

“Our Zoo News”

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

Price 3d.

Annual Subscription 3/0 post free.

NUMBER FORTY-FOUR.

With this, our first number in 1943, we wish all our readers a very bright and prosperous New Year, and sincerely hope that this year will bring us much nearer peace than we have been for some time.

We have many things to be thankful for in the year which has just passed, it certainly confounded the pessimists who thought that we had come very near, if not to the end of our effort to keep the Zoo going through the war.

It was far and away the best year Chester Zoo has ever had in spite of the many difficulties we are having to face with labour, feeding, etc., and we are hoping that the first four months of 1943 will be kind to us and enable us to show a good profit when our year ends on 30th April.

So far we have been spared the very severe weather which has visited us the last three winters, for this we are very grateful, for our problems are bad enough without having to combat an arctic climate.

All the animals appear to be keeping well and only very few minor deaths have taken place among small mammals and birds.

We are sorry that this Number is smaller than usual. The reason being a general lack of interesting news at this time of the year, but we hope to compensate with our next issue.

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining transport, schools have not been able to visit the Zoo for lessons as they did in peace time. We therefore decided to take the Zoo to the schools by way of the cinematograph and many schools availed themselves of our offer.

We are hoping in future to film all interesting events at the Zoo, and thus keep a record which can be seen as well as read about.

May we remind all Members of the Society who have not yet paid their subscription (which became due on January the first) to send it as early as possible as we depend so much on these at this time of the year.

New members still keep joining the Society, but we would like to see a very big increase during the year. For the greater the Membership when peace comes the quicker will be our recovery from the shock of war.

MOWGLI. Mowgli we are pleased to say is growing into an extra fine lion. He is still the best of pals with Peter the terrier who still takes liberties with Mowgli that even another lion would hesitate to take.

We have been fortunate enough to succeed in taking some very interesting cine-films of them playing together, which will always be a record of a very charming friendship.

Soon after the issue of our last number we thought it advisable to bring Mowgli into a closed-in cage, for whenever he heard the other lions roar, he would answer them and race up and down his enclosure as though the next instant he might take one leap over the fence, but the real climax came which made us decide to act at once when we discovered him standing on his hind legs with his fore feet on top of the fence calmly looking over.

The transport crate was at once brought and Mowgli driven into the loose box where he and Peter would shelter if the weather was bad. Mowgli, however, did not like the look of things and before we could fix the crate, he had jumped onto a beam in the building nine feet from the ground, and it took us quite a long time to persuade him to come down. It was, however, not until the following day that we succeeded in getting him into the crate, but to be more truthful it was Peter who really did the trick.

We feel very sorry that Mowgli and Peter have had to be caged for they loved the freedom of their enclosure. If the war would end we might be able to obtain material to build them a suitable enclosure, but at the present time it is impossible to obtain the necessary material to keep the existing cages and enclosures in proper repair.

A very nice Anubis Baboon was recently presented to the Society by a Liverpool shipping office, the animal having arrived in this country on a Dutch ship.

It is a male and is very tame, having been a pet of a Dutch sailor who had been transferred to another vessel, onto which he could not take his pet.

We are sorry to report that the wild fox has recently paid a visit to the Zoo and robbed us of one of our liberty Crowned Cranes. Coming in late one moonlit night we noticed a crane on the lawn. This was rather unusual for if they did not enter their own enclosure they nearly always perched themselves on top of an aviary or hedge. If we had attempted to catch this bird at night we would not only have missed it, but would have probably disturbed many of the other birds, so we left it alone.

About one o'clock in the morning we were roused by the alarm cry of the crane which suddenly seemed to end. We at once got up and went out to see what was the matter, but the only thing we could discover was, the crane we had seen on the lawn had vanished. We searched about but could see nothing so went back to bed, trying to believe that something had disturbed the bird and it had flown away and we would see it in the morning again.

There was one thing however that worried us, it was the deadly silence which prevailed, not a bird or anything seemed to move, everything seemed frozen to a silence which if broken by the call of a bird would give away its position to some unseen enemy. This proved to be correct for the next morning we found the body of the crane with its head off in the orchard.

Although we were very sorry to lose this bird we are glad it was not "Honky" for he is such a character and is so popular with all. "Honky" was terribly upset at the loss of one of his mates and for many days scoured the countryside calling at the top of his voice, then listening for the answering call which never came.

