
“Our Zoo News”
and Guide.



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CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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"Sheika", the tigress, looks very contented in her large enclosure.

The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 21898.

September, 1950.

Pot-Pourri.

It follows that a September edition of Zoo News must deal mainly, with an account of August's events—a none too amiable month alas in this year of grace, 1950. August, as far as weather was concerned, produced the sort of climatic conditions this island is justly "infamous" for—torrential rain, interspersed with fitful sunshine and temperatures ranging from humid to an autumn chill. Naturally, this has been as disappointing to us as to the public generally but, apart from the weather, there have been a number of bright spots to record.

The attendance for August Bank Holiday created another record for the Zoo this year, giving us the highest gate we have yet had—on this day.

During the holiday week-end, push chairs were available for the first time and have already proved a most successful innovation. Tired mothers will no longer have to struggle with collapsible chairs on the bus journey here, or alternatively, have no choice but to carry toddlers when they weary of walking. Now from push chairs to what was to be seen by those who pushed them and their occupants, to say nothing of the other odd thousands, who were in neither category.

There is always something fresh to see, and the more you study the various exhibits, the greater your interest usually becomes. Actually you begin to get properly acquainted with them as individual personalities. I can visualise at this point, the dawn of a smile on some of my readers faces. We who earn our bread in zoos, often join in the laughter at the joke about exhibitors eventually resembling some of their exhibits. Of course nothing could be further from the truth actually, but as the idea obviously affords a great deal of amusement, none of us are likely to protest overmuch and so spoil the fun. The fact remains that a better knowledge of the birds and animals, certainly seems to add to their charm. For instance, you are always sure of a good laugh in the Monkey House and an intimate know-

ledge of the inmates, is a great help to you in deciding who is likely to provide the most entertainment—Elmer, the largest and most boisterous of the chimps, will probably be balancing upside down, with his head stuck in an empty fruit tin—whilst Meg and George might be demonstrating "how not to kill a wasp"—or how to try and lie down in a pie-dish.

Passing the Elephant House recently I noticed that Molly and Barbar were enjoying their bath and I stepped inside to watch the performance, for that is the only way to describe an elephant's bath. My time was by no means wasted. Molly, who obviously considers that the bathing arrangements have been organised for her benefit entirely and that the odd splash, so to speak, should be quite sufficient for Barbar's needs—had been given a pail of water to amuse herself with, whilst the Mahout was busy with his hose on both huge carcasses. It was fascinating to watch her trunk draw up enough water to swill down her throat and slosh over her back with tremendous relish. Her appreciation of the swilling and sloshing process was so obvious that I should only have suffered with delayed shock, if she had called across to me "don't forget to tell all my fans how much I love my bath when you're next writing in Zoo News"—(after all I did get a letter from Rack and Ruin last month). Barbar viewed the whole procedure with undisguised admiration and envy, she was far too preoccupied obviously, trying to think of some way of distracting Molly's attention long enough to get her trunk into the bucket and manage a swill and slosh on her own account, to worry about having the odd word with me. I decided that it was a brilliant move on Barbar's part, when she tried to synchronise the down movement of her trunk with the up movement of Molly's. Alas, Molly was not prepared to take even a sporting chance of sharing the fun to be had out of the bucket, every effort on Barbar's part to work the oracle met with a snort of indignation from Molly—that Barbar should dare to assert any rights in the matter at all—the

privilege of a bucket of water to slosh hither and thither at will, was hers, and hers alone. The Mahout informed me in due course, that when Molly is in a good mood she has been known to share the pail routine with Barbar, and I must accept the Elephant Keeper's word for this, but there was certainly no sign of such a development even being considered by Molly, whilst I was there.

A few days after watching the bucket episode in the Elephant House, a terrific trumpeting announced the fact that Barbar had found a way of asserting her individuality by climbing over the rail in the Elephant House to follow the Mahout, who was trundling used hay into the orchard, of course Barbar trotted happily towards the elephant stand—which is in the opposite direction—trumpeting with vast enjoyment at this unusual freedom from the restraint imposed by Molly's sober gait. Of course hearing her elephant gurgles of glee brought us all to the scene, led by the Mahout, with the utmost speed, to learn the cause of so much noise. However, she went as happily back to the Elephant House as she had gone to her stand, with the keeper hanging on to her tail and Barbar trumpeting at full blast, no doubt announcing to Molly en route, what fun it had been to upset the daily routine a little. Personally I was in entire agreement with her, it would have been a priceless shot for any camera, the sight of a playful young elephant, a truant from her stall, the Mahout hanging on to her tail and Barbar enjoying the fun so much with elephant roars of laughter. The game all over she trotted back quite amiably to the Elephant House, clambered into her stall and five minutes later could be seen contentedly finishing off her breakfast.

The baby bears are still holding up the traffic near the Sea Lion Pool. The fun and games in their enclosure has reached a new pitch since it was decided to leave the door open between the two bear enclosures. We all know how attractive is "forbidden fruit", but if anything is ours for the taking we're half way to being cured of wanting it, at any rate that is how it usually works, but then maybe bears are different. All but one of the babies, seem to spend most of their time in with their elders, who are pretty tolerant about this wholesale invasion of their premises. Of course there is not much peace for them, but no doubt there are compensations—there must be, because we have received no complaints and since Rack and Ruin's recent effort, we are prepared for anything. However, Chota is an exception to this "one happy family" outlook among the baby bears—she really never

has been very friendly even with Jack and Jill, whose room mate she was on her arrival here early in the year—and now, having almost annexed the flat top of the stone mound in the enclosure, as her own particular perch—she takes a solitary swim in the pool and then ambles up to the summit of the stonework and settles down to lazily survey the proceedings from there. Her condition and coat are magnificent, but by nature she appears to be aloof, which is a pity in one so young.

I watched a most amusing interlude in this enclosure recently—Belinda, who, as many of you know by now, is a male in spite of his name—undoubtedly bosses all the youngsters about whenever he is in the mood to do so, making the very most of his six months seniority in age and bulk—he also takes his choice of all the buns and tit-bits thrown by the public into the enclosure. On this occasion, however, Belinda was busily occupied with a piece of thin tree trunk which he had seized and placed across his lap. Sitting bolt upright he was busily engaged in ripping the bark off and spitting out huge splinters of timber right, left and centre. The pool, cement work, in fact wherever you looked, showed evidence of his terrific activity with this latest plaything. Whilst his attention was so completely absorbed—Jack and Jill were doing a roaring trade with the customers on the other side of the wall—they cake walked, waggled their paws and did everything short of saying "gosh that was good, keep going with the buns and sweets whilst Belinda is still so busy with his piece of tree trunk". Jill, the smaller of the pair of European Brown and American Black bears, is particularly adept at standing and seems able to hold this posture indefinitely—she also walks well in an upright position.

One of the best things about our Zoo I think, is the way, so shortly after their arrival, the specimens are regarded as our friends, personalities of this or that specie, rather than curiosities of fascinating scientific interest. Of course the greatest respect is due to the scientific side of all zoology—it is impossible to have anything to do with a good collection, without realising how essential is the work done by research and laboratory experts, who play their invaluable part in keeping the various specimens healthy and learn what diets, etc., they will best thrive on in captivity and so on. However, this essential work is only a part, and I am sure that the personal touch with the animals and birds is equally important—we all need affection and appreciate kindness—and so it is with our friends the animals here in the Zoo. We name them, watch them daily



The Coypus allow us to photograph them for the Zoo News.

and learn all about their habits and quaint ways, in fact there is an individual touch everywhere in the Zoo. When it was discovered that little Simon the Chimp could use a hand brush and loved to do so, he soon possessed one of his own. Elmer is kept regularly supplied with an empty fruit tin to stand on his head in whenever the fancy takes him, Topsy loves her little piece of blanket to trail round and it is quite unbelievable what Meg and George can do with a piedish or enamel bowl. Even among some of our very newest arrivals, there are a pair of female leopards who are affectionate and docile enough to like their necks scratched and their keeper is most willing to oblige in this respect.

Since the last edition went to press there has been a big consignment of new specimens.

The parrot collection has been greatly enhanced by some of the rarer specimens newly imported from British Guiana, but I think my favourites among the new bird arrivals are

some Crowned Cranes from Nairobi—you cannot miss these elegant specimens who strut so aristocratically on the banks of the pool just beyond the Tiger Enclosure. Their plumed headdress is very regal and their beauty inclines to accentuate the ugliness of their companion, the Marabou Stork, who arrived with them. G. S. Mottershead in his recent broadcast, described this queer looking bird and its scavenger disposition. Of course there is no denying its odd appearance, but personally it does not strike me as being so repulsive in looks as the vulture—in fact getting a rear view of it perched among the rushes the back of its bald head is oddly reminiscent of a nice old gentleman hunched up in his chair, reading a newspaper.

Our Giraffes of course, we have only heard about to date, since these are doing twelve months quarantine in the London Zoo—but I hope to visit them during October and return here with enough gen to write you a worth

while pen picture of George, Gussie and Gooffey. If this can be managed it should make readers as eager to welcome their arrival in Chester, as we are.

Of the zebras, the Grevy mare is really the loveliest creature imaginable, with her long sensitive ears and beautiful markings. She is most aptly named "Beauty".

The cheetahs, who although in quarantine are on view, are docile enough to allow their keeper to get right into their cage for cleaning purposes, an activity they appear to regard as boring in the extreme.

We have also acquired a tapir who, although not the first specimen of its kind we have ever had, is the only one at the present time. He is a gentle loving creature and it is hoped to exhibit him in a suitable enclosure, in the near future.

All these new exhibits mean much hard work for the Zoo in the coming winter months, in order to house and exhibit them in the best possible way, by the commencement of next season.

N. J. BRUSHETT.

Zoological Conference held in Dublin.

A meeting of the Directors of the Zoological Societies of England, Scotland and Ireland, took place at the Zoological Gardens, Phoenix Park, Dublin, by the kind invitation of the Council of The Royal Zoological Society of Ireland.

All the Societies were represented—there were present:—

Mr. G. S. Cansdale—London.
Mr. E. H. Tong—Whipsnade.
Mr. D. Bowles—Edinburgh.
Mr. S. H. Benson—Glasgow.
Mr. C. L. Flood—Dublin.
Mr. A. Mc'Lean—Belfast.
Mr. R. E. Green—Bristol.
Mr. G. S. Mottershead—Chester.

A number of useful discussions took place on the many aspects of work in connection with running public zoological gardens.

In addition to this, a most interesting and attractive programme had been organised by the Council of The Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, which included a visit to Lord Powercourt's Demesne, the Guinness Breweries, and a theatre party. These outings which

were all greatly appreciated combined with several delightful luncheon and dinner parties, arranged for their guests by the Dublin Society, concluded with outstanding success, the first Zoological Conference of its kind, to be held.

It was agreed that the 1951 Conference should take place at Chester Zoological Gardens, in September, and Zoological Directors will be the guests on this occasion, of the Council of The North of England Zoological Society.

News Flash.

Lucky has now settled down in a real lions den and is growing quite big, but he still considers himself the pet of the Lion House.

The cheetahs were unlucky to have arrived in England during such a wet summer—but they are now getting used to the climate and seem quite content in their new home. You can always tell when it is feeding time by their sharp whistle.

News from other Zoos. BRISTOL.

Since we last contributed to this magazine, the Society made two fairly important acquisitions. The first one is a small collection of King Penguins which Edinburgh Zoo were able to let us have out of their recent consignment from the Falkland Islands. Two, unfortunately, caught aspergillosis and died, but the remaining five seem very healthy and provide a rival attraction to the sea lions opposite. They share a pond with our one black footed penguin. He, poor bird, contrasted with the haughty newcomers, looks regrettably like Lazarus at the rich man's table.

Our other important new inmates are a pair of young jaguars from Brazil, who arrived early in August. For the first time our Lion House now contains representative pairs of the large cats from all three continents: lions and cheetahs from Africa, tigers and leopards from Asia and pumas and jaguars from America.

Following the success of the invisible glass window in the plant house, a similar window of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick plate glass has replaced the bars in one section of the leopards' outdoor cage. On the morning that the leopards were allowed to see the public behind glass for the first

time, very careful tests were carried out under the supervision of a member of the Engineering Department of Bristol University. A weight equivalent to a full grown leopard was swung against the glass from various angles at the maximum speeds a leopard could rise to in the confined space. When let out the animals only reaction was faint curiosity and a tendency to lick the glass, an occupation which fortunately for visibility soon palled. They certainly look very striking seen without the intervention of bars, though there seems to be a feeling among the more sentimentally inclined members of the female public that glass gives few opportunities for profitable conversation on "there's a lovely pussycat" lines. Be that as it may, the idea is sufficiently successful to be worth extending.

We are also experimenting with clear perspex instead of wire on the Gibbons' enclosure to prevent the apes being fed by the public and yet give clear vision. The same thing is being tried on one of the outdoor flight aviaries where the perspex has been bent to appear invisible.

The plant house is looking very gay just now with a display of tropical flowers, foreign finches, pin-tailed whydahs and various foreign and English butterflies.

Our baby chimpanzee is still flourishing and is beginning to take notice of her surroundings. She has been christened Gwendolen in honour of the thousands of Welsh children who come to the Gardens on educational excursions during the summer.

Some brief but interesting facts about a few of the New Specimens.

GREVY ZEBRAS. This specie is a taller and slimmer animal than the true zebra, which, however, it resembles in having the limbs striped right down to the hoofs. On the other hand it resembles Burchell's zebra in the long mane and abundantly-haired tail. It is distinguished from both by the much greater number of stripes which are very narrow, deep black in colour, and separated by equally narrow white streaks. The arrangement of the stripes is moreover quite different, those which run transversely across the sides occupying a

much greater extent of the body, and the obliquely longitudinal ones on the haunches being proportionately shortened.

BURCHELL'S ZEBRA. Usually rather stouter and taller than the true zebra, standing from 4 feet 4 inches to 4 feet 6 inches. It is further distinguished by its shorter ears, longer and more fully-developed mane, and more thickly-haired tail, as well as by the absence of the transverse bars connecting the stripe on the middle of the back with the uppermost of those on the haunches. In the typical form, the tail and legs are quite devoid of stripes.

CHEETAH OR HUNTING LEOPARD. The hunting leopard is distinguished by the slenderness of its body, and the great relative length of its limbs, which are longer than in any of the true cats, not even excepting the lynxes. In length of body it may be compared with the true leopard, although it stands much higher on the legs. The fur is rather coarse, the tail is relatively long being equal to more than half the length of the head and body. In India Cheetah are often kept by native princes for the purposes of sport. The Cheetah's speed over short distances, far exceeds that of any other beast of prey, even greyhounds or kangaroos.

MARABOU STORK. The largest and ugliest of the stork specie. These ungainly birds have a large body with a thick and naked neck—the head being either bald or thinly clad with down—also an enormous beak, which is very thick, four-sided and somewhat wedge-shaped with a sharp point. The legs are of great length and the whole plumage rough and untidy looking. On account of their value as scavengers, these birds are protected by law in Calcutta and some other Indian cities, nothing seeming to come amiss to them from the carcass of a large animal to a dead cat, or from small birds to frogs and fish.

CROWNED CRANES. These birds take their name from the narrow fan-shaped crest of twisted bristle like feathers radiating from an elongated centre on the top of the head, by which they can be immediately recognised. On the west coast of Africa, some of these cranes are domesticated by the natives.