

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org

March 2015

**FIREFIGHTER
FATALITIES
REPORT
EXPOSES NEED
FOR ACTION**
See p14

**RECALL CONFERENCE
SPECIAL REPORT**

WE STAND UNITED

**Conference votes
to continue fight for
pensions justice**

See p10





Matt Wrack

We cannot allow this lie to prevail

As *Firefighter* went to press the union had announced a further 24-hour strike over the government's attacks on our pensions. It will take place on 25 February.

This comes after the parliamentary debate on the scheme in which Westminster fire minister Penny Mordaunt gave a clear "guarantee" that any firefighter who failed a fitness test through no fault of their own would receive a "full, unreduced pension" or a redeployed role.

We have proved this to be a sham. The FBU wrote to all fire authorities asking if they would implement the parliamentary guarantee. All the responses received said they would not. This was confirmed by the fire service employers nationally after they had taken legal advice on the issue.

Even more alarming, the minister was informed of this by London Fire Brigade before the debate.

The minister misled Parliament and attempted to mislead firefighters. The so-called "guarantee" was used to quell opposition to the plans and get the legislation through Parliament. It is important to remember that **all** the changes to our pensions were forced through on the back of this false claim.

Throughout this pension dispute firefighters have made an evidence-based case, have acted with integrity and made their arguments with respect.



Matt Wrack addresses the Manchester conference

The Westminster government has responded with lies. We cannot allow this.

At our recent recall conference, which was called for the union to have an open and honest debate about the future of the campaign, there was a wide range of opinion on where we should go next.

However, the overriding sense of conference was that we cannot back down and stand idly by after having been lied to so blatantly by a minister in order to succeed in a vote in the House of Commons.

We will continue to challenge this government over

pension changes that take no proper account of the real work firefighters do. We continue to fight for justice on this issue.

Watterson report

A significant new and independent report from the University of Stirling has found that structural failures in the fire and rescue service are threatening firefighters' health and safety.

One firefighter death is one too many. This latest report builds on our earlier research and campaigning around firefighter deaths at work.

This is a hugely important

matter. We owe our work on this to our brothers and sisters who have died in the line of duty, to their families and to all those involved in such terrible incidents, as well as to all firefighters who continue to face these hazards on a daily basis.

As the report shows, there is no reason why its conclusions cannot be implemented. I hope this report will be listened to by fire service employers and acted upon. Our task is to ensure they cannot avoid doing so.

Spot the difference

A very interesting read in the magazine this month is a submission by a member about the difference in attitude between chief fire officers during the 1970s industrial dispute and those who are in those positions today.

We could count on one hand the number of CFOs who have supported firefighters and not backed the government's position during our current dispute.

Conservatives – natural cheerleaders for privatisation

As we head nearer an election, I would like to urge you all to make sure you are registered to vote. You have until 23 April and can do it online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

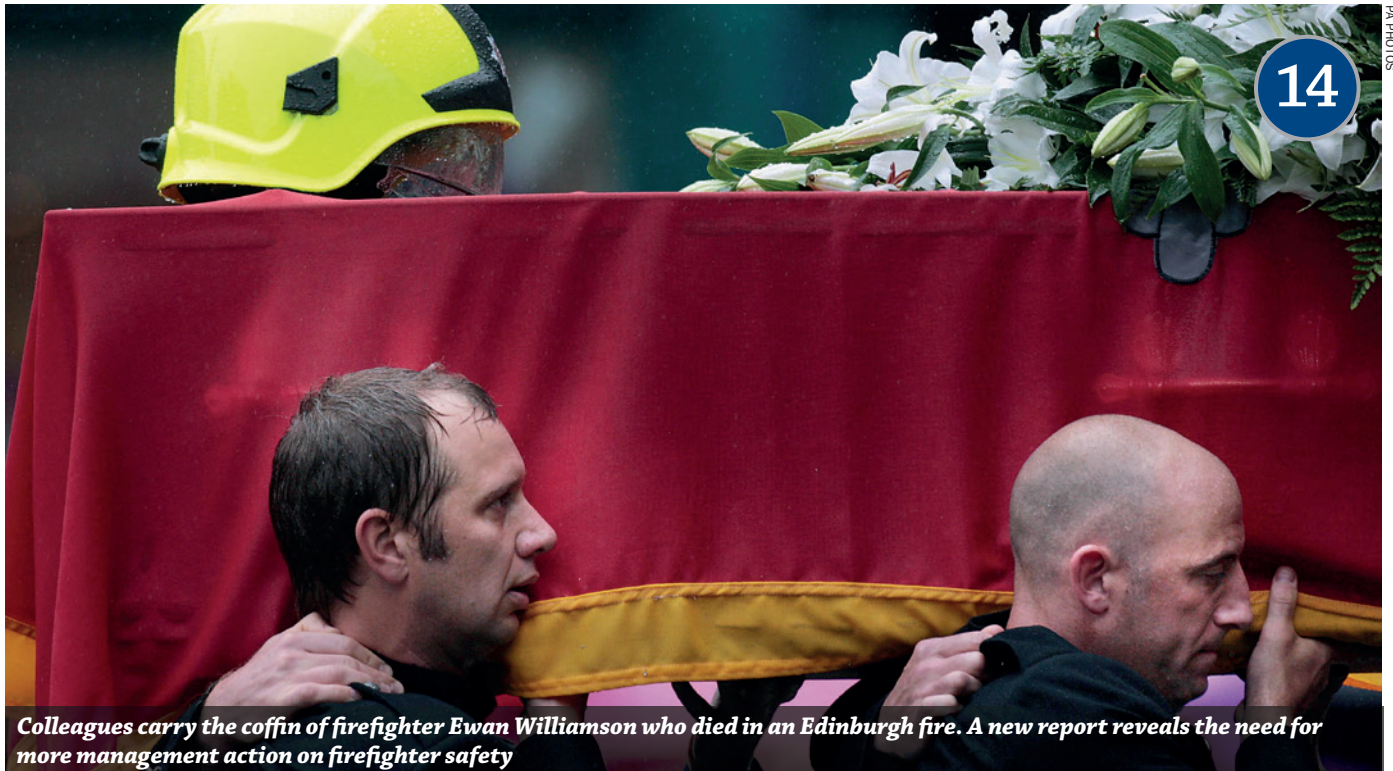
As our feature on the privatisation agenda in Surrey shows, this government is intent on trying to sell off every public service it can. There is no doubt that the fire and rescue service is in its sights.

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Essex control staff are fighting attacks on their jobs and conditions as they deal with a failing mobilising system

ROB FOSSETT



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Fire minister Penny Mordaunt addresses the House of Commons

FBU: Minister misled MPs to win Commons vote

Firefighters' pensions

Firefighters have accused the Westminster fire minister of misleading Parliament ahead of a vote on the 2015 firefighters' pension scheme.

In a House of Commons debate on 15 December 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) fire minister Penny Mordaunt gave a guarantee that was welcomed by all sides of the House, saying: "If someone fails a fitness test through no fault of their own and they do not qualify for ill-health retirement, they will get a redeployed role or an unreduced pension.

"That will be put on a statutory footing in the national framework – a full, unreduced pension, if not an alternative role."

Conservative MP Peter Bone, having taken part in the debate, concluded: "Having heard the words of the minister, I think the whole House can now support the statutory instrument."

That guarantee influenced the debate

and the vote. Some MPs who were previously asking for the legislation to be annulled actually voted for it to be passed.

