OBITUARY.

WILLIAM EDWIN GLEGG.

WILLIAM EDWIN GLEGG died on February 13th 1952, at the age of 73. He was the second son of Arthur Glegg (who held a post in the Registry House, Edinburgh), and after attending Daniel Stewart's College, learnt brewing with a local firm in Edinburgh. In 1903, after he had married, he came south to take up an appointment with a London brewery at Stamford Hill which, during the 1914 war, was taken over by Messrs. Mann, Crossman & Paulin, and thereafter he lived at their Albion Brewery, Whitechapel.

Epping Forest was within walking distance and Glegg soon became interested in birds. During the first world war he was in the R.A.M.C., and saw service in Macedonia from July, 1917, to April, 1919, keeping careful records of all the birds he saw. After his release from the Army he visited the Natural History Museum on Saturdays to read papers on the birds of Macedonia; I then saw a good deal of him when he was working on his list of birds from that country.

Many of his week-ends at this time were spent tramping about Essex and in course of time he had covered the estuaries and coast line from the Stour to the Thames. The standard work on Essex birds was Miller Christy's small volume, published in 1889. A new work was long overdue and Glegg undertook to remedy this. In 1929 his Birds of Essex was published, which that exacting critic, F. C. R. Jourdain, described as a “thoroughly sound and conscientious piece of work.” After this Glegg set about preparing a companion work for Middlesex, and in some ways this was an easier task since he was fortunate in securing Harting's unpublished MSS. for a second edition of his well-known book.

It was Glegg's custom to spend as much of his spare time as possible in the field and to devote the long dark evenings of winter to book research in which he was most painstaking. But his interests were far beyond local birds, and he probably knew more of the Camargue than any ornithologist in this country. To the Camargue proper he paid no less than eight visits between 1924 and 1929, and the coast line to the west as far as the Spanish frontier, he visited as many times between 1931 and 1934. These visits were not only made during the breeding season but in autumn and winter as well, so that he acquired a thorough knowledge of the birds at all seasons.

After he retired in 1938 Glegg went to live at Richmond, but owing to the bombing he left for Tring. There he was in his element with the first-rate library in the Museum and an interesting countryside for birds. He always spent one day a week in the field and, after the Americans had taken over the aerodrome near Tring, when he was one day using his field-glasses near the
aerodrome he was promptly arrested and confined under guard and was not released until an official from the Tring Museum had vouched for him as a harmless bird-watcher who had allowed his keenness to outrun his discretion. On my monthly visits to Tring during the war I saw much of Glegg who was always busy with some paper or other. On one of my visits I suggested that he might undertake the registering of the Rothschild collection of eggs consisting of many thousands of specimens. I explained that this was a very tedious business, but nevertheless he undertook the work and completed it without breaking a single egg. The Trustees of the British Museum were so pleased with Glegg's work that they instructed me to write to him and express their thanks and, a little later, made him an Honorary Associate of the Museum.

Glegg was of a rather shy and retiring nature and some people found him difficult to know, but that was not my experience, possibly because we came from the same home town. At times he was inclined to be a little dogmatic and self-opinionated—but that was only after he had gone very carefully into a problem—and was always ready to admit he might be wrong. He was very well read in ornithological literature and his store of information was always at the disposal of others.

Glegg was twice President of the London Natural History Society and for many years held a similar office in the Essex Field Club. From 1947 to 1949, he was honorary secretary of the British Ornithologists' Club and was a very hard-working member of the B.O.U. List Committee.

Besides ornithology Glegg took a great interest in football and cricket and thought nothing of making an early start from Tring to attend all day at an important match at Lords.

He lost his wife in April, 1951, and though he was just as keen and active he had noticeably aged during the last few months. He knew he had not long to live and before he was taken to the hospital he left a note of instructions in his room.

His principal publications are:


N.B.K.