

# The Society for Old Testament Study

## Minutes of the Business Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015

at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge University  
under the presidency of Professor Hans Barstad  
(chaired in his absence by Professor John Day)

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed new members to their first Business Meeting of the Society. Apologies had been received from the following: Hans Barstad, Cheryl Exum, Anthony Gelston, Anselm Hagedorn, Eun-Woo Lee, Rex Mason, Alan Millard, Hector Patmore, Simon Stocks, William Tooman, Wilfred Watson, Jim West, Mervyn Richardson, Alma Brodersen, Tarah van De Wiele (prospective member), Angela Thomas, Sue Groom.

### 2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the previous Business Meeting (23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2014), which had been displayed, were approved by the meeting and signed by Professor John Day. There were no Matters Arising not already covered under the Agenda.

### 3. Reports from Officers

**(a) The Retiring President,** Professor John Day reported that nothing in particular had turned up which had required him to act on behalf of the Society throughout the course of the year, although he had been involved throughout the year in discussions of arrangements concerning future meetings. He expressed his gratitude to the outgoing Secretary, Hilary Marlow, and to the Hospitality Secretary, James Patrick, for the assistance they kindly provided. He reported that he had enormously enjoyed his year as President of SOTS and wished to thank the Society for the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

Additionally, because Professor Hans Barstad was unfortunately unable to be present for the January 2015 SOTS meeting, he happily agreed to chair this meeting as well. Further, he asked the permission of the society to extend the society's best wishes to Professor Barstad and to thank him for helping to organize such an interesting winter meeting. **The society agreed that Professor Day should write to Professor Barstad in these terms.**

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

#### **BANK & INVESTMENT ACCOUNT BALANCES**

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Barclays Current A/C                | £14,600.80  |
| Barclays IAS (Business Premium) A/C | £111,063.90 |
| TOTAL                               | £125,664.70 |

As usual, the final figure includes income in respect of the Winter Meeting, which will be paid out in due course. The current account balance is thus overstated by about £17,000. Further, it is still expected that the Wiki project and the special celebrations for the centenary year will require withdrawals from the investment account, which is likely therefore to be significantly reduced.

Available assets (other than the legacy funds of about £58,000) are in the region of £53,000. While this represents a reasonable reserve, it is not growing, and bank interest is effectively zero. The audited accounts for the year have been posted during the meeting, and require approval by the meeting.

One matter of some concern is that expenditure on Bursaries and Scholarships is running at about £1000 in excess of income. This problem was masked this year by the accident of two tranches of Gift Aid recovered within the one financial year, and the transfer of the residuum of the Hart Bequest to the Bursary Fund. The committee is considering ways to address this issue.

There are currently sixteen members in arrears with their subscriptions, including one new member who has not yet arranged for payment. Of the remainder, seven seem to be determined to ignore all requests from the Treasurer (however politely phrased!); accordingly if no response is forthcoming, it is anticipated that we will lose them as members within the next eighteen months.

The Treasurer alerted members to the likelihood that a proposal will be brought to the July 2015 meeting to increase the annual subscription. It has remained unchanged for around fifteen years; but the need to enhance the Bursary Fund, issues relating to the production of the Book List, and other projects in the pipeline mean that our reserve is likely to fall significantly. Accordingly it is only prudent to make a change before we are compelled to. Further details will be communicated when the Committee has had a chance to consider the detailed proposals.

While it is customary for the Treasurer to thank committee colleagues, he insisted that his gratitude was none the less genuine. In particular he indicated his indebtedness to Viv Rowett who keeps the membership list in order, James Patrick who does the real work of arranging the meetings, and Hilary Marlow whose efficiency as secretary has been impressive. Without wishing to absolve himself of responsibility for the care of the Society's funds, The Treasurer indicated that his task would be impossible without their expertise and assistance.

He concluded by noting three specific items for which he was seeking the meeting's approval. The first was to approve the audited accounts, which have been displayed on the notice board; the second was to approve the appointment for a further year of Hardie Caldwell as our

auditors; and the third was to approve a change to the financial year so that in future it will end on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September rather than, as at present, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October.

