

Fergus Kicks off 2011 For LSH

"Is It Possible To Lead A Fulfilled, Meaningful Life Without The Consolations Of Religious Faith?" ... This was the question presenter Ernie Rea put to his panel on the BBC Radio 4 programme Beyond Belief [broadcast Monday 16th August 2010].

The panel tasked with debating that question was:

- **Fergus Stokes** - ex-Baptist Minister; now a Humanist and practising Psycho-therapist.
- **Dr Susan Blackmoor** – visiting Professor in the School of Psychology at The University of Plymouth and Zen practitioner.
- **Cannon Dr Alan Billings** - former director for ethics and religion at The University of Lancaster.

Listen to the debate here* <http://www.lancshumanism.org.uk/beyondBelief.html> [or on the attached cd - for those without internet access] – And you are asked to listen to it before attending the **LSH** Meeting at Great Eccleston Village Centre at **7.30 Wednesday 19th January 2011** – because our guest speaker, Beyond Belief panel member Fergus Stokes will be leading a discussion continuing from where the programme left off.

As always - but with the usual proviso [see 'Small Print' - bottom of page 6] - anyone is welcome to attend and participate in our discussions.

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And Lo! The Humanist Wand of Wisdom - Tipped With The Glittering Tinsel of Truth - Revealed the Facts Behind the Fiction.

There was a definite Pantomime theme, complete with audience participation, to **LSH's** 'Christmas Special' – [A.K.A. our 'December Meeting' – (Wednesday 15th)]. Twelve established traditions were looked at in detail – [The Season itself – Jesus' Birthday – The Nativity – The Three Kings – The Stable & Manger – Virgin Birth – Herod & The Slaughter of The Innocents – Christmas Trees – Mistletoe – Mince Pies & Plum Puddings – Pantomimes – The Christmas Goose] and the merest touch* from **The Humanist Wand of Wisdom - Tipped With The Glittering Tinsel of Truth** – burst the bubbles of delusion to reveal the facts behind the myths.

It was all done with a sense of festive fun helped along by mince pies and a Christmas Raffle in which everyone won something ... **[Eventually!!!]**

The earlier 'Winter Gathering [Social] Event' at Silantro in St Annes on Sunday 12th December was another enjoyable event: it was especially good to see **LSH** members who find it difficult to attend our regular 3rd-Wednesday-of-the-month meetings during the year.

*Although one particular Caledonian among us – clearly more at home with a claymore than a rapier – favoured battering the balloon into submission rather than gently pricking it.



2011 ... Looking For A Resolution? - Join the revolution!

Instead of doing nothing, or doing something for yourself, you can resolve to help others in 2011. And <http://resolution-revolution.org.uk/> can help you.

1 To get started simply have a look at what others are doing or get some fresh ideas. Then register yourself and your resolution on the site.

2 Read about how to stick to your resolutions, including tips about what to aim for and how to reinforce your plan.

3 It's important to share your resolutions to reinforce your goodwill. Add your plan to the Activity stream, tell your friends or family, and share it on Facebook.

... Go to page 4 for more details ...

A shake-up of religious education?

Education bosses at Lancashire County Council are reviewing the RE syllabus in a bid to promote community cohesion, encourage understanding between religions, as well as develop a host of communication skills.

In the 1st stages of the consultation LCC education bosses have revealed that children have asked to get out of the classroom, learn creatively instead of reading from books and to hold religious activities, such as traditional Hindu dancing for example, during lesson time.

During the 5th Lancs SACRE* youth conference around 60 children and young people sat down with teachers and religious leaders to look at what makes good religious education lessons.

The conference was organised for the new syllabus, which will be published and rolled out in 2011, as part of strict Government legislation which states the council must review it.

