

The end of an era?

Our Diamond Jubilee celebrations of 2005 are fast fading into the mists of time, and some months into a new year with a largely new team at the helm it is a case of back to normality for the Northern Association. Or almost.

Our new national code for the examination and testing of boilers is now in place and clubs are feeling their way around it. We are no nearer a code for the *design* of boilers, felt by many to be more needed than the new test code, welcome though a national standard is. The future of the British Model Engineering Liaison Group, responsible for drawing up and agreeing the code with the authorities, seems far from clear, although there are many issues still to resolve on the boiler test code, and no doubt more will arise on other topics. We continue to worry about fallout from the politically correct, risk averse and litigious society we live in. Model and experimental engineering started out a very long time ago as a fairly insular hobby, conducted mainly by well heeled gentry behind closed doors away from the public gaze. It would be a great pity if the 'blame culture' were to drive it back underground, not least for the loss of its considerable educational value. In many countries public running is already the exception rather than the rule. Let's hope it doesn't happen here.

For the last fourteen years, and for an earlier and shorter period, the Northern Association has published a printed newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter has been to keep club members informed as to what the Northern Association is doing for them, their club, and their hobby. At least two copies have been sent to each club secretary, more to the bigger clubs, and we put a note with every issue asking secretaries to put at least one of those where their members can see it. Despite this, anecdotal evidence suggests that many individual members do not see the newsletter, for reasons we do not entirely understand. We have decided therefore to move to a medium which is accessible to everyone who is willing to look: namely the internet. Our internet website was set up about a year ago using content largely from the newsletter. It contains pictures and descriptive matter from our events as well as information about the hobby and the Association, and links to other sites of interest. We have expanded the content to include the news, commentary and features currently appearing only in the newsletter, and we would hope to be able to keep the news more up-to-date than is possible with a twice-yearly publication. Eventually we would hope to set up a 'members only' area where minutes of meetings and other restricted information will be available. Best of all, access to the website and all that is on it is freely available to anyone who is willing to walk down to the public library and take five minutes instruction from the librarian on the use of the internet terminals which are available there free of charge. There will be absolutely no excuse for not knowing what is going on! The website is at www.normodeng.org.uk.

Happy surfing! *Alan P Bibby*, newsletter editor

'Promoting the King of Hobbies'