



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

# Dorset Humanists

## November 2012

A PARTNER OF THE  
BRITISH HUMANIST  
ASSOCIATION 

### Forthcoming events...

#### ■ Saturday 10th November 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre,  
Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## Thinking about Right and Wrong



Vice-President of the BHA and former Professor of Moral Philosophy Richard Norman will offer suggestions for a rational approach to morality. A new

edition of his book *On Humanism* was published this year.

**Good quality used books will be on sale for charity at this meeting. Please bring some cash!**

#### ■ Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30pm

Black Bear, South Street, Wareham

## Faith and Psychology: Is God an Illusion?

Purbeck Open Lectures: A talk by Michael Jacobs, author of a book on illusion and belief, followed by open discussion.



**Where do atheists get their moral values from? Come to our next Saturday event.**

#### ■ Thursday 8th November 7.30pm

*An enquiry into some of the questions surrounding...*

## Assisted Dying

*Facilitated by Persephone Arbour*

This independently-organised event on a subject of great interest to Dorset Humanists will start with a reading of Sir Terry Pratchett's BBC Dimpleby lecture 'Shaking Hands with Death' – a beautiful, funny and exquisitely intimate piece of writing which addresses the question of assisted dying. The meeting will then break up into small discussion groups, finishing with an open forum.

Limited places – call Jackie Deakin on 01202 828786 to be sure of getting a seat and for venue details. There will be a charge of £3 to cover expenses.

■ **Wednesday 28th November**  
7.30pm at Green House Hotel

## ***Hope for the Homeless***

*Nathanial Major, Manager of St Paul's Hostel*

As we head into another cold winter, imagine losing the safety and sanctuary of your home. Try to imagine walking bitterly cold streets, searching for a safe place to lay your head, while desperately trying to figure out where your next meal is coming from. Hostel Manager, Nathanial Major will explain the spiral of events that can lead people from all walks of life into homelessness, and how agencies like St Paul's Hostel can help. Run by social action charity BCHA, St Paul's in Bournemouth helps the homeless get off the streets and on the road back to independence.

★ **Please note this event is at our new trial evening venue: Green House Hotel, 4 Grove Road Bournemouth BH1 3AX. The hotel can also be accessed from Gervis Road which is better lit and also has parking available.**

■ **Thursday 29th November 7.30pm**  
at Wessex Royale Hotel, Dorchester

## ***The Science of Happiness***

*David Warden*

This talk brings together two fundamental aspects of Humanism: science and happiness. The international symbol of Humanism is the 'happy human' and Humanists believe that we can enjoy 'human flourishing' without belief in God. David, Chair of Dorset Humanists, will explore some of the latest scientific research into happiness. If you want to push up your happiness level a notch or two, don't miss this talk.

*'Happiness, you could say, is listening to a talk by David Warden. I thought David did an excellent job on this complex subject.'* Dave Haith

■ **Thursday 15th November 12.30**

## ***Dorset Humanists Lunch***

A large table has been booked at 12.30 p.m. on Thursday 15th November at Day's Chinese Buffet Restaurant, St Peter's Quarter, 68 Old Christchurch Road (entrance also from St. Peter's Road). Highly varied 3-course All You Can Eat Buffet £8 per head. Pay on entry. Fifteen members have already expressed an interest in attending. If you have not already entered your name on the attendance sheet at a meeting, please either email or telephone Lyn Glass on lyn.glass@btinternet.com / 01202 - 558763 if you hope to attend.

■ **Saturday 8th December 2.00pm**  
at Moordown

## ***Humanist Support for Prisoners***

Amy Walden, Probation Officer HMP Winchester. Religious prisoners are able to practice their religion whilst in custody, providing them with much needed emotional and moral support from chaplains, time out of their cells, and a chance to form a network of friends. Amy Walden is the inspiration behind a positive new pilot project offering equivalent support to non-religious prisoners.

■ **Saturday 1st December**

Southampton University Atheist Society, main Highfield Campus

## ***The Nativity: A Critical Examination***

A talk by Hampshire philosopher Jonathon Pierce challenging the biblical narrative of the nativity. SU Atheist Society is open to everyone. Provisionally 3pm but check <http://atheistsoc.susu.org/>, email [atheist@soton.ac.uk](mailto:atheist@soton.ac.uk) or 07962 885377 nearer the date for final details.



## Remembrance Service

Dorset Humanists will again lay a wreath at the Bournemouth Remembrance Service on 11th November specifically to remember and honour non-religious men and women who have died in conflict. Over 26,000 serving members of the Armed Forces have described themselves as having 'no religion' – the largest group after Christianity. We are currently in positive talks with the organisers of the Bournemouth service and hope to have formal recognition and presence at the service next year. The BHA and the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association has launched a campaign for Remembrance Services across Britain to be inclusive of non-religious representatives. We encourage you to write to your MP and/or councillors in support of our inclusion. Please bear in mind that our current negotiations have been positively received and we will keep the situation under review. Follow this link for an easy way to email your MP: <http://forallwhoserve.org.uk/>

## Special Interest Groups

Would you like to link up with fellow Dorset Humanists who share your special interest or hobby? Paul Beckett has suggested we could keep a register of members' interests. Contact Paul on 01202 871010 if you think we could get this scheme up and running.

## Goodbye 100 Club Raffle. Hello Grand Christmas Raffle!

After a number of successful years it has been decided to wind down the 100 Club, but in its place we are pleased to announce the launch of a twice-yearly grand raffle in December and July. We will therefore be very grateful for any unwanted gifts for the raffle to accompany our Mulled Wine and Mince Pie tea after the speaker on Saturday 9th December. Please either email or telephone Lyn Glass on [lyn.glass@btinternet.com](mailto:lyn.glass@btinternet.com) / 01202 – 558763.



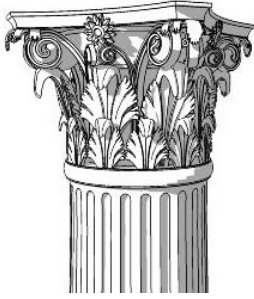
## Greeters wanted!

Could you be a greeter? We need personable

people who regularly attend our meetings to look out for new faces and give them a friendly welcome and take contact details if appropriate. Contact David Warden (details below) if you think you could help us in this way.

## Christian aid

In 2010, church taxes in Germany raised €9.3 billion for Catholic and Protestant churches.



## LETTERS & EMAILS

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

*From Richy Thompson, Campaigns  
Officer (Faith Schools and Education),  
British Humanist Association*

Many schools will be starting to think about Christmas charity, and many will decide to take part in Samaritan's Purse's annual shoebox appeal, Operation Christmas Child. You may be aware that this appeal is in fact very evangelical in nature, and not something most humanists would support.

The BHA has a page on Samaritan's Purse, and secular alternatives, at <http://www.humanism.org.uk/humanism/humanism-today/humanists-doing/charities/samaritans-purse>

It would be great if local humanist groups decided to contact schools in their area, to find out if they are planning to use Samaritan's Purse, and encourage them to use alternatives. Now would be the time to do so, before any firm decisions are made.

*From Conor Burns MP setting out his  
position on bishops in the House of  
Lords*

Thank you for your recent email asking for my position on bishops in the House of Lords. My overall view on the House of Lords is that while reform is long overdue I favour evolution, not revolution or what effectively amounts to abolition. The House is far too large but it works very well as a revising chamber. I am therefore very cautious about removing the bishops. The Church of England is the established Church in England and the relationship between Church and state is an important part of the constitutional

framework that has evolved over centuries. I have sympathy with the Government's view that, in a mainly elected House of Lords, it is right to maintain their presence because it provides an important dimension to the legislative process. The House of Lords Reform Bill proposes that the reformed House would have 12 places for Church of England bishops. However, in regard to the 20% appointed members, the Government expects that the Appointments Commission would be required to consider the adequate representation of faith groups and people of no faith in its selection process, to reflect the range of diversity in the UK. I hope this is helpful.

*From Dariusz Andersen*

After his talk on 'Science and Religion' I had a chat with the speaker - David Nunn - about his use of 'BC' and 'AD' in his presentation timeline. As we all know, these abbreviations come from 'Before Christ' and 'Anno Domini' (or shall we put it more simply - 'Year of Our Lord'), so I found it quite awkward when used by an atheist scientist, especially when there are acknowledged, commonly used non-religious designations available. David's answer was that this was too small an issue for him and that he would only use 'Common Era' (CE) and 'Before Common Era' (BCE) when in front of a specifically secular audience. Maybe this might be a small issue for most folk, but for me it doesn't make any sense to promote Christian or other religious designations where there are scientific/secular/neutral/atheist equivalents also in use.