Helen Harrison, Lancashire Consultant for RE, said: *"RE should not be about reading or writing it is the subject for community cohesion. I think sometimes people misunderstand what RE is about. Skills for the subject include empathy, enquiry, evaluation and understanding which is the idea behind community cohesion in schools. We will be building on four main attitudes, open mindedness, respect for all, appreciation and wonder but we want children to be self aware. We want to build, change and exemplify the current model and incorporate more of a practical element in it. We do part of this with Imams at the mosque visiting schools."*

County Councillor Susie Charles, cabinet member for children and schools, said: *"The teaching of RE is such an important area and we want to get it right. In Lancashire we are lucky to have SACRE to advise us and now we can shape the curriculum according to their wisdom, coupled with the insight of our children and young people."*

[*Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education]

So - Who Are On The SACRE?

The **38** [voting] members who make up the LCC SACRE (as at 20/12/10) is as follows:

5 x Church of England

5 x Islam

4 x The Free Churches Group

[eg. United Reform Church; Salvation Army; Methodist]

2



**The
Committee
Room**

This new 'Committee Room' column will become a regular feature of future **LSH** Newsletters.

All **LSH** Officers and paid-up **LSH** Members qualify as attendees and therefore bona-fide participants in these quarterly 'Committee Meetings'.

It is hoped that this will removed the need to eat into valuable time at our regular monthly meetings with business matters concerning the group.

The **LSH** Committee will be tasked with steering and directing the group; deciding on issues of policy and procedure; determining activities and events; formulating strategies and agreeing expenditure – as well as evaluating any other business **LSH** is either currently involved in; or is considering becoming involved in at any time in the future.

In this column we will report back to Friends of **LSH** [and our wider readership] those non-confidential matters which may be of interest.

LSH Committee meetings will commence at 10.30^{am} on 1st Saturday of each 3rd Calendar month; consequently the dates for 2011 are:

Sat 8th January ... *The 1st Sat in Jan is New Years Day*
Sat 2nd April
Sat 2nd July
Sat 1st October

Until a permanent location has been decided upon the inaugural Committee Meeting will be held at 'Wavecrest', Hackensall Road, Knott End-on-Sea, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire FY6 0AZ

For directions - suggested items for the agenda - and any other queries - contact Ian by phone on 01253 812308 or on mobile 07932 773589 or by e-mail: ian@lancshumanism.org.uk

SACRE ... continued

3 x The Roman Catholic Church

2 x Hinduism

1 x Judaism

1 x Sikhs

1 x Buddhism

= 22 - Religious Representatives.

5 x Teacher Associations

5 x Local Authority

6 x Co-opted Members

[eg. School Governors; Teacher Trainers; NATRE etc

= 16 - 'Others' - some of whom will also have a vested interest in teaching religion!

So did the pope OK condoms?

Prior to the current kerfuffle, Catholic doctrine was devastatingly clear: birth control was not allowed. Then, last summer, Pope Benedict decided to give an interview and answered a question about AIDS prevention by saying ... *in some cases, like that of a male prostitute, using a condom can be a first step in the direction of a moralization, a first assumption of responsibility, on the way toward recovering an awareness that not everything is allowed ...*

So – that's a [tortuously complex but vaguely qualified] 'Yes' ... isn't it?

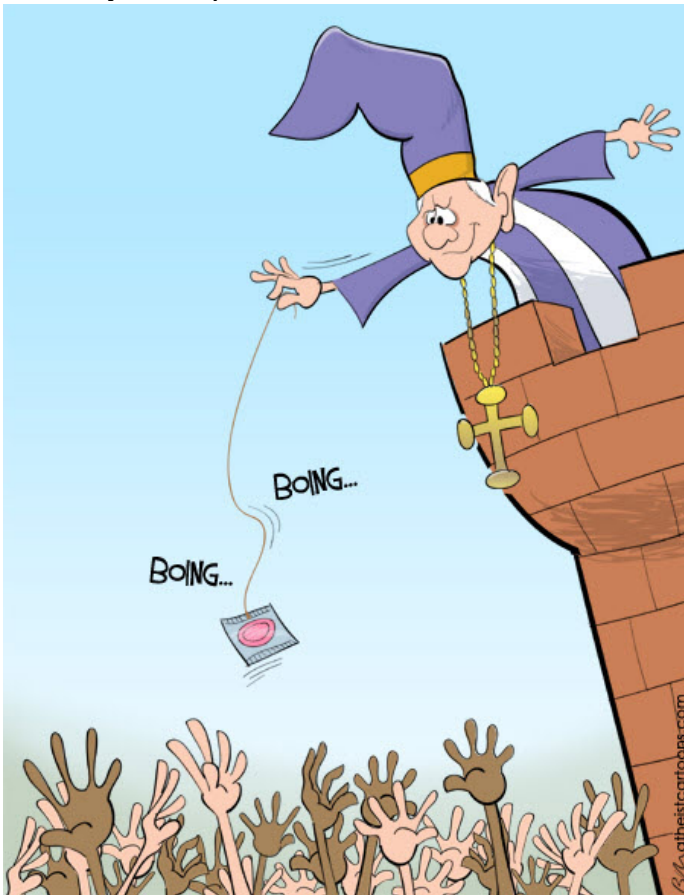
Well - 'No!' Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi, quickly stressed that *"the reasoning of the pope certainly cannot be defined as a change..."* [adding "...such a position had not before been heard 'with such clarity' from the mouth of the pope." ... ?!?!]

O.M.G! - How difficult does it have to be?

Are condoms, as contraceptives, intrinsically evil? Or are they just devices and it is the user's intent which determines whether their use is acceptable?

The Pope certainly appears to be favouring the later. But the Vatican doctrinal office reiterate that the words of the pope *"do not signify a change in Catholic moral teaching or in the pastoral practice of the church."*

There - I hope that's clarified things for you [Ed]



'Men Only' – as far as Burnley & Blackburn Bishops are concerned **'Nothing to do with misogyny [of course]'**

Could you imagine dialogue of this sort being tolerated in any other walk of life in Britain?

If police, fire, health and public sector workers of any hue expressed even the slightest reluctance to embrace sexual equality in the workplace they were [quite rightly] given short shrift.

When golf club secretaries, pub landlords and any number of dyed-in-the-wool chauvinists attempted even feeble resistance they were very rapidly compelled to comply – 'or else!'

And yet [once again] we see Church arguments for being a 'special case' tolerated.

In the wake of the vote by members of the Church of England General Synod to press ahead with the ordination of women bishops Bishop of Burnley, the Rt Rev John Goddard, said his opposition to women bishops *"was not motivated by sexism but a desire to uphold traditional Church of England values."*

After years of agonising prevarication in an attempt to accommodate the inflexible views of a phalanx of fossilised prelates Synod members finally decided ...

... to drag the church, kicking & screaming, into the 20th Century (forget the 21st) and voted to approve work on a statutory national code of practice to accommodate parishes and clergy who object to women bishops on grounds of conscience: but rejected the creation of new diocese for parishes and clergy opposed to women bishops, the preferred option of traditionalists.

Despite the fact that the 'Yes' vote has won support from East Lancashire women vicars; who believe the decision on ordination is a positive step forward, Rt Rev Goddard said the Synod's lack of compromise was a concern. He said: *"I believe that the orders we have received along with the whole scriptures of the church are not ours alone to change, but must be in the nature of the universal church. It's nothing to do with misogyny but the understanding of the church."*

Having voted against the motion, he added that the Synod's decision had made no provision for traditionalists such as himself . . . He was backed by The Bishop of Blackburn, the Rt Rev Nicholas Reade, who has signed a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury saying *"the presence of women bishops could force other clergy away from the church."*

Join the revolution - and make a resolution that counts.

