I introduce this report as Chairman of the newly created Member’s Benevolent Trust (MBT) formed during June 2003 from the merger of The Member’s Trust of the former IoM and the former IMM Benevolent Fund (IMMBF). This merger to our planned schedule is a major achievement and now enables us to serve all past and present members of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining and their dependents in a consistent and effective manner.

The important aspects of this merger involved the following milestones:
• adoption of the new Trust Deed, and Rules and Regulations at the AGM of The Member’s Trust in June, as agreed by the two constituent benevolent charities. This involved the name change to the Member’s Benevolent Trust
• agreement at the EGM of the IMMBF in June to merge. These two events paved the way for the merger to proceed
• the Charity Commission Order for the merged Trust received in August

There has been a lot of very hard work by our secretary and the Board members of both constituent Trusts, many of whom now serve on the current MBT Board, to achieve the merger, its systems and finances. Getting all existing cases and all the bank accounts and investments into one integrated system has been a major task and I am pleased to report that it has been successfully accomplished. Without mentioning names, I thank everyone concerned for their magnificent efforts.

**Work of the Trust**
I am also pleased to report that the new Board, elected last June and comprising representatives from all component pre-merger benevolent charities of the Institute, is working well. We have their combined experience to make a stronger benevolent charity. I am very fortunate to have such support. They have, I can report, been most successful in providing help to many people. In this context, I must highlight the panel of visitors who are on the front line of our help and counsel and assess needs on our behalf. My sincere thanks to them too.

The objective of the MBT is to provide support to those members and their dependants in need. Our stated policy at the merger was that we would maintain the level of support to existing cases; no one would be worse off as a result of the merger. This we have endeavoured to do during the period following the merger. However, we shall be reviewing all cases during 2004 to ensure that we are consistent in both our approach and procedures across the spectrum.

We provide support and advice as well as financial assistance. The almoner role is equally important. It is difficult for me to give you complete statistics of our support in 2003 as this bridges the constituent Trusts before merger and the post-merger MBT. However, I can tell you that we have continued to attract new cases and have dealt with them promptly, courteously and effectively. Some statistics – we have given help in various ways to well over 100 people during the year; we gave grants to 63 people, helped 27 unemployed people with their Institute subscriptions, gave travel grants to three unemployed members, each of whom
was successful in finding employment, and gave 16 Christmas hampers to people and families we are helping on a regular basis.

It is perhaps worthwhile to illustrate this assistance with one or two cases. This year we have had requests for assistance with wheelchairs and stair lifts for members and dependants incapacitated through injury and illness such as MS. In Africa, we have set up a trust fund for an overseas member’s wife and her children to provide support in very difficult and sad circumstances. Last year we provided her with a wheelchair. We also make regular payments to several members and their widows who do not benefit from state pensions. They are dependant on the support we can provide.

At the time of the merger, we elected a new Honorary Secretary, Alan Baxter, who had not previously served on the constituent charities. He immediately took on the case load and new applications for help, whilst our secretary, Maureen Johnston looked after the administrative aspects of the merger. Both have worked well together to ensure a smooth running of the MBT. I must also highlight the contributions of our treasurer, David Oxley and former IMMBF treasurer, Norman Riley in sorting out the complex financial aspects and that of the outgoing secretary of the IMMBF, Bill Yuill. I thank them all.

Looking to the future
As our Treasurer will report, our current expenditure exceeds our income by a significant amount. This situation cannot be sustained long-term, particularly as we can anticipate larger numbers of calls for assistance in the future, as current Institute members retire in increasing numbers. We are working to remedy this imbalance. One route is through increased voluntary donations from current Institute members and we are working with the Institute to see how we can best accomplish this as part of the subscription renewal system.

I do use this opportunity to urge members to be generous and make a donation when renewing subscriptions. If everyone made an annual donation of £5, much of our problem would be resolved! Remember, a £10 donation, if coupled with Gift Aid, is worth £13 to the MBT. Additionally, we also need to improve our capital reserves to ensure we can meet our ongoing commitments and I do encourage and urge Institute members to include a small legacy to the MBT in their wills.

Finally, I will conclude with especial thanks to Maureen Johnston who has worked tirelessly to help achieve the merger. She acts as secretary and is stepping down from that role in 2004. On behalf of the Trustees, I thank her most sincerely for her major contribution over many years. I also acknowledge the support of the Council and staff of the Institute, whose members we serve. We have a good, developing relationship, which is important to our effectiveness.

Dr C W Corti CEng FIMMM
Chairman, Member’s Benevolent Trust