

# TOEBI Newsletter

Teachers of Old English in Britain and Ireland

## Issue 1, February 1995

### TOEBI Committee

Prof. Barbara Raw (President)  
Dr Donald Scragg (Chairman)  
Mrs Ann Squires (Secretary)  
Dr Marilyn Deegan  
Prof. Malcolm Godden  
Dr Joyce Hill  
Dr Stuart Lee (Newsletter Editor)  
Dr Richard North  
Prof. Jane Roberts  
Dr Jocelyn Wogan-Brown

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### Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the *TOEBI Newsletter* which has been circulated free of charge. In the future, however, it will only be sent to members. This issue has been divided between information on the proposed new organisation of TOEBI and its activities, and a selection of brief notices on recent publications and teaching resources which the committee felt would be of interest to members. This indicates the kind of material which the *Newsletter* will include, and we warmly welcome contributions of this type from members. Suggestions for future TOEBI activities are also sought. We see the *Newsletter* as a forum for the expression of current interests and concerns and its success will depend upon the level of involvement of the membership. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is June 30th, 1995; please forward all material to the editor.

### Official Business

After an enthusiastic start, TOEBI has been rather inactive recently and the committee feels that the time has come for a more formal constitution, a membership (with a subscription to provide the necessary

running funds), and an agreed list of activities, to achieve our general aim of the promotion of Old English studies. The committee agreed to the following proposals which will be put to the membership at an AGM in November 1995.

**Membership:** All staff (current and retired) and postgraduates with a professional interest in the teaching of Old English.

**Subscription:** £5 a year for those in full-time employment; £3 a year for others

**Committee:** President, Chairman/woman, Secretary, Editor of Newsletter, six members. Members will serve for three years and then be eligible for re-election. One of the officers and two of the elected members shall be appointed each year at the AGM. The current committee is listed above. Dr Scragg will complete three years in November 1995, Professor Raw in November 1996, Mrs Squires and Dr Lee in November 1997. Dr Deegan, Dr Hill and Dr Wogan-Brown wish to resign in November 1995, and of the four remaining members, two will resign in November 1996 and two in November 1997. Until a separate office seems necessary the Secretary will act as treasurer.

**Annual Meeting:** The Society will hold an annual one-day conference normally in November, hosted at a different university each year with short papers on an agreed topic or topics. It will include an AGM for the election of officers, the arrangement of venue and topics for the following year's conference, future activities, and any other business.

**Newsletter:** The society will publish a twice-yearly newsletter (February/March and August). Material for this should be sent to the editor by January 31st and June 30th.

**Mailing List:** an electronic mailing list of members will be set up for the circulation of information about conferences, appointments and similar factual matters.

**Graduate List:** an up-to-date list will be kept of graduate students interested in temporary and/or part-time employment in the Old English field.

### Annual Meeting 1995

This will take place at Durham on Saturday, November 1995 10.30am to 4.30pm. The topics suggested are: Innovative ways of teaching Old English; Using Art and Archaeology in the teaching of Old English. Proposals for short papers (c.25mins) are invited and should be sent to the Secretary by June 30th.

A display stand for information and publications, plus computers for demonstrating software will be provided. Members are encouraged to contact the Secretary about material for these.

The AGM will take place at the end of the sessions of papers. Nominations will be invited for the office of Chairman/woman (as Dr Scragg has completed three years) and for two committee members to replace Dr Deegan, Dr Hill and Dr Wogan-Brown who are resigning.

Details of the 1995 meeting will be given in the August Newsletter. Costs will include coffee, lunch and tea.

### Mailing List

The intention of the list is to provide a convenient means of circulating factual information between the editions of the Newsletter. Given the current number of discussion groups and the amount of mail they generate, it was felt inappropriate to set up yet another discussion network. There will be no more than one mailing a week (at the most) and the Secretary will consult the Chairman and other committee members if there is any question about the appropriateness of material offered for circulation. To be included on this list please supply your current e-mail address with the subscription form, or contact Dr Stuart Lee (Stuart.Lee@oucs.ox.ac.uk).

### Workshop Proposal

TOEBI is considering the possibility of running a workshop on the whole concept of 'Teaching Old English' in which common problems, and possible solutions, will be explored. A fuller proposal will appear in the next issue of the *TOEBI Newsletter* but for the time being please forward any suggestions as to topics which might be included to the Editor.

### Graduate Courses in Old English

It was suggested at the annual meeting that one useful service TOEBI could provide would be to collect together and disseminate information relating to Graduate courses offered at HE institutions of relevance to Old English. This then is an initial request for all members to submit details of courses on offer at their University or College. Details should include title, topics offered, entrance requirements, contact/application procedure, and any other information of interest. Please forward this to: Dr Stuart Lee, OUCS, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN (tel: 01865-283403; e-mail: Stuart.Lee@oucs.ox.ac.uk). In the next issue of the *TOEBI Newsletter* details on how to access this information will be given.

### Directory of Research Students

At the recent TOEBI committee meeting it was decided that it would be helpful to constitute a list of research students

immediately available for part-time/temporary employment. Prof. J. Roberts agreed to take charge of such a list and to ensure so far as possible that it be kept up to date. Because it will be held on computer, those who wish to be included must, when submitting personal details, agree to the information being passed on to enquirers. Those on the list will be asked annually to confirm their details, and anyone not replying would be deleted.

Please supply the following details: name, address, telephone number, e-mail, thesis topic, areas of proposed teaching, teaching experience, Supervisor (and/or Head of Department), and living area (or area in which prepared to accept part-time teaching).

Please forward all replies to: Jane Roberts, English Department, King's College, Strand, London WC2R 2LS; e-mail: UDLE020@bay.cc.kcl.ac.uk

**Bruce Mitchell *An Invitation to Old English and Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995)**

*A Guide to Old English* by Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson is revolutionary in the absence of a separate section on sound-laws and is, the authors like to think, better directed to the needs of users than some of its predecessors. *A Guide* remains the book for those wishing to acquire a sound knowledge of Old English. But, while 'much better than what the tradition has previously supplied' (YWES 1986), it works within the tradition of Old English grammars and readers.

*An Invitation to Old English and Anglo-Saxon England*, however, recognizes the importance of the inter-disciplinary approach and deliberately breaks with tradition. It differs in tone, general approach, and contents. It teaches the language by comparing it with Modern English and stresses its 'Englishness'. The main difficulty—the Germanic vocabulary—is met by glossing each word in the fifty-one untranslated texts in the form in which it appears.

Through these texts and through numerous quotations, *An Invitation* not only offers a wider variety of prose and poetry but also presents speakers of Old English—ordinary men and women, not just warriors as members of a society in which the fusing of the heroic and the Christian produced a tension and a special attitude of mind.

While those wishing to study the literature and the history in depth will need the sections on language, those primarily interested in

archaeology, arts and crafts, place-names, and Anglo-Saxon life and thought, can move straight to the relevant sections, where all but the numbered texts are translated and maps and illustrations are provided. In short, as explained in the section 'How to Use This Book', teachers or readers can select their own menus.

*An Invitation* is revolutionary in its use of Old English literature to attract readers to a fascinating period. It is traditional in its defence of the place of Old English in any university English syllabus worthy of the name. In their different ways, two post-publication comments salute these idiosyncracies: 'It is plainly a resolutely antimodern book.' It is 'a very important gift to the corporate humanistic enterprise at a time when the body is under all kinds of assault, from within and without. It is the best sort of medicine.'

Bruce Mitchell  
Oxford

**George Jack (ed.), *Beowulf: A Student Edition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. 0 19871043 7 (hbk), 0 19871044 5 (pbk). £30 (hbk), £6.99 (pbk)**

The chief aim of this edition is to facilitate the reading of *Beowulf* through the provision of glosses beside the text. It is not intended to displace editions of the traditional kind, or indeed those in which the text is accompanied by a translation. But my own experience has been that for a good many students there are drawbacks in both of those ways of presenting the text: if they use an edition with a conventional glossary they find their progress discouragingly slow, and lose a sense of the larger development of the poem; but if they turn instead to an edition with a facing translation they have no means of gaining real understanding of the Old English text. A few years ago I therefore prepared a preliminary text of *Beowulf* with accompanying glosses for my own students at St Andrews. Their response was encouragingly positive, and they seemed to cope more successfully than before with the Old English text and to be less inclined to rely on translations. So I thought that it might be worth while to produce an edition of this kind for wider use.

In its published form the edition is designed to be suitable for as wide a range of students as possible. The provision of glosses is deliberately generous, to make the poem accessible to those who may previously have read little Old English, and I have assumed only that students will have a grasp of the basic elements of Old English grammar and of some common vocabulary.

But the commentary is aimed also at the needs of more advanced students, for whom the discussion of problems of text and interpretation and the provision of references to other studies are primarily intended. I hope that the edition will at any rate help to sustain and promote the study of *Beowulf* in Old English, for that is its central purpose.

George Jack  
University of St Andrews

***The Poetry Shell and The Dream of the Rood***

The Poetry Shell has been designed to enable the production of learning resources (in this case, hypermedia text editions) without the need for knowledge of specialized hypermedia authoring tools. The target user for the Shell is the academic who would like to prepare such editions for their students, but who has neither the skills nor the time to learn complex authoring systems. At the centre of each package produced by the Shell lies the text with hypermedia links to a glossary, associated text documents, and images. The target user of such editions is the student who finds difficulty in reading a text in a language and from a culture which he or she is only minimally familiar.

*The Dream of the Rood* is an example of such an edition. It offers adequate linguistic resources for the student trying to understand the poem, but also offers a range of associated material which should allow the student to place the text in various cultural contexts. The bibliography and references in the material are intended to lead the student back to the more traditional forms of scholarly inquiry. One advantage of the electronic edition is the ease with which the material can be added to, modified, deleted and up-dated, thus allowing it, with minimal effort, to be tailored to the requirements of a particular user-group.

This development was made possible by funding from ITTI which allowed the employment of a professional programmer (Nicola Timbrell). That project and its funding are now complete. However, a wider selection of edited texts could be of real use to the teacher of Old English, and we would like to hear from any TOEBI members who would be interested in looking at ways for taking the project further.

Ann Squires, Durham  
Marilyn Deegan, Oxford  
[Note: Both packages are available from Jean Burgan, CVCP/USDU, Level 6, University House, Sheffield, S10 2TN; tel: 0742-725248; e-mail: j.burgan@pa.shef.ac.uk]

**Contributions for the next issue of the TOEBI Newsletter should be submitted to the Editor by the 30th June, 1995—Dr Stuart Lee, OUCS, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN (tel: 01865-273221; e-mail: Stuart.Lee@oucs.ox.ac.uk)**