

# The Zoo on the Avenue: A History of the Hull Zoological Gardens 1840-1861

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## **Newspaper Abbreviations**

HAEG – Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette

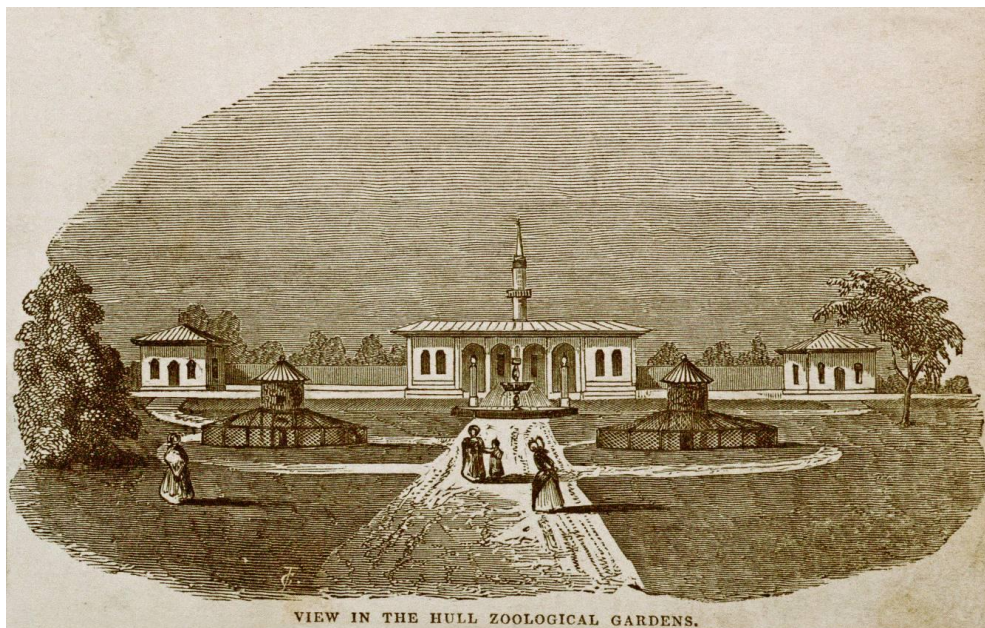
HP – Hull Packet

# In the beginning...

**“It is matter for regret that this important town possessing as a seaport peculiar facilities for the importation of specimens of animals, the natives of foreign lands, should not enrol a menagerie among its attractions.” (Hull Packet, 22 Feb 1839)**

Royal and wealthy individuals across Europe had kept menageries since the twelfth century, but it was not until the early nineteenth century that the first commercial zoological gardens appeared in Britain. The gardens established by the Zoological Society of London in Regent’s Park, principally to encourage scientific research, opened to the British public, in 1828. However, the first truly commercial British gardens were the Surrey Zoological Gardens, founded in 1831. Setting a precedent for the future, these zoological gardens collected a vast array of animals and also held grand fêtes, exhibitions, firework displays, and flower shows. Following their success, other British cities created their own collections in a spirit of competition and emulation; Liverpool in 1833, Manchester and Bristol in 1836 and Leeds in 1840. Zoological gardens across Britain became popular places of education and amusement, enabling cities and their urban elites to display their status to the wider world.

By 1839, Hull’s growing middle class and urban elites were keenly interested in its status as a port and mercantile centre. Hull’s economy was reasonably buoyant, plans for a railway line were in development and Hull’s boundary was beginning to expand beyond the old town walls. In this atmosphere of economic prosperity and increasing civic pride, theatres were established, new Assembly Rooms were built (1831) and the Botanic Gardens were opened (1812).



**View of the Hull Zoological Gardens (L 9.7)**

On 22 February 1839 the editor of the Hull Packet appears to have been the first to suggest publically that, being a port, Hull, was well placed to acquire animals, and that its visitors (especially in summer) and the great public spirit in the town, were more than enough to support zoological gardens. The case was made to attach the zoo to the Botanical Gardens. Further editorials and supportive letters from local notables were published in the newspaper.

Amongst the zoo's early supporters were local elites including Dr Horner, Dr James Alderson and Sir Clifford Constable. Dr Alderson, in particular, became a leading voice in the plan to establish a zoological garden, calling for the founding of a Zoological Society to promote education in the area of natural history, and to be responsible for setting up zoological gardens and an associated museum in the city. Opposition to the scheme appears to have been minimal and by April 1839 shares in the gardens were on sale and a draft constitution for The Hull, East Riding, and North Lincolnshire Zoological Society had been compiled.

**“Men of ardent minds, decisive characters, and originality of thought, will always see their way through any proposition that is at once ornamental, useful and practicable” (Hull Packet, 8 Mar 1839)**

The first animals were acquired by December 1839 and temporarily housed on land, provided rent-free by a Mr Hammond, off Anlaby Road. Other temporary accommodation was provided on Pryme Street. The inaugural meeting of the Provisional Council of the, now renamed, Hull and East Riding of York Zoological Society was reported in February 1840, with the following proposals detailed in the local newspapers:

*“The object of the Institution is to provide for the rapidly increasing population an additional source of recreation, which shall be a place of resort for healthful exercise, where a picturesque and tasteful arrangement of the grounds and architecture may be combined with the every-varying interest of both the animal and vegetable worlds – a spot where the hours of relaxation may be not only cheerfully, but usefully, spent, in admiring the beauties of the latter, and tracing the characteristics of the former.*

*The Society, following the example of other towns where similar Institutions flourish, propose to hold meetings for philosophical investigation in natural history, when lectures may be delivered, papers read, and subjects discussed.*

*The capital of the Society is proposed to consist of the Sale of 600 Shares of £5 each, of which £1 shall be paid down on subscribing – the remainder by instalments not exceeding £2 each – not to be called for at less than three months from each other.*

*The Society to be deemed formed when 150 Shares shall have been taken.*

*The property of the Society to be vested in trustees, who shall be chosen by the shareholders.*

*The income of the Society, by which the Garden is to be supported, will arise from annual subscribers, as well as from shareholders and other visitors.*

*The annual subscriber of twenty-five shillings, payable in advance, to have free admission to the Garden and Museum for himself and family; whilst the shareholder pays an annual subscription of £1 only, with the additional privilege of attending the lectures and meetings, and the management of the Garden.*

*It is proposed to hold the First Annual General meeting of the Shareholders on the first Wednesday in June, until which time the Provisional Council have power to act.*

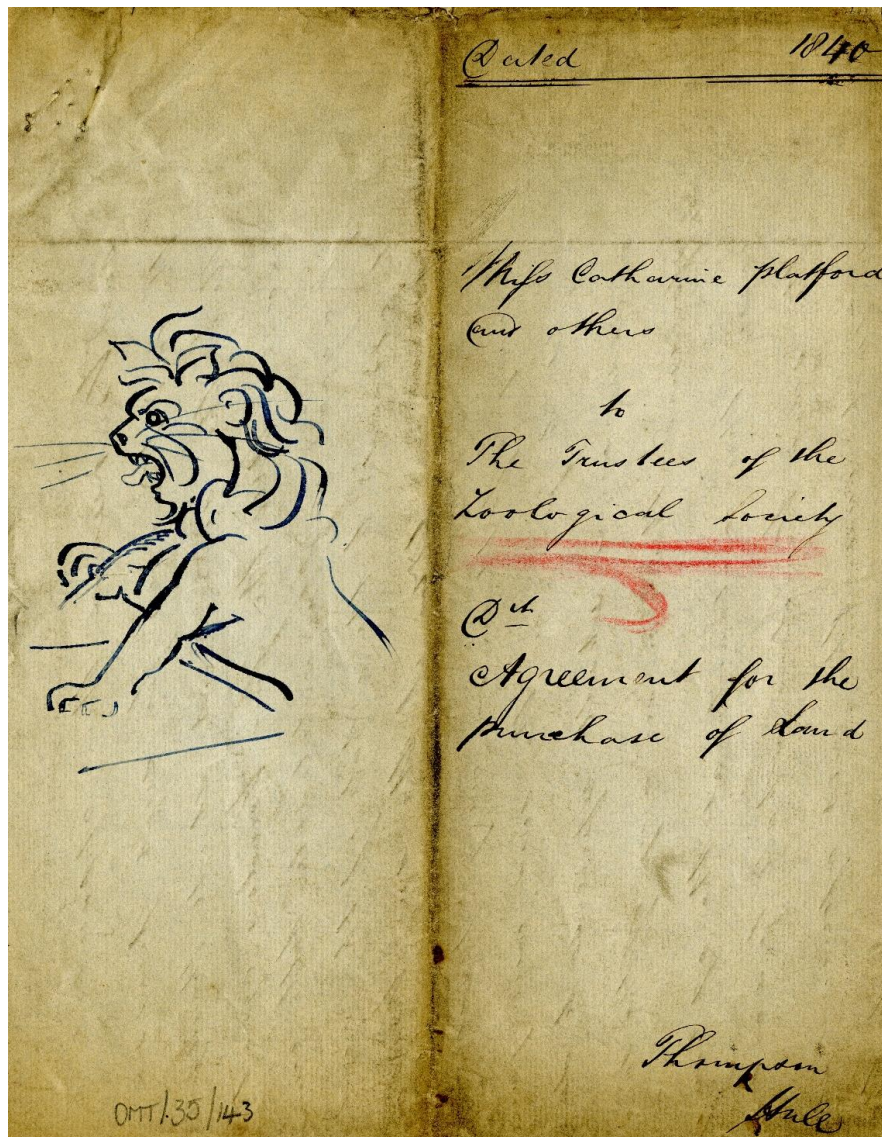
*It is confidently anticipated that by that time the Garden may be opened to the Public, stocked with a large and rare collection of animals, birds, and reptiles from all parts of the world.*

*The Council having laid open their scheme, have only to announce, that the offers of support hitherto received have been both extensive and liberal.*

*It is unnecessary for them to urge the fact, that the wider the co-operation the more effectually can their plans be brought to perfection.”*

The first officers of the Zoological Society were as follows: Dr Alderson, President; Thomas Thompson, H.F. Lockwood, H.R. Francis, and W.H. Dikes, Vice-Presidents; T.D. Hammond, and A. Gadsden, Secretaries; and J.B. Briggs, Treasurer. At the end of March, the Society purchased land off Spring Bank for the zoo.





Draft agreement for the purchase of land by the trustees of the Zoological Society (C DMT/35/143)

Spring Bank, at this time, was on the very edge of town. It was part urban, part rural, surrounded by fields, and had trees lining the road, as many of the nearby avenues do today. Work began immediately, under the direction of Mr Lockwood, the architect, and an initial opening date in July 1840 was advertised. As is often the case with building works, construction took longer than anticipated and at 12 noon on Monday 5 October 1840 the Hull Zoological Gardens were officially opened!

**✓ HULL AND EAST RIDING  
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.**  
**T**HE COUNCIL of the ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY have the satisfaction to announce, that  
their GARDENS will be OPENED TO THE PUBLIC  
on MONDAY, the 5th of October, at Twelve o'Clock.

Extract from the Hull Packet, 25 Sep 1840 (Local Studies)

The entrance fee was set at one shilling for adults and sixpence for children, whilst annual subscribers enjoyed free entry. The entry fees didn't really change whilst the gardens were opened, apart from on special occasions when discounts were given to encourage attendance.



Hull Zoological Gardens admission tickets (L791.9)

Local newspapers proclaimed the opening a success despite bad weather and several buildings still being in various stages of construction. Sir Clifford Constable, an ardent supporter and patron of the enterprise who had donated a number of animals to the collection, was present with his party, together with approximately 800 members of the public.

