THE ORIELTON DECOY—PAST AND PRESENT.

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The early history of this decoy, which is situated near Pembroke, can be found in *The Book of Decoys*, pp. 147-149, written by Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey. The decoy is fifteen acres in extent, though the fowl rest nowadays on only a relatively small extent of the water—namely, the shallow water at the eastern end. The lake is artificial. It was made in 1820 by the Saurin family, to whom the estate belonged until 1919, when the property was sold and the decoy fell into disuse.

In 1868 the first pipe was dug on the north shore, but this was a failure for various reasons, obvious to any one who examines the remains which are visible to this day.

However, in spite of this failure, a pipe (the present No. 2) was made in 1871 by a gamekeeper named Sharpe, who came from Norfolk. When this proved successful, another pipe (No. 3) was made parallel to the first, in 1873; and yet another (No. 1) was dug on the north shore in 1874. These two pipes were made by George and T. Gilbert Skelton, members of the famous family of decoy men of that name. The last of the Skelton family—another George—grandson of the above, died in harness, as a decoy man, at Orwell Park, in 1919. Finally, one of the Williams' from Suffolk made the pipe (No. 4) on the southern side. This pipe is less than 40 yards long, and is probably the shortest decoy pipe ever made; nevertheless, it is very successful.

The decoy was worked by the proprietors, or lessees of the estate, principally for their own amusement, and "the numbers of birds taken varied with the amount of time devoted to decoying". During the war years the fowl were driven away by the aircraft which continually passed over the pond on their way to hunt submarines.

Lately the decoy book, which recorded the daily captures of duck from 1877 to 1919, has come into our hands through the kindness of Major Saurin. This book records the capture of roughly 42,000 wild fowl, of which some 5,000 were Mallard (*Anas platyrhyncha*), 19,000 Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) and 17,000 Teal (*Anas crecca*), while in addition 160 each of the two species Pintail (*Anas acuta*) and Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) were also obtained. As regards other species of wild fowl, Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) provide frequent entries
(15), one or two being caught almost annually until 1908. Odd birds were also shot in flight to the sea in the years 1914-1918; as also were Smew (*Mergus albellus*). In our experience Gadwall are nowadays extremely rare visitors to the district.

Another curious record is that of two Garganey (*Anas querquedula*) which were caught in February, 1889. Thomas Wogan, the decoy man (1883-1908) came of a long line, and must have been familiar with all kinds of fowl, while Colonel Saurin was a well-known sportsman, and very interested in the decoy. Hence, early as is the date, identification must, in our opinion, be accepted. In those days few captive wild fowl were kept, but it is possible, even then, that these two birds may have been escapes. In this connexion hybrids, common in captivity, should be considered. "Hybrid" duck are mentioned among the bag on three occasions (December 23rd, 1878, December 11th, 1879, and March 1st, 1888). No clue is given as to what mixtures these hybrids were due. Possibly they may have been escapes, as, indeed, certainly was the Chilian Pintail recorded on December 30th, 1908.

Tufted Duck (*Nyroca fuligula*) first appear in December, 1889, after which there is no further record of this bird until 1913, when they are mentioned many times. Pochard (*Nyroca ferina*) also, were rarely captured, and are only mentioned on five occasions, though they were freely seen and shot on flight from 1912-1918. Both these diving duck are, however, difficult to decoy, as they always dive back past the decoy man, but can be easily taken in a trap. Traps were not used until 1912. The absence of these two species in the book during the early years cannot therefore be taken to prove that the birds themselves were not present on the decoy pond. Scaup (*Nyroca marila*) were caught on two occasions, while Golden Eye (*Bucephala clangula*) and Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) only figure in one entry each. Wild Geese are recorded twice, a Barnacle (*Branta leucopsis*) in 1878, and a Grey Lag (*Anser anser*) in November, 1914. This latter was caught as it fed into No. 4 pipe late one evening.

