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1 OBITUARY

2

3 **Edwin George ('Ted') Spinner (1938–2018)**

4



5

6

(place the photograph supplied here)

7

8 **1. Introduction and Ted's early years (1938–1957)**

9 Edwin George ('Ted') Spinner passed away on 23 February 2018 at the age of 80. He was a  
10 lifelong palynologist, Carboniferous megaspore expert and stalwart of the Palynology School  
11 at the University of Sheffield, England where he worked all his career. Ted Spinner was born  
12 on 27 January 1938, the youngest of seven children, and was raised as part of a farming  
13 family in the charming tiny village of Worlingworth, deep in rural Suffolk, southeast  
14 England. Worlingworth is located between Bury St Edmunds and Southwold, and had a  
15 population of only ~500 in the 1930s. Ted attended the local primary school and passed his  
16 eleven-plus examination, thereby winning him a place at Eye Grammar School. This  
17 secondary school is in a small market town around 11 km northwest of Worlingworth. He and  
18 a friend were the first ever children from Worlingworth to pass these entrance examinations.  
19 Because no pupils from Ted's primary school had ever achieved this feat, the Local  
20 Education Authority (LEA) buses did not connect Worlingworth to Eye Grammar School.  
21 The solution to this dilemma was to provide Ted and his fellow pupil with 'LEA bikes' with  
22 which to cycle the seven mile journey to and from school! Ted excelled at Eye Grammar  
23 School, being made Head Boy and appearing on the School academic honours board for two  
24 consecutive years. He also passed his university entrance exams, the first member of his  
25 family to achieve this.

26

27 **2. Undergraduate student life in Sheffield (1957–1960)**

28 Ted chose to study Geology at the University of Sheffield, and travelled north by train  
29 in the autumn of 1957. He would have arrived at the old Victoria Station in Sheffield, and

30 Ted's first impressions of the city would have been the steelworks in Attercliffe and  
31 Brightside. The contrast of industrial Sheffield with the John Constablesque landscape of  
32 Suffolk he had left a few hours before could not have been more dramatic. This culture shock  
33 that Ted undoubtedly faced would have been experienced by many first year students from  
34 rural areas who arrived in Sheffield during the late 1950s. The city, like the rest of the  
35 country, was in the process of rebuilding after World War II. Bomb-damaged buildings were  
36 still obvious in many parts of Sheffield, trams trundled their noisy ways in almost every  
37 direction and everywhere was subject to severe air pollution from the burgeoning steel  
38 industry. The young Ted Spinner must have been truly astounded to be living in a setting  
39 which was the absolute polar opposite of his idyllic and peaceful Suffolk home.

40 Ted spent his undergraduate days in lodgings in the southern Sheffield suburb of  
41 Nether Edge at the home of the Collins family. He formed a very strong relationship with his  
42 landlady, Mary Collins, which was to survive for over 40 years. Together with his fellow  
43 1957 Geology students, Ted graduated in the summer of 1960; he achieved an Upper Second  
44 (2:1) Honours Degree.

45

### 46 **3. Postgraduate research (1960–1964)**

47 The Sheffield Honours Geology class of 1960 as a whole was extremely committed  
48 and engaged with the earth sciences. Consequently almost half Ted's fellow graduates  
49 decided to continue in science via postgraduate research. Ted initially embarked on a PhD  
50 project funded by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research close to his Suffolk  
51 heart, a study of the Quaternary palynostratigraphy of the area around Hoxne, Suffolk which  
52 is ~37 km east of Thetford in southern Norfolk. This research project had substantial  
53 difficulties from the outset with problems accessing suitable samples, and very poor  
54 palynomorph recovery from the material Ted had been able to collect.

