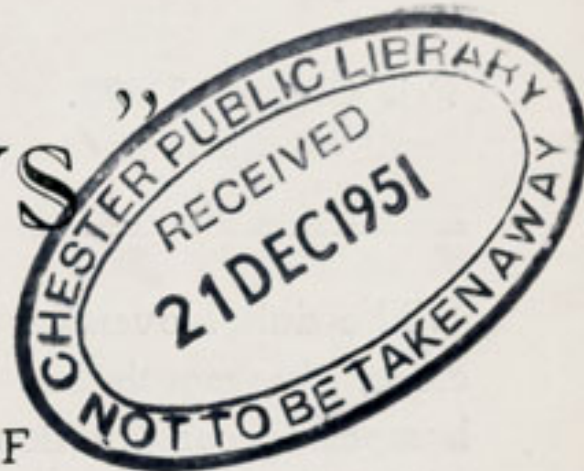

“Our Zoo News” and Guide.

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOO.

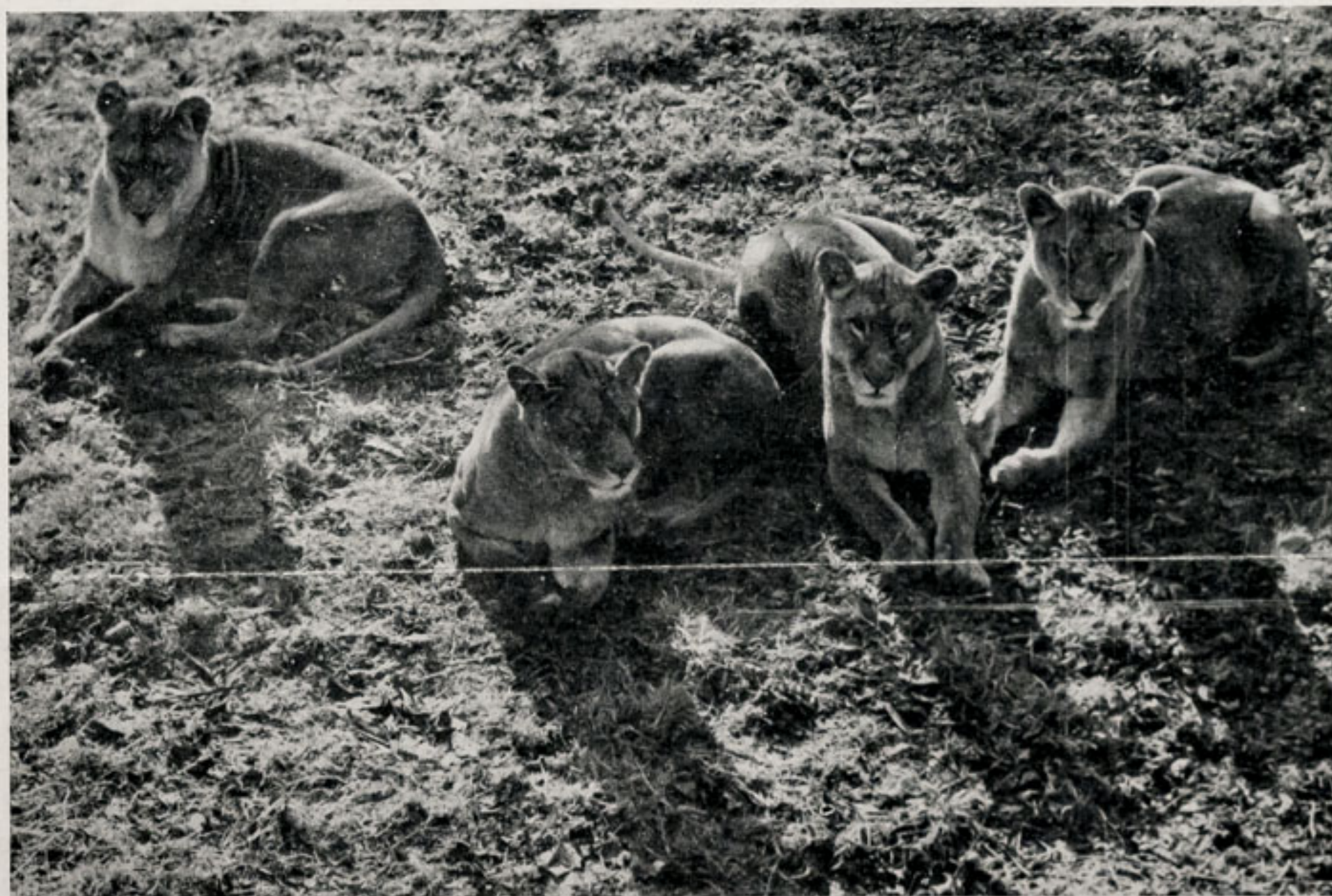


Price 3d.

