

One Final Push!

The BHA's census campaign gathers momentum as the big day looms.

The 2011 National Census takes place on Sunday March 27th and all the activity designed to raise awareness of the message '**IF YOU'RE NOT RELIGIOUS FOR GOD'S SAKE SAY SO**' is coming to ahead.

The BHA will hold a Press Launch on Friday 4th March – followed by a weekend of action in London commencing Friday 11th March.

LSH is doing its bit:

- We have David Bridley's fantastic [UK CENSUS 2011](#) YouTube video with over 1,800 'hits' already - and set to rise when the publicity begins to kick in on the run-up to the Census day.
- We were invited into Preston.fm (Community Radio) for an hour-long discussion on Humanism & **LSH** in general and the Census campaign in particular.
- We took part in a telephone interview with Joe Wilson over the census campaign on BBC Radio Lancashire's Sunday Morning programme.
- We've now commenced a letter-writing campaign to all the local press.
- We are about to issue our own Press Release.
- We'll be taking to the streets of Preston to coincide with the BHA's 'Weekend of Action' handing out census campaign leaflets to passers-by in the city centre; taking any opportunity to enter into dialogue and explain more fully the key messages:
 - The 2011 census will take place on 27th March
 - The 2001 census measured 72% of the population as Christian and only 15% as non-religious.
 - The latest (2009) British Social Attitudes Survey measured only 43% of the population as Christian, and 51% as non-religious.
 - A major reason for this difference is that the census asks a leading question ('What Is Your Religion?'), and so gets a higher number of religious responses. The BHA have lobbied for a change in the question but to no avail.
 - This is Bad News because the census data is used to justify lots of policies (*increase in Faith Schools - the continuation of collective worship in schools - the public funding of faith-based organisations - suggestions of an increase in the role of faith under the coalition government - the appointments of government advisors on faith - contracting out public services to religious organisations - keeping 26 Bishops in the House of Lords - high number of hours of religious broadcasting - specific consultation with 'faith communities' - continued privileges for religious groups in equality law and other legislation*) on a national & local level: if it's inaccurate Governments are making important decisions with bad data.
 - We want people to think carefully about which box they tick and if they are not religious, to say so on this year's census.
- **LSH's** meeting in March will be given over to a 'Public Meeting' inviting local MP's & Councillors to explain to the general public just how the information gleaned by the census is instrumental in deciding where resources are best applied and what the various priorities should be.

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LSH's Car Window Sticker

Our on-line marketing officer Helen (*ably assisted by husband Chris*) has again been applying her considerable talents in the service of **LSH**.

Not only does Helen, along with David Bridley, take credit for our 'Award Winning' **LSH** website – she has also designed our very own ground-breaking Humanist Funerals advertisement [*see pg 3*] and is now working on a design for a Car-Window Sticker to raise our **LSH** group profile even more.

Settling on just the right look and message is trickier than you might think – and a good discussion is currently taking place about this subject [*go to our website home-page and click 'Forum'*]

As well this particular thread you will discover many other issues being debated there ... feel free to jump in and share your views.

Cold Reading

There have been a number of conversations / book exchanges – at recent LSH meetings about Cold Reading ... There's an excellent series of six discussions between Derren Brown & Richard Dawkins on that very subject on You Tube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xswt8B8-UTM&feature=BF&list=SP55A986E56B106611&index=1>

Includes a great line from Derren "... I wanted to defend my non-belief as strongly as I should have been able to defend it as a believer"

Darwin Day Lecture – In Preston And It's Free!

Thanks to LSH Member Julie Humphrey for bring this to our attention - see poster below.

Details are below along with a [very] brief bio of Prof. Nicholas Humphrey.

You can see four ten-minute discussions between him and Richard Dawkins here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQcwbnsHxWk&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=SP2C2ECE701B589981

I have reserved six tickets for LSH – for anybody not 'on-line' who wants to attend but is unable to obtain tickets via the e-mail booking form. Just let me know – as soon as possible – [two have already been claimed but it should be relatively easy to reserve more if need be]

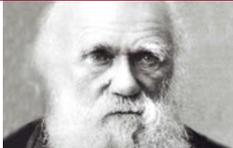
Don't forget

7pm Monday March 7th

University of Central Lancashire

See You There.

Darwin Day Celebration Lecture 2011



School of Psychology

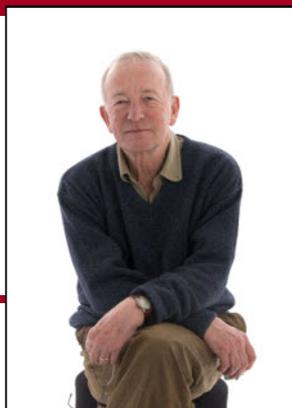


SOUL DUST The Magic of Consciousness

by **Nicholas Humphrey**
Emeritus Professor of Psychology,
London School of Economics

Darwin Lecture Theatre
7 March, 7.00-9.00pm
(free refreshments from 6.00)

All welcome! For free tickets, visit
<http://darwinday.eventsbot.com>



Nicholas Humphrey is known for his work on the evolution of human intelligence and consciousness. He also studied mountain gorillas with Dian Fossey in Rwanda, was the first to demonstrate the existence of "blindsight" after brain damage in monkeys, and is the only scientist ever to edit the literary journal *Granta*.

For more information, visit www.uclan.ac.uk/darwin
or email [Mike Eslea mjeslea@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:Mike.Eslea@uclan.ac.uk)

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From
The
Committee
Room

Next LSH Committee Meeting 10.30am Sat 2nd April 2011
Meeting Room – Great Eccleston Village Centre
All 'paid-up' LSH members welcome

Remember Our Part in Preston's Interfaith Week?... Preston City Council Don't!

For the second year running the non-religious have been marginalised and ignored in a multi-faith event staged by Preston City Council - The declared aims of which were to:

... Encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other ... Increase understanding between people of religious & nonreligious beliefs ... Encourage the development of new partnerships within local communities and by faith.

In 2009 we were one of the few exhibitors to fully staff a display stand all week with volunteers on hand to answer questions and hand out literature.

We later complained after a Preston City Councillor and a Muslim speaker, addressing schoolchildren on the opening day, completely disregarded the non-religious sections of society – despite the fact that we were stood there **and** they'd visited our stand!

First the Councillor informed the children "- although there were many different people participating in the event the one thing we all have in common is our belief in God" ...

Then the Muslim lady told them the Census [2001] revealed that "... after Christians; the next biggest group in Britain were Muslims" – ignoring the fact that the next biggest group were in fact 'No-religion'.

Not only was no apology forthcoming - our letter wasn't even acknowledged!

Undeterred we agreed to participate again in 2010: We set up our freestanding display in County Hall on Tues 23rd Nov. – ahead of the 'Faith at Work' briefing session organised for Wed 24th. When we collected it we were informed our stand had received a lot of interest from visitors attending the event.

However Preston City Council's recently published report makes no mention of Humanist participation *Bloody Hell*, even the Christian Scientists got a mention – viewed by many as a dangerous Cult!

The event is to take place again this year [20 - 26 Nov].

I think this time we will be speaking with the press instead . . . about why we are not taking part!

... LSH say "When Preston City Council say - **'All Religions & Non'** what they really mean is - **'All Religions & No-one Else'**!"

A 'First' in Lancashire?

A Prominent Fylde Coast funeral director Box Bros has specifically invited LSH to submit an advertisement for Humanist funeral ceremonies to be included in their— soon to be published — new company brochure.

Every family Box Bros deals with will automatically receive the brochure which, as well as providing information about their own specific services, also offers advice and support along with particulars of a wide range of associated issues: from dealing with the coroner and legal issues (such as sorting out the deceased's estate): to caskets, flowers & memorials – and now; informing recently bereaved families about Humanist Funerals too.

As far as we know, Box Bros is the first major independent [regional] funeral director to take a step such as specifically recommending Humanist Ceremonies as viable alternative to religious funerals.

LSH's new on-line marketing officer [Helen Cullen-Williams] has worked very hard on the design (below) and we are looking forward to seeing the fruits of her labours in print and in circulation.

www.boxbrosfuneraldirectors.co.uk



Celebrate Their Life

For a personalised ceremony that celebrates the life of your loved one ask about a Humanist funeral.

www.lancshumanism.org.uk/funerals

A non-religious alternative

 Lancashire Secular Humanists

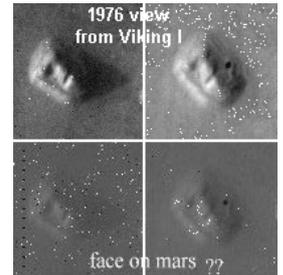
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Quick Dictionary Corner

'Apophenia': [*a-POH-feenee-a*] - the experience of seeing meaningful patterns or connections in random or meaningless data. The term was coined in 1958 by Klaus Conrad (psychiatrist) who defined it as the "*unmotivated seeing of connections*" accompanied by a "*specific experience of an abnormal meaningfulness*".

