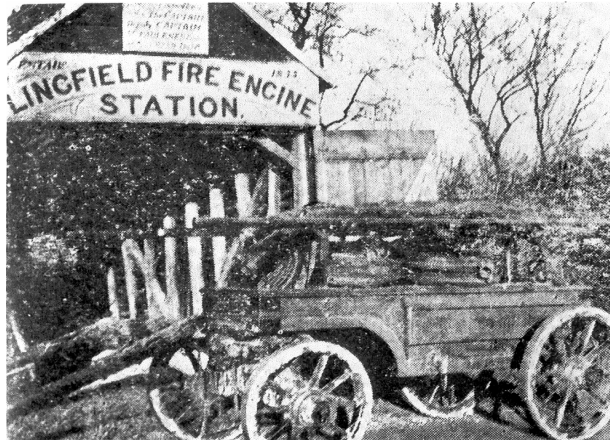


THE RH HISTORY GROUP 7

THE FIRE BRIGADE



Although there were Insurance Companies such as the London and Lancashire, the Sun and Phoenix insuring property against fire, there were no municipal services for the prevention of fire in 1815. The insurance companies encouraged the provision of fire engines and an act of 1833 allowed parishes to provide engines and pipes at ratepayers' expense, but these precautions were useless without a good supply of water. There are several references in the local papers and the church magazines about raising money for our local brigade by the local institutions and the gentry, such as jumble sales and social gatherings.

There were no building regulations designed to prevent outbreaks of fire. A committee of 1842 had pointed out the dangers of back-to-back houses in the towns and recommended the enforcement of rules regarding flues and the isolation of workshops using combustible materials.

Lingfield District Fire Brigade was one of the first volunteer services set up in Surrey, and indeed the country. It was formed in 1850 and equipped with a small four-wheel manual fitted with a hand pump. The men on numerous occasions hauled the pump to the scene of the fire when a horse could not be located. Usually the horses came from Lullenden Farm, now the site of Little Lullenden and Selbys.

The pump was equipped with only a few yards of canvas hose and a couple of small buckets, the men had very little training to speak of and wore no uniform except for an armband with the brigade name on.

THE FIRE BRIGADE

Progress through the years was not easy for the men, but from an almost unnoticed body they became one of the most efficient and essential units of the village organisations.

The earliest recorded photograph shows the pump of 1855 in front of the wooden shed that was located in a corner of a field below the Star and Commercial Hotel (until recently Church House). The pump did almost 52 years service until it, and the shed, were replaced in 1902.

A messenger who ran through the village with a hand bell called the widely scattered members of the fire brigade from their homes or places of work. In the new station, the Llewelyn Palmer Hall, still in Church Road but now a private dwelling, there was a turret containing an alarm bell.

This new hall was built in memory of Sir Frederick Llewelyn Palmer of Crowhurst Place. It was a small stable-like structure with glass doors, through which could be seen the old-fashioned hand-pump engine in all its glory - gleaming brass and shiny red paint.

The new engine arrived on Saturday 22nd April 1902 and was proudly paraded through Lingfield and Dormansland. The firemen were said to look uncommonly well in their new uniforms and were delighted with themselves and their purchases. The new local tailor, Mr. Farrance, supplied the uniforms.

To celebrate the big event a tea was given to the firemen followed by a smoking concert. Mr Hayward (of the Guest House), who took the chair, very kindly gave £1 towards the cost of the teas. (It probably covered most of the expenses in those days.)

For over 150 years we have had the benefit of a volunteer fire brigade and it has been involved in many incidents. We are all proud and grateful to these men who have served us so well.

Sources: The organisation of a civilised social life
History of Lingfield - Francis Napier
Sean Vatcher - Lingfield Fire Brigade

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