

Hastings Humanists *Newsletter* April 2009

We're on the Map! Hastings Humanists is now in the official list of BHA Local Groups. To find us on the BHA site go to: <http://www.humanism.org.uk/home> and click on "Meet up", "Groups" and "South East"; or go to the "Humanist Groups Map". To make us more official I have also produced a draft Constitution, a copy of which is on the back of this newsletter. It is proposed to hold the first Annual General Meeting in September at which the posts of Secretary, Treasurer and Speaker (i.e. chairperson) will be properly elected.

Programme: I've now put together a programme of meetings for the next six months.

9 April: *Discussion on Human Rights*. It is 200 years since Tom Paine died, and last December marked the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Currently there are efforts at the UN by Islamic countries to curtail the right to freedom of expression by passing resolutions to make defamation of religion illegal. In this country Human Rights law is increasingly influential.

14 May: *How I Became a Humanist Celebrant* by Lesley Arnold-Hopkins. Our member Lesley is Accredited by the BHA to conduct Humanist funerals. Others conduct weddings and baby-namings. She will tell us something about the courses provided, and entertain us with anecdotes of her experiences.

11 June: *Evolution Implies Atheism* by Dean Morrison. This presentation returns to the original Darwin Day subject of our first meeting, which got side-tracked by other discussions. Our member Dean will present the case, to be followed by a Q&A session.

9 July: *Discussion on Religious Education*. On 7th July there is a meeting of the East Sussex SACRE which I hope to attend. So I will report on this, and we can then discuss issues relating to religious education in general.

13 August: *History of Humanism Part 2* by George Jelliss. Continuing on from 1800 where we left off in the March meeting.

10 September: *Annual General Meeting*. The wording of our Constitution will be decided, and nominations for the three main post-holders, Secretary, Treasurer and Speaker will be voted on. We can also discuss the aims of the Group, and ideas for our future programme. The BHA Group Representatives Annual Meeting (GRAM) is on 3 October, so we will also nominate people to attend that.

The Kepler Telescope: was launched on 7 March. This will look at a small area of our galaxy where there are many stars and check them for regular slight variations in brightness that indicate the presence of planets. In the case of a star like our sun, a period of one year will indicate a planet at the same sort of distance from its star as the Earth is from the Sun, in the "Goldilocks" region - possibly "just right" for life to have evolved.

The Pope Outrages AIDs Workers: Benedict XVI said that HIV/AIDS was "a tragedy that cannot be overcome by money alone, that cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which can even increase the problem". Rebecca Hodes, of the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa said "The Pope's opposition to condoms conveys that religious dogma is more important to him than the lives of Africans." Oxford Immunology Professor, Quentin Sattentau said: "There is a large body of published evidence demonstrating that condom use reduces the risk of acquiring HIV, but does not lead to increased sexual activity."

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Hastings Humanists Constitution

1. NAME AND OBJECTS: The Group shall be called "Hastings Humanists" and shall have the objects of: a) Providing a means for like-minded individuals to meet at least monthly to discuss Humanist values, principles and relevant subjects. b) To educate and interest the wider public in the philosophy of Humanism, and to be open in the expression of their views. c) Through involvement in active campaigns and projects, to seek to promote Humanist values and to make a difference in the world, both locally and globally.

2. MEMBERSHIP: Any person who agrees with the objects of the Group may become a Member on payment of the annual membership fee. The Committee may refuse to admit as a Member or terminate the Membership of any person whose conduct is, in its unanimous opinion, inconsistent with the objects of the Group.

3. COMMITTEE: The Committee shall consist of at least three Members. These will normally include three Postholders: Speaker, Secretary and Treasurer, elected at each Annual General Meeting of the Group. Other Members may be co-opted to the Committee by agreement of the Postholders at any time. Should a Postholder vacancy occur, say due to resignation or illness, a new temporary appointment must be made within two weeks and notified to the Members. The quorum at a Committee Meeting shall be three Members.

4. GENERAL MEETINGS: An Annual General Meeting shall be held in September. It shall receive financial accounts and reports of the Committee for the previous 12 months. The members present shall elect the Postholders of the Group for the next 12 months. A Special General Meeting can be convened at other times by the Secretary on receipt of a request from at least a third of the Members. At least two weeks notice of General Meetings must be given to all Members. Nominations and Notices of resolutions must be received by the Secretary at last a week before the meeting. Only resolutions stated on the notice convening the meeting shall be voted on, although other issues may be discussed. The quorum at a General Meeting shall be six Members. In any dispute concerning the affairs of the group, a General meeting shall be the final arbiter.

5. FINANCE: The income and property of the Group shall be devoted to the promotion of the objects of the Group. Members may not receive payment for their services to the Group. The Group shall maintain an affiliation to the British Humanist Association and in the case of the Group having to be wound up, any funds remaining after payment of liabilities shall go to the British Humanist Association. The annual membership fees shall be set by the Annual General Meeting.

This is the First Draft of the Constitution. To be confirmed or revised at the AGM in September 2009. For present purposes anyone who attends any formal meeting of the Hastings Humanists, from February 12th onwards, and pays the current £2 per meeting towards the cost of the venue, will be considered a Member for purposes of the AGM, unless they choose not to be included.

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