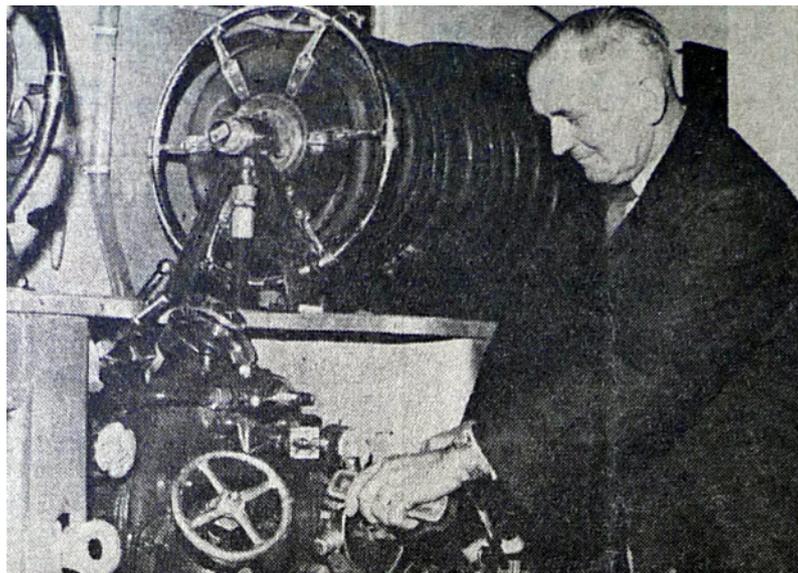


FOOTBALLING FIREMAN HAS LONG SERVICE RECORD

C.T. February 9, 1968



A MAN who can claim a record of long service retires on Monday from Christchurch fire station. He is Bob Ashby, who at the age of 55 is leaving the fire service after more than 28 years' continuous work in the borough.

Bob Ashby is a local man; he was born in Christchurch and he gave up the chance of promotion because he didn't want to leave. His interests are in town, chiefly the football club, of whose committee he is chairman. At one time a painter and decorator, he joined the Auxiliary Fire Service in October, 1938. The following year he became the second full-time fireman in the borough brigade, later to become part of the National Fire Service

and eventually a county council service.

During the Second World War he served with the Christchurch brigade in London, Bournemouth, Poole, Portsmouth and Southampton. He volunteered to join the overseas contingent and trained at Totton, but the Christchurch men never crossed the Channel. "They took tanks instead," said Mr. Ashby.

When the county council took over the fire service in 1948 he had the opportunity of promotion. He didn't take it. "I wanted to be a fireman in Christchurch. If I had been promoted I would have had to leave."

Last year the Christchurch firemen won three trophies in county competitions and four shields in district competitions. It was Mr. Ashby who was responsible for training them.

His interest in football began when he was at the Priory School. At the age of 15 he joined Christchurch Football Club, and played for the club for five seasons before joining the AFS — which meant he couldn't turn out regularly for the team.

SERVICE TEAMS

He played for the fire service division and area teams. After the war he played again for Christchurch FC whenever there was a place available in the team.

He has been a member of the club committee for 18 years and chairman for most of this time.

He has also played cricket for a number of local sides and was an active member of Christchurch Table Tennis Club. More recently he has taken an interest in fishing. Four years ago he joined Christchurch Fishing Club, and last year he helped to form a fishing club for New Forest firemen.

Christchurch firemen are to present him with a transistor clock at a social and dance at the British Legion Hall, Bargates, on March 2.

Mr. Ashby, who is married, lives at 58 Walcott Avenue.