

FIREFIGHTER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | WWW.FBU.ORG.UK | DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022



CLIMATE CHANGE IS RESHAPING OUR JOBS

MORE WILDFIRES
MORE FLOODS

SEE P8 & P16

**KING'S CROSS
RED PLAQUE**
SEE P12

**GRENFELL FOCUS
ON GOVERNMENT**
SEE P14

**PAY REVIEW
BODY THREAT**
SEE P7



**FIREFIGHTERS
100 LOTTERY
FESTIVE DRAW**
SEE BACK COVER





MATT WRACK POSITIVE STEPS IN A DIFFICULT YEAR

COVID

It would be slightly odd to call this year a good year. We are still living with the effects of the Covid pandemic, and the Westminster government's fatal mishandling of it.

As I write, we are far from out of the woods and, in any case, many families across the country are already missing loved ones as a result of this dreadful disease.

That is a particularly sad thought as Christmas approaches. The government should be ashamed and should be held to account.

Of course, we cannot discuss Covid or the year more generally without making reference to fire employers' sudden, unilateral, decision to pull out of the agreement that had enabled firefighters to assist the NHS and care sector response to Covid-19.

This was driven by employer desire to alter previously agreed safety arrangements to protect firefighters. Members wanted and want to assist where they can, but they should not have to pay a price to do so.

So, while we cannot call this a "good year", we can nonetheless reflect on positive steps we have taken together as a union across the past 12 months.

PENSIONS JUSTICE

We have made significant legal steps towards pension justice, including the Employment Appeal Tribunal siding with us and the winning of a clear, relatively quick process for financial remedies for the 2015 pension scheme. This



BACK ROW: Steve Gregory, Mark Waldron, Scott Walker. **MIDDLE ROW:** Danny Hodgkins, Ian Cash, FBU regional secretary Steve Price-Hunt, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, Neil Wait, Adam Aston-Moss (not a badge recipient), David Hickman, Andy Nixon. **FRONT ROW:** Nathan Hodgkins, Warren Lyndon, Alex Daw, Andy Nightingale

is a fight that continues, with more legal action pending.

CONTAMINANTS AND CANCER

We also made huge steps towards changing the situation when it comes to fire contaminants. At the moment, research suggests a firefighter is four times more likely to get cancer than a member of the public. It is thought that fire contaminants could be a cause of this, and we are determined to help achieve changes in this area.

Our work here includes making firefighters aware of simple actions they can take to protect themselves against fire contaminants, hoping to account for anywhere where firefighters are or have been let down by information gaps or lax culture.

You can access guidance at fbu.org.uk/campaigns/decon-fire-contaminants-training

We launched a new cancer and disease registry,

which is collecting firefighter information that will push forward vital research.

It is vital that every firefighter, serving and retired, fills this in, and you can do this at uclan.ac.uk/fcdr

ISSUES THAT MATTER

We have continued to be vocal on campaigning issues that matter to members.

Fighting the building safety crisis, climate change, and fire and rescue cuts are all things that make a difference to members' lives.

We are also campaigning on breathing apparatus changes.

NFCC guidance has recommended that firefighters go beyond the bridgehead in high-rise fires without their BA turned on.

Clearly, this is dangerous and we will consider all legal, political and industrial options to fight any brigade that tries to introduce this policy, as we have been doing.

RED PLAQUES

Finally, this year the FBU has continued to bring attention to the enormous sacrifice fallen firefighters have made.

Red plaques play an important role in making sure that this vital history is remembered in spaces where people carry out their lives on a day to day basis.

You can contribute to this work by playing the Firefighters100 lottery, which funds the scheme: firefighters100lottery.co.uk

I recently visited the West Midlands to present 25-year badges to a great group of members (above). It was wonderful to present these badges in person – congratulations and solidarity to them.

GREETINGS

As we go into the New Year, the union will continue to fight for them and for every member.

I wish you, and your family, a merry Christmas and a very happy new year.



CONTENTS

DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022

NEWS

- 4** House fire death near closed station
- 5** BA safety victories, but fight continues
- 6** Pensions, Red Plaque, Coats4Calais

FEATURES

- 8** Climate change
FBU at COP26 in Glasgow
- 12** King's Cross fire
Red plaque for Colin Townley
- 14** Grenfell inquiry update
Focus shifting from firefighters to government
- 16** Red Clydesider
Firefighter meets the legendary Roddy McAllister

REGULARS

- 5** Sounding off
BA changes are a threat to us all
- 7** News focus
Collective bargaining
- 18** Equalities
We must outlaw misogyny
- 19** Legal Beagle
A landmark case for working people and their unions
- 20** Noticeboard
FBU merchandise
Special edition watch
Award for control manager
- 21** Station Cat
Image and reality
- 22** Long service badges
- 24** Firefighter 100 Lottery



JESS HURD

FIREFIGHTER

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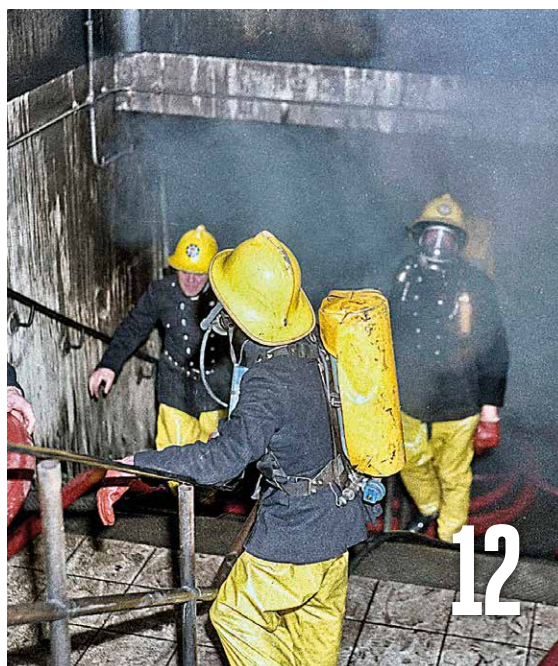
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LB

UK FIREFIGHTERS CANCER AND DISEASE REGISTRY

Research has shown that carcinogens are present in firefighters' working environments and firefighters in the UK are four times more likely than the general public to develop cancer.

We need more firefighters, existing and past, to tell us about their experience of contaminants.

Don't worry – if you change your mind, you can leave the study at any time and your data will not be shared with anyone else.

