

The Society for Old Testament Study

Minutes of the Business Meeting held on 18th July 2012

at Hulme Hall, University of Manchester
under the presidency of Professor George Brooke

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Professor John Barton, Dr Stephen Bigger, Dr Carly Crouch, Dr Katharine Dell, Dr Anthony Gelston, Dr Ann Jeffers, Dr Robert Murray, Ms Eva Pinthus, Professor Alexander Samely, Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou, and Dr Jonathan Stökl.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous Business Meeting (5th January 2012) had been displayed. With two corrections (under Item 6.3, the titles of Andy Lie and Ed Ball should both read 'Mr' rather than 'Dr'), the Minutes were approved by the meeting and signed by the President.

3. Matters Arising

A proposal was made that the Minutes of Business Meetings be made available on the members-only section of the Society's website, with the Membership Secretary notifying members by e-mail once the Minutes were available. This was agreed *nem. con.*

4. Reports from Officers

(a) **The President**, Professor George Brooke, reported that, as the Society's nomination for and now as an independent member of the Research Excellence Framework sub-panel on Theology & Religious Studies, he would be happy to interact with members on aspects of REF 2014 and to give further updates on the process (following on from the presentation he had made earlier to the Summer Meeting) if felt useful by members. He also noted that concerns had been expressed about possible effects on the Old Testament discipline of the forthcoming school curriculum changes, and he invited Professor Hugh Pyper to address the Business Meeting on this matter: Professor Pyper indicated that he was agreeable to take the matter forward on the Society's behalf; there was a wide debate that needed to be had, and in his role with the teaching-and-learning initiative in Philosophy and Religious Studies he would seek to bring the relevant scholarly societies together with the Exam Boards for conversation on the issues concerned.

(b) **The Treasurer**, Dr Janet Tollington, reported that the Society's accounts currently stood at just over £130,000, a figure that included earmarked legacies as well as income held for the Summer Meeting, such that the Society's 'free' assets are close to £56,000, a level that has remained fairly constant over recent years. The accounts for the Winter Meeting in Durham, January 2012, indicated that a loss of £575 was

made, and a total of £856 was awarded as conference grants and low-income subsidy; it is apparent that applications for the low-income subsidy continue to be important, and it is good that the Society has the means to support both students and other unwaged members in these difficult economic times. The Treasurer noted that the costs associated with accepting credit-card payments remain high at £32 per month even when no transactions are processed (probably six months in each year), and she would be recommending to her successor that the new Treasurer seek out an alternative provider for this service. She also gave notice of a matter that the Committee would be placing before the next Business Meeting for discussion and resolution: in view of the increasing costs of the twice-yearly mailings to members, the Committee will be seeking approval for the materials sent in the spring and autumn mailings to be sent electronically in the future. Finally, the Treasurer noted that she was coming to the end of her term of office, and expressed her feeling that it had been a privilege to serve the Society in this capacity, and her thanks to all for their cooperation over the years. The assembly in return expressed enormous thanks to Dr Tollington for her years of splendid service.

(c) The Secretary, Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou, reported *in absentia* that Dr Charlotte Hempel has taken up the post of Executive Editor of *Dead Sea Discoveries*, and Dr Diana Edelman will be spending the 2014-15 academic year at the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy for Sciences and Letters as a core investigator on a project led by Professor Terje Stordalen entitled 'Local Dynamics of Globalization in the Pre-Modern Levant'. She reported with regret the deaths of Revd Dr Allan Jenkins and the Society's oldest member, Professor Helmer Ringgren. On a happier note, she noted the recent marriage of the Society's Retiring President, Professor John Sawyer; and on a personal note, she thanked members, and especially the Committee, for their support during her short tenure as Secretary. Two additional items were reported from the floor: Dr Eryl Davies has been awarded a DD by Bangor University, and Dr Paul Joyce has been appointed Samuel Davidson Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at King's College London.

(d) The Secretary for Honorary Members, Professor David Clines, reported further on the death of Professor Helmer Ringgren at the age of 94, noting his long-term service at the University of Uppsala and in particular his editorship of the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. The presence of Professor Sara Japhet on the Summer Meeting programme was noted with pleasure. There had been a recent fall in the number of honorary members, and as his own term of office as Secretary for that portfolio drew to a close, Professor Clines looked forward to his successor bringing new names before the Society to bring the numbers back up in the very near future. The assembly expressed appreciation to Professor Clines for his service as Secretary for Honorary Members.

