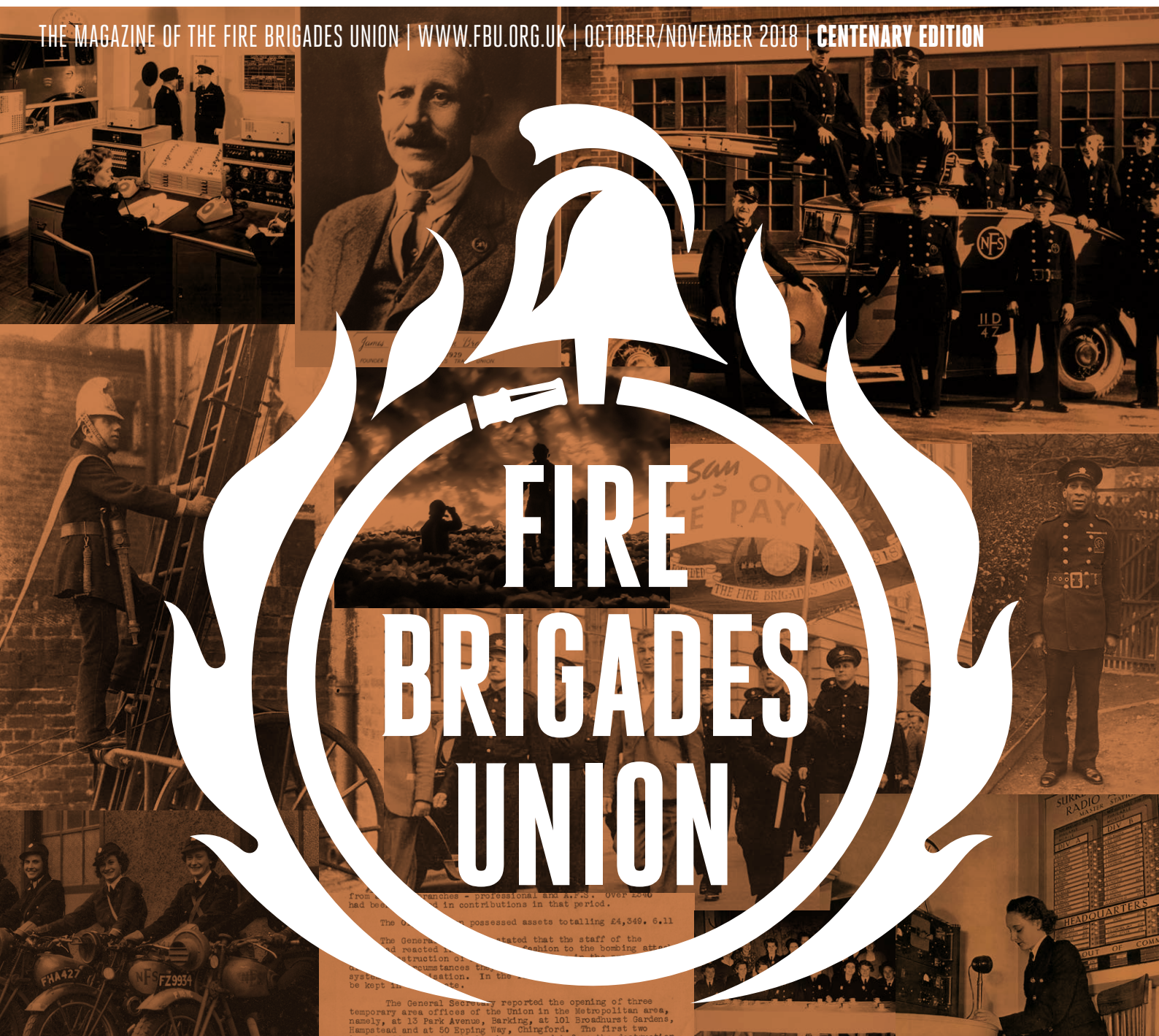


FIREFIGHTER



THE MAGAZINE OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | WWW.FBU.ORG.UK | OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018 | CENTENARY EDITION



**"THE PAST WE INHERIT
THE FUTURE WE BUILD"**

SEE P10



MATT WRACK

OUR UNION YOUR UNION

This October we formally mark 100 years since an independent trade union was created solely for firefighters.

The Firemen's Trade Union, as it was known then, was the first of its kind. Although a benefit society for firefighters had existed for many years, there was no specialist trade union to fight for better working conditions in fire brigades.

Back then firefighters would live and work on stations as part of a continuous duty system where paid holidays, sick leave and pensions were non-existent.

Although the strong bonds of community and comradeship kept people going, it was a brutal life where people felt powerless, trapped in the drudgery of dangerous, poorly paid work with no respite. A union was sorely needed.

Fast forward a century and your union – the much more appropriately named Fire Brigades Union – is still fighting for you.

Over the last 100 decades our union has won battles for improved pay, entitlement to paid holiday and sick leave as well as access to pensions.

We have paved the way for improvements to protective personal equipment, training and procedures to ensure that firefighters can work safely at incidents.

Our union has successfully campaigned for better public safety. The fact there are fewer fires and fatalities today than 100 years ago is no accident.

It is because the public, whether they know it



Matt Wrack (clenched fist, centre) on the FBU's new appliance at the Notting Hill Carnival

or not, have had a trade union fighting for a safer world on their behalf.

A strong, vibrant, independent trade union for firefighters and emergency control staff is more needed today than ever.

But our future is not guaranteed. For the past decade we have been in a fight for our life.

Never in our history has a government carried out such a sustained assault on the fire and rescue service as the Tory-led governments have since 2010.

They are responsible for axing 12,000 frontline firefighter jobs and have made it harder for us to

represent members by drowning us in bureaucracy through the draconian Trade Union Act.

Our centenary offers us the chance to look back, take stock and move forward. To continue fighting with vigour for fair pay and conditions and for full and proper funding for the professional, world famous fire and rescue service we are all so proud of.

If it seems like an difficult task with this Tory government in power, remember that the history of the FBU provides extensive stories of struggle and heroism.

It is the story of men and women who built an

organisation against the odds.

They had to campaign, fight and make sacrifices to build it. At times, many were victimised for their stand.

They also had to think carefully about, and debate, the challenges they faced at various times.

We owe it to those still to come into the service to continue that work – to think, debate, organise and struggle – in the decades ahead so that it is a case of “the past we inherit, the future we build”.

The fundamental strength of the Fire Brigades Union has and always will be you – the members.

This is your union; never let anyone tell you otherwise.



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The FBU stall at this year's TUC stood out from the crowd with its centenary branding. One of its celebrity visitors took the shape of evil husband Simon Foster from BBC1's *Dr Foster* – otherwise known as actors' Equity union member Bertie Carvel

FIREFIGHTERS



FIRE BRIGADES UNION CENTENARY 1918-2018

FIREFIGHTER

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NEWS

CARNIVAL

First outing for the FBU's new appliance is the Notting Hill Carnival

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TUC

The FBU at the 150th Trades Union Congress

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Firefighters join relatives and the local community to demand justice for the dead and survivors of Grenfell Tower at one of the silent walks on the monthly anniversary of the disaster



GLY SMALLMAN

FIREFIGHTERS' EVIDENCE IS 'HONEST AND CANDID'

GRENFELL

If you want to see what solidarity looks like in action, look no further than the reaction of the firefighting community to the questioning of watch manager Michael Dowden at the Grenfell Tower inquiry.

The first FBU member to give evidence to the inquiry, Michael Dowden was questioned for three long and difficult days. It led to a swell of support on social media where the hashtag #IamMichaelDowden began trending.

Similarly, all firefighters and emergency control operators who have so far given evidence to the inquiry have been greeted by a show of support. Each day, as firefighters and emergency control operators give evidence, FBU officials are on hand to help.

Fire Brigades Union general secretary Matt Wrack says it is clear that members are taking part in the best possible faith.

"This needs to be a thorough investigation and our members who have been giving evidence have come across extremely honestly and candidly in what they have said.

"It is heart wrenching to see people having to relive what is probably the worst night of their lives.

"Every firefighter who responded was in an utterly impossible position dealing with a fire that had not been planned for at all in the UK."

The FBU has at times been critical of the inquiry. It said the line of questioning put to Dowden was "absurd" and has said the inquiry is the wrong way round.

Stage one, the current stage, of the inquiry will investigate what happened on the night itself.

Stage two, not expected to begin until next year, will look at events and decisions leading up to the fire.

The FBU has said Grenfell was a death trap long before the night the fire broke out and that the inquiry should look at events chronologically.

In order to make that point, the FBU launched the *Background to an Atrocity* report, available on the FBU's website. It provides an exhaustive history of 30 years of failed government policy that culminated in the Grenfell Tower fire.

Whether it was the FBU's 1999 warning about fatal flammable cladding fires or how fire and rescue services' ability to ensure building owners complied with fire safety laws was watered down; it is clear that Grenfell was an atrocity decades in the making.

■ *Background to an Atrocity* can be found at: bit.ly/FBU-BtaA

PCC DROPS BID TO TAKE OVER FIRE SERVICE

HERTFORDSHIRE

The FBU has welcomed Hertfordshire police and crime commissioner David Lloyd's withdrawal of his application to take over the local fire and rescue service.

The "business case" for the takeover included closing both police and fire stations, causing uproar among local people. The aborted scheme cost taxpayers £100,000, including fees to the consultancy KPMG for writing the proposal.

The FBU's executive council member for Eastern England, Brian Hooper, said voters would be "flabbergasted".

"Not only has this futile bid cost a

small fortune," he said, "it has severely delayed the introduction of the county's integrated risk management plan, an essential part of the strategy to keep people safe."

The FBU says police and crime commissioners (PCCs) are a threat to the independence of the fire service and to firefighters' terms and conditions, including pay and role maps.

At the time of writing, five PCCs have been allowed to take over fire services in Essex, Cambridgeshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia and Northamptonshire. More takeovers are being considered, with Lancashire, North Yorkshire and Norfolk under threat.

FBU MEMORIAL SCHEME GATHERS MOMENTUM

RED PLAQUES

The FBU's Red Plaque scheme is going from strength to strength as more memorials to fallen firefighters are unveiled.

In **EDINBURGH**, Ewan Williamson, who was killed tackling a fire in 2009, is remembered at the site of the now renamed Balmoral Bar.

His mother and sister joined local firefighters and FBU officials to unveil the plaque.

At Peterlee fire station in **DURHAM**, a Red Plaque commemorates two young firefighters, John Donley and Tony Hall, who died when their fire appliance overturned on the way to a fire in 1982. They were aged just 26 and 24 respectively.

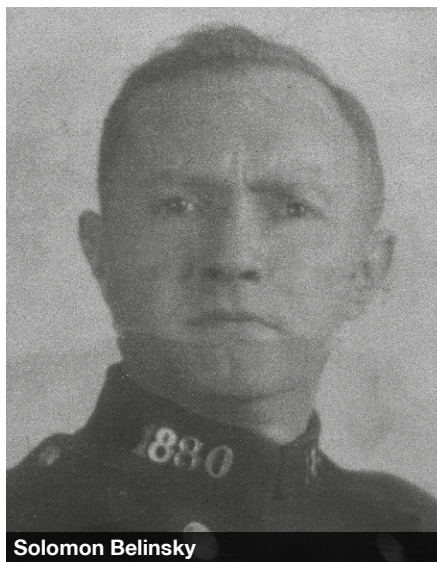
Forgotten hero Solomon Belinsky was a firefighter during the blitz and was part of a team trying to save **LEEDS'** historic museum after it was hit in a raid. He was injured by a bomb and died from his injuries 17 days later. A Red Plaque now hangs in The Old Fire Station in Gipton, now a community hub.

Big crowds turned out to the unveiling of a Red Plaque honouring all **NORTHERN IRELAND** firefighters who have died in the line of duty. A video of the event is at

bit.ly/FBU-YT-national

A ceremony on 28 October will see the next Red Plaque revealed on **LEICESTER's** Atrium Building in memory of Robert Miller, who died there in 2002.

In sadder news, the first ever Red Plaque, in memory of firefighters Billy Faust and Adam Meere, in Bethnal Green, East London, was vandalised recently. The FBU has reported the incident to police and is working on repairs.



Solomon Belinsky

SOUNDING OFF

The Burmese military must not be allowed to get away with genocide, says Anna Roberts, executive director of Burma Campaign UK

GENOCIDE IN BURMA

Just over a year ago, the Burmese military launched a horrific offensive against ethnic Rohingya civilians.

Using the pretext of attacks on police stations by an armed group, the genocidal attacks forced over 700,000 people to flee to Bangladesh. Thousands of women and girls suffered rape and sexual violence. Thousands were killed.

Eyewitnesses saw babies and children snatched from their parents' arms and thrown into burning homes or drowned in rivers. Families were burned alive in their homes and villagers were lined up and shot.

While the scale and intensity of attacks against the Rohingya may be different, the same tactics have been used by the army against Burma's other ethnic groups for many years.

A UN report said that Burma must be investigated for genocide against the Rohingya and crimes against humanity and war crimes against civilians in Kachin and Shan states.

It is shocking that the international response has been so weak. There have been many words of condemnation but little practical action to put pressure on the military and government in Burma. We need to see those words turned into action.

With the support of the FBU, Burma Campaign UK has been working hard to mobilise pressure. We are briefing and appearing in media, lobbying governments, briefing MPs and building pressure on the British government to act.

We are campaigning for those responsible for these crimes to face justice at the International Criminal Court, for a global arms embargo and for sanctions targeting the military.

■ **To take action, visit burmacampaign.org.uk**





The new and fully refitted FBU fire appliance made its debut at the Notting Hill Carnival in London where DJs gave their time for free and drew an impressive crowd

FIREFIGHTER PAY UPDATE

Firefighters will receive a 2% uplift in pay, backdated to July after a consultation with members.

Fire service employers had proposed earlier this year that pay (including continued professional development) should be “uplifted by 2% from 1 July 2018 while negotiations continue to put in place a longer-term deal”.

The FBU made clear that the 2% was a derisory offer and is campaigning for a better, improved pay rate for firefighters and emergency control operators.

A consultation with FBU members took place over the summer with the general conclusion that it is better for the 2% to be in member’s pockets rather than not.

CEREMONY HONOURS LONG-SERVING FBU MEMBERS

LONDON

The London region of the FBU held a special 25-year award ceremony for long-serving members in the capital’s City Hall.

Members and family were invited to City Hall, where the Mayor of London is based, to watch *The Firefighters’ Story* film before being presented with

the FBU award by general secretary Matt Wrack.

At the ceremony, Wrack spoke passionately about how the union could only function with the continued support and participation of members.

London EC member Paul Embery noted that 7 September – when the event took place – was the first night of the London blitz in 1940.

FBU officials said: “It was a pleasure to recognise so many of our members at such a prestigious location.

“It was appropriate for the event to take place on the anniversary of the start of the blitz. It made the event even more poignant.

“The whole ethos of the FBU and its future sits squarely on the bedrock that is the membership.”



Matt Wrack with long-serving FBU members at London's County Hall



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE.CO.UK

The FBU delegation at the TUC: (l-r, back row) Samantha Rye, Dave Green, Matt Lamb and Paul Embery (l-r front row) Ian Murray, Matt Wrack and Andy Noble

GRENFELL TOWER DISASTER A CRIMINAL INCIDENT, WRACK TELLS TUC DELEGATES

Every aspect of fire safety in Grenfell Tower had failed long before 14 June 2017, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack told delegates at the 150th Trades Union Congress in Manchester.

Supporting the FBU's motion on the disaster, Wrack said: "We've learned that the refurbishment work carried out a few years before the fire was a complete disaster from a fire safety perspective.

"It is staggering that Grenfell Tower was safer before it was refurbished than after; that it was safer in 1974 than it was in 2017.

"Every fire safety measure in that building had already failed before the fire. Compartmentation failed, because the new windows were badly fitted and sat outside the building and were made of flammable material.

"The fire doors did not give even half an hour's protection and many do not seem to have been self-closing. The lifts could not be overridden by firefighters. The ventilation system did not disperse smoke, as it was supposed to do.

"The single stairwell was barely a metre wide – and less with the handrail.

"There was no wet riser main, despite the building being close to 70 metres high – only a dry riser.

"But, above all else, Grenfell Tower was clad from top to bottom with materials that had the same sort of flammability as petrol. It is a criminal incident."

WILDFIRES

After wildfires had ravaged huge swathes of the country during the heatwave, FBU vice president Andy Noble proposed a motion calling for national structures to be created so that extreme weather events, which are becoming more common, could be better planned for.

Noble told delegates: "Our members worked 17 to 18 hour shifts, sometimes without breaks, to bring these fires under control.

"I can assure you this type of fire isn't the most exciting type of incident that firefighters deal with, chasing a grass or heathland fire, fanned by 15 or 20 mile per hour winds across an exposed Pennine hilltop isn't most firefighter's idea of a day out in the country."

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FBU president Ian Murray called for more "common pay co-ordination" between trade unions to destroy the government's pay cap once and for all.

He spoke of the benefits of collective bargaining structures that ensure parity between workers. "Firefighters often work across borders with firefighters from different fire and rescue services," he said. "It makes no sense for their pay and conditions to vary between their services. We think the same is true in every sector. We will fight to maintain the right to bargaining collectively."

CELEBRITY VISITOR

The FBU stall stood out from the crowd with its centenary branding and had a celebrity visitor in the shape of evil husband Simon Foster from BBC1's *Dr Foster*, otherwise known as Equity union member Bertie Carvel. The charming actor spoke about his admiration for the work of "firemen". He was quickly helped with his terminology by FBU delegate and national women's committee secretary Sam Rye.

CLIMATE BREAKDOWN

This summer was the hottest on record for England with 35.3C recorded in Faversham, Kent. Glasgow and Belfast experienced all-time temperature highs of 31.9C and 29.5C respectively and Porthmadog in Wales hit 33C on 28 June.

London firefighters were called out to 1,969 grass fires during the heatwave. Call-outs recorded as grassland, woodland and crops more than doubled compared to the same period last year.

London Fire Brigade tackled the largest ever grass fire in its history at Wanstead flats which engulfed 100 acres, and took 220 firefighters to put out.

In the North of England, hot and dry conditions fanned the flames of “unprecedented” wildfires across Saddleworth Moor and Winter Hill. Firefighters were “pushed to the limit”, working in shifts around the clock.

Prof Simon Lewis, a researcher at the University of Leeds and University College London said that the UK heatwave was a harbinger of the country’s future under climate change.

“Climate change is a greater threat to the UK than EU directives, terrorism or a foreign power invading. Instead of this blinkered view where the future is the same as the past, we need to step out of the intense heat and take a cool look at what we are doing to our home planet,” he said.



**Firefighters at a wildfire on
Saddleworth Moor that was
declared a major incident by
Greater Manchester Police**

DANNY LAWSON/PA IMAGES





100 YEARS IN

An unforgettable ceremony at Southwark cathedral in London will be one of the high points in the year-long celebrations of the FBU's centenary

FIREFIGHTERS



FIRE BRIGADES UNION CENTENARY 1919-2019

ON 13 OCTOBER, Southwark Cathedral in central London will be packed as a key event in the Fire Brigades Union's centenary year gets under way.

It will be a powerful and poignant service, marking 100 years of a small, punchy industrially focused union that has won major victories for its members, heavily influenced the work of the fire service and, through its campaigning work, immeasurably improved public safety.

Remarkably, it has managed to do this at a time when other, bigger, unions have been forced to merge into colossal general unions representing workers in an array of industries.

As a union, the FBU evokes Gloria Gaynor's memorable hit *I Will Survive*. Successive generations of members have ensured

that it survives in its current form – one of the key points of the centenary celebrations.

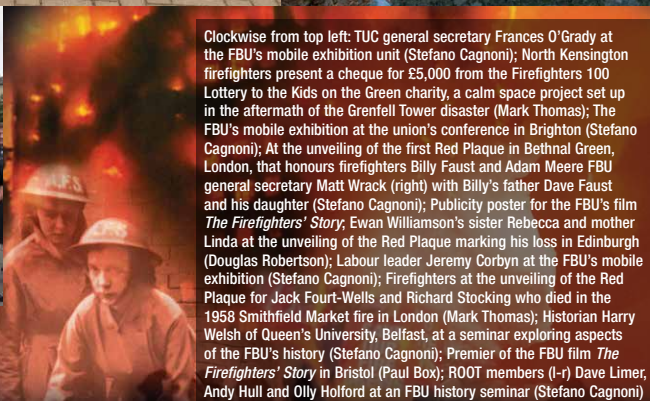
The union executive started to look at how the union would mark its centenary two years ago. Different options were on the table. "We could have taken the decision to issue a one-off publication and move on with not too much fuss," says FBU general secretary Matt Wrack.

"But we took the decision to really make a mark of it. First, because it is a huge achievement and we should recognise all our members and officials who came before us and played their part.

STRATEGIC VIEW

"But also we took a long-sighted, strategic view. If we are to survive as an independent union for another 100 years, we need to know our history, engage a new layer of activists and to shout about our achievements."

So, throughout 2018, the union has been unveiling a mass of



Clockwise from top left: TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady at the FBU's mobile exhibition unit (Stefano Cagnoni); North Kensington firefighters present a cheque for £5,000 from the Firefighters 100 Lottery to the Kids on the Green charity, a calm space project set up in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower disaster (Mark Thomas); The FBU's mobile exhibition at the union's conference in Brighton (Stefano Cagnoni); At the unveiling of the first Red Plaque in Bethnal Green, London, that honours firefighters Billy Faust and Adam Meere FBU general secretary Matt Wrack (right) with Billy's father Dave Faust and his daughter (Stefano Cagnoni); Publicity poster for the FBU's film *The Firefighters' Story*; Ewan Williamson's sister Rebecca and mother Linda at the unveiling of the Red Plaque marking his loss in Edinburgh (Douglas Robertson); Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn at the FBU's mobile exhibition (Stefano Cagnoni); Firefighters at the unveiling of the Red Plaque for Jack Fourt-Wells and Richard Stocking who died in the 1958 Smithfield Market fire in London (Mark Thomas); Historian Harry Welsh of Queen's University, Belfast, at a seminar exploring aspects of the FBU's history (Stefano Cagnoni); Premier of the FBU film *The Firefighters' Story* in Bristol (Paul Box); ROOT members (l-r) Dave Limer, Andy Hull and Olly Holford at an FBU history seminar (Stefano Cagnoni)

THE FIREFIGHTERS' STORY 100 YEARS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

A FILM BY IN FOCUS PRODUCTIONS PRODUCED BY JOE JOHNSON PRODUCED BY EMMA WEBSTER EDITED BY CATHY HOLLAND JOHANNES BRICK ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS JUDIE CHILLEY MARTHA BAILEY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALISON PROPER CAMERA PAUL TANE JEREMY JEFFREY QUALITY STANLEY WINSTAN WHITTAKER MUSIC JAMIE HULL AUDIO NETWORK SERVICES FRANCIS RODRIGUEZ POST PRODUCTION BOUNE TACHE POST PRODUCTION

THE MAKING

centenary material. A website charting its history was launched (www.fbu.org.uk/centenary), a documentary *The Firefighters' Story* has been showing at events across the country and two books will be published, the first of which, *Fighting Fire*, is now available to buy on the FBU shop (shop.fbu.org.uk). The Southwark Cathedral event will be the icing on the cake.

The day will begin with a wreath-laying ceremony involving every brigade in the UK at the National Firefighters' Memorial opposite St. Paul's Cathedral. Then firefighters will march solemnly across the Millennium Bridge to Southwark Cathedral for the main ceremony.

The Southwark ceremony will celebrate the men and women who shape the modern day fire and rescue service. The audience will be taken on an emotional journey as the ceremony honours, in particular, those who have made the ultimate sacrifice during the FBU's 100 year history.

A reception will then celebrate the union's proud past and the forward-looking work of today's members.

The FBU wants to involve as many members as possible and is encouraging people to come to London for the day to take part in the centenary events. The Folly bar in the City will be dressed in FBU branding and show the ceremony live on a big screen. Bar sales will go to the good causes fund of the Firefighters 100 Lottery.

LIVE STREAM OF CEREMONY

Unable to make it to London? Don't worry. The FBU has teamed up with the *Daily Mirror* to have the full ceremony streamed live on its website, so you can watch it all from home.

If you know a few people who would be interested, why not arrange a group viewing somewhere local?

The ceremony has been a long time in the making – some would say 100 years – and none of it would have been possible without the help of People Creative, a live experience agency that has donated a vast amount of free time to ensure the union gets a celebration it can be proud of.

JOIN IN

■ To watch the livestream of the Southwark Cathedral event on 13 October visit www.mirror.co.uk/fbu

■ The Folly can be found at 41 Gracechurch Street, London EC3V 0BT



**FIREFIGHTERS 100
LOTTERY**

FIRE BRIGADES UNION | SERVING FIREFIGHTERS SINCE 1918

SOWING THE SEEDS OF BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Firefighters are joining others in high stress occupations to discover and use the benefits of gardens and gardening. David Wibberley reports

Following the deaths last year of firefighters Danny Haxton and Mark Hilder, both stationed at Beckenham fire station in South London, the Firefighters 100 Lottery helped to fund a memorial garden. Terry Leigh, the FBU borough rep, said that “it was a very hard and difficult time for the firefighters at Beckenham”.

It was crucial, he said, “to try and find a way to help the collective grieving process”.

Ideas were floated around the station and it was decided to build the memorial garden on the theme of red, white, blue and green, set around a water feature.

Terry says that it was important that the firefighters did all the work themselves, from planning, through planting to ongoing daily maintenance. Terry believes that having this focal point of remembrance and reflection has certainly helped with the healing process at Beckenham.

The plot has become more than a remembrance garden, it is a place for

Firefighter Simon Jakeman (left) won a silver medal at this year's Hampton Court Palace Flower Show for his FBU Centenary Mess Garden, created to celebrate the union's 100th anniversary in 2018. Fire dog Sherlock and handler Paul Osborne joined him in the garden



quiet contemplation, a therapeutic oasis, an area for mindfulness, used by all the firefighters for moments of quiet reflection.

Terry says that the garden breaks down barriers and he “has had conversations there that he would never have had within the four walls of the station”.

What has taken place at Beckenham is not new; the healing power of plants has a long history. The use of horticulture in mental health treatment dates at least as far back as 2000 BC.

In ancient Mesopotamia, the Persians created gardens to soothe the senses, involving beauty, fragrance, flowing water, and cool temperatures.

Ancient Egyptian physicians prescribed garden walks for patients with mental illness. During the middle ages, the grounds of monastery hospitals contained plants whose sole purpose was to cheer up the melancholy.

These ancient beliefs are now being backed up by modern research, giving proven results for patients with depression and other mental illnesses. The benefits appear to spring from a combination of physical activity, awareness of natural surroundings, cognitive stimulation and the satisfaction of the work.

The therapeutic properties of a garden increase with a combination of food-producing, scented, and flowering plants to nourish all the senses.

A comfortable seat enables visitors to bask in the garden while resting from their labours. Letting the body get a little hot and sweaty may also have hidden benefits – elevated body temperatures





JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

are correlated with increased feelings of well-being and soil contains chemicals that are natural anti-depressants too.

Firefighters from Brixton fire station, not far from Beckenham, recently showcased their roof-top garden on BBC's *Gardeners' World*. They backed up Beckenham firefighters' accounts of the benefits of a garden for their mental wellbeing and agree that it is making a positive difference to life on station.

MYSTERIOUS

No one is 100% sure how gardening helps with improved mental health. All we know is that it does. When we surround ourselves with growing plants, we're getting more than "a nice view". That sensory experience stirs mysterious regenerative processes deep in our bodies and minds.

There is a much-reported case of two groups of patients recovering from gall bladder surgery in Pennsylvania: one group looked out of their windows at green trees, while the other had only a



Above: At the opening of the Beckenham garden (top)
Right: Brixton's rooftop garden

WHEN WE SURROUND
OURSELVES WITH
GROWING PLANTS, THAT
EXPERIENCE STIRS
REGENERATIVE PROCESSES

www.firefighters100lottery.co.uk

brick wall. You guessed it: the nature-view group healed significantly faster, needed less pain medication, and had fewer complications.

Humans are instinctively drawn to connect with other living, growing things; we want to feel part of the web of life. We can feel something happening when we walk in the woods, or sit quietly on a mossy knoll, and these feelings also take place when we are actively involved in supporting life and growth – gardening.

Military charities including Help for Heroes and Combat Stress recognise this affiliation with the natural world and have programmes involving horticulture.

Both organisations believe that this engagement with nature plays an important role in the treatment of post traumatic stress disorder.

Jolandi du Preez, lead occupational therapist at Combat Stress says that horticultural therapy for veterans "offers opportunities

to be away from stress-inducing factors, either physically or psychologically, helping to calm the body and mind when intrusive thoughts are troublesome and offers opportunities for mindfulness".

The Fire Brigades Union is seeking to support members and help them get involved with gardens of their own.

Dave Shek, regional secretary of the FBU in London, is urging fire stations to apply for grants from the Firefighters 100 Lottery for gardens of their own. Successful grants will be awarded to the value of £100, £500 or £1,000, depending on the scheme.

To paraphrase the famous psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud: "Flowers are restful to look at. They have neither emotions nor conflicts. But they are so important in the healing process of those that do."

IT TAKES A MAJOR TRAGEDY

Kings Cross and Grenfell Tower are five miles and 30 years apart, but the lessons are the same and must be learnt, writes **Helen Hague**



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

FIREFIGHTERS



FIRE BRIGADES UNION CENTENARY 1918-2018

ON 18 NOVEMBER 1987, at around 19.25, a match was dropped through a gap on the Piccadilly Line escalator at Kings Cross station. Still alight, it hit grease and litter gathered out of sight below the wooden stairs, igniting a fire that killed 31 people and seriously injured many more.

A public inquiry chaired by Desmond Fennell QC reported within a year, pinpointing the cause of the blaze and making 157 recommendations. These led to some much-needed changes that would make the London Underground safer, including banning smoking throughout stations and replacing escalators containing wood.

The first “escalator alight” call to fire control came at 19.36. Red Watch from Soho, led by station officer Colin Townsley, were first to arrive at 19.42. Within minutes of their arrival, a fireball, fuelled by greasy rubbish, erupted from the wooden stairwell. Flames raced up concourse walls to the ceiling. The ticket hall clock stopped at 7.45pm – the moment flames cut through the wiring.

Thick black smoke soon filled tunnels and obscured exits. Molten plastic dripped from ceilings. Concrete cracked. Tiles fell from walls. And many people died from suffocation.

So how could it happen? The inquiry called many expert witnesses and commissioned many tests. It concluded that flames heated the framework and decking of the Piccadilly line

escalator, pre-heating the rest of the wooden staircase before it burst into flames.

Station officer Townsley was found on the concourse, alongside the body of a badly burned woman he was trying to save. He was posthumously honoured for his bravery. Both lay near the stairs leading to St Pancras Road, where fire crews were gathering, awaiting breathing apparatus and instructions.

Sian Griffiths, one of 150 firefighters mobilised that night, was preparing to go down these stairs to assist crews on the concourse. She noticed crew members trying to resuscitate a man in a firefighter’s tunic who they had just carried above ground.

“It was incredibly shocking, and as I walked past to descend the stairs, into what appeared to be a living hell, I recognised the casualty as station officer Townsley”, Sian recalls.

Amid the chaos and struggle to save lives, there was particular grief for a fallen colleague on the fire ground that night. And let’s remember that post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was little understood back then, let alone talked about.

TRULY AWFUL

Sian, who had been in the job less than three years, descended into “thick smoke, no visibility, screaming and shouting, increases in temperature as trains went through the tunnels and bodies all over the place. It was truly awful.”

She was later tasked with collecting and removing bodies to the street where they were officially pronounced dead. Now retired, the former watch manager, FBU activist, Queen’s Fire Service Medal holder and doughty campaigner for women’s rights, says that constant vigilance is needed to defend safety



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

The funeral of station officer Colin Townley

Firefighters at the staircase entrance to Kings Cross station

standards. The notion that we can now “afford to close stations, cut jobs and rest on our laurels” is not only wrong-headed but also disrespectful to the memory of all who have died in catastrophic incidents, she says.

She cites words from Desmond Fennell QC in the constant battle to maintain standards more than 30 years on. He said: “The message is that nobody responsible for safety can be complacent that all potential hazards have been identified or that the cumulative effect of individually unlikely events can be predicted, let alone ignored.”

Before 1987, frontline firefighters had long complained of the inadequacies of personal protective equipment. So the Fennell inquiry’s call for a review was welcomed. At the FBU conference the following year, there were stories of PVC gloves melting and leggings being so shoddily made that they fell apart as firefighters attempted to rescue those caught in the King’s Cross fire.

Paul Embury, FBU executive council member for London, says that the King’s Cross disaster “still resonates” around the fire and rescue service.

“It was a pivotal incident, and yet another example of how it takes a major tragedy to secure significant improvements in public and firefighter safety.

“We lost one of our members – Colin Townsley. Like many firefighters before him, and since, he made the ultimate sacrifice – risking his own life to save someone he had never even met. It’s

sad that, so many years on, some of the operational issues identified by the public inquiry, such as poor communications, are still problems today.”

Embury says the public again witnessed the “extraordinary courage and professionalism of firefighters” at another major catastrophe in the capital, when Grenfell Tower burned so shockingly fast last year. “Politicians and the media always say ‘Never again’ after such tragedies. This time, they must mean it. The British public deserve a properly funded fire and rescue service, with a robust fire safety regulatory regime, which protects them adequately and limits the chances of disasters such as Kings Cross and Grenfell Tower ever happening again.”

CONSTANT VIGILANCE

Kings Cross/St Pancras International has long shed its grimy run-down late-eighties feel – reborn as a slick transport hub, complete with up-market shops and bars. Teams of cleaners now ensure dropped debris – from chip packets to mini bottles of champagne – don’t hang around for long. Talk about culture change – though fear of terrorist attacks has helped drive the war against randomly dropped rubbish.

But as Desmond Fennell and Sian Griffiths argue, it is constant vigilance and combatting complacency that stand the best chance of keeping the public safe from fire hazards. And, of course, as Sian has made clear, keeping properly crewed fire stations open all hours.

NOBODY
RESPONSIBLE FOR
SAFETY CAN BE
COMPLACENT



A MOTHER'S PRIDE

Linda Williamson unveiled an FBU Red Plaque in July
in honour of her fallen firefighter son Ewan.

The Red Plaque Scheme is a fitting tribute to firefighters who have died in the line of
duty, brings comfort to loved ones and ensures their sacrifice is never forgotten.

With your help, the FBU can establish more memorials.

Buying Firefighters 100 Lottery tickets helps to fund important projects like this.

HELP US REMEMBER OUR FALLEN COMRADES



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Registration No: 000-046564-R-324800-002 © 2017 Gatherwell Ltd an External Lottery Manager (ELM)

LEGAL BEAGLE

ASBESTOS IS STILL A THREAT

Asbestos is the greatest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK.

Employers and insurance companies want to hide their track record of exposing workers – and those around them – in history books. But Thompsons Solicitors knows that, for thousands of families, forgetting about asbestos is not an option.

Asbestos-related illness is not a thing of the past. The number of people who will be victims has not yet reached its peak.

Not everyone who has been exposed to asbestos will become ill, but it is important that all members are aware of the dangers posed by asbestos and what to do if they are worried about any potential exposure.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos, a natural fibre with fire-retardant and heat insulating qualities, was commonly used in construction until the 1980s.

Links between asbestos exposure and ill health were known in the early 1900s and confirmed without doubt from the 1960s.

But the use of asbestos in the UK was not completely banned until the late 1990s. It is easily reduced to a powder and can become airborne – making it a particular hazard to anyone inhaling its microscopic fibres.

HAVE I BEEN EXPOSED?

In buildings where asbestos may still be present, your employer should be

providing personal protective equipment (PPE) as exposure can still occur.

Members who have been working for many years, including retired members, will not always have had access to the right equipment to minimise the risk of exposure.

People who are going to develop an asbestos disease normally begin to develop the symptoms a long time after exposure – somewhere between 10 to 50 years. But the nature of the fibres

means that not all members who have been exposed will develop a condition.

If you know you have been exposed, concerns about developing an asbestos-related condition can be significant and prolonged over years.

SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Thompsons Solicitors ran the first successful asbestos disease case in the UK and have unrivalled experience of representing people suffering from asbestos-related illnesses,

including mesothelioma, pleural thickening, lung cancer and asbestosis.

Union members have access to our legal expertise. Our specialists are experts in their field, experienced at working to protect and assist members who have been affected by asbestos-related illnesses.

Our #PastButPresent campaign aims to give a voice to sufferers, their families, communities and industries that continue to be affected by asbestos-related diseases, ensuring that their stories from the past remain to the fore in the present.

If you or a loved one think you may be suffering as a result of previous asbestos exposure, our experts can help you. They can provide legal guidance and point you to support services and medical professionals.

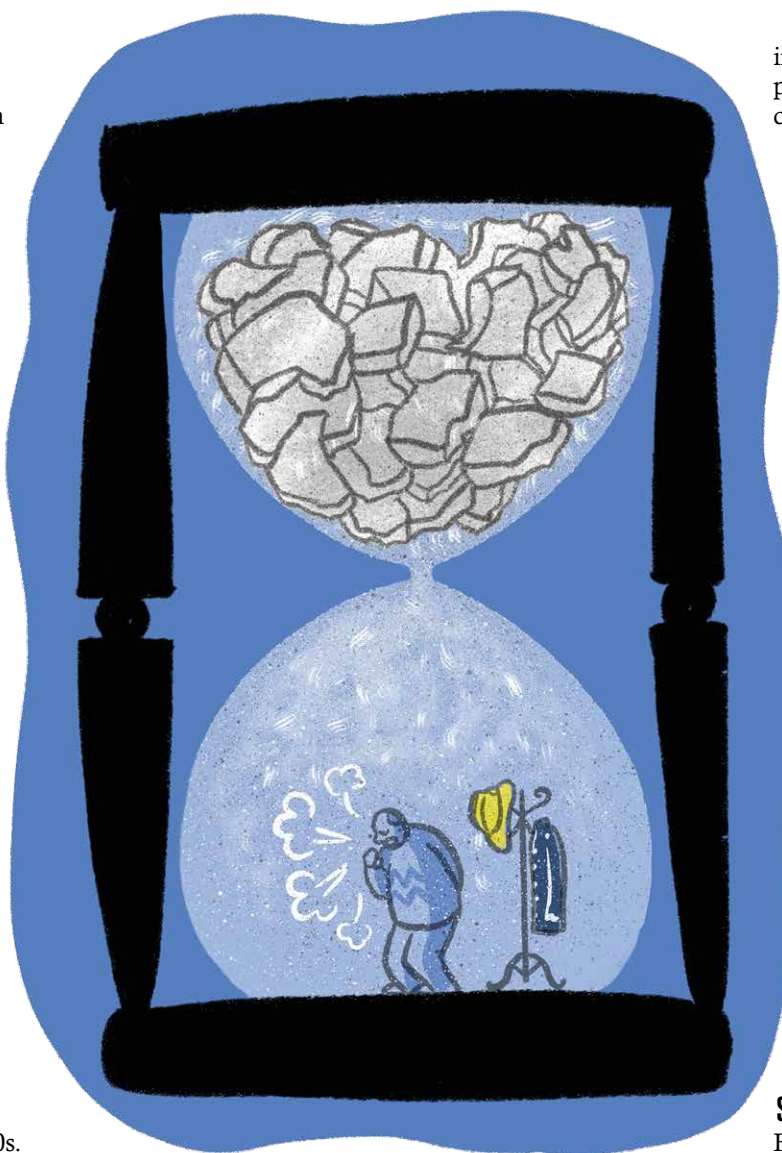
To learn more about our #PastButPresent campaign, go to bit.ly/Thompsons-APBP

STANDING WITH UNIONS

For almost 100 years, Thompsons Solicitors has stood shoulder to shoulder with the trade union movement, working with unions for improved workers' rights and campaigning for justice and equality.

In recognition of the 150th anniversary of the TUC, Thompsons Solicitors is celebrating its commitment to the trade union movement and the value and significance that trade unions have had in the past and continue to have today.

■ To find out more, go to bit.ly/Thompsons-SWU



SATOSHI KAMEYASHI

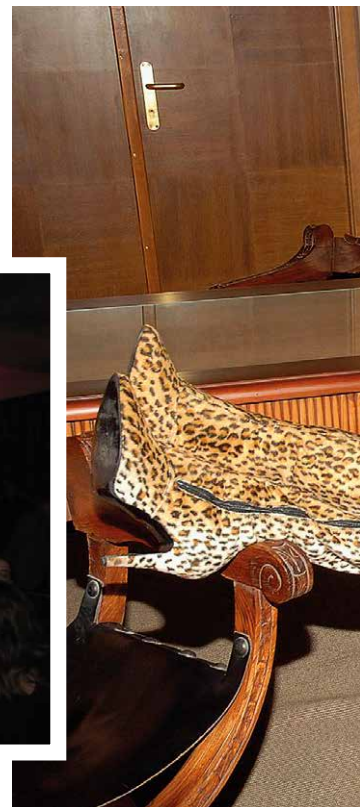


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0800 089 1331**

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Steve Pateman with Cyndi Lauper



YOU CAN'T PUT A LABEL ON ANYBODY

Everyone has a story to tell, but few can be as fascinating as that of firefighter and former 'kinky boot' manufacturer Steve Pateman, who has put his experiences into a new book. He talked to **Will Stone**

Northampton firefighter Steve Pateman, 56, once an entrepreneur, is the unlikely hero behind the hit film and musical *Kinky Boots*, his true story of trying to save an ailing family-run shoe factory by branching out into the "kinky" market.

The idea was sparked by a chance call from Sue Sheppard, the owner of specialist transgender shop – Lacies in Folkestone. She was having trouble

sourcing heeled boots for men that would support their feet and build.

With no budget for professional models, Steve began modelling his own stilettos and thigh-high boots, not to mention shaving his rugby player legs.

"It took 10 large razors to shave my legs the first time and I ended up looking like an albino chicken," Steve recalls. "I had to fake tan them as well and learn to walk on the ball of my foot instead of my heel, which is what men are used to.

"I was like Bambi on stilts. Being 6'2" didn't help much either."

Steve's story was featured nearly 20 years ago in the BBC fly-on-the-wall documentary series *Trouble At The Top*, which focussed on struggling companies and unusual business ventures.

The episode was deemed to be so good that it was promoted to the opening slot of the series, bumping down the original opener that focussed on the launch of the Russian version of *Vogue* magazine.

The story was adapted in 2005 into the comedy-drama film *Kinky Boots*, directed by Julian Jarrold and written by Geoff Deane and Tim Firth.

