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JS
JOURNAL

J. S. JOURNAL

HOUSE MAGAZINE OF J. SAINSBURY LTD.

DECEMBER 1953

Contents

Letters and contributions are invited from all members of J.S. Staff. Photographs of Staff Association activities will be particularly welcome. A fee of half a guinea will be paid for any photograph by a member of J.S. Staff which is published in J.S. JOURNAL.

All communications should be sent to

The Editor, J.S. JOURNAL,
Stamford House, Blackfriars,
London, S.E.1.

THE DIRECTORS send their Christmas Greetings and good wishes to all who work in J.S., at Headquarters, at the Branches, on the Scottish Farms, in the Egg and Poultry Packing Stations and the newly opened Slaughterhouse ; to the Veterans and, indeed, to all the readers of this Journal in many parts of the world who are our friends and suppliers.

J. S. News

Opening Day

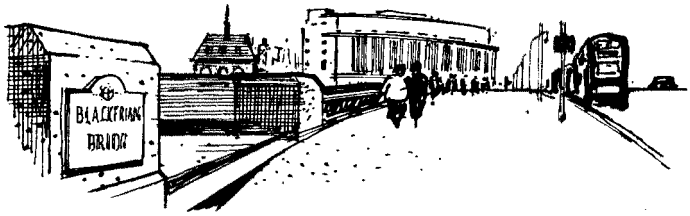
INTERESTED, but confused by what might after all have been a new and subtle sales technique, we put out enquiries recently to find out why a competitor opening a new branch near one of ours had chosen to open on a Thursday, a half-day in that area. It was with some relief that we learnt that they were much more confused than us. They had thought the half-day was on Wednesday. We are still wondering if they are open or only half-open.

Table Tennis Progress

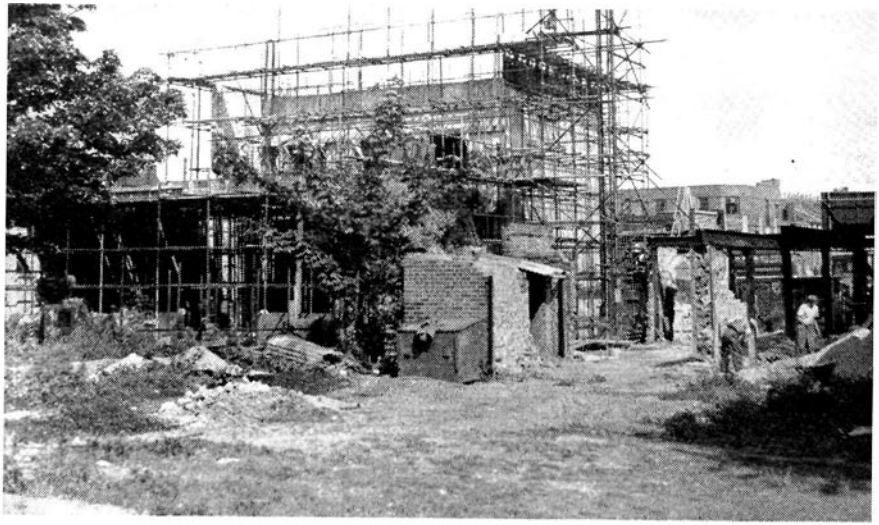
THE Table Tennis Section of the Griffin formed last year is doing very well in the second season of its career. Two men's teams and a ladies' team have been entered in the London Business Houses League, and at the time of writing the season is in the half-way stage. Our first team has won all its seven league games, six of them ten games to nil and the other one, 9-1. They are now in the third round of the cup competition. The second team and the ladies' team have both been eliminated from the cup competition, but our second men's team is doing fairly well in the league with four wins and two losses. The ladies' team is finding the league very hard going, however.

If you play table tennis, or even just want to play, the Table Tennis Section will welcome you at Blackfriars canteen any Thursday between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m., or on alternate Tuesdays at the same time. The only equipment you need bring is a pair of plimsolls.

Boundary

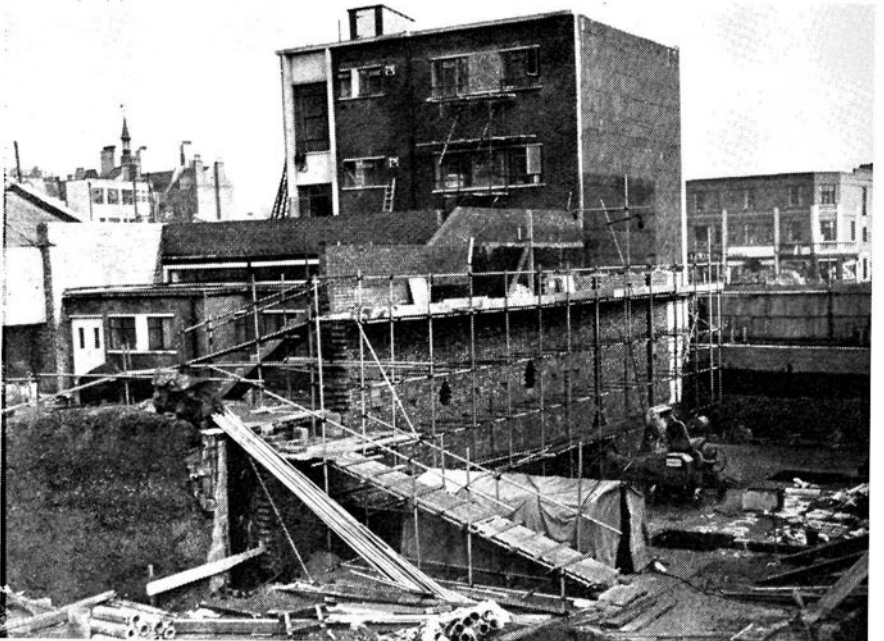


Those of us who cross Blackfriars Bridge may have noticed the new tablets which have been placed at each end of the bridge. The southern tablet marks the fact that of all the Thames bridges with one foot in the City of London, only Blackfriars Bridge is wholly inside the city boundary. London, Southwark and Tower Bridges are half in and half out of the City whose southern boundary follows the middle thread of the river. Blackfriars Bridge owes this peculiarity to the Act of 1756 which gave the City authority for its erection and contained a provision that with the building of the bridge the City



Progress at Lewisham

ABOVE *August.* BELOW *November. These pictures taken from approximately the same position on our Lewisham site show our progress downwards. The expanding hole in the ground is where the basement of our new self-service store will take shape.*



boundary should be extended at this point to its southern end.

Of the other bridges, the southern half of Tower Bridge is in Bermondsey, that of Southwark Bridge is in Southwark, but London Bridge is split down the middle of its southern half between Southwark and Bermondsey. Fortunately the difficulties which could arise through these joint ownerships are avoided by the City being wholly responsible for the maintenance of all the bridges and the costs are met out of trust funds from the Bridge House Estates. A considerable relief to the ratepayers.

K. Y. and R. Sections Dance at Wembley

RIVALLING the Country Sections dance, K. Y. and R. Sections had as visitors on November 9th at Wembley Town Hall coachloads from Oxford, Watford and Gerrards Cross, and visitors from as far as Croydon and, of course, Blackfriars. Over 800 members and friends were present. Spot prizes and novelty events kept the fun going all the evening, but perhaps the best loser of all the events was Superintendent Mr. Lamb.

Mr. Lamb was to make the presentation of the raffle prizes when they had been drawn by Mrs. J. Sheppard. The first number was drawn and announced three times with no response, when Mr. Lamb took a look at his own ticket which turned out to be the winner. He immediately asked for it to be redrawn, a sportsmanlike gesture which was thoroughly appreciated by the guests.

The Stamford Players New Show

THE STAMFORD PLAYERS are busy with rehearsals for their next production, and with a fine cast, under their producer, Albert Appleby, hope to give you a good evening's entertainment when they present A. J. Cronin's drama, " Jupiter Laughs " early in the New Year.

First performance will be on Jan. 12th at Toynbee Hall Theatre, followed by a second on Jan. 20th at Lloyd Park Pavilion, Walthamstow, and a third on Feb. 15th at St. Peter's Hall, Croydon.

Later in the month of February they hope to visit the Brighton area, and are looking forward to this new venture.

Tickets can be purchased from the S.S.A. Office, Blackfriars.

Mr. W. F. Brown, Manager of Greenford, Superintendent J. F. Lamb and Mr. A. Biddlecombe at Wembley Town Hall.

K. Y. & R. Dance at Wembley

STAFF MOVEMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

We are pleased to record the following promotions since our last issue :—

TO ASSISTANT MANAGER

R. C. Andrews of Hythe
K. P. Wood of Seaford
R. J. Woodhouse of Romford

TO HEAD BUTCHER

L. J. Bannister of 12/16 Kingsland to Somers Town.

The following transfers will be of interest to many members of staff :—

MANAGEMENT

R. V. Hold	Spare List (66 Brighton)	to 24 Brighton

ASSISTANT MANAGERS

D. Button	from East Finchley	to Mill Hill
K. A. Gloster	from 24 Brighton	to 66 Brighton
J. E. Lawrence	from Woodford	to Grange Hill
F. P. Rowell	from 3 Golders Green	to 165 Haverstock Hill
T. W. Reed	from Surbiton	to Victoria

MARRIAGE (BETWEEN MEMBERS OF J.S. STAFF)

We offer our best wishes for their future happiness to :—

Miss D. P. Paine of East Finchley and Mr. J. W. Airey of Whetstone, on the occasion of their marriage on December 12th, 1953.

CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Welford of 63, Newstead Road, Lee, who have just celebrated their Diamond Wedding. Mr. Welford retired from the Warehouse at Blackfriars in 1936 after 15 years' service. Both he and Mrs. Welford are active gardeners, and we hope that they will go on producing good vegetables for many years to come.

OBITUARY

We very much regret to record the death on October 19th of Mr. H. Guy. He was in the Transport Department for 29 years, retiring in 1948. We extend our sincerest sympathy to Mrs. Guy and the family.

NEWS OF J.S. STAFF ON NATIONAL SERVICE

We have heard from the following National Servicemen during the past few weeks :—

R. F. MEALING, *Bournemouth.* Upavon, Wilts (R.A.F.). Has now been promoted Senior Aircraftsman and has been put into the flight planning section. Now has quite a few trips in aircraft during the week.

