

"Our Zoo News"

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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"Punch," the oldest animal in the Zoo.

September, 1942.

It is now several months since we published our last Zoo News (Number Forty-Two), we find it is much more economical in war time to publish a larger copy less frequent than a small copy each month as we did do originally.

We have had many enquiries asking why the Zoo News had not come to hand, but we feel sure our

readers will appreciate the arrangements we have made as a war time measure only.

We regret it has been found necessary to increase the price of Our Zoo News. Subscribers will receive copies to the amount of money standing to their credit.

Many members of the Society have written to say that they do not think it right that Our Zoo News should be posted FREE to members during war time when costs are so high. We would point out however that owing to travel difficulties it is not possible for many members to visit the Zoo as in peace time, and Our Zoo News is the only means of telling them what is going on at the Zoo. If any members wish to make a donation towards the cost of printing and postage we can assure them it will be very much appreciated.

It is with pleasure that we can say that our season of 1942 has been a record one for the Zoo. Starting in May we began to improve and although the weather has not been of the best we have shown a steady increase each month, August almost reaching one hundred per cent. increase on our best previous August which was in 1939.

The most remarkable increase has been in the Cafe where our increase is nearly two hundred per cent. over our 1939 figures.

A considerable trade was done with home grown salads, and visitors seemed to appreciate a fresh meal at the Zoo after having walked to the Gardens, which thousands have had to do this year owing to petrol and other travelling restrictions.

One is tempted to ask why the Zoo should have been so popular this year. We would not like to say it is any one particular thing, but rather a combination of many.

In the first place the Zoo had been gradually improving since it started (till the war came when it received a sudden set back), this was due to a great extent through the Zoo becoming more widely known.

Another reason is although the population of the Zoo has changed somewhat since peace times, a very good collection is on exhibition consisting of larger animals which somehow seem to appeal more to the general public, and there is no doubt the Elephant has been a very great draw.

The Holidays at Home may have had something to do with the improvement, but that cuts both ways, for the Zoo is not in a big populated area and travelling facilities generally have been bad.

We should like to think that the Zoo is appealing more to the public and that is the main reason why

so many visitors have been this year, but whatever the cause we are very grateful for the improvement.

Meet your friends at Chester Zoo, and have lunch or tea in the Cafe.

For the benefit of those who have not been able to visit the Gardens lately we will survey some of the principal exhibits so that readers will see how they are faring.

Lions.

The stock of lions is still good, numbering something like a dozen adult specimens, which are all in very good condition and much admired by all.

PATRICK looks much better than he did in the Spring, but is showing signs of old age.

NERO has grown into a massive animal. It is a pity he is of the maneless variety for if he had a mane like Patrick he would have been a great show.

REGAL is now beginning to grow his mane and will we think be very much like his father Patrick in another year or two.

Among the group of Lionesses, Cassandra stands out as the finest lady of the lot. She was the first lion to be born in Chester Zoo and is now just over three years old, she has outgrown her mother Faith, who by the way is in wonderful condition.

Owing to the uncertainty of the war we have not mated any of the lions as the meat problem gets worse as the war goes on, but we hope the day is not far distant when once again we shall be able to exhibit lions with their cubs.

The most promising lion who bids fair to be a King of Kings is young Mowgili, formerly known as Victor. He was renamed recently by Miss Joan Hyland to commemorate the showing in Chester of "Jungle Book," based on Rudyard Kipling's story.

It will be remembered that Nathu the native child was adopted by the wolves and was afterwards named Mowgili. Victor as mentioned in our last issue had been adopted by Peter, a terrier, so we have now renamed Victor, Mowgili.

Mowgili is growing very rapidly indeed and although he looks with longing eyes at other dogs, and horses he watches with a particular relish, he is still the best of pals with Peter who pulls his ears, bites his lips and in effect does just what he likes with him, but Mowgili knows it is only in play and romps with him just like a kitten.

The question we are always being asked is, how long will we be able to leave the two together. We hope as long as Mowgili is on his own, as soon as we need him for breeding, which will not be for another three years, we shall then have to separate them, but till then we hope they will remain good friends.

