



Engage

Newsletter of the Chris Worfolk Foundation

July 2010

Editorial



Welcome to the first issue of the foundation's newsletter. We're keeping it short and to the point because as fun as making a newsletter is, we don't just want to talk about what we're doing – we want to be out there doing it!

This is a really exciting time for the foundation. We've just held our first national conference – Enquiry 2010 – and we're looking forward to another, Sunrise, taking place in September.

On top of that we're also opening our office next month and we would love you to join us for the launch party – see the next page for details of that. The opening of our office marks another major landmark in an organisation, which is only a year old and growing at incredible speed.

With this being our first newsletter we would love to get your feedback – both good and bad. So why not drop us an email with your thoughts?

Chris Worfolk

Enquiry 2010 Conference



Over the weekend of June 4th to the 6th, the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Birmingham city centre played host to a group of atheists, humanists and skeptics who had travelled from across the country for the Enquiry 2010 Conference.

Saturday began with foundation chair Chris Worfolk introducing the weekend followed by British Humanist Association chief executive Andrew Copson discussing the objections to humanism followed by Norman Ralph, founding president of the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist & Secular Student Societies.

Norman discussed the idea that atheists perhaps need a little change in their image – often the stereotypical image of an atheist is a white middle-aged middle class man, perhaps even a stuffy professor – a long way from the array of colours, creeds and backgrounds we find at the Humanist Community of Leeds.

After lunch Maryam Namazie from the Council of Ex-Muslims put forward her views, followed by a talk by Chris Worfolk on the influence of Christian Unions

on university campuses and Professor Chris French discussing the psychology of anomalous belief. There were some slightly technical problems with getting the sound to play on Chris's talk, but we simply put these down to bad luck and possibly a bit of divine intervention too.

Saturday evening saw entertainment provided by comedian Simon Munnery who has previously appeared alongside atheist favourite Stewart Lee as well as on his own shows on BBC Radio 1 and BBC Two. Simon also broke the news that Professor Dawkins is working on another new book to be entitled "the Santa Claus delusion" – it's for the kids ;) ...p3

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Upcoming Events

In celebration of our upcoming office launch, we'll be holding a reception on Saturday **3 July** consisting of an evening meal and drinks, as well as a chance to see the office.

If you would like an invite to the event, please get in touch.

In August we will be holding our first AGM. It will take place at 6pm on Wednesday **11 August** and will be held in Leeds. More details will be made available on our website nearer the time.

Sunrise Conference 2010 will take place **4 - 5 September** (over a weekend) in Leeds. More details can be found on page 4.

Humanist Community of Leeds

Sunday 4 July
Sunday 1 August
Sunday 12 September
Sunday 3 October

Leeds Skeptics

Saturday 17 July
Saturday 21 August
Saturday 18 September
Saturday 16 October

Useful Info

Email us on:
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Chris Worfolk Foundation is registered in England and Wales. 06974918.

News in brief

In **February** trustees Chris and Rich were in Oxford to represent the foundation at the annual convention of the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies of which Chris also sits on the board of trustees.

Meanwhile Leeds Skeptics was taking part in the 10:23 protest against homoeopathy, managing to gather one of the largest groups in the campaign.

In **March** we launched Atheist Stock, the world's first stock photography site dedicated to the freethought movement.

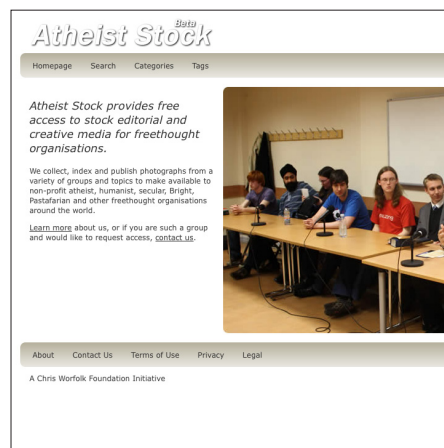
April began with trustees Chris and Gijsbert visiting the British Humanist Association and National Secular Society

to introduce the foundation. We're looking forward to the opportunity to cooperate with both these fantastic organisations in the future.

April 19 – 24 saw Leeds Reason Week take place. The biggest student awareness week of its kind, this year saw 22 events including an Islamic and Christian debate. CWF provided staff, equipment and guest speakers.

In **May** our Answers course ran for the second year running at the University of Leeds. The course is designed to help people who self identify as atheists express their beliefs better. A leaders pack for other local groups is currently in development.

Spotlight: Atheist Stock



The recently launched Atheist Stock is the world's first stock photography site specifically designed to provide for the freethought movement. Atheist, humanist, secular, sceptical and free thinking groups across the world are welcome to access our library of stock photographs to use in their materials, presentations and advertising.

The service is designed to complement our already popular online resources including Secular Portal – a collaborative site which allows people to add their own advice and information, most famous for being the birth place of the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist & Secular Student Societies.

Access to the site is free for these groups

and the material provided is designed to be high quality – as high quality as you would expect from the commercial stock photography website.

The project already has hundreds of photos from sessions of One Life, to iconic London scenes to Professor Richard Dawkins – so whatever you need your photo for, why not give Atheist Stock a look?

To allow easy access to the photos that you need there are a number of different ways the photos are classified – each photo is uploaded into a specific collection (this is similar to an album). From here they can be classified into categories and they can also be tagged – and all of this is searchable of course.

The site is also open to contributions so if you have photos you believe would be a valuable addition to the collection you can request an account and upload your own photos to allow groups from around the world to benefit from your generosity.

While the site is still in beta (a testing phase) it has held up very well so far and we're not expecting any major problems! You can visit the site at www.atheiststock.com.

Enquiry 2010 Conference

Continued from page 1...

Sunday was kicked off by Dr Antony Lempert, co-ordinator of the Secular Medical Forum who gave a powerful speech on where religion interferes, in some cases quite horrifically with the lives of both practitioners but far more worrying to the children of practitioners who are unable to make their own choices.

He was followed by former MP of Oxford West and honorary president of Westminster Skeptics, Dr Even Harris who discussed his plans to fight for his seat once again in the next election.

After lunch Professor A. C. Grayling delivered a stirring talk reminding us that in our lives we have less than 1,000 months to enjoy and the day was finished off by Dr Gijsbert Stoet discussing humanist chaplains.

The latter talk really provoked some debate with the room being split as to whether Dr Stoet's vision of as more organised community-based human-



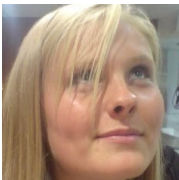
ism was the way forward or starting to become a little too much like a religion – something I address in an article in this issue.

The weekend shows that there are many contrasting opinions within the freethinking movement though of course we're all very much aware of that already! What is fantastic is that the differing opinions – such as the divisions between Maryam and Andrew for ex-

ample don't prevent them from working together for common good.

This is something I hope the foundation will be able to achieve with organisations such as the British Humanist Association and National Secular Society – we certainly have different opinions and different ways of working but in end will form a much stronger front if we can work together rather than competing with each other.

Comment: Almost, religious?



Lucy Harding

Stoet's talk on humanist chaplaincy.

In the talk he discussed a vision for a more united and organised humanism movement which was less focused on politics and lobbying and a little more focused on local groups and humanist (now known as positive) psychology, discussing both humanist communities and humanist chaplains.

The room was very much divided on the subject – some felt that it would be a very positive step to have more humanist community groups which people could attend while others felt that the idea, at least as put forward in the talk, smacked a little too much of organised religion.

One of the most controversial talks to take place at the Enquiry 2010 conference was Chris Norfolk Foundation trustee Dr. Gijsbert

This is very much representative of the wider humanist community. Indeed as far up as the British Humanist Association seem to be divided on the subject with one of their staff describing it as "very silly" when asked to comment on it by the BBC, meanwhile chief executive Andrew Copson recently told a conference it was something he was planning to seriously look into.

The question then eventually arises – what is it that separates a humanist group from a religious one? If the idea of having a Sunday morning meeting, which includes tea, coffee and discussions is seen as a religious idea then we have a very big challenge ahead of us indeed – the idea that religion has a monopoly on community groups and social outlets is a big claim indeed!

No, what I believe separates humanist community groups from a religious service comes down to the fundamental

building blocks of the group – the bottom up approach of group discussions, interaction and variety of opinions that you find in humanist meetings that fall in stark contrast to the top down preaching, dogmatic approach you find in the halls of the religious.

What separates humanist community groups from religious services is the same thing that separates humanism from religion – an environment where free thought and open discussion is encouraged.

The idea that we should accept proposition that simply creating such groups to bring people together and form stronger social communities is a religious idea is not only wrong it also verges on offensive. Humanists not only believe in social communities – it's our central tenant!

Get Involved

We need your support. We're an organisation that really makes things happen – we get out there and do stuff, we go full speed and believe you can achieve amazing things so long as you have confidence in yourself.

There has never been a better time to get involved in the foundation, nor has there ever been more opportunities. With our brand new office just opening in Leeds we need volunteers to help us push forward with our ambitious projects and initiatives.

Across the country we are also seeking a network of volunteers to act as regional representatives, volunteer as humanist chaplains, start a local HCOL or HAGs group just to name a few of the opportunities for you to get involved.

If you can spare some time to help us change the world, please get in touch. Send us an email today.

If you can't, consider supporting our efforts financially. You get the same great sense of self-satisfaction that you've supported charity without having to do anything! See our website for ways of supporting us, either via standard order or a one off donation, all of which can be done online.

Why get involved?

It's fantastic experience. The skills you learn and develop when you volunteer are simply immeasurable, from management and leadership to communication and organisation.

Increasingly employers are looking for people with well-rounded CVs including volunteer work with charities.

Most importantly of course – you'll be making a real difference and can sleep sound at night knowing you made the world a fractionally better place!

Sunrise

Taking place the first weekend of September – Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th – Sunrise is a national summit for leaders and future leaders of free thinking groups across the UK, which will take place in Leeds.

The conference is designed for anyone who is or wants to be involved in running a humanist, atheist, secular, sceptical or other such group with the aim of improving everyone's knowledge and creating ideas as to how we can better lead and improve our local groups.

During the conference there will be a mix of talks, seminars, round tables and discussions on local groups as well as plenty of opportunities to get to know other group leaders and build contacts.

Sunrise will be running multiple streams including several for local groups as well as a students' stream, which we are currently discussing with the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies.

There will also be a stream for people looking to train to become volunteer humanist chaplains. This is the first of its kind in terms of offering specifically non-religious chaplain training and will form

Sunrise

A national summit for atheists, humanists and sceptics on groups, leadership and activism



Join us this September for a meeting of the greatest minds in the country. Sunrise will bring together leaders of humanist, atheist, secular and sceptics groups to learn and share ideas, knowledge and inspiration on the freethought movement.

4 - 5 September 2010

Register your interest at www.sunriseconference.org



a key part of the Humanist Chaplaincy Network.

Registration for the conference will be available for £15 for a regular ticket and £10 for a student ticket, which covers access to all events throughout the weekend.

You can find out more information and register your interest on the conference website, www.sunriseconference.org.

Comic

Humanism and churchy...

What is this humanist community everybody talks about?

It's a bit like church, but without praying and dogma. It focuses on community, just having a tea and making friends.

Makes sense, I have a feeling that is what my church members are really coming for anyway.

