



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

# Dorset Humanists

## September 2013

A PARTNER OF THE  
BRITISH HUMANIST  
ASSOCIATION

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

## All Things Weird and Wonderful

### Psychology and the Paranormal

*A talk by Professor Chris French*



Despite widespread public belief in telepathy, psychic healing, out of body experiences, talking to the dead and other weird phenomena, the scientific community says they can all be fully explained by combinations of known

psychological and physical factors. Chris French is a leading investigator of “paranormal” beliefs, and will be joining us to share his fascinating research into “paranormal” phenomena and why we believe in them. Chris is head of the Anomalistic Psychology Research Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London and writes for the Guardian.

### ★ Part Two Meeting 3.50-4.30pm

After the refreshment break, you are welcome to come along to our Part Two meeting. This is an opportunity for members and visitors to discuss matters of interest and concern, and to consider ideas and proposals for the future. We are currently inviting ideas for a 2013 Christmas Appeal. (Last year, we supported the St Paul’s Shelter for homeless people in Bournemouth.)



**Dennis and Jane Bannister. We said our fond farewells to Jane on 2<sup>nd</sup> August.**

■ **Wednesday 25th September 7.30pm**  
Green House Hotel, Grove Road,  
Bournemouth BH1 3AX

## What is Humanism?

*A talk by David Warden*

If you agree that reason and evidence provide a better way of understanding the universe than belief in God or gods, and ethics and morality should be based on their consequences for people, society and our planet, rather than on ancient dogma from religious texts, you are probably a humanist.

In this introductory talk and discussion, David will discuss humanist values, some of the challenges facing humanists today, and why he believes humanism will be an increasingly important feature of the twenty-first century as religion continues to decline.

Send bulletin updates to chairman [@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:@dorsethumanists.co.uk) or phone 07910 886629

[dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk) [facebook.com/DorsetHumanists](https://www.facebook.com/DorsetHumanists) [facebook.com/groups/dorsethumanists](https://www.facebook.com/groups/dorsethumanists)  
[@dorsethumanists](https://twitter.com/dorsethumanists)

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.

■ **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 12.30pm**

## Rally and March for Secularism

The Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain is endorsing the Central London Humanist Group's Secular Europe March and Rally on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013. Assemble at 12.30pm in Temple Place, next to Temple Tube Station. The March will start at 1.00pm and end in a Rally at Richmond Terrace, opposite Downing Street at around 2pm. Confirmed speakers include Sue Cox (Survivors Voice), Charlie Klendjian (Lawyers Secular Society), Rory Fenton (British Humanist Association), Philosopher AC Grayling, Adam Knowles (Chair of Gay and Lesbian Humanists Association), Philosopher Stephen Law, Houzan Mahmoud (Organisation for Iraqi Women's Freedom), Nahla Mahmoud (Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain), Maryam Namazie (Fitnah, Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain and One Law for All), Pragna Patel (Southall Black Sisters), Naomi Phillips (Chair of Labour Humanists), Nina Sankari (Polish Rationalist Association) and Anne Marie Waters (One Law for All).

Join event page on Facebook  
<http://tinyurl.com/FB-SECM2013>>  
and Event page on Meetup  
<http://www.meetup.com/Central-London-Humanists/events/130817982/>>  
Twitter hashtag #SECM2013

## Committee changes

We warmly welcome **Jemma Hooper** onto Dorset Humanists committee. Jemma was on the staff at the British Humanist Association and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge into the team. We still have one vacancy. We are looking for a person to fill the role of membership secretary or other roles. Please ask David Warden for details. Women are currently

under-represented on the committee but we welcome nominations from anyone regardless of gender, age and other irrelevant factors.

✉ chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

☎ 07910 886629



## One Life

*An informative and enjoyable six-week course exploring Humanism and Atheism*

**ALMOST FULL!**

- 1 **Humanist beliefs and history** Monday September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013
- 2 **Why Humanists don't believe in God** Monday Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 2013
- 3 **Secularism and religious privilege** Monday October 14<sup>th</sup> 2013
- 4 **Ethics & morality without religion** Monday October 21<sup>st</sup> 2013
- 5 **Meaning, purpose & happiness** Monday November 4<sup>th</sup> 2013
- 6 **A Humanist vision of the future** Monday November 11<sup>th</sup> 2013

All sessions 7.30pm – 9.30pm at Green House Hotel, Grove Road, Bournemouth BH1 3AX. *No meeting 28<sup>th</sup> October.*

£15 non-members £12 members £2 off before 15<sup>th</sup> Sept

£5 for students Cheques to Dorset Humanists Covers all 6 sessions

*Book early to avoid disappointment – limited number of places*

*"Just what we need to introduce people to Humanism"*

*"An amazing course – it's been fantastic!"*

Tutor: David Warden, Chair of Dorset Humanists.

✉ chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

☎ 07910 886629



**Condolence meeting for Jane Bannister.  
Kid's Kingdom, Kurukshetra, India**

## Jane Bannister 'Passing on the Baton'

*Adapted from the ceremony script written  
and compiled by Maggie Pepin*

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August we said our fond farewells to Jane Bannister, former Chair and Vice-Chair of Dorset Humanists. Aged 69, Jane died peacefully at home with her family after a six-month battle against cancer. She is survived by her children, Claire, Sally and Adrian. Dennis Bannister, a stalwart of Dorset Humanists, died last August and their eldest son, Simon, died three years ago after a long battle with mental health problems. Especially dear to her also were her grandsons Seb and Zac and her daughter-in-law Natalie.

Jane was born in Newport on the Isle of Wight in 1944. She was the eldest of three siblings and remained close to her brother and sister throughout her life. Jane always spoke fondly of her childhood years.

Jane enjoyed school and developed a love of literature and creative writing from a young age. After school Jane applied to train as a teacher. She did not, however, pursue this vocation in the end but occasionally wondered what her life would have been like had she gone down that road. Instead she got a summer job in a yachting shop. Although Jane didn't care

for boats they somehow became prominent throughout her life.

In her late teens Jane frequented the local folk club on the Island with her cousin Jenny and loved being around during the developing music scene in the early 60s. As many did, she lapped up bands, particularly The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Queen.

Jane began working for Plessey engineering as a secretary which is where she met Dennis. They shared many interests throughout their whole life, one of the earliest being a love of the folk singer Joan Baez, whom they saw perform at the famous Isle of Wight Festival in 1970. They were so moved by her performance that Dennis was eager to salvage the wood from the stage she performed on. He used it to construct a garage at their Brighstone home.

In the early 70s Jane and Dennis took Simon to Canada, as Dennis had been offered a work position in Edmonton for a year. Jane really enjoyed her time there. She relished the lifestyle and warmed to the openness and friendliness of Canadian hospitality. Both spoke fondly of this time and told stories of close shaves with wild bears and their road trip with a tent trailer down the west coast of America to Mexico.

The family stayed abroad for about a year and a half but Jane was drawn back to England and the Island where her family were, so they moved back to Brighstone. They had a second son, whom they named Jason, in 1973 but tragically Jason died very soon after his birth. The doctor advised them to try for another baby, which led to the birth of Claire in 1974.

When Claire was about two the family moved to the mainland because of Dennis's job. First Maidenhead and then Bransgore, where they stayed for the next 15 years. Jane found that the community life in the village suited her down to the ground. She never found it hard to make friends; in fact it was impossible to stop Jane making friends. She was always so interested in people and their lives and the people naturally warmed to her gentle and friendly nature.

One of Jane's many skills was her ability to gently persuade others to participate in a

good cause. In particular she had a fearless approach towards convincing the famous or semi-famous to come and perform or give talks to community groups.

In 1995 the family moved to 63 Carbery Avenue, Southbourne. Jane and Dennis spent the rest of their lives there, where they were very comfortable and happy. Dennis continued to work until his retirement, after which he and Jane entered a new era of their lives where they made special new friendships.

