



*“Preserving Our Falconry Heritage”*

# Heritage

*e-Newsletter*

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## Introducing Peter Barry Devers 3rd in a Series: Archives Associates

Peter Barry Devers has had the great good fortune to grow up in, and still reside in, one of America's sportingest communities — Millbrook, New York. Born in December 1950, he has, since an early age, been an avid devotee of country field sports. Bloodhounds (beagles, bassets, and foxhounds) were his first love. He was one of the youngest members of the Sandanona Beagles to be awarded hunt colors and whipped-in to them for over 25 years. He was a major contributor to the Sandanona's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary history book published in 2004. For quite a few years, when still young and fleet-of-foot, he ran after the Millbrook Hunt as the hounds and horsemen pursued fox across the countryside.

Peter was first introduced to hawks by Frank Trevor, a good friend of his father, at about the age of 7. Trevor was the founder of the zoo at Millbrook School and had a special interest himself in birds of prey. The Trevor Zoo gang produced a passel of now well-known falconers and naturalists:

Pete Jenny, president of The Peregrine Fund; Tom Lovejoy, naturalist for the World Bank; naturalist Rob Bierregaard; environmental attorney Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.; and lifelong falconers such as Paul & Stuart Hutcheson, Tim Hollaman, and others had an interest in raptors nurtured at the zoo.

Peter's first real hawking experience came while on a four-month beagling and foxhunting trip to the United Kingdom in 1973. He received an invitation to visit Robin Bell-Irving in Scotland to go out with Robin's beagle pack which hunted hare. Robin's mother and father — in addition to being keen shooters, anglers, beaglers, foxhunters, and otterhunters — were also falconers. On a day when Robin had to journey to London, Mrs. Bell-Irving took out a strange-looking dark and ruddy hawk to hunt some rabbit. Peter asked Mrs. Bell-Irving if the strange hawk was from a foreign country and she replied, “Yes....Arizona.” It was the first Harris' Hawk Peter had ever seen.

While at the Bell-Irving's, Peter made the acquaintance of Mexican falconer Eduardo Besoudo-Salvo who had come to Scotland for the hawking. By strange

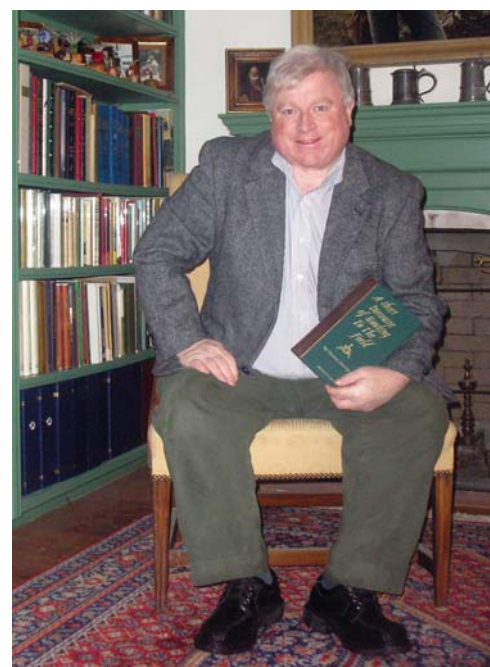
coincidence, they encountered each other in a Dublin pub several months later. Eduardo was going to visit the Falconry of Ireland the next day and invited Peter along. It was December and the manager of the falconry center hadn't seen a tourist for months. He saw Peter's interest in the hawks and made him a proposal: stay for a minimum of six weeks, help me out around the place, and I'll teach you the basics of falconry. Peter called his parents and said he wouldn't be home for Christmas.

In the spring of 1974, Peter took an ey-ass Redtail and an eyass Cooper's hawk for his first birds. Heinz Meng, the noted falconer, artist and teacher, lived only a few miles away and was the focal point of a group of Hudson Valley falconers.

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## What Is An Archives Associate?

Associates of the Archives of Falconry are those volunteers who wish to promote the mission of preserving the physical history of falconry. They help in any way possible from doing research at libraries and institutions, participating in strategic planning, providing financial support, collecting and evaluating materials, cataloguing acquisitions, preserving historical documents, arranging exhibits, planning social activities, and representing the Archives at international events and festivals. Our Associates represent many nations where falconry was or is currently practiced. 🦅



JOHN R. SWIFT, CURATOR • KENT CARNIE, CURATOR EMERITUS • DAVID WELLS, ADMINISTRATOR

THE ARCHIVES OF FALCONRY, THE PEREGRINE FUND'S WORLD CENTER FOR BIRDS OF PREY

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From him Peter got great advice and was able to make a success of both his hawks. He was also introduced to falconers such as Tom Cullen, Bill Robinson, Ed Hepp and others who became lifelong friends.

