

# BRICUP Newsletter 41

BRICUP

British Committee for the  
Universities of Palestine

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[www.bricup.org.uk](http://www.bricup.org.uk)

[bricup@bricup.org.uk](mailto:bricup@bricup.org.uk)

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## BRICUP welcomes UCU congress votes.

BRICUP welcomes motions that were passed at the UCU Congress, held in Harrogate, May 28 – 30, 2011. These will give encouragement to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel.

The Higher Education Sector Conference passed a Motion from the University of Birmingham branch, concerned with ethical investment for the USS pension scheme, which mainly applies to staff in the pre-1992 university sector. While not naming any particular country or company, the motion mentions examples of unethical investments in the top 100 companies of the USS portfolio, including the arms industry. It instructed UCU's representatives on the USS board "to press for policies of ethical investment, including divestment from companies whose practices cannot be reformed because of the intrinsic nature of the companies' activities, and companies which refuse to reform their practices". The first step will be to campaign for UCU representation on the scheme's Investment Committee.

The full Congress of UCU later passed a number of motions which related in various ways to Palestine.

An emergency resolution condemning Israel's "administrative detention" of academic and writer Dr. Ahmad Qatamesh, in response to an urgent appeal by Amnesty International, was passed with no dissent. UCU's General Secretary Sally Hunt will now be raising the matter with the Israeli Embassy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Conference noted the recent moves in the Israeli Knesset to penalise Israeli academics who support

boycotts, and agreed to circulate both the call from Israeli academics to boycott cultural and academic activities in the settlements and the Palestinian call to boycott all Israeli cultural and academic institutions.

Opponents of the motion who suggested that such support for BDS would be illegal were told by the union's trustees that if this had been the case, Congress would have been informed.

Mike Cushman, who proposed the motion on behalf of the London School of Economics branch, said, "UCU has always supported academics under threat, no matter where in the world they are; Palestinian and Israeli academics are no exception." The motion, which was also supported by the National Executive, was overwhelmingly carried.

British academics were the focus of an emergency motion entitled, "In defence of academic freedom". Liverpool University was roundly denounced for withdrawing an entire course in the medical faculty because of a complaint made by a single student about a talk that described the medical situation in Palestine. (See the article on page 5)

The last day of Congress saw what was probably the liveliest debate on a motion related to Palestine and Israel. Motion 70 from the National Executive dissociated the union from the "so-called EUMC working definition of anti-semitism", expressing concern at its use in attempts to ban speakers and prevent free speech on campus. UCU will now "campaign for open debate on campus concerning Israel's past history and current policy, while continuing to combat all forms of racial and religious discrimination". Sue Blackwell moved the motion on behalf of the NEC: she said, "The EUMC definition was created by Zionist organisations in order to conflate anti-Zionism with anti-semitism. The people who defend its use want us to believe that any support for boycotts of Israel is anti-semitic. I am proud that UCU has become the first British trade union to speak out against this nonsense. This marks the beginning of the end for this pernicious definition."

Since Congress, Blogs and Twitter have been full of abuse of UCU as 'institutionally anti-Semitic' by enraged Israel supporters. There have been sane responses by [Tony Lerman](#), [Richard Kuper](#) and [Ben White](#).

See the BRICUP Website at [www.bricup.org.uk](http://www.bricup.org.uk) for the full press release and the following article by Sue Blackwell for a detailed discussion of the EUMC "working definition of anti-semitism".

## UCU rejects Zionist definition of anti-semitism

Once again, all hell has broken loose over a motion carried at UCU Congress. This time it does not directly concern BDS (although we did pass a motion supporting boycott of Ariel), but centres on the "EUMC definition of anti-semitism".

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) was a statutory body of the EU. It produced its "Working Definition of anti-Semitism" in 2004 and adopted it the following year.

The Definition has no official status, but this has not stopped it, as Richard Kuper puts it, from "taking on a life of its own". It has been adopted, for instance, by the OSCE and the US State Department. In the UK, an All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry into Anti-Semitism endorsed it uncritically. So did the UK National Union of Students, which at its annual conference in March 2007 voted to adopt the EUMC definition, amidst heated debate and "rowdy" behaviour. The contentious issue, as reported by the Guardian, was the definition's insistence that "such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity". The policy of endorsing the EUMC definition was reaffirmed at the 2010 NUS conference.

According to the definition, anti-semitism could manifest itself in "claiming that the State of Israel is a racist endeavour", or "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis".

This has serious implications for freedom of expression on university campuses, which is already under attack. In January 2010 Denis MacShane MP (who had chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry) attempted to have Palestinian academic Azzam Tamimi banned from speaking at Birmingham University. MacShane even raised the matter in Parliament. Fortunately he was unsuccessful: our Vice-Chancellor, to his credit, stood up for freedom of speech on campus and Tamimi spoke to a packed meeting at which he roundly denounced his detractors.

In May that year, the Birmingham University Guild of Students considered a motion mandating the President to reject an external speaker "if they have a history of Anti-Semitic language in line with the EUMC definition". In the end this clause was amended out, but the Guild still voted "to continue to use the EUMC Definition of Anti-Semitism to identify instances of Anti-Semitism on campus,

including in those situations where speakers with no history of racist remarks make an anti-Semitic statement on campus". It seems highly likely that sooner or later the definition will be relied on by the Guild in an attempt to ban a speaker on Israel and Palestine.

It is no coincidence that the definition is being used in this way: this was always the intention of the organisations involved in drafting it. These include the European Jewish Congress (EJC) and the American Jewish Committee which are both self-confessed lobby groups for Israel.

One of the EJC's recent statements "reiterates that the city of Jerusalem should remain unique, indivisible and unified": This is of course in conflict with numerous UN Security Council Resolutions, according to which East Jerusalem is illegally occupied.

In March 2010 the EJC expressed its "deep disappointment" that the European Parliament had endorsed the Goldstone Report on human rights violations during the Gaza conflict, despite the "intensive lobbying efforts" led by its President, who had travelled to Israel the previous week "to meet with foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman".

The American Jewish Committee has also spent a lot of energy on attacking the Goldstone report. Its specialist on anti-Semitism and extremism is author and attorney Kenneth Stern. According to Stern, "anti-Semitism has three overlapping strains: religious anti-Semitism, which is the oldest form, and which comes in both Christian and Muslim varieties; race-based anti-Semitism, which sees Jews not as a religion (from which one could conceivably convert) but as a race (from which one cannot); and politically-based anti-Semitism, otherwise known in recent years as anti-Zionism, which treats Israel as the classic Jew. Whereas the Jew is disqualified by anti-Semitism from equal membership in the social compact, anti-Semites seek to disqualify Israel from equal membership in the community of nations."

Stern complained that the EUMC's original definition failed to recognize this last aspect of anti-Semitism, and duly provided a revised version. He became, in effect, the main author of the definition.

Readers of this newsletter will not take long to realise that the accusation of "seeking to disqualify Israel from equal membership in the community of nations" can be applied to anyone advocating BDS.

The EUMC was replaced in 2007 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The FRA has stated that feedback on the document "drew attention to a number of issues"; that they "are

not aware of any public authority in the EU that applies it", and that they have "no plans for any further development" of it. The FRA's latest publication on anti-semitism does not even mention the "Working Definition". They seem to have dumped it; and quite right too.

In the debate at Congress, a couple of well-meaning speakers stated that they felt we should not ditch the definition simply because some organisations had "abused" it. I beg to differ. The definition has not been abused; it has been used precisely for the purpose it was created for. Despite its name, it did not originate in the EU but was created by an American pro-Israel organisation with the express purpose of undermining the BDS movement.

Richard Kuper, a former chair of Jews for Justice for Palestinians, puts it well:

"The strong fight-back by Israel and its supporters against the country's deteriorating public image has been sometimes crude, sometimes carefully pitched. The dissemination of a draft 'working definition' of anti-Semitism by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2005 has proven particularly effective. Inadequate as a definition and never formally adopted, it is not up for discussion by those who could change it. Yet it is increasingly presented today as the definition of anti-Semitism. It cannot bear this weight."

Fortunately, delegates at the UCU Congress agreed with him and voted overwhelmingly to dissociate the Union from the definition. This has led to howls of condemnation from the Jewish Leadership Council, "Engage", Denis MacShane and the Community Security Trust, to name but a few. We must have got something right!

Sue Blackwell

National Executive Committee member, UCU

### Links:

- (1) [Full text of the motion carried at congress](#)
- (2) [An academic paper by Willem Meijs and Sue Blackwell on definitions of anti-semitism](#)

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### The PACBI Column

## Hiding Behind Governments: Artists Undermining the Boycott of Israel

Even while many artists, musicians and cultural workers refuse to entertain apartheid Israel, there continues to be those who try to find currency to

circumvent the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement. Most recently, the Swedish pop music duo, Roxette, rejected PACBI's appeal to cancel a scheduled performance in Israel by hiding behind their government's lack of a position on the boycott, rather than challenging it.

We thought that Roxette's reason for breaking the Palestinian and international picket line was relatively instructive, as the group provides a twist on common excuses for not heeding the call to boycott Israel. Roxette have claimed that they usually choose "venues taking into account any sanctions or embargos from the United Nations or the Swedish government." Since no such sanctions exist, they feel they can perform in Israel, and have no obligation to respond to the Palestinian people's calls for boycott as a non-violent means to redress Israel's grave violations of human rights and international law.

PACBI believes that at its root, this reasoning negates the historic relationship between people and their states. People have always tended to be ahead of their governments when struggling for their freedom and rights or when standing in solidarity with oppressed communities elsewhere. Swedish civil society, especially trade unions and cultural figures, launched effective boycott campaigns in support of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa well ahead of their government and, in fact, played a key role in crystallizing the official position, which came later, in support of sanctions against the racist regime.

The fact is that the UN and world governments have failed to act to bring about an end to the Israeli occupation, to hold Israel accountable for denying Palestinian refugees their UN-sanctioned right to return to their lands from which they were ethnically cleansed, or to ensure Palestinian citizens of Israel equal rights. Neither the UN nor most governments feel compelled to change their policies without pressure from grassroots movements and people of conscience around the world.

In such moments, artists and cultural workers are asked to play a role in standing with people's movements and lend their social capital – their prestige, name, and position in society – to speak to power rather than take orders from it. Many have done exactly that. Most recently, Roger Waters endorsed BDS saying:

Where governments refuse to act people must, with whatever peaceful means are at their disposal. For me this means declaring an intention to stand in solidarity, not only with the people of Palestine but also with the many

thousands of Israelis who disagree with their government's policies, by joining the campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel. [1]

Indeed, if artists are to wait for UN policies to be formed rather than play a role in shaping them, then they forfeit their social responsibility and relegate their role to obeying government top-down decisions, rather than speaking truth to power.

When the BDS movement calls on artists and cultural workers to take a position so that this might pressure governments and the UN, the movement is essentially asking people to take a lead so that governments may follow. Imagine if artists and musicians had waited for their governments before taking a stand in other situations of entrenched oppression; where would South African freedom be today? During the South African apartheid-era boycotts, world governments -- and to a lesser extent the UN -- were considerably slower in declaring apartheid to be a crime, and to institute comprehensive boycotts. It was only decades after a grassroots movement had been formed, whereby many artists refused to perform for the apartheid regime, that world bodies joined the boycott call.

Rather than take their lead from governments or the UN, musicians such as Roxette should be listening to moral leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu who has been consistent on why a boycott of Israel is necessary [2]. Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, had this to recommend during a presentation to the UN General Assembly in October 2010:

The other recommendation that seems responsive to recent developments is to encourage UN support for both efforts to send humanitarian assistance direct to the people of Gaza in defiance of the persistence of the unlawful blockade and the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign that seeks to respond to the failure of Israel to uphold its obligations under international law with respect to the Palestinian people. The BDS campaign represents a recognition that neither governments nor the United Nations are prepared or able to uphold Palestinian rights. In this respect, it should be recalled that the anti-apartheid campaign of the late 1980s was strongly endorsed by the United Nations. [3]

In heeding the call of the BDS movement, the principle should be whether one considers this movement to be a progressive, peaceful people's effort to achieve freedom, justice and human rights and not whether an act conforms to UN policy, which in this case has yet to be formulated. A lack

of a UN sanctioned call for the boycott of Israel does not, after all, mean that such a policy will not be passed. As in South Africa, when governments and world bodies such as the UN fail to uphold the rights of people, it is for the people to make these institutions act in the interest of justice and universal human rights.

PACBI

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/11/cultural-boycott-west-bank-wall>

[2] <http://www.timeslive.co.za/world/article675369.ece/Israeli-ties--a-chance-to-do-the-right-thing>

[3] <http://electronicintifada.net/content/un-will-be-judged-whether-it-upholds-palestinian-rights/9099>

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**Liverpool Medical School suspends a lecture course under Israeli pressure.**

Liverpool University Medical School ran an optional “Healthy Inclusion” course that addressed social exclusion issues in health from a global, national and local perspective: the course was recognised nationally, and had been running for over three years. Why the past tense? Because the course was suspended in January when two Jewish students complained following a session on the living conditions of Palestinians in the West Bank. The University’s action gave rise to a highly critical motion that was passed at the UCU congress in May (see above).

It appears that a letter from the course organizer Dr Joseph O’Neill included the following. "The talk was a straightforward eye-witness account of day-to-day life in a West Bank village where the speaker lived last year, including giving an insight into the humiliations of occupation. These matters are the legitimate concern of the profession to which I belong."

The talk was also attended by Pat Revans, the facilitator of Friends of the Holy Land, and two colleagues, who “thoroughly appreciated the excellent handling of such a sensitive subject. It was sad to hear some of the factual observations, but they truly reflect on the issues in the area...we feel that the talk can be presented openly, anywhere, and we shall recommend it to our associates.”

Further detail was provided by an article in the Jewish Chronicle online, dated May 6, 2011. in which it was claimed that someone was handing out pamphlets that defended Palestinian suicide bombings" but Dr O'Neill in his letter makes it clear that 'the talk contained no reference to suicide bombers and there is no defence of suicide bombings in the 54 page booklet referred to (which was not “handed out”). The JC article reported that the PSC pamphlet contained a section entitled “Terrorism or Resistance” in which it was argued that Palestinians who turned themselves into human bombs were tragic and acting in “utter despair” responding to “servitude, expulsion or annihilation”. A copy of the pamphlet was handed to a university Jewish chaplain who is reported to have said, "I think there should be a serious legal examination of this leaflet and the organisation distributing it". The university told the rabbi that it sees no problem with the Palestinian side being heard in lectures because free speech is guaranteed: however, it must be balanced with the other side of the argument. But this is absurd: When the situation is as unbalanced as that between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people to impose BBC-style ‘balance’ is to distort the situation.

As my medical colleague, Dr Brian Robinson has written to the university, “no matter how many Israeli medical lecturers were brought in they could hardly deny the well documented and authenticated difficulties that Palestinians under occupation have in getting medical treatment, nor the shortages of medicines and equipment, to mention only a mere fraction of the problems. You will certainly have seen the reports in the Lancet from early 2009 e.g. <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2809%2960049-0/fulltext> and much more.”

No, what is needed here is relevance, objectivity, and accuracy, not balance. BRICUP urges the University of Liverpool Medical School to resist this attempt to prevent discussion of the plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. Preliminary indications are that the University will indeed restore the course, but now as a compulsory course for all medical students and will offer other speakers the opportunity to contribute alternative or additional information.

David E. Pegg

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## **New proposals for EU Research Funding - BRICUP and the Israeli Connection**

In February this year, the European Commission published a Green Paper containing proposals for a new [‘Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding’](#) to replace the Framework 7 Programme when it expires in 2013. The declared purpose of the proposals is to ‘make participation easier and to increase the scientific and economic impact of EU funding for research and innovation.’ However, campaigners for Palestinian rights, including BRICUP, have been told on good authority that the Commission is going to use this opportunity to extend EU research funding to explicitly military research for the first time.

In 1996, Israel became the first country outside the EU to be fully integrated into EU funding programmes for research. Today, the EU is second only to the Israeli Science Foundation itself as the top source of research funding for Israeli research and there currently are as many papers from the EU co-authored by Israeli scientists as there are with scientists from the US (1). Under the existing EU funding programmes (currently ‘Framework 7’), Israeli companies and institutions that are known to be actively complicit in Israel’s violations of International Law receive millions of euros of research funding from the EU, thereby breaking the EU’s own research guidelines which stipulate that projects must meet with ‘fundamental ethical principles’. Examples of companies that currently enjoy major funding from the EU taxpayer include Elbit Systems and Israeli Aerospace Systems, both of which have provided drones that were used against civilians in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead and provide surveillance systems for the Apartheid Wall and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which has expanded into the illegally Occupied Palestinian territories. All this makes the EU complicit in war crimes and the EU taxpayer an unwitting provider of financial support for the development and sale of instruments for the oppression of the Palestinian people.

BRICUP has therefore taken the opportunity of the Commission’s public consultation on the Green Paper to call on the EU to ensure that Israeli arms companies, and other companies complicit with Israeli violations of International Law, are excluded from EU funding opportunities. Our contribution to this public consultation, which takes the form of answers to an online EU questionnaire, is provided below. BRICUP will also be taking these arguments directly to the Commission in Brussels and to the European Parliament, which will have the authority

to accept or reject the Commission’s proposals later in the year.

This is the response from BRICUP to the Public Consultation on the EU Commission’s Green Paper on a new ‘Common Strategic Framework for the future of EU research and Innovation Funding’ Our answers to the online questionnaire are as follows:-.

### ***Question 7. What should be the measure of success for EU research and innovation funding? Which performance indicators could be used?***

The EU's own research guidelines stipulate that projects must meet fundamental ethical principles. The EU’s policy for the support of research must therefore, at the very minimum, be in compliance with international law. Evidence for the complete inadequacy of current procedures, and their enforcement, is found in the EU funding of organizations complicit in violations of international law and human rights; for example, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which has expanded in to the Occupied Territories, and the arms company Motorola. Motorola has developed a low proximity altitude fuse specifically to ‘dramatically increase weapon effectiveness against ‘soft and light targets’ (i.e., people). According to the Israeli press, Motorola’s wide area surveillance system (WASS) has been installed in 47 settlements, establishing it as a company complicit in the illegal colonization of Palestinian land. It is very likely that the WASS technology tested out in the Occupied Territories has been transferred to the EU’s iDetecT4All project, making the EU taxpayer an unwitting partner in the development of techniques of oppression.

The EU should develop guidelines and performance indicators which will ensure that EU taxpayer’s money does not find its way to organizations complicit in human rights abuses and international law violations. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011), which are based on the obligations of states to ‘respect protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms, emphasise the legal duty of businesses to respect human rights’. These will provide a valuable basis for performance indicators.

### ***Question 13. How could EU research and innovation activities attract greater interest and involvement of citizens and civil society?***

It may be stated, with complete certainty, that EU research cannot acquire the respect, interest and involvement of civil society if the EU does not adhere to international law in its funding policy. The EU continues to fund Israeli research in full knowledge of its exploitation by the state of Israel in

the oppression of the Palestinian people. The EU must therefore set up robust mechanisms for ensuring that all supported organizations respect human rights, and are not complicit in human rights abuses. At present such mechanisms are lacking and are widely abused, in particular by companies active in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In the case of Israel, the current EU policy is to turn a blind eye to transparent abuses. This must change.

***Question 21. How should the role of the European Research Council be strengthened in supporting world class excellence?***

World class excellence must not be pursued at the expense of the EU's founding principles of human rights, democracy and respect for international law. To do so will increasingly bring the EU into disrepute with international civil society and thereby reduce its ability to influence world events. The European Research Council must therefore be given a mandate to ensure that EU research funds are not allocated to any company or organization that violates these principles in any way.

***Question 26. How should international cooperation with non EU countries be supported e.g. in terms of priority areas of strategic interest, instruments, reciprocity (including IPR aspects) or cooperation with member states?***

Existing bilateral agreements between the EU and surrounding non EU countries (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia , Israel) all refer to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement (EUIAA) specifically states that 'relations between the parties, as well as the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement.' Compliance with human rights and democratic principles is therefore an essential requirement for international cooperation at government level with any non EU country. This requirement should be applied to Israel in particular in order to comply by the essential terms of the EUIAA.

***Question 27. Which key issues and obstacles concerning ERA should EU funding instruments seek to overcome , and which should be addressed by other (e.g, legislative) measures?***

A complex and intimate relationship between Israel and the EU has developed in the area of research and innovation through the operation of EU programmes. These have delivered thousands of euros from the EU taxpayer to Israeli companies and

institutions that are in continued defiance of human rights, while the state of Israel itself fails to comply with Article 2 of the EUIAA. Elbit Systems, for example, receives large sums of EU money despite its role in the supply of electronic equipment to the Apartheid Wall and drones used against civilians during Operation Cast Lead. It is of deep concern to BRICUP that Israeli universities are deeply complicit in many of these research programmes, which are aimed at the developing increasingly sophisticated instruments of oppression of the Palestinian people.

This profound contradiction between the EU's foundation principles, and the activities of the institutions and companies it funds, must be overcome. This can happen only by applying strict criteria to the companies and institutions themselves, and not simply to the projects in which they participate. Only then can European civil society be sure that EU tax revenue is not being diverted from peaceful objectives to the development of weapons and surveillance techniques for use against innocent civilians.

***Any Other Questions***

The European Security Research programme, has been allocated a budget of 1.4 billion euros for security research. This means that EU money is already being diverted towards the development of instruments of oppression and crimes against humanity, for example in the OPARUS programme, which concerns the development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), a technology used with devastating effect against Gazan civilians during Operation Cast Lead , and the surveillance technology developed in the iDetecT4ALL programme, used against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. It is therefore crucial that the new framework for EU funding after 2013 includes safeguards to ensure that these abuses of EU funding do not continue, and that the new Framework also includes effective safeguards to continue to exclude any projects involving military research and the development of new weapons. Only then can EU civil society be confident that their taxes are not being used for the human rights abuses and other criminal acts.

Monica Wusteman.

***References:-***

(1). 'Europe's Alliance with Israel' by David Cronin, Pub. Pluto Press, (2011) .

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## Financial support for BRICUP

BRICUP needs your financial support.

Arranging meetings and lobbying activities are expensive. We need funds to support visiting speakers, book rooms for public meetings, print leaflets and pay the whole range of expenses that a busy campaign demands.

Please do consider making a donation .

One-off donations may be made by sending a cheque to the Treasurer, at BRICUP, BM BRICUP, London, WC1N 3XX, UK or

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**BRICUP** is the **British Committee for the Universities of Palestine**. We are always willing to help provide speakers for meetings. All such requests and any comments or suggestions concerning this Newsletter are welcome.

Email them to: [newsletter@bricup.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bricup.org.uk)