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# “Our Zoo News”

(and Guide to Chester Zoo).

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Photo. by H. F. Parker, Esq.

## “AXIS DEER.”

The Axis or Indian Spotted Deer (known in India as the Chital or Chitra) is a very pretty animal, possessed of cylindrical antlers with three tines on each side.

A native of India and Ceylon, it quickly settles down in captivity, and soon becomes very tame.

The pair shown in the photograph were not in the least alarmed at the presence of the photographer. The young male in the foreground has not yet grown his antlers. In full maturity, the antlers of the male measure about thirty inches in length, and he is then a very attractive animal.

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# The North of England Zoological Society Limited,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

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## "Our Zoo News."

In many respects, April 1946 has been an exceptional month. The summer-like weather certainly brought the crowds out of doors, and the Zoo proved a very popular attraction. Attendance records were broken, and some years may elapse before we experience another such April.

Although, just prior to Easter, the labour problem improved somewhat, it was nevertheless impossible to complete all the jobs we had hoped to before the Easter rush started. However, much progress was made in straightening-up the Gardens, and visitors would have observed the many improvements effected not only for the benefit of the animals but also in the interests of the public.

The enclosures in the South-West corner of the Zoo have been renovated to provide an exercise yard for the Swine, but by far the most striking improvement in this area is the clearance of the enclosure which many years ago accommodated Flamingoes. In the course of years this enclosure, vacated by the livestock, had taken on the appearance of a dense jungle, and parts of the old wire fence which at one time surrounded it had completely disappeared. So soon as we can acquire new netting to fence-in this enclosure again, we shall take steps to re-stock it with water-fowl or waders.

Practically all the material required for the open-air Lion enclosure is now on the site and, when labour becomes available, work will proceed rapidly. Much the heaviest part of this work will be the setting in position of the large Anti-Tank Road Blocks but, once placed, they will provide a firm foundation that will stand any amount of pressure.

The old wire etc. which during the war years accumulated about the Zoo grounds had become an eyesore, and the question arose as to its disposal. We have now collected this together in a heap which, covered with concrete, will form a rock for the Lion enclosure and thus add to the attraction of what would otherwise be a perfectly flat enclosure. Another rocky mound will be formed by tipping, in a large heap, all the earth excavated in the course of making the foundation. This also will be concreted over, except for a portion on the southern side from which the earth will later be dug out to form a cave into which the Lions can retire. The existing back dens will all be dismantled and replaced by permanent structures which will greatly facilitate the handling of the Lions and render it possible at any time necessary to isolate any individual animal.

After many years of conjecture as to the correct names of some of the animals, visitors will no doubt be grateful for the information imparted now that we have at last got the name-plates up. The Tahr, however, created a problem; where should we display her name-plate, seeing that she roams about all over the Zoo and we never know where to look for her next? One minute she is quite at home with the Bison, next she may be seen with the Deer or Sheep, and several times we have found her in the Malayan Bear enclosure. One bright suggestion was that we hang the name-plate around her neck and, although hardly feasible, it certainly would seem to be the only solution. We are still considering the problem.

The Egyptian Geese are sitting, and we are hoping that they will be successful in rearing a family so that we can allocate a separate enclosure to this breed.

These Geese are very pugnacious, especially during the nesting season; they will attack any other Geese, regardless of size, and have even been known to attack Swans.

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The Edwards Pheasants are also sitting, and we are afraid these will be the only Pheasants at the Zoo to breed this year, although we had hoped for success with several varieties.

The Golden Pheasants took to eating their eggs and unfortunately we lost the cock Reeves just before the hen laid; also for one reason or another, we have been unable to mate the Silver and Amherst's Pheasants.

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Several of the Parrakeets are showing signs of nesting and we are hoping that they will rear some young, as we are most anxious to replenish our much-depleted collection of birds.

We are afraid that our hen Griffon Vulture has passed the age for breeding. For the second consecutive year she has failed to lay. To our knowledge, she laid every season for seventeen years until last year. She was an adult bird when first she came under the writer's care, so it is quite possible that she is now well over thirty years of age and may even be almost double that.

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During the night of 11th April, an unwelcome visitor sneaked into the Zoo and left behind two headless Geese—an Ashy-Headed and a Magellan.

