



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

RETIRED STAFF WELFARE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 27 SEPTEMBER 25

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to issue number 27 of the **Retired Staff Newsletter**. As you will see within this edition the target set by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Rob Barber to raise **£50,000** for the Fire Fighter's Charity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the amalgamation of Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Burton on Trent Fire Brigades was well and truly achieved. A massive thanks goes to all those who organised, took part in and supported through sponsorship across all the events that were held over the 12 month period.

Although this target has been met, fundraising for the Fire Fighters Charity (FFC) continues through a variety of innovative ways. Details of events will be circulated by email and posted on social media for those who have access to such means of communication. The charity continues to provide help and support to many serving and former fire service employees and their families in a variety of ways and does some amazing work. If anyone needs any help from the charity, the support line number is

0800 389 88210 or email **helpline@firefighterscharity.ork.uk**

More information on the work of the charity can be found on **www.firefighterscharity.ork.uk**

It is still important that I increase the numbers of email contacts in order to reduce the burden of posting out hard copy versions and to ensure that as many people as possible are able to receive regular updates and information. If you receive this newsletter by post and have an email address, please let me have your details. You will also receive updates and news on a variety of matters of interest such as walking groups, charity and social events, Service updates etc.

Please note that all details are held securely on a Service database and are not shared with anyone. All emails are sent out without showing any individual addresses.

Andy Buttery

Retired Personnel Welfare
Network Volunteer

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Rickerscote Train Crash

Following on from the previous newsletter here are a few more stories and photos from the 50th anniversary. A south bound freight train carrying 23 carbon dioxide tankers was derailed at Rickerscote, Stafford at 11.00 pm on Friday March 8th 1996. Minutes later a Glasgow bound train collided with the stricken tankers.

One carriage landed within a foot of houses and debris was scattered across gardens of nearby homes. Rescues were hampered by a gas cloud of leaking carbon dioxide necessitating extensive use of breathing apparatus to carry out search and rescue.

Nine people were rescued by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and a further 10 casualties were accounted for. Sadly, one person died at the scene. An inter-agency command structure was established at the scene and Gold Control was set up at Staffordshire Police HQ. 8 pumps, 2 Rescue Tenders and a Foam Tender attended along with several officers all under the command of Senior Divisional Officer Turner.

Stoke Market fire 1982

In May 1982 the Victorian Stoke market hall was all but destroyed in a fire with only the clocktower, entrance arch, fish section and shop frontage surviving. The fire started after the day's trading had finished and most of the stall holders had gone home.

The fire was attended by 10 pumps, 2 Hydraulic Platforms, Foam Tender and Emergency Tender. There had been reports of the sound of screams coming from within the building which resulted in BA teams being committed to carry out a search but they were forced to withdraw due to the danger of collapse. In the event there were no casualties and the fire was brought under control after 2.5 hours.



Burton fundraising

In 1981 Burton Fire Station were busy raising money for the **'Year of the Disabled'**. They took part in a 35 mile 'Six Summits Walk' Raising £211, An Open Day brought in £600 and the annual **'Mammoth Jumble Sale'** raised **£1,500**.

On top of this they also raised **£1,122** for the Fire Service's National Benevolent Fund (now known as the Fire Fighters Charity) through a flag day.



WALKING GROUP

The walking group has continued to hold walks at a variety of locations across the county and has attracted some new participants. Walks are arranged to be about 5/6 miles in length together with an option for those who prefer to have a shorter walk. After the walk we have lunch - usually in a nearby pub.

If anyone has any ideas for suitable walking routes please let me know. The walks are open to anybody who wishes to come along and enjoy some exercise and fresh air and to socialise with former colleagues.

“After the walk we have lunch - usually in a nearby pub.”

Walking, and walking in groups, has many health benefits including reducing blood pressure, body fat, total cholesterol and risk of depression.

Walk details are shared by **email** and posted on **social media**. If you're not on the email list but would like to join, feel free to **get in touch**:

T 07866 951110
E a.buttery@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

DIARY DATES

Fire Fighters Charity Living Well Groups hold monthly events in Leek, Sandyford, and Lichfield. Dates are shared via **email** and on **social media**.

If you're not on the email list and would like to receive updates, please contact: a.buttery@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

If you don't use email but are interested in attending the Living Well Group meetings, feel free to **contact Andy** on **07866 951110**.

We hope to arrange visits to the **Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh** and the **Fireground Museum, Rochdale**. Details will be shared by email and social media.

In **November**, a **wreath-laying at the National Memorial Arboretum** will be followed by a walk and lunch. Date to be confirmed and circulated as usual.

Advance notice: A **wreath-laying at Fire Service HQ** is planned for **May 2026**, marking **International Firefighters' Memorial Day**, followed by a light buffet. More details to follow.

Veterans Walk

1st October 10:30
Bridge Inn, Cheddleton ST13 7EQ

FFC Living Well Group

15th October 10:30-12:30

Sandyford Fire Station

6th November 10:30-12:30

Lichfield Fire Station

Wreath Laying and Walk

12th November 10:30

National Memorial Arboretum
Meet on the car park

Christmas Lunch

4th December 12:30

Open to all retired staff and partners
Staffordshire Fire and Rescue HQ
Get in touch to book your place

Contact Andy using the details above for any queries

IN MEMORY OF

I've been asked to include a list of former colleagues who have sadly passed away.

Below are the names of those I've been notified of since the last newsletter.

Paul Robinson
Latterly of County Kildare

John S Taylor
HQ Stores

Alan Davies
Hanley, Burslem

Peter Reid
HQ

Paul Bel
HQ

Ken Jeavons
Brewood

Brian Greer
Stoke-on-Trent FB

Pete Hatherley
Stafford, Burslem

Brian Walters
Longton

Cyril Yearsley
Hanley, HQ

Barry Davies
Newcastle, Hanley

Paul Barker
Ashley

David Price
Kinver

Mervyn Russell
Wombourne

George Causer
Ashley

Ted Jones
Newcastle, Hanley, Longton

Terry Jones
Gnosall

Jim Miles
Hanley, Stafford, HQ

Mike Cope
Cannock, Leek, HQ

Derek Rushton
HQ



*Gone but
never
forgotten*

NEW MEMORIAL STONE

At the end of May, a new Memorial Stone was unveiled in the Memorial Garden to honour former staff members who sadly passed away while still in service since the garden's creation in 2002.

This heartfelt tribute was envisioned by Lead Trainer Matt Wade and made possible through the commitment of the Memorial Garden Volunteers. The project was funded through a series of fundraising events and generous donations, which surpassed the original target. The additional funds will go toward enhancing the garden, creating a peaceful space for current and former staff, as well as family and friends, to reflect and remember.



FUNDRAISING

A number of fundraising events took place last year in order to raise the **£50,000** target for the Fire Fighters Charity. Members of the retired network supported many and also took part in some of them, including a **sponsored walk** in which two teams set off from Longnor and Kinver to walk to HQ over three very hot July days last year. They managed to coordinate their respective walks in order to finish at the same time at the bottom of the drive to HQ and to finish that last short section together before having some well-earned refreshments.



At another event **Red Watch Stafford** hosted a **'Show and Tell'** of their new Enhanced Rescue Pump for veterans which also included a cream tea. Around thirty members attended and had a chance to meet to former colleagues some of whom had not seen each other for many years. The group included two legends of workshops - Dave Houlding and Paul Wright, who can be seen in the photograph to the left trying out the seats in the crew cab of the appliance.

RETIREMENT

Some folks wonder what life will be like when the job finishes in the service and retirement comes along. When I retired I immediately gained a new gaffer, my darling wife. I was very lucky as my dearest was the best. From the moment we met it was very much a 50/50 partnership and we both supported one another all the way down the line as we used to say.

But then the other thing is what shall I do when I don't have to go to work again. In my case that wasn't a problem as I had always led an active life outside the job. There were of course the usual things - holidays, gardening, visiting friends and family. and of course our hobbies. When we start getting older the normal doctors visits and hospital appointments also seem to take on an alarming part of our life.

Personally, I and my late wife never had a problem, obviously holidays were more frequent and gardening played a big part of our home life.

My wife and I did our bit in scouting for many years. Then we both joined Lions International (the largest service club in the world with 1.4 million members) which took up a lot of our time and still does for me now.

However, there are now many other things to pursue for retired members of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and present several opportunities to fill the spare time

that we all have. We have the National Association of Retired Fire Service Personnel (NARF) - only two meetings a year, but very informative and a great opportunity to meet ex colleagues, and then the Living Well meetings usually take place once a month and the location changes each time in a bid to cover most of the county. There are also two walking groups (long and short) who do regular walks for all ex service personnel, Knobs for those who served at either Newcastle or Kidsgrove. They meet monthly. Then there is the Ceremonial Squad who turn out for all special occasions and to say a fond farewell to those passing to a higher service.

We are all so lucky, as when I was serving there wasn't much for the retired member and now thankfully there are several options. If you know any retired member who is at a loose end put them in touch with Andy Buttery (retired members co-ordinator) who will point them in the right direction should they wish to find out more. In addition, NARF is ideal as a starter and retired members do find out a lot from those meetings too.

