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HISTORY

The last white rhinoceroses in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Robert Coryndon shot two adult male white rhinoceroses (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) in northern Zimbabwe in 1893 for museum purposes, commissioned by Lord Walter Rothschild. The mounted hide of one of these specimens was added to Rothschild's museum in Tring and its skeleton was purchased by the Museum of Zoology of the University of Cambridge. Both skin and skeleton of the second specimen were added to the collection of the British Museum (Natural History) in London. As the species was considered to be on the verge of extinction, these white rhinoceroses created much interest among the educated public in England during the last decade of the 19th century.

Résumé

Robert Coryndon a tiré deux rhinocéros blancs mâles adultes (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) dans le nord du Zimbabwe en 1893, à la demande de Lord Walter Rothschild, pour un musée. La dépouille empaillée d'un de ces spécimens a été ajoutée à la collection du musée de Rothschild à Tring, et son squelette fut acquis par le musée de zoologie de l'Université de Cambridge. La peau et le squelette du second spécimen furent ajoutés à la collection du British Museum (Histoire naturelle) de Londres. Comme on considérait que l'espèce était au bord de l'extinction, ces rhinocéros suscitèrent beaucoup d'intérêt chez le public anglais cultivé pendant la dernière décennie du 19^{ème} siècle.

Setting the scene

On 2 July 1892, the well-known paleontologist and zoologist Richard Lydekker (1849–1915) contributed an article on the general natural history of the African species of rhinoceros to *The Field*, the leading weekly magazine of the time for the country gentleman in England. Without elaborating about his sources, he lamented that the white rhinoceros, *Ceratotherium simum simum* (Burchell, 1817) occur-

ring south of the Zambezi River, was hunted on such a scale that 'its destruction is but a matter of time, even if still unaccomplished' (Lydekker 1892). No example had ever been shown in a zoological garden, and material in English museums was very scarce, consisting of four skulls in the British Museum (Natural History) in London, one skull with horns in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, also in London, and a stuffed head and skull in the Free Museum in Liverpool. The Zoo-

logical Society of London had made enquiries as early as 1882 to obtain a living white rhinoceros for their zoological gardens, but had been made to understand that any chance of capture was small indeed (Lydekker 1892).

First described in 1817 by the British explorer William John Burchell (1781–1863), the white rhinoceros had been hunted to near-extinction just 70 years later. The famous hunter and author Frederick Courteney Selous (1851–1917) had roamed the hunting grounds of southern Africa for about 10 years when he wrote his best-selling masterpiece, *A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa* (1881a). According to Selous, in 1878 and 1880 the white rhinoceros was still 'fairly numerous' between the Umniati and the Hanyane Rivers in north-eastern Mashonaland (Zimbabwe), while by 1879 it had disappeared from the area between the Chobe and the Botletlie Rivers (Botswana). As the known range was very limited, he predicted that 'their extermination in this portion of the country may therefore, I am afraid, be expected within a very few years' (Selous 1881a: 191–192). While Selous chose his words very carefully, his readers in England should be excused for concluding that the disappearance of the white rhinoceros was imminent. That certainly was the impression gained by the hunter-naturalist Henry Anderson Bryden (1854–1937), who travelled to Africa in 1890. In *The Field* of 16 July 1892, Bryden thanked Lydekker for his interesting comments, which were 'for naturalists full of melancholy interest' as the animal was 'now unhappily extinct, or all but extinct' (Bryden 1892). When Selous saw this article a few months later, he had to set the record straight, which he did in a letter written on 4 November 1892 in Cape Town and published in *The Field* on 26 November:

I will take the opportunity of saying that I have never stated that the white rhinoceros was extinct, although I have often lately seen myself quoted as having done so. What I have said, and what I still say, is that this most interesting animal, the largest of terrestrial mammals after the elephant, is on the verge of extinction. (Selous 1892).

He estimated that in Mashonaland (now the northern part of Zimbabwe), there could still be 10, up to 20 perhaps, of these animals left. Another one or two had recently been reported in the Limuga, which is the country between the Umfuli and the Umzweswe

Rivers, situated in the general region of Kadoma, 130 km south-west of Harare. He added some news:

I have just heard from a reliable source that one of these animals (a female) has been killed lately about 100 miles NW of Salisbury, Mashonaland. This animal was one of six that were consorting together, and the two gentlemen who shot it—Messrs Eyre and Coryndon—have, I believe, preserved the skin and skeleton. (Selous 1892)

While Selous was acquainted with both Arthur Eyre and Robert Coryndon, his knowledge of their hunting feat was second hand, because he had left Salisbury in the middle of 1892 and was on his way back to England.

In this paper, I will trace the history of these events in 1892 and the subsequent commission to procure other specimens of the white rhinoceros in 1893. I have been able to use three collections of mainly unpublished papers. First, the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House in Oxford preserves the private papers of Robert Coryndon (documented by Gates 1966), which includes a scrapbook and a map relating to the hunt of the rhinoceros (MSS Afr. S 633, Box 12), referred to as 'MSS Afr'. Secondly, the correspondence of Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild (1868–1937) preserved in the archives of the Natural History Museum, London, contains a few letters by Coryndon, referred to as 'Rothschild Archives'. It may be noted that most of the papers relating to the life of Rothschild have been destroyed in the course of time (Rothschild 1983: 296–301). Thirdly, the Museum of Zoology at the University of Cambridge has seven bound volumes of historical documents relating to their acquisitions until 1910, which contain newspaper cuttings and correspondence about the purchase of the white rhinoceros (History, vol. 3, items 138 to 167), previously mentioned by Rothschild (1983: 167–169) and referred to as 'UMZC'. The main localities mentioned in the text are shown in figure 1.

An unexpected encounter in 1892

Robert Thorne Coryndon (1870–1925), brought up in the South African diamond town of Kimberley, loved the outdoors and spent much of his time and money on horses, dogs and guns (Youé 1986). At the end of 1889 he was among a dozen young men re-



Figure 1. Map of Zimbabwe showing places mentioned in the text.

cruited by Cecil John Rhodes (1853–1902) to escort the pioneer column of new settlers to Rhodesia. Guided by Selous, they halted near Mount Hampden in Shona country in September 1890, where they founded Fort Salisbury (now Harare), initially a collection of mud shelters and thatched huts. Coryndon accepted a position in the personal clerical staff of Archibald Ross Colquhoun (1848–1914), the first resident commissioner of Rhodesia. He spent the next 17 years in the service of the British South Africa Company, moving from surveyor to Rhodes’s private secretary to administrator of North-Western Rhodesia.

When Coryndon read the announcement in the open letter written by Selous (1892) about his hunt of the white rhinoceros, he wrote a full report about the events dated 23 January 1893, which was pub-

lished in *The Field* of 20 May (Coryndon 1893). According to Coryndon, he was among a company of men returning from the Zambezi River to Fort Salisbury at the end of August 1892, together with Arthur Eyre and A.M. Graham. Although he did not provide a more precise locality, he seems to have been about halfway between Zumbo and Harare. Selous (1881b) had been in the same general region along the Umfuli River in July 1880 and had reported spoor of rhinoceroses as well as the presence of the black rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis* (Linnaeus, 1758). Coryndon and his party unexpectedly sighted some rhinoceroses in the distance, and upon investigation these turned out to be a male, a female and a small calf of the white species. Although they fired a number of shots, none were fatal and the animals got away. Following the spoor during the afternoon, they lost the two adults, but they

had mortally wounded the calf by mistake and it died. Continuing their search early the next morning, they came across another female white rhinoceros accompanied by a half-grown animal and a small male calf. When Eyre shot the mother, the older calf disappeared into the bush, but the young one remained at her side. The latter was caught, put in a kraal, given piles of grass to eat and plenty of water to drink, and named 'Sloper'. Despite all care, Sloper died on the eighth day, 'apparently of a broken heart' (Coryndon 1893).

These events were confirmed by William Harvey Brown (1862–1913), who wrote about hunting big game in Mashonaland in a book of 1899. After shooting a black rhinoceros in the vicinity of Sinoia between the Angwa and Hanyani Rivers in September 1892, he accepted an invitation by Arthur Eyre and his brother Herbert to try his luck in the fly-infested country to the north. Brown arrived at their camp in Tchinga's (Chininga) in the evening of 24 September 1892. He found the party at work on the skin and skeleton of a female white rhinoceros and heard about the unfortunate fate of the calf Sloper (Brown 1899: 226). According to Brown, Eyre again tried to shoot a male white rhinoceros between 30 September and 3 October at Mount Domo, just north of Chininga, but failed. It is quite likely that Mount Domo was the place where the mother and calf had been shot. Although Brown stated that Eyre was preserving the remains as museum specimens, there is no trace of them. Coryndon (1893) gave the impression that they were able only to rescue the skull of the young one called Sloper and the skin and skeleton of his mother, which 'formed good loads for twelve boys.' Selous (in a letter to Dennis Lyell of 1906, printed in Lyell 1935: 8) later assumed that the skin had gone bad.

The commission of 1893

In England, Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild (1868–1937), the second Baron Rothschild of Tring, had opened his private menagerie and museum of natural history at his Tring estate to the public in 1892, when he was 24 years old. His collection had been his passion from at least the age of seven and he was to continue this interest throughout his life, buying specimens on the market and sending out collectors to various parts of the globe (Gunther 1975: 417; Rothschild 1983). We can easily imagine Rothschild perusing his copy of *The Field* at the end of November 1892,

reading the letter by Selous, and wishing that he would be able to obtain the remains of the white rhinoceros shot by Coryndon and Eyre. He knew that this was going to be his last chance ever to add this great prize to his collection. Rothschild could have enquired at the London office of the British South Africa Company, or written to people in Salisbury, or discussed the matter with Selous, who had landed in Southampton just before Christmas 1892 (Taylor 1989). In any case, Rothschild approached Coryndon in an attempt to procure the white rhinoceros, but was informed that the specimens shot in August 1892 were not available. Coryndon was confident, however, that he could take leave to track down another one for Rothschild. While this exchange of letters during the first half of 1893 has not survived, it is certain that Coryndon set out from Salisbury in the first week of June 1893 hoping to shoot a white rhinoceros for Rothschild's museum in Tring. Rothschild was not the only one desiring to possess this rare rhinoceros. On 1 June 1893, Sidney Frederic Harmer (1862–1950), since 1892 superintendent of the Museum of Zoology in Cambridge, wrote to Coryndon on behalf of the museum with a similar request, but his letter arrived too late. In Coryndon's absence, it was opened by H. E. Caldecott, who replied from the Office of the Public Prosecutor in Salisbury on 17 July 1893:

Mr Coryndon received a commission some little time ago to procure an adult skeleton of the white rhinoceros for Lord Rothschild, and he left Salisbury for that purpose about six weeks ago. He is going in the direction of the junction of the Umniati and Zambesi Rivers, and expects to be away about six months. . . . I do not fancy he would sell a white rhinoceros skeleton with skin &c. complete (if he got more than one) for less than £250 or perhaps £200. (UMZC 3: 138)

Soon after his return to Salisbury three months later, Coryndon sat down and wrote a letter to Rothschild, which is reproduced here, as it contains the most immediate reflections on the expedition. Dated Salisbury, Mashonaland, 3 September 1893, Coryndon wrote as follows:

Sir, I have great pleasure in reporting the success of my expedition; I have shot and preserved two fine white rhinoceros bulls. I left camp in the beginning

of June and proceeded to the rhinoceros country, & there made a big camp & proceeded to look for spoor and to examine the country thoroughly. It was very evident that there were still one or two more of the animals left and about a week after I had formed camp, I found the two bulls. After a short stalk I got up to them & shot them both, using a double 10 bore Paradox gun—this was about four o'clock in the afternoon, so that the sun had set some time by the time I had gone to camp, got the loads and formed another camp by the dead rhinoceroses; I explain this because by next morning the bodies had swelled up considerably & stiffened so that it was a matter of great difficulty getting the few measurements I have; I succeeded besides in getting several photos with a small hand camera and some sketches which will be of considerable use to the taxidermist. The skinning & preserving of the two rhino at once was a severe & unpleasant piece of work; I used arsenical soap plentifully for the skins together with a good deal of powdered burnt alum, the bones I had carefully cleaned, tied up in bags and labelled. Upon my arrival in camp I consulted Mr Duncan, the acting administrator during Dr Jameson's absence in Victoria, and we decided that the best thing to be done was to have the skins & bones properly & safely packed and stored carefully here; and in view of the difficulty that would be experienced in setting up a rhinoceros skin merely from indistinct photos or sketches, and as I will have to go to England myself when the first of the Matabili campaign is over, I offered Mr Duncan to bring the skins & bones home myself rather than trust them to the usual heavy goods transport. Besides that, it is not safe to send anything home along the Tuli Road in the present state of affairs, the risk of it being interrupted & destroyed is far too great. I have to state with regard to the second rhinoceros that a hyaena got into my camp one night and succeeded in tearing open a bag in which were tied up the small bones of the two fore legs and the tail; these bones were scattered about in the morning; I was exceedingly careful however in collecting them and do not think that more than three or four of these bones are gone, the hyaena also gnawed away a small shoulder of one of the large knobs on one of the large bones of the fore leg. Should you be willing to purchase the second rhinoceros I would suggest the price I mentioned in my first letter, viz. £500 clear for both rhinoceroses; should you however be unwilling to purchase it I may mention I have several other offers.

The day after tomorrow I leave here for Matabililand with the column and I shall take the first opportunity that offers itself to return to Salisbury, repack the bones and leave for England; I am convinced that from my intimate acquaintance with the white rhinoceros I can be of material service to your taxidermist & shall be happy to give you any help in my power. In the meantime, as my contract with you is complete and as I have handed the rhinoceroses to the Company as instructed, I shall be obliged if you would credit me with the sum of £250; the matter of the second rhinoceros may I think rest until I arrive in England. With regard to my expenses, I have drawn up a complete statement showing all expenses in detail and with all receipts attached which I shall show to Mr Duncan and take with me to England. I ought to have said that I have drawn the sum of £50 from Mr Duncan on account. I regret that I have been unable to procure for you any specimens of butterflies or insects as owing to the Matabili scare my trip was cut very short. (Rothschild Archives)

Coryndon had shot two adult male white rhinoceroses and preserved their hides and skeletons. His notes with measurements, sketches and photographs done on the spot have not been found again, with the exception of a rough sketch of the heads published in *The Field* of 14 April 1894 (fig. 2). Having returned to Salisbury with the trophies at the end of August 1893, he joined a volunteer burgher force under Major P.W. Forbes in the Matabele campaign and left Salisbury on 5 September 1893 (Fox 1915). The conflict was brief and ended with an encounter at Bembisi on 1 November 1893, which Coryndon described in the *Illustrated London News* for 17 March 1894 (Youé 1986: 13–14). Although the precise actions taken by Coryndon afterwards are unknown, he probably went to Salisbury, where he found that the remains of the rhinoceroses had been packed and sent off, and continued to travel to England, arriving in February or March 1894. Selous had also been back in Africa to fight in the campaign against the Matabele and returned to England in time to marry Gladys Maddy (1874–1951) at Down Hatherly, near Gloucester on 4 April 1894 (Millais 1919: 205, Taylor 1989: 222). Coryndon may have been among the guests, because he knew Selous from the days of Rhodes's pioneer column and had tried to emulate his skills in big game hunting. (Youé 1986: 12)

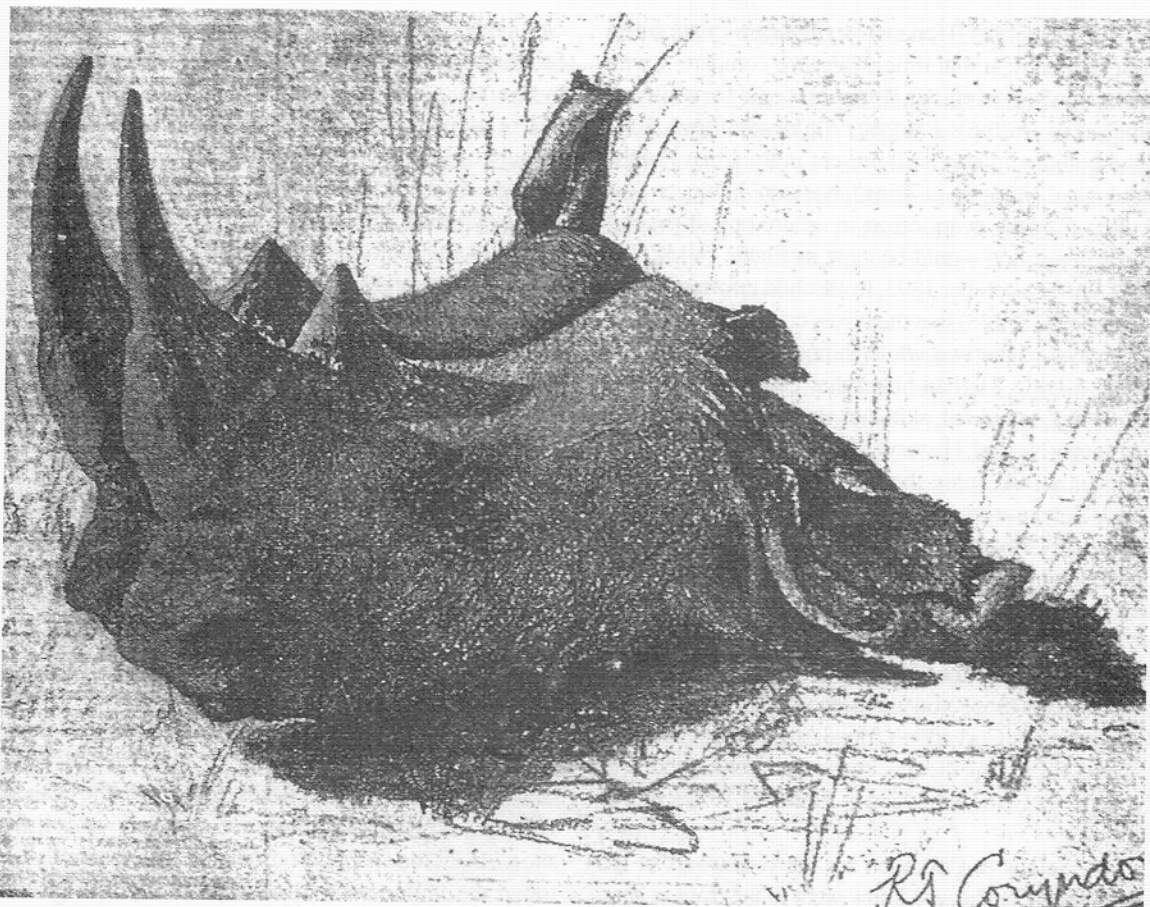


Figure 2. Heads of the white rhinoceroses shot in July 1893 sketched by Robert T. Coryndon, published in *The Field*, 14 April 1894.

