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# “Our Zoo News”

and Guide.

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CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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Picture by kind permission of Mr. J. Davies.

Rack and Ruin in their new pool, have a friendly argument about the hole in their motor tyre.

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# The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 21898.

October/November, 1950.

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## Donkeys.

To most folk donkeys are donkeys and that is that—no distinction, no character, no individuality. This could be true of the poor subdued types on various beaches—but is certainly not true of the donkeys here at the Zoo. The next time you pay us a visit, even if it is not until next Spring, take a closer look at our subject. Try not to dismiss them lightly as so many silly beasts with children habitually dumped on their backs, and don't frown severely at the people you hear entreating Penelope or Marmaduke to "look at the little ponies", try to forgive the doting parent who pleads with a howling infant to "go ta'tas on the lovely little gee-gees".

The mokes themselves, join with you in deploring this attitude. Jack, for instance, flatly refuses to budge when referred to as "that one on the end", and I don't blame him. You see Jack is the lord and master of them all—although actually one of the youngest (he is only 4½ years), he is the biggest and orders the others round in the most arbitrary fashion. You will identify Jack by his neat sandy coat and not by the black line down his back, as someone once said, the donkey who hasn't such a line is a horse or a black donkey. Jack also possesses aristocratic ears and a most superior glance, apart from his appearance, he invariably walks through things, especially other donkeys and people, never round them, and he gets quite annoyed when trees and fences don't jump out of his way, as Trigger would for instance.

Now Trigger is nothing like so sterling a character as Jack. If you have been in the Forces you will know what I mean when I say that Trigger is full of "flannel". He is the big, brave, dashing, handsome donkey—in Trigger's opinion that is—but in actual fact he is scared stiff of Jack and not too sure about

Jim, Joe and one or two others. In the mornings when they are given their oats, he would get very little if a place were not found for him where it is difficult for the others to elbow him out, or fetlock him out, or whatever donkeys do.

Talking about food, you may have thought hitherto, that donkeys will eat anything. Well, this is a pretty fair estimate—Jim and Blackie are often to be seen greedily munching the bark from trees, also Jack has been known to consume numerous paper bags and Candy to daintily chew lighted cigarette ends. However, they have their special likes and dislikes, Trigger would give a pound of carrots for one bite of those straw baskets that ladies carry—preferably with a good quality glove or two thrown in! Then Monty has a passion for peppermints—I must tell you more of Monty later, he is quite a star turn, Bill likes tea leaves and Jim is miserable if he doesn't manage to steal at least one sandwich a day—usually from some poor unsuspecting child's lunch—so watch your sandwiches children. Or better still give your donkey one. But please, and this is from the heart, only feed them after you have had your ride. Promise them a treat first by all means—tempt them if you like, with tales of best butter and Grade 1 Salmon, and they will trip round the track nicely, but don't stuff them with buns just before you mount and then wonder why they stand gazing soulfully into your eyes. So many folk are apt to label the moke brainless for refusing to go and at the same time, hold interesting looking and smelling carrier bags near their noses. They may be lazy and stubborn, but there is always a reason when they stop. Free from temptation, unmolested and with a rider firm and straight in the saddle using the reins, they behave quite well—at least as well as anyone else could be expected to who had walked round in circles all the afternoon.

For customers who can really ride, they can even be persuaded to canter and on occasions have been known to gallop, as the riders who take part in our Donkeys' Derby will testify. In fact the most unlikely things have happened—Bill, who is very fat and only needs the addition of an umbrella and bowler hat to closely resemble a portly little business man in a fur coat, once won a race—yes, Bill, who ambles round placidly with all the smallest infants at about a mile a week.

In order that you can choose your favourite moke to ride, the following descriptions will help you to recognise them.

Jack and Jim are easy—they are the two biggest and Jim is the greyer of the two with a white star on his back. Jack's only peculiarity is that he doesn't talk—he does everything else. Then there is Rusty, she is very small, with a slightly purple tinge on her coat with a rusty look round the edges. Although she is Jim's girl friend she is by no means glamorous—in fact she has a rather untidy appearance. Rusty is also fickle and it is because she sometimes winks at Jack, that he and Jim have never been on speaking terms. Monty is perhaps the easiest to pick out (except of course Blackie who is surprisingly enough—black). Blackie is the eldest of our tribe, being 15 years—a veritable George Bernard Shaw among donkeys, for he is very wise and a nod from him soon brings the more youthful and frivolous youngsters to a sense of their duty. It is said that in his dim and distant past, longer than any donkey can properly remember, he worked in a circus. One of his special tricks is knowing precisely when it is his day off and no amount of argument will convince him that he has changed with Joe. Monty is a very dark grey and is turning white; he is a bit bony now but is still the best moke for very little children.