Often in the past something has disturbed the cranes at nightfall and one has come to rest at some distance from the Zoo, it is then that the whole neighbourhood knows about it, for the cranes in the Zoo call con-

tinually to it throughout the night. It was the fear of causing such a disturbance which made us leave the crane alone when we saw it on the lawn in the moonlight.

The young Peafowl (reported in our last issue) are growing nicely and have made their nightly resting place in the oak tree over the exit from the Zoo. Each night at sundown they gather at the entrance, and after begging what bits they can from the young lady in the Pay-box, they fly up one by one to their nightly resting place.

PUNCH. One hears so often the remark, "What is the matter with Punch, he looks so quiet and sad?" that we feel we ought to tell you of this little episode.

"One afternoon recently we decided to do a little ridding as these pests were beginning to get a bit too plentiful for our liking. We had destroyed quite a number and were winding up our afternoon's work close to the Polar Bear Den. Punch seemed fast asleep by the side of the bath, whilst Judy was also resting underneath the terrace. Suddenly a large rat was unearthed and it made straight up the Polar Bear steps and started to climb the iron bars towards the wall which surrounds the bears; it had almost reached the top when Punch must have caught sight of it, for with one bound he leaped across his den and brought down the rat." It was the speed with which he moved which so amazed us, for as will be remembered in our last issue we pointed out that Punch is well past thirty years of age, and as far as animals in the Zoo are concerned he is the Grand Old Man.

PHYLLIS. We are pleased to say that Phyllis has settled down and is full of beans. Like all chimpanzees she likes people to make a fuss of her, and the greater the encore she gets for her act, the more boisterous she becomes till the whole house is in an uproar.

"The Tragedy."

Contributed by Dorothy Ramsden.

The murder had been committed in broad daylight amongst many witnesses. It was a peaceful setting and none would have dreamed that the stage was all set for the re-enactment of that greatest of all dramas—"Jungle Law"

It was what many people called "a beautiful morning for the time of the year." The weather was mild and the wintry sun spread out her warm fingers to

the earth. The birds were twittering in the trees, and but for the voice of nature, no other sound disturbed the tranquility of that hour.

Abruptly the silence was shattered by the screams of a frightened animal. Leaves rustled and twigs snapped in the undergrowth as the victim tried to escape. This way and that, she turned. A handsome creature with a beautiful coat, as only a healthy, country-bred rabbit can grow. In pursuit and gaining with every second was a jet black cat. Her lithe body and rhythmic movements proclaimed a black panther, yet in actual size she was no bigger than the rabbit.

A spring, more powerful than the previous one, landed her on top of her adversary, with sharp teeth embedded deeply in the back of its neck. Over and over they rolled, well matched, but by now the fur was beginning to fly. No more cries were heard, for with the fatalistic view of the wild, the rabbit had given up hope.

Why had she not gone on? She would have stood a chance of escape then, but no, she had turned and tried to get back home, thereby losing those few precious seconds on which her life had depended.

Her despairing cries had, however, brought human aid—too late. From where it had been dragged, her lifeless body was picked up, the neck broken.

From far and near the tale was spreading like wild fire. The peacocks, the pheasants, the crowned cranes, and the wild birds had gathered together at the scene of the tragedy. To think that this nobody, this stray cat who was now lazily licking her paws, had struck with a ferocity unequalled and had taken life. She who was so timid, whom they themselves had chased away so many times before, whose kittens they had pecked and stolen food from—clearly the animal world was bewildered.

Why not become a Member of The North of England Zoological Society.

Entrance fee £1 1s. 0d.

Annual Subscription £1 1s. 0d.

Life Membership £15 0s. 0d.

Patrons £25 0s. 0d.

For further particulars apply to Secretary.

Manchester (Belle Vue).

Submitted by G. T. Iles.

From the large number of parrots offered to us recently it would seem that their owners are now feeling the food shortage very acutely. We could

not possibly accept all those offered, as our stock of parrot food has to be carefully conserved.

Monkeys, too, seem very abundant at the moment, especially the *Callithrix* monkey, which merchant seamen bring home in large quantities. If a census of monkeys in this country could be taken now, we should all probably be astounded. With so many attractive monkeys in West Africa it is a great pity that the least suitable should be constantly imported for sale as pets.

The collection has suffered a great loss in the death of our chimpanzee "Joey", who died just before Christmas. There is no doubt that "Joey" was the most popular animal in the Gardens, and since he arrived from Liberia in 1938 had endeared himself to all, staff and visitors alike. His visits to the cinema, tricycle rides around the Gardens and exhibitions of boxing, will be long remembered. The donor of "Joey" has generously promised to try and send another chimpanzee, but will it be another "Joey"?

