PROFILE

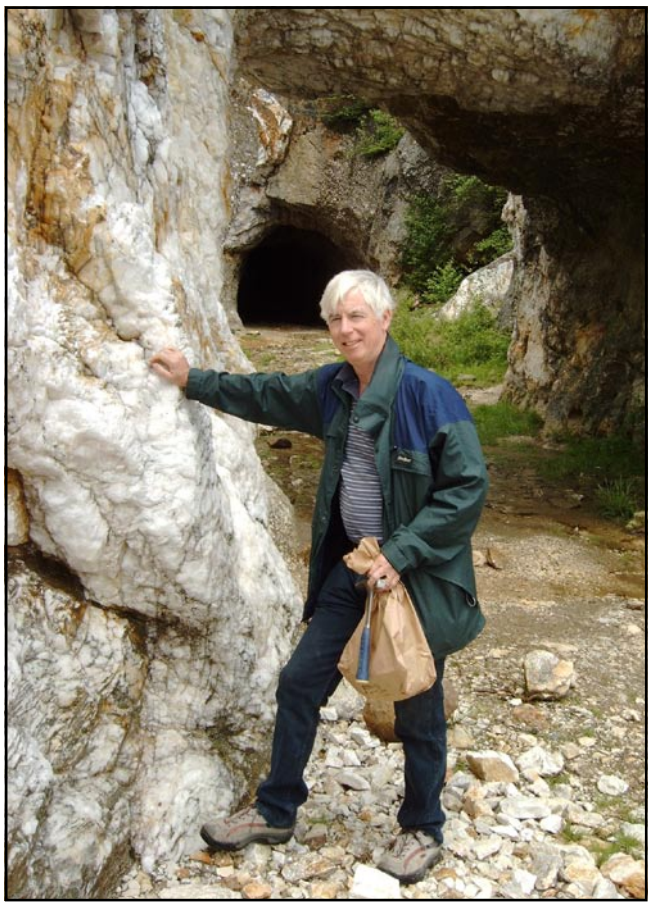
Tim Colman

Our new president was born in a vicarage near Cockermouth, Cumberland, but moved south at an early age to Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire and then Norfolk. His only scientific ancestor was an uncle who was head of the Marine Biological Station at Port Erin on the Isle of Man. He remembers his parson father taking him to the Hensbarrow china clay pit and South Crofty tin mine in Cornwall, and still has a photo showing him operating a hydraulic monitor at the bottom of the Hensbarrow pit at the age of 12.

He graduated in geology from the University of Durham in 1969. The excitement of the 'nickel boom' and the prospect of travel led him to a graduate trainee position with Consolidated Gold Fields Australia, with a first placement at the Mount Lyell copper mine in Tasmania, where he gained an introduction to open pit and underground mining and ore reserve calculation. After four months he moved on to his next placement, the CGFA exploration division based in Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, arriving as the Poseidon nickel share boom was at its height. Within a couple of days he was 100 km out in the bush, with a student as a field assistant, mapping Archaean volcanic rocks – a far cry from his BSc mapping area of Ashover. The temporary placement was soon made permanent, and he spent the next three years based in Kalgoorlie but mainly living out of a Landrover and caravan on a variety of projects including prospecting for nickel in many areas of the Yilgarn, mapping iron ore in the Hamersleys, drilling heavy mineral sands north of Perth and investigating a copper-zinc prospect in the Pilbara.

He returned to Britain in 1972 to take an MSC in Mineral Exploration and Mining Geology at Leicester University, and was then offered a post as exploration geologist for Irish Base Metals based in Loughrea, County Galway. He spent a year prospecting for lead and zinc, around the Tynagh mine and in County Clare, before returning to Britain in 1975 to take a PGCE at Keele University. He then initiated a geology A-Level course at Forest Fields 6th Form College in Nottingham, where he used his Durham introductory field week as a basis for the A-Level field trip.

After four years of teaching, the call of the minerals was still strong, and he became an Economic Geologist in the minerals division at the Institute of Geological Sciences, which had recently moved from London to Keyworth His first couple of years involved helping to administer a mineral incentive scheme to promote commercial mineral exploration in Britain. This introduced him to many mining company projects, from Islay to Cornwall. From then on, until his retirement in 2007, he was involved in a wide variety of mineral-related projects including mineral exploration, mineral deposit studies, mineral statistics, metallogenesis, radon investigations, GIS developments and several short



overseas projects. The latter took him to Zambia, Angola, Turkmenistan, Portugal and the Falkland Islands, before leading a three year project to develop a mineral information system and digital documentation centre in the National Directorate of Geology in Mozambique. His main interests throughout his BGS career remained metalliferous mineral deposits, especially volcanogenic and Mississippi Valley Type ores and their worldwide exploration and development.

He was responsible for the production of two volumes of the BGS publication 'Exploration for metallic and related minerals in Britain: a guide' as well as several Mineral Reconnaissance Programme reports on projects in Aberdeenshire, Anglesey, Southwest Wales and Staffordshire. He investigated the small mineral deposits associated with the Ordovician Snowdon volcanic caldera and contributed to the final seminal BGS memoir on this classic area.

He initiated the now almost annual BGS attendance at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada March meeting in Toronto, and helped to foster links with various mining companies. He retains an interest in Irish mineralisation and is still a member of the Irish Association for Economic Geology. He is also a member of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) and was on the committee of the former Nottinghamshire Branch, with a term as President.

Following his retirement from the BGS in 2007, he has become a tutor at the Ecton Hills Field Studies Association mine and has joined their committee.