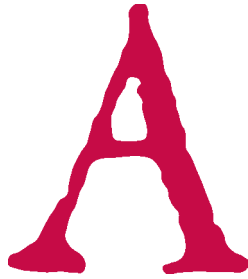


# Falconry



AS WE HAVE SEEN, FALCONRY

can be defined as the art of using trained birds of prey to hunt wild quarry. Whilst it is practised almost exclusively for sport today, it undoubtedly came into existence for a rather more practical purpose. Like dogs, hawks were seen by early man as competitors for food, but ones which, if their skills could be harnessed, would make valuable assistants in the chase, enabling humans to eat the meat of a variety of species that they would not otherwise have the speed or agility to catch. It is a matter of speculation where raptors were first used thus by man, though the earliest evidence of the sport exists in the form of bas-reliefs from Turkey, dating back to the thirteenth century BC. De Chamberlat, in *Falconry and Art* (1987), suggests that it was spread from central Asia by the Mongols, and reached Japan in the third century AD. By the sixth century, it is recorded that the King of Kent, Ethelbert, wrote to a kinsman to send him some falcons capable of capturing cranes. It would appear, therefore, that an unbroken tradition of British falconry had already been established by this time.

In many people's minds the word "falconry" conjures up a rather stylised, romantic picture of ... a day's hawking in the mediaeval

countryside'.<sup>1</sup> The opening lines of Phillip Glasier's *Falconry and Hawking* convey a popular notion of the sport, and one which should not be entirely dismissed; during the Middle Ages the art of falconry was as much a part of the education system for those who were fortunate enough to enter it as were reading, riding and swordsmanship. The sport is often seen through modern eyes as being a purely aristocratic pursuit, but it was one which involved all classes. In Anglo-Saxon England there was freedom to hunt for all, and whilst at various times after the Norman Conquest monarchs changed the laws according to their personal whims, all but the poorest who had no land of their own were generally allowed to keep hawks for the purpose of obtaining food. A statute of Henry VIII prevented anyone from owning a hawk without license from the King. This, according to Manning (1993), led to the arrest of a man for owning a Goshawk. He claimed that he had been abroad when the law was passed, and that the hawk was purchased from a sailor on the return journey, having been obtained in Scandinavia. The defendant, a merchant, pointed out that the law only precluded ownership of native birds which, under the new regulation, were the property of the Crown, and as his hawk was foreign, he had committed no offence. Hopefully, after their adventures, they enjoyed many a happy hour afield together, but the anecdote does show that the emerging mercantile classes were just as likely to pursue hawking as the gentry and aristocracy. The large retinues of aristocratic hawking parties almost certainly would have featured members of the peasantry, who would be employed as beaters to flush quarry, kennel—and and stable—hands and indeed falconers. Whilst the nobles owned and hunted with the birds, they were trained and maintained by people who were generally of lower status. In *The Hound and the Hawk*, Cummins suggests that in the royal households, the position of falconer was one of great honour, fitted for a minor aristocrat and involved 'a flattering role in ceremonial and precedence but no actual bloodying of the hands'.<sup>2</sup> His inferiors, however, and the falconers of lesser households, would have been from a much lower social class and considered to be servants—highly paid servants with specialist skills, in most cases—but servants nonetheless.

The species of raptor used in Mediaeval falconry were classified into two categories. To the modern day zoologist these equate to the Falconidae, the true falcons, and the Accipitridae, which covers vultures,

kites, eagles and hawks. From the latter family, the kites and vultures were of no use for falconry, and only the true hawks were regularly trained. In modern falconry parlance, the true falcons are known as 'longwings' (for the obvious reason), and the true hawks 'shortwings'.

The longwinged falcons are birds of open country, have dark eyes, short tails and hunt mainly avian quarry. They were known to the Mediaeval falconer as 'hawks of the tower', a reference to their style of flight, as we shall see below. This distinction includes the Gyrfalcon, Peregrine, Lanner, Saker, Merlin, Hobby and Kestrel. Of these the last two are not normally considered to be suitable for falconry proper, but Hobbies would appear from contemporary texts to have been quite popular and Kestrels were maybe used as beginner's birds, whilst the large falcons and the bold but diminutive Merlin were the favoured species of those with the means to fly them.

The shortwinged hawks, known as 'hawks of the fist' (again a reference to the way in which they were flown), are generally birds inhabiting more enclosed country, hence the long tails giving them greater agility which, along with bright yellow irises distinguish them from the falcons. The two species in this category are the Sparrowhawk and the Goshawk. The Goshawk was flown at a variety of quarry, both avian and mammalian, and for this reason was formerly known as the 'cook's hawk', which is a literal translation of its German name, *Hubnerhabicht*. The English name is a corruption of 'goosehawk', reflecting its ability as a hunter. The smaller Sparrowhawk, as the name seems to suggest, principally hunts small birds from sparrow-sized passerines to prey up to the size of Partridge. That said, the Sparrowhawk's common name, according to Liam O'Broin in his excellent treatise *The Sparrowhawk: A Manual for Hawking* (1992), is derived from 'spare hawk', where 'spare' denotes the slight, almost fragile, build of the little predator. Both Sparrowhawk and Goshawk were more suited to practical pot-hunting, providing more meat for the table but less spectacular sport than the falcons. They were thus considered second-rate by the aristocracy, and records suggest some disdain on the part of falconers for those who flew hawks of the fist, traditionally known as 'astringers'. The word 'astringer' is derived from the Latin 'Astur', or 'hawk', and Madden, in *The Diary of Master William Silence* (1897), mentions that in the First Folio of *All's Well that Ends Well*, there is the stage direction 'enter a gentle astringer'.<sup>3</sup>

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Today, almost all species of raptor, and certainly all of those most commonly used in falconry, can be bred in captivity in the interests of conservation, and whilst there was never any great pressure put on wild populations through legitimate falconry, this now puts the sport beyond reproach where green issues are concerned. Indeed the knowledge and skills offered by falconers have been used widely to boost dwindling populations of certain species: a concerted effort in North America has brought the Peregrine back from the brink of extinction there. In earlier times, however, birds were obtained from the wild, and were classified in accordance with their origins. The three most commonly encountered terms for these categories of bird were the 'eyass', the 'haggard' and the 'passager'.

