



# The Leicester Secularist

Journal of Leicester Secular Society

August 2010

No. 20



## How can we support the Lord Mayor's Forget-Me-Not Appeal?

The Forget-Me-Not Appeal is raising funds to create a national centre of excellence for dementia care in Leicester Hospitals. It will be a 'home from home' retreat for people with dementia who need temporary admission as inpatients, replacing the usual hospital-style ward. Disorientation in unfamiliar surroundings is one of the many difficulties associated with dementia and so this home-from-home approach will be ideal for people with dementia.

Leicester Hospitals Charity, which is co-ordinating the appeal, has put together a short video: you can view it at [www.sounddelivery.org.uk/leicester-hospitals-forget-me-not-appeal/](http://www.sounddelivery.org.uk/leicester-hospitals-forget-me-not-appeal/). Don't be alarmed by the first statistic they give: one in three people *over the age of 95* will experience dementia; over the age of 80 it's nearly one in five. But it's true that there are over 700,000 people with dementia in the UK now, and in 30 years' time that figure will double. There's an increasing number of younger people (under 65) developing dementia too, and no one knows why.

The plans for the centre for dementia care look excellent. It will provide:

- A specially designed ward that caters for the particular needs of patients with dementia
- A secure and pleasant sensory garden to encourage patients to move freely outdoors whilst still being cared for and properly supervised

- Enhanced training and awareness of dementia for all staff in Leicester Hospitals
- Information for families, carers and care home managers to better support people living with dementia in Leicester.

The third point in the Forget-Me-Not plan is music to my ears - more and better training for hospital staff nursing people with dementia. In my work for the Alzheimer's Society (in Warwickshire) over the past three or more years I have heard countless stories of people with dementia being admitted to acute wards, perhaps as a result of a fall or an infection, and receiving abysmal care because in my experience the generality of nursing staff have little or no understanding of dementia and of how to care for people with this difficult and cruel disability. I have talked to carers who describe their husband or wife as quickly having aged ten years, a few weeks in hospital having pushed them into the later stages of dementia.

So what can each of us do to support the Forget-Me-Not Appeal? I am about to embark on my post-retirement career as a dementia trainer (I'm an Approved Trainer for the Alzheimer's Society) and I'd like to set the ball rolling by committing to making a donation to the appeal for each day's training I deliver - it will be mainly to carers working in care homes where many of you will be aware standards and understanding are often dire.

What will you commit to? I'm sure every one of us has a skill which could raise money, be it practical, creative or what-you-will. Maybe someone could organise a fundraising charity meal at a local restaurant? Or some kind of sponsorship event?

And what can the Board think of?

Jill Perry

To donate on line, with a message, visit:

[justgiving.co.uk/forget-me-not-appeal](http://justgiving.co.uk/forget-me-not-appeal) or call 0116 258 8709 to make a donation by telephone.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday 17th August, 7.30pm, Square Bar, Hotel Street:** Skeptics in the Pub. Martin Robbins talks about **Bad Science in the Developing World**.

**Wednesday 25th August, 7pm - 9pm, Friends Meeting House, Queen's Road: Leicester City of Sanctuary AGM.** Includes talks by asylum seekers of their personal experiences of CoS. All welcome.

**Sunday 5th September, 6.30pm, Secular Hall: TBA.**

**Sunday 12th September, 11am - 6pm, Secular Hall: English Heritage Open Day.**

**Sunday 12th September, 6.30pm, Secular Hall: Secularism - The Way Ahead.** Allan Hayes.

**Sunday 19th September, 6.30pm, Secular Hall: An Evening With(out) Pat Condell.** Ted Hankin will introduce extracts from a DVD by the militant atheist Pat Condell.

**Sunday 26th September, 6.30pm, Secular Hall: An Evening With the Lord and Lady Mayoress.** Colin Hall and Eleanor Davidson.

### Steady Progress

Things seem to be calming down after the shock of cancellation of prayers before Council meetings and differences over the Civic Service. But it is important that the issues raised be kept alive and that something be done about them so that we will have achieved something lasting at the end of the year.

The idea of a celebration of the city as the principal event on the election of a Lord Mayor has met with approval whenever I have raised it, but the Council needs to be engaged and planning started if it is to be realised. We are preparing a petition to Council and will be promoting the idea in the media.

Work is also in progress on what should be done about Council prayers – a standing policy of not having them or having a non-religious replacement; and the chaplaincy needs to be looked at – should it continue but in a non-religious form?

I hope that the correspondence in the *Mercury* over the nature of the secular state involving Fr Pereira, Prior of Holy Cross, and, in a more oblique way, Bishop Tim, will continue – that such a state is to the benefit of all needs to be got across, and we need to keep on insisting on the rights of the non-religious. You can read the *Mercury* letters section on line at: [www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk/letters](http://www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk/letters).

Entering a term in the search box at top right will give material by or referring to that term.

More pressingly, but related, we need to step up our warnings of the real danger of a slide to a divisive patchwork of faith schools encouraged by the government's policy on academies and free schools.

I continue to be on the lookout for ways of enlarging the understanding of secularism and gaining support. Being chaplain is a big help in this, and in an hour I shall be off to the last day of the annual Sea of Faith conference at Leicester University's Gilbert Murray Hall. This has been a particularly helpful meeting for secularism, with Maryam Namazie, spokesperson for the Council of ex-Muslims of Britain, the One Law for All Campaign and Iran Solidarity speaking against Sharia and philosopher Julian Baggini on 'Renewing Secularism'. The title Sea of Faith is tricky – it refers to the tide of faith going out. The objective of regarding religion as a human creation is quietly subversive.

Lastly: I shall be giving an eight-session WEA course, Humanism and Secularism in a Diverse City, beginning 21st September at Vaughan College.

Allan Hayes, President



### Lack of Disabled Toilets

I have communicated with the President (Allan Hayes) regarding the above subject. On Wednesday 21st July at his invitation I attended a Board meeting.

My concern is with the fact that in the 21st century the Secular Hall is totally not disabled friendly. Indeed, when mentioned at Leicester and District TUC about holding meetings in the city and the Secular Hall is mentioned I utter the following three words: 'Not disabled friendly'.

The Society needs to get a grip on the situation. The Hall may have been built in the 19th century but we are now in the 21st century.

The construction and installation of a disabled toilet is a No.1 priority. Everything else - lifts, refurbishment, modernisation, etc. comes, 2nd, 3rd, 4th ...

In 1999 I suggested that the Society buy badges commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Society (1851-2001) and then add £2 - £3 on to the sale price i.e. make some money. No interest was shown. Why? Money does not grow on trees. Disabled toilets cannot be installed at the wave of a magic wand! Positive action and leadership must come from the top (i.e. the President). It's a case of 'all hands to the pumps'!!

Hands that help are better than lips that pray—or minds that dream!

Your Secular Hall needs you.

Paul Southwood

VP and Disability Officer, Leicester District TUC

### Brian Humpherson Sextet Playing at The Sec

Last year we had this wonderful ensemble performing music for midsummer and on 20<sup>th</sup> June they came again. This time they had a new singer, Nicole, who comes from Amsterdam to sing with this wondrous ensemble and has a voice as large as a river over which she has wonderful control – she delivers standard songs in a way that makes you feel them.

This is where the jazz comes in. It matters not if the melodies are standards. It is what the ensemble do with them in their solos that matters. Brian's sextet produced streams of glorious notes – even the drum solos were musical; but then their drummer plays with some big names in rock and jazz when he is not doing what he seems to like best: making music with Brian.

This was a concert for people who enjoy music to savour and remember. Leicester has a first-class jazz ensemble here and we should appreciate this fact.

Michael Gerard



## Philosophic Consequences

(or Sodom and Gomorrah)

Secular-Humanist philosophy

Thinks an afterlife's highly unlikely:

So questions most modes of theosophy,

And takes ethical stances more lightly.

By eternity's laws disencumbered

Let's our view shift to the life we have here:

That the days we have left are now numbered,

So let freedom and joy reappear.

Humanity's rights are now centre stage,

The Golden Rule's ideals shine brightly forth,

Unwarranted guilt's forever assuaged,

Our morality's reasonably sourced.

Let everyone then, before the final end,

Enjoy those things formerly condemned.

Wilf Gaunt

### Scepticism is the Best Policy

A young man at the end of his tether went into a pub and started drinking heavily. He was noticed by a withered old woman at the other end of the bar. She went up to him and said, 'What's the trouble, young man?'

He looked at the old hag before him and said, 'Well, Ma'am, I've just lost all my money in a card game, and now I've got to go home and tell my fiancée that we can't get married.'

The old lady said, 'Well, you're in luck! I'm a witch, and if you sleep with me, I can make a million pounds appear in your bank account in the blink of an eye!'

The young man eyed the old woman apprehensively. She was hideous, covered in spots and warts and wrinkles and random hairs. But the man was desperate, and so he agreed.

They went back to the woman's house and made vigorous love for hours. On waking the next morning the young man asked, 'So, is the money already there, or do you have to do a spell now?'

'Tell me something, sweetheart', the old lady said as she lit a cigarette, 'aren't you a little too old to believe in witches?'



### Oxford Trip Success

A full coachload of members and friends enjoyed their day trip to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford on 19th July. After viewing exhibits in the museum many went off to explore the city and colleges independently.

### In relation to the Civic Service ...

It seems to me that the Bishop is saying 'It does not matter what you believe in as long as you turn up and pretend you believe in my religion, others have and do.' I must go now to find my dictionary to look up the meaning of 'hypocrisy'.

Gordon Goode.



In late June the Board organised a petition to the Council calling for the annual Civic Mayor-Making Ceremony to be a non-sectarian event



### New Memorial to Tom Paine

Over the weekend of 3rd/4th July I visited Lewes on two occasions. The first was to join a group from Berkshire Humanists to visit Bull House, where Tom Paine lived for six years (1768 - 1774) before emigrating to the American colonies, and to hear a talk on Paine from local author David Powell.

At the meeting I learned that there was to be another event the next day (4th July, US Independence Day) when a new memorial to Tom Paine by local sculptor Marcus Cornish was to be unveiled by Tony Benn. There is a fuller report with other photos on a page of my website:

[http://www.mayhematics.com/r/paine\\_lewes.htm](http://www.mayhematics.com/r/paine_lewes.htm)

The sculpture appears to represent something like Tom Paine emerging from obscurity to fame, or notoriety.

George Jelliss (Photos: George Jelliss)



A big crowd turned out for the unveiling





## Library News

The big news is, of course, the incredibly generous donation of 250 books from a member of the Cornwall Humanists Group, who has run a Humanist Book Service for many years, which she is now giving up. There will be more news of this next month when I will have further details and possibly the books will have been collected.

Once again, many thanks to the members who have donated books – some of these were received some time ago but not acknowledged previously as they were out on loan – the best possible reason for a delay! They are an interesting collection which will enliven the library considerably.

Thank you Jill Cunningham for –

### ***Samuel Johnson and His World* by Margaret Lane**

Samuel Johnson was an enormously influential figure in his time and this book discusses his literary achievements and gives a sympathetic account of his private life. It also provides an absorbing insight into the way of life, ideas and personalities of the period.

and for –

### ***Proletarian Philosophers* by Jonathan Rée**

Jonathan Rée examines the influence of the self-educated working people in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century whose socialist and philosophical ideals were closely linked. Anyone interested in the social and political history of the period, the history of philosophy or the history of education should read this book.

Thank you Wilf Gaunt for –

### ***The Dog Allusion – Gods, Pets and How to Be Human* by Martin Rowson**

I know Wilf intends to review this book so I will just say that I thoroughly enjoyed it – thought provoking and informative as well as a very entertaining read.

Thank you Allan Hayes for –

### ***Taking Liberties – The Struggle for Britain’s Freedoms and Rights* by Mike Ashley**

This book was produced as a tie-in with the exhibition of the same name held at the British Library about 18 months ago. It tells the story of the struggle for political rights and freedoms in the British Isles over the 900 years since Magna Carta. It makes connections between the past to the present and asks whether we value these freedoms as we should. Sections include ‘Freedom of Worship and Conscience’, ‘The Rights of the Individual’ and ‘The Right to Vote’ and the book ends with a short but important piece on ‘Rights Under Threat’.

This is a fascinating and easy read (big print, lots of illustrations). The book contains much familiar material but also much that was new to me. Don’t miss it – we owe it to the individuals whose sacrifices gained us the liberties which we now take for granted.

Thank you, again, Paul Southwood for –

### ***The Story of the Daily Worker* by Alan Rust**

A new edition of this book, originally published in 1949. The paper’s first editor tells the history of the paper’s turbulent early years and links are made to the political events of the day. An interesting account, giving a different, socialist perspective on an eventful period of history.

### **Missing Books**

Please return as soon as possible or let me know you have them. We have no money for replacing books.

### ***Radical Leicester* by A. Temple Patterson**

This book is much in demand and I need to keep track of it.

### ***God Is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens**

This book was removed some considerable time ago. It would be nice to see it again.

### **Signing Out Book**

I have replaced our current black borrowing book with a lurid pink one in the hope it will remind members that they need to sign out borrowed books.

Gillian



## Living with HIV

Review of the lecture by Celia Fisher and Julie from the Leicestershire AIDS Support Service

There was only a small, select group of secularists to hear this excellent talk on 11th July. (It was a beautiful evening and the World Cup was on TV.)

The LASS group is a small charity funded by local government and the National Health Service; it was established in 1987. The charity works with people with HIV and AIDS in Leicestershire and Rutland.

We learned that in Leicestershire we have a high level of AIDS at 3.12 per 1,000, with significant numbers from African and Asian backgrounds. In Leicester there are many women living with HIV/AIDS. Drug-users do not now get AIDS because of programmes enabling users not to share needles.

The main route to infection is unprotected sex and passing on the HIV virus to babies through breastfeeding.

Leicester AIDS Support Service offers a rapid test for the virus, which they are able to administer at low cost.

Their principal message was the good news that ‘there is life after a diagnosis of HIV!’ It is now reduced to the status of being a chronic long-term illness, and not a death sentence as was originally portrayed. A combination of the latest drug along with a healthy lifestyle will mean that a person with HIV can live a normal lifespan. The problem is that the drugs cost £14,000 per year.

Unfortunately HIV and AIDS remain a source of social stigma.

This was an excellent talk – we should really invite them to do it again for a larger audience!

Caroline Moles



### The Allusionist's Dog

It was while clicking through the stations on my Sky box that I happened on an interview with Martin Rowson, of whom I'd been previously unaware, and was immediately captivated by the interviewer starting to question him about his well-known Atheism.

Thus I discovered the character who produces the satirical cartoons for the *Guardian*, and the covers of the *New Humanist* magazine.

His obvious facility with language and wide-ranging interests are surprising in one who also expresses himself so effectively in the pictorial medium. In talking about his Secular Humanism, and his book *The Dog Allusion*, it became obvious that his critical attitude towards the extremist stances of Dawkins and Hitchens matched my own in many respects: the first ideological fellow-traveller whom I've encountered to date ('We read to know that we are not alone': *Shadowlands*). Naturally, I was very quickly switching on the laptop to order the book.

Rowson has a compact style of writing, and he manages to adequately say in 137 pages that for which others would require the full 250-page standard book. The eighteenth century model that governs his cartoon style sometimes appears in the way he writes: indulging in over-long, detail filled paragraphs, which require the reader to be wide awake if the thread is not to be lost. Despite this, Rowson does not come over as elitist. Indeed, in the introduction he states that 'The book's ... meant to be playful, rude, sweeping, generalising, discursive and often digressive, as well as serious.' And it truly is all of these things (very interestingly digressive). I would also advise that some of the words used make the book unsuitable as a Christmas present for one's maiden aunt or the local vicar.

Much of the book is in comfortable, high-class journalese style; but, occasionally, the breadth and depth of his learning and research efforts show through. Usually, in normal reading, one can infer the meaning of little-used or new words from the context in which they are used; but, now and then here, these words tend to be the context: necessitating keeping a good dictionary within easy reach. However, the justice and authority of his arguments, based on an encyclopaedic knowledge of European and political history, can only fill a secular-humanist's breast with joy.

The book tends to divide into five parts: the first being an introduction on what the book is about; the second being his take on the human condition in general; the third on his contention that religion is nothing more than a political controlling tool; the fourth consists of a general discussion of his take on a wide variety of matters to do with society and religion; and the fifth is a justification of his atheism.

He regards the human social position as being driven by our enhanced sense of empathy: claiming it to be seven times stronger in a child than in a chimpanzee (no mechanism is described as to how this measurement was obtained, nor the howlingly obvious difference between men and women in this respect): claiming that this is the natural origin of our moral and ethical sense. This last insight is, in my opinion, an extremely important one for secular-humanists to take on board.

On page 53 there's an excellent example of his argument style and attitude: 'compulsion to surrender (dehumanise) ourselves to higher powers of our own creation; religions seeing only souls waiting to be squirted out of imminent carrion; historians, statisticians, sociologists, scientists seeing only data; doctors seeing pathologies or cases, capitalists seeing units of production or consumption; politicians seeing potential enemies or supporters; despots seeing enemies or scapegoats ... when all any of them ever really see are other people.'

Page 76 gives us: 'The Peace of Westphalia and The Act of Settlement ... established that religion was a secondary consideration. When the level of human carnage finally became intolerable, then tolerating the people you hate – not agreeing with them, or appeasing or loving or even liking them – was ... preferable.'

Page 129: [Religion] 'closes off so many possibilities of both thought and action, [and makes us want to] impose the same limitations on other people.'

Towards the end, he describes his book as a 'rant'; but it's the most well-informed and presented rant that I've ever come across.

I've donated a copy to the Society's library, and highly recommend it.

Wilf Gaunt



### Woodhouse Eaves Walk

Members enjoyed a very pleasant walk around Woodhouse Eaves on the evening of 7th July. The weather was kind and in less than two hours thirsts were being quenched in the Old Bull's Head.

(Satish Kapur behind the camera)

### Thought for the Day

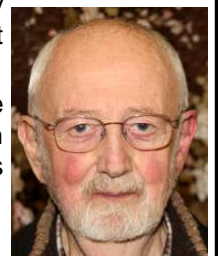
Know then thyself, presume not God to scan  
The proper study of mankind is Man.  
From Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*  
Jill Cunningham

Dear Harry

In response to your request for opinions about whether or not you should 'censor' items submitted, in my view you have no option. As editor you are legally liable for things that appear in a public print - which for this purpose I suppose the *Secularist* is. By printing possibly libellous or offensive material you also expose the Society itself. As far as I know this is a universally accepted convention. It's not 'censorship' - it's called 'editing'!

By the way, I'm really surprised that the Board hasn't made this clear through some statement in your columns to this effect.

Doug Holly



## Living Together in Leicester

'Living Together in Leicester - Cohesion and Diversity' was the title of a presentation by Thilo Boeck at Secular Hall on 17<sup>th</sup> July. Thilo is a Senior Research Fellow at De Montfort University and explores issues of social justice, social inclusion, human rights and democratic empowerment and change. His varied presentation included a talk, a talk with audience participation, a video showing a wide variety of Leicester people's opinions about the topic cohesion and diversity, and small group discussions and feedback on the theme: How do you define a community? This was followed by question time and more discussion.



Thilo explained that as a researcher he cannot be neutral, so his background and attitudes are inevitably bound up with his research. Thilo was born in Germany as one of four children. He moved to Peru with his family, where he was influenced by various conservative, Catholic organisations. He tried hard to become a heterosexual but after ten years he knew he must acknowledge that he was a gay man. He started his career as a Youth and Community Development practitioner in Lima. He is now delighted to be accepted by LCC as somebody who can inform their social policies, and thinks that it reflects well on British society that a German is acceptable in this role. Thilo's motivation is to explore how a community (whatever that means) can be organised in a fair way for everyone. He spoke about the difficulties of defining words, the dangers of labelling and the difficulties of measuring cohesion in numbers.

Whatever people felt community was (a geographical area, people who come together with a common interest, people who look after each other) Thilo's point was that of fluidity - people come together for a short time and usually for a

specific purpose. He said that certain groups can make change happen but these groups are those who share and have established trust and co-operation between them. Sharing decisions also involves people in disagreements and issues of power. Thilo stated that he thought a healthy society or group was one where there were disagreements and conflicts because without this it smacks of totalitarianism – people suffering and serving. In this context,

Thilo's statement that a cohesive community can be an exclusive community makes sense.

Discussing the issues around diversity, Thilo said that although a diverse community sounds like an ideal and in the public sphere many people in Leicester say that they do like having neighbours from many different cultural backgrounds, in the private sphere it is a different matter because it is impossible to be friends with everyone – probably 150 people in a network is maximum. These people are going to be ones that people can identify with. Any discussion on diversity does need to consider social justice. For example, as a social researcher, Thilo needs to acknowledge that young white people in deprived areas are going to say it is not fair that they have less access to resources and educational opportunities than other groups.

This probing talk left the audience with the following questions:

- In a diverse and cohesive community whose norms and values are being imposed?
- How do we open up closed communities?

Helen Pettman



## The Lakes of Kenya – from ecology to economy Ed Morrison

A welcome return to the Hall for Ed. We were treated to an excellent lecture despite poor attendance.

Ed is working on the ecology of Lake Naivasha, one of the eastern lakes in the Rift Valley, originally a pristine low nutrient lake with a fabulous fauna and flora that has become over rich in nutrients owing to increased human activity. This includes mismanagement by the introduction of alien species during the colonial years, large mouthed

bass, Tilapia, the Louisiana crayfish and water hyacinth. This has resulted in a decrease of the islands of papyrus which absorb the excess nutrients and help to keep the lake in balance. Run-off from the many cash crop enterprises such as Kenyan tulips for the European markets, also contributes to ecological disturbance.

Human populations along the shores of the lake have increased many times and again the polluting effect of sewage, etc. has contributed to the lake's decline.

Ed sees that a way forward to improve the lake and the lives of the people roundabout is by increasing the islands of papyrus. There is no history of the local heterogeneous populations using papyrus for local industry compared to the more homogeneous population that live along Lake Victoria, where some 40% derive between 75% and 100% of their income from it.

He is currently looking to see if papyrus could act as a substitute fuel for charcoal. He hopes to encourage a grass-roots use of papyrus for this purpose. So the papyrus would absorb the excess nutrients, the locals would harvest the papyrus and so the theory goes the nutrient levels in the lake should stabilise.

Once again this is a work in progress so, Ed, come back in two years and update us again!

Mike Burden



## Catch 22?

Lyn Hurst challenged the Board about producing a business plan and about the benefits of charitable status. I think that rather than putting the 'horse before the cart' we face a Catch 22 situation.

The business plan is all about finance, showing how we would make the Hall a viable proposition after redevelopment using HLF grants. Lyn gives the impression that no work has been done on this, which may be quite understandable as little has been reported to the membership, although I did allude to our problems in coming up with a viable business plan at the AGM.

We have in fact worked in liaison with one set of consultants and have produced various scenarios looking at the various options. Unfortunately we could not find any realistic viable options (that is, where the Hall would be self-supporting and able to produce an income that would allow for its ongoing maintenance in the long term) that could be put to the Board, the HLF and Leicester Rationalist Trust. There seems little point in producing a business plan that shows the Hall not to be viable.

Options for various uses of the Hall and the likely income and costs associated with them were examined (taking into account the Audience Development Report). The conclusion reached was that we would need to keep at least the current level of commercial use and that additional support would still be needed. The only realistic source of such grants identified would be public bodies and charitable trusts. Discussions with various advisers, confirmed recently by a representative of the National Trust, was that this would be almost impossible without charitable status. Indeed when the City Council made the last grant for the roof, they included a paragraph in their letter stating that they would not wish to make any further grants unless the Society could show that it had at least attempted to gain charitable status.

The options as to how we develop the Hall and whether or not we obtain charitable status will in turn affect the financial projections. Hence my 'Catch 22' title.

The Board are now considering going to the expense (hopefully with the aid of grants) of employing consultants to do some radical thinking about the use of the Hall and then develop a business plan. We can ask them to look at options with and without charitable status. However, our not having finalised what is acceptable in terms of the physical development of the Hall could make the challenge problematic to say the least, and there is no certainty that they will find a solution.

Lyn also challenged me to provide 'a real explanation of the benefits' and says 'let's have some real evidence of some worthwhile benefits before charging in and then finding we have traded our principles and true independence, as well as what we have now - the complete freedom to act politically, or in any other way we want - just to gain a few grand from tax advantages'.

With regard to the specific benefits charities qualify for, the main ones that might be of benefit to us would be:

Tax relief on donations received through the Gift Aid scheme;

Charity business rates relief;  
VAT relief.

Members can find more details at: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/tax/basics.htm#3>

Being asked to put figures on this is the equivalent of being asked to give the length of a piece of string. Gift Aid is only available for taxpayers who opt for it. I don't know what proportion of our members pay income tax nor can I reliably predict how many of these would opt in and what level of subs or donations they provide. In any case, as I tried to make clear, the reason for going for charitable status is to preserve the building (which we do not own), not so much for the Society.

In fact if we were just a Secular Society hiring space for our meetings, distributing a newsletter and campaigning for secularism, I would probably not be suggesting charitable status.

However, the development of the Hall as suggested is going to cost £2M+. The grant from HLF (if obtained) will cover 75% of the cost, leaving another £500K+ to find. We have had indications from various bodies of help amounting to c. £400K. This means that we will need to find donors prepared to provide £100K+. With tax relief they will need to provide c. £70K rather than the full amount. I believe it unlikely that we can find donors for this kind of sum without their being able to use Gift Aid.

Then there is the probable ongoing need for grants for the maintenance of the building. Again it would appear unlikely that we will be able to apply for many of these without charitable status.

Unfortunately we did not have time to discuss options at the EGM. One would be to set up a separate charity to manage the Hall. This would have the disadvantage of separating the Hall from the Society and would need a separate team of volunteers to run it.

Another would be to ask the Leicester Rationalist Trust to convert into a charitable trust and take on the development and management of the Hall: possibly the best outcome since ownership, development and management would be combined avoiding the need for a formal lease and the negotiations that would be involved in deciding what is acceptable in terms of changes to the building.

I must admit that I disagree with Lyn when he says that we have 'complete freedom to act politically'. Since we are a limited company we are restricted to our objects in the same way as a charity (although we do not have the Charity Commission monitoring whether or not we are complying with them).

I think that the current objects would prevent us acting with 'complete freedom' politically. This is something I welcome, since I think we should 'stick to our last' and concentrate on promoting a secular society.

Of course this does not mean the membership cannot form an unincorporated organisation for the promotion of particular political ambitions, which is of course an option that would be open to them even if we were a charity.

John Catt



## Could You Use a Free Printer?



I've upgraded to a network printer but my old laser printer still works (it's a Dell 1100, mono USB). Although toner is expensive, cost per page is far cheaper than ink-jet. It's easy to set up and use and is free for anyone who wants it. Donation to the Forget-Me-Not Appeal optional.

Contact Frank Friedmann (details on back page).

## Leicester Secular Society Contact Details

Registered Office: Secular Hall

75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB

Tel: 07598 971420

Email: [mail@leicestersecularsociety.org.uk](mailto:mail@leicestersecularsociety.org.uk)

Website: [www.leicestersecularsociety.org.uk](http://www.leicestersecularsociety.org.uk)

LSS is a company limited by guarantee

Reg. No. 06292639

**President - Allan Hayes:** Tel: 0116 241 8747

Email: [allan-hayes@ntlworld.com](mailto:allan-hayes@ntlworld.com)

**Chairperson & Events - Mike Burden:** Tel: 07722 782727

Email: [mikeburden2001@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mikeburden2001@yahoo.co.uk)

**Treasurer/Web group admin - John Catt:** Tel: 01509 211468

Email: [treasurer@leicestersecularsociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@leicestersecularsociety.org.uk)

**Company Secretary - Chris Williams:** Tel: 07718 629651

Email: [chris.williams@open.ac.uk](mailto:chris.williams@open.ac.uk)

**Hall bookings - Wilf Gaunt:** Tel: 07598 971420

Email: [wilfredgaunt@yahoo.com](mailto:wilfredgaunt@yahoo.com)

**Website/News updates - Frank Friedmann:** Tel: 0116 292 1964

Email: [web@leicestersecularsociety.org.uk](mailto:web@leicestersecularsociety.org.uk)

**Librarian - Gillian Lighton:**

Email: [gillianlighton@hotmail.com](mailto:gillianlighton@hotmail.com)

**Secularist editor - Harry Perry:** Tel: 07795 097635

Email: [harry.perry1@btinternet.com](mailto:harry.perry1@btinternet.com)

**Keyholders:** Allan, Michael G, Mike B and Wilf are all keyholders for Secular Hall.

**Audio-visual kit:** This is normally held by Michael Gerard or Mike Burden.

**All can be reached by post via the Hall address.**

The Editorial Team would like sincerely to apologise to Lyn Hurst for misspelling his surname three times in the last edition. We did achieve 100% consistency however! Sorry Lyn.

Harry & Jill

We have received an appeal for help and support from Flo Gible, widow of Harry Gible (Eleanor conducted his funeral at Secular Hall in November 2007 - some of you may remember him – he used to come to the Hall on his bike). Flo, who is in poor health and lives in Southampton, needs somewhere to stay locally while she deals with winding up Harry's affairs including the sale of his house. **If you can help, please contact Flo on 0238 033 7008.**

### The Leicester Secularist Copy Deadline

The copy deadline for the next edition is **12 noon on Thursday 2nd September 2010.**

Articles, letters, jokes, poems, news, announcements, book reviews, adverts are all welcome. Please send via the Hall or email to me at the address in the box adjacent. **When emailing copy please compose in Arial with single line spacing, 3pt paragraph breaks and single quotes.** Include photos or illustrations where you have them.

The copy deadline for the subsequent edition currently looks like being Thursday 7th October.

Thanks

Harry Perry, Editor

Jill Perry, Subeditor

### Report of Board Meeting of 22nd June 2010

- One membership application was approved by the Board.
- The issues surrounding the current format of the Civic Service were discussed. Board members agreed that the new Lord Mayor was pursuing the right agenda and unanimously expressed their support for the work of Allan Hayes and Eleanor Davidson (the Lady Mayoress and LSS member).
- Work is to be done on the ballroom landing and changing area in the Hall, as the floor tiles are cracking. Some outstanding elements of the Fire Risk Action Plan are to be carried out.
- Allan Hayes had an appointment to see the Chair and CEO of Prospect Leicester to discuss obtaining support for the Hall.
- An officer from the National Trust had recently visited the Hall. They were impressed by its architecture and heritage and are to report back to the Society.
- Chris Williams said that he had had positive discussions with organisers of the Leicester Comedy Festival, who are interested in using the Hall for some events.



Richard Hopper

### Report of Board Meeting of 21st July 2010

- Presentation by Paul Southwood on the urgency of installing accessible toilet
- Admission of two new members
- Some discussion as to how to fund advisers with regard to the business plan
- Relaunch of Atheist Bus Campaign in September

Mike Burden

### Disclaimer, Code of Conduct and Copyright

*The Leicester Secularist* is a not-for-profit undertaking of Leicester Secular Society. Please note that the views and proposals expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board of the Society and the Editor, the Society and its officers accept no liability for views expressed. As the journal of a Freethought organisation any member's views will be published subject to the usual constraints of avoiding libel and occasional editing to fit the space available. When writing please abstain from intemperate language and avoid being unnecessarily offensive, especially to other members! We express our thanks for non-Society images sourced under the fair use convention for the purposes of debate and education. Resolution is reduced to prevent onward commercial use. The contents may be reproduced at will unless the item is accompanied by a copyright symbol. An acknowledgement of the source (for original material) would be appreciated.