

THE SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Minutes of the Business Meeting held on 5th January 2023 at the Winter Meeting in Sheffield under the Presidency of Prof Katharine Dell

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

There were 41 people present.

The Secretary noted that apologies had been received from Margaret Barker, John Barton, Cynthia Crewe, Juan Cruz, Eryl Davies, Cheryl Exum, David Firth, Janet Fyffe, Fleur Houston, Hedy Hung, Alastair Hunter, Irene Jones, Gwen Knight, Nathan MacDonald, George Nicol, Hugh Pyper, Deborah Rooke, Norman Wilson, Jess Wood, Pieter van der Zwan..

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous Business Meeting (27th July 2022, Nottingham), which had been displayed and posted on the notice board, were approved by the meeting, with noting of 4 small mistakes of spelling or grammar. 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 Retiring President, Prof Charlotte Hempel reported as follows:

My Presidential year was marked by what we may hope is a lasting transition out of the pandemic, even though the SOTS calendar was still considerably impacted by it. After we had plans in place for a face-to-face meeting, our Winter Meeting in January 2022 took place online. It is due to the enormous resourcefulness and commitment of our officers, especially our outgoing Information Officer Dr Zanne Domoney-Lyttle and our Hospitality Secretary Dr Janet Fyffe, that this swift change to the online format was such a resounding success.

It was a particular pleasure, therefore, to meet in person for the first time again last summer in Nottingham for our 18th Joint Meeting with the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in the Netherlands and Belgium (OTW). OTW President Professor Hans Ausloos was prevented from attending and was represented by Professor Koert van Bekkum. I was extremely grateful for Professor van Bekkum's collegiality in co-hosting the meeting with me. We were also joined by Drs Nozipho Princess S. Dlodlo and Professor Charlene van der Walt from Durban, South Africa, as guests of OTW. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Drs Julie Woods and James Patrick who worked alongside Janet Fyffe in supporting the evolving conference arrangements so collaboratively. We can all be very proud of how resiliently the Society has weathered the challenges of the pandemic.

My period of office also saw the work of the SOTS Strategy Working Group – including a comprehensive survey of the membership – led by former President Professor Sue Gillingham come to an end. We can expect to see changes that were endorsed come into effect in the course of the next year or so.

The summer meeting also included an interactive panel discussion on ‘The Academy and Academic Publishing: Sustaining the Discipline Collaboratively’. It was a particular privilege to hear our former President and Publisher – Professor David Clines – share a platform with the Senior Acquisitions Editor for Old Testament and Qumran, Suzanne Mekking, of Brill Academic Publishers. With characteristic energy Professor Clines had written a thoughtful and stimulating document for the occasion, sharing his vision for academic publishing and conferences of the future. We were also most grateful for the sponsorship by Brill, the University of Birmingham as well as two former Presidents – Professors Walter Houston and Hugh Pyper – to support generous receptions as well as additional bursaries.

Finally, I would like to offer my profound gratitude to all the officers of the Society who give so much of their time to keep the business of the Society running so effectively and professionally.

4.2 The Treasurer – With the post of treasurer in transition following the resignation of Dr Jo Henderson-Merrygold, it did not prove possible to provide a financial update of the affairs of the Society. The President and Secretary assured the meeting that Dr Henderson-Merrygold had kept the financial affairs of the Society functioning, and that the Committee was assured that a good transition would be possible in the event of electing a new treasurer, as we hoped to do later in the meeting.

[*Secretary adds:* This election did indeed take place – see below.]

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

The main issue on which to report remained the difficulty of finding suitable candidates to fill some of the Society’s posts on Committee and other sub-committees. The particular difficulties have been regarding the Treasurer and *Book List* Editor roles. Conversations during the course of the Winter Meeting had offered ways forward on these and some other roles too, for which the Secretary offered thanks.

