

As usual there is more to say than space to say it ... but I've tried to include as wide-a-spectrum as possible so there's something for everyone.

For example there's an encouraging number of local activities - Courses - Lectures - Conferences - Even a camping weekend (with a bar!) - (p.3 & 4).

A report on July's meeting - the **LSH** Charity Quiz Night (p.3) and here (p.1) you'll discover what we're up to on 18th August - which I hope will get the 'wudda-shudda-cudda' among us thinking about those subjects we've not yet addressed ... Because this is your chance to raise anything you like ... What's more - you can't be heckled or shouted down.

There's an amusing article on retroactive praying from 'New Scientist' - (p.2) - which [leaving aside the very dubious ethics] could also provide hours of fun simply contemplating the 'what ifs?'

Read about a Heysham boy who'll be driven to school every day - despite living right next door to one - because his parents were too slow branding him a Christian ... at four years old! (p.2)

Faith schools feature again (p.4-5) this time its Sex Education and (page 5) a Preston Faith School so careful about the socio-economic origins of its intake it has had to be ordered to be more inclusive You'll find an update on the 'Protest the Pope' campaign there too.

Our 2nd 'Outreach Event' talk - Kath Wayland's 'History of Humanism' - is reproduced (p.6) and between all the pages there are our usual features [What other groups do - cartoons - jokes - quick quotes] ... Enjoy!

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Getcha Dibs In For Our Pecha Kutcha

Something to get off your chest?
Fancy having a good old rant?
Got a hobby to share?
A song to sing?
A dance to demonstrate?
A monologue to recite?
Ever wanted to just say something without being interrupted?

Well Here's Your Chance!

Pecha Kutcha is Japanese for Chit-Chat.
It was originally developed as an antidote to those interminable 'Power-Point' presentations many of us have been condemned to sit / yawn through.

The rules were simplicity itself:

You were only allowed to display 20 slides

Each slide could only be displayed for 20 seconds

20 slides X 20 seconds = 6 Minutes 40 seconds

And that's it!

So - our version of Pecha Kutcha is based on that 'time limit' ... 'Not' power point presentation!

Each speaker has up to 6.min 40.secs to use in any way they choose . . . **And No More!**

When the bell sounds they have to stop ... mid-sentence or not.

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..... *Pecha Kutcha ...continued*

Speak - tell - show - perform ... it's up to you.

The beauty of this event becomes more evident the more you think about it.

6:40 means you get to hear / see lots of different subjects.

6:40 means you can speak - etc; and no one can interrupt you.

6:40 means you know it's going to end soon - if you aren't enjoying a particular item!

[As a rough guide 6min. 40sec is around 900 words]

Get your name down if you want to speak

[Weather permitting] we'll be in the award- winning gardens at Great Eccleston Village Centre.

It will be a 'Jacob's Join'* - why don't you bring a bottle of 'something' (*whatever tickles your fancy*)

Members £2 non-members £3 (*room hire - tea / coffee etc*).

Plus our usual 'Raffle' - to raise funds for LSH

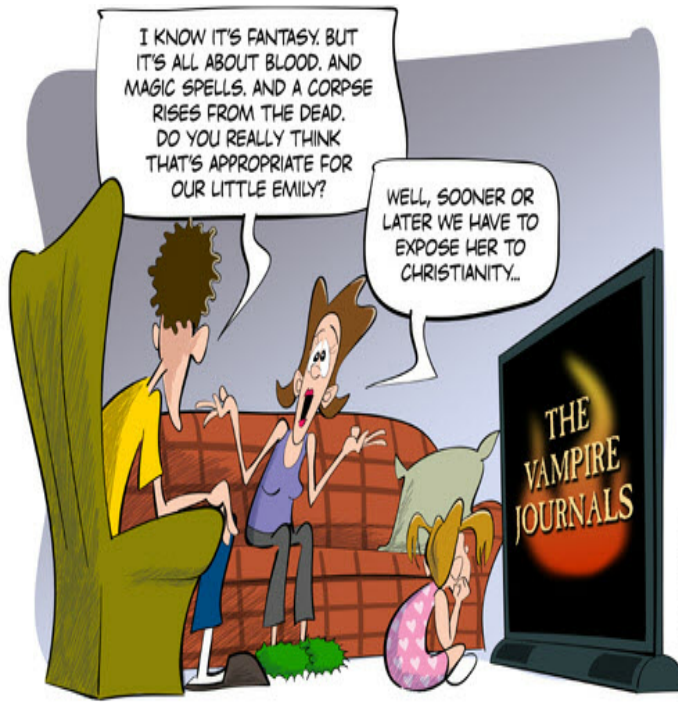
7.30pm, Wednesday 18th August 2010
Great Eccleston Village Centre; 59 High St,
Great Eccleston, Preston PR3 0YB