'Pareidolia': [*parr-i-DOH-lee-a*] - a type of apophenia involving the finding of images or sounds in random stimuli. For example, hearing a ringing phone while taking a shower. *The noise produced by the running water gives a random background from which the patterned sound of a ringing phone might be "produced"*.

A far more common human experience is perceiving faces in inanimate objects. Such as these 'faces' seen on Mars sent back from the Viking 1.



And we're all familiar with the face of Jesus on burned toast or The Virgin Mary in a cinnamon bun.

Here's a question for you - when you look at the full moon do you see a human face or a rabbit / hare?

Your Inhumanly Slaughtered Food Is Wrong! *But Your Inhumanly Slaughtered Food Is Alright?*

The Church of England is risking accusations of Islamophobia after telling its schools that they should not serve halal food without an alternative being available: after it was revealed that some CofE schools are only serving meat that has been ritually slaughtered according to Islamic law.

Interestingly the Church did not raise objections to the Jewish equivalent of halal — shechita — in which animals are killed in exactly the same way, by having their throats cut and being allowed to bleed to death while conscious.

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said:

We agree that meat slaughtered in ways considered unnecessarily cruel by the Government's advisory body the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) should be labelled clearly so that an ethical choice can be made. And we are actively campaigning for this at the moment. But we think this should apply to Jewish shechita meat, too. It seems those in the Church of England who are raising these objections are doing so in a discriminatory fashion.

Terry also pointed out that some so-called Church of England schools in the north-west of England already had 95% Muslim pupils.

Is 'Your' Religion 'Unknown' or 'Undisclosed'?

Copied below is the complaint submitted by **LSH** to Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Hospitals Foundation:

A member of Lancashire Secular Humanist recently attended Blackpool Hospital Outpatients and whilst there decided to review those details the hospital has about them – specifically how their 'religion' is categorised.

As you are probably aware the 2011 Census is imminent and LSH has been involved in raising awareness of the need for people to answer the 'Religion' question accurately:

"If you're not religious tick 'No Religion'"

Particularly as the recent [comprehensive] British Social Attitudes Survey shows that 50.7% of the population are non-religious whereas the [single] 2001 census question put that figure as 15%.

My complaint is that this LSH member tells me their religion is shown on your records as 'Unknown'.

Seeking to correct this inaccuracy they discovered there is no option to put Atheist - Humanist - Secularist or even No-Religion.

All that was available was the misleading and inaccurate 'Unknown' or [even worse] 'Undisclosed'.

Could you please confirm that this is the case?

And if so – will you confirm that you will take steps to correct this oversight?

Please bear in mind that most people who decide they're not religious have usually had to reject a religious faith imposed on them since childhood.

The majority of these people reject religion on intellectual grounds but there will be some [who knows how many] who've been hurt – even damaged – by religion.

Removing from these people the opportunity to accurately declare their position on religion is at best insensitive – at worst it might be upsetting - even offensive.

*Regards
Ian Abbott*

Chair – Lancashire Secular Humanists

That complaint was submitted on 4th February.

On 16th February I received this reply:

*Dear Mr Abbott ... Thank you for your email. It was sent to our Chaplaincy department, however, it should also have been sent to our Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) as is Trust policy with any complaint received ... It has today been forwarded to PALS for their urgent attention/action. Apologies for the delay in this happening. Regards ... Communications Department
Blackpool Victoria Hospital*

And 'Yes' you've guessed it - I'm still waiting to hear the outcome of PALS 'urgent attention'!

Teachers Oppose New Lancashire Academies

Six teaching unions have united to oppose plans by the Church of England in Lancashire to convert all its high schools in the county to academies. The unions argue that this will drain money from other schools that choose to remain under local authority control.

St Wilfrid's CofE High School Technology College, Blackburn; and St Christopher's CofE High School, Accrington, have already announced that they are interested in becoming academies.

Bids are also expected to be made by: Bishop Rawstone CofE High School, Croston; St. Michael's CofE High School, Chorley; Ripley St Thomas CofE High School, Lancaster and St Aidans CofE High School, Preesall.

The National Union of Teachers, NASUWT, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, along with UNISON, Unite and GMB have all teamed up to fight the plans, reasoning that additional money will be taken from the budget for other schools and given to those which convert.

Becoming an academy allows schools to control their own budgets but also endows them with additional benefits such as developing their own curriculum [including RE] and taking full control of their admissions.

John Girdley, national executive member and Lancashire representative for the NASUWT, said: *This is like robbing Peter to pay Paul.*

I am concerned that schools that set such store by the local family of church schools have not seen that their proposals could lead to other church schools, and in particular their local feeder primary schools, losing money. There is a lot of disquiet among our members in these schools.

Ken Cridland, Lancashire secretary of the NUT, said:

I am surprised that Church of England schools are putting their own interests before those of others. It simply doesn't seem to fit into the Christian ethos.

LSH Meeting for March ...

... Will be a '**Public Meeting**' entirely given over to the 2011 Census:

- Why such an expensive and elaborate exercise is deemed necessary?
- How the information gleaned is used?
- Is this indeed to be the last one?
- What will replace it?
- What do you say to Big-brother conspiracy theorists and anti-bureaucracy campaigners?

**7.30pm Wednesday 16th March
Great Eccleston Village Centre PR3 0YB**

Lancashire Solicitors Attacked Over Sharia law 5

Emmetts solicitors [offices in Preston & Longridge], will introduce a new service for Muslim clients who want advice on matters such as divorce or child custody according to both UK Civil and Sharia law.

The Family Law service will be delivered by trainee solicitor Farah Razaq and paralegal Sidra Ghani.

Farah Razaq told *Asian Image* magazine:

"The service will focus upon divorce in accordance with Sharia Law. Any male or female Muslim who needs a divorce in accordance to Sharia law can come to us and we're here to provide services for them. If a Muslim is married in the UK, then a divorce may require civil proceedings as well as a Sharia divorce. And we deal with both matters."

Sidra Ghani added:

"We're also offering services for those clients who have unfortunately been involved in forced marriages, either here or abroad. We're very passionate about the new service. We will be dealing with very sensitive matters and real people. There aren't many solicitors who deal with this service overseeing both sharia law as well as civil proceedings. We feel that this will be an important consideration for Muslim clients when choosing a law firm that deals with family law legal advice."

However Maryam Namazie, leader of the One Law for All campaign reacted furiously, saying:

"It is scandalous that lawyers meant to defend rights are now set on violating them by recognising and pandering to sharia law decisions on women. Under Sharia, a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's,

Men can unilaterally divorce by uttering a certain phrase thrice whilst it is often difficult for women to secure divorces.

Marital rape is not considered a crime and violence against a disobedient wife a husband's prerogative. With regard to child custody – under UK civil law, the welfare of the child is paramount, whilst under sharia child custody goes to the father at a preset age - irrespective of the child's welfare.

Sharia law and UK civil law (however imperfect) are antithetical to each other so how can both be applied? In an ideal world, lawyers applying Sharia law would be disbarred. After all, the same would happen to doctors who hurt rather than helped their patients."

Lawyer Anne Marie Waters, a spokesperson for the One Law for All campaign, commented:

"As Solicitors, Emmetts should be fully aware that sharia law fails the human rights test quite spectacularly. Rather than promoting the use of sharia, solicitors should remain true to their vow to uphold the law and to act in the best interests of their clients – including their female clients."

Hard Times & Bleak Expectations

We're all aware of the difficulties ahead – for everybody (*well – almost everybody*) - but the brutal fact is that it takes money [as well as commitment] for any group to survive: let alone grow and thrive.

LSH members have always been generous and things such as donating prizes for our monthly raffle have gone a long way to swelling our coffers.

One other very simple thing everyone on-line can do is raise funds for **LSH** when you search the web.

Make **easysearch** your home page - use it every time you search - and **easysearch** will give 50% of the fees paid by their advertising sponsors to **LSH!**

Just 10 searches a day with **easysearch**, will raise around £20 a year - **Now multiply that by 50 supporters!**

As well as raising funds, **easysearch** also gives you the best search results available on Web.

Go to <http://lsh.easysearch.org.uk/> to register as an **LSH** supporter – it's very simple

And it gets better!

There's a link to **easyfundraising** – and once you've registered there too [again - very simple] every purchase you make [via **easyfundraising**] - from almost any high street retailer you can think of - will generate somewhere between 3% & 5% of the total purchase cost for **LSH** ... at no cost to you!

HOW TO DE-STEREOTYPE A MUSLIM WOMAN



A Message from Census Campaign HQ

Dear Lancashire Secular Humanists,

The Census Campaign is going from strength to strength with your vital support.

We have posted to you the leaflets you requested, and can't wait to see and hear about the results.

I had a day out leafleting on Tuesday [22 Feb] and had a great time: people seem to be very receptive to hearing about the campaign. It made me appreciate even more the commitment many of you have made to give up your time to hand out some leaflets: it is just fantastic.

We are charging on with the campaign here in the central office, and are preparing for a big press launch on the 4th March . . . In order for our launch to be maximally effective, it is vital that local news outlets know that people are talking about the issue in their area, and that there is enough public interest to justify them writing an article on it. This is where you come in.

We need you to write letters to your local press.

This is a really critical time in our campaign, and a letter from you could make a really big difference as to whether your local press decides to take up the story of the campaign or not.

We want you to write to the letters page, and say why you will be ticking 'No Religion'.

Separate from our launch, a letter to your local press is a brilliant way to campaign.

The letters page is the second most read (after the front page), allowing just one individual to be able to communicate the message to lots of others with relative ease ... It is also a good way of letting your community know that your group exists, and that you are actively engaged with current affairs.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to do this. There is a sample letter at the bottom of this e-mail incase you get writers block.

Please forward this to all of your members as this is an extremely important action: if everyone wrote just one letter the press won't be able to ignore the voice of the non-religious!

Many thanks in advance and best of luck,
Lizzie

Sir,

I am writing as a supporter of the British Humanist Association. I would like to encourage all readers to think carefully about the question on religion in the upcoming 2011 Census.

The results of the question are used by government, local authorities and service providers to decide how to run services and create policies.

Many people in the last Census ticked the 'Christian' box yet do not hold Christian beliefs, go to Church or identify as Christian in any meaningful way.

By ticking 'Christian' rather than 'No religion' this has influenced central and local government policy.

This has led to an increase in divisive and discriminatory faith

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schools, (which the majority of the population are against), huge amounts of money for 'faith groups' in local areas and the appointment of 'faith advisors' to government departments.

I urge all your readers who do not practice or strongly identify with any particular religion to tick the 'No Religion' box in the Census in March 2011.

In the 2001 Census, 15% of the population identified themselves as non-religious.

However, countless other surveys show that there are many more non-religious people on the UK that are not being properly counted.

As the 2011 Census may be the last one ever held it is doubly important that policy can be based on accurate statistics.

More information is available at www.census-campaign.org.uk

What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

Cumbria Humanists e-mail - oldcodger2@btinternet.com
Sadly Cumbria Humanists is currently disbanded enquiries can be directed to George Weston at the above e-mail address.

Isle of Man Freethinkers www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk
2.30 Sun 13 March - Morton Hall in Onchan
'Does The Bishop Have Too Much Influence on Isle of Man?' - Discussion

Liverpool Humanists <http://livehum.org>
No details posted yet - for update see website

Greater Manchester Humanists <http://gmh.humanist.org.uk>
7pm Wed 9 March: Friends Meeting House, Mount St, M2 5N
'A Historical Survey' - by Robin Grinter.
Vice-Chair - Greater Manchester Humanists.

South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists www.humanists.org.uk
Meetings start at 7.30pm - Details of March's meeting not yet posted - see website for further info.

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire www.wyhumanists.org.uk
7pm Thus 10 March: Swathmore 3-7 Woodhouse Sq. Leeds,
'Humanist Chaplains - For or Against?'

Amnesty Preston www.preston.amnesty.org.uk
7.30pm Mon 14 March: St Augustines Parish House,
St Augustines Place. Preston

Lytham St Annes & Blackpool Amnesty www.amnesty.org.uk/lytham
7.30pm Mon 7 March: Church Rd Centre Methodist Church;
St Annes. FY8 5PX

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!

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'.*