

ESSEX FIRE MUSEUM ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

June 2010
Version 1.0



Protecting our heritage



Essex Fire
museum

1. Introduction

This is the third Annual Report of the Essex Fire Museum and its purpose is to provide the Essex Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer with a résumé of the Museum's activities during the period 1st June 2009 to 31st May 2010 together with an outline of matters identified for future consideration and development.

2. Background

The Museum was officially opened by the then Fire Minister Angela Smith MP on 14th June 2007. 2009/10 was a successful year for the Museum which, with the continued dedication and commitment of volunteers and the Essex Fire Authority, enabled it to promote and develop its local and national profile.

3. Staffing

The Museum's current staffing is as follows: Collections Officer / Assistant Curator (part time – 22.5 hours per week). In addition, specialist support is provided by the Safer Communities Directorate and volunteers as and when required.

4. Finance

Pending the allocation of a specific EFM budget, expenditure is monitored by the Safer Communities Directorate budgetary procedures.

5. The Year's Performance

The Essex Fire Museum is pleased to announce that its 3rd year in operation has been a resounding success with both local and County-wide communities and within the service itself.

This success would not have been possible without the valuable assistance given by the Museum's dedicated volunteers which, in turn, has allowed the Museum to develop at a pace far beyond that originally envisaged.

The EFM has had approximately 1150 visitors during the past year and included in this figure are visits by school groups and various educational establishments as well as numerous return visits by 'Retired Members' and serving personnel.

The Grays fire station open day on June 6th 2009 saw 128 visitors signing the museum visitors' book with many more spending time viewing the displays and talking to museum staff. A number of EFA Members, local and County Councillors have visited and left favourable comments in the visitors' book. In addition, there have been visitors from Spain, France, Finland, Argentina, Canada and USA, which has been a source of great pride for Museum staff.

Approximately 450 of our visitors have been children and young adults from local schools and colleges. These visits have been arranged locally by Roger Pickett, the Museum's Collections Officer, who has been supported by volunteers on numerous occasions.

The museum has hosted and taken part in a number of 'events' during 2009-10, two of which were especially high profile. The first, on 18th June, was the official opening of the Corringham Community Safety Centre by HRH The Earl of Wessex. The Collections Officer was presented to His Royal Highness who then inspected a vintage appliance. A photographic display was set up in the exercise yard. The second event was the official opening of the new Rayleigh Weir fire station on December 1st. The Museum stand was in a prime position within the appliance bay and consisted of a detailed display showing photographs of both Rayleigh and Hadleigh fire stations from past decades. This brought about much interesting debate and conversation and once again demonstrated to the assembled dignitaries and senior officers the EFM's commitment to preserving our priceless heritage.

The London Fire Brigade Museum 'Friends' AGM was held at EFM on February 6th 2010 when 15 members attended. Saturday, March 6th 2010 saw the museum go 'mobile' when we returned to Rayleigh Weir and furnished a comprehensive display of museum artefacts for perusal by the service's 'Retired Members Association' as well as providing an opportunity to view the new station's facilities and equipment. A total of 38 visitors enjoyed this occasion. On Saturday, May 8th, the ECFRS 'Retired Members Association' held their AGM at the museum where 36 Ex ECFRS staff spent an afternoon enjoying the exhibits on display.

As well as receiving numerous donations of photographs and fire service 'memorabilia', after much discussion with the Chelmsford and Essex Museum, the EFM has secured on loan for a period of 12 months the silver fire helmet which belonged to James C Diaper who was the Chief Fire Officer of the Chelmsford Fire Brigade from the early 1900s to 1930. Another significant and valuable donation which was made by a retired member is a rare 1930s London Fire Brigade fire helmet.

The displays within the museum are constantly being developed in accordance with the Museum's prevailing policies and all are commensurate with the overall objective of protecting Fire Service heritage, improving community access and promoting fire safety.

A total of 17 letters of thanks and appreciation have been received and acknowledged. These letters generally describe the enjoyable and interesting experience gained by visitors. There were no letters of complaint. Some 17 requests for information have been received via email; these have come mainly from relatives of ex firefighters wishing to complete a family history project. The requests have covered details required from Victorian times through to the present day. In the vast majority of cases they have proved fruitful with sometimes simple and occasionally comprehensive information being found and handed over. This can be a time consuming task but with the help of volunteers' knowledge and connections some informative responses have been provided. Much assistance has been given by the London Fire Brigade Museum and the Kent Fire Brigade Museum and the EFM is grateful to these organisations.

The Museum has submitted an application for formal Accreditation under the MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives) Scheme. This Accreditation scheme sets a quality operating standard for museums and if successful will enable the EFM to seek future grant aid and support in furtherance of its activities. It is expected that the decision on the application will be known by the end of 2010.

A video tour of the Museum is also currently being produced and once completed will be posted on the Museum's website which will also be further enhanced during the year.

The visitors' book and letters of appreciation file are available for inspection.

The Museum looks forward to continued support from both the EFA and the ECFRS as well as from its volunteers Mr Murray Beale, Mrs Jayne Ricketts, Mr Mick Ford and Firefighter Nick

Singleton from Red watch Clacton fire station. The EFM will continue to strive to achieve greater status within the heritage and museum movement and will at every opportunity endeavour to enhance the image of ECFRS with particular emphasis on promoting community fire safety to its visitors.

6. Future Strategy

The Essex Fire Museum's future strategy is detailed in a Forward Business Plan 2010-13 which has been approved by the Museum's Management Committee and is available on request.

7. Acknowledgements

The Museum's progress and performance would not have been possible without the positive support of the EFA, Chief Fire Officer, volunteers, curatorial advisor from the Essex Record Office and serving and retired ECFRS personnel.