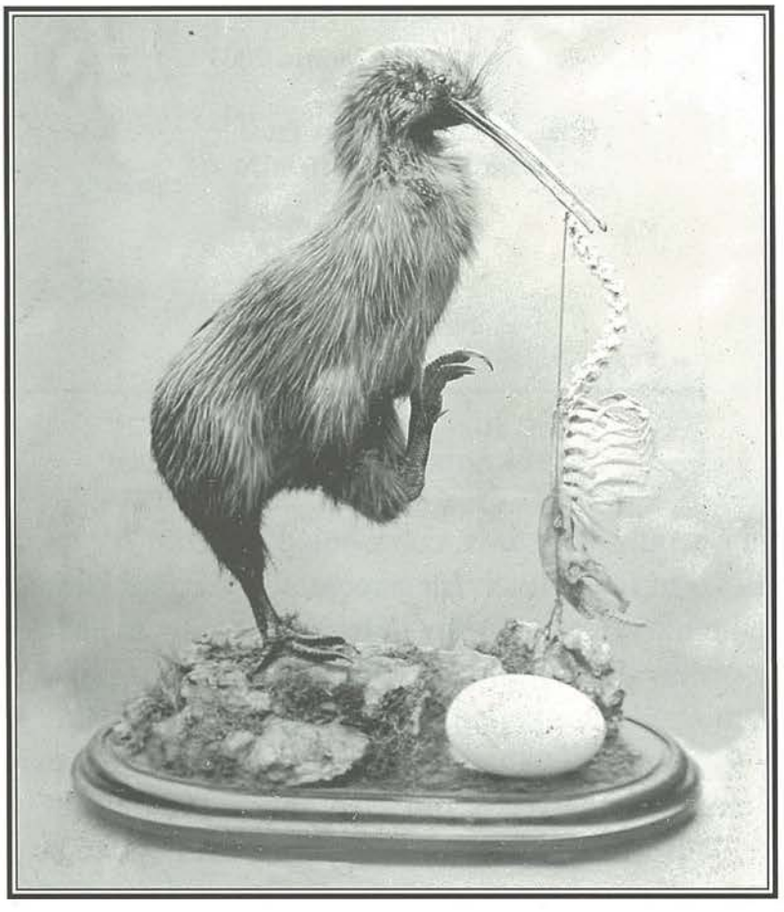
Edward Gerrard & Sons

A Taxidermy Memoir

by

P. A. Morris



Chapter 1
The Gerrard Family

The Gerrard family tree is confusing and difficult to unravel. The confusion is excusable however, because for several generations the Gerrards followed a common practice of naming the first son after his father, thereby creating a succession of men all bearing the name 'Edward Gerrard'. A published account by Hillaby (1950), although seemingly detailed and accurate, is in fact misleading. Fortunately the family history has been unravelled by the two daughters of 'Mr Ted', Betty and Audrey. To remove ambiguity, they allocated numbers to the sequence of 'Edward Gerrards', and these are used here. The genealogy runs as below, focussing on those directly involved in the taxidermy business.

The Founder (Edward Gerrard 1st)

Edward Gerrard
1810 -1910

The original Edward Gerrard was born in Oxford in 1810 and moved to London with his parents. In 1836 he began work with the Zoological Society of London, as joint curator of the Society's museum. After five years he transferred to the British Museum, which he continued to serve for more than half a century. One of his first tasks was to assist in moving the collections from Montagu House to the new museum building in Bloomsbury. There he assisted Dr J E Gray, who particularly wished to build up representative collections of skeletons. These were stored in a cellar, where a fire was kept constantly burning to prevent them and their labels becoming mouldy as a result of the damp.

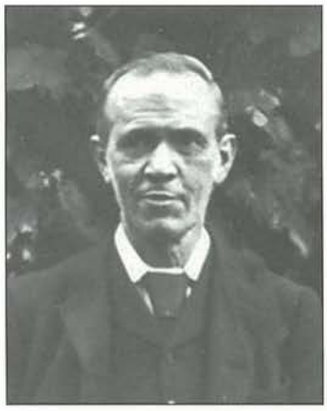
Working here, Edward Gerrard compiled a catalogue of specimens, using a tray on his knees as a table, there being so little space (Stearn, 1981). The catalogue of the collections was published and the specimens were later transferred to their own gallery at the new Natural History Museum in South Kensington. He was distressed when this display was dismantled. Apart from curating the osteology collections, Edward Gerrard had additional responsibilities for overseeing the accession of other vertebrate specimens. He was also keenly interested in general natural history and became an associate member of the Linnean Society of London. He was a friend of Charles Darwin too. Professionally he was widely known as a stalwart employee at the British Museum, and when he retired from there after 55 years, he received a special commendation from the Trustees.

Edward Gerrard shortly before his 101st birthday.

Edward senior seems to have been a fit and healthy man who was rarely ill. Each day, regardless of the weather, he used to walk to work from Camden Town to Bloomsbury about 5km away, where the British Museum's natural history collections were held in those days.

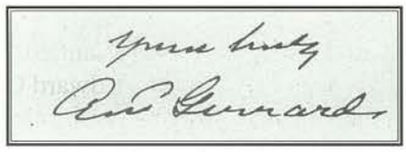
By the time of the 1881 census he was a widower living with some younger relatives. He died on June 19th 1910, within a few weeks of his 101st birthday with his son, grandsons and his great-grandsons working for the business.

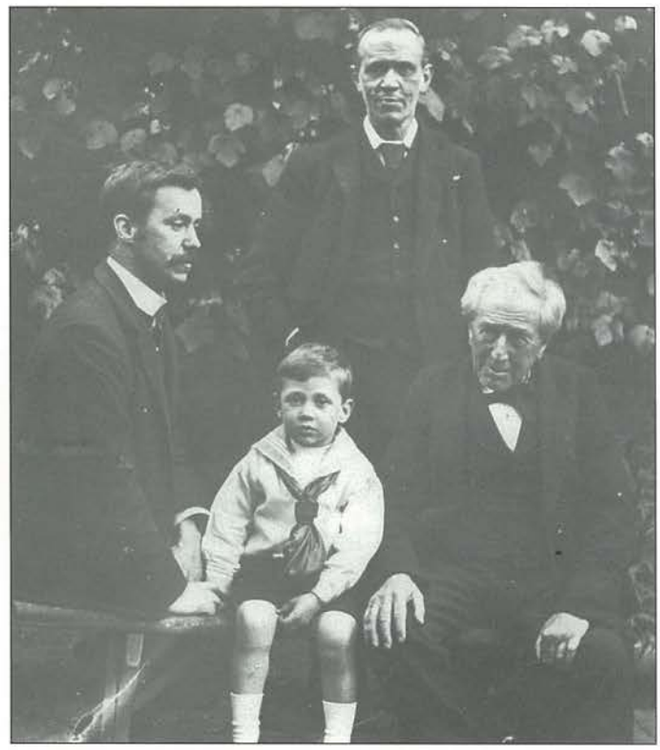
Edward Gerrard 2nd



Edward Gerrard
1832 -1927

His son, Edward Gerrard 2nd, was born in about 1832 and joined his father in business, aged 18, when the family firm was set up in 1850. He was often referred to as Edward Gerrard Junior. According to an account by Hillaby (1950), Edward Gerrard Jr. left three sons Henry, Charles and Thomas Gerrard, and it was this Thomas that established the separate osteology and model making business, T. Gerrard & Co in the 1930s.





Four generations of Gerrard taxidermists, with Edward Gerrard 1st seated at the front right, beside his great grandson, Edward 4th. Edward 3rd is at the left and Edward 2nd ('Edward Gerrard Jnr') is behind.

Edward Gerrard 3rd

The next Edward Gerrard was born in 1869 and married Minnie Emma Payne. She gave him eight children, several of whom later worked for the family business. The 1901 census shows Mr Edward Moore Gerrard, listed as a taxidermist, living with his wife Minnie and son of 11 months. The boy was Edward Francis Gerrard (Edward Gerrard 4th, 'Mr Ted'), who was born in 1900.

Edward Moore Gerrard
1869 -1906

Edward Gerrard 3rd died unexpectedly early, in 1906, aged only 37. Normally his eldest son (Edward 4th, 'Mr Ted') would have taken over, but he was only six years old at the time, so his uncle Harry (actually Henry Gerrard) ran the firm and was still in charge in 1938 according to a contemporary news-paper article. By the end of World War Two, he was still there, but by now rather deaf and nearly 80 years old. When he died, his heirs emigrated and sold the business to Edward 4th ('Mr Ted') and his brother Charles ('Mr Charles''). They had followed careers in the Navy, see below, and returned to civvy street to run the family firm jointly.

Charles Gerrard ('Mr Charles')

Charles Gerrard (1903-1971), photographed about 1970 by Bari Logan.

Charles Gerrard (also known as 'Charlie') was a cheery, friendly man, easy going and easy to get on with. He was always happy to comply with the needs of visiting press photographers, which is why so many of the contemporary pictures show him rather than anyone else.

Charles Gerrard in 1935 carrying an awkward bundle of goods through the yard. Charles was an easy going, cheerful sort of person who was evidently very willing to cooperate with visiting photographers, which is why he figures so frequently in contemporary newspapers and in the pages of this book.

In the post-war years, he was the firm's principal taxidermist. He was very versatile and apparently not dismayed by the variety and complexity of the many unfamiliar jobs that came his way. Although he served in the merchant navy he never went to either Africa or India, the source of so many hunting trophies, so his big game taxidermy had to be guided by photographs and visits to the London Zoo.

After the Second World War Charles worked in the family business at College Place, although he still lived in Rochester, while he waited for a posting at sea. This did not materialise, so he resigned from the Navy and joined the firm as a full time taxidermist, living for a while with his family in the damp basement at 61, College Pace. Charles was an accomplished artist, but it is not clear where he learned taxidermy. He was already

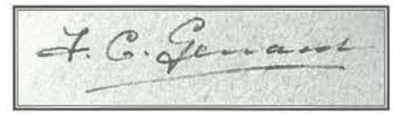
Charles Gerrard in the 1950s

familiar with the basics of what the family firm had done for so long, and he had worked there in the pre-war years. Presumably he learned on the job as he went along.

He also had a small collection of books. These included a set of Witherby's *Handbook of British Birds*, to which he often referred, a second hand copy of Oliver Davie's standard taxidermy manual (Davie, 1894) and *Our Country's Birds* by W.J. Gordon, which had a whole chapter giving useful measurements of birds. He also had a copy of the English edition of John Moyer's book *Practical Taxidermy* (Moyer, 1957), but evidently was already sufficiently experienced to feel moved to annotate the master's work in a critical fashion. In addition, the Gerrard library included an album of cigarette cards, showing colour illustrations of fish, and also the ninth edition of Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* (Dollman & Burlace, 1928), with its many helpful illustrations and measurements.

In the last two years of his life, Charles wrote a taxidermy book of his own. This began in 1970 as a plan to write what he called "a small pamphlet on taxidermy" motivated by a feeling that "most books I have read on the subject make the job far too complicated". He was aiming for teenage readers, presumably to provide advice for school leavers seeking a job in taxidermy. The book is written in a very direct style, almost like a tutorial session with the reader. It is a long series of practical tips and instructions, full of detailed observations based on personal experience (for example, the elegance of the eyelashes in a toucan and describing the difficulty of skinning the head of a shoveller by turning it inside out). The project expanded and became a 25,000 word manuscript, but writing it proved difficult for him, and he rewrote the first half three times, wrestling with an ancient and perverse typewriter, typing to the very edges of tiny sheets of paper (presumably in pursuit of economy). The text was submitted to David & Charles, but they declined to publish it, saying that it was *"too technical for beginners and too simple for experts"*.

The financial disaster (see Chapter 2) that resulted in closure of the firm, had left Charles penniless and without a home. He lost his house in North Finchley as it had been used to guarantee a bank loan to support the rug business. He retired to Sark in the Channel Islands, but later began to suffer from heart trouble and was hospitalised in 1971. Later that year he came to England, staying with his brother Ted in north London and doing odd jobs for Gerrard Hire Ltd. He planned to live on a houseboat, but had barely completed its purchase when he was taken ill again and died. Charles left two sons, Edward (Ted jnr, 1933 -) and Richard Henry (1939 -), who worked for a while as a young taxidermist in the family business.



Edward Gerrard 4th ('Mr Ted')

Edward Francis Gerrard married and had two daughters, Elisabeth and Audrey. He and his brother Charles had attended Dartmouth naval college after the First World War, and he remained a Navy engineer, while Charles worked in the aircraft industry for a time and later served in the Navy. Ted was somewhat more reserved and formal than his brother, and more conscious of being 'The Boss' of the family firm. In fact he did not take on the business until late in life as his uncle Harry was already running it. After the end of the Second World War, Ted and Charles bought the business from

Edward Gerrard 4th
1900 -1976, in about 1920

Harry, who then emigrated with his children to Rhodesia. Ted travelled in each day from Rochester, then bought a house in Woodside Park (North London) in the 1950s. He was a very practical man and set about repairing the dilapidated workshop premises in Camden Town, by now suffering from years of neglect and wartime shortage of materials.

Although Ted was not especially interested in taxidermy, he became a very skilled and ingenious model maker and made a long series of tailors manikins for use in displaying ladies clothing in shop windows. Animal models, plaster casts, special exhibition models, all sorts of items were produced, continuing the impressive versatility of the Gerrard family firm and helping to diversify its output and thereby reduce its dependence on taxidermy. The firm also made many of the mechanical dummy 'hares' used at local greyhound races, comprising a rubber body covered with real fur.

The two brothers ran the operation until its closure in 1967. After the collapse of the main company, Ted worked part time for Gerrard Hire Ltd, assisting with putting up shelves and doing other odd jobs. He died in 1976.

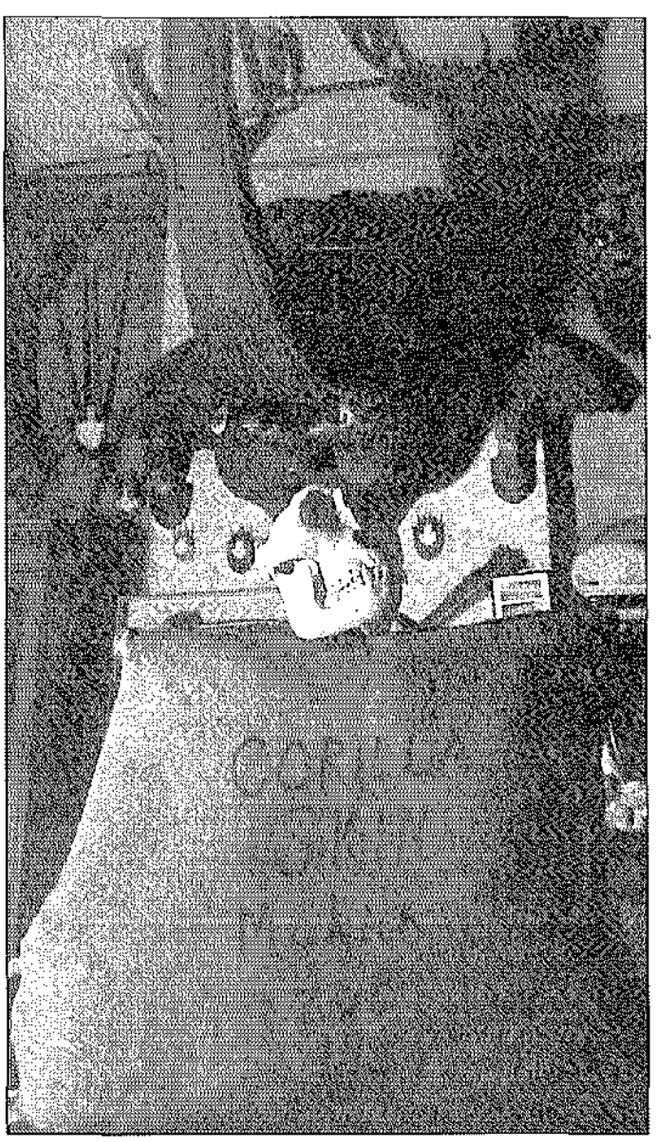
'Mr Ted' in the Gerrard showroom in 1950

Chapter 2
The Taxidermy Company

Edward Gerrard 1st (1810-1910) set up the family taxidermy business 'Edward Gerrard and Sons' in 1850, whilst still employed by the British Museum, and took on his eldest son to run it. This is the date stated for the foundation of the firm on most of its literature (although a later date was sometimes given). Early on, the business was based at the family home, 54 Queen's St, Camden Town (1870-79) in north London, but later moved to the yard behind 61 College Place, also in Camden Town.

Camden Town was close to the London Zoo, with all its interesting animals, and itself a focus for so many of the zoological luminaries of the day. Very early on, well before the end of the nineteenth century, the nearby Gerrard workshops had become famous as a place where hunters, travellers and naturalists could meet and exchange or sell specimens. Thus, the juxtaposition of zoo and taxidermist must have proved very advantageous all round, and certainly ensured that a supply of interesting dead animals was readily available not far away. Many

Gerrards also had premises round the corner in Royal College Street, where these children posed for some newspaper photographs.



From the early days, Gerrards purchased specimens, like this gorilla skin and skull, from zoos, professional collectors and hunters. They also bought zoological curios at auction (like the giant Aepyornis egg in the background).

valuable specimens came from there, and some of the individual animals were famous in their own right.

