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"Our Zoo News"

AND GUIDE MAP

• A CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF •
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

NUMBER 124.

JUNE, 1956.



Two Lion Cubs which were born this spring in the Chester Zoo Lion Enclosure.

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The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 20106/7.

Our Zoo News.

EDITORIAL.

It is now many months since we published our last Zoo News. As always, we find it extremely difficult to find the time to sit down and write all the 101 happenings which take place daily in the Zoological Gardens.

We have now come, we hope, to the end of what has been a very cold winter, but it could have been much worse, and we are grateful that we have passed through with very few losses only.

Perhaps the most outstanding loss as far as the public is concerned is that of Rob-Rob, the blue-and-red macaw, who was presented to the Zoo almost 25 years ago. In those days, when he arrived we thought he was an old specimen, and his only vocabulary was, when asked his name, "Rob-Rob", and later he would say "poor Rob-Rob", and this has remained so ever since.

Rob-Rob was very popular indeed on account of his gaudy and well-groomed appearance; but in 1948 Rob-Rob received a mate in the form of a Red-and-yellow macaw which had been in the writer's possession even before Rob-Rob came to Chester Zoo. We placed them together, and it happened that though of different species, they were of different sexes. Towards the end of the year, Mrs. Rob-Rob, as the female came to be called, laid two eggs not in a nest, but simply on the floor, and there she guarded them with all the tenacity which can be shown by a bird for its nesting site. She had, of course, to move about the cage all the time because of cleaning operations and so forth, and each time she would take the eggs with her and sit on them. Not for a moment did anyone imagine there would be any possible chance of them being fertile,

let alone hatching, but in due course one of the eggs hatched and a youngster emerged into the world, only to be foully done to death by one or the other of the parents.

The remaining egg aroused much interest, she still persisted in sitting on it, and eventually this egg too produced a chick. This time, things were slightly different for the mother diligently fed and mothered it until it grew quite large. Unfortunately, later on in the year when it had become cold and wet, the youngster eventually perished from exposure to an English winter. However, Rob-Rob and Mrs. Rob-Rob lived on, and were eventually transferred to the new Parrot House, and there, despite all efforts to persuade them to nest properly, they never did so.

Rob-Rob was always one of the most docile and mildest birds it was possible to meet, and he took a very reverent outlook on everybody who visited him, but his wife was rather different—she looked for every opportunity to give visitors a nip when they tried to stroke or feed her, so much so that a double mesh of wire had to be placed between her and the public. But there was one strange anomaly which seemed to worry this animal. After you had been making a fuss of Rob-Rob and decided to leave, you would invariably hear a call from the far end of the Parrot House, Mrs. Rob-Rob saying "Good-bye" in a tone as much as to say "Good Riddance".

The death of Rob-Rob is not the only happening which has overtaken the birds at the Zoo during the winter. The fox has become much bolder since the almost complete disappearance of the rabbit from the countryside, and we are sad to report we have lost one of the King penguins, two black-footed penguins, and various water-fowl during the early part of this year. The attacks seemed to be made

CONTINUED AFTER PLAN OF THE ZOO.



The Lesser Panda which was born in 1955, and it is now an adult specimen
in the Panda Enclosure.

CHESTER ZOO

KEY PLAN



NOT TO SCALE.

This plan is correct at the time of going to print but new exhibits and other circumstances make it impossible to guarantee the exact positioning of each exhibit.

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1—Main Entrance | 13—Toilets | 28—Polar Bears | 39—Beavers | 50—Chimpanzee House
(Tropical House under
construction) | 68—Kiosk—Sweets and Cigarettes | 70—Raven |
| 2—Car Park | 14—Lion Enclosure | 29—Pond | 40—Coypus | 51—Gibbons | 69—Sea Lions | 71—Bat Eared Foxes |
| 3—Private Lodge | 15—Hyaena | 30—Pond | 41—Lake | 52—Kangaroos—Emus | 70—Raccoons—Otters—Badgers | 72—Birds of Prey |
| 5—Malayan Bears | 16—Ferrets | 31—Penguins | 42—Lake | 53—Wallabies—Soay Sheep | 61—Himalayan Bears | 73 and 74—Aviaries |
| 6—Huskies | 17—Quarantine Enclosure | 32—Parrot House | 43—Cattle Paddocks | 54—North Snack Bar | 62—Pond | 75—Pandas |
| 7—Coyotes | 18/22—Quarantine Cages | 33—Rose Garden | 44—Giraffe House | 55—Aquarium | 63—Porcupines | 76—Cranes |
| 8—Donkey Rides | 23—Monkeys | 34—Motor Boat Booking | 45—Camels—Llamas—Ostriches | 56—North Entrance and Exit
Coach and Bus Stands | 64—Zoo Shop | 77—Wapiti Paddock |
| 9—Cheetah Enclosure | 24—Indian Elephant House | 35—Lake | 46—African Elephant House | 57—Reptile House | 65—Cafeteria | 78—Main Exit |
| 10—Big Buffet | 25—Tiger Enclosure | 36—Bridge Cafe | 47—Zebras—Antelopes | | 66—First Aid—Toilets | |
| 11—Little Buffet | 26—Pond | 37—Deer Paddock | 48—Rose Garden | | 67—Coronation Hall | |
| 12—Restaurant and Offices | 27—Breeding Aviaries | 38—Vultures—Eagles | 49—Pond | | 69—Axis Deer | |

EDITORIAL—continued,

so regularly we did not know how to combat them. The Penguins we had to pen in every night, and the waterfowl, which are at complete liberty of course, were at the complete mercy of this animal. Numerous oil lamps were placed in various parts of the enclosures and around the deer paddocks in the hope that it would scare Reynard away. So far, we are pleased to say these efforts have more-or-less been successful, but it is now getting more difficult to protect specimens in the Zoo grounds.

Owing to the large area the Zoo now covers, and the freedom which we have now given to the water-fowl, one or two interesting things have happened.

In one instance we had, during last Summer, received a pair of spur-winged geese. We already had a male, a well-known character in the district, who had been missing for some time. It was recaptured a mile away from the Zoo last year, when one of our sea-lions made a visit to a pond some distance away. The two new spur-winged were given their liberty and settled down well, but later in the year they seemed to vanish, and we did not see them for a long time. However, we were most pleased to notice the other day a pair of spur-winged geese back on the lake together with one or two pairs of Egyptian geese.

The Egyptian geese now appear to have become an established breed in the district. We have had them at the Zoo for many years where they have bred continuously. It is quite difficult to find more than one or two about the Zoo ground, and then, all of a sudden, you will come face to face with several pairs. There is not the slightest doubt they have bred quite well, and we understand that quite a number have made their home in Frodsham Marshes, and it is, no doubt, several of these birds who return occasionally to their original home in Chester Zoo.

Another point of interest in the Zoo is a Griffon vulture. This bird was owned by the writer in the 1920's, and was an adult bird when received. It arrived at Chester Zoo in 1932, and in February of each year it built and made a nest, laying always one egg. This bird always sat on the egg, but nothing ever happened until 1941, when, with its mate, it succeeded in hatching a young one. Unfortunately the youngster was destroyed in a very severe thunderstorm. However, the fol-

lowing year they again succeeded in hatching out another chick, and this they successfully reared, and it was, as far as we are aware, the first Griffon Vulture to be bred up to that time in captivity. This youngster is a very fine specimen, and is still in the Zoo to-day.

Readers will be pleased to know that we have at last been able to transfer our chimpanzees to their new quarters. In some respect, work is not yet complete, because it is eventually to be part and parcel of the large Tropical House which we propose to build, and which will accommodate an endless variety of specimens from the tropical climes which thrive only under tropical conditions.

Unfortunately, owing to the financial squeeze, the completion of this large tropical house is temporarily held up, but the chimpanzees enclosure which, correctly speaking, is the Anthropoid section, will be more-or-less completed, and visitors will have the pleasure of seeing these interesting animals under conditions which no other Zoo have so far offered them.

OUR GARDENS.

Due to the very severe weather experienced during January and February of this year we had a very poor show of wallflowers, and it also considerably reduced the number of Spring bedding out plants. Trees and shrubs have survived the Winter surprisingly well, in fact, the Spring flowering subjects have been a mass of flower, due no doubt, to our glorious Summer last year.

We have made further additions and alterations to our gardens during the Winter months, particularly in the vicinity of the new Ape House.

Looking to the future an avenue of trees has been planted across the recently acquired farm land to the Liverpool Road; a total of 130 trees were planted, consisting of American Oaks, Red Horse Chestnut, Norway Maple, Purple Sycamore, Mountain Ash, etc.

In addition to these, we have added to the variety of our trees in the Zoo, by planting Catalpas, Paulonias, trees (Gingko Biloba), Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus), etc.

We look forward to another lovely Summer as last year, and a successful gardening year to all our visitors.

P. W. Gallup.



EMU EGGS.

In January of 1954, we received from Australia a pair of emu, and the following January yet another pair arrived, but unfortunately one of the latter pair died. These were only young birds but they grew and thrived very well indeed, and it was rather surprising that in the cold wintry weather of January this year one of the birds commenced laying eggs.

It is not too easy to distinguish the sex of the emu, and we were for some time doubtful whether one could say we had the two sexes among the three birds.

The first egg which was laid we found inside their hut, and the second was laid on the open field, and when discovered was found frozen to the ground. This egg was unfortunately broken in separating it from Mother Earth. However, the emus continued to lay, but we should say emu, because we feel certain that only one of the three laid the eggs.

The eggs began to arrive at irregular intervals, and the laying took place over a period of nearly two months. By the end of March something like twenty eggs altogether had been laid.

As the eggs were collected after laying, they were taken into the House out of the bitter cold, and here the Office Staff kept them in a cork box and turned them over each day.

An incubator was acquired, but this only comfortably held 12 eggs, and incubation was duly started. On the 29th April we were rewarded by our efforts as the eggs began to hatch. Eleven out of the 12 succeeded in hatching. Now we have perhaps our most difficult problem of all, and that is to successfully rear these youngsters to maturity.

The remaining seven eggs we propose to now put into the incubator and try and repeat our previous success.

