

## Sadness as founder of Twycross Zoo dies

One half of the partnership who created Twycross Zoo, has died. Nathalie Evans, who along with her lifetime business partner, Mollie Badham, founded the Leicestershire zoo, died on September 9, aged 98.

A spokesman for Twycross Zoo said: "Natalie will be sadly missed throughout the zoo world and by all those who were fortunate enough to count her as a friend."

Sarah Nathalie Evans, who was known as Nathalie, discovered her love for animals breeding dachshunds before eventually selling them worldwide. This experience led her to finance her next business venture, a pet shop in Sutton Coldfield.



**Ms Evans is pictured on the left with Ms Badham on the right in the 1980s. Picture supplied by Twycross Zoo**

The rival pet shop in the town was run by Molly Badham, and it was in the window of Nathalie's shop in 1949 that Molly saw her first monkey. The encounter led to a unique partnership between Molly and Nathalie and their joint and enduring passion with primates began, and a legendary association was born.

After the two joined forces, they quickly became well known in veterinary circles for taking in any unwanted animals, from a circus lion with bow legs to an otter injured in a fight.

In 1954 Nathalie and Molly moved to a bungalow, with a one-acre garden, at Hints, near Tamworth. Here the collection of animals blossomed and with the help of Nathalie's brother Henry, they opened Hints Zoological Gardens to the public, firstly at weekends, but soon, due to public demand, expanding to four days a week. The income from ticket sales helped to maintain the costly menagerie.

By 1962, Nathalie and Molly had outgrown the small Hints Zoo site and purchased a red-brick Victorian house with 12 acres of land. This was to become Twycross Zoo. Farm buildings and stables were converted to form animal enclosures and over the years they bought adjoining fields to expand the zoo's footprint and cottages to house the keepers.

In 1972, to ensure the future of a rapidly expanding collection, Nathalie and Molly transferred all the assets of the business into a charitable trust - the East Midlands Zoological Society.

Nathalie was a founder member of the National Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland and a member of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens. Nathalie co-wrote two books, *Chimps with Everything* (1979) and *Molly's Zoo* (2000).

She retired at the age of 86 from full-time work at Twycross Zoo, leaving behind a legacy and financial platform from which a new generation of conservationists continue a remarkable woman's lifetime's work.

**Source:** <http://www.burtonmail.co.uk/sadness-as-founder-of-twycross-zoo-dies/story-29737869-detail/story.html>