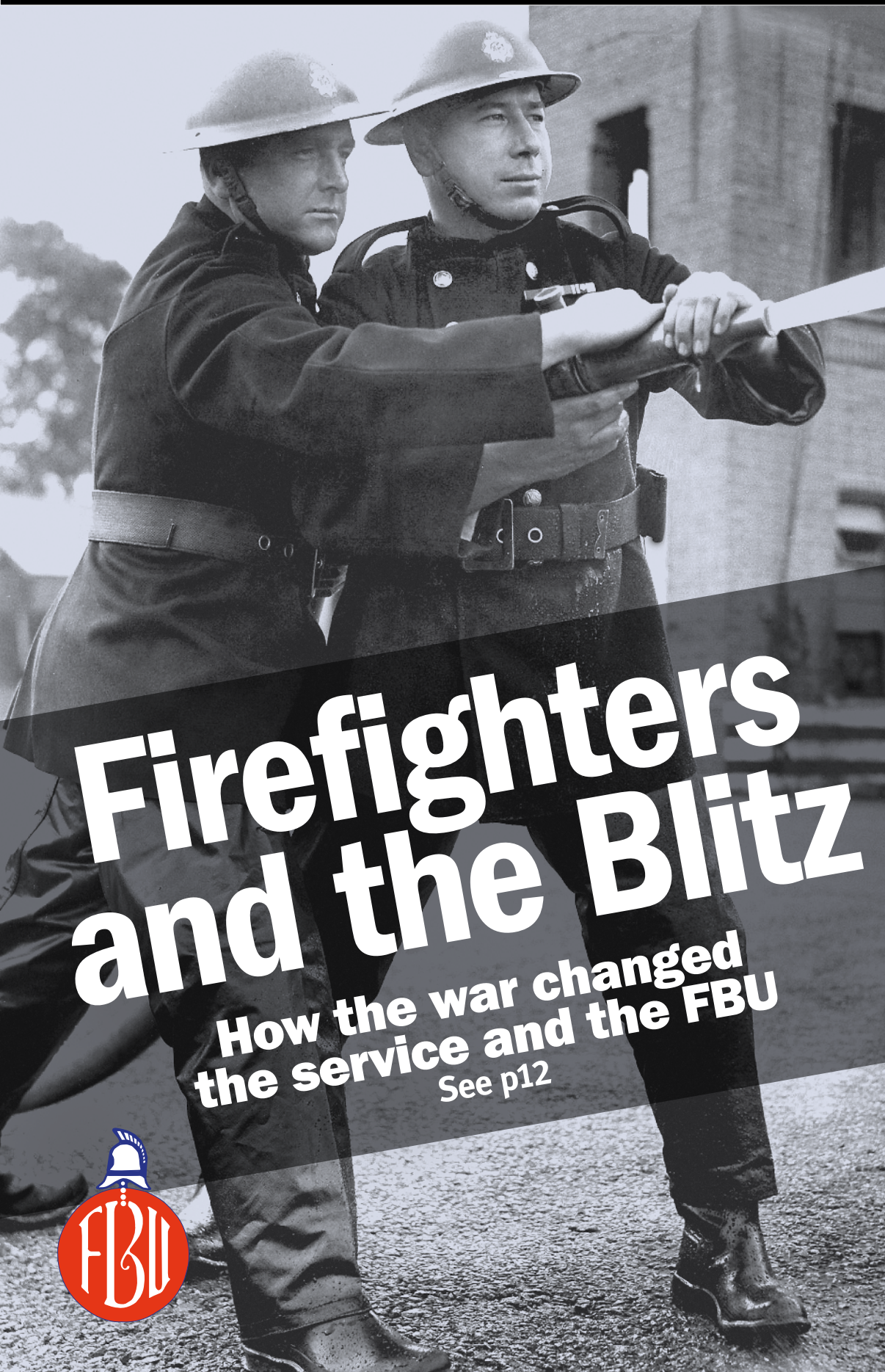


FireFighter

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

August/September 2010



Firefighters and the Blitz

How the war changed the service and the FBU
See p12



Firefighter safety under attack

Union hits back
See p14



Workforce development

How to do it right
See p16



Investment not cuts

FBU national rally and lobby
See p7

The fights of the past and the fights



This issue of your magazine includes an article on the role of firefighters – and the FBU – during the Blitz.

This backs up a book we are due to publish commemorating these events and the men and women who sacrificed so much to protect communities against such enormous odds.

We are extremely grateful to those who assisted in the research for this book – and for the film which will accompany it. Many of those involved are sadly no longer with us, but many

families have preserved the stories, press articles, letters and memorabilia that bring to life the human side of these historic events. By ensuring these stories can be told they have performed a great service to firefighters and especially to the FBU.

Turning point

The mass bombing of UK cities during the second world war marked a turning point for the fire service and for our union. Before the war the fire service was hugely fragmented – firefighters from neighbouring brigades were often not able to work together because their

equipment was incompatible. The threat of bombing forced huge changes in policy and legislation and the FBU was at the centre of those debates.

This meant that after the war a new fire service was created on a genuinely modernised basis. New legislation, structures and standards ensured that our service and our profession were able to meet the challenges of the 20th century – albeit a little late. The fire service became a national service delivered locally and it established a fine reputation throughout the world.

Today, with all the talk of “modernisation”, anything that

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How the FBU is tackling the issues around workforce development



SEAN VATCHER

of the future

happened before 2004 is dismissed as being part of the bad old days. However, those expressing these views are simply demonstrating their own ignorance of the huge improvements which were made during and after the war years.

Cuts, cuts, cuts... and localism

There are many themes in debates today which echo those of 1939-45. The abolition of national standards (for equipment, response times, appointment and promotion, training) has produced an increasingly fragmented service. Firefighters are expected to work together side by side,

but little or nothing is done to ensure that equipment, training and procedures are compatible.

This is likely to get worse as the new government embarks on its agenda of "localism" alongside a period of huge cuts. For our service this seems to mean little more than saying: "There is no money but it's a local problem rather than national one – get on with it." My fear is that we see a service squeezed more and more by cuts and increasingly fragmented as local authorities try to find their own way to solve what is really unsolvable.

Because the truth is that we cannot afford cuts on the scale the government talks about – indeed we cannot afford cuts at all. Cuts will mean further attacks on pay, pensions, jobs and conditions.

Cuts will undermine the safety of firefighters and the public. Those are the stark facts.

As I wrote last month, the government talks of the "bloated public sector", but its claims are false. We have fewer firefighters than we did a decade ago and we simply cannot afford cuts. We have already shown that emergency response times in our service have slowed by 18 per cent and more over ten years. That is a disgrace and further cuts will only make this situation worse.

As firefighters, as trade unionists, as workers – we have no alternative but to fight as hard as we can to resist this agenda. Out national lobby in November can be an important step in that – I hope you will get involved.

Matt Wrack



JAYNE ELMSELEY/MOUNTAINBIKEPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

LETTER

Solidarity with Palestinian people

The Gaza flotilla incident on 31 May once again highlighted the suffering of the Palestinian people. Some were shocked at the way Israel acted but, in truth, this is a daily occurrence for Palestinians.

It took me back to my trip to Palestine in February as part of a trade union delegation. I felt it was an opportunity to see with my own eyes the treatment of the Palestinian people.

I learnt a lot on the trip. No matter what you hear, the illegal settlements, the illegal wall, the checkpoints, the intimidation and the bullying these people face every day is something that I struggle with to this day.

For example, armed Israeli soldiers stopped our minibus at a checkpoint, checking our entire luggage, our suitcases, the minibus and us. I have never had a gun pointed at me. Yet, as weird as this sounds, by the end of the week I got kind of used to it.

Nothing we experienced was even a touch on what the Palestinian people have to go through every day.

The ban on Israeli settlement goods and the position taken by the TUC (led by the FBU) is something that we as a union need to push. This issue is debated time and again. From my first hand experience, this will help the Palestinian people and it is what they want. They are so appreciative that we took this stance. Let's not let them down.

People say to me: "What's it got to

do with us? Why is the union wasting its money?" Quite frankly, it has everything to do with us and it certainly is not a waste of money. These people are suffering and any responsible human being would not and should not stand for that. One thing I want to make clear, which actually surprised me – it is not about religion and it runs much deeper than that.

