TOEBI Newsletter

Teachers of Old English in Britain and Ireland

TOEBI Committee

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Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of the *TOEBI Newsletter*. The members of the committee would like to express their thanks for all the support that has been offered with regards to the renewed launch of TOEBI, and in particular to all those who have pledged membership for the next three years. The revenue collected so far has given the society a sound financial basis to work from.

In this issue we include information about the Committee Meeting earlier this year, further details on the AGM, information concerning the TOEBI on-line service, and material on new publications. The Editor strongly welcomes contributions and ideas for the next newsletter. Material for this should reach me at the above address by January 31st 1996.

February *Newsletter*: The name of Dr Hugh Magennis, The Queen's University of Belfast, was unfortunately omitted from the list of committee members in the first issue of the *TOEBI Newsletter*. The Editor and Secretary apologise for this error in proof-reading.

Business from the Committee Meeting of the 13th May 1995

Election of Officers and Committee Members: It had been previously agreed that two members of the committee and one officer should retire each year. It was agreed that nominations for these positions with a proposer, seconder, and the written agreement of the nominee must be received by the Secretary not later than 22nd September each year so that members could be informed of the proposals in the agenda circulate for the November AGM. If more nominations were received than there were vacancies, a paper ballot would be held at the AGM.

The same name could be proposed for both an office and as committee member. Elections for offices would precede those for the committee. If elected to an office, a nominee would withdraw from the list of nominations for the committee. This year nominations are required for two committee members and the chairmanship.

Membership: A current membership list will be circulated each year with the August newsletter. Names of postgraduate members who are on the Directory of Research Students will be asterisked with a note that further information is available from Professor Jane Roberts.

November General Meeting

The meeting will take place on Saturday, 11th November 1995, in Collingwood College, Durham (10.30am—4.30pm). The cost will be £16.50 for members, £15.00 for postgraduate members, £18.00 for non-members (includes coffee, buffet lunch, and tea).

On the theme of 'Using Art and Archaeology/The Material Culture in Teaching Old English' papers will be given by Mr Sid Bradley (York), and Dr Gale Owen-Crocker (Manchester). On innovations in teaching there will be presentations by Dr Felicity Currie (Manchester) on her 'Anglo-Saxon for Beginners' course, Dr Macrae-Gibson (Aberdeen) on his 'Learning Old English', and Mrs Ann Squires (Durham) on computer editions of *The Dream of the Rood* and *Judith*. The AGM will follow the academic papers at 3.30pm.

The programme has yet to be finalised and members are still welcome to propose papers or demonstrations of computer material. A bookstall will be provided.

As this is the first meeting of TOEBI in its new organisation (and the first to be held so far north) it would be helpful if members could return the enclosed form as soon as possible so that the organisers can have some idea of the numbers to expect. There should be adequate parking for those coming by car.

Electronic Old English: Preliminary Notice

Dr Scragg is arranging a one-day meeting in Manchester on 9th February 1996 (in which it is hoped TOEBI members will participate) for a demonstration of the potential of the electronic *Beowulf* material (a British Library project), and other electronic teaching aids. Further details of this should be available at the November meeting and will be circulated on the e-mail list.

TOEBI On-Line!

TOEBI is now offering its members two on-line facilities. As mentioned in the last issue of the Newsletter an electronic mailing list has been established which will allow for the quick dissemination of news relevant to TOEBI's activities. It should be noted that this is not a discussion list and therefore postings will be kept to a minimum. If you would like to subscribe to this please e-mail either the Secretary or the Editor.

In addition to this TOEBI now has its own World-Wide Web site containing information on the society's activities, the committee, future meetings, an on-line version of the Directory of Research Students, plus an archive of information on Old English courses on offer in Britain and Ireland. With reference to the latter anyone who wants information about their courses to be mounted on the Web site should contact the Editor. To use this service you will need a computer that has access to the Internet (your Computer Services should be able to help you on this). The address for the TOEBI site is: `http://info.ox.ac.uk/departments/humanities/toebi/`

Durham Medieval Texts
(General Editors: Paul Bibire, Joyce Hill, John McKinnell, Meg Twycross)

The assumption behind this series of paperback editions is that medieval literary scholarship can still be advanced by editions which are also accessible and cheap enough to be used by students. Each volume is designed to be usable in undergraduate courses, but also to bring a new perspective to the text(s) concerned; each volume includes an introduction which deals with manuscripts, literary-historical relationships, and literary approaches; an extensive bibliography; textual and interpretative notes; and as full a glossary as space allows.

Most are of literary works which deserve to be more widely studied. The aim is to keep volumes in print, issuing revised editions where necessary.

Five of the eleven editions published so far are of Old English texts:

Resignation, ed. Lars Malmberg, 48 pp., ISBN 0 9505989 1 7, £1.00

Old English Minor Heroic Poems (i.e. *Widsith, Deor, Waldere, The Finnsburh Fragment*), ed. Joyce Hill, (2nd ed., 1994), 92pp., ISBN 0 9505989 3 3, £4.00

The Old English Physiologus, ed. Ann Squires, 150 pp., ISBN 0 9505989 4 1, £4.00

The Anonymous Old English Legend of the Seven Sleepers, ed. Hugh Magennis, 132 pp., ISBN 09505989 6 8, £4.00

Ælfric's Prefaces, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, 210 pp., ISBN 0 9505989 7 6, £7.00.

The series is always looking for further editions of suitable medieval literary texts to add to its list; the original text may be in any medieval European language, but the editorial language should be English. Anyone who would like either to buy copies or to offer a new edition is invited to contact: John McKinnell, Durham Medieval Texts, Department of English Studies, University of Durham, Elvet Riverside, New Elvet, Durham DH1 3JT, UK. Tel: 0191 374 2644; Fax: 0191 374 7471; E-mail: john.mckinnell@durham.ac.uk.

Michael Alexander (ed.), Beowulf. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books, 1995. ISBN 0-14-043377-5. £5.99.

I accepted with some pleasure the invitation to edit *Beowulf* for the Penguin English Poets series, taking it as an indication that the poem had achieved admission to the company of the English poets. Up until that date, the Penguin English Poets had reached backward into the abysm of time only as far as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The advantages of the edition lie in the fullness of its glossing and in its chosen format: the text occupies the left-hand page, with glosses facing on the right-hand page. The glosses are in head-word form, without grammatical indication. For example, the glosses to line 1 read: *Hwæt* what!, *Gar-Dene* Spear-Danes, *gear-dagas* days of yore. The only words not glossed in the first line are *we* and *in*. The vast majority of the words in the text are glossed. The glossing is word by word not phrase by phrase. There is much repetition, and no separate glossary of common words, for *Beowulf* is not read through at one sitting. Notes are brief and limited, and are placed at the foot of the page. There are no end-notes, apart from a Note on the Tale of Finnsburh.

The aim of the edition is that its user should be able to work out the sense from the glosses, supplemented where necessary by footnotes, without turning a page. Such a user will be a persistent person, possessed of some rudiments of grammar, as is required of anyone who wishes to read *Beowulf*. The edition presents a clean text and the elements necessary for the making of a translation. The dark and extensive hinterland of *Beowulf* has here been kept in the background. Glossing was preferred to a facing translation because such a translation can become a substitute for the original.

The text is printed throughout in roman type, with no 'on the page' apparatus. Punctuation is editorial. Other departures from what is found in the manuscript and transcripts are given in a list of Manuscript Readings towards the end of the edition. This format is devised for those who wish to study the poem in Old English and to work out the meaning of the text, rather than for the specialist interested in how an editor arrives at a text. The text is prefixed by an 11-page Introduction, with a map; a six-page Editorial Preface; and a Note on Metre. It is followed by suggestions for Further Reading, a List of Manuscript Readings, a page of Genealogical Tables, and a Glossary of Proper Names.

The text adopted differs in several details from the text I adopted in preparing my verse translation of *Beowulf*, published in Penguin Classics in 1973. I intend to take account of these differences in the next edition of the verse translation.

Michael Alexander
University of St Andrews

Learning Old English (Software)

Learning Old English is a systematic, multimedia course intended to bring beginners to a level at which they can read straightforward prose with the aids editors expect to provide. It is divided into eight lessons, progressively developing the grammar, with limited amounts of supporting text which in the early stages consists of specially written material to avoid going outside currently covered grammar. The presentation combines text booklets and audio cassettes, with a view to using both visual and aural memory. Each lesson is concluded by a test exercise (largely translation, in both directions, but there are also specifically grammatical questions), which should be satisfactorily done before going on to the next lesson. The package includes a computerised version of these exercises, allowing the course to be followed without a tutor, though since no computer program can foresee every question that may arise, occasional access to an expert remains desirable.

The work can be completed in 3–4 weeks if, say, half a student's studying time can be given to it. An elementary knowledge of conventional grammar is expected—there is a brief reminder of the essentials which should suffice for those a bit rusty, but anyone quite ignorant of such things would probably need preliminary help. For more details contact: Duncan Macrae-Gibson, Dept. of English, University of Aberdeen, King's College, Old Aberdeen AB9 2UB, U.K; E-mail macg@abdn.ac.uk.

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