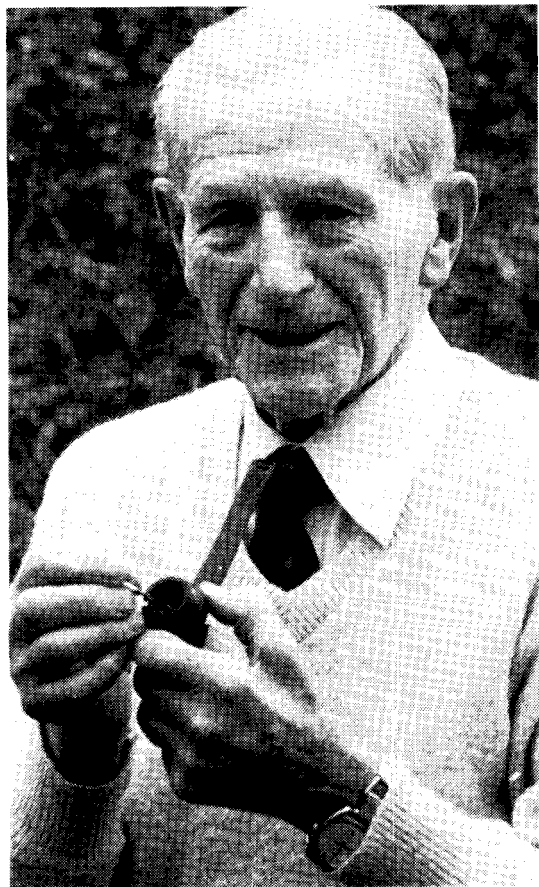


## OBITUARY

**CHARLES ARCHIE D'ARCY BLACKBURN**  
1899-1984



When Archie died on 6 December 1984, the Society lost yet another of its long-serving octogenarians. Archie was born in Hamilton in 1899 but the family moved to Gisborne and it is with Gisborne that his name is especially associated. He received his early education at Gisborne Boys' High School of which he was Dux in 1916. His chosen career took him to Duntroon Military College from 1917 to 1920. The change of scene and the teasing variety of Australian birds in comparison with those of his native land conspired to turn him into an ornithologist. He returned to New Zealand in time to become a Foundation Member of the Forest and Bird Protection Society. In 1922 he resigned from the Army to qualify as a chartered accountant.

The outbreak of World War Two saw him smartly back in uniform, commanding the 19th (Wellington) Infantry Battalion. He saw active service in Greece and Crete, was mentioned in despatches and earned a decoration. Back in New Zealand he commanded the First Army Tank Battalion and rose to the rank of Colonel. Forty years later he was one of those New Zealanders selected to revisit the scenes of historic battles in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In 1955 Archie succeeded in landing on some difficult islets off the East Coast and his resultant article (*Notornis* 7: 15-16) put an unrecorded gannetry on the map. After his retirement in 1958 he was able to devote more time to fishing, bird-watching, the exploration of offshore islands and trips to wild Australia. From time to time on the mountain streams of Hikurangi he was able to pursue Blue Ducks and trout at the same time.

Because Archie combined an observant eye with a ready pen right to the end — his letters were written in a neat disciplined copperplate — he produced a steady stream of articles, notes and reviews which illuminate the essentials of field ornithology in New Zealand. His study of North Island Fantails in a garden, Muttonbird Island's Diary, Codfish Island Fernbird, reports on insular avifaunas, such as Codfish, Cuvier, Fiji, show the breadth of his vision and the depth of his understanding. His wide Australian experience and discerning eye enabled him to add Satin Flycatcher (1963) and Black Falcon (1983) to the New Zealand list.

In collaboration with the Wildlife Service he visited numerous offshore islands, playing a leading part in the surveys which led to the successful transfers of Saddlebacks from Hen to Red Mercury and Cuvier Islands, a bold concept and experiment which triggered a new development in the salvaging of rare and endangered species. As President of the Society from 1960 to 1968, and a member of the Fauna Protection Advisory Council, he was in a position to back his judgement with authority. It is now difficult to recall a time when he was not also the Society's assistant editor and unofficial liaison officer with Te Rau Press. He was suspicious of the direction of some recent research which talked glibly of 'strategies' and 'time-budgets'.

Archie found ornithology an ideal hobby which presented a challenge and helped him to face, with cheerful fortitude, the illness which assailed him during the last quarter of his long life. For his many services the Society in 1982 honoured him with the Falla Memorial Award.

He is survived by his wife, Mollie, and a large family of children and grandchildren to whom the Ornithological Society gratefully extends the warmest sympathy.

R.B.S.