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# "Our Zoo News"

⊙ A CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF ⊙  
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

NUMBER 122.

JULY 1st, 1955.



*Joey, our hand-reared Oryx, has had a great deal of publicity already, but we just could not resist making him "front-page news" again when we received this exquisite portrait.*

*"DAILY EXPRESS" PHOTOGRAPH*

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# The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 20106/7.

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## Our Zoo News.

### EDITORIAL.

Main topic of conversation in the Zoo this month has been the Garden Party held on June 13th in the grounds to celebrate the coming-of-age of the North of England Zoological Society.

The weather around that time was very uncertain and on the cloudy "day-before" the pessimists outnumbered the optimists, as far as the sun was concerned. We need not have worried. The Day dawned fairly clear and bright and as the afternoon approached hot sun and radiant skies were titivating the Gardens, like first-class cosmetics!

Between 500 and 600 guests arrived practically all together (or so it seemed) as guests at such functions so often do, and soon the main building of the house, set aside for the guests to rest and eat in, were practically as full of people as the terrace and lawns.

We were proud that so many distinguished visitors were able to come. Several Mayors and Mayoresses from the neighbouring counties, Chester dignitaries, Chairmen of local and comparatively distant Councils, with their ladies and friends, representatives of the B.B.C., Press and film companies, Zoo colleagues, and members of the Society mingled happily together and—although we know the phrase is hackneyed—everyone seemed to have a good time.

Numerous telegrams and letters of congratulation were received. Among those who sent good wishes were Professor Dr. Schneider (Leipzig Zoo), Robert Bean (Director of Chicago Zoological Society), Fletcher A. Reynolds (Director of Cleveland Zoological Park, Ohio), Bristol Zoo, and Antwerp Zoo. Some of the "thank you" letters, which were almost as numerous, were from Coun. N. W. Barritt (Chairman of Chester Rural District Council), Mr. G. E. Banwell (Chief Constable for Cheshire), Couns. Miss Beryl Nield, Mrs. D. B. Bowen (Vice-Chairman of Nantwich Urban District Council), Miss Helen Pollard, Mr. G. Morgan (Clerk to Chester Rural District

Council), and Miss Gwen Pain and Mr. N. F. Ellison ("Nomad"), both of B.B.C. Children's Hour fame.

The highlight of the proceedings came just after 4.30, when two "surprise" presentations were made to Mr. G. B. Grounsell, Chairman of the Society's Council, and Mr. G. S. Mottershead, the Director-Secretary of the Society. Mr. Grounsell received a handsome engraved silver salver from the hands of Mr. Mottershead, who himself was presented with a lovely whiskey flask by Mrs. D. Dodd, on behalf of the staff. Both recipients were so flabbergasted at the gifts they were almost at a loss for words! A pleasing end to the ceremony was the appearance of a very minute girl in white organdie and a straw bonnet (Susan Collins, the daughter of Mr. Charles Collins, who has been employed at the Zoo longer than anyone else) with orchid sprays she could scarcely manage to carry, for Mrs. Grounsell and Mrs. Mottershead.

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A few days before the 13th, Sugar, one of our Lesser Pandas, brought twins into the world. This is a particularly important achievement for although pandas have been born in England before, they have never yet been bred successfully here.

What finer birthday present could we have wished for!

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The attendance figures for Whit week-end were excellent in spite of the rail strike; no doubt they would have been larger under normal circumstances, as the weather was perfect

Saturday—2,197 (2,259 last year).

Sunday—10,460 (2,847 last year).

Monday—13,736 (5,211 last year).

Total attendance figure for 1955 was 26,393 against last year's 10,317.

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The Zoo has considerably extended its boundaries this year by purchasing about 66 acres of land. Its total acreage now is approximately 130 acres.

## New Arrivals.

### BARBARY APES.

While two Barbary Apes, presented to the Zoo by the Royal Artillery Garrison, Gibraltar, were on their way to this country, one of the apes, Madeline, delivered a baby, a minute, scantily-furred creature, which, for about two weeks, she barely allowed out of her arms.

There began a series of amusing walking lessons—the baby would totter a few steps on all fours, fall over and gibber disconsolately, and mother would pick up her offspring none too gently, do a little gibbering herself, then off they would go all over again. It really was funny to watch.

Winnie, however, was not amused! For far too long, it seemed to her, the baby (puny little thing, too, she thought) had been in the limelight. She remedied that one morning about three weeks after her arrival. She gave birth to a baby, too.

Now there is no more cause for jealousy!

### SENEGAL PARROTS.

Twelve Senegal Parrots, presented by Sir Donald Kingdon, Q.C., K.B., have arrived at the Zoo. Although not rare birds, their pretty grey, green and yellow plumage shines attractively in the Parrot House.

### TAWNY OWL.

A baby tawny owl, which had fallen out of its nest on a Wrexham road, was rescued and brought to Chester Zoo.

This friendly little bird has been christened Goblin by its keeper, who has no difficulty in getting it to eat! He was rather worried because when the owl was given to him to look after he was told it had been fed on bread and milk, a deadly dish for birds of prey. Several owls, in fact, brought to us recently have been given bread and milk, when they should actually receive birds and mice if they are to thrive.

### ROCK HYRAX.

Another newcomer to the Zoo is a young male Rock Hyrax. A native of Nigeria, the Hyrax is small and rodent-like in appearance, and the bone-structure of its feet shows it to be related to the elephant. The bare soles of its feet have contracting muscles which form cup-shaped suction pads on each foot.

Some forms live in the trees but the Rock Hyrax inhabits rocky hillsides, as the name

suggests, and the foot adaption enables it to cling to and climb on almost perpendicular surfaces.

The Hyrax feeds on leaves, shoots, barks and grasses.

### BLUE AND YELLOW MACAWS.

The Parrot House has received two more Blue and Yellow Macaws, making a family of seven.

### FALLOW DEER.

Friday, June 23rd, brought us another fallow deer—but this one is white.

### FISCHER'S LOVEBIRDS.

The aviaries have received one of its largest consignments—47 Fischer's Lovebirds. The lovebirds, which come from Africa, make a most colourful show in a large aviary where they have all been put together.

They are striking little birds, with bright green back, brilliant blue and grey tail feathers, strong orange beak, face and neck, the orange fading into yellow on the chest, and soft brown back-of-head.

### DONKEYS.

Two donkeys have been born within the last few weeks. Sunday (so named because she was born on a Sunday) is a lovely creature, much treasured by her mother, Beauty. The younger donkey, not quite so pretty, is, nevertheless, quite an attractive, furry little creature, and mama does not seem to mind her comparative plainness.

### PORCUPINE.

A baby porcupine has been born to one of our two pairs, making a total, with the two born here last year, of seven.

All of them are Kenya Chested Porcupines, and have the imposing Latin name of *Hystrix Cristata Senegalica*.

## Animal Characters.

### RINTY, THE LEMUR.

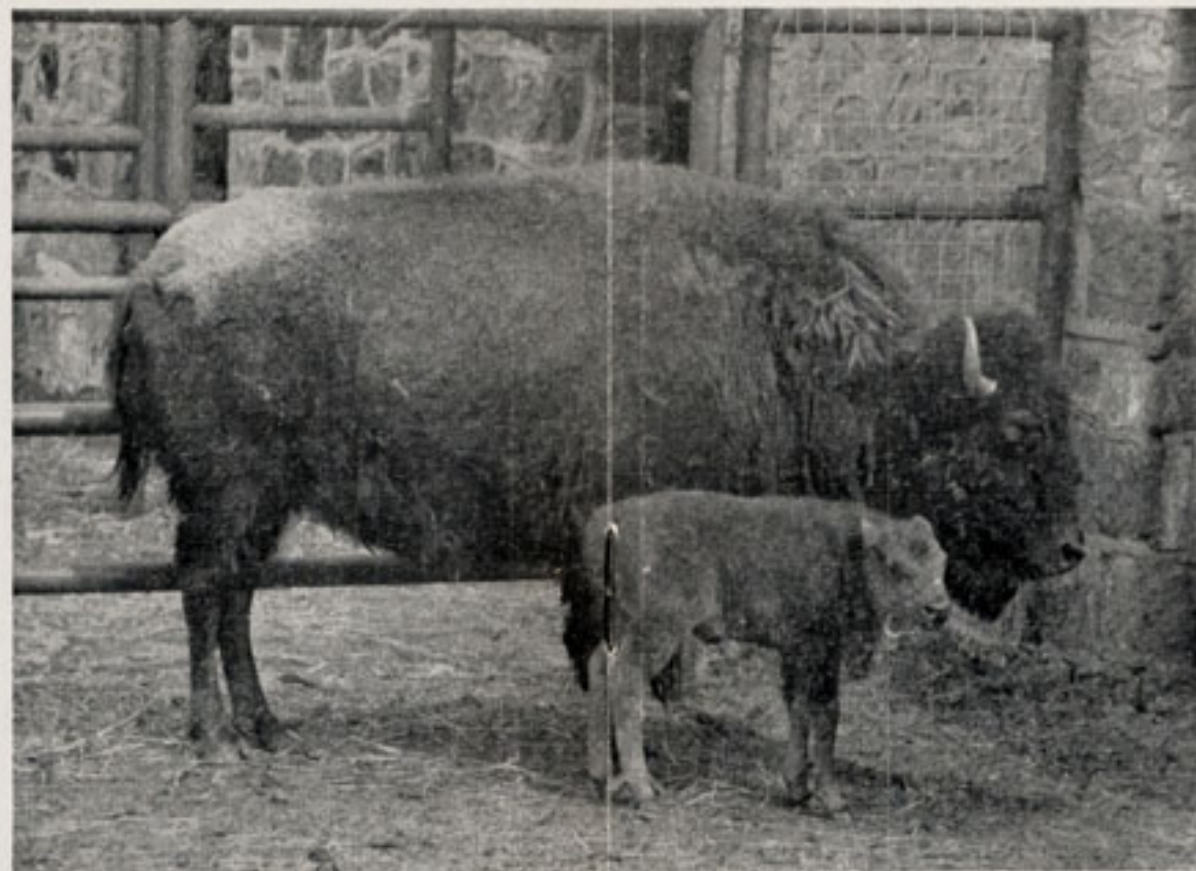
Have you ever heard of a monkey being a woman-hater? No? Well, we have one.

Rinty, the Ring-tailed Lemur was presented to us in March, 1951, when only a few months old, and is a fine specimen. His agility and balance have to be seen to be believed. But as soon as he has female company—in the form of visitors outside his cage—he becomes terribly agitated and clumsy in his movements.

What is the cause of this active dislike? Nobody seems to know.



*Some of the Zoo's Babies*



*with their Mothers*



"CHESTER CHRONICLE" PHOTOGRAPHS

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## Younger Generation.

A new generation of animals has suddenly sprung up and made everyone feel that Spring was worth waiting for after all.

Two of the mallards (wild duck) are daily to be seen shepherding their large downy families round the lake.

Several cygnets were hatched out discreetly on the reed-covered pond near the unfinished Tropical House, and at least four are growing up healthily.

A female baby bison called Linda has, by her size and carefreeness, put youth back into the spirits of her parents. It is incredible that one day this red-coated tiny creature will have grown into a big, dark, shaggy animal "the image of mother".

Maureen and Charlie, two Grant's Zebras, are now the proud parents of a beautiful foal, Danny.

A Silky Bantam (of Chinese origin) laid and hatched out a baker's dozen of eggs not long ago.

An egg has also been laid by one of the four King Penguins, which is sitting quite happily. It is hoped that the egg will be hatched successfully; we have never before reared King Penguins at the Zoo.

That is not all. We are expecting a Gnu, too!

### PRINCE AND BODEN SETTLE DOWN.

Prince and Boden, fairly new arrivals (chimpanzees), have settled down well.

