

Vic Wall

Victor John Wall was born in Sydney. Vic did his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Sydney where he met his wife Pat, prior to moving to Pennsylvania State University in 1969 for a research fellowship with Wayne Burnham, running experiments on CO₂ leading to the first PVT-data available for conditions of granite magmatism. He returned to Australia to take up a position in Bruce Hobbs' Earth Sciences department at Monash University in Melbourne, where he taught metamorphic petrology and supervised graduate students in topics ranging from diagenesis in petroleum basins, through thermodynamics, metamorphic geology and geochemistry, granite genesis and mineralization. He left Monash and the academic sector behind in 1990 and shifted to Brisbane, to take up a position as Chief Geologist for Mount Isa Mines Exploration, where he was instrumental in MIM's transformative acquisition of the Bajo de la Alumbrera Porphyry Copper deposit in Argentina. He then set up a consulting business with ex-MIM staffer Stewart Taylor as Taylor Wall and Associates. In the last 8 years he took a more entrepreneurial role in project development, as technical advisor and strategist for several companies. Most recently this included technical leadership for Colossus Resources, which included pioneering negotiations with small-scale miners over a new underground development of the infamous Serra Pelada Pd-Pt-Au deposit, site of the last Brazilian gold rush that left behind a hand-dug but now flooded open pit. More successfully in a commercial sense was his initiative with Continental Gold, who are on the verge of getting the Buritica carbonate-base-metal polymetallic-gold epithermal system into full production, which will make it Colombia's largest metalliferous mining operation. He was in Colombia with the Continental Gold team a little over a month before he died, a testimony to how well he fought with his health.



Vic had a somewhat confronting approach to discussing geoscience topics, which not everyone appreciated or understood. His deep knowledge of petrology and geochemistry commonly fuelled combative conversations or even fierce arguments over fundamental science and its geological implications (a fighting spirit possibly generated from growing up with 6 siblings). Vic would challenge you to bring out exact arguments, to think through what you were thinking, before claiming a conclusion. Once past this outer shell, or 'over the Wall', the inner Vic was an inspiring font of excellent scientific thinking applied to petrology, geochemistry and mineral systems. He was prepared to discuss ideas at great length, of particular benefit both to colleagues in the minerals sector and research institutions, and also to a legion of postgraduate students when he was an academic. In the field of exploration and development, he was able to combine a deep understanding of ore deposit models with an appreciation of the factors that lead to the highest value deposits, which explained the high degree of respect he commanded and the high demand for his services. His capacity to share and stimulate ideas at a very high level is reflected in a most extraordinary and unusual publication track record: 150+ official papers published in top level journals, where commonly Vic provided the initiative and the original ideas stimulating research that is now widely cited: the thermodynamics of CO₂ fluids, fluids in metamorphism and deformation, the fundamentals of granite emplacement, the origin of unconformity-related uranium deposits, to name a few. However, he rarely had the patience to write up his ideas in first-authored publications. In his last months he was trying to finish a paper on Thermal Aureole Gold Deposits, a deposit class linking orogenic, intrusion-related and deep porphyry deposits to common processes of granite petrogenesis, magmatic and metamorphic fluid evolution.

Several of his graduate students and young colleagues ended up as professors, many took on major roles in industry positions, and others entered government research sectors. Many of these colleagues regard their time with Vic as instrumental to their subsequent successes.



“Fluids in Metamorphism” meeting, Glasgow, 1982. Back row: Ken Greig, Colin Graham, Doug Rumble, Mike Brown, Jacques Touret, Bernard Leake; Front row: John Ferry, Bruce Yardley, Arny Sveinbjornsdottir, Roger Powell, Vic Wall, Alan Thomson.

Vic worked in almost every corner of the world, from which many people have sent condolences to his wife Pat and their extended family. Several South American geologists reflected on his strong and commonly fatherly mentoring role in their professional lives, expats in the Sudan saw Vic and Pat as parenting role models. His closest colleagues have been in frequent contact, and as he was fighting with his health, doing what Vic liked to do best – argue science. In Chris Heinrich’s words in a message to Vic not long before his death, “Vic you are the sharpest-thinking geologist and geochemist working in mineral exploration today – and I am not the only one to say this. TAG is alive and well (Thermal Aureole Gold AND The Australian Geologist). You really made science work for economic geology, because you understood (and more importantly *believed* in) basic chemistry and physics.”

A visit to Vic in his family environment was always a special treat, oozing hospitality, friendship, laughter and genuine affection. Vic is survived by his loving wife Patricia (married for 50-odd years), his 5 successful children, and an increasing bevy of grandchildren.

Vic Wall passed away on September 26 2017 after 18 months spent battling cancer

