
“Our Zoo News”

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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The Season's Greetings to all our Readers.



Contentment.

Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.

The North of England Zoological Society Limited,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 1898.

December, 1945.

“Our Zoo News.”

Considering that November is not normally an ideal month as regards weather, it has this year proved very favourable for visitors to the Zoo. On the other hand, the loss of the hour caused by our return to Greenwich Mean Time has made the days much shorter. Had the time remained as last winter, we feel sure that our attendance this month would have shown an improvement on that of November 1944. However, November and December are not as a rule good months for visits to the Zoo.

Work is proceeding on schemes for next season, and considerable progress has been made with the planting-out of the enclosure surrounding the Fountain-Pool at the rear of the new Bear Dens. Many shrubs have been planted, and the backs of the Bear Dens are now almost hidden from view. In front of the Fountain-Pool we have dug another pool, with the intention of growing some attractive water plants. The effect of the water-fall behind the fountain is very attractive, especially now that the filter-tanks from which the water cascades are hidden among the shrubs. When completed, this enclosure should be quite an attractive exhibit, and to many visitors it will no doubt have as great an appeal as the animal enclosures. We are concentrating on this job while the weather holds good as, in the event of a long spell of hard weather, it would be impossible to proceed with the work, and we are anxious to be free in the New Year to devote as much time as possible to the construction of the Open-Air Lion Enclosure.

We hope that, by the time these notes appear in print, we will have been able to make a start on the dismantling of the old Aviaries which used to house the Touracos and Ring-Necked Parakeets, both of which are in a deplorable condition.

Of late, these old aviaries have accommodated a variety of animals and birds, but the principal tenants have been rabbits.

Apart from the necessity of removing an eye-sore, the ground on which these aviaries stand will be utilised to improve the road-way to the Court-Yard as, when the Open-Air Lion Enclosure is completed, this will be the main supply route for all goods going to the store.

We are anxious to make this road-way an attractive approach to the new area. For years it has been a rather dismal section of the Zoo, and the ruins of the Conservatory have only added to its unattractive appearance.

Although it will not be possible to tackle the Conservatory for some time, the new lay-out should however effect a vast improvement for next year.

AN APPRECIATION.

MISS C. J. TOMKYNS-GRAFTON.

By G. S. Mottershead.

It is with sorrow that we report the sudden death of a very dear and kindly Member of our Society, Miss Tomkyns-Grafton, who passed away on 27th November at her residence, “Fellborough,” Far Sawrey, by Lake Windermere.

Miss Tomkyns-Grafton was a real lover of animals and birds and, during her lifetime, gave generously to their welfare. She first became acquainted with

Chester Zoo after she had read in the daily Press of the gift to the Zoo by the late Miss Esther Hoit of her collection of Foreign Birds, and decided that the next time she passed through Chester she would call and see them. This she did, and whilst here she saw Punch the Polar Bear, for whom she felt very sorry as his accommodation at that time was very cramped and he had not sufficient water in which to swim.

She joined the Society as an ordinary Member, and paid a visit to the Zoo whenever she was passing through Chester.

Upon the outbreak of war, Miss Tomkyns-Grafton at once undertook the adoption of Punch, and on one occasion in 1940 whilst she was standing watching her Bear (as she called him) a little boy came along and, looking at the Bear, remarked "poor thing" and walked away. Miss Tomkyns-Grafton sought me out and asked what would be the cost of providing a swimming-pool for Punch. It was impossible to say off-hand, so she asked me to work out the cost and promised that she would provide the money. Alas, it was war-time, however, and so not until September, 1944, was permission given by the Ministry of Works to proceed.

Last winter Miss Tomkyns-Grafton spent many weeks in Chester whilst the work of building the Polar Bears' enclosure proceeded, but she returned to the Lake District before it was completed. In June this year, despite her great age, she made a special journey down to see the Bears, and both Punch and Judy (whom she had also adopted) gave a wonderful display in the water as if to show their appreciation of her kindness.

Almost her last spoken words to me were that she could now die happy because her Polars (as she called them) had plenty of room and water and were themselves happy.

All the other animals and birds had her kindly thoughts, and I had always to tell her in my letters of their welfare; frequently a parcel would arrive containing some little dainty for one or other of the

animals, and wherever she was she never failed to send her cheque for the Polars' "keep." This must have been one of her last acts, as we received a cheque the morning after she had passed away.

During the last six years, I came to know Miss Tomkyns-Grafton very well, and to realise how very genuine was her love for animals, and I was deeply sorry for her when, last year, she lost her Clumber Spaniel Dogs, all of old age.

We have lost a very dear friend, but her kindness is permanently recorded in improved conditions which she did so much to provide for the animals she loved so well.

THE B.B.C. AT CHESTER ZOO.

On 21st November, listeners to the "Roundabout" Programme on the North Regional wave-length of the B.B.C. heard for the first time some of the animals and birds at Chester Zoo.

Peter was the first on the programme, and he needed no encouragement. His bark of welcome could be heard both before and after he had recorded his greetings to his many friends who will remember him as Mowgli the Lion's pal.

Cocky, the Slender-Billed Cockatoo, deserves honourable mention as the star turn. His laugh was as infectious as it was persistent, and he could quite easily have filled the whole programme. Many people have asked us who it was that said "Hello, Cocky." It was Cocky himself, no doubt endeavouring to convince us that he was the only bird in the aviaries deserving of such a greeting. He then started to laugh at his own joke, and continued laughing, with intermittent pleas of "Come 'ere, Come 'ere" (which seemed somehow to imply "Come 'ere, so that I can the better see how funny you are"), and we had with difficulty to restrain ourselves from joining in his mirth. He kept it up until we were well out of sight.

Although Patrick was heard growling over his meal, the noise from the Lion-House was nothing like what it can be; it can indeed be most alarming to those not accustomed to hearing Lions calling for their meal. We have at times heard such roars from this quarter that we doubt if the microphone could have stood the strain. The very walls seemed to vibrate with the echoes, and we were reminded (rather fearfully) of the wall of the City of Jericho regarding which it is recorded that it "fell down flat" at the blast of a trumpet.

Punch and Judy, the Polar Bears, rather disappointed us. They could, at least, have recorded a nice splash into their pool for listeners, but they preferred to wait until Mr. Eric Jolly and his party had departed with their contraption. A workman employed near their enclosure told us afterwards that no sooner had the party disappeared than both Bears dived into the pool for the meat which had been thrown in for them, and Judy also had a great game with her motor-tyre. But perhaps they thought (and quite rightly, too) that their performance has to be seen rather than heard, to be fully appreciated.

Molly, the Elephant, gave a very good account of herself, and recorded to the best of her ability, with joyful trumpet calls, her powers of destruction and how well she enjoys herself when so occupied.

WHY NOT BECOME A MEMBER OF THE NORTH OF ENGLAND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY LIMITED ?

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A MINIATURE LION-HUNT.

The day arrived when it became necessary to move Faith's nine-month old cubs from the Lion House to the Leopard House, where they will remain until such time as we decide to part with them.

As these cubs have been allowed to run about the front of the Lion House during cleaning operations, it was decided to drive or walk them to their new home.

They soon came out into the public passage, but when they found themselves in the Court-Yard they at once showed signs of alarm.

The first one made a wild rush at the Vulture Cage, found a weak spot, and dashed right through to the meat store. A keeper who was present at once hastened to close the door, but the young lion ignored the doorway, dived through a glass window, and out to freedom.

Whilst number one made good his escape, number two took the opposite direction. He also dashed straight through a window, back into the buildings.

Number three took refuge in some straw, and when we went to get him he made his way back to the Lion House, where he was soon lassoed and crated and taken to his new home.

We then set about locating the other two. Number one, we discovered had taken refuge in an old crate by the back lion dens, so we decided that we could safely leave him to the last. Number two had, by now, returned to the Lion House, so he was quickly dealt with in the same manner as number three, and was soon in his new home.

We again turned our attention to number one, only to find to our dismay that he had gone, and it was some time before we again located him. Eventually, one of the keepers discovered him in a disused water closet. The keeper at once closed the door to secure him, but when we tried to open the door to crate him he had taken up a stand behind it and some minutes elapsed before we

succeeded in forcing an entry. By this time, the cub had decided to show fight and, in the cramped space, we had some little difficulty making him safe to crate; although only nine months old, these cubs are capable of inflicting a nasty wound.

They are now comfortably settled in their new home and none the worse for their little escapade.

PROLONGED LIFE OF ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY.

In the news from Dublin Zoo last month, Mr. Flood drew attention to the prolonged expectation of life of animals in captivity. We agree with Mr. Flood that many Zoos and others could no doubt produce some really remarkable records of long life of animals, and it would be very interesting to hear about them.

Contrary to the belief sometimes held that wild animals die at an earlier age when in captivity than they would if they had remained free, it frequently happens that captivity considerably lengthens the life of such animals. A lot depends on the feeding; if it is possible to feed an animal on a similar diet to that which it would obtain for itself in the wild, or at any rate a diet containing the right vitamins and suited to its digestion, then that animal at once has an advantage over its brothers in the wild. Provided with sufficient room for exercise, and suitable protection against the weather, it is free from worry and can normally settle down to enjoy its life under the conditions in which it finds itself.

A wild animal is more or less compelled to live a life of tension for twenty-four hours a day. When it is not hunting its own food, it is as likely as not being hunted as food by some other beast, and such a strain must sooner or later have an adverse effect upon its expectation of life. It is common knowledge that nervous strain takes more out of human beings than does hard work, and the same can be said to apply to animals. Consider, for instance, the Antelope—always seeking suitable food.

Not for one moment dare it relax its watchfulness for some other animal also seeking a meal and ready to pounce upon it at the first opportunity. It cannot even sleep peacefully, as it must ever be on the alert.

Some animals and birds do not, of course, thrive in captivity, for the simple reason that it is impossible to provide them with those things which are essential to their health and well-being, but the great majority of wild animals and birds do take kindly to captivity and thrive under the conditions provided for them.

THE JOKER PAID.

If we were not more than fully occupied with the serious business of running the Zoo, we would no doubt get a huge "kick" out of some of the practical jokes that are tried out on us. As things are, when we do have time to consider the matter at all, it is with amazement at the number of people who seem to have time on their hands these busy days and the manner in which they choose to dispose of that time, and we are forced to the conclusion that such folk must certainly, to say the least of it, be suffering from a perverted sense of humour. Indeed, we are sometimes almost tempted to think that the whole idea of the Zoo is a mistaken one, that we should let the animals loose and, instead, consider the possibilities of a collection of "specimens" from the human race.

The telephone is simply pounced on by these people as a safe medium for "getting their stuff across", and the 1st of April each year is their hey-day—although, for the matter of that, they have little respect for any day or hour. April 1st is our "peak" day of the year for telephone calls, numbers of which are to the effect that the person ringing has found a message on his or her desk to ring Chester 1898 and ask for Mr. Lion, or it may be Miss Swan or Mrs. Peacock. Very often the caller is extremely annoyed when informed that Chester 1898 is the

Zoo and that the joke is on him or her. One 1st of April a few years ago, a member of our office staff had so many calls that morning for Mr. Lion that, when the telephone rang, she picked up the receiver and spoke automatically "We have no Mr. Lion here—this is Chester Zoo". Much to her embarrassment, she gave the same answer to a Member of the Society making a perfectly legitimate call and who afterwards pulled her leg unmercifully.

The latest attempt at a hoax, by someone who hoped no doubt to catch us on the hop, proved a complete flop because the would-be hoaxer did not know his job. But thereby hangs a tale—

One night recently, at a very late hour, we answered the telephone and were "requested" to send someone to No. 3 Gladstone Dock, Liverpool, to collect three Lion Cubs off a ship that had just docked. Now, it requires very little intelligence to realise that nobody in their senses would go dashing off to Liverpool at dead of night on such an errand—not, at least, without first making full enquiries, but the caller was by no means prepared for the questions asked of him. To begin with, we happened to be fully aware that there is no No. 3 Gladstone Dock, so our suspicions were immediately aroused. When the caller could not furnish such information as the name of the Ship, and seemed to be in dire distress to remember even his own name, it became perfectly obvious, no doubt even to the would-be hoaxer, that his attempt at buffoonery had completely failed. As the call was originated from a Call Box and would consequently have been paid for, we had the satisfaction of knowing that he was that much out-of-pocket. We sincerely hope he is now correspondingly sadder and wiser.

MORAL—When it comes to trying to make a fool of somebody else, unless you want to end up looking a bit of a fool yourself, "don't bite off more than you can chew."

THE LATEST ARRIVAL AT CHESTER ZOO.

SNOWY OWL (*Nyctea Scandíaca*) OR ARCTIC OWL.

We were more than sorry when our Arctic Owl died a few months ago, and especially so as we had no hopes at that time of ever getting another. However, Dame Fortune smiled kindly on us again when a very fine Arctic Owl alighted on the Henderson Liner "Samphire", 400 miles east of the Belle Isle Straits. The bird was taken care of by Mr. J.

S. Wilson of "Braeghar", Nelson Street, Dunoon, (Second Officer on board the S.S. "Samphire"), and when the ship arrived at Liverpool he telephoned us and kindly offered the bird as a gift to the Zoo if we would collect it, which we were very pleased to do.

It is now safely preening itself and taking stock of its strange surroundings in an Aviary adjoining the Lion-House at the Zoo, and seems to be quite content. It is a finer specimen and in better condition than was the one that died. Readers will no doubt recall that the previous bird, although a very fine specimen, suffered from a broken wing sustained when it flew into the mast of the ship which then brought it to this Country, and it was never able to fly again.

This new arrival is a perfect specimen and will, therefore, make a very welcome start to the collection of Owls which we are hoping to get together.

IF YOU EVER GO TO IRELAND.

By G. S. Mottershead.

No, this has nothing to do with the popular song! If you ever go to Ireland, don't forget to pay a visit to the Zoo at Phoenix Park, Dublin. You'll find it well worth your while, I did.

It was eighteen years since last I visited Dublin Zoo, therefore my present trip was one of expectancy almost as if it had been my first visit. I arrived late at night, and was well taken care of by my kind host, Mr. Flood and his wife.

The next morning I was introduced to the Dublin Zoo of 1945, and I must say I was delighted with everything. From my earlier recollections, I could see that the Zoo had moved forward with the times and is now a decidedly more attractive Zoological Gardens than it was in 1927.

First of all, I was taken to see the two Himalayan Bears which were born in the Zoo almost two years ago. They are lovely animals, and the Society can be justly proud of them.

Next, I visited the Monkey-House. Here, my favourite was Charlie, the male Chimpanzee; he is a real beauty in every way as, apart from his pleasant temperament, he is handsome in all respects. Next to Charlie in order of merit is the Malang Gibbon, a very fine specimen and, like all Malang Gibbons, possessed of a voice which drowns all conversation when he gives vent to his vocal powers. Considering the difficult times, Dublin Zoo has quite

an interesting collection of Monkeys, each one looking exceptionally well.

From the Monkey-House, Mr. Flood took me to the Lion-House. This, I think, is the finest Lion-House that I know of. It is extremely light and airy, and decorated in a bright fresh colour. Of the inhabitants, I could write much, but space confines me to the briefest remarks. First is Shelagh, a Lioness which went to Dublin from Chester Zoo in 1939. Although a good breeder, Shelagh is a bad mother and not to be compared as such with Noreen, her sister, who is accommodated in the open-air Lion enclosure, and of whom I shall make mention later. The next Lion, Rory, is a very fine specimen, and the reason for my visit to Dublin. I am happy to say that, in the New Year, Rory is to come to Chester Zoo as a stock Lion. He was born in Dublin Zoo on 28th June, 1939, his father being Cairbre and his mother Conwenna, and he is already proved as a breeder. He has much of the Abyssinian Lion's look about him and, although not quite so big-boned as Stephen, whom I saw next, in my opinion he is a much more handsome animal. Next to Stephen is Flame, a Lioness, with her attractive little cub, and in the cubbing cage I saw Conwenna with three very nice younger cubs. Although the Lion-House contains other interesting specimens, I must pass on to the large cage outside containing Rhesus Monkeys.

It is not often one sees so many Monkeys with their young as are to be seen in this cage, and Mr. Flood is inclined to the opinion that the inclusion of potatoes in their diet is greatly responsible for the successful breeding of these Monkeys.

Two very attractive enclosures next drew my attention, the Raccoon enclosure and the Coypu enclosure. These are so new-looking that they have the appearance of having hardly been inhabited.

The Elephant-House is a relic of earlier days, and no doubt the Society will some day be able to undertake the building of a new one. The Elephant is certainly worthy of a better home, and is a credit to her keeper.

After the Elephant-House, I saw the open-air Bear enclosure, which is very attractive, and where are to be found, with other Bears, the parents of the two Himalayan Bears previously mentioned.

The Sea-Lion enclosure is at present untenanted, but there are very many more interesting exhibits of which space will not now permit me to write.

I next arrived at the open-air Lion enclosure, which reminded me very much of a similar one in Edinburgh. Here is Larry, brother to Rory, with Noreen,

sister to Shelagh, also from Chester Zoo. They have an extra fine litter of three cubs, and seeing Lions under these conditions makes one realise how much better they are for being out-of-doors with plenty of room.

To me, the real delight of Dublin Zoo is the Lake, which is in the centre of the Gardens, with the animal enclosures built on the surrounding sloping ground. When the new roadway, which is at present in course of construction, is completed, this beautiful sheet of water, on which so many birds can be seen, will be surrounded by a very pleasant drive. I was much interested to notice on this Lake a Black-Footed Penguin, which Mr. Flood tells me catches and feeds on the fish which abound in the Lake.

The entrance to the Gardens is most charming, and the thatched Pay-Box and Turnstiles harmonise well with the setting of Phoenix Park, in which the Zoological Gardens are situated.

Much work is in progress and, by next season, the Gardens of The Royal Zoological Society of Ireland will be even more attractive. I look forward with pleasureable anticipation to my next visit.

WHY NOT BECOME A SUBSCRIBER TO "OUR ZOO NEWS" ?

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News from other Zoos.

MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake.

In accordance with our usual custom during the winter months, we have now closed the Zoo to visitors, and will re-open in March. This arrangement has always proved satisfactory as, apart from the fact that attendance during the cold winter months is infinitesimal, it affords us an opportunity to do odd repairs and painting for a few hours each day. This work is undertaken by the regular staff in addition to any extra hands which we can obtain.

The baby Peccary is growing much more quickly than the one born of the same parents in 1944.



Anticipation—Where's the Keeper with our meal?

Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.



Enjoyment—thanks to their kind Benefactress.

Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.