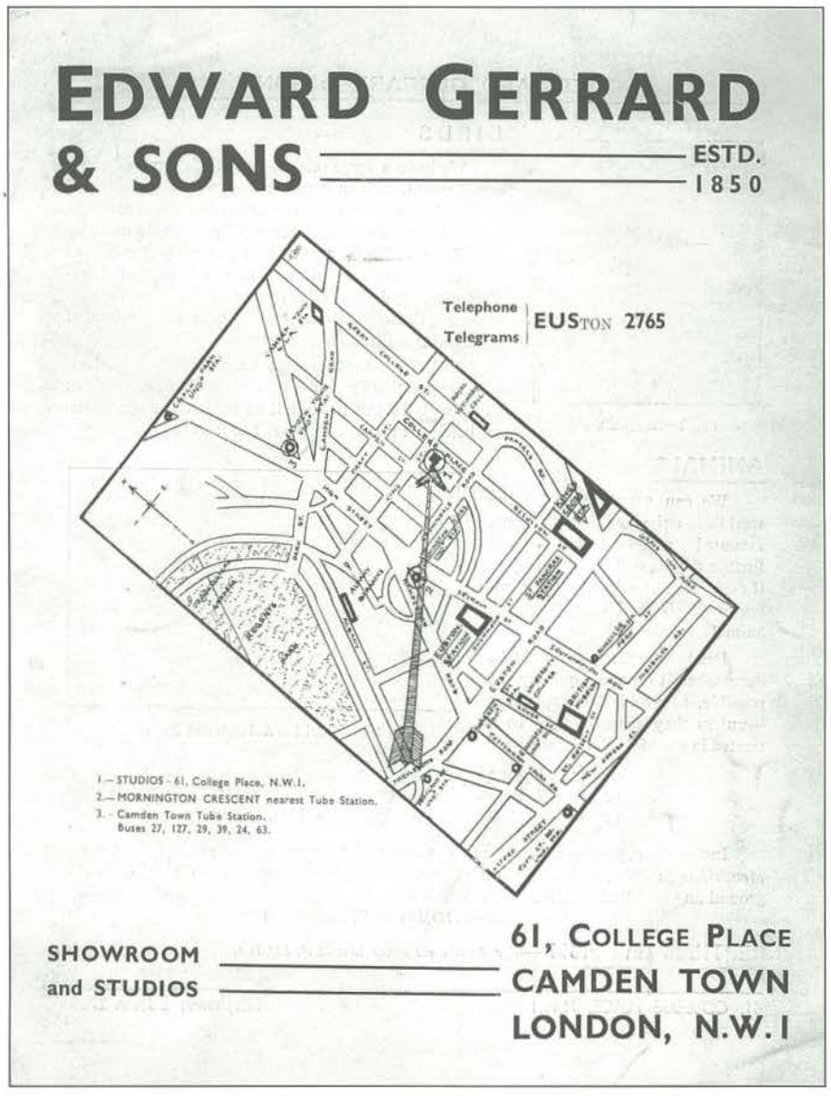
During the heyday of British taxidermy, from about 1880 until the First World War, Gerrards was a thriving business, although they were in competition with dozens of other taxidermists, large and small. In the 1930s there were five or six employees whose wives often helped out by doing the office work. The business remained operational on a small scale during the Second World War providing employment for a few elderly staff. There was little demand for taxidermy, but some specimens were hired out for use in wartime propaganda and instructional films. Gerrards even issued a brief price list in 1942, offering a mounted blackbird or a waxwing for 15/6d or a bittern for £3. Soon after the War, prices increased and a waxwing (perhaps the same one) was now 18/6d and a blackbird was £1/2/6d. By 1947 a mounted blackbird cost £2/2/6d, a waxwing (perhaps still the same one!) was £2/17/6d and a badger was priced at £8/15/-. (an explanation of prices is given in Chapter 4).

In time, Gerrards became sufficiently well known that even mail to "the man who stuffs animals, London" was still delivered to the right place. The Post Office was easily able to guess where it was meant to go and could add the correct address.

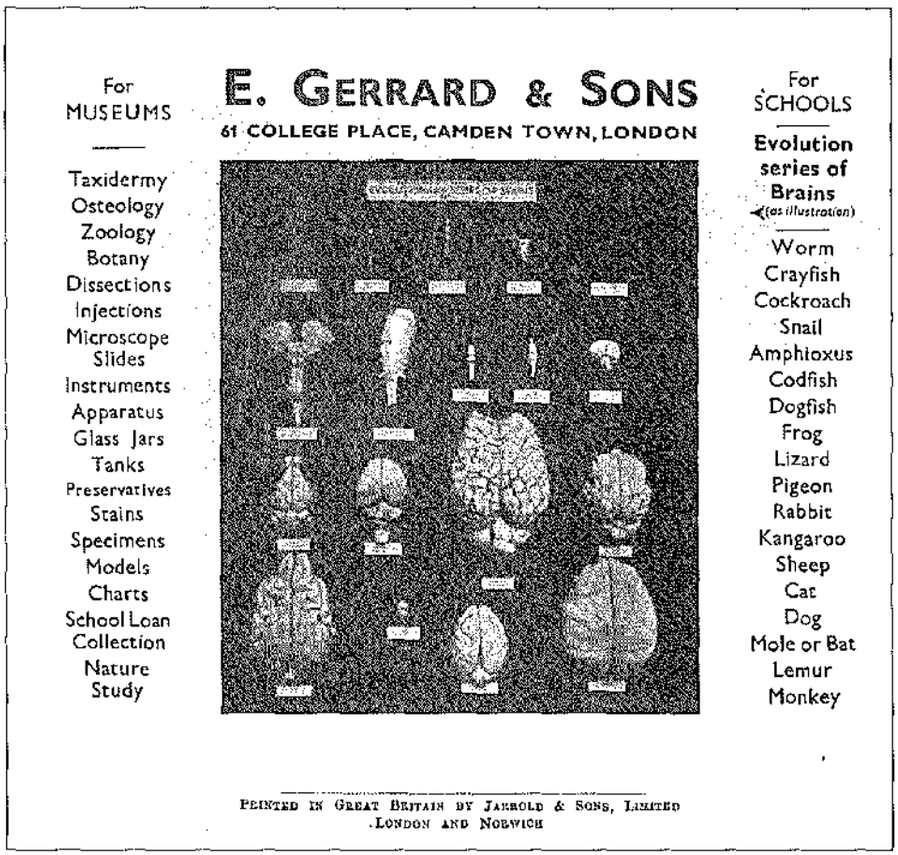
Throughout its time in business, the company offered a wide range of services, not just taxidermy. In particular, they specialised in supplying articulated skeletons. The Founder himself had been a skilled osteological preparator and headed notepaper dated 1906 shows that Edward Gerrard "Taxidermists and articulators" was supplying skeletal specimens to the Dublin Museum.

Making (and selling) natural history models was also established early on, and by the 1930s a wide range of such products was available for purchase by schools and museums.

Contemporary price lists and advertisements feature comparative models of brains, and the embryonic development of the chick. These, and models showing development and life cycle of the frog, proved popular teaching aids. They were easy to see, being several times life size, and also readily available from a classroom cupboard at all times of the year, unlike the real thing. Other models featured insect life cycles and species that were of economic importance. The market for these models was substantial because comparative anatomy and embryology of specified species remained the foundation stones of biological studies in both schools and also at universities. Many hundreds of sets were probably produced, although once purchased, they tended to be durable and could be used for decades without needing to be replaced.



A brochure, issued in 1938, showed where to find Gerrards



An advertisement for model brains. Initially the various types of models were made from plaster of Paris, but later on other materials were pressed into use.

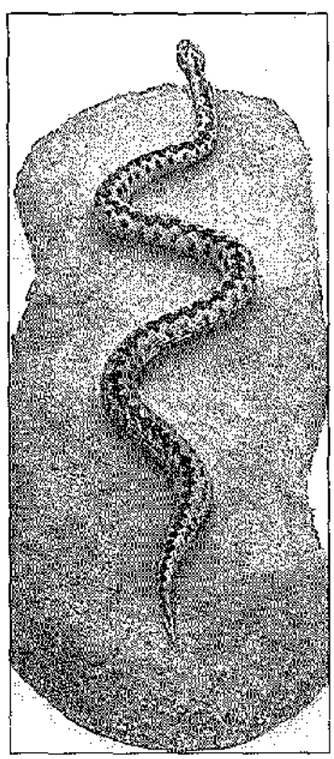
Complementing these teaching sets were some models of animals that do not lend themselves to successful taxidermy, notably reptiles and amphibians. These were popular with schools, but were also frequently purchased by museums wanting to display local British wildlife. In 1951, a coloured plaster cast of an adder, life -sized, would have cost £3.

By the early 1930s, Thomas Gerrard was running an almost autonomous division, concentrating on skeletal preparations and model making, using some additional sheds (later demolished) adjacent to the Gerrard main yard. In fact the osteology and educational models were sufficiently popular that it was possible for Thomas Gerrard to break away and set up his own business in 1938, specialising in just this type of work. Later he added various other teaching materials and T. Gerrard & Co became the market leader for such biological supplies.

The relationship between the two businesses is unclear. The establishment of a competing operation, albeit within the family, cannot have been warmly welcomed back in Camden Town. However, the yard at College Place was too small to expand this line of work, so business opportunities could be better exploited by moving the modelling and supply of teaching materials to another site. Nevertheless, models continued to be made in College Place, as well as by T. Gerrard & Co. Moreover, the latter also supplied taxidermy on a small scale, so there was overlap in their products and probably a degree of competition developed between the two firms.

Whilst Gerrards did have some specialists, jobs were often given to whoever was available. Some of the taxidermists had to work on fish and birds as well as mammals. In fact Gerrard's relied a lot on the diverse skills of their employees. Improvisation seems to have been foremost among their talents. Gerrard's were always distinctive in offering a very wide range of products, far more diverse than any other British taxidermists. Their output included not just birds, mammals, fish and reptiles, but also models, skulls and skeletons, rugs, animal furniture and ornaments and even shoes and fancy leather bags. Latterly, there was also a Hire Division.

It was this unique breadth of output that made Gerrards so interesting and so different from other contemporary taxidermists. Diversity was also probably a commercial necessity given the dominant market position of Rowland Ward Ltd since the late 19th century, with their large factory in Kentish Town and prominent shop in fashionable Piccadilly. Ward's were a very powerful competitor in the limited market for large scale taxidermy. Yet, at the same time, there were scores of minor taxidermy businesses that competed effectively



Plaster cast of an adder, painted to create natural colours and patterns

Chapter 3
Gerrard's Workshops

Turning into College Place from the north, on the right hand side was the Gerrard family home at number 61. This was a three storey house, typical of many in North London. Several of the rooms were used for the business and it had a basement too. Although this had been the family home in the pre-war years, after the war both the proprietors, Charles and Ted Gerrard, lived elsewhere.

Two brick pillars, painted white, stood either side of a narrow alleyway adjacent to the house. They supported double wooden doors, painted dark green. The pillars were at one time surmounted by a pair of rubber penguins. During the 1950s, and probably for long before that, a wooden signboard spanned the alley. This formed a 'V' shape with two faces, each announcing "E. Gerrard & Sons, Natural History Studios". This was the entrance to the alley that led to the workshops behind.

This alley and the atmospheric workshops formed the backdrop to part of the 1956 film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. This was a remake by Alfred Hitchcock of his own 1934 film of the same name. It starred James Stewart and Doris Day. The film's hero, Dr Ben McKenna, is seen visiting a London taxidermist called Ambrose Chappell. The film shows general clutter, with a lion's foreparts in the middle of the floor and various heads (including a rhino and many fox masks), hanging on the wall. Old bottles, a shovel and coils of wire are also evident. This is as it would have been at Gerrards, there was no need to recreate the scene in a studio.

In the film, 'Dr McKenna' is seen visiting Gerrards yard, relabelled 'Ambrose Chappell'. He has an aggressive interview with the boss, surrounded by bits of half finished work hanging on the walls and a taxidermist stuffing wood wool into a leopard skin. A fight develops and the taxidermist tries to keep his leopard out of the way, while another attempts to rescue a stuffed sawfish. Various other staff wrestle with James Stewart, presumably paid up members of the Actors' union rather than real taxidermists. In the melee, the hero gets his hand caught briefly in the open mouth of a mounted tiger. It's all very dramatic and weird, no doubt why Hitchcock selected this location to film, but completely irrelevant to the story. 'Dr McKenna' had in fact misunderstood something he heard from a dying man and went looking for a fellow called Ambrose Chappell, when he should have been looking for a chapel of a different kind!

© John Springer Collection/ CORBIS
James Stewart, seen visiting 'Ambrose Chappell', whose sign is simply a printed sheet pasted over the Gerrard name on their own signboard. The number 61 (College Place) was unchanged on the brick pillars at the entrance to the alley. (A Press photo of James Stewart signing autographs outside the Gerrard alley, with their own signboard visible, can be seen on the MPTV website, http://www.metropolisusa.biz/scripts, image archives no. 5372-0027)

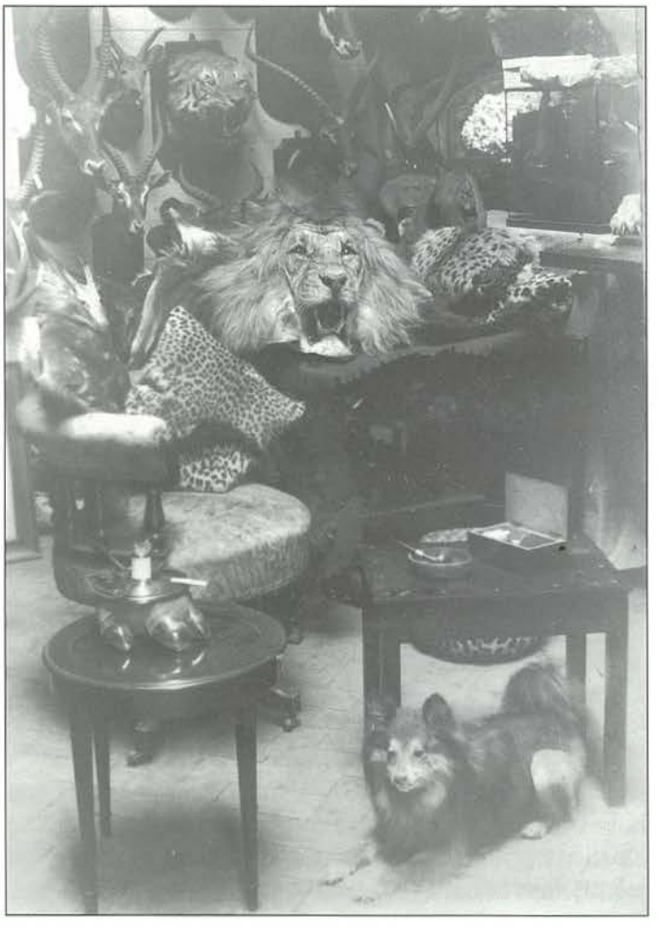
The alleyway ran alongside the house for about 20 metres, then turned left and led into a long yard that lay behind the gardens of College Place. A high brick wall surrounded the yard, within which a series of six large, single-storey wood and brick sheds housed the Gerrard workshops for decades. These might once have been stables or light industry workshops. They each had a high slate roof over dirty yellow brick walls, typical of north London. The first shed had large doors, painted dark green.

Various other lean-to sheds made of wood and corrugated iron added to the storage space available, and a hand cart stood ready to collect and deliver specimens. In the narrow space between the outer wall and the

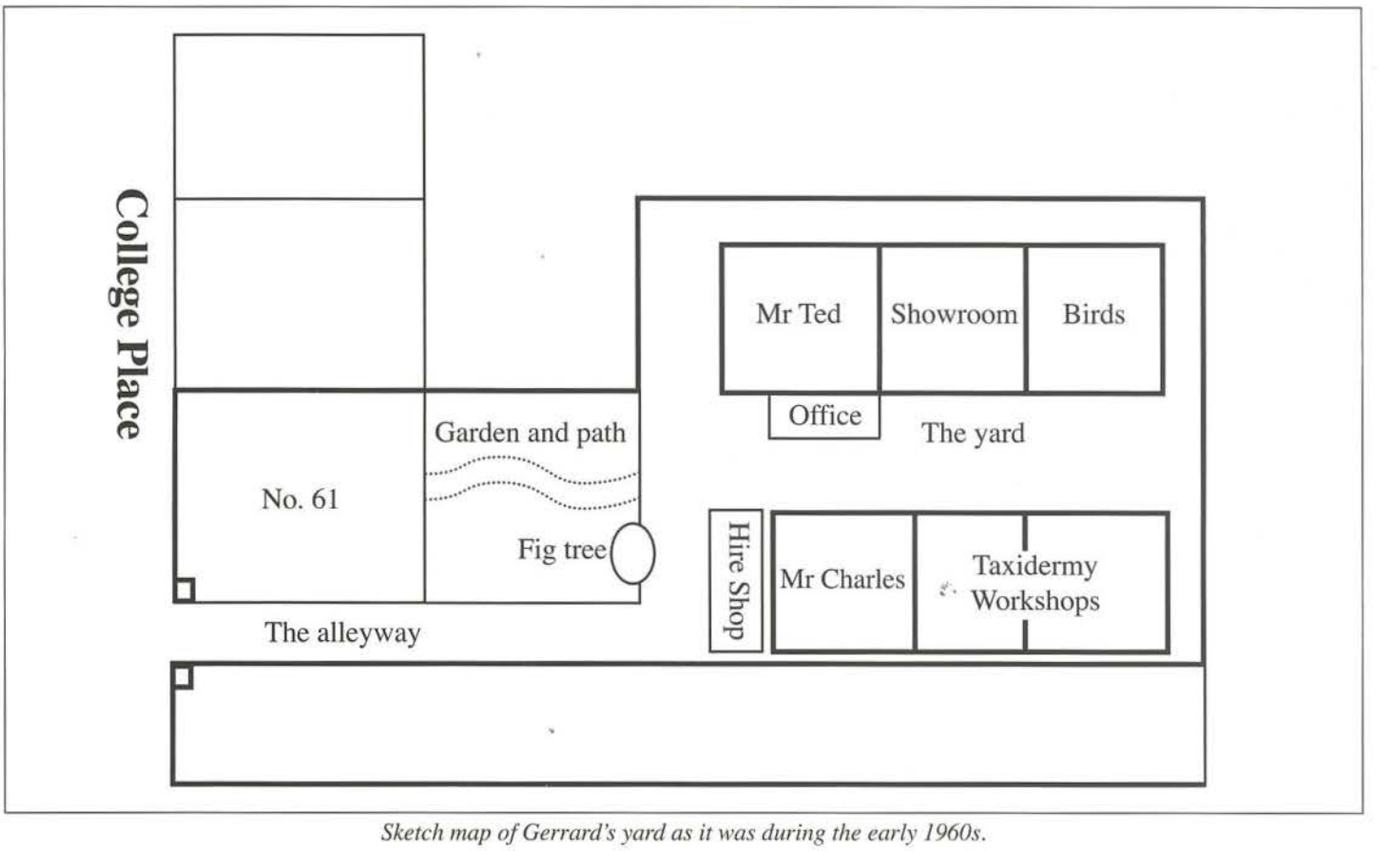
sheds there were maceration tanks in which skulls and bones could be rotted free of flesh before cleaning. Odd piles of skulls, antlers and horns were to be seen here and there, and large stacks of them were heaped up in the space between the workshops and the yard's outer wall.

It was in the big sheds (or 'shops' as they were sometimes known) that different aspects of the business were pursued. The sheds were actually quite large, but always very cluttered. They had large windows, glazed with small panes set in iron frames. The glass was usually dirty, giving a low- level of diffuse light, which reflected off the walls that had once been white. A few electric light bulbs hanging from the roof, some screened by enamelled iron lampshades, provided additional illumination. Sometimes a wireless would be audible, tuned to the BBC's Home Service.

The high walls surrounding the yard shielded the buildings from the sun so they tended to be cool inside, even during the summer. In winter the workshops were cold and dingy, although large iron 'tortoise' stoves served to generate a little warmth. A Persian cat sat on a shelf above one of the stoves and frequently got singed. Visitors to the premises always found it disturbing to see some cats scuttling about the yard, whilst others sat motionless on shelves and work benches, staring blankly with their glassy eyes.



A corner of the showroom.