Jane worked for many years volunteering for the Rape Crisis phone line, whilst Dennis held groups such as the philosophy group at the U3A. Jane also enjoyed attending many U3A groups herself, particularly the reading group, where she thrived on the opportunity to pursue her lifelong love of literature. The U3A for Jane and Dennis was also a huge source of social enjoyment. In keeping with Jane's passion for discussing ethical dilemmas she also set up a U3A debating group called 'The Moral Maze', where they explored controversial topical issues.

It's impossible to overstate the significance Humanism played in the last years of Jane and Dennis's lives. They worked together as a committed team alongside the many wonderful new friends they made in the Humanist group.

■ Music choices included The Beatles, Jake Thackeray, Joan Baez and Simon Bannister.

■ Dorset Humanists donated £50 to Cavendish Cancer Care in memory of Jane. Individual members made further donations. Jane's last booksale and our Summer Cream Tea raised a further £103.40 for Macmillan Cancer Support and £159.40 for our India Fund.

## “Quote... Unquote”

“In my family we don't attribute blame, we work out what needs to be done.” *Jane Bannister*

“Mum and Dad were great believers in making the most of the life that we have and they really did live by their philosophy. Whether it was enjoying sunsets in their

campervan, cleaning up after two boisterous grandchildren, discussing some of the great questions of life or roping Dad into babysitting a small herd of alpacas, I know she spent her life with the person she loved, her best friend... I feel glad and lucky that I got to tell her that I loved her and how proud I am of her.” *Adrian Bannister*

“There's something far more important than donations that you can do for Jane. This march of humankind that we're all part of is something of a relay race. And she's just passed you the baton; though I know that to follow Jane is a tall order. Try not to drop it, so that you can pass it on too when the time comes.” *Maggie Pepin, Humanist Celebrant*

## India situation

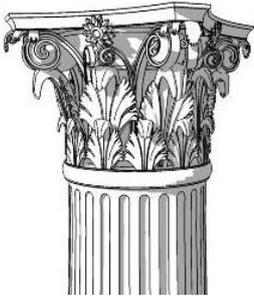
### Leading Indian rationalist assassinated by gunmen

One of India's most renowned rationalist and Humanist leaders, Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, was shot dead by gunmen on Tuesday, 20 August. He was reportedly shot four times by two men on a motorbike in Pune, Maharashtra state. The murder comes days after the state government pledged to re-introduce an anti-superstition bill closely associated with Dabholkar's work and opposed by many rightwing and Hindu nationalist groups as "anti-Hindu."

Dr. Dabholkar was founder of the Maharashtra Forum for Elimination of Superstition, editor of a magazine devoted to propagation of progressive thought, and had served as vice president of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations (FIRA), a Member Organization of the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

### Swami Manavatavadi fears for safety

After mysterious predictions that the student teacher Mahadevi will be returned to the Humanist school in September, Swami Manavatavadi has gone into hiding for the time being. David Warden is in contact with him via email and phone.



## Letters & Emails

Write to Dorset Humanists, 58a  
R L Stevenson Avenue  
Bournemouth BH4 8EG or  
email chairman  
[@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:@dorsethumanists.co.uk)

*From Sheena Nayton*

I was truly shocked and very saddened to learn of Jane Bannister's death. How dreadful, I had no idea that she was ill. Such a tragedy following so soon after Dennis's death last year. Jane was such a lovely kind lady, full of energy and always with a smile for everyone. She worked so hard, she will be truly missed as she was the backbone of Dorset Humanists. I can still hardly believe that she has died, just a few weeks ago she was pottering around, busying herself with all the things she took on. Jane will be sorely missed.

*From Martin Billingham*

That's so sad to hear that Jane is no longer with us. She was always a warm and loving force for the short time I knew her. Please pass my condolences to her relatives, friends and other Dorset Humanists.

■ Martin was a committee member in 2012 and is about to embark on an MA in stand-up comedy at Kent University.

*From Andrew Copson, Chief Executive, British Humanist Association*

I was so sorry to hear about Jane Bannister. Very sad news.

*From Bob Churchill, International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), to friends of Humanism in India*

Many of you will have heard of the assassination of Dr Narendra Dabholkar. We wanted to write directly to you – representatives and friends of rationalism, Humanism and freethought in India – at this tragic time to express our sincerest sympathies and solidarity. The culprits of the murder are not yet known, though many seem to have their ideas as to who may

have carried out the shooting. Dr Dabholkar's work was wide-ranging enough and had enough impact that he must have earned himself these enemies. [Other Indian] organizations may have similar enemies prepared to go to vicious lengths to combat reason, secularism and Humanism with oppression and murder. Several people have expressed fears today that Dr Dabholkar's murder represents a growing 'talibanization' of the extremists.

■ Bob Churchill has taken a keen interest in developments at the Humanist school in Kurukshetra where the student teacher Mahadevi was abducted by a Maoist extremist group. He is coming to speak to Dorset Humanists in December.

<http://iheu.org/story/leading-indian-rationalist-assassinated-gunmen>

### Dorset Humanists in local media

Dorset Humanists received a mention in the June edition of Dorset Business South as one of the organisations which helped with the St Paul's Shelter Winter Watch programme.



### Dorset Humanists on YouTube

Dorset Humanists now has its own YouTube page with a growing collection of great videos. Many thanks to Chris Street for creating this for us.

<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQq413GBwrUQXHlkfTijrOQ>

Jonathan Pearce talk: *Unholy Questions The 'Case for God' on Trial*

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNhdHLiJWV4tUL5XcleNpXIX6v4KZDpd>

### Fair Admissions Campaign

The BHA has announced its participation in the Fair Admissions Campaign – a new campaign aiming to end religious selection by state funded schools. It cannot be right that children are turned away from their local school because their parents are of the wrong religion or of no religion. The BHA would like as many of us as possible to get involved in the Campaign.

<http://fairadmissions.org.uk/>



Dorset Humanists  
**Chairman's View**  
September 2013



I have been busy preparing a speech for a house debate in Swanage: 'Jesus of Nazareth - Fabrication or Factual Reality?'. Some may think it's unnecessary to try and 'prove' that Jesus never existed. Why not just accept that he was probably a wise ethical teacher who was elevated into a god after he died? Apart from the intrinsic historical interest of this topic it's also an important strand of enquiry in the rationalist tradition. Christian apologists since C S Lewis have made short work of the rather feeble notion that Jesus was 'just' a wise ethical teacher. Lewis's famous 'trilemma' has been used to good effect in Christian evangelism. Lewis argued that if Jesus claimed to be divine then he must either have been mad, or bad, or God. Similarly, apologists like William Lane Craig argue that the disciples could not have preached the resurrection of Jesus immediately after his death if there was still a body lying dead in a tomb.

Explanations of what happened to the body are unsatisfactory. Therefore Jesus rose from the dead! Most of these ridiculous claims can be effectively undercut by 'Jesus Mythicism' which is the well-argued scholarly conviction that in the middle of the first century the Christ sect worshipped Jesus as a mystical messiah revealed by their creative exegesis of scripture. In effect, they believed that the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament) contained a mysterious 'Jesus Code' which they had unlocked. Jesus (which means 'Yahweh saves') was just an emanation of Yahweh. Late in the first century, a talented writer thought it would be a good idea to write a gripping drama about the 'life of Jesus'. We don't know who he was, but his drama came to be known as the Gospel of Mark, easily the most influential work in Western civilization. The 'historicisation' of the Jesus myth was under way. Second century bishops well understood the political advantage of being able to trace a line of apostolic authority back to a real Jesus and his apostles, and it wasn't difficult to convince ordinary Christians that Jesus had been a real person. If the original Gospel of Mark had been burnt in a house fire, Christianity would have been a footnote in the history of religion.

The shocking news from India demonstrates, once again, how risky it is to make a stand for reason, science, humanism and rationalism in many parts of the world. The freedoms we enjoy in this country were won by many brave campaigners in earlier times. If you can, please show your solidarity with humanists in other countries by joining the International Humanist and Ethical Union as an individual supporter.

*David Warden*