

# LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB  
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The Oldest Secular Society in the World  
Formed in 1851

## SUMMER NEWS 2007

### ABORTION

The abortion debate that many of us had thought settled in the UK continues to heat up. Last week the Vatican told Catholics to withdraw all support for Amnesty International because of its stance on abortion! AI was actually founded by a Catholic in 1961. The Committee has agreed that the Society should aim to stage a "big-name" public debate on abortion and possibly related issues of "sexual morality" in the Autumn programme.

### Society Incorporation Latest

Registration documents have been despatched to Companies House and the final step in the transition will be another Special General Meeting (sorry!) to confirm the formal transfer from unincorporated to incorporated society. This will probably happen on Sunday 19th August. Papers will be sent out at the appropriate time.

We are to return to the old practice of issuing membership cards and these will be issued along with the Rules immediately after the transfer is formalised. The logo and most other traditions will be maintained.

### Headstrong Session Sunday 24th June

The 6.30pm slot at the Hall on Sunday 24th June will be a "Headstrong" session for you to get on your soapbox, free that bee in your bonnet, pass judgement on 10 years of Tony Blair, or just heckle those who do. Come along for this opportunity to discuss a few of the topical issues that are exercising our minds at present. Feel free to prepare something if you wish.

### Sectarian Schools Debate

There has been an ongoing exchange of views on religious schools in the Leicester Mercury. Following a recent invitation to express views by the Mercury it was gratifying to see pro-faith views outnumbered by secular views by something like 7:1. Well done to members who helped express public concern at religious indoctrination in taxpayer funded schools.

### Roll of Honour

During the last twelve months the Society has bade farewell to long-time member Edith Hesselgreaves (21/05/1910 - 27/06/2006); supporter and past contributor to our Lecture Series Mark Plumb (18/02/1955 - 12/05/2007); friend of the Society Geoffrey Jackson (22/05/1911 - 19/04/2007); and member Brian Bilson (- 03/2007).

### Humanist Funeral Ceremonies

As a celebrant for the British Humanist Association and representative of the Society, I've been privileged to conduct funeral ceremonies celebrating the lives of many local secularists and others who chose to live their lives without religion.

Since 2005, several thousand people in the community have appreciated participation in Humanist funerals and have found comfort and inspiration in the tributes, music and poetry which are woven together to honour and celebrate a life. Some of these ceremonies have been for Christians, Jews and Hindus who wanted an inclusive secular ceremony without religious ritual.

I am thinking of organising a Memorial Service for families, friends and colleagues in honour of their loved ones. A large venue would be required, and I would welcome any suggestions.  
Eleanor Davidson

### **The Secular Tourist, by Chris Williams**

In May I found myself at a work-related conference in Norway, in the city of Trondheim. While I was thumbing through the tourist information brochure, I noticed that under the list of 'places of worship' was an entry for the Humanist building. So, the next morning I skipped some slightly boring sessions at the university, and went in search of the humanists. I found them in a tall wooden building by the docks. This doesn't really narrow things down in Trondheim, much of which is tall wooden buildings by the docks. In the building were Age (pronounced like 'Ogre', which is kind of cool) and Lise, who work there. Like us, Trondheim has the only secular building outside the capital. Unlike us, they've got a mass membership locally and nationally: secular humanism has always been strong in Norway. They use some of the building for meetings and office, and the rest they reserve for progressive organisations. Right now the other floors are occupied by the local branch of Amnesty International, the LGB centre, and a refugee and asylum-seeker support group. I learned that right now in Norway there's a government commission examining the establishment of the Lutheran church there - but the latest rumours are that this might come up with a recommendation that's no better than the status quo. It was good to see how other secularists were dealing with things in another country. Perhaps we ought to think about twinning ourselves with secular societies in other countries. But not Norway - the pubs, the place and the people are lovely, but the beer is eye-wateringly expensive.

### **Why not be a non-religious hospital visitor?**

As the (voluntary) Humanist/Non-Religious Pastoral Visitor for Leicester University Hospitals NHS Trust (Chaplaincy Department) I'd like to ask if any other LSS member would consider giving an hour or so a week to visit non-religious in-patients in either Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester General Hospital or Glenfield Hospital. You'd need to undertake a small amount of training and be prepared to work under the supervision of Head of Chaplaincy. Please contact me if interested and we'll discuss the way forward: Eleanor Davidson, 19 Hall Road, Leicester LE7 9SY Tel: 0116 292 964

### **IDEAS Group**

The next session of the IDEAS Group is at 7.30pm on **Thursday 21st June**, at the Hall. Simon Perry is to open a discussion entitled "Why I am a Capitalist". Should be fun.

Subsequent meetings will be held on the Thursday closest to the 20th of each month. Future topics will include Abortion, Socialism and Relativism.

### **British Humanist Invitation**

The BHA is setting up a local development project to train and enable local humanists to contribute to local government consultations and bodies discussing religious and belief issues. If you are interested in this work contact Pepper Harow at: [local@humanism.org.uk](mailto:local@humanism.org.uk) with your name, address and telephone number.

### **Open Day**

Last year we had a successful Open Day for the public to visit the Hall, hear about our activities and learn about our plans for the improvement of the building. We plan to repeat the exercise this year on **Sunday 9th September** from 10.00. Volunteers for the working group to plan the event would be very welcome—names to Allan Hayes please on 0116 241 8747.

### **Moving House?**

When moving please add the Society to your change of address cards mailing list.