Last thing I met with the firefighters in Nablus. I spent the whole afternoon with Shams, Saher and Rabee. Those that have met them know what an inspiration they are. I am honoured to call them not just my comrades but my friends also.

Please let's stand up for what's right and support the Palestinian people. I have a presentation I am happy to give to brigade committees and the sections.

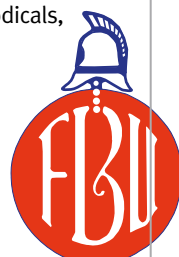
Paul Lawler

Brigade secretary, Wiltshire

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Day off:
meet trainee
firefighter and
extreme cyclist
Lynne Aitchison



FBU slams broken pledge on regional controls

FiReCONTROL

The FBU has condemned the government's decision to renege on the pledge made by both coalition partners to scrap the plan to create nine regional control centres.

Fire minister Bob Neill announced at the fire and rescue conference in Harrogate on 29 June that the government would honour existing contracts with companies involved in the plans. So 46 control centres will be replaced by nine new centres, operating new, complicated and untried technology.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "This is a massively expensive way of making Britain less safe, and a shameless abandonment of a clear pledge given before the election by both governing parties."

"Firefighters will be very angry about reports that the government will honour the contracts for the FiReControl project."

"A manifesto pledge appears to have been dropped at the first opportunity."

Prime minister David Cameron was asked about the project on television by FBU member Graham Donaldson on 26 April. He replied: "One thing we would do to try and stop waste is the regionalisation of the fire service, the so-called 'fire control scheme'; it was going to cost £100 million, it's now costing £420 million. We will want to stop that in its tracks."

The Tory policy green paper, *Control shift: Returning power to local communities* (February 2010), stated: "We will ... abandon plans to regionalise fire control (while providing new measures to enhance resilience in the case of a national emergency)."



Sharon Riley: We will fight on to see an end to this shameful project

In March this year, the Liberal Democrat spokeswoman Julia Goldsworthy told *Firefighter* magazine that the government should think again over FiReControl. She said: "The Liberal Democrats are opposed to the government's plans to centralise fire control ... We have called for the project to be stopped."

Wrack said: "This project already costs many times the original estimate. We

'This is a massively expensive way of making Britain less safe, and a shameless abandonment of a clear pledge'

expect costs will continue to rise and other problems will inevitably occur with this flawed project.

"As the fire minister himself has said: "This project has been a catalogue of delays, poor delivery and added costs."

Sharon Riley, FBU executive council member for control, also expressed the union's disgust with the decision. She said: "The FBU will be pushing hard to ensure that the secrecy and lack of communication which surrounds the project is ended. To put it simply, we are not going away, we are not going to see our service run into the ground and we will fight on to defend it and to see an end to this shameful project."

Riley added: "Our advice to the minister is very clear – scrap this wasteful project."

Union vows to continue cuts fight

WARWICKSHIRE

FBU members in Warwickshire will continue to oppose cuts after the Conservative council voted to slash fire cover in a move which could end an effective firefighting service in the county.

The council discussed a report full of buzzwords and misdirection before deciding, by 34-22 with two abstentions, to close three fire stations.

FBU assistant general secretary Andy Dark said: "The council talked of 'modernisation' and 'improvement'. There is nothing modern about what they considered. It was old-fashioned cuts.

"There's no improvement in jeopardising public safety by cutting the number and spread of fire engines and fire stations."

Dark said that when the council agreed not to close but to "decommission" three stations it meant they would be sold off on the cheap to property developers.

Public consultation revealed that almost no one in the county supported the cuts.

Dark said: "We hear much from the government about localism, letting local people make decisions. Not in Warwickshire, it seems.



Warwickshire firefighters are joined in their protest by Penny Bould, vice chair of Warwickshire council's Labour group.

"£80,000 of council tax money was spent on consultants to direct the public consultation. When the public rejected the cuts package, the consultants said, in essence, that it doesn't matter what the public think, it isn't about popularity or unpopularity."

The consultants stated that the views of the public of Warwickshire were skewed because they felt that their safety was dependent upon the proximity of their home to a fire station.

Dark added: "Only a rambling lunatic would ignore the facts that the quicker it takes to get to a fire, the quicker it gets put out and the closer a station is to the fire then the quicker that attendance will be. The public were right and the consultants were barmy.

"What happened in that council chamber is not the end of the story. The firefighters, the FBU and the people of Warwickshire will stand shoulder to shoulder to save the fire service, to protect the community and to protect public safety in the coming months."

Last minute obstacle to settlement

ESSEX

The FBU was disappointed and bemused by the refusal of Essex's chief fire officer to formally sign off the full and final agreement already reached between the authority and the union to end the long-running dispute over last year's cuts.

Essex FBU officials were due to meet the chief fire officer on 21 July to complete the formality.

But instead, when they arrived at the meeting, the chief refused to sign the agreement and produced a revised document with a new clause inserted without notice or negotiation.

Keith Flynn, Essex FBU secretary, said: "We simply can't believe that yet another last-minute hurdle has been placed in the way of a final agreement, especially when the full and final terms of settlement already offered by the fire authority had been formally agreed by both sides.

"We were given no prior notice of the new clause, there was no negotiation and inevitably we are now faced with calls from angry members to reinstate our industrial action."

He added: "It transpired that the chief had sent a letter late the night before to elected members of the fire authority telling them

what he was going to do. It's almost as if a trap was being laid for us to walk into."

As far as FBU officials were concerned, the deal was already done.

The union signed the original full and final settlement but the chief refused and handed officials his revised version.

Flynn said: "We will calmly consider the situation and the implications of the new clause.

"We shall consult with our members and seek a face-to-face meeting directly with the elected members of the fire authority as soon as possible, because we simply can't keep on doing business this way."

Sounding off!

JOHN McDONNELL MP

FBU parliamentary group secretary

Restore the right to strike

FBU members should know that I have presented a private members' Bill to parliament to improve significantly unions' ability to defend their members.

Firefighters will know that your brothers and sisters in other unions have had industrial action curtailed over the last year by the courts.

In the current BA cabin crew dispute employers have been able to exploit loopholes in the law by using minor technical errors in a trade union ballot to stop trade unionists from taking strike action.

RMT has been hauled through the courts on the most spurious of grounds by employers trying to sabotage democratic votes by members whose only crime has been to fight for their jobs and safe working conditions.

This resort to the courts by some ruthless employers is bringing current employment law into disrepute and undermining industrial



John McDonnell address striking BA cabin crew

relations in this country. This cannot be right and in the interests of good industrial relations needs to be addressed.

If parliamentary elections had to satisfy such stringent regulations, we would have no MPs and 650 court cases pending.

The Lawful Industrial Action (Minor Errors) Bill would tackle the increasing practice of using minor technical errors in the balloting process – which have no material effect on the outcome – to take unions to court in order to prevent them from taking industrial action.

The Bill has been co-signed by members of the FBU's parliamentary group and by some other Labour MPs. It is backed by seven other national unions (BFAWU, NAPO, NUJ, PCS, POA, RMT and URTU), representing over half a million workers.

The second reading of the Bill is on 22 October. There will be a mass rally and lobby of parliament on 13 October.

Trade unionists can help by lobbying their MPs to get backing for this important freedom Bill.

In brief

The race for Britain's most highly paid fire chief is storming ahead despite the chastened times, with a £200,000 award being made to Merseyside chief Tony McGuirk.

The latest Merseyside fire and rescue authority accounts state that McGuirk receives £204,577 plus an extra £1,500 for expenses and allowances. According to a Freedom of Information request for last year's salary, he was then earning no more than £189,000 – so this equates to at least a 7.6% pay rise – a tad more than firefighters in Merseyside and elsewhere.

Some friends have not missed out on the bonanza either. Other senior managers in Merseyside receive salaries of between £129,000 and £176,000, with benefits of several thousand pounds. Meanwhile other officers, firefighters and control members have their basic pay frozen and the prospect of no increase for the next few years.

Controversial plans by South Wales fire and rescue service to introduce a self-rostering duty system at three of its wholtime duty stations have been announced in its 2011–2012 risk reduction plan.

If approved, the plan would see station personnel cut from 28 to 12 and could see firefighters working continuously up to 96 hours. Local FBU officials have been meeting with MPs, Assembly members, local councillors and members of the fire authority in an effort to persuade them that this system of working is not in the best interest of firefighters or the public.

