

Summer 2000

AVON



Fire Brigade

news



Rocks Rescue

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SUMMER GREETINGS

There is some sad news and good news in this summer issue, sadly there is the imminent retirement of our Chief Fire Officer John Terry who has decided to call it a day after a long and distinguished career.

While we all wish his successor every success in the future there is no doubt that John Terry will be missed and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

Meanwhile the good news is that one of our firefighters, Dave Price, has been selected to receive the national "Firefighter of the Year" award by FIRE magazine.

Dave will shortly feature on the first of a series of "British Bravery Awards" programmes which will salute the heroic deeds of our emergency services.

Well done Dave - you are a star!

That kind of recognition helps compensate for the expected turmoil of car crashes, house fires, boating accidents and cliff rescues that summer brings.

This issue of Avon Fire Brigade News includes the inevitable selection of unfortunate incidents but also reflects some of our other activities, from setting the fashion trend with new uniforms to helping out with a charity garden makeover.

Our thanks to all those who have forwarded information to Geoff Hutchings and Tim Wood in the press office for inclusion - and we also urge you to support our advertisers whose support makes the publication of this magazine possible.

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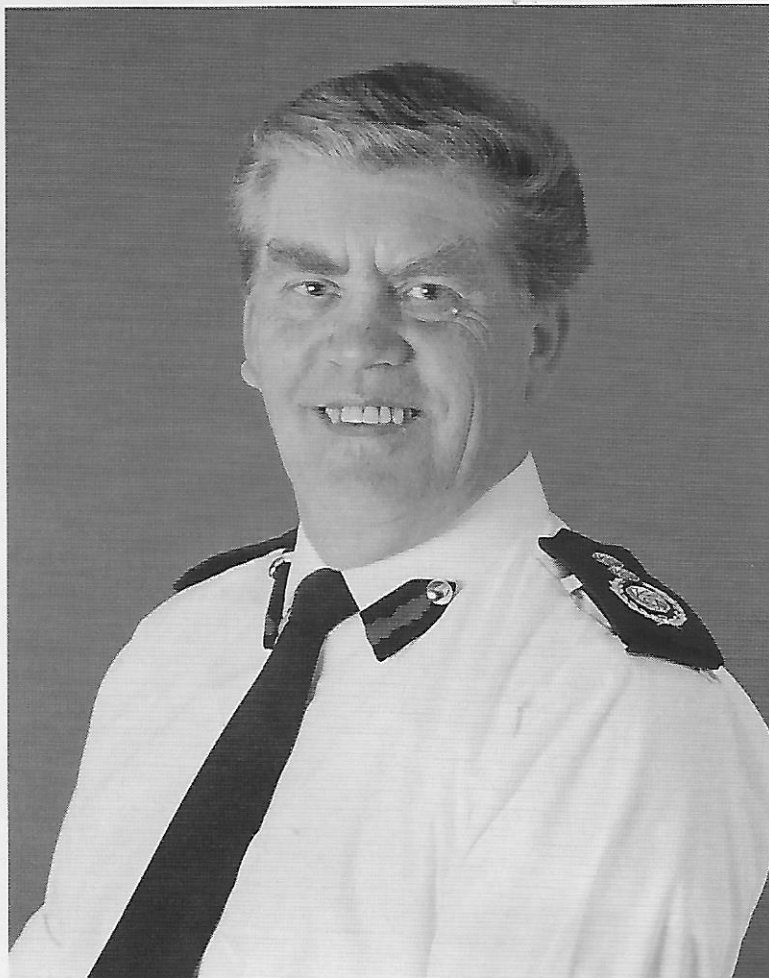
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Chief Bows Out



Our Chief Fire Officer John Terry retires next month (July) and while everybody wishes his successor all the best, general opinion is that "The Chief" will be a hard act to follow.

But the amiable pipe-smoking boss has decided to call it a day after 34 years and says that he intends to quit public life to devote all of his time to the family that has supported him over the years.

John Terry joined Surrey Fire Brigade in 1966, working his way through the ranks to Divisional Officer in 1979. He was appointed to Assistant Chief Fire Officer with Avon Fire Brigade in 1984, was promoted to Deputy Fire Chief Officer in 1993 and to his present post in 1996, shortly after the Avon Combined Fire Authority was established.

He came into the job with an impeccable third generation pedigree. His grandfather William Tothill was Police Superintendent in charge of Newport Fire Brigade, his father Harold was awarded the MBE and the Queen's Fire Service Medal serving with Derbyshire fire service, and John's younger brother Neil is an A.D.O. in Nottinghamshire Fire Service.

When John started work as an apprentice vehicle engineer he was already considering a change of career.

"I always thought that being a firefighter was an attractive job and a worthwhile career," he says. "And it has been, I would not have changed it for anything."

Now at the age of 56 he will hang up his bleeper and devote more time to his wife Anne, son Ian, daughter Clare, and his four grandchildren, and enjoy his main hobby as skipper of the Moly Brown, a 29ft motor yacht moored in Dorset.

The first incident he attended as a fledgling

firefighter was a chimney fire, and with typical enthusiasm he ended up dirtier than the rest of the crew. His worst moment was the tragic blaze at Leo's supermarket at Kingswood which claimed the life of Firefighter Fleur Lombard.

"The biggest fire was the former British Aircraft Corporation stores warehouse building in Surrey back in the late Seventies. It was a huge blaze, and the biggest loss in the UK at the time, something like £74 million," he recalls.

His scariest moment was the huge blaze at the GATX petroleum storage depot at Avonmouth in the mid-Nineties. Twenty pumps, a big turn-out and he was deputy chief fire officer wondering just how it was all going to work out.

One employee was killed in the fire and there was a serious problem with a continuing fuel leak that could not be traced. "We tried everything but the situation was getting steadily worse, and the professional advice we were receiving was not very helpful."

"Fortunately we did manage to isolate the leak after 16 hours and got it under control. I was very relieved when it was all over."

He says his best moment was when he got the Chief Fire Officer's appointment. "Not that I set out with that intention but to achieve it in Avon which has such a superb fire brigade was a very good feeling."

He rates his proudest achievement as having guided Avon Fire Brigade forward through the past four years of incredible change.

"I believe that the Brigade has acquitted itself very well in the face of some difficult challenges. We have developed new facilities and started many initiatives which I have wanted to see for a long

time, and we have achieved much during my 4½ years as the Chief Officer.

Under his leadership Avon has proved to be one of the most successful of the new Combined Fire Authorities. He has been a leading force in fire safety research on best practice and the development of community fire safety and education. This has been undertaken on a voluntary basis with health authorities, local authority departments and voluntary organisations, gaining national recognition for Avon Fire Brigade's work in this field.

He has also been responsible for developing welfare and counselling services, and setting standards for occupational health.

Now he says he just wants to see the Brigade go from strength to strength as a local public service.

“I will miss the people, the friendship, the humour, and the dedication and professionalism that goes with the job.”

"While there will be increasingly close working relationships with other fire brigades I think that each should remain a local public service with its own identity under local democratic control. I believe that this is very important for the kind of fire service that we need," he said.

Notice so far that there has been no mention of his OBE, another proud moment which he is due to receive at Buckingham Palace in early July.

"Actually it was quite a shock when the long brown OHMS envelope arrived," he said.

"I thought it was probably from the Inland Revenue until I noticed that it was from the Prime Minister's office, so I thought that I had better open it."

"It was quite a surprise because it was not something that I was expecting. I believe that it is more of an accolade in recognition of Avon Fire Brigade," he says modestly.

So what will he miss once he has plenty of time on his hands?

He glances out of the window and draws thoughtfully on his pipe.

"Everything and everybody," he said. "I will miss it dreadfully. I won't be part of a firefighting team any more, and that will be quite hard to come to terms with."

"I will miss the people, the friendship, the humour, and the dedication and professionalism that goes with the job."

"Whoever takes over will be very lucky indeed, becoming responsible for a fire brigade which is very well respected throughout the country."

"In fact I am rather envious."

Going Overboard



Avon fire crews have been going overboard for safety boat training at Portishead swimming pool to help make local waterways safer this summer.

The brigade is bracing itself for an increasing number of emergency calls this summer as more boating enthusiasts get into difficulties on local waterways.

Both Bath and Bedminster stations have safety boats on constant alert, ready to respond to a variety of calls, from capsized craft to boat fires, swimmers in trouble, the recovery of bodies and even the occasional car plunging into the water.

We captured the action (left and below) as a Bedminster crew practiced capsizing and righting their safety boat at Portishead, with associated water safety drills under the watchful eye of instructor Nick Baker (right).

Kids just love Lifeskills

Bristol's new Lifeskills training centre at Ashton Gate is proving a major attraction for youngsters and is now taking school bookings from the start of the new term in September, said Divisional Officer John Sleight.

Lifeskills at the CREATE Centre at Smeaton Road, has been visited by more than 900 pupils from 15 schools since it was opened by HRH The Princess Royal Princess Anne in January.

Some 60 schoolteachers attended an open evening in May along with North Somerset chief executive Paul May and the council's education director John Simpson.

"It was an excellent evening and meant that we were able to have the centre fully booked to the end of the current term," said John Sleight.

"All the children who visit the centre cannot believe that there is a realistic village on the fourth floor of a warehouse."

"They are all very enthusiastic and we are confident that they go away with a greater awareness of accident prevention and saving lives."

The centre covers 10,000 sq ft of floor space and graphically shows youngsters the dangers they can face from everyday living, whether it is a supermarket, house, road, sub-station, stream, railway, building site or even a playground.

The Lifeskills Centre is now appealing for more volunteers, so if you, or anybody you know has some free time which they would like to turn to good use, contact John Sleight on 0117-9262061 x 610.



Best Value

Avon Fire Authority's vital statistics have gone on show to the public, telling them who we are, what we do and how well we do it.

The Best Value Performance Plan was made available to the public for the first time in March through various outlets like libraries, health centres and at fire stations.

The Plan reveals facts like:

- Avon Fire Brigade receive over 27,000 calls for assistance;
- Attend more than 16,000 emergency incidents;
- Rescued over 600 people from fires, cars, lifts and a range of other incidents;
- Fitted more than 8,500 smoke alarms for the elderly since 1997;
- Visited 385 schools to teach children about fire safety.

"The best value performance plan has been very well received so far by the public and the responses will be collated ready for the auditor," said Jenni Eggo.

On the HOMEFRONT



All going according to plan, the new look garden takes shape.

Two crews from Bedminster have helped a single parent family transform their wilderness back yard into a designer dream garden with help from the BBC's Homefront make-over team.

It was all part of a campaign by homeless charity Shelter and Bristol's Business in the Community who needed volunteers to completely transform the former homeless family's overgrown garden at their new home in Bedminster.

Christine Hybs, of Bristol Cares, a group which co-ordinated the project, said: "Shelter held a competition for people to design their dream garden and this mother was a winner."

"While the BBC's Homefront team with Diarmuid Gavin was involved we needed volunteers to help with the work and Avon Fire Brigade responded brilliantly."

The crews faced a variety of tasks from clearing and preparing the ground to mixing concrete, laying decking and paving slabs, erecting fencing and a pergola, and planting trees and shrubs.



Doing their level best to help are (l-r) Russell Mitchell, S.O. Brian Counsell, John Maloney and Dave Puddy.

The project began when the council agreed to help clear the rubble, and took an entire wet and windy weekend, with occasional breaks when the crews had to drop tools and rush out to respond to emergency calls!

The mother Shirley Fleming said: "When we moved in I could not allow the children out in the garden because it was overgrown and dangerous with rubble and weeds."

"But now it has been cleared and we have a new lawn, a shed, a decked patio and a play pit for the children, its absolutely brilliant."

Shelter project manager Jackie Beech said that when former homeless families move in they frequently find the garden in a poor state and need help to start rebuilding their lives."

Has anybody seen a hammer? The volunteers get it together piece by piece.



Rope Rescue on the Rocks

A young female climber slips and falls 30ft on the sheer 200ft cliff face at Sea Mills, Portway, Bristol, and Avon Fire Brigade's Rope Rescue team swings into action.

She is just one of some 20 incidents every year on the rock face which is a popular training ground for climbers.

Thanks to the team's expert level of training and regular practice the stricken climber was carefully secured and brought down to ground level where a waiting ambulance took her to hospital with some bad cuts, bruises and a suspected broken wrist.

One of the team, Adrian Mantle, said: "Fortunately she was properly equipped and was with two other experienced climbers. They had secured themselves to the rockface and were waiting to be rescued."

"Matt Jones and I abseiled down to reach her and after checking her condition we decided that we could carry her down in a sling."

Crews at Temple Back and Weston-super-Mare hold mock rescue sessions, either using training towers or outside locations to rehearse various accident scenarios so that they are ready for the real thing.

Each station has a vehicle to carry its equipment including

"Matt Jones and I abseiled down to reach her and after checking her condition we decided that we could carry her down in a sling."

stretchers, rescue slings and a rope winch, and their rescue tenders also carry a certain amount of equipment.

Operators train to reach casualties over cliffs, steep slopes, in quarries or on most scaffolding or high buildings, and they are able to carry out the recovery either from above or below the scene.

Generally a dummy is used, thrown over a cliff or placed in a dangerous location, and the team work out the safest rescue manoeuvre.



Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson said: "While you can never be sure exactly what will happen when there is an incident on the cliff face, our regular training sessions ensure that we are prepared for any eventuality."

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Date/Time: 18-12-99 10.18

Address: Ambleside Avenue, Southmead, Bristol

Appliances: A22, A52

Firecrews were faced with a severe house fire on arrival at a person's reported call. Four firefighters in BA used two high pressure hose reels to extinguish the blaze, having searched the heavily smoke-logged house. Fortunately everyone was found to have escaped before our arrival. The whole property was severely damaged by fire, heat and smoke.



Date/Time: 21-12-99 07.00

Address: Clevedon Road, Weston-super-Mare

Appliances: C11, C12, C14, C15

On arrival crews were told that two young children were still inside the blazing property with the mother and three other children already having escaped. Six firefighters in BA fought their way in using a jet and two high pressure hose reels to fight the fire. Tragically both children had died as a result of the fire, later established as caused by a candle, the whole property was severely damaged in the blaze.

Date/Time: 20-1-00 08.06

Address: Portishead primary school, Slade Road

Appliances: C31, C32

Two firecrews arrived at a single story classroom to find it heavily smoke-logged. Four firefighters in BA dealt with a number of seats of fire using a high pressure hose reel which badly damaged the classroom, disrupting the school's programme and destroying the children's work.



Date/Time: 15-2-00 09.11

Address: Kite Walk, Weston-super-Mare

Appliances: C11, C12, C14

The Brigade received multiple calls to this house fire with persons reported. The Officer-in-Charge made pumps three on arrival and was faced with smoke issuing from all windows with a severe fire on the ground floor. Four firefighters in BA used two high pressure hose reels to extinguish the fire and establish after a search that one was inside. Three persons had already escaped who all later needed hospital treatment for smoke inhalation.



Date/Time: 12-5-00 04.04

Address: Happy Landings Public House, Hengrove Lane, Hengrove, Bristol

Appliances: 091, 092, 093, 095, 099, 100, 142, 151, 152

On arrival despite three persons already having escaped a severe fire in the ground floor bar, it was unclear if all persons were accounted for. Ten firefighters in BA searched the detached building as well as extinguishing the fire with two jets and two high pressure hose reels. It was soon found that everyone had escaped. The cause of the fire has been established as arson.

Date/Time: 19-3-00 19.25

Address: Simmonds View, Stoke Gifford

Appliances: A22, A52

Firecrews arrived to reports from neighbours of smoke issuing and an alarm sounding. Two firefighters in BA entered to deal with a fire in a ground floor living room, and located an elderly female who had tragically already died as a result of the fire.



Date/Time: 10-5-00 23.05

Address: Redwood Lodge, Beggarbush Lane, Failand, Bristol

Appliances: 081, 091, 093, 095, 100, 151, 152, 161, 162

A complicated range of buildings with various types of roofs added to over the years involved in fire and threatening "The Bungalow", the old Hunting Lodge of Ashton Court Estate, a Grade 1 listed building. Six pumps and an aerial attended with eight fire firefighters in BA. Two jets, three high pressure hose reels and a T.L. needed to bring the fire under control. Estimated to be £500,000 of damage caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette. The listed building was saved thanks to the prompt actions of the firefighters.

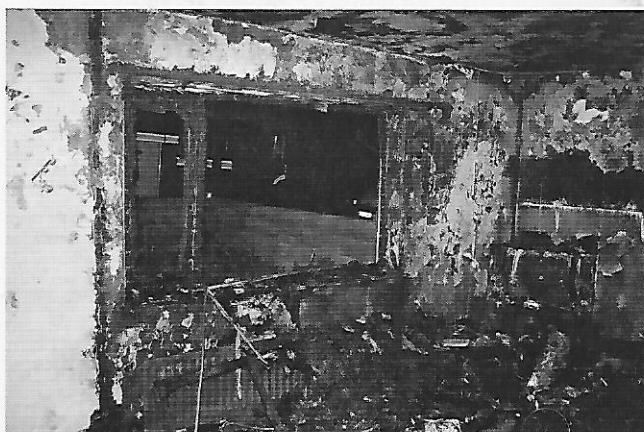


Date/Time: 15-3-00 18.44

Address: Hungerford Crescent, Brislington, Bristol

Appliances: B42, C51

The Officer-in-Charge was told on their arrival that a 30-year-old man was believed still inside with a serious fire taking hold of the property. Four firefighters in BA entered to search and fight the fire with two high pressure hose reels, the casualty was quickly located and taken outside. Despite strenuous efforts made to resuscitate by firefighters and then paramedics, the man later died of his injuries. The family later sent their thanks to the crews attending for everything they had done.



Pushing the boat out at BATH

Report by David Baxter.

They were pushing the boat out at Bath fire station but it was all part of the regular drill. Fire-fighters Paul Smith and Keith Watts were kitted up in divers' dry suits with their instructor Mark Searle, while Pete Marsh was learning the ropes.

They towed the safety boat nearly a mile to the launch point in Ferry Lane and went through their usual two-hour training programme, practising rescue techniques while on the look-out for anything unusual in the water.

Back in the fire station Station Officer Kevin Escott said that they are the busiest station for water-based incidents because of the increasing popularity of the River Avon and the Kennet and Avon canal.

"It is getting as busy as a motorway in the summer," said the former army paratrooper. "We get them all, from novices in dinghies to 60ft pleasure cruisers packed with passengers enjoying jazz bands or discos."

"That's why I love working here, there is so much variety," he said. "You name it and we have it, so you never know what to expect."

It is quite a heavy responsibility, protecting a city which is a World Heritage Site, and respond to an average of over 2,000 shouts each year. The four watches cover an area outside their own station turnout patch - from the Mendips and part of Somerset to deep into South Gloucestershire and across into Wiltshire for road traffic accidents at an average of one each day.

Their patch includes the classic Regency housing for which the city is renowned, the rapidly expanding University and Royal United Hospital, the Theatre Royal, hotels, hostels, restaurants and nightclubs.

Then there are industrial estates, shopping centres, multi-storey housing blocks, stately homes, old people's homes and four MOD sites including Copenacre and RAF Colerne.

They also have an underground network of former stone mines, large gas holders, a large sports centre, the rugby ground which is packed with some 10,000 spectators for a Saturday home match, the football ground at Twerton Park, and a racecourse.

"The only thing we do not have is a dock," said Kevin. "But we do not need one since we have two very busy waterways."

Housing accommodation in the city poses major problems, complicated by serious traffic congestion, and packed on-street parking which can hamper emergency access.

The narrow streets and congested traffic are a headache, not only for crews trying to answer an emergency call, but just trying to get to work on time.

"Most of the three and four-storey houses are in multi-occupation as flats and bed-sits to accommodate the student population, even the basements," he said.

"That means that when there is a fire in a house you can have twelve or more people involved, and the nature of the cause of fire has changed. Years ago it used to be the old paraffin heaters, now it is perfumed candles which are often responsible."

Meanwhile they get their quota of calls



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to rescue or recover stranded farm animals, and the usual ration of car fires which are of doubtful origin and can be arson.

Road traffic accidents are high on the call-out list for nose-to-tail shunts, which are almost routine in congested cities, and the occasional bigger pile-up on two sections of the busy M4 motorway, particularly in the summer when it is swamped with holiday traffic.

To cope with this workload Bath fire station has 18 men on each of the four watches along with the support of ten retained crew.

They would like more retained support but have difficulty with recruitment.

"Firms are not as co-operative as they were in letting staff get time off to help the community," said Kevin. "Now the majority of retained are self employed, and we cannot consider the unemployed because it affects their benefits."

Bath is equipped with two front line appliances, water tender, turntable ladder and rescue tender, plus the safety boat which is alternately manned by two crew and is used to provide cover when crews are engaged working near or on water.

The fire prevention department is very active dealing with the problems which can accompany property conversion into flats and bed-sits, and the standard of fire prevention is very good.

Bath fire station also looks after a number of large heritage sites so they are concerned not only with fighting fires and minimising damage but also salvaging as many treasures as possible.

"We have Bath Abbey, Durham House on the A46 which is National Trust, and Longleat, and in these cases we have attended salvage courses with a priority list of treasures which have to be rescued," said Kevin.

Characters on the Bath roll-call include Bob Baird a fire-fighter who played goalie for the England fire service team and plays a lot of local soccer, and Paul Ruddick who has appeared on several TV quiz shows.

Bath fire station has an action-packed programme for charity: Red



Spreading the safety message



Crashed cars are vital for rescue training

watch once did a round-Britain trip on trains, and volunteers did a sponsored parachute jump in 1982.

They took part in a canoe race from Bristol to Windsor in 1984 which has now become a national event, raising money for the Benevolent Fund and John Apley children's ward at Bath Royal United hospital, and they still raise a lot of money with Christmas raffles and children's parties.

Big fires have included Prior Park College, a private school which turned out to be a £9 million loss after a blaze in April 1990. Then there was Bath Street in the centre of the city, a

fire which took out a whole row of properties in the mid-Eighties. It was a narrow street and the flames, which could be seen from outside the city, were so fierce that they threatened the properties opposite.

The main facade was retained and now fronts British Home Stores.

Kevin, who joined the fire brigade in 1980 aged 22 after five years with the Paras said: "I enjoy it here because I have the best of both worlds."

"I like working with people and as station officer I can combine management with hands-on practical

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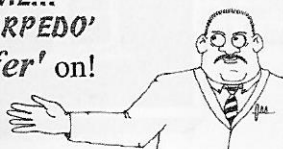
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Part of the Blue Watch team (l-r): Len Harvey, Russell Jenkins and Tommy Cooper

...continued from previous page

experience."

He goes out on all the calls and when it is a large fire he is in charge until higher management arrives.

"I enjoy the drills and fitness training and I like fighting fires," he said.

Kevin's sub-officer Bob Bunyar has been in the fire service for 28 years and trained as a boatbuilder. He joined the retained service at Bath and enjoyed it so much that he signed up full-time.

While Bath fire station has its fair share of fire-fighters aged over 40's, generally crews are getting younger.

Now applicants are joining at the age of 18 and

the average age of a watch is early-Twenties.

"The fire service is not only getting younger, it is getting more technical," said Kevin.

"The biggest challenge we have is training. It is a dangerous job but we are trying to make it safer."

Bath crews regret losing their famous call sign B1 which has stood since 1974. Now it is known simply as Station 12 which does not have the same ring to it.

But given the choice Kevin said that this is the only place he wants to work.

"I have worked at five stations including Temple and Southmead and while I enjoyed them I prefer the huge variety that you get

here. You never know what to expect."

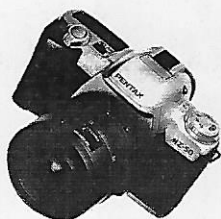
"Bath is a very lively city and we have very good relations with the community. We get on well with local businesses and I think that we are highly respected."

"What more could you want?"



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Squash Championship

Squash fans can look forward to their own Brigade championship later this year, together with various inter-brigade matches.

That was the news after our team Len Harvey, Steven Higgins and Alastair Dunlop returned from the F.S.A.A. National Squash Championship at Nottingham in April.

Our squad, resplendent in sweatshirts supplied by a Bath sponsor T-Shirts and Sons, all went down to seeded players in the first round of their respective competitions.

Steve Higgins bowed out in the second round, losing in a four set encounter to a female firefighter from Bedfordshire who went on to contest the final.

Alastair Dunlop won a trophy for reaching the semi-finals of the over 35's competition before losing to the eventual winner, and Len Harvey lost in the quarter finals of the Over 45's. But Alastair said they all enjoyed the tournament which was a friendly affair, and said he was looking forward to any player of whatever standard to register their interest as soon as the new Brigade championship is launched.



Firefighter Olympics

A twenty-strong squad of firefighters from Avon with a burning ambition to win gold is in serious training for the World Fire Fighter Games in Paris next month (July).

captain Gordon Turner, aged 46, Station Officer at Temple Back HQ.

"We will be up against the best including teams from Canada, New Zealand, Italy, France and Germany, but we have heard that we are regarded as formidable competitors."

The man shouldering the hardest challenge is "Big Matt" Hunt, aged 32, a 6ft 2 tall ex-Royal Marine who is competing in the "Toughest Man Alive" contest.

Matt, who competed in the last Games two years ago, faces four gruelling tasks of increasing severity including running up to the top of the Eiffel Tower wearing full kit with breathing apparatus.

He came ninth in the archery contest and 17th out of 500 in the world's fittest firefighter competition, and has high hopes of improving on both this year.

"I am in serious training, running on the Mendips with a full back pack as well as undergoing a rigorous programme of specific exercises," he said.

Matt's contest will also involve pitching ladders, dragging heavy hoses long distances, and lifting and carrying variety of heavy objects, while he will also be competing in the archery and volleyball events.

Team hopes are also riding high on Station Officer Pete Moore, aged 40, who is a champion archer, and Simon Hill, 34, from Avon Fire Brigade's training department, who runs Bitton Athletics Club and who will be competing in the 400 and 800m races.

Other firefighters in the squad will be competing in swimming, badminton and other conventional sports.

"I am in serious training, running on the Mendips with a full back pack as well as undergoing a rigorous programme of specific exercises,"

But their biggest challenge so far has been to raise sponsorship since it costs some £400 per entrant, and any profits will go to the Mencap charity and the Fire Brigade benevolent fund.

"We are getting good support but we could always do with more," said Gordon.

"At least we will look smart with Vector Command providing our tracksuits which are being made by Monsoon."

New addition to sporting activities

Squash is likely to be added to the list of sporting activities recognised by the Fire Service Sports and Athletic Association, the national organisation which runs many national and international sporting events.

But local association secretary Tony Jackson has appealed for more support, particularly for the 1000 club which raises funds through a monthly draw at £1 per ticket.

"In the past the sports association was more active than it is now, but we are hoping that the creation of the 1000 club will reverse the decline and make it as active as in other brigades," he said.

"At present we cater for football, golf, skittles, sailing, walking, sea fishing, volleyball and cycling, and anybody with any of those interests should get in touch if they are not already a member."

"The Sports Association funds these sections from the 1000 club draw and the money is used for a variety of other purposes, including giving a grant to our team competing in the World Fire Fighter Games in Paris, and providing £840 for equipment so far this year."

Those interested can contact Tony Jackson at 04 Patchway, or visit the association's website at <http://avonsports.tripod.com>, or via e-mail on fbavon@hotmail.com.

Those who might like to increase their 1000 club stake can contact Clive Leech at S.Div Brigade HQ.



Four of the Avon squad with a burning desire for gold- top (l-r) Station Officer Pete Moore, leading firefighter Matt Hunt, Bottom (l-r) Station Officers Gordon Turner and Simon Hill.

The team is in serious training for the "Firefighter Olympics," ready to compete against hundreds of rivals in a variety of 66 events including swimming, cycling, archery, sprinting and volleyball, in the face of tough competition from the United States and Australia.

"We believe that we have a strong chance but it will not be easy," said former England volleyball player and team

FIRE SERVICE HISTORY FOR THE RECORD

Michael Kernan, honorary Historian and Archivist at the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire, has appealed for firefighters to roll back their memories to help with two formidable projects - recording the post-war history of the UK fire services, and to record the working history of the national college.

Mr Kernan, who was awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal in the New Year Honours, spent twelve years at the college, firstly as a teacher and later as the Commandant's Staff Officer.

He fears that unless a start is made on both projects valuable information will be lost.

The history of the college up to 1939 when it was a former RAF station, has been published and the authors, John Hamlin and Gerry Tyack, donated two copies of the book to the College library.

Mr Kernan said he wants to take up the story from there. "I am looking for the history of people working in the Fire Brigades or the national college."

"It is now 50 years since the end of the last World War and old 'fire-eaters' who were members of the National Fire Service and witnessed the first moves in the life of the national college are getting on, just a bit."

"We must talk to them now for their recollections and record their answers, otherwise it will be too late."

"We would like to speak to any firemen - as they were called - who served at any time from September 1939 up to the present day, or those out of uniform who were still involved in the service."

"We must talk to them now for their recollections and record their answers, otherwise it will be too late."

"We also want to speak to anybody who has been connected with the college, whether as a teacher, a student, a cook or a storeman, and those who have recollections of previous Commandants."

"We would also like to hear from any elected members of the Fire Authority who was involved in changing the college into an agency in 1992"

Those interested in contributing to either or both projects can contact the college on 01608-652154, or fax 01608- 652155.

Stub it out!



Firefighter Richard Norton is pictured having his cigarette put out by Pete Stone and health promotion specialist Miriam Thornton.

Firefighters joined the national No-Smoking campaign day in March with a graphic appeal to smokers to stub-it-out in Bristol.

The Kingswood brigade hosed down giant cigarettes to highlight the fire risks caused by smoking materials which last year sparked 140 fires in the region.

Avon fire brigade spokesman Geoff Hutchings said: "Cutting out smoking would do both the fire service and the health service a favour. Careless disposal of smoking materials is a significant cause of fire in the home, and once started destroys life and property."

Bells Ring out an appeal

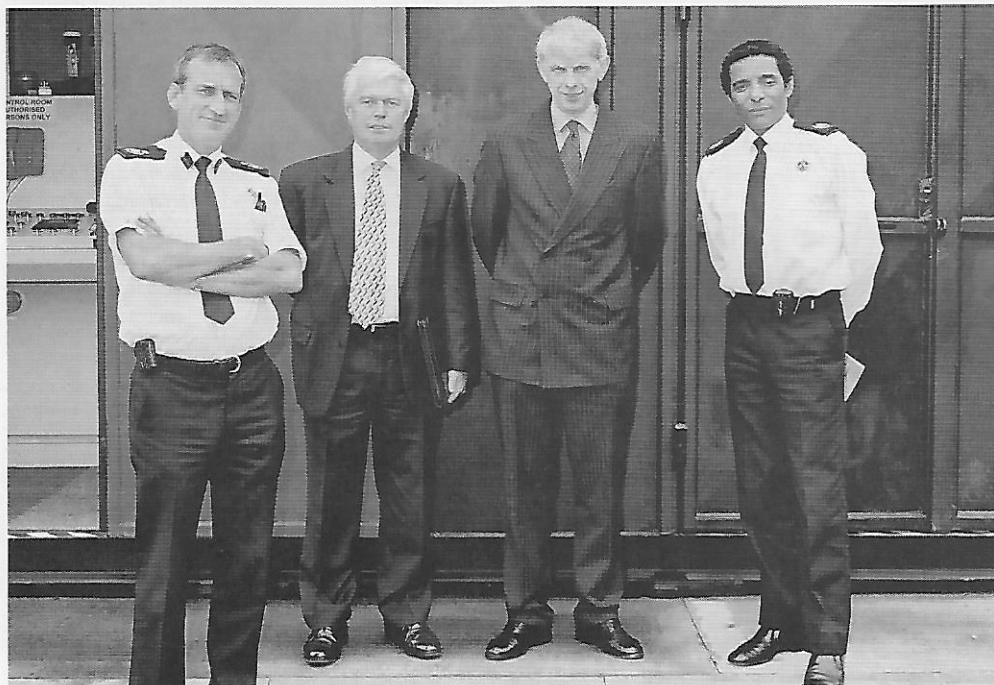
Ringling bells may have given way to sirens on fire engines but the tradition lives on in the Fire Service Guild of Bellringers which has launched an appeal for new members.

The Guild was formed eleven years ago and has rung at many important fire service events. Members ring every year in London for the Fire Service National Service of Remembrance, and the Guild has been in action at various official celebrations including welcoming Her Majesty the Queen to the Benevolent Fund Golden Jubilee Lunch in Guildhall.

Members range from novices to veterans, both serving and retired, and membership is open to anybody in the Fire Service, either wholtime, retained or volunteer, and those directly employed by a Fire Authority, F&CDA, the Defence Fire Service, Works or Airport Fire Brigades.

The Guild organises three ringing outings each year and subscription costs £3 per year.

If bell-ring appeals to you contact the Guild Chairman, Michael Kernan at The Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, tel 01608 - 651792, or fax 01608-652328.



Neil Wallington, (centre) retired Chief Fire Officer of Devon and author of the book "Red Watch", visited the hot Fire Training Centre at Brislington in May where all the talk was about future developments in HFT technology.

He was welcomed by Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson (left) and Divisional Officer Mike King (right) as Richard Kitson of International Fire Training Equipment outlined the latest advances being made in the technical research of real Fire Training.

These advances mean that existing facilities are continually assessed for possible upgrading.

Benevolent fund boost

A new scheme has been launched in Avon Fire Brigade which could raise more than £43,500 this year for the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund.

Over the coming months every member of Avon Fire Brigade, both uniformed and support staff, will be invited to join the covenanting scheme which enables personnel to make monthly contributions from their salary or pensions to help boost revenue for the fund.

Ian Satherley, Brigade Treasurer and covenant co-ordinator, said that while the national covenanting scheme was launched in 1994 it had not been very successful in Avon, and only 29 members of the Brigade were donating direct from their bank accounts.

He said that he hoped the local launch in February by Chief Fire Officer John Terry would encourage greater support for the fund which last year spent more than £33,000 assisting members and former members in Avon, compared to an income of just over £25,000.

"The shortfall of nearly £8,000 was made up nationally from general funds, but this situation can only continue until the funds run out, or the assistance being given is cut back," he said.



Chief Fire Officer John Terry pictured at the launch with (left to right): Assistant Chief Fire Officer Richard Brimmell, deputy Chief Fire Officer Dave Hutchings, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson, Ian Satherley, and retired Divisional Commander Monty Britton.

"Contrary to rumour and popular belief, the Benevolent Fund does not have an unlimited supply of money."

"It does have investments, Harcombe House at Littlehampton and Jubilee House, both of which are in constant use."

"If the fund sold these investments there would no longer be any convalescence or therapy treatment."

"In the past four years 45 people from this brigade have been to Jubilee House at a cost of £38,250. Each has come back and thanked the fund for the marvellous facilities and the speed at which they have regained their quality of life, as have those who received grants or been for convalescent or beneficial rest," he said.

