



# Dorset Humanists

## July 2012

A PARTNER OF THE  
BRITISH HUMANIST  
ASSOCIATION 

### Forthcoming events...

#### ■ Saturday 14th July 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre,  
Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

### **A Humanist Manifesto**

Are you fed up with bankers' bonuses, religious schools, house prices, student fees, incompetent government? Is it time for Humanists to turn their principles into a political programme? The Humanist Party exists in many countries including the UK. We'll have a look at some of their policies and discuss what a Humanist Manifesto might look like covering poverty, wealth, education, international aid, crime, taxation, marriage, and more. Followed by our famous Strawberry Cream Tea and a booksale in aid of the St Paul's shelter for the homeless.

#### ■ Thursday 26th July 7.30pm

Moordown Community Centre

### **Religion for Atheists**

In his latest book *Religion for Atheists* Alain de Botton argues that the supernatural claims of religions are entirely false, yet they still offer a wealth of ideas that can help the non-religious build a sense of community, strengthen our relationships, and improve our appreciation of the arts. David Warden will outline De Botton's



**Alexander Aan, 30, of West Sumatra, Indonesia has been sentenced to two and a half years in prison for denying the existence of God and for 'inciting religious hatred'. See *Chairman's View*.**

key suggestions, and we'll discuss how the non-religious might benefit from adopting the best ideas from religion into our lives. Join us to discuss this beautifully written book.

#### ■ Thursday 23rd August 7.30pm

Moordown Community Centre

### **Filmosophy II**

'An evening of short discussions inspired by ethical dilemmas from the movies'. Following our popular and enjoyable 'Filmosophy' event last Summer, Mat Coussell presents another raft of moral dilemmas arising from the world of film. Don't worry if you're not a movie buff, as Mat's

prepared a set of handy plot summaries to ensure we can all participate. Don't miss this opportunity to debate these dilemmas from the big screen, and find out how your views compare with those of your fellow local Humanists.

■ **Saturday 11th August, 12.30pm**

## **Lunch with South Somerset Humanists**

We have been warmly invited to join South Somerset Humanists at the Sun Inn, Burton, nr Dorchester on Saturday August 11th. Past meetings with our friends from Yeovil have been enjoyable affairs, involving good pub food and exchange of ideas, followed by a stroll into Dorchester, along the riverside, for those who wish to take part. Please phone Jane on 01202 428506, if you can offer a lift or would like a lift.

■ **Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> August 12.00**

## **Bridge House Lunch**

Lunch at The Bridge House, 2 Ringwood Road, Longham, BH22 9AN. We hope that as many of you as possible will come and join us. Midday for a £5.00 carvery lunch followed by an optional walk, weather permitting. We shall book a table inside for all those who contact Ken by the 11th August. Parking is spacious and free.

☎ Contact Ken by 11<sup>th</sup> August on 01202 700885 or email him on [ken.fagg@btinternet.com](mailto:ken.fagg@btinternet.com)

## **Dorset Humanists Slogan**

There will be an Extraordinary General Meeting after our talk on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September for members to vote on a slogan for Dorset Humanists. 3.45pm.

## **One Life: Exploring Humanism course**

In October and November Dorset Humanists will be running its first ever 6-week course in Humanism. This interesting and absorbing programme will give you a good grounding in Humanism and plenty of food for thought about how to live your life fully. There will be a small fee to cover costs with an 'early bird' discount for booking before the end of August.



☎ David 07910 886629 or email [chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk)

## **Ancestor's Trail 2012**

The Ancestor's Trail is a shared walk over the Quantock Hills in Somerset, this year taking place on the Bank Holiday weekend: 25th and 26th August 2012. The event was inspired by Richard Dawkins' book "The Ancestor's Tale" and rewinds the evolutionary history of our species, and many others, back to our shared origins 3.7 billion years ago. **Richard Dawkins** is confirmed as the evening speaker. For details of how to book and pay visit <http://ancestorstrail.net/>

## **Children hear about Humanism**

Richard Scutt had an excellent day at **Bishop Wordsworth** school in Salisbury speaking to four groups of 14-15 year olds totalling about fifty boys. There was so much response and discussion after presenting the basics that Richard almost abandoned the rest of his presentation in order to debate real issues with the boys and their teachers. When asked about their

beliefs at least 50% of the boys in each group declared themselves to be non-religious – so not too much discrimination in this church school!

## Cardiff Conference

*Lyn Glass reports on futuristic stimulation and 'much intimate touching' among delegates at this year's BHA Conference*

This year's BHA conference in Cardiff was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Friday evening commenced with a sociable humanism-related table team quiz



interspersed with witty performances by comedians **Iszi Lawrence** and **Richard Herring** (left). Saturday began with a

welcome by BHA Chief Executive **Andrew Copson**, followed by an interesting and amusing presentation by **Kevin Warwick**, Professor of Cybernetics at Reading University, on his Cyborg Experiments in the field of Artificial Intelligence. **Polly Higgins**, a barrister, environmental lawyer and author, described her progress in establishing with the UN that ecocide (the destruction, damage to or loss of ecosystems) should be recognised as an international Crime Against Peace, alongside genocide and other such crimes. Saturday afternoon began with consideration of 'Humanism and the Future' in conversation with **Greg Claeys**, Professor of the History of Political Thought at the University of London, and **Paul McAuley**, award-winning science fiction author and TV scriptwriter.

Journalist and broadcaster **Ben Hammersley** spoke on 'Technology and our Inner Life' demonstrating how political and social planning must take account of the fast-changing pace of technological advancement.

Environmentalist **Roger Martin** spoke on 'Population Growth: Multiplier of Impacts; Divider of Resources; Provoker of Conflict'. The afternoon came to a close with a light-hearted performance by **Carole Jahme**, journalist, author and programme maker, entitled 'The Better Apes of our Future'. This involved audience participation with much intimate touching to mimic the empathy felt between apes. Chris Street and I were relieved that we were not sitting together for this session or I wouldn't have been able to look his wife in the face again!

During the convivial Saturday evening dinner **Richard Dawkins** was presented with the annual award for Services to Humanism and we heard more about his new University of Evolution. We also heard a short presentation by **Amy Walden**, the Probation Officer at HM Prison Winchester on her work there with prisoners. I am delighted to tell you that Amy will also be speaking to Dorset Humanists at our December Saturday meeting.

Sunday morning kicked off with an engrossing talk by **Professor Sir David King** on 'Human Ingenuity and the New Demand for Collective Action'. Sir David spoke about the exponential rise in consumption of resources, and possible solutions to tackle the world's problems of climate change, energy security, and population growth. The conference closed on a cheerful note with comedian, author and 'futurologist' **Mark Stevenson's** talk 'An Optimist's Tour of the Future' - a positive perspective on the future of humanity, provided we adopt more innovative approaches to global issues.

It was a thoroughly stimulating and thought-provoking weekend with impressive speakers raising important topics for the future of humankind. I met lots of extremely nice and intelligent people and would heartily recommend the conference experience to you. There is a

suggestion that it may be held in Southampton next year.

## Mahadevi hurt in road accident

On 13th June, on her way to take a scooter driving test, student teacher Mahadevi was injured by a hit-and-run motorcyclist. We have sent our best wishes for a speedy recovery. Mahadevi teaches 100 street children at the Humanist mission school in Kurukshetra. We recently raised £250 to help her through college. You can still donate by using the box on your membership renewal form. Any surplus funds will be sent to provide essential resources for the children.



## THE COLUMN

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

*From Dennis Bannister regarding the Q&A session after David Warden's Bertrand Russell talk.*

I was really astonished to hear you state that Russell suggested bombing Russia before they "got the Bomb"! That would have been completely out of character for a man who campaigned against the bomb, against warfare, and went to prison for his beliefs as a Conscientious Objector during WW1. It sounded like malicious lies spread by the gutter press, as you must have appreciated when you read the bit giving the impression that he had virtual holiday conditions in his prison cell. He was supremely concerned by human suffering to the extent that he thought that CND (of which he was President) was not

going to stop nuclear armament if it kept strictly within the letter of the law, and that nonviolent civil disobedience, which had helped Gandhi drive the British out of India, was the only justifiable alternative; so he broke with the Church heading CND; hence the Committee of a Hundred. (The police would have to arrest 100 unnamed people to prosecute). Does all this sound like a Bomber...? What about putting this letter in the next Bulletin to put the record straight ?

*From Phil Mayer in response*

I did not suggest that Russell proposed "bombing" (i.e. nuclear bombing) The Soviet Union. But he did at one point advocate - or at least approve the idea of - a preventative war while the western allies had superiority in armaments.

*From David Warden in response*

In 1959, interviewed by John Freeman, Russell was asked 'Is it true or untrue that in recent years you advocated that a preventative war might be made against Communism, against Soviet Russia?'. Russell replied 'It's entirely true, and I don't repent it'. In his autobiography Russell wrote: "The arms race became inevitable unless drastic measures were taken to avoid it. That is why, in late 1948, I suggested that the remedy might be the threat of immediate war by the United States on Russia for the purpose of forcing nuclear disarmament upon her... the Cold War might have been avoided had my advice to threaten war been taken in 1948".

As regards imprisonment in 1918 he writes in his autobiography: "I found prison in many ways agreeable... I read enormously; I wrote a book".

**Q:** *Why did the Rationalist cross the road?* **A:** *To be sure to see both sides.*