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wrt Red Grouse

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About 1840 William Pinches of Ticklerton and the Revd. R. J. Buddicom introduced a few pair of red grouse (from Yorkshire) to the Long Mynd. Though it was the bird's southernmost habitat in 19th-century England, the high, treeless, heather-and-bilberry moorland suited well, (fn. 67) and the sport which the common afforded (apparently unaffected by the volunteer gunners' summer practices) (fn. 68) became one of the manorial property's most desirable features. (fn. 69) Mrs. Coleman let Pinches have it but on his death in 1849 his brother-in-law Buddicom lost it after Moses Benson, of Lutwyche, 'treacherously applied over his head to Mrs. Coleman'. (fn. 70) Benson's grandson R. B. Benson, who also leased the shooting, (fn. 71) bought the manor in 1888, and A. S. Browne, who bought the manor from Maj. G. R. Benson in 1925, was another tenant of the shooting before his purchase. (fn. 72) Such continuous interest produced good sport: a day's bag of 96 brace by four or five guns was remembered in 1935. (fn. 73) Browne improved the shooting to the satisfaction of his successor R. D. Cohen. (fn. 74) William Humphrey, lord 1937-63 and previously agent to his predecessor M. V. Wenner, was the breeder of a unique strain of English 'Llewelin' setters. (fn. 75)

Wenner and Humphrey both enjoyed shooting over their setters, but their attempts to confine a potentially careless public to rights of way over the common had little success. Public access led to damage: a match dropped by a labourer more used to town than country life destroyed 1,000 a. of heather in 1922, and in the spring of 1935 alone there were three fires. (fn. 76) In 1935 Humphrey admitted that 'hikers' behaved well on the hill, (fn. 77) but there were other classes of visitor who perhaps did not; (fn. 78) and the beginning of flights by the Midland Gliding Club in 1934 was said to have attracted too many spectators, they (and their dogs) probably doing more harm to the grouse than the gliders did. (fn. 79) During the Second World War Humphrey could not exercise his sporting rights; afterwards, however, he resumed his 'days at grouse' with a mounted party, flying falcons at birds found by his setters. (fn. 80) In 1965-6 the manor and common were acquired by the National Trust, which was faced with potentially difficult management problems in reconciling agricultural and recreational interests. (fn. 81) By then, however, recreational interests were primarily those of visitors to the area (fn. 82) rather than sportsmen, though bags of 113 brace for the 1975 season and 32 brace in 1990 were recorded; the latter was the highest seasonal bag for a decade and indicated the need for conservation. (fn. 83)