

## 2011 Census - Final Word!

from Ian Abbott - LSH Chair

There is just one last thing I want everyone who put so much effort into LSH's contribution to the BHA's Census Campaign to do ...

Follow these instructions carefully:

**Stretch** out your right arm directly in front of you – parallel to the ground.

**Rotate** your hand so the palm is facing upward.

**Bend** your arm at the elbow and stretch your hand as far over your right shoulder as you can.

**Reach** as far down your back as possible.

**Pat!** - vigorously - as many times as you can - you deserve it!!!

We leafleted Lancaster University.

We leafleted Preston City Centre.

We leafleted door-to-door in Blackpool.

We had articles printed in almost every local paper.

We hosted a Public Meeting with speakers from The Census itself.

We had an hour-long interview on Preston.fm Community Radio.

We had an hour-and-a-half interview on BBC Radio Lancashire.

And we had David's amazingly successful YouTube Video which – by 27<sup>th</sup> March – had well in excess of 6,000 views.

**Fantastically Well Done Everybody!**

## Pareidolia in action!

At the end of a 'spirited' 1½-hour interview; when LSH chairman Ian Abbott was Joe Wilson's studio guest on BBC Radio Lancashire's Sunday Breakfast programme on 20<sup>th</sup> March, Joe made reference to an 'Image of Mary and Jesus' at a Lancashire construction site revealed by the Google Maps satellite: which religious leaders described as 'remarkable' (*well they would say that wouldn't they?*)

Although [to be fair] Rev. Sue Williams, of St Leonards CofE Church in Samlesbury, admitted: "... *with these type of things we usually see what we want to see and I won't be encouraging people to make*



Google Maps Image - Brockholes Nature Reserve under construction

*pilgrimages to Brockholes . It's a lovely image but it is based on a religious and cultural context because people of other faiths may see something totally different."*

Ian pointed out to Joe that it was simply a case of Apophenia - but regular Newsletter readers will know that [strictly speaking] Apophenia is to see meaningful patterns and connections in random data whereas what is being described here is more accurately Pareidolia; a type of apophenia but more about seeing images (rather than connections) in random stimuli.

◀... Anyway - here's the picture.

Coincidentally both words ['Apophenia' and 'Pareidolia'] featured in last months Newsletter. And if you thinks that is in some way 'spooky' - well that really is Apophenia!

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### **Let's Have A Lively debate**

As is [now] usual (*thanks Rachel – she's 40 btw*), **LSH** members adjourned to the local after our March meeting for a well-earned glass-n-a-chat and, as so often happens, a lively discussion developed – the theme of which I'd like to share here.

The proposition was

*'Given that we can only perceive other cultures through the prism of our own culture; what right do we have to impose our [westernised] concepts of right and wrong on those other cultures . . . Specifically – by condemning religious practices that we say [at best] enforces inequality, misogyny and oppression or [at worse] are cruel, abusive, inhumane & barbaric?' . . . Issues around gender equality, tattoos, piercings, facial scarring, genital mutilation, child-witch hunts etc are entirely matters for those cultures to resolve themselves without interference / imposition of western-led values.'*

### **Discuss!**

### **Triumph For Common Sense**

*"We have been excluded because we have moral opinions based on our faith and we feel sidelined because we are Christians..."*

*Eunice Johns*

Cries that sexual equality discriminates against Christians is as daft as claiming racial equality discriminates against The National Front.



*Pentecostal Christians - Owen & Eunice Johns.*

## **From The Committee Room**



Next **LSH** Committee Meeting 09.30am Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2011  
Meeting Room – Great Eccleston Village Centre  
All 'paid-up' **LSH** members welcome

### **Free School for Christian Cult in Lancs**

The Brethren Christian Fellowship has been given the green light by Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove to open a new facility at the former Hornby High School near Lancaster.

The premises closed in summer 2009 as a result of low pupil numbers and poor examination results.

The plan is as a result of the Brethren outgrowing their current Whinfield School in Leyland - which is a converted house.

The Brethren assert that Hornby is a better location for pupils who come from Lancaster and Preston.

The new school, which will be known as Hornby Park School, could open as early as September. It would see about 80 pupils aged between seven and 18 being taught there.

In a somewhat oxymoronic statement it states the school will be 'for pupils who come from Brethren Communities' and yet asserts it will employ 'a non-selective admissions policy'?

There, it seems, the communication with the wider public ends and local community leaders claim they remain in the dark about what is being proposed.

David Morris, MP for Morecambe and Lunesdale is "...delighted that once again young people will be able to be educated at Hornby." and claims to be in discussions with the Brethren about re-opening the school under the Government's Free Schools initiative.

He gives vague non-specific assurances that he's working with The Brethren to obtain the best deal possible for the local community.

It will be interesting to see how that works when Brethren Schools are the very model of isolation ... No Technology - No shared meals with 'others' - Shunning of Cult members who associate with non-members - Misogyny etc.

Mr Morris could do worse that visit the Cult Help Website and read some of the heartrending stories of ex-Brethren pupils who have struggled to escape their clutches and remain scarred by the experience.

[http://www.culthelp.info/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.culthelp.info/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

*Watch this space for updates*



## 'Chaplaincy' Provides No Clinical Benefit 3

£29m of NHS money was spent on hospital chaplains in 2009/10.

However - many of the best hospitals spent least on chaplaincy services indicating these services have no clinical benefit whatsoever.

Contrary to what advocates of chaplaincy believe; there is no positive correlation between how much a hospital spends on chaplaincy services and the overall quality of patient care.

NHS Trusts were asked [under FOI requests] how much they spent on hospital chaplaincy services. The proportion spent on chaplaincy was compared to how well it performed on national quality ratings.

There were huge variations in the proportions that similar hospitals spend.

If all NHS Trusts simply brought their spending into line with the best trusts, savings of £18.5m a year would be made.

£18.5m p.a. could pay for 1,000 nursing assistants or a brand new community hospital every year.

It was recently reported that the NHS is to lose 50,000 jobs - including doctors and nurses.

Yet chaplaincy costs rose by 7% in the last year.

Nobody is saying 'remove chaplains from hospitals' but their cost should not be borne by public funds, especially when clinical services for patients are being cut.

Many priests [or equivalents in other religions] offer their services voluntarily - and this should become the norm.

Alternatively, chaplaincy services should be paid for through charitable trusts, supported by churches and their parishioners.

If churches really do support 'the big society' then they'll be only too keen to stop siphoning off NHS cash to fund chaplains' salaries.

Source - NSS website [www.secularism.org.uk](http://www.secularism.org.uk)

## Could You Be LSH's Event Secretary?

It is becoming apparent that we would benefit from having an 'Events Secretary'.

Not a particularly demanding role, it would entail:

- Liaising with the **LSH** Committee about speakers and other events planned for the meetings.
- Contacting speakers to confirm attendance / identify specific requirements [laptop / projector etc]
- Informing the Chair of any travel arrangements such as pick-up & drop-off at train / bus station.

The post-holder will be assisted during the initial phase when it's hoped we will be able to plan events at least six months ahead.

Internet / e-mail access would be a requirement - all reasonable costs for phone calls could be reimbursed.

**Interested?** - Please contact Ian in the usual way

## A Reply Has Flooded In!

Readers of Last month's Newsletter will recall our letter to Blackpool Victoria Hospital [sent 4th Feb] and their reply [of 16th Feb] promising 'Urgent Attention'.

Well this was received [on 23rd March] - after a nudge from us:

*Dear Mr Abbott,*

*Please accept my apologies for the delay in your receiving this response to your enquiry.*

*I liaised with the Medical Records and Information Governance department to provide a response to your enquiry.*

*The Information Governance Manager has advised at present the current Patient Administration System (PAS) does not support 'Affiliated Beliefs'.*

*When the directive was issued by the Department of Health (DoH) to collect this, 'legacy' systems were not mandated to do so.*

*Therefore it was only made compulsory for new systems under development or offered by Contract for Health (CfH).*

*This meant that our PAS system supplier could choose to add this to their system.*

*They chose not to do so.*

*At present the cost to the Trust would be prohibitive.*

*The Medical Records Manager has advised her clerical staff if a patient informs them they have no religious beliefs this should be written as No Religion on the case-note folder.*

*At the moment Hospital Information Support System (HISS) does not allow for the recording of "no religion" only unknown, which may change in the future.*

*When the HISS system is upgraded the information will be recorded more accurately.*

*However now under the category of Religion there are 19 headings which include Atheist / Agnostic / None, Other and Unknown.*

*If the patient wishes to have their information amended at any time this can be achieved by contacting the hospital records department either by telephone or at their next appointment.*

*Last year the Trust adopted a new electronic system for the recording of patient information.*

*When a patient comes to the outpatient department to book in for their appointment they will use the new Savience system which has a touch screen where personal information about the patient is requested.*

