
“Our Zoo News”

• A CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF •
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

NUMBER 130.

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'Mottie' the first Polar Bear Cub to be born at Chester Zoo. Born in December, 1959, 'Mottie' is now well grown, and lives happily with the rest of the Polar Bear family at the Zoo.

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Number 130.

Our Zoo News.

Dare we raise our heads again??? After two years we feel that we owe our readers an explanation as to why 'Our Zoo News' has not been published.

The sole reason for this delay is that we have been so terribly busy. Since the last 'Our Zoo News' was printed, a great many developments have taken place at the Zoological Gardens, and we have had to deal with a rapidly increasing number of visitors. As a result 'Our Zoo News' has been somewhat neglected, but we now hope to resume regular publication, and to acquaint our readers with some of the many developments which have taken place during the last two years.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

Since the last issue of 'Our Zoo News' a considerable amount of work has been done in the Zoological Gardens. Many of the developments foreshadowed as a result of the purchase of the Riding School (mentioned in a previous edition) have now been carried out. This area has been completely transformed, and now contains two canals, several islands and four large paddocks for Deer and Antelopes. By far the most spectacular construction in this area, however, is the new Restaurant, in front of which has been built a fountain surrounded by many flower beds. These beds contain a very large number of plants and one particular area is confined to roses, where something like 2,000 rose trees have been planted. The remainder of the beds are devoted to seasonal bedding plants.

The Fountain Restaurant, as it is called, is a two storey building, with large windows looking out on to a terrace, giving a very fine

view of the gardens in the front. The whole is serviced by a central kitchen and during the season complete luncheons are served in the restaurants. The first floor is more or less a repetition of the ground floor, with a balcony, giving once again an extensive view of the gardens. The first floor is used mainly for afternoon teas.

Another addition to the catering facilities of the Zoo was the construction, near the North Entrance, of a long building in Cedar Wood with multi-coloured windows, which has been named the 'Rainbow Cafe'. This building is a replacement of one of the original catering buildings in the Zoo, known as 'The Big Buffet' where cups of tea and minerals, etc., were available, and people could eat their own food.

In 1959 we erected a new Bird House with outside flights which has proved exceptionally successful, as well as being popular with the public. All the indoor sections of the house can be reached by the Keepers through a passage, without coming into contact with the public. The whole of the structure is covered with a profusion of plant life, which gives a very pleasant appearance.

Another building which was constructed and opened in 1960 is the 'Small Mammal House' which as its name implies, is used to accommodate the many small mammals which we have acquired; it is fairly extensive with rows of cages on either side, and each cage has an outdoor enclosure. The whole of the roof of the building is made of one of the plastic glasses, and tropical vegetation is planted at the top of all the cages and down the centre of this house, so that the visitor has the effect of wandering in a jungle. The public look at the animals

through large glass windows. The main object of the glass is to cut out the natural smell which most of these mammals have, and at the same time to prevent close contact with the animals when indoors. When the animal is out in its enclosure, the visitor can get much closer—with plenty of fresh air.

The stock at Chester Zoo has increased considerably during the last two years.

At the present time we have 16 Chimpanzees. Since the birth of Mary in 1958 Babu has had another baby, 'Vivienne', which has also had to be hand reared. In addition to the Chimpanzee Colony we now have five Orang-Utans; two pairs live on the Islands, and a baby who was presented to us in September, 1959 at present lives in the 'Small Mammal House'.

We have now also established our Gibbons on the original island at the Zoo, and they have been there for two years. They live almost completely wild and rarely go into the hut which has been provided for them. They cause a considerable amount of attraction in the summer as they swing from branch to branch, and suddenly appear out of the undergrowth to gaze at boat loads of visitors as they pass by.

Much progress has also been made in establishing herds of various animals for the many large enclosures. Already we have nice herds of American Bison, Ankole Cattle, Water Buck, Fallow Deer, Wildbeeste, Oryx, Zebras and Lechwe. As far as possible we are hoping to keep various species of animals together in herds as would be the case in their natural habitat. The animals themselves are much happier living in this way.

Our monkey population has grown considerably. Our accommodation at the present time is absolutely full, and every effort is being made to build a new Monkey House as soon as we possibly can.

The Reptile House, which for years has been a 'must', is still having to wait, as other jobs take precedence, but we are hoping that by the end of 1961 we shall have a new 'Reptile House'.

Perhaps the greatest addition as far as spectacle is concerned has been the extension and development of the gardens. These have grown so much in the last year or two that our Supply Nurseries have had to be extended considerably. It has been our aim for several

years now to produce a floral display which is out of the ordinary.

Since the winter of 1958 we have added five more glass houses to the nurseries—two at 75 ft. long, 1 each of 110 ft. long, 120 ft. long and 50 ft. long. We are at present constructing an 'Orchid House' which will be 80 ft. long, as we have recently acquired a collection of Orchids which will be used mainly for the decoration of some of the exotic houses.

Wherever enclosures are being made, and the further we extend the Zoo boundaries, it is our intention to incorporate these floral exhibitions.

Quite recently a large party of School Children visited the Zoo and afterwards they were asked to write an essay about their visit. Nearly 90% of the children said that they liked the monkeys best (which were mainly Chimpanzees!) but it was a remarkable fact that well over 90% of the children commented on how much they had enjoyed the flowers. These letters were written quite individually and we feel very pleased that the efforts we have bestowed on the gardens are met with approval by the rising generation!!

A FEW NEWS ITEMS

At the time of going to press we have just had word that Meg, the Chimpanzee, has had another baby—her third since the Chimpanzees were released on to their Island. Mother and baby are doing well.

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A consignment of Eland have recently been received and are now at our Quarantine Station.

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The Wart-hog which was the subject of so much publicity twelve months ago will shortly be transferred from the Quarantine Station into the Zoological Gardens.

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The Colobus Monkeys which arrived here in the early Summer have now settled down. At first when visitors went near their cage they would bolt and hide from them. Now they are becoming quite used to the visitors they are happy in their surroundings, and make a very spectacular sight.

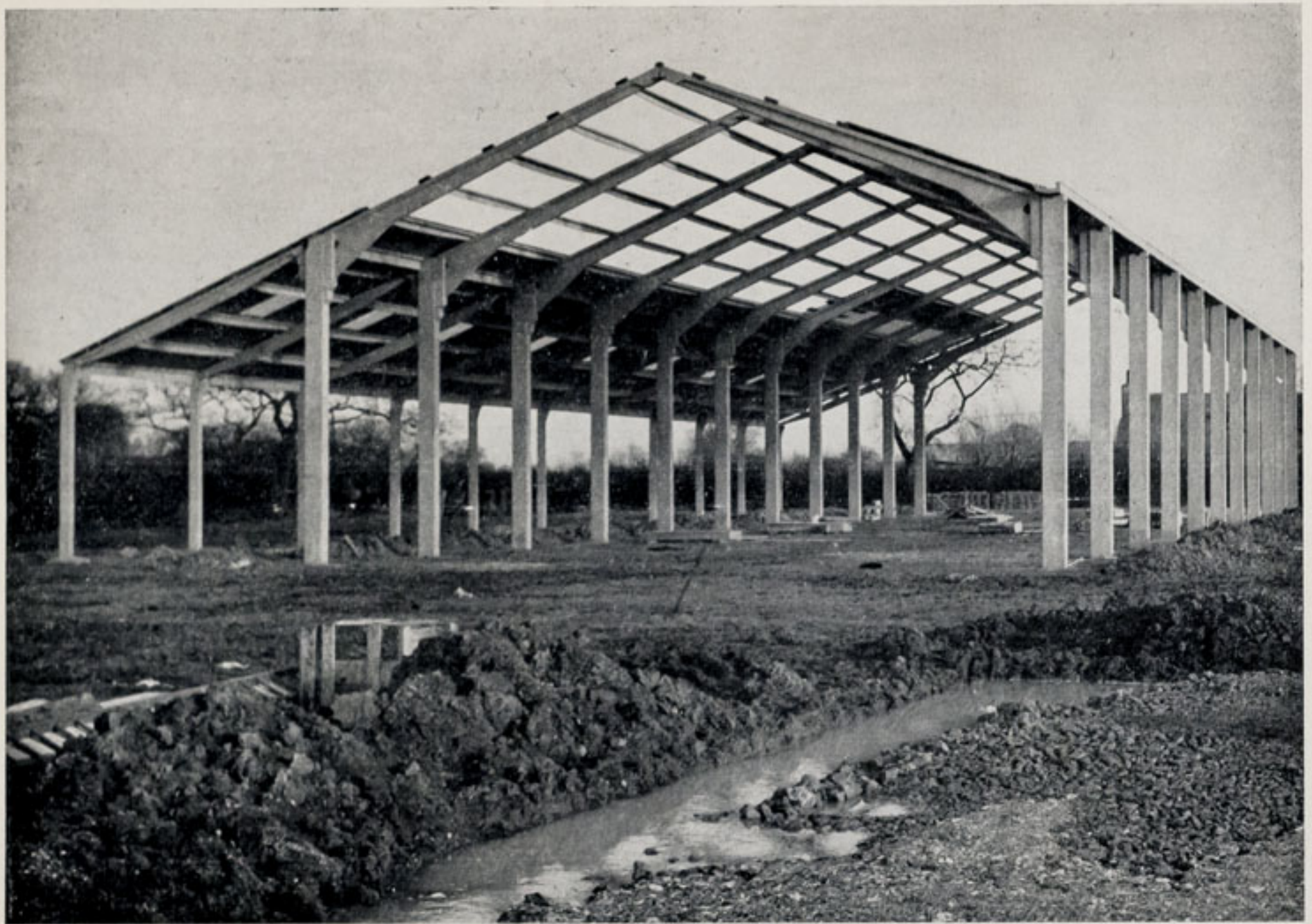
The Fountain Restaurant and Gardens



This is a view of the Fountain Restaurant. In the foreground is the fountain surrounded by flower beds. The buildings of the old courtyard now used as store houses and work shops can be seen in the background together with the trees in the lion enclosure.

We now have a Water Bus service, so that visitors can travel by canal from one part of the Zoo to another. Passengers alight at various stages and when they have seen the animals in that particular area they can rejoin the Water Bus.

This view of the gardens and Fountain Restaurant was taken from one of the Water Buses; part of the new canal runs alongside these flower beds.



This is a view of the early stages in the development of the new 'Pachyderm House' taken in November, 1959, this building is now rapidly nearing completion. The photograph does not convey anything like the size that the building will finally reach, as there are extensions to be made on both ends, and also along the front.

THE PACHYDERM HOUSE

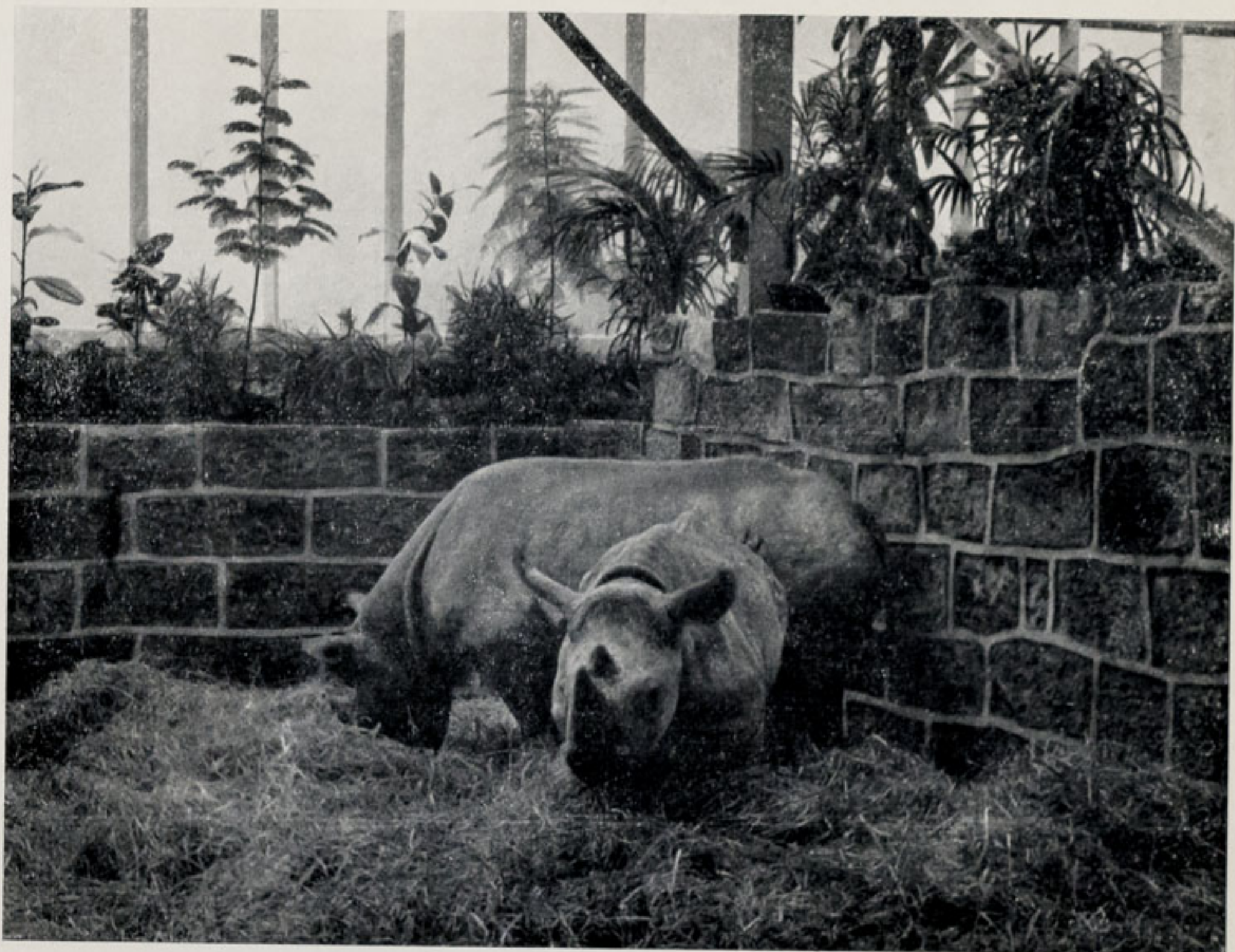
When completed the 'Pachyderm House' will accommodate such animals as the Elephants, Rhinoceros and Hippopotami. All of these animals will be viewed freely without bars or hindrance of any description—specially constructed ditches being the only division between the public and the animals. It is proposed to supply the Elephants with an indoor bathing pool so that they may bathe when confined indoors during the winter. All the animals in this House will have large outdoor enclosures with bathing pools and mud baths. As in the case of the 'Small Mammal House' tropical vegetation will be cultivated to give as natural an appearance as possible.

It became necessary to concentrate on this building, as Rascal and Bobo the two young

African Bull Elephants, were growing so rapidly that in the Spring they began to demolish the roof of the old Rhino House, and had to be transferred to the existing Elephant House, where they joined Baba the large Asiatic Elephant.

The Elephants are taken out daily for walks, but at present they have very little room to move about indoors, hence the speed at which we are working to complete the new 'Pachyderm House'.

Although these two young African Elephants have grown considerably during the past two years, when they are transferred into their new home they will be dwarfed by the size of their accommodation and will have more freedom than most other Elephants kept in captivity.



A photograph of Susan and Roger taken within a few hours of being transferred to their new home.

SUSAN and ROGER.

In the late Summer a Television programme was recorded at the Zoo, and we removed our two Black Rhinos from the Farm and installed them in the new Pachyderm House. These two Rhinos are now between 2 and 3 years old. The female (Susan) was imported from Africa but the male (Roger) was bred in Bristol Zoo. Fortunately the pair immediately settled down together—a state of affairs which does not always happen, as sometimes, Rhinos can be very quarrelsome with one another.

Although Susan is not at present as robust as "Roger" she appears to be progressing and the new pen allows ample space so that al-

though they have each other's company, she also has the opportunity to get away from "Roger" who, I am afraid, must be regarded as a bit of a bully at times!

RHINOCEROS (*Bicornia*)

There are two species of Rhino in Africa—the Black Rhino and the White Rhino. They are both a dirty grey in colour and although many theories have been advanced as to how the "White" Rhino got his popular name, no-one ever seems to query the reason why a "Black" Rhino is so-called. Both species live in very similar territory and in some parts of the Southern Sudan the two are supposed to live side by side.

In the wild, Black Rhinos are fairly widespread throughout East Africa and more localized in Central, South and Southwest Africa. They do not appear to exist in the forests of Equatorial Africa. White Rhinos are now restricted to two small areas of Central and South Africa, the ones in South Africa being protected in a Game Reserve. The former area incorporates South Sudan, West Uganda and part of the Congo. Many estimates have been given of the numbers of both Black and White Rhino still left in Africa, but any such figures must be regarded as very approximate. What is undoubtedly true is that both species of Rhino will be among the first of the larger mammals to disappear altogether. The inevitable encroachment of civilisation is spelling doom to such vulnerable animals, but fortunately they are ideally suited to captivity and one can only hope Zoos will be able to breed as many as possible.

The African Rhino, although lacking the heavy "armour-plating" and ponderous appearance of the Great Indian Rhino, have two horns and these can attain a length of three feet or more. The actual horn is no more than a compressed mass of horny fibres attached only to the skin and merely resting on a small conical base that protrudes from the skull above the nostrils. This means it is possible for the horn to be completely torn off. When such an accident occurs there is a small amount of superficial bleeding and then in a comparatively short time the skin heals over the exposed tip or bone, and a new horn rises to replace the one that has been dislodged.

Much has been written about the Rhino's bad temper and his tough skin, but for the most part his erratic outbursts of temper arise from his nervous disposition, and in captivity he quickly becomes tame. His tough skin is also a common topic but here again there are reservations; in captivity great care has to be taken that his skin does not become dry or cracked. Like Elephants, they thrive on mud wallows and the new outside pen has a mud wallow and a water pool for their comfort.

The Black Rhino is a browsing animal and lives almost entirely on Acacia thorn bush, stripping off the young shoots and soft wood with its specially constructed, prehensile upper lip. In areas where they lack water they will go miles to seek out succulents, such as the Candelabra Tree, Euphorbia, presumably to gain the moisture stored in the thick fleshy stems. White Rhinos are entirely grass-eaters and their wide mouths enable them to crop grass

with the efficiency of a first rate mowing machine. Their heads are very long and carried very low on the ground. Their ears are large and their hearing is undoubtedly better than that of the Black Rhino; they are not solitary in their habits but live in herds of ten or even as many as twenty. This probably accounts for the fact that White Rhinos are far less aggressive than Black, and although considerably superior in size and weight they are remarkably placid in disposition.

The Black Rhino is a solitary animal and his bad eyesight puts him at a great disadvantage with the world. When treading his own well-known tracks he is surprisingly nimble on his feet but when taken unawares he is blundering and awkward. If disturbed when sleeping, he will jump up and rush blindly away, sometimes up-wind and sometimes along the only track available through the bushes. In doing this he often charges into his adversary without necessarily meaning to attack, but once he has made up his mind where he is going, nothing will change his route. So, although he will not necessarily seek out the disturber of his peace, he will certainly press home his charge if the intruder stands in his way. Few Rhinos however, unless deliberately provoked, will turn round in their tracks so as to carry through an attack.

Almost as if to compensate for their inadequate sight Nature has provided an additional alarm system in the form of birds. These birds differ in various parts of Africa from Oxpeckers to Cattle Egrets. At the slightest provocation these birds screech out their warning signal and thus put the Rhino on their guard. These birds that dance attendance on the Rhino—and other game for that matter—serve a dual purpose. Not only do they sound a warning but they settle on the animals and search out ticks and other skin parasites; at the same time they can pick up considerable numbers of insects that are disturbed in the grasses as the Rhinos move slowly along. This seems to prove a very amicable arrangement for both parties.

Left to themselves, all Rhinos are lazy and sluggish by nature, content to follow a daily pattern of habits with monotonous regularity. Just before sunset they can be seen trotting down to drink, grazing and browsing as they go; by early morning they will have left the open country and are back again in the thicket ready to lie up through the heat of the day. It is their methodical, lazy habits that suit them so ideally to life in captivity.