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# contents

- 4 News & new products

---

- 6 Ask Chitty  
The problems with Sour Crop

---

- 8 Casting my Shadow  
The story of one male Harris Hawk

---

- 10 The Harris Hawk  
A Blessing in Disguise or Unwanted Gift?

---

- 12 The First UK Eagle Field Meet  
Dr. David Glynn-Fox tells us about this first event in the UK

---

- 18 2010 Falconers' Fair  
Looking forward to this years' event

---

- 20 To end a season  
Nick Kester gives us his thoughts

---

- 22 Hawk Board News

---

- 24 Notes from an Eagle falconer  
Joe Atkinson flying his beloved eagle, Jackhammer

---

- 28 Mixed Fortunes  
Another article from the pen of Bob Dalton

---

- 32 We Were Falconers  
Part two of the Robert Heberden Barber story

---

- 38 Club Directory

---

- 40 IBR Lost & Found

**W**ell, what a time we have had with all the bad weather – the worst for 30 years. Thank goodness all that snow has gone and I hope you all have had a good flying season.

Now is the time when our hawks and falcons are put down for either moult or breeding. Whatever happens, let's hope everything works out okay for everyone.

As you will see, in this issue is an article from Dr. David Glynn-Fox on the very first Eagle Field Meet in the UK. What an exciting time for Austringers up and down the land – they don't have to travel 100's of miles overseas to have a good meet to fly their eagles. I hope there will be another one next year.



In the meantime, have a good read.

# editorial

# news & products

a review of what's new in our sport Send all your news and product information to [peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk)

## Conservation work at ICBP

Sometimes, Jemima Parry Jones, director of the International Centre for Birds of Prey (ICBP), is asked the question "what conservation and information work do you do at the ICBP?" and the answer usually, after a bit of consideration, is many types – which amazes the director of the centre.

Teaching and informing visitors in an amusing style is key through their flying demonstrations which take place three times a day. Also, through books, DVD's, the education room and the website. Guided tours by the staff at the centre, external lectures and school visits also ply a big part in the education programme.

Many years of experience are shared with many people and if someone is asking for advice or help, Jemima is usually on hand to give it, although the advice given may not go down too well with the questioner.

Projects away from the centre include the South East Asian Vulture project, where Jemima visits India on a regular basis to teace and advise together with Simon, a member of her staff. Setting up various projects such

as incubation and the rearing of the vultures is a major part of the ICBP work and is an on-going work load which can go on for a few months at a time. There are many research programmes that the ICBP has set up and funded over the years.



## CLA Game Fair 2010

This year the CLA Game Fair will be held at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire on 23-25 July.

The falconry area will be slightly different from previous year's and will be called 'The Falconry Village'. It is being re-vamped into a hexagonal shape with the longer tent (40mtrs) being at the back and 4 x 20mtr tents forming the hexagon. The two weathering areas will be towards the rear and the same size as usual with the mini arena close to the entrance.

Camping will be as usual but more people are expected

this year due to the parade in the main arena.

There will be a flying display as usual in the mornings in the main arena given by Terry Large. In the afternoon there will be a parade around the arena consisting of 4/5 groups dressed as falconers through the ages. This will involve dogs and hawks and volunteers from the clubs attending the fair. Whilst this is going on a Perlin followed by an Eagle will be flown in the centre of the arena. This has come about because the Game Fair organisers were impressed by the parade at the Falconry Festival and wanted to give it a try.

# The English School of Falconry Bird of Prey & Conservation Centre

## Happy 10th Anniversary

**H**ow time flies, literally! I can't quite believe we are celebrating our 10th anniversary this year.

The centre has come a long way since we opened our gates, we've had our highs and certainly have had some lows. It's been a brilliant 10 years. We are now home to some fantastic birds, birds that 10 years ago I would have only dreamed of flying. I think every falconer has their wish list of birds that they would love to fly, so I consider myself lucky to have at least crossed a few of my list. From our spectacular White-Tailed Sea Eagle fishing off the lake, flying a cast of Bald Eagles or our parliament of owls, we have certainly trained some beautiful birds.

From the different species of birds we have we have been able to perform some fantastic and hopefully memorable displays for our visitors and provide different experience days.

The one thing we are most proud of is our young falconers club. We have taught over 500 children in the last 10 years, so with any luck these children will protect our sport in the future. We currently have two year groups going; I had to start a second year as some of the children have been repeating each year for the past 4 years. In fact some of the children I taught in the first year



of the club are now volunteering at the centre, helping with each new year group.

We started the club with the idea of being able to protect our falconry future, teaching them the skills of leather craft, field craft and all the other skills of the modern day falconer. Even now I watch these children with amazement as they make lures, learn the dreaded knot that their little hands struggle with, and unlike adults show

no fear when it comes to handling the larger birds. We would like to think that after 10 years of teaching we have hopefully helped a few budding young falconers on their way.

We're all now looking forward to the future and the next 10 years. Striving to come up with new, fresh ideas for our visitors, hopefully ticking a few more birds off my wish list and teaching more children for the future of our sport.

*Emma Gooden*

## Wirewolf Gundogs

**A**llan Hender has been training dogs now for 29 years and training dogs for the shooting field, falconry, deer stalking and field trials.

Although specialising in Hunt Point Retrieve Breeds, Allan trains many Labs and Spaniels for those involved in

shooting people.

He also trains people on a one-to-one basis with their dogs, as it is his belief that if you both learn together you will have a better understanding of each other in the field and will have a lot more fun together.

As a falconer and austringer for the last 34 years, Allan has hunted hawks over many different breeds of dog, giving him an invaluable knowledge which he can pass on to people when

they go to him for training hawking dogs.





# askchitty

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

## What are the symptoms and treatment of Sour Crop in birds of prey? Could it be a generic problem or can it be just one group of raptors: i.e. falcons, hawks, etc.

Sour crop is one of the most distinctive illnesses of raptors and, unusually, doesn't rely on sight, feel or blood tests to diagnose! It is the smell that is so distinctive – that sweet sour sickly smell of fermenting meat often assails your nostrils from the waiting room, never mind in the close confines of the consulting room.

It is a serious problem for the raptor – rotting meat releases toxins and, of course, any bacterium that digests meat can also digest raptor. Therefore prompt attention is always required in these cases.

So, what is it? And how does it happen? Basically it can occur in any raptor that has a crop (i.e. all but owls). The crop is simply a sac attached to the oesophagus (food tube) that allows raptors to gorge feed and store a quantity of meat before it passes to the stomach. The crop is not involved in digestion – it simply stores. In the normal course of things, meat passes from crop to stomach in a few hours (the exact time depends on the bird and what it has eaten) allowing true digestion to begin.

Souring of the crop contents occurs when the meat is retained in the crop for too long – the combination of meat, bacteria (there are always bacteria living in the crop and on the feed) and a warm moist storage chamber results in fermentation. The consequences are several-fold:-

- While the solid materials cannot pass to the stomach, there is always an exchange of liquids between stomach and crop. The lump of meat will absorb fluids which results in a net pull of fluids from the stomach and thence from circulation

to the stomach. Ultimately this causes dehydration.

- Meat fermentation releases toxins. These toxins pass to the stomach, are absorbed and cause the bird to become very ill quickly.

- Bacterial activity can damage the lining of the crop.

So, what causes the meat to stay in the crop? Essentially anything that causes the gut to slow or stop will potentially result in sour crop. This can be as simple as gorging on a novel food (we all know that feeling!) – in my experience the first pheasant of the season is a frequent cause of sour crop. To avoid problems, it is best to introduce new foods gradually and only allow the bird to take small quantities of a new food.

Stomach foreign bodies can also cause problems where food physically cannot pass from the crop to the stomach.

This makes treatment more difficult – many of the medical cases can respond well, in the early stages, to antibiotics, fluids and agents that make the gut move. However, the latter are definitely not used when there is a foreign body – making the gut contract then can result in a gut rupture.

So, all cases of sour crop should be x-rayed to make sure there is no foreign body. Similarly, all require antibiotic (often given by injection and tubed directly into the crop) and fluids (again often given by both routes).

In the early stages this can be enough and gentle breaking up of the ball of meat by massaging the crop may be all that is needed to allow food to start moving into the stomach.

However, as the condition progresses this is not in order – if for no other reason than “pushing” fermenting meat down through the gut will only result in further absorption of toxins. In these cases the

meat must be removed from the crop.

The technique of holding the bird upside-down and milking out the meat via the mouth is no longer advised – not only is this very distressing to a sick, toxic bird but there is also a strong chance the bird will inhale some of the fluid: a good recipe for pneumonia a few days later!

Therefore, the bird must be anaesthetised and a close-fitting tube placed into the trachea (not only to provide oxygen and anaesthetic but also to prevent entry of fluid).

The meat can either be removed via the mouth using long forceps or by incising into the crop – the latter is more invasive but carries less risk of inhalation of crop contents and is much better when trying to remove larger bones. Large foreign bodies or bones in the stomach often need a full exploratory surgery to remove directly from the stomach (this is definitely last resort- this type of surgery is very risky in birds).

So, this is an emergency situation and definitely best avoided – gradual introduction of new foods, reducing gorge feeding and not allowing access to unbroken long bones will prevent most cases.



Photo courtesy of Amews falconry

Falcon with full crop

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# Casting my Shadow

In my first article I described the initial ups and downs of falconry with Harris Hawks and I had soon come to the point of flying Shadow my male Harris Hawk free for the first time. He is my first Harris Hawk that I have trained up to this point after completing a falconry course with Falconhigh at Winchester University.

The time had come to cast my Shadow free as he was flying to me without any hesitation on the creance over a greater and greater distance each day and even had his debut at the Romsey show flying on the creance in front of an audience; I don't know who was more nervous! I had also trained him to fly to the rabbit lure so I knew I had a chance of getting him back should he go up into a tree and stay there. I was extremely hesitant but I knew it was the next stage in his training and just hoped that everything I had done so far would pay off for me and Shadow. I called Phil Oldham from Falconhigh who ran the falconry course and asked if he could come over just in case anything

went wrong. Although I have been flying raptors with Phil since February 2006 I still needed his expert advice on this occasion.

I didn't feed Shadow the night before so as you can imagine he was eager to go and ready for his food but this time he would have to work for it! I fitted a transmitter on him and took the leash off and prepared his jesses for flying. Then I walked out into the field and faced the wind. With my heart in my mouth I gently cast Shadow and watched him go. Watching him nervously I whistled him back and watched his return over my left shoulder with my arm outstretched and ever so still. He circled round and headed back with his eyes just fixed on the piece of chick held in my glove, with the occasional sideways glance he returned low to the ground and then up to my glove, talons first and landed on the chick.

## Next stage

The next stage in his training was flying in the trees and following on. Placing

Shadow in low trees, flying him to the glove and returning him to the trees gave him the confidence to overcome that initial awkwardness he had in the branches. Casting him into the trees was the next step but this was done without much force behind the cast until he became more agile. Following on came quite quickly as he instinctively knew that I was there now to flush any prey out for him, beating the undergrowth, so he naturally knew to fly ahead and wait; it also helped that I wasn't feeding him on every whistle so I would hold my arm out but retract it at the last minute as he flew towards it thereby flying up into the trees ahead of me.

With each flying session Shadow became more and more aware of his surroundings, flying further and surveying the fields for any prey. His hunting instinct elevated and at his flying weight of 11lb 6.5oz he chased a greater variety of quarry.

During the Christmas holiday period Shadow fractured his leg as he bated off his perch. I was away at the time but he was being looked after by a friend and fellow falconer and it was due to his expertise that he recognised quite quickly that Shadow was holding his leg incorrectly so he took Shadow to see a veterinary surgeon and I am fortunate that Shadow was treated by an expert in birds of prey. According to Emma Ford's book, *Falconry Art and Practice*, "a fracture of the top third of the tibia is seen in young hawks because bating puts pressure on weak bones", and is best treated by an intramedullary pin.

However, inserting an intramedullary pin needs to be done soon after fracture. After a full examination by the vet it was decided that the fracture was to be fixed by a splint and plaster cast.

Having worked in fracture healing research I knew that it was important



Judith with her Harris Hawk, Shadow





A recovering Shadow on bow perch

to keep the fracture stable during the first week but then increase the amount of micromovement at the fracture site thereafter to encourage cartilage formation and a larger callus of ossified bone and also to encourage Shadow to resume using his joints as soon as possible as lengthy stabilisation can lead to arthritis. I was also concerned that too much movement may cause a non union of the fracture or a misalignment of the fractured ends of the bone. My other concern was whether Shadow had damaged his tendons upon injury as the ends of the fractured bone can go through and sever the tendons, causing a lack of movement in his foot, talons and toes.

Searching for literature on raptor fracture repair and rehabilitation after fracture proved not to be too successful,

so Shadow's recovery was due to advice from the vet, other falconers and my own judgement.

All through the fracture rehabilitation process it was important to feed him up to a point that would stop him becoming too hungry and therefore too much movement but also to monitor his weight to prevent him becoming too fat and therefore put too much pressure on his healing fracture and his good leg. A diet rich in calcium, vitamin D, glucosamine, sodium chondroitin was also important to promote cartilage and bone formation. This was achieved mainly on a diet of mice and nutritional supplements for raptors.

This brings me on to stressing the point of checking the diet of any bird of prey when you buy it from the breeders to make sure that the bird is receiving

all the supplementary nutrients it should have during the growth period and that the diet was also varied. Applying heat to the fractured leg or increasing the heat inside the room where recovery was taking place encouraged Shadow to weight-bear which was important to encourage him to use his injured leg more and also to use his foot as they can become 'lazy' after a fracture.

Alteration to his perches was also important during his rehabilitation, introducing him to a block perch so he could put his foot flat if he wished and putting Vetbed round his bow perch. A bungee cord was also put on the tethering ring to take some of the shock if he bated from his perch.

