

SAOA Historical Series No.16

Walter Cain (Cont)

Those readers who have enjoyed this series of correspondence will be saddened to know that this is the final instalment in these letters.

Letter 81 – 7 October 1935 – from WC to JS

Walter writes to thank JS for his letter but says the tern is not a Crested Tern as Mr McGilp saw it and said it was “definitely not ‘Crested’”, but thought it might be *W. Frontieci* (sic?).

Walter also tells JS that he knows Mr Simpson is now at Quorn but Walter has not yet met him and will try to get his contact details for JS.

He tells JS that he has given Mr McGilp a “Marquetry Cabinet on behalf of the Association”, suggesting it be raffled with the proceeds devoted to providing prizes for “an essay on Bird Life amongst the School Children”, and also informs JS that he found out from Mr McGilp, himself, of the mishap at the hotel.

Walter says that Chris has gotten some more eggs now rains have arrived and is especially pleased that he got some Turquoise Wren and Black Falcon eggs.

He also tells JS that Pearce has been successful in getting a clutch of Rock Parrots hatched and asks how Pearce can join the SA Aviculturist Association.

He then thanks JS for the copies of the hawk articles for Hyem but says his purpose in asking about the articles was to prove to Hyem the difference between the Kestrel and Little Falcon. Walter’s dispute with Hyem centres on whether both species line their nests with feathers with Walter declaring that if Hyem “ever gets ‘in the field’ after *F. subniger* (author italics) he will find that he is wrong”.

Walter then raises the issue again of the Flinders Collection not yet having a permit.

Letter 82 – 13 November 1935 – from JS to WC

JS apologises to Walter for forgetting to consult Mr McGilp about the required permit and about Mr Pearce’s request to join the Aviculturist Society. However, he tells Walter that he contacted a Mr Simon Harvey about the Aviculturist Society and an application to join for Mr Pearce will be sent to him, shortly.

JS then thanks Walter for the cabinet and says, “it was duly admired by the members”. He tells Walter that raffles are illegal so they are considering what to do with it regarding Walter’s instructions. He also thanks Walter for getting Mr Simpson’s address at Quorn and tells Walter that Mr. Simpson “paints botanical and avian objects” though he hasn’t seen any of his work.

He then apologises again for not replying earlier but has had influenza and a fall and laments that he seems to be “getting ODTAA – one dam (sic) thing after another”, the latest being abscesses in the ears for which the doctor has prescribed buttered sandwiches with Marmite which he enjoys (though JS doesn’t say whether the sandwiches are to be eaten or applied to the ear in whole).

Letter 83 – 15 December 1935 – from WC to JS

Walter thanks JS for his letter and regrets to hear of his illnesses but hopes he is recovered in time to enjoy Christmas. He says there is nothing of interest, ornithologically, except that there are plenty of waterfowl and waders at Lake Salmon.

He then lets JS know that he and Chris are hoping to catch up with JS and Mr McGilp during the holidays when they will be in town.

Letter 84 – 13 February 1935 (s/b 1936 – error by CC) – from CC to JS

Chris writes from a Port Augusta post office box address. He thanks JS for the January issue of the SAO and admires the article on the Albatrosses by Mr Condon.

Chris then comments on the three inches of rain recently received in the Port Augusta area transforming the land, however, his trip to Lake Salmon had very little bird life to report. He discusses a station that he was working on being in a deplorable state (likely Farina) as it missed the big rain and “the only spot where any feed is present is Kallioota Creek . . . resulting from the floodwaters of the Willochra Creek”.

Chris has enclosed some notes on Wedge-tailed Eagles sighted in the Farina District during 1934 and 1935, commenting especially on their behaviour with the weakened lambs and ewes. He also notes that he recorded the deaths of 57 Eagles from strychnine poisoning during this time.

Letter 85 – 28 February 1935 (s/b 1936 – error by CC) from CC to JS

This letter has a hint of panic to it as Chris writes to JS asking about an article he has seen in the *Advertiser* which describes the seizure of egg collections in Victoria by the Department of Game & Fisheries. In the article, Chris says “thousands of eggs” were seized and is “certain that most if not all of the collectors of any note in that State have lost their collections”. He asks JS to alert them if JS hears of any action being taken in the same vein with regard to South Australia by using the wording “news to hand in SA . . . we will then know what is meant”. In rather ominous overtones, Chris asks JS if it is advisable to “remove from the house Data and correspondence relative to the collection?”. He also alerts JS to the fact that it is possible “Archer & Collins’ collections have been confiscated”.

Letter 86 – 29 February 1936 – from JS to CC

JS writes to Chris Cain about his letter of the 13th being received and thanks Chris for his article on the Wedge-tailed Eagle, telling him that it was read out at the last monthly meeting. He tells Chris that the members were particularly interested in ascertaining whether the animals involved in the feeding by the Eagles were sheep or lamb as the brains were extracted so quickly that most of the members presumed they were lambs.

JS then asks Chris to let Walter know that they have offered the cabinet as a prize to the Education Department to use for a competition.

He closes the letter by saying that he is glad Chris has finally experienced some "inches of rain in your district".

Letter 87 – 3 March 1936 – from JS to CC

JS confirms receipt of Chris' letter of the 29th. He tells Chris that the information he has comes from the "Argus", "Herald" and "Star" newspapers from Melbourne on Sat., 29 February 1936. Apparently, an egg collection was confiscated but JS says, "No names or persons raided are mentioned in those papers but it is stated that thousands of eggs have been seized". He continues, "The places referred to are Sale, Bendigo, Minyip, Lyndhurst and Melbourne". The raids were the result of information conveyed to the Department of Game & Fisheries by "the Chief Secretary's Department of NSW".

JS says it is unlikely that he will be informed of projected raids as he expects they will be "carried out simultaneously throughout the state" should they happen. However, in trying to allay Chris' fears, in the closing of this letter he says, "a wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse".

Letter 88 – 29 April 1936 - from WC to JS

Walter tells JS that Chris is shearing so Walter has taken up the ornithological work. He thanks JS for his time at the Museum over Christmas but was sorry to have missed him prior to leaving.

Walter tells JS that their "intimation re the Raiding of Collins & Archer proved only too correct". He tells JS that Archer lost 90 sets of eggs, given over voluntarily as they were not identifiable. Archer must have received prior warning, however, as Walter says, "all Identity Tags had been removed & all data carefully put out of sight".

Apparently, Collins was less forthright about how "he fared beyond that they relieved Him of a few sets hard to replace". Walter tells JS that he has been sending replacement sets over to Collins for his collection and, though not having met "Hughie" (Collins), personally, has high regard for him.

Walter tells JS that there is not much going on with the birds other than the absence of them. He says they had a great fishing camp-out at Easter catching 40 dozen whiting and relates the birds that they did see, commenting "It came much as a surprise to me to learn how inferior Crested is to Caspian both in speed & the art of picking up the objective of the Strike".

He tells JS that Chris was at Mt Eba but is now on to Miller Creek then that will be the end of the shearing until the middle of July.

Walter relates that he has heard from Mr McGilp regarding the chance of a permit for their collection having better success in the near future. He suggests that there is no point going on collecting without the permit as "the Cutthroats may repeat what has happened East & the things we prize may be taken from us".

He closes the letter by discussing Condon's Albatross egg collection saying he believes they are from the

"Nightingale Islands" and that he believes Condon goes out there in an open boat, much to his amazement.

Final comments are on the "droughty" weather of hot days and cold nights.

Letter 89 – 9 May 1936 – from JS to WC

JS tells Walter that he knows very little about the raids in Victoria, as what he was told by people at the Museum was very contradictory regarding what actually happened. He says he hasn't heard of any raids planned for South Australia and that Mr Bruce (from the Department of Game & Fisheries) will be retiring on 30 June so future raids will depend on who succeeds him.

