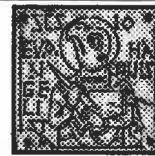




TOEBI Newsletter

Teachers of Old English in Britain and Ireland

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/depts/humanities/toebi/>



Issue 3, February 1996

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TOEBI AGM 1995

The 1995 AGM which followed the Annual Conference in Durham on Saturday 11th November re-elected Professor Donald Scragg as chairman of the society for the next three years and elected Dr Elaine Treharne (Leicester) and Mr George Jack (St Andrews) to serve on the committee for three years.

The new constitution and financial arrangements for TOEBI proposed by the committee (and detailed in previous newsletters) were approved. It was agreed that the first year of subscription should be deemed to start from November 1995. Subscriptions will fall due at the November Annual Meeting in 1996 (and for those who enrolled for three years in November 1998). A financial statement for the first full

year will be presented at the AGM in November 1996. Approval was also expressed for the first two newsletters.

The AGM accepted the offer of Dr Treharne to host the next Annual Conference and AGM at Leicester University in November 1996. Preliminary information on this conference is in this newsletter.

Professor Scragg gave notice of the jointly sponsored meeting of TOEBI and the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies to be held on February 9–10th on computer developments related to Old English studies (see report below). Members were asked to suggest to the committee areas in which they would like to see future TOEBI activity.

A logo was finally agreed for TOEBI and can be seen at the head of the newsletter!

At the committee meeting which preceded the Durham meeting it was agreed that Professor Godden and Dr North should retire from the committee in November 1996, and Professor Roberts and Dr Magennis should retire in November 1997. Nominations for new committee members should be forwarded to the secretary. Retiring committee members are eligible for re-election. The committee meeting in Manchester on 10th February was chiefly concerned with agreeing the contents of the newsletter and approving preliminary suggestions for the next Annual November Meeting.

Annual Conference in Durham, 11th November 1995

Thirty-seven members attended this one-day conference. We are grateful to Sid Bradley (York) and Gale Owen-Crocker (Manchester) for

stimulating papers on the use of the cultural background in teaching Old English. Rosemary Cramp spoke on the exciting developments at Bede's World, Jarrow, and Angela Evans of the British Museum deserves special thanks for squeezing a rapid trip up to Durham into a very busy schedule and for not only offering a new perspective on her chosen material objects but for the invitation to visit and even handle some of the museum's collections with our students. In the afternoon's programme Felicity Curry (see below) and Duncan Macrae-Gibson offered very different approaches to designing courses for teaching Old English; Ann Squires introduced *The Poetry Shell* and the editions of *The Dream of the Rood* and *Judith* which have been developed in it; and Stuart Lee looked at material relevant to Old English which is currently available on the Internet. Thanks are due to all our speakers for their contributions. The bookstall offered publications from Blackwell's, CUP, Manchester, and Durham Medieval Texts. TOEBI is also grateful for financial support from Blackwell's, CUP, and Exeter UP.

The organiser hopes that members considered that the conference was reasonably priced at £16.50 and apologises to vegetarians for the fact that the caterers did not really follow their instructions in providing adequate vegetarian choice.

TOEBI Annual Conference 1996

The conference will take place on Saturday, 9th November 1996, in the Charles Wilson Building on the University of Leicester campus. Registration will be at 10.30am. The themes of the papers are to be decided upon (anyone interested in presenting a paper is invited to contact the organisers). Cost will be

approximately £12.00 to TOEBI members. For more information contact Dr Elaine Treharne, University of Leicester (e-mail: emt1@leicester.ac.uk).

TOEBI Web Update

The TOEBI world-wide web pages (<http://info.ox.ac.uk/departments/humanities/toebi>) have now been expanded to include international links to other sites of interest to Anglo-Saxonists, as well as a link to the Centre for Humanities Computing Software Archive, based at the University of Oxford. From here you can automatically download several pieces of software—of most interest to TOEBI members are the 'Old English Font Packs' designed by Peter Baker (University of Virginia) to run under both Macintosh and PC systems.

Graduate Teachers Day

TOEBI will be organising a day's workshop for graduate students aimed at introducing them to some of the problems and solutions related to the teaching of Old English. The day will be held in Oxford, and will culminate in an example 'field trip' to the Anglo-Saxon exhibits at the Ashmolean Museum. Places for this will be strictly limited. As yet the date has to be confirmed but please contact Dr Elaine Treharne if you are interested in attending or presenting (Dr Elaine Treharne, Department of English; e-mail: emt1@leicester.ac.uk).

Fontes Anglo-Saxonici

12th Open Meeting
King's College London: Tuesday,
26th March 1996

This is notification of the 12th Open meeting of *Fontes*. A preliminary programme has been arranged and speakers include: Professor Malcolm Godden; Professor Paul Szarmach; and Professor Michael Lapidge. For more details and a complete programme contact: Professor Jane

Roberts, English Department, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS (e-mail: UDLE020@bay.cc.kcl.ac.uk). Cost, including a buffet lunch: £13.00.

Electronic Old English

A conference organised jointly by TOEBI and the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies was held in Manchester on 9th/10th of February 1996 subtitled 'The Use of Computers in Old English Teaching and Research'. It was supported by funding from the British Academy, the British Library, and the University of Manchester Research Support Fund, and forty-six speakers and delegates were registered. The conference began on Friday evening with a session on the development of databases. Mark Atherton talked about the organisation of the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* database and of ways in which it can be interrogated.

Loredana Teresi spoke of her need to compile a database to make possible her doctoral research into a linguistic comparison of two late Old English manuscripts. Jane Roberts and Lynne Grundy produced the first copies of the *Thesaurus of Old English* off the press, Jane giving some background to the compilation, and Lynne explaining how the database had made it possible to create such a computer-generated book.

The Saturday morning session was devoted to the British Library's manuscript digitising programme. Andrew Prescott placed it in context and gave tantalising glimpses of the way ahead. Deborah Coombs and Kathryn Powell presented for the first time in Britain their electronic *Beowulf* teaching program, 'Scribe', Kathryn giving technical details and showing how teachers might prepare classes in palaeography or textual criticism, and Deborah extending this to art history with manuscript illuminations. The research element in digitisation was stressed by Donald Scragg displaying a page of Cotton Julius E.vii which has a controversial change of scribe, and Joana Soliva showing how the

protective gauze may be stripped from burnt pages of Cotton Vitellius D.xvii to make visible illegible readings.

In the afternoon, Linda van Bergen demonstrated the WordCruncher package that she has developed for the Toronto Old English corpus; Ann Squires showed *The Poetry Shell* in its basic form, available for a variety of users, and with *The Dream of the Rood* and the beginnings of her new package on *Judith* written in; and Stuart Lee talked about available Old English sites on the World-Wide Web and how to create new ones. If not everyone agreed with the hyperbole of the delegate who left declaring that he had learnt more in two days than in his whole life, at least all felt that the weekend had been enjoyable and informative.

Anglo-Saxon for Beginners

Anglo-Saxon for Beginners, by Felicity Currie, offers a radically different approach to the teaching of Old English. It addresses the learning difficulties students often have in acquiring translating skills, by working first from Modern English, explaining (always with clear examples) the functions of words in sentences, and gradually introducing the different ways of an inflected language. This means that when Old English itself is introduced, students are comfortable with the ways in which words change their shape in relation to meaning, and with the flexibility of word-order. Students are encouraged to learn by reading and recognition of forms, to understand the function of every word in every sentence, without being immediately intimidated by forbidding paradigms which have to be learned by rote. By the time study of Old English passages begins (Mitchell and Robinson's *A Guide to Old English* is the required textbook), students are not strangers to the language. The actual study of texts begins by first glossing extracts (so that students always begin by seeing Old English and Modern English together), second by detailed

grammatical analysis (accompanied by evaluative comment), third by showing students how to compile line-by-line glossaries, and only then, as the last stage of a four-fold process, offering a polished translation. Gradually students are encouraged to do glossaries and translation on their own. The book is accompanied by two cassettes, which begin with exercises in pronunciation and reading, followed by supplementary grammatical explanation, and culminate in a stirring debate on *The Battle of Maldon. Anglo-Saxon for Beginners* has already run successfully as a distance-learning course, and is now also being used by undergraduates who have responded enthusiastically to it, because they find it lively, stimulating and, above all, enabling. It would also be suitable for sixth formers who are interested in the subject. The book is available from the English Department, University of Manchester (ISBN No. 1871 034035): book £5.00, cassettes £5.00.

A Thesaurus of Old English: A Research Tool for Historians of Language and Culture

A Thesaurus of Old English, by Jane Roberts and Christian Kay with Lynne Grundy, has just been published by King's College London Medieval Series. (Its rather inelegant abbreviation is *TOE*.) The *TOE* is an offshoot of the Historical Thesaurus of English, a project based at Glasgow University, and is drawn from an INGRES database held at King's College. Although it is a research tool of considerable interest in its own right, it is also intended that the *TOE* will serve as a 'pilot', in which the classification structures and working practices designed for the Historical Thesaurus may be tested. The printed version is the product of an INGRES report, and other published resources are planned, each drawing on the database. In addition, the database itself will continue to be a living repository of new research as we

continue to work on the vocabulary of Old English and continue to learn more about it. The database of the *TOE* is kept in a single table in INGRES, a relational database. Although the relational facilities of the package have not so far been exploited, in the future we may want to use them as we move away from the original tasks of preparing both the Old English constituent of the Historical Thesaurus and the independent volumes that comprise the *TOE*. Each record, whether Old English lexical item or Modern English heading, constitutes a row in the database. In total there are at present 72,612 rows, of which 50,502 represent Old English words and 22,110 Modern English headings. Each row has a unique 'address', composed of a group reference (this is called 'groop' by us because INGRES reserves 'group' for its own use), sub-category reference, and individual number.

The other data stored there are to do with part of speech, alphabetical-sort sequence, Roget categorization (dating from the time before the new classification was devised by Michael Samuels and Christian Kay, but still of use in placing slips as a clue to where errant ones should belong), and cross-referencing. We also record any identified modern or earlier English etymological tie-up. A further field allows comments: for example, location references for rare words, meanings or usage. This field also serves as a convenient space for recording the sorts of observations that are generally found in footnotes. Finally, we have a field in which we put a flag for simple distributional information: if the lexical item occurs only once in the corpus of Old English texts it is flagged *o*; if only in poetry, *p*; if only in glosses, *g*; or if in some way it is to be queried, *q*. To print a report of the database (for example to produce the materials for the published version) we use a custom-made report designed by Harold Short that selects the fields we need, in the right order, and with the right font characteristics. Text is recorded in the database in ASCII, so the Anglo-Saxon characters thorn and ash have to be entered as

symbols. Thus, in the database thorn/eth is represented by } and ash by {, and these conventions, together with an underscore to denote the macron of a long vowel, serve to present the language adequately. When using the database we must remember these conventions, which is easy enough for the small group at present working with it, but a more transparent set of characters is in the long run needed for future research. We are therefore determined that any electronic version of the database materials shall carry with it an acceptable Anglo-Saxon font; in addition, it must offer macrons to mark long vowels (we have done a lot of work on vowel length, and would not want to lose this information).

The classification of vocabulary contained in the database starts with the presentation of concepts wide in extension, and descends from these more general ideas to increasingly refined notions. Here is an example of headings from the classification, taken from the section of the database on the activity of the mind:

06 Spirit, soul, heart
 06.01 The head (as seat of thought)
 06.01.01 Thought, the faculty of thinking, mind
 06.01.01.01 Thinking about, minding, heeding
 06.01.01.01.01 Thought, cogitation, meditation
 06.01.01.01.01.01 Consideration, rumination
 06.01.01.01.01.02 Forethought, consideration
 06.01.01.02 Care, attention, observation
 06.01.02 The imaginative faculty
 06.01.02.01 An imaginary form, fancy
 06.01.02.01.01 A vision, apparition
 06.01.02.01.01.01 A dream, vision
 06.01.03 Faculty of reason
 06.01.03.01 Argument, reasoning
 06.01.03.02 Dialectics, logic
 06.01.03.03 Unreason
 06.01.04 Faculty of memory
 06.01.04.01 To remind, bring to the notice of
 06.01.04.02 Living, remembered
 06.01.04.03 Forgetfulness
 06.01.04.03.01 Forgetfulness, oblivion

Within each 'groop' and sub there are often nests of data which start generally and descend to the detailed.

Searching the database at present is by one of two methods: the Query-by-forms procedure provided within INGRES, or the common SQL language. You can ask for a subset or all rows to be returned, usually to be sorted on group, sub, num. The material in the whole database is very quickly and easily accessible. With the current publication of fascicles of the Dictionary of Old English (by the University of Toronto) there is a great deal of interest in the vocabulary of Old English at the moment. Our thesaurus offers an unique way of exploring what words were available to the Anglo-Saxons when they wanted to call a spade a spade or when they wanted to consider the most remote elements of the nature of God. It documents, using all the sources available to us, the ways the Anglo-Saxons referred to their world.

[A *Thesaurus of Old English* is currently only available in print form at a cost of £47.50 for the two volumes. Enquiries, and pre-paid orders should be sent to Professor David Hook, Department of Spanish, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS (cheques should be made payable to 'King's College London').

Bede's World — The Museum of Early Medieval Northumbria at Jarrow

Readers of the *TOEBI Newsletter* will be interested in the latest developments at the new museum being constructed at Jarrow, focussing on the life, times, and works of Bede. Details and slides of the development were presented by Rosemary Cramp at the TOEBI meeting held in Durham last November.

The museum (and the already existing Jarrow Hall) will contain a variety of exhibitions and displays, including examples of early stained glass made at the monastic workshops, replicas of some of the craftsmanship of the monastery, and temporary special exhibitions.

Surrounding the museum is an eleven-acre site which will house a medieval farm and reconstructions of buildings from the Early Middle Ages.

The whole project is managed by Jarrow 700 AD Ltd, and fund-raising has been the responsibility of the

Bede Foundation. Assistance for the development has also come from local and European development funds.

The organisers of Bede's World welcome visitors, and would like to hear from anyone who is interested in helping with the development of the site. For more information contact: Bede's World, Church Bank, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear, NE32 3DY (Tel: 0191 489 2106; Fax: 0191 428 2361).

Stop Press

International Medieval Congress,
University of Leeds, 8–11 July
1996

Programme and registration details for this year's IMC at Leeds are currently being circulated. If you have not received details so far contact: IMC, International Medieval Institute, Parkinson Building Room 1.03, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT (Tel: 0113-233-3614; E-mail: imc@leeds.ac.uk).

Contributions for the next issue of the *TOEBI Newsletter* should be submitted to the Editor by the 30th June, 1996—Dr Stuart Lee, OUCS, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN (Tel: 01865-273221; E-mail: Stuart.Lee@oucs.ox.ac.uk)