### Important falconry experience

My reasons for writing this article are to illustrate the importance of having someone with falconry experience looking after your bird when you are away, not just to look after your bird day to day but to know when things are not right; finding a suitable veterinary surgeon with expertise in raptors if possible; knowing the dietary background of your bird when you collect it and varying the diet of your bird and providing additional nutrients with specific raptor supplements regularly throughout your raptor's life.

Nearly four years on Shadow has made a full recovery and has no problems from his injury. He takes part in a lot of the falconry shows we attend with Falconhigh, as well as the experience days and is a successful hunting bird. He is also my inspiration for the 'Falconry for Schools' project, the 'Care and Handling of Birds of Prey' talk I present but most of all he is a great companion.

**Day 0** Fracture occurred, splint and cast by the veterinary surgeon, also coping of the talons. Confined in the warmth and darkness.

**Day 3** Checked by the vet to make sure the dressing had not slipped and the bone ends were immobilised and aligned. Confined in a small cage with daylight and view but kept warm.

**Day 7** Vet changed and loosened dressing. Need to look out for the dressing slipping and any signs of bumblefoot due to too much pressure on the other leg. Still confined in a small cage.

**Day 10** Weight bearing and gripping of the perch was observed.

**Day 16** More alert and vocal.

**Day 20** Cast and splint removed by the vet. Still confined in a small cage.

**Day 25** Transferred to mews and jessed on good leg. Also, 'fed up' and brought in at night into the warmth

**Day 28** Full weight bearing on injured leg observed.

**Day 30** Exercised on the creance.

**Day 36** Flew free again.

# The Harris Hawk

## A blessing in disguise or unwanted gift?

**T**he Harris Hawk has to be the most commonly flown raptor within the UK. Since the very first imports hit our shores its impact has changed everything about British falconry and although successful in the field it seems that this 'gift' is becoming less appreciated as time goes on. So why is this? Some see this clever *Parabuteo* as a stepping stone to something more exotic whilst others simply prefer to dabble and try their hand at all aspects of falconry. Nothing wrong with this, but if only they could unlock the true potential of the Harris and see firsthand just what they are capable of achieving. I really think the majority of UK austringers haven't even come close to finding just what they're missing out on.

I love the Harris! Some claim they're boring and catch little – this has not been my case. I think that the magic ingredient has to be time, and most UK austringers pass on the Harris before giving it time to blossom. Slow to mature and often lacking in hunting drive in their adolescent years, I have noticed with the ones that I have seen firsthand that given time they indeed progress into first class hunting partners that will more than fill the hawker's larder.

My hawk is a 1992 bred male. I paid top dollar for him as prices were high during that time and £700 took a while to save, so I was somewhat disappointed when as a youngster he just wasn't consistent in the field and catching so very little when flown at fur or feather. During this time I also flew a Goshawk –

after the initial manning the hunting was so easy and entering a joy. Obviously I always compared the two but with time came a change, a big change!

The Goshawk was stolen, so over the next few years I really put everything into this small male Harris. Trips to the most viable hunting corners of England, Scotland and Wales really brought out the spirit of this small hawk. Flown mainly as a rabbit hawk he progressed nicely and the changes were very noticeable with him often catching more than 'in vogue' raptors flown on field meets around my area. I appreciate that quantity is not the issue here but with time the quality aspect kicks in.

Fitness is always a consideration with the Harris. Whilst flown in a semi-fit state they will hunt and bring limited success but in comparison to a hawk that's flown daily and hunted regularly their catch rate will excel. A truly fit Harris is quite awesome to watch and a hawk of this nature will push itself well past the boundaries of its weaker part time flown counterpart. One often hears the repetitive complaints of critics saying that, "the Harris won't pick itself up again after a failed strike". Watch a Harris that's flown daily pick itself up and repeat the same thing two or three times and its obvious to see that fitness plays a major role.

### Versatility

Comparisons will always be made between *Buteo*'s and *Accipiter*'s and no one can doubt the explosive acceleration of the Goshawk. Indeed off the fist they are second to none and I for one enjoy this style of hawking and one day may return to it. But with the Harris comes so much more and this is where an older more experienced hawk comes into its own.

McElroy's *Desert Hawking* describes just what can be achieved and the book has inspired many. Likewise Martin Hollinshead here in the UK has written a series of books and I sense that he has



Two's company

witnessed firsthand what boundaries can be stretched, be it slope soaring, off the fist, or whatever style suits. Indeed, the Harris when moulded correctly will accept whatever is needed of it and can be switched between almost any styles of hawking.

My personal preference has to be slope soaring. With the hawk at a pitch of around 60 to 100 feet above the dog we enjoy some great flights. Nothing thrills me more than seeing the dog on point and the hawk locked on the dog just waiting and waiting some more, eagerly hoping for a successful flush. To me this is ultimate hawking and the pleasure it gives is everything. Of course here in the UK we can also call on the aid of ferrets to 'bolt' rabbits, but nothing compares to a hawk waiting on above a good dog in almost gale force conditions. I like to work for my goal and a day on the hill may return little in the way of bag size but a couple of successful flights with the same amount of quarry taken always makes the trip worthwhile. I often take guests up on to the hills and they always ask "How does your hawk soar like that?" and I simply reply, "He's been doing it for years." But one thing is for sure, a young Harris flown for the first few times in winds on the high ground is often a lost one.

### Cast hawking the Harris

Cast hawking is popular in the UK whereas gang hawking is frowned upon by many. We are a very politically correct nation and some see this as having a negative effect on the sport. Whatever we think, to ganghawk a group of Harris's is very efficient, although in our politically correct society it leaves little respect for the quarry. Cast hawking seems more accepted and it's quite normal for a couple of friends to go out hawking and enjoy the bond being built between their hawks. Teamwork is everything and with well reared hawks the hunt becomes even more fun. Seeing the Harris work in this way is something most Brits enjoy and although it's not everyone's choice, I enjoy it. To see a young inexperienced hawk learning its trade alongside an older more experienced hawk is very rewarding and I think a lot of astringers make the mistake of passing on a hawk without trying this method.

Last season I met Simon Stokes, a nice guy with a second year hawk that was catching very little. Within a few outings alongside my old male this hawk changed, becoming more experienced on fur and a credit to its owner. I know some of you people know all this having experienced the Harris for so long, but for us in the UK the Harris is becoming expendable and when failure looms it's easier to replace. Something needs to change and quickly!

I arranged a trip to Aberdeenshire, Scotland, last season as it is known for being a rabbit hawking paradise and plenty of hawkers make the trip yearly to enjoy some fine sport. Harris devotees gather to make the most of the social side of hawking and also to enjoy the group theme. This was my third visit and was to be one of my best years. The cottage was remote and set amongst the grounds, one only had to walk into neighbouring fields to find sport and the only thing to worry about was the wet Scottish weather that's so changeable.

My hawk was just starting his 17th season, flying alongside a friend's second year male. It was something that sort of crept in as the week went on and it was obvious that teamwork was beginning to play a role. Neither hawk ever showed aggression to each other and towards the end of the week we witnessed some fine joint flights.

The dog I use is a Brittany and the younger hawk soon keyed in to the fact that the older hawk was reliant to the dog for flushes. All this comes when the hawk is at a keen hunting weight and I think many fail with a dog as their hawk is not truly committed to the hunt at that given time. By the end of the week the younger hawk was killing well and nearly catching up with my older hawk and the transformation had taken place. It's such a shame that so many UK falconers fail with the Harris and try their luck with accipiters. For what chance do they have of success if they've failed with the former?

For all its merits, social hawking can have its down side. Sometimes whilst in group situations certain Harris's can be a liability and a nuisance. Grabbing another whilst on the fist or on a kill does not make for happy hawking and the offending hawk should be reserved for 'off the fist' style hawking or flown

alone. This behaviour is almost akin to jealousy and a danger for other hawks in the group. It doesn't help the image of the Harris and it's no good for falconry.

### The plight of the Harris

The Harris is still sought after as a hunting hawk in the UK but things are changing and not for the better. Going back to the late 1970s and early 1980s they commanded high prices and everyone wanted them. Many arranged to import them from distant shores and had to endure the long wait whilst their hawks sat in quarantine. Everyone either owned one or wanted one and the demand outweighed other raptors. To claim a second generation import one would have to pay £2000 or more and this was a lot of money.

To attend a field meeting it was always the Harris that ruled the roost as they caught plenty and behaved consistently in the field. With such popularity captive breeding was the next step. The Harris being such an easy breeder obliged and slowly prices began to fall. This New World hawk took the UK by storm and is now a victim of its own success. Saturation point has been reached and if truth be told its numbers outweigh its demand. One often can see surplus untouched hawks at giveaway prices and this is a shame. We have no licensing restrictions here in the UK and anyone can go out and purchase almost any hawk they wish depending on availability. The Harris is cheap to buy now and thus we have the wrong sort of person buying them and as a consequence the standard of hawking is dropping. Likewise, Goshawks seem to be following the same pattern and one only has to look on the forums to see that the skill levels aren't there. I guess it's just a question of time before we see the same pattern with many species of hawk as they become easier to obtain.

I have seen lots of these fine hawks flown over the years to a high standard, but confess I have seen lots more flown to a low standard that insults our hawking heritage. They are too easily available and lots of people try them and ultimately fail.

The Americans seem to have a system; a licensing scheme is perhaps the way we should go – it may not be perfect but it's a start.

# First UK Eagle Field Meet



The gathering at Belvoir Castle

For many years now I have been watching events regarding eagle falconry as it is practised in Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria, where this most fascinating branch of the sport has been passionately pursued by an ever-increasing number of falconers. Their eagle field meets have witnessed some stunning flights at Brown Hare, Fox and Roe Deer, although hawking the latter is illegal here in the UK. Here in England, we have been slow to catch on to this section of falconry and not without good reason. True, a handful of falconers have enjoyed great success with eagles here, myself included, but by and large, eagles have always been ridiculed as too large, slow and aggressive to be of any practical use. Philip Glasier himself wrote that if an eagle could be persuaded to wait on, then perhaps worthwhile flights could be

achieved. I wonder what he would have thought of the eagle falconers of today who not only enjoy great success with such waiting on flights, but equally have proven that the Golden Eagle, and others, are just as capable of first class serious falconry on the flat lands such as those found in Lincolnshire? Additionally, eagles have never been easy to acquire and until recently, nobody in the UK was breeding them and it was illegal to take them from the wild. It was with all this in mind that I decided to try an eagle meet here in England through the British Falconers Club (BFC), of which I am a proud member. Although I only managed to scrape together four Golden Eagles and their handlers, including myself, twelve other interested members joined the field for a great day's eagle falconry and although only one hare was caught, by my own bird, a male called Star, it set the seeds for a more ambitious project.

## Plans get underway

I teamed up with fellow eagle enthusiast, Chris Miller, and between us we came up with the idea of running an eagle meet along similar lines to those in the aforementioned Czech Republic and Austria. Apart from the actual eagle hawking we also required a similar Continental ambience, such as hawking from a beautiful castle and with a falconers feast thrown in, followed by a second day in the field. To cut a long story short, all this took a considerable amount of time and organisation. I contacted the landowner who had given us permission for the first BFC eagle meet at Bunny, near my home town of Nottingham and he was enthusiastic enough to kindly grant us permission again for this larger event. So that took care of Day One.

The foreword for my first book *Garden of Eagles* had been written by the Duke of Rutland now alas deceased



Falconers gather inside Belvoir Castle in preparation of day two of the Eagle Meet

and more recently Chris had broached the idea of falconry to the new Duchess at Belvoir Castle. This fairy tale building is situated on the northern border of Leicestershire and not far from Grantham and which is also still the permanent residence of the current Duke and Duchess of Rutland. Chris had personally spoken to Her Grace and she seemed very receptive to the idea. Additionally, this would not only provide a superb backdrop, but would also give us the ambience that we were seeking and the addition of thousands of acres of suitable hare hawking country would not go amiss either. Chris and I spent some time with the head gamekeeper driving around in the estate land rover, identifying suitable hare locations, and there was no shortage of these. So Day Two would be operated from Belvoir Castle. The Belvoir estate also owned the Manners Arms, situated in the nearby village of Knipton, so Chris and I drove across to check it out as a suitable venue for the proposed meal. The Manners appealed to us immediately, for not only did it boast a wonderful, open log fire, but the walls were adorned with stag antlers, stuffed fox head mounts and a plethora of field sport pictures. Here too, the ambience was exactly what we were seeking. A mistake we

made here however, was that the meal, though well presented and tasty, was of the haute cuisine type, which as all well know, is usually rather miniscule and many of these eagle lads are big fellows with similar appetites and after a long day tramping the fields, a more hearty dish would perhaps have been more appropriate. However, we did not discover this fact until it was too late. All this has been noted for the next meet.

So, with both hawking venues and the meal sorted, it was time to choose a date and contact as many eagle falconers as deemed necessary. One thing I have learned from eagle field meets is that it is possible to have too many eagles, depending on the land in question of course. The fields that we were using, although fairly large, were only large enough to permit eight eagles at the most, otherwise the birds were too close together to decide, when and if a hare was spotted, which falconer had the right to slip his eagle. When birds are well spaced apart, this problem diminishes to the point of being almost negligible because one has far more room for error. Basically, we used the European rules of slipping, which maintain that a hare can only be slipped at if it gets up in front of one and includes the strip of land to the

next eagle in the line on the falconer's right, anything else belonging to another falconer. But this was all in the future and we of course required eagle falconers in order to render the event viable.

### Eagle falconers wanted

Obviously, eagle field meets have been held in England for some time, particularly those organised by the United Kingdom Eagle Falconry Association (UKEFA) of which both Chris and I are members, but this one had a major difference, and that difference concerned the fact that anyone was eligible to join us, providing of course that such people had a desire to see eagles flown at natural quarry. All other meets, to our knowledge, were based purely on only eagle falconers being present with perhaps a few invited personal guests. Ours was to be an open meet, like Opocno in the Czech Republic and the dates of the 5th and 6th of February 2010 were selected. We had no preconceived ideas of how many guests and falconers would be looking at, but decided that twenty-five individuals would be the top limit for day one at Bunny and perhaps thirty to thirty-five for day two at Belvoir. I also had to let the catering manager at the Manners Arms also know how many

guests she would be catering for and this was not finalised until the very morning of day one.

