

New on the web

New this month on the website are reports on the AGM and delegate's meetings, an update on our loan-aided projects; and more on the Young Engineer of the Year award. As the year progresses we hope to add reports and picture galleries of our various planned events and functions. So, if you don't have the internet (and who could blame you!), then get yourself off to your local public library once in a while to see what's new on our website www.normodeng.org.uk using the free internet facilities there.

Annual General meeting

This was held as ever at Ockbrook near Derby, on the 19th April and was as well attended as usual. Honorary chairman Frank Cooper and hon secretary Alan Budd presented their respective reports on the Association's progress through the year past, including reviews of events held, exhibition attendances, use of loan facilities and the progress of club projects helped by the loans made, and changes of membership. One member, Hawarden Bridge, has sadly closed down, and four other societies have applied to join us. The chairman thanked the officers and all who had helped with the running of the Association in their various capacities.

Hon treasurer Maureen Stephen presented the financial report and accounts showing once again a useful surplus on the year and about half of our capital out in the field helping our member clubs to push forward their projects. All loans falling due for repayment in the period had been repaid, some before they were due. She welcomed applications for further loans, all on an interest free basis, to help other eligible club projects over that financial hurdle that so often rears up. Loans are normally repayable over a maximum period of five years.

Boiler registrar Alan Reid reported a grand total of 6064 boilers on record, an increase of around 1500 since he took on the job of boiler registrar some years ago. However only 1459 of these are currently certificated and the rest are presumably laid up or scrapped. Alan again appealed for more care in completing and returning the paperwork associated with boiler tests, acknowledging that the increased complexity engendered by last year's new code of practice had not helped matters.

Next on the agenda was the election of officers, all existing officer being returned unopposed, and the appointment of insurance broker, auditors, accountants, and boiler committee, again without change except for the resignation of Terry Vaughan from the boiler committee, accepted with regret. There were no nominations or volunteers to replace Terry so it was agreed that a suitable person would be co-opted at the earliest opportunity.

Last item on the agenda was the payment of Honoraria in recognition of work put in by the

officers, and it was agreed that these would continue to be paid at the same rates as last year.

Delegate's meeting

This immediately followed the AGM, and following the usual preamble revealed the following items of general interest.

Further to her report to the AGM, hon treasurer Maureen Stephen reported that loan applications had been received from Butterley Park, Burton on Trent, North Staffs, and Belfast and County Down Miniature Railway Society. Following discussion, all were approved.

Applications for membership of the Northern Association had been received from Duddon Model Engineering Club, Audley End MRS, Milton Keynes M.E. Society and Pimlico M.E. Society. All were duly proposed, seconded and accepted.

Insurance broker Tony Wood's report to the delegates is not normally reported here, at his own request. However it is worth mentioning, without any repercussions hopefully, that he reminded delegates that the insurance year for clubs does not have to start on April 1st, it can start on any date which is convenient to the club concerned, maybe to coincide with the club's own financial year.

The Narrow Gauge Efficiency competition will be held at Rochdale this year, over the weekend of 14-15th June, and Rochdale delegate FAJ Colin requested the loan of as many slate wagons as possible from the usual sources, or indeed any source. Further details and application forms may be found on the club's website at www.rsmee.com.

The Northern Association annual rally will be hosted by Bradford M.E. Society at their Northcliff Woods site on Saturday 28th June, forming part of their centenary celebrations extending over the whole weekend and beyond. Details may be found on their website at www.bradfordmes.co.uk, and we extend our hearty congratulations to the club on achieving a century of continuous service to the hobby: no mean achievement indeed!

Two applications were submitted for the Model Engineer of the Year award, from Ben Pavier and Peter Dean. Both were excellent submissions but the officers had judged Ben's the best and he will be duly presented with the award at a ceremony to be arranged at the National Railway Museum. The officers decided to make a runners-up award for this year only and this will be presented to Peter on the same occasion at the NRM. The NRM are now members of the Northern Association, and our new relationship shows every sign of being beneficial to both sides. The museum has a section of 7¼" gauge track which it is keen to develop and the Association has been invited to participate in this and to take over the operation

of the track on a number of occasions per year. They are planning an event to be held in the summer to commemorate the end of steam operation on the main UK network.

Our new British Model Engineering Liaison Group representative Frank Stephen reported on a meeting in March with the insurers, Royal and Sun Alliance, on the subject of proposed changes to the new boiler code. He said there had been very little input from Northern Association clubs, from which he inferred that they all must be happy! The changes proposed by clubs had been largely accepted by RSA and would be incorporated in a supplement to the 'red book' until such time as a reprint became necessary when they would be incorporated into text. Specific issues mentioned included arrangements for inspecting traction engine boilers without removing the hornplates, for people joining a club with a boiler already built and looking for certification, for steam tests carried out at a different club to the hydraulic test, and for documentation. There was a growing recognition that the blue card served no useful purpose other than as a record of the boiler's history, and was not acceptable as a proof of certification. It seemed to be suggested that the issue of a blue card was therefore optional. Frank said there appeared to be a hardening of attitude on the part of the insurers to boilers and boiler inspectors, likely to lead to tighter regulation.

Boiler committee secretary Nigel Thompson reported on progress with the planning of seminars for boiler inspectors, and reminded delegates to ask their club inspectors to send in expressions of interest so that suitable venues could be arranged to avoid excessive travelling by attendees.

The Association will be represented at the model engineering exhibitions to be held at Harrogate, Leamington Spa, Alexandra Palace, Shepton Mallet, and, if personnel can be found, at Ascot, over the coming season.

On the legislation front, the chairman reported that some clubs seemed to be confused still over the applicability of the new legislation on smoking in public buildings, which he stressed do apply in ALL club premises, and on the need for fire risk assessments, which must be done as part of the overall risk assessment policy. He noted that the Protection of Vulnerable groups Act comes into force in October, with much the same effect as the Protection of Children Act but having a much broader remit.

Under 'Any other business,' the South Cheshire club offered moulds for casting supports for elevated track to any club able to make use of them, contact details on their website, and it was noted that HSG216, the guidance on miniature railway construction and operation, was now out of print and while there are no immediate plans for a reprint, photocopies may be obtained from the publishers.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm.