

BEAUTY IN USEFUL THINGS

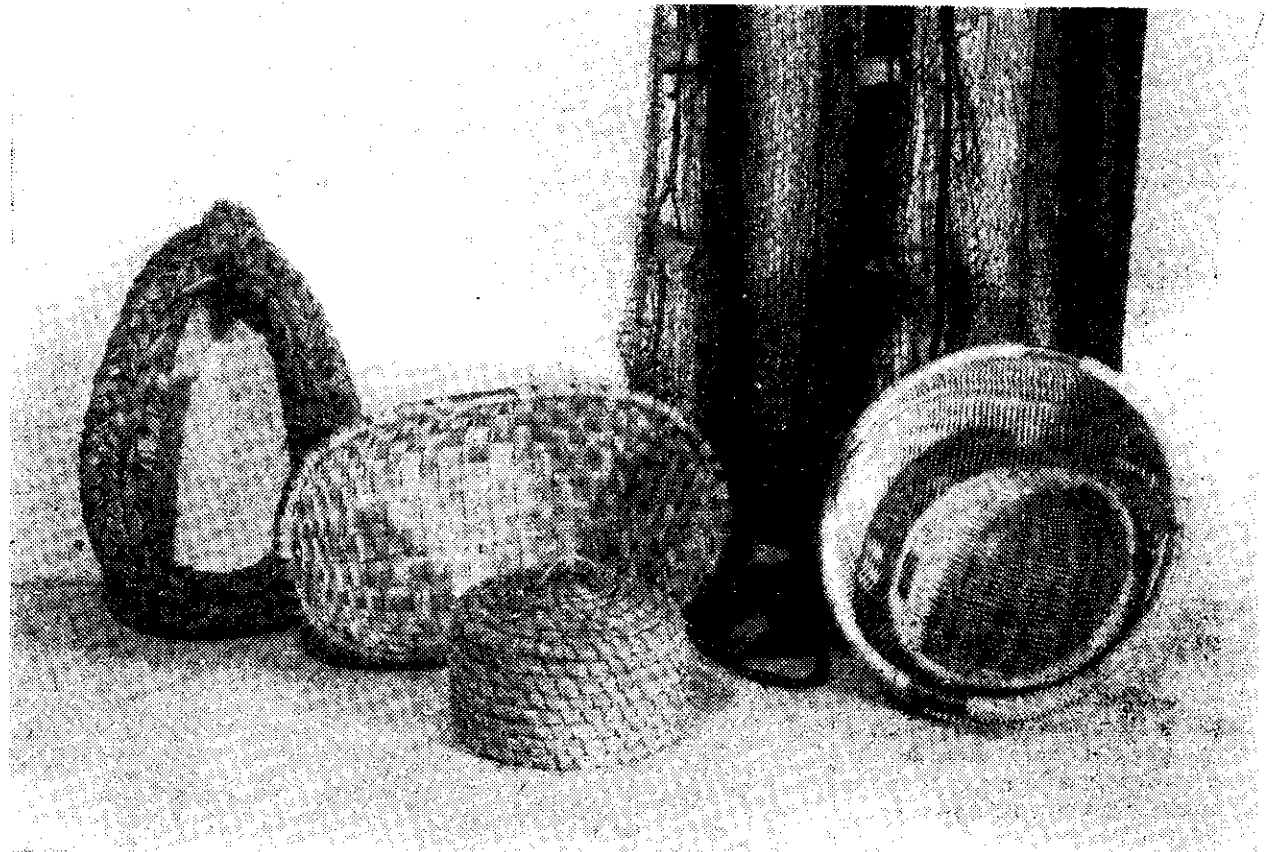
British Rural Handicrafts on Exhibition

NEW ZEALAND is shortly to see an exhibition—16 tons of it—of handicrafts that are still being practised in the British countryside. It is the work of traditional craftsmen and women, who, with few exceptions, do not regard themselves as artists or designers, but whose work, nonetheless, enriches the lives of those who use their products. Accompanied by R. D. McEwan, area organiser for the arts and crafts branch of the Education Department at Auckland, the display will be taken to 22 centres, and shown finally during the Otago Centennial Celebrations early next year. Then it will go to Australia for display at the 1948 Sydney Royal Show.

The exhibition has come here from the British Council, and the New Zealand Education Department will endeavour to show it in as many of the smaller centres as possible. Mr. McEwan will give descriptive lectures, showing what has developed through the years in rural England, and how ordinary every-day articles can combine functional ability with good appearance.

Included in the display are eight screens showing handicraft processes which can be undertaken by schools or by adults who wish to practise a craft at home. And the British Council hopes that these examples of Britain's country crafts may be related to a practical aspect of present-day life in the Dominions, and meet the increasing need to find satisfying ways of using the leisure which machinery now makes available.

Pre-industrial workers, as the exhibition shows, made a design out of every



WEAVING (L to R): Rush horse-collar (Norfolk), oak spale seed-hopper (Lancashire), bee skep (Devon), herring-net (Dorset), potato-baskets (Cardigan)

object they used, either for their households or their ordinary work in field or workshop. Each one of the exhibits has been made, or composed, as though the only aim of the worker was to make something graceful and harmonious to look at. There is a bewildering variety of forms, from a shillelagh to a potato-

hopper, with its ingenious hook to which the sack is attached. Yet the curves and proportions of every article are such that they must have been designed by artisans who were also artists.

The axe-handles were obviously made to be grasped and swung; and the ladles, besoms, bill-hooks and reaping hooks

to be used. But they and the other hundreds of articles are fashioned with such a rightness of line that they might have been made for display like a picture on a wall.

Adaptable Blacksmiths

There is a giant teapot, made to be handled comfortably and easily. There is a shapely coracle, and a rabbiting-spade; there are grain-scoops so fashioned that the craftsman must have been thoroughly absorbed in the pleasure of his job. Before the war the decrease in the number of horses left many village smiths without full employment. By adapting their skill to making simple fireside implements, they have been able to maintain their forges.

During the war the smiths made a valuable contribution in repairing and manufacturing parts for tractors. The exhibition shows examples of their chased toasting-forks, pokers and shovels. Among the smaller implements are Scottish scythe blades, a Devon potato-digger, a fag-hook (not used for extracting packets from under the counter), turnip-cutters, and iron mattocks.

Well Made—Well Played!

Working in the wooded districts of Gloucestershire or Buckinghamshire, small turnery mills supply some unexpected markets; at the same time they make chair-legs and wall-rails in large quantities. And there is a fine example of a cricket bat, made from English-

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GOOD LINES, GOOD EDGES (L to R): Turnip drag, chopping-down billhook, turnip cutter, shredding billhook, hedge slasher, fag hook