

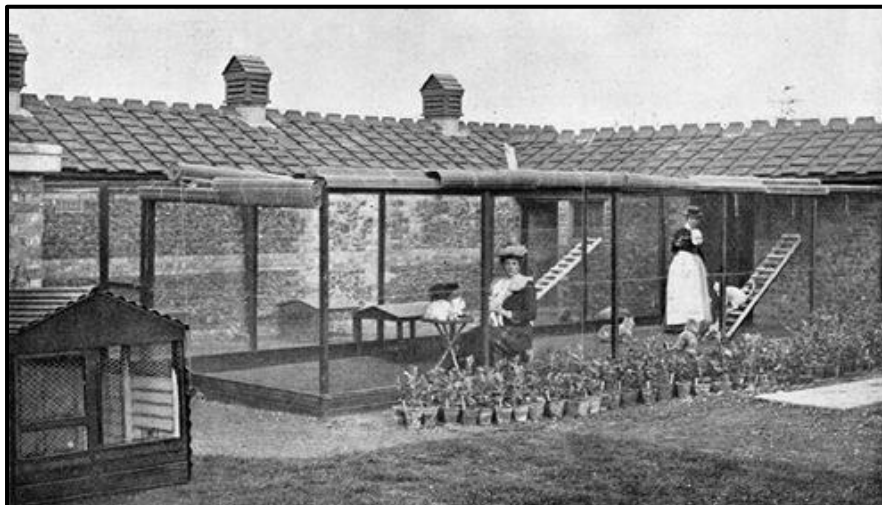
Lady Decies' Cattery at Beresford Lodge, Birchington

"When the Fulmer cattery removed from Slough to Birchington-on-Sea, on the occasion of the marriage of Miss Gertrude Willoughby with Lord Decies, there was just a question in the minds of those interested in the beautiful cats bearing this prefix as to whether they would maintain their ascendancy in the show world! "

"Lady Decies' brother, Major Sir John Christopher Willoughby (born 1859), served in Royal Horse Guards. He was known for his interest in "sports" such as big game hunting in Africa, horse-racing and gambling and had been caricatured in Vanity Fair. He had paid the incredible sum of 8,600 guineas for the race-horse Harvester which dead-heated the 1883 Derby. It later turns out that he was relying on hand-outs from his sister who depleted her estate, and then took out loans, to pay off her brother's debts. In 1896, her brother appeared before the Queen's Bench for an offence under the Foreign Enlistment Act 1870 (Queen's Bench: R v Leander Starr Jameson, Sir John Christopher Willoughby Baronet, Henry Frederick White, Raleigh Grey and Charles John Coventry; preparation of a military expedition to South African Republic). Willoughby was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment, but was subsequently released and headed back to the Cape by steamer." So the big game trophies would belong to Major Sir John Christopher Willoughby and were housed in Fulmer, near Slough and moved to Beresford Lodge in Birchington.

There are many other clues; the paintings of cats and dogs (she bred show cats and her husband was Master of the Harriers and a judge at dog shows).

"When the weather is too strong to allow of outdoor exercise, a large room with glass front and roof is at their service for romps and play."



Lady Decies (seated) in her Cattery in B'ton, c. 1905