

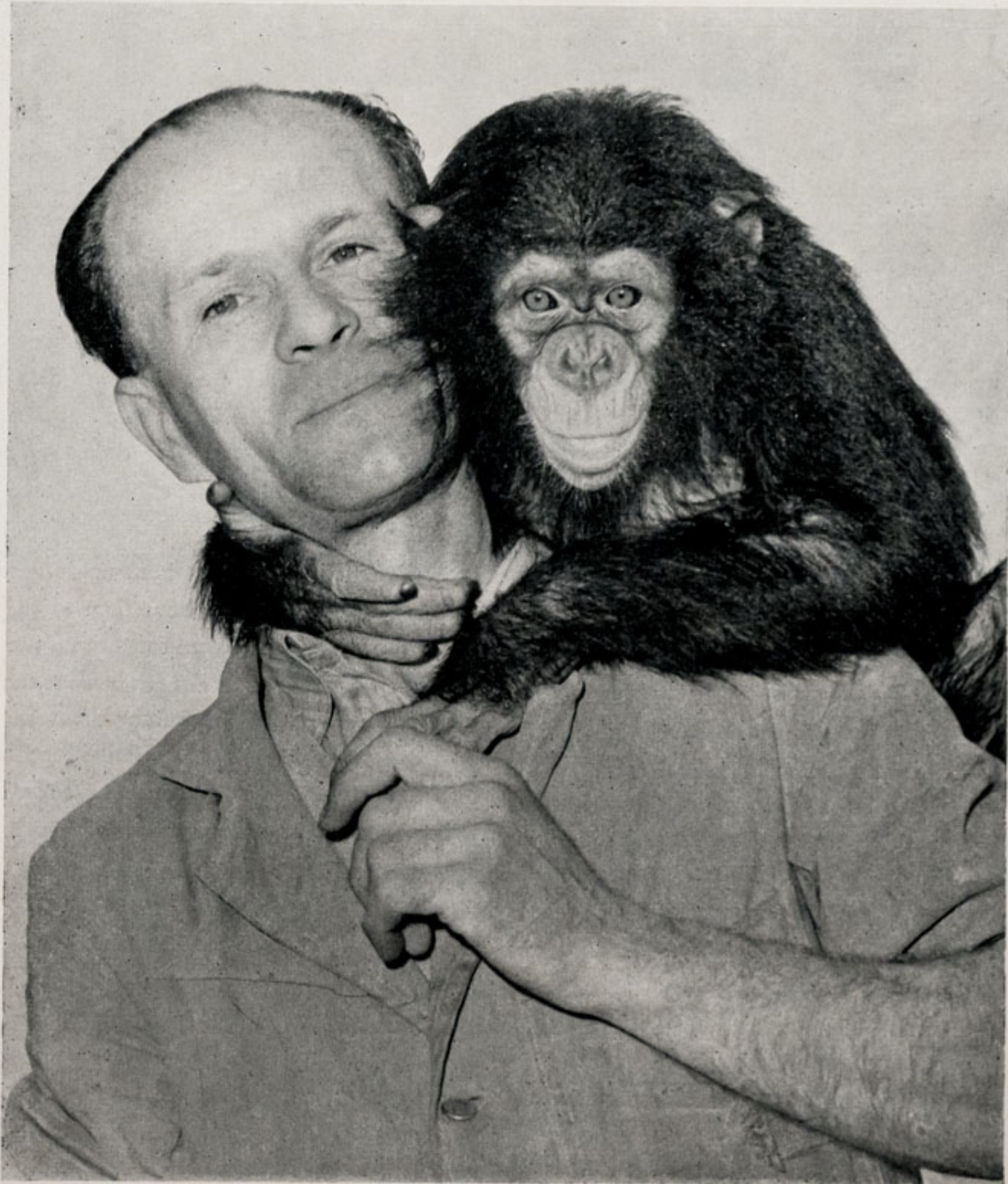
"Our Zoo News"

AND GUIDE

● A BI-MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF ●
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

NUMBER 115.

