

Our distinguished guests - NWhumanists conference - 2011



Professor Raymond Tallis - philosopher, poet, novelist and cultural critic and was until recently a physician and clinical scientist. In the *Economists Intelligent Life Magazine* (Autumn 2009) listed as one of the top living polymaths in the world.



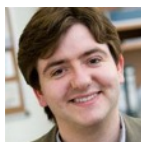
Kathryn Busby - Policy & Campaigns Manager for GlobalNet21. She has nine years of experience working for charities and campaigning organisations; including Shelter, the Forgiveness Project and the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT). She is now a member of the CAAT Steering Committee.



Dr Evan Harris – Vice-President of BHA: was MP for Oxford West for 13 years and Liberal Democrat science spokesman for five years. He retains a particular interest in medical ethics: served on Oxfordshire Health Authority's Research Ethics Committee, as well as the BMA's Medical Ethics Committee.



Professor Carol Truman - Humanist Celebrant who leads Health and Community Studies at the University of Bolton. Her expertise is in the area of applied social research methodology and, in particular, how this may be used in community based research in the policy areas of health and social care.



Andrew Copson – Chief Executive of BHA. His writings on humanist and secularist issues feature in such publications as The Guardian, The Times, The Independent, & New Statesman and he's represented the BHA on numerous television & radio programmes.



Marilyn Mason - BHA's former Education Officer - co-founder of Humanists for a Better World (H4BW): a network for UK humanists who'd like to take individual and collective action on international ethical and sustainability issues such as peace - international co-operation - global justice - climate change etc.

Programme

Fri 7 Oct : Evening Pre-conference entertainment (*film & discussion*)

Sat 8 Oct: 9.00 am Registration

9.30 am Opening of conference - Ian Abbott

9.45 am Keynote address Andrew Copson, CEO of BHA - Coffee - then break-out groups and plenary discussion

1.00 pm Buffet lunch on site

2.30 pm Panel discussion (*The Big Question format*) Chair: Guy Otten - Evan Harris, Ray Tallis, Carole Truman, Andrew Copson.

3.50pm Coffee Break

4.10pm Panel discussion (*Question Time format*) Chair: Guy Otten - Evan Harris, Ray Tallis, Carole Truman, Andrew Copson.

5.30 pm Close

Evening: *Informal dining - various locations (facilitated get-togethers)*

Sun 9 Oct: 9.30 am 'Why more equal societies almost always do better' Kathryn Busby, *The Equality Trust*

11.00 am "Why Bother?" - with so many apparently insoluble global problems ... Marilyn Mason - *Humanists for a Better World (H4BW)*

12.30 pm Conference close - Ian Abbott

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Tickets

£42 - for all three days ... including lunch and refreshments

£32 - Saturday only ... including lunch and refreshments

£12 - Sunday morning only

There are a limited number of discounted tickets available for Students.

For further information, or to book a place, contact:

John Coss:

[T]: 0161-430-3463

[e]: secretary@gmh.humanist.org.uk

Or visit:

www.gmh.humanist.org.uk
www.lancshumanism.org.uk
www.livehum.org

This is promising to be an excellent event - tickets are now selling fast. I'd recommend that you secure yours sooner rather than later.

See you there - [Ed]

Quick Quote

"The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe.
If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself."
~ Friedrich Nietzsche

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From
The
Committee
Room



Next **LSH** Committee Meeting 09.30am Sat 1st Oct. 2011
Meeting Room – Great Eccleston Village Centre
All 'paid-up' **LSH** members welcome

The relevant 'attachments' have been forwarded to all those who have indicated their intention to attend. Any other **LSH** member who would like copies should contact me in the usual way... [Ed]

GAS LAND

Update ... by David Hollinshead

In the last news letter I asked Ian to mention the showing of the film 'Gaslands' on 12 September.

The film looks at the issues around drilling for shale gas. This involves forcing water and chemicals into the ground, to break up rock and release gas. This is known as fracking.

In a roundabout way 'Gaslands' shows how President George W Bush exempted various oil companies from the water safety acts in order that they could drill for this gas all over America. It shows how many chemicals are put in the water to help break up the rocks. And it lists them, but I don't know what things like butoxyethanol, monoethanolamine, ethylhexanol etc etc are.

The film visits many people who have had a drilling well built next to them. It shows how they say the gas has got into the water supply and describes the various illnesses they now suffer from - Several times the film shows people putting a lighter next to water running out of the tap until there is an explosion.

The wells have to be sited 100 hundred metres apart, and the film shows the environmental consequences of taking tons of fresh water by lorry to these sites and then taking the waste water away to water treatment sites.

So let's bring this closer to home ... and it couldn't get much closer!

There have been exploratory drills near Southport and Blackpool and it is thought Lancashire is sitting on more shale gas than anywhere else in the country.

There could be wells every 100 metres from the Flyde through the Ribble Valley to the Trough of Bowland, creating all the problems that the film highlights.

For more information on this people should visit (via easysearch on LSH website of course):

www.foe-centrallancs.co.uk

www.campaignccc.org

Sorry if this film review turned into a rant but if we're serious about climate change please remember this: gas is a fossil fuel and I believe should stay in the ground.

Burning it will increase our CO² output not reduce it.

We'd do better creating jobs in the sustainable energy industry... and putting a jumper on if we're cold!

Agenda

1. Attendees & Apologies
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Matters Arising
4. Interim Treasurer Report
5. NWHumanists - Conference
6. Proposal - to revise Membership Pricing
7. Social Networking Updates
8. Forthcoming Activities
9. Query £50 DiD Donation
10. A GRAM Day Out
11. Navigating the LSH Website CD
12. A.O.B.
13. Meeting Ends

Time/Day/Date of next Committee Meeting

09.30 – 12noon - Saturday 7th January 2012

Reminder

October is our A.G.M.

7.30pm Wednesday 19th October 2011

See page six 'next meeting' for details.

How does that work then? ...

De facto misogynist Bishop of Burnley the Right Rev John Goddard – who has already nailed his colours to the mast when it comes to female equality in the Anglican Church [i.e. – *There Isn't Any!*] - appeals to the Church of England ... "*Don't put your opinions to one side – just make room for mine!*" – but hints – then denies - he may leave if he doesn't get his way.

In baffling bishop-speak he asserts "*You should go with your convictions and share them with other people. Listen to other people and what they have to offer ... You really try to search to know the person, what their needs are and what they are trying to say to you. Then you try to respond to the person.*"

[And if they still won't do it your way; what then – leave? - Ed]

Quick Quote

"Prayer is just a way of telling god that his devine plan for you is flawed – and shockingly stingy."
~ Betty Bowers

Sad Café

They're kicking off again – those hard-done-by Christians ... admirably coaxed and cajoled by the Daily Mail. **'Police tell café owner: Stop showing Bible DVDs, or we will have to arrest you'** ... which [of course] is nothing like what the police said.

'Salt & Light' is a Christian Café on Layton Road, Blackpool – and (although it's not clear in the report) seems to be attached to the local church. The proprietor; Jamie Murray previously worked in a homeless shelter and now has a large flat screen TV mounted on the café wall constantly displaying [on a 26 hour loop] his 15-disc CD set of the Watchword Bible.

Just the large-print text is screened - no audio.

It seems a female customer took exception to a particular passage and complained to the police that she'd been distressed by the biblical extracts. The offending passage isn't specified ...but (let's face it) there are so many to choose from!

As the police are obliged to investigate any complaint, two officers were dispatched to the café to make enquiries.

The Daily Fail quotes Mr Murray as saying "... the WPC fixed me with a stare and said ... 'You cannot break the law'."

He added "...I worried about being handcuffed and led out of the shop in front of my customers ... They left and told me they'd continue to monitor if we were displaying inflammatory material."

The first thing that needs to be understood here is: S.5 Public Order Act:

A person is guilty of an offence if he ... (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting, within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby.

[NB, the important word is 'or': 'threatening, abusive or insulting' ... 'harassment, alarm or distress']

BTW - 'Salt & Light' are apparently references to The Sermon on The Mount - Matthew 5:3-16. [Who knew?]

Once again this is a 'nothing story' trumped up by certain press and The Christian Institute.

If this Café is [indeed] an obvious Church venue then there is an argument that anybody entering such an establishment should really know what they're likely to encounter ... A bit like entering a strip club and complaining about nudity [I imagine ☺]

However – If any 'normal' café [or shop for that matter] displayed signs to the effect that 'Homosexuals must be put to death' [Leviticus 20:13] or 'Men or Women who commit indecent acts are worthy of death' [Romans 1:26-26] or refers to homosexuals as 'sexual perverts' comparing them to 'kidnappers or liars' [Timothy 1:10] then there would indeed be an argument that the proprietor is committing an offence under S.5 POA*

... continued ... ►

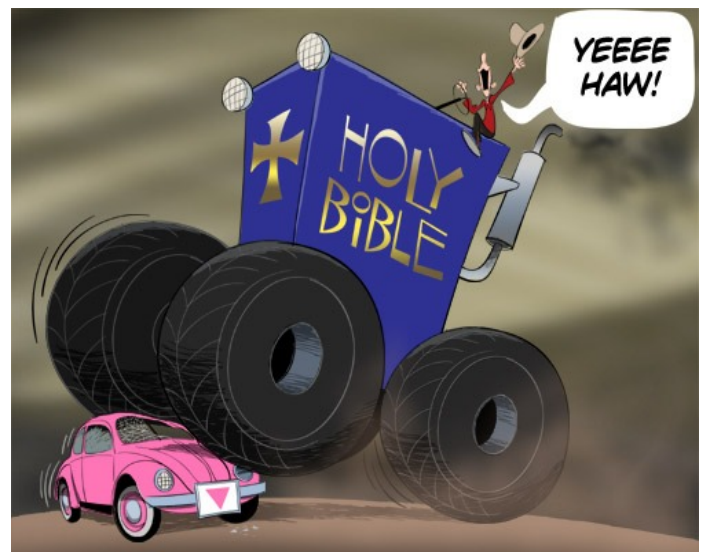
'Sad Café' ... continued

3 One thought did occur to me –

You've got to feel for the poor vulnerable sods who fell under Mr Murray's care during his five years working in a homeless shelter – it must have been a barrel of laughs having to endure wall-to-wall bible-bashing in order to get a bed for the night

Be assured; it's how the future will look for more and more people – if Mr Cameron's 'Big Society' has anything to do with it!

[Ed] ... **there is a good case for arguing that the word 'insulted' be removed from this legislation altogether! Enshrining in law the right for people to complain about being insulted was always going to cause problems.*



BBC. BC BCE. AD CE

It may be hard to believe but the BBC are now officially "enemies of Christianity" by replacing the terms BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini) with the '~~politically correct~~' 'more inclusive' BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era).

Australia adopted similar changes to its national curriculum; spawning inevitable over-reaction: "...it's an attempt to write Christ out of human history."

With corresponding predictability The Daily Wail looks to the former Bishop of Rochester; Dr Michael Nazir-Ali to articulate its dismay: "... this amounts to the dumbing down of the Christian basis of our culture, language & history ... Whether you use CE or AD, the date is still the same - the reference point is still the birth of Christ." [begging the question - 'why complain then?' - Ed]

Widdecombe-watchers didn't have long to wait either - the ghastly Catholic spluttered: "... What are they going to do next? Get rid of the entire calendar on the basis that it has its roots in Christianity?"

But there were sober voices too: Rabbi Jonathan Romain [Maidenhead Synagogue] said: "In the year of Our Lord' is a religious view that is not shared by many across the world, or even the UK. The change to BCE and CE is simply more inclusive."

Community Splitting Muslim-only free school

The government's decision to open a free school for Muslim pupils in the Lancashire has been slammed by some critics claiming it would deprive state schools of funds and would lead to a segregated education system.

Government approved the business case for the Tauheedul Islam Boys' School in Blackburn

Opponents described the decision as 'extremely bad news' for community cohesion and claimed it would deprive state schools of vital funds.

Simon Jones, national executive member for the National Union of Teachers, said – "... *such a school would further undermine much of the progress towards community cohesion.*" And added "... *we're on our way to a completely segregated schooling system. It is going to develop potential social problems in the future. This is extremely bad news for Blackburn with Darwen.*"

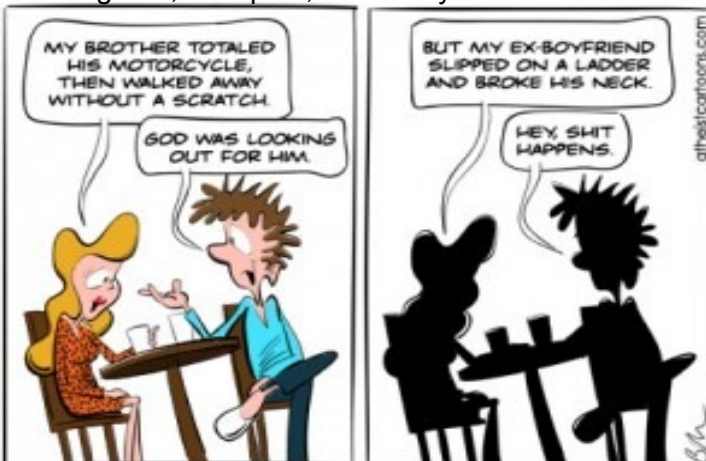
Councillor David Foster, leader of the Lib. Dems, echoed those sentiments saying '*...the nation shouldn't have any religious schools - of any faith. I hope Tauheedul ensures it provides a curriculum where pupils are a part of the community and they continue to develop links with other schools as the girls' school does.*'

There already exists a Tauheedul Islam Girls' School, and now the green light has been given to open a Boys' school under the same name, but at a different location.

Principal of the Girl's school; Mufti Hamid Patel, made the application - along with school governors - and rejects criticism, saying the school would play an active role in all areas of the community.

The detailed plan of the school include: students completing 500 hrs community service throughout their school life; specialisms in sport, and outdoor pursuits more than once a year and a finishing school.

According to reports, the school has already received over 700 pre-registration admission forms from parents across the country: including London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Dewsbury and Bolton.



Crem-encounters

"Don't inform my ex-wife & children of my death ... and under no circumstances are they to be present at my funeral!"

These were part of the details the best friends [and executor] of a recently deceased man shared with me during a family visit to arrange his ceremony - he'd specifically requested a humanist ceremony.

I explained that funerals are public ceremonies; people cannot be prevented from attending ... and for very good reasons.

Anyway – the day of the ceremony arrived.

It was a Friday! [*relevant ... read on]

As always, I arrived at the crem in good time but suspected the worst when I spied an appropriately aged woman along with half-a-dozen young adults hanging around outside – I'd been assured there'd be just four mourners.

My fears were confirmed when the hearse arrived and a heated exchange commenced between the parties ... one asserting the others can't attend – the others insisting '*you can't stop me!*'

An appeal was made for me to intercede. I started by acknowledging that nobody can prevent them from attending, but perhaps they might take the view that an altercation under these circumstances may be rather undignified.

But time was pressing and; anxious to keep within the allotted time-slot, the funeral director & bearers began sliding the coffin out of the hearse.

The executor; had been listening to the intractable responses to my eloquent appeals and suddenly put his hand on the coffin and pushed it back inside the hearse proclaiming "*Right! Well we won't have the bloody funeral at all then!*"

The undertaker was instructed to take the deceased back to the funeral parlour and, as it became clear the ceremony was not going to take place, everybody else just drifted away.

I got a phone call later that afternoon asking if I was available for the cremation to take place at 9am Monday morning? I was – only those people the deceased wanted to be there were in attendance – the ceremony went off without [another] hitch!

