

PUBLICITY

Through the courtesy of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, a free stand was made available to the Trust at the R.S.P.B. Exhibition at the Central Hall, Westminster, in April, 1949. Among the exhibits was a fine model, in a glass case, of the South Pipe of the decoy, made by the Northampton Society of Model Engineers. This was made at the cost of the materials only, and the Council is most grateful to Mr. W. A. Wells and his assistants for the work they have put into this beautiful scale reproduction.

The Trust had a stand in the Forestry Section of the Bath and West Agricultural Show at Cardiff in June, 1948, and will have an independent exhibit in the 1949 Show at Bristol, when some birds will be shown on one of the natural ponds on the show ground.

Four minutes of Pathé Pictorial No. 183 was devoted to the work of the Trust, and we are grateful to the Directors of Pathé Pictures Ltd. for a 16 mm. copy of the film for use at lectures. More recently a film has been taken by the Merlin Film Co. Ltd., for the Central Office of Information. This film is for overseas distribution, but once again a 16 mm. copy of the material has been made available to the Trust.

The Trust has been mentioned in a large number of broadcasts and magazine articles and on many occasions in the local and national press.

LEASE AND LICENCE

As the Council is convinced of the long-term interest which has been aroused in the Trust's work, negotiations are in progress with the Berkeley Estates Company for a 25 years' lease of the Headquarters and of the 21 acres of enclosures, which include the decoy and all the pens. It is also proposed that there should be a licence for our Members to watch the geese, under certain conditions designed to protect the birds themselves and also the agricultural interests. Thus for that period the continuity of the Trust's work is assured, if indeed anything can be assured for so long in a changing world.

ACCOMMODATION

The work of the Trust has hitherto been limited by lack of space for staff, laboratories, and visiting students. Plans have been examined for a new building which will provide the necessary accommodation. The development of these plans has been delayed by the continued tenancy of parts of the two farms on the New Grounds by the County Agricultural Committee. This has caused a modification of the plan, but it is hoped that it can go forward shortly.

Meanwhile the difficult accommodation problem is being met by a modern caravan, a fine Gypsy Waggon of the Burton type which has been most generously lent to the Trust indefinitely by Col. J. Clarke, and the converted Narrow Boat *Beatrice* which, after an adventurous passage through the canals from Birmingham, is now safely moored at the Patch Bridge, less than half a mile from the Headquarters. This boat was converted by Messrs. Spencer, Abbott & Co., and beautifully painted in the traditional style, complete with castles and roses, by Mr. Allen, Foreman of the yard, who was also responsible for the conversion. The glass for the windows was most generously donated by Mr. G. L. Pilkington. It has sleeping accommodation for 11 Members and guests who do not mind the comparatively primitive amenities of life afloat. We are indebted to Mr. C. H. Taplin, whose advice was invaluable during the conversion and who formed part of the crew during the hazardous passage of the Stratford Canal. We are also greatly indebted to the Inland Waterways Association, for their helpful co-operation in the development of this project.

The Assistant Secretary will be pleased to send particulars of *Beatrice* to Members who are interested.

Bookings can be made now and Members are urged to book as much in advance as possible.

Details of other local accommodation, including a map and list of hotels in the neighbourhood, are also available on application to the Assistant Secretary at the New Grounds.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISITORS

With the large increase in visitors a revision of the local rules governing the facilities at the New Grounds has been necessary. Behind these rules is the principle that on no account must the wild geese be disturbed, as any such disturbance might cause the birds to seek other winter quarters. In order to implement this principle it has been necessary on occasions to prevent our Members from using some of the observation huts. This has caused disappointment and annoyance, for which we are indeed sorry, but we feel sure that all our Members will, upon reflection, agree with our principle. Under these circumstances luck plays an important part, for should the geese be at one end of the marsh a good view may be had, whereas if they are at the other and are wanting to use the fields *behind* the sea wall (as they sometimes do in late January and February), it may be impossible to allow a close approach. It is a matter of regret to the Council that any "control" of our visitors should be necessary, but we are trying to bring the thrill of wildfowl to a large number of people; wildfowl and crowds do not easily mix, and this is one of the conditions which, we have found, must be imposed, if this new idea is to succeed.

All Members proposing to visit the New Grounds are asked to pay particular attention to the advice of the wardens, and to read carefully the details on the following pages.

Seasons

The wild geese arrive on about 24th September and leave on about 10th March. The peak numbers are usually present between 20th December and 7th January. Before the peak there are usually fewer geese than after the peak, but on the other hand they are certain to be in a place where they can be seen (the Dumbles), whereas in January and February they may be in the fields and therefore unapproachable. For watching the geese binoculars or telescope are desirable and rubber boots are more or less essential in a normal season.

The decoy is open to Members (who must be accompanied by a warden) from the end of April until the last week in July. At other times a view of the pool can be had from the new hut on stilts (the Gazebo).

The waterfowl in the collection are in their best plumage from November until the beginning of June, best of all in April. The birds begin nesting then and the young begin to hatch in quantity early in May. These make a most attractive show and there are small downy young to be seen in the collection until the end of June. There are usually *some* young ones out at any time between the beginning of April and the middle of July. Between the end of June and the middle of October, however, the adult ducks are in eclipse plumage. This means that the drakes have lost their brilliant colouring and look, in most cases, drab and brown like the females.

It is hoped that the foregoing paragraphs will help Members to decide the best time to visit the New Grounds in order to see the things which interest them most.