

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

MERCER MILLIONS

In the 1870s American newspapers drew the attention of the public to the story of General John Mercer of Pennsylvania, who, it was thought, had emigrated to America from Scotland in the previous century. He eventually came to own much of the land on which New York was later built. During the American War of Independence, he had leased to the government a great tract of this New York land which was then occupied by government forces. General Mercer fought and died in that war and after his death, this lease was forgotten and the land fell into other hands. None of his family had claimed the property. Some of his sons had fought in the War and were never heard of again; the rest of his family scattered. The land was eventually built on and developed as the prosperous business heart of the growing city of New York. In 1876, following legal enquiries into the deeds of other New York property, it was discovered that the lease to the government of this most valuable land had run out. The search began to find which Mercers had a right to share the property, by then valued at \$500,000,000.

Representatives of the Mercer family in the USA and elsewhere actively traced their genealogy to attempt to establish a claim to the immense fortune. British Mercers whose hopes were raised included the Mercers of Chipping House. Thomas Mercer senior (1842-1921), submitted a claim based on a detailed family tree drawn up by his wife Grace. However it would appear that only descendants of General John Mercer had a rightful claim on the property, and some of these were traced.

THOUSANDS OF GROUSE

The record bag for any British grouse-moor was made on the fells above Abbeystead on 12th August 1915, when 2929 birds were shot in six drives over eight guns:- the Earl of Sefton, the Hon.J.Ward, the Hon.E.Stonor, Mr E.de C.Oakley, Major the Hon.J.Dawnay, Capt.the Hon.T.Fitzherbert, Capt.the Hon.H.Bridgeman and Major the Hon.E.Beaumont. This beat by 140% brace the previous record for the British Isles made in August 1893.

On the following day on Mallowdale Fell, the same guns shot 1763, and on the 14th August with an additional gun, 1279, making a total of 5971 birds in three days. By the end of October 15,176 red grouse had been shot on these moors.

Abbeystead also holds the record for the largest bag ever made in one season.

(From "The Birds of Lancashire" by Clifford Oakes.1953 and "The Encyclopaedia of Sport" ed. C.Harvey. 1959.)

THE SOLITARY SNIPE

Last week, one of these birds, which we understand, are very seldom met with in this country, was shot on the preserves of George Weld, Esq. of Leagram Hall. It was a very fine specimen of the bird, and weighed nearly nine ounces.

From the Preston Chronicle,

21 Sept 1839.

