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# "Our Zoo News"

(and Guide to Chester Zoo).

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF  
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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June 1945.



Photo by H. F. Parker, Esq.

The Polar Bears, Punch and Judy, now comfortably settled in their new enclosure and keeping a watchful eye open for any intruder.

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# The North of England Zoological Society Limited,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 1898.

June, 1945.

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## "Our Zoo News."

We regret the brevity of the "Zoo News" published in May but the fact is that issue was intended for April. However, one thing after another cropped up to delay the work and then VE Day came along and upset our plans. So that is how the April issue was missed and a very short May issue circulated.

Writing the Zoo News is not always as simple as it may seem because very often much interesting matter is missed as we have not time to write it out at the time and then the incident is forgotten.

When our Zoo News was first published in pre-war days we had a shorthand-typist who could make notes and compile the Magazine as we went along and only at odd periods during the past six years have we had a complete office staff, but now we are once again in a fortunate position and an effort will be made to publish the News on time.

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Although the weather has not been kind, we are pleased to say that our attendance is still being maintained. Despite the fact that Whit-Sunday was a miserably wet day, the Whitsun holiday taken as a whole was one of the best we have ever had.

With the arrival of the Basic Petrol Ration, the Zoo soon became a venue for visitors in cars, and the road blocks which are at present covering the Car Park will have to be moved. These blocks are intended for the open-air Lion enclosure but, so far, it has been impossible to get labour to proceed with this work.

We are hoping shortly to once again open the Aquarium, which has been closed now for some weeks, due again to shortage of labour. We have, from time to time, received many kind offers of voluntary assistance with the Aquarium, but unfortunately the necessary work not only calls for some knowledge but involves a lot of strenuous and dirty work under conditions which one could not expect a volunteer to cope with.

The gardens are sorely in need of good practical gardeners, but somehow they seem impossible to obtain. However, as things become more normal this class of labour may become available, but the

question is, will the gardener who has been on war work earning £8 to £10 per week take kindly to his old occupation at £4 per week? We are afraid he will try many other vocations before he willingly returns to his old job. It is strange but true that war changes all our lives and many a man has become a skilled worker in a craft which he had never previously heard of.

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All the Lion Cubs are doing extremely well and are proving a great attraction. It is very interesting to watch these cubs play, and both Faith's and Cordelia's cubs have discovered a means of getting in to each other; indeed it is quite a common sight to see one Lioness with all the cubs, but they sort themselves out and return to their rightful parents when they feel they have been away long enough.

Cassandra's four cubs are all females and are now beginning to explore. We found Cassandra one day in a very agitated state, so we went to see what the trouble was and discovered that she had only one cub. On investigating, we found two with another Lioness, quite happy and contented, and the Lioness appeared very pleased to have their company. But what of the fourth? After an unsuccessful search, we began to think that misfortune had overtaken it, and Cassandra was moved into an adjoining cage so that we could search for the corpse, but nothing could be found. Just as we were giving it up as lost, the little rascal came back, quite unconcerned, from the field adjoining their cage. She is evidently "a chip off the old block"; it was her mother who was the ring-leader of the cubs who killed the sheep

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At last a start has been made on the repair of the Malayan Bear enclosure. Ever since these animals took up residence nine years ago, they have persistently indulged in an orgy of destruction. First of all, they destroyed the huge oak tree which is in the centre, and now this stands as a gaunt symbol of what it once had been, reduced to a mere trunk with large boughs devoid of all bark, light branches, etc. They then turned their attention

to the undermining of the building which adjoins, and for years they have burrowed deep and long under the foundations. Many times it was repaired but as many it was destroyed again. Having apparently explored to their satisfaction in this direction, the Bears proceeded to excavate under the surrounding wall, till this showed signs of collapsing. Now these two Bears, Sally and Teeny, have been removed to a strong cage in the monkey-house, where they are to remain while their enclosure is re-cemented. In this work a more thorough job is being undertaken and it is to be hoped that, when it is completed, the Bears will literally find themselves "up against a stone wall." We shall not have to be long with this job, as both Sally and Teeny have already set to work destroying the cage they now occupy. They have excavated a hole in the centre of the brick and concrete floor and, by the amount of earth they have brought up, they must have proceeded a considerable distance. Fortunately, they will have many yards to travel before they can get any way out and we sincerely hope that, before that happens, their new home will be ready for them.

Of all the Bears, the Malayan Bears are perhaps the most entertaining. Their walk, their antics, and their general appearance, cannot fail to amuse, and it is extremely funny to watch one disappear head-first down a burrow which they have made in the floor, drawing his hind legs after him.

## THE NEW BEAR ENCLOSURES.

In our last issue we mentioned that it was decided that the new Bear enclosures were sufficiently completed to enable the Bears to take up residence, and also that Trotsky and Won Lung had already been moved. Actually, at the time of going to press the Polar Bears also had been successfully conveyed to their new home, in a very dirty-looking condition as, having been confined in their den in their old home, preparatory to trapping, they had been unable to have any toilet whatsoever. Judy was the first to be moved and was transferred to her new home about 11 o'clock one night. She did not bother to take a bath that night but early the next morning she plunged into the large pool and after about an hour's swimming about emerged looking beautifully white. Punch was caught the following morning and transferred about mid-day. He straightway went for a drink, then surveyed his new enclosure in complete amazement, and finally took a plunge into the water where he also remained for a considerable time cleaning himself. For a whole week both Bears relished their new home and one at least could at any time be seen taking advantage of the swimming-pool, but mis-

fortune was soon to overtake their clean bath; the pump which had been temporarily installed collapsed and in a very short time the water became very foul and dirty, but this we are pleased to say has since been righted and once again the Polars are in their element. We have not yet received the pumps which are to be permanently employed. These will consist of two, so that should one go wrong there will be a reserve to be brought into immediate action.

Our troubles, however, were not at an end. Trotsky and Won Lung had been very contented and were thoroughly enjoying their new abode. Then Paddy arrived. A new Himalayan Bear we had purchased some time ago for Won Lung. For a week he was very shy and kept himself very much to himself, but one day to the utter amazement of some visitors he made a determined attack on the steep wall which surrounds their enclosure and, by sheer will-power, succeeded in obtaining sufficient grip with his claws to enable him to gain his liberty. For three hours he gave us rather a hectic time. He was not in the least aggressive, but proceeded to the new Wolf enclosure, and there as a matter of fact he wanted to stay. It would have been an ideal enclosure for the Bears, but no doubt he would soon have destroyed many of the trees which adorn it. However, eventually he was successfully lassoed and taken back to his enclosure where he was confined to the dens along with Trotsky and Won Lung whilst the wall was made smoother. The weather was atrocious and it was not possible to complete this operation as quickly as we should have liked. Feeling sorry for these three Bears confined to their den, we decided to confine Punch and Judy in a den for an hour or so and let the three other Bears into their enclosure to have a bath and exercise.

At first, only Trotsky ventured out, then Paddy decided to follow. Within a very short while Paddy was in the water and, according to eye witnesses' report, he tried to climb out on the opposite side. Failing at that particular spot, he swam to a corner and once again succeeded in climbing out. His claws appear to be extremely sharp and long and with these he managed to obtain sufficient grip. He was very soon conveyed back to his home this time, and was confined to the den whilst the improvements to the wall were completed. Judy had many times attempted to climb the outside wall, even at the spot where Paddy had climbed out, but on no occasion could she succeed in gaining a foothold. The whole trouble was that we had been in too big a hurry to get the Bears into their new home, but their old accommodation was in a very deplorable state and we had to move them quickly.



Photo by H. F. Parker, Esq.

Trotsky and Won Lung happily installed in their new home.



Photo by H. F. Parker, Esq.

Paddy, the Escapist, quietly thinks things over in a corner of the enclosure.



Photo by H. F. Parker, Esq.

A very fine head of one of the wolves now in their new enclosure, to be found beyond the new bear enclosure.

## THE WOLVES.

We are pleased to say that the Wolves are now in their new enclosure and form a very attractive exhibit. This enclosure is a wooded hollow surrounded by a wall, giving the Wolves a spacious and natural habitation.

Actually the Wolves have been more difficult to move than the Bears. They were extremely suspicious of any device made to trap them, and after the old she-wolf had been trapped it was impossible to trap the others, they all had to be

lassoed—a task which proved both tricky and risky, the Wolves being by no means tame. On several occasions when a Wolf had been successfully caught in the rope he bit himself free within a matter of seconds and made a dash at his would-be captors.

As we write these notes, two Wolves are still defying capture and we are afraid that if they cannot soon be captured they will have to be shot, as their presence in the old enclosure is delaying work on the Malayan Bear enclosure.

## Guide to Chester Zoo.

Upon entering the Zoo, visitors will proceed down South Drive and will first arrive at the Elephant Stand, where Elephant Rides are given daily except Fridays and wet days.

Turning to the left, the visitor will find two enclosures now under course of reconstruction. First the Malayan Bear enclosure, regarding which an article appears in this issue, then the Raccoon enclosure. Unfortunately, the last of these animals died just before the repairs were started, so we shall have to try and obtain a new stock.

Visitors should now retrace their steps and proceed to Central Drive, which will lead them to the public Cafes, Tea Gardens, etc.

In the Basement below the Cafes will be found the Aquarium. This is temporarily closed but it is hoped to re-open it within the next few weeks.

Leaving the Aquarium, we proceed to the right and then turn left and enter what used to be the Court-yard. Just inside, we have on the left the Quarantine House in which is accommodated at the present time a Serval Cat and a Leopardess. Once again outside the Quarantine House, we find the Griffon Vultures, one of which was bred and reared in this cage (the only known instance of a Griffon breeding in captivity).

Passing the Vulture Aviary, we enter the Lion House, and usually find there a family of Lions, Chester Zoo being noted for breeding these fine beasts.

After leaving the Lion House, the visitor can proceed to the opposite corner of the Court-yard and see the Elephant (if it is not out taking exercise), and alongside will be found the Monkey-House.

There are several old dilapidated cages in the Court-yard, now empty, the Bears and Wolves which used to occupy these cages having been transferred to their new homes down Bison Walk. As soon as labour is available, these cages will be dismantled, as also will be the Conservatory and Aviaries on the south side of the Court-yard.

The Parrot Aviary, which used to be such an attraction, still contains some entertaining birds, but owing to the poor condition of this Aviary many birds cannot be exhibited.

Leaving this part of the Zoo and proceeding in an easterly direction, we arrive at Bison Walk. This is a new elevated roadway and on the left will be found a small herd of American Bison. Proceeding along Bison Walk, we next come to a small herd of Fallow Deer; these are only young and, so far, very shy. A roadway is being constructed between the Bison and the Deer, and when this is completed visitors will have a much better view.

Opposite the Deer on Bison Walk will be found the new Bear enclosures. First is one containing Russian and Himalayan Bears, and next to them will be found the Polar Bears. These enclosures are a distinct advantage on the previous accommodation for Bears at the Zoo, and rank amongst the best in the Country. There is continuous running water, and the Polars have an exceptionally large swimming-pool. The water from these enclosures passes through a filter-bed and finally to the reserve tank. These will be found in the new Wolf enclosure. From this point, the water is pumped to a Fountain Pool, which will be found at the rear of the Bear enclosure, and on its journey it is aerated in many ways until it finally flows back into the Bear pools.

All this part of the Zoo has been constructed since October, 1944, and is not yet completed. The Contractor, J. Roddy, of Chester, had to overcome a great many difficulties before the project could be moulded into shape, on account of the very heavy rains, as in the construction of these enclosures the best possible use has been made of land drains as a means of changing the water.

The Wolf Wood is to be found at the end of Bison Walk, and visitors can walk right round this Wood and watch the Wolves in their natural sphere. **VISITORS ARE WARNED** not to reach over this wall or attempt to stroke the Wolves or Bears. We have endeavoured as far as in our power to remove from the animals all sense of confinement, and we hope visitors will observe this warning and not act unwisely. If you ignore this warning, you are yourself responsible for the consequences.

We leave the Fountain Pool and proceed along the drive, past the Water Fowl enclosure, to East Avenue. Turning right up East Avenue, we arrive at the junction of Bison Walk where, to the left, we mount the steps over the den previously occupied by the Polar Bears. It is at the moment uncertain what use will be made of this, or if it will

eventually be dismantled. From this point we may find a few Aviaries, and finally will arrive at the 'Crowned Cranes' enclosure, but most of the inhabitants of this enclosure are Liberty Birds and may also be found anywhere in the Zoo.

Visitors will, of course, appreciate that the Zoo is just now incomplete, but when labour is once more available progress will rapidly be made.

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## News from other Zoos.

### BELLE VUE, MANCHESTER.

By G. T. Iles.

Despite wretched weather during May and June, attendances have been maintained at a high level and we have quite a number of new animals to show our visitors.

The most important of these new additions is a magnificent pair of wattled Cranes which we believe to be the only ones of their kind in Europe. Their clean-cut plumage of white and greys plus the two wattles hanging below the throat, makes them outstanding exhibits. The wattled cranes are at present housed in the old pheasantry, but we hope shortly to move them to a larger enclosure.

At the time of writing, two young lions are on their way and should be well settled in by the time this appears in print. We shall then have eight lions—three males and five females.

Another welcome addition is a bush baby, delightfully tame and which had already been given the name of "Achmed" when he came to us via the Merchant Navy.

A Mouflon Lamb, born just after VE Day, charmed Whitsun crowds. Other new exhibits include three Fallow Deer, two Soay Rams, an American Alligator, and various Monkeys.

We cannot close without mention of the tank of magnificent Angel Fish, which is at present the special feature in the Aquarium.

### MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake.

This season so far, in spite of indifferent weather, is progressing satisfactorily and the "gate" for the first twelve weeks shows an increase in attendance of over 8,000 visitors.

The renewal of the Basic Petrol Ration will, I think, improve matters even more, and it is pleasant to again see a string of cars in the Park.

The births have been disappointing. The cow Bison gave birth to a first calf—a heifer—born dead. The cock White Rhea sat assiduously on a nest of eggs—and hatched five chicks; as a nurse he was not a success so a foster mother (electric) was requisitioned, but all the chicks gradually died, the last living some eight days. I cannot understand what was wrong, as I have in the past had grey Rheas hatched and successfully reared in the same orchard.

### WHIPSNADE.

We hear from Captain Beal that another Camel has been born, two Chapman Zebras, one Black Yak, and also a White-tailed Gnu.

Several Rhea chicks and Paradise Shell ducklings have been hatched, and the two baby Bears have been weaned and are now in their Nursery enclosure.

Readers will probably have heard the B.B.C. Broadcast from Whipnade, on Saturday, 9th June.

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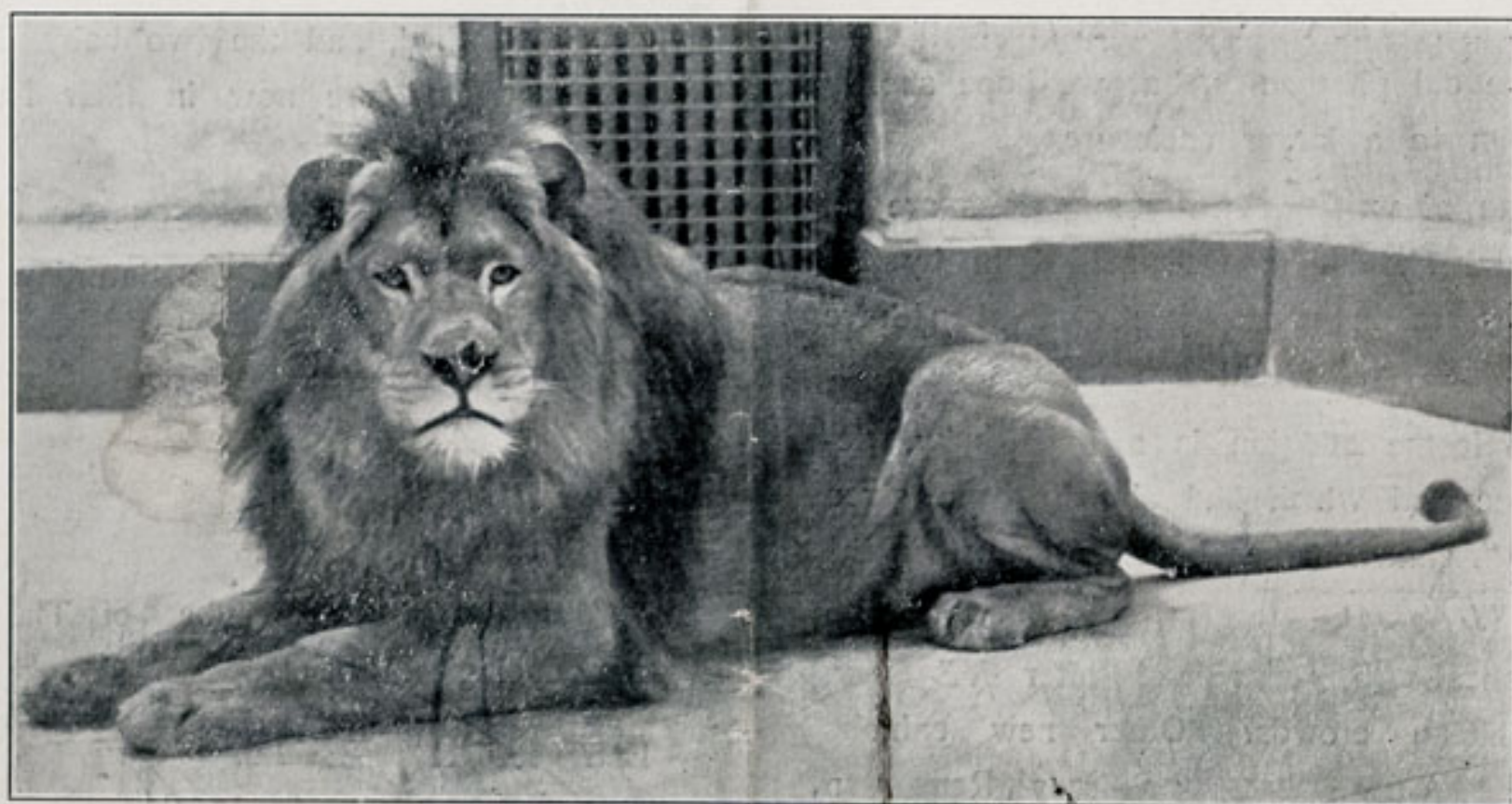
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Trotsky, as he was when he first arrived at the Zoo.



A Stag Fallow Deer.



Patrick, the father of all the Lion cubs born this year.