

**Information Network on Religious Movements**



# **Annual Report**

## **April 2015 – March 2016**

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Inform is a registered charity (No. 801729) and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (No. 2346855).

## Introduction

The year has been both productive and challenging for Inform. Its charitable objective of collecting, assessing and disseminating reliable information about minority religions was undoubtedly achieved, with, for the third year running, a slight increase in the number of direct applications for its services – and, as usual, Inform was able to help a wide range of enquirers and service users. The enquirers included government departments, the police, chaplains, members and former members of movements, their relatives, students, academics, journalists and programme makers as well as a variety of members of the public. Most of the enquiries came from the UK, but agencies and individuals from 43 other countries also made use of Inform's services and products.

However, as one of the casualties of the government's cutbacks, Inform has managed to achieve its objectives only by drawing on its financial reserves since April 2015. Not having secured further funding, the Board of Governors was forced to make the post of Director redundant in September 2015, with Professor Eileen Barker taking on the role of Acting Honorary Director. Since then, strenuous efforts have been under way to raise funds so that Inform can continue to meet the pressing demand for information about minority religions. The need for this information has rarely been stronger. The following cases illustrate just some of the important contributions that Inform has made during the year to improving public understanding of minority religions.

## Some major events

In January 2016, Aravindan Balakrishnan, a.k.a. Comrade Bala, was sentenced to 23 years in prison after being convicted of child cruelty, false imprisonment, four counts of rape, six counts of indecent assault and two counts of assault. Bala had established a political organisation in South London in the 1970s called the Workers' Institute of Marxism-Leninism-MaoZedong Thought. A small group of female followers remained living with him, as did his adult daughter, who had been 'imprisoned' within the home and had not known the truth about her parentage. The daughter, with two other members, had left the home in November 2013 with the help of an anti-slavery charity, after which Bala had been arrested. Inform became involved when the police asked for its expertise in the matter. Members of staff gave presentations on new religions and the social dynamics of charismatic leadership to officers and support workers involved in the case, and met with relatives of some of the victims. The case generated a number of further enquiries to Inform at the time of the court hearings in 2015, and at the time of sentencing in 2016. Amanda was interviewed on Sky News on the day of Bala's sentencing. She has since spoken to other journalists at Sky News, who became interested in the work of Inform.

Tensions between the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) and activist former members continued throughout the year, as did tensions between groups supporting and opposing the Dalai Lama and his position on practices relating to Shugden, a figure in the Tibetan pantheon. The Dalai Lama visited the UK on several occasions during 2015 and his public appearances were accompanied by vocal and well-organised protests coordinated by the International Shugden Community. Prior to the public events, Inform was asked for information explaining the background, and an assessment of the dynamics of the groups involved and of the likely behaviours of participants. The information was gratefully received and turned out to be essentially accurate. The protests against the Dalai Lama generated several media articles and a number of enquiries to Inform for further information about the groups involved.

Around this time, Inform became embroiled in a number of exchanges initiated by a freelance reporter using the pseudonym 'Indy Hack'. Indy Hack raised various issues both directly to Inform and also to various third parties, which again generated further enquiries about the New Kadampa Tradition, the International Shugden Community and the agendas of former-member enquirers who have contacted Inform. As a result, the NKT continued to be the group about which we received the greatest number of enquiries.

A proposed bill in Israel has become known as the 'Anti-Cult Law'. It was proposed by Orly Levy-Abekasis, a Knesset member of the Yisrael Beytenu party, and it received the support of the coalition government, passing its preliminary reading in the Knesset. The bill would create a legal definition of what constitutes a 'harmful cult', and allow the courts to jail 'cult leaders' for up to 10 years and seize their assets. There has been much criticism of the bill from the international academic community, who have pointed out that the definition of cult which the bill employs is inherently problematic, and could be applied to a broad range of religions and other groups, and that accusations of 'brainwashing', or loss of free will, are not accepted as meaningful concepts by the scientific community. Concerns have been voiced by others that the legislation is imprecise and could compromise religious freedoms, potentially allowing the government to crack down on any group of which it does not approve.

## Inform's Governors

### Kim Knott



Professor Kim Knott

At the September AGM the Governors welcomed onto the Board Professor Kim Knott of the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion at the University of Lancaster.

Kim has long had an interest in minority religions. Her PhD on ISKCON (the International Society for Krishna Consciousness) was published in 1986 by the Aquarian Press under the title *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna Movement*. Since then she has been active in numerous research projects.

She currently leads a programme of research in the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) focused on the transmission of ideas, beliefs and values in their social context. Her research interests include the theorization of space and place; the interrogation of religious and political spaces; spatial metaphors in religious and political discourse; the relationship between religion and non-religion; the 'secular sacred'; media representations of religion; and religion and its intersections with migration, diasporas, diversity and ethnicity.

In August 2015, Kim gave a keynote lecture, sponsored by the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), at the XXI Quinquennial World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Erfurt, Germany. It was titled 'Inside Out: The (in)visibility of religious communities in contemporary European societies'. She also organised a two-session panel on 'Iconic Religion in Public Space'.

Together with Matthew Francis she organised the following events as part of their Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded Global Uncertainties project:

- Stakeholder workshop, 'What have we learnt about radicalisation? RUSI, 1 July 2015. Chaired by Kim Knott, Amanda van Eckwas among the speakers. Briefings (audio and text) based on the presentations can be found on *Radicalisation Research.org*, <http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/debate/2015-radicalisation-briefings/>.
- 'What should schools do about radicalisation?', a public debate, co-organised with Westminster Faith Debates, RUSI, 1 July 2015. <http://faithdebates.org.uk/debates/what-should-schools-do-about-radicalisation/>.
- Roundtable on 'Foreign Fighters', Work Foundation, 2 July, 2015.
- Roundtable on 'Far Right Extremism', Work Foundation, 20 November 2015.
- Roundtable on 'Schools and Radicalisation', Work Foundation, 27 November 2015.

**Eileen Barker**, while still Chair of Inform's Board of Governors, took over responsibility as Acting Honorary Director, with the primary task of attempting to fundraise to secure Inform's future after the departure of Nick Parke in September. At the same time, she has been continuing her work researching, writing and lecturing about minority religions and related issues.

She also became a member of the Charity Commission's newly founded Association of Chairs and has attended a number of their meetings which have proved helpful for learning more about issues related to the charity sector.

## Staff

Following Nick Parke's departure, Amanda van Eck and Sibyl Macfarlane were the only salaried staff working full time, with Suzanne Newcombe, Sarah Harvey and Silke Steidinger all working part time.

**Sarah** had returned from maternity leave on 9 March 2015 to work two days a week. She has also returned to studying for her PhD in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Kent. Her PhD, 'The Work of Birth: Negotiating the Ideal and the Practical in Natural Birth Groups in the Contemporary UK' is due for submission in May 2017. She gave two talks based on her research:

- 'A Religious Studies Perspective on Natural Childbirth: A Global Ideal Versus An Individual Plan' at the British Association for the Study of Religion (BASR) Annual Conference, University of Kent, Canterbury, 7-9 September 2015.
- 'The Work of Birth: Negotiating the Ideal and the Practical in Natural Birth Groups in the Contemporary UK' at the Staff Research Seminar, Religious Studies Department, University of Kent, 9 March 2016.

**Suzanne** began working in June 2015 on a five-year project that will look at 1,000 years of overlap between the traditions of yoga, ayurveda and rasaśāstra (Indian alchemy and iatrochemistry). The work is part of the European Research Council Horizon 2020 project, Ayuryog (<http://www.ayuryog.org/>), with Inform as a partner organisation and Suzanne contracted to work 17.5 hours a week on Ayuryog, which has included her participation in the organising committee of an international yoga conference, 19-21 May 2016 at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland entitled "Yoga darśana, yoga sādhanā: traditions, transmissions, transformations".

At the same time, Suzanne continues as an Associate Lecturer with the Open University in London, teaching on A332: *Why is Religion Controversial?* and moderating the national student forum for this course. Furthermore, she continues to be the book reviews editor for the journal *Religions of South Asia*; and in March 2016, she became Educational Advisor for SAMM (Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements) at the Panacea Charitable Trust.

**Silke** continued working at Inform two days a week. She also works as a UKCP registered attachment-based psychoanalytic psychotherapist both in private practice and for two days a week at the NHS Personality Disorders Service in Tower Hamlets where she conducts group and individual therapy and clinical assessments for individuals diagnosed with personality disorders.

She has written a chapter entitled “Enlightened or Insane? The Unique Insights of Having a Sociologist Hat and a Psychotherapist Hat in the Field of New Religious Movements” for the forthcoming Inform/Ashgate/Routledge volume *Minority Religions and Counselling*.

### **Student placements**

- Jessica McCarthy, a Master’s student at King’s College, London, worked one day a week in the office from October 2014 until June 2015.
- Jasmiina Kauriola, a final-year undergraduate student at King’s College London, worked one day a week in the office from November 2014. On completing her degree, she left Inform for a paid internship at the think tank, Demos.
- Martyn Venskutonis, a graduate of King’s College London, has been working one day a week in the office since November 2014. He is now also working towards a legal degree.
- Emily Thomas, an undergraduate at the University of Birmingham, worked in the office for two weeks in May and June 2015.
- Debbie Elliot, a graduate from the University of Wales, began working one day a week in the office in June 2015.
- Megan Wright, a sixth former, underwent a week’s work experience in the office in June 2015.
- Dr Shanon Shah, a former PhD student at King’s College London, has been working one day a week in the office since September 2015. He also has a paid internship at the Templeton Foundation.
- Siyu Feng, an undergraduate student from Amherst College, USA, spending one term as an exchange student at SOAS, has been working two half-days a week at Inform since February 2016.

### **Enquiries**

Apart from the cases described above, Inform has received several enquiries about Osho-inspired groups that have given rise to a number of concerns, particularly about groups and networks that teach and practise versions of neo-Tantra. In two cases this has raised concerns about the well-being of children within households of practitioners, with fears that a sexualised home-culture might affect the children.

There have been enquiries about historical cases of abuse in a number of different groups, some of which were also involved in investigations as part of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This was established in 2013 by the Australian government to enquire into and report on responses by institutions

to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse in Australia in educational institutions, religious groups, sporting organisations, state institutions, and youth organisations. Some of the religious groups investigated have also been involved in court cases in the UK and the USA – namely the Watchtower Society and some Jewish schools (yeshivas).

The practices of some Jewish schools, in particular schools in predominantly Orthodox communities, have also been brought to our attention on several occasions. There have also been allegations reported in media that education in some schools is de-prioritised in view of religious teachings.

Several cases took a significant amount of time, with staff members relying on our international network of experts to help us to build a clearer picture of some of the groups about which we received enquiries. Examples are Universal Medicine, Awaken Radiant Sun, and the Genesis II Church.

Universal Medicine is an Esoteric group that works with Ascended Masters (also referred to as The Hierarchy), and is particularly influenced by the works of Alice Bailey. It was founded by Serge Benhayon and has its headquarters in Byron Bay, Australia. In the UK it runs courses at The Lighthouse, an esoteric training centre near Frome, Somerset, which was set up in 2007 as a permanent base for Universal Medicine teachings in the UK.

Awaken Radiant Sun is a 'New Age' counselling group led by a woman who previously went by the name Roshahne Ammariel but is currently known as Shekeira Shaozen (born in 1947). There are claims that, although not ostensibly religious or spiritual, counselling and courses can become focused over time on concepts of a higher power and the Ascended Beings.

Genesis II Church was founded and is led by Archbishop James (Jim) Humble. Humble claims he discovered that water purification tablets could cure malaria. The Church was founded in 2010 as a 'legal structure' through which Humble could share his discovery and provide the 'primary sacrament', Master Mineral Solution (MMS — until 2010 called Miracle Mineral Solution or Miracle Mineral Supplement). This is said to be a 'miracle cure'; it is comprised of a solution of 22.4% sodium chlorite dissolved in water that is then 'activated' by adding citric acid — which then creates chlorine dioxide (ClO<sub>2</sub>). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the UK Food Standards Agency both describe MMS as bleach, but Genesis II Church insists that MMS is not a bleach as the chlorine dioxide is too diluted.

## Some statistics

### Enquiries

In the period April 2015 to March 2016, Inform dealt with 322 enquiries concerning 86 different groups, which do not include either enquiries about groups we classified as 'unknown' (19 of which have since been, or are in the process of being, researched, classified and filed), or any of the 139 enquiries about 20 different general themes.

These figures represent a slight increase in enquiries since the period April 2014 to March 2015, when Inform dealt with 305 enquiries concerning some 83 different groups (as well as 10 enquiries about 'unknown' groups and 49 enquiries about general themes). These figures were themselves an increase compared to the period April 2013 to March 2014,

when Inform dealt with 296 enquiries concerning some 96 different groups (as well as 21 enquiries about 'unknown' groups and 19 enquiries about general themes).

It should be noted that the number of enquiries received about a particular group is merely a statistic relating to which groups are generating the most enquiries; it does not indicate either negative or positive evaluations.

The groups most enquired about during the period:

New Kadampa Tradition	39
Unification Church	9
Sikh groups	6
Jehovah's Witnesses	6
Gurdjieff	5
Yoga	4
Awaken Radiant Sun	4
Genesis II Church	3
Mohan Singh	3
Siloists	3
Witness Lee	3
Workers Institute	3

**Enquirers**

Inform responded to a wide range of enquirers, but it is clear the largest minority have come from government departments – in particular there was a significant number of enquiries from the newly developed Extremism Analysis Unit (EAU) within the Home Office, as well as the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Education. In comparison, last year 44 enquiries came from former members and 43 from government bodies; whereas, in 2013-4, heading the list were 49 enquiries from the media, followed by 43 from government bodies.

Enquiries between April 2015 and March 2016 were received from:

Government bodies	52
Ex-members	49
Media	48
Academics/writers	32
Relatives and friends	32
General public	25
Church network	21
Current members	20
'Cult watching groups'	16
Students	14

Enquiries were also received from educational institutions (5), prospective members (5), counsellors and therapists (3), a think tank/NGO (1) and a legal firm (1). As always, we received some enquiries from anonymous sources who were not willing to identify themselves (7).

The government enquiries can be further broken down into requests for information/analysis from the Department for Education (13), the Home Office (9), social

services and safeguarding teams (9) the Department for Communities and Local Government (8), the Metropolitan Police Service (4), local police forces (3), local government (2), as well as from probation services (1) and the Government Communications Headquarters (1). Two were from foreign governments.

The 43 international enquiries were received from the USA (12), Switzerland (6), Canada (3), Germany (3), Israel (3), Belgium (2), Malaysia (2), the Netherlands (2), Sweden (2), and one enquiry each from Australia, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Singapore, and the UAE.

## Speaking engagements

### Eileen Barker

#### Keynotes talks:

- University of Tartu: 'Boundary Construction, Maintenance and Change in NRMs'
- University of Tallinn (CESNUR): "... But the Greatest of These Is Charity.' An Exclusive Inducement to Religious Innovation?" – talk about the Charity case and the 'Exclusive Brethren'
- Beijing International Academic Symposium: 'Protection, Prevention and/or Post-Facto Penalty? Governmental Attitudes to Minority Religions'
- Wake Forest University, Greenboro, NC: 'Responses to Cults, Sects and/or New Religious Movements in Contemporary Democracies: Lecture in Honour of Professor James Dunn'

#### Talks at conferences:

- ICSA, Stockholm: 'The Role of the Second-Generation in Modifying High Control Groups'
- SISR, Louvain-la-Neuve: 'The Lord Provides in Many Ways: Diverse Approaches to Religious Economies in Contemporary Britain'
- SocRel, Hoddesdon: 'Non-religious new religious movements'
- Goldsmiths' College, London: 'NRMs that do not call themselves religious'
- IAHR, Erfurt: 'Revisionism in New Religions' (and organiser of two panels on the subject)
- BASR, University of Kent, Canterbury: 'Here, There and Anywhere? Migration and NRMs'
- AAR, Atlanta, GA: 'Method-illogical Limits to Social Enquiry'
- Yerevan: 'NRMs, the Changing Scene'
- Inform Seminar, LSE: 'New Religious Radicalisms'



Eileen at the Inform Seminar,  
October 2015

#### Invited talks to specialist groups:

- Hay-on-Wye Festival *How the Light Gets In*: 'Pagans in contemporary society'
- LSE Alumni, Brussels: 'Religious Extremism and secular responses'
- Confreres, London: 'Where have all the Cults Gone?'
- The Lighthouse, Tooting: 'Women in Contemporary Society'
- LSE General Course, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor: 'New Religions Today'

Eileen also made a number of media appearances on both radio and television.

## Amanda van Eck

- 'Beliefs in Possession; what exactly are we talking about?' at a Seriously Possessed event at Goldsmiths College
- British Sociological Association's conference, Glasgow: 'From Dartington Hall to Osho Ko Hsuan, the desire for alternative schooling continues'
- International Cultic Studies Association, Stockholm: 'What happened to the children? Mutual blaming and talking at cross purposes'
- International Society for the Sociology of Religion, Louvain-la-Neuve 'New possibilities for religious schools in England'
- British Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Study Group, Hoddesdon: 'Controversies and atrocity tales: can a cult change its spots?'
- Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall. 'Radicalisation: What have we learned? What should we do?'
- Salon event: 'Cults in the 1970s'
- British Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Study Group Response Day 'Educating Civil Servants for Religion and Diversity'



Amanda at Inform Seminar Oct 2015

She also participated in a round table event, The Role of Schools in Preventing Radicalisation, organised by Dr Mat Francis and Professor Kim Knott as part of the Global Uncertainties programme.

## Suzanne Newcombe

- Gave a talk to students at St Mary's School, Ascot.
- British Association for the Study of Religion (BASR) Annual Conference, University of Kent 'Yoga, Ayurveda and Immortality: The Case of Swami Ramdev'
- The Social Media, Religion and Political Violence Forum, Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, The Open University, London, 'Social Media and anti-Dalai Lama Protests'

## With Sarah Harvey

- The Panacea Charitable Trust and Queen's University Belfast, at the SAMP (Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements), Bedford 'Apocalyptic religions and gender – how far can we generalize?'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We4FWJw15uU&feature=youtu.be&list=PL-HZEE7zbEG-V14J2VTYZZonuF1VKlasi>

## George Chryssides

- International Academic Forum (IAFOR): Keynote address. 'Power, Empowerment and Disempowerment in Religion'
- CESNUR, Tallin University, Estonia, and British Association for the Study of Religions, University of Kent at Canterbury: 'A Scottish Vegetarian's View of Jehovah's Witnesses':
- Leeds Trinity University: Keynote address, 'The Ethics of Conversion'
- York St John University: 'The Role of Ethics in Fieldwork'

George is also on the Editorial Board of the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (de Gruyter), and has contributed several entries.

## James Beckford

- Sociology of Religion Study Group, Hertfordshire: keynote presentation 'Forty years on: the Study Group we've built'
- Japan Association for Religious Studies, in Hachioji City, Japan: keynote presentation, 'Sociological perspectives on religion and Religious Studies in the age of globalisation'

## Inform's visitors

Inform has welcomed many visitors to its office, ranging from academics, writers, researchers for media institutions and think tanks, to members and former members of religious movements, and more. We have had constructive discussions with several academics from the sociology department at Kingston University who have been developing a strong focus on the sociology of religion. We were also joined by a professor from Switzerland who regularly visits Inform with his students.

Inform has also met with some media representatives engaged in reporting on religious affairs, including Caroline Wyatt (the BBC religious affairs correspondent), Afua Hirsh (who has led on reports on the 'Comrade Bala' case for Sky News), Harriet Sherwood (the Guardian's religion correspondent) and Andrew Brown, who writes the *Guardian's* Religion blog. Inform also had extensive contact and meetings with Optomen TV, the company responsible for a two-part documentary titled 'Cults in Britain' shown on Channel 5 in August 2015. They had contacted Inform for much of the background research, contacts, and a 'talking head' for the final programme.

### Other visitors included:

- Professor Craig Calhoun, Director of the LSE.
- Rebecca Hardie, LSE's Faith Centre Coordinator.
- Leslie Jones, Deputy Director for Schools Organisation and Admissions.
- Paul Dalglish, Assistant Director for Faith Schools Policy, Department for Education.
- Dr Tristram Riley-Smith, University of Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy, Department of Politics and International Studies.
- Dr Catherine Fieschi, Founder and Executive Director of Counterpoint
- Dr Brian Grimm, President of the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.
- Sue Breeze, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon.
- Katherine Thane, Operations Director and Gurinder Singh Jhans, Events Manager and Researcher, All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- James Newell, Director - Kingston Smith Fundraising & Management, who has been helping Inform on a pro bono basis with funding applications.

## Mail-out

At the start of the new academic year, as in previous years, we distributed information about Inform with our *Searching?* poster to chaplains and Student Union welfare officers in all higher education institutions throughout Britain. The *Searching?* poster (which can be downloaded from our website <http://www.inform.ac/node/11>) alerts students to potential

problems and dangers related to new religious, spiritual and related groups and movements, encouraging the students to make informed decisions, and telling them where they might turn for information and help.

## Information resources

Throughout the year we updated and added to Inform's database. By the end of March 2016, our electronic database held information on 4,900 movements, groups and organisations; 132 new groups were added to the database during the period covered by this report, and countless others were updated by Inform staff and students during their placement with Inform.

Our library has also increased and, by the end of March 2016, our Endnote bibliographic database has a total of 22,100 entries, 10,049 of which are entries of publications located at Inform, including 1,605 books, 318 edited books and 4,331 journal articles. 6,158 entries refer to publications among those which, owing to lack of space in Inform's accommodation, are located at Professor Barker's house, including 1,609 books, 528 edited books and 2,125 journal articles. (There are thousands more books and articles that have yet to be entered in Endnote.)

## Research



Bernard talking to two Scientologists with the Manor House where L. Ron Hubbard lived for several years, in the background

One of Inform's Honorary Research Fellows, Dr Bernard Doherty, of Charles Sturt University in Australia, took advantage of attending a conference in Europe to visit Inform for a week. He was able to talk with the Management Committee over lunch and spent some time in the office, adding significantly to Inform's files and knowledge about several religious groups, especially those with branches in Australia. Eileen took him on a number of field visits, which included spending a day with the Church of Scientology at Saint Hill Manor,

East Grinstead and, together with Amanda, Sefton Park Focus school run by the Plymouth Brethren Christian Community at Stoke Poges, where he was invited to give the students a talk.

Eileen interviewed members and/or visited the following minority religions in the UK: The Ahmadiyya Baitul Futuh Mosque; the Brahma Kumaris; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons); the Church of Scientology; the Dialogue Society (Hizmet); The Family International; a Gurdjieff group; ISKCON; the Jesus Fellowship; the Plymouth Brethren Christian Community; three different Swaminarayan Mandirs; and a Sikh Gurdwara.



Bernard with Amanda, Eileen, and the Headmistress of Sefton Park Focus School

In China Eileen had meetings with former members of Falun Gong and local government officials; In the USA she visited another Swaminarayan temple, a Pagan community,

House of Oakspring; and a Tibetan monastery. In Berlin she visited the Church of Scientology and in Erfurt she had lunch with members of the Twelve Tribes Messianic community, whose children had been removed in a raid by the German government. In Israel she visited an Anthroposophy community, the Church of Scientology, a Unificationist, a Pagan gathering and a Jewish Messianic meeting. She spent a day in Tallinn, and another day in Copenhagen, with Unificationists.

Events Eileen attended that were related to minority religions included some at the British Academy; Chatham House; Church House; Conway Hall; the Council on Foreign Relations; DAIWA; the Foreign Policy Centre; Henry Jackson talks in Houses of Parliament; Justice; RAPT; the Royal Society; SOAS, St Paul's Cathedral; the Scientific and Medical Network; Theos; the University of Leicester (Religion in Schools conference); and several of the Westminster Faith talks.



Staff of Info-Secte, CIAOSN, and CIC with Eileen Barker and Amanda van Eck, 2016.

Amanda and Eileen attended a meeting in Brussels, hosted by the CIAOSN (*Le Centre d'information et d'avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles*) to meet with them, representatives of the Swiss CIC (*Centre Intercantonal d'Information sur les Croyances*) and the Canadian Info-Secte. This has now become a regular annual event. Initiated by Inform back in 2009, the meetings alternate between London, Geneva, Montreal and Brussels. Most frequently, for one

day the four 'cult-watching groups' get together in private to compare policies and discuss relevant issues, while a second day is spent either discussing a particular topic with representatives of about four minority religions who are invited to the host's offices, or visiting the religions in their own centres.

Amanda, along with colleagues (Liselotte Frisk and Sanja Nilssen from Sweden, and Torang Asadi from the USA), spent a few days with the Twelve Tribes at their farm in Devon. She later returned there for a day, with some follow-up questions. The Twelve Tribes, also known as the Messianic Communities, were



Amanda and Sanja at Stentwood Farm.

founded by Elbert Spriggs who had

previously been active in the Jesus Movement in California in the 1960s. The beliefs of the group are an interpretation



In the orchard at Stentwood Farm.

of first century Messianic Judaism. Each community tries to support itself through cottage industries, including restaurants, bakeries and furniture making. Children are home schooled within the communities, where there is a focus on practical education, and corporal punishment is advocated. Several communities in the USA and in Europe have been inspected, or in some cases raided, by authorities, over child welfare concerns.

Amanda and Suzanne used some of their previous research (Amanda's participation in the Bilderberg Fringe Festival two years ago, and Suzanne's ongoing research into protests against the Dalai Lama) to co-author a chapter about conspiracy theories that is now to be published as "Trust Me, You Can't Trust Them": Stigmatised Knowledge in Cults and Conspiracies" in Asbjørn Dyrendal, David Robertson and Egil Asprem (eds.) *Brill Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religion*. Suzanne used some of the



Protest against Dalai Lama, Aldershot, 2015

same research material (and Inform case studies) for another forthcoming paper: "Certain Beliefs and Uncertain Evidence – the Case of Shugden" in Matthew Francis and Kim Knott (eds.) *Minority Religions and Uncertainty*, which is part of the Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements. As part of this ongoing research, Suzanne and Nick observed the protest against the Dalai Lama's public talk in Aldershot in July 2015 and spoke with demonstrators who were handing out leaflets.

Suzanne attended a research weekend for the Ayuryog project, when she learned how to prepare rasahastra medicines, which involve the use of such metals as zinc and lead. She has also conducted four interviews relating to the Ayuryog project and attended several events relating to the Wellcome Museum's exhibition 'Body, Mind and Meditation in Tantric Buddhism: *Tibet's Secret Temple*' which included a practical 'introduction to Tibetan Yoga teachings' led by Akarpa Lobsang Rinpoche. She also attended several public lectures and 'Religion and the Global City', a one-day symposium, sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust, the Department of Religious Studies, and SSPSSR, University of Kent. She represented Inform at an event organised by the Institute for Public Policy Research and the 3 Faith Forum entitled "Education in a Diverse Britain".



Suzanne with Andrew Mason in Dorset

Amanda and Nick interviewed former members of a small church on two occasions in order to find out more about the internal dynamics of the congregation that has become controversial at a local level.

#### Further events attended by Inform staff:

- A meeting of the 'Godless congregation' Sunday Assembly at Conway Hall. (Sibyl)
- An All Faiths Network event at the House of Lords. (Suzanne)
- An event at the House of Commons on the subject of the radicalisation of youth. (Nick)
- A lecture by Professor Elizabeth Loftus: 'The Memory Factory' at Goldsmiths' College. (Amanda and Silke)
- A book launch at the ICSR in King's College London. (Nick)

- A day-long event on the subject of the death of Jeremiah Duggan and the LaRouche organisation. (Most of the Inform staff)
- The Centre for Inquiry UK Conference: 'Searching for Satan: Miscarriages of memory, fractured families and Satanic panics.' (Silke and Sibyl)
- An event entitled: 'Social Media, Religion and Political Violence' at the Open University. (Nick and Suzanne)
- The Westminster Faith Debate: 'What Should Schools Do About Radicalisation?' (Amanda and Nick)
- 'Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict: Global Summit One Year On' at the House of Lords. (Sibyl)
- 'London Thinks - What has Scientology got to Hide?' at the Conway Hall. (Sibyl)
- 'Children's burden or benefit?' at King's College, London. (Amanda)
- A book launch of Lois Lee's *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular* and Anna Strhan's *Aliens and Strangers? The Struggle for Coherence in the Everyday Lives of Evangelicals*. (Eileen and Amanda)
- A one day conference on witchcraft entitled Seriously Bewitched, organised by the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena, at Goldsmiths' College. (Sarah)
- A workshop, 'Brainwashing and Hidden Persuasion: Models of the mind and de-radicalisation', at Birkbeck College, organised by the Bridges Project, a collaboration between Counterpoint and the Open Society European Policy Institute. (Amanda and Eileen)
- Three days of the criminal trial of Aravindan Balakrishnan a.k.a. Comrade Bala at Southwark Crown Court when Balakrishnan was charged with 16 counts including rape, sexual assault, battery, child cruelty, and false imprisonment stemming from his alleged leadership of a "Brixton Maoist Slave Cult". (Sibyl)

## Publications by Inform staff and Governors

### Eileen Barker

- 2016: "From The Children of God to The Family International: A Story of Radical Christianity and Deradicalising Transformation" in Stephen Hunt (ed.) the *Handbook of Contemporary Christianity: Movements, Institutions & Allegiance*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 402-421.
- 2015: "Here, There and/or Anywhere? Minority Religions and their Migration In and Out of Britain." *Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities Anthropologica Culturalia* March, pp.18-30.
- 2016: "Freedom for Me and, Perhaps, You - But Surely Not Them? Attitudes to New Religions in Contemporary Democracies." in *Religious Pluralism: A Resource Book*, edited by Aurélia Bardon, Maria Birnbaum, Lois Lee, and Kristina Stoekl. San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, pp. 68-77.
- 2016: "Understanding the Religious Landscape: The Info-Secte/Info-Cult Perspective: An interview with Michael Kropveld." *World Religions and Spirituality Forum!* <http://www.wrs.vcu.edu/FORUM/Interview%20with%20Michael%20Kropveld.pdf>
- 2015: "'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law'" in *Freedom of Conscience and Religious Freedom* edited by Michaela Moravcikova, pp. 18-30.

### James A. Beckford

- 2015: Editor of *Migration and Religion*, 2 vols, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publications,
- 2015: (with Ilona C.M. Cairns) "Muslim prison chaplains in Canada and Britain", *The Sociological Review* 63(1):, pp. 36–56.

2015: "The sociology of religion. A modest social constructionist view." *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture* 39: 9-25. (Published separately in Japanese translation as 「宗教社会学. 控えめな社会構築主義の視点から」 南山宗教文化研究所 研究所報 第25号 年: 5-18). Translated by Masato KATO).

2015 : "'Community' in the sociology of religion: the case of Britain." *Social Compass* 62(2) 225-37.

2015: "Religious diversity and rehabilitation in prisons: management, models and mutation", pp. 15-30 in I. Becci & O. Roy (eds) *Religious Diversity in European Prisons*. Heidelberg: Springer.

2015: "Themes", in A. Day and M. Lövhheim (eds) *Modernities, Memory and Mutations. Grace Davie and the Study of Religion*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 9-12.



Alain Garay and Jim Beckford at Inform Seminar October 2016

### George Chryssides

2014/2016. With Zeller, Benjamin E. (eds.) *The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements*. London: Bloomsbury. ISBN: 978-1-4742-5644-5. (New paperback edition).

2015: "Conflicting expectations? Insider and outsider methods of studying Jehovah's Witnesses." *Diskus* 17(1): 14-22. Accessible online at [www.religiousstudiesproject.com/DISKUS/index.php/DISKUS/issue/view/10](http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/DISKUS/index.php/DISKUS/issue/view/10)

2015: "A Scottish Vegetarian's View of Jehovah's Witnesses". CESNUR Library Texts and Documents, Cyber-proceedings of International Conference organized by CESNUR, Tallin University, Estonia, 17-29. URL: [http://www.cesnur.org/2015/chryssides\\_tallinn\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cesnur.org/2015/chryssides_tallinn_2015.pdf)

2015: "Power, Empowerment and Disempowerment in Religion". IAFOR Keynote Series; ECERP2015 The Second European Conference on Ethics, Religion and Philosophy Brighton, UK. Accessible online at URL: <http://iafor.org/george-d-chryssides-powerempowerment-and-disempowerment-in-religion>

2015: Entries on "Hate, Hatred", "Head", "Healing Miracles", "Hearing/Listening", "Heaven's Gate", "Hell", "Heresy", "Hislop, Alexander" Vol.11, pp.402, 457-8, 493-4, 515-6, 595, 763-4, 861, 1115-6. *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter.

2016: *Jehovah's Witnesses: Continuity and Change*. Farnham: Ashgate. ISBN 978-1-4094-5608-7.

2016: "Conversion"; in Lewis, James R. and Tøllesfsen, Inga B. (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Volume II. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.25-25.

2016: "Jehovah's Witnesses: Anticipating Armageddon"; in Hunt, Stephen (ed.) *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity: Movements, Institutions, and Allegiance*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 422-440.

### Bernard Doherty

2016: with Janet Kahl "Channelling Mary in the New Age: The Magnificat Meal Movement." *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 7/2, 101-119.

2016: "Spies and Scientologists: ASIO and a controversial minority religion in Cold War Australia, 1956-83." *Intelligence and National Security*. Published electronically May 4, 2016. doi: 10.1080/02684527.2016.1175213

2016: "Why were Christians Persecuted?" In *The Rise of Christianity: History, Documents, and Key Questions*, edited by Kevin W. Kaatz, 165-168. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

- 2015: " 'Mourning the Death of Our Faith': The Little Pebble and the Marian Work of Atonement 1950-1984." *Journal of the Australia Catholic Historical Society* 36 (2015): 231–273.
- 2015: "The immolated victim: Traditionalist Roman Catholicism and Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ." *St Mark's Review* 234 77–101.
- 2015: "Cyril and Hypatia: Tracing the Contours of an Anti-Christian Myth." *Phronema* 30, 63–90.
- 2015: with Laura Dyason "The Modern Hydra: The Exclusive Brethren's online critics – A case study of cult awareness activism and community formation in cyberspace." *St Mark's Review* 233 116–134.
- 2015: "Colonial Justice or a Kangaroo Court? Public Controversy and the Church of Scientology in 1960s Australia." *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 69–49.

### Graham Harvey

- 2016: with Robert J., Wallis *Historical Dictionary of Shamanism*. 308pp. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. Second edition (2016) 366pp. Paperback edition (2010) entitled The A to Z of Shamanism
- 2016: "Paganism" in Linda Woodhead, Hiroko Kawanami, and Chris Partridge (eds) *Religions in the Modern World*, 3rd edition, Routledge, pp. 345-67.
- 2015: "Food, Sex and Spirituality" in Monica M. Emerich and Curtis Coats (eds) *Practical Spiritualities in a Media Age*. London: Bloomsbury. pp. 189-204.
- 2015: "Playing Croquet with Hedgehogs: (Still) Becoming a Scholar of Paganism and Animism", in Special Issue on Scholarly Biographies, *The Pomegranate: International Journal of Pagan Studies* 17.1-2: 99-114.
- 2015: "Religion and food, religions as foodways / Religião e Comida, religião como forma de alimentação", **Revista de Estudos da Religião (REVER) 15.1: 80-92.**  
<http://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/rever/article/view/23588> .
- 2015: "Shamanism and Possession" in Joseph P. Laycock (ed.) *Spirit Possession around the World: Possession, Communion, and Demon Expulsion across Cultures*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clío.

### Blogs:

- RS department blog: "How Indigenous festivals contribute to understanding ritual(s)":  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/religious-studies/?p=276>
- OpenLearn blog: "Hanukkah: a festival of lights" <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/religious-studies/hanukkah-festival-light>
- OpenLearn blog: "Why do we feast on so much chocolate at Easter?"  
<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/why-do-we-feast-on-so-much-chocolate-easter>
- RS department blog: "'So much universe, so little time': honouring Terry Pratchett"  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/religious-studies/?p=197>

### Kim Knott

- 2016: *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*, 131pp, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
- 2016: "Geographies of the Urban Sacred" in Susanne Lanwerd (ed.), *The Urban Sacred: How Religion Makes and Takes Place in Amsterdam*, Berlin and London, 51-57, Metropol Verlag.
- 2016: "How to study religion in the modern world", L Woodhead, K Kawanami and C Partridge, eds, *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, pp. 15-40, New York and London, Routledge, third edition.
- 2015: with Matthew Francis, "'Return? It never left.': exploring the 'sacred' as a resource for bridging the gap between the religious and the secular", Francis, M., Knott, K.,

Kutz, C., Riss, H., Roy, O. In: Religious norms in the public sphere. Florence, Italy: European University Institute pp. 48-57.

2015: with Manuel Vasquez, "Three dimensions of religious place-making in diaspora", Special Issue: The religious lives of migrant minorities: A multi-sited and transnational perspective", in James A. Beckford (ed.), *Religion and Migration*, vol. II, Cheltenham UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

2015: "Religion, Raum und Ort: Der *Spatial Turn* in der Religionsforschung", in Annette Wilke, Judith Stander and Martin Radermacher (eds), *103 Jahre Religionswissenschaft in Münster*, pp. 199-225, Münster: LIT Verlag.

2015: "Dewsbury case reminds us that we have much to learn about how extremism spreads", *The Conversation*, 15 June.

### **Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist**

2015: "On being a stranger in their midst" in *Diskus* special edition *Interrogating Integrity: Reflections on the Insider/Outsider Debate*. Vol. 17, No1, pp. 30-36

2015: with M. Francis, "Religious literacy, radicalisation and extremism" in Dinham, A. and M. Francis (Eds.) *Religious literacy in policy and practice*. Cambridge: Policy Press.

### **Suzanne Newcombe**

2015: Review of *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration* edited by Knut A. Jacobsen, in *The Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 30:1, 176-178.

2015: Review of *Pool of Life: The Autobiography of a Punjabi Agony Aunt*, by Kailash Puri and Eleanor Nesbitt, in *Religions of South Asia*, 9:1, 104-105.

### **The Ashgate / Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements**



Routledge stall at an Inform Seminar

Under Eileen's general editorship the series has continued to produce a regular output of edited volumes on issues related to minority religions. The original publisher, Ashgate, has now been taken over by Routledge, part of the Taylor and Francis Group, and the series is now advertised on their website (<https://www.routledge.com/series/AINFORM>). Eileen invited Josh Wells, the new contact at Routledge to lunch with Inform staff involved in the editing of volumes in the series, together with Beth Singler who is currently co-editing with Eileen a volume entitled *Radical Changes in Minority Religions*.

Two volumes based on papers presented at the Inform's International Anniversary Conference in 2014 and edited by Eugene V. Gallagher will be published in autumn 2016, entitled '*Cult Wars*' in *Historical Perspective*, and '*Visioning New and Minority Religions*'. A third volume based on the conference is currently being edited by George Chryssides, and a further volume *Fiction, Invention, and Hyper-reality: From Popular Culture to Religion* is being edited by Carole M. Cusack and Pavol Kosnác, Pavol being a former student placement with Inform. Sarah is continuing to assist Dr Hamish Cameron with a volume on counselling, and Kim Knott and Matthew Francis are continuing work on their volume about how minority religions deal with uncertainty.

## Inform Seminars

Having held a Seminar on *Innovation, Violence and Paralysis: How do Minority Religions Cope with Uncertainty?* unusually early in February 2015, there was only one Seminar to be covered in the present Report. This, the Inform Autumn Seminar, *Children, Minority Religions and the Law*, was held on Saturday 17 October 2015 in Clement House with over 85 attendees. Speakers included Jean Wiseman, a lawyer for the Twelve Tribes, Lorraine Derocher, from the Centre for Research on Children and Families at McGill University, and David Waldock, who shared his personal



Andrew Maguire and David Waldock at the Autumn Seminar



Inform Seminar October 2015

experiences of attending an Accelerated Christian Education school. Heiner Bielefeldt, the then United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, had agreed to introduce our seminar and give a talk based on the report he had been working on, about what religious freedom means for parents and children. However, the date coincided with the United Nations' annual meeting, where he was to present his report. Instead, he sent Inform another paper, which was read out by Professor James Beckford. The full programme is attached as Appendix II.

## The Future

Inform plans to continue its work of helping enquirers with reliable information and organising events that will contribute further to a greater understanding of minority religions. The next Spring Seminar, on 'New Religious Radicalisms' is in preparation for 21 May 2016. More edited volumes for the Inform series are in preparation and it is hoped that there will be 14 or 15 titles available by the end of 2016, with more in the pipeline.

We shall continue to collect and assess material about the minority religions to add to our unique collection of resources. At the same time, we recognise that we have to adapt to the financial situation and will devote considerable effort in ensuring we can secure a sustainable future for Inform.

Eileen Barker  
Chair of Inform's Board of Governors

# Appendix I

## Appendix I

### Patrons

The Right Reverend Graham James, Lord Bishop of Norwich (Church of England)  
The Reverend Michael Heaney, The Moderator of The Free Churches Group  
Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia (Greek Orthodox Church)  
Bishop Paul Hendricks, Nominee of the Westminster Roman Catholic Diocese  
Professor Lord Desai of St Clement Danes  
Lord Ahmed of Rotherham  
Baroness Sally Greengross of Notting Hill

### Board of Governors

Professor Eileen Barker, PhD, OBE, FBA (Chair), *Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology, London School of Economics and Political Science*  
Professor James Beckford, PhD, FBA (Vice-Chair), *Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick; Nominee of the British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group*  
Dr Hamish Cameron, MA, MB, BChir, FRCP, FRCPsych, DPM, *Former Consultant Child Psychiatrist at St George's Hospital, London & Cassel Hospital, Surrey*  
George D. Chryssides, DPhil; *Honorary Research Fellow in Contemporary Religion, University of Birmingham*  
Professor Conor Gearty, PhD, *Professor of Human Rights Law, London School of Economics*  
*The Reverend Canon Ralph Godsall, Priest Vicar of Westminster Abbey and Canon Emeritus of Rochester*  
Graham Harvey, PhD; *Reader in Religious Studies, Open University*  
Professor Kim Knott, PhD, *Professor of Religious and Secular Studies, Lancaster University (joined August 2015)*  
The Reverend Andrew Maguire, MA, BD (Treasurer), *Nominee of the Free Churches' Group; Superintendent Minister of the West Norfolk Methodist Circuit*  
Mr Jim McManus, *Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council (resigned January 2016)*  
Professor J. D. Y. Peel, PhD, FBA, *Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, School of Oriental and African Studies*  
Marat Shterin, PhD, *Department of Religious Studies, King's College London*  
Reverend Alan Walker, MA, MTh, LL.M., *Parish Priest*  
  
*Observer from the Church of England: Anne Richards, DPhil*

### Management Committee

Professor Eileen Barker, PhD, OBE, FBA  
Professor James Beckford, PhD, FBA (Chair)  
The Reverend Andrew Maguire, MA, BD

## **Staff**

Nick Parke, BA (Director) (*left September 2015*)

Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist, PhD (Deputy Director)

Suzanne Newcombe, PhD (Research Officer)

Sarah Jane Harvey, MSc (Research Officer)

Sibyl Macfarlane, MA (Administration Officer and Assistant Research Officer)

Silke Steidinger, MSc (Assistant Research Officer)

Honorary Research Fellow: Professor Eileen Barker, PhD, OBE, FBA

Honorary Research Fellow: Professor Jean La Fontaine, PhD

Honorary Research Fellow: Dr Bernard Doherty, PhD

University Liaison Officer: Marat Shterin, PhD

## Appendix II

### Children, Minority Religions, and the Law

Saturday 17 October 2015  
London School of Economics

9.30 - 10.00 REGISTRATION

10.00 - 10.15 **Eileen Barker** (Founder and Honorary Research Fellow, Inform) *Welcome*

10.15 - 10.40 **Amanda van Eck** (Deputy Director, Inform) *Introduction*

10.40 - 11.05 **Heiner Bielefeldt** (UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief)  
*Parental Rights as "Rights-in-Trust"? (read by Professor Jim Beckford)*

11.05 – 11.30 **Alain Garay** (Lawyer in Paris, France) *Children, Minority Religions and the European Court of Human Rights Case Laws*

11.30 – 11.55 TEA/COFFEE

11.55 – 12.20 **Jean Swantko Wiseman** (Twelve Tribes lawyer since 1983, USA)  
*Germany to Twelve Tribes Parents: You can Get Your Children Back if You Leave Twelve Tribes*

12.20 – 12.45 **Tony Brace** (Legal Department, Watch Tower Society) *Jehovah's Witnesses: Children, Blood Transfusions and the Law (Who Holds the Key or Controls the 'Flak Jacket'?)*

12.45 - 13.45 LUNCH

13.45 - 14.10 **Roger Kiska** (Senior Counsel, Deputy Director, ADF International) *Judicial Dogmatism: Home Education and the Rise of Humanist Statism in Europe*

14.10 - 14.35 **David Waldock** *Reflections on a Tennis Shoe*

14.35 - 15.00 TEA/COFFEE

15.00 - 15.25 **Anat Scolnicov** (University of Winchester) *Children, Family and Community - A Clash of Rights?*

15.25 – 15.50 **Lorraine Derocher** (Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for Research on Children and Families, McGill University) *The Application of the Youth Protection Act in Insular Religious Communities: A study about 5 groups in Quebec (Canada)*

15.50 – 16.30 GENERAL PANEL DISCUSSION