
“Our Zoo News”

(and Guide to Chester Zoo).

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“FALLOW DEER”

These graceful Deer are a pleasing sight at the Zoo,
and the antlers of the young bucks are now showing
prominently.

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May, June, July,, 1946.

“Our Zoo News.”

Despite all our efforts to publish “Our Zoo News” on time each month, we find ourselves slowly but surely slipping further behind than ever, and we feel that the time has arrived when something will have to be done about it.

We cannot now say “well, there’s a war on” but, to tell the truth, running the Zoo at the present time is far more difficult than at any period of the war. Labour seems in shorter supply and certainly more difficult than ever, the food problem gets worse, and licences, permits, etc., although doubtless designed to control materials and food in the interests of the general public, are certainly not in the interests of lightening our work. Added to all this, visitors are now coming in larger crowds than ever before and, in our efforts to get back to a peace-time Zoo, we find some of our enterprises lagging behind.

Whatever the cause, however, we have decided that from henceforth “Our Zoo News” must be published in the first half of each month, and so, in order to bring our numbers up-to-date, May, June, and July will be incorporated, and will count as one issue to subscribers.

To add to the interest of “Our Zoo News”, we invite correspondence and contributions from readers. Such correspondence and contributions should be of a Zoological nature and would, of course, be published only if considered suitable by the editor.

Whitsuntide weather was very disappointing and the extra holiday for Victory Celebrations just a wash-out in more than one sense of the word; even so, Whit-week as a whole was only a few hundred down as regards visitors to the Zoo on our record Whitsuntide of a year ago.

Although it has not been possible to do all we would have liked to have done, many improvements and developments have been carried out, and the Zoo is beginning to show signs of recuperating from the aftermath of war.

The Aquarium, which has been under reconstruction for some considerable time, will be again open to visitors by the time these notes appear in print but, for the first time, an extra charge will be made for admission to this exhibit. This extra charge has been found necessary for two reasons; firstly, to keep out that unruly element which did so much damage in the past, and secondly, to help meet the very heavy cost of running an Aquarium of this size. Unlike several Zoos, we have not increased our charges for admission, although our overhead charges have increased considerably, wages alone being now over a hundred per cent. up on 1939.

Another charge we have been compelled to make is for the parking of cars and cycles. In the past, our Car-Park has been free, but during the war it became a general parking and playground for all and sundry, with the result that we have had to employ an Attendant. This, of course, is an expense which the Society should not be called upon to meet whilst our charges for admission to the Zoo remain at pre-war rates, and so a Parking charge of 1/- for Cars and 3d. for Cycles is now made.

Our Demoiselle Cranes made a rough nest and laid. As we were anxious to encourage these delightful birds to produce some young, we fenced-off the path which went past the nest, so that the birds would not be disturbed. Alas, some mischievous youths climbed into the enclosure and stole the eggs. We still have difficulty in understanding the mentality of such people.



AFRICAN CIVET.

The one recently presented to Chester Zoo is, however, a much finer specimen.

On 22nd May an African Civet was presented to the Zoo by Mr. R. E. Jones, of 24, Church Street, Connah's Quay, who thought it was a Mongoose and had been keeping it as a pet until it became too much of a handful.

The African Civet comes from tropical Africa and is much larger than a Mongoose, being about 4 feet long when fully grown.

When alarmed, the Civet exudes an unpleasant odour as protection against attack. This odour comes from a secretion of certain glands in the animal's body, and although at first extremely unpleasant it gradually changes into a very sweet perfume. These animals used at one time to be kept in cages for the purpose of extracting this glandular secretion, which was largely used in the manufacture of Civet perfume.

Civets can be very docile and, on the whole, make charming pets, but they can also be extremely savage.

THE ARCTIC OWL.

By G. S. Mottershead.

I have on occasions expressed the view that, if some of our animals and birds held in captivity at the Zoo were either to escape or be set free, they would probably pine and die. This opinion was justified when, recently, our Arctic Owl escaped from its Aviary by flying against the wire at a place where it had become rotten. Naturally, we were extremely sorry to lose it but consoled ourselves with the thought that it might be able to fend for itself and even fly back to its native Arctic regions.

A few days later, however, we were overjoyed when three little boys brought it back, but we were very concerned when we found that it was thoroughly exhausted, having apparently been unable to find suitable food. It was so weak that we had forcibly to feed it and were not at all sure at first that it would recover. However, after two days it had made a complete recovery and now looks as pleased as Punch to be back again at the Zoo.

A WHALE OF A JAW-BONE.

