

# "Our Zoo News"

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF  
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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MOLLY giving Rides

All our efforts to produce this number of Our Zoo News in time for Easter have been in vain, not that we have lacked news, but simply the time to write it down. When this war is over and we look back on these days, no doubt we will wonder how we managed to keep going with the staff difficulties we have had to contend with.

We are pleased to say there are signs of improvement and we are hoping before long to be settled

once again and able to produce this chronicle of zoo news more regularly.

Easter has gone and despite the war and all the difficulties produced by it, a record crowd visited Chester Zoo during the week, thus assuring us a profit on the year which ended on 30th April.

The last few months have had their misfortunes. "Honky", as will be seen later in this news met with

a very untimely end, and the Martial Hawk Eagle also became a victim of a gun.

The Eagles cage, like many more aviaries required re-wiring, but owing to restrictions we were unable to obtain supplies of wire with the result the wire gave way against the weight of the bird. This bird was very tame, and when we called to it soon after it was located in a tree top it tried to come down to us, but got caught in the wind and was taken out of sight in the fading light of day. The following afternoon we were rung up and informed that it had been shot. Had the person who had seen it rang us up, we would have at once gone to it when it would have come to us. We feel the loss of this bird and Honky very much as both were great favourites and the loss to the collection is very much to be deplored particularly during the present difficult times.

A Dingo pup has been born and is a bonny specimen. Why there was only one we cannot say, the usual number in a litter being from five to eight. Perhaps his parents remembered there was a war on.

The Aquarium has had the most interesting additions so far this spring, a very nice Rainbow Boa has been added to the collection and can be seen in a new extension of the aquarium where also can be found a very active young Nile Crocodile.

We also hope to add many new fish during the next few weeks and start once again the breeding which a few years ago was such a popular feature.

On 19th February there appeared in the Daily Mail a photograph of Mowgli and Peter and during the next few weeks we were continually receiving letters accusing us of all kinds of cruelty, the following letter is an example of the narrow mindedness of some people, who cannot appreciate animals having affection for one another.

— Lawn Avenue,  
Doncaster,  
20/2/43.

Sir,

With reference to the photograph which the "Daily Mail" was so misguided as to publish for you, of a little dog looking terrified in a lion's cage I only wish I could transport the author of it into the cage instead and let him have the "joy, fun and frolic" instead of the dog. I hope the swine ends his days in the lion's jaws. It would be delightful to see him torn to pieces by the said lion (cub?).

What a beastly trick to make capital out of a poor little dog. How many have you killed before the photograph could be produced?

I hope you end your days in agony.

Yours truly,

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All the letters expressed great concern for the poor little dog, quite a number wondered how long he lived after the photograph was taken, and was his end sudden?

Well! for the benefit of all, we are pleased to say Peter and Mowgli are still the best of pals and living happily together.

It is an unusual friendship no doubt, but that is because the facilities for creating such a friendship are rare. Most people think of, and treat the lion as a wild savage creature without any feeling, whereas the lion is as affectionate as the domestic cat once he is satisfied you are his friend. Dog and cat friendships are quite common. In most cases where dogs go for cats and vice versa they have been persuaded to do so by humans. It seems natural to quite a lot of people to set one animal against another, friendship and affection are faculties they do not believe exist in the animal world, but they do to a very great extent and we who spend our lives among varied animals notice and appreciate the instructive lessons they teach us.

Regarding the complaint about the dog being in a cage and not having his freedom. Peter has far more freedom than most dogs. We wonder how many of the people who wrote in this strain, have a dog and keep it indoors and do not allow it to run wild. Surely a dog which is kept in the house and only taken out on a lead and is compelled to do just what its master wants, is far more to be pitied than Peter who just does as he likes. Even if he does decide to live with a lion.

Considerable damage has been done and much valuable time wasted by the Bison breaking bounds. All through the winter they have roamed about at will, and owing to us being unable to obtain material to fence them off much hay was wasted. Early in 1942 we applied to the Ministry of Agriculture for a permit to purchase some Barbed Wire. The Zoo they said did not come within their orbit, and they advised us to write to the Board of Trade who in turn referred us to the War Office. The War Office referred us back to the Ministry of Agriculture who again referred us to the Board of Trade till the circle was once more complete. So after much time and labour wasted we have given up trying to confine them to their original enclosure, and with what small quantity of

barbed wire we have been able to obtain, mostly of a second-hand nature, we are endeavouring to confine them to the area on the left of Bison Walk, which means **sacrificing about six acres** of good mowing grass which is very much to be deplored under the very difficult times we are in, when feeding stuff of all kinds is such a national question.

