

Groupwise

Some practical guidelines for starting
and running Humanist groups



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1 Introduction

This booklet is intended to provide some material and helpful suggestions for those involved in the running of local Humanist Groups. It does not seek to pontificate on how a Group should or should not be run and recognises that Groups can vary in size and structure according to their needs and the people involved in running them. However there is a core of practice that has evolved among well-established Groups over the years. We feel that some of these suggestions could be helpful to Humanists starting new Groups or trying to revitalise old ones.

1.1 Why Have a Local Humanist Group?

The British Humanist Association and the other national Humanist organisations which operate from London have an important central role, but they do not fulfil the need for personal contact with other Humanists in a particular area. A local Humanist Group can fill this gap. Furthermore, an effective network of Groups operating at grassroots level can provide healthy foundations for a strong national movement. The importance of attracting new members and keeping old ones applies as much locally as nationally. People who call themselves agnostics or atheists do not always see the need to 'come out' as Humanists, and it is necessary to point out repeatedly that, until we increase our numbers substantially, the Humanist view on moral and other issues will not be taken seriously. We are surrounded in everyday life by others who might identify themselves as Humanists if they knew about us, and we need the open support of all those who think along our lines.

1.2 What Does a Local Group Do?

A local Group can fulfil a number of functions:

- By holding regular meetings and social events a Group can provide an opportunity for Humanists and others of like mind to meet together.
- It can provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of issues of concern to Humanists.
- It can be an information centre or local focus for the dissemination of Humanist ideas in the community, seeking to establish Humanism as an attractive and interesting life stance or viewpoint. This can be achieved by offering speakers on Humanism to local schools, colleges and societies or simply by being locally active.

- It can act as a pressure group to take up local causes and also to pursue locally any campaigns that are being run by the BHA at a national level. For example, if MPs are being briefed in London on a particular issue that is coming up in Parliament, a Group can reinforce this action, possibly by producing some briefing material independently for their own MPs or by adding facts and figures that draw on local cases or examples.
- Group members can pass on requests for officiants at Humanist funerals and other ceremonies to accredited officiants in their area.

1.3 The Challenge

Running a Humanist Group presents a particular challenge: though we are part of a national movement and affiliated to the BHA, Humanism is still largely unrecognised. Our aims are wide ranging and we have no 'party line' or dogma, which makes our task difficult. Our members join for a variety of reasons (see section on Preparing a Programme) and we must go as far as we can to cater for all their needs. We are faced with the dilemma that, though we want to present Humanism as a viable alternative to religion and get it onto the map, we are not trying to undermine the deeply held beliefs of religious people.

1.4 What Makes a Successful Group?

A Group is likely to flourish in direct proportion to the amount of well-directed effort put into it. However it must be admitted that some areas are much more fertile ground than others. Small or larger towns within easy reach of others, containing centres of further education or technology, are better than remote country places where communication can be a problem. The presence of other Humanist Groups within a radius of 10 to 20 miles is an enormous advantage, as joint events can be arranged and there is the opportunity for a cross fertilisation of ideas. An optimistic keen hardworking nucleus of active members backed by a supportive generous membership, an outward looking attitude towards the local community and the outside world, and a strong sense of being part of a national movement... these perhaps are the ideals towards which ambitious and at times harassed Group workers might strive. The BHA and also neighbouring Groups can offer them support and encouragement. More than that, a flourishing Group will sometimes give financial help to get a new Group started nearby and support it as a satellite Group either for the short term or for longer.

2 Starting a New Group

If you live in an area where there is no Humanist Group and you are keen to start one, a little preliminary investigation increases your chances of success.

2.1 Preliminary Thinking

- Is the area within reach of a reasonably sized town or, preferably, several towns?
- Is public transport good?
- Is there a university, polytechnic or college of further education within reach? (These are a good source of speakers).
- Is there industry nearby? (Again, a good source of members and possible speakers).

If the answers to these questions are mostly positive, and you decide to proceed further, the following steps can be taken:

2.2 Getting Names

- Make a list of people who might be interested. Write to the BHA, the Rationalist Press Association (RPA) and the National Secular Society (NSS) and ask them if they would mail their members and enquirers on your behalf. Work with the national organisations to achieve an appropriate draft. These targets should be within a reasonable radius of your centre. Unfortunately the Data Protection Act does not allow organisations to hand out their address lists.
- Find out (from the BHA or from your local library or Citizens' Advice Bureau) if there has ever been a local Group. Someone who was involved with a Group in the past might have a list of ex-members. Don't be put off by lack of enthusiasm in this quarter. This may well have been one of the causes of an earlier Group's demise, although even successful Groups can fail if they have been run by one or two people only who then move away.
- Contact any neighbouring Groups to see if they have had enquiries from your area.

2.3 Making a Start



- Unless you are very unlucky, at least one fellow Humanist will have been thrown up by this stage. Get together to plan a public meeting in the near future, where a decision can be taken as to whether it seems that a Group may be viable.
- Meeting place: choose a central, easily accessible venue, such as a small room in a pub or a hotel.

- Advertise your meeting; put notices in local and central libraries; insert a small ad in the local paper or “What’s On” publication; get a mention on local radio; put A5 posters in shop windows and on college notice boards.
- Write to all the people on your list, informing them of your meeting.
- Contact the BHA office for any further advice or information or for suggestions for a speaker, if you want one. It can be helpful to invite someone from an established Group, not so much to give a talk as to answer questions and give encouragement. If there is time, ask the BHA to put a notice in *BHA News* and their e-bulletin.
- At the meeting it will become clear if you have the nucleus of a Group, namely several keen, energetic people. Appoint an ad hoc committee with an acting chair, secretary and treasurer. Arrange a date for a committee meeting.

2.4 Who is Eligible to Join?

You will find that some of your prospective members call themselves atheists, some agnostics, while others dislike labels but say they have no religious beliefs. Often people are uncertain and simply haven’t made up their minds. They want to find out what Humanism is about and whether it is what they have been looking for. All these people will be welcome to join if they feel that your Group is right for them. It is important to have some leaflets with various definitions of Humanism so that there are no misunderstandings. For example, those calling themselves ‘Christian Humanists’ should be kindly told that Humanism, being non-religious, is unlikely to be for them.

3

Preparing a Programme

Preparing and distributing a programme is an important task for the Group committee. It will tell existing members what they have to look forward to, it must seek to attract new people to the Group, and it will also be useful for advertising to the outside world what the Group is planning.

3.1 Plan Well Ahead

It is wise to try to plan the programme a good six months or even a year ahead, at least the outline that it will take. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Good speakers are in demand and it is not reasonable to invite them at short notice.
- If the list of forthcoming meetings is to be circulated to the press, displayed in regional libraries and on college notice boards, and sent for publication to other local Groups and to the BHA to put in their newsletters or on their websites, it is essential to do all this several months in advance.
- Meeting places must also be booked well ahead, if you are to get the room you want, and pubs and other places that let rooms for meetings often prefer to take a year's bookings in advance.

3.2 What Kind of Meetings?

People join Humanist Groups for a variety of reasons and are looking for different things from the Group. This makes it necessary to plan a programme with a lot of variety so as to try to cater for as many needs and tastes as possible. You are certainly not going to please all the members all the time, but you must attempt to see that most people's needs are adequately considered. This is a tall order, and many Groups will at some time have the disappointing experience of members resigning or dropping out, because the Group has failed to provide them with what they want.



3.3 Whom Are You Catering For?

The following are some of the reasons which bring people to Humanist Groups:

- They are already Humanists and want to get involved with the movement nearer home.
- They have recently heard about Humanism and it seems to be what they have been looking for. They are still uncertain about their beliefs and are anxious to find out about Humanism and see if it fits in with their fundamental thinking.
- They have heard of the Group and wish to meet people of like mind.
- They miss the social aspects of religion.

All these people come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but they now share the same interest and are keen to meet others who think along the same lines as they do themselves. Some are quite young; others are well past retirement age. Some are only just beginning to think about what they believe and to sort out their own ideas; others have been doing so for years. Your programme should be a varied one, in which the style as well as the content of the meetings must try to cater for all tastes. What a challenge!

One way of achieving this variety is for different members to organise meetings and social activities which appeal to them and about which they may have special expertise and/or enthusiasm.

3.4 What Do They Want?

The following are merely suggestions and possibilities:

- A visiting speaker, who will talk to the Group on a particular subject.
- An informal discussion, usually led by a Group member.
- Some social activity, such as a fund raising event, a theatre outing or visit to a restaurant, ramble, party in a member's house, etc.
- A joint enterprise with another local organisation or with neighbouring Humanist Groups.
- Encourage members (especially those who don't seem keen to get involved) to organise a totally different event or activity under the Group umbrella. Even if the committee or you personally may not particularly like what they suggest, the event may attract other people to the Group who have different interests and probably come from different age groups.
- Finally, ask members regularly what they would like.

(Further advice on speakers and meetings is given in Section 8.)

4

Officers and Committee

In the initial stages of starting a new Group you may have been functioning with an ad hoc committee and, in all likelihood, the acting secretary will have been doing more or less everything. For the long term health of the Group, it is preferable that the workload should be divided among a number of people and that no one person should become indispensable. For this purpose a meeting of all interested parties should elect officers and a committee.

4.1 The Roles of the Officers

The CHAIR will normally be the final authority in the affairs of the Group and will usually preside over meetings. To perform this role effectively, tact, decisiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to grasp points quickly and keep control at meetings are all valuable attributes.

It is unlikely that all these qualities will come together in one individual, and it may well be a good plan for a VICE-CHAIR to take the chair at committee meetings. These need firm handling as they can all too often degenerate into cosy social evenings among friends. At public meetings it can be a good idea for a member who has particular knowledge of the subject to take the chair, or possibly someone who knows and has invited the speaker.



The SECRETARY will usually be the officer who keeps the Group going. The tasks of the secretary are manifold and should if possible be subdivided (see below). The tasks can be classified as follows:

- Arranging the programme. This will in general include inviting the speakers, booking the room and making any necessary practical arrangements.
- Keeping in touch with the members. This is usually done by means of a regular newsletter, but will also involve some correspondence, e-mailing and phoning.
- Dealing with enquiries about Humanism and about the Group's activities. It is often a good idea to invite enquirers round for an informal chat, so that they can ask questions from their own personal points of view (see section on Enquirers' Meetings.)
- Acting as link between the Group and the BHA, this being a two-way process, and attending the Group Representatives' Annual Meeting (GRAM) which is usually held in London.
- Acting as spokesperson for the Group in local affairs.
- Dealing with requests for speakers on Humanism.

- Servicing the committee, writing agendas and circulating minutes.
- Making the practical arrangements for social and fund-raising events.
- Keeping records of the Group's activities, for continuity.
- Passing on enquiries about Humanist ceremonies to the local BHA Area Contact.

The TREASURER is responsible for keeping the Group's finances in order, dealing with the bank account, collecting subscriptions and so on. Other duties include producing a balance sheet for the AGM and getting it audited, and advising the committee on the wise and proper use of funds.

In addition to these four main officers, and in order to lessen the secretary's load, a PRESS OFFICER and a PUBLICITY OFFICER are very useful additions; also sometimes the job of SOCIAL SECRETARY is one that people are prepared to undertake. A MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY is useful, with special responsibility for members, for example getting in touch with a member who has suddenly stopped coming to meetings; or visiting those that are house-bound or in hospital. A MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY can make sure that newcomers are made to feel welcome at meetings.

A NEWSLETTER EDITOR who can produce a publication that is attractive both in content and presentation is a great asset. Groups which sport a website will need a WEBMASTER to keep the site up-to-date and act as the e-rep for liaison with the BHA.

Some Groups have PRESIDENTS or VICE-PRESIDENTS, who are 'elders' of the Group and feel concern for its long-term interests. They are not necessarily active posts.

Once again it should be pointed out that this is just one model that a Group might choose to follow and there are many possible ways of allocating the various jobs. But in every case it is important that several members share the work and the responsibility.

4.2 The Committee

The committee typically consists of eight to ten people, including all the active officers, who will meet regularly to plan and organise the activities of the Group. They will be annually elected at the AGM and are likely to be members who are prepared to devote some time and energy to the Group's welfare. A committee needs people with ideas, time to spare and plenty of enthusiasm. In general, it will be necessary to hold committee meetings about six times a year, but this will depend on each Group's arrangements and activities.

5

Publicity

Good publicity can provide a number of important benefits. It will enable your local community to know that your Group can provide a meeting place for those with Humanist sympathies. This will help to increase the Group's membership and make it able to support a wider range of activities. For a large public meeting it may be appropriate and possible to splash out but, in the day to day running of the Group, techniques can be used that are less demanding of resources. These can be along the following lines:

5.1 The Local Paper

- This is an area where Groups may be able to get some valuable free publicity, or they may find themselves up against a brick wall. If the editorial policy of the paper is sympathetic, and the paper is short of copy, they may be willing to report your meetings and activities on a regular basis. Either you send in a report yourself or, for a large meeting or for a particularly newsworthy subject, you ask them to send along a reporter. However such a situation is not common, and it is as well to have some knowledge about how papers work in order to get the best you can out of them.
- First, when writing a report or an article, get the "intro" right. This is the opening paragraph, which should be eye-catching and attract the sub-editor's immediate attention. For example, do not start off: "The Blank Humanist Group held a meeting at". This will go straight into the bin! What is wanted is something striking, like: "Everyone should have the right to end their life with dignity, the Blank Humanist Group agreed on Friday, in a debate on Voluntary Euthanasia".
- It is worthwhile trying to get to know a reporter personally. You can call at the office and ask to speak to one, but it must be about something definite or you will be wasting their time. Or you can invite one to a meeting or informal press conference. It is generally possible by asking around, or by careful study of the paper, to find the name of someone who is likely to be sympathetic. You don't really want to land up with their church correspondent!
- Try to discover which day of the week you have a better chance. For example, for a weekly paper, it may be best to send copy to arrive on a Friday morning, when the sub-editors will be looking for stories to use.
- Never forget the value of letters to the editor. Most local papers publish incredible letters, which are crying out for sane replies. Every letter is free publicity.



