

SMEDG Life Member Medal to Dr Richard Sillitoe

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For meritorious service to SMEDG and the global mining industry's understanding of porphyry copper-gold deposits and epithermal gold deposits, we are pleased to award a SMEDG Life Member Medal to Dr Richard Sillitoe

Dick is a world-renowned London-based consultant economic geologist – who has probably seen more orebodies than any other person – ever! His expertise in porphyry copper-gold deposits and epithermal gold deposits is unequalled. Since 1971 he has consulted for more than 300 companies and more than 11 international governments and agencies – conducting field work in over 100 countries. Dick is very generous with his time – he has spoken at nearly 100 international conferences, and has given over 50 lectures at universities and geological surveys around the world.

Dick is well-known to many people in this room, as he has been a good friend of SMEDG for over 40 years, speaking at two of our previous functions. The first was in August 1980, talking on *'Porphyry-related mineralization in a volcanic context'*, and the second was his role as our Keynote Speaker at the South American Symposium in March 1996, where his talk was titled *'Exploration objectives and frontiers in the Central Andes'*. His comprehensive expertise, combined with his unique presentation style and dry sense of humour, have always captivated his audiences.

So, we were thrilled when Dick graciously accepted our invitation to be our Keynote Speaker for these celebrations, which meant flying out from London specially to be with us today. In reply to our invitation, Dick commented that *"These days I do my best to avoid giving talks, but for the SMEDG Golden Jubilee celebrations I'll make an exception. It will be a great opportunity to catch up with old friends before we all fall off our respective perches."*

Dick thrives on breaking new ground. In 1999 he was elected as the first President of the *Society of Economic Geologists* who was not an American. Tonight, he becomes the first SMEDG Life Member Medal winner who is not an Australian.

Dick studied geology at the Royal School of Mines in London, where he completed his PhD in 1968. His initial exposure to porphyry copper deposits was in Chile, where he worked for the *Geological Survey of Chile*, and this was the start of a lifetime of assignments in South America. He is an expert in 'deposit modelling' combining field mapping with drill core observations and other data – which means that he can visit an exploration prospect which only has a few drill holes, spend a day or two in the field and looking at drill core – and then draw conclusions about the character and size of the most likely type of mineral deposit that may be present there. Most importantly, he can then recommend where to site the

next drill hole! It's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle expert who can visualise the whole completed jigsaw puzzle when he (or she) has only seen a handful of pieces.

When Russell Meares was Exploration Manager for Renison Goldfields in PNG in the 1980's, the company had purchased the Wau gold mine in the Owen Stanley Ranges inland from Lae. RGC had engaged Dick to tell them what potential it had and where to find more ore. Dick worked with Max Baker and Bill Brook for a couple of days in the field – coming up with a diatreme model for the breccia-hosted gold deposit, and writing it up in a joint paper with Max and Bill in "*Economic Geology*" in 1984.

Dick has been one of our generation's most regular contributors to the growing wealth of knowledge about mineral deposits, as he has written over 130 technical papers – including over 38 in "*Economic Geology*". Over the 107 years since the journal commenced, Dick's 2010 overview paper on porphyry copper deposits is still the second-most cited paper. In recognition of Dick's outstanding scientific contributions, in 2012 the SEG produced Special Publication No. 16 entitled:

"The Geology and Genesis of Major Copper Deposits and Districts of the World: A Tribute to Richard H. Sillitoe".

In 1975 Dick won the SEG's prestigious *Waldemar Lindgren Award*, which is given for outstanding research in economic geology before the age of 35. He is indeed a modern-day Waldemar Lindgren! In 2015 he won the Society's *Penrose Gold Medal* in recognition of a full career in the performance of outstanding work in the earth sciences. His trophy cabinet must be rather full, as he has won many other international awards. He now has one more to take home tonight!

Dick, as our friend and our source of exploration inspiration to discover the next Bingham Canyon or the next Escondida, we are delighted to present you with this award. In doing so, we sincerely hope that it is indeed many, many years before you fall off your perch!

Russell Meares, August 2022