

ROGER BENNETT HUNTER

1910 - 1988

Doctor Roger Hunter was both the 16th May 1910 and died the 21st March 1988 after more than 50 years of devoted marriage and fatherhood, and nigh on 50 years in Bridge. His practice as a physician was shortened by grave illness in December 1965, when he was snatched back from death by the skills of his colleagues and the care of his wife, for all of which he often voiced his thanks. Yet the years of retirement which followed were ones in which the variety of his talents and interests enriched alike his own life and thought and all those who had the good fortune of his friendship.

He was educated at Coleraine Academy, where his own father was Headmaster, founding himself on the Latin and Greek classics which he pursued for his first year of study at Trinity College, Dublin, then turning to medicine, to the gain of successive generations in our villages since he first came here in 1939. He was first briefly in practice in Sheerness, but more important was the job as a 'locum' in Guernsey where he met and married Joyce on that May Day of 1937 when they entered the 'united way' which is lovingly mentioned in his poetry, and from which he had so much strength and support. With Joyce and all his family we united and prayed at his funeral, and still unite in prayer and sympathy, as in pride of memory.

So much for mere chronology - what matters is the man we loved. Words such as 'respect', 'affection' and 'trust' - all of which his friends and patients held him in - are inadequate for feelings which mirror his own qualities. The calm devotion which he brought to his vocation inspired all these feelings, touching peoples' lives when they most needed reassurance. But there, as in all his social contacts, was a wryly amused compassion for human frailty - gently mocking within, but never hurting. A careful watcher might see the diagnosis of pretention or humbug being quietly reached, and the corrective gently administered without the 'patient' even knowing it.

There were, if one pauses to analyse, a number of factors persisting throughout his practice and for the last two decades and more since formal 'retirement', though even in these he did not wholly cease from medical work. 'Love of mankind' may be the short answer, based on faith, and breadth of scholarship and understanding. He was familiar with a number of languages, classical and modern, and had a wide scope of reading and interests - whether it were music, the flora he studied and loved, or the works of man-made art he appreciated so much - coins, silver, porcelain or paintings: in short, all that showed the hand of the Creator or those skills with which He had endowed His creatures, in nature,

art, or those sports which Roger joyed in watching and following.

All this is reflected in ^{his} poetry. Its economy hides a richness of knowledge and, above all, belief - a recognition that the '....wind of God blows all things clear', as he wrote.

But the words bear a little dissection, to disclose the scholar's memory of the Greek 'pneuma'.... wind, or rather Spirit, which served for him to '...mythologise the commonplace', using his own words again. Every line is a minute cameo of engraved Faith. Each poem reflects a sensitivity to God, to beauty, to history. Any effort to analyse further would be impudence, for the words he wrote speak for themselves in terms of loving understanding of humanity and of rooted trust in God.

Roger himself would be the first to writhe at, and instantly disclaim, words of praise. So we need not go further than the words of the Fifteenth Psalm which triumphantly opened his Funeral, and which provide a succinct check-list of his noble qualities: those things, which he did in his life, give the firm confidence that he 'shall never fall' and - to use his own verse once more - that he will be 'united with Infinity'.

There is already a physical memorial in the Hunter Room of the Village Hall, to which he contributed so generously. But, with a final paraphrase from his own writing, this memorial is a physical 'real' that may be crushed in time, yet '...the ideal form remains' in the hearts of his family and all whom his life and work have touched.

Bridge Doctors

The earliest record we have of a doctor in Bridge is that of **Amelius Sicard**, born in Blackheath on June 12th 1809, the son of John Jacob Sicard, who was probably a refugee from revolutionary France ('Jean-Jacques') and his wife Mary. John Jacob it appears was 'Major-Domo' to Princess Caroline of Brunswick (wife of the Prince Regent) at Montague House in Blackheath. It was he who brought news to her in 1820 in Florence that George III was dead and that she was now queen. He died in Kensington (?Palace) after this date, but before 1841. Amelius entered into practice in Bridge in 1832, aged 23, MRCS and Lic. Apoth. Co. London, and clearly able to afford the 18th century property on the corner of Union Road and the High Street, which remained 'the doctor's house' until ?1970. Sicard was the village doctor for 48 years, dying on November 29th 1880.

