

THE SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Minutes of the Business Meeting held on 7th Jan 2021

Online

under the presidency of Prof Hugh Pyper

1. Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed new members attending for the first time and the rest of the membership to the Business Meeting of the Society. The Secretary noted that apologies had been received from the following: Ron Clements, Eryl Davies, Anja Klein, Gordon McConville, Katherine Southwood.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the previous Business Meeting, which had been displayed and posted online, were approved and the President indicated they would be signed at the next in-person meeting of the Society.

Heather McKay asked whether anything further had been done in relation to Teaching Excellence noted in the minutes. The President invited her to raise that under any other business if she didn't feel it had been addressed to her satisfaction in the course of the meeting.

3. Notification of Any Other Business

Sandra Jacobs noted that she had one item of other business.

4. Reports from Officers

(a) The Retiring President, Dr Walter Houston, reported as follows:

I am grateful to have had the privilege of the year's presidency of SOTS, even though the year was far different from what I had imagined and planned for. It opened well, with a successful Winter Meeting at the Jubilee Campus, Nottingham, at which, among other fine papers, Professor Avraham Faust delivered an intriguing and well-received guest paper. I am grateful to our past President, Sue Gillingham, for taking my place as chair at two sessions when I was unavoidably absent. As the Covid-19 pandemic mounted, the decision was taken, with great regret, to cancel the Summer Meeting. Most of the speakers were rebooked for this meeting, and it was agreed between the President-elect and me that I should chair those sessions where the speakers had been chosen by me. I am grateful for Hugh's generosity. Over the summer, the Committee took a number of important decisions. We backed the sending of a letter to the Secretary of State for Education from the Arts and Humanities Alliance on behalf of many academic and professional associations pleading for much increased funding for universities. We issued a statement concerning the killing of George Floyd and subsequent events, including

the use of an image of the Bible in publicity for President Trump, and another statement repudiating any connection with a senior scholar convicted of possessing images of child sexual abuse. It fell to me to draft both statements. Later in the year, I attended the AGM of TRS-UK in place of Charlotte Hempel, our regular representative. Our final act as a Committee during the year was to determine that there must be a meeting in January, and that it should be held entirely online. I must conclude by expressing my thanks to the Committee for their helpfulness and good advice over all these issues. I should like to mention three persons in particular. First and above all our Secretary, David Shepherd, who true to his name has guided me through some pretty thorny wildernesses, kept me on track, and alerted me to numberless important points. Secondly our Information Officer, Jonathan Stökl, who even before the beginning of my presidency had achieved a major and necessary overhaul of our website. He has given us invaluable advice over online formats and made all the technical arrangements for this meeting. He is standing down at this meeting, and we shall miss him. And finally Janet Fyffe, just taking over as Hospitality Secretary during the year, who with high efficiency and determination has pursued negotiations with the venues originally booked for these two meetings, thus proving we had chosen well.

(b) The Treasurer, Dr Alastair Hunter, reported on the financial affairs of the Society as follows:

BANK & INVESTMENT ACCOUNT BALANCES at 27th December 2020

		(Dec 2019)
Barclays Current A/C	£ 7,469	£ 2,087
Barclays IAS (Business Premium) A/C	£70,527	£64,477
TOTAL	£77,996	£66,564

The increase in the current account balance arises from underspend on the bursary fund and income in respect of the winter online meeting. I have also been able to return to the investment account the sum of £6,000 which I transferred last year to cover a temporary cash-flow problem. The funds are in good health, with the only anticipated outlays being the costs of the January meeting and the servicing of the Wiki site. The latter will be drawn from the balance of the centenary fund. The gift aid income for the year ending 30th September 2020 was £892 – a little down on the previous year, but still very satisfactory. Together with donations from life members this constitutes about two-thirds of the income to the Bursary fund.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS 2020

The winter meeting in January 2020 registered a deficit of 3140. However, as noted last year, the new Hospitality Secretary and myself have agreed measures to ensure realistic costing for future meetings. This has, of course, yet to be tested.

SUBSCRIPTION SITUATION

At the time of writing we have, 19 members who remain on the old rate, and 13 who are one year in default. Regarding the others, despite repeated reminders I have made little progress. It is likely, therefore, that we will lose these thirteen at the end of the year.

The online payment system continues to function well, and in the most part unproblematically. I note an increase in the proportion of those using this method, and also a significant increase in use of this method for payment of meeting fees.

NEW TREASURER

The new treasurer and I have, on account of the pandemic, been unable as yet to liaise on the matter of the transfer of the accounts. We hope, assuming favourable circumstances in 2021, to effect the changeover in time for her to take full responsibility from October 1st 2021.

