

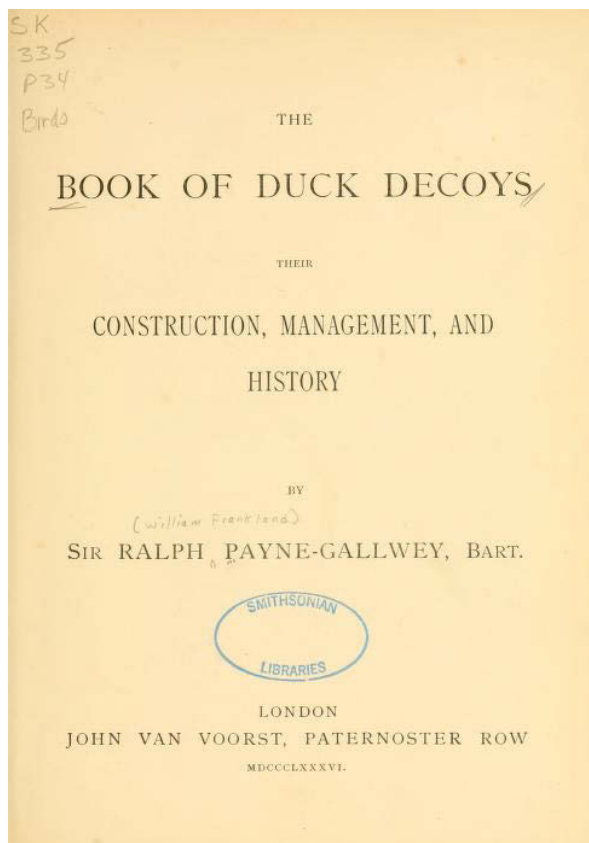
Item 78.3

Heaton, A.M. (2016b) MS for Histo. wrt Decoys in Shropshire

Information on Duck Decoys in Shropshire

1. Pages taken from Payne-Gallwey 1886
2. Pages taken from Whitaker 1918
3. Notes recorded by Andrew Heaton on Payne-Gallwey's annotations in his own copy of "The Book of Duck Decoys", including information on four Shropshire sites - Onslow, Hawkstone, Sundorne, Oakley - and a sketch of the decoy at Onslow (copy by Andrew Heaton of Payne-Gallwey's diagram annotating his book)
4. Notes made by Andrew Heaton on visit to Onslow.

1. RPG 1886



DECOYS IN THE COUNTY OF SHROPSHIRE.

Decoys in use.

Oakley Park.
Sundorne Castle.

Decoys not in use.

Aston Hall.

Oakley Park, Bromfield, 3 miles WNW. from Ludlow.—The Decoy here is the property of Lord Windsor, and of some antiquity, being marked in a map of 1796. It covers an area of about five-and-twenty acres, and has four pipes. Originally there were but two pipes, but in 1834 two others were added by the late Hon. Robert Clive.

The present Decoyman, who has been at Oakley about ten years, states, that the average number of ducks taken annually is from 110 to 120. His father was Decoyman before him for more than 30 years, and he says they used to take many more in the first years that his father was there, but owing to some large pool on another property above the Decoy being done away with, they did not get so many birds afterwards.

Sundorne Castle, 5 miles NE. of Shrewsbury.—There is a Decoy here on the property of the Rev. J. D. Corbett. It consists of 3 pipes, attached to a lake of 30 acres, and was constructed some 100 years ago by John Corbett, the famous fox-hunter. The Decoy is 500 yards from the Castle. The takes are not large, as the Decoy is only used to supply the table of its owner.

Aston Hall.—There are the remains of a four-pipe Decoy here on the estate of Colonel Richard Lloyd of Aston Hall, Oswestry.

The pool is 3 miles from Aston Hall, and 2 from Whittington. It is placed in an angle between the River Perry and the Ellesmere Canal, on part of a large tract of marsh land known as Baggy (or Boggy) Moor, and through which the River Perry flows. The Decoy is a quarter of a mile distant from both the canal and the river. Its age is about 200 years, but it has not been in use for the last 80. It was made by Thomas Lloyd, Esq., of Aston, who died in 1692.

The pool consists of 1 acre, 2 roods, 6 perches.

There are no records of its successes.

In the Aston pedigree the following note occurs on the page which records the death of Thomas Lloyd, the constructor of the Decoy :—

"Mr. Thomas Lloyd made a Decoy on the moor for taking wildfowl, and Mr. Mytton, of Halston, built a forge close by on the opposite side of the River Perry, for the purpose of disturbing the ducks for shooting at them, for which a bill in Chancery was afterwards preferred against Mr. Mytton by Mr. Lloyd."*

In Davies' "History of Whittington Castle," printed about 1800, the following very curious lines, quoted from an epitaph, occur :—

"ANDREW WILLIAMS,

"BORN A.D. 1692. DIED APRIL 18, 1776.

"Aged 84 years.

"Of which time he lived under the Aston family as Decoyman 60 years.

