

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF NATURAL HISTORY

Registered Charity in England and Wales No. 210355

**Report of the Trustees
and
Statement of Financial Activities
2023**

c/o The Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, UK

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1. Legal Status

The Society for the History of Natural History was founded in 1936. The Society is a registered charity in England and Wales, no. 210355.

2. Registered Address

c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

3. Objectives and Activities

The Society is instituted for the historical and bibliographical study of all branches of natural history, including their social and cultural aspects, across all cultures.

The Society achieves its mission, and serves its membership, by:

- The publication of a journal, *Archives of Natural History*
- The circulation of a Newsletter to members
- Utilising electronic communication effectively to promote our interests and values
- Holding an Annual Conference and other meetings on relevant themes
- Funding relevant research as finances allow
- Encouraging younger scholars through the presentation of dedicated awards and prizes
- Giving a range of public awards to recognise scholarship, reward excellence and to promote the history of natural history to a wide constituency
- Partnering with relevant organisations to further our mission
- Monitoring and responding to new opportunities to further the Society's mission

Further details of each of these activities can be found elsewhere in this report.

4. Trustees (as of 31 December 2023)

The Trustees who served the charity during the year are as listed below.

Trustee	Role and Year of Appointment
Ms Gina Douglas	President (2021)
Mr William Noblett	Vice President & Treasurer (2021)
Mr William Beharrell	Secretary (2022)
Professor Helen Cowie	Awards Secretary (2021)
Dr Eleanor Larsson	Meetings Secretary (2022)
Dr Malgosia Nowak-Kemp	International Representatives Secretary (2021)
Ms Margaret Reilly	Book Reviews Editor (2021)
Ms Jeanne Robinson	Membership Secretary (2021)
Dr Anne Secord	Editor (2023)
Ms Elaine Shaughnessy	Newsletter and Website Editor (2021)
Dr Nathan Smith	Trustee without portfolio (2022)
Ms Joanne Hatton	Trustee without portfolio (2022)
Dr Geraldine Reid	Trustee without portfolio (2022)

In addition to the Trustees listed above, those who served and retired during the year are listed below:

Dr Rachel Jennings	Resigned 19 December 2023
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The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, especially as it relates to the charitable purpose "the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science" specified in the Charities Act 2011.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Society for the History of Natural History requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Society's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the Trustees should follow best practice and:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is appropriate to presume that the charity will not continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity and to ensure that the financial statements comply with applicable law and the Society's byelaws. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Society and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

5. President's Report for 2023

This year saw the welcome return of 'in person' meetings including our summer meeting, AGM, and some visits. Our Meetings Secretary organised an online SHNH Early Career Researcher Symposium on 23 February 2023. This included a wide range of international speakers from China, India, South Africa, Europe, UK and the USA. Visits for members included two to the Prince Philip Library of the Zoological Society of London in March and September. Our SHNH 2023 AGM was held at the Think Tank, Birmingham on 13 June, as part of our International Summer meeting on 'The Language of Nature'. My thanks go also to all who helped bring that meeting together, whether speakers or attendees and to Society members who joined the AGM to elect new Trustees, celebrate our awards and be informed about the continuing progress and achievements of the Society. Other events included an online talk on W. H. Hudson by Conor Jamieson as well as links to other events likely to be of interest to SHNH members.

Our Trustees contribute significantly to the work involved in keeping our Society going. Thanks must go to Will Beharrell for his efficiency as our Secretary, including updating our Governance issues. Elle Larsson, as Meeting Secretary, brought together some excellent events, as well as continuing to help with communications. Helen Cowie's leadership in managing the Society's Awards and Prizes continued through the year. Some changes to the nominations deadlines in all categories have been made to help both promote them as well as spread the workload involved in assessing them. Many thanks to Geraldine Reid for overseeing the SHNH History of Natural History book prize (the John Thackray medal) a task that often involves difficult decisions, and to all who helped in decision making.

Ways of supporting our membership have continued to be discussed with our publishers, Edinburgh University Press, with some changes to membership payment methods. Our Membership Secretary, Jeanne Robinson continues to work closely with members, fielding enquiries, and helping to resolve any membership matters with Edinburgh University Press. Among our membership, one significant loss in 2023 was the death of Dr David Allen, a supporter and member of the Society for many years. His contribution to the Society will be recognised in Archives of Natural History, Volume 51.1 (2024).