Joe has no special features except that he is apparently under the impression that he can act. He walks stiffly and in jerks to pretend he is tired, but it is a poor show, mainly because too often repeated, then once he is in the field, rushes round like a whirlwind. Of course he is not often sent out anyway, as he spends most of his time recovering from fights with Jack.

Candy is also a small build of donkey, slightly inane and definitely sagging in the middle. Sandy and Bess are the two other ladies, apart from Silver who has been unable to appear in public for some time, but is very good for riding when her maternal obligations are completed. Sandy shows the origin of her name round the face and head, and Bess is a very handsome long haired brown donkey—it was her foal named Squibs who wandered off with neighbouring cows and as a consequence was denied home comforts. This unfortunately, resulted subsequently in the foals death.

The only member of our donkey fraternity not mentioned so far is Tiny, who is a rather non-committal type. He does many of the things that the others do, but all in moderation. However, Tiny has one claim to fame, when he trots it is just like a polka, one two three—hop.

On better acquaintance, which is the purpose of this article, it is possible to like donkeys very much, not that anyone ever actively dislikes them, only it is not usual to attribute to them any personality, with their own individual and endearing qualities. At this point one expects uncomplimentary comments about their nondescript appearance with its suggestion of habitual misery. I must contradict this suggestion, they are not miserable, they only look that way, so would anyone possessing long ears, a face with mournful contours and a droopy bottom lip. The whole effect of melancholy is dispelled when you see them laugh as someone slips in the mud—it should be added that they often show a perverted sense of humour.

Don't forget next time you're here then, and donkey rides are on the programme, to ask for Jack, Trigger or whichever you prefer—and to enquire after Monty, who may be retiring any time now. If there are no rides the day you visit us, go and see them in their winter quarters and if there is a Keeper handy, ask to be introduced, you would go a long way to find elsewhere quite so charming a crowd of silly asses.

J. R. DAVIES.



A view of the Sea Lion Pool.



A contented survey by one of our Lionesses in their large enclosure.



The Crowned Crane lowers an elegant head to contemplate something of interest on the ground.



The Himalayan Bear calmly considers the photographer.

## News Flash.

**OSWALD'S ESCAPADE**—Early one morning recently, the zoo personnel were much disturbed to discover that our petted and so solitary penguin Oswald, had vanished. Apparently he had wriggled himself under a most unlikely looking spot in the fence, but the only one that would account for his absence. The hue and cry was raised and since on a previous occasion, three of his predecessors had staged a similar get-away, waddling ponderously down the main drive, over the road and up the pathway of a house in a nearby street, it was decided to begin the search in that direction. This spot must have a definite "penguin appeal" for sure enough, in a front garden, lurked Oswald.

With considerable relief the cheekie chappie was caught and supposedly, safely crated for transportation back into the zoo on the lorry. As luck would have it, the driver was called away before he had a chance to unload the crate and return Oswald to his own small piece of territory and so, nothing daunted, and quite determined to seek pastures new—Oswald managed to disentangle himself once more and was next seen waddling hurriedly back from whence he had just come.

Alas for Oswald, his little escapade was over, no more chances could be taken or further opportunities given, and we shrewdly suspect what is more, that in his heart Oswald may be as thankful to be sure of his little house and nice fresh herrings, as we are to be sure of Oswald.

**GIRAFFES**—Our Giraffes now doing their quarantine in London, are making good progress. George, who seemed less happy about his new home than either Gussie or Gooffey, has picked up again nicely and seems to be thoroughly enjoying once again, a pleasantly varied diet.

**MAP GUIDE**—Readers will notice that the usual map Guide, until this edition, to be found in the centre of Zoo News, has been discontinued. In view of our rapid expansion this is now obsolete, but it is proposed to publish in the spring, a complete and up-to-date Guide of Chester Zoo for the Festival year of 1951.

## New Arrivals.

**GUINEA BABOON (PAPIO PAPIO)**—This little lady called Jennie and aged about five years, has been newly acquired from The Royal Zoological Society in Ireland. The Guinea Baboon is an inhabitant of West Africa from Senegal and the Niger to Central Africa. It is the smallest of all the Baboons, and characterized by the uniformly reddish-brown colour of the fur, tinged with yellow on the head, back, and limbs. The naked parts of the face are bluish-black, and bear small longitudinal swellings corresponding with those which are so enormously developed and highly coloured in the Mandrill. Like all its relations, the Guinea Baboon is social in habit, wandering about in small troops. It is hardy and lives well in captivity, large numbers being imported into Europe to stock travelling menageries; but, like all Baboons, though friendly and fairly docile when young, it becomes spiteful and aggressive when adult.

**LESSER SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO—PAIR (KAKATOE SULPHUREA)**—The Lesser Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo is found in Celebes, Buton and Tогian Islands. This bird does not do very well in a cage, but is hardy and enduring in an outdoor aviary, or at liberty. It is very noisy and seldom a good talker, but, like all white Cockatoos, is easily tamed. The food should be that of the Greater Sulphur-crest: green peas and green wheat are much appreciated.

Both sexes sit, the cock quite as much as, if not more than, the hen. The period of incubation is twenty-four days. The species has been bred in captivity and hybrids with the Roseate have also been reared.

### Some brief facts about specimens now to be seen in our rapidly expanding Bird Collection.

**GREATER SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO**—This bird is to be found in widely distributed areas of Australia—the species congregates in large flocks, usually laying two white eggs, either in hollow trees or holes excavated in the face of a cliff. They are apt to congregate in great numbers at nesting time, taking possession of the holes worn by the

weather into the high cliffs—here they lay eggs and hatch out their young. It is a most interesting sight to see hundreds of these birds sitting upon the ledges of rock near to their nests—depressing and raising their beautiful crests. This bird is very destructive to growing crops and is much hated by farmers who kill them wholesale; whilst the farmers point of view can be readily appreciated—their methods of meeting this nuisance is unfortunately often harmful to other types of rare and beautiful birds.

As a cage bird the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo is both hardy and enduring and there are records of birds living to over 100 years.

Determining sex appears to be controversial, though experts do say that the female resembles the male but has a slightly paler iris—though others remark that they have never seen any specimen with other than button black eyes, so the percentage of females imported on that basis, would appear to be extraordinary low. The plumage is white with beautiful sulphur crest.

**ROSEATE COCKATOO**—Another bird that can be found in many parts of the Australian continent. The back wings and tail are grey, the flight feathers darker grey, the crown of head and hind neck a sort of pinkish white and the throat, sides of face, breast, abdomen and under wing coverts, a rich rose pink. The Roseate Cockatoo is sometimes known as a Galah in its wild state. From the Avicultural point of view this bird possesses more virtues than failings—it has not much merit as a talker—in an aviary only the strongest type of protection will long survive the constant attacks made upon it by the strong beak. Contrariwise it is easily tamed and soon becomes devotedly attached to its keeper—females are often gentle enough to let strangers stroke them. It is intelligent and takes quite kindly to cage life, though every effort has been made in Chester Zoo to give them outdoor flights where they can indulge their obvious love of flying. They greatly delight in a rain bath.

**LEADBEATER'S COCKATOO**—This bird is an inhabitant of New South Wales as well as large areas of Australia. The Leadbeater has very lovely colouring, back wings and tail are white, inner tail feathers red, sides of face, hind neck, chin, breast, sides of body and under wing coverts salmon pink. The long crest is red at the base, then yellow, then red and then white. Grows to a total length of approx-

imately 14 inches. Aware of their beauty obviously, they will partially open their wings exhibiting the pink colouring underneath and at the same time, spread their crest until the bands of yellow and scarlet form a complete semi-circle. It is a good aviary bird and breeds well. Both sexes incubate the eggs—the male sits sometimes more than the female. This species can be very spiteful when kept in mixed company.

**COCKATIEL**—To be found largely in Australia—has greyish brown colouring on the under surface of the wings with blackish shoulders, hind neck, mantle and upper back, smoke brown. Has a large whitish patch on the wing. The forepart of the head, sides of face, throat and crest lemon and the ear coverts bright orange. The tail is fairly long with the central feathers projecting beyond the rest—growing to approximately 13 inches. The cockatiel likes roomy quarters and is in general, an excellent aviary specimen.

**BLUE AND YELLOW MACAW**—Found in Tropical America from Panama to Guiana. In colouring blue with sides of neck, entire breast and under wing coverts yellow. This macaw is freely imported, is a good talker and often very talented—is inclined to become very attached to one individual and often bites strangers if given an opportunity. It is a very hardy breed.

**RED AND BLUE MACAWS**—Found in Guatemala and Guiana. This is a very well known Macaw with more or less, the same characteristics as to the rest of the species.

**HAHN'S MACAW**—We have one cock and two hens in the collection. This bird is considerably smaller than the macaws mentioned previously and only attains a length of 12-14 inches. It comes from Guiana and Trinidad—the forepart of the crown is bluish, the bend of wing and under wing coverts are red.

**BROWN THROATED CONURE**—Comes from Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil—Green plumage with cheeks, throat and upper breast brown. This is a smaller type still only growing from 10-11 inches. When our specimens first arrived here they were in poor condition, but those who survived, are now coming along very nicely.

**ALEXANDRINE PARRAKEET**—Comes from India—Green plumage, salmon pink collar, tail is blue-green in colour and very long. This is a very hardy bird and can stand severe cold. They go to nest readily but are nevertheless not easy to breed from.

**INDIAN RINGNECKED PARRAKEET**—Also from India. Green plumage, with bluish green tail—the colour of the face is brighter than the body and the bill is red with blackish tip. These are very hardy birds and will live in any indoor or outdoor aviary.

**AFRICAN GREY PARROT**—Comes from Equatorial Africa. Has ashy grey plumage, the flight feathers are dark grey, with red tail and tail coverts. This bird is noted for its intelligence and talking ability. The African Grey is of most gentle temperament and is seldom known to show signs of spitefulness or treachery. They, in common with most of their kind, are great fruit eaters, grapes very sweet being their most favoured variety of this food. A pair of our African Greys went to nest this year, but did not succeed in hatching any young—as the birds had not long been placed in the aviary and there was a lot of building work underway in the vicinity, we think this probably accounts for their failure.

**AMAZONS—BLUE FRONTED LEVAILLANT'S, ORANGE WING, GREEN CHEEKED**—We have a number of these specimens who, unfortunately, have all been domestic pets, and whilst they are all able to fly their age is extremely doubtful and so far, we have not managed to complete pairs of these birds.

**CANARY WINGED PARRAKEETS**—We have two or three pairs of these birds in the collection, that have recently been imported, and it is hoped that we shall be able to breed from them in the coming year.

**BLACK HEADED CAIQUE**—From Guiana and Upper Amazons. Has a black crown, with green wings, rump and tail. Cheeks and throat are gold, under tail coverts and flanks bright orange. The Caique is a short tailed South American parrot and in habit resembles the Conures closely. They are large fruit eaters, intelligent, playful and amusing—these birds need plenty of exercise and do not do well confined for any length of time in a small cage.

**BLUE-HEADED OR RED-VENTED PARROT**—Our specimens came from Guiana—have green plumage, with head, neck and upper breast a rich dark blue, with rich blue and green tail feathers. This is a very pretty bird that can be trained to make a most affectionate companion—it is hoped to make up a breeding pair from those at present in the aviary.

**KINGS PARRAKEETS**—This is a fairly hardy specimen and a most beautiful looking Australian bird, quite new to our collection.

We now have a pair of these in our breeding aviary, with which we hope to be successful next year.

**RED RUMP PARRAKEETS**—From New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. This species is entirely unsuited to close confinement, but bred well last year in their spacious quarters in our breeding aviaries. We were not, however, so lucky with them this year but hope to breed some more of these lovely little Parrakeets in 1951.

**STANLEY PARRAKEETS**—From Mid- and South-West Australia. We have several pairs in the collection who are proving most attractive exhibits.

**MEALLY ROSELLAS**—From Northern New South Wales and Queensland. This bird is inclined to be delicate when first imported—the Mealy Rosella is well represented in our collection and grows to a length of about 12 inches. The crown of the head feathers are a pale yellow, the upper mantle golden yellow with blackish markings, the wings are various shades of violet, blue and blue-green, central tail feathers are dark blue, cheeks and throat whitish and the breast, rump and under parts pale blue.

**CRIMSON-WINGED PARRAKEET**—Native of large areas of Australia and well represented in our collection, this is a most handsome and attractive exhibit.

**BARRABANDS PARRAKEET**—Found in large areas of Australia. General plumage is brilliant in hue, flight feathers bluish green, with long pointed tail, under surface black, upper surface green, bill red. This bird grows to approximately 16 inches. The Barraband can become a most attractive pet, but has too loud a cry to be pleasant company in a small space. As an aviary bird, however, the Barraband is not only a most attractive exhibit, but hardy and indifferent to cold.

**ROCK PEPLAR**—To be found in New South Wales and over large areas of Australia. In general colouring the Rock Peplar is pale yellow, darker on the crown and hind neck and grows to a length of approximately 16 inches. This bird when tame, can be made into a delightful pet with considerable powers of mimicry—is also very active and thrives best in an aviary where it has a generous flight.

**CORRECTION—PUBLISHER'S ERROR**—We have to point out that the name of the Bristol delegate to the Zoological Conference in Dublin, reported in our last edition, should read Mr. R. E. Greed and not Mr. R. E. Green, as printed.