55 Fortunately however, a suitable solution rapidly emerged to Ted's travails. The then  
56 Head of the Department of Geology at Sheffield, Professor Leslie R. Moore (1912–2003),  
57 suggested that Ted work on Carboniferous megaspores under the supervision of himself and  
58 the palaeobotanist Robert H. Wagner (1927–2018), who had been appointed at Sheffield  
59 during 1960 with the task of reviving palaeobotany in the UK. Bob Wagner, who incidentally  
60 passed away only three days before Ted (Cleal et al. 2018), was at that time undertaking  
61 research on the palaeobotany of the Middle Pennsylvanian [Asturian/Moscovian]  
62 Warwickshire Group of the Forest of Dean coalfield between the Severn and Wye valleys in  
63 western Gloucestershire, southwest England (Moore 1954, Wagner and Spinner 1972, Waters

64 et al. 2007, Waters et al. 2011). Ted readily agreed to research the megaspores and miospores  
65 from the Pennsylvanian successions in the Forest of Dean being studied by Bob Wagner. Ted  
66 had a ready-made initial sample set and these were very productive; thus Ted's research path  
67 on Carboniferous megaspores and miospores was set for life. Throughout his career,  
68 however, he concentrated largely on megaspores (Supplemental data).

69 During the early 1960's most of the adits and mines in the Forest of Dean coalfield  
70 were readily accessible, and Ted took detailed sample collections of all the relevant  
71 successions exposed at that time. However, the extraction of the megaspores was a relatively  
72 undeveloped technique at the time and Ted had to experiment. The palynology laboratory on  
73 the top floor of the Applied Science Building, overlooking St George's Church, on Mappin  
74 Street naturally operated with the best contemporary health and safety standards. Despite this,  
75 many of Ted's contemporaries worried about the prodigious amounts of bromine he used!  
76 Ted shared the laboratory with a diverse group of palynologists including Ralph Coffey,  
77 Barrie Dale, Charles Downie, George Hart, M.A. Husain, Tony Jenkins, Dick Lister, Leonard  
78 Love, Alan Marshall, David Mishell, Leslie Moore, Roger Neves, Bernard Owens, John  
79 Richardson, Frank Spode, Herbert Sullivan, John Varker, David Wall and Graham Williams  
80 (Sarjeant 1984, Wellman 2005). Most working days ended at around 10 pm before  
81 adjourning to the Hallamshire public house around the corner on West Street. Since most of  
82 the PhD students in this group had acquired motorbikes for fieldwork. Ted Spinner's  
83 motorcycle of choice was a monstrous BSA 650cc; no doubt Ted in leathers astride this beast  
84 was a truly awesome sight.

85 It was not, of course, all about work. Perhaps because he now lived in the city that  
86 gave the beautiful game to the world (Farnsworth 1995), Ted decided early on in his  
87 postgraduate days to become a football referee. He qualified first as a linesman (now assistant  
88 referee) and then as a referee able to officiate at Sheffield and Hallamshire Football  
89 Association Sunday League matches. Local football played according to Ted Spinner's  
90 interpretation of the rules did not always meet with the approval of players and spectators.  
91 The BSA 650cc was clearly a sound idea! Football refereeing duties notwithstanding, Ted  
92 worked very hard on his PhD, and was duly awarded this degree in 1964 for a thesis entitled  
93 Megaspores and miospores from the Forest of Dean Coalfield. This was partially published  
94 as Spinner (1965).

95

#### 96 **4. A scientific career at the University of Sheffield**

97           Immediately after obtaining his PhD, Ted was appointed a Research Fellow at  
98 Sheffield supervised by Leslie Moore to work on the organic remains in the Precambrian  
99 Nonesuch Shale Formation (Oronto Group) from the Lake Superior Basin in Ontonagon  
100 County, Michigan, USA. The Nonesuch Shale Formation is a lacustrine siliciclastic unit of  
101 Middle Proterozoic age which contains substantial organic carbon which has been interpreted  
102 as being evidence of photosynthesis (Meinschein et al. 1964). Ted was a co-author of Moore  
103 et al. (1969) who reported an ecosystem of fungal remains and apparently saprophytically  
104 degraded palynomorphs from this unit.

105           During his time as a Research Fellow, Ted also continued his work on Carboniferous  
106 megaspores including a productive collaboration with Mavis Butterworth (1927–1996) who,  
107 at the time, was also a Research Fellow in the Department of Geology (Butterworth and  
108 Spinner 1967). After his Research Fellowship, ended Ted was appointed as a lecturer in 1965  
109 (is 1965 right Charlie, or was it 1971?) and remained on the staff at Sheffield until his  
110 retirement in 1997.

