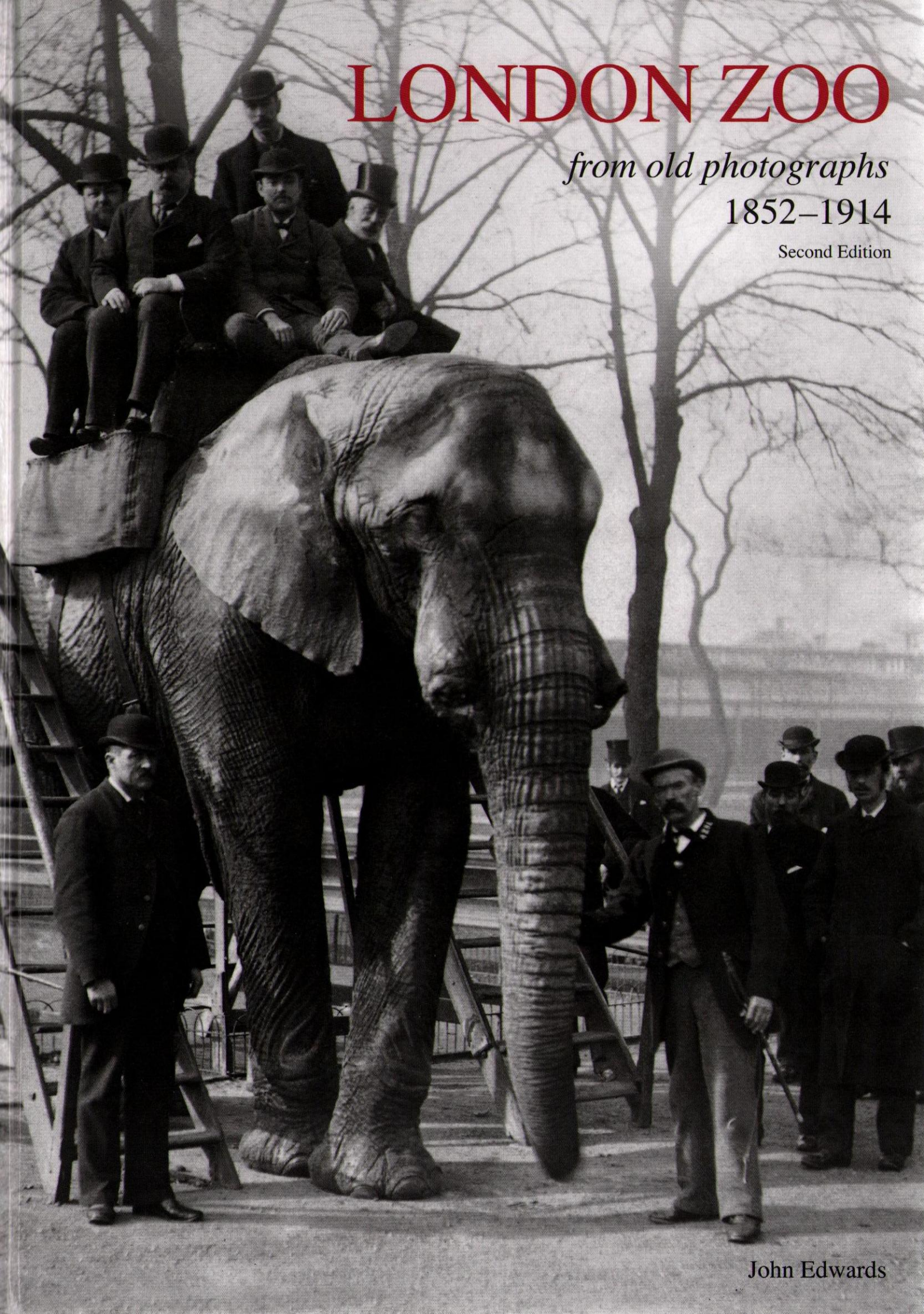


LONDON ZOO

from old photographs

1852–1914

Second Edition

John Edwards

PHOTOGRAPHY

at London Zoo 1852–1914

The first person to take anything that most people would call a photograph was the Frenchman, Louis Daguerre. His process, patented in 1839, produced a very clear image, known as a Daguerreotype, but duplicates could not be made from the original. Very shortly afterwards, an Englishman, W.H. Fox Talbot, invented a process known as the Calotype, which although less clear than the Daguerreotype had the advantage that duplicates could be printed from the original exposure. Both these inventions were protected by patents which tended to limit their use and improvement. Because of the long duration of the exposures, these early processes were generally used for human portraiture or recording inanimate objects and images of even domestic animals were seldom attempted. Nevertheless, Daguerreotypes of a jaguar and its trainer, Jacob Driesbach were taken in the United States in 1847 and these are believed to be the earliest ever taken of a living wild animal. In about 1850, a Daguerreotype was taken in Italy of an Asiatic bull elephant.

In 1851, a sculptor, Frederick Scott Archer (1813–1857) invented a new process which he described in *The Chemist* for March 1851. A glass plate was coated with collodion (a solution of guncotton in ether) and then this prepared plate was immersed in silver nitrate and exposed while still wet. After exposure, the plate was developed immediately. This process, known as photography, combined the Daguerreotype's high definition with the Calotype's ability to be reproduced. Despite being smelly, messy and cumbersome, this process, sometimes known as the wet-plate process became the normal method of taking photographic images for the next quarter of a century. With great but unwise generosity of spirit (for he was to die in poverty), Archer declined to patent his invention and the popularity of photography, freed from restriction, mushroomed.

Closely associated with Archer was Don Juan de Bourbon y Braganza, Count of Montizon (1822–1887), a grandson of King Carlos IV of Spain. During the summer of 1852, he began to take photographs at London Zoo, his purpose possibly being not so much to record the animals as to demonstrate his photographic skill. In December of that year, he exhibited a series of his Zoo photographs at the Society of Arts. Queen Victoria saw them and noted in her diary, " A set of photos of the animals at the Zoological Gardens by Don Juan, second son of Don Carlos, are almost the finest of all the specimens'. Incidentally, the Queen's use here of the abbreviation 'photo' is believed to be its earliest recorded use by anyone. Forty-three prints by Montizon are now preserved in the Royal Photographic Collection at Windsor Castle. There are other prints in the International Museum of Photography and Film at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York State which are thought to have belonged to Antoine Claudet who bought the first licence to take Daguerreotypes in the United Kingdom.

The difficulty and expense of animal photography ensured that few photographs were taken in zoos. John Dillwyn Llewellyn, a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London, took some photographs at Bristol Zoo, which are now in the National Museum of Wales. A photograph of a female elephant was taken in Brussels Zoo (formerly an inmate of London Zoo) in 1854 and some stereoscopic photographs were taken in London Zoo, probably in 1856.

Then, in the summer of 1864, a professional photographer, Frank Haes (1832–1916), in partnership with Messrs. McLean and Melhuish of 26, Haymarket, began taking photographs in the zoo. He was an enterprising man, for he had already been to Australia to take photographs. His thoughts may have turned to photographing animals in the Zoo while he was taking portraits of a number of eminent scientists, including the Zoological Society's Secretary, Dr. Sclater. We are very fortunate that he recorded his experiences at the Zoo in a lecture given to the London Photographic Society on 3rd January, 1865 and which was published in *The Photographic Journal* for 16th January 1865. He recounted that it could take up to twenty minutes before an animal could 'either by coaxing or menacing' be placed 'in a favourable position'. Frequently the effort was wasted, as the wet plate would dry out and no exposure could be made. Needless to say, the exposures were made as rapidly as possible but this still took about one third of a

second. And once exposed, the plate had, of course, to be developed immediately. Although Haes does not mention this, the unpleasant smell of the chemicals used must have been an additional handicap as most mammals have a much more highly developed sense of smell than human beings.

Haes obtained about sixty images in 1864. Some are relatively common, while no prints of others seem to have survived. Haes sold his images in the form of stereoscopic cards. He probably anticipated that cards depicting certain animals such as the elephant, rhinoceros, orang-utan, lion and giraffe would be in greater demand than others and there are a number of different exposures of certain animals. In the days before cinema or television, the stereoscope was very popular and it had the great advantage that the bars in front of an animal were much less obtrusive when the image was viewed through a stereoscopic viewer. These cards cost one shilling and sixpence each, not an inconsiderable sum when one considers this was eighteen times the cost of sending a letter in those days-and there were fifty-five images in the series. Another possible reason for the scarcity of Haes' images may be that children were allowed to play with them, as the marks of coloured crayons on some surviving examples attest. The Zoological Society owns what appears to be a unique album of larger images, some identical with the stereoscopic images, others different. The same owner has a portfolio containing the same images mounted on card. Haes also sold his photographs in the form of glass magic lantern slides, but these are exceedingly rare.

Haes returned to the Zoo in 1865 and took more photographs. His lecture to the North London Photographic Society on 7th February 1866 was published in *The Photographic News* for 16th February 1866 and *The Photographic Journal* for the 16th March 1866. He was very ambitious in his choice of subjects, for he recorded the aye-aye, a bat, the clouded leopard (through very narrow bars), a binturong (which bit its keeper in the process) and the ratels. Unfortunately, Haes varnished the negatives with a substance that soon cracked and so very few prints were made. Both stereoscopic cards and magic lantern slides from the 1865 season are exceedingly rare and Haes never worked at the Zoo again apart from returning in 1866 to photograph Lecomte and the sea-lion. He seems to have retained an interest in the institution as some years later he wrote a supportive letter to the press on the vexed subject of feeding the snakes with live prey.

