

FIRE

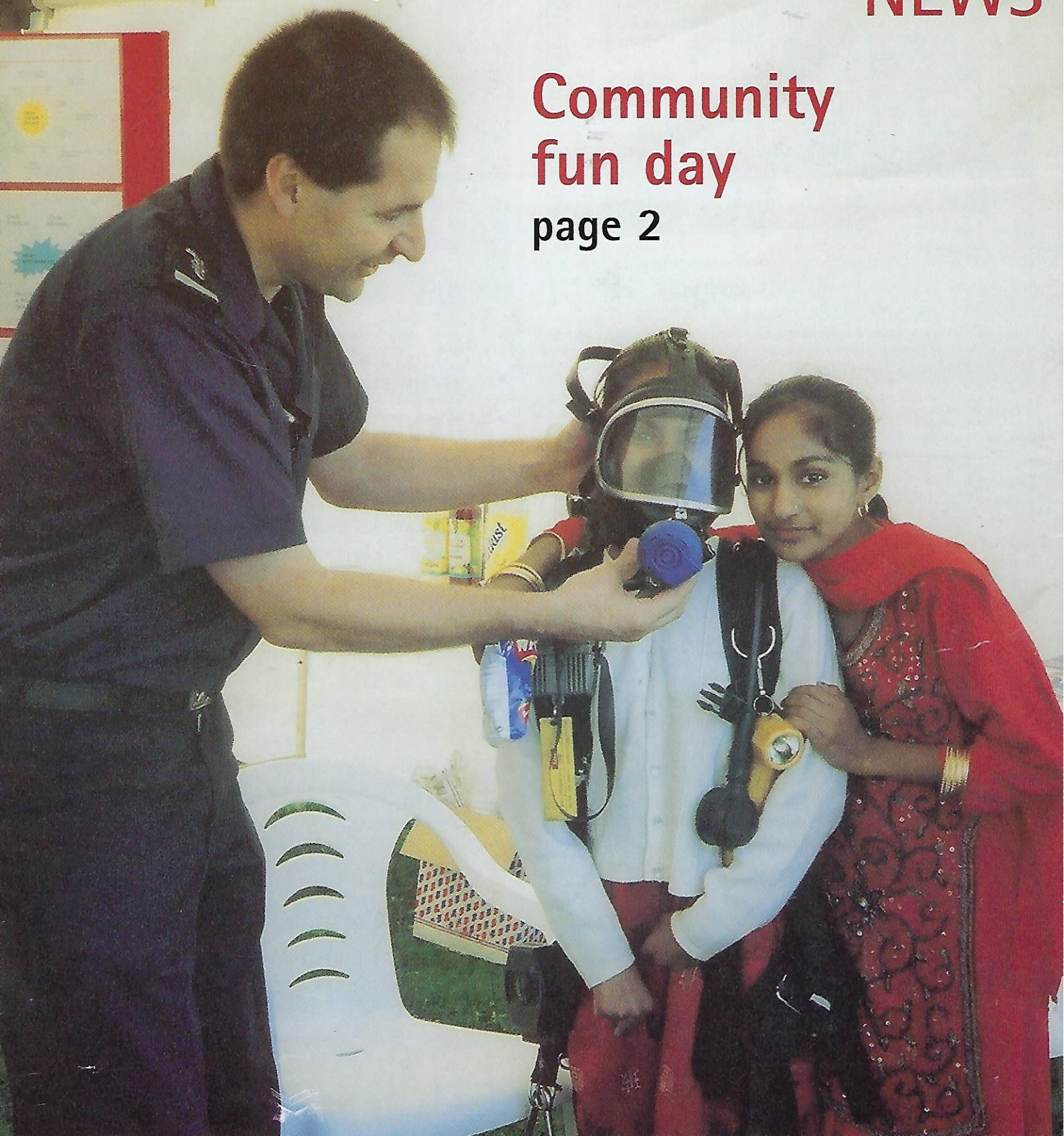


BRIGADE

NEWS

## Community fun day

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## NETWORK WOMEN MEET IN BRISTOL



Pictured from left to right are: Paula Pond, Dany Cotton, Lynda Lloyd, Cheryl Rolph, Xanthe Bevan, Michele Height, Maureen Williamson and Aidan Phillips.

More than 100 delegates attended the annual general meeting of the independent national organisation Networking Women in the Fire Service at the Beeches Conference Centre in Bristol.

The meeting, hosted and sponsored by Avon Fire Brigade, was addressed by Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson and amongst the topics on the agenda were career development and personal safety.

The organisation was created to provide support, education and representation for all women who work within the British Fire Service.

It also provides a source of information for those concerned with making the Fire Service a place where women and men can work together harmoniously and professionally.

## THREE GO TO HARCOMBE

Harcombe House near Chudleigh in South Devon is available to all Fire Brigade members and their immediate dependants, but looking after 300 acres requires volunteer help. **PETE BURTON** of Temple Back HQ reports.

Working parties from brigades form an integral part of keeping this estate in perfect condition, and having used the facility two years ago for assisting in the recuperation of my wife after an operation, I decided that organising a working party would be a practical way of repaying the Benevolent Fund.

Accommodation is provided either in the main house or in one of the many self-catering chalets, and amenities include three fishing lakes - said to be over-stocked with monster carp - an indoor swimming pool, a bar with games or childrens' room, and many woodland walks.

Two volunteers quickly signed up, Garry Harris from Yate and Kevin Read from Blue Watch, Temple. I telephoned Harcombe to set the dates on a rota basis from Monday to Thursday or Tuesday to Friday, and wrote to confirm the dates that we would be there.

You are requested to arrive on the first day in time for the evening meal at 1830 hrs, and to leave by 1000 hrs on the last day. So it does not take a Brain of Britain to work out that for those of us already here in the West Country the first and last days are effectively free time, so pack the rods and clubs.

Our living accommodation, a bedroom with two bunk beds, lounge with TV, tea and coffee facilities and a shower/ablution room were very cosy.

The following morning we showered, enjoyed a full English breakfast, sorry Kev, no chips, and then met the estate workers called Jamie, Steve and Chris.

The work can be virtually anything to keep the estate running and is mostly painting, grass-cutting and wood clearing. We were wood clearing, two removing smaller logs and brush, one on assisting winching larger logs off the hillside. That sounded just the job for ex-Commando Garry who did not need much persuasion, and the task had its highlights.

Pete: "Kev, why is that big hairy ex-commando running down the hill?"  
Kev: "Dunno, what is that big black cloud behind him?" Pete: "Bees?"  
Kev: "Could be."

The work was hard graft but not excessive, and you get a mid-morning cuppa along with a packed lunch and afternoon tea. Once finished it was back for a shower and a terrific dinner.

If fundraising does not appeal, then this is a great alternative with the right group, and if you are interested, contact your Ben Fund rep.

## ETHNIC YOUNGSTERS LEARN THE DRILL



Admin Assistant Louisa Marrota, Assistant Divisional Officer Steve Williams with Awaz Utaoh's Project Manager Amarjit Singh

Avon Fire Brigade was the centre of attraction at the ethnic fun day in Bristol's Eastville Park as youngsters showed great interest in all aspects of the service.

The popular chip pan fire demonstration captured their attention and then it was question and answer time around the equipment as they learned more about firefighting as a career.

The fire brigade supports the event as part of the campaign to encourage more people from ethnic backgrounds to make a career in the service.

While ethnic minorities are under-represented in Avon Fire Brigade, it is surprising how many ask about career opportunities during employment days.

The fun day was organised by Awaz Utaoh, a community group which is committed to helping Asians combat economic and social deprivation.

**Front page** - Roger Farrant community fire safety officer and leading firefighter shows enthusiastic youngsters how to use breathing apparatus.

## STRANGE BUT TRUE

**Heard the one about the Divisional Officer who arrived at a chemical incident in Bath?**

Tony Witcomb parks just outside a hotel, lifts up the tailgate to put on his firefighting kit when an elderly American tourist comes out of the hotel, hands him two suitcases and says: "Railway station please."

Our resident cartoonist illustrates....





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I was filled with a tremendous sense of privilege and pride when I was appointed as your Chief Fire Officer in August of this year. I also sensed a great feeling of anticipation in the Brigade. Alongside these elated feelings also ran an understanding of the enormous workload in front of us if those expectations are to be fulfilled. There has been much speculation about what changes may be involved.

It is true to say there has been greater recognition recently, by everyone, of the changing world we live in. The terrible and tragic events of 11

September will remain with us for many years to come. Those events have forced us to accept that the world can become very different, very quickly at times, and such changes force us to re-examine our position. Similarly, as society generally changes around us, we need to ensure that we are capable of changing and adapting to the expectations and needs of those around us.

There is undoubtedly much to be done in the forthcoming months to ensure that we continue to have the public confidence that we are adequately prepared to deal with whatever may come along.

I can state with confidence that the team that is Avon Fire Brigade can rise to any of the challenges presented by the necessary changes. Change should always be seen as an opportunity for development and not a threat to anyone. If we can all support this principle I'm sure we'll develop and make progress as a Brigade. Some of the changes we can expect in the near future are in relation to:

- Improved personal protective equipment
- Further additions and modernisation of the fleet
- Improved operational, firefighting and rescue equipment (PPV, Defibrillators, Bodyguard)

In the longer term, work progresses in relation to:

- The Joint Training Centre
- Radio Replacement
- Improving IT provision
- Improving performance on attendance standards
- Improving the condition of our buildings

I am aware probably more than most of the tremendous amount of commitment and hard work that is necessary to bring such changes about. The support I have been given to date humbles me.

I can only hope that this support continues as we strive to bring about the improvements that I think we all know are needed.

As I write this message many people are striving hard to provide me with the information I need to push even harder for additional funding for the Brigade. I remain totally committed to ensuring that the Brigade receives the financial support that it needs to meet the ever changing and increasing demands put on us.

Thank you to all those people 'behind the scenes' who work so hard for the good of the Brigade.

I would like to wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year and trust that for you and your loved ones, 2002 turns out to be a good year.

Thanks to everyone for all their efforts.

Kevin Pearson  
Chief Fire Officer

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The opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors and publishers and may not represent the official opinion of the Fire Brigade.



## WE SALUTE FALLEN HEROES



**In one of its most solemn engagements of the year the Avon Fire Brigade Ceremonial Drill Squad led by George Raines, and the Brigade's Corps of Pipes and Drums under Bandmaster Ian Morrissey travelled to Ypres on the Belgium/French border to take part in the Last Post ceremony to honour the fallen at the Menin Gate.**

The Menin Gate was built by the people of Ypres and the surrounding districts after the First World War as a mark of gratitude to the sacrifice made by thousands of Allied troops who lost their lives.

The memorial straddles the main road in the town centre and stands in tribute to the soldiers who were killed and have no known grave or recorded burial place. On the walls of this large and impressive structure are recorded the names and regiments of over 50,000 men who died and were never found.

Since its completion in 1928, members of the Ypres Fire Brigade have paraded at the gate at 8.00pm every night to sound the Last Post and maintain a minute's silence.

Apart from a period during the Second World War when they were prevented from holding their ceremony by the occupying forces, they have maintained the tradition every night since.

This task fell to the Fire Brigade because in the days before modern communications they were called to fires and other emergencies by bugle.

Since they were amongst the few who could actually play one, the job

fell to them, and this now forms part of a closely guarded history and tradition which they are proud to perform.

"We were honoured and privileged to be invited to parade with them and after the Last Post was played and a minute's silence was held, wreaths were laid on behalf of the Brigade and some local British Legion branches who had asked us to represent them.

Retired Brigade member Steve Waring also proudly laid a wreath for the Gloucester Regiment, and pipers Bill Plenty and his grand-son played a moving lament which brought lumps to the throats of hundreds who were gathered there.

Our buglers sounded reveille and the ceremony was all too soon at an end. We marched from the Gate back to the town square to tremendous applause from the crowd of over 2000 visitors and towns people who had come to the memorial to pay their own respects to the fallen.

We were invited to visit Ypres Fire Station, a six pump and 3 special volunteer station for some light refreshment before we returned to our hotel for more light refreshments in the bar, and some vocal entertainment led by Messrs Doull and Hawkes.

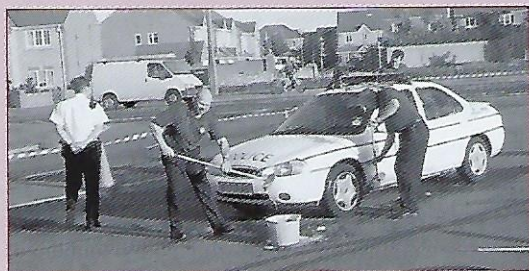
Our grateful thanks to George and Kath Raines, not only for the invitation but for all the organisation of a tremendous weekend, and to all the members of the Drill Squad, and the Pipes and Drums for the privilege of parading with them because they are a credit to the service.

Thanks also to Les our Blue Iris Coach driver and to the Chief Officer in maintaining his support and assistance to the squad.

The Brigade Ceremonial Squad meets the last Tuesday of every month at Nailsea Fire Station at 8pm. Those interested in joining should just arrive or contact Garry Hawkes, White Watch, Weston-super-Mare, Paul Windows, Red Watch, Temple, or Barry Doull at Fire Safety, Bristol.



## SIMPLY MAGNIFICENT!



Front Garry Harris (whose idea the event was) on front wheel Graham (tug) Mill-Wilson and Ian Alderson

**Avon firefighters reached out to their heroic colleagues in New York with an amazingly generous response in the aftermath of the September 11 atrocity.**

As the true horror unfolded across the world's media Avon fire crews rolled up their sleeves and launched a massive fund-raising campaign which so far totals nearly £40,000 – and donations are still coming in.

It was a simple message – we want to help – and they were backed 100 per cent by a sympathetic public.

Many fire stations launched car washes and motorists queued to have their cars cleaned even if they were already gleaming, while many others just gave their donations as a gesture of support and goodwill.

There were street collections, sponsored sports and social events, whatever could be organised quickly or could be turned into a fund-raiser.

The car wash proved a popular idea with wash-and-brush-up squads getting busy at Yate, Thornbury, Weston-super-Mare, Speedwell and Winscombe amongst others.

Yate also organised a sponsored tug-of-war, a football match and a swim-marathon with the local Rotary Club.

Street collections were held in Keynsham, and Bath, where firefighters managed to get some VIP donations from the Mayor and Liberal Democrat MP Don Foster.

Radstock came up with the idea of a sponsored bed-push, while Temple staged a Halloween dance.

Whatever you did it helped, and it worked. It was a brilliant effort and congratulations to all those who took part.

## PAYING TRIBUTE

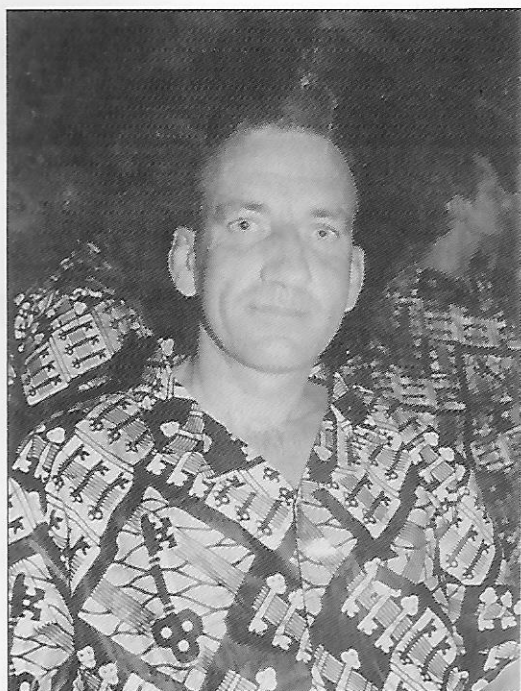
**Avon firefighters joined Brigades from across the country to pay tribute to lost and missing colleagues of the New York Fire Department at a special Commemoration Service at St Pauls Cathedral on October 11.**

Chief Fire Officer Kevin Pearson personally requested the widest representation and the allocation of 70 tickets for Avon was over-subscribed as many from all ranks in the service applied to pay their respects.

Those who attended the service wore ceremonial uniform and travelled by coach to join more than 5,000 who formed the congregation both inside and outside the cathedral. The Avon group included representatives of our Ceremonial Drill Squad and the Corps of Pipes and Drums.



## KEVIN - THE WIZARD FROM OZ



**Kevin Pearson's appointment as our Chief Fire Officer has won the thumbs up from firefighters. He loves the job and is fired with enthusiasm, but it could all have been very different if he had glanced the other way while travelling to work on a bus in 1979.**

By now he might have been a senior administrator in the Inland Revenue!

Kevin happened to glance out of the window and saw a recruiting poster advertising jobs in the fire service at £79 per week.

"That was twice my wage and I did not like the desk job that I was doing, so I signed up," said Kevin.

He joined Cleveland County Fire Brigade in January 1980 and started training at Durham, where he qualified with distinction, won the title of "Best Recruit," and was awarded a Silver Axe.

After serving at a number of stations as an operational firefighter he became a Leading Firefighter in December 1984. He joined the Oxfordshire brigade in September 1985 and left there in 1994 as Assistant Divisional Officer.

That was when he joined Avon as Divisional Officer with specific responsibility as Area Fire Safety Officer. He became Deputy Divisional Commander in August 1995 with main responsibilities for training and personnel matters.

The following year he became Brigade Training Officer and was appointed Divisional Commander in 1997.

Later that year he was appointed Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and then became Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer in August last year.

It is all a long way from New South Wales where he was educated, and before coming to Great Britain his father's career in telecoms took him to Libya, Zambia, New Guinea, Bahamas and Malawi.

"I did a lot of travelling in my youth, and I still enjoy long-haul trips, particularly to the Far East, and I would really like to visit Australia again," he said.

Kevin is married and has two sons Shaun aged 14 and Mark, 12, his hobbies include keeping fit, rugby, swimming and jogging, while he also enjoys golf - his handicap is 16 - fishing, and pub quizzes.

But his greatest enthusiasm is the fire service and since joining he says he has looked forward to going to work every day.

"The job is full of variety and very rewarding, and you work with great people, but when I started I never expected to be a Chief Fire Officer, he said.

"I also believe that we have fallen behind in terms of IT because in the past we have concentrated on our operational equipment. Now we need extra funding for IT to get up to speed.

"We have a lot to do, and funding is not easy, but we know what areas need to be improved and it is now just a question of how we can best achieve these objectives."

## BBC PUTS BURN-OUTS IN THE FRAME

**The BBC in Bristol is backing the campaign to combat the increasing menace of abandoned and burnt-out cars littering the city streets.**

David Garmston, who presents BBC TV West's nightly news programme Points West, spent time filming with Avon Fire Brigade as crews were called out to tackle blazing cars which had been abandoned and torched.