Members of the FBU's LGBT committee attended London Pride in July after two days at the TUC LGBT conference, which was also held in London.

Pat Carberry, FBU LGBT secretary, said: "This year celebrated 40 years since the foundation of the Gay Liberation Front in the UK. Many believe this to have been the first major rumblings of unrest from a community that was no longer prepared to be marginalised.

"Back in 1970 it was only a few hundred very brave individuals who were prepared to stand up and be counted. We can celebrate the progress that has been made and that is reflected in the attendance of over one million people at London Pride, making it the largest outdoor event in the UK."

FBU breaks new ground with tribunal victory

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

The FBU has secured a groundbreaking victory for firefighter Christopher Bennett who was sacked for sending an email to colleagues about the fire service's insistence that he use a chair on nightshifts that was injuring his back.

Last month union solicitors Thompsons secured an out-of-court settlement of £80,000, an amount greater than the statutory cap for this type of case.

Steve Shelton, the FBU official who represented Bennett during his disciplinary hearings, said: "I always knew that Chris had been treated unfairly and that the mitigating circumstances involved in his case had been ignored.

"To lose his job for speaking out about his concerns for safety was a sanction too far. It's reassuring to know that the law recognises this and that our legal advisors were able to successfully argue that the Human Rights Act be applied

to Chris's case." Bennett, who has arthritis of the spine, had over 25 years' service with Greater Manchester fire and rescue service.

In February 2008 he sent an internal email to colleagues referring to an article from the *Manchester Evening News*, headlined 'Firefighters sue brigade after hurting backs on station chairs'. He was sacked for gross misconduct.

An employment tribunal last year found that

Chris Bennett:
Without the support of the FBU I would not have been able to get justice in my case

his right to freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act had been breached and that his dismissal was unfair. It concluded that the email was of political and public interest because firefighters should be alert and fit to go about their business of fighting fires and effecting rescues.

Bennett said: "Without the support of the Fire Brigades Union

I would not have been able to get justice in my case. I was aware that we would be breaking new ground if we could convince the tribunal to apply the Human Rights Act. I would like to thank them for backing me and my case."



Union learning school 'great success'

EDUCATION

An FBU union learning school in July – to begin to implement the union's recent conference motion on promoting education – was a great success, said Vicky Knight, FBU executive council member for women.

"Members are a trade union's most precious commodity," she said. "Well-trained, educated and organised members, who are aware of the issues of the day with a deeper, more reflective understanding from a trade union perspective, make for an active, formidable force to be reckoned with."

The FBU has addressed many challenges facing members, breaking down barriers that served to exclude members from career progression routes

and full integration in both union and workplace.

This included highlighting the issue of dyslexia by both raising awareness through equality work and addressing



Vicky Knight:
Members are a trade union's most precious commodity

learning needs via education and learning structures.

The union wants to open up opportunities for all in areas including basic skills awareness, helping members achieve both formal accreditation and vocational skills.

These programmes can be found on the FBU's website. Courses provided so far have been as diverse as cultural awareness – cookery, learning to speak Spanish, French, Polish or signing and ensuring better delivery of FRS services within communities.

Knight said: "This has the potential to be a hugely successful area for development for members with other responsibilities and skills outside the fire and rescue service, which would be assisted by joint FBU and management support."

She added: "Congratulations to all those on the FBU's education and union learning committees, the learning centre staff and local, regional and national reps and officials who support the learning agenda as a whole. Your input is invaluable."



Save the fire and rescue service

National officer Dave Green says government intends to change forever the way the fire service operates

PUBLIC SERVICES

The budget was clear – the cuts are coming. Make no mistake. This is an attack on the very fabric of the public sector – a battle we have not witnessed for a generation.

For us, this is an attack on the fire and rescue service. But these cuts go far beyond an attack on individual brigades. It's more than the specific issues that we feel strongly about, such as shifts, IRMPs or health and safety.

The proposed cuts are intended to alter forever the way the fire service is delivered. Fire stations will have to close under their plans, jobs will go and those left will have to pick up the debris – working longer hours, for less money and a worse pension.

There has been no public debate, no analysis of alternatives. We are told that there is no alternative. I guess the government works on the theory that if you keep repeating an untruth people will believe it. The fact is that the crisis was caused by a fall in government income due to the bail out

of the banks. The crisis was not caused by anything else.

We have to look beyond the threats of 40 per cent cuts to non-protected services and question the reasoning behind the rhetoric.

For the likes of Cameron, Osborne and Clegg the crisis is a means to an end – a plan they have been harbouring for many years. Dismantle the public sector – cut pay, strip away pensions and reduce staffing. Hive off

profitable sectors for their chums in private industry to asset strip.

The last bastion of trade union influence, the last vestiges of any notion of a compassionate society are removed.

If they get their way

FBU officials are well aware of the ramifications of what is before us. Our view is that there is no fat to cut in the fire and rescue service, no more waste to jettison.

We have lived with a cuts agenda for several years now, unlike the other emergency services, and the frontline is down to the bone.

We have been in close contact with our parliamentary group and allies in the labour movement. We intend to campaign vigorously to defend our service, a service society both expects and deserves. It falls upon all members of the FBU, the true professional voice of the fire and rescue service, to start that defence now. I urge all members to contact their local MPs and councillors.

We are organising a national lobby of parliament on Wednesday 17 November. We want an impressive turnout – so branches and regions need to make preparations now to build for the event.

United we can defeat the coalition's cuts. They have no mandate for what they propose. They have to be stopped.

NATIONAL RALLY AND LOBBY

Central Hall, Westminster

**WEDNESDAY
17 NOVEMBER**

- ◆ Defend public safety:
Investment – not cuts
- ◆ No pay freeze
- ◆ Hands off our pensions
- ◆ Scrap regional controls

Speak to brigade officials for transport and other details

VIEW FROM THE AERIAL LADDER PLATFORM

12 HR SHIFTS

AN ATTACK
ON
NIGHT-TIME
FIRE COVER!



First use of vuvuzelas in industrial protest

FBU MEMBERS MAKE SOME NOISE

London firefighters protesting at proposed changes to their shift patterns demonstrated their fury by blowing vuvuzela trumpets outside a key meeting in June.

Around 500 Fire Brigades Union members gathered outside

the headquarters of the London fire brigade for a meeting of the fire authority.

The protest was widely heralded as the first time that vuvuzelas — the popular trumpets from the football World Cup —

have been used as an instrument of industrial action in Britain.

Paul Embery, London FBU regional official, said: "There was quite a bit of noise. They have certainly had an impact during the World Cup and you can't fail

LONDON FIRE BRIGADE
FBU



PICTURE: STEFANO CAGNONI

to hear them. We thought it was a good idea to catch the flavour of the moment. When we have a protest it's always our plan to make as much noise as we can."

The brigade wants to impose 12-hour shifts, despite near

unanimous opposition from London firefighters.

The FBU believes that the introduction of new shift patterns is a prelude to cutting overnight fire cover and would force some firefighters to quit because of

difficulties arranging childcare.

Embery said: "They want to introduce 12-hour shifts which, frankly, is going to cause people massive practical problems, to the extent that many people may have to leave the service."



FIREFIGHTERS AND THE BLITZ

How the war changed the fire service

The Blitz began 70 years ago on 7 September. It transformed the fire service, as well as the firefighters' union. To mark the anniversary, the FBU commissioned Francis Beckett to tell the story, in a new book, *Firefighters and the Blitz*. In this extract he describes Britain's fire services in the runup to the war.



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE





LONDON FIRE BRIGADE



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

In 1937 Britain's fire services were in no state to deal with a major national emergency. That was the year the Home Office instructed local authorities to draw up air raid precautions and fire protection schemes and the Air Raid Precautions Act provided a grant to finance improvements in firefighting services.

These services had grown up in a piecemeal way. Many firefighters were recruited from the navy, where they were taught the rigid and unquestioning obedience that fire officers believed the job demanded. Life in a fire station was run like life on board a naval ship, revolving around drill and discipline, spit and polish. New recruits were even expected to clean their officers' homes. "Fire stations," noted Victor Bailey in his history of the Fire Brigades Union, "were simply ships on dry land."

Every firefighter was on duty 24 hours a day for 14 days and nights. Men who had fought a serious fire in the night had to spend the next day cleaning and testing the engines and equipment. Discipline was arbitrary and the station manager's word was law. Outside the big brigades, there were no pensions and pay was reduced during sickness.