Peter was president of the New York State Falconry Association for six years during the 1980's. During his tenure, he and the club directors were able to turn the state's Conservation Department from hostile foe to accommodating friend. Evidently his four years at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service came in handy for local diplomacy.

Booksellers Tom Gossard and Barrie Watson awakened Peter's interest in collecting rare books on the sport of falconry. From his first purchase of a Freeman & Salvin from Tom he has gone on to assemble one of the most complete collections of falconry books in the English language now in private hands. Many of his copies are signed by the authors, some with presentation inscriptions from one famous falconer to another. His favorite book is a perfect 1611 Turberville that Natalie Nicholson found for him many years ago.

When visiting Yale University's Beinecke Library, home to a superb collection of hawking books, Peter came upon two treasures. The first was a book on training longwings, author unknown, printed in 1603. A little detective work revealed the author to be Sir Thomas Sherley of Wiston in Sussex. This book, *A Short Discourse of Hawking To The Field*, totally unknown to falconers, was reprinted by The Archives of Falconry in 2004. While at the Beinecke Library, Peter also came upon several albums of letters written to Lord Lil-

ford, the patron of 19<sup>th</sup> century British falconry. Peter is currently finishing up a transcription of over 300 letters on hawking written by famous falconers such as Salvin, Brodrick, Freeman, Lascelles, Harting, Delme-Radcliffe, Fisher and others.

From reading these letters – and of course their books – Peter came to think of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Brits as friends and comrades. While driving down the A38 in Devon he saw a sign for the village of Chudleigh and, knowing this to be William Brodrick's homeplace, ventured into the village to find his grave. Brodrick's monument was in pieces, covered with unmown grass and weeds, and was heartbreaking to see. Upon his return home, he solicited funds from other falconers and the monument was handsomely restored.

A bronze plaque was cast and affixed to the base telling visitors of Brodrick's importance to our sport. A few weeks after the restoration was complete a painting of a merlin attacking house martins came up for sale at Sotheby's in London. The auction house called it "English School" but Peter recognized it as the original painting from Brodrick's *Falconers' Favourites*. No one bid against him and he purchased it for \$125. Devers firmly believes Brodrick's ghost sent it his way in thanks.

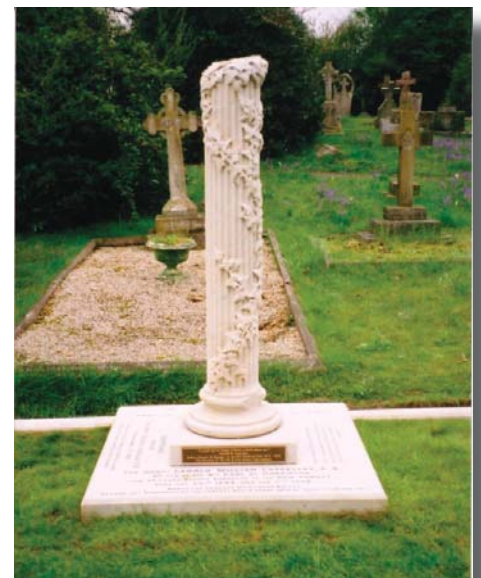
John Swift, then assistant curator of the Archives, was intrigued by this project and, together, he and Peter decided to undertake a "Dead Falconer's Tour" to locate the graves of other falconry authors wherever they might be. In 2002 they set forth with Natalie Nicholson and Vicki Swift to run to ground the likes of Harting, Salvin, Freeman, Michell and others. Their adventures are recounted in the 2002 NAFA *Journal*. An outgrowth of their trip was the remarkably beautiful restoration of Gerald Lascelles' monument which, like Brodrick's, had been wrecked by the ravages of time.

Peter's home has been jokingly called the "Archives East" for, in addition to the library, Peter has gathered on shelves

and in drawers some unique falconry items. Most interesting are five ambrotypes dating 1850 to 1855, photographs of William Brodrick and his falcons. These are part of a grouping of 14 ambrotypes that Brodrick had made and are the first photographs ever taken of a falconer and his trained birds. They may also be the first photos taken of a living bird as the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and the Natural History Museum in London cannot identify any earlier images. The other ambrotypes are in the collections of falconers Ron Clarke and Andrew Feher, in the Archives, and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Recently Peter has been acting as a research assistant for John Swift in the writing of a new book on falconry, and with our British Research Associate Paul Beecroft has continued to author a series of essays on falconers of the past.

