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SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1923.

STOKE PARK COLONY ELM FARM, STAPLETON.



A FINE CROP OF WHEAT BEING STACKED BY THE BOYS.

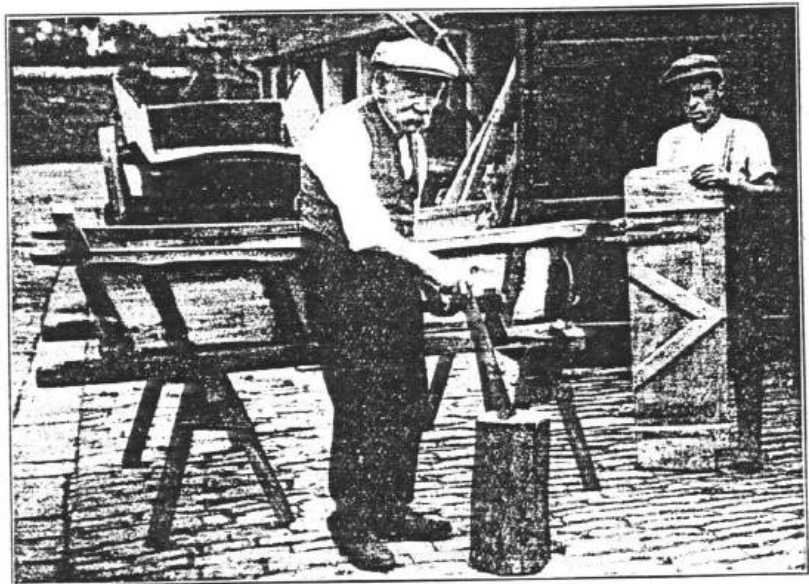
THE beauty of Life is its experiences. If we only knew what was going to happen a year ahead why, of course, we should in many cases do our best that it should not happen. Now I learned a great many things at the Fishponds Show of the West Gloucester Farmers' Club. One was that a prominent farmer had been determined to make a name for himself and the breed of cattle he had adopted in the bunch-of-four class. And later on in the day I learned that he had been beaten. And by whom? The catalogue said Elm Farm, Stapleton. Now I badly wanted a photograph of those four fine Shorthorn heifers, but how was I to get them behind those bars and beneath the shade of the trees? I found out that Elm Farm was part of the Incorporation of National

STOKE PARK COLONY.

Institutions for Persons requiring Care and Control at Stoke Park Colony, Stapleton: that the officer in charge of the agricultural section was Mr. Geo. A. Scott, from whom I learned that these animals had been mainly in charge of mentally deficient boys. So I fixed up right away to go over and have a real look around.

When I got to Stapleton I found I had bitten off much more than I had expected, for surely Elm Farm was but a very small portion. There were offsets at Hanham Hall, Leigh Court, the Dower House, and some 1,400 acres of land was being handled, which included the largest farm in the City and County of Bristol.

Under Mr. Scott's guidance I soon found the farm buildings, and they were kept in admirable order by these lads, who were being directed by kindness. There was the old Beaufort estate carpenter, who had put up his 50 years of work and not out, busy making a farm cart, assisted by one of the boys, who had made a very creditable tail board indeed. Soon another had brought in the two stock rams, one of which had taken a prize at Fishponds. Then another had his favourite prize-winning heifer, and he handled her with all the care of an experienced herdsman to get her to pose.



CART BUILDING.

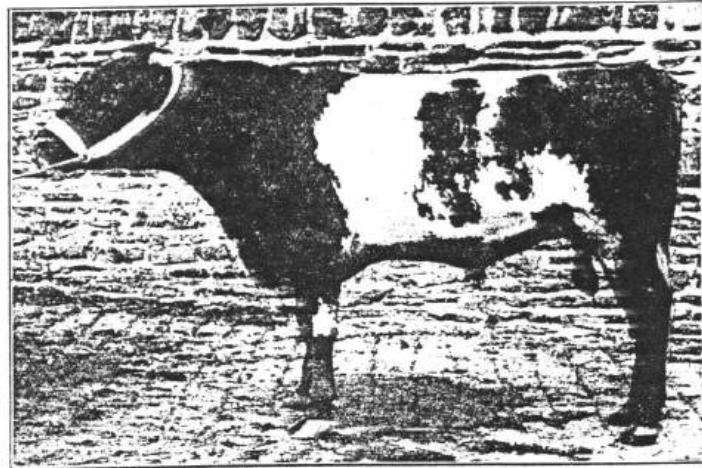
The cowsheds were kept in the best of condition for the production of clean milk, and then I learned from Mr. Scott that he had to provide maintenance daily for upwards of two thousand. I wonder how many cities have such a supply of clean pure milk for their populations as this institution had for its inmates.

Passing through the rick yard I saw a very fine rick of oats being put up. I wanted to see where these were grown. But firstly I had a stroll across the Park, and there I found those four heifers constituting a veritable picture as they stood by the margin of the lake. On the other side there were the old swans and cygnets making friends with the Park Ranger. Then I came to a big bunch of grazing cattle, including about a score of West Highlanders. How picturesque they looked on those slight eminences leading to the wooded heights. These I found were killed, as required, for the use of the inmates. How lucky some might think to be fed on home bred, home fed, and home killed English meat. And what meat it must be grazed on that fine old pasture. I was informed that some 500 head of cattle, sheep and pigs

STOKE PARK COLONY.

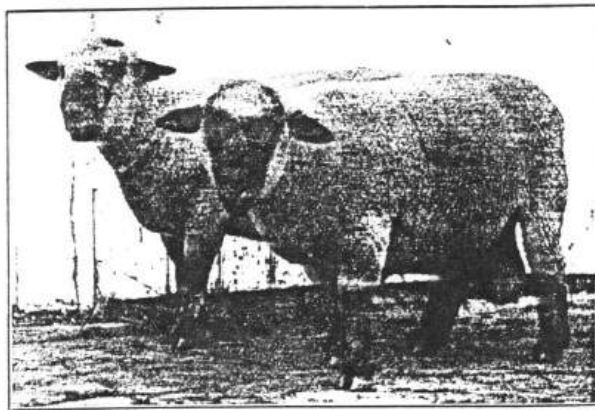
were kept and in the main tended by these boys, which description must be considered as a very elastic one.

Walking on further up into the woods I came to another holding. This was the piggery. Here were some scores of pigs of all ages. They were mainly Gloucester Old Spots and



ONE OF THE PRIZE BULLS.

Large Black crosses, which, of course, made very weighty pigs indeed. In the winter months, from November to March, these are killed and dry salted for bacon, and smoked as required. During the summer they are killed and used as pickled pork, which I should think would be a matter of some difficulty, having regard to the fact that there is no refrigerating plant



TWO RAMS, WHICH TOOK SECOND PRIZE AT THE
WEST GLOUCESTER SHOW, FISHPONDS.

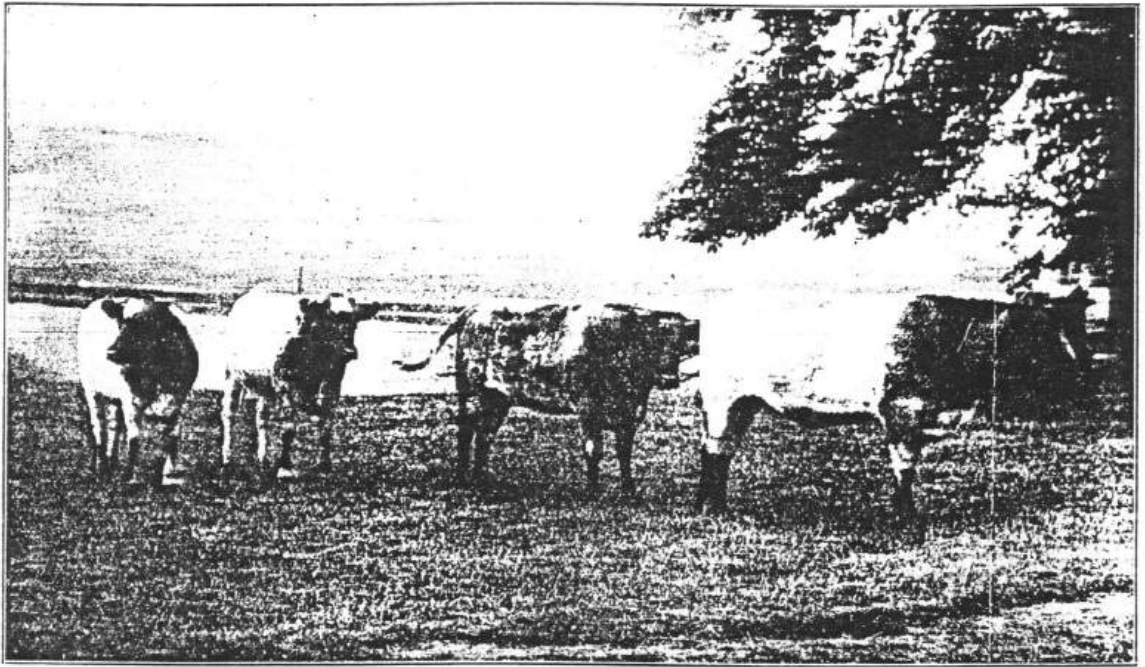
installed. The slaughter-house was a clean and airy one. Everywhere I met these boys working, each having his especial bent gratified.

Next I came to the arable fields, and here was the very finest piece of wheat that I have seen anywhere this year. It was long in the straw and big in the ear, and the land was exceptionally clean. Surely such a splendid piece of straw, with plenitude of labour available,

STOKE PARK COLONY.

might be made out into reed. Then came the crop of crops, the pieces of black and tawny winter oats. To cut them must have been a matter of difficulty, to carry them even more so. But what a mass of foddering material.

Leaving the grain crops I came to those of difficulty, the market gardening on unsuitable land. The drought had opened veritable trenches in that strong soil, and what everything needed was water. Some of it has since come. Some of the parsnips had germinated. With what painstaking labour must the boy have sown, planted out, and staked those tomatoes and kept them clean. The prospect is nil, and yet how proud this stocky little chap was of his work. The kidney beans were in full flower, and these, with the beets, promised to be the best crop of the year.



THE FOUR SHORTHORN HEIFERS WHICH TOOK THE FIRST PRIZE AT
THE WEST OF ENGLAND SHOW, FISHPONDS.

Then I came back over Purdown, and here I saw something that fairly puzzled me. Why should the most distant and seemingly most unsuitable soil have been selected for the arable farming, every load from which would have to be carted down over the farm roads of Purdown, and each load of manure from the yards at Stapleton have to be carted back up over it again? The wear and tear of labour must be enormous. At the farm I saw the boys busy milking, and they shaped themselves like old hands. And there was some ingenuity in their methods especially as to how they prevented the switch of the cows' tails on a sunny afternoon. As I had a look at that well tended herd of cows I could not but think, and think deeply, how much better it was to utilise this labour to produce food for maintenance than to see it cast aside and to degenerate until it became a social danger. And yet how few Bristolians, and still fewer of our countrymen, know of this Colony farming so many acres right in their midst.

ELDRED G. F. WALKER,
("North Somerset").