Since the previous meeting, the Society has been notified of the passing of two members, both former presidents: John Bartlett (President in 2002) and David Clines (President in 1996). As is widely appreciated, David Clines was a major contributor to not just the life of the Society but to the shape and structure of our discipline, including in 2009 being the first person from outside North America to serve as President of SBL. He had written earlier in the year (2022) with proposals for the future of SOTS, which had been under discussion by the Committee.

[To correct an error in the Summer 2022 Secretary’s report: Carmel McCarthy was not a SOTS member at the time of her death. The list of 4 deaths reported for earlier in the year should therefore have read: John Sawyer (President in 2011), Gareth Watts, Norman Gottwald (honorary member), Joseph Blenkinsopp (President in 2000).]

Committee members were aware that the Secretary’s own circumstance of becoming an acting vicar of a large church in July 2022 had hampered his ability to stay ahead of SOTS

business. He was grateful to colleagues for patience and extra help afforded. A fairly full draft of the delayed Bulletin for 2022 was in hand, but one or two still had not responded to queries, and there was no financial report to include.

The Secretary was not aware of having received notification of any honours for members.

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

Seven of the seventeen members replied to the emails requesting any updates relevant for the website, five with specific news. Normally these would be uploaded straight onto the SOTS website, but this year had been more difficult and this will happen some time later in January. The news to report in outline is:

Athalya Brenner-Idan has completed co-editing *Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah* in *Texts@Contexts*. Published papers include one on the Bible, Theology and Politics in Times of Empowerment, for the *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*, and two others on translation, and Ruth as Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy.

Sara Japhet has just had a collection of 32 articles and past presentations published, all in Hebrew, under the title *Biblical Studies*. She also reports with pride on the birth of her first great-grandson, David.

Reinhard Kratz has completed his long-term project project 'Qumran Digital: Text und Lexicon' which is now online as qumran-digital.org. Materials of the Critical Edition of the Greek Psalter are also to be made available online at <https://septuaginta.uni-goettingen.de/>. His project 'The Arabic and Syriac manuscripts of Ahiqar' is also online and has received the funding for a second phase in 2022–2025 at <https://ahiqar.uni-goettingen.de/website/>.

Martti Nissinen has been submitting several articles on ancient Near Eastern love poetry (i.e. Akkadian love literature and the Song of Songs) as a part of his research project on 'Desire, Agency, and Gender in Ancient Near Eastern Love Poetry'. He is also editing the volume *Love Poetry from Ancient Egypt and the Near East* in the SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series. Other papers include one on Anna the Prophet in Luke 2:36–38, another on textual plurality, and a third on Peace and Peacemaking in the Hebrew Bible.

Thomas Römer has received several distinctions throughout this year, including à Dr. h.c. from the Catholic University of Lyon; the decoration of "commandeur des Arts et des Lettres" from the ministry of culture; and his re-election as Administrateur (President) of the Collège de France. His publication *Dieu de la Bible, dieu du Coran*, co-authored with the Islamologist Jacquelin Chabbi, has now been published in a pocket edition.

Further details of all these publications will soon be uploaded on the website. It has been a good year overall in terms of correspondence with all Honorary Members: only one has failed to make any contact at all. Their contributions, both old and new, continue to enrich the Society's profile. Several have indicated they hope to attend SOTS in Cambridge later this year.

4.5 The Membership Secretary, Dr Alastair Hunter, was absent from the Business Meeting, and so Dr Janet Tollington, whose term of office had just ended, gave her own report as follows:

The total membership now stands at 499, which is an increase of 1 since December 2021

New Ordinary members in 2022: 12 (8M/4F)

Resignations in 2022: 1 (M) and lapsed 6 (4M/2F) for non payment of subscriptions (although I believe one of these is in the process of being reinstated).

Deaths in 2022: 6 (all M), **4** of whom had been Presidents of the Society; and **1** was an Honorary member

Promoted to Life Membership in 2022: 9 (4M/5F)

Male/female ratio: 341M/158F, being 68.57% M and 31.43% F. The % of women is very marginally up again but this is primarily because we lose males at a faster rate

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 (65.94%)

Rest of the world 170 (34.06%)

If I disregard the Honorary members (who are de facto from RoW) these statistics become UK&I 68.26% and RoW 31.74%

Membership by type:

Ordinary members: 322 (64.5% of the total membership)

Life members: 160 (30 are female - 18.75%)

Honorary members: 17

Book list mailing: 487 were sent out to Members in the June mailing. Ordinary members should note that anyone whose subscription has not been paid at the correct annual amount by the end of May each year will not receive the Book List. There is no longer a second Book List mailing during the year, so late payers will forfeit their copy of the print version. I do not know how many members are in arrears for 2022 as this information has not been available to me. 2023 subscriptions are now due.

Will members please keep the new Membership Secretary (Alastair Hunter) – and not 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 my database have bounced back and they have been deleted from the circulation lists. The Book List is mailed to the most recent address we hold.

Farewell: This is my last report to the Society as I now hand over to Alastair confident that he will serve you well as Membership Secretary. It has been a privilege to serve in this capacity since 2017, as it was to serve as Hospitality Secretary and Treasurer before then. This brings to an end my time as an Officer of the Society which began in 1998 (although I had 3 years off for good behaviour before this latest role). You have listened to me presenting reports for more than 20 years and I have been circulating electronic messages for over 5 years; but I can now say 'farewell' and promise that this is my last word to you all. Shalom. *[The President thanked Janet Tollington for her 20+ years of service to the Society.]*

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 once again agreed to take on many of the Hospitality Secretary's duties. JW thanked several people for assisting in 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 JW for her on-site managing of the conference.*]

It was noted that the Committee intended to change the title of the role 'Hospitality Secretary' to 'Conference Secretary', effective from the next meeting, in view of the nature of the role and the desirability of its appearing in these terms on the cv of any possible candidate. The role is not named in the SOTS rules and therefore no further process is required to make this change.

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

The 2023 edition of the *Book List* is now taking shape, with assorted reviews having already arrived by the time of the writing of this report, and hopefully many more expected reviews will be in hand by the time of the Meeting, and yet more to come throughout January in time to make it into print for the latest issue.

As I work on this latest edition, I am mindful that a transition point has been reached, and I accordingly want in this report to pay tribute to a now-retiring worker who has served the *Book List* enterprise for the past twenty or so years. Presumably unknown to members at large of SOTS, but much appreciated over these years by a succession of *Book List* Editors, the freelance production editor Elaine Bingham has shaped the Editors' manuscripts into production readiness under the auspices of Continuum at first and then Sage Publications in more recent times. She may even have begun such tasks already in the years when Sheffield Academic Press was producing the *Book List*, but in any event she has now decided to retire from such duties, and her steady, experienced hand on the production process will be missed, even while it is acknowledged that she deserves now to rest from her two-decades-long *Book List* labours.

Members will recall that at the previous Business Meeting of the Society, approval was given to proceed with the digitization of the pre-1998 issues of the *Book List*, with then-estimated expenditure of several thousand pounds for the project. In the event, we will not need to spend that amount of money in order to achieve the desired end, since our good friends at the Bangor University Library have undertaken to digitize those past issues as part of a wider project of digitizations of their collections. This is a splendid development, on which our Archivist, Eryl Davies, will report on the details, but we can all be very grateful that Eryl has negotiated such an acceptable arrangement for the Society.

Meanwhile the digitized past issues from 1998 to 2015, as well as the most recent issue of 2022, have been made available to SOTS to place on the Members' Space of our website, to join there the already-accessible issues from 2016 to 2021. I regret to see that, at the time of my writing of this report, these additions have not yet been made to the website, but this delay may be explained in the Information Officer's report.

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 Ernest Lucas's guide to *Daniel*, under the theme of 'Sovereignty, Human and Divine'. I can also report an imminent change in personnel in terms of the Series Editor role at the SOTS Monographs Series: Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, who has led the renewed incarnation of this series

for the past decade, is moving on to become Editor-in-Chief of the *Vetus Testamentum* Supplements series; she is to be congratulated on her new editorial role under those other auspices, and thanked enormously for her splendid work in bringing back to fruition the previously-dormant-for-a-time SOTS series. I am pleased to note that a worthy successor has been identified, which the membership will have the opportunity to approve (or otherwise) at this Business Meeting.

