Humanist Heritage

WALKING TOURS

heritage.humanists.uk

Humanist Heritage

BELFAST TOUR

Throughout history, there have been non-religious people who have lived lives guided by reason, compassion, and the belief that this is the one life we have. Today, we call this 'humanism'. Although not everyone included in this tour was a humanist, all have worked to promote the values at the heart of humanism today, including inclusive education, freedom of belief, and freedom of expression.

1 CITY HALL

City Hall stands where the White Linen Hall formerly stood: once at the centre of Belfast's world renowned linen industry. In the 18th century, the money from this trade created a middle class which agitated for free speech and equality. Enlightenment ideals such as human rights, rationalism, and tolerance in the writings of John Locke and Thomas Paine were widely read and the examples of the American and French Revolutions were inspirational, especially for those – like Catholics and Presbyterians – who were excluded by the dominance of the landed aristocracy and Established Church. The City Hall replaced the White Linen Hall in 1906, and over the years has been a gathering place for protest, celebration, and vigil, with humanists and freethinkers well represented across all three.

2 LINEN HALL LIBRARY

Founded in 1788 as the Belfast Reading Society, the Linen Hall library is the city's oldest. The present building was built in 1864 and was originally a linen warehouse. In his history of the library, John Killen described 'a large proportion of the citizenry of Belfast' in the late 18th century as 'enterprising, self-reliant, enlightened, philanthropic and self-improving'. This was certainly true for the founders of the Reading Society, which from 1792 was known as the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge.

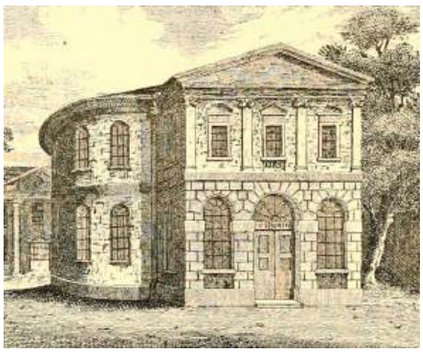
Francis Joy. Numb. 113

The Belfast News-Letter,
And General Advertiser.

TUESDAY, October 3, 1738.

3 JOY'S ENTRY

The Belfast Entries were a hotbed of radical free thinking in the 1790s. Joy's Entry was named for Francis Joy, as well as commemorating other members of this remarkable Belfast family. In 1737, Francis Joy founded the oldest surviving English language newspaper in the world, *The Belfast News-Letter*, which in the 1870s also became one of the earliest newspapers to feature a regular column for women, written by Irish journalist Catherine Drew. In 1776, the *Belfast News-Letter* was the first to publish the American Declaration of Independence outside of the US.



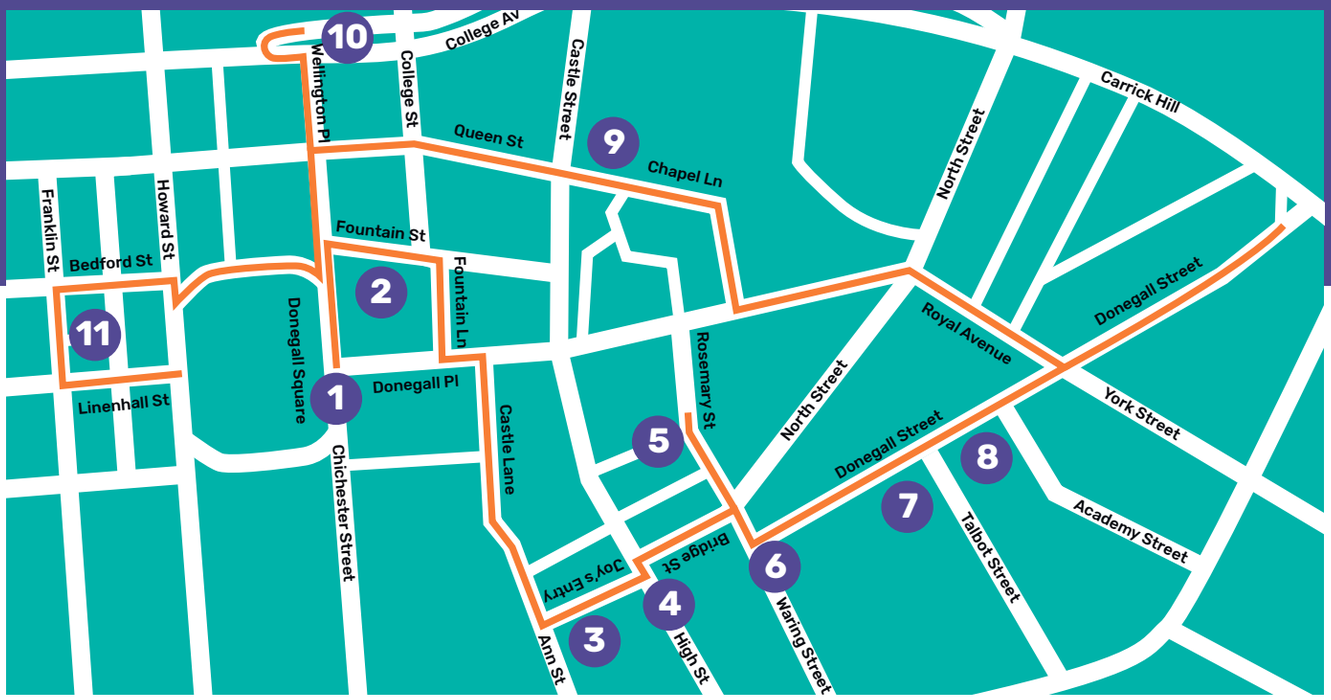
5 FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rosemary Street may be described as the historical epicentre of freethought in Belfast. The First Presbyterian Church was attended by many of the United Irishmen. Founded in the 17th century, it later took up unitarian ideas – associated with an open-minded and undogmatic approach to religion.

From the 19th century, Belfast was home to a number of non-religious and reformist societies, including the Belfast Secular Society, Belfast Radical Association, and a Fabian group. The Belfast Ethical Society was formed in 1896 and held its meetings in Rosemary Street Minor Hall, adjoining the Second Congregation Church, which was opened in 1708, rebuilt in 1789, and demolished during the 1960s. It was there that the Belfast Ethical Society met during the last years of the 19th century, its object being: 'the promotion of right conduct on a purely natural and human basis.' Ethical societies like Belfast's were the direct ancestors of today's humanist groups.

4 HENRY JOY MCCRACKEN

Also in Joy's Entry is a statue of Henry Joy McCracken, unveiled in 2019. Henry was Francis Joy's grandson, and a founding member of the United Irishmen: a revolutionary society founded in 1791, aiming to unite Irish Catholics, Protestants, and Presbyterians for democratic reform and independence from Britain, inspired by the American and French Revolutions. Oppression by the authorities led some, like Henry, to become increasingly radical. Following his execution in 1798, Henry's sister, Mary Ann, continued this legacy of seeking equality under the law for all. Her extensive social work was deliberately non-denominational, looking instead towards a more secular future for Northern Ireland.



6 ASSEMBLY ROOMS & NORTHERN WHIG

At the corner of North and Waring Street is the former home of the Assembly and Exchange Rooms. Following the 1798 rebellion by the United Irishmen, Henry Joy McCracken was tried here before being hanged at the Market House in High Street. Opposite is The Northern Whig, built in 1820. Here, in January 1846, a farewell breakfast was held for the formerly enslaved abolitionist Frederick Douglass. A freethinker, Douglass was unafraid to criticise those Churches and professed Christians who supported, or failed to condemn, slavery.

Nearby Waring Street was a meeting place for the Belfast Humanist Group, who met in the War Memorial Building (9-13 Waring Street) from the mid-1960s. The group were active in calling for a variety of social and political reforms, especially in the area of civil rights.

7 THE JOHN HEWITT

John Hewitt was a librarian, writer, and socialist, who sought to bring together the traditions and belief identities in Northern Ireland through mutual understanding and progressive politics. Hewitt stressed he had no religion and advocated tolerance, mutual respect, and openness to marginalised cultural traditions. He was a founding member of the Belfast Peace League, and advocated the idea of 'regionalism' (rather than religion or politics) as a means of exploring and establishing a sense of identity.

8 WRITER'S SQUARE

Northern Ireland Civil Rights ASSOCIATION
A CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH
WILL BE HELD IN DERRY
ON SATURDAY, 5TH OCT.
COMMENCING AT 3.30 p.m.
ASSEMBLY POINT: WATERSIDE RAILWAY STATION
MARCH TO THE DIAMOND
Where a PUBLIC MEETING will take place

Writer's Square celebrates the city's rich literary and cultural heritage. A number of Belfast's leading literary figures were freethinkers, like the humanist writer and teacher John Boyd, and novelist Forrest Reid.

To the north is the LGBTQ district, and Love Equality marches commenced at Writers' Square, building to the successful introduction of the Marriage Equality Act in 2019.

9 ST MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

St Mary's Church was the first Catholic church established in the city in 1784. Funds were donated by the Presbyterians of Rosemary Street, and this act of solidarity was echoed in the 1960s when the cross-community Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) held their meetings in the Church Hall. NICRA was founded in 1967: a non-party, non-denominational group to defend civil liberties, including those of free speech and free assembly. A public meeting held in the War Memorial Building in November 1966 had been chaired by humanist writer John D. Stewart, to highlight the issue of civil liberties in Northern Ireland. The key speakers at the meeting were Ciaran Mac An Ali and anti-apartheid campaigner Kader Asmal. Asmal and Stewart went on to play leading roles in the First Conference of Humanists in Ireland, held in 1969.

10 ROYAL BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

Created as the Belfast Academical Institution, and funded by public subscription, the RBAI was founded as a non-denominational college for secondary and higher education. It opened on 1 February 1814 by the physician William Drennan — a founder of the United Irishmen, and a radical social reformer. This was the first secular school in Britain and Ireland and the model for both University College London (the first secular university) and Queen's University Belfast. Efforts for inclusive, non-segregated education have been a keystone of humanist efforts in Northern Ireland for decades.

11 ULSTER HALL

It was here, in 1874, that Irish physicist and professed agnostic John Tyndall spoke to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and incited a rigorous debate about the relative places of science and religion in Victorian society. Tyndall argued for absolute freedom of thought and discussion in science. Like his friend T.H. Huxley, Tyndall was a passionate communicator of science, and an agnostic – a term which Huxley had coined in 1869 to describe someone who 'shall not say he knows or believes that which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe'. 'There is in the true man of science,' Tyndall said, 'a wish stronger than the wish to have his beliefs upheld… the wish to have them true.'

Humanist Heritage

BIRMINGHAM TOUR

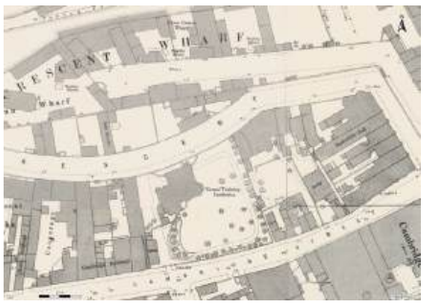
Birmingham was the birthplace of two key figures who quite literally defined the humanist movement at different stages of its evolution. George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) coined the term 'secularism' in 1851, describing an earthly philosophy synonymous with humanism today. Just over a century later, Harold John Blackham (1903–2009), became the first Executive Director of the British Humanist Association (now Humanists UK), earning the title of architect of the modern humanist movement. These two men form part of a wider story of Birmingham freethought, spanning the scientific curiosity of the Lunar Society, the defiant atheism of John Baskerville, and the pioneering work of Harriet Martineau.

1 IKON GALLERY

The Ikon Gallery was once the Oozells Street Board School, opened in 1878 by the Birmingham School Board. Such Boards were brought about following the 1870 Elementary Education Act — a landmark piece of legislation driven by the National Education League's push for free, compulsory, and non-sectarian schooling. This movement attracted prominent secularists like G. J. Holyoake, who argued at the League's founding conference that education should be practical and entirely secular. The school was also a meeting place in the early 1880s for the Birmingham Positivists, who practiced a 'religion of humanity' that replaced supernatural worship with a secular celebration of human achievement.

2 THE GOLDEN BOYS

This gilded bronze statue by William Bloye, unveiled in 1956, depicts three steam engine pioneers: Matthew Boulton, James Watt and William Murdoch. All three men were members of Birmingham's Lunar Society, sometimes referred to as the 'Birmingham Philosophers' or 'Fellow schemers'. Another member was Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), grandfather of Charles Darwin, who wrote on early concepts of evolution, and supported the idea of women's education.



4 BASKERVILLE HOUSE

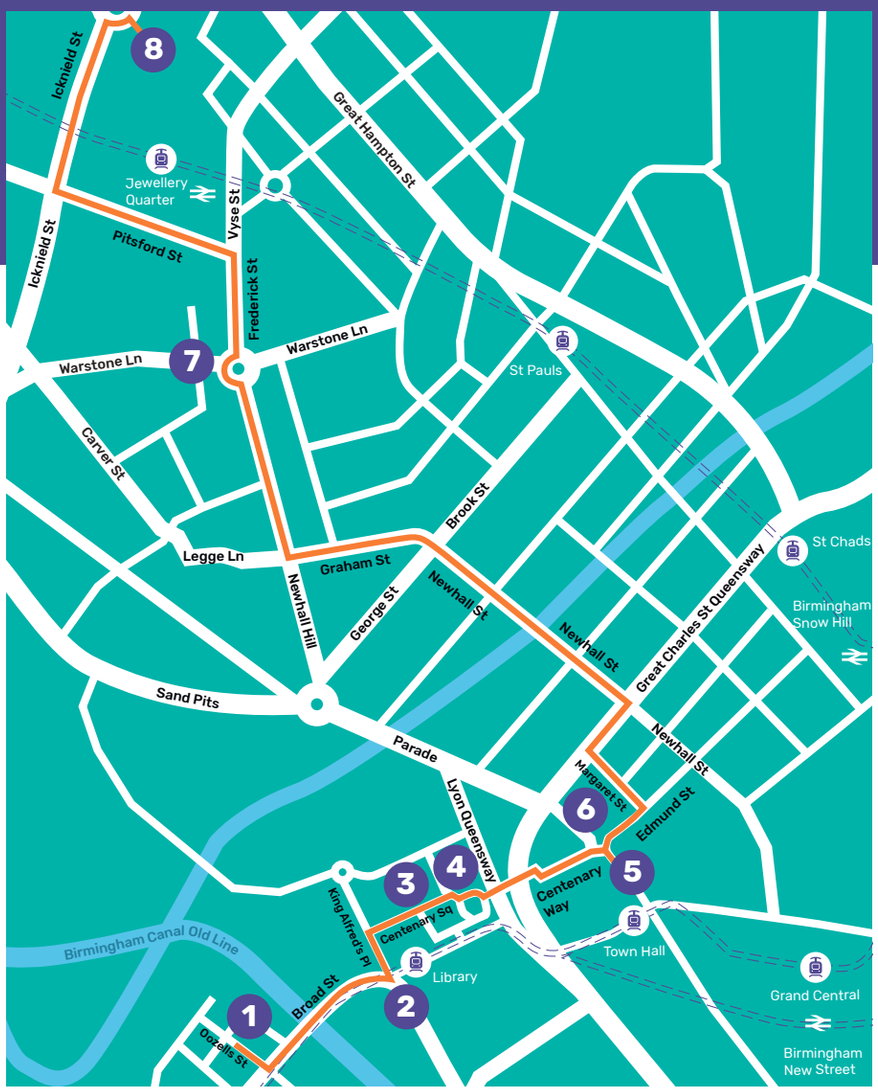
Baskerville House occupies the site of John Baskerville's home. Baskerville wanted to be buried in a conical building on his own premises. His self-penned epitaph read:

Stranger—Beneath this Cone in Unconsecrated Ground
A Friend to the Liberties of mankind Directed his Body to be Inhum'd
May the Example Contribute to Emancipate thy mind
From the Idle Fears of Superstition
And the wicked arts of priesthood.

His wishes were honoured, but when redevelopment took place in the area he was disinterred in 1820 and reburied nine years later in Christ Church. When this was demolished, his remains were removed again, and are now in the Church of England Cemetery in Warstone Lane.

3 CENTENARY SQUARE

Centenary Square is home to Industry & Genius: a monument to renowned printer and fervent atheist John Baskerville (1706–1775), by Birmingham-born artist David Patten. Best remembered today for the typeface which bears his name, Baskerville was an unapologetic non-believer, a fact celebrated by later generations of freethinkers. In 1877, just over a century after his death, the Birmingham secularists opened Baskerville Hall (at The Crescent), named in his memory.



5 BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery first opened in 1885, and contains more than 40 galleries of art, applied art, social history, archaeology, and ethnography. Paintings of and by a number of prominent freethinkers can be found in its collections, from James Millar's 1774 portrait of John Baskerville to works by humanist and Pre-Raphaelite painter Ford Madox Brown.

6 BIRMINGHAM & MIDLAND INSTITUTE

On 1 October 1877, physicist John Tyndall delivered a Presidential Address here titled *Science and Man*. In it, he argued that the roots of morality were human – not divine – and for the fundamental importance of honesty and the scientific method: 'When facts present themselves let us dare to face them, but let the man of science equally dare to confess ignorance where it prevail'.

Birmingham-born writer and philosopher Constance Naden took classes here in botany, French, and German from 1879. Naden developed an atheist philosophy called 'hylo-idealism', based on unity in diversity, and contributed to freethought journals like the Agnostic Annual. Bold in her own humanist philosophy, she observed of 19th century Britain that it was 'a nation of practical secularists [who] can tolerate passive religion better than active atheism'.

7 CHAMBERLAIN CLOCK

Joseph Chamberlain was a businessman, social reformer, radical politician, and the father of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He was raised as a unitarian, but lost his faith following the death of his second wife, Florence Kenrick, in 1875. In stark contrast to the feeling of liberation expressed by some freethinkers, like Harriet Martineau (next step), Chamberlain wrote bitterly: 'I refuse to try & buy comfort by forcing myself into insincere conviction—but still I thoroughly abhor the result at which I have arrived'. It was Chamberlain who proposed the vote of thanks to John Tyndall following that 1877 lecture at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

8 KEY HILL CEMETERY

Key Hill is the city's oldest cemetery, opened in 1836 as the non-denominational Birmingham Central Cemetery. Alongside a host of Birmingham's great and good, two of the 19th century's most remarkable freethinkers are buried at Key Hill: Harriet Martineau and Constance Naden. Both women embraced a humanist philosophy of reason, empathy, and rational inquiry, detached completely from theological ideas.

Harriet Martineau was a pioneering writer, thinker, and activist, considered the first woman sociologist. She is buried in Key Hill alongside a number of her family members.

Scientist, poet, philosopher, and freethinker Constance Naden is buried alongside her mother and maternal grandparents. Their gravestone, replaced in 2019 following a fundraising campaign, bears an inscription from Naden's poem 'The Pantheist's Song of Immortality': 'For earth is not as though thou ne'er hadst been'.

Humanist Heritage

BLOOMSBURY TOUR

Bloomsbury has been home to dozens of individuals and organisations who have influenced the modern humanist movement, and profoundly changed the world around them. Beginning at historic Conway Hall, this walk introduces a range of freethinkers, activists, creatives, and community leaders who thought for themselves and acted for everyone.

1 CONWAY HALL

Conway Hall was opened in 1929 and named for Virginia-born Moncure Conway (1832–1907), an abolitionist and freethinker. Conway was 'minister' of the hall's predecessor: South Place Chapel in Finsbury. In 1888, under another American, Stanton Coit (1857-1944), this became South Place Ethical Society. Ethical societies emphasised 'deed without creed'; living well without reference to any notions of reward or punishment in the hereafter – the precursors of today's humanist groups.

2 CHURCH OF HUMANITY

20 Rugby Street (formerly 19 Chapel Street) was the site of the positivist Church of Humanity, established by philosopher Richard Congreve (1818-1899) in 1870. Rooted in the ideas of French philosopher Auguste Comte, positivism sought to celebrate the achievements of humankind through secular ritual, and the chapel's interior was decorated with portraits and busts of those they admired. The freethinking Harriet Martineau (1802-1876) played a significant role in popularising Comte's ideas, with her 1853 translation of his *Cours de philosophie positive*.

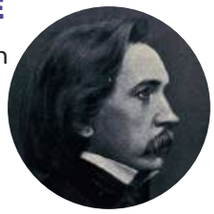
3 BRUNSWICK SQUARE

Brunswick Square has an all-star cast of former residents, including Leonard and Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, and E. M. Forster - all of whom were humanists. Like Woolf's Mrs Dalloway (from the novel of 1925), hers was an 'atheist's religion of doing good for the sake of goodness.' Virginia lived with her brother Adrian, Leonard, and John Maynard Keynes at no. 38 in 1911–12. Fellow writer E. M. Forster was active in the humanist movement, as well as in the cause of civil liberties. A humanist, wrote Forster, had 'four leading characteristics — curiosity, a free mind, belief in good taste, and belief in the human race.' He lived at 26 Brunswick Square between 1930-1939.

4 ROBERT OWEN

Welsh-born Robert Owen (1771–1858) was a utopian socialist, philanthropist, and reformer, whose time living here covered some of the busiest years of the Owenite movement. Owen was sceptical of organised religion, and motivated by the belief that human character was shaped by circumstance, not inbuilt from birth. As a mill owner, he had introduced pioneering changes to education, community, and labour, and later applied these lessons and ideals to experimental communities in Britain and abroad. Of his hopes for grand social reform, he wrote 'my plans were all laid to gradually supersede these religions… by the practical religion of love and charity for our race, irrespective of colour, country, class, sect, sex, party, or difference in natural organisation or constitution; and thus to attain happiness, the great object of humanity.'

