

ROCK LEGENDS

A BRIEF INSIGHT INTO THE CAREERS OF MINING AND EXPLORATION INDUSTRY EXPERTS.

Dan Johnson

Exploration Manager, Aeon Metals Limited

Q. When did you start?

I landed my first Geology job after graduating university in 1983 with the British Geological Survey as a Scientific Officer. I had less say in the place than the janitor, but it was a start. I was earning 62 pounds a week and living off a diet of sausages.

Q. Where did you start?

When I left school I completed a Bachelor of Science (drinking, rugby and geology) at Exeter University in Devon.

Q. Where have you worked?

I've worked in almost every mining state in Australia as well as in Malaysia and Britain. I've focused on gold and base metals with the occasional foray into exotics such as vanadium. I actually started in oil and gas in Britain doing a lot of seismic survey analysis. It was really affective highlighting stratigraphy and structure and in those days was basically only used in the Oil and Gas sector. It's now being used more in the minerals sector and we used it effectively last year at Walford Creek.

Q. Companies you've worked for?

- 13 years at **Asarco** which became Wiluna Mines
- Two years at **Great Central Mines**
- One year at **Normandy and MIM** as a contractor
- Chose **MIM** and stayed seven years
- Left **MIM** and took Executive Director role at **Sovereign** for two years until the GFC turned up
- **Aston Metals** as an Exploration Manager in 2009, which became Aeon Metals. Walford Creek was a key exploration project in the portfolio and we're continuing to develop it today as Aeon.



Q. How did you get into geology?

Being born on a farm, I have always loved the outdoors. I was originally going to do medicine, but I decided that I enjoyed geology. I most enjoyed the practical aspect of discovery and finding mineable deposits – which is frankly the high-risk side, but that didn't bother me.

I wasn't fazed about being in and out of a job. I found Exploration to have more variety than the rather controlled and regimented life in a mining operation.

Working for a smaller explorer gives you more exposure to a variety of tasks and you have a closer connection to the decision makers at the top of the Company. At the end of the day, the geo out in the bush beside the drill rig carries the knowledge and gets to formulate the strategy. In bigger companies, you tend to have bigger budgets and maybe better software, but you can struggle to have your voice heard in what are bigger teams. However, it does teach you to sell your particular project as if you don't, you won't get the funding and someone else's project will.

Q. Favourite place to explore?

I'll explore anywhere that's prospective. The Northwest Mineral Province (Mount Isa region) throws up many different types of deposits which provide anyone working in that area the opportunity to investigate several deposit types and models – which is pretty exciting. Western Australia also has great opportunities in terms of diverse minerals.

Q. What can be improved in the exploration and mining industries?

The most important thing is getting people to understand the significance of the exploration and mining sector – including the minerals being explored and why they're so important to everyone's livelihoods. If you look back 1000 years, mining was always important, and everyone was aware of that. Mankind has always been an explorer and geologist, and I think we've lost sight of that because society has been so removed from the exploration side that is so necessary. If people don't want mining, they don't want society as we have it today.

Q. If you were down to your last drill hole, where would you drill?

Naturally I'd like to keep developing the potential at Walford Creek and along strike of the current mineralisation identified. We also have Beauchamp west of Mount Isa. It's an interesting geological anomaly in terms of magnetics and I hope to get out there soon and drill it so that we know what is down there!

Q. Key advice for young geologists out there?

Enjoy the benefits of working in a great industry. Our industry is vital to everything the world needs and it's extraordinary that we've moved away from people understanding that. Whether you're chasing oil, gas, coal, precious metals and value type products, or new metals

and rare earths – they're all integral to life. Whether you're making a car, a wind farm or an electrical appliance – all this sh*t gets used!

Q. Any exploration companies out there whose projects you like?

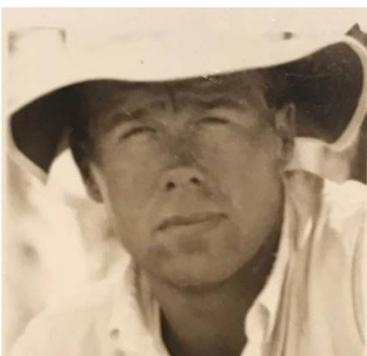
I follow the exploration space a lot. You need to realise that although projects may change hands 5 or 6 times, the value may still not be realised. It's important for geologists to realise that there are very often treasures within a company's portfolio that are yet to be unearthed – you just have to take the time to find it! That comes from being inquisitive, thoughtful and using your science, and not being afraid to fail. You're going to go down the wrong path many times, but it's not failure. It's testing theories which you can then write off and move on.

Q. If you could select one type of drill rig, what would it be?

One that works! It's not always the rig in all honesty. As I like to say, it's not just the horse, it's the jockey.

Q. I'll never forget...

It was winter in Wiluna (Western Australia) and I was a young geologist managing an aircore program. It started bucketing down with rain one afternoon, so we decided to have a few drinks thinking the next day would be a write off... At 5am I was woken up by the driller explaining they were good to drill. With a 'slight' headache I pegged the first hole for the boys to start. After a while of staring at the rig and then looking at the paperwork again, it then dawned on me that the darn rig was pointing the wrong way! Very sheepishly I asked the driller to stop and turn the rig around. I was a bit more circumspect after that with the Emu Bitter beers each night..."



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