



## Update from the Chief

As we enter 2008 I am delighted to report that, together, we in Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service **are** making our area a safer and better place to live. The effort being invested in community fire safety is now paying dividends and the number of house fires is being driven down. 2007 saw a reduction of almost 6%.

Fewer fires mean safer communities and safer firefighters and we must continue with our efforts to reduce emergencies through advice and education. At the same time we must also improve our equipment, hone our skills and ensure that when called upon in an emergency we can act professionally and safely. By continually reducing risk and increasing our skills we create a safer future and provide a service that we can all be very proud of.

**CFO Brian A Murray**

## Holiday Cottage Fire - Kishorn, Kyle



In January 2008, the swift intervention of the fire crew from Lochcarron, backed up by Applecross and Kyle crews, saved a holiday cottage in Kishorn from serious damage by Fire.

Damage was limited to two bedrooms by setting up a bridge-head on the first floor and stopping the fire spreading to the remainder of the two storey building. The bedrooms and roof were totally destroyed by the fire which is thought to have been caused by a faulty fan heater.



## Retained Availability

The pilot of the Retained Availability System continues to go well at Grantown, Aviemore and Kingussie where all three stations are now using the system to manage the availability of their crews.

Within the next couple of weeks the real time mapping system will be installed in Control. This will enable Control to see at a glance the availability of retained stations prior to mobilisation.

## ENHANCING COMMUNITY SAFETY Home Fire Safety Checks

We are continuing to make positive strides towards our ultimate aim of "Helping to Make Highlands and Islands a Safer and Better Place to Live", by targeting our community safety prevention work at our most vulnerable groups. The main challenge continues to be in domestic properties identified as being at the greatest risk of fire. It is in these homes that we have concentrated on providing Home Fire Safety Checks, which has been effective, helping to generate very positive results. Since the introduction of the IRMP process, we can show:

- We have completed in excess of 10,500 Home Fire Safety Checks.
- Fitted in excess of 10,000 smoke detectors, each having a ten year lifespan. A number of specially designed units have been supplied to residents with hearing or sight impairment. We are confident that these detectors have made a significant contribution to the reduction of risk.

We wish to congratulate Stations and staff for their activity in this area of work and encourage all members of staff throughout the area to consider how they can contribute further to enhancing the safety of some of our more vulnerable members of their community.

Over the last year, the introduction of Community Safety Advocates (CSAs) throughout the area has significantly increased the support and training offered to staff. Should any Units need further help or assistance in this area of work, please contact your local CSA or call the CRM Dept on 01463 227176.

**EACH OF US HAS A PART TO PLAY - WE CAN HELP TO SAVE LIVES!**

## Cycle to Work Scheme

The option to join the Cycle to Work Scheme closed on 20 January 2008. The final number of applications received was 192, representing an uptake of approximately 15% of the eligible participants. Cyclescheme have advised that this is significantly higher than the industry average of about 5% which demonstrates the healthy outlook of our workforce.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Framework for Positive Working Relations

Service managers and officials of the Fire Brigades Union have been working over the past months to develop a framework for positive working relationships. Together we have achieved a joint approach which fosters an environment of mutual respect and understanding.



The latest edition of the Grey Book (6th Edition) places an emphasis on local agreement over a range of conditions of service. Subsequent to this local approach the National Joint Council (NJC) has formulated these arrangements into a joint circular NJC 08/07 which provides a mutually agreed structure for improved industrial relations in the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Fire Brigades Union both signed a joint protocol and a local memorandum of understanding on 5 February 2008. We are both now committed to this approach which formalises agreement and time allowed for trades union facilities into our local arrangements. We are jointly very pleased to announce this protocol and mutual working relationship and look forward to closer working in the interests of our staff and in the quality of service we provide to our communities.

### HIFRS – Set in Stone

Inverness City Partnership is producing a series of text-works which will be inscribed onto the paving stones of the Old Town in Inverness.

One of the locations is the Dunbar Hospital on Church Street. According to historians this building has had many uses over the years: a school, an almshouse, a hospital and also stored the town gallows! Apparently at one point the town's fire "engines" were also there and they have selected an old Gaelic proverb for this which reads "Bathaidh uisge teth teine" which translates as "hot water puts out a fire". Under each stone that is laid various members of the public have been asked to contribute something in writing to be buried, and for this stone the Chief was asked to provide a quote.

