

**Object(s):** Game Larder, Coop and Shooting Picnic Basket

**Object Number(s):** STMEA:82.A.55; STMEA:83.A.5/a&b; STMEA:2014-12

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### **Game Larder, Coop and Shooting Picnic Basket**

The Game Larder (STMEA:82.A.55), was used at Hildersham Hall<sup>1</sup> in Cambridgeshire. It contains a total of 64 slots for game, was fully ventilated through slots in the walls and kept cool by a zinc liner, which also served to keep the game free of Fly's. It was manufactured, supplied and delivered to the nearest rail station in 'Kit-form' by Boulton and Paul of Norwich. This item first appeared in their sales catalogue, number 43, in 1888<sup>2</sup>, (p 175). The original sale price was £12, (approximately £1,520 in 2019). Game Larder's of this type were usually filled with game after a shooting party and kept close to the house kitchen for ready access to fresh game.

The design of this particular Game Larder, proved not to be very popular as by March 1898<sup>3</sup>, the Boulton and Paul catalogue, described the same item as being suitable for multiple uses: for 'Shepherds, 'Keepers' or as a 'Game Larder'. The same catalogue also describes their 'New Portable Larder', constructed from Red Deal and with open mesh sides.

Boulton and Paul were established in Cockney Lane (now London Street), Norwich in 1797, as an ironmongery business<sup>4</sup>. The founders were William Moore and William Boulton. By 1868, the company formerly became known as 'Boulton and Paul' and moved to a factory site in Rose Lane, Norwich. Their main products at that time were for agricultural purposes for which their reputation rapidly grew. There is a listed entry for Boulton and Paul products in the Country Gentleman's Catalogue of 1894.<sup>5</sup> During the 1914-18 war, Boulton and Paul commenced production of military aircraft. At this time, they employed 2,000 people in Norwich. Aircraft production continued into the 1939-45 war at a new factory in

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Westwood Bate -Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network (2013)  
[https://hildersham.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue\\_item/hildersham-hall](https://hildersham.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue_item/hildersham-hall)

<sup>2</sup> Internet Archive – APT Heritage Library (2012).  
<https://archive.org/details/BoultonPaulManufacturersRoseLaneWorksNorwichcatalogueNo.43>

<sup>3</sup> Boulton and Paul Ltd, Catalogue No 97, (Revised Edition) March 1898.

<sup>4</sup> Boulton and Paul Ltd, New Premises pamphlet April 1994.

<sup>5</sup> The Country Gentleman's Catalogue 1894 - printed and published by Eden Fisher and Co, 50, Lombard Street, London.

Wolverhampton. The company was sold to Jeld Wenn Inc. in 1999, by which time, production had moved to Lowestoft. The Lowestoft site was finally closed in 2009<sup>6</sup> with the loss of 194 jobs.

The Coop (STMEA:83.A.5/a&b ), was used by the Estate Keeper, on the Helmingham Hall estate in Suffolk, for rearing game birds for the shoot. Pheasants were reared under hens in the Coop “prior to eventual release into woods and coverts.”<sup>7</sup>. The coop is hand made for rearing birds and could be used for either Pheasant or Partridge.

The Shooting Picnic Basket was made by Colin Manthorpe<sup>8</sup>. It is a half scale model and could probably have served as an exhibition piece, a sales sample of quality/workmanship or an ‘Apprentice Piece’.

### **Game shooting in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

Game shooting became a popular pastime in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The fact that this happened is partly related to technological improvements in shotgun technology and the invention of double barrelled breach loaders which made ‘driven-bird’ shooting popular and in consequence of the increasing numbers of birds that could be shot, made the employment of a Game Keeper essential on larger estates, to, rear birds, control vermin and poaching.<sup>9</sup>

The Game Act of 1831, enabled anyone who wanted to shoot game to do so by acquiring a permit and limited the periods (‘seasons’) within which various types of game could be shot.

There were some significant political and economic influences on the rural economy during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Enclosure Acts 1750 – 1860, which effectively closed access to the “Peasantry”. McElroy<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/final-chapter-in-boulton-paul-story-1-515425>

<sup>7</sup> (The Countrymans Weekly – Feb 2014) <https://www.countrymansweekly.com/gamekeeper/game-rearing-1963-style/>

<sup>8</sup> (Eastern Daily Press – June 2012) <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/royal-commission-got-norfolk-basket-maker-weaving-1-1415028>

<sup>9</sup> Henry Cowells October 2017 - <https://www.henrycowls.net/blog-en/the-history-of-game-shooting.html>

<sup>10</sup> The Enclosure Acts and the Industrial Revolution – Wendy McElroy (March 2012) <https://www.fff.org/explore-freedom/article/enclosure-acts-industrial-revolution/>

The Liberal government repealed the Corn Laws in 1846, which overnight removed tariffs from imports of grain from abroad. Dymond and Northeast<sup>11</sup> talk of “a ‘great depression’ lasting well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century which hit grain producing areas like Suffolk particularly badly”. The associated drop in land values, allowed the newly, affluent middle classes for whom Matthew further suggests that the countryside became an “expensive playground, a place for week-ending.”<sup>12</sup>

The Industrial Revolution brought changes in agricultural methods reducing the need for labour. Significant numbers of people left the countryside for towns and cities to find work. The coming of the railways in the middle of the century made travel more accessible. Matthew<sup>13</sup> describes how rural populations fell by up to 40% in some areas against increases in towns.

With game shooting becoming a popular sport for the middle and upper classes of society, shooting parties were organised on large estates, as social occasions where people could mix both formally and informally. Examples of such game shooting parties can be found in the East Anglian Film Archive:

<http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/873> - A Norfolk Shooting Party 1913.

<http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/2014> - Home life at Sandringham (Long Version) 1909.

### **Shooting at Hildersham Hall in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.**

I have found no evidence that Hildersham Hall was a site of significance for large shooting parties during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In fact, Bolton, Duncombe, Dunning, Kermode, Rowland, Stephens and Wright<sup>14</sup> identify the main shooting estates at the time as: Cheveley, Chippenham Park, Dullingham and Dalham Hall.

It is reasonable to surmise therefore, that Hildersham Hall, although used for shooting would have been by local invitation only and possibly, although there are no records to substantiate it; ‘Walked-up’ shooting, which required guns to walk behind the game, which was the traditional method, rather than ‘Driven-Game’ where game would be driven by a team of ‘Beaters’, towards a static line

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<sup>11</sup> Dymond and Northeast – A History of Suffolk (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Matthew – The Liberal Age 1851-1914 – Oxford Illustrated History of Britain (1987).

<sup>13</sup> Matthew – The Liberal Age 1851-1914 – Oxford Illustrated History of Britain (1987).

<sup>14</sup> ‘Sport’, in A History of the County of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely – Volume 5 (1973).

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol5/pp279-303#h3-0008>



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of guns. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the social aspects and interactions of shooting parties were as important then as they remain to this day.

Annika Purdy<sup>15</sup> provides a good description of the social organisation for a weekend shooting party. Gander<sup>16</sup>, provides a very good description of a modern-day shooting party experience in the Highlands of Scotland.

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<sup>15</sup> Annika Purdy writing for Tatler, January 2019 - <https://www.tatler.com/article/how-to-host-the-perfect-shooting-weekend>

<sup>16</sup> Gander, writing for The Independent, February 2015 - <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/features/game-shooting-the-journey-that-takes-pheasants-from-field-to-plate-9973547.html>