
“Our Zoo News”

and Guide.

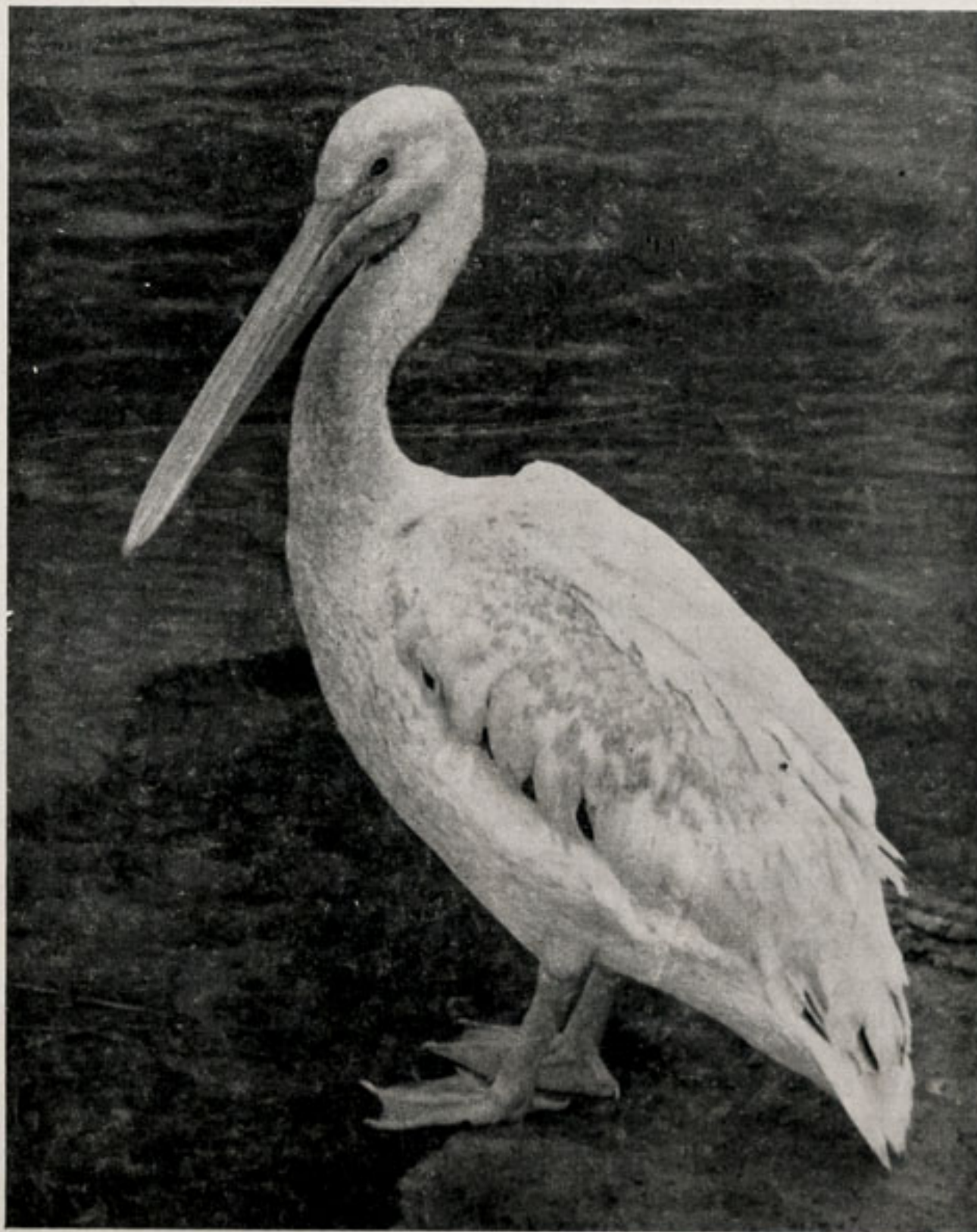
A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOO.

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One of the several Pelicans which can be seen on the waters at Chester Zoo.

The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 20106/7.

August, 1952.

Our Zoo News.