The quote is:

*"We arrived with blue lights flashing and rescued the woman from her burning bed. The flames, smoke and bottle of whisky she had consumed meant she was near death's door. As we gave her mouth to mouth resuscitation the spark of life re-ignited and she started to sing thinking she was in heaven being kissed by a firefighter. In Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service it is our job to make sure that everyone gets to enjoy this part of heaven for a little longer."*

This is just written on a piece of cardboard (biodegradable!) and a second copy is kept which will form part of the documentation of the project and may form part of an exhibition on completion of the artworks.

### New Fire Pension Scheme—Added Years Option

When the New Fire Pension Scheme commenced on 6 April 2006, the option to buy "added years" to increase benefits was available under the Regulations.

However the Scottish Government has confirmed at January 2008, the factors to take up this option are still as yet unavailable.

Several members indicated they may consider this option but without these factors, the Highland Council Pension Section are unable to process any such requests.

Staff will however be notified as soon as the factors have been received.

### Ben Fund Prize Winners

The lucky prize winners of the Ben Fund draw, which was held following the open day at Inverness Station, were recently treated to a boat trip on the Beaully Firth.

Three year old Kayleigh Brown, along with her Granny and Granddad, Penny and David and her uncle Eddie headed west from North Kessock up to the Lovat Bridge at Beaully. The combination of time and tide was just what was needed and the conditions were perfect, and even the sun shone, albeit only for a couple of minutes.

Several hours later, the objective was reached, seeing seals, herons and a variety of other wildlife on-route.

After a long and tiring day, Kayleigh was excited to tell her nursery friends of her trip. Skipper David Gill, who donated the prize, had a great day too as it was a pleasure to take along such interested people who thoroughly enjoyed their day.



### Road Traffic Collisions

The focus of Service operational activity since the last newsletter has been in attending Road Traffic Collisions. As you will know, the amount of life critical incidents on our roads far exceeds the number of life critical fires which we attend.

As an illustration of our activity in 2 months up to 18 January, we attended 67 Road Traffic Accidents. At 17 of these incidents, we had to physically cut casualties free of their vehicles, and at the remainder we assisted our colleagues in the Police and Ambulance Services. These accidents, tragically, resulted in 3 fatalities and 51 casualties. As a comparator, this is the number of fatalities from fire that we are likely to see in a year.

Over a third of these collisions have occurred on the A82 and A9 combined – the recent upgrade of our fire appliances on these routes, together with strategically located Community Response Units has paid dividends, in that we are able to provide a quick and effective response targeted at saving life.

However, we cannot afford to be complacent and work closely with our partner organisations like Northern Constabulary to help drive down the risk through initiatives like Hi-Fires and events targeted at young drivers.

### Service Extrication Challenge

Once again, the Service will be hosting a Road Traffic Collision Extrication Challenge.

This year, the event will include a Trauma Challenge.

An encouraging 15 teams from throughout the Service area will meet at Fort William Fire Station on Saturday 12 April to display their skills and dedication to this area of training and commitment. Please

put this date in your diary and come along to support those taking part. As well as being a great day out – there's lots to be learned from watching the teams being put through their paces. Best of luck to all competitors.



## INCIDENTS OF NOTE

### Flooding Incidents

During the last week of January 2008 the Service was called to various flooding incidents due to the unseasonal warm and wet weather, producing rapid snow melt and heavy rain, placing extra strain on the regions rivers. This started with crews from Beaully and Inverness being called to assist in the rescue of a herd of cows in calf, cut off by rising flood water. This incident made Scottish TV news. Crews were called to Aigas near Beaully and with the assistance of the Coastguard and Red Cross inshore rescue teams they were able to help local farmers lead the cattle to safety.



For incidents such as these, the Service has recognised the need to provide a flooding support capability. As part of New Dimension, a considerable amount of equipment has been supplied by the Scottish Government, including dry suits, lifejackets and inflatable sleds. In the near future, the Service will also take delivery of

an inflatable boat. As part of this development, a number of Service personnel (pictured above) have recently attended Water Rescue courses, qualifying them to technician level.