The TV campaign highlighted a problem that is causing increasing concern for firefighters, Bristol City Council, local residents and motorists.

Fire Brigade spokesman Geoff Hutchings told viewers that fire crews are dealing with some 250 car fires every month.

"David Garmston and BBC TV West have provided valuable assistance in raising the profile of this campaign," he said.

David Garmston said: "The two nights I spent with Blue Watch and Red Watch were real eye-openers. Because they let me ride in the back of the engine I was able to capture the dramatic shots of the cars on fire and see what a menace they were to the brigade and the public.

"The pictures were so powerful that they made the lead item on Points West and we got a large response from viewers who were clearly shocked at the scale of the problem.

"As for working alongside the brigade, I had a great time. As an outsider you see how the firefighters work as a really close, professional team. They were all incredibly good natured and took everything in their stride. We are all fortunate to be so well served."

Council spokeswoman Helen Parkes said that about 90 per cent of the abandoned cars are destroyed.

"These vehicles are a nuisance and a danger to the community.

"The council is committed to making Bristol a safer place and has invested in a number of initiatives to tackle this problem."

The council and emergency services are running a pilot scheme in south Bristol to remove abandoned cars more quickly.

Geoff Hutchings said they hoped to see the scheme extended to other areas after Christmas.







**Date/Time:**  
23/07/01 - 0445 hrs

**Address:**  
Kings Square, Kingsdown

**Appliances:**  
091, 092, 093, 095, 062,  
151, 100, 151, 112, 111,  
051

Fire-fighters arrived to find the front door to the four floored Georgian property open, with flames visible on several levels at the front and flames pouring out of the rear windows.

9 pumps, T.L. and C.S.U. attended, with fire-fighters using 3 jets, 4 high pressure hose reels and T.L. monitor, to bring the blaze under control.

Crews did prevent the fire spreading into the Cube Theatre at the rear.



**Date/Time:**  
29/07/01 - 04.35 hrs

**Address:**  
Francombe House, Commercial Road, Redcliffe.

**Appliances:**  
091, 092, 095, 151, 112, 093,  
100, 152, 111, 142

As crews from 09 approached the building, flame and smoke could be seen billowing out of the 4th floor maisonette. When the smoke cleared momentarily a man could be seen perched on a ledge adjacent to the fire - a 13.5 ladder was pitched and the man brought to safety.

Fire-fighters in BA entered the premises and located the badly burnt female inside - who was quickly removed to awaiting paramedics.

Prior to the brigade's arrival a baby had been thrown from the affected property to an adjacent balcony.



**Date/Time:**  
11/05/01 - 0724 hrs

**Address:**  
Lynton Road, Bedminster

**Appliances:**  
152, 093

When the first crew arrived from station 15, smoke was coming from the ground floor flat windows and neighbours confirmed they believed someone was still inside.

The fire which was in a rear bedroom was attacked through the window by fire-fighters using a HR -

meanwhile 2 fire-fighters in BA made a forced entry via the side door - and discovered the male occupant unconscious lying just inside.

Fire-fighters tried to revive the casualty until this was taken over by ambulance personal.

He died later in hospital from his injuries.



**Date/Time:**  
31/08/01 - 1200 hrs

**Address:**  
Regilbury Park Farm, Felton

**Appliances:**  
201, 151, 152, 232,  
111, 119, 181, 187

Due to its remote location a water relay had to be set up to provide the fire fighting jets required to extinguish this huge fire involving over a thousand disused tyres.

The pall of smoke could be seen for miles around and concerns were raised that the flight path into Bristol International Airport may have been compromised.





**Date/Time:**  
07/05/01 - 0812 hrs

**Address:**  
Crome Road,  
Lockleaze, Bristol

**Appliances:**  
111, 112, 062

A dramatic rescue by neighbours of two infants being dropped from a 1st floor window preceded the arrival of crews to this severe house fire.

The first and the second floors were extensively damaged by the fire and 4 fire-fighters in BA used 1 jet and 1 HR to extinguish the blaze.

The infants who suffered slightly from smoke inhalation and the mother (who was in the house at the time of the fire) suffering slight burns were taken to hospital by ambulance. This near tragedy is believed to have been started by one of the children playing with matches.



**Date/Time:**  
29/08/01 - 19.09 hrs

**Address:**  
Phoenix House,  
Northampton Street, Bath

**Appliances:**  
121, 122, 125, 126, 123,  
142, 132

This persons reported fire in a five storey block of flats resulted in 7 persons being rescued by ladders - 3 subsequently being taken to hospital suffering from the effects of smoke inhalation. The ground floor flat where the fire started was extensively damaged and 6 fire-fighters in BA used 2 HR to extinguish the blaze.

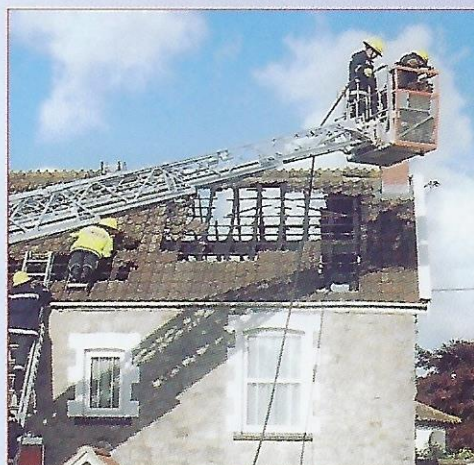


**Date/Time:**  
28/07/01 - 20.05 hrs

**Address:**  
Central Trading Estate,  
Bath Road, Brislington

**Appliances:**  
142, 093, 091, 062,  
067, 052, 056, 051  
095, 152, 081, 100,  
119, 111

As crews arrived large amounts of thick black smoke were pouring out from beneath the roof of the single storey industrial unit measuring 100m x 60m – pumps attending 6. Forced entries were made and 8 fire-fighters in BA using a thermal image camera were committed inside the building to locate and extinguish the fire. Once located the fire was extinguished using 3 jets and 2 HR. P.P.V fans were used to ventilate the building.



**Date/Time:**  
10/07/01 - 1707 hrs

**Address:**  
New Road, Churchill

**Appliances:**  
241, 232, 192, L105  
(CHEDDAR), 185

When crews arrived clouds of smoke were issuing from under the tiled roof of the two storey building.

