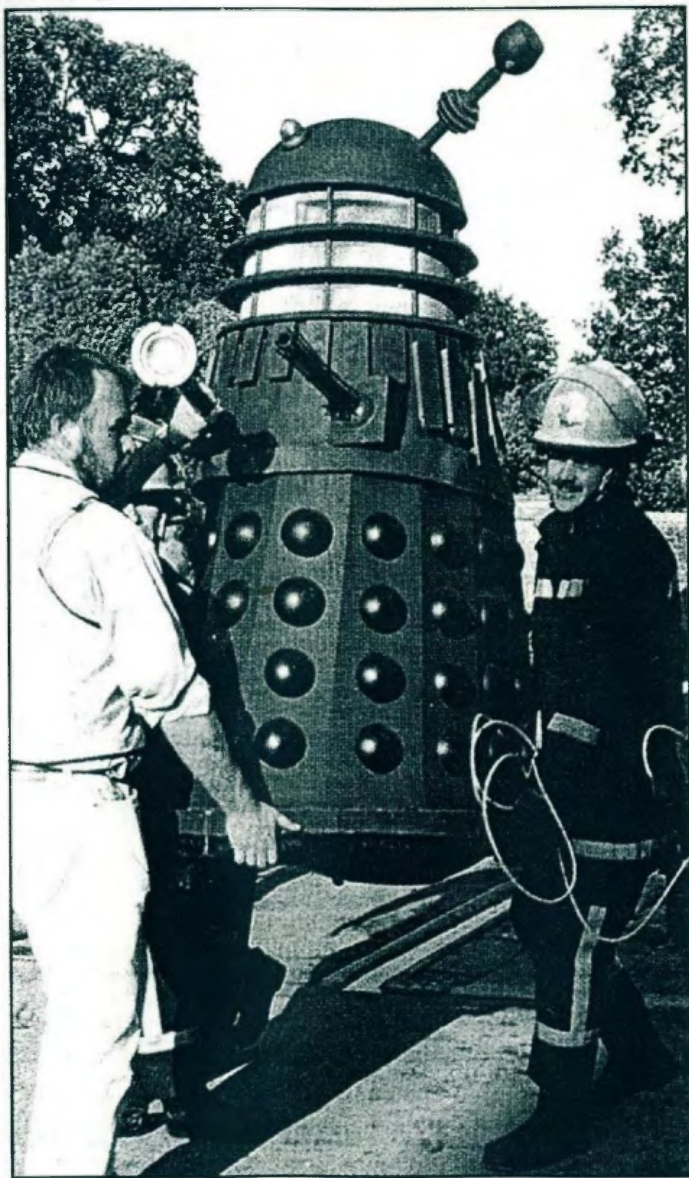


Blaze Daleks exterminated



A firefighter and a helper rescue one of the Daleks from annihilation

SCIENCE fiction fans were devastated last night after fire destroyed the world-famous Dr Who exhibition at Longleat House.

Hundreds of people were evacuated from the display area and the main Elizabethan building as nine fire crews from Wiltshire and Somerset tackled the blaze.

The exhibition was launched in a stable courtyard 23 years ago and had attracted tens of thousands of fans. The ten dis-

play items included some of the best-known creations from the show, including Daleks, K9 the robot dog and Cyberman.

It was the first permanent show of its kind devoted to Dr Who and was one of Longleat's most popular attractions with the 350,000 annual visitors.

The Marquis of Bath, who is in France, was informed of the fire, which broke out at 3 pm.

His father opened the exhibi-

Cont. on Page 2

Dr Who show hit by fire

From Page One

tion in 1973 at the height of the series' popularity.

Over the years it was visited by all the actors who played the title role and was the scene of numerous conventions.

Last year Cyberman's anniversary was celebrated and K9's 20th birthday was due to be marked next year.

The fire is believed to have been started by an electrical fault in K9.

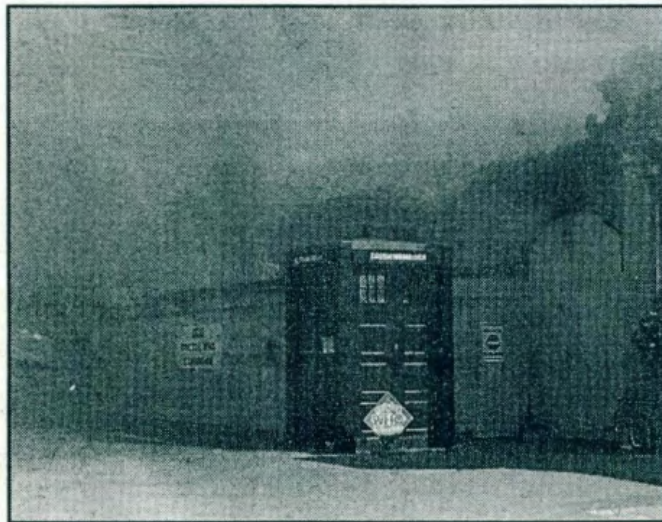
Smoke

A visitor reported the dog's buttons were overheating.

Smoke started pouring from the model and flames quickly followed.

Staff members Chrissie Buttery and Dallas Slade cleared all the visitors from the building when the alarm sounded.

Longleat spokeswoman Clare Keiner said: "It's very sad. It was



The Tardis is saved. Picture: Richard Cameron

a very dramatic scene. The flames were six feet high and there was a lot of smoke.

"We had a lot of visitors in, but we followed our safety proce-

dures and removed everyone from the building without any problems.

"It's too early to tell whether the exhibition can be reborn in

some way. We'll be meeting the BBC, who owned the exhibits, to discuss the situation. But it would be true to say these figures were irreplaceable."

Paramedics were called to the house but no-one needed treatment.

The stable complex housing the display was not badly damaged.

There was no damage to the 140-room stately home.

Fierce

Van driver Richard Cameron, from St George, Bristol, who was at Longleat with his son, Nicholas, and granddaughter, Shannon, said: "We saw smoke coming out of a heating duct.

"Very quickly the whole place was alight and by the time the fire brigade arrived it was very fierce."

A detailed investigation has been launched into the cause of the blaze.