Please support this research – sign the cancer registry:
uclan.ac.uk/fcdr



NEWS

COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

Government warned over collective bargaining for firefighters

p7



JESS HARRISON/DIGITAL.CO.UK

NOT FORGOTTEN

Red plaque after 50 years for Manchester firefighter

p6

Aftermath of an apartment block fire in Esher in June 2020 when crews waited more than 57 minutes for a high-reaching aerial fire appliance



DARREN PETER/SURREY LIVE

HOUSE FIRE DEATH NEAR CLOSED STATION

SURREY

The FBU has raised questions over the death of an elderly man in a Surrey house fire in late November.

It said cuts to the Surrey fire and rescue service meant the first fire engine took 13 minutes to arrive.

A nearby fire station had been moved to daytime-only cover, meaning that the fire engine took “substantially” longer to arrive than it otherwise would have.

Joe Weir, FBU regional secretary for the South East, said: “I would like to extend my condolences to the family and friends of the man who has lost his life.

“A fire station local to the incident, at Painshill, was made daytime-only in January 2021.

“I am told by local officials that if this cut had not happened, the first fire

engine would likely have reached him substantially quicker and he may well have survived.

“Fires tend to double in size every minute and our officials estimate the delay here was four minutes long.

“In other words, a man has lost his life and there is a possible relationship with cuts. That is incredibly worrying.”

The fire took place in East Horsley, a village near Leatherhead, in the early hours of Wednesday 24 November.

Changes to fire and rescue cover at Painshill were implemented as part of a local fire and rescue plan voted through by Surrey County Council in September 2019.

The plan included removal of seven fire engines, removal of night-time cover at three fire stations, and the loss of 70 firefighter jobs. The council assured

residents that the plan would provide a more efficient service.

The FBU opposed the cuts, arguing that they were dangerous. FBU members in Surrey were so concerned by the cuts they took industrial action, which was only halted by the pandemic.

The FBU has previously highlighted other devastating incidents in Surrey as being related to these cuts.

In a fire at Banstead on Friday 19 March this year lives were lost after the first fire appliance took 14 minutes to arrive.

In June 2020, an apartment block fire in Esher saw crews waiting more than 57 minutes for a high-reaching aerial fire appliance, the FBU said.

Figures released in September this year revealed that Surrey has lost 127 – 17% – of its firefighters since 2010.

BA SAFETY VICTORIES – BUT FIGHT CONTINUES

BREATHING APPARATUS

The fight against unsafe and unprofessional breathing apparatus changes is continuing. Members in the Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Greater Manchester brigades are organising rallies and mass meetings for after Christmas, and legal proceedings are in process with regards to both brigades.

However, *Firefighter* can report that the policy is being held back in other brigades thanks to the efforts of FBU members and officials – anywhere this dangerous proposal is stopped is a “significant victory”, according to FBU national officer Riccardo la Torre.

The issue stems from National Fire Chiefs Council guidance which allows for firefighters to go beyond the bridgehead without turning BA on in high-rise fires. Some brigades have chosen to try to impose the guidance locally.

The FBU argues that implementing this policy could open the door to the practice being brought in for other fires, too. The policy contains multiple serious safety and operational concerns.

In its briefing on this issue (available at fbu.org.uk/publications/breathing-apparatus-safety-campaign-briefing) the FBU argues that BA is designed to be started up in safe air, and that any faults with BA would only be discovered in the risk area once it is too late.

This policy risks firefighters ending up beyond where an emergency BA team could rescue them, as they would be deployed deeper into the building than the duration of a BA set would allow, due to the fact they would have started off without it turned on.

Riccardo la Torre said that this is a matter of both firefighter and public safety as “dead or injured firefighters can’t rescue anybody”.



RICHARD BAKER/ALAMY

LEGISLATORS URGE CANCER SCREENING

DECON CAMPAIGN

The FBU’s work to better understand fire contaminants and their links to cancer and other diseases, was the focus of a recent debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The union’s DECON campaign, designed to protect firefighters from and prevent the risks posed by toxic fire contaminants, was mentioned frequently, as was University of Central Lancashire research on this subject

commissioned by the FBU.

This suggests that firefighters are more than four times more likely to develop cancer than the general population.

The Assembly agreed a motion recognising the risk to firefighters, and the need to protect against it. It called for engagement with the FBU in implementing best practice in Northern Ireland, and called for annual cancer screening for serving firefighters.

During the debate

Northern Ireland minister of health Robin Swann said that the fire and rescue service was working in partnership with the FBU in relation to DECON.

Sinn Féin’s Colm Gildernew said: “The dangers of life-threatening contaminations due to the work that they do is the reality of every firefighter’s life. Firefighters are worthy of every tribute that is paid to them in the assembly”.

These sentiments were widely echoed.

SOUNDING OFF

FBU Southern regional secretary Mark Chapman says employer policies ignore the real lessons of Grenfell and threaten the safety of firefighters

A THREAT TO EACH AND EVERY FIREFIGHTER

Dangerous changes are being imposed on the way firefighters tackle high rise fires in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. They are a knee jerk reaction to critical issues raised by the Grenfell tragedy.

In no way do they address these issues and they put firefighters in danger and further beyond the reach of rescue than ever before.

Under the policy, firefighters are expected to enter a risk area beyond the entry control point not under air.

They are being asked to gamble with their safety in the fire bosses’ “sticking plaster” approach to failed building regulations and compromised building compartmentalisation.

This dangerous degradation of safe working practices is set to reverse progress to protect the safety of all firefighters that has been developed over decades and, in some cases, in response to firefighter deaths.

We are not standing down on this.

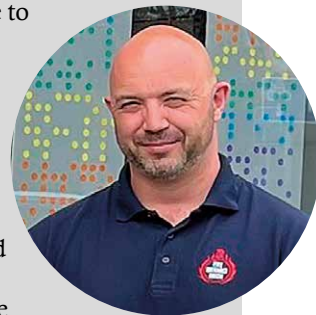
Denying this protection in one brigade is a threat to each and every firefighter.

In each brigade affected by such changes, firefighters have vehemently opposed them. We understand the additional risk placed upon our shoulders.

Instead of employers pushing back at government and standing with firefighters to improve building regulations, building standards and ensure safer homes, they remain silent and throw firefighter safety under the bus.

We must collectively exhaust every opportunity and resource to challenge and reverse these dangerous practices.

Ultimately, we must focus attention back on real remedies for the effects of building deregulation, substandard construction methods and unsafe materials, so that all buildings are made safe.





Ed Burrows FBU regional secretary for the North West at the unveiling of Wilfred McLaughlan's red plaque at the Tameside Wellness Centre in Denton

REMEMBERED AT LAST WITH A RED PLAQUE – THANKS TO A FIREFIGHTER WHO NEVER FORGOT

RED PLAQUE

A red plaque for a firefighter who passed away nearly 50 years ago has been unveiled after a retired FBU member uncovered details of his life and passing.

On 25 April 1972 Wilfred McLaughlan was attending a fire in a factory in Denton, Greater Manchester, when the roof collapsed.

He later died from his injuries. On the day the fire broke out he was three days away from his retirement.

Retired firefighter Graham Bowker was told about the loss of the firefighter when he was posted at McLaughlan's former fire station five years after his passing.

While there has been limited coverage or discussion about McLaughlan's death in the time since, and he has no traceable family, Graham never forgot

about him and, when the site where the fire happened was developed, he started researching the story and making enquiries with a view to having a plaque on the site.

Graham said that "we owe it" to McLaughlan to ensure his sacrifice is never forgotten.

The FBU's red plaque scheme seeks to memorialise firefighters who died in the line of duty with a plaque near to where the relevant incident happened.

FBU regional secretary for the North West Ed Burrows said that: "As firefighters we want to ensure that our predecessors are not forgotten. They helped build and develop our profession through their dedication and service, something we all benefit from today... the Fire Brigades Union is honoured to play a part in remembering Wilfred McLaughlan and his sacrifice."

UNION IN COURT ONCE AGAIN TO FIGHT FOR PENSIONS JUSTICE

PENSIONS

The FBU has begun legal proceedings against the government to stop its attempt to make firefighters pay the cost of discrimination resulting from its 2015 pension changes.

FBU national officer Mark Rowe said it was "unbelievable" that the government is trying to make firefighters pay the cost of discrimination that it had imposed on them.

It is also unbelievable that it was forcing firefighters to come back to the courts "time and time again" to win pension justice.

Legal action by the FBU has established that the government's 2015 pension changes discriminated against firefighters on the basis of age.

Older workers were allowed to stay on an existing scheme, while younger workers were required to leave it and join the new 2015 scheme.

The government has said that it will try to impose the cost of fixing this discrimination on those who are now on that 2015 pension scheme – a large number of whom will be firefighters who were discriminated against in the first place.

Rowe said: "The government needs to get a grip, recognise its mistakes, recognise the highly valuable contribution that firefighters make every day, and sort out firefighter pensions in a timely and straightforward manner."

"Six years after the relevant pension reforms came in the government is still in a mess over this".



'WE'RE HELPING PEOPLE JUST LIKE US'

East Midlands FBU has repeated its Coats4Calais drive, which last year gathered hundreds of coats for refugees. This year's drive provided all sorts of warm clothing.

The drive continues the union's relationship with Care4Calais. Members delivered aid to Calais in a fire appliance in 2019.

Adam Taylor, East Midlands FBU regional secretary, said: "We don't view this as giving needy people crumbs from the table."

"We view this as stepping up to help people just like us, in their time of need."

"This warm clothing will hopefully make a real difference here".

Employer and government opposition to workers getting together to safeguard their pay and conditions has a long history. This statue of George Lovelace, one of the six Tolpuddle Martyrs, stands outside the Martyrs' Museum in Dorset. They were transported to Australia in 1834 for forming a trade union. Massive protests demanded their freedom, succeeding in 1837



JESS HARRINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO END COLLECTIVE BARGAINING THREATEN NO SAY AND LOW PAY

An independent think tank has warned that rumoured Westminster government plans to scrap collective bargaining in the fire and rescue service would destroy a system that has functioned effectively for 70 years.

A report by The Institute of Employment Rights (IER) says the government should halt any plans it has to end "a robust and effective system".

In a collective bargaining system, workers join together to negotiate their pay and conditions.

In the fire and rescue service this happens through the NJC (national joint council) and the results of negotiations are recorded in the Grey Book of terms and conditions.

The Westminster government is thought to be planning to replace collective bargaining in the fire and rescue service with a pay review body.

The experience of public sector

employees in the UK, including NHS workers, teachers and prison officers, is that in such systems pay is effectively dictated by government ministers.

Firefighters and control staff would lose the democratic say they have under collective bargaining.

The IER report points out that a collective bargaining structure has been effective in helping to resolve issues between fire and rescue service employers and employees.

It says that the NJC is a "robust and long established vehicle for discussion, negotiation, and agreement" between employers and employees.

The report also says that government plans could conflict with both international and domestic law.

It points out that fire and rescue employers are in favour of the collective bargaining system – highlighting just how effective it is.

Matt Wrack, general secretary of the FBU, said that the report "blows a hole" in the argument that getting rid of collective bargaining in the fire and rescue service would make it more effective.

"This report is clear: having a clear structure where issues can be resolved helps fire and rescue services," he said. "It does not hinder them, despite whatever the government says."

"In any case, however, firefighters and control staff deserve the right to have a say over their own pay and conditions. That is an issue of democracy."

The Institute of Employment Rights is an independent think tank and charity that produces work on trade union rights and employment law.

The FBU has produced a document summarising and reflecting on the findings of the report, which it is distributing to members and officials.

The FBU fire engine provided the stage and main focal point for the trade union workers bloc at the demonstration in Glasgow

PICTURE: JESS HURD

CLIMA



ATE EMERGENCY

Dr Tommy Kane on how the FBU played a key role at the COP26 conference in Glasgow



Litter and piles of rubbish greeted the FBU fire engine as it rolled into Glasgow for COP26.

A year-long industrial dispute by GMB members over a decade of cuts to services, pay restraint and appalling working conditions and the threat of a rail strike following action by the RMT over pay highlighted the plight of key workers who have had enough of being patronised and treated shabbily.

FBU members joined workers on the picket line to show solidarity with the city's cleansing workers.

Meanwhile, at the conference hall, trade union delegates from across the world were aghast at the sight of Amazon boss Jeff Bezos being given centre stage to lecture the COP conference on how to address the climate emergency.

And they were vastly outnumbered by the huge official delegation of lobbyists representing the fossil fuel industry.

But the "Fridays for Future" event was an inspirational antidote, bringing young people from all corners of the globe together to demand "system change to tackle climate change".

This saw teenage environmentalists like Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate lead a 25,000-strong march alongside striking council staff. Exasperation at the official COP26 stood in stark



TO DELIVER CLIMATE JUSTICE, YOU MUST ALSO DELIVER SOCIAL JUSTICE

contrast to the hope and inspiration heard on the conference fringe where the voices of those on the frontline of the climate emergency were heard loud and clear at hundreds of meetings and events held across the city.