Wall plaque in the church: "Sacred / to the memory / of / Amelius Sicard / M.R.C.S. / who departed this / life Novr. 29th 1880 / aged 71 years / This tablet and the West window / were placed in this / Church by a numerous / circle of friends. /"

Tombstone in the churchyard: "In memory of / Amelius Sicard / only son of John Jacob / and Mary Sicard. / born at Blackheath / June 12th 1809, died at Bridge / November 29th 1880. / Here he had resided forty-eight years and / had been to rich and poor / the beloved physician. / " Headstone, Bodystone and Footstone: A.B. 1880

Also: "Sacred / to the memory of / Mary Sicard / widow of the late J.J. Sicard Esq. / of Kensington, who departed this life / on the 30th day of July 1843, / in her 79th year /" Headstone, Bodystone & Footstone: M.S. 1843 (buried on August 5th 1943)

The family of Sicard appears also to be related to the Counts Lautrec – several 13th century members being called Amelius-Sicard.

1841 census

ID	Surname	Christian Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Street	House sequence	Where born
229	Sicard	Mary	F	75		Bridge street	53	Kent
230	Sicard	Amelius	M	30	Surgeon	Bridge Street	53	Kent
231	Hatton	Eliza	F	15	FS	Bridge Street	53	Kent

1851 census

ID	Surname	Christian name	Relation	Condition	Sex	Age	Occupation	Street	House	Where Born County	Where Born Parish
529	Sicard	Amelius	Head	U	M	42	MRCS, Lic.Apoth.Co.Lond General Practitioner	Bridge Village	116	Kent	Lee
530	Drum	James	Serv	U	M	21		Bridge Village	116	Kent	Hothfield
531	Noble	Catherine	Serv	U	F	38	House Servant	Bridge Village	116	Kent	Canterbury

1861 census

ID	Surname	Christian Name	Relation	Condition	Sex	Age	Occupation	Street	House	County	Parish
504	Sicard	Amelius	Head	U	M	52	Member RCS England LAC & gen prac.	Bridge Village	101	Kent	Blackheath
505	Freeman	Emma	Servant	U	F	43	Housekeeper	Bridge Village	101	Kent	Canterbury
506	Harrison	John	Servant	U	M	23	Groom	Bridge Village	101	Kent	Canterbury

1871 census

ID	Surname	Xian Name	Relation	Condition	Sex	Age	Occupation	Street	House	Born Co	Born Parish
251	Sicard	Amelius	Head	U	M	62	Surgeon	Bridge Street	59	Kent	Blackheath
252	Jeffreys	Frances	Servant	W	F	47	Housekeeper	Bridge Street	59	Kent	Canterbury
253	Churchill	William	Servant	U	M	28	Groom	Bridge Street	59	Kent	Canterbury

From 1835 until after 1841 the Union Workhouse had its own doctor, **William Nix**.

1841 census

ID	Surname	Christian Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Street	House sequence	Where born
214	Nix	William	M	50	Surgeon	Bridge Street	47	Not Kent
215	Andrews	Rachel	F	15	FS	Bridge Street	47	Kent

Sicard was succeeded by **Charles Henry Schön** (presumably of German origin), who served also as medical officer to the workhouse. He died in 1899 aged 44, and was buried on January 25th of that year.

1881 census

ID	Surname	Othernames	Status	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Relation	Occupation	Address	H seq	Present seq
338	Schon	Charles Henry	U	26	M	Chatham Kent	Head	Surgeon	Bridge Street	83	24
339	Schon	Emily Cooke	U	31	F	Old Brompton Kent	Sister		Bridge Street	83	
340	Cornwell	Ashenden	U	19	F	Chatham Kent	Servant	Servant Domestic)	Bridge Street	83	

1891 census

ID	surname	first name	relation	condition	sex	age	occupation	location	<5r	house seq	county	parish
349	Schon	Charles H	Head	M	M	36	General Practitioner	High Street		84	Kent	Chatham
350	Schon	Kate	Wife	M	F	31		High Street		84	Herts	Bushey
351	Schon	Ursula K	Daur	U	F	2		High Street		84	Kent	Bridge

Schön was succeeded by **Robert L Moorhead**, MB CM between 1899 and 1906, but who quickly moved on.