It was many years since a Fox last visited the Zoo, on which occasion we lost our entire stock of Demoiselle Cranes, and not until last year did we again introduce this graceful Crane into the collection.

Since the night of 11th April, we have taken the precaution of hanging lighted lamps around the Geese enclosure, and this has so far proved effective in keeping sly old Reynard at bay.

One morning in April at an early hour we received a telephone call from the Police asking us if we had lost an animal. It had been reported to them that an animal about six feet in length, white with black stripes on its face, had been seen a short distance on the Hoole side from Chester General Railway Station. With the exception of Goats and Sheep, the only white animals at the Zoo are the Polar Bears, so we were able to assure the Police that it was not an animal from the Zoo. Within an hour they again telephoned to say that the animal was a Badger, it had been cornered in a yard, and would we go and catch it.

The person who first reported having seen the animal must have been only half awake, as a Badger is nothing like six feet in length, neither is it white in colour; but then, we are accustomed to hearing yarns about animals and their size, in fact the fisherman's pike is small fry compared with some animals encountered after closing time at night or in the early hours of the morning.

Returning to our Badger, however, this proved to be a full-grown specimen, and by the time we arrived at the yard it had bitten its way through the wooden door of a coal-shed and taken refuge among the coal.

We had brought along a metal-lined box into which we hoped to trap the animal, and this we placed at the entrance to the hole. Twice we drove the Badger into the box, but each time it escaped before we could close the trap. Whilst we were endeavouring to drive it in for the third time, it started to scrape at the brick wall at the back of the shed and, before we realised what was happening, it had a hole through the wall and had vanished. The Badger was not to know any more than did we, who were strangers in the yard, that beyond the wall was only a W.C., so his efforts were in vain; the W.C. door being closed, his getaway thus came to an abrupt end. We soon forced him to return to the coal-shed, and presently he ventured into the box and this time we had him. Within a very short time he arrived at the Zoo where we hope he will make an interesting exhibit; although the

Badger is a British animal, very few people ever see one alive.

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The three cubs born to "Faith" on 24th March, and reported in our last issue, are thriving well. On 4th April, however, to our dismay one was missing, and after a thorough search had revealed no trace of it we were reluctantly forced to the conclusion that Faith had so far forgotten herself and her normal maternal virtues as to eat it. This caused us no little surprise, as such an unmotherly act was quite foreign to her nature, and we regarded poor Faith in an altogether new light. Be that as it may, Faith in turn regarded us with her usual steady gaze of perfect innocence, and so we had no alternative but to allow the matter to rest at that.

Imagine our surprise when, on the morning of 8th April, a keeper reported that there was a young cub in the other cage with Patrick, Cordelia, and Coral. It was obviously not a newly-born cub, so the keeper naturally assumed that it must be one of Faith's remaining two, and turned the adult Lions out whilst he rescued the cub to return it to Faith. To everybody's amazement it was discovered that Faith still had her two cubs, therefore this one must be the little mite who had been missing for four days. There was only one solution to the mystery. The cub must have gone on an exploring expedition by itself, squeezed through a small hole by a radiator, and fallen under the floor of the Lion cages. How it had managed to survive four days without food, and then had sufficient strength left to climb back into the adjoining cage, will remain a mystery.

It was most interesting to witness the return of this cub to its mother. It immediately began to cry, which it had not been heard to do previously. Faith at once gathered it to her, and, gently putting the other two behind her, she allowed the little thing to suckle in peace and contentment.

Thus was Faith vindicated and her reputation as a perfect mother re-established.

On the morning of its return, the size of the wanderer naturally compared very unfavourably with that of the other two cubs, but the little truant is now rapidly making up for lost time.

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## DEER STALKING IN CHESHIRE.

Alack and Alas! The Pests Officer has been on our track, as a result of numerous complaints received in that quarter from various harassed gardeners and allotment-holders to the effect that our escaped Deer (two of them) were gorging on the produce of the said H.G. and A.H. and literally eating them out of house and home, to say nothing of ruining their plots ("green" ones—nothing to do with the "Guy Fawkes" kind).

We were therefore reluctantly compelled to sanction the shooting of these Deer, much to our disappointment as we had lived in hopes all along that they would wander back into the fold.