Reporters detailed their interest in the various animals on display, in particular the bears who would climb a pole in order to eat any treats offered by visitors. Much amusement also seems to have been caused by the elephant being walked from his Pryme Street stable to the gardens for the opening. Entertainment was also provided by the band of the 73rd regiment which was then occupying the Hull Garrison.

Subsequent to the opening, the Society used the following winter to further improve the gardens by adding even more flora and fauna to their collections. Several trees were presented to the Society, including a weeping ash, spruce trees, firs, and a mulberry tree. Two 30ft tall weeping elms were also donated. This practice of using the winter months to make improvements followed by a gala season running from May to October was continued throughout the life of the gardens.



# Lions, tigers and bears

You can't have a zoo without animals, and the Hull Zoological Gardens were home to a huge variety of animals. The first animals had already been acquired by December 1839, and were housed in temporary stables on Anlaby Road, behind the Hull, East Riding & North Lincolnshire Female Penitentiary for 'fallen' women. The penitentiary was in the process of being rebuilt and was located roughly opposite the current Hull Royal Infirmary. On 6 March 1840, the Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette announced that a further eight animals had been added to an existing menagerie of fifty-two specimens. This expanding collection included a Russian bear, six monkeys, a black fox, an Esquimaux doe, a polar bear, a Spanish goat, and a squirrel.



## Extract from a Hull Zoological Gardens advertisement poster (Local Studies)

Once open, further animals were added to the collection at the gardens. They were cared for by Mr Southwick, Principal Keeper, who was supported by assistant keepers. During the years of its operation, the gardens were home to big cats (leopards, tigers, puma, lynx, an Indian cat, Persian cats and a civet cat), bears (polar, Russian, black sloth and American black), monkeys (marmoset, baboon, rhesus, spider, and red lemur), and reptiles (alligators, chameleons and terrapins). Visitors could also see wolves, foxes, antelope, gazelle, deer, hyenas, reindeer, buffalo, an opossum, elephants, llamas, alpacas, seals, goats, porcupines and kangaroos.

Many of the animals were donations made to the Committee of the Zoological Society responsible for the gardens. Local gentry, such as Sir Clifford Constable, offered swans, peacocks, ducks and deer from their estates; whilst other wealthy local businessmen and land owners donated more exotic animals, such as a leopard given by Lord Wenlock in November 1840. Exotic animals were also transported to Hull on board ships, which had travelled from places including the Nile, Calcutta, Ferdinando Po, Bombay, North America, Rotterdam, New South Wales, Batavia, Greenland, and Scandinavia.

In July 1840, for example, a Captain Porter of the 'Brunswick' was noted in the local papers for having transported a female goat with two kids, a young porcupine and a monkey from Sierra Leone. Whilst the 'Diana', a steam-whaler, brought back five live seals in 1857 to be added to the menagerie at the gardens.

References to the conditions in which animals were transported are sparse. However, an article in the Hull Packet of 28 May 1841 reported:

*“Zoological – The Wanderer. Smith, from Calcutta, brought a variety of living specimens of zoology, including a leopard, a gazelle, a number of monkeys, and birds of gay plumage. There were two gazelles left the country, but the young leopard, having become pretty tractable, was fondled by the crew, and allowed during the voyage to run about the deck, in return for which liberty he one day killed a gazelle. Since his arrival here, he has been in close quarters, caged upon deck.”*

Some animals were acquired through swaps with other zoos, such as in August 1844, when Mr Atkin (of the Liverpool Zoological Gardens) brought a pair of alpacas to Hull in exchange for two of Hull’s polar bears. This deal may seem to greatly favour Liverpool, but at one point it appears that Hull had the greatest number of polar bears in the country (HAEG, 9 Oct 1846) and probably very little space in which to house them! Perhaps the most intriguing donation to the Gardens though, is a ‘singing mouse’, which was found by a labourer. The labourer, keen to make some cash, managed to sell the creature to a Mrs Sheriff Kennard of Theobald’s Grove, who then presented the ‘four-legged warbler’ to the gardens in November 1846.

**HULL ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.—Amongst the recent valuable additions to the collection at these gardens are a pair of rein deer, brought by Capt. Rayner, of the Courier, from Sweden, who also brought some animals of a similar kind for the Regent’s-park Gardens, London—being the first rein deer ever imported into this port. There have also been received four Polar bears, from the Arctic regions; and we hear that the captains belonging the port are now taking a lively interest in the gardens, and have made the following donations during the last few months:—Capt. Patching, a racoon and a blue crane; Capt. Nicholls, two spoonbills and a purple heron; Capt. Barker, two Russian bears; Capt. Bell, several chameleons; Capt. Donaldson, one bear; Capt. Kruger, one bear; Sir Henry Hunloke, Bart., a male wolf; W. Hobson, Esq., of Kettlebythorpe, one brown bear; and several cormorants from the Royal Zoological Society of London. It is to be hoped the example thus set will be extensively followed by the friends and well-wishers to the institution.**

Extract from a newspaper report (Local Studies)

It should be acknowledged that some worrying reports of poor animal welfare exist. In a letter to the *Hull Packet* in August 1851, concern was expressed that a kangaroo was kept ‘*thrust into a corner, and confined in a cage not big enough for a cat*’, and that men and children ‘*wantonly abuse the animals with sticks*’.

Another cause for concern was reported in December 1853, when John Hardy Vallance, of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, took the plight of a Bengal tiger, whose claws had grown into its feet, to Hull Police Court. The court refused to intercede, but public pressure eventually led to the Gardens employing a surgeon to operate on the tiger, who was described as having a ‘very fierce disposition’ and that ‘no keeper...[had] ever dared to enter his den’ (HP, 30 Dec 1853)!



The chosen surgeon was a Mr Taylor, and in an attempt to anaesthetize the animal, sponges soaked in chloroform were attached to long poles and held against the tiger's nose. This was not appreciated by the tiger, who broke the poles, but eventually, after inhaling about 2lb 8oz of chloroform, the tiger became sufficiently calm for ropes to be placed around his neck and paws so he could not attack the surgeon and his attendants whilst the operation took place. It was subsequently reported that the tiger made a good recovery. Entirely speculation, but it is possible that this creature may have been the same one whose preserved skin was later displayed at the business premises of a Mr D.W. Sales, following its natural death in late 1854.

Despite these cases, there were reports of the animals being well treated. Between 1843 and 1853, at least 19 babies were born at the gardens. 'Jenny', the monkey, is reported to have given birth six times, and this was thought to be more than any other captive monkey in England at the time. The gardens also featured a 'Cantelo's Patent Hydro-Incubator', and it was advertised that visitors could see chicks, of various types of birds, hatching before their very eyes! In January 1843, it was remarked that the '*favourable progress*' of a mother and new-born llama '*shews the care taken of the animals*'. A surgeon was also employed in June 1850 to operate on the broken leg of a cheetah which had only recently been presented to the Society by the Pasha of Egypt. It was decided that the best course of action was to amputate the leg, so the operation was performed using chloroform as an anaesthetic by Professor Simonds of the Veterinary College, Camden Town. The cheetah then went on to make a full recovery.

When talking about zoos, the morbid element of human nature usually wants to know whether anyone has ever been eaten. In Hull, there were a few reported cases of injuries caused by animals, though (sadly?) no reported deaths. In May 1841, a young girl was injured by a leopard who managed to reach a paw through its enclosure to claw at the child's chest. The next month, a camel '*bit a keeper over the leg in a very serious manner*'. The keeper was rescued immediately before being sent home to recover. More seriously though, in May 1854, a four-year-old girl was attacked by a monkey and sustained a '*shockingly lacerated*' forehead, despite the efforts of the keeper to get the monkey away from the child. The keeper had accidentally left the cage open whilst he was cleaning the enclosure and as the monkey was known to be aggressive, he had thought it unwise to place him with the other monkeys in their separate cages. The Zoological Gardens took responsibility for the incident and paid five guineas in compensation to pay for the girl's medical treatment.

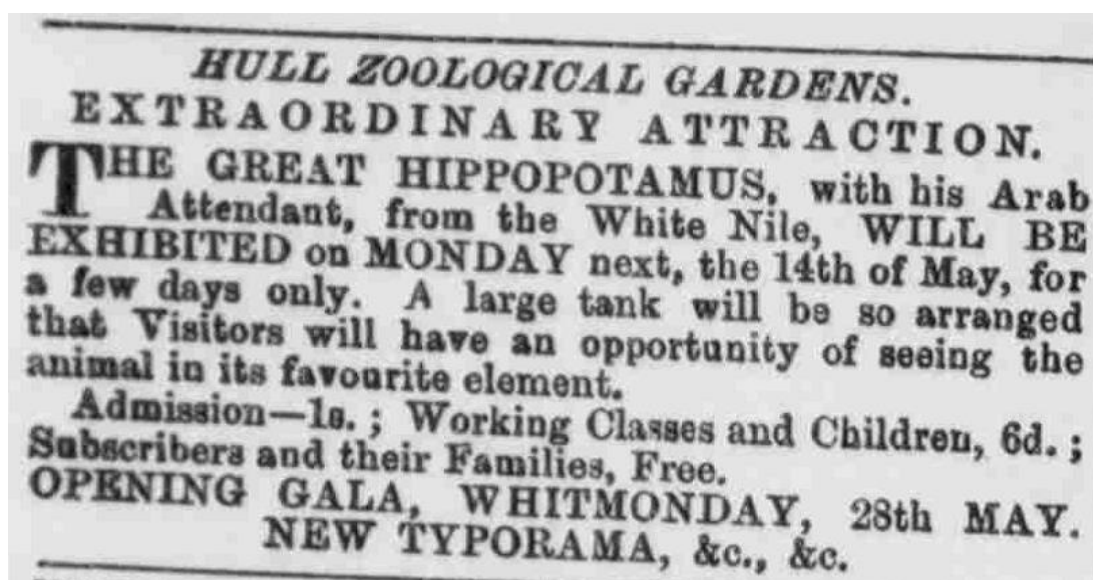
Animal escapes are usually a further area of interest. Only one story can be found of an animal escape, occurring in April 1842, when a stag got loose leading to a 'Stag Hunt Extraordinary'. Initially the stag started off in the Newland direction being chased by four boys. They managed to get a rope round its neck, but then a man who had come to their aid was dragged into a ditch, reportedly nearly drowning, because the stag proved too strong. The animal was eventually cornered and returned to the gardens, but only after it had crossed and re-crossed the River Hull! An escape attempt was also made by one of the elephants who, whilst on its regular walk from its stable to the gardens, was distracted by the smells of a local bakery (HP, 27 Nov 1840) and attempted to enter the premises! Its keepers managed to restrain the elephant, however, before it got inside!



**An elephant depicted on the wax seal of the Zoological Gardens c.1840 (L791.9)**

Sanctioned escapes were also a feature of the gardens, as an incident occurring in November 1843 highlights. The garden's female elephant was being transported to Hedon, when it fell through the pavement at the corner of Worship and Mason Streets (where the Hull History Centre now stands) into an empty coal-hole. The elephant fell six feet and, in her fear, destroyed the remaining pavement with her feet and trunk. She was, however, swiftly rescued with the help of Inspector Tacey and his men from the nearby police station. They used planks to form a slope up which the elephant was able to walk unaided, thus effecting her escape. She then continued to Hedon with her keepers and was miraculously uninjured from her accident. Another instance of an animal being allowed out can be found in December 1845, when one of the lions was used as part of a production of 'Dick Whittington and His Cat' at the Theatre Royal. A Mr Gomersal was credited as 'the Mighty Lion-tamer of the Desert', so the lion must have remained calm.

Alongside the usual inhabitants, the Gardens would, on occasion, host visiting animals owned by other menageries. For example, in 1860, 'The Great Hippopotamus', who was something of a national celebrity, was exhibited to the delight of garden goers. The animal was housed in an enclosure with a large tank, so that he could rest on land or in the water as he preferred. He was only meant to be on display at the Gardens for a few days, before being transported to the USA. His popularity, however, induced his owners to keep him at the gardens in Hull for just over a month.



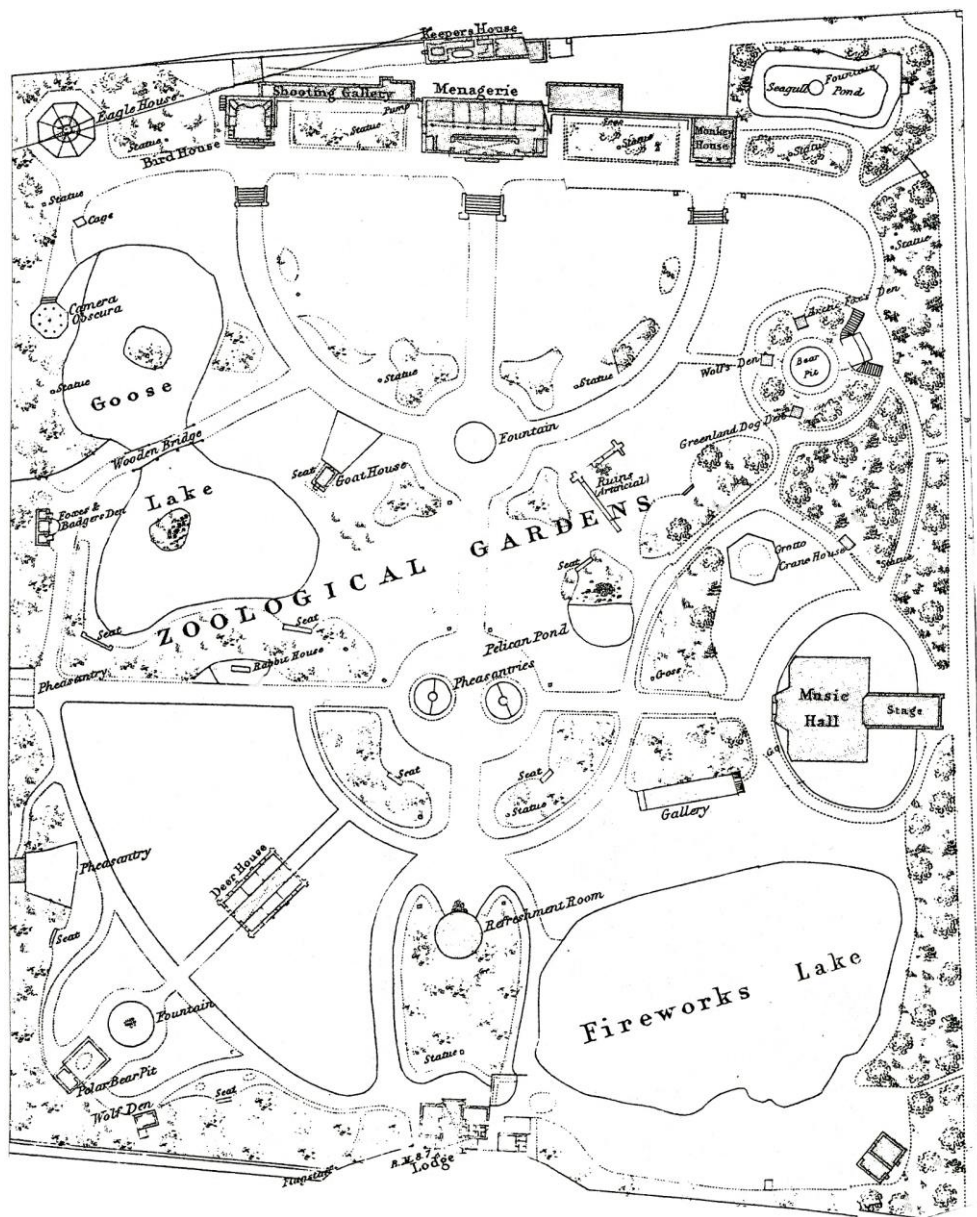
Extract from the Hull Packet, 11 May 1860 (Local Studies)

Another temporary exhibit was provided in the Summer of 1854 when two plate glass tanks were built. These were said to have been inspired by those of the Regent's Park Royal Zoological Gardens, which were used to display unusual fish. There are no details as to what types of fish were stocked in the aquariums, but judging by the other types of animals at the Gardens, a mix of indigenous and exotic fish seems quite likely.



# Buildings and layout

Accounts of the Zoological Gardens describe six acres of beautifully laid out grounds. These grounds were full of plants and flowers, with a grand pavilion or music hall, archery shooting gallery, and of course many animal enclosures in a variety of eye-catching architectural styles. For security, revenue protection, and to maintain an air of exclusivity about the gardens, the whole of the grounds were surrounded by a 7 feet high wooden fence, lined with shrubs and bushes. But, pay your entrance fee and you could enjoy the fabulous surroundings, picturesque walkways, and see the animal inhabitants in their enclosures. The gardens could be entered through a gate attached to a gothic-style lodge house at the south end of the grounds, set back slightly from Spring Bank. Plants were also placed at this entrance so that the gardens could not be seen from the outside. The layout of the gardens is clearly illustrated by the following plan:



Plan of the zoological gardens, 1854

At the time of the Gardens' opening, an elevated terrace, large pond with islands for waterfowl, a bear pit, a 100ft wide enclosure for a Brahmin bull and camel, and a small pond with a central fountain for goldfish had all been completed. Fountains had also been placed around the gardens, and the enclosures for the monkeys and the big cats were well underway. Only the bird and elephant enclosures remained uninhabitable owing to a lack of progress.

In the years following the official opening in 1840, further buildings were added, including a large marquee to give visitors shelter, a refreshment room where people could purchase drinks and cakes for a small fee, and a keeper's house. A wooden bridge was also built across one of the large ponds to enable the continuation of one of the promenades, but also to act as an attraction in its own right. The promenades themselves were designed to be between 12 and 15 feet wide and altogether, ran to almost two miles. Benches and alcoves were also spread at intervals along the various walkways.

**The Ground is tastefully arranged, and broken into Terraces, Parterres, and Walks, of great variety, which, with the addition of a beautiful Piece of Water, with Islands, afford a number of enchanting Vistas, in which the Two Fountains, throwing up their high and graceful jets of water, form a most beautiful feature.**

Extract from a newspaper report, 1840 (Local Studies)

The animal enclosures were built in various architectural styles. The goats were housed in a Swiss chalet set on rocks, and Swiss-style architecture was also used for a deer-house 35 feet by 25 feet in dimension. The elephant house measured 30 feet by 15 feet and was in the style of a 'Moorish temple'. The bear pit was of a more natural design, being a pit surrounded by mounded earth, up which a spiral walk allowed visitors to observe the bears. In 1849, the animal enclosures were painted by a Mr S.H. Bell of the Theatres Royal, London, to look like their natural habitats. Although Victorian zoos were not known for their animal rights, some considerations to this end were made at Hull. Thinking of animal welfare, the designers ensured that the top of the polar bear enclosure was packed with earth to keep it cool and that a pool was provided for their enjoyment, whilst the big cats had an enclosure heated by hot water passing through iron pipes beneath and at the front of the enclosure.

In 1843, a further lake was constructed and a new pheasantry was built. This was followed by further improvements in 1845, which included an extension to the fireworks lake, a den for wild boars, an aviary for curassows and peacocks, an aviary for the King Vulture, a pond for aquatic birds, and a mock temple.

**THE GRAND AND INTERESTING**  
**Buddha, or Heathen Temple**  
Conveys to Visitors a correct idea of the Religious Principles, Legends, and Antiquities of Southern Asia. The objects contained in it are Statues of Buddha, which have been worshipped in Ceylon and the Birman Empire; Images of Rahats and Buddhist Deities; and a numerous collection of Masks used in Demoniacal Worship, with several other Curiosities connected with Buddhist Mythology, forming ONE GRAND HEATHEN TEMPLE. To aid the Fund of the Sailors' Institute, an additional charge of One Penny is made to each Visitor as may choose to view the same, which will go towards liquidating the Debt on that Institution.

Extract from an advertisement poster for the gardens (U PN/2596 H9 Z8)

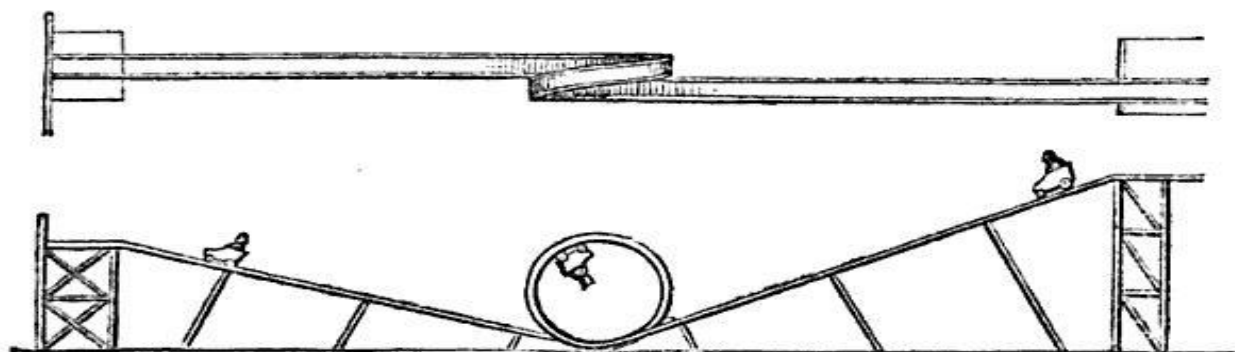
Ruins from York Minster were purchased in order to add some historical interest, the study of antiquities being fashionable at the time. In 1849, a music hall, fitted with a stage and proscenium, was constructed to accommodate up to 500 people. The hall became the location of various musical acts, scientific talks and displays, lectures, and magic shows.



A number of unusual features were to be found in the gardens. There was a *camera obscura*, a Victorian curiosity, which allowed anyone within its octagonal walls to see a real-time silhouetted image of what was happening elsewhere in the gardens. The camera was only open in the afternoons but was praised by the local newspapers of the time (HAEG, 26 Aug 1842). A model of the Crystal Palace of Great Exhibition fame was added in 1852 and also proved to be a big hit with visitors.

Several temporary features were created at the gardens over the years, including a centrifugal railway. The railway was an early example of a rollercoaster, on which the rider would descend in a car round a loop-the-loop before ascending a short slope to slow down. All of this was achieved by sheer gravity, the car was not attached to the tracks, nor was the rider strapped in to the car. This attraction appears to have struggled, at first, to find anyone brave enough to try it, until a Mr Newton, solicitor, was persuaded to become the first customer:

**HULL ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.—**These gardens are ever the scene of some novelty for the entertainment of the inhabitants. The centrifugal railway now forms the chief attraction there. Some hesitation was evinced on the part of the visitors to an experimental trip on the first day of its exhibition. One adventurous spirit, however, at last appeared in the person of Mr. Newton, solicitor, who submitted himself with great *sang froid* to its circumgyratory movement. The enterprising spirit exhibited by the council in the management of the gardens is beyond all praise.



Newspaper report and diagram of the centrifugal railway (Local Studies)

The newspapers do not reveal how many others followed his example except to suggest that ‘amateurs frequently essay the rapid transit, courage only being required’ (HP, 9 Sep 1842)! Another temporary entertainment was offered whenever weather conditions would allow, so that in early 1855, and again in early 1861, when cold temperatures froze the lakes, visitors to the gardens could enjoy ice-skating (HP 16 Feb 1855, HAEG 12 Jan 1861).

