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## David Quentin Bowen: A memorial

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# Quaternary Science Reviews

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/quascirev](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/quascirev)

## David Quentin Bowen: A memorial



The Quaternary community lost a giant and a leader on October 5, 2020, when David Quentin Bowen, known to many as “DQ” and founding editor of *Quaternary Science Reviews*, passed away in Cardiff. Born on February 14, 1938 in Llanelli, South Wales, he received his PhD at University College London. David’s 50 years of contributions to our science cannot be adequately summarized in a brief memorial but past, present, and future generations of Quaternary scientists will long remember his landmark achievements in publishing, his scientific contributions, and his personal and professional class in all his endeavors.

David’s landmark 1978 book *Quaternary Geology: A stratigraphic framework for multidisciplinary work* (Pergamon) was the first to bridge the gap between traditional “Pleistocene Geology” and the exploding field of paleoclimatology. In this book he recognized the community needed a paradigm shift from land-based studies of past ice sheets to new approaches to understand the last 2 million years of Earth history. Thus, he incorporated chapters on new regions (non-glaciated areas), the significance of new marine records (including marine oxygen isotope stratigraphy), the critical nature of stratigraphy and geochronology in nearly all Quaternary studies, and other topics we take for granted today. His early recognition of the significance of land – sea correlations in Quaternary science culminated in the 2005 *QSR* volume dedicated to David, “Quaternary land–ocean correlation: A tribute to Professor David Q. Bowen” edited by D. Maddy, A. Long, and D. Bridgland.

How do we measure his impact? His book on Quaternary geology has been used and cited by countless scholars. It is on the bookshelf of every serious student of the Quaternary. His encyclopedic knowledge of the Quaternary of the British Isles includes contributions on complex stratigraphic correlations, interglacial sea-level high stands, and geochronology. His numerous journal articles have been cited hundreds of times. Perhaps his greatest legacy was the founding of *QSR* in 1981, first published in 1982. In doing so, he launched a truly interdisciplinary outlet that has grown exponentially and today is the field’s premier journal, covering disciplines from archaeology to climate modeling. Some of us had the

honor of contributing to the inaugural *QSR* volume, and like thousands of scientists since then who have published in *QSR*, we all benefitted from David’s singular foresight and vision. Other *QSR* milestones of David’s include changing *QSR* from a review-only journal to one welcoming original research papers, inviting guest editors, publishing pre-Quaternary special volumes, enlightening book reviews and much more.

David had a great talent for inspiring young advocates of the Quaternary, as is evident from the esteem in which he is held by those he taught and supervised. His undergraduate students at Aberystwyth went on to research careers inspired by his knowledge and enthusiasm. His oratory skills, his ability to paint a picture and weave an engaging narrative allowed students to “experience” the Quaternary not just study it.

As for promoting our subject more widely, it is worth noting David’s contribution to the conservation of geological and, especially, Quaternary interests, as exemplified by his work for British government conservation agencies: for the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) as Quaternary advisor and editor of the *Geological Conservation Review* (GCR) and member of the Advisory Committee for Wales (1986–1991); as co-author of the first volume to be published in the GGR series (*Quaternary of Wales*); following the division of the NCC, as Vice-Chairman (1991–2001) of the Countryside Council for Wales and a member of the governing committee of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the body formed to oversee and co-ordinate the now separate national agencies for England, Scotland and Wales. He was also the Chairman of the Llanelli Millennium Coastal Park (1996–2001), at the town of his birth and where he spent his youth. David’s many activities and recognitions include Fellow Geological Society London; member American Geophysical Union, Quaternary Research Association, United Kingdom, and honorary life member of the International Union Quaternary Research.

More than his scientific contributions, it was David’s personality and perpetual optimism that distinguished him from others. Those who knew him were fortunate to enjoy his wit and charm, his kindness, his field trips and lectures on outcrops, and the fire and spirit which he brought to many scientific debates. Memories of stimulating conversations over excellent food and a fine wine and a stop at an interesting pub were essential when DQ was leading field excursions.

These sentiments, captured best by one of us (JTA), put the David Bowen we all knew into focus:

*“DQ was both a friend and a colleague although I have to admit that we were staunch enemies when it came to rugby—DQ was a proud Welshman; for my part I continually reminded him that a rugby XV from my small mining town (pop. 7000) went down to Llanelli in the 1890’s and beat the Llanelli 1st XV. I was also at pains to point*

out that the Millom RUFC was founded in 1873 two years prior to DQ's more famous Club (pop. Now ~50,000). However, our friendship started via snail mail and involved some of the first efforts to use amino acid racemization as a means of understanding the Quaternary sequence in the UK. This involved DQ sending samples to me to run in Giff Miller's Amino Acid Lab at INSTAAR in the mid and late 1970's. These initial exchanges led to a strong link between David and present and past colleagues at INSTAAR, including Giff Miller, Peter Clark, John Hollin (deceased), and Julie Brigham-Grette. In part, I would also claim that the concept of "Quaternary Science Reviews" started or was encouraged by this trans-Atlantic connection, and I was privileged to contribute to that first issue of what has become the "go to" journal for Quaternary studies. The ties were also personal, with David staying with John and Martha in Boulder, and John in the winter of 1982 (I think) taking the "train ride to hell", i.e. a British Rail journey from one isolated town, Millom, to another, Aberystwyth. It took something like 6 changes of trains and innumerable hours. It also coincided with a major snowstorm that stranded me in Aber. As both road and rail service were blocked by snowdrifts."

David's passing is an irreplaceable loss to our community and he is sorely missed. But his legacy of accomplishments and zest for our science will no doubt continue to influence future generations of Quaternary scientists.

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