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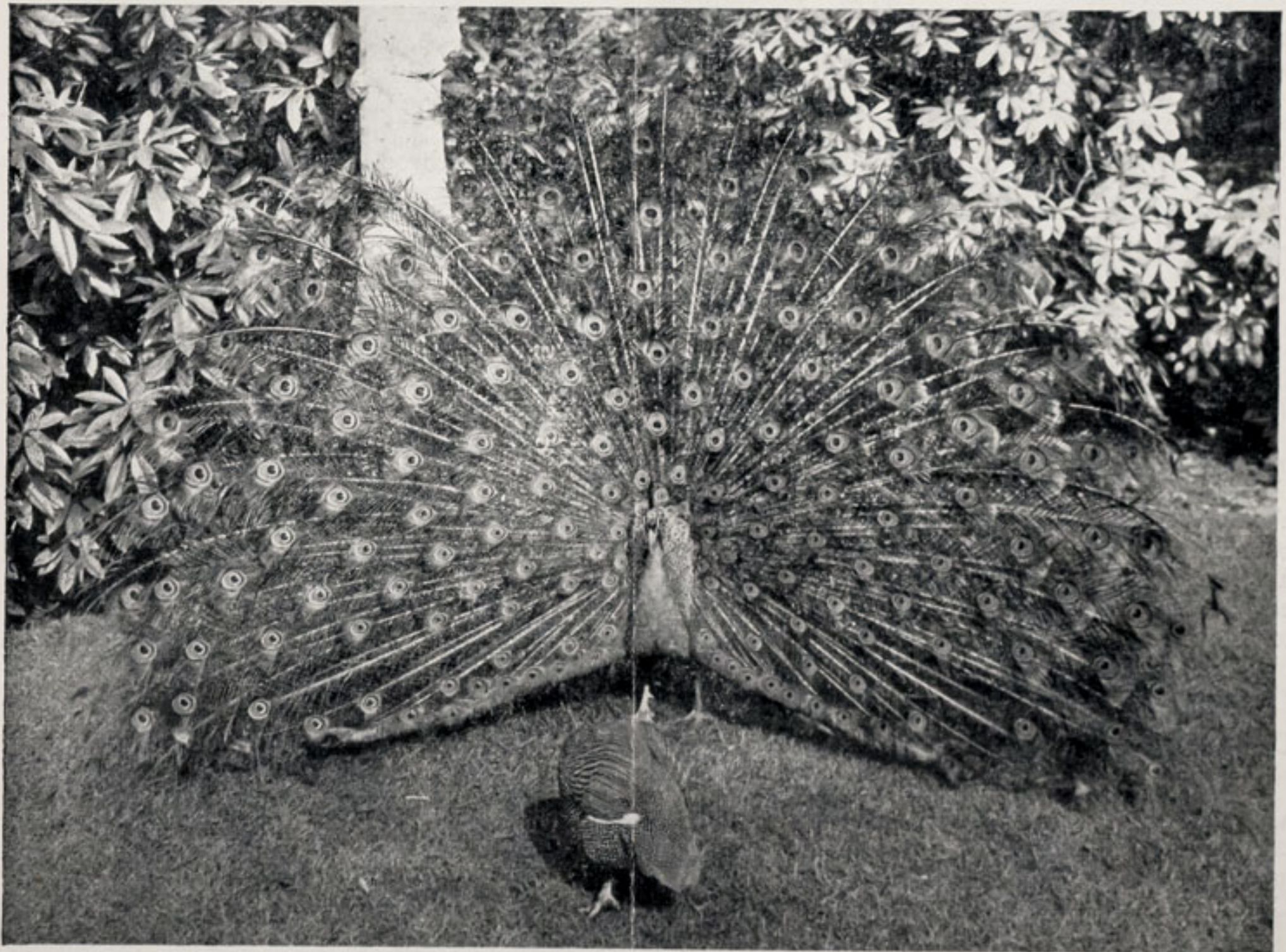
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"Our Zoo News"

● A CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF ●
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

NUMBER 119.

APRIL 1st, 1955.



"DAILY EXPRESS PICTURE."

A sure sign that Spring is on the way: the vanity of one of our resplendent peacocks is so roused that he pays court—with a fanned tail—to even the humblest guinea fowl.

PRICE SIXPENCE

Six copies for 4/- (including packing and postage).

The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 20106/7.

Our Zoo News.