Seven years ago, Mr. T. H. Humphreys of the Southern Whaling and Sealing Co. Ltd. presented to Chester Zoo a very fine pair of Jaw-Bones of the Blue Whale. These Jaw-Bones, each measuring twenty-two feet in length and together weighing approximately one-and-a-half tons, have been the subject of much speculation by visitors as to what they actually are; we have at various times heard them described by members of the public as tree-trunks, large elephant tusks, and the remains of all kinds of unheard-of prehistoric monsters. We are pleased to say that now, after seven long years, we have succeeded in placing them on show in a permanent position on what remains of the old Polar Bear Terrace. There, they are fixed as they would be in the Whale, so as to give some idea as to the size of the monster from which they came. We have also labelled them, and visitors can now see at a glance what they are and by whom they were presented to the Society. We hope, therefore, that we shall in future hear no more fantastic descriptions and stories about them; but some people may find in them evidence in support of the story about Jonah and the Whale.

ARRIVAL OF RORY.

By a member of the Staff.

After a rather rough crossing of the Irish Sea, Rory (the Zoo's new stock Lion, aged seven years this June) arrived safely from Dublin. He came in a specially-constructed iron and steel travelling cage, which just took him comfortably without allowing room for much movement. Although he must have felt somewhat cramped by the end of the journey, this method of transporting wild animals has been proved to be better than giving them plenty of room to move about, which only causes them to get badly bruised and scratched due to falling about when the cage is moved in the course of transit.

The front of Rory's travelling cage was composed of iron bars, through which he could be seen (Lion-recumbent), the sides were of iron, and the back consisted of the sliding door (securely locked for the journey).

We had, of course, received advice from Dublin of his despatch, and so were fully prepared for the telephone call from Chester Railway Station which informed us (in rather tremulous tones) "There's a Lion here for you, in a crate, and my knees are knocking". Mr. Mottershead hastened to the station in his car, with the trailer behind, and before long had the "crate" containing Rory safely at the Zoo.

Poor Rory must have been feeling very tired and somewhat bewildered after his experiences of the past twenty-four hours; he certainly looked a little bit sorry for himself. The travelling cage was backed to the open doorway of the cage into which he was to be released, although it was thought by some of us that, even after the door of the "crate" had been raised, he might possibly be feeling too seasick to make any attempt at moving out for, perhaps, a few hours. However, Mr. Mottershead climbed onto the top of the travelling cage, unlocked the door, and cautiously raised it. Rory must have been more alert than he looked, despite his expression of tired boredom he was fully alive to the occasion. Nobody actually saw him leave the travelling cage; although he had to move backwards, with a roar he was out, before anybody had time to see. He quickly retired to some straw at the farthest corner of his cage, and roared his defiance when we took a peep at him. After a good rest, he was well enough to eat a normal "Lion" meal, and later was allowed to go through into one of the front cages next to the cage containing Patrick and two Lionesses. Patrick didn't like it at all; he could just see Rory through an iron grating, at which he stood for hours and

roared. Rory was too tired to take overmuch notice, but he did give a few back answers from where he lay on his straw. By morning, Patrick was looking almost as tired as Rory; he had apparently been standing at the grating all night telling Rory what he thought of him. It is quite evident that to put those two in a cage together would be courting disaster, they would fight to the death. Patrick has been King of the Lion-House too long to willingly relinquish his sovereignty. Even the Lionesses seemed to wonder what it was all about, and they peered with interest at Rory when they could get a "look-in" at the grating. After a few days, Patrick worn out with his self-imposed vigil and his roaring maledictions at Rory, gave place to one of the Lionesses, and she just stood there and stared for awhile. Presently, she turned away and, walking deliberately over to where Patrick lay disconsolate, she lay down beside him and playfully started to bite at his face and ears whilst she talked to him in low murmuring growls. One could just imagine that she was telling him not to be a silly old fool, that she at any rate wasn't going to fall for Rory despite his youth and handsome appearance, because she loved Patrick too much for that. Anyway, Patrick seemed to brighten-up considerably, and they presently got up and played about the cage together. Let's hope that he'll soon settle down again and become resigned to the inevitable presence of a rival in the next cage.

PETER ATTEMPTS TO FEED THE LIONS (?).

The arrival of Rory from Dublin, before the completion of the open-air enclosure for the Lions, necessitated some slight moving-about of the inhabitants of the Lion-House. Patrick and Faith (with her three young cubs) were one day moved into one of the rear cages. The three cubs quickly discovered that they could get out through the bars into a nice field, and were soon rolling about, tumbling, and chasing each other in the long grass. Presently, along came Peter (the dog of Mowgli fame) to join in the fun and games, and they all had a jolly time together until the cubs got tired and ran back into the cage to mother. Peter, without the slightest hesitation, raced after them, through the bars, and into the cage. Fortunately, a keeper happened to be passing at the time and distracted Faith's attention from Peter whilst he was called out, otherwise it might quite easily have been the end of Peter. That dog's weakness for Lions, coupled with his high spirits, will some day be his undoing!



THE CROWNED CRANE.

By Graham Renshaw, M.D., F.R.S.E.
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University of Manchester.

Elegant in outline, striking in appearance, the colours of its plumage beautifully blended, the Crowned Crane is a worthy exhibit in any Zoological Garden. Its head is crowned with an aigrette of twisted feathers arranged in a fan; the cheeks are bare, and the plumage of the lower neck developed into elongated feathers that recall the hackles of a gamecock; the wings are ample, the tail short, the legs elongated. Three species are known, inhabiting West and North-East Africa, South Africa, and East Africa respectively. Special interest attaches to the West African species, for it has been thought to be the original of that most famous of bird myths the Phœnix. Shakespeare wrote (The Tempest III.3)—

"I will believe
That there are Unicorns; that in Arabia

There is one tree, the Phœnix throne; one Phœnix
At this hour reigning there".

The legend goes that, the only one of its kind, and always a male, the Phœnix lived in Arabia for five hundred (or even twelve thousand!) years, finally perishing on a funeral pyre set alight by the sun; from the ashes emerged a worm which became another Phœnix. The youngster eventually constructed a casket in which he carried the ashes of his father to Heliopolis in Egypt, depositing them in the Temple of the Sun. No other myth captured so completely the credulity of the ancient world; Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan writers and classical scholars alike accepted it as true. St. Cyril championed the origin of the new Phœnix; "Do not disbelieve this" he wrote "Thou seest the offspring of bees also fashioned thus out of worms" so why not the Phœnix? It was even claimed that a Phœnix had been captured in Egypt and publicly exhibited in Rome. Solinus wrote that this individual was the size of an Eagle, and bore on its head a cone of

feathers; its throat was tufted with feathers, its neck shining like gold; its body purple, and its tail blue mingled with rose colour. Now, if we compare the features of the Crowned Crane with his description we find, to say the least of it, a remarkable resemblance. The cone of feathers decorating the Phœnix suggests the fan-like crest of the Crane, upside-down perhaps, but there is still a resemblance. The throat of the Phœnix, tufted with feathers, suggests the hackled, plumed, neck of the Crane; the blue and rose tail of the Phœnix is comparable to the Crane's grey tail and red wing quills. The Phœnix Tree of Shakespeare is the Phœnix Palm i.e. the well-known date palm-tree of Arabia and North Africa.

The Phœnix had a plumed head, golden and red plumage, and saluted the rising sun with a sweet song. These details, with but little variation, are perfectly applicable to the Crowned Crane.

"CHRISTY".

By G. S. Mottershead.

In my last article about Christy I told of her morning and evening walks, and how much she enjoys meeting all the other inhabitants of the Zoo. I am pleased to say that she still enjoys her evening walks, but her morning exercise had to cease on account of the early arrival of visitors and Christy's reluctance to return to her cage.

She is growing very rapidly and becoming extremely strong, but she is passionately devoted to my wife and daughter and still respects them as her guardians.

In my broadcast in the Children's Hour on 17th June I mentioned that Peter (Mowgli's friend until the lion died) did not seem to be making much headway with Christy. I am happy to say that, soon after my talk, Christy's attitude towards Peter became more friendly and she began to enjoy his company when they were out together with my wife; now they share the same cage, play, eat and sleep together. We shall, of course, endeavour to keep this friendship within limits, as we have no wish to see Christy die of a broken-heart when separated from Peter, as did Mowgli. Christy is destined to be a breeding Lioness, so her friendship with Peter must, of necessity, be of a temporary nature. She will be brought into frequent contact with other Lions so that, when she matures, it will be the call of her own specie that will draw her most.

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, Peter has a pronounced weakness for the company of Lions, and seems to regard them all as his equals, in fact, I believe he's convinced that he is the King of Beasts. We hope, however, he will not allow his confidence to carry him too far, even though the Lions do look

upon him as an extraordinary animal and not a bit like other dogs.

Christy does not mind me petting Peter, but she will not allow my wife or daughter to do so in her presence; she seems to consider that they are her special property. This is, of course, quite natural, seeing that they fed her from the bottle throughout her babyhood; as I mentioned earlier in these articles, my part in her upbringing was confined to sharing my bedroom with her.

