

as evidence of the first authentic occurrence of the species in Australia. Measurements, which agree with those of birds from Lord Howe Island, are: Culmen 28 mm., tarsus 25 mm., wing 205 mm., bill black, legs and toes black.

—K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, N.S.W., 1/4/49.

#### REFERENCES

1. Iredale, Tom, *The Australian Zoologist*, vol. 5, pt. 4, March 24, 1929, p. 361.
2. Iredale, Tom, 'The Vicissitudes of a Noddy: A Christmas Story,' *The Emu*, vol. 28, pt. 4, April, 1929, pp. 290-291.
3. Salvin, Osbert, *Catalogue of Birds, British Museum*, vol. 25, 1896, p. 135.

## Obituaries

### FREDERIC LEE BERNEY

When the late F. L. Berney was president of the R.A.O.U. in 1934/35, I asked him for a photograph of himself, for publication of a likeness of our presidents had been customary. The request was not acceded to and a promise later that he made to me in Melbourne to 'send one for an obituary' was regarded merely as another refusal to supply one at the time. A retiring nature of that kind was the substance of his whole existence. Nobody knew much of him: even Mr. Alister Archer, one of his closest acquaintances and friends, writes me that "we all seem to know just about as much as old Fred. liked to tell us, which was very little indeed."

Mr. Berney was born at Croydon, England, on November 25, 1865, and was educated at Whitgift Grammar School, Croydon. His father was an architect there, and there is still an elder brother alive, also an architect at Croydon, Sir Henry Berney. When he came to Australia I do not know (about 1890, I believe), but he appears to have taken to an outdoor life as a jackeroo, starting, I understand, at Landsdown station out from Longreach. According to information from Mr. Archer, he spent several years managing a property at Richmond, north Queensland, and later had a dairy farm at Cawarral, towards Yeppoon, before settling at Barcarolle station at Jundah, again in the Longreach district. This property he purchased in partnership after the 1914-18 war. Twenty heart-breaking years followed, droughts, depression and dingoes combining to drive him out. I remember well a letter he wrote me when he left Barcarolle. The place had been 'sold up,' but he wrote, "I can easily start again; it's lucky I'm only a young fellow, I was born in 1865." He was then nearly 74.

This tendency, jocular or serious, to treat his age as of no moment, seems to have been a characteristic. There is a story of him, possibly apocryphal, but none the less

typical, concerning his enlisting in the 2nd Light Horse. It is that being then 53—I think 52, maybe rising 53, would be correct—he turned his age back to front and told the recruiting sergeant that he was 35. The sergeant knew him but did not 'let on', until Berney was being passed on. Then he called him back and held out his hand. "You say you're 35 years old, Berney," he said. "I believe you, for I've known you forty of them myself. Good luck." Berney became a Q.M. Sergeant and saw service in the Middle East, being stationed for months in the Jordan Valley.

After the 'crash' in 1939, Berney came to Melbourne. He visited old cronies such as Arthur Butler in Tasmania and Dr. Chenery in Wentworth, N.S.W. He considered that he had enough on which to finish his days, but later undertook a book-keeper's job at a station in western Queensland. Following an operation, adhesions developed; he became bent, and medical advice was that his spine was collapsing. The old man refused to accept the position and started physical exercises, lying on his back and working his legs. He spent his last years at Emu Park and died on March 8, 1949, a bachelor.

Fred. Berney's father was an ardent naturalist, from whom the son doubtless acquired his first interest in Surrey woods. Berney kept a series of nature diaries throughout his long life but published little. There are papers in *The Emu* as follows—'North Queensland notes on Some Migratory Birds,' vol. 2, p. 210, and vol. 4, p. 43; 'Field Notes on the Birds of the Richmond District, North Queensland,' vol. 5, p. 15 and p. 72, and vol. 6, p. 41, p. 106, and p. 155; 'The Food of Birds,' vol. 7, p. 79; 'An Ornithologist in Egypt and Palestine,' vol. 7, p. 43; 'Splitting—Generic and Sub-specific,' vol. 27, p. 75; 'Origin of the name *Podargus*,' vol. 27, p. 116; 'Juvenile Plumage of the Magpie-Lark,' vol. 32, p. 107; and 'The Bustard in Queensland,' vol. 36, p. 4. Many of his notes appear in Mathews' *Birds of Australia*.

He was an honorary member of the R.A.O.U., of which he had held membership since its inception. He was a good friend of the Union and always interested in its affairs, making donations from time to time, particularly of books. Shortly before his death, he presented the Union with an embossing seal for use in marking library books.

Another interest was his keenness to assure total protection for the Bustard. At his own expense he sent out hundreds of pamphlets urging landowners and others to refrain from slaughtering the birds. Ultimately, largely through his efforts, total protection was granted in every State, but enforcement measures have not been satisfactory. Other work included talks at schools and an active interest in the Central Queensland Native Birds Protection Association. There was no flourish or flag-waving about Fred.

Berney. He was quiet and unassuming and, to me, another of those gentle men of natural history who were indeed gentlemen in every way.—C.E.B.

VERNON RUPERT DAVEY.

Mr. V. R. Davey, of Toolern Vale, Vic., died on April 30, 1949, aged 74. He was a well-known apiarist, and, moving his bees about from site to site following the 'honey' flow, had many opportunities to further his interest in outdoor life.

Mr. Davey would not have considered himself more than a bird observer, but, in providing a 'students' cabin', on his 200-acre property, he made it possible for birdmen of every degree to 'investigate' the prolific bird-life of the district. This cabin, opened at the end of 1933, enabled observers to stay overnight (or longer) and, as a result, the district was well worked ornithologically. In the pioneering bird days of Campbell, Keartland, the Brittlebanks and others, the Melton district adjoining the Toolern hills on the south, had been considered a well-favoured one, and, although clearing and more settlement had reduced its importance, the scrub-covered Toolern country, extending northwards for miles of steep hills and gullies, kept up the reputation that the district generally had gained. For this was poor, 'quartz' country, with pseudo-mallee conditions, and along this tongue were to be found birds with drier country associations—the Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, White-browed Babbler, Chestnut-tailed Ground-Wren and others.

Bird-day excursions to Toolern were always an event for Mr. Davey, and his part was always well organized. He established a local bird club at one stage and generally propounded the subject of nature study whenever an opportunity arose. He was keenly interested in the activities of the Gould League.—C.E.B.

W. J. BELCHER

No one has done a more thorough and competent job in recording the appearance of the avifauna of the Fiji Group than W. J. Belcher, who passed away at Navua, Fiji, on February 18, 1949.

In *The Ibis* for October, 1925, and January, 1926, appeared the article, by Casey A. Wood and Alexander Wetmore, 'A Collection of Birds from the Fiji Islands.' Dr. Wood wrote—"I was greatly assisted by the artist, Mr. W. J. Belcher, who accompanied me on several excursions to various islands of the Group, and not only took many specimens, but was able to prepare numerous sketches for his paintings of Fijian birds. These he depicted, to the number of ninety, with great fidelity."

It has been the writer's privilege to look through this portfolio since Mr. Belcher's death, and the paintings are remarkable. They faithfully and accurately record, what skins are so often unable to do, the true colours of the plumage and soft parts of the bird. They form a unique and valuable record.

The association with Casey Wood seems to have been the most fruitful time in Belcher's work as an artist, judging by the large percentage of pictures which are dated at that period. Apparently the artist was also associated with Rollo H. Beck, of the Payne-Whitney South Seas Expedition some four or five years later, and this produced a further flowering of his genius. In recent years he had been more absorbed in business and unable to give the same amount of time to his painting, but even at the time of his death he was planning further work.

Other artists have depicted birds of Fiji, but it is safe to say that for artistic merit, fidelity to detail, and completeness, Belcher's collection of paintings ranks first. It is understood that the collection will go to the U.S.A.—  
WALTER R. HILL.

It is regretted that no obituary notice of the late Mr. G. M. Mathews is included. Publication of this part has been delayed for two months pending the receipt of an obituary from the person who had agreed to provide it, but, the same still not being available, it was reluctantly decided to publish and include the notice later.

## Reviews

**African Parasitic Cuckoos.**—Dr. Herbert Friedmann 'roughed out' his book (*The Parasitic Cuckoos of Africa*, monograph no. 1, Washington Academy of Sciences, Washington, 1948) nearly 25 years ago, after a year spent in Africa, since when he has been constantly garnering and adding. He apologises for incompleteness, which establishes his thoroughness; it is the novice who always claims or assumes most.

Three species of *Clamator* are dealt with, four of *Cuculus* (including *canorus*), the three *Cerococcyx*, the four *Chrysococcyx*, and one *Pachycoccyx* (monotypic). There appear to be many similarities between some African species of *Cuculus* and our *C. pallidus*, but the nestlings of *C. solitarius* lack the evicting instinct, which also applies—at least so far as is known—to all species of *Clamator*. The resident African race of *Cuculus canorus*, the world's most famous and best known parasitic bird, is one of the least known of African cuckoos.

The genus *Chrysococcyx* is composed of birds generally similar to members of the genera *Lamprococcyx* and *Chalcites*. It is definitely known that in *Chrysococcyx* the adults sometimes take an interest in their own young (or at least in young of their own kind) being reared by fosterers. Dr. Friedmann wonders whether the parasitic habit is of more recent development in this group. He says that the not infrequent feeding of fledgelings by adults of their own species has not been established as occurring in any other parasitic