
“Our Zoo News”

and Guide.

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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NEWS FLASHES.

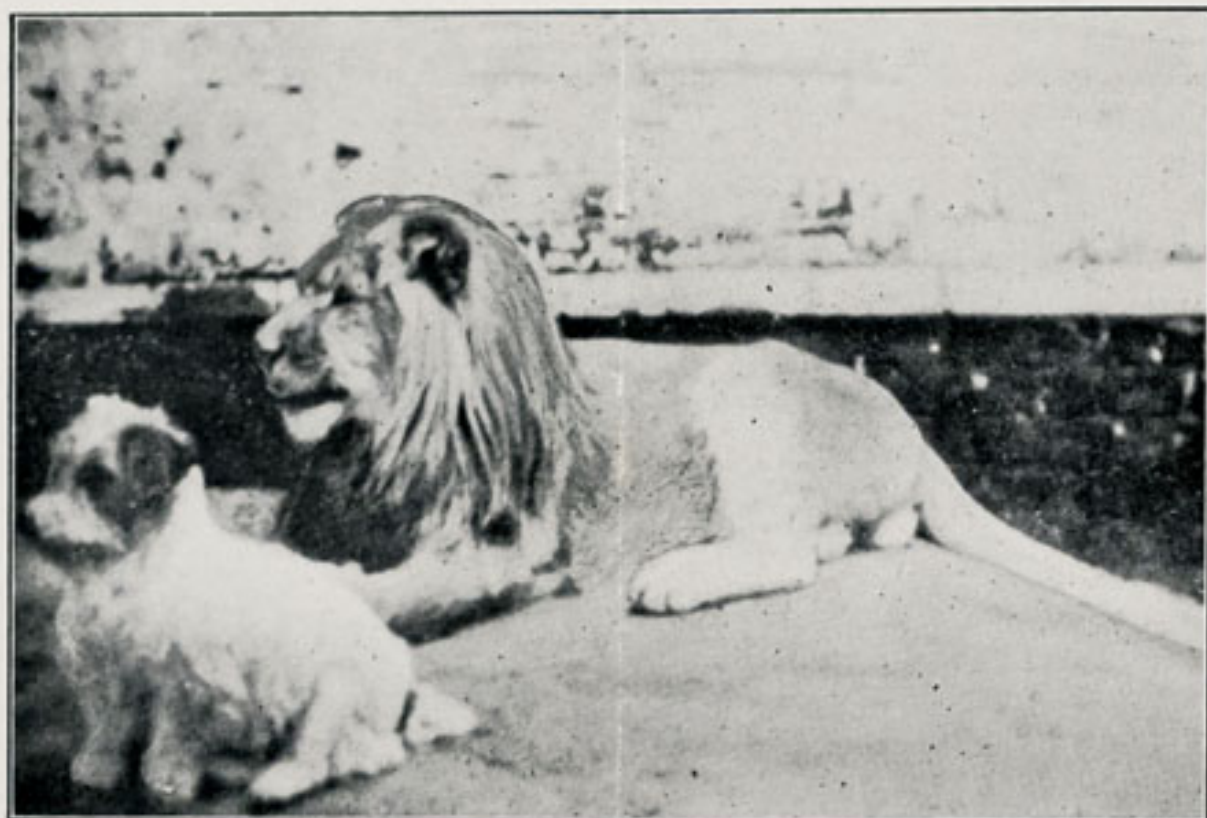
Latest arrivals at the Zoo include two lions which we have christened Ajax and Achilles. Ajax is between seven and eight years of age and Achilles is between three and four years. Introducing these two lions to the lionesses was most interesting as we did not know how the lionesses would welcome the newcomers. Much to our surprise they received quite an enthusiastic welcome, and it was most amusing to watch the feminine wiles displayed by the lionesses to attract the attention of the handsome males. The most exciting moments, however, were when we introduced Rory to the new lions. As most of you will know, Rory has been supreme ruler of the lion enclosure ever since it was opened, and we felt sure that he would not appreciate opposition in the form of two more males. Fortunately he did not have much opportunity to voice his disapproval as the lionesses, without exception, deserted him for the newcomers, and as with so many of the feminine sex it was a case of “off with the old and on with the new”. Rory now appears to have accepted the fact that he has to play “second fiddle”, and apart from a few occasional growls, they all mix together very well.