"Here lies the Decoyman who lived like an otter,
Dividing his time betwixt land and water ;
His hide he oft soaked in the waters of Perry, †
Whilst Aston old beer his spirits kept cherry ;
Amphibious his life, Death was puzzled to say
How to dust to reduce such well-moistened clay ;
So Death turned Decoyman and 'coyed him to land,
Where he fixed his abode till quite dried to the hand ;
He then found him fitting for crumbling to dust,
And here he lies mouldering as you and I must."

* Mr. Lloyd won the lawsuit from Mr. Mytton (ancestor of the famous Jack Mytton), and both parties rode up to London to give their evidence.

† The name of the river close by the Decoy.

BRITISH DUCK DECOYS
OF
TO-DAY, 1918.

By
J. WHITAKER, F.Z.S.,
of Rainworth, Notts.,
Vice-President of the Selborne Society.

Author of
"The Deer Parks of England," "History of the Birds of Nottinghamshire," "Scribbles of a Hedgerow Naturalist," "Nimrod, Ramrod and Fishing Rod Tales," "Jottings of a Nature Lover," &c.; and Compiler of the List of Birds in the Victorian History of Nottinghamshire.

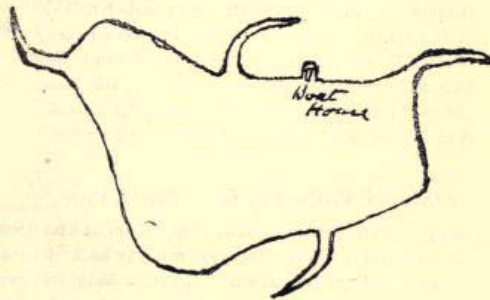
FIRST EDITION.

PUBLISHERS:
THE BURLINGTON PUBLISHING CO., LTD.,
74-77, TEMPLE CHAMBERS, LONDON, E.C.

1918

SHROPSHIRE.

Name of Decoy—Oakly Park.
Name of Owner—The Earl of Plymouth.
Size of Water—3 acres 1 rood 22 perches.
In a Wood of 13 acres.
Number of Pipes—4.
Dogs have been used.



This decoy is an old one, and is marked on a map dated 1796. Originally there were only two pipes, but two more were added in 1834 by the late Hon. Robert Clive. Ducks are only taken to supply the house and give away, and the common wild duck is the bird caught. The decoy is 3 miles north-west of Ludlow. In Davies' "History of Whittington Castle," printed about 1800, the following curious lines from an epitaph occur:—

ANDREW WILLIAMS,
Born A.D. 1693; died April 18th, 1776,
Aged 84 years,

of which time he lived under the Aston family as decoyman for 60 years; this decoy has not been worked for a number of years now.

“ Here lies the decoyman, who lived like an otter,
Dividing the time betwixt land and water;
His hide he oft soaked in the waters of Perry,
Whilst Aston old beer his spirits kept cheery.
Amphibious his life, Death was puzzled to say
How to dust to reduce such well-moistened clay;
So Death turned decoyman and 'coyed him to land,
Where he fixed his abode till dried to the hand.
He then found him fitting for crumbling to dust,
And here he lies mouldering as you and I must.”

OAKLEY PARK DECOY (APRIL, 1918).

Finding I could combine a visit to my sister at Clevedon, in Somerset, and to Oakly Decoy on my way back, I wrote to Mr. Bruce, Lord Plymouth's agent, asking for permission to see it. He most kindly consented, and asked me to stay a night at Prior's Halton with him. After spending ten days, during which time I saw the beautiful surroundings of Clevedon, I left on April 19th, and had time on my way to see the fine church of St. Mary's, Redcliffe, at Bristol, and the Cathedral at Hereford, I arrived at Ludlow, where Mr. Bruce met me, and as we passed through the old town I saw the church, a large and fine one, and the grand old castle, which played so great a part in the long past days. After a dish of tea, we proceeded to the headkeeper's, and found him waiting for us. In walking to the decoy, Mr. Bruce showed me a splendid oak, great in girth, long in bole, and with a grand

spreading top. It is a magnificent specimen of a grand old English tree, and now at its very best. Close by are the ponds, one of which is the decoy. The River Teme runs through them. The nearest to the decoyman's cottage is called the Upper Pond, and is about 6 acres in extent; then comes the Decoy Pool, $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, with some nice reed beds at one end; then the middle one, this is the largest, just over 9 acres; and the fourth is the lower pond, $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres. The Decoy Pool is a perfect one for its purpose, large enough, but not too big, surrounded by a plantation of 13 acres, in which are some grand trees, especially silver firs. These are very tall and of great girth, and here and there big Scotch firs, long in the stem, clean of bark and ruddy in colour. It was cold, but the sun shone and birds sang. The decoy has four pipes—north, south, east and west. Here they are called *Flues*. Nowhere else have I heard this name used for a pipe. They are shorter than any I have seen, and are from 52 to 54 yards long, and do not cover so much water as in other decoys. The hoops are of iron, fastened to oak posts, and the covering string nets. The screens are of reeds, and not more than 5 feet high, less in some places. The entrance of pipes is about 9 feet high and 16 feet wide. The exposed parts of the banks have reed screens, and on the head of pond spruce boughs drawn through rails. No dog is used. There were nine mallards on the water. No doubt their partners were sitting in the bracken in the park, and I saw two pairs of coots. The decoyman, who had joined us, pointed out a bird on the water on the far side of the next pond, and said there is a Spanish goose, the first we ever had here. I put my glasses on it, and saw it was a great-crested grebe. I was surprised, partly at

the wonderful name given it, and also that it was the first they had ever seen, and the place such a likely one. After a delightful hour we left this interesting spot, and I was pleased to have seen another of the now only too few decoys in England, and I felt much indebted to Mr. Bruce for his kindness in giving me the opportunity of doing so.

