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THE BAMPTON FIREMEN

Extract from the Witney Gazette



## THE BAMPTON FIREMEN.

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"In our last little chat, I told you about the famous Witney Fire Brigade" quoth Gramp, "and this week I have decided to tell you of all I know concerning the hey-day of the Bampton Fire Brigade, which, unfortunately, is now out of existence, I believe".

"However, I am only dwelling on the past, so the present don't matter" he continued. "I think I ought to be able to tell you quite a lot, because having a great deal of spare time recently, I've been able to ferret out the facts for you. But seeing as you're one of those type who only bother about getting a story, and like to get straight to the point, I will not detain you any further".

"Good", thought I, "at long last the Old 'Uns beginning to reform".

Nevertheless I had to wait a minute or two even then before he started. (Perhaps I'd better explain here and now that I am not complaining about my old friend, but he hasn't been none too well lately, having had a slight attack of the 'flu).

But cold and other troubles were soon forgotten when he started off on his road of memories.

"It was indeed a great time for the village Brigade, for they went to the Crystal Palace in 1904 to compete in some competitions, whether they thought they would never win anything I don't know, but the fact remains that they actually won the National Competition, which was something to be very proud of, as I think you will admit.

"As far as I remember, the National Fire Brigade Union was started in 1887, and at the time of the competition comprised of about 500 Brigades and over 12,000 members. The Union was divided into 16 districts, and each one was entitled to send two Brigades. At the time I am speaking of, Bampton was entering the competition, representing the South Midlands Division, for the two previous years they had been third.

"This time, however, they were victorious and won the most coveted prize. Not being a fireman, I can't exactly remember what it was they had to do, but I do know they were first, Burslem second, Braekley third, and Tunbridge Wells fourth, there were 20 entries, and so you see that they certainly must have been good, especially to beat a place like Tunbridge Wells. The Bampton contingent also won the Green Memorial Challenge Vase.



"As soon as the success of the winners became known, you can bet your life there was great rejoicing in Bampton. All the houses were decorated and flags were flying all over the place, and it was at once decided to give the fireman a hearty reception.

"Unfortunately the men could not arrive home until the last train on Thursday, but this did not daunt the inhabitants of Bampton who were not going to miss a chance of cheering their heroes. Many places had illuminations, and a very pretty sight it was too, when the train did finally arrive. I doubt if there had been such a big crowd at the station since it was built. All kinds of vehicles were lit up on the road to the town from the station, lighting up what was usually a very dreary road. If it had been daytime the scene would have been something like Epsom on a Derby Day. The locally famous Foresters Band was present, and the stage was set.

"Ah, but that was a day", bleated Gramp, a look of fervour on his face. His mind was thinking only of the past, he was in a world of his own, quite oblivious of my presence.

The Ol 'Un lifted his finger: "At last the train was heard in the distance, the sound came closer and closer, and then into the station steamed the train.

"At once a great cheering broke out and the band started to play 'See the Conquering Heroes Come'. Then the strapping forms of the men could be seen descending from the carriage, the captain beaming all over his face, and not without reason either. Everyone rushed towards the heroes of the hour and shouting, cheering, handshakes and back slaps came from all quarters.

"The firemen were taken to the town in a brake, and on arriving at Windmill Hill the horses were released and the vehicle was drawn along with the aid of ropes by enthusiastic supporters, to the Town Hall. Here there were shouts for the Captain Williams, the leader of the Brigade, to make a speech. He complied to this and made a rousing speech in which he said that Bampton was no longer the worn out town that some people thought it to be.

"After this the brake was drawn around the town to the strains of the band and the cheers of the people. My, what a time it was!

"On the Friday the trophy was on view at the Town Hall, and sight-seers from all over the countryside flocked in to Bampton to view it, and also to meet the men who won it for the town. Telegrams from all over the country poured in, offering their congratulations. It must have been one of the greatest days in the history of Bampton.



The Old 'Un pointed his pipe at me. "Another thing I did for your convenience, young 'un, was to find out how many cups and prizes the Bampton Fire Brigade held then, here is the complete list." So saying he brought out a piece of paper and handed it to me. This is what I read.

"The National Shield," "The Green Memorial Bowl," "The South Midland Shield," "Duchess of Marlborough's Cup," "Miss Somer's Trophy," also cups given by Members of Parliament in the South Midland District, and the local Challenge Club given by Dr. Oates.

Some record, eh?

Gramp also advised me to look up the old files of the 'Witney Gazette', as he was sure there was a poem written about the Bampton Fire Brigade. Doing as I was told, I was surprised to find out that he was perfectly right, and so with many thanks to the 'Old 'Un, I will now close with the poem.

To the Bampton Fire Brigade.

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You're men of merit, men of pluck,  
You're smart at drill, at calls you lead;  
You've buckled to your work, and luck,  
Has entered not a single deed.  
Then shout aloud through town to Weald,  
For Good Old Bampton's won the Shield.

You've entered competitions keen,  
'Gainst men of mettle and renown;  
You have done well, and ever been  
The pride and glory of our town.  
Then shout aloud through town to Weald,  
For Good Old Bampton's won the shield.

'Gainst England all you fairly fought,  
The crack Brigade all England round,  
By your grand efforts brought to nought,  
And you've come back with laurels crowned.  
Then shout aloud through town to Weald,  
For Good Old Bampton's won the shield.



To-day you stand on higher ground,  
You've faced your country proud and strong,  
You've rested from all those around  
The trophy for which firemen long.  
Then shout aloud through town to Weald,  
For Good Old Bampton's won the Shield.

Hail to the Captain and his men,  
Lieut. Rose and Fireman Fox,  
To O. Williams, Green and then,  
To Constable upon the box.  
Hurrah, hurrah, through town to Weald,  
For Good Old Bampton's won the Shield.

## BRIGADE ESTABLISHMENT

- 6 Wholetime Stations
- 18 Retained Stations
- 226 Wholetime Firefighters
- 344 Retained Firefighters
- 18 Control Room Staff
- 46 Administrative Staff, Other Non-Uniformed Support Staff

## APPLIANCES

- 44 Pumping Appliances
- 1 Turntable Ladder
- 1 Hydraulic Platform
- 1 Rescue Unit
- 3 Tractor Units for Pods

Pods: Foam Tender  
Emergency Salvage  
Control Unit  
Chemical Incident Unit  
Canteen Van  
Publicity Display  
Flat Bed

## CALLING THE FIRE SERVICE

No matter where you live in Oxfordshire, the call for the assistance of the Service will be received at one, central, Control and not at your local fire station. It is therefore, essential that the correct address of the incident is given.

1. The address of the incident (including the town).
2. The type of incident.
3. Any landmarks (church, cinema, etc.).
4. Your telephone number.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer: M. V. Johnson, F.I.Fire E.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer: G. M. Smith, M.I.Fire E.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer: T. M. Percy, M.I.Fire E.

## DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS

### 'A' DIVISION

'A' Divisional Headquarters  
Cope Road  
BANBURY, OXON OX16 7EH  
Telephone: Banbury (0295) 56035

### 'B' DIVISION

'B' Divisional Headquarters  
Rewley Road  
OXFORD OX1 2EH  
Telephone: Oxford (0865) 242223

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## OXFORDSHIRE FIRE SERVICE

## INFORMATION SHEET

FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS  
Sterling Road  
Kidlington  
OXFORD OX5 2DU  
Telephone: Kidlington (08675) 4211



## RECRUITMENT

### WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTERS

Potential firefighters are subject to certain entry requirements specified in law. Applicants should be 18 to 31 years old (35 if ex-armed forces) be not less than 1.68 metres in height with a 91.5 cm chest and a minimum expansion of a further 5 cm. Before acceptance applicants must successfully complete a medical examination including a strength test, an educational test and a selection interview. Recruitment is carried out periodically and brought to the public by advertisements in the local press.

### RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS

Because of the varied nature of the fire risks covered by Oxfordshire Fire Service, the Fire Authority requires people who wish to join the Service in a part-time capacity. If you feel that serving your community in this rewarding way would benefit your spare time, and you can satisfy the physical requirements listed above (the upper age limit might be extended in certain circumstances), contact the Officer-in-Charge of your local fire station or the Divisional Commander at the address shown overleaf, for further details. Every station in Oxfordshire has a complement of part-time firefighters. In particular, 18 of these stations are manned by part-time firefighters only.

The physical requirements for part-time firefighters are the same as professional firefighters and they are fully trained.

## BRIGADE TRAINING

Following recruitment, firefighters attend an initial course at the Oxfordshire Fire Service Training Centre based at Didcot Fire Station/Slade Fire Station, Oxford, its main purpose being to give the recruit a sound knowledge of the effective and safe use of basic equipment such as pumps, ladders and hoses. This practical use of equipment is combined with instruction on the more technical aspects of firefighting and includes hydraulics, building construction, basic chemistry and fixed firefighting installations. On return from their initial training course and throughout their careers, firefighters will return to the Training Centre to study such subjects as the use of breathing apparatus, basic fire prevention, HGV driving and various other associated subjects.

## COMMERCIAL TRAINING

Oxfordshire Fire Service, by arrangements, undertake the training of industrial bodies and commercial undertakings on a chargeable basis. For further details, contact the Training Officer at the Fire Service Headquarters.

## FIRE PROTECTION

The Fire Service has a legal responsibility to give advice on Fire Protection. To achieve this a part of the Fire Service is devoted to Fire Protection duties. Personnel in the "F.P." Department carry out a range of tasks, the majority of which are associated with "Fire Protection" legislation. Examples of this legislation range from the Fire Precautions Act 1971 which deals with the majority of premises where people work or assemble, to acts which deal with riding establishments or even boarding kennels. All

personnel in the Fire Service undertake some "F.P." duties. Other work undertaken by the "F.P." Department includes consultation with District Councils on Planning and Building Regulations. In Oxfordshire the Fire Service is also the Licensing Authority for the storage of Petroleum Spirit and Explosives.

To enforce this legislation inspections are carried out in a wide range of premises. In 1986 some 15,000 inspections were carried out by Fire Protection Department personnel.

In addition to work directly associated with legislation the Fire Protection Department is obliged to give advice on fire safety freely upon request. To contact the Fire Protection Department telephone, 'A' or 'B' Divisional Headquarters on the numbers given overleaf and ask for the "F.P." Department.



**Fire kills. Think about it.**