B. JONES, *Stanmore.* Hednesford (R.A.F.). Is now doing his initial training and finds the camp a little draughty at 5.30 in the morning. Hopes eventually to take a course as a Drill Instructor.

R. JENKS, *Ruislip.* Padgate (R.A.F.). Had an unfortunate start by having

Over 60 people were present at the farewell dinner given at the Red Lion Hotel, Luton, to Mr. A. D. Maclaren, who retires on December 24th, after fifteen years at Luton Branch and forty-five years in all with J.S. He was presented with a silver tea service and an illuminated address (the work of David Maclaren, his son) by Mr. F. Molyneux, assistant manager, on behalf of the staff.

to spend a period in hospital soon after he arrived. However, is quite fit now and will be shortly taking his trade test as a Cook, from which he hopes to transfer to a Butcher.

D. JACOBS, *Camberley.* West Kirby (R.A.F.). Expects to finish his initial course in a week or two and although, so far, he has not heard where he is to be posted, he has applied for clerical work and feels he might take his course at Hereford.

J. FAWDRY, *Winchmore Hill.* Compton Bassett (R.A.F.). Has now started his trade course as a Wireless Operator and seems to be doing very well so far. Can already read morse quite well and knows a good deal more about a wireless set than he did before.

R. G. EVANS, *Pinner.* Kidbrooke (R.A.F.). Expected to go abroad but at the last minute was withdrawn from the draft and sent for a special course at Kidbrooke.

K. ELDRIDGE, *Luton.* Leighton Buzzard (R.A.F.). Has been lucky enough to be posted fairly near his home and finds his job in the Accounts Department very interesting. He is, however, looking forward to his release next year.

Mrs. Rudd with the present staff of the Griffin Club. BACK ROW : *H. Whittaker, D. Wall, J. Seton, A. Robins.* FRONT ROW : *S. Taylor, V. Franklin, Mrs. Rudd, E. Oxley, L. Potter.*

T. DELVES, *Nottingham.* Shrewsbury (Army). Is now a L/Cpl. and in a few weeks' time takes over the duties of Chief Clerk. Eventually this should bring with it promotion to Cpl.

P. SULLIVAN, *Peckham.* Germany (Army). Still employed as a Bandsman and seems to be getting along quite well. With three colleagues he decided to try and beat the clock in travelling to England on leave and managed to complete the journey in 17 hours. (Munster to London).

R. STENNING, 218 *Sutton.* Bicester (Army). Has now passed the examination for Clerk Tec 1 which is evidently the highest trade classification he can take. Has been fortunate so far with his postings in that he is able to get home most week-ends.

F. A. POPE, *Bournemouth.* Dorchester (Army). Is still doing his initial training and seems to have enjoyed it so far. Seems to spend most of his evenings cleaning equipment.

B. J. CHRISTMAS, *Development Engineers.* After Padgate (R.A.F.), posted to Compton Bassett for training as Wireless Transmitter Mechanic. Finds this more interesting and gets home fairly regularly.

M. WATKINS, *Head Office.* At G.H.Q. Far East Land Forces at Singapore. In the office. Enjoyed his voyage out and likes it there—met D. Pettit (of H.O.), who is in the R.A.F.

E. BALSAR, *Building Development.* Promoted to Corporal and is attached to the R.A.F. at Deversoir (M.E.A.F.). Is in charge of a unit drawing office.

J. STANFIELD, *Head Office.* Has just completed his initial training at Aldershot, and is in very good health.

Mr. W. Goss, Mr. W. C. Gurr and Mr. Parker presenting an electric sewing machine to Mrs. Rudd.

A Great Send-off to Mrs. Rudd

An appreciation by W. C. Gurr, former Chairman of The Griffin Athletic Club

Do you want a button sewn on ? Or some warm milk for the baby ? Or perhaps the wireless switched on to hear the latest scores ? Do you ? Well, go and see Mrs. Rudd.

That is what we have been doing for 25 years, so long in fact that many present-day members of the Griffin Club cannot remember the time when she was not there as Club Stewardess to help them, guide them, and do her best to supply their needs. Many of the older members of the Club remember her in their playing days and were always pleased to meet her again on their perhaps less frequent visits to Dulwich.

Mrs. Rudd, who has carried on well past the retiring age, has at last given up her great work at the Club.

On Thursday, 29th October, 1953, in the Main Pavilion at Dulwich, where she has served us so well through all these years, we gave her a great send-off to what we sincerely hope will be a long and happy retirement.

SEATED CENTRE *is Mrs. Rudd with* (LEFT) *Mrs. Younger and* (RIGHT) *Mrs. Parker.* STANDING *are some of the oldest Griffin members, all of whom have been active in the Club since* 1925.

About fifty members who had known her for many years turned up to wish her well and to chat over old times. I am sure it was particularly gratifying to her that both Mr. F. W. Salisbury and Mr. N. C. Turner were able to be present.

During more than 30 years at the Club I have attended many functions at Dulwich, but none can compare with the intimate atmosphere that we managed to capture on this occasion. Coloured lights, a song or two round the piano, reminiscences from one and all, a tasty array on the buffet counter, arranged by the Staff Catering Department. I felt greatly honoured when Mr. Parker, the Griffin Chairman, asked me to make the presentation to Mrs. Rudd. I had been on the Committee who engaged her, and for many years, as Chairman of the Club, we had worked together in complete harmony. No Chairman could have had a more loyal and willing helper.

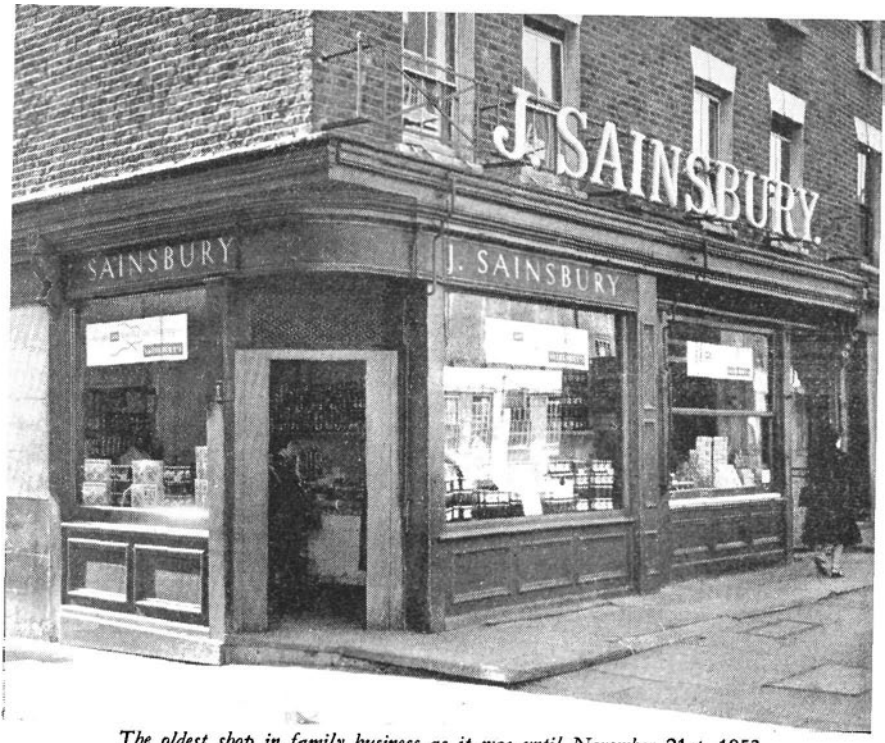
The money subscribed by the members was added to the amount voted by the Club, and I had great pleasure in presenting Mrs. Rudd, on your behalf, with a gift of her own choice, an electric sewing machine.

Mr. John Sainsbury visits the new branch and chats with some of the customers.

A New Beginning in Somers Town

In a way one can't help but sympathise with those customers who regret the old shop at Chalton Street and find it hard to change their habits. Certainly the old shop was a piece of J.S. history that kept us all reminded of the long road the firm has travelled since the days when John James Sainsbury married Benjamin Staples' daughter Mary.

The old shop, too small for to-day's trade, with its cramped



The oldest shop in family business as it was until November 21st, 1953.

departments, its wooden cash drawers and its Victorian tiles, had a kind of nostalgic charm that was easier to enjoy of course if you didn't have to manœuvre sides of bacon or cases of groceries through its population of wise-cracking Somers Town shoppers. Besides, it was, if not the first Sainsbury shop, the oldest shop in the family business. The Drury Lane shop was opened and the firm established in 1869, but Ben Staples' shop was already three years old by then. So there was always a special regard for Chalton Street with its gas-lit, horse-drawn memories of days when it was one of the busiest market streets in London, doing a roaring trade from morning to midnight.

Mr. John Sainsbury told me, as we stood looking at the old shop, now shuttered and silent, that he could remember his first visits to the shop seventy-seven years ago. He remembered having tea, when he was seven years old, with his grandfather,

Inside the old shop at Chalton Street.

Ben Staples, and looking down from the first-floor dining room at the welter of street traders below, their stalls packed tightly down each roadside. For many years the shop flourished on the stream of trade which ran through Chalton Street. "At one time we sold four tons of butter and margarine here every week," said Mr. John, looking up and down the street at the thin sprinkling of stalls and the leisurely shoppers. Times have changed in Somers Town and now our branch there is completely changed, too.

The new branch almost opposite the old one isn't a big shop but it's a very neat bit of planning and every inch of space is used. The site is an odd one, broad and shallow, since it is really six lock-up shops in a row. The depth is only some 25 to 30 feet and there is no basement or first floor. Three of the shops are used for selling. Of the others, one at the south end

The grocery department in the new shop. The service hatch can be seen over the assistant's left shoulder.

