

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor welcomes letters from readers for these columns but they should be brief. Photographs, to accompany letters, are invited which illustrate points of interest, or deal with curiosities of nature and of matters concerned with the countryside.

## SALES OF YEARLINGS

SIR.—Mr. John Loder's warning concerning risks when purchasing yearlings, sounds specious. Should the public really be periodically reminded of the hazards entailed in all matters connected with racing? My reply is in the affirmative in that none should be encouraged to enter the realm of racing unless fully endowed with sporting instincts. But I would have thought that, with very few exceptions, buyers of yearlings are prepared to accept the risks exhibited by Mr. Loder. Surely most people cannot think other than that the breeding of racehorses is delving into the unknown, and that the only guide to the acquisition of a winner is to aim for good conformation combined with successful lines of blood on both sides of the pedigree. The average shows that the best combination of these qualities in a yearling produces the most likely possibility of obtaining a winner. But this is only an average, and in past sales the most costly yearlings have turned out to be, in their turn, both the best and the worst horses of their day, as have many unattractive and consequently low-priced animals proved to be better than their more expensive brethren.

No notion could be more ill-conceived than that which compares the production of racehorses to the turning out of mass-produced motor cars with a guarantee. The Sledmere Stud was once faced with a purchaser who adopted a similar attitude. In 1920, Mr. James White purchased a yearling colt at the Doncaster Sales for 9,600 guineas, and two months later it was discovered that this colt was down on the hip. No complaint about this defect was made until the animal had been in training for some considerable time and was found to be a very moderate performer. Mr. White then proceeded against the Sledmere Stud, on the grounds that the Sledmere Yearlings were sold with a warranty of soundness and a capability of winning races. Mr. White lost his action, and Mr. Justice Lush, in giving judgment, stated that, although he was sorry for Mr. White in his disappointment, people who bought yearlings must expect to suffer such disappointments from time to time.

Although in the existing inflationary times it is imagined, as implied by Mr. Loder, that the breeder for sale has all his own way at the expense of the unsuspecting prospective owner, these disappointments are not always only on the side of the purchaser. During the 1914-18 war, the slump of the early 1930's, and the period of the last war, the most prosperous studs were threatened with extinction. If the fortunes of the Sledmere Stud are to be considered, in 1933 matters became so serious that all preparations were completed for a dispersal sale, and only a timely change in the market in the autumn saved this establishment from ceasing to exist.

Mr. Loder's method of illustrating the breeder's financial ascendancy over the racehorse owner is to my mind exceedingly misleading. To pick out isolated years

of sales in the history of a stud and compare these prices to poor stakes that may have been won by that one crop of yearlings, and at the same time disregarding the possibility of a good average over other years, is only falling into Mr. White's error in imagining that horses are regularly produced with the guarantee of manufactured goods.

Mr. Loder has passed judgment on failures alone, and has ignored the possibility that these failures may be balanced by successes which can demonstrate that, over a period of time, efficiently run public studs are not the hoax he would have us believe. I do not wish to be tedious, but as Mr. Loder has illustrated his point

£10,000; also that year Corrado realised £409, was the winner of £3,477 in stakes and sired many winners. Kyloe in 1932 realised £546 and was the winner of the Irish One Thousand Guineas. Scottish Union, sold for £3,150 in 1936, became the winner of the St. Leger, won £21,586 in stakes and is now a successful sire. Cockpit in 1937 realised £892, and was the winner of £7,092 in stakes. Orthodox was privately sold in 1939 for £917, won £3,474 in stakes and undoubtedly would have been a much more prominent winner had it not been for the war.

Mr. Loder, in assessing the remuneration of owners only in the value of stakes won, has overlooked an all important point in



LAYING A TRACK FOR PEAT TRANSPORT

(See letter "Fuel in the Hebrides")

by quoting figures, I would also quote figures in the history of Sledmere Sales to demonstrate what I infer, by judgment upon average successes.

