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John A. Dulhunty – An Appreciation

B. D. Webby

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This issue of the Journal and Proceedings is published in honour of Dr. John A. Dulhunty, now in his seventy-sixth year. The contributions were first presented at a seventy-fifth birthday seminar held on 4 April, 1986, under the auspices of the Department of Geology and Geophysics of the University of Sydney and the Royal Society of New South Wales, to recognize the significant scientific achievements of John Dulhunty, formerly Reader, and now Honorary Research Affiliate, in Geology at the University of Sydney. The contributions by his former colleagues, associates and friends cover a wide range of geological topics which reflect John's own broad spread of research interests.

John Dulhunty was educated at the Cranbrook School in Sydney, and at the University of Sydney where he graduated in 1938 with a Bachelor of Science degree with First Class Honours in Economic Geology. He was awarded the Deas Thompson Scholarship for Mineralogy in 1938, and then supported in research appointments by a Linnean Macleay Fellowship from 1940 to 1944, and a Senior Commonwealth Research Fellowship from 1945 to 1949. His research culminated in the completion of his Doctor of Science thesis on the 'Classification and Origin of New South Wales torbanites' in 1946, and through the 1940s and 1950s the publication of an impressive series of thirty two papers on aspects on Australian coals. In addition to 'landmark' papers on the nature of torbanites and the metamorphic development of coal, he published three pioneering contributions (one jointly with his wife Roma) in the field of Australian Permian palynology. In 1951 he was appointed to a Senior Lectureship in Geology in the University of Sydney, and in 1957 promoted to Reader. In addition he was Acting Head of the Department of Geology and Geophysics on three occasions, during 1955, 1961 and again in 1967.

His association with the Royal Society of New South Wales has been an active and fruitful one. Since he first joined the Society in 1937 he has contributed thirty papers to the Society's Journal, served as President in 1947, acted as councillor and advisor on publications at various times. He presented the Clark Memorial Lecture in 1964 and received the award of the Medal of the Royal Society for service to Science in 1970. His other activities include a period as President of the Geological Society of Australia from 1964 to 1965.

Since his retirement in 1973, John has undertaken a most ambitious programme of research. With his wife Roma he has carried out a series of arduous expeditions to Lake Eyre, to document the major sequence of wet-dry cycles of sedimentological and geomorphological change in the lake. This has resulted in a number of important research papers to scientific journals, especially those of the Royal Societies of South Australia and New South Wales. Secondly he has continued to work towards establishing stratigraphical relationships using radiometric dating of Mesozoic-Cainozoic lavas in the central west of New South Wales also with significant research publications.

Colleagues and friends in the Department of Geology and Geophysics and among the wider geological community have an affection and admiration for John, not just because he reminds us of our links with the illustrious line of Sydney University geologists of the past, Edgeworth David, Cotton and Browne, but because we recognize his outstanding geological talents – his stimulating and entertaining lectures, his wise counsel and administrative expertise during periods as Acting Head of Department, his pioneering spirit of adventure, when no longer a young man, to undertake expeditions with Roma to Lake Eyre, and his lasting research contributions on a variety of aspects of Australian geology. For these reasons we were delighted that the Council of the Royal Society agreed to publish the proceedings of the John Dulhunty birthday seminar in the Society's Journal.

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