

**Society for the Study of the Sudans (UK)**  
**37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, 16 September 2023**

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome from the Chairperson**

Gill Lusk welcomed everyone to the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the SSSUK. A minute's silence for the victims of the war in Sudan was then proposed by Dr. Husam Elmugamar and observed by those attending.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from: Leila Aboulela, Mohamed Baraka, Simon Bush, Peter Everington, Dan Large, Cherry Leonardi.

**3. Minutes of the AGM of 8 October 2022, and matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes, which had been previously circulated, and they were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

**4. Chairperson's report**

Gill Lusk sadly reported the death of Prof. Herman Bell on 7 February 2023. Two obituaries by Peter Woodard and Ahmed Abdul Rahman had been published in the July edition of *Sudan Studies*. The chairperson read out an appreciation by Fatih Osman, and then relayed the thanks and good wishes of Herman's family for the Society's support.

Professor Herman Bell (1933-2023): a linguist, specialising in Nubian languages and culture; worked with Nubian communities prior to the Aswan Dam forced displacement, 1962-1964; African and Asian Studies Unit, University of Khartoum 1973-1979; Department of Foreign Languages, King Faisal University, 1980-1993; Oxford Academy of Advanced Studies, 1993-2003; notable among his many publications is *Paradise Lost: Nubia before the 1964 hijra* (2009).

Gill thanked the outgoing Treasurer Adrian Thomas for his 16 years of support for the Society in that role, and also thanked his wife Robyn for her own valued work behind the scenes during this time.

Gill noted that this would be her last year in post as Chairperson of the Society and urged members to join the Committee and take an active role. New blood and new ideas were needed so that momentum created during her tenure could be continued. As is the convention, Gill would be happy to stay on the Committee for a period after stepping down.

Finally, Gill acknowledged everyone's pain at the terrible suffering and violence in Sudan. She hoped that the Society gathering together at the Symposium offered a chance for solidarity and some consolation.

## **5. Treasurer's report**

Adrian Thomas reported for the last time, as he now proposes to hand over his role to Shiema Ahmed.

The 2022 accounts were circulated. The Society's financial position is healthy. The Society's income exceeded its expenditure by £1,035.99, much as last year. In 2022 the Society spent less on printing and editorial activities (new printers were used), and there was a small increase in subscriptions income. However, these gains were balanced by a loss of £300 from the 2022 Symposium, which had been affected by a train strike and the pandemic.

For each of the last three years, the Society has made a surplus, such that the Society's current account balance now stands at about £9,000, and thus makes a reserve of nearly two years of our usual expenditure. This is a healthy position, and Adrian suggested now would be a good time to invest some of this reserve in new projects.

Membership remains stable at 225. Adrian noted this had grown from 190 in 2007 when he took on the role of Treasurer, and he urged that there was still lots of room to grow the membership further. He appealed to members to recruit among their friends and colleagues.

Members were again encouraged to subscribe to the Society by standing order. 27 members' direct debits had still not been updated from £12 to the new (2020) higher membership fee (see website for rates), and Adrian warned that such members would not receive hard copies of *Sudan Studies* next year if their direct debits remained uncorrected, the postal costs being the Society's highest outgoing each year.

Adrian remarked that he was an early member, joining in 1968. His first involvement with Sudan was in the field of education, post-independence. He noted recent events were a challenge for the many Sudanese and South Sudanese in the UK, and argued the Society has an especially important purpose now for these communities.

Adrian concluded by saying he had enjoyed his 16 years in the role as Treasurer and valued the support of committee members. Now was the time to hand over to younger members.

## **6. Editor's report**

Charlotte Martin reported that two issues of the journal, *Sudan Studies*, (#68 and #69) had as usual been published this year. They included an eclectic mix of material, including two articles by the editor. One of these was a report of a picnic to commemorate 20 years of

genocide in Darfur and held at Alexandra Palace Park in London centred round a memorial to [Sharif Barko](#) (aka Majed Hassan, 1961-2021).

Charlotte welcomed Aly Verjee to the Editorial Board and thanked the Board's other members, particularly Jane Hogan for her work in supervising the publication and mailing the issues. Heywood Hadfield was also thanked for taking on the book reviews for the journal. A series of reviews of classic texts is forthcoming, the first to be authored by Aziz el Nur. Gill Lusk was thanked as a long-term contributor, and Aziz el Nur and Garth Glentworth were also thanked for linking Charlotte with potential contributors.

Issue(s) in 2025 will include articles on Sudan Government Railways (which included river steamers). Charlotte invited contributions, and welcomed an immediate offer to help from member Hashim Mohamed Ahmed, a former General Manager of the Sudan Railways Company. Ian Cliff will contribute a history and Rosie Squires will also contribute. Charlotte noted that Nile barges were constructed at Rowhedge, Essex, where there is an archive and local studies library, and she would follow up this lead.

Charlotte noted that she would not be able to edit the journal for ever, and invited people interested in the role and in contributing pieces to the journal to get in touch and to continue to provide all the much needed support.

## **7. Website**

Francis reported that the SSSUK Committee had formed a sub-committee to make recommendations to improve or replace the website.

## **8. Elections to the SSSUK Committee**

Leila Aboulela (re-election) (Proposer Gill Lusk, Seconder Mawan Muortat),  
Francis Gotto (re-election) (Proposer Rosalind Marsden, Seconder Simon Bush),  
Fidaa Mahmoud (re-election) (Proposer Peter Woodward, Seconder Francis Gotto),  
Charlotte Martin (Editor) (Proposer Douglas Johnson, Seconder Rebecca Bradshaw),  
Mawan Muortat (Co-Deputy Chairperson) (Proposer Jacob Akol, Seconder John Ryle),  
Aly Verjee (Proposer Gill Lusk, Seconder Mawan Muortat).

Jane Hogan (co-opted member) (Proposer Andy Wheeler, Seconder Jihad Mashamoun).

Shiemaa Ahmed (Treasurer) (Proposer Adrian Thomas, Seconder Abdel Azim El Hassan).

All candidates were elected unanimously by the members attending the meeting.

## **9. Any other business**

- (a) Aziz el Nur reported a Chatham House event on Wednesday 13 September 'Making sense of coups and democratic renewal in Africa'. This presented a new UNDP research paper of the same title ([available online](#)), based on 8,000 questionnaires. Prof. Lutz Oette will review this for the journal.

(b) Hashim Mohamed Ahmed emphasised the importance of the journal and urged its wide distribution to members and non-members. To this end he volunteered that one of the two copies sent to his address may be re-directed elsewhere.

(C) A participant asked if SSSUK could promote charitable organisations active in Sudan and South Sudan on the website. Hazel Oberst noted as an example the activities of <https://www.kidsforkids.org.uk/> in Darfur. The Committee offered to discuss this practical suggestion, but noted that we must always be guided by the charity's constitutional purposes, which are:

*“to provide, for the public benefit and in any appropriate place, a forum for discussion and the circulation of information and ideas between groups and individuals concerned with or interested in Sudan and South Sudan, and to advance the education of the public in Sudanese Studies”.*

(c) Salwa Ahmed offered to contribute to the journal and will contact the editor.

(d) Nahla Abbas asked if the Society had collaborative links with Sudanese civil society organisations and professional bodies active in the UK, and if they could contribute to the Society in any way. Gill answered that there are several such links, offering the recent examples of Waging Peace and Sudan's Doctors for Human Rights, and welcomed further such contacts.

Close of meeting.