Environmental activists from the four corners of the globe stood in solidarity with indigenous people whose homelands are threatened and trade unionists whose jobs are at stake.

UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

The overarching theme was that environmental justice cannot be achieved without social justice and to deliver both will require a very different economic and political approach. One that builds on the unity, solidarity and sense of purpose shown by these groups in Glasgow.

High winds and driving rain failed to deter people from all walks of life from turning up

in their droves for the main demonstration on Saturday.

The FBU fire engine provided the stage and main focal point for the trade union workers bloc and FBU general secretary Matt Wrack led off the rally with a scathing critique of the failure of global leaders to address the climate emergency that has helped create extreme weather conditions that have endangered communities and cost the lives of firefighters across the world.

He called for bold action to protect those at risk and investment in the fire and rescue and other public services.

Despite the rain, spirits were high and the mood positive as the 150,000 marchers made their way through the city to Glasgow Green.

The feeling of strength and mutual support among people from the rainbow of nations represented was palpable. Indian farmers,

At the FBU event:
(l-r) William Burt (FBU North Area H&S rep), Matt Wrack (FBU general secretary), Jim Monnaghan (independent chair), Denise Christie (FBU Scottish secretary), Roddy McAllister (FBU ROOT member, formerly Johnstone fire control), Colin Brown (FBU North area secretary)



JESS HURD

JESS HURD

Brazilians from the Amazon and Scottish firefighters joined in common cause, united in the knowledge that, collectively, they are the people who know best the solutions to the climate crisis.

They have the knowledge and understanding of their communities, their people and the practicalities of what needs to be done.

PEACE AND JUSTICE PROJECT

On Monday the FBU held an event as part of the Jeremy Corbyn Peace and Justice Project Alternative COP26.

The Firefighters on the Frontline of the Climate Emergency event heard from fire service personnel who work in control rooms and those called out to increased incidents of flooding and wildfires.

All spoke movingly and with passion about the huge changes they are seeing as a result of

the changing climate. Their eloquent testimonies accompanied by short, hard-hitting films showed graphically the impact of wetter weather, warmer summers and how the increasing demand placed upon staff coincides with year-on-year cuts.

Job losses, control room closures, cuts to crewing levels and the inability to recruit retained officers are piling intolerable pressure on FBU members.

The FBU message to political leaders was clear:

- Governments across the world must act decisively and now
- Workers must be at the centre of developing solutions
- Public services like the fire service must be properly resourced
- To deliver climate justice, you must also deliver social justice.



'THERE'S A REAL SENSE OF LOSS'

Funded through the Firefighters 100 Lottery, the latest red plaque to honour a fallen firefighter was unveiled at the site of the 1987 King's Cross fire

It is now 34 years since the King's Cross Underground fire. 31 people lost their lives and more than 100 were injured when a relatively innocuous fire at the bottom of a wooden escalator exploded into a fireball, killing or seriously injuring most of those in the ticket hall at the top of the escalator.

It is one of the worst fires in recent British history, and it has been described as the Grenfell of its time.

Station officer Colin Townsley was one of the first firefighters on the scene. Witnesses later reported a firefighter, believed to be Colin, telling passengers to get out just before the fireball erupted. Tragically, he lost his life. He was found next to the body of a badly burned woman he was trying to save.

VERY PROFESSIONAL

Andy Dark, the FBU's assistant general secretary, knew Colin when he started his career as a firefighter in London in the eighties, with Colin being Andy's first boss.

Andy says that he was known across the service as "a very professional officer who really was committed to high



MARK THOMAS

The red plaque was unveiled with a ceremony on the 34th anniversary of the fire



© LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Firefighters at the fire in King's Cross Underground station



The funeral of Colin Townsley

standards of performance and very much committed to public service”.

At King's Cross station, on Thursday 18 November 2021 – the 34th anniversary of the fire, to the day – the FBU unveiled a red plaque for Colin.

Red plaques commemorate fallen firefighters, recognising their bravery and sacrifice, and are placed as close to the scene of the incident as possible.

IMPORTANT ROLE

The red plaque scheme was started in 2018, the year of the union's centenary.

The plaques play an important role not only in memorialising fallen firefighters, but in raising awareness in the local community about what happened at a particular site.

With redevelopment a constant presence in many cities, towns and villages, there is a danger that as buildings are lost the history attached to them is forgotten about too. A red plaque addresses this by strengthening the link between a place and its history.

The plaques also play a role in raising public awareness around the fire and rescue service more generally.

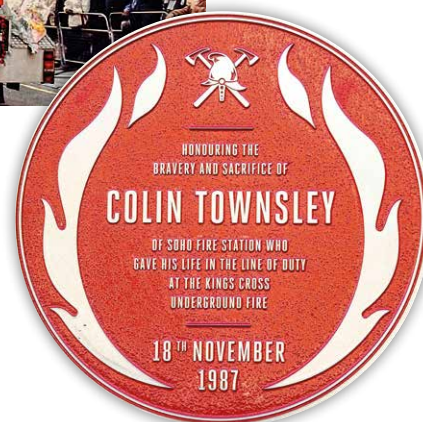
Andy Dark says that: “The purpose

of the red plaque scheme is to serve as a reminder to ourselves that the union does recognise our members who have fallen.

“But I also think the plaques have an importance in reminding the public of the dangers of fire and also the sacrifice that firefighters – too often – have to make or find themselves making, in order to serve the public.”

The King's Cross Underground fire had a considerable impact on various areas of practice and procedure, with wooden escalators banned and other transport safety measures enforced.

'IT HAS REAL POIGNANCY FOR ALL FIREFIGHTERS WHEN A FIREFIGHTER DIES, BUT PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE WHO WORKED WITH HIM'



Firefighter protective equipment also came in for attention, with some used at the time of the fire prone to melting – such as gloves that would melt onto bare skin.

FBU national officer Tam McFarlane said: “The King's Cross fire had incredible impact. The inquiry came out with huge amounts of recommendations which fundamentally changed London Underground, made it safer, and also changed firefighting.”

Reflecting on the incident and the loss of Colin, Andy Dark said: “It has real poignancy for all firefighters when a firefighter dies, but particularly for those who worked with him ... for those who worked with Colin, who knew Colin and particularly those who attended the incident, there's a real sense of loss”.

FIRE SERVICE PREPAREDNESS FOR GRENFELL UNDER SCRUTINY

The Grenfell inquiry has been focusing once again on the fire service, but it is now turning to the role of central government in the disaster. National officer **Mark Rowe** reports

Since September 2021, when the Grenfell Tower inquiry began examining evidence relating to the London Fire Brigade's (LFB) high rise firefighting policies and procedures, there has been a renewed focus on the preparedness of the fire service for cladding fires.

Module 5, that ran from 20 September to 21 October 2021, covered LFB policies and procedures relating to:

- evacuation and stay put;
- section 7(2)(d) visits;
- training;
- communications;
- FRS/LFB policy development and their interaction with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG);
- equipment.

ACUTE CHALLENGES

FBU submissions to the inquiry for module 5 argued that the inquiry should look to the underlying systemic causes of the disaster, avoid condemning individuals in the LFB, and recognise that the LFB was trying its best to provide a public service to keep the public safe from fire, in face of acute challenges imposed by government.

These challenges included:

- deregulation, which limited the extent to which new building materials and methods could be understood,

Daniel Betts as firefighter David Badillo in *Grenfell*, *Value Engineering*, *Scenes From The Grenfell Inquiry*



regulated and taken into account for firefighting purposes;

- austerity cuts, which reduced staff numbers in key public sector departments including building control, fire safety departments, operational crews and control;
- attempts at privatisation, draining already limited resources and: the fragmentation of the FRS, and insufficient national leadership, guidance and scrutiny from ministers, the DCLG and chief fire officers, in CFA (which became the NFCC).

EMINENT FIRE ENGINEER

A number of experts provided evidence for Module 5, including Professor José Torero, an eminent fire engineer who has submitted several reports to the inquiry.

Professor Torero was asked about a speech he made just over a year after the fire, in which he said:

“What ended up happening in Grenfell was that the engineers delivered the building, those engineers did not exercise competency adequately.

“Their competence was not consistent with the complexity of what they were doing and they delivered a building on fire to the fire service that the fire service could not manage.

“It was not the fire service failure to address the problem of the building; it is our failure to actually deliver the building

THE FBU CONSIDERS EVIDENCE RELATING TO THE GOVERNMENT – PARTICULARLY ITS ROLE IN DEREGULATING THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AND THE FIRE SECTOR – TO BE FUNDAMENTAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF THE FIRE

that the firefighters could actually work on ...

“So the expectation that the fire service should have understood building performance, the expectation that the fire service should have been able to manage the fire is a really unfair expectation ...

TESTIMONIES

“Nevertheless today we’re sitting in front of the television watching the testimonies of the firefighters at Grenfell and we are blaming them for what they were not able to handle.

“We expected them to come and fix the problem for us. We created the mess and they couldn’t fix the problem and

now we want to blame them.”

At the beginning of November, the inquiry began hearing evidence for Module 6 – testing and certification and government.

The FBU considers the evidence relating to the government – particularly its role in deregulating the building industry and the fire sector – to be fundamental to understanding the causes of the fire.

The union will continue to play very close attention to the evidence through its submissions and questions to the witnesses. The FBU will have the opportunity to submit closing arguments on Modules 5 and 6 early next year.

FLAT, BUT CHILLING

Investigative journalist Richard Norton-Taylor’s play – *Grenfell, Value Engineering, Scenes From The Grenfell Inquiry* – consists of edited extracts of the evidence.

It sounds dull – but it was the most gripping piece of theatre you could ever see, because Norton-Taylor edited the proceedings in such a way that a clear narrative emerged.

He boiled down months of hearings into two hours. The language was flat, technical, legalistic, but this threw into sharp relief the appalling truth that the building was covered with a cheap cladding, known to be potentially lethal, in order to save money.

“The notion that Grenfell Tower was not compliant [with the building regulations] without anyone being at fault

is unlikely,” says Richard Millett QC, Counsel to the Grenfell Tower inquiry.

“It’s right, isn’t it,” says Millett to a witness, “that either you or someone else specified that a particular product was to be used, namely Celotex FR5000.

“Now, Celotex FR5000 was a PIR insulation product, wasn’t it?”

And – all the more chilling because it is expressed with legalistic flatness – “PIR was a combustible insulation product.”

Another barrister, Stephanie Barwise QC, details the building’s history in a long, detailed and riveting speech.

She talks of “the epidemic level of incompetence from a fire safety perspective”.

The production, like the



Thomas Wheatley, Ron Cook and Sarah Coates in *Grenfell, Value Engineering, Scenes From The Grenfell Inquiry*

writing, made no attempt to jazz up the material. Director Nicholas Kent kept his actors static – the judge in the centre, the barristers standing at their desk, the witnesses in the witness box.

Norton-Taylor has made

this theatrical format his own, having turned into drama the inquiries into the Iraq War and the murder of Stephen Lawrence, among others.

But this is his most compelling yet.

Francis Beckett

©TRISTRAM KENTON

ALWAYS A TEAM PLAYER

Roddy McAllister, a Glasgow legend with an unmistakable voice, talks to Helen Hague about 45 years in control and the FBU

When Roddy McAllister started working in fire, 45 years ago, Glasgow still had the unenviable reputation as the “Tinderbox City” of Europe; in the 60s, fires were frequent and some shockingly devastating – with death tolls not seen outside wartime bombings.

In late autumn, days after Roddy retired, Glasgow was in the spotlight as world leaders gathered to save the planet from the ravages of global heating. This was the momentous task COP26 was under pressure to deliver. Though some progress was made, commentators agree there is still a very long way to go – and further delays could well mean too little too late.

AMONG THE LONGEST SERVING

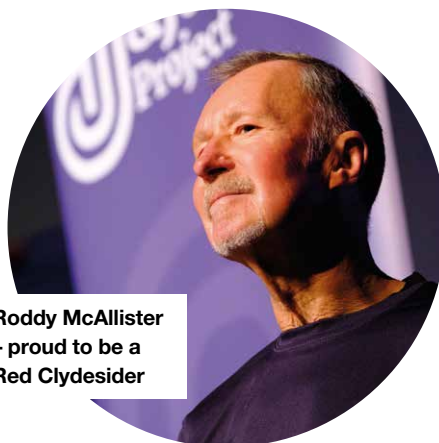
Roddy, keen to see all generations escape climate catastrophe, has firm views on this, agreeing with campaigner Greta Thunberg’s no-nonsense take on Cop26: “She was right. Too much blah blah blah and not enough action.”

He must be among the longest serving firefighters in the UK and has lived through the changes global heating is bringing to the job – more wildfires, more rainfall and more floods.

At an FBU public meeting during COP26, Roddy spoke from his decades of experience in control on how climate change is reshaping the job.

“There have always been grass fires, but they are becoming much more intense,” he says.

And on his last two night shifts in late October, just before COP26, control was



Roddy McAllister
– proud to be a
Red Clydesider

“inundated with flooding calls”.

But it is not only global heating that is changing the firefighter’s role. Roddy reckons the pandemic has seen firefighters becoming “social workers too” – with an increase in the number of mentally distressed people phoning 999 during lockdown – some on the cusp of self-harm.

‘TINDERBOX CITY’

Roddy has heart-breaking first-hand experience of the devastating effect Glasgow’s past as “Tinderbox City” had on families.

In 1960, when he was just five, a warehouse crammed with a million gallons of whisky and 30,000 gallons of rum caught fire in Cheapside.

As fire crews from across the city battled the alcohol-fuelled blaze, the building exploded, killing 14 firefighters and five salvage workers.

One of them was 27-year-old firefighter Christopher Boyle, married to Roddy’s sister. The couple had four children

under five – the youngest born just 19 days before the fire.

Roddy gives a moving account of this historic family connection to the infamous blaze in the union’s centenary film *The Firefighter’s Story*. He took the surviving nieces and nephews he grew up alongside to the Glasgow premiere screening.

Roddy was active in two national strikes spending nine weeks “freezing on the picket line” in the winter of 1977, shortly after he joined – sustained by camaraderie and “Yeoman Instant Mash Potato”.

Some 25 years later he was out freezing on the picket line again in the national pay strike, his ardour for the cause of a better deal for firefighters undampened.

Gorbals-born Roddy is proud to be a “Red Clydesider”, with a longstanding loathing of Margaret Thatcher for the “damage” she inflicted.

He is “disgusted and appalled” by station closures and job cuts under Tory rule in the UK over the years and the devastating effects of “light-touch regulation”, he sees as paving the way for the horror of the Grenfell fire and the loss of 72 lives.

FIREMASTER’S COMMENDATION

Roddy has always been a team player at work – it’s just the way he is.

Take what happened back in 2000. He was set to receive a Firemaster’s Commendation award for a fire survival call. He had kept a young woman, trapped in a burning building with her baby, reassured and as calm as he could for half an hour as fire crews fought the

flames before the rescue.

But Roddy refused to accept the award in person unless the watch control team joined the ceremony. The Firemaster duly came down to the control centre, 17 miles from the city, to make the award in person, with the watch in attendance. "It's not just about the individual, it's about the team," says Roddy.

His insistence that the team should be part of the awards ceremony was mentioned by senior Scottish Fire and Rescue staff when he retired. It has always underpinned his approach to the job and his colleagues in control.

It was a memorable "leaving do" too, held at the Rhoderick Dhu pub in Glasgow. The walls were covered in Roddy's quotes – disproving in an instant one he often uttered: "You never listen to a word I say".

He is known as "The Voice" at control – for his "distinctive delivery".

Former colleagues from the '77 strike, fathers and sons he has worked alongside and mentored, were among the many who turned out to celebrate his distinguished career on the telephone front line.

Roddy was "very touched" by "An Ode to Control" – emailed by group commander Murdo Henderson to everyone at the control centre, singling out soon-to-retire Roddy as "this legend" with an "unmistakable voice".

He had heard Roddy, "Calm. Steadfast. Consistent. Professional", guiding a trainee new to control. But, crucially, the group commander added, "control is the gel that binds us" – praising the team not just the "legend" who "taught us well".

An inclusive, team approach, acknowledging the key role control watches play in fighting fires. Given his track record on sharing praise and recognition, no wonder Roddy was so touched.

**RODDY REFUSED TO
ACCEPT THE AWARD IN
PERSON UNLESS THE
WATCH CONTROL TEAM
JOINED THE CEREMONY**

George Square,
Glasgow, 2002
pay campaign



Cheapside Street
fire, Glasgow
28 March 1960



Pay Campaign 2002,
Johnstone Control



Johnstone Control
September 2021,
(l-r) GC Martin Hill,
Roddy and GC
Murdo Henderson

HATE CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

WHY I SAY WE MUST OUTLAW MISOGYNY

Newcastle firefighter **Rosa Crowley-Bennett**, North East member of the FBU national women's committee, says the law must change to protect women

Many of us have been shaken by the high profile incidents involving male violence against women throughout 2021.

We remember the victims: Sarah Everard, Sabina Nessa, Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, to name only a few. There are countless more. On average in the UK, a man kills a woman once in every three days.

It is harrowing to imagine what these women went through in their final moments. How awful it must be for their loved ones to keep imagining what happened to their daughter, sister, partner or friend.

Many have also been shocked at the involvement and aspects of the response of police in these tragic incidents – from a serving police officer pleading guilty to the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah, to officers taking selfies next to the deceased Nicole and Bibaa after they had been stabbed to death in a park by a stranger.

A culture of misogyny in police forces is now rightly being interrogated.

Some claim that there are a few “bad apples”, but we exist in a society which contains misogyny, so it is not surprising that these cultures would also be present in large, traditionally male-dominated organisations.

Reading of these and



Flowers and messages on the bandstand at Clapham Common. Sarah Everard was found murdered 10 days after she disappeared on 3 March 2021 while walking home through Clapham on her way to Brixton

other stories of male violence against women in the media, such as the recent spate of spikings of women in clubs, can leave us feeling scared, angry or deflated.

But they also bring misogyny to the forefront of our minds, and how it exists on a spectrum ranging from sexist jokes and discrimination, to physical and sexual violence.

Unfortunately, the fire service is not exempt from this. I have heard jokes about domestic violence and rape from colleagues, although

they are infrequent and made by a minority, they still go on, often unchallenged.

Female FBU members are also targeted by the public, from online abuse, to harassment at incidents, not to mention the constant threats to women's safety outside of work (spikings, stalking, domestic violence etc.)

All of these things come under the umbrella of misogyny and violence against women.

We should be vocal in our support for making

misogyny a hate crime.

This would mean that sexist attacks would be treated with the same gravity as racist, ableist, homophobic or other hate crimes which attack a person because of their characteristics.

Alongside this, in our day to day lives, we need an awareness of the pervasive and deadly nature of misogyny.

We are members of a union made up of strong women, side by side with fathers, partners, friends and brothers of strong women.

We all have a responsibility to protect our sisters and call out misogyny at all levels when we see it.

Next time you see or hear something that could hurt a woman you know and love, do something about it. Call it out. It isn't harmless.

The FBU must stand against misogyny at every opportunity to make a safer world for everyone.

NEXT TIME YOU SEE OR HEAR SOMETHING THAT COULD HURT A WOMAN YOU KNOW AND LOVE, DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. CALL IT OUT. IT ISN'T HARMLESS

UNION MEMBERSHIP SUPREME COURT RULING SHOWS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT

Richard Arthur, head of the trade union law group at Thompsons Solicitors, on a recent landmark case for working people at the Supreme Court

The case of *Kostal v Dunkley* and others has far reaching implications for every unionised workplace in the United Kingdom.

A groundbreaking Supreme Court ruling on the case, delivered on 27 October, breaks new ground in extending and protecting trade union collective bargaining rights.

In the 2015/16 pay round *Kostal UK Limited*, an automotive components manufacturer, made an offer to *Unite*, which included pay and a Christmas bonus.

This was rejected by *Unite* members in a ballot. The company then attempted to bypass the union bargaining procedure by making the offer direct to employees, giving a deadline for acceptance if the Christmas bonus was to be paid.

The great majority of employees accepted. Similar further offers were then made to those who had not accepted.

A collective agreement was reached with *Unite* later in 2016.

UNLAWFUL INDUCEMENTS

The 57 *Unite* members brought Employment Tribunal claims that “unlawful inducements” had been made for them to give up collective bargaining rights.

Section 145B Trade Union and Labour Relations

(Consolidation) Act 1992 provides union members with the right not to have offers made to them if acceptance would have a “prohibited result”.

The “prohibited result” is that one or more of their terms and conditions will not, or will no longer, be determined by collective bargaining.

Such offers are only unlawful if the employer’s purpose in making them is to achieve the “prohibited result”.

If an Employment Tribunal upholds a claim under this section of the Act, it must award a prescribed amount of compensation (currently £4,341) to each claimant, for each offer made to them.

The Employment Tribunal upheld the claims. It found that making the offers had “destroyed” the union’s mandate and bypassed agreed collective bargaining procedures.

The tribunal awarded total compensation in excess of £420,000, representing the prescribed award (then £3,800) for each offer of the two offers made to employees.

The Employment Appeal Tribunal upheld this decision but it was overturned by the Court of Appeal which ruled that the “prohibited result” only arose where the terms were taken permanently outside the scope of collective bargaining.

However, five Justices of the Supreme Court unanimously upheld *Unite*’s appeal. They ruled that an employer must not make offers which, if accepted, would cause bargaining arrangements to be bypassed.

This would be the case where, if the offers had not been made, there was a “real possibility” that the term(s) would be determined by collective bargaining.

The Court therefore ruled that employers must complete and exhaust union bargaining procedures before they make offers directly to the workforce.

An employer cannot be allowed to ignore agreed union bargaining procedures, either by refusing to follow the procedure, or by being free to “drop in and out of the collective process as and when it suits their purpose”.

GOOD FAITH

Where an employer genuinely believes that the collective bargaining process has been completed and exhausted, then its purpose will not be to achieve the “prohibited result”. However, it is implicit in the ruling that the collective bargaining must be conducted in good faith.

This is the first time the UK’s highest court has had to consider trade union collective bargaining rights, and its ruling breaks new ground for the extension and protection of trade union collective bargaining rights.

Trade union membership continues to rise as we emerge from the pandemic, and the Supreme Court’s ruling shows exactly why membership of a trade union is so important.

■ For more information on legal support, visit Thompsons Solicitors’ FBU hub at thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/fbu



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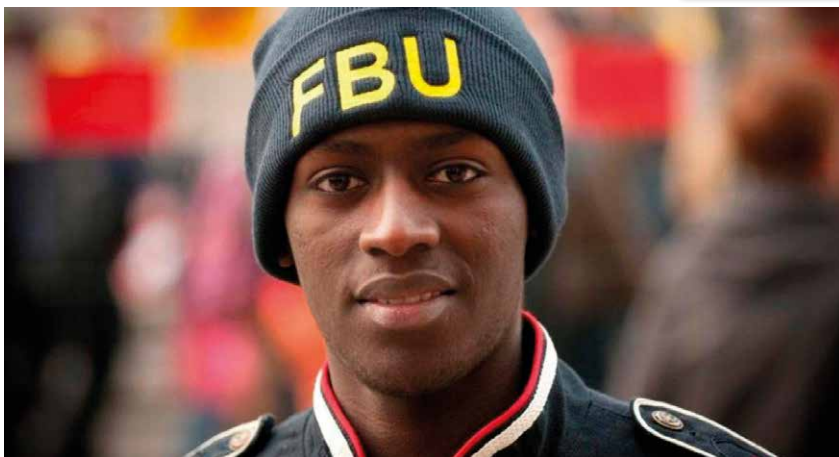
FBU SHOP MERCHANDISE

All proceeds go towards supporting firefighters and fire service good causes

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Featuring winning images from this year's FBU photo competition

**Buy it here: <https://bit.ly/3oJaS6T>
£11.99 inc P&P**



THE ORIGINAL FBU BEANIE IS BACK

Due to popular demand the original FBU beanie has been reinstated – just in time to keep you warm this winter! Navy with gold lettering

**Buy it here: <https://bit.ly/3CtdxWY>
£8.50 inc P&P**

shop.fbu.org.uk/

FIREFIGHTER 'THIN RED LINE' SPECIAL EDITION WATCHES

Elliot Brown watches are some of the toughest on the planet, worn by blue light services, the military, the RNLI and mountain rescue.

This 'special edition' Thin Red Line firefighters' watch, is built to Elliot Brown's unique high specification including a movement shock protection system, individual pressure testing of every watch at 200 metres in water, a solid marine-grade 316L stainless steel case and superluminova



markings which ensure high visibility in low light conditions.

Every watch is made to order with personalised engraving on the case back.

From every purchase of this special edition Thin Red Line watch Elliot Brown will donate £35 to the Rock2Recovery mental wellbeing charity which supports firefighters, other blue light services and the military.

Deadline for orders: Midnight 20 February 2022.

Please note that it takes six months to make a batch, including rigorous testing of every watch, so delivery is expected late August 2022.

The Canford: 44mm with four strap variants from £395

The Kimmeridge: 38mm with two strap variants from £365

■ For more information and to pre-order please go to: bit.ly/EBFIRE



Claire received the award from CFO Wayne Bowcock

RESPONDER OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR CONTROL MANAGER

Claire Moyes recently won the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service emergency responder of the year award for her role in saving the lives of two boys in a fire in Reading.

Claire, who works as a crew manager in Thames Valley Fire Control Service, answered a 999 call from the older of two brothers who were trapped upstairs in their house.

