

**PUBLIC SHOOTING QUARTERS;
BEING A DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF
LOCALITIES WHERE WILDFOWL
AND OTHER SHOOTING CAN BE
OBTAINED**

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Public Shooting Quarters; Being a Descriptive List of Localities Where Wildfowl and Other Shooting Can Be Obtained by Wildfowler

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WILDFOWLER

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A DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF LOCALITIES WHERE
WILDFOWL AND OTHER SHOOTING
CAN BE OBTAINED.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

SPORTSMEN who are not the owners or lessees of moors and manors are usually anxious to hear of likely spots where they can enjoy some little sport at a moderate outlay. Now, sporting rights are valuable, and are getting rapidly more so every season. Therefore, the number of places where free game shooting could formerly be enjoyed is diminishing at a great rate, and I dare say but very few such places now remain open. There are, however, a few such, particularly abroad—if game proper be sought—and there are many good free stations for wildfowl shooting in England, Ireland, and Scotland. Besides these, there are also sundry spots where, by moderate payment, sport of various kinds may be enjoyed; and I intend the contents of this book to deal with the latter as well as with absolutely free stations, and hence its title, viz., "Public Shooting Quarters," by which I mean such quarters as are open to the public either freely, or by daily, weekly, or monthly payments, in contradistinction with private shootings, where sport is strictly preserved by owners or lessees exclusively for their own enjoyment. Now, before entering into any description of the free spots, I would beg to explain that the details I am going to give are gleaned partly from the experiences of other shooters and partly from my own; but as these experiences, in many cases, date of some years past, things may have altered since then, in respect to either the sport, or the arrangements

which were existing, when I, or other shooters, visited the spots. In short, I here narrate what I, personally, knew to be facts some years ago, what has been stated by others, and has appeared in print; but for actual work, a reference to local men will be indispensable, and before going to any given place, I would, in the most emphatic manner, advise shooters to invariably ascertain beforehand their actual chances of success there, and if the conditions under which the sport may be carried on are still the same. In fact, were I, myself, intending to revisit any spots, I should certainly first write and ascertain if the old state of things still held good. Again, as regards shooting quarters where temporary sport is to be had by payment, doubtless some changes may, and have, occurred, either in the names of the lessees, or in the extent of the shootings, or in the fees to be paid. Therefore, I repeat, in all cases, due inquiries should be made at head-quarters.

I trust that this list of suitable spots, as it stands, will prove acceptable to my readers; and I need not add that the experience of sportsmen visiting any of the places herein mentioned would always be most acceptable, being for the common good.

“WILDFOWLER.”

PUBLIC SHOOTING QUARTERS.

ENGLAND.

Aldborough.—The shooting on the Alde is perfectly free to all comers, but certain portions of the shore are, it is said, preserved. Of these rights I have nothing to say, as I never had an opportunity of ascertaining whether those preserved parts were strictly legally so. The marsh extends over a considerable bit of ground, and all sorts of birds may be killed there. In winter time many fowl can be picked up on the river, or off the coast at sea, and not a few are killed fighting, on their way over the sea walls, to and fro the marsh or river and the sea. As regards oxbirds, shanks, curlews, &c., thousands of them visit the saltings, and, with a good shoulder gun, very fair sport can be expected. The accommodation at Aldborough is good, and no difficulty will be experienced in getting guides and boats.

Alfreton.—I have not personally visited this spot, but it was stated in the "Shooter's Diary" that wildfowl shooting was to be obtained in its direct neighbourhood, and that dotterels had very frequently been shot there.

Ambleside.—The only sport available there consists in shooting from boats on Windermere, and then, as the fowl only come when the wind blows from certain quarters, and in hard weather, it is useless to visit the place unless reliable information can be obtained when the fowl have come. Some portions of the shore are very strictly preserved, but it is said that leave to land is readily granted to respectable parties who are only in pursuit of wildfowl or sea birds.

