VALE

Richard Aldridge, 1945-2014

Richard Aldridge was Emeritus Professor of Geology at the University of Leicester. He joined the University in 1989 from the University of Nottingham, where he was Reader in Palaeontology. He became a Professor at Leicester in 1996, served as head of the Department of Geology from 1998 to 2004, and held the F.W. Bennett Professorship from 2002 until he retired in 2011.

His passing is a great loss to the academic community as well as to his family and friends. A Londoner by birth, he gained his BSc in Geology and a PhD from the University of Southampton. Dick, as he was always known, was a palaeontologist specializing in the investigation of Lower Palaeozoic fossils. He was a world authority on conodonts that he used in ground-breaking discoveries that helped elucidate the early evolution of vertebrates. Such research was highlighted in Simon Knell's book on *The Great Fossil Enigma*. He investigated ancient, exceptionally well-preserved fossil deposits, especially in South Africa and China, in order to reveal the palaeobiology and evolution of extinct animals and thereby gain insight into key episodes in the history of life. Using a range of microfossils he also established schemes to date, correlate and environmentally signature early rock sequences both locally and internationally.

His leadership and wisdom was widely sought after, and he served many learned societies and organisations with distinction. He served as president of the International Palaeontological Association (2002-6), the Palaeontological Association (2008-10), the Micropalaeontological Society (1995-8), and the Geology Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (2001-2). He was also on a range of NERC, Royal Society and other professional committees. His academic merit and contributions were widely recognized; he was the recipient of the Lapworth Medal of the Palaeontological Association, the Coke medal of the Geological Society and the Brady Medal of the Micropalaeontological Society.

Dick enjoyed teaching and he excelled at it. In addition to his distinguished scientific research and publications his enduring legacy will undoubtedly be his enthusiasm for learning and for the philosophy and curiosity-driven nature of science that was warmly appreciated by all the undergraduate students he taught over the years and by nearly 30 doctoral research students who benefited from his training. Many of those he supervised now occupy senior positions in academia and other professional bodies. He was a much-loved and generous colleague, always willing to help and offer advice. Especially when he was in Nottingham, he was an active member of the Society, and edited the *Mercian Geologist* from 1992 to 1995.

David Siveter and Mark Purnell