Spearmint, winner of the Derby and the Grand Prix and a successful sire, was sold by the Sledmere Stud in 1904 for 300 guineas. In 1919, Lemonora, winner of over £10,000 in England and France, was sold for £3,400. Tetrabazia was also sold in that year for £6,300, she won £4,835 in stakes and was the dam of Singapore who himself was sold for £12,500, and became a classic winner. Lady Juror was sold in 1920 for £3,150, won £8,570 in stakes and is the dam of the winners of over £26,000, including Fair Trial, and is the granddam of Tudor Minstrel. Mumtaz Mahal, sold in 1922 for £9,555, was the winner of £13,833 in stakes and subsequently became a great brood mare. In that same year Straitlace was sold for £2,100, and was the winner of £24,131 in stakes including the Oaks, was resold after her racing career for £17,000 and became a very successful brood mare. In 1931 Chatelaine was sold for £525—she won the Oaks and £9,181 in stakes and was resold as a brood mare for

the increased value of the stock upon winning races. An owner may have purchased many costly failures and then have the good fortune to buy an animal whose racing career will produce an increase in value far in excess of past losses. We are constantly witnessing this in the enormous capital sums realised by syndicated horses, and, further, the value of fillies for the Stud can be greatly advanced on the smallest of wins if they possess lines of blood which are sought after.

In conclusion I would revert to my opening lines; the man who simply wishes to add to his wealth, if such be possible in these restrictive days, has safer opportunities than in the investment of bloodstock. In any event, such an individual is of no value to the racecourse. The prize of the sale ring is in itself a fortune, but the prizes are, and always will be, few, and the blanks innumerable. Behind all these purchases, which appear so extravagant, lies the hope of a glory which is the envy of all who love the racehorse—the possession of a Classic Winner.

RICHARD SYKES

Sledmere, Malton, Yorks.

## FUEL IN THE HEBRIDES

SIR.—Modern methods for peat digging are being utilised in the Hebrides, where the Department for Agriculture is now using trolley railways for transport and in order to supply fuel direct at a small fee. The labour involved provides plenty of work to the menfolk of the islands.

JOHN TOPHAM

Sidcup, Kent.

## RHINO—BLACK OR WHITE

SIR.—With reference to a letter in your issue of June 14th, 1947, from Mr. Boje Benzon, of Springforbi, Denmark, I would like to point out that for at least the past twenty years a sub-species of the black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) has had its habitat in the Hluhluwe Game Reserve in Zululand. The sub-species has not however been scientifically classified as a local race or sub-species. The Zulu name of this sub-species is "Punyana"; the ordinary black rhino is known as "Ubejana," and the white or square-lipped rhino as "Umkombi."

There are at least a dozen of these "Punyana" in the Reserve. They are much smaller than the ordinary black rhino. They are most aggressive and bad-tempered creatures, and will often charge with mouth wide open and tail twisted up in a spasm of fury. They frequent the lower areas of the Reserve, mostly near the rivers. I have never seen them in close association with the ordinary black rhino and I do not think any cross-mating ever occurs between the two species.

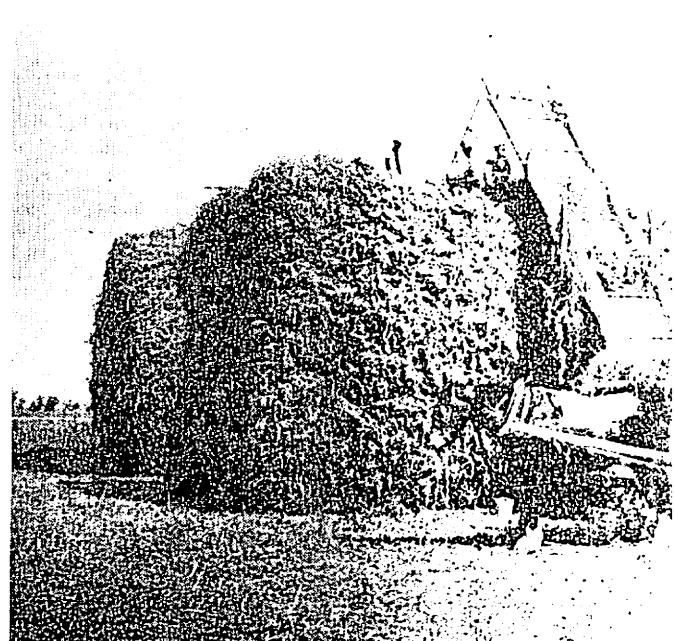
Referring to the difference between the white and black rhino, I am sorry to differ from your correspondent regarding the way their droppings are respectively deposited. In Zululand there are more than 200 white or square-lipped rhino (*Rhinoceros sinuatus Burchelli*). They deposit their dung in huge heaps and return to the same place daily to increase the size of such heaps. One could fill a fair sized lorry from each heap. No attempt is made to disguise their whereabouts by scattering the dung and so exposing it to evaporation as is the case with the black rhino. When the large heaps of dry droppings are found disturbed, it is usually due to the activities of antbeards, who are seeking the termites which consume the lower layers of the mass.