Appledore.—Appledore is situate in North Devonshire, and it is not at all a bad place to make one's head-quarters of, for wildfowl shooting. Punting on the river Taw is at times very successful, and a vast number of shore birds patronise the shores.

Barnard Castle (York).—The "Bowes" moor lies near here, consisting of 15,000 acres. The grouse-shooting is fair. It is shot over by fifty guns, at fifteen guineas each. Comfortable quarters can be had close to the grounds at inns or farms. Apply to Mr. Holmes, solicitor, Barnard Castle.

Barrow.—Formerly good sport used to be had round the Island of Walney, opposite Barrow. There are two inns on Walney Island, and a small village called Bigger. One of the inns is at the ferry, where the boats for crossing the channel between Barrow and Walney are kept. The said channel is about 400 yards wide. Opinions vary very considerably concerning the sport to be met with there now, some saying that they enjoyed themselves very much round Walney and the neighbouring islands, and others saying that they never were repaid for their trouble. The accommodation is very good at Barrow, and at Walney passable.

Battle.—Battle is situated in Sussex, and, according to the "Shooter's Diary," some shooting was to be had there or thereabouts.

Beachy Head.—Very good sea-fowl shooting is to be had there. The best way to do justice to it is to take a boat from Newhaven, and sail to the spot when the wind is suitable. This latter condition is a *sine quâ non*; and a good pilot should be secured, as otherwise the party would be almost sure to come to grief on the rocks.

Bedford.—The neighbourhood of Bedford, alongside the river, was noted for the vast numbers of moorhens that were to be shot there, and, in winter time, a few ducks, teal, and snipe used sometimes to be secured.

Benfleet (Essex).—Benfleet has a station (on the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway), a stone throw from the creek which separates Canvey Island from the mainland. When a strong wind is blowing from the river, in winter time, some shore birds are to be shot by walking up to Leigh, and visiting the saltings which adjoin the sea walls. One may also walk towards Fobbing, along the sea wall which adjoins the creek for

its whole length, and better sport will be found there than by going to Leigh; but care must be taken not to trespass on the adjoining marshes, which are strictly preserved, particularly for coursing. The whole distance may be covered in a little over an hour's sharp walking up to the shepherd's house; but to go round to Fobbing would take half as much time again. There are generally curlews, whimbrels, redshanks, ring plovers, dunlins, herons, &c. to be seen. A good dog is absolutely necessary, the mud being treacherous, and the creek's channel rises so abruptly that, if one should slide down to the bottom when trying to pick up a bird at low tide, it is very doubtful whether he could ever rise again to *terra firma*, and, as very often the birds fall there, or on the other side of the creek, the advisability of having a good retriever is very apparent.

Bampton.—Bampton is a short distance by train from Burlington Quay, and the cliffs afford first-rate sport; but, as most of the birds when shot fall at the bottom of the cliffs—either on the sands or on the sea—unless the shooters have some boatmen in their craft, below, ready to pick up the birds and polish off the cripples, they lose all their spoils. Therefore due attention should be paid, for that sort of sport, to both tide and wind. A still day would give greater security to the men; but, on the other hand, the birds are never so lively as when there is half a gale blowing. They are then continually on the wing, and will afford any amount of practice. Still, if the spoils are to be lost, I deprecate that sort of entertainment, which has then no *raison d'être*. Whereas, if the birds can be picked up, after the sportsmen have chosen those they wish to keep—for stuffing or other purposes—they will find that the rest will be gratefully accepted by the local men, who prize them very much for their down and feathers; and, indeed, some of them have a way of cooking them which renders them very palatable.

Bideford.—Bideford is within a short distance of Appledore, to which I have already alluded, and, therefore, the same sport is there available. Those shooters who do not care to undertake punting, will find some snipe and plover shooting on land; and I understand that by staying at the Westward Ho Hotel, leave is given to visitors to shoot over some extent of ground, where a few ducks, teal, snipe, and plenty of rabbits can be had. For further information, therefore, intending visitors should apply to the above-named hotel.