



## Local History: Fire Brigade

William Curtis describes the start of the Fire Brigade in Alton in his *History and Description of the Town of Alton* of 1896:



*'The Volunteer Fire Brigade was formed on 15 June 1863. A brigade had been in existence for many years previously, but the plant was antiquated and the general character of the Brigade so unreliable in the case of a great fire, that it was the unanimous wish of the Local board and the townspeople generally that there should be a reorganisation.*

*'The necessary funds were collected for the purchase of plant, the Brigade was started, and Mr. Alfred Hetherington was elected Chief Officer. A Paxton Manual Engine was obtained, but it was found insufficient, and a steam fire engine was purchased of Messrs. Merryweather in 1864. The "Firefly" was the first fire engine to leave the Metropolis for a provincial town.'*

The story of the Fire Brigade is told in *And Still We Serve* by C W Hawkins (published by Alton Fire Station 1988) which also lists the various fire stations that have been used. A copy can be seen in the Local Studies Area at the Curtis Museum.

The first engine house was a square building in the middle of the road at the bottom of Amery Hill, by Cut Pound. In 1891, the engines were moved to a larger building, since demolished, next to the Community Centre. Thirty one years later, the brigade took over the lower part of the Town Hall. The next fire station was on the corner of High Street and Cross and Pillory Lane (now occupied by three shops). Finally, the present station was built in Butts Road, on the site of the former police station.