5.2 Posters and Displays in Public Libraries

Public libraries usually display posters showing events in their local area. A poster listing your Group's meetings with times and location(s) over, for example, a three month period will show not only what is available, but will give readers some idea of the range of topics you are covering. The poster should also mention the various ceremonies conducted by BHA officiants in your area and the types of social events that your Group arranges. Make a list of all local libraries and send them an A4 poster with a cover note to the librarian at regular intervals. Some libraries are willing to host a display describing your activities and illustrating the theme of Humanism for a period of two weeks or more. Suggestions for display material and leaflets which can be adapted for your own purposes can be obtained from the Humanist Groups Network website <http://humGroups.org.uk/> and selecting:



'Resources that may be of use to new and existing Groups' then 'Setting up a display for a Library (or other public space)'. One local Group gained over thirty new members in one year by mounting unmanned displays (with leaflets available) at four libraries in their area! (see above illustration of them setting up the display).

5.3 Websites

With the popularity and ease of e-mails and ready access to the internet, an increasing number of people are looking for websites which contain information and activities which interest them. Having your own Group's website may well generate enquiries which can lead to gaining new members. Visitors from other areas may also see a meeting of your Group which interests them and which they can arrange to attend. Websites do require some expertise to initiate and maintain, but once in operation they are a very low cost means of publicising your activities. Several UK local Groups find that the free service offered by the Institute of Humanist Studies in the USA is a convenient way of getting into this technology. The website address they provide is also user-friendly. It has the format http://your_Group_name.humanists.net and has an associated e-mail address of your_Group_name@humanist.net. Further information on this subject can be viewed on <http://humGroups.org.uk/> and selecting 'Resources that may be of use to new and existing Groups' then 'Setting up an Internet Site for a Group'.

5.4 Small Notices in Well Chosen Places

A5-sized notices advertising the Group can bring in enquirers and new members. All libraries have notice boards, as do many supermarkets, shops, local councils, student unions, colleges, evening class centres, and social clubs. Some of these places are willing to display small notices free and some 'What's On' publications still make no charge to local societies and clubs, though others do. Small shops will probably charge per week, but an appeal to members to take on the payment in a shop window near their home might prove productive. Even a postcard-sized notice can give essential contact details. Groups will have their own ideas as to the wording of advertisements, but something quite simple seems to work well.

5.5 Informing Other Organisations

If your programme has been planned several months ahead, details can be sent to the BHA to put in *BHA News*, their e-bulletin and to neighbouring Groups for their newsletters and websites. It can also be taken round libraries and shops, as described for the general adverts, perhaps using A5-size paper.

5.6 Local Radio and TV

This is an excellent source of publicity, well worth investigating. You need something newsworthy to offer — a topical or controversial subject, or a speaker with a name. Again, it's sensible to find the right person to approach. Phone-ins are a valuable source of free publicity too, both day and night!



5.7 Entry in Phone Book

Have the address of one of the committee entered in the telephone directory under "Humanism". For security it is as well to have the address of one committee member with the phone number of another.

5.8 Yellow Pages

Yellow pages will put in short entries free of charge. You can be listed under several categories, for example, 'Religious Organisations' (we have to use categories available!). 'Wedding Services', 'General', 'Funeral Directors'. You could ask different members to act as the contacts for these entries. Don't be too concerned about advertising in the 'Religious Organisations' section as this is the kind of place people might well look if they have discarded religion and are looking for an alternative.

6 The Cost of Running a Group

To function effectively a Group will need a certain amount of money. Gifts and legacies can happen, but should never be relied on. The sources of income will be subscriptions from members, fund-raising activities, collections and special appeals.

6.1 Subscriptions and Donations

People expect to support organisations they approve of with money or time or both. The amount for an annual subscription needs careful consideration. It should be high enough to produce a significant income, but not so high as to deter people from joining. The fact that even a large annual subscription is trifling in comparison with the financial support most churches receive from their members can be pointed out when appealing for money (see below). Although, sadly, Humanists do not yet view their local Groups in quite the same light. Perhaps one day they will! A solution seems to be to have a low minimum subscription - say £6 or £7 – but to make it very clear that additional donations from those who can afford them are welcome, if not actually expected. In addition, there can be a lower rate for students. But a concessionary rate should always be linked to the ability to pay rather than to age. Giving people the option of paying for three years at a time (with a small discount) may keep some members for longer than they might otherwise stay!



6.2 Fund-raising

Fund-raising activities can be looked on as serving two quite separate purposes. They can provide an essential supplement to the Group's income. They are also valuable in getting the wider involvement of members in the running of the Group. Major events will have to be planned well in advance, and might include jumble sales, garden parties, fairs, stalls at local festivals, or perhaps raffles. As many members as possible will have to be enlisted to help in the various stages of all these enterprises, and the tasks and time schedules for each individual clearly agreed. In the case of the raffle it is essential to know all the legal requirements, which are quite elaborate.

Smaller events such as coffee mornings, book sales, or sales of plants and garden produce, will only need the significant efforts of one or two people and can generally be held at a member's house. These can well become regular features run by the same people each year and need not involve the committee in too much effort.

6.3 Appeals and Collections

For particular projects, or to cover the expense of running a large public meeting, an appeal is usually a good way to raise some extra money and members will often respond generously. At all public meetings it is common practice to take a collection to help with the cost of hiring the room or hall and, even at smaller meetings in members' homes, people expect to contribute towards the cost of coffee or tea and biscuits. A 50p contribution will leave some over for Group funds.

A number of Humanist Groups have adopted particular charities and worthwhile projects which they support. Others hold special appeals at different times, and of course make donations to organisations which have sent speakers to address the Group.

7

Welcoming Newcomers



When someone contacts you to ask for details of the local Humanist Group, probably after seeing your poster or website, try to put yourself in their position. It may have taken them some time to decide to approach your Group; and there may have been a prolonged and painful period during which your new potential recruit has been wrestling with deeply entrenched religious beliefs. Such a situation is quite a common one.

7.1 Dealing with a First Enquiry

Sometimes the enquiry is based on a genuine misconception of what Humanists believe, perhaps confusing the word with 'humanitarian', and the enquirer is clearly religious. In cases like that it is best to make it clear that Humanism is a non-theistic life stance as soon as possible, so as not to waste their or your time any further.

