

John Eastoe (1926–2021)



John Eric Eastoe was born in Stoke Newington, north London, in 1926 to Sunday school teacher Winifred and real-estate quantity surveyor Eric. He was very bright with a natural aptitude for science and attended Hungerford Road Infant and Junior School before earning himself a place at Minchenden Grammar School. In 1947, John graduated from Imperial College London with a BSc in chemistry. He continued his studies at Imperial and, under the supervision of Professor Cook in the Department of Agricultural Chemistry, gained a PhD in plant nutrition in 1950 with his thesis entitled 'A study of the effect of the porous earthenware flower pot on the nutrition of plants'.

On completing his PhD, John took up a post as Senior Research Officer at the British Gelatine and Glue Research Association in London where Professor Alan Ward was in the process of assembling a team of bright young scientists, whose purpose was to study the scientific basis of gelatine and animal glue manufacture and use. John not only became part of the scientific endeavour at 'BG squared' (BG²), as he affectionately referred to the Association, but it was also where he met his future wife, Beryl, who was employed there as a lab technician. They married in 1951. In 1957, John moved on to the Department of Dental Science at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, where he became a Leverhulme and Freemasons Research Fellow in the Department of Dental Science. This shift in research interests proved fruitful, and he went on to receive various awards for his contributions to dental research: the Colgate–Palmolive Prize for Dental Research (1960; International Association for Dental Research [IADR]); the European Organisation for Caries Research (ORCA) Prize (1965) for work on enamel proteins; and an IADR Distinguished Scientist Award for Basic Research in Biological Mineralisation (1969). In 1965, he was awarded a DSc (Biochemistry) on the merits of his published work, the scientific achievement he was most proud of. In 1980, John and Beryl relocated from London to the North East, where John was appointed Professor of Oral Physiology/Biology and Head of the Department of Oral Physiology (later Oral Biology) at Newcastle University. Five years later he became an elected Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (Dental Surgery; FDSRCS) and in 1990 he retired, remaining an emeritus professor of Newcastle University.

At 94 years young, John had outlived most of his colleagues and contemporaries, and retrospectively

piecing together his academic career and research interests has been hampered somewhat by the passage of time and our own lack of expertise. Nonetheless, looking back over his extensive published work reveals an interesting journey from his early days in plant nutrition and flowerpots, via gelatine and collagen research, papers on bone composition and analytical methods and seminal work on enamel proteins (including amelogenins), through to numerous publications in the field of dental and oral biology. In addition, John also (co-)authored a number of text books over the course of his career and latterly served as an editorial advisor for the *Biochemical Journal*, remaining a member of the Biochemical Society throughout his retirement. It seems that his natural curiosity, intellect and understanding of biochemistry, coupled with a thorough application of basic science and analytical techniques, took him a long way.

Although not dentally qualified himself, John did exceptionally well working alongside dental professionals. One of the things he enjoyed most about his role at Newcastle University was the care of his students, and he took a keen interest in both teaching and pastoral care, also serving as an external examiner for a number of UK universities as well as the Universities of Hong Kong and Malaysia. One graduate from the dental school at Newcastle who was interviewed, and later taught, by 'Prof' Eastoe recalled how he would play classical music at the beginning of his lectures. Another very fondly described how Prof's door was always open and remembers his enthusiasm, encouragement and support and the integral role this played in her studies, and subsequently her professional development.

John was an intelligent man with an inquiring mind, which remained sharp even in his 90s. He was also funny, thoughtful and caring – a true gentleman. John sadly passed away in February 2021 and is survived by his wife Beryl, children Sally and Richard, seven grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. He will be missed and remembered affectionately by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Jenny Wilkinson (granddaughter) and family