I would seriously recommend one or more to those are retired and have time on their hands.

Graham Dow

Ex-Longton & HQ

Your NHS Health Check Results

Name: Date:

Visit: staffordshire.everyonehealth.co.uk
Email: eh.staffs@nhs.net
Text: **HEART** to 60777
Tel: **0333 005 0095**



For more information or
support to stop smoking
or lose weight contact us


because everyone matters



LIVING WELL GROUPS

The Fire Fighters Charity holds monthly Living Well Group meetings at Leek, Lichfield, and Sandyford Fire Stations. Run by fire service veterans, these gatherings are for all retired members and their partners. They include guest speakers on health, wellbeing, and general interest topics, as well as time to catch up with old colleagues over tea and biscuits.

A Prostate Cancer Support Group has recently formed from these meetings, offering a space for veterans to share experiences. Future meetings will be open to anyone interested.

Next is a message from **Paul Bragg**, sharing how the Living Well Groups have supported him.

"My personal experience of Living Well Group has been nothing but positive."

"On a personal level I've gone through a very stressful and sad three years. The loss of my wife of 51 years and then my own diagnosis of stage 4 metastatic prostate cancer and subsequent treatments."

"The Living Well Groups have been something of a lifeline for me, from keeping me in touch with ex colleagues, informative talks arranged by Andy Buttery and Alf Wilson who both work hard to keep the Living Well Groups going and interesting."

"The latest Prostate Cancer support group I've found especially useful where we've been able to compare notes on the various stages of treatment we're all at."

"I can't thank you all enough, keep up the good work".

Paul Bragg MBE

If anyone would like more information on either the Living Well Groups or the Prostate Cancer Support Group please get in touch.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL (NARF)

Following the 2025 AGM and a ballot of members earlier in the year, the name of NARF was changed to the National Association of Retired Fire Service Personnel to reflect the fact that the Association welcomes members from all former Fire Service regardless of their role.

The aims of the Association are:

- To actively promote and safeguard the interests of members by representing their concerns, advocating for their rights and fostering collaboration with similar associations for industry-wide support.
- To introduce and support initiatives that enhance the wellbeing, safety and professional development of our members, ensuring their welfare remains a priority.
- To maintain strong and effective links with the Fire Service by fostering communication, and shared training opportunities to enhance mutual understanding and support.

More information can be found on their new website www.narfire.uk

If anyone wishes to join the Staffordshire Branch, which has a growing membership and is instrumental in organising events such as the annual hog roast and Christmas lunch, please contact the branch secretary Ron Biggs on ronniethewolf@me.com

HMICFRS

(His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service)

The latest report from the HMICFRS following last year's inspection was published towards the end of 2024 and graded the Service as outstanding at responding to major and multi-agency incidents. The report follows a full inspection in which inspectors graded the Service against 11 areas, the majority of which were graded as good. The inspectors stated that progress has been made since the last report and highlighted ten areas where they have seen improvements.

Two areas of promising practice were highlighted:

- One area the Service received the outstanding grading in was how they work well with the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) to provide a preventative and a reactive response to multi-agency or major incidents.
- The second was the work with the NHS for the falls response and home from hospital service.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEXT OF KIN

After discussions with the families of former colleagues and in consultation with NARF branch officials, we've created a document offering guidance on preparing for the inevitable. While it's a difficult topic, these conversations have shown how important it is to plan ahead to ease the burden on loved ones during a difficult time.

The document is available on the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service website under the **Welfare and Retired Network section:** www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

If you don't have internet access and would like a printed copy, please get in touch and we will get one posted to you.

WHAT IS A 5 A DAY PORTION?



Eating a wide variety of vegetables and fruit is a great first step to eating well and protecting yourself against cancer. Aim for at least five portions every day. Here are some examples of what counts as a 5 A DAY portion for an adult. **One portion weighs 80g, roughly equivalent to:**

Cruciferous vegetables



8 florets or pieces
eg broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower

Root vegetables



1 whole
eg carrot, parsnip, sweet potato

Salad leaves



1 cereal bowl
eg lettuce, uncooked spinach

Medium to large vegetables



½–1 whole vegetable
eg courgette, leek, pepper

Small or sliced vegetables



3–4 heaped tablespoons*
eg peas, sweetcorn, or sliced cabbage, mushrooms, runner beans

Large fruit



1–2 slices
eg mango, melon, pineapple

Medium fruit



1 whole
eg apple, banana, orange, peach, pear

Small fruit



2 whole
eg kiwi fruits, plums, satsumas

Berries



1–2 handfuls
eg blueberries, raspberries

Unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice



1 glass (150ml)
(only counts as one of your 5 A DAY)
eg orange juice, apple juice

Cooked pulses (beans & lentils)



3 tablespoons*
(only counts as one of your 5 A DAY)
eg canned chickpeas, lentil

Dried fruit



1 heaped tablespoon* (30g)
(only counts as one of your 5 A DAY)
eg raisins, dried cranberries

*A tablespoon is equivalent to a 15ml measuring spoon, whereas a dessert spoon only holds 10ml.

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER COMMENDATION

FF Benjamin Kelly
and FF Louise Ball



On Sunday 17th November 2024 whilst returning from an incident, Hanley 1 were driving along the A500, passing under a bridge upon which a lone female stood.

FF Benjamin Kelly spotted her in distress and insisted that she was trying to jump and that the crew needed to go and check on her welfare.

They proceeded to the Shelton New Road bridge and found her just in time as she began to mount the barrier with the intent to run down onto the A500 into the fast-flowing traffic.

FF Benjamin Kelly and FF Louise Ball quickly disembarked the appliance and ran to her aid. They mounted the barrier either side of her, preventing her from moving whilst comforting and talking her down from her distress.

During this time police and ambulance were requested and control informed.

The incident came to a safe and successful conclusion with the female being encouraged by FF Ball to come back to the safe side of the bridge. She was then taken by police car back to Hanley Fire and Police Station to be seen by the on duty mental health nurse.

This incident has left a lasting effect upon the Watch, and specifically FF Kelly and FF Ball with the positive impact they had on an individual's life that day.

On Tuesday 27th May, Chief Fire Officer Rob Barber presented their awards at Hanley Fire and Police Station.

12 MONTHS, over 30 fundraising activities



Thank you to all of you who have contributed to our £50,000 fundraising challenge for the Fire Fighters Charity as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations.

We have smashed our target and raised an incredible amount for the charity.

The Fire Fighters Charity are the UK fire family's charity, there for every member of the fire service community. They exist to help all firefighters, staff, volunteers and their families live healthier and happier lives by providing a variety of health and wellbeing services both online and in person. This incredible amount of money will go towards supporting members of the fire family.

Find out more about the charity and the work they do here.



£50,000

REACHED MARCH 2025

£45,000

£40,000

REACHED FEBRUARY 2025

£35,000

REACHED JANUARY 2025

£30,000

REACHED NOVEMBER 2024

£25,000

REACHED SEPTEMBER 2024

£20,000

REACHED JUNE 2024

£15,000

£10,000

REACHED MAY 2024

£5,000

REACHED APRIL 2024

and £54,280 later... WE DID IT!



Chief Fire Officer Rob Barber said:

"I'd just like to thank all of those who have organised activities and to all those that have dug deep during our £50,000 challenge.

"Thanks to each and every member of staff and volunteers, both past and present, for the hard work you have done and you continue to do day in and day out.

"Here's to the next 50 years of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service!"

PACE ISN'T SLOWING DOWN FOR ERT! HERE IS WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2025

Emergency Response Team (ERT) are not slowing down on delivering projects to improve ways of working across the operational side of the Service. Here's what the team are working on this year!

MSA BREATHING APPARATUS

A big project ERT are currently working on is the replacement of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for the new MSA breathing apparatus project. The project is now in full swing on the run up to our September go live.

Following feedback from station personnel, various elements of the project have been reviewed, and improvements made before the Service goes live with the new equipment. This has included new Entry Control Board charging leads, re-calibration of batteries and reviewing and updating our policies and procedures to better suit our new equipment.

Recently ERT have raised the first order for our new BA cylinders. These are being purchased in two phases, with phase two happening during 2026. These new cylinders are not only lighter, but they are also slightly smaller, providing the latest aluminium carbon composite design for operational use. These cylinders will be in service for 15 years and will be provided with new cylinder covers.

ENHANCED RESCUE PUMPS (ERP)



In March both of our new enhanced rescue pumps officially went on the run, making them a permanent feature in our fleet.

Based at Longton and Stafford, these state-of-the-art appliances have been developed and designed for our use. Both vehicles have specialist equipment to deal with heavy rescue, including two sets of cutting equipment to support with incidents involving small cars up to HGV lorries, and other specialist equipment to resolve operational incidents.

We're very happy with the outcome of these two vehicles and we hope you are too.

BATTERY POWERED CUTTING EQUIPMENT

We have now taken delivery of our new battery powered cutting equipment and are now working with JETS and a third-party supplier to fit the new stowage brackets to vehicles. Once these brackets are fitted, the on-call appliances will be going live with the new equipment.