Ideas for school pupils:

- sweep a neighbour's icy path • cook a family meal • reading stories to younger brothers, sisters and cousins • put on a play or panto for friends and family
- collect up old clothes, DVDs and toys and take them to the charity shop. • bake a cake for a relative and take it round for tea • tidy up and clean your room • clean all the shoes • plant bulbs in a pot for the spring • offer to help at the local nature reserve or animal rescue charity • tidy up your garden • tidy up your street – pick up litter/plant some bulbs • help with the school garden • help set up a school vegetable garden • help with the school library • invite a celebrity into school, your favourite author, scientist, musician, politician, artist or actor. • help a relative or neighbour learn to use a computer • teach a younger sister, brother or cousin to play your favourite sport or game • clean the bathroom

Ideas for young people:

- volunteer at a local literacy schemes • donate blood • set up youth sports team / training scheme • organize a summer street party • skills for schools – what can you offer? gardening, class support or help with excursions, play a musical instrument, set up a volunteer register so teachers can contact people who want to help • volunteer and do some mentoring of young people / entrepreneurs / artists / addicts • visiting isolated people – in care homes or hospitals, what about your neighbours or relatives or friends • tend a neglected garden (ask first!) or a patch of council land guerrilla gardening! • volunteer for medical research

Ideas for adults: Ideas and information www.resolution-revolution.org.uk

Be the change you want to see in the world – whatever you are interested in: supporting old people, radio schemes in hospital, mentoring, protecting wild birds, improving nutrition, human rights, young people's football - make the resolution.

The BHA is launching "Resolution Revolution"

over the New Year period - A major new project from which aims to transform the way we make and carry out New Year resolutions.

In response to last year's group survey when some groups indicated that they wanted to do more by way of social action, and Resolution Revolution can form a focal point for charitable and socially-minded group activity.

Resolution Revolution aims to get more people volunteering and doing things to help others and support a more cohesive society with the emphasis very much on things people can do rather than things they pay for or donate to.

Local Groups join the revolution!

Members of local groups can sign up together or individually to make a resolution for 2011. The Resolution Revolution website is the place where people can get ideas, find out more about making effective resolutions, see what others are doing, make pledges and then tell the world how it worked out.

There will be regular updates for participants so that they can see what has happened so far and ensure the momentum is maintained.

Local humanist groups can set up their own pages so they can work collectively on a project.

This is an opportunity for groups to raise their profile both by talking about Resolution Revolution and their group resolution or individual resolutions to their local press in the new year.

Why is the BHA doing it?

One of the main perspectives of the humanist approach is that individual responsibility, social cooperation and mutual respect are vital. By taking positive action, people can solve the problems of society by actively engaging with each other and basing their actions on shared human values.

Human beings helping other human beings is the only help we can receive.

Additionally, the BHA sees the benefit in strong local communities where people are engaged and empowered to take action on issues that affect them.

This project is one way to help build such a society.

Untangling the Web:

2. Blogging

By Helen Cullen-Williams

When we redesigned our website last year, we included a 'blog' in our News section.

The word 'blog' is an abbreviation of 'web log' – a chronological log of entries (like a diary) on the web.

They started to become very popular a few years ago because it is a simple way to keep websites up to date.

Blogs allow anybody with internet access to update them – you don't need any specialist software – so it's ideal for groups like us.

Ian can now add news articles to the blog whenever he wants, without having to wait for the webmaster to do it for him.

If any of you would like to become blog authors we'd welcome your help – just let me know.

Many blogs, including ours, also include an option for readers to comment on articles.

It's a great way to get conversation going with our supporters and others.

We recently had a critical comment from an outraged Christian about our "Real Meaning of Christmas" meeting. We welcome such debate on our blog and hope to get more in future.

The other advantage for us is that search engines (such as Google, Yahoo, Ask) really like blogs because they're very simple pages with lots of text in chronological order.

There's no fancy graphics or complicated layouts. So it means people are more likely to find a blog on search engines – and more likely to find us! (I'll explain more about this in a future article on 'search optimisation'.)