Martyn Standley, Chairman of the Midland Group of the BFC placed a notice on the International Falconry Forum, and apart from Chris and I contacting a few known enthusiasts, all the advertising for the event came from this posting. We actually did no advertising at all, but the response from the forum was immediate, and soon the bookings came flooding in, many of whom were not eagle falconers but who had nursed a desire to see them in action. A price of £85 per head had been set, which included both days hawking and the evening meal and this price was the same, whether one was flying an eagle or spectating. As expected, some felt this was expensive and so refused to come, some felt it was cheap and enjoyed a great two days. From my point of view, where else could one see up to a dozen eagles being flown at wild quarry, over two whole days and have a meal included? It was to be a unique experience and certainly non-profit making. We did not even set the prices, this came from the cost of using the land and the meal and if one added up the amount of time and a multitude of sundry articles, such as printing, e-mailing, posting brochures, telephoning, driving to and from estate venues to check details etc, we found we were very soon out of pocket, especially when the added VAT on the final bills had not even occurred to us.

Most of my Christmas break was spent designing a suitable package to be distributed to all those who attended and this package included google maps of the flying grounds and meal venue, the menu and an itinerary of events. We used a brochure jacket that Chris normally used for his corporate days to hold the documents together and give a more professional touch. All that we required now was enough falconers together with their eagles.

Of course, we already had Star, my own male Golden Eagle, but the list soon began to grow. Roy Lupton, the Chairman of UKEFA agreed to come with several other members, including Steve Field, Wesley Murch and Clint Coventry, all with Golden Eagles and also Billy Bowles with his lovely little male Bonelli's

Eagle. The UKEFA lads could only stay for the Friday and evening meal as they had another field meet booked for the Saturday. Phil Hudson agreed to bring his male Golden Eagle called Shoshone, an older brother to my bird and formerly flown and bred by eagle breeder and falconer George Mussarred. In point of fact, several of George's eagles were to be present at this meet. I e-mailed Alan Ames of Eagle Heights in Kent, and while he could not attend himself, his son Jonathon and Chris Belsey brought their stunning female Crowned Eagle for day two. Wayne Chesterman and Darren Hollis, both Midland Group BFC members also brought Wayne's female Golden Eagle for both days, and Alan Walker and Gary Knight pledged their Golden Eagles for day two, which gave us a total of eight eagles for day one and seven eagles for day two. Other falconers who attended included; Simon Tebbutt, also a Midland Group BFC member who owned a Golden Eagle but he was too overweight to risk flying, the bird that is, not Simon; Craig and Mike Ahmed and Tony Farrell from Liverpool; Glyn Thompson, Aaron Kisiel, Carl Noon and David Bostock from Nottinghamshire; Andy Reeve from Lincoln; Phil Bindon and Mark Taylor from Cornwall; Martin Turner from Herefordshire; Ian Bell and Michael Taylor from County Durham, Peter Evans and Stephen Axon from Merseyside, Brian Glace and Phil Hudson's partner Nanette from Cheshire, Martyn Standley from Staffordshire, Derek Abbey from Cleveland and David MacMahon from Nottingham who would be doing some video footage for me, as it was my hope to present all who attended with a DVD of the event as a thank you gift. So, the team had been formed and all we could do now would be to tick off the days and hope the elements would be kind to us.

### **Day one. Bunny Estate**

As usual when I am in anticipation of something enjoyable, I found it difficult to sleep the night before the eagle meet. I kept worrying if all would go well and that everyone would turn up and enjoy the event. When one organises an event such as this, it is usual to carry the blame if things go wrong and I found the stress levels quite intense at times. It also didn't help listening to the downpour of heavy

rain rattling against the windows. It rained and rained all night and was still raining when I placed Star in his travel box in the back of the land rover at eight in the morning. There was nothing I could do about the rain. Guests were on their way from all four corners of the country, so there was no point brooding about the weather. I just hoped that the forecasters for once would get it right when they stated that the rain would abate with bright periods to follow. By the time of the arranged briefing at nine in the morning, the weather had changed and the rain had ceased to fall and the day proved to be bright and sunny. Someone was looking after us it seemed.

### **The important briefing**

Once everyone had assembled it was time for the briefing, which both Chris and I conducted. The UKEFA members were all well aware of the importance of such a briefing, especially as some of these falconers were on their first organised meet. The aforementioned slipping regime was covered in detail, as the last thing we needed was more than one eagle on the loose at once. Additionally, an eagle that had been slipped had to be recovered by the falconer and returned to the line before another bird could be released, no matter what the temptation. A second eagle could well ignore the hare and make a beeline for a grounded eagle, or equally likely, the grounded eagle could take off and attack the second eagle which may now be on a hare, and these were all scenarios we wished to avoid at all costs. My one hope was that everyone returned home with their eagles intact after a successful meet, but adrenalin can kick in easily and everyone always hopes that their bird will be one of those that makes a kill, thus a "loose cannon" with an itchy trigger finger, metaphorically speaking, is always a concern. It doesn't take an expert to appreciate that a meet such as this can easily be ruined by someone getting over excited, so everyone was asked if they fully understood the ruling for this particular meet, for two Golden Eagles in a crabbing situation was a dangerous predicament to be involved in, with one bird possibly killing another. Everyone nodded in agreement. Field meets are quite unlike going out alone or with a few guests, the rules for the



Phil Hobson with his male Golden Eagle, Shoshone

former are there for good reasons for with so many people around, the chances for making costly mistakes are very much higher and so easy to make. Therefore, concentration by all the eagle falconers present must never be allowed to lapse. Chris Miller took on the demanding role of field master for the entire meet, as his bird had been tragically killed shortly before the event and thus he was available for the job and knew the requirements for keeping the line in order and all the other relevant details required to run a successful field meet.

There is never any way of knowing where a hare will break cover, so one's position in the line is irrelevant. The important part is keeping the eagles equidistant and constantly watching for any of them being slipped. Once a hare gets up in the designated area, one shouts "Eagle, or Eagle loose or Eagle off," as loud as possible, BEFORE the bird is actually slipped. A Golden Eagle can easily overhaul the fastest of hares, so there is no great urgency to get the bird airborne as fast as possible. Time must be taken to give the shout so the whole field is aware that one is about to release the eagle. The problem here is that sometimes the line is so long that one cannot hear the command being uttered and this is where two eagles can simultaneously be released. If a different hare from the one already being hawked is in the equation, then hopefully neither of the eagles will molest each other, and to be quite

frank, unless one opts for the safer but impractical solution of only one named person being allowed to slip his bird, then this sort of scenario is unavoidable. What can never be condoned is two falconers slipping their birds at the same hare, unless of course, the birds fly regularly as a cast and of course know each other. Any other scenario is unacceptable, for one cannot possibly know how two eagles, strangers to each other, may react under these circumstances.

Another problem is that some eagle falconers never use the hood. There may of course be very good reasons for this. For example, the bird was perhaps acquired second hand and the former owner never bothered to use a hood for whatever reasons and thus the bird can now use all of its attention towards avoiding being hooded. Whereas a new bird generally still has sufficient fear of its new surroundings and owner that it sees the hood as just a mere distraction from everything else going on around it. I have said this many times until I am blue in the face, but I cannot for the life of me understand why some falconers disdain the use of the hood. To me, the hood is a major priority and my first job after jessing etc., is to make a new bird to the hood. On field meets, the hood is of paramount importance and all my eagle flights are performed out of the hood. There can be nothing more frustrating than for a keen and fit, but un-hooded eagle to be constantly restrained from

chasing potential quarry that has got up in someone else's flight path. The poor bird is totally unaware of our slipping etiquette and it just sees the quarry and wants to be off. Hooding prevents this from the start and when a hare does eventually present itself for such a bird, the chances are that it is either too tired from all the bating or just thinks it is going to be held back again. If you want to fly eagles, or any other hawk for that matter, at field meets, I strongly recommend time spent hooding right at the very beginning of the bird's career. It is time never wasted. Additionally, once an eagle has been slipped and is on the ground, in order to prevent disturbing possible further quarry, the falconer should not charge ahead to recover his bird, he should either call it back from his original position, or walk behind the line of beaters and down the edge of the field to retrieve it. Ideally, the bird should return obediently to the fist, but sometimes, especially after numerous flights, the bird may tire and simply sit on the ground. Only if the bird is on a kill should the falconer head straight out to assist his charge as soon as possible. Also, once an eagle has been slipped, the entire line halts and doesn't move again until the bird has been recovered and reoccupied its place in the line. Once all this had been discussed at the briefing, it was time to head off into the fields and begin the hunt.

### Time for the off

Our line was formed with beaters between each eagle and each eagle was equidistant from the next eagles in the line. The wind had ceased and with nil wind conditions, we could slip our birds in any direction without having to engineer downwind or crosswind flights. Eagles have a huge wing surface area, which is not conducive to flying against strong headwinds. They soon rise too high and more often than not, will break off an attack under such conditions. With downwind, or nil wind conditions, the eagle soon overhauls the hare, as far as catching it up is concerned. Footing it is an entirely different matter. Hares are masters at eluding capture with some unbelievable escape tactics. They can of course jink from side to side at the last second, they can stop dead in their tracks and turn on a five pence piece and



Wesley Murch with his Golden Eagle

perhaps the most spectacular of all, they can jump several feet into the air, over and above the pursuing eagle and then away in another direction. When one considers that the hare has no burrow to run down and usually no tall vegetation to stall an attacking eagle, it is hardly surprising that the animal has developed these skills to such a high degree. In my view, the Brown Hare is one of the most difficult to catch of all quarry species and it has well earned my utmost respect for a great many years now and on this day, our first of the meet, we witnessed all of these amazing tactics.

The hares were plentiful and every eagle present, including Billy's little Bonelli's Eagle had their share of flights. One of the most stunning was from Steve Field's female Golden Eagle, which executed a powered dive from a fairly high pitch and slammed into the ground. How that hare got away I will never know. Earlier, this same eagle had caused a great deal of anxiety when it perched on a power line which ran along the top end of the estate but which we were walking away from. Fortunately, it merely closed

its wings and dropped down to a lure. Had it opened them fully, it would easily have spanned the wires and been killed. That indeed would have spoilt the entire meet, not least for Steve himself. All the eagles were flying well and the females belonging to Clint and Wayne gave some great chases. Wesley's bird was chasing hares everywhere, reducing Wes to a worn out rag, but his bird was very unlucky not to connect with a hare, for it gave a stunning performance. My own bird Star had several flights and almost caught a hare, but the latter steered him into a fence and he cart wheeled over it. Fortunately, he was unharmed and returned obediently to the glove. Every eagle performed well and proved a credit to its owner, but the hares had the last laugh. This did not bother anyone in the slightest, for the flights were generally of a high quality, and that is what good falconry is all about, or should be. The size of the bag is of little importance and I am always saying I would much rather witness a fast, jinking flight over several hundred yards at a hare and it result in a miss, than watch the bird merely drop

off the glove to grab a frog in the grass. The latter is a kill, of sorts, but not one you would wish to discuss with fellow falconers over a pint. Nobody present felt that they had experienced anything other than a great day out, which made me feel a lot better. The day was saved when Roy Lupton's eagle, called "Baby," took a hare on the plough from his six-wheeled Argo Cat. Roy is unfortunately disabled and has to use this fantastic all-terrain vehicle in order to practise his falconry, which he accomplishes to a very high standard and he often gets a kill from his vehicle when the rest of us fail miserably. One word must also be said of the plough, on which we spent so much time. Hares love the plough, for they find its deep ruts useful to hide in, but for us humans, it is very difficult terrain to walk over, especially after a full night's rain. The mud was clinging to our boots in huge clods and rapidly tired out the youngest and fittest amongst us. I was in my sixty-second year and really felt the strain, especially as two days earlier I had been out with the UKEFA on an eagle field meet at Revesby in Lincolnshire and experienced the same sort of conditions. I had barely recovered when faced again with this onslaught. One field member was so exhausted that he told me he had lost the will to live, and he was two-thirds of my age.

### Time to reflect

Trying to get everyone to leave the field when hares were still running was a bit of a problem, but we had the meal booked for six and it was already five and we had to get back to our respective bases to clean up and get changed. As it was, many were late and the meal did not get under way until almost seven. Most however, had had enough of the plough and were eager for a rest and a good meal. Hare hawking always involves lots of walking so just about everyone was tired out. My fears about the haute cuisine were justified although everyone enjoyed it and the atmosphere pervading the rooms was everything we hoped for. It was satisfying listening to everyone recounting the day's thrilling flights and those who had just arrived for the meal but not been on the meet, were listening to all the tales and this excited them for what the morrow would bring. The evening was a great success and many new friends were made. I sat with Michael Taylor,



a well-known Goshawk enthusiast and Alan Walker who had brought his Golden eagle for day two and enjoyed some great conversation. My wife Gill also enjoyed the evening immensely, although she didn't attend the flying days.