Perhaps most notably, there was a fireworks lake at the south-east corner, with an accompanying viewing gallery featuring a 'typorama'. Part painting and part model with mechanical elements, these constructions depicted cities from around the world, and were used to provide a backdrop to grand firework displays. They were created by the garden's artist and pyrotechnist Mr Seaman.

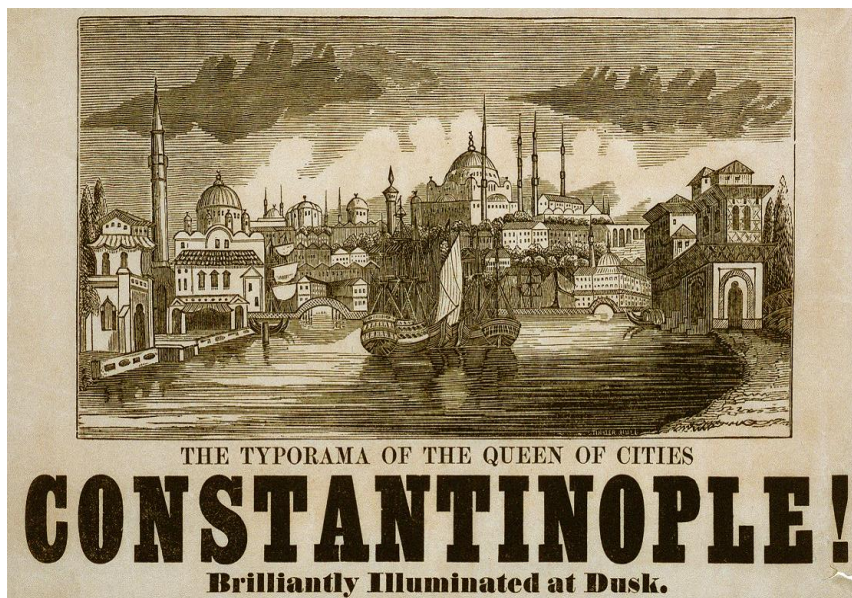


Illustration of a typorama taken from an advertisement poster for the gardens (U PN/2596 H9 Z8)

On which occasion will be exhibited on a Scale of Magnificence not hitherto attempted, the Typorama of  
**THE QUEEN OF CITIES,**

# Constantinople,

**FROM THE GOLDEN HORN.**

"Constantinople is universally acknowledged to be the finest city in the world—Mosques, Minarets, Palaces and Kiosks, in countless variety, combine to inspire wonder and admiration, the scene is splendid and unique. Enthroned on her seven hills, Stamboul, indeed, deserves the proud title bestowed upon it of 'The Queen of Cities.' The Seraskier's Tower, crowning the third and highest hill of the ridge, at whose base is seen a long line of bazars, and khans, forming probably, the most extensive and curious range of markets in existence. Around rise majestically, above the tall cypresses that hem them in, the proudly swelling domes, and graceful minarets of countless mosques, those of Mahmoud, Suleiman, St. Sophia, and the beautiful mosque of Achmet, being conspicuous from their elevation and striking from their size; these with the towers, forts, palaces, and the vast masses of heavy-looking, partly coloured houses, together with the myriads of small domes, which meet the eye in strange but pleasing confusion, present an appearance so Oriental, and different in character from anything European, as to defy description."

THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTS COMPRISED IN THIS CELEBRATED SCENE ARE—

**THE BRIDGE OF NOOSSRETYA,**  
 Or BENEFACTION, which was constructed in 1838.—The Mosques of  
**"SULTAUN SULEIMAN,"**  
 The most imposing, but at the same time the most simple and chaste of all those stupendous Temples of Mahomedan Worship, founded by Suleiman the Magnificent, in 1550.

**YENI JAMI,**  
 Erected in 1699, by the Sultana Ralja Gulnush, it has but a single minaret, and is chiefly composed of wood.

**MAHMOUD,**  
 Erected by Mahmoud II. and nearly rebuilt by Mustapha III., after the shock of an earthquake in 1765.

**SANTA SOPHIA,**  
 This most celebrated edifice, erected for the celebration of Mahomedan Worship, by Mahmoud II. in 1453.

**THE SERASKIER'S TOWER,**  
 An ancient and very high Tower in the Seraskier's Square, forms a conspicuous feature in the view.

**THE AQUEDUCT OF VALENS,**  
 Originally erected by the Roman Emperor Adrian, and rebuilt by Valens, in 367, which rises high above the valley and adjacent edifices, forms a conspicuous and picturesque ornament; the

**Mosque of the Arabs and the celebrated Tower of Galata.**

Description of a typorama taken from an advertisement poster for the gardens (U PN/2596 H9 Z8)

The first, in 1843, depicted Rome and was said to cover 12600 feet, whilst a later typorama of Kars was stated as being 72 yards long and 40 yards high. Other subjects included Peking, St Jean D'Acre, Verona, Constantinople, Antioch, Paris, Naples, Marseilles, Sebastopol, Delhi and Lucknow.



# The Staff

## John Simpson Seaman, Superintendent of the Hull Zoological Gardens

Born 23 December 1793 in Kenton, Suffolk, he was baptised the following day in Kenton. His mother was Mary (nee Simpson) and his father was also John Seaman, a naturalist and taxidermist who ran a small travelling natural history museum. Seaman was married to Ann, born c.1799 in Redruth, Cornwall. They had 4 children together: Elizabeth (born c.1833 in Torrington); Ellen (born c.1832, died 1834); John (born c.1837 in Liverpool); Jane (born c.1841 in Liverpool). Through the census Seaman is known to have been living at Derby Road, Everton, and working as Keeper of the Zoological Museum in 1837. By 1841 he is living at Duty Road, Walton-on-the-Hill, Lancashire, with his wife, Elizabeth, John, his brother Charles and sister-in-law Jane, niece Mary Ann and nephew Charles. In 1842 he is working at Hull Zoological Gardens as Superintendent, and in 1851 he is listed as an innkeeper of the Polar Bear, Superintendent of the Zoological Gardens, pyrotechnist and painter, living at 10 Carlton Terrace with his wife, Elizabeth, John, Jane and a servant Theodora Thompson. His wife Ann (also Johannah) died on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1856, and by 1861 Seaman was listed as innkeeper of the Museum Tavern (now Polar Bear Inn) on the corner of Spring Bank and Derringham Street where he resided with his son John, daughter Jane and a servant Mavoni Ward. Sadly, the newspapers report that in 1865 the Zoological Museum at the Polar Bear Inn had been destroyed by fire in a firework accident. He died in 1872, having been living at Uckfield, Sussex, with his daughter Elizabeth and her family.

## John Seaman Jr, Painter and Pyrotechnist at Hull Zoological Gardens

Born c.1832 in Liverpool, he was the son of John Simpson Seaman and his wife Ann, and was baptised on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1837 at St George's Everton, Walton-on-the-Hill. He married Emma (nee Peck) on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1861, and they had three children: Ellen (born c.1863 in Hull); Leonara (born c.1865 in Hull); and Arthur (born c.1866 in Hull). Census records indicate that he was living with his father until at least 1861. There are many reports in the Hull Packet and Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette of Seaman Jr helping his father with the creation of typoramas for the Zoological Gardens, and by 1863 he was also providing the firework displays. By 1871 he was living at 4 Vine Terrace, Norwood Street, Hull with his three children, and was working as a pyrotechnist. He died in Hull in 1875.

## Edward Southwick, Keeper of Hull Zoological Gardens

Born c.1792 in Preston nr Hedon, Yorkshire, his mother was Dianah and his father was John Southwick. He was baptised 30<sup>th</sup> January 1793 and married Ann (nee Mitchel) at Skirlaugh, Yorkshire, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1819. Together they had two children: Jane (born 1819 at Preston); and Harriet (born c.1829 at Long Riston, Yorkshire). On the 1851 census he was listed as Keeper and was living at the Zoological Gardens with his wife and daughter Harriet. An 1852 Hull Packet report of 17<sup>th</sup> December notes that he is Hull's sole agent for the sale of 'Major's (Patented) British Remedy for the Cure of Ringbones, Spavins, Crubs, Splints, Tumours, and Ossifications'. In 1861 Southwick was still living at the Keepers' House, Hull Zoological Gardens, but by 1871 he had moved to 5 Mason Terrace with his wife and was listed as a Labourer. In the Hull Packet dated 6<sup>th</sup> June 1873, 80 years old, Southwick is reported to have been elected to fill a vacancy in the Charterhouse caused by the death of John Moses, and he died in Sculcoates in late 1878.

## John Enderby Jackson, Manager of Hull Zoological Gardens (c. 1861)

Born c.1827 in Hull, his father was John Jackson, a tallow chandler. He married Eliza (nee Smith) in early 1860, and together they had three children: Harriet Elizabeth Gertrude (born c.1867); Edmund H.; and Harold E. On the 1851 census, he is listed as a tallow chandler living with his father and siblings at 41 Myton Gate, Hull. By 1861 he was living with his wife at 21 Prospect Street, Hull, and was listed as a Musical Contest Manager. By 1871, now a licensed victualler and musical conductor, he was living at 14 Carr Lane 'The Regent', with his wife, daughter Harriet, and servant Mary Ellen Boccock. In 1881, he was lodging at 21 Queen Street, Scarborough, with his wife and sons. By 1891 he was living at 2 Sherwood Street, Scarborough, with his wife, and was listed as 'living on his own means' but by 1901 was again working as a musical director. He died on 9 April 1903 at Scarborough, and his effects amounted to £1759 8s 1d.

## Other Known Staff

Other members of Zoological Gardens staff included the following: William Howell, Keeper (lions and leopards); Mr J. Wilson, Keeper (elephants); Robert Wells, Keeper (who also helped paint typoramas between 1851 and 1852); Mr Newton, Lodge Keeper; Mr Pickersgill, Keeper of the Saloon; Mr E. Bannister, who helped paint and build mechanical parts for the typoramas; Mr Ward, who helped paint and build mechanical parts for the typoramas; and Mr Virtue, Gardener.



# Galas and fêtes

Galas and fêtes were a regular feature throughout the life of the Hull Zoological Gardens and a staple of the local social calendar. The gala season ran from May to October and, in the early years, each season seemed to be grander and more lavish than the last.


**GRAND**  
**GALA!!**  
**AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, HULL,**  
*Under the Patronage of the Independent Order of*  
**ODD FELLOWS, M.U.**  
*BEVERLEY,*  
**On Tuesday, Aug. 17, 1847,**  
**FOR THE**  
**BENEFIT OF THE WIDOWS' & ORPHANS' FUND.**

The Committee of the above Order beg leave to announce to their Friends and the Inhabitants of BEVERLEY, COTTINGHAM, and the Neighbourhood, that they have arranged with the Committee of the Hull Zoological Gardens, for a Grand Gala, for the benefit of the Widows' and Orphans' Fund, on Tuesday, the 17th of August, 1847; also with the Railway Company for a

**SPECIAL TRAIN**

To leave BEVERLEY at a quarter to Five o'Clock in the Afternoon of that day, returning at half-past Ten o'Clock, P.M., (calling at COTTINGHAM going and returning,)

**FOR ONE FARE ONLY.**



On which occasion will be exhibited on a Scale of Magnificence not hitherto attempted, the Typorama of  
**THE QUEEN OF CITIES,**

**Constantinople,**  
**FROM THE GOLDEN HORN.**

"Constantinople is universally acknowledged to be the finest city in the world—Mosques, Minarets, Palaces and Kiosks, in endless variety, combine to inspire wonder and admiration; the scene is splendid and unique. Endowed on her seven hills, stretched, indeed, across the proud hills, bounded upon it is 'The Queen of Cities.' The Seraskier's Tower, crowning the hill and highest hill of the ridge, at whose base is seen a long line of barracks, barracks, and khans, forming probably, the most extensive and curious range of quarters in existence. Around rise majestically, above the tall pyramids that here threaten, the proudly swelling domes, and graceful minarets of exquisite mosques, those of Mahmud, Sulaiman, St. Sophia, and the beautiful mosque of Aksham, being conspicuous from their elevation and differing from their sites; those with the towers, fountains, and the vast masses of heavy-looking, pearly coloured houses, together with the myriads of small domes, which meet the eye in strange but pleasing confusion, present an appearance so Oriental, and different in character from anything European, as to defy description."

THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTS COMPRISED IN THIS CELEBRATED SCENE ARE—  
**THE BRIDGE OF NOOSRETTA,**  
Of BENEFACTION, which was constructed in 1828.—The Mosque of  
"SULTAN SULEIMAN,"  
The most imposing, but at the same time the most simple and chaste of all those stupendous Temples of Mahomedan Worship, founded by Sulaiman the Magnificent, in 1450.  
**YENI JAMI,**  
Erected in 1590, by the Sultan Selim Calmah, it has but a single minaret, and is chiefly composed of wood.  
**MAHMOUD,**  
Erected by Mahmud II. and nearly rebuilt by Mustafa III., after the shock of an earthquake in 1702.  
**SANTA SOPHIA,**  
The most celebrated edifice, erected for the celebration of Mahomedan Worship, by Mahmud II. in 1652.  
**THE SERASKIER'S TOWER,**  
An ancient and very high Tower in the Seraskier's Square, forms a conspicuous feature in the view.  
**THE AQUEDUCT OF VALENS,**  
Originally erected by the Roman Emperor Adrian, and rebuilt by Valens, in 267, which rises high above the valley and adjacent hills, forms a conspicuous and picturesque ornament; the  
**Mosque of the Arabs and the celebrated Tower of Galata.**

AT SEVEN O'CLOCK,  
**The Campanologian Band of Bell Ringers,**  
Will perform a Selection of New and Popular Airs, Polkas, Waltzes, &c.  
**MONTGOLFIER BALLOONS**  
WILL ASCEND DURING THE EVENING.

THE GRAND AND INTERESTING  
**Buddha, or Heathen Temple**  
Conveys to Visitors a correct idea of the Religious Principles, Legends, and Antiquities of Southern Asia. The objects exhibited in it are Statues of Buddha, which have been worshipped in Ceylon and the Hindoo Empire; Images of Bahuts and Buddhist Deities; and a numerous collection of Books and in Demosthenic Worship, with several other Christianities connected with Buddhist Mythology, forming  
**ONE GRAND HEATHEN TEMPLE.** To aid the Fund of the Bazaar Institute, an additional charge of One Penny is made to each Visitor as may choose to view the same, which will go towards liquidating the Debt on that Institution.

It shall be exhibited a superb Display of  
**FIREWORKS!**

Of an entirely novel and appropriate Character, by Mr. SEAMAN, Fire-works.  
**ADMISSION, 1s. each, Children, 6d.;**  
Brooks & Long, Printers, 25, Market Lane, Hull.

Gala Poster (U PN/2596 H9 Z8)

The first grand gala was held over two days, 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> May 1841, in honour of Queen Victoria's birthday. The services of Monsier D'Ernst were engaged to provide a firework display. D'Ernst was a well-known pyrotechnist who performed regularly at the Vauxhall Gardens in London.

**M R . D ' E R N S T ,**  
 The celebrated Pyrotechnic Artist to Her Majesty and  
 the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall, London, who will, on this  
 occasion, give a superb  
**DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS,**  
 Comprising some of the beautiful pieces he had the  
 honour to display before Buckingham Palace, by desire  
 of Her Majesty, on the day of her Coronation.

Extract from the Hull Packet, May 1841 (Local Studies)

Decorations included thousands of coloured lamps, illuminated fountains giving the illusion of 'liquid fire of various colours', the initials 'V.R.' in coloured lamps above the lodge, and a peacock in coloured lamps at the end of one of the grand promenades. Entertainments included the ascent of several pilot balloons and an unmanned 30ft Montgolfier balloon, which ascent was accompanied by a military band providing musical entertainment. Many local shopkeepers closed early to allow their staff to join in with the festivities, and across the two days, £400 was taken in admission fares. The only complaints seem to have been that the fireworks were discharged on such low ground that visitors who were not on the terrace could not appreciate the full effect (HP, 21 May 1841).

# FIREWORKS

## ORDER OF FIRING.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Royal Salute.</li> <li>2. A Discharge of Rockets.</li> <li>3. Ascent of Tourbillions.</li> <li>4. A Metamorphosis, beautifully varied; Scrolls of brilliant fire.—A second Figure formed of Saxon and Glittering Radii.—Dazzling Halo.</li> <li>5. Discharge of Rockets with Tailed Stars.</li> <li>6. Shell of Bright Stars.</li> <li>7. Discharge of Tourbillions.</li> <li>8. Display of Rockets and luminous Constellations.</li> <li>9. The Grand Figure Piece, in several Mutations. "Cœur Quartre." "Meduse Chinoise." Vertical Wheel. Revolving Star. Brilliant Halo.</li> <li>10. Shell exploding into Comets.</li> <li>11. High-projected Shell, bursting into a Shower of Snakes,</li> <li>12. Volley of Rockets of large Calibre.</li> <li>13. Flight of Tourbillions.</li> <li>14. Large Shell of amber Stars.</li> <li>15. Thrice transformed Figure Piece, Double Triangle.—Star of Diamond light, throwing out Stars of Red, Green, and Purple, with a Mine of Silver Rain.</li> <li>16. Discharge of Rockets with Tailed Stars.</li> <li>17. Tourbillions.</li> <li>18. Magnificent Shell with Comet-like Cornuscations.</li> <li>19. Flight of Rockets bursting fiery red.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. Splendid Piece, with several changes.—Scroll Wheel of Amber Light.—6 Vertical Wheels, with coloured Fires.—6 Circles of Saxons.—36 Radii, &amp;c.</li> <li>21. Rainbow Shell, scattering Stars of Green, Crimson, and Purple, blending their lights in rich profusion.</li> <li>22. Ascent of Rockets, with Tailed and Amber coloured stars.</li> <li>23. Rich Morceau with Crimson Stars.</li> <li>24. Volley of Rockets.</li> <li>25. Large Shell of Amber Stars.</li> <li>26. Tourbillions.</li> <li>27. Superb "Feux de Artifice."—Six Brunswick Stars.—Twelve Chinoise Flyers with all the colours of the Rainbow.—Thirty-six Jerbs reported.</li> <li>28. Crimson and Green Rockets.</li> <li>29. Pyrotechnic Tableaux.</li> <li>30. Artificial Moonlight.</li> <li>31. Magical Diffusion of Emerald Radiance.</li> <li>32. A Display of Bengal Lights.</li> <li>33. A Show of Amber Lights.</li> <li>34. A rich Rosy Light, kindling the City of Constantinople to a Sun-set glow.</li> <li>35. <b>FINALE "COUP DE FEU,"</b> with Roman Candles, filling the air with balls of fire, of the most brilliant colours; finishing with grand Radiated Jerbs, Mines of Saucissions, flights of Green, Purple, Crimson, and Amber Rockets, Serpents, &amp;c.</li> </ol>
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**ADMISSION, 1s. each; CHILDREN, 6d.**

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**W. KIRK, PRINTER, 161, and 162, HIGH-STREET, and 1, CHAPEL-LANE, HULL.**

Extract from gala poster (U PN 2596 H9 Z8)

These types of entertainments would become regular features at the early galas, and in August 1841, the Hull Packet reported that fireworks from the Zoological Gardens' grand gala had been seen as far away as Driffield. The early galas were covered extensively in the newspapers, with reporters providing details of all the decorations, the specific types of fireworks, the number of visitors, the entertainments, and the weather!



Following these initial successes, the entertainments became more varied, and included acrobats, jugglers, tight-rope walkers, and singers. Many of the performers were well-known across Britain and included the juggler Ramo Samee, the acrobat Mademoiselle Lafayette, and tightrope walker Signora Rossini. Many of the acrobatic feats were also incredibly dangerous, being performed amidst exploding fireworks, or in the case of Signora Rossini (in 1852) at great heights, walking a tightrope 300 feet long at a height of 60 feet! This feat was repeated at the same length and height by a Signor Corelli in 1861, but on this occasion 'he first walked across the wire, his feet being empanelled in baskets, and then made the return journey (without the baskets) blindfolded, and his whole body enveloped in a sack' (HAEG, 7 Sep 1861).



Extract from an advertisement poster for a grand gala at the Gardens (Local Studies)

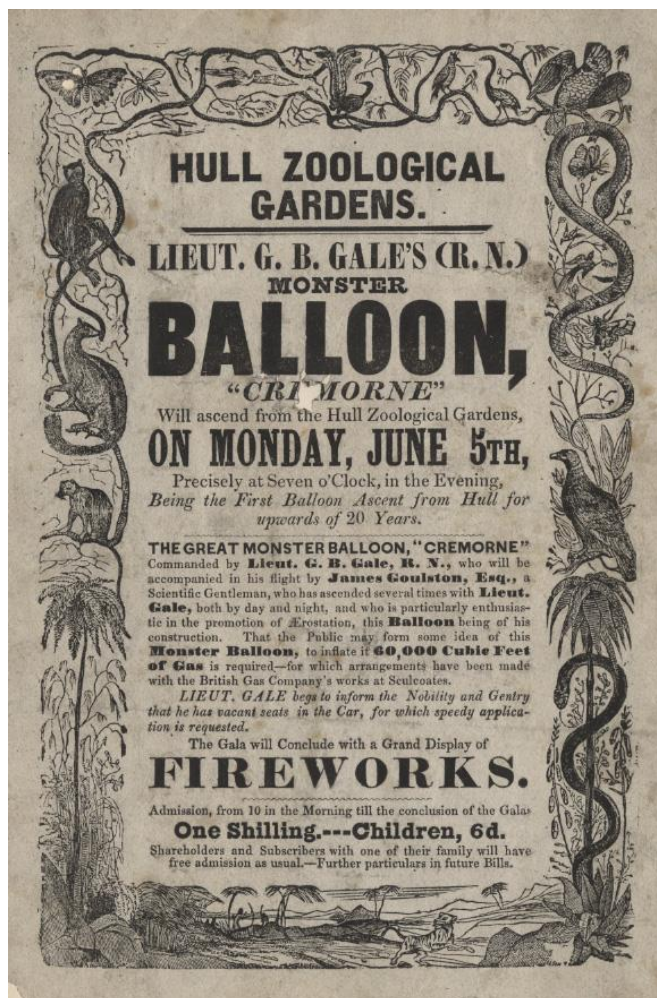
Novelties including fireworks discharged from hot air balloons and scientific inventions, such as the Bude Light, were also displayed to large crowds. Other attractions were also provided by foreign performers, giving renditions of traditional dances and customs. These foreign performers included a native New Zealander, who performed a funeral anthem, war song, and victory dance, and took to one of the lakes in a traditional canoe.

Of course, the zoo's animals were also part of the entertainments, with feeding times listed in adverts, and circus-style exhibitions of trained elephants and big cats. William Howell, the keeper in charge of the lions and leopards, was said to have such a command over the big cats that his skill rivalled that of the pre-eminent animal trainer of the day, Isaac Van Amburg (HP, 8 Oct 1841).



Another keeper, Mr Wilson, looked after the gardens' elephant which he had trained to stand on two legs and kneel down at his command, amongst other skills. On occasion, several of the animals, including the elephant, camels and llamas, would also participate in so-called 'eastern pageants', wearing brightly coloured costumes and involving a procession and triumphal car drawn by the elephant.

