This article appeared in the May 2019 edition of Materials World

IOM3 Trustee Gavin Bowyer recounts the founding of the Member’s Benevolent Trust, which supports members and their families in times of need.

Body

Recent research into the founding of the Benevolent Fund of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy (IMM) in the mid-1920s has revealed the role of IMM members who also belonged to The Iron and Steel Institute.

We have recently been remembering those who lost their lives in World War I (WWI). Indeed, the Institute headquarters at Euston Road houses war memorials of the IMM, and of the Institute of Mining Engineers (IMinE), both being predecessor bodies to IOM3. These memorials were originally dedicated in a ceremony on 24 November 1921. WWI resulted in many physically and mentally injured members, which left many individuals and their families without a breadwinner and it was felt that a form of support was necessary.

Sum total

In his IMM Presidential speech, Mr Savannah Johnson Speak (1922-1923) pointed out that a benevolent fund would be of inestimable value. The council of that year agreed that the balance of the IMM War Memorial Fund (being £534 8s 1d, in pre-decimalisation pounds, shillings and pence) was to be vested in trustees, to be appointed by the council. To this sum would be added the legacy of £2,000, bequeathed unconditionally to the Institution by the widow of the late Edward Riley, a prominent IMM member, who had died at the age of 83 years in 1914.

The draft constitution and rules for the IMM Benevolent Fund were approved by the council in 1924, and in 1925 the first committee was appointed, when it was noted that the Benevolent Fund would be entirely separate from the Institution. The first Annual General Meeting of subscribers was held on Wednesday 28 April 1926. In addition to the sums above, £354 had already been subscribed by 25 members, £391 0s 1d from the unexpended balance held by the IMM from the publication of Taxation on the Mining Industry, and £291 9s 5d was the accrued interest. This gave a total startup fund of £3,122 9s 6d, which would equate to £165,000 today.

The first chairman of the Fund was E T McCarthy and the first honorary secretary, H L Sergeant. The other initial trustees were G W Gray, F W Harbord, F Merricks, H K Picard and H C Woolmer.
Who was Edward Riley?

Edward Riley (1831-1914) was a metallurgical chemist. In 1853, he was appointed Chemist at Dowlais Ironworks, South Wales, where he carried out the first experiments on the Bessemer process. Three years later he started a private practice as an analytical and consulting chemist based in Kensington, London, and in 1869, he moved his laboratory to Finsbury Square and became an early member of The Iron and Steel Institute in 1873.

He devised many methods for the estimation of the constituents of iron, steel and slags, and was involved in the development of the basic or Thomas Gilchrist process. In 1904, Mr F W Harbord joined him as a partner in his firm, which became known as Riley and Harbord. Harbord went on to become one of the first trustees of the IMM Benevolent Fund (IMMBF) in 1926.

Over the following years, individual bodies established equivalent funds and a series of mergers combined many of these. As such, the Institute of Metals Benevolent Association was established in 1957, to support the Institution of Metallurgists, the Institute of Metallurgical Technicians and the Institute of Metals.

The IMMBF later merged with the fund of the IMinE and the Member's Trust of the Institute of Materials (IOMMBT), which contained, among other benevolent funds, that of the Iron and Steel Institute. Rolling forward to 2003, the IMMBF merged with the IOMMBT to form the IOM3 Member's Benevolent Trust.

Now, professionals in the materials, mining and minerals industries need only belong to one body, IOM3, to benefit from, contribute to, or assist the IOM3 Member's Benevolent Trust.

MBT remains an independent registered charity, run by volunteers to help past members and employees of IOM3 and all its predecessor bodies. If you are aware of any person who might benefit from help from the MBT or you would like to get involved in the group’s work, please visit the website at www.iom3.org/mbt or contact Honorary Secretary Peter Waugh at mbt@iom3.org.