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CHESTER ZOO NEWS



**Zoological Gardens
Chester CH2 1LH**

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1981 No. 1

The New Zoo News

This is the first number of the Zoo News in its new form. Some of you may remember when it looked rather similar, before it went inside its glossy cover. Now the glossy cover has had to go for the simple reason that it has become too expensive. So we have taken the opportunity to look at the Zoo News and ask ourselves how we can make it help us in achieving the Zoo's aims. Just because we feel the glossy cover has become an extravagance there is no reason for us not to improve the real meat of the Zoo News: the articles and comments printed inside.

We feel the point of the Zoo News is to let visitors know some of the current happenings in the Zoo and to make them aware of the wider issues involving the Zoo. Also it is a means for regular readers to keep in touch with events and we hope that it will develop as a way of keeping the Society's Members more involved in the work of a modern Zoo.

The Zoo is a place where we hope the public will enjoy their visit while learning to appreciate what wonderful things animals are. Much of what we have to do has to revolve around the looking after of our animals and looking after the public who come to watch them. Many of our articles will be concerned with the management of the animals and the gardens. We may even from time to time put in an article about how we look after the public too.

The Zoo would become very boring if we put great panels of information about the species we keep all over the place. Nevertheless, many people have their imagination stirred by some animal or other which they see and want to know more. Our articles will include those giving the zoological background to the species we keep.

The Zoo is also a place where endangered species can be protected and encouraged to breed enough animals

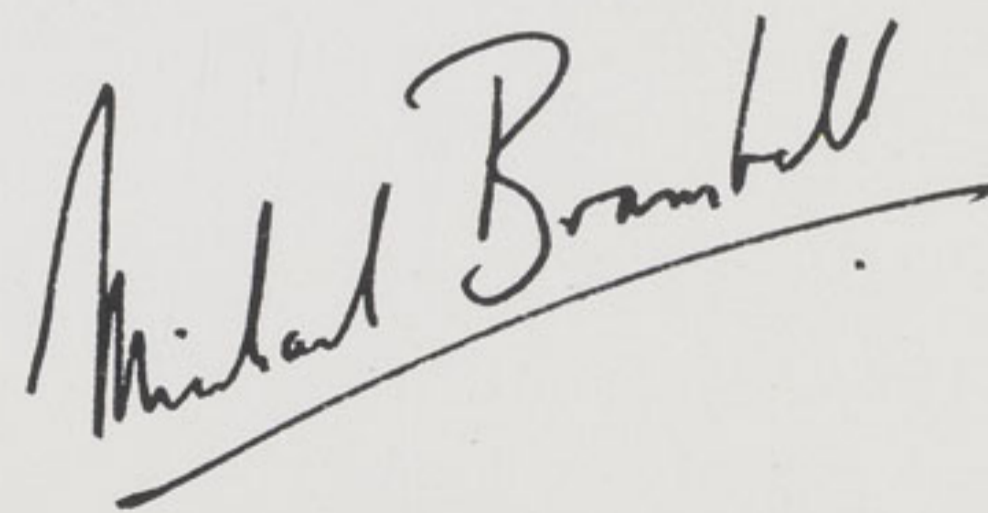
for the wild eventually to be restocked. For many species this goal of re-introduction may still be a very long time away, all the more reason for the protection in the Zoo, but for some it is already happening.

The Arabian Oryx is being re-introduced into parts of Arabia where it used to live but was hunted out only a few years ago. The released animals have all been born in zoos as part of an international programme of co-operation.

As the years go by, Chester Zoo will be playing a larger and larger role in such joint co-operative schemes. In fact, no Zoo can now operate its animal collection on its own and our readers will want to know about progress.

The Zoo is part of the life of the local community and of the whole country and things that happen elsewhere affect us. We feel there is a need from time to time for informed comment. Should Zoos be controlled by legislation and, if so, what form should this law take? How does the Zoo relate to the Wildlife and Countryside Bill? Does the new national training course offer a better career structure for keepers? All these are issues on which we have views which we will be expressing as the months go by.

Best wishes to all our readers, new and old, for 1981.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Brambell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Dr. Michael R. Brambell,
Director.

Tigers

At Chester Zoo we have the largest cat collection in the country, consisting of 17 species and three sub-species, ranging from the ever-popular Lions and Tigers to the less well-known Margays, Geoffroy's Cats and Pampas Cats.

Our cover picture this month shows one of our four Tigers.

The Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) is the largest in the Cat family, and the largest of the races are the Siberian Tigers which average 3.12m in length with an average weight of 325Kg. The normal colouring is orange with black stripes on the sides, head and back; the muzzle, throat and belly are cream with the insides of the legs white. The various races of the Tigers are distinguished from each other by the intensity of the orange colour in the winter coat, by their size, length of fur and the density of the striping. The southernmost races, living where there is strong sunlight or dense plant-life, have the most strongly orange coats. They are also much smaller than the northern races which live in colder, more exposed country. These northern animals also have much thicker and longer fur than the others. Black Tigers are sometimes reported, and the State of Rewa in India has produced several Tigers which are white with black and brown stripes and ice-blue eyes. The normal colouring provides excellent camouflage in the woodland and grassland which the Tiger prefers. The vertical stripes of light and dark fur look very like the light and shade of sunlight penetrating through tall grass. The hair round the face forms itself into a ruff.