News from other Zoos.

MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

MAY, 1946.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

The recent showery and changeable weather has, naturally, not produced good "gates", but the rain has produced a good growth of grass which will be uncommonly useful later on.

Two Wolf cubs have been born in the Wolf wood (the first for several years), and two Dingo pups have also been born.

New arrivals include a Tortoise, four baby Badgers, a Roseate Cockatoo, and a male Wolf of the Chester strain.

The Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede (Home Secretary) lunched with the owner recently and was much interested in all he saw.

Under the new Finance Bill, an injustice borne for years has at last been rectified. The Entertainments Tax (to which Maidstone Zoo is subject) has been reduced from 3½d. in the 1/- to ½d. in the 1/-.

JUNE, 1946.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

The description "Flaming June" could hardly be applied with any truth to the month of June 1946, not at any rate in the neighbourhood of Kent. Miserably wet and cold weather is not conducive to large "gates" for out-door attractions. As, however, my "gate" is up by over 25 per cent. on that for June 1945, I must not complain.

Some interesting animals and birds have arrived, including a pair of Blue-Fronted Amazon Parrots, a Patas Monkey, and a pair of Viscachas; the latter an old favourite of mine ever since I saw them in thousands on Estancias in South America. Incidentally, the first wild animals I ever owned, way back in 1900, were a Viscacha and a Puma that lived amicably together for some time.

No luck with the Eagle Owl eggs, as both proved to be unfertile, as also were nine Emu eggs which were put into an incubator.

Guide to Chester Zoo.

Entering the Zoo at the main gate, visitors are advised to proceed along South Drive. In the past, this roadway was a public highway but was closed about sixty years ago on the construction of the road now known as Oakfield Drive.

Passing along South Drive, we come to the Elephant loading platform from which Molly the Elephant gives rides daily, except Fridays and wet days, during the summer months. Molly is a native of Ceylon, about twenty years of age, and has travelled considerably, having visited most of the European Countries at one time or another. She has, however, been in this Country for the past eight or nine years, and her Mahout has been with her since she was quite a youngster. Elephants, as a rule, live to a great age and continue to grow until they reach the age of about twenty-five years; Molly has grown considerably since she arrived at the Zoo in 1941.

Leaving the Elephant stand and continuing to the left, we notice the Raccoon enclosure, at present unoccupied. On our right we find the Malayan Bear enclosure, in which are at present Sally and Teeny, two female Malayan Bears. Sally has been in this enclosure for about ten years and Teeny (distinguishable by the white marking on her chest) for about eight years. The Malayan Bear is about the smallest of the true Bears and is often referred to as the Sun Bear. Its native home is Borneo and the Malay Peninsula, and it has many peculiar characteristics. Its food in the wilds consists mainly of honey and nectar, which its long tongue is particularly adapted to extract. The fur of the Malayan Bear is much shorter than that of other Bears and is black tending to brown on the face. Its eyes are small, as also are its ears, and very few of these Bears are without the white patch (varying to cream) on the chest, this patch more often than not being shaped like a letter "V". These little Bears have a very peculiar walk, turning their front toes right in, and they are capable of doing considerable damage with their claws. Sally and Teeny used their claws to such good effect in their enclosure that we had last year to have it reconstructed.

Walking clockwise round the Malayan Bear enclosure, we come to several newly reconstructed enclosures in which are domestic goats, etc., and, a

little further on, a yard occupied by Half-Bred Wild Swine. These are bred from a Wild Boar ex a large Black Pig on the one side and a Wild Boar ex a Tamworth Pig on the other side. When born, these Pigs are striped, but the stripes soon disappear.

Turning left at this point, we proceed along Elephant Walk to Central Drive which runs at right angles to the Cafes and main buildings. Facing the Cafe entrance is a Tea Garden and Buffet, where visitors can make their own choice of a meal or light refreshments at reasonable prices. Beyond the Tea Garden, work is proceeding on the open-air Lion enclosure, and every effort is being made to complete this before the August Holidays.

The Aquarium is on the right of the Tea Garden and runs underneath the Cafes. This exhibit is again open to the public, but we have found it necessary to now make an extra charge for admission to it.

Passing the Aquarium, we find on our left the old Court-Yard in which have been situate for many years the Lion-House, the Monkey-House, the Elephant-House, the Leopard-House, etc. Many alterations and improvements are in course of being carried out in this area of the Zoo, and the Court-Yard is about to be closed to the public. New accommodation, in more congenial surroundings, will be found for the animals.

