



the
AUSTRINGER

News journal of the WELSH HAWKING CLUB

THE AUSTRINGER

Journal of the WELSH HAWKING CLUB

C O N T E N T S

EDITORIAL	2
SECRETARY'S PAGE	3
UNFULFILLED PROMISE & HAWKS LEFT OUT Dr G.F. Jolly	5
PERSONALITY PAGE Lorant De Bastyai	8
HACKED TO FREEDOM Roy Saunders	9
DO-IT-YOURSELF Hawk Bell Making D. Gordon Gower	11
AMENDMENT TO THE WILD BIRD PROTECTION ACT Graham F. Date	13

Editor GRAHAM F. DATE

Editorial

As the newly appointed editor, I anxiously await your reactions to this third edition of the 'Austringer' and hope it may favourably compare with the past two issues, most admirably handled by the joint efforts of our Chairman and Secretary.

It is my intention to mould the Austringer into a magazine, to be enjoyed not only by W.H.C. members, but by all, who may have occasion to read its contents and who genuinely practice the art of Falconry, today.

An attempt has been made to give our magazine a 'new look' by establishing a basic structure for future editions. Special pages such as 'Personalities', Do-it-yourself, News and Views, etc. will appear as standard features in each issue. In this way one hopes to encourage potential contributions, being aware of the 'form' the magazine now follows, -to take pen to paper and supply the editor with material.

The response, for such material, received from local members cannot be too highly praised, unfortunately it cannot be left to the 'few'.

YOUR contributions, however small and unimportant they may seem, will be readily accepted. I appeal to you - make the effort, as the 'life blood' of future editions of the Austringer is in YOUR hands.

EDITOR.

Secretary's Page

Our Chairman requested that I, as outgoing Hon. Sec. contribute something towards this issue of the Austringer. Knowing how his casual requests have a hidden purpose, I suspect that he may have sympathising labour pains for our Editor's potential ulcers, no doubt through, and rightly so, perpetually worrying about the lack of contributions from members towards this issue of Austringer.

However it would nevertheless be impolite of me, as outgoing Sec. to leave without outlining the reason, why in future I shall not be taking an active part in Club affairs.

For some considerable time it has become increasingly obvious to myself, that impending personal commitments would make it impracticable for me to continue to take an active part in Club affairs. Reluctantly, I informed the committee and members of my decision at a meeting prior to the A.G.M. True to the club's general atmosphere the room was filled with sudden elation and hearty sighs of relief. Drinks all round was the call, I think the Chairman was caught for the first round. The imminent vacancy of the most desired post within the Club, endowing great respect, eminence and numerous fringe benefits, was too much for them. Self elections flowed forth, the meeting ended in the usual tradition, chaos.

To a more serious note, the Extraordinary General Meeting held in the latter end of 1968, to decide the Club's future policy, resulted in confirming unanimous support for the Club's present policy. That being, to align them more so with those of the B.F.C. Those present considered these were in the best interests of both Falconry and Falconers as a whole.

However both your present Hon. Sec. and Editor will keep you well informed regarding these matters in future issues of the Austringer.

This year's A.G.M. was well attended by members and many useful proposals put forward. The N.A.F.A.'s new Code of Conduct was adopted, once again these you will receive via your future issues of the Austringer. I list below your newly elected committee members.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <u>President</u> | L. de Bastyai |
| 2. <u>Vice Presidents</u> | Lady Trehearne
P.W. Humphreys |
| 3. <u>Chairman</u> | K.C. Macleure |
| 4. <u>Vice Chairman</u> | L. Workman |

cont'd

Secretary's Page cont'd

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 5. <u>Hon. Secretary</u> | Roy Saunders
63, Wenallt Road,
Rhiwbina,
Cardiff. |
| 6. <u>Hon. Treasurer</u> | L. Reid |
| 7. <u>Committee</u> | H. B. Jones
D. Morgans
G. Gower
J. Vater
M. Prichard
J. Buchner |
| 8. <u>Librarian</u> | L. Workman |
| 9. <u>Hon. Vet.</u> | M. Morris |
| 10. <u>Editor</u> | G. Date |
| 11. <u>Publicity Officer</u> | K. C. Macleur |

