

The Shap working party on World Religions in Education



Peter Woodward



In September 1968 I left Nork Park bilateral school in Banstead and joined the five strong Divinity Department at Borough Road College of Education, Isleworth. Later that term Howard Marratt, my head of department, invited me to focus on Moral Education or World Religions with a view to developing a resource base for teachers in the chosen area. Moral Education, me? Most unlikely. So World Religions it was to be. And then there was a course the following April at a place called Shap that would open doors and windows into a world of which I knew far too little. I have vivid memories of listening to the wide-ranging team of speakers whose names we all know, along with others present such as Donald Butler, Riadh el Droubie, and Owen Cole (who took me for a walk in the snow, where we came across a dead lamb, a portent which we ignored!). From such beginnings what later developments grow!

Five years later I left Borough Road and moved to Birmingham. Shap's first overseas course was planned for January, 1974, and the Chief Education Officer supported my application to spend ten days in Istanbul, where Michael (Viscount) Combermere of the University of London and Mike Burrell of SOAS extra mural department were leading a Shap co-ordinated study of 'Islam in its Turkish context'. It was a rich feast of learning on location and finding insights and delight in such a fabulous city - a real high spot and an experience that stood me in good stead when, some years later, I found myself organising courses for teachers to Israel and Egypt.

What contribution have I made to Shap? A bit of everything, I suppose, since I have served in almost every position Shap offers, and have met and welcomed and encouraged so many members into the Working Party, helping them to find their own niche, as others have done for me. I suppose more than anything else I have combined secretarial duties, both early and late in Shap's history, with leading the different groups on three different Calendar occasions, spanning nearly thirty years, who have helped edit and distribute our treasury of Calendar materials - a privilege and a pleasure to work with each and all.

Peter Woodward