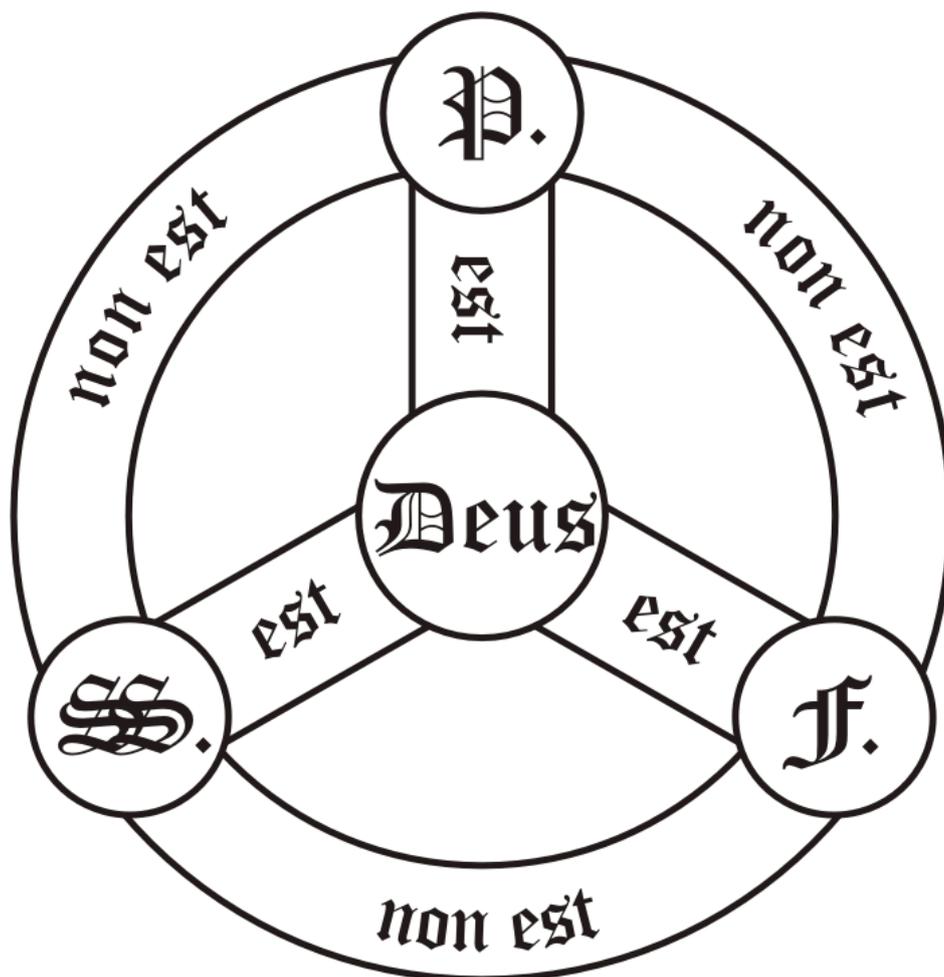


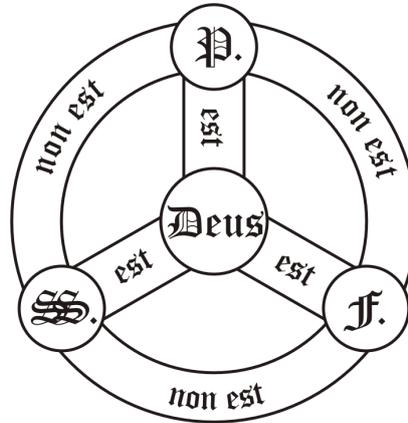
**BRITISH ASSOCIATION**  
for the  
**STUDY OF RELIGIONS**



**BULLETIN**  
No 108 June 2006

# BASR BULLETIN

## No 108 June 2006



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## The BASR COMMITTEE

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The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), formerly the British Association for the History of Religions (founded in 1954), is affiliated to the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) and to the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), whose object is the promotion of the academic study of religions through international interdisciplinary collaboration. The BASR pursues these aims within the United Kingdom through the arrangement of conferences and symposia, the publication of a Bulletin and an Annual General Meeting. Membership of the BASR is open to scholars whose work has a bearing on the academic study of religions and who are normally resident in the United Kingdom. Those interested in membership may apply directly by writing to the **Hon. Secretary** to whom all general correspondence concerning the BASR should be sent: **Dr Graham Harvey, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.**

Correspondence concerning the Bulletin, including information and contributions, should be addressed to Dr George D. Chryssides at <G.D.Chryssides@wlv.ac.uk> or at School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science, University of Wolverhampton, Millennium City Building, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 3SB. Deadlines for submissions are: 15 October for November issue; 15 February for March issue; 15 May for June issue.

**BASR Web site: <<http://basr.org.uk>>**

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### **Editorial — The end has come!**

This edition of the Bulletin will be the last under the present editorship. Having assumed this role for four years now, it seems like the end of an era. Like many other academics, the sheer pressure of work has made me review the various tasks that I currently do. I am sure, too, that the Bulletin will benefit from a fresh approach. Dealing with one's workload is not simply a matter of self-preservation; I have been conscious that past Bulletins would have benefited from having had more time to spend on them.

I have enjoyed my four years of editing, which has brought me into contact with new colleagues, and maintained contacts with old ones. Thanks to all its members, the Bulletin has never been short of material. After each edition has gone to press, it always looked as if there was nothing there for the next one; yet a good quantity of material has always come in, without having to harass people for copy that they promised. So my thanks go to everyone who has contributed over these years.

The four years have provided some interesting experiences. Some readers may recall that, after my first mailing of Bulletins, a postman threatened to sue me for posting too many letters! This incident has now graduated to the Wikipedia — 'the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit' ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)). Someone has created an entry entitled 'George D. Chryssides', in which the incident takes up the bulk of the entry: so much for one's academic achievements!

It has also been interesting to commission the Turning Point articles. When I took over, these seemed to be basically reviews of old books. This seems to have changed, although not by design. Academics seem more inclined in recent years to write about what really steered them towards their present career — not necessarily by an academic classic, but sometimes by field work, and sometimes by a piece of writing that was in no sense academic. My editorship concludes here with two Turning Points by Merv and Jeaneane Fowler (formerly of the University of Wales, Newport), both of whom came to eastern religions through interesting routes.

During the last year of editorship, the subject of 'engaged research' came to the fore. In the past, scholars have declared a commitment to neutrality, and have been reluctant to change the phenomena they are studying. As was noted, however, academic detachment has to be counterbalanced by the academic responsibility to contribute to public debate, and contributors have drawn attention to the difficulty of maintaining a balance between these two ideals. When Moojan Momen sent me his contribution on Baha'is in Iran, he sent a covering message saying that he realised that this was not the sort of piece that one might normally expect to find in the BASR Bulletin.

However, the article is about religion and education, and I believe one should question whether it is appropriate for academics simply to ignore such issues. I leave readers to decide how 'engaged' they wish to be on this matter.

Unlike the posts of Secretary and Vice-President, the Bulletin Editor is not elected by the membership, but co-opted by the Executive Committee. The Committee discussed the future editorship, and it has been decided that Dr Helen Waterhouse (Open University) and Dr Dominic Corrywright (Oxford Brookes University) will become joint editors, starting with the November edition. I am confident that you will give the new editors as much support as I have had over the past years, and thank you all for making the editorship a less onerous task than it otherwise might have been.

Needless to say, I shall continue to be around at BASR events, such as the annual conference, and you may even find the occasional article or review from me in forthcoming Bulletins.

**George D. Chryssides**

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### **CONGRATULATIONS**

Congratulations to the BASR President, James L. Cox, on being awarded a Personal Chair in Religious Studies at the University of Edinburgh. This is a much deserved promotion. Professor Cox now holds the title of Professor of Religious Studies.

## **BASR OCCASIONAL PAPERS (order from BASR Web site)**

- 1 Miranda Green, *Women and Goddesses in the Celtic World*, 1991
- 2 Christine Trevett, *The Quaker Margaret Fell: Religion and Gender in a C17th Dissenting Group*, 1991
- 3 Ann Bancroft, *Hildegarde of Bingen to Meinrad Craighead*, 1991
- 4 Julia Leslie, *Religion, Gender and Dharma: The Case of the Widow Ascetic*, 1991
- 5 Peter Antes, *How to study religious experience in the traditions*, 1992
- 6 Marion Bowman, *Phenomenology, fieldwork and folk religion*, 1992
- 7 George Chryssides, *Unificationism: A study in religious syncretism*, 1993
- 8 Michael Pye, *Syncretism versus synthesis*, 1993
- 9 Ria Kloppenberg, *A Buddhist-Christian encounter in Sri Lanka: Pandura Vada*, 1994
- 10 Peter Donovan, *Maori rituals add magic to contemporary civic life*, 1995
- 11 Ninian Smart, *Sacred nationalism*, 1995
- 12 W. S. F. Pickering, *Locating the sacred: Durkheim and Otto*, 1995
- 13 Terence Thomas, 'The sacred' as a viable concept in the contemporary study of religions, 1995 (bound together with 12)
- 14 Margaret Chatterjee, *Do we need authority in religious life?*, 1996
- 15 Chris Arthur, *Media, meaning, and method in the study of religion*, 1996
- 16 Gerrie ter Haar, *Chosen people: The concept of diaspora in the modern world*, 1996
- 17 Richard Gombrich, *Religious experience in early Buddhism*, 1997
- 18 James Cox, *Alterity as identity: Innovation in the Academic Study of Religions*, 1998
- 19 Elizabeth Amoah, *African spirituality and religious innovation*, 1998
- 20 Ian Reader, *Religion, conflict and the sacred mission: On understanding the violence of Aum Shinrikyo*, 1999
- 21 Brian Bocking, *Religious Studies: The New Queen of the Sciences*, 2000
- 22 Kim Knott, *The Sense and Nonsense of 'Community': A Consideration of Contemporary Debates about Community and Culture by a Scholar of Religion*, 2002
- 23 Armin Geertz, *Religion and Community in Indigenous Contexts*, 2002
- 24 Guilia Sfameni Gasparro, *Religion and Community in the Ancient World*, 2002
- 25 Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British State*, 2002
- 26 Rosalind Hackett, *The Response of Scholars of Religion to Global Religious Violence*, 2003

Occasional Papers can be ordered from the BASR Web site at  
<<http://basr.org.uk>>

## **BASR NEWS**

### **Election of Officers**

Once again it is time to consider the election of office-bearers. Formal election occurs at the BASR's Annual General Meeting, which forms part of the BASR Annual Conference.

This year the posts of Treasurer and Secretary need to be filled, and advance nominations are needed. Members should find nomination forms enclosed with this edition of the Bulletin, and completed nominations should be sent to Dr Graham Harvey, the current Secretary.

The posts of Conference Organiser and Bulletin Editor will also become vacant. According to the BASR's constitution, the procedure is not to elect them, but to co-opt them. Again, this is normally done at the AGM. Since these are not elected posts, no nomination forms are included. However, members should nonetheless give consideration to possible candidates, or even consider volunteering themselves for such tasks.

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### **DISKUS**

The on-line journal DISKUS should be ready for the September BASR conference. The first issue to be produced by the BASR will include the 2005 keynote addresses by Frank Whaling and Seth Kunin. The last of the BASR Occasional Papers to be produced in traditional format will be Ursula King's address to the 2004 BASR 50th Anniversary Conference at Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

Previous editions of DISKUS (volume 1, 1993, to volume 6, 2000) are available on the Marburg site:

<http://web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/welcome.html>

(There is a hyperlink from the BASR web site.)

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## GIFT AID

The Executive Committee would like to urge members to make use of Gift Aid. The BASR is currently losing between £200 and £300 per annum, simply because members have not returned a Gift Aid form, or — even more simply — e-mailed the Treasure with the following message:

Please treat my BASR subscriptions as Gift Aid donations with effect from 6 April 2004. I confirm that I pay income tax or capital gains tax equal to or exceeding the tax deducted from the subscription rate.

Subscribing through Gift Aid is easy! You no longer need a witness to your signature (as with the old Deeds of Covenant), or even a signature at all. An e-mail message is all it takes!

- It can be done at any time — right now, in fact! You do not need to wait until your subscription is due.
- If you are not sure whether you have already filled in a form, complete one anyway. The Inland Revenue will not credit the BASR twice, and the Treasurer is more than willing to check whether you have Gift-Aided.
- You can also activate Gift Aid by clicking on to the BASR web site, and follow the 'Membership application form' link. This includes an electronic Gift Aid form.

For every pound of your subscription, the BASR can claim 28p back from the Inland Revenue. This may not seem much, but it will top up a single £15 subscription by £4.20. Multiplied by over 200 members, this is quite a considerable sum.

Please contact:

Dr Helen Waterhouse, Arts Faculty, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. E-mail: <h.j.waterhouse@open.ac.uk>

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006**

**4-6 September**

**BATH SPA UNIVERSITY**

# **THE ETHICAL DIMENSION**

KEYNOTE LECTURE:

**The Ethical Dimension in Theories of Religion**

Professor Robert Segal, University of Aberdeen

The topic is intended to stimulate a wide range of papers. Panels and individual papers are invited on such subjects as the negotiation, promulgation and enforcement of ethical ideals within religion; the relationship of religious studies and ethics in higher education; encounters between different religions' ethical systems; cash and commodification in relation to religion; and other aspects of the ethical dimension in religion, from historical perspectives or in contemporary situations.

**Offers of papers and reports of work in progress, preferably by email, to [arts-basr@open.ac.uk](mailto:arts-basr@open.ac.uk) by 1 June 2006 or to Marion Bowman, BASR Conference Organiser, Religious Studies Department, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA**

Registration form and programme details are on the BASR web site ([basr.org.uk](http://basr.org.uk)).

Please register by 30 June to secure accommodation.

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# FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

*Under the high patronage of the President of Romania,*



The European Association for the Study of Religions,  
The International Association for the History of Religions,  
The Romanian Association for the History of Religions, and  
The Centre for the History of Religions, University of Bucharest

## Organise

### 6TH EASR CONFERENCE IAHR SPECIAL CONFERENCE **RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF EUROPE AND ASIA** **BUCHAREST, 20-23 SEPTEMBER 2006**

The 6<sup>th</sup> EASR Conference will be an IAHR Special Conference held in Bucharest (Romania), under the auspices of the Romanian Association for the History of Religions (RAHR), and in association with the Centre for the History of Religions at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest.

The Conference will be structured around ten keynote lectures and a cluster of panels. The RAHR organisers **call for papers** designated for the following six topics:

- Christianity in Late Antiquity
- Esotericism
- Greek and Roman Religions
- Indian Religions
- Iranian Religions
- Religions in the Middle Ages

EASR affiliated scholars can contribute individual PAPERS REFLECTING THE GENERAL THEME of the conference.

— The organisers will also run a NON-THEMED SESSION to welcome those PAPERS by the EASR affiliated scholars THAT DO NOT FIT INTO THE GENERAL THEME of the conference.

The deadline for proposals of papers has now expired.

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For fuller details, please visit <http://basr.org.uk>

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## Conference 2006

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### The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity

- Cambridge, 10 — 12 July 2006
  - Organised by Centre for the study of Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR) and Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) of University of Cambridge
- 

The conference will examine current discussion on contemporary European identity, when religion tends to be seen as one of the obstacles to further European integration. It will also provide comparative assessment of critical thinking in this field. The event will attract 'real' and 'virtual' participants through CJCR's successful web-based technology.

The conference will address the following key issues:

- Components of contemporary European identity;
- Manifestation of religious roots in secular society;
- Role of religion in further European integration and social inclusion;
- Poland, Czech Republic and the United Kingdom as case studies;
- Assessing the current debate about the role of Islam and Russian Orthodoxy in shaping Europe's identity;
- Discussing the strengths and weaknesses of electronic communication in international scholarly debate in this field of study.

**Conference location:** Westminster College.

**Accommodation** at Westminster College and St Edmund's College.

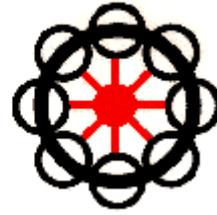
**Full conference fee:** £60 (excl. meals); day rate £30.

Further details from

**Registration deadline: 1 May 2006**

**Further details:** Lucia Faltin, Director of International Programmes & Conference Coordinator. E-mail: [l.faltin@cjcr.am.ac.uk](mailto:l.faltin@cjcr.am.ac.uk)

or visit <http://www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk/conference2006/conference-home.html>



Upcoming conference for the Study of Religions

**2006 - Celebrating the Past – Anticipating the Future**

**30<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> July 2006**

**Venue: University of South Australia, City West Campus**

Conference Chair: Heather Foster

Keynote speakers: John D'Arcy May (Trinity College, University of Dublin), Mitri Raheb (Pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem), Majella Franzmann (University of New England)

Panel Session: "What ever happened to secularisation?"

Panel members confirmed to date: Marion Maddox (Victoria University of Wellington), Alia Imtoual, (Flinders University), Adam Possamai (University of Western Sydney)

Papers on: Religions and Sustainability, Religions and Ethics, Religion and secularism, Religion and History , Religion and the 'Other', Religion and education, Religion and futures.

Enquires: Dr Heather Foster, University of South Australia  
Heather.foster@unisa.edu.au

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# **The European Society for the Philosophy of Religion**

**16th Biennial Conference in Tübingen (Germany)**

**1-4 September 2006**

## **Religion after Metaphysics**

**Main Contributors:** Hermann Deuser (Frankfurt), William B. Drees (Leiden), Nils Grønkaer (Aarhus), Hans-Peter Grosshans (Tübingen), Eberhard Herrmann (Uppsala), Denis Turner (Yale), Saskia Wendel (Tilburg), Mark Wynn (Exeter).

The general theme of the conference *Religion after Metaphysics* is: do religions depend on (a particular form of) metaphysics; and if not, what are the implications for the philosophy of religion? In recent years, there has been a widespread ‘empirical’ or ‘practice-oriented’ turn in the scientific and philosophical study of religion. Religion is seen as a cultural, social, or anthropological phenomenon: as a human form of life and orientation in the world rather than as a way of encountering a transcendent divine reality.

This has provoked a radical backlash within those philosophical and theological traditions that hold fast to an idea of transcendence as intrinsic to religion and religious life, and which insist that philosophy of religion is to be practised in the mode of metaphysics or transcendental philosophy. These modern and pre-modern forms of philosophy of religion clearly conflict with more recent descriptive, pluralist and naturalising approaches to religion and religions, and it is this particular conflict which the conference will address. Is philosophy of religion possible without some metaphysical orientation? Can it consistently exclude metaphysics in its critical reflections upon religious belief and practice? Is there anything left for philosophy of religion to reflect upon if religion is completely naturalized?

Those who are interested in presenting a paper should inform the organisers <lfrei@theol.unizh.ch> as early as possible and are asked to send in their contributions as e-mail attachments by 30 May 2006. Please indicate to which session the paper refers. There will be a selection of papers by the organising committee. Those invited to present their paper at the conference will be informed by 15 July 2006.

### **Conference committee:**

Ingolf U. Dalferth, Zürich: [dalferth@theol.unizh.ch](mailto:dalferth@theol.unizh.ch)

Hans-Peter Grosshans, Tübingen: [hans-peter.grosshans@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:hans-peter.grosshans@uni-tuebingen.de)

# **DYING FOR FAITH: RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

**Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College, London  
11-12 September 2006**

**Conveners: Professor Madawi Al-Rasheed, Dr Marat Shterin**

The conference will explore a number of issues related to acts of religiously motivated violence. Over the recent decades, religion has become increasingly prominent as an identifiable source of violence, both independently and in combination with other sources (economic, ideological, political, or ethnic). This conspicuous and extremely complex social phenomenon has so far been largely a subject of sensational media reporting and attracted only a patchy attention from academic circles.

The conference will be a step towards filling this gap by exploring religious violence from a range of perspectives, including theology, religious studies, history and social sciences. We invite papers examining theological views on 'dying for faith', sociological dynamics and anthropological aspects of such acts, psychological states of their participants, and political analysis of contributing factors. We will also discuss the interactions between religious groups and political and religious institutions that result in or follow the dramatic denouements of acts of suicide or homicide. The conference is intended to cover a wide range of regions and religions.

The conference will bring together scholars and policy makers from Europe, the USA and the Middle East. In two days of open discussions among commentators from a variety of perspectives, contemporary trends will be examined, exploring their roots as well as likely future development.

**Provisional conference structure:** Text and interpretation; Historical contexts; Contemporary manifestations.

For further information, please contact:  
Dr Marat Shterin, marat.shterin@kcl.ac.uk

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## **Second Global Conference**

### **Call for papers 2006**

This inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary conference aims to explore contemporary definitions, meanings and expressions of hope. In particular, it will seek to examine the individual, social, national and international contexts within which hope emerges as well as its counterpart, hopelessness.

The theme and the sense of uncertainty pervade the start of the twenty-first century. Although young, the past bears witness to the brutality of genocides, atrocities, terrorism which acts to counter-balance economic, political, technological and ecological aspirations. Medicine and bio-ethics are split between those who foresee the worst implications for persons and those who foresee the promise of genetic engineering. Cultural conflicts likewise offer scope for grave apprehension or the hopeful anticipation of a culturally enriched shared world. This project is committed to the view that now is the time look at the main spheres in which there seems to be a pendulum between fear and hopeful expectation, with a view to thinking out constructive strategies for exploration.

Papers will be considered on any related theme. 300-word abstracts should be submitted by Friday 2nd June 2006. If an abstract is accepted for the conference, a full draft paper should be submitted by Friday 1st September 2006.

300-word abstracts should be submitted to the Organising Chairs

Further details can be obtained from **Dr Rob Fisher**  
Inter-Disciplinary.Net  
Priory House, 149B Wroslyn Road  
Freeland, Oxfordshire, OX29 8HR  
E-mail: rf@inter-disciplinary.net

Or see web pages at <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ptb/hope/h2/cfp.htm>  
Details of other relevant inter-disciplinary conferences can be accessed at:  
[www.inter-disciplinary.net](http://www.inter-disciplinary.net)



**MALTA**

Euro Mediterranean Programme on Intercultural Dialogue,  
Human Rights and Future Generations



**International Conference  
Religious Routes and Pilgrimages in Europe and the  
Mediterranean:  
Jewish, Christian and Islamic Perspectives  
MALTA: 9 – 11 November 2006**

The Euro Mediterranean Programme on Intercultural Dialogue, Human Rights and Future Generations of the Foundation for International Studies at the University of Malta, in collaboration with the Faculty of Theology University of Malta will be organising an International Conference on *Religious Routes and Pilgrimages in Europe and the Mediterranean: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Perspectives*. This conference will take place at the Old University Building in Valletta, Malta from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

The objectives of the conference are the following:

- to explore pilgrimages and religious routes as a major common phenomenon in the development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- to discuss how such pilgrimages led to the spread of knowledge, culture and ideas
- to engage in an ongoing dialogue among the three monotheistic religions by their understanding of their common religious heritage
- to understand the common reasons among Judaism, Christianity and Islam for undertaking pilgrimages to religious sites

For further information, please contact:

Maria Bugeja, Conference Secretariat, Euro-Mediterranean Programme on Intercultural Dialogue, Human Rights and Future Generations, Foundation for International Studies, Old University Building, St Paul Street, Valletta, VLT 07, Malta.