Arrival of the white rhinoceroses in England

Meanwhile, Walter Rothschild had been happy to receive Coryndon's letter of 3 September 1893. When he wrote Alfred Newton (1829–1907), professor of zoology at the University of Cambridge, on 17 October, he announced in a postscript that 'a friend of mine has just killed & preserved for me two old bulls with their skeletons of the White Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros simus*), the first entire specimens ever preserved' (UMZC 3: 139). It is unlikely that Rothschild was aware that Sidney Harmer had tried to obtain a white rhinoceros from Coryndon just a few months earlier. Newton immediately grasped the significance of this unexpected opportunity to add the rarest large mammal to the collection of the Museum of Zoology in Cambridge, and enquired by return of mail (19 Octo-

ber 1893) if Rothschild was amenable to parting with one of the specimens: 'What are you going to do with the second one, for you can't wish to keep two? Perhaps you will give it to us?' (UMZC 3: 139A). Rothschild good-heartedly replied on 20 October 1893:

As to the 2nd *Rhinoceros simus*, I should be delighted to hand it over to you, but till my friend Mr Coryndon comes home, I cannot dispose either of the two skeletons or the stuffed specimens. I certainly shall only keep a stuffed specimen, but I paid half expenses (£250) & know that as Coryndon is a poor man, he will want to make up £250 (the other half) out of the 2nd *R. simus*. There are only 5 others left in the herd & that is the only remains of a gigantic mammal of which in 1875 one could still have killed 30 to 40 in a day. (UMZC 3: 140)

The price of £250 for a white rhinoceros was quite a sum of money at that time, when we compare it with the 6 pounds 18 shillings Rothschild paid for a 10-volume set of Buffon's *Planches Enluminées* with 1008 hand-coloured plates (still present in the library of the Zoological Museum at Tring). Newton, however, was willing to make every effort to secure one of the rhinoceroses if one would become available (UMZC 3: 141). On 8 December 1893, Rothschild informed Newton (UMZC 3: 143) that the boxes containing the hides and bones of the two white rhinoceroses had just arrived at Tring. He had heard that Coryndon had sold one complete animal, skin and skeleton, to the British Museum (Natural History). As Rothschild was interested only in keeping the hide to be mounted, he offered Newton the skeleton of that animal for £150, supposedly a bargain price, because three or four caudal vertebrae were missing and a boss on the thigh bone was smashed by a bullet. Newton never hesitated and on 12 December accepted 'the offer of the skeleton of *Rhinoceros simus* for £150 provided that it has no other defects than those you mentioned' (UMZC 3: 144). Unfortunately, Coryndon's friends in Salisbury had been careless in packing the specimens. Rothschild informed Newton about the confusion in a letter of 13 December 1893:

F.C. Selous & Coryndon are the two scouts of the Company and as you know went to the front as soon as war was declared. The consequence was that a man named Maclaurin brought the 2 *Rh. simus* home & packed all the bones indiscriminately in one case & the two skulls in a 2nd. (UMZC 3: 145)

As mentioned earlier, Coryndon himself had indicated that a few bones might be missing or chewed by hyenas.

Coryndon addressed a meeting of the Zoological Society of London in their premises at Regent's Park on Tuesday 3 April 1894, with an account of his hunt of the white rhinoceros in Mashonaland and some details of the biology of these animals. The contents of his talk were printed in the Society's *Proceedings* with a coloured plate, which was available in August 1894 (Duncan 1937). However, the interested public could read all about it much sooner in the local press, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 12 April 1894 (Coryndon 1894b), the *Pall Mall Budget* of 19 April 1894 (Coryndon 1894c; see fig. 3 and *The Field* of 14 April (Tegetmeier 1894a). It is likely that Coryndon's talk in London also occasioned an anonymous note in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 9 April 1894 on the arrival of two white rhinos in England (Anon. 1894a). Similar to the story related in his letter to Rothschild, Coryndon reported that he found tracks of the white rhinoceros in north-east Mashonaland in July 1893. After shooting two large adult males, the next 11 days were spent in the area to clean the bones and dry the skins. Both in his letter to Rothschild and in the printed versions of his talk in London, Coryndon was a little short on details and never disclosed where exactly he found the rhinoceroses, possibly to keep his options open for future commissions, because at least a few other white rhinoceroses were still alive in the area when he left. In his talk reported in the news magazines, Coryndon said that he found the animals in



Figure 3. Title of Robert Coryndon's report in the *Pall Mall Budget* of 19 April 1894.

north-east Mashonaland, while Caldecott had written to Harmer in Cambridge that Coryndon had set out into the direction of the junction of the Umniati and Zambezi Rivers. Although that might have been the plan, Coryndon did not actually travel that far from Salisbury. Among Coryndon's manuscripts in Rhodes House, Oxford (Rothschild Archives), is a hand-drawn map dated 'Chininga's, 6th July 1893' (fig. 4). The date coincides with the period in which Coryndon found the white rhinoceroses and it is more than likely that the animals were in fact shot in the immediate vicinity of the camp called Chininga. It was on the western bank of the Hanyani (or Manyame) River, 30 miles (50 km) north of Chinhoyi, which is roughly 100 km north-west of present-day Harare, about 17°15' S, 30°10' E.

