

JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A Peregrine Falcon on a broken Fence, a Curlew and Falconry
Accoutrements below

Sold

WILLIAM BRODRICK



Description

WILLIAM BRODRICK 1814-1888 English School A Peregrine Falcon on a broken Fence, a Curlew and Falconry Accoutrements below Oil on canvas, signed with initials and dated 1844 91.5 x 71.5 cms 36 x 28 inches

William Brodrick was the son of an eminent barrister living in Gower Street, London, who had a practice at the Old Bailey as well as other London Courts and the home circuit of Essex, Hertford and Middlesex. His maternal uncle was the renowned ornithologist P J Selby of Twizell House, Northumberland. He was educated at Harrow and University College, Oxford but he later said of his school days that "...all I learned at Harrow was how to catch birds". He gained a BA from Oxford in 1836 and then went to Edinburgh University to study medicine but it seems that he never practiced in this profession after completion of his studies as his lifelong passion for natural history held sway. After he was married, he moved to Belford in Northumberland, living near to his uncle who imbued in William the passion for falconry on the moors. In those early days, Brodrick procured, trained and used very successfully many fine eyess falcons and tiercels as well as peregrines from the northern coasts, notably one from St. Abb's Head, Berwickshire. He was financially well off and did not really need to work and thus was able to concentrate on this great passion. When he later moved down to the south of England, firstly in Bath and later in Ilfracombe, he procured peregrines from Lundy Island which was known as a treasure trove of a source for this wonderful bird and had been since the Middle Ages. When he moved to his final home in Chudleigh, Devon, the topography was wholly unsuitable for the sport of falconry so he had to content himself with keeping his extensive collection of working birds as pets. This collection was remarkable, containing almost all of the raptors used in falconry at that time including the Norwegian, Greenland and Iceland sakers, gyr falcons and lanners. The only groups missing were the Indian shaheens and luggers. Having had to relinquish his sporting pursuit, Brodrick was able to concentrate more on drawing and painting birds and his lifelong association and love of these birds meant that he was highly adept at portraying them in a naturalistic way. He understood the mechanics of their bodies, enhanced by his skill at taxidermy and, rather as Stubbs knew how horse bodies worked through many dissections, Brodrick's intimate knowledge of their anatomy enabled him to accurately portray how their talons gripped a perch or prey and how they folded their wings. It was not only birds of prey which he preserved and stuffed but also small birds of which canaries made up a large proportion. Indeed, so numerous were the cases of stuffed birds in his home that he had to lend some to Bath and Exeter Museums. It is not as a result of his sporting prowess or taxidermy for which William Brodrick is such a renowned figure. It is for the remarkable illustrations in published books which were the most eminent of the time and are still revered today. The first, published in 1855, was "Falconry in the British Isles", with the text by Captain Francis Henry Salvin, an old friend. The dedication at the...