



**THE
AUSTRINGER**

**The Journal of the
Welsh Hawking Club**

No 38 2006

President's Preamble

DAVE DIMOND

Just when you thought you had seen the last of my ramblings I re-appear, but this time as President of the Welsh Hawking Club. I have been elevated to the Presidency and was pleasantly surprised at the AGM to have been nominated for this position. It is a great honour to follow in the footsteps of past Presidents such as Dougie Morgans, who will be fondly remembered by all.

In my last 'Chairman's Chatter' I stated that I intended to stand down from committee work, but obviously, you, the members thought otherwise. Also at the AGM it was decided to make Terry Large a Vice President and this is our way of saying 'thank you' to Terry for all the work he has done for the club over the years.

Paul Dillon was elected to be Chairman and as President of the club my first pleasant duty is to welcome Paul to this position and offer him any help he may need, but knowing Paul, he is highly capable and I look forward to working with him to continue the good work done by all committee members over the past years. Next I must congratulate Lee Featherstone who after much hard work has produced three chicks from Isabel (the club's gos). Well done Lee! I must also welcome Jan France back to the committee as Membership Secretary after a short stay in Ireland. Their loss is our gain. By the time you get this *Austringer* most of you will be looking forward to a new seasons hawking and I wish you all 'Good Hawking' and look forward to seeing some of you at the 2006 Field Meet.



Chairman's Chatter

PAUL DILLON

Hello all. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dave Dimond on becoming the new President of our club and to also welcome into the committee David Horobin as Secretary, Jan France as Membership Secretary, Rob Cole as Breeding Officer, not forgetting the rest of the committee who all do a sterling job for our club.

Now, a little bit about myself for the benefit of the members who haven't met me yet. I became a member of the club some 15-16 years ago, trying to be an active member from the start - helping out at various game fairs and most of the Falconers fairs. Also having been elected on to the committee as hon. Assistant Secretary for a couple of years, and then being elected as Regional Chairman of the South Wales region.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the members whom I have met over the years and with whom I've made good friends for their support and for putting the trust of the Chairmanship in my hands.

I hope I can live up to the standards expected and follow in the footsteps of our previous long standing Chairman Dave Dimond and continued success for the club.

I am a practicing falconer (or try to be) still flying my thirteen year intermewed eyas female Harris which actually came from the clubs breeding scheme.

I for one am looking forward to the new hawking season and I hope all of you have a good season. -
HAPPY HAWKING.



From the Editor

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS

The summer heat brings a time for falconers to socialise and catch up with all the news whether it is attending the Falconers Fair or Gamefairs or regional BBQ's. It seems light years away from the last season as it drew to a close in bitterly cold weather and the restrictions that Avian Bird Flu brought with it. For the moment this problem seems in abeyance and should bring the new hawking season onto the calendar without any further disorder.

The breeding season which many falconers are actively involved in, has had its share of success and failures. I am hoping that those of you who had new hawks on order for this season are already prepared with the manning and training of these as we rapidly approach the new hawking year.

This year's Mediterranean heat in July may well be something we will all have to concern ourselves with in future years and many of the larger facilities will be considering implementing shade and heat reduction features that will be a concern where many gyrs and gyr hybrids are housed. Climate change could affect breeding, migration and disease transmission in migratory birds and animals. Such changes may well impact on our future hawking and we as naturalists as well as falconers need to remain observant and watchful of the affect on everyday species.

Ringling the changes in another framework is the new LANTRA Bird of Prey Keeping award. This is designed to provide a standard or benchmark that has been constructed through a series of modules, to allow the trainee falconer, the basic level of competence needed to manage and maintain a hawk up to the point of actually hawking in the field with it. This clearly has its promoters and those who would consign it to having little or no value. As a tutor recently involved with this education programme, and having overseas students as well, I can vouch for the fact that a complete beginner can be given the confidence and more importantly taught the knowledge needed to tackle the difficult task of management, husbandry and hawking skills crucial to anyone wanting to become a falconer. I for one give this my seal of approval as it is a very positive step in the right direction and may well be the approach needed to ensure that falconry has a secure base of well-informed people who in turn are capable and proficient falconers.

The newly created Falconry Heritage Trust which will become the internet archive for a vast amount of historical artefacts and memorabilia has been set up by Dr Nick Fox with a host of well known falconers as founder members. Designed to provide an unprecedented access to a wide and diverse selection of images, all falconry related, the FHT will be breaking new ground in its constant search to collate all known information. It is inspiring that both FHT and the LANTRA award scheme have had such a Welsh Hawking Club influence.

I am watching my gyr x peregrine tiercel as he suns himself on the windowsill of his aviary. It is the first few days of August and he is within days of coming out, sporting his clean moult and getting ready for the new grouse season. It is always a time of great expectation for me to get him focused and back into flying fitness. As soon as he is on the block then the dogs know that they too will soon be back on the hill. As the new season is just about to begin we have in this issue of *The Austringer*, a compendium of very good articles. The vibrancy and energy of its membership is evident even though regional groups may come and go; but one thing is for sure, there's certainly a lot of hawking packed into a year. With another International Field Meet in October our season will be back in full swing and once again a time to look at our hawks in action.



**WELSH HAWKING
CLUB INTERNATIONAL
FIELD MEET
17th-20th October
2006
Wild Pheasant Hotel,
Llangollen, North Wales
Tel: 01978 860629
AGM Wednesday
Banquet & Auction
Thursday**



Front and back cover
photographs: Leigh Tovey
Pictures of 2006 hawking:
Leigh Tovey and Greg Mikkleson



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PRINTING Gomer Press, Llandysul,
Ceredigion SA44 4JL

Please send all articles and photographs for inclusion
in the next *Austringer* to:
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Articles and photographs will be accepted throughout
the year and will be returned as requested.

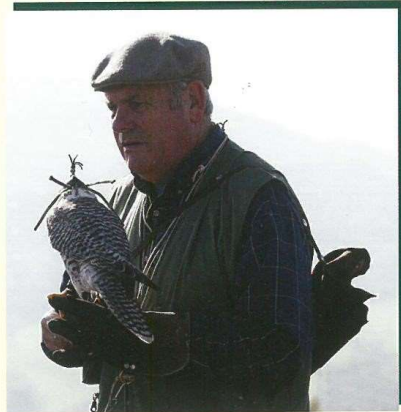
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LANTRA awards – page 38

Mutton Method Works for Nutty Norman



MIKE COUPE

IT WAS BACK in August 2004 that Ellis Phythian offered to loan me his year old Gyr x Prairie that had been bred at Falcon Mews the previous year. My own Peregrine x Prairie was injured and I wanted a falcon to take to the grouse moors in Scotland and this was an opportunity to fly a stunning looking falcon. I realised the challenge ahead when I heard he was called 'Nutty Norman' after the *Psycho* film character Norman Bates, who had the mad staring eyes. This falcon did indeed have the huge eyes of the prairie but the plumage of the Icelandic Gyr.

I heard about his antics in the first season hitting a pheasant head on, knocking himself out but still getting up and securing his prey. Plus taking high pitches, killing magpies with ease etc, etc. Ellis had done a fine job getting him hunting but had decided to concentrate on 'GP' his fantastic Gyr x Peregrine hybrid and Norman was surplus to requirements.

I decided to give myself a month to get to grips with this new falcon. Two weeks to slowly reduce the weight. One week to the lure and one week in the field. Well everything went according to plan and I headed North with a stunning looking and responsive falcon. On the first day I cast him off over a point, he disappeared low over the hill and out of telemetry range. Steve Gouldthorpe drove my car at break neck speed over the treacherous mountain tracks whilst I hung out of the window with the telemetry. We finally had a good signal 5 miles up the glen – in fact such a good signal it was bouncing off the mountains and we had difficulty pinpointing direction.

I stood in the road swung the lure and much to my amazement a white shape appeared from some distant rocks and came straight to the lure as if nothing had happened! To say the rest of the week was a disaster is maybe a bit of an overstatement. We did have a couple of stoops at grouse and he didn't disappear. On one occasion his imitation of a gull circling around on straight wings, whilst another he decided to imitate a Harrier quartering the heather and gaining no height at all. I tried slope soaring, casting him off into the wind; all he did was fly low down the glen, up the other side and return exhausted. I thought these hybrids were supposed to be intelligent, but to be fair, one day he did wait on like a spec in the sky but nowhere near the point.

Back home I didn't think I would have too much trouble as I had access to plenty of game. I would just keep flushing for him until he got the idea, but how wrong would I be? I put him up over some ponds surrounded by rough ground and trees, flushed five pheasants one after the other and he refused every one only to disappear low over the field after something in the distance. This seemed the general pattern of events so I decided to reduce the weight a little and things changed, but not for the better. The usual scenario was flying from fist, perch in a tree for a moment and then fly off high. Ignore falconer, kill magpies, stoop pigeons and rooks etc and this resulted in a lot of telemetry work. One day we were tracking over four hours.

I tried all different flying weights but kept getting erratic results although he did catch a few of my partridge. When he perched I swung the

lure, brought him over, ran in and flushed the partridge and he flew one down – not exactly great game hawking but these were desperate times. Norman went back to Ellis for six weeks as Ellis's falcon had sustained an injury. I got a phone call the first day to say he had caught a Teal in fine style but this was a one off and he was soon back to his old wandering ways although he put a few more magpies and pigeons in the bag.

January 2005 he came back to me again for the rest of the season but still no consistent flying so I decided to hand him back and get myself a new falcon for next season. 'Just hang on a few more days until I get my moulting aviary sorted out,' said Ellis. Well it must have been fate.

I took the errant falcon out the next day. He was straight off the fist and gained height over the pine wood. He just went up and up and every pigeon and rook in the area knew he was on the hunt and took flight so the sky was full of birds. With the falcon at some 500ft high but not over me I swung the lure to attract him and then ran frantically to the hedge to try and flush something for him.

Luck was with me, a Red leg partridge broke and flew across an open field. I heard the rush of air as the falcon stooped and heard the red leg call as it was struck. Yes I decided to keep him, he had shown me what he was capable of, and all I had to do was to harness this ability.

Moulting season saw me scouring all my books and old falconry literature. I reasoned that this falcon was more Gyr than Prairie and even again read Ronald Stevens *Taming of Genghis* in the hope of gleaning more information. I read some American literature which stated that they had stopped breeding Gyr x Prairie hybrids as

they had proved unreliable. They thought that as both hybrids originated from inhospitable habitats they had developed so many different hunting strategies which caused the erratic behaviour. Far better to cross your Gyr or Prairie with a Peregrine. All this didn't give me much hope but I came across an article in the September 2001 BFC Newsletter entitled 'The Mutton Method' by Paul Bracey.

The Mutton method is nothing to do with sheep but has been developed by Keith Mutton of Phoenix Bird Control Services. It doesn't

replace any traditional training methods but compliments them. There are several rules that must be

adhered to and it is assumed that the falconer has a good knowledge of training, conditioning and weight control. To try and summarise this method:

Call falcon to fist for titbits (never from tree or post, ok fist to fist). After initial training use an ungarnished lure or if lure is shown at all feed up immediately.

To teach falcon to gain height – call the bird for a titbit as soon as it is climbing (not in horizontal flight).

At each flight increase the amount of time before recall, whilst the falcon is climbing. They soon learn they are only fed when gaining height by this action and reward method.

October 2005 I had a beautifully moulted Gyr x Prairie, the image of the Icelandic race Gyr pictured in Emma Fords book on the Gyr Falcon and I decided to try my hand at the Mutton Method and see how it worked for me. I had a falcon that was very good to the lure and he soon came any distance to the fist. I cast him off and called him back to the fist as he was gaining height. All went well and he went higher with



each training session. However at about 100 feet I hit a stumbling block. He would fly away and up to 100 ft and return straight to the fist. Great as a show falcon but I needed more height. I phoned Paul Bracey and he advised me to raise the weight from 665grms to 720grms and then reduce if necessary.

Well my falcon did gain more height was still obedient, but had a rather slow wing beat and looked lazy. I began experimenting with the weight and he flew fine at the WHC Field Meet, waiting on and chasing red legs down the valley at Denbigh and stooping a pheasant an Llandegla. I was still not getting constant flying but some good height and stoops and the telemetry did not come out of the bag.

January 2006 would prove the turning point, anything above a flying weight of 700grm we had the lazy slow wingbeat, even a little as 5grm

reduction made all the difference I kept to a flying weight of 690-695grm. I had some great flights. He waited on consistently at 250-350ft, every flight we put out quarry for him, pheasant, teal or partridge. He had many knock downs and caught 1pheasant and 5 partridge in the month. The Mutton Method has worked for me. One big advantage is that after an unsuccessful flight the falcon will return from a long distance to the fist, causing much amusement to the more traditional falconers who then find their own hawks are wet after grappling with a lure on the ground.

I am looking forward to next season and will do my best to replicate the success achieved in January. My Gyr x Prairie hybrid has been renamed 'Tundra' and I can only hope that he lives up to expectations after such a challenging start.

Falconers' Feast

DAVID HOROBIN



Roy Benton presents cheque to Roger Upton.

