
"Our Zoo News"

and Guide.

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

Price 3d.

Annual Subscription 4/6d. post free.

NUMBERS 73, 74, 75.

MARCH, APRIL AND MAY, 1947.



Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.

Rory with his favourite Lioness in their new enclosure. The photographer took this delightful picture from the southern boundary, at a distance of approximately thirty feet.

The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 1898.

March, April and May, 1947.

Guide to Chester Zoo.

To write a comprehensive Guide to Chester Zoo at the present time is a somewhat difficult undertaking, because the Zoo is still in a very transitional stage. However, for the benefit of those who are not regular visitors, we will endeavour to outline briefly the locations of the principal exhibits.

Upon entering the Zoo, the visitor should proceed along South Drive to the Elephant Parade where, on fine days,— the Elephant, Ponies and Donkeys are giving rides.

Just beyond this point is the Malayan Bear enclosure and, adjoining it, two more enclosures which may be occupied by a variety of exhibits awaiting permanent quarters.

Leaving this area and proceeding along the walk to Central Drive, the visitor will notice on his left a field which is largely used as a playing-field for children, especially large parties such as Sunday-School outings.

At the top of Central Drive are the Cafés and, opposite to them, the Tea-Garden where visitors may obtain a quick snack or sit in comfort to eat their own food.

On the right, running underneath the Cafés, is the Aquarium, where are to be seen Tropical and Cold-Water Fish, Reptiles (including the large Pythons, Boa Constrictors, Alligators, etc.). An extra charge of sixpence is made for each person admitted to the Aquarium.

Behind the Tea-Garden and opposite the Aquarium and the Public Conveniences is the largest open-air enclosure for Lions in this Country. It is not possible for the public to proceed all the way round this enclosure, but a good view of the lions is obtainable from any point along the whole of the southern

boundary, and an excellent bird's-eye view from the Terrace at the south-east corner.

Below this Terrace is an Aviary and, adjoining the Aviary, the official Quarantine Cage for feline and canine exhibits on their arrival direct from abroad.

Opposite the Quarantine Cage is the Hyena enclosure and, to the east of this, the new Monkey-House is in course of construction.

On the other side of the drive and south of the Monkey-House, another large building is being erected. This is the new Elephant-House, which will include an indoor bathing-pool for these animals.

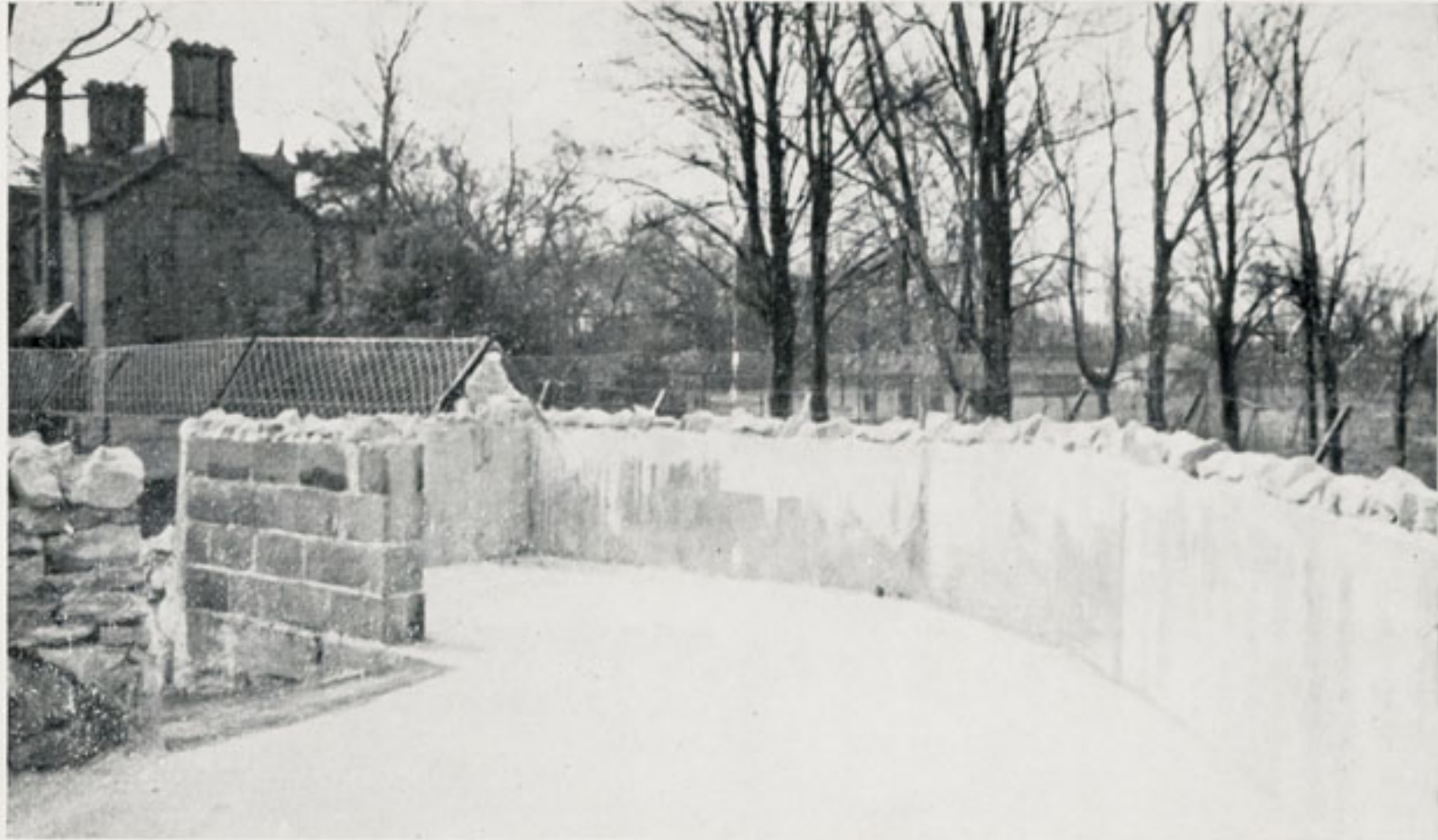
At this point the roadway divides into two, and the visitor is advised to proceed along Bison Walk, passing the North-American Bison, Fallow Deer, several varieties of Sheep, Geese, Brown Bear, and Himalayan Bears, to Raccoon Wood. In the Raccoon Wood are the North-American Raccoons, and we hope soon to introduce other exhibits.

Having walked round this Wood, the visitors will arrive at an Ornamental Garden with Fountain and Waterfall, opposite to which is the site for another new enclosure, this time for Dingos.

Further along this pathway is a Waterfowl enclosure, and, proceeding in a clockwise direction the visitor will arrive at the end of East Avenue.

Continuing westwards, past the Axis Deer and the site of the new Elephant-House, take a sharp left turn past several Aviaries, to the Exit.

As so many alterations are taking place just now, it is impossible to write a concise Guide to the Zoo, but if the visitor will follow these brief directions all the principal exhibits will be seen.



Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.

The Terrace, from which a bird's-eye view is obtained of the lion enclosure.

THE LIONS' OPEN-AIR ENCLOSURE.

After many years of waiting, prolonged delays and hold-ups, and eventually long months of hard work, the Lion enclosure, which was commenced as far back as 1937, has at last been completed.

On 30th March it was decided to liberate the cubs into their new home, and see what their reactions would be. Christy was the first out but she, having spent the early months of her life in almost complete freedom, accepted her new-found liberty with apparent nonchalance.

Faith's two cubs, who are Christy's young aunts, came out next, showing obvious signs of being very suspicious. They glanced cautiously about their strange surroundings and then, catching sight of Christy, made a friendly attempt to join her. But that young lady wanted to be alone, and her welcome resolved itself into a forbidding growl.

The day, which had started with promise, soon changed and, by the afternoon, had developed into a very wet day indeed, but all the cubs stayed out until they were thoroughly wet.

Christy kept to her chosen corner of the enclosure, as near as she could get to the house, and would not leave it or allow any of the other cubs to approach her. She padded up and down continually, until she had so churned-up the earth that she was

covered with mud and presented a very sorry sight indeed.

For over a week the cubs enjoyed the freedom of the enclosure to themselves, then on 9th April the weather changed for the better and we decided, not without some misgivings, to try introducing the adult lions. So far, Rory had not made the acquaintance of the cubs, and Christy was still afraid of her two young aunts, but perhaps "afraid" is not quite the correct word. She could, and did, hold her own, but persisted in keeping aloof from the other two, and would snarl and scratch each time they attempted to approach her. She just kept to her corner of the enclosure, and eventually the other cubs left it to her.