## “Honky”

Honky has returned to the Zoo after being missing for fifteen days, but Honky did not return as she has done for the last five years, full of life and happiness enjoying to the full the freedom which was hers. She was carried back to her home a mutilated mass having been the victim of some assassin's gun. No! She did not suffer, her death must have been instantaneous for whoever it was who took her life could not have been more than ten yards from her, in fact judging by the ghastly wound in her body we should say she must have been much nearer to her murderer.

Knowing her as we did we can just fancy her alighting by the pond in which she was found, and seeing a man there had probably started to approach him quite expecting him to be a friend with perhaps a crumb to give her. What we cannot understand is the mentality of anyone shooting such a harmless and beautiful creature that showed such friendly feelings to man.

Honky was more often than not referred to in the masculine gender, but strictly speaking Honky was a lady of the specie, the rather masculine name of Honky was given to her soon after she came, by a little boy who associated her call with that of the old fashioned motor horn.

She was a symbol of freedom and friendliness and will be missed by the regular zoo visitors who enjoyed her company when they visited the zoo, for if ever she saw anyone picnicing in the zoo Honky would nearly always join them, and the pleasure of being honoured by so graceful a creature brought forth many dainties from the picnic basket which Honky always enjoyed.

We miss her very much, for she came regularly to the house at the same time each day and if we happened to be busy or had not noticed the time she would give us a call and once we had answered she would fly off again.

It is not likely that Honky's assassin would be interested in reading "Our Zoo News," if he does he will perhaps realise that he would be a wiser and happier man if he laid his gun aside and made friends with the creatures about him.

## Itinerary to Chester Zoo.

Visitors upon entering the Zoo will have the choice of two ways of proceeding to the Gardens. One via South Drive and the other by the Central Drive, but if the visitor is desirous of seeing all the Zoo, he or she should take the South Drive which will first bring them to the Elephant Stand from which the Elephant gives rides on fine days (Fridays excepted) to both children and adults.

If the visitor turns sharp left he or she will come to a large walled in enclosure containing Malayan Sun Bears, at present there are only two, Sally who has been in the Zoo for nine years, and Teeny who was presented by the late Sir Delves Broughton in 1938.

These bears which are natives of Malay, Sumatra, Java and Borneo, are very amusing animals and wonderful climbers. Their chief food in pre-war days was Sweetened Condensed Milk and Honey, to-day they have to have just what they can get, and it is remarkable how they have survived, only one dying of ill health in the four years of war. Sammy, the largest and most uncertain, escaped when a large drift of snow piled up in their enclosure during the winter of 1939-40 and had to be shot.

Working round this enclosure in a clockwise fashion, we come to a smaller enclosure containing Raccoons. These come from North America and are much in demand for their skins.

Proceeding round the Bear enclosure we next come to two open pens which at present accommodate Dalmatian Dogs. Having now completed a circle we find ourselves at the junction of South Drive and a short drive leading to the Central Drive. At this junction on our left is a Field used for picnics and sports but if we wish to see the Zoo we proceed down the drive and turn left when we reach Central Drive. This drive leads to the zoo proper but first we find the Cafe's where light luncheons, teas, etc., may be obtained. There is also a buffet bar, but on fine days this may be transferred to a site opposite the Cafe entrance, under the trees from which picnic parties can proceed to the field.

Leaving the cafe we move round the building and on our right we find the Aquarium which contains both Fish and Reptiles, English and Foreign, most of the tanks contain Tropical Fish. Of the reptiles the most beautiful is the Rainbow Boa, from South America. This lovely snake flashes all the colours of the rainbow as it moves gracefully under the light. Like all Boas, the Rainbow kills its

prey by constriction and then devours its victim whole. Space does not permit us to deal with all the inhabitants of the Aquarium, but these continually change and are always of great interest.

After leaving the Aquarium we proceed on our way and notice on the left a site which was being developed as a large Open Air Lion Enclosure when the war broke out and work had to be suspended, but it is the desire of all that this work should be proceeded with as soon as circumstances permit.

We have now reached one or two old aviaries containing Herons, Arctic Owl, Jackdaws and other birds and we proceed in between these to what was many years ago the Court Yard, here many alterations have been made since those days and instead of accommodating horses and carriages we find wild beasts. On entering the Court Yard we should turn right and here we find the Russian Bear (Trotsky) and the Himalayan Bear (Won Lung), and then we enter the Monkey House where in addition to several monkeys we find the Chimpanzee (Phyllis).

