# 2023 Oxford University Museum of Natural History Undergraduate Bursary Scheme

## Project: The Dale British Insect Collection (Extinct)

### Project summary

James C. Dale (1791-1872) was one of the most influential entomologists of his day. His collections, spanning most insect orders, are probably the single-most important and comprehensive to have been amassed in the British Isles. The collection houses specimens from most contemporary collectors, including material published in both Stephens’ *Illustrations of British Entomology* and Curtis’ *British Entomology.*

This project aims to catalogue the extinct British insects in the Dale collection, extracting information from the collection, archive, and entomological literature.

### Project details

In order to accomplish this project, the student will:

* Receive in-house training
* Generate a list of extinct British insects, based on the literature
* Catalogue the specimens using the museum Collection Management Software, EMu, with an initial focus on Lepidoptera and Coleoptera
* Research the taxonomy and history of the Dale specimens
* Extract information from the archive relevant to these specimens, and link archives to specimens in EMu
* Photograph the specimens at sector standards
* Write at least one blog entry for the Museum’s website
* Write a report of the project for funders
* [Stretch goal] Generate a list of species from [The Great Fen](https://www.greatfen.org.uk/), Whittlesea Mere. The site, long since drained, is currently being restored. The Dale collection and Archive provide a unique baseline dataset for insect biodiversity.

### Selection criteria

#### Essential

* Excellent attention to detail, with an organised and methodical approach
* Commendable manual dexterity, with the ability to reliably manipulate and handle fragile material
* Ability to concentrate for long periods on repetitive tasks
* Strong self-motivation and ability to work independently without close supervision, and as part of a team
* Good communication skills

#### Desirable

* Strong interest in working in a museum setting
* Basic understanding of taxonomy
* Familiarity with Microsoft Office applications

### Outcomes for the intern

* Experience in research using collections, archives, and the scientific literature
* Experience in the organisation, handling, and management of natural history specimens
* Improved knowledge of museums, collections care and documentation
* Experience in digitisation of museum specimens with use of specialist museums collections management software
* Good organisational, documentation, and IT skills
* Particularly valuable experience for students interested in a career in museums or biodiversity research
* [Depending on the results of the project] The option to publish this work in an entomological journal