The eyass was a young hawk taken from the nest before it was fully fledged, and then 'hacked', that is allowed to develop and fly free to learn mastery of the air, food being provided by the falconer, until it instinctively made its first kill, when it was taken up for training. Hacking essentially enables young falcons to develop naturally, but under the ken of the falconer. There are few places where it could be considered safe to do this in modern Britain, but the practice was very much in vogue for use with wild-taken eyasses until the early years of the twentieth century. Hacking is still continued by some breeders today, giving captive-bred hawks, often produced by artificial insemination, a great advantage in terms of flying hours and fitness before being taken up for training. Eyasses were often disliked as they treated the falconer as a surrogate parent, and the majority persisted in bad habits common to wild birds that normally vanish during later life, namely screaming for food, and often behaving aggressively towards parents. This was particularly the case if they had been taken from the nest too early in their development. We now have devised different ways of rearing and handling eyasses which would amaze seventeenth century falconers, but they were described in Symon Latham's *The Faulcon's Lure and Cure* (1615) as 'these kinde of scratching Hawkes, that I did never love should come too neere my fingers',<sup>4</sup> and in Edmund Bert's *An Approved Treatise of Hawkes and Hawking* (1619) as birds 'upon whom I can fasten no affection, for the multitude of their follies and faults'.<sup>5</sup> Having said this, there were, it seems, some potential benefits to flying eyasses. Turbervile, in *The Booke of Falconrie or Hawking* (1611 edition of 1575 original) writes of the Peregrine:

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**If you take the falcon gentle [as] an eyesse, you may  
boldly flee the Crane with her, but if shee be not an  
eyesse, shee will never be so hardy as to venture on  
the Crane. And therefore being an eyesse, and  
never seeing, nor knowing any other lesse fowle  
then the Crane, if you cast her off to the Crane, shee  
forthwith thinketh it to be a fowle fit for her.<sup>6</sup>**

In short, the eyass, being inexperienced, could be taught to tackle more ambitious items of quarry, which could be brought to bag with the aid of the falconer or a dog, than a wild bird which would soon give up on prey likely to give her a hard time! Turbervile does, however, add the caution immediately after this exposition of the eyass' potential that 'if a man doe well, he should never take the falcons out of the Eyrie, till time they be fully summed and hard penned',<sup>7</sup> that is fully fledged and ready to fly.

The haggard gives rise to many falconry references in the literature of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, often due to its wild nature. This was a mature bird and therefore a fully qualified hunter, having survived in the wild for at least a year. The haggard having thus had a great deal of hunting experience, it was presumed to be much easier to hunt with than an inexperienced eyass. Unfortunately, seeing little reason for any contact with humans, they were very hard to man (tame). In addition, when finally manned and trained they would often refuse to fly at more demanding quarry which they may have given up trying to take in the wild, preferring instead slower or smaller targets which experience taught them made for an easier meal. However, with the persistence of a skilful falconer, as Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (circa 1590) mentions, 'in time all haggard hawks will stoop to lure'.<sup>8</sup> Some would consider that an experienced hawk which was caught in a trap suitable to fool a younger, less knowledgeable bird, had taken an easy option due to 'slack-mettle', idleness or perhaps even ill-health, though others maintained that the ease with which a haggard hawk could take quarry made any other considerations immaterial.

The third type of hawk was the passage hawk. Like the haggard, the

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passager was a bird that had lived in the wild, but was less than a year old, thus lacking the experience (be it good or bad) of the former. Bert describes such a hawk as the ‘rammish hawke’:

There is small difference betweene the Haggart  
[sic] and the Rammish, onely the Rammish hath had lesse  
time (by preying for herselfe than the other) to know her  
owne strength and worth, but ... the Rammish hawke is my  
especiall delight, for in them my labours have proved most  
successefull.<sup>9</sup>

Being more likely to pursue the wonted quarry, and free of the vices of the eyass, it is reasonable to suggest that the majority of falconers prior to the captive-breeding era would have agreed with Bert. Lascelles, writing in *Shakespeare's England* (1966), lists four categories which appear to be variations of passage hawk, and as they are taken from Turbervile's treatise, it is likely that they were contemporary classifications which later fell under the auspices of the term ‘passage’, which strictly denotes a hawk taken on migration. They all, however, relate to fairly young birds which have developed their hunting abilities and which have been trapped, rather than taken from the nest. In essence, they had to all intents and purposes been hacked by nature rather than by man, but obviously, the longer they had survived for themselves, the more set in their ways they were likely to be when it came to prey and strategies used to take it. ‘Rammage hawks’ (presumably Bert's ‘Rammish’ as above) were first year birds taken in August. ‘Soar hawks’, also known in falconry literature as ‘sore’ hawks, were taken between August and November, whilst ‘*Marzaroli*’ was ‘an Italian designation for the same hawks caught between November and May’.<sup>10</sup> The final category, halfway between the passager and the haggard, was the ‘entermewer’, taken during the first moult between May and December of the second year. The term ‘intermewed’ is still sometimes used today for a bird undergoing its first moult.

It is ironic that, throughout the period in which falconry was at its zenith in Europe, there was an abundance of wild raptors of every kind.

Indeed, due to their status as birds reserved for the recreation of royalty and the upper classes, in many societies wild raptors and their nests were protected by severe penalties for those interfering with them. It was only when falconry lost influence and raptors became seen as vermin that their fortunes changed. Throughout the centuries prior to this, the fact that some eyasses being taken from a nest increased the chances of survival for the rest of a clutch, and that many passage or haggard birds had either already bred or would be released, whether accidentally or deliberately, back to the wild state by falconers to breed, suggests that falconry was in effect beneficial for some species.

The basic training process has remained largely unchanged until the present day. The newly caught passager or haggard, or the fully-grown and hacked eyass, was fitted with the essential equipment, or 'furniture'. The jesses are the leather straps around the hawk's legs used to retain the bird on the fist. The design has been modified since 1611, when Turbervile mentioned that they 'must have knottes at the end, and they should be halfe a foote long'.<sup>11</sup> To these knots were attached 'varvels', flat rings of brass, gold or silver, through which the leash is passed, 'whereby you tye the hauke'.<sup>12</sup> The varvels were often used as an identity tag. Glasier, in his autobiography *As the Falcon Her Bells* (1978), relates a dubious tale of a hawk that was supposedly picked up in 1792 with a collar bearing the inscription: 'This goodlie hawk doth belong to His Most Excellent Majestie, James, Kinge of England. AD 1610'. Whilst few living creatures attain the age of 182 years, if the tale has any basis in fact, as Glasier points out, the inscription was more likely to have been on the varvels, the chances of a raptor wearing a collar being somewhat remote! Varvels in the British Museum, though not large enough to be mistaken for a collar, are of differing sizes, including a recent acquisition which shows the Stuart Royal coat-of-arms, and has 'King Charles [sic]' inscribed around the edge. Another, of silver and considerably larger though also from the seventeenth century, bears the name and coat-of-arms of one John Coventrey Esq. from Worcestershire. It would appear from contemporary illustrations that the varvels were tied to the jesses, though Coventrey's varvel appears to have an elaborate hinged construction. A swivel, which consists of two rings of metal joined by a central pin, (resembling a figure-of-eight and very like the type found on dog leads) replaces the varvels

today, and is fastened to the jesses by means of a slit in each one; this serves the purpose of preventing the jesses from tangling. The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II's instructions in his Latin treatise on falconry, *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* (circa 1247), show that similar swivels were used in the thirteenth century but were fixed to the varvels by means of bewits similar to those used to put bells onto a hawk's legs. The leash, as its name implies, is used to tether a hawk to its perch. Again, Frederick II suggests that the leash was used somewhat differently to its modern counterpart. It seems that the Mediaeval leash was drawn through the varvels, then passed through a slit in itself approximately a third of the way along, thus preventing the varvels from sliding off. The two ends of the leash were then united, to form a loop which was secured to the perch.