Prince is much cheekier than his companion, takes more interest in the life around him, accepts from the hands of his keeper, without fuss, his mug of milk, and enjoys a cigarette after lunch.

Not a smoking addict, Boden has reserve and dignity, and prefers to pick up his milk beaker from the floor. He is much gentler and easier to handle.

They have one thing in common, though. They both love licking malt off a spoon!

### PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION.

May we remind readers that our Photographic Competition is still being run?

We have now altered the closing date for entries to the last Friday in July (July 29th).

Here are the rules again:

The competition is divided into two classes.

(a) Pictures of animals by themselves.

(b) Pictures of animals with people.

The entrance fee is 6d. and no competitor may submit more than one entry.

For convenience in reproducing the winning photos in "Our Zoo News" they must be at least post card size and have a glossy surface. They can be in black and white or colour.

The judging will be done as quickly as possible and it is hoped to notify prizewinners a fortnight after the closing date for entries (i.e. mid-August).

Three prizes will be awarded in each class and a fourth for children's entries (each of the latter must be accompanied by the child's age).

All entries should be sent, with the name and address of the competitor, to:

The Director-Secretary;

North of England Zoological Society;

Chester Zoological Gardens;

UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

and marked "Photographic Competition".

Prizes will be:

1st—Three Guineas.

2nd—Two Guineas.

3rd—One Guinea.

Children's Book Token (value 10/6).

We hope that you will take an interest in the competition and will come and see the winning pictures which we intend to post up in the Zoo.

## Tabby Courage.

Quietly and unnoticed by anybody, Leonora, one of the Zoo's tabby cats, crept into a little hollow rock near the wall of the Brown Bear pit—and, fortunately, inaccessible to the Brown Bears!—and gave birth to three tabby kittens.

The first keepers knew about this was when they saw three very tiny tabbies stretching, not too near the edge of the rock, watched carefully by Leonora. She soon removed her brood one by one over the wall and to complete safety.

## More Edible Frogs.

Some of the twelve Edible Frogs which the Zoo acquired in the Spring spawned a short time ago and the spawn was carefully transferred to a tank. Now hundreds of tadpoles

have hatched out, not unlike Common tadpoles, but light brown in colour.

The Edible Frog has quite an interesting history. Certainly not a native of this country, it was introduced into Norfolk about a century ago and survived there for many years. It is believed that the Frog was found even earlier in Cambridgeshire. There are none in either of these counties to-day.

Within the last fifty years many have been brought over from the continent and liberated in different parts of England, mainly in the south-west. At the present time the creature is known to inhabit Surrey, Middlesex, North Kent, and a colony in Woburn Park, which is not, however, flourishing as well as it was.

Breeding usually begins in May. The first young leave the water before August is out, but owing to the variable growth of the tadpole as winter approaches large numbers, in every stage of development, are still in the water. Very few live until the next spring.

Thoroughly aquatic in its habits, the Edible Frog spends its life in water or at the water's edge, feeding both by day and by night. It loves sunshine and can be seen basking in it at all hours of the day. The beautiful shades of green the Frog can assume are dependent on this sunshine. Its aquatic habits and extreme liveliness make it difficult to catch.

In captivity, it often refuses all food, or it may feed well; ours are extremely healthy and always enjoy their meals.

The Edible Frog is eaten regularly in France and Belgium, but rarely in other parts of Europe.

Roger Ainslie.

## News from the Gardens.

Over 25,000 plants were used in the planting of the summer beds, which we completed recently. The varied and interesting collection include Begonias of many different kinds, Heliotropes, Geraniums, Salvias, Antirrhinums, Dahlias and Calceolaria. An increased number of Canna Lilies were at our disposal this year, and they form a bold group in the border by the Pandas' quarters. These grand plants are always a source of particular interest to our visitors.

The Rhododendrons and Azaleas (even the recent plantings of these) flowered well in the spring and with the remainder of the spring bedding have combined to make a most colourful display.

Our roses are again showing promise (at the time of writing); they are in full bud and will soon be at their best.

