

= History of Edinburgh Zoo =

Edinburgh Zoo is a zoological park in Edinburgh , Scotland which opened on 22 July 1913 . Edinburgh had previously been home to a zoological garden which failed to thrive . The new zoo is owned and run by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and initially opened as the Scottish National Zoological Park . Modern zoological methods allowed animals to survive in Edinburgh 's cold climate .

Edinburgh is the only zoo in the United Kingdom to be incorporated by Royal Charter , and was the first zoo in the world to house and breed penguins . The zoo 's penguins have been famous throughout its history , and since the 1950s have performed a daily parade around the park .

The zoo was largely unaffected by war , though some animals were euthanised for safety reasons during the Second World War . After the war the park housed a brown bear named Voytek who had served with the Polish military . In 1972 one of the zoo 's king penguins was adopted by the Norwegian military .

In the 21st century Edinburgh Zoo was briefly forced to close by the 2001 foot @-@ and @-@ mouth outbreak , and in 2005 received threats from the Animal Liberation Front . In 2000 a plan for the complete redevelopment of the zoo was begun .

= = Precursors = =

Scotland 's first zoo was called The Royal Edinburgh Zoological Gardens , and predated the modern Edinburgh Zoo by some 70 years . After the death of James Donaldson , a wealthy Scottish publisher and bookseller , the gardens of his country house , Broughton Hall , were converted into a zoological park . Occupying a 6 @-@ acre (2 @.@ 4 ha) site , the park was situated about a mile to the north @-@ east of Central Edinburgh , near East Claremont Street . Naturalist John Graham Dalyell was one of the original promoters of the project and eventually president of the board of directors . The Zoological Gardens opened in 1839 with a collection of stock zoo animals including lions , tigers , monkeys , bears and an elephant .

At the time , animals in zoos were typically held in poor conditions in small , cramped cages , and the Zoological Gardens presented no exception . As a result , its animals were frequently afflicted by disease , and also suffered from the harsh easterly winds of the Edinburgh climate . Despite these setbacks , the menagerie attempted to maintain its popularity by putting on concerts , acrobatics shows and displays of fireworks and Montgolfier balloons . Children were carried around the park on the back of the zoo 's elephant , giving it a rare opportunity for exercise . Even with these entertainments , the Zoological Gardens were eventually forced to admit defeat . The park was closed and the site sold to a property developer in 1857 . Nothing now remains of the house or its gardens .

= = Foundation = =

Edinburgh Zoo was created by Thomas Haining Gillespie , a solicitor from Dumfries who dreamed of establishing a zoological park in Scotland . At first he was told that tropical animals would never be able to live in a cold climate like Edinburgh 's ? a view that had to some extent been borne out by the failure of the Royal Zoological Gardens . In 1908 , though , he was encouraged to read of the pioneering methods employed by Carl Hagenbeck , which were allowing tropical animals to thrive in the recently opened Tierpark Hagenbeck in Hamburg , Germany .

In 1909 , Gillespie and others founded a registered charity which was to become the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland . The Society 's first president was lawyer and politician Edward Theodore Salvesen , son of the Norwegian merchant Christian Salveson ? a connection which would prove significant in later years . A series of lectures given to the society by J. Arthur Thomson gave yet more momentum to the modern approach being spearheaded by Hagenbeck in Germany .

All that remained was to find a suitable site for the new zoo . Gillespie hoped for a site with plenty of sun and with shelter from the north and east winds . He also intended the zoo to be cheaply and

quickly accessible via public transport . The society secured an option to purchase the 75 @-@ acre (30 ha) Corstorphine Hill House estate for £ 17 @,@ 000 . The house had been built in 1793 as the home of Scottish accountant William Keith . Its current Scottish Baronial architecture is mostly thanks to remodelling by the Macmillan family in 1891 .

The zoological society found they were having difficulty gathering the necessary funds before the approaching expiry of the purchase option . Edinburgh City Council stepped in , purchasing the site outright in February 1913 . The zoological society was granted full use of the estate in return for a 4 percent annual repayment of the cost .

