



TOEBI, 1990-2010, and Going Strong

TOEBI can be traced back to Don Scragg's initiative in 1989 of organising first a questionnaire on the teaching of Old English in British and Irish universities and then a workshop to discuss the state of the subject in the light of the results of the questionnaire. The workshop, which was held on 2 December 1989, marks not the birth but the conception of TOEBI.

The context at the time was not encouraging for Old English specialists. Old English had just been discontinued at Liverpool and was under threat in some other places; and there were rumblings in opposition to compulsory Old English at Oxford, which would lead to more strident attacks on its place in the curriculum in the next few years. The available text books had become increasingly unsuited to the modern student, with Sweet's *Old English Reader* still being the main one in use. Some Anglo-Saxonists understandably felt beleaguered at the time of the workshop, which may be reflected in the title that Don came up with for it: 'W(h)ither Old English?'. People were also keen to compare notes about teaching Old English and to learn from the experience of others. Don's invitation to the meeting asked intending participants for ideas about what topics they would like to discuss. Examples of the issues raised in responses are: 'the provision of suitable text books'; 'the question of whether to offer Old English in the original to first-year students'; 'the problems of teaching Old English to those with no previous formal language experience'. Looking back from 2010 we have a strong sense of déjà-vu when we see those responses.

The 1989 workshop itself was well attended, and at it the idea of setting up an association was proposed, by Don Scragg. Replies to the original questionnaire confirmed that Old English was being taught at thirty universities in 1989, and there were some no-returns from departments which were definitely teaching the subject as well.

A follow-up questionnaire was sent out the next year and, following initial groundwork by a small working party, which met at Manchester on 3 March 1990, a second open meeting took place at Manchester on 17 October 1990. It was at the 1990 general meeting that TOEBI was actually set up, with the following agreed functions:

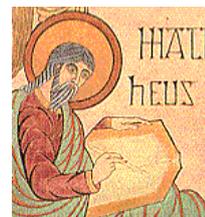
- To disseminate information about courses, conferences, text books etc.;
- To provide support for beleaguered colleagues;
- To offer a forum for the discussion of ideas of mutual interest, both through regular meetings and a newsletter;
- To raise the profile of the subject as something worth doing, among students, non-Anglo-Saxonist colleagues and the wider community;
- To provide up-to-date information on ongoing research in the field, especially by postgraduate students.

A formal executive body was agreed for the association, consisting of a chair, a secretary and a committee made up of these and eight others; there would also be an honorary president. The members of the first committee were Don Scragg (chair), Jeremy Smith (secretary), Marilyn Deegan, Malcolm Godden, Joyce Hill, Hugh Magennis, Richard North, Jane Roberts, Ann Squires and Jocelyn Wogan-Brown, with the president to be appointed later.

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Some of the comments sent in by respondents to this second questionnaire are interesting. To quote just a few: 'I think Old English is at risk of going the same way as Greek and Latin, because it is too demanding and esoteric a discipline to compete on equal terms with other English options'; 'Most colleagues are not sympathetic to the Old English cause'; 'There has always been hostility to our courses and jealousy of our success. My department has allowed this to succeed in crushing our courses'; 'The entire syllabus is being revised with a bias towards (guess what) literary theory. Old English is seen as (a) too difficult and (b) irrelevant'; '[TOEBI] just might sustain study of Old English until the passion for [. . .] rubbish has died down and Education begins again'; 'The major difficulty we face in teaching, of course, is the general linguistic / grammatical ignorance of incoming students'. Déjà-vu all over again.

There was to be a further questionnaire on the teaching of Old English in 2000-2001, organised by Elaine Treharne. Commenting on its results, Elaine noted the non-existence of Old English in post-1992 institutions and she pointed to a decline in student numbers taking Old English as an optional course. More positively, she wrote, 'in comparing the results of this questionnaire with that undertaken a decade ago for TOEBI, it is absolutely evident that the 1990s have not seen a demonstrable decline in OE' (*TOEBI Newsletter* 13 [2001], ix).

The 1990 Manchester meeting had got TOEBI up and running, but it would take quite a bit longer to achieve its present developed form. There was a committee meeting at Oxford on 21 September 1991 and a general meeting at Oxford on 8 February 1992, where plans for a newsletter were brought forward, though the first number of the

TOEBI Newsletter didn't appear until February 1995. It took time, too, to elect a first honorary president; it was at the 1993 AGM, again at Oxford (29 May) that it was agreed to invite Barbara Raw to be president; she subsequently accepted the position. At this time too TOEBI was essentially a loose organisation without a formal membership; communication was with known contacts and via informal networks. The meetings were well attended, though, with 46 at the 1992 one, for example, and they had lively agendas, showing a particular interest in teaching resources but also considering larger questions, such as UK research policy (1992) and 'quality assurance' (1993), the latter being a term that suddenly was being used quite a lot in higher education. As noted in the minutes, the 1993 AGM 'concluded with a call for TOEBI to continue to develop as a positive force for the promotion of Old English studies, and not just "a whingeing shop"'. The minutes don't say from whom this impassioned plea came.

The 1994 meeting (26 November) was also at Oxford, making three in a row for Oxford, following two in a row at Manchester. The 1994 meeting was an important one in the history of the association, setting it on a much firmer footing organisationally. The meeting resolved that TOEBI should have a formal membership, with an annual subscription, that charitable status be established for TOEBI, and that a bank account be opened for the society. It was also resolved that the *Newsletter* should be finally launched, to consist of one double-sided sheet of A4 in the first instance. The organisation of the committee was tightened up: there would be four ex officio members, the president, chair, secretary and *Newsletter* editor, each serving for three years and eligible for re-election; the secretary would act as treasurer. There would be six

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'ordinary' members of the committee, each serving for three years and eligible for re-election. Elections for the officers and committee would take place at the AGM and seconded nominations would be invited from members by the secretary in the notice for the AGM. The committee would meet twice a year. These resolutions followed from a paper by Barbara Raw, in which she also counselled, 'There should be one general meeting each year, whose main function (apart from fostering a sense of group identity) would be to stimulate new ideas, not only in teaching but also in research', and 'Activities should be spread more widely round the country, either by holding the annual meeting in a different place each year or by additional regional meetings'. Not just Oxford and Manchester then.

TOEBI was now a fully fledged professional-looking society with a clearly defined membership and a sound org-anisational structure. It didn't have a written constitution, however, and indeed it still doesn't have one today. But things were now on a good formal footing. The first issue of the *Newsletter* duly appeared in February 1995, under the editorship of Stuart Lee. Issue One contained a short editorial, introducing the publication and outlining its perceived function: 'We see the *Newsletter* as a forum for the expression of current issues and concerns, and its success will depend upon the level of involvement of the membership'.

That involvement has not been lacking in the years since. We have now got to issue 28 and, despite a recent hiccup, the *Newsletter* has been steadily growing in size from its single-sheet beginning. Recent issues have gone increasingly further into double figures in the number of pages. The first issue set the pattern for subsequent ones in its mixture of reports, news, information and short

notices of new publications. Early issues of the *Newsletter* used the image of the St John eagle on the Brandon Plaque as a logo, which had been adopted as TOEBI's logo, and is still to be seen on the TOEBI website and on conference material, but in 1998 the eagle was replaced in the *Newsletter* by the Matthew portrait from the Lindisfarne Gospels. In 2003, the *Newsletter* acquired an ISSN.

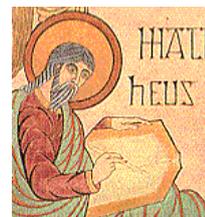
Two committee meetings per year didn't prove to be desirable, though one committee meeting separate from the general annual meeting was held in the Spring of 1995, on 13 May at King's College, London. That meeting was used to plan the programme of that year's general meeting. It also formalised, with approval at the next AGM, the arrangement for setting up a bank account, and a list of the email addresses of members was tabled, bringing TOEBI firmly into the age of electronic communication. The ease of communication using email was one reason why it didn't prove necessary to have two committee meetings per year from 1995 on. At the beginning, Don Scragg and the TOEBI officers had had to communicate with everyone via the postal service. The invitation to become a member of TOEBI had been snail-mailed after the 1994 AGM meeting to about 160 academics. Names had been drawn from a list compiled and published by Geoff Lester at Sheffield, a *Handbook of Teachers of Medieval English Language and Literature in Great Britain and Ireland* (1987). About 50 people joined in response to the invitation, paying a total of £604 in subscriptions.