As part of the Service's commitment to the health and safety of our staff, we have also purchased 300 lifejackets which will be distributed throughout the Service to provide safety for crews working alongside water. Training in the use of these lifejackets will be provided by the Learning and Development department in the coming year.

### Firelink Update

Since the September 2007 edition of the newsletter, much of the Firelink Phase "A" equipment has now been installed.

The process of integrating this Firelink equipment into Control has now begun. The first phase of the work to upgrade Sungard public sector Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS), which is used by Control operators to deal with radio and telephone calls, has been completed.

This upgrade has resulted in some changes to the functionality and the user interface presented to the Control operator. The second phase of this work in the coming months will fully integrate the ICCS with the Airwave network.

During this period there will in addition be a series of upgrades to the Fortek CMS 7/Fires III system, to facilitate changes to the bearers used to mobilise Stations and to allow support for services such as status messaging, short data messaging (SDM) and Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS).

The first mobile radio and Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) installations (Phase "B") will begin in June 2008.

### News from the Archives – 47 Years Ago

#### Hose

In the year which has passed two hundred and eighty-seven lengths of hose were tested, three hundred and seventy-six patches applied, while fifty-four lengths of hose were condemned and couplings retied to one hundred and eighty lengths of hose.

*Northern Area Fire Brigade Annual Report May 1961 – May 1962*

## TRAINING

### Learning & Development Update

PDRpro and the Learning Content Management System (LCMS) has now been rolled out to a further 6 Stations and we would like to thank Dornoch, Beaully, Inverness Retained, Nairn, Fort William and Kinlochleven, for their hard work and commitment in implementing the systems successfully.

We would also like to thank the Stations who have been in touch to register their interest in being involved in the next batch of training – just to let you know we will be in contact shortly.

The programmed training sessions for all Retained Managers across the Service area are going well, to date South and North mainland, the Western Isles and Shetland have been completed. These sessions are aimed at updating personnel with Service and Departmental aims and objectives and how they are achieved through front line service delivery.

In addition, all relevant topics such as CFS, Training, IRMP Operational Incidents, and Firelink are discussed encouraging information exchange through two way communication. This is seen as a fantastic opportunity to explore and inform both Service Management and Station personnel of Service related issues and future Service direction.

The Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) process, through the tri-service agreement between HIFRS, Grampian and Tayside FRS is progressing well with a Middle Manager ADC being held in Aberdeen late February. It is anticipated that a Supervisory Management ADC will be held in Highlands and Islands FRS area in summer 2008.

The majority of mainland Stations have now had their Equality & Diversity course with Robin Iffla and it will soon be rolled out to the remainder of the Service.

The Training Department is currently in the process of developing its Departmental Plan for 2008/09 which will shortly be published on the Learning & Development Intranet site.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Never off Duty!

On their way back from a recent training event at Dunvegan, WM Duncan MacKinnon and CM Kevin Dingwall stumbled upon a road accident on the A87.

Snow was lying on the verge of the A87 between Portree and Sligachan – and as they drove past Duncan saw what looked like "steam" coming from the embankment of the road, and felt they should go back to investigate.

Duncan and Kevin discovered a car lying on its roof at the bottom of the embankment, and quickly set about freeing a man and woman from the car. The quick thinking of the two firefighters allowed the occupants to be freed from the car just five minutes after the incident occurred.

The occupants, who were badly shaken, were taken to hospital as a precaution.

## PEOPLE

### David Gill

On 1 December 2007, Area Manager David Gill was presented with his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal by Temporary ACFO John Donaldson. The presentation took place at Service Headquarters and was well attended by David's friends, family and colleagues.



David joined South Yorkshire Fire Brigade in June 1987 at the age of 26, and served at a number of stations and Headquarters departments. As a young, fresh faced temporary leading firefighter, he impressed his senior officer at training school, who just happened to be

Martin Haigh. He quickly passed all of the statutory examinations and in 1992, he was promoted to Leading Firefighter. This was quickly followed by promotion to Sub Officer in 1993.