The two specimens in England

Although Alfred Newton had gladly accepted to buy the skeleton for £150 (UMZC 3: 144), he still had to find the funds. It was decided to try to raise the necessary amount by public subscription, to which effect a pamphlet was printed and distributed. Dated December 1893 and signed by Newton and Harmer, it reads as follows:

The skeleton of an adult African Rhinoceros of the largest species (*R. simus*) has been offered to the Museum at the price of £150. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the addition of this form to our collection. Mr Selous states, in his recently published work ('Travel and Adventure in South-East

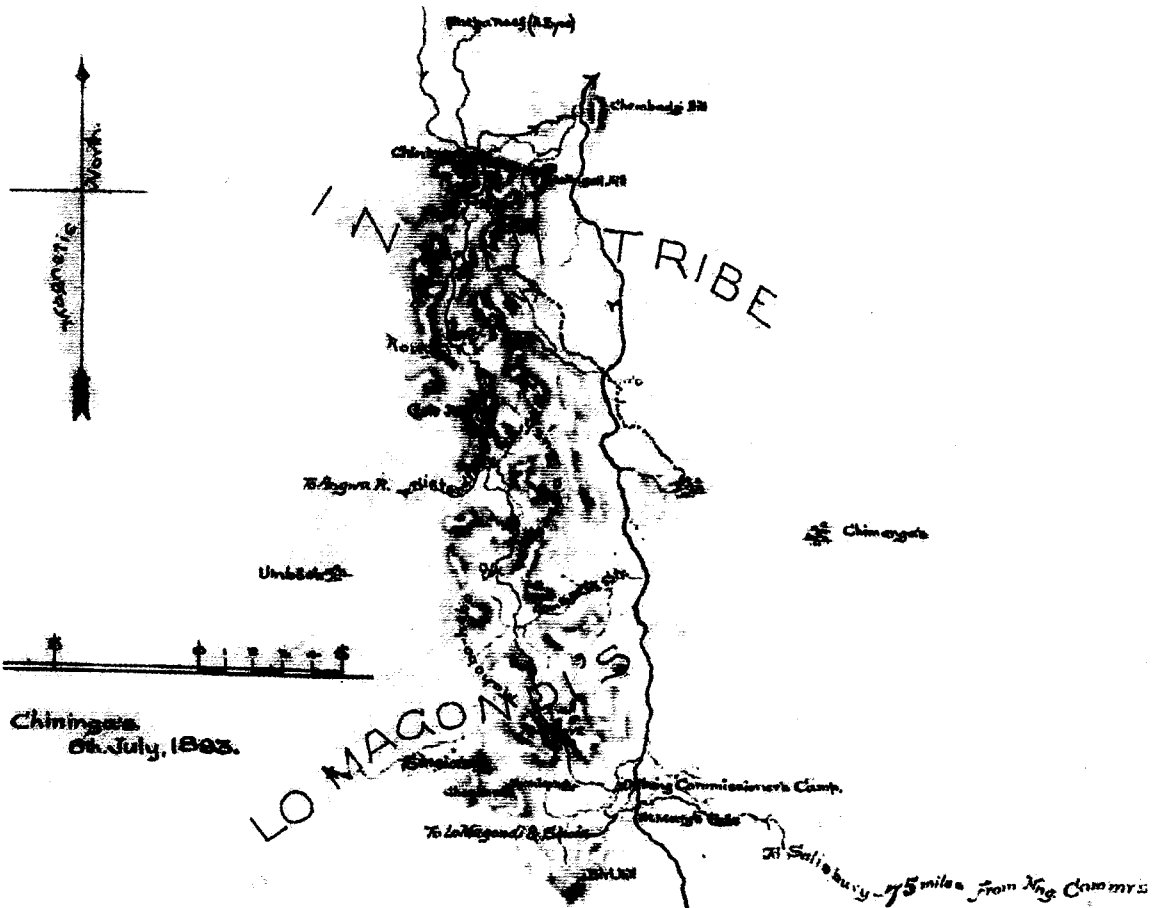


Figure 4. Map of Lomagundi's area drawn by Robert Coryndon at Chininga on 6 July 1893, preserved in the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS. Afr. S 633, Box 12, f.16.

Africa,' p. 158), that 'to the best of my belief, the great white or square-mouthed rhinoceros, the largest of terrestrial mammals after the elephant, will in the course of the next few years become absolutely extinct.' No living example has ever been received in Europe; and the only specimen of the skeleton to be seen in any Museum is believed to be that of Leyden. Within the last six months two adult males have been killed out of the few said to be still left in Mashonaland; and their hides and skeletons have arrived in England. The hide and skeleton of one have been secured for the British Museum. The skeleton of the other is now offered to us at a price which, considering the extreme rarity and impending extinction of the animal, is by no means excessive. An additional point of interest lies in the fact that this species of Rhinoceros seems to be more nearly allied than any other to the extinct species commonly known as *R. tichorhinus* [the woolly rhinoceros], of which remains are found in various parts of England. In the present state of the Maintenance Fund it is impossible that more than a very small portion of the price asked could be defrayed out of funds at the disposal of the Museum. We therefore hope that Members of the Senate and others interested in the study of Zoology at Cambridge will be as liberal now as in the past, and enable us to purchase this extremely desirable specimen by subscription. (Pamphlet in UMZC 3: 151)

Eventually the required funds were raised, which was announced in another printed circular (100 copies) dated 6 December 1894, in which Newton and Harmer stated:

We have the pleasure of informing you that our appeal was so generously received that we were able to effect the purchase, and that the specimen has now been mounted and is exhibited in the Museum. (Circular in UMZC 3: 159; see fig. 5)

A total of £162-1-6 was raised, of which Newton donated £15 and Harmer £5. Other large donations of £10 each were received from Mr H. Evans, Prof. Sir G.M. Humphry and Mr S. Sanders, and of £5 each from The High Steward, The Master of Emmanuel, The Master of Trinity Hall, Mr W. Bateson, Mr H. Bury, Mrs Darwin, Prof. Foster, Mr F. DuCane Godman, Messrs Mortlock & Co., Mr M.R. Pryor, and Mr A.E. Shipley. Besides the purchase of the skel-

eton, expenditures were made for ironwork, for the stand, and for printing the circulars. The accession was proudly recorded in the museum's annual report for 1894 (Harmer 1895: 907). The skeleton may have been on exhibit for a short time only, to be returned to the taxidermist for further attention to some details.

When the boxes with the hides and bones of the white rhinoceros specimens arrived at Tring, all the bones were found packed in one box, and Rothschild indicated to Newton in Cambridge on 13 December 1893 that he 'could only pick out the correct number of bones to each skeleton & not fit them till macerated' (UMZC 3: 145). Newton was eager to supervise the maceration and mounting of the skeleton, but Rothschild informed him on 18 December 1893 that the bones had been taken to Alfred Brazenor, 39 Lewes Road, Brighton, for maceration (UMZC 3: 149). In June 1894 this process was still going on (UMZC 3: 154), but a few weeks later the bones of the skeleton bought by the museum in Cambridge were taken to the well-known taxidermist Edward Gerrard (1811-1910) in Camden Town on the outskirts of London. There was some confusion about the selection of bones for each specimen and Newton had the impression that the British Museum had been able to get first choice (UMZC 3: 161). Gerrard proceeded to mount the skeleton as best as he could, adding the missing bones in plaster, and completed the work in July 1895. It was duly registered in the Accession Register of the Museum of Zoology in Cambridge (Old Catalogue number 627A, now number H.6441). The register states that Gerrard added moulds of the missing bones, being the vestigial right metacarpal V, the internal and external cuneiform of right hindfoot, the middle left cuneiform, and several caudal vertebrae. More significant, perhaps, was the absence of the horns, which of course had to be placed on the hide of the same specimen in Tring. However, Rothschild supplied another pair of horns taken from a male shot 'some twenty years ago' (around 1875) in the Cape Colony (UMZC 3: 167). The skeleton is still on permanent exhibit in the gallery of the Museum of Zoology, University of Cambridge (fig. 6). It cannot be determined with certainty if the horns received by Rothschild from the 'Cape Colony' belong to a black or a white rhinoceros. If the location had been used in a strict sense rather than colloquial usage, one would expect them to be those of *Diceros bicornis*.

Reg. Sept. 20, 1894

UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY, CAMBRIDGE,
December 6, 1894.

Some months since we asked your help towards securing a skeleton of *Rhinoceros simus* which had been offered to the Museum, but at a price beyond the means of the Maintenance Fund. We have the pleasure of informing you that our appeal was so generously received that we were able to effect the purchase, and that the specimen has now been mounted and is exhibited in the Museum.

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In making this announcement we take the opportunity of most heartily thanking you for your liberality, and beg leave to append a list of the subscriptions received as well as a statement of their expenditure.

ALFRED NEWTON.
S. F. HARMER.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
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Mr F. DuCane Godman	5	0	0	Mr E. Taylor	1	0	0
Mr J. Griffiths	1	1	0	Mr C. Warburton	1	1	0
Dr Guillemard	1	0	0	Dr Ward	1	1	0
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Mr J. A. Harvie-Brown	2	2	0				
Mr C. T. Heycock	1	1	0				
<i>Carried forward</i>	284	2	0	Transferred from the Museum Account	161	17	0
					0	4	6
					284	1	6

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s.	d.
Skeleton of <i>Rhinoceros simus</i>	150	0	0
Messrs Macintosh, for iron-work	9	2	6
Mr Sindall, for stand	2	5	0
The University Press, for printing circulars	0	14	0
	162	1	6

Examined and found correct,

ARTHUR E. SHIPLEY.

December 4, 1894.

Figure 5. Circular by A. Newton and S.F. Harmer acknowledging the assistance to purchase the skeleton for the University of Cambridge.

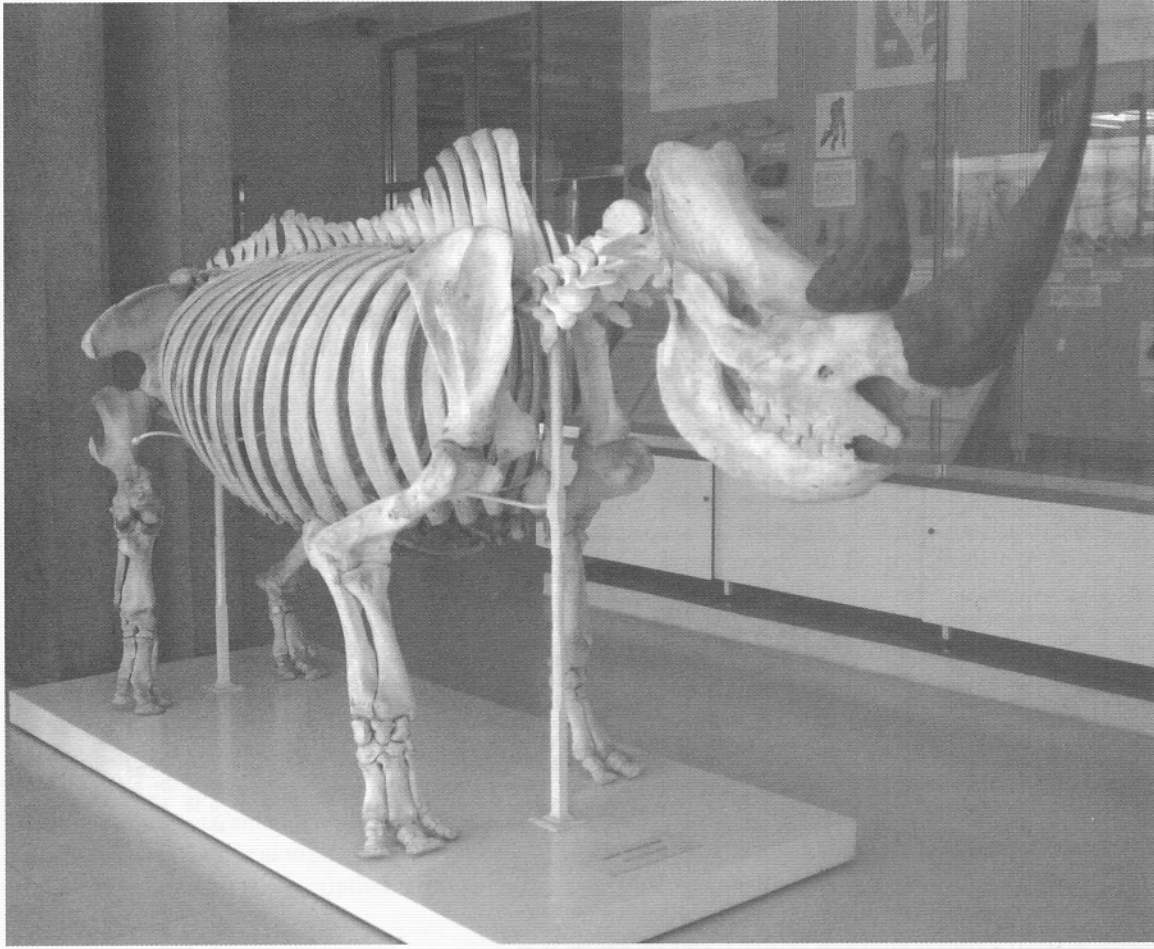


Figure 6. The skeleton of the white rhinoceros shot by Coryndon in 1894 in the Museum of Zoology, University of Cambridge.

Rothschild had originally commissioned Coryndon to shoot a white rhinoceros because he wanted to exhibit a mounted hide in his museum at Tring. It was natural that he approached Rowland Ward (1853–1912) in London to mount the specimen, because the firm at that time was the largest and most famous of its kind in the world. Rowland Ward was especially well known for mounting big game animals and their heads as trophies. From 1879, the shop was located at 166 Piccadilly, and many different kinds of animals could generally be seen on these premises (Frost 1981: 19–22). It was announced in the *Daily Graphic* of 13 April 1894, in *Land and Water* of 14 April, and in *Nature* of 19 April that ‘Mr Rowland Ward has now on view in Piccadilly a superbly mounted example of *Rhinoceros simus*, being one of two shot by Mr R.T. Coryndon last July in the north-west of Mashonaland’ (Anon. 1894b,

c,d). Coryndon, still in London, had been assisting the taxidermists. An illustration of the mounted rhinoceros in Ward’s premises was published in *The Field* of 21 April 1894 (Tegetmeier 1894b) and in two of the other local magazines (fig. 7). The correspondent of *Land and Water* added:

The specimen now on view at the ‘Jungle’ is the larger of the two bulls. With the aid of Mr Coryndon and Mr Ward’s assistants, we took a few measurements which will give our readers an idea of the size of this animal. Before giving these, we should say that Mr Coryndon expressed to us his surprise and delight at the manner in which the rhinoceros has been set up. ‘It is the animal himself,’ he said, and drew attention to the skill wherewith the outlines of the beast have been preserved, and the manner in which the forelegs



A "WHITE RHINOCEROS": THE FIRST COMPLETE SPECIMEN EVER SHOWN IN THIS COUNTRY.
(See page 10.)

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Figure 7. The white rhinoceros at Rowland Ward inspected by Richard Lydekker, from *The Daily Graphic* of 13 April 1894.

convey a sense of the weight they have to support. The animal stands 6 ft. 1½ in. [186.7 cm] at the withers; length, between uprights, 12 ft. 1 in. [368.3 cm]; length from lip, along bases of horns, up between ears, and following curves of back, 13 ft. [396 cm] to root of tail; 15 ft 8½ in. [478.8 cm] to tip of tail; girth behind shoulders, 10 ft. 3½ in. [313.7 cm]; girth round forearm 3 ft. 4½ in. [102.9 cm]. The development of the muscle of the forearm, by the way, attracts attention at once. The width of the lip between greatest depth of nostrils is just under twelve inches [30 cm]. The specimen is not remarkable for the length of the horns. The anterior horn measured 2 ft. 3 in. [68.6 cm] round the base, and 1 ft. 10½ in. [57.2 cm] from base to tip. (Anon. 1894c)

The mounted specimen is still in the Natural History Museum in Tring, registered with number ZD.19.39.4807. Besides the illustrations in contemporary newspapers, its likeness was engraved by Joseph Smit (1836–1929) on a coloured plate accom-

panying Coryndon's paper in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* (Coryndon 1894a, pl. XVIII; see fig. 8), while Renshaw (1904, facing p. 126) published a photograph.

When the British Museum (Natural History) in London negotiated with Rothschild and Coryndon about the purchase of a hide and skeleton of one of the white rhinoceroses, they stipulated that their own taxidermists should be responsible for mounting the skeleton, which gave them more control over the selection of the bones. The hide was mounted by Rowland Ward in London, and in May this specimen and the one destined for Tring were exhibited together in Piccadilly for a few days (Tegetmeier 1894c). The specimen was officially registered in their register on 21 September 1894 and placed on exhibit. The *Guide to the Galleries* dated 1894 states that the

white rhinoceros 'is now almost exterminated, and it is only quite recently that the Museum has been able to obtain the fine specimen exhibited' (Anon. 1894e: 37). According to Renshaw (1904: 142), it was a young adult male with the following measurements: height at shoulder, 6 ft. 6 in. (198 cm); base of horn to tip of tail, 14 ft. 6 in. (442 cm); anterior horn, 1 ft. 7 in. (48.3 cm) and posterior horn, 7 in. (17.8 cm).

At the end of the 19th century, it was often reported in newspapers as well as in the scientific literature that the white rhinoceros was extinct, or quickly nearing extinction. Coryndon kept his silence about the numbers of white rhinoceroses that he may have encountered in Mashonaland. These animals were valuable, and it probably was wise to keep quiet about their whereabouts and their numbers. It is unlikely that he in fact shot the last ones, or even the last one to be preserved for science. Even though there are no known reports of the white rhinoceros in northern Zimbabwe after 1895, it is prudent to agree with Roth (1967: 218) that 'a few stragglers might have sur-

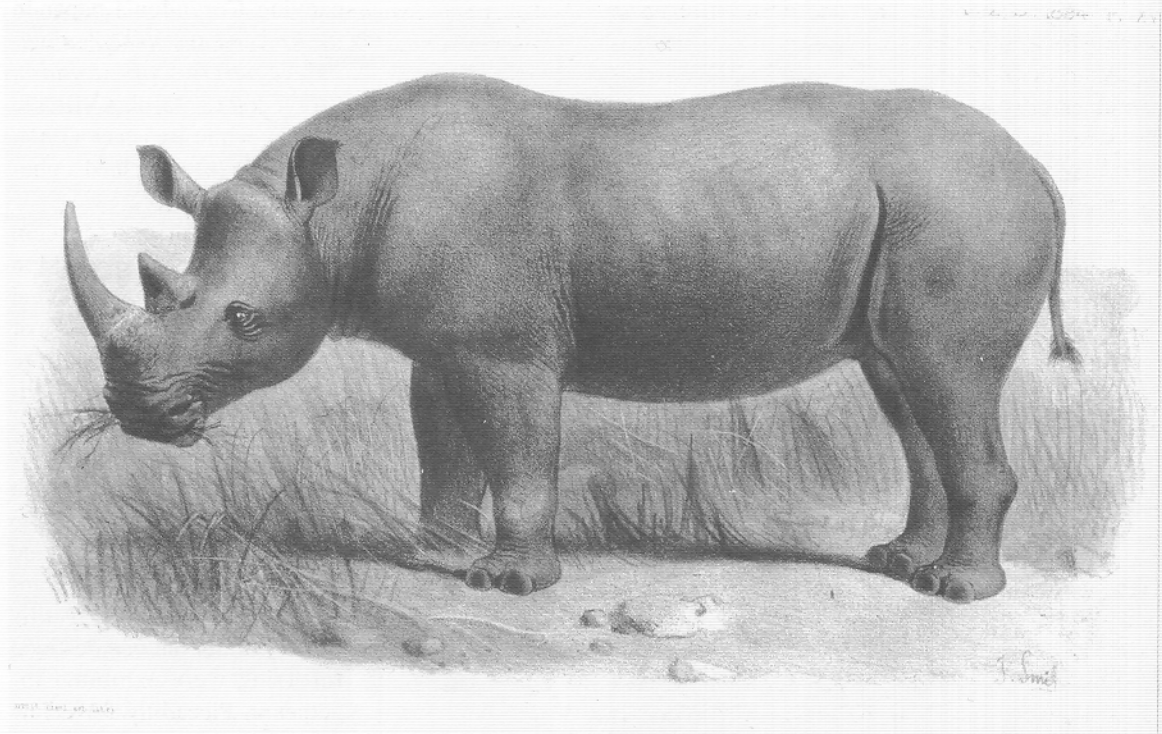


Figure 8. The white rhinoceros shot by Robert Coryndon in northern Zimbabwe in July 1893, mounted by Rowland Ward in London, later exhibited in Walter Rothschild's Museum at Tring, drawn by Joseph Smit; from the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, 1894, pl. 18 (copyright, Zoological Society of London, published with permission).

vived much longer in this and other peripheral areas'.

Renshaw (1904: 138, 144) stated that another fine bull white rhinoceros was shot in Mashonaland by Arthur Eyre in 1895 and presented to the South African Museum in Cape Town by Cecil Rhodes. This is not quite true in every detail. Although Arthur Eyre appears regularly in the accounts about the rhinoceros, I have been unable to find more about his life, except that he was part of Rhodes's pioneer column in 1892. He may have started to farm on the Umvukwe Mountains in the Lo Maghonda District with his brother Herbert, who was killed in the Mashonaland Rebellion on 21 June 1896 (Hole 1898). Arthur Eyre had been with Coryndon when they first sighted the white rhinoceroses in 1892. He went back to rhino country in 1894 and shot an adult bull animal, according to a remark in a letter written by Selous on 19 January 1906 (printed in Lyell 1935: 8). When Selous was in Salisbury in July 1895, he saw the skin and skull of this specimen 'with a very good horn'. Brown (1899: 228–230), unfortunately without dat-

ing the event, reproduced the text of a letter that Arthur Eyre wrote to friends at home, in which he relates how he shot a male white rhinoceros on Mount Domo. Eyre was at the same pool where he shot his first white rhinoceros (in 1892?), saw fresh spoor and after tracking it, he wounded a rhinoceros. It took another day to find the animal again and finally kill it. It was a large male, with a height of 6 ft. 4 in. (193 cm) and a length from the end of the nose to the tip of the tail of 13 ft. 8 in. (416 cm). Eyre added that the skin and skeleton were bought by Cecil Rhodes for £250 to be presented to the museum in Cape Town. Selous (in Lyell 1935: 8) was 'quite sure that the white rhinoceros in the Cape Town Museum was shot and preserved by Mr Arthur Eyre, but he may have sold it to Mr Harvey Brown, who sold it to Rhodes, who gave it to the Cape Town Museum'. When H.A. Bryden and G.E. Yale visited the South African Museum, they took a photograph of the specimen, published by Bryden (1893: 492, 1894).

In September 1895, Rowland Ward was sending out invitations to inspect another mounted example

of the white rhinoceros, this one from Zululand in South Africa, where its existence up to then was unsuspected by the public (Anon. 1895). The number of rhinoceroses in this new population was unknown, but generally considered to be very low. Although figures as low as 20 animals have often been published, I have suggested that this may not have been correct, because no attempt to count the white rhinoceros in Zululand was made until much later in the 20th century (Rookmaaker 2000, 2002). The white rhinoceroses procured by Robert Coryndon in the northern part of Zimbabwe in 1893 were among the last from that region, and certainly among the best publicized trophies to be exhibited.

Acknowledgements

The history of the rhinoceroses in Mashonaland has been pieced together from material in three collections of letters and newspaper cuttings. I am grateful to Dr Michael Akam, Mr Ray Symonds and Ms Ann Charlton of the University of Cambridge, Museum of Zoology for access to the historical documents about the collection, and to Mr Russell Stebbing in assistance to take the photograph of the skeleton in the public gallery. The material in the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford, was made available by the archivist, Ms Lucy McCann. Initial enquiries at the Zoological Museum in Tring were answered by Mrs A. Harding, who directed me to the holdings in the Natural History Museum in London. I was allowed access to the correspondence of Rothschild in that institution by the archivist, Dr Susan Snell. Dr Richard Sabin, Curator, Mammal Group, Natural History Museum, London, gave information about rhinoceros specimens in the collection, which includes material in the Zoological Museum in Tring. The work on this paper is part of the ongoing research of the Rhino Resource Center, sponsored by SOS Rhino and the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

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