It seemed advisable, in all the circumstances, to proceed with caution, and so we started by releasing one adult lioness. To our surprise and relief, she was soon quite at home and when she came face to face with Christy she made no attempt to bully her. The next lioness to be released reacted in exactly the same way, and by late afternoon it seemed safe to risk letting Rory out.

Our optimism was justified, Rory being content to give all his attention to his favourite lioness and leaving the others to their own devices. For almost a week everything went well and we had great hopes that Christy would very soon be on friendly terms with the lion community as a whole.



Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.

Looking south. A view of the enclosure and terrace at an angle not available to the public, this photograph having been taken from the roofs of the dens. A lioness is just discernible in the background, and beyond are the Cafés and administrative offices.

Our hopes were, however, rudely shattered when, one evening we observed Rory and a lioness in full chase after Christy. Dodging here and there, Christy made a sudden spring and climbed a tree. At first the lioness tried to follow, but Christy had early learned the art of climbing trees and the lioness soon decided that there was nothing for it but to sit at the foot of the tree and wait for her to descend.

We, who had reared Christy from birth, did not like the situation, so we quickly set about with much coaxing to draw the lioness away. It was some time before we succeeded and then, in response to our appeals, Christy at last descended. When we retired for the night peace seemed once more to be reigning over the lion enclosure and we hoped that the lioness had forgotten the episode. But, as frequently happens in a Zoo, the feud was suddenly resumed, with added violence. I was getting into bed when I heard the rapid movement of lions among the bushes. Feeling anxious, I dressed again and proceeded to investigate.

It was a very dark night, so I brought out the car and swung round the headlights to see what was

happening. Sure enough, there was Christy up the same tree, and in a semicircle round the foot sat the other four lionesses and Rory, patiently waiting for her to descend.

I realised that this was no joke on their part; they meant business alright so I set about enticing them towards the dens at the rear of the enclosure, and after about an hour had succeeded in trapping them all. Christy was left in the open until morning when, with much coaxing, we managed to entice her to a den before again liberating the other lions.

We can only surmise that the actual cause of all the trouble is Christy's fear of her own kind. Having been brought up an orphan and, consequently, a great pet, she has been segregated from other lions for too long. Possibly, one of the lionesses approached her with perfectly friendly intentions and was repulsed with a fierce blow. Christy had previously been seen to strike out when approached by another lioness, but in the past her attacks had been ignored. However, she now has good-natured Patrick as her sole companion, and no doubt he will teach her some manners without causing her any real suffering.

MORE ABOUT THE AQUARIUM.

By the Keeper-in-Charge.

If these notes seem to be somewhat curtailed, it is due to the fact that an accumulation of work awaits me down in the Aquarium. The very severe weather during March, and the cuts in electricity, resulted in quite a lot of routine work having to be more or less neglected. Then, when the thaw came at last, the Aquarium was flooded for about a fortnight, and nothing much could be done about it. However, now that all those troubles are behind us, we are getting down to normal working again.

It was necessary to raise the level of the Snake-Pen, enlarge the pool, and instal a new heater to obtain the required temperature. All this, in order to accommodate the larger size Snakes that we now have.

The most recent arrival in this line is a beautifully marked and coloured Boa-Constrictor, approximately ten feet in length. Contrary to general opinion, few of the Snakes are "slimy" creatures, and certainly not the Boa. The hard scales which cover its skin form a smooth and perfectly dry surface. Had I the many veils that adorn Cleo (our Veil-Tailed Goldfish), with shoes and hand-bag made from the skin of our Boa-Constrictor, I could snap my fingers at the Board of Trade. But, even so, I must admit that a snake-skin looks much more natural with a Snake inside it.

A native of South America, the Boa frequents tropical forests from Venezuela to Upper Argentina, living mostly in the trees. In its native haunts it feeds mainly on small mammals such as Agouties, Pacas, Rats, Mice, and sometimes birds and eggs. In captivity, however, it thrives quite well on an exclusive diet of rats and mice. Not much is known regarding its breeding habits, but it is thought that the eggs are hatched within the body of the parent.

One point of interest is that, in some parts of South America, the flesh of the Boa is considered a great delicacy. So, maybe, before long we too will be eating Boa; some of us have already taken kindly to Whale. But I imagine that, even off the ration, Boa would be beyond the reach of many people on account of its prohibitive price; alive it is worth about 90/- per foot, which is the usual method of Valuation.

It is not generally appreciated that Nature provides many of her creatures with a perfect camouflage as protection against their enemies, and the skin of the Boa harmonises perfectly with its natural surroundings. We try to provide all our captives with as natural conditions as possible, and that is why people are apt to remark, after a cursory glance into the Snake-Pen, "Wot, no Snakes?" The Snakes are there alright but, needless to say, they are nothing like as anxious to be seen by you as you are to see them. If you look carefully, you will see them.

Whilst on the subject of camouflage, this is well illustrated by the Angel Fish. They can remain so still as to be almost indistinguishable from the surrounding plants growing in their tank. Many times has my heart jumped into my throat when, on looking into their tank, I have been unable to see one. But, waiting quietly for a few minutes, I would catch sight of one and then another as they began to move again, until I could pick them all out and count them.

People who tap on the glass, thinking thereby to make some creature move, are sadly mistaken. Most creatures, on hearing or seeing anything that is unusual to them, will remain perfectly still in the hope that they will not be seen. The best way to study Water Life is to "stand and stare". By standing still and watching quietly, you will be able to study the habits of these creatures. At first, the fish will be merely swimming to and fro, but soon you will wonder if they are the same fish.

The other day, I happened to mention to a friend that one of my fish looked a bit off-colour. Whereupon, he said he did not think fish could be ill. Now, I wish that were true. As it is, we have always to be on the watch for any signs of disease. If the first symptoms were allowed to pass unnoticed, we would soon find that all our fish were affected and I would have no work to do. Sometimes, when everything seems to be going wrong, I think that would be fine.

I'm not much of an authority on diseases of fish, but I can at least tell you a little about some of the more common ailments. To start with "Ich" or "White Spot". As the name implies, the first symptom of this disease is a few white spots on the body of the fish. If left unchecked, these soon cover the whole body, and the fish eventually dies of the disease. The treatment is salt baths, but there are many schools of thought on the subject and, as I have said, I am not an authority. So, if you have any fish that show signs of this disease, I would advise you to consult the writings of some of the experts.

Other common ailments are Drooping Fins, Dropsy, Fungus, Tailrot, Shimmies, and Cancer. It is interesting to note that Cancer is most common in hybrids such as the Red Swordtail.

Some of the main causes of illness among fish are over-crowding, insufficient plant-life in tanks, poor lighting, and falling-off of temperature. Due to the cuts in electricity, I'm afraid the last two mentioned have been occurring to a slight degree recently in our Aquarium, but I'm thankful to say that, up to now, all our fish seem to be keeping in good health. Improper food can also bring on illness. Prior to the hard frosts, we fed our fish mainly on live food, so it was a great change for them when we had

only dried food and scraps of horse-flesh to offer them. But they are evidently a hardy lot, as even that seems to have had no ill-effects on them. Given some sunshine, some day soon, I'll maybe catch some Daphnia for them, also find some water-plants for the fresh-water fish.

Now, down to the Aquarium again, to do some **real** work.

"Sing hey, Sing ho,
it's back to work we go—"

Funny how the mere thought of water—bath, brook, river, or just Aquarium—makes one feel like singing!