Although the weather during June this year was not very good, we have made satisfactory progress both in attendances and with work. It is now possible for us to give a few more particulars of the progress of our Giraffe House. This building, which is being constructed entirely of sandstone, is approximately sixty feet square. The walls, which rise to a height of almost twenty feet are, on an average, two feet thick. The building will have an apex roof which will be of asbestos and perspex with a ceiling underneath of insulation board and reinforced glass to admit the maximum of light and at the same time provide a good insulation from the cold and condensation. This house has had to be built in such a way because of its very open position; standing to the north of the Zebra House it is exposed to all the wintry winds which at times are very penetrating—the wind sweeps up the Dee Estuary and one has a very clear view of the Welsh Mountains from this site. We were anxious when we built our Zebra House (which is similarly constructed to the one we are now building for the Giraffes) in the same area but we are happy to say that of all the buildings in the Zoo the Zebra House kept a more steady and even temperature than any other and on cold days even if it was not heated, there was a feeling of warmth inside—the thick sandstone walls providing adequate protection against the biting winds. It has been proposed that the Giraffe House will be divided into two sections so that, if necessary, a Giraffe can be separated from the others but we intend to allow the Giraffes to have full access to all the building normally. This will give them plenty of exercise during the winter months and whenever the weather is suitable they will be able to walk out into a large enclosure. It may be many months before this enclosure is properly completed but we intend to surround most of it by a canal which we have commenced building. It is now almost a certainty that the house will be ready to receive the animals in early August—the finishing touches can be made when the animals are here.

The Zoo has just received a very fine specimen of a Bactrian Camel. This animal has been obtained from Whipsnade where it was born in 1950, and we hope it will be an attractive addition to the Gardens. Visitors can now see both species of Camel—single humped (Dromedary) and two humped (Bactrian).

We will probably soon be able to transfer our tropical Aquarium to its new site by the North Entrance. Work has progressed rapidly during the last few months and we hope to be able to open it to the public before the close of the season. The New Aquarium will be appreciated by a large number of visitors who disliked having to walk down into the dark cellars of the house to view our present collection of fish. All the tanks in the New Aquarium will be illuminated by daylight and therefore our consumption of electricity will be decreased, and the light will be better for the fish and plant life.

We mentioned in our last Zoo News that we had decided to obtain a new stock of forest bred lions. We are now happy to say that the first young cub arrived a few weeks ago. She is a lovely specimen—about five months old and is called "Helen of Toro". She arrived in this country by air and was remarkably fit when we received her. She is settling down well and we hope as time goes on will prove a good breeding lioness. At the moment, of course, she is doing her quarantine period but she is on view to the public in the quarantine cage immediately behind the Striped Hyaena—we are sure the public will grow attached to her as they have done to so many cubs in the past. Many visitors do not realise that one of the fine lionesses in our open enclosure was a very popular character at the Zoo in 1939. She is one of the lionesses who, as a cub, used to roam freely about the Zoo. It was not until she and her companions decided to go further afield, and finished up by killing a sheep that she had to be confined. The Zoo has undergone a very great change since those days. The Lion house, in which they were accommodated,

has now been converted into a large food store and it was from the dens at the back of this that these cubs were allowed to run. These dens opened out on to a field and were not part of the public exhibition. Their present enclosure is still the largest of its kind in the British Isles and is very much appreciated by the public. We often overhear comments made by patrons that they never wish to see a lion in a cage again after they have seen them roaming about in almost complete freedom.

Another recent addition to the Zoo Collection is a pair of young Genets which were presented by Mr. Cubben. These are not the first of their species we have had by a long way. Years ago we were very rarely without a collection of Genets, Civets, etc., but with the expansion of the Zoo, the disbanding of all the indoor cages in the courtyard and concentration being made upon open enclosures, the accommodation for this type of animal became practically non-existent. However, we intend to build suitable quarters for these small mammals. They are extremely interesting creatures and can become very tame—Genets are kept in some houses in the South of Europe for catching rats and mice, as we keep cats.

Some of the owls have been transferred to a larger cage near the Elephant house. The pair of Agoutis which we have now had for about six weeks are in the old owl cage and our Mongoose has been placed in the adjoining one.

The African Clawless Otter which had been kept in the Monkey House since its arrival in the Zoo last winter, has been put into the Raccoon enclosure where it now has plenty of water and a great deal of freedom.