Alongside the Monkey House is a large cage which used to contain Rhesus Monkeys, but now contains Wolves for security reasons. Six cubs have been born to the pair this year and if the war does not last too long these should help to start a nice pack for the wolf enclosure suggested at the end of Bison Walk.

At the opposite end of this cage is the Elephant Stable, but during the nice weather the Elephant (Molly) will either be giving rides in South Drive or enjoying herself among the trees in East Avenue.

On the opposite side of the court yard to the wolves is a large cage containing Griffon Vultures. In this cage was bred in 1940 the first Griffon Vulture to be reared in captivity, and as far as we are aware is the only case on record. This bird can easily be distinguished from the other Griffons by its rust brown colour which will go lighter as the bird gets older.

On the right of the Vulture Cage is the entrance to the Lion House. Here are two cages constructed in the old stables in which at present is a Striped

Hyena from Africa. The Lion House proper is a new building specially built in 1937 and is part of the scheme of the open air enclosure previously mentioned which provides accommodation for all weathers.

Our stock of lions are generally considered one of our outstanding exhibits, and at times we have had as many as between twenty and thirty, but owing to the difficulty of procuring horseflesh our stock of full grown lions is now under the dozen. We are hoping that some of our five lionesses will produce some cubs this year. Through the war we have refrained from breeding, but during 1939 and 1941 upwards of twenty lion cubs were born in Chester Zoo.

Leaving the Lion House, we proceed to the right round the Vulture Cage and make our way to where we entered the Court Yard, but before leaving we find on our right a door which takes us into the Leopard House. Here we have a very fine pair of Leopards, the male being an exceptionally fine specimen. The female it will be noticed limps rather badly, this is as the result of a fight something like three years ago, in which a tendon became damaged, but we can assure visitors that the animal suffers no pain and in fact can use the leg quite well.

By far the most outstanding exhibit in the Leopard House, or one might go so far as to say, the Zoo, is Mowgli and Peter, a young male lion born in June 1941 and a dog born in January of the same year. This friendship is one which the animals themselves have made, both refuse to be parted and are just as friendly after being a year and seven months together as they were at the beginning.

After we have left the Leopard House we should proceed out of the Court Yard, and visit the Parrot Aviaries on the left. Here are to be found many interesting birds of the parrot family, the most interesting and by far the most talkative is Cocky the Slender-billed Cockatoo. Visitors will have no difficulty in recognising him as he will have

greeted them more likely than not long before they have reached his cage, by shouting "Come 'ere." If Cocky is in the mood he may sing you a song, or invite you to kiss him, or shake hands, but BEWARE for nothing makes him laugh more than catching an unwary visitor, and believe us nothing can be more painful.

Leaving the Parrot Aviaries, we turn left and after a few yards we find ourselves facing East Avenue. This avenue leads at present to an undeveloped part of the zoo. The orchard on the right is reserved as a wild bird sanctuary and visitors are asked not to trespass.

Running at an angle to East Avenue is Bison Walk, and along this we find American Bison, Thar, Bahreian White Donkey, etc.

This roadway will one day lead to many interesting developments of the zoo, but at present the visitor must retrace his or her steps and cross East Avenue to mount the Polar Bear Terrace. On the right we have two fine Polar Bears, "Punch and Judy." Punch is the oldest animal in the zoo but is still very active, while Judy must be many years his junior. We are hoping when the war is over, to build a much larger enclosure with a large swimming pool for the polars, as they love to swim and dive and will play for hours in the water.

On the opposite side of the terrace to the polar bears we find the Dingo or Australian Wild Dog. These dogs are very friendly but cannot be trusted with sheep or poultry.

Proceeding from the terrace we find on our right the Coypu, a large water rat from South America, and after these we come to some of the Aviaries which unfortunately have suffered greatly through the war. One, a large aviary, contains several brightly coloured Parrakeets, and when we reach this we should turn left till we come to a large enclosure containing various Pheasants, Guinea Fowl, Crowned Cranes, Peafowl, etc., etc., and then we will find we have reached the junction of South and Central Drive, the point from which we started.

## Life at the Zoo--6.

(By one of the Staff)

On March 8th, 1940, I came to work at Chester Zoo. Exactly three years later I was called up by the Ministry of Labour for work of national importance, and I expect, by the time this news is published, I shall have settled down in the Forces.

Looking back on the past three years, my job has been most interesting, although it consisted principally of office work. My whole interest, however, was centred in the animals and every bit of work I did was carried out with the knowledge that it was directly, or indirectly, for their benefit.

I have always been an animal lover and my experiences at the Zoo have shown that I have quite a talent for handling animals. At first there were many disappointments, but I soon became their friend. Many tears were shed over the death of some favourite animal, but later on I got more hardened to it, and although there was always a genuine regret and an aching remembrance, the visible signs of sorrow were more modified.

After the war I should like to carry on working for the betterment of animals, and I have my own idea of what constitutes an ideal Zoo.

The public benefit from a Zoo. It is educational, it is also a place in which to relax and enjoy oneself, but what of the animals?

In "Our Zoo News", number 41, the Editor wrote on Post-war Zoos, and he believed that practically every animal able to stand living out of doors in this climate, could be safely confined without being caged. I think all Zoos here are of this mind, but much depends on the amount of space at their disposal.

The war has interfered with the progress made in this direction, but there will come a time when the old-fashioned idea of keeping an animal in a cage will be as extinct as the dodo. The happiness and well-being of the animal MUST come first, and their more natural surroundings will be, I am sure, heartily approved by the general public.

I am convinced that it was not just wishful thinking on the part of our Editor, and I shall gladly

welcome the day when a Zoo will not merely be a Zoo, but an Animal Paradise.

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May I now introduce you to "Little Chris," the Dingo pup born here recently.

These Australian Wild Dogs are very friendly, but I am afraid the pup has inherited the baser qualities of his parents. Like his father, he just wants to play, but this consists of biting pieces out of one, although I must say this for Bob, he is always very good with me. Already the pup's mother is finding him a handful, and he much prefers living with his grandmother, which is a bit hard on the former.

Two or three visitors have so fallen in love with Chris that they offered to buy him, but naturally he is not for sale.

One afternoon he squeezed through the bars of the enclosure and was off on a little tour of his own. Fearing that if he was found wandering around by himself, someone would carry him off, we soon fixed that little matter. Having waited so long for a Dingo pup, we were not anxious to lose him.

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Trotsky and Won Lung the Russian and Himalayan Bears, next came under my care. The former had been losing his winter coat and wanted a little extra attention in the way of his diet, and to facilitate matters, it was decided to let the bears run together. In this way they had a bigger cage, a pool of water and a dry indoor sleeping den, which they shared.

Trotsky was the bigger bear, but Wonny made up in weight what she lost in height, so they were pretty evenly matched. Next day, both bore the scars of battle, but a respect for each other's person was very marked.

Wonny sits all day at the entrance to the sleeping den. Her fore paws crossed on the step and her head resting on them. Trotsky's brain is working overtime, and he tries all sorts of ruses to get inside, but by the black bear's attitude, one can

read "Only over my dead body, Trotsky, can you enter." When the snores of Wonny can be loudly heard, Trotsky stealthily creeps past and inside, and soon he is competing with his sleeping companion.

Before the Russian Bear awakes, Wonny is up and taking a bath. She revels in it, splashing herself from top to toe. Plunging and rolling about in exuberant spirits. By now Trotsky is awake and full of play. There is a slight skirmish on the edge of the pool, a boxing exhibition and Wonny scuttles back to her own quarters, for the pool is in Trotsky's domain. He, being a gentleman, tries to drink up all the water, but giving it up as a bad job, he waits impatiently for his breakfast.

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Quite a number of regular visitors have wondered why the two wolves have been separated. Their cage was divided into two a short while ago. This is the explanation.

On the evening of the 19th April, seven baby wolves were born, five survived.

For some reason or another the two previous litters had been killed and eaten by the wolves themselves, so we were most anxious that this unfortunate incident should not happen again. It was therefore necessary to keep the wolf away from his wife during the last few days. It was at this stage that I took over. Cleaning, feeding and making friends with them both, so that they would get accustomed to me, popping in and out.

We kept the wolf as quiet as possible and left her until morning, when I took her a drink, finding then that there were two dead cubs. At that time I was unable to see how many were alive. Later in the afternoon, while she was having a drink, I saw that she had five babies.

Easter Week was rather noisy with children, and crowds gathered round the Monkey House windows to watch the mother with her cubs. Others were gathered round by the Elephant, and all the noise upset the mother very badly. Presumably, in search

of a quieter spot, she would carry the cubs round and round in her mouth, only settling down with them when we managed to get things a little quieter. One poor little cub got soaked through with being carried round in a heavy thunderstorm. The poor mite was shivering and I thought this one at least, would die of pneumonia. Fortunately it survived this treatment.

Next day, while I was helping with the Elephant Rides, a new keeper came and told me that a cub was dead. By the time we had got through with the rides, all was quiet with the wolf family, and I left it until the evening to remove the body. Several visitors informed me that they had seen the dead cub and in their opinion it had been so for at least a couple of hours. I was overjoyed to find on examination that all five were very much alive.

Three times a day I counted the cubs and made sure that all were as fit as one another. The mother was very good and I stroked and fondled her as one would a dog. Always at the back of everyone's mind, however, was the thought that she might kill the cubs, as she, or he, had done with the others, and everything that was humanly possible, was done in the hope of averting this tragedy. I even whitewashed the adjoining windows to stop the public from looking at her, and thus throwing her into a panic.

Thursday came and I went to look how my wolf was, as I felt now that I had a priority claim and was in a position to call her mine. She was running round the cage, which I thought was a bit unusual. However, I gave her the usual warm drink which she knocked right out of my hand. I talked gently to her and asked what was the matter. My answer was a vicious snarl and with bared teeth she literally flew at me. She did not hurt me in any way and of course she could easily have done so, but I took it that she wanted to be left alone. Quietly I moved about the cage and, as usual, inspected the five cubs. I was very pleased with the progress they had made, and all were looking very bonny.

I was worried about the sudden change in her manner towards me and over the fact that she was

never with the cubs, simply running round and round in circles. I worried in case the time had come for the massacre of the cubs, and also, if it were I who was upsetting her. I decided to leave her alone, just keeping her quiet and preventing visitors from teasing her.

In the evening the usual performance went on of carrying a cub round in her mouth, while the well-meaning public crowded round.

By now I was beginning to feel that it was well-nigh hopeless in trying to rear the cubs. That sooner or later she would get so frightened and they would all disappear.

Later I noticed that some boards had been pulled up in the sleeping den and were lying across the young wolves, so that they were unable to feed. She had also worked out some bricks and I hoped that they had not fallen and crushed one of the youngsters. When it was quieter, I asked our Mahout to come and keep the wolf away from me while I crawled inside the den and found out the extent of the damage. I removed the debris and was very relieved to see all the cubs snuggled together. Automatically I counted, one, two, three, four, five, six. SIX! No, it couldn't be, I had made a mistake, so I counted three, and even four times. Then I got Karunadasa to count them and there were six baby wolves alright. I knew I had not made a mistake in my previous counting. For four days I had ticked them off at least three times a day, and there had only been five then. This apparently explained the peculiar behaviour of the mother wolf earlier in the day, for she has been quite friendly ever since.

As I write this the cubs are exactly a fortnight old and we now feel that the danger is past. Their eyes are open and their coats are dark, rather like the male's, while their little bodies are as round as barrels.

As yet their sex is unknown, for in no way have the cubs been touched by human hand. That perhaps is one reason why the mother permits me to move in and out. It is a great temptation to pick one up and cuddle it, but I could not betray her trust in me until she is satisfied that no one means harm to her, or her little family.

## NEWS FROM OTHER ZOOS.

### Dudley Zoo.

Contributed by E Wilsdon.

We have opened up in full swing for Easter, after the quiet months of the Winter. Being the fourth year of the War we are fortunate in having quite a good stock of Exhibits and with the mild weather the Grounds look well in their early new leafage on the trees. The Easter weather has been far from what we would have wished, but we are unable to control this. Curtailment of travel naturally makes a vast difference to the attendances but the holiday attendance has been, we are happy to say, over 15,000.

### The Maidstone Zoo Park.

Contributed by Sir Garrard Thrwitt-Drake.

I have often heard it said that a good start is half the battle won, and what a wonderful start we

have all had as far as weather is concerned this season.

Another thing that must have struck all "Amusement" Caterers—if I may include Zoo Proprietors under this category—is the plentifulness of money everywhere. Against this, as far as Zoos like mine are concerned—outside a town—is the practically total eclipse of the private motor and the severe restrictions of public vehicles. However the nett result as far as attendances is concerned is that mine in the first five weeks is 25 per cent. up on last year, very satisfactory as far as it is an offset against the increased price of labour and foodstuffs.

It is amazing to me, after 40 years' experience, that the stock looks so well on the unusual and poor quality of the latter.

It is a bit early to report births, but four dingo pups, two cream pony foals, two wallabies, several Spanish lambs have already arrived, and the cock Emu is very busy sitting on eggs—the first time he has decided to go through the 50 days' ordeal of incubation.



THE LIONESS