



John R L Allen (25th October 1932 – 18th October 2020)

John Allen died on the 18th October, a week before his 88th birthday after a short illness. He was one of the giants of sedimentology. Would our discipline be where it is today without his contribution? Of course not. To many, John must seem a very distant figure as he had not published in an SEPM publication for decades but his influence over the fields of physical sedimentology and the development of facies models was enormous.

John obtained a 1st class degree in Geology at the University of Sheffield in 1955 and researched for his PhD but never submitted it, his doctorate was a DSc awarded for published papers. He was appointed to the University of Reading in 1958 where he continued his research activities after retiring in 2001, although teaching long after that date. John was a key member of the Sedimentology Research Laboratory which was powerhouse of research during the 1960s and later. He became the first Director of the Postgraduate Research Institute for Sedimentology (PRIS) in 1988, which is where we both worked with John for some years.

It is not possible here to even begin to cover the contributions John made across so many fields of sedimentology. John was an experimental sedimentologist who deciphered the physics involved in producing sedimentary structures. He was then able to take that understanding to the outcrop, whether in ancient alluvium, turbidites, sand waves or tidal bundles. We suspect few these days have a copy of John's 1968 433-page book on current ripples but many sedimentologists will have read his seminal 1970 book *Physical Processes in Sedimentation*, and most of us will have used, or are fortunate enough to own, his two volume *Sedimentary Structures: their character and physical basis*, and the single-volume edition on our bookshelf is 1256 pages long. Much of this understanding was used by John to elucidate the classic continental successions of the Siluro-Devonian Old Red Sandstone of Wales and the Welsh Borderlands and also the Catskills. Based on his experiences with

those rocks, John became one of the pioneers in the study and applications of paleosols in alluvial strata, but John also studied a range of ancient marine and also modern deltaic deposits. For his contributions to sedimentology John was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) in 1979.

Later in his career John would speak of moving on from sand to mud and he produced a large volume of work on modern estuaries and salt marshes. John became more involved in geoarchaeology publishing on amongst others Mesolithic, Roman and Medieval sites, and then more recently on geological aspects of church architecture and gravestones. In 2018 John's *Geology for Archaeologists* was published. As a mark of the esteem in which he was held, John was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (FSA) in 1991.

John received many honors including SEPM's Twenhofel Medal in 1987. Amongst his other awards was the G. K. Warren Prize of the US National Academy of Sciences in 1990; the Penrose Medal of the Geological Society of America in 1996; the Lyell Medal of the Geological Society of London in 1980 and the Sorby Medal of the International Association of Sedimentologists (IAS) in 1994.

John was a very private person, but there are many who can speak with great fondness of their time with him. The many items posted on a range of websites is evidence of the impact John had on so many lives and careers.

We wish to add to the calls that our community commemorates John's contribution in a tangible way by introducing an award in his honor.

Paul Wright and Susan Marriott-Wright