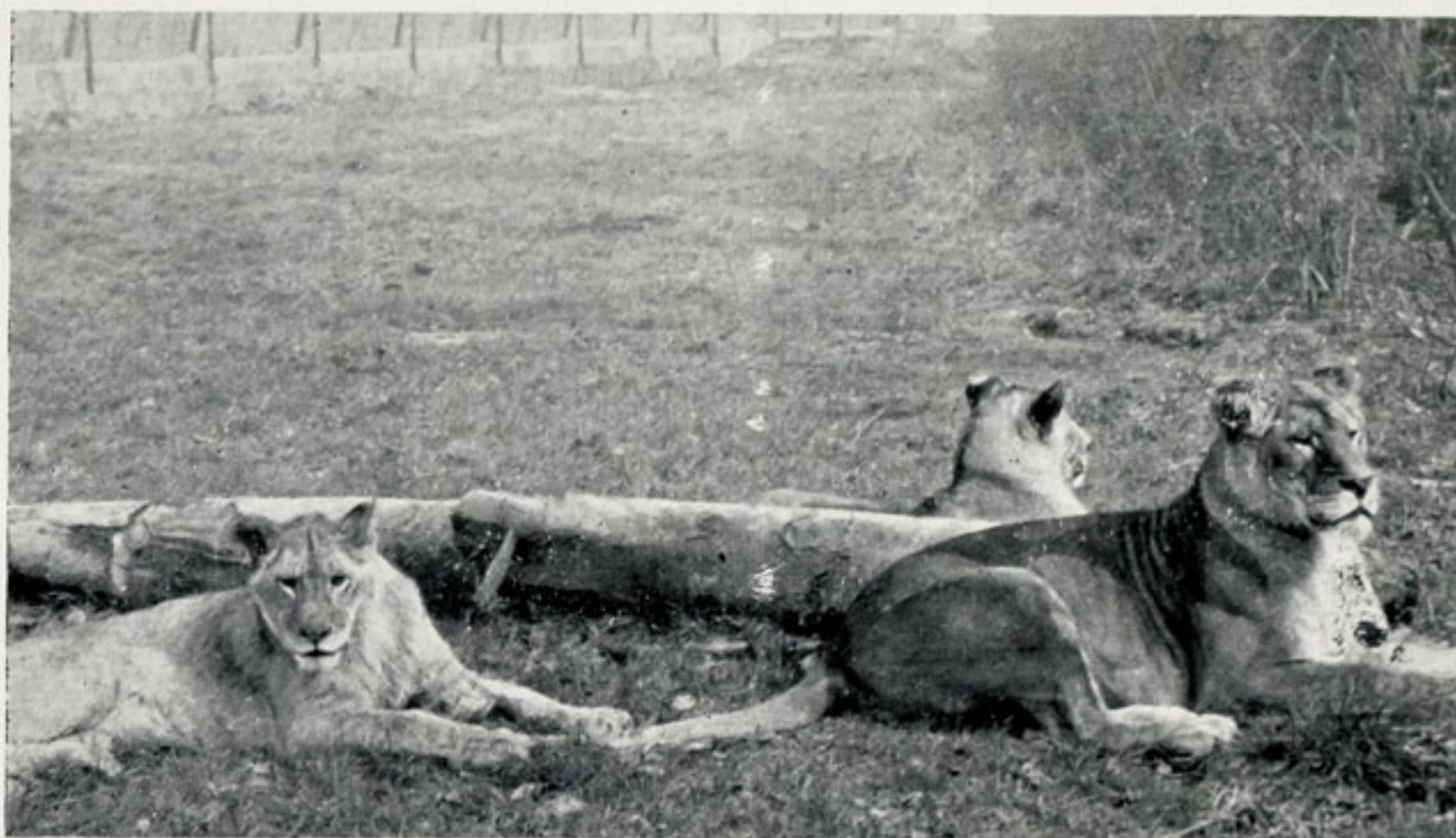
Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.

Christy on guard—"I want to be alone". Photographed prior to her removal for her own protection.

The very severe winter seriously hampered work at the Zoo, and many of the improvements which it was hoped to have had finished by Easter are still in progress.

The Lion enclosure is, however, completed and the young lions were in occupation at Easter. It is hoped to have the Monkey-House and several other new enclosures completed in time for the official opening of this enclosure.

Work has been commenced on the new Elephant-House, but it is not anticipated that this will be finished before September, as priority must be given to the many other jobs already started. The only reason for starting on the Elephant-House at the present time was because the Ministry of Supply was anxious that we take immediate delivery of the huge concrete blocks. As these weigh three-and-a-half tons each, we cannot afford to handle them more than necessary, so the foundation was prepared ready for them to be placed in position as they arrived.



Photograph by H. F. Parker, Esq.

Another charming photograph, showing an adult and two younger lionesses in another part of the enclosure. Several tree-trunks, similar to that shown in this photograph, have been left lying in the enclosure for the lions to claw, in the hope thus to spare the growing trees and avoid the necessity for placing unsightly protectors around them. We are pleased to say that, up to the present, this precaution has served its purpose.

Another building project which will be commenced shortly is a Sea-Lion Pool and Penguin Rock, the basis of this construction being a quantity of concrete pill-boxes given to us by the Ministry of Supply. It is hoped that, when the Zoo staff have finished work upon them, their original purpose will be completely disguised.

It was also necessary to renovate the Quarantine-House in readiness for the reception of Pumas and other cats expected to arrive this summer.

The most pressing job at the Zoo just now is the new Monkey-House. It is remarkable what a fascination Monkeys have over a large section of the community. Whether it is the supposed kinship between the monkey tribe and ourselves, or just the antics of these animals, we will not venture to commit ourselves, but the Monkey-House is undoubtedly the most popular attraction in any Zoo.

The Monkey-House at present under construction is, of course, not intended to be the only one at Chester Zoo, but it will suffice until conditions improve sufficiently to warrant our building accommodation which will be in keeping with the size of the Zoological Gardens.