Few firefighters could rise through the ranks to become officers, for these were often recruited from the ranks of naval officers. The man who was to become easily the most famous of these was the appropriately named commander Aylmer Firebrace, veteran of the 1916 battle of Jutland and a former commander of Chatham gunnery school. The instincts of a naval officer accustomed to instant obedience never quite left him.

John Horner

Firebrace became an officer in the London fire brigade (LFB) in 1919. In 1933 he recruited to the ranks a young man of 21 who, arguably, was to have as big an influence on the future of the fire service as Firebrace himself. His name was John Horner, and he did so well at training school that Firebrace attached him to headquarters and placed him in the zone of accelerated promotion. If Firebrace had had any idea what sort of man young John Horner would turn out to be, it is unlikely he would have done that.

Horner found the LFB deeply conservative and rooted in the past, and was horrified to discover that its equipment was incompatible with equipment used elsewhere in the country. Could those in charge not see how dangerous this would be in time of war, when other brigades might need to come to London's aid? Could no one see that military-style uniforms and drilling to make men docile were not the preparation required for war work? Apparently not.

"It was the brass helmet which for me epitomised the hidebound traditions of the LFB," Horner wrote later. "Polished every day and after every fire, the crown might become dangerously thin by generations of elbow grease, since a helmet could have previously served more than one fireman throughout his entire service. Heavy and cumbersome, awkward in confined spaces, it provided little protection. Since the dawning of the age of electricity the high crest with its splendid embossed dragon had been a constant danger to the wearer."

Born in November 1911, Horner knew what poverty did to people and to families, for he remembered his father, who arrived in London, a 13-year-old orphan, looking for work: "He was to remain an illiterate navvy

FIREFIGHTERS AND THE BLITZ

until, his strength failing, he simply died.” Horner’s parents brought up their four children in a tiny two-up, two-down house in Walthamstow. The defeat of the 1926 general strike when he was 14 seems to have been the point at which he became a socialist.

A scholarship to a grammar school led to him becoming a trainee buyer for Harrods. It could have been the gateway to a comfortable life far removed from the privations of his parents, but everything in this restless man revolted against it, and after a year he left and went to sea. He travelled the world with the merchant navy and became a qualified second officer – but one who could not find a ship because of the economic crisis of the 1930s. So he applied for a job in the fire service.

As a seaman, he recalled, “I had seen the collapse of world capitalism. I had seen the unwanted wheat of the prairies of America mixed with tar to fuel dockside locomotives, while starving jobless immigrants wandered the quays and begged for scraps from the hogswill in our galley’s shit-bucket.” Now he was seeing the dreadful poverty and starvation of the 1930s in Britain; and he had seen the 1929-31 British Labour government do nothing at all to change it. It was a bitter disillusion for reformers of Horner’s generation. So he was quite ready to be what his colleagues called “a bolshie”.

Horner became an activist in the FBU, whose power and influence were very limited. Two thousand of its members were employed by the London county council (LCC), and the other 1,000 were spread thinly over provincial brigades. The LCC refused to have anything to do with it, and set up a tame “representative body” (RB) instead.

The LCC under Herbert Morrison made a parade of refusing to deal with the FBU. Morrison also poured scorn on the claim that firefighters worked 72 hours, “announcing publicly that we actually slept at nights – on beds – with blankets supplied by the LCC”. Contemporary London politicians have recently, as I write in 2010, made the same appalling discovery, and speak about it with the same manufactured outrage.

The military-style drill was designed to make the men docile and unlikely to get involved with the union. But firefighters relied on each other, and as Horner wrote later: “I came to realise that the strong bond of mutual reliance which characterised the job could be a powerful element in forging a special kind of trade union for a special kind of service.”

These two men, the grandee who had been a naval officer and the young working-class former merchant seamen, were to be the key figures in the fight against the Blitz.



Herbert Morrison from the London County Council attacked firefighters’ conditions

In 1938 Firebrace was appointed chief officer of the LFB. That was the year of the Fire Brigades Act, which required local authorities to maintain efficient firefighting services, and Firebrace took up his post just in time to implement it in the capital.

Before this Act, local authorities provided whatever they thought they ought to provide by way of fire services. No local authority except the LCC was under any legal obligation to provide a fire brigade at all. What they did provide was often very sketchy indeed. The heads of local fire brigades were often local worthies who had an interest in firefighting.

No extra money

The Fire Brigades Act of 1938 made fire protection compulsory for every local authority. Britain was divided into 12 regions under the command of chief regional fire officers to coordinate resources, including manpower and appliances. But the Act did not provide extra money, and it did not reduce the fire brigades to a manageable number. When tested in war conditions the new law proved insufficient.

But it was a sign that the government and the press had belatedly woken up to the reality of aerial warfare and were tending if anything to exaggerate its potential for destructiveness. The Fire Brigades Act put the expansion of the fire service under the control of the Home Office, which issued a Memorandum on Emergency Fire Brigade Organisation. This pointed out that the assumption that large numbers of fires would not occur at the same time, upon which fire service organisation was based, was reasonable enough in peacetime but clearly wrong in the sort of war that was likely to be fought. For war, a huge and rapid expansion was needed, both of men and equipment.

Frederick Radford, the first historian of the Fire Brigades Union, noted just after the war that “the union drew the nation’s attention to its woefully inadequate fire defences. There was a criminal lack of equipment and uniforms. Fires were fought in civilian clothes in some towns. There were deficiencies in hoses, blankets and beds.”

In March 1938, the LCC’s air raid precautions committee set up what became known as the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) by deciding to recruit and train 28,000 auxiliaries for the London Fire Brigade, and to set up 360 additional fire stations. There were to be two types of auxiliary: unpaid part-timers, who did their normal jobs and worked as firefighters when they could and when they were needed; and those who, in the event of war, would give up their jobs and become full-time, paid firefighters.

The AFS became a national organisation, and was to be the key factor in fighting the Blitz. John Horner’s determination to use its creation as an opportunity for the union, rather than a danger, was the foundation upon which today’s FBU is built.

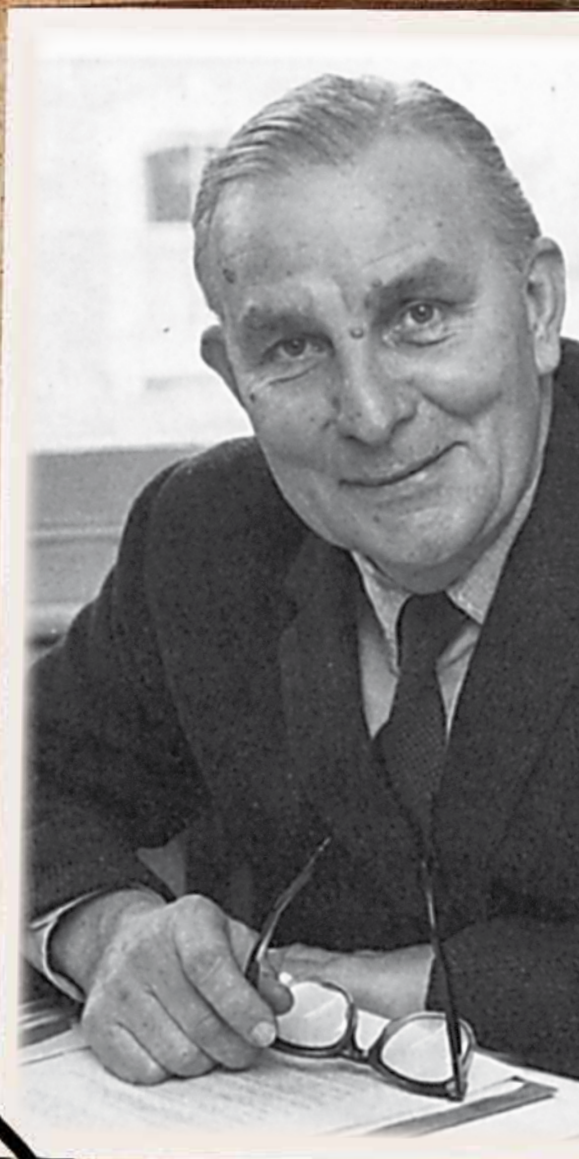
✚ *Firefighters and the Blitz* by Francis Beckett (ISBN 9780850366730) may be ordered at the special pre-publication price of £10 plus £1 p&p to addresses in the UK until the end of September. Order from Pre-publication offers, Central Books Ltd, Mail Order Department, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN, (Telephone 0845 458 9910, fax 0845 458 9912 mo@centralbooks.com) and quote Pre-publication Offer/Firefighters. (The book will be sent out on publication in the second week of September.)

