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The **Falconers**
& Raptor Conservation Magazine

an interview
with...

Lloyd Buck

Digging for victory
Hawk Board news
The Natural History of the artist

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editorial

The Falconers Fair is upon us once again and this year sees some changes in the format of the event. You can read what the changes are on page 12. It should be something to look forward to and hopefully, the crowds will come and support the fair as they have in the past.

There's another mixed bag of stories in this edition and I must thank Ben Long for providing the short article on how to get permission to fly a kite and lure when training a falcon. How many of us know who to contact to get this permission?

Also, you can read the latest from the Hawk Board concerning a meeting with Elliot Morley, MP and the different proposals that have been put forward that will have an effect on falconers throughout Britain. Falconers take note.

I hope that you will join me in congratulating Neil Forbes who has been awarded the Dr TJ Lafeber Avian Practitioner Award. This award has been given to Neil for career achievements of an avian practitioner and is the first to be given to a vet outside the USA. Well done Neil. I'm sure many falconers and friends are grateful for all the hard work that you do.

If you do attend the Falconers Fair, please come to *The Falconers Magazine* stand and say hello. In the meantime, have a good read.

Peter Eldrett

Falconers

news and products

Send all your news and product information to peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk

CLA competition

The CLA Game Fair 2005 is being held for the first time in its 47 year history at the stunning venue of Belvoir Castle, Nr Grantham, Leicestershire on Friday 22 – Sunday 24 July.

Along with the UK's largest shooting, fishing and gundog exhibitions will be the comprehensive and professional Falconry area as one of The Game Fair's core features.

Covering all aspects of Falconry visitors will watch exciting displays taking place in the Falconry Mini Arena where there will be a full daily programme of events all relating to the ancient sport of falconry. Newcomers will have the opportunity to experience handling a hawk and see over 30 different birds of prey. For those already involved in the sport the trade stands will have lots on offer and experts will be on hand to give advice on all areas of falconry for enthusiasts and beginners.

The falconry displays are being organised by The Hawk Board, whose chairman, Jim Chick, will be leading the twice daily displays in The Game Fair's main arena along with Terry Large, Chairman of The Campaign for Falconry. Their exciting displays will include the ever popular Harris' Hawks, high flying falcons and a very aerobatic eagle.

The CLA Game Fair is the annual get-together for all country sport enthusiasts, professionals and everyone who enjoys the countryside. The sheer scope of The Game Fair and the endless have-a-go opportunities, which range from 4 x 4 driving, fishing tuition and laser shooting, to bungee trampolining, aerial trekking and quad bikes, have ensured that this world class event has become renowned as a great day out for all the family.

Full details on all the demonstrations, features, competitions and events can be found on The Game Fair website on www.gamefair.co.uk To book your tickets in advance telephone 01264 226211, caravan and tent bookings contact by telephone or fax on 01908 588051 or e-mail gamefaircampsite@hotmail.com, for hotel bookings telephone 0870 225 8015.

We are delighted to offer a family ticket; two adults and two children 9 – 18 (under nine free) to the first five correct respondents to the following question:

Which popular hawks will be displayed in the main arena? Visit our website to enter.

Abu Dhabi

2005

The Falconers' & Raptor Conservation Magazine will, hopefully, be attending the International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition which will take place in Abu Dhabi and we are giving readers the chance to accompany us to this event.

The exhibition is the premier show that will take place in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates providing a suitable setting for manufacturers of guns, hunting vehicles, shooting, fishing, falconry, other outdoor sports equipment. The Exhibition will be held, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's Deputy Prime Minister. With over 300 exhibitors from 30 countries it should be an event worth visiting. If you would like to attend this event with us, please e-mail the editor at: peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk before 31 May when more details of travel, accommodation and prices will be available. The exhibition is held over five days and will be from 12 to 16 September 2005.

New products from Falcon Leisure

The Ultima hawking Jacket

This is the new jacket has been designed with falconers specifically in mind. It is not a re-hash of a shooting or fishing jacket; it comes with all the features you would expect on a top quality hawking jacket. The generous meat pocket has a removable lining and there are separate pockets for leash and swivel as well as for a small pair of field glasses and the hood. There are several useful sized zip pockets as well as a large inside one for car keys, etc.

Across the back of the garment is a quarry pocket that has easy access via a full-length zip on each side. The whole garment is machine washable and comes in a full range of sizes. At £85 plus £3 post and packing the **Ultima Hawking Jacket** is excellent value and should give many years of use.

The Ultima Hawk Box

Bob Dalton has introduced two new hawk travelling boxes to his product range. Fed up with poor delivery dates and supply problems when dealing with others he has decided to have his own boxes manufactured. The **Ultima** box comes in two sizes at present, medium and large. There are plans for a small and an eagle sized box to be added to the range shortly. The shell of the box itself is polyprop and all the fittings are stainless steel. The box comes complete with covered perch and carrying handle. The door shuts against a rebated panel for added safety and rigidity. Air holes are deliberately located low down so as to ensure a good flow and restrict light entry as much as possible. Being made of polyprop the whole thing is easy to hose down clean and disinfect when required. Prices for the boxes are £125 for the medium and £130 for the large. Carriage is extra. Both products will be on the **Falcon Leisure** stand at the Falconers Fair.

Bronze Vulture

The Oriental White Backed Vulture is a critically endangered species, due to the use of a veterinary drug called Diclofenec in cattle. Along with two other vulture species, it is believed that it will be extinct in the wild within three years unless conservation efforts are successful. Many agencies around the world are actively involved in trying to halt this species decline.

The Hawk Conservancy Trust in Andover co-ordinates the European Species programme for this vulture, but with only 14 birds in participating zoo's in Europe and America, there is a drastic need to breed more birds. The Trust is working with WWF Pakistan to co-ordinate and establish a captive flock in-situ in Pakistan.

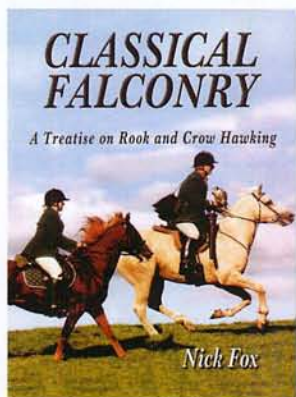
In order to help raise funds for this vital work the Trust has launched a special raffle to allow all raptor lovers the chance to play a part in this bird's survival. The prize is a limited edition bronze, number five of only 12 editions, Griffon Vulture sculpture by the internationally renowned sculptor Geoffrey Dashwood. Geoffrey was born in Hampshire in 1947 and has spent his working life in the New Forest. His work has been exhibited successfully in galleries all around the world and the strength of his sculpture comes from his intimate knowledge of wildlife and his passion for his subject. His simplified work is well balanced between classical forms and

naturalistic features and avoids the sentimentality often associated with works on a natural subject.

The sculpture is a beautiful work of art that retails at around £12,000 and would grace any home or garden.

A limited number of 2,500 tickets have been produced for this raffle with tickets priced at £10.00 each. The raffle will be drawn on Sunday 19 June 2005 at a fundraising wildlife art exhibition to be held in the grounds of the Trust featuring a wide range of wildlife artists and sculptors.

If you would like to contribute towards this vital work of the Trust in preventing this species from becoming extinct and have the chance to win this wonderful bronze, please contact the Trust on 01264 773850, or visit the website on www.hawk-conservancy.org or write The Hawk Conservancy Trust, Andover, Hants, SP118DY.



Classical Falconry

A Treatise on Rook & Crow Hawking

Nick Fox / Published by Hancock House, ISBN 0-88839-548-5

Reviewed by Paul Manning

of Nick Fox, gained through managing the Northumberland Crow Falcons.

Though covering all corvids, Crows are the primary quarry, as they can provide the ultimate objective, the elusive but spectacular 'Le haut vol', 'High flight' in which both falcon and its prey climb high into the sky, striving for aerial supremacy.

This form of hunting requires vast areas of relatively open terrain and is undertaken from both cars and from horseback. Everything that can and does effect the hunt is covered here in detail. From selecting land, gaining landowners permission, topography, wind speed and direction the quarry and their flight styles, selecting and training the falcons, weight management and their fitness and motivation. There is a section on the horses, their care and specialised training, together with an extensive insight into the establishment, management, equipment and logistics involved in bringing together the NCF.

Not many of us will ever have the opportunity to experience this branch of falconry. Given the huge area required and massive logistical operation and the specific flight style, you may feel that this form of hunting could never be aspired to; therefore this book is of little relevance or interest to you.

How wrong you would be. This book is a fantastic read and very effectively conveys an approach to falconry that can and should be adopted, regardless of which bird you fly or what land you have

As the sub-title makes clear, this is a very detailed analysis of hunting Rooks and Crows with Falcons. This book is essentially the experiences

available. The author's attention to detail and thirst for knowledge I found inspiring, not humbling. It renews ones desire to be the very best you can be. To strive to produce the very best hunting partner in whichever branch of falconry you practice.

At one point, he observes that "Falconry is like a tapestry, it is all little stitches. Only when you stand back does it make a picture". To extend the analogy; "The quality of a tapestry is judged, by the density of the weave". Nick Fox looks at every tiny detail that may impact on his sport, so as to understand and improve each one in turn. He approaches them all with equal fervour and when it does all come together it must surely produce a picture of the highest quality.

However, the detail alone cannot convey the pleasure that falconry brings. Here he manages to combine both.

It is beautifully presented, with a wealth of supporting photographs. Charming and informative sketches are used to introduce or illuminate the information and where necessary, technical descriptions in the text are further illustrated by clear charts or diagrams. The result is that the reader is never left unsure about a specific point.

An additional pleasure is that many sub headings or fresh observations are augmented by a relevant passage of poetry or prose, taken from the 'golden age of falconry'. These cleverly establish a poignant link between the thoughts and feelings of the contemporary falconer with that of our illustrious forebears. The effect is to make the reader (if a falconer) feel a part of something very special. I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to any falconer.



New Publication

Martin Hollinshead is releasing a new Harris' hawk book this summer and will be at the falconers fair taking orders for signed copies. The book is hard bound, contains 16 pages of colour photos and is priced at £19.95. Martin says that the book is a companion volume to *A Passion for Harris' Hawks*, giving those who enjoyed this book a chance to help themselves to another serving.

If you are not going to be at the fair, you can contact Martin on 01902 561075 or e-mail martin.hollinshead@virgin.net. Mention *The Falconers and Raptor Conservation Magazine* and get your copy post free!

Letters

Got something to say? Write to Peter Eldrett, Knowle View, Kings Lane, Woodlands, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 8LZ or e-mail: peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk

Dear Sir,

I have just been reading the sad story in the last issue of *The Falconers Magazine* about the female Harris Hawk that was electrocuted. We (that is my son and I) have two Harris Hawks, a female, Pheobe, which belongs to my son and a male who belongs to me.

I felt I must write to you because on New Year's day of this year Pheobe also received an electric shock as she landed on a pylon. She tumbled to the ground, lifeless and we thought it had killed her. This is why I had to write this letter because she survived the ordeal.

The electricity had struck her right wing, which made it droop down badly and ran down her leg. We took her to Great Western Referrals in Swindon and Neil Forbes operated on her straight away.

Over the weeks that followed it was very frustrating for us, as well as Pheobe. She kept nibbling at the dressing that was on her wing taking out the stitches and opening up the wound.

One time she did this she lost quite a lot of blood, so it was an

emergency dash back to Swindon at 8pm on a Friday evening, another operation and this time they tried bandaging part of her wing but Pheobe was not having any of it. She pulled that away so, in the end Neil attached a device to her top beak so that she could no longer nibble the dressing. The only thing this time was that she had to have all her food cut up for her, but it did the trick. She did look very comical with the device on the end of her beak.

She finished her treatment at Great Western on 25 February. Her wing is fine now (touch wood) and it no longer droops down, it's just how it should be. Neil Forbes and his excellent team have done a first class job. We now look forward to a successful hunting season with her.

We count ourselves lucky that we still have Pheobe with us, unlike that poor gentleman and his wife who lost their hawk. I must just add that we very much enjoy *The Falconers Magazine*, it is always full of interesting articles and useful information. Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully, Lynn Simms-Gould

Dear Editor,

Through your publication I would like to thank Bob Dalton for the vote of confidence in the Hawk Board. It is a thankless and largely voluntary task which we don't pretend to get right every time.

For those who think it doesn't apply to them because they fly Harris hawks, remember the following;

1. You can still feed day old chicks because of our representations. Think what would happen if this food source was outlawed!
2. You can still fly Harris hawks (and other non-indigenous birds of

prey) because we stopped the Bern Convention outlawing them.
3. You can still fly hawks and falcons at quarry because we keep an eye on all legislation (UK & EU) on your behalf.

We are all you have got, please support us. If every British falconer and bird of prey keeper gave us £5 every year, we would keep your sport safe for ever. So when you come to the Falconry Fair in May, give us a thought, give us a fiver.

