

In January, 1961, he and his son, Morrey, visited the Bahamas, and made a special trip to remote Andros Island, to study the birds and sea life. This year he completed a manuscript on the birds of the Shoal Lakes, Manitoba.

He is survived by his wife, Selina, and two children—Morrey of Toronto and Gerdine (Mrs. Crawford) of Winnipeg.

To understand how A. G. Lawrence played so great a role in the founding of the **Blue Jay**, one must review the life of the late Isabel Priestly, whose path and Lawrence's crossed on numerous occasions. Mrs. Priestly had been a research botanist in England prior to her marriage to a Canadian soldier at the end of the war, and she naturally joined the thriving Manitoba Natural History Society soon after moving to Winnipeg in 1929. At this time, A. G. Lawrence was creating a great deal of popular interest in bird-watching through his lively column, "Chickadee Notes," in the **Winnipeg Free Press** (the newspaper which now had R. J. Priestly as its desk editor!). On the nature outings, Mrs. Priestly began with the botany group but, noticing the greater enthusiasm in the birding group, she gradually developed a serious interest in ornithology as well.

When Mrs. Priestly moved to Yorkton in July, 1935, her enthusiasm kindled an interest in many young people, whom she led on weekly nature hikes around the "Muskeg" on the western outskirts of Yorkton. Soon she was asked to write a nature column in the **Yorkton Enterprise**—and this column was frankly patterned after "Chickadee notes" both as regards style and the high degree of reader participation.

As an outgrowth of these activities, Mrs. Priestly in July, 1942, issued a

mimeographed list of the birds in the Yorkton area. The next column of "Chickadee Notes" was devoted to a glowing review of this list; indeed, A. G. Lawrence spoke so highly of Mrs. Priestly's work as a model for other communities to follow, that his words were reported almost verbatim in the news columns of the **Regina Leader-Post** and **Saskatoon Star-Phoenix**. So many requests for the list resulted that the initial 75 copies were rapidly exhausted and a "second run" became necessary.

Most of the people who received Mrs. Priestly's list replied, comparing their own observations in their districts with hers at Yorkton. Mrs. Priestly realized for the first time how many people had similar interests—and conceived the idea of a yearly mimeographed newsletter to act as a clearing house for the exchange of such information. An enthusiastic response greeted a form letter addressed to her new contacts and a quarterly bulletin was decided upon. The Yorkton Natural History Society was formed for the purpose of publishing it, and the first mimeographed issue of the **Blue Jay** (125 copies) appeared in the fall of 1942. Mrs. Priestly several times acknowledged to me that it was really A. G. Lawrence's column that had "started the ball rolling."

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One of A. G. Lawrence's admirers recently described him as "A man . . . completely dedicated to priming a person's interest, and fascinating him into wanting to learn more. He taught me dedication to the pursuit of knowledge . . . and that a responsibility is incurred to pass this knowledge on."

The work of A. G. Lawrence lives on in the lives of the countless people who came under his influence.

Nature Notes from Ireland

by **Thomas Heaslip**, Loughries, Newtownards, Co. Down, N. Ireland.

Sheep and cloud; sky and meadow. Sweep of a summer wind over the far blue hill. I am in the townland of Annamoe, in the county of Offaly.

Although not primarily on a birding trip, I have had the good fortune

to observe bird life in abundance and variety along the quiet grass-verged roads and among the broad fields of this tranquil pastoral land.

The cawing of rooks enlivens the somnolent summer air, when parties

of these black field rovers wing overhead to join other scattered groups of their kind in turnip and potato fields. The rook is common throughout Ireland but is widely known as the "crow"; the carrion crow is in fact quite a rare visitor to these shores.

From the massive ruins of a great building an animated outbreak of jackdaw calls shatters the silences of the brooding walls; this black-plumaged, grey-headed member of the crow family possesses ancient affinities with such places.

Where the acres of new-mown hay scent the air, united family bands of mistle thrushes form flocks of up to one hundred birds. These handsome thrushes, slightly larger than the American robin, were apparently unknown in Ireland before the nineteenth century, but today are widely distributed throughout the country.

The morning mists of a new day have long since faded away, and a memory is stirred as the lonely cry of the curlew rings out across the wide brown bogs. For here where I stand by the roadside, I listened many years ago to the wild whistling of golden plover as they wheeled against the clouds of an April sky that seemed to rest on the gentle blue slopes of the Slieve Bloom mountains.

Farther along the road a pair of alert magpies commence a raucous chattering from the sanctuary of a high hawthorn hedge. Startled by the commotion, two wood pigeons with loudly clapping wings burst away in hasty flight from the green depths of a great beech tree.

Thickets of hazel, alder and hawthorn fringe the secluded lane unwinding before me as I stroll and listen to snatches of song, trills and little tinkling notes. A dapper little wren appears, scurries through its surprisingly loud and melodious song and—vanishes. Long-tailed titmice (chickadees) flit from bush to tree, jingling their musical notes, while nearby their relative, a blue titmouse, performs acrobatics on a dead twig. "Swee, swee, swee, sweedle"—crystal-clear, high-pitched, the notes come tumbling down from the upper branches of a rugged Scots pine; almost invisible among the dark green needles is that diminutive songster, Ireland's smallest bird, the golden-crested wren.

Now a cock blackbird, resplendent in jet black plumage and bright orange bill, perches momentarily on an old weathered fence, flicks wings and tail nervously, suddenly explodes his "chink, chink" alarm note and dashes out of sight into a bramble bush.

Over to the west, against a towering cumulus cloud, swifts pursue each other in screaming, meteoric flight.

By the old stone bridge spanning the river Barrow an Irish jay swoops for cover and a rainbow-hued kingfisher flashes into view to alight on a naked stub. Where the brown waters ripple over the stones, swallows are skimming, while over a neighbouring meadow a house martin loops and twists after insects stirred up by grazing cattle.

The final hoof print of the last barge horse has long since vanished from the green sod on which I now walk. Bright with summer flowers and grass-carpeted is this tow path of the old canal, and the canal itself, overgrown with lily pads and aquatic weeds, is now the haunt of coarse fish—perch, roach, tench, pike and eels. From a willow bending over the stream fall cascades of laughing notes as a willow warbler sings, while from the high branch of a birch a close relative, a chiff-chaff, pours out its refrain. On the opposite bank a white-throat engages in its dancing song flight. All three little singers come to us from Africa.

I watch as a waterhen stealthily leaves her nest and hides in the rushes; the nest is near the water and contains reddish-buff eggs, spotted with brown.

As the afternoon wears on, more birds are heard—greenfinches, chaffinches, hedge sparrows, yellow and reed buntings; goldfinches and linnets pass over in undulating flight, and a single pied wagtail crosses the sky in long, sweeping dips.

Slowly I retrace my steps into the setting sun as herons flap in ponderous outline against the scarlet clouds. Through the evening calm the faint notes of a cuckoo wander from a distant hill. My journey ends on the hearth where the turf fire burns with a silent, meditative glow and blue smoke is drifting into the twilight of a summer night.