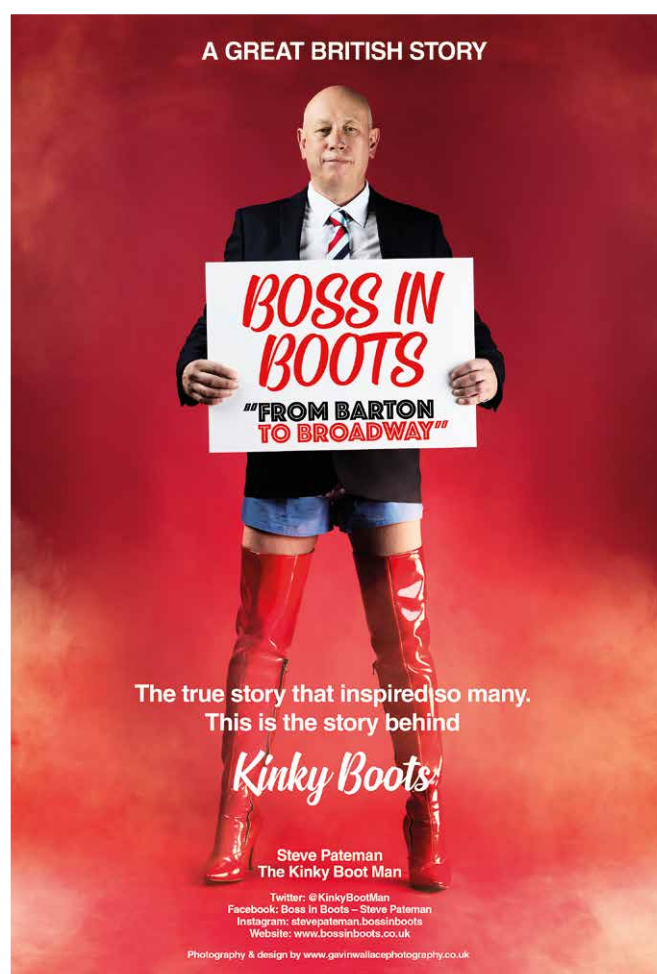
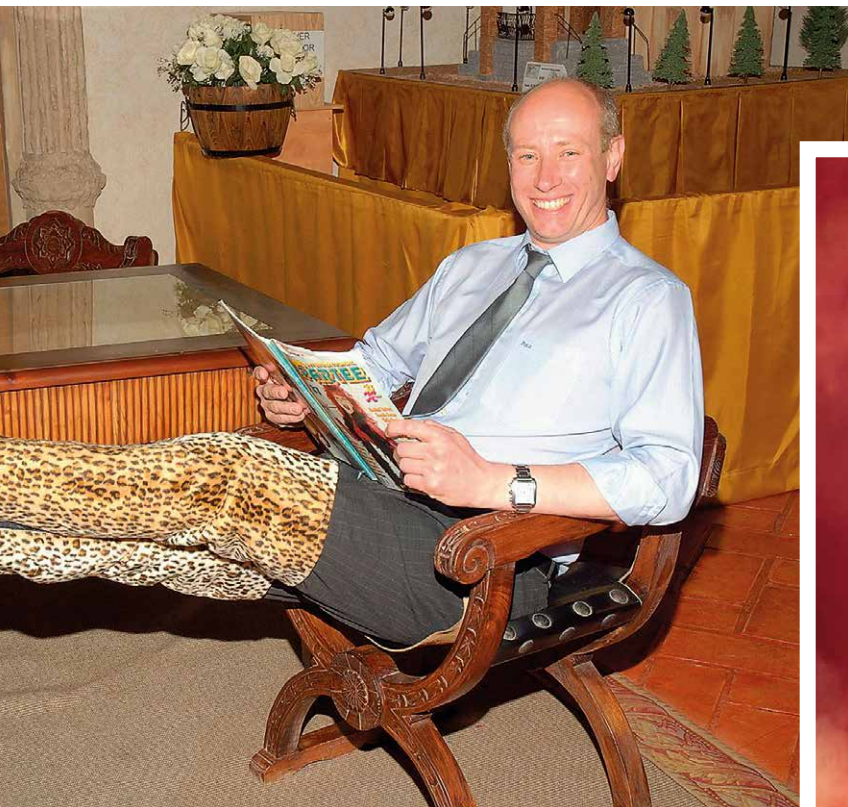
DRAG QUEEN

The film featured Chiwetel Ejiofor, of *12 Years A Slave* fame, as drag queen Lola, who teams up with factory owner Charlie Price, based on Steve and played by Joel Edgerton.

Although there was no single Lola in Steve's life, he says that she was the personification all rolled into one of about 15 characters he had met from the transgender community.

The film, in turn, inspired the Broadway musical of the same name. It has music and lyrics by singer, actor and LGBT rights activist star Cyndi Lauper, for which it won six Tony awards, including best musical, and best score for Lauper – the first woman to win that category on her own.

Since then, the musical has toured the world including London's West End, Australia, Seoul, Tokyo, Manila, Poland,



Finland and the Netherlands.

Steve admits that this period was a particularly “bitter pill to swallow” as the film sold the rights, so he didn’t receive a penny for the musical’s success and had no involvement in its development.

The producers begrudgingly offered him a pair of tickets to the opening night on Broadway – if he could get himself there.

But now it’s Steve’s turn to tell his story with the publication of his book *Boss In Boots*, which recounts his journey from a factory owner in the Northamptonshire village of Earls Barton to sparking the *Kinky Boots* empire – in what he aptly

**'I WAS IN MY 40s
WHEN I APPLIED TO
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HIM WRONG'**

terms “from Barton to Broadway”.

The book, which will retail at £12.50, aims to tell the world and fans of *Kinky Boots* how it really happened without the airbrushing of mainstream film and theatre.

However, firefighters will be able to buy the book for £10 online by quoting the reference FIRE999. For every book sold in this way, a pound will be donated to The Fire Fighters Charity.

The elephant in the room of Steve’s fascinating story, though, has to be the question of how did a factory owner known for selling kinky boots end up as a firefighter?

CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Steve says he first became a retained firefighter in 2003 to escape the claustrophobia of “being caged up in an office”. He became fulltime in 2006 when he closed his business after it was muscled out by bigger businesses that stole the idea and were able to source cheaper material abroad – a story all too familiar to small business owners.

Steve says: “It was my brand, I created it and I didn’t want to pass it on to

anybody else.

“I was in my 40s when I applied to become a wholetime firefighter and I remember the fire officer telling me I was too old. I wanted to prove him wrong.”

Steve’s background enabled him to join the fire service with an open mind as well as an acceptance and respect for the trans and LGBTQ community.

He said: “The experience certainly opened up my eyes as, all of a sudden, I was mixing with people I had not come across before – the trans community.

“It taught me that looks count for nothing, it’s all about personality.

“Society is full of contradictions. A cross-dresser on the street is called weird, but cross-dressing in panto is called family entertainment.

“It’s down to respect. There’s a danger in terminology. If you’ve got to put a label on something you can’t be diverse. You can’t put a label on anybody.

“My only regret is that I didn’t get into kinky boots sooner.”

■ **Boss In Boots was published in September. For more information and to buy a book with the discount code FIRE999 visit www.bossinboots.co.uk**

FIGHTING FIRE AND DEFENDING THE SERVICE WITH WIT, CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE

Fighting Fire, a new book by Sian Moore, Tessa Wright and Phillip Taylor of the Work and Employment Research Unit at the University of Greenwich, tells the story of the FBU over the past three decades.

It is based on the testimonies of FBU representatives and members; control staff, officers, and wholetime and retained fire-fighters from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

Their accounts capture the lived experience of firefighters in a changing environment. A distinctive feature is the way that the dynamics of gender, race, sexuality and class are woven into the narrative.

The book shows how, 100 years since its formation in 1918, the FBU continues to be simultaneously part of the fabric of the fire and rescue service and a “politically committed union”.

This history more or less wrote itself, says Sian Moore. “All the firefighter and control staff activists we spoke to

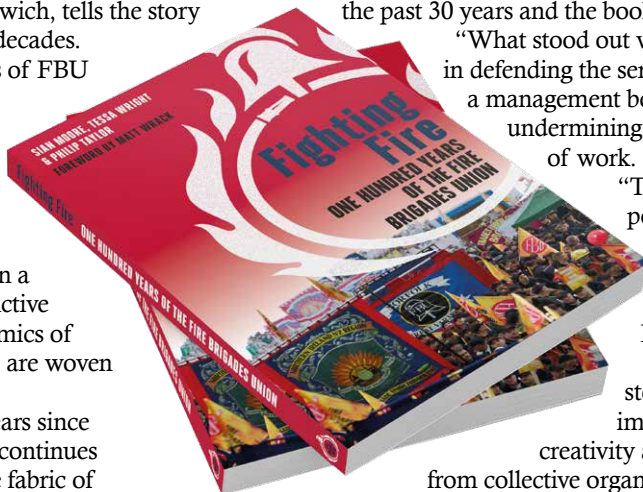
had a very clear understanding of the wider economic and political framework in which the union has operated over the past 30 years and the book conveys their analysis.

“What stood out was the resilience of activists in defending the service and standing up to a management bent on enforcing cuts and undermining terms and conditions of work.

“The book documents the wider political and international work of the union, including its lesser known work, for example, in the Northern Ireland peace process.

“On a lighter note, the stories from the picket lines are important testimony to the wit, creativity and exuberance that emerges from collective organisation and action and sustains solidarity.”

