

Major-General C. B. Wainwright, C.B.

(See Plate XII, facing p. 137)

On 23rd October 1968 the General died, suddenly and unexpectedly, in his home overlooking Abberton Reservoir.

From Oxford he had gone straight into the Army in 1914, later gaining his wings with the Royal Flying Corps. His subsequent career in the Royal Artillery was distinguished, with unorthodox diversions, such as teaching the Scots to play polo. He retired in 1948.

At that time many were talking about the uncertain future of wildfowl. The General believed in action and, recognizing that conservation should be based on hard, scientific facts, created what is now the internationally known ringing station at Abberton. His own account of the years from 1949 to 1966, published in the Wildfowl Trust's 18th Annual Report, naturally laid small emphasis on the early hardships that he and Lady Craven shared. They then lived some forty miles from Abberton, and with current theory mistakenly requiring ducks to be removed from cage traps only after dark, the inconvenience is easy to visualize, let alone the dangers—he once sank to his neck in a bomb hole, but his ever-glowing pipe served as a rescue beacon. A caravan by the reservoir temporarily solved the travel problem, and in its efficient tidyness has continued to serve as a model ringing centre. Indeed, everything about Abberton was meticulous: rings always precisely butted, records superbly kept in enormous detail.

He rather delighted in maintaining the external image of a fierce Major-General. A pennant fluttered from the bonnet of his car (but the emblem was a wagtail). Fools were by no means borne gladly. Undisciplined bird watchers he considered as big a menace as undisciplined shooters. Woe betide any who intruded on 'his' reservoir, especially on a wildfowl count day. Once three figures were discerned squatting on the opposite shore a full half-mile away. Leaping from his car he enjoined them in thunderous, and highly descriptive, terms to remove themselves. They did too, at the double. But he was chuckling as he got back into his car and demonstrated his high spirits by plunging off the perimeter track to do a 'wall-of-death' round the steep embankment. This alarming manoeuvre he usually

employed to scare the daylighters out of any he judged self-important or stuffy. For he disliked humbug in any form (scientific or otherwise). He respected simple virtues such as loyalty and good manners. But straight-laced he was not, especially when entertaining guests in the lovely old farm-house, surrounded by creature comforts and many creatures. He was a lovable person who bridged the generation gap with startling simplicity.

His bird-ringing achievements were quite remarkable. It was with a touch of proper pride that he announced the ringing of his hundred thousandth bird, supported by the fantastic list overleaf. He proposed to retire from his second career when his wildfowl total at Abberton had reached 50,000. Sadly he did not quite achieve this, falling short by only 7,195. The accumulated recoveries of wildfowl had then reached 9,041, together with 2,341 recaptures in subsequent years. It was finding these 'old friends' year after year that gave him his keenest pleasure. He knew exactly from which trap and in whose company they had previously been taken.

He played an effective part in the politics of conservation. Being a keen shooter he was well placed to reconcile wildfowlers and ornithologists, especially when their heads needed knocking together. Although he served on committees, he was in no sense a committee man, tiring quickly of vacuities. He could then be heard (especially as deafness advanced) regaling his neighbours with ringing stories or offering them noisily-wrapped sweets. Once he produced a simple device for sexing ducks, exploding with laughter when the suspended cork neither circled nor pendulated over an adjacent knee, but described a figure of eight.

His major recent conservation achievements were his part in the conversion of Nacton Decoy from killing to ringing ducks, and the safeguarding of Abberton Reservoir as a Bird Sanctuary under a Home Office Order. The owning company, convinced by him of the recreational importance of bird-watching, are constructing a fine public access area equipped with a beautiful observation hide. This must now serve as a last reminder of this gentle soldier-ornithologist.

The 100,000 birds ringed by Major-General C. B. Wainwright up to 18th April 1968.

Shelduck	290	House Martin	42
Pintail	117	Sand Martin	533
Teal	28312	Rook	57
Mallard	9649	Jackdaw	292
Gadwall	80	Magpie	8
Wigeon	1499	Great Tit	395
Garganey	274	Blue Tit	618
Shoveler	315	Long-tailed Tit	70
Pochard	170	Bearded Tit	7
Tufted Duck	622	Tree Creeper	15
Scaup	16	Wren	218
Hybrid ducks	8	Mistle Thrush	51
Exotic and unidentified ducks	18	Fieldfare	67
Mute Swan	416	Song Thrush	901
Great Crested Grebe	9	Redwing	32
Little Grebe	147	Blackbird	1664
Cormorant	8	Wheatear	190
Sparrow Hawk	8	Stonechat	11
Kestrel	15	Whinchat	81
Water Rail	140	Redstart	10
Moorhen	759	Nightingale	20
Coot	1728	Robin	583
Lapwing	708	Reed Warbler	579
Ringed Plover	108	Sedge Warbler	3686
Little Ringed Plover	14	Blackcap	41
Turnstone	22	Garden Warbler	7
Snipe	1434	Whitethroat	1671
Jack Snipe	84	Lesser Whitethroat	929
Green Sandpiper	100	Willow Warbler	448
Wood Sandpiper	48	Chiffchaff	54
Common Sandpiper	2118	Wood Warbler	12
Redshank	486	Spotted Flycatcher	32
Spotted Redshank	22	Dunnock	1251
Greenshank	24	Meadow Pipit	1935
Little Stint	33	Tree Pipit	7
Dunlin	461	Rock Pipit	159
Curlew Sandpiper	17	Pied Wagtail	3862
Ruff	122	Grey Wagtail	39
Common Gull	13	Yellow Wagtail	7268
Black-headed Gull	1037	Starling	7191
Common Tern	63	Greenfinch	4665
Little Tern	8	Goldfinch	201
Stock Dove	37	Linnet	1977
Wood Pigeon	15	Bullfinch	296
Turtle Dove	592	Chaffinch	1381
Barn Owl	7	Brambling	40
Little Owl	10	Yellowhammer	527
Swift	61	Corn Bunting	153
Kingfisher	6	Reed Bunting	1624
Sky Lark	893	Snow Bunting	86
Swallow	512	House Sparrow	58
		Tree Sparrow	210

In addition he ringed the following species:—

- 1 bird — Common Scoter, Canada Goose, Bewick's Swan, Great Northern Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Pectoral Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Long-eared Owl, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wood Lark, Greenish Warbler, Great Grey Shrike.
- 2 birds — Heron, Bittern, Temminck's Stint, Nightjar, Green Woodpecker, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Dipper, Goldcrest.
- 3 birds — Goosander, Smew, Oystercatcher, Knot, Cuckoo, Tawny Owl, Crow, Jay.
- 4 birds — Red-crested Pochard, Goldeneye, Spotted Crake, Golden Plover, Little Gull.
- 5 birds — Curlew, Nuthatch, Red-backed Shrike.