Epilogue:

I never was enlightened as to the cause of such deep seated animosity between the deceased and his estranged family but I did [later] ask the executor if he had any objections to me providing that family with a transcript of the ceremony?

He didn't – I did – The end ... [I think!]

**The crematorium is required to post a notice of the names of all the funerals scheduled to take place. The list is posted before 5pm the preceding day – apart from Mondays. Then, the earliest a notice can be posted is 9am ... and by that time were already in!*



And so we near that time when [with no shred of irony] religious leaders complain that children are participating in dangerous superstitious rituals ... yes Halloween approaches.

Halloween is a strange mixture of traditions but [hey] – any excuse for having fun

No one really knows its origins - all we know is Halloween is on the eve of a major Catholic festival, 'All Saints' (1st Nov) which, like most Christian festivals, was timed to replace the pagan Celtic festival known as Samhain [pronounced 'sow-in']

Samhain dates back 1000's of years and marked the end of the 'season of the sun' and the start of the 'season of darkness & cold'.

Nowadays we see Pagan / Christian celebrations intertwine. A fascinating example of superstitions struggling for dominance ... ergo the complaints from some clergy.

It is widely held that Halloween itself originated as a pagan Celtic festival of the dead and is closely related to the Irish / Scottish Samhain, but there is no evidence that it was connected with the dead in pre-Christian times.

Did you know?:

Our ancestors celebrated New Year on November 1st.
They celebrated their New Year's Eve on October 31st.

Neither the word Halloween nor the date 31st October are mentioned in Anglo-Saxon text.

And from Medieval times through to the 19th century, there's no evidence that 31st October was anything else other than the eve of All Saints Day.

However; from the 19th Century to the present day, 31st October has increasingly acquired a reputation as a night on which ghost, witches, and fairies, are especially active

In 835.CE the Catholic Church made 1st November the day to honour all their saints. Although a holiday it was also the eve of All Souls Day, so it became customary to pray for the dead on this date.

Another name for All Saints Day is 'All Hallows' ('hallow': old English word for 'saint'). Festivities began on All Hallows Eve, the last night of October.

The Celts believed that evil spirits came with the long hours of winter darkness and that, on that night, the barriers between our world and the spirit world were at their weakest and therefore spirits were most likely to be seen on earth.

The Celts built bonfires to frighten the spirits away, and feasted and danced around the fires.

..... Continued►

5 The fires brought comfort to the souls in purgatory and people prayed for them as they held burning straw up high - They burned strongest in Scotland & Ireland where Celtic influence prevailed - although they lingered in the northern counties of England until the early years of the last century.

In England, the day of fires became 5th November (Bonfire Night), the anniversary of the Gunpowder plot of 1605, but its closeness to Halloween is more than a coincidence. Halloween & Bonfire Night have a common origin they both originated from pagan times, when the evil spirits of darkness had to be driven away with noise and fire.

In Lancashire, 'Lating' or 'Lighting the witches' was an important Halloween custom. People carried candles from eleven to midnight. If they burned steadily the carriers were safe for the season, but if the witches blew them out, the omens were bad. Here too Halloween was sometimes known as Nut-crack Night . . . Nuts were put on the fire and their behaviour in the flames, forecast faithfulness in sweethearts and the success or failure of marriages - A variation of this was the nuts would be placed along the fire front – one for each suitors. The first to open would be the one she'd marry.

Other Superstitions

*On Halloween; journeys must be finished before sunset.
A piece of bread (crossed with salt) in the pocket, kept travellers safe.
Place an apple under your pillow to dream of your future husband.
The Devil is a nut-gatherer – Halloween nuts were magic charms.*

Halloween was sometimes Snap Apple Night.

'Snap apple': - apples suspended on a long piece of string. Contestants had to bite the apple without using their hands - *Apple bobbing is a variation.*

Another variation was an apple & a lighted candle fixed at opposite ends of a stick suspended by string - to swing the stick round. Contestants had to catch the apple with the teeth avoiding the candle.

Why apples? ... Probably from the Roman festival for remembering the dead - also in October. They remembered their goddess Pomona [goddess of fruits and trees] so when they came to Britain their festival and Samhain coincided - then merged.

Many places combined Halloween with Mischief Night (4th Nov.), when boys played practical jokes on their neighbours. Change shop signs - take gates off hinges - whitewash doors - tie door latches.

Trick or Treat is an American tradition but its origins stretch back to 9th century Europe and the custom called 'souling' . . . A Christian festival where people would make house calls begging for 'soul cakes'. It was believed that even strangers could help a soul's journey to heaven by saying prayers, so - in exchange for a cake - they promised to pray for the cake-giver's deceased relatives.

Next Meeting

October is our **A.G.M.**

7.30pm Wednesday 19th October 2011

**Great Eccleston Village Centre, 59 High Street,
The Square, Great Eccleston. PR3 0YB**

Item 5 of the **LSH** constitutions states:

An Annual General Meeting shall be held before the end of October in each year.

It shall receive financial accounts and the reports of the Executive Committee for the year ended the previous 31st August.

It shall elect the Honorary Officers of the Group and the members of the Executive Committee.

At least 21 days' notice of the meeting shall be given to all members.

Nomination of members who have prior approval (duly seconded by fully paid-up members) and notices of resolutions must be received by the Secretary at least seven days before the meeting.

Any member whose nomination for Honorary Office does not lead to election shall be considered as a nominee for ordinary membership of the Committee.

The 'AGM' item in last month's Newsletter is to be considered as fulfilling that obligation to provide at least 21 days notice of the **LSH A.G.M.**

Please be aware:

All notices of resolutions must be received by the secretary at least seven days prior to the A.G.M therefore no items received after midnight Tuesday 12th Oct. will be eligible for inclusion in the agenda.

Subsequent items can only be considered under A.O.B. and may therefore be deemed unsuitable for decision without a fuller debate and further consideration.

In seeking to comply with our Constitution - and in the interest of fairness to those who have submitted resolutions in the proper way - there can be no exceptions

Linda on The Beeb

Listen out for **LSH's** Linda Parkins on BBC Radio Lancashire this Sunday [2nd October].

Linda will be a phone-in guest on Joe Wilson's Sunday Morning Faith Programme around 7.50 talking about the **NWhumanists** Regional Conference in Manchester

And We're on Again

The following Thursday [6th October] Ian will be Joe's studio guest for his late-night show from 10 – till – 11pm.

No doubt the **NWhumanists** Regional Conference will come up again but anything and everything is up for discussion – should be good and [knowing Joe] a bit lively at times ☺

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Happy Hallowee'n

What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

Cumbria Humanists

e-mail - oldcodger2@btinternet.com

Sadly Cumbria Humanists is currently dormant enquiries can be directed to George Weston at the above e-mail address.

Isle of Man Freethinkers

www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk

2.30 Sunday 9 Oct. - **AGM** - followed by Afternoon Tea at the Morton Hall, Onchan. Vote on motion with regard to the bishop.

12.00 Thurs 20 Oct. - 'Lunch' Alessandro, Castle St, Douglas

Liverpool Humanists

<http://livehum.org>

No details posted - for update see website

Greater Manchester Humanists

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

7pm Wed 12 Oct: Friends Meeting House, Mount St, M2 5NS

Sufi Islam - Shaykh M Ramadan

6.30pm Tues 118 Oct: **Hoklyoak Lecture:** Prof Ray Tallis
'Aping Mankind'

South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists

www.humanists.org.uk

No details posted - for update see website

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire

www.wyhumanists.org.uk

7pm Thurs 13 Oct: **Superstition** - Brian Quinn HSWY member.
Venue: Swarthmore, 3-7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds, LS3 1AD

Lytham St Annes & Blackpool Amnesty

www.amnesty.org.uk/lytham

7.30pm Mon 1st Aug: 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' **