



INDEPENDENT ZOO! ENTHUSIASTS SOCIETY

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Contents

EDITORIAL by Tim Brown	- 1
Rome Zoo by Sam Whitbread	- 2
How Many <i>Ateles</i> ? by Mike Grayson	- 5
Two Notable Bird Gardens by Rosemary Low	- 8
Gleanings From The Internet by Sam Whitbread	- 12
Heidelberg Zoo by Mike Grayson	- 14
Dartmoor Wildlife Park by Matthew Peace	- 17
Tales From The Taxonomic Treasure Trove II by Mike Grayson	- 19
Three Forgotten Collections:	
- Thorney Wildlife Park by Bernard Sayers	- 23
- Kelling Park Aviaries by Bernard Sayers	- 25
- Brentwood Zoo by Bernard Sayers	- 27
Editor's Query	- 29
Emmen Zoo by Tim Brown	- 30
Cursed Are The Meek by Mike Grayson	- 34
African Ungulates In The Czech Republic by Sam Whitbread	- 36
Keeling's Cogitations by Clinton Keeling	- 38
Note to Contributors	- 42
The Amazon River Dolphin by Sam Whitbread	- 43
Enthusiast's Choice by Sam Whitbread	- 47
Parting Shot	- 52
Quick Quiz	- 53

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EDITORIAL

Less of an editorial and more of a 'state of the nation' address I would say. You will obviously have noticed the new look of our magazine and this represents something of a relaunch of the society after some two years of regrouping. Two aspects are particularly important. Firstly it quickly became apparent that I needed assistance even under the old protocol. The cavalry finally arrived in the shape of Sam Whitbread, fresh from obtaining his zoology degree, to pull us shouting and screaming into the computer age. This added dimension is critical. Secondly, I have always been a little concerned that the message we spread and the information we disseminate is limited to a comparatively small audience. Whilst I do not want to lose the specialist nature of our publication I have decided to 'spread our wings' a little and try to move on to another level. The vehicle for doing this will be an A4, part-colour, glossy magazine which I am hoping will be sold in zoo shops. This publication will become part of your subscription and will have two issues per year. ZOO! will also become a bi-annual publication and there may also be occasional newsletters. Subscribers to the new magazine (as yet untitled) will become members of the IZES and receive ZOO! as well. We will instigate a new bout of promotion and hopefully also launch a web-site. As a business man I enter into all this with my eyes open and I feel it is something we have to do in order to make a difference.

Even this issue of ZOO! represents something of a departure from the norm in that it is largely written by contributors other than myself. This has helped enormously and I hope that this can continue. My thanks go to everyone who sent me a contribution and therefore enabled this issue to emerge before Christmas.

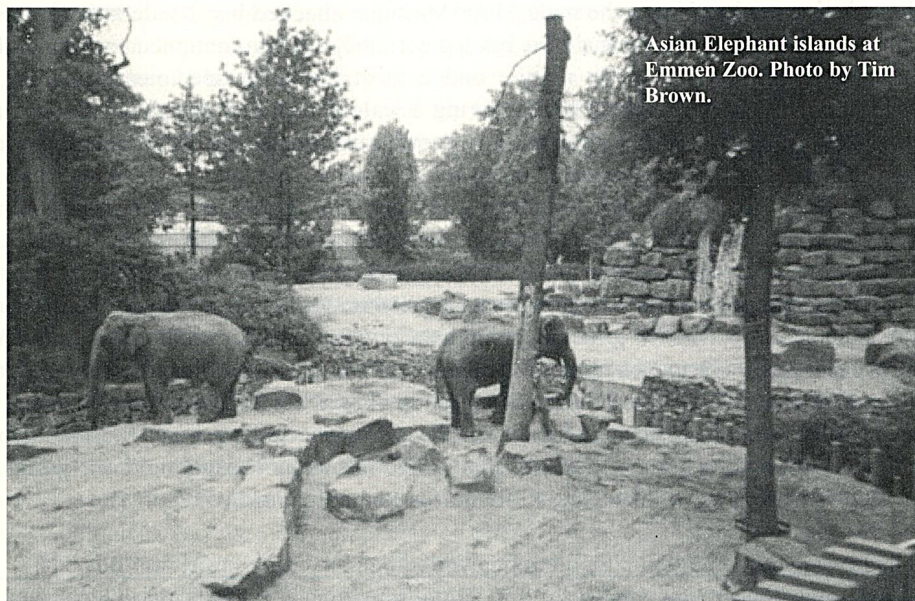
Next year should see us revive the IZES outing once more and the proposed venue is the world-famous Jersey Zoo. It is hoped that we will be allowed behind-the-scenes particularly to see the reptile collection. No date has yet been allocated but it seems likely to be April. If you are interested please write to me as soon as possible.

Towards the end of every year I attend a specialist music festival in Holland and always use the opportunity to visit a zoo or two (this year Artis and Rhenen). Zoo attendances have been very large in the Netherlands this year with over two million souls at Arnhem and 1.5 million at Rotterdam. Doubtless other places did very well also. Britain has had a fair year overall but as ever this can vary enormously from zoo to zoo. At the end of the season there are two closures to report - both establishments that have been around for quite a while. Over in Derbyshire Riber Castle has closed and news of this imminent event prompted me to make my first visit. Maybe it isn't fair to judge a place when in its death throes but I must admit that it is the kind of 'larch-pole and chicken-wire' zoo that I can't get excited over. Poor labelling, fibre-glass dinosaurs, lots of mud - I'm sorry if I offend someone but it doesn't seem like much of a loss to me. The best thing about it is the view (which will still be there of course) and, coincidentally, Todmorden has an almost identical Victorian castellated house over-looking it. More important was the closure of Rode Tropical Bird Gardens, possibly the largest avian collection in the UK. Those collections which are privately operated have particular problems with regards to their long-term future and it is sad to see a life's work fall apart when the owners are not around. Donald Risdon contributed much and I am sure he would not have wished it all consigned to history quite so

Emmen Zoo, 2000

By Tim Brown

Tucked away in the North-east of Holland not far from the German border is the town of Emmen. It is a neat and orderly place, walk a mile in any direction from the centre and you are on the outskirts of the town. Emmen is benign and welcoming but totally unexceptional save for one aspect... it's world-famous zoological garden. It would not be an exaggeration to state that this town seems to revolve around its zoo. Like so many communities around the world a square lies in the very centre of town in Emmen this same square doubles as the entrance area and perambulatory plaza to the zoo itself. Like many city zoos parking space is a great problem and Emmen solves this with a 'park and ride' scheme from the edge of town into the zoo.



Asian Elephant islands at Emmen Zoo. Photo by Tim Brown.

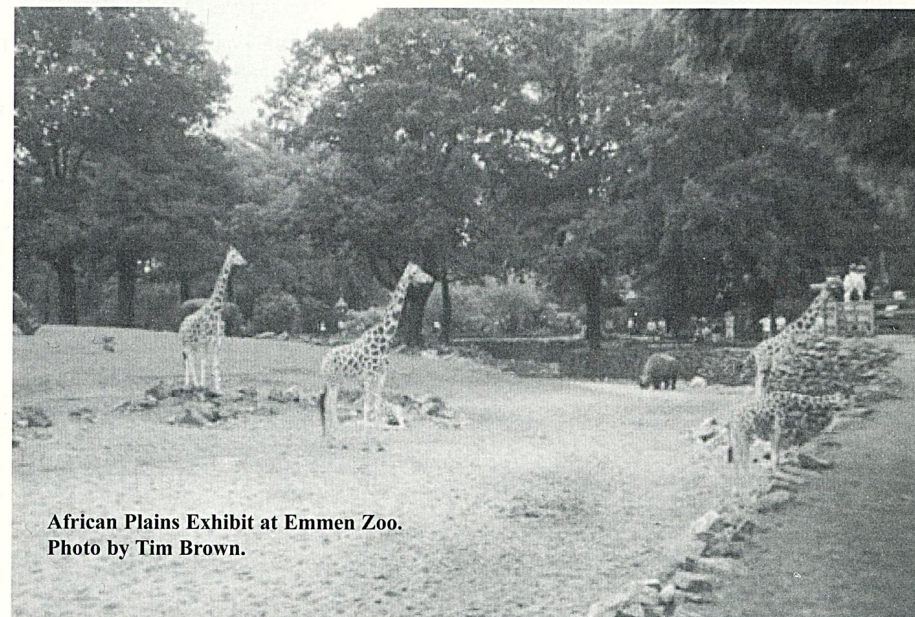
Noorder Dierenpark (to give Emmen its Dutch name) can normally rely on around 1.5 million visitors per annum. So what is it that pulls so many people into a relatively obscure region? Well, around thirty years ago Emmen decided to reinvent itself in accordance with a predominantly educational philosophy and the latest trends in zoo design. This met with massive acclaim and by 1980 the zoo had metamorphosed from an undistinguished menagerie into a world-class establishment thought by many to be the embodiment of a modern zoo. Now we must consider that this takes us to a point which in itself is twenty years old. What of the Emmen Zoo in year 2000?

Well, a good zoo never stands still and developments are ongoing at Emmen as they are everywhere else but it would be a fair reflection to state that the identity of the zoo remains within its radical period over two decades ago. Certainly it can be said that Emmen works to a different protocol from most others in that the emphasis is firmly on education and that the zoo is in part a museum and biopark as well as a living zoological collection. Part of the education process is undoubtedly regarded as the display of the animals and to this end Emmen

concentrates on spectacular exhibits of fewer species. No massive emphasis is placed on conservational work but obviously such a zoo will become involved in those species that are managed by EEPs and the like. There is no doubt at this zoo that the animal connoisseur must take his or her pleasure from criteria other than rarities and unusual species - this is easy to do.

The zoo has a zoogeographic layout that is not strictly adhered to - it can be very difficult under these circumstances to accommodate every situation. So we find, for instance, a wonderful job in breeding False Gavials to be taking place in the Africa House. This same Africa House is then separated from the main African area by the Asian Elephants. The zoo does have something of a problem in that it is not large in area (20 acres) and is surrounded by urban paraphernalia therefore zoogeography can become something of a Rubic's Cube in terms of practical implementation.

It seems to me that Emmen is particularly famous for three things at the moment:- the African Plains exhibit, the Biochron and breeding elephants. The African Plains is a very large moated paddock with a sizeable hillock in the middle which manages to combine, fairly peaceably, Giraffe, White Rhino, Zebra, Ostrich, Brindled Gnu, Impala, Springbok and Ellipsen Waterbuck amongst more occasional inhabitants. Much attention has been paid to lines of sight and hiding places for the smaller species. It must work well because most species kept here have reproduced. Overlooking all this is a restaurant terrace offering wonderful views with good food- quite the place to take a break.



African Plains Exhibit at Emmen Zoo. Photo by Tim Brown.

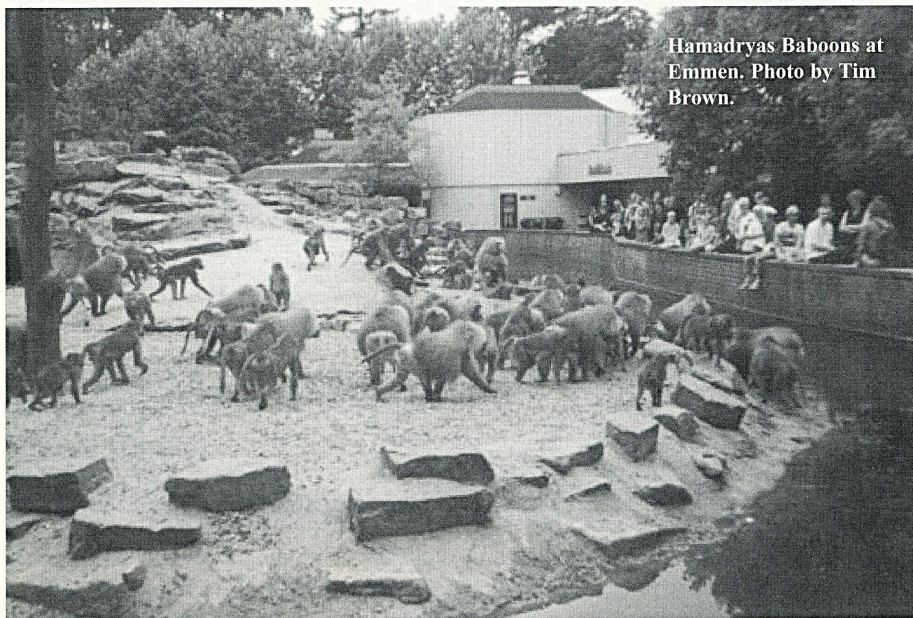
The Biochron is the most famous manifestation of Emmen's museum aspect. In truth I find this aspect of the zoo somewhat overstated, after all about a hundred miles away Amsterdam's Artis has been combining geology, botany, astronomy and other sciences with zoology for over a century before Emmen got around to it and in many ways it is still a more complete representative of these matters than its country cousin.

The Biochron is billed as an introduction to the zoo and principally seeks to explain and illustrate the evolution of life on Earth. There are some geological exhibits, a small aquarium with Lemon Sharks, dinosaur skeletons and models, an exhibition of flowers and insects and one for evolution of the mammals. Everything is done very well in what one might term a contemporary style and it does rather set the tone for what is about to follow

Actually the Elephant enclosure is not too far away and this is a zoo which has had great success in breeding Asian Elephants with five in the last two years alone. The accommodation is unusual to say the least comprising a large moated island and a separate, much smaller one. The latter is principally for the bull, Naing Thein, apparently (and I still almost don't believe this) he is lowered on a ramp into the inside of the island for indoor housing. In fact can anyone confirm this? It almost beggars belief, for instance what happens when he is in Musth? The females and calves live on the larger island with access to housing underneath the Asian Pavilion. This island contains a large rocky outcrop with a large waterfall, in fact the whole of the enclosure is decidedly montane in aspect with numerous small rock formations. To be honest, you would expect Barbary Sheep to come scurrying along at any moment yet the zoo litmus test is usually a very simple one - it works.

