

THE SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Minutes of the Business Meeting held on 27th July 2022 at the Summer Meeting in Nottingham under the Presidency of Prof Charlotte Hempel

1. Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed Members to the Business Meeting of the Society.

There were 39 people present.

The Secretary noted that apologies had been received from John Bartlett, Cynthia Crewe, Eryl Davies, Zanne Domoney-Lyttle, Cheryl Exum, Janet Fyffe, Tony Gelston, Alec Gilmore, Katharine Gwyther, Irene Jones, Nathan MacDonald, Alan Millard, Mary Mills, Rosalie Moloney, George Nicol, Katherine Southwood, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Kristin De Troyer, Stuart Weeks, Hugh Williamson.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous Business Meeting (6th Jan 2022, online), which had been displayed and posted on the notice board, were approved by the meeting and a physical copy was signed by the President.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that would not appear on the agenda. Nor was there any notification of any other business.

4. Reports from Officers

4.1 The President, Prof Charlotte Hempel reported as follows:

Professor Hempel extended a warm welcome to colleagues from the Netherlands, Belgium and South Africa to the 18th Joint Meeting with the *Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in the Netherlands and Belgium*. She also noted the international profile for this first face to face meeting post-Covid.

This year was again a challenging year for all our members with the ongoing impact of the pandemic. The officers of the Society have once again worked incredibly hard in supporting myself as President and the Society in steering us through these choppy waters. We all – and I in particular – owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Having said that, the Society – with the support of its Officers – has shown itself to be extremely resilient over the last two years in adapting to host three extremely successful virtual meetings when we were prevented from meeting in person. As a result, there is now a desire to embed a virtual event into our annual program of activities. The Society also progressed with a wide-ranging Strategic Review that involved a consultation with our members and were able to vote on a number of the strategic initiatives at our last Winter Meeting. Professor Hempel expressed her thanks to Professor Sue Gillingham and fellow members of the Strategy Group – especially Dr Cat Quine – for the

work behind the scenes in preparing the members' survey and sharing the results with our membership. It was heartening to see an impressive level of consensus that emerged after all voices were heard. It was also appropriate to leave room for further frank discussions we were able to have among friends and colleagues in the course of two meetings in 2022.

The summer meeting also included a strategic discussion on ways to support the health of our discipline and the next generation of scholars, teachers, and leaders in our field with a Discussion Forum on 'The Academy and Academic Publishing: Sustaining the Discipline Collaboratively'. Professor Hempel expressed her appreciation to Suzanne Mekking, Senior Acquisitions Editor at Brill Academic Publishing and Professor David Clines of Sheffield Phoenix Press for agreeing to join a small Panel. Professor Clines has also written a provocative set of personal reflections on the state of what he calls the "Infrastructure of Biblical Research" which he has kindly agreed to share with SOTS members and delegates of this meeting. *(Secretary adds: to be posted on SOTS website)*

Charlotte Hempel

4.2 The Treasurer, Dr Jo Henderson-Merrygold, reported on the financial affairs of the Society as follows:

Summary of Accounts (as of 21 July 2022)

	2022	2021	2020	2019
Current Account	£19,343.06	£14,833	£10,930	£20,620
Reserves Account	<u>£61,540.97</u>	<u>£70,531</u>	<u>£64,517</u>	<u>£69,412</u>
Total	<u>£80,884.03</u>	<u>£85,364</u>	<u>£75,448</u>	<u>£90,033</u>

Provisional Costs of January's Cancelled Event

Moving the January meeting from onsite to online had a lower overall cost to the society than feared. Thanks go to those who made donations to the society to offset the loss, which amounted to £1,742.72. With the charge for participation in the online event and the non-returned deposits, the overall sales income was £5,367.00. The expenditure for the conference was £23,601.95 to Nottingham Conferences, of which £9,726.00 was held as credit against the summer meeting. A further £287.86 covered the Zoom costs.

January Conference Income	£5,367.00
Donations from members	<u>£1,742.72</u>
Total income	£7,109.72
Credit held for summer 2022	£9,726.00

Conference expenditure	<u>£23,889.81</u>
Total Loss	<u>£7,054.09</u>

The loss has been easily covered from the reserves and will not significantly impact the work of the society.

General Update

The handover between the outgoing and incoming treasurers remains protracted. Complexities in the online payment system, in particular, remains an ongoing issue. Alastair Hunter has not been fully removed from the Braintree (Paypal) payment management system, meaning that

reconciliation of the January refunds was delayed until the end of April due to messages not reaching me. Alastair is still receiving the messages about the financial governance of the organisation, which we need to resolve in order to keep using their payment system. This is a very substantial area of concern as it relates to our overall governance –see below. Similarly, access to the HMRC website has not fully migrated despite attempts by us both to make it work.

To aid day-to-day finance management, the Society is now using Quickbooks software (£19.20 per month). Multiple members of the committee can now review the finances, although the treasurer remains the only person who can make payments and liaise with the bank. The Quickbooks system allows for direct invoicing, something that has been enormously effective in ensuring payment of outstanding membership fees.

I conducted a trial integration of direct Paypal payments to great success from members. Particularly our overseas members were delighted to be able to pay via the invoice, in their own currency, and directly to the society. However, there is currently an unresolved issue with ongoing Paypal payments as I am still working to ensure due recognition of our society's tax and legal status. Further updates will follow.

Secretary adds: In discussion two matters raised:

- *A question from JHM regarding appropriate use of the legacy left to the Society by Elizabeth Harper – how should something best be done in her name? Suggestions invited.*
- *The meeting also noted JHM's resignation from the post as of 31 Dec 2022, and her invitation for applications from a potential successor*

Jo Henderson-Merrygold

4.3 The Secretary, Dr Richard Briggs, reported as follows:

I have enjoyed taking on the mantle of secretary, and learning more of the ways of the Society. Helping to set up a joint meeting with OTW (and in turn with OTSSA) has been a full immersion in the life and workings of SOTS, and it is good to be part of a committed and enthusiastic team.

Finding people to fill all the roles of the society seems likely to remain a challenge in the near future. I welcome suggestions on any roles or posts that might be reconfigured, or (temporarily) stopped if necessary.

Since our last meeting, the Society has been notified of the passing of various members, including John Sawyer (our President in 2011), Gareth Watts, Norman Gottwald (honorary member), Joseph Blenkinsopp (our President in 2000), and also the death of long-time former member Carmel McCarthy. I have written or will write on behalf of the Society in each case, although no contact details have been possible to locate for Gareth Watts.

I have not received notification of any honours for members.

Richard Briggs

4.4 The Secretary for Honorary Members, Prof Susan Gillingham, reported as follows:

The Honorary Members' website has been recently updated to include recent publications by Reinhard Kratz and Martti Nissinen. Bernard Lang has also been publishing several new projects, but not in the area of Old Testament / Hebrew Bible studies. There are completely new entries for our two new Honorary Members, Bernd Schipper and Ellen van Wolde. Walter Brueggemann composed a most moving '*In Memoriam*' as a response to Norman Gottwald's death earlier this year, and this has also been included on the website. Johannes de Moor has not been well over this last year but still hopes to attend a SOTS meeting in a future year, an aspiration echoed by a couple of other members. I have been in direct contact with two-thirds of the membership throughout the year; some members, alas, have not responded at all. There are seventeen Honorary Members overall, and we could increase this at least to eighteen: any nominations (to be proposed in accord with the five guidelines posted on the website) to be made in the first instance through Sue Gillingham.

Susan Gillingham

4.5 The Membership Secretary, Dr Janet Tollington, reported as follows:

The total membership now stands at 496, which is a decrease of 2 since December 2021

Although we welcomed **7 new Ordinary members** in January (6M/1F) and **1 new Honorary Member** there have been **4 deaths** recorded (all male). 6 members (4M/2F) were removed from the roll for failure to pay their annual subscriptions.

9 members (4M/5F) have been elevated to the status of **Life Member** having been subscribing members for 30 years.

Will members please keep me informed of any changes to their postal addresses and e-mails.
A few people no longer receive the round robin e-mails because messages sent to the e-mail address on the database have bounced back for various technical reasons.

Male/female ratio: 341M/155F, being 68.75% M and 31.25% F. This balance has remained virtually unchanged over the last few years; it fluctuates within 1% either way.

