

FIREFIGHTER

APRIL/MAY 2016

LIFE SAVING OPERATOR

FBU helps to fund award-winning control film See p10

**IT PAYS TO
CAMPAIGN**
SEE p7

**EWAN'S LEGACY
MUST BE SAFE**
SEE p14

**ADULT FITNESS
APPRENTICESHIPS**
SEE p16





MATT WRACK EU REFERENDUM – AN INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

I recently gave evidence in the House of Commons on the Policing and Crime Bill which is currently being rushed through Parliament.

It is a hotchpotch of measures involving various aspects of policing but, critically, it also includes the provision to enable police and crime commissioners (PCCs) in England to take over governance of the fire and rescue service.

We have had plenty of well recorded disputes with fire and rescue authorities. They have often failed to defend our service or adequately challenge proposals from chief fire officers.

Such failures have occasionally led to scandals, such as the recent media coverage of the retirement and re-engagement of various chief officers.

These issues are a clear demonstration of narrow self-interest on the part of the managers involved and of a failure of scrutiny and oversight by councillors who should know better.

We have challenged issues such as this vigorously and often.

Nevertheless, handing the running of the fire service over to PCCs will do nothing to improve matters. PCCs, who were elected on the lowest turnout of any modern UK election, have failed utterly to demonstrate any improvement to the service's level of performance, oversight or scrutiny.

Handing over control of our service to PCCs will undermine the independence, neutrality and professionalism



STEFANO CASONI

of firefighters, whilst posing an additional threat to pay, conditions and negotiation rights, all of which have already been under severe attack for several years.

All of the witnesses from the fire service who gave evidence in the House of Commons clearly and unequivocally opposed the idea of allowing "hostile" takeovers of fire and rescue – i.e. where there is local opposition to any such proposal.

Like the proposed enforced academisation of schools in England, this is another attack on local democracy, and this from a party which has lectured us about their support for "localism".

EU REFERENDUM

The European Union has been an ongoing source of debate within the trade union movement. European

economic integration and EU policies clearly have a huge impact on all aspects of our working lives, including the background to how unions function and bargain.

There are matters relating to the referendum that significantly affect our service, our bargaining rights and our position as a union. The executive council will present a policy statement to our conference in May where a range of views on the issue will be heard before the final vote, which is of course a matter of individual choice.

TRADE UNION BILL

The Tory attack on our trade union rights continues through the Trade Union Bill. This government see unions as a source of consistent opposition to many of their plans for public services, workers' rights and living standards.

I was asked to give evidence on the Bill in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Debate in the latter led to a series of setbacks for the government, exposing the weakness of their arguments for key elements of the Bill.

It was exposed for what it is, a one-sided, partisan attack on workers' rights and their ability to organise.

The wider trade union campaign has challenged the government and won the argument, but the Tories can still use their votes in the House of Commons to force their legislation through.

They may make some concessions, but the final legislation will still be a serious attack on our rights.

We and others in the trade union movement must prepare to defend those who end up being caught out by the new law.



CONTENTS

APRIL/MAY 2016

NEWS

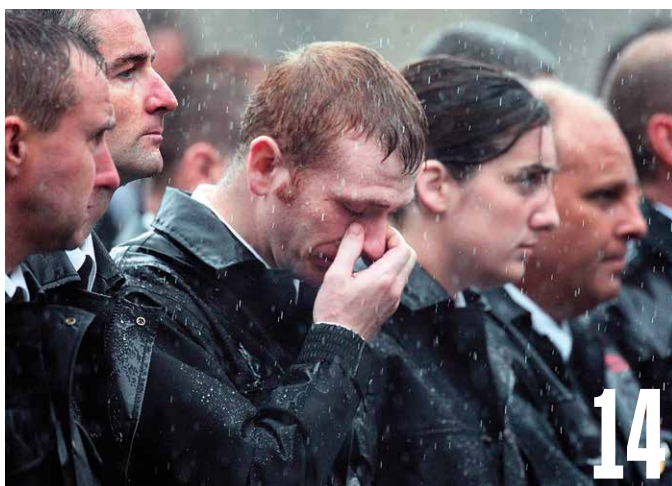
- 4** Peers, including some Tories, vote against Trade Union Bill
- 5** Fleur Lombard remembered South Yorkshire firefighters begin action
- 6** Former FBU president Bill Deal dies

FEATURES

- 10** Life saving operator Award-winning film, part-funded by FBU, highlights role of control staff
- 12** In or out? FBU members put both sides of the argument
- 14** Ewan's legacy The lessons learned from the death of Edinburgh firefighter Ewan Williamson must not be forgotten
- 16** Professional training FBU adult apprenticeships offer professional fitness training qualifications
- 22** Photo competition Could your image capture the essence of firefighters' work?

REGULARS

- 5** Sounding off FBU London treasurer Lucy Masoud on appearing in a film about gender stereotyping
- 7** Focus Victories prove it pays to campaign
- 8** Aerial ladder platform London's biggest-ever disaster training exercise
- 18** Health & safety Take care of your eyesight
- 19** Legal Beagle New government threat to compensation
- 20** Day off Meet author Graham Ashworth
- 23** Station Cat When is a fire station not a fire station?
- 24** 25-year badges



DAVID CHESTNUT/PA IMAGES

FIREFIGHTER

Published by the Fire Brigades Union
Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT2 7AE

www.fbu.org.uk

Design: editionpublishing.co.uk
Print: Southernprint Ltd, 17-21
Factory Road, Poole, BH16 5SN



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NEWS

FORMER PRESIDENT DIES

Bill Deal, FBU president from 1980 to 1987, has died
p6



NEWS FOCUS

Victories prove that it pays to campaign
p7



Shadow chancellor and long-time FBU supporter John McDonnell (right of banner) joined general secretary Matt Wrack, president Alan McLean and FBU members to protest against the Trade Union Bill in Westminster

PEERS DELIVER BLOW TO TRADE UNION BILL

TRADE UNION BILL

The government's Trade Union Bill suffered three humiliating defeats during its report stage reading in the House of Lords.

Peers voted against the government by a margin of nearly two to one on amendments relating to electronic balloting, facility time and political campaigning funds. Significantly, several Conservative peers voted against the government or decided to abstain.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "When even Tory peers are voting down their own party's hard edged trade union policy, you know they've gone too far."

"This is a significant setback for the government and will encourage the millions of trade unionists in the UK to

step up our campaigning against such anti-democratic legislation.

"We'd urge the government to drop this punitive legislation for good. However we are all prepared to continue fighting if they want to continue with their undemocratic attacks."

Peers in the House of Lords voted against proposals to force trade union members to "opt in" if they wanted to contribute to a union's political fund, which would reverse the current requirement of opting out. If adopted, their amendments would mean that new rules would now only apply to new members.

The Lords also voted against the government's ban on electronic balloting with a successful amendment being voted through for an independent commission on the use of

electronic balloting.

A third defeat for the government came over its plan to impose caps on facility time for union reps in local public services.

Whereas the Bill went through the commons in a fairly businesslike way, given the Tory government's majority, it has fared a lot worse in its way through the Lords.

The first loss came during the Bill's committee stage when the government failed to win a vote to set up a special Lords committee to scrutinise the measures in the Bill with more consideration.

Following a third reading of the Bill in the Lords, expected to take place in mid-April, it will then return to the House of Commons for the peers' amendments to be considered.

Although the defeat in the Lords is significant, the government is likely to try to force the Bill through regardless.

Dave Green, FBU national officer, said: "It's imperative that we keep on campaigning and continue lobbying MPs of all parties."

■ Lobby your MP at <http://bit.ly/1VfHDV1>.

CEREMONY MARKS ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST DEATH IN LINE OF DUTY OF FEMALE FIREFIGHTER

FLEUR LOMBARD

Twenty years since her tragic death, firefighters from across Avon gathered for a ceremony at the memorial dedicated to Fleur Lombard, the first female firefighter to die in the line of duty.

On 4 February 1996 Fleur, 21 (right), died after being caught in a flashover while tackling a fire at a supermarket. Her body was found just a few yards from the exit.

Fleur was posthumously awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal and chief fire officer's commendation in recognition of her bravery.

A trust fund was set up after Fleur's death



PA PHOTOS

as a tribute to her, courage, dedication and professionalism.

The Fleur Lombard Bursary is designed to help others progress their careers in the fire and rescue service by funding studies of firefighting and learning from other services across the world.

South West FBU executive council member Tam McFarlane, who laid a wreath on behalf of the FBU, said: "This courageous young firefighter died in the line of duty 20 years ago, whilst protecting the community she served. Her loss is as keenly felt today as it was in '96.

"Staple Hill in Bristol fell silent as members of the public stood shoulder to shoulder with their firefighters in memory of Fleur – a show of solidarity that moved many people present. The thoughts of everyone in our remarkable profession are with the family, friends and colleagues of this inspirational young woman."

UNTOLD STORY OF THE 'LONDON RECRUITS'

FIGHT AGAINST APARTHEID

A new documentary is shedding light on the British firefighters who travelled to South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s to help the anti-apartheid movement.

London Recruits tells the story of a group of young activists who disguised themselves as honeymooning couples, tourists and businessmen in order to get into South Africa to campaign for an end to apartheid.

The recruits undertook clandestine missions that saw banners unfurled from landmarks, home-made "leaflet bombs"



explode at packed train stations and rousing speeches played at events on improvised sound systems.

FBU members including firefighter William Gee are known to have taken part in the campaign, which has been kept secret for over 40 years.

■ Watch a trailer for the film at <https://vimeo.com/151562047>

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIREFIGHTERS BEGIN ACTION

FBU members in South Yorkshire have voted to take industrial action short of strike over plans to cut a quarter of all control operator posts and changes to firefighters' leave arrangements.

The South Yorkshire service

has failed to comply with nationally agreed industrial relations protocols since an industrial dispute was called last year over the changes.

Pete Smith, FBU regional secretary in Yorkshire, said: "For over a year now service managers

have ignored the fact that a trade dispute exists, leaving us no option but to take action. It didn't need to come to this.

"We hope that South Yorkshire fire and rescue will now enter into meaningful negotiations instead

of continuing their dictatorial approach. If the service fails to change its ways, we will continue and increase the industrial dispute."

Industrial action, which will affect detached duties, was due to begin on 4 April.

SOUNDING OFF

Redrawing the gender balance

Lucy Masoud, FBU

London regional treasurer, talks about appearing in a film highlighting gender stereotyping



Being a female firefighter has had its challenges. But I have seen advancements within my profession since I joined in 2006. These changes are due mainly to the work of the FBU, but also to the shift in people's attitudes toward women in the fire service. So any initiative to challenge gender stereotypes is welcome.

The idea for the *Redraw the Balance* film was simple: ask a class of eight- and nine-year-olds to draw a firefighter, a pilot and a surgeon, and then observe what they have drawn and what they imagine these professionals might look like.

The results were, sadly, a reflection of just how much children are conditioned on gender roles from an early age. More than 60 pictures were drawn as men and just five as women. Then three women came into the room in their profession's uniform and the pupils' jaws dropped.

I had a wonderful time making the film, but it crystallised for me how much further we need to come as a society to break down these gender stereotypes.

As a profession, the fire service has not only a responsibility to challenge sexism but also to make the service more open to women.

■ See the film at fbu.org.uk/news/2016/gender-stereotypes.



FORMER FBU PRESIDENT DIES

BILL DEAL

Bill Deal (*above*), who served as president of the Fire Brigades Union from 1980 until 1987, has died at the age of 83 after a short illness.

Born in West Ham, London, Bill joined the fire service in the 1950s before moving to Essex where he served as the FBU executive council member for East Anglia during the union's first ever national strike in 1977 over low pay.

Bill's son Steve, who followed his father into the fire service, recalls spending Christmas day as a teenager on the picket line at Canvey Island fire station as the strike continued.

He remembers how his father would always walk up to a telephone box in order to make calls instead of using the landline. "Another union official had picked up the landline one day during the strike to make a call only to find a

recording of a previous conversation he'd had playing back to him. The authorities were listening in to senior officials in the union. Dad used to have a little fun with it. He'd invent fake mass pickets to take place at some remote fire station that the police would then turn up to."

It was a few years later when Bill became president of the union in 1980, a post he remained in until his retirement in 1987. Bill's family remember him as a fun loving, principled and proud man. He leaves his wife Joan and their three grown-up children Brian, Steve and Tracy.

Alan McLean, the current FBU president, paid tribute to his predecessor: "I was fortunate to meet him on several occasions and he was an inspiring, decent and forthright man, a true comrade. Bill will be fondly remembered and sadly missed."

IN BRIEF

SWITCH TO DIRECT DEBIT TODAY AND GET CHANCE TO WIN AN IPAD MINI

Members will have the chance to win an iPad mini worth £500 if they make the switch to pay their membership fees by direct debit. The FBU is asking all members to complete a direct debit mandate form – available online – in order to stay protected at work, as the government will next year abolish the current check-off arrangements, whereby fees are deducted from pay.

If members make the switch by 29 April 2016 they will automatically be entered into the draw for the iPad donated by UIA insurance which offers FBU members a range of exclusive insurance deals.

■ **Don't delay. Download the forms at fbu.org.uk/Switch2DD.**

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS SUFFER NATIONAL INSURANCE RISE

Members are being warned about an increase in national insurance contributions due this April. Firefighters and control operators can expect to pay an extra 1.4% in contributions.

Employers are also set to be hit as they will lose a national insurance rebate worth 3.4%, which will add further pressure to fire and rescue services' finances.

Members can find a full explanation of the changes on the Department for Work and Pensions website: www.gov.uk/yourstatepension.

MORE RESPONSE TIME FATALITIES AS CUTS TAKE EFFECT

At least four fire deaths in London in the last two months have occurred after firefighters were unable to make their full attendance time targets.

Three of the deaths took place near the sites of former fire stations that were closed down in 2014 by mayor Boris Johnson.

The FBU in London said the deaths were a direct result of the mayor's cuts. Ian Leahair, London EC member, said: "We're seeing

more and more of these tragedies, many happening on the old firegrounds of now defunct stations.

"Boris Johnson has left a terrible legacy behind him, and Londoners are at greater risk now than eight years ago when he first took residence in city hall."

The deaths came after an inquest recorded an accidental death verdict for 85-year-old Choi Yip who jumped to his death from the third floor of his residence

after a fire devastated his home.

It took firefighters more than 13 minutes to get to the scene.

Had the local Belsize fire station remained open, the response would have been far quicker.

Failure to meet response time targets – with resulting fatalities – is not confined to the capital. An elderly couple died recently at their home after all five fire appliances that serve the Merseyside

area were busy dealing with a warehouse fire.

Mark Rowe from Merseyside FBU said: "This incident highlights how the reckless Tory-led cuts have put our communities at great risk.

"Merseyside has suffered severe budgets cuts and fire deaths are now at a 10-year high as a result.

"The government needs to get a handle on the atrocious cuts they've forced fire services to make."



FBU members and supporters campaigning in Leicestershire

'If you challenge the politicians again and again, you will get somewhere'

VICTORIES THAT PROVE IT PAYS TO CAMPAIGN

CAMPAIGN VICTORIES

In recent months vigorous campaigning by the FBU has paid off with significant victories for firefighters and the fire and rescue service across the UK.

Cumbria

The most eye catching was the reprieve from closure of five retained fire stations in Cumbria.

This victory was no doubt made possible because those who firefighters in the region serve saw what chaos could befall them if the stations were to be axed.

The major flooding that hit the county over the past few months would have been fresh in their memories.

"No amount of petitioning and lobbying is as effective as seeing our crews in action," says Les Skarratts, FBU

regional secretary in the North West.

"Councillors on the fire authority didn't really understand how the retained response interacted with our wholtime firefighters. When they saw how vital they were they knew they couldn't close the stations."

Storms Desmond, Frank and Eva brought devastation, but they also highlighted how important it is to have functioning fire stations ready to mobilise resources.

But Les is under no illusion that, when the memory of the floods recedes, councillors could well look again at cutting the stations.

"We're very vigilant and will have a forceful response if they do. What local politicians need to remember is that floods are becoming more of an annual event, rather than a freak occurrence," he said.

Leicestershire

In Leicestershire a remarkable victory saw the FBU fight off 88 frontline firefighter job cuts, two station closures and save five of nine fire appliances under consideration for the axe. FBU Leicestershire secretary Graham Vaux said it was proof that a well co-ordinated campaign mixed with people power could work.

"A lot of people tend to think that as soon as cuts are announced that that's it – game over", he says. "But if you challenge the politicians again and again, you will get somewhere. Of course we've seen some cuts that we believe are bad for the public in Leicestershire, but if we had not protested against them, it could have been so much worse."

New guide

A new guide to campaigning from the FBU has been sent to all brigade secretaries.

Dave Green, FBU national officer, said: "We have to build upon these great victories. The union has a long history of standing up against the brutal attacks on our service. We hope this guide will help propel local branches to more victories."

■ Download the guide at fbu.org.uk/publication/organising-campaigns.

Training exercise draws on first hand firefighter experience of terrorist attacks

The biggest-ever disaster training exercise for emergency services in the 150-year history of the London Fire Brigade took place at the end of February and ran over four days at locations in London and Kent.

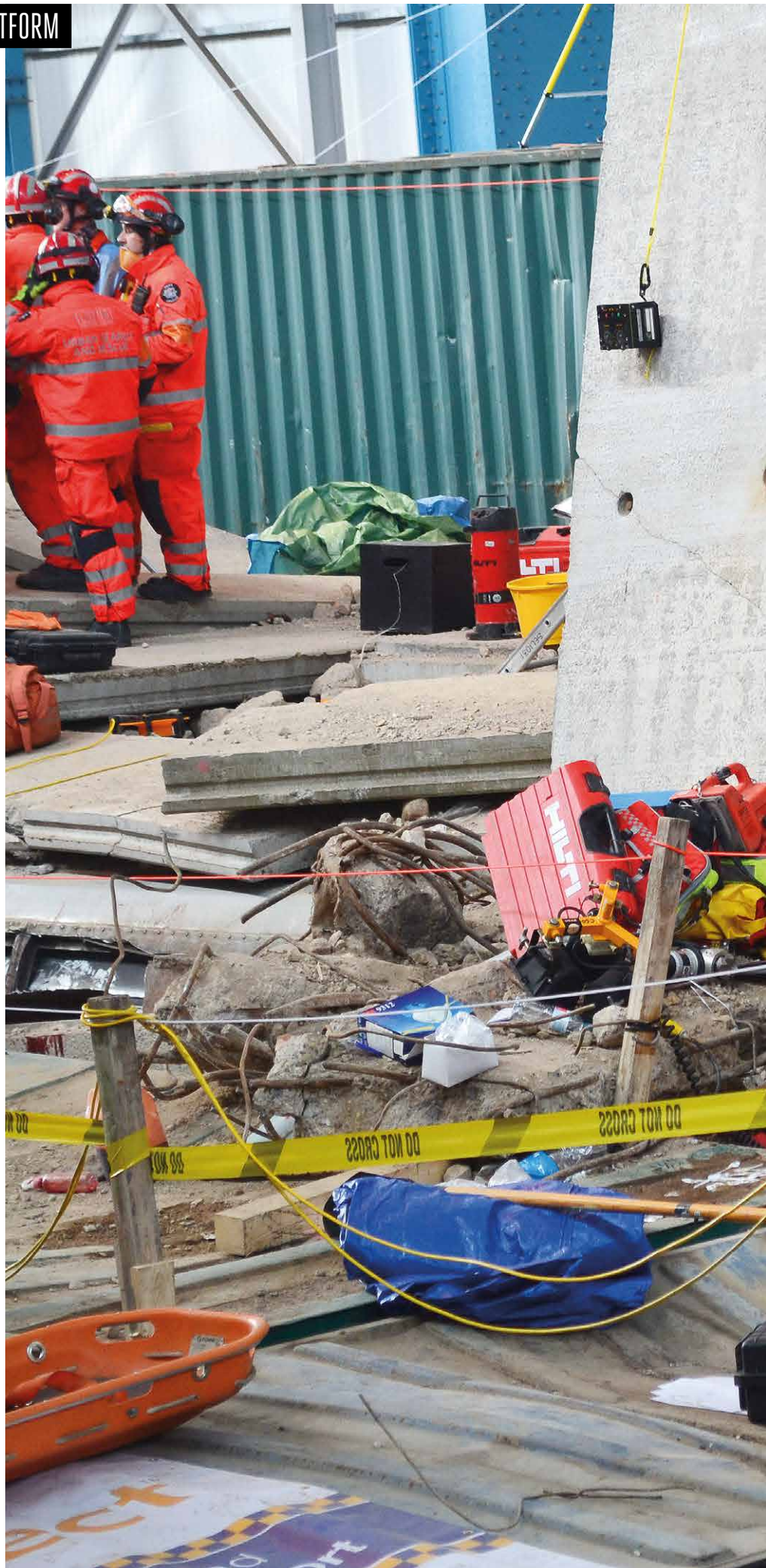
The European Commission funded exercise, which took more than a year to plan, drew on the first-hand experiences of firefighters who attended terrorist attacks, such as the 7/7 bombings in London, to design scenarios recreating realistic challenges for firefighters and other emergency service workers.

The main event, staged at the disused Littlebrook power station in Dartford, Kent, involved upended tube carriages positioned as if they had been hit by a falling tower block at a mocked-up but very realistic Waterloo station, complete with ticket barriers which had been smeared with fake blood.

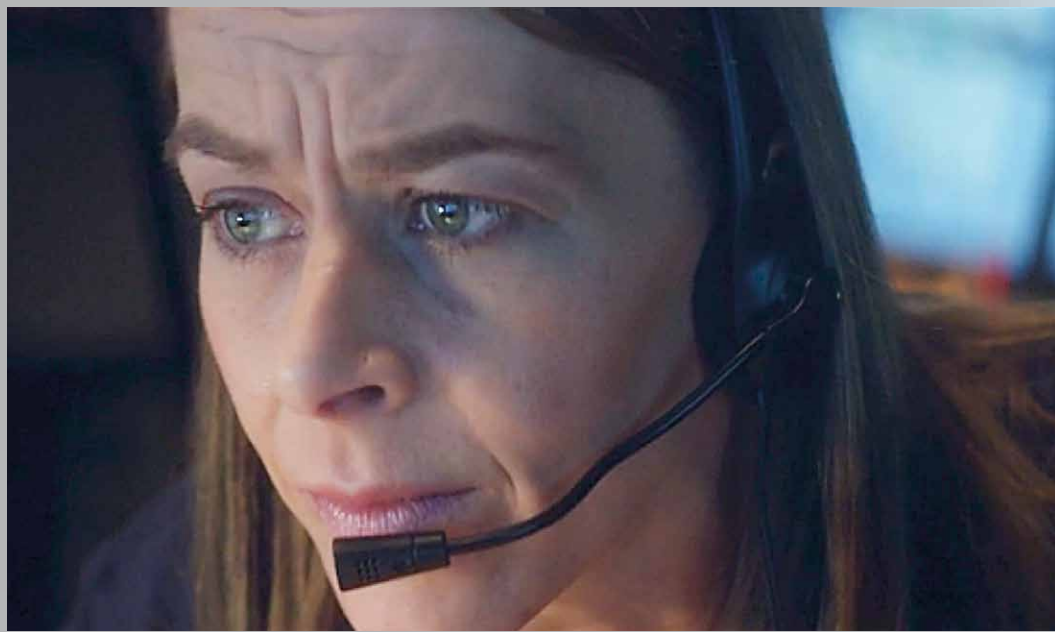
Inside were some of the hundreds of “casualties” who issued bloodcurdling screams as they banged on carriage windows.

Others wandered around with realistic wounds, while some were taken from the scene on stretchers for medical treatment. Firefighters trained in urban search and rescue attended from West Yorkshire, Merseyside, Avon and Devon and Somerset.

A temporary mortuary was set up at the site, along with a forensics area and a humanitarian assistance centre to support traumatised casualties.

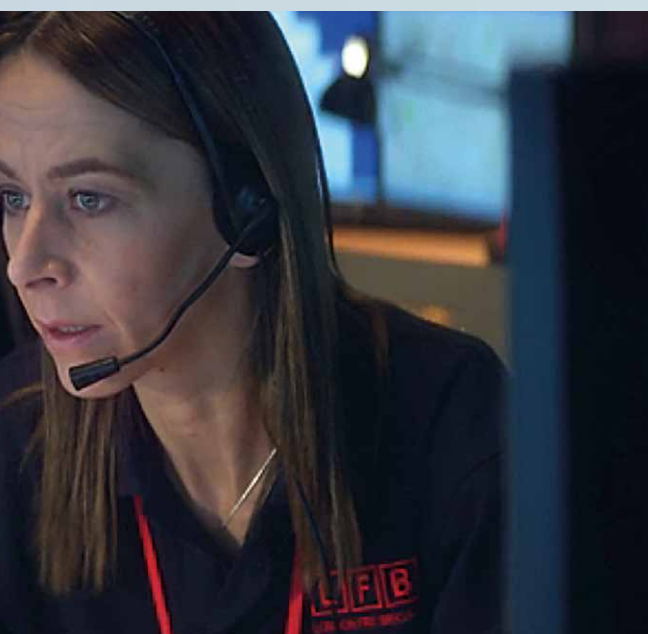






LIFE SAVING OPERATOR

Fire control operators save lives. A new film, part-funded by the FBU, uses real life to show how they do it. But their role is threatened by cuts and the undervaluing of their work.



MORE THAN 77% OF CONTROL OPERATORS ARE WOMEN. THEY FACE A HUGE CHALLENGE IN THE FORM OF A 21% CUT IN NUMBERS OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS

Kate Dickie as control operator Sam Pendlebury in the film

When Sam Pendlebury took her first serious emergency call as a control operator in Preston in 2006, she could not possibly have known that the contents of the conversation she had with the caller would be the subject of a short film so widely acclaimed that it won the BAFTA Best British Short Film award this year.

The Fire Brigades Union part funded the film and acted as advisers to ensure it was an authentic portrayal of a control operator.

The Operator is a word-for-word re-enactment of that call, with *Game of Thrones* actor Kate Dickie playing Sam Pendlebury and Vicky McClure (*This is England 1986*) playing the caller, a distressed young mother called Gemma who is trapped in a house fire with her three-year-old son Daniel.

From the moment Sam clicks into the call, the tension builds fast. Gemma is in grave danger – she fell asleep on the sofa with her son upstairs, and woke to find the house on fire and filled with smoke.

The line goes quiet and Kate Dickie repeatedly asks: “Are you OK?” The silence is deafening. Eventually Gemma responds and the relief spreads across the operator’s face and on to the audience.

It’s spine chillingly hard to watch, and the fear in Gemma’s voice is palpable as she becomes

convinced that she and her son are not going to make it. The operator instructs her to close all doors, put bedding underneath them and move to the window.

The firefighters arrive and we hear the sound of smashing glass. They are safe. The operator clicks off. She sighs, has a moment to recover, and then another call comes in and it all starts again with “Hello, operator”.

Film maker Caroline Bartleet was inspired by a transcript of the original conversation which was published in *The Guardian* – the call was also filmed, and the real film is even more harrowing than the BAFTA award winning version.

Sam Pendlebury, who left the service in 2014 after nine years, had no idea her call had been made into a film, never mind that it had won an award. She said: “I’m surprised and very happy. Anything that spreads the word about the amazing work control operators do is worthwhile.

“They really are the unsung heroines and heroes of the fire service.”

More than 77% of control operators are women, and they are currently facing a huge challenge in the form of a 21% cut in control staff numbers over the past five years; control room closures; imposed shift changes; excessive workloads; and technical issues that are hampering rescue work, extending response times and causing untold stress and anxiety.

Control room closures and job losses mean fewer staff are dealing with more and more calls, and they feel pressurised into accepting additional shifts. The continual acceptance of extra work is having a detrimental effect on their health. In some instances trainee control operators, who are still on probation and are therefore not adequately trained, are making up numbers for nightshift teams where there is understaffing.

Counselling for stress

The pressures now on control operators are seriously taking their toll. In Durham, there were 546 days lost to control staff sickness last year, resulting in overtime payments totalling £31,699.

Some services are offering counselling to stressed operators. London Fire Brigade instructed its welfare team to provide one-to-one sessions for stress. But so far, just one counsellor has been asked to conduct two sessions of four hours each to accommodate 87 members of staff, according to an FBU report.

The result of such disregard is that many control staff are resigning, unable to cope with the unreasonable demands of the job and the ensuing stress.

But where does this leave callers like Gemma, who was talked to safety by Sam Pendlebury, and others who are facing grave danger?

It is time that fire services across the UK started to value these crucial control firefighters instead of belittling and undervaluing them.

IN OR OUT

Two FBU officials put the case
for either side in the debate

MATT LAMB

Shropshire brigade secretary

IN European solidarity has never been as important as it is today. In a world that's looking remarkably crisis prone – rampant inequality, a raging war within Europe's borders and murderous fascists in the form of Isis knocking at the door – now is not the time to vote to leave an institution which for all its faults is the best option to face these challenges. "Brexit" will undermine workers here in the UK as many of the rights we as FBU members hold dear are as a result of European rulings and initiatives. Much of the equality legislation, two thirds of all new health and safety laws, the working time directive and transfer of undertakings (protection of employment) (TUPE) all come from the EU. In 2000, paid leave entitlement was introduced for retained firefighters as a result of the EU's Working Time Directive. The union then used EU law to secure pay parity for retained firefighters, alongside a reduction in the hours they are required to provide cover, from 168 a week to 120. These are no mean achievements.

Our historic battle to gain equal rights and pensions for retained firefighters could not have happened without the part-time workers directive. The union's fight against Day Crewing Plus where, in essence they want to enforce 48 hour continuous working is difficult enough, but without the weapon of working time restrictions it would be nigh on impossible.

Without TUPE, mergers of brigades or fire control rooms could result in widespread redundancy. Those redundancies will also be subject to further detriment without EU protections, and annual leave, maternity/paternity leave, parental leave, disability rights, sick pay and a whole host of other workers' rights will be threatened if we vote to leave the EU. Ironically, if the Tories continue in power beyond 2020, the only realistic curb to the anti-democratic Trade Union Bill will be the European Court.

If the Trade Union Bill works like the government wants it to, and the country votes for Brexit then the Conservative government will be able to rip up every single one of these rights.

While the wealthiest in the UK continue to pull away from the rest of us, the poorest in society find themselves on zero hour contracts and priced out of the housing market. If you think that the Tories will improve the lives of working people through sheer altruism, you're deluded.

The EU isn't perfect by any stretch, but it is the only handbrake acting on our current renegade right-wing government.

**THE EU ISN'T PERFECT
BY ANY STRETCH,
BUT IT IS THE ONLY
HANDBRAKE ACTING ON
THIS RENEGADE RIGHT
WING GOVERNMENT**

**IF YOU ARE
PRO-WORKER,
PRO-DEMOCRACY
AND ANTI-AUSTERITY,
YOU SHOULD VOTE
TO LEAVE THE EU**

PAUL EMBERY

London regional secretary

OUT The European Union is no friend of workers. It has imposed austerity, cuts and privatisation, causing mass unemployment, deep social unrest and a collapse in living standards throughout Europe.

Many of the things trade unions campaign for, such as full employment, nationalisation and investment, are impossible to achieve because of EU laws on government spending and ownership of industry.

Those laws are designed to let market forces rip. That's why huge chunks of once-public industry are now under the control of privateers. It's why EU leaders promote zero-hours contracts and attack collective bargaining arrangements. And it's why they are secretly negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which paves the way for the selling-off of our health, education and water services.

Is it so impossible to imagine an institution wedded to this kind of rampant capitalism opening up fire and rescue services to the market?

The EU is totally undemocratic. Many of our laws are

made by unelected bureaucrats over whom we have no control. This is an insult to all those, including previous generations of trade unionists, who took part in the long struggle for the vote.

In Greece, the people voted against austerity, but EU leaders forced it on them anyway. Contempt for democracy is part of the EU's DNA. That's why talk of "reforming" it is idle.

EU-driven unrestricted mass migration has been an utter disaster. It has created real social tensions, contributed to the under-

cutting of wages and fuelled the rise of racists and fascists. Trade union leaders have, so far, been criminally silent about this.

Some people argue that we can guarantee workers' rights only through EU membership. They are wrong. Most of the rights we enjoy in the workplace, such as the minimum wage, trade union recognition, health and safety protections and equal pay, were delivered through the UK parliament following campaigns by trade unions. In any case, it is never wise to choose a good dictator over a bad parliament.

We should ignore those who claim the UK could not survive outside the EU. The same people argued that we couldn't survive outside the euro. They were wrong then and are wrong now.

There is a rich tradition of hostility to the EU among socialists and trade unionists. Heroes like Tony Benn and Bob Crow were fierce opponents of the EU because they understood it was not on the side of workers.

Let's not line up with Cameron, Osborne, and the multinationals and merchant bankers who are desperate for the UK to remain part of what our general secretary Matt Wrack correctly describes as a "big business project".

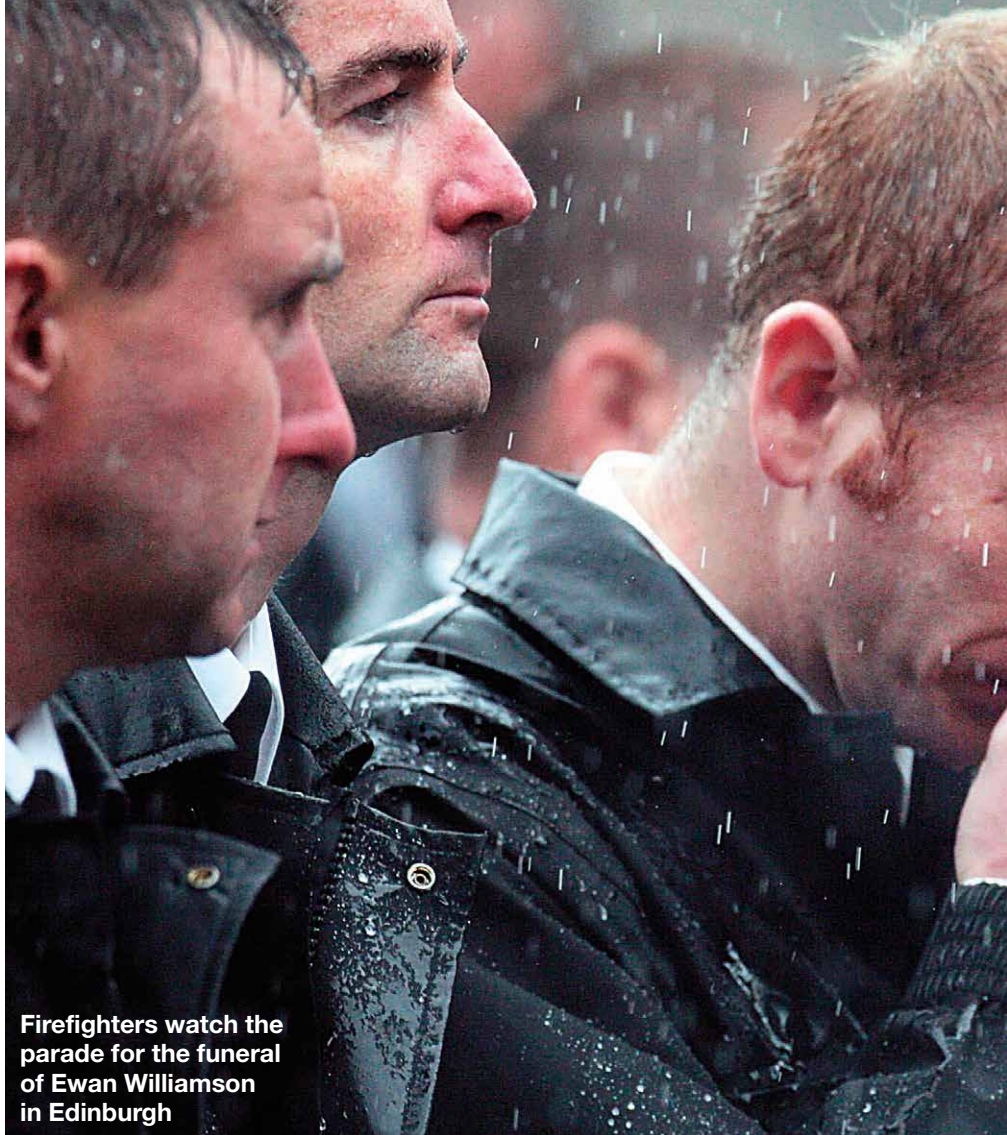
If you are pro-worker, pro-democracy and anti-austerity, you should vote to leave the EU.



