

## OBITUARY

### ARTHUR GRAHAM BROWN

Arthur Graham Brown, B.A. (Cantab.), M.R.C.S. (Eng.), L.R.C.P. (Lond.), M.I. Biol. was born on 22 April 1919 at Warminster, England and was brought to Australia in the same year. He died on 3 January 1982 in his home at Heathcote Junction via Wandong, Victoria.

Graham's father and grand-father had been much respected family doctors in the Colac district in southern Victoria, and Graham followed the same vocation. He was educated at Glamorgan (Melb.) 1927-29, Geelong Grammar 1930-37, Christ's College, Cambridge 1938-40, and at Middlesex Hospital (Lond.) 1940-45.

In 1946 Graham married an Anglo-American, Joan Frecheville and they had two sons and two daughters. After his wife's sad death in 1967 following a prolonged and demanding illness, Graham married Noela Downey of Colac in 1968.

Like many a medico Graham had a strong love for natural history; an interest that, so far as birds were concerned, stemmed from a holiday in the Grampians in western Victoria in September 1931 and from early ownership of Leach's 'An Australian Bird Book'. This interest he retained throughout his life.

Graham joined the RAOU in 1936, and in 1938 the Cambridge Bird Club as an introduction to British ornithology, becoming a member of the BOU in 1939 - a membership he maintained until his death.

On returning to his family home and medical practice in Colac his ornithological and natural history interests continued to develop. He founded and was the first President of The Colac Field Naturalists' Club in 1956. From this time and throughout the early sixties Graham's enthusiasm exerted a lasting influence upon others who were later to become prominent in ornithology and natural history in various ways - Mrs Pauline Reilly, Past President and Fellow, RAOU, Mr. Alan Reid of the ACF and Gould Leage (Victoria), and Mr. Murray Hodges, and his home offered hospitality to many. He joined the Royal Society of Victoria in 1959 and was a member of its Council from 1970-74. In 1968 he was appointed an Honorary Associate in Ornithology at the National Museum of Victoria.

Graham took active pleasure in RAOU Congresses and Camp-outs and attended a number. It was, in fact, at the 1957 Congress at Portland, Victoria, that I first met him. In addition he took part in several long ornithological field trips; to north-west Australia (1959), round Australia for three months (1962), and to the centre and north-west again for three months in 1967. These field trips, enjoyed with the companionship of other RAOU members, e.g. Brigadier H. Officer, Mr Max McGarvie, Mr Claude

Austin, Dr Norman Wettenthal and Mr Graham Pizzey, provided a great deal of field experience with northern and inland birds and produced good records. The Banded Fruit-Dove (Black-banded Pigeon) *Ptilinopus cincus* (Temm.) for example was seen in 1959 and also a party of the sparsely distributed Yellow Chat *Ephthianura crocea* (Castelnau and Ramsay) in 1962. On one of these trips 460 species were recorded. Graham loved the bush, drove tirelessly, and will be remembered as a splendid companion in the field. As an Honorary Associate in Ornithology at the Museum he was not only a source of ready assistance and helpful comment but had collected a number of specimens for the Museum Collections including northern forms from which he had made research skins in the field.

Graham's published notes, listed in Whittell, were not extensive but exemplified good observation, e.g. on the Pallid Cuckoo and, with little doubt, the first Victorian record of the Cattle Egret *Ardeola ibis coromanda* (Boddaert). His field notes, preserved in RAOU archives in the form of both traditional day-books (field journals) and loose-leaf species-notes, happily illustrated a response to birds at once nature-loving and scientifically meticulous. He upheld and shared both the ability to feel at one with nature and the ideal of documenting it accurately.

The summit of his contribution to Australasian ornithology however was reached in his Presidency of the RAOU, in 1969-72. This was at the time of marked change in the Union. The Review Committee's recommendations had been accepted and changes were being implemented. A rather special kind of President was needed who would continue the best of the traditional style while recognizing the need for contemporary concepts; one who would provide leadership that was understanding and sensitive towards both those who were not finding change easy and those who were frustrated by what they considered unnecessary delay. Additionally the first International Ornithological Congress to be held in Australia was already planned and was fast approaching. Much background work was being done overseas and there too, amongst preparations and discussions taking place behind the scenes and in which the Congress Secretary, the late Dr Harry Frith, was playing an active part, there was also an important though unobtrusive role to be played by the President of the RAOU.

Though in failing health at the time, Graham met admirably these various demands and, while those close to him in the RAOU will remember him with particular affection and respect, all can be grateful for the steady progress the RAOU made under his quiet and gentle leadership. The Union extends its sympathy to Noela and his family.

A. McE.