

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS

COLCHESTER ZOO

EST. 1963

BY TRISTAN FONTAGIO

It was in the summer of 86,
That we first took a trip to the Zoo.
Back in the day when summers used to last forever,
And every sky was a vast sea of blue.

What happened first was a curious thing,
Bordering on quite bizarre.
We all sat down for a veritable feast,
In the form of a picnic right next to the car.

I only really remember the Sea Lions,
Three of them all wanting to play.
Performing tricks in return for a fish,
In the pool, which the Penguins are housed in today.

Fifteen years passed before I returned,
A date with a girl I'd arranged.
I remember being totally in awe,
Mesmerised by how much had changed.

We visited often and even sponsored a Wolf,
Wilfy was the name that she chose.
We could recognise him from his nose!

One Halloween we went whilst it was dark,
There were ghosts scattered all over the place.
But the biggest scare came in the Lion's sleeping quarters,
When Mr Lion roared right next to my face.

Crowds stood on the Giraffe house gantry,
Like toy figurines lined up on a shelf.
I felt totally free with the warm sun on my face,
Like I was on an actual safari myself.

I recall the excitement when Kito was born,
86kgs of cute Elephant to adore.
But sadly there were also some losses along the way,
RIP Rajang, Billy-Joe and Igor.

It was thirty years exactly,
After my own Zoo journey had first begun.
I found myself back watching the Sea Lions,
Only this time, I was holding my son.

He absolutely loves the underwater tunnel,
Watching their grace and beauty through those
giant glass screens.
Creating memories that will last for all eternity,
Hearing his squeals and excitable screams.

We've fed Giraffes and Elephants too,
Oh and the Reindeer, not that I'm one to boast.
But of all the animals and enclosures to visit,
It's the Sea Lions my son loves the most.

Playgrounds, restaurants, animals and trains,
And a beautiful shop, in which we always buy a gift.
Colchester Zoo has been and will continue to be,
Such an important part of the life that I've lived.

