

## **Some fondly remembered concepts of the non-digitalised Old Brigade.**

**by R L (Rip) Smith.**



**Thought it appropriate to write this on  
Armistice Day 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020.**



### **Reminiscences of pay parades, greasy-poles etc before digital technology hijacked the traditional roll of the fireman/firewoman.**

I joined the Bristol Fire Brigade on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1964 and retired in October 1999. It is with some relief that much of my service was before what I would claim was the digital hijacking of traditional hands-on firefighting.

My observations are based on the latest Avon Fire & Rescue Service's 17 page! Issue 12 Bulletin dated Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020. This is an administrative tour de force and it would be interesting to know how many man/woman hours it took produce.

It is not the references to personnel, but the overwhelming technical rhetoric which I suspect is used to convince the HMICRS/public into believing that the AF&RS have or are moving to a hitherto unknown 21<sup>st</sup> century of concept of basic fire- fighting.

Two small hot-air fuelled examples can be found under the heading: 'Investing and improving our digital technology Phase 3.

- Increasingly move to Cloud Technology
- Currently in the initial stages, a lot of the work carried out will be invisible to the user with little interruption or downturn. The work concentrates on the infrastructure in preparation for the transformation work which will take place at a later stage.

This convoluted rationale is surely indicative of the puzzling language used by those desperately seeking to impress the hierarchy of many organisations including the government!

The gross over-administration could I would suggest be plotted to when personnel departments were hijacked into 'Human Resources' with pay rises all round! There followed a gigantic re-evaluation to perhaps convince the public that Bristol's fire services were par excellence. That of course was not the case as highlighted in the latest (2018-2019) HMICRS publicised criticism!

### **The basic Bristol Fire Brigade (BFB) I shall never forget:**

In the halcyon BFB days of the early 1960s there was a process which encapsulates for me the very basics of employment in a traditional albeit civilian uniformed service, namely pay day.

Weekly on a Thursday at A3 Avonmouth Glad Mann accompanied by her assistant Shirley would bring the cash to pay staff, which was reminiscent of a pay parade.

This article is not in any way meant as a criticism of the grass-roots of the current AF&RS but of those who seem to overcompensate for criticism with gross inappropriate claimed 'digital' improvements. Indeed, during my early years as a fireman I can distinctly recall when I had my head in manuals studying for promotion being told by an old stager: "Never forget you're a water squirter kid."

Shakespeare of course describes the theories of climbing the greasy-pole far better than I ever could, for example this quotation from Julius Caesar: "That lowliness is young ambition's ladder, Whereto the climber upwards turns his face; But when he once attains the utmost rounds, He then unto the ladder turns his back, Looks in the clouds, (not digital ones!) scorning the base degrees By which he did ascend."