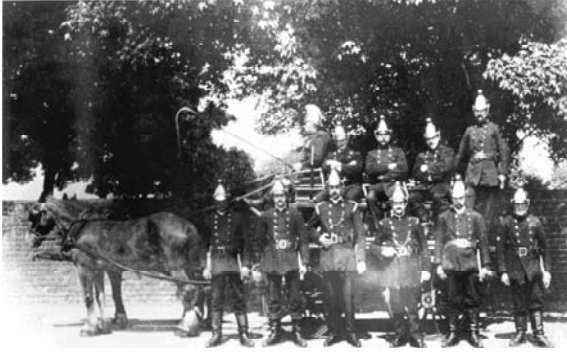


# Community

## 100 years service to Cliffe



One hundred years ago, in 1904, the Cliffe Parish Council paid out over £200 for a state-of-the-art Merryweather pump (equivalent to many £1,000s today) to help form the Cliffe Fire Brigade. Since then they have attended thousands of calls in the local area and beyond. As a part-time station, it is manned by local volunteers who respond to a 'bleep' in emergencies although for many years a siren at the station alerted them. They became part of the Kent Fire Brigade and support other part-time and full-time fire-fighters at incidents across the county. Although a vital part of the local community, it was almost closed as part of a Kent wide cost cutting review in the early 1990s—however local residents campaigned with

the local station to convince local politicians and the Kent County Fire Brigade that it was still wanted and could continue to provide a cost-effective and needed local service.

The Cliffe Fire Brigade was formed by local community leaders, including the Parish Council, in response to an earlier tragedy in July 1901 when a fire in a wood-framed semi-detached cottage near the Six Bells Inn cost the lives of the father Mr Kenknight and two of his daughters—although the mother, five other children and a young friend were saved, the mother died in St Barts Hospital of her burns the next day. While a hose from the Co-operative Society was located, but found to be too short, a local resident cycled to Rochester Fire Station for help. Although the bike suffered a puncture and the journey had to be completed on foot, by the time they arrived just two charred chimney breasts remained standing. The family suffered further tragedy when the youngest daughter died in a lunatic asylum and the eldest son died three years after the fire in an explosion at a



gunpowder factory in Cliffe.

Today, the station responds to about 150 calls a year in the local area and beyond. They respond to a wide range of incidents from children who get their fingers stuck in video recorders to major fires and road accidents.

With many more local residents working away from the area it has been difficult to recruit new fire-fighters, but they are still interested in hearing from potential local volunteers.

They are very much part of the local community and apart from their fire-fighting duties raise funds for local charities. They joined with the carnival committee to put on a major two-day event a few years ago.

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council have contributed towards a plaque to celebrate 100 years of

our local fire-station which will be mounted at the station.

Cliffe Fire Brigade remind you that they may be able to fit a Smoke Alarm in your house, free of charge—contact the Station on Medway 221647 for details. Fitting a Smoke Alarm could save you and your family's lives—but remember to test it on a regular basis—the batteries do not last forever.

Prank calls cost lives—the night this picture was taken, they had been called out to a car fire in Rectory Road and when they arrived there was nothing there—but a real call could have been received and they could have been delayed responding.