(T. P. Jenkins)

PRINTING CORRECTION

Referring to the 2nd INTERNATIONAL FALCONERS MEETING - AUSTRIA mentioned in the first edition of the AUSTRINGER. As stated in that first issue, to quote 'An invitation has been extended to all our members' was not correct. The invitation was in fact a personal one, to a number of our members and did not apply to the Club as a whole. We sincerely hope this printing error caused no embarrassment to members.

Editor.

Unfulfilled Promise & Hawks Left Out

Dr. Gordon Jolly.

As in previous years I was able to enjoy a fortnights hawking holiday in Lincolnshire.

The regular members of the party have included Steven Frank and myself, until, the last two years when Jack Mavrogordato and his falconer Leonard Potter joined our ranks for part of the time.

This annual expedition has been possible, following intense spadework by our good friend, John Loft, in whose debt we are more heavily placed each year, and the many consenting landowners, shooting tenants and farmers who have so generously accorded us hospitality.

Steven Frank arrived after a season on the Scottish moors, and I, whose opportunity for sport is rather more limited, came up from Wiltshire. Leonard Potter travelled with me with the haggard Lanner- Pearl.

We foregathered in the large, pleasant garden of John Loft rather 'over dogged' and 'underhawked'. I had feared as much for Steven's fine intermewed Spanish falcon had unfortunately died at the close of last season. During that season she had taken 51 head of grouse, 26 partridges, pheasants and sundries. Her death was a bitter blow for she was the ideal game hawk to fly on a partridge manor being very steady.

Dr. J.R. Justice's Peales falcon Hai whose earlier flying last season showed great potential developed this steadiness whilst rook/crow hawking near Marlborough. She had taken 43 head of grouse on the Scottish moors before she was lost during the second week of September this year (1966).

Steven's old Scottish peregrine now in her 7th season had scored 91 kills last season but was grounded after the second day's flying in Lincolnshire due to her propensity for flying wood pigeon which abounded.

As a result, we faced the main hawking with Steven's young Spanish eyas Carmeta and Jack Mavros' haggard Lanner Pearl who incidentally had taken 10 head last year. Making up the party were three trained pointers and a Clumber spaniel.

Partridges were definitely less numerous than previous years and I think it true a progressive decline has ensued since our first visit to this area during 1963. Unless there is a dramatic change in the trend, partridge hawking could become a pursuit of the past.

Our comfortable quarters consisted of two caravans parked in the garden while John Loft had completed an equally comfortable and excellent mews for the falcons.

The first day's flying was opened with the old Scottish falcon who took a red leg partridge in her usual style - flew and bound to an old cock pheasant but failed to hold him. The young Spanish falcon Carmeta was then flown and almost killed a partridge while the lanner was not flown.

cont'd.

The following day was one of the few sunny and dry days we experienced. Both the old falcon, who killed a pigeon and the lanner showed a distressing interest in these rather than waiting-on overhead to be served with game. The third day, while most interesting was also frustrating. Our hawking ground was near the coast. A covey of partridges were sighted on a stubble field adjoining a dyke, over which one could not see due to its high banks. The lanner was put up, going around nicely, but the covey rose slightly wide of her after which she made no attempt to fly them. This underlines the difference between the inexperienced eyas and the wild caught falcon, -the former will often make an attempt despite being badly or impossibly placed while the latter shows no interest.