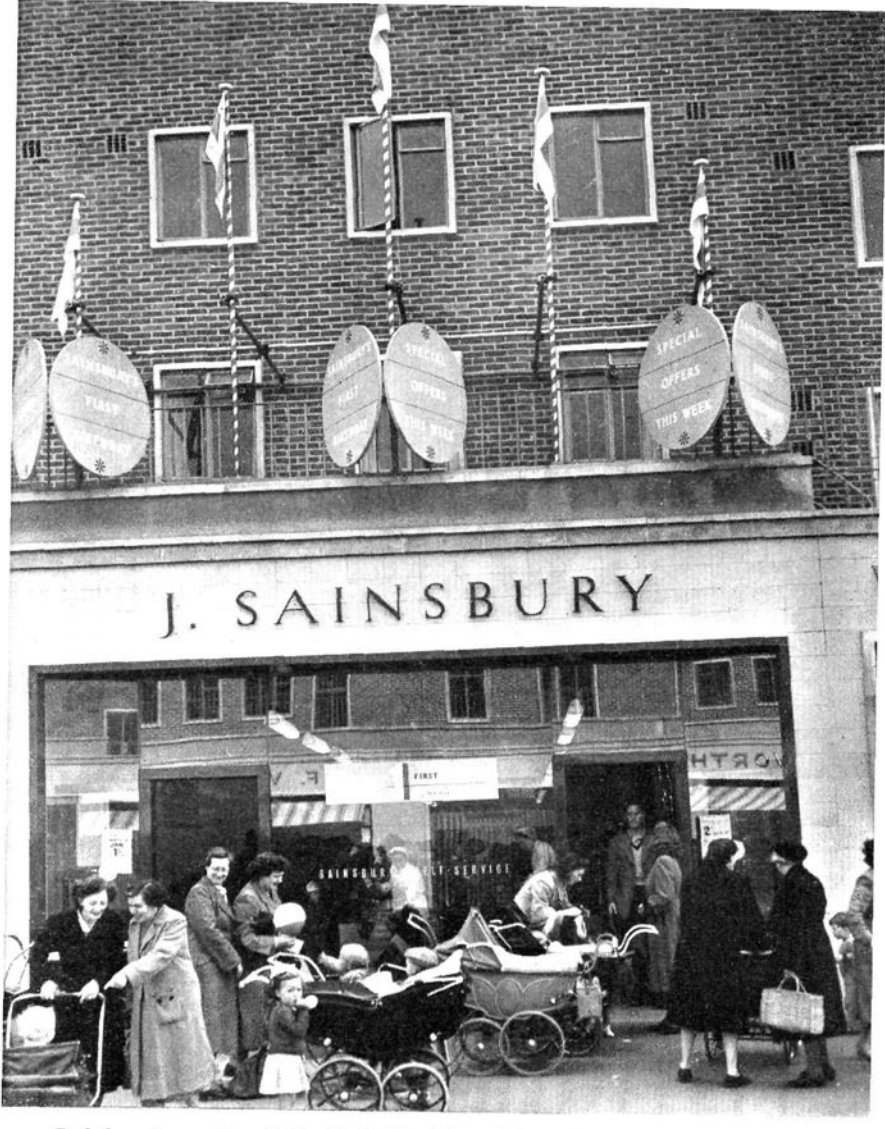
is used as grocery warehouse and office, while at the north end two shops enclose the cold store and preparation rooms for meat and provisions. The butchers' shop is a new addition. Access from one shop to another is at the back of the shops through the dividing walls.

There isn't any doubt about the feelings of the branch staff. The old shop closed on Saturday night and by next Tuesday morning they were wondering how on earth they ever managed to serve anyone across the road. And one customer who is really satisfied is Mrs. Gibbings who, as she was the last customer served on the final Saturday night, was given a pound to spend as she wished in the new shop. She came in on opening day, Monday, November 23rd, and got some of her Christmas shopping done early.

ABOVE *The grocery service hatch from the warehouse side.*
BELOW *A general view of the shop front.*

ABOVE *Mr. John with the manager, Mr. Mitchell, who told us that after only one day in the shop he couldn't imagine how they had managed before.*

BELOW *The cooked meats counter.*



Debden branch celebrated its first birthday in November with a month of special offers.

ABOVE *Junior customers take a keen interest in shopping the self-service way.*

OPPOSITE *The design of the shop front is clean, simple and modern.*

DEBDEN'S BABY SISTER

Our smallest self-service store yet

Grange Hill is the second self-service store we have opened on new L.C.C. housing estates, Debden being the first, leaving Oxhey, Harold Hill and Aveley still to be opened. The Grange Hill estate is in the Barkingside-Hainault-Chigwell area and is reputed to contain so far approximately 3,000 *houses or dwellings and a population of something over* 12,000. *Of the* 36 *shops on the main shopping parade,* 13 *are already trading—ours being the twelfth to open.*

A general view of the shopping area. The shop has no basement and the warehouse and preparation rooms are at the back.

While Debden self-service was celebrating its first birthday, the final feverish touches were being put to its young sister at Grange Hill. This addition to the family, although not originally planned as such, developed into a self-service during its embryo state—in fact as soon as the success of the Debden experiment became apparent.

In floor area this is our smallest self-service yet, although in actual shelf area it does not fall far short of West Croydon as it was when it was first converted. The shop itself is a single one with a frontage of a little over 20 feet and a depth of 75. Unlike Debden it is simply rectangular in shape and the warehouse and preparation rooms are all on shop floor level. Beneath the shop itself is a duct which houses the electrical and refrigeration installations for the cool air cabinets. The opening of this new branch marks yet another stage in the development of our open top refrigerating cabinets for, as can be seen from the

Another view of the shop.

photographs, these units, instead of being ' islands ' as in previous branches, have now been built against the walls. This arrangement also allows for the provision of two shelves over the cabinet itself—the lower of these also being refrigerated. The amount of refrigerated selling space is therefore considerably improved and from the photographs it will be seen that the upper shelf, which has been built to the same level as the top shelf of the wall shelving, is put to good use for the display of items which do not require refrigeration but which are allied to the goods shown in the cabinets. Unlike the previous open top cabinets, these are illuminated ; the battery of three of these units along the right-hand side of the shop is a most impressive feature.

It will be seen that in front of the first of the three wall cabinets a small barrier has been built ; from this particular cabinet butter, margarine, cooking fat and also rationed cheese is

ABOVE *The battery of three open-top cabinets makes a fine selling unit. This is a new design incorporating a shelf which is also refrigerated. The barrier in the right foreground is for serving rationed goods and will be removed in the future with the rationing restrictions.*

BELOW *One of the three check-outs.*

served. While these goods are still rationed we feel it is necessary to *serve* them rather than ask customers to serve themselves—when these items are derationed the barrier rail can be quickly taken away and the cabinet operated as an ordinary self-service unit. As a departure from the practice at our other self-service stores where rationed cheese is cut and served in the normal way, at Grange Hill it is pre-weighed and wrapped in moisture proof transparent film and served from the refrigerated shelf of this cabinet.

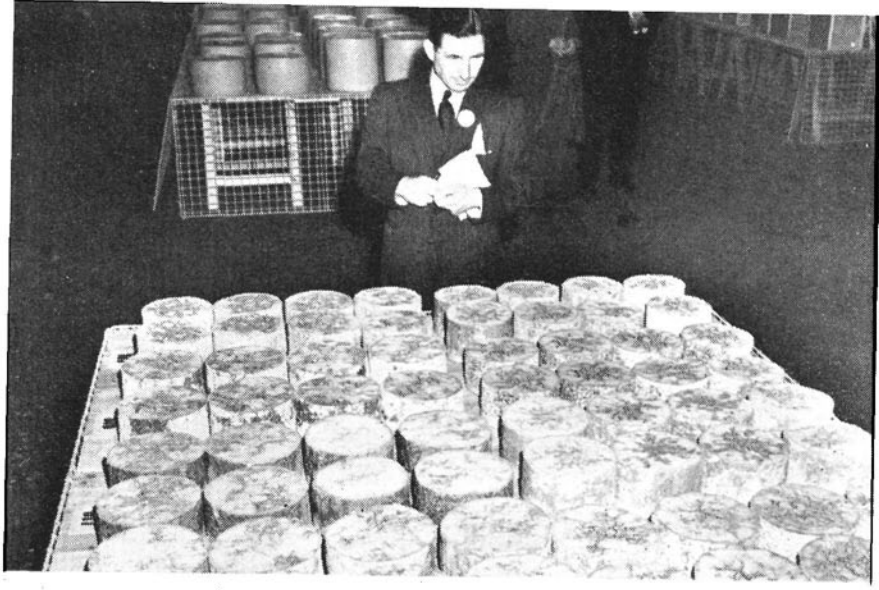
One can visualise in the Sainsbury store of the future a row of such cabinets down the entire wall length—dairy, cheese, cooked meats, pies, poultry, rabbits and perhaps even fresh meat. Full marks to the Development Engineers for the production of this magnificent piece of equipment.

Immediately inside the entrance a single wall cabinet for the sale of sausages, poultry and rabbits is sited, and this is followed by four-tier wall shelving for the remainder of the length of the shop. On the opposite side of the shop, wall shelving and three single counter units, two refrigerated for the sale of fresh meat, follow the battery of three refrigerated wall cabinets. Two long island gondolas run down the centre of the floor area. Three check-outs, each with a ' candy-rack ', can be seen just inside the all-glass front of the store. The warehouse accommodation includes, apart from storage space, two cool-rooms, a dairy preparation room and the usual wrapping, packaging and price-marking tables and equipment.

The new Grange Hill self-service is a very attractive store and, we are pleased to say, is already proving very popular with the residents.

Correction—

Will readers please note that the names under the photographs of the cricket teams in our October number should have read as follows : "V" Section—BACK ROW : J. Fairman, R. Whiting, H. Donovan, L. James, D. Richmond, H. Stone. FRONT ROW : E. Spencer, D. Lewis, N. Johnson (Capt.), F. Floodgate, G. Bradbery. "G" Section—BACK ROW : A. Ribbons, R. Gronland, E. Bardwick, G. Carter, W. Patton, R. Reid. FRONT ROW : B. Smith, D. Barrett, J. Morris (Capt.), H. Clark, J. Fitch.



Mr. R. G. P. Cox, at the National Dairy Show, Olympia, judging the Stiltons.

Ripe and Royal *A word about Stilton by R. G. P. Cox*

There is a little game, amusing to the onlooker, called " The King of Cheese " or perhaps better termed " When Experts Don't Agree ", and undoubtedly the all-flattering regal term can be applied, according to one's taste and fancy, to the humble portion of spreading cheese, just as much as to the acknowledged Stilton, for a man's fancy in cheese can indeed be a woman's horror. However, it may be nostalgically remembered by those not afraid to count the years that Stilton cheese was very much part of the old traditional Christmas, whether we were privileged guests to enjoy spooning at a whole cheese or sharing a small piece from an 8-oz. wedge. This fact was recalled to me

the other day when an old gentleman of 75 telephoned asking if he could buy a prime Stilton cheese to nourish with port according to tradition, so that he could later give half a cheese to each of his two nephews at Christmas. He really was most keen that his two relatives should know the old traditional Stilton before it was too late ; I hope the respective nephews will not be disappointed with their presents !

The history of Stilton cheese is said to have begun in Stilton, a village on the borders of Huntingdon and Northamptonshire known to motorists on the Great North Road and where the Old Bell Inn is still ready to welcome visitors. It has never been established or claimed that Stilton cheese was first made in this village, but the Old Bell Inn must have fed the travelling guests so well and they, in turn, were so impressed with the quality of the cheese that very soon the inn was renowned for its cheese and was doing a good trade serving visiting coaches (horse, not charas) with cheese to take away on their journeys. In this way it is hardly surprising that it became known as "Stilton" cheese, and, possibly because it was carried to every part of Britain, Stilton cheese has today a following in all corners of the country, and is exported to many parts of the world.

The method of manufacturing the cheese was kept a close secret and even today it still has not been made successfully except on the farms and dairies round Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir in Leicestershire and in some parts of Derbyshire. The reason for this is open to argument, and it is probably a matter of local "know-how" passed down through generations although it is claimed that land containing blue lias lime for the cows to feed over is necessary for the production of good Stilton cheese.

Of course, the fact that the Old Bell Inn made a habit of placing its cheese regularly under the wine taps and feeding them with drops of wine added to the popularity and some old fashioned houses and clubs maintain this tradition.

For the younger generation the richness and appearance of the nourished and ripened cheese might not appeal, but if they are fortunate enough to obtain a really nice piece of Stilton, they will, I hope, have re-captured a taste of the old-fashioned Christmas, and then they, too, will be able to argue the merits of the " King of Cheese ".

Miss Ivy Whiteside

J. S. jobs

Seventh of a series about people and the jobs they do for J.S.

TOWARDS the end of the afternoon at Blackfriars, the items which make up the daily bulletin are at last brought together. In twenty minutes Miss Whiteside and her staff print and deliver 740 copies to the branch post. Friday is the busiest bulletin day and, including price change notices, as many as 10,000 sheets of paper go through the machine on that job alone. Miss Whiteside has been in charge of the smooth running of this department since 1946, and in those seven years she has taken a leading part in its steady growth. She has seven girls working for her, all of whom she trained. Besides this staff, she supervises the typing pool and coaxes newly trained shorthand typists into doing their work the J.S. way. Besides the bulletin, every month the Multigraph department turns out 300,000 forms of different kinds for which they use 16 pounds of ink and about eight hundred reams of paper. Window display diagrams, the wages pay roll, time cards, letterheads, the self-addressed envelopes used for branch post, labels for caterers' supplies, tie-on labels for the factory, laundry labels and the addressing of customers' account statements. All these and other items go through the department which in the past few years has more than doubled its capacity and speed, and has surprised the makers of the machines with innovations in the technique of preparing printing plates. Miss Whiteside is very modest about herself. She really wanted to join the police force, she told us. But instead she came into J.S., and today her main interest outside the firm is the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

NIGHT TRIP

Every night J.S. transport leaves Blackfriars to keep long distance branches supplied with fresh goods. We print below a brief account of this J.S. job with which few of our staff are familiar.

At two o'clock in the morning Stamford Street is unexpectedly active. It is a quiet, purposive activity, without bustle or hurry. At the loading bays vans are being packed and in the transport offices forms are being checked. The windows of the factory blaze with light and in the silent streets the machinery sounds louder than usual. At the canteen dinner is ready for the night staff and in the big restaurant there is a sprinkling of men in overalls smoking, reading last night's papers and talking quietly.

Union Street is busier. In one of the bacon stoves golden sides of bacon are being lifted from the rails, carried to a bench where the gammon is cut from them with one strong-wristed slicing cut. The gammons are packed in a shining metal container to go straight to the factory ; the sides, once the cut end is covered, are stacked on hand trucks to be despatched to the branches. In another stove the floor is being swept up before fresh sawdust is laid and in the next the sawdust has been lit and the whole chamber is full of pungent eye-stinging smoke.

Over at the loading bay where the tomatoes are being sorted out for each branch, the van for the Derby run is packed. Sharp at three o'clock it pulls out into Union Street, and then turns north across Blackfriars Bridge. This run is on a tight schedule. The driver must be at Derby by 8.30 in the morning to be inside his time limit.

At that time of night Fleet Street is wide awake too. The morning editions are rolling off the presses and the streets are

busy with delivery vans. But half a mile further on as we pass into Islington, London sleeps and the road lies through dark houses towards the North through Finchley and Whetstone, where the first city-bound lorries are moving into town. Our van climbs steadily up out of the Thames valley. By night, along deserted roads, one becomes aware of the lowness of London. Beyond Barnet we are out of the valley and as we head towards St. Albans we pass the first lay-bys packed with great sleeping road vehicles crouched in the half light. This is the gateway to London or to the North where drivers sleep for a few hours in their cabs or in a lodging house for the night before they take the wheel on their return journeys.

In midsummer, day has begun to show by now but for most of the year this is a journey in the dark against the light of fleets of heavy traffic. Tumbling down from the North in close-packed groups come the lorries with their cargoes for London. In bad weather they keep together and if one of them gets into difficulties the others will stop to lend a hand. " They're very helpful people these long-distance chaps," said the driver. " Always ready to do one another a good turn."

In the dark the oncoming headlamps slam across the cab as each lorry passes, but when daylight comes mist rises from the fields and drifts across the road in swirling uneven patches. Then our only guide if the mist is not too thick is the gleam from the catseyes set in the crown of the road and sending back our own light to us in a long snake of brilliants. The mist creeps into the cab, dampens and chills us in spite of the engine warmth. Slowly the van feels its way until we are out of the worst of it and well on towards Dunstable and the Stratfords. A5 is an unfamiliar sight in the early morning light. Only a little traffic is on the move and the villages lie dead asleep as we leave them behind.

The rhythm of the motor and the warmth of the cab work like a sleeping pill on a passenger, but conversation breaks the spell. Drivers on the long hauls who ride alone will pull into the roadside and take a half-hour of sleep when they feel the drowsiness on them. But we're on a tight schedule, and if we stop it's for a cup of tea in one of the transport cafés that lie along these highways. Beyond Northampton, which lies sound asleep and empty-streeted as we pass through, we pull on

to the cindery parking space around a café and stiffly dismount.

It is a long shed with a kitchen at one end and the cash register strategically well placed three yards behind the counter. The seats are from old buses. The only luxury is the red and chrome juke-box which plays half a dozen records in a deep chocolate-coloured voice as we drink tea and more tea. Time slips by too easily at that time of the morning. The café is silent and the customers seem shut in private worlds waiting to accumulate enough vitality to make a start on the next lap of their journey. In the few minutes we spent inside the sun has climbed over the hedge-tops. "There's our friend," says the driver, and we're off to Leicester through green fields where young rabbits

and birds are getting breakfast. Later in the day when men wake up they will hide again, but for a few hours the green world is theirs.

In Leicester we come on a town starting work and pick a careful way through streets crowded with buses and cyclists. We check our watches. The early mists have slowed us a little, but once out of Leicester we make good time along the roads through the open rolling country famous for hunting. Loughborough, Kegworth and Elvaston are left behind, but on the fringes of Derby where smoke is rising straight in the early morning air we slow into an anti-climax of traffic lights, cyclists and buses. At the centre of the town buses and cars are trickling through streets designed for farm carts and stage coaches. The way in to the J.S. branch is tricky. Derby's one regular point-duty policeman stands in front of it, but to-day we are lucky. He waves us in and we creep into the arched entrance to the yard behind the branch. We check our time. 8.30 dead.

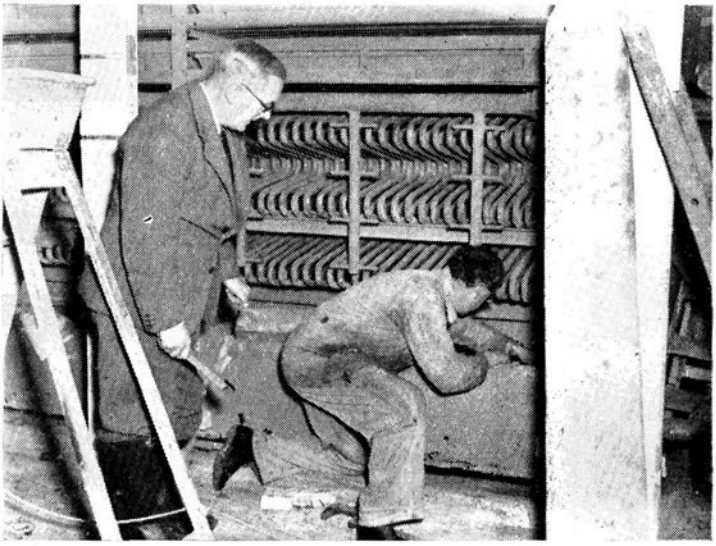
And then breakfast in the branch kitchen after a wash. Bacon and eggs never tasted so good.

Mr. James Sainsbury with Mr. E. Burgon watch the new saw in action at Little Wratting.

Slaughterhouse in Action

IF you want to be certain that you're getting the best possible raw materials to produce the best possible products for sale there's only one way to do it. You have to be able to check and control the condition of those materials as far back to the source as possible.

In the case of meat, this means going on to the farms and con-



Mr. Hall (left), Chief Engineer, checks installations in the new cold store.

sulting with the producer as to what sows and boars he should use and how his pigs should be fed. This is why J.S. will have its own pig-buying organisation in the country directly the Ministry of Food gives up—which is expected to be some time next summer. Having bought your pig you must kill it. These pigs will be destined either to be manufactured into sausages, pies in our factory or to be sold as fresh or pickled pork in our shops. The manufacturing process begins with the slaughtering. All a farmer's good work can be spoiled by bad handling of the pig prior to killing and at the moment of killing, therefore, J.S. consider that they must not only buy their own pigs but also must have full control from the moment the animal leaves the farmer's possession.