David was successful in obtaining a Station Officer's post in the Training Department in Highlands and Islands, and began work with us in March 1998. He was then promoted to Assistant Divisional Officer in October 1999, serving in Skye and Lochalsh District until July 2003, when he was promoted to Divisional Officer. David was then promoted to Area Manager in 2005 and has just been appointed as head of the Learning and Development Department.

### Alexander MacKenzie

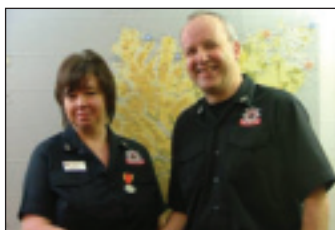
At a recent Station social event evening on the 14th December a presentation was made to Crew Manager Alexander MacKenzie from Lairg Fire Station on the occasion of his retirement after 29 years service. Alexander, who was affectionately called "Painter", was presented with a commemorative axe by Watch Manager Alex Morrison.



Alexander was a valued member of the crew and could be relied upon to attend incidents and training nights at the Station. The community of Lairg and all of those in the Station will miss Alexander's commitment. He will be missed by us all but we all wish him well on his change of occupation, having gone to work offshore.

Thanks again, Painter, for all your help from us all at the Station.

### Janice Russell



On 30 November 2007 WM Janice Russell was presented with her well-deserved Long Service and Good Conduct Medal by T/ACFO John Donaldson. Janice joined the Service on 6 October 1986 and is currently the Watch Manager on Control's Green Watch and a

valued member of the control management team. Operationally she has seen many things – from railway bridges collapsing into the Ness to cows stuck in baths – she takes it in her stride and leads those under her supervision in a manner which inspires confidence under pressure. Janice was joined by her husband, mother, friends and colleagues to ensure a memorable day.

## John Robertson & Willie Doull

Alan Edwards, Mark Loynd and Duncan MacDougall joined in the retirement celebrations in Shetland as tribute was paid to two long serving firefighters from Brae Station. Firefighter John Robertson and



Crew Manager Willie Doull who have over 65 years service between them are pictured with their commemorative axes.

## EVENTS

### Exercise Blacksheep

On 2 September 2007, personnel from Orkney, Shetland and Highland mainland took part in Exercise 'Blacksheep' on the cruise liner MV Braemar, which was on passage from Kirkwall to Maloy in Norway.



Teams were airlifted from Kirkwall and Sumburgh Airports by the Coastguard helicopter 'Oscar Charlie' and the Bond 'Jigsaw' helicopter, and winched on to the vessel to deal with a simulated fire below deck.

This proved to be a very beneficial and worthwhile exercise, providing an extremely realistic test of the logistics of mobilising two Response Teams to a casualty vessel at sea. It also facilitated the confirmation of the strict Nominal Roll and Incident Command procedures specific to this type of incident.

The success of the exercise was only possible due to the cooperation of Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines, especially in relation to the two Service Managers, who, for research purposes only, had to remain on board the vessel all the way to Norway. However, the only conclusion that can be drawn from their research is that Norway is lovely in September!



## News from the Archives – 41 Years Ago

### Cottage, Glenelg

The careless use of highly inflammable liquids from unmarked containers led to the total loss of this cottage. The occupant poured petrol from a can supposedly in place of paraffin on to the domestic fire with the result that the can exploded spreading fire rapidly throughout the premises.

*Northern Area Fire Brigade Annual Report May 1967 – Dec 1967*

**We hope that you have enjoyed reading the Newsletter but if you have any comments or wish any items to be included in the next issue please contact Denise Sutherland on telephone number 01463-227009 or [denise.sutherland@hifrs.org](mailto:denise.sutherland@hifrs.org)**

## EVENTS

### Tarbert Fire Station Car Wash

In August 2007 Tarbert (Isle of Harris) firefighters once again conducted their annual car-wash day in aid of charity. A total of eighty one cars passed through their doors during the valet and car wash, raising a total sum of £1,500.



From the monies raised, £1,300 was presented to the charity, Breast Cancer Care, with £200 being donated to the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund.

Their first ever car-wash took place in 2001 in aid of the New York Firefighters Disaster Appeal Fund. It

proved to be a great success with over £1700 raised on the day, and it was felt by all the crew that they should build on this now annual event so as to raise funds for more good causes in future.