Next in the line of zoo photographers was Frederick York (1823–1903) of Notting Hill. He had had taken a large number of stereoscopic photographs of London and its environs, including a few views of the buildings in the Zoo. Towards the end of the 1860s, he embarked on a series of over two hundred stereoscopic views of animals in the Zoo, the most comprehensive survey of the collection made up until that time. Three albums are known to exist containing 192 of one half of the stereoscopic images. The one in the Zoological Society's Library was presented by York himself in 1872. This means that all the images were taken in 1872 or earlier. This information, together with the Zoological Society's carefully kept records has facilitated the dating and identification of some of the animals depicted. York continued to take photographs at the Zoo during the 1870s and recorded such interesting arrivals as the hippo *Guy Fawkes* (born on 5th November, 1872) and the Society's only Javan rhino (received in 1874). He also photographed the animals in the collection brought back from India by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) in May 1876. Many of York's photographs are to be found in the form of magic lantern slides and he seems to have favoured this medium increasingly towards the end of the century. He also produced cartes-de-visites of animals. These were cards measuring about 6.35 cms. by 10.5 cms., a format generally used for human portraiture.

York seems to have attempted a complete survey of the collection and even small mammals and reptiles were fairly represented. It is curious, however, that there is no image of the black rhinoceros (received in 1868 and the only specimen in captivity at that time apart from a female which arrived at the Berlin Zoo in July 1870). Nor are there any penguins, hyænas, parrots or crocodilians. York,

incidentally, according to *The Magic Lantern Journal* for 1st January 1891 was the first photographer to use a camera with a 'finder' (presumably a view-finder), specially made for his work at the Zoo.

During the 1870s, the wet collodion process was superseded by a process using dry plates and this greatly facilitated animal photography, although most zoo photographs were still taken by professionals. Here we can mention T.J. Dixon (1857–1943) who seems to have been active at the Zoo between about 1879 and 1885. Dixon whose studio was close to the Zoo in Albany Street, is best remembered for his partnership with his father, Henry, in forming the Society for Photographing Relics of Old London. Major John Fortuné Nott (1847–1930) took photographs for the firm of George Washington Wilson and many of his negatives are preserved in the Aberdeen University Library. Nott published a number of photographs in his *Wild Animals Photographed and Described* (1886), mostly reproduced in mirror-image and the work of the 'well-known artistic lithographers, Messrs. I. and A. Lemercier of Paris'. Nott wrote in his introduction: 'I came to the conclusion that on this point at least I would try and make a new departure, and instead of illustrating the book with pictures of animals as many artists seem to think they ought to be, I would portray them as they are, and with this object use photographs wherever possible'. Most notable of late Victorian London Zoo photographers was Gambier Bolton (1854–1928), originally from Lancashire. His images, mostly taken in the 1890s continued to be used as illustrations until at least the 1920s. In 1924, Player's Cigarettes set 'Natural History' used Bolton photographs as the basis for a set of fifty cards. Bolton seems to have been a tricky character and was a vocal critic of the management of the Zoo at the turn of the century. He is said to have concluded his association with the Zoological Society by standing outside the Main Gate, distributing leaflets detailing his ill-treatment at the Society's hands.

The 1880s witnessed the rise of the amateur photographer. As has been described, photography had been a complicated, expensive and not entirely pleasant process, practised by only the most dedicated. But during this decade, increasingly sophisticated dry-plate photography culminated in the substitution of celluloid film for glass plates. With the coming of George Eastman's roll-film camera, photography became simply a matter of pressing a button and leaving the developing and printing to the Kodak works at Harrow, near London. One might have expected large numbers of Kodak snapshots (originally circular) to have survived, but this is not the case. Possibly their very convenience and ubiquity led to their being regarded as of little consequence. Only very slightly later than the snapshot was the invention of moving pictures. In about 1896, the Lumière brothers filmed two young tigers, a lion and its keeper and some pelicans at London Zoo. This was probably the first time that moving pictures had been taken of wild animals. During the period up until 1914 more sequences were shot and clips can be conveniently viewed on websites such as Youtube or British Pathé.

The Zoological Society of London was more enlightened in its attitude to photographers than many similar institutions. For many years, this was forbidden in the New York Zoological Park (Bronx Zoo) and when C.V.A. Peel toured the zoos of Europe in 1902, he recorded his frustration at being prevented from using his camera in the zoos of Paris, Berlin, Dresden, Breslau, Königsberg, Budapest and Vienna. An honourable exception to this was Dublin Zoo which in 1898 not merely abolished what it saw as a futile prohibition, but actually instituted a medal to be awarded for the best photographs taken in the zoo each year.

A curious feature of our story is that the Zoological Society itself showed very little interest in the invention. When in 1854, the Count of Montizon's photograph of a living fish had been exhibited at the Society's Anniversary Meeting, the great advantage 'to the study of Ichthyology deducible from this application of the art' had been noted politely. In the following year, 1855, the *Proceedings* contain a transcript of remarks by William Thompson on the Crustacean *Nika edulis* (now assigned to the Genus *Processa*) which was illustrated by five photographs,

probably the first ever taken of an invertebrate and also probably the first time that photography had been used in zoological research. From time to time, photographs would be exhibited at scientific meetings, as in the case of a pygmy hippo which lived in Dublin Zoo briefly in 1873, or the now lost photograph (or possibly daguerreotype) of Wombwell's gorilla (this had been taken in about 1861 and may have been the first photograph ever taken of living anthropoid ape). But no systematic official attempt was ever made to record the collection as was later done so magnificently by the New York Zoological Society (now Wildlife Conservation Society). The London Zoo Guide continued to be illustrated with woodblocks until 1903, despite the fact that half-tone illustrations had been available since the 1880s. Indeed, the very first such illustrations to be published in this country were of animals in London Zoo, reproduced in *The Graphic* for 5 September 1885.

Part of the reason for this lack of interest may have been that many of the animals of which a record was required were birds and obviously a monochrome photograph could not record the colour of plumage. This, coupled with the fact that the Secretary from 1859 to 1902, Dr. Philip Lutley Sclater, was one of the leading ornithologists of the period suggests one reason why photography was neglected. It is only fair to point out that the Zoological Society was not an isolated case and the National Portrait Gallery, to name only one other national institution, showed virtually no interest in photographic portraits until well into the second half of the twentieth century. It is nevertheless deplorable that the opportunity to photograph the very large number of type specimens which entered the collection during this period as well as many now very rare or extinct animals, such as the Antarctic Wolf or Warrah, Schomburgk's deer, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parrakeet, Huia, Sclater's Monaul, Chinese Monaul or Cape Verde Skink to name only a few.

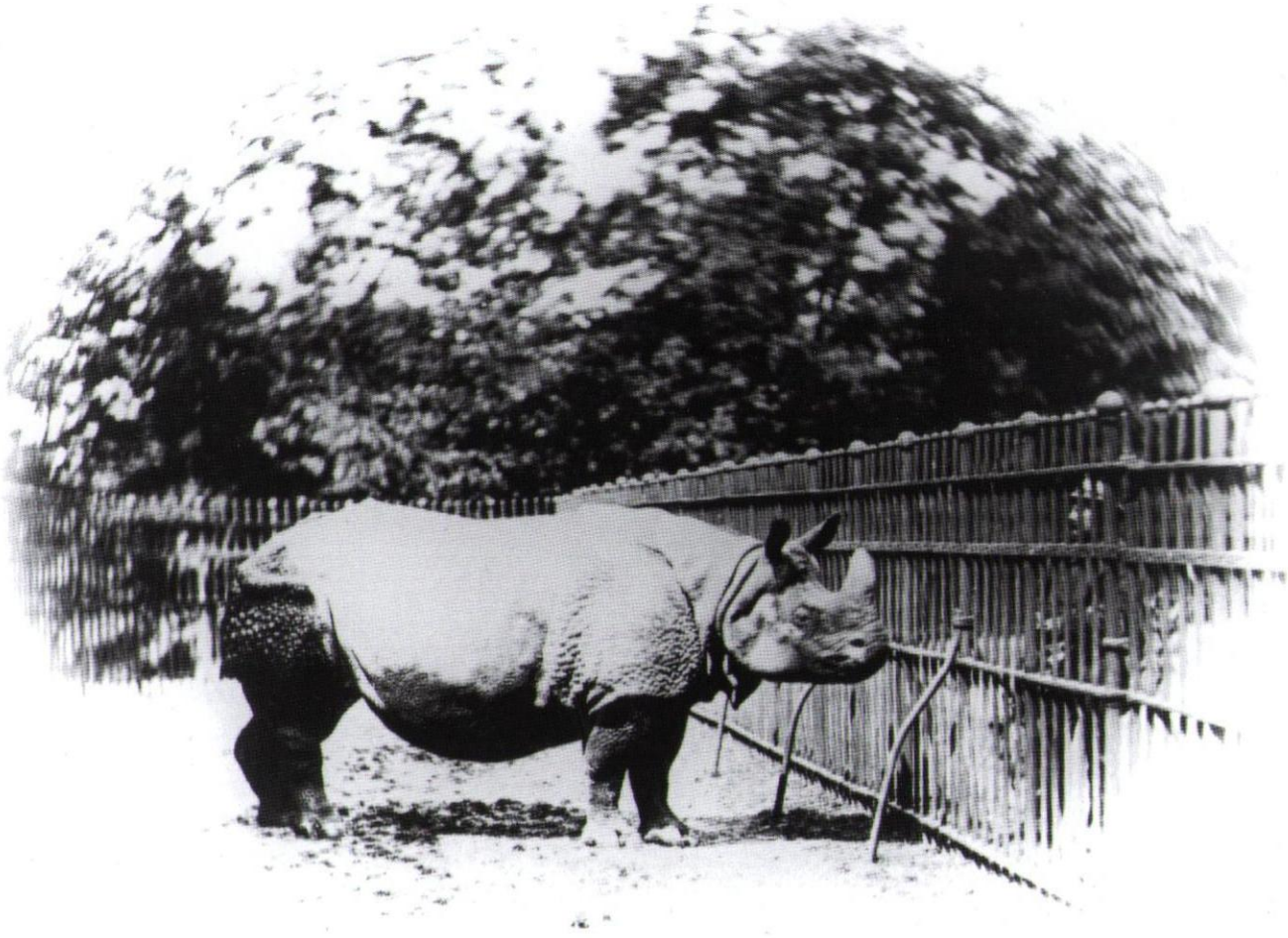
The dawn of the twentieth century heralded a change. In 1900, F.G. Aflalo (1870–1918) produced the delightful *A Walk through the Zoological Gardens*, an unofficial guide to London Zoo, illustrated with photographs by A.S. Rudland. It was a mute but nevertheless effective criticism of Dr. Sclater's official guide. In 1904, Dr. Peter Chalmers Mitchell (1864–1945), who had been elected Secretary in 1903, produced a new Guide, illustrated with photographs by Walter Pfeffer Dando (1852–1944), stage manager of the Palace Theatre and for a brief period, the Society's official photographer.

The Edwardian age was the Golden Age of the picture postcard and the Society now produced its own. Also, beginning in 1904, a series of half-tone photographic postcards, many depicting small mammals, birds or reptiles were produced and sold in the zoo, sometimes from slot-machines. These, of course, were in competition with the enormous number of unofficial commercial postcards depicting the Zoo's occupants. Possibly they were less successful as they were of poorer quality and represented less popular animals. And one series of coloured postcards was acknowledged to be a failure. Although the photographs were originally only by Dando, he was gradually supplemented by Henry Irving, W.S. Berridge (1872–1966), Lewis Medland (1845–1914), F.W. Bond (1887–1942), F. Martin Duncan (1873–1961) and David Seth-Smith (1875–1963). The photographs remained their own property and the Zoological Society of London is deeply indebted to the families of the last three men for generously donating their collections.

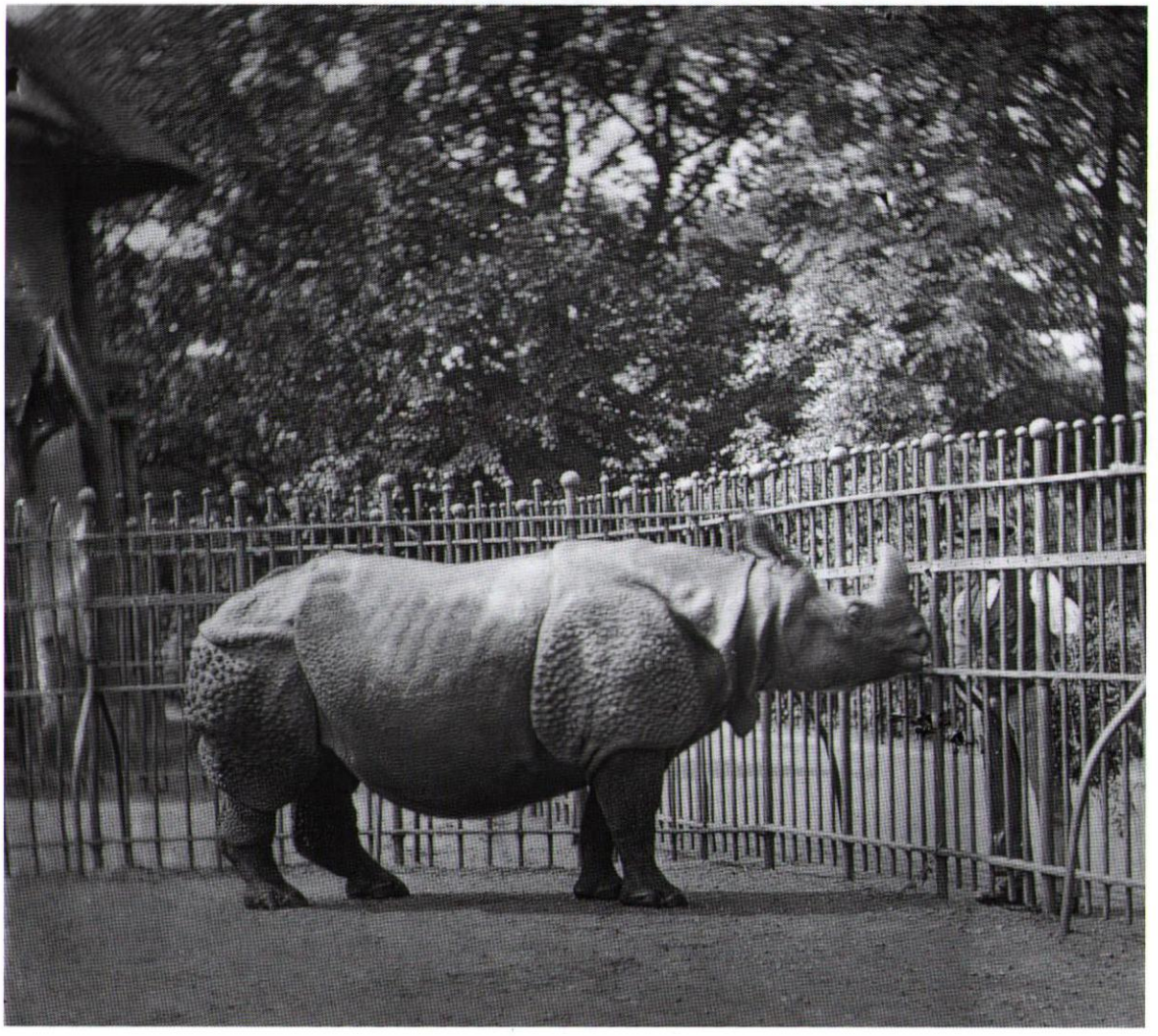
By the time war broke out in 1914, photography at London Zoo had come a very long way in the sixty-two years since the Count of Montizon first exposed his wet plates.

Indian or greater one-horned rhinoceros *(Rhinoceros unicornis) Miss Bet*. This photograph was probably taken in 1856 and is almost certainly the earliest photograph ever taken of a living rhinoceros.

Miss Bet had been acquired in 1850 to replace the Society's first rhinoceros, also an Indian which had lived in the Zoo from 1834 to 1849.

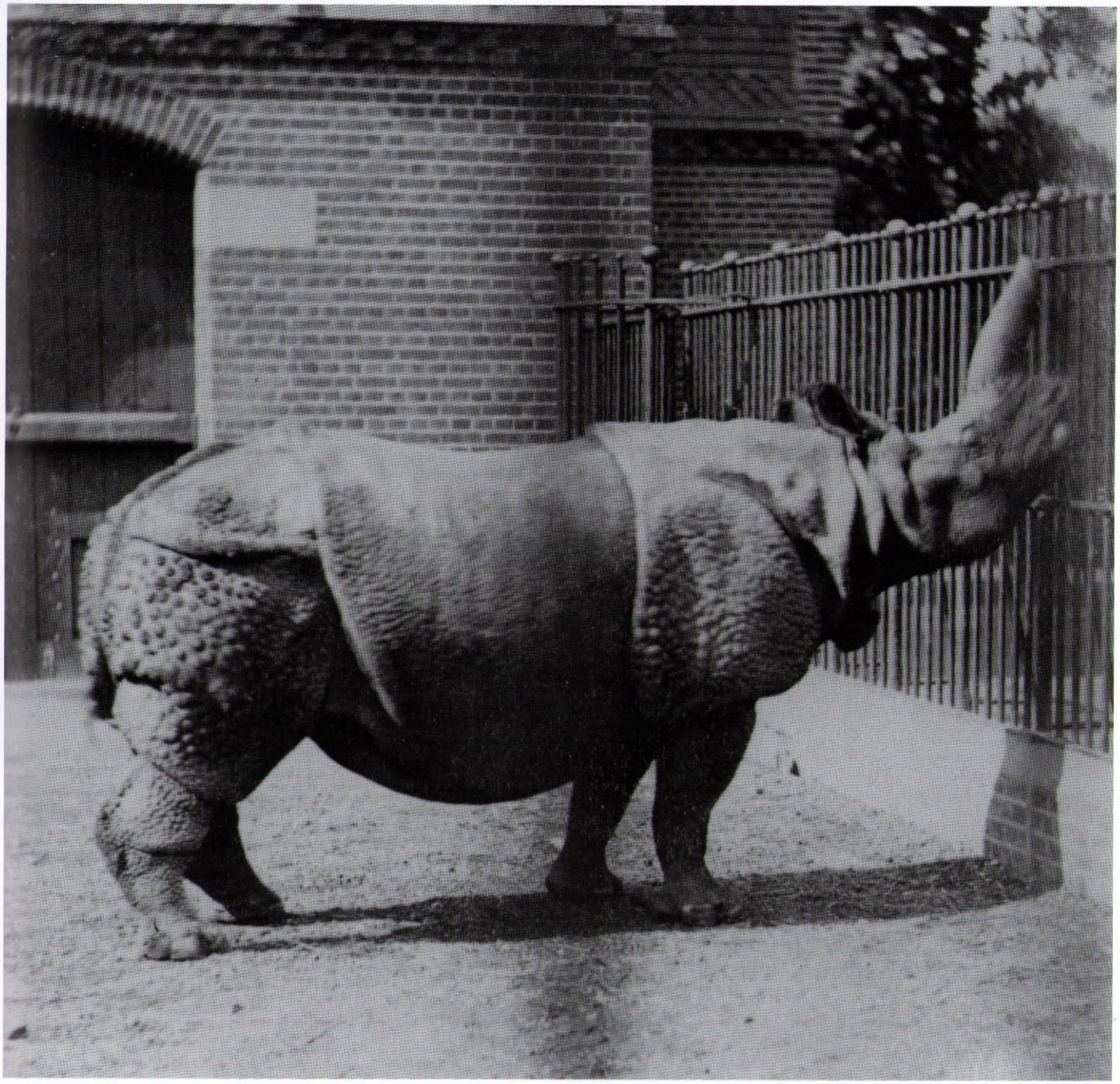


Female Indian rhinoceros *(Rhinoceros unicornis)*, Miss Bet Summer 1864. Photograph by Frank Haes, who considered her to be 'not a lady of very great amiability of temper, especially since the arrival of the young rhinoceroses, who, she evidently fancies are a counterattraction to her charms. In fact, so uncertain is her temper that the keepers never venture into her yard when she is taking her daily constitutional. When she first saw the fresh arrivals, she was in such a passion that nobody knew how to calm her; and her strength is such that few can imagine. I found out that the rhinoceros could run at a good round pace when so minded; for one day walking with my camera covered with a bright yellow cloth over my shoulder, Miss bet caught sight of it and charges full speed at me; fortunately the rails were between us.'