THANKS

My personal thanks to all who help to facilitate my duties as treasurer – in particular David Shepherd, Janet Fyffe, and Janet Tollington.

The Treasurer reported that the auditors had not noted anything requiring the Society's action and were satisfied with the state of the accounts. The Business Meeting approved the audited accounts and reappointed the current auditors.

c) The Secretary, Dr David Shepherd, reported as follows:

In a year in which the virus has taken a terrible toll in these islands and around the world, I am sorry to report the passing of various members of the Society including Joseph Mulrooney, Lionel Swain, Eva Pinthus, E.C. John, Ray Hobbs, Hallvard Hagelia, who regularly attended meetings up until recently despite living in Norway and Hans Barstad, President of the Society in 2015. On a happier note, as many of you will be well aware and as has already been reported in the Society's Bulletin, various members of our Society have been recognized for their contributions and work including: Professor Michael Knibb FBA, awarded the Ullendorff Medal for his significant contribution to the field of the Ethiopic Bible (2019), Professor John Barton awarded the 2019 Duff Cooper Prize (2019) for his book, *A History of the Bible* and Professor Stefan Reif awarded an OBE (2020) for services to scholarship. So well done to them and I'm sure you'll want to congratulate them yourselves if you have not done so already. Of course, I continue to appreciate very much the support and cooperation of the other committee members, and particularly the officers, in maintaining the work of the Society.

(d) The Secretary for Honorary Members, Prof Lester Grabbe, reported as follows:

Several honorary members have provided information on their activities for this year:

Professor Reinhard Kratz reports that the new Göttingen Academy project, an editio critica maior of the Greek Psalter, started in January 2020 (to last for about 20 years). He is still trying hard to obtain funding for the continuation of the Qumran-Lexicon project but is hopeful that

a reapplication to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) will be successful. After publishing the first two volumes of the dictionary in 2017 and 2018 they are now planning to continue the project in a digital form: Qumran Digital: Text and Lexicon, providing and publishing the database of the texts, including metadata (grammatical tagging and variant readings etc.), producing the articles online and only afterwards in print. He completed a three-year DFG project on an edition of the unpublished exegetical manuscripts of Benno Jacob together with Shimon Gesundheit in Jerusalem. The volume will appear in 2021 with manuscripts on Genesis and the Pentateuch. An application has also been successful for a three-year follow-up to edit the exegetical manuscripts of Jacob on Leviticus. News of publications were also received from Johannes de Moor and Martti Nissinen, while Carol Newsom and Kirsten Nielsen send their greetings to the meeting.

(e) The Membership Secretary, Dr Janet Tollington, reported as follows:

The total membership now stands at 494, which is a decrease of 15 since December 2019.

New Ordinary members in 2020: 5 (1M/4F)

Resignations in 2020: 5 (3M/2F) and lapsed 9 (7M/2F) for non payment of subscriptions.

Deaths in 2020: 6 (5M/1F) [although 1 actually occurred in 2018] plus former President Hans Barstad, who had ceased to be a member at the time of his death.

Promoted to Life Membership in 2020: 8 (7M/1F)

Male/female ratio: 342M/152F, being 69.23% M and 30.77% F. The % of women is very marginally up but it has remained more or less unchanged – less than 0.5% difference – for the last few years.

Members by country of residence: As was agreed at the 2017 Summer Meeting (and in this post-Brexit era) I am now only showing these figures in terms of the United Kingdom & Ireland (reflecting the Society's origins and historical associations) and the rest of the world grouped together.

UK & Ireland	328 (66.40%)
Rest of the world	166 (33.60%)

*If I disregard the Honorary members (who are de facto from RoW) these statistics become
UK&I 68.91% and RoW 31.09%*

Membership by type:

Ordinary members: 317

Life members: 155

Honorary members: 18

Book list mailing: 453 were sent out to Members in the June mailing but Ordinary members should note that anyone whose subscription had not been paid at the correct, updated, annual amount by the end of May did not receive the 2020 Book List. There was no second Book List mailing this year, since we didn't welcome new members in July to whom a copy is usually sent, so late payers (25 of them) forfeited their copy of the print version. At the year end there are still 13 members in arrears. Will members please keep me informed of any changes to their postal addresses and e-mails? Several people no longer receive the round robin e-mails because messages sent to the e-mail address on the database have bounced back, so I have deleted them from the circulation lists.