The general meeting of 1995 was held at Durham (11 November). The annual cycle of business was now in place in the form in which we still know it. The TOEBI website gives a list of the venues of subsequent

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meetings, and a list of office holders. Membership of the association had reached a number of seventy-plus by 1996 and has steadily increased since then. It now stands at over a hundred.

Another important development in the early history of TOEBI was the setting up of its website in 1996. Stuart Lee was responsible for this, and as time went on he expanded it, adding links to other sites of interest to Anglo-Saxonists. In 1996, in association with MANCASS, TOEBI organised a special conference on the use of computers in Old English teaching and research (held at Manchester, 9-10 February). Few, if any, other events outside the annual meetings have taken place since, however.

A significant development in more recent years was the establishment of the TOEBI Awards Scheme. By 2004 the TOEBI coffers were in a pleasingly healthy state and it was decided that a productive use of surplus funds would be to help post-graduates to attend conferences, thereby complementing the existing valuable support to Old English students offered by the Lynne Grundy Trust. From 2005 TOEBI also sent £100 annually as a contribution to the Grundy Trust. The TOEBI Awards Scheme, to be administered by a new ex-officio committee member, was launched in May 2004. In 2006 another official role in TOEBI was designated, that of Webmaster, also with ex-officio membership of the Committee.

And that's where we are now. In looking back over the twenty-year period of TOEBI's existence, it is clear that the society has been doing a much-appreciated job for its members and that we have all benefited from being in it. It is interesting, though, that TOEBI has concentrated on its role as a forum for exchanging ideas among its

members rather than promoting Old English externally. We have largely preferred to speak to each other, though we have been keen to look outside Old English, seeking collaboration and input from elsewhere.

And throughout the last twenty years there has been the guiding presence of Don Scragg in the background. Don can be seen as the begetter of TOEBI and as its most important guide down the years. As he has just come to the end of his period as President, it is worth finishing this survey by emphasising how much we are all in his debt.

Hugh Magennis
Queen's University, Belfast

O. J. Padel and David N. Parsons (eds)
A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling
Shaun Tyas, 2008, xii + 415 pp.
Hardback 978 1900289 900 £35

Few scholars have been as closely identified with their subject as Margaret Gelling, perhaps especially through two remarkable books, *Signposts to the Past* (1978) and *Place-Names in the Landscape* (1984, rev. with Ann Cole as *The Landscape of Place-Names*, 2000), which more than any others have brought place-name studies to a wider audience without any compromise in academic standards. This festschrift in her honour is very much to be welcomed, yet it is a formidable book to review. Its collection of thirty-six essays, many of them highly technical, covering several early medieval vernaculars and ranging from monument names in the Isle of Man to the origins of the borough of Droitwich, would test the capacity of any reviewer, and have certainly challenged this one. In what follows I have attempted mainly to draw attention to those



articles that readers of the *TOEBI Newsletter* are likely to want to turn to.

First among these, perhaps, will be Paul Cavill's discussion of the site of the battle of Brunanburh. Rival Brunanburhs abound, and Cavill concentrates on two claimants in particular – the ancient forest of Bromswold, and Burnswark (Dumfries) – making a formidable case on both linguistic and topographical grounds for the impossibility of locating the battle at either, and incidentally disposing of some of the odder assertions in earlier scholarship (e.g. that the *-burh* element in *Brunanburh* was invented by the Old English poet for metrical reasons). It is perhaps a pity that Cavill does not go on to consider where the battle *did* take place, though his own preference is pretty clearly for Bromborough (Cheshire), whose claims have been urged intermittently since 1692, most recently by Sarah Foot in an article in a festschrift for Nicholas Brooks. Nevertheless Cavill's article is a model demonstration of the extent to which philology can elucidate an old historical debate.

Just as interesting is an article by Don Scragg, which draws on the resources of the Manchester corpus of eleventh-century English to analyse the many variant spellings of *cyning* found between 980 and 1100: for example, *i-* and *y-* spellings, and *c-* and *k-* spellings, reveal little more than scribal preference; monosyllabic forms are found more frequently in the Chronicle and in legal texts than elsewhere; occasional use of monosyllabic forms in non-legal texts (e.g. in an anonymous homily for Easter Day) may indicate that the scribe was used to copying legal material. Scragg's research will hopefully prove a stimulus to others to consider similar phenomena elsewhere: a case in point is the occurrence of both monosyllabic and disyllabic forms, and of *i-*

and *y-* and *c-* and *k-* spellings, within the sole copy of one relatively brief Old English text, the *Vision of Leofric*.

Several other articles will have a particular interest for the Old English specialist. Susan Kelly relocates to Eynsham two seventh-century charters preserved in the Bath archive, reminding us that there was life at Eynsham (in the form of a flourishing minster) centuries before Ælfric. Nicholas Brooks carefully examines an OE boundary clause concerning the dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury entered in the eleventh century into the MacDurnan Gospels, locating its focus at the northern end of the diocesan boundary, while Joy Jenkyns traces in often entertaining detail the uses to which a supposed tenth-century charter of Æthelred II for Wyke Regis (Dorset), and in particular its vernacular boundary clause, were put in long-running local disputes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Some papers are devoted to single place-names: Carole Hough reinterprets the *freo*-element in *Freeford* (Staffordshire) as meaning 'free from the obligation to maintain' (the upkeep of bridges was of course one of the three 'common burdens', and *brycg* and *ford* are sometimes used interchangeably), while Peder Gammeltoft revives an old suggestion of E. A. Freeman that *Freystrop* (Pembroke-shire) contains the name of the goddess Freyr. Yet others discuss single place-name elements: the hardy perennial *wic* rears its head in articles by Steven Bassett and the late Harold Fox; Della Hooke considers *leah* in the sense of 'open wood' or 'wood-pasture'; and John Baker shows that *fæsten* is used, in place-names at least, 'of naturally inaccessible places that might be deemed suitable for a stronghold' (p. 341). Ann Cole demonstrates that *weg* has connotations of steepness when used in

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names of settle-ments rather than of trackways (because a settlement might have been located beside a particularly steep section of a trackway which included a range of gradients). All this is very much in the spirit of Gelling's own work, but dissenting voices have not been excluded: Peter Kitson reconsiders Gelling and Cole's treatment of *hlið* and *beorg*, and questions their assumption that the narrower meaning of those words – that found in place-names – is the earlier one.

As the reader will have guessed, most of the articles concern names of places rather than of persons. This is not an unfair allocation, given the bias of Gelling's work, but it does indicate how under-studied the latter area still is. Several essays, however, give a taste of what remains to be done. Following an earlier lead by Carole Hough, Judith Jesch considers Scandinavian wo-men's names embedded in English place-names and raises the question of the number of Viking women who settled in England. Veronica Smart discusses the Bristol moneyer Herthig (c.1115-25), conceivably to be identified with Harding, who attests as an official of Queen Edith in 1062 and was still alive in the West Country in 1120 – not an impossible life-span, given Edgar Ætheling's survival well into the 1120s. John Insley examines Cnut's West Slavonic family connections (only summarily treated in M. K. Lawson's biography) and adds some precisions to Simon Keynes's earlier dis-cussion of Cnut's earl Wrytsleof. In a demanding piece, John Freeman considers the folk-name *Magonsæte* (which readers of the Chronicle may remember from the account of the battle of Ashingdon in the annal for 1016), tentatively deriving the first element from British **magos* 'plain' and the suffix *-on-*. And Diana Whaley contributes a delightful article on words for 'magpie' in English personal and

place-names, which can usefully be read in the light of Peter Kitson's more wide-ranging survey of Old English bird names from the 1990s (not mentioned, it has to be said, in Whaley's bibliography).

Like everything from this publisher, the book is attractively produced and reasonably priced, and the standard of editing and proof-reading is high, though there are one or two remaining errors that might have been weeded out (e.g. at p. 87, Edith was not 'queen dowager' in 1062) and the absence of any form of index – even an index of names – is inconvenient. No one can pretend that this is a book for beginners, or even for advanced students, however committed: it is written by the specialists for the specialists. It is very much to be hoped, however, that lecturers in related disciplines – not least Old English – will distil some of its content into their teaching, and above all direct their listeners to Gelling's own work, to which it provides such a learned and impressive tribute.