There are some 150 black rhino in this Reserve of which I have been the warden for nearly 20 years. The white rhino is easily distinguishable from the black. The white is a bigger animal, higher at the withers, holds its head low and weighs about a ton more than the black. Its gait is slower and more measured. It has a huge square lip and its head generally resembles a sack of putty cut off squarely at the end. The white rhino mother always guides its calf in front of her and pushes it gently with her horn in the direction she wants it to go. The black rhino calf invariably follows its mother. Both species are slow breeders. Three years elapse between each calf, the period of gestation being 11 to 13 months.

WHITE RHINO ON THE HLUHLUWE RESERVE, PHOTOGRAPHED AT 20 YARDS, AND BLACK RHINO BULL MATILDA (NOTE SORE NEAR SHOULDER)

(See letter "Rhino—Black or White")





BEFORE AND AFTER THE FLOODS. WILLOW GRANGE FARM, NEAR ELY, AT THE TIME OF ITS INUNDATION AND IN CROPS WERE BEING HARVESTED  
(See letter " Fenland Floods ")

A female white rhino calf born in July, 1946, was abandoned by its mother during a game drive, and was presented to the National Zoological Gardens at Pretoria, where now at one year of age it is doing well. So far as is known it is the only white rhinoceros ever to be kept in captivity.

The speed of a charging black rhino has been tested dozens of times in the Reserve by means of a light motor truck. Twenty miles an hour is its limit, and that only for a short distance. The bulkier white rhino cannot travel more than 16 miles an hour, and that only in short spurts.

There is an extremely interesting phenomenon, which, up to now, little attempt has been made to explain from a scientific point of view. Every adult black rhino, both male and female, develops a

His Honour the Administrator of Natal, Mr. D. E. Mitchell, is a very ardent naturalist and a keen student of animals. I have frequently accompanied him through this Reserve, and many are the occasions we have been charged by various vicious "Punyana." He agrees with me on both the main points raised in this letter, i.e. (1) That the "Punyana" is definitely a separate sub-species of the *Diceros bicornis bicornis*, and should be classified accordingly. We suggest *Diceros bicornis punyana* as a suitable name. (2) That the sores appearing on each side of the black rhino's body are in some manner due to sexual activity.

H. B. POTTER  
(Capt., C.M.Z.S.)

Game Conservator, Zululand.

graphs here reproduced, and which come from the Ministry of Food, show one of the Fenland farms, Willow Grange Farm, Stretham, near Ely, during its six weeks inundation, and again in August when harvesting was in progress.

Mr. F. C. Stiles who farms Willow Grange Farm considers himself fortunate, for while other farms in the district were still suffering from the floods, he was able to harvest his barley and pea crops 15 weeks after sowing.

R. R.

**A SMALL COUNTY'S RIGHTS**

SIR,—England's smallest county is not taking kindly to the proposed plan for merging it with the adjoining counties of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire for administration purposes. Signs have now been erected at the boundaries of the county as part of a publicity programme which is being carried out by the Rutland authorities. The arches seen in the photograph are four of the eighty comprising the Harringworth Viaduct which carries the L.M.S. Railway line across the Welland Valley.

F. LUMBERS  
157, Upperton Road, Leicester.

**VOLUNTEERS FOR FARMING**

SIR,—I have just completed a fortnight at a Volunteer Agricultural Camp, having been willing to try to assist the country in a small but important way, and think that