Initially the fire was tackled from within the roof space by fire-fighters in BA, but rapidly deteriorating conditions forced crews to be withdrawn and fight the blaze from outside. Fire-fighters using approx. 1 HR. It took 3 HR and 1 jet to prevent the fire from spreading to the remainder of the premises.



**Date/Time:**  
24/08/01 - 2200 hrs

**Address:**  
8th Avenue, Filton

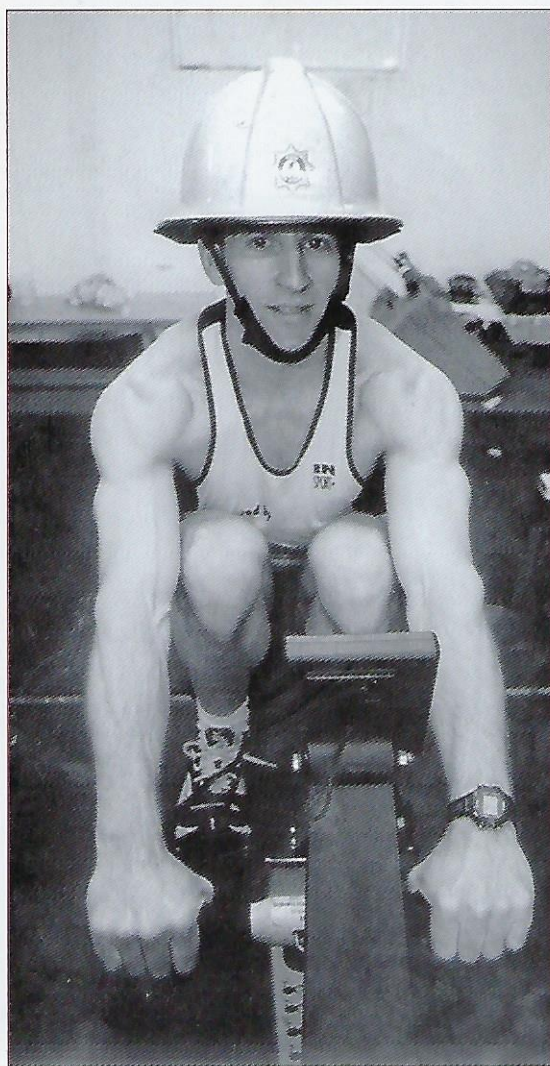
**Appliances:**  
062, 042, 093, 091

Approximately 250 local residents had to be evacuated from a 200m area surrounding the fire which involved 4 garden sheds containing hundreds of LPG cylinders – a number of which exploded.

Crews were at the scene throughout the night – using 3 cooling jets and a thermal image camera.



## PLAYING TO THE GALLERIES - IRON MIKE'S EPIC MULTI-MARATHON



One marathon is enough for most athletes, but Speedwell firefighter "Iron" Mike Collin completed an amazing four marathons in under ten hours and raised more than £5,500 for the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund.

Mike, aged 43, devised the incredible stunt to secure a place on an expedition organised by the F.S.N.B.F. to the Great Wall of China, which required raising £2,000 in sponsorship.

"Ever since I was in the Hong Kong police I have wanted to visit the Great Wall, and this would realise my dream," he said. "But I have also found from previous fund-raising campaigns that you have to come up with a stunt that inspires awe or pity to get support.

"So I came up with this hair-brained idea of doing four marathons on four pieces of fitness equipment, a treadmill, a rower, a cross-country ski machine and a cycle."

Mike went into intensive training at the Speedwell gym and the scene was set at The Galleries in Bristol's Broadmead. The time was 8am and Mike started his punishing 104.8 mile endurance attempt.

"I was glad that D-Day had arrived but the atmosphere was surreal. The Galleries was still closed to shoppers and the only noise you could hear was me pounding the treadmill."

It was also time for doubts. Had he got his training schedule right, would his knees take the punishment, and how would he cope with the warm dry atmosphere in the shopping centre?

The plan was to do the event in blocks of two miles. Each circuit of eight miles would take just under 45 minutes. Pacing the running and rowing would be critical. Mike had planned for marathons of 3 hours 15 minutes for both of these disciplines, requiring a pace of eight miles per hour.

"The first 40 miles went fairly smoothly in well under four hours, but the sweetness of the Hydrafuel which I was drinking was making me feel quite ill, and eating bananas and power bars only made me feel worse," he said.

"During the 50-70 mile stage I was beginning to doubt that I would finish. As people passed by and media interviews came and went I was struggling to force a smile. I felt like a performing poodle and for onlookers it must have been as exciting as watching paint dry."

At 70 miles Mike mounted the cycle for the ninth time and felt his first spasm of cramp due to the hot oppressively dry atmosphere. He realised that he should have had a fan to cool him down while he was cycling because he was losing too much liquid.

He asked his wife Suzanne to contact the GNC shop which had supplied him through his training, and they recommended magnesium phosphate tablets.

"Besides taking on more liquid refreshment I cut my running pace down to seven miles an hour and prayed that the spasms wouldn't get any worse. With 20 miles to go I took a phial of natural caffeine which hopefully would keep me going," he said.

Thankfully everything held up and he finished his 104.8 miles in nine hours, 46 minutes and 53 seconds.

"I felt a massive sense of relief that all the pain and hard work was over. My thanks to everybody who supported me and my generous sponsors including Bristol Auto Centre, M&P Media and Seating Design Ltd."

Iron Mike was finally going to realise his dream of visiting the Great Wall of China as part of the challenging Firefighter Trek 2001.

## WINSCOMBE WONDERS

Life in an attractive Somerset village like Winscombe near Bristol conjures up a picture of getting home from work and enjoying a great social life with a few pints in one of the welcoming pubs.

That may be the case for most of the villagers but there is a dedicated group of men whose commitment to public service means that they are on call day or night throughout the year.

They are the retained firefighters who cannot afford to get too sociable in case they get a shout.

They answer about three calls a week to a variety of incidents ranging from house and chimney fires down to trapped animals and people getting their hands stuck in letterboxes.

"You never know when it will happen, or what to expect, so you cannot really organise a big night out with the lads, just in case," said leading firefighter Robert Bale, who runs his own landscape gardening business.

"But we do have a couple of barbecues and the occasional skittle match during the summer."

Robert, aged 45, is one of the veterans of the team, having signed up when he was 16 as a junior fire-fighter with Somerset Fire Brigade.

