

# LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

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Leicester Secular Society is a company limited by guarantee, Reg.No.06292639,  
with its registered office at the address above

The Oldest Secular Society in the World  
Formed in 1851

## AUTUMN NEWS 2007

### AUTUMN EVENTS PROGRAMME PUBLISHED

With apologies for its slightly delayed appearance, the Board is pleased to provide members with the Autumn events programme. Once again it offers a wide range of topics and events such that every member should find something of interest in it. Michael Gerard, Eleanor Davidson, Harry Perry and Dave Ray have all contributed ideas to the mix and now it just remains for you to make the most of it...

### THE SOCIETY IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE SOCIETY!

Following the unanimous vote in favour of the Society conversion to company status at the SGM on August 19th 2007, the final act in the conversion took place at the Committee/Board meeting on 13th September when the transfer agreement was signed. This means that the unincorporated society no longer exists and the Leicester Secular Society now exists as a company limited by guarantee. Under the Articles of Association the committee has been replaced by "the Board" and committee members by "Directors" but I rather think it will be a while before members' usage catches up with that change ... (Harry)

Please notify the Society of changes to contact details—thanks.

### Dave Ray says:

No rants today(!). I would like to canvas members as to their interest in a trip to Leek in Staffordshire where Larner Sugden the Architect of the Hall lived and designed many of the buildings. The man who gave the excellent lecture at last years Open Day has agreed in principle to lead us around. Several people have expressed interest already and it's something I'd like to do. I'm proposing we go in the late spring—May/June 2008. I think a charge would have to be made and the best plan to cover costs and hopefully contribute to the Soc's funds would be to issue tickets. If interested please use my work number (0116 6203072) to contact me and I will do all the organising. The answerphone is always on (unless I forget) and I do check it regularly...

### In the belly of the beast

Society member John Sargeant reports that he is about to fly out to Virginia in the USA to help Richard Dawkins at the Atheist Alliance International Conference (Sept 28 -30). He will be keeping a blog for interested people to follow his activities on:  
<http://homoeconomicusnet.wordpress.com/>

### The Simpsons

When the teacher announces that the day's topic is Hell, Bart is delighted. "All right! I've sat through Mercy and I sat through Forgiveness; finally we get to the good stuff!"

### THEY MUST BE KIDDING!

Apparently Royal Nepal Airlines had been having maintenance issues with one of their Boeing 757s recently so the Directors reviewed their options and decided there was only one thing for it - to sacrifice two young goats (one for each engine?) to the sky god, Akash Bhairab.

The goats had their throats cut in front of the recalcitrant aircraft in accordance with Hindu tradition. A senior official reported that the problem has now been cured but sceptical local newspapers reported that an electrical fault had been fixed. Spoilsports.

For your next flight over the Himalayas you might like to book on-line with this obviously enlightened company - but their website is as dead as those poor goats. Let's hope that Akash Bhairab enjoyed the spectacle.

### WIKIPEDIA ENTRY

If you're on the internet why not check out the new Wikipedia entry for Leicester Secular Society? You can open a Wikipedia account (free) and then you can add to or correct the entry as you please—but do remember it is supposed to be an encyclopaedia entry, not a promotional tool. Just let the facts speak for themselves.

Did you leave your umbrella in the Hall after the last IDEAS Group meeting? Contact Harry to retrieve it: 07795 097635

### **Buddhism Lectures**

The "Faith Awareness" group, to whom we gave lectures on Secular Humanism last year, are hosting a series of lectures by Buddhists this autumn, entitled "Understanding Buddhism". Monday evenings at 7.30 in a room attached to Christchurch on Clarendon Park Road (next to the Red Cross shop near the corner with Queen's Road). The November 19th meeting is a visit to the Buddhist Peace Pagoda in Milton Keynes. (Wilf)

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

This year's AGM, the first to be held under the new constitution, will be on Sunday December 16th at the Hall. A full package of paperwork will be sent out to all members in November, including a copy of the Memorandum & Articles, a membership card and various other documents. One of the most important changes under the new constitution will be that motions for debate, including any amendments to the M&As, and nominations for election of Directors, will have to be given to the Secretary, Harry Perry, at least 14 days before the AGM. This will allow them to be circulated to all members 7 days ahead of the AGM.

Why not start thinking now about any motions you'd like to propose at the AGM, and whether you would like to be nominated in the elections for the Board?

### **Poetry Corner**

#### **Sonnet to a Street Evangelist**

Sure? Mere mortal man, pray, why is it so  
That you are right, and have yourself no doubt,  
That of the gods their numbers all you know?  
And one to you has given that right to shout  
Out loud to those who pass you by – sincere,  
As you, believing other versions of the truth,  
If truth has place in all religion's sphere,  
For none, of truth, can furnish any proof.

Whose god is it who blesses on each side  
Those soon to kill the other for his cause?  
Does hate, not love, deep in religion hide,  
To fester all mankind with needless wars?  
Can ever peace, midst faiths' created hells,  
Stem needless tolls on life, and  
**deaths' dull funeral bells?**

Doug Kennett

#### **New Treasurer**

A hearty thank-you to John Catt of Loughborough for volunteering to take up the reins of Treasurer on Sid's retirement later this year.

#### **Fame Awaits ...**

If you would like to be a regular contributor to the Newsletter, just contact Harry and we'll work something out. (07795 097635 or [harry.perry1@btinternet.com](mailto:harry.perry1@btinternet.com))

### **The Secular Tourist (2) by Harry Perry**

By a strange coincidence this report, like Chris Williams', also tells of a trip to Norway. In Oslo, Jill and I visited Vigeland Park, where hundreds of sculptures by Gustav Vigeland (1869—1943) are sited.

Vigeland had a strict religious, presumably Lutheran, upbringing and he was later influenced, among others, by Auguste Rodin in Paris. His first notable works were religious figures in Trondheim Cathedral, but his later style was dramatically different. The Rough Guide suggests he was a humanist but I have yet to find any firm indications of his outlook later in life. What is indicative, however, is the content of the work located in Vigeland Park. He can hardly be said to have been a devout Christian of any colour! Dozens of sculptures of naked human beings of every age, depicted in every sort of pose (some in weird conjugations with lizard-like creatures) line a grand avenue leading toward a raised area and the piece de resistance, an obelisk of naked human forms clutching and climbing over each other. Elsewhere there are figures fighting, playing, crying and laughing - a true celebration of humanity in all its glory - by turns uplifting and depressing. His interest clearly centred on the intense emotional lives of human beings, especially between men and women and parents and children. The figures of lizards or dragons, some say, are representative of sin - but this may not be in the religious sense - the ambiguity of the symbolism is an enigma, at least to me!

If anyone knows more about Vigeland's philosophical views and how they informed the character of his later work I'd be very pleased to include a longer exposition in the next Newsletter ... and photos of some of the more intriguing sculptures.

Muslims look away now ...

