**Not in *The Birds of Shropshire***

At the time of writing, *The Birds of Shropshire* has yet to be published, but I have seen enough during its gestation to know that it will rank as one of the most complete county avifaunas ever published. This is thanks in part to John and Peter Tucker’s extraordinary compendium *The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire* (or *Histo* for short), which provided those of us who wrote accounts for *The Birds* with online access to every known published text about the birds of the county. The combination of *Histo* and *The Birds* will mean that Shropshire’s birds are more comprehensively documented than those of any other county.

*Histo* runs to more than 4,700 pages and covers more than 220 accounts, but as John and Peter point out, the quality of these accounts is variable and it is up to those using this fantastic resource to make their own judgements as to the accuracy and of what they find. It seems worth me putting on the record what I discovered when one particular account excited my curiosity.

When compiling the species text for Red Grouse for *The Birds*, what was I to make of the statement to be found within the ‘Victoria County History’ which reads, ‘small numbers of grouse, presumably Black Grouse, were shot at Walcot in the later 18th century and again figure in the game books 1904-9’ (from ‘Shooting’ by A T Gaydon & D T W Price, ‘Victoria County History for Shropshire’, Vol 2, 1973).

This is a reference to Walcot at Lydbury North, and fortunately many of the Walcot Estate’s records, including game books, are held in the wonderful Shropshire Archives. A careful reading of the game books for the period 1904-9, when Walcot was owned by the Earl of Powys, revealed that they covered not just the area around Walcot, but other places within the Earl’s extensive holdings, including parts of the Clun Forest. And close scrutiny of the records revealed that it was in the Clun Forest, and not at Walcot, that ‘grouse’ were shot. But were they Red or Black Grouse?

In the 1890s there were records of the shooting in the Clun Forest of both ‘Black game’ (= Black Grouse) and of ‘grouse,’ the latter, by implication, being Red Grouse. It seems safe then to assume that the records of ‘grouse’ shot in the period 1904-9 refer to Red rather than Black Grouse. Interestingly, estate documents for the period 1780 to 1786 include four records of ‘grouse’ being sent to the Queen, but there is no detail as to where they were shot. It seems very probable however that it was in the Clun Forest, and that these too were Red not Black Grouse.

Although my little investigation of this source from *Histo* revealed nothing of major significance, it seems worth putting it on the record. Hopefully, this issue of *The Buzzard* will in due course be archived on *Histo* and be there to explain to a future researcher why the seemingly *bona fide* account in the ‘Victoria County History’ of Black Grouse shot at Walcot was sidelined when *The Birds* was written.

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