DURING the interwar years, British falconry enjoyed halcyon days when some of the most well known names in the sport were active. This was an era when gentleman falconers met at Avebury for rook hawking with Charles and Hugh Knight or in Caithness with Gilbert Blaine for flights at grouse, and the well known author and merlin devotee, E. B. Michell, instituted a Falconers' Feast held annually at select London venues for the members of the emerging British Falconers' Club. Whilst November 11th came to have a more sombre significance after 1918, it is the feast day of St. Martin, patron saint of falconers, and this date became a feature in the sporting year until Michell's institution sadly fell out of vogue after the Second World War. For those with a passion for the history and traditions of falconry, the Falconers' Feast epitomises those great days.

Last year, a falconer in my own locality, Mr Roy Benton, reinstated the event and held a Falconers' Feast at Haughton Hall, outside Shifnal in Shropshire. The event featured an excellent dinner of game and the finest fresh local produce selected by the Hall's head chef, pheasant and venison vying for supremacy as the main course, and was memorable in itself. However, after the dinner, those present were further treated to a talk by a guest speaker who needs no introduction, Roger Upton. Roger also started the meal with the Loyal Toast and a toast 'To Falconry, our ancient occupation'. As ever, his talk was witty, informative and highly entertaining and commenced with a description of his introduction to Arabian falconry before

dealing with his experiences in the Middle East over many seasons and culminating with a film show. This featured an astounding ringing flight of the kind most of us can only dream of and which, even in Arabia, is not the norm. The event also raised £178 in profits which Roger accepted on behalf of the Falconry Heritage Trust, more information about which can be seen elsewhere in this edition. Well attended, this was a high point of last season and a night to be remembered.

I am pleased to say that due to the success of last year's event, Roy is holding the second Falconers' Feast on Saturday 11th November, again at Haughton Hall. This year's guest speaker is Jim Chick, Chairman of the Hawk Board and another experienced falconer with a wealth of entertaining anecdotes. As with the last Feast, any profits will, appropriately, be donated to the Falconry Heritage Trust, an important and exciting venture which will both safeguard our past as well as helping to secure the future of falconry. A new exclusive menu has been devised with some of the favourites from last year and some additional options. I append this below in a somewhat abbreviated form.

Places at this year's feast are restricted to maintain the air of intimate exclusivity which was a feature of last year's occasion. Tickets are now available for a very reasonable £28.00 to include a four course meal of the highest quality, an entertaining after dinner talk and a contribution to ensuring that our sport's heritage is protected for future generations. If you are interested in attending, please contact Roy as soon as possible on 01902 758927 for further details or to reserve your place.

Saturday 11th November 2006

Falconry Dinner Menu

Game and Onion Broth – served with a ciabatta crouton

Warm Chicken Livers – cooked with smoked bacon and filled into a large vol-au-vent

Salmon Fillet – Grilled and laced with a spinach and nutmeg cream sauce

Grilled Venison Steak – With a Shropshire Blue cheese, port and baby shallot sauce

All main courses served with Dauphinoise and minted potatoes, Vichy carrots, Cauliflower Mornay and Savoy cabbage with caraway seeds

Fresh Fruit Salad or Caramelised oranges served in a brandy snap basket with vanilla ice cream

A selection of cheese and biscuits with grapes and celery

Coffee and mints

The Falconry Heritage Trust

NICK FOX

You're getting old when there's more behind you than in front. And quite a few of us in the WHC are not exactly spring chickens anymore! Looking back over one's own past, it is not a big step before you're thinking about other falconers of the past, what life was like for them and the things they got up to. Britain certainly has a rich heritage of falconry, going back 1500 years or more to a time before 'England' and 'Wales' were even invented.

So three years ago a few of us got together at the Red Lion at Avebury, a pub famous as a base for visiting falconers for 150 years. We wanted to do something about falconry's heritage. Scattered in houses and collections around UK are many paintings, diaries, manuscripts and bits and pieces of equipment. What could be done to save them as physical artefacts, and at the same time make them accessible to the community as a whole?

The idea we came up with is The Falconry Heritage Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee. The plan is simple: we would create an electronic Archive, freely available on the internet. Items of interest could be scanned or photographed, documented and entered on the website. With about 65 falconry countries participating, we would gradually amass a huge collection of material on falconry.

We've created this charitable company, and Roger Upton and I have donated lecturing fees to pump prime it. Since then we have obtained sponsorship funding from UAE for three years to set up the electronic archive and we have contracted a firm in Scotland to construct it. This is a lot more complicated than just setting up an ordinary website; it has to have a huge capacity and be searchable using a variety of search words, such as 'author', 'country' or 'date'. Jevgeni Shergalin is busy getting it set up and tested and we hope by the autumn 2006 it will be functional and loading will be in progress.

The idea is that regional co-ordinators chosen by the International Association of Falconry will input material, but already we have scholars from

all over the world sending in documents. The beauty of it is that, unlike a physical archive, we do not need to go cap in hand to a person and say 'Please would you donate your prized painting of an Elizabethan falconer?' All we need is permission to make a high resolution photograph and the image can be seen by all.

Obviously it would be nice to have a physical archive too, similar to the Archives of Falconry at Boise, Idaho. But this is very expensive in terms of housing, staffing, insurance, providing access to the public, and in obtaining material. Maybe one day we'll manage such a thing in Britain, perhaps linked to another museum or collection. But for the time being we are building the electronic archive which, while it may not be real, is a lot more accessible. You will be able to visit it just by logging on 'from the comfort of your own sitting room'.

We have a scanner and a small portable photographic 'studio' for making quality images of artefacts such as hoods, or paintings. As opportunity allows we will visit and record some of these historic gems. Of course with modern photography there are huge numbers of very average falconry photos around and we have to try to just pick out outstanding examples or we would soon be swamped.

Soon we will all of us be 'history'. Maybe you know of some item of falconry interest in a country house somewhere? Or maybe tucked away in a drawer you have a photo from the early days of the Welsh Hawking Club? Didn't we all look silly in the 60's and 70's with our long hair and flared trousers? (and those shirts!!) Sadly, when falconers die, often their mementos and diaries get thrown away. But now there is an opportunity to record something from the past. We may not be able to save all of it physically, or relatives may want to hang on to it, but with the electronic archive it can be recorded for posterity.

This is something for everyone, free of charge. We hope you will find something of interest and maybe you will know of a little nugget from the past that is worth preserving. Once it is up and running we will post the site address in the Mewsletter.



The Complete Word on Falconry

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS

BOISE, Idaho the home of the Peregrine Fund is also the site and focus for one of the greatest assets in modern falconry and that is the Archives of American Falconry or AAF. It is a building devoted to the collection of all works written in the English language on falconry. I visited the AAF in November 2002 spending seven days researching at this facility, which had only been very recently opened.

Initially founded to collect and preserve the history of American falconry, it has expanded to such an extent that it is worldwide in its scope and content with its library collection centred primarily on the English language. In fact the archives considers its library in English to be the most complete on the sport in the world.

Dispel ideas of fusty and archival storage this is purpose built with the most modern facilities available to the housing of very valuable literature. There can be few falconers that haven't read a book or an article on this subject and wanted to be able to read more, but getting hold of historical books can be a high-priced affair as there is the scarcity value to consider.

Books on the subject of falconry are often as alluring and attractive as the subject they are writing about. As a collection they are breathtaking in their scope and capacity, chronicling history and especially in modern times to find new and detailed ways of explaining all that is possible to attain in falconry. There seems to be no end to the continued output of authors on the subject that indicates the pursuit and interest in falconry is read by an increasing number of participants.

What is interesting perhaps is the continuation and dramatic increase in falconry has been a particularly English affair. Not only has the output of books been mainly in English but also its participants have risen in number in the post war period especially in this country. Parallel to our indulgence in all things to do with falconry

has been the rise over the past 40 years of the American love affair with the sport.

With so many people worldwide reading and collecting falconry books and related material it was no wonder that a dedicated area would need to be found which gave a comprehensive representation of all this wealth of literature. In our long and auspicious history there have been copious written works. These are very well documented of the times and era they are written



Kent Carnie with a rare original Schlegel and Wolverhorst, *Trait de Fauconnerie*.

in and span a vast traditional and changeable approach to all branches falconry.

In the UK a limited collection of falconry literature is held in Greys College, Oxford under the auspices of the British Falconers Club. These are not readily accessible and reflect in many ways the view of the falconry community at large that falconry books are about an individual's choice on reading material, which has its limitations.



Modern sculpture in the library.



Part of the unique library.

Americans with their approach to all things of importance in their history took the natural step to laying down the foundations of not only their falconry history, but also all that had gone before in creating a falconry culture and tradition.

The AAF started life in 1986 as a small project within the Peregrine Fund. Its originality gave access for all American falconers to literature that in the main they might never own but would allow them to see and/or read from these works. As with anything of a peripheral nature, as indeed books so often are, there was the urgency in the first instance to preserve the works of early American falconers before it was too late. This would include photographs, films, slides and more recently, video.

In the new building, which was occupied in September 2002, there is everything that any falconer could wish to see in books. To get this far requires dedication, drive and vision. Kent Carnie who has masterminded the Archives of American Falconry that we can see today has supplied this in enormous quantity.

As you enter the main room of the archives its wall-to-wall carpeting and shaded light show that attention to detail is a priority. Electronic window screens filter sunlight, which would otherwise allow damaging contact with the books and maintain subdued light levels. There are alcoves with a desk and comfortable chairs, where books can be read, with plenty of space for written work to be done. I buried myself in one of these whilst reading through vast volumes of literature that I had only previously seen in bookshelves with very high price tags.

As I gazed out through the screens on one of the panoramic windows, a flock of chukar partridge (very similar to our red legs) were gathered on the patio. They were daily visitors and seemed appropriate to the falconry collection within.

The books are housed in eye level bookcases in alphabetical order. The larger elephant copies are in floor standing drawers in the room. If there is anything that you have longed to read or browse into then almost certainly it is here.

In another room there are a vast array of cabinets that contain the film, slide and video collection and much unpublished work. Four of these cabinets alone are filled with these, not to mention cabinets of equipment, correspondence, diaries and the like. A unique programme of interviewing old American falconers has been in place for some time giving a verbal account of their falconry life and times. All of which is added to the growing amount of accumulated information.

A more recent undertaking of The Archives is its Heritage Publication series. Devoted to the publication of historic previously unpublished falconry works. Its first undertaking was a manuscript by Luff Meredith, the doyen of American falconry. It would have been the first US falconry book had it been published. Understandably when the Archives published it, it went out of print within 18 months.

A recent undertaking in this series is *Life With an Indian Prince* the day to day diary of the Craighead brothers, as they lived a falconers dream – a visit to a princely Indian state just at the start of World War II, with months crammed with trapping, hawking, coursing with cheetahs, a royal wedding and a true inside view of a way of life that had disappeared within a decade. The latest publication, a re-print of *A Short Discourse of Hawking to the Field* by Sir Thomas Sherley was an immediate success and sold all copies.

But where does all the money come from to acquire the stock and the building? Virtually all the materials making up the collection have been donated. No other country has quite the same philanthropic approach as the USA. It is the goodwill of many people from all strata's of society and not just the very wealthy donors who either allow whole libraries or artefacts to be passed directly on to the archives in favour of leaving it in their will to their families, or are prepared to donate large sums of money to the AAF. Admittedly the Archives enjoys a special status under US tax law enabling donors to receive tax deduction for their generosity. This speaks volumes for the confidence of individuals to benefit falconers and their history, as they truly see this as a fundamental part of the American way of life.

When it first started roughly 10 items were donated per year. Today that figure is well over 100 per annum, as Kent said, 'Every day is almost like Christmas.'

As so much material is donated it is often duplicated books that are already in the collection, which will be eligible for auction if the copies received are of a more pristine state keeping only the very finest of all works. The one exception being that copies that belonged to

prominent, historical falconers are always kept.

These auctions are all to the falconers benefit as they allow a circulation of books perhaps not readily available elsewhere. These auctions conducted annually by mail are open to all who have ever donated either money or materials to the Archives and all proceeds go directly to help support this archival effort.

The role of an archivist is one of book enthusiast, finance manager, public relations coordinator, secretary and educator. Dedication is needed in large doses and a belief in what is being created for posterity. Kent Carnie is one of those remarkable men who juggles all of these categories.

Although nothing leaves the Archives (a copying machine is available) Kent can provide access to almost the entire array of any part of the collection.



Smallest and one of the oldest by Gervase Markham.

He is there on call if need be for any falconer who would like to go and see the collected works. Just a phone call will be all that's needed to arrange times, days, etc

His concern for the disappearance of American falconry history has been the foundation stone that has today given us the finest collection of falconry literature written in the English language.

If America is the place where you are going to spend some time whether hawking or on holiday (whilst there Boise is only a short plane ride away) and you are interested about the written history of our sport, then the American Archives is a rich source of getting in touch with your roots.

Abbey Walmsley: *Art on the Wild Side*

ADAM GROSSMAN

She sold her first painting at just 14 and has been named as 'one of the youngest and best realist painters in the world'. Her work has hung alongside Picasso, Rembrandt and Warhol, and been personally selected for a show at the Royal Berkshire Polo Club by HRH Prince Charles. She has been presented with a best newcomer award while exhibiting at Christies London and held a private showing for HRH Princess Anne. It's not a bad portfolio – especially when you consider that Abbey Walmsley is just 26.

