

They're All Pals Together At Wick Ferry

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With a weary sigh brown haired Peggy Higgs chalked the word "In" against the names under Chalet 47 on the list. But she smiled when she turned to the three weary travellers who stood patiently in front of her desk in the reception block of the Wick Ferry Holiday Camp. She was tired from a long day's work; they were tired from a long journey.

"Here are your keys," she said brightly, "You'll be shown to your cabin, just ask the guide if there's anything you're not certain of. "You can sign these forms in the morning." They thanked her and were led out to their cabin. Peggy looked at the clock. It was about ten. The last of Wick Ferry's campers had arrived. She prepared to pack up. For Peggy it was the end of just another working day, but for the 200 new campers it was the beginning of something really exciting---their holiday.

Saturday is always a busy day at the camp. It starts early, for breakfast must be prepared for all the outgoing guests and the tired newcomers who have been travelling all night.

The dining room is filled with their chatter about the night before when they had a farewell dance. They talk about all the fun they've had in the past week. The one thing they won't say is "Goodbye," for partings are sad, and there is no room for sadness at Wick Ferry. Soon the time has arrived. The coaches are waiting to take them back to the north. They spend the last few minutes standing around in groups laughing, joking and exchanging addresses.

I asked just a few of these people what sort of a week they'd had. They crowded round to tell me.

HER BEST WEEK'S HOLIDAY

Manchester housewife, Mrs. Frances Nithsdale gave the best answer. "I have had the best week's holiday I've ever had," she said "and you can take it from me everyone else has had the same."

So she liked the camp? Yes. Plenty to do, eh? Yes. Family enjoyed themselves? Yes. Will she come back next year? Mrs. Nithsdale's face creased into a smile. "Eee I will an' all," she said. "For the whole two weeks. It's all I'll be thinking of for the next few months."

Her husband certainly enjoyed his stay in the camp but it was Christchurch itself that really captivated him. "I've lived in Canada a good many years," he said, "and I don't like the north of England. To live in a perfect place like Christchurch would suit me fine."

81-YEAR-OLD HAD FUN

Eldest member of Mrs. Nithsdale's party was her mother Mrs. Macrina Nithsdale. Turned eighty she is still out to have a good time "and I must say they did us well down here,"

She trilled. As the coaches drew out the occupants knelt on the seat and waved goodbye out of the windows. The camp staff waved back. But as soon as the coaches were round the bend it was back to work. New campers would be arriving all day long.

When they do arrive they go into the reception buildings and are welcomed by either Mr. Scott the manager or Mr. Anthony Rendall the entertainments manager.

Mr. Scott thinks he knows why the camp has such a friendly spirit. "It's personal supervision," he says.

"We aren't what you call a big camp, and it's just as well, this way we look after all of our campers."

He paused to wave to a pretty girl, "going swimming Valerie?" he asked. "I certainly am," was the answer.

"That's what I mean," he said to me. "We know each one of the campers by their Christian names. That is impossible in the bigger camps."

Mr. Scott is popular with the 200 campers and the 56 staff. In fact the staff at the camp enjoy working there. In their way they have almost as much fun as the campers.

There is the camp gratuity scheme too. This means that there is a good bonus for all the staff at the end of the season.

Smiling Mr. Anthony Rendall is the entertainments manager. He wears a white duck suit and everyone calls him the "Admiral."

He knows the business well, does Mr. Rendall. He had a long spell at Butlins' Skegness camp before the war.

He follows up Mr. Scott's policy of getting the campers to join in as one family. "After our Saturday evening get-together dance," he says, "everyone knows everyone else, and that is just how it should be."

He M.C.'s this dance and it gives him a chance to size up the campers. "That is very important, you see," he explains, "because I have to choose my committee."

"What is this committee then?" I asked. Mr. Rendall looked pained. "Don't you know?" he said. We get the campers to run things themselves. I choose a committee of four, representative of that particular week's community. They help to organise that week's functions.

It's a good idea, and it works too. Two brawny young men were coming round the tennis courts. The "Admiral" hailed them. They were two of his committee.

They introduced themselves as Mr A. Lambert of Tottenham and Mr J. Bryce of Palmers Green. "This is the last word in holiday camps," they assured me. "We ought to know," they said, "because we've been to a few."

Children are catered for in the camp. There is a special corner set aside for them with swings, rocking horse, roundabouts and a sand pit. They are under the care of "Auntie Ida." She is really Mrs. Rendall.

A playroom and theatre has just been completed.

The centre of the camp is the Riverside Restaurant. Campers have their meals inside or outside on the charming sun deck.

Mrs. M. Warner presides over the "galley" with a catering staff of thirty. She plans each day's menus and the campers are more than satisfied. All of them I spoke to had something complimentary to say about the good food.

What goes on at the camp? Well that is a question that takes a lot of answering. But camp officials did their best.

Sunday is a fairly quiet day. There are river trips in the morning and afternoon. In the evening there are band and orchestral concerts. The latter, known as "Riverside Serenade," presented by Charles Richards and his orchestra, is very popular, particularly with the older folk.

For the youngsters there is a lively camp version of "twenty questions" in the games room.

DANCE BAND SERVES UP WHAT'S WANTED

The camp's own dance band is an Alex Haddow combination that has proved particularly popular with the young set. They oblige with jive and "rebhop" numbers and they are always willing to provide some old-time music for mum and dad.

They get the laughs too. Especially on Mondays when the campers try them out with a "penny on the drum" competition. The band usually wins.

So that parents can enjoy themselves in the evenings without worrying about their children, a "glow worm" patrol is on duty. Members of the patrol know in which chalets children are sleeping and they make sure that none of them get fretful.

Most of the children have such busy days, however, that they are dog tired by bed-time.

Evening trips on the river are very popular. Al Curtis, the camp's accordionist and song-leader, goes with the campers and they say you can hear them singing evening when they're two miles away.

Several full day trips to Dorset and the Isle of Wight are arranged. Campers going on these take tasty picnic lunches with them.

There are all sorts of competitions during the day and of course the committee lay on some enjoyable events. The camp concert on Thursday always packs the concert hall and some of the most applauded turns are those given by the campers themselves who have been spotted by "talent scouts."

In fact there is so much to do at Wick Ferry that time simply flies until before you know where you are you're having your last breakfast and it's time to say goodbye.