If you're not taken a look at our blog yet, you can find it at www.lancshumanism.org.uk/blog.html.

Have a read, make some comments, get involved!

Majority of people in Britain now say they are non-religious!

2010 was one in which the new government heavily emphasised its pro-Christian credentials.

As the 2011 begins, the B.H.A. has welcomed the findings of latest British Social Attitudes survey that, for the first time, the majority of people in Britain now say they are non-religious . . .

Continued next column ...

5 . . . and expressed hopes that the results will cause government to take a fairer and more measured approach.

Their latest survey, just published but conducted in 2009, shows only 43.7% of people claiming to be Christian while 50.7% say they are non-religious. Just 5% belong to non-Christian religions - almost half of them Muslim.

This marks a huge change since BSA first asked the question in 1985, when Christians totalled 63% and the non-religious 34%.

Since then there has been an unsteady progress: the previous highest figure was 46.1% in 2006 but in 2008 it was only 43.4%.

The survey asked also about religious upbringing. The answers show that more than 4 in 10 of those who had a Christian upbringing have abandoned the religion, while barely 1 in 3 of today's non-religious had a non-religious upbringing. (Figures for non-Christian religions show very little difference between current religion and family religion.)

Commenting, Andrew Copson, BHA Chief Executive, said:

'The trend in Britain is clearly still one of increasing non-religious self-identity and hopefully we will see some reflection of this in this year's decennial Census.

Unfortunately, The leading question 'What is your religion?' meant that lots of people ticked the 'Christian' or another religious box even though they do not worship or believe.

We are encouraging those with only a cultural connection to Christianity but no actual religious belief to answer 'No religion' in the Census in March.

In the meantime, figures such as those provided by the British Social Attitudes Survey are a necessary counter to unreliable census figures, which have been persistently misused to justify funding of religious organisations and exempting them from non-discrimination laws in the last few years.'

Naomi Phillips, BHA Head of Public Affairs commented,

'It is time the Government took note of the growing number of people, now apparently the majority, who have no religion.

It should stop favouring religious organisations and religious schools with opt-outs and exemptions from the law.'

Even More Reason To Tell Everybody You Know To Answer The Census Question Properly - After All - Over Half Of Everybody You Know Is Likely To Be Non-Religious - And That Needs To Be Recorded -

National Census Day

27th March 2011

Not Many Months Left To Impress On Family & Friends This Important Message

**IF YOU'RE
NOT
RELIGIOUS
FOR GOD'S
SAKE SAY
SO**

It is very important that you answer the question on religion!

It is important that the Census generates accurate figures.

It is used to legitimise resource allocation and policy . . .

The more people who tick the 'No Religion' box, the less inaccurate 'evidence' there is that government should listen to religious groups and leaders over and above other groups.

➤ **There** will be no negative repercussions on you personally if you do . . . The Census isn't interested in you personally - it is used to find general themes in the population. Although it is not anonymous, personal data will not be traced back to you in any analysis so there should be very limited issues about privacy.

➤ **You** will be affected by negative use of the data. Social policy, services and government action affects everyone.

➤ **This** may be the last Census ever held - if we get inaccurate data we may be stuck with it forever!

➤ **An** increased percentage of non-religious people will mean an increased voice for your issues as a non-religious person in society, particularly in equality work and education.

More information is available on the BHA campaign is available here
<http://census-campaign.org.uk>

Beyond Belief

*For some reason there is a short pause in the recording
[from 1^{min}.17^{sec} to 1^{min}.27^{sec}].
No dialogue is lost – it was just a glitch in the download.

