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Author(s): Mathias, J.

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Report of Treasurer and Membership Secretary

The major item of expenditure for the 1980-81 financial year was the first Special Report: A Survey of Zoological and Botanical Material in Museums and Other Institutions of Great Britain. Printing and binding costs totalled £1488.00 of which £1380.00 was received as grant-aid (Royal Society £630.00; Museum Professionals Group £150.00; South-West Area Council £100.00; National Museum of Wales £500.00). This left a BCG contribution of £108.00.

The production and postage costs of the newsletter represent our biggest ongoing financial outlay. During 1980 three issues were produced at a total cost of £450.85 (production £348.57, postage £102.28). In 1981 this is likely to be nearer £600. Our first study week-end at Leicester lost £66.95 and we must ensure that future conferences and week-end meetings are self-financing.

Membership figures remain fairly constant. During the year there has been an overall increase of five bringing the total to 190 (160 personal and 30 institutional). Revenue from subscriptions in 1981 should, in theory, pay for the estimated costs of newsletter production but with very little to spare. We must therefore try to find new sources of revenue during the year (increased advertising perhaps) or we must seriously consider raising the subscription rates in 1982.

John Mathias,
20 January 1981.

The boys walked rapidly to the gloomy red pile of the Natural History museum, and roamed the halls. When they halted before the skeleton of the mastodon, Cliff surveyed the towering fossil and wistfully wished there were a live mastodon in the Zoo; Herbie looked at the strolling crowd through the dry ribs and sought a little figure with red hair. For an hour and a half they quested through corridors of bones, horns, skins, rocks, and stuffed beasts and fish. When they halted at last at a water fountain, Herbie said despondently, "She ain't here."

It is a low building facing the street. The basement is the store-room with shelves, shelves clear to the ceiling, loaded with jars of preserved animals. And in the basement is a sink and instrument for embalming and for injecting. Then you go through the backyard to a covered shed on piles over the ocean and here are the tanks for the larger animals, the sharks and rays and octopi, each in their concrete tanks. There is a stairway up the front of the building and a door that opens into an office where there is a desk piled high with unopened mail, filing cabinets, and a safe with the door propped open. Once the safe got locked by mistake and no one knew the combination. And in the safe was an open can of sardines and a piece of Roquefort cheese.

Surprisingly enough, a correct answer was received as to the identity of the source of the quotation given in the last issue. Penny Wheatcroft was apparently brought up on 'Penguin' Crime paperbacks and recognised it as Sweet Danger by Margery Allingham. She also sent in the above two extracts for others to try their skill on. The second one is not referring to a museum as such but should be the easier of the two.