The hog population of England has greatly increased in the last year and the Ministry of Food needed additional slaughtering facilities. J.S. were fortunately able to take advantage of the

Everyone takes a keen interest in the trial of a new electric saw.

opportunity to start up again the slaughterhouse at Little Wratting, near Haverhill, which before the war was run by Mr. Frank Sainsbury. Under the guiding hand of Mr. Salisbury the planning of the abbatoir has been in the hands of Mr. James Sainsbury, Mr. Hall, Chief Engineer, Mr. Parker of Building Developments and Mr. Bowyer, manager at the slaughterhouse. The planning began last summer and long before building operations began there was a thorough working out of all the problems involved in modernising the killing and processing technique. The speed at which the operations were carried out was largely due to the thorough preparation before work began.

The re-opening of the abbatoir has restored to Haverhill one of its pre-war industries and it is very satisfying to J.S. to have many of the former workers back again on their old jobs. Mr. Bowyer, manager of the slaughterhouse, started work with Mr.

Frank in 1916, and he is widely known in the district where he is held in real respect and affection. His satisfaction at being back at Little Wratting is only exceeded by his satisfaction at recently becoming a grandfather.

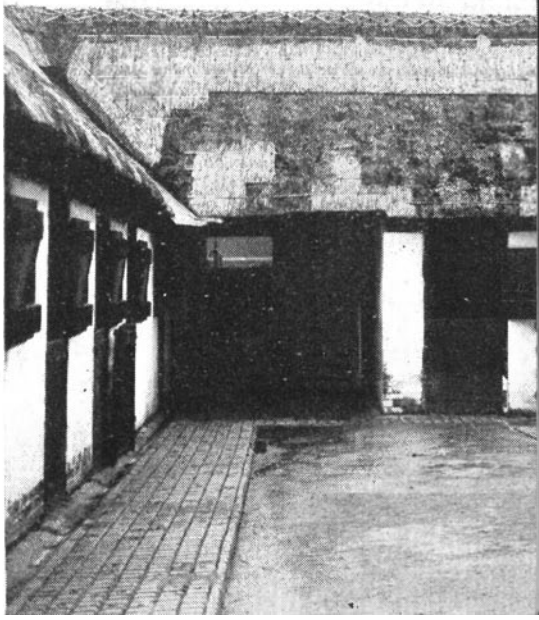
Arthur Lawrence, senior slaughterman, David Medcalf in charge of the cold store, Tommy Thompson "opener", John Rawlings, senior engineer and darts player, and Reg Herrington, senior stockman, were all with Mr. Frank. Arthur Lawrence's father was head gardener at Broadlands, the country house of Mr. J. J. Sainsbury, near Haverhill, and Arthur started work as gardener under his father in 1916. He went into the slaughter-house in 1921 and has worked at all the jobs in the process.

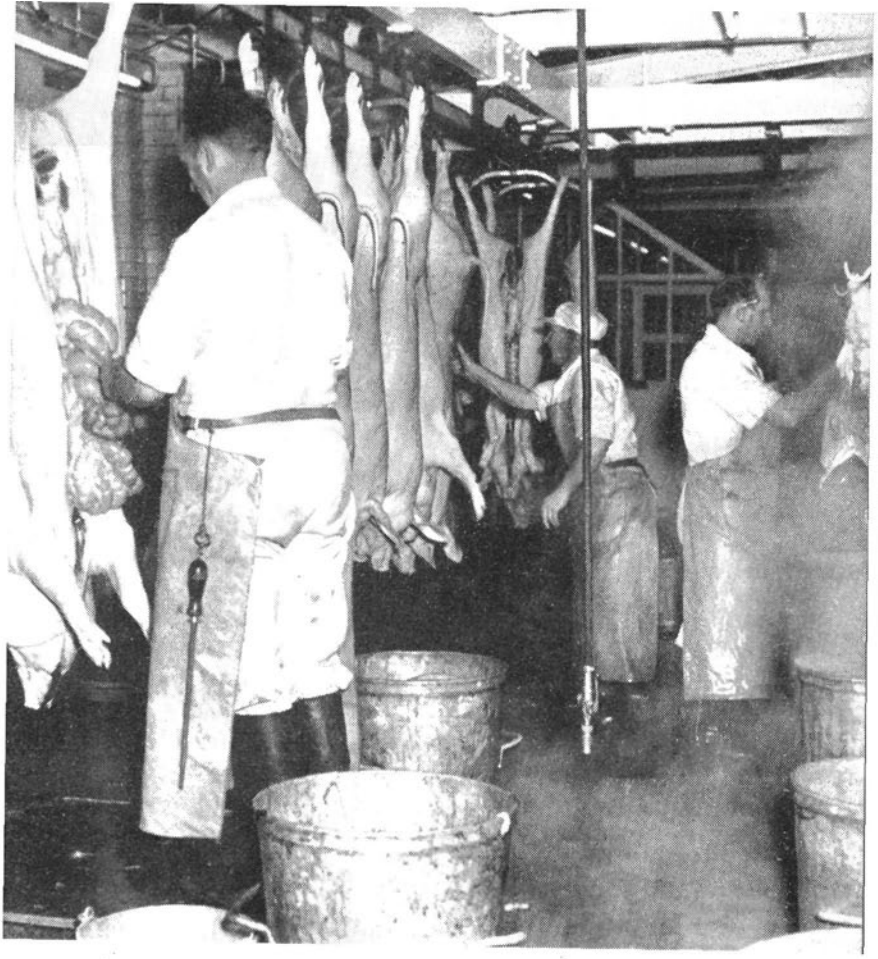
Some of the old hands have seen a great many changes in their time at Little Wratting for new ideas have always been given a trial there. The complete success of the new plans can only be judged when Little Wratting is once again sending meat direct to Blackfriars.

Mr. Bowyer, manager at Little Wratting abbatoir, widely known in the Haverhill district for his keen interest in social activities.

ABOVE *Reg Herrington welcomes new animals at the abattoir. As senior stockman he is responsible for the welfare of pigs and their delivery to the killers in good condition. Reg started work with Mr. Frank in* 1919, *spent the last war looking after forty or fifty hives of bees and is now back again at his old job. When pigs are kept over one day before slaughtering they are fed and watered.*

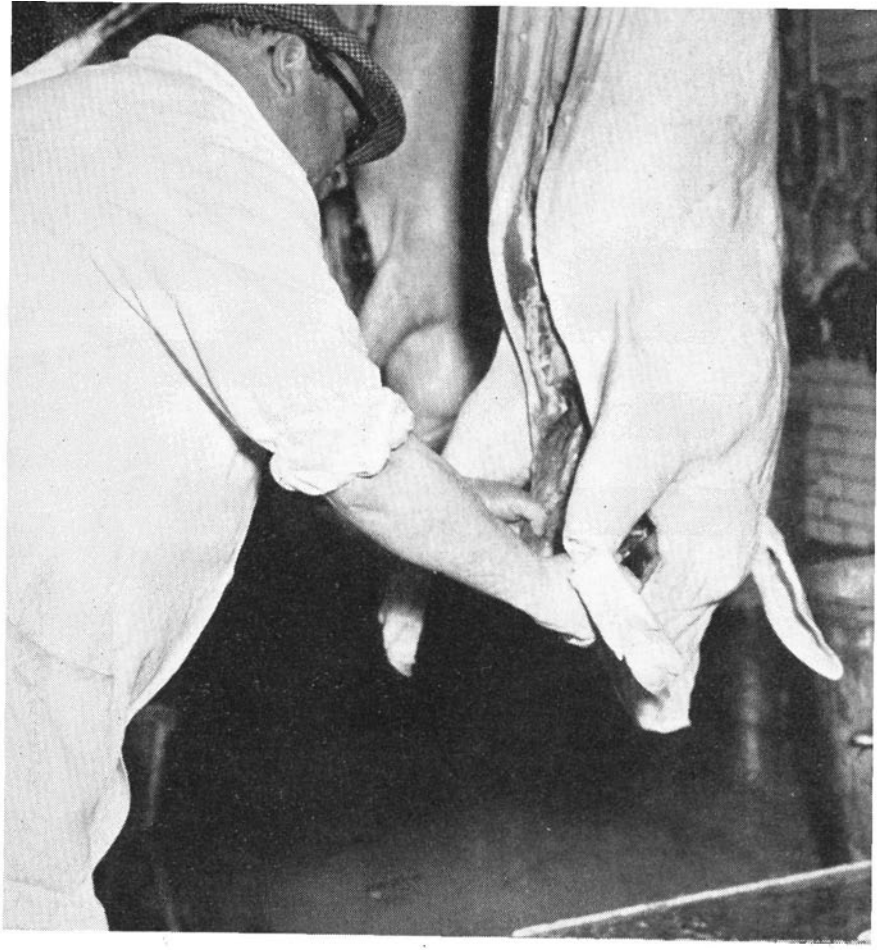
RIGHT *The lairage at Little Wratting where the pigs are rested before they are slaughtered.*





ABOVE *The "opener" at work. The gut is removed to the gut room and the pluck which can be seen on the extreme right is taken to the cold store.*

LEFT *After the killing the pigs are passed through a rotary depilator which removes most of the hair. The finishing touches are at present done by hand.*



ABOVE *Mr. Burgon examines every carcass for signs of disease. Infected glands in the throat are the first danger sign. Complete check-up follows any sign of trouble. Mr. Burgon, Haverhill's Veterinary Surgeon, is widely known in the district where his father was also a popular veterinary surgeon.*

RIGHT *By Ministry order all carcasses over* 140 *pounds are split. Ted Millidge, the splitter, was a butcher in London for twenty-five years before he married a local girl and settled down to a cockney exile at Haverhill.*

ABOVE *Weighing is automatic as the carcass swings along the overhead rail.*

BELOW *In the louvre room with its movable shutters the animal heat is dissipated.*

About Your Branch

COLD STORE

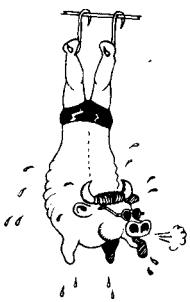
Mr. A. O. Rickman, who wrote our article on the workings of the cold store, has been with the J.S. Engineering Department since 1932. *As a change from his work as refrigeration expert he spent his war services in North Africa, Italy and India.*

The drawings are by Jack Wood of Publicity Department.

THE preservation of food by storing in a cool temperature is well known, but perhaps not so well known is the process by which this cool temperature is produced.

The earliest form of branch cool storage was the ' Ice Box ' requiring frequent replenishment with ice delivered by the ice cart, now only occasionally to be seen about our streets.

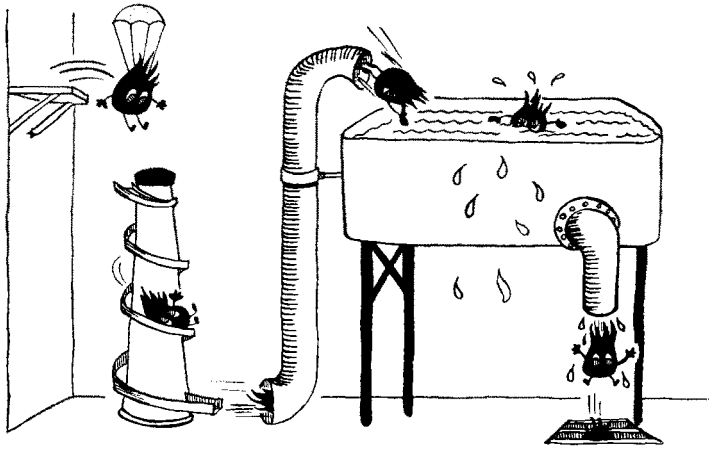
The next step forward was the introduction of the first refrigerating machines which required to be started and stopped by hand and which stored their refrigeration for night-time and weekend ' carry over ' in a tank of brine within the cool room. Rooms cooled in this way were, of course, a great improvement on the old ice box, but still suffered from the major defect of a widely fluctuating temperature, particularly during the week-end shut-down period ; a fluctuating temperature causes acceleration of decay together with excess surface moisture on carcases, etc., in the form of condensation and sweating.



The last of our old ice boxes disappeared some 20 years ago, by which time control of the machine by hand was giving place to automatic control by electrical thermostat. This instrument, with its sensitive feeler bulb, controls the starting

and stopping of the plant so that it keeps the store temperature constant within a working range of 3 degrees, normally between 34 degrees and 37 degrees Fahrenheit, and we can thus store with a reasonably steady temperature.

In order to understand how the refrigerating plant itself produces the cool temperature within the room, we must first appreciate that heat always flows from a higher to a lower temperature (just as water flows from a higher to a lower level). Thus in our cold room, air is circulating over a cooling coil, which is maintained at a lower temperature than that of the air. When the air is cooler than the goods stored in it, heat will flow from the produce to the air, be transferred to the coil and then be absorbed by the refrigerant gas circulating inside. This gas passes down the connecting pipe lines to the refrigerating machine, which compresses and then condenses it back to its liquid form ready to be re-fed to the cooling coil on a fresh cycle of operations. In the process of condensation, the refrigerant gas gives up its heat to a cooling medium, usually water, or in some smaller machines, to the surrounding air.



Thus the heat taken out of the goods in store is passed down the following chain: air—cooling coil surface—gas inside the

cooling coil—cooling water and thence down the waste pipe.

Having devised this means of removing heat from the room, we have also to prevent the rapid flow of fresh supplies of heat from outside so we enclose our cooled space with walls, ceiling and floor of cork slabs, a material which because of the air trapped in its cells offers very good resistance to heat flow. The average life of these cork cold rooms is approximately 15 years and it will be of interest to know that they are at present being rebuilt and overhauled at the rate of approximately 30 each year, a slightly faster rate than normal due to the need to catch up with arrears of replacement which unavoidably accumulated during the war.

It will be appreciated that all the good work these cork walls do in preventing undue heat leakage into the room can be completely nullified by too frequent opening of the door. In addition to the visible effect when warm air enters and is recorded on the thermometer, which measures the sensible heat (i.e., heat that can be felt), we have also a load imposed on the cooling plant in the form of 'latent' (i.e., hidden) heat caused by the moisture contained in the air. The moisture is condensed out of the air and deposited on the surface of the cooling unit in the form of snow and at a later stage, of ice. If it is allowed to build up over a period an insulating blanket forms over the coils preventing them from absorbing fresh heat. Our chain of heat flow is thus broken and in fact with the constant flow of air over this block of snow and ice, water tends to be re-absorbed into the air, giving rise to wet and slimy store conditions together with a gradual rise in temperature. Furthermore, since, as we have seen, the refrigerating plant is responsive to the air temperature within the store, it will run continuously in a vain endeavour to lower the temperature and with a consequently heavy electricity bill to follow. The need for frequent and thorough defrosting of the coils can therefore be appreciated,

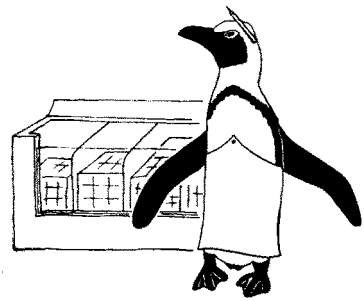
particularly at times when heavy deliveries of warm moist meat are being made direct to our branches.

Before the war bulk meat supplies were distributed from our cold storage depot at Blackfriars, where we have plant capable of handling the large refrigerating loads involved and where special provision can be made for defrosting the coils. The branch refrigerating plants had merely to handle the day to day storage and were not called upon for heavy cooling duty, nor to carry large forward allocations, as is now too frequently the case. They were thus able to run on a ' defrosting cycle '. The snow accumulated during the running period defrosted and dripped off into the trough in the form of water during the subsequent shut-down period, ready for the next ' ON cycle '.

This problem of heavy duty on the cold room leading to excessive frosting of the coils is particularly acute where for lack of adequate warehouse accommodation a single room has to serve for all purposes. The nature of the usage of the room by the fresh meat department on the one hand, and the provisions departments (excluding bacon) on the other, normally conflict. Fresh meat often requires to be stored in bulk for several days before cutting, whereas cooked meats, for example, require the store for shorter periods necessary to firm goods for slicing.

The present trend therefore is towards separate cold rooms for each purpose, individually controlled, and close to their respective preparation bays. The larger self-service branches for instance will have perhaps three or more such rooms devoted to fresh meat, poultry, cooked meats and butter.

The advent of self-service has taken refrigeration into the shop in the form of chilled cabinets and counter units and future development will almost certainly be towards completing and amplifying this protective chain between producer and consumer.

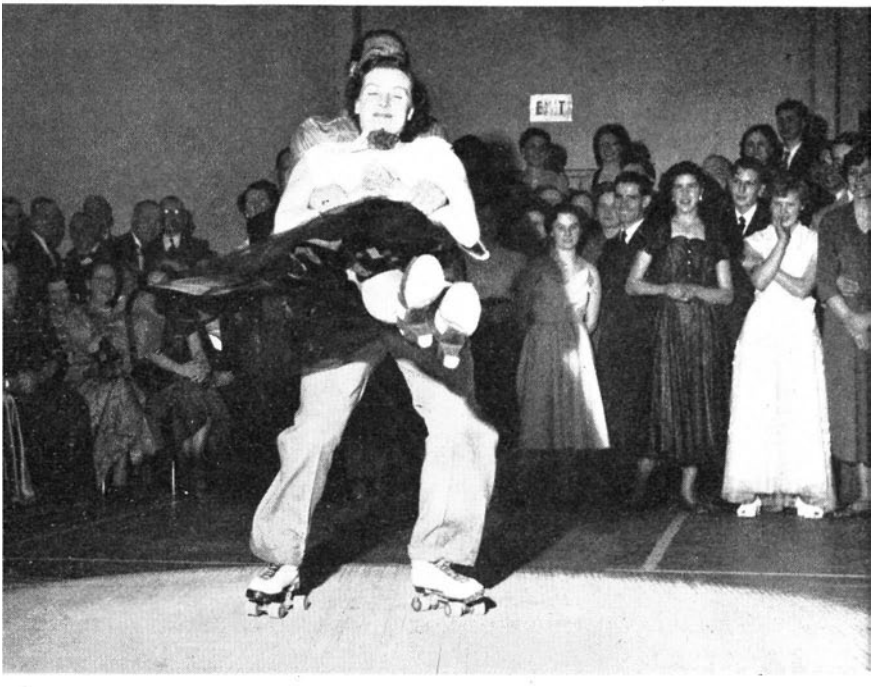


Depôt and supervisory staff at the dance.

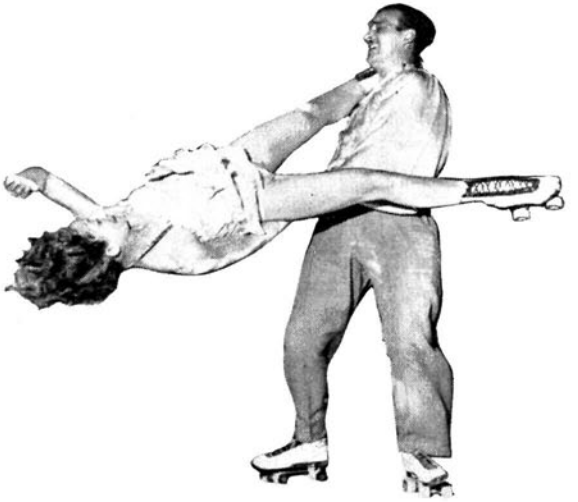
The COUNTRY at BLACKFRIARS

The Country Sections Dance on October 31st saw a packed canteen at Blackfriars. Coaches and cars rolled in from north, south, east and west, bringing dancers for one of the most popular events of the season. Len Henshaw's band made the music and with Frank White as M.C. there was never a dull moment. The popularity of this event was made evident by the applause for the announcement of the next Country Sections Dance which will be on Saturday, February 27th, 1954. Don't miss it.

Top thrill of the evening was the act of "The Skating Dexters", in a whirlwind of movement. Members of the audience were invited to try their hands and below is Mrs. Hill of Weybridge trying out the Dexter merry-go-round.



It looks as comfortable as an armchair ... .
until you try to stand up.