Another new arrival is a Campbell's Guenon Monkey. This is at present living with the Red-eared and Putty-nosed Guenons.

A Chameleon is the newest inmate of the Reptile House, and is proving a great attraction. This reptile changes colour to harmonise with its surroundings, and has already been seen whilst bright green, blue, brown and grey. It is very interesting to watch this reptile feed. Its diet consists of flies and it is most fascinating to watch it roll its eyes around until it sees its victim, then very slowly but surely, it makes its way to within reach of the unfortunate fly, projects its extremely long tongue and consumes its victim with much relish.

Another lion enclosure is in the course of construction. This is to house our two lion cubs and we hope, Christy, their mother, who has not been seen during the last few months as she would not mix with the other lions. We have just introduced Christy to her small daughters, and are pleased to say that she welcomed them more than she did just after they were born. She seems quite pleased to be able to play with the cubs, and they seem as pleased to be with her.

Christy incidentally features in a recent film production by the J. Arthur Rank Organisation—“This Modern Age”, Issue No. 22, under the title “Women in Our Time”. A shot taken at the Zoo shows Miss June Mottershead with Christy.



PETER.

It is with deep regret that we have to inform readers of the death of Peter, the sealyham terrier, who became famous through his association with Mowgli, the lion. Peter lived with Mowgli for four years, and it was the greatest friendship between animals which the Zoo has ever known.

When Peter was about six months old, Mowgli came to the Zoo with a brother and sister. The sister left immediately to become a regimental mascot, and unfortunately the brother died. Mowgli missed his brother and fretted very badly, until one day Peter came along and was very insistent on making friends. After a short while Peter persuaded Mowgli to play with him, and at night when it was time for Peter to go to his own quarters, Mowgli cried piteously and Peter was so taken up with his new friend that he could not be persuaded to leave him, and so commenced their life together.

Mowgli allowed Peter to take liberties with him which even another lion would not have dared to take, and it was most amusing to watch Peter try to roar like Mowgli. Mowgli and Peter have appeared in a film, and have been the subject of a radio talk and front-page news of most newspapers, and we have many photographs of them together which revive happy memories.

There is no doubt that Peter missed Mowgli very much, and although he was always very friendly with everyone and always gave a wag of his tail to anyone who stopped to pat him, he never attached himself to any person or any other animal as he did

to Mowgli, and when he was taken ill and there was no chance of his recovery, we did the only thing possible and put him out of his misery.

THE STRANGERS.

Next time you go to see the Zebras, you will notice in the Zebra Enclosure, two newcomers. Who are they? What are they? To look at they resemble a cross between the Fallow Deer who reside in the adjoining enclosure and an overgrown calf. At least, that is how I would describe them at the moment, but we are all entitled to our own imagination and you may have an entirely different view; however, they won't look like that for long as they are growing rapidly and soon there will be no doubt as to what they are. The strange pair are young Wapiti (an American Indian name), members of the North American Deer family, sometimes known as Elk, and second in size to the Giant Moose, so of course we, and our young visitors who already know the history of the pair, are watching the youngsters' growth with the greatest of interest.

The babies, for babies they are, even though they already tower over all the rest of the Deer family at Chester Zoo, arrived last February with a large consignment of animals from Canada. They were not much larger than our Fallow Deer then, and were quartered for a while in a large loose box in the old stables. They were very timid creatures, but soon showed their keeper that they could be

otherwise, for when he ventured into their box they had a nasty habit of kicking out; fortunately they soon became used to each other. When the warm weather came in the early Spring, the Wapiti were placed in a new grassy enclosure with our small herd of Fallow Deer, and they made friends almost at once and settled down quite contentedly. As the Summer came on the young stag used to watch Bambi, our pet Fallow Deer, who by the way has grown into a fine young stag, leave the herd and come over to receive tit-bits and caresses from his many young friends who come regularly to see him. Soon the young Wapiti was doing the same thing, but the hind looked on shyly and refused to be tempted. Towards the end of August the stags in the Fallow Deer herd began to look haughtily at one another and at visitors too, their coats glistening like satin under the sunshine. At this time of the year they lose the soft velvet covering on their noble antlers and begin to toss their proud arrogant heads and watch the hinds jealously. It was thought wiser to move the Elk from the Fallow Deer enclosure in case of trouble, for the stag had grown his very first pair of antlers, and although still very docile, knowing the massive strength of a full grown male Wapiti during the "rutting" season, it was thought best not to risk trouble.

The Zebra Enclosure, as you will see from the Zoo Guide on the back page of this magazine, is adjacent to the Fallow Deer Paddock, and as there seemed plenty of good grass there, the Wapiti were allowed through. They looked around taking in their new quarters and new companions. The mischievous young Zebras were quite taken aback at first with the queer intruders, but on finding that there would be no trouble if they did not start any, decided to be friendly, and they now even share the same stable. Of course now and again the Zebras try to take a rise out of the young female Wapiti, knowing that she has no dangerous antlers, but she usually has the last laugh, and it is quite a common thing for her to chase the culprit two or three times round the enclosure, after which he usually behaves himself. The Zebras look on in amazement, astonishment written all over their prettily striped faces, as the Male Wapiti, who has not forgotten his young human friends trots up to the wire fence to receive tit-bits, but the Zebras like the hind have decided that the human race is alright at a distance, and carefully avoid the fence of the enclosure during visiting hours.

The young stag's dearest friend is his young keeper, and he stands and waits for him every morning at the enclosure gate, and greets him affectionately before settling down to his breakfast.

What will this young stag be like in five years' time? That remains to be seen. In colour the Wapiti is a fawn yellowish brown, with dark brown legs, and dark toning lines on the face, the flanks and tail being a very light fawn, and the lighter colour forming a distinct diamond pattern. The hair on the neck is thick like an Elizabethan ruff, and is much longer than the rest of the coat; during the "rutting" season the neck gets rather swollen and bull-like, and the animal becomes dangerous. The stag does not attain his full, massive strength or stature until he is about five years of age when he stands about five feet six inches; his huge antlers then bear five prongs, but after his fifth birthday they increase irregularly and are no guide to his age. Some of the finest specimens have twelve to fourteen points on their antlers. The Wapiti in their prime are one of the most statuesque of the Deer family and are very rightly known as King of the Forest.

The Wapiti, like the Red Indians, once roamed the vast plains and forests of North America from Virginia to Oregon, and Mexico to Manitoba, until hunted by the Indians and driven back by the white civilization, it is now only found at the foot of the vast mountain ranges of Colorado and Manitoba, and in well preserved parks and game reserves, but whereas the herds were once thousands strong, there are not often more than a hundred or so together to-day.

The largest herds of Wapiti now to be found are in the National Yellowstone Park in the State of Colorado, U.S.A. They feed on grass, leaves, twigs and shrubs, and in the Winter use their antlers to scrape away the snow from their pastures. In this park they live in natural surroundings, and although they become quite tame during the Autumn, as the velvet leaves their antlers the stags become aggressive and very fierce, and can be heard bellowing out their challenges to rivals in a roar like a lion, and the fierce whistle and clash of antlers as they battle for possession of the hinds is a signal for inquisitive visitors to keep away. As is the custom with members of the Deer family, the victor keeps the hinds and will protect them fiercely. The female

will also fight gamely to protect her fawn, and if her cry for help is heard by other members of the herd, they will all arrive and quickly take a part in the battle.

That is what happens in Nature, but how do they behave in captivity. During the mating season the stags who most of the year are quite docile and friendly, suddenly undergo a change of temperament,

and greet their visitors with a shower of stones, mud, grass, or whatever happens to be in their enclosure, using their antlers as a rake and catapult, if anyone is foolish enough to get too near. Will our young friend undergo this change of temper once a year as he gets older? We shall have to wait and see, but at the moment he is quite friendly and is as gentle as our own Bambi.

J. Moffatt.



ZOO PERSONALITIES.

Each month we propose to tell you about one or two of our Zoo personalities, and we are commencing with Sally, the Malayan Bear, as she has been here longer than any other animal. Sally came to the Zoo in 1934; previously she had been a gentleman's pet, but as she was invariably getting into mischief which reached a climax when she got into

her owner's bed and removed the top from his hot water bottle, it was decided that she must be sent to a Zoo. Sally is now about eighteen years old and she lives in an enclosure with Teeny, another Malayan Bear who was presented to us in 1939 by the late Sir Delves Broughton. Sally is about five years older than Teeny, and quite often she is found trying to assert the authority to which she thinks she is entitled in view of her advanced years.

Malayan Bears are often called Sun Bears and come from the Malay Peninsular, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and North East India. They rarely grow more than four feet in height. Their bodies are covered with short black hair, and they usually have a white "V" shaped mark on the chest. Their heads are rounded with small ears and beady eyes, and they have very long tongues. The skin on the body is very loose and allows complete freedom of movement when fighting, which is certainly as well in the case of Sally and Teeny who do not always agree, and many a time visitors will see them having a terrific tussle and making the most dreadful noises. Fortunately their "bark" is worse than their bite, and although one bear may seem to be giving the other a very nasty bite, there is so much elasticity in the skin, that it is very seldom that the skin is badly broken. It is very amusing to watch Malayan Bears walk, as they turn their toes in at a most exaggerated angle.

Both Sally and Teeny always appear very friendly with visitors, but like every other bear, can never be trusted, and under no circumstances should visitors attempt to touch them. They will sit up and beg for tit-bits, and will climb and do acrobatic tricks, keeping everyone entertained. Visitors will notice that in the centre of the Malayan Bear enclosure is a dead oak tree. Originally this tree was very beautiful, but the bears completely stripped the bark within six weeks of living in their enclosure—a warning to everyone of the damage they can do with their claws and teeth.

BADGERS.

Anyone who visited Chester Zoo in the early days of the Summer this year, will recall two baby badgers. These delightful little creatures were for a

while in a large outdoor cage near the foxes by the new Monkey House. When they arrived they were just two little balls of silver fluff, with one ambition in life, their bottle of milk. They soon became very tame and friendly, and though they have long since passed the bottle stage, are still very affectionate, and always enjoy seeing their keeper who generally makes time to have a little game with them. They are now to be seen in a little den of their own near the jaws of the Blue Whale. You can't miss them for their sweet little faces, and the shrill little grunts with which they greet visitors, attracts young and old alike.

Everyone knows that Badgers are to be found throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, but how many people have ever seen them? Like most wild life they are now somewhat scarce, but although most boys and girls can claim to have seen a fox, hare, otter, squirrel, rabbit and other small creatures in their natural surroundings, very few can claim to have seen the badger at home.

To most people the Badger remains just a name associated with coloured plates in Nature Books or the friendly little wise character in Kenneth Grahame's "Wind in the Willows", who was for ever getting the famous Toad out of trouble. Of course we are not to blame for this, because they are by nature very shy, timid creatures, but nevertheless the little Badger is one of the most interesting animals, and famous writers have written much about them. By many celebrated naturalists the Badger is depicted as "the oldest known species of mammal now living on the earth". As the Badger is found in almost every county in Great Britain, almost every dialect has a name for it, and many of our villages and towns have been called after it, such as Brockhurst, Badget, Grey, and some well known family names like Grey (Cornish), Brock (Welsh) and Brooke come from the name Badger. Some of the old nobility had a

badger on the family crest, and even to-day many of the big landlords true to their family tradition still protect the animal on their large estates.

To look at, the Badger is rather like a little bear; the coat is of thick silver grey hair, the throat and tiny legs are inky black, and the face and cheeks are white with a broad jet black band passing across the eyes and ears. As the animal ages the silver coat becomes tinged with yellow. One of the most remarkable features about the Badger is the wedge-shaped head and strong jaw, and wicked set of teeth. If and when the Badger bites, he has a grip like a cast iron vice, and many strange tales are told of what those teeth can do, and so of course the "old man" with his spiteful ways was not very popular. Many old Welsh and Scottish Fables, and old English Poets too, depict the Badger as having shorter legs on one side than the other; the saying "as uneven as a Badger" was quite a common phrase once. Badgers have tiny strong legs and bear-like feet, with very long sharp claws, and they walk with a peculiar "rolling gait". If you watch our young badgers at play you will see what I mean, but in actual fact they have not got shorter legs on one side, and are very active being able to run as swiftly as any hare.

Why is it then that we so seldom get a chance to see this interesting little animal? Well, one of the reasons is that its favourite haunts are deep woodlands, or thick copses on the hillsides where it uses its claws to burrow deep into the earth like a rabbit, but unlike the rabbit family who congregate in large numbers, the Badgers are only found in pairs. A family of young ones are known as a "set" of Badgers. Badgers sleep most of the day and only come out to seek their food early in the evening, usually as the sun goes down, and scurry back to their burrows at the slightest sound. Mother Badger takes the greatest care of her family, and does not

allow them to go off and play like other forest mothers, and any attempt to get away from mother's apron strings on the part of a youngster is so strongly objected to by Mother, who cuffs her young one soundly, that he does not attempt it a second time.

They are exceedingly intelligent, plucky creatures, and do not become a nuisance to man as do their forest friends, rabbits, foxes, weasels, etc. They do not have to raid farmyards and crops for their diet is made up of young rabbit, insects, grubs and roots, and though they live side by side with the stag, grouse, hare, etc., the little badger who always strictly minds his own business and never stirs far from his home, manages to escape most of the traps and snares that so often become the fate of his more venturesome, inquisitive companions.

Once upon a time in this country, Badger hunting was a popular sport; terriers were used for this purpose and according to writers of the time, many a good dog has gone to ground and failed to return, having fallen victim to the Badger's strong teeth, and it was and still is, an unheard of thing for a terrier to ever manage to master the Badger without the help of his master. To-day, however, this sport is seldom practised and so the animal lives in comparative peace as it has few enemies amongst the forest animals.

Badgers caught young make clever and amusing pets, for they are easily tamed and will readily eat anything offered, and relish bread and milk, young rabbits, and left-overs from dinner. Sometimes they take only to the family to whom they belong and refuse to have anything to do with anyone else. This, however, is not the case with our youngsters, who seem to enjoy life at the Zoo. They run to greet visitors with excited grunts and squeaks, dashing round their pen in circles, and then standing on their

quaint little black hind-legs, they grip the bars of the cage with their sharp claws to steady themselves, and beg for a tasty bit of fruit, cake, biscuit, or whatever is going. They are great favourites with the children.

The other day I heard a little girl of about six say to her mother on the bus "Mummy, I liked the baby Pandas best". Her mother said "Pandas, dear, where were they?" "You know, Mummy, by the big bones". Her mother laughingly explained that they were Badgers, not Pandas. The little girl's passing shot was "Well, even if they weren't Pandas they were the nicest things there. When can we go again?"

I began to think, well, for six years of age she

had without knowing it struck up quite a comparison. The Panda is black and white, and very much larger than the little Badger, but he, too, is bear-like, intelligent and amusing, and in his native land of China is very shy and therefore rarely seen by the inhabitants.

J. Moffatt.

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Zoological Gardens, Upton-by-Chester.



Map of The Zoological Gardens, Chester

