
"Our Zoo News"

and Guide.

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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Photo by G. H. F. Parker, Esq.

A scene on the Lawns at Chester Zoo a few weeks ago. Thousands of families have this year spent many happy hours at the Zoo, for apart from the many interesting exhibits, the gardens offer an ideal rendezvous for family gatherings.



Photo by H. F. Parker, Esq.

"Bennett's Wallaby."

One of the largest varieties of wallabies, and a native of Tasmania. Like all other kangaroos and wallabies Bennett's Wallaby is a vegetable feeder, feeding on grass and tender sprouts of young trees. Young kangaroos and wallabies are little more than an inch in length when they are born, and are placed in the pouch by the mother; there they attach themselves to the teat and feed till they are sufficiently large and strong enough to move about freely, and do not leave the pouch for good till they are capable of being completely independent. All kangaroos and wallabies take very long leaps and some of the larger varieties may jump as far as thirty feet at a time.

The latest arrival at the Zoo is a pair of Bennett's Wallabies these have been quartered in the enclosure between Bison Walk and East Avenue. When they were introduced they caused quite a stir among the Soaz Sheep and Mouflon, who could not make out what it was that simply hopped about over great distances, so for some time the sheep gave them a wide berth.

Unfortunately these Wallabies are both males, but we hope in time to acquire some females so that the public will be able to see the most interesting feature about them, namely the carrying of their offspring in the pouch.

The Zoo is always being called upon to take into its care some animal or bird which has for some reason or other become separated from its natural home.

During the Spring we are constantly having young birds just out of the nest brought to us. Usually a very careful explanation is given to the effect that the bird was either found in the garden or on the roadside and it could hardly fly. In nearly every case the bird is perfectly fit and has been caught by its would be protector on its first flight from the nest, and had not been given a chance to practice another flight. Birds are like children learning to walk.

They have to practice a little before they are perfect.

Very often the person finding the bird remarked he was afraid that a cat might have got hold of it. Now, Nature has a way of protecting these youngsters, and while it is possible some may become victims of the cat, very large numbers survive the feline attack. It is far better to leave the bird to take the chance, because the parent bird will always look to their offspring until they are quite independent. It is most difficult to hand-rear them, because the kind of food we have to give them is sometimes totally different to that which the parent would supply, and the sudden change very often proves fatal.

In a lesser degree the same applies to animals, particularly Deer. When the young Deer is born, it is left hidden in the long grass or under-growth, while its mother goes in search of food. She returns at various intervals to feed her offspring, then leaving it carefully hidden, off she goes again. It might happen while taking your walk, your dog may discover the young fawn. Do not pick it up or take it away thinking it has been deserted, but call your dog away. Its mother will return when you have gone. She will make a far better job of rearing it than either you or I would; remember also the mental suffering caused to both parent and young when forcibly separating them, and it quite often happens that in our efforts to be kind to wild animals, we can be extremely cruel.

Nature provides for the protection of her young, and our interference often upsets the balance. Just imagine what a mother's feelings would be if after placing her baby in a shady corner of the garden to sleep she returns to find her baby gone. It is just the same for the Deer. They have their feelings just like we have, but cannot express themselves as we are able to do, so a little thought will save a lot of worry.

We do earnestly appeal to the visitors not to throw bottles and other litter into the enclosures. Glass causes many accidents to the animals. We still find there are some people who persist in throwing refuse into the water pools.

Only the other day the writer saw a woman having a picnic with her children. When they had finished their meal she crossed over to the Sea Lions and emptied the entire remains, waste paper, bottles and all, into their pool. Then there are still

some people who seem to think the animals are partial to glass. On one occasion we noticed the Bears had several cuts on their feet, we drained the water out of their pool, and found the bottom covered with broken bottles; not one, but hundreds.

So apart from the danger to the animals; litter makes the Zoo look very unsightly, so please remember there are others who want to enjoy the Zoo.

These last couple of week-ends have been a little disappointing, mainly due to the bus strike; and the weather not being too promising, did not encourage people to go too far from home. However, apart from this, quite a number of visitors did manage to get to the Zoo, and we had as usual a full car park, although the majority of the visitors must have come on foot.

Now the main trouble is over, we are hoping to see our usual crowds again and a spot of Summer weather also. It's a very pleasant sight to see those lawns of ours filled with folk relaxing after enjoying their tour of the grounds and enclosures and when the day is warm and sunny everyone seems to enter into the holiday spirit in such pleasing surroundings.

We have had quite a number of coaches on the car park recently. When it is a wet day, it is quite a problem to accommodate all these people, including the other visitors. Of course if it is a nice day, the majority of the visitors prefer to eat out of doors, and that eases our difficulties.

Another problem we have is the visitor who brings along his dog, and insists that it is only a puppy and quite harmless and they will take great care with it, etc.

We know it is very disappointing, when after coming a long distance, you find the dog is not allowed to accompany you into the Zoo grounds, even although it is on a leash too, or carried in your arms. You see we have to guard the welfare of the animals at the Zoo. This is most important. Very often the sight of a strange animal upsets them, and there is no telling what damage a mischievous little pup can do.

So even if your dog is very well behaved, and on a leash too, etc., we cannot make any exception to the rule.



Photo by G. H. F. Parker, Esq.

SEA LIONS.

This photograph was taken soon after their arrival at the Zoo, and they are seen making friends with their keeper.



Photo by G. H. F. Parker, Esq.

A few of the visitors that watched the arrival of the Sea-Lions.

Guide to Chester Zoo.

As we stated in our last Zoo News, it is still very difficult to write a comprehensive guide, whilst the Zoo is undergoing so many changes, but we realise visitors need something to help them, so we will try to be as accurate as possible in our directions, but should the visitors find that these notes are not quite correct, it will be because our work has progressed a little more quickly than we anticipated, and we beg your indulgence.

