

Horse-Drawn Traps that Go to Sea

While touring in Northumberland recently I arrived at the coastal village of Beal, and on looking seawards saw a long line of vertical poles stretching out to Holy Island, three miles away. I discovered that they were erected many years ago to indicate the safe route across to Lindisfarne, as the island used to be called, for there are dangerous quicksands.

Holy Island is only isolated from the mainland at high tide, however, when the sands are covered to a depth of two or three feet. As it was full tide at the time of my visit I had to travel across the sands in a horse-drawn trap similar to the one seen in the upper illustration on this page.

As we splashed our way along the "avenue" I noticed that a small arrow is nailed at the top of each pole, pointing towards Holy Island. Thus anyone enveloped in a sea mist while crossing the sands can check his direction.

Other erections for the benefit of wayfarers are two wooden "refuges." Anyone caught by the swiftly-rising tide can climb into one of these boxes and be perfectly safe until the tide ebbs, or until he is "rescued." G. B. WOOD (Leeds).

Ratray Head Lighthouse

Readers are no doubt familiar with the name "Ratray Head," for it frequently occurs in weather forecasts. You will remember "gale warning in operation all coasts north of a line from Ratray Head to Slyne Head." There are miles of sand dunes around Ratray Head, and about a quarter of a mile out to sea is a hidden reef that is dangerous to shipping. Many vessels have been wrecked there, but not so many since a lighthouse was built at the Head.

Last summer I visited the lighthouse, or the "Rock," as the keepers call it. In order to get there I had to wade some distance through shallow water to the landing at the bottom of the tower. There a rope was put round me, and I was helped up a perpendicular ladder, 30 or 40 ft. high, until I reached the entrance to the main part of the tower.

Once there I had a look round. On the lowest floor in the bell-like foundation of the lighthouse are the compressed air engines that work the foghorns, and also tanks of paraffin for the lamp. Every kind of spare part is kept there too. The engines are run every week without fail to keep them in trim and to reveal any parts that may be faulty. The men live in the narrower part of the tower. I

climbed the narrow, spiral staircase and saw first the kitchen with its grate and cooking utensils, then the living room, and above that the sleeping quarters. Surmounting all is the lantern chamber, reaching to nearly 200 ft. above sea level.

In good weather the men are able to go ashore for stores and perishables. Once a week things like water and coal are taken out by boat. REV. R. I. MITCHELL (Fraserburgh).

The Moa of New Zealand

When Europeans came to settle in New Zealand, they found quantities of strange fossil bones, generally

in caves, while others were dug up during road-making and while draining swamps. Most of these bones were unusually long and thick. They were those of a bird, and when sufficient had been collected to allow complete skeletons to be put together it was realised that the bird must have been 12 ft. high, the king of all birds.

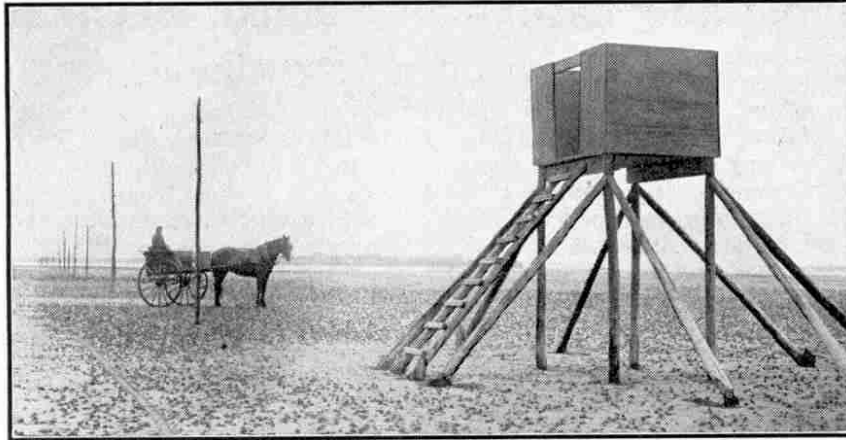
The Maoris called the bird the moa, and it is generally known by this name. Wing bones have never been found, but it is believed that the bird had so easy a life, with plenty of food within easy reach and no beasts of prey to hunt it, that its wings disappeared through lack of use.

The last of the moas lived 300 to 400 years ago. Remains of them have been found in many different parts of New Zealand, some in the Southern Alps of the South Island. One case in which moa remains were found interested me very much, for they were discovered by my uncle when exploring a cave on his sheep farm. In this cave there were the remains of six moas. The birds do not seem to have been quite as tall as the average, the tallest being 8 ft. high. An expert was hired to assemble one of the skeletons, and it is quite a curiosity to see it standing up. Its appearance makes one's thoughts drift back to bygone ages, when the country was in a wild and bushy state and these monsters were roaming the land.

Moa skeletons are also on view in the museums. These stand as high as 12 feet, higher than the ostrich and emu.

The Maoris first settled in New Zealand about 500 years ago, so that information about the moa can be obtained from their early legends and hunting traditions. In addition many bones have been found in ancient Maoris cooking ovens. A moa egg 10 inches long was taken from a grave where it rested in the hands of a skeleton.

T. SWARBRICK (New Zealand).



A "refuge" for anyone caught by the tide while crossing the sands to Holy Island, off the Northumberland coast. The line of poles shows the safe route between dangerous quicksands. Photograph by G. B. Wood, Leeds.



Wading out to Ratray Head Lighthouse, Aberdeenshire. Photograph by Rev. R. I. Mitchell, Fraserburgh.