



# THE ROUNDTHEADS

NEWS LETTER OF THE LFB RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION

[WWW.LFBRMA.ORG.UK](http://WWW.LFBRMA.ORG.UK)

PRESIDENT KEN KNIGHT CBE QFSM COMMISSIONER LONDON FIRE BRIGADE



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## **RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION STRUCTURE & BRANCH SECRETARY'S CONTACT NUMBERS**

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## **CHAIRMAN WRITES**

It is always interesting to note all the changes taking place in the Fire Service and it is sometimes difficult to realise what the real benefits are. Whatever any ones views may be, it is clear that the British Fire Service is going through a major programme of change. We are fortunate that members of the Retired Members Association although having probably been through earlier periods of change during their service careers, now only face changes in retirement that are somewhat limited. We have however, gone full circle in changing our Association Badge back to that use by the original of the Round Threads. We have done so with the blessing of the Fire Authority and it now allows us not to have to change in the future if the Brigade changes. I personally served under three different Authorities. There was the London County Council (LCC), the Greater London Council (GLC) and eventually the London Fire & Civil Defence Authority (LFCDA). Since then we now have the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA). Bear in mind that the RMA was formed in 1930 and the activities of the Association were suspended when the Brigade was mobilised in 1939. When the National Fire Service was disbanded in 1948 and the LFB was reinstated under the London County Council the activities of the RMA resumed with a dinner in Soho. There are few records available in respect of this period of our history. Only two booklets showing details of membership remain available. In one of the booklets, which dates from 1933; shows that Major Morris was the Chief Officer and Patron of the Association. Serving on the Committee was Clarina Shaw son of Sir Eyre Massey Shaw, the Brigade's first Chief Officer appointed in 1865. The members at that dinner in Soho were the backbone of the Brigade who had served through the blitz. Within this group were Major Jackson, Commander Firebrace and Mr delve who subsequently became Sir Fredrick Delve. The Secretary was George Bennison who held that office until 1970 when Jim Syrett took over. Over the years the Association has adjusted its organisation to fit with the changing shape of the Brigade. In 1965 there was the expansion into the Greater London Council. This change caused the Association to reorganise its 1500 members, who were living throughout the Country and even abroad, into an alignment of districts called Branches. This is largely where we are today, with only minor changes being made from time to time. The only significant change has been the development of the Women's Branch covering retired women Firefighters and widows of retired Firefighters. As you will know the Retired Members Association is very involved with the UK Firefighters National Memorial by St Paul's Cathedral. An annual Service of Remembrance is held there in early September every year. It is always a very poignant and moving occasion. Sadly there are now over two thousand names on the Memorial, with almost every Brigade in the UK represented. London by virtue of its size has by far the highest number recorded on the Memorial and there is always a very good attendance from London. Last year we had a very good attendance across the UK. This year the Annual Service of Remembrance will be held at 1100 hrs at the Church of St Mary le Bow in Cheapside. This will again be followed with a Parade to the Memorial where the Service will continue with the wreath laying. I would conclude by thanking the Branch Secretaries who are close to our many members. I know just how hard they all work. Our main Committee with our General Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, and Committee Members all contribute to an effective organisation. We are also most grateful for the Support from the Authority, the Fire Commissioner and indeed the Welfare Fund itself.

G. D. Clarkson CBE, QFSM, BA (Hons)

## **EDITORS BIT**

Here we go for the second publication. I am quite surprised that I have only received three emails for inclusion in this edition of the letters page. I thought I would have had the postman complaining about the weight of his mailbag. But there you go. In this addition we are covering the 2006 AGM held at Southwark. You can read Barry Sargents review a bit further on. One of our members Mr Ken Wheatley who lives in France, contacted me and offered to write two articles for this edition THANKS KEN. The first article contains some tips on healthy eating and weight control, which he thought may be of use to us old boys and girls. He is not a dietician, but it is his way of staying fit and healthy. He has promised to send some gentle exercise routines he uses, for the next issue. I hope that it will be of use to you all who are looking to stay fit and healthy in retirement. You may remember Ken as a PTI at Southwark T/C. Just remember not to over do any exercise and have your doctor give you the once over before you start any new exercise regime. His second article in this edition is about living abroad in retirement. Although we have limited space in our magazine I think Ken has written a splendid article. On page 6 we have an article on firemarks and their history. Plus, information on how and where to purchase hand painted replica firemarks. A discount will be given to all Serving and Retired FireFighters. I hope you enjoy this publication and I look forward to your letters and emails. ED



## Fitness

### Diet and health

Before expounding on the various aspects of fitness and health, it's necessary to clarify one or two myths surrounding the subject and also to talk a little about diet. Firstly, being fit doesn't necessarily mean that you will be healthy. The converse is also true. There is a tenuous relationship between the two but that is as far as it goes.

Secondly, being fit does not mean being able to run marathons or compete in any sort of strength events. It means simply being able to do normal things without becoming unduly fatigued. Being competitively fit is something else and once normal fitness is attained then perhaps that is something you would want to aim for.

It is also not necessary to have to work unduly hard to attain fitness. It would be wrong to suggest that in order to become fitter you will not have to work harder than normal. But it doesn't involve a regime of training that is daunting.

I must mention smoking and drinking at this juncture. There, I've mentioned it! We all know the risks, given the publicity. If you do the first then you should stop and the second should be done in moderation only.

**Diet:** One of the more common reasons why people exercise is to lose weight. As there are about 3500 calories in a pound of fat and an average person `burns` about 100 for every mile that is walked or run, it takes little working out to see that you will have to run/walk approximately 35 miles to lose a pound of fat! Of course you cannot eat anything whilst carrying out this exercise as you would probably take in more calories than you would actually lose. There is a relationship between exercise and weight loss. Exercise speeds up the metabolism and can help someone lose weight but the only true way to reduce fat content is to have a sensible diet.

Forget about so called `diets`. They have come to represent something solely commercial and only for the gullible. To reduce calorie intake is not complicated; it just takes a little application. Eat what you normally eat but just reduce the quantity by a degree. If it should be normal to eat four biscuits with a cup of tea then eat two. When having meals reduce the sauces and amount of coverings. It is not the amount of pasta or potatoes that are the problem but rather the `other stuff` that is ladled on afterwards. A weight loss of approximately a kilo every ten days is a sensible and sustainable target.

If you are hungry then you will almost certainly `snack`. At meal times make sure there is plenty of bread on the table (but leave the butter in the cupboard!) and that, lots of potatoes and vegetables are available. Just guard against the `coverings`. Don't cut them out, but reduce them. It takes a little discipline but this way weight loss will be slow and permanent. The error people make is in assuming that starches such as bread, pasta and potatoes put on weight. Not so! Obviously, once the desired weight is reached then by being sensible it is possible to eat a little more adventurously from time to time whilst overall continuing to eat properly.

In the next article, I will write about flexibility, probably the most important component of fitness.

**Ken Wheatley**

### LFBRMA trip to the REMEMBRANCE DAY PARADE and Service at the MENIN GATE-BELGIUM 2007

**Dear Members,**

Over the past two years N.Paulding and D.Bradbury have represented both the RMA and the LFB at the Remembrance Day Parade and Service held at the Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium. Recently requests have been received for the Association to arrange a trip for its members; with this in mind I am writing to all members giving them the opportunity to travel. Many other Fire Brigades attend the Service which is hosted by the Belgian Fire Brigade. It may be possible to arrange for a contingent to travel this year, but hotel accommodation in the area is in great demand and I have been advised that any hotel bookings need to be made early. However, we are hoping to attend in November 2007. The trip would be of a 3 day duration, staying at a local hotel with bed and breakfast. We will travel by either coach or mini bus, and it may be possible to have several pick up points.

At this early stage it is impossible to put a price on the trip; this again will be determined by the amount travelling.

If you are interested in participating please contact me on **01268 692675** or either write or E mail me at the above address, leaving your details, arrangements will be forwarded to you in due course.

Yours faithfully

B.Sargent.

### 2006 AGM and Reunion were held at Southwark on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May.

The President, Commissioner K.Knight gave members attending the AGM a behind the scenes account with the aid of a video into what occurred following the tragic events of July 7<sup>th</sup> on London's Transport system.

Following the AGM the Reunion was held in a marquee in the yard at which around 350 members and guests of the RMA, helped themselves to a magnificent buffet supplied by the caterers at Southwark. During the afternoon we experienced some heavy showers but this did not dampen the spirits of those who attended and the last members left the marquee at around 8.30pm after swinging the lamp all afternoon. Without naming anyone in particular, I should like to convey my thanks to all those who helped to make the day a success and hope that next year's event which will take place at **Southwark on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May** will bigger and better.

Barry Sargent

Secretary

(I did hear that the bar ran out of draft Beer; there must have been some thirsty people there). ED

## LETTERS COLUMN

Dear Editor,

A magazine has arrived although I'm not sure if it is the one you sent (personal issue) or one direct from the Welfare Fund. On the envelope, which was from the Welfare Fund, was their address should it need to be returned! Hence my confusion whether if it was from you or not. I suppose it's not really important and I'm not sure why I am `babbling` on about it!!! I'm afraid that my criticisms still stand. The welfare magazine is o.k. but really is a lot of nothing about even less. In any event my comments are only aimed at what the R.M.A. is trying to achieve. Having already pre-viewed the new R.M.A. magazine (you sent it to me via e-mail) my comments are still very much the same. It is still the old tatty news letter wrapped up in a glossy cover. The chairman's comments do not run with the accepted view that the R.M.A. is haemorrhaging members and is in fact **not** going from strength to strength. The contents are the same as all the previous `tatty news letters` that I have received over the years and are of little interest and the only new item was your editors comment about including one or two new topics in the next issue.

Hanging on to the shirt tails of the Welfare Fund magazine I can't possibly agree with and until you have the finances, autonomy and authority to produce your own work, the R.M.A. venture I believe will not succeed in its purpose. In fact I firmly believe it will wither and die. All the nonsense surrounding the publication of the R.M.A's own magazine has to be swept away. Data protection act, political correctness and probably interference from those established in the R.M.A, has to be firmly shoved to one side. I just cannot understand why an aggressive spirit is not being used, I can guess, but I would only be going over old ground. Believe it or not I'm not sure if I am a member of the WF and so I pose the question, "will I receive the next issue of the R.M.A. magazine?" I still feel very strongly that hanging on the shirt tails of the Welfare magazine is wrong and until you have the authority, finance and autonomy to produce a decent magazine then what will be produced will be an inferior product that will eventually shrivel and die. The criticism may appear to be unjust and ill informed. I have said I'm not privy to any detailed information. In a way I believe that makes my comments more pertinent. If, as simply an outsider I view it this way then perhaps so do many others! Right that's it for now. I'm sure you won't let critics such as I, blunt the hard work you do. You probably find it all more frustrating than I do.

All the very best  
Ken Wheatley

Dear Editor.

Through you I would like to inform the members of the wonderful treatment at Jubilee Therapy Centre at Penrith. I recently had a knee replacement and was accepted for treatment at the above centre. Because of being a widower and having a dog, which became quite distressed when I lost my wife, and when I went into hospital for the knee replacement she was looked after by my very kind neighbours again, the dog become quite distressed again whilst I was in hospital. I therefore asked if it was possible to take up my motor home to use as a dog kennel for her this was agreed and I arrived Sunday mid day. Having dinner with one of the physiotherapists it was commented how well I was walking. However during the night I had a considerable swelling of the knee and the next day I was taken to the local hospital in Penrith, it was decided that this was too difficult for them to deal with and I was transferred 30miles away to a hospital in Carlisle. After three days it was decided that it would be better if I was transferred to my local hospital in Kings Lynn Norfolk (where I had the original operation) all during the time I was up there the staff at the Jubilee Centre took my dog out several times a day for a walk, and so that she would not be left alone at night members of the staff took her home with them. Besides being visited at the hospital the staff always rang to find out how I was and always kept my family up-to-date with what was happening. Besides the wonderful equipment (although I was not unable to use any of it) the food and accommodation was far superior to many hotels that I have stopped in. And it has been a privilege to meet such professional caring staff. I therefore highly recommend to any of our members that if they need therapy they will never find a place better than the jubilee therapy Centre at Penrith.

Best wishes to everybody at R.M.A.  
Peter E. Wilson.

Dear Editor.

The Round Threads has the makings of a good and interesting magazine for all its readers. A 'Where are you now' column is a very good idea, as we all ask ourselves at times 'I wonder how old so and so is and what he is doing now,'? With a little help from the pensions dept. every one could be traced, members or non members of the RMA.. The poem 'Getting Old', very humorous and so true. More of this type of thing please. As you say it's the member's magazine and you need their help, their recollections and stories. We have all at one time or other met up with a member of our Great International Brotherhood of Firemen, in England or abroad. I know I have .In a small town when I was visiting Canada called Montpelier. They made not only me but my wife and her friend feel really at home. It was like walking into my old Fire Station and with my old mates again. Congratulations Keith and George, keep up the good work.

Ron Edwards ex B22 River.

(Ron has submitted an article about his trip to Canada, which is included in this edition) ED.



## What is a Firemark?



Read on for a brief history...

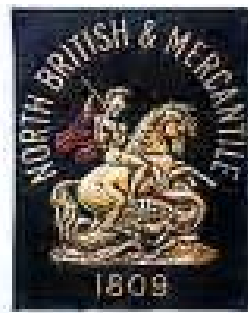
During the reign of Charles II, the Great Fire of London broke out in a baker's house in Pudding Lane, near London Bridge on 2nd September 1666. The fire raged for five days and destroyed 13,000 houses and many public buildings, including nearly 80 churches.

In some ways the fire was a boon, as it also swept away the haunts of the Black Plague in 1656, and which, at its peak, killed an estimated 10,000 people in one week. The City of London was rebuilt in a healthier and more considered fashion. The Great Fire also resulted in the first arrangements ever made for insurance against losses or damage caused by fire. By the end of the 17th Century, three London societies were actively engaged in the business - the 'Fire Office' (later known as the 'Phoenix Fire Office' established in 1680), the 'Friendly Society' (established in 1683), and the 'Hand-in-Hand Office' (established in 1696). Others soon followed. In those days, very few streets in English towns had names; the houses and other buildings in them were also neither named nor numbered as they are today. Signs and emblems were used by traders and inn-keepers to denote their business and services, and to generally attract attention, but private houses were very difficult to identify for anyone not familiar with the area.

It was the practice of each insurance company to mark the properties 'in their care' with a distinctive emblem, or 'Firemark' - these were usually decorated plaques nailed high up on the front of the property. Early Firemarks were made of lead - cast in a mould, with the number of the policy stamped on the panel below the design. The marks of each company varied in shape and size. All were brightly coloured - usually in gold-leaf and red or blue, and often included black. Early in the 19th Century, there was a sharp rise in the price of lead, so copper, tinned iron and other metals were used instead. Between 1680 and 1880, over 150 fire insurance companies issued marks. Many of them re-designed their marks during the course of their business life, leading to 'variants'. The introduction of the penny postal system in 1840, and consequently the numbering of houses and naming of streets, challenged the original necessity of using Firemarks to distinguish properties. However, as one purpose of the mark was advertising for the issuing company, some of the later ones were issued purely for promotional purposes. The other (one could say more important) purpose of the Firemark was to identify, for the benefit of Fire Brigades, the company which covered the property. In the absence of any satisfactory public provision for extinguishing fires, these early fire offices and companies were compelled to form their own individual brigades of firemen, trained in the use of primitive fire engines and appliances.

The most suitable men for this work were watermen from the Thames - strong, reliable, use to danger, and easy to locate when needed. These brave men, clad in the distinctive livery of their companies, soon became familiar figures at fires in London. It was the practice for the company 'claiming' the fire to pay for the services of the brigades from other fire offices and companies who had arrived to help.

Other towns and cities gradually adopted this practice.



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## A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

Pam and I emigrated to France six years ago. We decided on the Pays basque region as we had, a couple of years earlier, walked the Pyrenees from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. It is one of the most scenic and beautiful regions in Europe and as of yet an unspoiled region. We had absolutely no fears on quitting England. Pam spoke French fluently and after six years of schooling I am beginning to relax into the language as well. Many would suggest that there is little difference between the two nations other than the obvious. Usually that is because they live in an English enclave such as the Dordogne or other area where the `little Englishers` are in the majority. In actual fact the French are very different indeed. Here in the Pays basque we know of no other English people. Of course there must be some somewhere but we don't know of any. In fact we know only two other `foreigners` and they are Dutch so speaking French is the only way of communicating with anyone. Here it really is France in every sense. As for differences between our two nations the major one is simply that the French approach life in a much more relaxed way than the British. It may not appear to be the case but the British are a highly-strung bunch of neurotics by comparison. The bureaucracy is staggering but then it's mostly ignored so is really not a problem. Driving on near empty roads is a much more relaxed business. The French roads are a very strange paradox. Being almost empty they are a pleasure to drive on and one can be led into a false sense of security if you allow concentration to lapse. French driving is generally atrocious but the average French driver is polite and displays little of the `car rage` that is common in England. We have not been back to the U.K. since we left. France is superior to the U.K. in many aspects. The medical services are light years ahead of Britain. The lack of interference by the state is extremely refreshing and the people could most certainly instruct the British on how to be courteous and helpful. In short it is a fantastic place to live. If anyone should want any information about life in France then I would be only too pleased to be able to help.

**The Attached three photos:** One is of yours truly walking in the mountains behind where we live. Another is of my wife (Pam) and yours truly in one of our local villages and the third is a view taken from the hill behind our home.



Article by Ken Wheatley





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## **Membership**

The life blood of any organisation is its members. Without them the organisation wilts and eventually withers away.

Now, I am not suggesting that we are on the way out but we do appear to be having a serious problem with renewals of membership. Taking out a percentage for paperwork lost in post, we still seem to be getting fewer renewals every year. New members are always welcome and continue to trickle in with the reduction in retirement rates but they are not currently keeping up with our losses. If, for any reason you have decided not to renew your membership this year, I would appreciate knowing why you have made this decision. Drop me a line or email on [lfbma@btinternet.com](mailto:lfbma@btinternet.com). If you have not received your renewal forms this year contact the branch secretary or myself and we will rectify that straight away. Please give this matter some thought and help us to restore our numbers.

Many Thanks  
Jim Geoghegan Membership Secretary

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Volunteers are required to assist the London fundraising team, by co-ordinating collections, supporting other volunteers and maintaining the database; assisting with administration and giving talks to community groups. Our Receptionist will answer 'phone enquiries, meet and greet visitors and look after the reception area. Too busy? Just by sparing 4 hours a year to join a local team with their fundraising collections would be a great contribution. Gain new experiences working with us, share your skills and together we will change lives! Call Nicolette Spera Volunteering Advisor: for a chat on 020 8222 9040 or email [nspera@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:nspera@macmillan.org.uk). Visit the new Macmillan website at [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)





## **50<sup>th</sup> Wedding celebration By Ron Edwards**

I know its been two years since my 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, but I thought some of you out there would find this interesting. September 2004 was our 50th Wedding Anniversary so we though we would celebrate it by treating ourselves to a really memorable holiday. We had heard so much about the autumn colours in New England, we would give it a try. I have chronic arthritis and find it hard to get around at times as I have two complete artificial knee joints. The travel firm we chose pick you up at your front door and return you there after your holiday. Drive you to London Heathrow Airport where they have their own porters and booking in staff waiting for you. Nothing what so ever for you to do with your tickets or luggage, every thing is taken care of. During our tour we stopped at Montpelier for a lunch break and some retail therapy. As we were walking along the road a lady who was with us saw a Fire Station ' Let's go and have a look through the window' she said. Whilst we were doing just that I heard a voice behind me say 'Can I help you folks'? She replied ' My friend here was a London Fireman'. With that he said 'Come on in folks and meet the Commander '(not sure of the rank).You would have thought we were the Home Office Inspectorate the way we were treated. It started with a full tour of the station; the lockers were opened to show us their equipment, which they were so proud of, asking if we use the same type of thing. 'Can you get up into the cab? Try it for size' even the ladies were invited to join in. They explained that they also ran the Ambulance Service which kept them busier than the Fire Brigade side. The trouble was we were running short of time and we still had to have lunch. There was so much they wanted to show and tell us, also hear about the LFB. We had to take our leave after thanking them and asking the final question, the best place to eat. This they certainly knew and pointed us in the right direction. What a wonderful thing this International Brotherhood of Fireman is. I had had a very memorable visit and been shown the comradeship which exists between all fireman.

The photo was taken by the Tower Appliance. Lt- Rt the Fireman who invited us in, my self and the Station Commander.(I think the rank is Lieutenant) The photo of Brome Lake Fire Department was another Fire Station we passed on our tour but I never had the time to visit. The sign was carved out of solid wood. The following year 2005, as we had enjoyed our visit to Canada and the States so much we wanted to have another holiday there, the people are so helpful and friendly. This time we toured The Rockies and a cruise up the inside passage to Alaska. Scenery you just cannot describe. Whilst we were in Canada at a town called Baniff it was Canada Day. They really go to town and celebrate it. They are so proud of their country, something we seem to have lost. We were given a Canadian flag pin broach and a flag to wave by the restaurant where we had breakfast. The celebrations started at 8am with a Bar B.Q. breakfast in the park which went on all day. There was entertainment, competitions and all the museums open to explain how Canada was founded .The First Nation People had their lodges set up in the park. 5pm the Grand Parade .This lasted an hour , I have never seen so many horses and marching bands, mainly young people, dancing their way along the road, with numerous floats . There was no litter or beer cans to be seen in fact we never saw anybody the worse for ware all day; it was a real family atmosphere. The Fire Department had a Pump and T.L. in the parade with one Fireman proudly waving the Canadian Flag on the T.L.. Photos of which I have included. As you can imagine with so many horses there was plenty for the gardeners. But No. As the last float went by two young men with a motorised cart followed and swept it all to the middle of the road, then along came the mechanical road sweeper. There was not a trace that a very horsey parade had taken place, although the parade was still in sight. The celebrations ended with a firework display in the park where it had started sixteen hours earlier.

Ron Edwards



## **IN CASE OF FIRE, COMPETITION WINNER**

The winner of the IN CASE OF FIRE competition was Nigel Williams and the answer was January 1958. Last Street Fire alarm removed from London. Apparently it was removed from Arlington Avenue on Islington's ground.

### **Trading Items**

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### **Last Word**

I hope you have enjoyed this edition, please write or email me if you have any comments or articles you would like included in the next edition of The Roundthreads. I would like to thank Ken Wheatley and Ron Edwards for the articles they submitted for this edition and look forward to receiving your articles and letters for the next edition.

**Bye for now ED**