



# LGBT Humanist

News from the LGBT Section of the British Humanist Association

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## Peter Tatchell - What should schools teach pupils about sex?

In November, we once again welcomed veteran human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell in what is fast becoming his “annual address” to LGBT Humanists.

In keeping with our campaign focus on education, Peter spoke about the need for schools to provide improved, comprehensive sex and relationship education (SRE) to pupils, and must be LGBTI inclusive.

Peter said:

*“It is important that SRE acknowledges diverse sexualities and lifestyles, while also giving teenagers guidance on their rights and responsibilities - including teaching about consent and abuse issues.”*

*“A positive ethical framework can be summed up in three simple principles: **mutual consent**, **reciprocal respect** and **shared fulfilment**.”*



*“The great advantage of these principles is that they apply universally, regardless of whether people are married or single, monogamous or promiscuous or hetero, bi or homo.”*

*“Human sexuality embraces a glorious diversity of emotions and desires. We are all unique, with our own individual erotic tastes. People are sexually fulfilled in a huge variety of different ways.”*

*“Providing behaviour is consensual, between adults, where no one is harmed and the enjoyment is reciprocal, schools should adopt a non-judgemental ‘live and let live’ attitude.”*

Peter also advocated for age-appropriate SRE from the first year of primary school:

*“Keeping them ignorant jeopardises their happiness and welfare. Early knowledge is the key to later wise, responsible sexual behaviour.”*

# For Queen and Country



RAF Sqn. Ldr. Andy Wasley (left) and Army Pte. Ben Collier

To kick off the New Year, the LGBT Humanists and the Defence Humanists joined forces to hold "For Queen and Country." RAF Squadron Leader Andy Wasley and Army Private Ben Collier told us of their experiences of in the armed forces as both LGBT and humanists.

Sqn. Ldr. Andy Wasley joined the air force in 1999. At that time, it was still possible for

someone to be discharged from the forces for being gay. In 2000, the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military was lifted. Soon after, Andy came out as gay, but felt he had to tell his boss, fearing it would be an issue. In fact, his boss and the service fully supported Andy. In 2008, the three armed services marched in uniform in the London Pride parade for the first time. Commenting on this Andy said "There's something very special to be able to wear your uniform and march through your town or city in Pride."

Pte. Ben Collier. joined the army as a reservist in 2008. As a bisexual man, he felt he had a lot of support from his commanding officers. When people started using homophobic language, officers were very proactive in "nipping [homophobia] in the bud". Ben described how being open about LGBT has allowed him and other LGBT soldiers to better perform their duties.

## Trans\*Figurations 2

Following on from the successful event last year, in association with the London Trans Diversity, we held Trans\*Figurations 2 back in September. Speaking this year were Natacha Kennedy from Goldsmiths University and we welcomed back the performance poet AJ McKenna. Together



AJ McKenna (far left) and Natacha Kennedy (far right)

they explored representations of trans identities using two different approaches, Natacha through the academic and AJ through artistic expression

Natacha Kennedy presented her findings of her research into trans people and sexuality, exploring the experiences of trans people and how the sexuality of both trans and cis can change due to time and the influence of each other.

Fresh from her show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August, AJ McKenna performed several of her poems, including "Eggshells" - a poem to her father, "My revolution will not be trivialised" - a tribute to Gil Scott-Heron, and "Bathroom Challenge".

We raised £63 in donations for the Trans Day of Remembrance.

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# Blood Ban Debate

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In October, LGBT Humanists held a debate on the “Blood Ban”, the 1-year deferral of men who have sex with men (MSM) from donating blood. We invited along politicians and policy-makers to discuss the issue. Currently, as of the last SaBTO review in 2011, MSM cannot donate blood for 12 months since their last sexual encounter with another man.

Siân Berry is the Green Party London mayoral candidate and the party’s former principle speaker. Siân argued that the last review was too narrow and the focus of should be on risky behaviour rather than risk groups. She also mentioned that the current ban discriminates against those who are not out.

Shaun Griffin, from the THT, disagreed that it was an issue of equality, and argued that framing the debate as such was damaging. He pointed out that the demand for blood is largely being met and the current 12 month deferral was based on evidence at the time of the last SaBTO review.

Chris Ward is a LGBT Humanists Committee member. A former Lib Dem, he wrote the party policy on the blood ban, calling the current 12 month deferral “a ban by any other name”. Chris argued the ban, which is full of inconsistencies, makes little sense now that we know so much about HIV transmission; the evidence and methodology used by SaBTO is outdated and inadequate.



(From L-R) Siân Berry, Shaun Griffin, Chris Ward

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## Letter from the Editor

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Well, 2015 has certainly been an interesting year. For Humanists and LGBT people, it has been a year filled with causes for both celebration and concern. In the UK, the High Court ruled that the government has made an ‘error of law’ in omitting non-religious views, such as humanism, from the GCSE Religious Studies syllabus. But there is still much to do. Faith schools continue to have discriminatory entry policies and teach about sex and relationships from a limited, religious perspective. The BHA and LGBT Humanists will continue to fight for compulsory SRE in all schools in the UK.

Looking abroad, the first same-sex marriages took place in Ireland and same-sex marriage became legal nationwide in the United States. And yet, in the Middle East the *death cult* Islamic State has murdered scores of people for being LGBT and in Bangladesh five secular writers

have been murdered for their views. Pope Francis remains silent on the persecution of LGBT people in Africa by the Church. A poll found that more than half of Russians want gays ‘liquoted’ or ejected from society. While we’ve made much progress here in the UK, it is clear that in the rest of the world a litany of problems still destroys the lives of Humanists and LGBT people.

Now more than ever the need to campaign for Humanism and LGBT rights has never been clearer.

Josh Gladwin - Editor  
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# Letter from the Chair

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Happy new year! Welcome friends, old and new, as we march into 2016, reflecting on what a superb year 2015 was for LGBT Humanists, and preparing our strategies for the months ahead. Apologies to those of you who were disappointed by the lack of a festive lunch in December. We had grand plans, but, alas, they were foiled by circumstances beyond our control. We're currently in the preliminary stages of putting together a replacement event to take place in the not-to-distant future... Keep an eye out for details.

For me, personally, volunteering for LGBT Humanists in 2016 is going to be strange - it's going to be the first year that I've worked for the organisation without having Adam Knowles as a colleague. Adam has recently stepped down from the Committee after serving on it for six years - three of them as Chair - to focus on his training as a psychotherapist.

Adam has been my rock ever since I got involved in the Humanist movement. It was Adam that co-opted me onto the GALHA (as we were then termed...) Committee and groomed me into becoming Chair, Adam that ignited my passion for LGBT Humanism - and continually fanned the flames, and Adam who has been there every step of the way on this extraordinary adventure that it's been my honour and my privilege to share with him. We've travelled the length and breadth of the

country together - speaking at conferences and conventions, hosted more events in London than I care to remember, and witnessed history being made as we attended the inaugural UK same-sex marriage in 2014. We've dined with Dawkins, danced for equality in Trafalgar Square, and once found ourselves interviewing Peter Tatchell in a cupboard. We've marched and demonstrated and laughed and cried and lived, and I've loved every minute of it.

I shall miss terribly Adam's wisdom and enthusiasm in our work and our meetings, but rejoice in the fact that the Humanist movement has gifted me a truly wonderful friendship - one that I shall cherish for as long as we both live. Enjoy your 'retirement' my friend! (But don't be surprised when I inevitably rope you in to help out in three weeks time...)

Adam's departure means that there's space on the Committee. If you'd like to get involved - and I really can thoroughly recommend it - do get in touch at the address below.

Richard Unwin - Chair

[chair@galha.org](mailto:chair@galha.org)



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## Events

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### **TERRY SANDERSON: THE ADVENTURES OF A HAPPY HOMOSEXUAL**

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

**7:30 PM—Conway Hall (Bar Opens 7:00pm)**

February is LGBT History Month. It is an important time to reflect on the history of LGBT movement and the milestones yet to come.

Veteran activist and National Secular Society President, Terry Sanderson talks about his own history in gay rights - as recalled in his recently published memoir: 'The Adventures of a Happy Homosexual'. Peter Tatchell said of Terry's autobiography: "*From gay activist to agony aunt, media monitor and secular campaigner, Terry has seen, done and now written about it all. Bravo!*"

### **ELECTION QUESTION TIME**

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016**

**7:30 PM—Conway Hall (Bar Opens 7:00pm)**

With the London Assembly elections coming up, this is your chance to grill high profile candidates from all the main parties vying to get seats. Chaired by our very own Chris Ward, you'll have an opportunity to ask your candidates about the things that matter to you most in London.

Confirmed joining us so far are Andrew Boff AM (Leader of Conservatives on the Assembly), Tom Copley AM (Labour Housing spokesperson), Peter Whittle (UKIP Mayoral/Lead List Assembly Candidate), Elaine Bagshaw (Lib Dem City & East Candidate). Green Party candidate TBA.

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