Bears.

We are pleased to say all our bears are in very good condition and decidedly better than they were a year ago. Punch and Judy, the two Polar Bears look very well and have got some very fine coats for the winter. Punch spends a lot of his time sitting and watching his young wife Judy play about on her own, he is now beginning to show signs of age, as far as we can reckon Punch must be now well past thirty years of age, he is very fortunate in having been adopted by a kind lady who sees that he has plenty of good food.

All our bears have been adopted by good friends who see they do not suffer through the war, in the case of the Malayan Bears substitutes have been found for the sugar and sweetened milk which formed so much of their pre-war diet.

Won-Lung the Hymalayan Bear, and Trotsky the Russian Bear, have put on weight considerably this year, both of them lost a lot when they were removed to new homes in 1940 which they did not like. Now they are back again they are looking very fit once more.

Ocelot.

Thomas the Ocelot is still with us and quite fit, but here again age is beginning to show. It is now six or seven years since Thomas came to the Zoo in an exchange with Mr. Blazer of Rotterdam; Mr. Blazer

told us at the time he had had him for about seven years and he was an adult when he first got him, so Thomas must be well over fifteen years of age. He is one of the largest Ocelots we have ever seen and has lived entirely out of doors for the last four years.

Raccoons.

The North American Raccoons are still as attractive as ever; we had hoped that they would have bred this year but they have shown no signs of increasing their number.

The Leopard House.

Rajah and Reenie, still a very attractive pair of Leopards, have so far failed to increase their number, perhaps it is because they know so many of their babies (if they ever have any) are spoken for. More than one Zoo has its name down for Leopard Cubs should any come.

Monkey House.

The population of the Monkey House has increased since our last Zoo News, although it is a long way below pre-war numbers there are one or two amusing specimens.

A really good addition has been the arrival of "Phyllis," an adult Chimpanzee from Dublin Zoo. We were very pleased to receive her, for since the death of Big Boy, reported in our last issue, we seemed very lost indeed without a Chimpanzee.

Although Phyllis is an adult, she is full of life and gives the crowd many a good laugh with her antics.

Elephant.

Molly has no doubt been a very great attraction this year and the popularity of her rides can be judged by the fact that since she started giving rides in the middle of June she has taken well over 5,000 passengers.

Make up a party and visit Chester Zoo. Special inclusive prices for tea and admission for parties of 20 or over.

Coypu.

These animals have quite a lot of admirers. We have not noticed any young this year but their burrows are so many and on the slightest alarm they bolt from sight.

Bison.

We are very sorry to say that our cow Bison died last June whilst calving. When it was realised that she was having difficulty we proceeded to get the bull and her son away so that we might try and assist her, but she died before we could get to her. The calf was another bull, very well developed, but its head had become twisted which had prevented it coming normally.

We mentioned in our previous issue about the roving spirit of the Bison, well, this became so bad we had to erect an electric fence which has been very successful, but even then our troubles were not over for they took advantage of finding the gate open one night and wandered many miles from home. The story of how we got them back is best not repeated, for all that took part in that chase were so exhausted they do not wish to be reminded, but one thing is certain every one now makes certain the gate is closed and fast.

Birds.

Although our bird collection is not what it was we still have a lot of the old favourites. Cocky the slender-billed Cockatoo, who continually shouts to all he sees "Come 'ere", had to be taken indoors as he seemed to be suffering from over excitement, however he seems to be his old self again and should he hear some voice he recognises at once calls "Come 'ere, come and shake hands with Cocky."

Rob-Rob, the Red and Blue Macaw, has lost his war time mate, a Blue and Yellow Macaw, who was evacuated to the Zoo on the outbreak of war, known as Donald, it was discovered soon after Donald arrived that he was really a she. Her owner sold her and she had to leave her new mate who has missed her a lot.

Feeding the bird population of the Zoo is one of the most difficult tasks we have, as it is impossible to give them all just the right food they require.

