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## Obituaries

### THE LATE MR. JOSIAH EDWARDS CHUBB.

The Union has lost another member by the death of Mr. J. E. Chubb, which occurred on June 3rd last, at Auburn, Victoria.

The late Mr. Chubb was born on November 24th, 1862, at Yeovil, Somerset, England, and at an early age exhibited a strong instinct for Natural History. He became apprenticed to a furrier and taxidermist. When out of his time he sailed, in 1884, for New Zealand, with the intention of visiting relations there. Passing through Melbourne, naturally, he made his way to the National Museum (then at the University), where he chanced to meet the Director (the late Sir Frederick McCoy). Seeing Chubb's credentials, the Professor invited him to undertake an urgent temporary job—to prepare an exhibit of birds, mammals and fish for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition (1886). The exhibit was awarded a first-class medal and certificate.

Mr. Chubb was then requested to report on the condition of the mammals, birds, etc., in the Museum, which report led to his appointment as taxidermist from July 1st, 1885. Therefore he had 38 years' service to his credit. But nothing testifies more eloquently to his worth than his handiwork displayed in the

mounting and posing of various specimens that are among the exhibits in the Museum.

The late Mr. Chubb was curator of bird-skins in the R.A.O.U. Collection, and by virtue of that office was a member of Council till he resigned, owing to ill health. He was a conscientious and painstaking worker, with a critical turn of mind, which might be deemed by those who did not understand him as a complaining mood. It was this critical spirit that led Mr. Chubb, during the annual meeting of the R.A.O.U., Sydney, 1921, to notice in the valuable Macleay Collection that certain specimens needed immediate overhauling if they were to be preserved for posterity. This led to the forwarding of a joint report with Mr. A. J. Campbell, through the Council of the R.A.O.U., to the Authorities concerned, and remedial measures were soon taken.

Mr. Chubb visited King Island, Bass Strait, in April last, to recuperate his health. While there he believed he identified the following birds, which have hitherto not been recorded for that locality, namely:—Black-breasted Buzzard (*Gypoictinia melanogaster*), Rosella (*Platycercus eximius*), Warbling Grass Parrot (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petroica multicolor*), White-throated Tree-creeper (*Climacteris leucophaea*), Oriole (*Oriolus sagittatus*), White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*), and Black and White Fantail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*).

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#### "BEACHCOMBER" BANFIELD, OF DUNK ISLAND.

An idyll of tropic life closed, and the birds of Australia lost a stalwart champion, when Mr. E. J. Banfield, R.A.O.U., died at his home on Dunk Island, North Queensland, on 2nd June last.

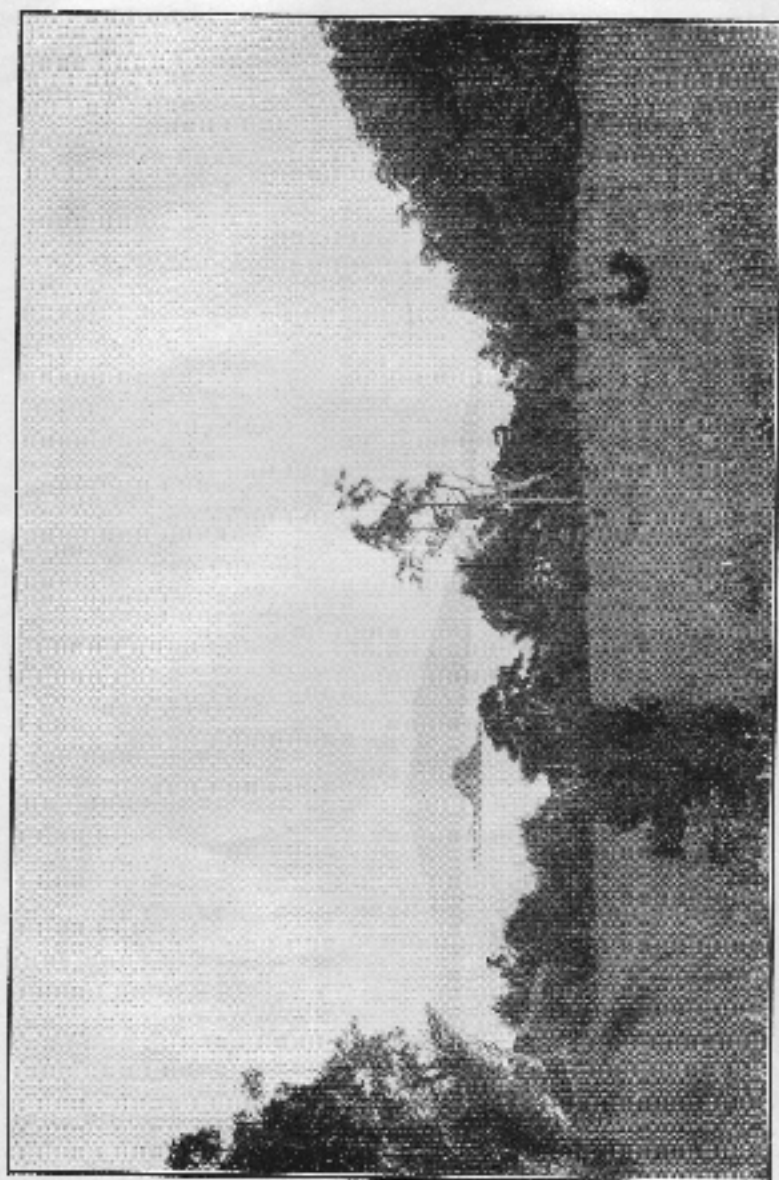
Edmund James Banfield, popularly known as "The Beachcomber," was perhaps the most picturesque figure among members of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. As the lord of a delectable isle lying in the seas of our tropics, and the author of three fascinating books dealing with his island life, he achieved fame extending far beyond the confines of the Commonwealth. Synchronically, he did much towards elucidating the life-histories of some of our most brilliant birds, and by his ceaseless emphasis of their charm and economic value helped largely to create the healthy spirit in ornithology that has animated Queensland in recent years. Apart from this consideration, Mr. Banfield's good citizenship was evidenced in many ways, notably in his championship of the qualities of our Northlands, and in the fact that he was an ever-present help in time of trouble to lonely settlers on the adjacent mainland. For all his love of freedom and ease, "The Beachcomber" was no mere lotus-eater. Those who have had the pleasure of visiting him

in the home which he so rarely left—among them several members of the R.A.O.U.—will bear witness to the fact that he was seldom idle, that he was astonishingly energetic for a man of his years, and that his mind was as active as his body.

Born in Liverpool (England) in 1852, E. J. Banfield came to Australia at an early age. His father, the late J. W. Banfield, took up a newspaper in Ararat (Victoria), and the young man became attached to the printing trade. Thence he went to New South Wales, and after working on newspapers in the Mother State, passed on to Queensland. For several years he did journalistic work on the Townsville daily *Bulletin*, and in that capacity became closely associated with the late Sir Robert Philp, then member for the district, and later Premier of Queensland, and also Sir Alfred Cowley, then member for the Herbert, and later Speaker of the Queensland Assembly. With Sir Robert Philp, Mr. Banfield toured much of North Queensland, experience that probably assisted in fixing his affections on the "free spaces" of the tropics. Towards the close of last century, the journalist's health gave way, probably through over-work, and his life was in danger. Indeed, when he and his devoted wife sought out an island home, it was in the belief that such experience would necessarily be of only short duration.

Dunk Island is one of a numerous group, lying immediately to the north of the noble Hinchinbrook Island. Rockingham Bay, which lies almost opposite, figures prominently in the ornithological history of Australia. It was fitting, therefore, that the district should give hospitality to yet another devotee of Australian birds. Mr. Banfield did not begin his studies immediately, of course. He was ill for many months. Gradually, however, strength returned to him, and he began to take an intelligent interest in the play of Nature on the isle, in the welfare of the blacks of the locality, and in fitting out a permanent habitation for Mrs. Banfield and himself. So the years passed.

Intermediately, this latter-day Stevenson wrote sketches for his old paper, the Townsville *Bulletin*, and its companion weekly journal, the *North Queensland Register*. From these writings was born his first book, one bearing the happy title *Confessions of a Beachcomber* (1908). Somewhat to the surprise of its author, this volume achieved popularity; its subject-matter was fascinating and the style was happy—obviously that of a man joying in the "next-to-Nature" life of a silver isle set in a silver sea. Thus came, in course of time, two further books on the same theme, *My Tropic Isle* (1911) and *Tropic Days* (1918). The first edition of each of these books is rare now; that of the *Confessions* has considerably appreciated in value. The only other mediums used by Mr. Banfield to relate his experiences and tell of the bird-friendships he had acquired were the *Emu*



Scene from Puka Island, towards Pukaboi Islet, and the mainland of Queensland.

Photo by A. H. Stevenson, C.F.A.O.C.

and the *School Papers* of Queensland. In the latter he told children of the delights of bird-study; in the *Emu* he wrote delightful sketches of the ways of Shining Starlings, Spangled Drongos, and the Grey-tailed Swiftlet, all of which birds breed on the isle. The Swiftlets' cave, indeed, was one of the features—a carefully guarded feature—of Dunk Island. There is an attractive and valuable sketch upon the subject in chapter XX. of *My Tropic Isle*. Other birds which "The Beachcomber" held in particular affection, and upon which he wrote informatively, were the dainty Sun-bird and the handsome Nutmeg-Pigeon. One of his last achievements, and one which caused him to rejoice, was the securing of total protection by the law for the sadly-diminishing Nutmeg-Pigeons.

Mr. Banfield was active almost to the last. His bronzed figure was moving about the isle with accustomed vigour until a few days before his death. The end came suddenly, and it was not until three days after his death that the widow was able to attract the attention of the crew of a passing steamer. These visitors carried out the burial in the garden by the sea which "The Beachcomber" created, and in which he loved to watch the Sun-birds frisk. So ended a remarkable idyll extending over a quarter of a century. Mrs. Banfield is still upon the island; but whether she remains there or returns to the mundane world, and irrespective of what the future of the little possession may be, the name of Dunk Island will always be inseparably linked with those of "Beachcomber" Banfield and his gallant little wife.—A.H.C.

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#### "THE BEACHCOMBER'S" GRAVE ON DUNK ISLAND.

The big-hearted sailors buried "The Beachcomber" in a clearing on the northern side of his pretty home, a position he would have approved, for it overlooks the glories of the bay (Bramms) and the glistening beaches of Purtaboi (or Mount Island). In the distance, across blue water, the bold heights of Bellenden Ker and Bartle Frere rise skywards, while the great main range swings defiantly north and south. In the immediate foreground rest adjoining isles, "green to the drowsy foam," while close at hand the tiny mountain streamlet gurgles cheerily through a wilderness of fern and scrub. Swamp Pheasants (*Coucals*) boom throatily on the flat, and Scrub Hens (*Megapodes*) querulously greet the coming and going of the days. Yellow-crested Sun-birds flit happily past, and later Nutmeg-Pigeons will croon sleepily, and there will be a riot of mango blossoms, and the soporific hum of bees, and at peace amidst it all lies "The Beachcomber," sleeping soundly, while breezes come and go, and fleecy-crested seas fall ceaselessly on the golden beaches. — "Ceatus," *North Queensland Register*, 11/6/23.

## A NOTABLE COLLECTOR—ROBERT GRANT.

By A. J. Campbell, C.M.B.O.U., Etc.

The late Mr. Robert Grant, who was for many years taxidermist and collector of the Australian Museum, Sydney, passed away on March 8th, 1923, in his 60th year.

Robert Grant was born at Holytown, Lanarkshire, Scotland, and at an early age showed a great love for Nature. After school and on Saturdays he roamed the woods to listen to the song of birds and observe their habits. He soon became the idol and wonder of the villagers for his knowledge of local birds, and he could skin and stuff birds and mammals as in a manner born. Young Grant's abilities became known to county noblemen, including the Duke of Hamilton, who gave him the freedom of their estates and often commissioned him to set up groups of heads of boars and deer.

After having earned his living for a few years as a coal miner, Grant, at 18 years of age, was appointed game-keeper to the Duke of Hamilton—a congenial occupation which gave Grant a better opportunity to study in the open the fauna of the estate. Being of exceptionally fine physique Grant had no difficulty in holding his own against poachers, until the call to the wilds of Australia arrested him, and he eventually arrived, with his father's family, in Sydney Harbour in April, 1879. He settled down at Lithgow, where once more he became a miner. After work on summer eves and during leisure hours he was always in the bush, then in its virgin state, with game abundant, tramping for miles studying and collecting specimens, many of which are for ever preserved in the "H. L. White Collection," National Museum, Melbourne, Mr. White having acquired the Grant collection.

In 1885 Grant's abilities as collector and taxidermist came under the notice of the then curator of the Australian Museum (Dr. E. P. Ramsay), who commissioned Grant to make a collection of the local fauna for that institution. Two years later Grant was commissioned for another collecting trip further afield. Accompanied by his wife, Grant joined E. J. Cairn on a pioneering expedition for the Museum, to the Bellenden Ker Range, North Queensland. As a coincidence in name, the party made Cairns their base, and the local scrub a preliminary collecting ground, among the sun-birds and Scarlet Honeyeaters.

Later, by arrangement, a string of eight pack horses, with three others to ride, arrived and the party travelled inland over the ranges; through dense forest with trees bedecked with orchids; now in scrub where palm and tree fern vied with each other for graceful figure, here giant fig-trees with buttressed roots, there noble kauris with cylindrical barrels 80 feet without a branch, and many other sylvan sights beguiled the way. Every part of the track was of interest, not to mention dangerous, for the four days and nights of travel. Many times members of the

party had falls. On one occasion Mrs. Grant was lifted from her saddle through her dress being caught by a limb of a tree, which prevented her from being hurled over a precipice hundreds of feet to the bottom.

The first camp was made at Boar Pocket, near Atherton. The blacks being cannibals, were treacherous, and as yet had come into contact with few whites; in fact, Mrs. Grant was the first white woman the blacks had seen, and she was deemed a curiosity to the native mind. However, by tactful methods, a state of good fellowship was maintained, and the dusky dwellers of the scrub were instrumental in bringing many rare specimens to the collectors' camp, including tree climbing kangaroos (*Dendrolagus lunulatus* and *D. bennettianus*). These unique animals were the first ever brought to Sydney. The rare striped opossum (*Dactylopsila trivirgata*) was also collected. On return to Sydney the general collection was found to be large and varied, with many specimens now too scarce, including the slender Native Cat (*Dasyurus gracilis*) and a small Flying Opossum (*Petauroides*). Among the birds collected were various Fruit-Pigeons, the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksi*), a new variety of the Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans nigrescens*), Fern Wren (*Oreoscopus gutturalis*), Little Tree-creeper (*Climacteris minor*), Victoria Rifle-bird (*Ptiloris victoriae*), Tooth-billed Cat-bird (*Scenopoetes dentirostris*), and many graceful and beautiful Honeyeaters. The first nests and eggs of the unique "Robin" (*Heteromyias cinereifrons*) were also found.

In 1888, Grant was engaged to accompany E. J. Cairn and Harry Shaw (representing the Sydney "Morning Herald") on an expedition down the rivers Darling and Murray, from Bourke to South Australia, in an open boat. The party started from Bourke on their adventurous undertaking, but, owing to a severe drought, the river became unnavigable, and after proceeding 300 miles the boat was abandoned and the collectors walked back to Bourke, where three months were spent collecting locally. The result was a good assortment of inland fauna and natives' implements. In the latter part of the same year Grant, together with Mrs. Grant and Cairn, were again despatched to North Queensland, and a camp formed at Mount Bartle Frere, Herberton District. Owing to its being monsoonal season, this trip, although not as successful as the former one to Queensland, nevertheless, the results were gratifying.

In 1889 Grant, with his wife, was despatched to the Bellenger River and Dorrigo Scrubs to make collections for the Chicago Exhibition. Subsequently trips were made to several stations in the interior, to the Cambenarra Mountains, and other localities. At the Bellenger River the Eastern Scrub Bird (*Atrichornis rufescens*) was procured.

Subsequently Grant was transferred to the indoor staff of the Museum, and on the death of J. H. Thorpe was appointed taxi-

dermist, which position he held till, owing to ill-health, he voluntarily retired in 1917, after 30 years of service. Grant's skill as a taxidermist is amply illustrated in the exhibits in the galleries of the Australian Museum, while the fact that he was kept so long in the field was a testimony to his bush-craft and his knowledge of birds and mammals and their habits. His many field notes of the former embellish the "Special Catalogue No. 1—Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania," by the late A. J. North.

In a curious way, without spending powder and shot, Grant was the discoverer of a new Bird of Paradise. Some years ago he received several specimens of Birds of Paradise to set up. In the series he noticed three birds different from any he had seen, and brought them under the notice of the Ornithologist, the late Mr. A. J. North, who at once recognised the species as new to science and described it in *The Victorian Naturalist* (Vol. XXII, p. 156), and named it in honour of the late collector (*Paradisca grantii*).

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