JULY—AUGUST, 1953.



"Dolourosa" with her Keeper.

"Dolourosa" is the youngest Chimpanzee in Chester Zoo.

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The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 20106/7.

Zoo News.

June was a very busy month at Chester Zoo in more ways than one. The Coronation Hall, which was opened in May, has been kept very busy indeed with large parties from all parts of the country. Its easy working arrangements have been a great boon to the Zoo, and parties of 500 and over have been seated and fed in a matter of minutes. The compliments we have received from party leaders have been very encouraging, and point to what we might expect next year. This new Hall brings our total seating capacity at one time to approximately 1,500, which is a great asset on a busy day.

Latest Developments.

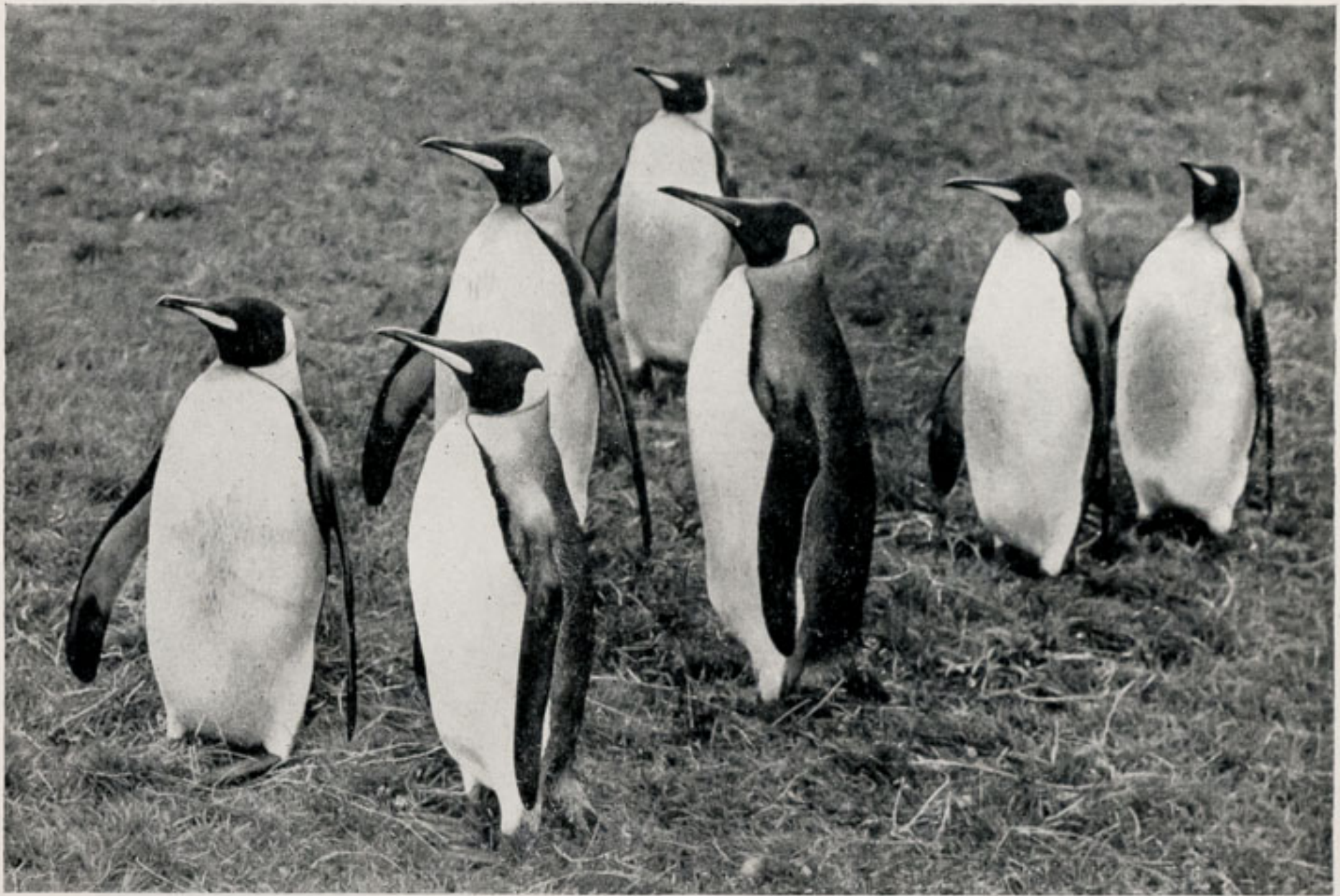
At last the open enclosure for the Giraffes has been completed, and these animals are