(e) The Hospitality Secretary, Ms Elizabeth Harper, reported that the Summer Meeting was running smoothly, and she thanked all who had helped to make it so, especially the Treasurer and Mr James Patrick and the team of helpers. She noted

that attendance numbers were back up this year after some dips in recent Summer Meetings, and that augured well for the Society's health. She also noted that this was her last report to a Business Meeting, as she was coming to the end of her term of office, and she was looking forward to a 'sabbath rest' after the sustained though always enjoyable efforts of her years in office. The assembly expressed enormous thanks to Ms Harper for her years of sterling service.

(f) The Membership Secretary, Ms Vivienne Rowett, reported a current membership figure of 486, and noted that female membership now makes up more than a quarter of the total (the male/female ratio now standing at 74%/27%). She requested that if anyone has contact information for either of the two members whose current addresses are unknown to her, namely Dr D. Price-Williams and Revd J.F.X. Sheehan, she would be pleased to receive it. She expressed her thanks to all the members and officers of the Society (especially to retiring officers Elizabeth Harper and Janet Tollington) whose efforts have made the work of the Membership Secretary run smoothly.

(g) The Book List Editor, Dr Deborah Rooke, reported that the 2012 edition had been successfully completed, and review copies of books were now being distributed for the 2013 edition. As always, she was grateful to all who review books and who produce some excellent evaluations of the scholarship that is being published in ever greater volumes (both literally and metaphorically). She did note, however, that she occasionally received reviews which appeared to have been taken largely from back-cover blurbs or from publishers' websites rather than from reviewers' own perusal and evaluation of books, or which addressed themselves to SOTS rather than to the wider scholarly community; neither of these is really acceptable for an international publication which purports to be offering scholars' own summary reviews and which is simultaneously published as issue 5 of the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. She encouraged members that their reviews are getting wide circulation beyond the boundaries of SOTS, and in the light of that fact she exhorted members to continue to maintain the high standards of reviewing that have prevailed in the vast majority of reviews that have passed through her hands over the last three years.

In her capacity as Convener of the Publications Sub-Committee, the *Book List* Editor reported that the last of the present series of SOTS Monographs, the essays of Rudolf Smend, was now in press, and that progress was continuing on the projected series of new Study Guides, with the first volume of that series now imminent.

(h) The Information Officer, Dr James Aitken, reported that the Society's website was averaging nineteen visitors per day, with an average visit-time of just over two minutes. He demonstrated to the Business Meeting the test site that he had established for the SOTS Wiki, making use of a sample entry (on 'Ecclesiastes') prepared by Dr Stuart Weeks, and he indicated that the working party would soon be drawing up a list of key entries to be covered. There would soon be a need to appoint an experienced Editor to assign and then edit the initial submissions, so that

the Society can be confident of good material in Phase One of the project; once the site 'goes live', any wiki entry will be open to further editing by contributors to the project, but it is desirable to set a standard from the start.

5. Elections

Professor John Day was elected **President** of the Society for 2014.

Dr Alastair Hunter was elected **Treasurer** (and formal authorization was given by the Business Meeting for Dr Hunter to replace Dr Tollington as signatory of the Society's bank accounts).

Dr Hilary Marlow was elected **Secretary**, Professor Lester Grabbe was elected **Secretary for Honorary Members**, Mr James Patrick was elected **Hospitality Secretary**, and Dr Eryl Davies was elected **Archivist**.

Three new **Committee members** were elected: Dr Carly Crouch, Dr Katie Edwards, and Dr David Shepherd.

It was noted that the term of office of the Information Officer was coming towards its end, and that the Society was also looking (as noted in the Information Officer's report) to appoint a Wiki Editor. Expressions of interest in and suggestions for nominations to each of these roles were invited.

6. New Members

A list of persons proposed for membership had been displayed, and the following were duly elected to membership of the Society: Ms Lindsey Askin, Dr Matthew Collins, Dr Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, Dr Kyong-Jin Lee, Mr Tarcisius Mukuka, and Revd Dr Mark Scarlata.

7. Future Meetings

Venues and dates were confirmed for the Meetings in 2013, a Winter Meeting to be held at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge on 2nd–4th January, and a Summer Meeting to be held at Bangor University on 22nd–25th July. It was noted that the following Winter Meeting 2014 would be held in Durham.

8. Any Other Business

There being no further business, the President thanked all who had attended and contributed to the Summer Meeting in Manchester, and declared the Business Meeting closed.

Signed: Date: