

OBITUARY

The Hon ROBERT GATHORNE-HARDY, traveller, writer, and botanist, died on 11 February 1973 at the Royal Free Hospital, Islington, London. He was born on 31 July 1902, the third son of the third Earl of Cranbrook, and was educated at Eton and Christ Church College, Oxford, where he studied medicine and law.

In 1920, just before going up to Oxford, he joined his cousin Geoffrey Malcolm Gathorne-Hardy (whose obituary he contributed to *Polar Record*, Vol 15, No 102, September 1972, p 447) in a trip to Labrador. His cousin had been there in 1910 with H. Hesketh Prichard and now wished to return to examine some house ruins near Nain. They travelled north along the coast in *Harmony*, the Moravian missionaries' supply ship, stopping at many settlements along the way. Robert's tentative view of the "Tunnit" remains seen near Nain and elsewhere was that the original dwellings might have been built by Norsemen from Greenland, perhaps during a late stage of that colony's decline. His cousin's conclusion, more tentative still, was that perhaps the houses had been built by Greenland Eskimos who had learned something of Norse building techniques.

From 1925, Robert Gathorne-Hardy lived in Stanford Dingley and in the grounds of his house, The Mill, he created a garden famous for its exotic plants, and especially for its Arctic and alpine species. In 1938, in the company of Logan Pearsall Smith, he visited Iceland, a journey he recorded in several chapters of *Three acres and a mill* (London, Dent, 1939) and more fully in *Recollections of Logan Pearsall Smith* (London, Constable, 1949).

Through the years, the experience of his trip to Labrador worked on his mind, and he used them to good effect in two of his novels, *Lacebury manor* (London, Collins, 1930), which is set in Newfoundland (called "New Berkshire") and Labrador, and its sequel, *The house by the bay* (London, Collins, 1932). Ten years after this trip, he wrote "Summer in Labrador", which was published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol 230, No 1391, September 1930, p 365-81. And 40 years later, he published yet another account, "The land God gave to Cain" in his last book, *Traveller's trio* (London, Thomas Nelson, 1963, p 23-144, with 8 plates following p 187). In this long essay, he reflects from the point of view of a man of 60 on the evidence he had gathered when an enthusiastic and impressionable 18 and had then reconsidered when he was 28. It is a thoughtful and thought-provoking piece of work, well worth the reader's careful attention.

Alan Cooke

AREF IVANOVICH MINEYEV died in the Soviet Union in August 1973. He had a long and varied polar career. As a civil war veteran and Communist Party worker from the early days of the Soviet regime, he went to Ostrov Vrangelya in 1929 as leader of the polar station there and remained five years. He records his experiences, and much other information about the island, in his book *Ostrov Vrangelya* (Moscow, 1946). In 1934 he became Director of the short-lived Institute of the Peoples of the North [Institut Narodov Severa]. Later, he took charge for ten years of maritime operations in the western sector of the northern sea route, and he was responsible in 1942 for organizing the defence of Dikson against attack by the German pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*. In the 1950's, he helped to organize Soviet scientific work in the Arctic Ocean, including the drifting stations and high latitude air expeditions, and he also advised on the first Soviet Antarctic expeditions.

ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY, Curator Emeritus of the American Museum of Natural History, died at his home in Long Island, New York, on 19 March 1973, at the age of 85. A pioneer in the systematic and ecological study of oceanic birds, he was best known for a series of adventurous expeditions and prolonged museum research which reached a climax in the publication of his two-volume masterpiece *Oceanic birds of South America* (New York, 1936). This work is generally acknowledged as the greatest single contribution to the study of Southern Hemisphere marine ornithology. Not only did it contain lucid and critical summaries of existing knowledge about each species of bird, but also many illuminating essays on the physical environment and birds in relation to the ecology of this vast region. In some respects the title is misleading, because it is much wider in concept—following the birds wherever they occur: whether this be a circumpolar Antarctic distribution or an annual migration to the Arctic.

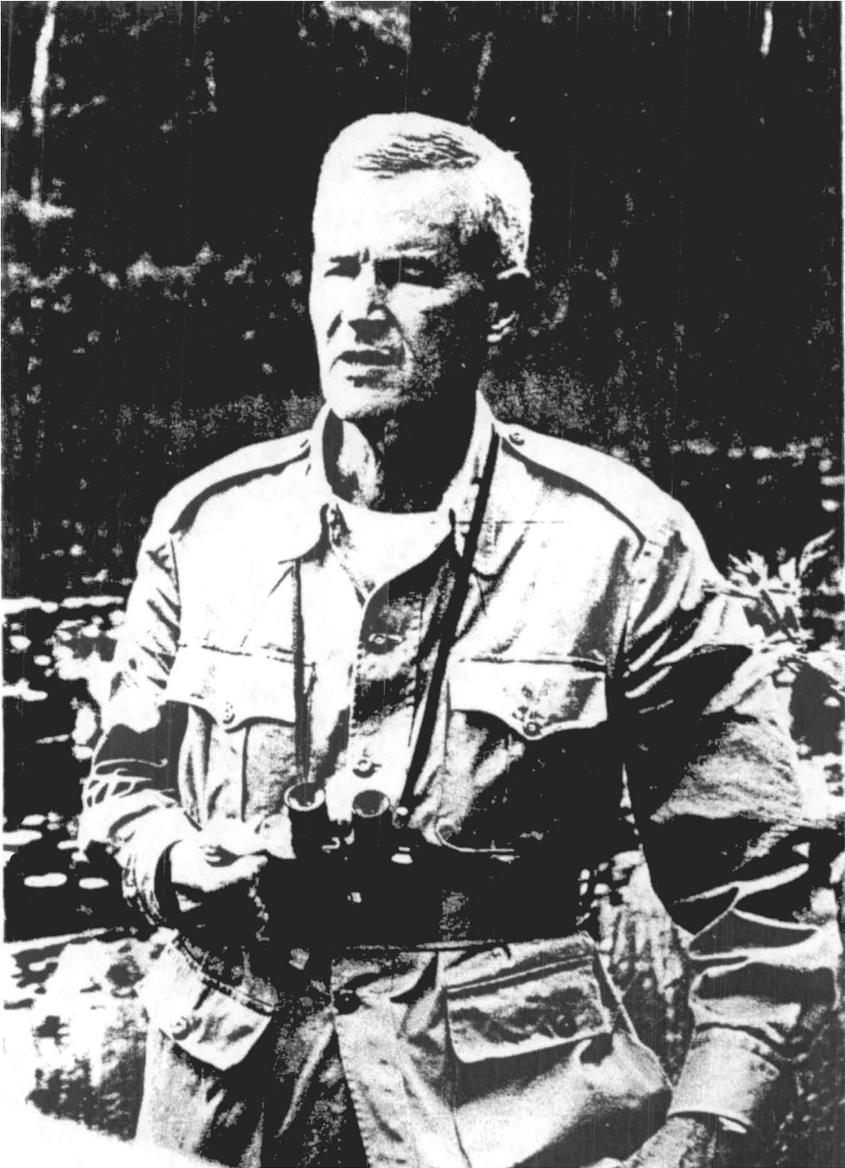
Murphy was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 29 April 1887. His deep interest in birds manifested itself at an early age. First attempts at commercial work were so unsatisfying that he wrote in desperation to the American Museum of Natural History in New York for advice about his ambitions. Dr Frank M. Chapman, then Curator of Birds, was sympathetic: he offered Murphy a specially created assistant post in the museum at \$40 a month for one year and then secured a scholarship for him at Brown University, where he graduated BSc in 1911.

Murphy's first responsible job was in the Brooklyn Museum, where he was appointed Curator of Mammals and Birds in 1911. From this base he set out on his first expedition—jointly sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History and the Brooklyn Museum—to make a biological survey of South Georgia. At that time he was planning to marry Grace Barstow, but she refused to let him miss this opportunity and agreed to be wed and then deserted for a year.

This voyage, 1912-13, was made in the brig *Daisy* (Captain Benjamin D. Cleveland), one of the last of the old American whaling and sealing vessels from New Bedford: Murphy returned with the Southern Ocean in his blood, with an unrivalled knowledge of the American Sperm Whale fishery and a deep and ever-increasing interest in Antarctic birds. Between 1914 and 1924 he published a rich harvest of scientific papers about South Georgia, but it was not until many years later that the diary he had kept for his wife was published as *Logbook for Grace* (New York, 1947).

During this voyage Murphy taught José G. Correia, the *Daisy's* cooper, to collect and prepare bird skins. In 1914, Murphy arranged for him to return to South Georgia to collect more specimens for the American Museum of Natural History. Correia subsequently took part in many other ornithological collecting expeditions initiated by Murphy.

That the American Museum of Natural History now contains the best study collection of birds in existence is largely due to Murphy's guiding inspiration and to Leonard C. Sanford and Frederick F. Brewster, two residents of New Haven, Connecticut, who were ardent and munificent supporters of the museum and of collecting expeditions. The Brewster-Sanford Expedition, 1912-17, was one direct result of this financial support. Rollo H. Beck was engaged to secure specimens of South American marine birds. He worked in Juan Fernandez in 1913-14, the Fuegian region in 1914-15, and the Falkland Islands in 1915-16. His collection, especially of petrels, was a remarkable achievement. The faultless character of the 7853 skins and the great body of associated data have not been surpassed. Probably no other ornithological collector has carried through a similar campaign or matched such scientific spoils. These collections formed the chief



Robert Cushman Murphy

basis for Murphy's *Oceanic birds of South America*, but this work could not have been written without his own experience in the *Daisy* and a subsequent expedition in 1919-20 to study the guano islands of Peru and the biological effects of the cold waters upwelling along the west coast of South America. This enterprise was sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum. It resulted in his first major publication, *Bird islands of Peru* (New York, 1925), a work which placed him in the front rank of ornithological writers and set a pattern for his future work.

In 1921, Murphy became Associate Curator of Birds in the American Museum of Natural History, a post that offered opportunities which closely matched his hopes and qualifications.

Meanwhile, in 1920, another patron of the American Museum of Natural History, Harry Payne Whitney, had made possible the Whitney South Sea Expedition, 1920-29, a further major effort to collect birds from a very wide region of the South Pacific Ocean. Once again, Rollo Beck was employed to undertake a major campaign to collect specimens. The special interest in petrels of Murphy and Beck resulted in another rich harvest. Among other objects, these specimens were to have provided the basis for a major monograph by Murphy on the petrels of the world, a project to which he devoted a great deal of attention in the past two decades but could not himself bring to completion. It is now in other expert hands at his old museum.

During the financial depression of 1932, there occurred an event which British ornithologists will always regret—the sale of the Rothschild collection of bird skins at Tring to the American Museum of Natural History. Lord Rothschild was at that time under considerable pressure from the income tax authorities and had no option but to sell his only available assets to the highest bidder in order to preserve the rest of his collections. Once again, through the generosity of the family of Harry Payne Whitney, it fell to Murphy to negotiate this transaction and to supervise the packing and removal. He spent four months at Tring organizing the transfer of some 280 000 skins across the Atlantic, including more than 2 000 type specimens. It was a most unhappy experience for British ornithologists, who were unable to influence this affair in any way; but all were agreed that Murphy had arranged matters with great tact and understanding of the extremely delicate situation. His own contemporary account of this transaction was published in *Natural History* (1932), and a later account, seen in wider perspective, is recorded in *The Ibis* (1973).

For many years Murphy served with distinction in successive appointments within the American Museum of Natural History: Associate Curator of Birds, 1921-26; Curator of Oceanic Birds, 1927-42; Chairman of the Department of Birds, 1942-54; Lamont Curator of Birds, 1948-55; Curator Emeritus, 1955 onwards. Throughout this period he initiated and fostered field work, research and display. The Whitney Memorial Hall of Pacific Bird Life was one of his special achievements.

In 1947, Murphy, accompanied by his wife, made the first of several visits to New Zealand. This was primarily a study trip to gather material for the two habitat groups from this region which now adorn the Whitney Memorial Hall. The location for the seabird material was the Snares Islands, and for the land birds a camp in the bush at Lake Brunner. He also made a brief visit to McMurdo in Antarctica in 1960.

In international scientific circles Murphy had great influence. With his social adaptability, personal charm, gifts of oratory, and easy command of Spanish, he could easily have followed a distinguished diplomatic career had he wished

to do so. But he was determined to stick to his specialized scientific objectives.

This notice should also mention a book by Grace Murphy. She published *There's always adventure: the story of a naturalist's wife* (New York, 1951; London, 1952), a personal biographical study which throws much light on her husband's life.

It is difficult within the confines of a short appreciation of this kind to make any adequate record of Murphy's contributions to ornithology. Spread over more than half a century, his writings have shed light on so many different problems. His contribution has been unique.

Brian Roberts