LONDON FIRE BRIGADE



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE





“The strong bond of mutual resilience which characterised the job could forge a special kind of trade union”

Top right: John Horner, FBU general secretary during this pivotal era

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER



FBU general secretary Matt Wrack responds to the government's attack on health and safety

The government review of health and safety, headed by Lord Young over the last two months, was an unwelcome distraction. Unwelcome because it was not designed to improve the existing health and safety at work system, nor to prosecute more criminal employers, nor to provide more resources for the Health and Safety Executive. A distraction because its recycling of *Daily Mail* headlines coincided with the government's announcement of savage cuts to public services.

The Young review is best seen as part of this attack. No one should be fooled by Young. He was the architect of privatisation under Thatcher. He may lack the vigour of yesterday, but no one should doubt his contempt for the welfare of workers.

Emergency services

Young told the *Daily Telegraph* (23 June) that his review would cover three areas. First, it would examine the so-called "compensation culture". Second, it would look at whether health and safety law is a "burden on business". Finally, it would decide whether health and safety law should apply to the emergency

services, including firefighters.

Young was crystal clear about his intentions. He told *The Times* (19 June): "I want to exclude all the emergency services from health and safety. Technically speaking, the firemen could say they wouldn't go to a fire because it was too dangerous. We've just got to get sense back into the system."

What would this mean? It would mean fire service employers would no longer be bound by the Health and Safety at Work Act. Fire authorities would not have a statutory duty of care for their employees, meaning they would no longer have to take measures to reduce the risks faced by their staff and to inform and train them about safe working practices. It would mean every firefighter death would be met

with crocodile tears but no investigation, never mind a prosecution of those responsible.

Young was effectively telling firefighters: You know there are risks when you sign up, so don't expect anything by way of protection. Tell that to the families of 150 firefighters who have died at work since the Act came into force. Tell that to the families of 17 firefighters killed at fires in the last eight years. Tell it to the 100 firefighters who suffer hospitalisation, burns and loss of limbs every year in the course of rescuing people, or the 4,000 injured in other ways in the line of duty every year.

The proposal is breathtaking in its stupidity. It would involve tearing up decades of British and European lawmaking. After meeting FBU officials, Young appears to have retreated in relation to issues affecting the fire and rescue service. Nevertheless we will monitor his conclusions closely.

In the fire and rescue service, health and safety does not in any way prevent firefighters from dealing with emergencies. Instead the real problem we face is the attempt to downgrade and weaken the importance of emergency intervention within our service. The culture which sees fitting smoke alarms as

**"Lord Young's
half-baked review
will do nothing to
address safety"**



Firefighters remember fallen colleagues at the national memorial for UK firefighters outside St Paul's cathedral in London

more important than emergency intervention will undermine our service and our profession unless we challenge it. Firefighters want to be able to respond rapidly and effectively to all emergency incidents. To ensure that is done safely, professionally and effectively we simply ask for adequate resources, equipment and training. Lord Young's half-baked review will do absolutely nothing to address this.

Compensation culture

Young claimed he wants to tackle the compensation culture. What does this mean? It means when you get injured at work and your employer is found to be negligent, then they have to pay. The perpetrator has to pay the victim for the damage done. It may not be enough. But it is at least some justice, when

the injury could have been avoided.

There is no compensation culture in the UK fire and rescue service. Firefighters are not increasingly likely to claim compensation from their employer should they be injured or made sick while carrying out their duties at work. Within the fire and rescue service there is no such evidence. In fact the number of personal injury claims made by Fire Brigades Union members in the past eight years has been reduced by some 36%.

More widely, academic research has found that the UK's "compensation culture" is a myth. Warwick University researchers working for the Health and Safety Executive found that the number of legal actions is consistently declining in both the High Court and the County Courts. TUC research has revealed

that fewer than one in 10 people made ill or injured by their work ever receive any compensation from the state or from their employers.

Health and safety 'a burden'?

Universal health and safety regulation is absolutely essential. Firefighters see that when we are called to free workers trapped by machinery and rescue workers from hazardous workplaces. Fires take place in ordinary shops and offices just as they do in factories and plants. In most cases, the employers' failure to follow safety law is a material reason why fire has engulfed the premises.

Every year around 200 workers die at work. Over one million suffer work-related ill health. Over 30,000 report injuries at work. Far from being a burden on business, this is a massive burden on working people. Yet businesses spend only three minutes and £1.40 a day on health and safety, according to government figures.

For these reasons, the FBU wants safety law, backed by strong enforcement, to continue. The trade union movement won safety rights after decades of mistreatment. We will not give up these rights without a fight.

THE TIMES 1 SEPTEMBER 2010

Police and firefighters to be freed from the 'absurd' health and safety shackles

News

Newspaper headlines have stoked the attack on safety



Competence requires continuous training



National officer Sean Starbuck explains how the FBU is tackling the issues around workforce development



The inconsistent

Delegates to recent FBU annual conferences have debated issues around the integrated personal development system (IPDS) and tasked the FBU workforce development group (WDG) with raising these concerns with employers.

The 2010 conference discussed six more workforce development-related resolutions. These included concerns such as how assessment development centres are run and unacceptable reductions in the contents of the initial recruit training programme.

The common theme running through these resolutions was the inconsistent way that IPDS was being implemented, despite clear national guidance on how it should be delivered.

The workforce development group

The WDG is made up of officials who are especially interested in this subject. Over the last three years it has worked to give officials a better understanding of workforce development and the tools to challenge issues in their own brigades. The group has produced a guide for officials on the IPDS code of practice, available via the FBU website.

An FBU course has been run more than half a dozen times and feedback from participants has shown that it has been extremely useful and confirmed that inconsistent implementation remains the biggest obstacle to IPDS being successful in its application.

Challenges

On the pilot course we ran a session on the

misuse of development pay on promotion. We identified that the majority of brigades which pay development rates of pay on promotion are doing this without having the right quality assurance which they agreed would have to be in place before this happened. Several officials have challenged this in their brigades.

The FBU is taking legal advice about whether this is an unlawful deduction of wages. Once again, only the FBU is representing the interests of firefighters of all roles. Members will be kept fully updated as this challenge develops.

The union believes that IPDS is the best system available to identify, assess and develop individuals to achieve and maintain competence – but that it can only be effective if it is applied as a whole and not in part, as is often

The report of this initial interview will be available to officials in the near future.

Ongoing work

The WDG is working on an advisory document highlighting our concerns about IPDS and suggesting simple remedies. It is also working on a document that will give officials an understanding of what elements should be covered in initial recruits' courses. The document is being designed to enable officials to mount a challenge if they believe that the current one is not appropriate.

As part of this work the FBU has met with the Scottish Fire Service College and has been given information on the foundation course which all Scottish brigades use for wholetime firefighter initial recruit training.

The FBU is also looking at other areas, such as the qualifications that are available to firefighters of all roles, and has been involved in a dispute around a proposal to introduce an unnecessary breathing apparatus qualification.

In addition, several surveys are under way. One is designed to gather information around the use of the national firefighter selection test and another to discover the range of specialist skills that are being undertaken in brigades. The results will be used in future projects for the WDG.

The WDG has also played an integral part in establishing a process which ensures that the nationally agreed role map cannot be amended even slightly without the agreement of the National Joint Council.

ency problem

the case. This is the message that we have been trying to reiterate at all the national committees we sit on and the message is finally getting through. A specific subcommittee has been set up primarily to look at IPDS and to review how it has been implemented. The FBU has

a permanent seat on this committee and will continue to raise issues when we do not agree with the way things are being implemented.

In addition, the Communities and Local Government department has commissioned consultants – Greenstreet Berman – to review current processes for operational training and development in the fire and rescue service.

The FBU has already taken part in an initial interview, where the union reiterated its support for IPDS, but only if it is applied in line with the nationally agreed codes of practice that address all the concerns that have been raised by our officials.

The FBU also gave examples of IPDS not being applied in line with these codes of practice and outlined areas where immediate improvements could be made.

There is no doubt that the FBU takes workforce development very seriously and continues to raise issues in all the right places.

It is only through a nationally agreed, quality assured development process that we can be confident of safe and competent firefighters at all levels.

IPDS is the key to this – but it cannot work unless it is applied as per the codes of practice. The FBU will continue to raise issues until the process is delivered as it should be.

Other organisations claim to be the professional voice of the fire service.

We all know that the FBU is the real voice of professional firefighters of all roles. It's time that our voice was heard and workforce development was delivered in the way it was intended.

**“The FBU is
the real voice
of professional
firefighters of
all roles”**

Pain at work

New research on musculoskeletal injuries to firefighters

INJURIES

Firefighting is one of the most important and most dangerous occupations in the world. While firefighters face a number of unique risk factors in the job, the most common work-related injuries among firefighters are musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). MSDs are injuries to the back, the upper limbs (shoulders, wrist, elbow, neck etc) and lower limbs (mainly the legs).

The physical demands of the job and the limited opportunities to modify them mean that MSDs are potentially more disruptive and costly to firefighters than to people in other lines of work.

Researchers from the Centre for Health and Safety in the Workplace in the United States have published a study of the frequency, severity, and economic consequences of musculoskeletal injuries to firefighters in California. The importance of firefighter MSDs was heightened by changes to California's workers' compensation scheme.

The results are relevant to firefighters in the UK.

Elevated risk

Researchers found that firefighters face an "elevated risk" from MSDs and the risk is "especially pronounced" for firefighters aged 55 and older.

They found that:

- ◆ Firefighters are 3.5 times more likely to suffer a workplace injury and 3.8 times more likely to suffer a work-related MSD than a private-sector worker.
- ◆ Firefighters take 1.4 times longer to return to work than workers in the private sector for all injuries; this difference rockets for MSDs, as firefighters take twice as long to return to work.
- ◆ The average number of days away from work after an MSD is 1.8 times greater for an MSD than for any other injury for firefighters, whereas this ratio is only 1.25 for private sector workers.
- ◆ Both the frequency and the severity of injuries, particularly MSDs, are worse for older firefighters than they are for younger firefighters.
- ◆ Older firefighters are 10.4 times more likely to suffer an MSD than are private-sector workers, and they take more than four times longer to return to work.

FINDINGS IN BRIEF

- ◆ Firefighters are 3.5 times more likely to suffer a workplace injury than a private-sector worker
- ◆ Firefighters take 1.4 times longer to return to work than workers in the private sector
- ◆ Both the frequency and the severity of injuries, particularly MSDs, are worse for older firefighters
- ◆ Older firefighters are 10.4 times more likely to suffer an MSD than are private-sector workers and they take more than four times as long to return to work

The sharp increase in the frequency of MSDs for older firefighters is consistent with the idea that the physical nature of the job exposes them to cumulative trauma, making them more susceptible to disabling MSDs.

Researchers also compared the employment outcomes of firefighters with four different categories of injury: back; knee; shoulder; and heart disease.

Researchers found:

- ◆ While the losses for firefighters who experience permanent disabilities are substantial on average, there are a wide variety of outcomes across different injury types.
- ◆ Heart disease is associated with the most significant reduction in employment. The relative employment ratio for firefighters with heart disease falls to less than 0.6 in the third year after the date of disability.
- ◆ The losses associated with back injuries and other common types of injuries appear to be relatively minor, particularly compared to those of workers in the private sector.

Medical interventions

The researchers also looked at medical interventions for firefighters with MSDs, particularly chiropractic or physical therapy.

Most studies evaluating the health effects of chiropractors or physical therapists found mildly positive results relative to general practitioner care and significant improvements relative to placebos.

The evidence regarding return-to-work outcomes and cost-effectiveness was mixed and weak. While some studies found that chiropractors or physical therapist treatments were marginally cost-effective and return injured workers to work faster, they were sparse. Many studies found that alternative treatments from a GP were more cost-effective. However, there is still a lack of evidence on long-term treatments.

Although not conclusive, the research sets out some of the key issues facing firefighters at work and the effects of MSDs.

More information:

The full research is available online.

Seth A. Seabury, Christopher F. McLaren, (2010) *The frequency, severity, and economic consequences of musculoskeletal injuries to firefighters in California*

http://rand.org/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG1018.pdf



SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

Am I really redundant?

Q I am a retained firefighter. While at my main place of work I had to go out on a shout. When I returned my boss announced he could not tolerate any more interruptions to my work as it was hurting the business and said he was making me redundant. Can he do that?

A An employee can be made redundant only if the employer is closing the business, closing a workplace or requires fewer employees for existing work or there is less work for existing employees.

Terminating someone's employment because retained firefighter duties are said to be disrupting the employer's business is unlikely to be viewed in law as a redundancy. It is instead a dismissal.

There are six reasons for dismissal which may be considered fair in law: capability; conduct; redundancy; continued employment that contravenes a restriction or duty imposed by statute; retirement; and "some other substantial reason".

"Some other substantial reason" could include an employer's genuine belief that a member's retained duties are disrupting the business.

An employment tribunal asked to consider a claim of unfair dismissal would have to consider whether the employer acted reasonably or unreasonably in treating that reason as sufficient grounds for dismissal.

The extent to which the issue was discussed with the member or to which alternatives were considered, such as altering the member's working hours or redeployment to a role where retained duties would be less disruptive, would also be considered.

If a retained member is dismissed because their firefighter duties are said to be disrupting their employer's

business then they should immediately contact the trade union that represents them in their full-time job.

Claims for unfair dismissal must be lodged within three months of the date the employment ends. The member must also have at least one year's continuous service with their employer in order to be able to pursue a claim.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

Bullied, but I can't complain

Q What should I do if I am bullied, harassed or intimidated at work and feel I cannot complain?

A Complaining is the only way to deal with this. The problem is unlikely to go away otherwise.

Contact your FBU representative and talk through the options with them. You should also check to see if the employer has a bullying or harassment policy that might set out a procedure to follow when making a complaint of bullying or harassment.

Keep a diary recording dates and times of incidents when you feel you are being harassed and an outline of what happened. Note down the names of any witnesses and keep copies of any relevant written material.

Then inform your employers so that they can assist in resolving the situation. At the end of the day, if one of their employees is behaving in a bullying way this is their problem, not yours.

Raise the issue if you can with your line manager or, if they are the person who is bullying you, with their manager. Alternatively you may wish to contact personnel or human resources.

If you feel that you cannot raise the matter yourself with anyone, then maybe the union can do so on your behalf.

Unless you or your union representative raise the issue with management, it is unlikely that anything will change. There are no specific legal rights that outlaw bullying or harassment, so the only way of resolving the problem is by discussion with management.

→ The advice published here is not intended as legal advice on individual cases. Write in with your legal problem to legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

‘I haven’t really raced – I’ve been doing more stunt work’