111           Ted lectured in geology to the undergraduates and also on the famous Sheffield  
112 Master's course in Palynology that began in 1967 and was run until 2001. This course was a  
113 one-year programme comprising taught modules with a final examination, and practical work  
114 including an original research dissertation. For most of its life it was approved and funded by  
115 the Natural Environment Research Council as a part of its range of vocational postgraduate  
116 awards. During his time in Sheffield, Ted interacted with all of the ~300 palynology students  
117 (>200 MSc and >100 PhD) that graduated through the Sheffield Palynology School (Spinner  
118 1986, Wellman 2005). Ted was an incredibly popular lecturer whom students naturally  
119 gravitated towards. He adopted an open-door policy and was a first port of call for students  
120 for academic advice or to air their concerns and problems that Ted would solve in a most  
121 genial manner. Ted diffused difficulties for students so effectively, the vast majority of these  
122 cases never troubled the more formal departmental hierarchy. It is not too surprising that  
123 Ted's extremely skilful pastoral care of students lead to roles working with students in the  
124 university halls of residence. Between 1965 and 1973, Ted served as a Tutor at Earnshaw  
125 Hall. Later, between 1975 and 1983, Ted was Warden of Tapton Hall. This was a role in  
126 which he was particularly successful, operating as an efficient director but still accessible and  
127 available to the students.

128           Charles Downie and Roger Neves ran the Sheffield Master's course in Palynology  
129 during the 1970s and early 1980s; both retired in 1984 and Ted became course director. He  
130 duly set about invigorating and modernising the course in order to ensure its survival through

131 what were extremely challenging times in the UK Higher Education sector. Specifically the  
132 University Grant Committee Earth Sciences Review recommended closure of the Department  
133 of Geology at Sheffield in 1987. A number of near-simultaneous staff retirements  
134 immediately prior to this exercise in scrutiny, which was not repeated for other subjects, had  
135 made the department vulnerable. As a result, during 1988, the Palynology School was  
136 reorganised. Despite the potential closure of the Department of Geology, the MSc and PhD  
137 programmes in palynology were thriving and graduates continued to be in great demand. The  
138 Centre for Palynological Studies (CPS) was instigated with Ted as its first Director.  
139 Alongside the CPS, an informal Industrial Palynology Unit was informally set up (Wellman  
140 2005). Ted ran the CPS and undertook the majority of the teaching and supervision. He was  
141 helped in particular at that time by Ken Dorning and Wolfgang Wille, together with  
142 numerous honorary/visiting lecturers most of whom were Sheffield graduates. The  
143 Department of Geology was finally closed in the summer of 1990 and the CPS was  
144 transferred to the Department of Animal and Plant Sciences. Ted had a significant boost in  
145 1991 when the Paleogene palynology expert David Jolley, was appointed by the CPS as a  
146 new lecturer in palynology. This appointment eased Ted's administrative and teaching duties,  
147 and increased the breadth of stratigraphical coverage in the CPS.

148 Ted formally retired in 1997. It is an indication of the esteem and respect for him  
149 within the community that a retirement dinner for ex-Sheffield palynologists was organised at  
150 Tapton Hall by Tony Loy and Pat Mellor. This event was attended by over 100 former  
151 colleagues and students, including some that had travelled from as far away as Canada and  
152 the USA.

153 Ted also diligently and generously served the broader geological community,  
154 involving himself in the development and organisation of the teaching of geology in  
155 secondary schools in the UK. Between: 1970 and 1975, Ted was responsible for the  
156 introduction of geology teaching within the Postgraduate Certificate in Education in the  
157 Department of Education at Sheffield; this comprised a novel, fieldwork-based approach.  
158 Subsequently he became the Chair of Examiners for the Northern Universities Joint  
159 Matriculation Board Geology Advanced Level course, studied by 16–18 year olds. He was  
160 responsible to the board for the development of the syllabus, and for the setting and marking  
161 of examination papers.

162 In addition to his administration and teaching duties, Ted was also a highly successful  
163 scientist; he supervised many MSc, MPhil and PhD projects. Moreover, he published  
164 numerous scientific papers including collaborations with colleagues such as Mavis

165 Butterfield, David Jolley, Bob Wagner and Charles Wellman, and postgraduate students such  
166 as Steve Brindley and Nick Turner (Supplemental data). These papers were largely on  
167 Carboniferous megaspores, but also on other diverse subject areas deriving from postgraduate  
168 student research projects. He worked mainly on the Carboniferous megaspores of the UK,  
169 however Spinner (1969) and Jolley and Spinner (1989) were Ted's only ventures outside  
170 Europe and on marine palynomorphs respectively. Ted also undertook voluntary work for  
171 scientific societies. This included a stint as the Newsletter Editor for the British  
172 Micropalaeontological Society (now The Micropalaeontological Society) between 1979 and  
173 1983, and sat on the Council of the Yorkshire Geological Society (1983–1985).

174 Ted Spinner will be remembered with great affection by all the students he  
175 encountered at the University of Sheffield, be that in his capacity as Hall Tutor/Warden,  
176 Lecturer or Supervisor. Ted could be old fashioned in certain respects, but in others he was  
177 very much on the right side of history. For example, he much preferred to adopt a lively tone  
178 in scientific writing avoiding the passive tense and using pronouns such as 'we' and 'our'.  
179 This more dynamic and sprightly style is now the new norm in science writing in North  
180 America, and is rapidly becoming much more common in Europe. All his students and  
181 colleagues will recall his innate charm as well as his very forthright and robust views,  
182 stridently expressed. Another trademark was his trusty pipe charged with highly aromatic  
183 tobacco. The pipe was always with him, lit or unlit, and was used to great effect as an aid to  
184 gesticulation when he offered his wise council (see the photograph above). The Sheffield  
185 Palynology School owes Ted Spinner a huge debt of gratitude for a lifetime of dedication.

186

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190

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197 **Supplemental data**

198 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed here

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- 235
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251

252

### 253 SUPPLEMENTAL DATA

254

255 This Appendix is a chronologically-arranged list of Ted Spinner's 33 major scientific  
256 publications.

257

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260

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262 Woodbury Hill, near Abberley, Worcestershire. *Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological*  
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264

265 Butterworth MA, Spinner E. 1967. Lower Carboniferous spores from north-west England.  
266 *Palaeontology* 10:1–24.

267  
268 Spinner E. 1968. Contribution on the megaspore genus *Tuberculatisporites* (Ibrahim)  
269 Potonie and Kremp 1954. *Pollen et Spores* 10:395–410.  
270  
271 Higgins AC, Spinner EG. 1968. Techniques for the extraction of selected microfossils.  
272 *Welsh Geological Quarterly* 4:25–36.  
273  
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275 Scotland. *Palaeontology* 12:441–458.  
276  
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278 Quebrada del Tupe, La Rioja, Argentina. *Pollen et Spores* 11:669–685.  
279  
280 Moore LM, Moore JRM, Spinner, E. 1969. A geomicrobiological study of the Pre-  
281 Cambrian Nonesuch Shale. *Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society* 37:351–394.  
282  
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284 macro- and microflora of the Forest of Dean Coalfield (Gloucestershire), England.  
285 *Proceedings of the International Geological Congress (Montreal, 1972), Section 7*:428–  
286 437.  
287  
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289 Spinner 1967. *Pollen et Spores* 24:301–313.  
290  
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292 northern England. *Journal of Micropalaeontology* 1:19–22.  
293  
294 Spinner E. 1983. Some new sporomorphs from the Lower Carboniferous of N. W.  
295 England. *Pollen et Spores* 25:117–129.  
296  
297 Spinner E. 1983. Two new species of *Lagenicula* from the Upper Carboniferous  
298 (Westphalian B) of North Derbyshire, England. *Pollen et Spores* 25:243–251.  
299

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302

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305 England. *Pollen et Spores* 26:117–126.  
306

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310

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313

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315 Fife, Scotland. *Pollen et Spores* 28:435–450.  
316

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319

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339

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