For some years now our stock of Peafowl has been gradually getting less from one cause or another till we found ourselves with only one Peacock and one Peahen, however this year for the first time the Peahen has sat and hatched a brood of chicks. When we first discovered she was laying we carefully collected the eggs which she laid about the enclosure, and obtained the services of a domestic fowl, but after we had collected four eggs the Peahen vanished and it was more than a week later before we discovered her sitting on her own with four of her own eggs and four Guinea Fowl eggs. She hatched all her own eggs and the Guinea Fowl eggs we gave to an ordinary hen, which successfully hatched three of them, one of them being a white one.

The Silver Pheasants brought out their annual brood of chicks, they have done so now for several years, but each year with the exception of the spring of 1940 they have lost them to vermin, rats, stoats, etc., they succeeded in saving two in 1940 both of which were cocks, but when the breeding season came in 1941 the old cock drove his sons away.

This year when we discovered the hen with her brood we tried to catch them up, but it was not until her family was reduced to two once more that we succeeded and placed them in a large aviary till they were large enough to look after themselves; they are now at liberty and once more are both cocks.

The liberty birds are always a feature of our Zoo, it adds greatly to the charm of any garden to see Pheasants, Peafowl and Cranes strutting and flying about in perfect freedom.

Earlier in this issue we asked why the Zoo had become so popular and suggested it was because of many things, but we did not mention "Honky." Now Honky is, as every visitor knows, a Crowned Crane who like all his mates have their complete freedom, but it is Honky who has taught them the homing instinct. Honky knows Chester district well and daily

flies round trumpeting at the top of his voice while his mates, who are not so daring as he is, answer him, and by so doing let the outside world know where the Zoo is. Often when out in the district, Honky has flown over and you hear people say "There's that bird from the Zoo." He goes his round each day as if he was conscious of the fact that he was advertising the Zoo, sometimes he will alight at various distances from the Zoo and has discovered a few places where kindly people will give him a crumb or two.

At different periods we have had other birds at liberty such as parrots and parrakeets, and they have survived their freedom from a few months to several years; a Quaker Parrakeet flew about the Gardens for so long that even to-day after it has been dead for about four years visitors ask where it is. A Ringed Necked Parrakeet was also a popular liberty bird, unfortunately it vanished in the very severe winter of 1940-1 during a very bad fog and got lost.

The greatest difficulty in giving birds their freedom is, some visitors will not let them alone, they must chase them, often they think they are doing a service in trying to catch them, but if they would only pause and think they would realise that they did not stand a chance and are only disturbing the bird.

The Aquarium.

Although the aquarium is still stocked with fish, the variety has diminished considerably. This is due to a variety of causes, one is we have no one permanently employed looking after the fish and it requires some careful attention if breeding is to be carried out successfully, another cause is no fresh supplies are coming into the country now, and vandalism by a certain class of visitor has accounted for many deaths.

"What is it?"

Since the outbreak of war we have noticed a considerable increase in the amount of petty destruction and theft not only at the Zoo but almost wherever a crowd congregates, that one is puzzled to know the real cause of such delinquency.

Although it is now an offence to throw away paper, we have had more litter this season than at any time previous. Although this has been collected and turned over to the salvage it has meant much time wasted

in collecting it when it could have been so easily placed in a waste paper receptical.

The thieving in the Zoo orchard has been very bad this year, not altogether by persons visiting the Zoo but from actual trespassers from the road. One can understand children raiding an orchard, but when adults deliberately force entry and start and strip trees of fruit just as it has formed and the fruit is neither fit to eat or the least appetising one cannot help but wonder what it is that has tempted them to such wilful destruction. Many hundred-weights of both apples and pears have this year been lost through the action of these people. Food which was sorely needed to feed the animals through the long winter months has thus been wasted.

Notices and signs have been wantonly destroyed, conveniences have been stripped of essentials necessary for hygiene so quickly that we had to stop supplying them, for the supply is now limited, but if only every one would be honest and play the game there would be, and is, ample to meet the requirements of us all.