By the summer of 1842, the Committee began to experiment further with new entertainments including small market fairs, bell-ringers, magicians, equestrian displays involving processions and mock battles, fairground rides, and fireworks discharged from the lake. In 1848 much excitement appears to have been created by the announcement of a manned hot air balloon ascent from the Zoological Gardens. The balloon ascent was apparently the first to occur in Hull for twenty years and the balloon was named the 'Cremorne'.



Advertisement flyer for a balloon ascent (L791.9)

It was made of yellow silk and had been constructed by James Goulston Esq., of Old Kent Road, London. The silk was expensive, costing 12s 6d per yard. When inflated, the balloon contained about 40,000 cubic feet of gas and its diameter extended to 40 feet 6 inches. The pilot was Lieutenant G.B. Gale of [the Royal Navy]. The balloon was inflated at the nearby Sculcoates Gas Works and then transported (although there are no details as to how this was affected) to the Zoological Gardens. Unfortunately, the first ascent was cancelled following gales which tore part of the balloon's canvas and broke a gas valve, pouring gas all over the men trying to keep the balloon attached to its moorings! Thankfully, the second attempt a few weeks later was a success and, according to the Hull Advertiser, was witnessed by 20,000 people! The newspapers provided a detailed report of the balloon's course, stating that it proceeded from the Gardens first towards

Beverley Road, before bearing toward Pryme Street, Albion Street, George Street, and Dock Street, crossing the Old Dock at Grimston Street and then moving towards the Citadel, and eventually out to the north of Paull where a safe landing was achieved on the land of a George Prickett Esq. This successful outing was followed by further ascents in 1849, despite the cholera epidemic in Hull of that summer.

Balloon ascents continued to attract large crowds to the Gardens. On 8 August 1851 it was estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 people watched a balloon ascent provided for the benefit of Mr Wells and Mr Southwick, the keepers. It was reported in the newspapers that 'at half-past six o'clock a balloon ascent was made. It had been intended to have sent up a monkey, but fearing lest the poor animal should receive any injury, a policeman was substituted'. The popularity of the ascents was such that in July 1859 the Gardens paid for British Gas to lay gas pipes so that balloons could be inflated at the Gardens for the first time. Over the years the Gardens were also keen to engage with new scientific inventions, which included experimental hydrogen balloons. These balloons made their first ascents from the Gardens on 20 May 1850. By 1859, ascents were being undertaken by a Mr Coxwell who also allowed two or three passengers to join him in the adventure. Mr Melbourne of the Queen's Theatre, appears to have got a taste for the experience as he joined Mr Coxwell on at least two occasions in that year.

The Victorian obsession with magic and illusion was also indulged at the Gardens with 'Magic Arts' being presented for the audience. In 1843, the juggler Ramo Samee was praised by the Hull Packet for his 'Magic Sand' act which they claimed was 'perfectly unparalleled in the annals of illusion' (8 Sep 1843). In later years, the Gardens hosted lectures on magic by Professor Buck, dubbed 'the first illusionist of his age', and Mr Bruce Shaw from the Royal Polytechnic Institute of London (now the University of Westminster), who mixed magic tricks with explanations of the 'science' and how the tricks were accomplished.

After the tragic death of Monsieur D'Ernst in a firework explosion at his firework factory at Lambeth Butts in March 1842, the fireworks were initially conducted by a Mr Coton. However, after mixed responses in the local newspapers to his displays, Mr Coton was not engaged for the 1843 gala season. His successor was John Seaman, the gardens' Superintendent. From this point on, John Seaman was heralded as the Gardens' 'unrivalled pyrotechnist', his skill being 'so well-known and universally appreciated' (HP, 22 May 1846). His reputation spread and he was asked to arrange firework displays for events outside the Gardens, such as one that was held in the grounds of York Lunatic Asylum in July 1848. Mr Seaman's displays included a large variety of fireworks including squibs, rockets, Catherine wheels, and roman candles, and some were also used to create devices designed to represent St George and the Dragon and to spell out temperance mottoes.

The spectacular galas continued at the Zoological Gardens until its closure in 1861, dazzling thousands of visitors with magicians, scientific experiments, musical bands, acrobats and fireworks, and exploring new entertainments such as country sports, fencing and art exhibitions. The final gala, featuring the tight-rope walker Signor Corelli, brass bands and a firework display, was held on 2 September 1861.

# At the heart of the community

The Hull Zoological Gardens quickly established itself as a host for local society events and group visits. In July 1841, the Gardens opened at a discount for members of the York Mechanics' Institution visiting their sister institution in Hull and the following year money was raised to enable children from the Hull Deaf and Dumb Institution to visit. The Gardens regularly played host to children from various schools, Sunday Schools and workhouse schools across Hull, the East Riding and beyond. The newspapers would regularly praise the children's behaviour and also provided details of the entertainments and refreshments laid on by the Gardens, which included spiced buns and other treats!

The Gardens also hosted fêtes, exhibitions, galas and charity events organised by local groups, including the Kingston Amateur Floral and Horticultural Society, the Hull and East Riding District of Ancient Foresters, the Hull Licensed Victualler's Association, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The first exhibition and fête organised by the Kingston Amateur Floral and Horticultural Society was held in 1845. Floral shows were reported in detail in the local newspapers, with long lists of the prizes awarded. As well as flowers, there was fruit and vegetables for consideration by the judges, some of which were grown in small allotments on the Humber Bank 'by persons in rather an humble rank of life' (HAEG, 18 Jul 1845). This would suggest that involvement in Hull's societies and associations covered all classes and not just the town's wealthier inhabitants. However, in later years, the Zoological Gardens' popularity with the working classes appears to have been objected to by members of the gentry involved in the local horticultural societies! In August 1858 the Hull Advertiser reported that many country gentlemen were of the opinion that the next horticultural show should be held at the Botanic Gardens because 'they would not be likely to meet with so many of the plebs'! By 1851, the Gardens were also hosting exhibitions of poultry and fancy birds, where prizes were also awarded to the best specimens. These exhibitions appear to have been prompted by the example of other towns and cities in supporting such events, with the common aim being that of improving the country's poultry breeds.

Galas organised by the Foresters and Odd Fellows would often involve processions from their respective institutions to the Zoological Gardens, followed by musical entertainments and fireworks. These events were designed to raise money for the institutions' charitable works, with the proceeds generally donated to their Widows and Orphans Funds. The Gardens also accommodated large and elaborate temperance galas, the first of which was held on 10 July 1845. This first gala involved a promenade brass band concert, dancing, rural games, addresses and short plays on the temperance movement, and fireworks. The following year's celebration was estimated to have attracted 5,000 visitors! The increasing popularity of the temperance movement during the Victorian period, ensured that grand temperance galas remained an annual fixture until the Zoo's closure. The temperance gala of 1850 was said to have attracted 20,000 visitors and in 1856 the Hull Temperance League held an eight-day long gala at the Gardens! Visitor numbers were also helped by the arrival of the railway to Hull and the dawn of 'cheap trains'. The cheap trains could carry thousands of passengers and, at times, consisted of over 100 carriages! Many of these passengers would visit the Zoological Gardens for the temperance galas, and in an effort to further induce them to visit the Gardens, excursionists would, on occasion, be given half price entrance to the Gardens (HAEG, 9 Jul 1859).

The Gardens also became involved in organising amateur archery competitions and brass band contests, the results of which were published in the newspapers. The first archery competition was held in September 1843 and was won by Dr Horner, a well-known proponent of the Zoological Gardens. His win, however, was not without controversy! The first newspaper reports suggested that he had not practised for over twelve years and that he had achieved 'an unparalleled feat' when he shot two consecutive arrows into the Bull's Eye (the gold circle) (HP, 15 Sep 1843). However, these assertions were determinedly refuted in a letter to the Hull Advertiser by a member of the Kingston Archery Club, saying that Dr Horner had not practised for only 6 years instead of 12, that he had the opportunity to practise at the Gardens before the



event, and that his hitting the gold circle twice in a row was no extraordinary feat, since a member of the Kingston Club had recently hit the gold with three arrows in a row and at a greater distance! The first music competition at the Gardens was a Grand Fife and Drum Contest held in September 1855 by the Hull Temperance League. This first contest appears to have been a success, with 10,000 people reported to have visited the Gardens. This was followed by popular brass band contests in 1856 where each band had to play a piece of music composed specifically for the event. The brass band contests became a regular fixture at the Gardens and continued until 1860.



Hull Zoological Gardens ticket (L 9.7)

From 1856, an annual 'Old Women's Tea Party' became established, providing tea and entertainments for 500 local women, whilst other visits were arranged for adults from workhouses and asylums. The annual tea parties were hosted by Messrs Wolfenden and Melbourne of the Queen's Theatre and included invitations to the older female inhabitants of the local workhouses. The parties included dancing, country sports, balloon ascents and fireworks, and provided refreshments consisting of spiced and plain bread, cheese cakes and Queen's cakes for the invited guests. At the party hosted in 1858, it was estimated that 25 stones of flour and 14lbs of tea had been consumed! Visits by adults from the local workhouses and asylums were also hosted by Messrs Wolfenden and Melbourne, although on a smaller scale, inviting between 40 and 60 individuals and providing an afternoon of entertainment (HAEG, 1855).



Extract from an advertisement poster for a charity gala, 1861 (Local Studies)

Despite the Gardens' many charity and community events, concerns were often raised that ticket prices were too high for many local people and that the Gardens was simply another domain of the rich. In 1844, these concerns were considered by the Mayor of Hull, who proposed opening the Gardens for free one day a week. The proposal appears to have later been taken up by the Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette in 1845. However, it was never implemented by the Gardens, although the zoo was opened occasionally at half-price.

The Gardens' individual officers also became involved in other community events. John Seaman, the Gardens' Superintendent, alongside running The Polar Bear Inn, a Zoological Museum, and the Gardens, arranged firework displays for various events across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. For instance, in 1845, he provided the fireworks at the Yorkshire Agricultural Show, and in 1848, he gave a firework display from the grounds of the York Lunatic Asylum. In 1855, he also designed the triumphal arches for Queen Victoria's visit to Hull! These arches were several small arches placed across footpaths and at least one large enough for carriages to pass through, supported by columns painted to look like stone, whilst the arches were decorated with the royal coat of arms and the phrase 'Vivat Regina'. John Seaman continued advertising his services as a pyrotechnist and artist up to 1867, when he was 73 years old!

As with all entertainment venues where large groups of people gather are apt to attract the less honest in society and there were regular notices in the newspapers relating to pickpockets working in the Gardens. Pickpockets, both young and old, male and female, plied their trade at the Zoological Gardens and, when caught, were often sentenced to hard labour at the local House of Correction. For instance, in August 1850, teenagers George Lewis and John Green, were sentenced to 21 days hard labour for attempting to pick the pockets of a group of women enjoying a day out at the Gardens, whilst in 1852, William Ryan was sentenced to two months. The Gardens also suffered from other criminal damage and robberies. In 1842, a John Reckett was charged with 'wilfully destroying several illumination lamps' (HP, 27 May 1842) and in 1854, a Muscovy duck and several duck eggs were reported stolen from the grounds. On the other hand, the Zoological Gardens were also an unexpected beneficiary of crime! There are several reports of the town's meat inspector, Mr Hall, charging butchers in the Shambles with trying to sell unwholesome meat, the meat in question then being sent to the Gardens for consumption by the animals! Tragically, the Gardens were also the site of the accidental death of Robert Brown, who died in an explosion whilst trying to fire a rocket for a gala organised by the Ancient Order of Foresters in September 1853.