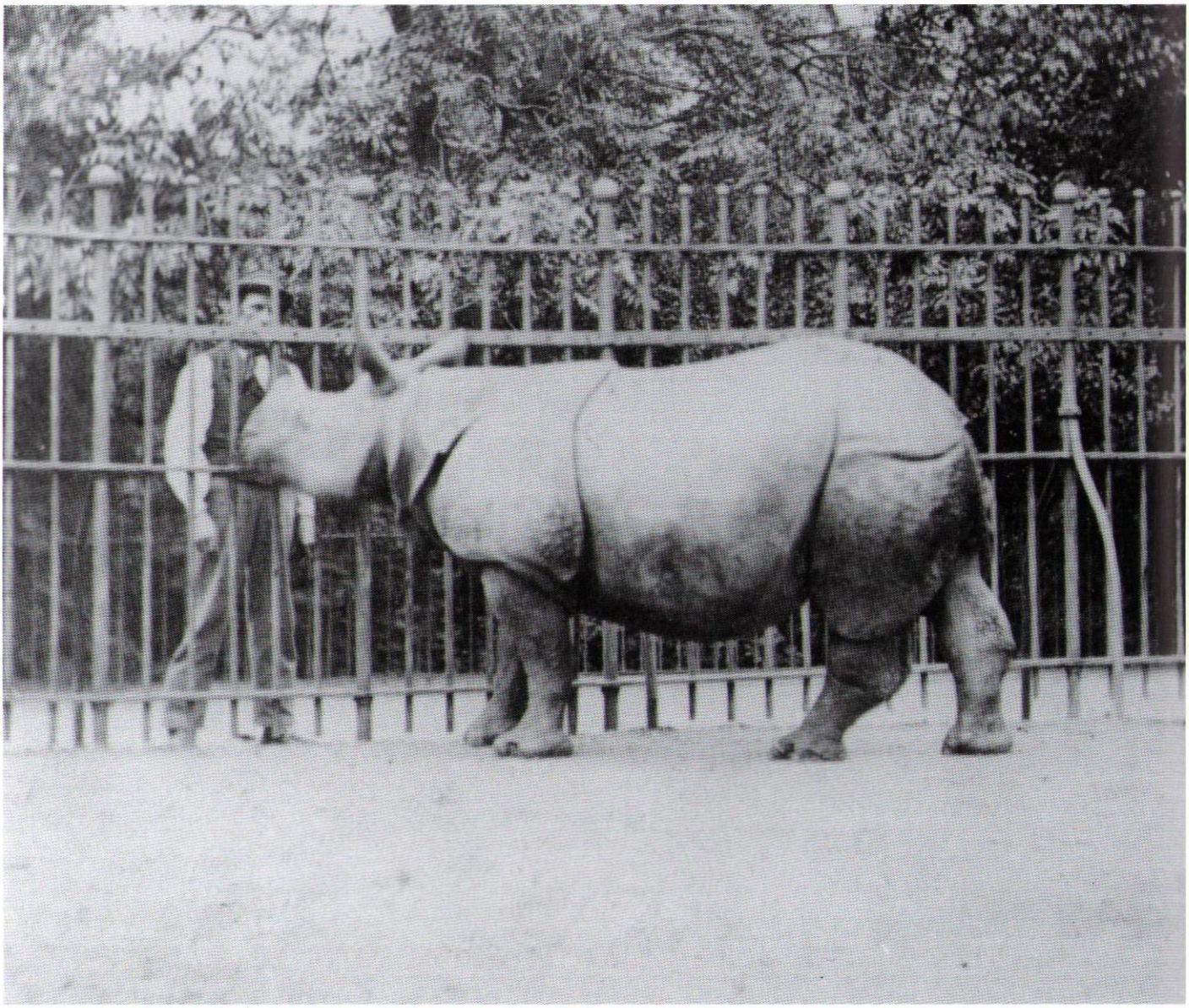
Miss Bet, Indian rhinoceros. Summer 1864. Glass stereoscopic photograph by Frank Haes. This rhino used to try to tear up the paving stones in the enclosure with her mouth.

It was this rhino that, in December 1871, fell through the ice covering the pool and from which she had to be rescued by the keepers, an incident immortalised in the famous watercolour by Ernest Griset.



Miss Bet, Indian rhinoceros with overgrown horn, *circa* 1870. Photograph by Frederick York.

Bartlett noted: '...in her constant endeavour to tear down the iron fence caused the horn to grow forward, so as to project beyond the nose, consequently the animal had great difficulty in feeding off the ground by reason of the horn coming into contact with it first. Consequently, I determined to saw it off. The animal became comparatively sociable and friendly, allowing me to rub her eyes with my hand and at the same time I practised with a walking stick the process of sawing the horn. This performance I continued to go through on several mornings. Finding that she submitted gently to this treatment I went one morning prepared with a sharp saw, and, with the aid of one of the keepers, who smoothed her eye in order to keep it closed, I commenced to saw off the horn, which I very effectually accomplished in about ten minutes, during which time she remained perfectly quiet. I have kept this horn, and although it has got very dry, it weighs 11lbs., and measured 15 in. in length.'



Jim, male Indian rhinoceros, 1865. Photograph by Frank Haes.

Jim arrived, aged about two years with two others on 25 July 1864. One went to Dublin Zoo almost immediately and a female was exchanged for Jumbo in 1865. He was of a ferocious temper and on one occasion severely injured a keeper whose life was probably only saved by Matthew Scott, Jumbo's keeper, who hit Jim in the eye with a whip. On another occasion, when trying to force the gate separating the two paddocks open, he broke his horn off, but a fresh one grew again. His anxiety to open the gate was because Miss Bet, presumably in œstrus was in the next paddock. It is intriguing to reflect that if the gate had been weaker or the horn stronger, an Indian rhinoceros might have been born at London Zoo in the early 1870s.

Jim was not a large specimen (only 5ft 4in tall), he had a nicely shaped horn, unlike many captive rhinos which are prone to rub them down. This made him a popular subject for artists and photographers. He was the model for the rhinoceros in Britain's Limited's series of model zoo animals and thus until relatively recently, tiny sculptures of Jim could be bought , almost a century after his demise.

Jim died on 6 December 1904, after 40 years 134 days in London Zoo, a captive longevity record which remained unsurpassed for many years. The nearest approach was probably that of Billy or Kanakbala (Studbook #10) who lived in Philadelphia Zoo from 14 September 1955 until 6 January 1996 (40 years 114 days).

Female Sumatran Rhinoceros, 1872. Photograph by Frederick York. This animal was acquired from the dealer, Carl Jamrach (who had deposited it on 2 August 1872) for £600 on 21 August 1872 and which died exactly one month later on 21 September 1872.

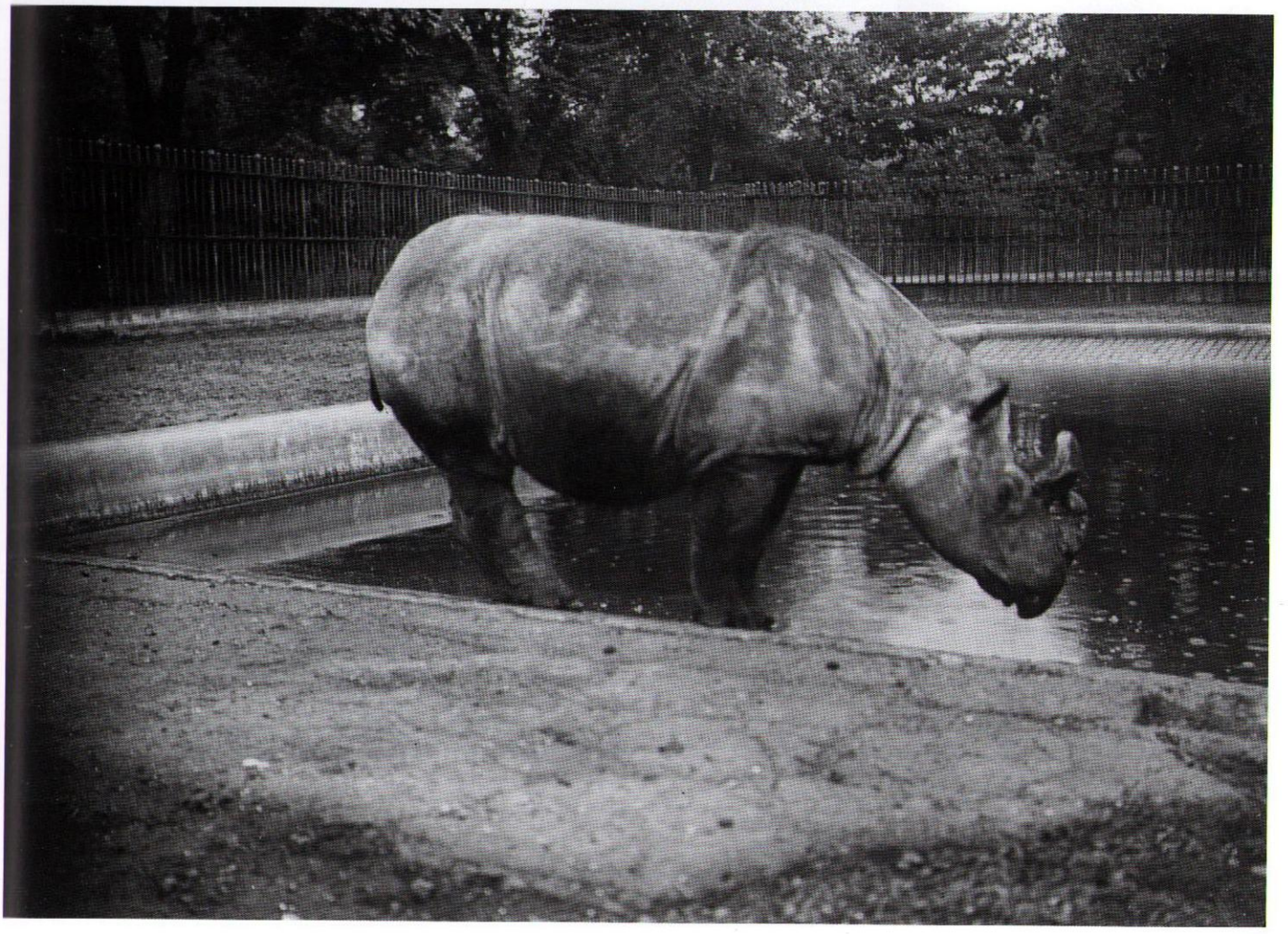
York's images continued to be reproduced for many years after they were taken. This one proved particularly durable and appeared on the 25 cent grey, black and scarlet stamp of North Borneo as recently as 1961.

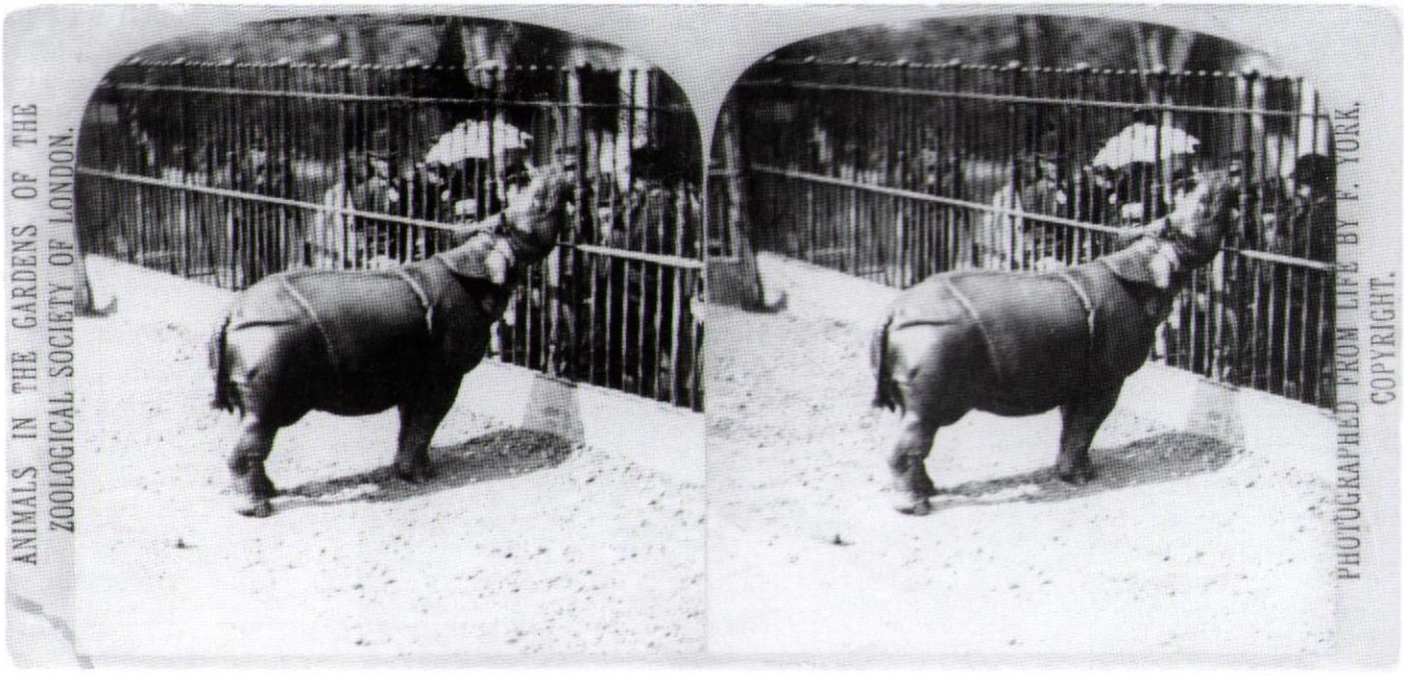
Theodore, Male Black Rhinoceros *(Diceros bicornis) circa* 1890. Photograph by Lewis Medland.

This animal was acquired when the size of a large pig from Carl Hagenbeck, the German dealer on 11 September 1868 and was believed to be the first Black rhinoceros to reach Europe since Roman times. Forty years later, Hagenbeck bitterly recalled that, having paid £800 to his agent, Signor Cassanova (who had obtained the animal near Kassala in the eastern Sudan in February 1868), he was obliged to sell the animal to the Zoological Society for only £1,000, only half of which was in cash, the rest being in the form of animals. Theodore died on 12 April 1891 from stomach cancer. Although the species was then common in the wild, it was not until 1906 that a second specimen was obtained.

Begum, female hairy-eared Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis lasiotis*), *circa* 1899. Photograph by Henry Sandland.

Begum was the type specimen of this subspecies which was generally larger than the others. She had been captured in 1867 or 1868 when at least two years old after being rescued from a quicksand 'sixteen hours' march south' of Chittagong in what is now Bangladesh. On 14 February 1872 the Zoological Society bought her from the dealer Carl Jamrach for the high price of £1,250.

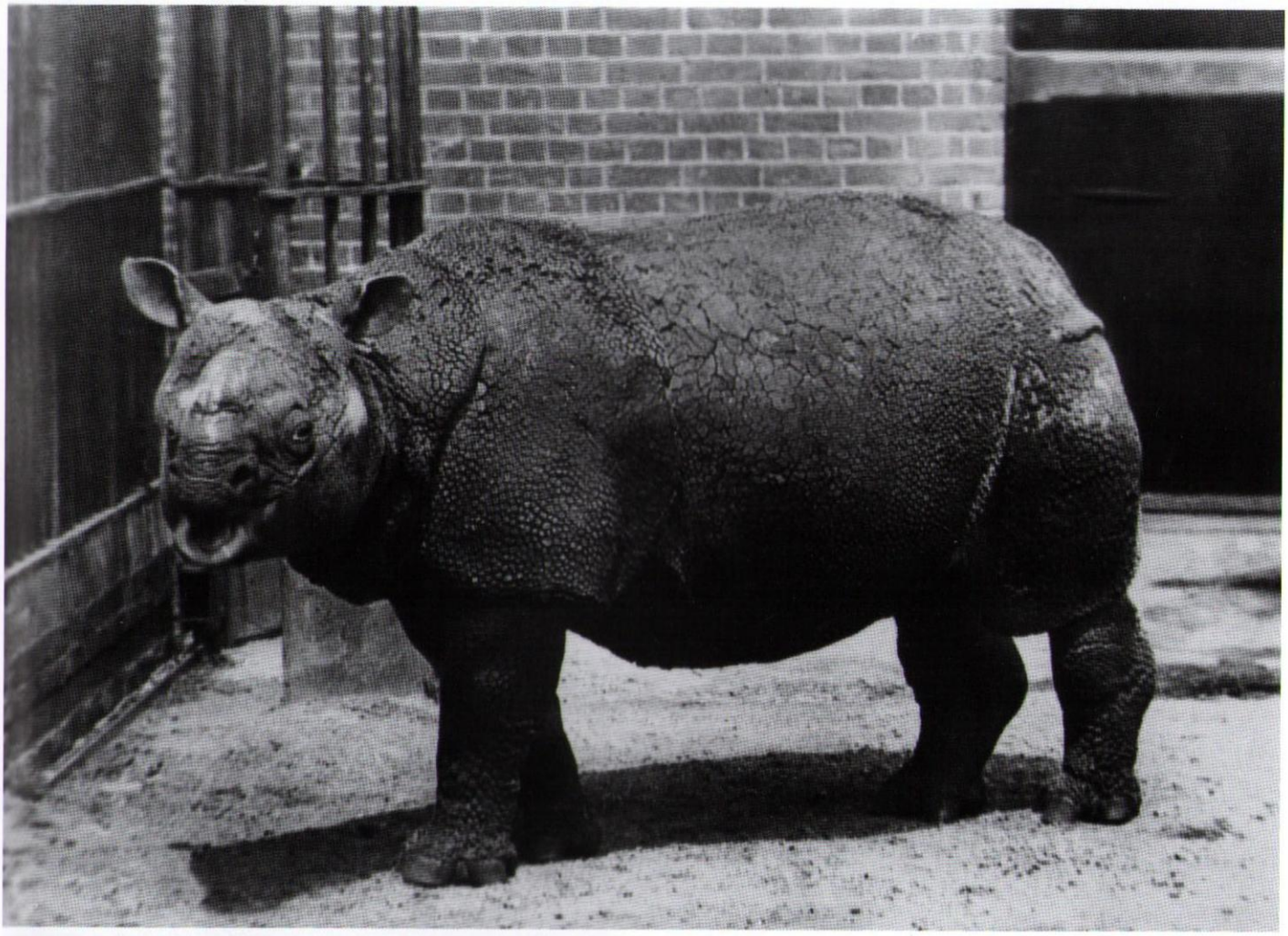


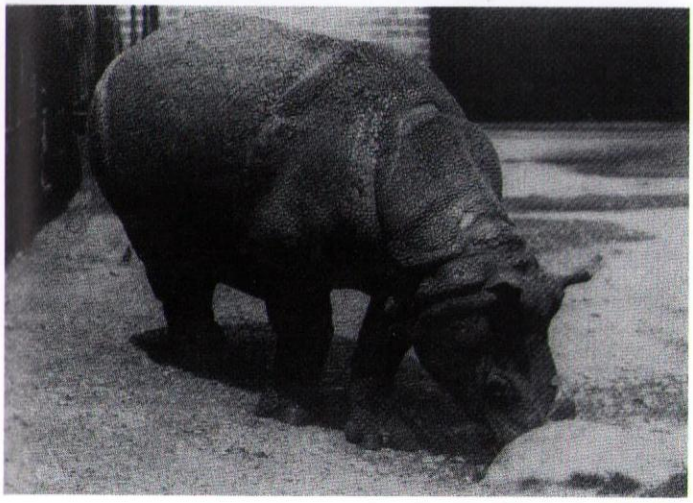


Male Javan (also known as the Lesser one-horned rhinoceros or Sondaic rhinceros) *(Rhinoceros sondaicus), circa* 1875. Stereoscopic photograph by Frederick York.

