
"Our Zoo News"

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

Price 3d.

Annual Subscription 4/6d. post free.

NUMBERS 80 & 81.

OCTOBER & NOVEMBER, 1947.

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Autumn has arrived and with it a glorious sense of peacefulness which belongs to this season alone. The trees which for months have given shelter to a parched earth from the blazing sun, are now turning into a hundred shades of gold as their leaves gently wither and fall to the ground.

There is something about this period of the year which gives the Zoo a special atmosphere, and wherever a visitor goes he finds a tranquility amongst the animals and birds which is not apparent at any other period of the year.

The Bears are fat and covered with a thick winter coat, the Bison look at their best, and nearly all the animals appear to have prepared their bodies to withstand the rigours of the winter.

Even the Lions' coats are thick and shiny, and the Sea-Lions have put on an extra layer of fat.

Work on the Sea-Lion Pool itself is completed, but at the moment we are unable to complete the water supply. However, we are searching for the parts that are needed to complete the pump and hope that our efforts will soon be rewarded.

After a lapse of over five months we have been able to acquire material to finish the first portion of the Monkey House. A Ministry of Supply Sale produced a quantity of Armour-plated Glass which we were able to buy, so the monkeys are now assured of warm quarters for the winter.

Many people make the remark "What a lot of work has been done at the Zoo"! Yes, we are doing and have done quite a lot, and when one looks back

on the work and realises that practically all the material used was sold or given away as scrap, we feel proud of the many additions which normally could not have been undertaken.

The Elephant House which was to have been built with huge concrete blocks has had to stand in abeyance as we were unable to acquire the services of a large enough crane to lift these blocks into position (they weighed between three and four tons each).

Visitors to the Zoo this summer have been puzzled as to what use we were going to put the large Pill Boxes. A large number of these have been removed during the summer from the Ministry Sites to a field in the Zoo, and now the time has arrived for us to work them into a useful purpose.

We are hoping to receive this winter some Beaver, so accommodation will have to be prepared for them, and some of these Pill Boxes are ear-marked for this purpose.

Our Alligators are growing at an alarming pace, and already are far too large for the case they now occupy.

With some of the Armour-plated glass and the Pill Boxes we hope before long to build them a new home, and at the same time prepare more accommodation for reptiles, as more of these are expected during the next few months.

Many visitors this summer have been delighted at the sight of a baby Mona Monkey at liberty in the Zoo grounds. This little monkey was placed in the end cage of the Monkey House, but she soon discovered that the mesh of the wire was large enough for her to squeeze through and she has spent all her time either visiting the other monkeys or raiding the kitchen garden and orchard.

Her greatest achievement was however that of nursemaid to a little Manx Kitten as large as herself. She would sit quite a while nursing the kitten in true motherly fashion, but she was also very jealous and if anyone attempted to pick up this fluffy bit of cat then the monkey would appear as if it were from nowhere, and unless the kitten was at once put down the culprit would soon receive a nasty bite which

would force matters in the monkey's favour. The completed section of the Monkey House is that which would be reserved for larger specimens such as Chimpanzees, Baboons, etc., not specimens like the little Mona who is having such a lovely time, and giving endless delight to the visitors with her antics.

The Ostriches which have been such an attraction this summer have been removed to their new quarters. This is beyond the New Sea Lion Pool and is on the left of the new roadway which is leading to the land purchased by the Society last year.

Winter accommodation has also been provided for them in this enclosure which will be heated during the severe weather.

We are sorry to say that the young hybrid Macaw which we reported in last month's News had been hatched, was killed by its parents when it was one month old. This in our opinion was a case where the old birds knew best, and realised that with the rapid advance of winter there was little prospect of rearing it successfully, so they decided to put an end to a life which had very little hope of surviving.

We are hoping to have these macaws suitably housed by next spring and hope that they will set up housekeeping earlier in the year when they will have a better chance of rearing young before the cold weather arrives.

Another effort has been made to introduce Christy to the lions in the Open Air Enclosure, but once again it has proved a failure, for Christy refuses to make friends with any of her kind and still wants humans to be her companions, so after many battles it was decided to return her once more to the company of Patrick in the Lion House, and we are afraid that is now where she will have to remain.

During the next few weeks we are hoping to transfer the Bison into a new enclosure, and give their present enclosure a good liming and rest, and carry out the many alterations and repairs to fences

which need constant watching, as we have no desire to chase Bison over the countryside as we had to in the early days of the war.

We have had many kind words said to us this year about the efforts we have made to develop the botanical side of the Gardens, and we are pleased to say that our efforts this next year are to be increased still further.

While the old gardens are to be made more attractive, we are going to lay out many restful beauty spots in the new ground we are now starting to cultivate.

The Zoo is visited by many thousands of visitors who while enjoying seeing the animals very soon tire and long for a rest, so to ease the strain on these people we propose to make small gardens of refreshing beauty where the tired ones can sit and rest before proceeding on their way to see other animals.

In addition to this, small copses are to be planted to provide shelter from the winds for the animals.

"THE SNAKE HUNT".

Percy the elusive python is certainly living up to his reputation, in spite of having disclosed his whereabouts to his former keeper, who from such slender clues as disturbed plants in tropical fish tanks, and shrivelled skin, has steadily built up her case and narrowed down the suspected area to the back of the Aquarium. But the other day Percy nearly made the fatal mistake, he got careless. Apparently he had had a very good supper, at the expense of some poor Mouse Family, and after having his bath as usual in one of the Fish Tanks, he felt tired and went to sleep between two of the tanks. He slept longer than he intended, and there the Keeper found him early one morning neatly coiled up, oblivious to all the excitement he was causing. When Mr. Mottershead arrived on the scene with visions of recapturing the runaway, and returning him to the Snake Pen, Percy had other ideas, and put on a disappearing act. Fate it seems had seen to it that he awoke just in time, and he swiftly made a get-away down a small hole, and his would be captors after a strenuous search, had to admit that Percy had once again beaten them to it.

R.J.M.

OUR NEW POLAR BEARS.

Thursday, October 23rd, was a red-letter day here. It was the day on which the two new Polar Bears arrived. Their arrival was eagerly awaited as these animals were to replace two favourite pets of every one, Punch and Judy, both of whom we unfortunately lost early this year.

The new arrivals left Antwerp, Belgium, on Tuesday, October 21st. They arrived at Harwich, England, on Wednesday morning. On Wednesday afternoon a railway official phoned us, and informed us in a rather surprised voice that he had been told to be ready to receive two bears on Thursday morning. He very kindly promised to send them up here on a waggon as soon as they arrived.

On Thursday morning the main subject of conversation here was the new polar bears—what would they be like—what should we call them? Almost exactly as the clock struck twelve the railway waggon arrived. On the back was a large wooden crate, divided into two parts by a sheet of metal, and securely lined throughout with tin to prevent the occupants from clawing their way out through the wood. In each partition of the crate was a young Polar Bear, which from the distance looked like a cuddly toy, but from a "close-up" it would be seen that to attempt to cuddle these would be fatal. Both were like little furies, throwing themselves against the side of their crate and emitting growls which were not at all friendly.

Unfortunately at the moment the sea-lions are in the Polar Bear Pit, and until their new home is completed they have got to remain there, as they cannot live without water, so the new arrivals have had to be put in the dens at the back of the pit, which had been cleaned out and carefully prepared for the new inmates. It took ten men to slide the crate from the waggon to the ground and then move it up to the door of the den. The trap door was then raised, the bars removed from the crate and into its new home entered the first Polar Bear. Looking through a barred window we could see the bear survey his new surroundings. Under the window was a trough full of water, and he made straight for it. We thought that the dear little thing must be very thirsty, and we pressed closer to the bars to watch him drink—much to our surprise the "dear little thing" stood on his hind legs, leaned against the window and gave us the benefit of the mouthful

of water he had. We now approach his window very warily as it has become a habit of his to catch unsuspecting people and almost give them a bath.

Having got one bear into the den we had to close the trap-door and turn the crate round, and get the other bear in in a similar manner. At first the two bears eyed each other suspiciously but they are now becoming accustomed to each other and we hope that they will continue to live happily together. Each morning they take a bath in their trough and splash about thoroughly enjoying themselves—we hope that in the very near future we shall be able to move the sea-lions into their new home and let the Polar Bears into the Pool which is rightly theirs, then they really will be able to have fun and games, and we are sure that they will prove a very great attraction to all visitors.

We have not yet christened these bears, as we have decided to organise a competition for the children to suggest two suitable names. This competition is open to all children up to and including 14 years of age. All they have to do is to write their name, address and age, on a **Postcard** and underneath the two names they think would be most suitable for the two Polar Bears (which are Male and Female) and send the Postcard to:

Polar Bear Competition,
North of England Zoological Society,
UPTON, CHESTER.

The closing date for entries is Saturday, November 29th, 1947. "Nomad" will be one of the judges. The results will be given on Saturday, December 13th, 1947.

The boy or girl whose names are chosen will receive a prize of two guineas and a free pass to the Zoo for the whole of 1948, and he or she will be able to attend the "christening" ceremony.

There will be twelve consolation prizes of free passes to the Zoo for the children who in the opinion of the judges have chosen the next best names.

E.M.N.

LATEST NEWS.

It will be remembered that last winter we had to remove the snakes from their case on account of the very severe weather and electricity failures. These reptiles were placed in smaller cases behind the aquarium where a closer watch could be kept on them.

Early one morning however, whether it was a result of an accident or neglect we have never been able to find out, we discovered that the case containing the African Python had been tampered with and the snake had made good its escape. Fortunately the snake was confined to an area which was comparatively safe as regards the snake reaching the public passage so we did not worry too much as we realised that sooner or later we would catch it again.

Many weeks went by and there was no sign of the escaped snake and we really thought that the reptile had taken its only means of escape and died from the cold; we had finally given up all hope, when one morning we discovered a fish tank terribly disturbed, and at the back of it the discarded skin of the escaped snake. From that date, we saw signs that the reptile was still about, but it was not till the end of October that we actually saw it coiled up between two tanks. It was too quick for us however and escaped before we could reach it.

It was not till the morning of November the fifth that the Aquarium Keeper discovered it once again in a fish tank, and this time its capture was made good.

It is now once again in the large case of Pythons, and has grown quite a lot since its escape. There is no doubt whatever that it has fed well while at liberty, presumably upon mice which have been conspicuous by their absence in the Aquarium during the last six months or so.