*'Jacob's Join' - a term used in rural Lancashire and parts of Yorkshire to describe the food equivalent of a bottle party ... In other words - a communal meal where everybody brings a dish of something they like and is happy to share - and takes pot luck with what else is there.

No place for 4-yr-old in school next door

- Because his Parent's didn't sign him up as a card-carrying Christian quite soon enough!

From article in Lancashire Evening Post - Mon. 19 July



Pray now to get better yesterday

From 'New Scientist Magazine' - 14 July 2010

QUITE why David Kemmish was looking for studies on the medical effects of prayer we do not know, but we are as delighted as he was to be reminded of the nine-year-old paper "Effects of remote, retroactive intercessory prayer on outcomes in patients with bloodstream infection: randomised controlled trial" by Leonard Leibovici, then at the Rabin Medical Center at Petah-Tiqva, Israel.

It seems surprising that this paper, published in the prestigious *British Medical Journal* in December 2001 ([vol 323, p 1450](#)), didn't create more of a stir at the time.

It appears to show that prayer is associated with shorter stays in hospital and quicker recoveries from fever.

However, as David points out, "the keyword is 'retroactive' - the patients were treated between 1990 - 96 but the prayers were said in July 2000.

Apparently this works because God is 'not limited by linear time'."

We are bound to point out here that any result reported with, say, a 95 per cent confidence level (the standard for social science studies) has, by definition, a 1 in 20 chance of being utter nonsense.

On the other hand, what if the effect were real?

Do we have to convert before we pray for, say, Mary Wollstonecraft (Mary Shelley's mother) to have recovered from her septicaemia in 1797? If we succeeded, would we risk un-writing *Frankenstein*?

Might prayer work for outcomes other than length of stay in hospital?

What if we pray, most faithfully, for Abraham to have said "no way, Yahweh" and we thereby manage to un-found an entire family of religions?

A Heysham family lives so close to their local school that they share the same garden wall.

But this September, Karen Gillespie, 41, will be forced to make a three mile round trip by car every day to take her four-year-old son Hal to school despite living next door to St Peter's CE Primary*.

Karen says she was told location would be an important factor in deciding whether or not Hal would be granted a place at the CoFE school but school chiefs insist location is not an over-riding factor and the criteria is clearly and set out by the LEA, the diocese and the school's governing body.

Why? Well because Hal wasn't baptised at the time of application last August, therefore did not fulfil the criteria: even though he now is - and has been attending Sunday School at St John's since March.

Because the school was over-subscribed other children living much further away whose parents can claim [or feign] a commitment to Christianity have been prioritised and Hal will have to travel to another school.

**A voluntary aided school ... state-funded but in which a foundation or trust (usually a religious organisation), owns the school buildings, contributes to building costs and has a substantial influence in the running of the school. Such schools have more autonomy than voluntary controlled schools, which are entirely funded by the state.*

So – even though St Peter's Primary School is [to all intents and purposes] paid for and maintained by all council tax paying residents of Lancashire – it is the Church which once made a minimal financial contribution [only] to the initial school building costs [in 1974] who has the last word about who does or does not get privileged access to education.

