

All Fired Up

HK Hudson Abbreviated, by David Hughes

Article no. 3

In this issue the museum will highlight an area of research which aims to give a biographical picture of some of the men who were firemen prior to the First World War. There were approximately 100+ brigades most of which consisted of volunteer members, who fought fires with equipment very different from today and with little regard to Health and Safety Law and Regulations!

Herbert Knayston Hudson

Herbert was born on the 19th September 1864 in the City of London to Edward Taylor Hudson and Sarah Ann nee Fraser. He was baptised on 30th October 1864 at St Nicholas, Cole Abbey, London. He was baptised by Rev. H Knayston DD, who was obviously a family friend as his surname is used as a second name for Herbert.



Rev.H.K.Hudson

In 1884 he attends Oxford University where he obtains a Bachelor of Arts. Seven years later in 1891, he marries Caroline Emma and is living at 70 Eccles Road, Battersea. By 1901 he has become a clergyman in the Church of England and he and his family have moved to the vicarage at Berden.

He started the Berden Fire Brigade in 1910, after a serious fire on 25th March, the night of Good Friday. The nearest fire brigade, the Bishop Stortford Fire Brigade was over 7 miles away, and were not on arrival, able to salvage much. This led to Herbert setting up a fire brigade in Berden and a small fire engine was purchased from Thaxted Parish Council. On the 1st July 1910 Berden Fire Brigade, consisting of a manual fire engine, one Chief Officer and three men came into existence. By the 1st October he had obtained a 16ft 'pompiers' ladder and seven extra men and boys had been enrolled in the brigade. On October 5th the Fire Brigade

Bottom Right: Berden Fire Brigade Equipment, some of which was homemade by the Chief Officer H.K.Hudson. (EFM Archive)

was admitted into the National Fire Brigade's Union as a recognised fire brigade.

In 1913 he dragged a fire engine, which he had made himself, to a fire of 5 haystacks at Berden Hall and was assisted by his wife who had taken the hose cart until the arrival of a steamer.

On the 30th October 1919, he attended a fire at a cottage in Berden and extinguished it. He was involved with other local brigades and in 1926 he attended the funeral of Samuel Davis, Captain of the Romford Brigade. In 1933 he attended the annual dinner of the Stansted Fire Brigade where he performed two humorous songs and made an amusing speech. Four years later in 1935 he was still captain of the Berden Fire Brigade when he visited the Fire Brigade in Earls Barton in Northamptonshire.

By 1945 he had retired and had moved to Wadham West, Mersea, where he died on the 14th October, with probate going to his son, Aelfric, who is now also a Vicar.

If you have any information about firemen who served in Essex, particularly between 1900 and 1920 or at any other time, please contact David Hughes at museum@essex-fire.gov.uk or at The Fire Museum at Grays Fire Station, Hogg Lane, Grays, Essex, RM17 5QS



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