The range of the Tiger in the world is quite extensive, reaching in the West from the upper reaches of the Amu

Darya Basin in Southern Russia and possibly also still in Northern Iran, through most of Central Asia and India, north-east to the Stanovoy Mountains of Siberia and south-east to Java and Bali. In all this area it is absent only from Tibet and the very desert areas of Baluchistan and Sind in the subcontinent of India.

In the wild, the Tiger tends to be solitary but, on occasion, as many as six individuals will gather together at a time—generally to share a larger kill. Both the males and the females have established home ranges; the home range of the male frequently being larger and usually encompassing the home ranges of three or four females. The size of the home range varies considerably with the availability of prey and cover. The prey of the Tiger consists of almost anything that moves which is edible. The size of the prey is from an animal the size of the Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), an Indian deer, downwards. They have been known to kill and eat Himalayan Bears. The Tiger locates its prey by sight and sound and catches it either by stalk and rush or by ambush.

One to six—but usually three—cubs are born after a gestation period of 15 to 16 weeks. The cubs are born with their eyes normally shut and are already striped like their parents. Their eyes open when they are about two weeks old and they begin to follow their mothers on hunting trips when they are about six months old. They stay with their mothers until they are almost two years old, when they leave—the males going first and then the females a little later—to find home ranges of their own. They probably live for 15 to 20 years in the wild, but in Zoos they may live for over 25 years.

There are several different races of Tigers but they can be best grouped into three kinds:—

The Bengal Tiger from India is in a very vulnerable state in the wild, because the forests and marshes in which it lives are being used by Man and there is not enough wildlife to support the Tigers.

The Siberian Tiger which lived all the way from the Caspian Sea to the Pacific coast of Siberia. There are very few left in the wild, but so many have been bred in Zoos that the species is safe. (Caspian Tigers and North Chinese Tigers are probably local varieties of Siberian Tigers from either end of the range.)

The South East Tigers from Malaysia, Sumatra, Java and Bali. These are four quite distinct kinds, all are rather smaller than the Bengal and Siberian Tigers and

their coats are strongly orange and black. Because they live on islands (Malaya is almost an island), they have been unable to mix with other Tigers for a long time, so each of the kinds is a little different from the others. The Bali Tiger is now almost extinct and the Javan Tiger is also in trouble. The Sumatran type breeds well in Zoos.

The story of the Tigers shows what Zoos can do to save rare species. There are now more Tigers in Zoos than we know what to do with, because they breed so well. At the same time, they are becoming very rare in the wild. We cannot yet put Tigers back in the wild because there is not enough food there for them to live on, so we have to wait until times improve.



Siberian Tigress with Cubs



We are sad to report the recent death of "Richie", our breeding male Giraffe. This beautiful animal was born at Chester in February 1969 and fathered a number of calves.

He was ill for only two days and it was reported that he was drinking large amounts of water: so far we have not managed to ascertain the cause of death. We suspected kidney failure, but the post mortem as yet has not proved conclusive. Fortunately, he was not ill for any length of time, but we are still very sad that an animal so popular and loved by both staff and visitors should be lost at such an early age.

In the normal course of events he would have continued as a breeding male for another eight years or more. We will now be contacting various Zoos in the hope of acquiring another breeding male for our group of five females.

ZOO NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have been expecting a subscription reminder for the magazine and have not yet heard from us, please do not worry; due to the change of format we have had to delay, but we will be in touch shortly.

CHESTER ZOO NEWS is at present being produced every month and readers who would like to receive the magazine regularly can obtain subscription forms at the Souvenir Shops or the Office. The current charge for 12 issues, including postage, is £3.00 per year.

Completed forms can be handed in to the Souvenir Shops or posted to Mrs. Sandra J. Elliott, Chester Zoo News, Chester Zoo, Chester CH2 1LH.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Annual subscriptions for membership fall due on 1st January 1981. However, last year's membership cards were printed with "*Valid until 28th February 1981*" to give us time to get the new card back to Members. We would be grateful if annual subscriptions (Senior £5.00 and Junior £2.00) could be sent to Miss A. L. Howard (Society Secretary) some time between those two dates.

We hope that our Members will enjoy reading the magazine. Those of you who are not regular subscribers may wish to take out a subscription; we do hope so, as it is our intention to include Membership items. The remainder of the magazine will then keep you up to date with latest births, arrivals and general information as to what is going on.

The Members' Meetings held in October and November were very well-attended and everyone enjoyed two extremely entertaining talks. We hope that Members will enjoy the rest of the programme just as much, which continues on 21st February 1981, with a talk entitled "*Grey Seals on North Rona*" which will be given by Dr. J. R. Baker.

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In an effort to cut down on postage costs, we would be grateful if Members could help us by enclosing stamped addressed envelopes when renewing subscriptions, requesting Members' tickets, etc.



Female Arabian Gazelle and Youngster