Tel: +356 21 234121/2 ext 215/220; fax: 356 21 230551  
email: [mbuge01@um.du.mt](mailto:mbuge01@um.du.mt)

**University of Wales, Lampeter**

**SEMINAR SERIES 2005-2006:** Research Institute for Contemporary Theology and Religious Studies, **Theology and Religious Studies: Methodological Convergence and/or Divergence?**

**MARCH - DECEMBER 2006: The Alister Hardy Society,** supporting the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

For further details, please visit:  
[www.lamp.ac.uk/trs/news\\_events/listings.htm](http://www.lamp.ac.uk/trs/news_events/listings.htm)

**Equinox Publishing**

**List of Conferences**

An extensive list of conferences in Religious Studies can be viewed at:

[www.equinoxpub.com/conf.asp](http://www.equinoxpub.com/conf.asp)

**BASR Annual Conference 2007**

The 2007 annual conference will take place at New College, The University of Edinburgh. The dates are 3-6 September 2007.

The theme is to be announced. In the meantime, members may care to make a note of the date.

## **SEMINAR REPORT**

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Lampeter, held a seminar series entitled ‘Theology and Religious Studies: Methodological Convergence and/or Divergence?’ in the course of the 2005-06 academic year. The series aimed to explore the similarities and differences between Religious Studies and Theology, initiate a dialogue between the two disciplines, and generate a self-reflexive examination of what each is about. The central question addressed through the series was whether the two disciplines are strange bedfellows sharing little in common but simply bedding together out of sheer habit, or whether there is something they organically share, which sustains the link between the them. This issue has been of long-standing interest to members of the department at Lampeter, where the disciplines of Religious Studies and Theology run alongside each other within a single academic unit.

The first two papers in the series, presented by Dr Tim Jenkins (University of Cambridge), and Dr Tim Fitzgerald (University of Stirling) respectively, provided an anthropological critique of the disciplines of Theology and Religious Studies. Following this, theologians and religious studies scholars (both invited speakers as well as academic staff at TRS, Lampeter) examined the relationship between the two disciplines from a range of perspectives. Some contributors, notably Dr James Cox (Edinburgh University) and Dr Chris Arthur (University of Wales, Lampeter) argued in favour of recognising clear boundaries between the two. Others, for instance Professor Paul Badham and Dr Kathy Ehrensperger (both from the University of Wales, Lampeter), explored the potential common ground that could be shared by the two disciplines.

Themes that recurred throughout the series included, firstly, the problem of defining ‘religion’ as a conceptual category; secondly, the applicability or otherwise of Western definitions and models to non-Western contexts; thirdly, the relative value of insider and outsider perspectives on religious faith; and fourthly, the impact of Western secularisation on modern academic perspectives. Some contributors used case studies to explore the relevance or otherwise of particular methodologies to specific religious contexts.

There have been 12 speakers on the series so far, and the papers have generated considerable debate and discussion within the TRS staff and student community in Lampeter. The series has now temporarily drawn to a close but will resume briefly in the first term of the next academic year, when a few more speakers will present papers on key issues that the series

has not so far explored. The organisers of the series hope to make the papers available to a wider audience by publishing them in an edited volume in the near future.

**Maya Warrior**  
**University of Wales, Lampeter**

### **Completed Ph.D.**

Congratulations to MaryCatherine Burgess on the successful completion of her Ph.D. MaryCatherine graduated from the University of Edinburgh in November 2005. Her thesis was entitled 'Contemporary Shamanic Practice in Scotland: A New Paradigm of Spirituality and Religion'. Of course, I was in the Religious Studies area of Divinity, but that is not mentioned in any of the official documents.

MaryCatherine continues to work as part-time chaplain at the University of Edinburgh, and her remit includes providing a presence and a place for students of all faiths and none. Her work on feminist and shamanic spiritualities therefore fits well with some of the work she is doing. She expects to remain in post until her grant expires in June 2007.

## **JOURNALS**

### **The Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality (JMMS)**

is a new online, scholarly, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal. JMMS is published twice a year, beginning in January 2007 with provision for other special editions. JMMS seeks to be as inclusive as possible in its area of enquiry. Papers address the full spectrum of masculinities and sexualities, particularly those which are seldom heard. Similarly, JMMS addresses not only monotheistic religions and spiritualities but also Eastern, indigenous, new religious movements and other spiritualities which resist categorisation. JMMS papers address historical and contemporary phenomena as well as speculative essays about future spiritualities. JMMS is currently seeking papers and reviews for its first issue.

For further information, please visit: <http://www.jmmsweb.org>

**CSSR Bulletin.** The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion is a federation of learned societies in religion interested in enhancing coordination of the field as a whole; it seeks to initiate, coordinate, and implement projects to strengthen and advance scholarship and teaching and to support the activities of constituent societies and of their executive offices and officers. The CSSR Bulletin is published four times per annum as a service to constituent and affiliated societies of the CSSR.

The Bulletin covers a vast array of topics and provides a forum for ongoing conversation among those engaged in the academic study of religion. We seek to address issues related to pedagogy and the field as a whole by publishing essays of general interest that highlight trends and developments in the field in order to raise awareness and stimulate debate. Serving as a prime vehicle for showcasing new innovations in the discipline and the work of seasoned and emerging scholars alike, it represents an ideal place to publish articles and essays aimed at a broad audience. We welcome essays emerging from symposia, conferences, and discussions taking place in various sectors of the field (including organisational reports from constituent and affiliated societies).

