

# Ep 24: The history of the NSS – Interview with Bob Forder

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How did the secularist movement begin in Britain? And why should modern supporters of secularism care about its history?

In this week's episode, Emma Park speaks to Bob Forder, a member of the NSS Council and former history teacher, about the origins of secularism in Britain. Bob explains how the secularist movement was, from its early years, bound up with the story of the National Secular Society.

From its origins in local working-class associations, he argues, secularism has always been a socially progressive if not radical movement that has challenged the established hierarchy.

Issues like freedom of speech and of conscience, abolishing the blasphemy laws and providing scientific information about birth control have been at the heart of secularist campaigns, and supported by the NSS, for over 150 years. And, Bob argues, understanding the history of secularism can help reinforce its supporters' sense of purpose, and their shared identity, even today.

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## Notes

- [The series is available as a playlist on YouTube](#)
- [The history of the National Secular Society](#)
- [The Fruits of Philosophy – an early pamphlet on contraception](#)
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- [Radicals, Rebels, and Revolutionaries of the 19th century – Bob Forder at Conway Hall](#)
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