The last words Ewan Williamson spoke face to face to his mother Linda, who had noticed he had been subdued during a family meal a month before he was killed, were that he was worried about what was going on in the fire service. He spoke specifically of a “general feeling of unease about the lack of firefighter safety training”.

Four weeks later on 12 July 2009 Ewan, 35, died during a blaze at The Balmoral Bar in Edinburgh, having become separated from his partner and then trapped in a basement toilet – by the time other firefighters had gained access to rescue him, it was too late.

A report into the incident, published jointly in March by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and the FBU,



Firefighters watch the parade for the funeral of Ewan Williamson in Edinburgh

WE MUST ENSURE

found a catalogue of failures. These included the firefighters in attendance being given “limited or incomplete briefings” about breathing apparatus, and crews “committed into a high-risk environment, ill-equipped and without full appreciation of the hazards”.

£54,000 fine

The report was published a year after a lengthy court case which resulted in the SFRS being fined £54,000 for health and safety breaches in connection with Ewan’s death, a death EC member for Scotland Chris McGlone described during media interviews as “tragic, avoidable and unacceptable”.

The report makes 19 recommendations and identifies nine lessons to be learned.

Service chief officer Alastair Hay was keen to stress that the SFRS is

Scotland’s fire service has been heavily fined for failings in a fire that caused the death of Edinburgh firefighter Ewan Williamson. **Lynne Wallis** heard why his mother and the FBU are determined the lessons will be learned and not forgotten.

“committed to ensuring that Ewan leaves a legacy of improved safety for his fellow firefighters across Scotland”.

This is scant comfort, however, for his mother, who strongly criticises the service for failing to admit culpability early on.

She told *Firefighter*: “The fire service organised and paid for the entire funeral. It was very moving, with so many firefighters who knew Ewan just standing there in the rain, frozen, with water dripping off their noses, just standing there, stock still, some crying.

“But I’d never have allowed it had I known what they were going to do to us. They have put us through absolute hell.

“Six years we’ve had to wait, almost seven, when they could have admitted their guilt in the beginning.

“We’ve had court cases postponed over and over, once after my daughter



DAVID CHESKIN PA IMAGES

'I WOULD URGE ANYONE WHO BECOMES A FIREFIGHTER TO JOIN THE FBU. DON'T WAIT.'

happened during the entire process.

During the final hearing in March 2015, just before the court was due to hear the extremely distressing details of the circumstances surrounding her only son's death, a court liaison officer asked judge Lord Uist if they could break

at 12.50 and start the process after lunch, to spare the family the prolonged agony of having to do it twice. Linda recalled: "With not one ounce of compassion, Lord Uist glanced up at the clock and said without even

EWAN'S LEGACY

had boarded a plane from California, and the stress of it all almost broke me.

"Thank God Ewan was a union member because I couldn't have survived without the FBU. They were the only ones who looked after us, who supported us. They provided lawyers, financial support, the means to stand strong. Without them we'd have been weak.

"They were compassionate when no-one else was. They grieved with us and were sympathetic. They gave us the power to fight back.

Join the FBU. Don't wait

"I would urge anyone who becomes a firefighter to join the FBU. Don't wait because you never know when you are going to need them."

Linda felt let down by the judicial system too, citing one incident as being more upsetting than anything else that



In the days before his death Ewan Williamson was concerned about the lack of safety training

the blink of an eye that it was only ten to and therefore we could carry on. I thought that was so cruel, so inhumane. That hurt more than anything else, but this is what powerful institutions do, they oppress the weak."

Linda is comforted by the knowledge that her son's death will not have been in vain if the lessons learned from the joint report are implemented.

She said: "It's too late for my son, but the changes to training requirements that have been made as a result of his death are very good.

"The service has to make sure firefighters are trained properly before going into fires. People at the top have a responsibility, a duty of care, a duty to listen.

"But they get full of their own power and they don't listen. And that is how deaths such as Ewan's happen."

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN FITNESS NOW ON OFFER

New FBU adult apprenticeships will benefit firefighters and the public they serve



The FBU and its national learning centre have secured funding to organise adult apprenticeships in personal training for firefighters in England. The aim is to enable firefighters to become qualified fitness training advisers. This will equip them to encourage firefighters to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to try to get and stay fitter for longer.

The course, which is of A level equivalent standard, has already attracted interest from 30 out of 46 fire and rescue services in England. Course tutors for this qualification have been carefully selected and are all qualified trainers, some of whom are former rugby league players with lots of experience of fitness training.

The apprenticeships take around 15 months to complete, with participants doing classwork one day each month while taking part in “blended learning” throughout the course, including online and practical work. The apprenticeship covers all aspects of health and fitness training, ranging from advice on nutrition and diet to rehabilitation and avoiding injury.

Mark Dunne, FBU Union Learning Fund project

manager, said: “We were inspired when we began a level 2 personal training course previously. Despite having just six weeks to recruit learners because of the funding deadline, we managed to attract 270 applicants. We were pleasantly surprised to see demand was high. When we learned that the FBU was heavily involved in creating a best practice guidance document on firefighter fitness, it was obvious that this was the right time to apply for funding for a level 3 course.

“We are delighted that it has attracted interest from two-thirds of fire and rescue service employers, and very pleased to be in a position to offer this apprenticeship at no cost to firefighters or the union.”

No one off limits

Local employers are supporting this learning initiative by providing classrooms, access to a quality gym and support for those wishing to achieve the qualification.

The benefits to employers are clear – they will get a fitter workforce who will have a thorough understanding of anatomy and physiology, and the



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presence of skilled accredited personal trainers in the workplace.

The benefits to the public are that their firefighters will be encouraged to be as fit as they can be and therefore more effective in their role.

The first seven months of the course will be classroom based, with the remaining months spent on practical assessments and observations delivered in gyms. Firefighters wishing to apply must do so before 31 July 2016.

Sean Starbuck, national official, said: "This is a really great opportunity for us to assist firefighters to be as healthy as they can be both at work and at home.

"Firefighters take fitness very seriously and this professionally delivered course will be a great qualification for them." "The course contains some

rehabilitation work to help injured firefighters to recuperate, with specific programmes designed to help each injured individual who needs to get back to work. It's a no-brainer in terms of what it offers and who it benefits."

The FBU is the only union in the UK to have its own accredited national learning centre which, in collaboration with the Local Government Association and Leeds City College, is delivering the personal training apprenticeships.

Other courses are available on a whole range of topics, including mental health and dyslexia awareness, and they are available not just to members but to their families too.

■ For more information about the personal training apprenticeship or any other ULF course visit www.fbueducation.org.

THE FBU IS THE ONLY UNION IN THE UK TO HAVE ITS OWN ACCREDITED NATIONAL LEARNING CENTRE

HEALTH

OPTICAL HEALTH IN THE FIRE SERVICE IS ESSENTIAL

Loss of or deteriorating eyesight is a nightmare for anyone, especially firefighters. But, as with many age-related health issues, you can take precautions to help yourself, writes **Will Murphy**

Firefighter Lynsey Donoghue was left devastated at the age of 28 after being told she had developed cataracts and could lose her eyesight.

The condition is usually associated with older people, not those in the prime of their lives.

The news would have left anyone distressed, but for Lynsey, who served as a whole-time firefighter at Rawdon fire station in Leeds, the hereditary condition – passed on from her father's side of the family – could have ended her career.

Thankfully Lynsey's sight was saved after she became the first person to have hi-tech lenses implanted in her eyes during

ground-breaking surgery.

Her vision returned and she was back on the run less than a month after the operation. Cataracts may be a rarity for younger people, but Lynsey's condition could have sounded the death knell for her career, given that visual impairment and fire and rescue work make poor bedfellows.

Fire and rescue services have visual requirements for all newcomers to the job, but long-serving workers who are getting on in years can suffer naturally occurring age-related visual decline.

The new firefighters' pension scheme, which was imposed last year, means the government could be facing a generational challenge to keep firefighters' eyesight healthy as they ask them to work longer than ever.

The most common cause of eyesight loss is age-related macular degeneration, where damage to the retina causes central vision loss, most common in those aged over 50.

Eye health, coincidentally, benefits from lifestyle changes that also significantly reduce the chance of heart disease.

A good place to start would be to quit smoking and reduce your alcohol intake. A diet that is high in antioxidants will also be beneficial with coloured fruit and vegetables such as carrots, broccoli, kale and mangos, all firm friends to eye health.

You should be getting a check-up with your optician at least once every two years if not more often, as early detection of any eyesight problem means treatment will be more effective.

In Lynsey's case, an early referral from her optician to the hospital resulted in speedy intervention and limited the length of time she was off work.

Anyone spending a majority of their working day looking at screens is at particular risk which, of course, includes our brilliant control operators.

When you are focused on a screen of any kind

your blink rate goes down and your eyes dry out as a result. Paradoxically, this means your tear glands overcompensate, resulting in watery eyes.

Eye drops available from most chemists can help ease this problem. Opticians recommend screen users should practice the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and look 20 feet away.

What can I do to protect my eyesight?

Give up cigarettes –

Smokers are much more likely to develop age-related macular degeneration and cataracts compared to non-smokers.

Get moving – Research shows that exercise may reduce the risk of sight loss, which can occur as a result of high blood pressure, diabetes, and narrowing or hardening of the arteries.

Eat sensibly – A healthy balanced diet with a wide variety of fruit and vegetables will benefit your overall health and may help keep the retinas healthy.

Watch the drink – Heavy alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of early age-related macular degeneration.

Protect your eyes – Never look at the sun directly. Doing so can cause irreversible damage to your eyesight and even lead to blindness. Wearing UV sunglasses carrying the CE mark ensures they offer a safe level of ultraviolet protection.

SUE FORD/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY



The eye of a patient with a mature cataract

LEGAL BEAGLE

DON'T LET GOVERNMENT TAKE AWAY LEGAL REPRESENTATION



**FBU FREEPHONE
LEGAL ADVICE
0808 100 6061
IN SCOTLAND
0800 089 1331**

Proposed new changes to injury compensation law would have far-reaching effects, says **Gerard Stilliard**, head of personal injury strategy at Thompsons Solicitors

Your right to have independent legal representation to help you get the correct amount of compensation for your injuries if you are hurt in an accident is under threat.

The entitlement to compensation that is fair to all, regardless of wealth or position in society, is being challenged by proposed government changes.

The very same Tory ministers who are making workers pay to bring a case to an Employment Tribunal, and who are seeking to neuter trade unions through the Trade Union Bill, are now also hell-bent on imposing charges on the injured for legal representation in road traffic accident cases.

Left to go it alone

In his last autumn statement, the chancellor announced that he wants the small claims limit to rise from £1,000 to £5,000 in road traffic cases and the government is even consulting on extending this increase to all cases with a value below £5,000 – including claims against employers.

This means that for any injury caused by a road traffic accident, if the level of compensation awarded is less than £5,000, the injured person would not be able to recover the money spent on a solicitor to represent them.



"SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI"

While some people may be fortunate enough to have the time, knowledge and confidence to fight an insurance company, for the vast majority the idea of representing yourself while recovering from injuries without the support of a solicitor is a nightmarish prospect.

And who, without expert advice, will know what their case is really worth, or what the long-term medical impact of an injury is going to be?

Where is the evidence?

The government, along with its mates in the insurance industry, says there is a "fraud and claims culture in the motor industry". The Association of British Insurers (ABI) claims that it

"detected" 67,000 instances of "fraud" in 2013 alone.

But there has never been any independent verification of the insurers' figures and, by the ABI's own admission, they include cases which "might have had an innocent explanation" or other legitimate reasons.

Insurers profiting

Motor insurance is compulsory and the £15 billion a year market is looking pretty healthy by anyone's standards.

Direct Line and Admiral paid out £1.65 billion in dividends to their shareholders in the last three years (that's equivalent to £221 per policyholder).

The chancellor claims that the proposed rise in the small

claims limit will save the insurance industry £1 billion. But it is unclear how this has been calculated and ministers have said in parliament that they have no intention of making insurers pass any savings on to the motorist.

Given that insurers have saved nearly £7 billion in the last four years, while motorists have paid £353 million more in premiums, the chances are low that anything more than small change will be passed on.

Stay protected with your union

While the government continues its attack on ordinary people, members of the FBU should remember that their union's legal scheme will continue to work hard to protect them from the worst effects of Tory policy.

If you or a family member are injured in a road traffic accident, don't go it alone – contact Thompsons and get support from expert solicitors who represent union members in personal injury cases every day of the week.

Thompsons is working with trade unions and opposition parties to fight the proposed changes before they are sneaked through as law.

You can help us fight them too: read the latest on our car insurance campaign at www.thompsons.law.co.uk/cutpremiumsnow.

■ If you have secured compensation after being injured in a car accident and believe you would have been negatively affected by a rise in the small claims limit, tell us your story via Thompsons' Facebook page, found by searching "Small Claims, Big Impact".

'There are so many amazing stories that need to be told'

Retired firefighter and author Graham Ashworth spent 30 years at a busy Greater Manchester station and now has four novels under his belt

When retired Rochdale firefighter Graham Ashworth goes for a walk, he may come back with a storyline, a sub-plot or even “a couple of characters” and he doesn’t just keep it to himself.

Graham, based at Rochdale fire station for 30 years, is a published author. Three novels are already out there – both as printed and ebooks. A fourth is “ready to go”, along with a collection of short stories.

At 56, Graham, “author, real ale lover” according to his Twitter feed, is no slouch. In fact, he’s more like a one-man rapid response unit once creativity strikes. When *Firefighter* called he’d just written 1,000 words after a brisk walk near his Rossendale home. “Fresh air, fresh ideas,” says Graham, who retired from blue watch in 2009.

People watcher

Being an avid reader and a lifelong “people watcher” certainly helps. On holidays with wife Dawn and in local pubs with fellow real ale enthusiasts, there’s a lot of potential material out there for those who care to look.

It’s hardly surprising that all those years on watch have seeped into his fiction – firefighters feature in two of his novels.

Former colleagues who have read the books sometimes try to nail down individuals but, says Graham: “While they may spot the odd look or foible, it’s never just a straight

portrait. It’s all mixed up and made up. It’s a story. But people like to play the guessing game”.

After all, creative writing gurus say write about what you know, but it’s hardly reportage and certainly not documentary once the fairy dust of fiction is sprinkled. Events Graham evokes never really happened, and characters never existed beyond the page or screen – other than in the readers’ imagination.

Gritty debut

So, it’s hardly a shock that Graham’s gritty debut novel, *Man O’ the World* – garnering five star reviews from people who bought it online – is set, in part, at a small town fire station.

It opens not long ago in a rundown pub in a small town. Ray, an old bloke in an ill-fitting suit, “bleary-eyed, yellow-skinned”, is nudged awake at the bar by the landlord at chucking out time.

The debut novel, which came out four years ago, is shaped around the life of Ray Taylor – the old bloke slumped at the bar. He’s lived a rackets life. Or, as Graham puts it, “he’s an out and out womaniser, outspoken, a Jack-the-lad and a rogue in every sense of the word”.

Flash back to the early 1960s as Ray joins the fire service, when winkle-pickers and Billy Fury were all the rage. There were no women on watch and nobody talked about firefighters, not to mention equality



Graham Ashworth heading off to his last shift at the station – uniform in hand



'WE HAD AROUND SIX TO EIGHT THOUSAND CALLS A YEAR AT ONE TIME. FIREFIGHTERS WANT TO BE KEPT BUSY, OUT THERE DOING EXACTLY WHAT THEY SIGNED UP FOR – NOT SAT AROUND. MOST FIREFIGHTERS PREFER TO BE KEPT BUSY, OUT ON A SHOUT'

and diversity. The fire service, says Graham, no doubt regretted taking Ray on even back then. Nowadays no-one would give him long in the job.

It's a cracking read and there's a lot that will chime with firefighters who pick it up or download it – the camaraderie on shift, the smells at the fire scenes, the waiting.

Neanderthal attitudes

Graham says: "It was my first book so it's a bit 'raw'. There is some authentic sounding swearing, and even some convincingly Neanderthal attitudes amid the banter as strong comradely bonds are forged on the station and beyond. So a lot's changed since then, obviously.

Fast forward to "the very near future", and *Crossed Paths*, published late last year. It explores how the forward march of new technology, gathering of personal data, tracking people down and pinpointing locations, can be abused by villains and others up to no good. The internet-tracking plot rips along and it's scarily plausible. And there's some up-to-the-minute firefighter material amid much villainy, mystery and suspense.

Now that he is a published author, Graham has been interviewed by local media about his work. There have been some good reviews and he was featured on Radio Lancashire. He appeared at the Rochdale literary festival, reading excerpts from *Man O' the World* and his other "fictional biography", *The Original Wag*.

"There's nothing new," says Graham. "Wags have always been around, although the fame was more of a draw than the money back when it's set. Young women would stand outside football grounds when

players were on five pounds a week."

Graham's publisher has recently retired, so he is on the lookout for a new one to help promote and distribute *Kandyman*, a mystery/thriller that's ready for the off. But he's willing to self-publish if it takes too long.

Graham is very glad he spent 30 years as a firefighter in one of Greater Manchester fire and rescue service's busiest stations. "We had around six to eight thousand calls a year at one time. Firefighters want to be kept busy, out there doing exactly what they signed up for – not sat around. It's a massive job and most firefighters prefer to be kept busy, out on a shout."

He enjoyed his time in the fire service and reckons he's "seen the best of it", what with cutbacks and station closures.

Life on the frontline

His two fire service novels help chronicle how changing attitudes – and technology – are reshaping life on the frontline. Graham thinks there were more "characters" back in the day. But, chances are, when today's recent fire service recruits retire, they'll probably be thinking the same.

Happy Valley is shot nearby. Graham is a big fan and quite likes the idea of writing similar dialogue. So, after the novels and the short story collection, could screenplays beckon? With his novels already out there, maybe they are ripe for adaptation.

On past form, the next move could well come to Graham as he takes a brisk walk around Rossendale.

■ <http://bit.ly/g-ashworth>

WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT

Can you capture the essence of fire and rescue work?

The FBU's head office currently has a cold, sparsely decorated wall that needs warming up. With the help of our members' photographic skills – not to mention the prize on offer from our sponsors College Hill Press – we're hoping that the 2016 FBU photography competition will help fill it.

We're looking for a powerful, intriguing and/or educational photograph to be hung at the union's head office demonstrating what working in the fire and rescue service is all about.

Our sponsors have kindly offered £500 worth of Jessops camera store vouchers for the FBU member who submits the

best photo and the winner will be invited to the official unveiling of the picture.

OK, so we get that the best time to take a picture might not be when you're attending a huge emergency. That's why we want members to be as creative as possible and showcase the huge range of other work the fire and rescue service undertakes and what modern firefighting entails. So if it's a dramatic picture of firefighters in action, or control operators dispatching engines, or staff on downtime, working in the community, undertaking training, returning from a shout, why not submit your photo and see if you could win.



COMPETITION TERMS

The 2016 FBU photo contest begins on 1 February, 2016 and closes on 20 June 2016. By submitting an entry, each entrant agrees to the Official Rules.

WHO MAY ENTER

Contest is open only to individuals who are current FBU members.

HOW TO ENTER

You can enter either online or by post.

Include your full name, address, membership number, contact telephone number, email address with a short description

of your picture detailing where it was taken and the story behind the photo.

Digital images must have a minimum size of 3,000 pixels on their longest edge.

Physical prints or slides must be of sufficient quality and resolution to be printed at large size. Original negatives for prints must be available.

Email: firefighter@fbu.org.
uk Post: FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Rd, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, KT2 7A.

CONTEST PRIZES

The winner will have their picture hung at head office and will receive £500 of vouchers to

spend at Jessops camera shop. Two runners up will receive £100 of vouchers each to spend at Jessops.

JUDGING

The judging panel will be made up of Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, Chris Longley from our sponsors College Hill Press, Anna Zych from the FBU communications team as well as editor and designer Alan Slingsby and photojournalist Jess Hurd.

Sponsored by

College Hill Press

OFFICIAL RULES 1. This competition is only open to FBU members whose membership fees are up to date. 2. All entries must be the original work of the entrant and must not infringe on the rights of any other party. 3. Each image entered must be the work of the individual submitting it and must not have been published elsewhere nor have won a prize in any other photographic competition. 4. It is the responsibility of each entrant to ensure that any image they submit has been taken with the permission of all people recognisable in it and that the image does not infringe the copyright of any third party or any laws. 5. Copyright in all images submitted will remain with the entrant. But each entrant grants a worldwide, irrevocable, perpetual licence to the Fire Brigades Union to feature any or all of the submitted images in any of its publications, websites and/or in any other material published by the union. 6. There is no limit on the number of entries per person. 7. Entries will be considered from fire service photographers. 8. The competition closed 1 June 2016. 9. We cannot guarantee entries can be returned. 10. The decision of the judges will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. 11. Entrants must warrant that they took photograph they submit and that they own it's copyright. 12. Submission of an entry will be taken as acceptance of the rules of the competition.

LETTERS

Write to:

Firefighter letters

FBU, 65 Coombe Road
Kingston Upon Thames
KT2 7AE

Proud to be a member

Thank you to all the hard working officials in the FBU who took on the might of Westminster in our fight for fairer commutation payments for retired fire service personnel.

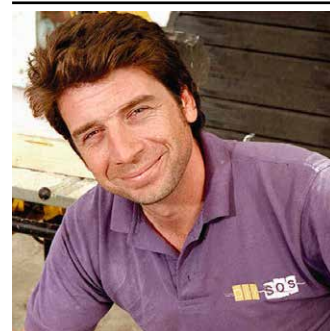
It's been nine years now since I retired from South Wales fire service and I am proud to still be a member of one of the strongest trade unions in the UK.

But, more importantly, I realise that I'm still in touch with a group of people who make me feel that I'm part of something worthwhile and which is appreciated by the wider public.

Your dedicated work is very much appreciated and I, for one, will be making a contribution to the FBU campaigning fund.

David Potter

TWEETS



Let's appreciate the Fire Service for being there when we need them so they don't think they're unappreciated and battered from all sides!

Nick Knowles

@MrNickKnowles

ANSWERS

November/December quiz

- 1 **D** – National Velvet
- 2 **A** – Capybara
- 3 **C** – Brazil
- 4 **D** – White grapes
- 5 **A** – A type of shipwreck

STATION CAT

SO MANY USES FOR CARS, STATIONS AND CONTROLS

London Assembly member Andrew Dismore – nine fire stations off the run – see He's got a way ... with words

PA PHOTOS



SO HANDY FOR A GET-TOGETHER

Apparently a school orchestra and a ukulele group played at the opening of Longton community fire station in Stoke-on-Trent, as a symbol that the place was “not just a fire station, but a community facility”.

Chief fire officer Peter Dartford said: “This helps us to engage with local people and with our partners to work with them to improve their health, safety and well-being excellence.”

Bill Whiston, group leader of the South Stoke University of the Third Age, said the group had been meeting at the station three times a month.

According to Councillor Kath Banks: “It is what the area needs. There isn't really anywhere else nearby the community can use for meetings.”

And that's not all. It could come in handy if there's a fire, too.

INFORMATION IS NOT FREE. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CAR?

A cat's congratulations to Hereford and Worcester FRS chief fire officer Mark Yates, who retired at the end of March, shortly after taking delivery of a new £37,000 Land Rover Discovery.

The FRS bought it, apparently, for operational use, though it appears not to have been equipped with any conventional firefighting kit, unless you count a heated steering wheel, extended leather interior and privacy glass.

The FRS has to cut £2m from its spending

in the next few years, and firefighters have taken career breaks, gone on secondment to other fire services and some have even taken voluntary redundancy, to avoid compulsory redundancy.

So does Mr Yates get to keep the car in his retirement, your Cat wanted to know.

She rather expected to be told: “Of course not, you silly



pussy, it's paid for by the fire service and the fire service gets to keep it”.

What she got was a note telling her this was information you could only get by invoking freedom of information legislation. We can expect an answer before the end of April. When the Cat gets the answer, so will her readers.

HE'S GOT A WAY ... WITH WORDS

London mayor Boris Johnson had your Cat scurrying to her pocket Oxford dictionary to look up the word recondite. Apparently it means abstruse, out-of-the-way, little-known.

Here is mayor Johnson's idea of recondite

information: London Assembly member Andrew Dismore asked him if he knew, when he decided to cut 13 fire

engines, that “on 6 February 2016 nine fire stations were out of action for an entire shift and five more were off the run for at least two hours due to staff shortages? Of those nine stations, three of them – one third of them – are where you have taken one of their two engines away and, if you had not, those stations would have remained operational.”

Did mayor Johnson know that “on 26 October 2015, the day of that fatal fire in Camden ... nine stations were off the run for the entire shift, including one of those where you have taken the pumps away, and two more were off the run for part of a shift?”

After dodging the question three times, mayor Johnson admitted: “No. I did not know that. No.” After several heroic attempts to change the subject, there was this rather strange dialogue:

Johnson: I did answer your question. I said I did not know this pointless statistic that you quote because the crucial ...

Dismore: It is pointless that nine stations are off the run, is it? It is pointless to Londoners that nine fire stations are off the run? You think that is pointless, do you?

Johnson: I was not aware of this absolutely useless and recondite fact that you have dug up.

CHIEF DOBSON CLEANS UP

All the same, you'll be glad to hear that mayor Johnson has a clean jacket. On 17 July last year, London Fire Brigade commissioner Ron Dobson claimed £3.74 for

“dry cleaning for uniform jacket”. Mr Dobson's pay and pension payments add up to about £200,000 a year.

GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN – PRESCOTT'S FOLLIES

Remember the regional control centres – John Prescott's folly, as they came to be known? Nine of them were going to replace 42 fire controls and transform the fire service, until ministers suddenly realised they were useless, and shelved them.

There's a building near Cambridge which has been empty for five years. Designed to hold one of the centres covering six counties. It's no good for anything else. But it was built under the public finance initiative – which means the taxpayer has to keep coughing up money to the company which built the thing. It's cost nearly £12m so far.

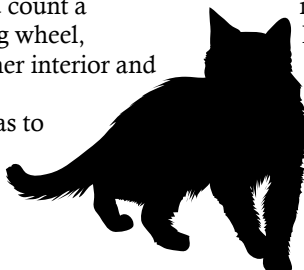
How do we find the money? Norfolk County Council came up with an idea. perhaps you can guess what it was.

IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

Your Cat was thrilled that her old chum David Stanley Brown, director of operations, prevention and response at London Fire Brigade, has been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal.

Dave said he would like to “pay tribute to all those I have worked with over the years”.

Sadly, he was prevented from doing so personally, as many have been forced out of a job by London Fire Brigade cuts he helped to implement.



25-YEAR BADGES



Andrew Sargent (r), officers' branch, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Ian Buckley



Stephen McNab (r), Clydebank, District 5, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep John Finnan



Raymond McGregor (r), Clydebank, District 5, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from watch commander Steven McNab



Kenny Morrison (r), branch chair, Birtley, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Brian Harris



Richard Greensill (r), West Midlands health and safety rep and IRMP coordinator, receives his 25-year badge from West Midlands EC member Barry Downey



John Semple (l), community safety rep, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from divisional rep Gordon Chalk



Mike Gibbons (r), Penkridge, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from West Midlands EC member Barry Downey



Jon Spencer (r), blue watch, Newark, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from watch manager Pete Allen



Mark Unsworth (r), red watch, Fallings Park, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Ben Falmer



Paul Greig (r), Greenock, receives his 25-year badge from colleague Alan Johnston



Andrew Keay (l), red watch, Fallings Park, West Midlands receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Ben Falmer



Allan Shepherd (l), red watch, Banbury, Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Richard Hughes with watch colleagues looking on



Jason Wilder (l), white watch, Chiswick, London, receives his 25-year badge from NW London area secretary David Shek



Kev Dawson (r), RDS, Rewley Road, Oxford, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Mitch Missen



Garry Walker (l), blue watch, Redcar, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Martin Bunn



Conal Daly (l), blue watch, Aston, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Steve Gregory



Davy Swanston (r), Dalkeith, receives his 25-year badge from Scotland treasurer Denise Christie



Ian White (l), Lesmahagow, District 6, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from district secretary Phil McDonald



Dean Kennedy (r), green watch, Darlington, receives his 25-year badge from Durham brigade organiser Paul Dawson



Seth Vasey (l), Newark, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Alan Coates with colleagues looking on



Royston Stewart (r) and Paul Hance (l), green watch, Heathrow, London, receive their 25-year badges from NW area secretary Dave Shek and borough rep Jason Hunter respectively



Mark Bottomley (l), Newark, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Alan Coates with colleagues looking on



Tony Chapman (r), white watch, South Shields, receives his 25-year badge from divisional rep Gordon Chalk



Paul Farnden (l), white watch, Surbiton, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack



John Bryant (l), white watch, Surbiton, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack



Dave Colley (l), white watch, Surbiton, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack



Richard Hennessy (l), white watch, Surbiton, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack



Phil Watson (r), fire safety, Sunderland, receives his 25-year badge from divisional rep Gordon Chalk



Jason Tait (l), service development centre, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Clare Hudson



Andy Paffet (r), command unit, Islington, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Peter Johnson



Ray Bamford (r), since retired, Penkridge, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from West Midlands EC member Barry Downey with Georgie Bamford (Ray's wife) and back row (l-r) orange watch colleagues, Mike Gibbons, Alex Fowler, Nick Fife, Dan Batchelor, Alex Taylor, Tim Grube and Alec Wright looking on



Paul Johnson (l), green watch, Poole, Dorset, receives his 25-year badge from brigade membership organiser Scott Blandford with (l-r) Martin Hallett, Gareth Hinds and Davey Wilson, and (back row l-r) Stuart Topp, Steve May, Rob McEnnerney, Roger Sarginson and John Powell

25-YEAR BADGES



Pat Delaney (r), command unit, Islington, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Peter Johnson



Rob Brooke (l), white watch, Calvert Lane, Hull, Humberside, receives his 25-year badge from Yorkshire and Humberside EC member Ian Murray



Gez Sutton (l), Oakham, Leicestershire, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Mark Draper



Mark Draper (l), branch secretary, Oakham, Leicestershire, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Anthony Smith



Andy Davison (r), Maindee, Wales, receives his 25-year badge from Wales H&S rep Simon Fleming with colleagues (l-r) Steve Hulme, Andy Sansom and Nick Jones



Michael Fong (l), Worksop, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Dave Spink with colleagues (l-r) Roger Chapman, Layne Buckley and Gavin Leversidge



Guy Burley (c), Darlington, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Paul Dawson with blue watch colleagues looking on



Gordon Chalk (l), divisional rep, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Russ King



Stuart Murphy (r), West Midlands policy team, receives his 25-year badge from (since retired West Midlands regional secretary) Andy Dennis



Ian Wilkinson (l), Cramlington and West Hartford, Northumberland receives his 25-year badge from brigade safety rep Ian Dick with Ian's grand-daughter Chloe



Ian McIntyre (l), Renfrew, District 6, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from branch member Brian Clark



Keith Hamilton (r), Marionville, Edinburgh, receives his 25-year badge from Scotland treasurer Denise Christie with colleagues (l-r) James Hogg, Grant Ferguson, Gary Glenn and Stephen Cornish looking on



Rob Holt (l), red watch, Barry, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from rep Carl Evans with red watch colleagues (l-r) James Chambers, Luke Davies, Nathan Rees Taylor, Jon Holmes and Richie Clarke looking on



Andy Mumford (l), Bingham, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from West Midlands EC member Phil Coates with colleagues and friends looking on



Tony Smith (r), Dalkeith, receives his 25-year badge from Scotland treasurer Denise Christie



Chris Walker (4th from left) and **Dave Solly** (6th from left), both red watch, Darlington, Durham, receive their 25-year badges from brigade organiser Paul Dawson with red watch colleagues looking on



Sue Bunting (r), control, Dorset, receives her 25-year badge from brigade secretary Karen Adams



Andy Lindley (r), officers' branch, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from watch manager Steve Ainley



Craig Edwards (l), red watch, Bethnal Green, London, receives his 25-year badge from Thomas Brewer, state president and president Professional Fire Fighters and Paramedics of North Carolina and Charlotte Fire Fighters Association and Pavinder Singh (r), red watch, Bethnal Green, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Ady Cropper (l), Highfields, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Clare Hudson with branch members looking on



Alison Scott (r), Dorset control, receives her 25-year badge from control rep Dan Cull



Pete Golding (r), white watch, Bridgwater, Devon & Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from H&S rep Steve Bayliss with colleagues looking on



Sean Wells (l), Derbyshire, receives his 25-year badge from Derbyshire officers' rep Mat Lee with fellow officer members looking on



Dan Kelly (r), white watch, Woodside, London, receives his 25-year badge from Mick Hickson with colleagues (l-r) George Mahoney, Pascal Davis, Steve Bowes and Emma Watling



Steve McBride (r), B Watch, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Tony Mills with colleagues (l-r) Gary Smith, Dave Taylor, Gary Dyer and Paul Champ looking on



Stuart Thew (r), Durham officers' branch, receives his 25-year badge from Consett branch rep Alan Robson

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

0800 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.



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