### Day two. Belvoir Castle

I awoke as stiff as a board in readiness for day two after the exertions of the previous day and as I placed Star in his travel box, I could not but help noticing the dense fog that rolled across the fields facing my home. I hoped that this would soon burn off, but if anything, it became even worse and severely marred the entire second day's eagle hunt. Visibility was down to about seventy-five yards at best, but nevertheless, I drove over to Belvoir Castle early to await the arrival of our guests. They began to arrive in dribs and drabs but I had to get them all to park on the roadside verges below the castle as Chris had the code for the barrier and he was late arriving. The Duke's personal secretary informed me that we should be meeting up at the castle and that parking was not permitted along the roadside, so I had to arrange for those already there to go into the castle grounds and then return to open the barriers for the remainder. However, once everyone had arrived, we enjoyed a pre-flight coffee in the entrance hall of the castle. Belvoir Castle is visually stunning and its interior, lined with a fine array of weaponry, such as Brown Bess muskets, swords arranged in great circular formations and batteries of cannon lining the hallway, blended well with animal head trophies such as African Buffalo and the extinct Irish Elk. Many commented that a better place to begin an eagle hunt would be difficult to find. I could not agree more and felt that yet again, the ambience we had strived for had been achieved. After coffee and posing for some group photographs, it was back into our fleet of four-by-fours and journeying through the castle woodlands out onto the more open areas to begin the day's hawking. As aforementioned, the fog proved a great setback, for the hares were moving off under its cover before we could even see them. I placed my hand into a number of the numerous forms we came across and felt that they were still warm, indicating that a hare had been present only moments before. This was maddening,



Golden Eagle flight over root crops

all the more so because when Chris and I had been out with the gamekeeper a few weeks previously, the hares had been out in force and were running all over the place in bright sunlight. We had a few flights, but eagles and hares soon became invisible in the gathering gloom.

### Flights in the fog

The first flight of the day caused some concern because Wayne shouted, "Eagle," and cast off his bird at a hare which ran across my front. I had seen his bird leave the glove and held Star back. However, two more eagles were slipped at the same hare that was currently being chased by Wayne's bird. This was exactly the scenario that Chris and I had warned everyone about at the briefing during coffee. Fortunately, all three birds obediently returned to their respective owners. Additionally, the line was so long that both ends were invisible to each other because of the fog. We made a note that a set of two-way radios will have to be obtained for future meets.

By far the best flights of the day came from Alan Walker's eagle. Alan had been worried the previous evening that with all these experienced eagle falconers present he felt that his bird might not be up to the same standard. I told him he had nothing to worry about, and indeed this proved to be the case. His bird flew superbly and chased a hare down the line towards my position and the pair came so close to me that I could hear the stubble rustle as the hare jinked from side to side, narrowly eluding the attentions of the eagle. I had a ringside view of this flight

and marvelled yet again at the escape tactics of this wonderful animal. Alan's eagle was unlucky again on its second flight for it actually made contact with the hare, bowling it over, but again, the leggy lagomorph made good its escape. This bird had caught a fox on a previous occasion and I was very impressed with its performance. Star only had one flight the whole day and he, like many others, simply chased his hare into the fog and lost it, only to come back looking for me along the line of beaters.

Our next tactic was to beat through some small patches of woodland, with eagles being stationed at various vantage points, but all we flushed were pheasants and woodcock. Soon darkness began to add to the gloom of the fog and we felt we had done all we could have given the circumstances.

The beautiful Crowned Eagle never really got a chance, which was a great pity, for I would have given much to witness a flight from this powerful forest eagle. Again, everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy the outing and there were a few reasonable flights throughout the day, but nothing like those experienced on day one. Oh well, one cannot do anything about the weather I suppose and I can but hope that everyone took away some pleasant memories. At least, no birds were lost and there were no further accidental releases. It only remains for me to say thank you to all who came and supported the meet and you will all be first on the list for invites when we organise the second UK Eagle Field Meet.

# The British Falconry and Raptor Fair 2010

**R**apidly approaching is the 21st annual British Falconry Fair which will be set once again in the beautiful landscaped rolling grounds that make up Chetwynd Park, Newport, Shropshire. The May Bank Holiday weekend of Sunday the 2nd and Monday the 3rd will see falconers and raptor enthusiasts alike descend on this beautiful corner of Shropshire for a celebration of falconry.

The organisers have put a considerable effort into ensuring that the Fair, as the undoubted prestigious event that it is, moves forward and encompasses even more directly related falconry displays in the main arena.

## New sponsor

The event itself boasts a new sponsor in the form of Kiezebrink UK Ltd, the high class purveyor of bird and animal foods, who have long been staunch supporters of the Falconry Fair and the sport of falconry in Britain. This year they have taken over the mantle as principal sponsors of the event and the organisers would like to extend to them a very warm welcome and thank them for their co-operation.

The main arena is the shop window of the Fair and many have felt that it has given itself over to too many displays that do not directly relate to falconry in the past three or four years. Well this

will be most certainly rectified this year with the emphasis very much on falconry and its practice. Flying displays will be of their normal high standard but there will be more of them. Also joining us in the main arena this year will be Allan Hender, the well respected falconer and dog trainer. Allan and his team will be giving two different displays each day. One will feature the breeds of dogs suitable to falconry and their different applications in the sport. The other will involve a practical demonstration of simulated hawking showing the interaction between falconer, dog and hawk.

Jemima Parry-Jones will be giving two flying displays each day and they are sure



Sue and Allan Hender



Jemima Parry-Jones lure swinging

to be up to her normal very exacting standards. Which means the flying will be excellent and it will be accompanied by an entertaining as well as informative commentary. Also flying in the main arena will be members of the South East Falconry Group with commentary being given by their chairman Gary Biddis. The South East Group has long been associated with the Falconry Fair and it will be good to see them back once again.

Another welcome addition to the flying displays in the main arena will be members of The Yorkshire Hawking Club, under the guidance of their chairman Dale Johnson. This particular club is a relatively young one but already has an extremely healthy membership and is very pro active in supporting and promoting good falconry. The lads from Yorkshire will be giving us an excellent display of simulated rabbit hawking and for those of you that have not seen it yet I cannot stress too highly that this display should not be missed. It is the type of hawking that the vast majority of falconers are familiar with, or at least can directly relate to, and therefore it should be of great interest.

The weathering ground is always of great interest and this year should prove to be no exception. The range of trained eagles, hawks and falcons that will be on display will be simply mouth watering. A lot of visitors don't appreciate just what an undertaking it is to put on such a large static display and to police it sensibly for the duration of the event. The organisers are fortunate in that members of The Central Falconry and

Raptor Club undertake this task each year and always make an extremely good job of it. They do a great deal of work behind the scenes which tends to go unnoticed by the general visitor but without their unstinting help it wouldn't be possible to put together such an excellent static display. A particular mention must be made of Andy Barfield, the secretary of the Central club, who co-ordinates the whole thing superbly.

#### UKEFA

Joining us this year will be the UK Eagle Falconry Association who will have their own weathering area. Here will be some genuine hunting eagles on static display with members of the association on hand to answer any queries. This part of the event is being co-ordinated by long time eagle exponent David Fox. "Garden of Eagles" is the title of a book written by David many years ago and it has been unavailable for a very long time. But word is that David has revamped and updated the book and it is being republished fairly soon. For those that are interested in obtaining a copy make sure you have a word with David at the Fair.

As always the clubs will be a very active part of the Fair and these will be well represented at local, national and international level. Clubs are the grass roots of our sport and the stronger the clubs are the stronger the voice we as falconers have when talking to other sporting bodies and the government. For this reason alone I would urge all falconers to join at least one major national club. Joining a club has a great

many benefits including things like public liability insurance and help with legal problems relating to falconry should they ever arise. Most clubs hold field meets and do all they can to assist beginners in the sport and make sure they follow the right road. Our largest and oldest national club costs less than one pound a week to belong to, a very small outlay for such a large return.

#### Trade stands

Trade stands that sell just about everything relating to falconry and raptor aviculture will be well represented and, as always, the Fair offers a unique opportunity to make a direct comparison between the products of all the different suppliers. What Fair would be complete without the mouth watering range of artwork on show and available from a wide range of top class artists such as Martyn Brook and Carl Bass for example. Images of another kind, the photographic sort, will be available from Steve Magennis who will be making his third consecutive appearance at the Fair. Steve is a well known wildlife photographer who has specialised for the last few years in photographing falconry subjects. His work really is worth a look.

This year the British Falconry and Raptor Fair is taking very positive strides to get back to its Falconry roots and I think this 21st consecutive staging may well be a very special one. Certainly it should not be missed.

For more details contact the show office on 01588-672708.

Hope to see you there.

# To end a season... and some bad language

by Nick Kester



Nick with Baldrick

**A**n old, very experienced foxhunter once commented as we sat by the covert-side on a very wet late February day: “Funny old season, and nearly time to stop. Of course you know when the season is truly over. Not because you have set a date, but because nature and life tells you.”

Never a truer word was spoken. Down here in rural Wales foxhunting was and will be again, a central thread to the farming year. It provides an important focus during the long winter. The stock are in, the fields cannot be accessed. So a hunting we will go. That is until nature, and agriculture, tells you that the year has moved on. Jobs to do, lambing on the horizon, muck spreading, hedge cutting, and on and on. It is time to stop.

Falconry is no different. We may hawk inside the game seasons by law, but when, as happened to me I awoke to the first dawn chorus in mid February, I was acutely aware that disturbing the cover would be unfair on those birds who had waited so patiently for a lift in the temperature so that they could announce with their crescendo of song, the start anew of their cycle of life.

## In a burrow

There are other things that ring the bell. The ferret lies up in a seemingly straight-forward burrow, and digging reveals a nest stop. Your hawk becomes more interested in you than in quarry – certainly true if, like me, you fly an imprint. And the catkins are showing above the snowdrops on the edge of the wood.

Seasons have a very good purpose; they make you anticipate even more

Photo by Nick Kester



Photo courtesy Diana Dunham-Walters

### Feeding up time

energetically the following autumn. Years ago I used to cycle along a very quiet country lane to a railway station en-route to London. Summer evenings were often slow on the return journey as I checked rabbits and watched pheasants. A real joy was the occasional brood of grey partridge being ushered into the safety of the roadside by a plump parent. By September my patience was exhausted and the hawk would be reclaimed. How we falconers long for leaf-fall when others curse the nights drawing in.

At the time of writing Nick Fox and his team are currently editing a book on falconry for publication later this year. (Falconry: celebrating a living heritage. See issue 79 of this publication for review) Written by a Spanish falconer it contains fascinating references to the roots of falconry throughout the world, but one thing stands out. It is a universal truth that falconry, more than any other field sport puts us in touch with nature. And because you cannot hurry falconry, it teaches us more about ourselves, and our place in the environment, than any other activity.

The best part of a day's hawking comes at the end with a successful kill. Because the weather is usually good – hard to hawk well in inclement weather – you can sit quietly watching your hawk or falcon feed up. You have disturbed nothing, taken little and gained a great deal. What could be better? Whilst Gilbert Blaine would have

said: "Cigars may be taken, and the merits of the flight discussed." I, having stopped smoking twenty-five years ago, take a long pull on a hip flask in salute to the dog and goshawk sitting beside me; not forgetting the quarry that made it all possible.

### Telling off

Some years ago I was chastised by a senior member of the British Falconers' Club for using the phrase 'field falconry' as a shorthand differential to 'falconry displays'. Of course both are totally incorrect, the former being born out of the inadequacy of the latter. Falconry is a stand alone word; it needs no qualification. There is no such thing as a falconry display, because nothing is caught. It is merely a 'display of free flying birds of prey using falconry methods'. But that is a terrible mouthful and show organisers have long used the abbreviation 'falconry display', which left me in a quandary as to how best to separate true falconry when discussing it with the media. Field falconry was a convenient best of the worst options. But I was taken to task nevertheless.

Of course it is very easy to become a crabby, grumpy old git about such things. Whilst I recognise that today few talk about bechins and petty singles; nor shout 'ho!' at the critical moment, there are some places in the hawking lexicon that should be totally off bounds. Someone recently referred to 'going out hunting with the

birds'. What the...! You are going 'hawking'. Nothing else will do. Can we please drop the use of 'bird' when discussing hawks and falcons? I was told very early on that all falcons could be hawks but no hawk was ever a falcon.

Of course the public can be forgiven such errors, although I cannot understand why people persist in asking me if I am going 'falconing'. Now that really jars. They always talk about the goshawk sitting on my wrist rather than fist; and even the most experienced countryman often asks in July whether I am still hawking. Don't they know we have seasons too?

I am also very intolerant of certain abbreviations. Perisaker jars, whilst perlin doesn't. Strange. But flying a Harri or, worse still, a Red is quite simply beyond the pale. Also the misuse of tiercel: applicable to falcons (more properly to the peregrine falcon because all the other species have their own male name: jerkin, sakerette, jack, etc.) and male goshawks only. The male sparrowhawk is a musket, and the rest are just plain old males until suitable words evolve to more attractively define them.

So this is a plea to maintain at least some of the correct language before we descend to unacceptable depths and lose a fascinating part of our sport. And please, no more hunting with birds, unless you are a teenager out on the prowl on a Friday night – which is a very different field sport.



**T**he season is well and truly over for the year. Rabbits are digging early nest stops and the dawn chorus is at full volume; catkins are out and the snowdrops are fading fast. Time to let Mother Nature re-stock herself ready for the autumn. But the work of the Hawk Board goes on...

This is the show season with the Campaign for Falconry setting out its stall for the public at large. A rolling educational project that aims to raise awareness of falconry, with a bit of income generation thrown in.

#### HB and CFF at Falconry Fair

The first set piece will be the Falconry Fair at Chetwynd Park, Newport, Shropshire over the Sunday and Monday of the first May Bank Holiday. Both the Campaign and the Hawk Board will be on hand to answer your questions so come along and quiz us on policy and politics. Given that this is an election year, there may be some changes you want us to represent to an incoming parliament; possibly one more sympathetic to the

# Falconry fair, Game Fair and Animal Health

countryside and field sports. Our second event is the CLA Game Fair at Ragley Hall in Warwickshire at the end of July. By then a new government will be in place with new ministers to influence.

It is an inescapable fact that our country (well, the public sector part of it) is broke – some would say morally as well as fiscally. This means that all departments will be looking hard at spending, and hopefully that will mean removing some of the legislative cost burden. But they sure as hell have not started yet.

#### Animal Health split?

We are currently looking at the consultation on splitting Animal Health into two: one for disease (paid for in some way by the animal keepers) and the other for welfare funded by Joe Public. You may not think this affects you, but consider another outbreak of bird flu, or similar. Yet again a new quango will burden us with costs and responsibilities. We have to re-educate a whole new team on who we are and what we do. But a new government may well consider this a waste of time. Fingers crossed.

What a new parliament might look at is the 30-year-old 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. It is severely out of date and is currently held together by sticky tape of amendments. There is much we could improve on huntable species, game seasons, and increased or less emphasis on falconry depending on the issue. Of course, and I have said this before, there is a downside because it opens the door to counter lobbying by protectionist groups. However, this is where the 'fiscal squeeze' helps.

An incoming government has a lot to do, and we cannot expect overnight

change, but we are certainly ready for action.

Finally, before you ask, there will be no Festival of Falconry this year.

## Useful Websites

Hawk Board  
[www.hawkboard-cff.org.uk](http://www.hawkboard-cff.org.uk)

DEFRA  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

IBR  
[www.ibr.org.uk](http://www.ibr.org.uk)

Lantra Awards  
[www.lantra-awards.co.uk](http://www.lantra-awards.co.uk)

Great Western Referrals  
[www.gwreferrals.com](http://www.gwreferrals.com)

John Chitty  
[www.jcexoticpetconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.jcexoticpetconsultancy.co.uk)

Raptor Rescue  
[www.raptorrescue.org.uk](http://www.raptorrescue.org.uk)

Countryside Alliance  
[www.countryside-alliance.org](http://www.countryside-alliance.org)

The International Association for Falconry  
[www.i-a-f.org](http://www.i-a-f.org)

The Peregrine Fund  
[www.peregrinefund.org](http://www.peregrinefund.org)

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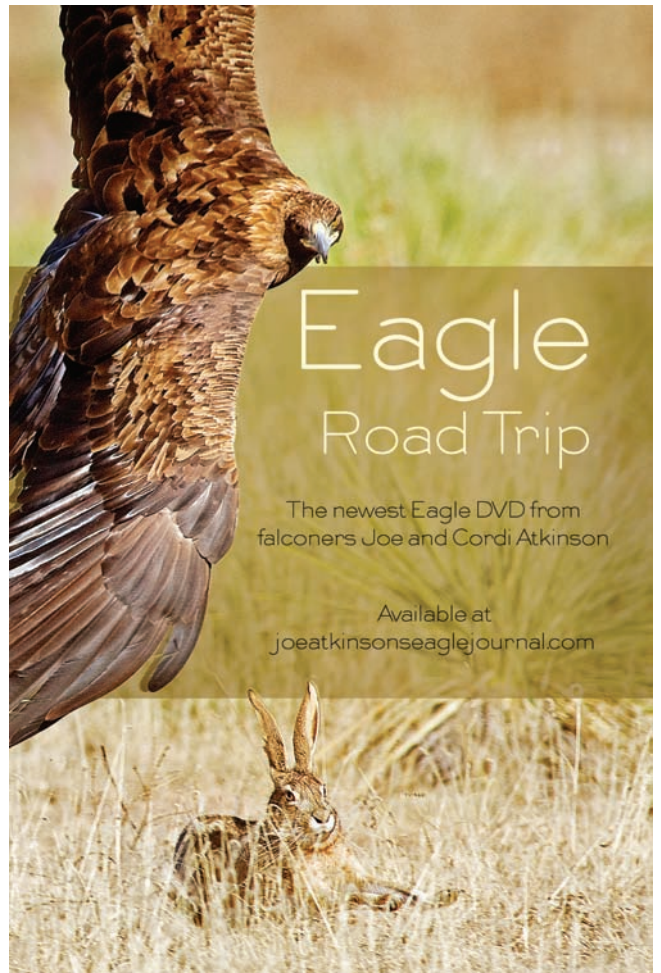
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# Notes from an Eagle Falconer

I get asked this question a lot . . . “Joe, what’s it like to fly a bird like that?” A question like that cannot be answered in one or two words, like awesome or unbelievable; flying a golden eagle is all of that but so much more . . .

Long before falconers were able to fly golden eagles in the U.S., I was flying and hunting rehab eagles to prepare them for release back into the wild. Not just any rehab eagles, but the young ones, eagles that had not had a chance, because of injury or sickness, to develop hunting skills on their own. Adult rehab eagles, once healthy, can be released and smoothly resume their life in the wild without any additional help from man, but a first year eagle that has not had the opportunity to naturally follow its parents around learning the necessary skills to survive, is a different story. Those are the ones that need some help. I have flown, hunted and released dozens of golden eagles over the years and in the course of hunting them I have caught hundreds of jack rabbits and a few miscellaneous things like coyotes, ducks, pheasants, a badger and more than a few feral cats. I believe that if a young eagle can fly down a jack off the fist and catch up to 20-30 jacks, it’s ready to do it on its own in the wild. Like all predators, eagles need to develop a “go to” move, one that they can count on to produce a kill, and after catching 20 plus jacks I can see them perfecting their move and know that they will have a chance to be a wild eagle.

Years ago I started e-mailing my falconer buddies with eagle updates and tails of my eagle flying experiences. Things like chasing a partially trained eagle that was flying two feet off the ground right down the middle of a very busy two lane street with me running after it waving cars out of the way, or running through backyards in a rather rough housing tract, asking if anyone had seen a large black bird anywhere. Things

like that, which seemed to happen to me all too often. You may be wondering why I was trying to fly a golden eagle in places like these. Well, it’s simple really, these areas were surrounded by and encroaching on agricultural fields teaming with jack rabbits and one has to go where the game is. Over time, as the word spread about my eagle hunting adventures, my little email group took a major jump to include 15 different countries and falconers from all over the world. In the process, I started to receive some interesting emails from people, including ones accusing me of faking the photographs of my eagles on kills, that I was not telling the truth about catching game with eagles because you can’t catch game with an eagle, and that eagles were slow and not worth training as a falconry bird. Of course, this was all completely untrue and in some cases rather hurtful, and frankly, it was these kinds of attitudes that motivated my wife, Cordi and myself to produce our first eagle hunting DVD, Eagle Journal, The Movie. This DVD was produced with one thing in mind -- to show what a well conditioned golden eagle can do in the field hunting jacks off the fist.

So what is it like to hunt with a golden eagle? First off, they are extremely quick and super fast. I have been told by more than a few well known goshawkers, one in particular being Mr. Daryl Perkins, author of “Understanding Goshawks”, who has been in the field and witnessed Jackhammer (JH), that he is faster than a goshawk. This past November Daryl and I, along with Scott Simpson, were hunting a field of wheat stubble in Kansas and Daryl saw JH chase a jack into a very stiff wind with the jack zig-zagging back and forth many times, JH matching the jack turn for turn, and then reach out and snag it. This was a very nice flight, so much so that Daryl’s reaction was to start howling like a wolf! I guess howling is a goshawker’s thing?

The golden eagle is very intelligent and demands that the falconer go to another level in the training process. Golden eagles are not big red tails or Harris’ hawks. Many a falconer that has treated them as such has had little, if any, success. In fact, rapid weight reduction, along with traditional manning methods, coupled with high stress, has been proven, time and time again, to be the wrong way to train an eagle and, in a high percentage of cases, has proven fatal. Passage golden eagles are very prone to aspergillosis and if the stress level is too high they will succumb to the disease and die. In order to be successful hunting with an eagle the falconer must take the relationship to a new level, one of hunting partners on nearly equal grounds where food is not the primary motivation, hunting is. Once this level is achieved between eagle and falconer, a whole new world will open up because once your eagle looks on you as a means to get to hunt stuff, the sky is the limit. Golden eagles can fly down anything in the field -- distance is not an issue and they can overcome winds up to 30 mph. As an example, what other raptor in falconry can you hunt in 90° heat while in the middle of the molt, take 5 jack rabbits and would still keep going except that the falconer (me) was tired out? Not the eagle, mind you, he still wanted to hunt, I was the one that was done. What other falconry bird could average 3.5 jack rabbits over the course of seven consecutive days in heavy wind, from 18-30 mph? This is what a golden eagle can do. Having success hunting an eagle requires two things.....your eagle must be in condition and you must have game to hunt, it is that simple. If you live in an area that has nothing to hunt or is not suitable to fly an eagle in, you should not have an eagle. It will be a huge waste of time.

The temperament of golden eagles varies greatly. I have had some that are very gentle and a pleasure to work with,



never footy, and just as nice as can be. Then there are others..... that are not so nice. Some eagles I have trained were downright nasty and would try to foot me at any and all opportunities, and did! Over the years I have found myself having to handle eagles that have, let's say, a high degree of hatred for people, having been poked, medicated, chased down with nets and been examined for all sorts of reasons. All for their own good, of course, but the eagles don't know that, so all this does is to make them that much more resentful towards people. And then I come along and want to be friends with them and, frankly, they don't care and are looking for ways to show me they don't care. Make no mistake, eagles are extremely powerful. If they get just their little toe on something, they have it and it is not getting away and, unfortunately, this includes the falconer! A golden eagle can drive its front or rear talon right through your hand -- in one side, sticking out the other side. When this has happened I could pull the talons of a male golden eagle back out of my hand but I couldn't even budge the talons of a female golden eagle. You are at her mercy until she decides to let go. After all, when the prey list includes coyotes, foxes, deer, and prong horn antelope, you'd better have some powerful feet! In short, if you handle eagles you're going to get grabbed at some point, usually in the early days of training. Once they are trained and hunting the chances are less and less as their aggression diminishes. Like I said, most golden eagles are very gentle and there is little danger of being footed, however, I would be foolish not to point out that the possibility is very real that you could get grabbed.

Notes from my eagle journal from this year's eagle meet, the Gathering of Eagles (GOE), that took place in Garden City, Kansas:- Wind 18-25 mph. Temperature 38°. Clear sky. Jackhammer's weight: 8.5 lbs.

Jackhammer was on his game, as good as I've seen him, flying at a very high level and maintaining it throughout the entire meet. I won't recount the day by day flights as there were simply too many to remember but I will just give some highlights.

One of my goals was for Jackhammer to show to our friends from overseas what he can do because the last time

they hunted with JH he did not do well. He was slightly overweight (my fault) and was put off by people in the hunting field, which I told myself I would correct at all costs, and I have done. People in the field hunting with JH have not been an

issue for a couple of years now; so much so, that he is a veteran of two National Geographic programs and will now hunt in front of anyone.

It's a funny thing about JH, some fields just don't hold his attention and these fields, more times than not, don't produce very many jacks or none at all. However, I can tell the second I step into a good field as JH is very focused and that is when things get fun.

With many folks in tow, Cordi and I drove out into the main ranch outside Garden City, looking for a field to fly. I remembered an area on the outermost edge of the ranch that had caught my eye the few times I drove past it. The field is a cut wheat field with a pivot in the middle and patches of tumbleweed that have grown after the wheat was cut. This area of cover was, for the most part, out in the middle of the field, far away from any other heavy cover and made for a dramatic landscape with the light tan of the wheat stubble and the very dark, almost black, of the tumbleweed stuff growing out in the middle of the field. To me it just looked like it should have a jack or two in it and this is the perfect JH field, wide open where the jacks can hit full speed.

We walked out into the field, positioning ourselves in a way that we could work the prime area in sections, keeping the strong wind either at our backs or in a crosswind direction. As I moved into the cover JH suddenly became very focused and I could sense that something was about to happen. I don't know if he saw some slight movement of a jack or what, but he was going to explode on the fist, flinching at



Joe with his golden Eagle, Jackhammer

anything. I heard the slight rustle of the cut wheat and felt JH reacting before I ever saw the jack flush up from its hiding spot. Being out in the open, this jack was in a full burn, ears down and moving out on some predetermined escape route. JH exploded from my fist with big powerful wing strokes, turning over at a rate that seems impossible for a bird so big. I stood and watched as JH closed in on the jack that was now running for its life. I could see the very slight directional changes JH made as he built speed and tracked his jack rabbit. I say his because, over the years and thousands of flights, I can tell the second JH leaves the fist that a jack is going to be caught. As the flight built in speed and distance, the jack realized it was in serious trouble and, in a desperate attempt to shake JH, it turned upwind and reached for what speed it had left. Already with considerable speed and momentum built up, the wind now was not a factor. JH closed on the jack like a runaway freight train and simply overpowered it..... Jack rabbit flushed at 15 yards away, jack caught at 30 yards out.

### Mid-week of the GOE

With 17 cars following us I found a previously unflown field that looked like a Jackhammer type field, low cover with big areas of open space. Earlier in the morning I had stopped in and gained permission to fly this whole area and many fields looked good. But I chose this one and boy did it pay off.

The wind was at 25 mph with gusts up to 30 mph so it was going to be a factor again. All I could do was keep it cross- or downwind from us and hunt,

that's it. JH was in prime condition so I knew he could handle many slips in all directions. My first indication on how this field was going to be was that jacks were already flushing as I was wiring up JH at the truck. I had everyone, some 30 plus people, walk off my right side and I stayed just slightly in front of the line. Sometimes, if the line gets even with me, JH and I cannot see the jacks flush and, in strong wind like we were in, that is a factor. I don't think we had gone 20 feet and up popped a jack and JH had it, just that fast! We continued to walk and another jack got up. JH just missed him due to an outstanding move by the jack rabbit using tumbleweeds and the wind to its full advantage. I'll try and set the scene as best I can recall . . . off to my right were 30 people walking in a straight line and I was keeping maybe 10 yards in front of the line. Up in front of us all, on the left side, was the photo gallery consisting of Cordi, Rob Palmer and Mark Williams. So, what we had done was to create an alley for the jacks to run in, effectively funneling them in a crosswind

or downwind direction. We were walking slowly because many jacks were flushing way ahead of us and, with the wind, those would have been very difficult flights and out of the cameras' range. I asked everyone to stop so I could work the cover just in front of them to look for the close, fast slip that JH loves. I took maybe five steps and a jack was up and running straight upwind. JH was on it just as fast, closing regardless of the strong wind. The jack went left, then right, with JH matching it move for move and he slammed into the jack . . . number two for the day. With tons of field left and no other birds ready to fly I traded JH off and we continued to hunt, working our way back to the trucks. JH went on to catch two more jacks, making a total of four for the day. The last two flights were just the kind I like, speed on speed, with the jacks running in full burn-out mode and JH cranking all the way in . . . fantastic!

Throughout the course of the meet we saw many great flights with the jack rabbits using all manner of escape tactics, particularly the "jump high in the air over

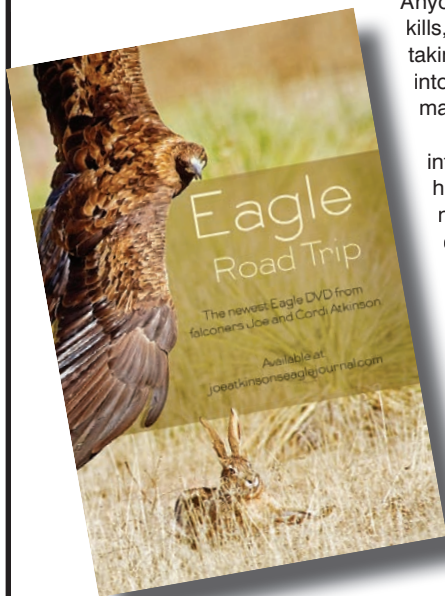
the eagle", very effectively.

GOE meet game total for Jackhammer:- 23 jack rabbits, 1 cotton tail and 1 rooster pheasant

So, what's it like to fly an eagle? For me, it's like no other bird I have ever flown. The bond that forms between eagle and man can only be compared to that of you and your dog. Golden eagles will challenge the falconer to think outside the box on all levels, unlike any other bird in falconry. Walking into a field with a golden eagle on your fist is a feeling like no other. You can clearly feel your eagle's unbridled excitement to hunt, its power and speed is unmatched. Sitting on my fist, Jackhammer is like a coiled spring just waiting for the slightest movement. With this comes a great deal of responsibility because anything that dares to move is going to be caught and it is my job to make sure it is only a jack rabbit.

To read more about hunting with Golden Eagles go to [www.joatkinsonseaglejournal.com](http://www.joatkinsonseaglejournal.com)

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# Mixed Fortunes

If there really is any such thing as re-incarnation then I want to come back as a weatherman. It would appear to me to be the only profession where people expect and accept that you will be totally wrong in your predictions, for which you are extremely lucratively paid, but will go over the top with praise when you actually do your job correctly and predict conditions accurately. I don't mean long range weather forecasts but the far more mundane next twenty four hour predictions.

During a recent spell of prolonged rain all the TV weather pundits and those in the national newspapers suddenly spoke with one voice and predicted that for forty eight hours there would be a break in the rain and not only that but

it would be clear and cold for a couple of days. Such conditions would be ideal for hawking and also just the sort of conditions to make photography a worthwhile proposition.

## Invitation

A good friend of mine in Leicestershire is currently flying a female Golden Eagle and he has extended an invitation on several occasions to join him for a day's hawking. What with busy work schedules and inclement weather conditions we just seem never to have quite managed to sort things out and get our act together. This supposed rapidly approaching break in the weather made me realise the season was almost over and it would more or less be a now or never situation if I was to see this eagle hunt

before it was put down for the moult. Arrangements were accordingly made and two days later saw my apprentice and I heading towards Leicester to enjoy some hawking that differed greatly from that which we practised ourselves.

Being something of a pessimist when it comes to British weather I had packed into the rear of the car a few items that I was categorically assured would not be needed the following day. That is Barbour coat, Chameau boots, hat, gloves and scarf. The hawking destination was just over three hours from my home and an early start was required to ensure we arrived on time and did not delay the start of the day's sport. At six o'clock in the morning the rain was simply hammering down and driving required that the wipers were on double



The happy hawkers



Taking a break

speed in an attempt to see where I was going. Always one to see the good in any situation my apprentice declared that this was probably the tail end of the bad weather and things would get progressively better as the day wore on. Ah, the misplaced optimism of youth.

The intensity of the rain made the entire journey a nightmare although it would be fair to say that as we arrived at our predetermined meeting point it did start to ease considerably and an extremely watery sun put in the briefest of appearances. But it was enough to give us hope for the day ahead.

My friend Richard James was flying an eyass female golden eagle of the year called Freya and we would be joined in our sport that day by Gary Knight with his eyass male golden eagle Griffin, which is the sister of Freya. As well as my apprentice and myself we would also be joined by three or four other spectators and as a group we would be acting as beaters for the eagles. The quarry that day was to be Hare and the estate

we had permission on is quite literally teaming with them. As we discussed where we would be hawking and the tactics to be employed the weather did actually ease a little and the rain actually stopped altogether. Without any further ado eagles were readied, jesses changed from mews to field, and transmitters fitted.

As we walked into the very first field we could see two hares sitting close together some two hundred yards away. As we walked towards them Gary unhooded Griffin and allowed him in his own time to take off in pursuit. From the first few wing beats it was evident the eagle wanted the hares and he closed on them rapidly. One of the hares took to its heels the second it saw the eagle's wings flapping. But the other hunkered down in its form and allowed the eagle to close on it. Just as the eagle threw up its wings and stretched out its feet to take its quarry the hare leapt a couple of feet into the air. As the eagle crashed to the ground without its intended victim in its feet

the hare took off at full speed towards a distant hedgerow.

To give the eagle the credit it deserves it was straight back into the air and off in pursuit. As it closed on the hare for a second time the hare it was chasing quite literally ran into two more and suddenly there were three hares making off all in different directions. The eagle tried to foot the one that was passing almost back underneath him and again landed on the ground empty footed. A valiant effort on the part of the eagle but unfortunately one that had not ended in success. Gary called Griffin back to the fist and it was plain to see that the two brief visits to the ground had left the eagle with tail and wing tips that were absolutely sodden. To add insult to injury the rain decided that this was the moment to return and to do so in a heavy fashion.

We moved on and Richard with Freya was next up to fly. We didn't have to wait long for another slip and a hare got up just over a hundred yards away and made off across a field of winter wheat.

Richard slipped the hood off of Freya and she was instantly in pursuit of the hare. She made up ground very quickly on the hare and was almost on terms with it as it made the safety of a hedgerow. The eagle threw up over the hedgerow and almost hovered for a couple of seconds whilst she tried to work out where the hare had disappeared to. She then spotted it as it re-emerged from the hedgerow some way distant and was off after it again. But luck was with the hare and it made the safety of a ditch which contained plenty of cover for it to lose itself in. The eagle crashed in at the spot where she had last seen the hare but to no avail. After avidly staring into the ditch for a few minutes she eventually returned to the fist. Again though it was blatantly obvious just how wet that brief visit to the ground had made her wing tips and tail feathers.

### Different flight pattern

For someone that does not hunt with eagles these two brief glimpses had already showed the different flight between the male and the female eagle quite clearly. Something that was confirmed time and time again as the day progressed. The wing beat of the male is short and rapid whereas that of the female is full and appears to be a great deal slower. It isn't slower at all but appears so because the strokes of the wing are so full and therefore much longer. A statement that is made repeatedly about more or less any raptor is that males are smaller, therefore more agile and accordingly faster than their female counterparts. I have never given this any credence myself and certainly in the case of these two eagles, and I suspect the vast majority of raptor species, the male may well have been up and running slightly more quickly, but once into her stride the female was very quick indeed and I would say quicker than the male.

Into the next field and again Griffin was off in pursuit of a hare the second he spotted it. Just as it seemed he would bring this hare to the bag it doubled back on him and then made the safety of a hedge. Griffin threw up over the hedge and flew around in the next field looking for the quarry that had suddenly disappeared on him. Not managing to spot anything he pitched on the ground.

As we walked through into the field Griffin was in, Gary called him back to the fist. However the eagle's albeit brief flight in that field had spooked the hares that were in there and they got up a long way off from us as we walked the field.

As we went through the gateway into the next field another hare was spotted sitting in its form and Richard approached with Freya unhooded and ready for the off. Eventually the hare broke from its seat and made off in a straight line. When the eagle was almost upon it the hare suddenly doubled back and ran straight towards the human element of the hawking party. At the last minute it veered off and back out through the gateway by which we had just entered. Freya was left sitting disconsolately on the ground. More importantly her major flight feathers were now even wetter than ever.

Our next field was a rather small one but contained sugar beet and this would assuredly give the eagles a decent chance. Sure enough we had only just lined out ready to walk the field when a hare got up and Gary cast Griffin off at it. The eagle tried hard to get on terms with the hare but at the last minute the hare performed a nifty side swerve and then made off for a sparse hedge. Problem was

the hedge, which made up one border of the field, had a public road running along the other side of it. There was a heart stopping moment as the eagle threw up over the hedge just as a car trundled along towards it. The eagle came straight back to Gary's fist without any hesitation and so was never low enough to be in any danger from the car. But it does make you wonder what on earth those in the car thought when a Golden eagle suddenly popped over the hedge right in front of them.

Safely back on the fist it was apparent that Griffin, just like Freya, was well and truly soaked. It was decided to head back towards the vehicles and go and find somewhere to have lunch and see if we could think of some method of drying the eagles out at all. As we trudged back towards the vehicles a hare got up more or less at the feet of Richard and made off across some winter wheat. Freya was slipped and made up ground on the hare surprisingly well and we all thought that perhaps this hare would be brought to bag. As the eagle got close the hare turned sideways and whereas a dry eagle would have turned with it and then stuck out a foot you could see that the wet plumage prevented Freya from turning quite so effectively as normal and thus



Griffin returning to Gary

the hare got away. So ended a morning that had seen us enjoy some really good sport but was also one that was fraught with disappointment. Added to this was the fact that it was so wet that digital cameras decided they just didn't like the conditions and were not going to work properly.

We soon found a friendly village pub and we ordered some warming drinks and a light lunch. On a visit to the gents I noticed one of the blower type hand driers was mounted on a pillar and the hot air nozzle swivelled. The fact that it was on a pillar meant there was sufficient room to position the eagle in front of it. A quiet word with a somewhat bemused landlord saw the somewhat bizarre sight of two golden eagles being taken into the men's toilet soaking wet and emerging some ten minutes later relatively dry. The emergence from the toilets on a busy Saturday lunchtime in a village pub meant that Richard and Gary spent the next ten minutes or so engaged in PR and in a question and answer session with the customers of the pub. We looked on amusedly as we ate our lunch and probably most of theirs as well.

### Running Terrier

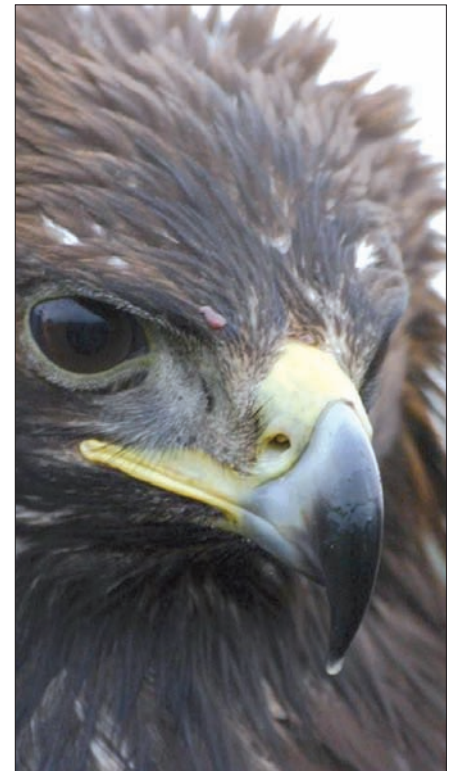
With dry eagles it was time to start again



Gary with Griffin

and, as always the case on such occasions, we began again with renewed enthusiasm and hope. On arrival at the afternoon's venue our hopes took a slight dip as we watched a terrier type dog running round and round the first field we had planned to hawk. The dog was chasing all and sundry that it came across and its owner, jogging some considerable distance off, was absolutely oblivious to the behaviour of her beloved little pet. To make matters worse the woman jogged into the next field on our hawking agenda and the delightful little pooch duly followed. It was no good ranting and raving at the woman, that would serve absolutely no purpose, the damage was done so better to expend the energy moving on to different fields and getting on with the hawking.

This we did and no sooner had we reached a suitable field and lined out ready to walk it than the rain returned and was very heavy. We were obviously not going to get very many flights in before the eagles became drenched again and so we moved quickly and purposefully on. Gary was first up with Griffin and got a flight pretty quickly. This time the hare was too close to a hedge and got through it and away quite a time before the eagle came to terms with it.



Freya

Gary held up his gloved fist and Griffin was straight back. As the eagle returned to the fist it was repeatedly dive bombed by a Black Headed Gull who obviously felt the eagle was very much out of place in these particular fields.

The next slip of the afternoon was for Freya and this was the closest we came to actually catching a hare that day. The hare had a good start but ran straight away from us and down a slight incline. Freya with her powerful wing beats closed the gap rapidly and as she did so the hare tried swerving away from the eagle at the last second in an effort to throw it off. But Freya had anticipated such a move and swerved in flight at the same moment. The hare looked done for but at quite literally the last second stopped dead and the eagle overshot. By the time Freya had swung round and was back in pursuit the hare had opened up a sufficient margin to enable it to reach the safety of the hedge without any problem.

By now the rain was heavy and incessant and it was decided by one and all that it would be best to call it a day. In terms of bag the day had been a far from successful one but then falconry should never be solely about the bag. In terms of sport and companionship it had been an extremely pleasant day and one, that despite getting up at four thirty in the morning and getting wet through, I genuinely had thoroughly enjoyed. Roll on next season, let's do it again.

# We Robert Heberden Barber were Falconers Part 2

**R**obin was – to his mind – cursed with a boyish face. He worried that the men he would one day lead might not look upon him as a mature officer and follow his commands when he still looked like a young teenager. This wouldn't do so, standing in front of a bathroom mirror, he hit upon the idea of growing a mustache to make himself look older and more distinguished. He settled on a Basil Rathbone look, quite fitting since Rathbone had been a Repton boy too.

Robin graduated from Sandhurst on December 17, 1935. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Northamptonshire Regiment on January 30, 1936. In January of the following year he was sent to India, still the crown jewel of the British Empire, where he was first based at Razmak with the 1st Battalion.

India was an exotic and intoxicating posting and many in the British Army delighted in being assigned there. Robin was well aware of the tradition of hawking in northern India, having devoured Phillott's essays on various aspects of falconry published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, and Delme Radcliffe's small treatise on hawking there in the 1860's. He had heard stories of Indian sport as practised by officers of the nineteenth century such as Stephen Biddulph and Benjamin Heywood Jones and was anxious to see if he could find native falconers to hunt with in the twentieth.

Robin was fortunate in March to find

an Indian chieftain with whom to go hawking. He left us no written account of the sport there but surviving are a dozen photographs he took of hawking in the plains. Sakers and goshawks were the birds most commonly flown, and they were flown to provide food for the Indian family not just for sport. As did Lawrence of Arabia, Robin must have felt a bit of the romantic pull to become part of a culture so different from his own. A lovely photograph exists showing Robin in native attire, much like the classic picture of Lawrence in flowing Bedouin robes.

Fighting in Waziristan, now part of Pakistan, was to occupy most of his first year in India. There was soon little time for hawking as his regiment was heavily engaged in trying to pacify the tribal entities in that fractured part of the country. During Robin's time in Waziristan 242 soldiers



Robert Heberden Barber with Cassandra



in his 48th Regiment were killed and 685 wounded. Brigadier General W.J. Jervois writes thusly of the Waziristan campaign in which Barber took part: "It had been a hard year for the 48th. They had scaled, and held, hills which in any other part of the world would merit the name mountains, often in the face of enemy fire, only to withdraw from them when, and not a minute before, they received the order to do so. They had covered close on 1,500 miles on their feet. They had been hot, cold, wet, hungry and tired. But they had never lost heart."

The rigors of marching, fighting, and life in temporary camps toughened Robin considerably. His boyish looks hardened into a man's visage and he became a leaner tougher self. Looking in the mirror he must have begun to see his emergence as officer material, something that at Sandhurst he fretted about. The boyish Robin was gone and now an officer looked back at him in the glass. For actions in Waziristan Robin was awarded the Indian General Service Medal with Waziristan battle clasp.

In January 1939 Robin's battalion was relieved from active fighting and sent eastwards, to Dinapore, for rest and relaxation and lighter duty. The countryside was a hot, humid and populous place in the Ganges valley and not at all lovely. Despite that, Robin delighted in the sporting opportunities in the environs. He zealously pursued hawking. Pig sticking, shooting, and a bit of polo enlivened his days in between patrols around the countryside.

### Expedition leader

From Dinapore Robin lead an expedition in February to find the source of a Nepalese glacier but evidently the weather prevented him from achieving his goal. Shortly afterwards he applied for and was accepted as a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He was quite proud of this affiliation and you will see this designation – F.R.G.S. – after his name on the cover of his book.

Sport in Dinapore also included a hunt after wild tiger, on the backs of elephants, in the classic Indian manner. Sir Leonard Woolley, the eminent British archaeologist, was coming to India. To honour him a tiger shoot was arranged at which he presumably would bag his trophy and return home triumphant. As

Eileen Barber, Robin's wife, tells the story:

"Apparently the hunting method was that they would try to isolate the poor tiger in part of the forest so that he would be hungry and be more likely to break cover when the hunting party came riding on elephants. My husband-to-be was of course very junior, being 22 at the time, and riding on the last elephant in the procession through the forest. The tiger broke cover and rushed at the elephant in front of Robin, on which rode Lady Woolley, and he, who clearly didn't believe in empty rifles, shot it dead with one shot as it charged. This was not the way it was supposed to happen of course, but Robin was much feted. After the war I was at a dinner party and heard a woman telling the tale: 'It was absolutely petrifying', she said, 'a huge tiger broke from the undergrowth and charged towards my elephant and this young subaltern raised his rifle and with one shot brought the animal down'. It was Lady Woolley, and of course I said, 'That must have been my husband.'"

The tiger's head still glowers menacingly down at Robin's descendants today in their house near London.

Robin's posting to India was cut short as the Nazi menace became more and more threatening in Europe. In April 1939 he sailed back to England for a short leave, slated to become ADC to the Governor of Bombay upon his return. On September 3rd, however, two days after Hitler's army invaded Poland, Britain declared war on Germany. Great Britain lacked experienced officers for the size the army had now attained so experienced men – and Robin's year under fire in Waziristan was more experience than many had – counted greatly. He was sent to France with the 2nd Northamptonshire battalion as part of the British Expeditionary Force.

Evidently Robin's intelligence, practicality, and promise were noticed by the army brass. After some months with the BEF he was recalled to Britain on January 5, 1940 prior to the start of the Battle of France on May 10th. He was posted to the 9th, then 50th Holding Battalions, followed afterwards on October 7, 1940 by an appointment to the General Staff in 12 Corps. Robin was promoted to a General Staff Officer, 3rd grade, as a Temporary Captain soon after.

Happiness entered Robin's life on

June 15, 1941 when he married Eileen Mary Louisa Coombe, the only child of Captain and Mrs. Harvey Coombe of Oaklands Park, Battle, Sussex. Eileen's grandmother's family, the Lamberts of County Mayo, and Robin's mother's family, the Thompsons of Salruck, had known each other for generations in Ireland. It wasn't until Robin went out prospecting for a place to shoot in England, however, that they met. They were married within 6 months of meeting at Holy Trinity Church, Prince Consort Road, South Kensington.

In September 1941 Robin was transferred to the General Headquarters of the Home Forces. From March 12th through July 3rd of 1942 he attended the No. 8 Junior Staff Course at the army's Staff College Camberley. A year's work was accomplished in three months, so great was the pressure to train the many officers needed for the war effort. One of Robin's course members actually shot himself, breaking under the strain.

From July to December 1942 he was based at the Home Forces HQ in the Aldershot District.

### Promotion given

Exemplary work there garnered him a promotion to Temporary Major and War Substantive Captain on October 14, 1942. Two months later, on December 17th, he was transferred to the epicenter of British war planning, the Cabinet War Rooms in London, working on General Ismay's staff. On several occasions Robin was called upon to inform Churchill on military matters.

During respites in the early 1940's Robin was able to continue hawking and shooting on visits home. Evidently his father looked after his birds, so it is doubtful they were in the fittest condition for flying when he was able to take them out. Unable to journey to Ireland in 1942, Robin and his wife took the train from Aldershot to Scotland for a holiday. Eileen was a good sport as Robin was able to avail himself of an invitation to go grouse hawking with Gilbert Blaine, the grand master of British falconry. Blaine had commenced his falconry career under the guidance of Major Charles Hawkins Fisher of Stroud, one of the preeminent falconers of the 19th century. He was thus a bridge between the Old Hawking Club and a new generation

of falconers like Robin. In his diary for October 11th Blaine writes: "At 1500 hours a distinguished party took the field. Present were Colonel Speed, Major Barber and his Lady, Miss Patricia Harman, Lieut. Roberts of the Pigeons, and your humble servant with his trusty retainer James Chalmers, leading a goodly posse of dogges." The Barbers enjoyed several outings with Blaine that week hawking grouse with 'Cleopatra' and 'Patricia'.

While with the General Staff in London Robin concentrated on German troop movements and other aspects of army intelligence. His careful analysis of military situations was appreciated and because of this Ismay selected him to accompany Churchill's party to the historic Quebec Conference in Canada. Held from August 17th through August 24th, 1943, the secret meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, Mackenzie King, and Soong of China set major plans in motion for the invasions of France and Italy. The US and Britain also signed a hush-hush pact for the sharing of nuclear technology. Another falconer was also present at this conference, playing an important part in the inner circle – Air Marshal Sir Charles Portal of Hungerford.

Upon his return from Canada, with his 2nd Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment now in North Africa, Robin was posted to the 6th Battalion of the Northamptonshire on October 18th.

His stay there was short as plans for the invasion of France were well advanced. Robin was selected to be the commander of D Company, the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment, and he took charge of them on February 7, 1944. They were sent to Scotland for months of rigorous training.

Only the most competent soldiers were chosen to train and lead the initial assault companies as what happened in the first hours of the landing would determine the victory or utter defeat of the invading force. It is no small statement to say that victory in this war lay squarely on the shoulders of the leaders and men of the assault companies and the fate of western civilization, no small outcome, lay in the success of the endeavor before them. Robin must have felt both the honor and frightening responsibility of his posting.

### New book published

During the last year of his visits home before embarking for Normandy Robin finished writing the small book by which he is now known to falconers, *A Supplementary Bibliography of Hawking*. Published in 1943, in an edition of 1000 copies, it was Robin's attempt to extend Harting's 1891 *Biblioteca Accipitraria* with an account of the books published afterwards on falconry. Unlike Harting, Robin only included those books written in English.

Robin seems to have had a great affinity for the history of our sport as well as its practice. Like many falconers he had a streak of the romantic in him, reveling in the knowledge that he was part of a line of men practising a sport that extended back through time to the first falconer. He writes: "Every year, in out-of-the-way places throughout the British Isles, the hawk's bell and the cry of the falconer may be heard as have they been for many hundreds of years. In effect, I would venture to say that the sport is more popular today in this country than it was in the eighteenth century."

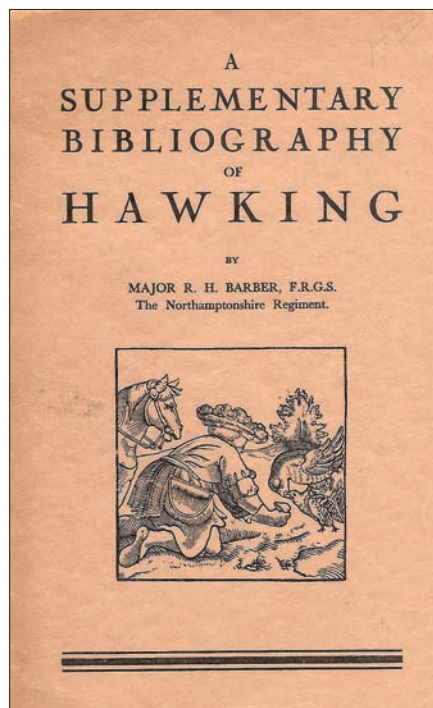
He read the classics voraciously and over time built up a lovely library of books on hawking. "My library consists of some forty books in English. In collecting I make two rules. The first, never to buy a book which I do not intend to read; the second, never to buy a book on sight without closely examining it, checking its perfection from at least two

bibliographies, reading any criticisms available, and checking from several sources its current price." Wise advice then and now. Robin goes on to say, "All this has to be done without delay or the book will have disappeared." He would be shocked to know this admonishment is even truer today, with vast numbers of falconers and raptor enthusiasts around the globe competing for classic books on the sport – including his own.

Robin's observations and critiques on the various books in his list are generally erudite and on target. Harting's *Biblioteca Accipitraria* is "indispensable to the collector". Gerald Lascelles' *Coursing and Falconry* is "one of the best books. A would be falconer... should make the acquaintance of Lascelles at an early date". Michell's *The Art and Practice of Hawking* is "the best book published hitherto for the beginner. Michell's knowledge of hawks was extensive but, as his favorite was the Merlin, his instructions for handling that species are without doubt the soundest ever written".

Robin's book met with the approval of the British falconry community, and also the Americans when it found its way across the Atlantic. William Ruttledge, in a review in the 1948 BFC Journal, remarks: "The pamphlet opens with an interesting discussion on early books on falconry. A useful criticism of each book is given, based on the author's practical experience on hawking." No one knows why Robin printed a thousand copies as there were probably no more than two hundred practising falconers in Britain at the time. We suppose, knowing the high prices old falconry tomes commanded due to scarcity, he intended that his book always be plentiful, inexpensive, and available.

Robin and Eileen were able to find time in July, 1943 to visit his well loved Irish country home. Salruck beckoned him as did no other place. Childhood memories of days spent fishing with his father and brother, boating on the waters with his sister, climbing the hills, and sleuthing out the nests of Merlins and Peregrines were the threads that tied him to all he believed was good in life. He was anxious to show this magical place to his wife, and it seems Eileen was greatly pleased to share in the beauties of Ireland with him. The Barbers were a



Robert Heberden Barber's book

well liked - even loved - family and Eileen found herself wrapped in the warmth of the country people. Robin writes, "All the people came to see us in hundreds and we ended up with 12 1/2 dozen eggs, 2 lobsters, 2 1/2 salmon, and a chicken. We caught 3 brown trout and 2 white trout on the rods, 6 white trout, a herring, 117 mackerel and 10 scallops in the bay. The river was full of fish." Wartime food rationing in England was severe at this time, and this abundance of food was a complete miracle. The greatest gift he received, however, was something close to his heart. "Michael came down with a young Merlin he had taken from the nest in Lough Fee. There were five, he said, and they all flew but one. It was a sweet bird, just right for training." His wish was to have his parents and sister join them at Salruick in July 1944, the whole family together again. "We might all be over there next year," he wrote his parents hopefully.