However, after the FBU wrote to all fire authorities, it became clear that fire service employers had no intention of delivering the guarantee. And, in a highly disturbing development, London Fire Brigade said it would not honour the guarantee as a result of legal advice that the authority had previously notified to DCLG.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "Firefighters have been utterly cheated. Their pensions are being stolen on the basis of false information given to the

'Firefighters have been utterly cheated. Their pensions are being stolen on the basis of false information given to the House of Commons'

House of Commons.

"However, even now Penny Mordaunt could announce that she will change the law to deliver her promises, her guarantees. She has the power to do this. The Scottish government has already done it. In the FBU view, she is morally obliged to stick to her guarantee.

"Unless she does, this the long-running dispute will be fuelled with more bitterness than before thanks to the government's phoney guarantee. And the public will recognise that the government case in this dispute is built on falsehoods.

"The FBU urges MPs to urgently consider what steps they should take in light of the fact that a government minister appears to have deliberately misled the House of Commons on a matter that is vital to public safety and security."

The day after the debate secretary of state Eric Pickles reiterated the same guarantee to a House of Commons DCLG committee hearing. He also informed the committee that he thought firefighters had made a very reasonable point.

*Pat Carberry:
Those charged
with preventing
discrimination are
leading attacks on
those they should
be protecting*



Wales government makes improved pension offer

Pensions

The Welsh government has confirmed that it will offer an improved pension proposal for its firefighters in response to concerns raised by the FBU.

This improvement means that firefighters retiring at 55 would see a reduction of around 9% of their pension instead of the 22% that English firefighters will experience under unworkable proposals that are set to be imposed by the Westminster government.

The FBU is still raising other concerns with the Welsh government in relation to its proposals, but the union acknowledges this is a significant development.

This improvement is in contrast to the Westminster government that now refuses to meet the FBU – despite a number of written requests – to negotiate a solution to the firefighters' pension dispute.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said the Welsh offer was “a significant improvement in the proposals and will be welcomed by firefighters in Wales.

“This improved offer shows what is possible when both sides sit down and discuss options.

“It should send a clear message to the Department for Communities and Local Government and to fire minister Penny Mordaunt that firefighters in England are getting a much worse deal under Westminster proposals that are unacceptable, unfair and unworkable.”

Welsh public service minister Leighton Andrews said that, given the strict fitness standards firefighters had to have, there was much sense in treating firefighters as a “special case” when it came to retirement age. The minister added that penalising firefighters for the unavoidable effects of ageing would be unfair.

Fire authority votes to reduce cuts to frontline services

Staffordshire

A local fire authority has voted to reduce dangerous cuts in frontline fire services by increasing funding.

Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority chair Councillor Len Bloomer said the increase was “a small price to pay for the excellent service the organisation provides”.

Rich Williams, secretary of the FBU in Staffordshire, said: “I’m very pleased about the decision.

“We won’t have to cut as many jobs as the chief fire officer alluded to. The FBU have been working with the authority on this issue.



“We are not blind to the fact these cuts are going to be made but we’re happy the right decision was made to prioritise frontline services to continue keeping the public safe.”

The fire authority voted 11 to 9 in favour of a rise in council tax offsetting

the need for financial cuts of more than £1.3m over three years. Firefighters (above) lobbied fire authority members ahead of the vote urging them to “forget party politics and do what is right for the safety of people who live in the region”.

SOUNDING OFF

Equality, fairness and pensions

Pat Carberry, FBU LGBT committee secretary, looks at the implications for equality of proposed change to firefighters' pensions

The previous Labour government introduced the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that discrimination is not acceptable on the grounds of a “protected characteristic” such as age, sex or disability or sexual orientation.

But since the current government took power the fire and rescue service has seen moves that would undermine equality and fairness at work.

For instance, proposed changes to pension schemes controlled by the government, like those for firefighters, highlight the issue of age.

Fitness levels

As you get older your fitness levels naturally deteriorate, so the proposals around a higher normal retirement age and firefighter fitness impact you more.

If you are a woman, we know from the Williams report on normal pension age at retirement for the FBU that you would be treated less favourably in respect of your pension because of a greater drop in levels of fitness over the age of 50.

Chronic illness affects your ability to carry out everyday activities. The older you are the more likely you are to have developed a chronic illness – so, again, the impact of proposed pension changes will be greater on you.

Women, black or Asian members of the fire service are more likely to be locked out of the offer of protection for a firefighters' pension if they are within ten years of the age of 55, because the targeted recruitment of such firefighters has only taken place in the past 15 years.

Those charged with the responsibility for ensuring this type of discrimination does not take place are leading the very attacks on those they are supposed to be protecting.

FBU and campaigners save three fire stations

Tyne and Wear

Firefighters and campaigners have welcomed news that three fire stations in Tyne and Wear have been saved from closure, but are continuing to warn of the continued threat of dangerous job losses.

Sunderland Central, Gosforth and Wallsend fire stations were saved after a 34,000-signature petition was handed into the local fire authority.

Russ King, secretary of the FBU in Tyne and Wear, said: "The fire authority made the right decision to save these three fire stations. The overwhelming majority of the public did not want to see these vital assets to the community lost, putting lives at risk and endangering the public."

"It is great to have the support of the Northern TUC and Sunderland trades council

as well as that of the local Sunderland MP Julie Elliot. This shows you the effect that co-ordinated community led campaigns can have on fire authority decisions. However the fire authority is still pressing ahead with dangerous job cuts. We will continue to fight the cuts and challenge the austerity agenda."

The campaign also had the backing of the *Sunderland Echo* newspaper, which collected 14,000 of the signatures, through its Hold Fire campaign.



'Our moral duty to fight for safety'

Leicestershire

Firefighters have said it is their moral duty to fight proposals to cut services in the county after Leicestershire fire and rescue service published its integrated risk management plan.

It contains proposals that would cut three fire engines, reduce the number of fire-fighters per engine, disband the resilience team and force firefighters to be on duty for 24 hours plus.

Graham Vaux, secretary of the FBU in Leicestershire, said: "We cannot allow these proposals to be accepted. It is our moral duty to fight for the safety of the people

of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

"The fire services document makes a number of unqualified sweeping statements and general assertions based upon a selective use of data.

"The FBU is keen to work with management to develop alternative proposals to save money that can be achieved safely.

"These current proposals are not safe for the public or firefighters."

In a detailed response to these plans the FBU in Leicestershire points out:

- 72 operational frontline firefighters have been cut in the past 10 years

- The service plans to cut a further 104 firefighter posts over the next five years
- Response times have already slowed by almost two minutes
- The suggested impact of the IRMP on response times for support (secondary) engines is inaccurate
- The number of rescues carried out in areas to lose fire engines has risen in the last five years
- No task/time analysis has been carried out by the FRS
- The public face the prospect of a fire service "postcode lottery"
- Firefighters locally need to be properly resourced and funded.

IN BRIEF

Don't miss your chance to vote to save public services

Firefighters across the UK are being urged to make sure they are registered to vote in the 2015 general election taking place on 7 May.

Dave Green, FBU national officer, said: "This election is the most important for a generation. It is make or break time for public services.

"Firefighters need to have their voices heard. Having lost over 5,000 firefighters since 2010, it is clear the UK fire and rescue service cannot take another five years of austerity.

"With a membership of 40,000, many firefighters will have an influential role in deciding who their MPs are and who they want representing them."

Registering to vote is simple, takes only a few minutes and requires only your national insurance number.

Voters have until 23 April to register.

To register visit: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

BBC airtime for striking firefighters

The BBC 3 TV show *An Idiot's Guide To Politics* visited an FBU picket line as part of a segment on why voters are losing trust in politicians.

Presenter Jolyon Rubinstein (below) interviewed firefighters



at Chelsea fire station in London who recalled that, on the eve of the 2010 general election, Tory leader David Cameron had promised no frontline fire cuts only to oversee the axing of more than 5,000 firefighter jobs.

During the filming in September firefighters were on strike over pensions.

*Control operators
were forced to jot notes
on pads and inform
stations of
emergencies
by phone*

ROB FOSSETT



Essex FBU members on the picket line

Control staff fight cuts

Firefighters and emergency 999 control staff in Essex took three days of strike action in January in their fight against huge cuts and attacks on working conditions by the county fire and rescue authority.

It plans to cut at least 179 firefighters and control staff, seriously affecting the ability of the service to keep the public safe.

Although they took part only in a series of short strikes over three days to protest against the cuts, the fire authority decided to lock out members for three whole days.

Alan Chinn-Shaw, secretary of the FBU in Essex, said: "None of us want to strike but I am proud of the officers, the retained firefighters, the wholetime firefighters and the emergency fire control staff who have stood together to defend the public's fire and rescue service and our profession.

"The public support for us on our picket lines has been overwhelming.

"We're facing the biggest wave of cuts to frontline 999 services in our history. We have seen a 20% cut in the number of our emergency fire control staff and unnecessary attacks on the working conditions of those left. The next waves of attack on retained firefighters, officers and wholetime firefighters are on their way."

Under the plans, control staff in Essex would see their working conditions attacked and the disruption of the domestic lives of many of them with caring responsibilities that they must fit around working day and night shifts.

Soon after the strike action finished, Essex fire service saw its new "state of the art" control system collapse.

Service managers began by describing the situation as having "minor teething problems" and even tried to blame "user errors" by control staff – until the system collapsed completely.

Fire control operators were forced to revert to 1950s-style methods, jotting notes on pads and informing fire stations of emergencies by phone.

Jo Byrne, the newly elected executive council member for control members, commended the strike action saying: "The control staff national committee (CSNC) is firmly behind our colleagues in Essex emergency fire control and will continue

to support them during any further industrial action.

"Essex control members are having to come to terms with the news that management will cut 20% of frontline jobs and have also imposed radical shift changes which are severely detrimental to our members' ability to achieve a reasonable work/life balance.

"As if that was not enough, the management decision to 'go live' with new mobilising equipment before it had been tested thoroughly, has left our control members struggling to cope and at one point having to resort to using pen and paper to turn out appliances.

"This so-called state of the art system is clearly unfit for purpose and is putting operational crews and the residents of Essex at heightened risk due to delays in mobilising.

"It is only our members' tremendous professionalism and experience that has averted a disaster.

"FBU control members around the country are fighting for their futures with mergers and joint technology ventures being announced."

At the FBU's one-day recall conference, members in Essex were given a special round of applause and commended for taking industrial action over local issues while also in the middle of the national dispute.

The industrial dispute in Essex continues.

■ Essex country house HQ – p23

"We're facing the biggest wave of cuts to frontline 999 services in our history. We have seen a 20% cut in the number of our emergency fire control staff and unnecessary attacks on the working conditions of those left"

VIEW
FROM THE
AERIAL LADDER
PLATFORM



Cancelling austerity and

Syriza sent shockwaves throughout Europe in January when the party won the Greek general election and became the first anti-austerity party to form a government.

Greece has seen some of the deepest cuts

in public spending since the 2008 financial crash leading to many years of pain and misery with over 25% of Greeks jobless and more than a quarter of families living on the poverty line.

Syriza plans to resolve a lot of these issues by renegotiating the terms of Greece's international bailout to free up spending to help the poor as well as rolling back unpopular taxes. It also plans to give



destruction

free electricity to those cut off, provide food stamps for children, provide healthcare to the uninsured, provide accommodation to the homeless and raise the minimum wage. The win by Syriza, an acronym meaning

“Radical Coalition of the Left”, marks an upset of Europe’s political order which has for decades centred on neoliberal policies. After results were confirmed, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras told supporters that

Greek voters had given the party a clear mandate, saying: “You are an example of history which is changing ... Your mandate is undoubtedly cancelling the bailouts of austerity and destruction.”

FIREFIGHTERS REMAIN UNITED

Firefighter reports from a one-day FBU recall conference called to discuss the pensions campaign

The FBU's one-day recall conference on pensions saw the announcement of plans for a renewed period of industrial action as part of the ongoing campaign.

Taking place at Manchester's Mercure hotel, the conference was called to give members and officials the opportunity of a serious debate specifically on the progression of the campaign.

More than 150 delegates attended alongside the executive council and regional officials and had the opportunity to put forward conference motions.

Improved

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, opened proceedings by explaining how the campaign had managed to alter, reverse, or mitigate a number of aspects of the government's plans for the 2015 firefighters' pension scheme that attacked members, including:

- An improved actuarial reduction – from 47.1% at 55 to 21.8% in England, 9% in Wales and Scotland
- Normal pension age (NPA) of 55 in Northern Ireland
- An agreement on "No Job, No Pension" in Scotland
- Lower initial contributions for new entrants, firefighters in training and firefighters in development
- For New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (NFPS) members, an actuarial reduction better than the 40.5% in the 2006 scheme for retirement at 55.

But Matt Wrack explained how these improvements were considered nowhere near good enough by the executive council to suggest withdrawing the dispute and therefore the campaign should continue to be fought industrially, politically and legally.

The executive council's motion calling for a 24-hour strike was supported by conference sending the government a clear message: Firefighters are not going away.

Paul Embery, secretary to the FBU in London, told the conference it was clear that striking does work as some of the improved offers from government showed.

Rich Williams of Staffordshire and **Riccardo la Torre** of Essex also spoke alongside many others in support of further appropriate action.

It was announced that the strike will take place on 25 February along with a protest at Westminster.

The executive council's statement on defending firefighters' pensions, which was supported by conference, paid tribute to the determination and unity of members that "has been maintain(ed) despite the potential for division".

False 'guarantee'

The statement went on to confirm that the lobbying campaign of MPs to highlight the false "guarantee" made in Parliament by Westminster fire minister Penny Mordaunt will continue.

Other parties are being





PAUL HERRMANN

Conservatives have pledged to impose even more restrictive trade union laws aiming to stop the kind of action the FBU is taking to defend members' pensions

lobbied on firefighter pensions in the run-up to the 2015 general election with clear pledges being demanded from the Labour Party.

The possibility of further coordinated action with other trade unions is also being considered.

Matt Wrack warned about the dangers of a Conservative win at the general election saying "this union is clearly in the sights of Tory ministers".

The Conservatives have pledged to impose even more restrictive trade union laws aiming to stop the kind of action the FBU is taking to defend members' pensions.

Overtime ban

Action short of strike was discussed at length. After 25 February it will continue to consist of the existing cross-border arrangements and the ban on marauding terrorism and firearms (MTFA) training, however the overtime ban will be lifted and then reviewed thereafter.

Alan McLean, president of the FBU, summed up the renewed industrial strategy: "We're still here. We're still fighting. We are not natural strikers – we are fighting for our rights."

Matt Wrack added: "The conference gave us the opportunity for a serious and honest discussion about this campaign.

"We cannot accept these pension changes as they take no proper account of the real work firefighters do."

❖ You can read the full executive council statement at www.fbu.org.uk/circulars/ec-recall-statement.