The partridges were marked into a hedge, running at right angles to the dyke, Steven moving up with the pointers got a nice point. The lanner came over well as a partridge was flushed, she came down in a 45° stoop disappearing behind the far side of the dyke bank. A few seconds later a cloud of birds rose into the sky from the direction Pearl had taken. We quickly crossed the dyke by means of a wooden bridge some 100 yards away and commenced our search. It was thought she had probably killed close to or actually in a hedge now visible, on the far side of a ploughed field running up to the road and dyke bank. Carefully the area was searched including both sides of the hedge and back into the plough, but no sound from her bells-no sign of the lanner.

After approximately 45 minutes we were returning to the original hedge mentioned earlier. Our host was sitting in a landrover talking to another farmer, when suddenly a gull flew over the plough making a shallow stoop and squawking before flying on. A few seconds later from the depths of the furrows Pearl appeared sitting on a clod. Taking wing almost immediately and flying down the dyke she finally took stance some half a mile away in a tree.

We were able to watch her until dusk by which time she had moved on two or three occasions, finally selecting a large willow standing alone, in which to spend the night. Although still dark 5.40am saw us in the field. At 6.15 her bells were heard confirming her presence. A lark started singing at 6.30 and 15 minutes later Leonard Potter was able to see well enough to move in position and display his lures. Despite a half crop remaining from her gorge she bossed at them and after circling around settled our anxieties by sitting on the dead enabling Leonard to make in and take her up.

Pearl, who had been grounded during the previous 3 days was put up over a covey running through a field of potatoes. A stiff breeze had sprung up carrying her down wind. At this point the lure was produced but while Pearl was returning she re-drifted downwind over two sets of farm buildings and was lost. We spent a miserable evening

/cont'd

cont'd.

searching, and again with an early morning start searched the whole of the day without success. We flew Carmeta in an attempt to overcome our gloomy mood but although she had two nice flights at partridges she had no kill.

Two more mornings, searching the area were as unsuccessful as the first search with no indication of the whereabouts of Pearl from the abundant game in the vicinity. Pearl was well and truly lost.

Our flying strength was now reduced permanently to one eyas falcon, - Carmeta who went up well but rather inconstant, not appearing to press her stoops home as hard as she might. At this stage John Loft's intermewed male Gos. Twit killed a hen pheasant opening his score for that season.

One days flying was impossible due to dense fog. On our last but one day we were ready to leave for the afternoon's hawking, when a good friend of ours Brian Simpson telephoned the exciting news that he had been in touch with Pearl most of the morning. A farmer had seen her sitting on a gravel mound beside a farm road, he described her as a 'bloody Vulture' and commented upon her wet and miserable looking condition. She had obviously taken a bath. Brian was able to get within 6 feet of her but no closer and consequently gave us a ring.

Steve and I rushed down there as Jack Mavro and Leonard had already travelled back to Wiltshire. We arrived at the spot Pearl had recently been encountered by Brian but our hearts sank when Pearl was nowhere in sight. Again we started to search when we noticed three crows showing interest in a field full of bales. As we considered investigating further to our great joy Pearl suddenly appeared heading over us, coming around and finally taking stance on a nearby pylon.

Three efforts to make in to her were unsuccessful on each occasion she returned to the pylon. It was impossible to attempt 'winding' her up for the ground was too uneven. Eventually she snared herself with one of the nooses which caught around her bell allowing Steve to make in and take her up. Having been out 8 days was taken up only $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the point she had been lost.

Elated by our recapture we rushed off to fly the Spanish falcon before darkness fell and at the second flight she outflew a hen pheasant in fine style, an exciting finish to a most anxious but rewarding day.

As a result of our two weeks expedition the score was very modest but no falcons were lost permanently and both we and our hosts enjoyed the sport.

Lorant De Bastyai

Who could choose a more colourful and appropriate personality to open this new series than the President of our own club. A story that indeed could well fill several news journals.

Lorant arrived in this country after a hurried exit from his homeland, Hungary, during the national uprising. At that time a curator of the Budapest Zoo he had already earned the grand title 'Falconer Supreme' after many years of practical experience in the field. During this time he served as professional falconer to a number of the Hungarian aristocracy and as a professional working for the Government in the protection of the fishing industry against marauding herons.

On arrival in the U.K. he found a position at Dudley Zoo as a keeper. He didn't stay long for reasons best known to Lorant and soon joined a taxidermy firm in London, who were glad of his other specialist knowledge, taxidermy.

It was while working at this establishment that he met Nancy, who was also a member of the staff and who became his wife. Nancy also being very keen in falconry and Lorant's other interests.

After several months he was persuaded by Peter Scott to join the staff at the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust. His extensive experience of taxidermy and knowledge of bird 'settings' was brought into practice by making lifelike goose decoys to be used when Peter Scott was goose ringing and trapping by means of rocket thrown nets.

His next move was to Newport as the taxidermist to Newport and Mon. Schools Service, it was here that he was contacted by our Chairman. This led to Lorant's appointment as Vice President of the Newport Wildfowling and Gun Club and it was a nucleus of this club that eventually decided to form the Welsh Hawking Club with Lorant acting as its President.

Regretfully, for us, his next appointment took him to Colwyn Bay Zoo as curator of birds, working with his beloved falcons and hawks. It was not long before the Zoo boasted of the largest collection of birds of prey in this country.

While at work here, Lorant was struck down by a very severe illness, putting him on the critical list for many days. After a long but successful convalescence he recovered but not sufficiently to enable him to continue his work at the Zoo.

We are now right up to date with Lorant, working under his own name as a Professional Taxidermist in Leamington Spa.
Long may he reign.

Hacked To Freedom

Roy Saunders.

For centuries throughout mediæval times, young peregrine falcons were regularly taken from eyries on the cliffs of Pembrokeshire and sent by special delivery and immense cost to the Royal Mews of the hunting Kings of England. Sometimes a 'cast' of peregrines would be sent overseas as a gift to some continental monarch. Royal falconers of old knew few greater honours than to receive such a gift which far outweighed the value of the finest racehorse.

From its supreme position in the favour of man, this noble bird was then demoted to the status of a hunted outlaw. By a strange quirk of fate in recent times, the shotgun, the gamekeeper, the pigeon fancier and the farmer with insecticides, have banished the peregrine almost to the verge of extermination.

But happily the tide has begun to turn again, in time, to save the last remnants of British surviving stock. Our peregrines are now high on the list of protected birds. Let any pigeon fancier or gamekeeper dare raise a squeak of animosity against them on press or radio and he will be 'stooped at' and ripped from stem to stern by the hind talons of the law, the Home Office, bird protection groups, County Naturalist Trusts, conservationists and of course, falconers.

During the Spring of 1968 a story came out of Pembrokeshire that a pair of breeding peregrines had been shot by a pigeon fancier at a cliff eyrie. A gypsy, feeling sorry for the three downy eyasses left on the ledge, climbed down to rescue them, and housed them in a parrot cage.

Whatever motive inspired the rescue, the young birds were soon available for sale. But before the news of their illegal availability spread, the Secretary of the West Wales Naturalists Trust, Capt. Dillwyn Miles in company with a policeman 'keeled over' and 'stooped' at great speed, presenting themselves at the gypsy's door, demanded to see the eyasses. After some 'hedging' and 'beating about the bush' the custodian of the parrot cage was 'trussed up' with a neat bit of 'footing' by Capt. Miles, who outlined the legal position to him. Then the two visitors 'raked away' to consider how best to restore the eyasses to the wild.

Among the numerous activities of the West Wales Naturalists Trust, is the administration of the great nature sanctuary of Skomer Island. Capt. Miles approached the resident warden of the island and arranged that the young birds should be hacked back to freedom amidst the romantic and colourful splendour and safety of Skomer.