5 GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE



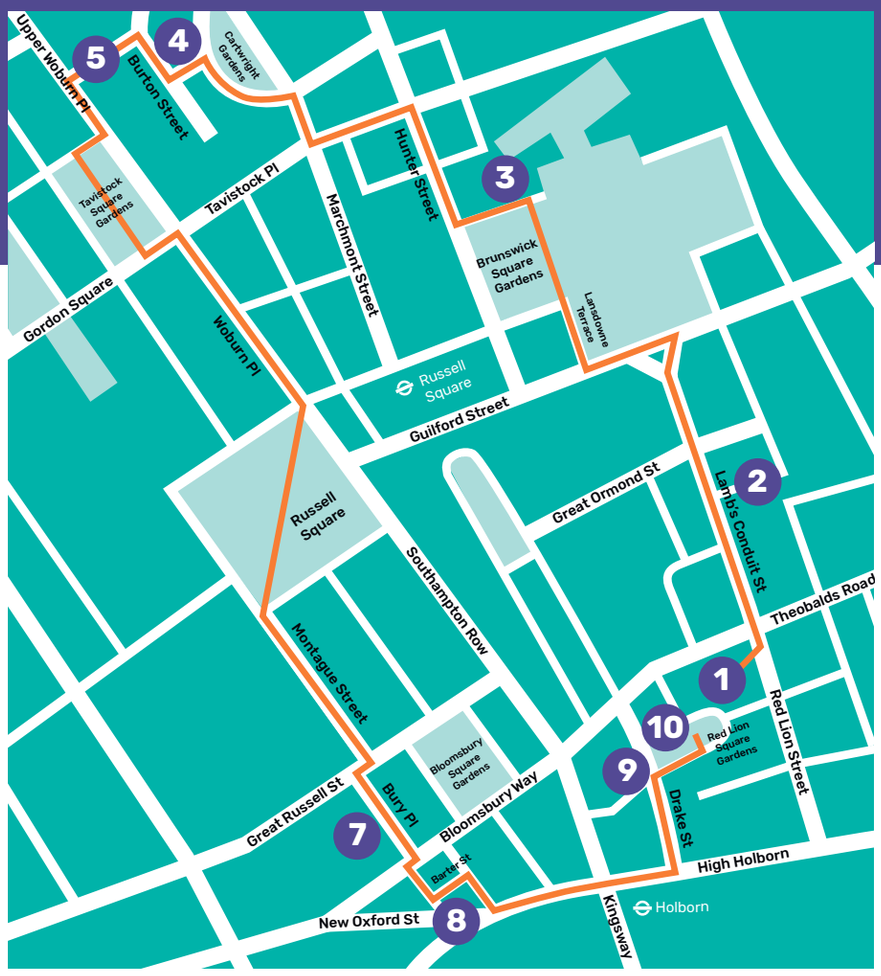
A plaque on Woburn Walk remembers George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), a writer, lecturer, and promoter of the cooperative movement, who lived here 1850–1861, and who coined the term 'secularist' in 1851. For Holyoake, secularism described 'that province of human duty which belongs to this life', and work undertaken to improve the lot of humanity. In its focus on living well in this life, without hope of another, Holyoake's original definition of a secularist is almost identical to that of a humanist today.

6 TAVISTOCK SQUARE

The Conscientious Objectors' Commemorative Stone, unveiled in 1994, was the work of a group of humanists and pacifists, and is dedicated 'To all those who have established and who are maintaining the right to refuse to kill'. The campaign was led by Edna Mathieson, whose uncle Joe Brett had been a conscientious objector, and whose enduring philosophy Mathieson described as that of Thomas Paine: 'My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.' The stone was unveiled by humanist, composer, former CO, and then President of the Peace Pledge Union Sir Michael Tippett.

7 BERTRAND RUSSELL

Philosopher, mathematician, and humanist Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) lived here at flat 34 between 1911-16. A public intellectual, Russell was also a lifelong activist, particularly in the cause of peace and international cooperation. Russell described the good life as 'one inspired by love and guided by knowledge', and strove to contribute to the kind of society in which the good life could be lived.



9 FENNER BROCKWAY

A lifelong socialist, anti-racist, and peace campaigner, Fenner Brockway (1888-1988) founded the No Conscription Fellowship in 1914 (at the suggestion of his wife, Lilla) to resist compulsory military service. Alongside Bertrand Russell he was a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1957 and, aged nearly 90, co-founder of the World Disarmament Campaign in 1979. He was a member of the Advisory Council of Humanists UK.

10 BERTRAND RUSSELL

This bust of Bertrand Russell by Marcelle Quinton was unveiled on 29 October 1980 by Dora Russell, in a ceremony presided over by Lord Fenner Brockway. Dora Russell (1894-1986), herself a prominent humanist and activist, and wife of Bertrand 1921–1935, had proposed the memorial a year earlier, and was joined in the appeal by Brockway, philosopher A. J. Ayer, writers Ritchie Calder and Ted Willis, and sociologist Barbara Wootton – all leading humanist activists.

8 WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

One area of activism in which many humanists were involved was the fight for women's suffrage. On the corner of Bury Place and Barter Street was the London headquarters of the Women's Freedom League 1914–1959, founded in 1907 by dissenters from the Pankhurst-led Women's Social and Political Union (the WSPU). Among its founding members were Teresa Billington-Greig (1876-1964), a lifelong agnostic and ethical society member, and Lillie Boileau (1869-1930), a key figure in the 20th century humanist movement.

Humanist Heritage

BRISTOL TOUR

From chartists and Owenites to secularists and humanists, Bristol has a rich history of radical action and free thinking. This walk follows in the footsteps of some of those who challenged religious dogma and political inequality to fight for a society built on reason, democracy, and 'deed not creed'.

1 CASTLE PARK

Across the park, at 34 Castle Street, once stood the premises of J. Cossens: purveyor of radical literature. On this walk, we'll be introduced to some of the freethinkers and agitators who might have been drawn to such a shop; individuals who fought for change in Bristol and the wider world during the 19th century and beyond. These have included the chartists – a working-class movement agitating for democratic reform; Owenites – who advocated for the reorganisation of society along communitarian lines; and secularists – whose philosophy referred to a this-worldly focus on doing good for the sake of humankind, identical to humanism today.

2 BROADMEAD

Broadmead was the site of the Owenite Hall of Science, built in 1840 as a centre for education, discussion, and social activity. Trustees of the Hall of Science on Broadmead included pawnbroker Robert Tovey, carpenter Samuel Bromhead, and engravers John Field and Charles Brown.

The Hall of Science later became the Broadmead Rooms, continuing to welcome speakers of all stripes. One of these, in 1846, was formerly enslaved abolitionist and freethinker Frederick Douglass.

3 9 BRIDEWELL STREET

Near this site was a house once occupied by Emma Martin, commemorated by a plaque unveiled in 2023. The remarkable Emma Martin was born in Bristol in 1812, and was in her early years a zealous Baptist. She later became an outspoken atheist, and one of Owenism's most famous women lecturers, drawing crowds of thousands. In her later years, she worked as a midwife, and advocated firmly for the rights of women to knowledge of their own bodies.

4 NARROW LEWINS MEAD

Formerly a unitarian meeting house, it was here, in 1818, that a teenage Harriet Martineau came under the tutelage of minister Dr Lant Carpenter. Born into a unitarian family in Norwich in 1802, Martineau progressively abandoned the religious faith of her childhood, embracing instead a rich humanist philosophy focused on free inquiry, social conscience, and the pursuit of happiness. Today, she is remembered as the first woman sociologist, a prolific writer, and a vocal opponent of slavery.

5 BRISTOL BEACON

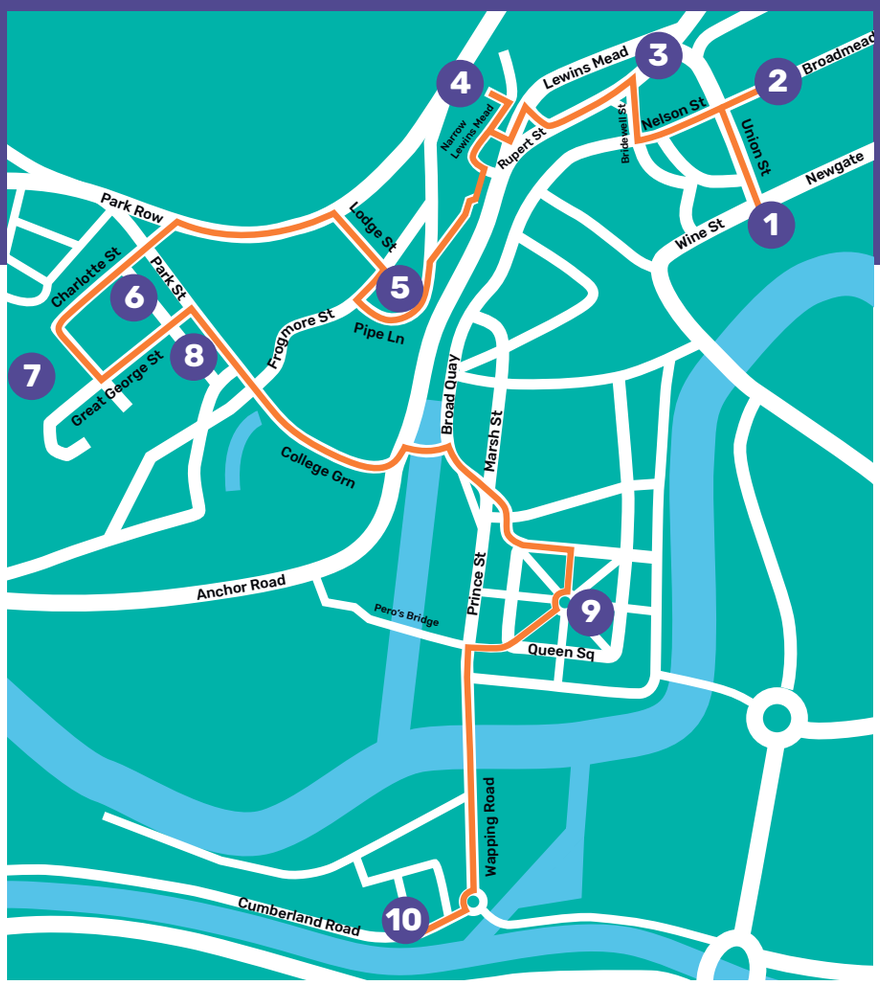
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.
GREAT DEMONSTRATION
WOMEN
COLSTON HALL,
THURSDAY, Nov. 4th, 1880,
Mrs. BEDDOE

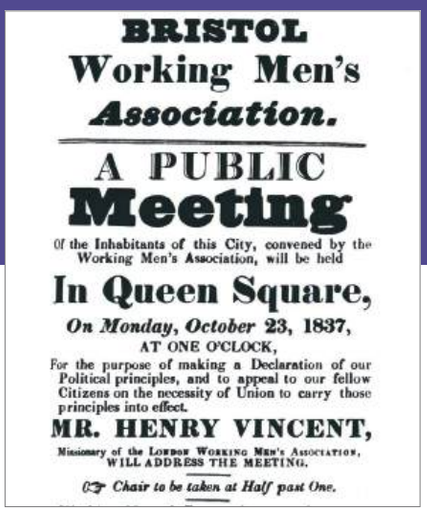
On 4 November 1880, when still known as Colston Hall, this was the site of a significant suffrage demonstration, whose speakers included the freethinker Lydia Becker. Becker was a suffragist, science advocate, and correspondent of Charles Darwin. Another humanist with a link to Bristol suffrage was Jeanette Gaury Wilkinson, a working class trade unionist and feminist. A powerful speaker, London-born Wilkinson was invited to become the Bristol Society for Women's Suffrage's organising secretary and lecturer in 1884.

AN INVITATION
to all interested in the advancement of mankind—physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually—to meet at
17, CHARLOTTE ST., PARK ST., Bristol,
6.30, SUNDAY EVENING, April 22.
to discuss the forming of a BRISTOL ETHICAL FELLOWSHIP and a centre for HUMANISTIC and ETHICAL (as compared with supernatural) RELIGION in Bristol.
Ethical Societies provide a meeting place for stimulating idealism, promoting collective thought about the higher ends of life, and for the discussion of pressing social and moral questions.

6 17 CHARLOTTE STREET

Charlotte Street was one of the meeting places of the Bristol Ethical Fellowship, founded in 1934. This was a successor to the Bristol Ethical Society, active from 1898–1900. Ethical societies, which first formed in the UK during the 1880s, focused on living well without reference to supernatural ideas. They grew out of the American Ethical Culture movement, started by Felix Adler in New York in 1876, with the motto 'deed not creed'. Spaces of secular community, they organised lectures and debates, with members often involved in wide-ranging charitable and reformist efforts.





BRISTOL
Working Men's
Association.

A PUBLIC
Meeting

Of the Inhabitants of this City, convened by the Working Men's Association, will be held

In Queen Square,

On Monday, October 23, 1837,
AT ONE O'CLOCK,

For the purpose of making a Declaration of our Political principles, and to appeal to our fellow Citizens on the necessity of Union to carry those principles into effect.

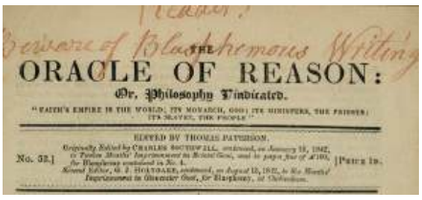
MR. HENRY VINCENT,

Missionary of the LONDON WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION, WILL ADDRESS THE MEETING.

☞ *Chair to be taken at Half past One.*

9 QUEEN SQUARE

Queen Square was the site of the first public meeting organised by the Bristol Working Men's Association in October 1837, addressed by chartist leader Henry Vincent. The People's Charter (from which the chartists took their name) would be written the following year, outlining demands for the extension of voting rights, including the vote for every man, annual parliaments, and the secret ballot.



Beware of Blasphemous Writings

THE
ORACLE OF REASON:
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS; ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

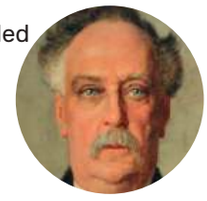
EDITED BY THOMAS PATTERSON.

No. 32.] [PRICE 1D.

10 THE GATEWAY

This is the site of the Old Gaol, built in 1820 and mostly demolished by 1898. It was here that avowed atheist Charles Southwell was imprisoned for blasphemy in 1842. En route to visit Southwell here, George Jacob Holyoake was himself arrested for blasphemy, following a flippant comment made at a lecture on Owenism in Cheltenham. The flurry of prosecutions in the 1840s which caught Southwell, Holyoake, and others, recalled those of two decades earlier, when efforts to suppress 'blasphemous' or 'seditious' publications and statements had seen the imprisonment of many freethinkers. As then, attempts to legislate opinion and belief were met with fury and opposition, and humanists then – as now – fought resolutely for freedom of the press, and of religion and belief.

7 BRANDON HILL



Brandon Hill provided the outdoor venue for a variety of public meetings and lectures, including those of radical speaker Henry Hunt and the National Union of the Working Classes in 1833. In July 1869, Charles Bradlaugh, founder of the National Secular Society, lectured here. Bristol's Secular Society was established that year. The word 'secularism' was coined by George Jacob Holyoake in 1851. Although secularism today typically refers to the separation of Church and state, Holyoake's definition was almost synonymous with that of modern humanism: a philosophy which placed the needs of human beings, and the achievements of this life, at its heart. One significant Bristol-born secularist was Charles Watts, born into the family of a Bristol book maker in 1836. Brought up a strict Methodist, he heard Holyoake speak and, by the age of 16, had abandoned religion. He moved to London to join the national movement and in 1866 became a full-time secularist lecturer and the first secretary of Bradlaugh's National Secular Society.

8 FREEMASONS' HALL

The Institution for the Advancement of Science, Literature and the Arts was opened here in 1823. Housing a lecture theatre, library, and exhibition space, it sought to 'disseminate useful knowledge through lectures and experiments'. Institutions like this often drew freethinkers, helping to promote and expand the scientific understanding which destabilised the religious beliefs of many during the 19th century. That said, papers explicitly discussing religion or politics were often forbidden.

Humanist Heritage

CARDIFF TOUR

This walk introduces some of the key freethinkers and reformers who have shaped, and been shaped by, Cardiff. These include famous names like Aneurin Bevan, the architect of the NHS, and lesser known figures like Millicent Mackenzie, a pioneer for women's rights and secular education. The route highlights significant milestones in social progress, from the growth of ethical societies and organised humanism to the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, and beyond.

1 PARC MACKENZIE

Parc Mackenzie is named for Millicent Mackenzie, a university professor and campaigner for women's rights. Appointed Associate Professor of Education at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (now Cardiff University) in 1904, in 1910 she became the first woman in Wales to achieve full professorial status. She was also, in 1918, the first woman in Wales to stand for election to Parliament.

Mackenzie was one of Humanists UK's earliest Vice Presidents (when it was still called the Union of Ethical Societies). With her husband, John, she was a dedicated promoter of moral education, rather than religious instruction, in schools. This focused on teaching children how to be good citizens, using reasons that could be understood by all, whether they were brought up with a religious background or not.

2 NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF

The National Museum collections contain many busts and portraits of notable Welsh humanists, including Leo and Dannie Abse, and Aneurin Bevan. Leo Abse was a lawyer and MP, whose parliamentary efforts helped to decriminalise homosexuality, liberalise divorce laws, and support the abolition of capital punishment. His brother, Dannie Abse, was a doctor, poet, and writer, who said: 'I like to think I'm a poet and Medicine my serious hobby.' He saw poetry as 'a kind of singing', which helped to make life more beautiful.

3 GORSEDD GARDENS

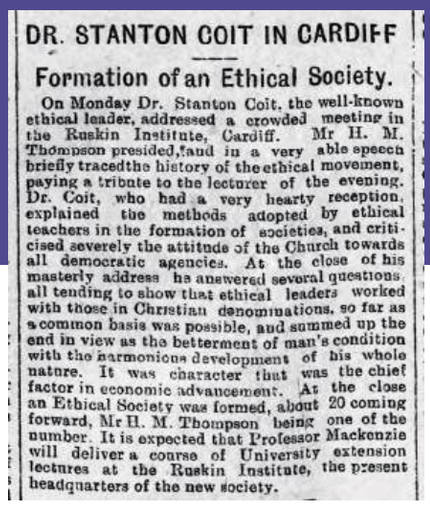
These gardens were named for the Gorsedd Circle of standing stones, originally placed in Cathays Park for the 1899 National Eisteddfod, and moved to their present location in 1905. In its early years this space was referred to as the Druidical Gardens but the name Gorsedd Gardens was later adopted.

The Gardens are home to 'Girl' by sculptor Robert Thomas (1926–1999). Thomas was the creator of the statue of Nye Bevan which we'll pass later, and also made a bust of Welsh writer Gwyn Thomas, which was stolen from the foyer of the Sherman Theatre, and later recast. Like Bevan, Gwyn Thomas was a freethinker, whose autobiography *A Few Selected Exits* (1968) featured sections including 'And ten more dogmas bit the dust' and 'See one miracle and you've seen the lot'.

Also here, unveiled in 1960, is a bronze statue of David Lloyd George, a Member of Parliament for Caernavon for 55 years, and Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922. As Prime Minister, Lloyd George oversaw the disestablishment of the Church in Wales in 1920 – something he and many others had long campaigned for.

4 LEONARDO HOTEL

The Leonardo Hotel was formerly Park Hall, and the location of radical journalist and prominent secularist G.W. Foote's lectures in Cardiff in March 1890. *The Cardiff Times* reported that 'On Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, Mr Foote had for his theme, "Death—what after?" The gist of his contention was a recommendation to make the best of this world as there was no certainty of another'. Although today secularism typically refers more strictly to the separation of Church and State, during the 19th century, its emphasis – like Foote's – was on making the best of this world.



DR. STANTON COIT IN CARDIFF

Formation of an Ethical Society.

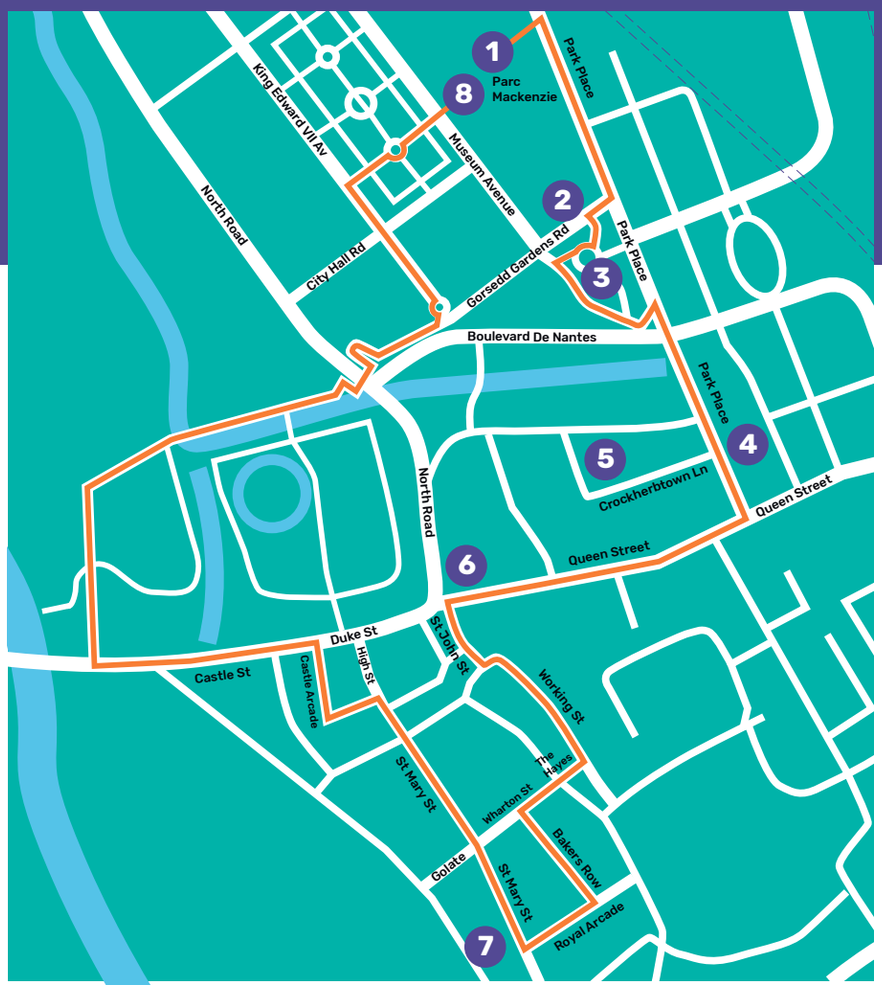
On Monday Dr. Stanton Coit, the well-known ethical leader, addressed a crowded meeting in the Ruskin Institute, Cardiff. Mr H. M. Thompson presided, and in a very able speech briefly traced the history of the ethical movement, paying a tribute to the lecturer of the evening. Dr. Coit, who had a very hearty reception, explained the methods adopted by ethical teachers in the formation of societies, and criticised severely the attitude of the Church towards all democratic agencies. At the close of his masterly address he answered several questions, all tending to show that ethical leaders worked with those in Christian denominations, so far as a common basis was possible, and summed up the end in view as the betterment of man's condition with the harmonious development of his whole nature. It was character that was the chief factor in economic advancement. At the close an Ethical Society was formed, about 20 coming forward, Mr H. M. Thompson being one of the number. It is expected that Professor Mackenzie will deliver a course of University extension lectures at the Ruskin Institute, the present headquarters of the new society.

