

*This article was written by Dave Parson, a former police officer in Faringdon, and published in a Local Paper. Date not known, but thought to be late 60s early 70s
Faringdon became part of Oxfordshire in the Local Government boundary reorganisation of 1974.*

Before the turn of the century Faringdon took delivery of a manual pump whilst other larger towns had been elevated to the status of being equipped with a steam vehicle. The manning of this pump required 14 men and these were made up of volunteers pressed into service from among bystanders at the scene of the fire.

The tender was kept in a bay under the Town hall in the Market Place (*Later a garage was provided for a motorised model at the corner of a Church Farm [Berners Estate] field at the junction of Church Path and Coach Lane*).and in a second bay was the town's ambulance.

Horses were the means of propulsion for these vehicles so one can imagine the delays which occurred between the alarm being raised and the brigade arriving at the fire.

The story is told of the brigade being called at 7am one weekday to a very large fire some miles out of town. The tender was drawn from its bay by two fidgety white horses anxious to propel the red pump to its destination.

The men were properly dressed and their muscles flexed ready to handle the pump. Yet, within 20 yards of the bay the whole company stopped outside the local tobacconists shop and there it stood until 8am at which time the shop opened and the Captain was able to purchase an ounce of baccy to see him through the day.

This old fashioned type of appliance was eventually replaced by a motorised vehicle supplied by the Rural District Council. This was as much as the Council could afford so, in 1930, the firemen themselves had what must have been a very substantial whip round and purchased a personnel carrier which they then presented to the council and used themselves.

Except for wartime, the fire service has remained a part time occupation in the town. Woe betide any yokel idly crossing the road when the siren sounds and the part timers rush to the fire station from all corners of the town- he may be bowled over by anything from a solid tyred bike to a wheelbarrow.

Like the local bobby, they are always ready.