

**Rait-Kerr, Helen Margaret** [nee Metcalfe] (1887-1965)

### HELEN RAIT KERR

Helen Rait Kerr, who died on February 16, 1965, came of a well known Irish family, the Metcalfes of Enfield, Co. Meath, and was born and brought up in Co. Kildare. Under her maiden name she contributed notes on various birds, and one on the marten in Co. Kildare, to the original *Irish Naturalist* and later to its successor, the present *Journal*. Her earliest contribution to the *Irish Naturalist* appeared on p. 82 of Vol. 22 in 1913 and dealt with the occurrence of the tree sparrow in Co. Kildare. When she married the late Colonel R. S. Rait Kerr, best known as a former Secretary of the Marylebone Cricket Club, she travelled far from Ireland, her husband's military duties taking him to India, Gibraltar and other parts of the world where she was able to continue her birdwatching. Even when living in England, however, she frequently visited her mother and sister in Dublin and never lost an opportunity of birdwatching with local ornithologists along the coast.

In England Helen Rait Kerr will be best remembered for her many years' service on the Council and Committees on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, of which she finally became a Vice-President on her retirement from the Council in 1961. She also played her part in practical bird protection, and one of us (R.S.R.F.) well remembers finding her standing on guard when he went to visit the first breeding pair of little ringed plovers at Tring Reservoirs in 1938. Not realising that we knew what she was guarding, she immediately offered us a lift back to London, in the hope of diverting us from the precious rarity.

Her many other interests included geography, archaeology, geology, gardening and the breeding of bloodstock. She also fully shared her husband's enthusiasm for cricket.

R.S.R.F. and A.W.S.

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