To exhibit a representative collection of Monkeys, accommodation would be required for at least thirty species, and these would need as many cages.

What we have in mind for Chester Zoo is the grouping together of the different orders—Gorillas, Chimpanzees, and Orang-Utangs in one house; Gibbons (of which there are several varieties) in another. The Gibbons, by the way, require much more roomy accommodation, to allow of their swinging about. Then there are the Old-World Monkeys, American Monkeys, Baboons, Lemurs, etc., all of which would be of added interest if grouped in their respective orders.

We are, however, determined to provide each animal with both indoor and outdoor accommodation, and as much liberty as possible. This very ambitious project will, of course, take time and money, so for the present we are concentrating on one house which will incorporate all the amenities mentioned and, if all goes well, should be completed by Whitsuntide.

Among the new exhibits to reach Chester Zoo during April is a very fine Boa-Constrictor, nearly ten feet in length. This snake is a striking contrast to the Indian Pythons that occupy the same case, and will be much appreciated by visitors who are interested in snakes.

A very nice Red and Yellow Macaw, and a Lear's Macaw, are striking additions to the bird collection, and it is hoped soon to erect new Aviaries which will show these birds off to advantage.

News from other Zoos.

MAIDSTONE ZOO PARK.

By Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

February, 1947.

I have always advised anyone who wished to lead a life free from worries, large or small, **not** to keep a collection of wild animals. Never has my advice been more to the point than during the last few weeks. I live in the so-called "sunny" South; the weather has been just d-----. Snow eighteen inches deep, with hard frost—one night one degree below zero!—and a biting North-East wind week after week. The roads have been impassable for traffic—two of my girl keepers had on more than one occasion to walk seven miles because the 'buses had been taken off—and consequently food, especially the heavy stuff like hay and straw, has only been delivered under the greatest difficulties. One lot in particular skidded on a hill in the Zoo, and had it not fetched up against a convenient tree must have fallen into a pond. A tractor had to be sent for to put it onto the road again. In spite of all this, the animals have on the whole stood up to it pretty well although, naturally, mortality has been higher than usual. This I put down, to some extent, to the inferior and not too suitable foods with which they have had to be fed. I don't know how other Zoos have fared, but I have found the proposition of feeding more difficult during the past six months than at any time during the past six years!

The Brown Bear Cub I reported in my last notes as just born is still alive, although he has only been seen once, but heard often! I hope that, now he has survived to the age of between four and five weeks, he will live to be the first Bear Cub born and surviving in my Zoo-Park.

The Park re-opens to the public on Sunday, 23rd March. What sort of a Season will it be from the weather and financial points of view? On the first I won't prophesy, on the latter money will undoubtedly be tighter, but Zoos are more popular than they have been, so we must just hope for the best.

April, 1947

This Park opened on 23rd March, after a very difficult winter. The Opening Ceremony was performed by Mr. Jack Train (the one and only Colonel Chinstrap) assisted by Mrs. Train, Mr. Collie Knox, Mr. Olaf Olsen, and others. For once it was fine, although cold, and the thousand (and more) visitors heard a most amusing speech by "The Colonel".

Easter was a disappointing holiday as far as the weather was concerned, but over four thousand turned up on the Monday. Since then, the weather has been more spring-like and attendance good.

The "stork" has been responsible for the arrival of a Soay lamb and a Moufflon lamb. Recent additions include three North-African donkeys (these attractive little beasts are very small and dark); a tortoise; Patagonian hare; Yak heifer; and several varieties of fish to re-stock the Aquarium.

A new attraction that has been added is the Butterfly Orchard. This is a butterfly farm and insect research station, and in it may be seen living insects from many parts of the world, some being reared for sale to collectors and others for educational and scientific purposes, such as the biological control of insect pests. It is not possible to say what will be on view at any particular time, but all through the summer there will be a succession of exhibits, some very strange, others of great beauty. There is also a small "museum of insects" being formed, which will fascinate children as much as it educates them. Many British and foreign butterflies will be flying in the greenhouses and loose in the grounds, but perhaps the giant tropical jungle moths, measuring up to a foot across the wings, will attract most attention, especially as their cocoons, eggs, and caterpillars will be on sale. For those who wish to start a new hobby, there will be demonstrations of how to collect and mount butterflies, and a display of the apparatus required, which will also be on sale. During the insect "season" there will be a small additional charge for admission of the buildings and grounds.