The decoy fell into disuse after 1919 until we obtained a lease in 1934, and restored three of the pipes, primarily with a view to ringing wild fowl. After long years of disturbance, the fowl did not, of course, return immediately in great numbers. Teal readily availed themselves of the quiet and protection of the pond, until, on many occasions
at least 1,000 were present. Wigeon, however, were rarely seen until February, 1935, when their numbers gradually increased until some 300 were resting on the decoy by day. Shoveler, Tufted Ducks, Mallard and a few Pintail and Pochard completed the assembly. There were, however, never more than 1,400 fowl to be seen, whereas in old days thousands had made it their winter home. An ancient photograph is in existence which shows many acres of water densely covered by a flock of thousands of Wigeon. Mr. R. H. Mackworth-Praed tried to take a census in 1912, during his tenancy of the decoy, and estimated that the pond "in full flower" carried 10,000-12,000 duck, 90 per cent. of which were Wigeon. It would appear that certain species of ducks have decreased in the district. Take, for example, the record year, 1890-1891, when 2,521 fowl were taken, as follows:—405 Mallard, 1,395 Wigeon, 682 Teal, 31 Pintail, 7 Shoveler, 1 Gadwall. The numbers of Mallard have greatly decreased. Even as late as the season 1902-3, 446 were taken. Mallard appear to be largely resident in the district and not migratory. Certainly the local stock of Mallard is increased, to some extent, by visitors to the tidal waters, as soon as they are driven away from their haunts inland by frost, but we continually recapture duck which have been already ringed on the decoy, and get no returns from a distance. It would be impossible nowadays to capture 400 of this species even if the whole local stock used the decoy. The cause of this decrease is not far to seek. The length of the season renders the Mallard an easy prey to the gunner. The season begins too early and allows immature young birds to be slaughtered wholesale, while, under the influence of the mild climate of Pembrokeshire, the Mallard nests very early, and many instances are known to us, where the duck has been shot off her nest, legally, in the month of February. Last year a brood could be seen on the decoy in early March. At any rate the indigenous stock of Mallard has been reduced by 80 per cent. in the north of the county during the last 20 years; and the gunner is solely to blame, in our opinion. Wigeon, though still plentiful, do not visit us in the great numbers of olden time. Possibly this is due to factors abroad, over which we have no control in this country, such as drainage and excessive decoying in Holland, as well as the great diminution of the zostera grass. Another potent cause is probably the aircraft base at Pembroke Dock. Wigeon dislike aircraft intensely. The mere sight of an aeroplane
causes them to take to the water and dive continually with a sudden flip of water in exactly the same manner as they adopt when a Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) puts in an appearance. If an aeroplane roars by within half a mile, they rise and depart for the open sea. We are informed that Wigeon have been driven away from other estuaries by aircraft (e.g. the Welsh Dee).

Teal, however, do not appear to have decreased so appreciably. They are, however, jumpy, nervous little birds, which never appear to settle long in one locality, and their numbers vary greatly from day to day. After heavy rain when the floods are out, they leave the decoy in masses and do not return until the surface water has gone. In February last (1935) we ringed a Teal which was shot four days later by a gunner at Wareham in Dorset. In fact, with us the numbers of Teal are very variable. The birds are here and gone to-morrow. Pintail did not visit us in numbers and at no time could more than five be seen on the decoy. In February, 1934, Shoveler were present to the number of several score. It is, however, on the return migration in March, after the season is over, that these birds appear to be most numerous. A few Tufted Ducks were always on the water, but never more than thirty could be counted.

This year (1935-36) an attempt will be made to make a daily census, and a record of the numbers of fowl to be seen; and it is hoped that several hundred duck will be ringed. One fact has been learnt by us in our first season as amateur decoymen, and that is the deadliness of the method of catching duck in grim silence within a few yards of their unsuspecting companions. In 1934, though we knew nothing, and could learn our trade only by methods of trial and error, we caught more birds than were obtained during the last year’s working of the decoy—far more than could have been obtained by the gun. The use of smouldering turf was necessary in order to deaden human scent. The subject of the scenting powers of wild fowl is, however, a vexed one, on which the literature is voluminous.

Lastly, what is the explanation of the fact that ducks are attracted up the pipe by a dog? Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey is of opinion that ducks are braggarts and rush forward to drive him away, and that so long as the dog appears to be retreating, so long will they follow, believing they are so doing. In our opinion, however, it is merely an intense curiosity, even an indignant curiosity, which lures them to their doom.
When Teal are sleeping on the "yackoop" and the dog jumps through his hole right among them, they merely dash out a few yards on to the water, and turn round looking startled and indignant. When the dog appears at each successive jump, they swim forward craning their necks to see and showing all the signs of curiosity alone, and not of being braggarts.

**NOTE 1.**—Yackoop (=wake up) is the dog jump between the breast-wall screens, i.e., the screens which shelter the breastwall where the fowl rest on the right-hand side of the entrance to a decoy pipe.

**NOTE 2.**—Mr. G. C. S. Ingram has kindly sent us the following records of Gadwall and Garganey in the coastal counties of South Wales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Gadwall</th>
<th>Garganey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>Once recorded many years ago.</td>
<td>No records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glamorgan</td>
<td>Five recorded over a period of 50 years.</td>
<td>Ten recorded during last 50 years (latest 1931).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Last record Llanishen Reservoirs, November 2nd, 1927.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmarthen</td>
<td>No records.</td>
<td>Three only, and none recent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pembroke</td>
<td>Only recorded at Orielton.</td>
<td>Orielton records, and another, also at Orielton, November 21st, 1902 (J. Wynne).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Past and Present book. Read 8 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. This is a pre-1923 historical reproduction that was curated for qua... It is quite a strange book. Past and Present is, essentially, a critique of Victorian Capitalism from a very Reactionary viewpoint, with a nice diversion into Mediaeval History. This is through a portrait of the 12th century monk, Abbott Samson. Carlyle considers Samson to be a true embodiment of "The Hero", something sorely missing in Carlyle's day. Acquisition. Presented by Sir Alec and Lady Martin in memory of their daughter Nora 1918. Reference. N03278. Summary. Display caption. Summary. This is the first of a set of three modern-life pictures on the theme of the fallen woman. The other two (N032279 and N03280) are also in the Tate collection. They are typical of the social moralist pictures that were popular in Victorian art. This article explores the significance of the theatrical and literary references found in the triptych Past and Present 1858 by çExplore. emotions, concepts and ideas(16,617). emo...