*Nick Kester, Communications Officer
(Hawk Board)*



2003 Gyr chicks

FALCON SALES DAYS
6th and 7th August 2005



BAZ, hat-bird



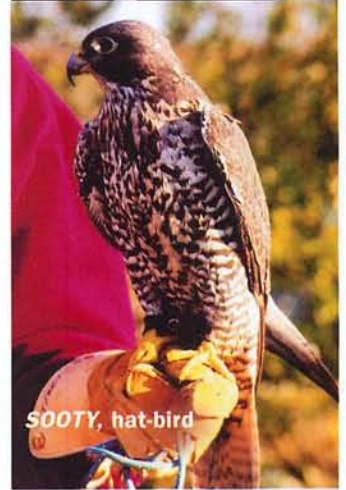
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TEX, hat-bird



SOOTY, hat-bird

Accipitrine Behavioral Problems

A comprehensive book written on accipitrine psychology. It is based upon a study in which 100 accipiters with behavioral problems were correctly diagnosed and then successfully treated by their trainers. Imagine having the background experience and knowledge of having trained 100 accipiters at your fingertips when you encounter your next problem. Written as a graduate level textbook this book is far more advanced than the Imprint Accipiter; in fact, it blows it out of the water! Encompasses all accipiters from imprints, passage, chambered, and parent raised. Peer reviewed, short production run, available exclusively through the author, 208 pgs. 158 quality photos, 70 lb. paper, color, gold embossing, 80+ action photos!

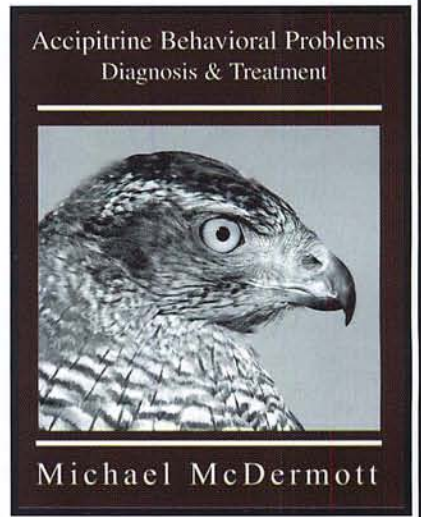


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hawk board news

Meeting of
The Hawk Board
 and
Mr. Elliot Morley MP,
Minister of State for Environment and Agri-Environment

Wednesday 26 January 2005
 Nobel House, London



The Hawk Board has been in existence since July 1979, and is the liaising body between those people keeping, breeding, hunting, flying and working with birds of prey and owls in the United Kingdom and also with the UK and overseas government and recognised bodies.

The Hawk Board works to protect falconry and the keeping of birds of prey by collecting and collating scientific evidence on all aspects of captive birds of prey. It also promotes that the standards of bird of prey keeping are of the highest in the UK.

The Hawk Board is a voluntary organisation of unpaid elected members. It was set up to represent keepers through their clubs and organisations.

The members of the Hawk Board bring to that body their own specialist professional skills and from within their own professional fields.

The Hawk Board acts in both UK wide and also within the devolved structures. It has an excellent working relationship with DEFRA (Global Wildlife Division).

Hawk board representatives for meeting with DEFRA

Jim Chick – Chairman

E-mail:

jim@countrypursuit.freeserve.co.uk

Web: www.hawkboard.org.uk

Dr Nick Fox – Vice Chairman

E-mail: office@falcons.co.uk

Web: www.falcons.co.uk

Mark Hinge – elected member

E-mail: mark.hinge@public-affairs.co.uk

Web: www.public-affairs.co.uk

HAWK BOARD - DEFRA

(26 JANUARY 2005)

RAPTOR REGISTRATION AND CITES FEES

The aim of the review of Part I of the WCA 1981 is to “ensure that the legislation delivers appropriate levels of protection for biodiversity with minimum control on people’s activities.”

DEFRA proposals are to retain the Registration Scheme but increase the cost to breeders. This amounts to a significant control on the activity of breeders, without delivering any added level of protection. An example of the cost increase to a medium-sized breeder who breeds and exports three species is shown below.

Note: registration and A10 fees are per bird. CITES are per species per shipment. This is a *ten-fold increase*; prices will rise up to £233 per bird. Thus a male peregrine would rise from £427 to £660, a 55% price rise, increasing the incentive to not register. Big breeders would face fees up to £44,174 pa plus their own admin costs, to produce 250 birds. Overall for the industry, 1,987 raptors bred each year represent a rise from £33,779 to £317,920, even before CITES fees are considered.

The Hawk Board Proposals

We propose two tiers to Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

4a. Would include all wild-source or non-UK-source specimens of all species included in Schedule 4 under the new criteria for listing.

4b. Would include all captive-bred close-ringed specimens of the species listed in Schedule 4, PLUS all those that require Article 10s.

Schedule 4a. Would continue the same as now and is targeted at species of conservation concern according to criteria currently under review. Only specimens taken from the wild or of unconfirmed origin would be on Schedule 4.a. They would be fitted with a UK ring and all details would be maintained on a Defra central database as now.

Schedule 4b. Would consist of domestic-bred specimens that are wearing a DEFRA approved closed ring, either of approved UK origin or of an accepted similar type from a participating country. The specimen would also have travelling with it for life a single document that meets both the requirements of an Article 10 Certificate and a Breeder’s Certificate. As this bird changes hands, the new owners would be listed on this certificate. This certificate would not be on a central database, but the Breeder would.

- The closed ring would have a country prefix (e.g. UK) and a registered breeder’s prefix (e.g. 123) followed by a unique number for each bird. Therefore each bird would be traceable both to country and breeder.
- The rings could be supplied in bulk by Defra to the breeders prior to each season at minimal cost. The blank certificates could be supplied either as a Defra online template to registered breeders, or as paper copies.
- When supplying the ringed bird, the breeder would make three copies of the Article 10/Breeder’s Certificate: one for the new owner, and one for his permanent records, and one for Euro CITES. The certificate would

	Clutches	Young	Current DEFRA Charges				
			Reg. £17	A10 £0	CITES £10	Total	Per bird
Species 1	9	54	918	0	90	1008	18.7
Species 2	6	12	204	0	60	264	22
Species 3	6	6	102	0	60	162	27
Total	21	72	1224	0	210	1434	19.9

Proposed DEFRA Charges				
Reg. £60	A10 £100	CITES £100	Total	Per bird
3240	5400	900	9540	176.7
720	1200	600	2520	210
360	600	600	1560	260
4320	7200	2100	13620	189.2

travel with the bird as an **EU Passport** for life.

- Defra will maintain a central database of all registered breeders' details and their prefixes. All birds therefore are traceable to source and DNA verification tests can be carried out. Breeders could retain DNA samples as now, for verification purposes.
- Registered breeders could be required to make an electronic end-of-season '**Breeding Return**' listing the details of all birds produced that season.
- Inspections should be done after the rings have been fitted, but before most offspring have been sold (June/July). This would enable the inspector to verify ring numbers, check the appearance of each (feathered) bird, obtain a feather DNA sample, and check that paperwork and breeding records are being done correctly.
- Any domestic raptor which has had its closed rings removed, for whatever reason, should lose its 4.b. status and go to 4.a. It should wear a fitted ring and/or be microchipped, and be registered with DEFRA, with a **Registration Document**.
- EU Passports (Article 10 certificates)

should not be required for parents of birds for which an application for an Article 10 is being made. Article 10's should be obtainable at any time

during a bird's life using the Certificate of Breeding as the basis for application, as is done in the rest of the EU thus enhancing harmonisation.

■ A diagrammatic assessment of the proposals, as described

Current Registration System

- ✓ Provides full controls on captive wild birds.
- ✗ Covers only Schedule 4 species.
- ✓ Provides full document traceability.
- ✓ Allows DNA traceability.
- ✗ Not geared for EU needs.
- ✗ OK in 1981, but now overwhelmed by numbers.
- ✗ Not linked to Article 10s.
- ✗ Unrealistically expensive to run.
- ✗ Fees discriminate between raptors and passerines.
- ✗ Meets resistance from parrot owners.
- ✗ Hopeless for EU database.
- ✗ Inspector ring delivery system ineffective.
- ✗ Incomplete Article 10 coverage.
- ✗ Treats captive-bred birds as wild.
- ✗ Unproven conservation benefits.
- ✗ Widely misunderstood schedules and annexes.

Hawk Board Proposed System

- ✓ Provides same full controls on captive wild birds.
- ✓ Covers Schedule 4, *PLUS* all captive-bred raptors that need A10s.
- ✓ Provides full document traceability.
- ✓ Allows DNA traceability.
- ✓ Fore-runner of pan-EU controls.
- ✓ Capable of indefinite expansion.
- ✓ Linked to Article 10s.
- ✓ Minimal costs.
- ✓ Non-discriminatory between user-groups.
- ✓ Supported by parrot organisations.
- ✓ EU Breeder database is achievable.
- ✓ Effective inspector verification.
- ✓ 100% Article 10 coverage (incl's gifts).
- ✓ Complies with proposed revision of WCA definition of 'wild bird'.
- ✓ Promotes sustainable production.
- ✓ User friendly.



FALCON LEISURE



This one hour video shows training and hunting with Harris Hawks. The emphasis being very much on hunting. Shows hawks being flown singly, in a cast and in a group of three. Also working with ferrets and a pointer. Some truly excellent hunting footage.
£23.50 inc P&P.

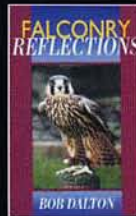


An exciting one hour video showing training and hunting with Goshawks. Available at:-
£23.50 inc P&P.



This 40min video captures some excellent footage of hunting with Aplomado Falcons in South America.
£15.50 inc P&P.

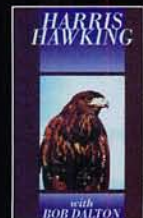
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British Falconry & Raptor Fair

2005



The 15th annual Falconry Fair is rapidly approaching and once again the event will be hosted by Chetwynd Park, just outside Newport in the beautiful Shropshire countryside. Visitors from far and wide, who have an interest in Falconry and Raptor Aviculture, will be heading for the venue on the Bank Holiday weekend of 1 – 2 May.

Once again the country's leading specialist hawk and animal food suppliers, Honeybrook Animal Foods, are the principal sponsors of the event. Their generosity and co-operation will help to ensure that the Fair, like their own product range, gets ever larger whilst still retaining quality as its main objective.

This year will see several changes to both the structure and the entertainment at the event. The weathering ground is being moved onto the top plateau above the main flying arena. This is to facilitate better spectator viewing and to accommodate the increased number and varieties of trained raptors that will be on show. The space left by where the weathering ground has always been will be expanded to ensure that both Raptor Rescue and the mini arena have the desired amount of room.

As usual the mini arena will be used to show close up and personal various raptor and falconry related topics. These can range from equipment used, to working dogs, to basic training. There will be several demonstrations each day and these will be announced at regular intervals.

Raptor Rescue will, as normal, be putting on their own mini weathering and members of the organisation will be on hand to discuss the work that they do in rehabilitating injured raptors. Those two stalwarts of the organisation Jane and Dean Hemmingway will oversee the stand.

Whilst appreciating all that has been contributed over the years by the usual people that take part in the main arena flying displays it was felt it was time for a change. And a change is certainly what we have this year.

A group of Dutch falconers and raptor breeders are gathering together in their own marquee and will be proudly carrying on their country's long

association with British falconry. For centuries it was the Dutch that provided most of the professional falconers to the rest of Europe and for many decades provided, amongst others, British falconers with passage Peregrines. This year some of those that will be exhibiting in the miniature Dutch community will also be flying eagles and other raptors in the main arena. It will be nice to see something different and another first for the British Falconry Fair.

Another new item on the display menu for this year's event is something very special. Dr Nick Fox will be giving us an insight into the classical falconry he and his companions in the Northumberland Crow Falcons enjoy.

The Crow and Rook are classical quarry for falconers because, like the Kite and the Heron in the olden days, they will try to fly high into the sky to escape the falcon. The flight can go a long way very quickly so the falconers must be very mobile. Crows will also try to reach bushes or woods to escape from the falcon, so the country must be as open as possible.

There are not many places in the UK suitable for the high flight, but on the fells of Northumberland there is a group of falconers who hawk Crows in the traditional manner. Of course it will not be possible to show a Crow flight in the arena, but the falconers will be showing how the falcons are trained for the flight at Crow. The young falcons learn to catch dummy Crows and develop a "search image" for Crows rather than any other distracting quarry such as Pigeons or Pheasants. Also the falcons are exercised with pole lures to teach them how to cope with the twists and turns of the Crow at close quarters.

The horses too have to be trained to work with Falcons, following the flight across country, being used for luring and radio tracking, and waiting while the falconer picks up the falcon from the dead Crow. The horses you will see are Anglo-Arab or Arab horses used solely for hawking and hunting, not the show ring.

Dr Fox, who has managed the Northumberland Crow Falcons since 1992, aided by some of the members, will give a commentary. If you are interested in flying the sable quarry then this is an item that must not be missed.

Dr Fox will also be signing copies of his new book *Classical Falconry* at the fair. This is a limited edition book so make sure you get a copy while they are still available.

One of the old perennial favourites of the fair is the Wildlife and Raptor art exhibition which is so expertly staged each year by Chris Christoforou. How Chris manages to come up with such a successful blend of new and established artists each

year is simply amazing. But manage it he does. The list of names that have exhibited under his experienced eye and umbrella reads like a who's who of raptor art; Martyn Brook, Carl Bass, Michael Demain, Andrew Ellis – the list goes on.

But there are more artists to be seen apart from those in the main art marquee. For those that visited the first ever fair at Stoneleigh 15 years ago, some may well remember a young lad tucked away in the corner with some paintings to sell. How many people wish they could put the clock back all those years and snap up all of the paintings that were being exhibited at such ridiculously low prices. The young lad was Andrew Ellis and his work stood out to anyone that had an eye.

Always a crowd pleaser Michael Sagar of *Hounds Magazine* will again be introducing us to various foot and mounted packs. This year the item may well prove to be even more popular than ever, for very obvious reasons. Michael always manages to persuade a selection of packs to attend the event and the commentary he gives is always entertaining, as well as educational.

All the usual favourites will be making an appearance too. The Parachutists and a Regimental Band to name just a couple.

There will be plenty going on outside of the main arena with dog agility demonstrations, a gun dog scurry, Lurcher and Terrier shows, Archery, Clay Pigeon Shooting, etc. There really is just about something to suit everyone's taste.

Of course the fair would not be complete without the myriad of equipment makers selling their wares. This event really is the only chance the falconer and his hard earned cash get to see all the equipment makers side-by-side. Not just British equipment makers but also those from Holland, USA, France, Belgium, Mexico and Eastern Europe.

It is not just exhibitors that venture across to our island for this truly remarkable event in the falconry calendar. From enquiries received at the show office we know that visitors from USA, Canada, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Japan, China, Arabia, North and South Africa, as well as practically every country in Europe will be descending on Chetwynd Park. The British Falconry and Raptor Fair is a truly unique event and this is borne out by the number of times it is imitated. But there is only one Falconry Fair. Make sure you are part of it.

If you require further details of the Fair then please ring the show office on 01588-672708. This is the same number if you have any suggestions as to what you would like to see at future fairs or things that you would prefer not to see. On behalf of the organisers please be assured all comments are given the consideration they deserve.

**List of lost, found,
reunited and
stolen birds from the
IBR between
22 December 2004 to 14
March 2005**

FOUND X 10
HARRIS HAWK
1SGUY96W IBR11251V
BARN OWL
1758BC97U IBR1872U
HARRIS HAWK
4227DOEW
BARN OWL
103WOT
HARRIS HAWK
IBR36600W
COOPERS HAWK
ICBGC99U IBR34522U
BARN OWL
686BC097U IBR34529U
COMMON BUZZARD
13678DOEW
BARN OWL
702104/91CU
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL

LOST X 60
HARRIS HAWK x 14
BARN OWL x 6

GOSHAWK x 3
GYR HYBRIDS x 7
LANNER FALCON x 2
PEREGRINE FALCON x 6
RED-TAILED HAWK x 3
KESTREL x 4
PEREGRINE HYBRIDS x 3
SAKER FALCON x 3
COMMON BUZZARD x 2
AFRICAN HAWK EAGLE
SPARROWHAWK
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 2
LITTLE OWL
BENGAL EAGLE OWL
SAKER HYBRID

REUNITED X 85
KESTREL x 2
PEREGRINE HYBRID x 8
RED-TAILED HAWK x 8
HARRIS HAWK x 35
COMMON BUZZARD
SAKER FALCON x 6

SPARROWHAWK
GYR HYBRIDS x 5
GREAT HORNED OWL
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 4
BARN OWL x 7
GOSHAWK x 3
LANNER FALCON x 2
PEREGRINE FALCON
BALD EAGLE

STOLEN X 8
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL
HARRIS HAWK
HARRIS HAWK
GOSHAWK H00389 BY27900038
AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL 4025
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID 8875V
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID
12713V/23429W
HARRIS HAWK

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608
8500

Independent Bird Register



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club directory

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The Central Falconry & Raptor Club

Founded in 1988

Is the local falconry club serving the following counties: - Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, & the West Midlands.

We meet on the second Sunday of each month at 8pm, throughout the year, at the Sports Connexion, Leamington Road, Ryton on Dunsmore, Coventry.

CLUB MISSION STATEMENT

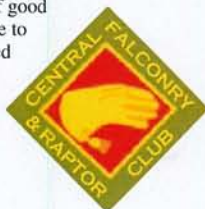
The mission statement of the C.F.R.C. is to offer people the opportunity to embrace all aspects of Falconry in a spirit of good companionship. There will be a warm welcome to people of all ages, whether they are experienced falconers, novices, or families.

For more information e-mail:

cen.falc@ic24.net or phone

John Hill 07973 224609

www.central-falconry.co.uk



The Welsh Hawking Club



SOUTH WALES, Usk

Contact: *Paul Dillion* Tel: 01633 276411

NORTH WALES, Chester

Contact: *Neil McCann* Tel: 01512 930364

SOUTH WEST, Exeter

Contact: *Dave Scott* Tel: 01752 830382

BATH, Hinton

Contact: *Bob Martini* Tel: 01934 862446

THE MIDLANDS, Loughborough

Contact: *Mike Kane* Tel: 01773 811491

COTSWOLDS, Evesham

Contact: *Shaun Healey* Tel: 01386 832812

ESSEX, Colchester

Contact: *Andy Hulme* Tel: 01206 729363

★ FOR ALL GENERAL ENQUIRIES CONTACT ★

Jan France, secretary, 01279 842440



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Contact our Falconry rep, Tony Ellis, on:-

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or visit the club website www.brittanyclub.co.uk

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We are a fast growing club with members ranging from complete novices to seasoned falconers.

We meet the first Monday of every month at the Bull Inn, Hinton nr Bath. Our meetings are informal and friendly and provide an opportunity to exchange experiences, arrange field trips and establish contact with local falconers. Guest speakers and falconry furniture suppliers regularly attend. We also run beginners' workshops.

ALL NEWCOMERS WELCOMED.

For more information please telephone:

- Rob Kelly 01275 891813
- Keith Wicks 01454 315810
- Tony Ellis 01666 510067

Northern England Falconry Club

Club meetings are held at:-

“The White Swan”

Public House, High Street, Yeadon.

(2 mins from Leeds & Bradford Airport).

Contact: **G Shaw** on

01274 780800

The Cleveland Hawking Club

“Sharing the knowledge”

A fast growing club catering for the novice and the professional. Guest speakers, videos, furniture and hawk food. All enjoyed over a few drinks in a relaxed informal environment.

Monthly meets on the first Sunday of the month at 6.30pm.

Venue:-

The Falcon Inn, Hilton near Thornaby-on-Tees

For further information contact:-

Lee Copeland on 07802 251502

or **Jono on 07788 725501**

E-mail: clevelandhawkingclub@yahoo.co.uk

www.clevelandhawkingclub.20m.com

Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club

Meetings held at:-

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*Promoting falconry throughout
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For information contact:

07711 514073

www.lancsfalconry.co.uk



Yorkshire Falconry Club



Our meetings take place at 8.00pm on the third
Wednesday of each month at the

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THIS IS JUST OFF THE M1 AT JUNCTION 35.

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For further information please telephone Steven on

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The South East Falconry Group

AIMS TO SUPPORT FALCONERS IN THE CONTINUATION AND
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Drawing its membership from around the South and East of
England, the SEFG provides a forum for falconers and
would-be falconers to meet, discuss and practice the art.

Members benefit from having access to a wealth of
experience and knowledge, good facilities and field meeting
opportunities throughout the winter months.

Meetings take place on the last Tuesday of the month at
Tilbury in Essex.

For members in our Southern region informal meetings take
place nr Winchester, Hants.

For further information or an application form please contact -

Dean White (secretary) on 01489 896504

E-mail us at enquiry@sefg.org or

visit our web site www.sefg.org

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FOR THE DEDICATED FALCONER

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Further details from:

**Tommy Bryce
01620 850209**

★ We are a D.E.F.R.A. recognised club ★

club directory

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THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB (F.M.)

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HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

Affiliated to the Hawk Board.

Group member of the Countryside Alliance.

We meet at Bagshot, Surrey, on the third Tuesday
of the month.

The aim of the club is to promote good husbandry
and practices in raptor keeping and flying and our
membership ranges from complete beginners to
seasoned falconers.

Our programme includes guest speakers and
demonstrations, and field meets are held through
the season.

**Ring Laila on 01945 410150 or
Alan on 01784 250577 after 6.00pm**

South Eastern Raptors Association (S.E.R.A.)

Established for some 25 years, and now affiliated to the Hawk Board and holding group membership to the Countryside Alliance, the aims of S.E.R.A. are to further and maintain the standards of falconry in the South-East of England. With a broad band of knowledge and experience within our club, we extend a warm welcome to new members, whether practising falconers or complete novices. Where practicable, novices will be allocated a mentor. Helpful, honest and friendly advice is always available.

**Our meetings are held at 10.30am on the second Sunday of each month throughout the year at
The Junction Inn - Groombridge, Kent. (Opposite Groombridge Station)**

Outings, guest speakers, field meets, (at home and away) videos, quizzes and other special events are ever-present features of our club calendar and may be viewed on our website.

Please visit our website at: **www.sera.freereserve.co.uk** or telephone Brian for information on: **01732 463218**

VISIT OUR CLUB STAND AT THE FALCONER'S FAIR





askchitty

Do you have any veterinary questions relating to your bird? If so, send them to the editor (see address on page four) and they will be passed on to John Chitty - BVetMed CertZooMed CBiol MIBiol MRCVS

Q: I am new to the sport of falconry and I own and fly a Harris Hawk, which I keep bowed down in the weathering. I have heard of a disease called bumblefoot. Can you tell me what it is and what causes it and what I can do to prevent it.

Alan (by e-mail)

A: This is the 'classic' disease of raptors and is still seen quite commonly. What is it? Basically, it is an infection of the foot that can be caused by a variety of bacteria or, more rarely, yeasts.

However, the infection is only a part of the story as it mainly represents invasion of tissues by bacteria when they're given the chance. Underlying factors are far more important in the development of the problem, which is why it can be so difficult to treat:

1. **Check** Bumblefoot is a two-footed problem! Although we normally see it in both feet we sometimes see a bird with a problem on just one foot. In these cases we carefully check the so-called good leg for the reason why the bird is putting all its weight on the other side to cause bumblefoot. The results are often worrying with lesions in the 'good' leg ranging from arthritis to healing fractures. Often the problems in the leg without bumblefoot are far more severe than the bumblefoot and contribute heavily to a poor outlook.

2. **Species** Bumblefoot does seem to vary in severity between species. Although there are always exceptions, it does tend to be less severe in hawks and far worse in falcons and eagles. Part of this also relates to the way in which birds may be kept and lesions in tethered birds tend to be picked up much earlier than in, say, an aviary-kept Eagle Owl where it is only detected when it is very well-advanced.

3. **Immunity** Some bacteria do seem to be more likely to cause problems than others. The obvious culprit is *Staphylococcus aureus*, which is commonly found in bumblefoot. It has been claimed in the past that this is the only cause of bumblefoot but this is certainly not the case. The problem with *Staph. aureus* is that birds often have relatively poor immunity to this bacterium. Essentially it is usually found on

human or dog skin as a normal inhabitant (commensal) and may become transferred to the bird skin where it is not normally found and where the immune system may be naive to it. That's alright as long as the skin is intact and not compromised to many bacteria. However, if there is damage then the *Staph* can enter and disease results. It is also no coincidence that bumblefoot always tends to occur in the centre of the foot as this is where the blood supply is poorest. It is therefore a site where bacteria are most protected from the immune system.

4. **Perching** Poor perching can cause pressure sores on the feet that can then become colonised by bacteria, particularly if the environment is unhygienic. Perches should be designed with respect to the size and species of bird and should always be kept clean and in good repair. Covering with AstroTurf seems to help as the bird will shift position more often and this improves blood flow round the feet (see later). However, if the feet are sore or damaged then the astro should be covered with soft leather. This provides a soft springy surface and avoids sharp pieces of astro sticking into sore feet.

5. **Vitamin A deficiency** This has been proposed as a cause, though I suspect it is a minor one. Nonetheless it is no bad thing to give affected birds a Vitamin A supplement.

6. **Injuries** Occasionally we will see a case where the problem has begun with a trauma but these are quite unusual. The traditional story of the bird grabbing its own foot is very unusual indeed.

7. **Blood flow** A very interesting theory involves the blood flow around the feet. The most common time to see bumblefoot is in tethered birds at the end of the flying season just after they begin the moult. Traditionally this has been linked to the increased bodyweight putting more pressure onto the feet and producing sores. However, this is not the whole story. It is common at this time to radically change diet in a very short time; one day the bird is working hard and being kept 'keen' while the next it has loads of food and has to do no work at all. This produces various metabolic changes that can affect peripheral

blood flow to the feet. In birds this can cause blood to pool in the feet especially if they are tethered and inactive and at a higher weight. Bird blood is not sterile so these 'pools' are the perfect place for bacteria to settle and proliferate; *ie the infection starts inside and breaks OUT* rather than the traditional view where it enters via broken skin. This certainly fits the pattern of many of the cases and we have seen several birds where cysts and foot swelling appear before the bumblefoot. These problems are reduced by moulting birds in aviaries where they will be more active and by gradually reducing exercise and increasing food rather than doing it abruptly.

So, there are many possible causes.

What about therapy. In the very mild cases (before an abscess has formed) antibiotics and padded dressings or perches are normally sufficient.

