

## Minutes of the SELHuG AGM 2022

7 July 2022

Held online

### Present:

Committee members: Ann Pickering (Treasurer), Hester Brown (Secretary), Sam Becker (Communications Manager), Helen Warner, Tony Brewer; Audrey Simmons; Brian Venables; Roman Bednarz; Karl London, Arun Muttreja; Dee Bird; Barbara Chandler

### Agenda

#### 1. Secretary's report

We had a year of varied talks and discussions, as ever, not shying away from big issues facing society including climate change, the crisis in British democracy and whether adult social care provision in the UK is meeting our needs.

When our talks start off focusing directly on challenges facing society, we find we are looking at them through a humanist prism, and when our talks start off as an exploration of humanism, they quickly become explorations of social, political and economic problems. In the first category, the talk on the nuclear threat, 'Campaigning against Armageddon' given by two senior members of CND, was of huge concern because of the continuing risk of violence to the whole world, the use of nuclear weapons to manipulate and threaten, the political aggression rather than peacemaking, and the sad and reckless waste of resources they represent.

The talk from a Make Votes Matter member, "Do you live in a democracy?" is another ongoing concern for humanists because we want to live in a society where everyone is empowered and everyone is involved in civil society. We want a politics where people talk, listen and negotiate, where consensus is the aim and where everyone feels represented. Ditto Adult Social Care. We have a vision of what life should be like for people who are old or disabled. How far are current services able to deliver a good quality of life?

And then the second category of talks on an aspect of humanism took us to look at education in Uganda, action we can take on climate change, how Humanists International is supporting freedom of expression and belief abroad, how definitions of humanism reflect the social concerns of the day, and how the book 'Humankind: a hopeful history' can help us live – and make the world a better place.

I think the nearest we got to escaping reality was the Celebration of Spring with all those wonderful poems. But you know, even a verse about roses is saying something fundamental about life.

*Hester Brown July 2022*

#### 2. Treasurer's report

##### 2021/2022 SELHUG accounts summary (1st July 21 to 30th June 2022)

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
<b>INCOME</b>			
Membership subscriptions	£128.00	£196.00	£140.00
Monthly attendance subs	£286.00	£190.00	£188.00

Nunhead Booksales	£332.22	£0.00	£0.00
David's book sales	£108.42	£75.30	£122.04
General donations	£0.00	£30.00	£40.00
Donations for AFRIL	£0.00	£0.00	£112.00
Exceptional donation	£0.00	£220.00	£0.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£854.64</b>	<b>£711.30</b>	<b>£602.04</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Rent	£180.00	£0.00	£280.00
Meetup: social networking portal	£30.16	£29.39	£33.74
Affiliation fees: NSS: £34; Humanists UK £75	£34.00	£109.00	£259.00
Donations: £101 to AFRIL	£101.00	£520.00	£112.00
Stand at Nunhead Cemetery Open Day (for Sept 2021)	£35.00	£35.00	£30.00
Web upkeep	£0.00	£31.18	£31.28
<i>Little Book of Humanism</i> purchase	£0.00	£49.00	£0.00
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£380.16</b>	<b>£773.57</b>	<b>£746.02</b>
<b>Transfer of funds (+/-)</b>	<b>£474.48</b>	<b>-£62.27</b>	<b>-£143.98</b>
Bank Balance as at 30 June 2021 (As per Bank Statement)	<b>£941.72</b>	<b>£467.24</b>	<b>£529.51</b>

Notes:

1. Income changed explained

Membership subscriptions rose

Monthly attendance subs were maintained as more members have set up regular direct debits

David managed to raise £440 in book sales, a huge sum!

2. Donations made by SELHuG to other organisations

The treasurer arranged payment to Uganda Humanist School Trust (UHST) on 1st July 2022, this will show in next year's account.

We made the typical £100 donation to AFRIL, directly from our funds with a £1 admin fee. This was match funded.

3. Expenditure changes explained

All but four meetings were online and we have been invoiced and paid so far for three.

No Humanist UK affiliation fees were requested this year.

4. Matters arising from the accounts

To be discussed at the AGM:

Agreed that as we will not be holding monthly meetings in person in the coming year, we need to make it clearer that we ask members to pay 'membership subs' and a monthly 'donation' when attending a meeting, and that it all needs to be paid by bank transfer if possible, or by cheque if not. The website will be amended to reflect this.

### **3. Elections to the committee**

Chair: no one stood, and the committee agreed to continue to share the role

Secretary: Hester Brown agreed to continue for a second year

Treasurer: Ann Pickering agreed to continue for a second year

Other committee members: Sam Becker, Tony Brewer and Helen Warner agreed to continue.

There was a unanimous show of hands in support of the five continuing in their roles.

### **4. Committee's report (in lieu of a Chair's report)**

#### The last year

#### 1. Experimenting with hybrid meetings

We returned to the library in September last year with high hopes. We were pioneers of hybrid meetings, managing to hook up to Zoom and project everyone's faces onto the big screen. Over the year we had six hybrid meetings and five on Zoom, plus the additional pre-Christmas Amnesty International letter-writing event on Zoom.

The pluses:

- Flexibility for attendees, including changing your mind and attending by Zoom at the last minute when you got late!
- For those of us who met in the library, it was lovely to meet in person and there were a few good sessions in the pub afterwards.

The minuses:

- Managing the technology from the library end was sometimes tricky, and Zoom attendees couldn't always hear contributions from the library
- The library only partially re-opened after covid. We had to open and close the library ourselves for each meeting.
- The library costs £60 a session.
- But the biggest issue: not many people wanted to attend in person.

#### 2. Coping without a Chair

This was the second year without a Chair because no-one stood for the post. The committee carried on, on a collective basis until such time as we find a chair. And it continues to work well.

#### 3. Activities

We continued to concentrate 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 [note from Sam: Twitter has been a little neglected this year but I've made a note to keep this more updated]  
Newsletter subscribers: 229 [up from 218 last year]  
Meetup members: 285 [up from 235 last year]  
Facebook: 307 followers [up from 253 last year] and 280 likes [up from 232 last year]  
Twitter followers: 1, 562 [down from 1, 572 last year]

But we also did have some outings and social events as fear of covid lessened:

- A picnic in Greenwich Park last August which was great, well attended, and we will do again this August, of which more later.
- Not one but two Nunhead Cemetery Open Days, in September last year – postponed from the usual early summer date – and then this May. The September one was fairly quiet but all was back to normal this year with a glorious day, crowds of people, lots of conversations about humanism and humanist ceremonies, and the most successful fund-raising ever due to the efforts of David Lewis.
- In January we attended the 'We Are History' exhibition at Somerset House, which explored humanity's impact on the planet and legacies of colonialism in surprising ways. Several new people joined us for that, and chat in the café afterwards.
- And in March we saw 'The World of Stonehenge' exhibition at the British Museum, a mighty bringing together of artefacts and understanding of Stonehenge in context of cultural movements across Europe in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC.

#### Campaigns

- SELHuG supported the Climate Justice Demo on Nov 6.
- Sam led our pre-Christmas letter-writing session for Amnesty International's 'Write for Rights' campaign which sends letters to express support for prisoners of conscience and to the authorities to ask for their release.
- SELHuG supported the 'Free Mubarak Bala' campaign organised by Humanists UK and Association of Black Humanists: Bala is President of the Nigerian Humanist Association and was imprisoned for blasphemy for 24 years.
- We joined LGBT Humanists at the protest outside Downing Street in April to protest at the government's policy to ban conversion therapy for gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people but not for trans people. Trans rights are human rights, in a nutshell.

#### 4. Fundraising

- Just to reiterate what Ann said in the Treasurer's report, that we raised £300 for AFRIL at the April meeting – Celebration of Spring – in addition to the usual £100.
- And again to thank David for raising £440!!!

#### 5. The Bromley Group

It was great to see the Bromley Group restart this year, and Tony, Denis and I attended the launch meeting. Asad has been poorly but ok now.

#### And looking forward:

1. Committee suggest we move to Zoom only monthly meetings (to be called 'monthly talks'), with more in-person socials going forward to we can still meet regularly in person.

2. What would you like to do next year? Committee meeting soon to discuss ideas!
3. Picnic on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August! Other London groups invited, hope you can come! Contact Hester on 07791 460552 or selhug email if you would like to bring a dish to share.

## 5. Discussion

- The committee's proposal to hold all the monthly meetings/talks on Zoom, and have social events in-person every one or two months, was accepted
- Re marketing, Karl wondered if it was worth duplicating our Facebook posts on Google and paying small sums on Facebook to increase the number of views.
- Cafes on the South Bank were proposed by Karl as good places to meet socially
- Museum and art gallery visits with gatherings in the café afterwards work well. Barbara suggested Tate Britain: "British sculptor and contemporary visual artist Hew Locke has created a new and exciting large-scale installation for the 2022 Commission", a free exhibition there till January.
- Audrey suggested shouting out to SELHuG members to speak and was in turn asked to talk about her work as a British Sign Language practitioner.

## 6. AOB

- Audrey announced an event, 'Tai Solarin Day 2022 Dinner' organised by the Association of Black Humanists on Saturday 20 August. This is a celebration of African humanists in Africa, the Caribbean, and the diaspora with an impressive array of speakers, namely Amina Ahmed, Mubarak Bala's wife; Professor Anthony Pinn of Rice University; Dr Leo Igwe, Humanists International board member; Maachelle Farley, founder of Humanists Barbados; Roslyn Mould, Ex-President of Humanists Association of Ghana; Mandisa Thomas, founder of Black Non-Believers of the United States; Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of Humanists UK and Corin Solarin, Tai Solarin's daughter. For more information see: <https://humanists.uk/events/tai-solarin-day-association-of-black-humanists/>