The UK-born realist wildlife painter currently resides in Vancouver, Canada and continues to challenge the very notion of what it means to be a wildlife artist. As well as continuing to paint stunningly real original wildlife, Abbey has also set up her own company, Abbey Walmsley Fine Art, and

community and conservation outreach programs, which enable her to give back to the groups and animals which so inspire her work.

Here she talks to *The Austringer* about the pressures put on young artists by the industry and the artist themselves, and why she is more influenced by an industrial painter than any of the wildlife greats.

You've achieved a lot as an artist for someone so young. What are the challenges in the art community for someone of your age?

I'm often told by people that, after seeing my art, they expect me to be much older and a man. It surprised me the first time it happened because I never thought about a gender bias in my paintings. I can understand it in part – my paintings can be seen as masculine in that they are punchy and direct. The age issue can be a problem as a young artist – even to oneself. I kept away from London galleries because I didn't think my technique was good enough, and then I was actually really surprised at how well they thought my work compared to established wildlife artists.

There are a number of prominent wildlife artists that come to mind. How do you draw on their influences?

It's never really been wildlife artists that have influenced me. Of course anyone who is interested in wildlife art

knows David Shepard. But I developed an interest in other artists at an early age.

My earliest influences, and those who have remained with me, were Holbein for his accuracy and Constable for his ability to capture light in various weather conditions. Constable particularly intrigued me because of how he was still able to produce something so true despite the thickness of his paint.

I focused on John William Waterhouse when I learnt to oil paint, when studying at the Slade School of Fine Art in London at the age of 17. From there on, I gained the ability to build



colour within thick luminous paint while retaining my accurate approach.

Perhaps the most interesting influence on me is Cuneo's industrial paintings, which are all about the freedom of movement and colour. You can smell the industry with his paintings and I hope people take those same feelings away from my work – the smell of the grass, the spray of the water, the taste of the dirt and the sweat of the beasts.

You seem to cover a lot of different subjects in your art. Have you yet to find a focus for your creativity?

I've never wanted my work to settle in one particular area. I always want to keep evolving as an artist, exploring new ideas, taking on new challenges and testing my techniques to the fullest. There's no point in painting ten horses in a row or only tigers.

But I also know, through experience, how tough it is for young artists to develop and test themselves. Galleries and the marketplace put a lot of pressure on artists to keep with what works and therefore not challenge themselves. This is a huge pressure for any artists to deal with, and it's sad and frustrating.

Where did your interest in painting Birds of Prey come from?

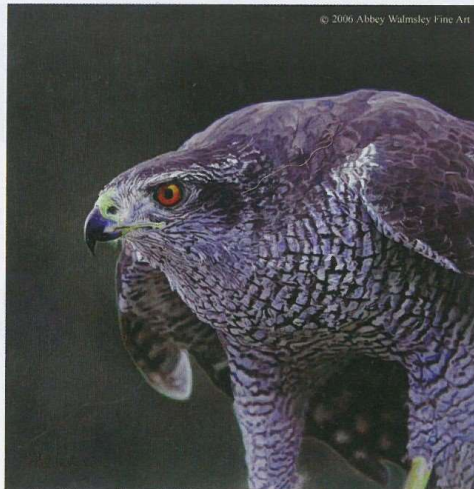
I developed a curiosity for birds of prey in my early twenties when I became aware of a demand for good falconry art with The Halcyon Gallery I worked with in London. Soon I was on my way to photograph falcons in the Yorkshire Dales, and within hours was absolutely fascinated by these magnificent birds and the unique relationship formed between them and the falconer.

You can't help but be impressed by their intensity, grace, speed, agility and power – all things that I aim to capture in my paintings.

What do you hope to capture with your art for the viewer to take away?

I hope they take away a true impression of the animals, and an appreciation for the unique relationship that exists between animals and humans. What's really important to me is revealing the true nature of animals, why and how they behave the way they do, and to capture their essence, attitude and personality.

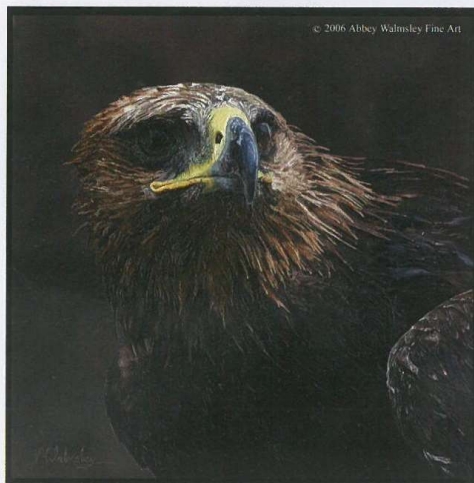
The keys to my work are movement, light, colour and accuracy. These are the mechanisms by which the imagination accesses the essence of the subject. In that way, I hope my art expands the observer's comprehension of nature and inspires an appreciation of animals and their habitats.



What's coming up for Abbey Walmsley Fine Art?

I suppose the biggest news is that we're relocating to Ireland in August 2006. I'll also be busy painting for two large exhibitions in the US for early next year, and I'm part way through painting a peregrine falcon on a kill that I've decided to experiment with a bit, and its proving to be quite a challenge. At the same time I'm really looking forward to getting to know Ireland, and of course, getting more great photographs of falcons in action that I can paint.

For more information on Abbey Walmsley Fine Art visit: www.abbeywalmsley.com



Fonzie's First Grouse

MARTIN COX

OCTOBER 2ND 2005, 2.30 pm, a time and date indelibly etched into my memory – '*Fonzie's First grouse*'. But before recounting that eventful day, let me take you back to the beginning.

I had always had a fascination for all birds, and in particular raptors. Luckier than most I had grown up in the countryside of South Glamorgan, spending endless days wandering over the fields and forests. Unfortunately because of my chosen career in the armed forces, I was never able to fully realise my dream of flying birds of prey. Later in life though, during my early thirties, an introduction to someone was to change all that.

That person was Roger James, and through him I was able to handle and fly raptors without the encumbrance of owning one of my own. A firm and deep friendship followed and I sought his company whenever time permitted, barracking and cajoling, asking questions and seeking information and experience.

On leaving the army, a medical condition forced me to give up full-time work, so more and more time was spent with Roger, learning to handle the birds. At this point he thought me responsible enough to have my own bird. That first bird was a female Harris, which Roger kindly gave me, and under his guidance I successfully trained and entered her.

For a few years my life seemed complete, no drudgery of going to work, just handling and flying my hawk whenever weather permitted. But a nagging ache persisted, that I knew would not be quelled until I flew a longwing. Roger was concerned, not about my ability to man, train and fly one, but to game-hawk it, because of medical condition. Doggedly I persisted, practising my lure swinging and handling the longwings as often as I could, never ceasing to be amazed by their wildness and independence, whilst maintaining their tenuous bond with their falconers.

After much discussion, a bird was suggested . . . a Peregrine x Saker. Luckily a club member called Andy Welsh bred the species. After a little research I heard nothing but praise for Andy's set-up and the quality of the birds he bred, being both steady in character and tenacious hunters.

Contact was made but my hopes seemed to be dashed when he informed me that he had only *one* Peregrine x Saker eyass, a female (I wanted a Tiercel), and she was already spoken for. The only other eyass he had was a Peregrine x Prairie tiercel, and most people had said 'don't attempt one of those; they're far too difficult and bad-tempered'. I thought I would wait until the next season, and see what Andy bred. In the meantime, I would arrange to meet him and have a look at his set-up.

To say that I was suitably impressed with his breeding aviaries and the conditions his birds were kept in would be an understatement, they were immaculate! Andy explained about each of his breeding birds, its age, background, etc. Then he took me to the last aviary where the eyasses were. A sharp intake of breath followed as I laid eyes on two of the most beautiful eyasses, one a female Peregrine x Saker, and next to her was Fonzie, only five weeks old, but as far as I was concerned, a perfect product of Nature. Having been raised in open fronted aviaries, they were both steady and stared back in defiance, with that wild, independent gleam in their eyes. Andy put some quail into the aviary, and a tug-of-war ensued, with the much smaller tiercel winning the battle. From that moment I knew that no other bird would suffice, I had to have him!

A price was agreed and Andy informed me that I could pick him up in three weeks' time, at which point he would be eight weeks' old. Those weeks dragged by like no others, and it reminded me of my childhood, counting down the weeks and days until Christmas, the excitement ever increasing. I kept myself busy by making a cage, and sorting out the mews where Fonzie would be housed. What I really needed though, was information specific to the Prairie. Roger and Colin Asquith were a mine of information and recommended Bruce Haak's (a famous American falconer) book, *The Hunting Falcon*. Until I could

procure a copy, Andy kindly lent me his. Over the following week I read it from cover to cover, not once but three times! Bruce's description of the birds' character, temperament, aggression and hunting prowess, convinced me that this was the species that was going to challenge me . . . I was not to be disappointed!

Finally, July 6th arrived, the agreed date that I could pick him up, and on the way to Andy's my pulse quickened as I got nearer and nearer. We made our way to his aviary and there he was in all his glory, staring at us with defiance and total disdain, as far as I was concerned he seemed even more beautiful than the first time I saw him. Andy duly caught him up and hooded him with little bother, and we took him indoors to fit all his bits and pieces. The one piece of equipment that would give me peace of mind was a leg bell that would signal if something was not quite right. At the same time as fitting his furniture we took the sharp points off his talons, so that he would not puncture the insides of his own feet. Then we weighed him. I was impressed with his fat weight of 1lb 9½ oz. He was then blocked out to settle in preparation for his journey home.

The first night I slept fitfully, keeping one ear permanently cocked for the slightest tinkle of his bell. I had left him hooded for his first night and in the morning picked him up and weighed him, and found that he had dropped 2 ozs. In preparation for his first manning session I locked the dogs away and brought him into the house, shutting the blinds, and making myself comfortable with a cup of coffee within easy reach.

Tentatively I struck the braces, waited a few moments, and then removed the hood. As soon as he saw the light of day and my ugly mug he bated, but quickly regained the fist, then glared and hissed at me when I made even the slightest movement. (Why is it you always get an itch when you're manning a bird?) That first day I manned him for one hour, frequently hooding and unhooding him, but he didn't show any interest in the food I offered him, which was hardly surprising in his first session.

The second day went well and he ate ½ chick from my hand, after bating only twice, and with his weight dropping and his appetite increasing, things got better, accepting a little more food. At the end of day three he stepped up to the glove to be put away for the night.

His progress astounded me, he was becoming tamer day by day, but the fierce independence in his eye never softened. I took things slowly, dropping his weight little by little, fearful I might cause him harm by reducing it too fast. Roger had said, 'be careful with him being so young, if you drop his weight too fast he might start screaming'. That was the last thing I wanted, so

caution was the order of the day. The long manning process continued with no real hiccups, up to the stage of jumping to the fist from a few metres. Feeding now took place on the lure, which on the first occasion perplexed him for a full five minutes. At the end of four weeks I gauged that he was ready for the next phase, coming to the lure on a long creance.

Roger assisted in removing the hood as I whistled and threw the loaded lure out to one side. He bobbed his head twice as if to say 'I know what that is', then in he came, throwing up above it and coming down on it. Not only did he respond immediately, but when he'd finished the food on the lure, I proffered the garnished glove he came to it straight away. Rehooding him, I was absolutely ecstatic, never in my wildest dreams had I thought this would move so quickly with little or no humps.

'Don't hold him back,' Roger had said, 'he's ready to go free, the next time the weather is right, go for it!' I was about to visit that dark place that all falconers throughout the centuries have had to visit, flying the bird free for the first time. The following day I awoke with trepidation, the weather conditions were perfect. Fonzie was in good humour and his weight absolutely spot on. There was no reason for putting it off. With the tiercel hooded and caged, I made my way to Roger's centre, ever trying to quell that strange mixture of fear and excitement.

As he was prepared, doubts crossed my mind – will he realise that he is no longer within my physical control, and straight-line it to get as far away from me as possible? My one solace was that I had a brand new powerful falcon transmitter if things went awry. With shaking hands I secured his flying jesses, removed his bullets and struck his hood braces, removed the hood and held him aloft, facing the gentle westerly breeze. The seconds ticked down slowly as he surveyed his



surroundings, bobbing his head repeatedly. After what seemed an age, but was in reality only a minute or two, he roused, and was off!

Initially, like most baby falcons, he hovered around me looking for the lure. I turned and walked into the wind encouraging him to go off and fly. With no lure in sight, he got the message and began to climb into the bright blue sky, gaining a commanding pitch in seconds. Now for the difficult bit. Would he come into the lure when called? Waiting until he was downwind, I whistled shrilly, throwing the dressed lure out to one side. I needn't have worried, his reaction was instant, folding his wings, he stooped and at the last minute flaring and gently landing on the lure. Looking at me, he bobbed his head as if to say, 'How was that, Dad'. This simple act of faith filled my chest with pride, reminding me of other times I'd had the same emotional reaction, my children's births, their first steps and words, I was drunk with euphoria.

