

EASTER PARADE

April showers come down London way and lay on a windy background for the flowers that come into bloom at Easter Parade. Among them are film stars Patricia Dainton and Moira Lister. Elsewhere in the capital, it's who's for the zoo - Regents Park faces up to a record invasion from the younger set. At two bob a time for grown-ups and a shilling for children, they roll up in thousands with one idea - to see Brumas, that bundle of fur that has brought fame for her mother Ivy and glamour for herself. The queue to see her is so great that at times onlookers wonder who is in the cage - Brumas or the crowd.

Twenty-five pounds of mischief Brumas is rapidly becoming a national figure. For stay-in-town holidaymakers, the cub provided the perfect Easter attraction. For others, who take their pleasures more strenuously, it's hey-ho for the wide, open spaces! Hikers - ashore and afloat - are at ease. Canoe-hiking is the new fashion. It's a sport that combines the skill of the handyman with that away-from-it-all feeling that is part of the outdoor entertainment. A collapsible, carried-in-a-bag canoe makes for a luxury cruise - destination unknown and unnecessary. There is no need to worry where you'll land up: the canoe floats in only three inches of water, so if the holiday is a wash-out you can float right back to your doorstep.

For still more hardy spirits, Easter can't be strenuous enough. It's Snowden for them. In weather fit for an eskimo, they head out for the highest mountain south of the border. Those who can't take it get there too - by train. By rack and pinion railway, they make for the top the easy way - by kind permission of British railways.

For the adventurous mountaineers, it's a five-mile grind to the top. Battling through high winds and sleet, they get there on time. For this is a special occasion - a celebration outing by the Ramblers Association to mark the coming into force of the National Parks Act - an act that frees to all the open land of Britain. Old Man Snowden joins in the merrymaking with some special Easter snow.

For those bent on a more orthodox adventure, Portsmouth and H.M.S. Victory lay on a full ration. It's Navy Day and, with Nelson's flagship first port of call, the Senior Service is at home to landlubbers.

From the mighty King George the Fifth and its sixteen-inch guns to the little ships of the submarine service, the Navy gives open house. For 10,000 would-be sailors, it's a thrill-a-minute Easter egg.

It's a holiday treat for all but the sailors, for whom it's just another day on duty. It's an Easter on duty, too, for those wonderful London policemen, trying to keep order among the thousands crowding Hyde Park for the Hat Parade.

It's gay - it's frivoleous - it's Easter and the only tragedy is that for once, Rotten Row lives up to its name - as far as the weatherman is concerned. Though there is a blustering wind, and sunshine is never far from shower, the crowd's light in heart. Everybody's there, including those regulars - the King and Queen of Pearls. With them return memories of travel when basic donkeys were their only horse-power.

Britain lay aside its cares and hatched out some novel holiday ideas.