now enjoying the full range of their accommodation, and look extremely well in the large open paddock.

We have now transferred the Bison and Cape Buffalo from their temporary home in the Camel House to their new quarters on the South-West side of the Giraffe House. Most of these new paddocks are now completed, and one of them will eventually accommodate the Ankoli cattle, at present doing a spell of quarantine in London.

The completion of this area actually brings us to the most northern boundary of the Zoo, but an area of 7 or 8 acres remains to the East, on which development of the Gardens will take place during the coming Winter. This does not complete all our available land. Some 20 odd acres will still remain undeveloped after we have completed our next Winter's programme.





King Penguins.

The arrival of new specimens is always an exciting event, especially anything so interesting as our KING PENGUINS. Above is a photograph of some of these delightful birds which were the very kind gift of Mr. A. C. Olsen, a Director of a Norwegian Whaling Company. They arrived about 2 months ago, and so far have taken quite happily to their

new life. They are a source of continual amusement and interest to our visitors as they shuffle round their large enclosure, stopping from time to time to gaze at their admiring audience with apparently just as much interest as they themselves receive. They have a fine deep pool in which to go swimming, and as this is between 70 and 100 feet long they are able to swim up and down at a good speed. These birds require plenty of exercise, and there is certainly plenty of scope for them at Chester. Fish is, of course, their main diet, and they manage to consume about 200 whiting a day.



"Rubble", the male Polar Bear, sits in a begging attitude for the visitors.

Polar Bears.

This appealing look has a very unfortunate influence on the public, for the look in the Bear's eye and his dramatic movements to attract you, invariably means that you disregard the notices which have been placed

prominently round the enclosure—"Do not feed the Polar Bears!" We do ask visitors to ignore this appeal and obey the notice boards, as the feeding by the public of these Bears causes much trouble by upsetting their health.



"Rack" and "Ruin", the two females, have a slight argument on the Island in their pool.

But these arguments are usually only a prelude to a game in the water.

Polar Bears are without doubt unhappy if they have not plenty of water to play in, and the enclosure at Chester is one of the largest Polar Bear Pools in the world. There is constantly moving water, and the animals can have some really exciting times.

The public are warned not to place bags on the walls, or to lean over, as very often accidents will happen such as occurred a year or two ago when a lady visitor accidentally dropped her handbag off the wall of the Polar Bears

enclosure. There was an excited dash by the three Bears of course, to retrieve the lost article, and in a very short time the tug-of-war which developed ended in the bag coming to pieces; one had the outer part and another the handle. But "Rubble" succeeded in retrieving a smaller personal compartment containing the ladies "make-up" and wallet. The small mirror caused some amusement at the start as the Bear was rather surprised to see itself reflected in such a small compass, but evidently not being very satisfied with what it saw, discarded the mirror into the water. The ladies Lipstick however caused great amusement because "Rubble" in a very short time had a very pink face!



"Rack" and "Ruin" have here carried their sparring into the water.

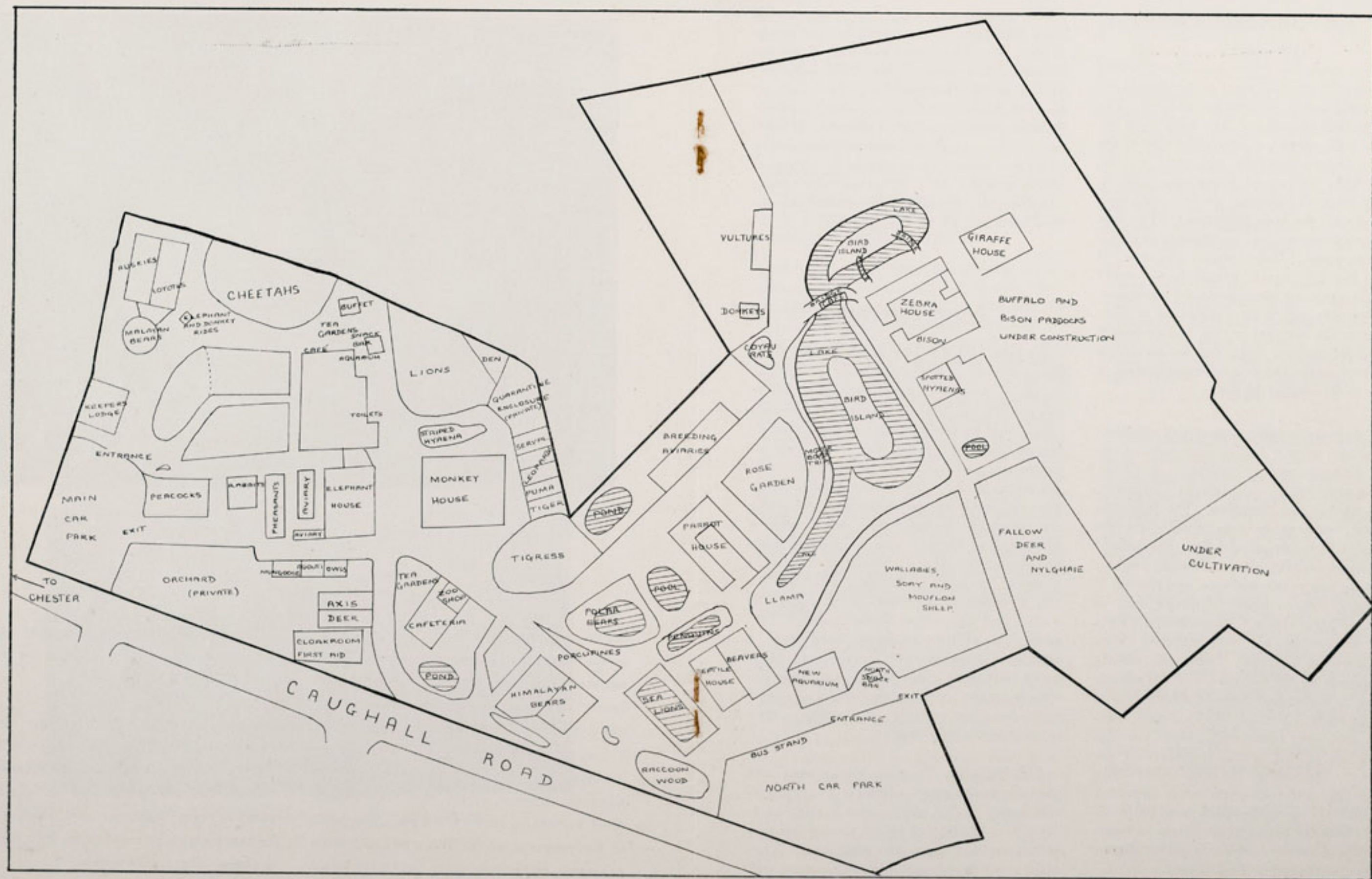


"Rack" and "Ruin" are now really getting down to it! and in a short time no doubt will be carrying on their tussle at the bottom of the pool, where they can remain for quite long periods.

But the real climax came when the Bear picked up the wallet, which was lying on the stone, and started to investigate that. To the great dismay of his watching audience he started to pick it to pieces—and the wad of notes which it contained, to shreds. The lady who had lost it informed us that there was over £50 in it when she dropped it; but of course nothing could be done to retrieve this particular piece of her property, as the Bears are extremely dangerous, and anyone going in to them would

not have come out alive. The lady agreed that it was her own fault, and took the matter as philosophically as she could.

In view of the little story we have just related we do earnestly appeal to the public not to throw or drop anything into the Polar Bears. A bottle can soon get broken and the Bears would be severely cut, and food which is good for humans could be very bad for Polar Bears—so please—observe the notices.



The Ornamental Gardens.

No one could but admire our Rose Gardens this year. Its blaze of colour at the end of June was a sight which everyone has admired. The roses in this part of the Zoo have done extremely well; mainly, of course, because of the suitable ground in which they are planted. Last Winter we planted Roses once again in front of the main buildings. In 1951 they were removed, and the beds bedded-out. This was not too satisfactory, and we decided to revert to Roses again. Unfortunately the show of blooms has not been as prolific as we would have liked, and we soon discovered the reason. Our Peacocks, which have increased in number during the last year or two, had developed a liking for the rose buds, and we are afraid they have caused rather a scanty exhibition of blooms in the front of the house.

Our Summer bedding is now well established, and we have a display of flowers at the North Entrance, mostly consisting of Geraniums, inter-planted with Lobelia Cardinalis, Salvia Patens, and Nicotiana. The Aquarium roof we found to be very suitable for the placing of flower boxes and these are planted with Geraniums, Petunias and trailing Lobelia. The large bed at this entrance was planted in the Spring with a variety of shrubs, such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Cotoneasters, Viburnums, Escallonias, etc., with standard Acers and Flowering Cherries. These are making good growth for the first year, and will provide flowers for Spring and Summer in future years. Annuals, such as Zinnias, Stocks, Asters, Veridiums, etc., have been planted round the edge of this bed to add to the brightness of this entrance. The beds by the Rose Garden have been planted with Heliotrope Salvia splendens, Calceolarias, Begonia Semperflorens, Matricaria, etc., with the edging plant Cineraria maritima. These should combine to give a display of colour for the rest of the Summer.

The addition of a large greenhouse to our glass department in the Spring has enabled us to meet the need of our Cafes with Tomatoes, Cucumber and other salads. Although it is Midsummer we are thinking of next Spring's bedding displays, and in the nursery are busy with the planting out of Wallflowers, Forget-me-nots, Pansies, Polyanthus, Aubretias, etc.—all flowers that we are so pleased to enjoy after winter months. We have had very many complimentary remarks about our borders this year, for which we are very grateful.

New Arrivals.

On June 23rd Mr. John Seago and Mr. Reg. Bloom arrived at Avonmouth with a large collection of animals destined for Zoos both in this country and abroad. Among the animals which were for Chester was a very nice female "clover-leaf" marked Giraffe. This has, of course, gone to London to undergo the usual quarantine period. Two other animals which went to London for quarantine also, and which are eventually destined for Chester were a Kudu, and an Oryx. Quite a collection made the journey by road to Chester, as it included a pair of forest-bred Lionesses, which we are able to quarantine ourselves, three young Ostriches, and four Giant Seychelle Island Tortoises. In addition to these, there were 4 Grevy's Zebras, several Vultures and Mongoose, and some Cape Hyrax, but these are only in transit to American Zoos, and after a short period of rest they will continue their journey across the Atlantic.

OSTRICHES—These three youngsters, with the Llama and Camels, now make a very attractive group in the large paddock attached to the Camel House, and we are hoping that they will thrive and grow into adult birds. They make a wonderful sight when they career with

their wings outstretched in a dancing evolution.

LIONESSES—The two young Lionesses which Mr. Seago brought for us have been christened "Coronation" and "Princess" and they can be seen in their quarantine quarters at the rear of the Ape House.

TORTOISE—From a few scattered islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans come the Giant Tortoises; our four new-comers having come from the Seychelle Islands.

These reptiles are the survivors of a once great race which is slowly dying out. They are defenceless against man, and can only protect themselves by withdrawing their head and limbs into their shells. The stories one hears relating to their great age are true, and records show them to have attained an age of 150 years and more. Our Tortoises are sharing an enclosure with the King Penguins at present, but as soon as we have enough labour available we hope to start on the erection of a Tortoise House. This will have been made possible earlier than we had anticipated owing to the generosity of the late Mrs. Nield of Hoole, who in her will left the Society a legacy of £50. Knowing her great interest in Tortoises we felt that this money could be put to no better use than to build a permanent home for our specimens.

MACAW—The Parrot House was enlivened recently by the arrival of a Red and Blue Macaw from British Guiana. This bird created something of an uproar in the Aviary, as he—or she—(no one is quite sure which) no doubt feeling very much a man—or—woman—of the world after such a long journey, flew on to a branch when liberated, and surveying the other occupants of the Parrot House with a knowing eye, said in a perfectly human voice "Oh, Mother"! The said occupants immediately took exception to this verdict, and all proceeded to say so in no uncertain terms.

News from the Reptile House.

The Reptile House continues to draw large numbers of the public who never seem to tire of gazing at its silent and often deadly inmates, which have a fascination all their own. Several of the attractions in this House are not strictly reptilian, such as the Toads and Frogs, which are known as Amphibians. An interesting newcomer in this section is the Tree-frog, which as its name implies, spends its life amongst the leaves of trees; except during the breeding season, when, in the wild state, it seeks the water; or, during intensely hot or cold weather it retires to the shelter of stones or other safe spots. Tree frogs are found in almost the whole of Europe, varying locally in colouration and habits. Like Toads, they do not touch their prey till it is on the move.

The Crocodile family has had some additions in the shape of five babies, which at the moment are sharing quarters with the Terrapins. The Terrapins are a fresh-water member of the Tortoise family. For those who have never seen either a Baby Crocodile or a Terrapin, now is the time to make their acquaintance.

As may be imagined, the Reptile House, containing as it does, so many "difficult" inhabitants, has its exciting moments, especially if one, or more of them decides to see a little more of the world—outside its cage! which has happened on one or two occasions. Last week two Lizards managed to slip out unnoticed, and were well on their way to "the great open spaces" when they were spotted, and their adventure came to an abrupt end.

From time to time, some of the larger Snakes appear to turn cannibal, and as happened recently make a meal of one of their companions; in this case the guilty party was an Egyptian

Cobra. But although all the evidence points to Cannibalism in these cases, it is possible that where two snakes both start on the same food, one, usually the larger, simply has to go on swallowing the smaller till it comes to the tail, simply because the teeth of most snakes point towards the throat, so that they cannot without great difficulty relinquish their hold on anything they have once seized.

Something Fishy.

The New Aquarium has now been opened 10 months, and contains one of the finest selections of Tropic Fish in the British Isles. There are 80 exhibition tanks, of varying sizes.

Most Aquariums are very dark places, the public passages being unlit. We know that many people prefer to see where they are going, so we have kept our passages as light as possible—without detracting from the effect of the Fish tanks—in a novel way. A tank, 240 ft. long and 3 ft. wide, encircles the roof over the outside passage, and visitors can see the fish swimming above their heads through glass panels.

Tropical Fish-keeping in the home is a popular hobby with many people, the fish being so interesting to look after, and the pleasing effect a well set up tank can have in a room makes it popular with the lady of the house. How interesting fish can be is illustrated in the family Cichlidae, of which perhaps the ANGEL fish is the most famous—T.V. having used a film of them swimming as an interval film. Cichlids are rather particular about choosing their mates, but having once settled the problem, they mate for life, and settle down to raising a family. Fish, like humans, vary with the individual, but in the main both parents of the Cichlid

group take part in rearing their young. The happy pair often move all the gravel in the tank to just where they think it should be, then clean a stone or smooth surface of all dirt and lay their eggs on it. Once the eggs are laid, the parents take turns in guarding the eggs, fanning them all the while with their fins and tail to stop dirt settling on them. After about 4 days, the eggs start to hatch. The parents then take the young fish, which cannot yet swim, in their mouths to a hole in the gravel which has been made ready to receive them. During the next few days, while babies are still living on their yolk sacs, the parents move them from one depression in the gravel to another. Each time they pick them up in their mouths to move them, they give them a good wash so that all in the new nest is spotless. After the yolk sac has been absorbed, the young become free-swimming. They all stay close to their parents, any wandering away are quickly caught up by the parents in their mouths and deposited back in the fold. The pair will defend their young with their lives, and will attack any strange object put into their tank. We ask people not to tap the glass of these tanks, for if the parents get too frightened they will eat their eggs or young sooner than they should fall to an unknown enemy. Many of the Cichlids to be seen in the Aquarium, such as FIREMOUTHS, MOUTH-BREEDERS, and BLUE ACARAS, etc., have settled down to family life, and can be seen with their families in the tanks.

THE RAINBOW TROUT are doing very well, and no fisherman would have trouble in catching ours, for they will take meat out of one's hand—the only disadvantage being that sometimes they try to take your fingers as well!

We now have some beautiful SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH, most of which have been

bred in the Aquarium. These fish are used in Siam in the same way as cocks were once used in Britain, with bets being placed on the fish. Our fish have to be kept in separate tanks, so you will see one in most of the tanks for they do not fight other fish, but will fight to the death with one of their own kind.

Some of the most unusual fish in the Aquarium are the BLIND CAVE FISH of Mexico, which are found in a cave at San Luis, Patosi. They have no eyes but do not seem to miss them for they are always on the move, and have little trouble in catching the live water fleas (*Daphnia*) on which they are fed. They can also tell when there is a change of diet and quickly come to the surface of the water on which the dried food floats, easily telling the difference between the floating water plants and the food.

Another strange fish is the LUNG FISH, which can be drowned if it is not allowed to breathe air. It is a close relation of the *Coelacanth*, of which so much has been heard recently.

Among the latest arrivals are the Sea Horses which come from the Mediterranean. These interesting creatures, always remind one of the Knight in the game of Chess. They have a prehensile tail, which they wrap round the twigs, which are placed in their tank for that purpose. Feeding the Sea Horses is a great problem, for although they look so thin and bony, they have large appetites and will only eat living food, i.e., *Daphnia*, Baby Live-bearers such as Guppies, Red Swords, etc. The Sea Horses have an interesting method of breeding young. The female lays the eggs

into the pouch of the male, where they remain until hatched. The male then opens the pouch by curling his tail up in front of him, this causes the pouch to open, and the young swim out.

More New Arrivals.

SPOTTED SCATS AND MONODACTYLUS ARGENTENS—These are salt-water fish, which can be acclimatised to fresh water, although we keep them in about 50 % salt water to fresh water. Both these types of fish will grow larger than they are at the moment, being young specimens.

COOLIE LOACHES—These fish are rather hard to find in the tank for they are nocturnal by nature. They are salmon pink, with black bands. They are of an eel-like shape, about 2 ins. long.

HALF-BEAKS are small fish which like to stay at the top of the tank. They have a long lower jaw, prolonged into a beak. These fish are live-bearers. That is to say, they have live young instead of laying eggs.

PENCIL FISH—These get their name from swimming, and also standing still, in the position of a pencil held while writing.

LAMP EYES—As one would expect from their name, these fish look as if they have lights in their eyes.

Our Personalities of the Month.

GIRAFFES.

These extraordinary creatures are the tallest members of the animal world, and are found in the open bush country of Africa. They reach, when fully grown, as much as 18 feet, measured to the top of the head. Their enormously long necks enable them in the wild to feed on high branches and the young shoots of trees, which they pluck off with their tongues—these being extremely long and thin and very well suited to stripping off leaves and other greenstuff. In captivity Giraffes are given lucerne, clover hay, chopped roots and fruits, cereals, such as oats, and of course branches of green leaves. Elm is one of their favourites. Actually, in captivity, the Giraffe does better on a special diet, with very little green food. They do not usually make much sound but are not entirely mute, as is supposed. They lack vocal chords, but are capable of a low trumpeting sound, and the young ones, when distressed, bleat like lambs. In spite of its size and vivid colouring, the Giraffe is not so conspicuous in its native surroundings as one might think, and blends extremely well with the leaves and grasses of the plains. If danger threatens they can run at great speed, being capable of doing between 30 and 40 miles an hour. On the run the hind legs are brought forward simultaneously with the front which gives the animal a peculiar rocking motion. This tremendous speed is the Giraffes main defence, and not many other animals will tackle it, excepting the Lion which, after man, is its chief enemy. If attacked it can give a good account of itself both by swinging its head with tremendous force and hitting the enemy with its horns, and by striking out with its hooves.

At Chester Zoo we have at present three of the Reticulated variety. These are so called because of the net-like pattern of the markings. We also have on the way two of the "Clover-Leaf" variety, the markings of which are similar to the clover-leaf, but these will not arrive for another 12 months, as Giraffes, being cloven-footed animals, are liable to Foot-and-Mouth disease and Rinderpest, and have to do a period of quarantine before they can come to a country Zoo. As mentioned earlier in this article these animals run with a peculiar rocking motion, and this can be observed quite easily at Chester Zoo, because of the spacious accommodation which is allocated to them. It is most difficult for Giraffes to pick anything off the floor. They have to straddle their fore-legs wide apart and it appears to be a great strain on them to reach down to the ground with their heads. For this reason all the feeding troughs and racks are placed high so that the animals can feed with ease. Branches of trees are fastened to a wire rope which is suspended from the roof, and pulled to the required height for the Giraffes to feed on. They have a prehensile tongue, which means they can use it for grasping things. The Giraffe wraps its tongue round branches of trees, and pulls the leaves and bark off with ease. The bark is an essential part of their diet, and when the branches have been up a very short time they will have been stripped of every particle of leaf and bark. Giraffes take very well to captivity, but although on the whole they are quiet and good-tempered, are inclined to be rather nervous animals, and we have to see that they are not disturbed, otherwise one might meet with a very serious accident. They can be very easily upset by wrong feeding, and to avoid this visitors to the Zoo are strictly forbidden to feed them.

OLD FRIENDS.

The African Claw-less Otter, which as we mentioned in our No. 113 Issue, had been transferred to the Raccoon enclosure, has quickly found the value of a large repertoire of appealing tricks, with which he entertains his public daily. He has acquired the name of "Squadger", and will oblige with a display of water-acrobatics the highlight of which is a juggling act with an empty can, or with a plain sit-up-and-beg routine which he finds very useful when meal-times are a little overdue.

We are pleased to be able to record that we have been able to find a mate for "Monk", our Ring-tailed Lemur. His new partner is called "Rinty", and is a very attractive animal. They have now been placed together in a cage in the Ape House, and are enjoying each others company.

Our little female Llama "Queenie", which arrived from Dublin last summer has been in-

troduced to "Woollie" the male Llama, and they have settled down together in their home in the Camel House. They also share a large paddock with the two Camels, and three Ostriches, and an amusing situation has arisen. Since acquiring a partner, "Queenie" has come out in her true colours, and she has made it quite clear to the other occupants, especially the two Camels, that she is going to be the boss, and keeps them firmly in their place with many a nip from her sharp little teeth.

"Sammy" has been up to his tricks again—but not I am afraid the sort which his public applauds. He is rapidly earning for himself a reputation as a "woman-hater", as his wives are continually having to be rescued from his savage attacks. The remaining member of his harem has had to be transferred to the lake adjoining the Polar Bears Enclosure, for her own good, as she had received a very nasty wound at the hands—or rather—teeth of "Sammy". "Sammy" of course is quite unrepentant and appears indifferent to his sentence of "solitary confinement".





"Molly" and "Baba" giving rides at the Zoo.