



CHelsea Pensioner

## Oak Apple Day Held At The Royal Hospital

Of all the events in London's pageant-studded year, by far the most moving is Oak Apple Day at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

On this occasion, senior army officers, or royalty, review the red-coated veterans of 70 or 80 summers whose loyal service has won them a last billet here and a picturesque uniform which is a passport to fellowship and honour anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Celebrated on May 29th, Oak Apple Day is the Pensioners' toast to their founder, Charles II, on the dual anniversary of his birth and restoration to the throne. Never once in the past 250 years, come blitz or flying bomb, have these grand old men failed to mark the day.

The story is, though the hospital authorities deny it, that the hospice was founded when Nell Gwynne, Charles' favourite lady friend, urged him to do something for the veterans to be seen begging for every street corner. Either Charles was very fond of Nell or every bit the diamond in the rough, modern historians make him out, for he set his noblest architect, Sir Christopher Wren, to build a truly elegant home for the old soldiers.

The Oak Apple Day inspection (tickets for which may be obtained by applying in writing to the Governor, Royal Hospital, Chelsea) takes place in the colonnaded courtyard of the great central building whose enormous chimneys and steep-pitched roofs make it surprisingly like colonial Williamsburg, for much of which Wren was also architect.

Gardeners hand out bounties of young oak leaves to all comers, and a statue of Charles in the centre of the courtyard is clothed in fresh oak branches. This is in grateful remembrance of the hollow oak which safely hid the king after the Civil War's royalist rout.

The Pensioners' step is not so brisk today, but the parade runs off with clockwork precision all the same, merely accentuated by the need of some for cane or crutch. While a Guards' band plays softly in the background, four picturesque old drummers lead their companies into hollow square formation. Those too feeble to parade watch from seats in the colonnade.

On the stroke of eleven the band strikes up "The Queen," the Pensioners pull or prop themselves to attention, and the visiting dignitary, usually a distinguished field marshal of the same vintage as the old soldiers, makes his appearance. It is more like a reunion in Valhalla than a formal inspection, for the marshal walks along the tottering lines, joking with each veteran about the campaigns conjured up by the latter's medals.

Afterwards, the Pensioners retire to their Founders Day plum pudding and extra pint of beer, and visitors may inspect the quarters. Each old soldier has a diminutive bunkroom with bed, wardrobe, desk, chair and radio earphones. On its walls will be souvenirs and photographs of the Gibson girl loves of his younger days. Just to prove that old soldiers never die, there's usually a bit of 1937 leg art as well. And, of course, snap shots of the grandchildren.

The military duties of the Chelsea Pensioners are limited to attendance at church, pay and Founder's Day parades. He's supposed to make his bed and tidy up his bunkroom, but a char comes in each day to do these chores if he's disinclined. Late passes are to be had for the asking, and no reveille sounds next morning. Then there's his daily ration of beer. Bugles sounding from the Guards barracks across the street underscore the greenness of his pastures.

The full strength of the Royal Hospital is 500; the oldest man is 92 and the rawest recruit pushing 60. Some one of them has seen service in every operation from the Egyptian campaign of 1882 to World War II.

During the Hitler War so many bombs sought out the hospital that casualties hit the active-service figure. Air-raid shelters met with a poor reception, however, and no one was able to think of a good answer to the

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# Women

Lena Caroline McLure, Women's Editor. Phone 8508

Page 14, The Guardian Thur., May 29, 1958

A delightful evening was spent Tuesday, May 27th, when the Victoria group of the United Baptist Church, Charlottetown, held their closing banquet at the Charlottetown Hotel. Special guests were Mrs. Beth Rideout and Mrs. H.L. Mitton.

Mrs. George J. Tweedy left Wednesday by plane for Quincy to attend the funeral of her aunt, Mrs. William MacLeod.

Mrs. Tweedy, after the funeral, proceeds to Montreal where she will meet her husband, the Hon. Mr. Justice Tweedy and they will attend the graduation in nursing of their daughter, Miss Jean Tweedy.

Mrs. (Dr.) Norman W. Gillespie of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander MacPherson, Union Road prior to leaving for Germany, where she will be the guest of Major and Mrs. Frank A. Bagley, the latter her sister.

While in Europe, Mrs. Gillespie expects to visit the British Isles, France, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, as well as the world's Fair in Brussels.

Mrs. K.M. Martin is leaving shortly to visit with her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Bushell, Bedford.

Mrs. Charles H. Coles, Charlottetown, is visiting with her son-in-law and daughter, Captain and Mrs. Ronald Dicks, Kingston, Ontario.

The first privately owned atomic reactor in Canada was started Monday to coincide with the annual conference in Toronto of the Chemical Institute of Canada. Mrs. John Bigelow, in a Canadian press photograph is shown seated beside the reactor, holding a Canadian-developed radiation detector. Mrs. Bigelow, the former Miss Katherine Shaw is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. L. W. Shaw, Southport.

## ELLEN'S DIARY

### Work Is The Watchword Each Has Place To Fill

"We'll soon be into the sowing," James said at breakfast. "You and I, Ellen," he added with a smile.

"And the old mare" we chuckled, though a bit sad.

"I'm going to miss her in the seeder," he nodded.

We breakfasted not far from the open door. On the lawn the oak's leaves were commencing to unfurl, while those on the poplar

by the gateway stirred in effluvia. From a low limb there, a sparrow sang to us. Of young seedtimes, we decided, and of one delectably here and those yet to come in the bright of Maytimes to follow.

For there will be other Maytimes—a month especially appealing and memorable for so many lovelinesses, among them for students of class and college and university, the happiness of their Commencement Day.

It may mean only some cherished milestone reached along the way to some set goal, or it may sweep the graduate out from the intriguing sheltered years—with sheepskin and sheaf of memories, into an even busier and more competitive life without.

A sink-or-swim place, with its smooth shallows and also its deep waters and baffling, to breast. It is however, by and large, a good world, and in it there is room, and a nice life for those who would meet it fairly. Work as its watchword and each has her own place to fill.

We at Alderlea wish them well: the little girl graduate of school of nursing, graduates of commerce of normal school, or art and science, indeed of every walk and profession that womankind may now enjoy. The lads too, May all find much happiness in pursuing the careers they have chosen!

A song sparrow sang a breakfast-song for us. And in ideal weather, soon the tractor was repeating their familiar refrain on fields coming up to the seedling. By day now, and on into the night in the countryside round, the pulse-beat of the cultivating continues. Looking out from a vantage point of rise this afternoon, it was an engaging scene of green pasture and meadow and red field, which spread in a checkerboard pattern about.

We sense the busy-ness of the season everywhere. There was haste even in the swallows' wings that with enviable patience and industry ferried their adobe material between streamside and eave.

"Ah, ha," Mack said noting a

pair busy about the door-light on the front verandah, "so you're building there again. There's no sense in doing that, it's not allowed. And besides it's too public a place for any quiet. If I were you, I'd take myself off to the barns."

Cowslips in plenty adorn now the streamside, dandelions' gold brightens pasture and meadow. The wild pear ("Or is it the wild plum?") Granddaughter queried coming by with a bouquet of sprays this evening, "some call it that") is in blossom, as are also in beautiful bloom the wild cherry trees.

The children make choices of hyacinths in the lawn-border, deciding "which is prettiest," and the tulips trying to find "the very nicest one of all."

And this was a nice day at Alderlea. It brought us up to the edge of first seeding.

Until tomorrow Diary—Good-night.

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