Submissions should be sent to the editor as an email attachment. Articles should be 3,000 – 3,500 words or less, with a minimum of endnotes and bibliographical references.

For further information, please contact Scott S. Elliott (Editor), CSSR Executive Office, Rice University — MS-156, P.O. Box 1892, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005

— or visit <http://www.cssr.org/publications.htm>

## **JASANAS**

### **(Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies)**

The latest edition of JASANAS (volume 2, February 2006) is now published. The on-line version can be accessed, free of charge, at [www.open.ac.uk/Arts/jasanas/](http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/jasanas/) A soft bound copy is also available at US\$ 15.99 plus postage and packing. Please visit the web site for further information.

## **RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE U.K.**

### **Islam and Muslims in Britain**

#### **Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK, Cardiff University**

Cardiff has a long history of Muslim settlement. It is recognised as having one of the oldest Muslim communities in Britain; the first mosque in the UK was established in Cardiff in 1860. From this early history, there is now a sizeable and well-established Muslim population in the city, making Cardiff the best place to appreciate the full and dynamic history of British Islam.

Cardiff University is now a leading institution for postgraduate scholarly teaching about Muslims in contemporary Britain. The Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK is based in the School of Religious and Theological Studies, which was awarded the highest possible grade (a 5\*) in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. The Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK (CSI-UK) has a strong and positive relationship with the local Muslim community, and members of the community form part of the Centre's advisory committee.

The study of Islam in Britain is a rapidly growing academic field. There is a need for more scholars and researchers with in-depth knowledge of the history and contemporary context of Muslims in Britain. The M.A. course is specially designed for those with an interest in understanding Islam in Britain: past, present, and future. It is also a natural choice for those who work with, or for, the Muslim community.

The course offers a wide range of possible career opportunities. It is a particularly suitable programme for those who are looking for careers in the public sector (such as local authorities), in the race relations and community relations industry, inter-faith work, community development, and the voluntary sector. Students leave the course with a wide range of social scientific research skills that could be deployed in a wide variety of careers. It is also a pathway into a research or academic career in the field of British Islamic Studies.

#### **The Muslims in Britain Research Network**

During the first half of the 1990s there was a group of scholars and researchers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who met bi-annually at the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (CSIC) in University of Birmingham, to share updates on current research on Islam in Britain. For various reasons, this research network lost momentum over a number of years, but at a meeting in March 2002, Professor Jørgen Nielsen (University of Birmingham), Dr Sean McLoughlin (University of Leeds) and Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray (Cardiff University) felt that it was important to try to

re-establish the research network.

The Network was formally 're-launched' at Cardiff University on 20th January 2003 with some 30 participants and a paper from Professor Pnina Werbner, Professor of Social Anthropology at Keele University, on 'Research on Islam in Britain: past, present and future'. Since January 2003, the Network has been meeting regularly every six months (usually in April and September), rotating around the universities of Cardiff, Birmingham and Leeds, and most recently at the Markfield Institute in Leicester. The meetings usually begin with open discussion and informal sharing of research updates in the morning, followed by a formal paper by an invited speaker in the afternoon. Postgraduate students are encouraged to participate in these meetings.

[Sources: 'Muslims in Britain Research Network, <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/schoolsanddivisions/academicschools/relig/research/centres/islam-uk/muslimresearchnetwork/index.html>; Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK: A brief guide to the programme. Collated by the Bulletin Editor.] For further details, please contact Dr Sophie Gilliat-Rae at [Gilliat-RayS@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Gilliat-RayS@cardiff.ac.uk) or visit the Centre's web site at [www.cardiff.ac.uk/relig/islam-uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/relig/islam-uk)

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## **Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University College**

It is with regret that we have received the announcement of the closure of the Sophia Centre at Bath Spa University. BASR members may recall the coverage given to the Centre shortly after its launch in October 2002, when Nick Campion, its Director, gave it coverage as a 'Religious Studies in the U.K. feature in the *BASR Bulletin* (no.99, June 2003).

The reasons for the closure are unclear at this stage, although we presume the reasons are allegedly economic ones. The Centre was the only one of its kind in the country, and was truly innovatory, and it is to be regretted that its lifespan has been so short-lived.

Bath Spa University will be the venue for the BASR 2006 Annual Conference, which will take place there, as scheduled, since the thriving Religious Studies Department, under the leadership of Denise Cush, remains unscathed.

The Bulletin has always endeavoured to keep track of developments in the Study of Religion and related areas, and it is hoped that further information may be available for the next edition of the Bulletin.

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## **The Baha'is of Iran and Access to University Education**

While it is widely known that the Baha'is of Iran have been relentlessly persecuted in Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, it may be of interest to those associated with university education to have some details of one aspect of this persecution: the fact that for 26 years now, the Baha'is youth of Iran have been denied access to university education. Baha'is are denied this access purely because of their membership of the Baha'i community, which is the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, numbering some 300,000. The university authorities have made it clear that, if they were to recant their membership of the Baha'i community and become Muslims, they could be admitted to university. Baha'is will not, however, as a matter of principle, deny their faith, even for expediency's sake. Were they to do this and later to reassert their Baha'i identity, they would lay themselves open to the risk of being accused of apostasy – a crime that can attract the death penalty in Iran.

This denial of education has been particularly cruel to the members of a religion that emphasises in its teachings the importance of education in fostering the material, social and spiritual advancement of humanity and whose members prior to the Revolution had been among the best educated sectors of Iranian society, having been among the first to set up schools in Iran in the early twentieth century. The Baha'is, for example, had been able to announce in 1973 that they had eliminated illiteracy from the entire community, men, women and children, at a time when the literacy rate for women under 40 in Iran was 44% and even lower for the over 40s.

When the Baha'is attempted to mitigate the effects of their exclusion from university by creating their own underground higher education system in 1987 with some 900 students and 150 lecturers and instructors, the teachers of this system were repeatedly imprisoned and its equipment, books and records confiscated. In 2004, the Iranian examination authority perpetrated a cruel deception against young Baha'is by removing the need to specify one's religion on the university entrance examination forms. However, when the results of these examinations were released in August 2004, the Baha'i students found they had been falsely recorded as Muslims. The 800 or so young Baha'is who had passed the university entrance exam (some were close to the top of the league table of exam passes) refused to go along with this and were excluded from university.

The right to education is enshrined in a number of international covenants. Article 13(2)C of the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, to which Iran is a State Party, specifies that “...*higher education shall be made equally accessible to all...*”. Iran's denial of higher

education to Baha'ís is an aspect of the officially sanctioned and systematic persecution against the community. A “secret” government memorandum that surfaced in 1993 and was cited by the United Nations special rapporteur revealed that it was official government policy to block the “progress and development” of the community. Since the Iranian Revolutionary regime came to power in 1979, more than 200 Baha'ís have been killed, hundreds have been imprisoned, and thousands have had property or businesses confiscated, lost their jobs and/or had their pensions terminated. Many rural areas have been “religiously cleansed” of all their Baha'í inhabitants. Baha'í holy sites and cemeteries have been destroyed, and Baha'ís have been denied a host of other rights, ranging from freedom of movement to simple inheritance rights. (More information can be found at <http://denial.bahai.org>)

**Moojan Momen**

*Moojan Momen is a medical practitioner and freelance author who has published extensively on the Baha'í faith.*

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## **TURNING POINTS**

**by Jeaneane Fowler and Merv Fowler**

**John Koller, *The Indian Way***

It was the educationist R. S. Peters who once wrote that: “To be educated is not to arrive but to travel with a different point of view.” They are wise words; for life, it seems to me, is all about evolution of the self—not so much to an ultimate point, but as a continuum of positive changes until the end of life. A full and good life is replete with turning points: these are the times when something or someone alters the course we are taking and turns it in a different direction or endorses the first tentative steps on a new pathway. I have been fortunate to have had very significant turning points that have radically changed the course of my life.

I could well write about early turning points in terms of venturing into Old Testament study under the influence of such great books as John Bright's *A History of Israel* and Martin Noth's *The History of Israel*, which informed my early studies. However, after completing my doctorate on *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew*, only two days after finishing the work for publication I was offered a part-time lectureship and within a short time a full-time post as head of Religious Studies. Suddenly, I was faced with a new discipline, World Religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam,

alongside the more familiar Christianity. In the utmost honesty, I can say that I could have written *all* that I knew about the first four of these on the back of a postage stamp! To make matters worse, I discovered that the famous Owen Cole's daughter Eluned would be listening to my pearls of wisdom on Sikhism! At least I got to the point when I could say to Eluned: "Ring Dad tonight and ask him about  $x$  or  $y$  or  $z$ "! And not only was he supportive then, but he has continued to be right up to the present, advising me on many turning points in my academic life. However, a quarter of a century ago, I had to start again in my studies, turn to other cultures and teach other religions. To my surprise, it was in travelling through these areas that I found myself thoroughly at home for the first time.

It was certainly this massive turning point I had to make that clarified for me the fundamental aims that were to inform every jot of my academic life. I found it easy to write aims and objectives in those endless course documents we all despair of because I believed wholeheartedly that Religious Studies should be about opening students' minds to the wider canvas of varied responses to fundamental questions about life and the ways in which others live it. And it was a privilege to watch the changes and growth that took place in the social and psychological makeup of my students as much as the changes that were expected academically. Reaching out to other religious cultures (and even non-religious ones, since I included Humanism in the programme of studies) became exciting for them through participation in chanting at Buddhist centres, singing with the Sikhs at the *gurdwara* and sharing *langar* with them, performing *puja* in the Hindu temple in Bristol, my female students dressing in saris, and through other visits to churches, to synagogues and to mosques. This kind of practical, experiential learning paved the way for greater depth of study in an open, empathetic, yet academically critical way.

It is in the context of empathetic study that John Koller's *The Indian Way* must now be placed. For I know that if I were to ask students from the past for their choice of book that was for them a turning point, *The Indian Way* would surely be that choice. It was a very expensive book, but word about its intrinsic value spread quickly amongst the students so that all eventually bought it. Students who left normally sold their books to newcomers, but only on two occasions have I known students part with their copies. So what is it that made *The Indian Way* so popular? Pragmatically, its breadth of content—ancient India, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Indian philosophy are dealt with in great clarity without sacrificing depth. However, the greatest qualities of the book come from two aspects, it seems to me. The first is the book's underlying approaches and the impact that these had on my students. *The Indian Way* is written with great empathy and openness and each of its chapters reaches into the heart of the religion and is written

from that heart. Secondly, it has its own spirituality of expression: Koller simply puts things so well. On many occasions I had to criticize students for over quoting from *The Indian Way*, and their response was always that Koller put it so perfectly, how could they do anything else! And it is true: Koller writes with a deep, almost poetic sensitivity that touches the soul of the subject and the soul of the reader. For so many students *The Indian Way* served to foster the deeper understanding of other religions that promotes tolerance, empathy, enquiry and exploration that are essential ingredients in education, in journeying forward, and to travelling with different, and better, points of view. It helped to change the perspectives of life for many students.

These days I have been fortunate enough to have some contact with John Koller and have come to understand that not only is he a wonderful writer, but he is also a very warm person whom it is a privilege to know. My own turning points are continuing. I have now retired (well, almost!) and am still exploring other religions and cultures—presently in China and Japan—still searching for the answers others have to life's fundamental questions. But I have made conscious efforts to explore wider fields—watercolour paintings and voice training, for example. Such new pursuits ensure that I am never fully educated, only awaiting the next, and future, turning points.

**Jeaneane Fowler**

### **Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught***

Two ideas are psychologically deep-rooted in man: self-protection and self-preservation. For self-protection, man has created God, on whom he depends for his own protection, safety and security, just as a child depends on its parent. For self-preservation, man has conceived the idea of an immortal soul or *Atman*, which will live eternally ... These ideas are so deep-rooted in man, and so near and dear to him, that he does not wish to hear, nor does he want to understand, any teaching against them.

One Friday 13th, long ago, a fellow factory worker asked me to take his daughter to the dance. Suiting the action to the word, I made an immediate impact. Clearly, the young lady, whom I had not met previously, was deeply impressed by my erudition, which included my ability to recall the names of every world heavyweight champion from the days of John L. Sullivan. She instantly decided to call off the search. Fate took a hand. I took hers. I lost my job, took her advice and decided to study.

To this point, my reading had been restricted to tabloid sports' pages. Never having studied a book, I was blissfully unaware that *books can be wrong*, for how often had I been told, "I know it's right. I've seen it in black

and white”? Armed with this reassuring assertion, I took my first confident strides along the short path towards international stardom. It was comforting to learn that, for Christians, the absolute ethic is dependent on “love” though, in my ignorance, I couldn’t help wondering, “Then how can it be absolute”? Undaunted, I had the benefit of no less an authority than OED to thank for telling me that devotees of the faith of Islam should be referred to as Mohammedans.

A decade later, I emerged from a mist of ignorance with a Ph.D. in Old Testament study and a reading knowledge of Hebrew and Akkadian; the collective wisdom of my first university interview panel immediately identified me as being eminently qualified to lecture on Buddhism. I knew little of Indian religions but promised myself I soon would rectify this deficiency. Determined not to replicate my earlier mistakes, I resolved to read only the writings of eminent scholars. “What better”, I asked myself, “than the conclusions of professors of Comparative Religion”?

A slight unease pervaded this resolve, for I was unsure quite what *Comparative Religion* is. “If one compares religions”, I reasoned, “is there not a danger of losing sight of the grounds by which comparisons are being drawn”? My unease increased as I delved into what so-called experts conceived to be Buddhist thought. How *karma* can be said to be a system of reward and punishment when there is no creator God perplexed me. Nevertheless, I did know that the Buddhist term *nirvana* means “blowing out”. *Nirvana*, so I read repeatedly, is the “blowing out” of the person or soul. How *nirvana* can have this meaning when the Buddha, in his second sermon, taught that beings have no soul, was never clear to me. To my naïve way of thinking, any suggestion that a being with no soul can have the soul he never possessed “blown out” was linguistic nonsense.

These are but two examples among many of my lack of understanding, and I was becoming more and more disillusioned with the “light” being thrown on Buddhist studies by so-called experts. Just as I was beginning to despair of ever acquiring any meaningful knowledge of Buddhism, I came across not a modern “authority”, but a rather old book, *What the Buddha Taught* by Walpola Rahula. I was immediately reminded of the adage “The greatest truths are the simplest, and so are the greatest men”. Written in a style accessible to every reader, nowhere does the author seek to impress, preferring to record precisely the teachings of the Buddha, rather than interpretations others would wish to accord him.

Time and again, the author redresses generally held misconceptions; to his eternal credit, not once does he name the guilty parties. On *nirvana* alone he affirms that even great scholars have misunderstood the concept. *Nirvana* is never compared with a flame going out, nor is the Buddha ever said to have *entered into nirvana*. At no point can *nirvana* mean annihilation of the self,

since there is no self to annihilate. I soon recognized, with the benefit of Rahula's vision, that western writers who, in their misunderstanding, have taken *nirvana* to mean the cessation of life have caused endless confusion. They conclude (again quite erroneously) that Buddhism has an emphasis on suffering and that it seems to have a negative goal of extinction. *Nirvana* does mean "blowing out", but it has nothing to do with the cessation of life; what must be "blown out" are the three roots of evil – greed, anger and delusion. *Karma* has nothing whatever to do with reward and punishment, while one so-called expert, a professor of Comparative Religion no less, who had assured his readers that Ananda, the devoted attendant of the Buddha, was a layman and not a monk, was quite simply wrong.

The courage and conviction of the author are depicted in the words that head this paper. No praise is too high for a book (first published in 1959) that still appears on A Level student reading lists today, yet is being cited in 2006 by scholars of international standing. Reading this standard work was my turning point, and I shall always be indebted to Rahula; I am now and forever a student of Buddhism. My own understanding of Buddhism remains very limited, though, thanks to the inspiration of *What the Buddha Taught*, I have written two modest books on the subject. To my limited knowledge, no writer has ever compared Walpola Rahula with the Buddha. If I am right in this assumption, then I shall close this paper with just three words ... "More's the pity".

**Merv Fowler**

*Merv Fowler was Head of Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Newport, and Jeaneane Fowler taught in the same department until they both retired recently.*

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY BASR MEMBERS

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**GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS**

The Editor welcomes contributions on events and issues relating to the Study of Religion. The following guidelines on length should be observed.

Conference reports (short, one-day)	500-800 words
Reports on major conferences	1,000-1,500 words
Notices of forthcoming conferences	Not more than one page
Book reviews	500-800 words
Religious Studies in location	750-800 words
Research in progress	800-1,000 words
Turning Point	800-1,000 words
Tributes	normally 500 words

The Editor is pleased to advise, where necessary. The BASR Executive Committee particularly welcomes accounts of research in progress by post-graduate students, and articles describing RS at a particular location.

The *BASR Bulletin* will carry notices of relevant conferences and calls for papers (up to one page) free of charge. Preference is given to conferences where members may offer papers; other non-participatory conferences, which are more akin to courses, may be included if space permits.

Flyers may be sent out with the Bulletin, for a pre-paid charge of £50 each.