

The Tom Vallance Medal

The Tom Vallance Medal recognises people who have made a significant contribution to researching, recording, investigating, documenting and/or publishing about people or places or events of historical importance to the geological sciences in Australia or Australasia.



Citation

Barry was born in 1948 and raised in Melbourne, and has been interested in history and geology since he was a child. He was introduced to both subjects at school and his parents supported this interest.

By Grade 4, Barry was fascinated by the voyages of explorers. By Year 9 he was being called 'Mr History' by fellow students, after achieving 100% in a history exam. In the same year his best friend encouraged him to join the Hawthorn Junior Field Naturalist Club based in Melbourne's suburb of Hawthorn. Within a short time he was founding and editing the Club's newsletter *The Junior Naturalist*, and writing articles on rocks and fossils. When the Club celebrated its 25th birthday in 1968, Barry wrote an article on its history and had it published in *The Victorian Naturalist*. Around the same time, Barry was appointed Club Recorder or Archivist. His historical records from this period are still kept today by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

In Year 12 Barry took the opportunity of studying geology in his final year at school. He gained First Class Honours and entered the University of Melbourne in 1967 graduating BSc (Hons) with First Class Honours in 1970. On completing a Masters Degree in paleontology he travelled to the US where he graduated PhD at The Ohio State University in 1974 with research dealing with fossil conodonts.

On returning to Australia he was appointed a paleontologist with the Geological Survey of SA in 1975. He remained attached to the Geological Survey and in other various SA government roles until retirement in 2009.

Early years — SA

In subsequent years, as well as geological investigations, Barry became active in professional societies, notably as Secretary of the GSA-SA Division (1975–1978) as well as Secretary of the Royal Society of South Australia (1977–1978). His childhood experience in administration with the Hawthorn Junior Field Naturalists Club proved invaluable.

In the early 1980s, he became aware that celebrations were being planned to remember the bicentenary of European settlement in Australia 1988 and the 150th anniversary (sesquicentenary) of SA in 1986. Consequently, Barry wrote a public letter in January 1983 to TAG soliciting interest in establishing a new special interest group dealing with the history of geology.

The numerical response to this letter from around Australia was remarkable. With the production of the first newsletter in November 1983, more than 50 GSA members had positively responded. Quickly Barry was introduced to Tom Vallance and his links as Vice President Australasia to the International Commission on the History of Geological Sciences (INHIGEO).



Barry Cooper on holiday in Bali.
Image courtesy Barry Cooper

Also based at the University of Sydney was David Branagan.

The Earth Sciences History Group (ESHG) was formally established during the 7th Australian Geological Convention in August 1984. Barry became founding Chair of the new ESHG (1983–1986).

Barry also developed a good relationship with Tom Vallance, who was readily accessible by telephone, an excellent postal correspondent on all historical subjects and willing to accommodate Barry on visits to Sydney. Barry had no hesitation in recommending Tom as a keynote speaker for the bicentenary Australian Geological Convention in 1988.

Historical investigations and oral history with the Geological Survey

Quite unexpectedly, the letter to TAG also led to a special request that Barry undertake historical investigations for the Geological Survey to support a sesquicentenary project that would consider the historical development of geology in SA over 150 years since 1836.

This project, which had been initiated by the Royal Society of SA, dealt with all natural sciences and was eventually published for SA's 150th anniversary under the title 'Ideas and Endeavours – The Natural Sciences in South Australia'

With David Corbett working on the 19th century history of geology, Barry was asked to focus on 20th century history of geology while also supporting David's work. Most notably as part of the joint investigation, Barry arranged oral interviews of several eminent SA geologists. Prominent interviewees included Sir Ben Dickinson, Reg Sprigg, Lee Parkin and Eric Rudd. Records of these interviews have since been stored in the oral history collection of the State Library of SA.

Earth Sciences History Group/Australian volumes of *Earth Sciences History*

Following its establishment, ESHG, with Barry as Chair actively promoted studies in the history of geology. Associated with ESHG, Barry organised history sessions and posters at several geological conferences as follows.

- Adelaide Geosyncline Conference 1983
- 7th Australian Geological Convention, Sydney, August 1984
- 8th Australian Geological Convention, Adelaide, February 1986
- 12th International Sedimentological Congress, Canberra, August 1986.

Most notably, the 12th International Sedimentological Congress was also sponsored by INHIGEO following the recommendation of Tom Vallance and the History of Earth Sciences Society, who provided eminent geologist/historian G Friedman as international convenor.

The success of ESHG at conferences also attracted international interest, and Barry was approached to organise a special Australia and New Zealand issue of the newly established international journal *Earth Sciences History*. All ESHG members were invited to participate and the success of the response was such that two Australian volumes of *Earth Sciences History* were ultimately published. Barry was primary editor but following the successful response, Secretary Colin Gatehouse became the second editor

Rock Me Hard. Rock Me Soft

When the GSA reached its 40th anniversary, GSA President Peter Legge was determined to have a volume published on the history of the Society. Not surprising, Barry and David Branagan were chosen to compile and write the volume, which was titled *Rock Me Hard... Rock Me Soft... A History of the Geological Society of Australia* and published in 1994.

Barry organised every active GSA section to prepare its own contribution. However he still had several sections to research and write personally. Barry also spoke on GSA history when INHIGEO held its conference in Sydney in 1994. New GSA members received a free copy of the volume for several years after publication. A Special Historical Supplement was also prepared by Barry for the GSA's 50th anniversary in 2002.

History of Science, Ideas and Technology Group

During the mid to late 1990s, Barry became heavily committed to administrative responsibilities associated with mineral industry development. His research into history and geology declined but did not disappear

He became involved with the local History of Science, Ideas and Technology Group (HSITG), which was established in Adelaide, becoming its Vice President and a regular historical speaker on geology.

In 2000, he organised a conference in Adelaide involving ESHG and HSITG entitled 'Geology over the past millennium' The meeting concluded with a delightful historical field trip to Hallett Cove.

Heritage stone

Mineral industry development also introduced Barry to the building stone industry and its historical development as a heritage stone. In 2002, INHIGEO organised a conference with a heritage stone theme in Portugal. Barry presented a paper with a SA stone focus at this meeting.

Barry's heritage stone involvement expanded rapidly from 2007. Barry encouraged the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in establishing a Heritage Stone Task Group (HSTG) for the period 2012–2016, which formally recognised a Global Heritage Stone Resource. Barry was founder and Secretary General of HSTG.

Portland Stone from the UK was the first to be recognised in 2015 as a Global Heritage Stone Resource, while Sydney sandstone and Victorian Bluestone are likely to be the first Australian stones to be so designated following publication of citation papers.

In promoting HSTG (2008–2016), Barry participated through attendance and formal presentations at many international conferences, including

- International Geological Congress, Oslo, Norway 2008
- International Association for Engineering Geology & the Environment, Auckland, New Zealand, 2009
- Global Stone Congress, Alicante, Spain, 2010
- International Geological Congress, Brisbane, Australia, 2012
- Global Stone Congress, Alentejo, Portugal, 2012
- European Geoscience Union conferences, Vienna, Austria 2013, 2015
- International Association for Engineering Geology and the Environment, Turin, Italy 2014
- Annual General Meeting, Geological Society of America, Baltimore, USA, 2015
- International Geological Congress, Cape Town, South Africa 2016.

n supporting these meetings Barry also facilitated definitive reports in the UGS journal *Episodes*, with the production of model citation papers. An HSTG website was also established and a volume of papers was organised for publication by the Geological Society of London in 2015.

INHIGEO revitalised

In Barry's latter years at the Geological Survey, a revitalisation of historical research took place with an initial focus on the history of Cambrian investigations in collaboration with Jim Jago, as well as on the history of uranium investigations.

The history of uranium in SA was encouraged at the Geological Survey and it also excited much interest from the local mineral explorers. The latter were delighted for Barry to speak at the International Uranium Conference in Adelaide in June 2008 as well as the International Geological Congress in Oslo, Norway in August 2008.

My expanding historical research led to the suggestion from David Oldroyd, a previous Secretary General, that with retirement approaching Barry may also be interested in the role. And so it led him to re-establish his interest in organising professional groups through holding the post of NHIGEO General 2008–2016 and NHIGEO President (2016–2020). Barry felt honoured to be considered and even obligated to become more involved.

With Barry's appointment as INHIGEO Secretary General, there was much to work on even though the Commission was well organised by Barry's predecessors.

Achievements during his term of Secretary General and President included

- Establishment of the first NHIGEO website in 2009
- Creation of a quarterly Circular
- Appointment of a separate post of Editor in 2012 with associated transformation of the INHIGEO Newsletter into the INHIGEO Annual Record in 2013
- Organisation of successful Annual conferences, in particular the 50th Anniversary conference in 2017 in Armenia
- Following an *ad hoc* review by IUGS, revised Terms of Reference were prepared, which were approved by IUGS. Changes included
 - Removal of the 11 members per country rule
 - Introduction of Associate Membership and Affiliated Associations
 - Establishment of the Vladimir V Tikhomirov History of Geology Award with an obsidian medallion.

Reply

I am greatly honoured to be recognised with receipt of the Tom Vallance Medal. For me the medal not only recognises my humble contribution to the history of geology in Australia, but also acknowledges the pioneering historical research into geology in Australia by Tom Vallance and by many others in the ESHG.

In 1983 I wrote to TAG and suggested that GSA should have a Specialist Group dedicated to the History of Geology. I had been initially motivated by the developing community interest in history by the coming National Bicentenary and State Sesquicentenary in SA during the 1980s, as well as the historical publications by my then employer the SA Department of Mines and Energy.

As a consequence of my letter the Department asked me to contribute to a historical paper on SA geology dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the state. And so, my personal involvement in the history of geology began.

Quickly I learned that Tom Vallance and David Branagan (then TAG Editor) at the University of Sydney had a ready cultivated interest in the history of geology. Tom was, especially, a proverbial 'mine of information' who followed up my long-distance phone calls with sheets of data on the history of geology that his research had revealed. Sadly Tom passed away prematurely in 1993 at 65 years.

Tom was notably a Foundation Member of INHIGEO. And by 1989, Tom had pressed me to join him as a second NHIGEO member from Australia which led on, much later during retirement, to a period as NHIGEO Secretary General (2008–2016) and NHIGEO President (2016–2020). Without Tom Vallance's initial commitment over many years, much of my involvement in the history of geology would never have taken place.

As a professional geologist and not an historian, I needed to justify my involvement in history. An attempt to do this was suggested at the first formal meeting of ESHG in 1984 as well as during the annual NHIGEO conference in 2014 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in California. Significantly I came to understand that geology is fundamentally an historical subject. The history of Earth is truly the object of geology. A knowledge of history is also a natural study of interest within any well-defined subject or group of people. However geology is a discipline whose focus is truly historical.

So, with deep appreciation I thank all who have supported me for this award.

I remain greatly honoured.

BARRY COOPER

Australian Journal of Earth Sciences

FL Stillwell Award

The FL Stillwell Award is a medal awarded to the author or authors of the best paper of the year in the Australian Journal of Earth Sciences, judged by the Editorial Board.



FL Stillwell Volume 65

Best paper

Stevens BPJ and Bradley GM 2018.

Sedimentology in metamorphic

rocks, the Willyama Supergroup,

Broken Hill, Australia. *AJES* 65, 25–59.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08120099.2018.1399462>

FL Stillwell Volume 66

Best paper

Jessop K, Daczko NR & Piazzolo S 2019. Tectonic Cycles of the New England Orogen, eastern Australia: A review. *AJES* 66, 459–496.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08120099.2018.1548378>

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