Falconers' birds are tethered rather than kept in cages to prevent damage to the vital flight feathers of the wings and tail. If such a feather is broken in the course of hunting, it can normally be repaired by a process known as 'imping', where a replacement feather of the same size, shape and, if possible, from the same species of hawk is joined to the stump of the damaged one, giving the bird full powers of flight once again. This is done by means of lightweight imping needles, formerly made of iron wire or wood, though modern falconers have experimented with materials such as carbon-fibre. The imping needle is pushed into the soft pith inside the feather shaft of the replacement feather, and can then be similarly joined to the broken stump. It is still common practice to retain moulted-out feathers in good condition in case, during the following season, a feather becomes broken. This can then be replaced with an almost exact match from the same bird. References to imping proliferate in the literature of the period, often having great metaphorical value, as in Thomas Carew's 'Ingrateful Beauty Threatened' (circa 1615-39):

Know, Celia, since thou art so proud,  
 'Twas I that gave thee thy renown.  
 Thou hadst in the forgotten crowd  
 Of common beauties lived unknown,  
 Had not my verse extoll'd thy name,  
 And with it imp'd the wings of fame.<sup>13</sup>



Another familiar item, of course, are the bells which are used to track a hawk which has flown out of sight. Generally worn on the legs, affixed by leather bewits, bells were (and are) also fitted to the shafts of the deck feathers—the central two feathers of a bird’s tail—for shortwinged hawks. Shortwings, being flown in more enclosed countryside, are often located by the sound of the bells, and the habit which they have of shaking their tails on landing assists with following them. Even in trees devoid of leaves a Goshawk can be surprisingly hard to spot at times! Bells were often imported from Milan, though at the end of the fifteenth century, *The Boke of St. Albans* suggests that Dutch bells from Dordrecht were of excellent quality. Later generations of falconers found bells from the north of India, sometimes known as Lahore bells after the town (now in Pakistan) where they were made to be very good. Bunches of similar bells fixed to handles (Indian bells) may be found today in the shape of a musical instrument popular in primary schools!

The 1614 *A Jewell for Gentry*—essentially an almost verbatim copy of *The Boke of St. Albans*—offers the following advice:

Looke that the Bels your Hawke shall weare that they  
be not too heaue, nor that they be above her power to  
beare, and that they be not one heavier than another  
... also looke that they have a good sound and shrill,  
and not both of one sound, but that one be of a  
seemy tune above the other.<sup>14</sup>

A well matched pair of good quality bells, being a ‘seemy tune (semi-tone!) apart, may be heard at a great distance. The familiar motions of a hawk, even at rest, give rise to different patterns of sound from the bells, and it is thus quite possible to know exactly what a hawk is doing, whether scratching her head or bating wildly, even if she is out of sight. The sound of a flying falcon’s bells was popularly supposed to assist by keeping her quarry on the ground until the falconer was ready to send in a dog to flush. Not, therefore, a welcome sound for all who heard it. Shakespeare evidently felt that the sound made a good analogy for bad news when he

describes ‘Lucretia, marking what he tells/With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcon’s bells’.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the jangling of her bells, a stooping falcon cuts through the air with such great speed that the air whistles through the bell slots, a sound which is alluded to in the section of Drayton’s ‘Poly-oblion’ quoted below. As regards weight, an examination of some fourteenth century bells in the collection of the British Museum proved most surprising. The bells were at least twice the size of, and considerably heavier than, their modern counterparts, and no modern falconer would dream of hampering a bird with such monstrosities! Whilst heavier bells were sometimes fitted to hawks at hack, in an attempt to stop them from straying too far, one would assume that as one of the bells in question is neatly engraved it was used on a valued hawk or falcon rather than an untrained youngster. In addition, as many birds were obtained as passagers or haggards and were thus not hacked, it is, statistically speaking, more likely that any surviving bells today would be standard ones as opposed to hack bells. However, after all this time, plus a great deal of corrosion and damage, one of these bells still gave that characteristic and wonderful sound, a sound fascinating to hear some six-hundred years, perhaps, after a hawk last wore it.

Whilst we have seen the use of varvels to carry some form of identifying mark to enable a lost hawk to be returned to her rightful owner, it seems that in central Asia, a slightly different approach was used. It is well known that Marco Polo recorded the hawking expeditions of Kublai Khan, who it would appear maintained a mews to leave any western ruler agape with awe. A sixteenth century translation of Polo’s account of his travels through Asia would have us believe that the Great Khan went afield with every longwing caught in his dominions, though never suffered the loss of one of his:

Ten thousande Faulcons, five thousande Gerfaulcons [or]  
other kinde of Hawkes a great number, which are very  
singular and good ... for every one of them hath fastened  
unto hys Belles a Scutcheon of gold, wherin is written the  
name of hys Mayster.<sup>16</sup>

Given the Khan’s entourage of 15,000, all armed with lures and hoods, it

seems all the potentate had to do was sit back and watch the flight. If the hawk went adrift, it was sure to be returned, and failing that, there were plenty more to be flown. Indeed it is a wonder that they had anything left to fly at!

Training proper began with the now obsolete process of 'watching', which entailed someone sitting with a hawk until it slept on his fist, demonstrating the beginnings of trust. Desdemona similarly tries to deprive Othello of sleep to petition him on behalf of Cassio: 'My lord shall never rest/I'll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience'.<sup>17</sup> Watching is now generally considered pointless, as a hawk can be made tame by shorter periods of handling. Like any modern falconer, Bert realised that any time spent with a bird was of benefit, and that rather than staying awake all night, the falconer could be 'talking, or at Tables, hee may be vertuously spending his time in reading the Scripture'<sup>18</sup> with the same end result. The hawk must simultaneously be made to the hood, if this was to be used.

The hood is used to cover the hawk's eyes, thereby fooling it into thinking it is night, when all diurnal birds of prey naturally remain still, and is used for many reasons. When any raptor is initially trained, it must gradually become accustomed to anything it may encounter in the company of people. The hood is thus used to '*chaperone*' (the French term for the hood) the bird, sparing it the sight of, for example fire or cattle, until it has learnt to accept man, dogs and horses. A fully manned bird is hooded to keep it still whilst travelling to a hunting ground, to prevent it from exerting itself in anticipation of the chase, and whilst another bird is being flown, to prevent jealousy. It is also useful to keep a bird still during routine trimming of the beak or talons, imping or the replacement of worn out jesses or bells. There are many species which it is not considered necessary to hood, and more rubbish, perhaps, has been written on the use or lack of use of the hood over the centuries, than any other related subject, with some authors suggesting that Goshawks should never be hooded and others, perversely, that they should be hooded at most times when not flying or bathing! Despite this, there are times when even the tamest raptor will benefit from the use of a hood, in order to spare it a stressful experience, and the vast majority of falconers in the period with which we are concerned would have considered making a hawk to the hood of the utmost importance.