■ *Fighting Fire: 100 Years of the Fire Brigades Union* is published by New Internationalist on behalf of the FBU and can be bought online at shop.fbu.org.uk



NO HARM, AND A LOT OF GOOD, COME FROM UNION LEARNING

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) has another great success on its hands after two of its learners went on to create an inclusive football team for children with special educational needs.

Firefighter Dave Naudusevics completed a level 3 advanced apprenticeship in personal training while his wife Leanne took part in the autism awareness and mental health awareness course. Courses from the ULF are free to access for any FBU member as well as their family.

The Leicestershire couple combined the skills they learned on the courses to create the Wigston Foxes, a unique football team for six to 12-year-olds who cannot join mainstream teams – the only one of its kind in Leicestershire. They are affiliated to the Football Association (FA) and play in monthly tournaments.



Leanne, Charlie and Dave Naudusevics

“The founding of the football team makes all the study worthwhile,” says Leanne. “It massively contributes to the children’s development. One boy used to need to be helped on the pitch during games by his dad but, as his confidence grew through taking part, he stopped needing that support. His dad can now enjoy the game from the touchline along with the other parents.”

Dave, who coaches the team, says he is applying the knowledge he gained on the apprenticeship to help the

children improve their game. “Now that I am a qualified fitness instructor, I will use my knowledge to help coach the team. The opportunities provided by the ULF have really proved a catalyst for both Leanne and myself.”

As Leanne says: “No harm can come from learning. There is always something new to find out.”

■ The FBU Union Learning Fund has launched a new prospectus full of information on free learning opportunities. For more information visit: www.fbueducation.org

STATION CAT CHEAP FIRE APPLIANCES

FIRE ENGINES FOR POCKET MONEY

News dropped into your Cat's basket of a school pupil from Norfolk, Lewis Cram, who saved up his pocket money to buy his own fire engine. His family then bought him a second – from the USA.

Two thoughts immediately sprang to mind. First, how much pocket money does this lad get? £2,000 over 18



months, he told the BBC.

Second, is he just taking advantage of supply and demand and has he come across a stockpile of surplus-to-requirement fire engines and got a good deal because there are so many available.

Then your Cat thought that, maybe, Lewis isn't so astute after all. Back in 2012, AssetCo who owned all of London and Lincolnshire's fire appliances under a misguided PFI agreement, was forced to sell its entire UK fire appliance fleet for £2. (The Guardian, 2012)

But Lewis is only 13 and, unlike AssetCo, he seems to be hanging on to his fire engines.

SECRET SOCIETY

There has been a fair amount of chat on social media about Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's decision that all

social media output regarding Surrey will now come solely from their service-wide official accounts.

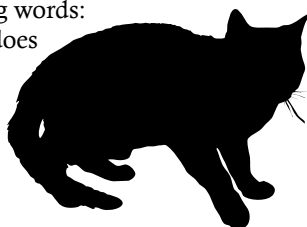
All station-based Facebook and Twitter accounts have been closed and crews are being asked to forward any relevant material for inclusion on the official social media pages.

It is probably safe to presume that relevant material does not include anything relating to the cuts being inflicted on the brigade by Surrey County Council.

Firefighters have been advised that any unofficial page should be marked with the following words:

"This page does

not reflect the official views of Surrey Fire



and Rescue Service".

Management even had the audacity to thank firefighters for their previous efforts in engaging with their local communities.

Unsurprisingly, there have been accusations of gagging and questions have been raised about Surrey's firefighters' freedom of speech being removed.

Your Cat cannot help but draw parallels from history.

High achieving organisations and civilisations have done so with powerful leaders. When leadership is replaced with repression then these institutions ultimately

fail. We only have to look at what happened to the Soviet Union or what is happening in Trump's America.

Students and scientists protested after fire destroyed Brazil's national museum in Rio de Janeiro – see It couldn't happen here



FABIO TEIXEIRA/DPA/PA IMAGES



Lewis Cram's two fire engines at this year's Cromer festival

IT COULDN'T HAPPEN HERE ...

Sad news of the fire that has destroyed the national museum in Rio de Janeiro. It started after the museum had closed for the day and, fortunately, no lives were lost.

Museum officials say that almost 90% of its collection has been lost. It housed one of the largest anthropological and natural history collections in the Americas – around 20 million artefacts. It included the 12,000-year-old remains of "Luzia", the oldest human remains ever discovered in Latin America.

Staff blamed the fire on years of funding cuts. In Britain, where we are all in it together, we would prefer to call them "austerity measures".

25-YEAR BADGES



Adrian Moyse (l), South Wales officers' branch, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Ian Buckley



Scott Forbes (l), training, Mid/East Lothian and Scottish Borders, receives his 25-year badge from East area vice-chair Gus Sproul



Mark Aiken (r), Portlethen development centre, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from North area organiser Leon Murray



Gary Zaccarini (l), Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Ian Hibbert



Samuel Gallagher, Patrick McCarroll and Aiden McCarney (l-r) Fintona, Omagh, Northern Ireland, receive their 25-year badges from regional secretary Stephen Boyd



Darren Rose (l), red watch, Sprowston, Norfolk, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Alan Jaye with colleagues looking on



Jason Palmer (l), white watch, Sprowston, Norfolk, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Alan Jaye



Tony Callister (r), Barrow, former brigade secretary for Cumbria, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Ben Jones



George Henderson (r), green watch, Kingsway East, Dundee, receives his 25-year badge from North Area secretary Gary Lennie



Jim Taylor (r), red watch, Kingsway East, Dundee, receives his 25-year badge from North Area secretary Gary Lennie



Nick Bryan (r), amber watch, Kingsway East, Dundee, receives his 25-year badge from North Area secretary Gary Lennie



Paul Smith (r), amber watch, Kingsway East Fire, Dundee, receives his 25-year badge from branch official Stuart Nicoll with colleagues looking on



Alan Faulds (l), Stirling and Clackmannanshire, receives his 25-year badge from Alloa branch secretary Davie Dawson



Ian Williams (l) red watch, Neath, Mid and West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Barrie Davies with watch members looking on



John Fox (r), white watch, Warrington, Cheshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Andrew Fox-Hewitt



Lee Perry (r), white watch, Soho, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Darren Cameron



Chris Cock (r), retained, Ashford, Kent, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Malc Harms



Mark Rollo (r), Yeovil, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from FBU rep Dave Lock



Fleur Wilks (c), West Sussex, receives her 25-year badge from brigade organiser **Pawel Kosla** (l) with group manager **Stephen Clack**



Fraser Whitaker (l), green watch, Burnley, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary **John Rivett** with colleagues looking on



Dave Noddle (r), Chorley/USAR, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Kev Wilkie** with colleagues looking on



Brendan Higgins, Michael Maguire, Johnny Little, John Magee and John Reihill (l-r), Lisnaskea, Northern Ireland, receive their 25-year badges



Erol Mehmet (r), white watch, Kingston, London, receives his 25-year badge from area secretary **Dave Young** with colleagues looking on



Craig White (l), blue watch, Lancaster, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Kev Wilkie** with colleagues looking on



Dave Williams (r), white watch, Blackburn/USAR, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Kev Wilkie** with colleagues looking on



Stef Belsten (r) white watch, Torquay, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep **Scott Atkins**

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Northumberland, Tyne & Wear
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158 Muller Road, Horfield,
Bristol, BS7 9RE
0117 935 5132, 13rs@fbu.org.uk

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

0808 100 6061

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.

T THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS

Please send good quality, 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.

THIS YEAR THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION IS 100 YEARS OLD

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PROUD HISTORY: WWW.FBU.ORG.UK/CENTENARY



FIREFIGHTERS



FIRE BRIGADES UNION CENTENARY 1918-2018