

'Outreach' 2010

Well; it was a long time in coming and a lot of effort setting up but the LSH Outreach Event for 2010 – planned to coincide with other Humanist Week activities across the rest of the UK – went according to plan [*which was strangely worrying*].

At 9^{am} on Wednesday 23rd June Preston City Council were sitting their very impressive CitizenZone vehicle on Preston Flag Market – right in the city centre; giving LSH volunteers Ian, Zelda, Linda & Ken plenty of time to set up both exterior and interior display stands and leaflet tables – and the six computers [fitted in CitizenZone] to our new (very impressive) LSH Website. Each computer displayed a different web-page ... including the link to the BHA's 'Are You A Humanist' quiz.

Preston City Council's CitizenZone co-ordinator Stephen Bennett could not have been more helpful offering invaluable advice based on his previous experiences with other CitizenZone users.

The BHA's display packs proved to be very engaging with those passing members of the public who stopped to see who we were and what we were up to and - [Humanism aside] - it was an enlightening exercise in observing human nature.

The further away from the vehicle – and therefore the 'volunteers' – the information was sited, the more likely people were to stop and look at it.

Consequently; the 'A'-Board: ten feet (or so) away from 'us', was read by far more people than those who stopped to study the exterior display stand and leaflet table which [necessarily] was close to the vehicle and a volunteer.

Similarly; the number of people who lingered there far exceeded those who dared to enter the vehicle itself.

In the main – those who did cross the threshold to have a chat, take literature and engage with the computers, were already familiar with Humanism.

Ken suggested one design improvement might be to have a clearly visible, easily accessible, 'Way Out' – and I think he is right.

The next time we use CitizenZone it might be an idea to have the invalid access ramp permanently deployed ... as an additional alternative to the main entrance.

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Protest The Pope Campaign² - www.protest-the-pope.org.uk

L.S.H. supports the BHA and NSS who, together with other organisations, are planning protests over the Pope's state visit to the UK in September 2010.

There will be events and media articles to ensure that as many people as possible understand why the Pope should not be welcomed - as a state leader - in this country.

Why? - Because, as well as being a religious leader, the Pope is a head of state - and the state of which he is head has been responsible for so many things humanists fundamentally contest:

- Opposing the distribution of condoms - thereby increasing large families in the poorest countries.

Whatever you do ... don't tell 'em you're - 'an Atheist'!

Following on from last month's Newsletter – 'Lancashire Pagan Police' - one wonders who will be policing the streets during holidays?

Now Pagan-Police Officers have swelled the growing ranks of 'Hyphenated Police Officer' Associations – I've no doubt other minority groups within the police service will be looking at putting their bids in for special consideration too ... And why wouldn't they?

If Christian Officers can now insist on not being compelled to work on Christmas Day; Advent; Palm Sunday; Easter Sunday; & Good Friday.

Jewish Officers can claim: Purim; Pesach; Shavuot; Tisha B'Av; Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur; Sukkot/Shmini Atzeret; & Chanukah [*to name just those with restrictions about work*]

For Muslim Officers its: Milad un Nabi; Ramadan; Eid-UI-Fitr; Eid-UI-Adha; Al-Hijira; Ashura.

Officers recruited from the Hindu faith might choose from: Lohri; Makar Sankranti; Pongal; Mahashivratri; Holi; Hola Mohalla; Ram Navmi; Onam; Rahki; Sri Krishna Janmashtami; Ganesh Chaturathi; Navratras; Dussehra; Karva Chauth; Dhan Teras; Diwali; Govardhan Puja

For Sikhs its: Lohri; Hola Mohalla; Baisakhi; Diwali ... [plus the birthdays of all 10 gurus].

And now Pagan officers will need: Samhain; Yule; Imbolc; Ostara; Litha; Lughnassadh; & Mabon.

What's next?

Buddhists wanting: Parinirvana; Magha Puja; & Chokhor Duchen.

Zoroastrians demanding: Naw-Ruz; Yalda; & Zarathust No Diso.

