



SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF NATURAL HISTORY

Minutes from Annual General Meeting, held 26 June 2020 by video-conferencing

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Isabelle Charmantier, Miranda Lowe, Stanislav Strekopytov, David Lowther and Charles Nelson. There were 37 members in attendance.¹

2. Welcome and Introduction by the President

Attendees were welcomed and the President outlined recent Council activities. Positive advances had been made with the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the aims were being gradually delivered. Details of the strategic plan have been published in the Newsletter and are available on the SHNH Website. Attention was drawn to the marvellous promotional work of our International Representatives and the support given to them by Malgosia Novak-Kemp. It was noted that the significance of social media is growing; an important contribution is being made by Elle Larsson and Ann Sylph to Facebook, Twitter and jiscmail feeds that are markedly increasing SHNH profiles. The pandemic had indicated the potential of holding web-based seminars as a means of reaching out to the membership. A key element for progressing the strategy will be devising a Constitution fit for purpose to replace our now much-outdated Rules, and will be a major target for Council next year. Constructive meetings with Edinburgh University Press continue to improve membership recording systems and recruitment mechanisms. Although we now have a better idea of numbers and names, we know very little about members' interests and what they want from the Society; consequently, with the help of Ray Williams, Elaine Shaughnessy and the communications team we will shortly be sending out a questionnaire to all members – this will be vital information to feed into our strategic planning. Finally, the President referred to the hard work done by our Meetings Secretary, Jo Hatton, for the Cambridge Conference, and hoped that next year the theme of Pioneering Naturalists will bring the Society together again, in person.

3. Minutes of 2019 AGM held in York, 4 June 2019

There were no comments or corrections and so after being proposed by Geraldine Reid and seconded by Gina Douglas the minutes were unanimously approved as an accurate record.

4. Report of Council for 2019

This was accepted unanimously after being proposed by Elle Larsson and seconded by Arthur Lucas

¹ A letter of invitation had been sent to our Patron, Sir David Attenborough, but no reply received, although post is erratic at present.

5. Trustees Annual Report including the financial statement for 2019

The financial future was raised in relation to the lockdown and effects of the pandemic virus on membership. Two issues might have an effect. Firstly, non-renewals or lapsed members will be more difficult to follow up. For example, many staff furloughed by employers who supply their internet access cannot receive emails, making contact difficult. Secondly, recruitment of new members via meetings and conferences has not been possible and opportunities will continue to be diminished for some time. To balance these kinds of lack of income the Treasurer pointed out that expenditure has been minimal this year during which few meetings have been held where claims for travel might have been made.

Apart from notice of a typo in the date on line 4 (201 should be 2019) the Trustees Report as circulated was accepted unanimously after being proposed by Jo Hatton and seconded by Maggie Reilly.

6. Election of Officers

The following have agreed to stand for a further year:

Treasurer – Bill Noblett
Editor – Herman Reichenbach
Meetings Secretary – Joanne Hatton.

Secretary Geoff Hancock is stepping down this year. Ann Sylph (a member of SHNH Council and Librarian at the Zoological Society of London) has been proposed as Secretary by Felicity Roberts and seconded by Peter Davis, and is willing to stand. There had been no nominations for the vacancy on Council. The President confirmed that Bill Noblett is willing to act Vice-President for the coming year.

This composition of Council was proposed *en bloc* by Elaine Shaughnessy, seconded by Gina Douglas and carried unanimously.

7. Honorary Membership

Honorary Membership had been proposed at Council for Dr E Charles Nelson in recognition of his singular contribution to SHNH over many years. The President outlined Charles' role as Editor (1999-2012), and copy editor (2013-2019) of *Archives of Natural History*; Charles continues to act as an Associate Editor. He also edited the anthology in 2011 entitled *History & Mystery* which marked the Diamond Jubilee of the Society, and has contributed many articles and notes to *Archives* in addition to a considerable academic output (some 24 books and 150 research papers) as part of his career as a horticultural botanist. The President asked the AGM to confirm Honorary Membership on Charles; this was carried with acclaim by all those present after being proposed by Robert Peck and seconded by Arthur Lucas.

8. Vote of thanks by the President

The contribution of Isabelle Charmantier to the work of Council was acknowledged; her resignation was consequent to taking a new post at the Linnean Society. The out-going Secretary was also thanked for the support given to the President during his first two years of office and for providing excellent supervision and administration of Council business and procedures. The President also thanked those members who had enthusiastically joined this somewhat unusual AGM.

9. Any Other Business

Gina Douglas reported the demise of Ray Desmond, an important and well-known contributor to the history of botany and herbaria. An obituary of his work is in preparation.