The Chester Zoological Gardens were founded in 1930, at the private residence, which was then known as "Oakfield."

On entering the Zoo grounds, you will find on the left, the Lodge, which was built in 1884. At about the same period, the South Drive was then a public highway, but was eventually closed and a new public roadway made, which is now known as Oakfield Drive.

If you proceed along the South Drive, the first point of interest to be seen, is the elephant stand. From here, Molly the elephant, who came from Ceylon and is about twenty-five years of age, gives rides each day, excepting Fridays, which we count as her day off.

To the left, is a walled enclosure for the Malayan Bears, and next to these will be found, the Dingoes or wild Australian Dogs.

Other pens in this vicinity may contain goats, dogs, or other animals, and are used more as emergency pens, rather than permanent accommodation. Under the trees along this walk, there is a small stall, from which tickets for pony and donkey rides may be purchased. The rides are given from this point every day excepting Tuesdays.

Leaving this area of the Zoo grounds, and proceeding by way of Central Drive, you approach the main building, which in the old days, was the residence. This was built in 1892, on the site of the old house. Remnants of the old fabric have been discovered in certain parts of the present building.

It is obvious by looking at the trees, especially the cedars, that the grounds were laid out long before the present main building was erected. Today it is the residence of the Director-Secretary, and houses the Administration Offices, Members' Tea-room and Public Cafe; the basements being converted into the Aquarium.

The Aquarium is a very popular exhibit. An extra charge of sixpence is required to view the excellent collection of Tropical and cold fresh water fish. It has been particularly successful on account of good breeding achievements, and can almost claim to be self supporting; the young fish being exchanged, for other specimens not in the collection. During the war the Aquarium had to be closed on account of staff shortage, but was re-opened again in 1946, after being enlarged and improved. Now we can exhibit a few reptiles and a couple of alligators along with the fish. Its popularity may be judged by the fact that over 20,000 visitors paid for admission during the first three months of its re-opening.

Leaving the Aquarium, you now find you are in front of the Lions Open-air Enclosure. This is the largest enclosure of its kind in the British Isles, and was officially opened on the 28th May, 1947, by "Nomad", the popular radio star in the B.B.C. Children's hour. In addition to the public view of the frontage which extends for over 200 feet along the southern boundary, there is a raised terrace, capable of holding nearly a hundred people at a time. From here a wonderful bird's eye view of the enclosure can be obtained. It is also possible to look down from the top of the terrace, onto the quarantine cage, but a better view of this is obtained by descending from the terrace and turning left between the hyena enclosure to the front.

At the moment a pair of Pumas are occupying the quarantine house, and will have to remain there until their period of quarantine is over. Next comes the new monkey house not yet completed. This building contains several roomy cages for monkeys, each animal having an indoor and outdoor cage.

The entire roof over the inside cages is constructed of Perspex, the object being to admit as much light as possible, and at the same time allow the animals to have the light in the cold weather without feeling cold, which they undoubtedly would if the roof was made of glass. We have purposely kept the public at a greater distance from the animals in the new monkey house, than we did in the old building. There are two main reasons for this. The first is, all monkeys, especially chimpanzees are very susceptible to human ailments, and we cannot prevent people with infectious diseases from coming into the Zoo. Secondly there is a class of people who delight in teasing animals. We therefore felt compelled to protect the animals from this type of person.

Leaving here, you will come to the foundation of a new elephant house. Work on this will be held up for some time we are afraid, on account of the shortage of materials.

When the foundations were first put in, it was intended that some large concrete beams, which the Ministry of Supply wished to dispose of, were to be used, but it was impossible to obtain a crane large enough to do the work; consequently the work has had to stop, for the time being until we can procure the necessary cranes.

Proceeding from this point, you should now make your way along Bison Walk, where on the left are to be found the American Bison.

These animals are of great interest in many ways, but mainly because of the fact that they once roamed the American continent in millions, and later very nearly became extinct. This animal breeds in this country; one of the bulls in the enclosure was born in 1941, and another young calf was born this Spring.

Opposite to the bison, is an enclosure containing various water-fowl and sheep.

Continuing along Bison Walk you will come to the Fallow Deer on the left. In their enclosure work is in progress on the construction of a large pool for the Sea Lions.

On the other side of Bison Walk are the Bear enclosures, the first containing Himalayan and Brown Bears. The other enclosure was the home of the Polar Bears, but is temporarily accommodating the Sea Lions. Just beyond these enclosures is a wooded dell surrounded by a wall. In this dell are the American Raccoon, and visitors will have to look very closely to observe them as they spend most of their time in the tree tops.

Visitors should then proceed around the rear of the Bear enclosure and pass the fountain and ornamental gardens. Instead of returning to the Bison Walk, they should proceed around the pond to East Avenue. On the left of this Avenue, will be found the Axis Deer from India. Upon arriving at this junction of Bison Walk, turn left, there by passing several aviaries, but before proceeding towards these aviaries, note should be made of the large jaw bones of the Blue Whale.

Having followed these directions, visitors will then find themselves on the lawns in front of the main building, where they can rest or proceed to the cafe for a cup of tea.

News from other Zoos.

MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

Fine sunny weather at Whitsuntide brought out the visitors; 8,200 in the two days paid for admission to the Zoo Park.

New arrivals include three fox cubs, two Anglo-Nubian kids, a Mona monkey and several varieties of pond fish for the Aquarium.

The Butterfly Farm—a new feature this year—is proving a popular addition, a high percentage of visitors patronizing it and shewing the greatest interest in the large foreign moths that are issuing from their cocoons daily.