

## IN THE GUNROOM

### PAYNE-GALLWEY'S PURDEY

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Provenance. What does a Purdey sidelock ejector go for, a bit worn and with the barrels altered? £4000-£5000? But what if that gun originally belonged to a famous sportsman, due to its provenance, it would go for considerably more. In this sale there is such a gun – lot 1404, a Purdey hammerless ejector no. 14520 completed in 1892 for the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century sportsman, wildfowler and author, Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey and estimated at £7500-£8500.

The provenance of any firearm will have a major bearing upon its value as the gun ceases to be just wood and metal, it has history. With the Purdey owned by Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, you can read his books, find out about his shooting exploits with the gun, know what company he kept, even find contemporary photos of him with the Purdey – it then ceases to become just another Purdey, it is a Purdey with a real, tangible history.

In the gun world provenance is a lot easier to ascertain than in other collecting circles as most of the famous gunmakers have complete records that state exactly who the original owner was. Be wary of perfectly well intentioned oral history of a gun where a story has been handed down through a family to denote provenance. In my experience such provenance has often grown arms and legs and only a check on the makers records will confirm or deny it.

Probably one of the most sought after provenances concerns the collection of the Scottish 19<sup>th</sup> century eccentric Charles Gordon. A Charles Gordon provenance will vastly increase the value of a firearm. The gunmakers records are very easy to look up to confirm this, but I have seen escutcheons on some slightly unusual hammer guns engraved “CG”. The only problem with this is that no Charles Gordon gun was ever engraved upon the escutcheon!

Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1848 and after education at Eton, succeeded his father as third Baronet in 1881. He resided at Thirkleby Park near Thirsk in Yorkshire and also at 30 Eaton Square, London. His recreations in *Who's Who* of 1906 record “shooting, golf, cricket, fishing, well known as an experienced and enthusiastic wildfowler”.

He was a prolific author publishing books that became standards in the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as *The Fowler In Ireland* 1882, *The Book Of Duck Decoys* 1886, *Letters To Young Shooters* (Three volumes) 1891-1896 and *The Cross Bow* 1903. He also edited and contributed to the *Badminton Library, Shooting* in conjunction with Lord Walsingham in 1887.

Not only was he a keen sportsman and talented writer, he was also of an inventive turn of mind as well inventing in two patents of 1884 and 1885 a game counter that was inlet into the fore-end.

Probably his most famous creation was the Gallwey 1 ½” bore double-barrelled punt gun built for him by Holland & Holland. It was completed in 1885 in 1 ½” bore with 9 foot barrels. Both barrels were bored full choke and the gun had only one trigger that could select either barrel or fire both simultaneously.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1885 Payne-Gallwey tried his new punt gun out at Holland & Holland’s Kensal Rise grounds and found it worked admirably. He mentioned that it was the first double-barrelled gun built and he intended it for shooting abroad where wildfowl were more plentiful. During the firing of both barrels, there was a deliberate, appreciable delay between the first and second barrel to catch the birds as they rose after the first shot. Each barrel was loaded with 4oz. powder and 20oz. shot. Sir Ralph concluded that “Were it not for cattle about, I intended some flying shots at single pigeons out of a trap at 70yds.” 20oz of shot at a single pigeon!

For his conventional guns, he preferred Purdeys writing that Purdey were “The Emperor Of Gunmakers” and had various pairs of Purdeys built such as nos. 12658/9 in 1887. At his home in Thirkleby Park he made many improvements such as a private golf links and an indoor rifle range. He also made models of ancient siege engines and at his regular shooting parties entertained his guests with demonstrations of them.

He was very enthusiastic about shooting and gave his name to all manner of accoutrements, Payne-Gallwey shooting bags, Payne-Gallwey gaiters, Payne-Gallwey cleaning outfits etc. Tragically his only son was killed early on in the First World War in 14<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and Sir Ralph never really got over this dying himself two years later on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1916.

PHOTO

The Gallwey double 1 ½” bore double punt gun of 1884/5 built by Holland & Holland.

PHOTO

The gun room at Thirkleby Park. Notice the punt guns. Purdey no. 14520 must be in the rack next to Sir Ralph.

PHOTO

Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey at Thirkleby Park. He is holding a Purdey. Is it no. 14520?