

Minutes of SELHuG AGM 1 July 2021

Present: Ann Pickering; Tony Brewer; David Lewis; Sam Becker; Denis Cobell; Hester Brown; Brian Venables; Helen Warner; Arun Muttreja; Bev Platt; Becky Tee

Chair: Hester Brown, committee member

1. Welcome

2. Notices

- No meeting in August but there will be a **picnic!** on Sunday 22 August, in Greenwich Park flower garden, meeting at 1pm inside main entrance facing Blackheath – *all info on website and again in August newsletter*. Hoping Bromley members will join us.
- Thanks:
 - To Tony as he steps down as Secretary, for being an excellent secretary and pro-active and supportive colleague
 - To David Smart as he steps down from Committee, for his many contributions but especially for starting and being the mainstay of the biggest campaign the group has had in many a year – the Thought for the Day campaign which ran for nearly two years.
 - To Anna Tagliaferro who stepped down earlier this year after serving on the Committee for several years, for all her help but especially in explaining what humanism is to members of the public at TFTD demos and to students at school open days.
 - To Arun who has been an excellent Treasurer for the last year, stepping in when there was no-one else.
 - To Sam for outstanding communications work including editing the newsletter
 - To Ann who joined as new committee member a year ago – generously donating her Zoom account for our meetings and chairing and hosting so reliably
 - To David Lewis for continuing to raise money in impossible circumstances, keeping the attendance tally and keeping our morale up
 - To all those who suggested talks and wrote reviews
 - To SELCOG colleagues who read at our Christmas storytelling fundraiser and donated to tree.

3. Secretary's report: Tony Brewer

This is the Secretary's Report for the year September 2020 to July 2021.

It's been a light year due to the restrictions arising from COVID. Apart from the Christmas Party we've only had to arrange monthly Zoom meetings - there were no other social events nor any liaison meeting with Humanists UK.

I've prepared this chart showing the titles of the meetings that we've held, plus the name of the person who arranged the meeting or provided the initial contact together with the name of the person who wrote the meeting review.

Month	Subject	Suggested by	Review
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September	Fake News	Tony	Tony
October	Climate Change & XR	Hester	Anna Tagliaferro
November	The Little Book of Humanism	Sam	Hester
December	Write for Rights	Sam	Tony
January	Wikimedia	Barbara Chandler	Hester
February	Judging Religion	Hester	Tony
March	Wills & other post-death arrangements	Ann	Tony
April	Ethical Dilemmas		Hester
May	Action for Refugees in Lewisham	Hester	Helen Warner
June	Happiness	Ann	Ann

As you can see, most of the work was done by members of the committee, as you'd expect, but not exclusively so. So special thanks to Anna, Barbara, and Helen. If any member has a contact who they think could make an interesting presentation then we'd be very pleased to know. It would also be good if we could share more widely the task of writing up the meeting review. Please don't feel shy to volunteer!

Regarding the rest of the year, we've arranged meetings for September, November and December. We're hoping to get a speaker to talk in October about the work of the newly-formed Humanists Climate Action Group. This would be particularly appropriate given that the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) will be held in Glasgow in November. Unfortunately the group is so newly formed that it's having some difficulty getting its act together & deciding who might speak. But we hope to resolve this fairly soon, so watch this space.

Other than that there's nothing to report. It's been a relatively quiet year.

[End of Secretary's Report]

ACTION: Sam's proposal to continue the 'Write for Rights' Amnesty International campaign in December for the third year running, was welcomed.

4. Treasurer's report: Arun Muttreja

2020/21 SELHuG accounts summary (1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021)			
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
INCOME			
Membership subscriptions	£196.00	£140.00	£220.00
Monthly attendance subs	£190.00	£188.00	£317.80
Christmas Booksale	£0.00	£0.00	£18.90

Nunhead Booksale	£0.00	£0.00	£90.00
David's book sales + <i>Little Book of Humanism</i> sales	£75.30	£122.04	£0.00
General donations	£30.00	£40.00	£191.00
Donations for AFRIL	£0.00	£112.00	£0.00
Exceptional donation	£220.00	£0.00	£0.00
Subs from social outings	£0.00	£0.00	£22.00
Total income	£711.30	£602.04	£859.70
EXPENDITURE			
Rent	£0.00	£280.00	£400.00
Meetup: social networking portal	£29.39	£33.74	£183.69
Affiliation fees: NSS: £34; Humanists UK £75	£109.00	£259.00	£94.00
Donations: £420 to Ugandan Humanist Schools Trust, and £100 to AFRIL	£520.00	£112.00	£100.00
Stand at Nunhead Cemetery Open Day (for Sept 2021)	£35.00	£30.00	£25.00
Web upkeep	£31.18	£31.28	£88.00
<i>Little Book of Humanism</i> purchase	£49.00	£0.00	£0.00
Total expenditure	£773.57	£746.02	£890.69
Transfer of funds (+/-)	-£62.27	-£143.98	-£30.99
Bank Balance as at 30 June 2021 (As per Bank Statement)	£467.24	£529.51	£673.49

Notes

1. Income changes explained

- Membership subscriptions rose from £140 to £196 as new members joined while a few dropped out
- Monthly attendance subs were maintained as some members have set up regular direct debits
- Despite continued lack of book sale opportunities, David still managed to raise over £50!
- The exceptional donation of £220 was Hester's fee for taking the funeral of a family friend. Without that, income would have been £491, down from £603 in the previous year. However, that is largely explained by not having any individual donations to AFRIL passing through our books – see donations below.

2. Donations made by SELHuG to other organisations

- As agreed at last AGM, £200 was donated to Uganda Humanist School Trust (UHST)
- An additional £220 was donated to the UHST's special fundraiser to purchase two abandoned primary schools – made possible by the exceptional donation
- We made the typical £100 donation to AFRIL, directly from our funds. Our fundraiser for AFRIL – the Christmas storytelling session on Zoom – directed donors directly to the AFRIL site. Pre-covid, people would have handed over cash or groceries at a meeting. We don't know how much we contributed to their fund.
- SELHuG and SELCOG (Humanist celebrants) members raised £380 to plant a tree outside a primary school in Downham, via the charity Street Trees for Living. Contributions were collected in a PayPal Pool account and paid to Street Trees by the Treasurer, and therefore the £380 does not feature in SELHuG's books.

3. Expenditure changes explained

- As all meetings were online, no rent was paid
- Humanist UK affiliation fees for calendar year has been paid. Last year we paid for 2018, 2019 and 2020 in one go
- 10 copies of "The Little Book of Humanism" were purchased from Humanist UK

Matters arising from the accounts

- Propose that we agree at AGM to donate a minimum of £100 each to AFRIL and UHST in 2021/22, as long as we have the funds to do so, whether it is paying from our cash balance at the end of our financial year or taking specific fundraising initiatives during the year.
- Do we want to make any changes to the annual and monthly meeting subs?

[End of Treasurer's Report]

Matters arising:

- **ACTION:** We agreed the proposal that SELHuG should donate a minimum of £100 each to its chosen charities, AFRIL and UHST, provided the funds are available. Any increase in these amounts could be decided by the committee.
- There was considerable discussion of the question of increasing the annual membership subscription and meeting fee.

- David Lewis proposed that annual subscription should be increased from £10 to £20 because it been £10 for years while cost of living has increased. Tony agreed and said the meeting fee should also be increased from £2 to £3 or £5, but not until we return to physical meetings, and still retain the exceptions for first time visitors, students and unwaged. Beverley said the £6 annual sub for unwaged should not go up. Hester and Sam argued that the basis for our subscriptions had always been to raise the minimum required to cover costs, ie to keep them as low as possible. Currently our costs had not increased so there was no need for any increase.
- Tony suggested that our costs depended on our ambitions and that greater funds would allow bigger donations or support for Humanists UK, for instance. Subscriptions can only be decided at an AGM.
ACTION: Sam proposed that the committee should make a proposal regarding subscriptions for the 2022 AGM and this was agreed.

5. Media report: Sam

- Since the newsletter started seven years ago, recipients have gone up from about 40 to 218 – impressive!
- Meetup numbers are up in the last year by 34 (to 235).
- Our Twitter account currently has 1, 572 followers
- Facebook: likes have risen in the last year by 58 (to 232) and followers are up 62 (to 253).

6. Elections to the committee: Sam chaired this agenda item

Standing for election:

- Hester Brown for Secretary
- Ann Pickering for Treasurer
- Helen Warner for Committee

Standing for re-election to the Committee:

- Sam, Tony

All those standing were elected *nem con*.

7. Committee's report – looking back and forward, given by Hester on behalf of the Committee in absence of a chair

The last year

1. Coping with covid

We started the year a few months into Covid, thinking it might only be a few months more before we could meet in person! All our meetings had been cancelled since April. The AGM was our first attempt to meet on Zoom, and it went surprisingly well, and set the pattern for the rest of the year.

The downsides?

- Not meeting in person, not being able to go to the pub afterwards – not so sociable
- Some members haven't warmed to Zoom
- No social gatherings in between meetings either

Upsides:

- We have had around 40 visitors to meetings this year, even from overseas, so it hasn't dented our reach that much. Average attendance has been 17, ditto.
- While the number of older members attending regularly has decreased, the number of new members has gone up
- Zoom has proved to be an equitable medium: everyone takes a turn to contribute – very orderly!
- We were able to organise the Christmas storytelling event on Zoom which was attended by around 30 people.

2. Coping without a Chair

No-one stood for the post of Chair last year, so the committee agreed to continue on a collective basis until such time as we could find a chair. It has worked – again surprisingly – well, with everyone sharing the tasks of chairing meetings, writing newsletter introductions and suggesting speakers.

We concentrated on two things:

- keeping the monthly meetings going and
- keeping the monthly newsletters, website and social media going, and as full and interesting as possible. We do get feedback from people who don't attend meetings but feel connected via the newsletter so it is an important part of our outreach. We have Sam to thank for editing and producing the newsletter and keeping the website and social media going single handedly (apart from Twitter which Trevor has very kindly kept up though we are looking for a new Twitter person... any takers?)

3. Fundraising and making connections with other people and organisations

- Done really well to donate around £1,000 this year, with the help of SELCOG who were co-fundraisers for AFRIL (Christmas event) and the street tree planted outside a local school
- Campaigns – Thought for the Day demonstrations wound up early because of covid; we have sent the odd letter to new figures at the BBC, and are considering a social media campaign next year. We were able to support Humanists UK's Census campaign and Amnesty International's letter-writing campaign, so not all external work stopped.
- Quick note on Humanist Celebrants – Humanists UK has been running the training of new celebrants via online courses and mentoring has continued, and SELCOG is refreshed and vibrant!

And looking forward:

1. Venue next year: what will we do if the library doesn't open? We have some suggestions already from David Smart and David Lewis. Please let us have any suggestions and we can explore over the summer. Appetite for real meetings again? Keep them streamed too if we can?
2. What would you like to do next year?

[End of Committee's Report]

8. Discussion

Ideas for speakers next year:

- Any who we lost because of covid, perhaps only Arianne Sherine?
- Sam offered to talk about a book as he has in previous years
- Ethical dilemmas will always have a place in the annual calendar, hopefully back at the Rose in January
- David asked what happened to the December Mythmas social and booksale, as we have focused on human rights to coincide with UN Human Rights Day (10th December) for the last couple of years and again this year. It was agreed we should consider organising a social event like a party or dinner but not pre-Christmas, rather it should be when we need cheering afterwards, near a day like 'Blue Monday', the third Monday in January, or February.
- Becky suggested a speaker from Humanists UK to tell us more about the national movement and organisation. Two national figures, the Chair of the Board Tamar Ghosh and the Campaigns officer Rachel Taggart-Ryan live in our patch and could be approached.
- Bev would like to know more about famous humanists in history. Sam mentioned the new Humanist Heritage resource recently launched by Humanists UK. One possibility would be to invite historian Madeleine Goodall who compiled the online archive of humanist people and ideas to speak.

9. Any Other Business

- Denis asked what news of the Bromley group? They stopped meeting during the pandemic but Brian reported that the URC church where they meet has reopened so there were hopes the group might restart meetings again.
- David Lewis will welcome any donations of books for the Nunhead Cemetery Open Day, which is scheduled for Saturday 4 September. We will have our usual stall, and also welcome anyone who can volunteer to cover the stall for a couple of hours during the day.
- Bev asked if there was any news of a memorial event for Barbara Smoker. Denis said he had been charged to take that forward with Conway Hall and would report back once the lifting of covid restrictions allowed such an event.
- What will we do in the event of rain at the picnic on 22 August? The suggestion had been to move into one of the cafes at the park, but David L pointed out that we would not be allowed to eat our own food in them, and suggested one of the local pubs near the park.

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