

A life for ornithology: Stanley Cramp (1913-1987)

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It is now nearly five years since the untimely death of Stanley Cramp: the obituaries have been written, the dust has settled, and the time has come, I think, for a more detailed and frank biographical profile of this remarkable man before he sinks into the anonymity of history with his story incompletely told. No journal could be more suitable for this than *British Birds*, whose highly influential Senior Editor he was for 24 years.

To many, Stanley Cramp was the leading ornithological figure of his time. In his capacity as Chief Editor of *BWP* (Cramp & Simmons 1977, 1980, 1983; Cramp 1985, 1988) and through his work in what we might call the politics of British ornithology, his was an increasingly familiar and respected name to ornithologists, birdwatchers and conservationists alike. Here we come to an anomaly: so well known to all by reputation, and to many in the flesh, he remained to the last a shadowy, strangely enigmatic figure, his origins, background, private life and interests outside ornithology being almost totally unknown to most. Even to those of us who were his colleagues in the production of *BWP*, Stanley always remained something of a mystery. Although I worked closely with him for some ten years, and shared the main responsibility with him in getting out the first three volumes, communicating with him almost daily for long periods, meeting him frequently, and coming to know him quite well, I learned little about him outside *BWP* other than that we shared an interest in

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music. Even when I wrote the citation for his BOU Medal in 1984 (see *Ibis* 126: 451-452), the personal information I squeezed out of him was minimal. Only after his death, in researching for this account of his life and work, have I managed to lift the veil a little (see also Simmons 1989).

This situation arose not through any excessive modesty on Stanley's part, but because of his almost obsessive reticence and strong tendency to arrange his busy life into discrete, seldom-overlapping spheres of activity. One major result of this compartmentalism was that the scope of his interests before he became active in London ornithological circles in the late 1940s remained largely unknown, earning him the reputation of being a rather slow starter who was handicapped by the unfortunate limitations of his northern provincial background. Nothing, in fact, could be farther from the truth. Northerner he was, and proud of it, deliberately preserving the flavour of his Mancunian accent right up to the end, but his interests—mostly intellectual and cultural—were surprisingly wide, and he had long since transcended his humble origins when he first became known to ornithologists in the capital. Clear-minded and highly organised as he was, it was inevitable that—by dint of strength of character, determination, and a driving ambition—he would succeed in nearly everything he chose to do.

Early life and influences

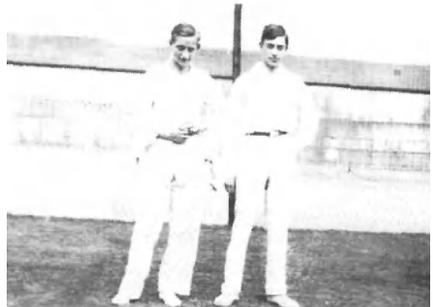
Stanley Cramp was born on 24th September 1913 at 28 Rae Street in the Edgeley district of Stockport, Cheshire, the eldest son of Edith Cramp (née Fell) and Thomas Edward Cramp, then a clerk in the Post Office, the family being completed some two years later by the birth of a second son, Leslie. By all reports, they were a happy clan, dominated—in the best possible sense—by Edith, who, though not well educated, was a most unusual woman. Highly intelligent, literate and remarkably prescient, 'Nana', as she was known, saw to it that her two sons were independently minded and self-sufficient, and would never feel tied to her apron strings. Stan (as he was then invariably called) took after his mother, to whom he was particularly close, the two of them contrasting markedly with the much more extrovert Ted and Les. Short, stout, and jovial, with a penchant for making excruciating puns, Ted Cramp (who died in 1950) was much better educated than his wife. He was known to his family as 'Chek', presumably after the Russian author, Chekhov. A Freemason, he resembled Stan only in his tendency to become chairman of everything with which he was associated: the local union branch, tennis club, masonic lodge, and so on.

The Cramps made sure that the boys had as good a schooling as was possible for lower-middle-class parents with a limited income in those difficult times after the Great War. Stan received his elementary education at Alexandra Park Council School in Stockport and later, after 'passing his scholarship', went to Stockport Secondary School, where he eventually obtained high marks in both the School and Higher School Certificates, the examinations for which he took when almost a year younger than the majority of his classmates. Like his brother, he also received music lessons,



155 & 156. Above left, infant Stanley Cramp, with his mother, Edith ('Nana'); right, Stanley Cramp's father, Thomas Edward Cramp ('Chek')

157-159. Below, left, Stanley Cramp aged 3 years 4 months, with his younger brother, Leslie (1 year 7 months), February 1917; top right, Stanley Cramp (left) with Frank Rhodes, about 1930; bottom right, Stanley Cramp (centre) with RAF colleagues, Canada, 1945



and they both became accomplished amateur pianists, though of quite different tastes: while Les's inclined towards jazz and popular music (he showed a fine aptitude for improvisation, playing and vamping any given tune by ear), Stan's were wholly classical, with Beethoven and Chopin as his idols.

At secondary school, Stan was a quiet lad with few friends, his dour, uncommunicative manner and rather negative attitude to life earning him the nickname 'Silas' from his school-mates (after the sad eponymous hero of Dickens's *Silas Marner*). All changed, however, with the advent of a new boy—Frank Rhodes—with whom Stan struck up a life-long friendship when he found that, in spite of their very different characters and outlooks on life, they shared the same very off-beat sense of humour as well as a number of common interests. The friendship with Frank—who, in effect, became almost the third brother in the Cramp household—liberated the introverted and reticent Stan. Although he lacked confidence in himself—even then conscious of what were, or what he thought were, his limitations—he became the leader and organiser of many of their activities. Together they played tennis, table tennis and snooker, attended the theatre, went to concerts of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, took up fell-walking, and (almost secretly, fearing ridicule from their peers) started birdwatching.

The two lads' interest in birds was initiated quite spontaneously by Stan when they were both aged 14; there were no outside influences, nor did they belong to any society or wish for other company. Only much later, when they were both working, did Stan approach a local expert for advice and, as was always to be his custom, he aimed high, that person being the doyen of Cheshire ornithology, A. W. Boyd, who exerted a kind and friendly, if rather brief, influence, as did Reg Wagstaffe, then Curator of Stockport Museum. Stan also read avidly, the books of E. M. Nicholson (1927, 1931) being a further and important stimulus to him, and it was about this time (1932) that he wrote to Nicholson inquiring about the possibility of jobs in ornithology.

Though both boys had matriculated and would have liked to have gone to university, that goal was far beyond the financial means of their respective families. So, while Frank took an apprenticeship in pharmacy, Stan obtained a stop-gap job as a clerk in the Borough Treasurer's department at Manchester Town Hall just after his sixteenth birthday, in September 1929. There he remained until October 1934 while working at night-school for an external degree in business studies from Manchester University, receiving his BA (Admin.) in 1934, his three years' hard graft having embraced political philosophy as well as economics and statistics. A brilliant mathematician, he had set his sights on a post in the Civil Service and, in March of the same year, took, without further study, the entrance examination for the Customs and Excise Department. This he passed with great ease, coming third out of a long list of 18-21-year-old applicants from all over the country, and he took up his duties as an Officer of Customs and Excise in the Manchester Collection area on 22nd October. With just a move to the excise division in 1936, he

remained in Manchester for the next 3½ years until applying, with his mother's encouragement, for a transfer to London, where he assumed his new post in the office of the West Collection area on 2nd April 1938, when aged 24.

Stan's years in Stockport and Manchester had been highly formative. With his brother, Les, he often spent his summer holidays walking and climbing on the Continent, from Switzerland to the Pyrénées. With Frank Rhodes, he further developed his interests in music, the visual arts, theatre (including ballet), cinema, poetry, literature (particularly the novels by contemporary American writers such as Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Faulkner), philosophy, politics, and environmental issues. Of strong left-wing bent, they belonged to an intellectual circle of Fabian socialists and formed a group—one of the first in the provinces—affiliated to the London-based Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals (in which men such as Bertrand Russell, C. M. Joad and Julian Huxley were leading lights), organising meetings, seminars, film clubs, and amateur theatricals. Joan Littlewood was 'one of the girls' and several more members went on to higher things subsequently (in the theatre, politics, and other professions), including the writer, Eric Burgess, and Dan (later Sir Dan) Chester, who became the right-hand man of the economist William (later Lord) Beveridge.

In group discussions, Stan and Frank often joined forces and were considered by their friends to be ruthlessly formidable. Although he took the lead in matters ornithological, Stan did not actively participate in the theatricals (which were Frank's province). The two of them would often write ephemeral doggerel for their own private amusement, but, while he once provided new verses for a song in one of the group's political reviews, Stan left serious poetry to his friend. A mutual interest in philosophy, however, was something rather special to them—though a matter of reading rather than of contacts (when they actually met Joad and Russell, they found them far too grand for them)—both firmly believing that the highest attribute of humanity was scientific rationality. They discussed religion, but neither was a believer; to take refuge in religion (or patriotism), they thought, was 'a cop-out'.

Even in those days, it was difficult to fathom Stan's character fully. With deeply held ideas and prejudices, his outlook on life was essentially fatalistic and pessimistic. Although he was keen to succeed, he recognised that his was a strong ambition that needed to be kept in check. He drew limits for himself (never, for instance, learning to drive a car, being convinced that it was beyond him) and believed that he lacked creativity and imagination and needed the help of an alter ego if he were to achieve anything. He cast himself as a follower, and once quoted to Frank, seriously, but with a touch of tongue in cheek, knowing that he was too ambitious to be wholly content with the sentiments in it, this passage from T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*:

'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;/ Am an attendant lord, one that will do/
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,/ Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,/'

Deferential, glad to be of use,/ Politic, cautious, and meticulous;/ Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;/ At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—/ Almost, at times, the Fool.’

He also still felt awkward in company, one result being that, having realised that the ritual of offering and taking a cigarette helped others to break the ice, he himself started smoking when aged about 18 by asking Frank for a ‘fag’ one day while on a boat trip to Jersey. For many years, he never inhaled, but the habit was later to take such a hold on him that he became a heavy chain-smoker to the extent that he was utterly miserable without a strong cigarette between his lips—and hang anybody else who might suffer or object—earning him, in late middle age, the nickname, among the staff of one national society, of ‘Old Fag Ash’.

Nor was ornithology neglected in those heady Mancunian days. In the winter of 1932/33—the family having moved by this time into a bigger house (12 Valley Road) in the village of Bramhall, a much more attractive area south of Stockport—Stan, with the help of J. H. Ward, another friend of the time, made a study of roosts of the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in northeast Cheshire, following up the earlier work of A. W. Boyd and A. G. Haworth, the result being his first known publication—a paper, no less—when he was 19 (Cramp 1933). Two more papers followed, both published in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*, a rather unexpected place for an unknown young birder (Cramp & Ward 1934, 1936). The first of these was inspired by the earlier work of P. A. D. Hollom, to whom Stan had written for further information, and gave the results of a 1933 census of House Martins *Delichon urbica* and Swallows *Hirundo rustica* near Manchester. The second paper, a survey of the rookeries in the neighbourhood of south Manchester, was also a follow-up of earlier work elsewhere, in this case by W. B. Alexander, the Nicholson brothers and others. Thus was the pattern of Stan’s ornithological interests established early: census work and distribution, such studies being a notable feature of British amateur birdwatching in those years immediately before and after the founding of the British Trust for Ornithology in 1933, largely owing to the seminal work of Max Nicholson and others at Oxford, the outstanding examples being Nicholson’s own long-term national census of heronries (begun in 1928) and the national inquiry into the status of the Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* organised by T. H. Harrisson and Phil Hollom in 1931.

Tom Harrisson and Mass-Observation

Stan thought the grebe survey an incredible performance for two young men who were only slightly older contemporaries of his. Already an admirer of Tom Harrisson, Stan wrote to him in 1937 after reading his book *Savage Civilisation*, being much in sympathy with the political philosophy it endorsed. At that time, Harrisson—through the census work that he and other ornithologists (like Stan) had been doing—had come to realise that, in several important ways, we were becoming better informed about birds than we were about people. Together with Charles Madge and others of like mind, therefore, he was in the process of establishing the Mass-Observation organisation (‘M-O’). This aimed to do for the ordinary British man what the BTO was then starting to do for the British

bird, namely to conduct detailed scientific study on aspects of contemporary society by using a large body of amateur observers and interviewers. Stan visited Harrisson in Bolton several times, the two of them immediately establishing a good rapport; they had a mutual interest in birds, of course, and also shared a dislike of academic sociologists. Stan was soon enrolled into the ranks of M-O, as an observer, but mainly as statistician and adviser. He was not the only ornithologist who became involved with M-O, then or later, others including James Fisher, Max Nicholson and Richard Fitter; indeed, as Fitter was to point out (in Harrisson's *Britain Revisited*, 1961), it was no accident that several of the early mass-observers were birdwatchers when one remembers the similarity between the new methods that M-O was pioneering in social anthropology and those with which Max Nicholson and others had revolutionised field-ornithology in the 1920s.

While still living in Cheshire, in 1937-38, Stan started work for a M-O book, *Politics and the Non-voter*, which Harrisson and Walter Hood were writing, his main task being the statistical analysis of the canvassing and local-election results in 'Worktown' (i.e. Bolton) and some Parliamentary by-elections elsewhere. He continued with this after settling in London, seeing much of Harrisson, who had moved there too; but, though it reached the proof stage in 1940, the book was never published. This was not, however, the end of Stan's work for M-O or, rather, for Harrisson, whom he greatly admired and believed would be one of the great men of the future. To Frank Rhodes, he described Tom as a charismatic figure whose talk was a continuous outpouring of ideas: four-fifths totally impractical, one-fifth brilliant. For his part, Harrisson thought highly of Stan, seeing his statistics as ammunition against the enemy of academia; they made a good team, Stan being just the man to pour cold water on the fantasies and encourage the brilliances. Probably because he was a voluntary helper, Stan found that his mentor—who had a reputation for being overbearing—was reasonable and easy to work with. He assisted him, therefore, with two more book projects which also came to nothing, mainly owing to the outbreak of the Second World War. He read through Harrisson's *Poverty of Freedom* (written for the Liberal Book Club), checking the facts and earning himself a dedication, and worked with Harrisson and Madge on an even bigger book on politics for which he did some research in the library of the London School of Economics. Long afterwards, in 1960, when he had already begun to make a name for himself in ornithology, Stanley (to give him the name by which he was almost invariably known later) devoted much time to a re-examination of the non-voting statistics for Harrisson's *Britain Revisited*. Although Harrisson spent most of his time abroad, the two of them continued to keep in touch until Tom's untimely death in January 1976, characteristically meeting for a gossip and a 'bender' together on Harrisson's last evening in London before his fateful return to Thailand, where he and his wife were killed in a motoring accident. (It is one of the absurdities of our science that T. H. Harrisson—who as ornithologist, anthropologist, sociologist, biologist, museum curator, conservationist, and

adventurer became one of the great polymaths of his time—is largely unknown to birdwatchers today.)

The move to London

When he came to London in April 1938, Stan found a home from home in Frank Rhodes's flat in Trinity Court on the Gray's Inn Road, Frank having come to the capital to work as a pharmacist a few years earlier. Where it suited him, Stan entered into the circle that Frank had already established, the flat becoming a meeting centre for friends old and new. The two of them picked up where they had left off, birdwatching and going to concerts and the theatre together; among a number of memorable events, the Toscanini concerts at the Queen's Hall and the acting of Olivier, Gielgud and the young Peggy Ashcroft stood out. Nor was romance absent from their lives. Stan, on a holiday in Germany just before the war, met and was attracted by a young *fräulein* who later visited him in London. The outbreak of hostilities, however, put an end to that, but, in late summer 1940, after Frank had married and settled elsewhere, Stan himself was wedded to Doris Strong, a girl of 21 whom he had met on the periphery of Frank's circle and later fallen in love with. They set up home together in a flat in Clare Court, Judd Street, Bloomsbury, where they lived happily for the next four years.

In the meantime, his work for Tom Harrisson finished, Stan took up serious birdwatching again. From June 1943 to June 1944, he studied the territorial behaviour and nesting of the Coot *Fulica atra* in St James's Park, publishing the results in *British Birds* three years later (Cramp 1947), his first contribution to that journal. Two events in 1944 then shattered his domestic bliss. First, in June, a temporary transfer took him to Liverpool. Next, on 15th July, he was called up for military service, his work as a civil servant having until then given him exemption (though he had 'done his bit' for the war as a member of the Home Guard, serving for a while in the rocket battery based in Hyde Park). Stan followed Frank and Les into the Royal Air Force, in which he remained until 22nd April 1946, serving at first (mainly as a clerk in equipment and accounts) in a number of UK postings. In 1945, however, with the rank of Leading Aircraftsman, he was sent to Canada for aircrew training—characteristically breaking all records by obtaining 100% in his final examination as a navigator—but the war ended before he received his 'wings' (while in Canada, he had taken the opportunity to visit the United States, where he saw the Lunts performing on the stage). After demobilisation, on returning to his London home, Stan found his domestic life unexpectedly disrupted, his wife having formed another attachment during his absence abroad. Bitter and heart-broken, he divorced her; indeed, so traumatic were Stan's experiences at this time that they were later used, Frank Rhodes believes, by their friend Eric Burgess in his novel *A Knife for Celeste* (1949).

The breakdown of his marriage was a key event in Stanley's life and he was never the same man again; because of that great hurt, it seems that he lost most of his trust in human nature and found it difficult to form close

bonds thereafter. He soon gave up his home in Clare Court and settled down, still in Bloomsbury, at Queen Court. There, in a tiny flat (no. 9 at first, later the more familiar no. 32, with its view from his desk over the central gardens of Queen Square), he remained until shortly before he died. As he became better known, he deliberately fostered the image of a confirmed bachelor; although he never married again, he was not without women friends, but they occupied a world from which his ornithological colleagues were strictly excluded. One of them—the late Jean Stewart, a well-known figure in The City whom Stanley had known for many years—proved a great help and comfort to him in those terrible last months of increasing debility and terminal illness.

Customs and Excise

When he resumed his Civil Service duties in April 1946, Stanley (as we must now call him) again worked as an Officer of Customs and Excise in the London West Collection area. It is appropriate, at this juncture, to examine his professional career in a little more detail, for it throws a useful light on his character and other achievements. That career was, on the face of it, remarkably static: he had entered the Department as an Officer, was confirmed in that grade in 1935 after his probation period, and remained an Officer (albeit in increasingly responsible posts, involving tax sums running into millions of pounds sterling) until he took early retirement in 1970 to devote himself to *BWP*, neither gaining nor seeking any significant promotions. This was quite deliberate, of course, and allowed him to pursue his real interests outside his job. Now defunct, the Officer-of-Customs-and-Excise grade was most prestigious in its day, bringing with it (when Stanley entered) a King's Commission, the powers of a superintendent of police, and a dress-uniform with cocked hat and sword. As Geoffrey Berry (his colleague of over 30 years) told me, pay and conditions provided a reasonable prospect even without further promotions, which were, in fact, very limited and called for a long commitment to private study. In this approach to his career, Stanley was following a long-established tradition, competition for entry into the service being so intense that it attracted candidates of far more impressive capabilities than were necessary to carry out the duties; a high proportion of the Officers, therefore, developed outside interests that gave greater scope for their talents and intellectual energy, many eventually becoming national figures in their fields.

Stanley's personality—then more charismatic than the public one he adopted in later years—made him a popular character among his colleagues, his enthusiasm for birds being contagious (he would at one time, for instance, take parties of them on tours of the London bomb sites in his lunch hour to see breeding Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*). In his professional work, he was held in high esteem, recognised as a very able man in every way, expert but approachable, and with an outstanding ability for chairing informal meetings. As a committed trade-unionist, he took a strong interest in staff-association affairs and held office on a number of committees of the Customs and Excise Federation, serving as

national President from 1958 to 1968. He was an important negotiator in dealings with the Board of Customs and Excise, some of which were protracted and often acrimonious; for many years, too, he represented the Federation in its dealings with other Civil Service unions and in giving evidence to the Parker Committee for its momentous reorganising review. He also served on various Whitley Committees, including a 21-year stint as Vice-President on the London West local one. After all that experience, he told a friend years later, the conduct of ornithological business was 'child's play'. Characteristically, when offered a well-merited civic honour in recognition of his union work, he refused it.

Ascent in ornithology: the LNHS

For many people, such activity would have precluded serious pastimes; for Stanley, however, it was the tip of the iceberg. Once more a single man, he threw himself into his hobby of ornithology, determined to make his mark and reach the top. After he left the RAF, he at first centred his energies on the London Natural History Society, which he had joined in 1942, contributing a number of papers to the *London Bird Report* between 1949 and 1967, with an outlier (on the effects of the Clean Air Acts) in 1975 (see Teagle 1988). First elected to the Committee in 1957, he served as a Vice-President from 1960 until 1976 and was later made an honorary VP of the Society for life, in 1957 and 1958 also being Chairman of the Ornithological Section. His chosen field at first—for which, as a resident, in Bloomsbury, he was particularly well placed—was the distribution and status of the birds in that central built-up area of the capital known to naturalists as 'Inner London', the study of urban birds being a rather neglected field in those days. The royal parks provided a particularly important habitat and, in October 1946, he started to keep regular records of the birds of Kensington Gardens (the scene of an earlier study by the Nicholson brothers) and Regent's Park.

Later, Stanley teamed up with W. G. Teagle and they conducted winter censuses in Kensington Gardens (1948/49) and in St James's and Green Parks (1949/50), following this up with counts of birds on two stretches of the Thames (1951-53), their work later stimulating other members of the LNHS to undertake more detailed, longer-term studies of the bird-life of London's open spaces. Starting in 1949, the two of them also took part in the watches for diurnal migrants over Central London that had been initiated by Leslie Baker and John Parrinder, and they were part of the team which counted roosting Starlings in 1949-52, helping too with the ringing of those using Trafalgar Square, Stanley comparing the hair-raising happenings there to something out of one of the Marx Brothers' films (of which he was a keen fan). In the summer of 1949, Stanley himself organised a count of nesting Swifts *Apus apus*, Swallows and House Martins in the London area; with John Gooders, he also documented the return of the House Martin as a breeding bird in Inner London. In 1952, the partnership of Cramp and Teagle produced a paper (published in *British Birds*) listing the birds recorded for Inner London during 1900-50, collating the annual reports on this subject which had appeared in that journal since



160 & 161. Above, Stanley Cramp catching Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* at roost in London for ringing, about 1950 (*Eric Hosking*)

162. Below, ringing beside Heligoland trap at Spurn Bird Observatory during the big fall of Robins *Erithacus rubecula* in October 1951. Left to right, Eileen Parrinder, George Edwards, E. R. Parrinder, unidentified helper, Stanley Cramp and C. B. Ashby (*Eric Hosking*)



1929. This was supplemented by a joint article in the LNHS's book *The Birds of the London Area since 1900*, for which Stanley also wrote (with E. R. Parrinder and B. A. Richards) the article on roosts and fly-lines (1957). Stanley brought the work on the birds of Inner London up to date in the second edition of the book (1964), which he and D. I. M. Wallace had helped R. C. Homes to revise, and in a paper in *British Birds* (Cramp & Tomlins 1966). Later—in 1955 and 1956, and again in 1961—he ran the LNHS's census of the Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*.

In W. G. ('Bunny') Teagle, Stanley had found another rare friend in ornithology with whom he shared some interests outside it: good music, the arts, literature, and politics. Theirs was a happy partnership: they enjoyed one another's company and sense of fun, sometimes corresponding in humorous verse. A visit to the Isle of May together in 1949 was a succession of hilarious events, the one to France in 1951 full of incident. With his northern common sense, drive, and worldly experience, Stanley acted as sound mentor, adviser, and older-brother figure for Bunny, who much admired his sense of humour, love of the ridiculous, and dedication to ornithology. That dedication, however, was not made at the cost of other interests for, as he made plain, he had no time for those whose lives were focused solely on birds. He was scathing, for instance, in his condemnation of birdwatchers who went to Provence and had no knowledge of the artists who had worked there or of the Roman buildings, mentioning one group who could be persuaded to visit the Pont du Gard only because they might see Crag Martins *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* there. He also once delighted in introducing a reference to the Beethoven string quartets into a discussion at the exclusive 1937 Bird Club for the benefit of those fellow members whose conversation never strayed from paths ornithological. By then, his tastes in music had broadened since the Stockport days, taking in West End musicals and opera; and he spoke enthusiastically to Bunny of a performance of Gershwin's 'Porgy and Bess' at the old Stoll Theatre. (He later told me that he loved the works of Puccini, but preferred to listen to them than to see them on the stage, the sight of a large Prima Donna quite spoiling the illusion for him.)

For Bunny Teagle, Stanley was a wise and sympathetic friend. The friendship for Stanley, however, with his busy and highly organised timetable and private life kept apart, was, though genuine, very much a controlled one, reducing mainly to Christmas-card contact once Bunny left London in 1963 and Stanley had become a senior figure in British ornithology. He tended to treat other friends and colleagues similarly once they had passed out of his life or ceased to be useful to him, this representing the other—practical, unsentimental, dispassionate, calculating, even ungrateful—'Goshawk' side of his nature which, if it was the only one that people encountered, gave them an incomplete picture of him. One ornithologist who saw the better, warmer side of him, both in his active LNHS days and later, was D. I. M. (Ian) Wallace—a close colleague for 20-30 years—who first came under Stanley's firm and slightly stern wing as a young birdwatcher, earning his approval and receiving encouragement and guidance: 'he sowed more seeds of

discipline into me than anyone else, enjoyably though, and made me care for common birds (counting them, etc.).' Stanley, who liked human contact more than he would admit, proved an excellent mentor, evidently feeling a strong sympathy for loners and adventurers like Ian, busy people who still found time to do more.

In 1949, Stanley initiated a 20-year study of the Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* in the squares and streets of Bloomsbury and Westminster and in the royal parks; this was to become the most important of his contributions on urban birds. In order to accommodate the work within his busy life, he used simple field techniques, mainly census work and the finding of nests. At first, however, with the help and under the guidance of Derek Goodwin, he looked also at behaviour; the results (Cramp 1957) reveal that the great surge of interest in the methods and theory of classical ethology which swept over us in post-war Britain, especially after Niko Tinbergen took up residence in Oxford, had not passed Stanley by. Moreover, although it was to be his only significant venture into this field, bird behaviour never really being his forte, the 1957 paper was also an early example of the application of the ideas of behavioural ecology, well ahead of its time. Subsequently, the study dealt more and more with the basic aspects of reproductive biology (especially breeding season and success), the eventual report (Cramp 1972, in which comparisons were made with the work on rural Woodpigeons by R. K. Murton) being the only major paper of his to be published in *The Ibis*.

Stanley's interest in the London parks and gardens continued throughout the 1950s. Between 1952 and 1956, he acted as the LCC voluntary watcher for Holland Park. Then, in 1957, he was appointed to the Official Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks, remaining a member until this body—so important to the encouragement and conservation of bird-life in the parks—was abolished (as an unnecessary 'quango') in 1979, serving for some years as its last Chairman in succession to Lord Hurcomb. During 1960-63, Stanley was also involved in the survey of the fauna and flora of the Buckingham Palace garden initiated by D. McClintock, Maxwell Knight, W. S. Bristowe, and O. W. Richards. Robert Spencer—who, with David McClintock and Bruce Campbell, used to broadcast in a BBC radio programme called 'Naturalist's Notebook'—also became involved and proposed bringing in Stanley to do the avifauna, not only because he was an acknowledged expert on urban birds, but also because he actually lived in central London and could more conveniently make the early-morning start required. Later, the two of them wrote the bird section for the series of papers on the natural history of the garden which appeared after the initial survey had ended (Cramp & Spencer 1963). Stanley continued to visit the royal garden long afterwards, sitting there quietly and noting what he saw and heard, eventually earning for himself the popular but wholly unofficial title of 'The Queen's Birdwatcher': 'I always ring up first', he told a reporter in 1979, 'to let them know I am coming, and usually go before dawn so I won't get in the way of the Queen if she is walking in the garden.'

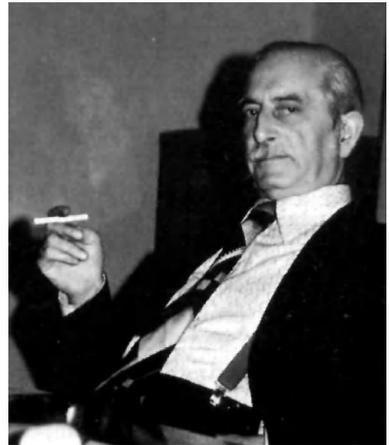
The BTO and the RSPB

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Stanley became increasingly active in the affairs of three national ornithological bodies: the British Trust for Ornithology, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the journal *British Birds*. He had joined the BTO in 1946, been a local organiser for the Mute Swan censuses in the years already mentioned, and was Regional Representative for the London area from 1958 to 1964. But it was his paper analysing the nest-records of the Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (Cramp 1955) which revealed his fuller capability, and two years later he was appointed to the Scientific Advisory Committee of the BTO, becoming Chairman of the Nest Records and Roosting Sites sub-committee in 1958. Membership of Council itself followed later the same year and in 1959 he took over as Chairman of the SAC for three years (it was at this time that I first met him when I served briefly on the Committee before departing for two years on Ascension Island). In 1963, he rejoined Council as a Vice-President, then, after a brief gap, was elected to Council for a second time in 1970. Surprisingly, however, he never became President, but perhaps the offer, if it was ever made, came too late, for by then he was too engrossed in *BWP* to give the job the attention it needed.

The BTO was not neglected in the 1970s, however, and Stanley continued to serve on three of its committees: SAC again, Ringing and Migration, and Populations and Surveys (of which he was Chairman for a while). He also represented the Trust for a number of years on the Advisory Council of the Edward Grey Institute. Characteristically, once his last term on Council ended in 1974, he quietly slipped out of sight, no longer even attending the Annual Conference at Swanwick—at which he had been a fixture for so many years ('I've earned a rest from all that', he told me)—but he did return to deliver the eleventh Witherby Lecture (on ornithology and bird-conservation) in 1979. He had served the BTO well, not least as a member of the ad hoc' research committee which formulated the new policies that led to the move to Tring (in 1963) and the appointment of the Trust's first Director of Research (D. W. Snow) in 1964. Further, in a remarkable solo effort, he had produced a policy document for the future development of the Trust which was so advanced that it is still being implemented today (see Hickling 1983).

Stanley was also a long-standing member (and, before long, a Life Fellow) of the RSPB, though it was not until 1960 that he was elected to Council, becoming its Chairman for five years from 1966; he was voted

163-166. Facing page, top, group at Scottish Ornithologists' Club conference at Dunblane in October 1965, left to right, Malcolm Ogilvie, Dr Adam Watson, Dr Ian Pennie, Prof. V. C. Wynne-Edwards and Stanley Cramp (*Jas. MacGeoch*); centre, HRH the Prince of Wales, at RSPB film show in Cardiff in 1972, meeting Stanley Cramp, Peter Conder, Anthony Clay and Trevor Gunton (*South Wales Evening Post*); bottom left, Stanley Cramp cutting *British Birds*' seventy-fifth-birthday cake in June 1982, left to right in background, Gwen Bonham, Dr Richard Chandler, Dr J. J. M. Flegg, Dr Raymond O'Connor and Keith Allsopp; bottom right, Stanley Cramp in typical pose in his 'BWP' office



back onto Council in 1972 and served on it until 1976: altogether an exceptional record. At the RSPB, Stanley formed a notable partnership with P. J. Conder, first when they were both members of the BTO/RSPB Joint Committee on Toxic Chemicals. Increasingly during the 1950s, there had been a marked concern—shared by these and other bodies (including the Nature Conservancy and the Game Research Association)—about the disastrous effects that certain agricultural chemicals were having on bird-life and the natural environment. In 1959, the Scientific Advisory Committee of the BTO (of which Stanley was then Chairman) had established a small working party (the Toxic Chemicals Group) under W. D. Campbell to look into the matter and produce a report based on a study of the literature (Campbell 1962). At the RSPB, Peter Conder (then Assistant Secretary and jack-of-all-trades there) had also started to investigate the problem and, in August 1960, Stanley (who had been a member of the original BTO sub-committee, now disbanded) became Chairman of the Joint Committee, with Conder as Secretary.

In a telling series of six reports (published by the RSPB and co-authored by Cramp, Conder, John Ash and P. J. S. Olney in various combinations but always with Stanley as first author), this team spearheaded the successful campaign that was waged throughout the 1960s against the continued use of persistent chemicals (pesticides, seed-dressings and the like) in agriculture. Stanley, who edited and sharpened up the RSPB-written reports, proved to be an excellent chairman—‘the very best I have ever known’ (Peter Conder)—and a highly proficient leader at meetings with the agro-chemical industry, the government ministry (MAFF), and other bodies, his shrewdness, common sense, ability to keep everybody to the point, and toughness in argument being invaluable. Partly because of his work on the Joint Committee, Stanley (having already received the Tucker Medal of the BTO in 1963) was awarded the Gold Medal of the RSPB in 1966. His sterling work for the Society did not end there, however, for he served as well at one time or the other (often as Chairman) on the Finance and General Purposes, the Reserves, and the Research Committees. In all, he devoted much time and thought to the business of the RSPB, bringing to it (in the words of the medal citation) ‘great penetration, knowledge of men and affairs, deftness in procedure; and a “common sense” of quite uncommon excellence.’ After his last stint on Council ended in 1976, he finally bowed out and was made an Honorary Fellow the next year. In October 1988, the year after he died, a plaque was unveiled in the RSPB hide at Copperas Bay, Essex, to commemorate his long involvement with the Society.

With Stanley’s determined support and help, Peter Conder (Director during 1963-75) had started to modernise the RSPB by re-organising it, employing professional specialists, improving the staff’s conditions of pay and service, and greatly enlarging the membership. With the co-operation of its increasingly diverse and experienced staff—and of a new-style Council versed in other areas of expertise (finance, advertising, personnel management, pensions, computers, etc.)—they had given the fortunes of

the Society a huge boost. With their going, an important era in its history had ended and the foundations for its continuing expansion firmly laid.

Other work in conservation

Stanley was also active on other national conservation bodies. For the Nature Conservancy Council, he served as a member of the Advisory Committee for England and later as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Birds (1982-85), having previously been a member of the Home Office Committee on the Protection of Birds Act. At one time or another, he belonged also to the Duke of Edinburgh's Committee that organised the British contribution to European Conservation Year 1970 and later to the Council for the Preservation of Rural England; to the Committee for Environmental Conservation; to the Council for Nature, as the RSPB's representative; and to the British Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation, as the BOU representative for many years and as Honorary Treasurer during 1971-81.

To all these institutions, Stanley brought all his experience and common sense. At the CPRE from 1970 to 1976, for instance, he helped the then Director (Christopher Hall) to establish a sensible constitution giving its branches responsibilities as well as powers in the running of the organisation, regularly exhorting the Executive Committee to 'get out of the Dark Ages and move into the Twentieth Century'. It was mainly as a result of these reforms, and later ones in the 1980s, that the CPRE became the dynamic and successful body it is today. For his services to bird conservation, Stanley was created an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1975. This time he accepted the honour, his mother accompanying him to Buckingham Palace for the investiture, coming up to town especially for the great event (since the death of her husband, she had lived with Les and his wife Dorothy, who described her to me as 'a lovely person').

Over the years, Stanley took every opportunity to press home the conservation point of view by writing articles in a variety of outlets (including *British Birds*, *Bird Notes*, *Birds*, *BTO News*, *New Scientist*, and *Nature*), also contributing the entry on 'Toxic Chemicals' to *The New Dictionary of Birds* (1964). His most distinguished essay in this field, however, was the booklet on bird conservation in Europe (Cramp 1977) published as a report of the Nature Conservancy Council for the Environment and Consumer Protection Service of the Commission of the European Communities (EEC). In this, the result of an assignment from the EEC, Stanley gave a detailed historical perspective of the vicissitudes which have faced the European avifauna over the past hundred years and then put forward the conservation measures that he thought should be adopted, thus aiding the EEC to develop a sound policy of bird protection based on biological principles.

'British Birds'

We now come to *BB* itself, the third of our core national ornithological institutions with which Stanley was closely associated. Ever since its

founding by the ornithologist and publisher H. F. Witherby in 1907, the journal has exerted a great influence in charting and directing the course of general ornithological activity in twentieth-century Britain. It nearly came to grief, however, with the unexpectedly early death (at the end of 1950) of B. W. Tucker, Witherby's close associate and chosen successor, but was rescued by the dedication and efforts of a series of Senior Editors (E. M. Nicholson, P. A. D. Hollom, and Stanley Cramp) and of an outstanding full-time Executive Editor (I. J. Ferguson-Lees).

Stanley had first joined the editorial team as a member of the Notes Panel in the mid-1950s, ascending to the Editorial Board in 1960 and becoming Senior Editor in 1963, continuing to hold the reins until his death in 1987, making him the longest-serving editor after Witherby himself (1907-43). In 1973, he saw *BB* through another crisis: the transfer to a new publisher (Macmillan) after the firm of Witherby had decided it could no longer afford to support the journal, and the departure of James Ferguson-Lees to the RSPB after 21 years as Executive Editor. With the appointment of J. T. R. Sharrock as full-time Managing Editor in 1976, Stanley (now heavily involved in *BWP*) was happy to relax the strong, almost dictatorial grip he had exerted over *BB* for so long, now assuming a mainly advisory, supporting role, his wise counsel always available. In 1980, when Macmillan decided to sell *BB* and gave its Managing Editor first option to purchase, Stanley played an important part in the financial negotiations which led to the journal being owned, for the benefit of ornithology rather than private profit, by its own Editorial Board, thus putting the new company (British Birds Ltd) on the same footing as the BTO and certain other societies. Subsequently, Stanley (though still nominally Senior Editor) acted mainly as Chairman both of the company and of the board of editors at meetings held four or five times a year, performing his duties in a characteristically efficient manner, firmly, swiftly, and without 'waffle', soon cutting short any member who went adrift from the logical argument or entered unfruitful avenues of discussion. Some years before his death, it had been agreed by all concerned that his position with *BB* was unique, so, as planned, the title of 'Senior Editor' died with him.

Before Stanley became an editor of *BB*, his only contribution, apart from his paper on the Coot (1947) and the joint paper on the birds of Inner London (1952), had been a typically terse note on an incident of courtship-feeding by Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* (1950). The year 1960, however, saw the publication in the journal of an impressive three-part report on the inquiry organised by A. Pettet and J. T. R. Sharrock into the unprecedented irruption of tits (mainly *Parus*) and a few other birds into England and northwestern Europe during the autumn of 1957. Stanley (who had also compiled his own report for the London area in the *London Bird Report* the same year) played a key part in the writing-up and analysis of the data and emerged as first author of the larger paper. In 1963, he followed this up with another (solo) paper in *BB* on the later movements of tits in Britain, Ireland and Europe, the same year also seeing his paper there on toxic chemicals and birds-of-prey. Except in joint authorship, he

was to contribute only one other major paper subsequently to the journal: a report on the nesting of gulls on buildings (1971). He also wrote some texts to accompany the special photographic studies of individual species and prepared the occasional obituary, the last, and his own last published work, being that for W. H. Thorpe (a good friend of *BWP*). Otherwise, he confined himself chiefly to reviewing books—over 50 between 1961 and 1986—a task he enjoyed and did with flair.

Mention of books gives me an excuse to relate that, although he was an avid reader (of good literature, biography, history, and political commentary as well as of ornithological and other scientific and conservation-orientated texts, mostly obtained from the public library), his own collection was strictly limited by the space it occupied within the glass-fronted cases which lined the study-lounge of his small, neatly kept flat. If he bought a new book, he said, an old one had to go: no easy decision, though he was released from this dilemma to some extent by being able to keep books in his *BWP* office from 1970 (after which his rate of reviewing bird books also increased).

Stanley's joint papers in *BB* on the birds of Inner London and the tit irruption have already been mentioned. In 1963, he also published a paper there (again as senior author) with I. J. Ferguson-Lees on the status and conservation of the birds of the Danube Delta, this important survey being based on their 17-day visit (ten in the company of Phil Hollom) to Romania in May 1961. In James Ferguson-Lees, the expert ornithologist, Stanley had found another of his rare close friends and an invaluable colleague; associates also in the affairs of the BTO and RSPB, and in each other's personal confidence far more than anyone else's, they worked together in harmony for many years on *BB*, complementing one another in just the sort of partnership that Stanley needed—James, the perfect alter ego, possessing that depth of ornithological knowledge, the field experience, and flair in constructive and painstaking editing that Stanley, for all his other gifts, somehow seemed to lack.

The Seabird Group

Stanley's gull paper of 1971 in *BB* was an offshoot of the 1969-70 survey 'Operation Seafarer' set up by the Seabird Group, on the instigation of W. R. P. Bourne and James Fisher, to make a census of all the breeding seabirds of Britain and Ireland; organised by the Executive Committee (first Chairman: G. M. Dunnett) and a special Census Committee (first Chairman: James Fisher), it had David Saunders as full-time organiser of the fieldwork (and main compiler of the results). Stanley played no part either in the early development of the Seabird Group (founded 1965) or the formation of Operation Seafarer, but, after he had joined the group (in 1967), his offer to help with the running of the census was gratefully received. When George Dunnett departed on a sabbatical year in New Zealand, Stanley's high standing in British ornithology made him an appropriate choice as Chairman of the Executive Committee in his place, and he then took over also as Chairman of the Census Committee itself after the tragic death of James Fisher in 1969. Subsequently, having by

now set up his *BWP* office in London, he was asked to handle the publication of the book which was to give the results of the census. Stanley, of course, proved to be an excellent Chairman, always available and co-operative, and it was largely through his efforts—and quick, clear decisions—that the book appeared so promptly. Rather surprisingly, however, as most of the writing and editing had been done by others, he emerged as senior author (Cramp, Bourne & Saunders 1974).

The BOU and other societies

Though he joined the British Ornithologists' Union in 1951, Stanley played little part in its affairs until 1965, when he became a member of Council for three years. There was then another lull until 1974, when he was elected a Vice-President, after which he succeeded Sir Hugh Elliott as President in 1979. That term of office ended in 1983, and he was awarded the Union Medal in 1984. He had represented the BOU on the ICBP (British Section), as we have seen, and was also a member of the advisory committee set up in 1979 to assist the editors of the Union-sponsored *A Dictionary of Birds* (which finally appeared in 1985). Of Stanley's presidency, there is little to say, for it was not a time of innovation or expansion at the BOU like that which the BTO and RSPB had seen when he served so dynamically on their Councils. As chairman of the BOU Council, he was splendidly efficient as usual, clear-thinking and fair, and rattled through its business in record time—in part, it was suspected, because he was not allowed to smoke in the Council Room of the London Zoological Society where the meetings were then held—though there was no question of discussion ever being prevented or unnecessarily cut short.

Stanley, it would seem, took the BOU presidency in his stride, accepting it largely as an honour rightly due to him, but the term had come too late in his busy life for him to do it full justice. Moreover, during the later part of it, he had started to show signs of the failing health that was to lead eventually to his death, being already a sick man when he attended the BOU Annual Conference at Southampton in March 1983, though indignant at the suggestion that anything was wrong with him.

His BOU presidency over, Stanley undertook no further senior duties in any ornithological body, saving what remained of his energies mostly for *BWP*. I have not attempted to trace his membership of other societies, but he must have belonged to a number. A Scientific Fellow of the Zoological Society of London for many years, he received its Stamford Raffles Medal in 1978 on the recommendation of V. C. Wynne-Edwards.

Travels

Stanley did belong to OSME (the Ornithological Society of the Middle East), of which he was Vice-President from its inception in 1978, having made several field-trips to the area over the years. He went, for example, to Azraq, Jordan, with Dr J. S. Ash and others in 1966; to the Kufra oasis, Libya, in 1968 with Peter Conder (Cramp & Conder 1970); to southern Iran in 1969 with Conder and others, and to Turkey in 1970 with Richard Porter (Cramp 1971a); to Turkey in 1973 ('atlassing') and 1975, and to

Baluchistan in 1972, again with Porter; to Tunisia in 1977 with Geoffrey Beven, M. D. England, M. G. Wilson and others; and to Israel in 1980 and Italy in 1981. Journeys farther afield were few, but he got to The Gambia in 1978 and Belize in 1982. In Europe, as well as his visit to Romania in 1961, he paid a highly influential visit with Bruce Campbell to Poland in 1959 (see Campbell 1979; Dyrz 1988), the first by any British ornithologists to an east European country since the war, and to the Coto Doñana, Spain, in 1965. Nearer home, he travelled to Ireland and widely in Britain, especially around the RSPB reserves. Until her death in 1982, a few months before her 100th birthday, Stanley would, after each trip, send home to his mother photographs taken of him (some at his special request), ever the loving and dutiful son.

Though some of the foreign expeditions produced scientific results (as noted), or provided material for *BWP*, most of Stanley's field-trips were essentially recreational, giving him a much-needed break from the demands of his busy life and a chance to birdwatch and add new species to his life-list. In Britain, with the need to preserve his dignity as a senior ornithological figure, he could appear reserved or even bossy in the field; but abroad, away from it all with his friends, he would relax, let his hair down, and enjoy himself, by all accounts being excellent company, fortified by as huge a supply of duty-free cigarettes as could be mustered (by all members of the party, non-smokers included) and by the local beverages. There are a number of stories of hilarious, even scurrilous goings-on, but these, I fear, lie outside the scope of this profile, wide-ranging as it is. Three other things emerge, however: Stanley's calm and phlegmatic character, even under the most trying or alarming conditions; his authority in organising himself and others; and his practicality and kindness in adversity (here, in particular, I am thinking of the way he came to the rescue when his friend Derrick England was taken seriously ill in Tunisia, nursing him and getting him safely back home). Rather surprising, especially in view of his keenness and the obvious enjoyment he obtained from birding, was his evident lack of skill in identification, thus showing that even distinguished ornithologists do not necessarily make good field men.

‘BWP’

We now come, finally, to Stanley's greatest achievement: *BWP*. Plans for a comprehensive modern replacement for *The Handbook of British Birds* (Witherby 1938-41) had been under consideration by the Editors of *British Birds* since the 1950s and these gathered pace after 1962. The Chief Editor designate was E. M. Nicholson, who hoped to see the task through as a retirement job (just as Witherby himself had done for *The Handbook*), thus maintaining the link with that great work, with which Nicholson had been closely associated. It was he who now set up the non-profit company (West Palaearctic Birds Ltd), whose Board of Directors would oversee the new project, and found just the sort of publisher that it needed (Oxford University Press). Before long, however, the scientific necessity to cover a much wider faunal area than Britain and Ireland had been realised, and

the scope of the new handbook was expanded to embrace the whole of the western Palearctic. In view of this, and because of his increasingly heavy involvement in environmental matters, Max Nicholson now decided that he must take a back seat and be succeeded (both as Chairman of the WPB Ltd Board and as Chief Editor) by someone able to give the project his full time over a number of years. More and more, and rather unexpectedly, the finger began to point at Stanley (who had by now taken up his turn of duty as Senior Editor of *BB*) as the one person with the qualifications, strength of character, and motivation to see the great task through: 'I now felt quite happy', Max Nicholson told me, 'to step down in his favour, in view of the judgment, integrity and dedication to the highest ornithological standards which he had demonstrated.'

By 1966, plans for *BWP* had advanced far enough for them to be announced and, in July, just before they were published in *BB*, the chance was taken to air and discuss them at a special meeting at the XIV International Ornithological Congress, at Oxford (for which Stanley was acting as Treasurer). With the promise of considerable international help with the project, Stanley and his *BB*/WPB colleagues went ahead to find the necessary (and substantial) finance needed to float and sustain it until *BWP* was self-sufficient through its own royalties. Unforeseen difficulties in raising enough money to make a start, however, delayed it for a further three years. Then, with the aid of a substantial advance from OUP and a grant from the Pilgrim Trust and a loan from the BOU (both obtained through the good offices of Sir Landsborough Thomson, another invaluable friend of the project), Stanley felt able to go ahead. On 1st February 1970, ten days before his early retirement from Customs and Excise officially commenced, Stanley started working full time as Chief Editor of *BWP*, his salary paid by WPB Ltd (not OUP).

At first, he worked from his flat—no. 32 Queen Court, in fact, remaining the official address of *BWP* until his last illness—but was soon established, with his own secretary, in the fully equipped WPB Ltd office at 71 Gray's Inn Road, only a short walking distance away from his home. During his years with Customs and Excise, he had enjoyed much freedom and he could then usually be contacted at his office in Harwood Place (and later Berwick Street) only before ten in the morning, after which he would disappear out of official ken upon his rounds; but now he could give all his time to ornithology for the first time in his life. There was, however, still a huge amount to do before the actual work on the first volume began and Stanley—in his element with the challenge of it all—began to tackle the task with great determination and efficiency. To help him, he had the half-time assistance (from May 1970) of his *BB* lieutenant James Ferguson-Lees as co-editor, his salary also paid by WPB Ltd; together they were a formidable partnership, tried and tested.

By this time, the full *BWP* team consisted of nine people making up the Editorial Board: five Directors of the WPB Ltd Board—the four *BB* editors (Cramp, Ferguson-Lees, Hollom, and Nicholson) and Robert Spencer (then Deputy Director of the BTO)—plus K. H. Voous and Jan Wattel (of the Instituut voor Taxonomische Zoologie, University of Amsterdam),

Robert Gillmor (Art Editor), P. J. S. Olney (Curator of Birds, Zoological Society of London), and me. In a series of formal meetings, written exchanges, and consultations during 1970, the scope of the book, the area it was to cover, and its organisation and format were discussed and the allocation of the various sections amongst the editors decided. As well as overseeing the whole thing, Stanley's own immediate task was to help Ferguson-Lees (and Hollom) compile the species list for the first volume. Further, being himself responsible for what were to become the Distribution and Population sections, he had to start on the long and tedious task of setting up a network of foreign consultants (eventually 43 in all) to provide the basic data for his texts and for the ambitious maps he was planning (these latter also involving detailed discussions with the cartographical department of OUP). The exact eastern boundary of the area was problematical, so the views of Russian ornithologists were sought; indeed efforts were made to recruit specialists from the whole of Europe to serve as advisory or associate editors and consultants for all aspects of the book. In September, the XV IOC, held in the Netherlands, presented another opportunity for discussion and recruitment. For this, Stanley prepared a document for circulation outlining the nature and scope of *BWP*; there were to be seven volumes, the first to appear in the autumn of 1974 and the rest at yearly intervals thereafter. The whole project, then, was to be completed by the end of 1980, thus taking some 11 years in all, a daunting prospect.

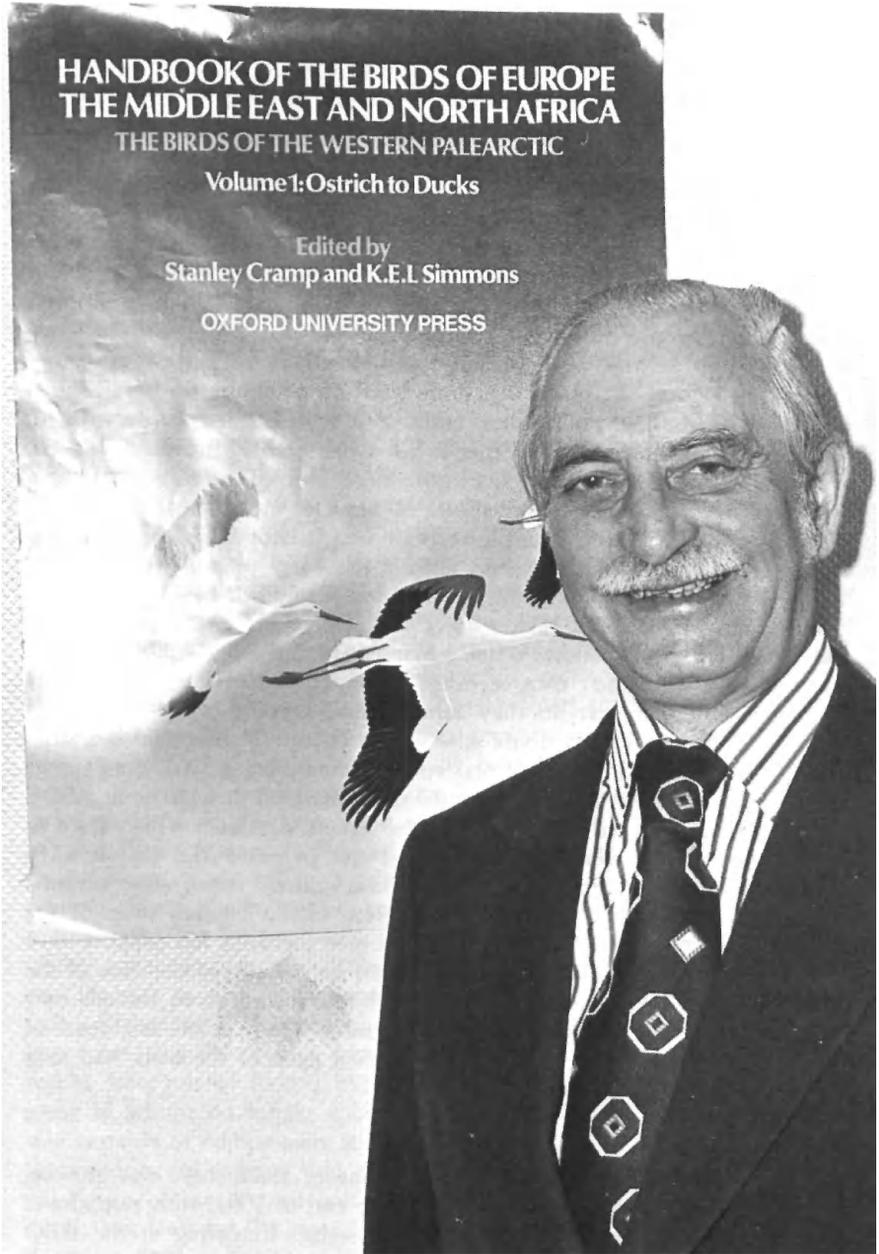
The years that followed, up to the publication of volume I, were not easy for any of us, with a series of crises, delays, and early disappointments, not least the lack of support (Cambridge and W. H. Thorpe apart) from the professional centres of ornithology in Britain, though this was more than made up for in later years. There was a strong feeling, initially, that *BWP* was unnecessarily duplicating the work started by the German *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, three volumes of which had already appeared by the time our work started; there were doubts, too, about Stanley's ability (as an amateur) to oversee the scientific side of the project, a translation of the *Handbuch* being seen as a preferable solution by some leading ornithologists who might otherwise have thrown their weight behind *BWP*. Stanley, indeed, was always sensitive about his lack of a higher scientific degree: being addressed as 'Dr Cramp' by his foreign correspondents embarrassed him and he hinted to me that the award of an honorary doctorate from some British university would be very acceptable (alas, the offer never came).

There were also early editorial changes. Two new section editors joined the team: Robert Hudson (for Robert Spencer) and M. A. Ogilvie; like most of the rest, they worked unpaid and in their own time. A key loss came with the departure of James Ferguson-Lees for the RSPB, depriving Stanley of his chosen co-editor and right-hand man. I now replaced James in March 1973—three-quarter time at first, full time from 1975—having first been associated with the project as a consultant (on behaviour) since 1966 and as a section editor since late in 1969. Work on volume I continued slowly—much too slowly for Stanley's liking—and it finally

appeared in 1977, three years late. There were many reasons for the delay, not least the great increase (as the book evolved) in the scope and complexity of most of the sectional treatments, which now far outstripped the original conception. This threw great pressure on the available space (then watched much more rigorously than in later volumes) and caused many editorial problems, and even more serious financial ones. With the huge expense of the London office, money was always tight and Stanley was faced—then and later (when D. J. Brooks was engaged as his assistant and a long-overdue editorial team set up at Oxford)—with the urgent need to find more and more of it so as to keep the project alive, a chronic and ever-worrying chore which engaged a great deal of his time, ingenuity, advocacy and energy. Matters came to a crisis early in 1975, when the money nearly ran out and OUP threatened to withdraw because of delays on the agreed timetable; going without salary for several weeks, Stanley and I weathered the storm, having made a private pact together to complete the work on the vital first volume, come what may.

It is not the place here to go into the detail of the subsequent history of *BWP*. Stanley and I worked together well, complementing each other, and remained on friendly terms throughout; although there were rough patches and disagreements, and he went his own way in the end, when poor health reduced my own participation, he was always pleasant and courteous to me—if at times exasperatingly stubborn and unapologetic, and always overdemanding—and I retained a soft spot for him until the end. When I nagged him about his smoking, he took it well, explaining that his late father (a heavy smoker also) had given up cigarettes to the detriment of his mental health, the cure being worse than the ill. Two more volumes appeared under our joint names (in 1980 and 1983) and a further two under Stanley's alone (in 1985 and 1988), the last posthumously.

In view of his record elsewhere, it must be admitted that Stanley was far from the perfect boss; so obsessive were his efforts to keep the project afloat that the welfare of the staff and others working for it had a much lower priority (it was a considerable relief to me when I received a special five-year grant from the Science Research Council which gave me a large measure of independence from him). Though he kept his section editors continually on their toes, exhorting them to better efforts and keeping meticulous records of progress, most of them received little help from him once the ground-rules had been established. It seems that, not having to undertake any substantial literature research or analyses himself, Stanley never fully realised just how difficult the task was: many of the problems about timing arising from his editors' inability to meet the deadlines that he had agreed independently for quite other reasons (mainly financial). Organisation was his métier, even if it seemed at times almost an end in itself. Discussions with him could have an air of unreality about them: matters agreed, deadlines established, end of problem. There is a myth that he planned and wrote *BWP* practically single-handed—an omnipotent spider in the centre of a web, spinning gold from flax—but that harms his memory as much as any underwriting of his true role would do, and pays scant justice to his hard-working colleagues (the unsung heroes of *BWP*):



167. Stanley Cramp, sporting typically flamboyant tie, beside poster featuring his life's greatest achievement, 'BWP' (*Topix*)

Duncan Brooks and Ruth Wootton (Stanley's secretary from the start); the Behaviour Team at the EGI, Oxford (E. K. Dunn, M. G. Wilson, and Dorothy J. Vincent); the long-serving Voice Team (Joan Hall-Craggs and P. J. Sellar); and the other editors, past and present (N. J. Collar, C. S. Roselaar, D. W. Snow and D. I. M. Wallace as well as those already mentioned). In fact, Stanley's input to the text was small—that for his own sections being deliberately kept to a minimum, pressure to make them more comprehensive being strongly resisted—his main involvement being with the excellent maps that are such a notable feature of *BWP*. As for his editing, it may perhaps tactfully be said that he worked on the broad canvas and that the detailed, constructive work fell to others.

Stanley, then, was no paragon; but, as has been said of a famous general, nice people do not win wars. *BWP* had been the great challenge of his life and he rose to it magnificently. Without his perseverance and unremitting efforts, it would have floundered on a number of occasions: it needed the strong, even ruthless hand of a level-headed, down-to-earth realist to hold it together, and this is just what Stanley provided. Indeed, looking back at events—and over the huge files containing his letters, directives, and other communications—I am lost in admiration and can think of no-one else who could have organised it better. His expertise and energy were remarkable, especially during the early years when the book had to be evolved from scratch. He presided firmly but benevolently over Editorial Board meetings, taking notes and issuing his own concise, lucid, and neatly laid-out minutes. While leaving it to the other editors to plan, research, and draft their own sections, he supervised everything, critically reading over all the texts as they came in and keeping everybody on the rails. There was never any doubt who was in charge; he maintained a strict centralisation, discouraging editors from communicating with each other directly and insisting that they channelled all material through him. Above all, he constantly urged them to meet the agreed deadlines which were so important to the financial survival of the project. He was a hard taskmaster, earning himself appropriate nicknames from some editors: 'Chairman Mao', 'The Ayatollah', and even 'God'. Though most of the text initiatives came from others, he would give them his full support once (and if) persuaded: this he did, against much opposition, in the case of the greatly expanded behaviour sections that I introduced, even though they remained the main target of his cuts thereafter. Only in the last years of decline did Stanley relax his grip, and by then most of the work had long been done by others anyway.

Final years

With Stanley already a sick man in the spring of 1983, there was growing concern for his health, especially towards the end of 1984, with rumours of a mild stroke and smoking-induced emphysema circulating at the BTO conference at Swanwick. When I wrote to him in January 1985, however, not having seen him since October 1982, he denied that he was unwell. By then, in fact, he was seriously ill with a chronic respiratory disease and should have handed over the reins to his successor, his speech being

affected, his breathing painfully restricted (so that he easily became exhausted), and his handwriting, which had got progressively worse, now almost indecipherable (it had always been poor, largely because of the peculiarly twisted way he held a pen, itself a consequence of the posture he was forced to adopt while writing up his diary on his lap during wartime air-raids). Later in the year, he did admit to me that he had suffered a bad attack of the shingles (which kept him off work for some three months) and in December 1986 reported that he was having trouble with his legs, making walking difficult; but he struggled on, albeit now half-time, refusing to give up even though, by now, there was not all that much work that he could do and the business affairs of *BWP* were in disarray (and had to be rescued later by *OUP*). So, by one of those cruel twists of providence, Stanley Cramp eventually became a liability to the very project he had done so much to foster, a sad outcome which he certainly did not deserve.

His health continued to decline during 1987 until, in July, he suffered a stroke and was taken into St John and St Elizabeth Hospital, St John's Wood, where he died on 20th August, following a bout of pneumonia. His funeral, at Golders Green Crematorium on 26th August—attended by a number of his ornithological colleagues and the representatives of many of the bodies on which he had served—was a strangely muted affair, with few private friends, no personal words said, and none of his close family present (his brother Les having predeceased him two months earlier).

I have never met anyone quite like Stanley Cramp. A rule to himself, he was predictable only in his unpredictability, seldom taking the line one expected of him. Highly organised, he remained to the last a fatalist, as exemplified by his attitude to his own excessive smoking (which, together with the worries of *BWP*, undoubtedly hastened his death). Right at the centre of projects disseminating huge amounts of knowledge, he was no communicator. Highly dependent as he was on the help and co-operation of others, he remained to the end an autocrat, keeping everybody firmly in their allotted place within a strict hierarchy and often maintaining what seemed to be a compulsive and unnecessary secrecy about matters of mutual concern. Throughout his life, he exploited people and their ideas, taking advantage of their devotion to the progress of ornithology, but he was the one to get things done where softer souls would have failed. He had a persuasive way about him of getting the best out of you even while you were silently cursing him. Capable of evoking great devotion, he would draw intense hatred, even from former close friends and colleagues, some of whom no longer spoke to him. Hard-boiled and insensitive, he was capable of compassion and had a fondness for children. To the end, he remained an enigma, but about his greatness as a leading ornithological figure of the second half of the twentieth century there can be no doubt, not least for the legacy of *BWP*. There, as Max Nicholson has said, he 'turned in a performance much greater than could reasonably be expected of him', and for that we should all be grateful.

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