5 CROCKHERBTOWN LANE

Off the south side of Crockherbtown Lane once lay Paradise Place, home to the Ruskin Institute, where the Cardiff Ethical Society held their meetings. The Society was inaugurated in January 1904 with a lecture by Stanton Coit, a leader of the Ethical (later humanist) movement. Ethical Societies emerged in the late 19th century as groups aiming to bring people together on the basis of shared values, without reference to supernatural ideas. They sought to separate morals from religion, providing a space for socialising and education, as well the opportunity for good works in the wider community.

6 ANEURIN BEVAN

This statue of Aneurin Bevan was created by Welsh sculptor Robert Thomas, and unveiled in 1987. Thomas himself was described by obituarist Meic Stephens as 'staunchly humanist' and 'attracted as a sculptor to subjects whom he revered for their humanitarian ideals'. This statue commemorates one of Wales' most famous humanists: Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan.



As Minister of Health following the ravages of the Second World War, Bevan was a driving force in the creation of the National Health Service and the realisation of the welfare state. Jennie Lee, politician, humanist, and Bevan's wife, wrote of Nye: 'He was not a cold-blooded rationalist. He was no calculating machine. He was a great humanist whose religion lay in loving his fellow-men and trying to serve them'.

7 ROYAL HOTEL

The Royal Hotel was the site of the last public banquet of explorer Captain Robert Falcon Scott 1868-1912 and fellow members of the ill-fated Antarctic expedition. They departed from Cardiff aboard the Terra Nova on 15 June 1910, beginning their journey to the South Pole. The party of five would die on their return from the Pole in early 1912.

Louis Bernacchi, one of Scott's Discovery expedition team, wrote: 'Truth and right and justice were his gods, and these did not come from any religious sense. They were something within himself. He led a decent human life because he was a decent human being.'

8 CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

Many humanists have been associated with Cardiff University, as students and as staff. Mary Adams, the first woman television producer at the BBC, gained a first class degree in botany here in 1921. It was Adams who gave a young David Attenborough his start in broadcasting. Other humanist alumni include former Humanists UK President (and current Vice President) Professor Alice Roberts.

Humanist Heritage

MANCHESTER TOUR

Manchester has a rich tradition of radicalism, freethinking, and humanism - historically home to leading suffragists, pioneering cooperators, and influential social reformers. Many of these were united in challenging orthodox religious ideas, and living by values we call 'humanist' today.

1 HOLYOAKE HOUSE

Now home to the National Co-operative Archive, Holyoake House was named for George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906): a leading proponent and historian of cooperation (where enterprises are owned and run jointly by their members), and coiner of the term 'secularism' in 1851. Although it's come to refer to the separation of church and state, Holyoake's secularism was a worldview rooted in reason and human need which is interchangeable with that of humanism today.

2 ROBERT OWEN

Robert Owen (1771-1858) was a utopian socialist, philanthropist, and reformer, whose own religious scepticism fostered his desire for a secular society, and his pursuit of a 'rational religion' - rooted in the needs of humankind, rather than the worship of any god. As a mill owner, he introduced pioneering changes to education, community, and labour, and influenced a number of experimental communities in Britain and abroad. The movement, which became known as Owenism, emphasised cooperation, reason, and the human capacity to improve the world.

3 MAHATMA GANDHI

The international significance and reputation of Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) is well-known, but his involvement with the burgeoning humanist movement during the early 20th century is far less so. Drawn by its unifying focus on moral action, Gandhi became a correspondent and close friend of the Secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies (now Humanists UK) Florence Winterbottom, and in 1907 published a Gujarati translation of US ethical society leader William Salter's book *Ethical Religion*.

4 BARTON ARCADE

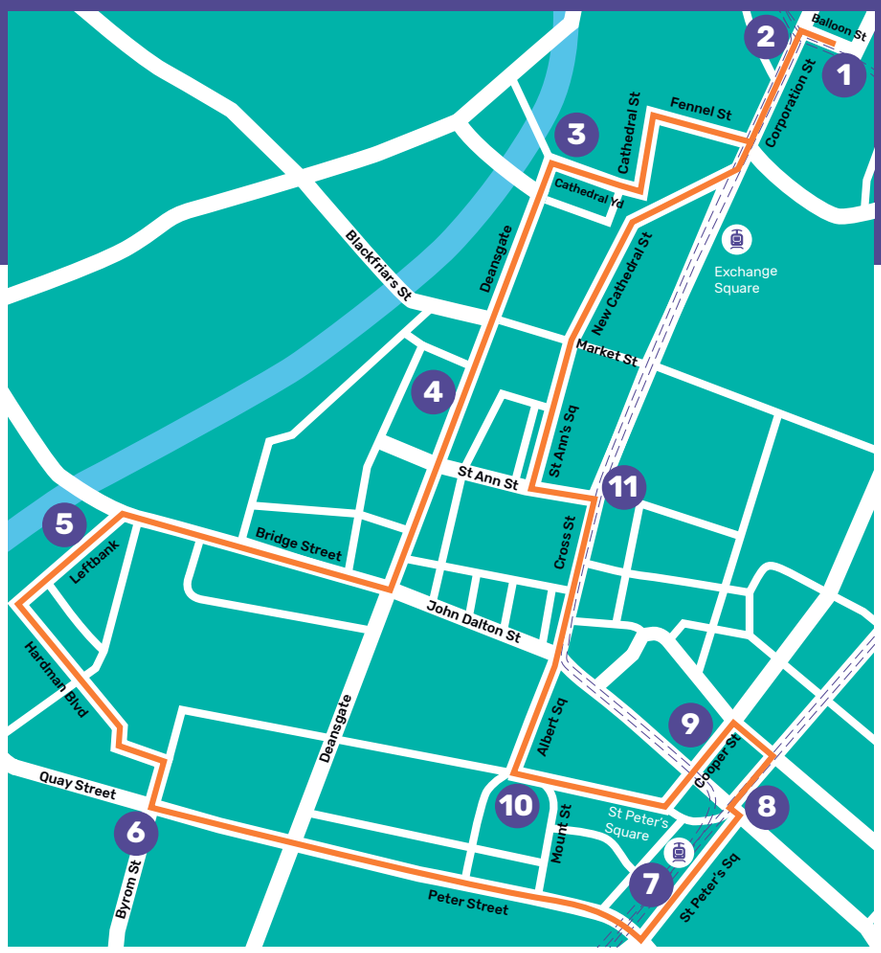
Dr Louis Borchardt (1816/7-1883) was a paediatrician, political liberal, abolitionist, and active supporter of women's equal standing in the medical profession. His offices were in Barton Arcade. On his death, an obituary in the *Women's Suffrage Journal* described him as 'the foster-father of the women's suffrage movement in Manchester'. It was at Borchardt's home in January 1867 that the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage had been formed. Born of Jewish parents, Borchardt was a liberal thinker in matters of religion as well as politics. His daughters, Malvina and Helene, both became longtime members of the West London Ethical Society (a founding group of the Union which became Humanists UK), and started a girls' school in London.

5 PEOPLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM

The People's History Museum is the UK's 'national museum of democracy', and its collections commemorate many remarkable humanists and freethinkers, from revolutionary writer Thomas Paine, and influential secularist Annie Besant, to NHS founder Nye Bevan.

6 COBDEN HOUSE CHAMBERS

Cobden House, the former home of Richard Cobden and of Owens College, provides a fascinating insight into various efforts for secular education during the 19th century - a cause many humanists advocated, and continue to work for today. Cobden was a prominent voice in the call for a national system of secular education, while Owens College was founded for the education of young men along non-sectarian lines. An early pupil was Richard Pankhurst (1834–1898) - an active champion of secularism in state and schooling.



7 EMMELINE PANKHURST

This depiction of leading suffragette and founder of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) Emmeline Pankhurst was only the second statue of a woman in Manchester City Centre, after that of Queen Victoria. Also considered for commemoration was Mancunian MP Ellen Wilkinson, who in 1945 chaired a meeting in London which ultimately led to the formation of UNESCO: an organisation established on explicitly humanist principles.

8 MANCHESTER ART GALLERY

The Manchester Art Gallery includes two historic buildings designed for the pursuit of knowledge and the enjoyment of culture. It also contains works by prominent humanist artists, including Ford Madox Brown. One of the gallery buildings originally housed the Royal Manchester Institution 'for the Promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts'. The other, the Athenaeum, housed a society for the 'advancement and diffusion of knowledge'. The Royal Manchester Institution was the location of the inaugural meeting of the Manchester Ladies' Literary Society, with freethinker Lydia Becker (1827–1890) as President.

9 COOPER STREET

Becker was born on Cooper Street, and established the Ladies' Literary Society to provide intellectual opportunities for women, who were largely excluded from Manchester's other learned societies. In spite of the 'literary' in its title, Becker's society was mostly scientific in focus. Like much of Becker's work, the Ladies' Literary Society provided a direct challenge to the prescribed 'spheres' of activity for Victorian men and women, forming part of a long campaign to prove women's worthiness for intellectual pursuits.

10 TOWN HALL

The Town Hall was where the first meeting of the Women's Trades Union Council took place in February 1895. Established to encourage trade unionism among women workers, its office was nearby at 9 Albert Square. The Council's Honorary Secretary was Elizabeth Schwann (1855-1914), who the following year chaired the inaugural annual congress of the Union of Ethical Societies (now Humanists UK). Both she and her husband, MP Charles Schwann, were active members of the early humanist movement. Inside the Town Hall are a series of twelve paintings depicting the history of Manchester by Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), known as The Manchester Murals. Artist, suffragist, and ethical society member Ernestine Mills (1871–1959) described Ford Madox Brown as 'a cheerful and reverent Agnostic, whose whole life was one of unselfishness and devotion to lofty aims'.

11 CROSS STREET CHAPEL

Cross Street Chapel began life as a dissenting congregation, and the original chapel was built in 1694. In common with London's South Place Ethical Society (now Conway Hall), what began as an assembly of nonconformists grew over the years, and through a succession of ministers, into an ever more liberal outlook. While South Place moved from a Unitarian body to a humanist Ethical society, Cross Street became and remains a Unitarian chapel. The Unitarian emphasis on individual conscience and the rejection of dogma bears much similarity to the Ethical movement's ideal of 'deed not creed'.

Humanist Heritage

NORTHAMPTON TOUR

This walk explores Northampton's long tradition of secularism and free thought, including the legacy of its famous MP and radical reformer, Charles Bradlaugh. Discover connections to key humanist figures like artist William Morris and councillor Rodger Alder, who championed freedom of speech, LGBT rights, and the pursuit of human happiness.

