

A FAREWELL FROM JON HALL AS A NEW PRESIDENT IS ANNOUNCED

When I became your President some 5 years ago, it was at a time of great change for the UK Fire and Rescue Service and similarly for The Society. Indeed, looking back, there's very little to recognise of how it was then with a couple of notable exceptions which I'll come on to. Shortly after my appointment, I left operational service to establish Capita's new setup at the Fire Service College. From there it was into London to organise the operational aspects of their bid to run the Ministry of Defence Fire & Rescue Service. All a million miles from where a 'water-squirting' career started, but at least ensuring some degree of influence on the future of troubled and cash-strapped organisations.

We all look back and hanker for the "*good ol' days*", but, like many of you no doubt, I do worry for the future of what is becoming an increasingly introverted service seeming to talk far more freely about the characteristics of its own workforce than about the shrinking service it is forced to provide to the public. But, returning to the two things that haven't changed during my tenure... First is the high esteem in which we hold each and every firefighter. Still they're the ones facing instant danger and repeatedly rising to the challenge without a sideways glance. Second though has to be the commitment and dedication of the FBS membership. In my humble opinion, you are still the sole custodians of FRS fleet history. Your tenacity, organisation and drive for perfection are characteristics so hard to find these days and yet you have them in bucket loads!

The Membership has been supported by some remarkable individuals who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to keep visits going and to produce the superb publication that is Fire Cover. I can't name all of you I'm afraid, but must make mention of three particular individuals who I've had the pleasure to work closely with. Ralph Horton, Richard Williams and Steve Dodge have been stalwarts of The Society and have seen it through some tense times. Please let me add my personal thanks to them to those due from all members of the Society.

So it comes time to announce your new President – Allow me to introduce Steve Owen-Hughes MBE, the recently appointed Chief Fire Officer of Surrey. Steve has been a colleague and friend for many years and I have no doubt that I'm leaving you in good hands and with someone able to promote The Society to the wider FRS as it approaches its 60th anniversary!

Steve, whose full title is Director of Community Protection and Emergencies (Chief Fire Officer), has served in a number of fire and rescue services and also had a distinguished military career before joining Surrey. He held various roles in the Army and with the Ministry of Defence, serving on front lines including Afghanistan, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Iraq, Africa and the former Yugoslavia. During this time he was also involved in humanitarian work and founded the charity Operation Florian to help bring fire-fighting equipment and skills to areas around the world, particularly war-torn regions, where people are most vulnerable and at highest risk, such as refugees and returnees.

I have no doubt that Steve will be a great ambassador for you and that The Society will go from strength to strength.

Please accept my very best wishes and a hope to see The Society strengthen in years to come.

Jon Hall QFSM, Outgoing President