(f) The Hospitality Secretary, Janet Fyffe, reported as follows:

The 2020 Winter Meeting at Nottingham Jubilee Campus on 6-8 January 2020 was widely regarded as a success. The venue provided good modern accommodation and catering, excellent conference facilities, reasonable rates, and helpful Events staff. That meeting was the last one organised by my predecessor, James Patrick, with myself as his shadow. It is also the last face-to-face meeting of the Society to date. For the present meeting, much of the virtual equivalent of the Hospitality Secretary's normal work has fallen on the Information Officer, Jonathan Stökl. He and I have worked together over the past few months to maintain links with those publishers who display and advertise at our meetings. This has led to the new venture of hosting publishers' online offers for SOTS members on our website. We hope that this will develop further, alongside the physical displays, when face-to-face meetings again become possible. For future meetings, the Society has a booking in place for a conventional face to face meeting at the University of Sheffield for 12-15 July this year, and an option on a booking at Nottingham for 4-6 January 2022. The Committee will be keeping plans for these two meetings under review as the course of the pandemic becomes clearer. My thanks are due to the other Society Officers for their wholehearted support during this period. I should particularly like to thank the Treasurer and the Information Officer, the two with whom I have worked most closely. Finally, I wish to put on record my thanks to James Patrick for his thorough handover, and for his encouragement and much needed patience during the handover period, and beyond.

(g) The Book List Editor, Dr John Jarick, reported as follows:

The manuscript of the 2020 issue of the *SOTS Book List* was delivered to the publishers just as the coronavirus pandemic began to have its impact in the Spring, but I believe that the printing and distribution in the Summer took place without serious incident. This edition contained reviews of 228 books, contributed by 103 reviewers. While still representing the good work of a significant proportion of the SOTS membership and providing an invaluable service to teachers and students in the wider world of Old Testament Study, nonetheless it is noticeable that a growing number of publishers appear to be becoming more reticent to supply the *Book List* with copies of their recent publications for review. Readers have probably noticed that I have increasingly resorted in recent times to including notifications of certain collections of

studies without a review as such, but beginning with the words ‘The publisher has declined to make a review copy of this volume available to the *B.L.*, and so no assessment of the work can be made here, but it is understood that the work contains the following contributions...’, followed by a listing of the essays and their authors gleaned from the publisher’s publicity material regarding the volume. This is an unfortunate development, and makes me all the more grateful to those publishers who do continue to respond positively to my requests for review copies of their recent publications in our field. The 2021 issue has of course been taking shape during a time of pandemic, and this has brought new contingencies. The former time-honoured system of the Editor requesting books from publishers, the publishers posting them to the Editor, and he in turn making them available to reviewers, in person at the Summer and Winter Meetings of the Society and by post in Spring and Autumn mailings, has not been possible for this forthcoming edition of the *Book List*. There have not been in-the-flesh meetings of the Society, and indeed many publishers have not been willing to send printed books at all, as well as the Editor’s college having been in prolonged lockdown at various times and accordingly not able to take delivery of books. Members will be aware that in these circumstances I conducted two e-book exercises, one in the Summer and a second as Winter arrived, inviting members to select items from a list I had assembled of recent e-publications for potential review. I am grateful to everyone who responded to this invitation, and who has been willing to review e-books rather than printed books in these unprecedented times. Not all publishers have responded positively or efficiently to these exercises, but at least we should still have a 2021 issue of some quality despite the challenging circumstances.

In my capacity as Convener of the Publications Sub-Committee I am pleased to report a healthy number of recent or imminent publications under the Society’s auspices: in the Study Guides to the Old Testament series, Jill Middlemas’s guide to *Lamentations*; and in the SOTS Monograph Series, Collin Cornell’s *Divine Aggression in Psalms and Inscriptions: Vengeful Gods and Loyal Kings*; Isabel Crazz’s *Royal Illness and Kingship Ideology in the Hebrew Bible*; Brett Maiden’s *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion: New Perspectives on Texts, Artifacts, and Culture*; and Daniel Stulac’s *Life, Land, and Elijah in the Book of Kings*. Some members may notice that several of these authors are not yet themselves members of the Society, but that they are coming forward to be elected to membership at this Winter Meeting (there having been no Summer Meeting at which their names could have been presented on that earlier occasion). You may also have noticed that the wording on the web page concerning the series has recently been updated to include the sentence, ‘Prospective contributors should also note that scholars published in the SOTS Monographs series are normally expected to be or to become members of the Society’. The sub-committee is mindful that the monograph series, having become re-established, is attracting potential authors from beyond the current membership, and that Cambridge University Press is keen to facilitate a good flow of publications through the series, but the sub-committee is also mindful that the series should remain very much under the aegis of the Society and its membership. Accordingly, a wording of ‘normally expected to be or become members’ leaves open the possibility of the occasional exceptional case where an author might have an acceptable reason for not seeking to become a member but yet the Editor would not wish to deny publication of a significant contribution

to our field of study on that account, but also leaves intact the normal expectation of the Society that its Monographs series is publishing the work of people who are in solidarity with the aims and operations of the Society. And to that end, the sub-committee is keen to remind all current members that they should keep the SOTS Monographs series in mind as a potential venue for their next monograph. The Editor of the series, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, is always delighted to hear from any member who is contemplating writing — or who has indeed completed — a work that can take a place in the Society's own-brand series. Meanwhile members will be pleased to learn that the Editor of the Society's projected newest survey volume on the state-of-the-field in our discipline, John Barton, has secured a contract with Oxford University Press for the work to be published in 2023, under the title *Understanding the Hebrew Bible: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study*. No fewer than 28 members of the Society are contributing their expertise to this now-in-preparation volume. And of course I am also delighted to note that the SOTS Wiki is up and running once again after a period of abeyance. This happy event was announced to members by Wiki Editor George Brooke in September, and I trust that many members — and indeed also teachers and students of the Old Testament beyond our membership — have been making good use of this resource since then. Everyone involved in the development of the SOTS Wiki hopes that this fine electronic resource will be of assistance, especially in these strange times, in the delivery of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible courses worldwide. Members of the Society are encouraged to participate in the Wiki, making corrections and improvements of all kinds, including to the short bibliographies, and to spread the word about the Wiki's existence (with free access for everyone, members or not) at www.sots.ac.uk/wiki. Please e-mail the Editor if you discover topics that are needed and he will try to commission them from SOTS members — or you may suggest yourself as the prospective writer on the topic in question. Indeed the Editor has commissioned or re-commissioned about 20 further articles for the Wiki since its relaunch, and the first of these are due in early 2021. The Society owes a great deal to all the writers who have so far contributed, and to former and current Information Officers Jim Aitken and Jonathan Stökl for their hard work in discovering and enabling a suitable system with both launch and maintenance costs well within the Society's means. We now look to a renewed flourishing of the SOTS Wiki.

(h) The Information Officer, Dr Jonathan Stökl, reported as follows:

This report marks the end of my tenure as the Society's Information Officer. As part of my tenure I have overseen the establishing of the new website, which includes accounts for individual members, the facility to pay for meetings and membership fees, the possibility to post Information for anyone to see and areas where information only for members can be posted (such as the address list, minutes of business meetings, and the information about the virtual Winter Meeting 2021). I will be glad to support the incoming Information Officer in their efforts to improve things yet further. The most ambitious enterprise for the Society in terms of IT is this Winter Meeting which is being held virtually on MS Teams. I am extremely grateful to our Secretary and new Hospitality Secretary for all the support they have given me during the preparation. My parting advice would be—finally—to put the Information Officer on equal standing with the other main officers of the Society. I would also like to thank the other officers

of the Society with whom I had the pleasure to serve the Society, in particular the treasurer, Alastair Hunter and the Secretary, David Shepherd, as well as the many other officers, 'ordinary' members and presidents.

(i) The Archivist, Professor Eryl Davies, reported via the President as follows:

At the SOTS Winter Meeting in Nottingham in January 2020 John Jarick provided me with a number of items to be deposited in the archive. Among these items were the reconstructed missing pieces of archival items of 2008-09 and I am grateful to him for his painstaking work in reconstructing these items. These have now been safely deposited in the archive at Bangor. He also provided me with a number of SOTS publications for the archive – a total of 61 volumes. These included 16 volumes of SOTS Monographs published by Ashgate in the first decade of the 2000s under the editorship of Margaret Barker; a complete set of the first series of Study Guides edited by Norman Whybray and published by JSOT Press (later Sheffield Academic Press); 5 volumes of the surveys of OT study by SOTS members, from *The People and the Book* (1925) to *Text in Context* (2000); and 7 volumes which have appeared over the years under the aegis of SOTS (including the latest, *SOTS at 100: Centennial Essays of the Society for Old Testament Study*). Adrian Curtis, as editor of the *Phoenix Guides to the Old Testament*, ensures that these latest Study Guides are sent to me as they appear from the press. I have hitherto only received one volume of the latest SOTS Monograph series, but I have written to the editor, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, asking her to remind CUP to send me the volumes that have appeared so far. The only problem I have encountered is that the archive at Bangor is much too small to house these volumes and I have been in negotiations with the adjacent library to see if the volumes could be housed there. The librarian told me that space in the library was at a premium and the prospect of having all the volumes housed together in one place (as I had requested) seemed remote. The discussion with the librarian came to an abrupt end with the pandemic since the library had to close (and still remains closed). When normal service is resumed, I will continue to see if the librarian can be persuaded to house the SOTS volumes, and hopefully I will be able report a positive outcome by the Summer Meeting. In the meantime, all the books are safe and remain in boxes in my study at home.

5. Proposals for New Members

The Business meeting elected the following into membership: Dr Collin Cornell, Dr Isabel Cranz, Rabbi Atar Hadari, Dr Dan'el Kahn, Rev Fr Pablo de Lima, Dr Brett Maiden, Dr Joanna Töyräänvuori, Miss Veronica Vandervliet.

6. Nominations

The Business meeting elected the following:

Zanne Domoney-Lyttle as Information Officer

Susan Gillingham as Secretary for Honorary Members

Anja Klein as Member of the Publications Sub-Committee
Charlotte Hempel as President for 2022

7. Proposals and Matters of Interest

a) Strategic Review Group Update

The Chair of the group, Prof Susan Gillingham reported as follows:

The Strategic Review Group has now assimilated the results of the online survey. The committee's gratitude to the skill and competence of Cat Quine in presenting the data cannot be overstated. The survey was completed by 196 members, from most of the representative constituencies in the Society. The data revealed four clear issues: 1. to move the number of conference meetings from two to one a year, with the favoured time being July; 2. to extend the Presidential term to two years, but allowing more collaboration with other officers; 3. To allow our diversity in membership and in subject areas to be better reflected in our programme, and to appoint an 'Equality and Diversity Officer' to promote this; 4. To raise the profile of SOTS to wider audience, in part through an online presence. The report on this data was shared with the Committee at its most recent meeting. However, it was recognised there that those without online access also need to be approached, so hard copies of the survey will be sent out to all those without emails, and any responses will then be accommodated with the results overall. This might change the shape of the things, so this is very much work in progress. Once all the results have been assembled, the Strategic Review Group will produce an action plan which it will take to the main Committee, hopefully when it meets in July. By then we might even be able to bring their proposals to the Business Meeting also in July.

b) Proposed Code of Conduct for the Society (posted in advance of the Meeting)

Hugh Pyper introduced the proposed code of conduct by referencing issues that arose over the course of the year and noted that unlike other learned societies which might be considered peers, the Society lacks a code of conduct. He suggested that while it is regrettable that such things are necessary, the increasing dependence on online connections suggests that SOTS should have one. He asked whether the Society agreed that such a code should be adopted and whether the proposed code might be approved. James Patrick noted the value of a statement in principle, but also observed that 'deliberately' might be added to the final 'offensive comments' reflecting the relevance of intention in adjudicating behaviour. Heather McKay noted that questions required to join the Society's Facebook page have prompted various answers and interesting posts have appeared from time to time, so this seems timely. Charlotte Hempel thanked Hugh for advancing this and noted that since it is possible for offence to be caused unintentionally, she felt it was not necessary to add 'deliberately'. Andy Lie expressed the view that the code appears to be a work in

progress, but recognized that it is important that we have a sense of dignity as we work and meet, and hoped that this document would facilitate this.

The Business meeting agreed that the proposed Code of Conduct should be adopted.

8. AOB

Heather McKay noted that Teaching Excellence should remain a priority for the Society and noted that strategy would be required. Hugh Pyper noted that it would be on the agenda of the Programme Sub-Committee.

Sandra Jacobs offered a word of thanks especially to those had organized the present meeting; she also asked about the possibility of an online Study Day in the Spring. Hugh Pyper noted that this too might be considered by the Programme Sub-Committee.

Paul Joyce noted that there would be a KCL Study Day on Prophets in May (online) about which more details will be forthcoming. Hugh Pyper noted that there were other meetings which will be moving online and encouraged members to contact the Information Officer to have these circulated/posted. Janet Tollington noted that Hindy Najman has a plan for a Hebrew Bible Conference on March 8-9 and asked that any additional information of this sort might be sent to her immediately so that she can avoid multiplying emails to members unnecessarily.

9. Future Meetings

Hugh Pyper assured members that plans are continuing for the Summer Meeting (currently scheduled to be held in-person in Sheffield), but in light of continuing uncertainty regarding coronavirus restrictions, details will be forthcoming in due course.

There being no further business, the President thanked all the members present and declared the meeting closed.

Signed: Date: