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NOTABLE WEST COUNTRY HOLDINGS

HATTON, BISHOPTON - VI

In the Clydesdale department peculiar trust has for many years been reposed in the members of the Park family. Shows and showing are popularly held to be in touch with ways which would suit the "Heathen Chinese", but the Parks have always "gone straight". Mr Walter S. Park the youngest of his race now prominently before the public, was born at Hatton, a holding extending to about 420 acres, and on the Blantyre estate. It lies about midway between Bishopton and Langbank, on the Glasgow and Gourock line, and the railway passes through the lower fields. The farm may be said to slope up-and in parts pretty stiffly-from the banks of the Clyde. The low lying fields near the river are fairly strong and deep alluvial soil, but the land thins gradually above the railway, and the upper fields are of poor quality above hard whin rock, which crops out a great deal. A back lying field over a ridge is to a considerable extent gathering ground for spring water, and here there is a reedy extent of bog and shallow "residuum". The present Hatton used to have the distinctive addition of Lower, for there was an Upper Hatton. Mr Walter Park's father took the latter place 57 years ago, and in course of time he also rented the lower holding. Father and son have thus between them been three nineteens on the ground. Upper Hatton steading was a very poor affair when the late Mr Park took the place, and after he shifted his household to the lower farm the braeside buildings were allowed to fall away. On the modern Hatton there is a good but rather badly situated house. The front door faces the north, and the main part of the old steading which did use when the holding was half its present size in the form of a square set on a slope, which gathers rain water and something stronger pretty near the back door of the dwelling-house. From the front door a grand view can be got on a clear day of fair Dumbartonshire and its bold northern neighbour Ben Lomond.

Taking quality of land and working convenience into account, Hatton must be accounted a high rented farm. It is 35s per acre, a figure which an east country man would consider to be quite out of the question. The upper fields have long been in grass, and the main course of cropping lower down is oats, greencrop, oats (sown down), and hay. The green crop is usually 40 acres potatoes and 20 acres swedes and yellow. On the Clyde side fields below the railway wheat, Italian ryegrass, hay and timothy are taken. The last noted is allowed to lie for a good many years. Four pairs of horses overtake the work of the farm. As Mr Park deals pretty extensively in horses, he has to provide some wooden loose boxes and paddocks for his stock. With reference to what has been done in recent years by the proprietor at Hatton, the best bits of work by far are a hay shed and a commodious granary, with cart shed below. On Upper Hatton, which is mainly used as a dairy farm, an excellent brick steading, specially planned for the milk and butter trade was erected a good many years ago. This steading is a double one with accommodation for 30 cows or so on each side. There are two fair-sized dwelling-houses, and each side has its separate compartments for milk setting and butter-making. Each churn, by the way, has a pinion through the wall, and is driven by a horse. The byres are very well planned for convenience. All the flooring is brick, troughs are of glazed fireclay, and each section of channel has a small trap-door down which the manure is sent to a kind of subterranean midden, the arrangement being much the same as that which may be seen on one or two model dairy farms in Switzerland. On paper the plan might be subjected to criticism, but in practice it is not found to be objectionable.

Mr Park, like all true West Country men, is an out-and-out believer in the Ayrshire as a dairy cow. He also has a liking for sheep, and has done well with fat cross lambs and a small flock of choicely bred Leicesters. His cattle are kept for milk, not for show, but some of them have taken prizes locally in pretty strong competition. Fair numbers of calves are bred from the best cows, and the most likely looking heifers are brought forward to recruit the herd. The dairy is let to bowers at a rent of £15 to £16 per cow, and Mr Park of course binds himself to provide straw, meadow hay, a fair quantity of turnips, and a fixed weight of bean meal. The bowers now in possession churn the whole milk, and they manage as a rule to dispose of the butter to private customers at 1s 6d per lb. Butter-milk is not quite so easily sold nowadays. Formerly there was comparatively little difficulty in selling it at Port Glasgow and Greenock, a good deal of it going to working men employed in heavy and sweating jobs. Mr Park is of opinion that the new generation will in course of time turn away from the good old-fashioned "slockener".

Mr Park has handled many excellent horses since he was a boy. In recent years his best known entire horses have been the well-known Royal Signet, holder of important premiums; Royal Gallant, by Prince Gallant (6176); Prince of Airies, by the noted Mains of Airies; King's Gambit, by the champion Prince of Albion (6178); the blocky dark coloured Master Jack (7049), so popular a few years ago in the Mearns; the famous Prince of Erskine (9647), winner of the Glasgow three-year old premium in 1895, one of the very best horses of his time, but now, like some other valuable members of the breed, gone all too soon; Royal Alexander, by the champion Prince Alexander (8899); Royal Tom and Royal Hunter, by Mains of Airies; Royal Crusader, by Crusader (9178); Vanora's Prince (9461); Gallant Poteath (8638); Royal Conceit and Royal Albion, by Prince of Albion (6178); and the grand young horse King's Knight, by Mains of Airies. These are only a few of the first-class horses which Mr Park has had in his possession during the last two or three years. Some of them are still in his hands.

At the present time there are several fine specimens of Clydedales on Hatton Farm. A two year-old bay colt by Sir Everard out of a Lord Montrose dam has the making of a first-rate horse. He was first at Aberdeen, and will no doubt be further heard of in due course. A two-year old brown colt named Royal Fortune, by Mains of Airies out of a Prince Fortunatus mare, is sweet and stylish, and should he come to enough size he will be worth some cash. Recently he was first at Houston and second at Paisley. A colt that ought to be a decided acquisition even to a strong stud is Royal Blantyre, a two-year old bay by the champion Prince of Carruchan from the famous mare Hatton Beauty by Darnley. Beauty, it need scarcely be said, is a daughter of the Time o' Day mare Bella. Royal Blantyre is a big colt, with first-class bones, and like his sire he can make a great show when he starts to trot round his paddock. The best young colt in Mr Park's possession meanwhile is the beautiful Prince of Erskine yearling which took firsts at Glasgow and Paisley and the champion cup at Bishopton. He was bred by Mr Leslie Durno, near Oldmeldrum, and is altogether a beauty in colour, shape, and action.

Among the mares and fillies now at hatton there is a very good three-year old bay, bred by Mr Kerr, Redhall. This filly, which is by Royal George, took firsts in Paisley and Bishopton. A pretty yearling filly, by Prince of Erskine from a dam by Belted Knight, looks like an improven Bred as she is, one would expect that she would come to some value. Mr Park has still the remarkably typical dark brown two-year old Topgallant mare Jeanie Wilson which was bred by Mr Wilson at Mansraes. She is of the real Darnley and Topgallant cut in forelegs and hocks. A grand big mare to suit

the times as Lady Alice, a brown four-year old which Mr Park recently bought at Dumbarton show, where she stood first. She is by Gartsherrie, and would not be easily excelled anywhere for legs and feet. With a trifle more reach of neck she would stand much mote than ordinary competition. Mr Park has had great practice among Clydesdales, and his judgement is acknowledged to be remarkably penetrating and free from bias. Like his relatives now at Brunstane and Glenshinnoch, and the late highly respected tenant of Dechmont, Cambuslang, he is a “quality” man, but he has no liking for ornamental animals. Taken all in all he may be termed a representative man of the Clydesdale world, and a man of grit and capacity in general agricultural affairs. This week Mr Park is judge in the Clydesdale section on Glasgow Green, and he is down for the Angus Show, which comes round a fortnight after the close of the “Highland”.



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