
"Our Zoo News"

and Guide.

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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First of all we would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers and visitors a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year. Looking back over 1948 we feel that it was a most satisfactory year, and we look forward with great anticipation to the coming year. Perhaps readers would like a brief summary of the outstanding events of 1948. In January we were very pleased to announce that Won-Lung, one of our Himalayan Bears, had given birth to two cubs on December 21st, but as these had to be left undisturbed with their mother for three months we were unable to see them, although we knew from sounds that at least one had survived, and we anxiously awaited the time when we could raise the trap door and see how the family were getting on, for the Himalayan Bear had not been bred before in this country. At Easter we opened the door of the den, and in to the Bear Pit stepped Won-Lung, followed somewhat cautiously by one lovely cuddly little bear. Unfortunately the other cub must have died soon after birth.

On May 12th, a broadcast was made from Chester Zoo, and the baby Himalayan Bear was christened "Belinda" by Nan Macdonald of the Children's Hour. Also in May, Christy, the lioness, gave birth to two

cubs which were hand-reared and which proved a great attraction to thousands of visitors. These were christened by "Nomad" of the Children's Hour, in July, when he also christened our two Polar Bears.

The Reptile House was opened on July 1st, and has proved extremely popular. The lake surrounding the island bird sanctuary has been another new attraction and children have revelled in the motor boat trips around this lake. Many new animals, birds and reptiles arrived during 1948, and in addition to many extensions, the improvements to the botanical side of the gardens has called for much favourable comment and we have received numerous letters from visitors saying how much they have enjoyed their visits. The numbers of visitors have been far in excess of any we have ever had before and we hope that 1949 will bring even more.

Amongst other plans for improvement for 1949, are a proposed Tropical House and Aviaries, additional Bear Pits and extensions to the Monkey House. The island has been planted with trees and shrubs, and many other developments are already in progress concerning the botanical aspect of the Gardens.

Zoo Personalities.

BILLY, THE HYENA.

Billy, the Hyena, is one of the oldest inhabitants of the Zoo, having been presented to the Society in 1935. Billy's name is rather misleading for she is a female. She has a small enclosure of her own between the lion enclosure and the monkey house, and she spends hours on end running round and round in circles until it makes one dizzy to look at her. She always appears quite friendly but like all hyenas cannot be trusted. To look at she is rather ungainly. Her head and body are about three and a half feet long, and her tail is about eighteen inches long. She has long pointed ears and her fur which is a dirty grey colour is coarse and shaggy; she has a mane of long hairs running along the middle of her neck and back, and tawny and blackish transverse stripes on her body and legs. Her front legs are longer than the back ones. From this description you will realise that Billy is a striped Hyena as opposed to a spotted Hyena which is the other well-known type.

The Striped Hyena is the only representative of the Hyena family to be found in India, although it is also found in different parts of Africa. It is a cowardly, treacherous and cruel animal and like all hyenas, its jaws and teeth have greater strength and bone-crushing power than any other carnivorous animal. Its food mainly consists of carrion or carcasses killed by other animals, but the hyena is mainly dreaded on account of its grave-robbing activities.

The Striped Hyena makes a den for itself on the side of hills or ravines or in a cave in a rock. It is a comparatively solitary animal and it is very rare to meet more than two together. When brought to bay it shows very little resistance.

It is quite common to hear mention of a "laughing" Hyena. This is an entirely wrong conception for the Hyena certainly does not laugh. It has a very weird, unearthly cry which has no association with a laugh.

THE THREE BEARS.

Last time Bears were mentioned in this magazine, Trotsky, the massive Brown Bear received all the attention, but what of his companions, Paddy and Won-Lung, the Himalayan Bears? Let us take the lady first. Her record card simply says "Won-Lung" Himalayan Bear, arrived at Chester Zoo in 1939. She came from the Liverpool Zoo which was then closing down, and she was then a very young bear. How did she come to live in Liverpool? Well, I think her story, if her original owners were here to tell it, would be something like this.....