Spot the diff

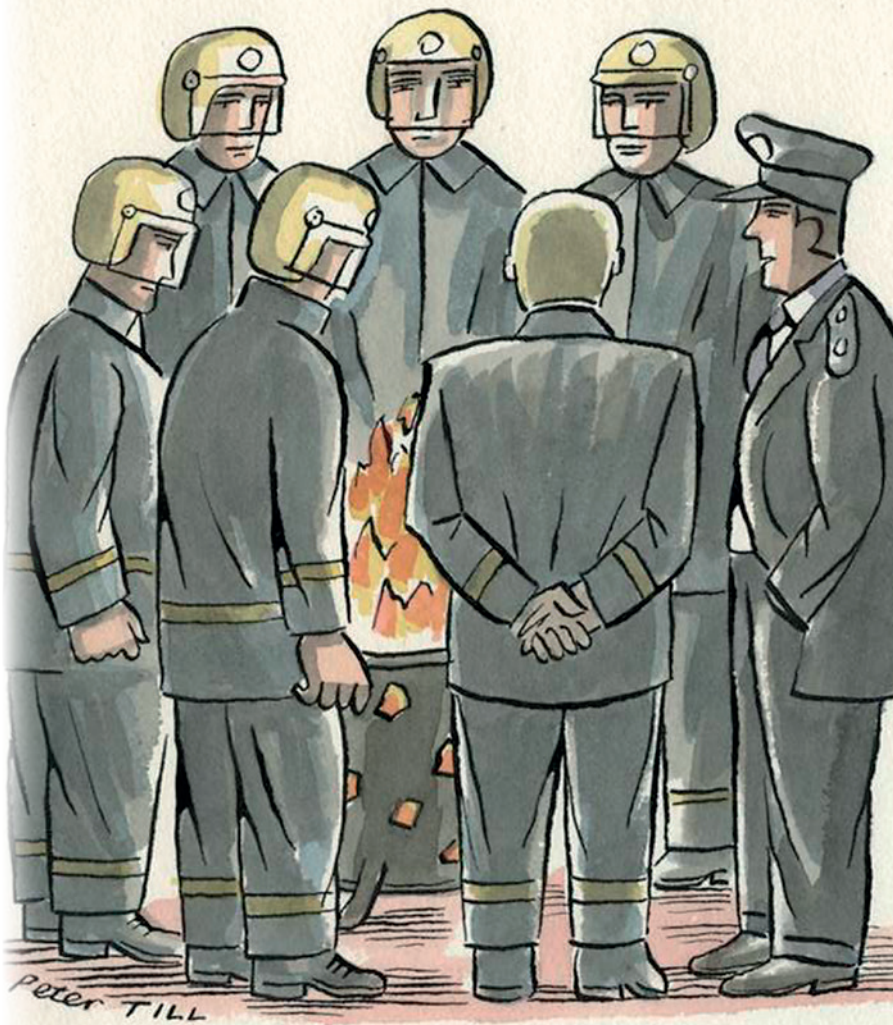
A firefighter and FBU member recalls how the support of one chief fire officer was the turning point for the Glasgow industrial dispute in 1973 and asks why his successors seem disinclined to lead from the front

Throughout the current industrial dispute the silence of the majority of chief fire officers has been deafening. This is in stark contrast to the stoic resolve of a man called Joe Milner. Appointed chief officer of London Fire Brigade in 1970, Mr Milner appreciated his workforce, he exuded an almost paternal pride and would defend his firefighters against anyone who sought to undermine or attack his comrades.

In a speech given to the influential Brixton Rotary Club in October 1973, London's chief officer eloquently and passionately urged that firefighters should be paid a fair wage.

His speech is reproduced in the prologue to Gordon Honeycombe's 2007 book *Red Watch*. It cites many examples of the bravery, skill, selflessness, initiative and teamwork that our noble profession continues to display.

Although spoken nearly 42 years ago, Milner's words resonate strongly today. It is widely accepted that the speech was the key to Glasgow firefighters calling off their strike and industrial action in



England coming to an end. Honeycombe wrote of Mr Milner's decision, "... to speak out and show whose side he and his senior officers were on".

Compare and contrast Joe Milner with the current LFB commissioner Ron Dobson.

Handsomely paid

The latter is understood to have retired from his handsomely paid role in order to obtain a lump sum from his pension fund and then came back to his old job.

He then had the nerve to criticise his firefighters for going on strike in order to attempt to preserve the comparatively meagre pension that they had

ference!



been promised. Commissioner Dobson has also overseen the closure of ten London fire stations in January 2014. These stations were cornerstones of their communities, bastions of reliability that dutifully protected all who live in, travel through or stop over in the biggest city in the British Isles.

Such cuts have been made in spite of a recent increase in people adversely affected by fire. The

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has experienced a near 100% increase in serious fire-related injuries (from 12 in 2011/12 to 23 in 2012/13).

It does not appear that commissioner Dobson himself is feeling the pinch in our austere financial climate. His salary of around £200,000 is approximately £170,000 more than that of a qualified firefighter.

Surely we are entitled to ask how he can effectively lead and represent those from whom he is financially so far detached.

The Labour Research Department found that between 2003 and 2008 CFOs' earnings increased by 39.7% more than the increase in basic pay for firefighters over the past ten years. When one examines such a disparity it perhaps becomes a little clearer why many senior officers are so reluctant to speak out in favour of their workforce.

Dangerous cuts

It could be argued that many chief officers are the enablers and facilitators of the dangerous and drastic cuts being experienced by the fire service.

The front line is the greatest source of expenditure for any fire authority, but the extent to which it has been attacked will leave an ugly scar upon the very fabric of our society.

The UK now has over 5,000 fewer firefighters and 39 fewer fire stations (soon to be 41 following the imminent closure of Blaina and Porth in South Wales) than it did in 2010. This decimation of fire cover puts both the public and firefighters at increased risk.

There are notable exceptions to the silent majority. Avon CFO Kevin Pearson attended a picket line during the summer of 2014 while the deputy CFO of Lancashire, Justin Johnston, has also been proactive with his calls for government to engage in meaningful negotiations. But such empathetic acts are very rare.

Why many principal officers have not used their intellect to find the right words and deeds to go into battle for their firefighters without compromising the political neutrality that their rank demands is a source of bemusement.

We appreciate that they have to make difficult decisions, but we urge them not to forget where they came from. We're not asking them to be like Lech Walesa, Bob Crow or Matt Wrack, but we would like them to be fair, representative, dignified, respectful, honest and decent – we would like them to be like Joe Milner.

It is not too late for fire service managers to make a positive contribution by exerting the necessary pressure on fire authorities and rallying against government cutbacks. We urge them to stand up for and defend the profession that has served them so well. In the immortal words of the character Sean Maguire, portrayed by the late, great, actor, comedian and trade unionist Robin Williams in the 1997 film *Good Will Hunting*: "Your move, Chief!"

It is not too late for fire service managers to make a positive contribution – Your move, Chief!



Colleagues carry the coffin of firefighter Ewan Williamson at his funeral in Edinburgh. He died in a fire in the city in July 2009. The Scottish fire and rescue service was accused of a number of health and safety breaches more than four years after the fire. They include claims that necessary “instruction and supervision” was not provided to employees of the former Lothian and Borders FRS, now merged into the Scottish FRS, and that there was a lack of appropriate training for firefighters in relation to tackling basement fires.

Better management is needed to reduce firefighter fatalities

Report for FBU highlights avoidable risks that are not tackled because safety has not been prioritised



DAVID CHESKINA/PA PHOTOS

ROLLCALL

Firefighter deaths at fires from 2004 to 2014

Billy Faust	London	20 July 2004
Adam Meere	London	20 July 2004
Jeff Wornham	Hertfordshire	2 February 2005
Michael Miller	Hertfordshire	2 February 2005
Brian Wembridge	East Sussex	3 December 2006
Geoff Wicker	East Sussex	3 December 2006
John Averis	Warwickshire	2 November 2007
Ian Reid	Warwickshire	2 November 2007
Ashley Stephens	Warwickshire	2 November 2007
Darren Yates-Badley	Warwickshire	2 November 2007
Ewan Williamson	Edinburgh	12 July 2009
Alan Bannon	Southampton	6 April 2010
James Shears	Southampton	6 April 2010
Stephen Hunt	Manchester	13 July 2013

While the number of deaths at fires in each decade varies, not all decades have seen such a high number of deaths and serious injuries as there were in the past 10 years.

Professor Watterson's report is based on interviews with firefighters, inquiries, inspection reports and trial papers and makes a number of recommendations to combat the threat of firefighter fatalities at fires.

Role of senior management

It says brigade fatality investigations rarely, if ever, identify and acknowledge the direct and indirect roles that central and senior local government and brigade managers play in such events.

Yet these bodies and their directors are ultimately responsible for regulations, budgets, staffing, systems, training, equipment and resources, information, procedures and specific operating procedures that firefighters use.

Professor Watterson makes 48 detailed recommendations on how to reduce the threat of firefighter fatalities.

They relate to a number of different organisations and areas: government departments, the chief fire and rescue advisor's (CFRA) office, the Health and Safety Executive, UK fire and rescue services, local government, laws and legal matters, and the availability of statistics.

The report says government "better regulation" and "red tape" agendas need to be better evaluated. There was little evidence that fire health and safety regulations are applied when they should not be or that they weigh down the economy.

Key recommendations include:

- UK governments should introduce occupational and public health and safety impact assessments before pursuing new policies.

- A properly funded CFRA should develop a programme to carry out audits

and inspect fire and rescue services to check that effective public and firefighter safety measures are in place.

- A fire health and safety forum should be re-established, serving the whole of the UK, and used to engage firefighters effectively in producing technical and other documents relating to fire health and safety.

- The Department for Communities and Local Government and relevant devolved departments should urgently set up a review of the failure of some brigades to act rapidly on recommendations from firefighter fatality at fires reports.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "One firefighter death is one too many. As this report shows, there is no reason why these recommendations cannot be implemented. The costs would be covered by the economic gains of reduced firefighter fatalities, injuries and diseases.

"It is neither cost-effective nor morally acceptable to cut vital fire services in ways that endanger both public and firefighter safety.

"The fire and rescue service as well as chief fire officers need to implement these recommendations immediately."

Scale of deaths unacceptable

Professor Watterson said the scale of death and injury to firefighters was unacceptable, adding: "Many risks are avoidable if appropriate management systems, inspection, regulation, training and other related matters are in place.

"Public and firefighter safety has not been prioritised when it should have been.

"Risks cannot be removed but they can normally be managed far better by fire services, local and central government and regulatory and inspection bodies."

■ You can read the report at:
<http://bit.ly/1J2VaLf>.

Structural and functional failures in the fire service are threatening firefighters' health and safety, according to an investigation of firefighter fatalities between 2004 and 2013.

The report, by Professor Andrew Watterson of the University of Stirling's occupational and environmental health research group, was funded by the FBU.

It recommends that risk assessment and management, as well as training, be improved and says that "self regulation" by brigades must end. Improved independent inspection and measures for faster implementation of recommendations following investigations of fatalities and injuries are also required.

In the UK between 1993 and 2004 there were six firefighter deaths at fires. In the next 10 years, up to 2014, there were 14 firefighter deaths in fires, including one fire technician.

PRIVATISATION C

Salespeople pushing privatisation are everywhere. But their insidious message always ignores the key fact that their product invariably leads to failure paid for by us

Firefighters in Surrey are suffering from a bothersome irritation known as SGI; or to give it its full title, Specialist Group International. This outfit pops up at every opportunity assuring the county council that, whatever Surrey's firefighting challenges, they can do it better than the public service. They have a ready ear from the 81 councillors, which is hardly surprising as 58 of them are Tories.

SGI first endeared itself to the council by offering its strike-breaking services, or as the company expressed it, by being "ready to stand in and protect the residents of Surrey" during industrial action. And having got their foot in the door, they are now trying to flog "an arsenal of cutting-edge equipment and a wealth of expertise".

According to its own boasts, SGI specialises in just about everything from helicopter flying to diving, from water rescue to breathing apparatus. In fact, its skills increase every time its salesmen meet a councillor. SGI's tentacles are creeping into all aspects of the service.

Cheerleaders

The Tory councillors are willing prey for the SGI advances. They feel more comfortable with private contractors than public servants.

Conservatives are the national cheerleaders for privatisation – and we will be in for more if they win the May election. So perhaps it is a good time to remind ourselves just how successful privatisation has been.

Or, in fact, not – if we think about why it was first introduced and what it was supposed to achieve. Any balanced assessment, as opposed to political dogma, shows it has never lived up to its promises.

Advocates of the "free market" were enthusiastic supporters of privatisation for three reasons.

They argued that selling national assets to private firms introduced competition, which kept everyone on their toes; it removed public businesses from political interference so they could get on with the job; and the profit incentive led automatically to increased efficiency.

FAIL



LEWIS WHILD/PA IMAGES

FAIL



ALASTAIR GRANT/PA IMAGES

Our railways are the prime example of the introduction of competition. Because there isn't any.

If you want to go from Liverpool to London, you take a Virgin train or you walk. If you're looking for a jaunt around Scotland, there's Scotrail or nothing. If you take a train from London to Wales, you go First Great Western or you don't go at all.

And where the Tories *did* manage to introduce competition, who gained? Did energy prices drop as a result of privatisation? Of course they didn't – for the simple reason that we now have a plethora of additional fees. The shareholders' dividends. The bonuses and inflated salaries of board members. The additional staff to service a dozen companies rather than a single organisation. The publicity and advertising that competition requires.

Laughable

And the idea that private organisations wedded to money-wise Tory ministers would benefit the likes of us would be laughable if the joke was not on us.

We have only to look at the sale of Royal Mail which was a financial disaster on just about every level. For one thing, it was sold for a fraction of its value. Shares picked up by speculators for £3.30 were trading at over £5 within days. Last month they were selling for over £4.50. The highest price they reached last year was £6.17.

Top: Privatisation of railways has led not to competition, but monopoly

Above: Wealthy speculators profited hugely from the sell-off of Royal Mail

Right: The only privately run NHS hospital was proved a total failure when the company running it withdrew

REEPS AND SNEAKS BUT STILL FAILS



This was a disaster for us because we owned Royal Mail. It was ours. The government was not so concerned because it was selling something that didn't belong to it, so it could not really go wrong.

And has privatisation ended government “interference” in these former public services? Hardly, because we are now paying enormous amounts for a host of regulators like Ofcom, Ofgem, Ofwat and the Office of Rail Regulation. Ofcom alone has an operating budget of some £125m.

Worst-ever

And if we were looking for a single example of privatisation failure, we need look no further than Hinchingsbrooke, where the private concern Circle became masters of the only privately run NHS hospital in the country.

Circle introduced itself by cutting 36 nursing jobs. It has scooped the worst-ever award from the Care Quality Commission. The latest staff survey placed it into the bottom 20% in the areas of job satisfaction, bullying, training and potentially harmful errors, and visitors to its A&E facility were twice as likely to give up without being seen as an average state hospital.

It is interesting that Hinchingsbrooke pretended not to be a private hospital, describing itself as a “mutual” on the basis that it was formally

owned jointly by its staff – and a group of hedge-fund managers.

The end of this sorry saga was predictable: Circle announced in January that it is “withdrawing from its contract” because it is “no longer viable under current terms”. Or, in plain English, Circle is not making enough money from people’s illness.

Anyone can make a mistake. But the privatisation mistake has been going on since Thatcher was in power. And, if the Tories win the May election, it will not only continue, but get worse.

Our public services, and especially our emergency services, will all be prey to the vultures, gathering over the whole country just like Specialist Group International in Surrey.

Anyone can make a mistake. But the privatisation mistake has been going on since Thatcher was in power. And, if the Tories win the May election, it will not only continue but get worse

CANCER

UK firefighters need a change in the law

The science is clear – there is a connection between firefighting and increased cancer rates

Alex Forrest is a former lawyer, a firefighter and Canadian trustee of the International Association of Fire Fighters, the FBU's sister union in the USA and Canada. Known internationally for his work on cancers and firefighters, he explains how UK law puts firefighters at a huge disadvantage compared to those in north America and Australia

Consider four firefighters, one Canadian, one American, one Australian and one from the UK. Each has 20 years of service in a major city. Each firefighter, previously in good health and with no family history of cancer, is diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Each firefighter is concerned about the financial future of a spouse and a young family. In Australia, Canada and the United States the firefighter is deemed to have contracted cancer as a result of their profession. So the cancer is presumed in law to be occupational.

These firefighters and their families are compensated and supported in the same way as if they had been injured or killed while fighting a fire.

This is not the case in the UK and that is wrong.

Firefighters everywhere are being diagnosed with

occupational cancer at an alarming rate and cancer is now the single biggest killer of firefighters.

Many of these cancers are occupational. It is not one fire that kills us, but the hundreds that we fight over our careers. At every fire we are exposed to deadly cancer-causing agents.

This danger is getting worse and we have minimal ability to protect against exposure.

Plastics

Fires are much more dangerous today than they were even ten years ago. The reason is the increase in the use of plastics in building construction.

In 2008 the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) found that an almost incredible number of carcinogens is present at almost every fire. They include benzene, furons, dioxins, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, formaldehyde and more than a dozen others.

That is not the end of the story. There are three ways in which carcinogens are able to enter our bodies; digestion, absorption and inhalation.

At every fire, no matter how good your cleaning process, you will be exposed to carcinogens while donning and doffing your gear, as well as during the fire itself, via all three methods of entry.

There have been great advances in self-contained breathing apparatus and clothing, but carcinogens still come into contact with our bodies and internal organs.

The science is clear – there is a connection between firefighting and increased cancer rates.

Three recent major studies have demonstrated the deadly connection – a study of 16,422 firefighters in Nordic countries published in May 2014; the US government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study of cancer in 30,000 firefighters who served between 1950 and 2010 – the largest-ever study of US firefighters; and in 2011 Monash University in Australia was commissioned by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council to carry out a national retrospective study of firefighters' mortality and cancer incidence.

United States, Australian and Canadian firefighters are

supported by what is known as presumptive cancer legislation.

This acknowledges the link between firefighting and occupational cancer and allows for compensation for the firefighter and his or her family. A diagnosis of occupational cancer is deemed to be an injury acquired throughout the firefighter's career.

Almost impossible

Presumptive legislation means it is no longer up to the firefighter to prove at which fires he or she came into contact with carcinogens – the opposing agency must prove that the firefighter's cancer is **not** a result of his or her firefighting career. The science means this is almost impossible to do.

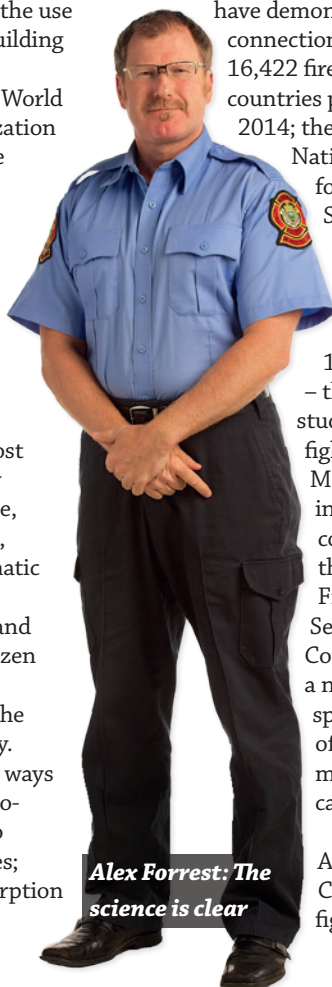
Presumptive legislation does not say that every cancer a firefighter is diagnosed with is work related. A firefighter must also work a certain number of years in order to qualify under presumptive legislation.

Such legislation does two important things.

First, it helps to educate firefighters and fire services about the dangers so that they can minimise them. It also means employers have a financial stake in minimising exposure to carcinogens.

Second, it results in prompt support for firefighters who have cancer.

When they are diagnosed they need to be able to put all of their efforts into fighting the disease and should not have the added stress of worrying about the financial wellbeing of their families.



Alex Forrest: The science is clear

Legal Beagle

Tribunal fees deny working people justice

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IN SCOTLAND
0800 089 1331

Tory fees for employment tribunal actions are pricing members out of justice, says Iain Birrell of Thompsons, the FBU's solicitors

The Conservative Party is pricing working people out of holding bad employers to account. The introduction of fees for employment tribunal actions in 2013 has deterred thousands of workers from accessing justice, because it has become too expensive.

According to research by the charity Citizens Advice, more than four in five people with problems at work have been put off making claims because of the upfront costs of pursuing a case at an employment tribunal.

Tribunals were introduced to offer justice to victims of unfair dismissal and discrimination and for workers whose bosses withhold their wages and ride roughshod over their rights. Hardly trivial matters.

Surely a civilised society should be making it easier for ordinary people to access justice, not harder?

Scrimp and save

But the government has slapped fees as high as £1,200 on people who want to access justice. Nearly half the population would have to save for up to six months just to start to afford these fees – six months in which they would have to scrimp and save, while the injustice they suffer continued and the employer enjoyed a grace period to build their case.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Even when there is – very limited – financial support available for people on the lowest incomes, the government makes sure that barely anyone knows about it.

Research shows that only three in 10 people are even aware that such support exists; while half of the people who thought they were ineligible for support were actually eligible.

Claimants must study a 32-page document to find out if they can get support.

As tribunal fees make it less likely that they will be held to account, there are fewer

incentives for employers to abide by the rules, because they think they can get away with it.

In many cases bad employers are getting away with it because victims are increasingly unable to pursue claims that are valid.

Since the introduction of fees the number of cases going to a tribunal has dropped off a cliff. Between October 2013 and September 2014, there were 32,671 fewer single claim cases brought by individuals than in the previous year (when there were not fees) – a decrease of 64%.

The number of multiple

claim cases – which are brought by two or more people, usually against a common employer – dropped by 3,527, a decrease of 67%.

Justice secretary Chris Grayling rejoices at such numbers, seeing it as proof of the success of his policies to deter what he would consider “false” claims, and supposedly save the legal system money.

Driving force

But those who work in trade unions and in the legal profession know that the government's desire to free up their friends in business to treat workers however they want, is the real driving force behind these changes.

The Tories claim that most of their bizarre and punitive legal changes are to save the taxpayer money. But analysis shows that only 6% of total expenditure on employment tribunals was saved by the introduction of fees in an eight-month period. That's as little as £4.5m.

When you consider the billions lost because corporations do not pay their taxes, this saving is minuscule. It is shocking that so many people are being denied justice and that this is being dressed up as a cost-saving measure. Even employer organisations like the CBI and Federation of Small Businesses now say the fees are a barrier to justice.

The only way we can hope to get rid of tribunal fees is to kick out the Conservatives and their Lib Dem stooges at the general election this May.

'I didn't do very well at school. So I identify with young people who leave without qualifications'

Ian Fraser uses his military background to help youngsters learn the skills and discipline necessary for a career in the armed forces – or anywhere else

On his days off, the chances are that Hull watch manager Ian "Joe" Fraser is helping disadvantaged youngsters in the area achieve their ambition – of joining the armed forces.

In common with a good many firefighters, Ian first joined the fire and rescue service after leaving the military. He was in the Royal Navy and served in the radar room on the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious during his time at sea.

Ian feels well placed to help raise the game of young people intent on a military career. "I didn't do very well at school. So



I identify with young people who leave without qualifications," he says. "My time in the services gave me the chance to get to the fire service. I've since taken GCSEs – and a course that means I'm qualified to teach."

Ian has been a firefighter and active FBU member for more than 28 years. He has been spotted in a kilt, banging the drum for the Humberside Pipe Band alongside the FBU at protest marches against austerity – most recently in London last autumn.

Track record

Ian began teaching fitness to young people keen to join the armed services on a charity-run training course. But in 2007 European Social Fund money that had helped bankroll the course dried up. The charity had to fold. But there were still lots of young people out there, keen to raise their game to join the armed services.

The quickest way to carry on providing young would-be recruits with skills they needed was to set up a company, ready to deliver. There was proven local demand, Ian and colleagues had a proven track record of delivering – and the local council was keen



to provide quality training for young people who risked long-term unemployment.

So – along with his partner Michelle, a fitness instructor – Ian got cracking.

In 2007, 13 young people started training with Quality Professional Development training. But that was just the start.

Largely staffed by former military personnel, including four firefighters, training in preparation for the forces is delivered alongside functional skills in maths and English and vocational qualifications.

There are currently 120 16-19 year olds on the course – and an impressive roll call.

More than 260 former students are currently serving around the world in the army, navy and air force – as guardsmen, submariners, and aircraft technicians and even in the Royal Military Police. Ofsted recently judged QPD's training "outstanding".

It is not only young men who enrol: 30% of the intake is now female. Six young women recently had a QPD reunion in Afghanistan. Many return from postings abroad and inspire new recruits with first-hand testimony.

Last year, 46 students – 47% of those enrolled – went into the army. And, once there, they were less likely to drop out than the average new recruit.

"The army did a survey of 100 of our learners and found they had 27% better 'stickability' through the first stage of army training," Ian says.

And he knows why: "Some people who join up don't have a realistic idea of what joining the army involves. We try to give them that."

Motivation

Motivation and focus are part of an approach that, says Ian, gets students to "drive their own ambition" and "compete for jobs they really want to do". It's not a soft option and, with cuts in the armed forces, competition is increasingly tough.

All those recruited have to want to join the armed forces. But it's not all lost for those who don't. Far from it. They have, says Ian, learned skills that will equip them to thrive at work, as many of his former students have proved.

Some who did not make it to the military or had a change of heart now run their own businesses. Others have picked up the learning habit and gone on to gain vital qualifications and thrive in the workplace.

Around a third of the student intake comes from challenging backgrounds, including involvement with petty crime and drugs.

The course offers a nurturing environment, where students can move on and



"The army did a survey of 100 of our learners and found they had 27% better 'stickability' through the first stage of army training"

are supported to achieve their best. Or, as Ian puts it, alongside skills, "we teach them the core values of courage, integrity, loyalty, and selfless commitment". Links with forces charities – from poppy selling to Help for Heroes – are an integral part of the QPD experience.

Success stories

For Ian, a key motivation is seeing young people flourish, some overcoming huge obstacles, to lead successful lives in the forces and beyond.

There are many success stories. Ian recalls one young woman "trainee", neglected in early life by her heroin-addict mother, who is now crewing an exclusive private yacht after leaving the navy. Lives have been transformed.

And when fire services start recruiting again, there may well be some QPD "graduates" joining the watch, freshly returned from military service.



Prize quiz



Win a set of Lezyne micro drive lights

HOW TO ENTER

To win a set of Lezyne micro drive lights please send your answers by 31 March on a postcard to: Prize Competition (March 2015), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.



PA PHOTOS

1 When was the Crystal Palace destroyed by fire?

- A – 1914
B – 1936
C – 1980
D – 1963

2 Where in the US is Black Rock Desert?

- A – Nevada
B – New Mexico
C – Texas
D – South Dakota



3 Who created the science fiction character Jerry Cornelius?

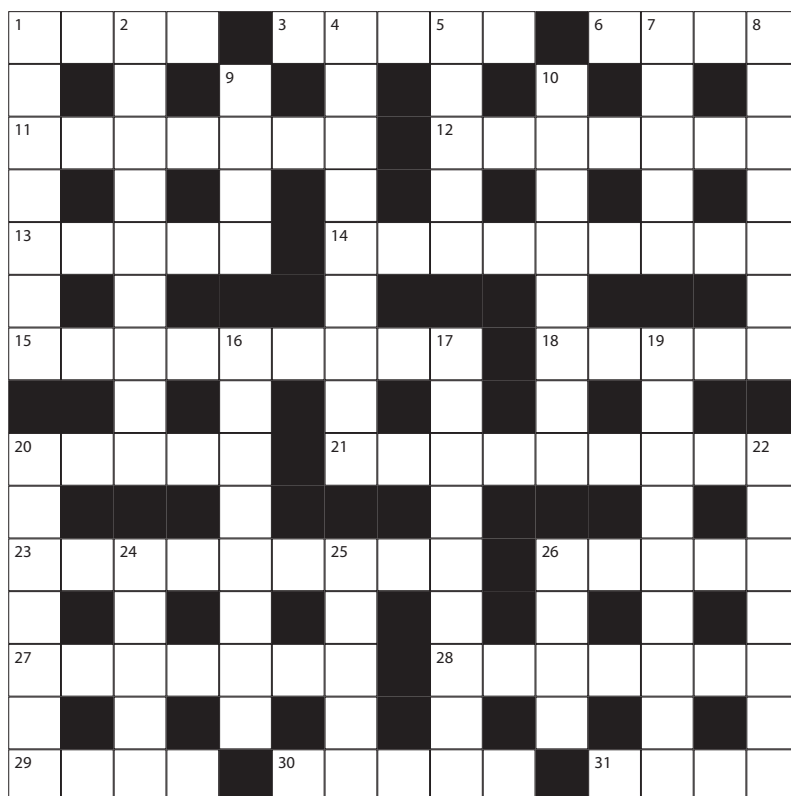
- A – Michael Moorcock
B – Michael Moore
C – Michael Morpurgo
D – Patrick Moore

4 Who directed The Wild Bunch in 1969?

- A – John Huston
B – John Ford
C – Sergio Leone
D – Sam Peckinpah

5 What important event is happening in the UK on 7 May 2015?

- A – Chelsea Flower Show
B – Wimbledon lawn tennis championships
C – The general election
D – FA Cup final



