

# ZOO KEEPER SHOOTS RHINO

## Escaped animal killed

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# ZOO KEEPER SHOOTS RHINO

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### THE South Lakes Wild Animal Park's rhino had to be shot dead by the park's owner and a police marksman this morning after it escaped.

A police spokesman said the 3.5 ton rhino was believed to have got onto a 4ft mound in its compound and then scrambled over the fence.

It then charged a wall and damaged its horn.

After that it became trapped in a safety ditch dug between the animal park and the bypass.

The owner of the wildlife park, David Gill, raised the alarm at 6.05 am after the rare white rhino, Zimba, got out of its compound.

He called Barrow police for assistance and went to the place where the rhino was stuck.

## By JANET SHIELDS

He took with him the guns kept at the park for dealing with escaped animals.

A police officer on the scene, Sergeant Peter Hartley, said the animal was in some distress, having damaged its horn, and it was decided to put it down.

He said although the animal had not escaped from the wildlife park, it was so close to the A590 that if it had got out it would have caused danger to the public.

A woman eye-witness told the Mail she and a friend saw the rhino as they were returning home after a night out.

She said "We couldn't believe our eyes.

"We just saw it coming towards us and turned and ran. When I got home I poured myself a double

### ● TURN TO PAGE TWO

● FROM PAGE ONE brandy. I didn't understand how it could have got there. I thought I was seeing things."

Mr Gill was too upset to comment this morning after shooting the wildlife park's latest acquisition, which arrived at the park just two weeks ago as part of an animal conservation breeding programme.

Sgt Hartley said he did not know whether the animal could have been tranquilised, because he did not know if there were tranquiliser facilities at the wildlife park.

A police investigation is continuing into how the animal escaped.

Barrow police inspector Keith Hardman said, "The result was the best one that could have been achieved under the circumstances."

The park was open for business as usual today.