what to do if there is a fire and how to test a door for any signs of fire.

I really enjoyed the bit when we learned about putting the back of our hands against a door because if we did that with the palm of our hands they would get burned if the fire was behind that door.

I learned a lot about the dangers in the sitting room, like too many plugs in one set of sockets, and also putting clothes over a heating up lamp.

Zoe, a pupil at St Stephen's CE Primary School

Kingswood 10 – Red Watch

Thank you for coming to our school. I really liked the heat detector and enjoyed listening to the sirens. I learned I never go near to fire.

Luke, a pupil at Beacon Rise Primary School

Thank you for your letter of condolence regarding the death of my father, Arthur Lasson. My brother and I appreciated the kind words and accompanying prayer.

We also wanted to pass on our thanks to those officers, both serving and retired, who attended Dad's funeral. It would have meant so much to him that the representatives from the Brigade were present, so consequently it meant a lot to us.

We thanked those Brigade members we managed to meet on the day of the funeral, but wanted to express our thanks in writing to the Brigade as a whole.

Mrs GM Gillam

Yatton 19

I am writing to express our appreciation to the Yatton fire crew for once again attending and supporting the annual village bonfire and firework display on 3 November.

This year was yet another successful event blessed by ideal weather and has once again raised a large amount of money for the school.

Once again we have made a £50 donation to the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund to show our appreciation for your assistance.

Yatton Infant School Association

Radstock 21

Thank you for providing the excellent team of firefighters who attended the Radstock art|works festival on 22 September.

The attendance of your team really contributed to the success of the day and their wholehearted friendly approach was so much appreciated by the many families and children who came to the event (estimated at 600+).

We really were so delighted that the firefighters complete with fire engine could attend. Their professional, fun, caring and hands on approach was exemplary and we as a group really wanted to write and thank you for their attendance.

North East Somerset Arts (nesa)

The nephew of a former Banwell firefighter is appealing for former colleagues to get in touch.

Brian Baker would like to hear from anyone who knew Frederick Thomas Yard, who was the former chief fire officer at Banwell Fire Station.

If you can help contact Sandra Connolly in Creative Services on 0117 926 2061 extension 247.

Competition

Win Win Win!

In every issue of the magazine we are offering you the chance to win an exciting prize - for this edition we've teamed up with Invitation.

One copy of the Invitation book is up for grabs - all you need to do is answer the five questions below and send us your answers on a postcard.

Don't forget to include your name, address, phone number and your current or former place of work with AF&RS on your entry.

Entries should be sent to Louise Hart, Media & Communication Officer, Avon Fire & Rescue Service HQ, Temple Back, Bristol BS1 6EU.

The closing date is Friday, 20 June.

Questions

What was the Roman name for the city of Bath?

Levante and Ponente are names of what?

What popular children's toy did Ruth Handler invent in 1959?

In which Italian city does Michelangelo's famous David sculpture stand?

In what year was the Rugby Five Nations Championship renamed the Six Nations with the inclusion of Italy?

Editor: Louise Hart

Regular contributors: James Bladon, Steph Mounsey, Helen Shrimpton. Design and layout: Annabel Brito

Guest contributors: Ruth Baker, Adrian Mantle

Thank you: To all our contributing writers, as well as everyone who supplied pictures, letters and ideas

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The Invitation book was formed in 2003 with the idea of helping to raise funds within the local community while offering a wide range of savings for the whole family.

Originally starting as the Big Fundraiser, the aim was to raise over £1 million for good causes in every region. A secondary target was to have a book established in every major city and region throughout the UK - books are now in Bristol, Cardiff, Nottingham, Birmingham, the Black Country and Coventry. With each new year it is increasing both geographically and with the amount of savings available.

The 2008/09 Bristol, Bath and West book contains over £13,000 worth of fantastic savings and discounts on purchases most of us make during the year - going to the cinema, family days out to local and national attractions, bowling, entertainment, eating out and shopping.

Some of the great 2008 offers included are: The Bristol Golf Club - 2-4-1 offers; Odeon - save £105; Greggs - save £12.54; Go Ape - save £75; Hollywood Bowl - save £54. PLUS 600 more offers, which guarantee your money, back over and over...

If you are interested in finding out more about the great offers or to purchase a book yourself please visit the website at www.invitationbook.co.uk. If you enter the word FIRE when you purchase the book online £4 from each sale will be donated, split between the The Fire Fighters Charity and Gambia and Avon Fire Services in Partnership (GAFSIP).

Congratulations to Amy Collins from Health and Safety who was the winner of our last competition - a meal for two at Juniper in Cotham.