*From Richard Scutt*

David Warden (Chairman's View, October) attacked the wearing of religious symbols charged with evangelical messages in the work place and said that Christians should give up their legal battle for the right to wear them at work. He also suggested

that there is a difference between crosses and turbans and headscarves. I can see no harm in the wearing of a cross or brooch and would certainly not be pleased if an employer stopped me from wearing a discreet Humanist badge, chain or other emblem so long as it could not be considered a threat to Health and Safety or security and did not contravene any corporate dress code of which I would presumably have been aware when I joined the company. Surely, David, a cross cannot be said to be more evangelistic than a turban or hijab?

*From Lyn Glass*

With reference to the crucifix-wearing issue, I rather like the idea of the British Humanist Association going to court to win the right to wear Atheist emblems openly at work, just to highlight the ridiculousness of this case. Could we find a helpful company that would 'fire' someone for wearing their BHA badge at work to set the ball rolling?

*From Mahadevi – student teacher at the Humanist mission in Kurukshetra, India*

Nowadays I go to university at 8:00 o'clock in the morning and work in the laboratory till 6:00 o'clock in the evening, constantly standing for the whole day. After returning I join Deviji and Swamiji in teaching the children up to 7:30pm and drive Swamiji's old car to drop girls in their homes.

Swamiji's sight is not working well. He sees everything double and can't read small-sized letters. Today he visited the doctor for a check up and the doctor found problems in the retina of both of his eyes and also development of cataract in his right eye also.

The President of Maharashtra Rationalist Society and the National Secretary of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations have shown their interest to participate in our annual function on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

My 5th semester examination will start from 21st of November.

Deviji and Swamiji say their Namaskars to you and all our well wishers there at Dorset Humanists.

Kindly excuse me for my mistakes.

Yours affectionately, Mahadevi

■ Swami Manavatavadi, director of the Humanist school in Kurukshetra, is currently in Toronto as the guest of the Canadian Humanist Association.

## Humanist lending library



Frances Usher has kindly offered to set up a Humanist lending library for us. If you have some good quality books of Humanist interest please contact Frances on 01258 858311. Please do not donate books unless they are in good condition and relevant to Humanist interests such as atheism, humanism, secularism, science, philosophy, and religion.

## Schoolboy banned from Scouts for being an atheist

An 11-year-old boy has been banned from joining the Scouts because he doesn't believe in God, despite his Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist peers being offered an alternative oath to swear. Different versions of the scout oath are available for different faiths. Simon Carter, assistant director of media relations for the movement, said: "Young people are required to make the promise [“to do my duty to God and to the Queen”]”. The Scout Movement was founded by Robert Baden-Powell in 1907. Bear Grylls is the UK's current Chief Scout.

*Telegraph, October 18, 2012*



Dorset Humanists  
**Chairman's View**  
November 2012



**D**avid Nunn's presentation on 'Science and Religion: Contradictory or Complementary?' provided us with an extremely lively session. The overwhelming majority of those present agreed with the proposition that science and religion are contradictory. It's easy to see, however, that they don't have to be. A Christian working in viticulture will accept without question the scientific processes involved in winemaking. She may also believe, without contradiction, that an incarnate God can easily bypass these processes and turn water into wine in an instant. There's no logical problem here. Similarly, she may accept the science of evolution alongside the belief that God, if he chose to, could create a man from clay and a woman from a spare rib. Again, there's no logical problem. What she has to explain, however, is why a God with such power would bother with the long, arduous process of evolution. She may answer that God exists outside time and that, to him, 4 billion years is no time at all. Maybe so. But the atheistic implications of evolution will press upon her in moments of quiet reflection. Instantaneous creation would be such an impressive display of divine power. Why choose evolution when magic can achieve the same result with infinitely greater efficiency? Hence the religious attack on evolution. But Christians should know better than to pick a fight with science. Science will always win in the end. If you're going to believe in God you really have to take God right out of the domain of science.

**C**hris Street's presentation on the Higgs Boson attracted a large crowd at our new evening venue at the Green House Hotel. As a non-scientist, I struggled to understand why Higgs is so important - apparently it's up there with  $E=mc^2$ . Chris explained that Higgs is what gives mass to all the other elementary particles such as quarks and muons. In other words, without Higgs we would not exist.

**U**nlike the Anglican church and Her Majesty's Armed Forces, the Scout movement persists in barring atheists from joining although a scouting colleague of mine assures me that a Humanist child would be welcome, reasoning that Humanists 'believe in something' whereas atheists do not! Let's keep up the pressure for the Scouts to become an inclusive, secular organisation.

*David Warden*