

In Praise of Peggy

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It is a great honour to contribute some words of congratulation on the occasion of Peggy's special Birthday. However, due to my ongoing illnesses I find it difficult at present to write a longer piece of reflection on a highly valued colleague and special friend of many years. Others will have written in greater detail about Peggy's many achievements and strengths, and the valuable contributions she has made over so many years to different aspects of Religious Studies, especially when she was teaching at the Westminster Institute which later became Oxford Brookes University. Equally valuable was her important work as Tutor for the Study of Religions at the Oxford Faculty of Theology and her work as Lecturer in the Study of Religions at Mansfield College, also in Oxford.

I cannot remember where and when Peggy and I first met. It seems a long, long time ago – not quite a life-time, but a large part of it. Peggy's name and some of her work were first mentioned to me when Michael Pye moved from the University of Lancaster to the University of Leeds, probably in 1972 or shortly afterwards. But I had little opportunity to meet her then and got to know her much better after she had moved with her family from Lancaster to Oxford, especially when she worked at the Westminster Institute. I also knew her name through the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) which she joined as an early member, as can be seen from its first Register of Members. Much of Peggy's interests and work have been concerned with world religions in education, especially in schools. Within her wide range of interests Buddhism has always had a special place and she has produced many valuable contributions to all these areas.

Just over fifty years ago British teachers and lecturers working on world religions met in Shap village in Cumbria, at the edge of the Lake District, where they founded the "Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education" which brought together school teachers and lecturers on world religions from colleges and universities all over the country. Neither Peggy nor I were there, but we joined quite soon afterwards and have been members ever since. Later regular meetings used to take place in London, usually

once a year, but the Jubilee Conference celebrating its 50 years of existence took place last year in the Shap Wells Hotel (11-12 April 2019). We have a wonderful photograph of all its participants standing at the front entrance with Peggy right in the centre – a suitable visual confirmation of the recognition given to her work by her colleagues, many of whom are good friends. All of these appreciate greatly the special gift Peggy has in linking people with each other, so that they can collaborate in many different ways.

Over the years Peggy also contributed much to the BASR as secretary and conference organiser and as Honorary President from 2000-2003. Following on from this she organised in 2004 the BASR's 50th Anniversary Conference in Oxford which will be remembered by many BASR members as a very happy special event. Other contributions to this Festschrift will reveal many different aspects of Peggy's rich experiences gathered during her long life. They show what a wonderful person and lovely friend she is whose special strength is her great capacity of putting people in touch with each other, so that they bond together and collaborate creatively with each other.

Let us celebrate and praise Peggy for her very special qualities and achievements, and may we continue to enjoy her friendship and presence for many years to come.