What if next year's National Census is anything like 2001 - we will have Jedi as a recognised religion – and 'The Force' knows what holidays they'll lay claim to! [... *plus an allowance for Light Sabre batteries too no doubt*].

It'll be a bugger for Police Officers who're Atheist - They'll be the poor mugs working whilst everyone else is off having a good time celebrating [one thing after another].

- The consequential spread of AIDS
- Promoting segregated education
- Denying abortion to even the most vulnerable women.
- Opposing equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people
- Failing to address the many cases of child abuse within its own organisation.
- Rehabilitating the holocaust denier bishop Richard Williamson and the appeaser of Hitler, the war-time Pope, Pius XII

The State of which the Pope is the head has also resisted signing many major human rights treaties and has formed its own treaties ('concordats') with many states which negatively affect the human rights of citizens of those states.

As a head of such a state, the Pope is clearly an unsuitable guest of the UK government.

He should not be accorded the honour and recognition of a state visit to our country.

Keep in mind - the Pope is a head of state - and ask yourself: would / should the UK government confer the prestige that accompanies such a visit on a head of any other state if that state not only promotes these practices within the confines of its own borders but does all in its power to interfere in the administration of other sovereign states in a thinly disguised effort to compel others to adopt similar pernicious policies.

What can you do?

- Visit www.protest-the-pope.org.uk to discover the latest news and planned events.
- Consider organising your own event based on protesting the issues highlighted above.
- Join facebook group <http://tinyurl.com/paplvist>
- Write to you local newspaper saying why you don't agree with the Pope being accorded the honour of a state visit to the UK.

Quick Quote

When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said "Let us pray." - We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.-

Desmond Tutu

'Faith Schools are all about education' ...

... we hear - time & time again.

'It has nothing to do with indoctrination!'

... we're constantly [often impatiently] assured.

Even though, simple common sense screams out, to anybody who cares to give it a moment's thought, 'why else would a church want to be involved with educating children?'

Well: once again, the truth is revealed – this time by Lancashire Methodist Minister Mark Slaney, in conversation with BBC Radio Lancashire's Joe Wilson on his Sunday Morning Faith Based Breakfast Programme ... Sun 20th June 2010.

The subjects under discussion moved on to the seemingly inexorable decline in attendances for Churches – particularly Sunday Schools.

One contributor: The Rt. Rev. Geoff Pearson [Bishop of Lancashire] posited '*if things continue as they are – within a generation the Church will be extinct.*'

The dichotomy being that, here in Lancashire, we have more Faith Schools than anywhere else in the country and yet we hear that Sunday Schools – as well as children's attendance at churches - is '*struggling a bit*'

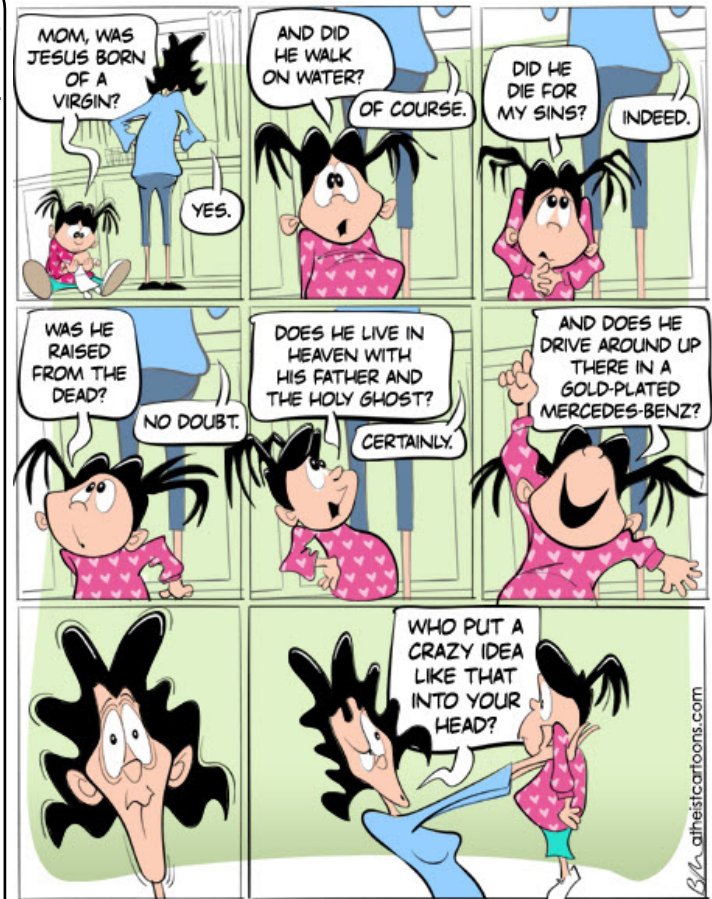
Mark accepted that Sunday School attendance figures do indeed appear to be "struggling a bit". But went on to say that Sunday isn't the only 'special' day in the week '*... faith is woven throughout all seven days of the week so every day is sacred.*'