It is not the majority, but a few who for some reason only act in such a manner when a crowd is present, one would think that when plenty of people are about it would be difficult for them to act without being detected, but very rarely is anyone caught and then they nearly always blame someone else.

The Zoo is not the only place which is suffering from this mental alienation, that is all we can call it, we heard recently of a person attending a Cinema and because the picture did not meet with the person's approval he started to cut the seat adjoining (which was vacant) with a knife.

It is very sad that persons should allow their minds to lead their bodies into such actions, particularly at a time when we all ought to do what we can to control our thoughts for the benefit of our fellow men, and not as some do to-day, try to spoil anything from which their neighbour might benefit.

Why not become a Member of The North of England Zoological Society.

Entrance fee £1 1s 0d.

Annual Subscription £1 1s. 0d.

Life Membership £15 0s. 0d.

Patrons £25 0s. 0d

For further particulars apply to Secretary.

NEWS FROM OTHER ZOOS.

Dudley Zoo.

Submitted by E. Wilsdon.

As we approach the end of another season, after three years of War, we review the past, and congratulate ourselves that it has not been so bad as we might have expected. The "Holidays at Home" suggested by the Government have increased our attendances, many thousands taking advantage of this break to spend a day at the Zoo and picnic within the grounds. We have held dances in our ballroom, and for weeks past have provided a band to play in the courtyard on Sunday afternoons. We have had a Bison, also a Thar and Barbary Sheep born during the season which have added to the attractions of the Zoo.

News from the Zoological Park, Edinburgh.

Submitted by T. H. Gillespie.

A most interesting event—one so far, it is believed, unique in this country—occurred recently in the Scottish National Zoological Park, the birth of a young Orang-utan. The parents are "Mickie" and "Minnie," who were obtained for the Zoological Park through the kindness of the Netherlands East Indies Government and Dr. Coenraad, Director of the Zoological Park at Palembang, Sumatra, and they arrived in Edinburgh in August 1937. It was difficult to estimate their ages at that time with any accuracy, but it was supposed that "Mickie" was then at least five or six years old, and "Minnie" a little older, at any rate "Mickie" was not more than halfgrown at the time. He has since quite doubled in size and weight, and is now a magnificent specimen.

The first sign of mating between the two occurred in 1940, and hopes were high that a "baby" might be born in 1941, but nothing happened. No one had any idea this year that a birth was imminent, and it was something of a surprise when, on the morning of Sunday, the 12th July, "Minnie" was found to have

given birth to a "baby." The birth was so unexpected that no preparation had been made for the screening of the cage from the public or for separating the male, as had been done on the occasions when the young chimpanzees were born in the Park. This was probably fortunate as nothing could be more likely to upset a temperamental female ape at such a time than separation from a mate to whom she was attached, and a disturbance in her surroundings. At any rate, "Minnie" showed no objection to the presence of the crowds of visitors who have been crowding the Ape House every day. She shows great affection for her "baby," and during the first two or three days she held it very carefully to her breast, using one arm to support it, and, when she is climbing about the enclosure, holding it by one of its arms in her lips. On the fourth and fifth days after birth her behaviour was a little less circumspect, and I noticed her placing the "baby" on her head, perhaps in emulation of her mate "Mickie," who was at that time parading the enclosure with a branch of hawthorn on his head. When either her mate or any human comes near, however, she immediately clasps the young one to her breast and protects it carefully. So far as can be observed, the young one is getting sufficient nourishment. It has not, however, been possible as yet to ascertain its sex.

This female Orang-utan has not shown such a temperamental disturbance as was marked in the case of the two Chimpanzee mothers we have had in the Zoological Park here, which became in the one case very savage immediately after the birth of her "baby," and in the other case very timid. "Minnie," in fact, carries on as if having a "baby" was an every-day affair.

It is believed that an Orang-utan has never before been bred in this country, but one was born in Berlin Zoo in April 1936, and at least one other to the same pair prior to the outbreak of the war, and several have been born in American Zoos.

