
FIRE SERVICES NATIONAL MUSEUM TRUST

Working towards a National Museum of Firefighting

NEWSLETTER

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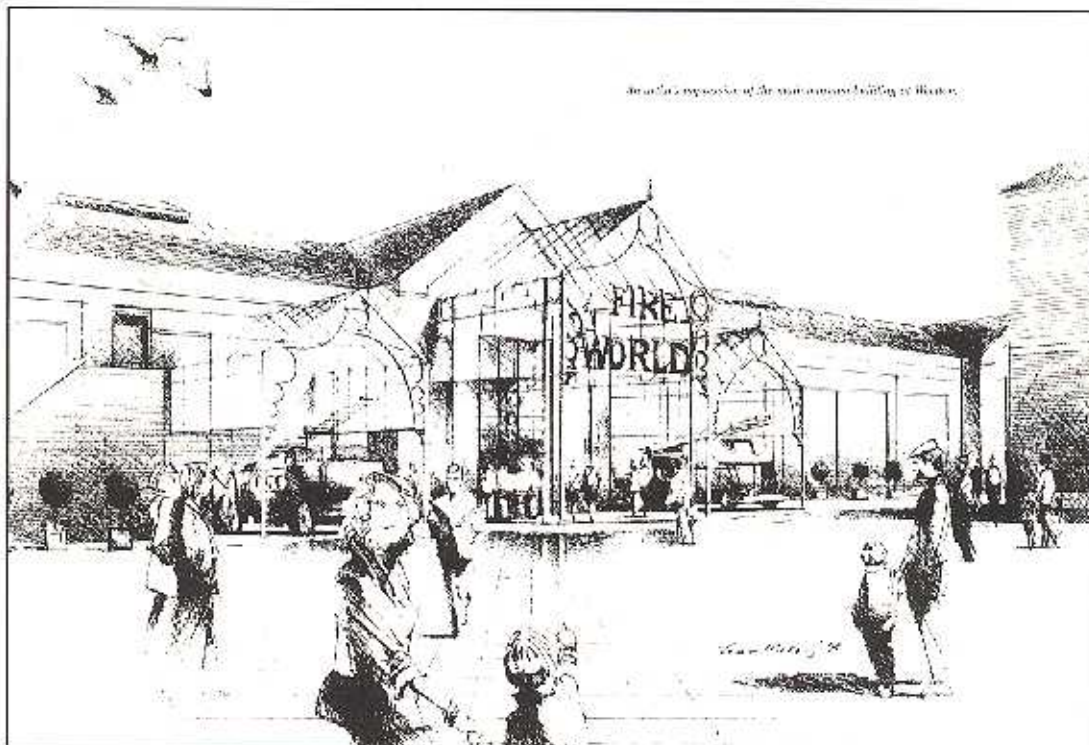
THE MUSEUM MAKES STEADY PROGRESS AT WEEDON

In the last edition of *Saved*, the magazine of the Friends of the Fire Services National Museum Trust, the long-awaited news was announced that following a Public Enquiry, the Department of the Environment had allowed the Museum to go ahead at Weedon in Northamptonshire.

Since then there has been steady progress made on the Weedon site, both by Trustees and a small band of helpers. This work has included further discussions with Cavalry Centre, the site developer, together with plenty of practical and physical activity on parts of the Museum Collection, both on vehi-

cles and other items (see Page 2). The Museum Trustees have now also set up a permanent office within the Weedon site, and this office now provides the logistical base for all activities connected with the Museum. The office contact number is: 01327 342396; although not manned on a daily basis, there is an answerphone facility.

The whole project is now at the stage where more volunteers are needed to assist with the various tasks involved. With this in mind, the *Friends* are holding an open meeting at Grantham on Sunday, 29 April (see Page 4).



CURATOR'S COMMENTS

By
Collection Curator
Maurice Cole

Santa came early this year when the Collection received some very useful exhibits which were surplus to the collection of the Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade Museum.

Negotiations commenced some time ago and after sorting out the usual difficulties that seem to attend such enterprise, the move to Weedon was completed with the help of their curator, Tony Back, of Island Commercial Vehicles.

The Trust has received an Austin Merryweather 60ft TL, an Austin escape carrier, an Austin towing vehicle, a horse drawn hose carrier, a John Morris curricule escape and a bikini raft.

Friends may recall that we already have an Austin/Merryweather 60ft TL and wonder why we need another! The answer is that our original vehicle had a very poor body, which could have led to long and expensive restoration; in addition many parts had been removed before the Trust acquired it. The new appliance, GXN247, is generally in a much better condition, particularly the ladders which received some restoration while with the Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade Museum. GXN 202, the original TL, will be put for disposal having contributed to the improvement of GXN 247 to museum condition.

GLE 32, the Austin towing vehicle is in its wartime form, which fits well into the Trust's Core Collection Policy, as the example currently on loan has the post war fit of the first-aid hose reel and 60 gallon tank. The escape carrier is also built on the Austin chassis and registered GXA 797, and like the ATV has strong links with the Lothian and Borders area.