### General Staff appointment

Sometime in the weeks prior to D-Day Robin was offered a permanent office position on the General Staff. It was an important appointment and would have kept him in England, safely away from enemy fire. The job would certainly have advanced his career. Robin, however, quickly dismissed the idea before the offer was fully broached. He had been drilling and training his men of the East Yorkshire Regiment for months and felt his obligations lay with them, that it was his duty to lead them onto the beach. While the decision came quickly to his mind there must have been agony over the price his family would pay were he wounded or killed in combat. He already knew his parents' grief – and his own – at the death of Colin. As the last son his parents would be devastated should anything bad befall him. And Eileen, how it would pain the sweetest person he ever met. He felt, however, that such a sacrifice was called for to save Britain and her people and return a semblance of balance to a world turned upside down. In making the decision he might have recalled the words of Sir Richard Francis Burton, author of "Falconry In The Valley of the Indus", who wrote: "Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from none but self expect applause, he noblest lives and noblest dies who vows and keeps his self

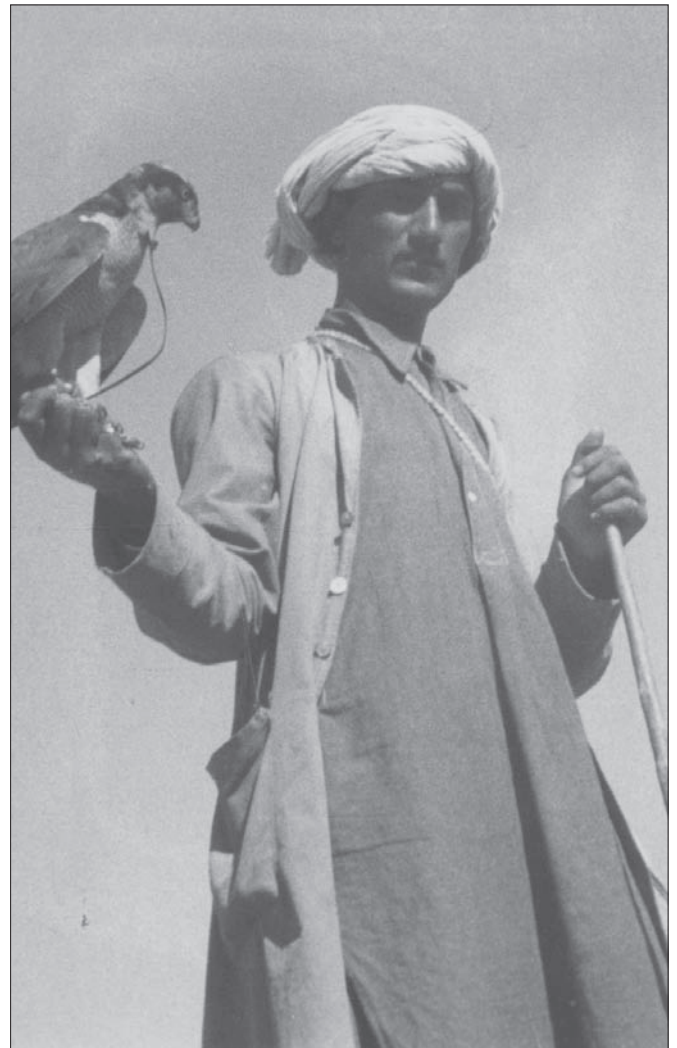
made laws."

Eileen has not spoken of her last moments with her husband before he left her side for the invasion of France. In so many homes in Britain these leave-takings were emotional and stressful. How could they not be? Robin was devoted to his young wife, very much so, and she to him. We will leave their parting moments to them alone.

We estimate that Robin was killed within 15 minutes of landing on Sword Beach. Hugh Temple Bone, who was in the same landing craft as Robin, wrote of the horrifying scenes of men torn apart by shrapnel, floating dead in the rising tide, bleeding from wounds they couldn't staunch. He was shocked and saddened at the death of Robin, his aide Jimmy Laurie, and so many other comrades. The images still remain hauntingly in his mind. In 2004, in a movie about D-Day, Bone had this to say about Robin and the other men who died in the initial assault on Sword Beach: "The best ones die first because they are the brave ones, they're the ones who go forward, and, it's sad, it's very sad, but one has to face the fact that in war that's what happens."

Robin was buried in a temporary grave on the beach, above the high water mark, on June 7th.

In January 1945, Eileen Barber was taken to the hospital in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. On the morning of the 12th she gave birth to a lovely baby girl. For the first time in many months her grieving heart felt again a touch of beauty and hope. She named her daughter Robin – her husband's nickname – and wished with all her heart he could be with her to share her happiness. Eileen would be the



Indian falconer

bridge tying together father and daughter, two people who loved one another but could never meet.

Sixty years passed and, on June 6, 2004, two elderly men walked up a small paved path into the British War Cemetery at Hermanville-sur-Mer. The cemetery is located only a short distance from the sea, from Sword Beach, in what is yet a lovely part of the French countryside. A ring of tall trees surrounds the cemetery, shading and guarding the one thousand and three markers of Portland stone that rise commandingly from a green, well tended lawn.

One of the men, once a young sapper with the 246 Field Engineers, pulled out a letter from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission telling him how to find the grave he sought. He nodded the direction to his brother-in-law and together they counted off the rows of gravestones until they came to the one they wanted. Section I, Row G, Marker 16.

"Here he is," breathed Thomas Baldwin. "He saved my life, you know, by putting his hand on my shoulder." To his brother-in-law he read aloud the simple inscription on the stone, "Major R H Barber, the Northamptonshire Regiment, 6 June 1944, Age 28".

As he stood quietly beside the grave the sapper's mind began to fill with flashes of all the memories of his life. They came quickly and relentlessly. His parents, his boyhood, his schooling, his enlisting in the army. D-Day, of course. His fighting in France, his job, his beloved wife, his children, his mates, his sports, his marching in veteran's parades. The memories flew through his mind, warring for his attention, overwhelming him. Memories he would never have had were it not for an officer's command to hold fast until called.

Three men, other veterans he thought, walked slowly down the path behind Barber's grave. They nodded silently to him and his brother-in-law as they passed by. He noticed that all had the stains of tears on their cheeks.

"These old men," he whispered plaintively, "these old, old, men. Why are they all crying?"

His brother-in-law looked at him and smiled gently, seeing tears welling in Thomas Baldwin's own eyes. Strangely, he seemed to be looking into the eyes of an eighteen year old, the age the young sapper had been on D-Day, not those of a 78 year old man.

"I think you know why, Sapper," he said quietly, and nodding at the grave of Robert Heberden Barber he added, "After all, he gave you a lifetime to find the answer."

Thomas Baldwin bowed his head in agreement. As they walked away from the grave the air smelled of the sea and history.

### Epilogue

Eileen Barber is living yet, though frail in health, loved by her daughter, son-in-law, and two grandsons. She never re-married. Robin Barber (Wells) married American David Wells in 1980 and has two sons, Robert and Patrick, who have inherited their father's and grandfather's liking for country sports. The family lives near London. Colin Browne Barber is buried in the Benghazi War Cemetery in Benghazi, Libya. He was awarded the

Military Cross. Ruth Barber (Willoughby) married, had children, and lived to the good age of 93. She is buried on a hill in Ireland near her family home. Ian Kay "Kim" Muir was killed on May 27, 1940 and is interred in Hodeng-au-Bosc cemetery. His sister had the George Lodge painting of his favorite falcon, Black Jess, carved on his grave marker. Thomas Stanley Baldwin, who wrote under the pen name "Young Sapper", sustained several war wounds but survived until leukemia laid him low, age 83, in 2008. He met the love of his life, Ethel, in 1944 while convalescing in Britain. They were married for over 53 years and have three children. Hugh Temple Bone became a Methodist minister and is living yet in southern England. The old warrior for country and god is now quite frail and in fading health. Robert Heberden Barber sleeps forever in the cemetery at Hermanville sur Mer.

### In thanks

Our article about Barber could not have been written without the generous assistance of many people. Robin Barber Wells, after overcoming her shock at having two strangers call to say they wanted to write about her father, fell wholeheartedly into the conspiracy. David Wells, an ex-US Army officer, was pivotal in researching Robin's military career. Hans Houterman of Holland aided us as well with military information. Hugh Temple Bone and Thomas Stanley Baldwin (Young Sapper) gave us their first hand accounts of the Sword Beach landings and Barber, thanks in part to the BBC's World War II programs. French falconers Pierre Courjaret and Gilles Maillard brought their falcons to Robin's grave for the photo that accompanies this article. They were deeply moved and honoured to perform this service for a soldier falconer who died on their

soil. Jan Cobb of Repton School gave us the details of Barber's schooling, and Dr. A. R. Morton of Sandhurst briefed us on Barber's time at the College. Peter Harrington of Brown University sent us histories of the Northamptonshire Regiment from their superb collection of militaria. Lynn Beecroft proof read, printed, and investigated all the things the authors couldn't find out. George Edward Lodge Trust reference the painting and Vassar College who let us ransack their databases for information whenever we needed to.

Robert Heberden Barber's gravestone



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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**

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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.seraonline.co.uk](http://www.seraonline.co.uk)  
or telephone Brian for information on: **01732 463218**



# Independent Bird Register

Telephone 0844 700 8500

## IBR Lost, Found, Reunited & Stolen birds of prey from 10th January to 24th March 2010

The IBR would like to thank all of those people that helped to reunite and look after found birds.

If you think one of these birds is yours or you think you may know the owner, - please contact us.

If you have reported losing a bird it is **LOGGED** on the database and **REMAINS** on the **LOST LIST** until **WE** are told differently.

Our web site now has a rolling 2 month lost IBR registered list and a found list.

Part of the ring number has been replaced with a ? for security reasons

**REMEMBER!** We offer a service don't abuse it.

### STOLEN x 1 (this is a list of stolen IBR registered birds)

BREF	RING NUMBERS	SPECIES
73717	IBR72022W	HARRIS HAWK

### REUNITED x 96

AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL	1
BARN OWL	7
COMMON BUZZARD	2
EURASIAN EAGLE OWL	5
FERRUGINOUS HAWK	1
GOLDEN EAGLE	1
GOLDEN x TAWNY EAGLE	1
GYR HYBRID FALCON	12
HARRIS HAWK	27
LANNER FALCON	5
LITTLE OWL	1
LONG-EARED OWL	1
MERLIN	1
PEREGRINE FALCON	6
PEREGRINE HYBRID	11
RED-TAILED HAWK	4
SAKER FALCON	7
SPARROWHAWK	2
WHITE-FACED SCOPS OWL	1

### LOST x 15 (this is a list of lost IBR registered birds)

BREF	RING NUMBERS	SPECIES
24739	?0697?	BARN OWL
32455	?2723?	BARN OWL
51150	?5022?	BARN OWL
70737	?6728?	BARN OWL

75116	?4576? / ?768?	GYR / SAKER FALCON
65557	?562?	GYR / SAKER x SAKER
23230	?1190?	HARRIS HAWK
50476	?5079?	HARRIS HAWK
53808	?BLH0?	HARRIS HAWK
56699	?6141?	HARRIS HAWK
68529	?6928?	HARRIS HAWK-SUPERIOR
47784	?563?	HARRIS SUPERIOR
65678	?EZ0?	LANNER FALCON
74944	?3708?	PEREGRINE/BARBARY HYBRID
56995	?6274?	SAKER FALCON

### FOUND x 16

BREF	RING NUMBERS	SPECIES
5278	?7955?	PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID
20023	?6706?	PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID
24699	?4187?	LUGGER FALCON
41525	?7021?	HARRIS HAWK
44500	?2553?	HARRIS HAWK
54780	?6308?	HARRIS HAWK
71343	?7391?	BARN OWL
74881	?02BC0?	BARN OWL
74882	?4BC0?	SPARROWHAWK
74893	?0192?	GYR/SAKER FALCON
75217	?13BC9?	BARN OWL
75218	?SOS0?	EURASIAN EAGLE OWL
75249	?BM0?	HARRIS HAWK
75295	?2601?	BARN OWL
75610	??04??	GYR HYBRID FALCON
75622	?4073?	PEREGRINE HYBRID



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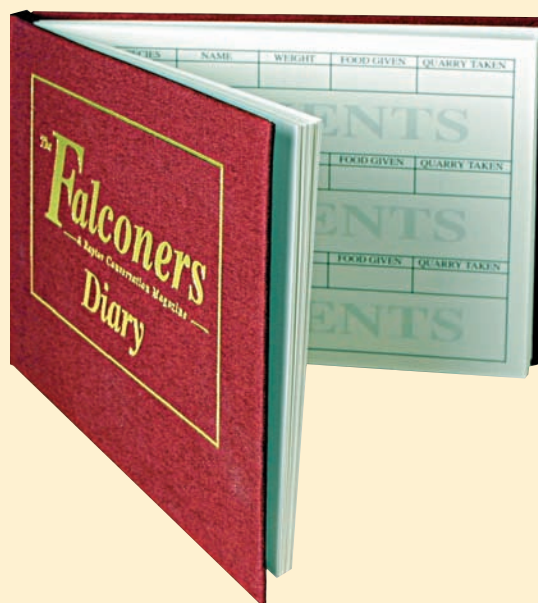
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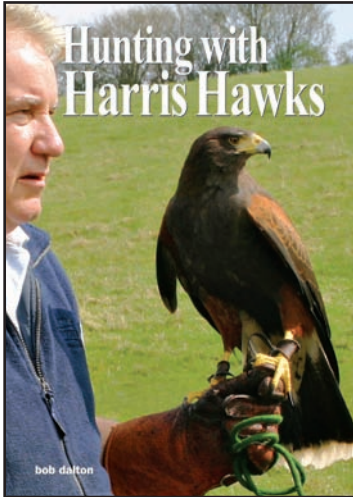
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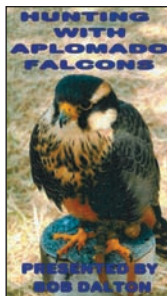
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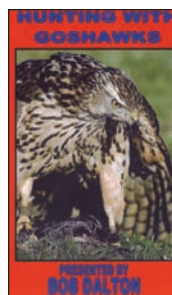
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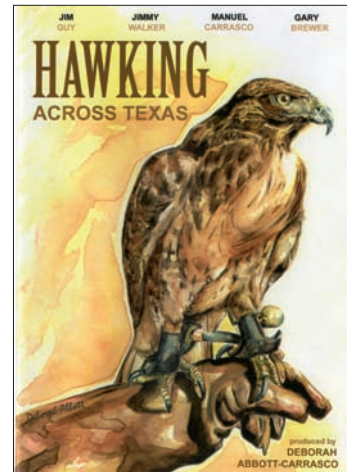
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