

# "Our Zoo News"

## AND GUIDE

● A BI-MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF ●  
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

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Dinah Sheridan making friends with the Camel.  
By courtesy of Mr. F. R. Jones, Chester.

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# The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 20106/7.

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## Zoo News.

Much has happened since last August. We have many new animals and many new buildings. For our old visitors the place will have taken on a new look, for newcomers the maze of animals and houses will astonish. What is needed is some form of guide, and this is what we hope this magazine will prove to be.

If it is many months now, since our last Zoo News was published, it is obviously not because we have been short of news but simply because we have been far too busy to write one.

However, we now propose to publish our Zoo News Bi-monthly (every two months instead of each month). It will be increased in size, and the price will be 6d. per copy, post free, 4/6 per annum (or six copies).

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## Feeding Time at the Zoo.

It has long been a cause for complaint among foreign visitors that while the English excel in the art of organising displays and exhibitions, they remain oblivious to the need of feeding the crowds such shows attract. It may be that the international nature of the Zoo's residents has made us less insular in our attitude towards catering for visitors, but in any event it is with pleasure and perhaps a certain smug feeling of satisfaction that we announce the completion of a new restaurant that will accommodate 650 people. We found last year that the ever-increasing number of visitors threw too great a strain on our existing facilities—the tea rooms, out-door tea garden and restaurant—and the queues which formed at the buffet restaurant opened last year, only served to emphasize the need for even more "feeding space". Hence the new building. We trust that when visitors this summer indulge in that most pleasant of occupations—namely feeding the animals (but only where allowed, please!)—they will do so with all the benevolence that comes from having fed well themselves.

## Latest

## Structural Development.

### NEW HOMES FOR GIRAFFES AND CAMELS.

At the end of the 1952 season our giraffe house was completed and our three giraffes transferred from London to Chester, where we are very happy to say, they have established themselves through the Winter. Adjoining the giraffe house is the camel house and these two new buildings should prove a very great attraction to the visitors in 1953. The llamas will be kept in the camel house and allowed to mix with the camels themselves.

### PADDOCK WITHOUT "BARS."

The enclosure outside the camel house will be surrounded by a moat, a method of displaying the animals to the public which has been adopted in the Amsterdam Zoo which allows visitors to see them in the open and not through any intervening wires or bars. It is hoped that this moat will prevent that all-too-common mishap—the snatching of handbags and articles by the camels from the hands of startled visitors.

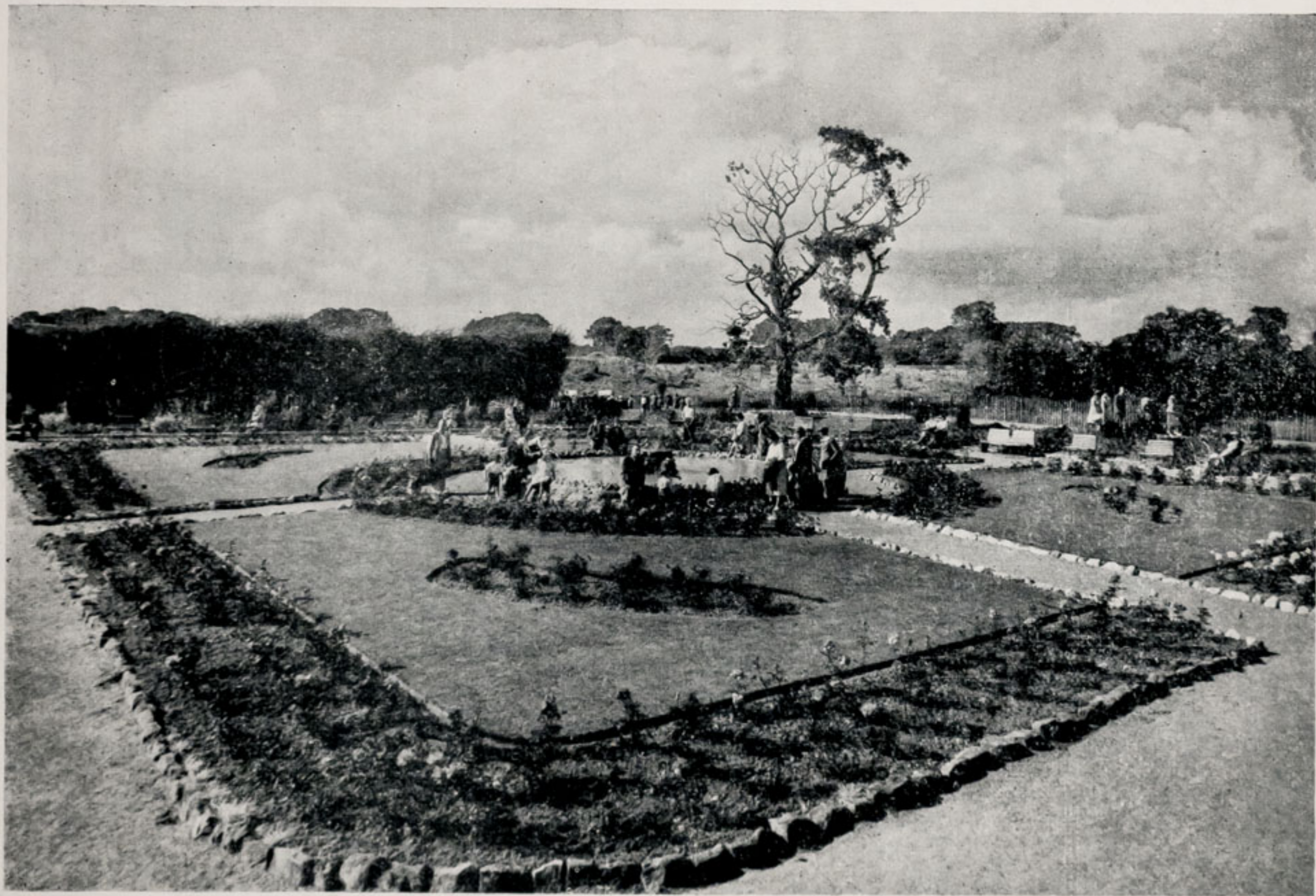
The whole of this outside enclosure has been covered with sand so that the camels will be able to roll about and enjoy themselves and make of the enclosure something resembling their own habitat. In the moat itself we hope in due course to grow water lilies.

An avenue of prunas and flowering cherry trees has been built along each side of the enclosure, and time should make it a pleasant strolling ground.

### AQUARIUM.

Perhaps the most important development has been the construction of our new aquarium, which contains a very fine collection of fresh tropical and cold water fish. The number of tanks on view to the public is 80 and these vary in size. The largest indoor tank is over 13 feet long and the smallest about 18

A view of the Rose Garden taken from the Bird Aviaries.



inches square. Normally the daylight is sufficient illumination but we can on dark days provide all the extra light we need through our electric installations.

The advantage of the daylight is two-fold. It is a great advantage to the growth of water plants and it enables the fish to be seen in their true colours.

An outstanding feature of this aquarium is the 240 feet long tank on the roof of the building where the fish can be seen from below through glass panels in the ceiling. The collection is both varied and large, and we are certain that aquarists will find much to interest them in this building.

Every effort is being made to make the entrance to this building as attractive as possible. There is in the centre of the building a semi-circular pool into which water from the roof tank cascades. On calm days there will be six fountains playing on the roof, giving the whole building a truly aquatic atmosphere.

#### ORNAMENTAL GARDENS.

Towards the end of 1952 we realised that the gardens were demanding more and more of our attention. We have found for many years that the public enjoyed flowers almost as much as they enjoyed the animals, but our funds have been strained these last few years in providing suitable accommodation for the zoological exhibits, and we were left with very little to spend on the Botanical side, hence an appeal was made, to the public and members, to subscribe to a fund to provide shrubs and flowering trees and other plants which were necessary to beautify the grounds. We are very happy to say that the response was very good and has enabled us to make many improvements. It was realised that for the expansion we had planned and which is now well under way, we needed the services of a first class gardener, and we have been fortunate in obtaining the services of Mr. P. Gallup, who was for many years head gardener of Hampstead Marshall, and before that of Sandringham. We are hoping to make the horticultural side as attractive as the Zoo animals.

It is an expensive undertaking but we trust that many of our friends who have the interest of the gardens at heart, will help us in the initial development of this new scheme, for in addition to providing a large variety of plants, trees, etc., we shall have to erect much glass for the propagation of seeds and plants.

## The Sad Story of Ossie.

One of the Zoo's animals who gained world wide recognition this Spring was Ossie, the ostrich, who swallowed two padlocks. Unfortunately as a result of her peculiar taste in food, she died, much to the regret of millions who had followed her fight for survival in bulletins appearing in the "Press" over a period of several days.

When Ossie, who was 2½ years old, was moved to her new quarters in the new camel house, she went "off" her food. At the same time a brass padlock was missed from her old home in the zebra house.

We were perturbed by the fact, for five years ago an ostrich died after a six weeks' hunger strike, and a post mortem examination had revealed a padlock inside the bird.

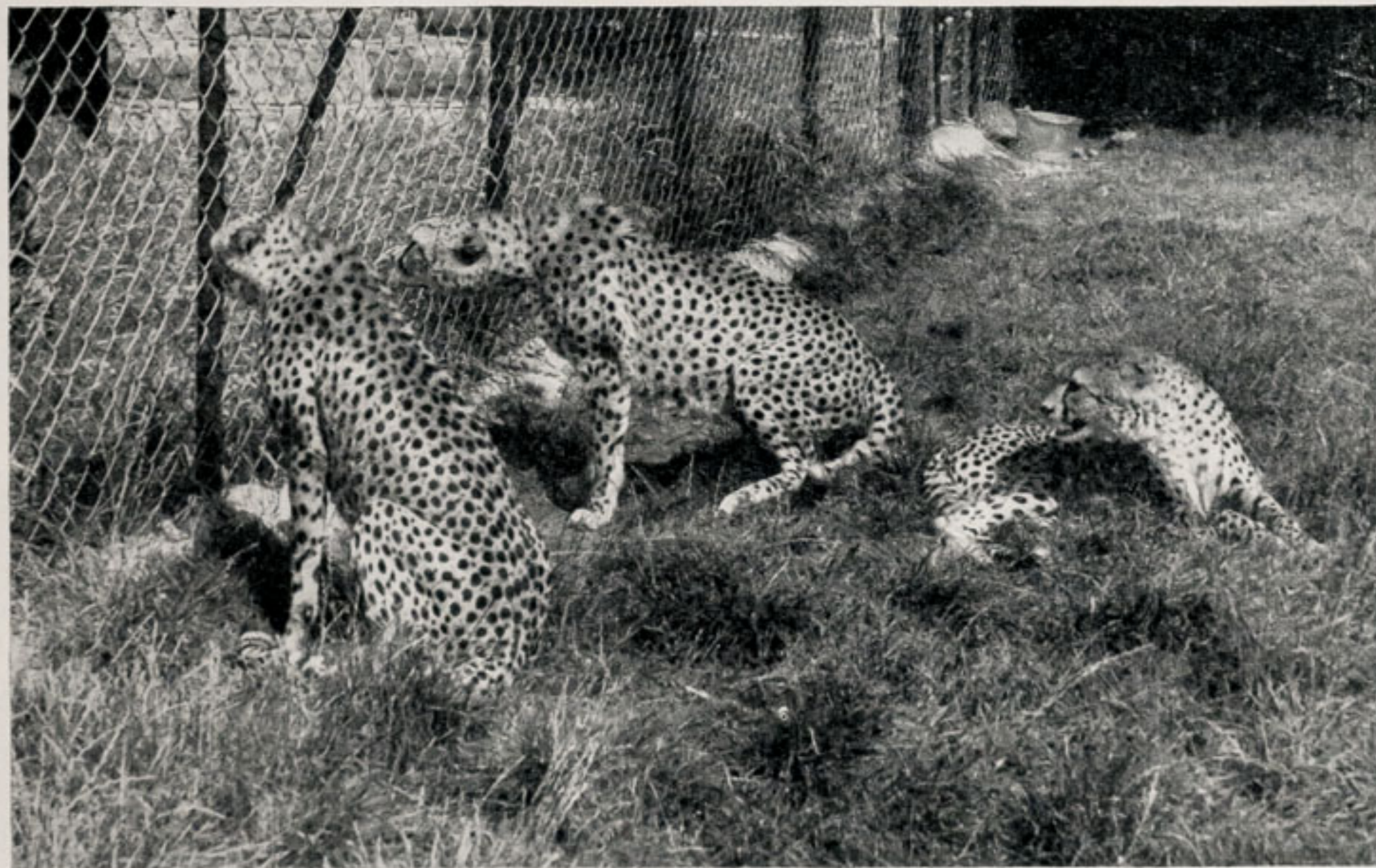
This time the help of the army in Western Command was enlisted and three members of the Cheshire Garrison Engineers arrived with a mine detector. This registered the presence of metal in Ossie's gizzard and it was decided to operate.

After the operation which lasted an hour, Ossie seemed to be none the worse for her experience, but during the night pneumonia developed, and the bird died the next morning.

During the post mortem examination a second padlock was found in Ossie's gizzard. This padlock was badly worn and must have been there for at least two months. It was decided that all the padlocks securing ostrich cages would in future be attached with chains.

Since this sad tragedy our two remaining ostriches have died. They both died from natural causes. We believe that they had been taken from their native grazing grounds when too young. They were only 12 months old when they died and were brought from Africa when five months old. In future we will only accept ostriches which are a year old. We hope to have a new consignment during the summer.

N.B.—Letters of sympathy concerning Ossie's death have been received from as far away as Sweden and the United States of America.



Our Cheetah Enclosure is an ideal place for these animals who need plenty of room in which to exercise.  
They are reputed to be the fastest moving animal in the world.

## New Arrivals.

### GIBRALTAR APES.

The Zoo has recently been presented with two male Gibraltar Apes, Brutus and Ken. The Barbary ape has long been established on the Rock of Gibraltar and is looked upon in somewhat the same manner as the Raven in the Tower of London.

These two specimens presented through the Colonial Office by the Commander-in-Chief, Gibraltar, should be quite an attraction.

### HYRAX.

Some Cape Hyrax have been presented to us by Imperial Chemical (Pharmaceuticals) Ltd. and now are housed in one of the cages opposite the camels. But they have not yet overcome their shyness. The hyrax is rodent in appearance but is classified as an ungulate. The Cape hyrax to give it its fuller name, has a soft fine blackish brown hair, speckled with a little yellow or white.

The feet structure is similar to that of the elephant—but there the resemblance ends.

We hope these hyrax will breed and we trust in that case, that the young will not be as shy as their parents.

### AGOUTI.

In the camel house alongside the hyrax are two cages, containing South American rodents, known as agouti. One cage has the common agouti and the other a Golden rumped agouti, though we should add that the only difference between the animals is in this matter of colouration, a distinction that is no doubt regional. They are extremely active and can be made quite tame.

### WILDEBEESTS.

We have added a pair of wildebeests of brindle gnu, to our collection since last season. These animals of the antelope tribe are very common in Africa, and can be very ferocious. The male in particular is quite capable of killing a man, foolish enough to go near them.

### CAPE BUFFALO.

Another new specie has arrived at the Zoo. A Cape Buffalo, a heavily built animal with

strong limbs, and generally referred to as one of the most ferocious members of its kind in Africa. Our particular specimen was given the name of Lulu and she lately came to fame as a film star when she appeared as a calf in that well known film, "Where No Vultures Fly".

So far Lulu is docile but she is treated with every respect. As a temporary measure she is accommodated in the zebra house, but as soon as the labour can catch up with the work we already have in hand, we shall be moving her to much more suitable quarters, to dwell with the bison and other members of the oxon family.

### AND THE BABOONS CAME TOO!

Two baboons, a yellow and an anubis, who also appeared in the same film, have arrived here recently to form, with Lulu, the nucleus of a film colony.

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## Our Personalities of the Month.

### THE MALAYAN BEARS.

Of all the bears and there are a great number of varieties, the Malayan bear is one of the most amusing to watch—but only at a distance, for though they are no larger than a Bull mastiff, their claws are long and their teeth powerful. Their well-developed canine teeth would in fact give one the impression that they are great meat-eaters. These little bears in their wild state feed mainly on honey, fruit and small birds and mammals. Their very powerful claws and teeth are no doubt used mainly for uprooting roots and boulders to get at the honey and insects they love.

They look very docile and can be so, when very young, but as they grow older their tempers become very uncertain and they are dangerous animals when roused.

These bears, as the name implies, come from the Malayan Peninsula but although they are used to a tropical climate they settle down very well in our climate, providing they have plenty of room in which to exercise and climb about.

We have two females at the Zoo which have been here now for many years. Sally has



"Tweeny and Sally", Malayan Bears, old inhabitants of the Zoo.

been in residence for 17 years, and Tweeny 14. They both live in the circular enclosure, which has in the middle of it, the remains of a large oak tree which they killed very shortly after their arrival. When they were young they hardly ever bothered to go into the little house which was provided for them, but slept in the tree tops, even in the coldest weather.

There can be little doubt of the amazing hardness of these animals, for although born in the tropics, they can survive out-of-doors the most severe winters, and when the war made it impossible to provide them with the fruit and condensed milk on which they were normally fed, they lived, and even thrived, on whatever scraps of food we could provide for them.

Their feeding habits are most funny. When fruit is thrown into them they lie on their backs and put the apple or orange on their little tummies, holding the fruit before them with their long claws, and shooting their long tongues out to lap up the juices.

The procedure they adopt with a tin of honey or sweetened milk is equally amusing—

always assuming that two little holes have been punched in the lid. They stand on their hind legs, and holding the tin well above their heads pour the milk down their throats with the most obvious relish.

Another peculiar characteristic of the Malayan Bear is the way in which it walks. It turns its front feet in and its consequent peculiar running action is most amusing to watch. They have a number of such endearing characteristics and it is little wonder they are amongst the most popular inmates of the Zoo.

#### **But One Warning!**

Always treat them with the greatest respect, and never take advantage of what might appear to be a suitable time to pet them, as they are not only treacherous but can be very, very dangerous indeed.

## Humorous Incidents.

### **TITAN THE TUGGING TORTOISE.**

One fine day this Spring, Titan, our giant tortoise awakened from his winter sleep spent in the warm passageway behind the pens in the reptile house. Looking round to see what mischief he could get up to, Titan notice a protruding plug. He tugged at it with his mouth and suddenly to his amazement water came gushing from the opening. He had pulled the plug from the crocodile pond outlet pipe. A crocodile wallowing in the pond was most perturbed when he found that his slimy green paradise was fast disappearing, but an attendant came to the rescue.

### **BEAVERS CALL UPON THEIR NEIGHBOURS.**

Not so long ago, the reptile house keeper got a shock when he opened a small door under one of the snake pens and saw three beavers staring at him. It was later discovered that the animals had burrowed their way from their enclosure, adjacent to the reptile house and tunnelled up into it.

The beavers will not have many more opportunities for neighbourly visits such as these as they will soon be moving to their new home—an island surrounded by a moat and well wired against escape. The animals will be left to make their own lodges—the name given to a beaver's home.





View of the Crocodile Enclosure.      A Crocodile and Alligator basking in the sunshine.

## Crocodile Tears.

Alec, the nine years old Mississippi alligator, has died of a broken heart. He was found dead in the special pond in the reptile house which he shared with two six year old crocodiles. It was these crocodiles who brought about Alec's death. After living peaceably together for the past five years the crocodiles in the last few weeks were bullying and per-

secuting Alec. The persecution came about when the crocodiles decided they wanted more "living space". Sometimes the crocodiles would not allow Alec into the pool and on other occasions they would not let him out. This bewildering state of affairs proved too much for Alec, and he gave up the ghost.

## BEWARE THE SEA LIONS!

Visitors to the sea lions are advised not to sit on the wall with their back turned to the pond as Sammy is likely to take an unfair advantage of you. One visitor learnt this to her cost. While resting on this wall, Sammy swam up and mischievously tweaked the part of her anatomy nearest the wall!

## “Sunset Boulevard.”

Many of our visitors will have seen the film, “Where No Vultures Fly”, which had for its locale Tanganyika, but it may come as a surprise to them to learn that a number of the animal “stars” from that film are now “naturalized” Cestrians, and thriving in exile. Unfortunately animals, like actors, are subject to the changes that come with the passage of time—although we do not anticipate any trouble in the way of artistic temperament—and we feel that even the most ardent film-goer might appreciate a little help from us in the matter of spotting those animals which contributed to much of the success of “Where No Vultures Fly”, and who now live in retirement at our Zoo.