1901 census

ID	Surname	First name	Relation	Condition	Sex	Age	Occupation	Location	House	Born Co	Born parish	rooms<5
244	Moorhead	Robert L	Head	S	M	31	Surgeon	High Street	60	London	NK	
245	Vidgen	Elizabeth	Servant	S	F	27	Cook Domestic	High Street	60	Kent	Waltham	

Moorhead was followed in 1906 by **Arthur Thomas Wilson**, MB, BCh, BAO, BA.until ?1937

Death of Dr Wilson. Gloom was cast over the village when Dr Wilson passed away on Friday evening, after a few days illness. He had not been in good health for some time, but was able to carry on his practice, which covered a large area, including Bekesbourne, Barham,

Bishopsbourne, Upper and Lower Hardres. He succeeded about 30 years ago, Dr Moorhead who left the district. A bachelor, Dr Wilson resided with his brother, Mr J Wilson, on the death of his mother, the late Mrs Wilson, at Bridge Place, Bridge. He was a member of a well-known Irish family. His two surviving brothers are Sir Samuel Wilson and Mr Jack Wilson. Another brother, General Wilson, passed away a few years ago. (Williamson - undated)

Death of Dr. A. T. Wilson

Well-known Bridge Practitioner

We regret to record the death of Dr. Arthur Thomas Wilson, at his home in Bridge, on Friday. Dr. Wilson, who was 67 years of age, was born in Dublin, was Irish, and came to Bridge to practice medicine in 1906. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin University, and held the following degrees, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., B.A. Dr. Wilson, who was devoted to his work, had lived with his brother, Mr. J.B.E. Wilson, for 33 years. His father, Mr. James Wilson, was a well-known Irish Barrister.

The doctor had been M.O. at Bridge Institution since he first came to the village, and held the same position at the old isolation hospital, Bishopsbourne. Dr. Wilson was extremely well-liked and respected in the village and the surrounding district. He leaves two brothers, Mr. J.B.E. Wilson and Brig.-Gen. Sir Samuel Wilson, late Permanent Under Secretary for State for the Colonies.

The funeral took place in Ireland on Tuesday, Dr. Wilson's ashes being buried in the family vault.

A personal appreciation

For years he resided in Bridge, near Canterbury. A small man with a big heart, an Irishman's sense of humour and a characteristic laugh. A doctor, no, more than a doctor, a friend in need. How many, for miles around, will mourn him in silence. In the large mansion and in the small cottage, aye, even the tramp on the road will, if he pass through Bridge again, learn of this death with a tightness in his throat. Nothing was too small for this man to see and understand, no one was too poor for him to sympathise with and comfort. For years he knew the trials and troubles of multitudes, yet never have I heard him say one word to the detriment of any. Unconscious of self, he gave his whole time to his people, and would often spend hours in sympathising rather than take the rest he sorely needed. Described in my hearing once by a Bishop as "A Christian" no man could deserve that appellation more than he. Yet his Christianity was not artificial, it was lived. Rarely have I discussed religion with him, but what he thought could be known by how he lived. So passes from sight a doctor, a man and an example, for if only one person can say "that man was a comfort and strength to me," then surely he has not lived in vain.

(No source, no date: Williamson)

Dr Wilson was in turn succeeded by **Roger Bennett Hunter** MB who graduated from TCD in 1930

Dr. Hunter's House, 24 High Street, Bridge.

Dr. Roger Hunter, my father, came to Bridge with my mother in about 1937 when he bought the house and the practice from Dr. Wilson. Dr. Wilson had been the village doctor for many years and lived in the house with his brother, known as Mr. Jack, and their valet. I assume they kept their horses out in the carriage house which is just round the corner up Union Lane. The old stables with two rooms above are still in a more or less original state, with the present garage added on. My mother thinks that the house was still lit by gas when she arrived, but I am not sure about this.