1 CHARLES BRADLAUGH STATUE

Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891) was a leading freethinker, secularist, and founder of the National Secular Society. His efforts to take his seat in Parliament as elected MP for Northampton in the 1880s led to a protracted campaign for solemn affirmation, rather than oath swearing, and his publication with Annie Besant of birth control literature made a stand against obscenity laws. A fierce defender of freedom of speech, and tireless champion of rationalism and reason, Bradlaugh took up many of the causes central to the efforts of Humanists UK today.

This statue by George Tinworth (1843–1913) was unveiled in 1894, three years after Bradlaugh's death. *Watts's Literary Guide* (now *New Humanist magazine*) reported that more than 100,000 people were present at the unveiling by Bradlaugh's daughter Hypatia, in a 'remarkable demonstration of gratitude and devotion on the part of the admirers of the deceased freethinker and democrat'.

2 GUILDHALL

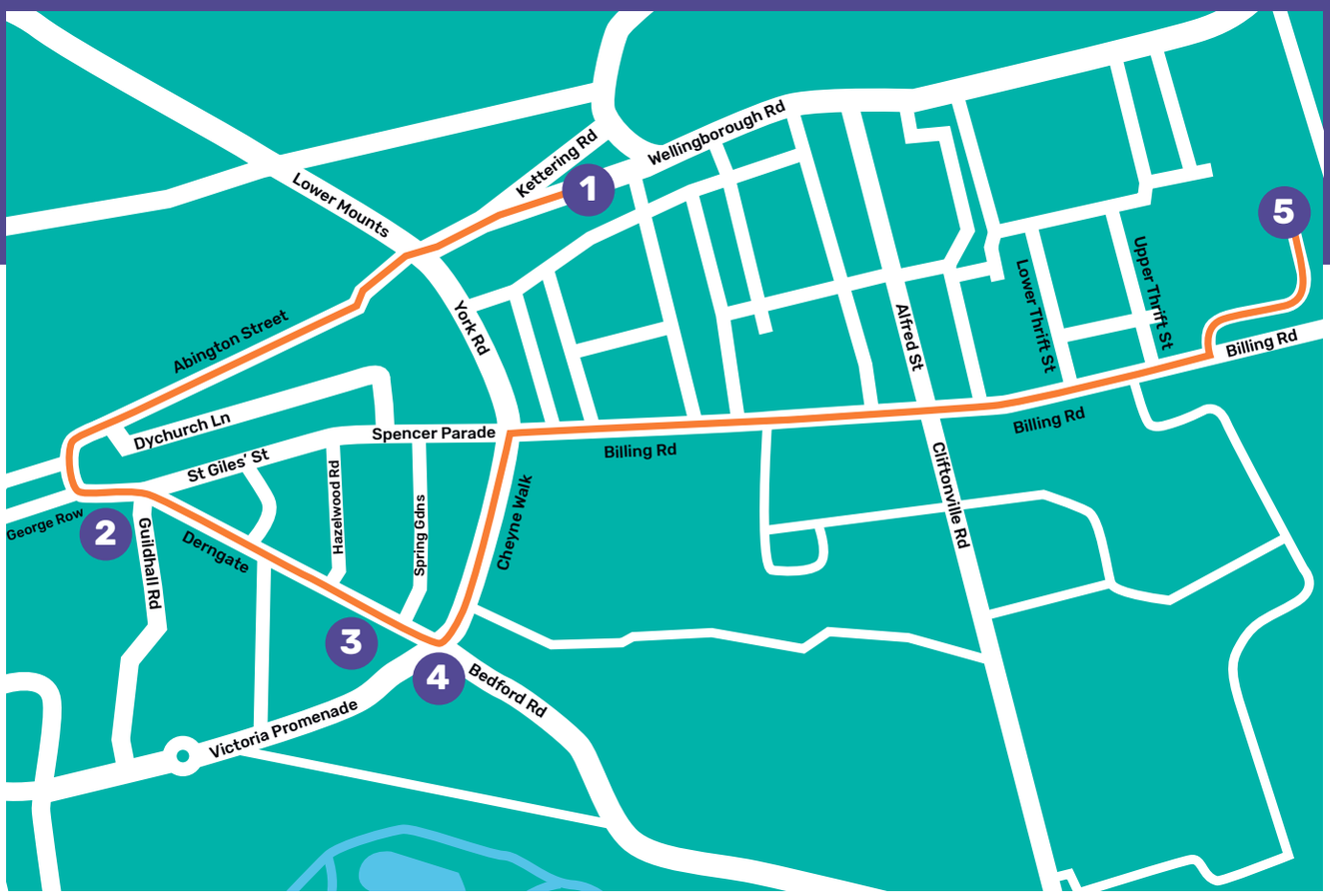
Northampton Councillor Rodger Alder's self-planned humanist funeral was held in the Great Hall here in 1997. A lecturer in Industrial Archaeology at Nene College and active in local politics, Alder became deputy leader of Northampton Borough Council and chair of its planning committee. In this role, he helped secure the naming of Bradlaugh Fields, in honour of Charles Bradlaugh, and played a leading role in acquiring 78 Derngate (next stop) for the Council. Alder died at just 49 from cancer, leaving instructions that his funeral include 'big hats, meringues and orange squash'.

Alder was active in Northampton's gay community, and in the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Group (now LGBT+ Humanists), whose meetings, socials, and residential weekends he regularly attended. He was remembered in the *Gay and Lesbian Humanist* magazine as 'a man of great intelligence, wit, and good humour'.

3 78 DERNGATE

78 Derngate is a Grade II listed house and visitor attraction. Built in the early 19th century, it was later designed and remodelled by Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh for Northampton model engineer, W.J. Bassett-Lowke – Mackintosh's only domestic commission outside of Scotland. In the 1990s, Rodger Alder played a key role in acquiring the house for the Council.

Humanist playwright George Bernard Shaw stayed here on a number of occasions, hosted by Fabian businessman and socialist Bassett-Lowke. Put up in the vibrantly decorated 'stripy' guest room, in response to the hope that he would sleep well, given the room's brightness, Shaw was said to have responded that he always slept with his eyes shut.



4 BECKETS PARK

In July 1885, famed artist, designer, and humanist William Morris spoke here at Beckets Park (then Cow Meadow) on socialism, under the auspices of Northampton's Secular Society. He reportedly stated that 'the real business of man on earth was happiness', and 'if there was anything which interfered with happiness it was a duty to remove it'. In the evening, Morris lectured at the Secular Hall on 'How we live and how we ought to live'.

In 1902, following a series of meetings at Cow Meadow held on Sunday afternoons during the summer, efforts were made to start a local ethical society 'to build up and comfort men and women, in those ways of thought and conduct which go to make a good life'.

5 BILLING ROAD CEMETERY

Billing Road Cemetery was opened in 1847, an example of a garden cemetery and the town's first secular burial site. Over the following years, a number of non-religious burials took place and were reported upon by the papers. These often used the secular burial service written by Austin Holyoake (1826–1874), emphasising the character and achievements of the individual, and – rather than an afterlife – the 'conviction that our memory will be cherished by those who come after us'. Such burials included those of prominent local atheist William Watts in 1883, 'old Radical' Frank Perry in 1885, and Irish-born Patrick Shea of Victoria Road in 1895.

The cemetery suffered bomb damage in 1941, and in the years since has lost many of its monuments and original buildings. One notable monument is that on the grave of Mary and Robert Fossett, circus performers. Though neither had an explicitly secular funeral, the inscription for Robert Fossett chimes with a humanist idea of death: 'He has pulled in for his last rest and still remains with those who knew and those who loved him best'.

Humanist Heritage

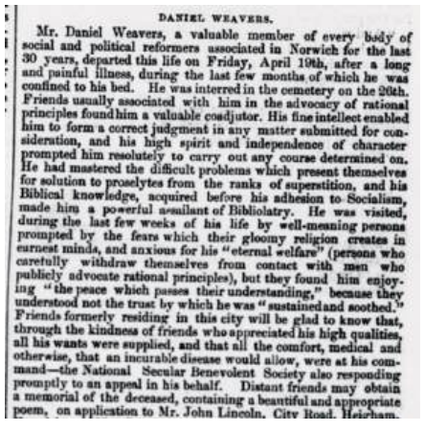
NORWICH TOUR

Norwich has a rich radical tradition, and across centuries has been home to many freethinkers, activists, and humanists who have championed reason, rights, and human happiness.

1 ST. ANDREW'S HALL

Charles Bradlaugh (the 'first atheist MP') spoke here at St. Andrew's Hall in 1876. Bradlaugh was a proponent of secularism, a term coined in 1851 to mean a philosophy focused on doing good in this world, without concern for an afterlife. Though it has come to mean the separation of Church and state, this original definition was closer to that of humanism today. In 1875, Norwich secularists had been denied the use of the Hall, instead holding an open air meeting on St. Andrew's Plain to assert the right of free speech.

In 1880, Norwich banded together in support of Bradlaugh when he was refused his seat in Parliament due to being unable – as a professed atheist – to swear the oath. Norwich's Jacob Henry Tillett MP (a nonconformist) supported Bradlaugh in his efforts to be allowed to affirm rather than swear an oath. After nearly six years, and four re-elections, he was eventually able to do so.



DANIEL WEAVERS.

Mr. Daniel Weavers, a valuable member of every body of social and political reformers associated in Norwich for the last 30 years, departed this life on Friday, April 19th, after a long and painful illness, during the last few months of which he was confined to his bed. He was interred in the cemetery on the 26th. Friends usually associated with him in the advocacy of rational principles found him a valuable coadjutor. His fine intellect enabled him to form a correct judgment in any matter submitted for consideration, and his high spirit and independence of character prompted him resolutely to carry out any course determined on. He had mastered the difficult problems which present themselves for solution to proselytes from the ranks of superstition, and his Biblical knowledge, acquired before his adhesion to Socialism, made him a powerful assailant of Bibliolatry. He was visited, during the last few weeks of his life by well-meaning persons prompted by the fears which their gloomy religion creates in earnest minds, and anxious for his "eternal welfare" (persons who carefully withdraw themselves from contact with men who publicly advocate rational principles), but they found him enjoying "the peace which passes their understanding," because they understood not the trust by which he was "sustained and soothed." Friends formerly residing in this city will be glad to know that, through the kindness of friends who appreciated his high qualities, all his wants were supplied, and that all the comfort, medical and otherwise, that an incurable disease would allow, were at his command—the National Secular Benevolent Society also responding promptly to an appeal in his behalf. Distant friends may obtain a memorial of the deceased, containing a beautiful and appropriate poem, on application to Mr. John Lincoln, City Road, Heigham.

2 ST. GEORGES

St. Georges Street, historically known as Gildengate and later Middle Street, underwent a significant transformation in 1898 when it was merged with Bridge Street to create the continuous thoroughfare seen today. During the 19th century, it was the home of Lot Hill (1815–1894), a radical bookseller and secularist. In 1867, following the death of Daniel Weavers, a hand-loom weaver and fellow secularist from nearby Rose Yard, St. Augustine's, Hill organised a collection to support Weavers' family.

3 THE OCTAGON CHAPEL

The Octagon Chapel was completed in 1756 and today is home to an inclusive community of unitarians, who welcome people of all faiths and none. Rooted in dissent from the Anglican Church, unitarianism emphasises individual conscience and progressive thought.

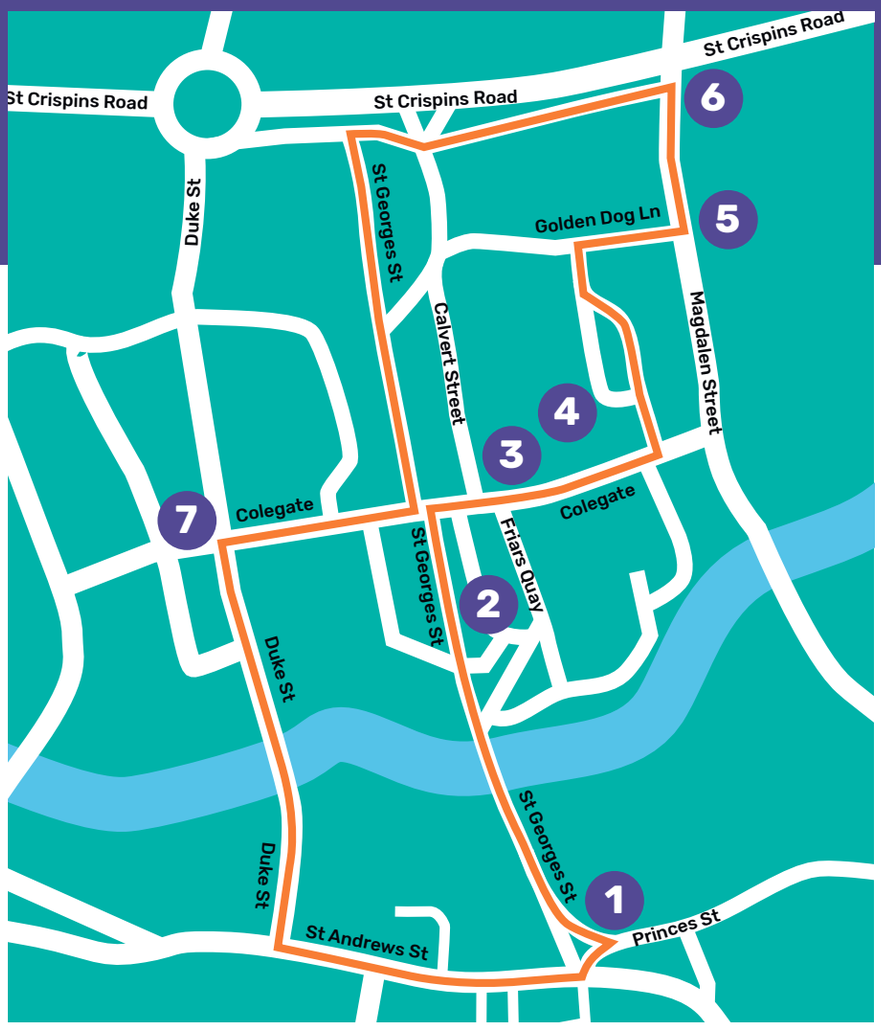
One influential Unitarian was William Johnson Fox (1786–1864), a politician, journalist, and minister. Fox was born in Suffolk but raised in Norwich, where he worked as a weaver and in a bank. Among other causes, Fox advocated for divorce on the grounds of mutual incompatibility, and defended freedom of speech — notably taking a stand for Richard Carlile, imprisoned for selling works, like those of Thomas Paine, deemed blasphemous or seditious. He also encouraged, through his magazine, the early careers of Tennyson, Browning, and Norwich's own Harriet Martineau (see next stop).

4 OLD MEETING HOUSE

In 1767, William Godwin (1756–1836) received tutoring from Samuel Newton here in the Old Meeting House. This was an unpleasant experience, with Godwin recalling Newton as 'the most wretched of pedants,' and his wife as 'an animated statue of ice'. Godwin went on to become one of the most famous English writers of the revolutionary period, a leading radical spokesman, and an atheist. Despite being ideologically opposed to marriage, he married the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797 when she was pregnant with their daughter, the future Mary Shelley – famous as the author of *Frankenstein*.

5 GURNEY COURT

Gurney Court was the birthplace of Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), writer and freethinker. Martineau was born into a Unitarian family but ultimately rejected all religion, which she described in liberating terms: 'What an emancipation it is, — to have escaped from the little enclosure of dogma, and to stand, — far indeed from being wise, — but free to learn!' A fervent abolitionist and pioneering sociologist, Martineau was also responsible for the 1853 translation of Auguste Comte's 'positive philosophies', helping to popularise his secular 'religion' in England. Among those directly influenced by this was fellow writer George Eliot.



6 ST. SAVIOUR'S

Sampson Arnold Mackey (1765–1843) was a British shoemaker, autodidact, and cosmologist, known as 'the self-taught astronomer of Norwich'. On his death, he was buried in the parish of St Saviour's. Born in Norwich, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker aged eleven, but also studied astronomy, geology, and mythology, writing original works and giving lectures. Based

on his ideas about the axial tilt of the Earth, Mackey challenged Christian narratives of the history and age of our planet.

7 DUKE STREET

Duke Street was home from the mid-1880s to the Gordon Hall and Cafe: a centre for the city's socialist movement. Norwich's branch of the Socialist League was established in 1885, and Gordon Hall hosted such speakers as William Morris: artist, designer, humanist, and prominent socialist. A fellow freethinker and key figure among the Norwich socialists was Fred Charles, about whom a friend remarked that 'I, who knew him well, have often thought that Charles, Atheist and Anarchist as he was, had more of the spirit of Christ about him than those who talk so loudly of their Christianity'.

Another Fred, James Frederick 'Fred' Henderson (1867–1957), was a socialist, Fabian, and Lord Mayor of Norwich 1939-40. His most famous work, The Case for Socialism, was the result of a series of sermons he delivered at Norwich Labour Church. Labour Churches sought to imbue Christianity with practical reform and workers' rights – appealing to those 'who believe in a practical religion and despise a faith that does not lead to action'. The Labour Church movement had much in common with the Ethical movement (despite its religious leaning), and a number of Labour Churches were affiliated with the Union of Ethical Societies (now Humanists UK). The Norwich Labour Church and Ethical Society (1910–1912) met at the Victoria Rooms on St Stephen's Street.

Humanist Heritage

NOTTINGHAM TOUR

This walk explores Nottingham's history of radical thought and the fight for freedom of expression. Discover the stories of figures like Susannah Wright, who defied imprisonment to promote a free press, and Thomas Major Mosley, a miner who spent decades debating rationalism in the city's public square. The route highlights the sites where freethinkers, abolitionists, secularists, and humanists have advocated for reason and human rights across 200 years.

1 GOOSE GATE

Goose Gate was the site of a radical bookshop opened by Nottingham-born lace worker Susannah Wright in 1826. Wright had earlier been imprisoned in London for selling texts deemed to be blasphemous. During a self-penned defence conducted with a babe-in-arms, lasting nearly four hours, Wright argued for the fundamental right to bring religion 'to the touchstone of free discussion'.

Her opening of a shop here in Nottingham was met with extreme backlash from the community, with Wright keeping a pistol under the counter for her protection, but she stood her ground. Her success was proven when she later moved to larger premises, also on Goose Gate.

3 DRURY HILL

Drury Hill was once home to the Secular Institute: a meeting place for Nottingham's secularists. Although today the word has come to mean the separation of Church and state, when 'secularist' was coined by activist and freethinker George Jacob Holyoake in 1851, he was seeking a positive alternative to words like 'atheist' and 'infidel', and describing a philosophy focused on promoting human happiness in *this* world - one synonymous with humanism today.

Nottingham had a secular society from the 1850s, which organised lectures, held debates, and provided an opportunity for its members to meet with likeminded people.

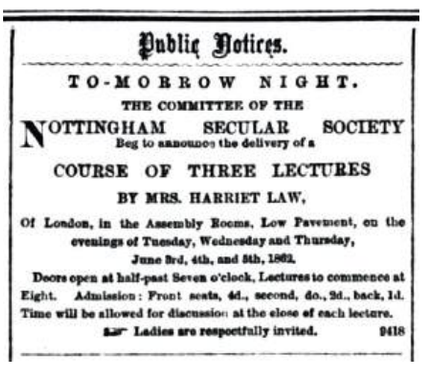
2 PLAQUE TO SUSANNAH WRIGHT, 7 BROAD STREET

This plaque to Susannah Wright was placed as part of the Our Rebel Writers trail, an independent art project promoting Nottinghamshire's rebel writers. Susannah Wright's efforts to promote freedom of the press and freedom of belief form a key part of the story of humanism in the UK, placing her within a rich tradition of working for free discussion and the right to non-belief.

4 9 LOW PAVEMENT

This building was formerly the Assembly Rooms, and one of the venues used by Nottingham secularists during the 19th century. One series of lectures, organised by the Nottingham Secular Society, welcomed prominent speaker Harriet Law, who spoke here across three evenings in June

1862. *The Nottingham Journal* reported that her subjects were 'Difficulties of Christianity', 'The Doctrine of Providence... Opposed to Reason and Experience', and 'The Degradation of Women and Children', summarising her argument that 'reason, experience, and science are gradually dispelling the idea of the doctrine of providence'. Such topics, including the use of religious ideas to oppress women, and the importance of reason and evidence, were common among secularist lecturers of the time.



Public Notices.

TO-MORROW NIGHT.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE

NOTTINGHAM SECULAR SOCIETY

Beg to announce the delivery of a

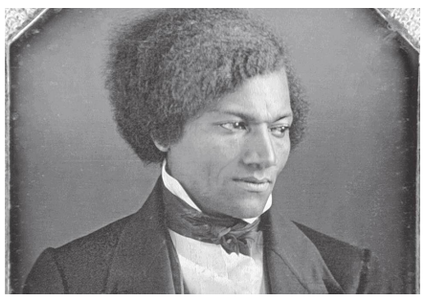
COURSE OF THREE LECTURES

BY MRS. HARRIET LAW,

Of London, in the Assembly Rooms, Low Pavement, on the evenings of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, June 3rd, 4th, and 5th, 1862.

Doors open at half-past Seven o'clock, Lectures to commence at Eight. Admission: Front seats, 4d., second, do., 2d., back, 1d. Time will be allowed for discussion at the close of each lecture.

☞ Ladies are respectfully invited. 9418



5 NOTTINGHAM COUNCIL HOUSE

Nottingham Council House was built on the site of what was once Exchange Hall, where leading abolitionist and formerly enslaved man Frederick Douglass spoke in March 1847. As he often did, Douglass took the opportunity during his speech to castigate those back home in America who professed religion while holding slaves. In this, Douglass represents another aspect of the humanist tradition: those outside the organised movement who nonetheless expressed sceptical ideas and challenged what they saw as religious hypocrisy.

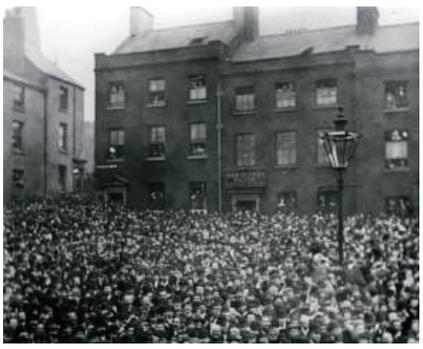
6 OLD MARKET SQUARE

If you'd come here on a Friday in the 1950s, you would have been likely to come across the indefatigable Thomas Major Mosley, a former miner and prominent debater. A decades-long member of the Cosmopolitan Debating Society (founded in 1898), Mosley took to the square on a weekly basis into his old age, typically taking 'rationalism' as his subject. Famed for his encyclopedic memory and ability to get along with those he completely disagreed with, Mosley continued Nottingham's legacy of championing free discussion. On his death in 1970, Mosley was given a humanist funeral conducted by J.W. Challand, secretary of the Nottingham Humanist Group.

Humanist Heritage

SHEFFIELD TOUR

Sheffield has been home to a network of freethinkers over hundreds of years, who met, wrote, campaigned, and connected with each other - whether as individual activists or as organised groups. While many of the buildings in which these people met have been lost or profoundly transformed, there are still echoes of this humanist heritage throughout the city today.



1 PARADISE SQUARE

This beautiful Georgian square was a major open-air meeting place for radicals from the end of the 18th century. The Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information, formed in 1791, had their headquarters here. Inspired by the writings of Thomas Paine, they believed that 'the Want of Knowledge and Information in the general Mass of the People has exposed them to numberless Impositions and Abuses', and aimed to spread political knowledge and agitate for reform.

Later, the square became notable for thousands-strong gatherings of chartists: part of a working-class movement for parliamentary reform and universal (male) suffrage which began during the late 1830s. One activist who addressed meetings here was self-described 'infidel' Isaac Ironside, chartist, socialist, freethinker, and founder of the Hall of Science – a building opened in Rockingham Street in 1839 for the purpose of education, socialising, and social reform.

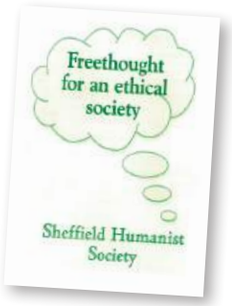
2 CATHEDRAL

The first building here was the Parish Church, built by Norman lord William de Lovetot around 1101. This was demolished and replaced around 1430, with additions over subsequent centuries. Early organised freethinkers were acutely aware of goings on in the churches, including suggestions by ministers that unbelief was responsible for unpleasant happenings in the world.

In 1914, the *Literary Guide* (now *New Humanist*) reported that the Bishop had told an assembly of school teachers gathered here that a turning away from faith was to blame for the outbreak of war. *The Literary Guide* noted that as the 'hideous panorama of war' filled the world's eyes, it was all the more necessary to guard against 'the unscrupulous attempts of Christians to load Rationalism and Materialism with the responsibility for this catastrophe'.

3 TOWN HALL

From the early 1960s to the late 1970s there was an active humanist group in Sheffield – successors of the Sheffield Ethical Society (see stop 5) and precursors to today's Sheffield Humanists. The group later revived and was active again during the 1990s and into the 2000s. Activities undertaken by the group included large scale events with leading humanists like Peter Tatchell and Jim Al-Khalili, letters to the press, and a stand outside the Town Hall in the lead up to the 2011 Census, encouraging non-religious people to tick 'no religion'.

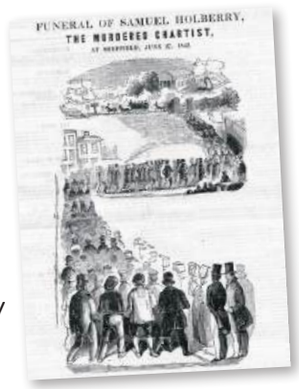


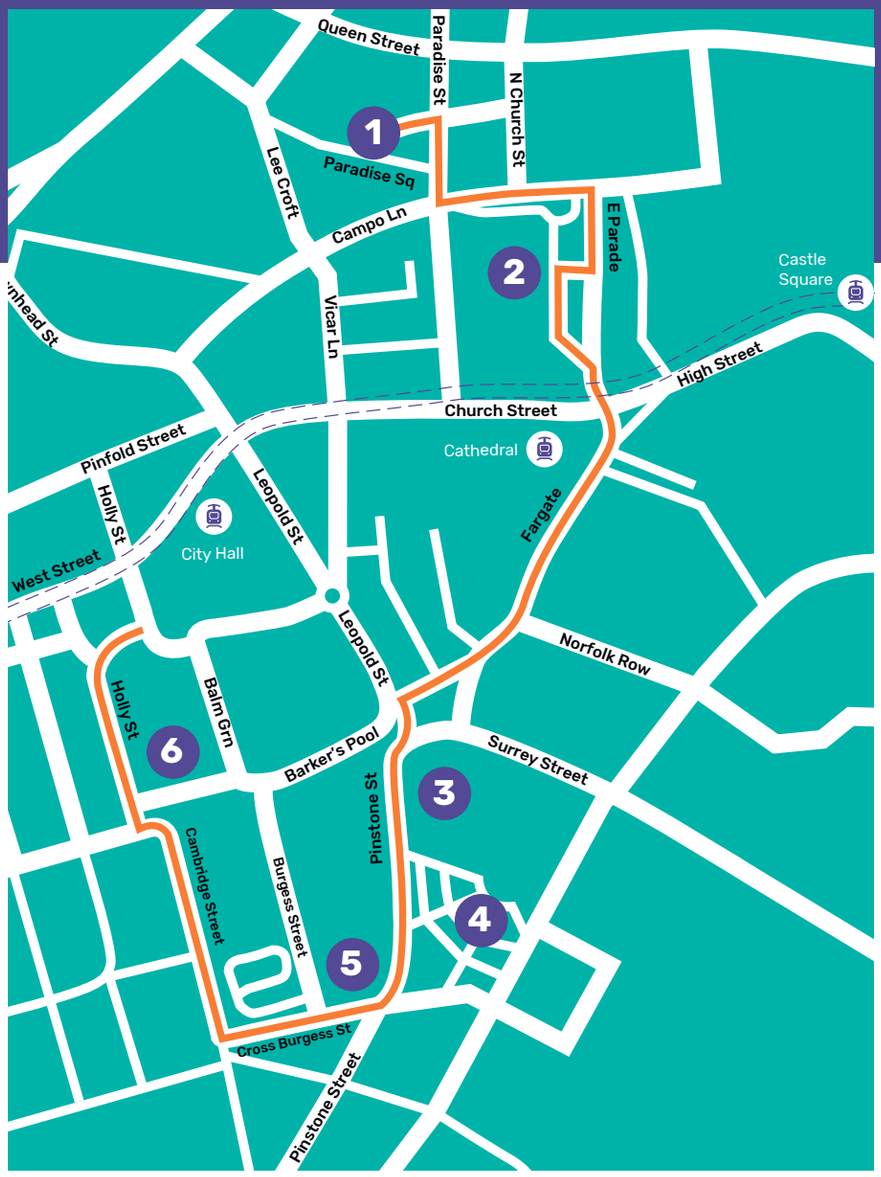
Today, Sheffield Humanists are a Humanists UK local group, meeting regularly for socials and events.

4 PEACE GARDENS

The Peace Gardens are on the site of what was originally the churchyard of the 18th century St Paul's Church. This was demolished in 1938 to make way for a proposed extension to the Town Hall, which was never built. A temporary garden was created there named St Paul's Gardens, but known as the Peace Gardens due to a desire to return to peacetime (during World War II). This name became formal in 1985.

Today, the Peace Gardens are home to the Holberry Cascades, named for chartist Samuel Holberry, who died aged just 27 following imprisonment in brutal conditions. A funeral address was delivered by freethinker George Julian Harney, who called on the assembled 'to labour with heart and soul for the destruction of the horrible system under which Holberry has perished'.

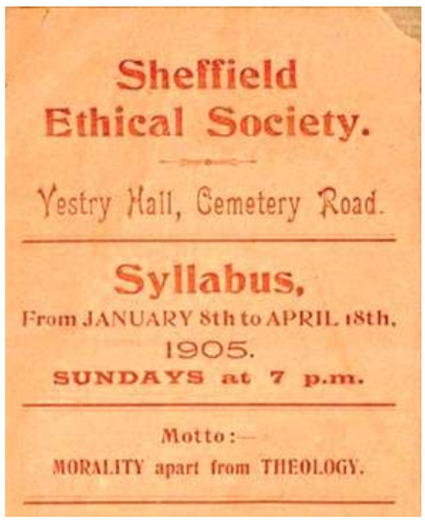




5 PINSTONE CHAMBERS

Now Pinstone Chambers, 58 Pinstone Street was once the Wentworth Cafe. It was here on 8 July 1903 that the founding meeting of the Sheffield Ethical Society took place - a forerunner of later humanist groups in the city. Ethical societies, which flourished in the UK from the 1880s, aimed to bring people together for socialising, education, and discussion, without reference to supernatural ideas. The general aims of the Sheffield Ethical Society included fellowship rooted in 'the needs of man as a social and rational being', and to 'reform social conditions by the application of Ethical principles to all social problems, and to remove social evils such as war, poverty, superstition, privilege and inhumanity'.

The Society's key figures were local councillor R.H. Minshall and cookery columnist for the *Sheffield Independent* Katherine Gillott, and speakers to the group included the poet and gay rights activist Edward Carpenter. The success of Sheffield's ethical society was apparent from the fact that the first annual congress of the Union of Ethical Societies (now Humanists UK) ever to be held outside of London was hosted here in 1920.


Sheffield
Ethical Society.

Yestry Hall, Cemetery Road.

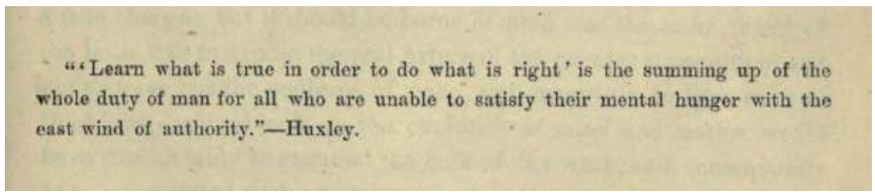
Syllabus,

From JANUARY 8th to APRIL 18th, 1905.

SUNDAYS at 7 p.m.

Motto:—

MORALITY apart from THEOLOGY.


"'Learn what is true in order to do what is right' is the summing up of the whole duty of man for all who are unable to satisfy their mental hunger with the east wind of authority."—Huxley.

6 CITY HALL

In May 1950, this was the site of a 'Freethought Demonstration': a public meeting with a range of speakers, intended to educate people about the values and aims of freethought. The meeting was addressed by leading humanists and secularists from across the country, including Nottingham's Thomas Major Mosley – a prominent public square debater. A report of the evening noted that the collected speakers put across 'various aspects of Freethought in clear, crisp and pointed terms to an interested audience'.

Running alongside and behind City Hall is Holly Street, once home to the Sheffield Public Hospital for Diseases of the Skin, established in March 1880 for the benefit of poor people. Its founder, Herbert Junius Hardwicke, was a freethinker. In 1887, he published *Evolution and Creation*, the epigraph for which was the above quote by avowed agnostic Thomas Henry Huxley. This was a follow-up to his earlier *Popular Faith Unveiled*, which had sought 'to expose the real nature of popular superstition'.