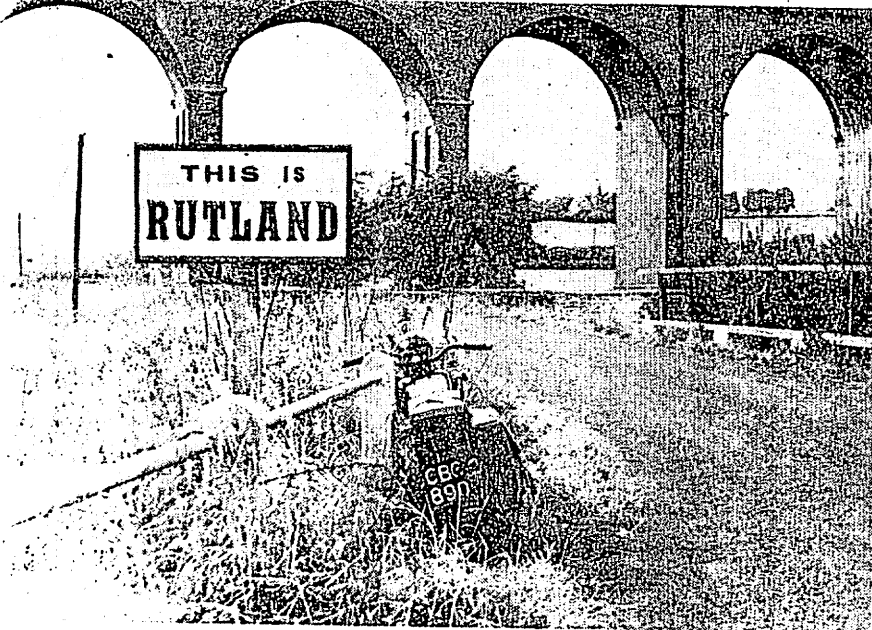
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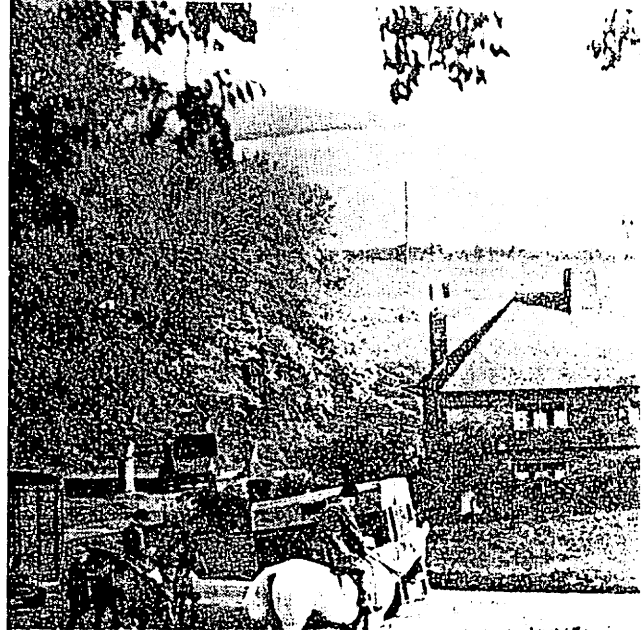
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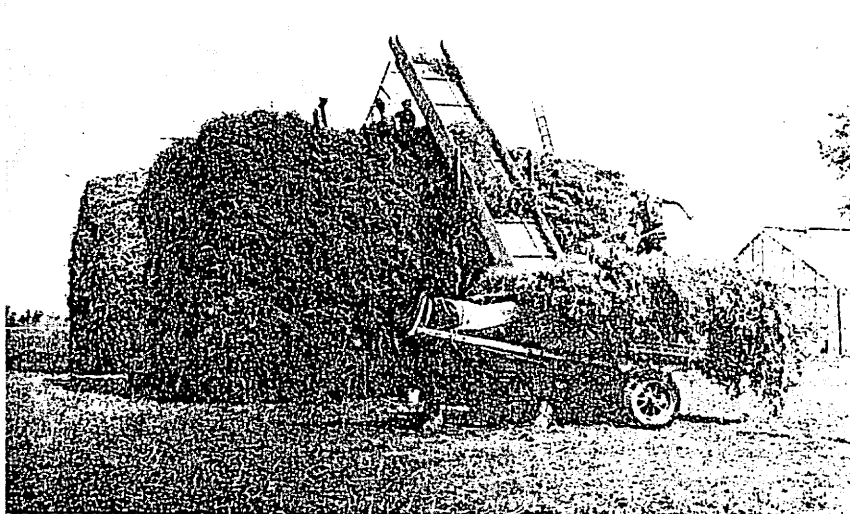
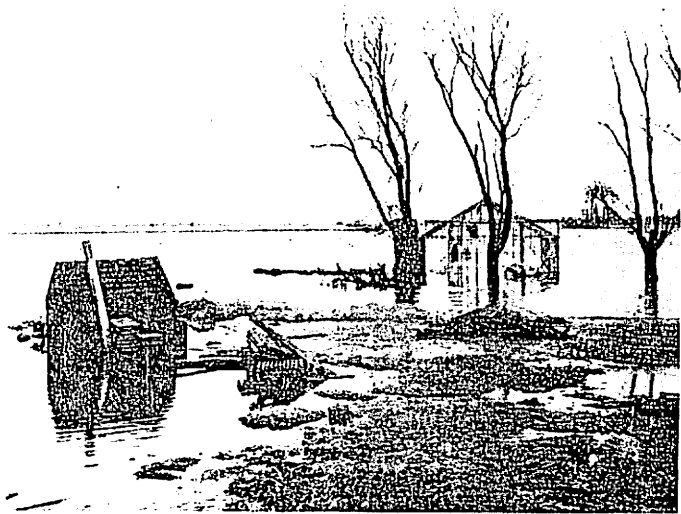
**CUBHUNTING DAYS**

SIR,—Cubhunting started early this year, and the most pleasant of memories is that of an early morning with hounds as summer wanes and before the nip of autumn is felt in the air, no more so than on the South Downs. Such an occasion is depicted in the accompanying picture which shows a meet of the Southdown at Saddlescombe.

H.

FENLAND FLOODS





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(See letter "Fenland Floods")

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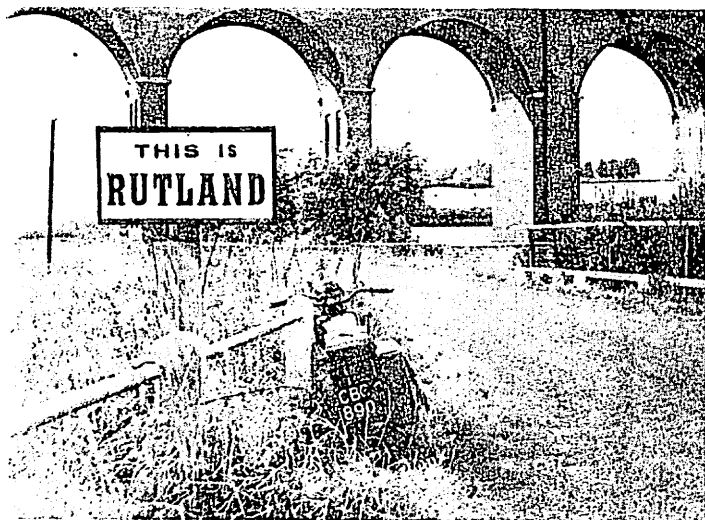
conditions in some of these camps should be publicised in an attempt to improve matters.

A volunteer must be over the age of 17 years, be willing to devote 30 hours a week to work, and pay 28/- a week for his keep.

The camp which I attended had a broad cross-section of the community, including a large proportion of Grammar School boys and students, totalling about 90 men and women in all. Everyone seemed anxious to work and with the younger people this was an economic necessity to enable them to pay their board for a second or third week.

During the first week there was very little demand from the farmers and many people had no work at all. Several young people, in view of the uncertainty of work during the second week, went home at the end of their first week. In the second week more work was available and on some days everyone had work. Sixty people went pea-picking and were offered 2/6 a 40lb. bag picked. The field was so overcrowded that after three hours' work few people had picked more than one bag—three hours' work for 2/6.

Pay, normally, was by the hour and the minimum rate is 1/3. For working from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m., with one hour for lunch, I earned 9/4 per day. A five-day week means that one has 19/- clear after paying board—if one has work on five days. Compared with prices paid by farmers to other casual labour, it appears to me that these



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(See letter "A Small County's Rights")

re on each side of its body near the outer blade. In the mating season the testes become the size of small plates and discharge quantities of blood and fluid. In the course these sores heal up, only to open again the following year. At birth young black rhino show only signs of this sore on each side, but it is not until the animals reach puberty that any discharge takes place. I am firmly of the opinion (unsupported, however, by any scientific evidence) that these sores with their discharge are purely a sexual matter. The colour of the discharge appears to be highly attractive to the opposite sexes; and it may be Nature's way of bringing the males and females together for mating purposes in such a huge expanse of country—especially in the case of comparatively mute animals such as the black rhino.

The white or square-lipped rhino shows a sign during any part of its lifetime of such sores on any part of its body. It is a notable fact, however, that the white rhino has a "finite squeal or "whiny," which can be heard for some distance.

#### CUBHUNTING DAYS

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H.

#### FENLAND FLOODS

SIR,—As a result of the floods which followed the winter snows and frosts, an official report says that in 31 counties some 600,000 acres of agricultural land were inundated, that is an area equal to the size of the county of Kent. About 70,000 acres of winter corn—mostly wheat—and 50,000 tons of potatoes were destroyed by floods, and about 200,000 acres of wheat and 30,000 tons of potatoes by frost.

One of the areas which suffered most was the Cambridgeshire Fens. Two photo-

#### A DOWNLAND MEET

(See letter "Cubhunting Days")