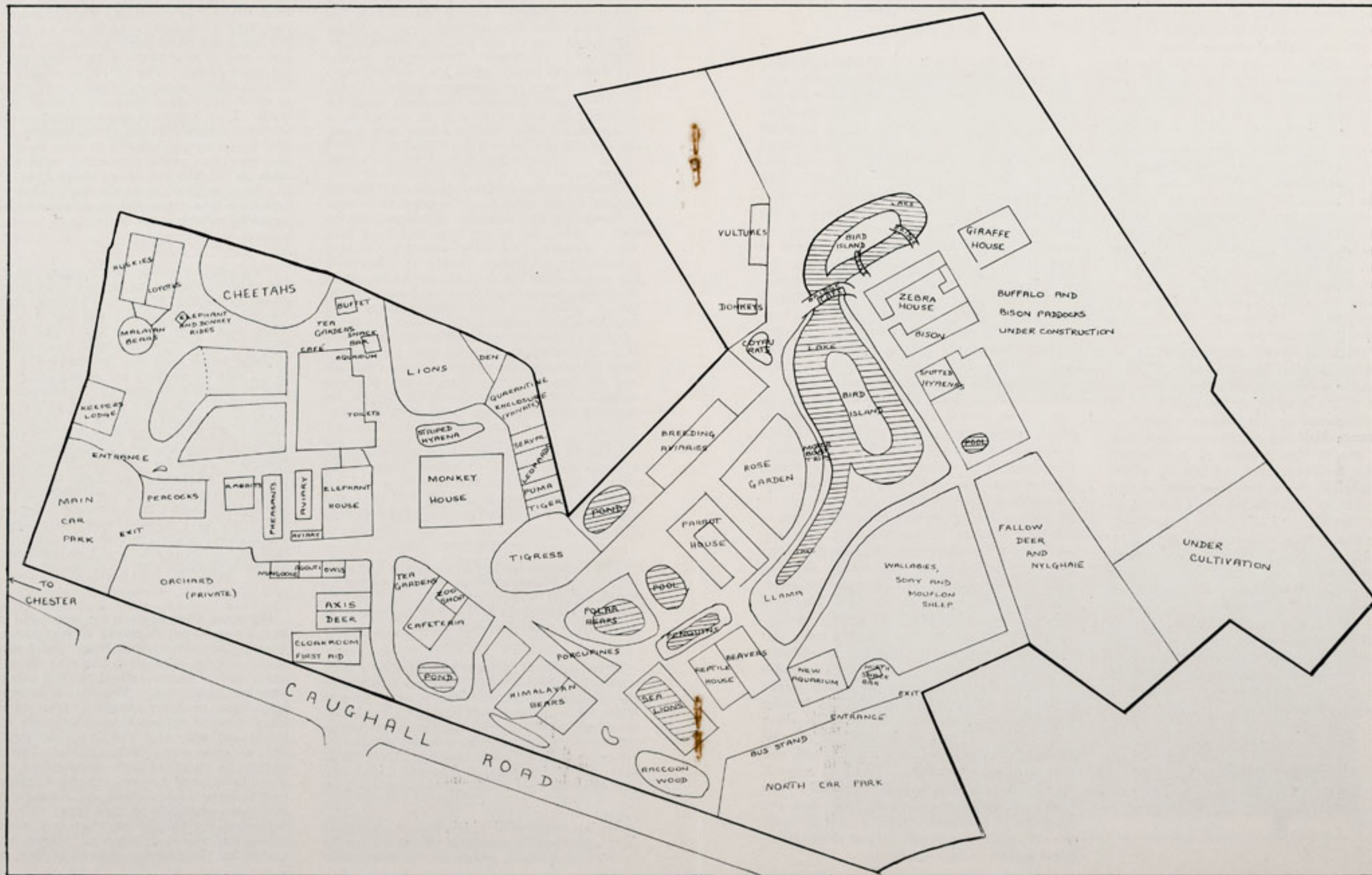
A sad accident happened at the Zoo a little while ago. One of the Pelicans which live at the lake had caught its wing in some wire in flight. It was discovered late one night in the enclosure, with its wing completely broken at the base. There was no possible chance of repairing it so it had to be amputated. However, the bird appears to be quite happy and can often be seen swimming around the lake.

An interesting bird which, we are pleased to say, is thoroughly contented on the lake is the Spur-winged Goose, which we received in the

same consignment as the Otter last winter, from Africa. In the spring we decided to cut one wing so that it could be put on the lake but the goose freed itself before this could be done and is now often to be found with the Egyptian Geese. The latter are a very variable quantity—some days there are only two or three and others there are quite a flock of them. They appear to have established themselves in various waters in the vicinity of the Zoo returning periodically to their home. At one time they were pugnacious with all the birds on the lake but during the last two years the large number of swans have taken their authority from them and they are now living amicably with the other birds.

Two pairs of swans had cygnets this year. One pair had eight, which was eventually reduced to six, which are now growing rapidly. Another pair hatched two but lost them both. They then went to nest again and hatched another three. Unfortunately they took the cygnets which they had hatched on a pond, to the lake where the other swans and cygnets had established themselves. Consequently a battle royal took place and one of the young cygnets was killed—but for the timely interference of a keeper the mother of the remaining youngsters would also have been killed. However, the swans with the two cygnets have now been placed on the water by the Polar Bear enclosure where they are apparently quite contented. During the summer months, swans which are very popular with the public, can become very temperamental. On one occasion they can be quite docile and on another they are liable to attack with great vigour.

For some time we have not mentioned Sally and Tweeny, our Malayan Bears, which are amongst our oldest inhabitants. Sally arrived at the Zoo in 1934 when she was about four years old. Tweeny arrived in 1938 when she also was about four. We do not know how long Malayan Bears usually live but although Sally must be approaching old age she is still active and agile and looks no older than she did ten years ago. Although these bears appear to be attractive little animals they can be treacherous, and I have seen many fights between them. They make an alarming noise and make good use of their fangs and claws, but when the fight is over they are none the worse and show no signs of having fought, except for the defiance of one another, which



continues for hours afterwards. At one time there were four of them in the enclosure but in the severe winter of 1939-40 during a storm we had our first problem with open enclosures. The snow drifted to such an extent that the ditch which confined the bears was filled in. This enabled Sammy, one of the males, to walk out—which he promptly did. He caused a sensation by coming up to the house and scratching on the window. A young lady who was living at the house switched off the light (this was during the war when the blinds had to be kept drawn) and moved the curtains to see who was there. Imagine her horror when she saw the face of a bear staring at her! She raised the alarm and we decided that the best plan was to try to get the bear into the house to make him safe. This we did and afterwards we tried to get a crate into the house, in which to catch him. During this time Sammy was becoming bored and was tired of receiving sweets, etc., with which we were trying to keep him occupied. When everything was ready to catch him in the crate he went to the window and pushed his way through—incidentally this window which is in the Entrance Hall has not been repaired yet. Sammy was at liberty again so we decided that when we caught sight of him he would have to be shot. Some time later when we did discover him he was coming up a cutting in the snow and he had a terrible look on his face—he was definitely at war with the world, so we had no choice but to shoot him before any damage was done. Another of the bears died from no apparent cause, the result being that since then the two females have had the enclosure to themselves and have amused thousands of visitors by their peculiar method of begging. They still have many old friends who come to see them regularly, bringing them tins with treacle in the bottom, a delicacy of which they are extremely fond.



The Mayfly,

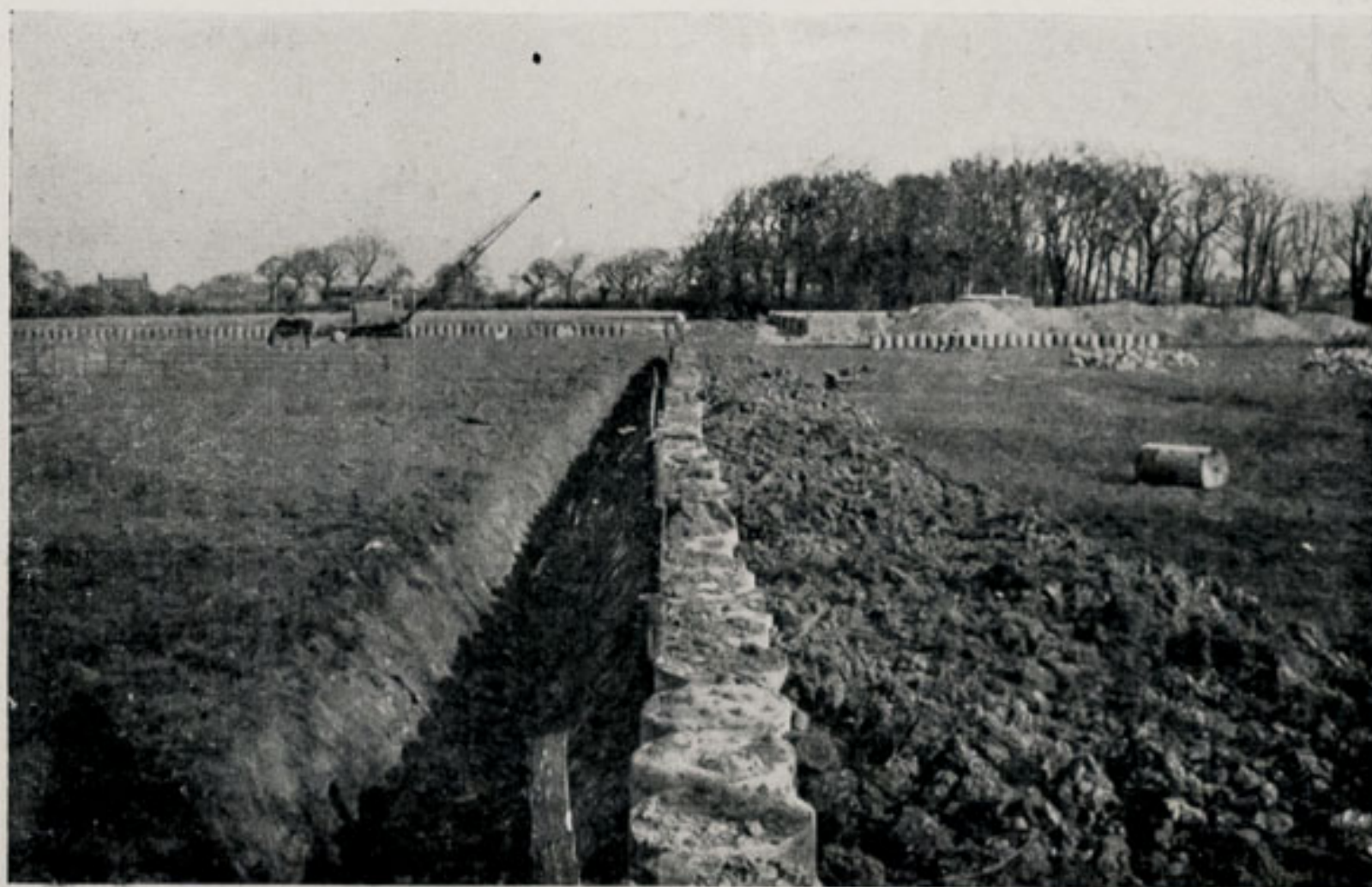
by E. J. F. Pitman.

The Mayfly is familiar to all who walk along the banks of pond or stream in the early summer. Their fairy dances on lacy wing are fascinating to watch but it is not popularly known that this dance is a prelude to death for the adult insect is a complex creature and rarely lives longer than a few days—often only hours. Mayflies begin life in a watery world. The adult alights upon the surface of the water or even dives beneath and lays her eggs on the bed of a stream. When hatched the larvae, unlike the adult insect, breathe by means of gills. They have rather broad heads, flat bodies tapering towards the tail which generally possesses three long filaments persisting also in the imago. The larvae feed upon vegetable matter such as algae although in some species they are said to be carnivorous. The larval life is very long, in fact it is stated in some kinds to reach three years. There is another strange feature about the Mayfly for when most insects emerge from the pupa as perfect adults they are soft and flacid and the wings are crumpled but Mayflies are completely enveloped in a pellicle even to the wings. At this stage they are termed sub-imago and are capable of short flights. In some species the pellicle is shed almost immediately but in others it remains for several days and then when the truly adult insect is seen the wings are not translucent but transparent and the body and legs take on their natural colouration. The sole purpose now of this adult Mayfly is to perpetuate their species and the fairy dances are really the mating flight and to make this light and feathery dance possible the anatomy of the insect is strangely modified. The mouth is degenerate and is used as an air intake though not for breathing, as Mayflies breathe like other insects, by means of tiny holes along the abdomen. The air is used to fill the intestine which is converted out of all recognition and is in fact used as a balloon. With its stomach blown out and the pressure regulated by its mouth the little creature takes off into the warm air of a summer's day to meet its lover and after mating is completed and the eggs are safely laid its destiny is fulfilled.

FLASHBACK TO THE SPRING OF 1945 WHEN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF
THE ZOO—AS IT IS NOW—WAS COMMENCED.



Molly taking a rest during the moving of blocks. The photographer was standing in the present fallow deer enclosure and immediately behind the tree is the new Cafeteria completed this year.



The roadway under construction which now constitutes the main walk from the Elephant House to the Sea Lion Pool.



The roadway which leads from the main walk to the lake. The Sea Lions and Reptile House are now on the right and the Polar Bears, Parrot House and Rose Garden on the left.



The Brown Bear enclosure under construction.