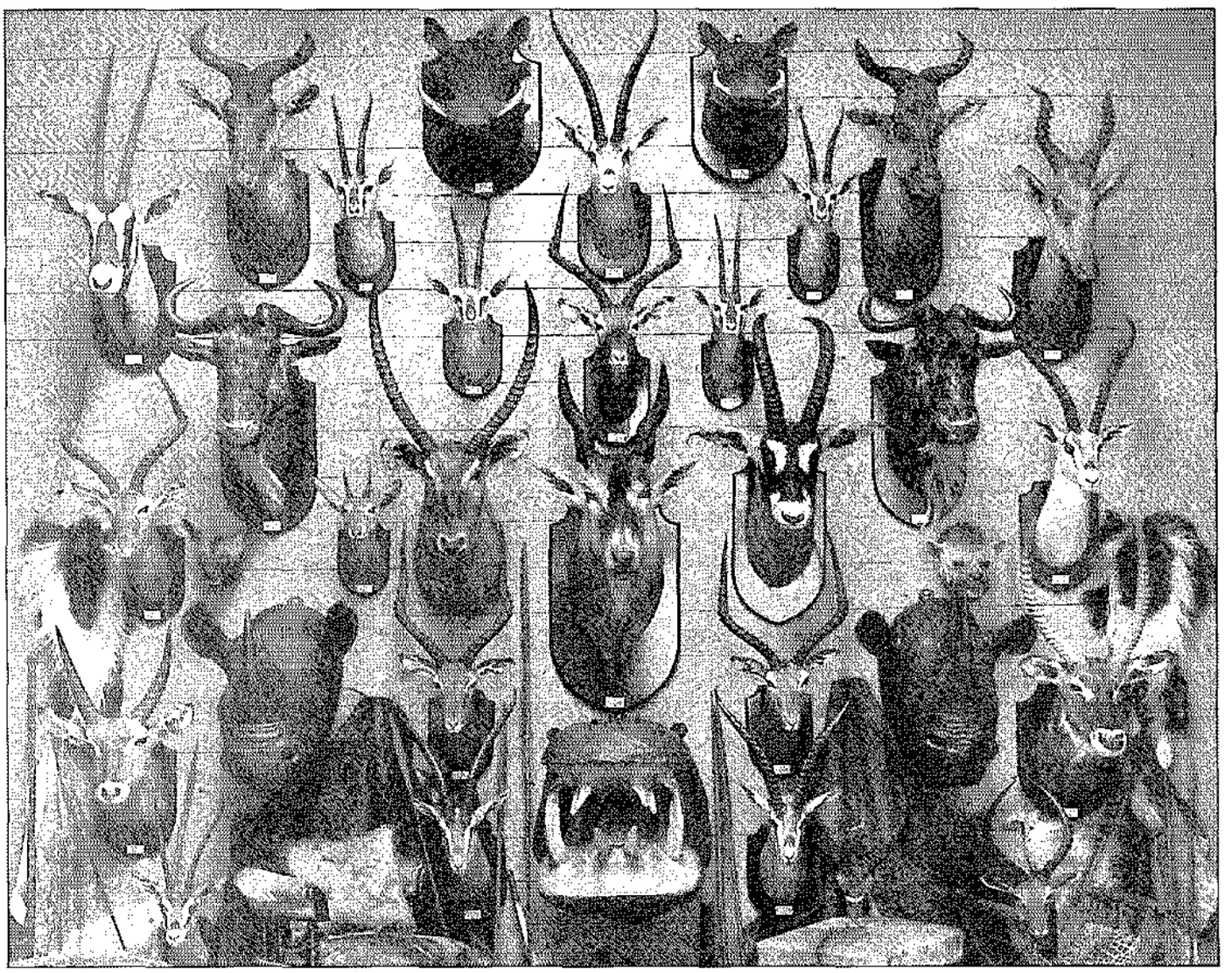
Sketch map of Gerrard's yard as it was during the early 1960s.

Chapter 4
Products and Customers

Gerrards advertised occasionally (in the London Zoo Visitors Guide for example) and periodically issued price lists and illustrated catalogues showing the wide range of work on offer. These and old photographs, dating from the early twentieth century, show that preparing game trophy heads, mostly from Africa, formed a major part of the business. Gerrards had a huge output of head mounts on their characteristic shields, and even today these are commonly seen in the antiques trade and in museums and large homes.

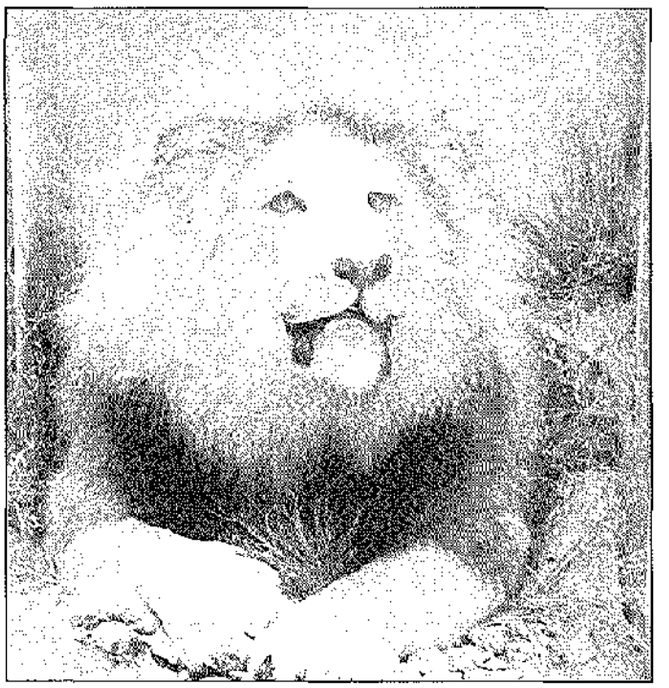
Clearly Gerrards were very productive in this area, servicing the big game hunters who had been collecting in various parts of the world, particularly in the Colonies. Hunters made brief visits from Britain, but many also collected their trophies whilst on secondment to the Colonial administrations of Britain's former Empire.

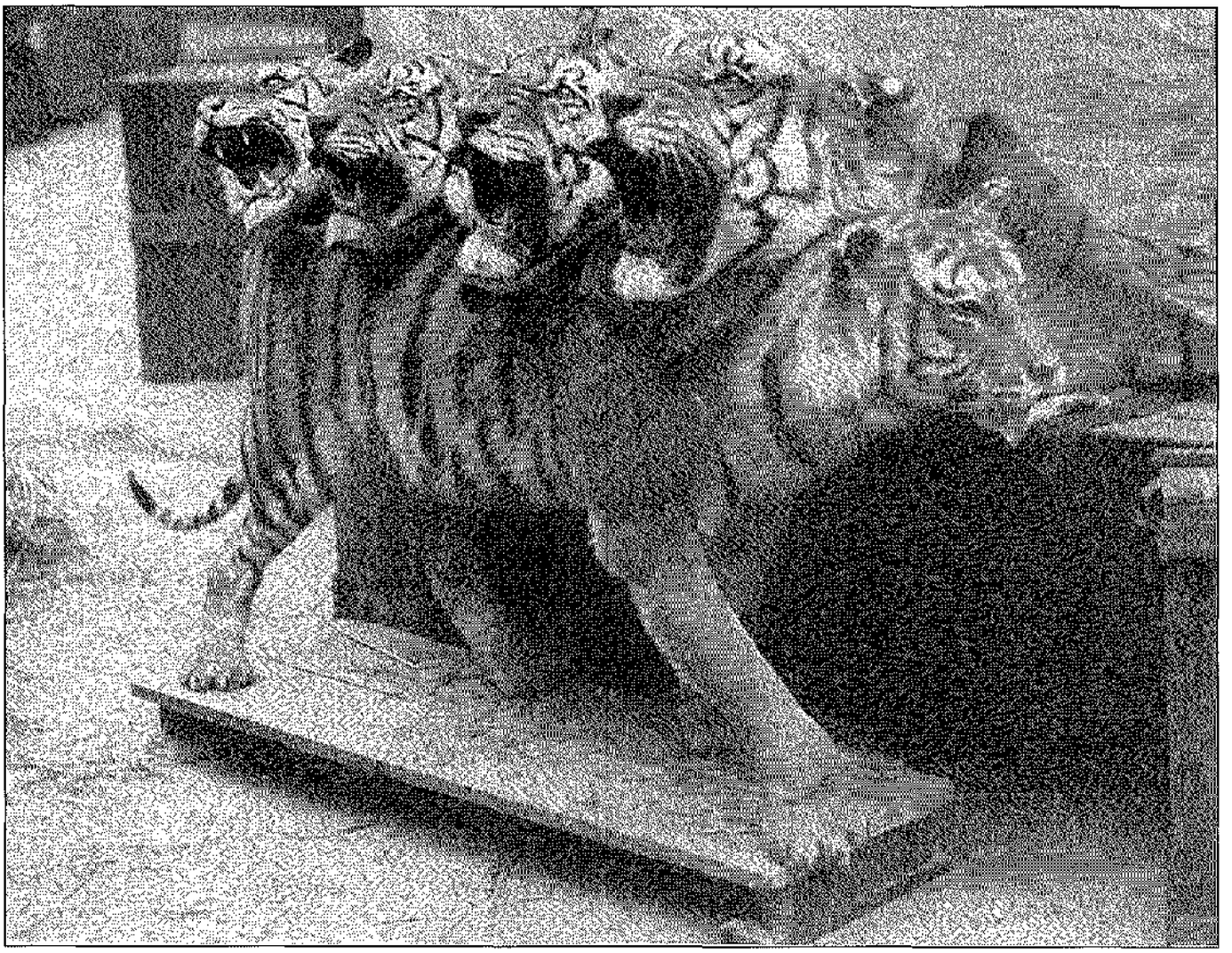
Curiously, relatively few of the old photographs show tigers (or other distinctive Asian trophies), yet big game hunting was popular in Asia, especially India. Perhaps the market there was already well served by Rowland Ward Ltd of London, yet Wards were also well established in Africa and even opened a branch in Nairobi specifically to capture a larger share of the trophy trade. Despite this, Gerrards still managed to preserve a very large number of African specimens.



A selection of typical African trophy heads, dating from about 1907.

Perhaps Gerrards appealed to those who were unable to afford Ward's high charges? Yet, by contrast they appear to have done few similar specimens from Asia. Perhaps this was because they faced additional competition in India, where sportsmen also had available the services of many local taxidermists, foremost among them being Van Ingen and Van Ingen, 'Artists in Taxidermy' of Mysore. They produced extremely robust high quality trophies, using lightweight papier maché manikins that must have been attractive to those wishing to save on shipping costs. Moreover, trophies by Van Ingen could be ready and delivered to the customer in India within a few months, those sent to Gerrards in London were unlikely to be returned inside a year. So customers who lived in India would have little incentive to send their trophies back to Gerrards. This still does not explain the comparative lack of specimens and species from other parts of the Empire that were set up by Gerrards. The majority of their big game work consisted of African species.





Asian animals comparatively rarely figured among Gerrard's work, even tigers. African trophies, like the three quarters lion, (above) were much more common.

It is also curious that customers rarely made reference to their taxidermists in newspaper stories and books. For example, H.G. Mainwaring's book *'A Soldier's Shikar Trips'* includes long lists of safari kit needed, even down to the most trivial items, but no reference is made to the essential tools and materials required for skinning or preserving the trophies which were the main purpose of such expeditions. Moreover, Mainwaring's taxidermy was done by Gerrards, and his book illustrates many of their distinctive specimens, but there is no mention of that either, any more than he mentions his barber or cook.

Customers and suppliers

Animals were purchased from hunters or traded against the cost of preparing their own specimens. The explorer, Du Chaillu sent a gorilla in a rum cask and 'Trader Horn' also sent gorilla skulls and said Gerrards gave him a fair deal. Gerrards worked for many famous collectors and hunters, including Major P.H.G. Powell Cotton and his private museum in Kent. They also prepared many hunting trophies for Lord Kitchener, including forty bears made into a rug. Nevertheless, Gerrard's taxidermy was not confined to hunting trophies. In fact they prepared a remarkably wide range of species, and their 1951 price list even offered to mount a porpoise for £7/15/-.

Some notable people associated with Gerrards

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India

Lord Cromer (Bank of England)

Lord Kitchener,
Commander in Chief in World War I

Lord Baden Powell,
founder of the Boy Scouts

Lord Rothschild (said to have driven his team of zebras and cart to Gerrards from Piccadilly)

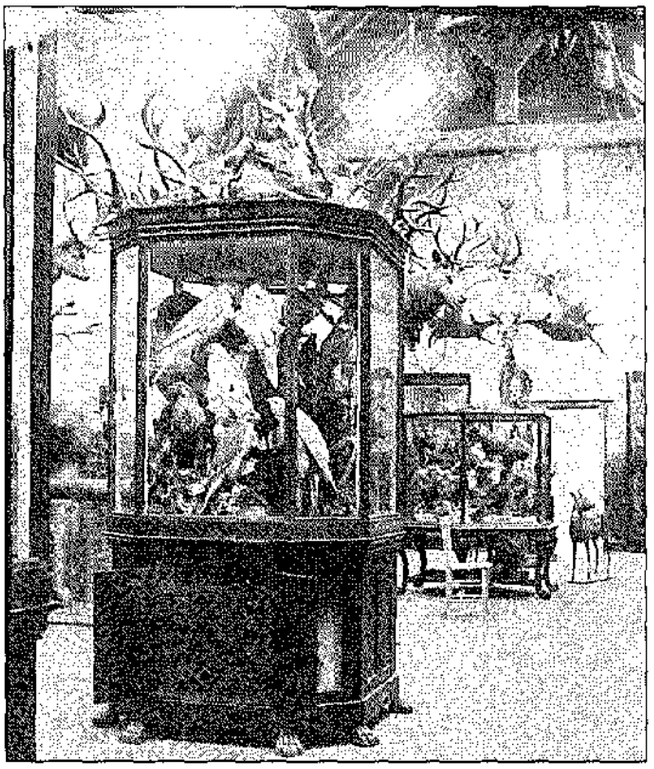
Sir Harry Johnstone,
European discoverer of the okapi

FC Selous,
hunter, traveller and author

The Maharajah of Gwalior,
famous Big Game hunter

The Sultan of Jahore and other Indian dignitories,
Various European and Egyptian princes

Trader Horne



Many taxidermists offered to visit private collections, like this one, to carry out installations and renovations. To what extent Gerrards did this too is not clear, but it was not prominent among their advertised services.

Gerrards were unusual in supplying an extensive range of models, not just taxidermy. For example, they made models of villages depicting good and bad hygiene for the Uganda Medical Mission to "instruct the native population". Models were made of agricultural systems, showing good and bad fields, correct drainage systems, different types of fowl housing methods. There were also model mosquitoes, house flies and fleas to facilitate instruction in the threats that these creatures posed and the ways in which they could be controlled.

In addition to preparing trophies for hunters, Gerrards served many public museums, including those in Perth and Dublin, as well as London's Natural History Museum. Many overseas museums exhibited their work, including Moscow, Cairo, Bergen, Cleveland Ohio, New York, Ontario, Bulowayo, Durban and Sydney. Gerrards thus helped to establish many major institutions in the Empire and elsewhere. They seem to have done particularly well with Melbourne Museum. Pressed by the museum's energetic director, the first Edward Gerrard and his son supplied an elephant skeleton, a rhino head and a mounted hippo, along with deer, giraffes and sundry other large animals. The most famous items were three gorillas, originally collected by the adventurer Paul Du Chaillu and finally secured for the museum by Gerrards, four years after being asked to obtain some specimens.

They were originally preserved in salt, then mounted as a small family group among artificial rockwork and branches. On arrival in Australia in 1865 they fuelled an intense debate about human and primate evolution and doubled the number of visitors to the museum. They are still there, in the Museum Victoria, as examples of 19th century taxidermy with notable 'social history' connotations (Rasmusen, 2001).

Since Gerrards had easy access to dead animals produced by their close neighbour, the London Zoo, they were able to provide many rare specimens of zoological interest that were not readily available to museums from other sources. These could be purchased 'off the shelf' to extend a museum's own comprehensive collections and displays. Some of Gerrards more exotic species would have been bought as skins from collectors or at auctions, but most probably came from zoos, whose turnover of animals must have been very high in the days when major suppliers (like Carl Hagenbeck) maintained a steady flow of living curiosities. In days gone by, zoo keeping was less successful than now. Animals were considered expendable and easily replaced, so dead specimens were in constant supply.

Gerrard's staff frequently visited the nearby London Zoo to skin animals that had died recently. These included many common species such as camels and monkeys, but also rare species, including at least one of the Zoo's thylacines. Gerrards even mounted one of their precious quaggas (bought by Edinburgh Museum in 1879) and also sold its skeleton for £10, now in the Peabody Museum, Yale. (Edwards, 1996). Other bodies collected from the zoo included that of 'Brumas' the famous baby polar bear that had featured so prominently in newspapers, magazines and newsreel films. It was Don Sharp who went to the zoo with a two-wheeled handcart to spend all day skinning this popular and widely publicised animal and carry it back to the workshops, dripping blood through the streets as he went. Nobody noticed.

Some notable animals prepared by Gerrards

(from a list compiled by Gerrards in the 1960s)

Moina,
a famous gorilla

Sam & Barbara,
two polar bears done for Madame Tussauds

Mickey the chimpanzee from Liverpool Zoo,
figured in '*The Naked Ape*'by Desmond Morris.

Hector,
a bear that lived in London Zoo for 28 years

A reconstruction of a giant armadillo from South America, as big as a mini car

The largest adult orang-utan to reach Britain alive from the Far East..

Elephants, whales, giraffes and okapi.

A basking shark featured in the film 'Man of Arran'.

Prices for Gerrard's products

It seems that Gerrards issued very few price lists, and they are rarely seen today. Consequently, few costs have been available for analysis here. The three priced catalogues that I have been able to trace (in more than 20 years) do not cover the same items, restricting the comparisons that are possible. Moreover, they are not dated and I have relied on someone who added the date by hand when the lists were current.

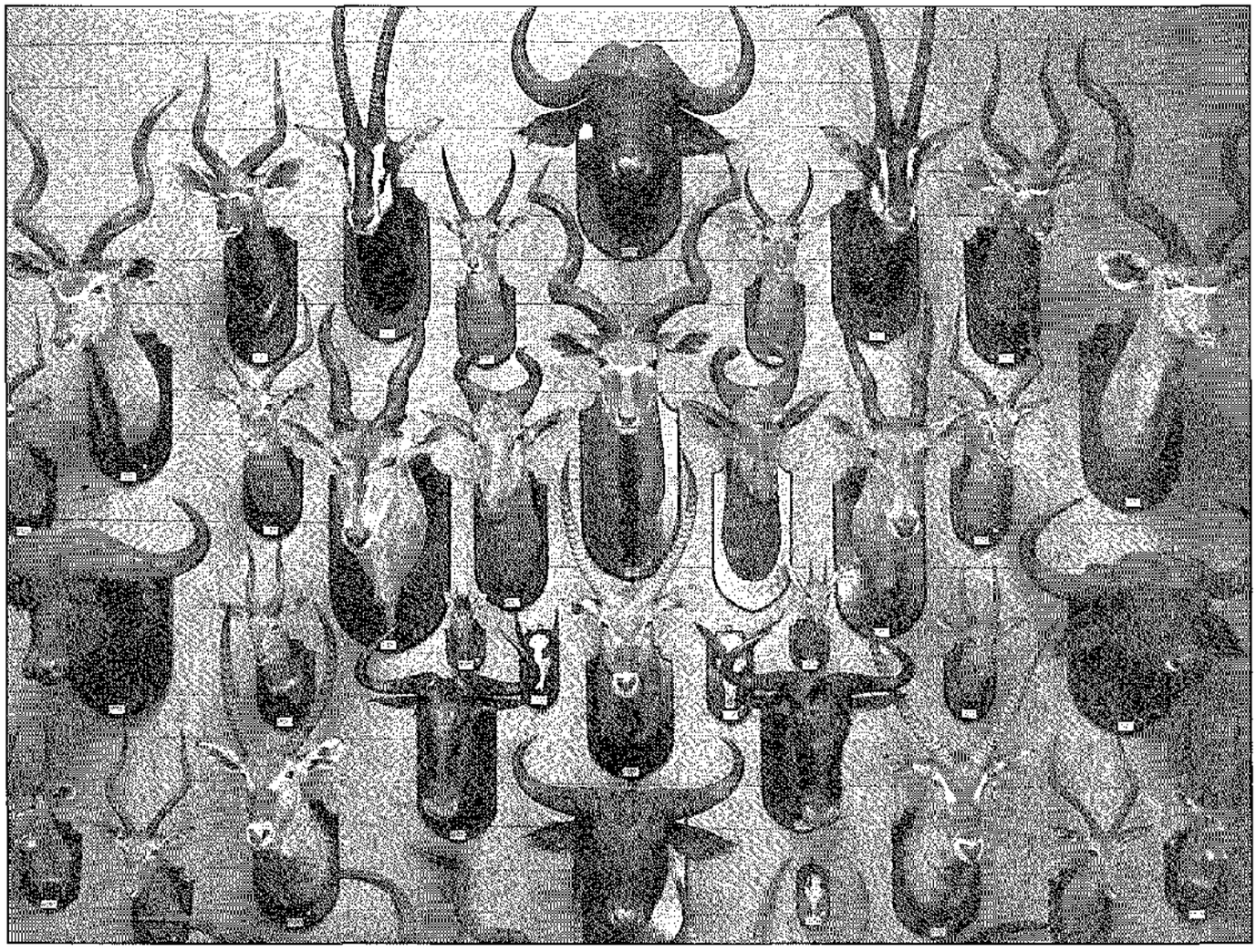
A few more price lists were issued as single sheets or folded leaflets, probably in the 1940s and 1950s, but they are not dated and are therefore not referred to here. As prices steadily increased over the decades, lists are meaningless without an indication of date. In any case, prices given for preparation of customers own specimens were always only for guidance, with the emphasis being on seeing the specimen first.

As an alternative to issuing a long series of price lists, Gerrards often quoted for individual jobs instead. This would also help overcome the problem that their jobs were so varied that any list was almost bound to be incomplete and only any use for the most general guidance. A letter dated 1898 quoted £120 to build a model of half a humpbacked whale to fit the skeleton already in the Dublin Museum. Another letter in 1901 offered a badger skeleton (for £1-15/-), and one the following year offered to supply Dublin with a stuffed elephant shrew for 50/-. Similar hand written letters signed "Edwd Gerrard" appear in several archives, with the first typewritten examples dating from 1913.

Chapter 5
Heads

The most numerous of Gerrard's taxidermy products were antelope head mounts. They probably prepared thousands of these, often in large batches as customers shipped home crates of specimens obtained on big game hunts lasting weeks and months. The specimens were skinned in the field, often by skilled local men. The skins (or scalps in the case of head trophies) were then salted or dried before being crated for shipment home. The skull was roughly dried or cleaned up by boiling or maceration, but Gerrards specifically advised their customers to send skins and skulls separately. This was to avoid the danger of insect pests in the latter infesting the precious skins and causing irreparable damage to them on the long voyage to England.

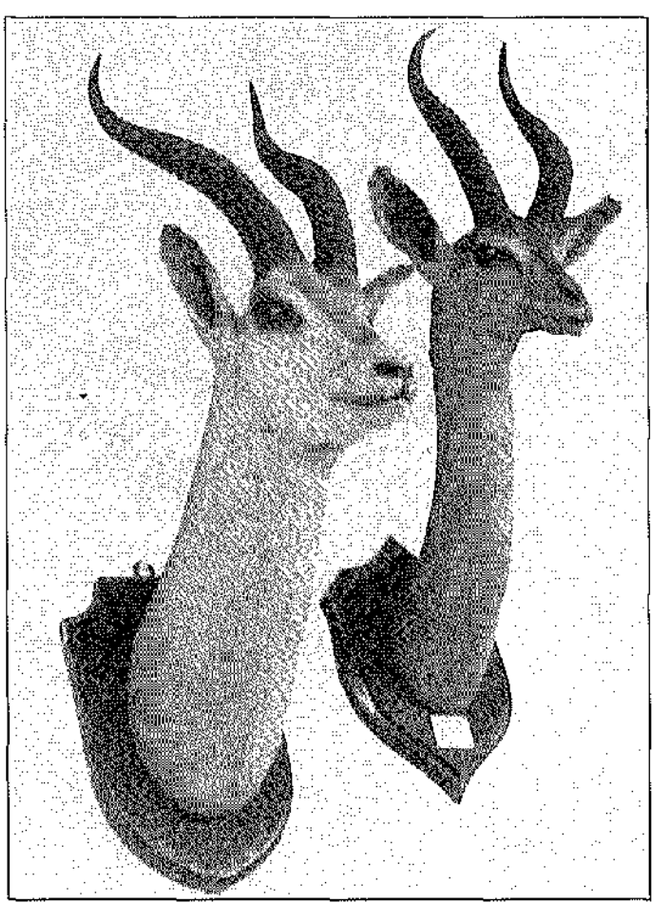
Gerrard's trophy heads were usually mounted on a distinctive 'U'- shaped shield, with the top corners scooped out. These highly characteristic mounts are common in collections and mostly have withstood the passage of time quite well. The characteristic shields were in use at least from about 1905, and remained unchanged for over 50 years. They are very evident in photographs and in collections and enable Gerrard's work to be easily recognised without the need to lift the specimen down from the wall to look for a label on the back. Sometimes other shield shapes were used, at the request of customers. The wood was usually 'fumed oak', although other hardwoods were available. Trophies were also supplied without shields, reducing the cost.



Heads were often sent to Gerrards in large batches, following a successful hunting trip abroad. They were then usually mounted on a distinctive 'U' shaped shield, with the top corners scooped out.

oak, but other woods were available on request. In his unpublished book, Charles Gerrard commented that it was "a good idea to make your own pattern and keep to one style as a kind of trademark" and that "the manufacture of these is really the job of a cabinet maker and not the taxidermist, but it is very satisfying to carry on a job right through from beginning to end and it is a lot cheaper too".

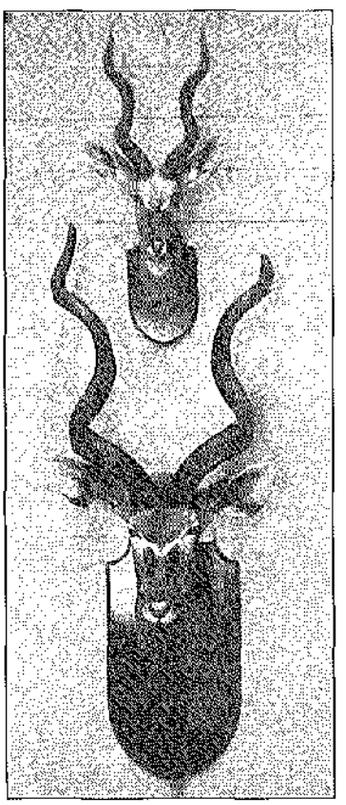
The shields often bore labels on the front to say when and where the animal was shot. Labels were available in ivorine (made from a type of white plastic resembling ivory) and Gerrard's offered a wide range of different styles, as shown opposite. Ivorine labels sometimes had their lettering added to the surface, but this easily wore off. Letters engraved into the plastic were more durable and permanent, but also more expensive. Relatively few Gerrard shields carry ivorine labels. Instead, the information was often painted directly on to the wood by hand. Perhaps the use of hand painted lettering was cheaper and helped to reduce the total price of the job. This would be consistent with the fact that Rowland Ward Ltd had a reputation for the highest quality and attracted the richest and most prominent clientele, leaving the lesser, more cost conscious, customers to deal with Gerrards.



Two characteristic shield designs - Gerrards (left) and Rowland Ward (right).

Prices of Mammal head mount trophies

In 1921, skulls on shields were priced from about 8/- (fox) to 20/- (buffalo, tiger), with big hippos and rhinos costing up to 50/-. Prices were always quoted for looking straight ahead, there was an extra charge for turning to one side or other poses. Frontlets (horns with the top of the skull linking them) were 6/- to 9/- in 1921, but had increased to £3/10/- by 1951. At that time, lion and tiger heads cost an extra £2 for mounting with the mouth open, showing the modelled tongue. This represents over 20% more for a mouth-open trophy, a reflection of the considerable extra work involved.



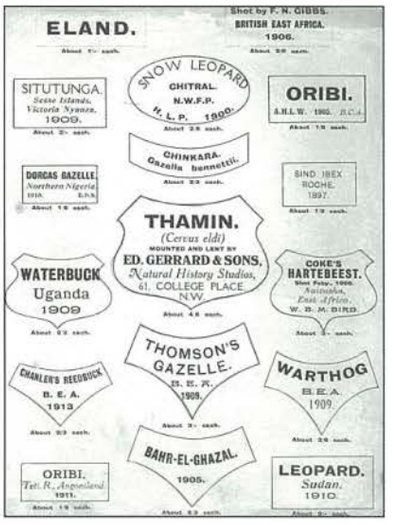
Most of Gerrard's trophy head mounts were of antelopes.

Engraved ivorine labels cost 1/- to 2/6d in 1921, depending on size, but relatively few Gerrard head mounts have ivorine data labels. It was more common on Gerrard shields to have information about where and when the trophy was obtained written directly on to the wood by hand in white or gold letters. This was charged at 1/4d per dozen letters. In practice, there was probably little difference in cost for a typical data label done this way as against using ivorine, but cheaper still was to have no label at all, and that is the case with the majority of Gerrard heads.

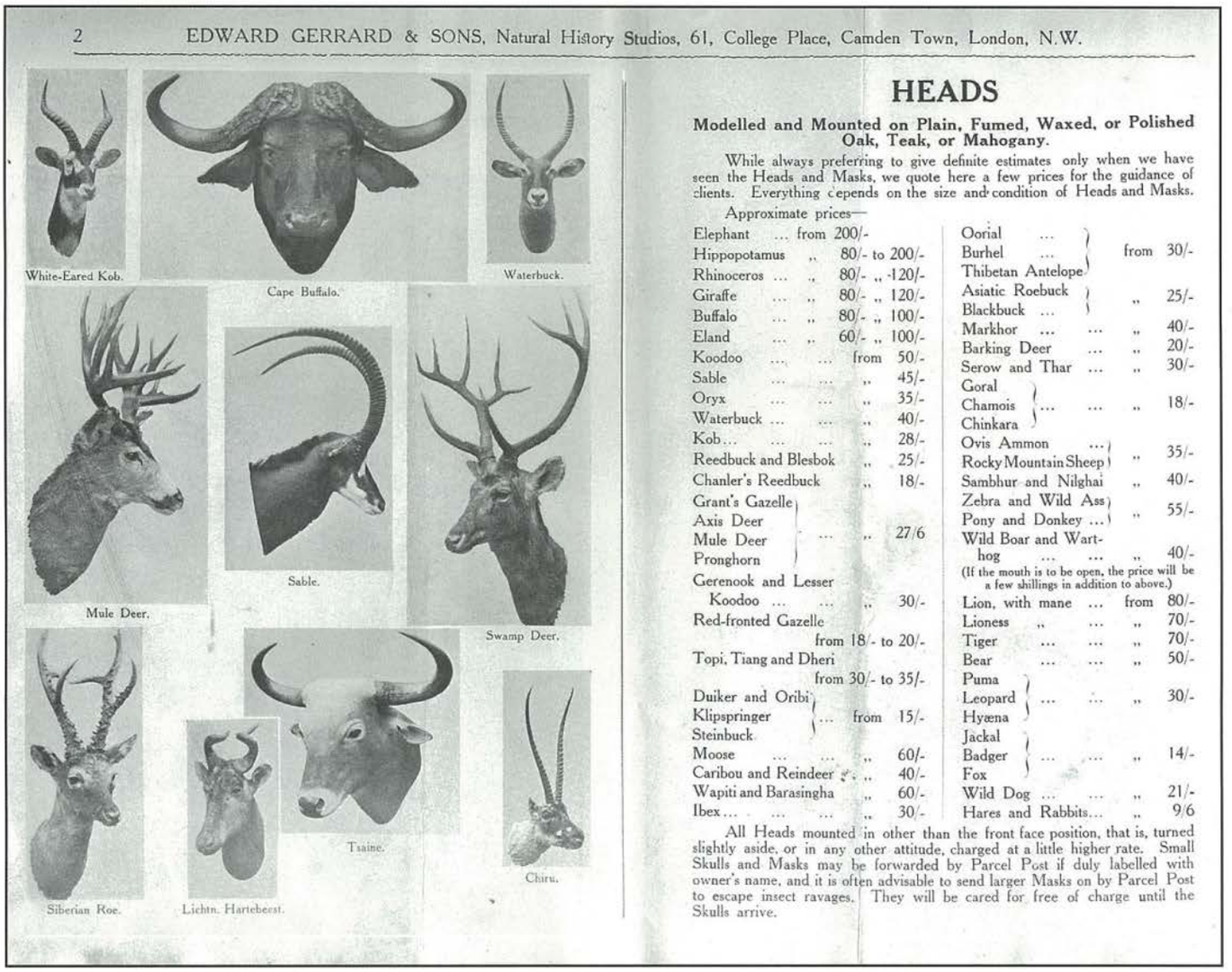
Glass eyes were bought for use in the workshops and were also offered for sale by the dozen. In 1951, eyes 15mm in diameter were 7/10d per dozen, a similar number of 36mm eyes cost 55/-. Plain black eyes were cheaper.

Normal glass eyes had a simple black pupil and a coloured surround (iris), rather like teddy bears eyes, and many of Gerrard's early heads have these, even though certain species do not have such a simple ocular anatomy. The eye of a reindeer or ibex for example,

requires an oblong pupil, unavailable in those days from suppliers of enamelled glass eyes. These special eyes could be created by hand-painting the inside of a plain glass cup. Gerrards had a large stock of these glass 'blanks' to colour as needed. They would also supply painted eyes to customers or other taxidermists. They cost 50% more than standard glass eyes and were much better (but they were only available on sizes of 15mm and above).



Above: Two pages of suggestions for label designs.



2 EDWARD GERRARD & SONS, Natural History Studios, 61, College Place, Camden Town, London, N.W.

White-Eared Kob. Cape Buffalo. Waterbuck.
Mule Deer. Sable. Swamp Deer.
Siberian Roe. Lichtn. Hartebeest. Tsaine. Chiru.

HEADS

Modelled and Mounted on Plain, Fumed, Waxed, or Polished Oak, Teak, or Mahogany.

While always preferring to give definite estimates only when we have seen the Heads and Masks, we quote here a few prices for the guidance of clients. Everything depends on the size and condition of Heads and Masks.

Approximate prices—

Elephant ...	from 200/-
Hippopotamus	,, 80/- to 200/-
Rhinoceros ...	,, 80/- ,, 120/-
Giraffe ...	,, 80/- ,, 120/-
Buffalo ...	,, 80/- ,, 100/-
Eland ...	,, 60/- ,, 100/-
Koodoo	from 50/-
Sable	,, 45/-
Oryx	,, 35/-
Waterbuck	,, 40/-
Kob	,, 28/-
Reedbuck and Blesbok	,, 25/-
Chanler's Reedbuck	,, 18/-
Grant's Gazelle, Axis Deer, Mule Deer, Pronghorn ...	,, 27/6
Gerenook and Lesser Koodoo	,, 30/-
Red-fronted Gazelle	from 18/- to 20/-
Topi, Tiang and Dheri	from 30/- to 35/-
Duiker and Oribi, Klipspringer, Steinbuck ...	from 15/-
Moose	,, 60/-
Caribou and Reindeer	,, 40/-
Wapiti and Barasingha	,, 60/-
Ibex	,, 30/-
Oorial ..., Burhel ..., Thibetan Antelope	from 30/-
Asiatic Roebuck, Blackbuck ...	,, 25/-
Markhor	,, 40/-
Barking Deer ...	,, 20/-
Serow and Thar ...	,, 30/-
Goral, Chamois, Chinkara	,, 18/-
Ovis Ammon ..., Rocky Mountain Sheep	,, 35/-
Sambhur and Nilghai	,, 40/-
Zebra and Wild Ass, Pony and Donkey ...	,, 55/-
Wild Boar and Wart-hog	,, 40/-

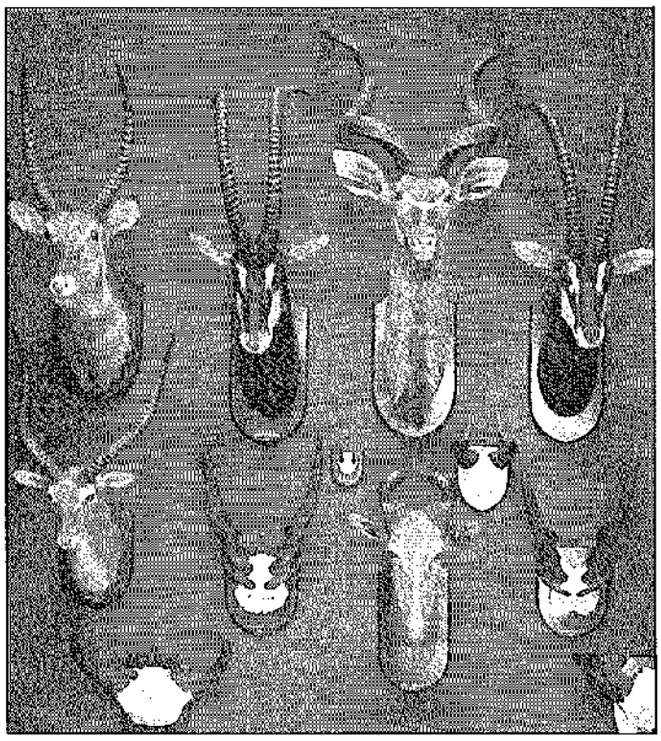
(If the mouth is to be open, the price will be a few shillings in addition to above.)

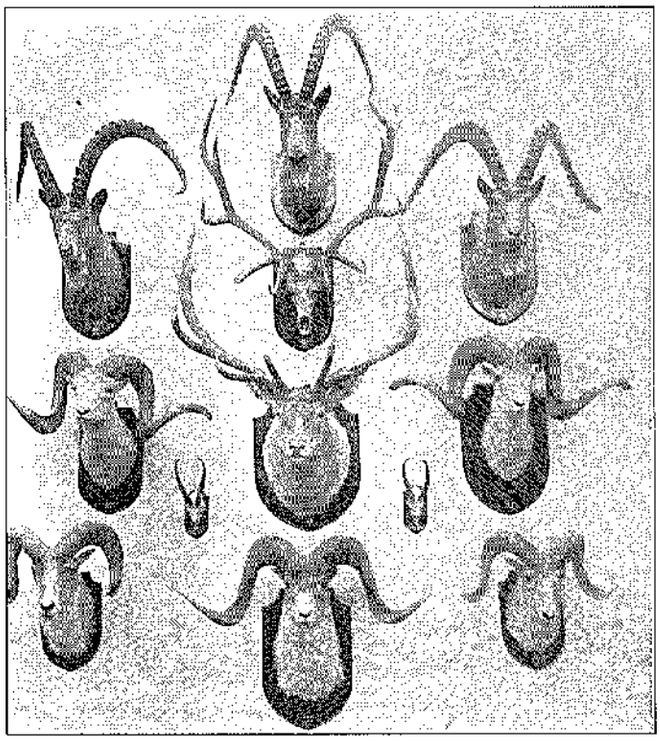
Lion, with mane ...	from 80/-
Lioness ,, ...	,, 70/-
Tiger	,, 70/-
Bear	,, 50/-
Puma, Leopard, Hyæna	,, 30/-
Jackal, Badger, Fox	,, 14/-
Wild Dog	,, 21/-
Hares and Rabbits...	,, 9/6

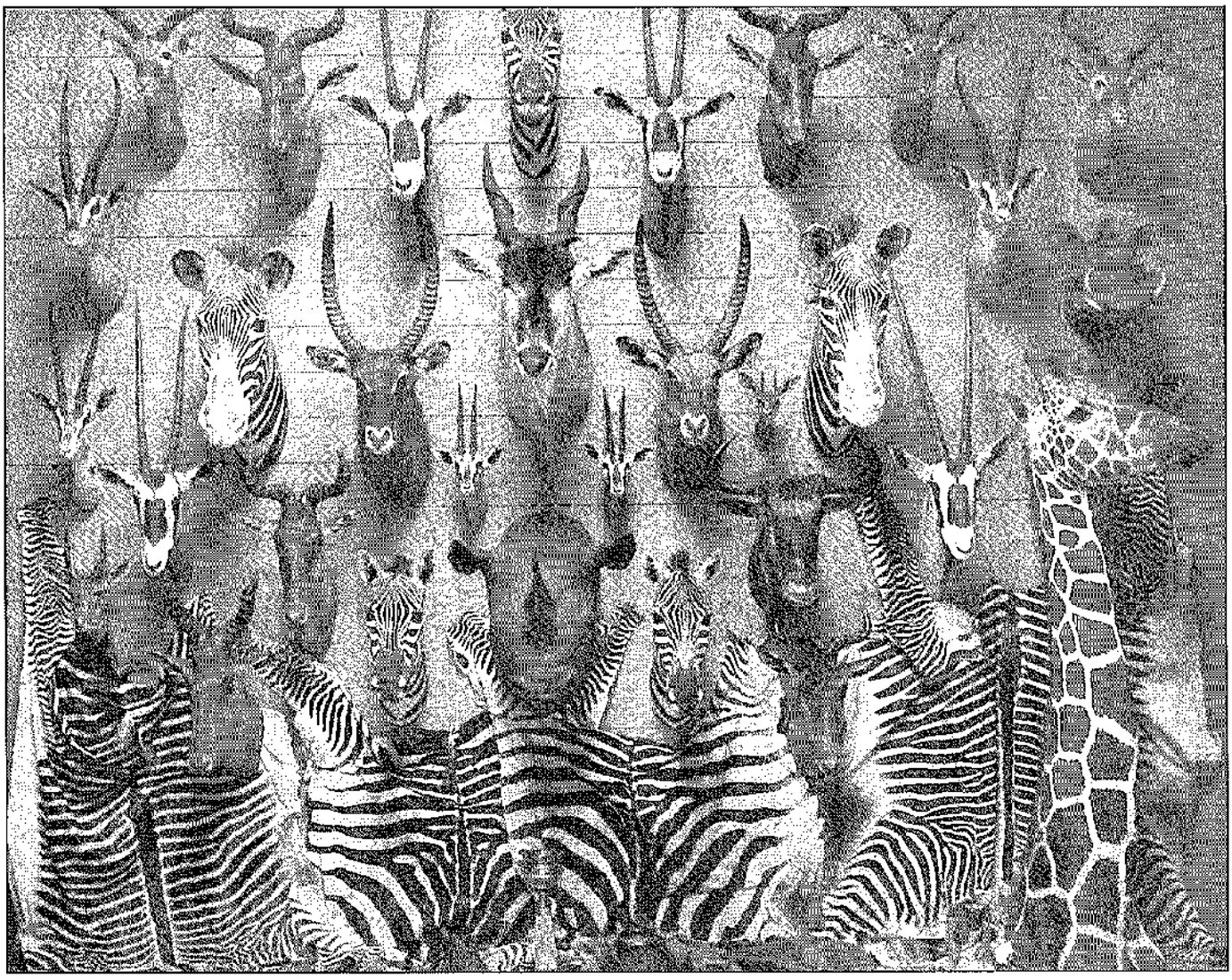
All Heads mounted in other than the front face position, that is, turned slightly aside, or in any other attitude, charged at a little higher rate. Small Skulls and Masks may be forwarded by Parcel Post if duly labelled with owner's name, and it is often advisable to send larger Masks on by Parcel Post to escape insect ravages. They will be cared for free of charge until the Skulls arrive.

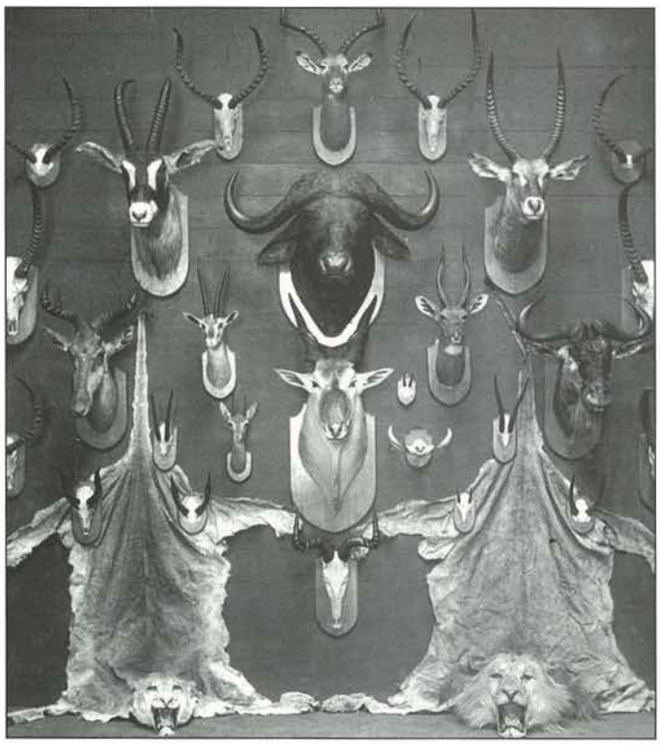
Pages from a Gerrard catalogue, showing prices of head mounts in 1921, with some typical examples.

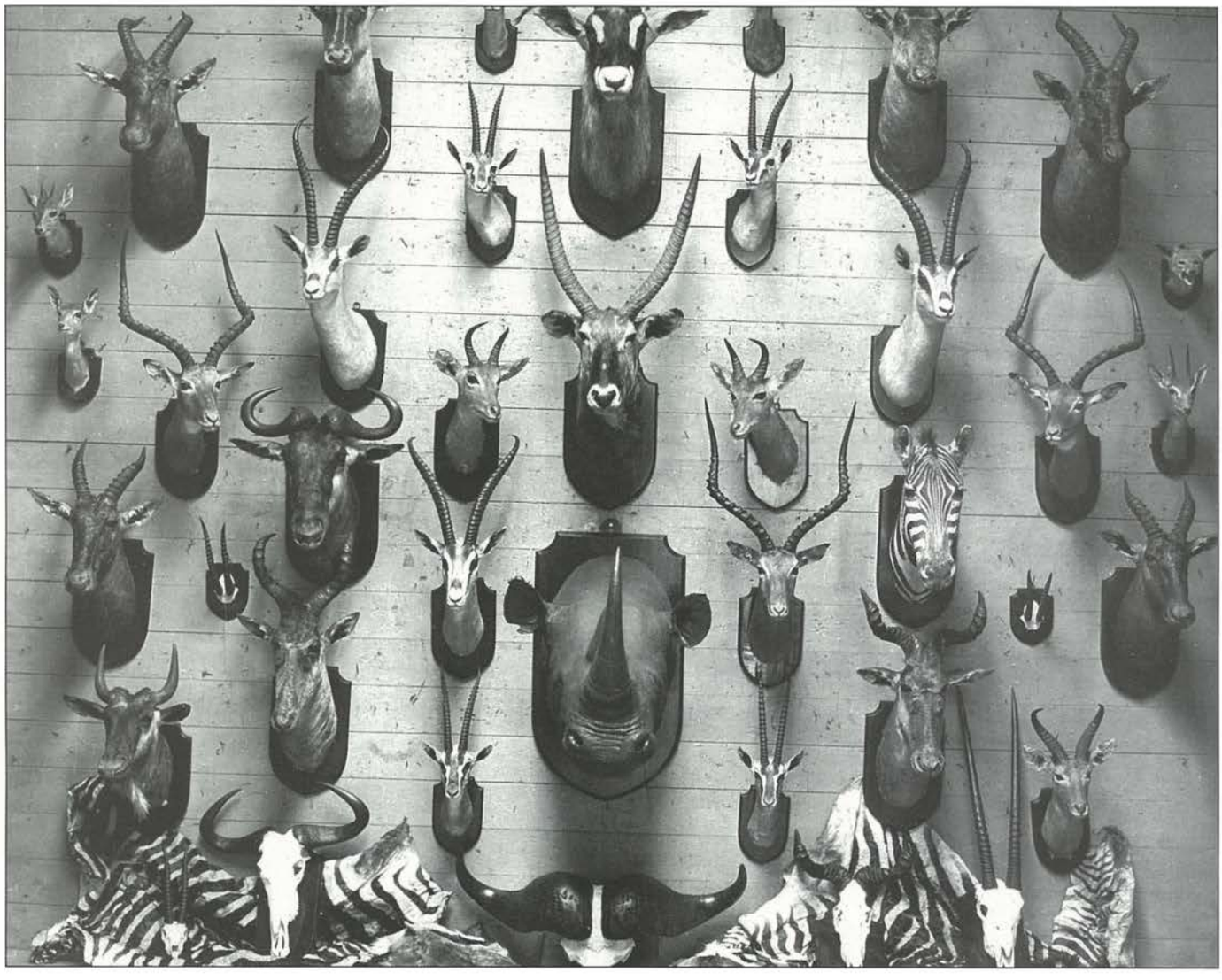
A selection of trophy head collections











Chapter 6
Whole Mount Mammals

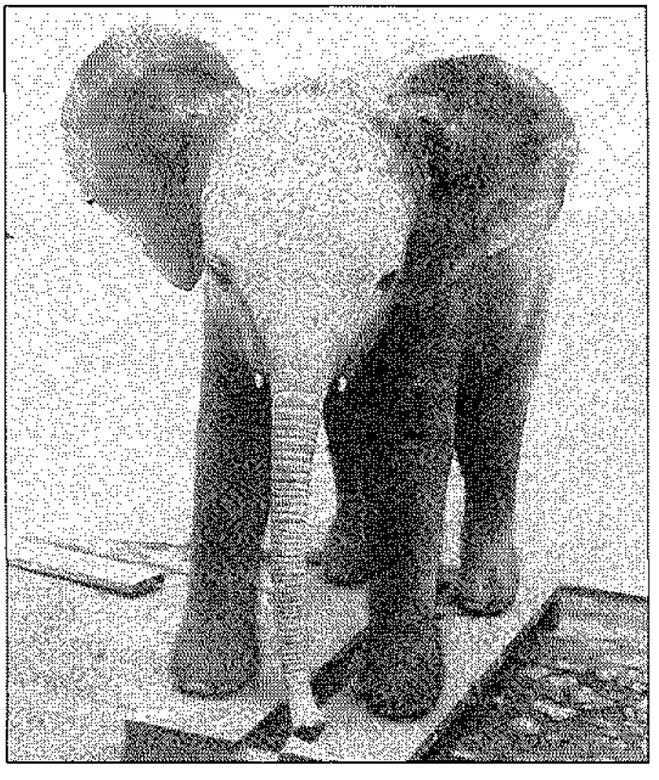
Gerrards created considerable numbers of mammal whole mounts, both large and small, for collectors and museums. They included cows, rhinos, giraffes and at least one famous hippopotamus. Because of their size, the largest mammals were a particular challenge to taxidermists and few ever managed to prepare adult examples, especially elephants. Such jobs required a small team of men, because of the sheer weight of the skin and materials needing to be manipulated.

Nevertheless, despite the limitations on space and manpower, Gerrards mounted several elephants, although some were only small ones. One Indian elephant, nearly 2m (6 ft) high, was prepared for the Blackpool fun fair. It comprised 12ft of planks and 15ft of two-inch wire mesh, covered with canvas and a layer of papier maché below the skin. It took 18 months to dry. Another elephant was 'Lizzie', a circus animal that died in 1888 in Wales. The body was sold to Swansea Museum for £20 and Edward Gerrard was summoned from London to supervise its preservation for a fee of £40, plus £8/15/3d expenses. Lizzie stood in the entrance hall of the museum for 60 years, a delight to visitors, many of whom climbed on her back or stroked her from the staircase. She deteriorated sufficiently that she was dismantled and burnt in the early 1950s.

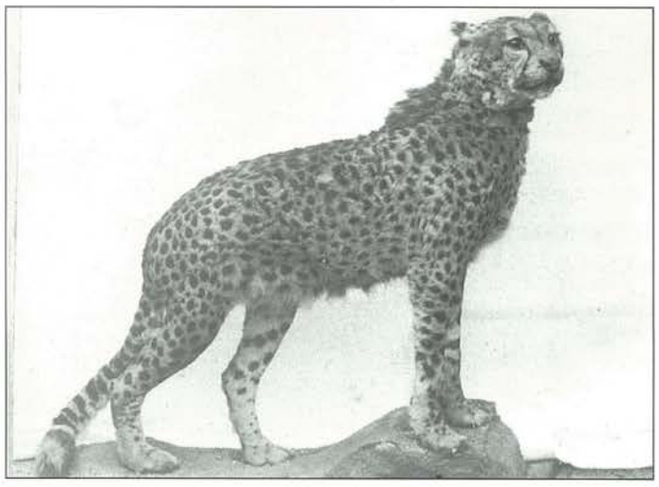
The largest of Gerrard's elephants was probably "Jung Pasha", one of four brought back from Asia for the London Zoo by Bertie the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIIth) following his tour of India in 1875-76. The animal was only about five years old at the time, but spent twenty further years in Regents Park, where he was popular among the thousands of children who were given rides on his back. He died from peritonitis in March 1896, and was mounted by Gerrards for display in the central hall of the Natural History Museum.

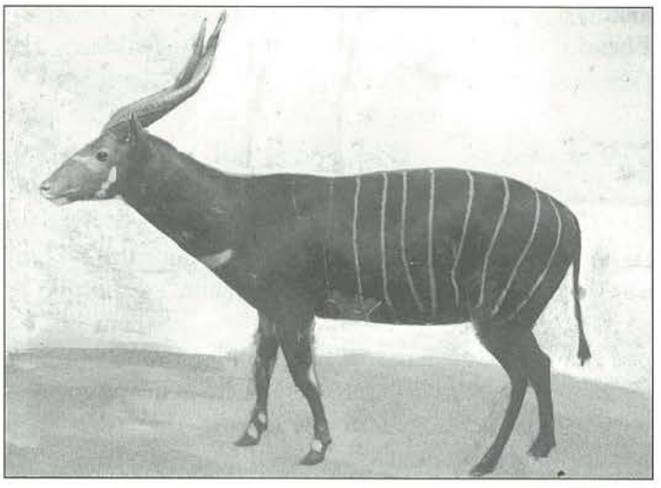
Some noteworthy zoo mammals

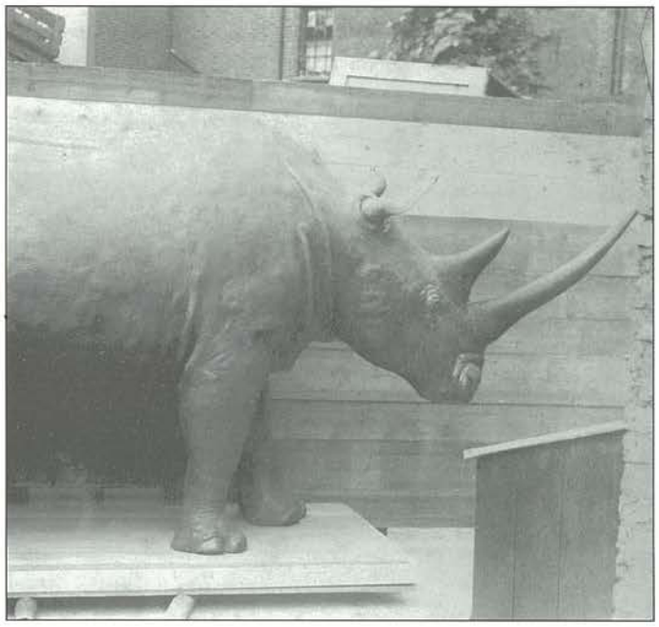
The quagga is a form of zebra, now extinct, that used to roam the plains of South Africa in large herds. London Zoo exhibited three of them in the mid-nineteenth century. The first was acquired in November 1831 and is probably the mounted specimen on display at the Natural History Museum in London. It was prepared by Gerrard's, but at some later stage (perhaps as a result of the dryness associated with the generous heating in public institutions) the skin split badly and the relatively crude repairs remain visible to this day. Gerrards also mounted the Zoo's second quagga, which died in 1872, after more than 20 years on display. This one is now at

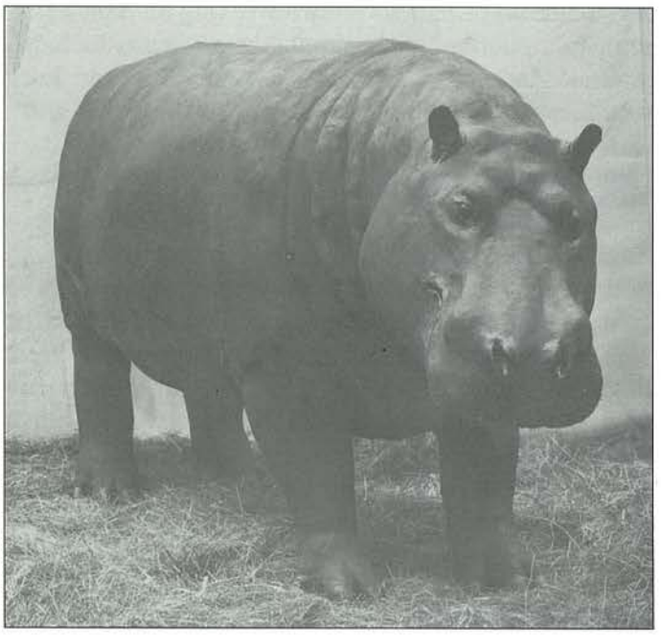


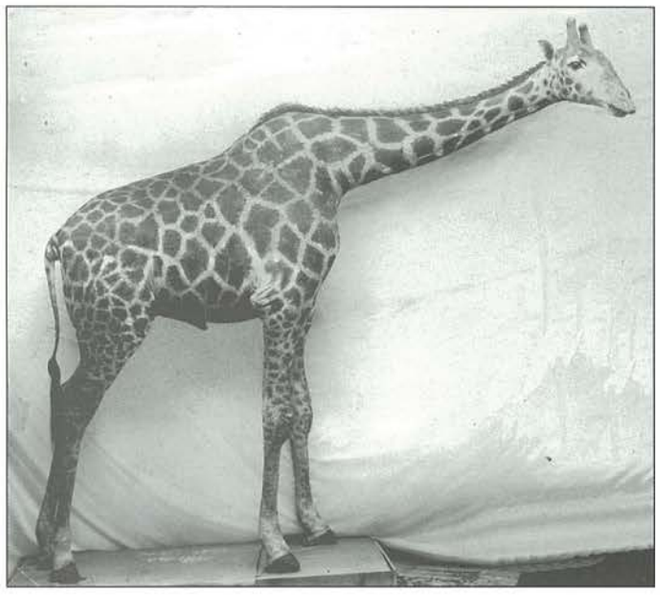
A selection of large mammals by Gerrards

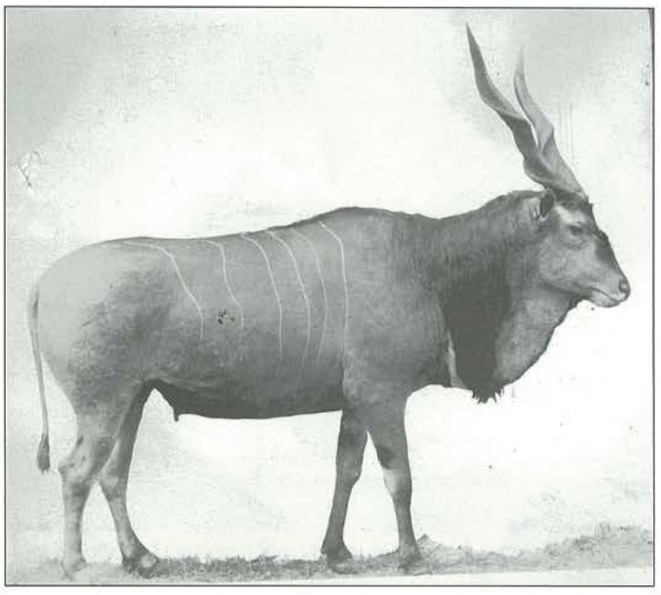






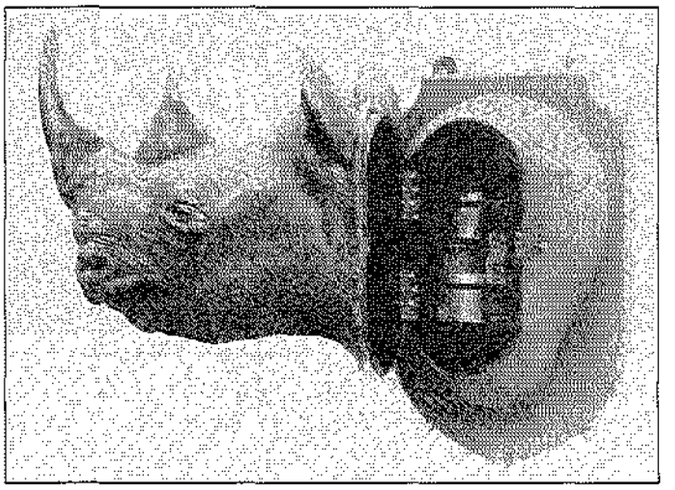






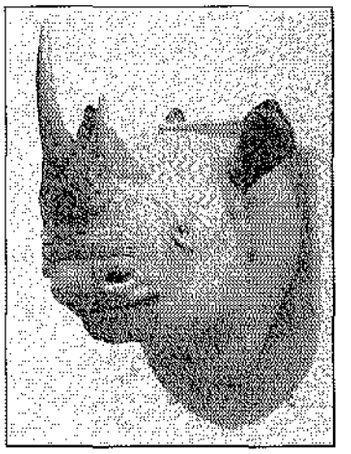
Chapter 7
Animal Furniture, Rugs etc.

Although we find it strange, and even offensive, to think of animals being made into furniture, it was not always so. Indeed it was viewed as an interesting and ingenious way of putting to use what might otherwise be wasted. After all, if elephants were being shot in large numbers for their ivory, it was a pity to waste the feet, ears and other bits of their anatomy that could be made into functional household items. Moreover, these might also serve as souvenirs of a memorable hunting trip, or simply a novel and interesting type of furniture.

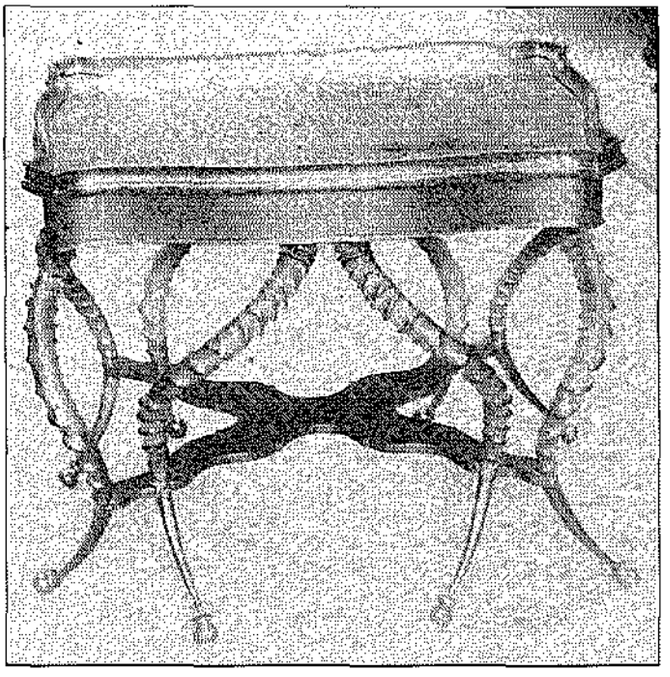


Rowland Ward Ltd offered a lot of this type of taxidermy as a speciality. So did Gerrards. Keen to sell similar things, but at lower prices, they illustrated a vast assortment of different designs in their brochures, ranging from zebra skin screens to doorstops made from rhino feet. This type of product would be made up from a customer's own skins, which had to be in good condition.

The fabrication of household furniture from parts of animals, including waste bins made from elephant feet, lamps from the feet of rhinos and hippos, and tables supported on straightened zebra legs, became a classic Gerrard speciality. These items were a major and evidently popular line of work in the 1920s and 1930s, as shown by their dominance in contemporary Gerrard catalogues. An elephant foot containing cut glass decanters cost 90/- in 1921. My favourite is a drinks cabinet inside the head of a rhinoceros, no doubt created to grace an imposing household. Few things could more graphically illustrate the change in attitudes towards animals that took place during the past century

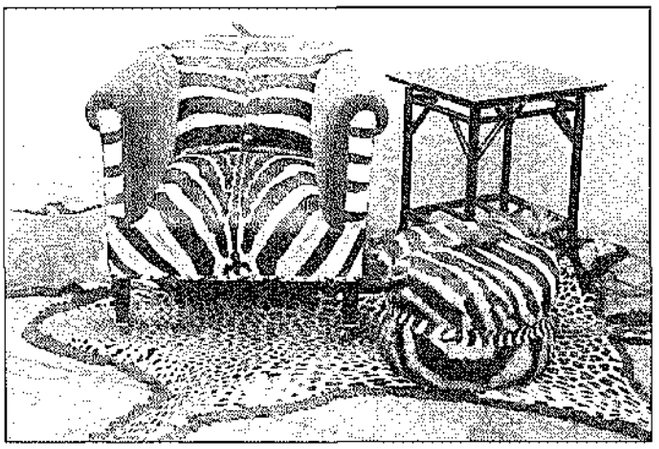


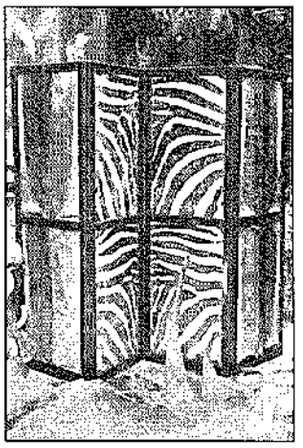
A selection of these items is shown on the following pages, including some of the artwork prepared for use in sales brochures. The photographs are mostly from Gerrard's own albums that were shown to customers to indicate what might be made available.

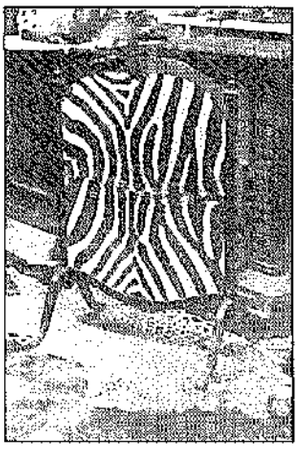


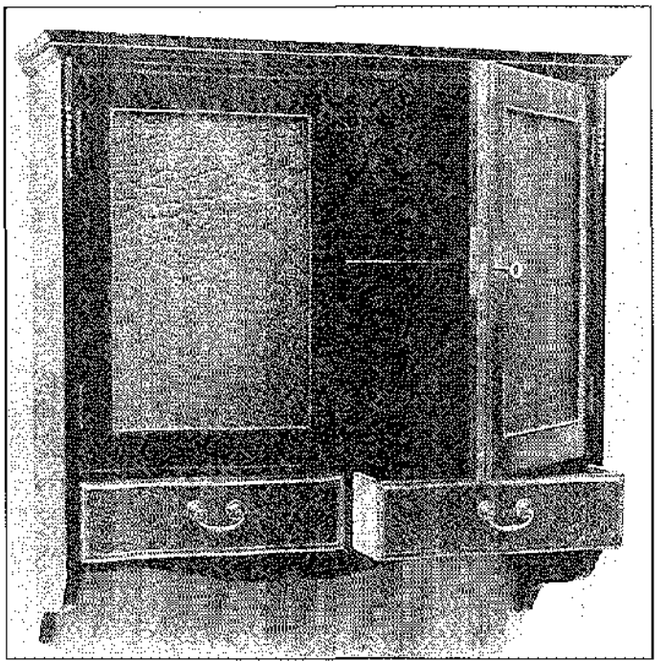
Animal skins could easily be substituted for plain leather to make unusual armchairs and other household furniture, featuring the natural patterns of hair and fur. Gerrards also supplied tables, cabinets, chairs and other furniture, in which some of the wooden panels were replaced by sheets of specially treated skin from crocodiles or large mammals such as elephants or rhinos (whose skin is about 1cm thick, dries hard as a sheet of plywood and could take a fine polish).

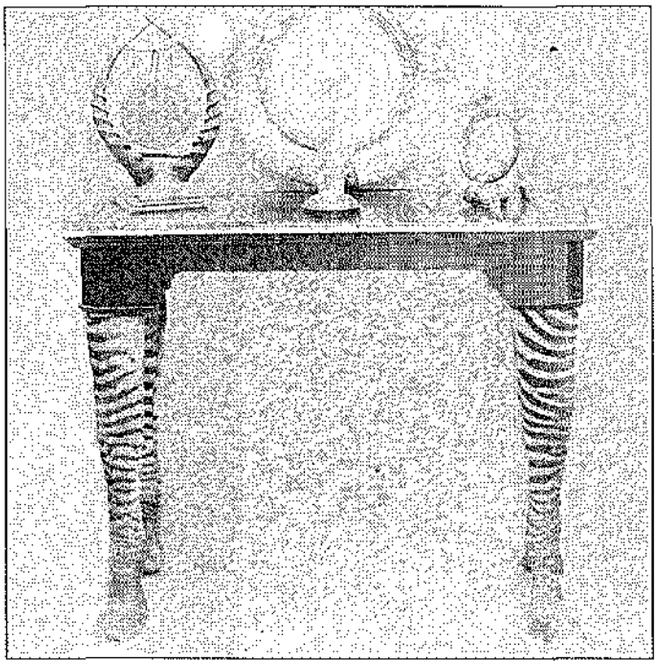
Rhino hide could also be fashioned into dog whips, walking sticks and umbrella handles (all costing about £1 each), or turned like wood to make chessmen or

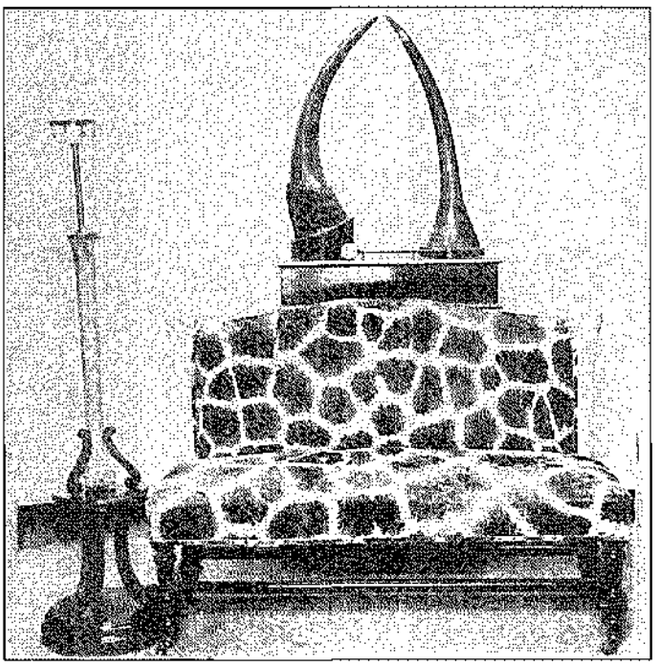


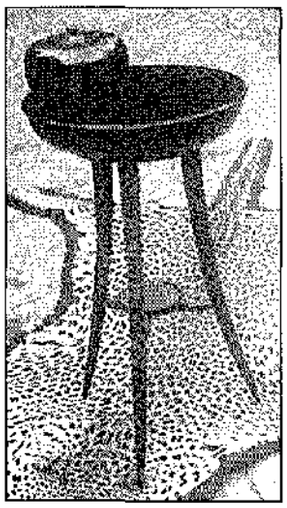












small bowls. Animal furniture was expensive. Hide topped tables cost about £6-£8 in 1921, the most expensive being a rhino hide and mahogany table standing on legs made from impala horns. An ostrich egg sweet dish to stand on it was also available (but cost extra). In 1932, a normal height table, topped with rhino or elephant hide cost the equivalent of two weeks wages for an average skilled worker like a policeman.

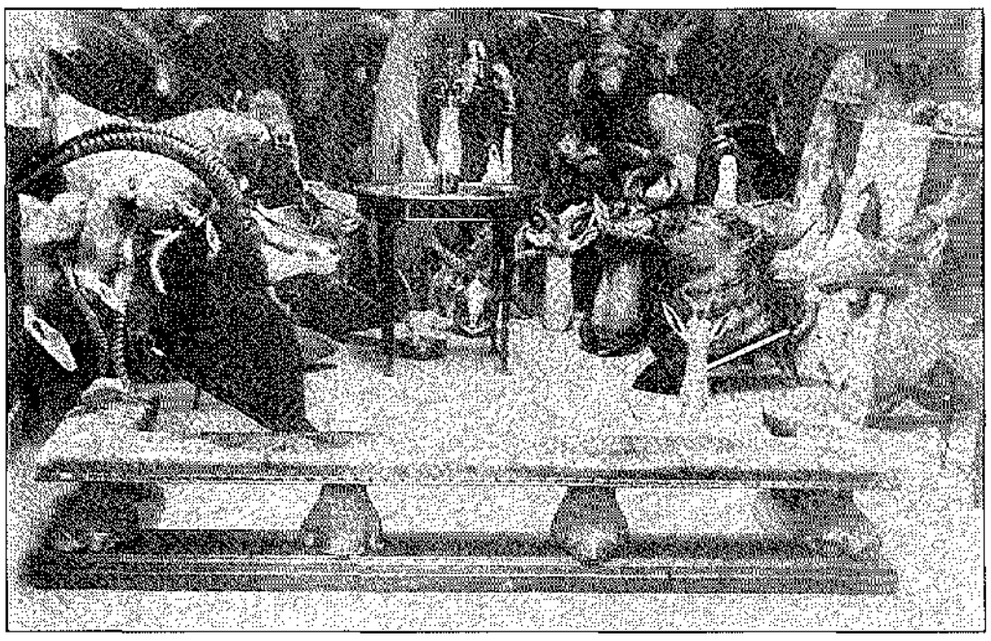
Other types of table were supported on animal legs, specially stretched and straightened to gain sufficient height. The lanky zebra legs are disturbing enough, but the fact that the table legs all faced different directions also looks distinctly odd.

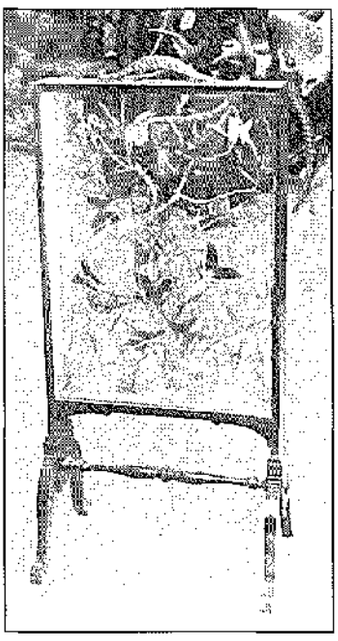
Large screens were offered in which panels of skin were stretched on frames. This was a good way of using the visually arresting skins of zebras. Their hair is brittle and zebra skins that are made into floor coverings soon become bald with use, due to people walking over them.

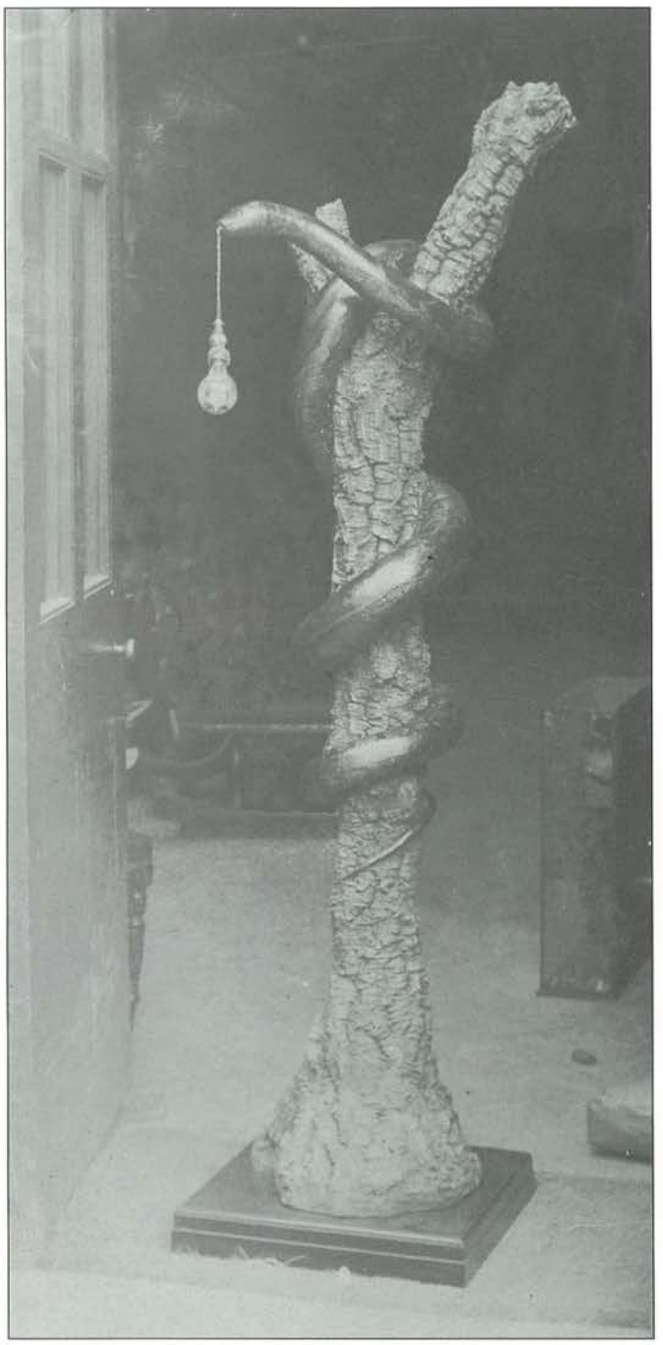
Smaller, lightweight screens were made to hide fireplaces. Often these were in the form of a tall wooden stand, supporting a narrow glass case. This might contain a group of colourful birds or butterflies, or sometimes a single spreadeagled individual bird. These small free-standing screens cost about .63/- to 75/-. Simple hand held screens containing only the wings or breast of a bird set on an ebonised handle cost from 15/6d in 1932.

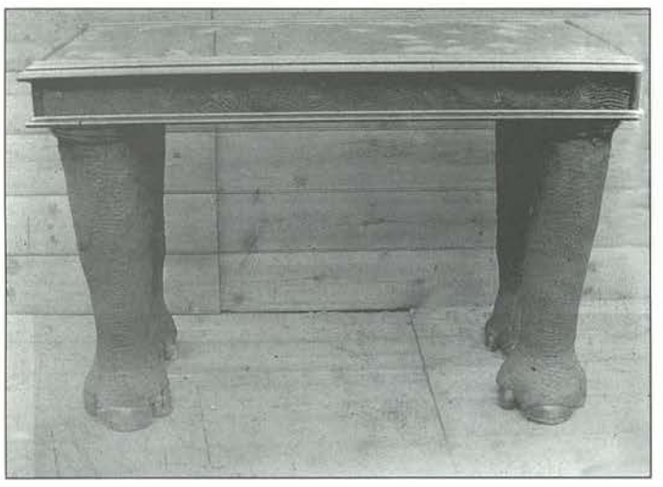
Gerrards also made a number of 'dumb waiters' consisting of an upright bear holding a small tray. These were very popular at one time and are still frequently seen in the antiques trade. Probably less appealing were the large pythons, formed into standard lamps by being wrapped around a tree stump and equipped with a light fitting. Not only are snakes widely reviled, but they are difficult to mount without their long axis becoming twisted unnaturally. The scales often lift too, becoming ragged as they dry, creating a very nasty object.

It seems that almost anything could be made to order, allowing the customer's own ingenuity to be used creatively. And there seemed to be no lack of imagination. One woman wanted a whole crocodile mounted as a couch for ladies to sit on at her tea parties, like the fireside fender mounted on rhino feet, shown here.









Feet

Gerrards offered an amazing range of furniture made from feet. However, these were quite hard to prepare. An elephant foot for example, needed to have all the bones and fibrous tissue removed from inside, right down to the toenails. Leaving any flesh inside meant risking smelly decay and also a serious danger that insects (such as carnivorous dermestid beetles) could begin a damaging infestation that would destroy other specimens and also household carpets. But getting everything out of a foot was extremely hard work, as the skin of a foot is always intimately attached to the tough materials inside and is difficult or impossible to turn inside out. Large feet were hammer and chisel jobs and took a day or more each to complete. The empty skin was packed tightly with sawdust and left to dry before being made into an item of furniture.

It seems that rhino feet were particularly versatile, being made into cigar cabinets, pipe stands, lamps, ashtrays, post boxes, doorstops and umbrella stands. It was even possible to buy an electric fan mounted on a rhino foot, as shown among the typical products illustrated here.

RHINOCEROS AND HIPPOPOTAMUS FEET.

Adaptations and designs other than those here shown will be submitted with approximate cost on application.

These Feet are well formed for use as Door Stops, Tobacco Boxes, Work Boxes, Ink Stands, Umbrella Stands, Stands for Cut or Pot Flowers, for Table Lamps, either Petroline, Duplex, Incandescent, or Electric Light, with metal mounts of any description, or with tops of natural or polished hide, lined with metal, cedar or sandal wood.

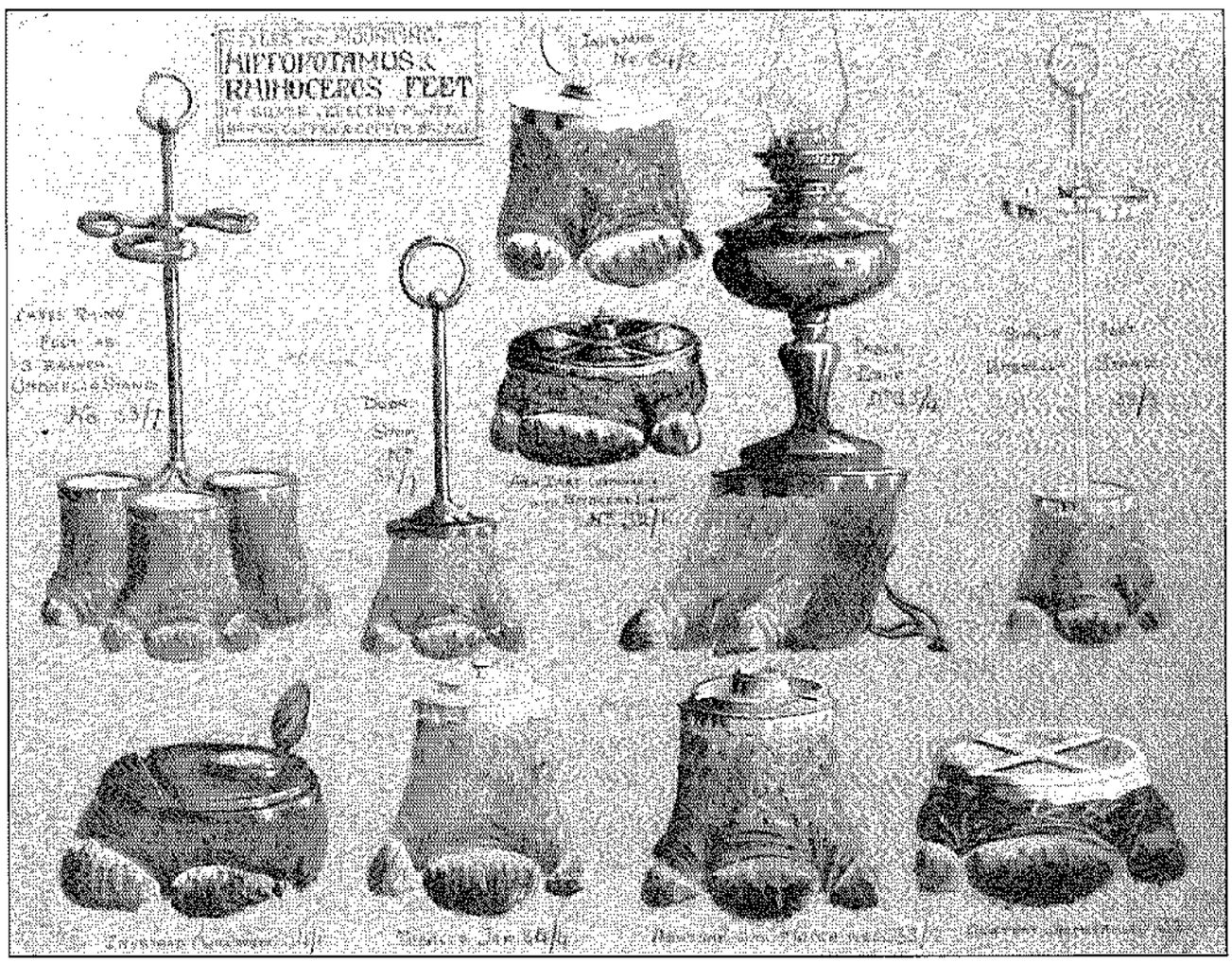
The cheapest and simplest mounts requiring little or no polishing and cleaning are oxidized brass, and copper bronzed. More showy mounts are made in bright brass or copper, in oxidized silver metal, electro-plated silver, and silver, and each may be perfectly plain or artistically ornamented.

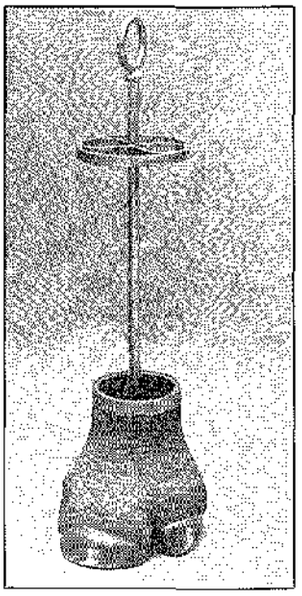
To prepare and mount Rhino or Hippo Feet, with toes nicely polished—

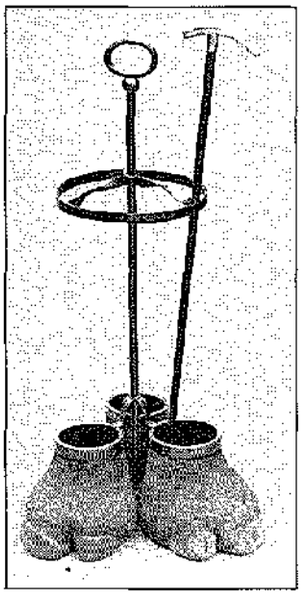
Door Stops,	plain, wood top, weighted ...	from	20/-
„	„ long bronze handles	„	30/-
Jardinières,	plain copper bronze rim, zinc lining	„	30/-
„	embossed mounts..	„	40/-
Inkstands,	polished hide top and lid	„	35/-
Ash Trays,	with cigar rests, copper mounted	„	35/-
„	„ with cigar lighter	„	45/-
Card Trays	... ...	„	28/-
Tobacco Boxes,	cedar lined, polished hide top, no metal	„	35/-
Stick Stands,	copper bronze, standard supports	„	50/-
Lamp Stands,	copper bronze, lamp included .	„	50/-

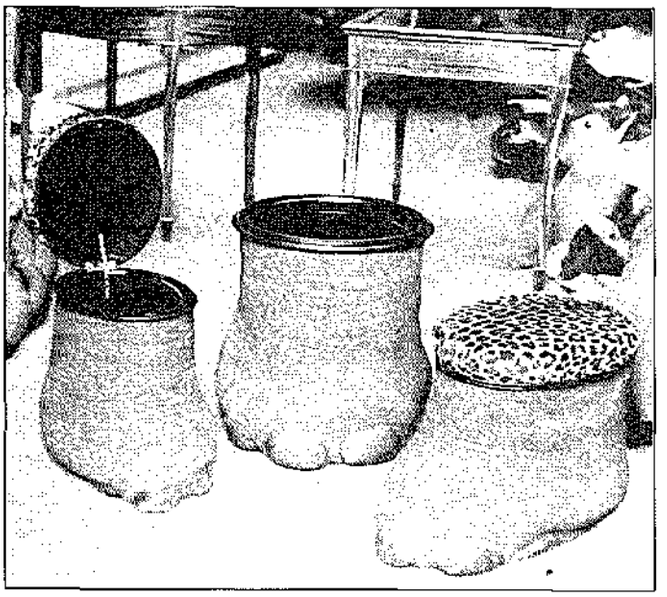
Prices for Electro-plated or Silver Mounts, etc., according to design, submitted on application. Regimental Crests and Inscriptions engraved, or enamelled in colours.

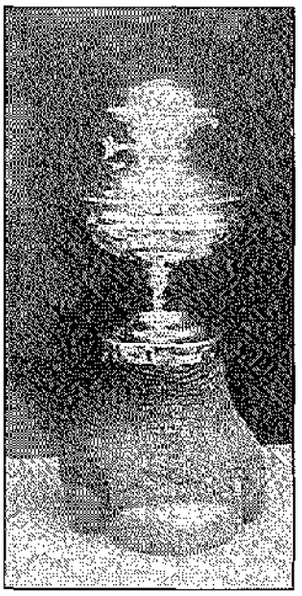
Note:—The prices above are the lowest, unless the trophies are smaller than usual, or the work in some way simplified. We have a variety of styles and designs besides the above. Quotations sent on application.

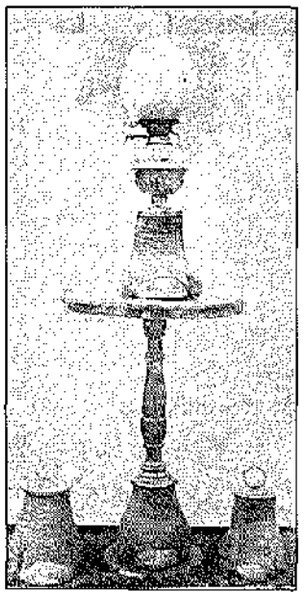


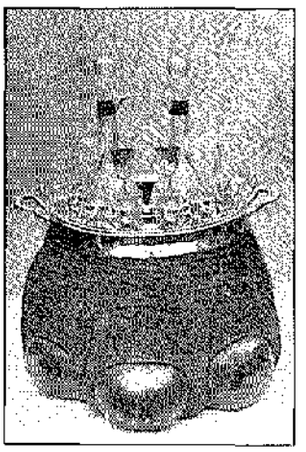


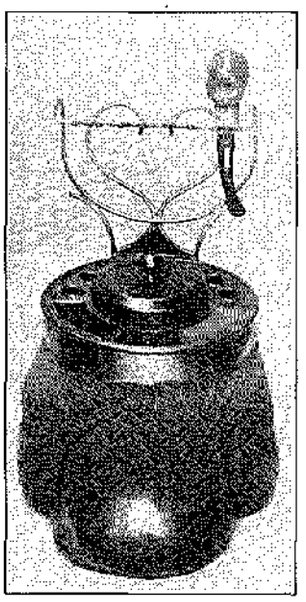


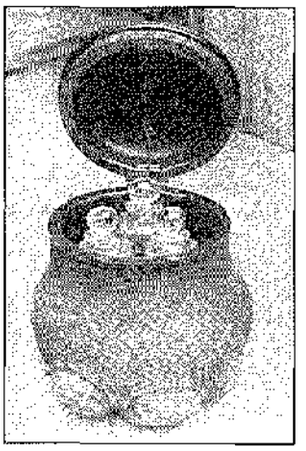


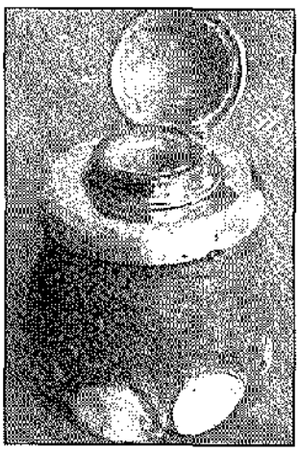


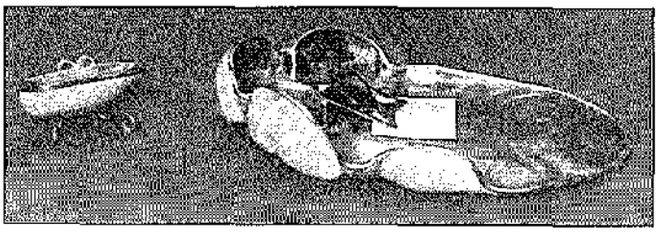


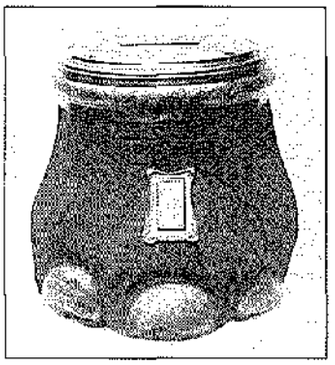


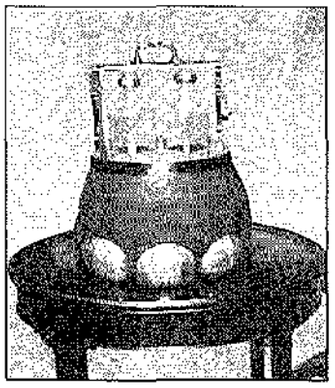






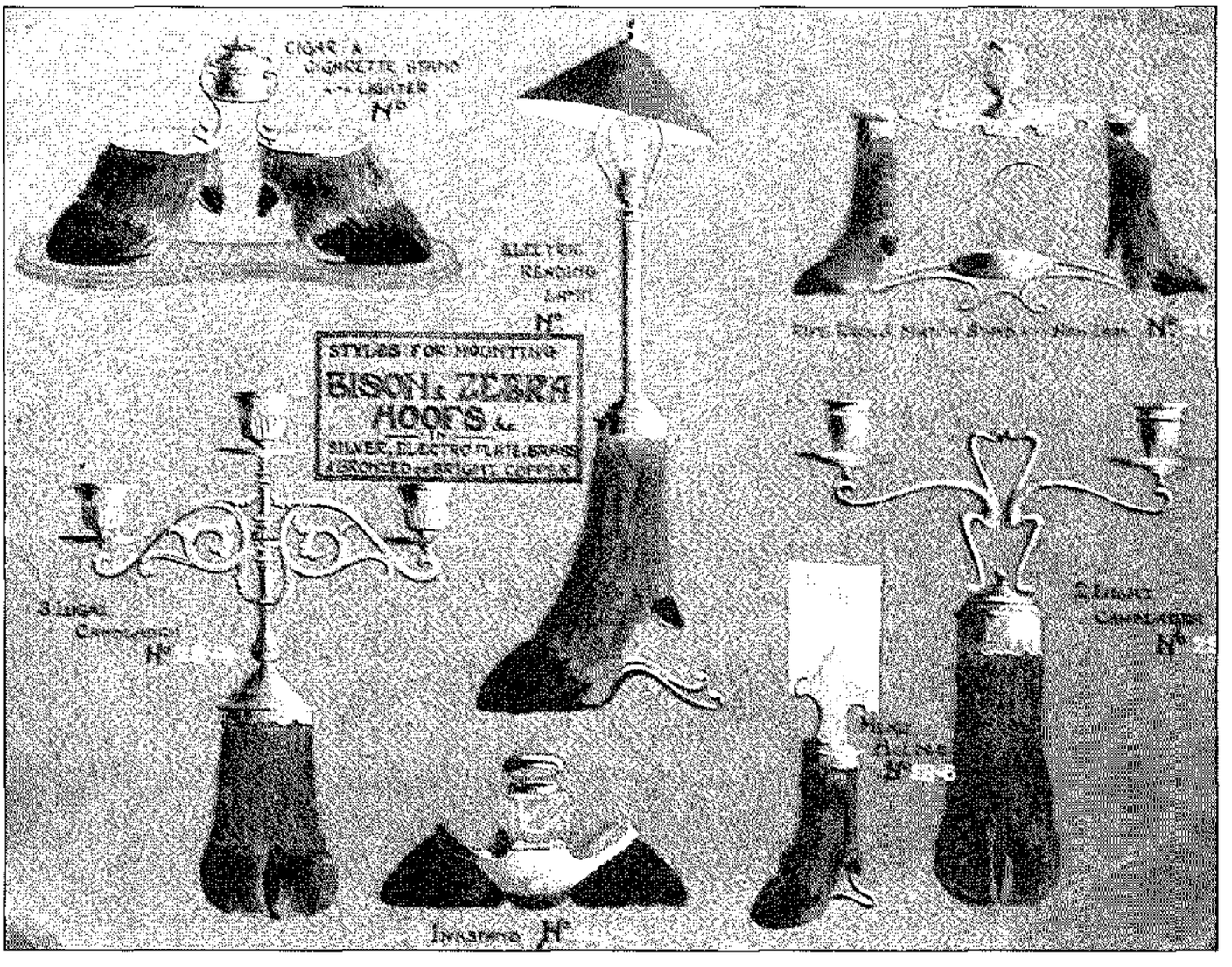






Elephant feet were large enough to make into drink cabinets, stools or waste bins. If the skin was damaged, the sole of the foot could become a small tray, and individual toenails made small dishes, suitable for ashtrays or for holding sweets, matches and other oddments. Baby elephants had feet small enough to make into inkwells.

Ungulate feet could be turned into similar products. The most extraordinary were candle sticks and plant pot supports made from antelope or zebra feet. These are visually disturbing as all four feet were mounted as though 'walking' in different directions!



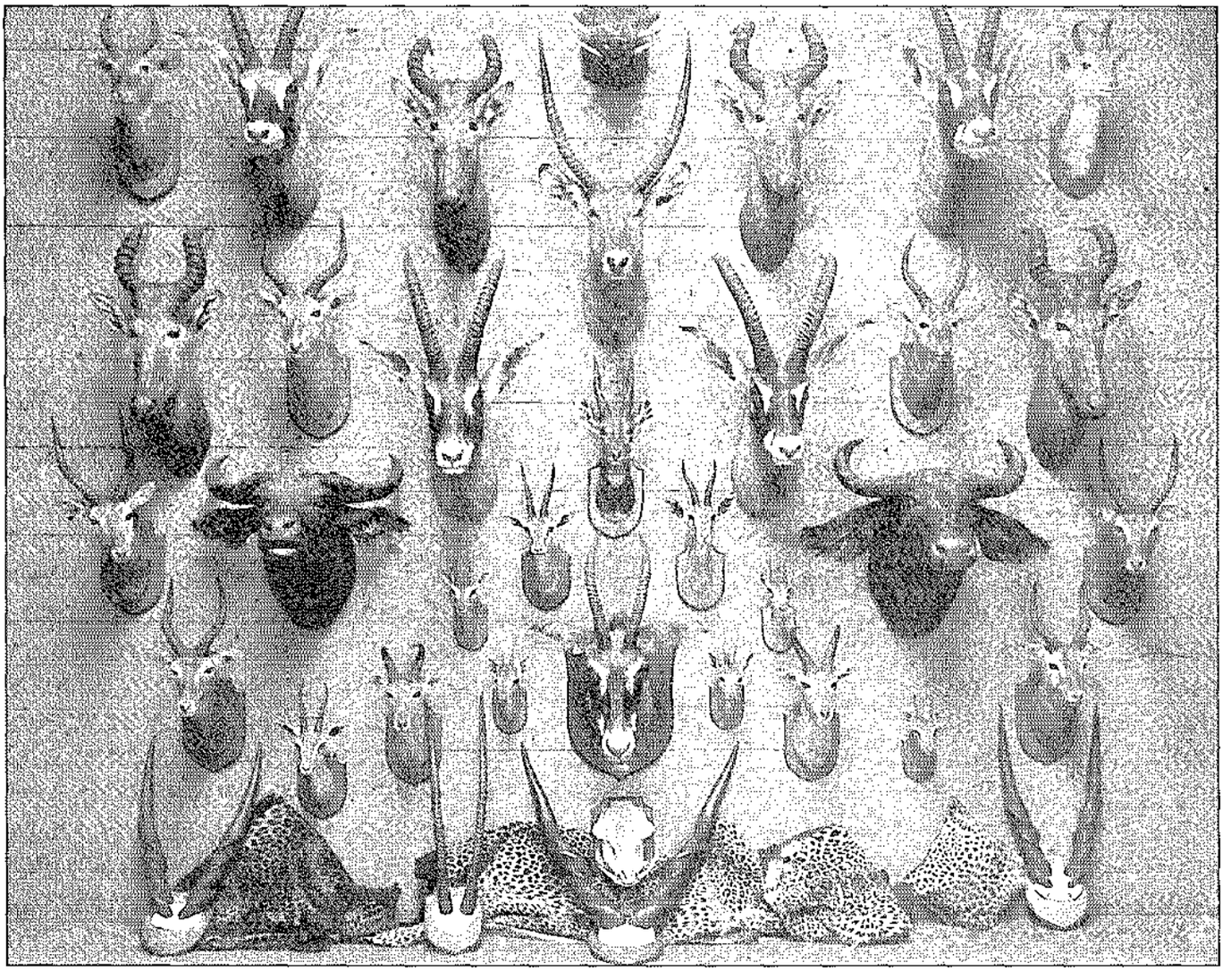
Chapter 11

An Assessment

Gerrards was established in the heyday of British taxidermy and faced many direct competitors in London alone. These included the large business of James Gardner (with a Royal Warrant and premises in Oxford Street) and several other high profile taxidermists, with important social connections and businesses that lasted for decades. They also included the specialist fish taxidermist John Cooper and Sons, whose work was regarded as the finest available, and various bird specialists such as the London taxidermists Leadbeater, Dawes and Burton, all of whom were capable of producing high quality work, easily as good as Gerrard's.

However, none of these other taxidermists did large mammals, few attempted game trophy heads and fewer still offered osteological preparations and biological models (in demand by museums and educational institutions). Most of these smaller businesses had closed by the time of the First World War, regardless of the superior quality of taxidermy that some of them had produced.

From about 1880, Rowland Ward Ltd was unquestionably the leading London taxidermist and Edward Gerrard & Sons operated in direct competition with them, particularly in the area of big game trophies,



Gerrards produced vast numbers of game trophy heads, but few other taxidermists did them at all.

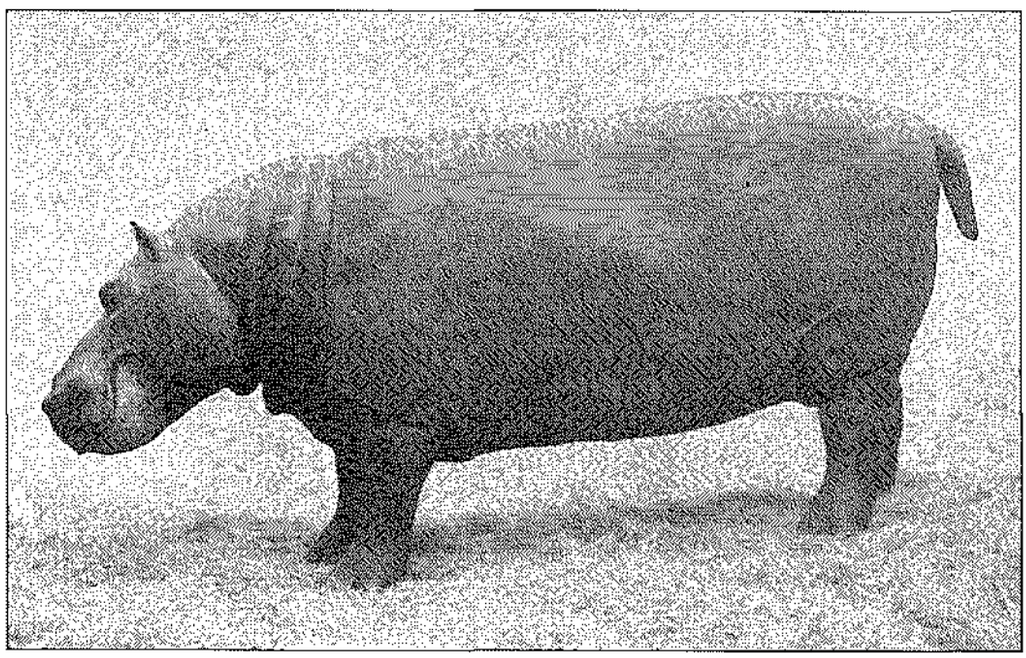
whole mammal mounts and animal furniture. Indeed the items offered by the two companies were almost identical. Gerrards was established earlier (in 1850), but the business of Rowland Ward had grown out of that set up by his father Henry, who in turn had begun about the same time as the first Edward Gerrard.

Rowland Ward had a reputation for higher quality than Gerrards, but also higher prices. Although I have not been able to trace exactly comparable price lists, the cost of mounting a small bird such as a sparrow in the 1960s was four to six times as much if it was done by Wards rather than Gerrards (who charged only 15/- in the 1950s). A similar fourfold price differential is evident when comparing the cost of providing a glass case for it. A Gerrard glass case would have cost about 10/- in the 1950s, Ward's charged £3 in the 1960s. But Ward's cases were all-glass and likely to have been more expensive to make than the simple glass fronted boxes often supplied by Gerrards. Nevertheless, however much buyers might like superior styles and appearance, money is money and the lower cost of Gerrard products could have been a decisive factor for many of their customers.

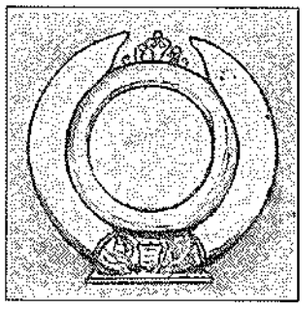
Both companies enjoyed the services of very loyal and experienced staff, several of whom worked in the business to well beyond normal retiring age. Both companies also had loyal customers who were evidently pleased with what they got for their money. Both companies invested in advertising, but Wards did so widely and frequently in the national Press, whereas Gerrards rarely advertised at all, except in relatively obscure places such as the London Zoo guidebook. Unlike Wards, they also did not benefit from the publicity and status associated with publishing highly respected books by famous explorers and sportsmen, nor did they offer anything comparable with Ward's '*Sportsman's Handbook*', giving instructions on how to prepare trophies in the field (and who to send them to of course!).

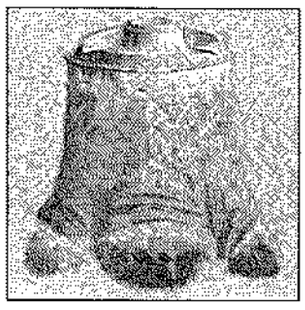
It is also clear that Rowland Ward was a master at manipulating the Press to his own advantage (Morris, 2003), whereas Gerrards appear to have done little more than grant occasional newspaper interviews on request. Wards had a prominent shop in Piccadilly and several of the other London taxidermists also had shops in the fashionable West End. By contrast, Gerrards had no shop at all and instead operated out of an obscure yard in Camden Town, never an easy part of London to reach. All of this must surely have contributed to Gerrard's substantially lower profile in the taxidermy business.

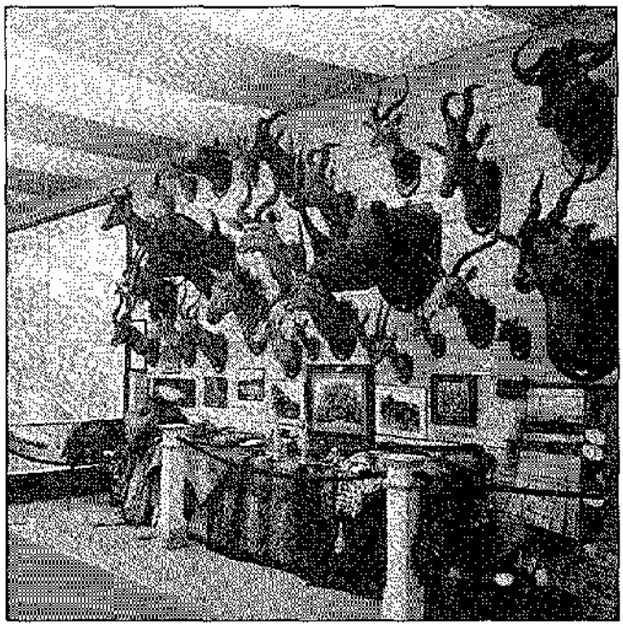
In terms of taxidermy, Rowland Ward Ltd often created very large mounts and museum groups. Gerrards did less of this type of work, lacking the necessary space (although they did mount the occasional elephants and rhinos).

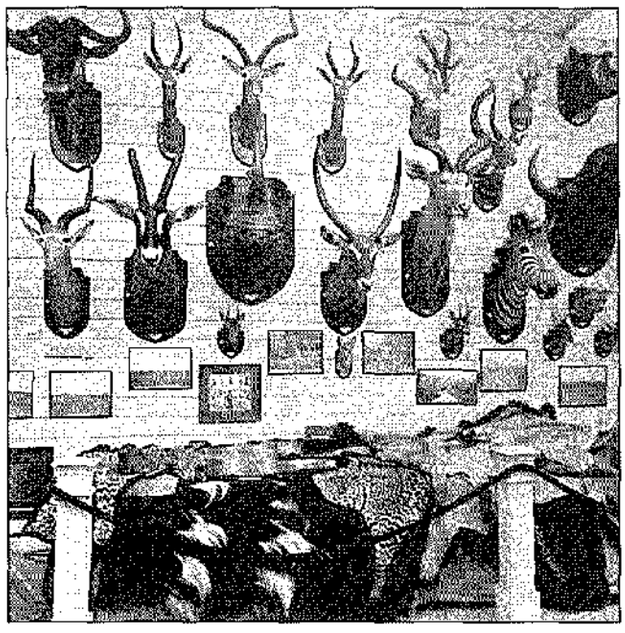


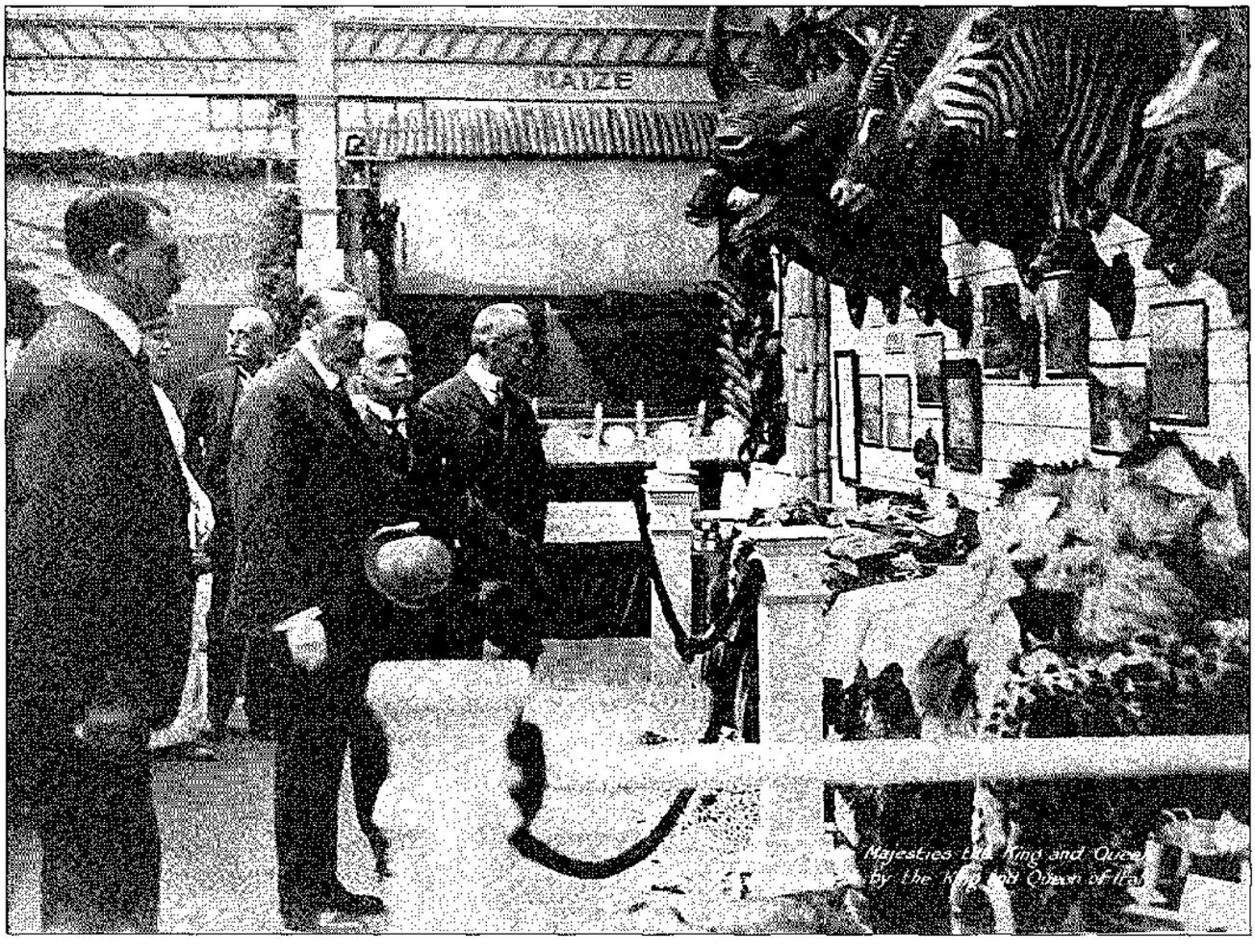
Gerrards produced a full range of animal products. Hippos and rhinos offered endless scope for ingenuity, from whole mounts to furniture and ornaments











Gerrard's stand was set out on either side of a wall map at the Wembley Exhibition. His Majesty King George Vth spent a long time inspecting the display of trophy heads, rugs and photographs before leaving.