Altogether a most welcome addition to the Collection; we are grateful to the Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade for their consideration.

The derelict ground floor of another building at Weedon has become available to utilise for the storage of vehicles and equipment that must be relocated so that we can vacate the current storage that will be demolished once work starts to refurbish the site as a whole. This extra space has been a mixed blessing as the building is very damp and has required a lot of work - led by Malcolm Tovey - to keep out the worst of the weather.

Working parties continue at Weedon, rain or shine, on at least two Saturdays of the month, with a wide range of work being carried out: if you have not attended before it is necessary to notify either myself on 01234 355453

or Norman Simmons, the Engineering Advisor, on 01536 762503, that you intend to come, so that entry may be facilitated.

Efforts to label and catalogue the Collection are underway at last, with a steep learning curve for those of us involved: marking methods for the wide range of surfaces encountered has necessitated more research.

Meanwhile, in the workshop efforts have been concentrated upon returning the TK Bedford flat bed lorry, which the Trust purchased from the Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, back to road-worthy status. This vehicle is not intended as an exhibit, but is utilised when recovering larger donations to the Collection. Those involved with Engineering Advisor Norman Simmons have been: Pat and Roy Murfin, Dennis Bigrave, Cedric Ellingworth, Tony Osbourn, Howard Adams and Neil Burrows - not all at the same time of course!

An opportunity to 'network' and publicise the work of the Trust occurred recently, when we were invited to take part, by Bedfordshire County Council, in a day of wartime reminiscence at Ampthill in mid-Bedfordshire. A display was created illustrating the work and equipment of the fire services of both sides of the conflict, with Alan Youngman in period dress. Along with the other displays our efforts attracted a great deal of interest from the many visitors to the event - altogether a worthwhile day. Following on from this event Malcolm Tovey and Alan Youngman were able to attend a similar occasion to commemorate the Leicester Blitz, which also proved most successful.

We continue to add to the library that the Trust is creating to provide a research facility as part of the museum: a recent booklet was a *London Fire Brigade, General Order No 700*, dated 1941, which details the provisions for the Auxiliary Fire Service in relation to sickness and war service injuries. Yet another interesting facet from that period of fire service history.

A number of interesting photographs from this period have also been passed to the Collection, to add to our growing file of fire service images. Your help in extending this area of interest would be welcome; while fires and appliances are of most concern, photographs showing any fire service activity are welcome - perhaps it's time for a visit to the attic?

Maurice Cole, the Collection Curator can be readily contacted at 9 Moreland Way, Manton Heights, Bedford MK41 7NP.

Telephone: 01234 355453



Volunteer activity at Weedon.: Dennis Bigrave applies a much-needed coat of paint on one of the many historic firefighting vehicles in the care of the Museum Collection at Weedon.



Alan Youngman, suitably attired in AFS wartime steel helmet and uniform, regales visitors to the Museum stand during a recent Bedfordshire County Council event at Ampthill. (See page 2)

VISIT OUR WEB SITE

Readers will find the Trust's web site at www.fireworld.co.uk where further information can be found about the Trust's National Collection and plans for the National Museum.

FORMER AFS COMMER BIKINI UNIT ON LONG TERM LOAN

A rare example of an AFS special vehicle has recently been placed on long-term loan to the Fire Services' National Museum Trust.

The vehicle concerned is a 1953 Commer Q4 Superpoise 6 cylinder 6300cc Transportable Water Unit (SKF 509), otherwise known as a 'Bikini' unit. It carries three type F inflatable rafts in a cradle over the cab and nine Coventry Climax lightweight pumps with heat baffles on the flat bed and is complete with full inventory of ancillary gear carried in side and rear lockers. A launching and recovery crane is also installed on the flat bed.

This appliance, designed by the Home Office, is one of the 'Green Goddess' family which was formed into the Auxiliary Fire Service Mobile Fire Columns established in the early 1950s to combat a possible nuclear attack on this country. When launched each raft carries three Cov-

entry Climax lightweight portable pumps, one being used as a jet propulsion unit via a tiller assembly at the stern. The other two pumps are used for water-borne firefighting or to pump water ashore where the source is inaccessible to conventional fire appliances. Water is drawn from beneath the raft via a 4 inch alloy suction bend with a 21 inch draft and discharged from two deliveries on each pump for whichever purpose they are required.

This particular machine is owned by Leicester City Fire Brigade Society but is on long term loan to the Fire Services National Museum Trust. It is believed that this appliance is one of only three surviving to this day and in private hands. It is certainly one of two which are fully kitted up.



Commer 'Bikini' Unit SKF 509 alongside an Austin A40 AFS staff car.

FRIENDS OF THE FIRE SERVICES NATIONAL MUSEUM TRUST

The next meeting of the Friends is being held on Sunday 29 April at Grantham Fire Station, Lincolnshire, commencing at 1400 hours. All those interested in the Museum and its future are very welcome to attend. John Herrick, the Friends' Chairman, will set out the way ahead and highlight the growing opportunities for Museum supporters to become actively involved in the progress towards opening the Museum at Weedon.