

OBITUARY

Terry Rogers & Frank Walker

It was with sadness that I learnt, belatedly, that two of Arabia's founding birders and long-time members of OSME, had bowed out between the end of 2015 and early 2016. Terry Rogers was well known for his work on Bahrain birds from 1969 and later in respect of Masirah island, Oman, and died on 7 December 2015. On 11 February 2016 Frank Walker died, he was active in Oman in the 1970s and northern Saudi Arabia in the 1980s.

Terry Rogers who worked for the UK Meteorological Office spent a number of years on ocean weather ships in the Atlantic building up a vast store of knowledge of seabirds before working in the Gulf region, first to Bahrain and then later to Masirah island for a number of years, during which time he visited Dhofar and several other places in the region. Bahrain 1969 was also my own introduction to Arabian birds and I well remember the quiet enthusiasm and knowledge Terry brought to our motorcycle gang of birders on the island. Well there were three of us, Chris Griffiths the third member who Terry collaborated with a lot on Gulf and Oman publications, died young in the 1970s. We were all part of the great flowering of birding activity on Bahrain at that period anchored by the late Mike Gallagher. We scoured the islands almost every day looking for migrants until the end of 1971. I suppose we were proto-twitchers (although there was not yet a term for it), as soon as one of us found a new species for the island the others would jump on their Honda to rush off and see it. Terry contributed much to Mike Gallagher's monthly *Gulf Birdwatchers Newsletter* and Mike collaborated with him on a new list of Bahrain birds in 1973 as well as an important paper on breeding birds on the island in 1978. Terry, Chris and myself joined Exercise Tayur Watch to the UAE in 1970 (which Mike Gallagher set up for his bird watching friends at the UK taxpayer's expense) and the later Exercise Lapwing, also to the UAE (or the Trucial States as we knew it at the time), which put the Khor Kalba race of the White Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris kalbaensis* on the map. Unfortunately I could

not join the second trip. After 1971 Terry went to Masirah island, Oman, for a number of years and regularly visited Dhofar province, and kept in touch with the region long after he retired to Shetland (UK). He took part in the important Oman government funded survey of the flora and fauna of Dhofar in 1977 and published a very well respected checklist of Masirah birds in 1988, through the Oman Bird Records Committee. Terry found a number of first records for Oman including Great Crested Grebe, Brown-throated Martin and Spur-winged Plover. He published a number of other papers on birds of Oman and the Gulf. On Shetland in retirement he got deep into micro-lepidoptera and added several new species to regional lists.

Frank Walker died on Malta aged 91. In his long Royal Air Force and birdwatching career he visited a huge number of countries and his achievements included playing a major part in setting up the Hong Kong Bird Club and the RAF Ornithological Society. After retiring from the RAF he spent some eight years in Arabia, first in Oman 1975–1979 with an equal amount of time in the north and Dhofar and then in Tabuk, northern Saudi Arabia, 1980–81. Frank found a number of first records for Oman including Demoiselle Crane, Little Swift and Eversmann's Redstart. Frank was a good correspondent and we enjoyed a long chain of letters starting well before the ABBA project and which continued well after the *Atlas* was published in 2010, to just before he died. A bachelor, he was birding round the globe well into his 80s with interesting letters from places as far away as Canada, Australia and Morocco, but especially from all corners of the Mediterranean which seems to have been his spiritual birding homeland. He provided a very comprehensive set of records for ABBA for all his Arabian days. I only met Frank once, in 1981, when I found him a very interesting character and enjoyed his conversation and attitude to life. I was impressed by his strong independent personality, with a straight talking attitude he seems to have always done his own thing to a high standard and expected

everyone else to come up to his standards. He could not abide pomposity and incompetence and had a deep rooted obstructive attitude if he felt he was being treated poorly, especially by those in authority. In Oman his personality brought him eventually into conflict with Mike Gallagher who was trying to closely control everything relating to birds in Oman at the time. Mike unfortunately never quite understood that to get the most out of volunteers *eg* amateur birders sending their records to the recorder regularly, required a minimum of tact and encouragement. Mike (also formerly military) tried to order Frank to submit his records to the Oman Bird Recorder. Mike especially objected to Frank publishing notes on Oman birds without clearing everything through him and to sending bird specimens to the 'wrong' museum! All this only encouraged Frank to eventually ignore Mike altogether. Frank published a number of papers on his time in Arabia, several by the RAF Ornithological Society and notably two long notes on the birds of Northern Oman

and Dhofar in 1981 in *Sandgrouse*. He also prepared, with Arthur Stagg, a very useful checklist of Tabuk birds in 1982. He wrote other papers on radar and bird movements and Gannets *Sula bassana* off Iberia.

Mike Jennings

Some relevant publications

- Gallagher, MD & TD Rogers. 1978. On the breeding birds of Bahrain. *Bonner Zoologische Beiträge* 29: 5–17.
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- Rogers, TD. 1988. *A new list of the birds of Masirah Island, Sultanate of Oman*. Oman Bird Records Committee.
- Rogers, TD & MD Gallagher. 1973. *Birds of Bahrain. A check list*. Privately published.
- Stagg, AJ & FJ Walker. 1982. *A checklist of the birds of the Tabuk kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Privately published.
- Walker, FJ. 1981. Notes on the birds of northern Oman. *Sandgrouse* 2: 33–55.
- Walker, FJ. 1981. Notes on the birds of Dhofar, Oman. *Sandgrouse* 2: 56–85.