



THE INSTITUTION OF FIRE ENGINEERS

FOUNDED 1918 INCORPORATED 1924

Norfolk and Suffolk (No.5) Branch

3. President's report

During my last year as President of the Norfolk and Suffolk branch of the IFE we have seen another huge move forward in the modernisation agenda for the Fire and Rescue Service.

When I joined the Fire Service in the late 70s the route through to promotion was a tried and tested well trodden path.

Statutory examinations took me from Firefighter to Leading Firefighter to Sub Officer and on to Station Officer. It was then at this stage I discovered the IFE and took the opportunity to develop through the Member examination. Today the same travel involves passing a Supervisory Management Assessment Development Centre and a job related interview to become a Crew Manager. A further Personal Qualities and Attributes interview will move you forward to Watch Manager A and a further job related interview to move to Watch Manager B. In addition you need to demonstrate competence at all levels before you progress.

Is any part of this process still the same? Yes, there is still the IFE examination process. These examinations will not give you a route through the promotion system, but they will give you knowledge of Fire and Rescue Service related information that will not be provided through the new promotional system. This underpinning knowledge is essential to build a solid foundation for the future.

I don't believe that old is always best, but I do believe that the knowledge gained from taking the Preliminary, Intermediate, Graduate and Member examinations will provide you with a qualification base to help you through your career that you cannot gain anywhere else.

So has much else changed during my career – surprisingly it hasn't actually changed that much!

I went to fires and Road Traffic Accidents, now collisions, and a whole host of other incidents. These are now our **Response** rather than a good working job – this must be a better description.

I carried out fire safety inspections and gave advice to members of the public – today that would be **Prevention** and **Protection**.

So have things changed for the better? Firefighter safety is now a higher priority than it has ever been. I remember when breathing apparatus would not have been considered for a car fire and the Health and Safety Executive had no interest in the Fire Service. Today you would not consider tackling a car fire without breathing apparatus and although I wouldn't always say it out loud – the Health and Safety Executive monitoring our activity ensures that we operate a safe system for all our personnel.

Incident Command System has formalised and improved on the system of “you look after the back and I'll look after the front” at fires.

The IFE examinations, events and CPD will ensure that firefighter safety is supported by providing a solid knowledge base.

In closing I would encourage you to share your experiences of the IFE system to those you work with and if you haven't considered taking the examinations – have a look at what is involved and you might just be surprised how much they will support you now and during your future with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Questions in the 2006 Members examination covered carrying out fire risk assessments, preparing a contingency/recovery plan to minimize the effects of a major fire, information sharing within organisations, change management, development of effective teams, fighting fires in ships and high rise buildings and the motive for arson. This is only the tip of the iceberg and gives a taste of the areas covered in the syllabus you will study and the knowledge that you will need to gain to pass the examinations. This will help you to be a more effective leader and safer on the incident ground.

So why not join the IFE? Everyone is welcome and further details about our membership and subscription costs can be found through the website.

Eddie Meelan, MIFireE