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Once a bird had shown trust in the falconer by falling asleep on his fist, the next stage was to induce it to eat from the fist. The bird learns to associate the falconer with food, forming the basis of the bond between the two. When the hawk was becoming less wary of him, the falconer could then, with judicious use of the hood as described above, begin to man his charge, getting it used to as many things that it may meet in later life as possible. Strictly speaking, manning includes everything that the falconer does, from first handling the bird until the point at which it can be flown free, although it is a continual process as the hawk will often meet something not yet encountered. Returning again to Bert's treatise, which contains valid information even today, he describes the manner in which he accustoms his hawks to everyday life thus:

Getting company and dogges with mee, or in  
the Towne, or rather where I should meete  
moste passengers, there I would be walking,  
hooding my Hawke, and sometimes let her  
feede after hooding ... that both men,  
women, children & dogs should goe by her.<sup>19</sup>

After feeding from the fist was established as a routine occurrence, the bird was persuaded to step up onto the fist for food, and then to jump from the perch to the fist, until the day came that the bird was ready to fly. The leash was replaced with a long line, known as the 'creance', allowing the bird to fly to the fist over increasing distances without the risk of being lost.

At this point the training differed depending on what type of bird was being trained. Hawks of the fist were flown over longer distances, trained to fly to and from the austringer's fist, and into and out of trees. The hawk was then flown free, and sometimes trained to follow on from tree to tree. A lure or a dead bird could be used to simulate the movement of the quarry the hawk was destined to hunt, and the day would eventually arrive when the hawk, whilst being exercised, would chase wild quarry. In the past, it was considered acceptable—indeed normal, if not essential—to use bagged quarry, i.e., a previously captured bird or animal which was released to give the bird

an easy kill in order to encourage it to chase. Many books on falconry pre-dating this century give quite horrific instructions on the use (or rather misuse, as their chances were often hampered in an appalling manner) of such unfortunate creatures. Whilst bagged quarry is used widely today in other countries, it is illegal in Britain. Certainly, American falconers have less trouble in training game hawks to wait-on (see below) as they can use bagged quarry, but British falconers, within the constraints of the law, consider it pointless: raptors do not need to be taught to chase and kill, which they do instinctively, but only to accept the falconer and to return for food.

Whilst an austringer would call his bird to the fist, the falconer flying hawks of the tower would call his falcon exclusively to a lure resembling the birds it was to chase. When the falcon was coming readily over a long distance to the lure, it was allowed to fly free. The lure was swung to attract the falcon, which would fly at it, and was then snatched out of its way. At first the falcon was permitted to take the lure after a few passes, then the number was increased, so that the bird was made to work harder and thus get fit. When allowing the falcon to catch the lure, the falconer gave a shout which eventually would be associated by the bird with food, serving as a recall signal should the falconer wish to call the bird back. Harting suggests that each falconer had a unique form of this traditional cry, such as that with which Hamlet replies as his friends seek him: 'Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come'.<sup>20</sup> Francis Bacon once had cause to regret this particular practice: 'standing near one that lured loud and shrill, [I] had suddenly an offence, as if somewhat had broken or been dislocated in my ear ... so as I feared some deafness'.<sup>21</sup>

If the bird was to hunt waterfowl, or gamebirds such as partridge or grouse, the process was rather different. When the bird began to fly to the lure, it would be hidden, hopefully causing the falcon to gain height above the falconer and circle around until the lure was thrown out. The lure was then hidden for longer periods until the bird automatically began to climb as it left the fist, with the idea that it would reach a great height for game to be flushed below it. The principal use of bagged quarry, as mentioned above, was to teach a falcon that she needed to climb, rather than tail-chase, if she was to catch fast-flying gamebirds. If a falcon showed no desire to gain height, the bagged quarry would be released when she was in a position where she stood no chance of catching it. If she gained some

height, a live pigeon, or some other bird, would be thrown out which she could catch easily. I would point out here that in the United States, where bagged quarry is used widely, it is conducted in a humane manner, giving it at least a reasonable chance of escape, whilst in the past, pigeons etc. were often tethered if the hawk was intended to catch them, or would have flight feathers removed beforehand to weaken their flight. Repeated sessions would thereby reinforce the notion that 'height is right'. Such practices now being illegal in Britain, the modern falconer has to use other tactics to teach a falcon to climb, and some ingenious methods have been devised. In some instances a helium balloon or kite is used, which the falcon is trained gradually to climb up to for food. Eventually, with an instant reward as a result of gaining height, climbing becomes second nature. In addition, now we are at the stage with captive breeding where particular bloodlines are identified, it is possible to breed from two birds with a natural propensity for high-flying, thereby increasing the likelihood that the progeny may make good gamehawks.

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In all cases, the key to persuading the bird to respond as required is careful food management. Naturally, like any predator, a raptor will only hunt when it needs to eat. A hawk or falcon will therefore not fly, under normal circumstances, unless it is hungry. However, there is much more to falconry than starving a hawk until it flies—indeed this approach is wholly inappropriate, for a bird that is starving is a weak bird. The old falconers learnt, through experience, to judge the condition of a hawk by its responses and the size of the crop or the sharpness of the breastbone. Today, falconers weigh their birds in order to assess condition more accurately, and whilst subject to change for a variety of reasons, each bird will have its individual flying weight. The ideal situation is one in which the bird's weight is as high as possible (giving strength and power) whilst ensuring the bird is still responsive enough to return to the falconer. Food goes into the crop prior to being fully digested, and any feather or fur is later regurgitated in the form of a casting. Even when feeding butchers' meat, falconers would ensure that hawks were given casting regularly to purge the crop of excess grease, which makes a hawk sluggish. Gervase Markham, in his *Country Contentments* (1611), suggests that:

If your Hawke through pride of grease or otherwise be froward and wie, you shall not when she kilis reward her as you were wont, but convaying some other colde meat cunningly under her, let her take her pleasure thereon; and ever with the meat give her some feathers which may scower her and make her to cast; for this will recover her stomacke, and make her more carefull and diligent.<sup>22</sup>

Castings were generally given in the form of such natural material as mentioned by Markham, though, as the majority of older works mention, knotted threads from weavers' shops or tow were sometimes used in lieu of fur or feather. Today most falconers prefer to give a hawk a diet which regularly includes natural casting material (which she may take as much or as little of as she desires) as opposed to more artificial foodstuffs such as butchers' meat.

