



A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

national
secular
society

IHEU
International
Humanist and
Ethical Union

April 2015

Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

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

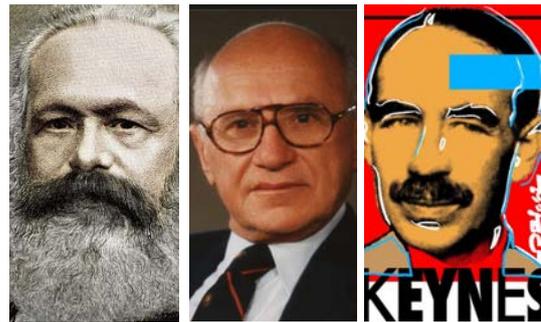
Why Secularism Matters



A talk by Keith
Porteous Wood –
Executive Director
of the National
Secular Society.

The National
Secular Society
has been
campaigning
against religious
privilege and for a

secular society since 1866. Keith's talk will set out the National Secular Society's view of secularism and religious privilege and why the need for a secular state is more pressing than ever. He will also consider why achieving this aim has become more difficult, how changes to the traditional religious lobby and vested interests have changed and how the NSS has responded. This will be an opportunity to learn more about the Society's work including its current campaigns on education, equality and human rights. In 2007 Keith received the Distinguished Service to Humanism Award from the International Humanist and Ethical Union for his work in building up the National Secular Society and campaigning for secularism both nationally and internationally. Dorset Humanists is affiliated to the National Secular Society.



■ **Wednesday 22nd April 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, Grove Road

Myth, Marx and Milton Friedman

A humanist approach to economics

A talk by Steve Laughton. Is economics still a reputable, scientific discipline or has there been an insidious takeover of economic theory by myth, dogma and market fundamentalism? Is the world now governed by a self-serving economic priesthood whose power is growing inexorably, unchecked by democratic forces? Steve Laughton, a member of Dorset Humanists and a member of the Labour Economic Policy Group, will talk us through this troubling possibility with a little help from Marx, Keynes, Milton Friedman, Thomas Piketty and Bob Dylan. He will argue that a decent future for everyone – full employment, a living wage, decent pensions and greater equality – are achievable but not without a fundamental challenge to the prevailing economic orthodoxy. Steve has degree in philosophy and a diploma in economics.

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■ **Thursday 7th May 7.30pm** and every first Thursday evening of the month at Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ



Social Evening

Enjoy stimulating conversation over a drink or two at our latest pub social evening. There is no fixed agenda so if you have any interesting topics or ideas you want to share and chat about in a friendly atmosphere then this meetup is for you. ☎ Dean 07713 858773

■ **Saturday 9th May 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Science & Religion in the Classroom



A talk by Alom Shaha – author of *The Young Atheist's Handbook*.

How can children brought up in religious families reconcile the different 'truths' they are told about the world? And to what

extent should we discuss these issues in schools? What exactly should science teachers say when asked about the 'truth' of science by religious students? In this talk, Alom Shaha will describe his personal experiences growing up in a Bangladeshi Muslim community in London, what role his science education played in his journey towards atheism and how, as a physics teacher, he responds to the apparent conflict between science and religion in the classroom.

Alom Shaha was born in Bangladesh but grew up in London. A teacher, science writer, and filmmaker, he has spent most of his professional life sharing his passion for science and education with the public. Alom has produced, directed, and appeared in a number of television programmes for broadcasters such as the BBC, and has received fellowships from the National Endowment for Science, Technology, and the Arts (NESTA) and the Nuffield

Foundation. Alom has represented his community as an elected politician. He teaches at a comprehensive school in London. He currently produces the Royal Institution's video series 'ExpeRimental'.

■ **Sunday 19th April 10.30am**
Wait by the benches to the left of Sandbanks Ferry

Walk – Old Harry

Don't be put off by the eleven miles, this truly is a spectacular walk. We will catch the ferry for a quid and then start the walk crossing sand dunes, nature trails, cliff side paths and hilltop vistas. We will see the Jurassic Old Harry Rocks, the breathtaking views from the Purbeck hills looking down over Swanage, Agglestone rock and many winding nature trails of gorse and heather. Camera essential for this one!

Disclaimer: Walks are led by Aaron for and on behalf of Dorset Humanists. No liability can be accepted. All persons attend at their own judgement. Full details of the nature of the walk are available so that individuals can assess their own abilities. Walks often have 'escape' points where you can join for part of the walk, and then leave via bus or other public transport. All walks are for adults.

☎ Aaron – Message via Meet-Up or phone 07851 239787

Other local events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 8th April 7.30pm**
Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub at The Brunswick, Charminster, BH8 8PX
Free entry (donations appreciated)

The Maths Police

Fighting Back Against Criminal Graphs

A talk by Colin Beveridge. There's no such thing as an innocent graph. Almost by definition, any representation of data omits some details, and glosses over others. That's to be expected. But innocence is a sliding scale and political graphs are often at the dirty end of it. With a general election coming up, it's vital to be wise to the tricks

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they'll use to convince you they're the only sensible candidate to vote for - from selective use of data, to playing about with axes, to more subtle techniques... and to outright making things up (sorry, 'informal polling'). This talk uses examples from election literature to warn you about these sneaky tactics - and give you questions with which to harangue the candidates when they canvass for your vote.

Colin lives in Weymouth and is the author of *Basic Maths For Dummies*.

📧 bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org
☎ Chris Street 01425 673477

■ Thursday 30th April 2015 – 7.30pm

West Dorset Humanists at the Wessex Royale Hotel 32 High West Street Dorchester DT1 1UP £3.00

Women and Religion (and Humanism, too)

A talk by Jo Adams. Jo is the founder of West Dorset Humanists and an experienced educationalist in the field of sexuality and women's studies.

☎ 07810 360700 or 07411 077058
westdorsethumanists@hotmail.com
www.westdorsethumanists.org

■ Weekend of 19-21 June 2015 BHA Annual Conference

The 2015 British Humanist Association Annual Conference will be held in the historic city of Bristol. Tickets on sale NOW and they're expected to sell quickly. The BHA Annual Conference is the can't-miss humanist calendar event of the year. The beautiful city of Bristol will play host to 300 happy humanists over a busy weekend of lectures, plenaries, debates, interviews, an awards show, live entertainment, and a gala dinner featuring big names including physicist **Jim Al-Khalili**, anatomist **Alice Roberts**, and historian **Francesca Stravrakopoulou**, and several as-yet-unannounced special guests. £99.00 for BHA members (+ £40 for dining). Dining

tickets entitle guests to attend the fantastic Gala dinner event where Alice Roberts will be speaking, and where we will announce the winners of the 2015 BHA Humanist of the Year and Services to Humanism awards. All tickets include a buffet lunch on Saturday. We would urge anyone interested in going to purchase their tickets as early as possible.

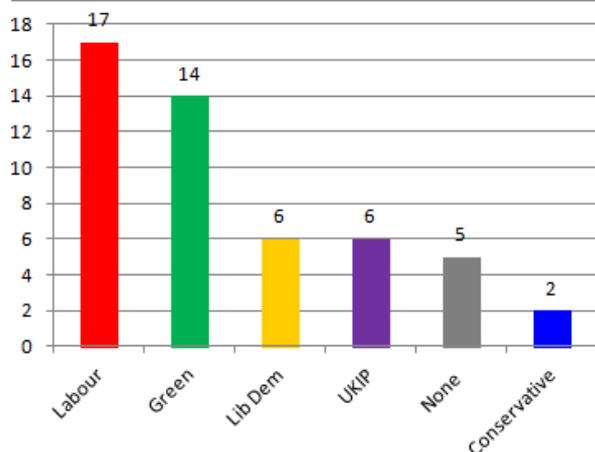
📧 humanism.org ☎ 020 7324 3060

Please let David Warden know if you are going.

■ **QED Weekend of 25-26th April**
Palace Hotel, Manchester. £99 for the full weekend (£69 for students and under 18s).

