



Inspired by Lindsay Gilligan

THE REMINISCENCES OF



PREVIOUS SMEDG COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Neil Hillhouse, Alan Blatchford, Roy Cox, C. Kelly O'Connor, John I. Sharpe, Michael Sharwood, Lindsay T MacAlister, John Best, Tony Hall, Dave Kennedy, Garry Lowder, Tony Robinson, Ian Ross, Alex Somm, Mike Turbott, John A. S. Dow, Jock Gilfillan, Neville Markham, Dave Clappison, Garth Wilson, Graham Willett, Denis Clarke, Sandy Moyle, Peter Goldner, Robyn Hee, Russell Meares, Greg Corbett, Bob Handfield, John Cramsie, Bruce Hooper, Bernard Rowe, Vicki Diemar, Cay Mims, Kim Stanton-Cook, Chris Torrey, Phil Hellman, Steve Collins, Katherine Courtney, Verity Borthwick, Roger Smyth-King, Brigitte Lovett, Rupert Osborne.

Memories from some of them begin here...

FROM ROY COX

Many thanks for your recent email regarding the upcoming 50th Anniversary of SMEDG. Re-reading the articles you sent me brought back many happy memories of my early involvement in forming SMEDG.

One serious omission from my previous articles was that the idea of forming SMEDG was that of Dr. Neil Hillhouse, Exploration Manager of Placer Exploration Ltd.

On my return to Australia in 1972, from a one year assignment at the Granduc mine in British Columbia, Neil offered me a senior geologist position in Sydney and told me how much he missed the informal meetings of the Discussion Groups in Toronto and Vancouver. He asked me if I would form a similar group in Sydney, together with Alan Blatchford and several of our colleagues from other mining companies. This we did!

Regrettably, in my earlier articles that you sent me, I did not mention that the formation of SMEDG was Neil Hillhouse's idea. This was a serious omission that I very much regret. Please make sure Neil's role is fully acknowledged at the 50th Anniversary.

Sadly, Neil died in the past 12 months.

Roy's earlier reminiscence:

I very much appreciate the honour of being awarded the [SMEDG Life Membership Medal](#) and wish to express my sincere gratitude to each member of the current SMEDG Organising Committee for honouring me thus, and also for inviting my wife Pauline to join me at this Awards Dinner.

SMEDG was the idea of Dr Neil Hillhouse, Exploration Manager of Placer Exploration Limited. When he took up his post here in Sydney he missed the regular meetings of similar groups in Toronto and Vancouver. *The Vancouver Mining Exploration Group was formed in 1957.* Neil asked Alan Blatchford and me to form a similar group in Sydney. We contacted colleagues John Dow, Jock Gilfillan, Garry Lowder, Lindsay MacAlister, Kelly O'Connor, John Sharpe and Mike Sharwood. I do hope I haven't forgotten anyone. We all discussed how

best to go about it, and I sent out a circular to ascertain the degree of interest within the exploration, mining & academic communities.

The response was encouraging and we organised our first meeting on 9th November 1972, at which Peter Solomon addressed us on “Geochemical Aspects of Exploration for Massive Sulphide Deposits in the Lachlan Fold Belt”. It was a great start and, 50 years later, the rest is history. SMEDG is still going strong!

From conception, SMEDG has always provided a friendly atmosphere for informal, illustrated presentations and discussions on topics of interest covering mineral exploration, evaluation and the geology of mineral deposits & mines. Many of us have had the opportunity to publish papers on our work and read papers published by our colleagues, but the real advantage of a Discussion Group is that the participants can ask the speaker questions, receive answers and have meaningful discussion. This is the main reason for its success, together with social contact.

The number of mineral deposits and mines covered by presentations over the past 50 years has been truly amazing. Many presenters have been too busy at their work to have had the opportunity to publish their work in AusIMM, Economic Geology, etc. SMEDG has filled a vital gap in disseminating important technical knowledge.

SMEDG continues to provide us with a unique opportunity to freely share our practical knowledge and experience with fellow members of our industry. Thus we have all become wiser, and at the same time, formed long-lasting friendships.

As the founders get older it is up to the younger members here present to continue this wonderful tradition, for everyone’s benefit. Long live SMEDG! Thank you.

JOHN DOW – One of the ORIGINALS

Thanks for your invitation to reminisce!

I was involved with SMEDG briefly in the mid-1970s while working for Kennecott Exploration and commuting to Indonesia. The meetings were useful opportunities to connect with others in the exploration sciences in Sydney both professionally and socially. I was also a member of AusIMM but found the regular SMEDG meetings catered much better to the market for these kinds of talks.

Later I was involved with the Denver Discussion Group for about five years and today, in retirement in New Zealand, I am the Co-Convenor of the Nelson Discussion Group which has monthly meetings and operates under the AusIMM (NZ Branch) umbrella.

From my experiences in all of these groups there is a clear need for regular technical meetings to share professional experiences and to provide opportunities for continuing professional development.

I have found in my current role there is also significant community interest in the earth and geotechnical sciences as our meetings attract attendees from local Councils and from the general public.

JOCK GILFILLAN thinks back

My notes say that I was involved in the organising committee from 1974 to 1989. I am trying to recall how it started and I may have this all wrong. There was an attempt, I think stimulated by a group of Canadian geologists including Neil Hillhouse of Placer, to start a Mining Club along the lines of the Toronto Mining Club. It had a tie and a lapel badge – both of which I still have! The club merged or shared rooms with another club (Accountants?) on the top floor of a building in Hunter Street. This proved unviable. How it morphed into SMEDG I don't remember, but I think all the names you have on the first line below would have been geologist members involved of that original club. Mike Sharwood might remember if he's still around.

Jock then added the following...

I've cobbled together a few notes that may be of interest. Hope it adds something.

1. Modus Operandi in the early days (1970's).

SMEDG had an ad hoc committee of pretty much self-appointed senior exploration geologists based in Sydney. Although committee meetings were held from time to time, the general rule was that if you knew of an interesting speaker, you collared him/her, then organised and ran the meeting, subject to a rough schedule. The idea was that if "you" thought a topic was of interest, other people would too. Consequently meetings varied greatly in general appeal from the ever popular case histories (at home or overseas) to serious technical topics that might attract less than 10 members. Usually the meeting attracted 30 – 50 people, depending on who was in town. Most of the committee had ties with overseas companies that had left Australia, or were leaving because of government policy and consequently when someone who had been working on a new discovery or new technical development overseas was coming to Australia (usually from Canada or USA), we would know about it and collar them for a talk.

Meetings were very informal usually in a Club with bar facilities. The Rugby Club near Circular Quay was a popular venue for many years.

2. SMEDG Symposia.

An annual one day ["SMEDG Symposium"](#) became a feature. Run on a shoestring at a local motel in the North Sydney area at a cost of about \$100, with morning and afternoon teas and sandwich lunch, it was designed to provide a technical forum for more junior members of the exploration community but often attracted senior staff from exploration sites all over Australia. Usually there would be 100+ attendees. Although by no means alone, CRAE was a consistent supporter. The cost was supported by contractors and consultants who paid a small fee to insert a flyer in a handout that every registrant received. The programme was very topical and relevant to the local exploration scene. The handout included a booklet of abstracts. Sometimes there would be a keynote speaker or specially invited address for the lunch break.

3. Foots Inquiry.

The AusIMM and SMEDG addressed a different market – the former being more interested in the engineering side of mining operations while the latter was very much geoscience oriented. The AusIMM had an internal inquiry run by “Jimmy” Foots, retired Chairman of MIM, and I was asked to meet him to explain why I thought SMEDG was so successful. I don't recall the details but basically I think it was the informality and the attraction of having speakers who were actually doing the work (Not “Captains of Industry”).

MIKE TURBOTT – another one of The Originals

Thanks for the opportunity to add a few observations about the early days of SMEDG.

I became involved in SMEDG shortly after moving to Sydney from the Philippines in 1976, when the Organising Committee comprised Roy Cox, Jock Gilfillan, Gary Lowder, John Dow and Dave Clappison. SMEDG meetings gave me as a newcomer the opportunity to meet the geological exploration community in an informal way.

I was invited to join the Committee in 1978, which then comprised Roy Cox, Jock Gilfillan, Gary Lowder and myself. The beauty of SMEDG's operation was always the ability to call meetings at very short notice. Whenever we heard that a notable geoscientist/potential speaker would be in Sydney, we would alert the “mailing list” via phone or fax (no emails in those days!). Between 1978 and 1982, over 50 SMEDG meetings were held on a wide variety of subjects and deposit types. The ability to informally meet the geoscientific community over drinks, listen to a talk and discuss mineral exploration and interact with other geos. was a big attraction, and the talks were well-attended.

Possibly the best example arising from positive interaction at SMEDG, was at a meeting in 1981. At the time I was the V.P. Exploration, Gavin Thomas was the Exploration Manager for Kennecott Explorations (Australia), and Geoff Loudon was in the process of forming Niugini Mining to explore in PNG. We explained to Geoff over a beer that after losing OK Tedi, and despite the country's prospectivity, our masters were not keen on going back to PNG. Geoff suggested that we form a joint venture, whereby Kennecott would fund Niugini Mining to undertake agreed exploration programs, using Peter Macnab and Ken Rehder, both experienced PNG geologists. This led to the formation of the Kennecott-Niugini Mining Joint Venture, which directed by Gavin, Geoff and myself, resulted in the discovery in 1982 of Lihir, the 60+ million ounce gold deposit.

GREG CORBETT COMMENTS

From when I moved back to Sydney in 1980 I enjoyed SMEDG for the technical nature of talks and the opportunity to meet people in this industry. In 1986 when I was working for Mike Turbott he did a shuffle and I ended up with his position on the SMEDG committee, which by the early 1992's was run out of my office. In those days I could get a snail mail notice of meeting out in a couple of days. Denise and I would knock up the art work and copy the notices which Dave Clappison would send out on the same day. I spent at least 10 years as chair of the SMEDG committee, in the days when it had a Chair, evicting the odd non-performer. I got dragged onto the AIG Board to provide a link between the two organisations, although I initially resisted the attempt by the AIG to take over

SMEDG, that had to happen. Eventually, at a SMEDG meeting Steve Collins said he'd like to help with SMEDG and I had the box of SMEDG stuff at his doorstep the next morning.

I'm proud of a few things SMEDG achieved:

- The original flexibility SMEDG enjoyed allowed it to play an important role with the AIG, when we had to use the legal system to pressure Jim Allen's insurer to eventually pay his compo, after Jim had been injured in a plane accident in PNG.
- I saw new entrants to this industry begin successful careers organised thru SMEDG.
- SMEDG ran a number of important conferences – The best was clearly the [Terry Leach Symposium](#) for which we had speakers come from all over the world. Terry did such great innovative science and that's what SMEDG should be about.

Herewith a contribution - JOHN CRAMSIE

SMEDG and the Geological Survey of NSW have had a very positive, fruitful, and cooperative relationship for many years. Several of GSNSW's managers served on the SMEDG committee, including Garry Lowder, Neville Markham, Dave Probert, Lindsay Gilligan, and Peter Lewis. I was Treasurer for a decade or so. In recent years Lindsay has made an impressive contribution to the very successful "Mines and Wines" conferences.

Herewith a contribution to my role in SMEDG and my role in minerals exploration and development in NSW and Victoria.

I contributed for more than four decades to state-wide mineral and energy resource mapping programs and government exploration initiatives in South Australia, Victoria and NSW. I planned and managed programs and exploration initiatives in my roles as Director of the Geological Survey of Victoria from 1983 to 1986 and Director of the Geological Survey of NSW from 1990 to 2001. Over this period I also served as Executive Director, Coal Development, and an Executive Director in other roles in the NSW Department of Mineral Resources.

I was appointed Director of the GSNSW in 1990 at a challenging time of widespread downsizing of geological surveys across Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. This resulted from budget pressures and the completion of the state's older programs of 1:250 000 geological mapping. The quality of much of this mapping was not of a standard to provide a good framework for modern mineral exploration. There was growing concern from the industry that governments were not providing adequate geoscience support for company exploration efforts. Recognising the changing priorities of industry and expectations of government, I was requested to carry out a comprehensive organisation review of the Geological Survey. The review involved broad industry, client, and staff consultation leading to government support for a substantial increase to the resources allocated to regional geological and geophysical mapping, a greater focus on delivery of publications, reports, new maps and data and greater promotion of the State's mineral, coal, and petroleum opportunities.

With the approval of the Minerals Industry Ministerial Council, the National Geoscience Mapping Accord Program was introduced to accelerate and coordinate Commonwealth and State geoscience mapping projects and proved to be very successful.

The appointment of Dr Garry Lowder in 1993 as the Department's Director General marked a critical point in the GSNSW's fortunes. He led preparation of a proposal that convinced the NSW Government to provide a government budget enhancement of \$40 million over 6 years to accelerate generation and promotion of new, high quality geological and geophysical information and an

improved framework for regional mapping and minerals exploration. This program was named Discovery 2000. High resolution airborne magnetic and radiometric surveys made a very important contribution to the program. Another element of Discovery 2000 was the development of a broad range of digital information systems and data bases, most notably "[DIGS](#)", providing online access to the vast knowledge contained in open-file company reports. Discovery 2000 was hailed by industry as a success and recognised as a model for governments to encourage an increase in the quality and quantity of mineral exploration.

Following the successful completion of the Discovery 2000 programs, the GSNSW, with strong support from industry, presented a compelling proposal which delivered the Government's new exploration initiative "[Exploration NSW- Mining Beyond 2000](#)", funded to \$30 million over 7 years.

Following my retirement from the NSW government in 2001, and from consulting in 2008, I have continued to be a strong advocate for the resources industry. I remain a Fellow of the AusIMM and of the AIG and was awarded the [SMEDG Life Member Medal](#) in 2018.

SMEDG – REMINISCENCES by GARRY LOWDER

In 1973 I was working as a petrologist at Amdel in Adelaide when I successfully applied for a position as "Research Geologist" with the Geologic Research Division (GRD) of Kennecott Copper Corporation. The new job was based in Sydney, which represented a homecoming for my wife and me, both Sydney-born and educated at Sydney University. The GRD personnel worked alongside their exploration colleagues and were headquartered in Salt Lake City. In Sydney we were there to support our exploration colleagues in the Australian arm of the company, known as Kennecott Explorations (Aust.) Ltd, led by Lindsay McAllister. My new boss at Kennecott was the late Dr Richard (Dick) Nielsen, an American geologist, widely recognised for his expertise in porphyry copper deposit geology and exploration. Dick became my mentor, role model and long term friend.

One of the first things Dick asked me to do soon after joining him in July 1973 was to join the committee of a new industry body recently formed in Sydney, known as the Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group. The name was a bit of a mouthful (the more esculent acronym – SMEDG – was not yet in regular use) but it was important because the formation of SMEDG was the result of a perceived need for exploration geologists to hear about, and discuss, what mattered most to them – ore bodies, their geology and the exploration techniques that lead to their discovery. There were other forums for earth scientists, principally the AusIMM and the Geological Society of Australia, but in 1973 neither of those organisations seemed to have sufficient focus on the sharp end of our business, the discovery of new ore deposits. SMEDG had been formed specifically to fill that need.

The other rationale for creating SMEDG was to meet regularly but have the meetings focus only what was of fundamental interest to the participants. That meant minimal meeting time was spent on procedural matters, including approving minutes of the last meeting, electing office bearers, AGMs and the like. SMEDG was run solely by unelected volunteers and operated as an *ad hoc* organisation, without a constitution. The lack of a constitution meant that SMEDG was not strictly eligible to open a bank account, although a way was found around that obstacle, thanks to Michael Sharwood. No one seemed to mind the informality and *ad hoc* nature of SMEDG and the popularity and high attendance at meetings gave strong endorsement to the concept. Of course, the fact that meetings were always held at a venue offering a well-stocked bar might also have something to do with the early, and continuing, success of the organisation.

Right from the start, as throughout most of its existence, case histories were the crux of SMEDG meetings. In the 1970s mineral exploration in Australia was driven in large measure by the great North American mining and oil companies, like Kennecott but including Anaconda, Inco, Phelps Dodge, Getty, Pennzoil, Amoco, Falconbridge and McIntyre, plus a handful of the larger Australian competitors such as Western Mining, MIM, CRA and EZ. Most of these companies were scouring eastern Australia and the Southwest Pacific looking for Antipodean examples of the giant porphyry copper deposits of North and South America, or repetitions of Mt Isa and Broken Hill. With that level of industry activity, there never seemed to be much difficulty in finding someone to present a story, commonly a case history of discovery, that was of keen interest to Sydney-based exploration geologists, of whom there were many in those days.

My time on the SMEDG committee was most rewarding and I enjoyed getting to know and working with colleagues such as Michael Sharwood, Dave Kennedy, Jock Gilfillan and Roy Cox. I remained on the SMEDG committee for the next eleven years and was delighted when my colleague, Russell Meares, so ably took up the cudgel after I stepped down.

RUSSELL MEARES - SMEDG Committee Reminiscences

SMEDG has been a cornerstone of my life and my career since the mid-1980's - almost 40 years! My first SMEDG meeting was when we were still living in PNG and I was invited to present a talk on RGC's Wau gold project in probably 1984 or 1985 – the talk is not currently listed on the SMEDG website and so the actual date remains a mystery. Following a site visit, Dick Sillitoe had just interpreted the Wau deposits as part of a maar-diatreme complex, and so it was an honour for me to present that story to SMEDG. When I was recruited to join the Pancontinental Mining exploration team in Sydney in 1986, Garry Lowder (who was responsible for a number of Pancontinental's activities including exploration) asked me to take his place on the SMEDG Committee after his many years of service. It is a tradition that you can only step down from the SMEDG Committee if you have a replacement who is approved by the other committee members. So I joined the SMEDG Committee in 1986 and had 13 happy and rewarding years on the committee until I stepped down in 1999.

To me it has always been a 'miraculous mystery' as to how an organisation consisting of over 100 members can operate so successfully, in spite of having no elections to the committee, no constitution, and no formal structure or procedures. I have concluded that this speaks highly about the passion of the like-minded people on the committee to achieve the original objectives as set down by the founders of SMEDG fifty years ago. The SMEDG Committee has always been a 'team of equals', with everyone working to their strengths and bringing their expertise and skills to the job in hand, whether it is organising a single monthly meeting, a cruise, or a major SMEDG conference. It was an honour to be invited to be the Dinner Speaker at the 2018 SMEDG Lifetime Awards Dinner, indulging in one of my passions – highlighting the achievements of the ['Legends of Economic Geology'](#).

One challenge I have enjoyed since 1986, whether during my time on the committee or in the years since, has been using my network and my powers of persuasion to identify and recruit speakers who would be of interest to the SMEDG community by presenting talks at SMEDG meetings and conferences.

I will always treasure the friendships I have made through SMEDG, connecting with like-minded, positive people – my SMEDG family.

From SANDY MOYLE

I joined the AIG WA Committee in 2001 and Rick Rogerson (ex PNG) and I tried to get a Perth SMEDG equivalent going in 2002-03 but we couldn't get anyone interested. Too inclusive for the WA scene which, unlike Sydney, was very segregated in the 90s!! A few years later Bruce Hooper joined the AIG WA Committee and between us we were able to get some traction, so as I'm sure that you would be aware, MEGWA started around 2005 and has been going ever since.

Like SMEDG, it has a good following. Fortunately we have been able to get sponsors for the drinks about 80% of the time and we use the money from our annual sponsors for the rest of the bar tab. What I do miss though are the overseas consultants that we had in the 80s. Unfortunately, without the major companies, that doesn't happen here these days. The other general change is that FIFO generally dissipates the geological/exploration fraternity so the average age of participants is getting older participants. Still, the SMEDG/MEGWA format works well and is a great way to keep the exploration industry reasonably cohesive.

Apart from excellent talks, the SMEDG Christmas Cruise was always a great event. I do recall having a function at the Comedy Store that was a good laugh and was probably SMEDG, but it may have been a Kennecott or AIG function. I will have a think about other events but not sure that I can contribute a lot more to the history annals.

DENIS CLARKE – A Contribution

My small contribution to SMEDG seems a long time ago now. In 1980 I had just come back from 7 years in Canada with Rio and found SMEDG to be very much styled on the Toronto Geological Discussion Group of which I had been a member.

My unforgettable memory of SMEDG is the time I was helping Dave Timms with the Harbour Cruise. The hired boat was tied up at its wharf when we arrive and loaded multiple cases of beer. The captain then advised us that the boat had a serious mechanical problem that prevented it moving.

Dave, ever calm and sensible, decided that we should simply go ahead and enjoy the cruise while tied to the wharf. Everyone came to the wharf and a great "cruise" was had by all. I'm not sure what year it was but likely it was in the mid-80s to early 90s.

I trust you are all well and enjoying life. I went off my last board last year when I hit 80 and fortunately I'm still healthy and enjoying life too. I doubt, however, I would be up to any post-cruise function like we used to have at the Rag and Famish Hotel.

More SMEDG recollections – PETER GOLDNER

With age my memory has deteriorated so my recollections are rather limited to the point where I can't even remember the period in which I was part of the SMEDG committee.

I do however recollect that I was tasked to compiling the hand-out booklet for the one-day [1992 Asia Update Symposium](#) so I assume I was on the committee at that time. It was quite an exercise as each speaker supplied their synopses in differing fonts and variable layouts (some probably in Microsoft programs and others in Apple), which did take quite a bit of effort to standardise. It is a pity that, since about 2000, SMEDG discontinued these one-day symposia which were well attended and covered a wide range of interesting subjects.

To some degree the symposia have been replaced by the excellent annual [Mines and Wines](#) conferences. These are predominantly focused on NSW, with some occasional 'ring-ins' from Victoria and Queensland, but they certainly don't have the broader subject coverage of the one-day symposia. I think the return of the one-day symposia would be very welcome and maybe consideration could be given to using some of the now aged and retired/semi-retired SMEDG cohort to take the load off the younger employed committee members.

I also remember that in the early SMEDG days it was standard practice to try and convince visiting interstate and overseas explorers to give a talk and to fit in with the visitors timetables the SMEDG meetings were often arranged at short notice rather than the current monthly schedule. This worked very well and resulted in some really fascinating exploration stories.

The annual SMEDG Christmas cruise (morphing from the original Amoco Cruise) remains a wonderful venue to catch up with industry colleagues. In the early days when it was the Amoco sponsored cruise it was necessary to be in the Amoco 'good books' to get an invite whereas once it became the SMEDG cruise it is available to all who want to attend, a much better situation.

and from **VICKI DIEMAR**

Compared with many of the SMEDG committee members, I contributed (? hopefully) for a short time only during the 1990's but during that time I felt a member of a very special 'family'. The monthly meetings and 6 monthly cruises were a great way to meet up with like-minded explorationists whenever in town. Many of us, working for small companies and largely in the field in the days before internet communication, did not have much interaction with others so SMEDG provided an important contact base.

The long term committee are a devoted and committed group that are a credit to our special industry in which they have fostered a professional development group and more importantly a friendship group that I am proud to have been associated with and hold as a special time in my professional life.

Congratulations of the fantastic milestone of 50 years supporting the exploration industry.

KIM STANTON-COOK remembers

I remember attending the first SMEDG meeting with the talk being given by Peter Solomon on 'Geochemical Aspects of Exploration for Massive Sulphide Deposits with Particular Reference to the Lachlan Fold Belt' on the 9th November 1972. I think it was held in the AMP building at Circular Quay. I was a fairly recent graduate, working for a Canadian company, McIntyre Mines. I was made to feel very welcome by the senior members of the exploration industry and this appreciation stayed with me, as I did with SMEDG. When in Sydney, on field breaks, I made sure I got along to meetings and as the years went by managed to give some presentations as well. I cruised on almost every

SMEDG Harbour Cruise (photographing many since 1998), as well as the preceding Amoco Cruises, only missing one, to a useful coronary by-pass operation in 2001 with Jock Gilfillan and Geoff Derrick competing with, and upstaging me, with their own heart ops at the same time. My attendance for that cruise was provided by a [facsimile cut-out](#), provided by Roger Smyth-King and distributed, to be cuddled by one and all, by Simon McDonald.

I was closely involved with most of the early SMEDG-AIG Symposia, [Asian Update on Mineral Exploration and Development](#) [Exploration Strategies Symposium – What works, what doesn't](#) [Exploration Under Cover – The Original Africa Symposium '97](#) [1993 – SYMPOSIUM ON RECENT ADVANCES IN THE MOUNT ISA BLOCK](#) linked here so you can revisit and see some great presentations. The Symposia were great fun to organise, the Committees were very efficient and we often wondered how, with so little apparent individual effort, we were able to mount such successful meetings.

My other involvement is with the SMEDG web site, started by Steve Collins back in July 1999. At the time the site consisted of a home page - A Notice of Meeting with various ephemera which escape me now. I barraged Steve with items I thought should be included until he lost patience, provided me with some clues to learn basic .html, along with access to the site, and told me to add them myself. I logged on, made some basic text changes, refreshed the page and lo and behold – it worked! I was on my way. I spent the latter part of the '90's employed, but with plenty of spare time to look for items on line that I thought would be of interest to SMEDG'ers. And thus the site grew like Topsy and is now somewhat akin to the rabbit hole created for Alice by Lewis Carroll. Whilst there is much dross, of interest to few people, there is a rich offering of papers and presentations on mineral deposits and exploration case histories contained in the [Past Talks](#), [Symposia and Mines & Wines](#) sections of the site. Of this, and the fact that it's all free, is something of which all SMEDG'ers can be proud.

CHRIS TORREY – an OBSERVATION...

I liked the way SMEDG was unpretentious. It was a straightforward organisation run by volunteers solely focused on the "discussion of all things to do with mineral exploration." It had a great team feel to it.

I am not sure that's the case these days?

PHIL HELLMAN and the anarchist committee...

It must have been in the early 1980s when I started attending SMEDG meetings. Later, I served on the "committee" for quite a while, I forget which decades or century. The term "committee", however, was somewhat of a misnomer and seemed to be run on anarchist principles, basically if you heard of someone interesting then invite them to speak and then check with the others if their whereabouts was known. This seemed to work except in boom times which came around at irregular intervals maybe every 5-7 years when SMEDG would stop having meetings because everyone was out of town.

SMEDG meetings saw several changes of technology from overhead projectors and slide projectors to slides from laptops to PowerPoint presentations. By far the best graphics were those by Greg Corbett who had an unfair advantage courtesy of Denise's skills in graphic design. The start of using laptops brought several challenges. I remember a double-header presentation when the first

speaker plugged his USB disk in to the laptop and discovered it was empty, fortunately the second speaker had way too much to say and easily covered both slots.

Sometimes speakers forgot to turn-off messages that popped up on their presentations via now extinct software. They certainly enhanced interest in the talks. One meeting that I was chairing was a complete fizzer when the SMEDG laptop decided to blow-up, from that point on I always brought a spare. Another hazard was the tendency of unheralded software updates to start in the middle of a PowerPoint presentation. These, I remember, were impossible to stop.

The one-day symposia that we organised were a highlight of the SMEDG calendar. The stand-out symposium to me was the [2003 Asian Update](#) in which we heard of the fruits of the 1980s push by many Australian companies into Asia and afar. [Mike \(and Vicki\) Diemar's](#) story of the discovery of the [Chatree gold deposit](#) and its successful early operation must rate as one of the most inspiring stories of a cash-strapped explorer whose perseverance finally paid off.

My introduction to the 2003 conference is below:

"11 years ago SMEDG hosted the last Asia Update mineral exploration symposium. Judging by the quality of the symposium notes and my memories of the venue, times were tough. As testimony to the captivating nature of mineral exploration, all but one of the ten speakers from 11 years ago are still active in the industry. We are grateful to a hopeful explorer from the 5pm session in April 1992 for today's keynote address. Mike Diemar wrote in his 1992 abstract that:

Success in Thailand will only be achieved by those with great determination and a long term policy.

About ten years before Mike's comments, I was at a planning meeting of a major Australian exploration and mining company. We were told that Thailand was rated low in terms of prospectivity for gold because it neither had any historical gold production nor known gold occurrences. Fortunately, the geological potential of the Upper Permian and Triassic volcanic arc sequence in Central Thailand was recognised. Due to a paucity of funds, Mike initiated a low cost soil panning reconnaissance program that did not involve expensive assays. This approach to geochemical exploration was rudimentary even by 1988 standards. It led Mike, however, to recognise that an area around a prominent hill in Pichit Province had all the characteristics of an epithermal gold system.

A soil survey led to RAB drilling which, in turn, led to drilling and trenching. Production began in mid-2001 and, as at 30 June 2003, there were approximately one million ounces of gold in Ore Reserves below the hill and at the operating Chatree Gold Mine several hundred metres to the south in an area of corn fields with virtually no outcrop. The operation has brought employment to hundreds of local people and has provided shareholders with dividend rates that are unmatched by most other Australian mining companies. We hope this story will inspire you.

Other talks at that 1992 SMEDG symposium have also proved prophetic. Dave Ransom tried to interest us in Mongolia of all places and specifically mentioned the presence of billion tonne porphyry copper resources. Was anyone listening? Simon Davies spoke about the potential of Laos. His pioneering, and relatively unknown, survey up the Nam Kok River in the Sepon District, in February 1990 yielded four samples of silicified metasediments with an average grade of 6.5 g/t gold. These results were followed up by CRA who, fortunately for Oxiana, decided to divest 80% of its equity in what has become known as the Sepon Project. We hope that today's talks will be similarly prophetic as those in our 1992 symposium and will provide

exploration ideas, strategies and a new motivation to engage the varied and fascinating cultures of Asia in the pursuit of exploration success.

This year SMEDG, in association with the NSW branch of the Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG), decided that we need to re-focus on Asia. In true SMEDG and AIG tradition we aim to provide inexpensive yet high quality technical presentations. SMEDG tries not to make a profit but we use the remaining funds to provide regular meetings at the NSW Rugby Club at no cost. We also subsidise students or unemployed geologists to come to these symposia. Please consult our web site at <https://www.smedg.org.au> for details of future meetings or how to join our mailing list.

Today's symposium is only possible by virtue of a dedicated group of volunteers who belong to SMEDG and AIG. In addition to the Organising Committee, I particularly wish to thank Roger Smyth-King from Contour Graphics for computer graphics and Margaret Greentree at Golden Cross Resources Ltd for organisational assistance. Greg Corbett, Russell Fountain and Cay Mims kindly agreed to each chair a session. Ken Maiden, no doubt, will entertain us with his poetic summary. We particularly thank the speakers and acknowledge the time they have spent preparing their talks in addition to fulfilling their normal responsibilities."

Despite the anarchy, SMEDG seemed to work well. Overhead costs were virtually non-existent, organisers were like-minded and had the best interests of our industry at heart. Thanks to all.

STEVE COLLINS and his time at SMEDG

My first memory of SMEDG was in about 1978. I was working for Amoco and the venue for a SMEDG meeting had a problem. As a substitute, Dave Timms arranged for the meeting to be held in one of the large rooms in the Amoco building. This allowed me to stay after work and join in the revelry. I was hooked and became a regular SMEDG attendee from then on.

Several years later, feeling that I should do something to help, I told the chairman of a meeting (Greg Corbett) that if he needed some assistance I could help. The next morning he turned up on my door step with all the SMEDG documentation, passed it to me and told me I was it. Nothing happened for several months..... Then I worked out that SMEDG meetings didn't happen unless someone made them happen. That led to many years of collaborating with the other committee members finding speakers and then organising a mail-out to "members".

The mail-out consisted of making a couple of hundred photo copies of the flyer for the next meeting, folding them, stuffing into envelopes with address labels and taking them to the Post office for bulk mailing. All very tedious but not as tedious as cajoling potential speakers to front up. (I still believe this is the most difficult and most important task of the SMEDG committee members.) Dave Clappison was a wonderful helper at that time and whenever he was in town, would take over the whole mail-out process.

When the Internet was developed, I decided that the tedious mail-out could be done away with if we had a web page. I set up the web site and gradually transferred the "membership" list to an email notification. The two systems ran in parallel for a couple of years until we finally relied solely on email. Dave Clappison then complained that I had made him unemployed.

The original web site was very simple, just a notice of the next meeting. Kim Stanton-Cook complained that a real geologist's web site should contain more. I gladly relinquished another task and Kim took over that part.

The high point of meetings that I chaired was [Mike Fogarty's talk](#) on the, then new, discovery of Tritton which overflowed the capacity of the meeting room by 200%. Also the one time I chaired a meeting that was not about mineral exploration, we temporarily changed the name (and logo) to Sydney Mars Exploration Discussion Group and [Graziella Caprarielli](#) gave a wonderful talk on the geology of Mars.

I remained on the committee for nearly two decades (can't remember exactly). During that time there were numerous suggestions that SMEDG should broaden its scope but I always insisted that it was created to form a venue for discussion of mineral exploration and nothing more. I figured that there are other institutions (AIG, AusIMM, GSA etc.) that can do more diverse things. I always referred to documents on the history of SMEDG that describe quite succinctly why SMEDG is there and that it should not compete with the more formal institutions. Sometimes this led to heated arguments at committee meetings but I believe that the simple idea of providing a venue for talking informally about exploration, - and only that, - has been the reason for SMEDG's long and successful life.

From ROGER SMYTH-KING

My engagement with SMEDG started out with the 'Amoco Christmas Cruise' that Dave Timms and myself morphed into the 'SMEDG Christmas Cruise'. The SMEDG Cruise is a great opportunity for geoscientists to catch-up with colleagues, dine and sip wine aboard the 'RADAR' on Sydney Harbour.

I have also been involved with the organisation of numerous conferences and symposia including the bi-Annual Mines & Wines Conference. The conference brings together geoscientists with technical presentations and field excursions with the opportunity to engage with the Wine Industry. Any profits gained are put back into the Industry to provide Bursaries for up-coming geoscientists and numerous geological events.

SMEDG has given me a great connection with like-minded people that I enjoyed and hope to continue!

(Roger has also been responsible for many Cruise and Symposia photos and numerous designs; the original SMEDG logo, the CWEDG logo, Symposia logos and the SMEDG lapel pins, worn, so proudly, when we remember to put them on.)



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