Although located in a very small geographic area, up to the present day, Tarbert Firefighters have now raised and donated over £10,000 which has gone to support a wide variety of local groups, charities, and individuals in our own community.

### Swift Water Rescue Training



Twelve members of the Service's Development Delivery team have now successfully completed their swift water rescue training up to Technician level, with the remaining members being trained during 2008. This now qualifies the delivery team to assist in teaching water awareness training to personnel throughout the Service.

The photographs show WM Archie Douglas, TGM Alex McKinley, TSM Deryck MacKay, TWM Allan Cormie and TWM Alec Mann braving the elements to successfully complete the course which was in November 2007 at Glenmore Lodge.



### Annual Turkey Trot

On 27 December the 9th Annual Turkey Trot took place in cold, clear conditions. There was a reduced turnout this year due to illness, despite this the 7 mile course was completed in a record time.



The run proved a great appetiser to the Annual Dinner with all participants working up a good thirst. Drivers on the A82 were a little surprised to see Santa Claus chasing a 6 foot Dolly Parton through the bushes of Craig Dunain! See you all next year for number 10.

Pictured are Ross Nixon, Dolly Parton, Neil Maclennan, Mike Bond and Alan Clark.

### Retained Managers Training

A number of Retained Managers' training events have taken place this year, when staff from Headquarters and Districts have facilitated meetings for watch and crew managers.

The meetings take place once a year in Inverness, Stornoway, Lerwick, Lairg and Kirkwall.



On 8 & 9 December, John Donaldson, Alan Edwards, Alec Kidd, Scott Hay and Alison Cameron travelled to Lerwick to meet the Shetland staff. Amongst the subjects discussed were Firelink, Community Safety and Sustainability. As well as the business of the meeting, there was a meal on Saturday night, where everyone was able to relax and meet old and new friends. The event was well received and gave everyone the opportunity to exchange information and opinions.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### OPERATIONS COMMAND

On 21 January 2008, North and South Commands amalgamated into a single Operations Command Department.

The references held by the Deputy Area Commanders, in line with the four Strategic Aims of the Service Plan are detailed below:

**Prevent:** Community Fire Safety Ian Smith  
Legislative Fire Safety Mike White

**Prepare:** Martin Haigh

**Respond:** Alan Clark

**Resource:** Mike White

Included in the allocation of references will be the following Districts:

**Alan Clark**  
Shetland  
Easter Ross  
Wester Ross

**Mike White**  
Western Isles  
Lochaber  
Badenoch & Strathspey

**Ian Smith**  
Orkney  
Caithness  
Sutherland

**Martin Haigh**  
Inverness & Nairn  
Skye & Lochalsh

The first point of contact for all issues relating to the Districts/Stations will be the Deputy Commanders identified with the District references. If the issue is urgent and the identified individual is unavailable one of the other on duty Deputy Commanders should be contacted.

## COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT / IRMP

### ROAD SAFETY

We are often asked by staff and others, "What are we doing about road safety"?

In addition to a number of local Station initiatives and Service wide campaigns, we are working closely with each of our Local Authority Road Safety Teams and Northern Constabulary to deliver a co-ordinated approach to reducing the risk on our roads. A few of these include:

#### Driving Ambition

This interactive programme aimed at 5/6 year pupils informs young people of what they need to know in terms of becoming a safe driver, the benefits of undertaking additional training through the Pass Plus scheme and what to expect if they are involved in a collision. Our latest Driving Ambition initiatives were held in Kingussie and Lochaber High Schools, helping us to reach over 200 pupils. A list of priority schools, based on previous road traffic collision (RTC) incidents involving pupils has been drawn up to provide us with a programme of work for 2008.

We are currently developing this initiative to include an Open Evening for parents of 15/16 year olds to help them prepare for when their teenagers learn to drive.

