

# "Our Zoo News"

• A CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF •  
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

---

---

NUMBER 123.

AUGUST 1st, 1955.

---

---



*Three of the Zoo's Blue and Yellow Macaques pose patiently for the camera  
in the large aviary attached to the Parrot House.*

---

---

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.

### EDITORIAL.

No need really to say that the crowds at the Zoo have been huge during this wonderful weather (this being written in mid-July).

Each day people have started arriving here quite early in the morning and it is well after eight o'clock before the last visitors walk through the gate.

Each day, too, we have said to ourselves, like so many others, "surely it can't last any longer"—but it has!

The sea lions are fed up with it and spend very little time out of the water. The Polar bears also think it's an excellent chance for a really enjoyable splash about. The peacocks love the way their bright blue plumage glistens in the sun. The tigers bask in it. Children play in it and race each other to the motor boats. . . . Impervious to all, the heat continues. Let us hope that we will still be feeling it when "Our Zoo News" is actually published.

---

Since we lost Molly, the Singhalese elephant, numerous enquiries have been received as to whether we intend to replace her, and if so, when.

Good news at last!

Two young African bull elephants have already been shipped to this country for the Zoo and the ship which is carrying them, the "City of Bedford", is due to dock at Avonmouth on July 26th.

---

If the polar bears (did you know their names were Rack and Ruin, Susie and Rubble?) look as though they are enjoying a swim in their pool more than ever, it's not entirely because of the heatwave.

The enclosure has had a thorough cleaning-out.

The operation took about four days to complete and was carried out by six keepers. A

new trailer pump was used and the water was drained away into the lake through a sluice pump. When the eight-foot water level was reduced to two feet, the cleaning began. The men scrubbed and brushed industriously in what can only be described as blazing heat, and then the hoses were brought into action.

Needless to say, more than one member of the staff was "accidentally" drenched during the proceedings (mentioning no names, of course), but these people were so refreshed they forgot to be even mildly reproachful!

When the pit was finally shining like a new pin, fresh water was pumped into it—that was an all-night job.

The polar bears, who, of course, had been kept temporarily inside, were freed, and rushed without delay into the sparkling pool, where ever since they have spent more time than they have done on dry land.

### COOT ISLAND.

When the Polar bear pit was emptied, the level of the pond next door automatically went down. Thus the stump of a tree which used to stand in the middle of the pond became visible.

First to notice the mound, rising up out of the water like a tiny island, was a mother coot, who had already hatched and reared two youngsters this year but wanted to nest again. Without further ado she told her children gently what she was going to do and asked for their help in carrying the necessary materials on to the island (we don't know where father was; obviously not a worker!)

Keepers watched the nest growing in size and neatness with anxiety, as they knew what the outcome would be; when the water was pumped back into the Polar bears' quarters the water level would rise again and the stump would be once more submerged.

Nothing could be done. Fortunately, however, the coots realised what was afoot and mother moved on before she had had a chance to settle in.

## New Arrivals.

### LITTLE OWLS.

Two Little Owls, birds of prey which originated in Africa but are now found quite often in this country, have been given to the Zoo. We now have three of this species.

### GNU.

Sheila, the Gnu (or Wildebeest) has given birth to a beautiful calf, which, only a few hours after its birth, was frisking about the paddock. Sheila, and Gus, the proud father, are African antelopes and arrived at the Zoo in September, 1951. Sheila gave birth in 1954, but the baby was stillborn.

This is the first Gnu breeding success the Zoo has known.

---

### LONE PENGUIN.

Many visitors to the Zoo during the last few weeks paused, mystified, at the sight of a lone King Penguin sitting (or rather standing) like a statue on the rather wild stretch of land where some of the wild duck, swans and penguins have made their home.

Crowds made their way past the Parrot House, noted the motionless black and white figure, with mustard-stained chest, continued on their way, to the boats, perhaps, so very inviting on a warm, fragrant, summer's day, or perhaps to see the babies in the Zebra House. Returning the same way, the people glanced involuntarily to their left, blinked, looked again, and saw again the little Penguin, in exactly the same position.

The solution is simple! Penelope had laid an egg and as there was no question of sitting on it—penguins never sit down because they cannot!—she had been standing with the egg between her feet, keeping it warm with her belly "overlap".

The only movement Penelope made was to face a different direction and then she only shuffled round carefully on the same spot. She was fed once a day with herrings—an aristocratic luncheon at 3 o'clock—and apart from that was never disturbed.

We had hoped that the egg would be hatched successfully but Penelope obviously found the incubation period of 32 days a bit too much for her, what with the heat, and the incon-

venience and boredom, and one day she knocked the egg into the water in a fit of impatience. The egg was retrieved, but, alas, is useless.

### THE PANDA TWINS.

Another development we are watching with interest but without active interference is the growing of the twin Lesser Pandas, born to Sugar and Spice just before the Zoological Society's 21st Birthday in June.

For some time nobody saw the babies, minute as they were and hidden in the long grass.

The parents have a daily routine. After breakfast father retires, apparently not interested in his offspring, to the top of a tree and mother climbs up into another branch of the tree and keeps a constant, and anxious eye on the twins, to make sure they come to no harm. An area round the pandas' home was cordoned off for the first few weeks so that they should have as much privacy as possible.

Now at last the babies have been seen. They are still very tiny, donkey-brown in colour, and do very little but sleep in the sun. They have walked about but no further than a couple of feet from one spot.

Photographers are asking every day for permission to take pictures of the pandas and these photographs would certainly be worth having. A panda born in captivity is a great rarity. We do not want to risk exposing them, however, at the moment.

The pandas have at last opened their eyes. Their first sight was an intriguing, if a rather frightening one.

They heard rustling in the long grass and looked at each other in apprehension. There it was again. They couldn't just sit there and do nothing; and mother was not watching at that particular moment.

On unsteady legs they staggered to investigate the source of the mysterious noise and came upon what looked to them like a white feathered monster, shuffling about in agitation on the ground.

They seemed to have walked a long way but actually the "white monster" was only about two feet away from where they had been sitting.

What was The Thing? was the first question the babies asked themselves. The next was what was It doing there?

The bird, although they were not to know it, was a peahen, who was just about to lay



*These are two of a dozen lovely photographs sent to us by a Chester Zoo lover who took them on recent visits to the Gardens. She is Mrs. J. Radcliffe, of Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent.*

*The first shows one of the female sea lions (Selina, perhaps, or maybe Sabrina, or Sophia!), dozing contentedly on a rock. The second picture is of a happy-go-lucky pair of polar bears in their pool.*

an egg when the youngsters arrived on the scene.

Obviously attracted by the peace surrounding the pandas, the peahen and her current peacock had been to survey the site a few days before and had decided it was an ideal place to build their "sweet little nest".

The parent pandas were extremely annoyed. Really! the presumption of these flashy birds! Well, they can think again!—They shooed the peacock over the wall, pint-sized creatures though they were, and waited till they were quite sure he was right off the estate.

Somehow, in the excitement, they overlooked the peahen, who laid her egg happily while they were looking the other way.

She has since laid two more eggs and is sitting on the nest, guarded not too closely by her wary mate.

#### DONKEY CHRISTENED.

The donkey, which was born a short time ago and is a filly, has been christened Candy.

Candy was the name given to one of our Soay lambs born this spring but as the two animals are alike neither in shape nor dimension we think there is no chance of them being mixed up.

### Animal Characters.

#### SAILOR AND TRIX.

The keeper has finally decided on a name for the two baby Barbary Apes in the Monkey House—the one born on the way over to us from Gibraltar is called, appropriately enough, Sailor, and the younger ape, which is a female, is to be Trix.

And what tricks they get up to!

It seems that apes have three "movements" to learn when they are small. First they crawl on all fours, watched carefully by mother, even though they can come to little harm. When they have mastered this they go on to the comparatively difficult task of learning to hop.

One day Sailor was attempting to show up Trix—still at the crawling stage—and was hopping clumsily about. Not looking where he was going, he hopped right into a bowl of milk, which, to him, must have appeared like a huge crater! He crawled out absolutely covered in the white liquid and very crestfallen.

He had had enough of this crawling business. He decided he would try climbing. That was the third lesson to be learnt.

Now both Sailor and Trix are growing hardy and courageous—and think they know everything.

#### LINDA AND WHITEY.

Although naturally fond of her parents, Linda, the baby bison, spends much more of her time with the Cadzow bull, Whitey, who lives next door.

The outside enclosures of the bison and the bull are separated by a barrier, and the little bison can, with comparative ease, squeeze under the lowest bar of this.

She walks about with Whitey, stops and thinks when he stops and thinks, and has been known to sleep by his side on more than one occasion.

A most curious liaison, on which mother and father bison are not at all keen.

#### MONKEY JEALOUSY.

It has always been accepted, until the new keeper came, that Pooh, the Brown Capuchin monkey (from British Guiana) was "the Boss" in the cage he shares with Tooky, the Mona monkey.

Just lately Tooky has lost some of his shyness. He has, in fact, grown quite playful.

Often, when the keeper goes into their cage, Tooky is the first to greet her, and on one occasion, when he perched himself on the keeper's shoulder, Pooh grew so annoyed that he was not the centre of attention that he pushed his companion off and jumped on to the then vacant shoulder himself!

---

#### "I CAN'T DO A THING WITH IT"!

Looks of envy and admiration, hidden under the superior exterior of Barkah, the Dromedary, have been cast just lately at the neat and smooth appearance of Kenneth, the Bactrian camel, who was given a slight haircut to help nature get rid of his surplus hair. Barkah's looks, however, are now turning contentedly to his own coat, which is gradually assuming a smoothness and smartness equal to that of his colleague.

We wonder what Brylcream would do to them!

## IT'S A FISHY BUSINESS.

— But our Aquarium shows not only fish: we have attempted to make our tank-planting a feature in its own right.

Our Aquarium plants have several utilitarian purposes and it seems only fair to say a word in their praise.

First of all, the plants serve to add oxygen to the water, which enables the fish to breathe. A correct blend of "fish" plants means that aeration by mechanical means is unnecessary.

Secondly, the colour of the little tropical fish is shown up more vividly against a plant background.

And, what is more to the point, a well-planted tank is, in itself a thing of beauty. We have about sixty planted tanks (some fish refuse to tolerate plants at any price) and we are attempting to show sixty miniature underwater gardens. We believe that living pictures are the best (apologies to our Tame Artist!) and each tank is an attempt to prove just that.

The first tank visitors see on entering the Aquarium is a Community tank—that is, a tank containing a selection of fish that will live peaceably together. For the main decoration we have used plants of a rather exotic order, namely, Indian Fern, Cryptocorene, Amazon Sword and Cambomba. The oxygenators are Sagittaria and Hygrophila. A real "community" of plants, in fact.

The two principles—fish and plants—each accentuate the colour and attractiveness of the other. So, please, don't pass over the plants quickly when you pay us a visit. They are there to be looked at and will, we hope, add to your pleasure, and appreciation of the fish.

Norman Williams.

## ROBIN COMES BACK.

Robin, the badger, which, you will recall, was kept for almost a year as a pet by a young corporal and his Rumanian wife in their army barracks home at Imphal, near York, was presented to the Zoo when he grew a little large to have about the house, and, a very short time afterwards was reclaimed by his very lonely foster-mother, has been brought back to us again. This time, we gather, he will just have to stay. For Corporal Eddie Ainsley is to be posted abroad shortly and although wives are allowed badgers are not!

When Robin was put into his Zoo home and sat down for a moment to survey the vaguely familiar scene, beside him on the ground was carefully placed—a rattle. He loves to play with this and it will no doubt be a treasured keepsake of the young couple who have devoted so much time and attention to his welfare.

## Overheard.

### MY, WHAT A BEAK!

A small boy and even smaller girl stopped by one of the ponds and watched the ducks swimming efficiently and with a fascinating waggle across it. A pelican passed, his long yellow beak half in the water, half out (he was looking for fish).

"What does he keep his beak in the water for?" asked the little girl.

"Oh, you are silly. Don't you know that?" snorted the older child in a superior manner. "It's because its MUCH too heavy to hold up in the air"!!

### MISSING—ONE BROWN BEAR.

The brown bears' enclosure was also subjected to a thorough cleaning recently. While two of his colleagues were wielding brushes at the bottom of the enclosure, a keeper looked over the wall and examined the job they were doing, very intently.

Suddenly a little man came running up to him.

"Excuse me", he panted, "I couldn't help noticing how worried you look. Has one of the bears got out"?

### REMOVAL.

The two emus, which had been accommodated for some time in the Zebra House, have now been put in the paddock with the wallabies.

Also in the paddock now are the ostrich and emu, transferred from the Rhinoceros House

The four birds have much more freedom and are therefore much happier for the change.

### THE CAT AND THE BADGER.

Leonora, the tabby cat who not long ago gave birth to kittens in a hollow rock, just out of reach of the Brown Bears, although in their

enclosure, has gone to live with the badger in her secluded and tree-filled home. They have always been friends, though badgers are usually shy and unsociable, and Leonora's two kittens do not seem to annoy the badger at all. They have a wonderful time chasing each other along the various rocks and over the sandy slopes and show no interest whatever in the outside world.

### CONCERNING PARROTS.

People often ask how long a parrot generally lives and how long parrots have been in existence.

It is, of course, difficult to say how long they have been on the face of the earth but it is known that the Romans kept them in their houses as pets. Alexander the Great also kept parrots. And Christopher Columbus brought back with him from his travels "strange, talking birds, which, to the amazement of the community, began to imitate and mimic everyone within hearing".

Parrots will live as long as human beings if carefully and correctly looked after. Cockatoos have been known to live for a century and even longer. One of our Amazons had been owned by a lady for thirty-seven years before coming to the Zoo.

In the Parrot House we have Amazon parrots, the African Grey parrot and the Senegal parrot, apart from other species such as macaws and cockatoos. There are many kinds of Amazons and here we have Levallants, Festive and blue-fronted Amazons. We have a yellow-shouldered Amazon (not on show as it is a little the worse for wear!) and this has an inexhaustible capacity for chatter. It defies and defies everyone and seems to be the most intelligent of them all!

Not ready mixers, Amazons do eventually take to one another, sometimes pairing off for life. If they can't abide any particular one, they usually avoid it as much as possible, which is easy in a large aviary.

Amazons live on a seed mixture and also consume a fair amount of fruit. They inhabit different parts of tropical America, living in flocks near plantations where any amount of fruit can be found. They nest each year in tree hollows, usually laying two eggs. They are extremely hardy birds and are easily acclimatized, though not a great many have

been bred in this country. Blue-fronted Amazons are particularly hard to breed.

Perhaps the most striking of the Amazons is the Levallant's parrot, slightly larger than most other Amazons, with the head a bright yellow, and a large, light-coloured beak. Our particular bird is rather quarrelsome and has been placed in an aviary with larger birds to subdue its aggressiveness. This bird is found mostly in Mexico.

The African Grey parrot is much sought after as a pet, being an extremely good talker and a superb mimic. Very few have been bred in this country, and they live to an age of fifty years or so.

Our pair are like Darby and Joan, always close together, though mating attempts have not been successful in spite of the fact that eggs have been laid. They will carry on a conversation with themselves when none is around, one imitating a deep masculine voice, but as soon as anyone goes near them and tries to get them to say some more a dead silence ensues. Grey Parrots are known to be very shy with strangers, refusing always to utter a word in their presence. They are found in West Africa living in flocks, pairing off at breeding times. The male bird takes a turn at sitting on the nest and is generally very dutiful and attentive.

A very attractive bird is the small Senegal parrot, which is an extremely endearing and charming little pet to have. We have sixteen Senegals, twelve in the Parrot House and four in the breeding aviaries. As soon as they get used to captivity they lose their nervousness, becoming pert and lively, and seem to welcome any playful diversions on the part of the keepers whenever there is time. Although they are small, they consume a relatively large amount of seed and fruit disappears as soon as it is put into the aviary. Their plumage is light green and frontal abdominal plumage bright orange, and they have a darkish head and neck, and beak.

They are found in Africa, where they are fairly common. They appear reluctant to breed in this country. They are generally of a happy disposition and love bathing, which they do frequently. They do not seem at all abashed by the hornbills next door, whose size must seem frightening to them!

G. Woods.