



Excavation work carried out at Mount Sandel, Coleraine, Co. Derry in the 1970s revealed a Mesolithic campsite with extensive evidence for habitation that included the remains of goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*), renowned as one of the world's most popular falcony birds.

7000 BC



BY CAROLANNO - WIKIPEDIA

In the late 1950s excavation work carried out on Dalkey Island (St Begnet's Isle) in Co. Dublin, uncovered goshawk remains among the settlements dating back to 3500 - 4000 BC.

4000 BC



The remains of goshawks were also discovered at the Newgrange Neolithic site during excavations in the 1960s.

3200 BC

## 7000-3200BC

Remarking on the finds of goshawks at the prehistoric sites, Professor Frank Mitchell in *Reading the Irish Landscape*, 1987, asks:

‘Could these birds have been used for falconry?’

# TIMELINE OF FALCONRY

‘Whatever comes next for falconry, it will always be one of the best ways to interact with the wild-both the wild out there, and the wildness inside ourselves’

- STEPHEN BODIO

3000 BC

In 1958, German archaeologists begin excavations of the Tell Chuera site dated to the 3rd millennium BC in northern Syria. Of the many pottery shards, one fragment includes a scene with a falconer holding a raptor.



2000 BC

Researchers recently discovered 11 zoomorphic petroglyphs in Iran depicting falconry. This discovery could mark the oldest record of falconry in the world dating back at least 4000 years.



1500 BC

Anatolian Hittite culture (part of present-day Turkey) portrayal of the ‘God Protector of the Countryside’ is depicted standing on a stag with a raptor on his left fist.



1300 BC

An ornate Hittite silver vessel found in the ruins at Khorasabad, Iraq during the excavation of the palace of Sargon II depicts a falconer on his left hand.



1200 BC

Hittite bas-relief of a gravestone depicts the scribe Tarhuniya on his mother's lap with a leash to a falcony bird.



720 BC

An Assyrian bas-relief found in the ruins at Khorasabad, Iraq during the excavation of the palace of Sargon II depicts a falconer with a bird on fist.



350 BC

In his *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle wrote: ‘In Thrace, the boys who want to hunt small birds, take hawks with them. When they call the hawks addressing them by name, the hawks swoop down on the birds. The small birds fly in terror into the bushes, where the boys catch them by knocking them down with sticks... When the hunting finishes, the hunters give a portion of all that is caught to the hawks.’



300 BC

The mummified remains of an ancient woman in a remarkable state of preservation was found in the Tarim Basin (Xinjiang province, northwest China). On her left hand, she wears a large, heavy leather falcony mitten. The exceptional size and thickness matches the distinctive bialeys, a protective mitt or gauntlet worn by Kazakh and Kyrgyz eagle hunters in the same region today.



208 BC

‘When Li Szu's punishment was imminent, he called to mind how he had gone forth to the East Gate of Shang-t's with a yellow dog on leash and grey hawk on arm, but this was now unattainable.’



100-200

Falconry is depicted in decorative stone carvings in tombs and shrines, especially in Shantung, Shansi and Shanxi provinces of northwest China. Carvings and reliefs depict hawking by both nomadic pastoralists and members of China's high classes. This era marks the widespread establishment of falconry in China.



400-600

A series of Byzantine-era mosaics are among the earliest evidence of falconry in the West. The oldest known Arabic treatise on falconry (8th C) confirms that hunting with birds of prey was well established among the Byzantines at an early date.



460

Gallo-Roman aristocrat and Christian poet Paulinus of Pella wrote the autobiographical poem *Eclogues*, nearing the end of the Roman Empire. In recalling his youth, he writes one of the earliest notations regarding falconry in the west:

‘Wherefore, as my growth, so my waywardness increased, readily settling down to the pursuit of youthful desires - as to have a fine horse bedecked with special trappings, a tall groom, a swift hound, a shapely hawk...’

500-600

In ancient Japan, Haniwa figures made from terracotta clay were buried with the dead as funerary objects during the late-Kofun period. Many depicted a falconer holding a hawk.



600-800

In 608 AD, Emperor Yangdi summoned all ‘masters of goshawks’ in China to assemble in the eastern capital, Luoyang. Over 10,000 falconers responded to the call, remarking on the popularity of falconry at the time. Less than a century later in the Tang dynasty, the position of ‘Commissioner for the Royal Stables’ managed five departments - the Eagle (huo 鵟) Department, the Falcon (hu 隼) Department, the Sparrowhawk (yao 鵟) Department, the Goshawk (ying 鷹) Department, and the Hound (quan 犬) Department. In addition to a subsistence purpose, records suggest falconry was already practiced as a recreational field sport by nobles and political elites.



745-746

During a mission to present-day Germany, a West-Saxon missionary named Boniface wrote to King Ethelbald of Mercia (central Britain) indicating he was sending ‘one hawk and two falcons.’ King Ethelbald later wrote back asking for crane-hunting hawks.



863

Possibly the oldest surviving falconry treatise in the world, the Kitāb Daw'at al-Tayr (Book of the Birds of Prey) was written by al-Ghifirif ibn Qulama al-Ghassani, master of the hunt for the Umayyad Caliphate centred in Damascus, Syria.



Excavations at Wood Quay, Dublin reveals a range of 10th and 11th century bird remains, including both falcony birds and prey species. Dublin was a major Viking trade hub at the time, and commodities harvested in the North - including falcons from Iceland - were likely to have passed through en route south.



The earliest written reference of falconry in Ireland is the Irish manuscript *Betha Colmáin Maic Lúacháin* (The Life of St Colman son of Luachán) held at the Rennes Library in Brittany. It describes Dombhall, son of Aed, King of Tara as having had seabac selga (two hunting hawks).

‘Then Dombhall gave Dan Leime to Colman to build a church facing the River Boyne and the 17 stealings which had served Dombhall and every other King before him, and two hunting-hawks that he had, and their freedom till doom from the brothers of his grandfather...’

600-700



One of Ireland's most famous high crosses, the Cross of St Columba, depicts an ecclesiastic with a bird of prey on the base.

850

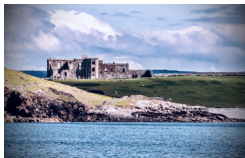
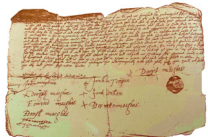


SHOWN BENEATH: CONTINUING SUPPORT CLEAR FOUND BY FALCONRY IN HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THE ISLE

Excavations at Wood Quay, Dublin reveals a range of 10th and 11th century bird remains, including both falcony birds and prey species. Dublin was a major Viking trade hub at the time, and commodities harvested in the North - including falcons from Iceland - were likely to have passed through en route south.

900-1000





# THE POPULARITY OF FALCONRY BEGINS ITS DECLINE AS GUNS BECOME MORE POPULAR.



**1542-1605**  
The *Book of Falconry* by George Turberville is published and remarks on Irish Goshawks:  
*"But truly there is no goshawk more excellent than that which is bred in Ireland in the north parts, as in Ulster, and in the County of Tyrone."*

The practice of falconry is so significant during this period that falcon eyes are noted in maps of the period as this one by Richard Bartlett marking Benbulbin in Co. Sligo.

*"The high hills of Benbulbin where yearly timbereth a falcon esteemed the hardest in all Ireland."*

King James I appointed Sir Geoffrey Fenton, then principal secretary of Ireland to be Master of the Hawks in Ireland (and game of all sorts within that realm).

Legal documents establishing the rights to cries of hawks and falcons are common, and many still exist including this one between the Earl of Ormonde (Black Tom) and Thomas Meagher for a nest of goshawks.

*Fynes Morison, History of Ireland* is published and comments on Irish goshawks:  
*"The hawks of Ireland, called goshawks, are much esteemed and they are sought out by none and all means to be transported thither."*

In his will, dated 13th April 1626, Murrough O Flaherty of Bunowen, the son of legendary Pirate Queen, Grace O Malley, directed that his third son Bryan should be left the townland of Cleggan, an extensive tract in the barony of Ballynahinch, "excepting onlie the airy of hawks upon Bannanoran" reserved for his eldest son.

By order of the Irish House of Lords in 1641 regarding grievances, falconry was prohibited within 7 miles of Dublin.

James Butler, 12th Earl of Ormond established the Phoenix Park as a Royal Hunting Park at the edge of Dublin city which was stocked with deer and game for 'hounds and hawks.' The deer at the park are direct descendants from the original stocking.

1700

*The Whole Works* by Sir James Ware is published and remarks on Irish goshawks: *"Among the feathered kind, there breed in Ireland, hawks; which from their preying upon wild geese are called in English, Goshawks of which those that breed in the North of Ireland are reckoned the best in the world."*



One of the earliest falconry clubs, the Irish Hawking Club was founded on Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 1860, in part due to a pledge of funds and game birds supplied by the exiled Maharajah of the Punjab, Prince Duleep Singh. At the meeting, chaired by Lord Talbot de Malahide, a committee was formed with the annual subscription set at £2.

Ronald Stevens, a luminary in falconry culture, came to live in Connemara at Fermoye Lodge. Despite its remoteness, his home became a hub for falconers all over the world. Stevens inspired generations through his classic treatise *Observations on Modern Falconry*, and his memoirs, *Laggard, The Taming of Geaghie and My Life with Birds*.

Author of *Falcons Fly in Ireland* (1967) Ernst Jocher opens the world's first bird of prey centre at Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. It later moved to Robertstown, Co. Kildare in 1972. Throughout its history, it remained a focal point for many generations of young falconers inspired by their school visits to the centre.

The Irish Hawking Club is reformed in Dublin on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1967 by founding members, Johnny Morris, Sean Greaves, and Alec Finn of De Dannan fame.

*The Sparrowhawk, A Manual for Hawking*, by Irish landscape and wildlife artist Liam O Broin, is published. An instant classic receiving worldwide acclaim, its publication reflected the popularity of flying sparrowhawks in Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Art and Practice of Falconry becomes Ireland's 4th Intangible Cultural Heritage on the UNESCO Representative List.

1542-1605



Emperor Akbar was the third Mughal Emperor of the Indian subcontinent. Few historical monarchs are the subject of so many paintings holding a falconry bird.

1614

Symon Latham publishes *Falconry or The Falcon's Lure and Care* in two books. Latham's book was the first book printed in English by a falconer that was solely concerned with falconry.



1619

Edmund Bert publishes *An Approved Treatise on Hawks & Hawking* which is a guide to the proper manning and training of the passage female goshawk. Edmund Bert's treatise remains a hallmark falconry text written in the English language which also includes a section on cures or remedies for varied ailments.



1637

In his 1637 book *New England Canaan*, American colonist Thomas Morton, known as the Pagan Pilgrim, notes birds of prey and falconry.

*"...and in my first arrival in these parts, practised to take a Lanneret, which I reclaimed, trained, and made flying in a fortnight..."*



## 'Civilisations rise and fall, but hawks stay the same'

- HELEN MACDONALD, AUTHOR OF HIS FOR HAWK

1804

*A Sporting Tour* by Colonel Thomas Thornton is published. A flamboyant character, Thornton's passion for falconry is reputed to have revived the practice in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which was in decline due to the advent of gunpowder and Puritan opposition to field sports.



1855

*Falconry in the British Isles* by Francis Henry Salvin is published. This is a significant English-language text on falconry produced during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and precedes the beginning of a British resurgence of falconry.



1942

In 1942, in the midst of the Second World War, German falconer Renz Waller successfully bred a captive pair of peregrine falcons, producing two young; one of which survived. This was the first documented successful captive breeding of peregrine falcons in history. That initial success helped inspire 20<sup>th</sup> century falconers to spearhead the worldwide reintroduction of the species through captive breeding following catastrophic declines due to the use of agricultural pesticides like DDT.



1968

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) is founded on 9<sup>th</sup> April in Disseldorf, Germany. The Irish Hawking Club becomes a full member in 1969.

2010

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, inscribed falconry on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

