

Anthony (Tony) George Gough
1937 – 2015



I think it is fair to say the sad news of Tony Gough's passing was felt across Yorkshire and indeed the UK, with Tony having been an (almost) annual visitor to the Isles of Scilly in the Autumn and his twitching exploits meant he was known far and wide.

From an early age he was fascinated by wildlife and with the encouragement of Dr Rankin he became a fully fledged birder sometime in his teens. Tony married once but that was cut short by a birding trip to Israel.

A great deal of Tony's birding was done within the boundary of what became the Bradford Ornithological Group's recording area. The Bradford birding scene in the mid 1980s was such that a gang of birders got together to form B.O.G. and Tony was a key influence.

Tony proved to be a friendly giant who was generous with his knowledge of birds and he himself became a great influence on many a B.O.G birder. He turned into the complete opposite behind the wheel of a car however and

there are many tales of near death experiences by those who travelled with him.

Tributes from the birding community

A.G.G. was a true naturalist, with an astonishing encyclopaedic knowledge, ranging over a wide field. He loved nature in all its forms, and enjoyed passing on his vast expertise. So many of us learnt so much from him.

A four day trip to Norfolk with him in the early nineties (thankfully in Ian Hargreaves car!) always stands out in my memories of him. He "talked us through" a Semipalmated Sandpiper at Cley, showed us Orioles, Stone Curlews, etc. all with terrific enthusiasm and no hint of talking down to two comparative novices. The trip culminated with wonderful, close views of Baillon's Crake, and the delight on his face as the tiny bird walked right past his large hand will always stay with me. He was, without doubt, the "Founding Father Figure" of BOG, and will be greatly missed.

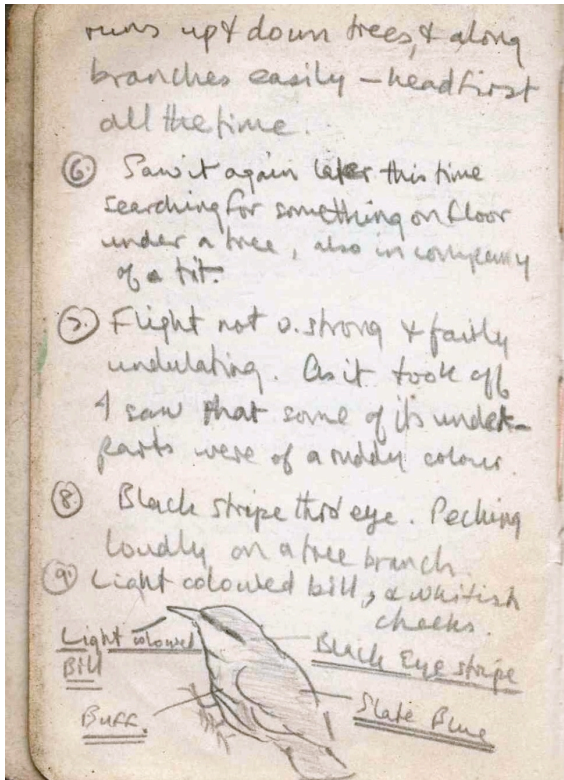
John Topham

My first memory of Tony Gough was at my first ever group meeting one Tuesday evening back in 1997. I'd entered the room and was looking around no doubt with a lost look on my face. Tony ambled over to me and introduced himself and explained proceedings for a typical BOG meeting. We discussed my recent sighting of a "white-winged" gull on my patch which was the reason for my being there. I met him a second time the weekend that followed as he and his birding pal, Mick Cunningham, arrived at Manywells Tip to peruse the gulls. It was that second encounter with Tony which convinced me BOG was worth joining....

As I established myself as an active birder within the Group, mine and Tony's birding activities naturally crossed and we eventually clocked up many hours raptor watching at the Barden watch point. It was here that I got to know Tony through his grumblings about BOG birding, life in



Tony (seated front) holding court at Barden Scale with Alan Tremethick, Martin Taunton and Brian Vickers.



From one of Tony's notebooks - a description of Nuthatch.

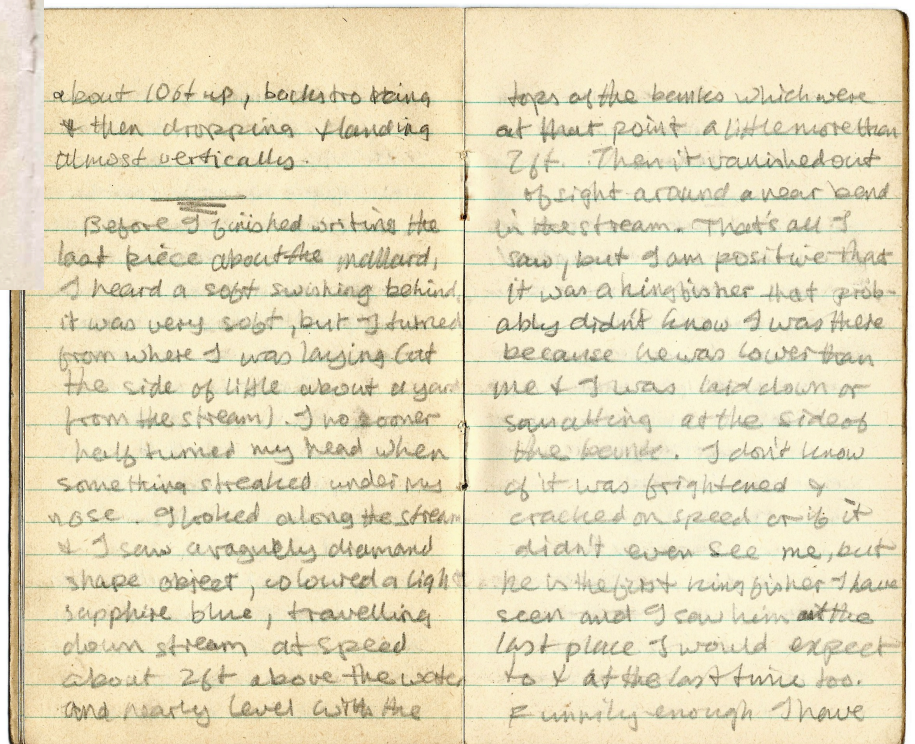
We compared notes after our birding sessions and I socialised with him as he entertained the troops in the pub.

We spent more birding time together during a week's trip to Greece one August and the two week BOG trip to Brazil in 2006. It was in Brazil that Tony's lack of mobility was highlighted as he was willingly left behind on many of our walks. Despite this, he appeared to enjoy the trip though not the rain forest weather.

general and the various medications he was on for whichever ailment was going to "polish" him off next.

A few years later the depth of Tony's birding knowledge became more apparent as I spent time on the rarities committee and had the pleasure of reading his species descriptions. Not only was a species plumage accurately described, most were aged and sexed (something only a select few attempted). It was clear from seeing these, that Tony's note taking and eye for detail were second to none.

Tony wasn't an early riser and we didn't often go on birding trips together but I did accompany him on one trip to the Isles of Scilly.



Kingfisher description - extract from a 17 year old Tony Gough's notebook



Tony, second left with a group of members (early 90's)

The almost annual visits to my home to sort out his Group Recorder software for his BOG records earned him the nickname "Eeyore" for his sunny disposition by my good lady wife. Such a visit in December 2014 was to be the last time I saw Tony. By then he was a shadow of his former self having lost a great deal of weight but none of the humour or character.

As one of the custodians of his notebooks after his death I'm privy to the depth of note-taking where just about any wildlife which crossed his path was duly written down with time of day a comment. It is a pleasure to get to know Tony Gough all over again and something I hope can be shared with the BOG membership.

Article written and compiled by Mark Doveston

This article with the addition of more tributes can be found on the BOG [website](http://www.bradfordbirding.org).