The Cambridge party.

Up from Luton.

Brighton and Folkestone join forces.

Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

Guildford

Weybridge.

OPPOSITE : TOP *Bognor.*
CENTRE *Watford.*
BOTTOM *Worthing.*


RESERVED
FOR
BOGNOR

ABOVE
Bedford enjoys its trip to town.

LEFT
Winners of the spot prize were Miss Jacqueline Dall and Mr. William Heron of Folkestone.

After the Party

POST-CHRISTMAS cookery *can* be interesting *and* tasty so we asked our cooking expert to make some suggestions to prevent that feeling of post-Christmas anti-climax.

Turkey or Chicken left-overs

INGREDIENTS

About 1 lb. turkey or chicken
3 ozs. spaghetti
½ pt. stock
1 egg
Breadcrumbs
1 dessertspoonful flour
1 dessertspoonful favourite sauce
1 oz. butter
Salt and pepper
Dripping for frying

METHOD

Break spaghetti into pieces, put them into water with a little salt and boil until almost tender, then drain. Add stock to the spaghetti and simmer for ten minutes. Knead the flour and butter to a paste, add the paste and the sauce, a spot of pepper into the spaghetti and simmer for seven minutes. Cut the poultry into slices, dip them in egg, then into breadcrumbs and fry a golden brown. Drain and serve on a hot dish with spaghetti.

A Simple and easy Savoury

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. cooked meat (any kind will do)
1 onion
2 ozs. butter
1 dessertspoonful flour
½ lb. tomatoes
½ pint stock
1 dessertspoonful of favourite sauce
Salt and pepper
Mashed potatoes
Sprigs of parsley
Gravy to moisten

METHOD

Peel and shred onion very finely and fry in 1 oz. of butter until browned. Sprinkle in the flour and stir well until smooth and brown. Add stock gradually and boil gently for ten minutes. Stir in the sauce and add seasoning. Put the meat through a mincer. Add it to the gravy and put in casserole in a very moderate oven for 1 hour.

Slice the tomatoes and cook them in the remaining 1 oz. of butter, season with salt and pepper. When soft rub through a sieve and reheat. Place the mashed potatoes around the inside edge of the dish, put the mince in the centre, pour on the tomato purée, sprinkle with parsley and serve.

Christmas Pie

For using up left-over Christmas Pudding.

INGREDIENTS

Slices of pudding
1 cup of milk
2 egg yolks
1 dessertspoonful sugar

MERINGUE

2 egg whites
1 dessertspoonful sugar

METHOD

Break pudding slices finely with a fork. Break egg yolks, add milk, put in saucepan and stir over gentle heat until the mixture coats the spoon then add the sugar and pour all over the pudding. Beat egg whites very stiffly, add sugar and beat five minutes longer. Pile on top of pudding and bake in a very slow oven until meringue is set. Serve hot or cold.

A Delicious Trifle from left-over Xmas Cake

INGREDIENTS

1 lemon
2 ozs. sweet almonds (blanched and sliced)
Some left-over cake
Some custard
9 macaroons
Jam (whichever you prefer)
2 glasses sherry
Whipped cream

METHOD

Soak cake in wine, grate lemon rind over and sprinkle with almonds. Spread over this a layer of jam then pour over a rich custard. Pile whipped cream on top and garnish with chopped jelly.

SECRET MISSION

Pero di Covilhan and Affonso di Paiva, two Portuguese spies, were sent in 1487 by King John of Portugal on a secret mission, firstly to spy out the details of the spice trade, a monopoly of the Arabs, and secondly to find Prester John, the mysterious Christian king in the East. They passed in disguise into the Moslem world where Christians were hardly tolerated and made friendly contacts with some Moorish traders who were going to India to buy spices. With these merchants Pero and Affonso travelled to Aden; they then separated, Affonso going to Ethiopia in search of Prester John, while Pero made arrangements to cross the Indian Ocean.

The arrival of the two Portuguese spies in Aden had been timed to take advantage of the early monsoon winds which carried the Arab ships across the two thousand miles of open sea between Aden and the Malabar Coast. The fleet was already beginning to set sail so Pero made his arrangements with the owner of a dhow and after bidding goodbye to Affonso he embarked with the mixed feelings of a solitary man facing a hostile future.

These dhows were vessels of two to three hundred tons. They carried a lateen sail but were usually without decks except

for a small poop deck where the navigator and the more important passengers crowded together. The cargo was piled in the body of the ship covered with coconut mats and the crew and most of the passengers scrambled about on this, making themselves as comfortable as they could. The journey was monotonous, slow and dangerous. The food and water were stale, the heat was vicious. At nights a fire was lit in a clay-lined box and coffee was brewed and the passengers would relax in the comparatively cool air and, if they were fortunate, listen in wonder as a story teller recounted the fantastic or erotic adventures of one of the characters from the Thousand and One Nights. Four hundred years later Sir Richard Burton, travelling the same seas and countries and enduring the same dangers and discomforts, heard the same tales and wrote them down. Perhaps Pero heard the stories of the voyages of Sinbad and pondered on them for Sinbad's travels took him to India and the Spice Islands, and it is possible to identify some of the East Indies in those strange mixtures of fact and supernatural. The dhow sailed on, carried forward by the steady monsoon wind, and guided skilfully by the Arab navigator. His instruments of navigation were not inferior to the latest Portuguese inventions and his maps and charts were probably better.

The long enforced idleness must have given Pero time to remember his own meetings in Lisbon with King John and with Diego Ortiz, Bishop of Tangier and one of Portugal's richest and most powerful statesmen. He and Affonso had been briefed for their mission on the highest level and the most learned geographers had been there; among them, Moyses Vizinho, pupil of Abraham Zacuto, and translator of Zacuto's *Almanach Perpetuum* into Latin and Spanish. The *Almanach* was a series of tables of declination for working out the position of a ship at sea and from it simple manuals were prepared which made fairly accurate navigation possible for the semi-literate captains of Portuguese ships. And there had been Mestre Rodrigo di Pedras Negras the mathematician who had worked with Martin Behaim on the construction of an improved astrolabe. These learned and inventive Jewish savants enjoyed the confidence and protection of Portugal and contributed the scientific basis for the expansion of her naval power. It was not long before they were subjected to the horrors of the Inquisition as

part of a political bargain with Spain. But at that time they enjoyed positions of great responsibility and their skill in map making was known throughout the Mediterranean world.

Pero's knowledge of navigation was limited, but in his conversations with the sailors he kept coming back to the question of how far south the Arabs traded. The problem of rounding the continent of Africa and reaching the Indies by sea and so outflanking the existing trade routes was one which the Portuguese geographers believed to be at the point of solution. And in that year Dias had sighted the noble mass of Table Mountain, but in response to the demands of his crews he had turned back. It would be ten years before Vasco da Gama sailed into the Indian Ocean leaving a trail of bloodshed and treachery and making the first brutal blow in the long history of misunderstanding between India and the West.

The wearisome journey across took four or five weeks but at last the ship made its landfall at Mount Dely on the south-west coast of India. Pero was put ashore at Cannanore, an important port in the eastern trade, and port of entry to a small kingdom rich in cardamom and ginger. His excitement can be understood. Here, at last among the spices which he had sought so long for, he was at the source of the golden stream of trade that had enriched the cities of Cairo, Venice, Constantinople and Genoa.

Here, he began to make his first observations and notes on the methods of the trade in spices and here he found that the real centre of the spice trade lay in Calicut some way south of Cannanore. He made his way down the coast and found himself in a world which to a European of the fifteenth century might have been a different planet. Calicut was a strange mixture of simplicity and opulence. Its convenient position on the coast made it a natural centre for trade between China, the East Indies and Ceylon and the ports of Arabia, Persia and Africa. It was ruled by the Samorin, the head of the Nairs, a warrior tribe or sect who by building a strong navy had established control over the coast. In this, they had been helped by the favourable trading terms and conditions they had offered merchants who wished to use the port. At Calicut no tax was collected on land owned by traders and customs duties were about two and a half per cent. of the value of the goods, the duties

being payable only on the completion of the sale by the importer. Moreover, wrecked ships were not seized by the Treasury but were restored to their owners, a strong point in Calicut's favour on this coast where ships anchored in the open roadstead and landed their goods in small craft.

The buildings of Calicut were not imposing. On the sandy soil it was difficult to build above one storey high for water was found only five spans down. The houses were palm-thatched adobe-walled structures as a rule, but with woodwork and carpentry of delicate and skilful craftsmanship. Over the narrow streets tall coconut palms threw a green shade and the pepper vine grew with extravagant vigour all over the town. The streets of small box-like shops with woven awnings to protect them from the savage noonday heat were crowded with a fantastic mixed population of sailors, merchants and townsfolk. Persians, Turks, Somalis in long white robes and greasy braided hair, Chinese, Malays, Cochin-Chinese, men from Annam, from Sumatra, Hadjis from Mecca in green turbans, all rubbed shoulders with the slim dark townsfolk in white dhotis, elaborate jewels and garlands of flowers. Temples, hovels, shops and palaces stood side by side in a confusion of planless building. The waterfront was given up entirely to ingeniously constructed warehouses in which goods were stored and kept safe and dry. Flower-sellers peddled roses in the streets for, as one Arab writer put it, "The people of Calicut cannot live without roses and look on them as quite as necessary as food."

To Pero di Covilhan, wandering through the streets searching out the knowledge which was to make his country rich for a long bloodstained century, these Nairs must have seemed odd topsy-turvy people. They governed the country, but in their strict religious codes were governed by the Brahmin. The men were warriors from the age of seven, but the women chose their own husbands. In warfare they kept to strict and curious rules. Before battle both sides would fraternise, chewing betel together until, at a drum signal, both sides drew up in formation and fought vigorously with swords, sharp-edged quoits, bows and throwing clubs. At the sound of another drum the fight ended and when the dead were removed both sides resumed their betel chewing and presumably took up the conversation where it had been interrupted. Ambuscades and night fighting

were strictly forbidden and, as can be imagined, these methods of warfare put the Nairs at a great disadvantage when some years later they had to defend themselves against Portuguese troops.

Pero probably arrived on the coast in August or September, 1488, and the return journey could not be made until January, 1489, when the Mecca fleet loaded with goods and pilgrims would set out borne on the easterly winds which would bring them to Arabia. He had a great deal to learn in those few short months. Strolling in the crowded streets among the strange peoples who gathered for trade in the markets, wandering from shop to shop, gossiping with the shrewd dealers in spice and muslin and jewels he patiently gathered the information which King John wanted. By now he felt secure behind the disguise which had become his habit of life. He lived in the Arab quarter where many dealers and sailors had settled to enjoy the privileges offered them by the Samorin. Many had taken Hindu wives and the community of Arabs played an active and respected part in the life of the town. He avoided his fellow Christians on the coast, for apart from the physical danger of betrayal there was the spiritual danger of association with heretics. These Christians followed a rite which they claimed had been handed down directly from the apostle St. Thomas, who by tradition had preached to and converted many men and women up and down the coast.

In time he came to know the town and its ways and he noted down the variety of goods, the methods of packing, the places of their origin and the curious trading customs observed in dealing with the producers. He probably saw some of the last of the great Chinese junks to come into Calicut, with their square sails and staring eyes painted on the bows. They brought in cargoes of silk, embroideries, porcelain, tea, tin and lacquer ware. By the end of the century they were displaced by the faster Arab ships which pushed up into the China Seas in search of trade.

From one dealer to another went Covilhan, talking prices and qualities and the state of trade, prising out, as skilfully and tactfully as he knew, the little nuggets of knowledge that would fit into a rich, paying pattern of commercial power. From elegant half-naked Indian traders sitting cross-legged in their

shops, their arms and fingers glittering with bracelets and jewels in the deep noonday shadows he learnt how to value the fragrant cinnamon bark from Ceylon. Or how the natives in Banda gather nutmegs and separate the mace which is the covering of the hard pungent nut. And he learnt, perhaps from its cultivators in the town, the mystery of why there are black and white peppers, and how the colour depends on the season at which the seed is gathered.

On the sandy shore he would watch the cargoes of cloves being unloaded from the dhows which brought them in from the Moluccas or picked them up at Malacca, another entrepôt further east which, so he heard, was a busier and larger port than Calicut. From the sailors he would learn about the ways of the peoples further east who were often so shy of contact with traders that they would leave their goods in a known open space by the shore and retire into the jungle. The traders, when they arrived, would place their barter goods by the others and themselves retire. If their trade goods were accepted the natives would take them and disappear leaving their own produce. If the trade goods were not enough to clinch the bargain the natives would retire to allow the traders to make a further bid. This "silent trade" was common practice in the east and in Africa. It was a safeguard to both sides. Slave-raiding was too common a practice and too tempting to traders for the natives to put much trust in them. It also, no doubt, gave rise to many of the curious legends and superstitions about the appearance of the natives, for after all, if they did not show themselves, they must be monstrous in appearance.

When he left Calicut to travel north to Goa, Pero probably went inland at Cannanore, where rich crops of ginger were grown. He would learn how to dry it and grind it and how to preserve it in syrup as the Chinese do. At Goa he found a busy active port, chief city of a Moslem state which was to be taken by Albuquerque for the Portuguese in 1510, some twenty-two years after Pero's visit. Here the horse trade with Arabia had its centre, for the Indian climate was not good for horse breeding and Arab horses commanded high prices all over the country.

Besides horses Pero noted down the kind of goods the traders of the east were keen to import. His reports mentioned copper, mercury, vermilion, coral, saffron, printed cloth, rosewater,

gold, silver and cutlery. He found, on the coast, articles manufactured at "Bruges in Flanders and Venice in Italy", as a letter of King Manuel puts it and he observed on the coast and from a safe distance merchants from Venice and Genoa but no Portuguese. By the end of the year he began to get ready to return to the west. He had been a long time from home and he longed to see Lisbon and his village of Covilhan and his wife and his confessor. For he was a devout man fearing more for his soul than his body in this long masquerade as a Moslem.

In the early months of 1489 he booked a passage on a dhow sailing to Hormuz. He watched the ship loaded with pepper, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, aloes, rhubarb, porcelain and fine calico cloth, and he knew that in the safe keeping of the captain would be the smaller but more valuable consignments of musk and amber, of rubies, pearls and sapphires. He must have brooded over this cargo as the dhow made its course towards Hormuz. The significance of his knowledge was becoming clear to him and it lay in his power to lift the curtain of mystery and superstition which it was so much in the Moslem's favour to keep drawn.

From Hormuz it is thought that Pero went to Zeila, the port of Ethiopia on the Gulf of Aden, and from there with some Moorish traders, on to Sofala in the south. There was at Sofala an Arab colony trading in the gold the natives brought from the interior, and in hippopotamus teeth which is a whiter and harder kind of ivory than elephants tusks. If he reached Sofala he was there some thirteen years ahead of Vasco da Gama, and nine years before the first Portuguese ships passed through the Mozambique channel in 1498. It seems likely that he made this visit in view of the confidence with which da Gama was sent off on his first voyage. Had Pero been working only on hearsay he would not have reported back as he did later, " Once at Sofala the way is clear to India."

About the end of 1490 or early in 1491, Pero was back in Cairo to keep the rendezvous he had made with Affonso, when they parted at Aden two and a half years before. He hoped to find him already there and return as fast as possible to Portugal. Instead he learnt that Affonso was dead. How he died is not known. Perhaps of an illness or perhaps murdered by hostile tribesmen as he tried to enter Ethiopia. There were in Cairo

in his place two Jewish emissaries of King John. One a Rabbi Abraham of Beija, the other Joseph of Lamego a shoemaker. These two men had already travelled widely in the Middle East. They had reported on conditions there to King John and he had sent them back to find Pero and Affonso.

Discreetly they sought out Pero and told him the King's instructions. He was ordered to return immediately unless any part of his work remained undone. Pero was in despair when he heard this. Half their task remained still to be done, for now that Affonso was dead he must go to find Prester John on his own. To Joseph of Lamego he gave a detailed report on the eastern spice trade, the shipping routes, and the nature of the Arab hold on the market. This long detailed letter is lost, but there can be no doubt that it did exist and it was certainly one of the most important documents in the history of European trade and exploration. For the first time exact and detailed information about the most lucrative business in the world was placed in Portuguese hands to take the place of the fragmentary and often false information on which they had been working.

Moreover the letter must have made it clear that the way round Africa was a practicable approach since da Gama set out in 1497 direct for Calicut and bearing a letter to the Samorin. That the letter is lost is not very surprising. Spies and agents, political and trade intrigues were commonplaces of the Portuguese court and so explosive a document would be shrouded in such secrecy that even references to its existence would be suppressed.

Joseph of Lamego, carrying the report, returned to Lisbon by the roundabout route of Basra and Baghdad and, after a visit to Hormuz, the Rabbi also returned, leaving Pero to plot a safer entry to Ethiopia than the one which had cost Affonso his life.

From Hormuz Pero went to Jidda and then to Mecca and Medina. He was perhaps the first christian to visit the holy cities and enter the shrines there. His Moslem disguise was perfect by now and his beard had grown long. One wonders if perhaps his religious faith was wavering a little due to the habits of thought his disguise imposed upon him. The visit to Mecca could hardly serve a useful purpose in his mission. Was it curiosity ? Was it some kind of insurance for his soul ? Or did

he simply catch the pilgrim fever and have to go along with the others. In any case he can hardly have expected to find Prester John at Mecca.

This vain search took him into Ethiopia in 1492 or 1493 during the reign of Alexander "Lion of the tribe of Judah and King of Kings", as the Emperor is still called today. He presented his brass plaque, was received with honour and no doubt drew his own conclusions about the Prester John legend for he asked to be sent home to Portugal and Alexander promised that this would be done. Unhappily, Alexander was killed in a tribal revolt in 1494. His son was seven years old, the succession was disputed. The country was in chaos, Pero was forgotten, and to pass the time he started to learn Ethiopian. Then the boy emperor died and Alexander's brother ascended the throne. The confusion subsided and when the opportunity came Pero presented himself to Naod the new ruler and asked for permission to return to his country.

Naod received Pero with favour but refused point blank to allow him to leave the country. Pero was probably less surprised than disappointed. In some of the backward countries of Asia and Africa the skills and knowledge of Europeans were regarded as a valuable asset. There were already other Europeans in Ethiopia, including one Italian painter, and if Pero was to live he would simply have to make his mind up to stay as they did. He had come in as a spy, disguised as an Arab, and to say the least his action was suspicious.

Under Naod, Pero flourished and in the end became a wealthy landowner and the governor of a district. He took a wife at the request of the Negus, so that his lands and his line might be preserved. But he fretted for his home and his parish priest. The Coptic variant of the Christian rite was adequate for his spiritual needs except that the priests did not respect the secret of the confessional. Pero had a great burden of trouble on his soul and he longed to go to confession.

And then one day in 1520, nearly thirty years after he had crossed the border, he heard that a Portuguese mission led by Rodrigo di Lima, had landed at Massawa and was approaching the capital. Pero was not a young man any more but his heart leapt at the news and with his sons he rode out to meet the ambassador and his men.

His eyes searched the column as it approached and to his deep relief he saw a friar among its members. When he had presented himself and assigned one of his sons to serve the envoy, he went to find this friar, Alvares de Coimba, who became not only Pero's confessor but also his biographer.

The end of Pero's story is curiously pathetic. He was by now a man in his middle seventies, full of riches, such as they were in Ethiopia, and from long habit accustomed to direct his district as Governor. He could probably have returned to Portugal with the embassy. But to what could he return with any certainty ? A new King John was on the throne and the days of spying out the spice trade had passed to a bloody struggle for control of it. Lisbon was rich with ships and trade, its streets thronged with merchants bidding for spices, silks, sandalwood, rugs and shawls. In the years since Pero had set out, 80,000 Portuguese had sailed to make their fortunes in the East: of these only one-tenth returned to die in Portugal.

And so the old man rode only two days journey with the envoy and then with his wife and his sons around him he watched the caravan pick its way across the rough Ethiopian highland. With them went one of his sons " dark as a russett pear," but the boy died on the journey as if to seal the exile's isolation. We do not know when Pero died—only that he was still an exile in a foreign land, unremembered by the masters for whom he had spied out the promised land of spice.

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A Happy Christmas
to all our
Readers