

Chapter 12

Will awoke the next morning to the sound of Jason singing quietly, whilst he brewed up for breakfast.



"I am the eagle I live in high country ... Go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArnbiHx6hk> to listen.

Words and music by John Denver and Mike Taylor Copyright Warner/Chappel Music Inc



"You sound very musical this morning," Will commented, as he unrolled himself from the sleeping bag and bivy bag he'd spent the chilly night in. "Coffee smells good," he added.

"Yeah," Jason replied. "One of my favourites – 'The Eagle and the Hawk' by John Denver. (Look up the lyrics on the internet. It's a lovely song to learn.) You just can't beat Mr Denver when you're out in the countryside. He really appreciated life in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, where he lived.

"I remember 'Rocky Mountain High'" said Will. "I always like that one."

"Mm, me too," Jason replied. He busied himself with breakfast whilst Will stretched the night chill from his bones. "Bacon and beans do you?" he asked.

"Bring it on!" replied Will. "I could eat that deer we found yesterday!"

As they enjoyed lunch, they heard footsteps in the wood, and it wasn't long before Dan's head appeared over the scrub. "Is that coffee I smell?" he asked.

"Help yourself," responded Jason.

The big Badger Group man pushed through the thorn scrub, grabbed a tin cup and poured himself a steaming mug of coffee. He savoured it as it slid down. He looked around him at the camp. In a way, he envied the two SOU men the life they led. Out in the countryside, free to do what you think is right in a worthy cause. But, on the other hand, you had to be a certain type to stand it. You had to be strong, tough, independent, self-reliant, confident of your own ability and resourceful. These military men just got on with it. The hard parts just didn't seem to bother them. He wasn't sure he could ever be hard enough for this life. He admired the two men sitting across the camp fire from him!



"I've one or two things to tell you. Firstly, the saga of the deer. I came up with the vet, and he took samples from the animal. He agrees with you. The cat killed it. No doubt in his mind."

"And your sighting of the deer has certainly stirred the village – though, of course, they don't know it was you that reported it. I just said 'a walker' had phoned it in. It certainly has implications for the village though. I don't think the dog-walkers will be straying far into the woods from now on. Might make the local yobs think twice about coming into the woods to snare too!" he added.

"But," he announced with emphasis. "Jane Rule rang me this morning. They've got some really good intelligence that the setts around here will be hit, probably tomorrow."

"Not good news," Jason said. "But at least it might finally bring matters to a head." Will nodded solemnly.

"Jane and Paul are coming up to talk over tactics later," added Dan. We need to be ready if they do hit."

The three men cleared up camp and wandered off around the wood, making their plans for the forthcoming strike on the setts. They considered every angle and possibility. They knew they had to get this right. There are no second chances.

As they meandered back, they were met by the two police wildlife officers. "Has Dan told you our news?" Jane asked, a little unnecessarily. It was pretty obvious from what was going on that plans were already being made. "Here's a bit more. Our forensics lads have got a match on something they found from the last dig. Belonged to a criminal called



Sean O'Vile. We've been tracking Sean for some time on our new computer system. He's well known to us and the local force in Manchester. Has form for burglary, robbery, fraud - you name it, Sean's had a go at it, I'd like to think that Sean and his mates are involved with this dig. I'd love to meet up with him again!"



Jason nodded and led the way back to camp. A mug of coffee later and the five fell to discussing the details for what seemed as if it was to come. Jane wanted 'wolves' placed at either end of the wood to watch each entrance. Jason and Will volunteered for that duty. "Listen for fox barks. We'll bark three times if our marks come into the wood," he said. The two men could imitate all kinds of natural sounds if it came to it.

"I'll have a good number of officers placed in the wood," Jane continued. We'll get a camera crew in too. It will make good evidence. The IT lads will set that up for us. Are there any good spots which would keep the crew out of sight, but allow them to film?"

"I've got just the spot," replied Will. "They could set up in the little well at the side of the sett. They would be down in the well a couple of feet, but the camera could be looking over the top." The police agreed that it would be the ideal spot, and made notes to that effect.



"I think that well is actually Roman," Dan informed them. There was a small camp around here in Roman times. They came up into the Dales for the metals."

"Wow!" said Will. "I didn't realise it was as old as that! Imagine that well still being there after all this time."

"Yeah," Dan nodded. There's quite a bit of archaeology around these parts. I've done a bit of archaeological volunteer work over the years. It's amazing what you can still find. Of course, *you can't just go and dig anywhere*. You'd need permission from the landowners, and you shouldn't really meddle in a site, if you don't know what you are doing. It's very easy to destroy archaeology if you get it wrong!"

"It's fascinating though," said Jason. "I guess there are places where the public can go and see the archaeology for themselves," he continued. "Who do you volunteer for?"

"The universities are usually the ones organising the work. The Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland are great. They help organise things too, You can find out lots of stuff from their

website." <http://www.dur.ac.uk/archandarch.dandn/index.htm> "I was involved in the dig of the Roman fort at Binchester, near Bishop Auckland," Dan continued. "Now there's a site worth dropping in to."

Binchester Roman Fort - visitor information

The fort is open to the public every year, from Easter weekend through to 30 September.

Opening hours are daily 11.00am to 5.00pm from 23 April to the end of June, and all through September. The Fort opens from 10.00am to 5.00pm in July and August only.

Binchester Fort is in the centre of County Durham, approximately one and a half miles north of Bishop Auckland. Car parking is available on-site and the fort is signposted from the A690 Durham-Crook, from A688 Spennymoor - Bishop Auckland road and from Bishop Auckland town centre. Alternatively, the fort is a scenic 20 minute walk along the banks of the River Wear from Bishop Auckland market place.

Explore the impressive remains of a Roman bath house with its amazing 1,700 year old under floor heating system. Find out why taking a bath in Roman times was about more than just getting clean! Walk in the footsteps of the soldiers around the remains of the Commander's House - see if you can find the beast of Binchester among the ruins.

Visiting Binchester Roman Fort - background history

Binchester was once the largest Roman fort in County Durham. A small part has been excavated and is open to view and to visit. However, most of the fort and the remains of the nearby civilian settlement still lie buried in the surrounding fields.

Binchester Fort was built in the second half of the first century AD, when the Roman army was asserting its power in the North East of England. Originally, the fort was built in wood: when the Romans knew they would be in the area for a long time, it was rebuilt in stone. The soldiers in the fort didn't come from this area; they came from all over the Roman Empire. We know that a cavalry unit from Spain was here in the 2nd century AD and that a unit originally made up of Dutch tribesmen was here in the 3rd century AD.

"I think I'll look into that," said DC Deed. "Sounds like a great thing to get involved in."

"I can recommend it," agreed Dan.

"What about stuff for kids?" asked the detective sergeant?

"Oh, there are loads," Dan replied. "They can get in touch with the Young Archaeologists' Club at <http://www.yac-uk.org/> They'll point them in the right direction for things they can do."

"What about badgers and archaeology?" asked Will. "Is it a problem?"

"Can be, unfortunately," replied Dan, "but we try to live with it. We watch sites carefully, where we know there is archaeology, and if there's a problem, we report it and try to solve it. But usually, we manage to get along fine with wildlife and history."

When the plans were laid, Dan and the police officers left the wood and Jason and Will set to making sure that nothing in the wood would give away their positions or the fact that anything might be different. Everything had to look good for the diggers tomorrow. The slightest thing could scare them off, and then the whole

project would have been for nothing. They might not hit the setts there for a while. But they might hit them tomorrow. They would always be back eventually!

