



Humanistically Speaking

August 2020

A Humanist hotline to a secular worldview

Summer of Madness

Plus our reader favourites:

- Dear Darwin
- Thought for the Day
- Chair's Interview
- Network News
- Tricia's Book Choices
- Lockdown Laughs

New Features:

- Black Lives Matter
- For & Against
- A Day in the Life
- Nuclear Power

After being cooped up at home for months to protect the NHS and save lives, British people took to the streets to show their solidarity with the 'Black Lives Matter' movement and on the hottest day of the year they flocked to Bournemouth beach in their thousands, triggering a 'state of emergency'. In normal times, seaside resorts would welcome such an invasion but with bars, restaurants, and other facilities closed the town struggled to cope with traffic and litter. Most visitors behave considerately but the loutish few always manage to give the human race a bad reputation.

In this summer edition of *Humanistically Speaking* our writers take opposing views as to whether violent protest is sometimes justified in order to bring about change. Is democracy well-served by banners, shouting, and simplistic slogans? Do protests always end in anarchic violence against a civilian police force doing its best to maintain order and safety on our streets? We aim to stimulate humanist debate on all of these matters and we'd love to hear your views.

Get your own *Humanistically Speaking* Hotlined direct from the editors

Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com

In this Issue

Come in, sit down, put your feet up...

David Brittain
Executive Editor,
Humanistically
Speaking



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CONTENT DISCLAIMER

Humanistically Speaking's editorial team is made up entirely of humanist volunteers. Articles are written by them, or by our readers and contributors, and published at the discretion of the editorial team. We strive to publish content in line with humanist aims and values but views expressed by writers are their own and not necessarily shared by the South Central England Humanists Network or Humanists UK.

I should like to thank everyone who emailed us to tell us how much you are all enjoying our magazine. It is a pleasure to serve, and the recently enlarged editorial team (See page 9) is very excited about this, our best issue to date.

'Specials' include weddings celebrant Rachel Head's story about being interviewed on BBC Radio about the campaign for legalising Humanist weddings (page 5), and Maggie Hall's reflections in a Day in the Life of a Humanist School Speaker (page 17). We also had our first ever competition winner with 17 years old Amelie Forbes of Godalming College winning a cheque for £25.00 for her reflections on religious education in school (page 23). There is much more in HS, of course - but you'll have to read it to find out! And if you have any comments or suggestions to offer, why not share them with us at

Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com ?

Which brings me to my last point. If you enjoy reading Humanistically Speaking, **why not get ahead of the game and ask to be added to our direct mailing list?** It is sooo easy – just ask us at

Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com and put SUBSCRIBE in the subject title.

Now, get comfy, tuck in, and have a good read!

David Brittain

Send your own comment, questions, articles to

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PROTESTS

The case for...



“Without Protest There Can Be No Change”

The agonising and heart-breaking murder of an innocent black man, George Floyd, by a white law enforcement officer was witnessed by the whole world and now the whole world has risen up to demand justice. Yes some of the protests have been violent but violence has been a catalyst for change throughout history. I cite the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Irish rebellion of 1916, the American War of Independence, the list is interminable. All began with protests which were ignored by the ruling classes. Violence is a powerful weapon and if the cause is righteous the end must justify the means.

In 1865 slavery was abolished in America but in truth people of colour are still in chains. They are born into poverty; struggle in low grade, low paid employment and are likely to be sicker and die younger than their white counterparts. Covid-19 kills three times more black people than white because of the grinding poverty and social deprivation black people endure. The American Dream which has successfully nurtured white capitalistic culture has been a nightmare for the black community. No wonder people are angry. No wonder they want change. No wonder they want change now.

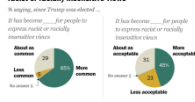
The statistics speak for themselves. In both the USA and UK black people are nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. They are 45% more likely to be arrested. 30% are imprisoned in spite of making up only 13% of the population. And the most horrifying statistic of all: 1 in a 1000 black men in USA can expect to die at the hands of the police. Why should such injustice continue? Peaceful protests have not changed discrimination and violence against a vulnerable black minority. The system must change and force may regrettably be the only path left open to the desperate.

Commentators have criticised the right to mass protest during a pandemic. But coronavirus will go away or a vaccine will be found. The virus of racism and inequality in the USA and, to a lesser extent maybe the UK, has been with us for 400 years and it is growing more virulent and claiming more innocent lives as every day passes. The whole world recognises this now and is taking a knee for George Floyd. The system needs to be torn down and rebuilt. Peaceful and even forceful protest is the only tool our populations have. Black lives matter. Trump's America ignores the voice of the people at its peril.

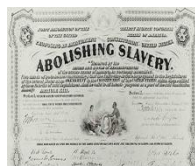
By *Humanistically Speaking* columnist Penelope Mountford



Most say it's now more common for people to express racist or sexually insensitive views



THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

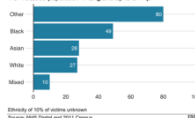


Preamble to the Declaration of Independence

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness



Hospital deaths by ethnicity
Per 100,000 population in England up to 21 Apr



“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” US Declaration of Independence 1776



PROTESTS

The case against...



"Protests and violence are not democratic and have no place in current society"

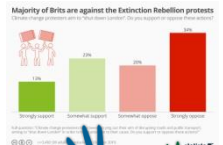
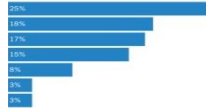
Back in the black and white years protests and taking to the street with pitchforks may have been your only way to get heard, but today, in this twenty-first century of technology and voice, it holds no place whatsoever. Today one human being can change the direction of humanity or government with a well placed tweet, a blog post or a one-person campaign that catches the media eye.

But it is not just the people; governments and political parties *want* to lead change, they want to know what voters want so that they can mobilise change in that direction. Governments, especially in the UK, are more accessible than at any time in history, with just 100,000 voices being able to raise a debate in parliament, or a survey or petition holding the power to shape policy. The internet has enabled this, modern news and media reporting has enabled this, people speaking out has enabled this. "What the people want" is where the county goes, where voters place their cross and the majority rule takes us in that direction. We have an open and listening democracy, the envy of many countries around the world.

Taking to the street, shouting, and stamping feet is the behaviour of six year olds; it's uncivilised, outdated and of its time, but more importantly it doesn't achieve its aims. A noisy rabble in the street no-matter what the cause, is a noisy rabble on the street. Extinction Rebellion has proved that unpopular behaviour does not get you public support, 54% against 36% for. Invariably any protest that gains media attention triggers violence, and any protest with violence has lost any public support.

The United Kingdom is one of the greatest countries in the world for freedom of speech and public opinion shaping change. The United States with its "Leaders of the Free World" self-made tag is not. Is racism a factor in the US right now? I would say yes, but I would also argue that it is not the lead element in the current unrest. Police brutality is a thing, but statistically it is equally against whites and other races. Managed with a well-crafted direction, the people of the USA could bring about change, but I do not feel that it will be won over by public unrest, protests, violence or destruction. The twenty-first century toolbox exists. Use it. Use it wisely. Vote for change.

By *Humanistically Speaking* Design & Layout Editor Aaron Darkwood





Legislation for Humanist Marriage

Humanist Ceremonies

Rachel goes 'Head to Head' with Berkshire Radio's Paul Coia

On Sunday 5th July I was interviewed by BBC Radio Berkshire's Paul Coia on his Sunday morning show about the upcoming landmark challenge being taken by six couples over the legal recognition of humanist marriages. As a Wedding Celebrant, accredited by Humanists UK to offer humanist wedding ceremonies in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, I was delighted to get the opportunity to talk to Paul about the case and the attempts of the couples to compel the UK Government to change the law to recognise humanist weddings as legally recognised marriages, as is the case with religious weddings across the UK and humanist weddings in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

During the interview, I explained to the listeners that Humanists UK has provided ceremonies for many decades and that a humanist wedding is a non-religious ceremony conducted by a humanist celebrant who shares the beliefs and values of the couple, differing from a civil wedding in that it is entirely personalised and reflective of the humanist beliefs and values of the couple. I referred to the argument, that the six couples' lawyers would go on to make on 7th and 8th July, that the current law discriminates against those wishing to have a humanist marriage because of their humanist beliefs and is therefore incompatible with human rights legislation, which precludes such discrimination.

Paul asked about the popularity of [humanist weddings](#) in England and Wales and I clarified that over 1,000 couples a year already have a humanist wedding without legal recognition and that they all must have a separate civil marriage – usually at a registrar's office – for their marriage to be legally recognised, even though it is not what they want. I said: couples must go through formalities twice, leading to financial strain, and distress over the state failing to recognise their humanist wedding as their 'real' one.

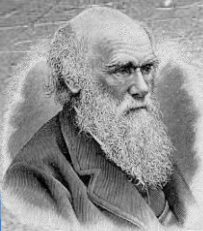
It was not an easy interview to do, straight out of my bed on a Sunday morning, with Paul asking a number of challenging questions about the rise of secularity and divorce rates in Scotland for those couples who were married in a legally recognised, humanist ceremony (lower than any other type of marriage; religious or civil) but I think I got the main point that Humanists UK Chief Executive Andrew Copson has been making, which is that couples who have humanist weddings see that day as the epitome of their love and commitment to each other, and all they want is the same legal recognition for that as is given to every religious person in our country.

Since my interview, the hearing has now concluded in the High Court, where the couple's case was apparently very well argued. At the end of the hearing, the judge [reserved her decision](#) until a future date.

Rachel Head

RachelHeadCelebrant.com

Rachel Head is a Humanist Wedding specialist based near Reading, and was interviewed by BBC Radio Berkshire's Paul Coia on the 5th July.



Charles Darwin.

Dear Darwin

Ask Charles your difficult questions...



Dear Darwin

The world has been convulsed by protests about police brutality against black people in the United States. What is your view of the Black Lives Matter movement and the desire to tear down statues glorifying slavery?

John S, West Sussex

Dear John

Thank you so much for writing. Race was a huge issue in the 1850s. The defenders of slavery believed that white people and black people were different *species* or, at best, different *creations* of the Almighty. This gave them an excuse to continue with this barbarous practice. I became convinced by the evidence that *Homo sapiens* is a single species and that every variation we see in the human race is a branch from a common ancestor. I understand that millions of Christians in the southern United States have still not accepted the theory of evolution which has been proven beyond reasonable doubt since I published *Origin of Species* in 1859. I wonder whether this lies at the root of the racism problem in the United States?

Our good friend the writer Harriet Martineau, who travelled extensively in the United States in 1834, raised our awareness of the horrors of slavery – the beatings and murder of slaves – and the bravery of the abolitionists. I too witnessed terrible scenes in Brazil where

slaves were beaten and tortured. On one occasion a young boy served me a glass of water which was not quite clean and he was struck with a horse-whip as a punishment. It sickened my heart and made my blood boil.

As to whether you should remove statues of slave traders like Edward Colston, who died nearly a century before I was born, I must say it seems curious to me that you are still agonising over such a question. But you must take responsibility for your own ethical decisions about whom to commemorate in the public square.

Dear Darwin

Your wife Emma, an evangelical Christian, was afraid that your religious scepticism would endanger your immortal soul. So may I ask whether you are now in Heaven or Hell? And how are you communicating with us today? Was spiritualism true after all?

Felicity Roberts, Farnham

Dear Felicity

A very good question! The editors of *Humanistically Speaking* are damned clever fellows and ladies. Far be it from me to divulge their editorial secrets but you may be interested to peruse my published *Journal* and other works to glean my views on all manner of subjects.



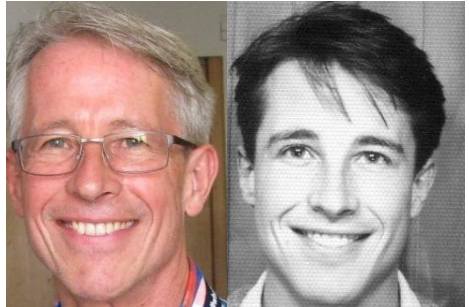
Thought for the Day

On the abolition of ageing...

Imagine going to a rejuvenation clinic every six months to have the damage to your cells repaired, just as you may now go to the dental hygienist every six months to have your teeth cleaned. Imagine that the chronic diseases of old age – cancer, diabetes, heart disease, dementia – have been abolished and you can now look forward to living into your 120s and feeling like a 50-year old, or even a 30-year old?

In a recent talk for Dorset Humanists, David Wood, Chair of London Futurists, claimed that we are now at the early stages of the fourth industrial revolution where the convergence of nanotech, biotech, infotech, and cognotech, is bringing the abolition of ageing within reach. Some humans already live well beyond a century without suffering from the chronic diseases of old age. What secrets are held in their genomes? The naked mole rat, likewise, appears to live without ageing. The axolotl salamander can regenerate its limbs, tails, eyes, jaws, spinal cord, part of its heart and part of its brain. Researchers are studying it hard to find out whether we can learn how to repair human spinal cords and other damaged parts of our anatomy.

Ageing is basically a process of damage to cells and the gerontologist Aubrey De Grey claims that ageing is caused by seven types of damage. He calls this SENS: Strategies for Engineering Negligible Senescence. It includes replacing lost and atrophied cells with stem cells, the removal of zombie cells, removing intracellular waste products and so on. Ageing is a biotech problem that can be solved.



Rejuvenation breakthrough?

Many people think that we should just accept ageing, suffering, and death as part of the natural cycle of life. They may associate the obsession with fitness and facelifts into your 70s and 80s with overpaid American celebrities.

But why should we put up with the chronic diseases of old age, and the vast amount of suffering and expense that goes with them, if technological breakthroughs could eliminate them? David Wood thinks there's a 50% chance of major breakthroughs by the 2040s if humanity decides to make this a priority. Perhaps that will be too late for some of us, but the realistic prospect of longer, healthier, and happier lives for the generations to come is surely a worthy aim for humanity.

Further reading

The Abolition of Aging: The forthcoming radical extension of healthy human longevity (2016) David Wood ([Zoom video here](#))

Ending Aging: The Rejuvenation Breakthroughs That Could Reverse Human Aging in Our Lifetime (2008) Aubrey De Grey

Lockdown Laughs



Finland has just closed their borders.

No one will be crossing the finish line.

Now is not the right time to surround yourself with positive people.

Why do they call it the novel coronavirus?

It's a long story....

So many coronavirus jokes out there, it's a pandemic.

There will be a minor baby boom in 9 months, and then one day in 2033, we shall witness the rise of the **quaranteens**.

The World Health Organization has announced that dogs cannot contract Covid-19. Dogs previously held in quarantine can now be released. To be clear, WHO let the dogs out.

What do you call panic-buying of sausage and cheese in Germany? The **Wurst Kase** scenario.

DUE TO THE QUARANTINE, I'LL ONLY BE TELLING INSIDE JOKES.

I ran out of toilet paper and had to start using old newspapers. *Times* are rough.

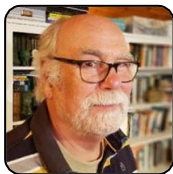
Jokes courtesy of Asad Abbas

I'll tell you a coronavirus joke now, but you'll have to wait two weeks to see if you got it.

The grocery stores in France look like tornadoes hit them. All that's left is *de brie*.

Meet the team

The editorial volunteers who make it all happen



David Brittain – Executive Editor / Originator

I wanted a regional “general-interest-to-humanists” magazine that might be big enough to have a decent readership, but still able to report on local humanists, and local initiatives. Thanks to the enthusiasm of our new team, *Humanistically Speaking* was effectively born on the 1st January 2020, and thanks to our readers we have never looked back since.

David Warden – Copy Editor

I’m Chair of Dorset Humanists, Council Member for SCEHN, and an Honorary Member of Humanists UK. *Humanistically Speaking* is a lively new grassroots magazine which aims to fill the gap between individual group newsletters and national publications. It has the potential to connect humanist groups and raise awareness of Humanism across the southern region. I hope it thrives.



Aaron Darkwood – Design & Layout Editor

I aim to bring our storybook of words alive and interesting, with graphics, images and some stylish design tinkering. I’m based in Dorset and have interests in fitness, outdoors, military, and psychology. I have thus far written a number of articles and have an overall aim of growing Humanism everywhere, and promoting the core values of Humanism.

Ronnie Barr – Assistant Editor / Young Humanists

I’m Diversity Representative, Social Media Co-ordinator, and a school speaker for Dorset Humanists as well as the Young Humanist Ambassador for Dorset and a SCEHN council member. I’m passionate about helping my local community. When I’m not volunteering I like to relax and read or do some creative writing.



Tricia Wallis – Assistant Editor / Book Club

An active member of Farnham Humanists and an enthusiastic new addition to *Humanistically Speaking*’s editorial team. I teach English Literature at Godalming College so have an interest in the crafting of language to present a compelling story or perspective. I enjoy writing polemical and opinion pieces as well as always searching for other writers to bring their views to HS.

Maggie Hall – Assistant Editor/A day in the Life

I’ve been Chair of Brighton Humanists since 2015, a volunteer school speaker and a retired Teacher of Speech and Drama with a life-long interest in the power of the spoken and the written word and a very annoying tendency toward grammar pedantry.



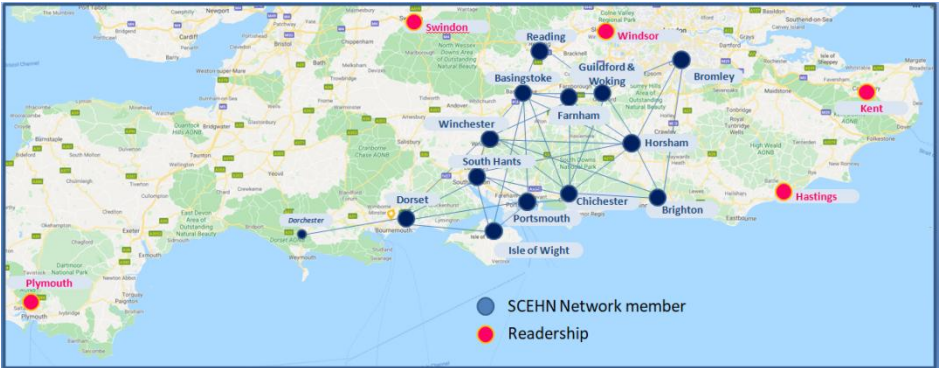
We welcome replies to any of our stories

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GROUP NETWORK

What's going on within the network

Spread far and wide our group network is ever expanding yet there are many gaps in between that could be filled. Do you have connections in other towns? Are you a humanist living in one of those between towns and eager to start a group of your own? If so we might be able to help. Within the Southern region we have experienced members who could give advice, be a source of knowledge, and possibly even offer 'hands-on' help to start up your events.



Our readership spreads wider than our Network. Why not see if your group wishes to join us? You do not need to be a network member to receive our magazine, simply email us at Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com type in **SUBSCRIBE** in the subject box.

Participating Groups – a group near you?

LOCAL GROUPS

-  Basingstoke Humanists
-  Brighton Humanists
-  Bromley Humanists
-  Chichester Humanists
-  Dorset Humanists
-  Farnham Humanists
-  Guildford & Woking

-  Horsham Humanists
-  Isle of Wight Humanists
-  Portsmouth Humanists
-  Reading Humanists
-  South Hants Humanists
-  Humanists UK (National Org)
-  Winchester (*to be confirmed*)

Do you live in a town where you think a group could flourish?
Contact us and we will see what can happen with the Networks help.

Black Lives Matter

"We are all connected by our humanity."

President of Humanists International Andrew Copson published this statement in response to protests which began in response to George Floyd's murder by a Minneapolis police officer

'Humanity is and ought to be one family, but racism and racial prejudice sadly endure as a global scourge. In so many states around the world, people are discriminated against, stigmatised, locked up, and killed because of their colour or their ethnicity. The US is not unique in its failings, but that is not a good enough defence. The enlightenment principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, on which the US state is founded, mean that its public authorities should expect to be held to higher standards. Failing to live up to those high standards and promise is not only a concern for its own citizens of goodwill, but for all who hope and work for a world where race will be no barrier to freedom and equal treatment.