In 2023, Volume 50 (parts 1 and 2) of Archives of Natural History was published with a special anniversary cover. Our thanks go to the Editor, Dr Anne Secord, and to Elaine Shaughnessy, Charles Nelson, Ingvar Svanberg and others on the 'editorial team', and to Maggie Reilly who coordinates the book reviews. We are also most

grateful to all the Edinburgh University Press production team who see our journal through to print, distribution and promotion.

The 'Communications team' members have continued to provide electronic newsletters to members, with news on events. Thanks to Elle Larsson, Elaine Shaughnessy, Will Beharrell and others, our awards, events and journal articles have continued to be promoted through social media channels to great effect

The Secretary together with the International Representatives co-ordinator, Malgosia Nowak-Kemp have made significant progress on formalising the status of the 'International Representatives' in order to assist them with future contacts with the members of our Society, in their respective countries.

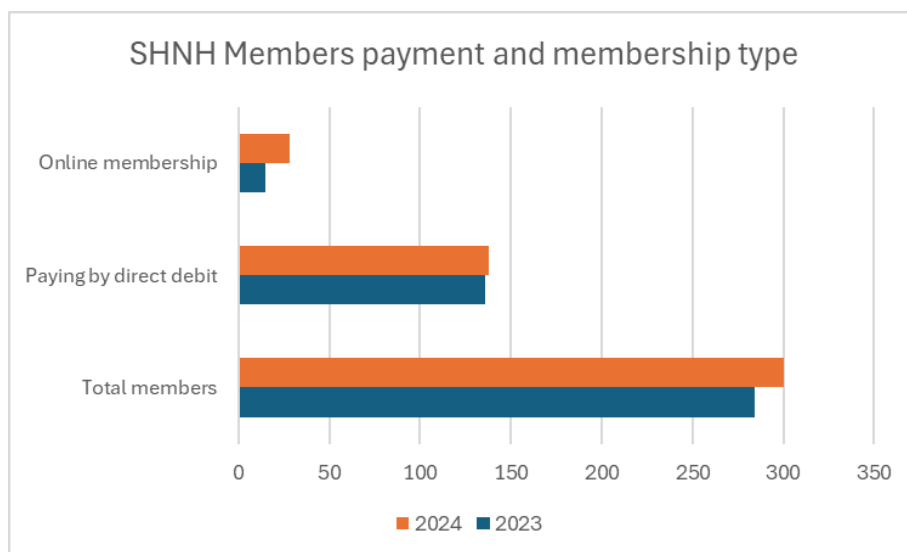
This AGM will see the end of my Presidency, but I look forward to continuing my close links with the Society. My thanks go to all those who have helped during these past three years, either as Trustees, or in helping with our events or publications. I should especially like to thank our Treasurer and my Vice-President, Bill Noblett for all his support during my term of office. I am sure the Society will continue to thrive and help promote the history of natural history through its publication and activities.

Gina Douglas
President

6. Membership

Total Membership

We have 16 more members in spring 2024 than we had in spring 2023. We currently have 300 members (including Honorary Members).



Associate Membership

Online-only membership has approximately doubled since last year, rising from 15-28 members (5% up to 9% of our members). This option is only available to associate members/students. Non-student members have contacted the membership secretary to ask about the possibility of going paperless. This request has been shared with the trustees and is under discussion.

Joint Membership

We have only one member currently listed as having joint membership. There have been issues with the billing for joint membership and the trustees have been discussing whether it is a category we should continue to offer. It is currently still available.

Honorary Members

Our number of honorary members has dropped from 10 in 2023 to 8 in 2024 due to the sad loss of Dr David Allen and Charles Nelson.

Pay by Direct Debit

46% of our members currently pay by direct debit, compared with 47% last year.

Lapsed Members

We have begun the process of identifying and reconnecting with/contacting lapsed members.

Geographical Breakdown of Membership

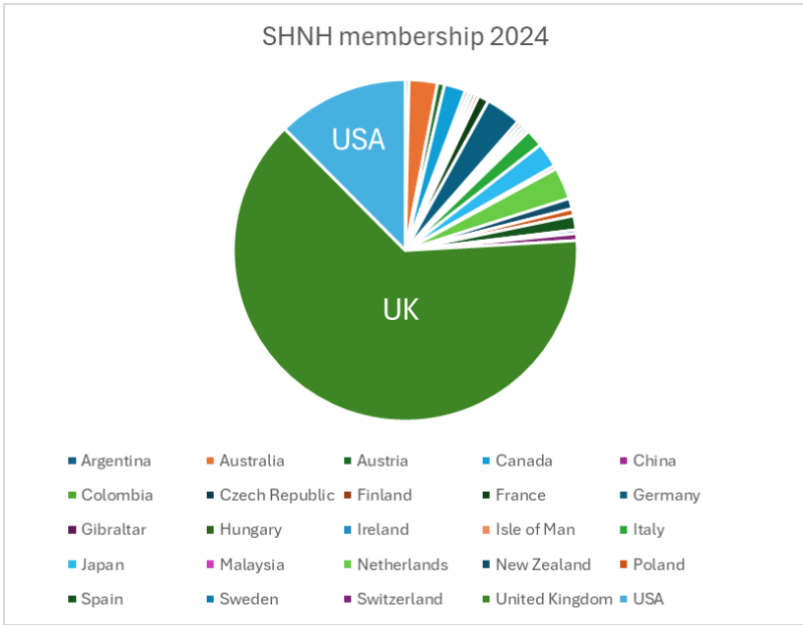
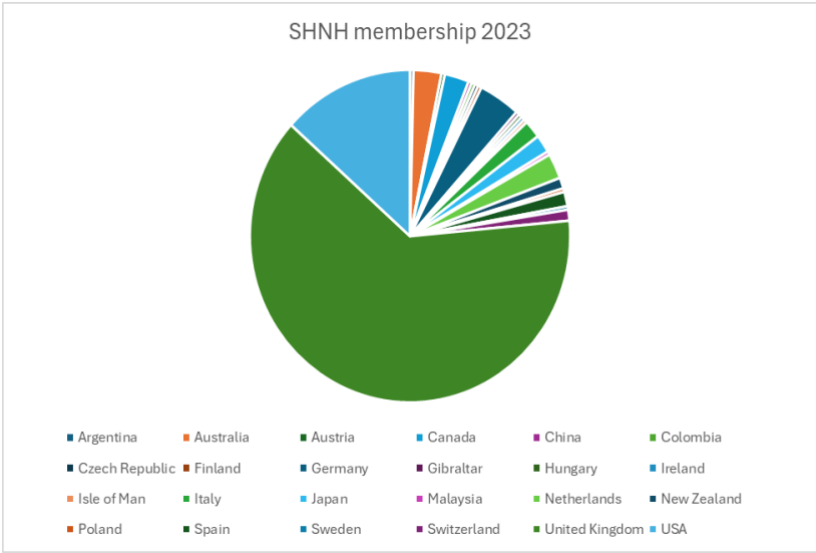
We now have members from 25 countries, with the addition of 3 members from France since 2023.

Our membership remains 63% UK, as it was in 2023. 10/16 of our new members are from the UK.

Our membership in the USA is the next largest after the UK. It has dropped slightly from 13 to 12% of our overall membership, with the loss of just one member.

The remaining 23 countries account for just 25% of our membership. 13 of these 23 countries are represented by individual members.

The breakdown of membership by geography is listed below. The countries are listed alphabetically. The last column and the shading indicate how the membership has changed since 2023.



Country name	Number of members 2023	Country name	Number of members 2024	Membership changes since 2023 (+ gone up, - gone down, = stayed the same)
Argentina	1	Argentina	1	=
Australia	8	Australia	8	=
Austria	1	Austria	2	+
Canada	7	Canada	6	-
China	1	China	1	=
Colombia	1	Colombia	1	=
Czech Republic	1	Czech Republic	1	=
Finland	1	Finland	1	=
		France	3	+
Germany	12	Germany	10	-
Gibraltar	1	Gibraltar	1	=
Hungary	1	Hungary	1	=
Ireland	1	Ireland	1	=
Isle of Man	1	Isle of Man	1	=
Italy	5	Italy	5	=
Japan	5	Japan	7	+
Malaysia	1	Malaysia	1	=
Netherlands	7	Netherlands	9	+
New Zealand	3	New Zealand	3	=
Poland	1	Poland	2	+
Spain	4	Spain	4	=
Sweden	1	Sweden	1	=
Switzerland	3	Switzerland	2	-
United Kingdom	180	United Kingdom	190	+
USA	38	USA	37	-

Jeanne Robinson
Membership Secretary

7. Publications and Communications

7.1 *Archives of Natural History* Editor's Report

Volume 50 (parts 1 and 2) of *Archives of Natural History* was published in 2023. To celebrate this landmark volume, Edinburgh University Press designed a rosette that appeared on the front cover of both issues. The first issue also included a foreword by the Editor outlining the history of the society with particular reference to the importance of the journal for furthering the aims of the founders. Significant changes to the journal as the field of the history of natural history has developed were also noted.

Volume 50 contains 26 papers, 2 short notes and 31 open-access book reviews. The papers included the 2021 William T. Stearn Student Essay prize in the first issue. The second issue featured the article by Jack Ashby 'How collections and reputation were built out of Tasmanian violence: thylacines (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*) and Aboriginal remains from Morton Allport (1830–1878)', which was picked up in the news (including Metro, BBC Cambridge, Cosmos, CNN) and the worldwide coverage totalled around 160 items. It was the featured article of this issue and free to access.

The preparation of volume 50 owes much to Associate Editors Elaine Shaughnessy, Charles Nelson, Peter Davis and Ingvar Svanberg and Book Reviews Editor Maggie Reilly, as well as to our journal publisher, Edinburgh University Press. Thanks are also due to the many reviewers who give generously of their time and expertise to assess submissions.

Over the course of 2023, 52 papers were submitted to *Archives of Natural History*, 22 of which were rejected and six withdrawn.

After many years both as Editor and Associate Editor Peter Davis took the decision to step down in 2023. While the editorial team was very sorry to see him go, we were delighted to welcome Steph Holt of the Natural History Museum as a new Associate Editor.

More recently, the editorial team has been deeply saddened by the death of Charles Nelson. Charles has been a kind mentor to me since I took over as editor of *Archives of Natural History* and I have much appreciated his generosity, advice and humour. His loss will be felt keenly by us all.

Anne Secord
Editor, *Archives of Natural History*

7.2 Book Reviews

32 books were reviewed for *Archives of Natural History* volume 50. In volume 50.2 we were very pleased to include three reviews by our International Representatives in Argentina (Sergio Zagier), Poland (Alicia Zemanek) and China (Jiang Che). All reviews are in English, the Argentinian book is written in Spanish, the Polish book in Polish and third is a book in English on Chinese botany. We hope this will support our international membership and I wish to thank Malgosia Nowak-Kemp, the International Representatives Co-ordinator for her help with this. Book reviews remain open access and continue to attract high levels of use.

2023 saw the 50th anniversary of *Archives of Natural History* which coincided with the publication of volume 30, the final part of the monumental Darwin Correspondence Project. In a special feature to celebrate these achievements, Professor Janet Browne contributed an article, for volume 50.2, on the Project that included a review of this last volume.

The SHNH policy statement on book reviews was tightened up in respect of unsolicited books or reviews and the information is on both EP and SHNH websites. EUP have made some changes to the IPR form, and the new form has been in operation from the beginning of 2024.

As ever, sincere thanks are due to the many people who make the reviews possible: to the reviewers who give their time and expertise and deliver copy on time; to the publishers for the notification and supply of the books; to Council, Advisory Board and members who suggest titles for review, help identify possible reviewers or write the reviews.

On a personal note, I wish to pay specific tribute to the late Dr Charles Nelson for his unfailing kindness, knowledge, help and guidance on book review matters, especially in my 'rookie' period, and the many reviews he contributed to the journal.

Maggie Reilly
Book Reviews Editor

7.3 Communications, Promotion and Social Media

The post of Communications, Promotion and Social Media Secretary has been vacant since 2022. The main communications outputs of SHNH have mainly been managed by Elaine Shaughnessy and Will Beharrell together with Elle Larsson, who has managed the communications relating to SHNH meetings and events. All three work as a team to ensure that we keep our members, interested friends and colleagues up to date on all our news and activities.

The introduction of our SHNH Mail Chimp account in 2022 has proved a great success, enabling quicker electronic communication with members for time-sensitive news and announcements including for our meetings and awards. This was used to great effect to invite members to the 'Language of Nature' meeting in Birmingham, a save the date for the 2023 AGM and AGM notices, arrangements for visits, and to announce the 2023 SHNH award winners and to invite nominations for the 2024 round. Two e-newsletters were also issued in July and November.

In 2023, the 50th issue of *Archives of Natural History* was published. Our publishers, Edinburgh University Press (EUP), updated the cover of the journal to include a 50th logo and produced two leaflets to promote the journal at meetings and events, for which we are most appreciative. EUP are very supportive of the journal and work hard with the editorial team to publicise the journal and its contents, including at international meetings.

Council supports the Society at other meetings they attend and institutions they are associated with including distributing leaflets and promoting the Society. We are most appreciative of NatSCA – the Natural Sciences Collection Association, who invited SHNH to have a display table at their conference in Stoke on Trent, which Gina Douglas, President, and Elaine Shaughnessy managed. Also, many thanks to EBHL – European Botanical and Horticultural Libraries Group and the Linnean Society including Isabelle Charmantier, Will Beharrell and Gina Douglas for promoting SHNH at their four day meeting in London and displaying our poster at the Linnean Society.

The team continue to promote the Society's activities via the website (www.shnh.org.uk), X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook accounts. Our email discussion list (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/hist-nat-hist>) continues to be a great vehicle for sharing Society news and for fielding enquiries among members. Our X (Twitter) following on @SHNHSocNatHist increased to over 4,300 followers and the focus continued to be on promoting the Society's activities, including the medals and prizes, small research fund and *Archives of Natural History*, as well as general news and events of interest to our members. We also promote the publications of our members and are always delighted to hear of any new work and to inform our networks.

At the 2023 AGM, members will remember that Rachel Jennings joined the team as Communications, Promotion and Social Media Secretary. Regrettably, due to very heavy work commitments and some unforeseen work-related events, Rachel was unable to take up the post. We wish her well and look forward to working with her in the future and to see the many improvements to the Powell Cotton Museum that she has been overseeing.

Elaine Shaughnessy,
Newsletter and Website Editor

8. Meetings

2023 was a busy year for the Society in terms of meetings.

The 1st Early Career Researcher Symposium was held online on Thursday 23 February. The symposium was a showcase of the research into the history of natural history being done by doctoral and early careers researchers across the globe. Registration opened in January and registration sold out - 80 places were allocated, with the remaining 20 available under the zoom license for speakers and panel chairs. On the day numbers peaked at around 50, but due to time zone differences people were tuning in for the panels they could. Each of the 12 papers was fascinating and it's been great to see some of those speakers continue to engage with the Society. It was decided following the meeting to consider these papers for the Patron's Review at the discretion of Council. Owing to the success of the event it was decided to run it again in 2024 and make it a standing feature of the events programme.

We were due to visit the Zoological Society of London Library and Archive in March, when five members were due to attend, however due to train strikes this visit was postponed to May when six members were able to attend. Due to popular demand and the disappointment of some who hoped to attend in March, I organised a second visit for September. 12 places were available, and all were taken up. It was a really interesting visit, and our thanks go to Ann Sylph and Emma Milne for hosting us, for their introductory talk and the objects they retrieved for members to peruse.

Our first in-person International Summer Meeting and AGM since the pandemic were held on Tuesday June 13th at Thinktank, Millennium Point, Birmingham. We heard 12 papers over the course of four panels on the theme 'The Language of Nature' and there were 30 delegates in attendance. It was fantastic to be back in person with members, award winners and those new to the Society after so long and to socialise over the Society sponsored drinks reception before a convivial dinner. A visit to Museum Collection Centre, the main store for Birmingham Museum Trust, was planned for June 14th, however a burst water main thwarted those plans and instead those due to attend the visit went to the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham which were wonderful.

The final event of 2023 was a seminar with Conor Mark Jameson who spoke about their publication 'Finding W. H. Hudson: The Writer Who Came to Britain to Save the Birds'. This was held online via Zoom on December 4th. 33 people registered and around 20 people attended on the evening.

Towards the end of 2023 I began putting plans in place for the ECR Symposium 2024, a visit to Winterbourne House and Gardens, and the Summer Meeting, which is due to take place at the National Museum Cardiff on the theme 'The Palette of Nature' on 13th and 14th June 2024. The Call for Papers for the ECR meeting was released in October and the Summer Meeting Call for Papers will go in early January.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to all who have supported me in this role over the past 12 months – meetings really are a team effort, and I am grateful to my fellow Council members for their ongoing support. Particular thanks go to Will Beharrell for the beautiful meeting’s programmes he has kindly put together for each of the meetings.

Elle Larsson
Meetings Secretary

9. Awards and Grants

The Society awarded prizes and grants in 2023 as follows.

The W. T. Stearn Student Essay Prize

Mia Uys (University of Cape Town) for ‘A soft-hearted fool? Eco-cultural networks and Alwin Haagner’s role in private animal trading through South Africa’s National Zoological Garden, 1922-1926

The SHNH Book Prize (Thackray Medal)

Henrietta McBurney for *Illuminating Natural History: The Art and Science of Mark Catesby* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), ISBN: 9781913107192.

The Founders’ Medal

Awarded to Professor Geoff Moore, Emeritus Professor of Marine Biology in the University of London.

The President’s Award

To Victoria Dickenson for the Gwillim Project.

Small Research Grants

The Society awarded small research grants to Bernardo Urbani and Deniz Martinez.

I would like to record my thanks to all Society members who have assisted in assessing nominations and applications, and in particular to Geraldine Reid and Gina Douglas for chairing the judging panels.

Helen Cowie
Awards and Grants Secretary

10. International Representatives

As the only international society devoted to the history of botany, zoology, geology, natural history collections, exploration, art and bibliography, the SHNH draws its membership from several countries across the world. The Society's International Representatives (IR) are appointed to facilitate the flow of information between the Society and its overseas members, to promote the aims and objectives of the Society, and to encourage growth of the Society's membership in their region.

Progress is being made in supporting the Representatives by facilitating contacts with local members while maintaining privacy requirements. Thanks to all who assisted in advancing this, especially Aju Omedali—Data Protection and Privacy Consultant—who kindly offered us her advice on a *pro bono* basis.

At present the Society has nine International Representatives based in countries other than the United Kingdom. They are—in no particular order—Dr Justin Jansen (the Netherlands), Margarita Hernandez-Laille (Spain); Leslie Overstreet (USA); Alicja Zemanek (Poland); Christa Dorn (Central Europe); Carlo Violani (Italy); Jiang Che (China); Elizabethann Boran (Ireland); and Sergio Zagier (Argentina).

Most of our international representatives are professionals, variously engaged in teaching, research or caring for collections of museum specimens and archives, spanning all fields of natural history. Others are deeply committed amateurs, who also possess the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment to contribute to the wellbeing of our Society. They are all well positioned to interact with people to stimulate interest in the history of natural history thanks to their publications, public speaking, and displays. From mounting exhibitions, through meetings and their research work they communicate with a wide audience of people and encourage interest in and thus the aims of the Society for the History of Natural History.

There is not space in this brief report to enumerate their many achievements, but suffice to say the Society's trustees and other members would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Representatives for their tireless advocacy for both the Society—and our wider discipline—in their own countries and communities. We are gratefully indebted to them for all their efforts in 2023.

pp. Will Beharrell
Secretary

Malgosia Nowak-Kemp
International Representatives Secretary (*in absentia*)

11. Treasurer's Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31st December 2023

	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2023 £
INCOMING RESOURCES		
AGM Receipts	NIL	2252.00
EUP	10725.96	10671.69
Other incoming resources ¹	30.27	47.53
	-----	-----
Total Incoming Resources	10756.23	12971.22
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Administration	NIL	306.57
AGM	NIL	4320.00
Archives	3978.75	5767.17
Awards and Prizes ²	729.33	1413.01
Bank Charges	81.00	60.75
Council	NIL	382.33
Mailchimp	NIL	85.66
Medals & engraving	1001.81	261.50
Newsletter ³	NIL	NIL
Website	2245.87	1899.59
ZOOM Subscription	143.88	143.88
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Total Resources Expended	8180.64	14640.46
Net Incoming Resources	2575.59	(1669.24)
Reconciliation of Funds		
Totals brought forward	15043.38	17618.97
	17618.97	15949.73
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	17618.97	15949.73

Notes to the 2023 Accounts

1. Made up of £38.58 interest and the sale of one copy of *History and mystery* for £8.95.
2. Includes £320 to the Stearn Essay winner, £200 to the Linnean Society to help sponsor a meeting and £893.01 taken from the Small Research Fund.
3. As in 2022, no newsletters were published because the newsletter editor had to concentrate on editorial and administrative work for *Archives of natural history*.

W.A. Noblett, Vice-President and Treasurer