



the
AUSTRINGER

News Journal of the
WELSH HAWKING CLUB

THE AUSTRINGER

The Official Journal of the Welsh Hawking Club



Clwb Hebogwr Cymru

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OFFICERS OF THE WELSH HAWKING CLUB

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EDITORIAL

Naturally, the first thing that came to mind when writing this editorial was the tragic death in October of last year of its former Editor, Roy Saunders. He had taken up this post after some eight years as Honorary Secretary of the Welsh Hawking Club. Our President, Lorant De Bastyai, in a sincere and fitting tribute expresses, I am sure, the feelings of us all towards a valued and dedicated member who is greatly missed.

Two other notable falconer/artists also died in 1977, namely Herr Willy Laer and D.K. Reid-Henry.

I have been holding back the Austringer so that I could include an account of the meeting in Oxford which was called to discuss the nine proposals from the D.O.E. My thanks to Lawrence Workman for sending me this article so speedily. Various individuals and bodies with much more experience than I have expressed their opinions on these, but there is something I would like to say. In a letter from the R.S.P.B. shown to me by a friend who had recently informed that Society that he would not be renewing his subscription due to their attitude towards falconry, it stated, and I quote, "under our Charter we are unable to take part in any discussion on the ethics of legitimate field sport". With all due respect, you could have fooled me. Chiefly to placate this Society flying displays have been banned, disposing of one of the few opportunities that the general public, en mass, had of meeting falconers. I know the arguments about attracting undesirable elements to our sport, but if we keep on retreating back into ourselves and do not bring our point of view to that same general public, it is easy to see a time, and that not too far distant, when the sport of falconry, for ordinary people will cease to exist. There is disturbing news too with regard to the next Labour Party Manifesto. I expect to be criticised for the opinion I have passed, but it is sincerely held.

On a less controversial note, I would like very much to receive articles for the Austringer from a wider cross-section of our club, thus making it an even more varied magazine. At the moment most of the articles come from members who are able to attend the monthly meetings.

The drawings for this issue were done by Chris O'Donoghue, a student at Leicester University, he has been keenly interested in falconry for some time and hopes to acquire a bird when his studies etc. permit.

I would like to thank my dear friend, Lorant, for his help and encouragement during the time I have been compiling this issue. I am sure we all wish him well with his new book 'Focus on Falconry'. Last, but certainly not least, my grateful thanks to my long-suffering husband, who has been a marvellous help.

Yours Sincerely,
The Editor.

ROY SAUNDERS

A Tribute to an old friend and fellow
member by Lorant De Bastyai, President of the W.H.C.

Nineteen seventy seven was a very sad year for our Welsh Hawking Club. We lost one of our best and most devoted members. Even now, six months after his departure, for me, and also for other members, it is still unbelievable that we do not have him amongst us.

Roy was not a founder member of the club, coming to us later than Gus, his son. But as time went on he became more and more involved in club affairs, and not very long after joining he became Honorary Secretary, staying in this post for many years. He carried on his shoulders not only the weight of this post, but also took part in editing the journal of the club, the 'Austringer', for which he did many sketches. Roy also designed the official club letter headings and envelopes, and several club badges.

He corresponded on the club's behalf not only in the British Isles, but also all over Europe and the United States. He was warm-hearted, and gave lectures not only to different associations about birds of prey, but also gave help and advice to anyone who went to his home and asked him questions about his beloved birds. He educated anyone, from six to sixty year olds. He was glad to invite to his home for a few days even falconers he had never met before.

Besides falconry and birds of prey, he had a great interest in and expert knowledge of sheepdogs and sheepdog trials, and very often on the radio and television he would give the running commentary.

Roy was a great idealist and nature lover. He wrote several books on the subject, about the Welsh countryside, wildlife, and the botanical world. He would travel hundreds of miles even for a glimpse of a bird. Even shortly before his tragic death he drove his car up to Scotland to watch Golden Eagles. But with the keenness that he watched eagles and peregrines Roy would also watch a little blue tit in his garden in Cardiff, putting it down with his pencil so lifelike that one could imagine it flying up from the paper that he had drawn it on.

Roy loved wholeheartedly all birds of prey, but most of all the falcons. He trained his falcons excellently, and they were all spectacular fliers. He described his beloved birds with a feeling such as only comes from someone who really loves them. Little 'Nobbie Bach' his Tunisian Lanneret was always his favourite, so much so, that this magnificent little bird became a legend amongst his close friends. I saw Nobbie fly several times, and was fortunate enough to see him kill a partridge from a high waiting on, it really was spectacular. I am also fortunate to have a portrait of Nobbie Bach drawn by Roy in a frame standing on my desk.

Roy was a humorous man. On the second page of the Austringer can be seen the Welsh Dragon with jesses and bells which was his idea. When the club held its field meeting at Lichfield in the Midlands, large posters awaited the guests and members bearing the inscription 'Welcome to Wales', I am sure that everyone enjoyed those.

Roy, wherever he went, could never leave behind in his thoughts his beloved Wales, and naturally, the Welsh Hawking Club, and wherever we members of the club go, and whatever the Club may do, the memory of Roy Saunders will always be with us.

FALCONRY IN THE 1980's

By David Martin.

It may be more appropriate to say will there be any falconry in the nineteen eighties. With beaucroatic attitudes being stifled with misguiding information, what chance has any law-abiding falconer have for pursuing his legitimate sport. In fact the only weapon we have against the so-called conservationists who put us down at every opportunity, is that everything we do is within the law, and there isn't anything to be ashamed of. I am sure that all falconers are proud of the sport they follow.

My opinion in trying to overcome these pressures from outside bodies is to prove them wrong whenever they publicise exaggerated and mis-guided information to the general public, which, after all, is only done to further their own ends. Let us, as a strong organisation, answer these accusations with facts.

If we don't voice our opinion whenever it is necessary, the sport as we know it today will just dissolve, and all we shall be able to do is reminisce of the great days of falconry.

Let us not fall too easily, the time has come for all true falconers to stand and be counted, and to put our feelings into print when it matters the most. Whenever we see silly articles appear in the press, answer them immediately with the truth, because that is our greatest asset. We are pursuing one of the greatest field sports alive today, let us keep it that way.



What are the chances of becoming a
falconer?

GOSHAWK IN DERBYSHIRE

By H.J. Wain, M.Sc.

County ornithologists were interested in a report that a goshawk had been seen hereabouts earlier this year.(1977). The status of this large hawk in Britain is uncertain. At one time breeding regularly in various large woods it became almost extinct in the 19th century.

By reason of its size the goshawk preys upon hares, rabbits, grouse, pheasants, partridges, woodpigeons, ducks, and geese. Indeed the original name of this bird was 'goose hawk', a testimony to its size.

From 1938 to 1951, three pairs bred regularly in Sussex and there are more recent breeding records from at least four other counties. There are, of course, casual visitors from the Continent which appear from time to time, and some recent records may be due to escapes from falconry, for these large hawks have been imported into this country under licence for that purpose.

In at least one instance it was suspected that one pair of breeding birds had both escaped from captivity, but strict secrecy is being maintained concerning actual breeding records at present.

Found Drowned

After a long absence, due to the widespread use of toxic seed-dressings which poisoned its prey, the kestrel is now appearing again in normal numbers. A local farmer was happy to see one of these graceful little falcons hovering above his fields, but was shocked to find the body of a female kestrel floating in one of his cattle troughs. The corpse bore no sign of injury and apparently had been drowned. He is still wondering how such a fatality could occur. Did the bird overbalance while trying to obtain a drink or perchance a bath, or was it trying to secure a diving beetle which sometimes fly into the trough?

Over a period of years I have come across similar fatalities involving barn owls and little owls, and could only return a verdict of 'found drowned'.

FOOT NOTE.

According to informed report the population of goshawks in Britain may now be put as high as fifty pairs.

An alarming fact also reported was the number of birds of prey illegally poisoned. During the six years from 1970-1976 incidents were reported involving eight species of raptors. Apparently the most common being the buzzard. Others found included a goshawk, kites and eagles. Although not always the target, the indiscriminate use of poisoned bait (almost always illegally) to attract crows, foxes etc., accounts for these deaths.

A case in point, a first-class goshawk belonging to a falconer died in such a manner fairly recently, as such birds are now difficult to obtain, and are therefore prized by their owners, it was a great loss to him, and a needless one.

MEMORIES OF A PHOTOGRAPH

By Lorant De Dastyai.

About twenty years ago, when I set foot in the 'Foggy Albion' as in Hungary Britain is sometimes called, after settling in Stratford-on-Avon with my brother and his family, I set off to visit my penfriends, members of the British Falconers Club with whom, from Hungary, I had exchanged experiences, so that I could meet them and they could meet me.

My first trip was to the home of Mike Woodford, at that time the Hon. Secretary of the British Falconers Club, with whom I had corresponded for years. He was living with his family in an old cottage near Melbury Osmond in Dorset. At this time June, Mike's wife had just started making with skill and artistry all types of hoods and other falconry furniture. I had brought with me from Hungary my four year old Heron Saker, and had naturally taken her with me. I flew her regularly every day to the lure, because herons were protected in this country. Here, for the first time I met Philip Glasier, who was at that time falconer to the late James Robertson Justice. He lived during the winter and spring near to Mike Woodford, going up to Scotland for the grouse season. Thus Mike Woodford and Philip Glasier were the first two British falconers that I met.

After several days Mike, my host, began taking me around to meet other B.F.C members. The first of these was Steven Frank, at a B.F.C committee meeting. I admired Steven's old farmhouse. It was full of silver trophies from race-horse breeding and racing, but most of all I liked his old falconry pictures, and, of course, his falcons.

A few days later our second trip was to the home of Jack Kavrogordato at Tilshead on the Salisbury Plain. After a long chat, during which Mike Woodford told him that I came from Hungary, Jack got up from his chair and walked into the next room, coming back with a photograph which he showed to me saying "I have corresponded with a Hungarian falconer for a long time, since nineteen thirty nine, I wonder what he is doing now". I looked at the photograph and recognised myself with Markos, my goshawk, and the hare, weighing four kilograms, which that crazy hawk had caught on the same day as the photograph had been taken. I was looking at the photograph deep in thought, when Jack Mavro again put the question to me- did I know the falconer, and if so, did I know what he was doing these days? I can still remember Jack's face when I replied "Yes I know the falconer, he is standing before you right now".

Looking at the photograph brought back memories of some very funny happenings which had occurred when I had this crazy goshawk. 'Marok' in the Hungarian language means hand, and Markos means someone who always has something in his hand, or something like 'crabbing with the hand' - it is very hard to translate. However, Markos was the craziest goshawk I have ever had, and believe me, I have had 'several' goshawks during my life.

Her hunting life started this way. The very first time that I took her out near Budapest to the small town of Godollo, she grabbed a duster from a girl's hand. In Godollo, which as I said is a small town, not much larger than a village, some of the bungalows were built in the last century, and as the level of the streets were later raised so the windows of the bungalows were nearer to the ground.



In the early morning, just as housewives all over the world do, the housewives and cleaners, after doing the dusting, would shake their dusters out of the window. Also, they would very often accompany their task with a light-hearted song to make the work seem easier. Such activity was going on this particular morning, when with my falconer friends, I, with Markos in Yarak on my fist passed by. A cleaning lady, singing I believe, a song from the opera 'Carmen' came to the window with her red duster. She was not expecting at this hour of the morning that a silly falconer with a gos in yarak would be passing by the window, and gave her duster a good shake. Markos bated from my fist after the moving red object, caught it in mid-air, and climbed back onto my fist with it. I remember that the song from Carmen immediately stopped on a high note such as any lady member of the Covent Garden Opera Company would have been proud of. Markos, bribed with a rabbit leg released the duster, and after I had apologised to the lady for my hawks' bad behaviour we walked on to the end of the street where the fields of our hunting grounds began.

We soon left the small town behind, and there before us was the 'promised land' with its sugarbeet, maize, and lucern fields. My friend had his gundog with him, who, as all dogs do, ran here and there sniffing at this and that and obeying the wishes of its 'biological functions'. We turned off the road to enter the fields, but to do so we had to jump over a small ditch. I stopped and speculated how to do this with Markos on my fist. On both sides of the ditch there was grass, so actually I couldn't see where to jump. The dog was already over, sniffing everywhere, so after long speculations I decided to jump, making a 'soft landing' on something that the dog had left behind just a couple of seconds before. I was glad not to have slipped, as I am sure Markos would not have remained on my fist if I had fallen. I was looking ruefully at my boots when my friend came up to me laughing, he said "You will have good luck today!" He was right.

I hadn't walked more than a hundred metres into the sugarbeet when with a great deal of noise up flashed a hare which started to run along the sugarbeet lines. Markos went after it and caught it on its back, over its tail, naturally the hare was running forwards and Markos was 'riding on it' like a hussar on a horse. After a short ride 'the horse' kicked Markos off, leaving her with a silly look on her face watching it disappear down a line between the sugarbeet. However, after a short rest Markos lifted herself like a helicopter and like an arrow blitzed after the hare, catching it firmly this time on its neck and shoulder, and fixing it firmly to the ground. Because it was her first hare I let Markos feed on it as much as she liked. She ate the whole of the right shoulder and leg, that is why, on the photograph that was taken on our return, these parts of the hare are missing.

Among many funny but exciting adventures I had with Markos was one that happened when we were hawking on the Hungarian Plains in autumn. It was a nice sleepy early autumn afternoon when we set out. The sun had just started to sink, but it was still very hot. Our Hungarian pointer (Vizsla) pointed in a lucern field, from which several pheasant poults flew up. Markos went after them. The chase went on for quite a distance, until we could see them like dots flying over a maize field. The pheasants went down and Markos dropped after them. We began to run, but we couldn't immediately spot where Markos was. The maize was over two metres high and starting to dry, the little wind there was made the maize leaves rub against each other, producing a whispering noise, also, with running we were out of breath, and our hearts were thudding, so we could not hear her bells. A little while later we heard them, and after searching for about ten to fifteen minutes we found Markos. She was holding a pheasant poult with one hand (Marok), and a hamster with the other.

Another day, after walking for about two hours through lucern and stubble fields without even seeing a mouse, we thought that we might have better luck in some nearby acacia woods where the rabbit warrens used to be. The woods were thick with bushes, so we could not see very far, but after about ten minutes Markos was stretching her neck right and left. I thought that at any minute she would ask to borrow my field glasses to see better, but before I had time to speculate she bated from my fist. I too could see something in the same direction, but I couldn't make out what it was. It looked reddish-brown, the colour of a hare or rabbit, but the wood was dark. So as not to disappoint Markos I let her go. Off she went. Whilst she was zig-zagging through the trees I could hear the noise of galloping, as if some light cavalry were making a battle charge. I started to run - at that time I was quite a runner - and caught a glimpse of Markos riding hard on the bottom of a Roedeer.

The Roedeer showed her its white bottom, meaning I thought "That to you, that to you", but Markos was holding on tightly, and I believe that she would still be riding the deer if a low acacia branch hadn't knocked her off.
We had lots of fun together, Markos the crazy goshawk and I.

THE CLUB LIBRARY

By the Club Librarian, Philip Macleaur.

Members who are able to attend meetings regularly have the opportunity to borrow books from the Club library at a cost of fifteen pence per book per month. However, due to the borrowing charge being small it does not give us much scope to add to the books available.

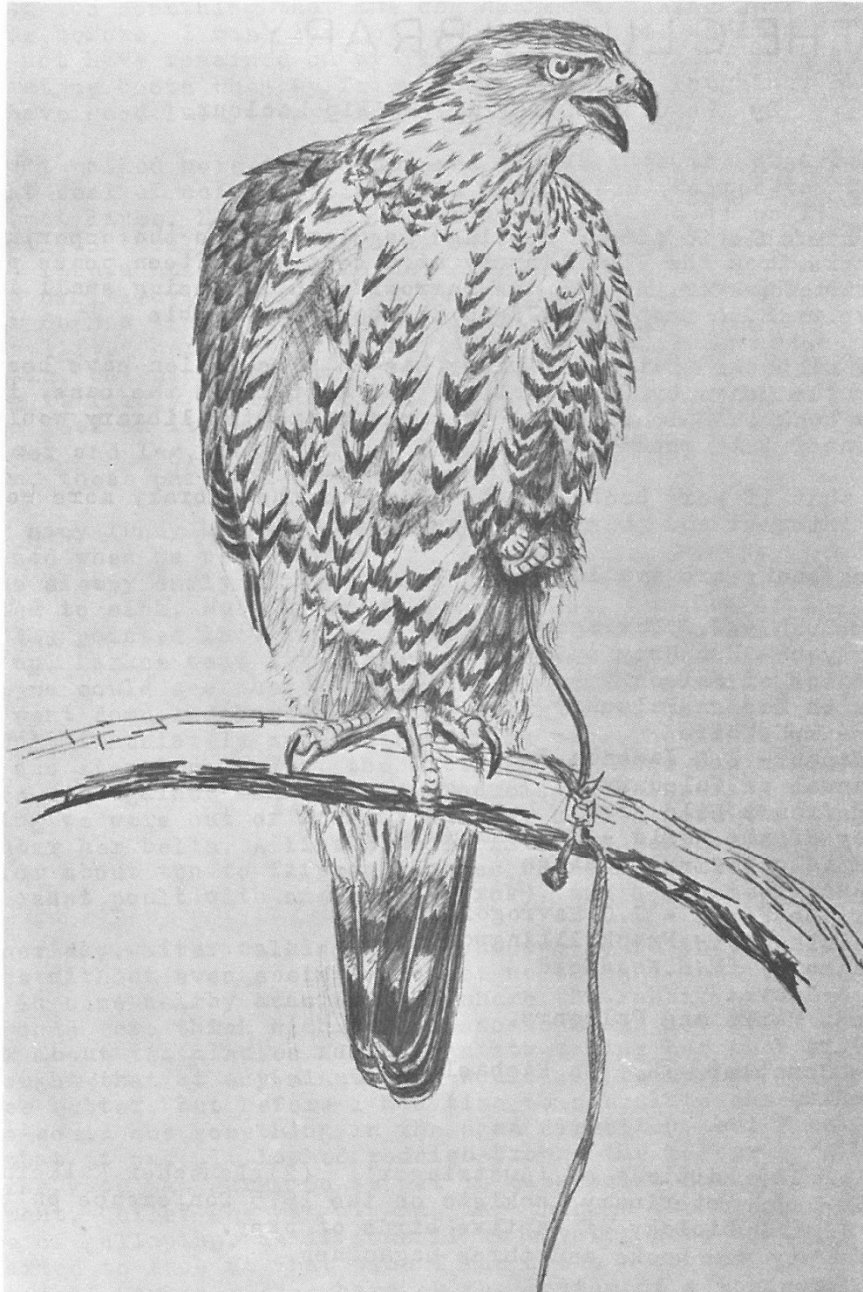
The majority of books that the library has in circulation have been donated over the years by Club members, and as this is the case, if any member has a book on falconry that they can spare the library would be more than grateful to receive it.

It is hoped that if more books can be added to the library more members may take an interest and wish to borrow them.

The following books are available.

Hawk for the Bush - J.G.Mavrogordato
Falconry for you - Humphrey Ap Evans
Art and practice of Falconry - E.E.Mitchell (2)
Observations on Modern Falconry - Ronald Stevens
The Goshawk - T.E.White
Hawking of Japan - E.W Jameson Jnr.
Beginners Manual of falconry
Hunting Bird from a Wild Bird - Lorant De Bastyai
Birds of prey of the World - Grossman/Hamlet
Coursing and falconry - Lascelles
Hunting in Austria.
A Falcon for the Field - J.G.Mavrogordato
Falcons and Falconry - Frank Illingworth
Manual of Falconry - M.H.Woodford
Kestrel for a Knave.
North American Hawks and Falconry.
Art of Falconry
Birds of the Gauntlet - H. Von Michaelish
Falconry (India)
Last Eagle.
Die Beizjagd. (1) Editions of 'Austringer'. (2) Deutcher Falkernorden.
Magazines. (3) Veterinary booklets on the 1975 Conference on the
biology of captive birds of prey.

A total of twenty two books and three magazines.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

By Mike Shuttleworth.

Goshawks, although obtainable from sources in this country seemed to be exorbitantly priced, so I, my wife and three friends decided to try to import four birds for our own use in our sport.

Although we were completely in the dark, never having tried such a venture before, we obtained our licences and set about our task. The paper work involved was rather daunting, but the authorities concerned were helpful, and we worked our way step by step. The regulations concerning quarantine quarters are strict, but with information gathered from a number of different sources we set up isolation premises at the home of one of the friends involved. These were passed with little difficulty, a good return for our careful work.

Our contact in Finland proved to be fair and reliable, and after a good many months our plans reached fruition, and we received a 'phone call to say that the hawks were to arrive at the airport the next evening. Unfortunately, the friend at whose home the isolation premises were situated was away for a few days, so my wife had to deputise for him. As you may imagine we set off for the airport in high spirits, only to have our hopes dashed - no hawks aboard the plane they were due to arrive on. A helpful airline official contacted Amsterdam, who notified him that the birds were still in Helsinki, and would not arrive until the following evening on the same flight. I was both worried and disappointed both during the drive back home and all the next day, wondering how the birds were faring. However, next evening found my wife and I sitting in the bar of the airport hotel as on the previous evening, the plane once again being overdue. It was second time lucky, at last, after more form filling and checks we were allowed to collect the two crates. Listening anxiously, I could hear noises coming from these, so I felt more at ease.

Arriving at the isolation premises we deposited the two boxes inside and in the very dim light looked first at them and then at each other. Carefully I opened one, and instantly a pair of very powerful feet gripped my gloved hand. Not without a struggle I managed to get the owner of these out of the box. We felt like whooping with joy. She was a beauty. Big and strong and in perfect feather, her tail taped neatly up. My wife held her down on a cushion whilst I attached the aliymeri jesses, (quite a chore) then we deposited her on a fairly low natural wood screen perch. The second bird to emerge was just as fine a specimen, and we dealt with it in a similar manner. The third hawk proved to be the largest of the three, and after an initial fierce bate sat on my fist and glared at me. I am inclined to think that this was an omen, as this hawk was the one who is now my own. After we had jessed and settled the last bird, the only tiercel, we stood and looked at them. They really were a marvellous sight, a credit to our Finnish contact, who had obviously taken great pains in sending them to us. Even taping a supply of feathers for imping to the lid of one of the boxes. The vet obviously agreed with us, saying that they were very healthy specimens.

Our friend, Mick, arrived back home next day, having been told over the 'phone that the birds had arrived. Not even bothering to switch

off his car engine, and leaving his wife and children still inside, he came down to where I was inside feeding the birds. To say that he too was delighted would have been the understatement of the year. I would like to say at this juncture that he took the utmost care of the hawks whilst they were in isolation. Once, however, we were given a nasty jolt. I was at work one day when I received a frantic 'phone call from Mick's wife to say that she had heard a screaming call, and after looking through a peep-hole we had placed in the door she had seen that one of the birds was loose. Unable to contact her husband she asked me to get over there as quickly as possible. Before she had finished speaking I was heading for the car. As is usual at such times I seemed to get stuck behind every lorry going that way. However, when I arrived the fugitive was sitting peacefully quite near to one of her fellows chewing a rabbit leg, that is, until I very gently approached her, when she suddenly erupted, and after quite a tussle during which she lay on her back and struck at me with both feet, I finally got her jessed once more - panic over.

When the period of isolation finally drew to an end, we drew lots to be perfectly fair. To my delight I drew the bird which had attracted me from the very first. After installing her in her own mews I weighed her, she was three pounds seven ounces. Four days later, after a great deal of manning she at last took her first meal since leaving isolation.

In conclusion, it gave all five of us a great deal of satisfaction to have succeeded in importing our own hawks. They seem even more our own as a consequence. As I said at the beginning we were pretty much in the dark about the whole business, but it really was worthwhile.

Recently seen in a newspaper - To provide a steady supply of peregrine falcons for use in Falconry by an Arab potentate a luxurious new falcon centre with special lighting and air conditioning will be built in Bahrain. Estimated cost about \$175,000.

The centre, apparently to be built by British architects and contractors will accommodate seven pairs of falcons. Any surplus birds will be sold to neighbouring countries at the enormous price of about \$30,000 a pair.

An amusing item also seen - A fisherman practising beach casting in a field got a surprise when akestrel suddenly appeared and tried to make off with his four ounce lead weight. Apparently the kestrel flew away, but then returned and made three more attempts to make off with its strange prize.



"You're supposed to take
the hood off first!"

AMATEUR?



"Look a little more terrified, dear
- we'll make a fortune with this
photograph!"

KEEN PHOTOGRAPHER



"You're taking a chance, aren't you?"

OVERCONFIDENT?

SWIVELS
by C.P. Milson

Until swivels were introduced to Britain, Varvels were used. These were flat pieces of silver or brass sewn to the jesses, through which the leash was passed. They had the name and address of the owner on them and were often delicately engraved. Varvels had several drawbacks, they couldn't be removed when the bird was flown and were therefore prone to entanglement in trees etc. also they couldn't prevent jesses becoming twisted like the swivel. Swivels were a Dutch innovation introduced circa 1775, when Lord Orford formed a Hawking Club and brought Falconers over from Valkenswaard.



Early swivels were made of iron or brass and in the figure of eight shape (fig. 1).

Many Falconers make their own equipment which is commendable as I feel this is part of the enjoyment of Falconry. I hope the following notes will be of help to anyone wishing to make their own swivels.

Swivels can be made from a variety of materials, each having its own strengths and weaknesses relative to the design. The following table gives the materials commonly used today - special materials used in the aircraft industry have been omitted as they are not readily available.

STAINLESS STEEL: Should be the first choice if making swivels. If of high quality is light, rustproof and incredibly strong. It should be "Stainless Steel Welded" for the maximum strength, failing this it should be "brazed", Silver Solder while looking neat and tidy should never be used as it is simply not good enough. Beware of low-quality Stainless Steels as they can, and do, rust.

BRASS: The next best after Stainless Steel. It is rust-proof, easy to work with. It is however heavier than Stainless Steel and can sometimes become "work-hard" which makes it brittle. Any Brass should be brazed as this will give the maximum strength. If a steel connecting pin is used, then the problem of rust arises, but by using a stainless steel pin this would be eliminated.

IRON AND STEEL: Not really worth using because of rust etc. It is however, cheap, easily obtainable and machined. Keep a check on any nickel-plated or chrome-plated steels as they can rust once the thin covering wears off. If you do use iron or steel it is best welded.

Although today the "figure of eight" swivel is still in use, it has been superseded by the "elongated" swivel (fig.2). The most common pattern for this swivel however has five "weak-spots", one being the hole, four being the joining spots which are brazed or welded. The following designs however remove some of the weak spots (figs. 3 & 4).

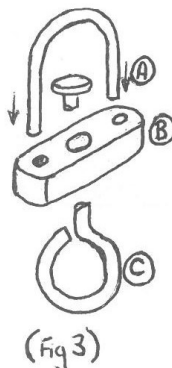
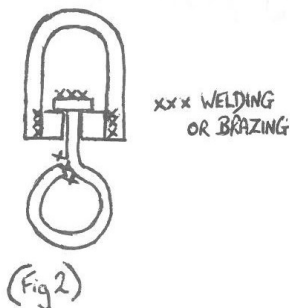
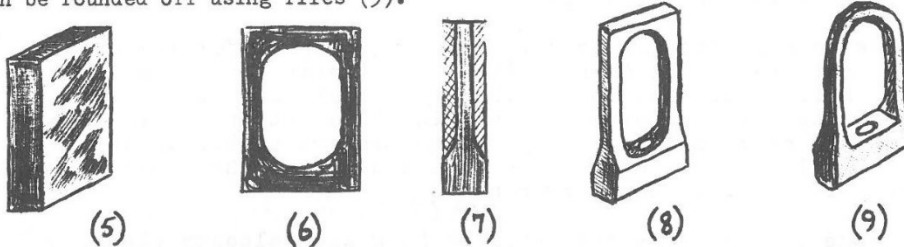


Fig. 3: is made from three or four pieces in much the same way as fig. 2 with the exception of the top loop (A), instead of being welded to the sides of (B) it is passed through the two outer holes, then it can be riveted or welded on the the underside of (B).

Fig. 4: can be made from two or three pieces. The top is made from a solid piece (5) then a slot is milled through it (6) then the sides are machined down leaving a thicker part at the bottom (7) the bottom is then drilled (8) finally the edges can be rounded off using files (9).



The bottom loop can be made in various ways.

1. A ring with a hole drilled through, then a connecting pin used to join top to bottom loop (10)
2. A straight rod is bent into shape then welded (11)
3. A ring and pin made in one piece (12)

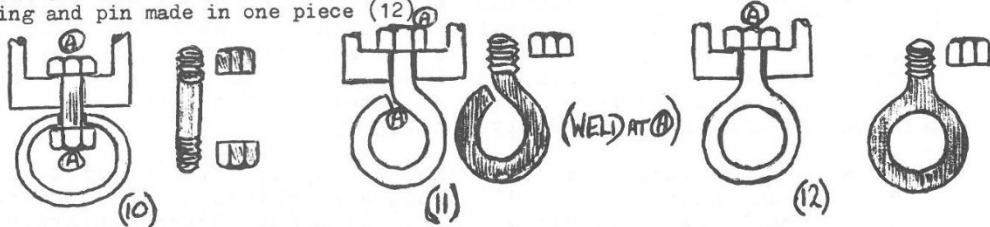
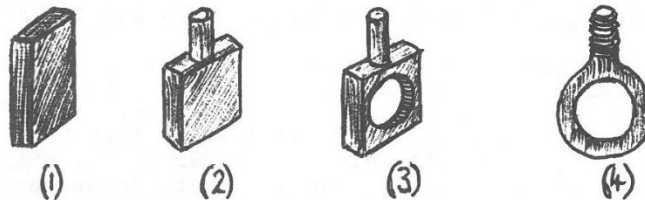


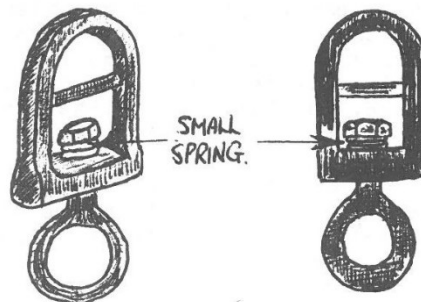
Figure 12 is made in much the same way as the solid top loop (1). First turn a spigot on the block (2) then drill a hole to take the leash (3) then file the block to the final shape (4)

Personally I always put a fine (B.A.) thread on the end of the pin then weld or braze over the nut.



The strongest swivel in my opinion would be one with a solid top and bottom ring. To this two possible "extras" could be added.

1. A small bar set in the top ring which stops jesses slipping down and jamming between top and bottom ring.
2. A small spring which would take some of the tension out of the swivel when a hawk bates.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By David Simpson.

In my experience as a falconer I have met many young people who would like to learn the art of falconry, to own their own bird and to experience the thrill when their bird flies free for the first time. As in all sports and hobbies we must have a future, so these youngsters are really our future falconers.

It is true to say that falconry is becoming a sport for the chosen few, more selective even than in the past. I mean of course those who obtained their experience before the new legislation laws were implemented, making birds of prey very difficult to obtain and in some instances almost impossible. Young falconers are unable to obtain licences until they are of age and in the meantime they have to gain experience in the best way they can.

I would like to see large and small hawking and falconry clubs, together with the independent falconer, offer help, advice and experience to those young prospective falconers, i.e. by taking them out into the field to hunt. To show them all the aspects of hawking-feeding, training, exercising not forgetting the expense involved. It is important to point out the 'code of the countryside' in that it is necessary to obtain the permission of the landowner or authority before hunting on any property. Also to show them how a better days hunting can be achieved with the aid of a well trained dog. It is therefore up to us to show these youngsters that owning a bird is not the end of falconry, but merely the beginning.

It is my opinion that if we give these youngsters the benefit of our experience and knowledge it will eventually eliminate the necessity to take birds illegally. After a while it should become apparent which of them are genuinely interested, and indeed capable of eventually becoming falconers. It should be borne in mind, that for the interested youngster the wait before actually owning a bird can be interminable, we in turn could take this opportunity to make the waiting time interesting and useful- both for them and for ourselves.

Many youngsters have complained that they have approached experienced falconers belonging to well known clubs for their advice on how to become a falconer and what club to join, and have been brushed aside. Having been left to their own devices they have gone to dealers who have charged extortionate prices for birds, this is what leads them to take birds directly from the nest. Consequently the general public hear of these cases and more mud is flung onto the sport of falconry. How many times do you hear of kestrels flying around complete with jesses, swivel and leashes. I had one case where the kestrel had jesses a foot long, unfortunately this bird was so weak I was unable to help it and it died.

I feel that these young people should be encouraged to join clubs, and for the clubs to encourage their experienced members to take a younger member and to help him gain his experience. This could be done on a district basis and a register compiled of those falconers who would be prepared to give some of their time. Falconry would then be assured of its share, in this country, at least of fully experienced and qualified falconers.

Having now prepared the way for these future falconers, we have to find the birds for them to train. This is where breeding projects could be increased for kestrels, buzzards etc and come into their own.

These could be purchased or wherever possible loaned from the clubs to these youngsters when the falconer is sure that he or she is ready to train a bird. It should not be too difficult at the end of this apprenticeship for our newly qualified falconers to obtain their own birds through the proper channels. For now they have had the experience which is asked for on the application forms they should have no problems in obtaining a licence to import a bird, and of course we would know that these birds would be flown at quarry and looked after.

CAT BALOU

By Mike Spornagel.

'Cat Balou' is my third imprint female spar. I had toyed with the idea of taking a musket this year but plumped for the female again. However, if I get a licence to take a sparrow hawk in the future I will try a male to see how he compares with the females.

She was taken from the nest at approximately twelve days old. Last years bird, taken at about four days after hatching turned out to be very jealous of her kills and carried the second one into a plantation and was lost. She never attempted to carry the lure, so I was a bit surprised at her reactions with prey. "Hannah" ("Some notes on a sparrow hawk imprint", the Austringer No.8, 1975.) and "Cat Balou" were both taken at around twelve days and did not attempt to carry prey very far at the start of their hunting careers.

I took her on the 27th. of June. She was the largest of three chicks, and there was also an addled egg in the nest. Raising her until she was hard pennaed went without mishap. Because the summer was so hot she did not need a hot water bottle in the bowl under her nest very often. Most of her food during this time consisted of road casualty birds, but about twenty per cent of her ration was made up of day old chicks. While still a downy she was taken nearly every day by car down to the village where she could see plenty of people and traffic. She grew very quickly, and was soon able to walk and then started making short hops and flights. We had her in the house quite a lot and she became very tame. Whilst eating one day, she jumped into my dinner, and to add insult to injury left a trail of gravy footprints on the tablecloth.

She soon got used to the bow perch and being tied up on a leash, and enjoyed bathing in the hot weather. During the rest of the day she was kept loose in a large shed, when not in the house or being carried. soon she was flying to the fist and around the woodland near the house. Often she was slow in coming down to the fist, because I kept her high as some of her feathers were still in the blood. She was fully sunned at about forty five days from hatching and at forty seven days I started flying her at quarry.

The first flights were rather half-hearted as expected. On August 1st. she made her first kill, a meadow pipit, when she was approximately forty nine days old. The pipit put in three times before being footed.

I had applied for the taking of meadow pipits on my licence, thinking I was going to take a musket, but they proved quite difficult enough to catch with the female, and most of them escaped. Even the ones we put in were very hard to flush from the bracken beds. Bonny, the German pointer was invaluable in snuffling them out for the reflush.

For her first ten kills Cat Balou had seventy two flights not including re-flushes, so we all got a lot of exercise. Also I limited her to one kill per outing fearing she would become a carrier if I attempted several catches in succession. This seemed to work quite well as she became pretty steady while on quarry, even with such light birds as pipits. She was allowed to eat the whole bird on the ground, unless it was larger quarry, such as partridge, when she was lifted up with it and allowed to eat her fill on the fist. Her weight was nine to nine and a quarter ounces during these early flights. On her first outings a bell was fitted on a Halsband round the neck but the bell got very gory when she was feeding on the ground, as she sometimes lay on her neck. Also it was a bit of a job putting it on and off, and I was always nervous in case something snagged the Halsband, so I discarded the neck bell and put leg bells on instead, with poppers on the bewits, and it was fairly easy to put them on before flying and then take them off when putting her back in the shed. Her talons became rather blunt because she attacked the stones holding down the newspapers in her shed. However, it did not affect her catching ability although she is not the best of footers, and often fluffed easy chances. So now the shed is fitted with padded perches and slabs of rubber belting hold down the newspapers, which has resulted in her talons slowly getting sharper again. On a few occasions she spent the night out, but was usually around the house next day to be taken up.

When she selected the quarry herself she would fly at all sorts of birds, from kingfisher to heron and short-eared owls, and even stooped at several full grown rabbits. I was glad she did not get the kingfisher which dropped into a stream to escape her, and naturally she did not bind to the heron, but made it squark with her first stoop. Once she even went on soar with a musket.

My flying ground is upland grass-land but it was surprising to see how many sparrowhawks used this open country for hunting. While hawking I found a lot of small bird kills on the area which must have been the handiwork of the sparrowhawks, as merlins are very scarce, only having been sighted there once in three years.

In September we moved house, and she settled into her new shed quite happily. The house is near a main road and forestry village, so it provides busier scenes than our old house. As I usually went out alone hunting with her she was not very well-manned. I started flying her near the new house to get her used to the area. After flying a black-bird and missing it she was frightened by a passer-by, and away she went into a large block of conifer plantations. After searching for a while I located her, and she came down to the fist. We managed some more flights before it got too dark, but did not take anything.

A few nights later, on a Monday, a friend came out with me, but it was a very long time before we found any quarry. At last, as it was getting dark, we put up some pipits and I threw her off at them. Off she went, but soon sheared off and set on some rooks. I went to pick her up, but she flew off towards the plantation trees. By now it was too dark to start searching for her.

First light next morning found me at the place where I had lost her, but there was no sign of her that day, or the next. There was still no sign of her on the third day, so after that I did not go out so often, but still kept a lure made up in case. By now I was convinced that I had lost her for good. However, at Sunday lunch-time my wife had a phone call from a house in the next valley. A bird with bells on had flown into the lighted window of a nearby house at dusk the previous evening. Quickly, I got some chicks and my gear, and zoomed off in the car. Bonny came with me, as she had proved to be a good lure in the past. When I got to where she had been seen, I started walking down a ridge, whistling all the while, with my ears straining to catch a sound of the bells. I happened to glance round, and there she was, coming low over the ground towards me. She bound to the first but hung upside down. It was several minutes before I could get her to stand up and actually start eating, as when I placed her on the first she just lay on the meat. I went home rejoicing, hardly believing my good fortune. She was very low, and would probably not have lasted much longer, but must have taken some birds in the six days she was absent without leave. Feeding her six or more sparrows and chicks a day soon put on her lost weight.

We went on holiday a few days later, and had to leave her behind, as I had no room for her in the car. I fitted a bath house to the shed and made a dowel rod barred inner door, so that she could be fed by one of the lads in the village by just pushing chicks through the bars, onto a shelf. When we returned she was still feather perfect, and quite clean, despite the white-washed shed, and very fat and wild. So fat in fact, that she would not feed on the first at first, but is settling down now that I have started re-training her. She should be ready to take to the field again this coming weekend, and carry on her interrupted flying career. I am looking forward to seeing her in action once more, and only hope that my flights of fancy become flights of reality.

Note. This article was written in 1976, so we sincerely hope that the authors wishes were fulfilled.



'AUDAX'

The following article was very kindly contributed to the 'Austringer' by Mr. Gerald Summers, the wellknown author, who was also for many years the President of the former Hawking Club of Great Britain.

Ever since I could remember I had always been fascinated by the idea of Africa, which to me typified all that a foreign country should be—a savage land teeming with wild men, wild beasts and, above all, wild birds, which, as far as I was concerned, meant birds of prey primarily, with other species as a welcome bonus. I had read about, and seen pictures of, such almost legendary raptors as Martial, Verraux's, and Crowned Hawk eagles, and it was obvious that there must be many more equally interesting, if less spectacular, birds.

When, shortly after the end of the war, I was offered a job in what was then Tanganyika, I accepted without hesitation. Now at last would come a chance to see, to study and perhaps to train some of these, to me, entirely unknown and therefore challenging new predators. My introduction to the wonders to come was not long delayed. At Aden the ship was greeted by what looked almost like an official welcoming committee of the big, reddish-brown Arabian Kites, which were as tame as and even more adroit and graceful in flight than the herring gulls which we had left behind in Southampton when our ship nosed into the Solent.

On arrival in Dar-es-Salaam, the capital of Tanganyika, I boarded a train for the leisurely two-day journey which ended at Iringa in the Southern Highlands, where I was to be stationed. On that journey I had little to do but eat, drink warm Tusker beer, and gaze out of the windows at the endless, rolling, Acacia-dotted plains as we climbed from sea level to the eight-thousand feet plateau which was then the heart of the European farming country. All the way a wide variety of birds of prey could be seen, ranging from the slim, grey Chanting Goshawks of the hot, low-level, coastal scrub, to the dramatic black and white Auger Buzzards of the grassy highlands, whilst always, high overhead, rocking and swaying, with swept-back wings and almost tail-less outline, swung that symbol of the African skies, the Dateleur Eagle.

I was working as Assistant Manager on a coffee plantation, high up on the fringes of a rain forest, and it was not long before my obsession with anything that bore a hooked beak and talons became known, both to my Norwegian friends and employers and to the African labour force, who, aptly dubbed me the Bwana N'Dege—the Bird Man. One day, the native overseer arrived, carrying a hollow gourd of the sort frequently used as a drinking vessel. Lying comfortably on a bed of dried grass was a large, down-clad eagle, with a well-filled and protruding crop. I was not over-pleased but I knew that if I told him to replace the bird in the nest from which he had obviously purloined it he would certainly knock it against the first tree he came to, once he was out of range of my prying eye. Also I was intrigued.

"What is this object, Juna?" I asked in my best, if recently acquired, Swahili.

"A bird, Bwana," he replied.

"I can see it's a bloody bird, but what sort of bird?"

"A Tai, Bwana."

This wasn't much more helpful, since "Tai" is the all-enbracing name for any sort of hawk, eagle or even vulture.

I picked it up and carefully examined it. At first I hoped it might have been a young Ayre's Hawk Eagle- it was about the right size, but it had completely bare tarsi, much like those of an eyas gos of the same age. Its feet were quite serviceable but nothing like as heavily armed as those of a small eagle or even of a similar sized accipiter. It was, as I might have guessed, an eyas Auger Buzzard- But none the worse for that. I named her "Audax" and hoped that she would live up to it.

Audax was very easily reared on a diet of small rodents, brought in by the family's tame Genet Cat, varied with locust-sized grasshoppers and a variety of doves and small pigeons. Auger Buzzards are, as anyone who has been resident in, or even visited, East Africa, will confirm, amongst the commonest and most successful of African raptors. They are slightly larger and noticeably more predatory than the common European buzzards and are, in my opinion, the African equivalent of the well-known American Red-tailed "hawk", having equally large feet, and the tails of the adults are just as fiery in colour. These birds differ, however, from most other buzzards, whose natural calls are a variety of mewling cries, plaintive, petulant, or just plain bad-tempered. The Auger, on the other hand, has a loud, dominant, far-carrying bark, a ringing "Aung-aung-aung!" - which is one of the best remembered and most nostalgic of sounds to any ornithologist who remembers and loves the African wild.

Audax grew rapidly and was soon hard-summed, whereupon I fitted her out with my own type of jesses, known to my long-suffering family as "Summersei", which are in fact normal jesses abbreviated to within an inch or so of where they join the leg and with a hole or slit for the field jesses punched at the end. Being idle and cack-handed I find them much simpler to manipulate than the authentic aylmeri. Anyway, I have used these for years and still continue to do so, never having had any problems in hawks getting hooked up on projecting snags. Incidentally, being anything but a traditionalist, I prefer to use nylon leashes rather than ones of conventional leather, because the latter, however careful one may be, have a habit of breaking, due to unseen flaws, whereas nylon, functional and unromantic though it may be, seems to last for ever; and I like to feel that, if I should leave home for a few hours my hawks will still be there, high, wide and handsome, on my return, rather than adorning the interior of some unseen and distant oak tree, however unlikely the chance of this occurring may be. If the jesses should break it is far less serious, because, if any sort of rapport has developed, the hawk's recovery should only be a matter of time.

Audax developed rapidly and was soon flying at hack, and remained thus for an unusually long period, largely because I believed her to have little potential and was at that time more than half inclined to let her return in her own good time untrained to the wild. I slept at the time in a rondavel, a beehive-shaped clay hut with a thatched roof, surmounted by a sort of wooden ornamental cupola, which proved an ideal launching pad and observation post for Audax, who spent hours perched thereon, when not swinging about the ravine at the edge of which my hut stood, much too close, I might add, for my peace of mind.

it was an intriguing experience to sit out on the porch with a sun-downer in one's hand whilst watching one's own hawk gliding and circling immediately below before shooting up on a thermal to be lost to view behind a shoulder of the surrounding hills. The ravine, or "carongwa", was shared by a pair of Whitenecked Ravens and at first these took a delight in mobbing Audax, sallying forth from their nesting-ledge like a couple of Barbary Corsairs.

They would stoop at her, diving down in turn with something of the speed and agility of peregrines. At first Audax, taken aback by the unexpectedness of the attack, would, after side-slipping and throwing herself on her back to ward off the aggressors, return to the security of her perch on the rondevaal to recover her self-possession. However, as her own self-confidence and aerial skill developed, so did her territorial instincts awake, and soon it was she who would launch an attack on anything that entered her air space, and I watched some fantastic ringing flights as she challenged, not only her old rivals the ravens, but also kite, harrier, or wandering auger that was unwise enough to trespass on her preserve. During this period she came regularly twice daily to be fed, and indeed showed little inclination to wander until the day came when she appeared from the direction of the African workers quarters and took stand upon her perch with a noticeably distended crop. She sat about for most of the day but disappeared shortly before dusk. The following day she didn't turn up until mid-day when she appeared with an equally full crop, so Audax was hunting at last - but what was she catching, I didn't have long to wait before finding out. Shortly after she re-appeared she was followed by a voluble and outraged African head-man, my "Tai", it seemed was helping herself freely to his family's precious poultry. I didn't believe him, buzzards just don't catch chickens - at least, so I'd always believed. However, I calmed the fellow down and agreed to keep watch. Before first light I took up my position, hidden behind a wall of thick forest vegetation which skirted the native village. When the light strengthened the chickens emerged from their straw roosting house and began chortling and scratching about in the dust. Suddenly, silent and swift moving as a gos, a dusky shadow dropped from nowhere, seized an unsuspecting pullet, dragged it to the shelter of the nearest thicket, and began mantling over the quarry. I emerged from cover and made in as quickly and quietly as possible. Audax mantled furiously but made no attempt to carry or to relinquish her prey. I bent, slipped jesses through the holes in the "Summersei", and took her up on the fist. She bated at the chicken, which I was relieved to see had had its chips. I took it also and later paid for all three of the slain. Audax finished her meal at leisure.

I decided that after this display of predatory expertise she was worth training, so I fitted her out with leash, block, and bow perch (I always give hawks a choice of both), and began her education. She was already as tame as a hawk could be and, being also quick in the uptake, was soon coming long distances to both fist and lure, as far, in fact, as I chose to call her. Having remained perfectly manned throughout her extended hack, it was quite unnecessary to use a creance, so all that remained was to enter her to legitimate quarry. The only form of transport we had on the farm was a retired American jeep, which more than lived up to its name - general purpose vehicle. No other motor, not even a land rover, could have climbed the almost vertical slopes which led to the farm. Audax was introduced to this mobile hunting-wagon at an early age. She used to sit happily, unhooded, on my fist, whilst my companion, Jan Nielland, raced along the forest tracks at frightening speed, with the old jeep stripped almost flat for action. All this seemed to come naturally to her. We hoped, somewhat ambitiously, that Audax might, if carefully entered, take guinea fowl, or at least francolin, which were no larger than the rather undersized fowls that she had already accounted for. We shot one, removed the pellets, and used it as a lure. She came to it without hesitation and bound to it with great enthusiasm. I cut off the wings and kept them in reserve, feeling that they might well come in useful at a later date. She soon cottoned on to the idea and would come from ever increasing distances with the minimum of hesitation to seize the attractive blue, pearly-spotted lure.

Jan and I loaded the jeep with tent and provisions and, with Audax aboard sought the hot, low-lying, semi-desert scrub which stretched to the horizon two thousand feet below the escarpment at the top of which our farm was situated. Audax was sharp-set and ready to earn her keep. Guinea fowl keep to thick cover during the heat of the day, emerging in the cool of the evening to seek food and grit along the verges of the few roads. This suited us. Audax had showed herself willing to tackle comparatively heavy feathered quarry and so, when we sallied forth on our first evening in camp we had high hopes of success. With Audax on my fist and Jan driving, we burst our way through the scrub, listening for the familiar "Go-back, go-back" call which is characteristic of both wild and domestic guinea fowl. Soon we heard it and sped in the direction from which it came. Bouncing through a barrier of thorny scrub into a flat amphitheatre of short grass, we came upon an enormous flock scuttling about like gigantic beetles. Audax saw them too, squeezed my fist, and stood on tip-toe, craning forward, as I removed the field jesses. Standing up in the back of the jeep I raised my arm and swung her forward at the quarry. With two or three flaps and a long glide she was off, but the guinea fowl saw her coming and broke into a fast shuffling run before exploding into the air in all directions. Audax was uncertain, hadn't picked a particular quarry, and swung up into an acacia tree as the game vanished into the bush, which swallowed them up as completely as if they had never existed. Only a mocking "Go-back, go-back" told us that we hadn't in fact dreamt the whole thing. Jan, a big-game hunter and ex-member of the Norwegian resistance, was sceptical. He had never seen a trained hawk take quarry and thought it unlikely that he would see it now. Audax came down to the lure, and we returned to camp and to a modicum of consolatory Tusker ale.

The next evening I ensured that Audax was even sharper set. We decided on different tactics. Coasting down the Nairobi to Arusha road, I stood aloft in the back of the jeep like a charioteer with binoculars at the ready. Rounding a bend, we saw not far ahead what we sought. A small party of Crowned or forest guinea fowl were shuffling about in the dust at the side of the road. Audax also saw them and squeezed even harder than the previous evening. Busy with their dust-baths the guinea fowl allowed a fairly close approach. Audax was hard to control as I removed the jesses, but went like an air borne greyhound when cast off. Travelling with deceptive speed she hurled herself forward. This time she made no mistake. The quarry saw her and began to run - but it was too late. There was an audible smack followed by a dense cloud of white dust as Audax struck home, and the dust, like a choking curtain, closed in and obscured the struggle from view. I hastened up to help Audax, whose weight must have been less than half that of her quarry and she was being dragged about and shaken like a rag, but she had her grip and meant to hold on. I ended the affair with my hunting knife and picked up Audax, who sat panting and wild-eyed, as if dumb-founded at her own success. Having removed and hidden the quarry, I rewarded her with a substantial piece of bushbuck venison and in triumph we returned to camp and to something a bit more celebratory than the warm and rather gassy Tusker ale which was our usual tippie.

Later, when I joined the Desert Locust Control organisation, Audax came with me, which was just as well, because my area of operation consisted very largely of the Amboseli National Park, where both shooting and the coursing of game with my Saluki were, quite naturally, frowned upon. Curiously enough, no-one had thought of putting a taboo on hawking, (this was in 1950) and so Audax and I did pretty well, particularly with the Cape hares, which, though smaller than the European brown variety, are none the less delicious and a great change from baked beans and bacon.

An amusing tale was recently told to me by John Evans concerning Randon, the golden eagle belonging to Gerald Summers and featured by him in his latest very enjoyable book "Owned by an Eagle", which working on the previous article brought to mind.

Apparently, whilst out a short time ago John found himself close to Gerald Summers' home and on the offchance decided to call. Although Mr. Summers had guests he made John welcome and took him to meet Randon. Whilst John stood admiring the eagle, Gerald Summers dropped his glove and John bent to pick it up. Randon evidently disliked him handling what she considered to be her property, and promptly jumped onto John's bent back. After an admonishing word from her master she quickly got back onto her perch, leaving John with scratches on both of his shoulder blades. No great harm was done, but as John commented, when his wife saw the marks on his back, and was told the reason for their being there she gave him a very old-fashioned look indeed.

(Editor)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

By Martin Evans

I had reached the maddening stage with my tiercel goshawk where he hadn't had any kills up to half way through the season. To say that I was very anxious to remedy this situation would have been a gross understatement.

I met Erazmo Meletti on the marshes near Peterstone, and we walked around without seeing one single moorhen all day. As we were rather despondently packing up we came across a pond with tall reeds in it. Next to this was a small field encircled by a neen. Amongst a field of beautiful sows were nine even more beautiful moorhens. Being good falconers we called on the owner and asked him for permission to hunt there. "No" was the stern reply. We smiled of course at him, but a few yards further on we both called him some unprintable names.

I met Raz a week later, and we ended up at this same pond after scouring the neens for moorhen. We were eyeing the moorhen with renewed hunger when the owner turned up. "No" again was the reply. Then one of his piglets got stuck in a neen of pig slurry. We saved this for him, getting rather smelly in the process. The owner, after some verbal pressure from Raz at last came out with the magical words "Oh all right then, just this once."

I got into position half way across the field, behind a pig sty. Raz positioned himself and signalled to me when these idolised moorhen came back into view. However, when I got up they would fly off. We decided to retire for a well deserved liquid lunch. I must have been a terrible drinking partner that lunch time, swearing after every other swallow about those dratted birds.

After lunch we parked a few fields up, and just as we were crossing the fence a woman shouted "Hey, where the hell are you going?" We were summoned to her presence, and after having to exhibit our gosses to half of the neighbourhood this Amazon said "Well, you are dismissed." On later reflection we decided that she must have been a school teacher.

At last we arrived at our beloved pool. That is, after jumping the pig slurry neen and renewing our new-found after shave, we arrived at our previous tactical positions. After what seemed an age the moorhens came back out to feed. The gos was duly released, and made a kill in the middle of the pond on some reeds. I had to take my life into my hands and crawl into the pool up to my waist. Eventually I reached my gos and his first kill, well earned surely, by any standard.



PERFECT HARMONY

When out hunting with his goshawk and dog, Stephen Dechtold, the President of the Hungarian Falconers Association, on arriving at a wood would let the goshawk up into the branches, where the bird would follow him along from tree to tree. One day in the late summer heat, after a good half-hours walk, he decided to have a short lie down on the grass with his dog, not calling the goshawk down, but leaving the bird up in the coolness of the branches. He and his red setter hadn't been lying there for more than two or three minutes when with a ring of bells, like a shadow the hawk swung down from her perch and settled on the ground between her master and the dog. Staying there until the break ended and hunting continued.

THE TAITA FALCON

By Lorant De Bastyai.

When someone is talking about the rare falcons, I am quite sure that nearly everyone is thinking about the very beautiful snow-white Gyr-falcon. Yes, I admit that I do not think that there exists a more hidden dream for a falconer than that he should have such a bird. Yes, it is rare, but there is a much rarer falcon which is therefore not much known as a sporting bird, this is the Taita falcon (*Falco fasciinucha*).

I was always interested in such little known types of hunting bird. When I studied back in Hungary the Eastern or Tundra peregrines, *Falco peregrinus calidus* or *Falco peregrinus leucogenys*, or in this country when I was more than interested why one Lanner falcon looks not at all like another one and wondered how many subspecies these birds have, I could not rest until I had got all the information I could about the Lanner falcons.

Now, I was very much interested in the Taita falcon after our dear friend from Rhodesia, Dr. David Walker was back home in Britain for his holidays and showed us his slides at a meeting of the Welsh Hawking Club in Newport. I started to be especially interested in this little falcon when I heard that the famous hawk painter David Reid-Henry, when he heard that David Walker had a Taita falcon which had been brought to him by a native boy who had found it as a road casualty, offered David Walker one of his paintings in exchange for the bird. I thought to myself that this must be a very rare bird if it was worth 40-50 or more pounds, because David Reid-Henry's cheapest paintings cost that much. However, if Dr. Walker exchanged the Taita falcon or not I am not sure, but I started a 'round-letter' to the different ornithological Institutions, and I admit that it was not an easy task for the ornithologists in the different Institutions to look up this bird, because it is so rare that not every book mentions it. However here is what I have found out about these little birds.

The Taita falcon takes his name from the county in Kenya called Taita because it was first seen there, and the descriptions came from there. The well-known ornithologist, Neumann, described it for the very first time in the year 1895, then again Reichenov. They put this noble little falcon not in the subspecies of the peregrines, but in the African hobbies. The length of the wings is 202-237 millimetres, and the tail feathers are 80 millimetres.

The colouring they say - it is very similar to the African hobby, (*Falco cuvieri*). The head at the back is chestnut coloured, so as they say it is in colour nearer to the Lanners.

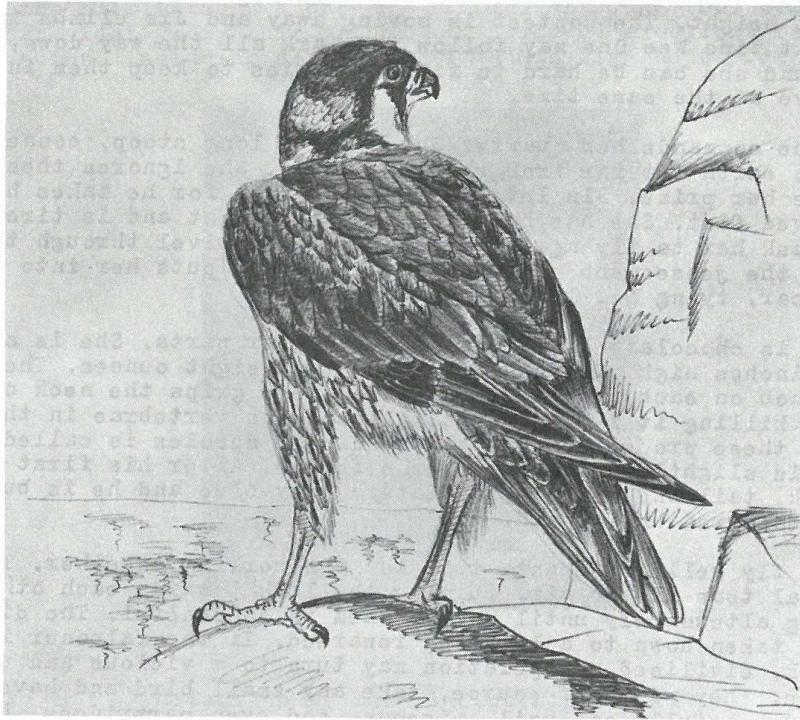
This very rarely sighted bird lives mainly south of the Victoria falls. Little is known about the habits of this lovely falcon, which is about in size between the Red-Headed Merlin and the Lannaret. The observer ornithologists have seen it hunting doves. In the book of Peters (1931), Peters put this little falcon into the subspecies of the peregrines. At that time he has had only two in his collection.

Two other ornithological writers Liversidge and Melachl in their book which was published in 1957 about these birds, put it in the peregrine lines.

Williams, in his Fieldguide book which is quite modern (published in 1969) puts the Taita Falcon into the lines of the 'Diarnacus' and mentions also its very pale colour and its very short tail. In my own opinion, what I saw on Dr. David Walkers slide pictures and as the last ornithologist writes that this little falcon has a very short tail, leads me to think that this little 'FalconGentle' belongs to the peregrines. Lanners do not have a short tail at all, not even when they are in their adult plumage.

Jack Mavrogordato writes in his book of the Taita falcon - "stocky dark falcon, peregrine build bird". Which is interesting compared with the descriptions of these birds in Williams Fieldguide book, which says that these birds are pale coloured ??? According to Jack Mavro, the feet, face, moustache and down by the ear are like the peregrine, and among the quarry that they catch doves are the biggest kills. Here again another observation that it could never be mistaken for a Hobby. What about Neumanns and Reichenov' observations which put the little bird in the hobby family???

These birds are so rare that no falconer that I know of could get one to train. He is a rare little jewel, a diamond amongst the hunting birds.



A Drawing of the Taita Falcon,
Taken from the painting by E.K. Reid-Henry.

FLYING MERLINS

By S.M. Newell.

High above the open downland a skylark spirals its way into the clear blue sky. It is well aware that, on a parallel track, a merlin is pursuing it. Far below them long shadows spread across the sun-baked turf from a small group of people watching the aerial combat through binoculars.

The lark rings up strongly, each circuit almost a quarter of a mile wide, but the little hawk is in peak condition and pumps up rapidly to a commanding position. She makes a sudden dive at her prey which avoids her easily although it loses a lot of height. The merlin still has the advantage and she stoops again, missing narrowly this time. The lark drops like a stone into the dense cover of a solitary clump of brambles. At first the merlin follows her quarry down, but then she changes her mind, and waits on, hanging in the air above the bush. A Land Rover bumps to a halt and her human partner jumps out to flush the bird. He is Jim Chick who has been a falconer for many years. In 1974 he was fortunate enough to obtain one of the three licences which have been granted for merlins recently.

The lark takes off again. The merlin, her name is 'Wee One', stoops to it almost immediately and misses by yards. The tiny bird seems to have anticipated the direction of the attack and continues on its way without a check. Wee One follows it, striving valiantly to make up the lost height. The contest is moving away and Jim climbs into the car. Next time Wee One may follow the lark all the way down, and on the ground she can be hard to find. He tries to keep them in sight and drive at the same time.

Again she commands her quarry. She makes a long stoop, connects, and comes to earth not far from the spectators. She ignores them and begins to plume her prize. Jim lets her eat her fill for he takes her up on his gloved fist. She has had an energetic flight and is tired. He won't ask her to fly again. He fastens the swivel through the loose ends of the jesses she wears on her legs, and puts her into the back of the car, tying her leash to the perch.

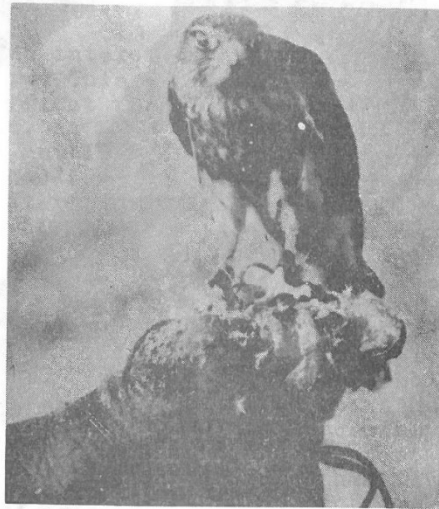
Wee One is chocolate brown with creamy under parts. She is about twelve inches high and weighs no more than eight ounces. There is a small knob on each side of her beak and she grips the neck of her victim, killing it swiftly by displacing its vertebrae in the notch made by these projections. The male of the species is called a Jack, and it is slightly smaller than the female. After his first moult, his back, tail and wings grow slatey, grey-blue and he is buff or russet coloured underneath.

Merlins fly well in a cast, that is, two working together. They make a natural team in the air, turning the lark towards each other and stooping alternately until one of them is successful. The disappointed bird is taken down to a lure and rewarded. If the falconer is slow off the mark, civilised co-operation may turn to a vicious and undignified squabble. They will, of course, take any small bird and have been flown successfully at quail, pigeons, and even partridges, but they have always earned their place in the news by their flights at the fast, high flying skylark.

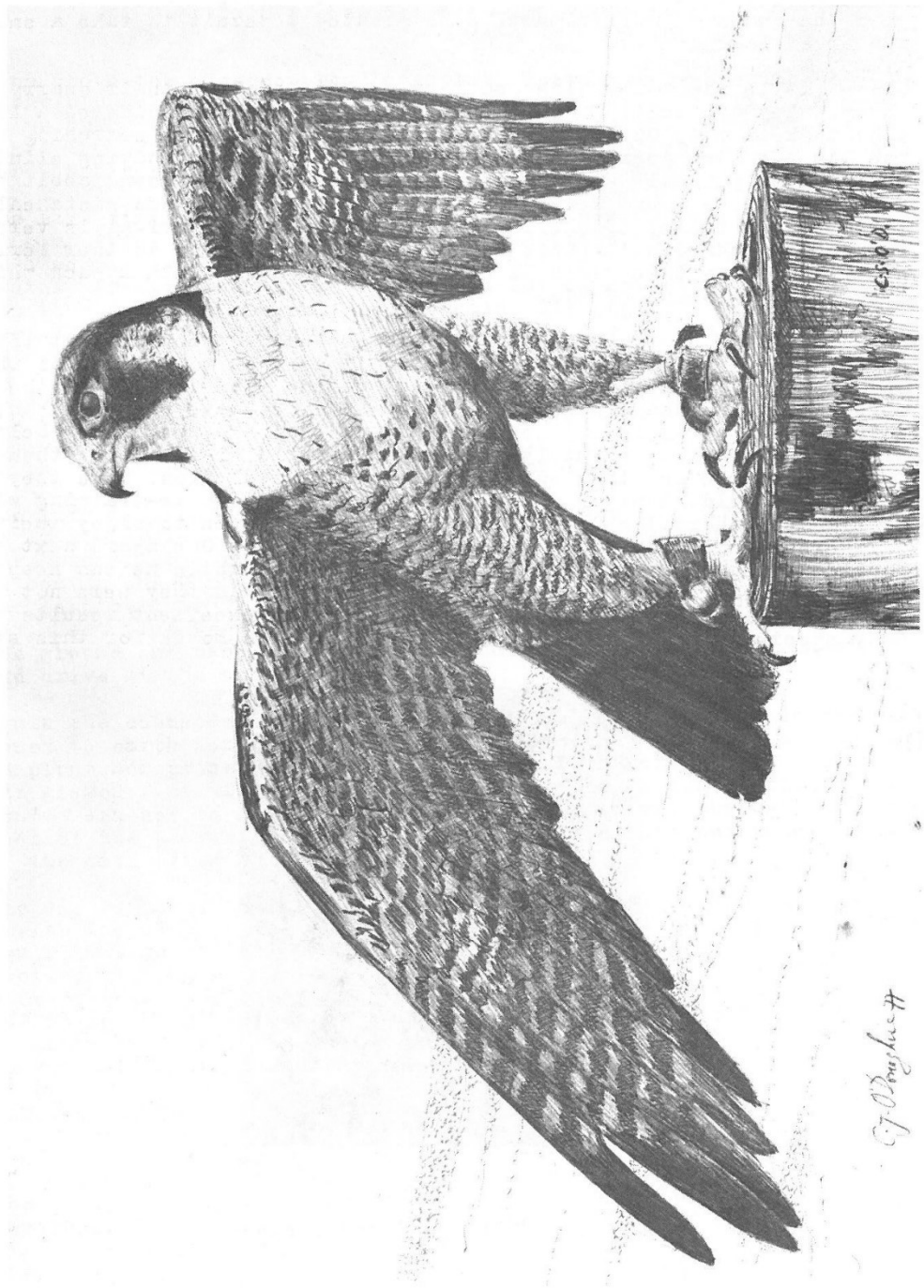
The Home Office recognise that this is their traditional prey and each year the owner of a legal merlin is granted a permit to take a small number of larks.

These little hawks fly high and fast and will follow their quarry into cover. They are easily lost and eighteen months is considered a long time to keep one. Once Jim spent more than three hours searching for Wee One. He knew approximately where she must be, and having eliminated every other possible hiding place he started looking down rabbit holes. Sure enough, he found her in one with her lark which had mistakenly taken refuge there. If she is lost, her chance of survival is very good, far better than Jims' chance of getting a licence for another Merlin. He tries not to take risks as he hopes to mate her with a jack which belongs to a friend of his.

When the lark-hawking season ended in September the pair went into the breeding-pen where they will remain until next July. The pen is the size of a large room. Its walls are solid, but the roof is open to the sky, covered with netting to keep the birds in. They have water and the natural vegetation is supplemented with a choice of perches, sheltered places and a generous supply of nesting materials. Jim feeds them through a covered chute and they enjoy uninterrupted seclusion. Soon they become completely wild. However, previous experience shows re-training will take a very short time for these elegant hawks seen to enjoy their partnership with man. Jim will be able to fly Wee One again next summer confident that she will return to his lure. Meanwhile he can keep an eye on the pair through a one-way mirror. Although they were not successful last year, this method has produced excellent results with many species, including merlins, and he has high hopes for this season.



Photograph by the kind permission of
Mr. Jim Chick.



MY FIRST SPAR

By Tim Williams.

After training a few kestrels, I decided to try my hand with a sparrowhawk, and frankly, at times afterwards I wished I hadn't.

When she arrived she was a tiny downy, but she soon grew at what seemed an amazing speed. At that time I was still at school, so by feeding her as much food as possible about six times a day, she didn't stay a downy for very long. From when I first had her, until the training to the fist started, she ate nothing but natural food, and thought nothing of gobbling up five sparrows a day.

By July 26th. at ten ounces, she was jumping to the fist, and by August 6th. she was flying free, and entered herself at a blackbird. During the period between August 1st. and August 8th. I was staying at Stuart Wilkinsons' home whilst he was away on holiday. I hadn't any scales with me, and was a little uncertain about dropping the spars' weight. When Stuart returned home we flushed a woodpigeon for her, as soon as the woodie broke cover, I slipped her, she flew well and only gave up after sticking to it for a good hundred yards. I returned home, and as I was at the time on holiday from school, from August 8th. until the thirteenth, I tried my hardest to get a kill. I finally took a house sparrow with her- a short flight, but it was a wonderful moment. We had been out hawking for five hours before she had this kill, and the beaters, the bird, and myself had a good rest before we made tracks for home. During this period of trying for her first kill she must have had at least thirty or forty separate flights every day. The next day she took a starling with superb style, or so I thought, but at the time I was so thrilled with her that anything she did was just marvellous. After that she gained confidence in herself, and anything in feathers was sport to her.

As it was, I was more interested in blackbirds, and my third kill was an old cock blackbird. This was typical of most of the flights I had with her. After the first flight, and the blackbird had put in, we just kept beating him out. At one stage the blackbird dashed out for about two yards, and then put in again with the hawk right behind him, when I made in the spar had four of his tail feathers firmly clenched in one foot. Ten minutes later, after another six flights he was the spars' third kill, for the hawk grabbed him as he entered cover after another short dash. I made in and held her and her kill on my fist, she was so tired that she did not break into him for well over ten minutes.

On January 10th. 1977, she was missing from the news, I assumed that she had been stolen, as there was no other explanation. Up to that time she had made thirteen kills, six of them blackbirds, although this does not seem a great many, and many trained spars have probably taken that many in a weekend. However, I could not possibly have counted the number of near misses, or the number of hours of sport she had shared with me. She never took stand in a tree for more than five minutes all the time I had her.

Before I had this bird I knew about the difficulties of training a spar, so I had bought "A Hawk For The Bush". There is no doubt about it, the training of my spar would not have been possible without this excellent book.

As I said earlier, this was my first spar, also my first hunting bird. I am looking forward to having another in the near future, with which I hope to do even better. Even so, I could write and talk about my first spar for a very long time to come.

Note. In reference to the above article, the sparrowhawk had been aviary bred, and Tim had been granted permission to take blackbirds.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS AT TUTBURY

THE ROYAL SPORT OF FALCONRY.

An extract from an article by H.J. Wain M.Sc.

The recent capture of a kestrel in Stapenhill, equipped with jesses and a bell on its legs draws attention to the increased interest in falconry which is being taken in this country.

In these modern days when so much of the countryside is enclosed, there are not many localities suitable for this sport, which is increasing in popularity. Moreover all falcons and hawks in Britain are protected by law, especially during the breeding season and anyone who takes eggs or young from a nest is liable to prosecution, but this does not prevent many nests from being raided, and instances are recorded each year.

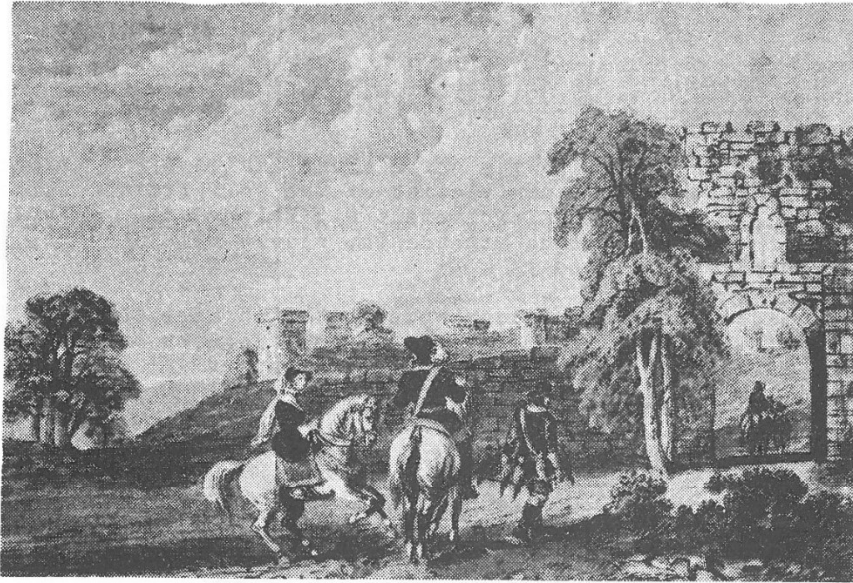
In this part of the Midlands, the only falcons and hawks available are the kestrel and the sparrowhawk, both of which are now recovering from near extinction due to the widespread use of toxic insecticides and weed killers which poisoned their prey with fatal results to the birds themselves.

Neither kestrel nor sparrowhawk was held in high regard in mediaeval times when the sport of falconry was at its height, the kestrel being assigned to the use of a knave or servant, and the sparrowhawk to a priest or holy water clerk. For different species of hawks and falcons were assigned for the use of each class of society.

In his Natural History of Tutbury (1863) Sir Oswald Mosley gives an imaginative account of a falconry party from Tutbury Castle in the days when Mary, Queen of Scots was imprisoned there under the care of Sir Ralph Sadler.

With the benevolent intention of relieving the tedium of her captivity Sir Ralph sent for his falconer and hawks and the captive Queen accompanied him on his sporting excursions.

Sir Oswald proceeds: "We may picture the good old knight with his royal charge, mounted upon white palfreys, together with numerous retainers and dependents, some on foot, others on horseback, issuing forth from the ancient portal.



MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS with her custodian Sir Ralph Sadler returning to Tutbury Castle after a successful hawking party in 1585.

After proceeding down the meadows for two or three miles in the direction of Egginton the sport began. The falconer, who had carried his "cadge" or frame upon which the hawks were perched, set it in the shade.

The heron, a bird more esteemed for the sport it afforded than for the delicacy of its flesh, at that time abounded in this valley. The anxious sportsmen would obtain a distant view of several of these birds, but waited until one approached slowly from the river where it had been fishing, towards the lofty oaks of Needwood.

Sir Ralph directed his falconer to prepare a well trained female peregrine. In a moment her hood is slipped off and she is perched on her master's wrist which is protected by a stout glove. Here the bird is retained by a small leather thong until the heron comes fully into view and the hood of the falcon is removed. No sooner is the hawk let loose, than the heron prepares for attack by disgorging the fish he was carrying home for his young. Thus lightened he rises to a considerable height but the falcon takes her flight in an opposite direction. Upon noticing this, the Queen blames the falcon for want of sagacity, but Sir Ralph requests Her Majesty to be patient awhile. During this conversation the peregrine has ascended in a series of gyrations and is now soaring far above her quarry like a speck in the sky. Presently she stoops, but the heron avoids the blow by a dexterous change in position. The peregrine, though baffled, is undaunted by the failure and in one wide sweep regains ascendancy above the object of her attack. The heron resumes its cause with increased rapidity but the strong pinions of the hawk are more than a match for him.

At length with a sudden rush from its airy height, the peregrine strikes its victim in the back. A fierce struggle ensues and both fall to the earth locked together.

The falconer then rides up, captures the prey, and rewards the hawk with its favourite morsel.

The sport is not confined to the heron alone, mallard, partridge, pigeon and rook become in turn victims of the well trained falcons, and after a day of no common excitement Sir Ralph Sadler and his royal companion with their numerous attendants, slowly return to the ancient castle of Tutbury.

Sir Oswald adds: "Such excursions were not often repeated, for the suspicions of Elizabeth were aroused, and she foresaw that under the pretext of amusement, an escape might be attempted".

A GOOD DAY AFTER ALL

By John Evans.

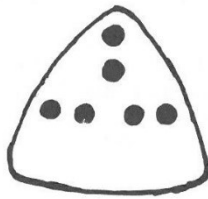
An invitation to hawk a small farm at Myndd-Islywn was given to us for the following morning, which being Sunday suited us fine.

Morning came, clear, crisp and sunny, with Weiner looking very keen and business-like. Everything ready, I set off, stopping only to pick up Andrew Buckner my beater, "the best one in South Wales". Plus his dog, ferret, rolled cigarettes and snuff box, also thoughts in our minds of a busy days hawking.

The dogs were put to work. Noses down, away they went through brambles and gorse bushes, getting very excited. Weiner, sensing that there was something likely to rise, paid undivided attention to them, her head bobbing, ducking, weaving and crouching, ready to leave my fist in an instant. With plenty of scent and sign excitement began to mount. Weiner again gripping my fist, watching every move made, and going stiff at every bush that crackled and shook as the dogs worked.

Alas, it wasn't to be, we couldn't raise anything. Feeling rather dejected we decided to make our way back to our transport. Unfortunately this was quite a distance away at the top of a hill covered in heather and dead bracken. Suddenly Weiner strengthened her grip, a flash of a white scut and a rabbit broke cover and raced away down the side of the mountain. Immediately my gos exploded from my fist and tore after it at unbelievable speed, twisting and turning for seventy to eighty yards. A clash of bells announced the end of a memorable flight. Excited and breathless I made in to her to find she had it well and truly held, mantling over it and looking up at us as if to say "How about that then?" I gave her a well-earned reward and picked her up off the rabbit, which we found later weighed just under four pounds.

Satisfied at the outcome of a day which started so full of promise, turning to disappointment, and ending on such a high note we retreated to the local inn to quench our excitement and to re-live that memorable flight.



Hole pattern for Red-tail.

Fig. 1

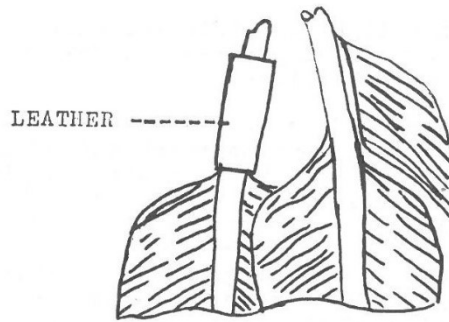


FIG. 2

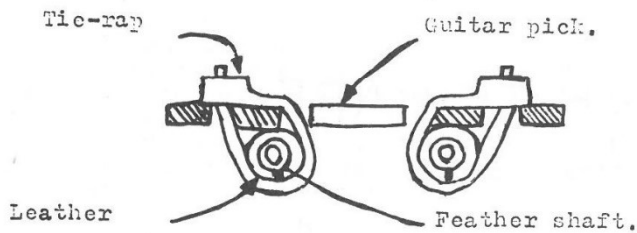


Fig. 3

THE TAIL BELL MADE SIMPLE.

By Mike Davis.

By kind permission of Mr. Tony Robertson
of the California Hawking Club.

The modern austringer has refrained from using a tail bell due to the hassles of its installation and its reliability. Presented here is an easy to install, reliable method for tail belling your hawk.

MATERIALS.

- Three small tie-raps
- One nylon guitar pick
- Two small pieces of soft glove leather
- Contact cement
- Bell
- Scissors
- Leather punch
- Hawk

Follow the pattern in fig. 1 and punch holes in the guitar pick. Cast the hawk. Cut the feather of the shaft of each deck about one inch from the top. Clue a piece of soft leather on each deck where the feather was trimmed. (see fig. 2) These pieces should be about one inch long and wide enough to encompass the shaft. Position the pick over the leather pieces and thread on the two tie-raps. (see fig 3) pull the tie-raps up near snug and adjust the deck feather spacing by moving the pick up or down the shafts.

Pull the tie-raps tight and trim the excess length. The bell can be installed with the remaining tie-rap before or after the pick is affixed. Your hawk is now tail-belled.

The guitar pick should be of nylon or unbreakable plastic as the more common celluloid type tend to crack and break. For the small accipiters the pick can be cut down and wire used in place of the tie-raps. The pick without the bell could be used as a platform for a removable velcro type bell or transmitter attachment.

I take no credit for the originality of this device. I learned of it from Chris Asay who learned of it from the L.A. boys. As to the benefits of the tail bell, Jack Belangee maintains a hawk can foot better when not encumbered by the traditional set-up. It couldn't hoit!

THE WHITE HARE

By Mike Spornagel.

The only evidence of blue or mountain hares being present on my flying ground was a road casualty seen one Summer lying dead at the side of a single track road.

However one Sunday in late December last year we came up with some that were very much alive. It was rather misty, and Sioux, the red tail, was still not completely dry after flying in rain the previous day. We hadn't found any rabbits in their usual haunts, and Sioux had gone over to an ash tree by some sheep pens. When the dog and I got to the pens Sioux was looking keenly towards a tussocky grass area. Several times she leaned forward ready to fly and finally launched out on her attack flight. When she reached the ground level about eighty yards away I saw a flash of white through the binoculars. On reaching her she was shifting about on the ground which meant she hadn't footed anything. Looking round I saw a brown coloured mountain hare running off up the slope. Sioux jumped up after it but only made a half-hearted attempt to catch it and set on the ground, while the hare made good its escape. From there Sioux went back into the tree. Meanwhile I'd seen a white hare slipping away, and at the spot where Sioux had made her first strike found a large quantity of brown fur. The two hares must have been boxing and their movements in the long grass attracted the red tail. Probably the white one was a female fighting off the attentions of the brown buck who had lost a lot of ready to moult fur in the encounter. Calling the dog I ran round in a large circle to get downwind of the hare, and slowly advanced. After a few yards I could see it squatting and urged Bonny to flush it. She ran right past it concentrating on some ground scent, but after it ran, saw it and gave chase. She soon stopped when I whistled, as the hare made a complete fool of her, easily out-pacing her and making it look so easy. The back legs of the hare seemed to have very powerful springs in them as it bounced along like an antelope. When clear it casually sat down before carrying on over the ridge, and out of sight. Sioux, from her vantage in the tree just watched, so I called her to the fist and we made our way back to the car and then home.

It wasn't until the sixth of January that we saw the white hare again. Sioux was perched on a power line pole when Lonny flushed the hare, but made no attempt to fly it apart from moving one pole nearer to where it rose. The hare bounced up over the hill and away. A short while later Sioux flew off in her attack flight towards the hill-side and caught a weasel, which she had killed by the time I got to her. After a few beck-ins I managed to get it off her and gave her a piece of meat on the ground. Earlier in the season she had caught and carried off a weasel in a high wind, and when finally found, all that was left of the weasel was a few plucks of fur.

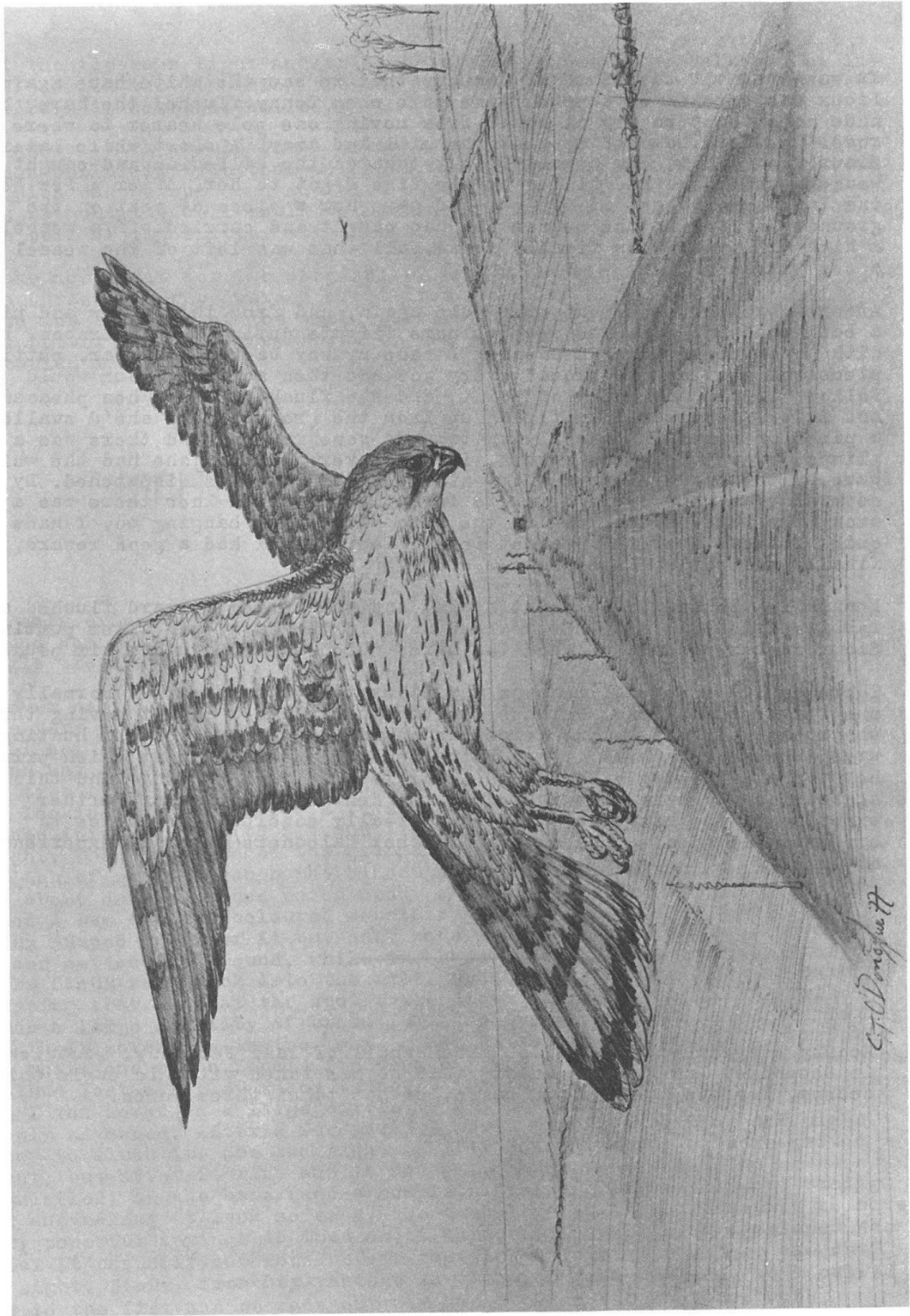
After a breather she went up a pole again, and from there flew and missed a cock pheasant. She had several more flights during the afternoon, but with no success. Towards evening I made my way back to the car, putting pieces of meat on the ground every now and then so that Sioux would follow. Then I saw Bonny on point, and she flushed both a hen pheasant and snipe. I heard Sioux flying up from the ground where she'd swallowed a piece of meat. She was flying towards some rushes, and there was a glimpse of white as she struck. Rushing over, I found she had the white hare by the head. After a short struggle the hare was dispatched. By now several cows were coming over to investigate, and I knew there was a bull among the herd, so picking up the hare with Sioux hanging on, I made a quick retreat over the nearest fence. There Sioux had a good reward, and finally relinquished the hare.

Meanwhile, Bonny was on point again, and when urged forward flushed a rabbit which tore away. We reached home in the dark, and after putting Sioux on her perch I weighed the hare, which was just under six pounds.

There could be several reasons why Sioux took the hare when normally she leaves them alone. Perhaps she thought it was a rabbit moving through the rushes, or may be dusk creeping on may have increased her hunting urge. However, I think it was being fed the pieces of meat which primed her to make the big effort. She is aggressive when feeding, and this aggression may have contributed to the demise of the hare. Further experiments in this line produced no really conclusive evidence to support this idea, and I wonder if other falconers have any experience of this.

Hearty congratulations to John Hockenull of Bank Farm, Nr. Mantwich in Cheshire. Amongst the quarry that he has taken with his eagle this season, besides rabbits and hares, he has taken three foxes.

Well done, John.



KELLY

By Ann Shuttleworth.

Kelly came into my life about five years ago. At first sight he was the most unlikely looking kestrel I had ever seen, very thin with a gaunt little face and no tail to speak of. To look at him now, you just wouldn't believe him to be the same bird, plump and sleek, with the lovely colouring of the male kestrel. His only flaw is a crooked talon which has never straightened out.

With my husband's birds I know where I stand. Mundy, his lovely old lanner treats me with friendly tolerance, and always greets me with pleasure. Zilla, his recently acquired Finnish goshawk, just stares right through me at the moment, but it is early days yet, and I hope with time to get on good terms with her. With Kelly, however, right from the very start it was either open warfare or an armed truce.



I must explain that he is our daughter's bird, well-mannered and flown to the lure regularly, and although I have in the past allowed him to live on a small perch in the sitting room (due to an injured foot), despite seeing me around all the time he seems to take a special delight in plaguing me. For instance, whilst daintily nibbling egg yolk from the end of my finger, just let me offer the same finger minus the yolk, and it is instantly impaled by a very sharp beak.

Mind you, I must admit that other people too are caught out by his deceptively mild appearance. Many times, whilst out walking with Mundy the lanner and Kelly curious people have approached us, and whilst not attempting to touch the larger bird have cooed at Kelly "What a lovely little baby", and advanced a finger towards him. A lightning foot and exit the surprised (not to say peeved) lady or gentleman sucking the same finger. What they didn't realise was that Mundy has beautiful manners, Kelly just hasn't any.

Although bearing many scars from encounters with him, the worst I can remember was one day, on coming in from the kitchen I noticed that his perch was empty. I spotted him sitting high on the wall on top of a stereo speaker. Stupidly, I held up my hand and called him down. I think that the sight of my bare hand must have been too much for him, down he came and instantly sank both sets of talons into it. It would have made the proverbial cat laugh to have seen me staggering back to his perch, knees tightly together sobbing "Kelly ple-case" as he experimentally squeezed and relaxed his grip, whilst keeping his glittering eyes fixed on my face to watch my reactions. When I finally unhooked him from my hand and got him back on his perch he promptly fluffed out his feathers, tucked up a foot and closed one eye, yelling "Out you go, you b---- horror", I retired to get the T.C.P bottle.

He has, on several occasions, dived with death. The first that springs to mind was when he made an aggressive dive at Mundy one afternoon when she was sitting quietly on my husbands fist. Mundy retaliated very quickly indeed, and if she had not been firmly held by my husband Kellys career would have come to a very abrupt end. The second, I recall happened one day when I was sitting with him on my fist in the car (well gloved!). Bonnie our collie, who is very good with the birds, ventured an inquisitive nose towards him. Without hardly seeming to move at all he expertly footed her right on the end of it. Astonished, the poor dog dived under a seat, where she lay licking her wounded snoot. Kelly promptly went to sleep.

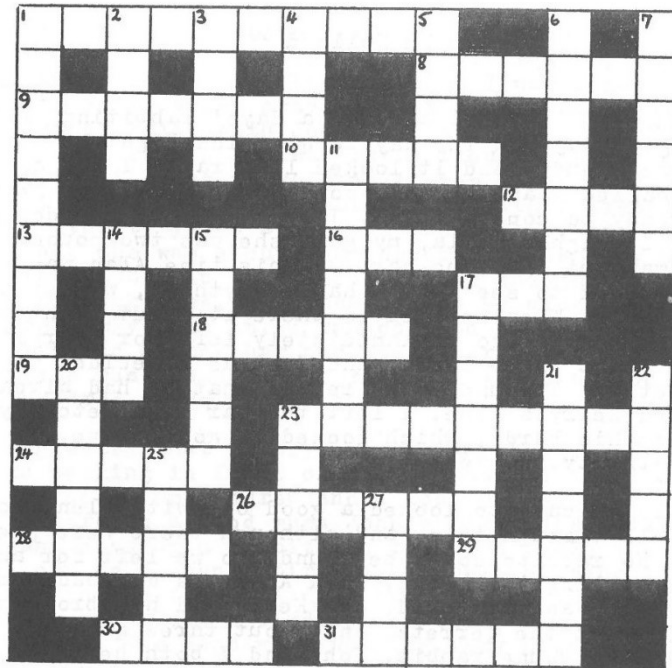
Will my relationship with this little brute ever get better?, I don't know, but I live in hopes. Sentimental twaddle, some of you may think, but I make no apologies for it. Kellys antics have given and continue to give me many a good laugh, which helps me through the daily routine, and for that I'll forgive him a good deal.

NEWS FROM SCOTLAND.

A short extract from a letter sent to our President by Sean Greaves.

'We live in a house that is a little off the beaten track but it is good to live in. It is above the River Spey and I can fish for Salmon and Sea Trout if I wish. We have a peregrine eyrie directly across the river, and the falcon was back a month ago. Since the snow I have not seen her. We have Ospreys flying over the house in the spring, and three times we have seen Golden Eagles from the garden. Once very close being mobbed by rooks only about one hundred feet up. Sparrow hawks are about and raid our bird table. Merlins occasionally come over, and we have seen a Snowy owl over the fields below the house - that was last year. Gyr falcons are on Ben Rinnes for a lot of the winter, and a jerkin was over the airfield daily for about three weeks'.

FALCONRY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. One who flies a shortwinged hawk (10)
8. Net for capturing hawks (6)
9. Term for immature birds from January to May (7)
10. Where 13 across go (5)
12. Wild jumping off and wing beating by a hawk tied to perch, block or fist (4)
- 13 and 15 down. Usually steel, triangular in section (6-6)
16. A swelling in the head (3)
17. "— and Cry" (3)
18. A hawk's nest (5)
19. Falconry is described as this (3)
23. What a hawk does having caught and plumed its quarry (5-4)
24. To sneeze (5)
26. Long winged hawk (6)
28. What all hawks should be (5)
29. To give a full feed (5)
30. The lower part of the beak (4)
31. A word for condition of feathers (6)

DOWN

1. Round worms in the stomach, giving rise to inflammation of the bowel if unchecked (9)
2. Another name for a Red Hawk (4)
3. Condition a bird can be flown in if not heavy (4)
4. Means of trapping hawks (4)
5. The striking of feathers from aerial quarry by a hawk (4)
6. Cleanse or purge a hawk of unwanted fat (7)
7. *Pandion haliaetus* (6)
11. This Circus Group includes the rarest British breeding bird of prey (7)
14. The dead body of any bird the hawk has caught (4)
15. See 13 across (6-6)
17. E.B. Mitchell's "Art and Practice" (7)
20. Small pebbles given to a hawk (6)
21. The first time a hawk is flown and kills a particular quarry (7)
22. Unsatisfied drinking by a hawk (5)
23. Leather strip that fits on wing (5)
25. The lower bowel of the hawk (5)
27. Trim or pare overgrown talons or beak (4)

A LONG SLIP

By Malcolm Holland

I got in touch with Kerry to arrange a days' rabbiting, which we fixed for the coming Sunday. On the day in question I got up at seven-thirty. It was cold and cloudy, and it looked like rain. I had a quick breakfast, then I called Alan, my son, down for his. Whilst he was dressing and getting ready to come with me, I went and put the dog and the ferret into the car. I weighed Bella, my gos, she was two pounds three ounces, then she too was put into the car. By this time Alan was ready, so after a quick check to see that I had everything, we set off for the home of John Evans. When we arrived there at about eight-thirty John and Andrew were waiting, so we immediately left for Kerrys' home. On the way we got lost three times, and just as I decided to 'phone Kerry to come to meet us, I found to my relief that he had already arrived. When we reached Kerry's home, I left the car to stretch my legs and also to look at his birds, which looked in good shape. By this time it was about ten-thirty, so we set off.

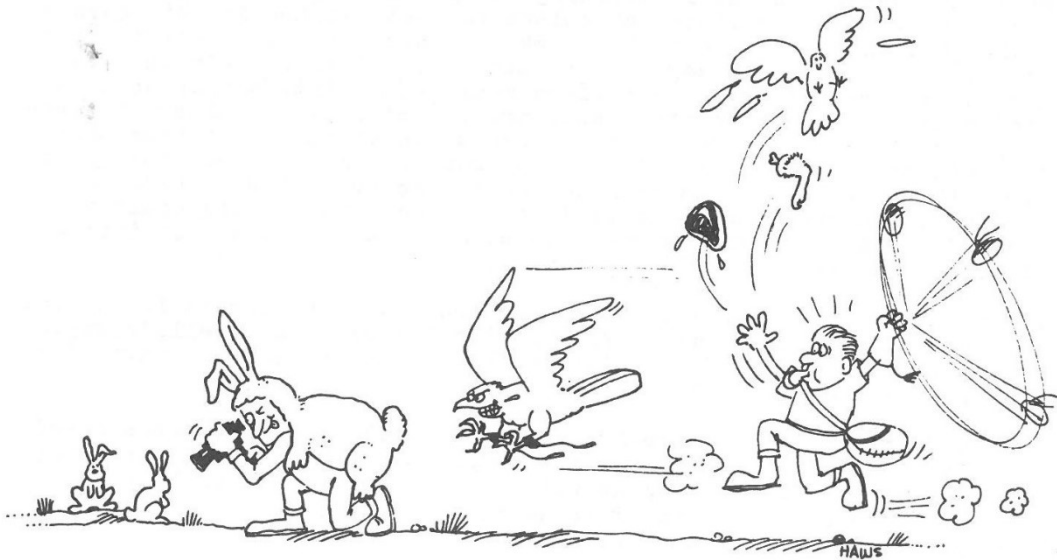
The first field we came to looked a good one with plenty of cover. The dogs worked well through this, and although there were plenty of good signs around, no rabbits could be found, so we left for another field. The dogs were working the hedge, when Andrew's dog had a mark. He went one side with John and his bird, and Kerry and his brother came with Alan and I. In went the ferrets, and about three quarters of an hour later out bolted a young rabbit. John and I both held our birds back, as it was too small. After a while Andrew picked up his ferret and we started to search again. We finished working that field, and went on to the next. We were working the hedge, and after finding more holes Andrew again put the ferret down for a run through, although the dogs didn't seem very keen - again, no luck. We had walked about a further hundred yards when the dogs came on some hot scent. John and I were ready, and they were running around like mad things, but still no luck, and as Andrew was suffering from a heavy cold we decided to rest and have a cigarette. About half an hour later the dogs were fretting to go, and as Andrew now felt a little better we set off again.

We came to another promising field with plenty of cover. Kerry, his brother and John took one side and Andrew, Alan and I took the other. John's bird was looking very keen. The dogs dropped onto some very hot scent, and Andrew's dog made a mark in a big patch of brambles. In she went, and out bolted a rabbit. I was left flat-footed, but my gos was off like a shot. The rabbit dived into a thick bramble bush, and my bird just missed it. John was running round to get a flight, so I went to pick up my gos. She was right on top of the bush, watching the dogs work. I picked her up just as Kerry's dog came through the hedge, she dropped on to the scent run up to were the other dogs were working. Poor John was out of breath after running a good hundred and fifty yards and just as he reached the opening in the hedge, the dogs bolted the rabbit out of a bush. It ran down the hedgeside and into another big patch of brambles just in front of the dogs. Andrew was angry about missing it, and tried to hit it with his stick. I didn't think that we would see it again as there were bushes everywhere. We called out the dogs and Kerry and his brother went around the back and worked their way towards Andrew.

I was standing on a bank when he called to me, and as I approached him he gave a loud shout and out came a rabbit, right by his side. He tried to drop his hat on it as it bolted by him. I was a good two hundred - two hundred and fifty yards away from it as it was running down the field. Alan was standing with John, but they were too far away to see it. My gos was off like a bullet, but I thought that she was too far away to catch it. She was travelling at top speed, and gaining with every yard. My heart was in my mouth, when with a tremendous burst of speed at about thirty yards away from the rabbit, she footed it right around the head. She was about four hundred yards away and still going strong with the rabbit in her talons, and I thought that she was going to land in a big oak tree. But luck was on my side, and she landed about four feet away from it. I ran down to her and made in very quietly as the dogs running around her had upset her. When I had her back on my fist everyone came down to congratulate me on a good flight. It was all of five hundred yards from start to finish.

Kerry then suggested that we try on some marshy ground, so off we went with the dogs working in front of us. We came to this large field full of rushes, and split up. Andrew and I took one side, and the rest took the other. We were in a wood when John's bird came whistling through the trees, just missing a rabbit. In the next field the dogs put up another one, off went John's bird, again just missing it, as it went through a hole in the fence. Andrew hopped over this six-foot obstacle like a kangaroo, and John's bird sat on the fence waiting for him to put the rabbit up. The dogs were working very hard and there were brambles everywhere. Andrew was waiting by a large log when suddenly he made a tremendous dive at a rabbit, but John's gos, who had been following him all the time, was there first. She is the best bird I have seen working. When John had picked her up it was getting dark, so we called it a day.

We had only had two rabbits, but as they say, it isn't the number you catch, but the flights that you have.



WHY RAPTOR RESCUE?

By Allen Oswald.

My interest in falconry dates back to school days in Edinburgh when T.H. Whites The Goshawk was published as a Country Book Club choice. From reading that work I went on to read everything about the subject I could find, including odd articles by Geoffrey Pollard published in Everybody's about once a year.

Following some journalistic training I went with the R.A.F to Gibraltar where, on one of my trips to Spain, I 'acquired' a young Bonelli's Eagle which was smuggled over the border and kept on the Rock. This bird, christened Wussiky was the subject of a number of articles in magazines such as Blackwoods, Gamekeeper and Countryside and so on.

During part of my eight and a half years R.A.F service I joined the B.F.C. but eventually allowed my membership to lapse, finding little value in a club that issued one magazine a year in return for my subscription and then invited me to a dinner, for which I had to pay a further sum.

I finally managed to obtain my discharge from the R.A.F. and returning to journalism edited a weekly paper in Llandudno, a post I left when I managed to persuade the late Bob Jackson that a Zoo opening at Colwyn Bay would need someone local to handle it's publicity. When I joined his staff it consisted of himself, Managing Director, Norman Fisher, Manager, and myself Publicity Manager and that was all. Gradually staff were taken on as the animals arrived, and in between feeding we built the Zoo.

Among those early staff members were Rob Allen and Jim Urquhart, by profession a ships radio officer, and a man who turned out to be more than proficient in training Sea Lions to give daily shows- this some time before the first Marineland was established in this country. Although I was unable to work a hawk in those days my interest never waned, and I think I managed to persuade Rob Allen and Jim that for the Zoo's birds of prey to be flown would be an interesting occupation producing an exhibition that would prove a real crowd puller. Between us we spent several lunch hours trying to convince Bob Jackson that the idea was sound, but we failed to impress him. My case was hardly strengthened by a long correspondence on the subject with Michael Woodford, who steadfastly maintained that no bird of prey could be trained to give regular demonstrations, and that if it was so trained it would be a travesty of falconry.

After the Zoo had been open for about twelve months Lorant De Bastyai was appointed Curator, and arriving with Strici, his Bonelli's Eagle and a Prairie Falcon, Mini, displays began more or less as part of the normal training of those birds.

I left Colwyn Bay to Manage Llanerch Deer Park, and from there moved to Weston Park, home of the Earl of Bradford, where I developed a Pets Corner and gave demonstrations with a small collection of birds of prey. It was at Weston that I first began to appreciate the true situation regarding falconry in the U.K.

Of dealers who were importing birds of prey in considerable numbers and with correspondingly large losses. Backed by some friends we began to bombard certain M.P.'s with appeals for changes in the law. I also joined the Hawking Club of Great Britain, and when one of that club's bulletins announced the Home Secretaries plans to impose an import licensing scheme I was one of the few who opposed his scheme. In a circular I had duplicated and sent to all the club's members I suggested that the proposed legislation was inefficient and would lead to the growth of a black market in birds to counter which I suggested that the licence under which a bird was imported should be treated in much the same way as a car's log book and become the permit to have the bird. It was not a popular suggestion, most of the objections being along the lines that it would constitute an infringement of personal liberty and so on.

I left Weston to open up a Hawking Centre in Devon for Mrs. Laloe, but as we failed to agree on a number of points I moved in less than six months to Chilham Castle to give displays for Viscount Massereene and Ferrard. I remained there for seven years, moving to Leighton Hall, Nr. Carnforth about twelve months ago.

It was while I was in Kent that I first thought in terms of Raptor Rescue. In the Midlands I had enjoyed excellent relations with local R.S.P.C.A. Inspectors, and had even got as far as nearly persuading the Society to publish a handbook on the care of raptors for use by Inspectors. Unfortunately the man I was dealing with retired before the scheme came to fruition and interest in the idea died. In the south I did not enjoy good relations with the Societies Inspectors, in fact there were occasions when I came close to taking them to court for cruelty. Instances that were brought to my attention included the story of an Inspector who reared a nest full of Kestrels until they were fully feathered and then released them. The one bird brought to me was too emaciated to be saved. Another Inspector ordered, under threat of legal action, a youngster to release a Kestrel he had trained and was already hacking back under my guidance - given by letter - immediately, and with no preliminary hunting experience. That bird also died.

Then there was the occasion when I was given an opportunity to purchase for about eighty pounds a Romney Marsh Hen Harrier. This had been given to a local 'falconer' by a Reserve Warden who had had it brought to him unable to fly. The wing was probably only bruised as the bird soon recovered, after which the 'falconer' decided to sell it.

I also began to collect proof of other infringements of the law. Of so called breeders who with two male Kestrels in an aviary were selling close rung home bred Kestrels, birds that had obviously been hatched in an incubator from stolen eggs, or close rung in the nest for theft at a later date. I also learnt how the import restrictions were being by-passed by importing birds in crates labelled as containing venomous snakes, or coming through under diplomatic coverage.

The more I looked into the business the more convinced I became that the law was totally inadequate in its present form, and both the R.S.P.C.A. and R.S.P.D. totally ineffective.

The B.B.C. were not excluded from my attacks. When 'Blue Peter' presented an item in which young Barn Owls were filmed being taken from

their nest in a barn, hand reared and then simply released with no training in hunting - I objected. I was told by Biddy Baxter that the presenter of the item in question was a competent naturalist who would not break the law. From a 'phone call to the Home Office I learnt that no Barn Owl licences had been granted for two years, as a result of which Biddy was told that the programme was lucky not to be taken to court. It was not the last item in bad taste that that programme has presented, I have certainly not appeared on it since, but it is to be hoped that in time the D.F.C will make use of experienced persons rather than those who make a lot of noise and hold birds of prey before the camera by their legs, rather like a chicken only the right way up! The D.F.C no publicity ruling may well be responsible for that sort of situation.

To get an organisation like Raptor Rescue off the ground I needed the wholehearted support of my employer. In Kent I felt that support would be lacking. The moment I moved up to Leighton I felt that situation would change, and at the end of my first summer season the organisations founding was put in hand. Last month (February) at the Castle Hotel, Lancaster, the organisation was founded and constitution approved.

Raptor Rescue exists to help conserve birds of prey in every sphere and to try and ensure that all sick and injured birds of prey are cared for by qualified persons who will be elected full members. Their experience will be checked out and may have to be proved by references, and their facilities are subject to inspection by the committee or person appointed by the committee. Describing fictitious news might enable you to get a licence to take a bird of prey in this country, but it won't gain you full membership of Raptor Rescue.

All birds brought to full members must be logged, and a diary kept on their progress. When fit they are to be hacked back, preferably in the area they came from. Those birds considered to be unfit for release must be so certified by a vet, then their disposition will be decided upon by the Committee whose aim will be to try and ensure that the birds future will be secure and that it will be given every opportunity to breed, bred young being released. By keeping a diary it will be possible to compare notes on treatment and generally exchange information for the benefit of all interested in birds of prey.

Members will also be expected to keep their eyes open for illegal birds and when such are traced they will do their utmost to ensure that the police prosecute. We already have one individual under observation - he is known to have two Sparrow Hawks and to have sold, last summer, a Peregrine. As soon as he acquires another bird then

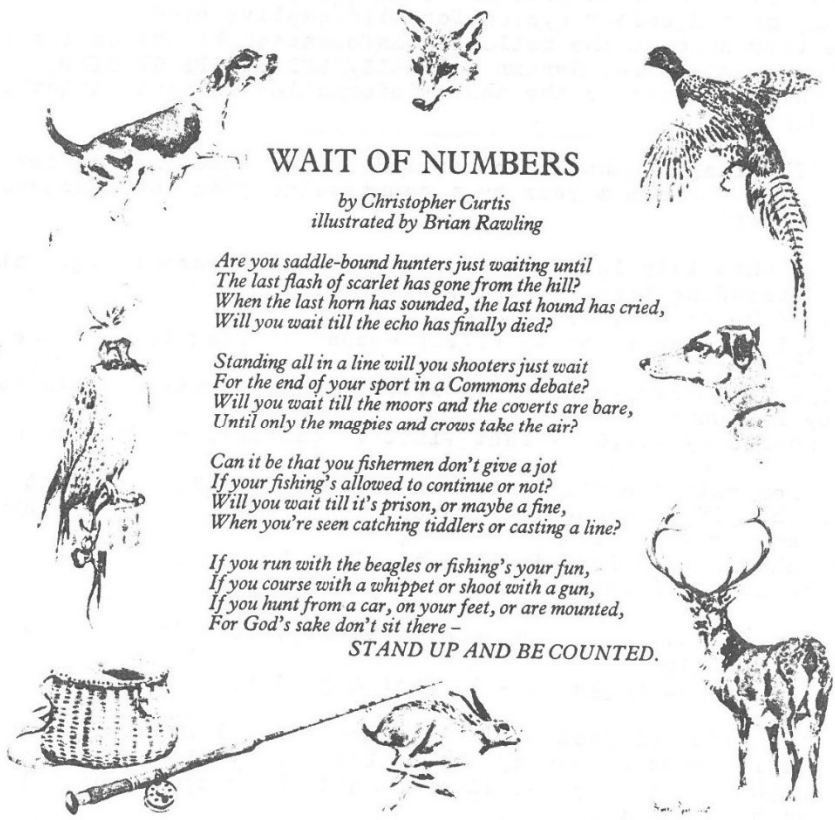
An approach has already been made to both the R.S.P.B. and R.S.P.C.A. appealing for their support in the organisations aims, and both the police and those Societies will be supplied with the details of all full members as soon as that list is compiled.

Doubtless all W.H.C members realise that if they accept for care and attention an injured bird of prey they can be taken to court for being in possession of a recently taken bird of prey. The R.S.P.B. rules that such persons will be required to satisfy the courts that such birds need expert care and attention. That is how it should be. But, pending a court hearing the R.S.P.B. and R.S.P.C.A. may try and remove such birds from accuseds care. Since those organisations have no staff qualified to care for birds of prey, and simply use persons they consider to be qualified, and since it is now proven that they are not

always right in their choice of person, I question their right to remove such birds. I argue that their removal without a court order is in itself an offence. This point is, in the near future to be raised I hope, with the Home Secretary.

I hope, in due course, that Raptor Rescue will operate on a country-wide basis with full members caring for birds and associate members ever ready to transport birds to and from full members as the need arises. I hope that members of the W.H.C. will operate Raptor Rescue within their areas, many club members already have the necessary contacts with the R.S.P.C.A and R.S.P.B. I may well have been over critical of those two organisations, but hasten to point out that conditions such as I have described can, and have, arisen. There are those Inspectors and Wardens who consider themselves to be experts, and in no need of advice or assistance, and it is against such men that my criticisms have been levelled, not at the organisations as a whole.

My contribution to your magazine has been somewhat lengthy but I felt I owed it to members to give a fairly full outline of my feelings and opinions and to supply proof that I have taken steps to form an organisation as a direct result of several years experience and a great deal of consideration.



WAIT OF NUMBERS

by Christopher Curtis
illustrated by Brian Rawling

*Are you saddle-bound hunters just waiting until
The last flash of scarlet has gone from the hill?
When the last horn has sounded, the last hound has cried,
Will you wait till the echo has finally died?*

*Standing all in a line will you shooters just wait
For the end of your sport in a Commons debate?
Will you wait till the moors and the coverts are bare,
Until only the magpies and crows take the air?*

*Can it be that you fishermen don't give a jot
If your fishing's allowed to continue or not?
Will you wait till it's prison, or maybe a fine,
When you're seen catching tiddlers or casting a line?*

*If you run with the beagles or fishing's your fun,
If you course with a whippet or shoot with a gun,
If you hunt from a car, on your feet, or are mounted,
For God's sake don't sit there -*

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED.

COMMENTS ON D.O.E PROPOSALS

Compiled by C. Griffiths.

A list of proposals originally from a W.H.C. meeting and seen, discussed, and passed at three subsequent meetings. To be used as an 'Aunt Sally' at the meeting at Trinity College, Oxford, on Saturday 6th. April.

Point 1. 'Any system proposed should cover all Falconiformes'.
This is agreed on but we would like it also to cover Strigiforms.

Point 2. 'All captive hawks should be fitted with a numbered sealed ring within 3 months of acquisition and details of the registration should be held by the D.O.E in London'.

- (a) We are for ringing both on wild and captive bred birds but with the following reservations:-
- (b) We must see and decide on the type of ring to be used before the legislation is passed as both the U.S.A and German systems do not seem foolproof - (damage to bird, to chicks (close rings) and the birds seem able to remove the rings anyway.
- (c) Work needs to be done on close ring sizes as these have not yet been perfected.
- (d) What we are initially in favour of is the WAGBI type open ring (it cannot be removed once on as it breaks on the weak point).
- (e) We suggest a 2 colour system for wild/captive bred.
- (f) We further suggest the following information be put on the ring and kept registered. Owners INITIALS/NUMBER/TYPE OF BIRD.
- (g) That whilst on record the above information is kept strictly confidential.

Point 3. 'The ringing should be carried out at specified centres, open 4 times a year by a countrywide panel of independent experts'.

- (a) We feel that this is a non starter for many reasons e.g. fat hawks, breeding time, numbers, fits, etc.
- (b) It could be done by D.V.O and L.V.I.
 - i. Flying birds taken to L.V.I. - cost of ring to be borne by falconer.
 - ii. Breeding birds visited by D.V.O - cost of visit again borne by falconer.
 - iii. Imports by D.V.O - last visit to quarantine quarters no cost.

No problem with identification as falconer should know what type bird he has if subsequently proved wrong would be open to prosecution and/or seizure.

- (c) There should be a lead-in time to allow breeders to pick the best time to avoid disturbance.

Point 4. 'Possession of a hawk should be reported within 2 weeks of acquisition'.

No problem with this proposal - in fact a good idea!

Point 5. 'A system of possession licences for all captive hawks should be introduced showing the number and species of hawks that might be kept by the licensee and the purpose for which they might be used'.

- (a) There is more worry over this than any other proposal- perhaps because of disquiet over present system?

- (b) More detail needed, who will say who will keep what, and for what reasons?
- (c) There are 4 distinct categories that hawks may be kept for, they are separate and a possession licence needs to be issued for each type without prejudice of the other types:-
 - i. Flying Hawks.
 - ii. Breeding Hawks.
 - iii. Sick, damaged, or imprinted hawks.
 - iv. Zoo type hawks.
- (d) Reference need be made to bred birds i.e. will the breeder automatically have his numbers increased by the number he has bred?
- (e) Suggest a working party be set up to look closely at USA systems for the pros and cons.

Point 6. 'Captive bred birds should be included in any system proposed'.

- (a) This is not an except for ring, no other animal or bird is subject to such a restriction.

Point 7. 'The transfer of a captive hawk from one possessor to another should be an offence except under permit'.

- (a) Good idea providing it only pertains to wild stock. Captive birds notification only i.e. no permit.

Point 8. 'Any registration/ringing scheme introduced should be self-financing'.

Grave doubt over this - very limited fees for registration and ringing duties but these must be set down first.

Point 9. 'As an interim measure, all Falconiformes be added to Schedule 4 of the Protection of Birds Act 1954.

Does this leave us with no cover for non-indigenous birds? If so these must be given cover.

What is most strongly felt is that we must press hard for the following bodies to be represented on the advisory body:-

- (a) IFC.
- (b) WMC.
- (c) Zoo body representative.
- (d) Professional.
- (e) Breeders.

There must be a published list of the people sitting on the board. If a full time secretary was employed then virtually all work could be lifted from the D.O.E onto the body which would work fairly as most people would be personally known to them. It is further suggested that a survey by an independent body possibly the Nature Conservation Council be taken as a standard and a fixed percentage of birds be offered for licences.

NOTES ON THE OXFORD MEETING.

By Lawrence Workman.

The preceding pages were placed before a meeting of interested parties at Trinity College, Oxford. Two delegates were present from the W.K.C., The Hawk Trust, the Falconry Centre, the National Zoological Society, Federation of Zoos, Cage and Aviary Birds, Long Wings Limited and the Raptor Breeders' Association plus a single delegate from B.F.S.S. The D.F.C. delegates arrived late, took no part in the discussion that followed and abstained from voting.

Also present were many non-voting interested parties. The meeting was chaired by Colonel Faithfull and minutes recorded by Miss J. Glasier.

Colonel Faithfull opened the proceedings by thanking C. Griffiths and P. Glasier for arranging the meeting. The reason for alarm over the nine point system was outlined by C. Griffiths. He had been informed by an official of the D.O.B that Falconry licensing was taking up too much time and money in the Conservation Department and that unless things altered within the next two years, a possible result could be the cessation of licence issuing. It was pointed out that the system had to be passed by Parliament and that in the interests of falconry some modification was necessary. It was then proposed to discuss the system point by point using the preceding sheets as a guide.

Point one was agreed upon. Some discussion followed regarding owls but their inclusion was thought to be necessary as owls have been trained and are still trained for falconry purposes.

Point two. The meeting was not against ringing as such, in fact it could prove beneficial in the prevention of theft. However, doubt was expressed regarding types of rings. Some birds, such as vultures, remove the normal type of bird ring almost immediately. Evidence was presented to emphasize that when small hawks, such as spars, wear rings in conjunction with jesses, chafing and lesions often result. An alternative form of identification should be looked into and research is being carried out at the moment on scale printing from the hawk's shin.

Point three. This point raised more problems than any other and was thought to be completely impracticable in its present form - the four ringing centres just could not work. To catch up birds from breeding pens and zoo aviaries could only result in dead birds. In some aviaries it would be impossible to take up the birds, e.g. one case was cited of a zoo breeding vultures in an aviary covering half an acre, with the birds nesting 40' above the ground. Also, the attempted ringing of a secretary bird would inevitably result in a broken leg. It was felt therefore, that zoos and breeders should be exempt from this clause, as a long extension of delay before this clause was implemented would not be feasible due to the longevity of some birds of prey. It was felt by falconers that each ringing should be done personally or by the local vet.

Point four was agreed on and thought to be a good idea, but it was suggested that exemption from licensing should be given to bird hospitals and to anyone dealing with casualties or imprinted birds released by children; also, when boarding a hawk for a friend on holiday or for some other reason such as sickness.

Point five. Much opposition was voiced over this particular clause. Due to the fact that hawks are kept for a variety of purposes - sporting, avicultural and scientific for example. A possible suggestion was that the falconer be licensed and a form of grading introduced as in the U.S.A., where three degrees of proficiency are acknowledged. It was agreed that some form of control is required as hawks need special attention and their welfare should always be uppermost in our minds. This control could also deter illegal dealing and prevent birds falling into the wrong hands.

Point six. No objection was voiced against the ringing of captive bred birds. It was felt however, that they were outside any system and that

both hybrids and other captive bred birds should be deemed domesticated.

Point seven was considered to be in force at present and that captive bred birds should be outside this clause. Boarding could again create a problem.

Point eight. Very grave doubts were expressed about this item as the D.O.E would not specify exactly what self-financing meant. It was felt by the meeting that any registration or ringing fee should be a single payment, otherwise it could turn into an annual licensing for each bird. Much more information is needed on this point.

Point nine. No objection to any British bird being placed on Schedule 4 of the 1954 Protection of Birds Act. It was hoped that non-indigenous birds of prey be included in this but it was felt to be very doubtful.

Single representation on the advisory body by the associations present was thought to be absolutely essential. Some associations put delegates forward at the meeting and others promised to notify C. Griffiths by the following Monday, so that this request can be placed before the D.O.E. with the least possible delay.

The Chairman thanked all those present for their interest and efforts. He in turn received a vote of thanks from the floor for his handling of the meeting which terminated at 6.00 p.m.

11th. April, 1978.

LABOUR MANIFESTO MAY SEEK BLOOD SPORTS BAN.

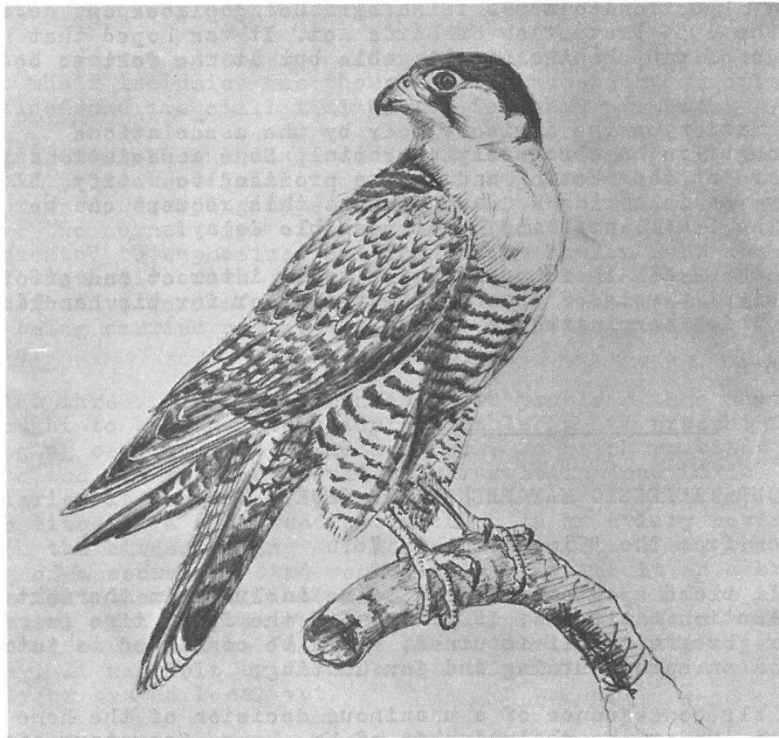
Taken from the "Times", 8. 3. 78.

Abolition of all blood sports is likely to be included in the next Labour Party election manifesto. If it is, for the first time in history a Labour government, if returned, would be committed to introduce legislation on hare coursing and fox hunting.

That is the likely consequence of a unanimous decision of the home policy committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Benn, Secretary of State for Industry, on Monday. It is to ask Mr. Ronald Hayward, general secretary of the party, to invite evidence from all the anti-blood sports organizations "with a view to preparing a major policy document" for approval at the next annual party conference.

In the past Labour and Conservative governments have taken the line that changes in the law on blood sports should be made by private members Bills, although the last Bill on hare coursing was assisted by the Government in the provision of parliamentary time.

Conservative leaders yesterday viewed with equanimity the prospect of blood sports coming into the election battle. They thought that quite as many votes might be lost for Labour among supporters of hunting and coursing as those gained among people opposed to those pursuits. (By "Times" Political Staff)



Red Headed Merlin.