(Since the above notes have been written, we have heard that the baby Orang-utan has died. We congratulate Edinburgh Zoo on being the first to breed this animal in this country and hope that the event will be repeated and that the next young one will be successfully reared).—Ed.

Maidstone Zoo Park.

Submitted by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake.

Another season is beginning to draw to a close, and looking back I believe for all Zoos it has been a surprisingly good one, considering all things.

As far as this one is concerned it has been, the gate showing an increase of 25 per cent. up to date on the 1941 figures—all the more surprising because Maidstone is in a prohibited area as far as the North and West are concerned, to say nothing of the abolition of petrol for private cars and the curtailing of bus services (the Zoo is two miles from Maidstone).

As far as the health of the animals, this again, in spite of difficult rationing, has been up to standard and mortality just average.

Births during the season include two wallabies, three lion cubs and a litter of half-bred wild boar.

Labour is difficult, and I now employ five girls and only three men. The former are quite satisfactory as far as they can be, but naturally are not fitted for heavy work and lifting.

For peace and quiet I would not recommend the job of a Zoo Owner-manager in war time, but, speaking personally, I carried through during the last war, and am certainly going to have a good try to carry on through this one!

News from the London and Whipsnade Zoos.

Submitted by G. M. Vevers.

The most interesting and topical event of the summer season at the London Zoo is the "Off The Ration" Exhibition, which has been produced for the Ministry of Agriculture by the Ministry of Information. The Exhibition includes sections on vegetable growing and storage, fruit and vegetable preservation, and a special exhibit on how to "Rout out Rats." Live pigs, poultry, rabbits and goats are on view, and expert advice available as to how one may make the most of one's efforts in this field. Attendants are on duty

to answer questions on what and what not to give rabbits to eat, how to join a co-operative pig-club, how to recognise those insects which are beneficial as well as those which are injurious to crops, methods of bee handling, and the countless other problems which confront the "backyarder." "Brains Trust Hall" is the name given to the covered enclosure which has been erected for purposes of film shows, talks and demonstrations in connection with the Exhibition, which will be open until October 3rd.

The pre-war popularity of the Zoo has returned and many thousands of visitors have passed through the turnstiles during the past few months. It is probable that the Government's "Spend your Holidays at Home" campaign has been partly responsible. "Ming," the Giant Panda, was sent up from Whipsnade for the summer season, but she will go back to Whipsnade within the next month or so. Five riding donkeys were purchased to supplement the riding facilities for visitors, owing to the absence of the Elephants at Whipsnade, and they have proved very popular with the children.

The most noteworthy gift of the year has just been made to the Society by Mr. Alfred Ezra, O.B.E. It consists of a very fine collection of ornamental waterfowl, cranes and parrakeets, many of them very rare and valuable specimens.

Whipsnade has come into the news by producing its first home-bred Lion cubs from a pair which were bred in the London Zoo and transferred to Whipsnade last year. The original group of Lions, which had been at Whipsnade since its opening, were all males, purchased from Bostock's Circus. Now that a breeding pair has been introduced, it is hoped that they will produce families with the same success as the group of Tigers.

Manchester (Belle Vue).

Submitted by G. T. Iles.

Business has been very brisk this summer with a much larger crowd than usual visiting the Gardens in spite of constant bad weather, especially at the week-ends.

Joey, the Chimpanzee, continues to be the star attraction of the Zoo. Joey has just recovered from a three weeks' illness, having had a severe dose of nicotine poisoning caused through some thoughtless person giving him a wad of tobacco. When will Zoo visitors learn that tobacco should not be included in the diet of apes and monkeys?

A very welcome addition to the collection is Prince, a fine black Zebu bull which we have obtained from the Maidstone Zoo. Our monkey population has also

increased considerably during the summer months and we have been able to collect a number of young *Callithrix* monkeys which make a most attractive show in the large gibbon cage.

The large Indian elephant, Annie, purchased from Sanger's Circus, just a year ago, has recently been trained to carry a riding saddle and she now carries visitors quite well. Next season she will be a great help to Lil, our other riding elephant.



The Members' Tea Room