



"Sultan", Goupil gravure ordered by Pierre Amedee Pichot.

Portraits of famous falcons

Dedicated to the late Piet Tuijn, biologist and former director of Museum Doorwerth, author of books and articles regarding the history of falconry in the Netherlands and its literature.

Edward Clough Newcome (1810- 1871) inherited Feltwell Hall on the death of his aunt. His knowledge of wild life, especially in East Anglia, is said to have been remarkable, though, unfortunately, nothing has been left by him in writing. One of the largest collections of birds ever made in Norfolk was the one at Feltwell Hall, which he himself had shot and stuffed, The place was crammed with birds and a visit to Feltwell Hall in those days was like a visit to a museum.

Clough Newcome had his first experience with falconry when he was invited to attend the high flight in Didlington. It was love at first sight and ever since he has dedicated himself to falcons and falconry with heart and soul. Clough Newcome is said to have had greater knowledge of falconry or hawking than any man in the British Isles. He was especially fond of flying merlins at larks and used a terrier to nose out and flush the larks. In 1838 he possessed a 5 year old wild caught peregrine tiercel **Will-o'-the-Wisp** who flew excellently on rooks, which for a tiercel is quite an achievement as we all know.

An oil painting of **Will-o'-the-Wisp** by the painter Dubourcq is part of the collection of the Museum of Natural History in Paris. On the painting is mentioned in french "**Will -o'-the-Wisp, property of Mr. E.C. Newcome**". This work belonged to Prince Willem of the Netherlands and was in the Loo Palace, before Mr. Pichot was able to acquire it in 1908

The painter Pierre-Louis Dubourcq (1815-1873) was one of several artists who worked at The Loo during the years of The Royal Loo Hawking Club (RLHC). During this period he regularly painted portraits of famous falcons. Although his name is not mentioned in that most illustrious falconry book *Traite de Fauconnerie*, he should undoubtedly be regarded as co-auteur of the most famous illustration in that book of the white Greenland Gyrfalcon. Other falcons painted by Dubourcq were **Zoe**, **Rocket** and **Marmion**.

When upon the death of Lord Berners in 1838 the High Ash Club was dissolved, Clough Newcome, the soul of the club, could not reconcile himself with the fact that there would no longer be a high flight. We know from the membership book that shortly afterwards he joined the RLHC in 1840, the second year of its existence. As one of very few members who personally practiced falconry and took part in horseraces, Clough Newcome would become the driving force of the Club practically until its demise in 1855.

In what probably was the last time when the regulations of the RLHC were issued, in 1850 or 1851, was Clough Newcome mentioned as third member of the management committee, or steward. The other committee members were Hendrik, Prince of the Netherlands, Leeds (The Duke of L.), E.L. Van Tuyll van Serooskerken v. Vleuten and Jhr. H.Mollerus. In the same regulations is mentioned in article 11, that during

the hunting season the Duke of Leeds and Mr. E.C. Newcome, together with a Dutch member of the management committee will supervise the falconers, servants, falcons etc and will also ensure that equipment is in a good state, as well as that the clothing of the falconers and servants, during their stay at the Loo, is decent and tidy. Please note that the annual season for falconry hunting, as mentioned in article 2, began on the 15th of May and ended on July 15th. This period, early in the year, coincides with the breeding season of the heron. The falcons were flown at herons during their foraging flights from and to the nesting site.

In a program of the RLHC races of 1852, one of the last years of the club, is E.C. Newcome, Esq. mentioned as one of seven stewards. The horse racing took place on four consecutive days; Tuesday 15th June up to and included Friday 18th June, 1852.

In the collection of the Loo Palace is still to be found a large gold plated silver cup, with a hooded falcon on top, which was presented by Queen Sofia to E.C. Newcome in 1849 as winner of the races with his horse Albion.

Not only was Newcome a natural with falcons and horses, also hunting dogs had his full attention. Prince Alexander, who was a great lover of hunting dogs, wrote on 19th June 1840 in a letter to his father, King Willem II, "We also had a duck hunt which, very nice to see, took place between a duck and an very good chien de Terre Neuve of Mr. Newcome." This chien de Terre Neuve is probably our present day Labrador Retriever.

In 1843 he had two remarkable Heron-hawks, **de Ruyter** and **Sultan**, which were brought from Holland by the Dutch falconer Jan Pells. **De Ruyter** and **Sultan** took 54 herons in 1843 and 57 the following season. **De Ruyter** was lost on Lakenheath warren when flown at a rook. **Sultan**, set up in full hawking gear with hood, bells and jesses, was preserved in a glass case at Hockwold Hall in honor of its great achievements.

Following the disappearance of the RLHC, Clough Newcome continued to practice falconry in England in its most sublime form, the flight on herons. Under his inspiring direction the Old Hawking Club was found in 1863. He was known as the last person in England to have been engaged in heron-hawking.

Pierre Amedee Pichot's collection on Falconry

P.A. Pichot (1841-1921) journalist, bibliophile and reputable collector of books, prints, paintings and other artifacts on falconry. Pichot's collection includes important documents and art from the end of the Renaissance to the beginning of the twentieth century. He donated his collection to the municipal library of Arles, which later became known as Mediatheque, a depository of global importance of falconry art and documentary heritage.

France has a special significance for the cultural heritage of falconry. In 1999 it submitted the Pierre Amedee Pichot collection at the Museum of Arles for inclusion in the Unesco World Register. Undoubtedly it is among the most significant falconry-related archives in the world.

Pichot travelled wherever he could find something about falconry, helped by a global network of correspondents. Pichot’s contacts included falconers of the Imperial Court of Russia and those of the Persian Shah to name some. His collection included books from different parts of the world in Chinese, Dutch, Danish, English, German, Italian, Polish and Russian. Quality editions from the turn of the twentieth century are especially well represented. Pichot published in 1865 a work of falconry *“La fauconnerie en Angleterre et en France”* and in 1875 and 1903 *“Les oiseaux de sport”*, Although his collection of books and drawings is preserved in the Mediatheque in Arles, his notes and paintings are to be found in the Museum of Natural History in Paris. He also assembled a great collection of photographs on hunting from different countries .

According to a note jotted down on documents in the Mediatheque in Arles, it was P.A. Pichot who wrote the following article in magazine ***The Field*** with some flattering comments about himself! Obviously he was delighted with the acquisition of the paintings:

‘The Field’, 26th December 1908.

“Some interesting falconry relics have recently turned up in Holland in the shape of half a dozen portraits in oil, on thick cardboard, of hawks once belonging to the celebrated Loo Hawking Club. The pictures are lifesize and in the style of the illustrations to Schlegel’s splendid folio ***Traite de Fauconnerie*** by artists such as Sonderland, who contributed to that masterly work, and four by Dubourcq which were perhaps intended for it. They have never been published, however so far as we have been able to discover, although we know of a single copy of a lithograph colored by hand, which is a reproduction of one of these portraits and represent **Zoe**, a jerfalcon, painted by Dubourcq on July 4, 1842, during which season at the Loo she is stated (according to a note on the original oil painting) to have taken eighteen herons. This print was part of the lot of the original water-colours painted by Wolf for Schlegel’s volume (Traite de Fauconnerie) and purchased after the death of the latter at the sale of his library at Leiden in 1884 by Pierre Amedee Pichot, the well known French falconer and collector.

It is also the same sportsman and art collector that the six portraits referred to have just been knocked down for a high price, making a valuable addition to the extensive and unrivalled collection of engravings and documents on falconry which that persevering amateur has been so long collecting.

Falconers may be interested to know that amongst those portraits is one of the famous hawk **Sultan**, painted by Sonderland at the Loo in 1843. **Sultan** and **De Ruyter**, the property of Edward Clough Newcome of Feltwell Hall, Norfolk, have been described in several treatises on falconry as two of the very best trained hawks ever flown. The late Rev. Gage Earl Freeman, who, under the name of “Peregrine” was a well known contributor to these columns, published in his own book on falconry an account of a flight at herons at the Loo with this famous cast contributed by E.C. Newcome himself. The Hon. G. Lascelles, in the volume on falconry in the Badminton Library (p.339) states that De Ruyter was ultimately lost while rook hawking, but **Sultan**, preserved after death, adorns the

collection of stuffed birds which Mr. Newcome formed at Hockwold, set up as his hands alone could do it. Another of the hawks figured in the set under notice is also mentioned in Newcome’s narrative (p.148), a hawk called **Rocket**, which from Dubourcq’s painting is seen to be a jer tiercel. Possibly it may be the one which Newcome did not care much about as being apt to crab another hawk if flown with it. In ***Falconry in the British Isles*** Capt. Salvin alludes to one more of Mr. Newcome’s hawks, a tiercel called **Will o’ the Wisp**, a first rate rook hawk in 1838 which died in its fifth year. That also is in the set under consideration.

The other two portraits are **Prins van Oranje**, painted by Sonderland at the Loo in 1843, and **Marmion**, a red falcon painted by Dubourcq sitting on the perch. All these hawks are painted with their hoods on and the portraits which belonged to Prince William of the Netherlands, and which were for a time in the Royal Palace of the Loo, were disposed of on the death of the Prince in Madeira. They are in an excellent state of preservation”.

Amsterdam Auction of 1908

The above mentioned set of drawings and paintings was auctioned off by the auction house of Frederik Muller in Amsterdam on 12 December 1908. Lot number 1183 A contained drawings of birds while 1183 B : hunting falcons of Prince Willem of the Netherlands from the Loo Palace: Six oil paintings on carton by Dubourcq and J.B. Sonderland (60 - 47 cm) of the falcons **Prins van Oranje**, **Zoe**, **Marmion**, **Rocket**, **Will-o’-the-Wisp** and **Sultan**. The buyer was Pierre Amedee Pichot. and consequently this important art, closely connected with the glorious period of the RLHC in the Netherlands, can now be found in the Central Library of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris.

Sultan Goupilgravure.

We can safely assume that following the auction in Amsterdam, Pichot immediately had a reproduction made of the **Sultan** painting by Sonderland. This reproduction was beautifully drawn and executed by the french printing firm of Manzi, Joyant & Cie, the successors of Goupil & Cie the fine art publishers. Editeurs- Imprimeurs. A special printing process called Goupilgravure or photogravure was used for the production of high quality colour reproductions.

Goupil & Cie, later called Manzi, Joyant & Cie, was the leading art dealership in 19th century France. Step by step it established a worldwide trade with fine art reproductions of paintings and sculptures with a network of branches in London, Brussels, The Hague, Berlin, Vienna, New York and Australia. The painter Vincent Van Gogh and his brother Theo were for several years partners in the firm.

On the lithogravure is inscribed: ***“Sultan three years old the property of Mr. E.C. Newcome. Loo 1843. To the members of Old Hawking Club this plate is inscribed by their devoted colleague. Pierre Amedee Pichot”***

We know from the brochure ***Une gravure de Sport*** that 100 copies of **Sultan** were printed by Manzi, Joyant & Cie. Half of the edition was taken to England by Pichot to be presented to the members of the Old Hawking Club. As we have seen

earlier, this club was founded in England by Newcome in 1863 after the dissolution of the RLHC in the Netherlands. We know from the stock administration of Manzi, Joyant & Cie that 50 copies (tirages) remained in stock at the start of 1909 which were to be sold for 100 francs each. Of this number 12 copies were sold in 1909, 1 in 1910, 2 in 1911, 2 in 1913-14 and 1 in 1915-16. In 1918, 34 copies were still in stock. en in 1920, 29 ‘tirages’ remained. Sales must have been slack because occasional copies from Goupil stock were still sold around 1990, according to information received from Musee Goupil in Bordeaux. I personally bought the last three copies in stock with a fine art dealer in Lyon around 1990. One of these I presented to The Loo Palace Museum in the Netherlands. The Musee Goupil has two ‘tirages’ of **Sultan** in its collection.

Article in ‘The Field’. 1909
A famous falcon

“To those who are conversant with the English literature relating to hawking, the names of two famous heron hawks, **De Ruyter** and **Sultan**, will be well known. They belonged to Mr. Edward Clough Newcome, of Hockwold Norfolk and distinguished themselves not only in that county, but also in Holland, where they were flown at the meetings of the Loo Hawking Club, of which Mr, Newcome was an English member. This club derived its name from the place of meeting, Het Loo, the summer palace of the King of Holland, who was an ardent devotee of the sport and president of the club. The members met chiefly for heron hawking, as this quarry abounded there, and it was always easy to get a flight at one, though it required a first rate hawk- or hawks, for two were generally flown- to kill one. Heron hawking was regarded as the highest branch of the sport, not only on account of the difficulty of getting hawks good enough to capture so large and strong a quarry, but also on account of the height at which they were flown, the distance they travelled and the hard riding which was afforded to the mounted falconers.

The ***Norfolk Chronicle*** of June 12, 1823 describing a famous flight at a heron near Diddlington Hall, then the seat of Colonel Wilson (afterwards Lord Berners) remarked that the flight was so rapid that of the numerous party who started with the hawk no more than four or five persons were up at the kill. The flight is stated to have lasted twenty six minutes, and the distance from point to point exceeded six miles. It was therefore, no child’s play but on the contrary often provided what would nowadays be called “a good hunting run”.

When the members of the Loo Hawing Club used to meet annually in Holland for this sport, their hawks used to capture from 150 to 200 herons in a season. To have first rate hawks, and some of them, to judge by their recorded performances have probably never been excelled, even in the palmy days of falconry when James I spent such large sums of money to secure falcons for this very flight. The two hawks above named, **De Ruyter** and **Sultan**, were brought from Holland by the Dutch falconer John Pells, and in one year took fifty four herons between them, and in the following season no fewer than fifty seven. **De Ruyter** was eventually lost while rook hawking at Feltwell Hall, but **Sultan** preserved after death by the hands of the owner, a skilful taxidermist is still in the possession of his son, Mr. F. A. Newcome.

By a piece of good fortune the portrait of **Sultan** has been preserved, being one of a series of six life sized portraits in oils, on thick cardboard, of celebrated hawks that once belonged to the Loo Club. They were painted by Sonderland and Dubourcq, **Sultan’s** portrait being the work of the former artist (Sonderland) in 1845. The pictures belonged to Prince Willem of the Netherlands and were for a long time hanging in the royal palace of the Loo, but were eventually disposed of on the death of the Prince in Madeira. Luckily last year they fell in the hands of an enthusiastic French falconer, M.Pierre A. Pichot, who knew how to appreciate them and it is to his enterprise and to the skill of MM. Manzi, Joyant and Co of Paris, successors to the well known firm of Goupil and Co that **Sultan’s** portrait has just been reproduced in color life size. It is a notable picture, hitherto unpublished and one which we do no doubt every falconer will be glad to possess, to say nothing of other collectors who are interested in sporting subjects. M. Pichot has paid a pretty compliment by dedicating the picture to the members of The Old Hawking Club who still carry on the time honored sport in England and continue to uphold the traditions of their predecessors at the Loo, A hundred copies have been executed of which a portion only is for sale and these may be obtained of MM. Manzi, Joyant et Cie, 24 Boulevard des Capucines, Paris as well as in London at 25 Bedford-street, Strand”.

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Illustration by Dick ten Bosch
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White Gyr. Illustration taken from the “Traite de Fauconnerie”