Hacked To Freedom Cont'd

They were first removed from the parrot cage, conveyed to Martins' Haven and transferred by ferry launch over the currents of the dreaded Jack Sound to the island. Then the warden took over and fed them regularly, and as their feathers grew and hardened, they learned to fly on to the warden's roof, until at last the wind of Skomer claimed them and passed them to the sky. Day after day they climbed on the spring wind and the flying muscles grew ever stronger. Throughout the hack period, their powers of flight steadily improved as they harried the teeming bird life of their foster home. They returned at intervals for the food which was set out by the warden, but gradually these return visits grew more infrequent. The call of the wild was overpowering, the tenuous links between them and the warden grew ever weaker. Then one day they failed to return to the feeding place, they had obviously learned to kill for themselves, the warden's job was over.

During the weeks that followed he would see them at a great height in the sky, three tiny specks circling at 'full pitch' or poised like Kestrels 'waiting on' in the high wind. On times they would rocket earthwards with closed wings, appearing as tiny bombs, until the wings would open slightly changing their silhouette to that of arrowheads as the 'grand stoop' gathered momentum. Swinging into the glorious 'throw up' that followed, the nearest gull colony would mushroom into a panic stricken eruption. Continuing their exercise they would hug the sheer cliff walls at fantastic speed before 'throwing up' again and heading downwind to the open sea. This was the time of adventurous flight, when muscles designed to withstand many g's of strain were developed to the full.

Thus they prepared themselves for the roving buccaneering life that was to follow, when their existence would depend on the ability to outfly and catch the speedy wader, pegeon or grouse. They would become the flying wonders of nature, whose aerodynamic powers continue to baffle students of flight.

Much as some falconers may turn a greedy eye at the liberation of these splendid birds of prey, he would be a churlish sportsman who could not applaud the speedy action of the West Wales Naturalists Trust, in securing these rare orphaned eyasses and arranging their hack period on the safety of the island during the first critical weeks. So the three young peregrines were able to attain their aerial birthright in the wind above the historic cliff eyries of Pembrokeshire.

Well done Capt. Miles.

Do-It-Yourself Page

Hawk Bell Making

D. Gordon Gower.

It is fair to say that most W.H.C. members have, in the past experienced difficulty in obtaining suitable hawking bells, due to one factor or another.

My close contact in the field of mechanical engineering coupled with a keen interest in metals, prompted me to investigate the possibilities of producing bells comparable in design and tone as those being used by most falconers of today. We are all well aware of the 'incomparable' tone on the Afghanistan bell and of the 'secret' material used in their manufacture. This was not going to be an easy exercise.

I proceeded to purchase a small quantity of a standard shin brass .020" in thickness, used widely in engineering and therefore readily available. At this stage I was unconcerned with the metal composition although I was sure it was 60/40- in plain terms a copper alloy containing 60% copper, 40% zinc, a combination ensuring a hard brass. My suspicions as to the difficulties in 'forming' the required shapes were realised when this particular material would not readily lend itself to much 'cold working'. After many frustrating and experimental hours and establishing (so it seemed) part shares in a local scrap metal dealer, I finally arrived at a shape I considered to be perfect.

To my surprise the finished article although very pleasing to the eye led me to believe I was going 'tone' deaf. At this stage I'm afraid it was back to the drawing board.

Feeling very disappointed and full of self pity I decided to approach the problem in a more scientific way. During my experimental stages I had received a few old and well used bells of German origin. These were to prove invaluable at a later date. By cutting these bells into small sections it was visually obvious that my material was too thick. Could this account for the great difference in tone? I decided therefore to make the thickness, shape and material as near to these patterns as was possible. The thickness was found to be .015", but the material content (where the secret of success lay) was impossible to decide upon without very special laboratory equipment.

As a past student of the local Technical College I suddenly remembered my old metallurgy master. After some difficulty in locating his whereabouts I persuaded him to allow me to test the brass pieces in his up-to-date laboratory. It is possible to detect the composition of various materials, including all alloys, after special treatment has been administered and examined under a powerful microscope.

Do-It-Yourself Page cont'd

However I shall not bore you with the actual technicalities. It was established that these pieces of the original German bells was a 70/30 composition, commonly known as 'cartridge brass'. This discovery was most encouraging, for it is common knowledge that 70/30 brass can easily be 'cold formed' without difficulty. The smallest quantity I was able to purchase at .015" thick, was a sheet measuring 4ftx2ft. By this time I was visualising an 'appointment to the board' of the aforementioned scrap metal company.

Very soon a number of bell halves were made as in Fig.1 and joined together by silver solder. The pip inside consisted of wrought iron.



Original shape (half)



Final shape (half)

Although the result was most encouraging, as yet, the 'tone' was still not to be compared to either the German or Afghanistan counterpart. I felt, design-wise, the 'wasting away' may be unnecessary, (this is the centre portion of the bell where the two halves are solder joined, see Fig 2). This assumption eventually proved incorrect, in fact the 'wasting away' was extremely essential, as it not only assisted the operation of soldering, but stiffened the centre allowing the metal to vigorously vibrate near the open slot. Consequently the bell when complete gave a very clear tone.

Eventually the final shape was achieved as in Fig 2 and after completing a few pairs I was personally convinced that the finished shape and tone were comparable to bells already in use by practicing falconers.

Now that I was able to produce bells of a particular size viz. suitable for Goshawks, and be fairly consistent, apart from the occasional 'dud' I decided to tackle bells which may be suited to the smaller raptors - Sparrowhawk etc.

A few pairs were produced, based upon the same pattern, construction and material (70/30 brass) as the Goshawk, but in miniature. When completed, to my great disappointment the excellent tone achieved with the larger bell had in fact disappeared, resulting in a tone far inferior.

At the time of writing this article I am continuing to experiment with the smaller bell which I hope to improve tone wise, by using silver in place of brass.

Amendment To Bird Protection Act.

As falconers we are automatically bracketed as conservationists and rightly so, for they go hand in glove.

With the long and pleasant hours we enjoy as falconers in the field, and our numerous countryside friends, we, above all, are in a position to help the Nature Conservancy and other local official bodies in their constant fight against infringements of the Protection of Birds Acts.

An amendment to the existing act, made during 1967, now makes it illegal to disturb Schedule 1 species for the purpose of examining nests of such species, for scientific or conservation purposes, photographing wild birds or their eggs or any disturbance at or near the nest. It is now necessary to obtain written approval from the NATURE ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL (an acting body of the NATURE CONSERVANCY) for any of the above mentioned activities regarding birds on Schedule 1.

As many people do not seem certain which species are involved, the following is a full list of the birds on this schedule arranged in systematic order.

Editor.

Black-Throated Diver	Marsh Harrier	Stone Curlew
Great Northern Diver	Hen Harrier	Black Tern
Red Throated Diver	Montagu's Harrier	Roseate Tern
Slavonian Grebe	Osprey	Barn Owl
Black-Necked Grebe	Hobby	Snowy Owl
Bitterns (all species)	Peregrine	Bee-Eater
Spoonbill	Merlin	Roller
Garganey	Quail	Hoopoe
Scaup	Corncrake	Wryneck
Goldeneye	Bustard	Golden Oriole
Long Tailed Duck	Little Ringed Plover	Chough
Velvet Scoter	Kentish Plover	Crested Tit
Common Scoter	Dotterel	Bearded Tit
Grey Lag Goose	Whimbrel	St. Kilda Wren
Whooper Swan	Black-Tailed Godwit	Black Redstart
Bewick's Swan	Greenshank	Marsh Warbler
Eagles (all species)	Temmincks Stint	Dartford Warbler
Sparrowhawk	Avocet	Red Backed Shrike
Goshawk	Ruff	Crossbill
Kite	Black Winged Stilt	Brambling
Honey Buzzard	Red-Necked Phalarope	Snow Bunting