"It seemed a natural thing to do since two of my uncles and my brother were retained," he said.

But his 22-year service is eclipsed by colleague Leading Fireman Norman Ebdon, a butcher at Langford research centre, who is coming up to 40 years.

Then there is Station Officer Dave Hares, who works for the local undertaker and builder, who has clocked up 37 years' service.

"We have a good team and we look forward to our training sessions at Winscombe fire station every Monday evening," said Robert.

On the team is Brian Pearce, a self-employed plumber, Paul Newton and Kelvin Rigney, who are both full-time firefighters at Filton and Steven Hartshorne who is a full-time firefighter at Bristol International Airport.

Then there is Ian Hayne who is the caretaker at the local primary school, Matt Brown who works at the yoghurt factory at Blagdon and is also on the retained team at Blagdon, and another self-employed builder Noam Peretz.

"Like all retained personnel we are proud to serve our local community, we enjoy the challenge and we like the variety," said Robert. "We are also proud to be part of Avon Fire Brigade."

"I suppose the worst part of the job is the paperwork, particularly when we have to get back to our own jobs, but it has to be done."



## RETIRE EARLY? NO CHANCE SAYS COLIN



Dave Hutchings presents an award to Colin Shilton also present are Councillor Glyn Duck and past chair of North Somerset Council Jan Barber

**Firefighter Colin Shilton aged 58, this year celebrates his 40th year in the service, and plans to continue his career as a retained station officer for another two years before retiring.**

"It is a very demanding job but it is very interesting," said Colin who lives at Pill near Bristol.

He can still run to the station from his home, and when he is called out he is always ready in three minutes and is second in line.

He joined the fire brigade at the age of 18 after hearing that there was a shortage of firefighters in the village.

During his career he has seen great changes, but the biggest moment of truth was when he visited Scotland to see a vintage fire engine, and then realised it was the same engine that he used in his early days!

"When I started as a fireman I mainly dealt with house fires, but today it is all about rescues and chemical spillages. It is so high-tech now and the equipment is second to none," he said.

## STUDENTS SEE HQ IN ACTION

Five students of Siblands Special School, Thornbury, whose trip to Lufton Manor College at Yeovil was cancelled by the foot-and-mouth crisis, visited Brigade Headquarters as part of their work opportunities week.

The day started with a quick talk to the students about the activities that they would see, and then they divided into two groups.



Richard & Maria from Siblands Special School enjoy time with 09 Temple.

Kris and Maria visited the workshops to see Phil James, while Rachael, Jamie and Richard went to 09 Temple with Dave Howard.

In the workshops Kris and Maria saw the work undertaken on the appliances by the mechanics, and Phil went into great detail explaining to one of the students how all the switches worked inside the cab.

It then turned out that the student Kris O'Connor probably knew as much as fire engines at Phil, having grown up with them for the past 18 years.

The students visiting Temple looked around the appliances and saw a firefighter coming down the pole - something that Richard wanted to try - and later in the day they had the opportunity of having a go on the hoses, with the temptation to soak the adults very evident.

Lunch was followed by a demonstration of the chip pan unit, which astounded the students and proved a lesson well learnt.

After a question and answer session the day ended with Jerry O'Brien presenting certificates of their day with the Brigade which they will be able to use in their progress files as accredited work.

## FLYING START FOR THE ITALIAN JOB

**The treasures of Italy were waiting for a group of 46 pensioners, their ladies and friends when they flew to Rome for a weeks holiday in Tuscany.**

The group had previously travelled by coach and cross-channel ferry or tunnel for their continental trips, but they decided to fly this time after one particularly long journey to Austria.

They started from the Lansdown at Bath and travelled by coach to Heathrow for the flight of just over two hours, and another coach was waiting on their arrival to take them to their hotel in Chianciano Terme.

Each of the seven days started with a glorious coach drive through the beautiful countryside of Tuscany and Umbria to visit Florence, Siena, San Gimignano and the famous leaning tower of Pisa.

They also visited Orvieto where a guided tour of town ended with a wine tasting, Perugia, Assisi and the Basilica Di San Francesco, Pienza and the important wine-making town of Montepulciano.

The last evening saw a celebration party in the hotel with music and dancing, and the group had free time in Rome on the final morning to explore the eternal city before being taken to the airport for the return flight home.

The general verdict was that the trip was tiring at times but a very enjoyable holiday.





## TOP HONOUR FOR RICHARD



Richard Brimmell (left) receives the President's Award from Monty Britton).

**Richard Brimmell has been presented with the Brigade Council's highest honour when he received the President's Award to honour his outstanding work and achievements as their long-standing Vice Chairman.**

Richard has been involved with the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund for well over 25 years and received the National Certificate for Long Service seven years ago.

The President's Award was made at his last meeting as Vice Chairman of the Brigade Council earlier this year.

Brigade Treasurer Ian Satherley said that Richard had been involved in the FSNBF for as long as he could remember and that his work has resulted in many of the facilities that the Fund locally still enjoys.

"Many may remember that Richard co-ordinated the premier of the film "The Towering Inferno" at the New Bristol Centre many years ago, along with organising all the posters, press coverage and invitations to local dignitaries.

"The audience, many firefighters and their families watched the film with true critical Fire Brigade spirit, shouting "hose reel" and "I wouldn't have done that" during the action.

"Richard undertook the same role with dignity and diligence some years ago when he co-ordinated the release of the film "Backdraught," and while the audience was different the end result was the same and everybody enjoyed themselves thanks to his efforts."

Ian said that Richard also undertook the role of Benevolent Fund Diary co-ordinator with a company called Seaton Sands, who still produce our desk diaries.

"The company discovered very early in the contract that Richard Brimmell was not somebody to mess with, and that the terms of engagement would work in the Benevolent Fund's favour, which they still do.

"The President's Award is a small token for all the work and achievements carried out during Richard's service, for which we will always be grateful."

## BE A WINNER AT CASTLE COMBE!



**HERE is a fabulous chance to win an exciting day driving a racing car at the famous Castle Combe circuit near Chippenham in Wiltshire.**

We have teamed up with Castle Combe Racing School to offer one lucky winner this spectacular prize in a bumper draw.

The racing school team of highly-trained instructors will do everything to ensure that the winners day at the racing circuit is a memorable one and he or she may also find time to visit the picturesque village of Castle Combe where the classic movie Dr Dolittle was filmed.