Lynne Aitchison from Lothian and Borders is a champion extreme cyclist

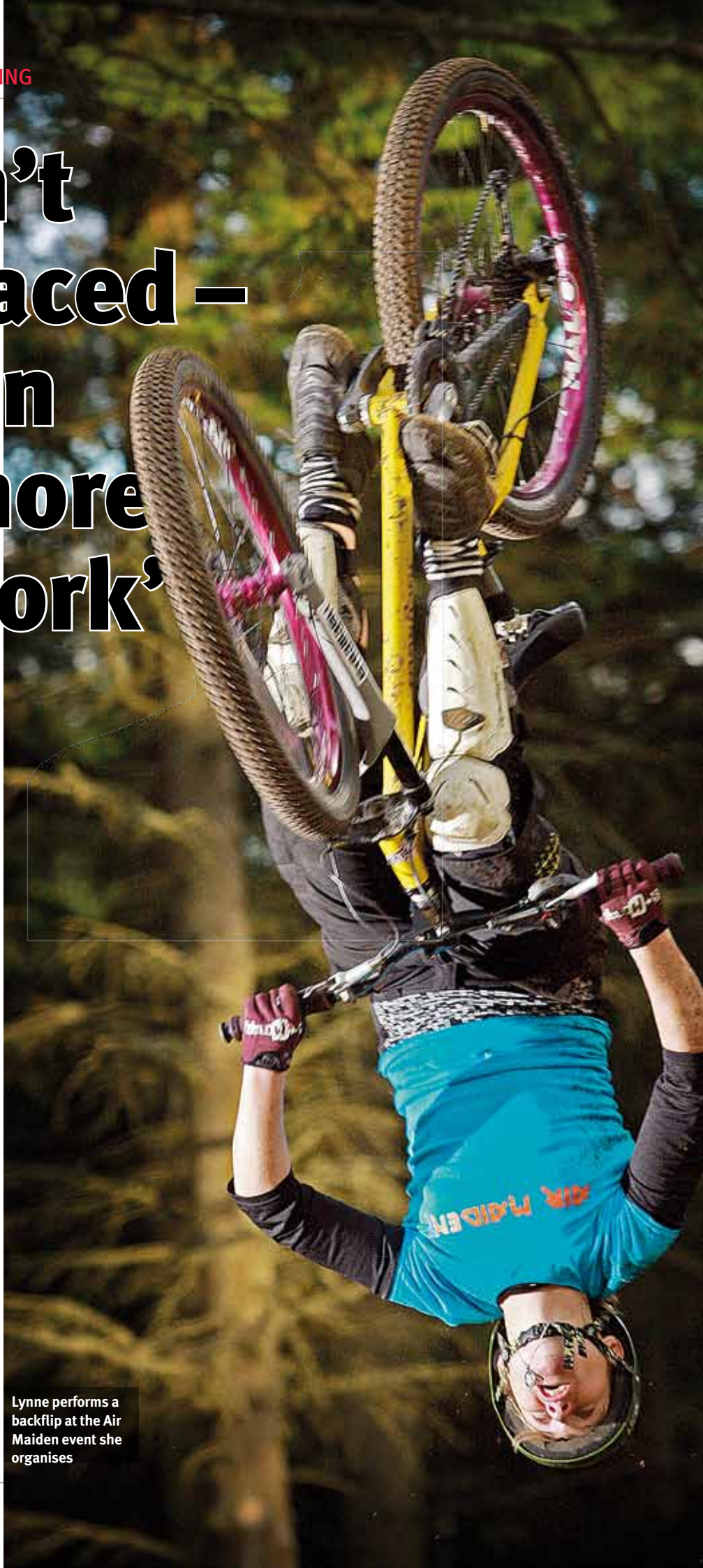
Going downhill really quickly on a bike on a rough track between large trees is not something most people relish. But Edinburgh fire-fighter and keen mountain biker Lynne Aitchison has had a great time biking down hills at speed. Now she is keen to help others enjoy the thrills of learning new skills on bikes.

Competitive downhill racing is not just exhilarating for the rider – it can be pretty thrilling to watch. Those who line the trackside can witness physical feats that certainly don’t get taught in the cycling proficiency test.

This is extreme biking, a recognised sport that requires a high level of physical fitness and agility – not to mention nerve. Take launching off a big step, “jumping” into the air and leaping across a ten-foot hole in the track road, for instance. “You just fly off a gap really – it’s not as tricky as it sounds”, Lynne explains.

Well, perhaps not if you are skilled enough to be named women’s downhill biking Scottish champion in 2005 after six rounds cycling down six hills between April and September. Lynne got the title because she won most races. She raced the downhill cycling world cup equivalent in Fort William

Lynne performs a backflip at the Air Maiden event she organises



the same year, organised by Union Cycliste Internationale, the official governing body for cycling sports.

Lynne, now 34, only discovered the delights and challenges of extreme biking in her mid-twenties when she realised she preferred going downhill to up, and wanted to learn some skills. But it should not really have come as a surprise. As a self-confessed adrenaline junkie, she's always felt drawn to challenging sports: she triple-jumped for Scotland as a schoolgirl and is a long-standing snowboarder.

She lived in Canada for a year. Downhill racing is far more mainstream in North America than the UK, so Lynne was not short of biking opportunities. She even entered the World Masters championship for women over 30 in Sun Peaks, British Columbia, came second and has the medal to prove it.

She also made sure she got along to Crankworx, the legendary extreme mountain biking festival in the ski resort of Whistler in British Columbia. It's a place where mountain bikers are judged very much by their drop-off, airborne, landing and other skills. There are some magnificent slopes amid breathtaking scenery. Lynne came fourth in the pro women's category in 2007.

'We do tours in schools'

She joined Lothian and Borders fire and rescue service in February last year and has moved away from competitive racing to performing stunts and encouraging others to get involved in the sport.

"Since I came back from Canada and joined the fire service, I haven't really raced – I've been doing more stunt work," said Lynne, a trainee on red watch and based at Tollcross station. She belongs to a stunt group called The Clan. "We do tours in schools and do demos at outdoor shows and festivals. There are five riders from all over Scotland – four guys and myself

"It's good fun. We've got a rig that we built up to take with us, a bus and a trailer. We drive into wherever we're going and do demos. Each of us has a different speciality – mine's jumping, so we do stunts over a jump, perform tricks on the bike in the air – back-flips, no-handers, no-footers. It's all very safe and people seem to like it. The idea is to get more people into biking and advertise the sport a bit."

Lynne also organises mountain bike events. Earlier in the summer there was Air Maiden – a freeride event for women – made up of a coaching weekend followed by a competition trying out newly learned skills. A similar event for men is planned for later in the year.

PICTURES: JYNNE ELMSEY/MOUNTAINBIKEPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



LYNNE AITCHISON

Lynne Aitchison is a trainee firefighter at Tollcross station in Edinburgh, a world-standard extreme biker and member of The Clan stunt group

"I've moved more into the events organising side of things, but I'm still doing the stunts when I can, still dabbling in the odd bit of downhill but not really as seriously as I used to. I love my job as a firefighter, am getting that bit older and it's trying to fit everything in. Maybe I'm calming down a bit."

'I fell in by accident'

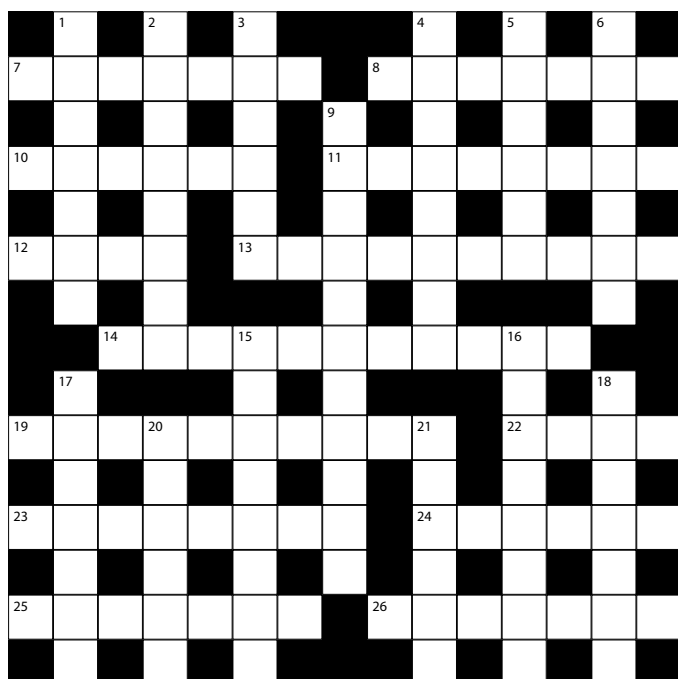
Though, to most people, the concept of calming down doesn't seem to fit with performing breathtaking bike stunts. For someone who "fell into mountain biking by accident", Lynne has notched up considerable success.

She is enjoying encouraging more

women to get involved by demonstrating and passing on her skills. "There are a lot of women going mountain biking, but not that many that do stunts. We always get a good response when we do demonstrations. There is quite a lot of interest."

Lynne reckons downhill stunt biking would make an excellent Olympic sport, but so far the authorities have not shown much interest. "They do recognise crosscountry mountain biking and boxing, but they don't even have downhill mountain biking in the Olympics. I think that's a shame because, like downhill skiing, it's such a good spectator sport. It's a bit too late for 2012 – but maybe the Olympic authorities should give it a whirl."

