



Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter

May 21, 2005

On May 21, 2005, Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter (known to his friends as “Gus”) passed away in the privacy of his own home in Easton, Maryland of a heart attack. He was born on May 3, 1926 in Rutherglen, Scotland. He is survived by a son, Peregrine D. Russell-Hunter, his daughter-in-law Janet Whitehill Russell-Hunter, and his three grandchildren; Hannah Margaret Russell-Hunter, Sarah Lindsay Russell-Hunter, and Malcolm Whitehill Russell-Hunter; all of Arlington, Virginia and Royal Oak, Maryland.

He was married to Myra Porter Rankin Chapman on March 22, 1951 in the Glasgow University Chapel, within weeks of earning tenure with the University. His career as a marine biologist, freshwater ecologist and invertebrate zoologist and her career as an artist took them from Glasgow, Scotland eventually to the United States and decades of distinguished work at both Syracuse University in upstate New York and the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

Dr. Russell-Hunter’s career in marine biology began, as a result of the Second World War, as a Scientific Officer with the British Admiralty on a marine anti-fouling team whose research was made urgent by the sinking of the fouled – and therefore slower – HMS Hood by the German Bismark earlier in the war. His placement on the Scientific and Technical Register due to his academic achievement moved him to this duty from his training as a Pilot and Observer

flying in Swordfish (the last cloth and wood biplane to see significant combat in the war). His first published papers in 1948 and 1949 were derived from this work and his honors research at the Glasgow University, following his BSc with honors in 1946, continued in this vein and led to the publication of now-classic works about marine and freshwater organisms and their physiological ecology, behavior, and functional morphology.

In 1949, Dr. Russell-Hunter led an expedition of scientists and ecologists to the Garveloch Islands off the West Coast of Scotland. This diverse young group of explorers made ecological, geological, malacological, ornithological, and even archaeological discoveries on these uninhabited islands. At the time of his death, he was attempting to publish the resulting book, *The Isles of the Sea*, along with getting back into print his four major texts: *Aquatic Productivity* © 1970; *A Biology of Lower Invertebrates* © 1968; *A Biology of Higher Invertebrates* © 1969 and *A Life of Invertebrates* © 1979 all of which were foundational for decades of students of invertebrate zoology throughout the world in their various translations.

In 1953, Dr. Russell-Hunter was awarded his PhD from Glasgow University. In 1953 and 1954 Dr. Russell-Hunter was in Jamaica as a Carnegie Brown Fellow at the University of the West Indies. Both before and after that research, he published significant papers which set new standards for the study of freshwater invertebrates. He was awarded a DSc by Glasgow University in 1961.

Dr. Russell-Hunter's career with the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) began in 1961 when he served as a lecturer in the influential Invertebrate Zoology Course until 1963. He served as the Director of that course from 1964 to 1968. He served as the Editor of the MBL's *Biological Bulletin* from 1968 to 1980. His editorship during those years fueled the *Bulletin's* rise to prominence as a leading general biological journal. Dr. Russell-Hunter was

also a four-term member of the Board of Trustees of the MBL and served on in emeritus status thereafter.

Dr. Russell-Hunter's teaching and research career with Syracuse University from 1963 to 1990 was equally distinguished, and he and his many graduate students not only produced significant research but also created an environment for learning about biology which was a jewel in the crown of the University's well-respected Biology Department. There, he received grants from NIH, NSF, and the Army Corps of Engineers. He was recognized by the University with his selection as the recipient of the William Wasserstrom Award in 1988 honoring his teaching career.

He authored and published over one hundred and twenty research articles, and that number almost doubles when considering the work of his graduate students in which he was directly involved but chose not to follow the common practice of adding his name so as to allow them a better chance to launch their own careers. This facet of his life – that of mentor and teacher – was perhaps his greatest hallmark as his generous and gracious work advising his graduate and undergraduate students created a diaspora of researchers and teachers through whom he has had a global impact on the fields of physiological ecology, malacology, and invertebrate zoology.

Dr. Russell-Hunter's career and work was honored in 1984 at the "International Symposium on the Physiological Ecology of Freshwater Molluscs Honoring Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter" for the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Union. Dr. Russell-Hunter was again honored in 1999 when the Freshwater Mollusc Conservation Society presented him with their first ever Lifetime Achievement Award. He has been listed for many years in Who's Who in America.

Dr. Russell-Hunter was also a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a Fellow of the Institute of Biology of the United Kingdom, a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), as well as a member of the Ecological Society of America, American Malacological Union, Glasgow Natural History Society, Malacological Society of London, Society of Systematic Biology, and Society of International Limnology, among others.

For the last decade of his life he was also a member of the St. Andrews Society of the Eastern Shore in Easton, Maryland.

In later years, after the death of his wife in 1989, for whom he cared during her decade-long battle with cancer, Dr. Russell-Hunter turned to oil and acrylic painting (for which he won awards), boating, reading, model railroading, and to the Religious Society of Friends. He was involved with both the Syracuse Meeting and Third Haven Friends Meeting, where he was a member and a long-time member and Clerk of the Worship and Ministry Committee.

A memorial service in the form of a Meeting for Worship will take place at Third Haven Friends Meeting, in the old Meeting House on Washington Street in Easton MD, at 11:00am on Saturday June 4, 2005. There will be a brief reception afterwards in the Common Room, where a small selection of Dr. Russell-Hunter's publications and artwork will be on display.

Memorial contributions can be sent to the Marine Biological Laboratory, c/o Ms. A. Kristine Johnson, Director of Special Gifts and Planned Giving, 7 MBL Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543-1015. She can be reached at (508) 289-7766 or kjohnson@mbi.edu. A memorial service honoring Dr. Russell-Hunter at the MBL in Woods Hole is in the planning stages for late July or early August of this year at which time his ashes will be sprinkled at the middle-ground buoy in Vinyard Sound.

Arrangements by Fellows, Helfenbein and Newnam Funeral Home, P. A.,
Easton, MD.

Tribute Wall



“ I am his 1st Cousin. During the war, I lived with him and his mother , Gladys, in Helensburgh, on the Clyde...even though I was only 4, I clearly remember VE day looking out of the window in Sinclair Street, seeing all the boats with coloured flags and lights in the evening. He could read a page of a book then pretty well recite it five minutes later...photographic memory, we thought.

JOHN TUDDENHAM - October 04, 2025 at 08:20 PM



“ Hello John, this is Hannah, Gus' oldest granddaughter. If you see this, I'd love to get in contact with you!

Hannah Russell-Hunter - March 20 at 08:50 AM



“ John: I hope you are doing well. This is Gus's son Peregrine (“Perry”) Russell-Hunter and we'd love to hear from you!

peregrine d. russell-hunter - April 20 at 12:32 AM



“ Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM