

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB
Telephone: 0116 262 2250



The Oldest Secular Society in the World
Formed in 1851

(MORE) SUMMER NEWS 2007

OPEN DAY SEPTEMBER 9th!

The Annual Secular Hall Open Day is being held on Sunday September 9th. **Come and see what we have** from 10am onwards: Guided tours of the building; live music; displays of historic items; BBC DVD Secular Believers; conversation; refreshments; etc! **At 6.30pm:** there will be a talk by **Ned Newitt** on the history of the Society. This is part of a national English Heritage event. We get countrywide advertising and last year we had more visitors than any other open day in Leicester.

HELP IS NEEDED TOO — If you can then please attend a planning meeting on Wednesday 22nd August at 7.30pm at the Hall **or if you can't attend that:** offers of help to Allan Hayes 0116 241 8747 or email: hay@haystack.demon.co.uk. Thanks.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING AUGUST 19TH 2007

You should by now have received your formal Notice of the **Special General Meeting of the Society to be held at 6.30pm on Sunday 19th August 2007 at the Secular Hall.** This meeting will, if the resolution is approved, formally confirm the conversion of the Society into a company limited by guarantee. Subject to approval it is anticipated the final step will occur at a joint Committee/Board meeting on September 13th when the transfer agreement will be signed. This is, of course, all technicality and all the plans and policies of the Society will continue as now, with the same name, but just a different legal status.

ANNUAL REUNION OF THE KINDRED HUMANIST SOCIETIES

2.30pm Sunday 30th September 2007

Conway Hall, London

Keynote speech: **"Apostates, ex-Muslims and the challenge to political Islam"** by **Maryam**

Namazie, 2005 Secularist of the Year

Representatives of BHA, NSS, RA, GALHA, TPS, FHRG, and SAGB Music are participating.

Refreshments.

All Members and Friends are welcome.

The Simpsons

Marge is nagging Homer to get ready to go to church. Homer is reluctant ... "What if we chose the wrong religion? ... Every Sunday we're just making God madder and madder."

Non-religious hospital visiting

Thank you to the respondents to the last invitation — but there is a need for still more non-religious hospital visitors. Please contact me if interested and we'll discuss the way forward: Eleanor Davidson, 19 Hall Road, Leicester LE7 9SY Tel: 0116 292 1964

Guardian writer Polly Toynbee is the new President of the British Humanist Association following the death last year of the former President, comedian Linda Smith.

Guided Watermead Park Nature Ramble and Social

Free to Members

Saturday September 1st at 2pm sharp. Book the ramble with Eleanor on 0116 292 1964. This is to be led by a Watermead Country Park Ranger who knows his stuff. Non-members £2. Assemble from 1pm at the Watermead Country Park car park off Wanlip Road, Syston.

Afterwards, join the fun (everyone, members and friends) at a social at Dave Ray's house at 8 Victoria Street, Thurmaston LE4 8GG. This will probably kick off some time after 5pm. Bring food and drink.

Stop Sectarian Schools

Allan Hayes asks if you have yet signed the on-line petition against more faith schools?

Go to:

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/endfaithschools/>

To borrow books from our 1,000 volume library just attend any Society meeting at the Hall and ask one of the officers to sort it out. The library catalogue can be viewed on line at www.leicestersecularsociety.org.uk/library.htm (or hard copy in the left hand book cabinet).

Committee Debate on Dialogue With Believers

It's not often that the Committee debates an issue with a view to adopting a specific position but at its last meeting a discussion and vote was held on the subject of whether or not the Society should include in its events programme joint meetings with religious organisations - like the meetings with Christians Aware held earlier this year. Every member at the well-attended meeting took part in the frank but thoughtful discussion - which is briefly summarised below:

Proponents of joint meetings argued that dialogue with opponents is at the heart of a rational secular approach to dealing with issues and differences. Disagreement can be expressed forcefully and in the process we may win allies on particular issues. Talking only to the like-minded places us outside the rough and tumble of current community debate and makes it easier for religious organisations in dominant cultural positions to sideline us and make us irrelevant. In joint meetings we are much more likely to win people over to our rationalist secular views than vice versa.

Opponents argued that while it is true we must engage more with the community, getting our message across to the widest circle of people, we must beware of the trap of being used as a fig-leaf to validate claims by religionists that they are inclusive and liberal. They are anything but. The Society was founded to combat religion, and to have its facilities provide a platform for religionists was a betrayal of the scientific enlightenment. So while it is all right to invite them along to particular events to hear their point of view, particularly when we want to achieve unity for a secular objective, we should not confuse the public's perception of the Society by organising joint meetings with them.

After much debate a vote was held and it was agreed (7 for, 2 against, 1 abstention) to meet with Christians Aware again to agree some joint events next Spring to look at the issue of faith schools.

Secularisation of Marriage

The Office of National Statistics reported in June that in 2005, for the first time ever, the number of marriages taking place in non-religious venues exceeded those taking place in religious venues by 88,710 to 84,400.

IDEAS Group—Abortion

The next session of the IDEAS Group is at 7.30pm on **Thursday 23rd August**, at the Secular Hall. Jill Perry is to open the discussion on "Abortion - what really are the issues?" Women members particularly welcome.

Rambling Man, and Woman, but not dog

Saturday 22nd September 2pm, Ramble beginning at the church at Houghton-on-the-Hill (A47). Terry Bates, Chair of the Leicester & District Group of the Ramblers Association, has invited members of Leicester Secular Society to join a walk he is leading on the afternoon of Saturday 22nd September. The ramble starts at 2pm at the church at Houghton-on-the-Hill, and will be about 4-5 miles. Bring something to eat / drink if you wish but not a dog. Let's try to get a good turnout - maybe this could lead to more joint activities in future!

Interim Chairperson

At the first meeting of the Directors of the company limited by guarantee, the Directors elected Eleanor Davidson as the Interim Chairperson to chair the company until the first Annual General Meeting later in the year. Lyn Hurst transfers to the company as Interim President until the same meeting when both will retire and elections will be held for both posts. All other posts are as reported in the table sent out with the Notice of the SGM, save that of Treasurer, on which see the item below.

New Treasurer Needed

Regrettably our Treasurer, Sid Sherriff, who now lives over in Shropshire, has had to resign for personal reasons. He has promised to carry on until the company is established but we now need to co-opt a member with some book-keeping knowledge to hold the fort until the AGM. The duties are to keep the books tidy, to pay invoices, send out subs reminders and to report the financial situation quarterly to the Board of Directors. If you think you can help please contact Harry Perry on 01455 823570. We owe a debt of thanks to Sid for doing the job so well for so long and I'm sure all members will join with the Committee in saying thank you to him. Thanks Sid!

Eleanor Davidson and Chris Williams will represent the Society at an "Inter-Cultural Social Evening" hosted by Leicestershire Constabulary on 3rd September.