A further £ 8 @,@ 000 , raised with the help of the society 's members , was set aside for the construction and stocking of the park . Initially the zoo occupied only the southernmost 27 acres (11 ha) , while the land to the north was used as a golf course . The park was designed by town planner Patrick Geddes and his son @-@ in @-@ law Frank Mears . Following Gillespie 's vision , they modeled the park after the open designs of zoos like the New York Zoological Park and Hagenbeck 's zoo in Hamburg . These modern zoological parks promoted a more spacious and natural environment for the animals , and stood in stark contrast to the steel cages typical of the menageries built during the Victorian era . The Scottish National Zoological Park , as it was initially called , opened to the public with a large collection of donated and borrowed animals on 22 July 1913 , after only 15 weeks of work . The zoo still occupies very much the same area of land today , though the park is being extensively redeveloped .

= = Early history = =

In its opening year the zoo was incorporated by Royal Charter ? though it was not granted the use of the " Royal " title until 1948 , following a visit by King George VI . As of June 2011 Edinburgh Zoo was the only zoo in Britain with a Royal Charter . The original charter defined the zoological society 's mission as being " to promote , facilitate and encourage the study of zoology and kindred subjects and to foster and develop amongst the people an interest in and knowledge of animal life . "

Thanks to the zoological society 's connection with the Salvesen family , some of the zoo 's first animals were three king penguins , arriving from South Georgia with a Christian Salvesen whaling expedition that docked in Leith in early 1914 . They were the first penguins to be seen anywhere in the world outside of the South Atlantic . The zoo successfully hatched the first ever captive king penguin chick in 1919 . Penguins continued to arrive with whaling ships for years afterwards . Today , king penguins are perhaps the zoo 's most famous animals .

A tropical bird and reptile house was added in 1925 , followed by an aquarium , paid for by a grant , in 1927 , and an ape house in 1929 . The now famous penguin pool was constructed in 1930 ? though it has since been rebuilt , in 1990 , to include a new viewing area . It was in 1928 that the Corstorphine Golf Club finally evacuated the 47 acres (19 ha) to the north of the estate , allowing the zoo to expand significantly . This new area of the park was again designed by Mears , along with his partner Carus @-@ Wilson , and was completed in 1937 .

Hagenbeck 's modern zoo techniques proved effective , and Edinburgh quickly gained a reputation for its good animal conditions . 1934 saw the births in captivity of a sea lion and beaver , and in 1936 a baby chimpanzee followed . A litter of wolves was born in 1938 , and soon afterwards the first orangutan to be born in Britain .

= = War years = =

Edinburgh Zoo was bombed twice during the Second World War , but remained mostly unharmed . One of the bombs , in around 1940 , was reported to have killed a giraffe . Nevertheless , Edinburgh was , like all zoos in Britain , affected by the war . Since bombs could fall at any time , it was not considered safe to keep dangerous animals that might escape if their enclosures were damaged . In 1941 the recently born wolves had therefore to be euthanized , along with a collection of dangerous snakes , to guard against any possible danger to the public . Despite the war the zoo continued to grow , with land to the east being purchased in 1942 and construction of a lake beginning soon

afterwards .

= = Post @-@ war era = =

Gillespie retired from his post as director in 1950 . In 1956 he was succeeded by Gilbert Fisher , who took over as director @-@ secretary of the Zoological Society and effectively gained control of the zoo .

It was around this time that Edinburgh Zoo 's now famous Penguin Parade was established . A zookeeper accidentally left a gate to the penguin pool open , and was followed around the zoo by a train of penguins . Visitors were so delighted with the procession that it became a regular occurrence , and today around two thirds of the zoo 's penguins parade round the park every day .

One of the zoo 's famous inhabitants during the post @-@ war period was Voytek , a Syrian brown bear . Voytek had been sold to a group of Polish soldiers during the war . He learned to help the soldiers by carrying crates of ammunition , and became an unofficial mascot . In 1944 the Polish II Corps sailed to Italy to join the British 8th Army . Voytek had to be officially drafted into the Polish army in order to secure his passage on a British transport ship . In 1946 the II Corps were demobilised and settled in Scotland , at Winfield Camp near Hutton , Berwickshire . Voytek retired to Edinburgh Zoo in 1947 and lived there until his death in 1963 . During his time in the army Voytek had developed a liking for cigarettes , and this may have contributed to his popularity as an attraction at the zoo .

In 1972 the zoo gained yet more military credentials when king penguin Nils Olav was adopted by the Norwegian King 's Guard . Norway 's connection with Edinburgh 's penguins began with the Salvesen family 's links to the zoo , and renewed interest was sparked when a lieutenant called Nils Egelien visited the zoo with the King 's Guard in 1961 . On his return in 1972 Egelien arranged for the unit to adopt one of the penguins . Nils Olav was named after Egelien and in honour of King Olav V of Norway , and given the rank of lance corporal . A statue of the penguin now stands outside the zoo .

Three @-@ year @-@ old polar bear Mercedes was given to the zoo in 1984 , after she was rescued in Churchill , Manitoba , Canada . She had begun wandering into the town in search of food . Because of the danger she posed to residents , Mercedes was tagged with a number so she could be tracked . When she could not be persuaded to return to the wild , a decision was taken to shoot her . A member of the Edinburgh Zoological Society collaborated with a cousin in Canada and they were able to rescue Mercedes , finding her a new home at Edinburgh zoo . The bear would become one of the zoo 's most popular attractions .

In 1986 , the Society acquired the Highland Wildlife Park , a 259 @-@ acre (105 ha) safari park and zoo near Kingussie , 30 miles (48 km) south of Inverness . When opened in 1972 by Neil Macpherson , the Wildlife Park 's goal was to showcase animals native to the Highlands of Scotland . Today its focus has changed and it primarily houses tundra species , including some animals which have been moved from Edinburgh Zoo itself .

= = 21st century = =

In October 1999 the zoo had begun to explore the possibility of relocating in order to improve its facilities . As of February 2000 the zoo had scrapped its plans to relocate , instead announcing a " masterplan " for the redevelopment of the entire site .

The foot @-@ and @-@ mouth scare of 2001 forced the zoo to close to protect the animals from possible infection . Since the zoo could not welcome any visitors , it faced significant financial losses . Questions were posed about the zoo 's future , though in the end the park was able to reopen after only five weeks . Further help came in the form of a £ 1 @. @ 9 million donation from an anonymous former resident of the city in early April , just as the zoo reopened .

In 2005 the new Budongo chimp house was unveiled , along with the Living Links to Human Evolution Centre , Britain 's first primate behaviour research site . In a scientific breakthrough in 2006 chimpanzees at Edinburgh were found to use word @-@ like vocal labels for food .

In late 2005 the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) threatened action over the holding in captivity of Mercedes , then Britain 's only polar bear . The zoo had initially planned to retire their polar bear exhibit after Mercedes died . When zoo officials announced plans to create a new attraction , citing their responsibility to ensure the survival of the species , the ALF threatened damage to zoo workers ' property and other scare @-@ tactics . Edinburgh 's treatment of polar bears had often been subject to criticism , punctuated by incidents like the death in 1997 of Mercedes ' partner Barney , who choked on a plastic child 's toy thrown into his enclosure . In 2009 the zoo carried out their plans to create a new exhibit and improve conditions for Mercedes , moving her to the Highland Wildlife Park , where she was joined by a young male polar bear named Walker . Mercedes was euthanized on compassionate grounds in 2011 , suffering from severe arthritis .

= = = 2007 council troubles = = =

In January 2006 the zoo put forward plans to sell off 15 acres (6 @.@ 1 ha) of land in order to raise funds for the ongoing redevelopment . The plans were rejected by the council in October 2007 by a single vote , leaving the zoological society " extremely disappointed " . In November the zoo announced that it planned to fight the council 's decision . A rumor circulated later that month that the zoo was considering a move to Glasgow , though zoo officials insisted the rumor had no truth to it . Organised opposition to the sale resulted in the zoo being allowed to sell only a small portion of the originally proposed land .