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1** Dearth, deficiency in (4)
3 Japanese capital (5)
6 Latvian capital (4)
11 Small house – or potato-topped pie (7)
12 Potentially fatal intestinal infection prevented by decent sanitation (7)
13 Actors Ms Richardson or Ms Fisher (5)
14 Vertical tube giving (temporary) access to water (5-4)
15 Having no value or use – like 30 10's 27 19 (9)
18 One who eggs others on (5)
20 Book of maps (5)
21 Lying prone, face down (9)
23 Blow for blow (3,3,3)
26 Large piece of cloth worn over head or shoulders (5)
27 Regular payment after retirement – 30 10 gave a '15' 19 about ours! (7)
28 Of a bus, say, with no roof (4-3)
29 Imperial length measure – about three inches short of a metre! (4)
30 Low-value coin (5)
31 Molecular unit of heredity – or actor Hackman (4)

DOWN

- 1** Common name for tetanus (4-3)
2 Major church – bishop's seat (9)
4 Fail to wake on time (9)
5 American shrub with evergreen sword-shaped leaves (5)
7 Ancient British tribe once led by Boudica (5)
8 non-pro (7)
9 Simple (4)
10 30: Fire minister who gave '15' 27 19 (8)
16 Of significant past events (8)
17 Blast out of the sky (5,4)
19 Promise or assurance – 30 10's was '15' (9)
20 Post-mortem examination (7)
22 Overshadow (one heavenly body by another) (7)
24 Photocopier's consumable (5)
25 Taut, stressed (or inflection of verb) (5)
26 Appear; give impression of (4)

Last issue's answers and winners



Crossword solution January/February

January/February quiz answers

- 1** – C Pulp Fiction
2 – B King George VI Chase
3 – B Lewis Hamilton
4 – C Paddington
5 – A Fidel Castro

Winners of Nov/Dec quiz

Stephen Winter, Kent; Craig Stephenson, Glasgow; G Levitt, Leeds; Iain MacDonald, Orkney

Station Cat

It's a mad, mad, mad, mad world

Nothing's too good ...

 Oh the glories of Kelvedon Park in Essex! A superb mansion set in its own grounds, formerly known as Durwards Hall, it was the site of John Wright's home in the sixteenth century, William Aylett's in the seventeenth century and once housed the Lord Lieutenant of Essex. Without doubt it is a magnificent building.

A little piece of Olde England.

Small wonder that several times over the past year well-heeled suitcase-laden tourists have staggered over the crunching gravel to the main entrance and asked for reception.

"Reception?"

"Yes, Reception. This is the luxury spa hotel we're booked into, is it not?"

The mistake is understandable, especially as last summer several refined groups were seen perched on checked rugs and surrounded by wicker baskets enjoying picnics.

They presumably imagined they were in the grounds of a National Trust property.

Alas, seekers of both five-star hotels and British heritage sights are cruelly deceived. In fact the opulent three-floor mansion is now the headquarters of the Essex Fire Authority. It has been so since the first phase of building, with its construction value of £8.5m, was completed in May 2011. This coincided neatly with the first

wave of the coalition government's vicious cuts in public spending.

Working firefighters struggling to maintain a service despite seemingly endless frontline cuts will be delighted to know their superiors see out the crisis in style.

Looking both ways

 Last month Swindon's Tory councillors, having being greeted at the council meeting by a group of local protesters, felt obliged to back a call from the (very) minority Labour group to demand a fair settlement to our pension dispute. But they added an amendment saying that our pensions are a gold-plated example to the world and a snip at the price.

They then managed to vote for both. Leaving the Cat pondering that, if our pensions are only a whisker away from perfect – how come they are urging discussions to make them fair?

Where facts are sacred

 We are regularly berated by most sections of the media for crimes like joining unions, seeking reasonable conditions and failing to be management lap-dogs. If only we were as efficient as journalists.

The London *Evening Standard* reported that a fire had broken out in the Reform Club in Pall Mall on 9 January. It chronicled

Kelvedon Hall – surely no-one could mistake it for a posh hotel rather than the FRS HQ that it is?

PICTURE COURTESY ESSEX CHRONICLE



details of the conflagration. 200 people were evacuated, 20 firefighters had attended, and the fire had started in a basement sauna. The club was founded in 1836, was once the Liberal Party's headquarters and offers its 2,700 members the use of a library, wine cellar, billiards room and bedrooms.

It is heartening to have such a detailed and informative account. Except it was wrong. The fire wasn't actually in the Reform Club. It was down the road in the RAC Club.

Unlike journalists, firefighters tend to be specific about details like the location of a fire.

Penny for her thoughts?

 Welsh Tories have been campaigning against junk mail, but news of their endeavours doesn't seem to have reached merry fire minister Penny Mordaunt.

No one would suggest that the minister shouldn't contact firefighters with vital information about their jobs.

On the other hand, some might wonder about the driving necessity of her dispatching unsolicited mail containing a thrilling account of a rugby match she watched recently, skiving off work to see the women's fire and police team taking on the Royal Navy. Even

if it was "a fast moving game played with enormous spirit".

Welsh Tories point out that junk mail takes up 4.5% of the country's annual paper consumption. They suggest that a useful deterrent would be to levy the sender for sending this stuff out. If the measure was introduced, it could cost the minister a pretty penny.

The Welsh Tories make the point that junk mail is particularly distressing for "older and vulnerable people". The Cat wonders if this group includes firefighters in their 50s who are worried about being dumped without a pension?

Who could have guessed?

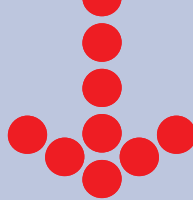
 Essex Fire Service bosses were looking very pleased with themselves last month as they switched on their spanking new "state-of-the-art" control system. It would select which appliances to send to incidents, add precision and efficiency and probably make the tea as well.

One week later, the predicted chaos began. The wrong appliances began scouring the county in search of emergencies. Engines from Harlow were dispatched to Colchester. Fire control operators were searching out pencils they hadn't used for years to record calls.

Managers blamed "minor teething problems" until the system finally collapsed completely, by which time the local FBU had recorded over 100 examples of problems with the new system.



25-year badges



Stuart Howarth (l), USAR team, Chorley, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Harman



Fraser McGuffog (l), County Durham HQ, receives his 25-year badge from officers' representative Dane Rollo



Nick Grimmitt (r), West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from acting brigade secretary Steve Price-Hunt



Bill Kadir (l), white watch, Paddington, London (since retired) receives his 25-year badge from London women's chair Sian Griffiths, since retired



Russ King (l), Tyne and Wear brigade secretary (elect) receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Dave Turner, since retired



Tracy Tanner (r), red watch, Bath, receives his 25-year badge from South West regional chair Kevin Herniman on the picket line at Bath



Glive Gannon (c), officers' branch, Nottingham, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Alan Coates and brigade organiser Clare Hudson



Paul Falvey (r), Swansea CS, receives his 25-year badge from officers' national committee chair Mick Higgins



John Tierney (c), Merseyside training, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Mick O'Marney Officers (l) and regional officers' rep Ned Phelan



Chris Coombes (r), red watch, Bath, receives his 25-year badge from South West regional chair Kevin Herniman on the picket line



Dean Bentley (l), red watch, Lambeth river crew, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Craig Weedon (l), red watch, Lambeth river crew, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Steve Norris (l), red watch, Lambeth river crew, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Mark Berryman (l), red watch, Lambeth river crew, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair

Please send digital files or prints to: **firefighter@fbu.org.uk** or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE. Please include full details for every picture – 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 and 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.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

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(England, Wales and N Ireland),

0800 089 1331

(Scotland),

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

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