

## OBITUARY

### **Professor Leslie Rowsell Moore 1912–2003**



Professor Leslie Moore, a former Sorby Professor and Head of the Department of Geology in the University of Sheffield, died on the 13 November 2003 at the age of 91 years. He was the driving force in the establishment of the Micropalaeontological Society.

In 1968, during a period when the Geological Society, London was trying to co-ordinate the activities of all Specialist Working Groups in Britain, Leslie Moore was approached by the President of the Society with the request to assess the potential for establishing a Group to cater for the needs of micropalaeontologists. He consulted widely on the issue, not only within the micropalaeontological community but also with industry and other interested societies, only to find no overwhelming enthusiasm for the proposal. He was, however, impressed by the commitment within all branches of the science for the need for a greater degree of organization and identity

and proposed the establishment of an autonomous body to meet those needs. It also provided the necessary ‘breathing space’ for the significance of the Geological Society proposals to be considered in full. The British Micropalaeontological Group was born in 1970 and Leslie Moore served as its first Chairman. During his tenure it became obvious that the way forward was to formalize the structure and, in due course, it emerged as the British Micropalaeontological Society.

Leslie was born on June 23, 1912, the son of a miner in the Somerset Coalfield and he grew up in the small mining and market town of Midsomer Norton. He was always interested in the natural sciences, did extremely well at school and, with the aid of a Miner’s Welfare Scholarship, won a place at the University of Bristol where he decided to read for a degree in geology. Leslie was a gifted student and went on to obtain a first class degree in 1934. A strong sportsman, he captained the University football team at Bristol. He was later to serve as President of the University football club in Sheffield for many years.

As a postgraduate student at Bristol, Leslie came under the guidance of Professor Arthur Trueman, the influential Carboniferous stratigrapher and coalfield geologist. A contact no doubt reflected in the choice of his PhD research on the structure, stratigraphy and economic geology of the Bristol and Somerset Coalfields. Early in that research, he realized the value of fossil faunal and floral evidence in resolving the problems of regional correlation in the Coal Measures and exploited them to make significant proposals. He was awarded his PhD in 1936.

Leslie’s first job after graduation was in teaching in Suffolk but he was soon appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in Geology at the University College Cardiff in the University of Wales, where his research expanded to embrace the South Wales Coalfields. His intimate knowledge of the Somerset and South Wales Coalfields meant that he spent the war years assisting in the exploitation of the important coal resources of both these areas. It was during this period that he developed research interests in those areas of palaeobotany that were subsequently to provide a major impetus to the emerging science of palynology. Whilst macerating the fructifications from numerous Coal Measure plants, he noted that the miospores recovered displayed a wide range of morphological variation which he suggested were representative of a series of developmental stages towards maturity. The observation that similar trends could be observed in the fructifications from different plant groups was to have major implications on the emerging schemes for the classification of dispersed miospores. The results of these investigations were published in the Geological Society in 1946 and Leslie was awarded the Lyell Fund by that Society in 1947 and his DSc from the University of Bristol in 1948. He moved briefly to a more senior position at the University of Glasgow before being appointed to a Readership in the University of Bristol.

In 1949, he accepted an invitation to become Sorby Professor of Geology in the University of Sheffield, an appointment that was to occupy much of the remainder of his working life. He was charged with the task of developing the science in Sheffield and his success can be measured by the fact that by the late 1960s–early 1970s the Department had grown to become one of the largest in Great Britain. Countless generations of students will remember the excellent quality of his teaching. He always taught the major part of the first year courses, frequently lecturing to classes of more than 100 but never failing to arouse their interest and enthusiasm. His expansive demonstrations of structure and stratigraphy in the field were always highlights of any Sheffield field class and many students will remember well the wake-up call with the climb at speed to the top of Shute Shelf Hill in the Mendips, in order to provide a sound overview of the regional geology. Despite the administrative demands of running a large department for more than 28 years, as well as acting as the first Warden of the new Earnshaw Hall of Residence, Leslie's commitment to the science was always maintained. He continued to work extensively in coalfield geology in Yorkshire, South Wales and Somerset, encouraging research in sedimentary geochemistry. In 1966, he was called as an expert witness to the Government Enquiry following the Aberfan disaster. He always maintained a significant interest in the teaching of geology at all levels in education and played a major lead role in the establishment of the Association of Teachers of Geology.

Leslie Moore's appreciation of the importance of biostratigraphy in geological investigations naturally resulted in palaeontology playing an important role in any Sheffield course. By the late 1950s, Leslie Moore had Charles Downie, Peter Sylvester-Bradley and Roger Neves on the staff. Together they were responsible for the development of the foundations of the Sheffield department's global reputation in micropalaeontological and palynological research. Leslie also personally supervised the research work of others, including Herbert Sullivan, John Richardson and George Hart on various Upper Palaeozoic palynological topics and the later Carboniferous conodont work of Alan Higgins and John Varker. From his initial vision, more than 250 postgraduates have gone forward to senior positions in industry and academia world-wide. The foundations that he laid in the 1950s provided the basis for the development of the internationally respected Centre for Palynological Studies.

Although the administrative demands on his time were heavy, Leslie Moore remained active in research, always probing for new areas of investigation. In the late 1960s he turned his attention to micropalaeobiology and the search for evidence of probable fungal and bacterial activity in sedimentary rocks. Although only a few of these studies were to be published before his retirement, they included accounts of the possible effects of fungal attack on Carboniferous miospores and a detailed study of the fungal and bacterial structures in the Precambrian Nonesuch Shale in the USA.

Following retirement in 1977, Leslie and his wife Peggy continued to live in the village of Curbar in the Derbyshire Peak District from where he was able to keep in touch with many of his former Sheffield students. He was truly happy in retirement,

surrounded by the Carboniferous geology he loved. During this time he also indulged his passions for cars and gardening. He taught himself to use the lathe and went on to make working steam engine models. Sadly his wife Peggy died in 1985, only a few years after his retirement, and this was a blow which hurt Leslie deeply. With a progressive loss of mobility he decided to move to Birmingham to be closer to his son. He died peacefully on 13 November 2003.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The titles below are a selection of publications by Leslie Moore, listed in chronological order.

## REFERENCES

- Moore, L.R. & Trueman, A.E. 1937. The Coal Measures of Bristol and Somerset. *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London*, **93**: 195–240.
- Moore, L.R. 1938. The sequence and structure of the Radstock Basin. *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society*, **8**: 267–305.
- Moore, L.R. & Trueman, A.E. 1939. The structure of the Bristol and Somerset Coalfields. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, **50**: 46–67.
- Moore, L.R. 1941. The presence of the Namurian in the Bristol district. *Geological Magazine*, **78**: 279–292.
- Moore, L.R. & Trueman, A.E. 1942. The Bristol and Somerset coalfields with particular reference to the prospects of future development. *Proceedings South Wales Institute of Engineers*, **57**: 180–222.
- Moore, L.R. & Cox, A.H. 1943. The Coal Measure sequence of the Taff Valley, Glamorgan and its correlation with the Rhondda Valley sequence. *Proceedings South Wales Institute of Engineers*, **59**: 189.
- Moore, L.R. 1945. The geological sequence of the South Wales Coalfield: the 'South Crop' and Caerphilly Basin and its correlation with the Taff Valley sequence. *Proceedings South Wales Institute of Engineers*, **60**: 141–252.
- Moore, L.R. 1946. On the spores of some Carboniferous plants; their development. *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London*, **102**: 251–298.
- Moore, L.R. 1947. The sequence and structure of the southern portion of the East Crop of the South Wales Coalfield. *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London*, **103**: 261–300.
- Moore, L.R. & Blundell, C.R.K. 1952. Some effects of the Malvernian phase of earth movements in the South Wales Coalfield, a comparison with other coalfields in South Britain. *Compte Rendu 3eme Congres pour l'avancement des etudes de Stratigraphie et de Geologie du Carbonifere (Heerlen, 1951)*, **2**: 463–473.
- Moore, L.R. 1954. The Forest of Dean Coalfield. In: Trueman, A.E. (Ed.), *The Coalfields of Great Britain*. Arnold, London, 126–133.
- Moore, L.R. 1963. On some micro-organisms associated with the scorpion *Gigantoscorpio willsi* Strömer. *Skrifter Utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Academi i Oslo, Matematiske Naturvidensk*, **9**: 1–14.
- Moore, L.R. 1963. Microbiological colonisation and attack on some Carboniferous miospores. *Palaeontology*, **6**: 349–372.
- Moore, L.R. 1963. The microbiology, mineralogy and genesis of a tonstein. *Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society*, **34**: 24–33.
- Moore, L.R. 1964. The microbiology of some tonsteins. *Compte Rendu 5eme Congres International de Stratigraphie et de Geologie du Carbonifere (Paris, 1963)*, **2**: 587–592.
- Moore, L.R. 1964. The in situ formation and development of some kaolinite macrocrystals. *Clay Mineral Bulletin*, **5**: 338–352.
- Moore, L.R., Moore, J.R.M. & Spinner, E.G. 1969. A Geomicrobiological Study of the Pre-Cambrian Nonesuch Shale. *Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society*, **37**: 351–394.

**Edwin Spinner**  
**Bernard Owens**  
**Patricia Lunn**