

Samphran Elephant Grounds & Zoo

First visit: 2nd August 2016

At the time of writing, their website clearly stated that there was a photo opportunity with the twin tigers (there had originally been three as evidenced by the photos found throughout the zoo), but on arrival there was only one and when our researchers questioned the staff member, they were informed that the other tiger had died. From research via Instagram, it appears the other tiger may have passed anywhere between October 2015 (last photo dated with both tigers) and March 2016.

The surviving tiger, named Lift, was left chained to a table, presumably from open until close of the zoo. He was very skinny, lacked energy and appeared to have cataracts as well as some sort of other eye problem. When talking to the staff, it turned out he was 18 years old and did not look like he would survive much longer.

Our researchers did observe that he had a fairly decent sized enclosure directly behind his photo booth. A dirt floor, trees, platform and a large pond. It was a surprise given the physical state of him. However, the handler seemed to genuinely love and care for him and the tiger was at ease with staff walking passed and sitting right next to him. Again this appears to be a case of no education rather than active cruelty though some better health care for him wouldn't have gone amiss.

Second visit: 24th February 2017

On arrival at the facility, the tiger photo booth was empty. When questioning staff, our researchers were informed that Lift had passed away.

However, another staff member claimed there was still one tiger residing in the facility. The small enclosure our researchers had seen the previous visit, was completely covered up so as to prevent anyone seeing in, however, through the material, a sleeping tiger could be seen. It is unclear whether this is Lift or another tiger - researchers guess it was Lift simply retired from the photos.

There were two four-month old lion cubs in a small enclosure nearby.

Checks on the website at a later date revealed photos of the lions with tourists and removal of any photos or information regarding the twin tigers.

2018 – 2019 the venue has not been revisited