"Most people involved in the Fire

Brigade will need or use the fund at some time in their lives, and in order to help the fund continue the valuable work it undertakes we are urging everybody to give serious thought to joining the covenanting scheme."

Many brigade personnel have indicated that a local scheme would receive much more support if there was a simpler method of making payments and the ability to pay monthly.

Well, now there is. The minimum suggested monthly repayment of £2 will produce an annual donation of £30.72, including the tax reclaimed from the Inland Revenue.

That would raise £43,560 from the Avon Brigade to turn a shortfall into a surplus on the amount received from the Benevolent Fund last year.

Leaky hose problem is getting verse!

Punctured hoses really cause a whole lot of trouble, so Geoff Chappell, Station Officer at Weston-super-Mare complained:

Delivery hose sent here with bursts, is marked with tape or string. Sometimes it comes with a label too! you know the sort of thing.

What makes the holes so hard to find, is that tape will tend to stray. And when it's wet and windy, the label blows away. Now we've got to find the hole, it really is a blow. We have to pass some water, and register the flow.

So now the long procedure, to make the inside dry. Or else the patches will not stick, no matter how we try.

To lift the burden from us, would make life easier then. So show us the holes with a piece of string, and a permanent marker pen.

If you can send a memo, to stations round about. And ask our mates to help us, I'm sure they'll sort it out.

To which Assistant Divisional Officer Bob Hatherly replied:

Your Admin 42 I've got, it's sitting in my tray. The contents I have just passed on, to brighten someone's day.

I understand the problem, contained in rhyming verse. And trust that others far away, will stop it getting worse.

I have a point of great concern, that's caused me hard to think. That written in your friendly style, may cause an awful stink.

But as the ball is rolling, and the furore we may raise. Your problem may just get solved, and give you happy days!

BLANKET COVER FROM HOMESAVER

Homesaver, the UK's leading manufacturer of fire blankets, has launched a new anti-tamper, fold-down container for its fire blankets.

The container, believed to be the first of its type in the UK, incorporates a security tie to provide visual reassurance, and is easier to use because it needs less emergency operational space when secured to the wall, and is virtually thief-proof.

The Homesaver container requires less mounting space than the conventional sleeve and is ideal for use in kitchens in commercial and industrial food preparation areas such as schools, pubs, clubs and catering establishments.

The front-opening container is built to modern design principles and improves the invaluable fire safety requirements of the blanket, while reducing the working space requirement by 40 per cent.

The container also uses the standard industry anti-tamper tag as used worldwide on fire extinguishers, to indicate whether the fire blanket has been tampered with.

The container has a smooth, easy-clean finish and opens with a sharp downward pull to remove the blanket. It comes in a choice of white or red and has clear instructions for use.

For further information:
Homesaver tel. 0145 230 3010



ASDA fined

ASDA Stores Ltd was fined a total of £18,000 after admitting seven breaches of fire safety regulations at its superstore at Longwell Green, Bristol, in a legal action brought by Avon Fire Authority.

The company was also ordered to pay £17,750 towards the costs of the prosecution.

North Avon magistrates were told that Fire Safety Officers with other agencies first visited the store in October 1997 when the company was proposing major alterations which involved virtually demolishing the existing premises and rebuild a larger store while the existing building stayed open to the public.

During the construction stage several visits were made by Fire Safety Officers who identified various problems and issued a caution under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 in April 1998.

In October that year the Brigade attended a fire at the store which was open at the time. Crews were concerned that the fire alarm had not been activated and no attempt had been made to evacuate the premises, despite smoke from a ventilation intake duct was evident throughout most of the store.

The fire was extinguished by staff, and an inspection was arranged for later that month. Inspectors found that six fire alarm break glass call points had been removed, and three others failed to operate the alarm.

Staff could not produce a fire safety logbook, and it was found that magnetic catches on escape doors were also not working.

Fire Safety Officers made three further visits which revealed other problems including defective emergency lighting and an obstructed escape route.

Divisional Officer Tim Bolland, Lead Investigation Officer and Deputy Fire Safety Commander said: "Avon Fire Authority endeavours to work with organisations to achieve high standards of fire safety."

"In this case despite the formal caution, Asda failed over a considerable period of time to have sufficient regard to fire safety management at this store, putting both customers and its own staff at risk."

"These were serious breaches of fire precautions whereby the safety of both employees and the public were seriously compromised."

STOP PRESS

Avon firefighter Dave Price has been chosen as the first Firefighter of the Year by FIRE magazine and will be featured in a new programme called "The British Bravery Awards" to be broadcast live on BBC 1 on June 16.

Dave, who was chosen for his actions in the rescue of an occupier from a house fire last year in Midsomer Norton, was presented with his prestigious award at Avon Fire Brigade's headquarters at Temple Back by TV personality Michael Buerk.

The programme is to become a high profile annual televised event to salute all members of the emergency services.

Serco Services who employ Dave as a full-time firefighter at their facilities management operation at BAE Systems, nominated him for the award.



(l-r) Simon Hoffman - Editor FIRE magazine - Michael Buerk and firefighter Dave Price