Members by country of residence: As was agreed at the 2017 Summer Meeting 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 329 (66.33%)

Rest of the world 167 (33.67%)

If I disregard the Honorary members (who are de facto from RoW) these statistics become
UK&I 68.54% and RoW 31.46%

Membership by type:

Ordinary members: 318 (64% of the total membership)

Life members: 162 (only 30 are female – 18.52%)

Honorary members: 16

Book list mailing: 487 were sent out to Members in the June mailing but Ordinary members should note that anyone whose subscription has not been paid at the correct, updated, annual amount by May each year are not included on that mailing list. Please remember that subscriptions fall due in January and adjust your standing order payment date if necessary.

Janet E Tollington

4.6 The Hospitality Secretary, Dr Janet Fyffe, was unable to be present, and a brief oral report was offered by Dr Julie Woods, who had stood in at the last minute for many of the Hospitality Secretary's duties. JW thanked several people for assisting in adjusting for JF's absence, including especially the volunteer members of the Conference Organisation Team without whom many of the practical matters of the conference would not run well or at all.

The meeting thanked both JF for her planning work, and JW for her on-site managing of the conference.

4.7 The Book List Editor, Dr John Jarick, reported as follows:

The 2022 edition of the *SOTS Book List* contained reviews of 340 books, presenting evaluations made by 108 members of the Society. This is a pleasing return to the kind of dimensions of coverage that had pertained to *Book List* editions prior to the pandemic, and once again a tribute to the active involvement in the Society's operations of a wide range of members. On the Society's behalf I would like to thank each and every reviewer, and everyone who in sundry ways assists in the smooth operations of the *Book List*.

As it happens, this year's edition was again produced without the assistance of a graduate student, on account of ongoing ramifications of the pandemic during a certain proportion of the calendar year of 2021 when the 2022 edition was in preparation, but I am glad to say that such ramifications no longer pertain in this calendar year of 2022 as the 2023 edition is in preparation. Since Oxford returned to relatively normal functioning in the past academic year, it is now possible once again to have an Assistant at hand to help with the smooth running of the *Book List* enterprise, and so current operations are being ably assisted by Seth Stadel, an Oxford graduate student who has also brought his doctoral project to a successful conclusion in this academic year.

In my capacity as Convener of the Publications Sub-Committee, I am pleased to report the imminent publication of two new volumes in the Study Guides to the Old Testament series, namely Cheryl Exum's guide to *The Song of Songs*, under the banner of 'The Bible's Only Love Poem', and Carly Crouch and Christopher Hays's guide to *Isaiah*, under the banner of 'A Paradigmatic Prophet and His Interpreters'.

A new matter for consideration is the question of whether the Society should seek to digitise the as-yet-undigitised back copies of the *Book List*, namely those prior to the incorporation of the *Book List* into the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. Members will be aware that the Society has been making recent editions of the *Book List* available online in the Member's Space section of the SOTS website since the 2016 edition, but I have recently requested Sage, the current publishers of *JSOT* who provide us with the links to those editions and who hold the digital iterations of the earlier *JSOT* editions as well, if it would be possible for those earlier editions of 1998–2015 also to be made available to SOTS members through our website. They have responded positively, and so I anticipate that those links will be made available soon.

But now the question of digitising the pre-1998/pre-*JSOT* editions was raised recently by Mervyn Richardson, who served as the Society's Publications Sales Secretary in the years 1981–1993 and who had faithfully maintained a collection of back copies of the *Book List* until needing recently to offload his collection. He has kindly supplied to the *Book List* Editor certain

editions which had been lacking in the Editor's Collection that I will be passing on to my successor in due course, and so in that collection we now have an almost-complete run of back issues, as also in the Society's Archive in Bangor. It seems that the only edition that we are missing is the very first edition of 1933, and so if anyone has a copy of that edition then please let me know. I have approached TownsWeb Archiving (specialists in digitisation that were recommended to me by the Regent's Park College librarian who used them to digitise certain journals in the library's possession) for a quotation on the task at hand, nearly 6,000 pages of the *Book List* editions up to 1997, and have received a quotation of a total project cost of approximately £3,000 (depending on whether the Society will be liable or not to VAT on this project). The Committee recommends that this project be approved.

The proposal to approve the digitisation of the pre-JSOT editions of the Book List was put to the Business Meeting, and it was agreed. In discussion it was also mandated that the Society should make the pre-JSOT editions available on the publicly-accessible section rather than the members-only section of the website.

4.8 The Information Officer, Dr Zanne Domoney-Lyttle, was unable to be present, but had submitted the following report:

Unfortunately owing to a lack of opportunities in academia, I have pursued employment outside of the academy and this means I am no longer able to be an active part of the society, and more importantly, I am unable to carry on my duties as SOTS Information Officer. I will continue to support SOTS in my role until the end of 2022, and will help with the transition of office to my successor. I would like to thank the membership of SOTS for their support, especially as the majority of my time as Information Officer meant hosting the conference online which would not have been possible without the board and the members. I would especially like to thank Janet Fyffe for her support and wit in challenging times. I encourage anyone with the relevant skills to apply for my position and wish the Society all the best as it continues to traverse difficult waters in the future of Biblical Studies.

Zanne Domoney-Lyttle

The Secretary will write to formally thank ZDL for her service as Information Officer.

4.9 The Archivist, Prof Eryl Davies, was not able to be present, and had no new information to present regarding the archives.

5. Proposals for New Members

The following were proposed and elected into membership of the Society: Revd Dr Rob Marshall, Ms Diana Paulding, Rev Dr Francisco-Javier Ruiz-Ortiz, Revd Sorrel Shamel-Wood, Prof Mark R. Sneed, and Miss Sara Stone,

6. Nominations

All proposals brought forward from the committee were accepted, namely:

1. President (for 2024) – John Jarick
2. Membership Secretary (for 2023) – Alastair Hunter
3. *Book List* Editor (for 2024 but thus beginning work in 2023) – no nomination yet
4. Programme Sub-Committee – Stuart Weeks and Sarah Nicholson
5. Publications Sub-Committee – Suzanna Millar
6. SOTS Wiki Editor – no nomination yet
7. EDI Representative – no nomination yet
8. Social Media Representative – Ellie Lyell (who may also become TRS-UK link)

It was noted that even with a general call for nominations or expressions of interest, some roles continued to be hard to fill, and that two further vacancies were now apparent in light of the meeting: the need for a new treasurer and a new information officer. Members were encouraged to consider roles they might take up, or potential nominations.

7. Item of Interest

The only item discussed was **a proposed change to the Society's rules:**

Rule 17 states that 'the term of office of the President is one calendar year'. At the Winter 2022 Business Meeting, in the discussion of matters arising from the work of the Strategic Review Group, the following note was recorded:

7.(iii) That the Society change the Presidential term of office to 2 years, as and when the new meeting format* is adopted.

This was accepted, with a vote in favour (over 2/3rds majority). It will involve a change to the rules to the Society, which specifies a 1-year Presidential term. The point will thus need to be brought again to the Society Business Meeting as a proposal for a rule change.

(this is the agreement to move to a single face-to-face meeting per year by 2024)*

Rule 21 states that such notice of a proposed rule change needs to be followed at a succeeding Business Meeting by a vote of approval of a 2/3rds majority. [These two steps had effectively been combined in the Winter 2022 proposal by taking the SRG report as the initial notification, on the basis that the SRG survey had reported directly on the views of a large number of members]. However such a proposed rule change then needs a further vote of approval (by a simple majority) at a subsequent Business Meeting.

In light of this, it was proposed that the Society agree to the change of rules indicated in the Winter 2022 note 7.(iii) above. A range of contrasting views were expressed including points about:

- the proposal is the implementation of the SRG's findings on the views of the membership
- the proposal effects a change of ethos to the presidency as part of a strategic move
- the proposal may combine with an opening up of the transparency of the process of appointing Presidents by inviting nominations e.g. in a preceding October
- the proposal will mean fewer Presidents, whereas the present system had served the Society well
- the proposal will raise further questions such as who will pay for the President's tea
- the proposal is unnecessary since the President is currently on the Committee for three years and therefore has a chance to effect strategic change
- the proposal is too hasty as it has not been discussed

- the proposal could be deferred to a subsequent meeting

In light of these points and other general discussion, a vote was taken, with the result being:

10 for, 16 against, 8 abstain

The proposal therefore failed to achieve a simple majority of those present, and was rejected.

Secretary clarifies: The rules are therefore not changed, and the term of office of the President therefore remains at one calendar year.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business

9. Dates of Future Meetings

The Society intends to hold future meetings as follows:

Summer 2023 – 4-7 September, St Catharine's College, Cambridge

Winter 2024 - Online 1-day event?

Summer 2024 – September, Oxford

There being no further business, the President declared the Business Meeting closed.

Signed:

Date: