

Chiltern Humanists

Newsletter No. 128 September 2017



This life is all we have - make it good to be alive

Humanism and Green Politics



Now that nothing is happening in politics (!), on Wednesday 11 October in Amersham, we will be welcoming Siân Berry AM from the Green Party. The General Election in June interrupted her plan to visit us before.

Siân believes it is up to us, and us alone, to look after our wonderful planet and all its people. She is a green campaigner, politician and author, and a Patron of Humanists UK. Since joining the Green Party in 2001 she has been a candidate in numerous council and parliamentary elections, and was the Green candidate for London Mayor in 2008 and 2016. In 2016 she was elected as a member of the London Assembly.

Siân has worked on a range of green and social issues, setting up the Alliance Against Urban 4x4s in 2004 and Reheat Britain, which successfully brought in a boiler scrappage scheme. A supporter of the Atheist Bus Campaign, she also focuses on social justice issues and is a patron of the Fair Pay Network.

It will be interesting to learn how far Siân's Humanist outlook has inspired her political activity, or vice versa.

HELP!!!!

For various reasons our committee is now reduced to just a few people. To enable us to continue to run our programme and for the group to survive, please contact either Antony Chapman, Pam Crawford, Richard Jakeman or me.

Humanism in the Age of Brexit and Trump

The meeting of the Chiltern Humanists was on the 12.09.17. Andrew Copson, CEO of Humanists UK and president of the International Humanists, gave an enlightening talk to a full Wendover Library Room on the state of humanism around the world today.

The work of Humanists UK was to stem the tide of nationalism not just in the UK but around the world. India, for example, was at one time moving towards secularism. Under the current government there is a strong move to making India a Hindu State. Text books have been re-written promoting ethnic nationalism and secularism is in retreat. Recently there has been reported murders of humanists.

Turkey is no longer a secular state. The constitution has been and is being changed by the ruling president. A Muslim state is replacing what has been a secular one. In the USA, there is a strong move against secularism encouraged by the Trump administration. Universal Human Rights are under threat in many countries. Religious fundamentalism is a threat to human rights.

In the UK faith schools have led to a less cohesive society. On the other hand chaplains in prisons and hospitals now share this role with Humanists although there is a need for more volunteers for this work. Abortion is still illegal in Northern Ireland. Humanist celebrants conduct funerals throughout the UK but cannot conduct marriages except in Scotland. After a recent court case non-religious alongside religious values are taught in schools. Humanists UK promoted a book of Humanism by Michael Rosen. This book was sent to schools and some schools asked for copies.

The UK is not facing an uprising in religious fundamentalism. In a recent survey 53% stated they had no religion.

Brexit is giving the Government a great deal of work crowding out other issues. Humanists UK are active in promoting a humanist philosophy and challenging any issues that deny freedom of expression. *Mary Peeler*

Annual Summer Social Lunch

On Sunday 23 July, we enjoyed an excellent lunch hosted by Antony and Carol Chapman. Many thanks to Pam and Carol for preparing a superb spread.

“Fake News”

Odd to include an item on fake news in a Newsletter. However, on Tuesday 14 November in Wendover, I will be leading a discussion on just this. There probably has always been distribution of “fake news” but we are now more aware of the truth in many areas of the world today.

Please come along and bring examples of such news to the meeting and perhaps we can sort out the truth from fiction.

Steve West

Howard League for Penal Reform

On Wednesday 13 December in Amersham we will be hearing from Andrew Neilson from the Howard League for Penal Reform about the history and work of their organisation.

Formed in 1866, the Howard League for Penal Reform is a national charity working for less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison. Too much money is spent on a penal system which doesn't work, doesn't make our communities safer and fails to reduce offending. They work with parliament and the media, with criminal justice professionals, students and members of the public, influencing debate and forcing through meaningful change to create safer communities.

The League campaigns on a wide range of issues including short term prison sentences, real work in prison, children in prison and community sentences.

Moira Hunter-Watt

Our thoughts are with Moira who has been admitted to a care home as she is unable to look after herself any more. Moira was one of the earliest people to join or group in the 1990's and regularly came to meetings. If anybody would like to visit her, Antony Chapman has her address.

Forthcoming Events

All meetings are open to anyone interested

**Wednesday 11 October 8:00 Amersham Small Barn Hall
Siân Berry AM**

**Tuesday 14 November 8:00 Wendover
“Fake News”**

**Wednesday 13 December 8:00 Amersham Sm Barn Hall
Howard League for Penal Reform
BRING YOUR FRIENDS**

Suggestions for future meetings, events and activities are always welcome.

If anyone needs a lift to a meeting, please contact Steve West and we will try to help.

Our usual venues:

Wendover Public Library Room, High Street, Wendover HP22 6DU. We meet in the room on the left as you approach the Library entrance. There is ample free evening parking.

Amersham Community Centre, Chiltern Avenue, Amersham. HP6 5AH. The Community Centre is close to the station with a large adjoining car park (free after 6.30). We normally use the Small Barn Hall.

For any queries about Chiltern Humanists or Humanism generally, please call Steve West on 01494 726351 or email: west@waitrose.com

For the latest news about Humanism locally and nationally keep an eye on our website www.chilternhumanists.org.uk . Comment on or submit material to the website via the 'Contact Us' page.

Please send any contributions, comments or letters for Newsletter No. 129 to Steve West at west@waitrose.com

Chiltern Humanists works in partnership with Humanists UK and is affiliated to the National Secular Society.

Please note that we maintain a computer record of our membership. The record is used strictly for administrative purposes and is not divulged to third parties.