Station manager Steve Trenery

who praised her for her dedication and professionalism. While on route to the incident, he was given vital information, gained by Claire, on the boys' exact location in the property.

This enabled him to brief and deploy his crew appropriately.

Claire also re-assured the boys and gave them essential advice on how to keep themselves safe until the fire engine arrived.

STATION CAT IMAGE AND REALITY

Highly
desirable:
a red Land
Rover
See Red is
the colour



AND THE POINT IS?

While your Cat applauds the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service as it pushes on with its conversion to electric vehicles, she cannot help but think about a debacle with similar vehicles at the recent COP26 climate conference.

A fleet of around 240 electric Jaguar Land Rovers was provided to transport world leaders and delegates between hotels and the venue for the conference, the Scottish Exhibition Centre in Glasgow.

However, a lack of charging points meant the cars were reliant for their power on generators fuelled by recycled chip fat.

Your Cat doesn't want to appear to short circuit SFRS carbon neutral plans but, the last time she looked, Glasgow was one of the more metropolitan areas north of the border.

SFRS aims to convert 50 per cent of its 755-strong fleet of cars and vans to EVs by 2025.

RED IS THE COLOUR

So ... in the same week that saw former Tory minister Owen Patterson avoid censure for misusing his position and lobbying on behalf of companies he worked for, Stewart Edgar the former CFO of Gloucestershire was cleared of abusing his position to fraudulently purchase one of his own brigade's vehicles.

Birmingham Crown Court heard that the



GUY BELL/ALAMY

former CFO had written, in a text to a colleague, that using the company (he had set up to purchase the vehicle) would be "cleaner" and stop any "silly FOI stuff".

Mr Edgar who now lives in Scotland is on record as telling a colleague he had always wanted a red Land Rover.

Your Cat knows where there might be one or two surplus (cleaner) Land Rovers knocking around, Mr Edgar might just need a long extension cable – see above.

ROTTING FROM THE TOP

Your Cat is saddened by the increasing reports up and down the UK of attacks on firefighters.

It seems all the government can do to try and prevent these mindless assaults is to suggest an increase in prison sentences for those responsible. What happened to prevention rather than cure?

Let's look at the root causes.

Cuts by this government have led to the disappearance of community engagement projects that are proven to reduce this type of anti-social behaviour.

Would your Cat be wrong to go further and suggest the behaviour of our prime minister and his minions isn't helping?

Let's face it, the images of Oxbridge-educated former public school boys wallowing in sleaze, breaking lockdown rules, accused of bullying, engaged in unlawful acts, being politically corrupt, charged with trashing the UK's democracy, and getting away with it, isn't really a shining example of morality for the youth of today to emulate, is it?

EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

North Yorkshire's fire and rescue service is, apparently, facing a bleak future.

Michael Porter, chief financial officer for the

county's police, fire and crime commission, has said the service would draw on £638,000 of its reserves to balance the books until April, adding: "Next year is looking like it is going to be really challenging".

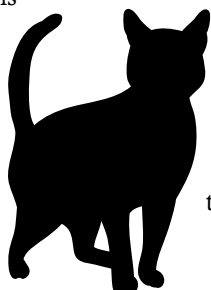
This is the same cash strapped brigade which, in 2017, awarded two senior managers a £35k pay rise.

Then, in 2019, the PCC created "Enable North Yorkshire" with the mission of providing "high quality, efficient business support services for both NYFRS and North Yorkshire Police".

The role of Enable North Yorkshire's managing director is to help control cost-cutting plans and to combine back-office workers in departments across both services including, ironically, finance.

The £105,000 to £115,000 salaried role was described as "pivotal" in the plan.

Now your Cat, being a feline, isn't particularly good at maths, but thinks there should be £185k of savings right there.



25-YEAR BADGES



Darren Donn (l), green watch, Plaistow, London, receives his 25-year badge from Newham borough rep Simon Kenton



Matt Harrison (r), Eastbourne, East Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Rob Meakins



Phil Bendall (l), Ashford, Kent, receives his 25-year badge from colleague Martin Morris



Paul Coles (centre), Middlesbrough, Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe with colleagues looking on



Neil Roberts (r), Grangetown, Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe with red watch colleagues looking on



Martin Allen (r), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe



Kevin Jones (r), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe



Phil Pierpoint (c), day crewed watch, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from station rep Lee Smith (l) and retired brigade secretary Mick Cambers



Grant Tolley (l), red watch, Hicks Gate, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Amanda Mills with colleagues looking on



John Convey (r), red watch, Crawley, West Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Pawel Kosla, with (l-r) Shane Mott, Matt Murphy, Mike Boyd, Gaz Peel, Simon Wenham and Terry Tucknott



Paul Cummins (l), Richmond, London, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Dave Shek (r) and SW London secretary Dave Young with colleagues looking on



Martin Conway (l), Richmond, London, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Dave Shek and SW London area secretary Dave Young with colleagues looking on



Brian Cook (r), Billingham, West Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Pawel Kosla, with colleagues looking on



Paul Reed (c), FBU South East area secretary, receives his 25-year badge at Norbury, London from London EC member David Shek (r) and regional secretary Jon Lambe



Julian Best (r), Chertsey, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Karl Jones, with colleagues looking on



Stuart Bratley (r), green watch, Grangetown, Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe with colleagues looking on



Tony Trodden (r), red watch, Grangetown, Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe with colleagues looking on



Steve Phoenix (r), red watch, Grangetown, Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe with colleagues looking on



Tony Hartwell (c), formerly of Chertsey, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge (pre-Covid) from brigade organiser Karl Jones with colleagues looking on



Daz Higgins (l), central blue, South Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Alex Wilson with watch colleagues looking on

Please send high resolution digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk

or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE

For your image to look its best, we need the original, full-resolution image. One lifted from a website may not do justice to a unique occasion. We do our best with images that are low resolution, taken directly into a bright light or suffer from camera-shake, or have other problems, but cannot perform miracles. Please include details for each image – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where/when it was taken.

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Change of address or next of kin
Advise your brigade organiser of any
change of address and head office of
changes to next of kin or nominations
for benefits.

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For disciplinary and employment-
related queries contact your local FBU
representative.

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FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

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SPECIAL FESTIVE PRIZE DRAW ON 18 DECEMBER



**YOU COULD WIN AN
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FIREFIGHTERS WATCH
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The Firefighters 100 Lottery was set up to help commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of firefighters killed and injured in the line of duty and to establish a fund for the future benefit of firefighters, their bereaved families and the firefighting profession.

The lottery has raised more than
£694,000 since its launch in 2016.

A ticket for the lottery costs just £1 per week with
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