Janet Tollington asked that it be remembered that a rate change will require members to change their standing orders and that this has sometimes discouraged some from continuing to give, including especially life members. She also asked whether the society needed to secure formal approval from outside bodies to change the dates of its financial year.

The Treasurer clarified that life members would not be asked to increase their voluntary contribution and acknowledged that there were some inevitable risks when membership subscription fees were raised.

**All three proposals were approved, including the change of financial year (assuming that approval from outwith the society would not be required or could be secured).**

**(c) The Secretary**, Dr David Shepherd reported on behalf of outgoing secretary, Dr. Hilary Marlow, that:

Since the Summer Meeting 2014, the society had been informed of the deaths of Rt. Revd. John Austin Baker in June 2014 and Rev Dr Leslie Green in October 2014. Congratulations are due to Hugh Williamson on his being awarded an OBE for services to scholarship and Theology and to Dr Casey Strine (of Sheffield) who has been awarded the 2015 Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise.

She reported that in September of this year she attended the AHRC Subject Association Meeting on behalf of the Society. The programme for the day included discussion on the Academic Book of the Future project, AHRC Commons, Open Access, and research careers and training. In addition, breakout groups met to brainstorm the challenges facing early career researchers, the opportunities and risks presented by collaboration across AHRC Commons and plans to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AHRC in 2015.

As she hands over her responsibilities as Secretary to Dr David Shepherd, she remains grateful for the support and cooperation of other Committee Members in maintaining the work of the Society.

The incoming Secretary wished to put on record how grateful he was for Hilary's help in orienting him to the new job.

The society expressed its thanks to the outgoing Secretary for her work over the course of her term of office.

Heather McKay asked whether it would be possible to report on the REF. **George Brooke offered to report on same at the 2015 Summer meeting.**

David Baker asked if reports might be circulated by email in advance of the Business Meeting. **It was confirmed by the Information Officer that there was no technical reason why they could not be posted on the website in advance of the meeting and the secretary confirmed that if this was done, it might be helpful for an email to be sent to members to alert them to this in advance of the next business meeting.**

**(d) The Secretary for Honorary Members**, Professor Lester Grabbe reported that the following honorary members had sent news of various publishing and professional endeavours: Athalya Brenner, Michael Fox, Carol Newsom, Kirsten Nielsen, Martti Nissinen; Walter Brueggemann, Tamara Eskenazi, and Sara Japhet had all sent their warm greetings to the Society.

Professor Grabbe invited members to contact him with any nominations for supplementing the ranks of the honorary members, reminding members of the important criterion of international academic standing and that any nominations should be accompanied by a short justification for the nomination.

**(e) The Membership Secretary**, Ms Vivienne Rowett, reported that the total membership of the Society now stands at 516, an increase of 13 over this time last year, and 3 more than in the Summer report. (New ordinary members in 2014: 20 (11F, 6M), Resignations in 2014: 2 (1F, 1M), Deaths in 2014: 3 (3M). The male/female ratio was as follows: 359M/157F = 69.6%M/ 30.4%. New intake this year was 9 men, 11 women, and the losses were 4 men, 1 woman, and since most of the oldest members are men, the ratio M/F is of course slowly becoming more equal. The total number of those promoted to Life Membership in 2014 was 12. The geographical distribution of members was as follows:UK: 333 (64.5%), Europe: 68 (12.7%), N America: 72 (13.9%), Rest of World: 43 (8.3%). As usual, there is very little change in these proportions. These figures reflect current political realities. 14 members live in the Republic of Ireland, and they are included in the figures above for Europe. 5 live in Norway, which is not in the European Union but rather included in the European Free Trade Area, and these are counted as being in Europe in the above calculations too, so members are able if they wish to work out three more sets of statistics based on these considerations. Membership by type is as follows: Ordinary members: 341, Life members: 157, Honorary members: 18. The ratio of Ordinary/ Life + Honorary members is 66%/34%, thus a slight increase in the percentage of older members from 32% in Dec 2013, probably caused by people living longer rather than a drop in the number of new members and so a cause for rejoicing. With regard to the book list mailing, the Membership Secretary was unable to supply the figure of the number of these sent out this year, and was concerned that some had been sent to members who were not eligible due to non-payment of subscriptions, in which case it was requested that payment be made.

She expressed her thanks to the officers with whom she works most closely, Hilary Marlow, Alastair Hunter and James Patrick, and also to other committee members and for help of various kinds from members in keeping her informed of news etc.

**(f) The Hospitality Secretary**, Mr. James Patrick, reported that attendance at this year's winter meeting was approx. 120, which was perhaps slightly above average, despite several cancellations which had been included on the list of apologies. Fitzwilliam College has had a quite significant turnover in conference staff and while we have retained our concession for use of the auditorium, working with new college staff had complicated arrangements slightly. James expressed the hope that this would be improved next time, and acknowledged that generally the College is hospitable and welcoming. The College has decided that students can stay on in their rooms, which will limit the number of en suites available to future meetings of the Society at Fitzwilliam. It might therefore be worth considering a different college that would allow for more en suite availability and James asked that Cambridge-based people suggest alternatives to him. James apologized for various problems which have arisen in part because conference staff at the College no longer support some services, which have now been outsourced and have incurred additional cost for the Society. James invited feedback from members regarding the accommodation to be passed on to the College. He also reminded members that the upcoming summer meeting would be held in Pollock Halls, Edinburgh and that numbers would be swelled by additional attendees from the OTW and Norwegian Old Testament Society. He assured members that the booking form would be made available earlier than it had been for the winter meeting and expressed his thanks to fellow committee members and executive officers especially for their assistance. Jim Aitken mentioned that refurbishment of Fitzwilliam would be commencing and that more en suite accommodation might be available in the future.

**(g) The Book List Editor**, Dr Deborah Rooke, reported that the search for her successor was continuing and progress was being made. She indicated her gratitude to members who had relieved her of 130 books for review by the end of January.

Publications sub-committee news:

- ***SOTS monograph series***: Lena Tiemeyer has closed the deal with CUP, and so she will be actively seeking manuscripts in order to launch the series in 2017.
- ***Study guides***: two more volumes are now with the press – Numbers, and Jeremiah. Also the design of the back covers has been revised to ensure that SOTS is mentioned in the blurb.
- ***Centenary publications***: moves are now afoot to recruit contributors for the two SOTS centenary volumes, one focused on the history of SOTS itself, and one the periodic review of scholarship which, in line with previous such publications, is due soon.

The Book List Editor expressed her usual, but no less sincere, thanks to all who have contributed in any way to making the Society's publications possible, either by reviewing or suggesting books for review, by taking part in the administrative processes that go towards producing the Book List (Holly Morse particularly, along with staff at Regent's Park College), or by undertaking other publication sub-committee duties (Lena Tiemeyer and Adrian Curtis with the monographs and study guides respectively).

For the encouragement of the Society, Heather McKay noted that Sage were very happy to continue to publish the SOTS Book List.

George Brooke noted that due to a reduction in his office space, his store of back issues of the Book List will be brought along to future meetings for collection by members and that those not taken will be pulped.

**(h) The Information Officer,** Dr Jonathan Stökl reported that he and Michael Willis are currently building the new website, which should be test-ready shortly after the New Year. There have been some costs incurred which have been communicated to the committee and the treasurer specifically.

The Information Officer hopes also to have sorted ownership of the [www.sots.ac.uk](http://www.sots.ac.uk) name, which is currently held by Cambridge University Computing Services, and Jim Aitken is kindly helping with that. Once the Society has ownership of the domain and the new website, the Information Officer will be taking over completely from Dr. Aitken on matters to do with the upkeep of the website etc. Selected members of the Society will be able to give the site a test-run before it is opened more widely.

**(i) The Archivist,** Professor Eryl Davies, reported (via a report read by Professor Day) that the Head of the Archive at Bangor is due to take early retirement in the spring of 2015; however, Prof. Davies does not anticipate that this will have any impact on the holdings the Society has in the archive. He has begun trawling through the archive in recent months with a view to preparing a chapter on the history of the Society for the SOTS centenary volume. He invited any member with any information relevant to the Society that should go into the archive please to get in touch with him.

#### **4. Elections**

##### **(a) New Members**

A list of persons proposed for membership had been displayed, and the following were duly elected to membership of the Society: Revd Dr Adam Carlill, Mrs Janet Fyffe, Dr Katie Heffelfinger, Dr Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, Revd Levente Lörík, Dr David Mitchell, Dr Elizabeth Robar, Dr Zoltan Schwab, Ms Tarah van de Wiele, Revd Dr Kevin Walton.

## **5. Centennial celebrations**

### **(a) Exhibition**

Dr. Carly Crouch reported that in the wake of the Ashmolean's decision not to host a SOTS exhibition, the members of the exhibition committee met to discuss the further options. It was instead proposed that the Society investigate the possibility of creating a virtual exhibition, with the advantage that this format would facilitate the inclusion of high-profile objects, would be durable beyond the usual shelf life of a brick and mortar exhibition, with a wider potential audience, and could be subsequently expanded.

The Digital Arts team at Nottingham has indicated significant interest in the project and is keen to support it. Discussions with the unit concerning the technical and financial aspects of the project have been extremely positive; it looks that we will benefit from an existing project aimed at developing a platform for virtual archives, as this should provide an underlying framework which may then be modified for purpose at a relatively low initial cost. Soon we will have a clearer idea of actual numbers.

The other significant cost in doing the exhibition virtually will be for digital image rights and costs relating to the recording of the 'public lectures' included as part of the exhibition. Overall, however, the virtual exhibition option looks to be viable, or very nearly so, on SOTS funds alone; this will be extremely helpful as the project is somewhat unusual on the research end and does not fit entirely neatly into the usual run of grant options (insofar as it draws on current research without necessarily furthering it, aside from the proposed associated conference).

### **(b) SOTS Wiki**

Dr. Walter Houston reported that progress on the Wiki has been rather slow since the summer. 27 of the planned 36 entries in the first phase of the project are more or less complete at the time of writing, but two contributors have had to withdraw and may be followed by others. We wish to expand the remit to include the deuterocanonical/apocryphal books so volunteers are needed to undertake this and other additional work. Interested parties should contact Walter directly.

Consideration is now being given to the appointment of a student assistant paid from the £3000 per annum assigned to the project to move things on a bit faster and to help with consistency of terminology, style etc. Dr. Houston will be advertising this position through normal Society communication channels. The editorial team will continue to consider the situation and plan the next phase.

Dr. Houston noted that the issue of acknowledgement for work done had been raised by some members, with the result that those who've made initial contributors will be acknowledged as

a group rather than in association with particular entries which would be contrary to the very notion of a Wiki.

Dr. Charlotte Hempel asked where the SOTS Wiki is located in cyberspace. Dr. James Aitken indicated it could be located by googling 'Wikispaces SOTS'.

Prof. Hugh Williamson asked about whether there might be anything we could learn from the SBL's Bible Odyssey project. Dr. Houston reminded members that the Bible Odyssey is different from the SOTS Wiki by virtue of the fact that the latter, like other Wikis, may be altered/revised/improved.

The Secretary also reported in connection with the centennial celebrations that in order to help Katharine Dell prepare a kind of snapshot of the Society at one hundred, she is planning to distribute a survey which members will be able to fill out either in hard copy or electronically.

## **6. Future Meetings**

The Secretary reminded members that our summer meeting with the Dutch Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap is to be held in Edinburgh at Pollock Halls from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 2015 and that the 2016 winter meeting will be held at Collingwood College, Durham from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of January next year.

There being no further business, the President thanked Mr James Patrick and those who had enabled the smooth running of the Summer Meeting, the Committee Members and all those who had read papers at the Meeting. He declared the Business Meeting closed.

Signed: ..... Date: .....