There is something in the old saying "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet" as anyone who has travelled in the Far East will tell you. Many years ago in a far eastern port, Hong-kong or was it Shanghai, where the western civilization had made a slender foothold on the East, and the white men mingled suspiciously with the silent yellow men of Asia, where every day the rising sun shone down on an ever changing hurrying crowd, some English visitors tired of the dazzling white thoroughfares turned down one of those mysterious enchanting, yet uneasy, side streets and wandered into Chinatown, where the hub of the great cosmopolitan city seemed far away. They stopped outside a tiny quaint building, and in the window sat a solitary forlorn little black bear cub. The building was a pet shop. Maybe it was stuffy and hot, and while the little one rolled over doing her best to ward off the pestering flies, her ruffled black coat with a broad white V on her chest quite won the hearts of the sightseers. They entered the strange shop and met the fixed quizzical smile of a little Chinaman dressed in oriental robes, and after bartering for a while the family emerged from the beaded room into the colourful street with a strange new pet. The cub's new owners called her "Won-Lung" after the Chinaman because they said she reminded them of the little man. I don't think he would be very flattered if he could see Won-Lung to-day! When the family returned to England they brought their little pet with them, but she could not always remain

a cuddly teddy-bear, and so she went to Liverpool Zoo and hence to Chester Zoo.

Won-Lung made her home in the large Bear Enclosure with Trotsky, where she was not long in finding that his bark was worse than his bite and so like all females took advantage, and she flouts him unmercifully.

She takes liberties with the big aggressive looking fellow that make her spouse Paddy fairly quake, for Paddy has learned to his sorrow that though Trotsky may be the perfect gentleman where Won-Lung is concerned, he will stand no nonsense from him. Sometimes Trotsky vents his spite on Paddy, and not one sympathetic glance can Paddy win from his wife. I think, however, that there must be something in the popular song from Bongo,....."that a Bear likes to say it with a slap".

Last Winter, Won-Lung suddenly became extremely bad-tempered and took to remaining in her den, and for many weeks an air of mystery shrouded the Bear Pit. Then one morning the Keeper spied the answer—"Belinda" had arrived. Everyone was very excited, and wanted to see the new baby, but Won-Lung decided that we would have to wait until the warm Spring weather. However, by various ways and means, none of which the mother was aware, it was discovered that the wee bear who had caused such a disturbance in the Zoo was only about the size of a rat, and just like Fuzzy-Wuzzy, had no hair. The weeks lengthened into months and still the Zoo staff waited impatiently, and so did the outside world. The telephone was for ever ringing, for Won-Lung's baby was the first of its kind to be born in this country. The Himalayan Bears were in the News. Then one day in the Spring, Won-Lung decided that she had kept us in suspense long enough and she ventured forth into the sunlight for the first time with her cub. I am sorry to say though, that neither Paddy or Trotsky were there to witness the event; they were confined to barracks as they are not very partial to young bears.

Was the cuddly black baby worth waiting for? Ask anyone who watched it playing happily, trying to copy its mother's movements all Summer.

This we do know, all through the season you would always find a large crowd around the Bear Enclosure, and on May 12th, Nan Macdonald of the Northern Children's Hour, carried out the christening ceremony, and the children who were not able to get to the Zoo on that day, were able to hear it on the radio.

When the cub grew big enough to leave its mother it was placed in an enclosure of its own near the Monkey House, as both Paddy and Trotsky resented their restricted freedom very much indeed. However, Belinda soon forgot her Mother and found a new friend in her Keeper who would always spend a little time boxing and playing other games with her. She is an intelligent little creature like her Mother and soon became very tame and friendly with all the visitors, and proved a great favourite with the children.

What about the proud father? Well, Paddy arrived at Chester Zoo in 1945 from the Dublin Zoo, and though he may be a Himalayan Bear, he has all the cheek of the Blarney Stone. He is a very fine Black massive creature and I sometimes think he has had rather a rough time of it. After all when he arrived he found a wilsome Won-Lung, who was used to doing as she pleased, and also Trotsky who was very annoyed at the arrival of the Himalayan Bear, but like all Irishmen, Paddy made the best of it. He started off by picking quarrels with his big Brown companion, but soon found that it was not going to work out that way, especially when it meant he ended up in the moat with a couple of nasty scratches, and instead of getting sympathy from his wife, he was rewarded with an indignant sniff. So Paddy took the line of least resistance, and when Trotsky felt inclined to quarrel Paddy kept as far away from him as possible, and peace reigned in the Bear Enclosure. We are all hoping that it won't be long before there is another cub to amuse the visitors next year. Paddy and Won-Lung have something to be proud of in Belinda, and Trotsky seems quite content to let it remain so, so long as they don't take too much of the public's attention which he claims as his.

J. MOFFATT.

Several people have commented on the photograph of the two Polar Bears on the cover of the December Zoo News. This photograph was taken by Miss D. Catherall, a member of the Zoo Staff."

Map of The Zoological Gardens, Chester

