

MICHAEL STUART LAVERACK
BSc, PhD(S'ton), FIBiol

Mike Laverack was born in Croydon on 19th March 1931. He spent 31 years of his working life at the Gatty Marine Laboratory of the University of St Andrews, where he established an international reputation for his studies on the neurobiology of marine animals. In 1991 he was fortunate enough to gain a prestigious five-year research fellowship from the Australian Research Council. He therefore resigned his professorship at St Andrews and went to pursue his wide-ranging interests on the neurobiology of crustacea, taking delight in the many unfamiliar and unusual genera available to him in the southern hemisphere. Mike was tragically killed on 28th July 1993 during a visit to Heron Island Marine Biological Station on the Great Barrier Reef. This was a double tragedy since his wife, Maureen, was accompanying him on this trip and also perished. He leaves a daughter and two sons. His sudden and untimely death is a tragic loss for Marine Biology and leaves a sense of vacuum in his many friends and acquaintances.

Mike attended Selhurst Grammar School for Boys but his education was interrupted by evacuation towards the close of the war by constant air raids and V1 and V2 rockets. He left school in 1949 to spend his two years national service with the Royal Air Force, before going up to Southampton University. In 1955 he was amongst the first to graduate with a First Class Honours Degree in Zoology. Intrigued by invertebrate physiology, he stayed on at Southampton to carry out his PhD on the respiration of snails, *Helix*, under the guidance of Professor Gerald Kerkut. His first appointment in 1959 was as Scientific Officer at the Merlewood Research Station, Grange-over-Sands and it was here that he met his wife Maureen. During this period he carried out research on the sensory physiology of earthworms which culminated in the publication of a book *The Physiology of Earthworms* in 1963. This monograph has become something of a classic in the field and is still heavily cited. Whilst at the Nature Conservancy Council he travelled to most of the other laboratories around the country which were involved in invertebrate sensory physiology. One of the visits was to the Gatty Marine Laboratory, where Adrian Horridge was carrying out pioneering work on simple invertebrate nervous systems. Mike later recalled that he found the Gatty enchanting, with the sea at the front of the laboratory and easy access to a range of fascinating animals. When a position became available at the Gatty in 1966 he applied and was appointed to a lectureship. During his early days the Gatty was a hot-bed of activity in invertebrate neurobiology, exploiting the new techniques which were becoming available in electrophysiology. Many of the research students and postdoctoral fellows around at that time have since gone on to become pre-eminent in their fields, occupying Chairs throughout the world.

In 1969 when Adrian Horridge left to take the Foundation Chair at the Australian National University at Canberra, Mike was appointed Director. At that time the laboratory was purely a research centre, occupied by staff from the Departments of Botany, Zoology and Physiology. A Department of Marine Biology was established and Mike introduced the first full-scale Honours teaching course in Marine Biology. Mike was an inspirational teacher and generations of students will recall his vivid and stimulating lectures and the love he held for his subjects. From small beginnings the teaching programme blossomed and the present undergraduate degree in Marine & Environmental Biology is now one of the most successful in the School of Biological and Medical Sciences. Throughout this period he continued to work on the sensory physiology of crustaceans and he also published a definitive Fauna and Flora of St Andrews Bay with the late Dr M H Blaxter. He was a founding editor of *Marine Behaviour & Physiology* and was much in demand on the editorial boards of other journals and as an external examiner. In 1985 he stepped down from the Directorship of the Gatty Marine Laboratory, allowing himself more time to concentrate on undergraduate teaching and research. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1972. Mike had wide-ranging interests and he took a special delight in the history of the Gatty Marine Laboratory and in particular of its founding Director, Professor William Carmichael McIntosh, FRS, FRSE. Like his wife, he was a talented artist and he took much pleasure in photography and silk-screen printing. In 1990 he mounted a photographic exhibition with Sandy Edwards at the Crawford Centre of microscopic images that travelled round the country to 15 different centres as far apart as Inverness and Chichester.

In January 1994 a Memorial Gathering was held at Crail Community Centre, organised by his surviving daughter and two sons at which an exhibition of the varied artistic output of Mike and Maureen Laverack was displayed. It was a moving occasion, attended by around 150 people, representing both former colleagues and friends from the University and throughout North East Fife. The occasion demonstrated the extent to which Mike had touched and changed the lives of so very many people. Mike Laverack had a very deep affection for the Gatty where he spent most of his working life and he had been looking forward to helping us celebrate the Centenary in 1995. Although it is tragic that he will not be able to attend, his contributions will be lasting ones and he will be remembered with great affection by past and present colleagues and friends.

IAN A JOHNSTON