



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

Dorset Humanists

December 2013

A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

■ **Saturday 14th December 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation
Avenue, BH9 1TW

Witchcraft, Superstition and Global Humanism

Bob Churchill Communications Officer for
the International Humanist and Ethical
Union (IHEU)

Humanists and rationalists in many parts of the world are engaged in dangerous struggles against witchcraft, superstition, and fanatical religion. In August, a leading campaigner against superstition in India was shot dead by gunmen, and in May, a young Humanist teacher was abducted by a Maoist group and forced into marriage. Having worked professionally for national Humanist organisations in Britain, Uganda, and lately at IHEU itself, Bob has a unique perspective on organised Humanism around the world, and will explain how it is expressed in different regions, and discuss the most significant challenges it faces going forward.



**3.30pm Minced pies
and mulled wine in
support of our
Winter Appeal**

Do join us after the main meeting for our traditional festive minced pies and mulled wine. These refreshments are provided free but please give



Bob Churchill was Head of Membership and Promotion at the British Humanist Association from January 2008 until May 2011. He subsequently spent a year as a Development Executive Volunteer with the Uganda Humanist Association.

generously to our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal in aid of the New Forest Night Stop hostel and Women's Refuge – see inside for full details. We will also be holding our Yuletide Raffle for the Winter Appeal. Good quality unwanted gifts very gratefully received. Please bring any contributions to the meeting or contact Lyn Glass.

lyn.glass@btinternet.com
 01202 558763

**6 days
left**

**Winter Appeal: Only 6
days left to help us
reach our £400
target! See inside...**

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629

Website: dorsethumanists.co.uk Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: DorsetHumanists



■ **Wednesday 11th December 7.30pm** Dorset Humanists social evening at the Goat and Tricycle, 27-29 West Hill Rd, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 5PF

■ **Saturday 11th January 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

An Audience with Andrew Copson



Andrew Copson is Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association. With legal recognition for Humanist marriages becoming more likely, new BHA schemes for non-religious pastoral support in prisons and hospitals,

and the launch of campaigning coalitions like the Fair Admissions Campaign, the BHA is extremely active on a wide range of issues. In this talk, Andrew will introduce the BHA's current initiatives and discuss future priorities and challenges.

■ **Wednesday 22nd January 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel 4 Grove Road
Bournemouth BH1 3AX

A Living Wage for Dorset

Neil Duncan-Jordan Acting Chair of the Living Wage Dorset Campaign

The Living Wage is a voluntary or negotiated level of pay (currently £7.65 per hour) which provides a starting point for a decent standard of living for all workers. More than a quarter of employees in Dorset currently earn below this level and very few UK employers currently use it as a benchmark. As a result, taxpayers effectively subsidise many businesses with tax credits and housing benefit for their lower paid workers. Neil will present the case for a Living Wage in Dorset, and will explain how employers, workers and

taxpayers would all benefit from its implementation.

■ **Sunday 26th January at 2.00pm**
Lighthouse, Poole

Holocaust Memorial Day

The theme for HMD 2014 is 'Journeys'. As well as an act of commemoration we hope to hear the stories of Henry Schachter who was born in Berlin in 1939 and only survived because of the kindness and bravery of non-Jews who kept him as a 'hidden child', and Gisela Thomson who was one of the 937 Jewish passengers on the SS St Louis that sailed from Germany in May 1939 seeking asylum from Nazi persecution. The story of the ship was made into the film *The Voyage of the Damned*. Ask David Warden for tickets.

■ **Sat 8th February 12.30pm**
Dorset Humanists at the Bournemouth International Centre proudly present Darwin Day Lunch with...

Crispian Jago

“How to point and laugh at irrational nonsense”

Crispian has given this talk at a number of Skeptics in the Pub events. He argues that whilst it is important to respect a person's right to hold whatever beliefs they like, ridicule of those beliefs (not the person) is not off limits and indeed can be one of many effective ways to highlight and combat irrational thought. Crispian writes the satirical skeptical blog “Science, Reason & Critical Thinking”, he is co-founder and co-organiser of the Hampshire Skeptics Society and Winchester Skeptics in the Pub. He describes himself as a failed bassist, ex-hippy, science-loving and music-loving godless Cornish git. Ticketing information in the next bulletin or contact Lyn Glass.

✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

☎ 01202 558763

🌐 <http://crispian-jago.blogspot.co.uk/>

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Jane Bannister Winter Appeal

6 days
left

The clock is ticking! A member of Dorset Humanists has pledged £400 to our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal if all other members together match this sum by 20th December. You

can bring cash or cheques to our 14th December meeting or pledge your amount by contacting David Warden (contact details at bottom of page). Cheques made payable to Dorset Humanists (Winter Appeal) can be passed to David Warden or our treasurer Dariusz Andersen. New Forest Night Stop and Refuge will be the recipients of this year's appeal. Last year we raised £800 for the St Paul's Shelter for homeless people in Bournemouth. Jane Bannister (1941-2013), a former Chair of Dorset Humanists, was very supportive of these charities.

**newforest
nightstop** *

New Forest Nightstop provides the only emergency overnight accommodation for homeless 16-24 year olds in the homes of trained and approved host households around the New Forest. New Forest Nightstop was established in 2003 and is a team approach to homelessness.

The primary aim of Nightstop is to enable homeless young people to access safe, free, emergency accommodation in our host households at the beginning of their homelessness when their need is most acute, then to support them into longer term housing through local housing providers. The support given by Nightstop improves not only young people's self-esteem but also their life chances, and their outcomes for employment, training, health and housing are much improved.

Nightstop is a unique and integral service in a multi-agency approach to youth homelessness. Nightstop is temporary emergency accommodation when needed at the point of crisis.

We support young people through the Supported Housing Panel where those with the highest needs are allocated appropriate accommodation if available. There is a shortage of suitable accommodation for this age group, and some young people may return home if appropriate, following mediation. Our Nightstop support volunteers give practical advice and support, helping young people who are not successful through the Housing Panel when their only option is to find accommodation in the private rented sector.

newforestnightstop.org.uk/aboutus.html



Refuge is committed to a world where domestic violence is not tolerated and where women and children can live in safety. Refuge aims to empower women and children to rebuild their lives, free from violence and fear.

They operate a three-pronged approach which involves:

- Providing a range of high quality services for abused women and children. Its national network of services supports women and children to regain control of their lives and move forwards in a positive way.
- Advocating for improvements to domestic violence policy and practice, and the implementation of legislation to meet the needs of abused women and children.
- Helping to prevent domestic violence through campaigning, education, training and research. We work in partnership with other agencies to raise awareness of domestic violence, its causes and solutions.

Refuge.org.uk

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Letters & Emails

Write to Dorset Humanists,
58a R L Stevenson Avenue
Bournemouth BH4 8EG or
email chairman
@dorsethumanists.co.uk

From Martin Holst

I felt it a great privilege to speak to Dorset Humanists on Islam. I learned a great deal in preparing for and giving the talk. I would be interested in feedback, as clearly I may use some of the material again. I found the questions that came most stimulating and I was grateful for the friendly and attentive reception.

My contacts with Muslims have been over very specific issues which include Religious Education, Faith Schools, the Incitement to Religious Hatred Law (Muslim Council of Britain and a persecuted Muslim sect), the 'Megamosque' (Muslims for and against), other legal matters including marriage, Quilliam Foundation (critical of Islamists), and some Muslim Labour politicians. To be able to relate to Muslims we need to know where they are coming from and in that respect I believe that Tom Holland's book, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, holds the key as traditional Islam was constructed to rule an empire. They reached a point in history when many thought they had the complete answer. Perhaps Muslims can only be released from this if they understand how it all originated.

I have the feeling there might be Humanists who are already involved in some of the issues raised or might like to be. In such a sensitive area I welcome the opportunity to work with others as I did over the Incitement to Religious Hatred Bill.

I certainly wish you well in your future discussions. I wonder if it would be useful to ask what people really want to know about Islam. I would be pleased to help and/or provide useful links.



David Warden at the Bournemouth Remembrance Service. Is Rabbi Neil Amswych kissing his forehead?

From Cathy Silman about the Remembrance Service

I was very impressed by your choice of words. I actually felt involving the audience worked out well. It shows that humanists can do ceremonies too. Congratulations on performing with such dignity.

■ The words read by David Warden were adapted from *Celebration: A Ceremonial and Philosophical Guide for Humanists and Humanistic Jews* (2003) by Sherwin Wine. Rabbi Sherwin Wine founded the Society for Humanistic Judaism in 1969, an organisation for Jews who want to celebrate the cultural aspect of Judaism without its supernatural beliefs. Wine was killed in a car accident in 2007. Listen here: (video from 22m 35s <http://goo.gl/V4ejeo>).

From David Brittain, UK Armed Forces Humanist Association

I thought David Warden's words were very apt - and I can see how the "Let Us Commit Ourselves" responses could work very well - it sort of resonates with "We Will Remember Them" and will be particularly popular with the military mindset.

I attended Oxford's remembrance ceremony yesterday. John White (Oxford Humanists Chairman) gave his open reading in what was otherwise a suffocatingly religious service in which 90% was about prayer and worship whilst those who suffered and died were a bit of an afterthought. Anyway, well done to Richard Scutt and David and indeed Oxford. The walls are slowly beginning to crumble, but it will take continued persistence over years to

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demolish them completely. For the meantime, let's hope they decide to include you again next year!

By the way, Squadron Leader Steve O'Kane is UKAFHA's new General Secretary.

From Eric

I am writing to thank you for your talk in Dorchester – 'An Atheist on the Alpha Course'. I am a Christian and enjoyed your presentation and the considerate but very direct way in which you presented your views and experiences. I have some good friends who are atheists and I value their challenge to my understanding of my faith. I sometimes think that God needs atheists to challenge the presuppositions of Christians, myself included of course. I have attended a few Dorset Humanist meetings and hope to join you for more in the future. Keep up the good work. Christianity needs your challenges.

From Conor Burns MP

My secretary has passed me your recent email inviting me to a Dorset Humanists meeting to debate issues with a Labour Party representative. Until Parliament is dissolved for the election campaign my diary will continue to be under great pressure and my first duty will continue to be to my constituents. I respect the views of Humanists and share your objective of creating a good society, rooted in ethics and values. I am not in a position to commit to a meeting next winter but I will nonetheless keep your invitation on file, and I will be in touch nearer the time if other commitments permit.

Committee changes

Following our appeal for new committee members we are delighted to announce that Susan Bryson has been co-opted onto the committee. We still have a vacancy and next year we shall be seeking a new Treasurer as Dariusz's responsibilities increase in other areas. Please contact David if you would like to join our friendly team.

Dorset Humanists win Website of the Year

Our website at www.dorsethumanists.co.uk won the British Humanist Association's (BHA) 'Website of the Year' award at the BHA's Group Representatives' Annual Meeting in November. Dorset Humanists Webmaster Chris Street was presented with the award by BHA Web Manager Andrew West, and Chris subsequently presented the award to Dave Elleman for his contribution to maintaining the website. The award is signed by BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson and can be viewed at goo.gl/y1stMx. Congratulations and many thanks to Chris Street and Dave Elleman.

Local firm pledges support for Appeal

Strategic Solutions independent financial advisers will contribute to our **Winter Appeal** if any Dorset Humanist members choose to engage them. Strategic Solutions is a Chartered firm covering the South of England including Bournemouth and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and chartered by the Chartered Insurance Institute. Chartered status is only given to those that can demonstrate a commitment to knowledge, capability and ethical practice. Please contact Dean for further information.

☎ 01202 527274 / 07713858773

✉ dean.robertson@ssfs.co.uk

🌐 <http://www.ssfs.co/>

Baroness Warsi and Eric Pickles will give money to humanists

We have been advised that humanist groups are eligible to receive £2000 for a multi-faith project which benefits the local community. This is conditional on the recipient group matching the funding amount. Contact David Warden if you are interested in spearheading our application for this funding.

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Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
December 2013



Boris Johnson, in his recent speech on Margaret Thatcher, proposed that the top one per cent of taxpayers should be given automatic knighthoods and fêted as heroes because they pay almost 30 per cent of all income tax. The reason the top one per cent are paying so much income tax is that their incomes have become so bloated and disproportionate. It hardly demonstrates their largesse. Johnson also asserted that 'some measure of inequality is essential for the spirit of envy that is, like greed, a valuable spur to economic activity.' Envy and greed are unattractive human traits which ought not to be encouraged by top politicians. Few people want to 'persecute the rich' or 'stifle wealth creation' but what is being argued is that rapidly growing incomes at the top, combined with stagnating incomes for the majority, is unsustainable both socially and economically. Encouraging the richest members of society to accumulate an ever-growing slice of the cake creates a dangerous mix of demand deflation and asset bubbles, setting the scene for the next crash. Johnson said that no-one can ignore the harshness of the global economy in which a 'violent economic centrifuge' is operating on human beings – as if it were a law of nature. He celebrated the number of Michelin-starred restaurants in London but said nothing about the growing number of food banks in Britain and the United States. There were, however, some under-reported nods to a better society in his speech. He called on the rich to practise 'prodigious philanthropy', that we should 'help those who genuinely cannot compete' and 'provide opportunity for those who can', assist bright children from disadvantaged backgrounds to get into fee-paying schools and build hundreds of thousands of new homes. Maybe Johnson is a bit of a social democrat after all.

The big picture coming out of Martin Holst's thoughtful talk on Islam is that it was forged as a complete system of governance to rule an empire. But what made sense in the 8th century cannot be transposed into the 21st without violent conflict. Martin hopes that if Muslims understand how Islam originated they can be released from the belief that Islam is the 'complete answer'. When people find out that ideas and ideologies have a human history they can respond more flexibly to present reality. The only way forward for Islam is to come to terms with modernity, democracy, and women's rights. Humanists can be a positive force in promoting this future direction by developing dialogue with liberal, progressive thinkers in the Islamic world. Religion doesn't have to be frozen in time forever.

David Warden