Emmen tends to specialise in large groups of socially relevant animals, ten Common Hippopotamus or, what appears to be, one hundred Hamadryas Baboons. Seen under such circumstances these species can take on a new dimension and it is a pleasure to observe such groups at length

There are a number of other excellent exhibits. I particularly like the South American Free Flight Aviary, nothing architecturally outstanding just a huge area of full grown trees -



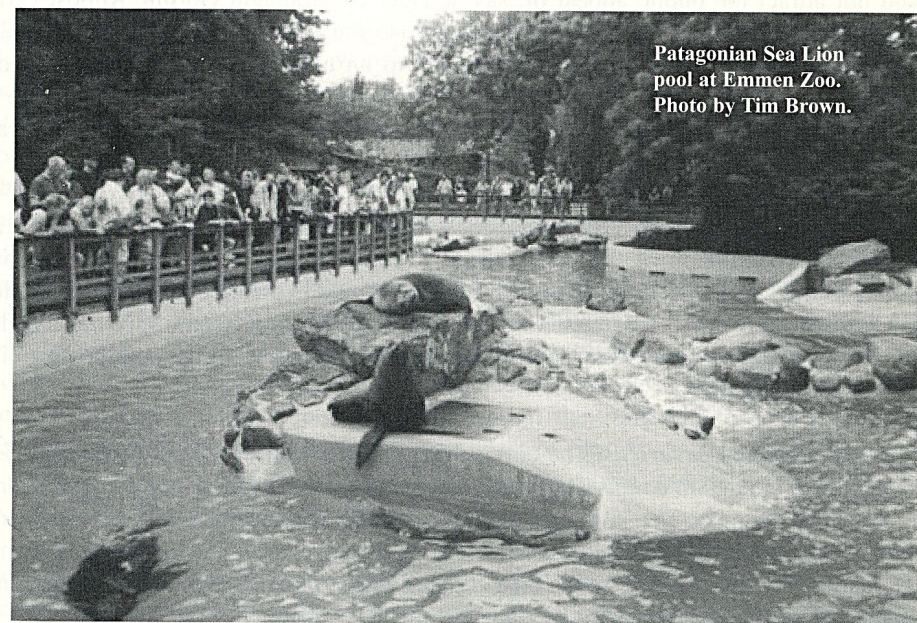
Hamadryas Baboons at Emmen. Photo by Tim Brown.

streams, pools and rocks nicely planted. Only around twenty species of bird here but again large colonies of many such as Scarlet Ibis and Roseate Spoonbill. The birds are moved indoors in Winter. This aviary leads into an indoor tropical glass house termed 'AmeriCasa' which also includes a nocturnal section. Quite good but one of those tropical halls that seems to have the

balance a little too much in favour of plant life. I would make a similar criticism of the smaller tropical free-flight area in the Asian Pavilion.

One side of the 'AmeriCasa' is occupied by a recent construction for the Kodiak Bears rescued from the notorious Limburgse Zoo in Belgium and surely transplanted to bear paradise. Lots of greenery, rocky outcrops, tree trunks and a very large water moat in which the Kodiaks spend a good deal of time cavorting. This is a quite superb exhibit and one of the finest I have ever seen for bears. Typical of Emmen is that an adjacent cabin is given over to a plethora of bear facts and information. If a whole exhibition can be made from information on the animals then often this zoo will do it. The best comparison to this in the UK would be Colchester I would say. Adjacent to the Kodiak Bears is a truly enormous pool for Patagonian Sealions.

Obviously there is a number of smaller exhibits I have not touched upon including the famous rat sewer. Out of all these miscellaneous exhibits I particularly enjoyed the variety of European shore birds in the Tidal Aviary. Avocets, Redshank, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Oyster Catcher and others including what may well be the rarest zoo animal in the whole place, the Common Tern. Just think about it, how often do you see Terns other than the gorgeous grey and whiskered Inca species in zoos? No. Emmen is not known for its unusual and rare species. It is not what we would term a 'collectors' zoo (and there is a term to frighten the management in most zoos these days).



Patagonian Sea Lion pool at Emmen Zoo. Photo by Tim Brown.

Emmen is unique mainly for the mantle it has taken upon itself and way it runs a little at odds with current zoo thinking. There are no Lions, Great Apes, Canids, Deer and numerous other groups (nor room for them I might add) so personally I would shrink from placing it amongst the world's very best. If I might be candid, even in its own homeland I would prefer Blijdorp or Artis, but if your criteria concerns doing things well or not at all then you might well rate Emmen amongst the most perfect zoos in the world.