

Lion's Den, disused old zoo, Groote Schuur Estate, Cape Town

A hot dip galvanized case history

On the slopes of Table Mountain, just above the land presently occupied by the University of Cape Town and opposite the tarred access road, a cage like structure was built in 1897 to house lions. In 1930 this structure was demolished and replaced by a new lion enclosure which was known as Groote Schuur Zoo (*photo 1*). It has been vacant since 1975.

The zoo was built by Cecil Rhodes, a British imperialist and expansionist who had two countries named after him, and who lived in the late 19th century. The zoo was his private menagerie project. His idea for the menagerie was that it should contain animals from all over the British Empire.'

Rhodes was very specific about the fact that the zoo should be open to the public, but to a very particular public: a middle class [white] settlers public. It was to be a place where people would come to promenade on Sunday. He had the animals brought in and he was gifted a lot of them from all over the Empire.' It is believed that Rhodes had a fondness for the lion as 'King of Beasts', symbolising the dreams and aspirations of the British Empire.

When they closed the zoo in the 1980s people started living in the cages. In

continued on page 18...

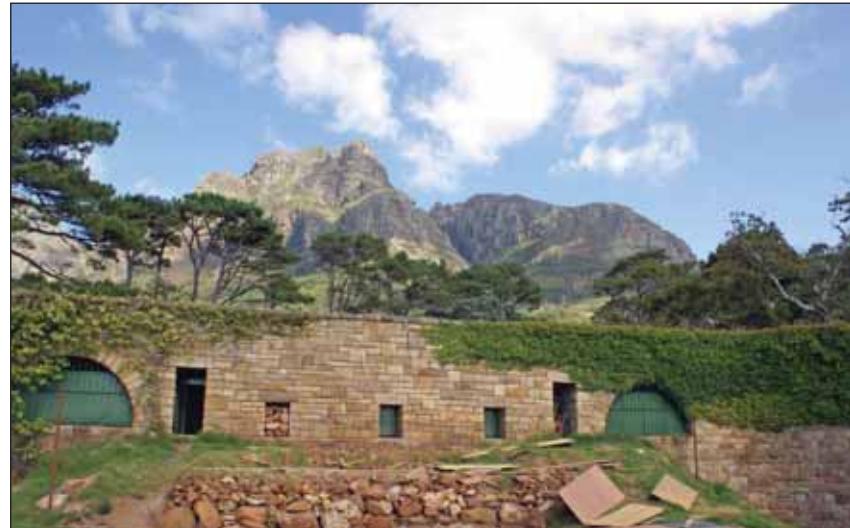


Photo 1.

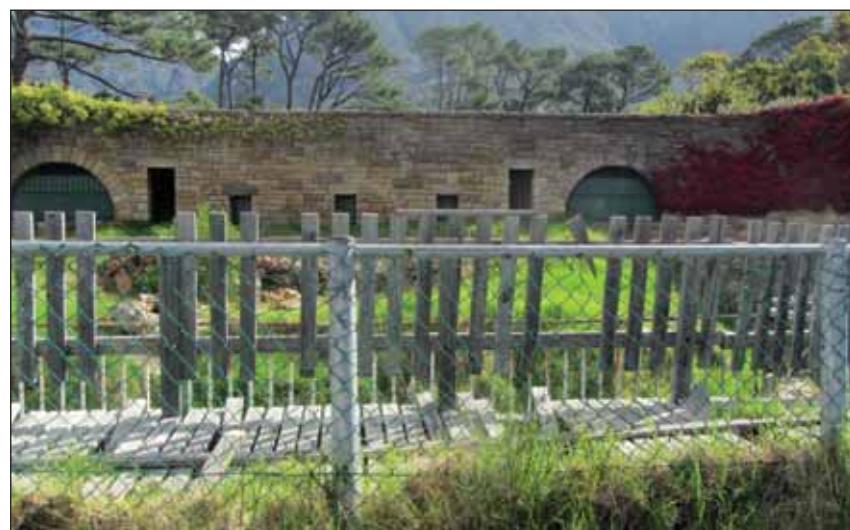


Photo 2.



Photo 3.

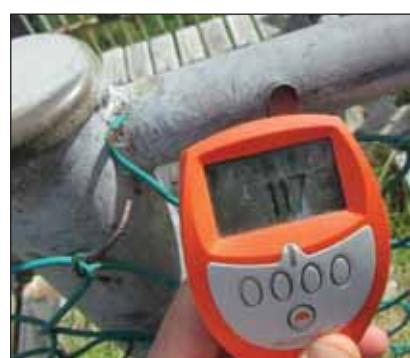


Photo 4.

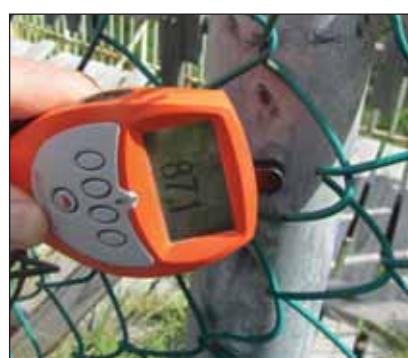


Photo 5.

Case history



Photo 6.



Photo 7.



Photo 8.



Photo 9.



Photo 10.



Photo 11.

the middle of last year a group of students moved in and they used it as an informal exhibition space.'

When and why the hot dip galvanized balustrade and handrailing was installed is anyone's guess. As the lion's enclosure was revamped a little after 1930 and the Zoo was vacated in 1975, it's logical to conclude that it was installed possibly somewhere between these two dates. This would mean the galvanizing is over 50 years old.

Looking at the condition of the hot dip galvanized coating it clearly shows it is still very much intact despite being exposed to an environment which is classified as possibly a C3 in accordance with ISO 9223/ ISO 14713 part 1! (*Photos 2 - 9*).

There were several pipe stands made up using hot dip galvanized screwed and socketed tubing on the site and here the hot dip galvanizing was also in excellent condition (*photos 10 - 12*).



Photo 13.



Photo 14.



Photo 12.

What we can do is imagine where the animals used to be. This looks like a funny shaped concrete swimming pool; there used to be water in here and crocodiles (*photo 13*).

Come and look very carefully — on the ground, all around — and tell me if you can see something that looks like an animal. You see his eye, his teeth, and his paws and there's his curly tail and his ferocious claws. These are pictures of lions (*photo 14*).

Zoo article taken from www.partizanpublik.nl/54/cape-towns-forgotten-zoo with thanks to Andrea Brennen, Christian Ernsten. Also to Nick Shepherd, Ronald and Richard. 