4.8 The Information Officer – this post was in transition, following the resignation of Dr Zanne Domoney-Lyttle. The Committee was aware of an expression of interest, so while acknowledging that nobody would be elected at this meeting, it was hoped that the post would soon be filled.

4.9 The Archivist, Prof Eryl Davies, was not able to be present, so the Secretary read Prof Davies' report as follows:

I am happy to report that the Archive at Bangor University Library has agreed to digitize all issues of the Book List from 1947–1997 free of charge to the Society (though the Society may wish to send a donation to the Archive in recognition of the work involved). Four issues of the Book List were missing (those relating to 1977, 1978, 1939, and 1947) and the Membership Secretary kindly circulated a request for the missing copies from members. In the event, there were plenty of offers to donate the 1977 and 1978 copies to the Archive but none to donate the two earlier volumes. However, John Jarick does have copies of the 1939 and 1947 volumes, and these can be used for digitization. Furthermore, the library is prepared to house the volumes published over the years under the auspices of the Society; these currently number about 75 volumes. These will be placed in the library's Reserve Collection and cannot be borrowed but can be consulted in the library, provided they are booked three days in advance. These volumes must be catalogued by the library staff, and there may be a charge for this service.

5. Proposals for New Members

The following were proposed and elected into membership of the Society: Dr Nathaniel E. Greene, and Mr Charles P Comerford.

6. Nominations

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

1. Treasurer – Joseph Scales, with immediate effect from Jan 2023
2. SOTS Monograph Series editor – Anja Klein

Updates were given on several posts where it was hoped that names could be brought back to the Summer Meeting, with an appeal to members to reflect on offering to serve in these roles:

3. Hospitality Secretary – JF's resignation was noted, along with title change (see 4.6 above). Expressions of interest received
4. Book List Editor (for 2024 but thus beginning work in 2023) – name anticipated for Summer Meeting

5. Information Officer – see 4.8 above
6. EDI Representative – no nomination but an expression of interest had been received
7. SOTS Wiki Editor – no nomination, and John Jarick and the Publications Sub-Committee had been asked to take this forward.
8. Other Posts – The Secretary invited expressions of interest regarding the British Academy ECR Network (one was received) and the Arts and Humanities Network. Ellie Lyell has agreed to be TRS-UK rep

7. Items of Interest

7.1 Rhythm of Meetings

The President reminded the Business Meeting of the forthcoming change to the rhythm of SOTS Meetings. The Summer Meeting will continue in the same format, though practicalities of booking a venue in Cambridge (2023) and Oxford (2024) had necessitated these two conferences moving to September. This was not the result of a policy decision. The situation will continue to be monitored, in dialogue with practical booking possibilities according to venue. The new Winter On-line Event affords the opportunity to try different formats or patterns for such gatherings. It would not necessarily be the case that the way it was done the first time would be repeated every year.

In discussion it was noted that any rhythm of meetings involved gains for some and losses for others – the particular case of school teachers and their availability was noted.

7.2 Winter Online Event

The President announced that the first such event would be on Thursday 4th January 2024, likely (but see above) to include around 4 papers, a Presidential Paper, and an invited international guest of some standing.

7.3 Calling for Papers

On behalf of the Programme Sub-Committee the Secretary noted that the Society wanted very much to encourage members, old and new, to offer papers for meetings. Papers of all kinds of scholarly sub-disciplines were welcome, and members should not feel that only a certain kind of paper would be accepted. The Programme Sub-Committee remained open to all good ideas.

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 – St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, Mon 4th – Thurs 7th September 2023

Winter 2024 - Online 1-day event – Thurs 4th January 2024

Joint SOTS/OTW Meeting – summer 2024, to be hosted by OTW

Summer 2024 – Mansfield College, Oxford, Mon 2nd – Thurs 5th September 2024

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

Signed:

Date: