

## **1. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS**

- a. The charity's name: Bournemouth Natural Science Society.
- b. The charity number 1165951.
- c. The address of the principal office of the charity: 39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 3NS. Tel.01202 553525.
- d. The charity's trustees for the year were: Mr Grenham Ireland (Chair), Mr Gerry Duggan, (Treasurer), Mrs Jacqueline Bainbridge (Acting Honorary Secretary from January 2021), Mr Ben Limburn (until January 2021), Mr Keith Butt (from January 2021), Mr Ray Chapman (until January 2021), Miss Pam Field, Mrs Anne Jolliffe, Mr Steve Limburn and Mr Colin Lord (from January 2021).

## **2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The Society was formed in 1903. A new Constitution and Rules for the CIO were agreed by the Society Members at the AGM held on 5th December 2015. The Charitable Incorporated Organisation was registered on 9th March 2016. Financial and related matters are overseen by the Trustees who this year have met via Zoom. The Trustees are also responsible for the appointment of those officers of the Society who have responsibility for substantial assets of the Society. The Trustee body is elected annually by secret ballot by members present at the Annual General Meeting. Up to nine trustees may be elected. Of these two are ex-officio, the treasurer and secretary. A chairman is elected at the first meeting of the new trustee body each year. Ray Chapman stood down as Secretary and trustee in January 2021 and Jacque Bainbridge took over as Acting Secretary.

The Assembly of the Society is open to all members who can raise any matter of overall interest. The Assembly usually meets roughly quarterly, the first following the AGM to elect the Assembly Chair and Section Chairs. Meetings were held on 16 January, 30 March, 29 June and 28 September 2021; all took place remotely, on Zoom.

The activities of the Society are run by a small number of committees. An ad hoc Programme Committee (consisting of those Section Chairs that can attend meetings by Zoom) has been responsible for the lecture programme. A small number of field trips were organised in the summer when Government regulations allowed. The Museum Committee and Library Committee has not met.

## **3. FINANCE**

Having secured significant levels of government grants related to the Covid-19 pandemic, and in anticipation of a managed re-opening of facilities to members and the local community during FY 2022, the Trustees have determined to make use of these funds for future improvements to its premises, collection and lecture infrastructure.

Latterly we have seen encouraging recoveries in visitor numbers and associated revenues.

Key highlights of the financial year included BNSS Trustees scheduling programmes to:

- a. minimize damp ingress (wholesale roof tile and lead flashing replacement, removing material from the front and east side elevations, installing a new damp-proof course), up-grade the side path, install insulation in roof spaces, improve the caretaker's basement flat (approx. £15k).
- b. commission a dual-delivery audio visual system for the lecture hall and remote audiences simultaneously via Zoom (£18k).
- c. improve access to and around the garden for all levels of mobility and garden clearances (£3k).

In addition, BNSS's principal Egyptology exhibit, Tahemaa, is undergoing a thorough conservation and pest management programme to ensure its longevity for future generations of BNSS members and visitors. The artefact will be housed in a new glass case with LED lighting and some environmental controls. Investment will be approximately £10k, of which £3.7k was paid in FY 2020-2021.

There were some final invoices to pay to complete the lantern roof, which were paid from HLF and Canford grants from previous years (£16k).

The BNSS financial policy calls for reserves of 2 years' total expenditure, a conservative figure being £130k. The Trustees anticipate further capital investments were justified in the future, seeking value for money and adhering to the guidelines within the policy framework. The Trustees are aware that social and movement restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic may not be completely behind us, so the financial reserves will naturally be treated with some care.

Income related to museum access held up well given the circumstances, including lettings -19%, donations -24% (a significant proportion of these donations coming from Tuesday Zoom lectures either directly to the BNSS bank account or via charity websites). The most affected income areas were, unsurprisingly, dependent on physical access to the House, for example refreshments, barn dance and schools visits, which decreased from £2.1k to near zero.

All BNSS lettings and room hire organizations have recommitted for FY 2021-2022, which once again is positive news for the year ahead.

Once again thank you to all the members and volunteers who have ensured the continuing rude health of the Society and Museum in these challenging times.

Unseen work that is vital to BNSS is carried out by the Independent Examiner, Louise Tonkin of Fisherton Consulting, who reviews the accounts for best practice and suitability for submission to the Charity Commission, to ensure BNSS retains its charitable status.

Thanks also to Mary Tiller, who manages the Society cash transactions, an important component of BNSS financial controls, and keeps rigorous records of cash donations required to be eligible for "Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme". Also to the new membership secretary, Sally Grant, who successfully navigated her way through the tortuous HMRC form to achieve the Gift Aid rebate relating to the BNSS membership subscriptions element first time.

#### **4. MEMBERSHIP**

Membership was 264 on 1st October 2020 and 247 on 30th September 2021. During the year, there were 12 new members. A small reduction over the year occurred, possibly because of the Covid-19 pandemic limiting access to the museum and lectures for those not able to view the Zoom talks on the Internet.

#### **5. PUBLIC BENEFIT**

Due to the pandemic, the Museum was closed to the public until 5 August 2021. Then the museum was open to the public for eight days in August 2021 and on Tuesdays from September 2021. Throughout the year, weekly lectures via Zoom were made available to the public who requested a link. Lectures were advertised on the BNSS Facebook page as well as the BNSS website from March 2021. All activities were free to enter but were also supported by members explaining the importance of donations to keeping our activities going and to providing support towards maintaining the old Victorian building. Non-members wishing to join Zoom meetings were sent the link with information about making donations online. BNSS was unable to host the Arts University Bournemouth Spring display by second year students this year. The Young Explorers programme was also mainly in abeyance due to the pandemic.

#### **6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

##### **6.1 Programme**

Our programme to our members continued to be delivered through a series of Zoom talks from October 2020 through to end of September 2021. The big advantage to Zoom talks is that we can invite anyone anywhere in the world to speak without paying their travel expenses, and it saves local people the effort and pollution they would normally expend in order to attend. Disadvantages were sometimes the poor quality of audio on occasions and reduced opportunities for interpersonal interaction.

A big advance was made by one member securing a professional Zoom account through the Institute of Physics (IOP), allowing more than 100 people to participate at any one time. Quite a large responsibility has fallen onto our Chair of Trustees in having to be the Zoom host at most meetings. Since the professional account was secured, this role was shared with the Chair of Astronomy. However, we are still looking for more ways to share the Zoom hosting. Attendance at these Zoom talks varied between 35 to 120 participants.

Topics covered included astronomy, archaeology, botany, geology, marine science, microscopy, ornithology and history. We temporarily lost a regular contribution from our Entomology and Zoology sections.

We also hosted five quizzes run by three different members. All of these were very informal and light-hearted, and were quite popular.

Four 12-page newsletters, mainly containing articles by our members, were produced and distributed

Four field trips were made, two with an entomology interest and two more with a botanical interest when withdrawal of restrictions allowed.

The Young Explorers (YE) programme was on hold during the pandemic. Refunds were offered to all who had paid in advance, but many did not accept the refund and the Society is very grateful for this generosity. The YE programme re-started on 11 September 2021 with a session on the theme of "Creepy Crawlies". This was well attended and takings for the session and refreshments were high.

An 'Open Garden' afternoon event organised by Jill Abbot was held on 11 September 2021 to welcome members back to BNSS. This involved a collection display, plant stall, solar scope and AV demonstration.

##### **6.2 Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan (2016-2019) was published in late 2016, following extensive consultation with Trustees, Officers, members and other interested groups and individuals. It contains background information on the history of the Society and how it is run, as well as a vision for the future with details of how we hope to achieve that vision. A new plan is now overdue, and a strategy review will be held when the pandemic resolves and the Society is able to resume all its normal activities.

##### **6.3 Museum Curation**

The renewal of our Accreditation has been postponed by Arts Council England (ACE) due to the pandemic. The invitation to renew has not yet been received and there is a six-month preparation period allowed before submission.

The lockdown in March 2020 effectively stopped the cataloguing and pest control. The admission of members up to 9 November 2020 and again after the second lockdown from 17 May to the end of September 2021, admittedly in limited numbers, has allowed some of the work to continue although social distancing made collaboration difficult. The main outstanding items to be dealt with are the collections documentation, cataloguing, accession numbers and labelling. The accreditation procedures have been checked against the new Spectrum 5 standard and amended where necessary.

The collections documentation is nearing completion with most of the collections being catalogued. Accession numbers are complete in some cases but where the numbers were not previously allocated they have been generated and added to the register. Object numbers have been allocated in most cases and have mainly been entered on or attached to the object.

Andy Davis and Eleni Dimitriou have begun to sort out the extensive slide collection.

Pest control was delayed due to the lockdown but prior to that the Entomology collection had been monitored and the 'mothballs' regularly replaced. Mark Spencer has been cataloguing the Entomology collection and has started working on the Canford School Lepidoptera, with decayed specimens being discarded. Keith Patenotte has carried on his restoration of the taxidermy specimens. James Dovey, Maureen Clements and Keith Clements have almost finished cataloguing the eggs. The fossil collection was regularly checked for pyrite decay, with little found. Pest monitoring throughout the building continued with mainly minor infestations found to date. There were significant numbers of beetles and moths in the Museum Room, which were eventually traced to an old fireplace with a dead pigeon behind it. This has been removed and the matter is in the process of being rectified. The dehumidifiers purchased to test the environment are now left running in the geology and archaeology rooms.

The Great Auk and Passenger pigeon were loaned to Portsmouth Museum in late January 2020 and returned to BNSS in early July 2021 after lockdown delays.

The Beale Collection was acquired from Sidmouth Museum in May 2021. One cabinet was placed in the reception area and the other two in the newly cleared geology storage area downstairs. A start was made on cleaning and sorting these cabinets. One cabinet had already been catalogued by Sidmouth Museum and is now on our computer records.

A major problem in the building is space, which is preventing improved display of the collections and storage so that the objects can be rotated at intervals to vary the displays. Further donations of collections, even desirable additions, must be kept to an absolute minimum to prevent the rooms looking totally cluttered. A start has been made on the clearing of the attic.

Work to secure the cabinets with locks was started but put on hold due to lockdowns; the volunteer cabinetmaker will probably not be returning.

#### **6.4 Museum Public Openings and Exhibitions**

The Museum was open to the public, with prior booking via the website, on Fridays and Saturdays between 6 and 28 August 2021. This was organised by Pam Field and Grenham Ireland and staffed by a number of volunteers on each day. 260 visitors booked through the website although 30% did not show up. However, £500 in donations and sales proceeds were realised during this period. Tuesday openings to the public restarted on 7 September 2021 with pre-booking no longer required.

#### **6.5 Publicity**

Publicity was mainly by postings on our website and Facebook pages and postings on the IOP website.

The profile of the museum was raised by the loan of the cabinet of model fungi to the BBC. These were featured by Chris Packham, one of our patrons, in the popular "Autumnwatch" programmes.

### **7. PREMISES - THE HOUSE**

This was a very challenging year due to lockdowns and the shortages of labour and materials. However, despite this, a lot was achieved.

Leaks in the Library and Lecture Theatre roofs were repaired. The front of the building and the side path were dug out and tanked to prevent damp getting into the building. The side path was also re-levelled and repaired, part of an aim to eventually improve access to the rear garden for those with mobility problems.

New blinds and curtains were installed in Reference Library, stairs, Egyptology Room, and Museum Room.

Some work was also completed in the caretaker's flat: damp repairs, new refrigerator, painting inside and out, and replacing a gas fire with central heating radiators.

The fire doors in the lecture hall are to be replaced due to deterioration of the hinge mounting, a temporary fix has been put in place meanwhile.

The insurance was renewed for three years at a very favourable price.

A substantial investment has been made in the lecture theatre with the installation of a new audio visual system. The project, led by Jo Crane, involved the provision of a bright digital projector, new speakers and other equipment mainly housed in a lectern. This will give both an improved experience for the in-house audience and the capability of

simultaneous broadcast of talks to remote participants joining by Zoom. It is also expected that the system will improve hiring opportunities.

## **8. LIBRARY**

Due to the pandemic, there have been very few books borrowed from the library this year. However, we were able to resume the usual Tuesday opening of the library this summer. We have made no purchases of new books in the past year. However, we have been given upwards of 80+ donations recently. The majority were given by Margaret Ross and Geoff Staples who kindly delivered them to us. The remainder came from Steve Limburn, Andrew Davis and Martin Western. Surplus and duplicate volumes will be sold on Anybook who will endeavour to sell them on our behalf to boost Society funds.

## **9. HEALTH & SAFETY**

The biggest challenge was preparing the house for the return of members and volunteers to the building after the Covid-19 lockdowns. This involved new risk assessments and attendance logging, as well as mitigations such as hand gel stations, new signage and various restrictions on access within the house.

We continue to monitor and ensure the house meets the statutory requirements for Health & Safety. A Fire Risk Assessment was carried out in March 2020. The main outstanding issue is that all the upstairs doors and the kitchen door require updating, along with a glass door at the bottom of the stairs as a fire break. However, planning permission will be needed before work can start.

A CCTV system was installed, with two cameras outside and one inside. They allow recording and monitoring, which has helped keep the building secure.

## **10. VOLUNTEERS**

Despite many of the Society's activities having been severely curtailed due to Government restrictions and prudent decisions by the trustees, many members and volunteers have continued to contribute to the Society. They have presented lectures, led some field trips, worked on the collections, stewarded public open days and organised improvements to the fabric of the building and infrastructure. They have also worked in the garden and on our newsletter and other publications and the website to enable it to take bookings. In addition to our more visible roles are those of the President, Trustees, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Health and Safety officer, chairs of sections, room hire organiser, Proceedings editor, specialists for our IT and AV equipment, conservators, pest control officer, Programme Chair and house manager. All these roles are essential and involve a considerable amount of work even when the building is closed to the public. Happily, we have been successful in recruiting some new volunteers despite the difficult circumstances during much of the year.

Our volunteers are the life blood of the society without whom we could not survive as a viable organisation. Every function within the Society and Museum is dealt with by volunteers except for the caretaker's role. We are fortunate to have a small core of reliable volunteers to whom we owe sincere thanks. However, there are opportunities available for any member who would like to take a more active part in the Society.

If any member wishes to help in any of our varied fields of interest, activities or administration, then please email [contact@bnss.org.uk](mailto:contact@bnss.org.uk).

## **11. COLLABORATIONS.**

Restrictions due to the pandemic have limited possible collaborations. However, our patron Jane Goodall was looking for somewhere to hold recordings of interviews with a number of organisations and we were honoured that she chose to use our premises.

## **12. THANKS**

This has been another difficult year for everyone, and we are indebted to our members for keeping us running through their subscriptions when our other sources of income have been reduced. From the other sections of the report, you will be aware of the many contributions from our trustees, officers and volunteers without which the Society would cease to function. Whilst we don't normally single out individuals, we should recognise the considerable contribution of both James Fradgley and Ray Chapman, both standing down from their roles in 2021, James as Membership Secretary and Ray as Honorary Secretary and Trustee. We would also particularly thank those who have been involved with pushing forward investments in our building and infrastructure which will be important to protect and develop our collections and enhance our activities in the future. Our website and social media have also been important for communication with members and to allow us to re-open to the public. We are grateful for another year of free 'charity hosting' for the website from 34SP. We must not forget that this year also saw successful events such as re-opening of the Museum to the public in August and the members' Open Garden event in September, neither of which would have happened without the contributions of many members and volunteers.

*The Trustees, November 2021*