

THE AUSTRINGER



THE JOURNAL OF THE
WELSH HAWKING CLUB

Nº 36 2004

Chairman's Chatter

DAVID DIMOND

Well, here we are again, another year flown by and it seems as if it was only a few week's ago I was thinking of what to write for the *Austringer* 2003.

After the last AGM we have had a few changes of committee members. It is nice to see members standing for positions on the committee, it's not too time consuming and new input is always welcomed, after all a club is only as good as it's members.

My thanks must go to Mike Clowes who after many years of service on the committee in various posts has decided to stand down. All will miss his input, but we wish him good luck for the future. We will still be in contact with Mike through his work for the Hawk Board so he is not lost from falconry completely. Jan France has taken on the position of secretary and we all wish her well in her new role.

We have also to welcome Kevin Simcox as membership secretary, a new position on the committee due to the increase in members and the workload created, this is already proving to be a great help. As you know by now Diana has taken on the mantle of editor for this years "Austringer" and must be thanked for her hard work.

A change of post for Tony France who has taken over the production of the "Mewsletter" which has given Ian a well-deserved break from committee work although he has said he will still attend meetings in his role of V. President.

It has been a good year for the club, starting with the "Summer Fair" which is proving to be a great social event. Unfortunately it could be even better if more members & friends were able to attend, but my thanks must go to Lee Featherstone & Mick Kane for their hard work in organising it.

This was followed by one of the best field meets the club has had for many years, only marred by the weather on the last day which so far the field officer has been unable to control, but I am assured that he is working on it! Again thanks to Neil for all his hard work.

This year the club will be represented at the Game Fairs organised by "Countryman Fairs" by Jean & myself at Weston Park, Kelmarsh Hall, Highclere Castle and Parham Park as well as the CLA at Blenheim and any help from members would be greatly appreciated! Please don't forget that reduced rate passes for the CLA are available from your area secretary.

I think that is enough said by it and me only remains for me to thank all members of the club for their support and to wish everyone "Good Hawking".



From the Editor

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS

As the new editor of the *Austringer* I can say that it has been a pleasure to see just how many interesting and diverse articles that have been sent for inclusion. The focus being very much on what is happening inside our club and how these hawking events shape and make our lives.

Falconry and hawking couldn't be more alive when we look at the input from club members in putting together hawking days, field meets and social and fund raising events. There is a deep sense of passion and commitment that comes across so well in the articles in this issue and is fundamentally very much the trademark of WHC members at home and abroad.

Falconry is never far from the perils of one form of attack or another. The comparatively recent outbreak of West Nile disease and avian influenza have halted the movement of falcons and hawks from the USA for an unspecified period, whilst a new twist to the importation of gyrfalcons bearing a CITES classification that does not allow them to be used for the creation of hybrids is being heavily contested by all concerned. In addition being ever vigilant to sustain the right to hunt and keeping falconry thriving and prospering.

Presenting a united front through the Hawk Board is one of the avenues of approach that we are fortunate enough to have at our disposal in this country. It is in our interests then to elect individuals who will support and campaign for our future. The forthcoming elections are an opportunity for those who can put forward our points of view, so don't miss the chance to stand for the board or to vote.

On a more colourful note you will see included the works of photographers Steve Magennis and Leigh Tovey. Steve is a wildlife photographer whose work is not only of the highest quality but captures those rare quality moments on camera. His work was used to create the front and back cover. Leigh attended our annual WHC Club Meet and he too captured perfectly those moments in time that an outstanding photographer sees before it happens. Their individual approach to their work can be seen on their websites at: www.stevemagennis.co.uk www.leightovey.com

In this issue I hope you find plenty to remind you all that the input from our membership is vibrant and shows that we never miss a chance to go hawking.



The Welsh Hawking Club 2004 Field Meet

will take place on Tuesday 26th – Saturday 30th October
Chainbridge Hotel, Llantysilio, Llangollen, Denbighshire . Tel. 01978 860215
To book rooms requires a £50 deposit (non refundable). Rooms are £37 pppn.
Details regarding hawking please refer to Neil McCann.



Harry Robinson – page 6



Partridge Hawking in France – page 8



There is a Tercel – page 11

Contents

HARRY ROBINSON by MIKE COUPE	6
PARTRIDGE HAWKING IN FRANCE by DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS	8
THER IS A TERCEL AND THAT IS FOR THE POWERE MAN by ROY BEBBINGTON	11
IMPRINT OR PARENT REARED? by NEIL McCANN	14
CATER – A SPECTACULAR HIGH FLIER by MIKE COUPE	15
AN EVENTFUL SEASON by DAVE BOWEN	18
HUNTING WITH PARENT-REARED GOSHAWKS by ANDY WELSH	21
FIELD MEETING 2003 IN ACTION	25
WINTER HUN HAWKING by MARK WILLIAMS	29
HAWKING WITH KING HOWEL by TOM JONES	34
TALES OF A LOWLAND GAME HAWKER by ANDREW HULME	36
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PERLIN by JEANETTE THORNTON	37

CONSERVATION OF THE GREY
PARTRIDGE

Update 39

ISOBEL

W.H.C. Goshawk 40
by MIKE KANE

WHAT IS THE RIGHT WEIGHT
FOR A HAWK?

41
by DAVE JONES

HAWK BOARD ELECTIONS 41
THE WELSH HAWKING CLUB
2003 FIELD MEET 42

THE ROUSE
Regional Reports 45

RULES OF THE WELSH
HAWKING CLUB 48

BIRDS OF PREY FLYING HIGH
AT COUNTRYMAN FAIRS 50



Cater – a spectacular high flier – page 15



Winter Hun Hawking – page 29



A Day in the life of a Perlin – page 37

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Back: Young peregrines on same face testing their wings.
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Articles and photographs will be accepted throughout the year
and will be returned as requested.

*The views expressed on the pages of this magazine are not necessarily
those of the editor or the W.H.C. committee.*

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CLUB PERSONALITIES

HARRY ROBINSON

MIKE COUPE

Like many of the more established members of the Welsh Hawking Club I first met Harry when he was falconer at the Welsh Mountain Zoo in Colwyn Bay. Was it really 35 years ago? How time has passed so quickly and how falconry has changed in all this time. Harry tells me that his initial interest was fostered during his army service in Egypt when his commanding officer gave him a book entitled Notes on Falconry by G. E. M. Mellor. When he returned home in 1954 sparrowhawks and kestrels became part of the household in Tarporley, Cheshire.

At the Welsh Mountain Zoo Harry followed in the footsteps of the illustrious Lorant de Bastyai. Harry had been coached for several years by Lorant and confidently managed what was at the time considered to be one of the finest collections of eagles, hawks and falcons in this country. In the late 1960's flying displays were in their infancy and only a very few people had ever seen a falcon flown to a lure or knew anything about birds of prey. These were indeed pioneering times for education and commercial displays and Harry was very much in the forefront of informing the public about his beloved birds of prey.

The Welsh Mountain Zoo with its backdrop of Snowdonia proved an ideal venue for flying longwings. The sloping site and the strong winds from the sea gave plenty of lift for the birds. Harry put on some truly spectacular displays with his team of Luggar falcons, but also flew many other species and in any spare time was off hunting in the Welsh countryside. One of my finest memories was of an African hawk

eagle that Harry had trained to a hare skin lure. An athletic looking youth was selected from the crowd and told to run holding a short line to which was attached the hare skin lure. Harry would then launch the eagle from the top of the hill. African hawk eagles

are very fast and approached the hapless youth at breathtaking speed. I never saw anyone drop the lure in panic; they just kept running until pulled up with a jolt when the eagle bound to the lure. Maybe health & safety would have something to say about this today!

Back home again in Cheshire Harry assisted by his wife Ethel continued his falconry with luggars, lanners and goshawks. However he always made time in a busy life to talk falconry and help us all with the management of our birds. How many of us were taught by Harry to tie the falconers knot, hood a falcon, feed a falcon on the fist without it turning around etc, etc. He even had us using loop leashes many years before they were "invented".

We also started having some Welsh Hawking Club North West regional meetings where we met for a drink and a chat. We normally had about four members including Mike Clowes and on a



Harry Robinson with African hawk eagle at the Welsh Mountain Zoo.

good night it went up to six!

Many of the younger members of the club will not realise how different falconry was in those days. No Harris Hawks. No telemetry, no captive breeding, very few books and little help. Harry told me how he wrote to the British Falconers Club and was told if he didn't have a 2,000-acre estate to forget about flying longwings. How things have changed and how many new innovative ways have been found to fly our falcons and improve our sport.

However, it was to be the arrival of Mrs Bond the Peregrine falcon that would capture our imagination and change our falconry forever. Terry large arrived on the 15th August 1982 carrying a cardboard box and out stepped a large immature peregrine. She had become tangled in a hedge by some wire and binder twine and was rescued and taken to Terry. Fortunately she had not been damaged and didn't seem too traumatised after her ordeal. Harry sent off all the details to the Department of the Environment and was able to register her receiving the cable tie ring number 007. Thus the name Mrs Bond, licence to kill!

Mrs Bond's training came along apace and she was soon flying showing a natural inclination to wait on over numerous ponds in our area of Cheshire. Harry didn't have access to vast areas of open land but decided to try and develop a waiting on style using his spaniel to flush quarry from the ponds. This was all in the days when few people had telemetry and we were yet to develop our game release ideas. Fortunately in those days, but not now all these ponds were alive with moorhens that were often referred to as the poor mans partridge.

Nowadays these same ponds are completely devoid of moorhen but seem to harbour Mallard and Teal. Mrs Bond would wait on over a pool in anticipation of a flush. Harry would send in Tess the spaniel and some exciting flights ensued as moorhen tried to make it to the next pool. Often Mrs Bond would wait on for some considerable time whilst Tess flushed 3 or 4 different



Harry with peregrine Mrs Bond.

ponds. After 8 seasons flying, we had the opportunity of some new land with potential to release partridge to supplement the wild stock. This was to be the start of our game hawking era. Tragically Mrs Bond would only fly there one season – she sadly died in the breeding aviary whilst incubating a clutch of eggs. A tragic death of a fantastic falcon, which I am sure, would have gone from strength to strength in our future game hawking activities. Harry had even acquired an English pointer. Miss Money Penny continued the James Bond theme. She would prove invaluable for our partridge hawking. Harry then flew tiercel peregrines, lanner and saker and continued running Penny for us all, in addition he kept up his PR work for almost 12 years and we hawked at least 3 times each week. Penny provided some great points for my tiercel 'Tao' whom I flew for 10 seasons.

Harry had to take it easy after a heart problem but would still take his saker out and fly to the lure in the field at the back of his house. This did not fulfil the hunting instincts and seemed a little tame after the glory years. So Harry decided to retire from falconry and concentrate in his vintage cars. However, I often catch him looking skywards at the buzzards, sparrowhawks, kestrels and peregrines and wonder if he is thinking back to the good old days.

Partridge Hawking in France

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS

THE GREY PARTRIDGE. These modest gamebirds with their small rounded bodies, short rounded wings and gliding flight are one of the most tantalising of quarry for any falcon (and some hawks for that matter) to pit their wits against. The European partridge *Perdix perdix* is in certain areas still a moderately common farmland bird. With its greyish plumage, red face and tail and dark shaped markings on its belly it assumes a mantle of ordinariness. Yet this allows it quite spectacular camouflage and when seen close to they are the most exquisitely patterned and coloured of our native gamebirds.

Partridge hawking has its devotees across the spectrum of falconers as well as different countries that exclusively seek these as quarry for their falcon. Major S. E. Allen wrote a fine piece of observation on the tactics and flights at partridge in Michael Woodford's *A Manual of Falconry*. He describes the flights that were traditionally made using peregrines in conjunction with pointers and setters. So much of our hawking culture has changed since this book was written in 1960 and there is a very different approach to the art of partridge hawking today.

He describes in particular the use of pointers English or German and how they are used to obtain the point, then the flight of the falcon that follows. After countless seasons of partridge hawking he noted that the longer the stubble was left (or if they were in roots) then there was a definite need for pointing dogs. However if the stubble were shorter then they could be fairly easily spotted with binoculars and flown without the need for dogs. This is very much of course how they are flown today without too much recourse to using dogs.

For many falconers their partridge hawking is based on spotting them with field glasses then using the power of a high mounting falcon to keep the game birds at their location whilst attempting the flush.

To see this branch of hawking pursued from a purely traditional approach is becoming more of a rarity. One falconer who still practices this with skill and flair is Henri Desmonts. Henri and I currently share a tiercel gyr x peregrine that has shown great promise on grouse and has shown equal style and tenacity on partridge.

As many of you know I work with Dr Nick Fox at one of the largest falcon breeding facilities in the world. When I decided that I would take a tiercel last season for grouse hawking the choice was infinite. Even though I work with a very large collection of falcons amongst them there are some especial favourites. One of these; a peregrine called Clarice; is the mother of my tiercel. She has produced some outstanding falcons for the Middle East. Her track record also



Hawking partridge with horses.

applies to falcons in the UK as Dave Jones can testify. He had the full brother to mine and this too was a remarkable hawk last year before he was sadly lost. Both tiercels shared one thing in common, that they were capable of taking a very high pitch, which came naturally to them and were both extremely fast in flight, showing a high proportion of gyr characteristics.

Henri had taken the young falcon onto his grouse moor by August 12th, as I was to hawk a bit later in the season. At the onset the tiercel was to perform without hesitation taking his first grouse on the 12th and continued to be consistent for the following month accounting for a total that would have been more in keeping with a mature well-seasoned hawk.

Henri had always said to me that the making of a truly good hawk, once they have had experience on grouse, is to fly them at wild partridge until the end of the season. This became the agenda that I decided the tiercel should accomplish. As Henri spends a great deal of the autumn partridge hawking, I took him back to France once I had finished flying him to conclude the year. Hence in January I went over to see how our tiercel was performing.

Late season game birds test the skills of falcon and dogs to the limit. They have well-developed powers of flight and have learned how to evade aerial predators using skill and instinct which gives them the edge when it comes to being pursued. A falcon that is also flying at this time of the year is equally very well suited to his quarry as he too has developed and honed his skills to perfection.

In the vast acreages of northern France the arable farmland has a certain similarity to the flatness of Lincolnshire and East Anglia. Far away horizons that have endless prairies of winter wheat, with virtually no hedges or trees to interfere with the tilling of the land.

They appear monotonous and devoid of life as you stand on the edge of the plateau and look across. This would of course be furthest from the truth as secreted in the growing wheat are coveys of partridge that are perfectly camouflaged and can only be spotted if they choose to move whilst eating. Equally hares are fairly frequent and can be seen on the move. Winter lapwings and plover, rook and crow and as the eye becomes accustomed to the vastness there seems to be bird life everywhere.

Bob Dalton and I were to spend the next four days with Henri just north of Paris at several different locations, as these historically are areas given to great flights at partridge. At the turn of the last century English falconers knew of these grounds and had already been able to achieve testing flights that equalled those of the more familiar flying grounds back in the UK on Salisbury Plain.

Our hawking consisted of a combination of horses and dogs employed to assist each day in the field. Although the horses really are at their most efficient when the crow hawk was on the wing as they could get to a location rapidly once the falcon had made a kill and keep any mobbing flock away from the hawk, they were also very useful for checking out large areas of territory, spotting partridge.

Once sighted the setters could be cast off so that they could quest into the area and accurately pinpoint the covey. The area that the covey might be in could well be considerable distances away from the falconer, but here the use of these superb and very fast dogs comes into it's own. Each dog cast into the wind, would take it's own direction which seemed at first to be far too wide a beat. The more experienced ones would take a shorter run and quickly check out the prevailing scent, homing into the partridge. Once one came on point the others would back immediately until all dogs were stationary, with one mind intent on the same flush.



Henri Desmonts with Diana's gyr x peregrine tiercel and partridge.



Quite often snippets of cover are to be seen out in the vastness, which partridge seemed to gravitate around. These were often the remains of hedges or small grassy depressions that were like a tiny oasis in the great open plains and if the partridge were near such vantage points they held very well to the dog. Although it always seemed in the distance there were large expanses of broadleaf woodland to be seen.

Pointing dogs have a way of riveting your attention to a small space that you cannot see or know what is there. At these moments in time you find your heartbeat quickens, as the falcon is quickly made ready. As the hood is released and he takes note momentarily of his surroundings it seems as if it is in suspended animation. You want him to leave the glove yet you know that any move from you now would spoil what could be the best flight of the day. Suddenly he flies forward and casting directly over the setters he now begins to accelerate into a tight pattern rapidly gaining height. Rising steadily as if in some imaginary cone that surrounds the falconer he climbs until he is 500-600 ft. above. This is not as high as he would attempt at grouse as the falcon is by now very aware that too high means his quarry will elude him as they will make to cover before he can get to them. Partridge are very fast on the wing and will make it back to the confines of the farm buildings and surrounding paddocks with the falcon in hot pursuit if he has chosen to take a very high pitch. Invariably he may well lose his quarry in this type of flight, as he cannot get down quickly enough to strike whilst they are out in the open.

Once he had reached his chosen pitch he came into position over the dogs who flushed and with that he rolled over into a tear drop shape, then using his amazing speed he rowed into his stoop at electrifying pace and closed the gap between the equally fit and fast departing partridge. Striking his quarry in a deadly hit, a puff of feathers just powdered the wind and with that he was sitting on his meal in a small clump of rough cover on the edge of one of fields.

The weather at this time of the year can be very unpredictable. Strong winds and driving rain are very typical of our own weather and can spoil a flight very quickly. The four-day meet had sun and rain typical of January. The gyr x peregrine was extremely accomplished and each flight was copy book in it's way as he would take an extremely good pitch which left the rest of the field of spectators able to see the action clearly and from a great vantage point. This to me is really what falconry at this level is all about. The ability to show others the dynamic skill of a hunting falcon, which is totally awesome. The use of setting dogs, horses and falcons on wide open farmland may be an aspect of flying longwings that cannot be easily achieved but even by modern standards this has to be one of the most exhilarating and a truly spectacular style of partridge hawking.

Setters waiting to quest for partridge.



There is a Tercell And that is for the powere man

(Boke of saint Albans 1486)

ROB BEBBINGTON

'This leaves the powere man with his goshawk tiercel, a bird of less weight and power, of lesser status than the female and even more difficult to man'. The author of the list is using the word 'poor' in an ambiguous way. An economically poor man, or a peasant, would not have the means to buy and equip, train and maintain a hunting bird. The phrase 'poor man' is therefore most probably one of sympathy for the poor gentleman who has not the means to acquire a decent hunting bird, or the unfortunate mewes employee with the wearisome task of caring for and flying such a fractious and, at times unrewarding bird.

Richard Almond, *Medieval Hunting*, Sutton Publishing, 2003

What is brown and white, 655 grams, and bounces off rabbits? None other than my eyas male goshawk, 'Dougie'. How unfair! He actually only bounces off nine in ten rabbits.

A little back ground to his purchase maybe in order here.

In 1998, a German friend of mine offered me an intermewed female passage goshawk, free of charge to fly. An offer, as a Yorkshire man, I found hard to decline and I duly took charge of her.

This particular hawk sorely tested the friendship I have with my German colleague. An absolute angle to have around the home, with impeccable manners, and almost as steady as any Harris, this hawk transformed into something quite different when being hunted.

Should she fail to catch our initial slip and trees were anywhere within the vicinity, a glazed look would come across those bulging yellow eyes. Memories of her past liberty seemed to fill her every thought. Then what followed, was the never-ending nightmare of having to follow her across the county, before she deigned to return to the fist, in her own good time!

If I have anything good to say about hunting this particular hawk, then it would be to mention, that it was interesting to watch certain hunting strategies that she had already perfected whilst wild.

When in pursuit of rabbits she would initially 'shadow' them. Flying alongside the fleeing rabbit, she would wait until she felt the time was just about right, then a sudden burst of speed would send her past the

rabbit. A sharp turn to face the rabbit head on, and she would plant both feet firmly upon its head, totally immobilising it. I had never previously experienced this technique, with a captive bred eyas. They all seem to normally take the shortest route from a to b.

So, at the end of what was a most frustrating season,

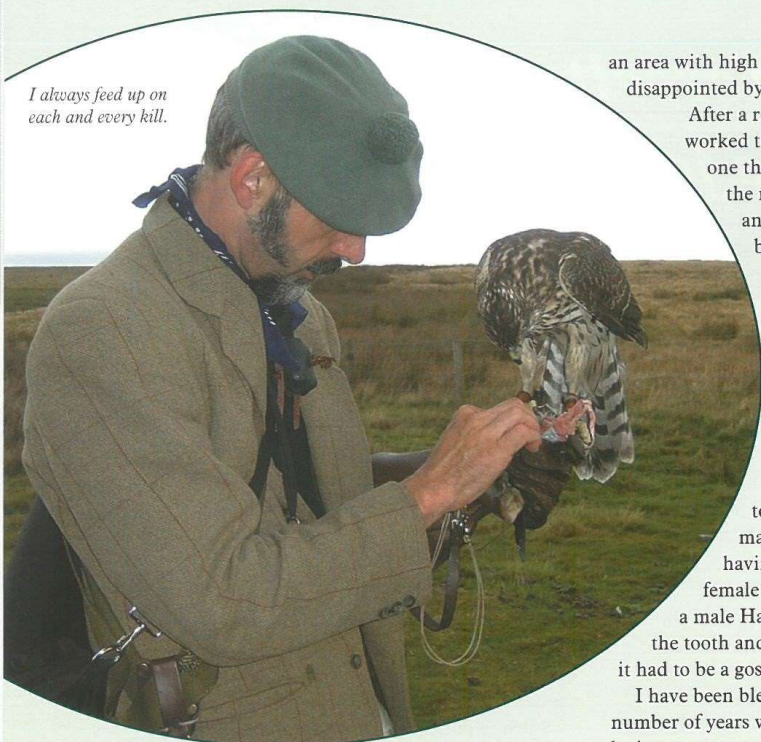
our partnership was terminated.

Due to a large number of working commitments with my dogs, both here and the occasional foray into Europe, the following season I felt I did not have the required time so necessary, for an eyas goshawk.

Enter lady luck! I was offered an 8 times intermewed female Harris hawk. If I chose not to fly her, then she



*I always feed up on
each and every kill.*



an area with high expectations, only to be disappointed by the absence of game.

After a real gem of a summer period, as I worked the dogs over my hawking grounds, one thing became very apparent. That was, the resident game birds, both English and French partridge, pheasant, and black game (although this latter species is strictly off the menu!), all of which in our area are truly wild birds, had fared extremely well. Their numbers exceeded anything that I would consider as normal for these parts. Surprisingly, if anything, I felt that rabbit numbers were slightly down.

So my thoughts once again turned to obtaining a goshawk, and possibly a male at that. I know, especially after having had such a good time with the female Harris, that I could have considered a male Harris. However, being as I am, long in the tooth and to a certain extent stuck in my ways, it had to be a goshawk.

I have been blessed with good fortune over the past number of years when requiring a hawk, and it was to be just so once again. A good friend of mine on his very first attempt at breeding goshawks, by natural methods I may add, succeeded in breeding 1 female and 2 males.

The female had been promised to somebody else, so I reserved one of the males and duly waited until he was finally hard penned.

'Dougie', as he was named (nicknamed Big spar by the rest of the family) is my fully parent reared, pure German, male goshawk. Unlike the current trend for large, socially imprinted Scandinavian birds, I feel we are somewhat swimming against the tide, so to speak.

I shall dispense with all the details of basic training, except to mention that I made the hawk to the hood. A fine decision, for the hood is such a wonderful tool. It also meant that I could dispense with a travelling box, and he now travels too and from our grounds, sat happily, hooded upon a cadge.

Well, it may have been my intention to pursue feathered quarry, but 'Dougie' had other ideas!

He seemed to have a fixation with rabbits right from the outset. He was entered towards the end of August, on yes; you've guessed it, a rabbit! This was all the incentive he needed.

I quite honestly expected due to the 'rough and tumble' nature of rabbit hawking, that this little fellow would finally decide that rabbits were simply too much trouble. But none of it! he revelled in the challenge.

was going to simply languish within her breeding chamber. I duly accepted this very kind offer and consider myself so very fortunate to have flown this hawk. She opened my eyes to just what fine potential this truly remarkable species has to offer, when flown regularly, over top class dogs, upon good ground, at plentiful sporting quarry.

After years of having to suffer the fickle whims of so many goshawks, she was like a breath of fresh air. Suffice to say, I flew her for the following three seasons, having lots of fun and catching a very respectable amount of quarry. Including the very first woodcock that I had ever taken with any species of hawk.

Sadly, this lovely hawk died just prior to the start of our fourth season together, shortly after rearing a healthy brood of youngsters. My intention had been to fly her once again, so I was left toying with various options.

Prior to the commencement of each season, I spend up to 3 weeks simply 'dogging' over my hawking grounds. This provides welcome stimulation for the dogs, and, just as importantly, gives me an idea of what game species are present, their respective numbers, and in what areas they are to be found.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this. There can be nothing more frustrating than to simply turn up to

I could not believe, as he was repeatedly thrown off one rabbit after another, that he never became dispirited. I have lost count of the number of occasions when he has had at least one foot to a rabbit, only to lose out in the resultant struggle. If I felt so frustrated at times, then heaven knows how he must have been feeling!

Rabbits in these parts appear to be either fighters or capitulators. Some will kick, buck, somersault and fight for their lives. Others, and the actual size of the rabbit sometimes has no bearing upon this, will simply accept the fact that they have been caught, and lie there awaiting the inevitable.

Poor 'Dougie'! He definitely seems to have had contact with far more fighters. I personally feel that one of the main reasons for this being, that the rabbits he has had a hold of, seem less dominated by his small stature, weight and strength of foot. I feel sure that they believe, that although a hawk has a hold of them, that they still stand a chance of escape if they fight one so small.

Due to the amount of hard work, effort and determination 'Dougie' puts into catching rabbits, I always feed up on each and every kill. I suppose further perpetuating his desire to chase rabbits.

Rabbit hawking for one so small (655 grams) is not without its risks (physically). During October I had to rest him for a period of 16 days. After being dragged into a gorse bush, by a particularly large buck rabbit, he sustained, what at first I feared to be a fractured leg. After X-rays, thankfully, nothing was broken, but a somewhat worrying amount of swelling was present.

Once his leg was back to normal, he simply carried on from where he had left off and flew the very first rabbit he saw.

During the coming months I presented 'Dougie' with some golden opportunities at game birds. He would normally do one of two things. Either simply sit there and watch them fly off, or on the odd occasion would be stimulated into pursuit, if and only if, they at first ran a little distance, before taking to the wing. He actually accounted for the French partridge in this manner.

Too date the only pheasants he has accounted for are birds which decided to act like the 'road runner', failing to take to the wing. Oddly, whenever we flush a woodcock, he seems to relish trying to catch them. The woodcock he accounted for must have been a tired, recent arrival. It flew no more than 30 yards before once again landing. It never got the chance to once again take wing, as 'Dougie' bound to it.

For the past 20 years, I have always kept a meticulous daily diary of each and every hawk, dog, companion, and occasion that I go afield. I record, amongst other things, the actual number of slips that we have. I consider a slip to be, a good solid point, and a good clean flush, after which the quarry presents the hawk

with a sporting chance of actually catching it. The following figures maybe of interest to you, as they highlight the opportunities 'Dougie' has had in this his first season, and the success (or lack of it) he has attained. Obviously what these figures do not highlight, are the innumerable rabbits that he has had a hold of, only to lose. They also do not include those occasions when, quarry spontaneously flushes well ahead, or when quarry is so close to the sanctuary of cover, that they do not present a realistic chance of capture.

My wife feels that 'Dougie' actually needs reminding that as a goshawk, he was known in former times, as 'the cooks hawk'! (We would all be rather too thin if we only had the game he provides for the table).

August (Entered on the 27th)

Flown on 2 days, 8 slips, 1 rabbit taken.

September

Flown on 16 days, 54 slips, 7 rabbits taken.

October

Flown on 13 days, 54 slips, 3 rabbits + 1 pheasant taken. (The hawk was rested for 16 days due to a swollen leg)

November

Flown on 20 days, 86 slips, 8 rabbits, 1 French partridge and 1 pheasant taken.

December

Flown on 18 days, 63 slips, 4 rabbits + 1 woodcock taken.

January

Flown on 11 days, 30 slips, 6 rabbits taken.

February

Flown on 3 days, 6 slips, 3 rabbits taken.
Season ended February 11th.

Totals

Flown on 83 days.
301 slips. 31 Rabbits, 2 pheasants, 1 partridge, 1 Woodcock + 1 various

In stark black and white, these figures look completely unremarkable. And yet, this has proven to be one of the most enjoyable seasons that I have had. I feel that is due to where I now find myself after 28 years hawking.

I am now totally fulfilled simply watching my dogs working, being surrounded by beautiful country, being so close to nature and watching my hawk give it his all, regardless if he is successful or not. So long as his spirits are high, and, he is prepared to continually try, then that is good enough for me.

God willing, I am hoping that all of what 'Dougie' has learnt this season, will stand him in good stead for the next. I shall update you as to his progress, as we continue to swim against the tide.



Imprint or Parent Reared?

NEIL MCCANN

After flying parent reared goshawks for the past six years with my own bird who was injured after only flying free for five days, Mick Wynn kindly let me fly his imprint female goshawk.

Her flying weight being 2lb 5oz I found her a little difficult at first. The noise factor. Other than that she became the ultimate killing machine for the next eleven weeks I was to fly her.

My parent reared bird was reliable returning to the fist or lure without a second thought but the imprint would have a good look round and would think twice to return or would move from tree to tree to try and find something to chase and kill first. This was the first thing to overcome. I would get a point with Ben and flush the game myself and let the goshawk fly on her own free will never casting her off. Then chase after her getting her to return to the fist or lure before she had a chance to think about moving on. After a week of this she would look for me and I would slip her at anything. Rabbits, hares, partridge, pheasants. Her aggression towards game was second to none, yet she never used this towards me at any time, even though she would move around in circles on a kill.

On a field meet organised by Mick Kane she was chasing hares up to 80 yds away and flew to the nearest tree and sulked for 15 minutes. Staunchly refusing pheasant lures and finally coming down to a rabbit.

The next morning we were on Dyserth her weight was up to 2lb 8½ ounces spoke to Lee Featherstone and he assured me there would be no problem. Again Ray, Mick, Trevor and myself met the keeper Bob and within 10 minutes we were putting pheasants up.

Trevor Webster's male again took a hen bird out of the sky 150 yds and 50 ft up in front of us all. The keeper had never seen anything like it. Then my turn. I slipped the female and she chased a hen bird hard but to no avail. She was thirty foot up in an oak tree and came straight back to the fist. No problem at this weight.

Trevor, Ray and Mick had all had one each so at 2.30 pm the last slip for



me! Ben got a point. The flush was made which she caught on the rise but promptly lost it on the floor. She then tail chased it 100 yds but her luck ran out and she took stand in the nearest tree refusing to come down.

Next she decided to wander off and she gave me the runaround for three hours. I would track her, get to within 10 ft of her and she would move off again. I had never chased a goshawk up and down a valley for many years and it was taking its toll. I was knackered. Mick, Ray and Trevor left me to it after the first two hours had passed. But my thanks to them as they kept tracking her too and they must have arrived home very late. I really thought I wasn't going to get her back. As I was going to the Czech Republic in the next two days I just had to get her back.

Bob the keeper thought it was quite funny to see someone so flustered! She had by now gone back down to the river. Bob gave me a lift to the bottom field. She was in a small tree covered in ivy about 10 ft off the ground. It was all or nothing now. I waded through the river and the freezing water promptly came over my wellies, whilst she just sat and watched. I swung the lure for the final time, as by now it was dusk. She flew past and looked at me. I thought maybe there's a chance yet. She landed in a tree just in front of me, but over the river. I placed a rabbit and a pheasant leg on the gloved fist. I swung the lure as well. Suddenly she came towards me and ignoring the lure she landed on the fist. What a relief.

I had a vision of phoning Mick Wynn up to tell him I had lost his

hawk on a shoot full of game. The keeper laughed as I walked back up the valley. However I was very pleased she had connected with her quarry but had been unlucky not to keep a good hold. Although I had one hare with her there were numerous feathered game and rabbits. A trip to Leeds to meet Gordon and Lewis turned out a real treat. She was a bit slow off the mark at first as there were no trees to land in on the North Yorkshire moors. However there were plenty of rabbits and she flew well taking 5 rabbits in three hours.

The noise factor from her ceased as well both in the field and in the garden, plus she was quiet in her travelling box. So I gradually increased her weight and she was by now 2lb 7½ ounces and I could hardly feel her keel. She was also fitter than any parent reared goshawk I had flown.

Recently I was on field meet in North Wales with Mick Kane's syndicate. The group consisted of Trevor Webster, Ray Smith, Mick Kane and myself on a two-day event. The first day she took a cock pheasant in flight over a small spinney. The second flight she took a hen pheasant after a short flight. Although she flew well we were more than impressed with Trevor Webster's imprint male that took a pheasant in flight after a 300 yd chase.

The last slip I had was on the ducks on the flash floods in the field. At the same moment a red quad bike came into the field and she took flight away from all the action with me in hot pursuit. The next day I had blood blisters on every toe. No fun running around like an old man for days afterwards. I flew the gos no heavier than 2lb 7oz after this and carried on catching game regularly.

I would like to thank Mick Wynn and Lee Featherstone for letting me fly their goshawk and Mick Kane's syndicate for the hawking days that I was invited on.

Total game caught: 1 hare, 1 duck, 2 partridge, rabbits, pheasants.

I will be flying a parent-reared goshawk this coming season.



Cater's first grouse.

Cater – a spectacular high flier

MIKE COUPE

Angela and Steve Gouldthorpe had been successfully flying long wings for several years when in 2000 they decided to 'go for gold' with a gyr x peregrine hybrid. At the time Steve was flying 'Bok' a peregrine x saker tiercel; a very stylish bird, which I often joked, should have been mine. I had been offered this falcon by an old friend, but had to turn it down as I was flying two Peregrine tiercels. Many times did I regret that decision when both my tiercels were killed and I saw Bok going from strength to strength.

With Steve flying Bok so successfully, they decided that Angela should fly the new bird and an order for the hybrid was placed with one of the foremost breeding establishments in the UK, Falcon Mews. The new bird's name was to be Cater, the dictionary connotation being 'a provider of food for entertainment', not an exaggeration considering his prowess in future years.

Cater was 9 weeks old on arrival in Cheshire and in absolutely immaculate condition, weighing in at 900 grams.

It was left to Angela to begin the careful and meticulously planned manning stage, which is so

important with captive bred falcons, if one wishes to produce a relaxed and well-mannered bird. Angela didn't rush this stage, in fact she even took a sabbatical from work to accomplish it successfully, and to her credit Cater has beautiful manners, no footing, mantling or other bad habits. He was introduced to the lure and flown free in September 2000 at a weight of 866 grams.

Perhaps I should now mention Steve and Angela's weight control method, which has proved so successful. They use a very accurate gram scale, weigh daily and keep an accurate record. In addition they weigh the food keeping a note of the nutritional value of the food used and relate all this to the flying style on the day. This fastidious feeding and recording regime certainly pays off with all hawks, but seems particularly important when training high flying waiting-on falcons. Its not a new system and is advocated in Philip Glasiers *Hawking and Falconry* first published in 1978, in fact he even goes one stage further advocating weighing the hawk when it has fed, in case it has taken in extra from the lure or kill.

Cater's first season progressed well, he started to wait on at a nice pitch and take quarry on a regular basis. Our Cheshire countryside is far from ideal for waiting on flights, too enclosed, too much check and not enough quarry, but we can only work with what is available and have to release grey partridge on our flying grounds to provide suitable quarry. However, back in 1990s we had proved to the sceptics that it was possible to game hawk from waiting on flights under our challenging conditions. I don't think any of us could have imagined it would have been possible to fly a falcon over our terrain at the truly eye watering pitches achieved in the subsequent seasons of the 2000s.

After Cater's first moult we saw a transformed falcon, gone was the entire first year brownish look and a startling handsome gyr falcon hybrid had emerged. His under-parts were almost pure white, whilst his back, wings, and tail showed delicate shades of grey.

Cater's stunning looks were equally matched by his performance. His transition into an adult bird continued to show incremental improvements and he gained some very impressive pitches along with an increasing quarry score. Some more open ground in Shropshire proved an asset, as did Abbey the Gouldthorpe's Red & White Irish Setter.

I don't want to give the impression that everything was easy with this falcon, it wasn't. There were hiccups, chasing check, coming down at partridge in a release pen, playing in thermals, etc but Steve and Angela stuck to their accurate weighing and recording programme along with careful studying and recording of Cater's very individual characteristics, and worked through any problems.

Another good moult and September 2002 saw us on the grouse moors at Auchnafree with Dave Jones and Lindsay. Dave told us how falcons flew as if supercharged in these mountains. I don't think we believed him, but the first day was to prove him correct. Cater disappeared down the glen, and Bok decided to fly from one side of the glen to the other, perch, wait for Steve to climb the mountain and then fly to the other side again, until it was dark! My own peregrine x tiercel, normally ultra

reliable, decided to explore this mountainous range for over half an hour before returning to the lure. By day three though, all our falcons had settled and the falconer's nerves had been soothed by copious amounts of malt whisky.

From this point on things just clicked. I can still close my eyes and see Cater 1,000 ft over our heads, stooping past and plummeting 1,000 ft down the glen in pursuit of a grouse. He didn't catch a grouse that season but had several knock downs and near misses – fantastic sport in unbelievable scenery.

Well the Scottish trip certainly did all our falcons a lot of good and Cater continued to wait on at fantastic pitches on his home territory. He would fly off the fist straight into the wind and just fly up and up until he

was a mere speck in the sky. Angela would wave the glove to bring him into position over the point. Dog, bird and falconer would merge into the landscape, before the air was split by the sound of a stooping gyr x peregrine, as he descends vertically toward his quarry and the strike.

September 2003 saw us all up at Auchnafree in Perthshire again, and this time we were prepared for the high-octane performance of our falcons. Cater certainly didn't disappoint and had some very memorable flights gaining height in such outstanding fashion with pinpoint attentiveness

over Angela. It was a red-letter day when he caught his grouse and Angela could hardly speak on the intercom in her excitement. I had heard and seen Cater come past me in a vertical stoop and bind to his grouse some 500 feet below me – to be *above* the falcon when it strikes is truly memorable.

Many falcons brought back from the wide open grouse moors of Scotland are challenged by the more enclosed spaces of agricultural Britain, but Cater's performance continued to improve, waiting on longer and longer in anticipation of the flush. Flight management became a priority, no good putting him up where there was only one option of a flush.

To give an idea of the quality and duration of the flights let me recall a recent weekend. We had spotted



First pheasant.



Dave Jones and gyr x peregrine with grouse.

a cock pheasant in the hedge near an overgrown pool at the side of the lane. Angela cast off Cater who attained a fantastic pitch directly over us, carefully we moved in to flush, but as with all the best laid plans we could not find the pheasant. The dogs worked all the surrounding ground but to no avail.

Steve then took the dogs over to some duck pools several fields away where we had always flushed teal and mallard, yet again nothing flushed and still Cater waited on in anticipation. The setter then found a covey of grey partridge and Angela waived her glove to attract Cater over the point and flushed. Thirty minutes had elapsed since Angela had cast Cater off and he had waited on over her, barely visible to the naked eye. The instant the covey flushed Cater put in a near vertical stoop and the partridge only beat him to cover due to his extreme height and enclosed Cheshire countryside.

Cater's dedication and trust in Angela is remarkable, and such is his faith in Angela finding quarry that he immediately remounted to almost a thousand foot and began to wait on yet again. With pigeons, crows, buzzards and wild peregrines to contend with, it's a far cry from the relative solitude of the Scottish moor, but through progressive training and manning Cater's attentiveness to the events under him showed a strong bond between falcon and falconer. With two setters in the field, we set about working all the hedges and ponds we could reach, on three adjoining farms! Forty minutes later with Cater now at a low 800 foot pitch! We flushed a pair of grey partridge, which Cater stooped at and bound to one over a large field.

Over an hour's flight, and the bird's faith had been

repaid. Flight management has certainly become an issue when flying Cater. He will come to the lure, but Angela has to have several possibilities of flushing quarry sometimes over hundreds of acres of Cheshire countryside, to repay the birds faith.

Four or five such flights of thirty minutes or more are not uncommon in a day for Angela and Cater, and I have even witnessed her flying a good point from the setter after feeding up for the day, and with two partridge already in the game bag! (Re; the Davey Jones School of falconry).

How has a falconer who has a full time job, grabbing the odd half days during the week, and flying at the weekends, achieved all this in far from ideal conditions? Of course you have to start with a suitable falcon and the gyr x peregrine hybrid excels at the highflying waiting-on flights.

One aspect is a very accurate feeding and weighing regime, allied to a careful conditioning and fitness programme. High fliers are always flown at the highest possible weight but still have to be under control. Cater's average moulting weight is 955 grams, whilst his uppermost flying weight is 910 grams.

Another important aspect is to never disappoint the falcon by not flushing quarry and this is where flight management becomes so critical. Spotting suitable quarry and then having several options of a flush becomes essential for this type of falconry. There is nothing more pleasing than seeing a high flying falcon waiting on over falconer and dog, Cater's conditioning by Angela is a true pleasure to witness and I wish them many more excellent seasons to come.

An Eventful Season

DAVE BOWEN



It was five years and five months ago, from the time of writing when I first had a hunting hawk on my fist. The wild, killing stare of that bird in hunting condition left me both humbled and proud.

Mike Gambold, falconer and fine countryman uttered a speech to me, which will remain engraved in my mind forever. "Falconry is a disease; it is terminal. I hope you have a sound marriage and a good wife because it will take over your life." From that moment it did. Looking back, Mike who is now a very close friend, must have been annoyed by the stream of questions that I constantly barraged him with. Nevertheless, he would stroke his famous beard and thoroughly explain every aspect of my inquiry.

There is no such thing as a stupid question – but there are many stupid answers.

I had already built my mews and Mike kindly

offered me a loan of his female Harris hawk for a season. What a season it was; she took forty-eight rabbits and two squirrels, which improved my climbing skills as they were both caught in trees. By now I was addicted. The following season Mike past on to me a cast of Harrises kindly loaned by Chris Buckner, which provided me with good sport but unfortunately had to be returned and for the first time in my life I had to dip into my pocket and think about purchasing my own hunting hawk.

Early in the following year I was the proud owner of a male German goshawk. I found the manning and training relatively simple but hunting with it was a total nightmare. All the previous enjoyment of hawking was gone: I was just not happy any more. Every time I returned home it felt like a weight being lifted off my shoulders. I have never used telemetry,

always depending on bells. There never seemed any danger of losing him but it was just too stressful for me. By close season I was faced with a predicament. I had a goshawk, which I was beginning to hate and a Springer spaniel that always ran in on rabbits – what was I to do?

My wife, tolerant to the brink of sainthood, finally drew the line at me getting another dog so I considered my options and deduced there was only one open to me. Squirrel hawking.

Everyone at club meetings thought I was barmy when I revealed my intentions. “You’ll need a good vet – and possibly a psychiatrist” was one of the more printable comments I received while I pondered this over my Guinness. I picked up my female Harris from Andrew Thomas in Pontypool last summer and started manning straight away. The hawk was magnificent in her juvenile plumage and I loved her from the start. I am unsure of her emotions towards me, she was unaware yet of what I had in store for her – squirrels.

She was manned and proved to be a cracking hawk. Within thirteen days she was free. One month later she took her first squirrel after a heroic struggle in dense ivy. I fed her up on the kill and was still planning that evening when I e-mailed Gary Brewer in the USA asking for the procedure for making squirrel chaps.

I modified the design into my own version – an outside layer of camel skin, an under layer of kangaroo and a suede sock made from an old welders jacket. She was now kitted out and ready! The season progressed well; six squirrels by Christmas, six rabbits and two corgi sized mice. I had now worked out the squirrels and formed a cunning plan. I invested in a quality catapult to move them on when they froze in the tree or under the boughs. The dog latched on to the job in hand, with him at the base of the tree the rodents stayed aloft.

Boxing Day in this part of Wales consists of a few hours of hunting and then straight to the pub, bragging in front of the fire in between quaffing a weeks supply of real ale. I left at nine thirty and worked a twelve-acre wood about three miles away from my home. The hawk was doing well and we had many good slips providing much excitement. A narrow miss when a squirrel dived into a dry stone wall, which the dog marked but we couldn’t shift. Another just made it to a woodpecker’s hole and a third was branching into a small copse on neighbouring land. The hawk was off and I followed. My hair blowing in the wind and my hawking bag flying nearly horizontal. I cleared a dry stone wall and vaulted into the wood.

It could only have been seconds but it seemed like hours later I regained consciousness and could not help but notice the enormity of the wood and the total silence-apart from the monotonous buzz drilling my brain. I attempted to stand and realised I could not put weight on my left leg. It felt like a nasty sprain. I called the hawk in. She glided through the trees and I tied her to the gloves D-ring – something I rarely do but at the time I was feeling quite strange. Not in pain – just sick.

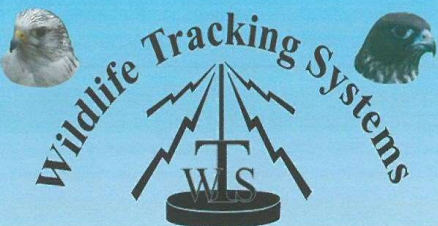
It took me three hours to limp home one mile an hour. Every step was agony. Every couple of minutes I’d stop and set myself a target-hop ten and stop; do not rush do not panic. Like a man swimming for the shore which seems to get no nearer I began to wonder if I would make it when – Hallelujah – a vehicle appeared, a rare sight on Boxing Day morning. Andy Murphy a friend of mine stuck his head out of the window and offered me a lift. Immediately his Alsatian pup started barking and my hawk already unsettled by my unnatural gait commenced bating. Amidst the jangling, the barking, and the revving of the engine I declined a lift with a cheery albeit forced “no problem – I’ll get home. Merry Christmas”.

When I finally arrived I put the hawk down and the dog away. My wife the aforementioned Saint Mags took one look at the swollen ankle and insisted I go straight to the doctors – I went straight down the pub! There’s not much that comes between Dave Bowen and his Boxing Day pint. Mike and Dave Kirby were already there, earnestly attempting to empty a keg of Fullers London Pride. Their mornings hawking also fruitless. They do not try too hard the day after Christmas. Everyone was concerned about my injury but soon lost interest – you have to be at least six months dead to get sympathy in the Carpenters Arms, Shirenewton.

I awoke the following morning to realise I was in serious trouble. My ankle was the size of a rugby ball and I had a red stripe running down my nose. My face had become infected and I looked like I was chewing a golf ball. I was admitted to hospital. Four days later I left having had surgery on a shattered Cellulose bone. Two titanium screws in my leg and fitted with a high tech plaster called a pneumatic boot. This apparatus is currently regarded as the norm for lower leg and ankle injuries and was used on David Beckham for his broken ankle, hence commonly known as the Beckham Boot.

The ankle is now healed and the hawk is moulting well. Roll on squirrel hawking next season. Thanks to Mike Gambold my tutor and mentor and as he would say, “That’s hawking”.





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Hunting with Parent Reared Goshawks

ANDY WELSH

There is a lot of speculation these days on whether we should fly an imprint goshawk or a parent reared bird, I can only provide my point of view which I hope will not offend any aspiring austringer who fancies imprinting a goshawk as their potential hunting partner.

As many falconers have started out in falconry, at a young age, we experiment with different species of birds, broad wings, long wings and short wings and learn by our mistakes, hopefully not to the expense of the birds themselves. As you know we should try and maximise our sport by adopting the bird that suits our landscape and local quarry but I must admit, as a lover of falcons I have tried rook hawking locally but unless we travelled 40 miles to hunting ground we were either constantly dragging out the telemetry or missing 75% of the flights! She either disappears over a hill out of sight or is completely masked by woodland – you must have guessed it by now, for a falconer I live in a land that time forgot and that is – South Wales.

After biting the bullet and realising we just do not have the ideal land for rook hawking or game hawking it was time to look at an alternative species that gave me the same buzz and also flew with equal venom, there could only be one alternative and that is the accipiter or to be more exact the parent reared

goshawk; tailor made for our terrain and capable of long flights on feather (that's if you're lucky enough to find plenty of feathered quarry without travelling all day!)

My decision to fly a parent reared goshawk started approximately nine seasons

ago. Unless you actually know the complete history of a bird then the only safe method is to buy a youngster untouched by human hands. If any vices develop then you're the only one to blame but you can still trace back through your own training and conditioning techniques to identify how you generated the problem. If you purchase an older bird without sufficient history then you could have problems fixing any inherent vices. So what did I go



Banshee in juvenile plumage.

and do? I bought a seven year old parent reared female Finnish gos that had been in an aviary for the last 4 seasons! Its not as bad as it sounds because an old friend of mine and past member of the club flew her for the first 3 seasons and he was a confident Austringer and more than capable of training and hunting a bird. Other than knowing who flew her all other details were non-existent. I was starting from scratch with a bird that could have hunting vices, it was a calculated risk I decided to take.

Regardless to never ever being hooded she eventually (after many wrist aching hours) took the hood and was comfortable taking it before and after food. Eventually after regular manning sessions, she became a pleasure to have on the fist showing no aggression in any way. She eventually responded to the lure and glove very well and her muscled flying weight was finally identified as 2lb

8½oz. At this weight she flew rabbits strongly and rarely missed a kill with some classic flights, but even after experimenting with various weights she would not fly feather with half the grit and determination that she flew fur. Fur excited her so much that in the chase she would smash into hawthorn and other cover eventually coming out bruised but still holding her trophy.

Not being one to give up easily, I soldiered on and she managed to take a good head of fur kills but low on pheasant duck and moorhen. Feather just wasn't her steak and chips. I am sure that if I flew her on good pheasant land day after day she could well of developed her taste for feather but unfortunately with a full time job, I did not have this luxury. (Get the violins out!)

I come to the conclusion that in the first 3 seasons she was flown predominantly on fur then spent another 4 years in a breeding aviary dreaming about fur! Somehow she had to realise that her flight pattern needed to change as feather defies gravity better then fur!

I will always remember her as having impeccable manners on and off the field. At the age of 12 the opportunity arose to exchange her for imprint falcons to fuel my small A.I. project, but that's another story! After flying Red (oh, by the way that was her name) for 5 seasons I decided to buy a brown bird but this time a parent reared male Finnish gos with the intention of flying more varied game.

I wanted to start with a clean slate and hopefully produce a bird that I knew would perform season after season as long as I didn't let him down with regards to manning, fitness and providing him with a chance to fly a mixture of quarry at an early stage. I bought the bird from Chris Brown (Bristol Region), he hatched in June 2000 and I picked him up

12 weeks later and he was one of a pair of parent reared males left with an aviary weight of just over 2lb.

In the early stages of manning he well and truly showed his true colours and that's when I decided to name him Banshee! Near the end of manning and after slowly reducing his weight he showed near enough identical behaviour patterns as my previous bird and was proven again to be another very steady bird.

I know males are considered to be predominantly feather birds but in this case I would have to disagree. His first introduction to fur was the first day I flew him free in Scotland in October 2000 and after his first taste of rabbit he got more and more courageous showing guts and buckets of perseverance, sometimes getting up 3 times before finally binding to the rabbit. His initial flying weight started at 1lb 7½oz but as the week went on with a number of slips under his belt he muscled to an end of week weight of 1lb 9½oz. His food rewards were regular and he flew stronger and stronger where at the end of the day I was slipping him and catching bunnies with a good size crop. His technique developed instinctively and he knew that he had to grab the head to ensure the rabbit didn't get the better of him. Scotland was



Red 12 year old parent reared Finnish goshawk.

the perfect foundation for his first season and our annual pilgrimage came and went with a good weeks hawking had by all. Banshee's first 6 days flying free (after losing 1 day after allowing him to gorge too much grub on his first kill) gave him a good bag of rabbits.

The next two seasons went well with a mixture of game to his bag including rabbit, duck (on the rise), pheasant, crow, rook, jay, wood pigeon and blackbird.

I've just completed the fourth season with Banshee and in Scotland this year he tallied 30 rabbits in six days hawking with some good long flights in and out of the woods bagging 10 on his best day. This season I flew mainly rabbit with some good slips on pheasant but generally I didn't do him justice in the feather department settling mainly for fur. His tally this season was 74 rabbits and 4 moorhen and I managed to see all the flights.

Parent reared goshawks can be very good hunting partners as long as you apply the correct training techniques, weight control and conditioning from day one. I agree that you have a smaller margin of error when controlling their flying weight compared to an imprinted gos but this adds to the challenge.



Banshee in Scotland – took 35 rabbits.

From my point of view the parent reared gos is the closest you will get these days to a partnership with a wild goshawk hunting in his natural habitat.

Thanks to the lads (you know who you are) for being good hawking company. And I'm sure next season we will be raising a few more glasses to those who got away!

All the best to all members for a successful breeding and hunting season.



Banshee on another successful kill.



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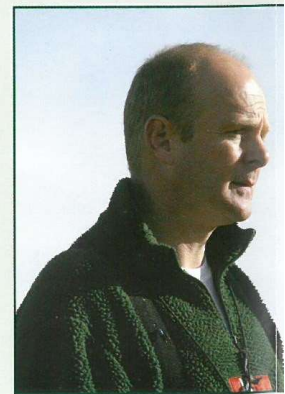
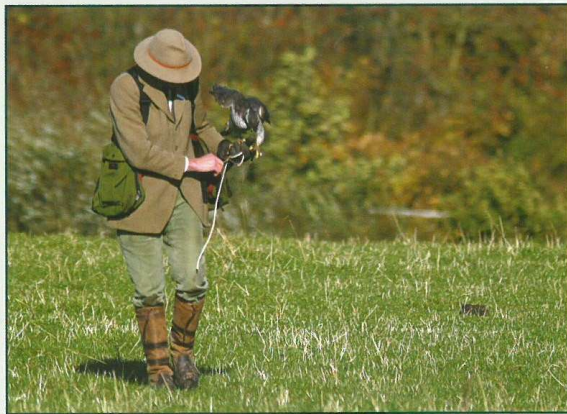
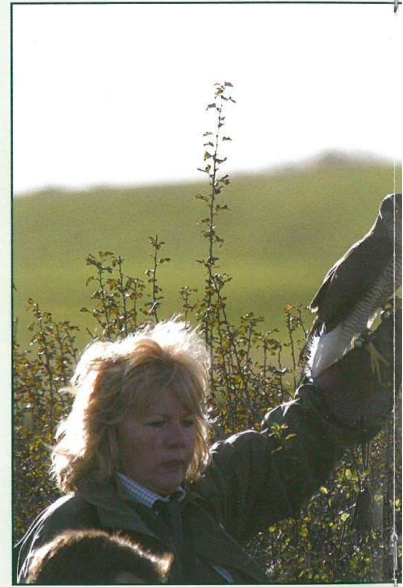
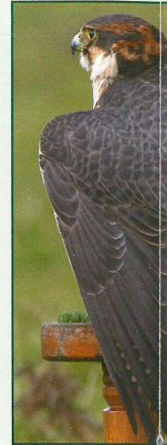
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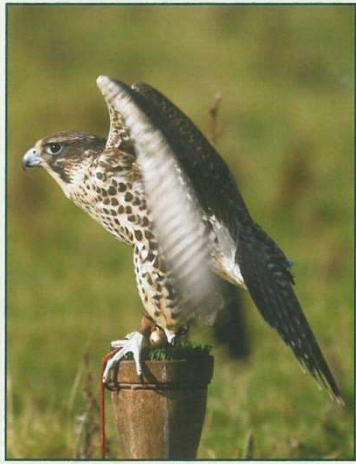


Chainbridge Hotel









Winter Hun Hawking

MARK WILLIAMS

Well the season is drawing to a close for me at least and the days are at last getting longer once again and spring will soon return with renewed life and color to our otherwise bland and bleak winter landscape. I have had a good innings this past season and not too many mishaps. In fact it has been one of my longest hawking seasons since immigrating to Canada 13 years ago. The main reason for my being able to extend my otherwise short and intense hawking season has been due to the fact that we are currently enjoying a high cycle in our local upland game bird populations, primarily the Hungarian or grey partridge, otherwise affectionately referred to as the "Hun". While they generally do well, like many game species, they are affected by climatic conditions and usually wet springs during nesting time can play havoc with chick hatch and survival rate. A typical covey will consist of 80% young birds. On average 30% of them will live to their second year. This past spring must have been ideal conditions for them as we have enjoyed such a bumper crop of them. Average clutch sizes range from 10–20 chicks.

Background

The Hungarian partridge as the name suggests was originally introduced from Hungary and other parts of Europe. The first successful plants were in Washington and California in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The 1908 stocking in Alberta is credited with establishing huns in the Great Plains, which is still their major stronghold. The reason they have adapted so well is primarily because of the growth of irrigated agricultural areas across these regions. Also they have the remarkable ability to survive the harsh winters conditions by roosting in the snow and using its insulating properties as a substitute for heavy vegetative cover.

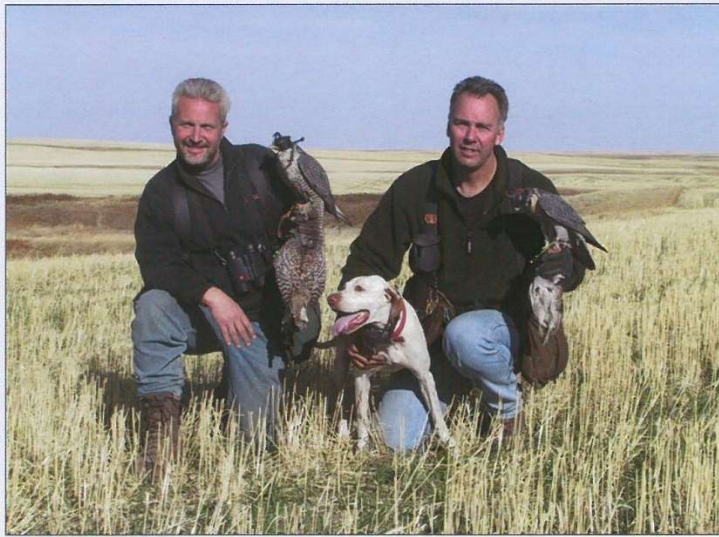
They also form a roosting ring or "dig" as we call them, much like some quail species do, so as to preserve body heat, which in part is why they have adapted far better than the pheasant, our only other non-indigenous game bird species. Certainly without this game bird species many falconers would not enjoy the generous seasons we have today.



*Gyr x peregrine and
gyr x barbury with pheasant,
sharptail and partridge.*

Seasons

Our hawking season here in Alberta starts on August 15th through March 31st for upland game birds. However very few take advantage of this early start until mid to late September once the crops are off and the partridge can be more readily seen and hunted, usually over wheat stubble. Our duck season opens September 1st for north of the province and usually a week later for the southern part. The latter runs a week later than former providing the full 107 days as designated by CITIES international agreement. Duck hawking is a great way to start a young falcon and they are usually well wedded to this sometimes intimidating larger quarry before we alternate with upland game such as partridge or sharptail grouse in late September. The ducks are unfortunately usually all gone by early November when the cold winter weather arrives and our sloughs (pronounced slew), ponds and rivers freeze up. This is when most falconers make the switch to upland hawking, providing they have adequate populations in suitable terrain to hawk.



Mark Williams on left with gyr x peregrine and sharptail grouse. Dave Knutson on right with Peales tiercel and English partridge.

are often found by the road side gritting up. Snow is a great asset to winter hun hawking as it enables falconers to easily spot and mark hun digs out in the open prairie. A good spotting scope with a car window mount is also a great asset to verify someone is at home before we put a bird up over the dig. Anything with between 15-45 power is fine as over that magnification the fields of view is usually hampered by heat mirages or poor light transmission to the eye. Our most productive method of locating them is from a truck (usually 4x4) and driving the country back roads or in some instances, farmer's stubble fields. Obtaining landowner permission is rarely an issue on the prairies. Sometimes we accidentally bump a covey which usually head to the nearest cover. If done by the truck instead of a dog or by man they usually do not go too far unlike sharptails, which more

often head "out of town" if disturbed. Often on days of less flight opportunities we even intentionally bump a covey when they are sometimes found in a less desirable location such as close to a fence or overhead wire. Bumping them to better spots often works and turns

an otherwise no flight situation into a good one.

Location, Location Location!

Here in Alberta, particularly in the south of our province, our upland hawking ground is usually over wide, open expanses of land comprising of hundreds if not thousands of acres. Open set ups are most conducive to high flying falcons and the flights to be had where both quarry and falcon have to give their all if either are to succeed are unsurpassable. Because of the hun's minimal cover needs, it is difficult to predict where they'll be at what time of day except at dusk when they

Birds Used

Traditionally we have used peregrines and to a lesser extent the prairie falcons for the sport, with virtually no one taking advantage of our passage gyr falcons populations. However in recent years many of us have switched to using tiercel gyr hybrids as they definitely handle the cold winters better than a pure peregrine which would naturally migrate south to warmer climes around late fall. The prairie and gyr falcons handle the winters very well and are readily available for resident

Alberta falconers to trap, just for the cost of a \$70 permit. However pure gyrs are too big for most of our quarry and 90% of the time we only see the females while out trapping as the jerkins seem to stay up further north in their winter migration. Either way they are both somewhat overkill for our usual quarry species but if more jerkins could be found I am sure more of us would take advantage of them. My personal preference would be to fly tiercel peregrines, if it were not for the cold and the fact that huns are generally not my main local quarry. Therefore I have currently opted to use tiercel gyr peregrine which at around 770–800 grams proved to be a good all round bird in size for tackling other larger quarry such a big ducks, sharptail and pheasant and are more cold resistant. Our huns weigh around 350 to 475 grams on average. As a good comparison, sharptails are around 750–1000 grams and ducks such as mallards are around 1200 grams. Of course there are always exceptions to every rule.



Chasing partridge with pointing dogs.

Weather

We generally hawk within some degree of comfort down to around -20°C here in Alberta. After that it gets quite uncomfortable and particularly if we get any strong winds at those temperatures. The wind-chill factor can get real tough on both, man and bird, as well as our telemetry which often shuts down or at least gives much reduced range when the battery gets real cold. Exposed human skin freezes in about 9 minutes when it gets to around -30°C (I've always wondered how they test that, must be a bum job!) I have hawked to around -33°C during this winter but frankly would not be able to keep that up. If you do, aside from eventually losing sensation in your finger tips, it allows for little margin of error and you will likely lose your bird if they rake off

or take down quarry far from sight and beyond the new parameters that your average transmitter will work. That being said, a very reputable American telemetry manufacturer is about to introduce a new model that's signal is totally stable to -40°C .

Often country dirt roads and stubble fields are inaccessible due to drifting snow and to go walking for any period of time in these sort of temperatures can be life threatening. A couple of years ago a falconer friend, while out hawking in mid-winter, found the frozen body of a young teenager who a few days before had got his truck stuck and he had tried walking out of a remote area. This sort of incident is not uncommon in the remote prairies and it is normal practice to carry a shovel and basic winter survival kit such as spare blanket, candles, matches and chocolate etc. Unfortunately because of the

remoteness of these areas, cellular phone coverage does not always work.

Ideal winter hawking usually falls between -5°C and -15°C . Providing there is no wind, all birds including peregrines will fly awesome within those

temperatures and with that extra zip in their wing beat not seen in warmer temperatures. Cold weather often can change the demeanor of a bird and they eat as if it is their last meal. It also permits us to have our birds weight up 15–30 grams or so higher than in early season and both the falcon and falconers benefit from this. Our typical winter days bring crisp fresh air and usually clear blue skies and when contrasted against a brilliant white landscape, all tends to add to the aesthetics of our hawking experience . . . providing you dress appropriately for it. A good snow covering, providing its not too deep, will provide shelter and cover thereby enabling the huns to fly out into the open fields and dig down to bare ground to find feed with some sense of security from predators. Some coveys will stay happily in their digs for days at a time if undisturbed and providing ample food lies on the ground beneath.

Predator Concerns

In addition to the aforementioned added stresses to winter hawking, there is also the serious issue of other predators out there who are also hungry and looking for a quick and easy meal such as your bird down on a kill. Late afternoon, which unfortunately coincides with the best hawking times is when our birds are at most risk from owls. Snowy and great horned owls, goshawks and further south in more remote areas, golden eagles are our main concern not to mention the wily coyote, which will take advantage of any opportunity that comes nearby. In early season we have a different variety of avian predator species to be concerned about. When the temperatures are low the predators seem extra keen and bold and often show little fear of man. At the time of writing a fellow falconer friend who was flying another falconer's high flying peregrine that was killed by a golden eagle. Also two other falconers in our province this season alone have had owls attack their birds while out hawking (late afternoon). Thankfully both of those birds lived to tell the tale. This is yet another reason to use good quality telemetry so you can locate and get to your bird as quickly as possible. Breaking from the normal training principles, I allow my dogs to run after the falcon once it is down on a kill. It has proven to be a savior to my birds if a passing eagle, owl or coyote comes cruising by and has intentions of breaking up the party.



Wild vs. Captive Bred & Released

In central, western and pacific Canada no one breeds and releases Grey Partridge to my knowledge, as there is no need to with the abundance of them and ease of access to hunt them. Unlike the UK and some parts of Europe, we are still in a fortunate situation to fly only natural wild coveys and sometimes that covey may be hawked for the very first time. Many parts of the southern prairies are still remote and somewhat sparsely populated by man and as a result large open expanses of land get very little human hunting pressure. That said, these wild birds deal with daily interactions with the

various wild predators that are also abundant in the Great Plains. There is no question of the huge difference between flying released captive bred pen raised birds to flying their wild counterparts. The wild birds are often not only much fitter but also wiser and experienced as to the ways of predators with their added learned skills which are far more developed than any instinctive behavior.

Evasive Escape Tactics

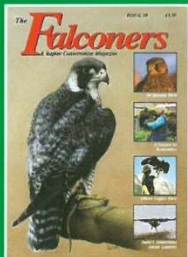
Some of the tricks I have witnessed huns pull when being pursued by a falcon are fascinating. Of course if the hun or any game bird for that matter is up out of his dig and you put your bird up anywhere close, they will bust and the flight ends right there as it starts. Probably the most well known act of bailing under a falcon is usually indicative of being flushed under a falcon that is at too low of a pitch or perhaps in early season when flying young quarry, assuming cover is not close at hand. Other tactics are when to avoid a hit coming in from behind they stand vertical on their tail shooting straight upwards 30-50ft depending upon their speed. This is followed by an equally vertical downward stoop down towards nearest cover. Not so welcome is their use of fences and wires to scrub off a pursuing falcon. Also like their cousins the grouse, they also pull off some nifty side shuffles or barrel roll maneuvers and also seemingly stalling in mid air so as to cause the falcon to overshoot its target beneath them. This all adds to the education of the falconer's bird and the enjoyment of flying these great little game birds.

I enjoy hun hawking immensely as they are great little game birds capable of providing excellent challenging sport and they usually hold well to dogs and in winter snow conditions often give you a clearly marked location to flush cleanly and on a timely basis. Given the general abundance of these birds and available flights on them, their honest flushes and often challenging conditions, hawking winter huns will continue as my favorite winter past time.

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Hawking with King Howel (d.950)

THOMAS W. JONES

Howel the Good, son of Cadell, King of Cymru, enacted by the grace of God and fasting and prayer when Cymru was in his possession in its bounds . . . So begins the laws of Howel the Good, a man who ruled most of what we now call Wales just before the turn of the last millennium. He is thought to have lived in Powys and spent a lot of time at a building known as 'The White House' (in Dyved), which came to be known as his Hunting Lodge.

Howel the Good or Howel Dda, as he was known, was a Christian King who visited Rome and was generally considered to have been a wise and beneficent ruler who codified the laws and customs of his province. He reigned in Wales when Falconry was the sport of Kings and was to continue to be so for the next 600 years. This is reflected by the high status given to the Court Falconer (Penhebogyd) who was fifth in seniority out of twenty-four officers of state, after the Judge of the Court.

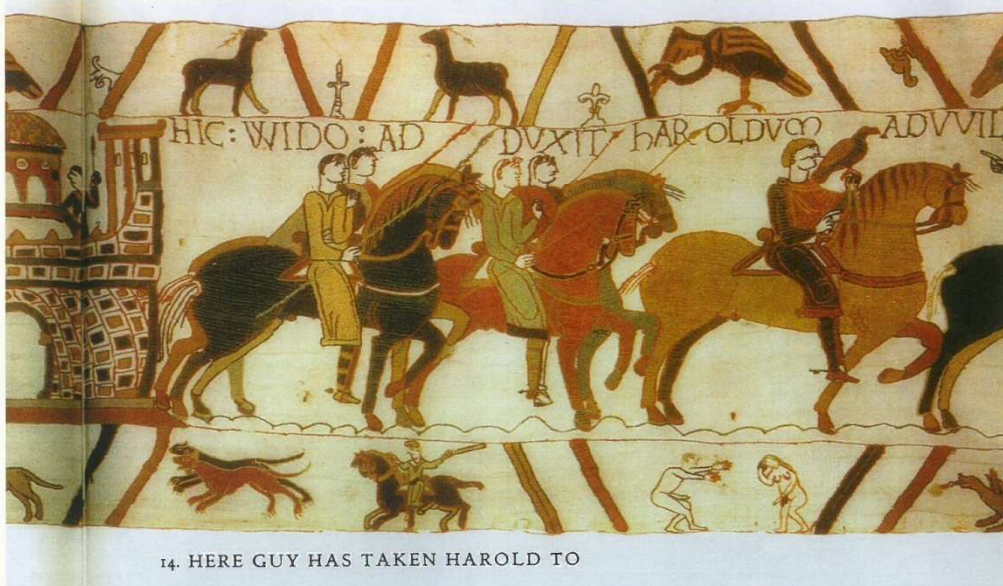
The Falconer had the protection of the King ". . . to the farthest place where he shall hawk . . ." but he had to lodge in the Kings barn ". . . because the hawks do not like smoke." Perhaps this was a blessing because I suspect that Howel and his Court lived in open plan accommodation around a central fire without the benefit of a Chimney.

We know from early medieval records that the position of Falconer might be given to a minor member of the aristocracy and we know that the position of Falconer entitled the Office holder to a stipend. In 1291 three men were called to account for refusing to pay Thomas Hauvyle 'lastage' dues, which he had the right to collect from all of the ships leaving Kings Lynn by virtue of his sergeanty of keeping the Kings Gyr Falcons.

The Officers of King Howels Court were afforded status and privileges, right down to who sat nearest the fire. The privileges afforded to the Falconer

were very impressive, the only downside being a 'don't drink and hawk' limitation and an obligation to provide the Chief Huntsman with ". . . a tame Sparrow Hawk every Michaelmas". The text reads as follows:

What day so ever the falconer shall kill a heron or a bittern or a curlew by means of his hawks, the king shall perform three services for him; hold his horse while he shall secure the birds, and hold his stirrup while he shall dismount, and hold it while he shall mount. Three times the King presents him with food from his own hand on that night; for by the hand of his messenger he presents him daily, except in the three chief festivals and the day whereon he shall kill a notable bird. On the canghellor's left he sits at a banquet. He has the skin of a hart from the chief huntsman in October to make him gloves and jesses. He drinks three times only in the hall lest there be neglect of the hawks. A horse always in attendance he receives



from the king, and two shares of the provender for it. If the falconer kills his in hunting or it is should by chance, he has another from the king. He has every male hawk. He has every sparrow hawk's next which shall be found on the land of the court. He has a mess of food and a horn full of mead for his provision in his lodging. From the time the falconer shall place his hawks in their mewes until he shall take them thence, he gives no answer to any one who shall sue him. He has gwestova (entertainment and dues) once every year on the king's taeogs (villains); and from every taeogtrev (district) he has a crone or four legal pence for food for his hawks. He has his land free. The day whereon he shall capture a notable bird and the king is not in the place, when the falconer comes to the court with the bird with him, the king is to rise to receive him; and if he rises not, he is to give the garment he may have on, to the falconer. He has the heart of every animal, which shall be killed, in the kitchen. When the falconer shall be distrained upon by law, neither the maer nor the canghellor shall distraint upon him, only the household and the apparitor.²

Strange times, but interesting from the perspective of a personal injury lawyer (I am one such). Everything

from murder to shipwreck to an insult could be compensated and if you hadn't got the money, everyone right down to your fifth cousin had to chip in – or hide in them there hills. Eyelid (with hair on it – please) was worth 1 pence in value – for every hair. Everything according to the laws of Howel had a value from an eyelid's to a dog:

‘Cub of a king's coverthound whilst its eyes are shut is twenty four pence in value. In its litter, it is forty-eight pence in value. In its kennel, it is ninety-six pence in value. In its random hunting, it is six score pence in value. When it shall be trained, it is a pound in value.’

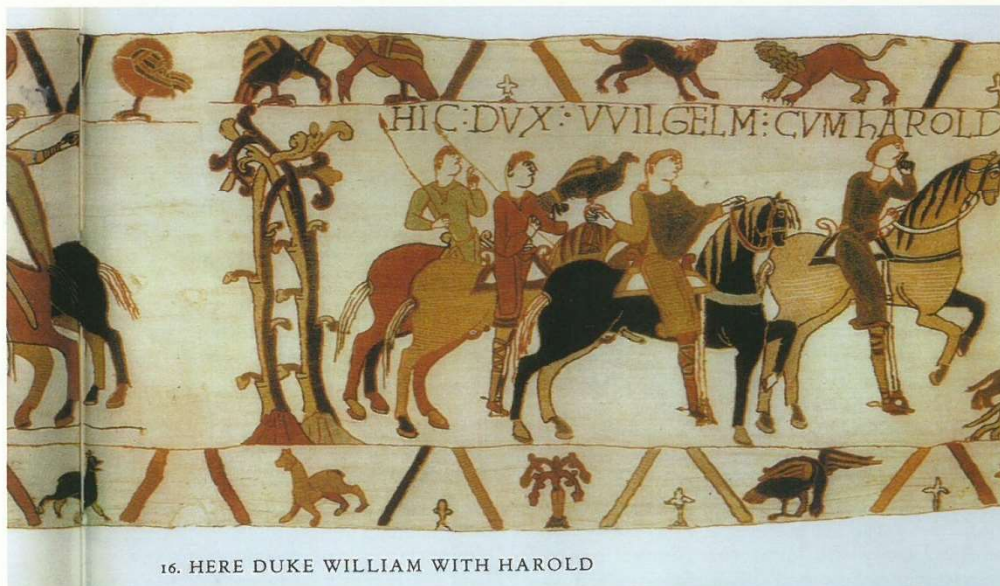
Birds of prey also had a value:

‘A pound is the worth of a hawk's nest. Six score pence is the worth of a hawk before mewing and whilst it shall be in the mew. If it is white after mewing, it is a pound in value. The nest of a falcon is six score pence in value. A falcon before mewing and whilst it shall be in the mew, is three score pence in value. If it be white after mewing, it is six score pence in value. The nest of a sparrow hawk is twenty-four pence in value. A sparrow-hawk before mewing and whilst it shall be in the mew, is twelve pence in value.

If it be white after mewing, it is twenty-four pence in value. The teithi (virtue) of every female bird are, laying and hatching. The teithi of every male bird are, singing and impregnating.’

The Falconer in common with all officers was entitled to woollen garments from the King and linen from the Queen three times a year. The text tells us nothing about the way he dressed, but pictures from the Bayeux Tapestry, which was, completed about 100–150 years later, give us an idea. Apart from mention of Falcons and Sparrow-Hawks, we can only guess the types of birds, which were flown e.g. Goshawks and Gyr Falcons. It is difficult to paint a mental picture of what a Court Falconer looked like, but we know that he worked for a Monarch and had the responsibility of keeping him entertained. I get the impression that he would have been well dressed and very particular when it came to the training and maintenance of his birds.

If I was given the chance to go back in time, I am not sure whether I would take up the offer of Court Falconer, times were after all brutal and life was short – three drinks a day – come on!



16. HERE DUKE WILLIAM WITH HAROLD

Tales of a Lowland Game Hawker

ANDREW HULME

July saw the Eyass I had eagerly been waiting for arrive in the form of a Peregrine x Barbary Falcon; the name Freya was given to the Eyass. I had picked her out two months earlier from my good friend John Dickson who had bred her. Freya was reared in an imprint pen by John's old game hawk Sky along with her sister and two brothers.

After manning, initial training and creance work Freya was flown loose with August spent taking the Falcon and two Brittany's out getting the Falcon fit and accustomed to her hunting partners while feeding on the lure.

The 1st September arrived and Hawking Partridges began. Freya killed the first Partridge flushed for her, she flew check on the 2nd with the covey flushed on her return and killed a Partridge on the 3rd. She flew check [gulls] once in her second week two fields away and again I flushed a covey on her return. She quickly learnt that it was better to concentrate on me than on check.

Her pitch was low so to try to encourage her to go up I started to flush covey out of position where she had no chance of catching them and was totally out flown and this did the trick with her pitch improving to where Freya was hitting 250-300 ft.

October came and the WHC Field meeting at Llangollen. Freya killed a Grey Partridge at Tom Smiths Moor on the first day and knocked down a Red Leg Partridge and Hen Pheasant at both Arley Hall and Weston Park. I was very pleased with the way she had flown at the meeting.

Freya became very reliable which made me complacent with her feeding and during the Christmas period she began to sit in trees before she started to make her pitch but I got her back on track in January. The last day of our season was 16th January when Freya killed her first Cock Pheasant but because she bound to it from underneath when they landed the Pheasant was on its back and gave the Falcon a kick in the head and Freya received a spur in her right eye but she has made a full recovery.

Being an Eyass the Falcon went through phases of binding to prey then striking down prey and on many occasions she chose the wrong method of catching the Game bird and on one occasion this nearly cost her life. A covey of Red Legs were flushed from a hedge and she chose the Partridge flying low across a

winter wheat field, down she came and instead of binding to the Red Leg she hit it full speed and both Freya and the Partridge hit the ground hard. The Partridge recovered and flew off and Freya was covered in dirt and a bit wobbly for a few moments but a lesson learnt the hard way.

She has given me hours of pleasure and many fantastic flights and hopefully next season I can persuade her to fly Duck. A modest bag of 12 Red Legs, 1 Grey, 3 Hen Pheasants, 1 Cock Pheasant and a Moorhen was her tally for the season.

I finish the article with two extracts from my diary.

18th Nov: Went up to Layer and drove along the edge of the game cover where a Hen Pheasant was spotted walking along hedge. Parked up and put the Falcon up who quickly mounted and was joined by a wild Peregrine Falcon. Ran Chalk down the hedge but he couldn't find the bird so I called him back and ran him into the game cover with both Falcons following the dog, suddenly half way down the cover a hen pheasant broke going across the grass field. Freya and the wild falcon turned over and were in pursuit of the hen bird as it cleared a line of trees and headed out into the next field heading for cover. Chalk and myself jumped over the fence and found Freya in the middle of the field plucking her prize with the wild Falcon flying around her but flew off on our approach.

21st Nov: At Stonham Aspal over Andrew's on a perfect day, Suffolk is covered in snow but there is a blue sky and a slight breeze. We spot a Cock Pheasant sunning itself near a feeder along a hedge that divides two large fields so we drive to a better spot to park up and release Freya where the Pheasant cannot see us. The Falcon mounts quickly and makes a terrific pitch of 300-350 ft. Send Chalk and Dan down the hedge where suddenly Chalk swings on Point with Dan backing him roughly where we had seen the Cock Pheasant. I wave Freya over and as she passes over the dogs I send them in to flush and two Partridges explode out of the ditch, one flying along the hedge while the other curls over the hedge across the field towards a far hedge. I look up as I shout HEY to see Freya in a full stoop reeling the Partridge in, she levels up behind it and comes from underneath to hit it hard, the Partridge spins in mid air and then hits the ground. As Freya comes into land on her prey up it gets and flies to make the hedge it first intended to reach.



A Day in the life of a Perlin

JANETTE THORNTON

“SHARJAH” was a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It wouldn’t pay to be fooled by her size or appearance.

Having flown and hunted a very beautiful Harris hawk for 5 seasons I decided that maybe I would have enough experience to fly and hunt a falcon. After reading many books on the subject I decided there was no excuse for hours of reading and talking to fellow falconers, as now was the time to put all this theory into practice.

Then came the question of which falcon would best suit me. As a beginner I was given lots of advice. Peregrine x lanner, tiercel peregrine, and gyr x peregrine, Barbary tiercel and so the list went on and on.

I thought for the next twelve months (in fact more) as to what quarry and land I would have available to the falcon and was eventually convinced that I should consider buying a peregrine x merlin. I had never heard of anyone in my part of the world owning this hybrid but decided that from what I had heard about these little falcons that would be my choice.

I rang Richard Hill of *Falcon Mews* and he said that he would put me on the waiting list. A year later he rang to say that Mick Cain had bred 3 females, one of which would be available for me to buy.

When I collected her she was not only beautiful but also very small and very, very vocal . . .

The training process was comparatively easy and she was quick to learn making her first years flying very enjoyable, although there were some scary outings when I had to go off and find her with my new Marshall equipment.

During her first season it became very noticeable that she had a keen tendency to chase anything that was oversized i.e., crows, mallards, pigeons and pheasants.

At weekends during her first season and also during her second season, I was fortunate to receive an invite from Julian Godfrey to hawk partridge.

One Thursday afternoon I drove to Julian’s and on this particular afternoon she went up and waited on above us beautifully. We walked with her, flushing one or two partridge with Julian’s dog Morgan, when suddenly from under a hedgerow a pheasant flushed. She stooped immediately and knocked the pheasant down. Julian was so excited he jumped the barbwire fence and ripped his trousers, his very best hawking trousers and got to Sharjah ahead of me taking control of the falcon and her enormous quarry.

He then proceeded to spend the next hour on the telephone ringing all of his fellow falconers and in the meantime while she was feeding taking stacks of photos. We then went to the pub to celebrate.

Thank you Julian for a lovely day . . . Sharjah.

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UPDATE

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Conservation *of the* Grey Partridge

ANDREW HULME

W.H.C. Conservation Officer

The last two dry summers have been ideal conditions for breeding and ultimately the recovery of the Grey Partridge.

Latest figures released have shown an increase in the population by 5% to around 80,000 pairs.

For the Game Conservancy Trust who are lead partner for this species biodiversity action plan the first goal has been achieved which was to halt the decline by 2005. The next targets are to ensure more than 150,000 pairs by 2010 and to maintain and where possible enhance the current range.

For the Grey Partridge to thrive this species needs the right habitat such as grass margins and beetle banks as well as dead grass at the bottom of a hedge for a hen to nest in. Sufficient food with sawfly larvae, which has been a favourite for young chicks and effective predator control.

Spring feeding has been proven to help as February, March and April there is very little food around especially on over wintered stubble fields where all the spilled grain would have been consumed. By keeping feeders topped up, pairs of greys will be in better body condition as the breeding season commences and have the fat reserves to be able to lay a second clutch if they lose their first clutch to predators.

In certain areas, such as Northern Ireland, Wales, South East and West Grey Partridges have virtually disappeared. In Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Kent, the population remains low. But in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Northumberland, The Lothian and Borders the population is increasing.

Here in Essex on the farm I keep on for our Hawking syndicates, two of the three pairs of Greys successfully reared young with one pair rearing six while the second reared four. I know Steve Barton has had success on his hawking ground in Wales. He reports that of 15 possible pairs they reared 24 young. This was due to countryside stewardship on the farm and good weather and feeding. In addition he had very few predators on the land.

We as falconers and austringers can play our part in the recovery of the Grey Partridge. The Game Conservancy Trust run a partridge count scheme spring and autumn so if you have Greys on your hawking ground join the count so they can monitor changing densities and geographical distribution accurately.

For more information on the Partridge count scheme contact:
01425-652381
or visit www.gct.org.uk

ISOBEL

W.H.C Goshawk

MICK KANE

The club's own hawk Isobel was bred by myself. She came out of a Finnish Female Goshawk 'Vicky' bred by Harry Gilbert. Vicky was imprinted by myself and was flown by Roly Evens in her first hunting season until she came back to me at the end of the season. She produced young that year. The father to Isobel is the male Finnish Gos that Ray Smith regular flies on all WHC meets; he came from my own hawk 'Rosie' who I attended most field meets with in the nineties. So Isobel comes from excellent hunting bloodlines that produce young at an early age. So hopefully the club's investment has been made wisely.

Isobel was imprinted by Lee Featherstone. Lee works on building sites and he takes all his birds to work with him, making them bomb-proof around everything. Lee has imprinted Goshawks before and the end product has always been excellent. I think to imprint any bird correctly you need lots of time and an understanding wife or helper to clean the house up everyday from the crap the bird leaves.

Around the penning stage Lee was experiencing some behavioural problems with Isobel. This is normal for most goshawks at this time of the imprinting, the major problem is the time of the year when we imprint, end of July blistering summer days are not exactly the right conditions to get a young imprint Gos entered. Also we are limited to what quarry is available at that time of the year, and some falconers have to take too much weight from the imprint to get a response which can trigger many problems which can be difficult to resolve.

We decided that a change of owner and location might help with her behaviour, so Isobel arrived at my home mid August. I was to fly her for the rest of the season and return her to Lee's for the breeding season. This worked well for me as I had just had a Goshawk stolen and was left bird-less.

Isobel was very aggressive on the glove and very vocal; this was normal for most of my imprints at this time of the year and although she was a pain she soon calmed down and we started to sort her out a little.

Soon came the hawking season and Isobel was flying well. She was still on single kills and all the

aggression had gone, and away from home she never called. Her temperament was spot on and now you could see the hard work that

Lee had put in imprinting her. She was never bothered on any large meet; her main quarry was game, which is really all I hunt during the winter months.

Her hunting weight started at 2lb 9oz and at the end of the season she would be 2lb 14oz and more.

Her tally for the season was modest but most of the time she was fed up on single kills.

Isobel returned to Lee's just after Xmas 2003, and Lee flew her till the end of January just to get back the bond with her for the forthcoming breeding season. The last time I spoke to Lee she was looking good and fingers crossed she may even produce this year.

Her hunting days have come to an end, she was bought by the club and only to be flown first season then placed into the club's breeding project. Lee has a couple of semen donors from good hunting stock, so who knows, it would be nice to see some of her offspring being flown by members in the near future, fingers crossed.



2003-2004 - Isobel club hawk quarry list:

Rabbits	22
Cock Pheasants	18
Hen Pheasants	23
Partridge	3
Hares	3
Various	2

What is the Right Weight for a Hawk?

DAVID JONES

Yes, we all do it, fly our Hawks too heavy or too light and the controversy that surrounds this will go on and on. For example, if you bought an eyass from a breeder who had kept it in a small aviary with little opportunity for exercise then the fat weight of that hawk would be different from a bird that was bought from a breeder with a hacking pen, so what is the true fat weight?

Falconers ask me what is the fat weight of a female peregrine. I reply, is she kept on a block or in a free flying aviary and is she a sluggish hawk or does she fly around all day? How long is a piece of string?

When I fly my Hawks (long-wings and short-wings) I will judge how much food to give them on how much work they have done. Falconers seem to forget that the judgement for tomorrow's flying weight is based on the calculation of energy spent on today's weight plus weather conditions of day and night.

Sometimes you can take hours to drive to a moor, then a long walk waiting for your dog to come on point or waiting for your turn to fly. You look at your watch and its 3pm and you usually fly your hawk at 11am.

This is not your normal day and your hawk has been bumped about in your vehicle for an hour or two not your normal 15 minutes up the road from your house.

It's your turn to fly and you look at your watch and

you are 4 hours out of your normal flying time. What is the weight of your hawk now?

If you started the day with the understanding that dinner was served at 1 pm and you didn't eat until 5 pm then your energy levels would be down and the thought of running a couple of miles would not be attractive.

I have also seen a falconer take his or her hawk out of the car, give the hawk one short flight, then feed her up and complain the next day that the hawk is overweight. The opposite of this is to fly the heart out of a hawk then feed her a measly amount for the work she has done. This will be rewarded the next day by the falconer complaining that his hawk is down on her weight and not up for it. I'm not saying that I'm not guilty of these mistakes but I try not to repeat them.

How many falconers these days are skilled enough to feel the breastbone of a hawk and comment the hawk is too sharp or too fat – not many!

Its good to take out too much food rather than not enough then you have plenty of fuel to replenish your hawk if she has flown hard and long without a kill, A well garnished lure is a just reward.

If we could think more about the workload and not "my Hawk has four chicks per day" then we could see healthier and fitter hawks flown.

Hawk Board Elections

TUESDAY, 31ST AUGUST 2004

Applications are invited for candidates to contest the forthcoming Hawk Board Election for six specialist members who will serve on the Board for a period not exceeding 3 years. Candidates must be proposed and seconded by members of a Club or other Association affiliated to the Hawk Board although the candidates themselves need not be members of an affiliated Club.

Each candidate must provide a CV of not more than 100 words to cover his/her background and to outline why he/she would be an asset to the Hawk Board. CVs will be circulated with the voting papers.

To quote the Hawk Board Constitution:
"Candidates will be expected to have an understanding of national and international legislation, and policy

from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), relating to birds of prey, and an awareness of the threats against falconry and hawk keeping."

Candidates must not be subject to nor have been convicted of any criminal charge in any country for offences concerning birds of prey.

Nomination forms and CVs are available from and should be returned to:

Mike Clowes, The Hawk Board, 10 Birthorpe Road, Billingborough, Lincs. NG34 0QS

CLOSING DATE Tuesday, 6th JULY 2004.

Forms received after this date will not be accepted.

The Welsh Hawking Club 2003 Field Meet

NEIL McCANN

The Field Meet for 2003 went well although the weather was not very kind with the rain making things a little difficult for most falconers. The club attended many new venues this season with pheasant being the main quarry most members wanted to fly. Then go back to the hotel, dry off and tell their finest flight of the day over a beer at the bar.

Although the game room did not seem as full as most three day meets, it soon became clear when the game cards were given back and the discussion over the phone on how well the meet went despite the poor weather.

Well done to Nick Havermann-Mart winning the prize for his falcon stooping and catching a mouse at Arley Hall. That would give most falconers something to smile at. With one of the quickest AGM's for a while and especial thanks to Mike Clowes who has stepped down after many years serving the club very well. Lee Featherstone did a great job in raising club funds on the raffle for the bronze (I wonder who won it?)

As I write this article I cannot believe four months have passed and I am in the process of starting the next meet for this year with the hotel booked and the partridge sorted out. It looks like the Red legs will be chased this season by the ever increasing number of longwings attending and with each new season having more goshawks that Harris hawks attending. Hopefully there will be many more rabbits to fly next season.

GROUP	DAY	LOCATION	QUARRY TAKEN
Falcon Group 1A Ellis Phythian Carl Cheshire	Wednesday	Arley Hall	Pigeon, pheasant
Jeff Cockle Richard Newton	Thursday	Llangurig	1 Redleg partridge
Kevin Whittle Martin Brereton	Friday	Tom Smith Moor	2 Red leg partridge
Falcon Group 2B Mark Belmonte Rob Rowe	Wednesday	Tom Smith Moor	2 grey partridge
Nick Havermann-Mart	Thursday	Arley Hall	1 mouse
Andy Hulme Steve Barton	Friday	Western Park	1 rook
Falcon Group 3C Lorraine Mechanow Paul Mechanow	Wednesday	Western Park	
Mick Fagan Phil Hudson	Thursday	Llandegla	2 pheasants
John Regan Danny McLoughlin Hugo Clerens Dimitri van Cleemant	Friday	Llangurig	
Goshawk Group 1A Rob Theijn Chris Freason	Wednesday	Dyserth	4 pheasants

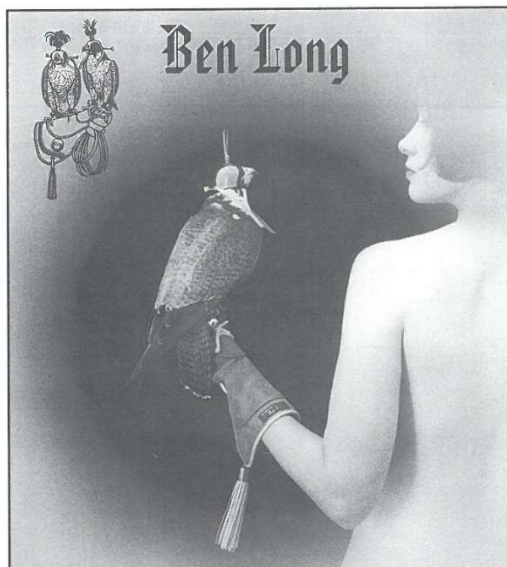


**SPECTATORS
ATTENDING:**
Andy White
Kevin Brisendon
Michele Brisendon
Derry Long
John O'Connor
Gary Trimbell
John Duggan
William Duncan
Bob Antonio
Ian Blatern

Paul Murray	Thursday	Cerrigydrudion	3 pheasants
John Murray			
John Regan	Friday	Arley Hall	1 rabbit, 4 pheasants 1 duck
Martin Breerton			
Goshawk Group 2B			
Simon Armstrong	Wednesday	Western Park	6 pheasants
Jim French			4 pheasants
Paul Morris	Thursday	Arley Hall	4 pheasants
Steve Dickenson			
Trevor Webster			
Goshawk Group 3C			
Mick Kane	Wednesday	Cerrigydrudion	1 hen pheasant
Ray Smith			
Lee Featherstone	Thursday	Western Park	5 cock pheasant 3 hen pheasant
John Simcox			
Kevin Simcox	Friday	Llandegla	3 cock pheasant 1 hen pheasant
Neil McCann			
Goshawk group 4D			
Terry Singleton	Wednesday	Llandegla	8 pheasant, 1 duck
Dave Metcalf			
Mark Crompton	Thursday	Dyserth	9 pheasant, 1 partridge
Mike West			
Pat James	Friday	Western Park	6 pheasant
Dave Jones			
Harris Hawk Group 1A			
William Tofts	Wednesday	Arley Hall	1 squirrel, 1 rabbit
Alex Whittle			
A Patterson	Thursday	Llangurig	4 pheasant
Roy Newport			
Ricky Norton	Friday	Arley Hall	1 duck, 2 pheasant
A. Watson			
C. Watson			
Harris Hawk Group 2B			
Steve Vaughan			
Adrian Watson	Wednesday	Arley Hall	3 pheasant, 1 moorhen
Ray Bleasdale			
Pete Dawson	Thursday	Western Park	5 pheasant
S. Byres			
Lee Peck	Friday	Llangurig	3 pheasant
Terry Peplow			
Harris Hawk Group 3C			
Etienne			
B. Pieter	Wednesday	Cwm	1 duck, 1 rabbit, 1 pheasant
Mark Wynn			
Andy Phillips	Thursday	Gresford	3 rabbits
Phil Hudson			
N. Davis	Friday	Lord Trevor	2 rabbits, 2 pheasant
Ellian Agius			

Field Meet Leaders marked RED





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The Rouse

A shakeout of the news, views and field-meets around the regions

Under the auspices of your committee, the WHC had been gently directed towards a regional structure. The need therefore, to inform you of the passion and success of each of the regions has arisen. The rouse gives you such a chance, and the rules of the club have been altered to accommodate this new direction. As part of the new clarified regional structure, it has become obligatory for the secretary to send in a written report to the editor of the Austringer.

SOUTH WALES
Meetings held on the second Monday of each month at Casey's Court Pub, Usk. Contact Helen Scourse 01600 860458

SOUTH WEST
Meetings held on the third Monday of each month at The Seven Stars, Kennford, Nr. Exeter. Contact Dave Scott 01752 830 382

MIDLAND
Meetings held on the last Monday of each month at The Plough Inn, Normington-on-Sour, Loughborough. Contact Mick Kane 01773 811 491

NORTH WALES
Meetings held on the first Tuesday of each month at the The Robin Hood Pub, Helsby. Contact Neil McCann 0151 293 0364

BATH
Meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Bull Inn, Hinton, Nr. Bath. Contact Dave Jones 01934 811 300

ESSEX
Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at The Whalebone Inn, Fingeringhoe, Nr. Colchester. Contact Andy Hulme 01206 729 363

COTSWOLD
Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Beckford Hotel between Evesham and Tewkesbury. Contact Shaun Healy 01386 832 812



Regional Reports



ESSEX REGION

Ray Hooper

The region has had another successful year with members attending the Summer BBQ held by the Cotswold region and the Field meeting at Llangollen with Lee Peck and Ricky Norton attending their first three-day meeting.

The region was invited to have a static display at the Tendering show in July and this was well manned by members who were able to bring along a Harris, Redtail, Peregrine, Merlin and a Lanner. This is always a great show where the public in and around Colchester get to see the birds and what Falconry is all about, we

also tend to pick up permission off some of the local farmers for hawking.

In September we had Simon Whitehead from Pakefield Ferrets give members a talk on Ferreting and been a pest controller for a living.

The Whalebone Inn changed hands this autumn and the new landlord Sam is happy for us to continue our monthly meetings there, he is also interested in hawks and has been our guest on a field meeting and enjoyed watching the birds fly.

Hawking season started in October with our first field meeting at Haughley Green on Saturday 25th. The Region held seven field meetings this season with two new venues we where kindly invited on.

The field meet at Brightlingsea on Saturday January 17th was this years most supported event. Ten members attended with their Harris Hawks. The weather was favourable unlike the November meet there. We witnessed some excellent sport on the day, with a variety of both fur and feathered game. The final tally was 7 Rabbits, 6 Pheasants, 1 Coot and 5 Moorhens.

Six members attended the Great Bardfield meeting on Monday 19th January. The weather was appalling with high winds and heavy rainfall throughout the morning. We were lucky to be able to fly the Hawks later that day despite the conditions, even so the birds flew well enough to

catch 5 Pheasants, 5 of the gamekeepers so called commando Ducks, 3 Rabbits and of course Dave Martin's odorous Stoat. Needless to say Dave did not have any close friends that day.

On Monday 27th January at another excellent Coggeshall meeting five members attended, the weather was quite mild although the wind was a bit gusty. We where accompanied by the gamekeeper Neil and one of the regular beaters, Neil's father owns the estate, he was in Scotland for that week and I know he was disappointed to miss seeing the Hawks fly again this year. Although the estate has had regular shoots throughout the season there was still plenty of game about for

the Hawks to try and outwit, the pheasants here seem to be very fit and take off like rockets. The hawks flew well and did manage to capture a few. Ricky Norton's Harris managed to catch a woodcock, which is unusual entry in any game diary. Total for the day 8 Pheasants, 3 rabbits, 4 moorhens and a woodcock.

The Essex region re-elected the following committee members: Chairman – Adrian Watson, Secretary – Ray Hooper, Treasurer – Andy Hulme, Field Officer – Andy Hulme, Regional Rep – Vacant.

The end of the season meal was on Friday 26th March at the Whalebone with some of the Gamekeepers who allow us to have meetings on their land invited as away of the Essex region showing our appreciation of their generosity.

BATH REGION

Dave Jones

Once again we've had a good year with many speakers from the full spectrum of Raptor life. Hawk and Owl Trust, Police Wildlife Liaison Officer, Roger Upton, Nick Fox, Terry Large to name but a few.

I would like to welcome Chris Selman, a young falconer, as our new secretary and treasurer, and to thank

Tony Ellis for his past support.

Throughout the year we've had our highs and lows with old members taking a break from the bar and new members turning up to meet other falconers and learn how to hold a pint of beer. It's been nice to see young blood joining our region and turn up on a regular basis.

On club nights Roy and Kevin Wellings of Falcon Fayre have provided us with top quality Falconry furniture and Nick and Lynn Haverman-Mart of Honeybrook Farm have supplied our members and guests with top quality frozen hawk food. I would like to thank both of these companies for their support.

We've had several small individual field meets set up by our regional members that have provided some good sport. I organised a weekend away in Devon with five other falconers. Two guests joined us (they had bid the highest for a days hawking in a Countryside Alliance auction). The guests were spoilt with dramatic flights from Goshawks and a longwing, taking 15 Pheasants, 3 Partridge, 2 Mallard and 1 Crow.

Our regional meetings are informal and laid back. The Bull Inn, Hinton is our gathering-place for a good hawk chat and on a good month you can catch Dave and Jean Dimond taking a well earned break at the bar.

MIDLANDS REGION

Lee Featherstone

The Midlands Region has had a very quite year this hawking season. Attendance at Field meets has been poor also the monthly meetings have been almost forgotten by some members.

We desperately need some help with YOUR club, instead of moaning what should be done why not help a little more, Myself and Lee both have exceptionally busy lives and if anybody would like to stand and have a go at our roles then please contact me ASAP you are more than welcome. Remember that we do not get paid for these roles on the committee we do it for YOU, we give up our time and effort for you the members so why not give something back to the club for once.

The Summer Fair was a great success again, mainly thanks to Lee and members from the Cotswold region. It was well attended again and the venue was spot on. Nick from Honeybrook Farm sponsored the event and supplied us with a cracking BBQ a big thanks for Nick and the staff from Honeybrook. The same venue has been booked again and we are hoping to repeat the success. If anyone would like to get involved and help with the summer fair then please come forward and give us some ideas how we can improve this

popular annual event.

This years dates are Friday 2nd & Saturday 3rd July 2004 at the Beckford Hotel on the A46 between Evesham and Tewkesbury. Just 5 mins off Junction 9 on the M5.

Contact Lee Featherstone 0121 6821277 or Shaun Healey 01386 832812.

We hope all members make an effort to attend, we will be having a guest speaker on Friday Night, yet to be announced, fun and games for the kids on Saturday with a clay pigeon shoot for the chaps to dethrone the champion Mr Dimond who just only just won last year. Sat night entertainment will be provided in the hotel. Last year we had a karaoke disco, with a seventies fancy dress, though some of the Essex lads sung like they looked.

This year evening entertainment has not been finalised yet so any ideas will be welcome.

Who's been hawking this year? Like I said it's been a quiet year for most of the Midland region, those who have made the meets are mainly goshawkers. Lee with Peggy once intermewed female club gos. Ray smith with Richard's imprint Finnish male gos. Trev Webster with an eyass male Finnish imprint, this bird has been awesome on field meets, and a joy to see being flown well by young Trevor. Simon Armstrong flying a home bred Finnish female imprint, this bird was going well

last time I saw it, very strong and confident on feather. Rip flying his first goshawk again an imprint Finnish female, of all the goshawks being flown on our region nobody is flying a parent reared bird. I noticed the trend has turned to imprint, I wonder if this is just a passing trend or will more falconers try their hand at imprinting a gos? I know they are not everybody's choice.

My own season started with a disaster when my goshawk was stolen. Being hawk less but not for long as Lee passed Isobel [the clubs gos] to me and I had an excellent hawking season with her.

We do have problems getting Harris hawks to attend Field meets and although we have a few members flying them most seem to prefer hawking alone, so if any members wish to attend meets then please come forward and ask. One thing I will not do is ring members to attend field meets, if you are interested in any hawking meets then pick up the phone and call me.

Secretary – Mick Kane
01427 848146

Chairman – Lee
Featherstone 0121
6821277

Treasurer – Vacant.

NORTH WALES

Neil McCann

It has been a busy past twelve months for our region. We had numerous guest speakers throughout the year, with Allan Gates giving a talk and slide show on hawking eagles from horseback after hares and fox in Kakistan, with temperatures of minus 20C.

Nick Haverman-Mart from Honeybrook Farm is delivering frozen hawk food every quarter to the region and gave an interesting talk to the members on nutrition through the moult and breeding season.

Derek Stotton gave a very interesting and informative talk on AI with imprint goshawks and gyrfalcons, with many a question for Derek to answer.

Gamekeeper Neil Wainright gave a talk and slide show on breeding and rearing also hawking grouse, by no means an easy task. A lot of hard unseen work goes into collecting fresh heather every day to rear the birds.

The local Wildlife Police Officer came to answer many a question. He was surprised on how much the members in the room wanted to know. He has offered to come along again as not all questions were answered as the night rolled on.

The highlight of the year is the belated xmas party in March where we

get a great turn out with the members bringing along all sorts of items for the annual auction held by Phil Hudson and Mick Fagan who in turn get the best response and previously got nearly £300.00 out of the members on the evening to go towards the regional funds and field meets.

This season the region held five fields meets on the following shooting estates.

One meet at Arley Hall
Two meets at Western Park

One meet Woore
One Meet Bodris Hall
Arley Hall had two groups. One group were Harris hawks and the other, goshawks and longwings. Pheasant, rabbit, hare and duck being caught on the day.

At Western Park the first meet was kind with a nice sunny day with a group of Harris hawks and the other group were falcons and goshawks. The Harris hawks were hawking rabbits and pheasants whilst the goshawks were hawking pheasants. John Simcox worked his Brittany dog under his very large female goshawk.

Kevin Simcox Finnish male was unlucky as the not getting a proper foothold but John's bird took a hen pheasant in the wood and a cock pheasant on the rise. Gary the new gamekeeper was surprised to see this, as there is a wild goshawk on Western Park.

In the afternoon we saw the falcons fly, with Ellis Pythian one of the best longwingers I have

seen fly, as his falcon took a pitch over a pond and stooped and bound to a teal in fine style.

Bob Bradshaw flew his Perlin female imprint over the hedgerows chasing hard and a pleasure to watch. Bob has put a lot of hard work into his falcon and I have never seen a fit bird stay on the wing so long.

The region attended new venue at Bodris Hall in North Wales where Dave Rhodes the gamekeeper was more than pleased to watch a hawk fly. Game was plentiful and at one point we watched about 1000 pheasants feeding in the wet weather. We just didn't seem to pick the days for the weather as the second meet on Western Park the winds were 70-80mph and the rain was heavy showers. The falcons flew, but the goshawk stayed in its box and the Harris hawks didn't even turn up.

The region has gone from strength to strength with I am pleased to write more new members attending the monthly meets and the field meets, even organising a weekend away rabbit hawking in mid-Wales.

At the AGM the following members were voted in:

Chairman: Terry Finnegan
Secretary: Neil McCann
Treasurer: Bob Antonio
Club Rep.: Bob Antonio





Officers 2004

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Douglas Morgans

Vice-Presidents

Nancy de Bastyai
Ian Blantern
Jemima Parry-Jones

Chairman

Dave Dimond

Vice Chairman

Bryan Patterson

Treasurer

Jean Dimond

Secretary

Jan France

Membership Secretary

Kevin Simcox

Editor of The Austringer

Diana Durman-Walters

Field Officer

Neil McCann

Breeding Project Officer

Lee Featherstone

Press & Publicity Officer

Dave Jones

Newsletter Editor

Tony Francis

Webmaster

Jan France

Club Co-ordinator And Conservation Officer

Andy Hulme

Assistant Secretary

Tony France

Legal Officer

Tom Jones

Honorary Members

Dr Nick Fox, Andy Barnes,
Christian de Coune, James Toth,
Stephen Frank, Dieter Horvath,
Terry Large, Gary Morris,
Mikloss Kiss Nemesker,
Graham Rossiter,
Mike and Ann Shuttleworth,
Diana Durman-Walters,
Hal Webster,

The Secretary of the California

Hawking Club North America,

The Secretary of the Cape

Falconry Club, South Africa

Honorary Club Vets.

Dick Best, Richard Jones

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Rules of the Welsh Hawking Club

Name and Objects

1. The name of the club shall be The Welsh Hawking Club.
2. The objectives of the club shall be:-
 - a. The promotion of Falconry.
 - b. The provision of advice and information for members and other interested parties.
 - c. The promotion and maintenance of the club Code of Conduct amongst members.

Constitution

The club shall consist of a President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Membership Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Editor, Press and Publicity Officer, Club Co-ordinator & Conservation Officer, Breeding Project Officer, Legal Officer, Mewsletter Editor, Field Officer and a Webmaster. Each of these is entitled to attend the committee meetings and to one vote, except the Chairman who does not have a vote. However, in the event of a vote resulting in a tie the Chairman shall then have the casting vote. Proxy and Postal votes will not be allowed at committee meetings. Only Full members are eligible for election to office. The business of the club will be conducted by the Officers and committee (hereafter referred to simply as the committee), which will meet at such times as it, thinks fit. A quorum for a meeting shall be five members. No one with convictions for offences involving birds of prey shall hold office within the Welsh Hawking Club.

Elections

1. All members of the committee will be elected individually, annually at the AGM. Prior to the election the attendance record at committee meetings for the last year shall be given.
2. During the year should any committee member fail to attend committee meetings regularly then he or she may be asked to give an explanation. If the reason is of insufficient justification the committee may co-opt a member to fill the position. They may also co-opt any person to the committee if considered desirable.

Membership

1. Members of the club will be elected by the committee.
2. No person will be elected without application to the Secretary in writing.
3. The annual subscription rate shall be determined at the AGM each year.
4. Any member whose subscription is unpaid by the end of May of any year shall cease to be a member, but shall be eligible for election as for new members.
5. Should the committee have reason to believe that a member has acted in a manner injurious to Falconry or the club then the member may be required to furnish a written explanation to the Secretary for the consideration of the committee or to appear in person before the committee. The member can claim a personal hearing if preferred. The Secretary must give the member at least 14 days notice of the committee's requirements. Should the member refuse to comply the committee may terminate the membership. They may also terminate the membership should they decide that the member has acted in a way harmful to Falconry or the club.
6. No member must give talks, interviews or material relating to Falconry, domestic breeding etc. to the media i.e. T.V. Radio, Press etc. without advice from the committee and/or the Press and Publicity Officer. Any member giving such talks must make every effort to ensure their accuracy.
7. Any member wishing to dispose of a hawk obtained through the club must first offer the hawk back into the club.
8. Only Full members are eligible to vote on club affairs.
9. Proxy and Postal votes are not allowed.
10. Associate members wishing to obtain Full membership may apply in writing to the Secretary for the consideration of the committee. Prior to applying the applicant should normally have completed at least 12 months membership. The application must give full details of hawk related experience and should be countersigned by a Full member.

Meetings

1. The Annual General Meeting shall be held at the main Field Meeting each year.
2. Meetings shall be presided over by the Chairman, Vice Chairman or in their absence one of the other Officers as appropriate.
3. A summer meeting shall be held annually at which reports of the affairs of the Club can be given. General meetings will normally be held monthly. Informal meetings will be held as required.

Alteration to Rules

Rules may only be altered by a vote taken at the AGM or at an EGM. Notices of motions for the AGM or EGM shall be sent to the Secretary in writing to arrive at least 6 weeks prior to these meetings. Any member wishing to call an EGM shall inform the Secretary in writing stating the reason for such a meeting. The application must be countersigned by 20 Full members.

Code of Conduct

1. The well being of all birds of prey both domestic and wild together with the continuation of Falconry must be the aim of all members.
2. Falconry is the flying of trained birds of prey and owls at suitable quarry found in the natural state. No action must bring this into disrepute.
3. Every hawk must be properly manned and equipped.
4. Every endeavour must be made to recover a lost hawk.
5. All hawks flown free should be equipped with field jesses, at least one bell and if possible a transmitter and the name and address of the owner. In the case of unentered or aggressive hawks, eagles, hybrids, exotics etc. special care must be taken to prevent loss.
6. Permission must be obtained before entering upon ground and it must be ascertained whether another falconer already has permission in which case his/her permission must also be sought. Due respect must be given to landowners and their property.
7. Indigenous hawks that are no longer wanted must either be returned to the wild state in suitable country or passed on to someone who will treat them in accordance with this code of conduct. Before a hawk is released the falconer must ensure that it is in good feather, in the highest possible condition, that it can kill for itself and is suitable for release. If there is any doubt that it is able to do so it should be hacked back.

Regions

Purpose of the Regions

1. To provide social meetings for members and potential members living locally, although any member will be welcome to attend.
2. To arrange local field meets, which will be governed by the main Club field, meet rules.
3. To arrange fund raising to assist with paying for speakers and field meets.
4. To promote falconry and the Welsh Hawking Club.

Rules

1. No new region will be formed by members unless it has been agreed by the Club committee at a committee meeting.
2. All regions MUST open a bank or building society account in the name of The Welsh Hawking Club. It is recommended that an account has 2 signatories.
3. Any non-members attending, other than wives, partners or children of members will be made welcome for 3 meetings. After this time they will be given the opportunity to complete an application form to join the Club. If they decline they will no longer be allowed to attend the meetings, even as a guest of another member.
4. A register of attendees will be kept at all meetings, primarily to enforce rule 3.
5. A written report will be forwarded each year by the regional Secretary to the Editor of the *Austringer*, to reach him no later than the end of February, for inclusion in the *Austringer*.
6. A report must be sent by the regional Treasurer to the Club Treasurer showing the state of the finances, to reach her no later than the end of September, for inclusion in the Treasurers report at the AGM.
7. Each region will hold an election at its next meeting following the AGM. It will elect from its Full members a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to run the meetings. One of these may also be elected as a member from the region to attend the main committee meetings. This representative will have full voting rights.



Birds of Prey Flying High at Countryman Fairs

This year's series of Countryman Fairs will be the best ever for birds of prey. The organisers behind the successful Midland Game and Country Sports Fair are using the Falconry Village formula – first tried at the record-breaking Midland last year – and taking the idea to their three other shows for 2004.

It will mean that there will be superb displays, interesting talks, educational demonstrations and a feast of falconry fun at the Game Keeper and Countryman Fair in Northampton, the Southern Counties Game and Country Fair in Berkshire and the Sussex Game and Country Fair at Parham Park, in West Sussex.

The man behind the success of the Falconry Village is Bryan Patterson, from Bridgenorth in Shropshire, one of the UK's leading lights in the raptor world. He has been involved in Falconry for the best part of 30 years and is chairman of Raptor Rescue, the National Charity that cares for all manner of birds of prey. The village will be a focal point for all falconry enthusiasts with static displays, demonstration tents and its own arena surrounded by traders selling all manner of produce connected with the sport. One of the highlights at all the shows will be the Fly to the Kite competition where a lure will be hung from a kite suspended 500 feet above the arena and birds will be timed for their speed in reaching the high-flying prey.

Although the experts' own birds will be used in the contest, visitors are welcome to register their bird and fly their hawks if all the paperwork is acceptable to the organisers.

Raptor Rescue will be involved showing visitors the work they do and local clubs and associations to each show will be running their own displays and tents.

In the main arena it will be the turn of the skillful and dynamic falconer Ray Aliker and his Ye Olde Redtail Falconry Display Team – one of the most exciting and innovative bird of prey shows on the touring circuit – to entertain the crowds.

It is the only team in the world to fly five Harris Hawks simultaneously and invite the audience into the arena for a 'mouse's eye view' of an Eagle Owl in flight . . . so close to the ground you can feel its feathers brush your face!

The team's front man is the popular Ray Aliker. He claims the show developed as a series of happy accidents but this detracts from his position of being one of the country's most experienced and knowledgeable 'birdmen'. What he doesn't know about birds of prey is really not worth knowing! Ray has developed an uncanny rapport with his birds and is dedicated to the incredible amount of training and preparation that goes into every event.

It's an unmissable show, as the visitors to last year's Midland will testify. They were swooped on by Ray's superb owl and even hen pecked in the main arena by his pet Vulture!

Ray always dresses the part as a Falconer from bygone



days and shows off his sturdy thighs in a natty pair of boots and coloured tights. His shows are fun, informative and thrilling.

If you want to feel an owl silently brushing your face with his wing feathers in flight – then get into the arena quickly as places for the audience participation are usually limited to around 30 people. You'd have to be a birdbrain to miss it!

Ye Olde Redtail Falconry Display Team is a main arena event at the Gamekeeper and Countryman Fair at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire on April 11 and 12, 2004 as well as all the other listed Countryman Fairs events.

Dozens of Harris Hawks, Goshawks, Peregrines, Hybrids and even a baby Golden Eagle will feature in the Falconry Village and Terry Large, chairman for the Campaign for Falconry, the fundraising arm of the Hawk Board, will be running hands-on workshops for youngsters wanting to get involved in the sport.

Bryan Patterson said: "It's thought there are currently 15,000 people keeping birds of prey in the UK today with around 5,000 working Falconers and with great chances to demonstrate our passion for falconry, such as at the Countryman Fairs, I know we can help those numbers grow."

This year's events in full are:

The Gamekeeper and Countryman Fair on 11th and 12th April 2004 at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire.

The Southern Counties Game and Country Fair on 30th and 31st May 2004 at Highclere Castle, Berkshire.

The Sussex Game and Country Fair on 12th and 13th June 2004 at Parham Park.

The Midland Game and Country Sports Fair on 18th and 19th September, 2004 at Weston Park in Shropshire.

Countryman Fairs Events 2004



18th & 19th September 2004
at Weston Park, Shropshire

The Midland Game and Country Sports Fair is the crème de la crème in the countryside sporting calendar. Britain's largest country sports fair attracts interest from all over the Europe. This two day event is packed with impressive displays and top line entertainment for all the family as well as being the unmissable event of the year for country sports purists. Last year more than 70,000 people attended and the Midland 2004 looks set to be another record breaker.



Spectacular entertainment every minute of the day, including:

- 19 live arenas - including:- Equestrian, Autarky Working Dog and Falconry.
- Clay Pigeon shooting - The Grand Final for Mitsubishi Motors World Series. Total prize fund £75,000.
- Airgun Field Target Competition and Tuition
- Fly Casting Tuition with the Salmon and Trout Association
- Children's Entertainment
- Antiques Fair
- Over 600 Trade Stands
- And much more...



Countryman Fairs
Game Fairs the way they used to be!



11th & 12th April 2004
at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire



30th & 31st May 2004
at Highclere Castle, Berkshire



12th & 13th June 2004
at Parham Park, West Sussex



"A Benchmark of Excellence"
Shooting Times and Country Magazine



Enquiries : 01889 563232 Ticket Hotline : 08700 115007
www.countrymanfairs.co.uk