A very fine St. Bernard dog named "Bruce" has been found a home at the Zoo, to save his life. Weighing 10 stone 4 lbs., this "playful pup" is already proving a great source of attraction. It is hoped that Bruce will soon carry a collecting box on his broad back in aid of war charities.

Maidstone Zoo Park.

Submitted by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake.

I think all Zoo Keepers should congratulate themselves that so far it has been a mild winter. Stock on rations, like ourselves, may apparently be in the same condition as in normal times, but I am sure have not the same stamina to withstand severe cold or strain.

The animals and birds in this collection have so far done remarkably well with mortality below normal, and everything looking in really good condition in spite of "substitute" food.

The three lion cubs born in September are growing apace, though living in one of the open dens and taking no notice of rain or snow.

New animals include a three year old lion, some monkeys and parrots, and a litter of half bred wild pig.

Repairs and renovations to the park and buildings are well in hand for the re-opening, which has been fixed for March 21st.

What of the 1943 season? If Maidstone is still in an unrestricted area I am sanguine, but I am nervous that the reduced transport may severely affect the gate.

News from the London and Whipsnade Zoos.

Submitted by G. R. Doubleday.

As it seems that the pre-war popularity of the London Zoo is returning and the Government's "Spend your Holiday at Home" campaign has been given such wide publicity, we have felt it necessary, during the winter months, to concentrate on preparations for the re-opening of the "Off The Ration" Exhibition which was such a success last year.

In its new form, it is hoped to include more demonstrations to replace many of the static exhibits. For instance, the exhibit of how to "Rout Out Rats" will no longer take the form of just a series of pictures and slogans, it will be implemented by exhibits of live ferrets, ratting dogs, etc., and an expert who will demonstrate the various types of traps and guns.

We have also arranged for several small live-stock shows to take place in the Gardens during the summer and there is talk of bringing one of the elephants back from Whipsnade, to supplement the riding facilities for visitors. The five donkeys which were purchased last year have wintered very well and it is hoped that they will again take their place with the other riding animals. In addition, Ming, the popular Giant Panda, will return to London for the season.

Labour is still very difficult, but we have been able to employ quite a number of young lads who are proving extremely useful as assistants to the older keepers.

The collection of animals in the London Zoo is still an extremely fine and representative one and their health has been extremely good, in spite of rationing difficulties; births and deaths seem to remain at a normal average.

An effort will be made to increase the show of flowers in the Gardens, and it is hoped to obtain the services of a band for week-ends.

In London we are looking forward, with every confidence, to a good season, but unfortunately we expect Whipsnade to suffer somewhat from transport restrictions, in spite of the wonderful show which can still be seen there.

Are you a Subscriber to our Zoo News? Why not become one now. The annual subscription is 3/- post free.

Our Zoo News will be sent to all Subscribers at the small cost of 3/- per year post free.

Zoo News. Annual Subscription 3/- post free.

Late News.

We very much regret having to add a post-script on the news of our Crowned Cranes.

On Friday, the 5th February, "Honky" was seen flying round just before noon, and since then nothing has been seen or heard of her and we can only presume that someone has shot her. Early on the Friday morning her mate was courting her with that strange dance peculiar to these birds, so it is not likely she had flown off in search of a mate, and there is no question of her having lost herself as she knew the country side well having had her liberty and used it to the full for the past five years.

New Additions.

Two very nice specimens have just arrived at the Zoo, one a young Nile Crocodile, the other a beautiful Rainbow Boa. Both are on exhibition in the Aquarium which has been slightly extended to accommodate them.

Peter Felix Falwasser.

It is with deep regret that we have to report the death on active service of Peter F. Falwasser, for some years the Aquarium Keeper at the Zoo.

He always had a very keen interest in his work, and it was whilst the Aquarium was under his charge that so many successful breeding results were obtained.

By the same post that brought word of his death (presumably as the result of serious injuries he had received at Tobruk in the early days of the war) we received a long interesting letter from Peter, written about a month before his death, in which he seemed quite cheerful and said he was well, having just returned from 14 days leave which he had spent in Palestine, where he had visited the Zoo at Tel Aviv.

He was looking forward to returning to the Zoo at Chester and asked us to send him a list of fish which were now in the Aquarium.

Meet your friends at Chester Zoo, and have lunch or tea in the Cafe.