The surgery was in the house with patients entering the waiting room through the door in the wall to the left of the house. Private patients were allowed to wait in the dining room and go in through

the front door! In the 40s and 50s I can remember needles and syringes were sterilised on the kitchen stove in a saucepan and the drugs were kept in the family `fridge. My father worked closely with Mr. Stockwell who was the chemist in the village. Mr. Stockwell's shop was down on the corner of Mill Lane and the High Street where I think there is now a kitchen appliance shop. He would make up the pills and potions in the back of the shop.

The interior of 24 High Street is still very much as it was structurally, with all the original doors and fireplaces, etc. The hall ceiling is attractively plastered. In the basement there is an area where wine and spirits could be locked up and there is another large area with cupboard for storing apples and vegetables. The roof was repaired recently and over the bathroom the roofers found a large flat water tank which must have been used for collecting water for the house.

It was a shame that when the roof was renovated back in the 70s (I think) that a copy of the original pediment wasn't replaced and a mean little strip of wood was put back. You can see a trace of the original pediment on the corner of Miss Jones's house next door. The heavy traffic over the years before the by-pass was built caused the mathematical tiles on the front of the house to loosen and they all had to be re-fixed. I think that is when the pediment was taken down.

Mathematical tiles were renovated on the side of the house early this year and I saw that the lower ones were fixed in plaster and the upper ones hung on timber.

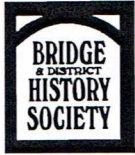
This is nothing to do with my parents' house, but I can remember Fagg's Farm as we used to ride with Captain Maslin, the local riding instructor, who sometimes kept his horses there, and we used to keep our ponies in the three fields where the Western Avenue estate now is.

I hope this is useful information - do get in touch if you would like more help.

Diana Cairns (01227 752836)

Dr Hunter was succeeded in ?1970 by **William GS Russell** who died December 25th 1988. Dr Hunter retained his house on the High Street when he retired (even though the notice 'Surgery' remained on the garden door until the 1990s) and Dr Russell began his practice in Green Court. After more than 130 years the doctor had moved.

Upon Dr Russell's death the practice was taken over by D Mark Jones, who had begun with him only on January 1st 1988, and who transferred the practice to a new purpose-built medical centre in Patricbourne Road in 2002.



From the Honorary Treasurer: Dr MM Raraty.
41 Bridge Down, Bridge, Canterbury, CT4 5BA
Telephone (01227) 830508
Email: mmraraty@btinternet.com

Mrs Diana Cairns
Little Oast
Selling
Faversham
ME13 9PS

24 November 2004

Dear Mrs Cairns,

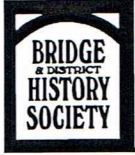
In the process of assembling material for the archive on Bridge, I have come across a letter you kindly wrote a while back about your reminiscences of your father, the late Dr Roger Hunter. I am now writing to ask if you could expand a little more on his life and work: in particular (though I did meet him on two or three occasions I arrived in Bridge too late to be a patient of his) for instance, basic facts such as his birth and death dates, family background, the date of his retirement and so on. I wonder, for instance, why a graduate of TCD should have found himself in Bridge: was it in any way connected with the fact that his predecessor Dr Wilson was also from TCD?

The doctor in a small community such as ours is a very important figure, and it is notable that since 1832 (the earliest I can find) there have been only seven up to the present: Amelius Sicard, Charles Schön, Robert Moorhead, Arthur Wilson, Roger Hunter, Bill Russell and now Mark Jones (and associates). Sicard in particular is well attested, since he is commemorated in the west window of Bridge Church. I would like to be able to give as full an account as possible of all these gentlemen.

It would I am sure also be of interest if you could say something about your mother, her background and her relationship to the practice. I shall be most grateful, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

(TCD 1963-66)



From the Honorary Treasurer: Dr MM Raraty.
41 Bridge Down, Bridge, Canterbury, CT4 5BA
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Mrs Jan Russell
36 Conyngham Lane
Bridge CT4 5JX
Canterbury

23 November 2004

Dear Mrs Russell,

I hope you will not mind my writing to you, to ask if can help me to recover some of the past of Bridge Village. Time moves so swiftly, and much is very quickly forgotten. Your late husband, Dr WGS Russell, was one of a very small band of medical practitioners who have served Bridge in the last two centuries – there are only seven altogether. I am in process of compiling material for a history of Bridge, and the list of doctors is of course central to this. As I'm sure you know, Dr Sicard (the first on my list) is commemorated in the church by a plaque and by the west window. He was followed by Charles Schon, Robert Moorhead, Arthur Wilson and Roger Hunter (whom I remember well).

I wonder if you would be prepared to spend a little time, either in writing a short biography of your husband, including any reminiscences or documents you think might be of interest to people interested in the village; alternatively, I would be delighted to talk to you about him. I was of course one of his patients in Green Court, and remember him a little, though the relationship was of course a strictly professional one, and it was some time ago now.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.
Yours sincerely,

William George Sinclair Russell

Mother Russian/Polish (second marriage) † 1965.

born 1895 in Faversham. 25 Wyke St.

Father. William Russell † 1970 Royal Medical Corps Administrator

WGS in RAF *1925. →

Tan was Nurse. ✓

WGS loaned to B. Percel. in Littlebourne, until.

WGS only bought Green Court when R.H. died in 1971.

Mr Jones came in 1988.

the London Hospital. Ill for 3 yrs in war. Very social colour for London U. & Hospital Chairman of International Students Union.

Father professional soldier.

Qualified in (1959) started in 1952 odd.

WGS involved in Medical Policies on Local. LTC in Maidstone.

→ D.F.T. felt slighted by not being ^{special} invited to funeral.

T 25 Dec 1988

1989

Obituary

DR. W. G. S. RUSSELL

Bill Russell was born at Shornecliffe into a service family. A service family necessarily meant many changes of homes both in the UK and, indeed, all over the world. For a time he was educated by the Jesuits in Portsmouth and the family spent some years in Guildford.

His late teens saw him in the RAF but sadly his career was then interrupted by serious illness. He was invalided out of the RAF—the illness having lasted some three years.

It is odd how the plans for our lives seem predestined, for it was during that long illness, that Bill became attracted to a career in Medicine. We can be thankful for this—without it we should not have had a most caring and able physician.

So Bill began a memorable and notable studentship at the London Hospital. Being a few years older than the average student and sporting a bald head at an early age, he readily assumed the mantle of organiser early in his study days. He was President of the students, not just of his own hospital, but of the International Student Body: he skilfully re-organised them in his gentle but very persuasive manner. He founded and took charge of the London University fencing scene with its galas—he produced and organised both the Rugby Cup Rags and hospital Rag Days, indeed, such was his reputation and skill at this, that an unheard of approach was made to him from a rival, smaller hospital to do the same for them: I am delighted to say the Dean forbade him to do so suggesting he applied himself to his books instead. Not to be outdone he obtained sponsorship from a well known brewers for the London and Brighton running race.

1961.

In 1960 he had the great fortune and good sense to meet and marry his wife Jan who has supported him in his many ventures with great humour and steadfast diplomacy.

It was then that the sea called him, working in and around Dover during his pre-Registration jobs. ~~Like his father,~~ he went to sea, for a year as a ship doctor.

He returned wiser and filled a locum post in Littlebourne. News of his skills spread and soon he was taken on as a partner in a Practice in nearby Bridge, Here Jan and he settled and it is there that he spent the tragically shortened 26 years of Family Doctoring.

I purposefully use the word Family Doctoring because he truly dedicated his life to that task and soon became the trusted, unstinting friend of all who came to see him. His caring and able skills, his unceasing struggle to get the best for his patients and his humour and true sympathy, earned him an enviable reputation.

However, Bill was not content to leave it at that. As I have hinted, he had a gift for serving others in another most important way. He frequently chided his colleagues and succeeded well in shaming us, his friends, to help ourselves and him by serving on many committees associated with the profession's administration. The Regional Health Authority, the Local Medical Committee, the Family Practitioner Committee, the British Medical Association—all these and more august bodies, all of them have good reason to share in our present sadness at his death. He instinctively offered them persistent and well considered arguments with a controlled passion impossible to resist. These exemplary skills cannot be replaced.

But above all this, Bill was a family man. With Jan, they are so proud of their children—and justifiably. Ian, a recently qualified doctor, Neil, a graduate mathematician and now a student actuary and, sadness for Jan, that he will miss their daughter Anna's graduation as a teacher next year: but he will surely be there in spirit.