This animal was purchased for £800 from Charles Jamrach and William Cross. This was the only specimen ever exhibited at London Zoo and one of the very few ever seen in captivity. None have been held in a zoo since the death of a male in Adelaide Zoo in 1907 (and this was only identified as a Javan, rather than an Indian, some decades after it died).

The closely related *R. s. inermis* (Bangladesh and NE India) and *R.s. anamiticus* (Vietnam) are now thought to be extinct.



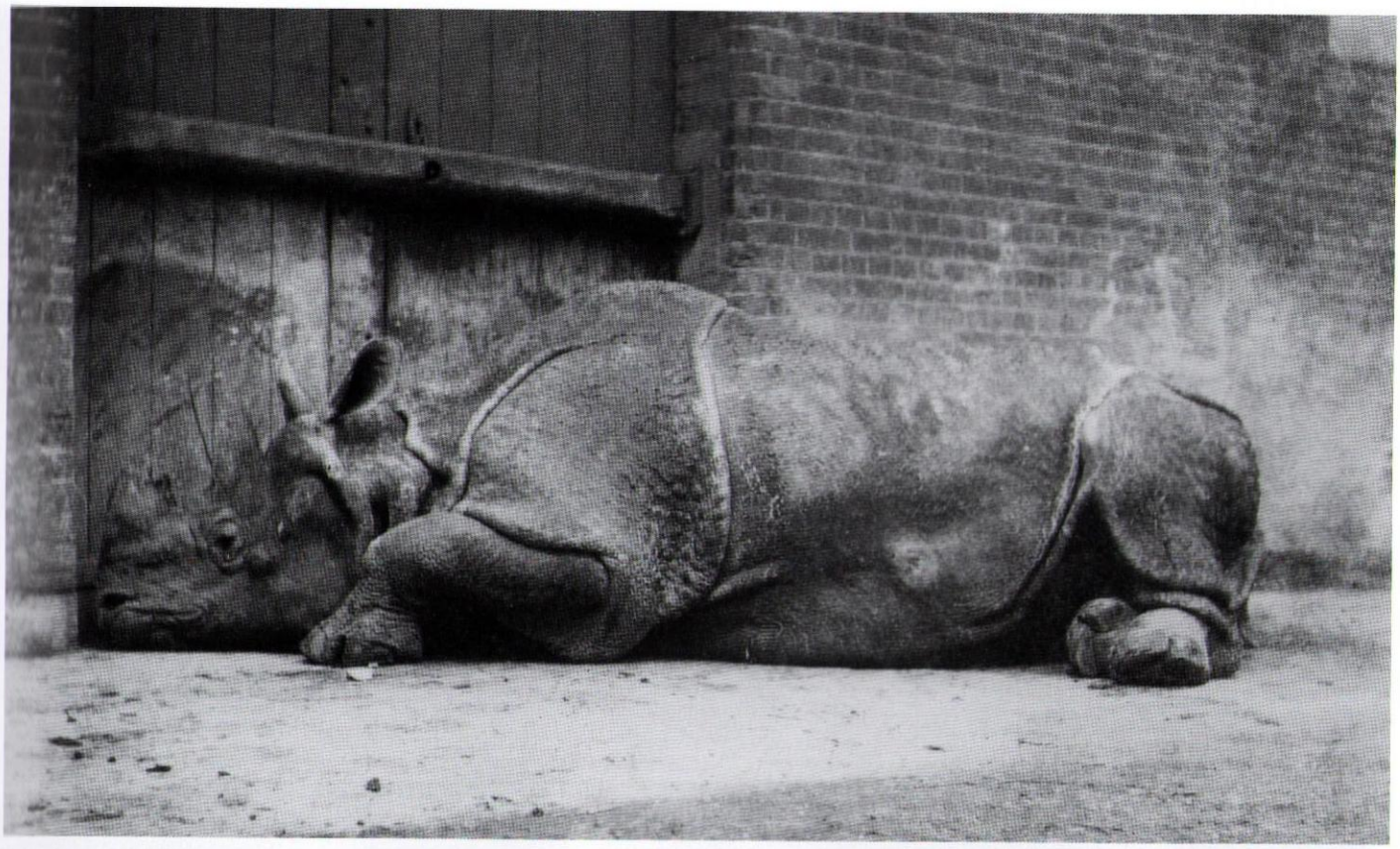


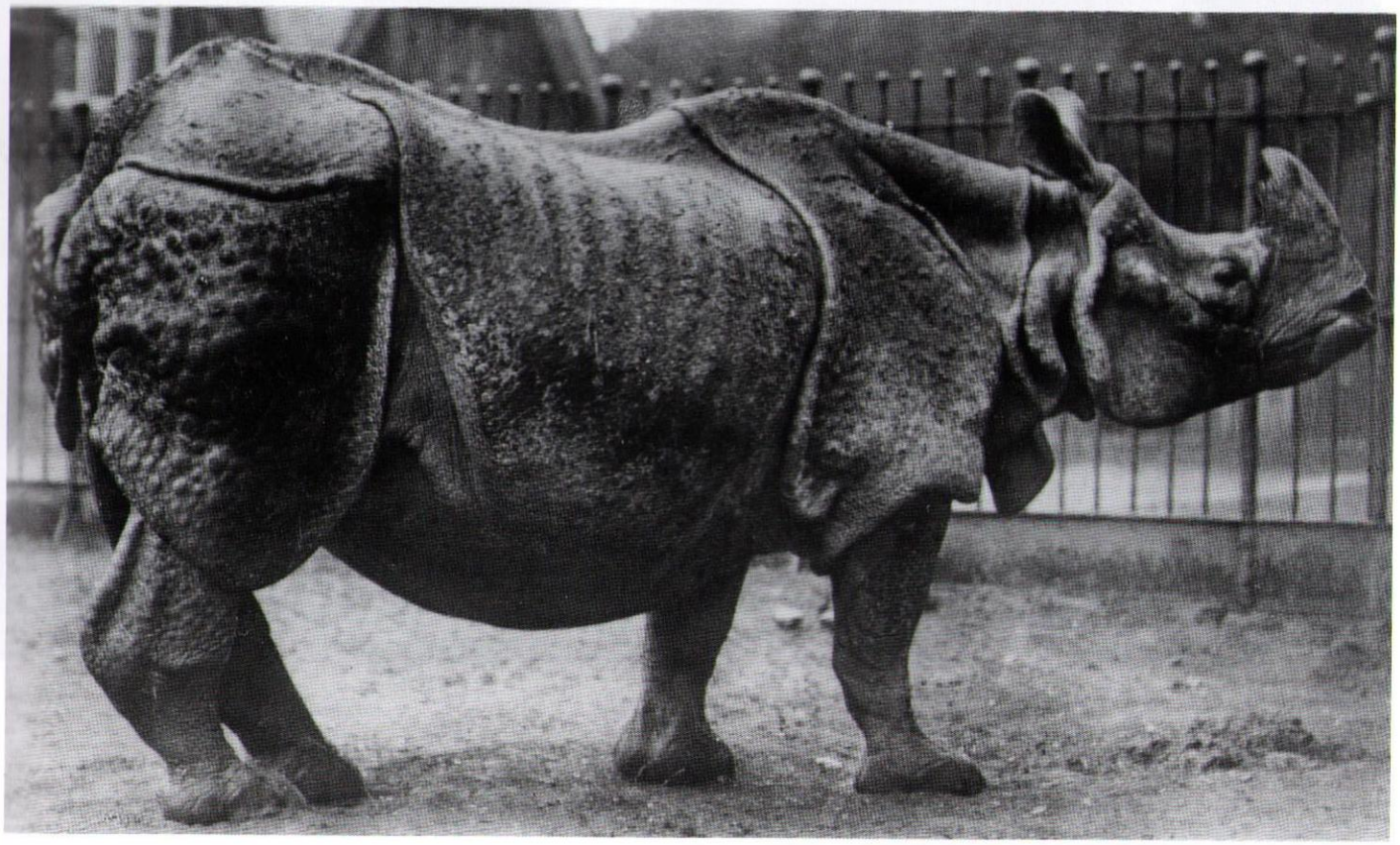
Male Javan rhinoceros *circa* 1884. Photograph by T.J. Dixon. These photographs are almost contemporary with the Krakatoa eruption of 1883 which devastated the coastline of western Java. This actually probably benefited the rhinos, as the surviving human population fled the area and the palms, *(Arenga pinnata)*, inedible by the rhinos, were swept away and replaced by vegetation more acceptable to the rhinos.