In addition to castings birds were also given rangle which had a more marked effect. 'Rangle' is a term used for small stones which were offered to hawks or given by hand. Whilst this sounds unwholesome, wild birds of prey have frequently been observed taking rangle, and it was formerly a very common practice used to make a hawk keener. Philip Massinger's play *The Picture* alludes to this practice, known as 'enseaming':

- Ricardo: Oh no more of stones,  
We have beene used too long like hawkes already.
- Ubaldo: We are not so high in our flesh now to need  
casting;  
We will come to an empty fist.
- Hilario: Nay that you are not.  
So hoe birdes, how the eyasses scratch, and  
scramble!  
Take heed of a surfeit, do not cast your gorges,  
This is more than I have commission for, be  
thankful.<sup>23</sup>

## FALCONRY IN LITERATURE

To 'cast the gorge' is to bring back the contents of the crop; clearly a hawk which ate too much, too quickly, might be at risk of having this happen. However, there are times when a hawk is given a full crop of food, either as a reward for a significant performance (e.g. the first kill), or just as a matter of routine to keep up her strength. Finding the balance between a weight at which the bird is keen enough to respond instantly to fist/lure or quarry, and one at which she is 'strong and full of flesh'<sup>24</sup> is the hallmark of the good falconer. Bert advises against too stringent weight control, which makes hawks:

So weake, as they are not able to shew what they would doe if they had strength. If this be not motive enough to make you have a care of your hawkes decaying strength, and her falling of flesh, then know that poverty is the mother and nurse of all diseases.<sup>25</sup>

34 Clearly, and as may be imagined from the above, to maintain such a creature was, indeed is, not a simple undertaking, and where we have records of falconers' wages, they would seem to reflect the time and effort required to adequately maintain a number of hawks or falcons in good condition. Much has, over the centuries, been written about the skills and character of the falconer. From Latham's perspective, such a person, paid professional or gentleman amateur, needed to be quite single-minded and able to resist the many temptations of the world: 'Let me further advise all yong men, that eyther are, or would be *Faulconers*, that they ... must be no excessive drinkers or Tobacco takers, but when their *Hawkes* be lowsie'.<sup>26</sup> The latter excuse for chain-smoking relates to the fact that, as alluded to more explicitly by Bert, breathing tobacco smoke over a hawk's plumage was used as a remedy for lice. Of course, we realise today the potential damage that such substances can do, and it is a sure fact that that 'excessive tobacco takers' seem to find it hard to keep up with a hawking party on the hill! Latham's concern, however, and that of the oft-quoted ancient Welsh law precluding falconers from any more than three draughts of ale at a sitting, was that anyone liable to be distracted by such lesser addictions would not pay sufficient attention to their hawks to keep them in good



health and feather. Indeed, for the serious falconer, as we shall see, hawking is a powerfully addictive drug in its own right.

We might look again with a critical eye at the main contemporary treatises on falconry in the light of Latham's comments above. Turbervile, Latham and Bert are considered to be the authors where sixteenth and seventeenth century hawking is concerned, though literary editors seem to use Turbervile quite widely as a source for falconry information relevant to their given text. It is telling that both Latham and Bert seem to have been, from their writings, reluctant to put thoughts to paper, whilst Turbervile also produced a 'text book' on hunting, dealing with all aspects of the chase. Whilst it is clear that no-one could be master of both arts to the extent that Turbervile's treatises might, on first consideration, suggest, he does point out that his work was a compilation of the more reliable European sources. In essence, Turbervile was a writer of literature and a translator, whilst Bert and Latham give details based on their own experiences. Doubt as to the practical experience of the author of *The Boke of St. Albans*, which also deals with hunting, angling and heraldry would also be well founded, whilst the later treatise by Blome, forming part of his *The Gentleman's Recreation*, was effectively an amended version of Latham. We might therefore argue that of all of the treatises of the period in question, Bert and Latham, so addicted to their sport that they did not really want to lose valuable hawking time to write about it, give us the most accurate picture of the practicalities of English falconry in the era.

The consummation of the whole process was hunting, and the bird's training was, as we have seen, geared towards the type of quarry it was to pursue. The large falcons, such as the Peregrine, Gyrfalcon, Lanner and Saker were often used for flying 'at the brook' for waterfowl, or at gamebirds, having been trained to circle above the falconer, or 'wait on', as above. The falconers would search a suitable area of ground for the required quarry, generally using dogs. The Springer Spaniel has its origins in hawking, being required to find and spring, or flush, the quarry. The Cocker Spaniel was a specialist for finding Woodcock, either for hawks to fly at or for other means of capture for the table. Dogs which pointed game were eventually developed through selective breeding into the pointers we have today to ensure that game was there before releasing a



And the sharpe cruell hawkes, they at their  
backs doe view.  
Themselves for very feare they instantly ineawe.  
The hawkes get up againe into their former place;  
. . . . .  
But when the falconers take their hawking-poles  
in hand,  
And crossing of the brooke, doe put it over land:  
The hawk gives it a souse, that makes it to rebound,  
Well neere the height of man, sometime above the  
ground;  
Oft takes a leg, or wing, oft takes away the head,  
And oft from necke to tayle, the back in two  
doth shred.<sup>27</sup>

Drayton, it might be thought, is overemphasising the powers of the falcon here, striking down the quarry with enough force to make it rebound from the earth, and cleaving the back in half. Whilst not the most tasteful topic for post-prandial procrastination, it is certain that the force of a falcon stooping from a height is all that Drayton says it is. Indeed, the poem could almost have described my own first flight at grouse with a longwing. The grouse put in ‘eneawed’ (though this term was more properly applied to waterfowl) after the initial stoop, and as I, an inexperienced falconer, was flying an inexperienced bird, it was decided to re-flush. The second stoop killed the grouse outright in the air, and on examination, the bird was split almost ‘from necke to tayle’. Grim reading, perhaps, but amply demonstrating just how effective the stoop is as a hunting technique: a high-mounted falcon hitting her mark accurately takes no prisoners and leaves no wounded. She is a specialist, designed and honed by nature for a specific purpose, which may explain in part why, despite the excellence attained in the manufacture and use of the sporting shotgun, 400 years after Drayton observed a flight at the brook, for some people there is still nothing to compare with hunting gamebirds or waterfowl with falcons.

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Gamehawking is considered the cream of the sport today, and many falconers worldwide make the annual pilgrimage to the north of Scotland to fly at grouse, or fly longwings at Partridge in areas of lowland Britain where the countryside is sufficiently open for such a flight. Although the changing face of the countryside means that gamebirds have taken over as a principal quarry from waterfowl, the basics of this branch of falconry, as used by George Wither as an analogy for verse in 'Philarete Praises Poetry', remain the same:

If thy verse do bravely tower,  
As shee makes wing, shee gets power;  
Yet the higher shee doth soare.<sup>28</sup>

The other style of flight employed by longwinged falcons was the 'ringing flight' at birds ranging from larks (the traditional quarry of the Merlin) to herons and differed radically from the waiting-on flight at the brook. Some authors even listed the species of longwing commonly employed for ringing flights, in which they were slipped directly from the fist at a seen target, as birds of the fist, as opposed to hawks of the tower. The heron was supposedly the prized quarry of the day. Certainly there are many references to the flight at heron as a royal sport. But it was also argued that the flight at ducks or game, requiring great skill on the part of the falconer to train a falcon to wait above a human for quarry (which no bird would supposedly do in the wild state, though several falconers have reported being joined by wild Peregrines which competed for quarry with trained birds), should be held in greater esteem. Indeed, 'the hawke fleeth the hearon moved by nature, as against her proper foe; but to the river she fleeth as taught by the industry & diligence of the falconer'<sup>29</sup>—that is to say that most raptors will fly at heron, as they see them as a natural adversary, whilst a falcon trained to wait on can only be trained thus by the skill of the falconer.

Falcons were trained to stoop repeatedly at the swung lure, building up muscle and preparing them for the energetic pursuit of such quarry. The heron had the advantage in this type of hunting, both in terms of size and of height. So large a quarry was flown at by a pair, or 'cast', of falcons, which would be slipped at a heron in flight, and often some distance away.

It was more likely that eyasses would readily tackle such quarry than experienced, wild-caught passagers or haggards. The falcons were required to ‘ring up’, or climb, by spiralling into the wind, generally by pumping hard into the sky with stiff wingbeats—hence the need for a great deal of fitness training prior to attempting the flight. Beaumont and Fletcher used the analogy of a cast of falcons ringing up to convey a feeling of mounting sadness, spiralling, perhaps, out of control: ‘our two sorrows/Work, like two eager hawks, who shall get highest’.<sup>30</sup> The heron would likewise mount up, trying to outclimb the pursuers, and this would continue as the opponents tried to gain the advantage. Eventually, the falcons would attain the higher altitude, whereupon the heron would usually turn downwind for speed, eagerly followed by its smaller foes, each stooping from above. The flight ended either when the heron evaded the persistent falcons to reach cover, or was taken. Often in eighteenth and nineteenth century falconry practice the quarry was released if unharmed, although in the times of Chaucer and Shakespeare heron was considered a delicacy, especially if one’s own hawks had taken it. In his play entitled *The Guardian*, Massinger alludes to this flight:

A cast of haggard falcons, by me mann’d,  
Eyeing the prey at first, appear as if  
They did turn tail; but with their labouring wings  
Getting above her, with a thought their pinions  
Cleaving the purer element, make in,  
And by turns bind with her; the frighted fowl,  
Lying at her defence upon her back,  
With her dreadful beak a while defers  
her death.<sup>31</sup>

The above passage points to the potential element of danger involved in such a flight. Emma Ford, in *Peregrine*, an excellent and finely illustrated monograph on one of the species most commonly used for the flight, quotes from Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, describing a falcon being gored in mid-air by a heron. Whilst this motif appears frequently in literature, there are

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no records of it having happened in reality. However, Richard Lovelace devotes a whole poem, 'The Falcon', to such an occurrence, using martial imagery to illustrate the tragic flight:

The desp'rate Heron now contracts,  
In one design all former facts;  
Noble he is resolv'd to fall  
His, and his En'mies funeral,  
And (to be rid of her) to dy  
A publick Martyr of the Sky.

When now he turns his last to wreak  
The palizadoes of his Beak;  
The raging foe impatient  
Wrack'd with revenge, and fury rent,  
Swift as the thunderbolt he strikes,  
Too sure upon the stand of Pikes,  
There she his naked breast doth hit  
And on the case of Rapier's split.

But ev'n in her expiring pangs  
The Heron's pounc'd within her Phangs,  
And so above she stoops to rise  
A trophée and a Sacrifice;  
While her own Bells in her sad fall  
Ring out the double Funerall.<sup>32</sup>

The heron was not the only bird flown at in this manner, and it may surprise some to find that the Red Kite was also seen as a suitable quarry for large falcons. In former times, the Kite was very common, and is recorded as being a frequenter of Tudor London's rubbish heaps, scavenging for food as seagulls do today. Unlike most other raptors, as we

shall see, it was also considered an ignoble bird, and was consequently fair game. Flights at both heron and Kite covered great distances (flights of five miles were not uncommon) and were followed on horseback, rather like an aerial foxhunt. Today, the enclosed nature of the British countryside and the scarcity of the now protected quarry species make such flights illegal, immoral and impossible. Indeed, falconry-pioneered techniques are being used to restore the Red Kite population over much of lowland Britain from which it has been absent for generations. Rooks now provide the same type of flight where the land is sufficiently open, with some enthusiasts still using horses to follow the flights. Many farmers are only too pleased to employ the only natural and effective scare-crow, though suitable land is becoming harder to find.

The Merlin was flown at a range of quarry, including all manner of small birds and in some cases, with assistance, could be persuaded to take Partridge. Turberville compared the Merlin to the Peregrine:

... there seemeth to be no ods [sic] or difference at all  
betwixt them, save only in the bignesse, for she hath like  
demeanure, like plume and very like conditions to the  
falcon, and in her kind is of like courage, and therefore  
must be kept as choicely, and as daintily as the falcon.<sup>33</sup>

Certainly the temperament of this little falcon, coupled to her size, may have led to the conclusion (which we shall see in Chapter Two) that she was an ideal hawk for a lady, though most modern authorities would agree that she is much more closely related to the Gyrfalcon in her physical attributes and style of flight. This was a point not missed by Blome, writing at the end of the seventeenth century:

This kind of Hawk is fit for Ladies, by reason of its  
smallness and fine shape, as also for its good Conditions;  
yet it is of a bold courage, being in all points like the  
Gerfaulcon, and must be kept after the same manner. If

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she is well manned, lured, and attended, she will prove an excellent Hawk, being of a quick flight, and very bold and eager at her Game, which is the Thrush, Blackbird, Quail, Lark, and the like.<sup>34</sup>

Blome was accused of plagiarism in the production of his book, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (1686), from which the above quotation is taken, and the above certainly seems to echo Turbervile, except that he compares the Merlin to the Gyrfalcon. He also adds after making this point that a cast of Merlins 'makes excellent Sport for the Snipe in the Winter, being much like the flight of the *Hern* and the *Gerfaulcon*'.<sup>35</sup> Despite this, the Merlin has traditionally been flown from the fist at larks, a flight which is to all intents and purposes a scaled down form of heron or Rook hawking.

The hawks of the fist were flown at lowlier quarry both in terms of status and altitude. The small size of the Sparrowhawk may not suggest a potent predator, but it is among the best of all avian hunters in the hands of a skilled austringer (more specifically, the little used term 'sparviter' applies to those flying the Sparrowhawk exclusively). As with most raptors, the 'spar' exhibits a marked difference in size between the sexes (sexual dimorphism), putting a wide range of species within its capabilities as suitable quarry. The range of the 'spar hawk' extends from the smallest of all birds up to those of at least its own size; for Mediaeval sparviteres the Partridge was a prized quarry. Individual trained female Sparrowhawks have, over the centuries, been recorded as having taken prey as large as Pheasant and young Rabbits. The Wood Pigeon too was, and indeed is, a possible quarry species though these are taken by surprise rather than by design. A trained bird, accompanied by humans and perhaps dogs, generally loses the advantage of the ground-hugging stealth attack used by wild shortwings against flocks of birds feeding in the open, and the Pigeon, being one of the fastest and most wily of all birds, is capable of outrunning even the Peregrine once both birds are in level flight (which, as any sporting shotgunner will attest, with the 'woodie' usually is long before a human can get anywhere near).

