



Steve Darby, Members Representative

I joined the fire service in January 1989 after 10 years in the building trade. Unlike many, I hadn't had boyhood dreams of becoming a firefighter. I stumbled upon my new found career via a friend who had joined the service 7 years prior to me. I had noticed big changes in his outlook on life and his enthusiasm for going to work. It was a day in winter when I had tied myself to a chimney to prevent being blown off a roof, whilst I carried out some repair work during an ongoing storm that I decided enough is enough and that I needed a change in direction in my life.

It is a day I will never regret nor forget. I carried out my basic recruit training at Lancashire Fire & Rescue Training Centre. I spent 15 weeks wondering how my friend could be so enthusiastic about this job. It had come as a shock to me after being self employed to joining a disciplined service with room inspections and instructors who you feared, hated some days, yet still respected. My most feared instructor is also an active Operation Florian member (you are human after all Mark!)

From the day of leaving training centre on May 1st, the penny dropped as to why this career of ours is so unique.

During the past 18 years I have been mostly in the operational side of the service with a short spell in a staff position at Divisional HQ. Many short and mid term secondments to our training centre, and finally, following re-structuring of management positions after the rank to role changes I have just been re-deployed into technical fire safety as a Watch Manager.

My first involvement with Operation Florian came about from me answering an "all users" email sent out by Mick Doherty asking for interested volunteers who would like to give some of their time and skills to train demobilised Serb, Croat and Muslim soldiers at a training camp in Neum – Bosnia. I spent 2 weeks there in Oct 2002. From that point on I was hooked. I have since worked on many Florian projects at various levels of responsibility from instructing to project managing. The majority of my involvement has been in Bosnia and Montenegro where I have accumulated over 20 weeks experience in the past 5 years. In June of 2007 I will be experiencing Operation Florian's work in Ecuador – South America.

Operation Florian is keen to return to its roots of self funded smaller projects and it is with this that I have been appointed as the "member's representative" on the management committee to:

- ❖ Maintain relationships with Members
- ❖ Be the link between the Management Board and members, ensuring good two-way communication
- ❖ Assist in increasing the membership base
- ❖ Produce articles of interest for members for the website and newsletter
- ❖ Debrief members post deployment on personal issues
- ❖ Maintain members project history
- ❖ Maintain details of members skills