Peter is looking forward to training a new hawk for the coming season. His Redtail "Wyvern" passed away in September after 27 years of hunting rabbits and other game with him around Millbrook. Peter will never forget the incredulous look on her face when, taken out of her giant hood at the Brigham City NAFA Meet, she observed that there wasn't a tree in sight. It was an astounding experience for a raptor of the forested East and was the only time Peter has ever seen a hawk so utterly stupefied. 🦅



# Recent Acquisitions

## From the **British Hawking Assoc.**

At last year's Falconry and Raptor Fair, the British Hawking Association presented to Archives Associate Paul Beecroft a splendid gift for the Archives: a crystal engraving based on a well-known photograph of Major Charles Hawkins Fisher. The piece was hand-engraved by British artist David Whyman, who is well-known in his field and has created commissioned works for presidents and royalty. His works have been exhibited in numerous countries and may be viewed at [www.a-touchofglass.co.uk](http://www.a-touchofglass.co.uk).

This piece is copy #1 of 25 and perfectly complements the significant collection of Fisher works at the Archives (described in the Autumn 2008 issue of this newsletter).

At the presentation, BHA chairman Brian Morris declared, "The work TAF is doing to preserve and conserve the history of our sport is very much appreciated by our members and falconers across the world, therefore the club is delighted to be able to make this contribution to the Archives." The Archives of Falconry is honored to receive this splendid engraving from the BHA. 🦅



## From **John Swift**

John Swift has donated a precious silver ewer with a hinged lid, mounted in a plexiglass display case. The piece was crafted by Hester Bateman, the queen of English silversmiths, in London in 1790 during the George III period. The pitcher displays two embossed designs on the sides based on etchings by German animal painter Johann Ridinger in 1764. One scene depicts heron hawking and the other a cadger conveying six hooded falcons. 🦅



## From the **British Falconers' Club**

Our friends across the pond, the British Falconers' Club, recently donated a bronze replica of what is known as the Berlin Trophy, 1937 to the Archives of Falconry. This piece, copy #10 of 250, was reproduced by Cemmic & Wylder Fine Art Bronze.

In donating the piece to us, BFC President Roger Upton writes, "The original bronze trophy was presented to the British Falconers' Club at the International Hunting Exhibition held in Berlin in November 1937.

The statuette was presented to Captain Gilbert Blaine and Jack Mavrogordato, (both well-known members of the Club) by General Reichjägermeister Hermann Göring in recognition of the excellent exhibition of falconry memorabilia ...by the BFC ...in Berlin. The complete British display, together with the bronze prize of honour was also exhibited in 1938 in London at the Imperial Institute in Exhibition Road. The trophy was sculpted by Wilhelm Krieger in Art Deco style and has been held for more than 70 years by succeeding Presidents or Honorary Secretaries of the Club and has an annual outing at the Club's Annual General Meeting, on display at the head table. ...May its presence illustrate the close friendship between falconers of all nations."

Quoting the certificate of authenticity which came with it, "70 years since this historic event, the BFC has decided that the sculpture and its history should be made available to BFC members around the world as a symbol of celebration for the art of falconry."

The Archives is honored to receive this work from the BFC and the bronze is now on prominent display for all visitors to enjoy. 🦅



## John Moran Hoods Display Spring Rendezvous: March 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup>

The dates, Thursday March 5 through Saturday March 7, 2009, have been reserved for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Rendezvous. A major highlight will be a very special, but temporary exhibit — the largest collection of John Moran hoods ever displayed publicly. Two private collectors, Dee Nicholson Bianco and Steve Duffy, will showcase their extensive collections of this legendary hood-maker's craft and the Archives will display many of its Moran hoods as well. John Moran himself will attend the event. John and his workmanship were spotlighted in an article by Ken Hooke in the 2007 NAFA *Journal*.

The Spring Rendezvous is an excellent opportunity for you to come visit, to socialize with fellow falconers and to view our treasures in detail. You will enjoy leisure time to peruse the most complete collection of falconry books in the world, admire important artwork and bronze sculpture, marvel over historical equipment, and tour the Arab Falconry Heritage Wing with its life-size models and interactive kiosks. The Velma Morrison Interpretive Center will be open regular hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) for you to see numerous live birds of prey as well as many interpretive exhibits on conservation.

Saturday will be an Open House from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a special dedication of new plaques on the Wall of Remembrance at 3 p.m. This year we will remember the lives and contributions to falconry of Frank L. Beebe, Kent Christopher, Clyde Matteson, Todd Newell Montgomery, and Tony Robertson. The associated *Book of Remembrance*, mounted on a new custom-made pedestal, will be inaugurated as a permanent display.

Barrie Watson, rare book dealer, will be available on those days for free appraisals of any rare books or art you wish to bring. Thursday and Friday are days best suited to individuals who wish to do some research in the Archives' collections or to help us process some of our backlog.

Natalie Nicholson and Vicki Swift will again serve as hostesses.

Mark your calendars now to join us for this very special event! 🦅



## Guess Who?

(4th in a series...)

Can you identify this Colorado falconer?

For answer, see below:

NAFA founder, Hal Webster

Previous issues of Heritage newsletters are available online:  
[www.peregrinefund.org/american\\_falconry.asp#heritage](http://www.peregrinefund.org/american_falconry.asp#heritage)