



EARTH SCIENCES HISTORY GROUP

(A Specialist Group of the Geological Society of Australia Inc.)

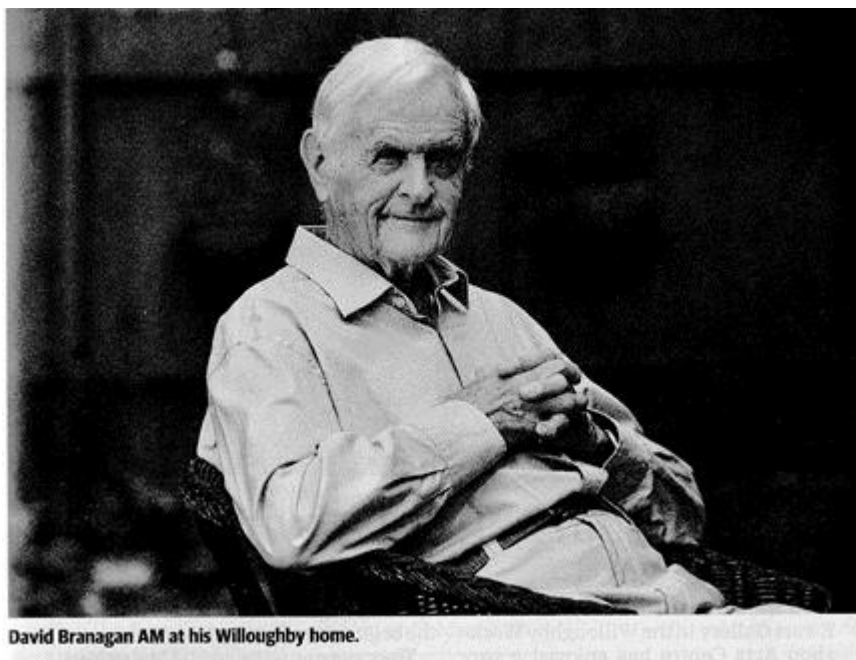
Email Bulletin No. 59

14 January 2022

Vale David Branagan (1930–2022)

The following news was forwarded by Angus Robinson as distributed by SMEDG in Sydney. I am sure that TAG will include a more detailed obituary in a coming issue.

To quote Angus, David was a legend in his lifetime and a gentleman to boot!



David Branagan AM at his Willoughby home.

It is with great sadness we share with you the news that David Branagan has passed away aged 91. His influence on, and contributions to, so many facets of Australian science will be his legacy, and he will be greatly missed by his many geological colleagues.

David was born in Broken Hill, and studied geology at the Sydney University, graduating in 1950. He spent the first four years of his career as a geologist with the Geological Survey of NSW, developing a growing expertise in the coal deposits of NSW. After a short stint in industry, he returned to Sydney University where he completed his PhD and remained there for 30 years. He advanced progressively through the teaching ranks to become an Associate Professor from 1975 to 1989, when he retired. His teaching expertise was in the fields of coal geology, mining engineering geology, photogeology, geomorphology and field mapping. He was also the founder of the Sydney University Speleological Society and the St Gregory Chorale which performed early sacred music, accompanied by his deep baritone voice.

As well as being an eminent and much-loved teacher of geology, his writings on the history of our science and the lives and achievements of the many pioneering geologists and explorers will always be seen as his most

distinguished contributions. He wrote around 20 books, and 230 papers and articles, about half of which have been dedicated to the history of geology and related sciences.

He was a founding member of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA) in 1952, and the founding editor of *The Australian Geologist* in 1974, a role he held for 10 years. He received many honours and awards, including Honorary Life Membership of the GSA in 1992, the Royal Society of NSW Medal in 1998, and was the inaugural recipient of ESHG's Tom Vallance Medal for contributions to Australian Earth Science History presented at the 34th IGC 2012. In 2018 he was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Given the current times, David's funeral will be a private affair, so we would also like to take this opportunity to pass on our sincerest condolences to the family

Below are tributes from his former students and colleagues:

"What a wonderful contribution Dave made to our science and also to the history of our science. "

"Dave was a gentleman, he lectured us in geomorphology and air photo analysis as well as being a leader on various field trips at Sydney Uni. Always approachable and unfailingly helpful, he was the link between David, Osborne, Browne, Joplin and Vallance (and others) in the papal succession of classical geologists that were larger than life and had widespread interests."

"A fun and fearless leader in my university days. I was privileged to have him as a First-Year lecturer, and also benefitted from his practical knowledge and participation in many enjoyable university field trips. Dave Branno as we called him, also was the most approachable and friendly First Year lecturer, and definitely influenced many students to continue on to do geology."

Australian Mining History Association News

The AMHA Conference, planned for November 2020, and postponed to September-October 2021 was cancelled for a second time due to the Delta COVID variant. The AMHA Conference will take place at Burra, South Australia and is now scheduled for 18-25 September 2022. There will be local visits to the town, mines and smelters, and longer day trips to Kapunda and Moonta.

If you are interested in attending, see the AMHA website at <https://www.mininghistory.asn.au/next-conference/>

Papers offered for 2021 will of course now be presented at the 2022 conference but the call for papers continues to be open. Contact Ross Both at rosannb@bigpond.net.au with title and abstract.

Contributions for the ESHG Newsletter

Articles for future editions are welcome and can be submitted to the Newsletter Editor, Mr John Draper at jdraper@hn.ozemail.com.au. We have one rather long article at hand but would like to include more.

Australian Geology Hall of Fame

The ESHG webpages include short biographies of influential Australian geologists (see [ESHG Biographies \(gsa.org.au\)](https://www.eshg.org.au)) and has recently been expanded, but biographies of many other influential Australian geoscientists are yet to be included here, and a list of possible candidates is given below.

Members are welcome to submit short biographies (500-600 words plus a photograph or image and links or main references to more detailed information) of these or any others to the Earth Science History Group c/- eshg.gsa@gmail.com. Of course, we would also welcome more detailed biographies for inclusion in forthcoming editions of the newsletter as requested above.

- Edward de Courcy Clarke
- Richard Daintree
- Samuel Benson Dickinson
- Norman Henry (Doc) Fisher
- Charles Gould
- John Walter Gregory
- Dorothy Hill
- Edwin Sherbon Hills
- Terence D Hills
- Joseph Beete Jukes
- Clive Loftus-Hills
- Lyndon Charles Noakes
- Reginald Claude Sprigg
- William Harper Twelvetrees
- George Henry Frederick Ulrich
- Leonard Keith Ward
- Samuel Warren Carey

ESHG Committee:

The current committee is listed below but has been in place now since 2014 and it may be time for a new team. The committee has traditionally rotated around the State Divisions but approaches to some of the State's that have not provided a committee in recent decades have not been successful. ACT members showed some interest but were reticent about taking on the role on their own. As the COVID Pandemic and the use of Zoom and Teams has shown us, living in different jurisdictions is no longer an impediment to forming a committee. Therefore, it is probably time for a committee to be spread across Australia. We will probably make a formal approach in the coming months, but in the meantime, please contact the committee if you are interested.

Chair — Ian Withnall
 Secretary — John Jell
 Treasurer — Paul Blake
 Newsletter Editor — John Draper
 Assistant Editor — Cec Murray
 Tasmanian representative — Carol Bacon
 SA representative — Jim Jago

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