

Vale - David Branagan
1930 - 2022



Biographical Entry: <https://www.eoas.info/biogs/P002064b.htm>
and
[Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science University of Sydney Sue Tyler Friedman Medal 2015: Dr. David Branagan](#)

It is with great sadness we share with you the news that Dr David Branagan has passed away aged 91. His influence on, and contributions to, so many facets of Australian science will be his legacy, and he will be greatly missed by his many geological colleagues.

David was born in Broken Hill, and like many SMEDG members he studied geology at the Sydney University, graduating in 1950. He spent the first four years of his career as a geologist with the Geological Survey of NSW, developing a growing expertise in the coal deposits of NSW. After a short stint in industry, he returned to Sydney University where he completed his PhD and remained there for 30 years. He advanced progressively through the teaching ranks to become an Associate Professor from 1975 to 1989, when he retired. His teaching expertise was in the fields of coal geology, mining engineering geology, photogeology, geomorphology and field mapping. He was also the founder of the Sydney University Speleological Society and the St Gregory Chorale which performed early sacred music, accompanied by his deep baritone voice.

As well as being an eminent and much-loved teacher of geology, his writings on the history of our science and the lives and achievements of the many pioneering geologists and explorers will always be seen as his most distinguished contributions. He wrote around 20 books, and 230 papers and articles, about half of which have been dedicated to the history of geology and related sciences.

He was a founding member of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA) in 1952, and the founding editor of *The Australian Geologist* in 1974, a role he held for 10

years. He received many honours and awards, including Honorary Life Membership of the GSA in 1992, the Royal Society of NSW Medal in 1998, and in 2018 he was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Below are tributes from his former students and colleagues:

"What a wonderful contribution Dave made to our science and also to the history of our science. "

"Dave was a gentleman, he lectured us in geomorphology and air photo analysis as well as being a leader on various field trips at Sydney Uni. Always approachable and unfailingly helpful, he was the link between David, Osborne, Browne, Joplin and Vallance (and others) in the papal succession of classical geologists that were larger than life and had widespread interests."

"A fun and fearless leader in my university days. I was privileged to have him as a First-Year lecturer, and also benefitted from his practical knowledge and participation in many enjoyable university field trips. Dave Branno as we called him, also was the most approachable and friendly First Year lecturer, and definitely influenced many students to continue on to do geology."

We would also like to take this opportunity to pass on our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of David on his passing.

What a wonderful contribution Dave made to our science and also to the history of our science

Lindsay Gilligan.

Hi Lindsay and friends,

Thanks for sharing that sad news. Like you Lindsay, by going to UNSW, we were not privileged to share the benefits of being under David's educational excellence at Sydney University.

His contributions to researching and communicating the wonders of the geology of NSW have been immense, which, accompanied by his celebration of the lives and contributions of the geological pioneers of our region in his writings will be his enduring legacy. For those who did not know him, here is a link to his brief biography

<https://www.eoas.info/biogs/P002064b.htm>.

It is interesting to note that he was born in Broken Hill and was a founding member of the GSA in 1950, and the founding editor of *The Australian Geologist* in 1974.

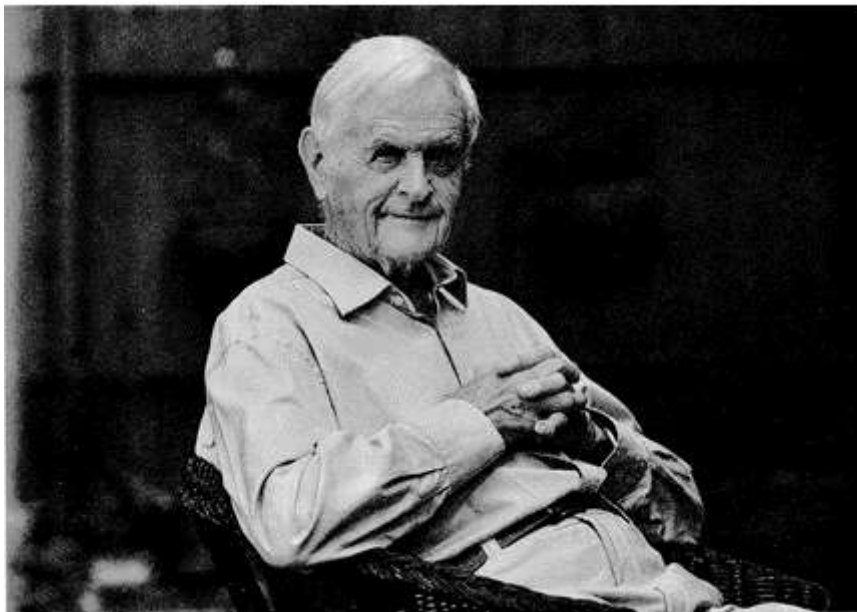
I was fortunate to chat with him and delve into his knowledge of the legendary GSNSW geologists when I was preparing my "*Legends of Economic Geology*" talk for the SMEDG Lifetime Awards dinner in 2018.

Vale David.
Russell Meares

Yes, Dave was a fun and fearless leader in university days. I was privileged to have him as a first year lecturer, and also benefitted from his practical knowledge and participation in many enjoyable university field trips. I believe he was also the founder of SUSS (Sydney University Spelio Society) of which I was a member for many years, and where I found many adventurous friends (many still enjoy the outdoors with us, but not caving any more). Dave Branno, as we called him, was also the most approachable and friendly first year lecturer, and definitely influenced many students to continue on to do geology.

On one memorable occasion I remember he carried me over the line in a girls vs guys football game in my first year uni (this is letting the cat out of the bag!) in 1966. Sandra Close and Sue O'Reilly also were students at this time.

Jane Barron



David Branagan AM at his Willoughby home.