Annual Subscription 4/6d. post free.

NUMBER 111.

DECEMBER, 1951.



A scene of Summer contentment in the Lion Enclosure at Chester Zoo.

The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 21898.

December, 1951.

The dull November days are drawing to a close; the month has been a very wet one, hampering construction work at the Zoo considerably. Ah! one might say "now we have time to write a Zoo News". But alas, when the rains came so did a lot of extra work and we find our time fully occupied with the hundred and one jobs which are always part of a Zoo Keeper's life.

With the growth of the collection the whole of the administration of the Zoo has had to be re-organised so as to not only ease the work of the keepers, but to keep a stricter control of all feeding arrangements so that no waste takes place and the animals and birds receive not only adequate supplies but properly balanced rations.

The old Lion House, which has more or less been in disuse since the Open Air Enclosure was opened has been stripped inside and refitted as a Central Food Store with an Office which will deal with all animal administration matters. This in itself has reduced the amount of labour spent on feeding considerably, and has resulted in a great saving in many feeding compounds.

Many other improvements have been made in various departments to harmonise with the central change and all the work has kept our maintenance staff fully occupied with the result that the building of our Giraffe House has had to remain in abeyance. However, we are pleased to say that we have now made a start to continue the building which was commenced in the early summer.

This building will be constructed of sandstone similar to the Zebra House but of course will be much higher, and will no doubt take a little longer to construct owing to the fact that more scaffold work will be necessary, but every effort will be made to have the House completed to enable at least three of our Giraffes, at present in the London Zoo, to be transferred to Chester by Easter or soon afterwards. In this respect the weather will play a very important part for a hard winter will call a halt on building as this cannot be done effectively if there is much frost about, but providing the weather is kind and we can complete by Easter, the weather will again decide if it is advisable to move the Giraffes, for as readers must know, this operation is not an easy undertaking as these animals can only travel by a special route to avoid bridges and this journey is both longer in distance and time, so we have to make sure the weather is quite settled and mild before the operation begins.

The Giraffe House is situated to the North of the Zebra House and will be approximately 60 feet square. It will contain two large enclosures for the Giraffes and will have a large open air exercise compound, these will be surrounded by part of our canal system, the water acting as a barrier. Another advantage of this arrangement is that the animals will be better protected from those members of the public who think Zoo animals can eat anything, and cause considerable anxiety, especially when valuable animals are concerned.

Recently we lost a very fine Hornbill quite suddenly and at first we could not account for

its sudden death, but examination showed some foolish person had given it a moth ball, so once again the many have to suffer for the folly of the few.

In the Giraffe House itself, we intend to protect the Giraffes from the public by a division of armour plated glass, and we say protect very advisedly for an unthinking visitor might cause endless trouble by offering some unsuitable food to these very valuable animals, but the visitor will be able to view the Giraffes far better than if there were a high fence between for this glass is remarkably clear. Outside of course, only a narrow stretch of water will divide the public and the animals so photographers will have nothing to complain of.

A fourth Giraffe arrived in England early in September for Chester Zoo, but it will not arrive at Chester till it has completed its quarantine period next September. It is a very beautiful specimen quite distinct to the three Reticulated specimens which arrived in England in 1950. This latter belongs to the Baringo Variety and is beautifully marked with a Maple Leaf pattern.

Apart from this outstanding difference, Dinah, for that is the Giraffe's name, is already a famous animal having appeared in the Command Performance Film, "Where No Vultures Fly", and was named after Dinah Sheridan, the Star in the Film.

There are other animals which share the same distinction as Dinah which will come to Chester Zoo when Dinah comes next September. These include a very fine pair of Brindled Gnu or Wilde Beaste as they are often called.

Another new arrival which the Zoo has not previously had and will arrive at the same time is an African Water Buffalo, which has been jointly presented by Mr. John Seago and Mr. W. Hale the Game Warden in Uganda.

Since our last Zoo News was published we have purchased a Dromedary or single humped camel, and very shortly we will receive a two humped camel or Bactrian camel as they are called. So the variety of the collection continues to grow, and so does the strain on those whose responsibility it is to provide accommodation, especially as we are committed to the principal of providing the best possible enclosures, for we are determined not to revert to the old and out-dated method of keeping Zoo animals in small cages and yards.

We have just published a very nice book showing Chester Zoo as it is to-day or we should say as it was yesterday, for before the book came off the press many improvements and additions had taken place. Nevertheless, the book, we feel sure, will be greatly appreciated by those who wish to possess a souvenir of a pleasant day at Chester Zoo. It includes a very fine aerial photograph, with a key plan, and most of our enclosures have been specially photographed to provide a real picture book of Chester Zoo.

The cover is an attractive pen drawing showing the Beaver at work with the appropriate sign worked in a tree "Always Building" and the title Chester Zoological Gardens comes up with the rising sun. We feel sure there will be a big demand for this book which is being sold at two shillings and sixpence per copy. Postage 6d. extra.

Among the late Autumn new arrivals are two very fine Secretary birds. These stately birds belong to the Vulture family and are renowned for their skill in killing snakes. Another outstanding addition is a young male ostrich which is at present accommodated in the Zebra House. Unfortunately this bird met with an accident in Africa as it was being loaded and hurt its foot, although this has not impaired its movement, it has left a nasty scar on the leg which we hope will vanish as time goes on.

Three rare Monkeys arrived in the same consignment, these are known as De Brazza Monkeys and come from East Africa and are most attractive. There is one male and two females so we are fondly hoping one day they will present us with young.

Another new cat also arrived. This is a very fine serval and is at present in quarantine in Chester Zoo, but by February this animal should be on public exhibition.

Although Satan the Sumatra Tiger which arrived in July is still in quarantine, he is in one of the new quarantine cages which are also exhibition cages.

This animal is a really lovely specimen and is gradually becoming used to the public, but his temperament is very similar to the pair of Leopards which occupy the next cage but one to him. These animals show all the traits of the Jungle and so far show no friendliness to humans, quite different in fact to the other two Leopardesses which arrived just over a year ago. These animals are so affectionate it is possible to stroke and fondle them. Their only vice is they are extremely jealous of one another and great care has to be taken to see that we do not pet one more than the other, if we do there is sure to be a fight.

The Reptile House has also had many new additions, the most outstanding being a pair of Queensland Frilled Lizards, a Reticulated Python and a very fine Boa Constrictor.

Owing to constant flooding, we are being compelled to transfer our Aquarium from the basement of the main building to a site by the North Entrance and we are hoping this will be completed by Easter, but here again the weather will be the deciding factor.

Every effort is being made to re-organise our Catering so as to meet the ever increasing demand made on our Cafés and we hope by Spring to have provided many additional points where refreshments can be obtained.

Our Raccoon Wood.

At a short distance from the Sea Lion Pool is a small wooded Ravine surrounded by a wall. A label attached to a tree simply says "Raccoons" (North America), and visitors reading the label peer over the wall to see the animals so called, but invariably there are a collection of cats all patiently sitting upright for tit bits thrown in by the visitors.

This strange set up is not of our making, but is one of those events which simply happen in a Zoo and it is always a little difficult to know why. In 1947 we decided this enclosure would be ideal for Raccoons and a pair were liberated into the wood in the hope that they would breed and start a colony. However, family rearing did not appeal to them, so a further stock of newly imported specimens were obtained and turned loose in the wood.

For a time all was well and the Raccoons caused quite a lot of interest as visitors stood round first spotting one here and another there mostly of course high up in the trees.

However, there came a day when one bright young Raccoon discovered a way he could get out and very soon communicated his knowledge to his fellows and before very long we were plagued with a daily occurrence of escaping Raccoons, unfortunately many got into trouble and had to be shot with the result that the numbers soon became depleted and only one or two now remain; but the striking thing is that during 1949 one of the many Zoo cats discovered that these attractive animals were frequently fed by discriminating visitors with bits of tasty fish, so this cat joined the Raccoons and lined up with them in their daily begging parade.

Time went on and the cat decided this home was good enough for any self-respecting feline to rear a family and in a short time Puss appeared among the Raccoons with a family and

from then onwards our Raccoons Wood has had a family of cats.

They live quite happily with the Raccoons and often can be seen all sleeping together, the strange thing is, these cats feel a great security in their wooded enclosure. They, unlike the Raccoons can spring over the wall and get out, and often do, but immediately anyone approaches they make one wild dash for the protection of their home and wait for the tasty tit-bits.

This winter we are going to give this enclosure an overhaul before introducing another family of Raccoons which are in another part of the Zoo. Many funny remarks have been overheard regarding the cats, but we think the funniest was that made by a Mother to her children as she guided them to the Raccoon Wood, glancing at the label she read aloud to her offsprings ("Raccoons" North America) then glancing over the wall saw an array of cats sitting waiting patiently to be fed. Studying them for a few minutes she then remarked, "our pussy must have come from Raccoon for they are exactly alike".

A word of Warning about Zebras.

Nearly all visitors to the Zoo are attracted to that lovely striped animal known as the Zebra. "Oh! how sweet", you will often hear remarked and straight away make forward to try and stroke or pat the lovely sleek coat of the horse-like animal, but unlike the horse and pony the Zebra has quite a different temperament, and while it often happens some Zebras are quite friendly, others are really treacherous and can very easily kill a man let alone bite him, and this they can do with a vengeance, so bad indeed that one might lose a hand.

Stallions of course are by far the worst, and "Charlie" our "Grants Zebra" is no exception, his keeper has to be extremely careful and on no account dare anyone go into his enclosure while he is in it, the chance of coming out alive would be poor.

How would he attack? He would first attack with both front feet, then probably bite and finally kick any life that was left in his victim with his powerful hind legs. So we beg of visitors to take heed of the warning and admire the Zebras from the right side of the barrier.

The Sparrow Hunt - An Episode at the Chester Zoo

It was a dull autumn afternoon, the brown fallen leaves were driven into the corners by a chill wind, and there were few visitors. Lacking an audience most of the animals were bored, but none so bored as our elephants, Molly and Barbar. The Elephant House was devoid of visitors. When I went in Molly was leaning nonchalantly against the wall which separates their stable from the bathroom and saddling space. Her trunk was twisted round the rail as there was nothing worth picking up in sight. Her eyes were closed. Barbar in like condition was searching idly for minute specks of hay, eyes half closed.

Molly opened one eye to inspect me and with a resigned expression shut it when it was evident that, as I was not carrying two baskets brim full of bread but only a couple of slices of old crust, I was beneath her notice. She then decided to blow at me as an expression of disgust because I came in empty handed. I was telling her that I regarded this as a disgusting habit unworthy of her dignity as a respectable elephant—when a solitary sparrow flew in through the door, and landed a few feet in front of Molly. Then the game began and I gathered from Molly's expression, and the obvious enjoyment of the sparrow, that it had

been played before. The sparrow chirped loudly and hopped along towards Molly who fixed it with a baleful stare, and carefully gathered up a few wisps of hay in her trunk.

When the seed searching sparrow arrived within reach Molly threw the wisps of hay at it. The sparrow merely retreated a few feet from her, chirped and advanced again.

"H'm—" says Molly to Barbar, "more hay needed". So she gathered a larger wisp and with a good long swing of the trunk bowled that at the offending bird. The sparrow dodged this easily by flying on to the railing where it chirped gaily and gave Molly a dirty look.

"More hay and a stronger throw old girl"—said Barbar. Molly considered this advice good and gathered a goodly bundle of hay which was well thrown at the sparrow who dodged it easily by flying into the bathroom where Molly couldn't see it; she could only feel for it. Filling her lungs for a good snort she carefully put her trunk round the corner and blew. This good and hearty draught caught the sparrow which was sitting just round the corner and it was airborne in record time for a sparrow, so it came out again and sat on the railings.

"End of round one"—said Barbar, and as Molly gave me a dirty look when I laughed I politely raised my hat to both my girl friends and left them to play the fantastic game of Elephant versus Sparrow.

G. E. GODSAVE.

Conference of Directors' of Zoological Societies in England, Scotland and Ireland - Held in Chester from 25th to 27th Sept- ember, 1951.

The annual Conference of the British Union of Zoo Directors took place in Chester at the end of September last, and was voted a great success. This Conference is an annual "get-together" of all the Directors' of Zoological Societies in the United Kingdom, and takes place at the invitation of the Council of each Zoological Society in turn. As there are at

present eight Societies in the United Kingdom, it will be seven years before Chester Zoo again has the honour of being the host for this event. The Council of The Bristol, Clifton and West of England Zoological Society have tendered an invitation for 1952, which has been accepted and the Conference will be held from the 6th to 8th May.

The object of this annual meeting is to provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and information relating to the control, direction and development of Zoos generally. Interesting Sessions were held during the mornings of September 25th/26th, and educational tours were arranged of Messrs. Evans Medical Research Laboratories and Shell Oil Refineries, at both of which delegates were the guests of the industry concerned. There is no doubt that the conducted tours and the hospitality extended on each occasion, were greatly enjoyed and appreciated. The Council of The North of England Zoological Society arranged a theatre party in Manchester to see George Formby's new production "Zip Goes a Million"—and the entire party were entertained afterwards by the Directors of Belle Vue, Manchester, to a delightful supper.

September 27th was the official Guest Day, when Directors' of all the leading Zoos in the country were invited to attend an open Session for a general discussion of Zoo matters. Guests and delegates were afterwards entertained to lunch at the Queen Hotel, and the Council were At Home in the Zoological Gardens during the afternoon, to many good friends of the Society who were anxious to meet our distinguished visitors.

The whole proceedings were wound up with a Dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel in the evening, honoured by the presence of The Bishop of Chester, the Mayor, the Sheriff and many other leading citizens of our lovely old city. This function in particular deserves special mention if only for the fact that it was obviously an outstandingly happy occasion from everyones point of view. We feature a photograph of the event on the opposite page.



Guests at the Dinner given by the Council of The North of England Zoological Society, in honour of the Directors' of Zoological Societies in England, Scotland and Ireland, at the conclusion of the annual Conference for 1951. Reading from left to right on the top table the guests are the Mayor, Alderman E. W. Keyes, Mrs. G. B. Grounsell, the Bishop of Chester, the Very Rev. D. G. Crick, Mr. G. B. Grounsell, Chairman of the Council, Mrs. D. G. Crick, Mr. J. O. P. Griffiths, Chairman of the R.D.C., the Sheriff, Mr. C. Cullimore, Miss G. M. Russell-Allen, the Chief Constable, Mr. G. E. Banwell, Dr. J. F. Wilkinson, M.Sc., Th.D., M.D., S.R.C.P., F.R.I.C. There will be many other well known faces to our readers, not forgetting our popular Director-Secretary, Mr. G. S. Mottershead.

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Our Beavers.

It is now one of our priority jobs to construct a new Beaver Enclosure, for the present enclosure has been so worked by these industrious animals that we fear the colony may shortly undermine the Reptile House.

How many Beavers we will find when the day for removal arrives we have not the slightest idea, for we have discovered that young Beavers are extremely shy and it is not till they are about two years old, that they feel confident to allow themselves to remain on the bank while humans are about.

Although naturally shy, some of our oldest Beavers are now quite friendly with the public and spend quite a lot of time, especially in the late afternoon, soliciting tit-bits from visitors, but their greatest attraction is that of watching them build and generally carry out the duties nature has taught them such as constructing a house fit for Beavers to live in.

Water to the Beaver is what land is to us and they never cease working to construct dams to ensure that there is always a plentiful supply, so industrious are they at times that quite frequently they cause miniature flooding of the surrounding area of this enclosure.

Their food consists mainly of the bark of trees and roots and the timber left after they have stripped it of its bark is used for constructional purposes, and many times have I watched them select a certain log of wood for some apparent special job.

And one occasion I noticed the roof of their lodge had caved in no doubt because they were compelled to construct this in a recently made bank of earth which had not properly settled. When I arrived a Beaver was on the top of the bank surveying the damage to his home. As I watched he started to sniff, as I thought across the hole, but I was soon to discover he was doing nothing of the kind, for after he had finished he came down, entered the water and swam out to some logs which had recently been placed in the enclosure.

Looking through these he selected one and started to sniff along it as he had done over the hole. Then he started to cut through it with his sharp chisel like teeth, completing the operation in minutes. He then pushed the piece he had cut off into the water and swam with it towards the bank in which his Lodge was built, then very cleverly carried it up the bank to where the roof had caved in. Carefully and obviously with the full knowledge of what he was doing placed the log into the breach where it fitted exactly, afterwards he brought other logs and finally carried from the bottom of the pool large quantities of mud which he plastered over the logs making the roof as sound as it was before it collapsed. I feel convinced the Beaver had used his mouth for measuring the size of the hole and the log he required to repair it.

Not all their work is as neat as the job I have just described, in fact some of their building appears very crude, nevertheless it is always effective which seems to show that a job well done is more important than an artistic finish to the Beaver.

