



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

Dorset Humanists

July 2013

A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

■ Saturday 13th July 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Altered States

A talk by Harvey Taylor on the Uses and Abuses of NLP

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is an alternative approach to communication, personal development, and psychotherapy. Its originators and practitioners assert a connection between neurological processes, language, and learned behaviours, claiming they can be changed to improve the way we think, feel and behave, but skeptics accuse them of making exaggerated claims and lacking supporting evidence from controlled trials. We've invited management development trainer, NLP speaker, and hypnotherapist Harvey Taylor to share his views on the facts and fiction of NLP and demonstrate some of the techniques. Harvey says 'one of the few things we have any significant control over is our state of mind', and claims he can 'show us how to generate states of confidence, happiness and many other states'. We're expecting this highly interactive session to be both informative and entertaining.

★ Part Two meeting

3.50-4.30pm – BHA Fair Admissions Campaign. Please stay for this update on an important BHA Campaign.

<http://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/faith-schools/fair-admissions-campaign/>



High Court Writ to rescue Mahadevi - see inside

■ Wednesday 24th July 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, Grove Road, Bournemouth BH1 3AX

Unholy Questions

The 'Case for God' on Trial

Author, atheist blogger and 'tipping philosopher' Jonathan Pearce will skilfully guide us through the maze of arguments for and against the existence of God. This presentation will include Jonathan's examination of the cosmological argument, moral arguments for God, an argument

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against God being fair, arguments against hell and God's omniscience, and many more. He will explain each argument in plain English and critically examine its pros and cons.

Jonathan has dedicated many years of his life to all manner of things philosophical and theological, and has written several books including *The Little Book of Unholy Questions*, which looks to show the incoherence of the idea of an all-loving, all-knowing and all-powerful God. He is also a founder author for the Skeptic Ink Network (SIN), an online community of skeptic writers, academics, and bloggers.

Our evening meetings end at around 9.15pm. Members and visitors are very welcome to stay on afterwards to chat over drinks in the hotel bar.

■ **Sunday 7th July 11am onwards**

Booksale and coffee

Politics, nature, fiction and much more will be on sale at 63 Carbery Avenue, Southbourne, BH6 3LW. Hardbacks £1.00 Paperbacks 50p. Money raised will be donated to our Indian School project and a cancer charity – please give generously according to your preferred charity.

■ **Saturday 13th July 10.30am-17.15pm**

British Humanist Association AGM

10.30-17.15 Upper Hall, Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London. Address by BHA President Jim Al-Khalili. Dorset Humanists committee member Simon Whitlock will be representing us at this meeting. *As this AGM always clashes with our July meeting we will consider moving our meeting next year so that more Dorset Humanists can attend the AGM.*

■ **Saturday 20th – Sunday 21st July**

Tolpuddle Martyrs

Dorset Humanists will again have a stall at the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival on Saturday

20th - Sunday 21st July. This is a great opportunity for us to engage with the general public about Humanism. The festival is great fun so do visit us if you can.



■ **Saturday 10th August 12 noon**

Beach Picnic

Happy Humanist Beach Picnic! Bring your own picnic to meet on the sand opposite The Offshore Cafe just to the right of Bournemouth Pier (behind the Beach Guard stand) from 12 noon (inside café if wet). All welcome but it would be handy to hear if you definitely intend to be there so that I spread a large enough rug to baggy the space! *Lyn Glass*

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✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

Could you represent Dorset Humanists?

Would you be interested in becoming a Forum Representative for Dorset Humanists? A number of quarterly Community Forums take place in the Bournemouth & Poole area and we are very keen to ensure Dorset Humanists are represented. Local churches and religious groups usually front representatives, so it is important to ensure that Humanism and Secularism also have a voice and a presence. The roles are not onerous as the forums last no more than three hours maximum and are generally fairly convivial and interesting. The religious groups use the forums to promote their activities, and so it is useful to be able to leave leaflets about our activities and ethos on the

information table provided. In my experience these have been well-received and generated friendly discussion and interest. The forums we seek Dorset Humanist Representatives are:-

1. Bournemouth and Poole Equality & Diversity Forum
2. Bournemouth Older People's Forum
3. Bournemouth 2026 Trust
4. Criminal Justice Forum for Bournemouth and Poole
5. Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Engagement Forum

For full details of what is involved and a typical meeting agenda, pick up the information sheet available at DH meetings. To express an interest in being a representative at one of the forums give your details on the Volunteer Register displayed or contact Lyn Glass.

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✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

Schools Group

Chris Street spoke to 15 primary school RE teachers at the Dorset SACRE conference on 23rd June. Chris's workshop was about Humanist non-religious worldviews and moral values. Humanism is becoming more embedded into the school curriculum - the draft Religious Education Council RE National Curriculum mentions "religion and non-religious worldviews" 18 times. The Dorset Humanists Schools Education Project has been recently formed to cope with the increasing interest in Humanism by RE teachers and students. Please contact Chris if you'd like to be a member.

☎ Chris 07794 419720

✉ crabsallover@btinternet.com

World Humanist Day

A small group of Dorset Humanists celebrated World Humanist Day at the Carlton Hotel on 21st June. This proved to be an extremely enjoyable social occasion. Members of the Malta Humanist Association also observed World Humanist Day with a

social event at City of London Bar, St Julians, Malta. Dean Robertson is collecting names for additional pub gatherings.

✉ dean.robertson@ssfs.co

High Court Writ for Mahadevi

BHA assists with letter writing campaign - will you write too?



The campaign to rescue Mahadevi, the student teacher at the Humanist Institute in Northern India we help to support, has stepped up a gear. A writ of habeas corpus has been issued in the High Court of Punjab and Haryana to

release Mahadevi from unlawful detention under the pretence of marriage. The petitioners are Swami Manavatavadi (director of the Humanist Institute) and Mahadevi's brother Sangarsh. The respondents include the State of Haryana, the Superintendent of Police in Kurukshetra and her abductors. The petitioners are requesting that a Warrant Officer is appointed to arrange for Mahadevi's mental state to be examined and to bring her before the Court to make a statement so that the truth of her apparent abduction can be established.

Dorset Humanists and the British Humanist Association have sent letters to the High Court in Chandigarh. The Humanist Association of Toronto is also helping. Our letter is reproduced on the last page of this Bulletin. Please write something similar and post it without delay. Postage to India is approximately 88p although recorded delivery is better at about £6.00. Every letter from abroad will show that there is international concern and will put pressure on the authorities to help. If you would like an electronic copy of the letter please contact David Warden.

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

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Stef Kling Responds to his critics

These are good responses (from Douglas Lock and Ken Fagg) and it is hard to respond without going into a lengthy debate. I will make some comments though, will keep it short to stimulate people to ponder on these issues.

Douglas Lock wrote: "We cannot consider debt = money as the whole story." This is such a fundamental issue though. If we all pay back our debt there is no money left! Hence we will never get rid of debt, be it personal debt or government debt.

DL "Most of these assets will be real assets and many will be productive." I tried to show that most assets are in fact non-productive in an economic sense. Most new money went to housing, creating a housing bubble. The asset remained the same (the houses) but house prices soared.

DL "The Government bailouts of the banks and the credit crunch together created the increase in Government debt." This played some effect, but when you look at the data you will see that this is a structural problem, not just caused by the bailouts.

DL "In a political climate... they (the solutions) begin to appear a bit unattainable." I agree, the current political climate is not ready for real solutions

Ken Fagg wrote: "A large chunk of loans from banks... are for mortgages on houses... This is fully sustainable if the loans are repaid out of wages/income." When you look at it for an individual then this is true, but when you look at it for the whole society then it doesn't work that way. There is more debt than money in the economic system! So how will we ever pay that debt off? It's a complex game, with winners (people who become rich) and by the design there have to be losers (people who go bankrupt).

KF "Stef said the US and UK are bankrupt – that liabilities exceeded assets. Complete nonsense!" Would Ken invest in a company who on a structural basis spends more than it receives? Who every year needs to borrow more in order to repay old loans? Whose debt levels continue to go up? What happens if we run a company like this? At some point the investors will stop lending and it goes bankrupt. With countries it is almost unthinkable that this happens (especially the US) but look at the history. People tend to forget and think "this time it will be different". It never is.

KF "And in assessing bankruptcy, we must include all future income." Please show me the day when the US or the UK will make a "profit" (balanced budget)! Selling off assets will only delay the inevitable, it does not change the underlying problem. And it's questionable at least whether as a country you want to sell off certain assets.

I hope this gives more food for thought. It would be a pleasure to come back.

Best wishes, Stef Kling



At our 'Part Two' meeting on 1st June members of Dorset Humanists discussed ideas regarding a different type of Humanist meeting. This is not to replace our current programme but a possible addition to it. A wide range of

ideas were shared from coffee mornings at one end of the spectrum to some kind of 'celebration of life' festival at the other. Please keep your ideas coming in. Meanwhile, you may be interested to find out a bit more about the Sunday Assembly.

Dorset Humanist Chris Street attended the British Humanist Association Conference in Leeds where the Sunday Assembly had a one-hour slot. According to their website the Sunday Assembly is 'a godless congregation that meets on the first Sunday of every month to hear great talks, sing songs and generally celebrate the wonder of life. It's a service for anyone who wants

to live better, help often and wonder more'. They say it's 'part-foot stomping show, part-atheist church.' More than 600 people attended their service in June and pilot assemblies are launching across the UK, US and Australia. Due to popular demand they've created 'Sunday Assembly Everywhere' which is a way for anyone to start their own Sunday Assembly.

Chris reports that it was 'all very upbeat with three songs including a song by the band Queen. The words were projected onto a screen and music was played as loud, karaoke style! The emphasis was on celebrating a 'wonderful life' and an 'upbeat' positive stance. There was no real comedy although organisers Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans do claim to be comedians. A humanist 'sermon' lasting three minutes was read out by BHA Trustee Trish Rogers. Lengthy talks were not in evidence! The key to Sunday Assembly's success seems to be several fast-paced short slots celebrating life. There's no talk knocking the religious and no talk about lack of god(s). Sunday Assembly pass a plate around the congregation with 10% going to Sunday Assembly HQ.

Chris briefly spoke to Pippa saying that Dorset Humanists could be interested in the concept. He writes that Sunday Assembly-style meetings could bring in a lot of people who might then gravitate to our more substantial Saturday and Wednesday talks. Chris would be willing to be part of a steering group to bring Sunday Assembly or something similar to Bournemouth. Anybody else?

☎ Chris 07794 419720

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A view from Howard and Dorothy Cattle

We attended the BHA Conference over the weekend of 7-9 June held this year in Leeds. Overall we found the experience very worthwhile. Some of the talks nicely supplemented those we have had at Dorset Humanists over recent months including aspects of our place in the universe, sex and sexuality and living without free will. They also addressed other issues such as the creation of life through synthetic biology and exploring magic through literature, a

rationalist approach to the fantastic. In addition, BHA President Jim Al-Khalili provided a wide ranging look at fundamental physics from the perspective of "how to live happily in a deterministic universe". Though he couldn't attend, it was heart-warming to mark the award of the 2013 Award for Services to Humanism to Sir Terry Pratchett and to have a video message from him at the gala dinner of the Saturday evening.

Relevant to our discussions at the Dorset Humanists' meeting at Moordown on 1 June on whether we want to have 'humanist celebrations of life' in addition to our regular programme was a session entitled 'Saturday Assembly' that took place first thing on the Saturday morning. Presented by Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans it was billed as a "part foot stomping show, part-humanists gathering". Evangelical in approach it incorporated a number of elements of a church service including community singing, a short period of meditation, a 'sermon' (based around Pippa Evans' experiences on learning to park a car!) and the 'passing of the peace', all set in a somewhat bad-taste, jokey atmosphere. Though we were glad we attended this session, and interesting experience though it was, we felt it was not for us and we would not race to attend another. We certainly didn't feel uplifted as a result, rather the opposite I'm afraid.

That said, we enjoyed our weekend in Leeds. It was interesting to see some of the leaders of the BHA and to hear the views of the wider humanist community. The next BHA conference will be incorporated into the World Humanist Congress which the BHA is hosting in Oxford from 8-10 August 2014.

Humanist readings

Do you have an inspiring reading to share with other Humanists? We are asking for short readings related to ethics, human rights, democracy, science, evolution, environment, Atheism, Humanism, Secularism or sceptical enquiry. You could select a piece written by a BHA Distinguished Supporter or a short extract

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from a book acquired from (or appropriate for) our Library. If you have an idea for a reading, enter it on the 'Literary Corner' suggestion sheet displayed at meetings. Once we have a reasonable number of entries we will schedule a date. If you dislike public speaking we will find another member to read your suggestion out for you. After each reading we can discuss any questions and issues it raises.

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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 Chris Jenord, Taunton Humanists

Once again I would like to invite Dorset Humanists to this year's Ancestor's Trail. Richard Dawkins is coming again, but we also have several other excellent science speakers including Prof Mark Thomas and Dr Copley exploring human evolution and hydrothermal vents respectively. On the art side we have a one man drama piece on Wallace (on his centenary), Jonny Berliner, a soprano, two pianists, more body painting and some collaborative art - oh and some dancing. Several Dorset Humanists have attended the Trail in previous years.

Ancestors Trail - a pilgrimage to the dawn of life - Saturday 24 - Monday 26 August 2013 Bank Holiday. 📧 Ancestorstrail.net

From Tony Tiffany

Following on from our meeting about leaving your body to medical science last Saturday I have had a word with Hinton Park Burial Ground who tell me they do not usually accept embalmed bodies as the urea formaldehyde which is used as a

preservative is very invasive and therefore not 'green'. I said, "What do you mean by 'not usually'" and their answer was that they do allow embalmed bodies in for burial if they have come from abroad. Anyone dying outside this country has to be embalmed (if not cremated) to be able to be transported back home. I think this will apply to most green sites but I would advise anyone who is thinking of giving their body over for medical research to make sure that they will have a burial at an accepted green site. In other words I've only spoken to Hinton Park and other sites may have different rules.

I also had a word with the manager of chapels and cremators at Bournemouth Crematorium who confirmed they do remove pace-makers before cremation and that any metal used for hip replacements etc are offered to the family as, being made of titanium, they cannot be rendered down with the ashes. The metal is very precious and Bournemouth have a special company who reuse the metal and the money it earns goes towards bereavement charities. He also invited our members to have a tour of the chapels and, in particular, the cremation side of things - if you wish I could look after that for you although I think they can only take about eight people at one go.

From Stuart Booth

Whilst abhorring and condemning the vile murder of Trooper Lee in Woolwich, and in expressing sincere condolences to the soldier's family, it is also vital one recognises that fascist organisations such as the English Defence League and British National Party are trying to use the murder to whip up racism and direct hatred against all Muslims. Unite Against Fascism (UAF) condemns them and opposes their attempts to call 'demonstrations' to exploit these issues. Even if, like me, one considers all religions to be a restrictive and outmoded array of concepts one should challenge Islamophobia and all racism, wherever and in whatever form they appear. Reject those who want to divide UK communities and set them against each other. Stand fast and adhere to the ideals of anti-racism, multiculturalism and respect for all humanity.

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Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
July 2013



Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association Andrew Copson gave a masterful talk on 'The Rise of Humanism' in Dorchester on 27th June. Speaking from a tiny post-it note, he explained how humanistic thinking arose independently in various parts of the world, including India, China and Greece from 6th century BCE and how it has been gaining ground since the 17th century. A massive generational shift appears to be under way with fewer and fewer young people believing in gods and religion. I was able to thank him personally for responding so quickly to our request for him to write to the High Court in Chandigarh to put pressure on the authorities to rescue Mahadevi. Will you do the same? The text is printed overleaf. You can personalise your letter to some extent but please don't change any factual information.

West Dorset Humanists have asked me to repeat my talk on the Alpha Course in October. Although I am very familiar with the Alpha Course material I thought it was about time I went on the course again. I am halfway through the sessions being run by Dorchester Baptist Church in a venue in Poundbury. Fear not, there is no chance that I will be re-converted! It's an exercise in mild brainwashing with little opportunity or expectation to exercise critical thinking – the complete opposite of our approach. They seemed mildly shocked when I came out as an atheist but they have prayed for me and fed me with some excellent gluten-free puddings. During the course I've read Pascal Boyer's *Religion Explained* and another book on religion and cognitive science. It's fascinating trying to understand how the human mind can so easily create the illusion of gods and spirits but you'll have to attend my talk to find out more. We'll try and schedule it for the Green House as well.

Sometimes people ask what can Humanism put in the place of religion to nourish the human spirit. Bob Mizon's incredible talk on the Hubble telescope provided one excellent answer. We feasted on the magnificence of the universe and the unimaginable shapes and forms of stars and nebulae. Bob also brought along meteorites for us to pass round – lumps of rock older than the Earth itself. He recommends Cranborne Chase as one of the best places locally to see the night sky. All you need is a pair of binoculars. We are planning to book his amazing inflatable Planetarium as soon as we can.

David Warden



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Honourable Chief Justice
Punjab and Haryana High Court
CHANDIGARH
India

25 June 2013

URGENT S.B. MOTION PETITION FOR WEDNESDAY DATED 19/06/2013 CR NO 52
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE NARESH KUMAR SANGHI
135 * CRWP-1256-2013 SWAMI SATYA NANDAN MANAVATAVADI & ANR V/S STATE OF HARYANA &
ORS, Lawyer PRITAM SAINI

Dear Sir

I am writing to you to let you know that humanists in the UK are extremely concerned about the detention of Mahadevi Prachi Kumari since April 1st, 2013 and the lack of action demonstrated by the Superintendent of Police, Rohtak, the Superintendent of Police, Kurukshetra and the Station House Officer, Kurukshetra University.

For ten years Dorset Humanists has been a friend and supporter of Manavatavadi Vishwa Sansthan at Rajghat, Kurukshetra where Prachi Kumari assisted with off-school classes for poor and orphaned children. We understand that she was doing well with her studies in Biotechnology at Kurukshetra University until her disappearance on April 1st, 2013.

As detailed in the above-mentioned Writ we respectfully request you to appoint a Warrant Officer so that arrangements can be made for a psychiatric assessment of Prachi Kumari's mental state and well-being at the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine and Research in Chandigarh before bringing her to the Court to make a statement.

Dorset Humanists is a Partner of the British Humanist Association. The British Humanist Association is a member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union which is an international NGO with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Copson
Chief Executive

Copies to Swami Satya Nandan Manavatavadi and International Humanist and Ethical Union, 39
Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB, United Kingdom

President: Professor Jim Al-Khalili OBE. Vice Presidents: Professor Simon Blackburn, Baroness Blackstone, Professor Richard Dawkins FRS, Professor A C Grayling, Dr Evan Harris, Mary Honeyball MEP, Lord Hughes of Woodside, Professor Richard Norman, Dr Harry Stopes-Roe, Polly Toynbee, Baroness Turner of Camden, Baroness Whitaker, Jane Wynne Willson, Professor Lewis Wolpert CBE FRS.