*If the patient wishes to make any changes to their information there is a clerk available nearby to update the information on the patient's behalf.*

*In the areas where Savience is not available the patient can request their information be updated at any time.*

*If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to come back to me on 01253 655588.*

*Kind regards*

*Christina Maddox [PALS Officer]*

*Patient Experience Team - Blackpool Victoria Hospital*

**There - now isn't that a lot clearer?**

For our response go to Page 4 - Column 1

## Religion 'Unknown' or 'Undisclosed'

After consulting with an LSH member who works with PALS from other Hospital Trusts the best interpretation we can come up with has prompted this reply:

Dear Ms Maddox:

Thank you for your reply of 23<sup>rd</sup> March: the complexities of which, I'm sorry to say, left me a bit confused.

It seems that you are saying:

- a) You are not obliged by the DoH to change the Patient Admin System (PAS) to collect information from patients about their Affiliated Beliefs.
- b) It would be too costly to have it added to your system.

My questions therefore are:

- 1) What exactly is the difference between PAS, HISS and Savience?
- 2) You say that HISS does not allow the recording of 'no religion' - but this "may change in the future" – but then [immediately after] say "when the HISS is upgraded the information will be recorded more accurately."
- 3) Does that mean that HISS will include the category "no religion" when it is upgraded, and when is this expected to take place?
- 4) Does the Savience system include a "no religion" category?
- 5) Will there be information and guidance to hand (eg. posters, leaflets etc) for patients booking in to outpatients appointments using the Savience touch screens advising them of their right to change their personal information if they wish and instructions as to how they could do this?

As to the costs being prohibitive – Given that in 2009/10 [nationally] £29m of NHS money was spent on hospital chaplaincy alone; a service most non-religious patients are unlikely to access – it doesn't seem unreasonable to suggest a tiny fraction of that might be justified on issues concerning non-religious patients ... Arguably 51%\* of all patients.

\*British Social Attitudes Survey 2009

## Christians celebrate Easter ...

... as the day Jesus rose from the dead following his crucifixion ... But many Easter traditions - eggs, rabbits, chicks and flowers – are Pagan in origin.

The name "Easter" derives from Oestre, a pagan goddess worshipped by the ancient Saxons. She was the goddess of spring and fertility, responsible for the creation of new life.

Her totem animal was the rabbit, a creature known to reproduce in copious amounts.

The Easter Bunny stems from a myth about Oestre, in which she finds a flightless bird in the snow and transforms him into a hare so that he can run and hide from hunters.

The hare eventually angers Oestre and she banishes him to the skies - where he appears at the constellation Lepus.

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Once each year, she allows him to return to Earth and distribute eggs to children.

Pagan celebrations were to shake off the shackles of winter and embracing new life ... The bright, pastel colors of Easter are likely to stem from these celebrations, intended to match green plants and the colors of the spring flowers in bloom.

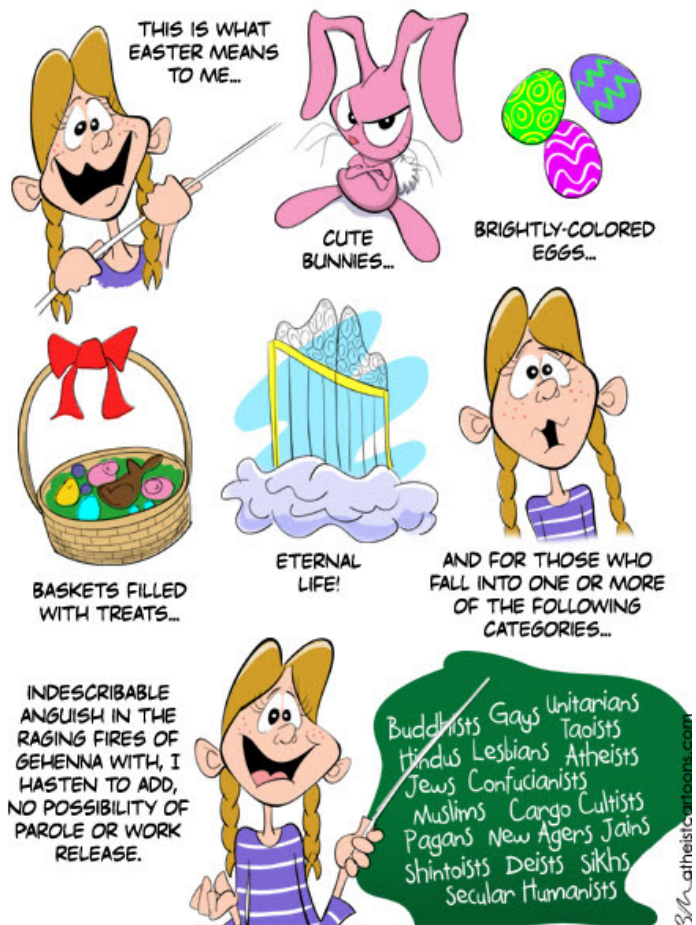
Feasting was a part of pagan Easter traditions as well; a hearty meal following an end-of-winter fast to purge the toxins of heavy winter meals (later echoed in the Christian tradition of Lent).

Eggs are a symbol of new life and fertility, as are newborn chicks ... Midwives in pagan Europe suspended an egg over a pregnant woman's belly to determine the sex of the unborn child.

People gave eggs as gifts, symbolising abundance & prosperity ... The wealthy would wrap eggs in gold leaf or similar signs of wealth: peasants, unable to afford such extravagance; dyed their eggs by boiling them in plant petals, giving them a brightly colored appearance.

When Christianity arrived in Northern Europe it simply adopted existing traditions as a way of integrating into the culture ... The story of Christ's rebirth closely matches pagan rituals of spring.

The date of Easter is set as the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox - dictated by astronomical phenomenon which governed the pagan calendar - rather than any Christian calendar.



*Ian's e-mail to Joe Wilson [BBC Radio Lancs] - following LSH interview*

Hi Joe – As always I found our Sunday chat enormously enjoyable – thanks for inviting me along – however, I think I just might be owed an apology ... (*don't worry - I'm not holding my breath*).

When we touched on faith-based involvement in Big Society projects: and I voiced my concerns over the potential for churches to abuse the access it afforded them to vulnerable people; you suggested that what I seem to have heard through my speakers bore to similarity to what was broadcast from your studio.

I confess to considering the possibility that I'd completely misheard the piece I was referring to!

So I've listened to the 'We Don't Do God/Church' piece in question again.

The first speaker explained how; when setting up projects, there was a need '*...to be intentional about where we're going*' - that God should be seen in it.

The scenario given was – If they came across funding of around £30,000 for a project they would need to look carefully at the list of objectives outlined by the people putting up the money; and if it didn't include Faith and God – the church should consider walking away from that project.

The second contributor went much further – she talked about having a time of bible reading and prayer before serving people their breakfasts / sandwiches and how that often led to conversations around the bible and how that relates to what they were doing ... She described how they always have Christian literature dotted around ... She said she doesn't want what she does to be '*just a glorified social work project*' - "*We want people to know there is a God who loves them*" and encourage people to somehow find a relationship with that God!

I maintain what I said on Sunday, both these examples go far beyond your suggestion of '*what's wrong with letting people know this is a church based project?*'

It points to that 'other agenda' I worried about.

The examples outlined above indicate opportunism – a way of taking advantage of people's vulnerability to push a specific agenda of God and Religion.

Even insinuating that a chance to deliver £30,000-worth of much-needed funding to vulnerable people might be passed up if it didn't also allow those delivering it an opportunity to proselytise is [I contend] a moral outrage!

And insisting on prayers and bible readings before giving food to disadvantaged people – exploiting the status of service provider to encourage recipients to accept God into their lives – could easily be construed as [not too thinly disguised] coercion.

Isn't it interesting how two people such as you and I can hear the exact same words and yet receive a completely different message?

My very best wishes . . . **Ian**

*Joe's Reply*

Hi Ian . . . You are right about people hearing the same sentences and getting different meanings from them ... As the reporter who went to the conference it is crystal clear to me that all the people there wanted was to ensure that those receiving help knew there was church involvement ... I didn't hear anyone going any further than that. But they did make it clear that, for church to continue to be able to help people, they will need to be more alert in ensuring they are not taken for granted. [*I'm paraphrasing - these are my words not theirs*]. And that's all this is about - as I hear it.

You talk about 'another agenda' & so on and that is emotive language which you see, but they don't. They just want people to know that what they're doing is based in their faith because too often people see the product of the work without thinking how it got there. Their point being how can church grow or even be acknowledged if the people doing the work don't make it clear who they are.

People like you will be quick to say that churches are in decline, when the case can be made that good church projects go unnoticed for lack of a few words.

So they are saying 'don't get involved with a project' if their input and objective aren't recognised.