Currently Eccleshall, Hanley, Longnor, Longton, Newcastle and Wombourne have been completed and we hope to have all remaining on-call appliances completed as soon as possible. This has been another huge investment, around £500K on equipment specifically for our on-call stations. This project could not have been possible without the involvement of colleagues who attended the evaluation days at West Midlands Fire Service, so thank you to all who attended and gave their feedback on the equipment.

So that's an update on our big three projects but here's what else is in store for 2025.

- **New helmets** - Over the last year, ERT and Supplies have rolled out new helmets to all operational colleagues, replacing the old ones with new Rosenbauer helmets. These again have been introduced to improve your safety and all of the helmets now have built in torches for improved functionality. All helmets have been issued, and old kit will be recalled back to Supplies.
- **Working from heights** - we are looking to replace level 1 working from heights equipment, to safely retrieve people from heights.

- **Supporting Ukraine** - Old helmets along with previous hydraulic cutting equipment, thermal imaging equipment and other kit will be sent out to firefighters in Ukraine on the next convoy trip as the Service continues to support the ongoing situation in the country.
- **Car Entry Kits** - Following station feedback, ERT have dispatched Car Entry Kits, Combi Drills and improved handheld lighting to all stations. These kits will assist with gaining entry to vehicles, and the new S-LED Lighting and Combi Drill will support crews when dealing with operational incidents.
- **Fleet** - We will be procuring three new appliances into our fleet to replace older models, as well as replacing a number of our 4x4 vehicles. This is in line with our ongoing commitment to ensure crews have the best equipment.
- **Smoke curtains** - Last year we implemented the use of smoke curtains as part of our safety equipment. Following feedback, we will be investing in more and will be looking to roll these out across the whole service.
- **Robotics** - Finally we have been looking at how we can utilise robotics within the Service. We are looking at investing in remote control vehicles to support with various incident types. This project will require significant research and demonstrates the Service's commitment to your safety.



Car Entry Kits



THE SERVICE WINS TRUST AWARD FOR *Home from Hospital* PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

Earlier this year, we were recognised with a special award for our partnership work in delivering a home-from-hospital scheme to help vulnerable people across Staffordshire.

The CEO award from the University of North Midlands NHS Trust acknowledges the success of the joint project which has helped over 3,400 elderly patients safely return home from hospital since its inception back in 2023.

The scheme, which runs seven days a week, sees our specialist fire and health partnership technicians collect patients from Royal Stoke University Hospital and help them return home while also providing a series of fire safety and wellbeing checks with the aim of preventing patients' re-admission.



Ian Read, Head of Prevent, Protect and Partnerships said:

"Home from hospital is about us working together for the common good, whilst giving us an opportunity to keep people who could be at risk from fire, safe.

"We work directly with UHNM's Integrated Discharge Hub (IDH), who select patients that would benefit from the service. After collecting patients from hospital, our technicians transport them home and make sure they're safe, warm and have everything they need. This can include ensuring the water and heating supplies are working, identifying any potential hazards, checking they have food and access to a phone and completing a fire safety check."

The award, which was presented at a special ceremony at the Royal Stoke University Hospital in early February, recognised the Service's ongoing support for patient care in partnership with the Trust.

Dr Simon Constable, Chief Executive of the Trust, said:

"Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has become the first external partner to receive the Chief Executive Award as a symbol of UHNM's appreciation for everything they do for us and our patients throughout the year.

"Home from Hospital is a hugely successful and impactful patient safety initiative for us that we couldn't do without."

Lisa Duncan, integrated discharge lead at UHNM, said:

"Staying in hospital longer than necessary can have a negative impact on how well patients recover and can often cause serious harm, impacting adversely on their health and wellbeing.

"Since its launch in December 2023, the home from hospital scheme has helped over 3,400 patients who are well enough to return home and continue their recovery in the comfort of their own surroundings whilst freeing up vital bed spaces at UHNM."



Deputy Commissioner for Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Dave Evans said:

"It was great to meet the home from hospital team recently and hear about the partnership working taking place to support the most vulnerable people in our communities.

"Myself and the Commissioner are keen to see this work continue to strengthen partner relationships and free up valuable health resources."

Well done to all involved, this is a fantastic achievement!

Since it began in December 2023, the team have:

- Had 3416 overall mobilisations
- 2601 of these were discharge and settle in patients (DSI).
- 1033 other activities (such as keysafe fitting, property inspection or furniture moves etc)

**As of August 2025*



Thank you for reading



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