While waiting for the summer bedding to become established, the most colourful places in the Zoo are the herbaceous borders and the beds of *Primula Pulverenta* Hybrids at the lake edge near the Wallaby paddock.

The greenhouses are planted chiefly with tomatoes and cucumber. These, cut and picked fresh each day, with lettuce from our nurseries, provide a base for the luscious salads served in the Cafe throughout the summer months.

At night, when visitors and staff wend their way home and the Zoo grows quiet, a batch of very unwelcome visitors come on the scene—rabbits. We really would not mind them coming if they would satisfy their surprising appetites with fresh grass, which is so abundant in the grounds, but, of course, they do not. Only the best is good enough—and the best, in this case, is the newly planted bedding stock! We have been forced, therefore, to take measures to discourage the persistent little intruders.

Footnote: Soon the gardens will reach the peak of their bright summer beauty. Just as the wood craftsman surveys a newly completed piece of work with pride, so we examine proudly the neatness and symmetry of the flower borders. We should be most grateful if parents with lively children (and we do realise just how lively children can be!) would try to keep their children on the paths as much as possible.

P. Gallup.

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## OSTRICH MYSTERY.

Visitors who walk across the Zoo as far as the back of the Camel House may have wondered why one of the ostriches is living all by himself in a rather isolated enclosure. The truth is rather curious.

Last year he developed a peculiar habit of almost tying a knot in his long neck, jerking round suddenly, and falling flat on his back—a most alarming process to watch.

He was put in a separate paddock so that he could be closely watched and kept quiet. He continued to behave in this odd manner for some months but gradually righted himself and is now all set for a reunion with his ostrich companions.

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### HAIRCUT FOR KENNETH.

A few tears were wept by Kenneth, the peaceable Bactrian Camel, when he was submitted, recently, to a haircut.

The loose hair on his front generally comes off of its own accord when the warm days arrive but there were still some untidy, straggly bits irritating him and disturbing his camel's pride in appearance, and one of the keepers asked the animal permission to get rid of it for him. Permission was granted but Kenneth cried a little.

We were a little upset about this but felt reassured when told that the camel's tear ducts are so adapted that it can clear its eyes when it wants (in this way the desert sand of its natural habitat is prevented, with little effort on the part of the camel, from obstructing the eyesight).

Kenneth certainly looks extremely smart and is at least trying to lope about with a little more dignity.

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### Sammy—and Sophia.

Sammy, our notorious sea lion, sometimes evokes sleeplessness in people living near the Zoo. One night late in June the number of those suffering from insomnia must, undoubtedly, have been doubled.

Sammy honked extra loudly and incessantly in the darkness. His keeper found out why the next morning . . . .

He had left the sea lions peacefully swimming about on the evening before. There were no signs then of anything unpleasant or strange. Sammy was in evidence, lording it, as usual, over his three pretty wives, and Sonny was there, too.

But the keeper, making his morning check-up, counted the sea lions—there were six. Sophia had joined the party!

You will remember that for several weeks Sophia had been living in solitary state in the pool which once was Sonny's. Many animals have their eccentricities. Sophia is no exception. On more than one occasion, when she had climbed wilfully out of her pool (which any fair-minded sea lion would describe as *de luxe*), and had to be firmly escorted back, she was put in an inside enclosure to do penance. But it had soon become obvious that it was not a penance at all. Sophia, freed once again, instead of darting madly into the cool depths of water as she was expected to do, just hung around languidly at the door—and often returned of her own free will to the roofed sheltering place. Moping perhaps, we thought. We must have been right.

For, in precisely the same way as the late Stella, much mourned mate of Sammy, who perished in this January's freezing weather, joined her disinterested husband, Sophia joined Sammy, and Sonny, and her sisters. A flip over the fence, a flop across the drive, another flip over the railings—and there she was.

It was immediately obvious, of course, that she had not come just to see Sabrina, Selina and Sonia, or pay her respects to Sonny. It was Sammy she was after! She spent the first day in her new home following, with adoration in her large brown eyes, the indifferent Sammy, whose call she had so promptly answered.