He agreed with Joe that kids aren't getting their faith education just on Sunday – they're getting it Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. & Fri.; and clarified it by adding "*... I just know; as the Minister at Bamber Bridge, that Cuerden Church School - next door to us - which we share with the Anglican Parish – I know that there are 160-odd children in there: Monday to Friday; in a Christian community - a Christian environment - receiving Christian teaching. And for me, as the Minister of Bamber Bridge Methodist Church, that is part of our children's ministry, as well as the 20 or so that we get on a Sunday morning.*"

Joe asked "So it's important to you that those 20 or so children come on a Sunday morning [even though you'd love it to be 40 (or even 60)] but you don't worry enormously because you believe the teaching is already going on . . . Is that what you're saying?"

Mark: "*I'm saying it's all of that! I know that we have 160-odd kids – local kids – that we're offering Christian community and teaching to – Monday to Friday!*"

Well - it made me smile!



"Read Your Bible"

– Philip Pullman

I missed the Radio 2 programme on Sunday morning 13th June but [thanks to a heads-up from LSH member Neville Bramhall – and - 'listen again'] I managed to listen to Aled Jones interviewing Philip Pullman.

When they got on to Pullman's new book **'The Good Man Jesus & The Scoundrel Christ'**

I especially loved his reply to Jones' curious accusation that by - 'hoping to persuade people to actually read the Gospels - as they are - in full - probably for the first time - and thereby discover for themselves the myriad of ambiguities, omissions, contradictions and inconsistencies they contain' - he is somehow doing a disservice to The Church':

"Well - doesn't The Church want people to read the Bible? Actually for many years it didn't ... It strangled and burned to death the poor blighter who translated it in the first place William Tyndale: so perhaps the Church doesn't want people to read the bible."

There is also an excellent youtube clip of Pullman talking about his book: firmly putting a complainer in his place by explaining (very clearly) that nobody has the right to not be offended.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ3VcbAfd4w>

I'm no psychology student but people may well have been more comfortable about coming in if they could have seen there was another way out readily available to them.

There were of course the usual 'nutters' to contend with but thankfully they were few in number ... as well as the ubiquitous Christian objectors – more entertaining than annoying. Interestingly, noticeably more people stopped, looked and listened when BBC Radio Lancashire turned up to record an interview with us – and to a lesser extent when the Preston fm journalist arrived too ... fewer because that interview then continued inside the vehicle.

The following days evening event at Preston Town Hall was held in the very impressive Room 'A' Theatre but disappointingly and perplexingly far fewer people were in attendance for this event than ordinarily turn up for our usual third-Wednesday-of-the-month meetings.

An audience of just 22 listened to our five speakers* Ian, Kath, John, Darren & Rachel deliver six short talks on Humanism / humanists: a sort of; who what when where & why.

Once again the meeting was impressively chaired by Julie and the quality of debate and discussion wasn't in any way diminished my the quantity of people present.

Plus – Zelda had painstakingly prepared 50 LSH 'goody-bags' for people to take away as they left [BHA pen & pad; bookmark, various Humanism pamphlets, our own LSH flyer and LSH Keyring].

There is clearly a steep learning curve to navigate in setting up events such as these – what works for one group wouldn't necessarily work for another. Added to which, the facilities [and enthusiasm] will vary widely too.

But perhaps an appeal to the BHA – collating reports on all 'Humanist Week - 2010' events staged across the UK with a view to developing very broad 'best-practice' advice would make the prospect of staging future similar events less daunting - and more efficient.

I still maintain that 'Outreach Events' are not just worthwhile - they are essential! Not only should we be challenged to step outside of our comfort zones from time to time ... The wider public: and especially our objectors; must be reminded that we are here and will not be ignored.

* All six talks will be reprinted on page six of these Newsletters [in the order they were delivered] over the coming months - The first is in this issue.

For those who haven't yet discovered Tim Minchin's Nine Minute beat Poem 'Storm': you're missing a real treat.

It's crammed full of fantastically quotable quotes

Here's a little sampler [2nd & 3rd stanza (of 26)] and the link below will take you to a recording of Tim delivering it – in his own inimitable Australian accent ... along with the lyrics.

Enjoy!

*The 5th guest is an unknown,
The hosts have just thrown
Us together for a favour
because this girl's just arrived from Australia
And has moved to North London
And she's the sister of someone
Or has some connection.*

*As we make introductions
I'm struck by her beauty
She's irrefutably fair
With dark eyes and dark hair
But as she sits
I admit I'm a little bit wary
because I notice the tip of the wing of a fairy
Tattooed on that popular area
Just above the derrière
And when she says "I'm Sagittarien"
I confess a pigeonhole starts to form
And is immediately filled with pigeon
When she says her name is Storm.*

<http://podblack.com/2008/12/little-kitten-lyrics-to-tim-minchins->

What's The Date Of Our Next Meeting?

Not every question will be as simple as this of course but it's a bit of a clue as to the subject of July's meeting.

We've had a couple of months of fairly intensive 'Humanising' and it's about time we let our hair down a bit. *Alas; more figuratively than literally in some cases.*

So July's meeting is our annual Charity Quiz Night when we have some fun – a glass or two of something refreshing – and at the same time raise a few bob for our charity

Those of with irritable bowel syndrome - or any similar conditions where being wound-up should be avoided - will be pleased to learn that Ian has been banned from ever again having anything whatsoever to do with this or any future LSH Quiz.

..... Continued ►

Next Meeting? ... Continued

So - put on your thinking head – bring a bottle of whatever you enjoy – bring something for our raffle – bring a friend or two [or 3 or 4 or 5] - and come along determined to enjoy a balmy summer evening in good company and very pleasant surroundings.

See you at: The Village Centre; 59 High St,
Great Eccleston. PR3 0YB*

7.30 – Wednesday 21st July 2010

[There: I've gone & answered the first question for you!]

**If parking directly outside The Village Centre is a problem – remember you can use The Farmers Arms pub car-park – up the hill behind the Village Centre – just a three-minute walk away.*

Church Notices

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.

from Richard Lederer's Godless Humour page
<http://atheistempire.com/entertainment/humor.php>

"Christians are like Camels ..."

Extract from Chapman Cohen's essay
'Religion and Labour' [1920]

'... the Christian world has been offering up the same prayer [*for the coming of the Kingdom of God*] for over nineteen centuries. And the exploiters of the people have never turned a hair.

On the contrary, they have encouraged the people to keep at it. More, they have provided handsome buildings for them to pray in, and have seen that no one disturbed them at their prayers. There is no occupation in this country that is better endowed than that of praying.

The Comparison is a little unfair to the camel ...

It was in full swing when women were at work half naked in the mines, when children of seven years of age were being killed in factories to fill Christian pockets.

It is the one prayer that has always been in evidence; and Dr Salter* is still at it.

It was Dod Grile who said that Christians resembled camels, inasmuch as both took their burden kneeling. The comparison is a little unfair to the camel. For we have no proof that the camel is silly enough to thank his driver for putting the burden on his back.

**Dr Alfred Salter was a doctor at the Methodist Bermondsey Settlement [established by Rev. John Scott Lidgett]. Dr. Salter was a Bermondsey Borough Councilor and London County Councilor. Defeated Labour Party candidate in the 1918 General Election: elected Labour MP for Bermondsey West in 1922 . . . A Committed Christian, Socialist and Pacifist he was one of the founders of the Socialist Medical Association.*

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July 1 - Chevalier de la Barre Day!

Mainly a French observance, 'Chevalier de la Barre Day' is a day that can be celebrated by anyone who opposes religious oppression.

The commemoration marks the execution of the Chevalier de la Barre for impiety on July 1, 1766.

Jean-Francois de la Barre (*known as the "Chevalier de la Barre", because he held the formal title of Chevalier or "knight"*) became a symbol of religious injustice after being tortured & killed for impiety, including the possession of banned books by Voltaire.

Voltaire - a leading critic of the Catholic Church - helped make the case of the Chevalier De La Barre into a cause célèbre ... Voltaire was especially haunted by '*this sentence so execrable, and at the same time so absurd, which is an eternal disgrace to France*', because a key piece of evidence was La Barre's possession of Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary".

La Barre and two others were accused of defacing a crucifix in the French town of Abbeville. There were no eye witnesses, but after continued harassment by clergy, churchgoers remember three youths who hadn't removed their hats when a Catholic procession passed by. [The fear of excommunication was far too great, so people identified the three young men who were viewed as anticlerical].

Once the charges were put by the courts, one of the youths fled to Holland; one was only 15 and fined; only the 19 year old La Barre remained.

When a search of his home revealed 3 forbidden books, including Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary," the courts and the church had their ideal suspect.

La Barre was tortured mercilessly, had his tongue cut out [for the crime of singing lewd songs], was then decapitated, and eventually burned on a pyre ... along with his copy of Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary."

In 1905, a statue of Jean-Francois, Chevalier de la Barre was built in Montmartre, on the outskirts of Paris.

[It was removed in 1941 and melted down for munitions for the Nazi war effort – while statues of saints and kings were left intact.]

Today, freethinkers in the West experience large amounts of freedom in their lives, but freethinkers are still tortured and killed for their belief [or lack of it] in many countries throughout the world.

'Chevalier de la Barre Day' is therefore a day to remember all those men and women persecuted by religion and to constantly campaign for the rights of those still being persecuted today.

Who Are Lancashire Secular Humanists?

Ian Abbott 6

We are a group of free-thinking individuals.

People who choose to live lives informed by **L**ogic, **S**cience & **H**umanity . . . rather than by creed, doctrine or dogma.

We enjoy participating in intelligent discourse between ourselves and with others about wide ranging subjects on the understanding that the only common denominator will be that nobody resorts to dogma to defend a contention?

- We discuss anything that interests or challenges us.
- We campaign on issues that concern us.
- We enjoy social events
- We support people being disadvantaged because they do not hold (or profess) a religious belief -
- We advise others on matters of humanism -
- We participate in community forums
- We have Celebrants who conduct Humanist ceremonies
- We have speakers to talk on Humanism to other groups.

Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity we think we should all try to live full & happy lives and – as part of this – do all we can to make it easier for others to do the same.

If someone says they're a 'Humanist' they mean they care about other human beings and acknowledge that everything they do affects others / they reject superstition and any acknowledgement of the supernatural.

We have no sacred texts – traditions – prophets - or authoritarian body but consider each issue on its merits and reach decisions based on human experience and evidence.

Secularists campaign for a society in which all are free to practise their faith: change it : or not have one: according to their conscience. Belief or lack of it should be neither an advantage nor a disadvantage.

Religion should be a matter of private conscience, for the home and place of worship; it must not have privileged input into the political arena ... where history shows it to bring conflict and injustice.

Why - 'Secular' Humanists?

Humanism isn't Rocket Science – Many aspects of Humanism will be familiar [even common] to people who identify with most religious faiths and life-style choices. The 'Golden Rule' - The 'Only' Rule as far as Humanists are concerned - is a common thread running through most religions too.

This idea that you should not treat others in any way you wouldn't like others to treat you – *'do as you would be done by'* – if you like.

Indeed 'Humanism' is such an inarguably moral stance that increasing numbers of religious groups are incorporating the epithet 'Humanists' in their title too:

We now have: Christian Humanists - Hindu Humanists - Muslim Humanists - Sikh Humanists & Spiritual Humanists [*to name but a few*]. However these hyphenated-humanists still retain a sense of having supernatural phenomenon at their core. So; it's increasingly clear – that any group of people identifying themselves as people who reject superstition and acknowledgement of the supernatural need to make that clear too.

As you may have already seen in our leaflets – there are many things we 'Secular Humanists' will not agree on between ourselves but there are some issues on which we do take a firm and unanimous stand -

We do not condone discrimination of any sort! You may say 'the only thing we will not tolerate is intolerance!' However – we need to declare and affirm our rejection of all things religious / superstitious / 'supernatural' - so as to leave people in no doubt about what we think.

Although we are a County-wide group we are affiliated to National Organisations.

But Humanism extends far beyond these shores - and these times. As we will hear shortly - Western Europe has a tradition of non-religious ethical thinking that can be traced back at least 2,500 years.

And The IHEU [International Humanist and Ethical Union] is the global union of over 100 – Humanist – Rationalist – Secular - Ethical Culture - Atheist and Freethought organizations ... in more than 40 countries.

We make no apology for organising these 'Outreach' events.

Experience teaches us that a great many people - hitherto unaware of the existence of groups such as ours - strongly identify with our core values.

We are certainly not looking to persuade anybody away from – or abandon - whatever religious faith they freely hold – but anyone who comes to the conclusion that they share our outlook - and wish to join us - will be made very welcome.

What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

Cumbria Humanists

www.cumbria-humanists.org.uk

7.30 Wed 21 July - Eden Rural Foyer - Penrith
Jane Yates will talk about "Including non-religious perspectives in the primary curriculum"- (Jane, teaches philosophy to her primary school pupils as an alternative to RE).

Isle of Man Freethinkers

www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk

13.00 Sun 11 July - Morton Hall, Onchan
Summer Garden Party - bring something for the buffet.
12.00 Thurs 15 July: **Lunch** Alessandros Restaurant, Douglas

Liverpool Humanists

<http://livehum.org>

7.30 Wed 14 July: **No Activity Scheduled [Yet!]**

Greater Manchester Humanists

<http://gmh.humanist.org.uk>

7pm Wed 14 July: Friends Meeting House, Mount St, M2 5NS
No Activity Scheduled [Yet!]

South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists

www.humanists.org.uk

7.30 Thurs 22 July: **No Activity Scheduled [Yet!]**

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire

www.wyhumanists.org.uk

7pm Thurs 8 July: Swarthmore, 3-7 Woodhouse Sq, Leeds
LS3 1AD

No Activity Scheduled [Yet!]

Amnesty Preston

www.preston.amnesty.org.uk

7.30pm Mon 12 July: St Augustines Parish House,
St Augustines Place. Preston
No Activity Scheduled / visit website

Lytham St Annes & Blackpool Amnesty

7.30pm Mon 4 July: Church Rd Centre Methodist Church;
Church Rd, St Annes.

Don't Forget - If you have trouble parking at Great Eccleston for our meetings you can use The Farmers Arms Car Park

** With apologies - the [hyperlinks](#) are for those reading this 'on-line' **