#### College Presentations

In December 2007, the Service took part in a multi-agency programme involving over 500 students at Inverness College. Presentations were made by Northern Constabulary Road Policing Unit, The Institute of Advanced Motorists Youth Manager and our Service which was represented by Gary Innes, (Spean Bridge CRU). Gary's presentation focused on the need for young drivers to consider the consequences of speed, use of drink/drugs and general attitudes around peer pressure and overloading vehicles. This event was hailed as a huge success by all, but in particular, the young students appreciated that those presenting were all young, experienced professionals who pitched the message at the right level. We hope to repeat this initiative at other colleges throughout Highlands and Islands, starting with another in Shetland in the near future.

#### Introduction To Road Safety For Elected Members

AM Trevor Johnson, Head of CRM recently attended a Strategic Road Safety Partnership event in Nairn aimed at informing Elected Members and Ward Managers of the issues facing the Service surrounding RTCs. The event was well attended by over 100 delegates, including other local and national bodies such as Road Safety Scotland, RoSPA and Transerve.

This gave us a valuable opportunity not only to highlight the commitment of the Service to reducing RTCs, but highlight to the audience the large numbers of RTC incidents we attend and the extensive resources we now have to enable us to effectively respond to incidents.

The risk based approach to resource allocation, through Integrated Risk Management Planning, was explained to the audience highlighting our aim: to ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time.

## News from the Archives – 44 Years Ago

#### Smithton of Culloden

At approximately 2330hrs on 12.1.64 the fire brigade at Inverness received a report that an air craft had crashed and was on fire at the above address. Within ten minutes the first appliance was in attendance at what proved to be quite a spectacular blaze.

.....Firefighting was, for a while, made difficult due to several explosions involving fuel and pyrotechnics. It is gratifying to note that the Squadron Leader and the other nine ranks under his command all made their safe escape using emergency exits.

*Northern Area Fire Brigade Annual Report May 1963—May 1964*

## ON THE RUN

In this edition of the newsletter, we'll be looking at grid references on Ordnance Survey maps. Knowing how to use them can be critical especially if you need to direct a helicopter to a rescue scene at a wildfire, or when you're working with the coastguards who use these references routinely.

### Grid References

The national grid is a series of 500 kilometre squares that cover the United Kingdom, with its starting point (or datum) located approximately 100 kilometres to the west of the Scilly Isles. Each of these squares is further subdivided into twenty-five, 100 kilometre squares and it is these that we use to give grid references.

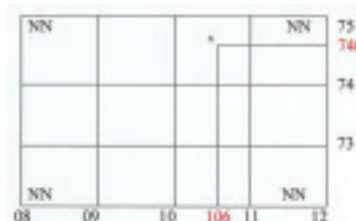
The full grid reference comprises two letters (identifying the square) followed by six numbers (identifying a place or object). The letters are to be found in the four corners of the map in use. In the Highlands and Islands, the first letter will always be N as this is the 500 kilometre square we live in. The second letter varies across the region.



(a) 500 kilometre squares of the National Grid

Along the four sides of the maps are blue numbers. Those along the top and bottom are called 'eastings', and those along the sides are called 'northings'.

The convention is that eastings are given first and then northings. So, the grid reference for the Fire Station in Fort William is NN 1074. This gives us the square 1km x 1km (1000m x 1000m) square that the Station lies in. For greater accuracy, instead of a four-figure reference we can give a six-figure reference. This simply means dividing the 1km square into tenths by eye.



So, assuming x marked the position of the Fire Station on the diagram to the left, its full grid reference would be NN 106746. Often, the letters are omitted as the locality is usually known e.g. between Fire Control and appliances.

A tip I use for remembering which way the grid references are given is 'bottoms up' but I'm sure there are others and if you'd like to share them, e-mail me on Michael.white@hifrs.org. If you look on the maps, there are instructions at the bottom of the legend, and also at the top and bottom of the map. Next time we'll look at estimating areas from Ordnance Survey maps.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVOCATE TEAM

We are pleased to announce that we now have a full complement of Community Safety Advocates to support the Community Safety Work of the Service. They are:



Supervisor Caithness and Sutherland Gordon Cook, Shetland Peter Stevenson, Lochaber and Skye & Lochalsh Janet Pringle, Orkney Ian Croy, Western Isles Mark Tebbutt, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey and Ross-shire

Colin Henderson (not pictured), also pictured are Derek Wilkie and Isabelle Kaminiarz.