A few more lessons of the same manner ensued, with me stooping him to the lure, but what he needed now was to learn about wind, so on the next favourable day it was off to Blaenavon to fly him on the hill. Everything went as normal, but I hid the lure and Fonzie went up and up, and then he spotted a buzzard soaring at about 500 feet. He quickly manoeuvred above it and then this tiercel that had not uttered a sound through his training, voiced his battle cry . . . Kek. Kek. Kek! and then stooped at the intruder. The buzzard got the message and quickly disappeared over the ridge, but he wasn't finished yet, Fonzie then spotted a hunting kestrel in the bottom of the valley, another intruder! Luckily, as he put his stoop in, the kestrel having already heard his battle cry, saw him and headed for safety. He was now in the bottom of the valley, in a downdraft, and quickly running out of energy, so like any good falcon he said: 'Sod it! I'll sit on this dry-stone wall and wait for my Dad to come and pick me up and feed me.' (I sometimes wonder who trains whom?)

Getting him to this point had so far taken five weeks, so now just over three months old, and the next six weeks were spent getting him fit and allowing him to hone his flying skills, letting him spend ever increasing time in the air. Sometimes he disappeared for up to ten minutes, (which set my pulse racing), but then he'd come back looking for me. The trouble was, the fitter he was getting, the further he drifted off. It was time to lock him on and enter him!

Once again Roger came to the rescue. He had some excellent ground where he puts grey partridge down for his own hunting with clients. Off we toddled with Guto (Roger's English setter), to one particular field where the partridge

at this time of day were normally in the centre of some kale, feeding. Sure enough, about a quarter of the way in, Guto came to a sudden halt, his tail becoming upright and quivering with intensity. Roger peeped him on, but he wouldn't move. That confirmed it. I was already half ready with the braces struck and Fonzie just clipped to my glove. Quickly unclipping him and removing his hood, I cast him into the wind. His pitch wasn't the greatest and he hadn't learned to fly back over the dog, and we realised that he was about to go 'a wandering'. So we flushed. Up rose the partridge, flying towards the hedge and safety. Fonzie saw it late, but then turned over, putting a shallow stoop. The partridge spotted him and decided to dump back into the field. No problem! Fonzie was going to take it on the ground, and gave it one almighty whack, throwing up and landing on his prize. Making in, I did wonder if the prairie character would now manifest itself. I'd heard some horror stories about trying to take prairies off kills. Again my worries were unfounded, and he allowed me to help him plume and break into his first kill. I let him have a full crop and picked him up without any qualms, his talons and cere flecked with blood, and warm fresh meat in his crop. This was one happy tiercel and falconer!

This perfect product of nature had so far outreached my dreams and expectations, and we had developed a strong bond. A few days later whilst exercising him over one of the farms he spotted a small flock of black-headed gulls feeding on a ploughed field. He circled and realising his intentions I tried to whistle him back. At that precise moment they burst. His reaction was instinctive and he flipped over and folded into that magical teardrop shape. He had been cast from a high point and they were in the low ground, so he was easily 300 to 400 ft above them. He put in a near vertical stoop and hit one before it had made 50 ft. Even so I was about 500 m away the sound was awesome and not unlike the 'whack of leather on willow'. The gull just folded and spiralled earthwards, with Fonzie throwing up momentarily and landing on his kill. I made him as quickly as I could and although he had not plumed it or broken into it, it was obvious that he had killed it cleanly and efficiently with his initial strike. I did not want him to get locked onto this particular quarry so a quick exchange was made with him taken up on the glove to eat his fill of DOC's.

A few days later Roger asked me if I'd like to try him on grouse. I had my doubts thinking they would be too much for my delicate little boy. Roger pragmatically stated, 'if you don't try you won't know.' So off to the grouse-moor we went (no not Scotland, a Welsh grouse moor), Roger with

Ripley, Martin Cray with his large falcon Bella, and a good friend Rob Payne who had supplied Roger with some stunning Peregrine x Barbaries. Before the main event we flew the three Red Kites that Roger was training for his forthcoming documentary with Iolo Williams. They really are spectacular birds and to see the three of them flying free on the hill was absolutely breathtaking.

Kite training session complete, we moved to the moor, Roger knew the area extremely well with a good idea of where we would find a covey or two. After only 30 minutes Guto had a point and it was Martin's large falcon Bella who was to have the first slip. As soon as she took to the air it was apparent that she was not on form so she was taken down to the lure. The point turned out to be old scent as the dog moved through the area in front of him. On we continued and hadn't gone half a mile when Guto gave us another point. Peeped on, he refused to budge. This was it. Roger unselfishly said, 'Your slip Martin.' Crumbs, I was now to embark on trying to catch the falconer's ultimate quarry with a five-month-old inexperienced tiercel in front of my peers. Surely the odds were not in my favour? Martin and I slipped over the crest half heading the point to try and get a little closer without the covey seeing us. In for a penny in for a pound. I looked skyward and uttered a silent prayer before unhooding my boy and casting him into the wind. Quickly he climbed, the fitness training paying dividends as he reached a pitch of 300 ft plus. Meanwhile Roger and Rob were moving around to head the point and stop the covey busting into the wind. Suddenly his young English setter Hooly who was in a lead froze on point. Roger was caught mid-stride and off balance and as he placed his foot down a covey of seven grouse flew off down wind.

I would have been happy if Fonzie had just acknowledged the flush, but what was to follow brought home just what potential this little tiercel had. He turned over and put in a classic 45° stoop chasing the covey into the distance. After 300m. We lost sight of Fonzie and the covey. I was made up that he had acknowledged them and flown but they had been fitter than he was, weren't they? We made our way to where we had last seen him and I continued to look skywards wondering why he had not come back looking for me as normal. Suddenly Martin Cray shouted, 'I think he has got him!' The walk turned into a run, we found a cluster of grouse feathers and there was Fonzie with blood on his talons looking very rattled and wound up. Martin and I gave the heather patch a cursory search and found nothing. I was ecstatic, as he had obviously managed to get a foot to one of them. Beaming with pride I picked him up with a reward,

crooning and singing his praises. By this time Roger and Rob had joined us and Hooly (still on the lead) staunchly pointed the heather clump. A more detail search was made and out popped a hen grouse to be quickly retrieved by Hooly. On inspection it was found to have a smashed wing. Fonzie had done for his first grouse!

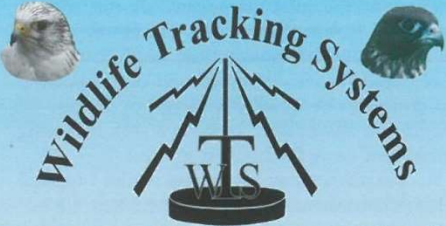
He was then given his grouse whilst I basked in his achievement. Whoops and hollers continued with everyone congratulating me. Unfortunately we only had a camera phone with us and as you can see the photo doesn't really do Fonzie justice. I looked as if I had a Botox injection, as I had this ridiculous smile, which lasted for a fortnight. The evening drew out with lots of whisky and of course the grouse, which June cooked and presented as a superb starter for our meal. We replayed and discussed every fact of Fonzie's achievement.



Even now more than six months on I can still be heard to say 'This is Fonzie, my little peregrine x prairie tiercel, he flies at 1½lb 2½oz, and did I tell you he caught his first grouse when he was only five months old?' Joking apart, was I lucky? Definitely!

I just so happened that all the ingredients for a successful meal were there that day and served in the right order. What makes it so special was achieving it in the company of my mentor, best friend and friends. Do I really take credit for Fonzie's prowess? Not really, only his tameness and manners, his flying ability, aggression and tenacity are all part of his genetic make-up and excellent breeding lines which are down to Andy Welsh.

Hopefully more success is to come which I will relate in another article, but that's for another day. For now I will never forget Fonzie's first grouse.



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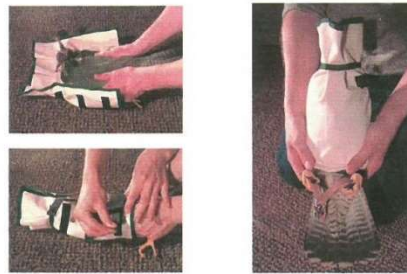
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POLITICAL PEREGRINES & SPINNING SPARROW HAWKS

YOU DON'T HEAR the terminology 'spin-doctor' that much these days. It was a word much associated with the Blair government and slowly moulted out when his communications guru, Alistair Campbell, decided to rake away or was he hacked to the wild with telemetry?

At the latter end of 2005, I was summonsed to talk with the Chief Veterinary Officer and I was asked to give my perspective on Avian Flu (AI). Fortunately, I was in quite an informed position as being an elected member of the Hawk Board (retrospectively cheers for the votes guys and gals), all manner of e-mails cross my desk, and so I went into discussions with a 'global' and informed view.

Government were initially surprised that I had 'inside-knowledge', not only that I knew the workings of government (such is my work in public affairs) but I knew that 'yesterday' the virus H2N6 had broken out in the upper reaches of some delta and that H4N3 was possibly being traced in the lower reaches of the back of beyond. I was not surprised, but somewhat disillusioned, that there was little knowledge of birds of prey. I advised in lay terms on the complexity of raptors, but at the same time I had to acknowledge that these (genuinely) very hard pressed officials had a mountain to climb if we were to face for real, any form of AI – human form or otherwise. It was my duty to advise and help as much as I possibly could.

To the governments credit, what surprised me was that after some explanation, the complications of housing, say, an entire collection of breeding goshawks in a front room started to ring alarm bells with them and that, to the very great credit of the CVO and the team, the penny started to drop on the enormity of the task ahead of them, not least as not all birds are registerable or identified on a government database.

I then glibly asked about my own particular quarry – game birds – and what of their housing needs, particularly this years estimated hatch of 700 odd pheasants – surely they could not be housed in the garage? There was deathly silence. What about Paul, my hawking chum, who is adamant that his 'lesser spotted blue breasted crested hawks' (actually the last breeding pair in the world) may need special treatment, housing, food and no vaccination as they can live for a minimum of 70 years each and he really didn't want to burden the government in applying for a daily license to move or hunt them and to complicate matters he was also on the circuit of local school talks as well. Deathly silence.

I couldn't spin-doctor this one any further. I had to come clean and owned up that I was fibbing and really I was only talking about peregrines, not goshawks, also that it was only 200 pheasants, not 700, and in fact Paul's birds were the 'greater

spotted' variety, not the lesser spotted. But, joking aside, the understanding was becoming a reality and the political implications and public relations nightmares that lay ahead became all too much of a reality.

The room fell silent. Drumming fingers on the table became more intense, a few bios were clicking anxiously. Someone gently grated their throat, but no one knew who had made the sound. Everyone seemed to be looking up towards the ceiling wondering what to say next. It was to my fortune, and convenience, that I found some meat stuck in a back molar and I rolled my tongue around into the depths of my mouth, thus precluding me from speaking. I gazed out of the window, I'm sure that I saw the flash of a passing spinning sparrow hawk. It's shadow was reminiscent of the shape of an Alistair Campbell pointing hand – remember, he always used to do that finger pointy thing – but I kept quiet in order that government would take the initiative and give some guidance.

I was taken aback, following an intense and numbing pause, a pearl of wisdom came forth. The answer came from across the table and as quick as a flash, my heart was gladdened. There was to be a consultation paper on this matter and better still it would be UK led and involve all the devolved governments. Well, that was it . . . phew! We all shook hands, patted each other on the back, we promised that Christmas cards would be sent (and they were) and we parted much the wiser and happier. I left with the safety net of full consultation and a two-way-process of communication in my back pocket. Of course, now they have my address. Hard copies of papers, annexes, maps & graphs pop through the letter box with near daily certainty. E-mails abound.

Dear Consultee . . . we value your opinion . . . could you kindly indicate by the end of the week . . . a meeting will be held tomorrow . . . luncheon will be provided . . . parking is at a premium . . . you will be required to give a power point presentation . . . the minister is delighted that . . . luncheon will be provided . . . would you be available to take part in an Avian Flu exercise . . . the bunker is 3,000 ft below Whitehall . . . luncheon will be provided . . .

In reality, I can't complain, this is really serious stuff and there are some professionals at the helm, but when I look back to my childhood, all I ever wanted to do was just to go and fly a hawk – mind you I do like luncheons. I wonder who will serve us, as I haven't seen Alistair Campbell recently.

Mark Hinge (Hawk Board)
The Bay – Public Affairs Ltd
www.public-affairs.co.uk

Isabel Diaries



LEE FEATHERSTONE

26 May 2006

Hi all,

The 4th egg has piped internal and I can hear squeaking, so hopefully 3 out of 4. I agree that leaving them with Isabel is a risk, but having just fed them in front of her, she has now clicked and has taken over feeding the chicks right in front of me. The past two days, my heart has been in my mouth and I'm almost panicking to get home as fast as I can to check on them. I have just lost one to the mother of some other gos chicks and it's gutting. But I have taught Isabel from the beginning with her as a chick, so pointing her in the right direction at this stage is natural to me. It's a privilege to be involved with birds in the breeding season and shows the bond that you can build with them I think and hope she will now realise that when the chicks are begging for a feed she will just do it. I will of course keep a very close eye on her, but she is doing a very good job up to now and if I can get this right, then people who want parent-reared can have them from her, as my parent reared pair are sitting on a second clutch and moving the chicks to them is out of the question. I wish I had taken my phone in with me to take some more pictures of her feeding but will try next feed time.

27 May 2006

Hi all,

Well, Isabel's 4th egg has a hole in the side and it should be out by tomorrow. It is in the incubator to keep the pressure off Isabel whilst feeding the other two. I've made two videos - one is 16 mins of Isabel feeding the two chicks with my help.



She has got the hang of it now and the young are cropped up regular - four times today from 5.40 this morning till 3.00 now!

The other video is of Peggy, the bird I bought from the club five years ago, as no one wanted her! She has laid five eggs. Three have hatched out today within one hour. All three went from eggs to what you can see in the video. Again the other two are in the incubator with holes in the eggs waiting to come out. It seems like a production line in my utility room! I hope that Leigh can up load the videos and pictures to the website - it will be handy in showing all that we have achieved and what we have on offer for members etc.



Imprint male at 2lb 2oz.

Well I'm going for a nap now I'm whacked out. Will keep you all posted

30 July 2006

Hi all,

Three of Isabel's chicks have survived - the fourth died at pip - 1 male and 2 females. Colin Askwith has got one female. He is keeping her as the next club female to breed from, as he has a semen donor at his place. The other female has been parent reared and is being flown by a lad from Yorkshire. The male is a big one, penning at 2lb 2oz, imprinted by myself and will be flown by myself. I have a picture of him fully grown and I think I have some as they were about nine days old.

Introducing Grey Partridges

ANDY HULME

In many areas the Grey partridge is practically non existent, so how can you establish a population to produce a viable harvestable surplus?

Firstly, if you have wild greys and they are breeding, then just look after them by feeding them all year round and effective predator control.

If you have a pair or two which are not rearing young, then these pairs can be used as foster parents to captive bred Greys. Find where the pairs territory is and place a release pen in a suitable place in their territory such as along a hedge line in a field margin. Place into the pen 8-12 eight week old poults (depending on size of pen) which at this age will be able to cope with the weather. Once the barren pairs are seen frequently around the release pen then the poults can be released and will join the adult pair, which will teach them the art of survival. As the pair have a territory, the poults are less likely just to clear off, and will very quickly act like a wild covey.

Put the feeder and drinker outside the pen so the poults have a guaranteed food and water source they recognise and keep these filled as long as they are been used.

For those of us who have no wild Greys, then an adult population has to be established through releasing adult birds or young and waiting a year

until they mature (young birds do have a high mortality rate 40-60 %). Adult birds could be released as late as February/March giving the pairs time to set up territories.

Once an adult population has been established and the pairs territories have been identified, then follow the same release as with wild barren pairs.

With the introduction of the single farm payment and the entry level scheme, we are going to see big improvements in wildlife habitats such as 2m, 4m, 6m grass margins, beetle banks and hedge planting - which is going to provide ideal habitats not only for Grey partridges but Redlegs, pheasants and brown hares which will only enhance our hawking.

I shall be put these recommendations into practice this year on

four farms - three in Suffolk and one in Essex. One farm has a good population of wild Greys, one farm has a single barren pair so poults will be released once fostered and the other two farms have no wild Greys. I shall release poults with a view to establishing adult pairs in 2007 and then to use them as foster parents.





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Field Meet Groups 2005

NEIL McCANN

This past year has come and gone so fast. It is June already and this years Field Meet is 75% done with yet another change of venue.

It is difficult to get a hotel to cater for all our needs at a nice price but the hard part is to find one large enough!

Over the last few years you will have noticed the quiet demise of the Harris Hawk and the increasing number of members flying imprint falcons and goshawks. How falconry tastes have changed these past few years. I hope to get the members to do a group photo this season as I have yet to achieve this. I hope this is possible this year as there are many international members that travel a long way to come and hawk with the members of the Club.

I hope all the members had successful hawking venues as I know our group struggled on one particular venue (Weston Park) as did most I believe. I would like to thank the Filed Leaders as they sort their groups out and this helps me a lot as they get to venues on time and organise themselves the night before so that all members know where they are going.

Terry Large made the Americans most welcome flying his hawks, loaning them his van and giving them board and lodging. The most memorable moment I think for our group was the smile on the face of Kris Ulens as his Redtail caught its first of many cock pheasants. How hard he tried. But as they say, 'if you first don't succeed, try, try again.' He insisted on buying every member in the group a drink that evening and he was not taking no for an answer!

I hope this season the weather will be as kind, as it is an International Meet and for our many members not only to enjoy the sport of falconry but the craick and one or two beers too many at the bar.

Total Game Caught

Partridge	8
Pheasants	73
Rabbits	11
Hare	1
Moorhen	2
Duck	7

Falcon Group 1

N. Haveman-Mart (FL)
L. Haveman-Mart
A. Hulme
M. Coupe

Falcon Group 2

M. Coupe (FL)
C. Cheshire
K. Brisendon
J. Cockle
E. Phythian
K. Wittle

Goshawk Group 1

N. McCann (FL)
J. Simcox
K. Simcox
M. Kane
R. Smith

Goshawk Group 2

D. Metcalfe (FL)
M. Crompton
R. Van de Grase
R. Theijn

Goshawk Group 3

T. Webster (FL)
J. Murray
P. Murray
N. Chambers

Goshawk Group 4

T. Singleton (FL)
R. Norton
C. Frearson
P. Worby
D. Fielder

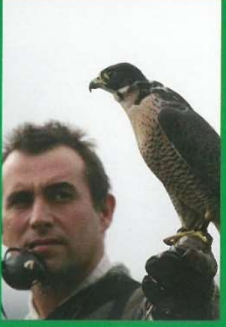
Harris Group 1

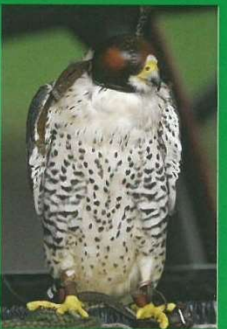
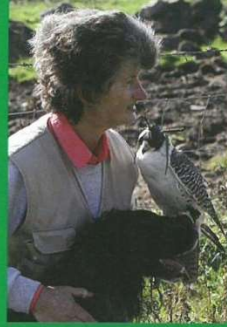
T. Large (FL)
A. Watson
A. Watson
B. Higham
K. Ulens
B. Clerens
B. Tofts

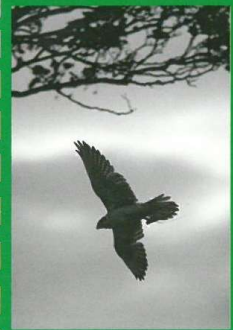
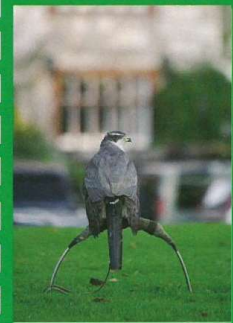
Harris Group 2

R. Hooper (FL)
S. Vaughan
A. Watson
P. Dawson
S. Byers
T. Peplow









Game On

Tales of a Lowland Gamehawker

Part 2

ANDY HULME

Two seasons have come and passed since I wrote the first article about Freya's first season, so I thought I would put pen to paper again. The falcon had finished her first moult in mid-August and was ready for the opening day of the partridge season but it was the 18th September before she killed her first partridge.

A week later an opportunity arose to fly ducks but she refused as she had done in her first season, so a phone call to Adie Watson and a pair of mallard shot on a night flight cured the problem for the Falcon; DUCK TASTE NICE!

On the 5th of October a pair of Mallard were flushed from the flight pond and Freya stooped knocking the drake down then binding to it as it tried to make safety and head for the lagoon.

The WHC Field meeting at Llangollen. Freya flew fantastic binding to a hen Pheasant in front of Tom Smith the landowner on his estate at Denbigh. Tom was impressed as it happened in front of him and I walked away with a big grin across my face.

The falcon was not put off by cock Pheasants from her encounter in her first season and accounted for three. Her footing improved as the season progressed and she only lost half a dozen cocks on the floor which were all late December and January birds.


She caught her last bird on the 26th January, a hen Pheasant which she killed in the stoop and her last flight of her second season was at a covey of Redlegs on the 1st February. In her second season she caught 9 Redlegs, 1 Grey, 6 hen pheasants, 3 cock pheasants, 6 mallards and 2 moorhens.

The falcon was put up to moult with Meteor, a six year old tiercel and they started to bond through the spring and summer. It was not long before late August came about and the falcon had finished her second moult and was ready to do battle against the game birds of East Anglia.

Freya opened her third season on the 5th September catching a Redleg partridge above a field of sugar beet which produced many good flights during the season as it was not harvested until late December and not finished to mid January as the ground was too soft.

The partridges I released on a farm in Suffolk in late July had all bar a small covey of six birds disappeared by the end of September. Foxes were the culprit at this farm as the Hunt had previously controlled the numbers - which they were not allowed to do anymore - and on two occasions the Brittanies had pointed and flushed them out of the sugar beet.

All was not lost as the farm held a good population of wild pheasants which started to go to the feeders in mid October where normally it would be mid November. I changed her flying times from afternoon to morning in December as the game was getting clever and this worked very well. Freya flew with all the vigour as she would do in the afternoon and the pheasants would be out at the feeders taking their first feed of the day. In one week in January she knocked down a hen Pheasant on the Monday, a cock on the Tuesday, she killed a cock on the Wednesday and Thursday then she caught a mallard on the Friday which was the flight of the season binding to the duck thirty feet in the air and landed 100ft away from where she had bound to the mallard.



On the Saturday Paul Mechaniow and I were invited on to an estate in Essex by game keeper and goshawker Clive. Freya killed a brace of Redlegs. Paul's peregrine killed a Redleg in style and both birds were fed up sitting contently on the lawn as we broke for dinner. Clive caught a brace of cock pheasants and Paul a single cockbird with their male goshawks in the afternoon.

Freya flew her heart out in North Wales at the WHC meeting at Ruthin. The falcon knocked down partridges and cock pheasants. At Denbigh on the first day she knocked down two hen pheasants into bracken at Llandegla and she killed a cock pheasant at Denbigh on the third day.

I had many great flights this season with the falcon and both Chalk and Dan the two Brittanies who worked well especially in the sugar beet and supplied the falcon with some spectacular pheasant flights.

The season finished on the 1st February with the falcon knocking two cock pheasants which I managed to flush separately which had clapped down on a freshly ploughed field but both cockbirds made cover after the initial knockdown.

The falcon's tally of game for her third season was 8 Redlegs, 9 cock pheasants, 6 hen pheasants, 2 mallard, 1 woodpigeon and 1 moorhen.

Freya was put into the aviary a week later with Meteor and she laid three eggs in March but sadly they were infertile and she never re-cycled. She is now moulting awaiting the start of the new game season.



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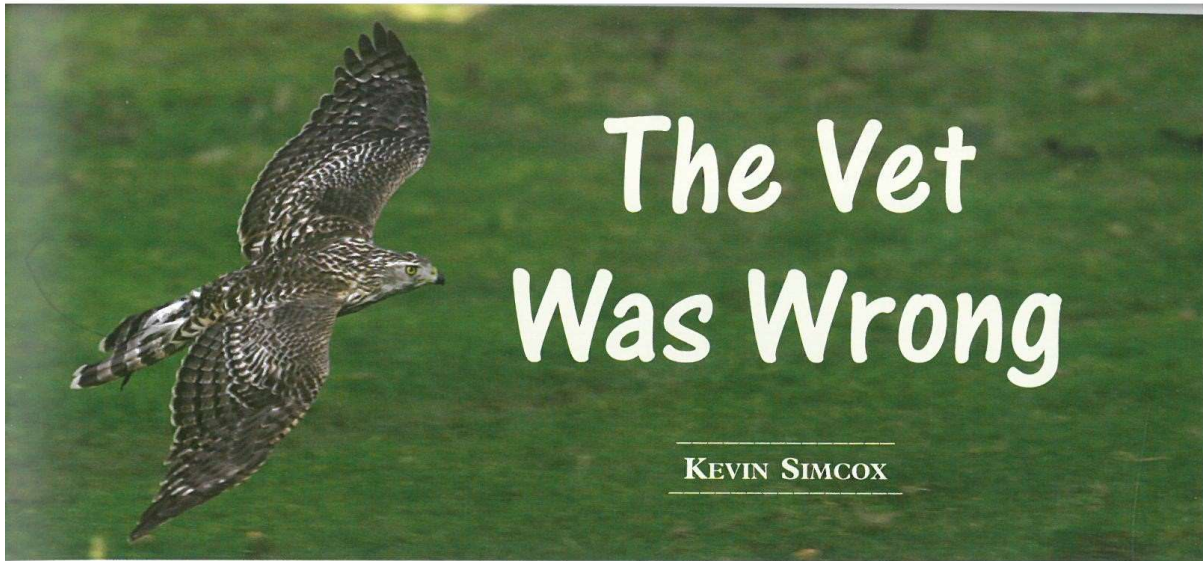
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The Vet Was Wrong

KEVIN SIMCOX

I have flown one of my dad's (John Simcox) Goshawks for the past four years. My son Ross named him Fred the first time we took him to the vet. He is a 6 year old Finnish male Goshawk.

I took him out of his aviary in the last week of September. It takes me about two weeks to have him flying free, I spend a lot of time flying him up and down my garden to try and build up this muscles.

The time came when I was ready to fly him free. It was a Friday afternoon – as with my job I finish at 2.30pm – and the land I fly on is about five minutes in the car. When I got to the hunting ground all the signs were good to have him flying loose for the first time this season. On leaving the car I checked that the telemetry was working etc and set off up the footpath to the first field. After about 10 minutes he looked like a feather duster. I spent most of the afternoon putting him in tall trees and calling him back as the rabbits did not want play out. So we went back to the car for a cuppa and then set off to a different part of my hunting ground, where I was sure we would have some fun on the bunnies. Sure enough we put up three rabbits in the first field, all of which made it to deep cover before he could get hold of them.

The rest of the afternoon was spent with him missing rabbits – apart from one that made it to a hedge line. He had hold of it in the middle of the hedge, as I ran over to help him out he let go and was sitting on a fence post – it was time to call it a day. I called him back and fed him up on the way back to the car.

When I got home I put him out to have a bath in the garden and noticed a bit of blood on the inside of his right wing, I thought he must have cut it on the hedge when he had hold of

that rabbit. I went into the house to get the first aid kit, took out the antiseptic cream and applied it to the wing near the elbow as I thought it was a small cut. Over the next couple days when the feathers started to mat together I realised that the cut was a lot bigger. That was on the Tuesday night. Before the three-day meet. I took Fred along to keep an eye on his wing and to take him to the vet on my return home, as the creams were not working and it wasn't healing.

I rang the vet on the Saturday morning and booked him in for the Monday. I took him to the vet in Tarporley who had a look at him and told me he would put him under the next day, clean the cut up and have a proper look. He rang me at work at 10.30am the next day with bad news. Fred had cut through the main set of muscles and tendons. My heart sank, I felt sick. He then told me that he wanted to put Fred to sleep as he would never hunt again nor would he be able to fly. I have flown him for four years, I was not going to give up on him, so I told the vet to stitch him up and I would take him home that night.

When I picked him up, the vet was going on about quality of life, bumble foot etc, but I was having none of it. I left the vets with enough drugs to start my own surgery and arranged to come back in two weeks time to have the dressing taken off. The vet said that he may need to put him under again, but the night before I was due to take him back, the dressing fell off. The wound looked great and was healing lovely. I took him back to the vet so he could have a look at the wing and he agreed with me that it was healing very well. I left again with a bag full of drugs. I never kept the next appointment, as I was not going to spend more money only to be told the wing had healed.

I spent four weeks building up the right wing and I was sure he would be able to fly again. And I was right. The Northern Region had a day booked flying game in North Wales, I had my name down and we had the license. We had five Goshawks in our group; there was myself, my dad (John Simcox), Neil McCann, Lee Featherstone and Mick Winn. We turned up at Dave Rhodes' house at about 9.15am, only to find that the long wingers had not turned up yet, so we spent about an hour waiting for them all to get there. We set off to the hawking ground after we had got the birds out of the cars to find the game. It was not long before Lee (just one more) Featherstone had a good flight on a hen bird, which she took. Then it was Mick's turn. He also had a hen bird, it seemed like ages for it to be my turn.



As we walked through some small trees in the heather, Ben, Neil's dog, was on the scent of a cock bird. The male took off like a bullet, turned upside down and pulled the cock bird out of the sky, only to lose it on the ground.

It took about an hour for it to be my turn again.

We were walking through a wood on the estate, when another cock bird got up, Fred was hot on it's heels then he turned upside down and pulled the cock bird from the air. Only this time he was not letting go, I let him have his fill as it would be the last time that I would fly him.

He is now in a breeding project with one of Neil McCann's females. The moral of the story is: **VETS AREN'T**

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Hunting with Harris Hawks



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Musings of an Afghan Falconer

Sirdar Mohamed Osman

Published by The Eryr Press, 2005

Reviewed by David Horobin

As a newcomer to falconry I, like many others, felt compelled to read every 'how to' book there was on the subject; eagerly snapping up conflicting advice on the intricacies of attaching swivel to jesses; on whether or not it is better to throw the lure into the air for species I am unlikely to ever fly, or allow them to take it on the ground, and so on. However, I later felt compelled to immerse myself in the socio-historical aspects of falconry. Recent years have seen a number of books that describe varying forms of our sport in cultures and places far removed from our own. Steve Bodio's *Eagle Dreams* and the Craighead brothers' *Life with an Indian Prince* stand out as titles which, though centred around Mongolian and Indian hawking respectively, offer glimpses of life and customs in other lands, painting pictures

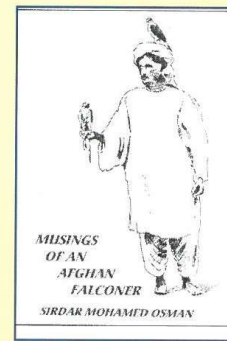
of the terrain and people they treat as vividly as the flights they describe. Sirdar Mohamed Osman's *Musings of an Afghan Falconer* falls very much into the 'cultural falconry book' category rapidly taking over my shelves.

Afghanistan is a land about which, in the West, we hear little unless it is negative, and the current political situation makes it an unlikely destination for visiting falconers. Osman describes 'the antiquity of a land which has since time immemorial been steeped in the blood of its martyrs' and is himself descended from a line of royal warriors, one of whom was responsible for the crushing defeat of a huge British force in Victorian times. A proud and strong people, Afghans have a long tradition of practical falconry in their often troubled yet hauntingly beautiful and varied country: some suggest that our

sport was born in these central Asian landscapes.

Musings is a sequel to Osman's earlier *Falconry in the Land of the Sun*. Like its predecessor it describes the various species of raptor found and flown in Afghanistan but concentrates on these from an ornithological perspective alongside a falconer's practical view. It is designed to be 'a companion for the falconer and general tourist' and a 'study into which is interwoven some description of the environment, with glimpses of the people who share Afghanistan with their feathered neighbours.' Osman is most successful in achieving this aim, and this title offers more of a flavour of his native land than his previous work, which concentrates more on his hawking experiences whilst living in parts of India and Pakistan.

Enhanced by Mark



Upton's wonderful vignettes, which accompany entertaining Afghan folk sayings, the work is further illustrated by work ranging from attractive tipped-in colour plates by Editor Kenyon Gibson and old photographs to sketches by US soldier and falconer Robert Widmeier, who met Osman during World War II. The book is written in a somewhat lyrical style, evocative of lands and times lost to the ravages of war and 'progress' and is, in places, rather wistful and moving in its description:

Book Reviews . . . Book Reviews . . . Book Reviews .

Small bits of silvery clouds, like bits of teased cotton, hung in the blue sky above the snow-covered peaks adding to the exquisite beauty of the scene in the first rays of the early morning sun. On the opposite side of the road lay open stretches of barren land mostly graced with tiny orchards that struggled out of the inhospitable earth.

This, prior to a practical description of a lanner's first flight at game in this harsh yet stunning landscape, is in turn followed by a humorous tale of an adulterer due to be flogged outside the city walls! Throughout the title, little scenes like this give a more human perspective to a land somewhat maligned by our media. From my own experience of working with Osman's countrymen in a professional capacity, I might – albeit at the risk of stereotyping – say that I have found Afghans warm hearted people with a rich sense of humour, and this shows through in this work.

As with many such books, it may be that there are too many differences between Osman's Afghanistan and modern Britain for much of his practical lore to benefit us directly. In many ways the book describes a falconer's dream of free access to land with quarry in abundance; unfortunately it must largely remain a dream under present conditions.

Nonetheless, there is much to enjoy and a wealth of absorbing information. Having of late undertaken a great deal of research into seventeenth century medicines for hawks, it has been fascinating to compare traditional Afghan remedies that hint at common origins. Few of us would care to dabble with such medicines when veterinary science is now so advanced, yet Osman's ancestors, like our very own Latham and Bert, found them sufficiently beneficial to record them. Notes on the ingredients of these remedies, plus details of the various quarry species Osman mentions, are included as appendices.

Musings is the latest work on Eastern falconry from the Eryr Press. My original intention was to review their earlier trilogy,

available in high quality leather bindings as a matched set. This consists of *Observations on Eastern Falconry* taken from scarce writings by Lt. Col. D.C. Phillott, a reprint of Phillott's translation of the Persian treatise *Baz Nama-yi-Nasiri* and *One Thousand Years of Falconry* comprising work by a range of popular and lesser known nineteenth century writers on the sport. I have yet to obtain the latter two titles but on the strength of *Observations* have been favourably impressed. Editor Kenyon Gibson is a keen environmentalist and all of his titles utilise some amount of hemp paper – a rapidly renewable resource – in preference to tree-based papers. His 'Editor's Introduction' in *Musings* clarifies links between conservation and falconry:

Falconry, being part of nature, works in harmony with nature; being the product of millennia of observation and practice, it can offer to the economy what untested new ideas cannot. Osman writes in

one part about . . . the use of falconry in control of crop depredation by pest birds . . . a ray of hope in a world of darkened idiotic thinking, as it offers a practice that is both economical and efficient; some might add, a bit of fun as well.

Osman's *Musings* offer a refreshing look at an unfamiliar land, seen through the familiar eyes of a brother sportsman. They remind us that whatever our practical and cultural differences, we are as one in the passion for falconry that links us. This is a valuable work, commenting on not only practical falconry but also its cultural and religious significance for Afghans, for whom it was until very recently something of a national sport. As such, this is a title well worth taking the trouble to read.



Book Reviews . . . Book Reviews . . . Book Reviews .

Hunting with Harris Hawks

Bob Dalton

Reviewed by the Editor

Hunting with Harris Hawks



bob dalton

The author needs little introduction as one of our most prolific and well known media writers in modern times, commenting on all aspects of hawking and hawk ownership.

This new and exciting publication is not just another book on the Harris Hawk. It is filled with the wealth of experience that has been gleaned and put into practice over the past 35 years.

The book which moves away from standard portrait image and is in landscape, which allows every page to come alive with its full colour photography illustrating the text and making it a handsome volume that will be a must for falconers who are new to Harris Hawks or those who would like a lot more detail about ownership of this versatile hawk.

The writer has spent many years of

pleasurable observation and involvement with these hawks in their natural environment and has been fortunate to have spent time trapping and subsequently hawking with them in very different terrain and at different quarry. Such experiences give a qualified edge to the chapters that follow as they are filled with sound hawk keeping principles and good hawking practice.

There are 14 chapters dealing with all the necessary information that the falconer will need to ensure he has a very detailed and grounded understanding of the type of hawk he/she is about start with. The author's very matter of fact approach is evident throughout and this method is just what is required when trying to absorb all the various pitfalls and positive points that accompany the day to day handling and training. The Harris

Hawk may seem to the onlooker to be a trouble-free hawk, but as the chapters unfold it shows the versatility and intelligence of them and how quickly things can go wrong simply by not knowing what you could have done.

No stone is left unturned. The chapter entitled 'Accidents' doesn't pull any punches and recalls many instances of disasters waiting to happen and those that did, often fatally. It doesn't sit easy on the reader who needs to be aware that inexperienced handling is so often the result but this chapter reveals that just a little more thought will avoid such incidents.

My particular preference is the observations on hunting which gives the reader a great deal of opportunity to see the various adaptations and styles of hawking which can be achieved

with these hawks. The use of dogs plays a major part in the hawking partnership which is a refreshing reminder that our days spent out in the field can be so much more productive with them. Although Harris Hawks are quick to find fault with having a dog around them the author shows that the hawks adapt very quickly once they can see the benefit of a very handy hunting companion, sometimes even to the point of making the falconer redundant.

Hunting With Harris Hawks has put into plain and simple language the layout for producing good management in the mews and quality hawking in the field and the rewards this will bring. This book is to be highly recommended as it is written with authority for everyone who owns and flies a Harris Hawk.

Another Award for Nick Fox

KEVIN MOSEDALE

For years, the falconry establishment, i.e. clubs, have been crying out for a properly structured beginners falconry award. Well now we have one and it is a good one. The Hawk Board and LANTRA launched the award at this years Falconry Fair. A pilot scheme had been set up some months previously to iron out and tweak the syllabus where necessary. It was at the pilot stage that Nick Farrant and I got involved and decided to apply to become probationary assessors. We attended a training day at Lantra and set off back to our Region fully armed with workbooks and candidate application forms. We discussed the scheme with members at one of our monthly meetings and were pleased with the response. In fact, all the members present decided that they would take the award. Four signed up that night and Nick and I have been working through the workbook with them.

So why should you take the award? Maybe you should ask yourself why you should not. Is it not the case that we have been decrying the fact that we do not have an adequate apprentice scheme? Clubs have put in token novice schemes so that it appears they are addressing the problem, but let's face it; none of them are a serious attempt at an apprenticeship. The Lantra award is, but it will only succeed if both novice and experienced Austringers and Falconers support it.

I recently received a phone call from Lantra asking if Nick and I would be interested in assessing approximately 12 people in Wales over a couple of days. We said sure no problem, only to be told that it was Nick Fox, Diana Durman-Walters, Jim Chick, Nick Kester and the staff/interns at International Wildlife Consultants Ltd. After the initial thoughts of, 'well how can we mere mortals assess these esteemed people within the falconry world?' we decided to take on the challenge. It was a great success for all concerned and yes, they all had to go through the workbook, to the point of picking a bird up and flying it on a creance. I am pleased to say and somewhat relieved, they all passed and have since received their certificates.

The thought of telling Diana, Nick or Jim that they had not acquired the required standard does



Diana with Tom Rambaut of Australia.

not bear thinking about. Also, if you are thinking that it must have been a doddle, ask them the next time you see them.

'But I've been a falconer for 15 years, why should I take a beginners award?' I hear you say. Well if these falconers are prepared to support it then why not you. You never know you might learn something.

This is a marvellous opportunity for the W.H.C. and its members, to fully endorse the award. As a club, we should take the lead and set an example to other clubs within the U.K. This Beginners Award is the starting point, it should follow that there will be awards for breeders, training centres and display teams etc. Wouldn't it be something if breeders would only sell a bird to someone who had the Lantra award, or that centres offering courses were Lantra approved, all

working from the same syllabus and singing from the same hymn sheet.

We have all read or seen some dreadful things relating to the keeping of birds of prey, whether it is a dire display or breeders selling mal-imprinted birds etc, etc. If we support the Lantra award scheme and what will follow on, because of its success, it will soon follow that dealing with people outside this umbrella would not be acceptable.

Lantra are looking for assessors in some areas of the country and if anyone would like a copy of the candidate's workbook, you can email me at: kev@mosedale.plus.com.

At the end of the day, the bird's welfare is paramount.

I hope that you will all consider taking this award.



(From left to right): Daniel Payne, UK; John Lawson, Finland and Manuel Maier, Uruguay.

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Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) Population Trends in South-Central Wales

ANDREW DIXON,¹ COLIN RICHARDS, PAUL HAFFIELD,
MARK LAWRENCE, MIKE THOMAS, GLYN ROBERTS AND ALAN LOWE

Summary

We have documented the breeding population of Peregrines in south-central Wales over the period 1900 to 2004. Over five decadal periods from 1900 to 1949 the number of occupied breeding ranges increased from 11 to a maximum of 34 in the 1930s. From the 1930s through to the mid-1950s our data indicates that the population was relatively stable with an estimated annual breeding population of about 20–25 pairs. After 1955 the population began to decline as a result of the effect of organochlorine pesticides, which eventually led to regional breeding extinction after 1965. The first post-pesticide era breeding attempt was confirmed in 1975 and the breeding population increased exponentially through the 1980s to eventually reach the present day upper-population ceiling of 81 (+/-3) occupied ranges since 1995.

Introduction

The contrasting fortune of the Peregrine population in Britain has been well documented (Ratcliffe, 1993) and their population trend has often mirrored the major conservation issues of their time. The deliberate killing of Peregrines and egg collecting were prime concerns in the first half of the 20th century, which the Protection of Birds Act, 1954 went some way to alleviating. Peregrines were a 'sentinel' species that highlighted the environmental problems caused by man-made pesticides in the 1950s and 1960s. The subsequent population super-recovery is a conservation success story, but some of the old persecution problems persist and the current population level has led to a renewal of calls for a Peregrine 'cull' from organisations representing pigeon fanciers and game preservers.

Since 1961 the Peregrine population of the United Kingdom has been the subject of decadal surveys, the most recent of which was conducted in 2002 (following postponement in 2001 as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak). The fifth and most recent survey indicated a 31% increase in the inland population of South Wales between 1991 and 2002, with a 24% increase in coastal

areas (Banks *et al.*, 2003). This study compliments the National Peregrine Surveys by providing information on the Peregrine population of south-central Wales on an annual basis and by covering a longer historical time period.

Methods

Study area

The limits of our study area were within a rectangle bounded by the co-ordinates SS7060 and SO3060 of the Ordnance Survey national grid. Within these limits our survey covered land within the Welsh vice-counties of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Carmarthenshire, Breconshire and Cardiganshire. We have termed this whole survey area as south-central Wales, which covers a total surface area of 4653 km² and comprises a range of breeding habitat types including coastal cliffs in Glamorgan, urban areas and industrial complexes in the south, lowland farmland with numerous quarries, the urbanised valleys of South Wales together with open and afforested uplands and valleys across much of the region with numerous quarries and natural rock exposures.

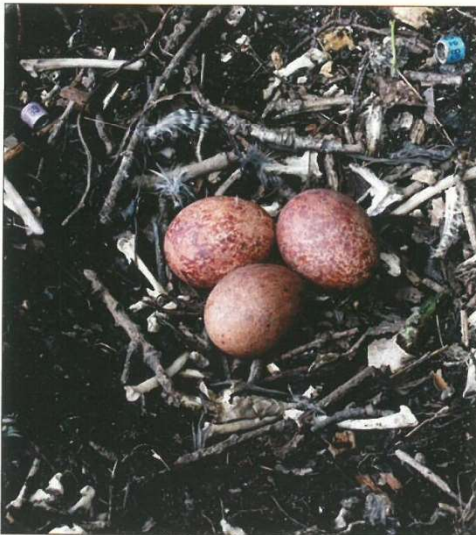
¹ International Wildlife Consultants Ltd., P.O. Box 19, Carmarthen. SA33 5AH
South Wales Peregrine Monitoring Group, c/o 96 Yr Ysfa, Maesteg, Bridgend CF34 9BE

Data collection and analysis (Territory Occupation)

The site occupation data used in this study was of three kinds, comprising documented records, registration dates on pigeon rings and guesswork.

Documented records: In addition to the original data collected by ourselves, the South Wales Peregrine Monitoring Group (SWPMG) has collated data on breeding Peregrines from as many different sources as possible. The RSPB and BTO provided data from their own collated records. Ringers and raptor workers provided retrospective data on the breeding territories they had visited, whilst county bird-recorders supplied information from their archives. We made use of the data stored along with egg collections in various museums and that within the manuscript diaries of several prominent ornithologists active in the first half of the 20th Century. Several other individuals provided further information that helped to improve the documented history of the Peregrine territories within our study area.

Racing pigeon rings: The documented evidence of territory occupation was supplemented by the use of racing pigeon rings that we recovered from breeding territories using metal detectors. The registration years inscribed on the racing pigeon rings allowed us to estimate when each of the territories was occupied. The registration dates on the rings went back as far as 1903 and usually we recovered fewer older rings than more recent rings at breeding territories. Consequently, we adopted different arbitrary rules for assigning the breeding status of territories over different time periods.



For the period 1900 to 1949 (i.e. the pre-pesticide era) we combined the documented records with our ring recoveries to build up a record of range occupation in each decade. Ranges where we had breeding records and/or racing pigeon rings from more than five years were classified as 'Regular' breeding sites. Ranges with racing pigeon rings only from one or two years in each decade were classified as 'Occupied', whilst all other ranges were regarded as 'Irregular' breeding sites.

For the period 1950 to 1969 (i.e. the pesticide era) we used the ring registration dates, in conjunction with documented records, to estimate when each territory was occupied. Our assessment based on ring registration dates broadly mirrored the documented records and provided a good estimate for the year of 'abandonment' for territories inadequately covered by written records.

For the period 1970 to 2003 (i.e. the post-pesticide) we used the registration dates on rings recovered at breeding ranges to fill-in some of the gaps in our documented record. Ring registration dates allowed us to estimate when the sites were first reoccupied and also to gauge the length of occupancy. Generally, there was a pattern in the frequency of racing pigeon rings with a particular registration date prior to and following the year of initial breeding. The typical pattern was of a smaller number of rings registered in the two or three years before initial breeding, with a sharp increase in the number of rings registered in the same year when breeding took place. Though this method is somewhat subjective our assessment of the year of initial and subsequent occupation based on ring registration dates accurately reflected the documented history of well-recorded territories.

Guesswork: This applied only to the assessment of breeding status of territories during the period 1970–2003. For the years where we had no information, either from documented records or from the registration dates on rings, we could do no more than provide an educated guess at the breeding status. These 'guesses' were based on the following rules: Unoccupied if there was no evidence of breeding prior to and/or after the missing record/s and Occupied if there was evidence of breeding prior to and after the missing record/s.

Results

We have records of only three Peregrine breeding territories in south-central Wales prior to 1900, one being on the Glamorgan coastline (Heathcote *et al.*, 1967), another in the Brecon Beacons (Ingram & Salmon, 1954) and a third in the upper

Towy valley of central Wales (Salter, 1895). In addition there was a fourth site in central Wales that was reported occupied in the 1890's but we cannot identify the original source to authenticate this record and the site was certainly not occupied in the early 1900s (J. Walpole-Bond Diaries).

The pre-pesticide era (1900 to 1949)

We recovered 718 racing pigeon rings dating from 1900–49 from 34 different Peregrine ranges in south-central Wales. Our retrospective analysis, combining ring recoveries with documented records, identified 43 different ranges that were occupied at some time during the first half of the 20th Century. Occupation at 14 ranges was identified on evidence from racing pigeon rings alone. Five of these 'rings-only' ranges were classified as Irregular breeding sites, whilst the remainder were classified as Occupied only. All ranges classified as Regular breeding sites had some form of documented history of breeding between 1900–49.

Our records indicate that the number of ranges increased steadily from eleven occupied ranges in 1900–09 to reach a maximum of 34 occupied ranges during the period 1930–39. The number of regularly occupied ranges increased over the first four decades of the 20th Century (Figure 1), indicating that annual occupancy of ranges also increased in line with the establishment of new ranges over the same time period. During the 1930s the minimum annual breeding population in south-central Wales was 13 pairs, based on the number of regularly occupied ranges alone. However, we believe that the true annual breeding population was probably in the region of 20 to 25 breeding pairs in this decade, taking into account the additional 18 ranges where breeding was classified as irregular. There is some

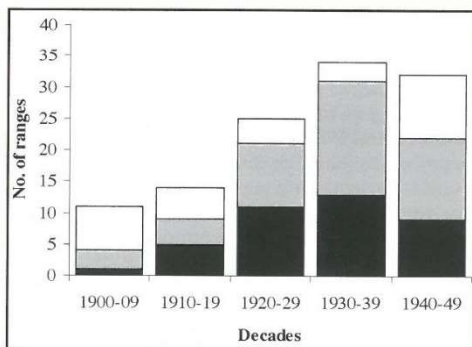


Figure 1. The number of occupied ranges in south-central Wales during the pre-pesticide era (1900–1949). Black = regularly occupied during the decade, Grey = Irregularly occupied during the decade and White = Occupied during the decade.

evidence of a small decline in the annual breeding population during the 1940s based on a reduction in the number of regularly occupied sites and in the overall number of occupied ranges.

The pesticide era (1950–69)

We recovered 320 racing pigeon rings dating from 1950–69 from 22 different Peregrine ranges in south-central Wales. In addition, we have documented records of occupation at a further three ranges, all of which were coastal sites. Using both racing pigeon rings and documented records, we estimate that 20 ranges were occupied by Peregrines in south-central Wales in 1950. The number of occupied ranges remained relatively stable until 1952 but subsequently declined through to the end of the decade with a sharp decrease in the early 1960s (Figure 2).

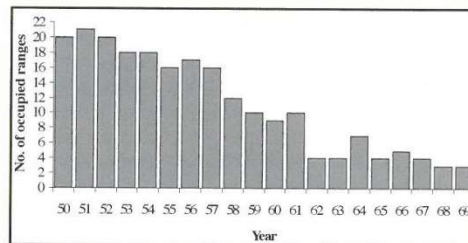


Figure 2. Annual sequence of desertation of breeding ranges during the pesticide era (1950–69) in south-central Wales.

By the end of the 1960's there were only three ranges in south-central Wales that showed any sign of occupation by Peregrines, two of which were in the Brecon Beacons and one in central Wales.

During the latter half of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s it is likely that a significant proportion of Peregrines occupying ranges either did not breed or failed in their breeding attempts. Broken eggshells were found below the Breconshire eyrie of one of the few remaining pairs that attempted to breed in 1962 (TA Waddell diaries); evidence of the eggshell thinning effects of organochloride pesticide contamination. In the South Wales valleys breeding was last recorded, at two different ranges, in 1961 whilst the last confirmed breeding attempt in our whole south-central Wales study area occurred in 1965 at a breeding range in central Wales.

The post-pesticide era (1970 to 2004)

In 1974 an adult pair was recorded summering at an old breeding haunt in South Wales and their behaviour suggested that eggs may have been laid but no young were subsequently seen. The first

confirmed breeding attempt within our study area came in 1975 at an ancestral eyrie on the south Glamorgan coastline. From 1975 onwards breeding was confirmed in every year in south-central Wales. Interestingly, the sites that had been established prior to the population collapse during the pesticide era were the first to be reoccupied.

We recovered 10,076 rings dating from 1970 to 2004 at 77 different breeding ranges. These rings, together with documented records of breeding have enabled us to profile the sequence of occupation at 99 different breeding ranges in south-central Wales in the post-pesticide era. In addition, the BTO have a record of breeding in South Wales during 2002 at an additional site that is unknown to us; thus our study area holds 100 different breeding ranges.

Following the initial re-establishment of breeding in the mid-1970s, the 1980s heralded a decade of rapid population increase.

Overall, our estimated population of south-central Wales increased from 18 occupied territories in 1980 to 49 in 1989, representing an average increase of three breeding pairs per year over the decade. The rapid population increase during the 1980s resulted in the colonisation of new breeding territories that had no previous history of occupation by Peregrines, and from 1980–89 the population increased by an average of 3.4 new occupied territories per year. The population continued to increase in the early 1990s but since 1995 the population has stabilised with an average of 81 (+/-3) occupied breeding ranges each year, with an estimated maximum of 84 occupied ranges in 2000, 2002 and 2003.

A total of 100 different breeding ranges have been used in south-central Wales in the post-pesticide era, though two of the sites, which were on rock faces within working opencast coal mines have been back-filled and no longer exist. During the National Peregrine Survey years of 1981, 1991 and 2002 the number of occupied breeding ranges in south-central Wales was 19, 62 and 84 respectively, representing an increase of 221% between 1981–91 and 34% between 1991–2002.

Discussion

In contrast to several other areas of Britain the Peregrine population of south-central Wales was not relatively stable prior to the 1930s (see Ratcliffe, 1993). Instead the population increased steadily over the first three decades of the 20th Century despite heavy persecution by egg collectors over this period. H.A. Gilbert (1929) noted a similar pattern of increase over the same period in an area that encompassed central Wales and the Brecon Beacons. Nest robbery was rife and no doubt severely reduced productivity

between 1900 and 1939 (SWPMG unpublished data), suggesting that breeding recruits mainly came from outside south-central Wales or that post-fledging survival was high for the few resident pairs that produced young. The earlier rate of population increase was not as great as that seen during the post-pesticide era recovery and it's possible that this was the result of egg collecting.

The pre-pesticide era population in south-central Wales peaked in the 1930's and may have declined slightly in the 1940's. Given the higher population levels seen in south-central Wales subsequently it is interesting to speculate on what factors were responsible for maintaining this earlier population ceiling. The availability of nesting sites was not limiting suggesting that food supply or some factor that directly influenced breeding output and/or survival served to constrain the size of the breeding population (see also Ratcliffe, 1988). It's unlikely that wild prey species were less abundant than at present, in fact the converse is more likely to be true. There is probably a greater availability of racing pigeons in south-central Wales now than in the past but they were certainly abundant and frequently taken as prey in the pre-pesticide era. The most likely explanation for the lower population ceiling found earlier than at present was that mortality was higher through persecution (including war-time 'control') and that breeding success was low because of nest robbery and, after 1945, the sub-lethal effects of DDT (Ratcliffe, 1967). Though not widely used as an agricultural pesticide until after 1948, DDT was used earlier as a dust on racing pigeons to control ectoparasites and a clutch of Peregrine eggs taken in Breconshire in 1947 already contained DDE, the metabolic breakdown product of DDT (Ratcliffe, 1993).

There was a dramatic decline the breeding population in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which coincided with the introduction of the new generation of cyclodiene insecticides, which were extremely lethal to Peregrines (Ratcliffe, 1993). The timing of the pesticide-era decline seen in south-central Wales matches that previously described by Ratcliffe (1993), with our breeding population becoming regionally 'extinct' after the last young were fledged from a central Wales eyrie in 1965. Immigrants from outside south-central Wales must have fuelled the subsequent recovery, which began in the 1970s. As the Peregrine population in Wales reached a low ebb during the pesticide era it's possible that these original colonists were birds reared in eyries in northern England or Scotland, where the population decline was not as large as in Wales. In south-central Wales the population eventually surpassed the previous estimated maximum of 34

occupied ranges by 1985 and the population continued to increase until the current average annual ceiling of 81 occupied ranges was reached in the mid-1990s. The environmental conditions that have allowed this 'super-recovery' to take place include better protection resulting in a lower level of persecution of adults and juveniles and less nest robbery, a lower background level of toxic pollutants and an abundant supply of racing pigeons.

The varying levels of breeding success exhibited across south-central Wales in each five-year period between 1975-2004 can possibly be explained in terms of natural population processes despite the fact that we were unable to determine the extent of human influences on breeding success. Between 1975-79 the population was very small representing the stage of re-establishment of breeding following local extinction in the pesticide era, and breeding success in this small sample was relatively high. The following five-year period represents the beginning of rapid population increase coinciding with the lowest level of breeding success. This reduction in average breeding success might be expected if inexperienced new colonists occupied a significant proportion of ranges; certainly this lower level of breeding success did not hinder the rate of population increase. Subsequently, we would expect breeding success to increase as the proportion of new colonists in the population declined in the period 1985-89, as seen. As the rate of population increase slowed in the period 1990-94, we might expect density-dependent factors to reduce the level of breeding success as the population approached an upper limit. However, we cannot discount the possibility that other extraneous factors reduced breeding success in the early 1980s, such as a higher level of nest robbery or adverse weather conditions during the breeding season over the five-year period. Breeding success was particularly poor in 1980 (36%), 1983 (18%) and 1984 (32%).

Over the period 1995-2004 the breeding population has been relatively stable and we might expect this stability to be reflected in the level of breeding success. However, there was a slight decline in breeding success between 1995-99 and 2000-04, though this may simply be stochastic variation rather than a true continued downward trend. Monitoring over the next five-years will be necessary to determine if this is a real trend towards a lower level of breeding success that, in turn, may ultimately be reflected in a reduction in the breeding population.

Acknowledgements

This is a shortened version of a paper originally published in *Welsh Birds*, the journal of the Welsh Ornithological Society.

We would like to thank Raymond Conner; Tony Cross; Peter Davies; Tony Forster; Grant Herbert; Jerry Lewis; Paul Parsons; Martin Peers; Alistair Proud; Derek Ratcliffe; Mike Shrubbs; Paul Smith; William Trobe; James Whitaker; Graham Williams; Iolo Williams; Reg Thorpe; Andy Young (RSPB); Humphrey Crick (BTO); Phillip Gilbert, Mike Cullen and Ian Guildford (South Wales Peregrine Watch); Martin Brown (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust); Katy Williams (Swansea Museum); John Campbell (Oxford Museums Store); Cardiff Naturalists Society; John Kenyon, Peter Howlett (National Museum of Wales); David Moore (Brecknock Museum); Bob McGowan (Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh); Krista Fahy (Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History); Jean Woods (Delaware Museum of Natural History); Rene Corado (Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology); David Willard (Field Museum of Natural History). Breeding information was collected under licences issued by the Countryside Council of Wales.

We dedicate this paper to the memory of Grant Herbert. The South Wales Peregrine Monitoring Group is maintaining a historical database for south-central Wales and would be interested to hear from anyone who has information on Peregrines within our study area.

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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.

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Regional Reports



Essex Region

By Ray Hooper

The Essex region of the Welsh Hawking Club is still going strong, with over 20 members from Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

Our meetings are held at The Whalebone Inn, Fingringhoe, Colchester by kind permission of Sam and Vicky.

We plan to have a few guest speakers this year, combined with the normal falconry related chat. The end of season meal at The Whalebone was again well supported and our thanks again to the landlords.

The local field meetings have been restricted this year due to the arrival of the dreaded bird flu,

however the meetings that we did attend were worthwhile and we witnessed some great flights. Next season promises to be a lot better, Andy Hulme contacted gamekeepers and is busy planning our dates.

We are hoping to have two new venues this year for field meets. One on a local shooting estate, the other is large orchard with a lot of resident rabbits. The Essex boys will be on tour again this year, some of our members will be attending the summer fair, and the Welsh field meet.

Both meetings were very enjoyable last year thanks to Neil, Kevin and John respectively. The Essex region is hoping to support the Tendring Show and the

Stoneham Barns Falconers Day again this year. All of our members look forward to meeting up with old friends at various shows and gamefairs throughout the year.

Chairman: Adrian Watson
Secretary: Ray Hooper
Treasurer: Andy Hulme

North Wales

By Neil McCann

The North Wales Region is attended by a regular group of hard-core members and the occasional new face but more members are encouraged to attend to take advantage of the hawking knowledge available.

The region held four field meets this season but one had to be cancelled due to the outbreak of bird flu. Kevin Simcox got around the issue with the appropriate paperwork and the vet's certificate so that the region was again hawking!

All three field meets were held on Llandegla with Dave Rhodes. He must be the most malleable gamekeeper – if only all keepers were as obliging it would make organizing field meets so easy.

There has been a notable lack of support from members attending the monthly meetings – it's not much to turn up and support your local region a few times a year. The members will miss out on the

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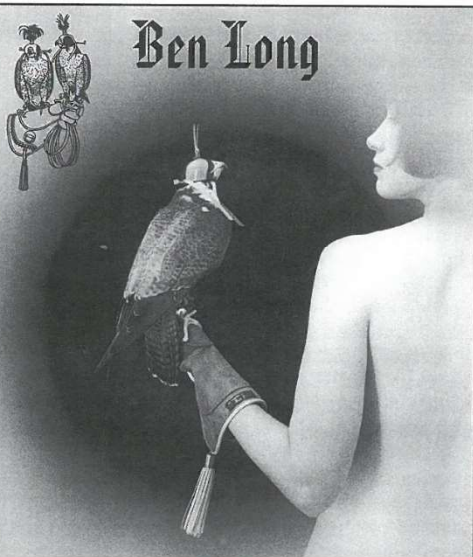
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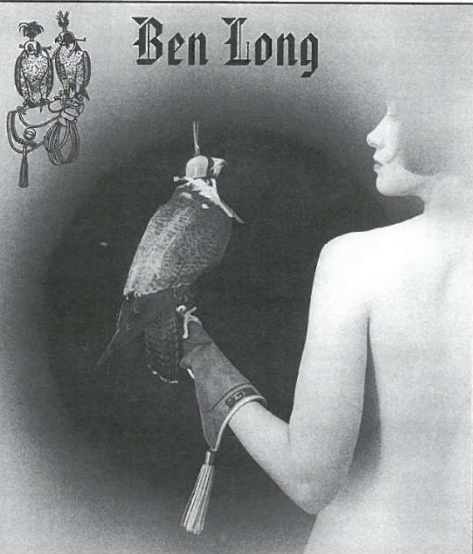
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shortwings and longwings, were very well attended and plenty of game taken with some great flying witnessed. Whether or not the numbers increased because a cameraman was in attendance, adding footage to Dave Scott's DVD, which incidentally is called, "Once upon a time in the Westcountry" and great value at £15, would, of course, be unfairly cynical of me.

We have also had some well-known names in the falconry world coming down to give us talks on various subjects. Diana Durman-Walters came along one evening with a very interesting talk and slide show on the breeding and other operations at Nick Fox's establishment. It was interesting and informative with members gaining some insight into just how much work goes on there. Jim Chick was forthright and to the point with regard to all the latest negotiations that the Hawk Board are involved with on our behalf. He also informed us of an initiative that the Hawk Board had set up with LANTRA. To be precise, the falconry Beginners Award. I believe there may be more on this subject in another article, worth reading.

Some of our speakers this year, lesser-known falconry celebrities I might add, have given us talks on telemetry and the digestive system. Individuals within the region are

encouraged to pick on a subject that they are keen or knowledgeable on and give us a talk, it's worked well and we hope to keep it going.

The boys from Bristol came down to avenge their defeat at skittles of last year. This they duly did, in fact, they thrashed us and I still think it had something to do with the fact that they demanded we play with their skittling bowls. Nevertheless, it was a great evening and we look forward to our chance to regain the cup next year.

We are now planning the upcoming season and will build on what we have achieved this last year.

Good Hawking.

Regional Secretary:

Kevin Mosedale

Regional Treasurer:

Tyrone Rolph

Club Representative:

Kevin Mosedale

Yorkshire

By Terry

Cadwallander

Our first year has past and it hasn't quite been the year we were expecting. The summer seemed to drag on forever awaiting the arrival of autumn, frosts and fully summed hawks. The club had many field meets lined up on Jamie Marsden's and Terry Cadwallander's land mainly flying rabbits in North Yorkshire with a number of days lined up on kepered land.

The meetings started well, it had obviously been a good summer for the breeding rabbits and every tuft of grass seemed to hold one, the ferrets enjoyed the rest and the chases got the hawks fit. All was set for the first of a cracking field-meet on kepered land offered by Dave Smout. Then disaster struck and DEFRA cancelled field meets, not really knowing what was going off and what was allowed and what wasn't the organised day was cancelled at the last minute but thankfully the understanding keeper said if we paid him for the day we could take it when the ban was lifted.

This was the end of the season as far as organised field meetings for the Yorkshire Region, we chose not to apply for licenses or to have any field meets for the remainder of the season in case of any repercussion which could effect our members.

As a region over the summer we have become little more organised there has been a change in the regional committee, the Chairman is Terry Cadwallander, the Secretary is Frank Pitts and the Treasurer is Malcolm Burgwin. The venue for social meetings has changed. They are now held in the Milton Arms, Armroyd Lane, Elsecar, Barnsley, South Yorkshire on the second Monday of the month. We've started to

organise a few raffles and such; last months prize of a creance and line being kindly donated by Frank Pitts. Hopefully the proceeds from auctions, raffles and quizzes will go towards paying for guest speakers or subsidising field meets in the future.

The region has its own website produced by Steven Lambert, we hope this will be used by our members to check on any events up and coming and to keep up to date with what's going off within the region, the site also has up to date contact information and a map to the venue for social meetings. The address is www.yorkshireregionwhc.co.uk, though there is a link from the Yorkshire Region section on the main Welsh Hawking Club site.

The season ahead looks promising, lots of field meets planned throughout the season with more to come. A few of the members are picking up new hawks this season. Kevin Brook, Steven Lambert, Glyn Treloar and Dave Smout all picking up young Goshawks and Frank Pitts has picked up another Peregrine x Saker this year. We are all looking forward to putting last season to rest and getting out and enjoying the next.

Chairman: Terry Cadwallander

Secretary: Frank Pitts

Treasurer: Malcolm Burgin



Officers 2006

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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.