However, once abscesses have formed things become much more involved and tricky. We normally x-ray the foot to ensure infection hasn't penetrated into underlying tendons or bones. Swabs will be taken of the infected areas to see which bacteria are growing and which antibiotics they are sensitive to.

Surgery will be required to open and clean out the abscess. The infected areas may then need to be flushed or packed with antibiotic impregnated beads. If possible the skin wound is sutured but often needs to be healed by means of special dressings.

The feet will then need padded dressings so there is no pressure applied to the surgical areas. Antibiotics and painkillers are essential. Treatment can take a long time and if the feet are badly scarred then the bird will be prone to future bouts of bumblefoot.

All-in-all prevention is better than cure and there are certainly many areas of the hawk's management that can be manipulated to reduce the chances of bumblefoot. However, the condition is not completely understood so bumblefoot can result no matter how much care you take. In which case regular checking of your bird will at least mean that the problem can be detected and treated before it becomes too far advanced. If in doubt about any marks on your bird's feet then seek advice from an experienced raptor vet. Delay in treatment could mean big delays in cure!

■ Peregrine jump



This is a continuation of the interview I had with Lloyd, the first part of which was published in the last issue of The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine.

an
interview
with...

Lloyd Buck

part 2

What about any other recent programmes that we may have seen on television involving your birds?

In the programme shown last year, Animal Olympics, we did a really good opening sequence for that with Tilley (my Golden Eagle) where she was carrying the torch over the stadium and dropping it to light the flame – we did a lot of that in the studio against a blue background and they put it all on to the mountain and the stadium. She took part in the weightlifting competition because in comparison with their body size Golden Eagles are the second best in lifting weights – second only to the Rhino Beetle which, in ratio, can lift the equivalent of 58 tons. Tilley, in comparison to the human size, could lift the equivalent of 400 kilos, which is still a lot.

In the Alan Titchmarsh series on the British Isles, all the close up work with Peregrines was using our guys. And also our Barn Owl, Kensa was featured in an earlier programme. What we've done with her which is quite interesting – we've trained her to fly to little sound boxes on 30 foot cables. I've got a little controller box and I can place the boxes out in the meadow and I can get her to quarter just like a wild Barn Owl does. Not only that, but she's actually learnt to catch prey and she catches her own voles – that's the second barn owl that I've done that with successfully. It's interesting, because captive-bred Barn Owls generally don't make it when they're released because they've not been trained to use their hearing as they should use it. But with Kester, we never flew her to the fist, we only flew her to the little sound boxes. I imprinted her on that sound and it works fantastically – and she's gone on to catch her own prey – it's really interesting.

I understand that you and Leo have made a new film together involving base jumping. Can you tell me a bit about that?

That's our new one which we did in Italy. It's called *The Falcon That Flew With Man* and we filmed it in Arco in the Dolomites. That all happened at the end of *Ultimate Killers* which we filmed in Spain. What we

We could suddenly see the potential that there was to get more information about what speeds they do – that's what really excited all of us

did for this film is very different. When we'd done the stuff from the balloon, we all knew when we came away, that we'd got a little window into the Peregrines' world that probably only Ken Franklin had before, the guy in the States who sky-dives with his falcons. We could suddenly see the potential that there was to get more information about what speeds they do – that's what really excited all of us.

What interested Leo and Andy was that they'd always thought that they were pretty good at skydiving because they'd done so many jumps, but suddenly when they saw Lady, the Peregrine Falcon, cutting through the air they realised how fantastic these birds were at flying and how absolutely useless humans were. So we thought we'd try to do a follow-up programme. But the problem was that because it was such an ambitious thing to do because of the base-jumping and all the things we planned, no-one thought it would be possible and we didn't get any backing from anyone.

So we went on and did it ourselves anyway – and pulled it off! It was really good – we found out some really new, interesting facts about falcons that are provable – because we've got computer data to prove it. A friend of Leo's who is a skydiver and also a computer whiz-kid (he designs games for Sony playstations and writes the programmes for them), designed this gadget for us – Leo called it the accelerometer. What it actually does is measure many times per second the acceleration, G-force and the bird's angle of flight in the sky. So it can work out what speed, what acceleration and what G force the falcons are doing. So we can 100% prove what speed they were doing. (Ken Franklin had done some work with his birds and proved some speeds there. They used some different kind of method and technology.) But this was a really clever little gadget – I'm not scientifically minded in that sort of way and I don't know the ins and outs of it. I just know it was really great. Dave Pratt would download it and it would take him a long time to come up with the speeds – because it involved a lot of complicated mathematical equations. For example, we found that Lucy was going from 0 to 60 in half a second. I'm on the edge of a mountain on a safety rope and she's sat on my fist and by dropping off my



■ Lady on a rock

■ Leo with Lucy on wrist



We found that Lucy was going from 0 to 60 in half a second. I'm on the edge of a mountain on a safety rope and she's sat on my fist and by dropping off my fist going downwards she could get to 60 in just over half a second. Phenomenal – that is mind-blowingly quick. I think Michael Schumacher's Ferrari takes about 2 seconds to get to 60. She's very, very fast

fist going downwards she could get to 60 in just over half a second. Phenomenal – that is mind-blowingly quick. I think Michael Schumacher's Ferrari takes about 2 seconds to get to 60. She's very, very fast.

You and your wife, Rose, have been working together for many years now. Do you ever have conflicts regarding the training of the birds ?

No, not really. We get on really well considering we work together seven days a week with the birds – they are like our family. It's not just birds of prey though. We've got two Whooper Swans which will fly following a boat or car, they're nine years old and they still follow; we've got a Raven, a Crow, a Barn Owl, a Tawny Owl, a Golden Eagle, my Tawny Eagle (Sasha) who's 14, Peregrines, the Goshawk and two trained pigeons ! In fact, my pigeons have been killed in more peregrine film sequences and lived to tell the tale than any pigeon I know! In most of the BBC sequences where you see a Peregrine killing a pigeon, in all the close-up "grab" shots it's mostly little Smudge who, obviously, has never actually been grabbed by a Peregrine and survives.

We got fed up with people asking us over the years for pigeons for filming, because nobody had got really well trained pigeons. So we imprinted two on the same principle as you would do a bird of prey flying them to the fist for seed at a flying weight and it worked fantastically. They're remarkable pigeons – you can call them into the fist, and you can fly them by the car as well.

Rose tends to do the waterfowl more than anything else. We sometimes have slightly different ways of doing things and if we do have any words about anything it's usually over really stupid little things, like the water bowl not being filled up enough but we don't actually argue, it's just stupid things like that. But generally we get on really well.

There's a bit of competition between us with falcons though, because Willow, the tiercel,

is her falcon so there's always a competition as to which one is the best flyer or the prettiest falcon. When I'm flying Lucy or Sage, I always think it's Sage (she's my favourite) and Rose thinks it's Willow. We're always having this debate as to which is the best one.

Do you ever get any problems with local people when you are filming ?

When we were in Italy we were very aware of the locals. Obviously we got all the correct permissions for the base-jumping. But there is a very strong hunting contingency in the area where we were and we were aware that these people just don't stop at shooting game birds. They'll shoot anything. So our local guide made a point of going around to all the local hunting people to say that we were there with our falcons and if they saw a falcon that had wandered off, please don't shoot it.

Fortunately there were no problems, but wherever we go in Europe with the birds, this is always something in the back of your mind and we have to be very careful, a lot more than we do in this country.

What projects have you got planned for the future but have not got around to doing yet ?

This year Rose has just imprinted eight Bar-headed Geese to follow a contraption called a paramotor, which is like a paraglider but the guy has an engine on his

■ Filming on a cliff

Clockwise, from right: Andy jumps after Lloyd's release, Dave and Willow, Lucy after Leo, Lucy strikes Leo, Sage chases Andy



back so he can propel himself. She took them to the south of France for six weeks of training and she flew them over Mont Blanc at 13,000 feet. This was for a new series that will be on in about two years time, all about incredible journeys, with Steve Leonard presenting it again.

We're going to be doing a lot more with Nina, the Goshawk, for a new Animal Planet series next March. She's in adult plumage now and looking really stunning.

I'd like to do some more exciting things with Tilley in some more remote places, more remote mountainous regions with her for the filming, from a photographic point of view. I think there's some really good stuff to be done there that people haven't necessarily done before.

I've always had an inclination that I'd like to try to get the eagle to soar with a paraglider – that would be something worth thinking of doing. I'm sure she would do that because she's so steady and that would be a really nice thing to do. Although there are a few people now who paraglide with birds of prey, there's not that many people who do it with an eagle.

Next year it looks like we might be doing a big feature film, imprinting some more swans and using pretty much all the birds we've got. Hopefully Tilley could feature a lot in it as well, so that will be pretty good.

What we've realised with the Peregrines is that, despite all that we've done with them, we're still only just about scratching the surface. For instance when we came back from Italy at the end of that month, the Peregrines were really only just getting into it and getting the hang of it, learning how to cope with the turbulence of the sky-diver and how to keep close and that sort of thing. And you know what it's like, money comes into it, the budget ran out and we had to come back. But you're always left thinking you could do a lot more – we all are. For example, I think there's a lot more potential with the sky-diving. We could learn a lot more as the birds get more experienced.

So I think we can all watch this space with anticipation of Lloyd pushing the boundaries in the world of filming wildlife. Lloyd and Leo Dickinson's latest film, *The Falcon That Flew With Man* (reviewed in the last issue) can be obtained from www.AdventureArchive.com



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With the game fair season in full swing, Countryman Fairs are looking forward to welcoming visitors to their two summer shows; the Southern Counties Game Fair on 29 and 30 May; and the Sussex Game Fair on 11 and 12 June. No show is complete without a falconry display; always a favourite with visitors young and old and Ray and Wendy Aliker of Ye Olde Redtail Falconry will be taking centre stage in the Main Arena at both shows.



However, Countryman Fairs have gone one better than this, and each of their events features a dedicated Falconry Village and full arena programme. Bryan Patterson and Terry Large are both familiar faces with visitors, and together they co-ordinate events in and around the Falconry Arena, which is supported by Honeybrook Animal Feeds. This year's display programme at the both shows will include the Hawk Board, the Campaign for Falconry, training demonstrations, the falconer's ferret and the falconer's dog.

With all the field sports facing an uncertain future, it has never been more important to encourage new interest and promote proper understanding. The children's falconry classrooms at all Countryman Fairs' events are an essential part of this initiative.



With an emphasis on responsible bird ownership, Terry explains the history of falconry and the basics of training, before taking all the kids into the Arena to fly Harris hawks in front of their friends and family. The classroom sessions are free for youngsters and any donations that their parents make goes to the Campaign for Falconry.

One feature of the Falconry Village that is rapidly growing in popularity is the Fly To The Kite competition. Essentially a race

Showtime!

to a lure, flying from a delta kite up to 700ft above the Arena, this is a fantastic spectacle for visitors and often brings the crowds to a standstill. Exhibitors in the Falconry Village are invited to enter their birds into the event, but visiting falconers are also welcome to compete. Anyone wishing to enter the event can contact Countryman Fairs on (01889) 563232 for more information.

Working gundogs, lurchers and terriers are all featured in dedicated arenas at each event. The Southern Counties Game



Fair has a particularly canine focus, with special events including the Hound Puppy Championships. Renowned HPR specialist Kelly Kelly will be appearing in the Autarky Working Dog Arena and also providing a free gundog behavioural clinic and consultation service for visitors. New for 2005 are the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever Display Team, who will be highlighting the history and unique working abilities of these decoy dogs.

In the Ferret Arena, Simon Whitehead will be throwing new light on the important role of working ferrets. A self-described 'man on a mission', Simon has attending game fairs for over 25 years with the aim of dispelling many of the myths surrounding ferrets and demonstrating their uses for countryside pest control. Ferret racing displays are brought to audiences by International Ferret Welfare and Rescue, who will also be arranging showing classes on both days.



There is a whole host of other attraction around each show, including clay shooting, airguns, casting tuition, rural crafts, vintage vehicles, live music, good food and drink, home and garden areas and over 200 trade stands at each show. For more details and to book tickets, telephone 0845 230 5175, or visit www.countrymanfairs.co.uk.



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Chris Christoferou

the natural history
of the artist

Born in Cyprus in 1954, Chris Christoforou moved to England with his family in the late 1950's. As a child he spent all his free time watching wildlife, especially on Hounslow Heath on the edge of West London where he grew up. This at the time was still quite an extensive wild area and although being so close to Heathrow Airport, the heathland had a very diverse range of flora and fauna.

Species found there ranged from the common raptors such as Kestrels, Sparrowhawks, owls and the occasional Hobby to reptiles such as Grass snakes, Slow-worms and the Common Lizard which at the time were in abundance. Small ponds, which were actually bomb craters left over from the Second World War, were full of newts such as the Smooth Newt and one particular deeper pond had a healthy population of Great Crested Newts. Invertebrates like Stag Beetles and Great Diving Beetles could be found on the heath, as could many species of butterflies and moths such as the Hawkmoths.

Chris would often stay on the heath until dusk to see some of the more elusive nocturnal animals like the Badgers, on the edge of the woods near the boundary of the heath. All this wildlife and beautiful countryside was an inspiration to the aspiring naturalist and young artist. He would draw much of the wildlife around him but also some of the more exotic species such as the tropical butterflies and moths from his collection of specimens, some of which he still has to this day. Chris was very taken by insects after encountering a male Stag Beetle with its impressive antlers. He used to keep and breed many species of butterflies and moths and release them back into their natural environment, which at the time was unspoilt.



■ Clockwise from top:
Black Gyr Head Study,
Snowy Owl,
Black Gabar Goshawk



Chris Christoforou



However, by the late 1960's the land and woodlands were being destroyed by developers, because the area was to be used as building plots for the growing demand for housing. For Chris this was a devastating blow and coupled with the family moving to North London where no such land existed, this put an end to an era of inspiring wildlife and artistic indulgence.

For a period of around 10 years Chris did very little in the way of artwork but pursued his other great passion and that was playing music. This was an activity he loved and was always in one rock band or another, even to this day where he still plays.

By the late 1970s, Chris found he had a renewed interest in art and decided he would like to consider taking art as a full time occupation. He enrolled in to Barnet College as a mature student at the age of 26 and embarked on a graphic design course,

employed as the conceptual artist and supervising art director for a sci-fi comedy featuring the comedian Alexi Sayle and Gavin Richards of *Eastenders* and '*Allo 'Allo* fame. He also worked with other stars such as Rowan Atkinson on a TV commercial for the Blood Donation unit of the NHS.

With all this experience since leaving college and with the varying types of artwork he had to produce, this made him into a good all round artist. He could tackle any type of subject for painting or drawing and used all types of mediums. By 1987 Chris decided to concentrate on his passion for natural history and wildlife art, so he took the plunge to become a professional wildlife artist. He has now generated an international reputation for his artwork and is particularly well known for his paintings of Big Cats and Birds of Prey. Portraiture and figurative work also often feature in his schedule.

Chris has and his most notable project has been the Wildlife & Raptor Art Exhibition, held at the British Falconry & Raptor Fair. Many falconers will be familiar with the exhibition, as it has been a favourite part of the fair for the past 15 years. Chris always manages to pull together some of Britain's finest wildlife artists to exhibit each year and has for several years included top artists from Europe as well. He has organised several other shows at different country fairs in the past, but the exhibition at the Falconry Fair has been and still is the most outstanding.

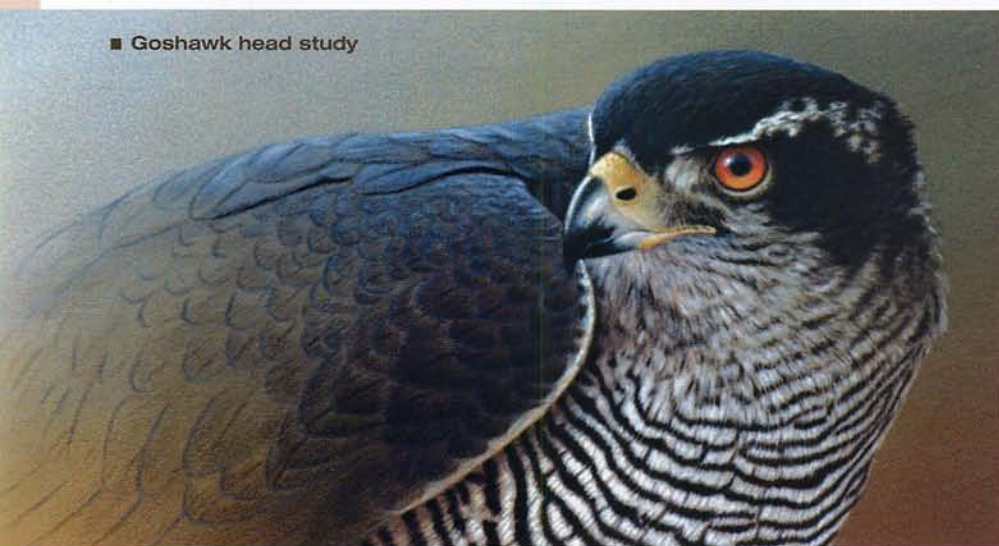
A field trip to East Africa was another event Chris had organised in which he had invited three other wildlife artists to join him, to gather research material for a charity project. The results were a series of paintings to be sold at the Christie's and Sotheby's Wildlife Art Auctions. The sales at these auctions have established Chris as a truly international artist, whose work is sought after by many art collectors. A good example of this was when a wealthy art collector and investor contacted Sotheby's auction house. He enquired about working with a wildlife artist on projects he had in mind. So Sotheby's recommended Chris for the job and gave the client his details - the rest is history.

September 2004 saw Chris jetting off to the Abu Dhabi Hunting Exhibition. He was invited to exhibit by an Arab Sheikh's business manager. Abu Dhabi being in the United Arab Emirates meant that his subject matter had to be chosen carefully. He chose to paint Gyr Falcons, a favoured bird by the Arab falconers for hunting and as deadlines were tight, he only had three weeks in which to produce the work.

Upon his return from the United Arab Emirates, Chris has been commissioned to paint a portrait of Sheikh Mohamed Faisal Al-Thani, who will be posing with one of his White Gyr Falcons. He has once again been invited to exhibit at the next Abu Dhabi Hunting Exhibition in September 2005. As a result he is now working towards this show and also for the British Falconers Fair in May, alongside commissioned work that comes in.

For further details on Chris's work, you can contact him on:
Christo Exhibitions Tel: 01525- 237549.

■ Goshawk head study



which would hopefully help him find a job in the artworld. As it turned out Chris was offered a full time job in a publishing house after only a year and a half of his four year course. He accepted this position and within six months he was promoted to studio manager. Whilst he was working in the publishing industry he still managed to produce artwork of his own and indeed learnt many new techniques.

As a result of his private work, a chance meeting with a couple of film producers through an agent led Chris into the film and television industry. He enjoyed this period immensely, especially on one particular TV project for Chanel 4 Television. Chris was

For the past 20 years, art material manufacturers have been very keen to use Chris and his reputation as an artist to promote and endorse their products. Companies such as Chromacolour International who produce acrylic paints and The Cumberland Pencil Company who manufacture the Derwent range of artists pencils. He is very often called upon to 'product test' new materials and evaluate them before they are launched into the public domain. Chris has written several articles for art magazines on painting techniques and has held many workshops and demonstrations for these publications.

Organising events is another forte that

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Ash

the Gyr-Barbary Hybrid

I promised Peter Eldrett I would put an article together about the joys of my hybrid for over a year so here goes.

I felt I wanted a new challenge but wanted to have an experience that I feel only a Hybrid can give. After many calls I found what I was looking for, my chosen bird was to be a small but very powerful Gyr-Barbary. I have never flown a hybrid of this type but thought it had a lot to offer after seeing some the year before. Large feet and a chest to match but with a menial flying weight of 1 pound 5 ounces – just right.

If you hadn't already guessed this is a male and goes by the name of Ash. He arrived at home and settled in quite slowly in comparison to a peregrine I bought a few years ago. Ash has never been a nervous bird but will only do what he wants, when he wants to do it. Anyway the training had to start so after a week getting used to his surroundings I started offering the usual feeding off the fist campaign, and to my surprise Ash ate the first evening way above his flying weight.

This response carried on right up until the creance was introduced, then, you've guessed it, Ash did not do what Ash did not want to do.

Fears taken away

Weight reduction was reinforced until a respectable response was reached, this turned out to be 0.5 ounces under his current flying weight.

He was manned every day both indoors and outdoors being shown as many distractions as possible to take away any fears he may have had.

After only 10 days Ash was off the creance, and I am sure who ever invented the creance only did so to put people off falconry. Although an excellent tool they can be an absolute pain in the butt.

Ash's first experiences of free flying were not too great as he acted more like a kestrel than a very intelligent hybrid. (apologies to any offended kestrel flyers!)

This is when I realised Ash would always

take the easy option unless I made it hard for him. I considered this bird a possible game hawk and this is the direction I wanted to go, however how could I get this kestrel impersonator up and waiting on?, because the old fashioned techniques were not working.

I had never used a balloon or a kite but after reading some articles on the internet I thought I would try Ash on some kite training. I am not going to go into much detail but I feel the kite has taught me and my bird a lot of new tricks.

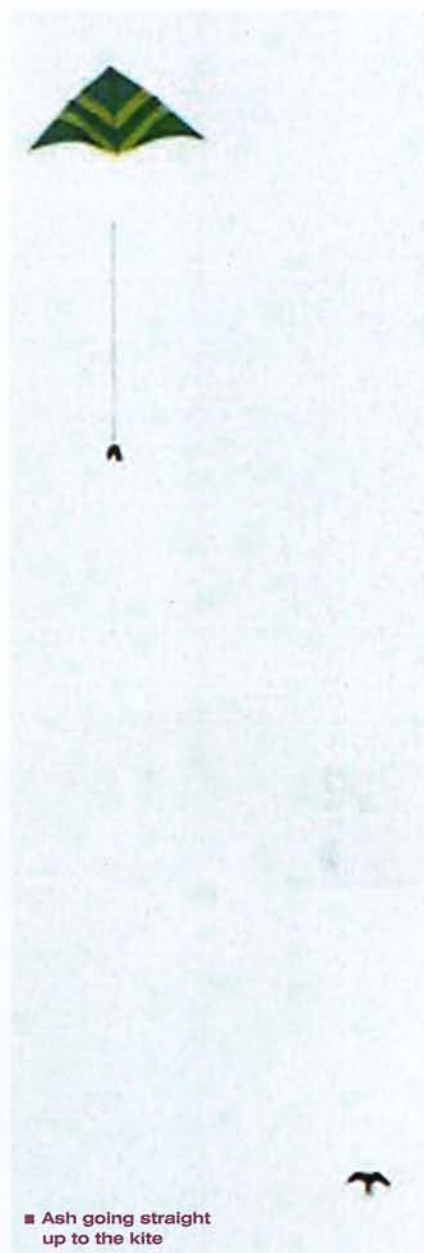
I would recommend you read Dave Scarbrough's article on "how I learned to stop Ballooning and love the Kite" for full details but I will tell you how I went about it with Dave's help. After getting the full kit together I went for a trial run without Ash. "What a lot of aggro!" I thought after getting the 8 foot kite up to 1000 feet and having to get it back down. I didn't think I would do this for long but how wrong I was.

The first day with Ash I put the kite up to approx 300 feet but had a small lure fully garnished hanging about 15 feet above the ground. Ash was unhooded and as soon as he spotted the lure without the usual rouse he was off the fist and bound straight to the lure. My spine tingled like the first time I ever let a bird free, a response like I had not seen before. After the lure came to the ground Ash had his fill and stepped up to the fist without hesitation.

Improving all the time

The next day was just as good but I had raised the lure to 40 feet from the ground, Ash was responding really well and I was waiting for the inevitable problem to occur, but it didn't, well not just yet. I continued raising the lure from 40 to 60, then 100, 200, 300 feet, all this in only 6 days and what fun I found it.

Ash went from strength to strength until he reach approximately 500 feet, then for some reason he did not want the lure but just wanted to fly around the kite, and take in the view. With no explanation, after 2



■ Ash going straight up to the kite

days of no kite and lure only served in front of him on the lawn, off he went again, 600, 700, 800, 900, and then 1000 feet.

This little bird is like lightning. He will never rouse when he is unhooded and sees the kite, but is off in a flash, powering straight up getting faster each day. Falcons have been flying high for many years before the modern day kite was used, the kite is not a necessity but I must admit it sure did get my bird where I wanted him to be.

What will happen when I take the kite away I thought, surely he will not be interested in going up to 1000 feet? My fears were unfounded. Ash ringed-up beautifully. He was now putting on muscle and was ready for some hunting but how could I be sure he would go up without the kite? I decided to give him 3 days rest from the kite and readied my flying ground for the big day. I needed to be sure if Ash did reach a good pitch he could be served a flush that would reward him well.

The big day

The day arrived which was to reinforce what I had thought about this little falcon and off I went into the field with some apprehension. I came across a good point after only a short time, off with the hood and well, Ash sat for a second, looked for the kite, but when he realised it was no where to be seen he was off, no not off away but off up. Although the conditions were perfect Ash set his pitch at about 400 feet, although not 1000 feet, a good enough pitch to be rewarded.

The flush was none too clever as I was expecting a partridge to leave for the heavens, to my concern a grown cock pheasant came out of the grass like a bat out of hell.

With no coaxing Ash went into a full stoop and hit this pheasant with so much force it was instantly dead. This was an impressive sight - a 1 pound 5 ounce bird sitting on top of another bird twice his size and he knew it.

Ash made the most amazing noises I think I have ever heard after a kill, he deserved this victory and I let him gorge himself.

Ash continued to take more head of game in great style showing speed, power and aggression only seen in this type of hybrid. My only complaint with him is he is never really consistent with his pitch and has never gone up to that magic 1000 feet since. However, 1000 feet has never really been necessary with his skill, speed and strength.

Through the season I used the kite on off days to reinforce powering up to a reasonable pitch and to hold his fitness.



End of the season

I finished the season with what I thought to be a respectable falcon that was just about to go into the moult and have a well deserved rest. I will not go too much into this season as it was cut short but as you can see from the photo he continued his skills with that Hybrid Vigour that I feel cannot be beaten.

