

FREDERICK BULSTRODE LAWSON WHITLOCK (1860-1953) ORNITHOLOGIST

I was contacted recently by Ian Mason who was in the process of writing the history of oology in Australia. Included will be a brief history of each collector's background and include the number, location and date of egg clutches of each species collected, who each collector corresponded with and where their collections are now. One of the persons Ian was looking for information on was Frederick Bulstrode Lawson Whitlock.

In April 1901 Lawson Whitlock arrived in Western Australia and began a life long association with local ornithologists, collecting and cataloguing the many and varied species of birds in the area, many of which had not before been catalogued. Major Hubert Massey Whittell's extensive article in the April 1940 issue of the journal *Emu* details Lawson Whitlock's career from his arrival until that date. He writes:

"In June next Mr. Lawson Whitlock not only reaches the advanced age of 80 years, but also completes thirty-nine years of research in the bird-life of Australia. As a memento of his birthday, and in appreciation of the work he has done in Australian ornithology, it was decided to submit a portrait, accompanied by an account of his travels after birds, for publication in this present issue of *The Emu*. The writer is pleased at having been given the opportunity of writing this account of the activities of a valued personal friend of over eleven years' standing.

A detailed list of the many new forms of birds collected, or of the numerous occasions on which Mr. Whitlock was the first to find the then-unknown eggs of many species, would prove too great a task to come within the scope of this short biography. Not only were Mr. Whitlock's discoveries very numerous, but he has the gift of being able so to describe his field-work that the many records he has left in the pages of *The Emu* are not only literary efforts of a high standard, but also word-pictures of the habits of the species with which he has come into contact. Gilbert, Carter, Rogers, Milligan and Whitlock are all noteworthy figures in Western Australian ornithology, but none of the first four travelled so widely within the State as has Mr. Whitlock, and none has left for posterity such complete accounts of the habits of the birds they encountered.

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Mr. Whitlock, although twelve years the elder, had been at school with Mr. L.F. von Wiedt, who now resides near Brisbane, and together the two left Kalgoorlie about August, 1901, on a prospecting trip to the Blackhills, about fifteen miles south of Bulong. There were there about three weeks and then travelled to Boorara (Golden Ridge, twelve miles south-east of Kalgoorlie), and were there certainly at Christmas, 1901, as Mr. Whitlock remembers their having had their Christmas dinner together. Shortly afterwards Mr. von Wiedt left for Perth where he obtained an appointment at the Museum, of which the Director was then the late Bernard H. Woodward. The appointment is here mentioned as it was the means of Mr. Whitlock's getting into correspondence with the late A.W. Milligan, who was then honorary ornithologist to the Museum. Later, when in September 1902, Mr. Whitlock moved up to Lake Austin on the Muchison Goldfield, Milligan persuaded the Museum Committee to make a grant to be devoted to ornithological collections to be made by Mr. Whitlock. Thus began, over thirty-seven years ago, that splendid work in Western Australia ornithology which was to have such wonderful results, and which – all Australian ornithologists will be glad to appreciate – still continues."

Mr. Whittell details over the next six pages Lawson Whitlock's travels and collecting excursions. Much of it reads like it was taken from Lawson's own notes recording the details of his criss-crossing Western Australia.

Mr. Whittell finishes his article by summing up Lawson Whitlock's activities in the last years before 1940:

“While living in Perth, Mr. Whitlock wrote many articles of a popular nature for local journals and also became a very much appreciated broadcaster on the bird-life of the State. Mr. Whitlock attended the 1927 R.A.O.U. Congress held in Perth and read a scholarly paper on “Some Peculiarities in the Distribution of Birds in W.A.,” wherein is apparent the specialized knowledge of that subject which his travels have enabled him to acquire. At that Congress he was elected member of council for Western Australia, which position he held till 1932, when he retired, at his own request, in favour of the writer. Finally, it is to be recorded that at the 1933 Congress Mr. Whitlock was elected an Honorary Member of the R.A.O.U. in recognition of the long and valuable services he has rendered to Australian ornithology.”

Our records show Frederick Bulstrode Lawson Whitlock was born in Nottingham June 3,1860 the son of Thomas Oliver Whitlock and Mary Ann Taylor who were married Dec.6,1857 at Ryton-in-Dunsmore near Coventry. Lawson Whitlock is a descendant of John Whitlock (1625-1708) the non-conformist minister of the Presbyterian Chapel, High Pavement, Nottingham. His family is detailed on our WHITLOCK02H chart.

Lawson Whitlock grew up in Loughborough, Leicestershire and worked in the office of the Registrar of the Leicestershire County Court as an accountant. By 1885 he is shown as a clerk at Smith Co., Bank in Nottingham. In 1887 he married Clara Ellen Neale. They were married 65 years when Clara died in December 1952 in Bunbury, Western Australia. Lawson Whitlock died June 15,1953 in Bunbury. Lawson and Clara had two children prior to leaving England. Charles Frederick B. Whitlock and Gwendoline Nora Whitlock. Charles did not accompany his parents to Australia and lived for many years in Buenos Aires.

Our thanks to Ian Mason for this interesting addition to our files.

SOURCES: R2462-4; X5516; R976/103