THE BOOK OF DUCK DECOYS – RALPH PAYNE-GALLWEY

Harrison Zoological Museum, Bowerwood House, St Botolph's Road, Sevenoaks, Kent – holds Payne-Gallwey's own copy of the book, annotated in the margins and endpapers with his notes on eg additional decoys, etc, also pasted-in cuttings from magazines, letters, etc on the subject of decoys. Includes some mentions of decoys in Holland, France, Germany.

Bookplate: Belongs to the Library, Thirkleby Park, Thirsk – “No. in catalogue 1413, Shelf in bookcase 6, division in bookcase 9, no. in shelf 2”

“The ground under the tunnel net should have a slight rise to its tail as ducks walk badly down hill, and therefore will not try to return.”

Additional information on decoys (in Midlands and elsewhere):

Capt G Cavendish Taylor, 1888 – heard as a boy of one at Patshull near Wolverhampton, possibly also Weston (Park) and Aqualate.

“Decoy at Col. C. Wingfield, Onslow Hall, Shrewsbury. I superintended the formation of a Decoy Pipe here in 1889. It is the best made decoy pipe in England.” – constructed 1890, cost more than any other pipe. On top end of peanut-shaped lake. Col. Wingfield, friend of RP-G, died in spring 1891.

“A very good “cage” decoy exists at “Drakelow” the residence of Sir Robert Gresley 3.5 miles from Burton on Trent, Staffordshire. I inspected it when staying at Drakelow in March 1894”.

1635 Sir William Brereton visited decoy halfway between Newcastle and Morpeth (7 miles from Newcastle), at Point Island, belonging to Mr Mark Errington; also decoy at Newcastle, of Mr Swan.

RP-G visited Hale in January 1901 – “The whole vicinity being dense with smoke and full of chemical odours! yet they still catch lots of fowl at Hale.” (Close to Runcorn/Widnes).

Park Hall, Notts – “1905 – a thousand ducks have been caught in one year lately.”

Hawkstone Castle, Shropshire – (Lord Hills) – small decoy pipe – worked with falling net from hut with long wire – on large lake in park – very primitive contrivance.

Sundorne – small pipes, 45 yards x 15 feet – badly constructed: head hoop and show place level with one another. Feed with bruised wheat. 1890 – 120 birds including 36 at one time.

Oakley – pipes 40 yards x 18 feet – average 100 birds.

Thirkleby decoy laid out by Thomas Gilbert Skelton.

Doncaster decoy – existence noted in annotations.

1916 – fine new trap decoy at Sir R Graham's Solway Moss, Netherby (Cumberland – would have been the northernmost decoy).

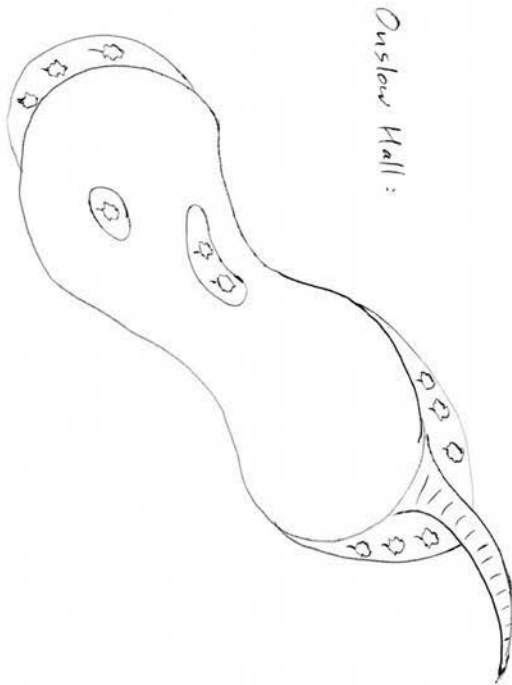
Museum also has two photograph albums of RP-G, one of which has two photos taken “In the Decoy. Thirkleby”.

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4. Site Visit by Andrew Heaton

Onslow

23/5/03

John Wingfield, Calcott Farm (L, R, R from Onslow estate), 01743-850431

Known as Round Pool.

One pipe – quite a few hoops and cross-struts and some wire netting still left, though sections crushed by fallen trees

Last used in 1960s (?)

Item 78.3a

BEING, added to 78.3

p.72 from Payne-Gallwey (Item 8.6) **The book of duck decoys.**To JT by AH 20.03.16 wrt the trap on the pool in Item 0.03 (17(38)), Pickmore Pool.