We're conscious that any words in response to an incident like this can seem insufficient, brittle, or too little. We will of course continue to challenge racism and racial discrimination in our work and in our society. As humanists we are in lockstep with those who dare, and care, to dream of a better world. People have been waiting for too long for this change to come, and generations have suffered while they have been told to wait patiently. It is a call for governments to act but as much as that, it is a call for society to act, and for individuals to examine, recognise their failings and aspire to do better. We are all connected by our humanity and the need to uproot racism from our lives and from our societies requires a marriage of systemic change and individual action.'



Andrew Copson is President of Humanists International and Chief Executive of Humanists UK

The Board of the **American Humanist Association** also released the following statement: "In communities across our land, Americans have been expressing their anger and frustration at the systemic racism that pervades our society and manifests itself in police brutality against African Americans, brutality that all too frequently has fatal consequences... Humanism and social justice go hand in hand. We call on all humanists and all Americans to do everything in their power to stand and fight the systemic racism in American society and the police brutality that is engendered by that systemic racism."



'All revolutions devour their own children'

Assistant Editor Tricia Wallis takes a critical look at BLM

The Russian Revolution, the Maoist Cultural Revolution, the French Revolution We can see it demonstrated in almost every bloody revolution which dramatically and destructively attempted to root out all dissent to achieve ideological purity. And now here we are again with Black Lives Matter; a global protest about black equality which has transmogrified into a radically political tsunami calling for our Western culture and society to be pulled up by the roots and replaced with a Marxist utopia. What should be a powerful peace movement to create equality between black and white communities is about to achieve the exact opposite, resulting in more racism and division and something even far more dangerous...



Firstly we must examine the manifesto of BLM. Few of its converts, and maybe even fewer of the general population, know what this group's aims and objectives really are. Who are its leaders? Who finances them? There is an echoing silence. BLM has no accountability, no transparency, no structure. So called 'chapters' spring up autonomously, with no warning, throughout the world, ready to take sometimes violent action against both people and property. Their very name, Black Lives Matter, is a semantic sleight of hand. Of course black lives matter and any dissent from that statement by default labels you a racist. Except they want far far more than just to protect the lives and liberties of people of colour. The aims of their manifesto point to a world where every social and cultural Western norm is challenged and then destroyed. 'Disrupt cisgender privilege. Disrupt the Western prescribed nuclear family'; yes destroy the family and replace it with a series of self-supporting self-ruling communes or 'villages'. 'Defund and dismantle the police'; yes, eradicate any form of policing and replace it with social support and help for the criminally-minded. This is a manifesto that promises a descent into tribalism and violent vigilantism. The truth is that the horror and pathos of George Floyd's murder has become a focus and an excuse for changing the world order as we know it; a dream that anarchists and the radical left, who are ventriloquizing BLM, now see taking shape for real and it is the gullible mob of mainly white, middle-class protestors who are doing their dirty work for them.

How many of the youthful young zealots, black and white, know the true facts about BLM; an organisation they now embrace like a religious conversion and like all true believers have created a set of icons and symbols which they worship with the blind eyes of the faithful. A new saint has been beatified. George Floyd, a man whose horrific death at the hands of a vile and racist police officer (there can be no absolution for his murder) was filmed on a mobile phone like some snuff movie and is now seen as a martyr. He has even been given a halo and wings in images of him blasted over the world; no years and years of Vatican mullings for him; it took just seven days.



Humanists hold a variety of views on current affairs. Why not tell us what you think in our letters page?



But for George Floyd 'nothing became his life as the leaving of it'; he was in and out of prison for many years of his life for drug offences and robbery; his most heinous act was the pointing of a gun at a pregnant woman's stomach; attempting to terrorise her into giving him money. She was black. At the time of his arrest he tested positive for illegal drugs and for using counterfeit money. The young converts genuflect for the 8 minutes and 46 seconds it took George Floyd to die. They then chant their mantra like a religious refrain over and over again 'No Justice. No Peace' their sense of utter self righteousness burning within them. But even that holy chant is suspect. What does it mean? The antonym for peace is war. Is this a declaration of war and if so a war against whom?

One of the most disturbing manifestations of the new puritans' zeal to purge society and build it again in their own image is the 'Topple the Racist' movement; an ugly offshoot of BLM. We all know that slavery and the imperialism of yesteryear was an abomination but to tear down and deface statues and memorials with any connection, however tenuous, is a violation of the culture and history of the western world. It is abhorrent totalitarianism and must be resisted. Orwell's 1984 was brilliantly prophetic in his depiction of the age of doublethink and political orthodoxy; 'the figure of Big Brother on top of a statue in Victory Square where Nelson once stood'. Now we are seeing the threat to our past all around us - the daubing of 'racist' on Churchill's statue in Parliament Square; a leader who protected us from fascism and gave us the right to protest; how ironic. The 'boxing up' of Baden Powell, whose scout movement has provided so many opportunities to children and adults of all races all over the world. The hysterical calls to have Cromwell removed; the founder of our modern parliamentary democracy. And now Rhodes too must fall, in spite of thousands of young black people benefitting from the Rhodes scholarship. Yes all these figures have a dark side if judged by modern sensibilities but then so did George Floyd. So where is all this leading? Who will remain safe from this culturing culling? Sadiq Khan has set up 'A Commission to Review Diversity in the Public Realm' - in other words topple more and more statues but will he, like Robespierre and his 'Committee of Public Safety', find the mob will turn on him? After all didn't Muhammad himself buy, sell and capture slaves; slavery is permissible in the Quran (23.5 – 6; 70.29 – 30). The Quran permits men to have sexual access "to what their right hands possess". The pyramids too were built by slaves so if time and historical perspective has become meaningless then by rights they too should be torn down. Already the protests are influencing the media and, one after another, well-loved films and TV series are now censored: *Gone With the Wind*, *Fawlty Towers*, *Gavin and Stacey*. It would be laughable if it wasn't so scary. When do they start burning the books?

We have to be very careful when we start to rewrite history and change the narrative of the past. We have to be extraordinarily careful when we start to condone violence however apparently good the cause, and we must always be attentive to what kind of dystopia all this may lead us into. We all want a peaceful, equal society based on humanistic values, where the rights of all citizens are respected and valued. BLM may appear to offer that, but we must think twice before we bend the knee and submit ourselves to totalitarianism. As Nelson Mandela said, 'We have to acknowledge our past but focus on the future. Hiding our history is not the route to enlightenment'.

We welcome replies to any of our articles

Please email us at: Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com

The New Revolution in Nuclear Power



*Nuclear physicist **Simon Johnson** explains how modern nuclear power could be the solution to global warming*

In the early 1980s I worked as a reactor physicist for the UK's Atomic Energy Authority at Winfrith in Dorset. At that time people were just beginning to become concerned about global warming but nuclear power was unpopular due to legitimate concerns about reactor safety, nuclear waste disposal and the overall cost.

A lot has changed since then and it's now possible to make completely safe nuclear power stations that actually consume nuclear waste instead of producing it and this can be done with no risk of the fuel being used to make nuclear weapons. There are several new ways of doing this and multiple new reactor designs have been proposed. I want to focus on the Stable Salt Reactor (SSR) designed by Moltex Energy because this design solves all of the problems associated with nuclear power and it has a realistic chance of bringing about a significant reduction in global warming.

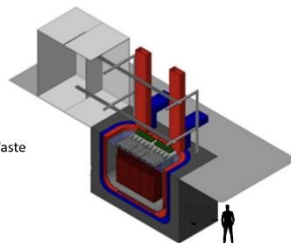
I would like to point out that I have no financial interest of any sort in nuclear power. My motivation is simply to increase public awareness of how revolutionary, modern nuclear power really could be the solution to global warming. In this 26 minute YouTube video I explain why this is and I attempt to throw in some interesting facts which most people aren't unaware of:

<https://youtu.be/KJS7C-QTXKA>

The following is a summary of the important points from the video:

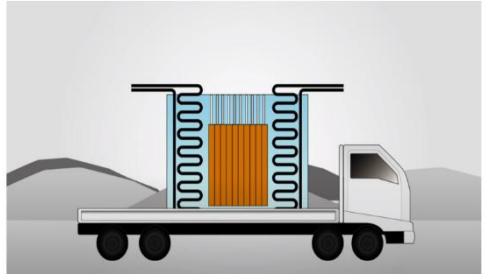
Stable Salt Reactor (SSR)

- Completely Safe
- Consumes Nuclear Waste



Only a small amount of natural uranium is used to produce power in a nuclear reactor. The rest becomes contaminated and forms radioactive waste which is dangerous for 100,000 years. Guaranteed safe storage of this waste away from the environment for this sort of timescale is not an easy problem to solve. One alternative is to process the waste with an electro-refiner in tandem with an SSR. The electro-refiner removes the part of the contamination that only needs to be stored safely for 300 years and the rest of the waste (which would otherwise need to be stored for 100,00 years) is put into the SSR to produce more electricity. This process is repeated multiple times with the same batch of waste and actually produces about 100 times as much electricity as was made in producing the waste in the first place. All of the final waste left over needs to be stored for only 300 years which is relatively easy to do safely.

In a conventional reactor the dangerous gases build up under pressure in the fuel pins. This can be a major safety problem if the fuel pins are breached in an overheating accident. These radioactive gases can contaminate large areas of land. In contrast, the fuel in an SSR is in the form of a liquid salt, just like table salt and all of the dangerous gases from nuclear fission dissolve into this liquid salt. This is why, unlike Fukushima and Chernobyl, the SSR cannot contaminate the land which surrounds it. Also the SSR loses reactivity as it becomes hotter so it can't overheat in the first place. It will cool itself by natural convection in any situation.



- High power density and modular
- Build on production line and deliver by lorry

The SSR is a small modular reactor that can be made cheaply on a production line and would be transported by lorry to the site where it is to operate. It can replace existing coal power stations while taking a smaller footprint. No surrounding safety zone is required because the reactor is inherently safe.

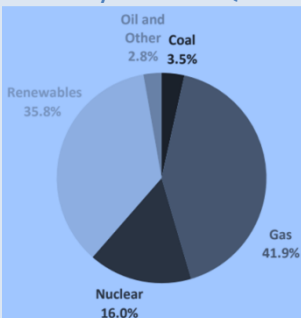
The electro-refining process is unable to produce weapons grade fuel. The waste, which is converted to fuel for the SSR, is at all stages of the process so radioactive that it is 'self-protecting', meaning that it would not be practical to make nuclear weapons from this material.

Independent studies show that electricity from an SSR will be cheaper than from any other source and for that reason there is a real possibility that this technology will be taken up around the world and would then significantly reduce the world's CO2 emissions.

For questions or comments please email Simon: modern.nuclear@outlook.com

For information

Electricity Generated: Q1 - 2019



 Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

	2019 Q1 TWh
Electricity Generated from	
Coal	3.1
Nuclear	13.9
Gas	36.4
Renewables	31.1
Total	86.9
Supplied to	
Industry	23.3
Domestic	29.8
Other final consumers	25.7
All	78.8

As humanists we tend to have a care and concern for our environment, and with this the energy mix that we are using right here in the UK. Over recent years we have made huge steps towards a greener and more sustainable supply yet there is still some way to go and clearly new avenues we need to explore in order to reach our clean and sustainable destination.

Humanistically Speaking

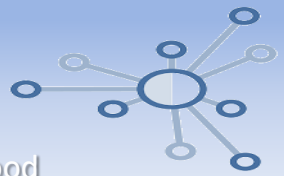
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Group Growth

Groups getting together

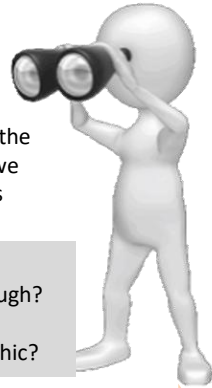
By Aaron Darkwood



Can I invite you to look into the future with me for a few moments?

One of the ways I see *Humanistically Speaking* working for everyone is in growing our groups. We all know the challenges faced with even considering the idea of how to begin enlargement of our membership but working together we can very easily cross that bridge. Before we go there, let's ask a few questions first:

1. If our group doubled in size could our current meeting venue cope?
2. If we gained fifty new members would our programme be engaging enough?
3. If we gained younger members would our talks interest them?
4. Does our programme of monthly events cover a wide enough demographic?



Once you have answered those questions within your respective groups and feel comfortable to move forwards there are a number of varied avenues we could consider, primarily being an eye catching main event that will be of interest, or a publicity drive that then leads to that main event.

When considering gaining your new members, you need to look in advance to your next three months of events. If you gained thirty members tomorrow, is there enough variety of topics and events to keep them coming back for more? Consider ages? Times available? Weekends? Indoor versus outdoor? Talks of deep cerebral meaning and philosophical discovery, presentations on environment, religion, learning, happiness, being yourself or psychology?

A gazebo stand in town with info, volunteers, Humanism awareness.

A stand in an existing event; Pride, Market, Carnival, Car boot...

A tabletop at an indoor event on Environment? Or other topical...

Run a course which is well advertised and invite people in

A humanist group doesn't have to be all about opposing religion; in fact from looking at group agendas most seem to cover a wide arc of subjects, and although they are all great learning opportunities, you may find few if any teenagers or twenty-somethings attending. There are plenty of young people out there who have no religious connection, as many as 73% in some surveys, so they are there for the taking if you know how to reach them.

Guest talks

Presentations

Courses

Debate groups

Walks

Cycle rides

Hillside picnics

Barbecues

Pub socials

Quiz nights

Book clubs

Short Talks



A day in the life...

of a Humanists UK Volunteer School Speaker

"Groups across the UK have positions where volunteers help represent Humanist interests in everyday places, or represent a sector in society within our own groups."

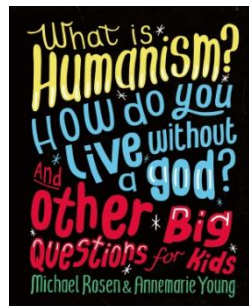
Interview with Maggie Hall, Chair of Brighton Humanists

Describing my role in one sentence:

The role of a Humanists UK Volunteer School Speaker is to promote the understanding of humanism among young people from a personal perspective, using their own lived experience of life as a humanist.

Five key responsibilities in my role:

1. To present Humanism in an engaging way to students
2. To **avoid** criticising or disrespecting religion
3. To be an ambassador for Humanists UK
4. To work in partnership with the school and the RE staff
5. To signpost students to further sources of learning



How did you find this role?

Humanists UK appeals for volunteers.

What appeal did it hold for you that made you apply/train for it?

Having been a teacher of speech and drama, although not in a school setting, I was used to public speaking and working with young people and I was very keen to use the skills and experience I had gained from that to help promote the understanding of humanism in schools.



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Take us through a typical day of you performing this role.

All my visits have involved either giving my talk once or twice at primary schools or “drop down day” workshops, usually for year tens. This means presenting five or six times, fitted in among other representatives of various faiths. Once I took part in a one-day conference organized by West Sussex SACRE for year 8 students from across the county.

In such cases I arrive at around 8.45am. I’m conducted to the room I will be using and set up with any technical equipment necessary. I usually get 50 minutes for the workshop and I try to allow 20-30 minutes for Q&A afterwards. I prefer to be led by the students’ own curiosity and respond to their questions than to give them a lecture.

Having spoken three times during the morning, I’m provided with lunch and this is an opportunity to chat with the teachers and the various faith speakers, often the most informative part of the day. I sometimes get to hear what questions the other speakers have been asked and, even more enlightening, what answers they’ve given.

After lunch I present another couple of workshops, which takes us to the end of the school day. I go home pretty exhausted but always having had an enjoyable and interesting day.

Do you require specific skills or training to conduct your role?

Experience of public speaking and working with children and young people is useful. However, training is given, so lack of experience needn’t be a barrier.

What is most challenging about your role? How do you navigate complications?

Events like the one described, talking for up to 50 minutes five or six times, can be extremely tiring. Trying to be diplomatic around the “faith” speakers in the staff room can be a challenge.

What are the rewards in this for you? Why would you recommend it?

I have always found that imparting knowledge to young people is a reward in itself. Being able to do so in the service of the public understanding of Humanism is a bonus.





Interviewing the 'Chair'

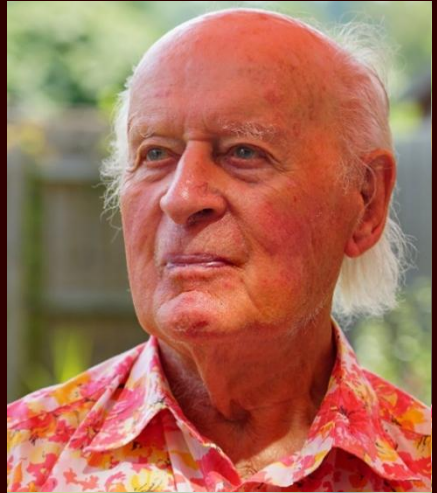
Our regular spotlight on local Humanist group leaders

Alec Leggatt, founder of Farnham Humanists

Alec Leggatt was born on the 20th June 1928. This was a time when the last pandemic had happened just eight years before ... When Al Capone still ran Chicago ... When there were criminal elements among the US police, and - after a period of post-war prosperity - the Great Depression was just a few months ahead. "1928 was also the year when Mickey Mouse emerged!" chuckled Alec. But putting world-famous mice aside for one moment, whether you see parallels between that time and now is a matter of personal opinion, but one thing's for sure – it was an awful long time ago.

The son of a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy, Alec's childhood was spent in Portsmouth, so his memories of that time, and the World War that came soon after, would have been vivid. But that's another story – perhaps one for a future issue of *Humanistically Speaking*.

Alec's earliest memories relating to religion really begins with the church parades that were a military requirement of service personnel at the time. The Leggatt family attended these events of course – but neither of his parents were regular church-goers, and he describes his religious upbringing as 'pretty ordinary really'. He was, however, considered to have a good singing voice, and he joined Portsmouth Cathedral's choir as a boy treble – a singing aptitude (and a broad love of music) that continued throughout his life right up to his mid eighties!



Alec would enter the world of civil engineering when he left school, and thus far his life was on course for a settled, middle class existence, but his road to Damascus really began when he fell in love with, and married Valerie in 1950 when he was just 22. He describes Valerie as a quasi-humanist at that time. Her father was a strict atheist, and that was the way she had been brought up, but she respected other beliefs, and in fact they both joined the local Presbyterian church. Alec recalls the minister at the time as a delightful, charming and a liberal individual whom he and Valerie both held in regard and with affection.

“We don’t really believe” Alec confessed to him once, but that changed nothing. The young reverend was clearly wise and open-minded enough to welcome them on the basis that the local church was there to serve all the community - irrespective of faith - and Alec still has fond memories of his friendship with him. So it came as a real tragedy for everyone when he suddenly and unexpectedly died of a heart attack.

His replacement was quite different, however. Alec described the new minister as a fundamentalist, and the turning point came at a sermon he delivered when he said “If you don’t believe that Jesus was the son of God, you are not a Christian”.

That marked the beginning of Alec’s transformation. He found that he actually *agreed* with the new vicar’s remarks. He *didn’t* believe that Jesus was the son of God – and the lever that began to prise Alec away from Christianity started a kind of domino effect that ultimately led him to the realisation that he hadn’t been honest with himself. He had described himself as Christian, but in truth, he wasn’t. After saying that, Alec reminded me of an inscription that he thought he saw onstage at Conway Hall which said ‘Be True to Thyself’. It was clearly very important to him.

So Alec was no longer a Christian, but at the time he hadn’t heard of Humanism, and that’s another story. By this time his civil engineering career was going well, and he was soon achieving considerable eminence, publishing several papers and a book. In fact he ended up chairing a London consultancy, and he became involved with many projects at home and abroad. He had a closer friend – a former boss - who was a firm atheist, and Humanist who died.

Alec attended the funeral, of course, and it would be another eye-opener for Alec. It was

the first ever Humanist ceremony he had attended, and he was immediately struck by its uplifting warmth and honest sincerity. It was *this* experience that finally caused Alec to begin to explore Humanism, and that would lead to his joining the then British Humanist Association. And some years later, after he retired in 1988, Alec decided to train to become a Humanist Celebrant.

The nineties were the beginning of a time of rapid growth for organised Humanism, and somewhere along the line Alec joined Guildford Humanists Group and there he became acquainted with a gentleman by the name of David Savage, who would later become the architect of Humanist UK’s Pastoral Care initiative. David and Alec became good friends; they both wanted to be more engaged with the local community, and they felt that Guildford Humanists was a bit too ‘armchair’ for their liking. They wanted to be more proactive and involved, so they decided to establish a new Humanist group that was nearer to where they lived in Farnham, and that process began in 2005.



When I asked Alec what help they received from Humanists UK to establish a group, he told me that they agreed to send invitation letters (yes ... they sent Royal Mail letters even then!) from their main office, which at the time was 1 Gower Street in London, to every member who lived near Farnham. In the end, about 50% responded, and Farnham took off with a bang – and it is still going strong today.

“So ... What direction do you think Humanism should take in future?” I asked. “Humanists UK are doing some excellent work, but they should press the limits beyond a narrow perspective. We should become much more engaged with the environment, and I don’t just mean the human environment but the natural world also.” (*That’s interesting, I thought ... Shades of my last interview with Norman MacLean here.*) “... Humans are just a vertebrate species with relatively advanced intelligence”, he said. “This facility has led to gross misuse of the planet and other life forms. We have a moral responsibility to make amends for our misuse... And we should stop worrying so much about God.”



We should leave stuff like *bishops in the House of Lords* and *Thought for the Day* to the *Secular Society*, that’s what they do.” He then went on ... “Humanism should work more in the direction of encouraging the world to deal with issues like poverty, population control and climate change. We should no longer think of ourselves as a group of individual nations, but as one species on one planet dealing with planetary issues.”



On a final point, we briefly discussed what a man who was born in 1928 might reflect on his eventual demise. I saw a little twinkle in his eyes and he smiled. “I’m not worried about dying ...” He said. “But I am optimistic about the future, and I would love to know what happens next.” He laughed when he added “In the extraordinarily unlikely event that I found myself at the Pearly Gates, and St. Peter asked me if there was anything I wanted, I’d simply ask for a front seat to see the rest of the show!”

I closed the interview by thanking him for his honesty and candour. A fascinating interview with a very special Humanist. Thank you, Alec.

Interviewed by David Brittain

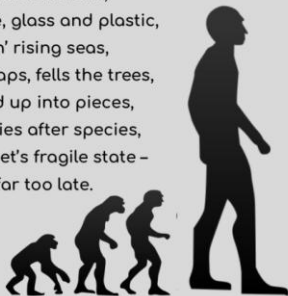
POETRY PONDERINGS

Humanistically inspirational and thought provoking

HOMO SAPIENS ?

What an animal is man –
 does so much because he can,
 makes his habitat fantastic,
 full of concrete, glass and plastic,
 poison, noise 'n' rising seas,
 melts the ice cops, fells the trees,
 carves the land up into pieces,
 wipes out species after species,
 knows the planet's fragile state –
 does too little far too late.

John Barclay



A	E	T	H	I	C	S	A	D	V	A	E
O	R	E	E	U	A	P	A	S	A	A	V
R	S	A	V	T	M	R	B	L	L	T	I
S	E	D	T	O	W	A	A	T	U	H	D
A	C	L	E	I	L	B	N	A	E	E	E
C	U	I	N	A	O	U	L	I	S	I	N
R	L	F	E	L	T	N	T	O	S	S	C
E	A	E	G	N	A	H	A	I	V	T	E
G	R	O	U	P	C	A	E	L	O	E	G
N	O	A	C	E	L	E	B	R	A	N	T

Humanist	Secular	Celebrant
Ethics	Darwin	Atheist
Life	Death	Group
Values	Rational	Science
Evidence	Global	SACRE
Evolution	Love	

Word Search by Aaron Darkwood

A HUMANIST CREED

I believe in no god.
 Religion is a construct of man,
 born of fear of the unknown,
 developed into belief systems,
 emphasised by symbols and rituals,
 polished by practice, hardened by time.
 I respect those who profess such faiths,
 but I believe they are empty promises.

I believe in the world we know –
 the natural world, the body,
 the mind – emotions, intellect,
 consciousness, memory, imagination.

I believe there are three zones –
 what we understand,
 what we know about and don't
 understand,
 and what we don't even know about.

I believe that the peoples of our planet
 share a common humanity.
 In the interests of all, we should
 take responsibility for our actions,
 treat everyone with respect,
 and act for the common good.
 And we should make the best
 of the one life we have.

John Barclay

<http://www.johnbarclayink.com/>

Competition Winner

'Religion – An Ever-Changing Journey'

By Amelie Forbes, age 17 years, Godalming College



Religion, for me, has always been a fascinating topic. I find myself drawn to hearing about other cultures, the endless and intricate arguments there are when it comes to what people believe in. Throughout secondary school, religion hasn't been something that I feel had been forced upon me, but instead something to question, to be curious about.

What strikes me is the contrast I've experienced between primary and secondary school. I went to a Church of England primary, so religion was ever-present in my education. Although it was something I was both interested by and invested in as a child, Christianity was something I almost passively accepted as an element of my life. It was only when I got older, moving abroad to a Muslim country (Qatar), that my own religious beliefs were something I began to question.

For the years that I went to school in Qatar, religion wasn't something that played a part in the curriculum much at all. Instead, I was learning through friends, or by going to places and doing things I never had before. When I got back to England, the school I joined wasn't a religious school, but I did get the chance to learn about religion. There was a feeling of inclusivity, with religion being something that I could invite into my life if I wanted to, something that was never 'tabooed'. In a sense, it was as if my primary school education and the education I received in Qatar had met in the middle somewhere: a place where religion wasn't surrounded by any limits or expectations. I was also lucky, as I was able to choose 'Philosophy, Ethics, and Religion' as one of my GCSE subjects. I learned a lot on this course, including elements to Christianity, despite having grown up with it, that I hadn't even known about, which surprised me. It feels as if there's a whole world that I got to dip into, and that was my prerogative.

However, there's one thing I can't help thinking: if I hadn't chosen to, would I have actually learned about religion at secondary school level? The answer is probably not. I don't know how I feel about that. On one hand, I love the fact that students were able to have freedom over what religion was to them. On the other hand, being exposed to other cultures and religions, other than the one I had grown up with, was, in my opinion, a game-changer about how I see the world. My mind has been opened in a way I know it maybe would never have been, had I not moved to Qatar or studied 'Philosophy, Ethics, and Religion'. With this in mind, maybe religion should be a more prominent part of the curriculum. By that, I'm not just talking about Christianity, I'm talking about religions from all over the world, religions that most people have never heard of before, religions that may appear worlds away from the lives we lead in modern British society. At the end of the day, exposure to other cultures has made me the person I am.

Humanistically Speaking wants to encourage young people's awareness of and involvement in Humanism. We recently invited students to write an article on their experiences of the teaching of religion at school and how it had influenced them. Amelie Forbes, who is seventeen and a student at Godalming College, has won our cash prize of £25 for this interesting reflection.



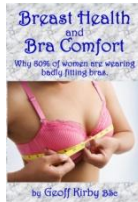
Local Talent Focus Geoff Kirby



A local humanist, an author, you might know him?

Geoff starting writing and publishing books six years ago at the age of 75. He is a member of both Dorset Humanists as well as its junior offspring, West Dorset Humanists who meet in Dorchester. In 2019, Geoff lectured both groups on the reasons that he gave up religious belief in 1950; his talk being appropriately entitled *“Seventy Years An Atheist”*.

He is considering expanding this into his eighth book to be published later this year. Before ‘lockdown’ he was booked to talk to Dorset Humanists on the topic *“The Goldilocks Enigma – Why Is The Universe So Perfectly Tuned To Support Humanity?”*



Click on a title to be taken to a full description of that book on the author's own website..

This year, at the age of 80, he published his seventh book. Entitled *“Poo, Pee & Paper – Humanity's Relationship With Bodily Waste”*. This is a light-hearted history spanning five millennia of toilet and sewage disposal history. Starting with the elaborate flushing toilets of the Bronze Age Minoans, Geoff takes the story through 200 fully illustrated pages of history (during which we meet the famous Thomas Crapper) up to the elaborate zero-gravity toileting arrangements on the International Space Station. Geoff's other books include two covering his lifelong interest in astronomy which started as a small child in London's ‘black out’ during World War 2. He has also applied his scientific skills to a book for helping women to find a healthy and comfortable bra.

His life-story up to the age of thirteen involved the horrors of living in London throughout WW2, his father's early death and his subsequent incarceration in an abusive boarding school run by Freemasons.

Geoff has also published two books on behalf of friends. Please read details of all Geoff's books at www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Books where there are links to buying them on Amazon.

Are you a humanist with a talent?

If you are, and you are a member or associate of one of the groups highlighted on the map at page 11, then Humanistically Speaking will be happy to advertise your work to all of our 2,500 readers. And if you would like to contact Geoff Kirby directly, please visit his page www.geoffkirby.co.uk/Books and check out his other titles.

Humanist Climate Action

A group within Humanists UK to tackle Climate Change

Humanist Climate Action

July 2020

Over the last five years, general public awareness of the seriousness and importance of climate change, and other damage that human beings are doing to our natural world, has increased massively around the world.

It hardly needs saying that human beings are inseparable from the natural world, and completely dependent on it. It is not only the source of our food and all the materials we need for life, but it is also for most of us the ultimate source of beauty, and completely essential to our happiness in numerous ways. Until recently we have almost entirely taken it for granted, but the rate at which humans can now extract and use up natural resources means that we are unwittingly destroying this complex web of interrelated fauna and flora on which we depend so utterly for survival and happiness. Humanists believe that the responsibility for saving this situation rests on the shoulders of all of us.

As part of this growing realisation, the 2019 Humanists International Conference passed a resolution stating that humanists everywhere should join the voices demanding that action is taken on climate change. In recognition of this, Humanists UK formed 'Humanist Climate Action' (HCA). Humanists UK members were invited to join the steering group. HCA is still in the process of being set up, and the launch of this initiative has been delayed by the Coronavirus crisis.



Photo credit: Pexel/ Marcus Spiske

Several volunteers joined the steering group, and after much discussion, it was agreed that the priority is campaigning on climate change, both by supporting the wider environmental movement and acknowledging the role that individual lifestyles can make to achieving the huge changes needed.

HCA will support evidence-based environmental policy. As a new campaign group, we accept the expertise, research, and carefully considered opinions that comprise the growing scientific consensus on these issues and will promote the work of established campaigning organisations in this field. We consider HCA to be part of the recognised 'environmental movement', and accept the learning in the journey that the movement has made to date.

Ultimately, HCA aims to take campaigning actions ourselves and to be a group that all humanists can become involved with. But we are equally happy if humanists join any other environmental campaign group or activity that seems appropriate for them, whether they are fighting to protect their local pond, occupying Trafalgar Square, writing to their MP, whatever! What really matters is that humanists recognise the need to try to achieve change, however they prefer to contribute to that.

Humanists UK is a member of 'The Climate Coalition', and Marilyn Mason (photo right) a Humanists UK member who has believed for a long time that humanists should be campaigning on climate change, has been representing Humanists UK at the Coalition for many years. The Climate Coalition has got a very active programme of measures that its member organisations, and that individual people, can do. So HCA's springboard to its first activities can include asking our members to support the Coalition's campaigns.

As people that believe in rational thinking and the scientific method, humanists should be pointing out loudly and clearly the need for people to face up to the reality of climate change, as frantically highlighted by scientists, and get something done about it.

It is widely accepted in the environmental movement that current Western lifestyles are not compatible with lowering our carbon emissions to sustainable levels or protecting our ocean wildlife, forests,

“humanists should be pointing out loudly and clearly the need for people to face up to the reality of climate change”



biodiversity, and polar wildlife. We need to change, and environmentally-aware people need to lead by example as much as possible. We can reduce the amount of meat we eat, we can try to walk, cycle, and use public transport more and drive less, we can fly less often, insulate our houses more, recycle, mend and re-use things – there are many sources of ideas and inspiration on how to lead a more 'green' lifestyle. We need to play our part in changing our culture.

HCA is currently looking for humanists to join the steering committee to help develop this campaign group. If you are interested in joining please contact Humanists UK at campaigns@humanism.org.uk



Tricia's Choices Book Club Corner



Tricia Wallis runs Farnham Humanists' book club. Humanistically Speaking has asked her to list three books that in her opinion are a 'must read' for any reader over the next two months, and here is her choice.



THE PLAGUE (La Peste) ***Camus (1947)***

A novel recounting the story of a plague sweeping the French Algerian city of Oran. It asks provocative questions relating to destiny and the human condition. Highly topical!

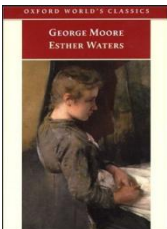
THE LITTLE STRANGER ***Sarah Waters (2009)***

Intriguing and creepy gothic novel set in 1940s Warwickshire. What are the secrets of a haunted dilapidated manor house and its surviving owners? An outsider delves into the mystery.



ESTHER WALTERS ***George Moore (1894)***

A young pious woman from a poor working class family enters domestic service where she is seduced and then deserted. She struggles to raise her child against all adversity. A prototype feminist novel!



If you read (or have read) one or more of these books, send your verdict to Tricia and star them on a count of 0 to 5 stars (with 5 stars being outstanding) and send it to

Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com, and we will pass your message on to her.

She will be very happy to find out what you think.

And if you would like to make your own reading recommendation, tell Tricia, and she might add your selection to her list.

Watch out for more of Tricia's choices in the next issue ...

Humanism is about tolerance, kindness, knowledge and friendship, and although Humanistically Speaking is for Humanists, everyone is welcome to read and contribute, regardless of faith or belief.