Our most exciting day this month was undoubtedly March 12th, the date of our first outside broadcast at the Zoo this year.

On the Friday before, the place suddenly became packed with B.B.C. engineers, who fixed up an imposing array of electrical apparatus in one of the rooms of the house, and cables at certain points in the grounds. Saturday saw the arrival of an even larger number, and of four commentators, Trevor Hill, Kenneth Wolstenholme, Gwen Pain and Philip Wadilove, whose guides during the 55-minute broadcast (it took up the whole of Northern Children's Hour on that day) were Mr. Mottershead, the Director-Secretary, and one of his secretaries, Miss Enid Rist. Enid, and also Miss Gillian Ashby, who spoke from the Aquarium, made extremely competent and successful B.B.C. debuts.

The broadcasting party visited among other places the Parrot House, the Aquarium and the Elephant House, and at the latter the elephants proved themselves to be the most conscious of the importance of the occasion. The trumpeting of one of these animals, loud clear and impressive, was one of the highlights of the broadcast.

OUR FIRST BABIES.

Our first "Zoo Babies" this year are Toby and Teddy (short for Edwina), Ankole calves born within two days of each other to Margaret and Jennie, who arrived at the Zoo in October, 1952, from Uganda.

A particular fuss has been made of Toby and Teddy because apart from being the first animals born here in 1955, they are the first Ankoles we have bred.

The first to come was Toby, and mother Jennie was very triumphant about this for Teddy was due to be delivered first! A couple of days later, however, on Friday, February

25th, Teddy arrived—and there was no more cause or time for jealousy.

As you can see from the picture (opposite) they are sturdy little creatures and in excellent condition.

New Arrivals.

LITTLE OWL.

We have received a female Little Owl from Dr. Fryer of the Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, London. The little bird was shot accidentally through the wing, and we were asked if we would like it. The wing is healing well now. The owl makes a pair with a Little Owl which belongs to one of our keepers, but which he keeps at the Zoo.

The Little Owl originated in Africa, but is now quite common in this country.

BARN OWL.

Another addition is a Barn Owl, which was found near the Zoo by a local resident and brought to us.

EMUS.

Two young Emus have arrived from Australia, and we have now four in the Zoo. When these birds are put in their permanent home they will make very attractive exhibits.

The Emu is a running bird, and, next to the Ostrich, the largest in existence.

COYPU RATS.

A start has been made to stock our new Coypu Rat enclosure, which was built late last year next to that of the Beavers.

The rats will have a large amount of freedom here, and plenty of running water.

BUFF-BACKED HERON.

We have been sent a Buff-Backed Heron (commonly known as Cattle Egret), which is commonly found along the banks of the Nile, although this specimen actually came from India.

"OUR FIRST BABIES."



"DAILY EXPRESS PICTURE!"

AGOUTI.

Two Agouti (South American rodents) were born recently to one of the variegated females. We all racked our brains to think of names beginning with "A", as we have had to on ten previous occasions! We finally decided on Arnold and Anne.

BUDGERIGAR.

A Hoole resident recently let us have a Sky-Blue Budgerigar, which he was unable to keep any longer. This little bird has very attractive markings and a lemon-yellow beak.

MASKED LOVE BIRDS.

Three small baby Masked Love Birds are now sharing mother's and father's perch and showing off their lovely green, clear yellow, black and white plumage and heads.

COATIMUNDI.

We are very pleased that we have at last been able to purchase a female coatimundi, which we call Jemima. We now have two males and one female.

Sammy and His Wives.

A PRESENT FOR SAMMY.

Who would not be overwhelmed if he were suddenly presented with four wives, all at once? Sammy, the sea lion, certainly was!

Selina, Sabrina, Sonia and Sophia arrived at Ringway Airport, Manchester, after a 6,000-mile, two-day trip from California, and immediately presented a problem to officials: how were they to be classified? Eventually they called the sea lions' flippers "legs", and Selina, Sabrina, Sonia and Sophia were put down as being "live, quadruped animals". . . .

We thought that if we split them up, put three females with Sammy and one with Sonny, the three would be able to give each other moral support, and the fourth (Sophia) would be good company for Sonny.

But things never turn out as planned. Strangely enough it was Sonny who disliked the arrangement. When Sabrina, Selina and Sonia were liberated they swooped down with one accord upon Sammy, who was eyeing them uncertainly in the water.

