
“Our Zoo News”

(and Guide to Chester Zoo).

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“Christy” at seven weeks, taking breakfast.

Photograph by courtesy of Kemsley Newspapers, Ltd.

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March, 1946.

“Our Zoo News.”

Great crowds of visitors are now arriving daily at the Zoo, and 1946 bids fair to prove a record year in many ways. We are still very much under-staffed and, like many employers today, wonder where all the labour has gone. Perhaps, as the season advances, things will improve in the labour market and we shall be able to overtake the delay in repairs and renewals which has been so aggravated by the war.

All things considered, however, work is progressing satisfactorily on many of the projects undertaken to brighten the Zoo for the coming season.

Provided nothing unforeseen happens, the Aquarium should be open early in May, and we are sure that the new arrangement of separate Entrance and Exit will be appreciated by the public. At any rate, it is hoped that even on busy days a visit to the Aquarium will now be a pleasure to all who are interested in aquatic life.

The job of demolishing the old Polar Bear den is at last finished. What a job!! We wish those pessimists who predicted, when it was being erected fourteen years ago, that it would not stand could have witnessed the job of pulling it down or, better still, have given a hand with it. However, a new road now runs over the site and, when completed, this will be a very interesting area of the Zoo. If possible, we intend to erect the very fine pair of Blue Whale Jaw-Bones on that part of the terrace which ran over the dens, where they will be protected from vandalism and, at the same time, be in a good position to be seen by the public.

The new range of Aviaries is now completed and contains some very attractive Pheasants and Parakeets. We are hoping that most of these birds will breed this year and thus help us to build up our very depleted stock.

The enclosures in the South-West corner of the Zoo are being renovated and, with one or two slight alterations, will provide an exercise yard for the Swine.

There seems to be very little hope of obtaining Raccoons for some time to come, and we are therefore endeavouring to find some animal to occupy the Raccoon enclosure pending the arrival of these interesting animals from North America.

The Rookery at the Zoo is larger this spring than ever, and the activity of these birds is not only interesting but very heartening. It seems, somehow, to bring the Zoo suddenly to life again after the depressing winter.

The Rooks do make a sorry mess of the main drive near the main entrance, by littering it with twigs which fall to the ground as they build their nests, but we like to see and hear them and to rejoice with them at the coming of spring once more.

The Griffon Vultures have built a nest, and we have observed them mating, but unfortunately no egg has been laid and we are afraid, therefore, that the hen bird must be getting too old. It is nearly twenty years since this Vulture came under the writer's care and, as far as is known, she may have been a good age then, she certainly was not a young bird.

A lamb has been born to the pair of St. Kilda Sheep, a bonny little black youngster, full of life, and very interested in the world around it.

Two lambs have also been born to one of the Spanish Sheep, and these delightful little creatures are black and white.

We hope that, by the time these notes appear in print, we shall have been able to move all the anti-tank road blocks from the Car Park, where they have lain since they were collected from the roads just over a year ago.

As necessitated by the original purpose for which these road blocks were intended, they are extremely unwieldy objects to move about, each weighing approximately 14 cwts., so it looks as though this is going to be another stupendous job.

Practically all of these remaining blocks are required for the open-air Lion enclosure, and an effort will therefore be made to deposit them as near to their permanent position as possible.

Although a considerable amount of material is waiting on the site for the open-air Lion enclosure, very little can be done on it until more labour becomes available. Six good labourers could, in about a month's time, make this long-talked-of enclosure a reality, and we are hoping daily that they will turn up. In the meantime, we are sorely pressed for accommodation for all our Lions, and something will certainly have to be done about it before we can receive "Rory" from Dublin.

On 24th March our Lioness "Faith" gave birth to four cubs (two males and two females). Patrick is the father of these cubs and was with Faith when they were born, as also were Cordelia and Coral. It was a very pleasing sight on the Sunday morning to witness this happy family all together. Three of the cubs were with Faith, but the fourth was trying to draw milk from Cordelia, who seemed quite willing to let the little thing try. However, we did not wish to lose a cub by starvation, so thought it advisable to remove the other Lionesses. Unfortunately, however, one of the males died during the first night. The other three are doing well and will help build up our stock from which we sold very heavily last year and, with the loss of Cassandra at Christmas, drew very near the danger line for breeding.

On 29th March, yet another Lion cub arrived. This time to "Coral", Faith's daughter, but after the first twelve hours she would have nothing to do with it. We therefore took it indoors and tried to get it on the bottle, but the little mite died later in the day. There had been an accident in the Lion-House a couple of days previously, which seemed to have very much upset the Lions as a whole and may have had something to do with Coral's behaviour.

"CHRISTY".

By G. S. Mottershead.

Following-up my introduction to Christy in last month's News, I shall now tell you a little about her life and doings in our household. I have already told how, at the age of seven weeks, she weighed 12½ lbs. and was so full of life that she was always getting into mischief.

Well, Christy continues to make very rapid progress. At eleven weeks she turned the scales at 19½ lbs., and is now beginning to throw her weight about.

Although very affectionate, she can be exceedingly rough, and shows definite signs of her mother's temper. But it is when hungry that she gets really rough and, to remind you that it is food she is after, she is not above trying to take a piece out of your anatomy, neither is she in the least particular from which part of you she selects her "piece". One morning, a week or so ago, having been refreshed by her first bottle, she was playing about the room and working up her appetite for her next drink (she has two bottles of milk first thing each morning). I was bending forward lacing my shoes when she suddenly took a flying leap at my bald head and attempted to take a bite. My skull, however, being hard did not yield to her young jaws, but she left me with a nasty scratch on my bald patch.

Once she has satisfied her hunger, she will settle down to rest for a while, and likes nothing better than to lie in my wife's arms, just like a human child, and go to sleep. When she awakes from her nap, she again wants to play; then the fun starts. If it is evening and we are sitting by the fire, she will try us each in turn to see which of us will play. If she cannot succeed in getting anybody interested, she has another card up her sleeve (so to speak)—an attack on the furniture. Needless to say, and as she well knows, that usually has the effect of arousing us all; at eleven weeks she can make a sorry mess of upholstery. So, in order to protect our home, we must play with her until she is tired out and hungry, then she begins to attack in earnest. For our own sakes, we feed her again, after which my wife tells her it is bedtime, shows her the blanket (which sometimes she will carry herself), and she trots off to my bedroom to sleep for the night; as I have said before, she is an ideal baby and does not disturb me at all during the night.

As the weather in early March improved, Christy began to go out a bit, and now follows my wife and daughter about just like a little dog. She has already been introduced to her father, her grandmother, and aunts, through the bars of course, but she was very nervous, not seeing the resemblance between those big creatures and herself. She has also met Peter the dog, and they showed signs of being a little interested in each other, but Christy is too young as yet to be allowed to venture in to Peter who is used to "managing" a full-grown Lion.

Today has been a chapter of incidents which seem to indicate that Christy will not be able to live in our house much longer. This morning, I caught her having a "ripping" time with my best overcoat. Later



"Christy" posed for this photograph when she was seven weeks of age and weighed 12½ lbs. Now, at the age of four months, she weighs well over 30 lbs.

Photograph by Courtesy of Kemsley Newspapers, Ltd.

in the day, she went out with my wife, saw some rabbits and thought she would like one. She strongly resented not being allowed to "go for" them, and when my wife bent down to pull her away Christy sprang at her and savagely bit her on the face. She was of course chastised, brought into the house, and told to behave herself. After a little while, she appeared covered with feathers and down, a sure sign that she had been in mischief again. We soon discovered the scene of the outrage. My daughter had forgotten to close her bedroom door, so the young Lioness had been in and made a good try at dissecting her bed.

Yes, I'm afraid our furniture has suffered badly as a result of providing a home for this daughter

of the King of Beasts, and although now only three months old and weighing 23-lbs. Christy will have to be found accommodation in the Zoo proper, and soon. Despite all her faults, we love her very much, and she loves us too, but in these difficult times we cannot afford to allow our clothes and furniture to be torn to shreds. Her mother's temper keeps coming to the surface and so we shall not be able to allow her the extended liberty we should have liked, in view of the risk that she might attack some unsuspecting person.

However, Christy shows every sign of developing into a first-class Lioness and, although we wish her to become a breeding animal, we hope that we shall keep her friendship throughout her lifetime.

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.

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

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.

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.

News from other Zoos.

THE ROYAL ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND. DUBLIN ZOO.

The "News from other Zoos" in our last issue contained an announcement by Mr. C. L. Flood of the birth, for the second time at Dublin Zoo, of Himalayan Bear cubs. Unfortunately, due to an error in the printing, the heading "Dublin Zoo" was omitted. We are very sorry about this, as Mr. Flood is justly proud of his baby bears and is to be highly congratulated on his achievements in this respect. It is understood that Dublin is the only Zoo in Europe to be successful in the breeding of Himalayan Bears.

MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

The re-opening for the thirteenth consecutive season took place on Sunday, 24th March. Mr. Claude Hulbert, accompanied by his wife (Miss Enid Trevor), performed the ceremony before a crowd of over 1500 people. Earlier, Miss Enid Trevor had christened the new Zoo Railway engine "Enid" by smashing a bottle of Kentish Sparkling Cyder over it, and the whole party then took a ride behind it!

Miss Jacqueline Hulbert officially opened the Children's Zoo, and was presented by the head girl-keeper in charge with a decorated basket of bantam eggs.

New arrivals include two Dingo puppies (born in the Zoo), a Calatrix Monkey, and Fish for the Aquarium. An interesting event may take place in a few days' time; the hen Eagle Owl is sitting assiduously on two eggs, the first she has laid although she has been in the Zoo for several years.

THE EUROPEAN BISON.

By Graham Renshaw, M.D., F.R.S.E.

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University of Manchester.

The European Bison (*Bos Bonassus*)—wisent of the Germans—zubr of the Russians—stands about six feet high at the shoulder and measures about ten feet from the tip of the muzzle to the root of the tail. Humped on the withers and semi-maned on the shoulders, neck and chest, it differs from the American species in its larger horns, longer legs and tail, and more powerful hind quarters. It is black-brown on the head, dark brown on neck and shoulders, and paler brown on the rest of the body. About May, this great beast presents a ragged, untidy, appearance, the long winter robe being almost shed; stray wisps of wool scattered over the hide reveal the smooth mouse-coloured coat beneath.

Once widely distributed throughout Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and Poland, the Bison as a truly wild animal now survives only in the Caucasus and Lithuania. It appears always to have associated in small bands rather than in herds; this would consort better with its woodland habitat, whereas the vast prairies once covered by its American cousin gave ample scope for the massing together of thousands. In summer, this species frequents swampy thickets, where it can bathe and wallow; in winter it inhabits dense pine-woods, climbing readily about the mountain-sides. The curious zubr grass grows in the Caucasus forests and imparts a scent—half musk, half violet—to the Bison which feed on it. This aromatic odour reminds one of the perfume

exhaled by many Antelopes, such as Eland and Blesbok.

The European Bison was first noticed by Julius Caesar, who mentions it in his account of the fauna of the Black Forest; "in size they are little less than Elephants" he says, so that the magnificent beasts must have impressed the Romans. Aristotle also mentions the "Bonassus" which inhabited the mountains of Paeonia and Media; it was as large as an Ox, with a reddish-gray mane on neck and shoulders. The old Polish kings and nobles hunted the Bison, taking the woods with thousands of beaters; in 1752 Augustus III killed no less than sixty. The last Bison in Prussia was killed by two poachers in 1755.

From its fine appearance and status as a genuine big game animal, the European Bison has always been a desirable exhibit for Museums and Zoological Gardens. The first examples received at the London Zoo were a young pair presented by the Czar Nicholas I through Sir R. I. Murchison in 1847; it is probable that the animal presented to George IV was sent direct to Windsor. A calf which had been born in Amsterdam on 14th July 1866 was later purchased for the Regents Park collection. In 1900

the writer saw at Antwerp a fine bull which, received as a mere youngster, had attained twenty-three years in captivity. On 15th April 1904 the first specimens seen in America reached the New York Zoological Park.

A curious method of preserving at least some strain of Bison blood has been adopted, working with the American species. The "Buffalo" breeds with domestic cattle, intermixing so freely that many of these hybrids can hardly be distinguished from pure Bison. Although these creatures are neither one thing nor the other, by this introduction of fresh blood it would doubtless be possible to preserve indefinitely a feral race of bovines bearing at least some outward resemblance to the monarch of the prairies. The supposed antagonism of the European Bison has been proved false by Count Walicki, who crossed his Bonassus with Swiss Cows; whilst the pair of calves received in London in 1847 took readily to the foster mothers provided for them. It might, therefore, be possible to establish a race of half-bred or three-quarter bred Bonassus, though this plan would be far inferior to the strict protection of the pure-bred wild forest animal.



EUROPEAN BISON.

Twenty-three years old.

Photograph by Graham Renshaw, M.D., F.R.S.E.