This specimen died on 23 January 1885 and was dissected by Frederick (later Sir Frederick) Treves, the great surgeon at the London Hospital who befriended Joseph Merrick, the 'Elephant Man' and removed King Edward VII's appendix in 1902, thereby saving the king's life, but delaying the Coronation.

Jim entering his stall, *circa* 1900. Note the timber buttresses, a relic of Jumbo's residence and the recessed drainpipes, to prevent damage from the animals.

Jim *circa* 1903. Photograph by Lewis Medland.





Jim, photograph by W. P. Dando, shortly before his death on 6 December 1904 aged about 42 years.

Begum (closer to the camera) and a female Sumatran rhinoceros, deposited by Cross, the Liverpool dealer in 1898. Photograph by Henry Sandland, *circa* 1899.

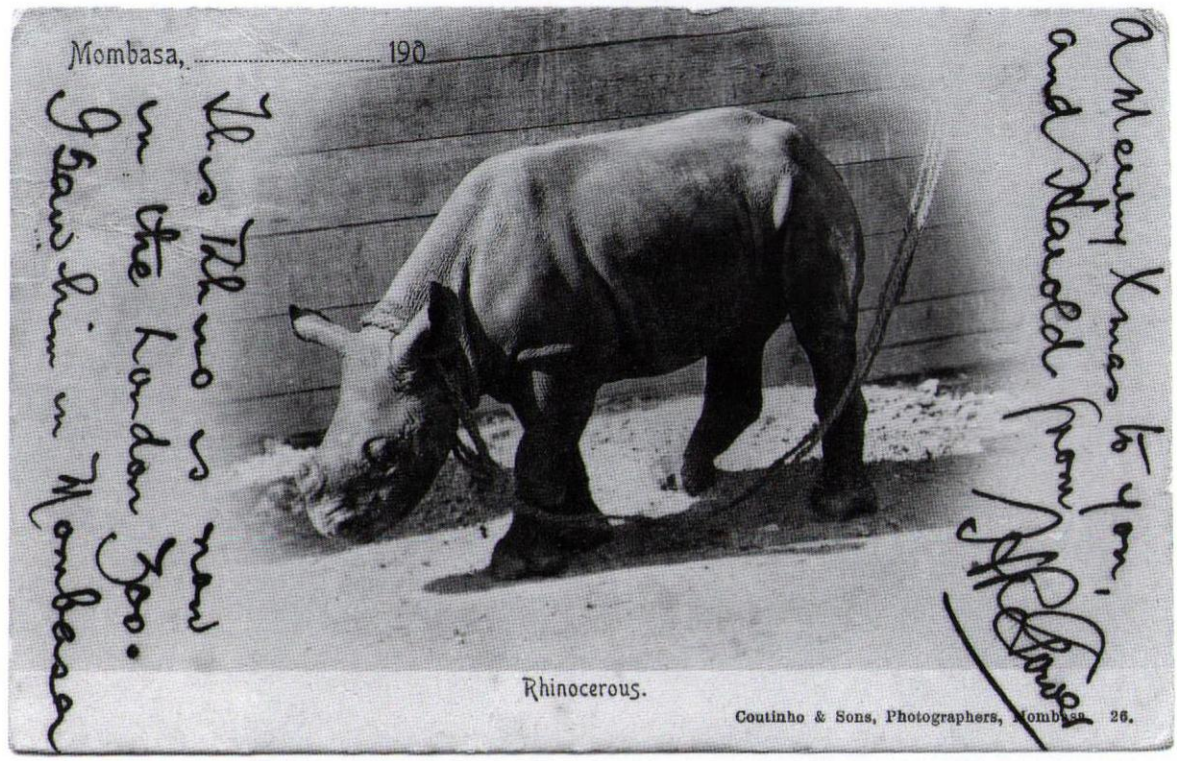
This photograph is probably unique in depicting the type specimen of *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis lasiotis* with a specimen of *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis sumatrensis*.

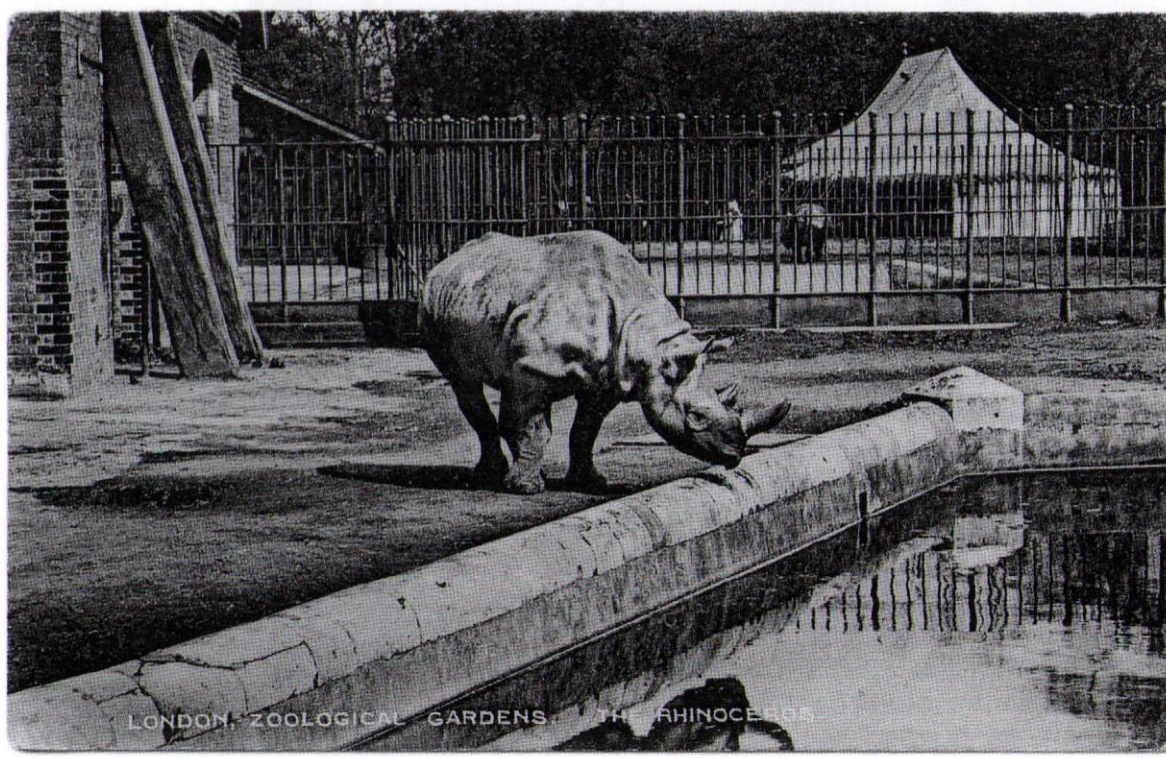
Begum died on 31 August 1900 aged about 35 years – still the longevity record for the species. The Cross rhino lived at the Zoo from 26 September 1898 to 13 February 1900.

Indian rhino *Tom* bathing in the west pool (note the two Sumatran rhinos on the other side of the railings in the east paddock), *circa* 1900. This rhino which died on 30 December 1911 had been presented on Christmas Day, 1886 by the Maharajah of Cooch Behar, an enthusiastic big-game hunter who had probably shot the young rhino's mother.

In the years from 1871 to 1902, a total of 207 rhinos were slaughtered by the Maharajah and his guests, five of them in a single morning in 1886. The consequences of such butchery are too well-known to require emphasis here.

Baby Black Rhinoceros *(Diceros bicornis) Theodora* at Mombasa on her way to London Zoo, where she arrived on 24 July 1906, having been purchased for £700.

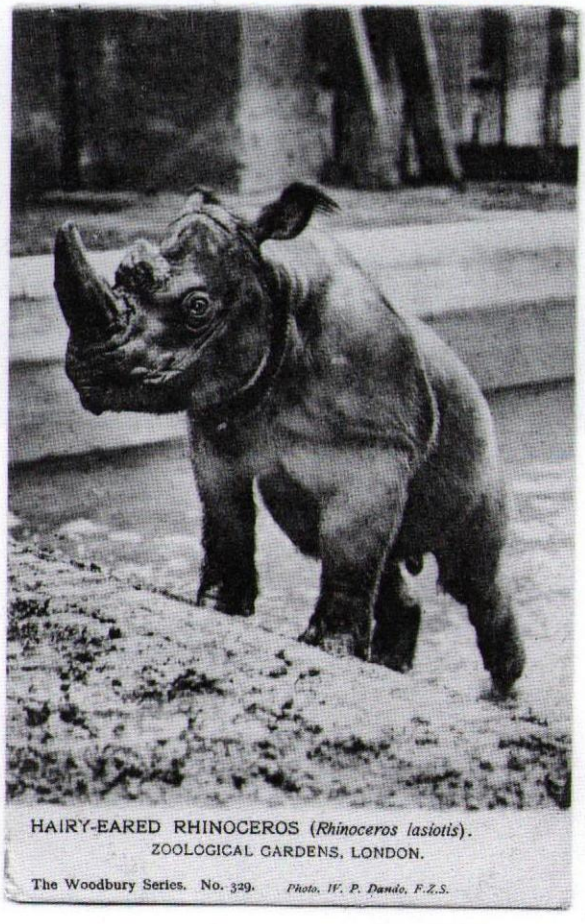




Theodora in the west paddock, *circa* 1910. She died on 14 December 1911.

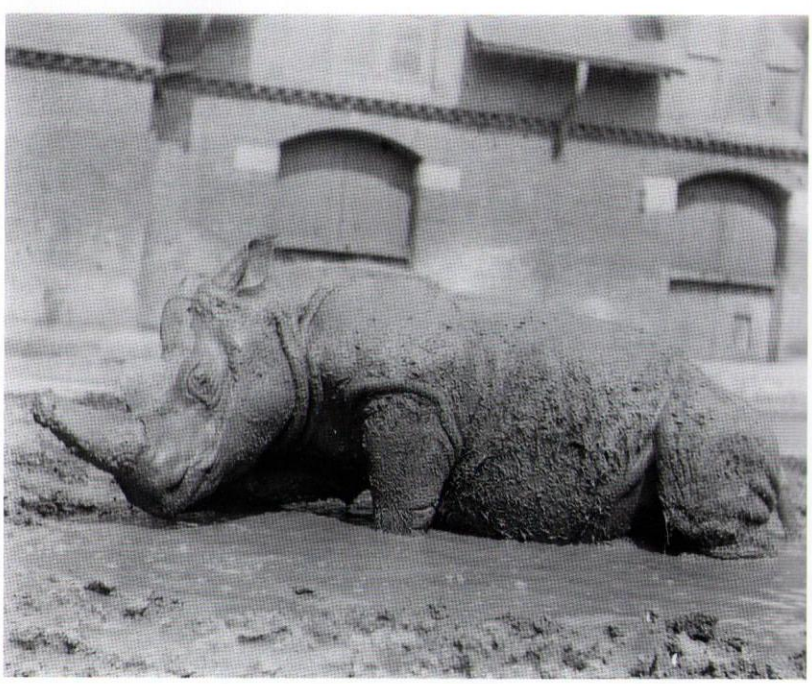
During the period covered by this book, black rhinos were seldom seen in captivity, although still very abundant in the wild. In 1902, C.V.A. Peel saw none in his very extensive tour of European zoos and it seems likely that the only one outside Africa was a female on New York's Central Park menagerie.

Jackson bathing in the west pool, which had been constructed for Jack, the first of the Society's elephants in about 1831. It was included in the west paddock of the new Elephant House and thus remained in constant use by both elephants and rhinos for over a century until obliterated in 1939.

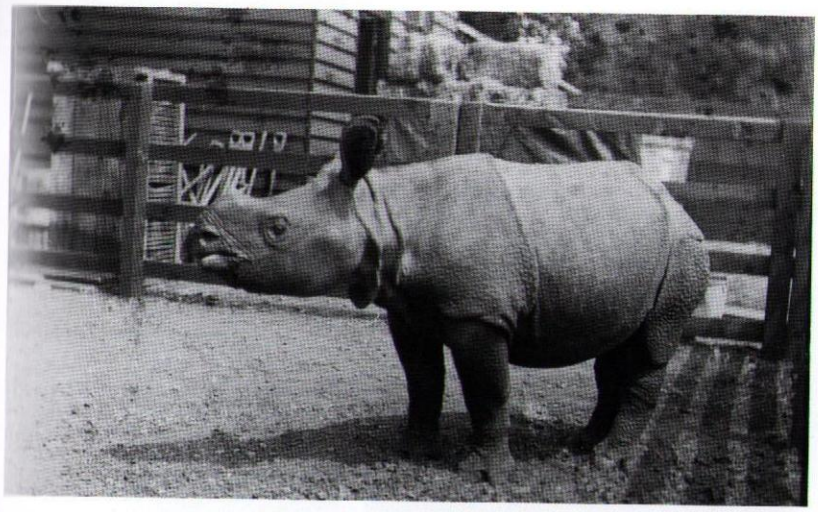


Jackson, *circa* 1900. This image appeared on the 6 cent black and olive green stamp of North Borneo issued in 1906. Nobody seems to have minded that he was not the correct subspecies, namely *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis harrisonii*.

Sumatran rhino Jackson wallowing, *circa* 1903. Photographs by Lewis Medland.



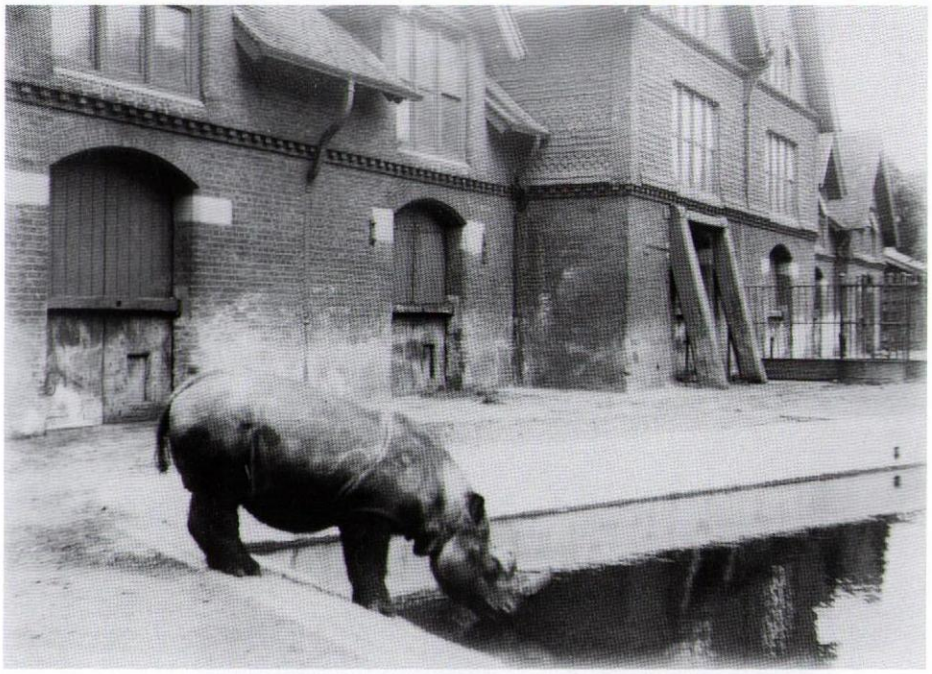
Very few captive rhinos had the opportunity to wallow or bathe in this period. The satisfactory longevities of many of the London Zoo rhinos may be partly due to this. With more space they might even have bred. At the Alipore Zoo in Calcutta in 1882, a pair of Sumatran rhinos were placed in a well-shaded enclosure measuring 230 feet by 116 feet (containing a pool 160 by 50 feet). Here, the female gave birth to a calf on 30 January 1889 which was reared. This was the sole captive-bred rhino birth in the world during the period covered by this book. Thoughtful contemporaries, such as Major Flower, were puzzled as to why rhinos seldom bred in captivity, whereas, for example, hippos did so freely. The explanation is possibly that rhinos were very expensive and few zoos kept more than one. The few (such as Berlin) that did have a potential breeding pair were worried that when the animals were put together they appeared to fight vigorously and so separated them early in the mating ritual.

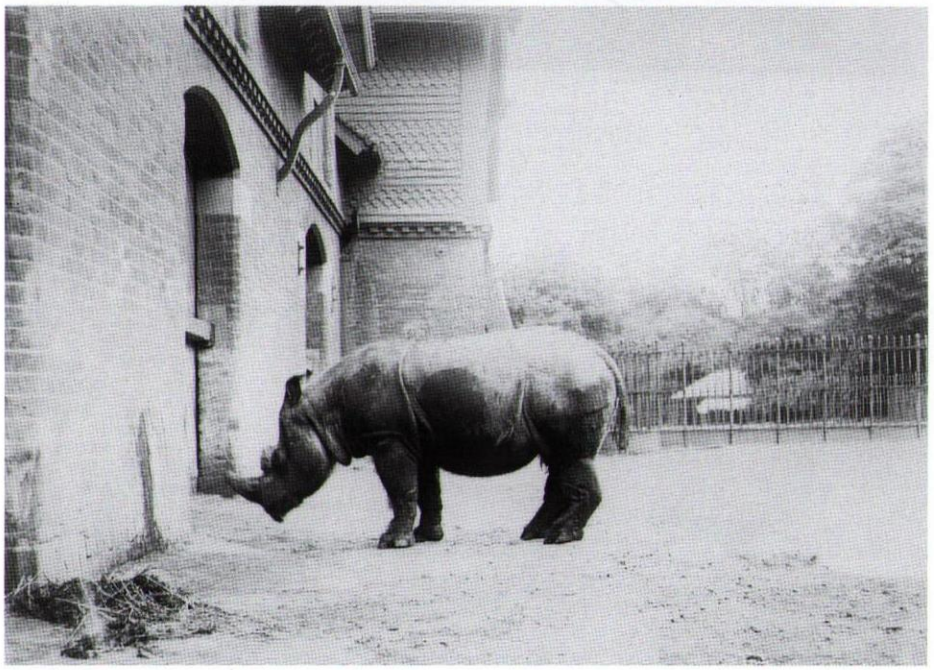


Indian rhino Carlo in the North Garden, photograph by Lewis Midland, 1906. Carlo formed part of the large collection of animals brought back from his Indian tour by the Prince of Wales, later King George V. The expense of transportation was defrayed by the Duke of Bedford and the collection exhibited on the north bank of the Regent's Canal. Carlo was later removed to the Elephant House where he died on 4 January 1924.

Young male Indian rhino, photograph by F.W. Bond, 1912. This animal was brought back from the Delhi Durbar by King George V and arrived at the Zoo on 21 May 1912. He died on 27 April 1921.

The Royal Collection was exhibited on land that was soon to be the site of the Mappin Terraces. The rear of the Ape House and the Southern Aviary can be seen in the background.





Hairy-eared Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis lasiotis*) Jackson. The second of this subspecies (which is now probably extinct) to be received at London Zoo. Jackson arrived on 27 April 1886, having been caught in about 1884 in Burma and exhibited in Calcutta Zoo before being sent on to London.

He was the last survivor of the nine London Zoo Sumatran rhinos, dying on 22 November 1910. His skin may now be in the Bristol Museum. Not until 1986, when a male Sumatran rhino arrived at Port Lympne in Kent was the species seen again in the United Kingdom.