Ash has been a major learning curve for me and I am sure many of you could learn a lot from this courageous powerful little falcon, but the biggest impression he made on me was his unfaltering faithfulness.

Let's Go Fly a Kite...but legally

Ben Long

Flying your raptor to a kite can be an invaluable aid to fitness and overcoming some falcons' apparent 'vertigo', shown in their reluctance to fly above a certain height.

However, the maximum height that the kite can be flown without official permission is 60 metres, or 200 feet in English money, above ground level (agl). It doesn't sound much, but it is a pretty reasonable height for a game hawk to wait-on, particularly in relatively enclosed ground. Kite flying up to 200 feet can also be very useful for fitness and footing training for broadwings and shortwings and, although this is an area so far little explored, it can prove rewarding and entertaining.

As the rule is not to fly the kite at more than 200 feet above ground level, if you are lucky enough to have a steep hill nearby, particularly if it has an easterly-facing slope so that the prevailing wind blows away from the face of the slope, it does mean that the kite can be flown above the slope. If the falcon is hooded off from lower down, another one, two or three hundred feet could be added to the total height. This doesn't sound much but, bearing in mind the wind direction, the falcon is having to mount into a serious downdraft, as the wind always follows the downward slope of the hill. It would be fair to say that mounting 100 feet in such conditions would be harder than climbing 1000 feet in a slight updraft or convection current, and it's always more difficult for the more heavily wing-loaded peregrine. Cleverer falcons can even learn to mount away from the downdraft, and then return to the overhead.

However, to fly your kite above 200 feet requires the permission

of the CAA. Those of us who fly aircraft for fun believe the initials stand for "Campaign Against Aviation", but it actually stands for Civil Aviation Authority. You can contact them best via their web site www.caa.co.uk and they are quite amenable to kite-flying requests. If your application is successful, you will have a little certificate issued, and your area will be notified to aircraft in the form of a "NOTAM" - a NOTice to AirMen (even in these emancipated times there are no "NOTAWs"), which are issued daily in huge lists, and which pilots (are supposed to!) check out prior to flying. It is possible that you would not get permission, depending where you intend to fly. Larger airports have Control Areas (CTRs) extending in all directions to a considerable distance, and upwards from ground level, and military bases have similar airspaces, known as Control Zones (CTZs). Even small registered airfields have ATZs (Aerodrome Traffic Zones), extending to either 2 or 2.5 nautical miles radius from the runway centre.

Most of all, don't be tempted to ignore the 200 feet rule. The magic figure, which people wish to fly their kites to, 1000 feet, is much higher than you'd think. Most general aviation is perpetrated at above 1500 feet, usually quite a bit higher, but military fast jets tend to fly between 500 and 1000 feet agl. Jet jockeys are pretty unusual people, but not good enough to spot a 10 foot kite whilst closing on them at 300+ miles an hour, and when said kite disappears up the intake that will be some millions of quids worth of aircraft making a big hole in the ground. That would be enough to get you locked up for a long time. If the pilot goes with it, it will be a very, very long time . . .

Three friends and I recently made the journey to the far North of Scotland for some rabbit hawking and relaxation. Everything had been arranged so that we would drive up through Friday night and arrive Saturday mid-morning. The hawks and dogs would have the rest of the day to weather and get over the journey and we would familiarise ourselves with the estate we would be hunting over. We would then have the following six days to just relax completely and concern ourselves only

with hawking and indulging in some of the local brew.

The original intention had been that two of the party would be taking female Harris Hawks, one a male Goshawk and the other a female Goshawk. We would also be taking a Brittany and a Vizla and a couple of ferrets for good measure. The Brittany is a very experienced worker and can also be relied upon to give her best. The Vizla is a young bitch that is still being trained. But it was felt that some really good work could be put into her during the week, so she accompanied our party.

Some eight days before our trip the male Goshawk was lost flying quarry. After three days there had been no sightings so the falconer concerned decided to pull one of his breeding females out of the aviary and take her instead. She was an experienced Gos with five seasons or so flying behind her. It was felt it wouldn't take too long to get her going and so she was included in the group.

We drove all through the night and arrived at our destination mid-morning. Having collected the keys to our cottage from the big house it was time to get ourselves, dogs and hawks settled in. None of us had any intention of flying of the first day.

Arrival

Unlike a great many cottages that are rented out to falconers as part of a package deal, this one had a proper mews and kennels attached. The mews was very good indeed with a shelf perch and individual compartment arrangement for at least half a dozen large hawks. There was also a fridge, a freezer and a large worktable. All-in-all it was very near perfect. The kennel was a little more basic but it was dry, warm and sheltered from the wind. The attached run was a decent

Simple Pleasures



size, so the dogs were going to be just as comfortable as the hawks.

The human accommodation was also very well appointed, even including electric blankets on the bed. Whilst we were in the process of getting hawks, dogs and ourselves settled in the keeper showed up and introduced himself. One of our party went off with him to look over the land that we were allowed to fly and have the boundaries pointed out.

The hawks were duly put out to weather and each one was given a freshly filled bath with the exception of one of the Goshawks that was being weathered on a high perch. These high perches (Renz Waller) are not a new idea and have been around in one form or another for a great many years. Many people with larger shortwings use the Renz Waller perch or a derivative of it. Hal Webster has used high perches for falcons for several decades. But for some reason the idea seems to be finding favour again and certainly one of our party now swears by them. He maintains that the higher position

In my opinion the secret of training a dog is not to overdo things and make each lesson or training session a glorified extension of play

helps make the hawk steadier when it is weathering and being up off of the ground it can't rub its wing tips or end of its tail.

I think they are quite a good idea for a hawk or falcon that is very well manned and the only real disadvantage that I can see is that you have to take the hawk or falcon to a more conventional perch in order to be able to offer them a bath. As I prefer to give my hawks or falcons the opportunity to bathe at the start of nearly every day (obviously extreme cold, Northerly winds and foggy days being the exceptions), it means I have to have two perch set ups to cope.

Once the needs of the hawks had been seen to and we had got ourselves settled in it was time to take the dogs for a walk and see just what was around the cottage. The answer, in brief, was plenty of rabbits and a



■ Maud on a kill

few pheasants. The little Brittany was coming on point every few minutes and the young Vizla was getting a good lesson in finding game and remaining steady on the point. Each time the Brittany locked onto something the Vizla would be brought in behind on a lead. At first it wanted to rush in and see what it could grab. But it didn't take too long for it to settle down a little bit and start to hold the point, or rather back the point of the Brittany.

In my opinion the secret of training a dog is not to overdo things and make each lesson or training session a glorified extension of play. Twenty minutes for each session is enough I feel but the sessions can be repeated so that the young dog actually gets three separate sessions each day.

With the amount of rabbits we were finding in the immediate vicinity of the cottage all looked good for our week's hunting. We put the dogs in the kennels and went for a walk on the adjacent moorland just to have a look around. We were fortunate, whilst on the moors, in spotting a Jack Merlin and towards the end of the day a haggard Peregrine Falcon. Then it was time to go back to the cottage and drive into the nearest town and stock up with food and drink, etc.

The following day

The plan for the following day was to take the Harris Hawks out in the morning and the female Goshawk that was flying already out in the afternoon. Of the two Harris Hawks one was a youngster of the year and the other was a 12 year-old veteran. The youngster had

had a few kills but she hadn't yet had a good clean hard flight at a full grown healthy rabbit. Her luck was such that each time it was her turn to fly the rabbit would have myxy or was half grown or a combination of both.

The falconer with this particular hawk set himself a target for the first day and this was to catch just one rabbit with his hawk but to catch a good one in fair flight. If this was achieved the hawk would be fed up on the kill there and then in the field and then taken back to the cottage and put out on the weathering lawn for the rest of the day. Here she would be allowed to slowly digest her reward.

The veteran Harris Hawk, which belongs to me, had been in a breeding project for the last couple of years although prior to that she had been a very successful hunter. So, I too was looking for just one kill on the first day but I wanted one of quality. I would then also feed my hawk up if she was successful and start hunting in earnest the following day. I wanted to get my old hawk 'Maud' back into the swing of things and the last thing I wanted to do was take her off of her first kill in a couple of years without giving her a decent reward.

The female Goshawk was a once intermewed eyass and had managed to get a few kills under her belt in her first season. She had been flying loose a few days before being taken up to Scotland and her owner was looking to make a good clean kill with her. He reasoned that if she caught a very simple rabbit on the first day then he would take her up and press on. But if she made a good kill he would call it a day at that and reward the hawk.



■ Second-season Goshawk on high perch, Our home for the week (right)



At first light the next morning the hawks were put out to weather and for the first half an hour were given the opportunity to bathe. Around ten o'clock we took up the Harris Hawks and walked from the cottage to our first hunting destination. This was a patch of reeds and miram grass some 40 yards from our cottage. The young Harris Hawk was the first to fly and it was decided to see how she would take to working over the Brittany. When this particular Harris was being trained the Brittany and its owner were often around. The Brittany would be made to sit close to the falconer as he called the Harris Hawk to him. At first the hawk didn't like it but it didn't take too long for the hawk to accept the dog. But they had never hunted together which is a little bit different.

Dog put to work

The Brittany was sent into the rough cover and was very soon on point. The falconer, with the Harris Hawk on his fist, made his way over to the dog and then sent the dog in to flush the rabbit. A rabbit did flush but the hawk was a little startled by the dog dashing forward and concentrated on it rather than what it was producing. This happened again and it was decided to withdraw the dog and see if we could just walk a rabbit up out of the rough. The clumps of grass and reeds were just a little too close together to be able

The young Harris Hawk was off the fist instantaneously and giving chase for all she was worth

to get a rabbit to bolt clean. There were plenty of rabbits in but they just ran from one clump to another never giving the hawk an opportunity to actually fly them.

The patch of rough ground tapered almost to a point and we decided to walk it and see if we could push a rabbit out of the end. We set about doing this and the rabbits decided they didn't want to co-operate. Instead of coming out the end they kept dashing back past us. It was all getting a little frustrating. Then about 20 yards behind us a rabbit broke out to one side and made off across open grassland. The young Harris Hawk was off the fist instantaneously and giving chase for all she was worth. The rabbit was making for a burrow out in the field and the young Harris was closing the gap well but would she be in time?

Only just was the answer. She nailed her rabbit less than a foot from its hole. It had been a good clean flight of a decent length and the falconer rushed over to his hawk to make sure the rabbit was despatched as quickly as possible. After all falconers owe it to their quarry to despatch as quickly and as

humanely as possible. The rabbit was opened up and the hawk allowed to have a little warm liver and heart as well as flesh. It was only when the hawk had already had quite a good feed that it was noticed that the rabbit had the start of myxy. It wasn't bad and the rabbit had run well but it did just take the shine off of the proceedings a little.

Next up was my old girl 'Maud'. She is very experienced and has worked with dogs most of her life. But as the last two years have been spent in an aviary I thought I would either ferret or walk up a rabbit on this occasion.

We walked on a little way to another rough patch and walked it through. No rabbits were spotted or flushed for us. We then decided to ferret a bury that was on the top of a small hillock. Two ferrets were introduced to the holes and we sat back and waited. I have to say I fully realise that without ferrets some falconers would never see a rabbit to chase. I also acknowledge that ferrets provide tremendous sport. But I can't stand ferreting and all the standing around it entails. There also seems to be more digging

involved than most of those that ferret would have us believe.

But I am glad to say on this occasion a rabbit popped up within a couple of minutes. Trouble is it popped straight back down again. 'Maud' had reacted instantly and was off the fist immediately. But even her quick reactions weren't enough to endanger this rabbit. It had only shown itself for a couple of seconds. But at least I knew 'Maud' was her old self and keen to have a close word with a rabbit if possible.

Nothing else emerged from the bury, with the exception of the ferrets, so we moved on and looked for another spot to work. Within a few minutes we had found another bury that had all the signs that rabbits were in residence and the ferrets were introduced to the holes again. We had an initial repeat performance of what happened with the other bury. Again 'Maud' was off the fist instantly but to no avail. As she was flying back to the fist another rabbit bolted clean behind her and made off for all it was worth. My Harris Hawk momentarily touched my glove and was off in pursuit. She chased the

rabbit for a good distance and despite its efforts to throw her off with a last minute jink she had it firmly round the head and it was going nowhere.

I ran over and despatched the rabbit and then paunched it so as to be able to give my hawk some warm liver and heart. I was extremely happy. Our hunting partnership was back on course and the goal for the day had been achieved. We all walked back to the cottage pretty pleased with ourselves and with our hawks. The two Harris Hawks were put out to weather again and we went inside the cottage and had rabbit, fried in garlic and butter with chunks of freshly baked bread. Excellent.

After lunch

After our hunters lunch it was time to take the intermewed Goshawk out and see if she could catch a rabbit. We went up onto a grassy bank that edged onto a patch of moorland. We were pretty confident we would find rabbits sitting out and this proved to be the case. We walked up three or four directly under the Goshawk and they bolted in plain view of her but she hardly took any notice at all of them. She certainly didn't bate at them.

