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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 6, 1932

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DEW PONDS

A recent number of the illustrated London News contains several pictures of the so-called "dew ponds" on the hills of southern England, which have aroused so much wonder and discussion because they usually retain an ample supply of water when springs and wells in the surrounding country have gone dry. These ponds are artificial, though some are of prehistoric origin.

"The secret of making them," says the accompanying text, "is known to but a few. The lime and flint to form the saucer-shaped bed, the layer of straw beneath the covering of clay, the final concrete surface, are all wrought with experience and craft that are a heritage from the past, and then left to dry. Once the pond has filled, though the clouds withdraw their shelter and no rains fall, though the torrid sun pour down its relentless heat by day, there will be the water for the cattle to drink. It would be wrong to say that there are no dry dew-ponds, for they are often to be seen about the Downs. But the reason is not far to seek. Once the bed of the pond is damaged, so that the water can trickle through, the pond naturally fails. That is why many of these dew ponds are fenced, so that the heavier beasts cannot tread the surface, and only sheep are allowed access."

The English dew ponds are all near the sea. The deposit of water caught by vegetation from the frequent sea fogs that drift over the Downs, and the increased rainfall due to the forced ascent of moist winds blowing over these same hills, afford at least a partial explanation of their almost unfailing water supply.

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