Peter Jackson
Oxford

Be part of it:

To join TOEBI, visit

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~cr30/toebi/>



Project Woruldhord

<http://projects.oucs.ox.ac.uk/woruldhord/>



At the last TOEBI meeting I gave an outline of the project we were running at Oxford during 2010, and it's pleasing to note that as of the 10th March 2011 this has now been released. In essence Woruldhord (World-board) built on the success of an initiative we ran at Oxford whereby we asked members of the public to send us digital copies of anything they held on the First World War that they were willing to share with others. We collected about 6,500 objects online, and made them available as part of a much larger free online collection (the primary focus being the poets of WW1). However, this 'community collection' idea took hold of the imagination of our funders (JISC) who then resourced us to tell others 'how to do it'.

As part of this new project (RunCoCo) I volunteered to run an exemplar project on Old English and the Anglo-Saxons - assisted by Dr Anna Caughey and Mr Thomas Birkett, both also at Oxford. Again, a very simple premise: set up a web site and invite people to send us material they had on the period, notably teaching material, that they would be willing to share with others for free reuse. We ran the collection site from July until 14th

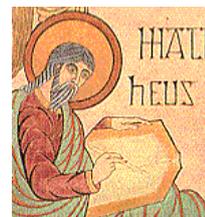
October 2011, and advertised it widely through TOEBI, ANSAXNET, the Engiscan Gesithas, local museums, and so on. The results were impressive. In the space of just over 3 months we collected together 4,500 objects (in total 16,500 digital files) from 400 people world-wide. Some of these were collections submitted by museums (the British Museum, Ashmolean, V&A, Croydon, Sittingbourne, etc) but more often than not these were submissions from individual scholars, students and enthusiasts. Particular gratitude must go to the Engiscan Gesithas and their education officer Matt Love.

Although some of this material is very familiar (Sutton Hoo images, by way of example) there are some gems in there - Barbara Raw's Old English Language Lab course, a selection from Napier's pamphlet collection, the Oxford Old English exam papers up to the war. However, the key points are that they are collected together, and more importantly that everything you find there you know you can reuse freely to help with your teaching for non-commercial purposes. So use on web sites, in presentations, in handouts, even in podcasts, are all fine - as long as you are not making a profit.

The project has a discussion group at: <http://groups.google.com/group/project-woruldhord> where we hope to encourage debate about the collections. It is also not too late. Due to the way the project was set up we can take more items so if any TOEBI members are willing to share material with us then contact me at: stuart.lee@ell.ox.ac.uk

Stuart Lee
University of Oxford

When you've finished reading this Newsletter, please spread the word by passing it on to colleagues or students.



**Learning Old English
Past and Present
TOEBI, Annual Meeting 2009
Saturday 24 October, School of English,
University of St Andrews**

Some 30 university teachers of Old English met in St Andrews on Saturday 24 October 2009 to discuss teaching methods for Old English, past and present.

The morning session, concentrating on 'Learning Old English: Earlier Traditions', explored the lives of three individuals' efforts in the teaching of Old English: the seventeenth-century Thomas Marshall, and John Josias Conybeare, and William Barnes in the nineteenth-century. Papers given by Kees Dekker, Robyn Bray and Chris Jones charted the difficulties these individuals faced, both in learning Old English language themselves, and also in dealing with their pupils' deficient linguistic experience.

The seventeenth-century tradition of Old English learning showed itself much indebted to the study of Latin, whereas nineteenth-century efforts were shown to have attempted linkage with the study and knowledge of modern English. Whereas the seventeenth-century study of Old English was shown to have taken place mainly in the circles of university-educated philologists and theologians, the nineteenth-century effort also stretched into schools (including primary schools) and working men's clubs.

The following session concentrated on presenting the results of an online survey, taken amongst TOEBI members over the previous six months. The survey by Erika Corradini charted the learning of Old English over the last 20-30 years (the decades in which most TOEBI members would have

been learning Old English). Knowledge of classical languages (Latin, Greek), related Germanic languages (Old Norse, Gothic, Old High German and Old Frisian) and modern languages was shown to have accompanied most learners of Old English during their education. Grammars, primers and dictionaries were found to have been the main source of language acquisition; the internet, however, played a surprisingly inconspicuous role. The survey demonstrated the need for a regular surveying of language learning among TOEBI members. A future survey could chart the decline of modern language learning in the UK and its possible effects on the study of Old English, and the effects of electronic tools on the study of Old English. It seems likely that electronic tools will displace more traditional book-based language learning at least to some extent.

The third session, presented by Tom Duncan, Don Scragg and Hugh Magennis, comprised three personal testimonies of Old English language learning, as gained over the course of an academic career. The difficulty of dealing with linguistically inexperienced pupils was discussed, as was the general decline of language learning in UK universities. The discussion also asked whether the study of dead languages should be compulsory at any stage during an individual's education. Old English was said to thrive more in English departments with a period-based structure, rather than a theory- or theme-based structure. In departments offering period-oriented degrees, Old English was in many cases a compulsory element in the early stages of a degree, which was then shown to lead to greater uptake of optional Old English modules at a later stage. Conversely, optional Old English provision in the earlier stages of a degree seemed to be connected with failing Old English modules at a later point during a degree programme.

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There was also discussion of whether large-scale research projects with a focus on Old English, funded by public bodies, were in fact diverting the more experienced staff away from undergraduate Old English teaching, which was instead left to be undertaken by postgraduate students. This in turn was said to have led, in some cases, to a disappointing undergraduate uptake of Old English precisely in those university departments which were at the forefront of research in Old English.

The Annual General Meeting, which followed these sessions, demonstrated a concern for the representation of Old English and TOEBI in the public eye. There was some discussion of a possible re-distribution of roles among the committee members, which, after further consultation, could eventually lead to the appointment of a patron-like figure for TOEBI. Overall, the sense was that the study of Old English was vigorous and thriving in the English departments of the United Kingdom. A larger number of students than ever in the past were shown to have some exposure to the study of Old English. At the same time, however, a lack in prior linguistic awareness and linguistic education in the students also meant that the study of Old English rarely went beyond the level of beginners' classes. In an adjoining room, a book exhibition included samples of nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century language learning materials. A further exhibit explained aspects of the work of SALTIRE, an organisation based at the University of St Andrews which promotes excellence in learning and teaching through innovation, review and enhancement. SALTIRE kindly offered to sponsor the warm buffet lunch at the Byre Theatre Bistro, which divided the day into two halves and which was much appreciated by the conference participants, and not only

because of the truly hideous weather conditions — horizontal rain.

The organiser of the Annual Meeting 2009 would like to thank all participants for making the long journey to St Andrews, and for their help in turning the day into a fruitful and interesting TOEBI meeting!

Christine Rauer, University of St Andrews

TOEBI Conference 2010 **Saturday 23 October, School of English,** **University of Leicester**

Leicester was the host of the 2010 TOEBI Conference, where twenty-nine Old English teachers met to discuss the twin themes of 'Narrating the Anglo-Saxon World' and 'Narrating Old English Studies'.

The day began with a joint presentation from Orietta Da Rold (in person) and Elaine Treharne (via Skype) on old and new narratives in twelfth-century Old English. This was followed by Turi King on the genetic legacy of the Vikings in the north of England, and James Paz on the non-human narrative of Exeter Book Riddle 60. Catherine Karkov gave the pre-lunch presentation entitled 'The visual doesn't work like that', centring on the Franks Casket.

After lunch and the Annual General Meeting, the afternoon session commenced with Rebecca Fisher and Christine Wallis's paper on 'Placing the Anglo-Saxons', outlining an approach to teaching Old English which emphasizes the importance of placing Old English textual culture within a rich contextual matrix. The day ended with Stuart Lee's presentation of the Woruldhord Project (see page 7 above).

Philip Shaw (Leicester)

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Changing Faces

Dr Marilina Cesario took up an appointment as lecturer in Earliest English Writings and Historical Linguistics at Queen's University Belfast in Sept 2010.

Please send any information about recent / upcoming appointments or retirements in your department to either of the Editors, and encourage your new colleagues to become members of TOEBI. Application forms can be downloaded from the website.

Contribute to the Newsletter:

Responses to this issue; book reviews; short articles on your Old English courses or assessment procedures; material about professional practice.

Please send information about the following items:

- conferences on Anglo-Saxon studies
- special lectures by Anglo-Saxonists
- postgraduate courses and opportunities in Old English
- news about promotions, or general news about Old English lecturers
- the publication of new books or articles useful for teaching Old English
- useful websites for teaching Old English

Please recycle me

If you have a paper copy (or print out) of the TOEBI Newsletter, why not pass it on to a colleague who is not a member, or one of your graduate students? Better still, leave it in the staff common area so that other faculty members can find out what goes on in the world of Old English studies.

Send submissions for the next Newsletter to the Editors:

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