LSH Meetings - The Small Print

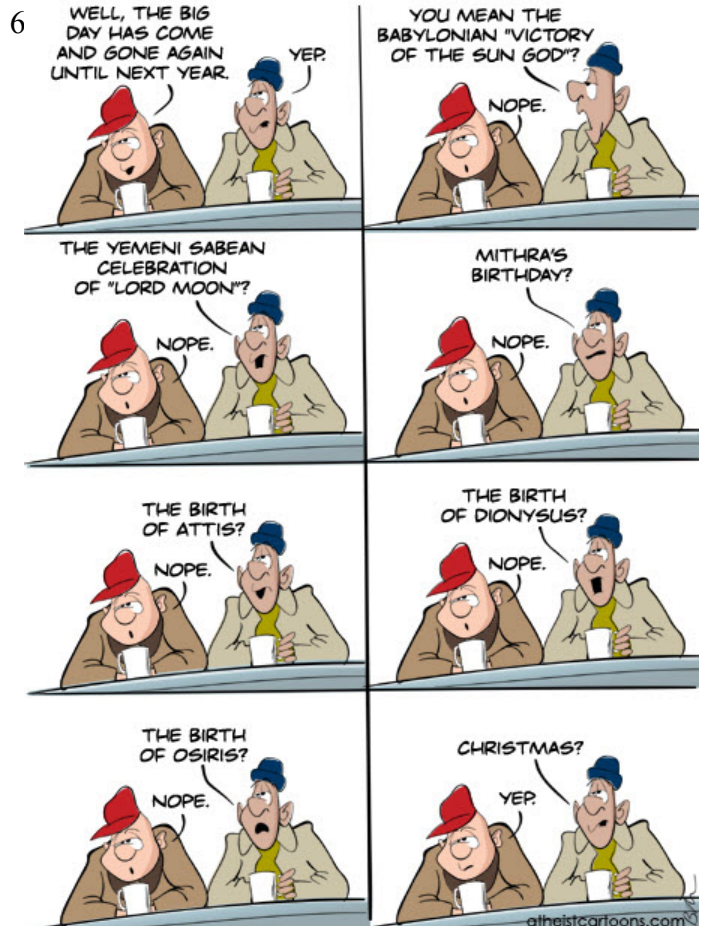
Lancashire Secular Humanists is a group for free-thinking individuals living lives informed by **Logic**, **Science** & **Humanity**

All **LSH** meetings are 'open' meetings. Anyone is invited to join in our discussions regardless of whether they are humanist – secularist – religious – undecided – or [just] interested.

We are people who 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 in defence of a contention.

Being freethinkers there are many things we secular humanists will not agree on between ourselves, but there are matters on which we do take a firm and unanimous stand ...

We do not condone discrimination of any sort - nor do we hate religious people ... Such views are entirely contrary to any humanist philosophy and we reserve the right to exclude any person promoting them!



What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

Cumbria Humanists

www.cumbria-humanists.org.uk

7 - 7.30 Thurs 20 Jan - Eden Rural Foyer; Penrith
Annual General Meeting

Isle of Man Freethinkers

www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk

2.30 Sun 9 Jan - Morton Hall in Onchan
Discussion: "Belief Into Action" - How belief affects everyday life.
Four members to speak and lead discussion.
12.00 Thurs 20 Jan: Lunch Alessandros Restaurant, Douglas

Liverpool Humanists

<http://livehum.org>

No details posted yet - for update see website

Greater Manchester Humanists

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

7pm Wed 12 Jan: Friends Meeting Ho, Mount St, M2 5N
'Rules For Living' - Talk by Barry Thorpe.

South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists

www.humanists.org.uk

Meetings start at 7.30pm - Details of January's meeting not yet posted - see website for further info.

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire

www.wyhumanists.org.uk

7pm Thus 13 Jan: Swathmore 3-7 Woodhouse Sq. Leeds,
Dignity in Dying - Nicola Swan [DiD Director]

Amnesty Preston

www.preston.amnesty.org.uk

7.30pm Mon 10 Jan: St Augustines Parish House,
St Augustines Place. Preston

Lytham St Annes & Blackpool Amnesty

www.amnesty.org.uk/lytham

7.30pm Mon 3 Jan: Church Rd Centre Methodist Church;
St Annes. FY8 5PX

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'