

Wooly's Latest Adventures – Part 1

As many will know my mother came to celebrate her 80th & my 60th in Australia in June. Best laid plans of mice and men everything went wrong when mum contracted double pneumonia and spent 10 days in ICU in Warrnambool. Note to everyone if you are going to get crook do it in Warrnambool as they have a great hospital and the brilliant staff.



This was a disastrous holiday so when the opportunity to escort mum home to the UK came up I jumped at it. Work also chipped in and allowed me to turn a two week trip into a five week trip providing I show up and do some work in Slough on their behalf.

Quickly arranged two photography shoots which I had been planning for some time – the Mach Loop in Wales & Red Squirrels in Northumberland. On short notice I booked my best mate in Wales Drew Buckley for a day of one on one shooting fast jets from the hillside in the shadow of Cader Idris. Then on advice from Drew booked a two day hide hire in the forests of Northumberland under the tutelage of a really young and excellent photographer Will Nicholls.

Day 1

As per usual Hughie had laughed at my plans and it bucketed down on my trip from London to Wales. Then he felt sorry for me and let the rain stop and lift the clouds a bit that let us go and photograph jets up on Cad East the next day. Being an extremely fit mountain goat I am not hence the choice of Cad East rather than Cad West. Cad East you can drive to within 125 meters of the top of the ridge. Cad west is a kilometre trek up the side of a mountain which is quite steep. Some of the photographers go to extremes up here and they use military style radio scanners to listen to the air traffic being allowed into the loop. It is pot luck as to whether anything flies in or not. I was told we were lucky to see a pair of Tiffys (*Eurofighter Typhoons*) and two pairs of training Hawks of two different models (*T1 & T2*). I can tell you that you need to have your game pants on as these things streak through the valleys below you doing 400 knots so you need to be setup before they get there. We had 5 seconds notice that the Tiffys were on their way in and by the time I picked them up they were past us but I still managed to get some shots.

Six shots – 2 Tiffys (*one is soft showing the difficulty of focussing*) plus two T1 Hawks (*they have no missile rails on the tips of the wings*) then finally two T2s.







Day 2

The second day Hughie blew me off the mountain so the backup plan was to go back to Gigrin Farm near Rhayder in Central Wales where they have a Red Kite recovery centre. The ones I saw looked very healthy and I had a blast there for three hours working on my BIF techniques all handheld using a good canon 1D X & the 400mm f2.8. I did try using extenders but found it impossible to track. More work required.

Alas that was all the time that I had allotted for Wales. Only makes me want to come back for longer when the weather is better. After all I was supposed to be looking after my 80 year old mother – don't fret she is fitter than me and could walk me into the ground any day!

Six Kite shots plus two buzzards.









Next instalment will be how I did up in Northumberland with the Red Squirrels.