The Lion-House contains some exceptionally fine specimens of the King of Beasts, Chester Zoo being renowned for its Lions. Here are usually to be found a family of cubs, nearly seventy having been bred since the commencement of the war.

Molly the Elephant can be seen in the Elephant-House, when she is not out giving rides or taking exercise.

Our stock of Monkeys is just now very low, but plans are in hand to build a new Monkey-House which will be stocked with all varieties including Chimpanzees.

The Court-Yard also contains an Aviary in which are the Griffon Vultures, one of which was hatched and reared in this Aviary (the only recorded instance of a Griffon Vulture being bred and reared in captivity).

We must not leave the Court-Yard without first taking a look at little Christy (the orphan Lioness cub whose mother Cassandra died when she was born last Christmas Day). She is being accommodated temporarily in the Quarantine House, pending completion of the open-air enclosure for the Lions,

and has now the company of Peter the dog for several hours daily.

Just outside the Court-Yard, on the left, are the Parrot Aviaries. We have here one or two very amusing specimens including "Cocky" the Slender-Billed Cockatoo, who persistently calls out "Come 'ere" or "Scratch Cocky", but visitors should take care—an unwary hand may receive a nasty bite. Another attractive specimen is "Rob-Rob" the Red and Blue Macaw, who has been at the Zoo since 1931 and is very popular.

Our route now turns left and up Bison Walk, on the left of which are the American Bison. One of these is an exceptionally fine bull "Ferdinand", with a magnificent head and shoulders, the largest American Bison we have ever seen. Some years ago, these animals became almost extinct, although at the beginning of the nineteenth century they ranged the North American Continent in hundreds of thousands.

The enclosure on our right, opposite the American Bison, (in the far corner of which is a well-sheltered pond) contains several varieties of Geese, including the Blue Snow Geese, Egyptian Geese, Chinese Geese, Ashy-Headed Geese, and the Magellan Geese.

Proceeding about a hundred yards or so up Bison Walk, past the roadway leading to the pond, we find on our right a smaller enclosure with a hillock in the centre. Here, with some goats, are the Mouflon (Wild Sheep of Corsica and Sardinia) now almost extinct.

Next, and still on our right, the two new Bear enclosures. In the first is "Trotsky" the Russian Bear with "Paddy" and "Won-Lung" the Himalayan Bears. Trotsky came to Chester Zoo as a small cub and, although he does not object to sharing his home with a lady like Won-Lung, he seems to strongly resent Paddy who was the last arrival in this enclosure. We suspect Trotsky of having grown up with the idea that he owns the Zoo!

Adjoining the Russian and Himalayan Bear enclosure is the Polar Bear enclosure, where Punch and Judy are to be seen enjoying themselves in their swimming-pool, which is one of the largest

for Bears in the Country. The water in this pool is constantly changing, the inlet supply being at the bottom. Punch, who is now about forty years of age, has resided at Chester Zoo for approximately fifteen years, and for many years previously was a member of the group of Bears in the late Bostock & Wombwell's Circus. Judy, who is now about ten years of age, came to Chester Zoo from Skegness in the early days of the War. Despite the great difference in their ages, they are good pals and have lots of fun together in their pool.

On our left, opposite the Polar Bears, is the Fallow Deer enclosure. These lovely creatures are, like all Deer, very timid, and care should be taken to avoid alarming them. They are natives of Northern Africa and Southern Europe, introduced to Central Europe and the British Isles some centuries ago, and now common in some of our large Parks.

Also in this enclosure are the Spanish Spotted Sheep, the Black St. Kilda Sheep, and the Soay Sheep.

Plans are in hand for a large Sea-Lion Pool and a Penguin enclosure, for which we propose to utilise part of the Fallow Deer enclosure adjoining Bison Walk.

The Wooded Dell at the end of Bison Walk is the home of Water Deer and several varieties of birds. Visitors are advised to proceed clockwise round this dell to the Fountain-Garden, where the filtered water from the Bear enclosures cascades in a water-fall and sprays from a fountain on its return journey to the Bears' swimming-pool.

The garden path leads straight on to the pond in the enclosure containing the sheep and geese. Walking clockwise round this pond we arrive at East Avenue on the left of which is the Orchard. Towards the end of East Avenue, on the left, are the Indian Spotted Deer. Turning sharp left and proceeding along a new roadway, on both sides of which are Aviaries containing birds of many varieties, we eventually come out onto the Lawns, where Peacocks, Cranes, Guinea-Fowl, and other birds, have complete freedom.

Now to the Cafe for a cup of tea.