

A Poultry Elysium: Visit to Mr J Stanworth's Farm. CAT 11th April 1924

“In the shadow of a high hill on which it is said that hundreds of years ago the witches held high revels under the direction of Mother Demdike there is a small community inhabited solely by hens, chanticleers and chickens in all stages of growth. To describe their inhabitation as “cotes” would be a [libel?] on buildings which may aptly be termed poultry palaces. As well, if not better lighted than the average working man's house these poultry dwellings are spacious and airy. As if conscious of their proud position in poultrydom the occupants of the houses are beautifully clean and they have everything than even the most exacting hen could desire. Most marvellous of all some of these palaces are electrically lighted.”

No this is not a fairy story. It is a brief description of conditions which actually exist at “The Hollins”, Mr J. Stanworth's poultry farm, which is pleasantly situated on the heights above Rimington. It is here where the Laying Competition, arranged by the Clitheroe and District Utility and Fanciers' Poultry Society has been held, for the competition is now in its closing stages. It has extended over six months and officials and members of the Society have paid visits of inspection at regular intervals. The final official visit was last Saturday when there was an excellent turn-up of members and their wives. It was a subject of general remark that the weather was more genial than on my previous visit. Mr Stanworth himself acted as “guide, philosopher and friend”. He concealed nothing. In fact his chief anxiety was that the visitors should not miss inspecting all the many branches of poultry farming which are to be seen at their best at “The Hollins.” The Poultry Society owes a deep debt of gratitude to Mr Stanworth for the trouble taking in conducting the competition, the success of which is wholly due in his kindness in placing pens and houses at the disposal of the competitors. The members who were fortunate enough to be able to take part in the tour of inspection on Saturday could not but realise the tremendous amount of work which the competition has involved.

The first move was to the heavy breeds. The birds of each competitor were in separate pens, one large house having been divided in spacious, well lighted, clean airy compartments. A central passage enabled all the compartments to be inspected quite clearly and it was noticed that the wants of the poultry could be supplied and the eggs collected from this passage. The method of the identifying the eggs was very enlightening and proved that in modern poultry farming there is nothing of the “hit and miss” method. Each hen when it entered a nest to deposit its egg automatically closed a trap door and had to wait until the attendant came before it could be released. The hens all bore rings on which was a number. When the eggs were collected they were entered against the number of the hen on a record sheet and were also immediately weighed, all under two ounces being regarded as second grade.

The pens were situated upon the most exposed part of the farm: in fact Mr Stan[rest of sentence missing] above sea level. From this eminence a splendid view of the surrounding country was obtained including the old road from Downham to Twiston. The hardiness of fowls which in such an exposed situation have survived the rigours of the winter and at the same time deposited eggs with anything like

regularity cannot be questioned. Some of the competitors have had the misfortune to lose birds, but the mortality taken on the whole has been very light. The competitors in the section for light breeds have been on open range, housing conditions in their case also having been of the most ideal description. To the ladies who were included in the party, the chicken pens were a source of great attraction. The number of future layers was countless and when Mr Stanworth threw down a little food outside one of the cotes there was an avalanche of eager youngsters. The visitors then entered a dimly lighted brick building in which the temperature was decidedly high and the atmosphere moist. Down the centre was what appeared to be a high table but which on closer inspection proved to be a series of incubators. Mr Stanworth informed his visitors that the total hatching capacity was 5,000. It should be explained for the benefit of the uninitiated reader that eggs which are in process of hatching should be turned daily. When a hen is used as an incubator she performs this duty herself, but in artificial incubation it has to be done by the attendant. As demonstrating the labour saving devices which are applied to modern poultry keeping. Mr Stanworth operated a handle at one end of the incubators which had the effect of turning every egg completely round. He also exhibited an ingenious appliance for testing the fertility of eggs.

The electric current used in lighting the poultry houses, barns and Mr Stanworth's own residence is generated on the farm, which is so up-to-date that a wireless set of the latest type is installed. Although everything on the farm is conceived and carried out on the grand scale, many valuable lessons can be learned by even the small back-yard poultry keeper. Reared and maintained under such healthy, invigorating and cleanly conditions, it would be sheer ingratitude on the part of hens if they did not do their utmost in the egg laying department. In fact one could hardly conceive that in such a busy and orderly community a drone would be tolerated for long. Our own impression was that the business of egg production has been raised to the level of a science, just in the same way as the breeding of race horses and deep milking dairy cows.

The actual management of the competition has been carried out by Miss F. Darrell, who has been in the service of Mr. Stanworth for several years, and whose knowledge of poultry is very wide and varied. She has taken a very deep interest in the competing birds, bestowing a great deal of care and attention on their welfare. It is only just, therefore, that full acknowledgement should be made of her services.