The said shooting duly followed, just prior to Easter, with the result that various people partook of venison as an Easter treat. It was not by any means the end that we would have wished for these Deer or, for the matter of that, for any other of our "dear" animals, but in this case there was nothing else for it as, being such swift-footed and timid creatures they were impossible to catch or to drive back to the Zoo. Several attempts had been made to recapture them without success. Had it been a single Deer wandering by itself, the chances are that it would eventually have returned of its own accord to its companions at the Zoo. But seeing that there were two of them together, they were quite content to wander with no thought of returning.

R.I.P.





Photo. by H. F. Parker, Esq.

#### "CHRISTY."

A recent photograph which shows how she is growing. The camera always fascinates her. She wonders what on earth it is all about.

#### "CHRISTY".

By G. S. Mottershead.

In the March issue of "Our Zoo News" I related how Christy, then gradually becoming more than a handful, was threatening to end up by wrecking our home, and we had decided that she would very soon have to be found accommodation in the Zoo proper.

We thought the matter over and took into consideration the probable tendency she might have to fret if subjected to an immediate and complete change-over from "domestic" life to that of an

ordinary "Zoo" animal, and so we hit on the idea of effecting the change by degrees. In this way, we hope to accustom her gradually to her new life, so that she will hardly notice what is happening.

The first step in this direction was to change her sleeping quarters, and it is now some time since she slept in my bedroom. She was, therefore, accommodated in a curtained-off section of a kitchen, where she was quite comfortable until morning when we invariably found her quietly waiting for us. One morning, however, rising earlier than usual, I was horrified to find the kitchen in a dreadful state of chaos. The table-cloth had been torn to shreds, the

chairs overturned, and the floor powdered with whiten-  
ing, a packet of which had been left in a cupboard.  
Christy, in the midst of all the mess, showed no  
signs of guilt; on the contrary, she had I thought a  
"Queen of all I survey" look in her eye. That was  
the last straw, it was time for the next move in  
the process of change, and Christy must henceforth  
sleep out-of-doors.

We all felt very sad when night-time came and  
our baby of four months was left out-of-doors.  
Many surreptitious visits were made to her quarters  
before we finally went to bed, but Christy settled  
down and now appears to accept her new bedroom  
as a matter of course.

Each morning when my daughter goes to her she  
literally tumbles out of her cage, so eager is she  
to have her freedom once more. For a couple of  
hours or so, she roams about quite freely, and before  
the visitors begin to arrive she will have visited  
almost every corner of the Zoo. By opening time  
we must see to it that she is in her cage; although  
her actions are only play, they are very rough, and  
for her size she is extremely strong.

During the hours that the Zoo is open to the  
public Christy remains in her cage in the Quarantine  
House patiently waiting for the evening when my  
wife will let her out for about two hours.

It is a pleasant sight to watch this young Lion  
following my wife about like a dog. For years it  
has been my wife's custom to go round each night  
with some tit-bit for each of the animals, and they  
patiently wait for her each evening. When she  
appeared with a young Lion cub, it was accepted by  
the other animals as a friend, and now Christy  
approaches each one and appears to talk with it,  
and they finally exchange a good-night kiss. How  
often I wish that the late evening light would allow  
of a photograph being taken of this young Lion  
and a Deer licking each other's faces; some day I  
hope to capture such a picture so that others may  
have the pleasure of seeing what we see every night.

How long will Christy be able to go these walks?  
We cannot tell. Even now she loves to chase the  
rabbits and pea-fowl, just play of course, but one  
day she may chase in earnest and effect a kill,  
which would certainly put an end to these morning  
and evening walks. We are, however, hoping that

before that day arrives the open-air Lion enclosure  
will be completed and then she will be able to  
roam freely always in a large area.

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## News from other Zoos.

### MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

The wonderful summer-like weather enjoyed in the  
South-East during the month of April brought us  
phenomenal "gates" for so early in the season—  
over 28,000 visitors in thirty days (7,500 on Easter  
Monday).

Lions and Tigers in the shade of cherry trees in  
full bloom may be an unusual spectacle but, according  
to visitors, a very pleasing one.

Recent births include a litter of nine half-wild pigs,  
two Mouflon lambs, and a Soay lamb. The White  
Rheas have laid a clutch of eggs and the cock is  
now sitting on them.