The important 'but' here is that not getting involved does not mean the project isn't going to happen: it just means they will be working elsewhere.

Often there are church projects wholly developed by the church and nobody realises. In these times of declining religious numbers, all they want to do is ensure that people know where they are coming from ... At no point did anyone say that they would walk away from people and leave them in a stressed or socially challenged situation . . . I can see that you read that differently.

I don't really take a view other than to say that I am clear in my own mind that what you are suggesting is not what they wittingly set about to do ... and therein lies the disagreement.

I have no problem apologising to anyone, I have spent half my life doing it, but on this occasion I feel that I defended their right to say they want to ensure recognition, whilst you were at the same time giving an alternative view.

Admittedly it was done in more knockabout style than Newsnight, which is only born out of the dynamics of you and I. Perhaps a more sober approach would not have caused you to revisit it in the way you have.

I genuinely believe that it is two sets of people looking at the same interview / subject with different ears and getting from it what they hear - which in many respects is what our Sunday mornings are about: discussion, debate, differences - all aired with a respect for whoever is making those points.

I genuinely look forward to seeing you again soon...

All the best . . . **Joe**



## Dignity in Dying in Lancashire

On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April Lancashire Secular Humanists will be hosting a public meeting on the issue of Medically Assisted Death.

Stevie Barksby has been a supporter of DiD for many years [both in its present guise and its former incarnation 'The Voluntary Euthanasia Society'] and as an atheist too he fails to understand opposition to this campaign having been unfortunate enough to have witnessed first-hand the painful demise of several friends over the years.

He is a veteran of several Television programmes such as The Lucy Meacock Debate – Gloria – M-Channel – Manchester and The Nicky Campbell [Radio] Show.

He was an active supporter of the 50,000 online 'petition for change' and delivered it to No.10 Downing Street, alongside Brian Pretty and his dear wife Diane prior to her death.

He attended the 12<sup>th</sup> World AIDS conference in Geneva in 1998 and reasoning that he hadn't flown all that way just to be ignored (*having been sidelined in an area away from the main event the day before*) he managed to stage his own 'demo' in the 'main clinical poster area'; thereby bringing the issue to the direct attention of many delegates. Action which brought him praise from the conference organizers.

Anticipating his visit to Lancashire Stevie says:  
*"It will be nice to chat in front of supportive audience for a change; or at least one without preconceptions."*

He will begin the evening by outlining the salient points around the need for the law on medically assisted death to be changed: and that will include examples of how dissenters are often misguided in their arguments.

Then, after adding his own particular 'take' on the issues, the debate will be opened up to the floor with the guarantee of an interesting and informative experience for all participants.

We meet at 7.30 for an 8pm start.

## **"Atheism To Be Taught In Lancs Schools"**

Blackburn with Darwen Council have overhauled the RE syllabus to ensure non-religious beliefs are taught. The major shake-up will be introduced from September in each of the 28 primary and secondary community schools in the borough . . . Faith schools can also opt to teach the syllabus. It was stressed that children will continue to learn about the six major faiths - Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. But they will also be taught humanism - the belief there is no God or Gods, and that moral values are founded on human nature and experience alone.

## 6 **Humanism In Schools** *Continued ...*

Fiona Moss, from RE Today said: *"We really must recognise that some people do not believe in God and do not have a religious background."*

But Salim Mulla, chair of Lancashire Council of Mosques said: *"We believe it is important to have faith values whether that is Christian, Islamic or any other religion. The values are very, important. I don't think the non-God aspect should be introduced into the curriculum. I don't think it is right. People are born into faiths and are brought up in that faith and that's how it should stay."*

*Source Lancashire Telegraph*

### What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

**Cumbria Humanists** e-mail - [oldcodger2@btinternet.com](mailto: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](http://www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk)  
1pm Sun 10 April - **Spring Celebration**, Douglas. All members invited (bring something for the buffet and non-alcoholic drink).

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

**Greater Manchester Humanists** <http://gmh.humanist.org.uk>  
7pm Wed 13 April: Friends Meeting House, Mount St, M2 5N  
AGM followed by discussion of BHA proposals for working with local groups

**South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists** [www.humanists.org.uk](http://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](http://www.wyhumanists.org.uk)  
7pm Thus 28 April: Swathmore 3-7 Woodhouse Sq. Leeds,  
**AGM** - followed by DVD 'Six Degrees Could Change The World'

**Amnesty Preston** [www.preston.amnesty.org.uk](http://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](http://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' \**