Throughout the life of the Gardens, community galas and fêtes were a key feature of the events calendar. Events continued even when the Gardens were up for auction and thousands of visitors still flocked through the gates. The running costs, however, had proved too much by 1860 and the Gardens were forced to close...

# All good things come to an end...

The old saying goes that flames burning brightly die out quickly, and so it was with the Hull Zoological Gardens. From 1840, the gardens had provided fantastic entertainment and proved popular with locals and visitors alike. In 1845 the committee had even considered plans to build a library and museum, and the Gardens had been able to attract thousands of visitors not just from Hull, but also from the rest of Yorkshire, as well as Lincolnshire and Lancashire. However, newspaper reports as early as 1843, referred to the Zoological Gardens' mounting debts of nearly £7,000 (£600,000 today). The debts were only compounded by other difficulties. These difficulties included the bad state of the road known locally as 'the Spring Bank bog' with no one willing to repair it, issues with visitors regularly picking significant numbers of flowers from the gardens (HAEG, 1844) and younger visitors defacing the garden ornaments. Complaints were also raised (HAEG, 5 June 1846) about numerous gentlemen smoking in the grounds, thus making the gardens undesirable for the ladies!

Whilst the weather was often unkind on gala days, and over the years many galas had to be postponed because of bad weather. On top of this, the cost of upkeep and providing for the animals eventually proved too much. An offer to purchase the gardens for £5000 had been made in 1843 and rumours had circulated in October 1847 that the Zoological Gardens were about to close. The rumours were false, and the Gardens survived for another 14 years, but by 1860 the financial position had become untenable.

From January 1861 advertisements began appearing that the gardens were to be auctioned. Finally, a date was set for 22 April 1861, and it was advertised that land suitable for villa residences would be auctioned off. Bidding reached £5100, offered by Mr Davis (a draper), however, as this was nowhere near the reserve price of £8000, the gardens did not sell. In June, a joint stock company, to be called the 'Albion Grove Villa Company Limited', was announced for the purposes of building 'villa residences in keeping with the ornamental character of the gardens'. This company proposed a terrace of semi-detached residences in Swiss, Gothic and other ornamental styles at the north end, whilst leaving 10,000 square yards as open garden.

In the meantime, the gardens continued to operate, however, the following report in the Hull Packet dated 26 July 1861 makes it clear that they had lost their sparkle:

*'Since last year [the gardens] have been allowed to fall into a bad state.... The walks, flower beds, and grass pots, had been entirely neglected, and weeds had been allowed to accumulate in all directions....The fountains were out of order... and the stagnant pools of water which once formed the artificial lakes, were now anything but pleasing to the eye. As to the animals we saw but few... and their cages were rapidly falling into decay.'*

The last ever gala was held at the gardens on the 2 September 1861.



**ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, HULL.**

**THE LAST GALA!**

At the above Gardens, previous to their being finally closed to the Public, will take place

**ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1861,**

On which occasion the greatest Attractions of the day will be provided for the recreation of all desirous of paying

**A Farewell Visit to this popular place of amusement.**

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**SIGNOR CORELLI,**  
M. BLONDIN'S GREAT RIVAL,

Will make his First and only

**DARING ASCENT**

On a portion of the Atlantic Cable **300 ft.** in length, and at an **Elevation of 60ft.**  
Amongst the numerous feats he will perform, will be walking backwards and forwards  
his whole body being **BLINDFOLDED.**

**Enveloped in a COMMON SACK.**  
Walking across the Wire, his feet being  
**EMPANNELLED IN BASKETS.**

Walking across the Wire

**ON STILTS.**  
Concluding with the marvellous, but beautiful and imposing descent of

**THE FLYING MERCURY!**

A Feat never yet attempted by M. BLONDIN, and far surpassing in daring any similar performance by him, or any other Artiste in the World.

**LEOTARD'S**  
**Wonderful Flying Trapeze Feats, by**  
**CHARLES EDWARD CORELLI!**

To be convinced that this Glorious but inscrutable piece of mechanism, the human body, is capable of far more wonderful actions than the mind which inhabits it ever conceived it is only necessary to see the marvellous performances of Mr. C. E. CORELLI.

Man, through his natural love of ease, and antipathy to exertion, has never fully tried his powers. It is sufficient for him that he can do what is absolutely necessary to his ordinary every-day comfort, without seeking the development of the still higher powers that are latent within him; and thus he has used his appliances for action—such as tension or expansion, much leverage of levers, &c.—to a sort of idle end, and brought them to such a state of feebleness that any attained a perfect mastery over both muscle and bone; and is, therefore, enabled to perform feats never before attempted, and to introduce a system of locomotion which can only be surpassed by absolute flying. Thus, with the greatest ease and comfort, and with the assistance of only three ropes suspended from Poles, Mr. CORELLI poses himself in the air, and there performs some of the most wonderful feats ever witnessed in any Gymnasium—Somersaults, Double Flourees, and Suspensions in every conceivable position, are performed with the most astonishing agility; and, to conclude, Mr. C. E. CORELLI makes

**TERRIFIC LEAP OF 100 FEET.**  
Pronounced by the Press to be one of the most graceful Entertainments yet brought before the Public.

**THE ITALIAN BROTHERS**  
The wonderful and Astonishing Gymnasts on the Suspension Persian Pole.

The Talented and world-renowned

**CORELLI FAMILY**  
Will use their united exertions to please all beholders. They will appear in an entirely New Entertainment, entitled

**The Gambols of Hercules**  
Exhibiting Classical Illustrations of Living Statuary, Poetry of Motion, and Zonal Dancing, consisting of Poets, Groups, and Statues of Art, introducing Tournaments and Aerial Flights, executed with such grace as to render it the most seductive performance ever witnessed. To attempt a description of the nature of the performance would be futile; suffice it to say, it can only be appreciated by being seen, when it must be pronounced at once as the most extraordinary, Chaste, and Classical Exhibition that has ever been witnessed. In the Entertainment will be introduced the YOUNGEST CLOWN IN THE WORLD.

Laughable Performance on the Long and Short Stilts by the Clown—A. CORELLI.

**TROUPE OF PERFORMING DOGS!!**  
Dido and Captain, The Great Salamander Dog.  
Who after a series of Astonishing Tricks will conclude his performance by Jumping through 100 Fire Balloons.

Electrical and most Marvellous Evolutions  
**ON THE DOUBLE TIGHT ROPES**  
By the accomplished and fearless Artistes M. A. Corelli, and Miss Corelli, from the Cirque, Champs Elysees, Paris. Their talent is beyond description! They are unapproachable—without equal!—SEE THEM.

**THE ITALIAN BROTHERS,**  
**On the Double Trapeze!**  
Performing Feats at an immense height, which to others would appear dangerous and fatal, but to them executed with ease and dexterity, calling forth the loudest acclamations of applause from the delighted and astonished crowds, who have flocked to see their most surprising and elegant Gymnastics.

Mr. C. E. and Mr. T. CORELLI will, in the most classical manner, introduce the following celebrated

**Grecian Statues,**  
Or Living Models from the Antique.

Exciting Performance of La Perche.

The Gardens will be Illuminated in the Evening.  
**DANCING ON THE LAWN.** Rustic Sports for the Juveniles.  
Concluding at dusk with a Display of

**FIREWORKS,**  
BY MR. SEAMAN

**ACEY'S QUADRILLE BAND.**  
BRUNSWICK BRASS BAND & ACEY'S BRASS BAND.

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**CHINESE JUGGLERS!!**  
THIS GRAND EXHIBITION WILL CONSIST OF

- 1 Shower of Plate ..... Arr. Ching
- 2 A Silver Globe thrown Fifteen Feet in the Air, then caught & balanced on the end of a common stick Arr. Wia.
- 3 Flight of Globes and Globes ..... Arr. Ching
- 4 Feats of Ponderality with three sixteen inch Disks ..... Arr. Wia.
- 5 Fountain of Balls ..... Arr. Ching
- 6 Basin of water—The Juggler throws ten feet in the Air, rebounding round the neck, arms, and various parts of the body without spilling one drop of the water ..... Arr. Wia
- 7 The young Chinaman's descent (on one single line) forming the most marvellous and astonishing pose in his descent ..... Arr. Ching
- 8 Banquet of Plates—A supper of real food ..... Arr. Ching & Arr. Wia.
- 9 Chinese Ribbon Manufacture in full speed producing 100 yards of Ribbon from the Mouth ..... Arr. Wia.
- 10 Revolving Hoop and charmed Basin, which the Chinese turns about his ears ..... Arr. Wia.

Concluding with the wonderful and astonishing Feat of

**IMPALING THE HUMAN BODY WITH HUGE KNIVES!**  
The Celebrated Artiste

**MISS CORELLI,**  
The great Globe Ascensionist, in her Terrific Ascent—**40 feet High.**  
The CORELLI FAMILY is the best of the

**BEDOUIN ARABS**  
FOUR IN NUMBER.

This Troupe of Artistes, the wonder of the age, is the same that appeared before the Queen at St. James's Theatre, London. Her Majesty expressed her unequalled approval of their daring feats; and delighted audiences in various parts of the country have pronounced them to be unsurpassable. Their bounding leaps and terrific flights—their almost incredible feats of strength—and their matchless acrobatic evolutions, entitle them without doubt, to be ranked as the greatest professors of the gymnastic art that ever visited this country.

**THE THREE GREAT CLOWNS,**  
Free from all vulgarity and coarseness—Albert de Harvey, Alfred Corelli, & Young Joey—The whole combined present one great concatenation of contortions, and producing an insupportable Buford of Fun, Frolic, Wit, Wisdom, and all that can charm the eye, warm the heart, or improve the mind, forming one vast "Ola Poodle" of every thing that can drive away dull care, and defer the visit of the doctor.

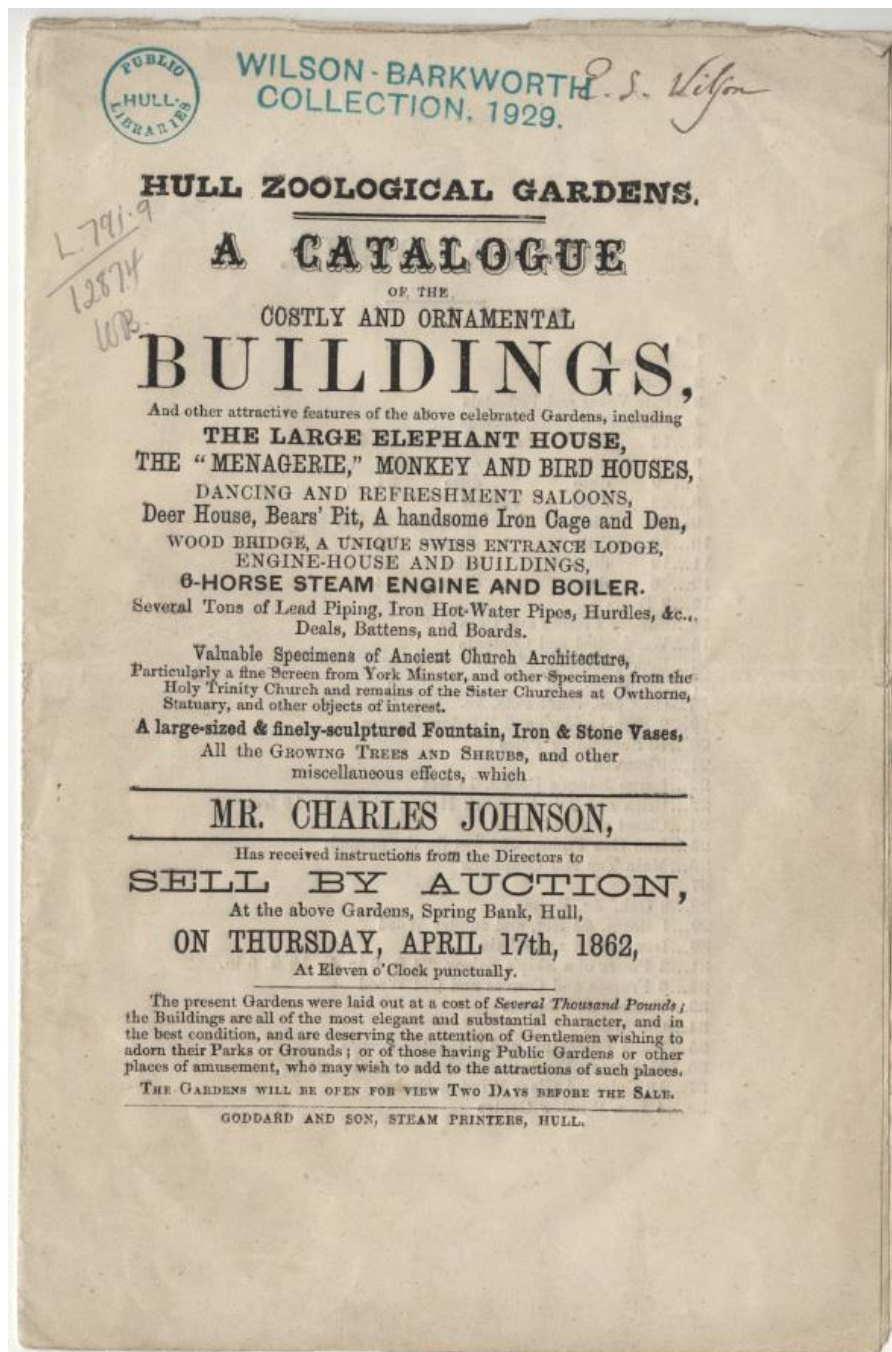
**ADMITTANCE, SIXPENCE.**  
TICKETS MAY BE HAD AT THE USUAL PLACES.

Poster for the last gala at the Hull Zoological Gardens (L791.9)

The Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette of 7 September 1861 stated: 'It is much regretted that the town is likely to lose these gardens which for years have been the only place of recreation the working classes of Hull have had. They are in close proximity to the People's Park, and, supposing an entrance is made thereto from the Spring-bank – which is most desirable, in order to make it somewhat easy of access for the inhabitants of the Potteries, &c – it would have been better to have converted them into pleasant tea gardens, similar to those on the continent, rather than into villa residences, which will be of no benefit to the poorer portion of the community'.



Finally, the buildings and appurtenances were put up for sale and so this intriguing part of Hull's history came to a sad end.



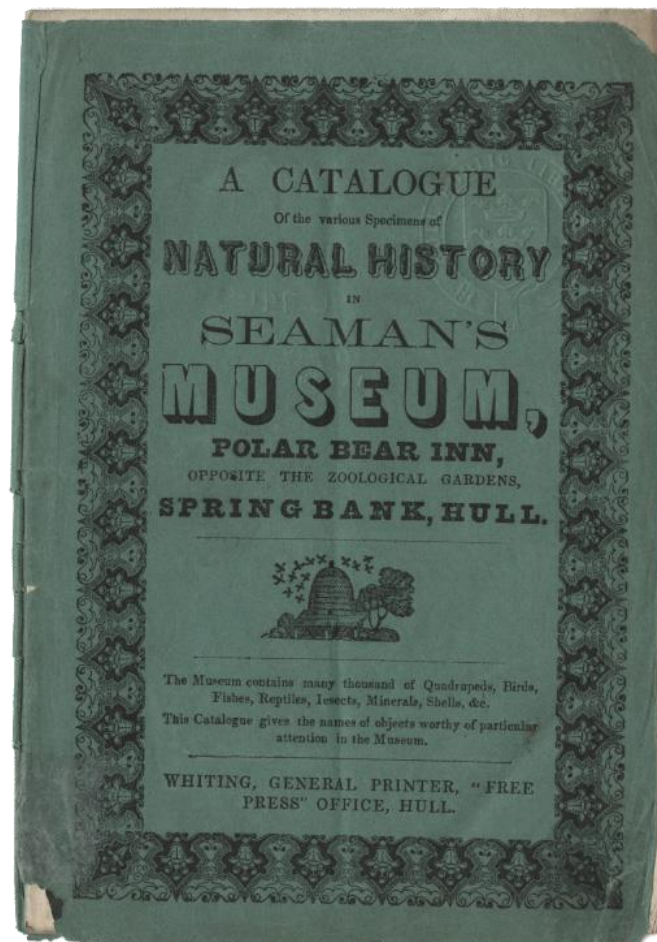
Sale catalogue, 1862 (L 791.9)

Walking down Spring Bank today, there is no discernible original evidence of the existence of the gardens. It is believed that the fountain was reused elsewhere in the city, and there have been debates as to whether a house in Hutt Street is the relocated original entrance lodge from the gardens. However, further research is needed to verify these claims. Two wire bear sculptures at the corner of Spring Bank and Albany Street mark roughly where the South West corner of the gardens would have been. Hutt and Peel Street were extended southwards to meet Spring Bank, and so currently run right through what would have been the heart of the gardens. The only original element of the gardens still in existence today are the trees and shrubs that were dug up and replanted in Pearson Park, which makes them at least 177 years old.

# Seaman's museum

Initially, the Hull Zoological Society had intended to establish a Zoological Museum at the Gardens, although, this was never realised. An unofficial museum was, however, opened by the gardens' Superintendent, John Seaman Sr. This museum was housed in a wooden outbuilding at the Museum Tavern where Seaman was innkeeper, and which we now know as The Polar Bear pub on Spring Bank. Although there are no firm dates as to when the museum was opened, it was definitely in operation by June 1854, when an advert was placed the Hull Advertiser.

The museum was stocked with animals that had died at the Zoological Gardens or during transportation to the gardens, and also by animals acquired from other zoos in England. Seaman was an avid taxidermist and it is likely that he prepared most of the exhibits himself. One account in a local newspaper notes that the carcass of an elephant was purchased by Seaman in 1864 from the then famous 'Wombwell' menageries, before being transported to Hull by train. Unfortunately, by the time it arrived in Hull, the odours emanating from the dead animal were apparently so bad that it could not be kept in the normal goods warehouse and it was instead kept at an engine works near the Humber until it could be collected.



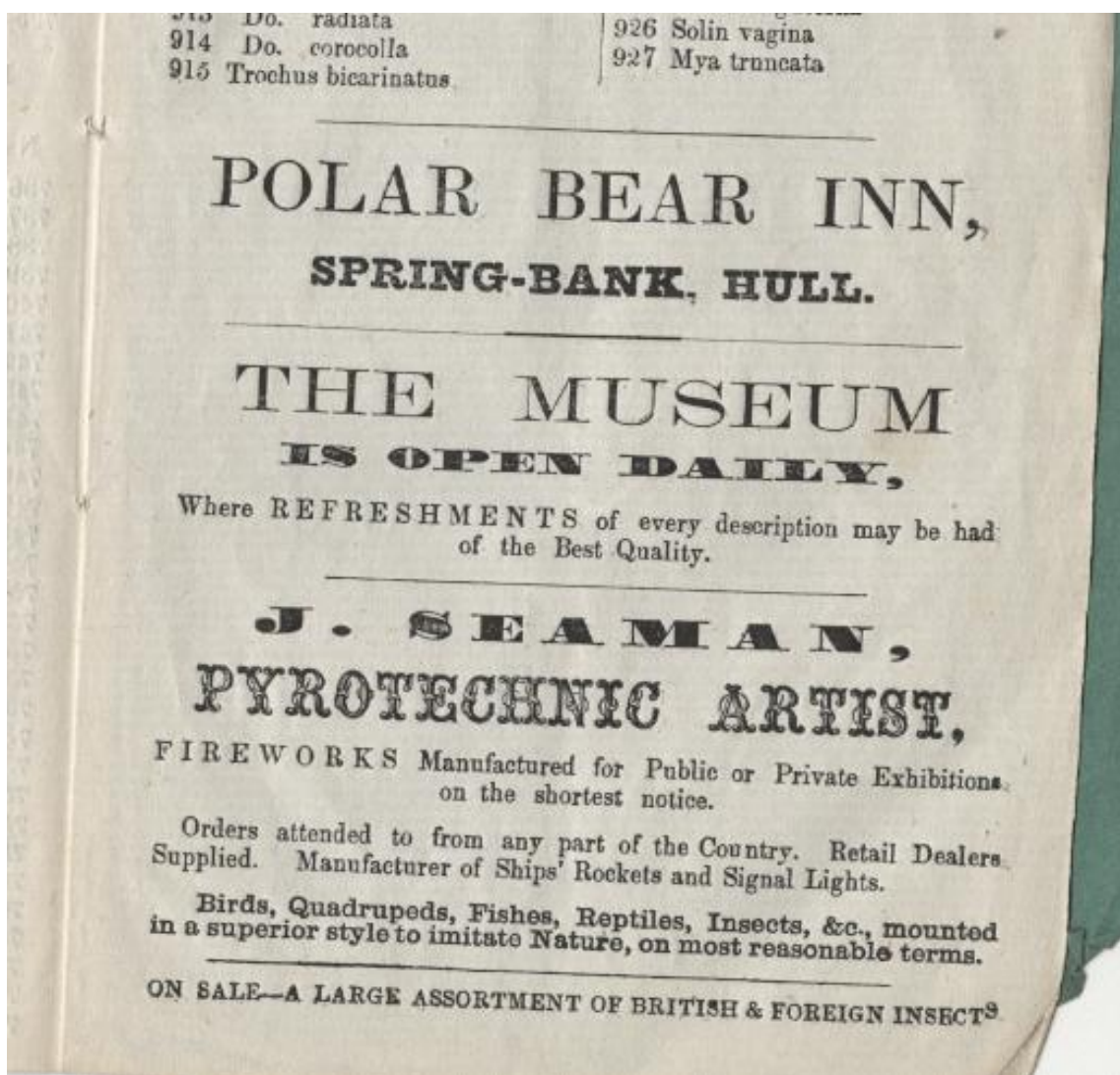
Seaman's Museum catalogue (L791.9)

Two catalogues for the museums still exist and these are held in the archives at the Hull History Centre. The catalogues give a good idea of the types of exhibits visitors could expect to see, which included birds, fish, insects, reptiles, lions, tigers and an elephant.



Seaman appears to have followed the example set by the Hull Zoological Gardens when managing his museum. He is noted in the newspapers as having invited children from the workhouse to visit and also to have hosted meetings and events for local associations, such as the Hull Licensed Victuallers' Association. In contrast to the gardens however, entry to the museum was free. Sadly, this liberality was abused by some and, like the gardens, Seaman suffered thefts and the destruction of some of his exhibits by dishonest customers.

Ultimately, the museum came to a tragic end, when it was destroyed in a fire in August 1865. The fire started after an accidental explosion involving fireworks in a nearby outbuilding, with the fire rapidly spreading to the museum and the tavern before it was finally extinguished by a police fire-engine. The entire museum collection was destroyed and much of the tavern was lost to the fire, which caused approximately £4000-£6000 (£350,000-£527,000 today) worth of damage.



Advert for the museum and pyrotechnic business of John Seaman operated from the Polar Bear Inn (L791.9)

Fortunately, no one was killed in the fire, although Seaman's son, who had been preparing the fireworks for a forthcoming display, was severely injured. Following the accident, Seaman's fellow licensed victuallers raised £150 which was presented to him by Alderman Bannister, President of the Hull Licensed Victuallers' Association. A newspaper report concerning the presentation, notes John Seaman's intention to re-establish the museum, however, this does not appear to have happened. And so the story ends here.