Among the new arrivals are an Amherst cock  
Pheasant, a young Yellow Baboon, and a Calatrix  
Monkey.

### WHIPSNADE PARK.

By Captain Beal.

During January five Bear Cubs were born. These  
have grown well and were a great attraction at  
Easter. On 9th February a male baby Chimpanzee  
was born, the first Chimpanzee to be born in the  
Gardens of the Zoological Society of London. He  
is doing well and has cut two teeth.

Other births include—Five Yak Calves three of  
which were born on the same day to three different  
mothers; one North American Bison Calf; two Hog  
Deer; and one Spotted Deer.

The numbers of visitors to the Park during the  
four days of the Easter Holiday were good, some-  
thing like pre-war attendances.

N.B. We think Captain Beal refers to Whipsnade  
in these notes reporting the birth of a male Chim-  
panzee.

Editor.

## Guide to Chester Zoo.

Entering the Zoo at the main gate, visitors are advised to proceed along South Drive. In the past, this roadway was a public highway but was closed about sixty years ago on the construction of the road now known as Oakfield Drive.

Passing along South Drive, we come to the Elephant loading platform from which Molly the Elephant gives rides daily, except Fridays and wet days, during the summer months. Molly is a native of Ceylon, about twenty years of age, and has travelled considerably, having visited most of the European Countries at one time or another. She has, however, been in this Country for the past eight or nine years, and her Mahout has been with her since she was quite a youngster. Elephants, as a rule, live to a great age and continue to grow until they reach the age of about twenty-five years; Molly has grown considerably since she arrived at the Zoo in 1941.

Leaving the Elephant stand and continuing to the left, we notice the Raccoon enclosure, at present unoccupied. On our right we find the Malayan Bear enclosure, in which are at present Sally and Teeny, two female Malayan Bears. Sally has been in this enclosure for about ten years and Teeny (distinguishable by the white marking on her chest) for about eight years. The Malayan Bear is about the smallest of the true Bears and is often referred to as the Sun Bear. Its native home is Borneo and the Malay Peninsula, and it has many peculiar characteristics. Its food in the wilds consists mainly of honey and nectar, which its long tongue is particularly adapted to extract. The fur of the Malayan Bear is much shorter than that of other Bears and is black tending to brown on the face. Its eyes are small, as also are its ears, and very few of these Bears are without the white patch (varying to cream) on the chest, this patch more often than not being shaped like a letter "V". These little Bears have a very peculiar walk, turning their front toes right in, and they are capable of doing considerable damage with their claws. Sally and Teeny used their claws to such good effect in their enclosure that we had last year to have it reconstructed.

Walking clockwise round the Malayan Bear enclosure, we come to several newly reconstructed enclosures in which are domestic goats, etc., and, a

little further on, a yard occupied by Half-Bred Wild Swine. These are bred from a Wild Boar ex a large Black Pig on the one side and a Wild Boar ex a Tamworth Pig on the other side. When born, these Pigs are striped, but the stripes soon disappear.

Turning left at this point, we proceed along Elephant Walk to Central Drive which runs at right angles to the Cafes and main buildings. Facing the Cafe entrance is a Tea Garden and Buffet, where visitors can make their own choice of a meal or light refreshments at reasonable prices. Beyond the Tea Garden, work is proceeding on the open-air Lion enclosure, and every effort is being made to complete this before the August Holidays.

The Aquarium is on the right of the Tea Garden and runs underneath the Cafes. It is hoped to have this exhibit open again to the public early in May.

Passing the Aquarium, we find on our left the old Court-Yard in which have been situate for many years the Lion-House, the Monkey-House, the Elephant-House, the Leopard-House, etc. Many alterations and improvements are in course of being carried out in this area of the Zoo, and the Court-Yard is about to be closed to the public. New accommodation, in more congenial surroundings, will be found for the animals.

The Lion-House contains some exceptionally fine specimens of the King of Beasts, Chester Zoo being renowned for its Lions. Here are usually to be found a family of cubs, nearly seventy having been bred since the commencement of the war.

Molly the Elephant can be seen in the Elephant-House, when she is not out giving rides or taking exercise.