Quick Crossword

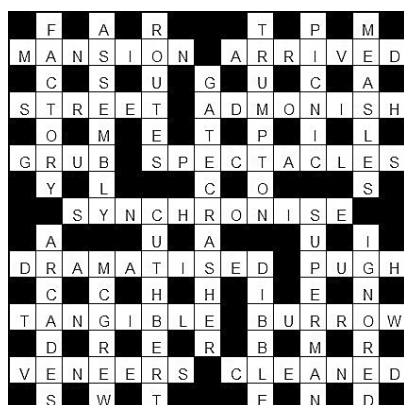


ACROSS

- 7** Fire hazard in pressurised can (7)
8 Item of padded soft furnishing, or rim of snooker table (7)
10, 12, 5 They were rejected by 98 per cent of members in London (6-4,6)
11 Wannabes; contenders (8)
12 See 10 (4)
13 Cut of 22 (10)
14 Basically, of the inner, distinctive nature of something; (11)
19 Large tropical reptiles - said to shed tears? (10)
22 Meat from cattle (4)
23 Fire hazards found in smokers' homes (8)
24 See 17 (6)
25 Fat-cat bankers still get them (7)
26 Bird of prey (7)

DOWN

- 1** Tall tree, native of north America (7)
2 Vertical posts used as barriers (8)
3 Wear them, or watch them fight (6)
4 Writ demanding attendance at court (8)
5 See 10 (6)
6 Bump into (7)
9 Stamp collector (11)
15 Final stages of chess encounters (8)
16 Free (8)
17, 24 Brighton fire station under threat of closure (7,6)
18 Asylum seeker (7)
20 Lemon or lime (6)
21 Hole for plug, or eye perhaps (6)



Solution to July 2010 crossword

Winner of the June 2010 quiz

Stuart McQueen
of Carlisle, Scotland

Answers to

July 2010 quiz

1. B – Diego Simeone
2. C – Cristiano Ronaldo
3. A – Salvatore Schillaci
4. A – Cafu
5. B – Ronaldo



Prize quiz

Win tickets for Glastonbury 2011

- 1** What anniversary did Glastonbury celebrate this year?
 a. 30th
 b. 25th
 c. 40th
 d. 10th
- 2** Who of the following was the first rapper to headline at Glastonbury in 2008?
 a. Snoop Dog
 b. Kanye West
 c. Dizzee Rascal
 d. Jay-Z
- 3** A documentary was made in 1970 of which famous US music festival attended by 500,000 people?
 a. Woodstock
 b. Coachella
 c. Summerfest
 d. South by Southwest
- 4** Name the UK's oldest popular music festival – originally started in 1961?
 a. Guilfest
 b. Reading
 c. T in the Park
 d. O2 Wireless
- 5** Which of the following cities does not host the Three Choirs Festival?
 a. Hereford
 b. Worcester
 c. Chichester
 d. Gloucester



HOW TO ENTER

To win a pair of tickets to Glastonbury 2011 please send your answers to the Prize Quiz by 30 September 2010 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (August/September 2010) FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.

StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

A county's firefighters ...



Norfolk firefighters had better keep their mouths shut about proposed fire service cuts in their county, if they know what's good for them, says their employer.

An instruction from Norfolk fire and rescue service tells them that "under no circumstances must they express personal views or make comments about the changes in a public setting whilst identifying themselves as an employee of NFRS".

And that doesn't just mean talking to the media. The instruction says: "This includes social gatherings, use of social networking sites or contact with members of the media." **Careful what you say down the pub, or over the garden fence. Big Brother is watching you.**

... seen but not heard



It's not hard to see why Norfolk FRS is so twitchy. It is planning for 10 per cent cuts and is holding public meetings at which they will be discussed.

The last thing they want is professional firefighters turning up and telling the public how damaging these cuts will be for 999 services.

So it is also trying to warn Norfolk firefighters off going to the meetings.

Hearing firefighters might not be welcome, the county's FBU brigade secretary Jamie Wyatt wrote to industrial relations chief Karen Palframan asking her to "confirm that an off-duty firefighter is a member of the public and that it is their absolute right to attend public meetings on matters that concern them, raise their justifiable concerns at those meetings ..."

The reply was anything but reassuring. **"These events are not intended for the benefit of staff ... we are not encouraging staff to attend"**, wrote Ms Palframan.

Staff won't be disciplined for going, she said, so long as they don't go in uniform, and so long as they keep their mouths shut when they get there.

"Staff ... have their own mechanisms to provide feedback," she wrote.

If a manager says you can cut 10 per cent without damaging 999 services, you don't want some pesky firefighter saying what rubbish it is.

Business, as usual



New fire minister Bob Neill doesn't want the Chief Fire Officers Association bothering him.

He told their conference in June: "Take sprinklers for example ... If you think that more fire protection would be good for UK businesses then you should be making your case to the business community, not to the government."

CFOA got the message. President John Bonney talked carefully about how the association would "make the case" for sprinklers without saying to whom they would make it.

But **Station Cat wonders what Mr Neill will say when firefighters have to risk their lives because someone's business was too stingy to invest in sprinklers.** Presumably he'll tell the CFOA that they weren't persuasive enough.

Manchester united



Have you noticed that when things go wrong, it's your fault, but when they go right, the politicians take the credit?

The chairman of the Manchester fire and rescue authority, Lib Dem councillor Paul Shannon, praising the work of the outgoing chairman, Tory James Pearson, said: "Working together, we have this year delivered record low levels of deaths and injuries from fire in Greater Manchester."

The coming spending cuts will make the future "challenging" he said. In the brave new world of management jargon, there are no problems, only "challenges".

High fliers fall out



Shock. Horror. Tories fall out over expenses. First Brian Coleman is exposed by the *Daily Telegraph* as the second highest paid councillor in the country. He receives £114,322 in allowances, including £26,883 as chair of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

Then Grant Shapps, the local government minister, warns that "people shouldn't get into public service looking for bumper pay packets".

Coleman's response: "Is that the multi-millionaire Grant Shapps? The one with the private plane? The successful businessman?

I don't have to justify what I earn. **Councillors are worth every penny they earn. I'm not interested in this tittle tattle.**"

Shapps apparently owns a Piper Saratoga, costing around £100,000.

His spokesperson said: "We will criticise Tory councillors who pay themselves excessive amounts just as we would criticise Labour councillors doing the same thing."

Hello, hello. What's all this?



Police moved into Tiptree fire station near Colchester in Essex last month, in another one of those "modernisation" pilots.

The police look set to lose many facilities and will have to operate out of two desks in communal areas of the fire station.

Police and firefighters are strongly opposed to the move and know it will lead to a reduction in services offered locally by emergency personnel. Delayed response times are inevitable.

The scheme is utter madness. Even the police chief heading the trial described it as "maverick".

Shifting ground



A change of heart?
CFO
Mark

Smitherman (right) says it's time to stand up for his staff and for the safety of the South Yorkshire public. "I will do my utmost to defend our service and our staff against cuts that could affect public safety and our firefighters' ability to do their jobs," he says.

Hard to believe that this is the same CFO who only a few months ago wanted to make 744 firefighters redundant and then reemploy them on a different shift system. A move that would have made it easier to cut firefighters' jobs.



JOHN GILES/PA PHOTOS

✂ if you have any snippets you think Station Cat should get his sharp claws into email: stationcat@fbu.org.uk

25-year badges



Rudolph Parkes (l) West Midlands training centre, receives his 25-year badge from West Midlands membership secretary Pardeep Raw



Paul Warnock (l) blue watch, York, receives his 25-year badge from North Yorkshire regional chair Ian Watkins



Mike Hill (r), Bridgwater, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from region 13 EC member Tam McFarlane



Andy BurrIDGE (r) Bridgwater, receives his 25-year badge from region 13 EC member Tam McFarlane



Paul Graham (l) Wallsend, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from region 3 safety coordinator Russ King



Simon Render (r) Harrogate, receives his 25-year badge from North Yorkshire brigade chair Sean Atkinson



Greater Manchester FBU members receive 25-year badges from national officer Paul Woolstenholmes (front row, far left). Front row (l-r) Mike Munelly, Andrew Maidens, Andy Charnley, Gary Costello and Paul Hesford. Back row (l-r) Val Salmon, Janet Mills, Dave Hall, Chris Mycock, Stuart Mason, Vic Kopicki, Frank McGuinness, Alan Anderson, Mark Rushden, Gary Dewar, Gary Costin, Jimmy Weir, Adrian Achin, Gary O'Neil and Bernie Lawson

Please send photographic prints or digital picture files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk 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.



Tony Tate (r) Daventry, receives his 25-year badge from national officer David Green



Trevor Lund (r) receives his 25-year badge from North Yorkshire brigade chair Sean Atkinson

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary 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

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