

THE SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Minutes of the Business Meeting held on 6th January 2022

Online

under the Presidency of Prof Charlotte Hempel

1. Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed Members to the Business Meeting of the Society. The Secretary noted that apologies had been received from Juan Cruz, Adrian Curtis, Tony Gelston, Alastair Hunter (absent for part of meeting), Irene Jones, Paul Joyce, Rex Mason, Walter Moberly, and Jon Stokl.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the previous Business Meeting, which had been displayed and posted online, were approved by the meeting and a physical copy will be signed by the President at the next in-person meeting. There were no matters arising that would not appear on the agenda.

3. Notification of Any Other Business

There was no notification of any other business.

4. Reports from Officers

4.1 The Retiring President, Prof Hugh Pyper reported as follows:

As is customary with presidential reports, and rightly so, my main task is to thank once more the officers of the Society for the dedicated and efficient work they have done in a year of continued uncertainty. We have had much more than could be expected from our retiring officers, but the way in which their successors have already responded to the challenges of these times and the collegial way in which the transitions have been handled bodes well for the Society's continued health. Presidents come and go, but we hold on to our officers (some longer than they ever envisaged); it is they who ensure our continuity. This was shown in the success of the Summer Meeting. The ease of the administration and the efficiency of the online delivery of the meeting was the fruit of much hard work and quiet expertise behind the scenes. It was also a pleasure to find the membership of the Society so understanding and supportive as we have navigated the unpredictable events of the year.

Aside from the Society's own business, I served as its representative at the virtual meetings of the Arts and Humanities Association and, *in loco* Charlotte Hempel, TRS-UK. In both these meetings, the difficulties that Arts and Humanities subjects in general face in light of the current economic and political culture were to the fore. Both organisations offer welcome guidance, support and resources which can be of real help to colleagues who find themselves having to argue for our subject. In particular, TRS-UK has resources to support recruitment and to publicise the excellent record for employability that TRS degrees demonstrate. The relevant

websites are www.artsandhums.org and <https://trs.ac.uk>. It was also good to have it reaffirmed that SOTS is seen as a significant participant in these discussions. I continue to serve on the panel charged with the revision of the Theology and Religious Studies Benchmark Statement, the draft of which was made public for comments now being considered by the group.

As my term as President comes to an end, I am encouraged that the Society continues in good heart in trying times and wish the incoming President and her committee a successful and enjoyable year.

Both the retiring and the incoming President added additional thanks to all those whose last minute work had facilitated the transition of the 2022 Winter Meeting to being held online. CH noted that not all learned societies have managed to continue meeting through the pandemic, and thanked those who have allowed SOTS to do so.

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

BANK & INVESTMENT ACCOUNT BALANCES at 20th December 2021

		(Dec 2020)
Barclays Current A/C	£ 6,406	£ 7,469
Barclays IAS (Business Premium) A/C	£70,534	£70,527
TOTAL	£76,940	£77,996

The funds are in good health: the costs of the January meeting planned for Nottingham have been paid in advance, though at the time of writing it is not clear what form the event will take. Gift aid for the year ending September 30th 2021 has not yet been received, due to a slight delay in submission. It is expected to be around £900. The Bursary Fund stand at approximately £7000.

AUDITED ACCOUNT

The audited accounts are ready and will be presented at the business meeting on the 6th. The auditors did not identify any significant issues.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS 2021

Both meetings in 2021 were virtual, delivered by Zoom. A nominal charge was made for those attending, in anticipation of outlay on technical services. The balance from these two meetings stands at £6370. This can be offset against historic losses accruing from meetings in the previous few years.

SUBSCRIPTION SITUATION

At the time of writing we have 14 members who remain on the old rate, and 10 who are one year in default, despite repeated reminders. It is likely, therefore, that we will lose these 10 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.

The meeting voted to approve the audited financial report.

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

My first note is one of thanks on behalf of the Society and of myself for the service of David Shepherd as secretary of the Society since 2015.

Since our last meeting, the Society has been notified of the passing of various members, including Robert Brownlow, Arnold Anderson, Robert Warner, the Danish scholar Eduard Nielsen, who was an honorary member since 1988, and Elizabeth Harper, who served the Society as Hospitality Secretary from 2004 to 2013. I have not received notification of any honours for members.

The President added thanks on behalf of the whole society to David Shepherd, for his service as Secretary for 7 years from 2015–2021.

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

The most significant event to report is the updating of the Honorary Members' website (<https://www.sots.ac.uk/about-the-society/honorary-members/>) which was a good opportunity to make some continued contact with these senior international members. There is space for perhaps two new proposals, but it might be best to leave things to settle until the summer. If we are looking in the round, then perhaps more female nominations would be good. I would encourage any members thinking of proposing potential new members to look first at the website and consider their proposals in the light of members' research interests already represented there. Because all their recent publications are now on this website, I have only one other new one to report. This is from the prolific author Tomas Römer who co-edited *Une Bible peut en cacher une autre. Le conflit des récits* with Frédéric Boyer (Paris : Bayard, 2021). When we return to a more normal pattern of meetings, it would be good to discuss how we might better include our honorary members: many of those still working or only recently retired would, I believe, like to be more involved.

Susan Gillingham brought a proposal to elect Ellen van Wolde as a new Honorary Member, and this was approved.

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

The total membership now stands at 498, which is an increase of 4 since December 2021

New Ordinary members in 2021: 21 (14M/7F) – another one who was elected last January has deferred as she may be moving out of our field of study. She won't be added to the membership list unless she pays a subscription.

Resignations in 2021: 4 (all M) and lapsed 6 (2M/4F) for non payment of subscriptions. One previous member (M) was reinstated after having lapsed for 2 years.

Deaths in 2021: 5 (4M/1F) [plus another 4M deaths from earlier years that hadn't been notified]

Promoted to Life Membership in 2021: 6 (3M/3F)

Male/female ratio: 343M/155F, being 68.88% M and 31.12% 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 (65.86%)
Rest of the world	170 (34.14%)

If I disregard the Honorary members (who are de facto from RoW) these statistics become UK&I 68.19% and RoW 31.81%

Membership by type:

Ordinary members: 327

Life members: 154

Honorary members: 17

Book list mailing: 462 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 2021 Book List. There is no longer a second Book List mailing this year, so late payers (12 of them) forfeited their copy of the print version. At the year end there are 9 members in arrears for 2021.

I would appreciate it if members would 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.

4.6 The Hospitality Secretary, Dr Janet Fyffe, had circulated a report to the Committee in December 2021, but events had moved on and most of that report – relating to the plans for a physical meeting at Nottingham in Jan 2022 – was no longer relevant. In its stead, JF thanked all those officers who had worked to effect the change to an online meeting at short notice, and offered to take questions.

Hugh Williamson expressed thanks that the Society intended to offer a refund to members of the cost of the physical meeting (minus the deposit, reallocated to cover the cost of the online meeting), but asked what was the nature of the financial loss involved. JHM estimated it at c.£13,000. [Secretary's note: following the meeting, the revised figure after consultation with Nottingham was in fact c.£8,700, which was partially offset by additional online bookings and other donations, resulting in a net loss of c.£5,000, tbc.]

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

The 2022 edition of the *Book List* has been taking shape during ongoing pandemic impacts, one 'external' to the *Book List*'s editorial operations and the other 'internal'.

By the 'external impact' I am referring to the practices of publishers concerning the dispatch of review copies. Many publishers now prefer to supply e-books rather than printed books for

review purposes, and many want to know that there is an assigned reviewer for the work rather than being willing to send a book ‘on spec’. These developments had been emerging in the case of some publishers prior to the pandemic, but the numbers of books that went undelivered in various lockdown periods in various parts of the world have given a further push towards a digital distribution paradigm. This is being eased somewhat in the case of some publishers, who have again resumed a willingness to send print copies for review when that is preferred by the individual reviewer—and indeed a few publishers themselves still prefer print copies and do not make their books available in digital form even if the reviewer would prefer an e-version—but it remains to be seen if hard copies will be as ubiquitous in the future as they used to be in the past.

The ‘internal impact’ is that the Editor’s college has taken advantage of the working-from-home times to redeploy various college spaces, with the result that I no longer have a college office, and so the former relative ease with which parcels of books could be received and processed has been severely compromised. It is accordingly no longer feasible for me to handle the numbers of print-copies of books that used to come in prior to pandemic times, and so a swift return to pre-pandemic practices is not on the cards for that reason too, even if publishers were willing to resume their old ways of doing things.

The combined impact of these ‘external’ and ‘internal’ factors means that for the time being the Editor is likely to continue with the new contingencies that were introduced when the pandemic first struck, namely that Book Offers will be sent by e-mail to members on a number of occasions each year, inviting them to select items from a list, assembled by the Editor, of recent publications for potential review, and whichever items are selected will then be requested from the publishers concerned for direct dispatch to the identified reviewer, either in e-book or ‘real book’ form in accordance with the preferences of the publisher and/or the reviewer. I am grateful to everyone who responded to the Book Offers of this kind that were sent out in 2021, and especially grateful to members who have been willing to review e-books in place of printed books in these unprecedented times. Not all publishers have responded positively or efficiently to these exercises, and not all reviewers have checked their e-mail junk folders for e-books that have been caught in there by over-zealous filtering devices, but at least we should still have a 2022 issue of some quality despite the ongoing challenging circumstances.

Meanwhile, in my capacity as Convener of the Publications Sub-Committee, I am pleased to report the imminent publication of the latest volume in the Study Guides to the Old Testament series, namely Michael Stead’s guide to *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, under the theme of ‘Return and Restoration’.

4.8 The Information Officer, Dr Zanne Domoney-Lyttle, reported as follows:

This report marks the end of my first year as the Society’s Information Officer. This year I have spent time updating small parts of the website, deleting obsolete pages from our servers, and upgrading the Honorary Members section so that it is easier to navigate. My thanks to Sue Gillingham for her stellar work on collating the information represented on those pages.

At the time of writing*, we continue to plan for an in-person conference though with some remote presenters. I have been preparing for this with the IT team at Nottingham as we continue to assess the ongoing situation re: Covid. Again, I want to give my thanks to the committee for their support, but especially to the Secretary and Hospitality Secretary as they have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to overcome potential issues which Covid may present.

As noted in my summer report, one of my goals as Information Officer is to explore the promotion of the Society through social media and by updating the existing website. I regret I have not had the chance to do this yet, but it is my aim for the first quarter of 2022 to make a start on this. I would particularly welcome thoughts and feedback on the current layout of the website, and any suggestions for improvement, especially in terms of making sure our online presence is accessible.

*Secretary adds: This report was written for the Committee in December 2021. At the meeting ZDL added that she had now completed her second fully online meeting after one year in post as Information Officer, and thanked those who had helped effect the late transition to an online meeting. She had purchased a 12-month SOTS Zoom license to make the Winter meeting effective, and noted that this would be available for further events if needed. She added that plans were in hand to raise the social media profile of the Society [through the appointment of a Social Media Representative on the Committee].

4.9 The Archivist, Prof Eryl Davies, reported as follows:

The archive has remained closed for most of the year due to Covid restrictions. Both CUP and T&T Clark regularly send me copies of the SOTS Monograph series and the Study Guides as they appear from the press. I have approached the library to inquire whether the numerous volumes published under the auspices of SOTS can be housed there, and I received the following reply: ‘This does sound like an interesting collection, and it may be that we could consider this in the future. However, we are currently unable to accept *any* new collections at present. This is not just because of Covid limitations but also because we are in the process of a major stock review. This involves the closure of the two smaller libraries, with the retained stock from both being integrated into the Main Arts Collection, which in turn is also going to be reviewed for currency and relevance. As I’m sure you can imagine this is a massive and very ambitious project, with reduced staff levels. Sadly, this is why we are unable to accept new collections for at least another twelve months’. In the meantime, the volumes (which now number about 80) are safely stored in my own office at home, pending the outcome of the decision by the university librarian in a year’s time.

5. Proposals for New Members

The following were proposed and elected into membership of the Society: Mr Ryan Chester, Mr Jonathan M Darby, Ms Katherine Gwyther, Prof Christopher Hays, Dr Michael Lyons, Dr Harald Samuel, and Dr Lodewyk Sutton.

6. Nominations

The President advised that while several names were under consideration for nominations to various roles, expressions of interest and/or proposals were also sought for nominations for election to the following roles and offices:

- Membership Secretary (from 2023)
- *Book List* Editor (from 2024 but thus beginning work in 2023)
- Programme Sub-Committee (which has at least one vacancy)
- Publications Sub-Committee (which has at least one vacancy)

- including the particular role of SOTS Wiki Editor
- and, in anticipation of the Society's acceptance of the Strategic Review Group's (SRG's) recommendation, an:
- EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Representative

Members were invited to send proposals and/or expressions of interest to the Secretary (Richard Briggs) – to arrive no later than end of January 2022. The Committee will then bring recommendations for specific nominations to the Summer Meeting.

7. Items of Interest: Strategic Review Group (SRG) Proposals

The SRG had reported to the Summer 2021 Meeting, and a PowerPoint of that presentation and associated proposals had remained on the SOTS website since that time. The President thus brought to the Meeting three recommendations from the Committee regarding the SRG proposals:

- (i) That the Society adopt a role of EDI Representative on to the Committee [*note: if accepted then a small group will be appointed to specify the role, the group to consist of CH, RB, ZDL, JHM*].

This was accepted, with a vote in favour (over 2/3rds majority).

- (ii) That the Society move to a single face-to-face meeting per year (allowing for other possibilities for an additional virtual meeting/event/lecture ...), aiming to do so by 2024 but in careful liaison with the hospitality secretary and the Programme Sub-Committee regarding when and how to make the change.

This was accepted, with a vote in favour (over 2/3rds majority). There was notable enthusiasm for continued other online possibilities. There was also discussion relating to the timing of one face-to-face meeting in the year, and an appeal for dates to be tried that would allow the maximum possible accessibility to the greatest number of people, including – for example – schoolteachers.

- (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.

8. Any Other Business

James Patrick asked about the use of 'Wonder Me' or other social options in online meetings in between sessions. The Information Officer welcomed proposals and suggestions regarding this issue.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

The Society intends to hold future meetings as follows:

Summer 2022 – 25-28 July, at Nottingham (definite)

Winter 2023 – 3-5 January, venue TBC (Durham/Nottingham/online?)

Summer 2023 – 4-7 September, St Catharine's College, Cambridge (provisional booking expected to be confirmed shortly)

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

Signed:

Date: