

farnham HUMANISTS

covering W. Surrey and N.E. Hampshire.

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NEWSLETTER 15 – April 2009

Since our December newsletter Joe Ansah has talked to us about adoption: reality and practice, Jim Herrick led a discussion on censorship, Andrew Copson the BHA Education Officer gave us an update on the BHA's campaigns at our AGM and we indulged in our annual dinner.

We have found a **new venue** for our monthly **Sunday** evening meetings – **the Hop Blossom pub** (Long Garden Walk, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7HX) located in central Farnham and thus convenient for public transport. We are using an attractive separate room on the ground floor which is suitable for wheelchair access. If you haven't been to the Hop Blossom yet why not join us to hear and discuss Alec Leggatt's talk on Infinity on Sunday 19th April at 7:30. (The pub sells real ale!)

We have added **two rambles** (Sunday May 10th and Sunday September 27th) **and a garden party** (Sunday June 28th) to our programme for 2009 (see at the bottom of the newsletter). For the first ramble we will be meeting 10.30 at The Good Intent in Puttenham for a walk over Puttenham Common with 12.30 lunch at the Good Intent. Please contact Jim Herrick for more information by e-mail Jim1herrick@aol.com or phone 01483 811707.

We are also continuing with our informal pub evenings at the **Fox Inn** Lower Bourne, Farnham GU10 3PH, the **first Wednesday** in every month.

Other current and recent activities are updated as follows:

- **Annual Debate 2009** – We have decided on a motion "Britain should become a secular state" and a provisional date, Tuesday 3rd November. We are now trying to find speakers. Any suggestions for speakers welcome, email David Savage address at top of newsletter.
- **Schools** – Jim Herrick and Mike Adams are to give a talk to Bedales School Petersfield – the date is to be confirmed.
- **SACRE** – Jennie Johnson presented a talk by Jim Herrick and herself on **what it means to be a Humanist in Surrey today** at the February 13th Surrey Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting. (The SACRE is responsible among other duties for providing the RE syllabus for Surrey community and voluntary controlled faith schools - not faith schools in the form of voluntary aided schools who determine their own). It went well with everyone present wanting a copy.

- **Local Development** –The BHA are concerned about **a lack of representation at local level for non-religious people** which means that, unlike religious people who can be consulted through recognised methods of communication, non-religious people's needs and views are at risk of being excluded from decision making bodies.
- Farnham Humanists are now part of a Surrey County Council Equality & Diversity Group. David Savage attended a second meeting of the group on 19th February.
- David has also written to Waverley Borough Council in response to their consultation on the Borough's equality and diversity policy and requested that Farnham Humanists is included as a member of a Critical Partner Group. He highlights that we are a group with non-religious beliefs who support human rights and within this want to help reflect and respect the diversity in our community. We also want to support the council in ensuring there is no discrimination based on religion or belief (as well as disability etc) in governance, employment and provision of services.
- At the South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) event in November it appeared that a Government objective is to use interfaith groups to encourage local authorities to cooperate with faith groups to provide 'welfare services'. David pointed out that the role of the non-religious to provide such services should be fully recognised. SEEFF is carrying out a consultation project in order to establish its work for the next three years. David has contributed to this through a questionnaire and will be attending a final regional conference in Reading on 28th April when the project will be discussed and agreed.

- **Humanist Chaplaincy support** - David has responded to Mike Penning, Shadow Secretary for Health on the all party consultation on the provision of chaplaincy and spiritual care within the NHS. His key points are that 'pastoral and spiritual care' should be for all in the NHS irrespective of their religion or belief and should be provided by all, irrespective of their religion or belief. At present this care is often seen as for the religious by the religious.
- **Ceremonies** – Alec Leggatt and Barbara Burfoot continue to provide officiant support for Funerals, Weddings and Baby Namings. Recently this has included a victim of a murder and an Air Vice Marshall with full military honours. They will be talking about their experiences at our Sunday September 13th meeting.

- **Contact with other Humanist Groups** –Alec and David are meeting with Guildford Humanists in April to discuss the work of the Farnham group and mutual cooperation.
- **Website** – the website has been completely revamped with more information added. Any comments for improvements would be very welcome – please contact Jennie Johnson by e-mail: jennie.johnson@virgin.net
- **Further Education Talks** – Following a request from a tutor at Farnborough College of Technology, Farnham Humanists are hoping to supply speakers to talk about Humanism to students taking a counselling course. Specific topics will include where counselling fits in with belief and religion, death and bereavement, ethics and morality, freedom of choice.
- **AGM** – At our AGM on February 22nd we elected David Savage as Chairman, Sue Shaw as Secretary, Mike Adams as Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Jennie Johnson as Vice Chairman and Meg Howson, Jim Herrick, Alec Leggatt and Alan Montgomery as other members of the committee. We also decided to keep the membership at £10 per year with a voluntary £5 donation. Any membership fees/donations can be sent to Mike Adams at 10 New House Farm Lane Wood Street Village Guildford GU3 3DD, cheques to be made payable to Farnham Humanists.

Programme for 2009

We meet in the middle of **each month on a Sunday evening at 7.30 at the Hop Blossom Pub**, Long Garden Walk, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7HX just off Castle Street in Farnham. Enquiries to 01252 794021.

Also, **on the first Wednesday of every month at 8.00, we have an informal gathering at The Fox**, Lower Bourne, Farnham GU10 3PH. All are welcome at both events. Enquiries to 01252 794021.

We are also organising our **annual debate** for Autumn 2009 (Motion: "Britain should become a secular state"), **two rambles** and **a garden party** in the summer - see below for details.

Our 2009 programme is given below. Enquiries to 01252 794021.:-

- **Sunday April 19th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Infinity: Alec Leggatt
- **Sunday May 10th**: Ramble/Pub lunch - Meet 10.30 at The Good Intent in Puttenham for a ramble over Puttenham Common. 12.30 lunch at the Good Intent.
- **Sunday May 17th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Erasmus Darwin: Desmond King-Hele.
- **Saturday 6th June**: we have a stall at Farnham Volunteer Centre's Annual Charities Event, Gostrey Meadow Farnham - 11am to 3pm
- **Sunday June 14th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Why humanists should not believe in representative democracy: Jane Cullen.
- **Sunday 28th June**: Garden Party - details TBC
- **Sunday July 12th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. The Sea of Faith: Barbara Burfoot
- **Sunday September 13th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Humanist Ceremonies: Barbara Burfoot, Jim Herrick & Alec Leggatt.
- **Sunday September 27th**: Ramble/Pub lunch - around Frensham Ponds – pub, time etc to be decided
- **Sunday October 11th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Construction Projects and the Hindhead Tunnel: Alec Leggatt.
- **Tuesday 3rd November**: Annual Debate on motion "Britain should become

a secular state" - details TBC

- **Sunday November 8th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Wreath laying at the Remembrance Ceremony at the Farnham Memorial -10:45 a.m.
- **Sunday November 15th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Prison Chaplaincy: speaker to be confirmed.
- **Sunday December 13th** 7:30 Hop Blossom pub. Faith-based Schools: Canon Derek Holbird, Director of Education Diocese of Guildford