The day at the race circuit starts with a full safety briefing followed by an explanation of the basic rules of the road in racing, and the special driving techniques involved.

The first laps will be in a Ford Focus, as a passenger while the instructor puts the finer points of the classroom session into practice.

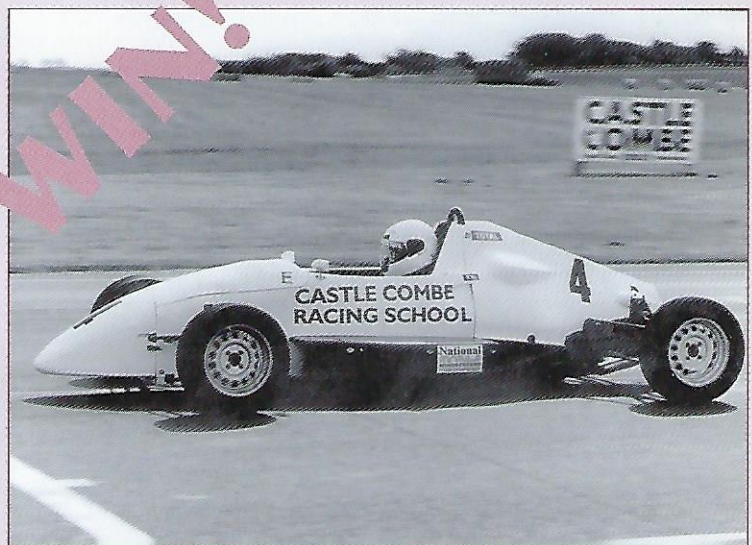
Then it is your turn to drive with one of the instructors, and once they are fully satisfied with your car control you are on your own for the thrills and excitement of driving a racing car, the same type of car which launched the careers of former Formula 1 world champions Damon Hill and Nigel Mansell.

All you have to do to win this super prize is name the film that was made at Castle Combe. Answers with your name, address and home telephone number to Castle Combe Competition, Martin Powell Communications, 1 Lyons Court, Long Ashton Business Park, Yanley Lane, Long Ashton, Bristol BS41 9LB. Closing date for entries January 18th, 2002.

No cash prize alternative and the editor decision is final.

\*Even if you are not lucky enough to win, remember that a gift voucher for a day tuition at Castle Combe Racing School makes an unusual birthday or Christmas present, for further details call:

01249 782929 or 01249 782417.



## AVON'S HOPES SQUASHED BY TOP SEEDS

**Bath fire station's squash stalwarts Steve Higgins (White Watch), Len Harvey (Blue Watch) and Al Dunlop (Green Watch) once again represented Avon Fire Brigade at the FSSAA national Squash Championship at The Parks Club in Nottingham earlier this year.**

Steve "the youngster" Higgins had a tough first round draw in the main competition, meeting last year's winner of the plate. In a well-contested five-setter Steve finally came out on top to be rewarded with a tie against the number one seed and reigning champion Eddie Noyce.

Steve, chasing the game from the start, got two points, which was some achievement against a player formally ranked on the world professional circuit.



## RSPCA HONOURS BULL RESCUE TEAM

**Bath firefighters and other rescuers have been praised by the RSPCA for saving the life of a bull owned by broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby.**

Representatives of Britain's premier animal charity presented an award to the rescuers including helicopter pilots, a vet and a farm dog called Badger at Mr Dimbleby's home at Charlcombe on the outskirts of Bath.

They were called in when farmer Paul Robinson discovered that cattle had escaped from a field and many had fallen down a wooded ravine.

While Mr Robinson managed to coax many out to safety one steer remained trapped and suffering from a leg injury.

Rescuers were called in including RSPCA Inspector Glyn Roberts who sedated the animal as the Royal Navy sent a helicopter with an 80ft length of cable.

The cable was lowered and secured to the trapped animal which was winched to safety in a sling.

Mr Roberts said: "The rescue was a great team effort and the RSPCA is delighted to have the chance to thank everyone for their help."

## BIG TURNOUT FOR CHALMERS RACE

**This year's Ian Chalmers Memorial Race saw 42 runners starting, and finishing, while raising £134.50 for the New York Fire Department appeal.**

Despite careful marshalling and signs, two runners still managed to get lost and were found running in the wrong direction until they were put right.

Temple and Speedwell stations provided standby fire cover to enable the event to go smoothly, and Jill Chalmers warmly thanked everybody who took part.

Results:

Brigade Individual Runners – 1st Simon Hill St 05 (G) 26 mins 23 secs;  
2nd Brian Penny St 12 (W) 27 mins 01 secs; 3rd Dave Mead St 06 (W) 27mins 25 secs.

Brigade Team Runners – 1st St 12 White Watch Martin Coward, Harry Mountain, Brian Perry; 2nd St 12 Green Watch Simon Lawson, Tony Chapman, Simon Ross; 3rd Weston Office Rick Hanratty, Graham Blight, Chris Bales.

Most improved runner – John Dando;

First lady runner – Catherine Brown;

First veteran – Chris Bales;

First guest runner – Darren Saville.

Al Dunlop in his last year in the over-35's, won his first round fairly comfortably but turned in a disappointing performance against a beatable opponent in the second round.

The veteran of the team, Len Harvey, lost his first round and then entered the plate and reached the second final to secure a trophy for the third consecutive year.

Meanwhile Steve and Al met in the "also rans" competition which Steve won but unfortunately again met the number one seed of this competition and Avon's interest in the tournament faded.

All three players would like to record their thanks to the organisers for yet another excellent sporting weekend.

Steve is hoping to arrange a couple of fixtures so those who are interested in playing for the Brigade should contact him at Station 12.

## BATH AVENGE 'POSEURS' JIBE

**A reckless claim from a Speedwell standby crew that Bath firefighters were a pack of poseurs who were useless at rugby was firmly squashed when both teams clashed at Oldfield Rugby Club earlier this year.**



Chris Coombs, Bath's Man of The Match.

The pattern of the game was quickly set when Jim Knight's thunderous tackle ended Steve Rodliff's early charge within seconds of the start.

Sympathetic refereeing enabled the game to flow and while Bath dominated the early stages Speedwell were always menacing on the break.

Simon Lawson's prodigious efforts at the line-out secured a good ball for the Bath halfbacks, but excellent

tackling by the Speedwell midfield soon halted any attacks. On the odd time that the ball did reach the Bath wingers, cries of "Teflon" were heard as the slippery ball eluded their grasp.

With scores level at 0-0 the teams turned around and the visitors started to pressurise the home defence with Terry Bamford and Rod King combining well at half-back.

The Bath line held firm and gradually their pack took control. Collins, playing a Captain's role, led the resurgence with Escott and Duncan burrowing their way forward in his wake.

Chris Coombs, making his first ever appearance on a rugby field, played at prop like a seasoned veteran, effortlessly taking the ball and passing it on, seemingly without even looking at his target. He was undoubtedly Man of The Match.

Eventually Bath got on the board with a successful rive on the blind side via Russell and Jenkins and Dunlop crashed over the line to score.

Tiredness was setting in and the game opened up to allow Speedwell fullback Brian Lindsay to use his pace to score. But minutes later he could not gather cleanly behind his own posts and Paul Smith scored Bath's winner.

Thanks to referee Ian Tiley from Midsomer Norton RFC who was making his refereeing debut, and to Oldfield Old Boys RFC for hosting the match.

**Score: Bath Firestation XV 12**

**Speedwell Firestation XV 7**



Bath: Duncan, Escott, Coombs, Cullen, Lawson, Knight, Collins, Dunlop, Russell, Jenkins, Smith, Bailey, Chapman, Allen, Cooper.

Speedwell: Williams, Tipping, Faulkner, Beesex, Sellars, Lane, Rodliff, Gibbs, Bamford, King, Showering, Staples, Pitt, Kingston, Lindsay.





# THROWING YOUR CARES TO THE WIND



Here is a flight of fancy that brings you down to earth with a bump. Those who fancy throwing themselves out of aircraft and freefalling for a few thousand feet will be relieved to know that they are not alone.

There is a small group of freefall

parachute enthusiasts who have formed the Avon Fire Brigade Sport Parachute Association which meets regularly and organises trips to different venues worldwide to practice and perfect their skills.

Six members recently travelled to Empuriabrava on the beautiful south eastern coast of Spain for the group's annual meeting, and were welcomed by some of the best skydiving conditions that Europe has to offer with bright sunshine, blue skies and a gentle breeze.

The main aim of the trip was for experienced jumpers to get some advanced coaching, and for new members to undertake their basic accelerated freefall courses.

Leading firefighter Jon Millard successfully gained his A-class licence which is the minimum requirement for solo diving, and firefighter Andy Green from Yate who achieved his 100th jump.

Jon is following in the slipstream of his brother Dan, who is based at Weston-super-Mare, and who is president of the association. Dan and Gary Sheppard, also of Weston, both gained their B-class licences with IC1 and FS1 endorsements which relate to individual canopy and formation skydiving skills.

Jon Millard said that the association is open to anybody interested in the sport, whether novices or more experienced.

"You start by learning the basic techniques with ground training, and then you go up in an aircraft with instructors. The equipment can be expensive with a new parachute costing around £1,500, but each jump costs around £12 and it is just an amazing and very exciting experience."

During the visit to Spain the experienced divers represented Avon Fire Brigade in several competitions.

Dan Millard came second in the first competition to achieve the fastest freefall over a vertical mile with a speed of 191mph, while Gary Sheppard came third at 173mph.

Competitors also threw themselves in the landing accuracy competition – literally in some cases – with Dan winning followed by Gary and Andy Green.

They plan to have many meetings throughout the year and members have access to some of the sport's best coaches at very exclusive rates, so training could not be safer, simpler or more fun.

Those who are interested should contact Dan or Gary at Stn 18 Red Watch.



## YOUR MAGAZINE

What do you think of Avon Fire Brigade News? We are carrying out a review of Avon Fire Brigade News to make sure it is keeping readers informed and entertained with news about the Brigade. This is your magazine and we want to make sure it contains all the information and gossip that you want to read.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey - your views are important, it will help us to decide on the content and format for future issues.

A draw will take place from all completed questionnaires - first out of the hat will receive a £20 Boots voucher.

### Getting hold of the magazine

1. Do you find it easy to get your own copy of Avon Fire Brigade News?

Sometimes difficult ☐ Difficult ☐ Impossible ☐

2. How would you prefer to receive the magazine?

By post to home ☐ Pick it up at work (current members of staff) ☐ Do not want to receive it ☐

### Regular Reads?

We want to know what interests you. Please tick how interested you are in the following types of article. 1 is not interested at all to 5 very interested. (please circle relevant number)

1. The Chiefs views and opinions

1 2 3 4 5

2. Incidents

1 2 3 4 5

3. Sports news

1 2 3 4 5

4. Social and charity work news

1 2 3 4 5

5. Offers and special deals for firefighters

1 2 3 4 5

6. Work related/instructional articles

1 2 3 4 5

### The Content

1. How would you like to see Avon Fire Brigade News improved?

More pictures ☐ More pages ☐ Less pages ☐ More colour ☐ Longer articles ☐ Shorter articles ☐

## PRIZE DRAW

To enter the draw please make sure you give your details below:

Name

Contact address

Tel:

News from other brigades ☐ A letters section ☐

2. How much of the magazine do you usually read?

None ☐ Up to 20% ☐ 20-50% ☐ 50-75% ☐ More than 75% ☐ All of it ☐

3. Thinking about the magazine as a whole – how would you describe the content?

Informative ☐ Useful ☐ Entertaining ☐ Varied ☐ Boring ☐ Superficial ☐

4. How often would you like to see the magazine published?

Annually ☐ Twice a year ☐ Quarterly ☐ Every two months ☐

### About you

To help us know what our readers think of the magazine we would like to know a few details about you.

1. Are you:

An employee of Avon Fire Brigade ☐ Pensioner ☐ Interested outsider ☐

2. If you are a member of staff, are you:

Uniformed ☐ Non uniformed ☐

3. How many years have you worked in the Brigade?

Are you:

Male ☐ Female ☐

Your rank/grade

Your station/department

What is your favourite newspaper/magazine?

### Last word.

Please use this space to give any other views on the magazine.

### Returning your form:

If you are a current member of staff please return using the internal post to:

Geoff Hutchings/Tim Wood - PRO Temple Back. Other readers please post to: G Hutchings/T Wood PRO, Avon Fire Brigade, Temple Back, Bristol BS1 6EU.