There is for instance, Lulu, the Cape buffalo calf, or calf as she was then, whose habit it was in the film to follow the hero around the game preserve he was so anxious to defend. Lulu, who has long ceased to worry about her weight, was presented to the Zoo on conclusion of the film, and arrived at her new home last September, after a year in quarantine. She is quartered at the moment in the zebra house, and with her, there are two brindled gnus, male and female, who were also in the film.

The trio must have much to talk over in the long winter evenings.

## In Black and White.

“Is a zebra black with white stripes or white with black stripes”, is a question that has been posed so often that most people are probably aware that the general colouring is white and it is the stripes which are black. What is not generally known perhaps is that a zebra, and particularly a stallion can be a most dangerous foe, even worse than a lion or a tiger.

This fact was brought home to the public and in a most dramatic fashion only a few weeks ago, when the National Press told how a zebra stallion from the Zoo, named Charlie, knocked down and badly mauled a trainee keeper, Mr. William Sass. Mr. Saas at the time of going to “press” is still in hospital recovering from his severe abdominal injuries. He was only saved from death by the very brave action of a senior keeper, Mr. D. T. Gawthorpe, who came to his rescue. The zebra has always been a favourite with the public, but it is as well to realise that it is a wild animal, and that the two new babies which are expected in the zebra house this Spring will lose much of their tameness as they approach maturity.





"Sheika", in the enclosure.

By courtesy of Litherland and District Photo. Society.



"After the Bath", no towel available.

By courtesy of Coulter Walker, Manchester.

## Prominent Visitors.

There was among the Spring visitors to the Zoo a film actress whose interest in the animals was all the more natural in that a number of them at the Zoo had appeared with her in a film in which she had starred. The actress was Dinah Sheridan, and the film, the Command Performance film of 1951, "Where No Vultures Fly". It transpired that Miss Sheridan has always been fond of animals and is blessed with an easy handling of them, an attribute which she told us turned out to be all for the good, since many of the animal scenes in the picture demanded all the confidence she could muster. And now, back in England, it was a pleasure for her to renew acquaintanceship with members of the supporting cast.

We also had the pleasure of entertaining Mr. and Mrs. G. S. Cansdale who paid a two day visit to the Zoo towards the end of March. Mr. Cansdale was formerly Superintendent of the Regent Park, London, Zoo, but his fame with the public rests on his television programmes which made the "Zoo-Man" one of the best known of broadcasters.

Earlier in March Mr. E. H. Tong, the Superintendent of Whipsnade Zoo, with his wife, visited us for a couple of days. It was during this visit that Mr. Tong arranged to "swap" one of his wapiti's—a North American deer—for some of our agoutis, swans and other small animals.

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## Our Dolourosa.

It is one of man's more pleasant characteristics that he is invariably moved to pity by the sight of an animal in distress. If we needed proof here at the Zoo, it came in the form of letters from irate correspondents who had seen pictures in the daily press of our newcomer to the Zoo, Dolourosa, the baby chim-

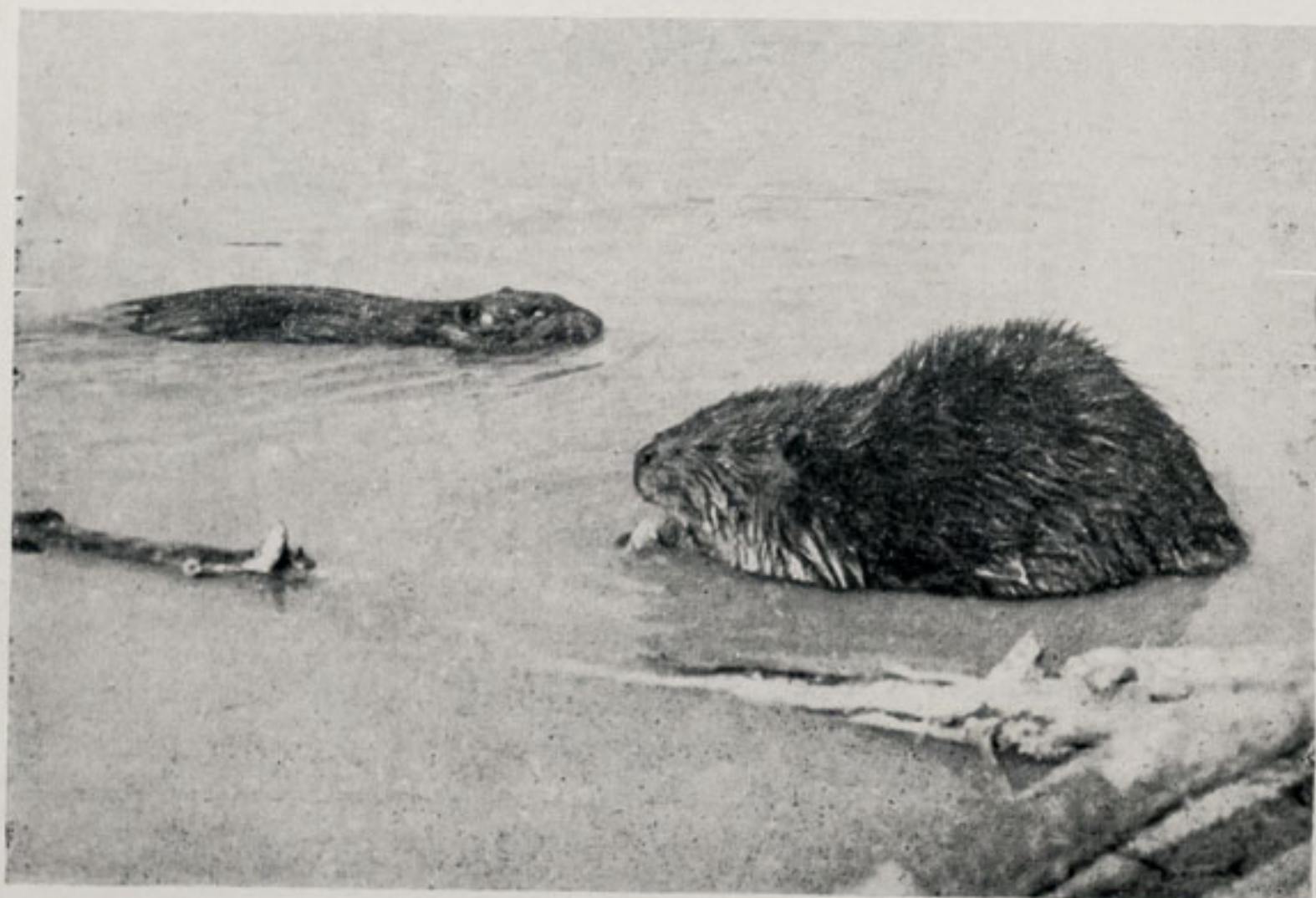
panzee. The picture shewed Dolourosa, even then a master of the pathetic look, in a huddled position, arms folded across her body, and looking generally dejected. While the caption read, 'Dolourosa denuded of her clothes, suffers agonies of shyness'. One half of the populace seemed to assume that her clothes had been taken away from her as the result of some peevish whim on the part of her keeper. But let us explain.

Dolourosa, who came to us from Nigeria, was presented to us by a doctor who brought her home with him, after rescuing her from some natives who had been cruelly treating her. The doctor very sensibly clothed her for the journey home as a protection against the abrupt change in climate, and she kept her clothes until she arrived at the special pen built for her, as a temporary measure, in the bird-keeper's office. We need hardly add that she received every attention and one of these attentions was the removal of her clothes—for the very good reason that she no longer required them for warmth, they are not hygienic and the wearing of them for any length of time would cause her to lose all the hair which nature provided for her as its own protection. Now, after all that, if you are still worried about her feelings, may we hasten to add that her shyness vanished within a week.

It is now some four months since she arrived and she has grown considerably. We are bound to confess however, that time has not lent her dignity, and that she is still as unscrupulous as ever in extracting tit-bits from those foolish enough to gaze into her eyes. Her art is such that it seems almost a pity that her favourite sweetmeat should be something as seasonal as Christmas-cake! She has as yet, had to practise her wiles on the members of the staff, but the proposed new houses for the chimpanzees, apes and monkeys, which will enable her to join her simian relatives should give her the chance of playing in public. We confidently forecast a sensational performance.