For the genuine enquirer, you can offer to send them your current programme, your latest newsletter, website details and perhaps some leaflets. If it seems appropriate you could suggest an informal meeting with one or two members at your home or another convenient location, whichever they would prefer. If they like the idea, arrange an evening in the near future and invite them to bring along a friend if they wish. Decide which of your members would be most suitable for the occasion. For a less confident person, a friendly, basic sort of Humanist would be most appropriate; if the enquirer sounds very intellectual, you could unearth your tame philosopher, who is familiar with the arguments on fundamental questions. If you have any concerns at all about the person, it is advisable not to give your home address but for two members to meet them in a public place.

But, in any case, never press the idea of a special meeting. Send what is asked for, tell them the date when the Group will next be meeting, and extend a warm invitation.

7.2 Meetings for Enquirers

The system of dealing with enquirers on an individual basis has much to recommend it, compared to a meeting to which a number of people may come, each wanting to ask very different questions and explain their personal beliefs. In this situation a reserved or nervous enquirer may feel unable to ask any questions at all.

The personal approach is certainly time-consuming but there really is no substitute and the time and effort spent are usually very much appreciated by the newcomer, and the results are often rewarding.

7.2 Newcomers at Public Meetings

As soon as a new face appears at a public meeting, make sure a committee member makes them welcome. If a Group has a Membership Secretary this may be an important part of their role. This must be sensitively done as it is important not to overpower people who may prefer to slip unnoticed into the back of a meeting. When the meeting ends, try not to let newcomers slip away without getting their names. And you could see if they will join others for a drink. Remember that people like to be included but not pushed. Think how often you have left a shop when an assistant was too quick to ask what you wanted.

7.3 Maintaining Their Interest

It may take a considerable time before new enquirers commit themselves by actually joining the Group, thus positively identifying themselves as Humanists. Don't pressurise people into joining too soon. However, once they have joined, and obviously only if they seem keen and willing, it can be a good plan to get newcomers involved in practical Group activities quite soon. One way of doing this is to arrange a meeting for a Group of new members at a member's house. This can be quite informal and partners could be invited too. Getting to know new members' interests and skills is invaluable. Their fresh ideas and initial enthusiasm can be very stimulating. If they suggest something quite new, let them try it under the aegis of your Group. It may attract people who wouldn't normally join.

Remember to encourage those who might seldom or never be able to attend meetings to join too. Old age, illness, distance or pressure of other interests may prevent active participation, but their passive support and financial help is very valuable. They should certainly never be made to feel guilty because they do not attend meetings or be harried in any way to do so although, if transport is the problem, there is no harm in offering to arrange regular lifts.

The golden rule with newcomers is to make them feel part of the Group and, through the Group, part of the national movement if and when *they* are ready. Joining the BHA will extend their influence and one cannot remind people too often that numbers do count and are essential if Humanism is to gain the recognition it deserves.



Meetings and Speakers

Humanists tend to be people who are interested in ideas and like discussing moral and social issues so it's important to plan an interesting programme of meetings. Some Groups have a dedicated Programme Secretary to take overall charge of this, though it can equally well be coordinated by other committee members. The meetings can take various forms:

8.1 Informal Discussion Meetings

A new Group, or one with very few members, is likely to meet informally, often at a member's house. It is difficult to invite an outside speaker who has to come some distance when one can only expect a few people to turn up. (If they live very near or are personal friends of one of the committee, that is different.) Small, informal meetings are in any case a good way for people to explore their ideas while getting to know each other. If a member has a big enough room to hold a dozen or more people and is prepared to lend it, the Group is indeed fortunate. But remember that some people feel more at ease meeting in a neutral place, such as a room above a pub. Any expense this incurs can be covered by making a collection.

Larger Groups may decide to have smaller discussion sessions in addition to their regular meetings. These sessions can be on specific topics of interest to the individuals involved, such as discussing a new book or a local issue of concern to Humanists, such as the threat of a faith school in the area. The discussion group can make its own programme and arrangements without requiring any effort from the committee and there is nothing against several such subgroups running concurrently.



8.2 Public Meetings

A public meeting with a visiting speaker needs a certain amount of organisation. First the speaker needs to be approached well in advance and the date, time and place confirmed in writing. The exact title and length of the talk must be agreed, and the speaker should be asked to furnish brief personal details for use in advertising the meeting. It's a good idea to check whether an overhead projector or any other piece of equipment is needed, or if the speaker needs a power outlet. A tactful reminder perhaps a week before the meeting is a good idea.

It's so important to get a good audience that some kind of advertising is essential, from making sure your own Group members know about the meeting, to letting neighbouring Groups know about it in good time, putting up small notices or posters in shops or libraries, and so on. For particular meetings there are sometimes obvious organisations who would be interested, and these can be sent information.



On the evening of the meeting some of the committee members need to arrive in good time to prepare the room before the speaker arrives. If coffee and tea are going to be provided during the evening, this must be organised and prepared. The chairs should be arranged in not too formal a way and some water and glasses put on the speaker's table. Whoever is going to chair the meeting will obviously arrive in

time to have a chat with the speaker and find out how he or she would like to be introduced.

Try to start the meeting on time, though this is sometimes difficult and Humanists are not known for their punctuality. Also, if practical matters, a mention of future activities or anything else must be brought up, try to keep this part very short, as the speaker did not come to hear about the Group's affairs, but to speak on a particular subject.

When the meeting is over and the speaker has been warmly thanked, the treasurer or another officer can find out discreetly if there are any travelling expenses that should be paid. Afterwards it is nice for the Secretary to write a formal thank you to the speaker, who will probably have given up quite a bit of time to fulfil the engagement.

You may consider asking speakers to provide a summary of their talks for your newsletter and/or website so that those not able to attend the meeting can have some idea of what has been covered. Or else a willing member can take notes and write it up. If a report of the meeting is to be sent to the local paper, this is a crucial role.

Sooner or later a speaker is bound to let you down through illness or a failure of memory. It is prudent to have a plan to fall back on. This could be a recording of an interesting radio or TV programme, which could be followed by discussion. But if, for example, people have come to hear a talk on sex education, it might be better to have an informal discussion on the same subject, even if it was less well-informed.

8.3 Other Types of Meeting

Other types of meeting could include debates, 'Any Questions?' panels, brainstorming sessions, and a variety of small group activities in which members play an active role. Certainly a talk followed by questions and answers does not involve the audience in much participation and perhaps should alternate with different styles of meeting. There is a lot of scope for experimenting with new ideas, and a questionnaire to the membership now and again to get some feedback can be very useful. But bear in mind that questionnaires never tell you what people who don't return them think. If you really need a higher response, it may be necessary to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope.

For small Groups not able to bring in regular outside speakers 'Topics from a Hat' (drawing out members' written questions for discussion), 'Speaking as a Humanist' (for example 3 members speaking for 10 minutes each on a topic of their own choosing) or playing a tape on a Humanist subject (see the Humanist Groups Network website) can be useful alternatives.

8.4 Day Meetings or Conferences

Day meetings or conferences, when you could join with neighbouring Groups or other organisations and probably have several visiting speakers, can be very rewarding. Various aspects of a topic can then be presented, there is an opportunity to study an issue in greater depth, and there should be reasonable time for discussion. This can also prove an extremely valuable chance to get a wider circle of people involved, and, if a simple buffet lunch is provided too, a most enjoyable day can result.

Such an occasion clearly requires advance planning and, if refreshments are being laid on, it will be necessary for members to apply for places and pay a registration fee to cover the food, drink, hire of room and speakers' expenses. Since attendance figures need to be known beforehand for this kind of meeting, advertising to attract the general public at the last minute needs to point out that prior registration is necessary.

9 Social Events

As well as the more formal regular meetings, local Groups may wish to arrange events which provide an opportunity for their members to meet, chat or share some form of entertainment.

Summer and winter parties at members' houses can be very enjoyable. They can be less daunting for the host if members bring contributions of food and drink for a buffet. If you want to get a lot of members to an AGM, it works wonders to lay on some refreshments or even a light buffet beforehand!



Other events could include regular rambles throughout the year, family picnics in the summer, visits to historic houses and gardens, canal trips, theatre or concert outings or pub lunches.

Some Groups have arranged musical and/or poetry evenings, usually just for enjoyment and interest, but sometimes to raise money for a specific charity, appeal or project. Why not ask your members what they would like to do? Social events can have the added benefit of strengthening the Group's relationships and members' commitment.



10 Campaigns and Lobbying

A local campaign can be a valuable and rewarding experience for Group members. Active involvement at a practical level is what many Groups fail to provide and, when the campaign is one that fires their enthusiasm, it can amply satisfy this need. A Group can even keep more than one campaign going at the same time, with different members involved according to the issues that concern them.

10.1 Supporting a National Campaign

Campaigns that are being fought nationally can be greatly helped by support from the Groups at grass root level. Local press, radio and television are an invaluable source of free publicity and it is very much easier to get letters in local papers and interviews on local radio. When the BHA is seeking to contribute its view on a current moral issue through the national media, this can be reinforced and made much more effective by appropriate action from the Groups.

10.2 Lobbying Members of Parliament

Members of Parliament will generally pay a lot of attention to the views of their constituents, and every opportunity should be taken of letting them know the Humanist stance on issues in the public eye. It is worth pointing out that you are speaking for the vast majority of the population of this country, who do not practise any religion at all. The 'drip technique' is a slow but effective way of getting Humanist values recognised or even accepted. Lobbying can be done by personal contact, by phone, e-mail or letter, or by circulating a briefing which outlines the moral arguments on a particular issue. The BHA is likely to have briefing material if the debate is a national one.



MPs are extremely busy, but letters which include a direct question or a genuine personal story will almost certainly get an answer and are likely to have the most effect. These tactics also work with your MEP.

10.3 A Local Campaign

When the campaign is a local one, such as a proposal to set up a school with a particular religious slant, there is an excellent opportunity for the Humanist Group to raise its voice. This is the kind of issue that the public can get very excited about and is a great opportunity for recruitment. Help can be sought from the BHA, and Humanists from other parts of the country may well be available to come and provide a powerful platform at a public meeting. This is more likely to be possible than during a national campaign, when people are busy in their own areas. Local MPs and councillors can be briefed and their support sought.

When the campaign ends, don't lose touch with the people who supported you on this issue. They may be useful contacts for the future or bring other people into your Group, even if they don't join themselves.

11 Education and SACREs

An important field for spreading Humanist ideals to a wider audience is in education. There are several ways in which local Groups can play an active role here.:

11.1 Giving Information to Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Other Organisations.



There is now quite a strong demand for information on Humanism from many learning institutions to meet the requirements of a broader curriculum for religious education. Local Groups could supply books and the excellent leaflets and educational packs available from the BHA. Better still, offering speakers on Humanism will be a very effective way of explaining our beliefs. Again, the BHA's Education Officer is prepared to advise on the supporting material available and can sometimes help with speaker training. The BHA's half-yearly *Ed Lines* gives up-to-date information on relevant education matters.

In some areas there are Religious Education Learning Resource Centres. For example, one such centre supports 13 Local Education Authorities and their associated schools. Contact with this centre was welcomed and information on Humanism is now shown as an available resource on their website and from their two libraries.

11.2 Philosophy for Children

In the absence of a widely accepted programme for introducing Humanism into schools in the U.K., local Groups could consider promoting the movement which trains teachers in 'Philosophy for Children'.

The idea behind this is that children, from about five years upwards, have an amazing ability to question what is going on around them. They have been shown to be particularly receptive to having this curiosity stimulated by the use of philosophical methods of enquiry.



At least one County Council, Northumberland, has taken up this idea and is providing training for their teachers at a U.K. branch of Sapere which also regularly trains teachers from Norway, sponsored by the Norwegian Humanist Association. Why not get a speaker on this subject?

For further information see the following websites: www.sapere.net and www.northernwisdom.org Also, see the North East Humanists website <http://northeast.humanist.net> for an article on this topic.

11.3 Faith-based Schools

The Government is promoting an increase in the number of faith-based schools by offering control of the schools' administration and curriculum in exchange for a comparatively small proportion of the initial capital cost of construction. Local authorities then continue to pay for the entire running costs of the schools. In some areas this has led to the take up of this offer not only by Church foundations but also by more extreme organizations which are supporting the teaching of Creationist ideas in science classes. This is an area in which local Groups can work with the BHA and with the NSS (National Secular Society) to bring the matter to the attention of local MPs, councillors and the general public. The Humanist cause has been helped in some areas by the increase in the number of Liberal Democrat councillors who are generally opposed to the increase in the number of faith-based schools. The whole issue is made more complex and indeed political by the demand for Muslim schools in some parts of the country.

11.4 SACREs

Every Local Education Authority (LEA) is required by the Education Act of 1988 to set up Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs). RE is no longer as closed to non-religious views as it used to be. Some but not all SACREs have a co-opted Humanist member. Apart from representatives from different religious communities there are also teachers, local councillors and school governors who make up a SACRE. Ask your LEA for the list of SACRE members and see whether there is a Humanist on the committee. If there is, they may need and appreciate your support. If there is not, contact the Education Officer of the BHA who will tell you if there is any history of a Humanist trying to get onto your SACRE. Some Groups have had one of their members adopted as Chair of the local SACRE. The BHA can also provide supporting information for Humanist participants in SACREs. Clearly, this gives an important opportunity for local action in support of a national campaign to get Humanism more widely recognised as an alternative life stance.


The job of newsletter editor is one that can well be done by a member who is not too busy with the other work involved in running a Group, and may be enjoyed by someone with a liking for writing or amateur journalism, a flair for design and artwork, and able to use a word processor. The use of a computer for address label printing as well as membership records takes much of the labour out of newsletter despatch. Certainly an attractive and interesting newsletter provides a very good form of advertisement for a Group.

12.2 Group Website

Increasingly a Group website is performing many of the functions of a newsletter. In many ways this is better, as more people outside the membership see a website. But not everyone has internet access or feels comfortable with it, so a newsletter should not be replaced and the two methods of communication can complement each other. Members can be given the choice of how they prefer to receive Group news; sending material electronically can save a lot of money in printing, postage and stationery. (See section 15 for details of websites etc.) A keen and competent webmaster can be a great

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address <http://members.sol.com/brumhums/index.htm>

 Welcome to the home page of **Birmingham Humanists.**

A local group affiliated to the British Humanist Association,

and to the National Secular Society.

...who we are 'My country is the world, My religion is to do good.' Thomas Paine

...what we think

...what we do 'The source of human happiness lies within human beings themselves.' Dora Russell

diary

join us

links

Famous Humanists
CLICK HERE

'I was not - I have been - I am not - I do not mind.'
Epicurean epitaph

'Happiness is the only good; the time to be happy is now; the place to be happy is here; the way to be happy is to make others so.'
Robert G. Ingersoll

Do please come and [join us](#)

Send comments about this site to williammw@aol.com This page has been visited **00000767** times since 1 July 2002.

Applet fphover started Internet

13 Practical Humanism

13.1 Humanist Projects

While Group members are likely to be actively involved as individuals in a variety of worthwhile organisations and voluntary work, it is much less common for Humanists to take on a project as a Group. Certainly a nucleus of active and keen members is needed and many Groups are too small, but the value of such an enterprise for the overall health of a Group cannot be exaggerated. A Report on Group Activities is being put together by Margaret Nelson of Suffolk Humanists which will give a clearer idea of what Groups are actually doing.

Professional Humanist counselling in hospitals, prisons and the armed forces, such as you find in The Netherlands and some other European countries, is a long way off here. But hospital and prison visiting by a small number of Humanist volunteers working in collaboration could be a project that Groups might undertake.

13.2 Humanist Ceremonies



At present, it is in the provision of Humanist ceremonies that many Humanists have the opportunity to put their Humanist beliefs into action and, at the same time, find personal fulfilment. These alternative, non-religious ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular. Often, too, it is when attending a Humanist ceremony that people first hear about

Humanism, and are impressed by what they see. This brings the movement welcome publicity.

The BHA has now got a network of accredited officiants trained to take funerals, and celebrants who conduct weddings, gay affirmations, and baby naming ceremonies.



There are Regional Organisers and Area Contacts who arrange most of the many thousands of Humanist ceremonies that take place up and down the country each year. But the role of Groups is important as the Group secretary is sometimes the first point of contact when a family is asking about a Humanist ceremony.

In some regions there is still a shortage of funeral officiants, and Groups can give advice and sometimes practical help. The BHA publishes practical handbooks which give step by step guidelines on how to plan and conduct the three main ceremonies. (Details of these books, *New Arrivals*, *Sharing the Future* and *Funerals Without God*, are on the BHA website, www.humanism.org.uk, or from the BHA office.)

It is important for Group secretaries to be in close touch with their nearest Area Contact for ceremonies so that they can respond quickly and appropriately when they are asked for advice over a funeral. The other ceremonies are usually planned months ahead and there is not as a rule any urgency. Also, it is helpful if Group publicity, such as its programme card, gives the local contact number for ceremonies.

It is highly desirable that new officiants and celebrants are already committed Humanists. Local Groups can play an important role in identifying possible candidates for training and eventual accreditation by the BHA.



14 Affiliations

Affiliating to other Humanist and secular organisations can help to broaden the views of Local Group members about what is happening in the wider world. Supporting selected organisations will also encourage *them* by showing that we appreciate their activities and are willing to contribute financially to their viability.

14.1 The British Humanist Association (BHA)

Local Groups already affiliated to the BHA are well aware of the services being offered. Their bi-monthly mailings to all Groups and their website www.humanism.org provide up to date information.

Those wishing to start new Groups should contact the BHA Membership and Development Officer at member@humanism.org to obtain information on how to contact individual BHA members living in their area as well as adjacent Groups that may be willing to help and to offer advice. Further information of interest to new Groups can be obtained from the Humanist Groups Networks (HGN) website www.humgroups.org

The charge for Local Group affiliation to the BHA is based on a band which reflects the size of the Group. The benefits of affiliation include:

- Public liability insurance cover for your meetings.
- Ten free copies of each bi-monthly issue of *BHA News* and a free copy of each new BHA publication.
- Listing on the BHA website's 'Humanist Groups' pages.
- Inclusion on a listing of local Groups sent to all new members, and on the listing sent at least once a year to all members.
- Advice and support from the BHA as appropriate.
- Discounts on bulk orders of publications.
- Being able to state affiliation to the national Humanist organisation on your headed paper.
- Use of the British version of the 'happy human' logo (a BHA trademark). Permission from the BHA EC needs to be sought for this.
- The right to submit motions to general meetings of the BHA.
- Occasional mailings of your Group's material to new BHA members in your area.

While Groups remain autonomous from the BHA, the trustees recognise that local membership is important to the growth of Humanism, and are keen to work more closely with Groups in developing publicity, membership services, lobbying and casework.

14.2 The National Secular Society (NSS)

The National Secular Society has a vigorous campaigning activity in opposition to the forces of superstition, obscurantism and illiberalism. Particular concerns are educational impartiality and so it has a strong opposition to faith schools. The NSS campaigns very forcibly against any of the social and fiscal survivals of religious privilege. Unlike the BHA, the NSS has chosen not to apply for charitable status. By concentrating its efforts on very specific activities, the NSS provides a valuable service with a minimum of staff. A comprehensive weekly digest of secular news is provided on request by e-mail. To subscribe to their *Newsline*, send a blank e-mail with "Subscribe to *Newsline*" on the subject line to enquiries@secularism.org.uk Further information on the NSS can be obtained from their website: www.secularism.org.uk Over one-half of Groups affiliated to the BHA are also affiliated to the NSS.

14.3 The European Humanist Federation (EHF)

One of the primary aims of the EHF, based in Brussels, is to represent its member organisations in dialogues with relevant European Institutions. These include the Council of Ministers, the Commission of the European Community, the European Parliament and Council of Europe. In particular, the EHF carries out the important function of alerting member organisations to the need to oppose any impending legislation which may affect the Humanist vision of cultural, social and ethical values in Europe. Current information on EHF's activities can be seen on their website: www.humanism.be Their contact address is: fhe@ulb.ac.be The 2004 consultative membership affiliation fee applicable to Local Groups was 100 Euros. For this sum, full information on EHF's activities and their requests for support for their campaigns is provided by surface mail and by e-mail. Several local Groups have taken advantage of this facility and help to support its work.

14.4 The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU)

The IHEU is based in London and serves as an umbrella organisation for Humanist, ethical culture, rationalist, secular and freethought groups around the world. IHEU sees Humanism as a modern, cosmopolitan and democratic alternative to traditional religion and to authoritarian and other oppressive social attitudes. There are nearly a hundred Humanist Groups in over thirty countries, from Nepal to Peru, from Slovakia to Indonesia, from Ghana to New Zealand. IHEU is an international NGO with Special Consultative Status with the UN (in New York, Geneva and Vienna), General Consultative Status at UNICEF (in New York) and the Council of Europe (in Strasbourg), and it maintains operational relations with UNESCO (in Paris).

An example of IHEU's role in promoting a scientific approach to ethical problems is the setting up of the IHEU-Appignani Humanist Center for Bioethics in New York at a location close to the U.N. building. This will enable a lobbying programme to be established at the U.N. and other international institutions to counter the conservative agenda of the religious right.

IHEU organises World Congresses for its member organisations and individual members. The 2002 Congress was in Amsterdam and the 2005 Congress in Paris. These congresses provide an invaluable opportunity not only to take part in the formal proceedings but also to meet and talk to fellow Humanists from many countries.



A specific activity for local Groups to consider is participation in a new 'Twinning' scheme linking a Humanist Group in an established country with one in a developing country. Further

information on IHEU's activities can be found on their website www.iheu.org The affiliation fee for local Groups is calculated on a formula based on the number of their members.

14.5 The International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organisation (IHEYO)

IHEYO is the Youth section of IHEU. It is an international network for Humanist youth and their organisations/Groups around the world.

IHEYO is devoted to promoting the spread of Humanism among young people and to promoting greater cooperation amongst those already involved with Humanism around the world. Youth congresses are usually arranged in parallel with IHEU events. For further information see their website: www.ihoyo.org

14.6 The Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA)

GALHA provides a voice for the many non-religious people in the lesbian and gay community in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. It promotes a rational Humanist approach to homosexuality and to lesbian, gay and bisexual rights as human rights.

An associated organisation is The Pink Triangle Trust. This is a charitable trust set up in 1992 to educate the public, particularly lesbians and gay men, in the principles and practice of Humanism, and to advance the education of the public, and particularly Humanists, about all aspects of homosexuality. It may also assist individuals to obtain remedies under the law where they have suffered unlawful discrimination on account of their homosexuality or their Humanism.

The main activities of the Pink Triangle Trust are the arrangement of affirmation ceremonies enabling lesbian and gay couples to make a public affirmation of their mutual love and commitment, and the publication of *Gay and Lesbian Humanist*, a quarterly magazine, and *Introducing the Humanist tradition*, a series of educational leaflets describing aspects of the Humanist outlook.

(Further information is available on the GAHLA website: www.galha.org)

14.7 Humanist Family Network (HFN)

The Family Network holds annual weekends away, normally using low cost accommodation. Venues have varied from Youth Hostels in North Wales to a small hotel in Nottingham. They are essentially very informal with the main focus on visiting local tourist attractions and places of interest. Other activities have included family games, a disco and a talent show organised by the participants, including the children.

HFN provides a network of support and communication for Humanist families; raising the profile of Humanist families within the BHA and in society; helping parents and children express themselves within Humanist contexts; and encouraging future generations of young Humanists.

Families are often the very people who are daily facing issues which concern Humanists and they appreciate the mutual support that other Humanist families can offer, especially since they are encouraging their children to grow up with Humanist values. Families also can find it difficult to be actively involved in the usual activities of the Humanist movement, so these weekends away and the friendships formed are an ideal solution for parents and children alike.



For further information see their website: www.humfamnet.org or contact John Catt, 32 Bramcote Road, Loughborough, LE11 2SA

15 Humanist Groups Network

Members of Humanist organisations have always met together in conferences and at lectures and events. Individuals (often members of several organisations) communicate with other Humanists through face-to-face contact, telephone, fax and mail. Many local Groups post their newsletters to each other. The BHA facilitates communication between Groups acting as a central hub. It hosts the Group Representatives' Annual Meeting (GRAM) and posts regular mailings to all their affiliated Groups. This includes mailing *BHA News* which, apart from international and national news, also reports many local Group events and advertises forthcoming meetings.

15.2 The Internet

The advent of the Internet has revolutionised the situation. It provides three new ways to communicate:

- E-mail (sending messages)
- Websites (advertisements and reference documents)
- Discussion Boards (conversations and debates that you can join or leave as you like).

E-mail is already widely used by individual Humanists and Groups as a convenient, free method of communication.



The Humanist Groups Network (HGN) website, which was constructed by John Catt of the Family Network, is at www.humgroups.org and is hosted by the Institute for Humanist Studies, a US based organisation which provides free web hosting for many Humanist and related sites. This website acts as a resource for information of interest to local Groups and also provides a number of targeted discussion forums.

The HGN is under development and it will be for the Groups to decide what form it should take. The potential for inexpensive or virtually free consultation, discussion and information exchange is considerable. The webmaster, John Catt, (address: john.catt@ntlworld.com) will do his best to post material received from local Groups about their activities which might benefit other Groups. Material needs to be in a format which is easy for him to upload, though John would prefer just to post a link to pages on other sites, either Group websites or personal websites. Contact John by e-mail for further explanation or if you can help him or other Groups in developing this resource. To do this it is best if you use the private message facility in the Discussion Forum.

The HGN enables local Groups to work together more effectively for the active promotion of Humanism both locally and nationally. All local Groups affiliated to the BHA have been asked to designate an e-representative.

Initially, the following Internet forums were set up (the private ones are only visible to those who are registered for that particular forum):

Humanist Groups Initiatives

These consist of general forums for discussing Humanism, Ethics, Politics & Religion, Ceremonies and Education & Religious Schools; and private forums in which E-representatives can take part, for example in planning the next year's GRAM.

BHA/HGN Working Parties

The BHA and HGN have already set up a joint private working party to discuss membership and fundraising.

It has been recognised that Humanist Groups who are not online need to be kept aware of new developments and this would normally be handled by the bi-monthly mailing by the BHA to affiliated Groups. But, for Groups where no committee members have internet access, it should be borne in mind that these resources can be accessed from public libraries. Alternatively, an appeal to members may well produce a volunteer who is willing to act as the Group's e-representative, who would liaise with the Group secretary or another committee member as appropriate.

16 A Sample Constitution

It may seem unnecessary to draw up a constitution when a small gathering of people first embark on forming a Humanist group. But, in any organisation, it is considered prudent to get things on a formal basis from the start, so that if difficulties do arise later a framework for action can be referred to. This is an example of a constitution based on one drawn up by North East Humanists. It can be varied to meet the requirements of the particular group concerned.

1. NAME AND OBJECTS: The Group shall be called “ ” and shall have the following objects:

- a) Advancing the education of the public in the philosophy of Humanism.
- b) Providing a means for like-minded individuals to meet and discuss Humanist values, principles and relevant subjects.
- c) Promoting charitable purposes.

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

3. HONORARY OFFICERS: The Honorary Officers shall be: President, Vice-President, Chairman, Publicity Officer, Programme Secretary, Secretary and Treasurer. They shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting of the Group.

4. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: The Executive Committee shall consist of the Honorary Officers, and (for example 2-4) members each serving for two years. Any vacancy may be filled by the Executive Committee subject to confirmation at the next Annual General Meeting.

The Chairman of the Group shall be the Chairman of the Executive Committee. The general business of the Group shall be administered by the Executive Committee. It shall meet at least once in every three months, and at least fourteen days' notice of meetings shall be given to members. A quorum shall be five members of whom at least three shall be honorary officers.

5. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS: An Annual General Meeting shall be held before (for example the end of March) in each year. It shall receive financial accounts and the reports from the Executive Committee for the year ended the previous thirty-first of December. It shall elect the Honorary Officers of the Group and the members of the Executive Committee.

At least twenty-one days' notice of the meeting shall be given to all members.

Nominations, duly seconded, and notices of resolutions must be received by the Secretary at least seven days before the meeting. Any member whose nomination for honorary office does not lead to election shall be considered as a nominee for ordinary membership of the Committee.

6. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS: A Special General Meeting may be convened by the Executive Committee or shall, on receipt of a request signed by at least fifteen percent of the members of the Group, be convened by the Secretary within six weeks of the receipt of such request. At least twenty-one days' notice of the meeting shall be given to all members. Only business stated on the notice convening the meeting shall be considered at such Special General Meetings.

The quorum at both of the above types of general meetings shall be ten members of the Group. In any dispute concerning the affairs of the Group, a general meeting shall be the final authority.

7. FINANCE: The income and property of the Group shall be devoted to the promotion of the objects of the Group. Honorary Officers and Members of the Executive Committee may not receive payment for their services to the Group.

In the event of the Group having to be wound up, all funds after payment of liabilities shall go to the British Humanist Association.

The annual subscription to the Group shall be set by the Annual General Meeting.

8. CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS: The constitution may be amended by a resolution passed by at least two-thirds of the members present and voting at a general meeting. The notice of the general meeting must include notice of the resolution setting out the terms of the amendment proposed.

9. AFFILIATIONS: The Group shall maintain its affiliation to the British Humanist Association. Affiliations to other bodies may be sought by resolution of a general meeting.

17 Humanist Publications

Most Groups have a supply of leaflets to give to enquirers and books to display (and hopefully sell) at public meetings. Some have small libraries with books to lend. The British Humanist Association will supply a current list of books for sale and free pamphlets.

The following are some basic publications that might be of particular interest to new members. All are available from the BHA at: 1, Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD; telephone: 0207 079 3850; info@humanism.org.uk:

A Short Course on Humanism
by Marilyn Mason

Humanism
by Barbara Smoker

Humanism – An Introduction
by Jim Herrick

Modern Humanism
by Alfred Hobson and Neil Jenkins

New Arrivals,
Sharing the Future and
Funerals Without God,
the BHA's practical guides to
Humanist ceremonies
by Jane Wynne Willson



NEW FROM THE BHA

From the Humanist Philosophers' Group
Editors Peter Case and
Doreen Lough (eds)
Together a collection of
philosophical essays on
death and dying based
on the 2002 Humanist
Philosophers' Group
conference.
Do we have a right to die?
Should I voluntarily be
euthanised?
Is the after death possible?
Why should we respect
the dead?
How can the trans-gnostic
life death come?
Plus: Glenn, Peter Case, Antony Fink, John Harris, Tim
Lutten, Hugh Miller, Richard Swinburne, Suzanne
Lisakoff and Adam Smith offer some answers.

and
BHA golf umbrellas - see inside pages
Humanist postcards - see inside pages



NEW FROM ROUTLEDGE

From members of the Humanist Philosophers' Group

On Humanism
Richard Norman
A timely and powerfully argued philosophical defence
of humanism, and an impassioned plea for us to be
courageous, not nihilist. To answer Socrates' age-old
question: what is the best kind of life to lead?
A lucid account of humanism which deserves to
become humanism's official manifesto - the only real
a-footing movement can have.
Julian Degen, *editor of* *Aliveness A Very Short Introduction*
June 2004

Is Nothing Sacred?
Edited by Sam Rogers
110 But 8 items of the sacred in a number of respects
and I can't quote other scientists who feel the same
Richard Dawkins
Simon Blackburn, Michael Clark, Richard Dawkins,
Ronald Dworkin, John Harris, Alan Hirsch, Alan
Hudson, Matthew Green, Richard Norman, Suzanne
Lisakoff, and Nigel Warburton discuss the value of
human life, art, the environment, and personal freedom.
Based on the Humanist Philosophers' Group conference
of 2003, the ideas of the sacred in a modern age is fully
debated: should it be abandoned altogether, or does it
still have something to teach us?
August 2004

Click on the Amazon.co.uk link or www.humanism.org.uk to buy books
while boosting BHA funds positively.

HUMANISM	
BLACKHAM'S BEST edited by Barbara Smoker The best of modern humanism on life, morality, religion and humanism. £4.50	SEASONS OF LIFE compiled by Nigel Collins Prose and poetry for seasonal occasions and private reflection, with poems by Tony Harrison. £3.95
FOR YOUR OWN GOOD? <i>Humanist Philosophers' Group</i> This pamphlet discusses paternalism in public policy, particularly some of the arguments concerning autonomy and who is the best judge of our interests. £1.50	A SHORT COURSE ON HUMANISM Inquires: What is humanism? A good life without religion: Making sense of the world. Applying humanist ethics, humanist history and contemporary writing. (For adults 16 groups) £1
HUMANISM Barbara Smoker A regular paperback introducing the historical development of humanist philosophy and society, suitable for adults and teenagers also. Illustrated. £4	SPEAKING IN SCHOOLS, GUIDANCE FOR HUMANISTS Speaker's pack (group training) Speaker's pack (individual) "Notes and quotes" for speakers. FREE FREE
HUMANISM - AN INTRODUCTION Jim Herrick Humanism, its historical development, and its philosophical underpinnings for the general reader. £6.50	THE THINKERS' GUIDE TO LIFE edited by Marilyn Mason A file book of erotic questions on happiness, freedom, morality, death, love and faith. An attractive gift. £4.95
THE HUMANIST ANTHOLOGY edited by M Knight and J Herrick An excellent source of questions and humanist thought from Confucius and the ancient Greeks to 2009. £1.50	THINKING ABOUT DEATH <i>Humanist Philosophers' Group</i> , edited by Peter Case and Doreen Lough A range of approaches and perspectives in this new collection based on the 2003 Humanist Philosophers' Group conference. Contributors including Antony Fink, John Harris, Suzanne Lisakoff and Adam Smith explore the questions humanists ask about death and dying. £4.95
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