

DUNCAN RAMSAY DERRY — An Appreciation

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DUNCAN RAMSAY DERRY

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1906-1987

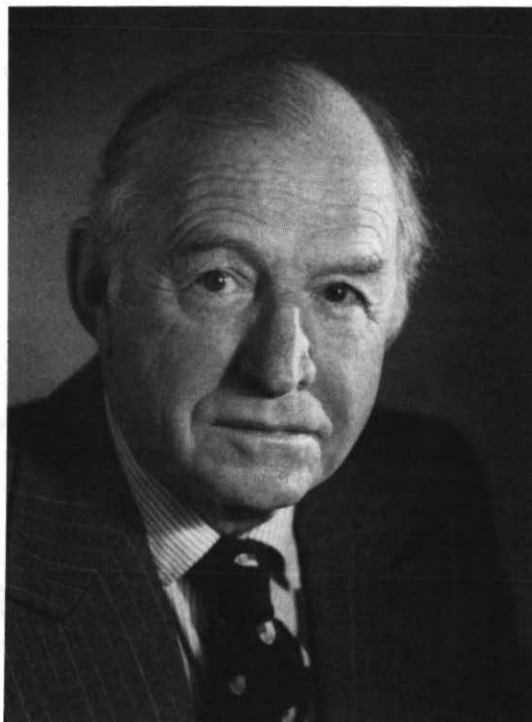
An Appreciation

Duncan Derry's death, on 26 January 1987, deprived us of a respected gentleman, an accomplished economic geologist and a dignified and effective ambassador for Canadian geology around the world.

His imprint on the Geological Association of Canada is indelible. He was a member of the founding group that formed the Association in 1947. He was President twice, in 1953-54 and 1971-72, and the Logan Medallist in 1970. In 1978 he was Honorary Chairman of the successful Toronto '78 GAC/MAC/GSA meeting and in 1979, the Mineral Deposits Division appropriately recognized his many accomplishments by striking

the Duncan R. Derry Medal to recognize those who have made major contributions to the science of economic geology in Canada.

Duncan Derry was born in Croydon, England. He graduated from Cambridge in Honours Science in 1927 and immediately emigrated to Canada. He enrolled in the graduate school of the Department of Geology at the University of Toronto, and was awarded his M.A. degree in 1928 and his Ph.D. in 1931. His early professional development in Canada was influenced by Professor W.A. Parks, then head of the Department of Geology, who had recommended the Porcupine area to prospectors long before the actual discoveries of what became the Dome, Hollinger and McIntyre gold mines. Also during this postgraduate period he gained field experience with the Ontario Department of Mines and, while continuing as a lecturer at the University following the completion of his thesis studies, worked several summers for the Cyril Knight Prospecting Company and Ventures Limited. This was the beginning of a long, productive association with the remarkable Thayer Lindsley, Duncan Derry's principal mentor and the founder of Ventures and Falconbridge Nickel Mines. Lindsley was probably



the most significant contributor to the Canadian mining scene between 1927 and 1954.

In 1935, Dr. Derry joined Ventures full time and, in subsequent years, mapped the geology at Canadian Malartic, Matachewan Consolidated, Coniaurum, Guysborough Gold and Opemiska. After five years of service in the R.C.A.F. in World War II, he returned to Ventures, and, in 1947, became their Chief Geologist. The next few years included his initial GAC involvement but also saw him active in exploration in Greece, Egypt, Southern Africa, Greenland and South America, as well as many parts of Canada. During this same period, Dr. Derry was

instrumental in the compilation and eventual publication of the first Tectonic Map of Canada in 1950, which synthesized structural data from government, universities, the mining industry and the rapidly expanding oil exploration and production industry in the Canadian West.

In 1954, he moved from Ventures to the presidency of Riocanex, the Canadian exploration arm for the London-based Rio Tinto Company Limited. Prominent successes included, firstly, the acquisition and the placing into production of the Quirke Lake and Nordic Lake mines in the Blind River-Elliot Lake area and, secondly, the discovery of the Mines de Poirier zinc-copper deposit in northern Quebec.

After 20 years of employment with major mining corporations, he achieved a long-time ambition and formed his own consulting business in 1960. Productive years of Irish exploration and development followed including involvement with Northgate Exploration, the formation of the Thayer Lindsley Prospecting Syndicate and the discovery of the Gortdrum copper-silver deposit in 1964. Also in the 1960s, he supervised the Thayer Lindsley interests in Australia under Westfield Minerals Limited and carried out various other projects in South and Central

America and in Canada. Another early client was Anglo American Corporation which was encouraged to participate in backing Murray Watts in his prospecting efforts in the eastern Arctic. This led to the discovery on Baffin Island of the highest grade, large tonnage deposit of iron in North America — still to be developed.

In 1968, Dr. Derry formed Dejour Mines Limited, originally to investigate a concept that uranium vein deposits in the Uranium City area of Saskatchewan were associated with the unconformity of the younger Martin Formation with the older crystalline basement rocks. Dejour, which is still active, gained a reputation for its championing of sometimes difficult, but innovative, geological concepts.

Dr. Derry joined with Charles Michener and James Booth, in 1969, to form the consulting firm of Derry, Michener and Booth which rapidly attained a prominent international reputation. In 1982, a merger with W.G. Wahl Limited created Derry, Michener, Booth & Wahl.

Despite this full and active business career, Duncan Derry readily found time to work with others and stimulate the advancement of the science of geology. He encouraged interdisciplinary communication and his scientific understanding and business and leadership qualities were unselfishly employed to the benefit of numerous institutions.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1946. Although not widely known, Dr. Derry served on a committee of the Royal Society of Canada in the late fifties which put forward a proposal to the Diefenbaker government recommending expansion of the Geological Survey of Canada for the purposes of improving the geological data base, increasing activity in the northern regions of Canada and providing work for the many unemployed geologists of that time. These proposals were ultimately accepted in 1958 and allowed for a rapid expansion of the Survey's sphere of activities.

The Society of Economic Geologists named him as its President in 1960, the first non-American to be so honoured. The Society has further recognized him as a Distinguished Lecturer in 1973 and as the posthumous recipient of its prestigious Penrose Medal in 1987.

He was instrumental in the launching of the Canadian Geological Foundation in 1968 and arranging its initial financing. He participated in the founding of the Canadian Geoscience Council, and contributed to the growth and development of the geology departments at the University of Toronto, Queen's University, University of Western Ontario, Harvard and Princeton through service on Advisory Committees. He was Chairman of the University of Toronto Advisory Committee from 1974 to 1978.

The Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy awarded him the Selwyn G. Blaylock Medal in 1974

and the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy recognized his service to the industry by naming him the recipient of their distinguished Gold Medal Award in 1976.

The Derry Laboratory, named in his honour, was established in 1984 as a graduate research unit of the Ottawa-Carleton Centre for Geoscience Studies.

Dr. Derry's appointment as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1981 was greeted with a great sense of pride and appreciation by geoscientists at home and abroad. Such a national honour was deserved, timely and appropriate. A short time later, his long association with the University of Toronto culminated with the award of an Honorary Doctor of Laws at the annual Convocation in 1984.

Throughout his career Duncan Derry delivered and published many papers, the most recent at the International Earth Science Congress in Johannesburg in the summer of 1986. In 1980, his major work *A Concise World Atlas of Geology and Mineral Deposits* was published by Mining Journal Books Limited of London, England.

Those who have had the privilege to work with Duncan Derry on exploration teams or on committees will remember him with admiration and a feeling of genuine respect. Although, at all times intensely aware of the progress of industry, the latter years of his career were directed more to issues of general public and professional concern than to the daily routine of business. To members of the Geological Association of Canada his passing is a sad loss. In his terms on Council and as President, he addressed many issues and influenced decisions which have become part of the Association's tradition and high reputation. Particularly, he emphasized professionalism in geology and continually advised politicians and administrators that the impact of the earth sciences on the average Canadian layman was greater than that of other sciences. We will now be denied his warm smile and his gentle but powerful presence at Annual Meetings but many members and speakers will recall, with appreciation, his frequent attendance at technical presentations and his pertinent questions and wise counsel during numerous discussions.

To his family we extend our sincere sympathy. His wife, Alice, and his two sons, Ramsay and Douglas, each distinguished in their chosen fields, often accompanied him to Association meetings. They will always be welcome.

We express our appreciation and respect to an outstanding man whose influence on the profession of geology and mineral exploration in Canada over a 60-year period will be felt long beyond our generation. For Canadian geology, the Ven. Roland Hill's words at the February Memorial Service in Port Credit were accurate and fitting. Duncan Ramsay Derry was, indeed, "a milestone along the way ...".