In the event of over-subscription the Schools admissions criteria is as follows:

1. All children in Public Care.
2. All children with medical or social need, for whom professional support of the required character is available at the school.
3. All children with a parent/guardian involved in the worship of a church in membership of Churches Together in England.
 - a) Those involved in the worship of St. Peter's Parish
 - b) Those involved in the worship of other churches in Membership of churches together in England
4. Children who have a sibling attending the school on the date of application and on the date of admission.
5. Parents who are resident in the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. Peter's but do not attend Church regularly i.e. less than Once a month and whose child has been baptised in a church in membership of Churches Together in England.
6. Parents who are resident outside the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. Peter's and are not included in Criterion 3 but whose child has been baptised in a church in membership of Churches Together in England.
7. Other children.

Introduction to Humanism course.

LSH are hosting a '**Introduction to Humanism**' course September / October. 2010.

If the experience of Manchester Humanists is any indication this will become a popular annual event.

It will be held on three consecutive Sat. mornings 25th Sept.; 2nd Oct and 9th Oct. [10am – 1pm] in the Committee Room; Great Eccleston Village Centre.

We are indebted to GMH's Robin Grinter who has generously agreed to run this – our first – course.

Robin is a retired lecturer of History and has designed and developed the course himself over the past few years.

It has proved so successful the BHA have now adopted it as their 'Introduction to Humanism' course.

Places are limited - six have already been booked - so let me know as soon as you can if you want to participate in what all reports say is a fascinating and worthwhile course.

The fee hasn't yet been finalised but it will be 'cost only' - based on ten students sharing the three days room hire [3 X £11] - plus Robin's travel expenses [X 3] M/cr - Gt Ecc - M/cr.

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Taking the 'Human' out of 'Humanism' ...

... **IS** the title of this year's BHA Holyoake lecture - delivered by Professor John Harris*.

Date: Thursday 21 October 2010

Venue: St Peter's House, Oxford Rd, Manchester.

Time: Doors open 6pm - lecture will start 6.30pm.

Tickets are £9 (£6 for BHA & GMH members, and £3 for students).

*John Harris is Lord Alliance Professor of Bioethics at Manchester University and has provided the following note on the lecture:

Discovery and innovation are creating new technologies which challenge our notions of humanity to and beyond breaking point. These technologies will improve cognitive powers, extend life expectancy and enable us to interact intimately with machines. It is certain that in the future there will be no more human beings but we may hope that there will still be beings for whom the philosophy of humanism, almost certainly under a new name, is relevant and important.

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Northwest regional conference

In conjunction with the Manchester and Liverpool Humanist groups we are planning a regional conference over the weekend of 22-24 October, ie immediately following the Holyoake Lecture.

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N.W. Conference ... Continued

The theme of our conference is:

'Humanism for the 21st Century'

The conference will take place at the St Thomas Centre, in Ardwick Green, about 12-15 minutes walk from Piccadilly station. [*Ample on-street free parking at the weekend*].

We envisage formal sessions on Saturday [morning & afternoon], and the Sunday morning.

Lunch will be provided on the Saturday, with informal social activities on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

More details - confirmed speakers – breakout sessions – social events etc will be provided in our next newsletter.

It is anticipated that the costs will be around £35 – with a limited number of concessionary tickets available.

Any residual profits from this event will be donated to the [Uganda Humanist Schools Trust](#)

Quick Quote

"As people become more intelligent they care less for preaches and more for teachers"

- Robert G. Ingersoll

The Team With No Name ...

...came out as victors in LSH's Charity Quiz Night - our 'event' for last month's meeting.

[One of that team (*who shall remain nameless*) wanted me to headline this piece 'Andy Gets A Question Right!' – but that seemed a little cruel]

To be fair – they scored a creditable 37 points to take the title [*that's out of 50 – before we get too carried away with admiration*] – although it is a little disconcerting that the team could answer questions as diverse as "*In which game can you score one point for a behind?*" – & – "*Until 12th or 13th Century which city was the capital of England?*" were nevertheless unable to come up with a Team Name for themselves!!!

They more than redeemed themselves however when they generously donated their 'winnings' to our charity – making the money raised for The Rosemere Cancer Centre a creditable £90.

Well done & 'thank you' to everyone who took part!

Every penny will be put to good use benefiting the lives of [who knows how many] others.

'Questival'

Think Camp Quest but for grownups

AHS [National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies] are organising this event with Camp Quest UK & the BHA – and it promises to be fantastic.

What's more - for those of us who frequently complain about 'Londoncentralism' - it's on our doorstep!

Questival is a weekend camping trip organised by AHS along with Leeds Atheist Society - inspired by Camp Quest UK - and sponsored by the BHA.

Unlike Camp Quest, which is aimed at children, Questival is for fully grown atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers and all those who embrace a naturalistic rather than supernatural world view.

The event, whilst aimed mainly at students, is open to adults of all ages.

The weekend features Iszi Lawrence and Rebecca Watson, and the theme will be - **HAVING FUN!**

Questival is running from August 13th to 15th at Dalesbridge in the Yorkshire Dales. Beautifully situated in the Forest of Bowland at the point where it meets the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Dalesbridge offers stunning scenery and an idyllic setting for visitors wishing to stay and enjoy the area.

There are standard outdoor activities such as walking round the Dales, mixed in with the usual Camp Quest inquisition in the form of...

- critical thinking and logical fallacies
- scientific method and pseudo-science
- philosophy
- ethics
- famous freethinkers and world religions
- The Invisible Unicorn Challenge!!!

...plus a bar featuring skeptical stand-up from: Iszi Lawrence and Rebecca Watson!

Iszi, as seen in the Perrier Award winning *The Passion of the Hodgson*, is an 'upbeat' comedian 'with nicely improvised material' which sits well within her intelligent, witty and darkly satirical set.

Her first hour show 'Matter of Tact' was Time Out recommended and London Lite's Comedy Pick. She'll be shortly debuting her second show 'Science Friction'. Radio credits include appearances on BBC Radio 1's *The Milkrun*, BBC radio Oxford's *Breakfast show* and BBC7 as a BBC New Comedy Award semi-finalist, 2005. She has also written and performed for Resonance FM's *The Ten Minute Sketch Show*.

Along with Simon Dunn, Iszi produces the weekly podcast, *Sundays Supplement*.

Rebecca leads a team of skeptical female activists at *Skepchick.org*, hosts the *Curiosity Aroused* podcast, co-hosts the weekly podcast *The Skeptics' Guide to the Universe*, produces pin-up calendars of scientists and skeptics, and attempts to rock harder each year.

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She currently lives in London where she works as a freelance writer in order to fund her hardcore skepticism habit.

There is currently an asteroid orbiting the sun with her name on it.

She does nothing in moderation and hopes it shows.

You can follow her every fascinating move on Twitter: [@rebeccawatson](https://twitter.com/rebeccawatson).

At £30, tickets are a bargain, with all food and soft drinks provided.

All you'll need to bring is yourself, a tent (so come with your mates!) and a sleeping bag!

Don't have a tent of your own?... Other attendees may have large tents with plenty of space, and be willing to share.

Email AHS at treasurer@ahsstudents.org.uk and let them know you are without a tent and they'll see if they can pair you up with someone.

Have a tent with lots of space, or a spare tent entirely?/// They'd love for you to let them know about this too on treasurer@ahsstudents.org.uk as the spare room in your tent may allow someone to come who otherwise wouldn't be able to!"

AHS recommend attendees arrive at Clapham (Nth Yorkshire) train station 16:59 on 13th, and depart 16:08 on 15th... They'll be ferrying people from there to the camp site.

Questival runs from 5pm Fri.13th to 4pm Sun.15th

Tickets are available '**now**' from the [BHA](https://www.bha.org.uk).

Further information can be obtained from:

AHS Rep, Oxford Atheist Society

The AHS, 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD

<http://www.ahsstudents.org.uk>

<http://www.facebook.com/the.ahs>

<http://twitter.com/ahsstudents>

Sex Education & Faith School

From NSS Website
www.secularim.org.uk

The NSS has responded to the National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence (NICE) consultation about guidance for teaching personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) in schools. We are particularly concerned about teaching of sex and relationships in faith schools.

The guidance recognises the need to give young people fact-based information but it also recommends respecting the ethos of the school. In some schools, these two instructions could be in direct conflict.

While some faith schools will teach the subject objectively, in others teaching may be biased by selective use of facts or it may be 'morally' loaded against casual sex and short-term relationships according to doctrine, leaving young people confused and unprepared to protect and discover themselves.

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Sex Education & Faith School ...Continued

They may be ill-informed or too embarrassed to buy contraceptives or to consult health-care professionals about STIs or pregnancy and may not know that what they have been told is inaccurate or partial until it is too late.

They may also be unprepared, isolated and vulnerable to bullying if they discover they are gay.

Baroness Massey of Darwen tabled an amendment to the Academies Bill to take sex education lessons (PSHE) out of the control of school governors and to make them mandatory in all schools.

It was defeated by 80 votes.

Public schools 'not doing enough for poorer children'

By David Williams www.Publicfinance.co.uk
26 July 2010

Top fee-paying schools have been criticised for not doing enough to help children from low-income families, especially compared with their less prestigious counterparts.

A study published today by the Sutton Trust found that the average private school spends 7.8% of its income on bursaries and scholarships.

But the rate falls to 4.3% for those ranked in the top 70 by *The Times*.

Sutton Trust chair Peter Lampl, said the findings were 'concerning'.

He added: *'While partnership and community work are important components of public benefit, bursary provision is perhaps the most effective way independent schools can boost social mobility.'*

The research also casts doubt on faith schools, where typical expenditure on bursaries is 10% below the national average. The study's authors say this 'sits uneasily' with religious schools' claimed commitment to public welfare.

In addition, around half of the sector's spending on free places goes on scholarships – which are not means tested – rather than bursaries, which are reserved for those unable to pay.

The publication follows action from the Charity Commission to force two schools – St Anselm's in Bakewell, Derbyshire, and **Highfield Priory in Preston, Lancashire** – to offer more bursaries for low-income pupils.

Under legislation introduced by the previous Labour government, fee-paying schools must prove they are providing 'public benefit' to maintain their charitable status.

Report author Peter Davies suggested that more government intervention might be required to persuade more schools to do more for social mobility.



The Protest the Pope campaign has announced its large-scale march through London on Saturday 18 September – the day that the Pope will be holding his outdoor mass in Hyde Park.

The protest march will assemble 1pm at Hyde Park Corner – Piccadilly Downslip (*full details will be made available nearer the time*) ... It will then proceed through central London and arrive in the vicinity of Parliament Square (details currently being discussed with New Scotland Yard).

Please put this date in your diary and make every effort to be there.

Spread the news of this event as far as you can.

Local groups might consider getting a coach party to come and if you're coming from outside London and could offer a lift to someone in your area, please let us know and we'll put you in touch.

Before then, a public meeting to form the Richmond Coalition Against the State Visit of the Pope will be held at Richmond Library, Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue, Richmond TW9 1TP on Thursday 12 August at 7.30pm.

This is in response to Ratzinger's first event in London, on Friday 17th September, which will be at St Mary's University College in Twickenham, just down the road from Richmond, where he will talk about his views on Education.

**To obtain your very own 'Pope / Nope' 'T' Shirt go to <http://www.secularism.org.uk/clothing.html>*

A Little Chuckle Muscle Flexer

An atheist buys an ancient lamp at an auction, takes it home, and begins to polish it.

Suddenly, a genie appears, and says, *"I'll grant you three wishes, Master."*

The atheist says, *"I wish I could believe in you."*

The genie snaps his fingers, and suddenly the atheist believes in him.

The atheist says, *"Wow. I wish all atheists would believe this."*

The genie snaps his fingers again, and suddenly atheists all over the world begin to believe in genies.

"What about your third wish?" asks the genie.

"Well," says the atheist, *"I wish for a billion pounds."*

The genie snaps his fingers for a third time, but nothing happens.

"What's wrong?" asks the atheist.

The genie shrugs and says, *"Just because you believe in me, doesn't necessarily mean I exist."*

LSH Outreach – Talk No.2

History of Humanism - Kath Wayland

If you look at any encyclopedia you are likely to find humanism as a term coined to describe a Renaissance movement studying the newly discovered thought of ancient Greece and Rome.

In England the figures most associated with this movement were Erasmus, a Dutch theologian who became professor of Greek at Cambridge, and Sir Thomas More, the celebrated statesman and writer at the court of Henry VIIIth. Neither of these men were what we would call Humanists today.

In Europe in the 17th & 18th centuries a number of freethought groups emerged, but harsh penalties were imposed on non-attendance at church, and these groups failed to flourish.

These penalties, especially in England after the restoration of the monarchy and the end of the divine right of kings, were gradually reduced. This change was accompanied by the steady increase in scientific knowledge at this time.

At the end of the 18th century two events, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, both led to greater freedom of thought and expression, with both countries declaring themselves as secular states

During the 19th century the number and influence of freethinkers in Britain increased further, and in 1866 the National Secular Society was founded. Its main objective was the repeal of laws discriminating against non-believers.

The two most important names in this period were George Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh.

Holyoake edited a magazine called the Reasoner and promoted a bill in Parliament legalising affirmations in court as an alternative to swearing a religious oath. He was the last person in England to be imprisoned, in 1842, for atheism.

Bradlaugh became an MP in 1886, but only after being denied his seat after two previous elections because of his refusal to swear the oath of allegiance. (*I became a JP in 1985, and I had great difficulty persuading the senior clerk that I wished to affirm at the appointment ceremony and that my atheism had no bearing on my ability to dispense justice.*)

In 1881 atheism was given its own voice in this country with the first issue of the Freethinker, a publication which remains today as the voice of the National Secular Society.

Many Humanists are also members of the NSS.

The driving force of subsequent developments in the 20th century was Harold Blackham, who died last year [aged 105]. Originally a practising Christian he led the Ethical Union, concerned that morals would be lost without religion.

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He lost his belief in the scriptural truth of Christianity and was closely involved in the formation of the British Humanist Association in 1963.

The BHA was formed to bring together several small freethought and secular groups, notably the Ethical Union and the Rationalist Press Association, with the aim of providing a single and more effective force.

Significantly, the National Secular Society remained a separate body.

Its goal remains still the removal of all religious privilege and influence in our society.

Many local groups were set up following the creation of the BHA.

In 1964 St Annes Humanists was formed, becoming Blackpool and Fylde Humanists in 1980.

In 2007, largely due to our chairman's enterprise, we decided to try and extend our reach and influence in the area by becoming Lancashire Secular Humanists, and by having a fixed meeting place every month at Gt Eccleston.

What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

Cumbria Humanists

www.cumbria-humanists.org.uk

Sun 15 August 2010: Summer Outdoor Visit and Walk –
Dalemain Ho., nr Penrith. Meet for lunch at
12.30 in the Mediæval Hall Restaurant &
Tearoom, & we'll take it from there

Isle of Man Freethinkers

www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk

12.30 Sun 18th August - Freethinkers 10th Birthday Meal.
Carvery lunch, Hilton Hotel.
Please reserve with Maureen Coleman by July 11.
12.00 Thurs 1 August: Lunch Alessandros Restaurant, Douglas

Liverpool Humanists

<http://livehum.org>

7.30 Thurs 26 August: Summer Social
The 07 Café Bar, 103 Mount Pleasant,
Liverpool L3 5TB

Greater Manchester Humanists

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

7pm Wed 11 August: Friends Meeting Ho., Mount St, M2 5NS
Topics From A Hat

South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists

www.humanists.org.uk

7.30 Thurs 26 August: No Activity Scheduled [Yet!]

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire

www.wyhumanists.org.uk

No Activity Scheduled for August

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' **