They kissed him, pulled his whiskers, and made such a fuss that Sammy was forced to retire under water to collect himself. When he had done so, he surfaced once more, and from then on his bossy, domineering streak has been much in evidence. From time to time his foghorn-like call can be heard right across the Zoo, and the obedient females flash through the water and congregate around him.

Sonny and Sophia did not get on at all well together and eventually Sophia broke out of the enclosure. Sophia, therefore, was put with her three sisters and Sammy. There was a joyous reunion and Sammy also seemed gratified to have been made lord and master of yet another wife.

Animal Characters.

PINEAPPLE.

Pineapple, the Margoullat lizard (from Africa) who lives in the Reptile House, is one of those people, sorry, lizards, you can't help but love.

He can easily be picked out in the cage he shares with several other lizards, because his skin is bright green and black, a contrast against the more sober grey and black markings of his brothers. He has a rump, shaped and coloured just like a pineapple, which, of course, is how he came to get his name.

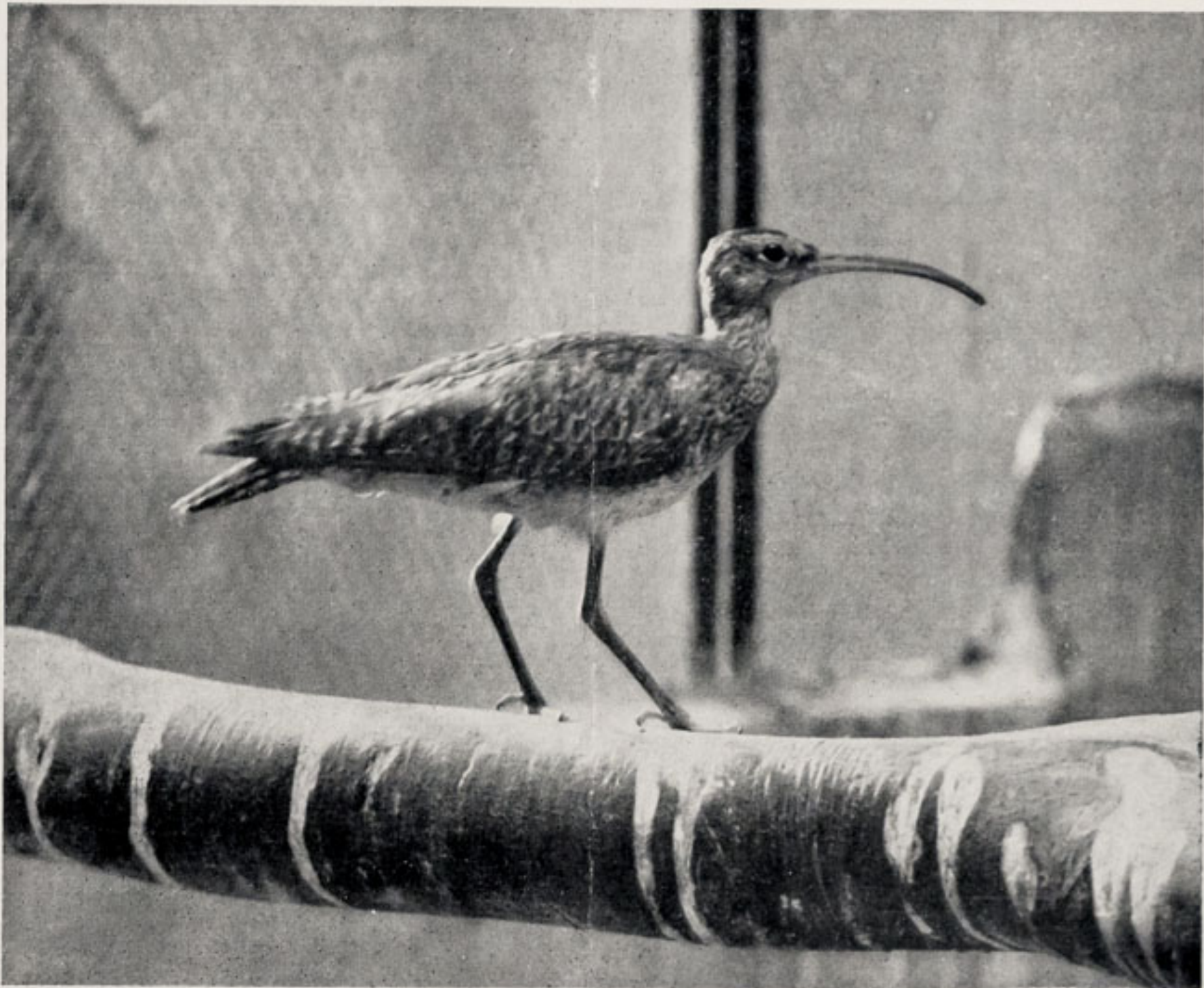
In ungainly fashion he strides quickly over the rocks and a favourite resting place is the door of his enclosure. On the other side, he knows, is the keeper—and food. Sometimes he leans against the door, and seems to be examining the card which explains to visitors just what he is. Lizards can't read, naturally, but he seems to know what it's all about! When the door is opened he surveys the welcome bringer of food with his head on one side, and if breakfast includes a banana, he's happy for the day.

WHIMBREL.

Willie, the Whimbrel, whose story was told in last month's "Zoo News", has settled down nicely and shows no signs of the exhaustion which brought him down on the deck of the Norwegian ship, M/S Tournai, in the East Indies.

He is sharing a cage in the Parrot House with the Cattle Egret.

WHIMBREL.



"DAILY EXPRESS PICTURE."

"Edgar."

EDGAR, THE STORY OF A SWAN.

There is nothing really remarkable about the arrival of a Mute Swan at a zoo, but when one of these birds came to Chester Zoo recently we discovered he had quite a background.

Edgar (don't ask me why he was christened that) could hardly believe as he waddled around among the King Penguins or swam in the pretty pond with some of his brothers that little more than a week before he was crouching, exhausted with hunger and cold, on a frozen patch of water in a Connah's Quay brick yard. He was found there in a very sorry state by some workmen, who informed the R.S.P.C.A. inspector in Shotton. (The inspector got the impression that the bird was a seagull, and off he went to the brick yard with a little box . . . the swan was even-

tually taken to the Shotton H.Q. of the R.S.P.C.A. in the boot of a car).

Poor Edgar was lowered gently into a tea chest which had been lined with hay, and fed right royally (for a swan) on bread and bran and all sorts of bird delicacies. He regained his health remarkably quickly and was soon walking about the yard, becoming quite tame with those who looked after him.

It appears that he was a television-conscious swan, for when the inspector's T.V. was switched on Edgar would creep up to the sitting-room window and "view" with interest from outside!

But a swan cannot be kept in a yard indefinitely, and Edgar was brought to us at the Zoo, where we provided him with every comfort. He was restless, however, and soon after his arrival he flapped his broad white wings and flew away. Perhaps he missed the television set? . . .

Overheard.

A KIND OF MOUSE.

Some little boys paying a visit to the Reptile House were gazing at one of the snakes in fascination. The Egyptian Cobra was lying in one corner of its cage, and not far away was a dead mouse which had been put there for food.

One of the children, who had been reading the label on the cage, suddenly pointed to the snake. "There", he said, "that's the cobra, and that"—indicating the mouse—"that's the Venomous"!

CRUEL TO BE KIND.

Looking down over the wall into the pool which is the home of Sonny, the baby sea-lion, a visitor exclaimed angrily to his companion: "Just look at that man, throwing things at the poor little sea-lion. Downright cruel! I've a good mind to report him to the authorities".

In actual fact, the cruel man was Sonny's keeper who was throwing fish to a hungry and very playful baby.

UMBRELLA WANTED.

A couple stood looking at Sammy, the sea-lion (Sonny's father, as the matter of a fact), who was swimming about, much less interested in them than they were in him.

The woman turned to her husband suddenly and said: "Jack, where does it go when the rain comes"?

Tailpiece.

TAILPIECE TO STELLA'S STORY.

When the body of poor Stella, the sea lion, was found in the pool of Sammy, her mate, at the beginning of February, you will remember that Sammy broke out of his enclosure, and after seeking refuge (which turned out to be anything but refuge!) in the porcupines' quarters, eluded a party of keepers in the rainy darkness, and flapped over a three-foot wall into the Donkey's Nest. This sunken pool once housed the racoons, and the only animal Sammy might have disturbed when he slithered down the steep slope into the water, was an old badger.

The next morning, leaning over the wall, we watched Sammy swimming about quite happily, and tried to think of a way of getting him back to his own enclosure, which, although not yet then filled up with water, con-

tained sufficient for him to live in. The Donkey's Nest was not suitable for him to inhabit indefinitely.

We made several attempts to entice him out, first by showing him fish from the wall and luring him with it through a contrived gap in the stonework, and then by starving him.

On one or two occasions he did venture through the opening and walk with the keeper in the direction of his enclosure. But after one look, which seemed to contain sadness and nostalgia, he would turn away, and return to the Donkey's Nest.

On Tuesday, February 15th, however, after purposely leaving him without food for a few days, he left his "second home", crossed the drive, and, when he saw his keeper dangling a sparkling silver herring on the bank of the pool, which had been the scene of all that disturbing excitement a fortnight before, he was tempted—and fell. Uncertainly, too, he fell into the fresh water, and we did wonder whether he would stay there. The next morning we half expected to find he had returned to the Nest—but no, he had settled down once more.

Della, the Crane.

AFTER STELLA, DELLA.

Dear, dear, these disturbances. First its Stella, the sea lion, then its Della, the crane.

Della is a Demoiselle crane, long-legged, and slate-blue in colour, who shares her enclosure with two Crown cranes.

One day she decided to take a look at the outside world, and this decision was made chiefly, we think, because she was a little frightened when one of the keepers entered the enclosure to have a look at one of the other cranes, which was ill.

With a sudden flutter she rose straight up in the air (a disconcerting characteristic of cranes), flew over the eight-foot fence of the pen and into the road. A lorry-driver spotted her near the North entrance and told one of the keepers, who immediately ran for assistance. Two small mongrel dogs, which were barking at her, were chased away, and Della was cornered in a ditch. She was soon back at home, none the worse for her adventure, and we wondered whether she considered it was worth all that bother for a mere fifteen minutes of freedom.

The remarkable thing was that Della had had her wings clipped, and should not have been able to fly high enough to get clear of

the fence. In September last year, she made a similar journey into the unknown, and this time flew a greater distance. She was seen several times in the surrounding fields, but none of the several attempts to bring her back proved successful. Finally, with the co-operation of a lady living nearby, we managed to catch her. Della had made friends with the lady in her garden, and she had been tamed and finally ate food out of an enamel bowl placed for her. A trap with corn was set in a field beyond the garden, and Della walked into it. Her wings were clipped straight away.

Now she is once more walking, apparently contentedly, in her enclosure—with re-clipped wings.

Photographic Competition

Many of our Zoo visitors, we know, are keen amateur photographers, and for their pleasure and benefit we have decided to run two photographic competitions this summer. Competition "A" will have the last Friday in June for its closing date for entries, and "B" 's closing date will be Friday, August 26th. The same rules will apply to both.

Each competition will be divided into two classes:

- (a) Pictures of animals by themselves.
- (b) Pictures of animals with people.

The entrance fee is 6d., and no competitor may submit more than one entry.

For convenience in reproducing the winning photos in "Zoo News", they must be at least 6 ins. by 4 ins. in size, and must have a glossy surface. They can be in black and white or in colour.

The judging will be done as quickly as possible, and it is hoped to notify prizewinners a fortnight after the closing date in each case (i.e. mid-July and mid-September).

Three prizes will be awarded in each class, and a fourth for children's entries (each of the latter must be accompanied by the child's age). All entries must be sent with the name and address of the competitor to:

The Director-Secretary,
North of England Zoological Society,
Chester Zoological Gardens,
UPTON-by-CHESTER,

and marked "PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION".

Prizes will be:

1st.....Three Guineas.

2nd.....Two Guineas.

3rd.....One Guinea.

Children's Book Token (value 10/6).

We hope that you will take an interest in the competition and will come and see the winning pictures which we will post up somewhere in the Zoo.

The Cobras.

Of the many varieties of Cobras in existence we have two specimens in our Reptile House: the Black Cobra and the Egyptian Cobra.

The Black Cobra is a handsome reptile and one of our finest snakes, black in colour with whitish under scales. When fully matured it is about seven feet long. This Cobra comes from tropical Africa.

In comparison, the Egyptian Cobra is rather dull and unattractive: dusty brown with yellow underparts. This specimen comes from North or East Africa and grows to four or five feet in size. It is easily identified by the striking hood on its neck which soon opens when the reptile is disturbed.

Cobras strike their victims (snakes, mice, or fully-grown rats), injecting venom with two teeth called fangs. This fluid kills within a few seconds. When the fangs are not in use, they fold neatly back into the roof of the mouth, and can be seen when the reptile yawns, which he frequently does. We feed the snakes in much the same way as they would feed themselves.

Our Black Cobra has now been in Chester Zoo for over seven years.

Roger Ainslie.

Our Gardens.

During the winter further alterations and improvements have been carried out in the gardens.

Most noticeable, perhaps, are those which have been made to the lawn and the borders by the cafeteria. Parts of the lawn have had to be re-turfed and levelled, so that it can now be cut with the mower. Laurels have been planted under the trees at the far side, with a border of primulas at the lawn edge. We have constructed a raised bed along the drive, and this will be used for bedding displays.

The heap of clay, excavated when the bear

pit was built, has been removed and the ground trenched and planted with laburnum and lilacs, bordered with rose bushes. In the centre of the lawn we have put a tulip tree and we feel sure that this grand tree will be of great interest to our visitors.

Four beds have been incorporated in the alteration made to the Wallaby enclosure. Two will be planted with azaleas and two with roses. Roses do so well here that we feel justified in planting them extensively.

Improvements have also been made to the banks of the new canal, and plantings made of rhododendrons and evergreens.

The beds and borders are now full of a variety of spring-flowering plants and tulips and these should give a lovely show of colour this spring, when flowers are most appreciated after the dull days of winter.

At present the gardeners are all very busy in the nursery tending the summer bedding plants. About 30,000 plants will be needed to plant out in June, and this will be a varied and interesting collection.

We hope that the gardens will continue to be an outstanding feature of the Zoo this year, and an object of horticultural interest.

Philip Gallup.

Monitor Lizard.

UNDER THE BAMBOO.

We nearly lost our Monitor Lizard (Africa) quite recently. It has been at the Zoo for many years and we thought when it fell ill that old age was the cause of its complaint. Limp, but still warm, it was moved by a keeper into an empty enclosure, where it was carefully watched. There was no movement from it. However, one day two eggs which had been put out for food, just in case it was alive, disappeared. Soon the lizard showed that it was, in fact, very much alive, for it began lashing out wildly in the enclosure with its tail, and then began digging operations with much hissing and exertion.

It tunnelled its way right down in the sand among the roots of a bamboo tree, and, although it came up for food, made the hole its home, and would not be persuaded to come out. The tree was finally uprooted and the lizard forced out into the open, and scuffling and protests accompanied its transfer to the crocodiles' quarters, where it is now quite restored to good health again.

Birds in Frost and Snow.

The recent cold spell put a strain on the resources of birds of many kinds, wild and in captivity. In Chester Zoo, owing to excellent housing conditions, good food and expert attention, we are glad to say that all the birds weathered the storm successfully. On the other hand, the wild birds were sorely pressed.

Take the migrant Redwings from Scandinavia, for example. A few of these Thrush family birds have been seen here within the last few weeks. They were hardest hit as they refused to deviate from their normal diet of slugs and worms, and thus found themselves with severely limited feeding grounds at their disposal. Snow effectively sealed off vast areas of grass land where the Redwings find most of their food. They were driven to forage among fallen leaves and were so desperately in need of nourishment that their powers of flight weakened considerably. The thaw came in good time to save them from disaster.

Of the others, the sea shore attracted many hungry birds, like rooks, jackdaws and starlings. Wood pigeons sought out greens and turnip tops wherever those showed above the carpet of snow; they also pillaged the tops of stacks, feeding greedily on the grain. Many gulls flew about the Zoo looking for food, pouncing in an angry scramble on scraps, or pilfering food laid out for other birds. The hard weather also brought us thrushes, blackbirds, blue tits, great tits, robins, chaffinches and other varieties in search of anything they could find.

On bitterly cold nights, when the temperature falls far below freezing point, it must often occur to people to wonder how the birds fare out in the open as against those in captivity. The cold is so penetrating that it seems impossible that the birds should survive. If they are not indoors, comfortably sheltered, like ours, they often roost under the roof of an outhouse or sleep in some covered place—perhaps in evergreens—and with their own covering of feathers and a layer of fat they contrive to pass the night without mishap.

Birds which die in the cold weather succumb not to frost but starvation. They are the unlucky ones, who do not come in close to human habitation and know nothing of the food laid out for them in the gardens of kindly people, although thousands of birds all over the country are helped through the cold spell in this way.

James Stark.