JS emphasises that Walter needs to request the permit from the Department of Game & Fisheries and to say it is for scientific purposes, mentioning the fact that he sends specimens to the Museum. JS also suggests that Walter use the name of Mr McGilp and himself as well as local members of Parliament in the application.

He then mentions that he is interested in Walter's observations of the Terns and has seen similar actions to feeding by a tame Magpie (referring to the way they eat food headfirst).

JS asks Walter to caution Mr Pearce about his birds in captivity and refers him to the 26, March 1936 edition of the Commonwealth Gazette regulation from the Animal and Birds Protection Acts.

He closes the letter by letting Walter know that the Association offered his cabinet to Mr Edquist of the Education Department for a competition but that he has not yet called in to see it so the Association may reconsider the offer and come up with something else.

Letter 90 – 2 August 1936 – JS to WC

JS informs Walter that a Mr T. Brandon (Historical Series No. 9), an egg collector from Wilmington passing through Adelaide, was going to get in touch with him (Walter). JS says he "seems a very decent young fellow" who has had egg dealings with Mr McGilp and intends to join the Association.

He tells Walter that he is working on a new project – listing all of the bird species found in South Australia and where they have been recorded. He asks Walter to send him a list of any species he finds in his travels, stating places and dates seen.

JS closes the letter by saying he is yet to meet the Education Department officer but was recently offered "£2.2/-" for it.

Letter 91 – 6 August 1936 – WC to JS

Walter thanks JS for his letter and complains that he, too, has been experiencing ODTAA.

He says he would be pleased to help Mr Brandon and asks JS to send him the description of the "Tail for *C. Isabellinus* (author's italics)" as Chris saw some and he wants to compare the description against *C. campestris* (JS has pencilled in some notes about the differences in pencil on the side margin).

Walter commends JS on the new bird list project and says it's a "move in the right direction".

He also tells JS that Mr Hughie Collins stopped in to see Walter recently en route to Central Australia. "He is a splendid chap & we got on like a house on fire together".

He says Mr Collins is a "very thorough oologist - & there is no mistake about His heart & soul being in his Hobby". He says he took Mr Collins around to meet Mr Pearce and that he was "very taken with the Hooded Parrots".

Walter asks if Mr Bruce's successor is on the scene, yet, still with some trepidation as to possible raids and seizures occurring in South Australia.

He also tells JS that Chris is shearing at Yudnapinna now and that they recently called out for 16 shearers to do 35,000 sheep.

Walter then tells JS that Mr Pearce will be starting 3 months long service leave soon and that his is due soon, too, "but the blighters won't let me go", and laments that he can't join Collins or Pearce on their travels.

He tells JS the weather conditions haven't been brilliant but that conditions from Nectar Brook to Port Germein were very good.

Walter also takes note of JS' remarks about the cabinet but says it is entirely up to the Association what they do with it but hopes they will "give country kids every consideration". His opinion is that children should be rewarded for their observation skills, especially those without access to books for reference.

Final comments regard Chris' inquiries as to how JS was.

Letter 92 - 16 August 1936 - from JS to WC

JS tells Walter that he is mindful of the original intention of Walter's donation and will convey his concerns to Mr Edquist.

He emphasises to Walter that they require "all species" localities and dates, especially around Port Augusta as they have little information regarding that area.

JS then goes on in great detail about what is known about *M. calamanthus*. He states that "At the monthly meeting on 28 March 1934, with many specimens of the genus exhibited by Messrs. Mellor, Ashby, Parsons, Prof. Cleland and SA Museum, it was considered that Kallioota was probably the northern limit of *Campestris*".

JS tells Walter that the new inspector at the Department of Game & Fisheries is Mr Moorhouse and they (the Association) have invited him to one of their meetings which invitation he has accepted for a later date.

He closes the letter by asking Walter to inquire of Chris specific locality details for Depot Creek.

Letter 93 - 6 September 1936 - from JS to WC

JS tells Walter that he has seen Mr Edquist and encloses a copy of the letter that Mr Edquist sent to him regarding awarding of the cabinet. No copy of that letter is contained within this correspondence. However, JS suggests that Mr Edquist found 2 points debatable in satisfying Walter's request, i.e., the limits of the competition to a certain age group and the competition being confined to members of the Gould League which JS presumes has numerous members within the schools.

In closing the letter, he says, "However, it is for you to decide".

Letter 94 - 10 September 1936 - from WC to JS

Walter thanks JS for his previous letter and asks JS to make sure the cabinet is donated in the name of the Association without mentioning Walter's name. He apologises for not responding sooner but says, "I Struck

'A Rotten Patch' in financial affairs" and encloses newspaper clippings of the events referred to. This collection of clippings has been scanned and can be found on p13 of the Newsletter, immediately after this insert.

Walter also mentions that he received a letter from Mr Collins who was at Mission Station and states that he (Collins) did fairly well with his collecting and suggests that JS get Collins to write for the SAO an account of his trip.

He then thanks JS for the remarks on *M. calamanthus* and says Chris is unable to confirm the species as the sheep have destroyed the nest. He tells JS that Depot Creek, mentioned by Chris in an earlier letter, is "26 miles from P. A. on the main north road".

Walter then discusses birds seen over the past few months and tells JS that Pearce has just returned from a 3-week outing to South Gap and Andamooka. He says, "things are bad to rotten bad out that way & not a single nesting was seen".

He then tells JS that both Mr Pearce and Chris send their regards and that he hasn't heard from "JR (Veitch)" lately and feels the "Raiders must have killed his interest in the game".

Walter closes the letter by talking of the difficulties of nesting due to the poor season and that they haven't seen the Little Falcon this year.

Letter 95 - 13 April 1937 - WC to JS

Walter tells JS that he hasn't forgotten him but that the raids of the previous year have "robbed 'The Game' of much of its interest". He says other reasons include the loss of several good men in NSW but he uses "Norman Cayleys' to fill the gap".

He tells JS that he and Mr Pearce and some others had another good Easter camp-out at "The Swamp & Lake Salmon" and encloses notes of what they saw (not with this letter). Additionally, he says that he met Mr Brandon and gave him a few sets of eggs and that "Archer and Collins are the only acquaintances left in the collecting business".

Letter 96 - 17 April 1937 - JS to WC

JS lets Walter know that he has received Chris' subscription and is sending a receipt. He also asks Walter for his notes on the Easter trip, buttering him up by saying "as your communications are valued on account of the accuracy of your records".

JS tells Walter that the Museum has just received Mr F E Parsons' collection of 300 clutches of eggs with full data. In a postscript, he tells Walter that Mr Condon, his assistant, will accompany Mr E A Colson on a trip across the Simpson Desert (perhaps, Walter had offered his services?) closing the letter with his kindest regards.

Letter 97 - 26 June 1937 - WC to JS

Walter apologises for taking such a long time to answer JS' previous letter but "I've been pretty busy one way & another". This is because of the case referred to in the previous newspaper clippings when Walter had to act as a crown witness in Sydney.

He encloses a few lines of the Easter trip and tells JS that Chris is at Depot Creek rabbiting.

He also mentions that he has seen Collins and that Pearce is intending a trip to Nareetha and if he (Walter) gets a chance, he'll go, too, but "we are pretty busy in the shop here".

Walter says several prospects are good up Kallioota way and notes JS' comments on getting the Parson's egg collection saying that his (Walter's) "will soon be the best 'outrider'". He laments again the loss of the NSW collections but tells JS that Mr Brandon got a permit and hopes Chris will be able to get one soon, too.

Letter 98 – 11 July 1937 – from JS to WC

JS tells Walter that he was sorry to hear of the unpleasant business in Sydney but glad one of the "Scoundrels was suitably dealt with". He tells Walter that he'll use his field notes for the October publication.

He then asks Walter to complete and return some questions he has for him on his bird observations and tells Walter that the Simpson Desert expedition returned to Adelaide on the 24th of June due to "the conditions were not carried out and (the food) and water supplies were insufficient and the camels were not satisfactory. They were out for 4 days but did not see the Desert – they got within 4 miles of the said desert. The parties here concerned in the trip were 'The Advertiser', S. A. Museum, and Waite Research Institute".

Then JS jibes Walter a bit about "The Swamp". He thanks him for the photo of the same but says, "if that is a swamp what are the Lakes like?"

As a postscript, JS tells Walter that Mr Brandon told JS he had a permit so he suggests that Walter go through the MLA (Editor's Note: could this be a Member of the Legislative Assembly?).

Letter 99 – 18 July 1937 - from WC to JS

Walter thanks JS for his letter and tells him he has included answers to his queries. He tells JS that it is a "Matter of deep regret to hear of the failing of The Simpson Desert turn-out". He comments that details are still to be worked out regarding the Nareetha trip and that the lack of a car is a major problem.

Walter then tells JS that Kallioota is in fine form and that his friend George "cannot recall seeing a finer muster of birds on the Creek". He says they could put "L Salmon & Salt Hole in the Swamp & never know anything had been added".

He closes the letter by telling JS that he'll pass on the permit information to Chris but acknowledges that Chris would rather not try at all than to try and get knocked back.

Letter 100 – 20 November 1937 – from WC to JS

Walter tells JS that he received his letter (no indication of date or letter) and thanks him for data supplied regarding the Goshawk. He tells JS that he is sending the Bill & Head skin along (a smaller slip of paper attached to this letter gives the details).

Walter also confirms that he received a report from a Mr Key on a Little Falcon noting, "It is quite 'athletic' & is an observation that may not have been seen before".

He also tells JS that Chris had a good time with Jack Hood and that they went over to see Collins in Victoria but missed him as he was in Melbourne. Apparently,

Chris is almost done shearing as well and hopes to get to Adelaide for a week to visit JS at the Museum.

Walter closes the letter by describing some Red-throat and Black-eared Cuckoo eggs he has been offered and that he, too, hopes to catch up with JS at Christmas.

Letter 101 – 15 December 1937 – from JS to WC

JS apologises for not writing sooner but says he mislaid Walter's previous letter.

He mentions seeing Chris and having a long chat with Chris and a friend of his. He tells Walter, "He has filled out since I saw him first (Chris would be nearly 20 years of age by this time)".

JS is interested in Walter's account of a Bat killing by a Little Falcon and says he will put it in the next SAO. He also encloses a reply to Mr Key on the same.

JS says he hopes to see Walter at Christmas and gives Walter his Unley telephone number.

Postscript

And that, I am sorry to say, is the end of this series of correspondence between two gentlemen who touched the lives of so many others in their areas of interest and whose legacies live on in many different ways.

I hope you have enjoyed this series as much as I have and that you are inspired to visit some of the locations mentioned within these letters.

Sandy Bradley

Amongst other information, Peter Langdon has kindly sent the following notes about people and place names mentioned or misspelt in the correspondence between JS and the Cains:

Boollaloo is Bookaloo — an important railway siding on the Transcontinental Railway for the local pastoralists and also marks the turn-off to Pernatty and South Gap Stations.

Wocalla is Woocalla — now a defunct siding, as is Birthday.

Mr Pearce is George Pearce, maternal grandfather of Bob Greenfield, current owner/manager of South Gap. Bob Greenfield knew both Walter and Chris Cain very well. Walter Cain's grandson, Bobby, works for the Department of Road Transport and grades the road to South Gap and Pernatty.