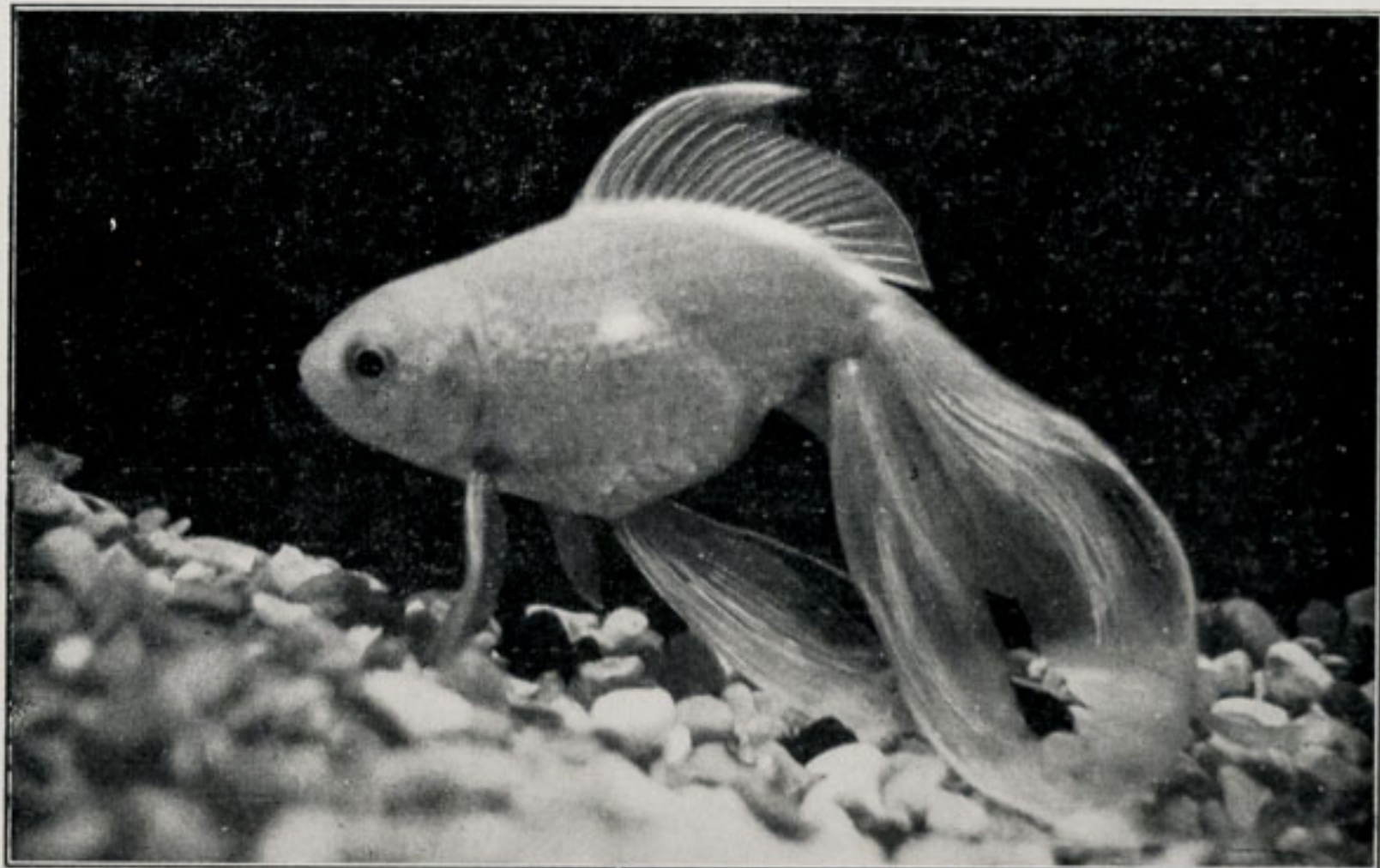
Three Sea Lions dispute  
the right to a rock.



Two Beavers at work in the beaver pool.



Peter Scott and Charlie.



Veiltail Goldfish.

Our new aquarium is a great attraction this year.



Two Lionesses in the spacious enclosure at the Zoo.



Nomad feed the Sea Lions at Chester Zoo.