We moved on and ran the Brittany for her and took her in over several good points and again she refused them all. In the end we ferreted a bury for her and at least three good chances presented themselves to her and she ignored them all. We all knew full well this Goshawk could hunt and hunt hard when she felt like it. But it was obvious her mindset was just not on hunting at that time. And in all fairness to her falconer he did not do what so many less experienced falconers would have done and that is throw the Goshawk off at one of the rabbits in frustration. This certainly would have done far more harm than good. He was experienced enough with Goshawks to know that when they are like this there is nothing that you can do other than go home and try again tomorrow.

Whilst we had been ferreting for the Goshawk the last member of our party had gone back to the cottage to fly his Goshawk on the creance in the hope that she would be ready to fly at quarry before it was time to head back down south again. It was dark as we trudged back to our temporary home but we felt we had all in all had a good day. When we finally got back to the cottage we found that a tragedy had occurred. A tragedy for the Goshawk that is. Having had its session

on the creance the owner of the Goshawk was taking off the creance and putting the leash back on. Instead of putting the leash on and then taking the creance off he was doing it the other way round. Whilst walking along he had stumbled and let the Goshawk go with no leash or creance attached, but with a swivel still connecting the jesses.

The most stupid and basic of mistakes was very probably going to cost this superb Goshawk its life. Anyone can make a mistake and most of us at some time or other do but to make one like this is almost unforgivable in my book. This is why I personally never tie the creance to the swivel, but directly to the jesses. This way a slip in the same situation would have meant the Goshawk still flying off but at least its legs wouldn't have been shackled together.

It was also dark as the Goshawk had flown off and so nobody had any real indication of where she might be. It was going to be an early start next morning with all our attentions turned to trying to find the unfortunate hawk. We telephoned the keeper to let him know what had happened and he was extremely helpful. This Goshawk's favourite prey is pheasant and the keeper brought us four dead ones down from his game larder. This way we could have one each to hopefully entice her with when we went looking for her. She was still apparently up in weight and a bit skittish. But her owner thought she would probably come down to a dead pheasant thrown out on the ground. If who ever found her then stood back and let her really break in to it they should be able to pick her up without too much trouble.

First light

Long before first light we were out and looking for the Goshawk and listening for her bell. We did in fact find her relatively quickly. But she moved away each time we approached. She ignored the dead pheasants and was gradually moving higher up the valley and flying directly into the wind. We had thought she would go downwind and certainly go onto lower ground not make her way higher and higher. We lost her after about 40 minutes and only found her again because a Merlin gave vent to its feelings about her being in his territory.

But again she would have nothing to do with us and kept moving away. We followed her for another hour or so and then she disappeared over a ridge. By the time we had climbed it and got over the top there was no

sign of her. Despite looking for the rest of the day we never saw or heard of her again. What a desperate shame and what a complete and utter waste. Just shows what a moment's carelessness or complacency can do. The problem is it is always the hawk or falcon that pays the price for human stupidity.

It was a very dispirited group that returned to the cottage that night. It was decided that the owner of the Goshawk would carry on looking the next day and the rest of us would carry on hawking. This was not because none of us cared it was simply that we couldn't do anything. There was no telemetry on the Goshawk and we did not know in what direction to look. It was merely a case of the owner driving round and watching for tell tale signs from Rooks, Crows, Ravens and the like. If he was fortunate enough to get a sighting then we all had mobile phones and could get to wherever he might be pretty rapidly.

The next morning it was back to hawking with the Harris Hawks with the Goshawk scheduled for the afternoon. But the weather was against us and hawking had to be abandoned for the best part of that day. We did manage to get out for the last hour of daylight with the young Harris Hawk, but it failed to make a kill. It had several good opportunities but its inexperience let it down and the rabbits made a monkey out of him. Each time it closed on a rabbit the rabbit would jink and simply dump the Harris Hawk. As we walked home I'm not too sure who was more disillusioned, the hawk or its owner. There hadn't been time for me to fly

We lost her after about 40 minutes and only found her again because a Merlin gave vent to its feelings about her being in his territory

'Maud' and the same was true for the Goshawk. So, they were both fed lightly in readiness for tomorrow.

The owner of the lost Goshawk returned to say he had not seen neither hide nor hair of his hawk and felt that further searching was futile. He would wait in the hopes of receiving a call from one of the many people he had contacted. The wait turned out to be a vain one.

Out early

The next day we were out early again with the Harris Hawks and the day went well right from the start. We were ferreting a high bank and managed to bolt a rabbit that then ran down hill. 'Maud' was off and closed rapidly. The rabbit jinked but 'Maud' is too old and too much the experienced hand to be fooled by this and stuck a leg out and grabbed him at the last second. They rolled down the bank a further ten yards or so before coming to a halt. I got straight over to them and despatched the rabbit. This time I would allow 'Maud' a small reward, as I wanted to catch another rabbit with her on this morning. But a good start, one flight one rabbit.

The young Harris Hawk was up next as 'Maud' took a breather. We bolted a rabbit from the same bury and this one ran up hill. The young hawk chased hard and after some fifty yards or so had closed the gap. The rabbit jinked but the young hawk had learnt her lesson from the previous day. As the rabbit jinked so did the hawk and took him with both feet around its head. A good kill and a lesson well learnt. This is what the falconer with the young hawk had been hoping to achieve on this trip. He wasn't after a large bag but a decent quality flight. He wanted his hawk to learn some field craft and become slightly more experienced with her footing. He felt, as did we, that this had been achieved. He would feed his hawk up on her kill today and then just enjoy the rest of the week. He felt that the self-imposed pressure he was under to help his hawk perform properly had been lifted.

I wanted another kill with 'Maud' and duly got exactly that. In fact I got a truly spectacular kill and one that will live on in my memory for a very long time.

We ferreted a bury that was on the lip of a ridge. Over the ridge was a drop of some twenty feet to the edge of a lake below. We thought that if we could get a rabbit to bolt it would have to run uphill to one of the many holes that were above us. The hawk would

have an uphill flight but she would have the chance of catching the rabbit well and truly out in the open with a fair way to run. Things were looking good for a decent flight and hopefully a good kill. Problem was that the rabbit had not read the script.

After a relatively short wait a rabbit did bolt. But it ran over the edge of the ridge and ran along the ridge just over the lip. We couldn't actually see the rabbit, just its head every now and again as it bobbed up and down. But apparently this was enough for 'Maud' and she was off after it and at a good pace. She closed on the rabbit and as its head momentarily appeared it was suddenly wearing a female Harris Hawk. But 'Maud' had hit him so hard that the two of them sailed out into mid air. Then they both started to drop as one. 'Maud' was actually underneath the rabbit and we saw her switch one foot from the rabbit's head to its hindquarters. Fortunately, gravity played its part and righted the pair so that the rabbit hit the ground with 'Maud' uppermost.

I scrambled down the bank and made sure the rabbit was dead. 'Maud' was given a massive crop as a reward and I sat beside her full of pride for her prowess as a hunting hawk. That most certainly was us finished for the day. It was back to the cottage for us all and the two Harris Hawks were put out to weather, both with full crops. We had a light lunch and then made preparations to out with the Goshawk.

Before the other Goshawk had been lost the Goshawk we were about to fly had showed signs of wanting to join the green party or become a vegetarian. We ardently hoped that today she would remember what she was put on this earth to do.

Open land

Our starting point was a decent bury right out in the open and we hoped a bolting rabbit in this sort of situation would stimulate her. Eleven rabbits later we realised that this was not going to be the case. To be fair all I I were probably not really first class opportunities for her. But at least one of them should have turned her on and at least made her bate at it.

How easy it would be at this point for a less experienced falconer to think this is purely a weight related problem and the hawk needs taking down a bit. None of us believed that for a second. We still held the belief it was a state of mind and she would switch herself on when she was truly ready. We moved on to a reedy area and hoped

Before the other Goshawk had been lost, the Goshawk we were about to fly had showed signs of wanting to join the green party or become a vegetarian. We ardently hoped that today she would remember what she was put on this earth to do

that perhaps a walked up one would do the trick. Certainly the first one did not. It could not have been better as a slip. It got up at our feet, ran out of the reed bed and then some hundred yards or so across open grassland. What more could you ask for, other than a Goshawk hot on its heels.

The next rabbit did not bolt clean and moved from one patch of reeds to another. Never showing itself for more than a couple of seconds at a time. But after it had moved for the third time the Goshawk suddenly crashed into the patch of reeds in an attempt to foot the rabbit. It missed and the rabbit scurried for another patch. Again the Goshawk tried and again failed. This went on for three more attempts till the Goshawk was taken up on the fist and we moved on. It was good she had suddenly switched back on but we did not want her switching off again out of sheer frustration.

The next rabbit we walked up never stood a chance. The Goshawk saw it move before we did and the rabbit had barely got 20 yards before she was on it. She sat on her prize as if she had been doing this all day everyday. We all felt a tremendous relief that she had finally switched on. She remained switched on for the rest of our break.

The last couple of days of our break saw all three of our hawks flying well and showing good sport. We didn't catch huge numbers of rabbits but then that was never the intention. What we did have was some good sport and some excellent fun. Good falconry is one of the very finest field sports. Poor falconry is nothing less than a travesty. I felt we had had good sport and enjoyed some excellent falconry. The only cloud was the tragic and unnecessary loss of the older Goshawk.

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The best part of 25 years ago, I invested in my first electronic ferret finder and have never been without one since.

In fact the original is still working. It's had a couple of services and has been buried more than once but continues to keep going. I had previously been out a few times with ferreters using Heath Robinson style devices, including one that worked off a transistor radio and when it found a ferret on Sundays we would be digging to 'Family Favourites' which, for some reason, it seemed to tune in to. Attractive though the proposition of excavating to the strains of Bernard Cribbens singing of an "Ole in the ground" was, I opted for one of the then revolutionary Deben ferret locators,

the greatest leap in ferreting technology for a few years. They still sell them now, although a new re-designed version should be available at about the time you read this.

An investment made

At first I ferretted as if I was still using a liner but the old hob was fitted with the locator collar instead of a collar and 'line'. When my jill lingered, in would go the hob and nine times out of ten digging would commence in pretty short order. Then an associate, rather brighter than me, let slip he only worked his jills but fitted them all with collars and dug to them. This was a revelation. I invested some hard earned cash in another couple of collars and my ferreting was

transformed. It really sped up the whole operation. If a ferret failed to show after five or ten minutes and there'd been no action then out came the locator. Prior to this I'd have left her in there for half an hour without worry. My eyes were opened as to how many rabbits the jills were killing below ground and the locators depth wheel made me suddenly aware just how deep some of these buries really are. Now I seldom put a ferret to ground without a locator collar. The ferrets get used to wearing them and I keep close tabs on them. It avoids delays.

This is especially important when ferreting for hawking. Waiting around quietly for half an hour or so may be all part of successful ferreting to nets but a (what is the collective name for hawkers?) of hawkers can grow impatient. After a while the attention of the 'on standby' austringer and hawk can wander to the sometimes not quite-so-muted conversation of onlookers waiting their appointed slip. Maybe a hub-bub of hawkers would be appropriate. To avoid this wherever possible it's best to ferret small shallow buries in preference to deep hundred holers that inevitably lead to a hole-hopping session. That way things move along and when a dig does happen it's a few spade-fulls, rather than a major excavation project.

When you've recovered the ferret remember that whilst you may have had a hard dig she's had a bit of a battle down there. A little drop of milk for the ferret is a fair reward.

Myxomatosis hits hard

There was a bad outbreak of myxy locally about six to eight weeks ago and it has really affected sport. Once rabbits have a touch of this disgusting virus, whether it is the start of an infection or recovery from one, they become reluctant to bolt. I guess that because they are not up to par they feel there is a better chance of survival by battling it out with a ferret below ground rather than bolting. In conditions like these a few digs are inevitable and a good locating/digging technique is essential.

Check the locator

The first rule of using locators is – check it is working effectivley before putting a

digging for victory

Robin Tarrant



■ Myxamatosis is a disgusting way to die

ferret to ground. It doesn't take a few minutes to do but you'd be surprised just how often it's forgotten. Get a tape and either lock it at say three feet out (current locators are in imperial) or put a mark on a convenient wall or tree. Put the collar on the ground and test the locator at that distance from directly overhead. How accurate is it? If it's not reading right are the batteries fresh? Are the contacts nice and good clean? Don't forget the inside of the collars battery retaining cap is a contact too and give it a clean out with a wire brush and a bit of wet and dry paper. This is a really useful tip and if you have any old collars that have stopped working give the battery cap a thorough clean up and it might just be a case of 'not quite dead'. What happens is that if it is tightened a bit too much a clear corrosive liquid leaks from the battery and reacts with the aluminium cap forming a hard clear coating destroying the contact.

Does your locator get it's best reading from directly above the collar. I've seen, and used, odd ones that read slightly out, getting a louder click-click from a position slightly to one side of the collar. When



marking for a dig these few inches make all the difference and it can be easy to dig right past a tunnel, wasting time and possibly losing a rabbit. If you know this before starting you can auto-correct. I do hate leaving a rabbit down there!

At the end of the day

The group of falconers I ferret for have taken to scoring proceedings as though it was a football match. On one Saturday it was hawks four – ferrets three, which wasn't exactly fair because it was really ferrets five but they'd killed two a bit too deep (in the absence of a JCB) for me to dig down without holding up the day.

What's in the bag is what counts. But

that's life I guess – a rabbit in the bag is worth two in the ground.

Another little thing I've noticed is that when I have a successful dig and magician like pull a rabbit from the hole I've just sweated over, what happens? I get shut out! They cuddle their hawks to their chests and turn their backs on me, hiding my triumph from the birds sight. It's really quite upsetting to such a sensitive soul as me. Are they sore losers or what?

But it has been explained to me that if a bird sees the rabbit I'm holding it will want to bate madly towards the bunny. I now see the sense of hiding the rabbit from the birds and the falconers don't get upset with me anymore. Still, they like the tea I brew at the end of the day!

Derek Stotton

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Bobbie was educated at Rugby School, a very famous school in England, having been established in 1567. It was here at Rugby School that his interest in Falconry was sparked when Captain Knight made a visit to the school with his Eagle, Mr Ramshaw.

In 1932, when he was just 16 years of age, he was already flying a Goshawk named "The Black Prince", and he also owned a Cormorant by the name of "Charles". It was also in this same year that Bobbie met Jack Mavrogordato. They were to become firm friends and hawking companions. As his story unfolds it will become obvious that Bobbie was highly respected, as a person, and as a Falconer by Mavrogordato. This is reflected in the July 1949 issue of *The Journal of the British Falconers' Club* where he writes of Bobbie:

"He first arrived on the scene at Avebury in 1932, a schoolboy with a screaming gos and a cormorant; and to my lasting good fortune he apprenticed himself to me. He had soon mastered all I had to impart on the subject of short-wings, and in future years proceeded to learn from Major Allen and others the very different art of flying peregrines. Combining enthusiasm, keen vision, an untiring physique, and natural insight into falcon

mentality, he soon outstripped all his contemporaries, and in "Rufus" trained a first-class rook tiercel, which for many years did great execution on "the plain". In 1935 he and I conceived the idea of reviving the sport of magpie hawking in Ireland, and for three consecutive seasons took out a party to the West of Ireland for the purpose and met with ever-increasing success. The war put a stop to this sport, to the resumption of which after the war he was looking forward with the greatest impatience. It was not to be: and while those of us who are left are doing our best to carry on, as he would wish, it is with a vivid sense of loss and the knowledge that many a future magpie will owe its safety to the absence of that boyish whip-cracking figure on the skyline."

Bobbie was a member of the British Falconers' Club and is recorded as such in the first ever copy of *The Journal* which was

Bobbie was born Robert Richard Patrick Spens, the son of Sir Patrick Spens, K.B.E., Q.C., M.P. and Lady Hilda Spens. He was born in India as his father was stationed there with the British Army. He had an elder brother Michael and two younger sisters Patricia and Susan.

May 1937. Not only was he a member, he was also a Member of the Committee as was Mavrogordato, George E. Lodge, Gilbert Blaine and T.A.M. Jack. Bobbie flew his birds with these Falconers and many others that are known to us.

It is known that he flew a Merlin on one stage but his main passion was the Peregrine, which he flew at Rooks and Magpies. In this same copy of *The Journal* Bobbie has the honour of having the first ever article published which is entitled 'Magpie Hawking'. At the time he was just 21 years old.

His sister Susan recalls that their childhood was a very happy one. Being much younger than Bobbie she cannot remember too much about his birds except for Charles the Cormorant. In the summer of 1933 they took Charles swimming at Littlestone on Sea and he had a Washing Line attached to him. She recalls



We were Falconers

him being fed in the kitchen of their house on Herrings that cost them 1d each (One Penny).

She also remembers two Falconer friends coming to visit them. One was Mavrogordato and the other T.A.M. Jack. She was always amused when her brother was with Mr Jack. When they spoke with each other they never used Christian names, always referring to each other as Spens or Jack. When she enquired why, Bobbie informed her that this is how it was done at school.

On leaving Rugby School, Bobbie went to Wye College in Ashford, Kent where he received a Diploma in Agriculture in 1937. During his time there one of the birds he was flying was a Peregrine Falcon by the name of "Lindsay". Bobbie was a friend of George Lodge and a recently discovered painting by Lodge, which has not been seen outside of the family for many years, shows

The tiercel tried to catch the rook on the ground, but of course the rook dodged around the stack and got away out of sight of the hawk

"Lindsay" sitting on her block in 1936.

From Wye College he went to Castleacre, Norfolk and took up the position of Estate Manager for Captain Keith. Working here gave Bobbie plenty of time for Falconry with many acres and numerous Rooks and Magpies to hunt.

It was also during 1937 that Bobbie and Mavrogordato made their first trip to Ireland for Magpie Hawking following in the footsteps of Capt. Salvin nearly 100 years before them. Accompanying them was Bobbie's sister Patricia Spens who was also a member of the BFC and perhaps the first ever female member. Pat herself was a falconer who trained and hunted a 1934 Austrian Goshawk named "Cleopatra", a Hobby named "Felix", and a Kestrel named "Chally" among others.

She helped out considerably and was a welcome addition in any hunting party. A Merlin owned and flown by Dr. H.O. Blandford, another BFC member was named 'Girl Pat', possibly after Pat Spens.

By all accounts Bobbie also flew an exceptional Tiercel Peregrine named

"William Rufus" or "Rufus" as it was better known. There are several recorded mentions of this bird by both Mavrogordato and Lodge.

Mavrogordato, in his book, *A Falcon in the Field* had the following to say:-

'Tiercels, too, are capable of taking both rooks and crows, and I have myself known at least one, a small tiercel named "William Rufus", trained and flown by Robert Spens before the war, who was equal to the best rook-hawks in dash, perseverance and courage, if not in style.'

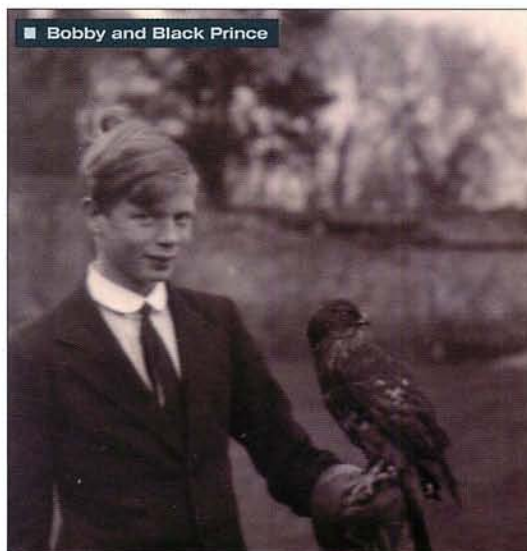
Lodge in his book, *Memoirs of an Artist Naturalist* says:-

'I have only once seen a hawk capable of catching rook in a tree; this was an eyass tiercel called "Rufus", flown on Salisbury Plain by

R. Spens in 1937. There was a certain tree by a small farmhouse, which was a favourite refuge for rooks that were being flown in the neighbourhood. On one occasion a rook was being flown by "Rufus" and put into some stacks as the hawk stooped at it. The tiercel tried to catch the rook on the ground there, but of course the rook dodged around the stack and got away out of sight of the hawk. Spens had run up just in time to help his hawk, of which he seized hold and flung after the rook, now a hundred yards away. The hawk chased the rook to this tree by the farm, hunted it through the branches of the tree, forced it to the ground and took it there.'

'The next day the same hawk was slipped at a rook on passage in the same neighbourhood. The rook after being well flown took refuge in the same tree, where a carrion crow joined in to mob the hawk. But the crow had made a bad mistake, for he was caught in the tree by the tiercel.'

Tragically, "Rufus" met with an accident



when he took quarry that he was not being flown at. In his autobiography, *Behind the Scenes*, Mavrogordato writes:

"The best magpie hawk was Bobbie's small tiercel Rufus. He came to an untimely end. He had been slipped at a party of magpies when a flock of domestic geese, alarmed by our shouting, took wing, and Rufus checked at them and pursued them out of vision. We eventually discovered him in a ditch, on the back of one of the geese, which he was of course unable to kill. The goose for its part had managed to scratch open the hawk's back with the claws of one foot. The wound turned septic, and this brave little tiercel soon afterwards died from septicaemia."

On September 3rd 1939, England declared war with Germany and for many

members of the BFC, including Bobbie, Falconry took a back seat. At the outbreak of war Bobbie joined the Royal Artillery and was attached to 65 (The Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment as a Lieutenant.

On 22nd September 1939 he married his sweetheart Elisabeth Leach. Elisabeth was a friend of his sister Pat and had accompanied them on their hawking expedition to Bellmullet, Ireland in 1938. She was a vivacious and engaging person who, though not a falconer herself, passionately enjoyed watching the beauty of the flights. Her participation in falconry culminated at the first BFC annual dinner following the war where she was an honoured guest.

On 9th February 1940, Bobbie and his Regiment sailed for France on the Ulster Monarch, one of the few Belfast Ships to survive the war. His Regiment took part in the battle at Arras in mid May as part of Polforce and Frankforce. By the 20th May, Arras was surrounded but still holding out. The Regiment suffered heavy losses during the retreat to Dunkirk as it went through Poperinghe and battery's had to be amalgamated. They were finally evacuated on the 31st May. During the battle Bobbie was wounded, but during the course of the battle he was mentioned in despatches for

■ Ulster Monarch



distinguished and meritorious service and was awarded the Military Cross.

Bobbie recuperated from his wounds in England and by August 1940 was back with his Battery in Doncaster. Falconer, Gilbert Blaine's Hawking diary reveals the following entry.

August 1940. It was impossible to fly hawks until near the end of the month owing to the high winds and bad weather. I sent one young Sanaig falcon to Robert Spens, who is marking time with his battery at Doncaster.....

This Sanaig falcon, a hacked eyass peregrine, was one of those given to

Gilbert Blaine by Kim Muir's sister Gillian. Muir, another ardent falconer, was killed during a battle in France in May, 1940.

On 5th October 1940, at Sibton Park, Lymminge, Kent, Bobbie and his wife Elisabeth celebrated the birth of their daughter Helen.

In early 1941 Bobbie once again found himself fighting in another part of the world, this time in North Africa. His Regiment were engaged in heavy fighting in June at Capuzzo and by November they were in the Bir Fakrun, Sofafi and Jerabub area. On 26th November the Regiment were supporting the New Zealanders around Sidi Rezegh and by the beginning of December they were at El Duda just south of Tobruk and then at Gazala.

It is hard for many of us to imagine what life must have been like for individuals such as Bobbie, fighting courageously far from home, with imminent death a constant companion. The hardships that he had to endure must have been stressful and soul stinging. His thoughts were often of home, of his family and his falconry. During what was possibly a short lull in the fighting Bobbie penned the following poem, a poem that has not to date been seen by any, except Bobbie's family. With the permission of his daughter Helen, below are the thoughts of a young soldier falconer we'd like to share with you.

Western Desert / December 10th 1941

I stood and stared at this waste of land
At the hard dark ridges and stretches of sand
And I saw again the woods and fields
Of the South of England, its downs and wealds
The trees that are bare and the fields, green
Or rich dark brown where the plough has been
And I heard again the whistle of bells
As my falcon made the stoop that tells
And I felt again the winds and frost
Of winters gone by that are almost lost
But then, above, I heard the hum
Of a plane and I thought of the weeks to come
Of war and the desert, where there was no rain
I turned to my truck and drove on again.

Shortly after writing this poem Bobbie was once again wounded in action and was then captured by the enemy and he was taken prisoner. A decision was made to transport all Allied prisoners to Italy for internment, and Bobbie along with hundreds of others, was herded aboard an Old Italian transport ship and locked in its hold.

On the voyage to Italy, aboard this



■ Lindsay

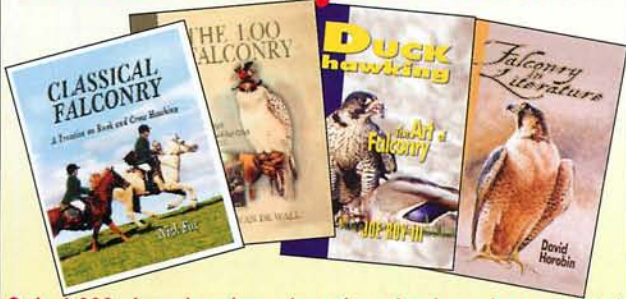
transport ship which was devoid of any markings showing that it was a POW ship, Bobbie Spens once again heard "the hum of a plane" overhead. The engines he heard were war planes of the Allies, coming, not to rescue him, but to destroy as much of the Axis shipping as possible. His convoy was heavily bombed and strafed. The transport ship he was on was sunk, somewhere uncharted, in the cold waters of the Mediterranean.

Bobbie never again was to see "the woods and fields of the South of England". He was never again to see the daughter born to him while on duty, or hear again his wife's sweet voice. His thoughts must have been of them as his ship went down. Family, friends like Mavrogordato, Muir, Jack, and Knight, and his homeland of England must have warred for time in his mind and heart as the waters closed around him. And perhaps, for the ghost of a minute, as his heart beat its last, he smiled as the names of his hawks and falcons came to mind. Perhaps, at the close of his life, at 26, for the final time, "he heard again the whistle of bells, as my falcon made the stoop that tells".

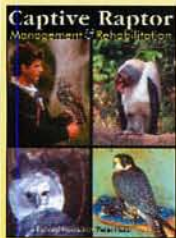
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