

John Dalingwater 1944–2018

by Paul Selden

John Dalingwater was born in Manchester on 27th January 1944, where he spent his early childhood. When his family moved to the Home Counties, he attended St Benedict's Roman Catholic School in Ealing (other notable alumni include Chris Patten, politician, and Julian Clary, entertainer). John went up to the University of Manchester in 1962 to study Geology and Zoology, and graduated with a First Class honours degree in 1965. He did his PhD research under the supervision of the then head of the Department of Zoology, Professor Ralph Dennell, on the topic of trilobite cuticle. The scanning electron microscope was becoming the tool of choice for ultrastructure research at that time, and John was the first to apply this technology to the study of fossil arthropods. On achieving his PhD, John was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Zoology in 1968, then full Lecturer in 1971 and Senior Lecturer in 1989. He took early retirement from Manchester, on medical grounds, in 1994 but continued to be involved in British Arachnological Society matters for many years afterwards.

John's research in fossil arthropod cuticles remains as important a contribution to the field today as it was ground-breaking then. Some of his most memorable studies include those on the cuticles of trilobites (e.g. Dalingwater, 1973a, 1975a; Dalingwater & Miller, 1977; Dalingwater *et al.*, 1991, 1993) and of eurypterids (e.g. Dalingwater, 1973b, 1975b, 1985; Dalingwater & Waterston, 1983). He also extended his knowledge of cuticle structure to studies of other arthropod groups (e.g. Dalingwater, 1975c, 1977) and general commentary and reviews on arthropod, especially chelicerate, cuticles (e.g. Dalingwater, 1975d, 1987a).

John first became interested in spiders through teaching, especially on the faunistics field course at the University of Manchester. On this course, students were first introduced to collecting and identification methods, and then spent the second half of the course doing a special project on one particular taxonomic group, e.g. spiders. John soon became an expert in spider identification, and started to develop projects in spider ecology for undergraduate students. Moreover, Peter Gabbutt, world authority on pseudoscorpions, was also in the Zoology Department at that time. It was John's enthusiasm for arachnology that inspired me and many others to move into the field, and he and I attended a spider course led by John Parker at Castle Head Field Centre, Grange-over-Sands, in summer 1981. John became a Council member of the British Arachnological Society in 1980; by 1982 he had been made Honorary Treasurer, a post he held until 1985, when he took over as Membership Treasurer. He was also Vice President from 1988–1990, President from 1991–1994, and was made an Honorary Member of the Society. But it was as Editor of what was formerly known as the *Secretary's News Letter*, which had been edited (and mostly written) by John Parker, who had been Secretary of the Society from its inception, for which John would be mainly remembered. He took over the reins from John Parker after *Newsletter* 50 was published in November 1987 (Dalingwater, 1987b).

John remained as Editor of the *Newsletter* until the Parkinson's disease, which was diagnosed on his 48th birthday (1992), prevented him from typing on the computer any more. He handed over the job to the present Editor, Richard Gallon, in 2004, on the occasion of the



John Dalingwater between Victor Fet (left) and me, Cheshire, June 2001.

publication of *Newsletter* 100 (Dalingwater, 2004). John's editorial skills were well known. He had already been an editor of the journal *Palaeontology*, and assisted me and others with a number of other editing tasks (e.g. the *Proceedings of the 17th European Congress of Arachnology, Edinburgh 1997*). John's editorials were, in addition to constantly asking for material for the *Newsletter*, exhorting authors not to use double spaces, double carriage returns, or indents (e.g. Dalingwater, 1998a,b). Moreover, it was in his masterly knowledge of English grammar that John excelled, woe betide anyone who used a split infinitive, a hyphenated -ly adjective, or an unnecessary apostrophe! When checking proofs, he was renowned for being able to spot an italic full stop! Nevertheless, John is remembered by members of the Society not only for such perfectionism but also for his intellect, patience, and general common sense when dealing with Society matters.

The contributions of John Dalingwater to the British Arachnological Society are immeasurable. During the three years he was Honorary Treasurer, he streamlined the system before passing the job back to Rod Allison. In the same period, John spent an enormous amount of time and effort producing a title and systematic index to *News Letters* 1–30 (Dalingwater, 1983). This accompanied a reprint of those otherwise hard to obtain *News Letters* full of important information and interesting arachnological tidbits from the early years. Back in the 1980s, everything had to be done by hand, including xeroxing old copies and renumbering the pages using Tipp-Ex and a rubber stamp (Dalingwater, 1984). I urge everyone to read some of the short articles John wrote for the *Newsletter* (use the search engine on the B.A.S. website) in order to get a flavour of his unforgettable humour!

At home in Hale, Cheshire, when not editing, indexing, or making bad puns, John frequented his allotment, carrying produce home by bicycle (he never owned a car), and was a lifelong supporter of Manchester City FC. John enjoyed opera, and he and his wife, Jackie, spent many lovely evenings at Covent Garden and other venues. He visited Italy, his favourite country, on numerous occasions, frequently including opera performances. Considering John's enormous knowledge of History and the Classics, it is perhaps surprising that he went into Zoology! He always claimed an extensive knowledge of French vocabulary, but this did not always

translate into conversation. On a road trip to the International Arachnological Society meeting in Jaca, Spain, in 1986, he managed to order us an orange Jew with breakfast, and on the return journey, the result of his attempt to obtain a twin-bedded room cannot be disclosed!

John died on Saturday 17th February 2018 at his rest home in Cheshire. He had just celebrated his 74th birthday three weeks before. He leaves behind Jackie, his wife of 49 years, a son and two daughters, and four grandchildren.

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Collecting Spiders and Other Ground-dwelling Invertebrates in Wet Weather – a Solution

by Richard Wilson

As many entomologists and arachnologists will have experienced, late winter and early spring 2018, especially

between February and mid-April, proved to be particularly wet and cold. Ordinarily this would not hamper or constrain fieldwork, but the ground conditions experienced whilst undertaking a contract for the Forestry Commission in the New Forest National Park, Hampshire, were extreme during this period.

The contract focussed on surveying for several rare species that had not been recorded for many years including *Tapinocyba mitis* (Linyphiidae) and *Sitticus caricis* (Salticidae). The former is an early spring (or late winter) active species, hence surveys commenced in mid-February 2018, just before the much heralded ‘Beast from the East’ arrived at the end of the month. The February visit included setting pitfall traps, sieving leaf litter and vacuum sampling. The March visit was planned to retrieve the traps, supplemented by vacuum sampling. Species diversity, as measured by identifiable specimens, at this time of year is low, but the wet vegetation, inherent to lowland mire systems, proved to be particularly unyielding when it came to sorting vegetation for spiders. The exceptionally wet weather caused by precipitation, as well as snow-melt, meant that pitfall traps became waterlogged and few specimens were captured by this method. Vacuum sampling and sieving leaf litter, particularly during the March visit proved frustrating. Although vegetation was sucked up, sorting through the resulting material returned little in the way of specimens. This was contrary to the author’s previous experience elsewhere such as in the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and Border Mires, where similar methodologies returned more than satisfactory results, enabled by the ease of recording and collecting specimens, even in *Sphagnum*-dominated mire systems.

Part way through the March visit, and bearing in mind this was a professional survey, an ‘in the field’ solution was needed to increase the number of spiders collected.



Figure 1. *Standard Berlese Funnel* manufactured by BugDorm. © Richard Wilson.