Blome writes of the Sparrowhawk that 'their Game is young Partridges, but their excellency is for *Magpies*, *Blackbirds*, and the like small



birds'.<sup>36</sup> Magpies, being of a similar size to the spar, and nimble fliers, constitute a good flight, and few people even in the modern climate of political correctness would be too upset by the demise of a few of these cunning and destructive corvids. The best flight from a sporting point of view for the Sparrowhawk is, however, at the Blackbird, now illegal in Britain without a license, these being a protected species. The two birds are virtually identical in terms of agility and speed, and this is a contest between equals on the wing. In the Middle Ages such flights were not merely sporting, as all manner of creatures made a valuable addition to the diet, as can be seen from a recipe from a fourteenth century French text, quoted by Cummins:

Make the centre of your pie three plump  
partridges, with six fat quails to give  
them support; around the quails set a dozen  
larks; then take wheatears and small birds,  
as many as you have, and scatter them around.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps such recipes might help to explain why four and twenty blackbirds were baked in a pie in the well-known nursery rhyme!

Symon Latham spoke very highly of the spar's potential as a hunting bird, and particularly as one for flying during the summer months. He once again berated the idle youth of his time, who would seem to have lacked the inclination to put in the requisite time and effort to get the best out of such a bird, as follows:

There is no better Hawke then shee, if shee be kept as shee  
ought to be, high, lustie and strong; but in these dayes the  
yong man hath so deeply addicted himselfe to sloath and  
idlenesse ... as that he had rather dye then to meddle with  
a Hawke that will require labour or attendance early or late  
... shee is a most excellent Hawke, and will kill more

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Partridge in one day, then [sic] the best long-winged  
**Hawke** will doe in two; and shee is for every place, you  
need make no difference of thicke or thinne.<sup>38</sup>

Praise indeed from an author renowned for his great love of the haggard falcon as the ultimate sporting bird. Thus it would seem that the smallest of all raptors used in hawking was perhaps, though difficult to manage, one of the most practical. The concept of a lightweight, easily borne raptor, ready to dart in nimble pursuit of virtually any small to medium bird encountered, and in just about any place, made it a pleasant companion on a walk or ride through the countryside, and one with immense sporting potential.

The Goshawk was also a bird of great practical and sporting value and Bert's treatise deals exclusively with this species, one of few printed books to do so until recent times. Many modern authors consider the 'gos' to be the most demanding of all raptors to train, though Bert's comments would seem to suggest that we have lost the ability to train them well: 'her disposition is meeke and gentle, if she be mildely delt with'.<sup>39</sup> Blome went a little further:

And of all Hawks she is doubtless the most Shie and Coy  
both towards the Men and Dogs, requiring more the  
Courtship of a Mistress, than the Authority of a Master,  
being apt to remember any unkind and rough usage; but  
being gently handled, will become very tractable, and kind  
to her Keeper.<sup>40</sup>

We are, however, now seeing some tremendous Goshawks which have been painstakingly imprinted in such a way as to avoid the vices commonly associated with hand-reared birds. Excellent hunters with none of the sullen, aggressive nature associated with the gos, these birds are perhaps modern equivalents of those in the seventeenth century with which Bert and Blome were familiar. Whilst he mentions in detail the time and trouble involved in getting a Goshawk into such condition, Lascelles writes that 'a

goshawk in really good “yarak”, or flying condition, can be used like a fowling-piece ... there is no more delightful companion in a morning’s stroll round an ordinary English country place than a Goshawk in good form’.<sup>41</sup>

The Goshawk was flown in much the same manner as the Sparrowhawk, from the fist or occasionally from trees directly to the quarry. Dogs were used to flush game, and short, low chases ensued, less spectacular than those with the falcons but by no means less enjoyable. The shortwings were employed in ‘birding’ which to all intents and purposes was akin to modern-day roughshooting. The dogs flushed small birds from bushes, which were then flown at. The austringers would follow these flocks from bush to bush, sometimes taking great numbers which could presumably be used in the recipe for sparviter’s pie as above. Shakespeare refers to this mode of hawking in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* when Page suggests ‘after, we’ll a-birding together; I have a fine hawk for the bush’.<sup>42</sup> ‘Bush’ alludes to the wooded country in which the shortwinged hawks were ideal. Goshawks are also adept at ground game, and the larger females are capable of taking the Brown Hare, which can weigh almost three times as much as the hawk. There has been much argument over the centuries over the relative merits of male and female Goshawks. Whilst the latter can take larger quarry, there is a lot to be said for the agility of the former. I once flew a little male gos belonging to a friend, and on two consecutive flights he firstly flew a Woodcock, threading after it through open woodland in an amazing manner, and then caught a Rabbit after a long and impressive flight in which he turned the bunny like a sheepdog herding sheep! This speaks volumes for the versatility and adaptability of the species, and though the Woodcock escaped on this occasion, that it was one of the most impressive flights I have ever witnessed demonstrates that good hawking is not always that which results in a kill. The following year, the same bird took a Blue Hare in Scotland, though it must be mentioned that this very unusual occurrence was by accident rather than design!

It is from the manner in which the shortwings were often used that we derive the concept of ‘havoc’. The word is a derivative of ‘hafoc’, the Anglo-Saxon from which the modern ‘hawk’ is derived, and was used as a cry in the field to permit hawks to fly at anything that moved (e.g. Woodcock, then Rabbit!), rather than specific quarry such as Partridge. We find further evidence of Shakespeare’s knowledge of hawking in

Coriolanus, where we are told: 'Do not cry havoc where you should but hunt/With modest warrant'.<sup>43</sup>

There is a long history of contempt on the part of the English for the French, and vice versa, and French falconers seem to have been ridiculed by their English counterparts for their habit of flying in the above manner. Madden quotes Hamlet, who bids the players of the travelling company to go about their business like 'French falconers, fly at anything we see'.<sup>44</sup> Whilst the French supposedly included 'in their gamebags the blackbird and the lark'<sup>45</sup> (as indeed did many of the leading lights in British falconry during the nineteenth century, and as it would seem from the quotation from Blome above, in the seventeenth!), Madden points out that they were especially skilled in the training of shortwings, and the Sparrowhawk and Goshawk supposedly held the same place of honour in the affections of French nobles as the Merlin and Peregrine did for the English. Indeed, the 'gentle astringer' in *All's Well that Ends Well* mentioned earlier is a gentleman of the French court.

As we have seen, the ideal birds to the French aristocracy were supposedly beneath the consideration of an English gentleman, and it is likely that this is one reason for the poor reputation of continental sportsmen which persists to this day! A somewhat mythical anecdote from the modern sporting field (which seems to have been witnessed by beaters and keepers on just about every shoot I have been to!) features a Frenchman on an English shoot who raises his gun to a pheasant on the ground. His horrified English loader says, 'Surely you're not intending to shoot a running bird, sir?' The gun replies, 'No, no, I wait until he stand still!' In fairness, however, the French (though it is probably a heresy against the current climate of political correctness to say so), are a much more gastronomically inclined nation than the English, and if their hawking had a more practical purpose than ours, then they presumably enjoyed the fruits of it greatly. There is certainly a lot of pleasure to be had in eating quarry taken by one's own hawk.

At the end of the hawking season, which in most cases tallied with the winter months, though it seems smaller species such as Sparrowhawks were flown during the summer as we have seen, trained hawks were put down to moult out their feathers. Raptors naturally lose their feathers in pairs—for example the outermost primary flight feathers on each wing both

drop out at the same time—as a wild hawk still needs to fly in order to survive. Losing her feathers in this manner means that a wild bird is still able to fly well aerodynamically. Trained hawks, however, were generally turned loose into the mews, given as much food as they desired and not handled until all feathers were replaced. Hunger or stress can lead to deformities in the feathers, which are therefore weakened and more likely to become broken if knocked. A hawk in the mews would be spared any stress or hunger and should, hopefully, moult out perfectly to commence the new season. Evidence suggests that some falconers occasionally turned shortwings loose into nearby woods and took them up again (hopefully!) after the moult, and it was common practice until comparatively recently to fly smaller birds such as Merlins and Sparrowhawks for just one season then release them back into the wild state.

Despite the practical ability of the shortwings, the majority of references to falconry in the literature of the period in question concern the hawks of the tower. Many allude to eagles, which were never popular as hunting birds. Large and heavy to handle, the average eagle will take only Rabbit and hare regularly, (Rabbit being, ironically, the more challenging quarry of the two for such a huge bird) and a large, experienced Goshawk made a more practical hunting partner for these quarries. Whilst Golden Eagles have been trained to take Fox and small deer, and have always been flown at wolves in parts of central Asia, these species were hunted from horseback with hounds in medieval Europe, and so were seldom if ever hunted with eagles. Hares too have traditionally been considered a quarry for hounds in Britain, though this alone is not a sufficient reason for the absence of allusions to the shortwings in literature. The real reason, and the reason for the many references to species which were impractical for falconry, in Britain at least, lies in the symbolism of these various species, as I will examine in the following chapters.

# LATHAMS FALCONRY

OR

The Faulcons Lure, and Cure:

IN TWO BOOKES,

*The First, concerning the ordering and training up of all  
Hawkes in generall; especially the HAGGARD  
FAVLCON GENTLE.*

The second, teaching approved medicines for the cure  
*of all Diseases in them.*

Gathered by long practice and experience, and published  
*for the delight of noble mindes, and instruction of  
young Faulconers in things pertaining  
to this Princely Art.*

By SYMON LATHAM, Gent.



Printed at London by I. B. for R. Jackson, and are to be sold at his shop  
neere Fleet-street Conduit, 1615.

Above: Title page from *Latham's Falconry, or the Faulcons Lure, and Cure*, showing furniture including a bell and varvels (compare with photo of varvel from British Museum.)



Right: Varvel bearing the Stuart Royal Coat of Arms, with the inscription "King Charles" [sic] (Photo Copyright The British Museum)

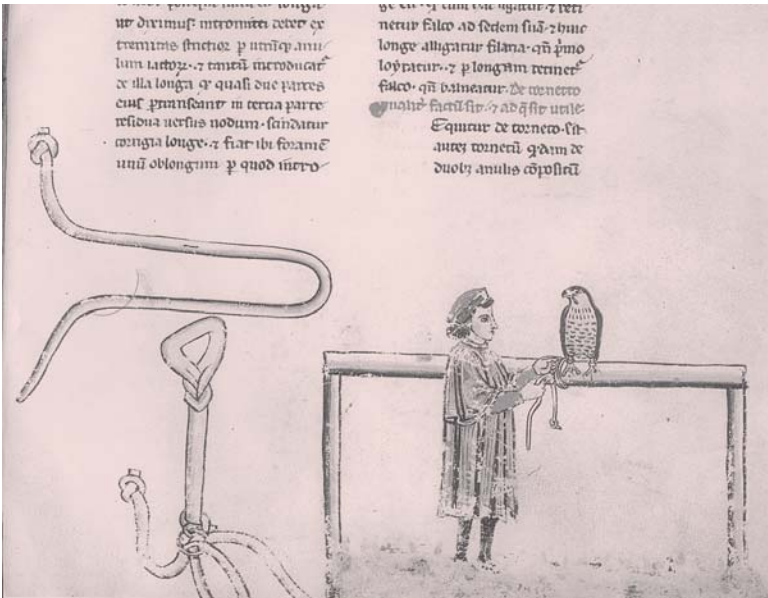


Illustration from Frederick II's *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* showing arrangement of jesses, varvels and leash. Note the slit in the leash which, as the illustration shows, was doubled to tether the hawk.



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Tethering the falcon to the block, clearly showing how varvels and leash were formerly used. (*De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*).





Title page of Latham's *New and Second Booke of Falconrie*, depicting hawks, furniture and a mounted falconer about to cast off, presumably, a heron hawk, (Woodcut)

Thyse hawkes belonge to an Emperour.  
**T**hise beþ y names of all manere of hawkes: First  
 an Eggle. a Balwre. a Melowne. y symplest of thi  
 se thre woll slee an hynde calke: a Fawne a Roo: a  
 Kiddle: an Elke: a Crane: a Bustarde: a Storke: a  
 Swaþ: a soxe in the playn grounde. And thys be  
 not enlured ne reclapmpd: by cause þ they be so  
 ponderous to the perche portatp. And thys thre by theyr na-  
 ture belonge vnto an Emperour.

Thyse haukes belonge vnto a kynge.  
 A Gersawhog: a Terzell of a Gersawhog are belve to a kynge

For a prynce  
 There is a Fawhog genyll: and a Terzell genyll. And thys  
 se be for a prynce.

For a duke  
 There is a Fawhoy of the roche: and that is for a duke.

For an erle  
 There is a Fawhoy peregryne: and that is for an erle.

For a baron  
 Also there is a Bastarde: and that hawke is for a baron.

Hawkes for a knyghte  
 There is a Sacre & a Sacret: and thys be for a knyghte.

Hawkes for a Squyre  
 There is a Tanare & a Tanrell: and thys belonge to a squyre

For a lady  
 There is a Melpon: and that hawke is for a lady.

A hawke for a ponge man  
 There is an hobb: and that hawke is for a ponge man.

And thys be hawkes of the toure: and be bothe illurpd to  
 be callpd and reclapmpd.

And yet there be mo kyndes of hawkes.  
 There is a Goshawke: & that hawke is for a poman. There  
 is a Terzell: & that is for a poore man. There is a Spare  
 hawke: & she is an hawke for a preest. There is a Muskyte: &  
 he is for an holy water clerke. And thys be of a norther mane-  
 re kynde. For they fle to Queere & to Seere Jutty & to Jutty  
 faryp.

Explicit.