Our stock of Monkeys is just now very low, but plans are in hand to build a new Monkey-House which will be stocked with all varieties including Chimpanzees.

The Court-Yard also contains an Aviary in which are the Griffon Vultures, one of which was hatched and reared in this Aviary (the only recorded instance of a Griffon Vulture being bred and reared in captivity).

We must not leave the Court-Yard without first taking a look at little Christy (the orphan Lioness cub whose mother Cassandra died when she was born last Christmas Day). She is being accommodated temporarily in the Quarantine House, pending completion of the open-air Lion enclosure.

Just outside the Court-Yard, on the left, are the Parrot Aviaries. We have here one or two very amusing specimens including "Cocky" the Slender-Billed Cockatoo, who persistently calls out "Come 'ere" or "Scratch Cocky", but visitors should take care—an unwary hand may receive a nasty bite. Another attractive specimen is "Rob-Rob" the Red and Blue Macaw, who has been at the Zoo since 1931 and is very popular.

Our route now turns left and up Bison Walk, on the left of which are the American Bison. One of these is an exceptionally fine bull "Ferdinand", with a magnificent head and shoulders, the largest American Bison we have ever seen. Some years ago, these animals became almost extinct, although at the beginning of the nineteenth century they ranged the North American Continent in hundreds of thousands.

The enclosure on our right, opposite the American Bison, (in the far corner of which is a well-sheltered pond) contains several varieties of Geese, including the Blue Snow Geese, Egyptian Geese, Chinese Geese, Ashy-Headed Geese, and the Magellan Geese.

Proceeding about a hundred yards or so up Bison Walk, past the roadway leading to the pond, we find on our right a smaller enclosure with a hillock in the centre. Here, with some goats, are the Mouflon (Wild Sheep of Corsica and Sardinia) now almost extinct.

Next, and still on our right, the two new Bear enclosures. In the first is "Trotsky" the Russian Bear with "Paddy" and "Won-Lung" the Himalayan Bears. Trotsky came to Chester Zoo as a small cub and, although he does not object to sharing his home with a lady like Won-Lung, he seems to strongly resent Paddy who was the last arrival in this enclosure. We suspect Trotsky of having grown up with the idea that he owns the Zoo!

Adjoining the Russian and Himalayan Bear enclosure is the Polar Bear enclosure, where Punch and Judy are to be seen enjoying themselves in their swimming-pool, which is one of the largest for Bears in the Country. The water in this pool is constantly changing, the inlet supply being at the

bottom. Punch, who is now about forty years of age, has resided at Chester Zoo for approximately fifteen years, and for many years previously was a member of the group of Bears in the late Bostock & Wombwell's Circus. Judy, who is now about ten years of age, came to Chester Zoo from Skegness in the early days of the War. Despite the great difference in their ages, they are good pals and have lots of fun together in their pool.

On our left, opposite the Polar Bears, is the Fallow Deer enclosure. These lovely creatures are, like all Deer, very timid, and care should be taken to avoid alarming them. They are natives of Northern Africa and Southern Europe, introduced to Central Europe and the British Isles some centuries ago, and now common in some of our large Parks.

Also in this enclosure are the Spanish Spotted Sheep, the Black St. Kilda Sheep, and the Soay Sheep.

Plans are in hand for a large Sea-Lion Pool and a Penguin enclosure, for which we propose to utilise part of the Fallow Deer enclosure adjoining Bison Walk.

The Wooded Dell at the end of Bison Walk is the home of Water Deer and several varieties of birds. Visitors are advised to proceed clockwise round this dell to the Fountain-Garden, where the filtered water from the Bear enclosures cascades in a water-fall and sprays from a fountain on its return journey to the Bears' swimming-pool.

The garden path leads straight on to the pond in the enclosure containing the sheep and geese. Walking clockwise round this pond we arrive at East Avenue on the left of which is the Orchard. Towards the end of East Avenue, on the left, are the Indian Spotted Deer. Turning sharp left and proceeding along a new roadway, on both sides of which are Aviaries containing birds of many varieties, we eventually come out onto the Lawns, where Peacocks, Cranes, Guinea-Fowl, and other birds, have complete freedom.

Now to the Cafe for a cup of tea.

UNIT BREED  
NEED IT