QED is a science and skepticism convention. Great speakers from the worlds of science and entertainment will be there for a weekend celebration of science, reason and critical thinking. Don't delay – [grab your QED ticket today](#)

Red-Green Humanists



The Humanist vote at our Election Special event came out in favour of red and green. The Conservatives came last with just 2 votes and UKIP and the Liberal Democrats were neck-and-neck with 6 votes each. Candidates were asked to state their party intentions on a range of Humanist policies including assisted dying, bishops in the House of Lords, and religious discrimination in schools as well as broader issues regarding housing, equality and the environment. See *Letters* for reactions. Watch the video here:

<http://youtu.be/CsnPApLoOmk>

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Dorset Humanists AGM

Just before the AGM we enjoyed a delicious Indian-style lunch prepared by Dean, Cathy and Susan. We were delighted that Roger and Chris, representing our sister group West Dorset Humanists, were able to join us (see *Letters*).

Our treasurer Simon Whitlock gave a comprehensive account of our financial situation and recommended a modest increase in our annual subscription from £12.00 to £15.00 which was approved. The 50% discount for another member at the same address was retained and the concessionary subscription for students and people on low income was kept at £5.00.

Paid-up membership of Dorset Humanists increased slightly to 152 and our Facebook group has 251 members.

Lyn Glass was presented with the 2015 Humanist of the Year Award for providing us with a fantastic Saturday programme and the huge success of Darwin Day with Professor A C Grayling.

The committee was re-elected as follows:

- David Warden – Chair
- Lyn Glass – Vice Chair
- Simon Whitlock – Treasurer
- Chris Street – Website and Schools
- Cathy Silman – Secretary and Membership
- Susan Bryson – Publicity Assistant
- Dean Robertson – Social evenings
- Jemma Hooper

There are still two vacancies on the committee. Members with skills and enthusiasm to contribute are welcome to be co-opted onto the committee for a trial period. Please contact David Warden if you are interested in joining our great team.

A proposal to facilitate postal/email voting on Dorset Humanists proposals was carried. A proposal to revisit our strapline 'Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World' was not carried.

David gave a presentation on highlights of the past year including the visit by Swamiji, high-profile speakers including Peter Tatchell, and the success of our Winter Appeal.



Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Bournemouth Councillor Blair Crawford, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, who was the Conservative panellist at our Election Special

I enjoyed the experience. It was a first for me and one I enjoyed very much. I truly believe in looking to identify areas of common ground on which we can work and leave the differences for open minded discussion and debate. It will be an interesting election.

From Richard Scutt on our Election Special

Another cracking event – well done to all concerned! Good panel, well planned and executed event. And, as well as being entertaining and informing us about how the politicians think, it clearly brought some idea of what Humanism is all about to them and non-Humanist members of the audience. As you know I'm all for us being more involved in such matters – which are a manifestation of our doing things to work for a better world. I'm thinking of the secular society promoted by the British Humanist Association.

From Kaye

Thoroughly enjoyed this fun and informative evening! Comfortable venue, surrounded by a great bunch of people...Perfect!

From Barney

Thanks to all the speakers and organisers of last night for a fabulous evening. I absolutely echo Kaye's comments, what a triumph for Dorset Humanists! PS. vote Green!

From Aaron

What a great night! It started off quite strange in that I found all five of our

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candidates engaging, informative, personable and likeable. Even further to my surprise is that all five would go for Proportional Representation. Let's hope that comes in!

From Ken Fagg

Congratulations on a very successful evening. The news will get out that we are a keen professionally run society. Well done - let's do it again!

From Roger Smith, West Dorset Humanists

Just a note to say what a pleasure it was to attend your AGM and learn so much more about your organisation. Chris and I both learned a great deal. There is much to admire about what you do and the scale of it all. What a good team you have. Congratulations to Lyn Glass on her Humanist of the Year award. I am sure it is richly deserved. We have a bit of work to do at our end to organise ourselves better. I have written up some notes for the benefit of our own steering group (SG). The example of your AGM and what it encompassed is one aspect of WDH getting far more organised and proactive. Also pass on our thanks to your 'kitchen staff' [Cathy, Susan and Dean]. The Indian meal was excellent – a wonderful way to entice people to an AGM.

From Chris Holmes, West Dorset Humanists

This is just to echo Roger's appreciation for your hospitality at the AGM and for the insight it gave us into your ways of working: an immediately welcoming atmosphere and an impressive level of constructive disagreement. My thanks, too, to Dave and Aaron for their advice, which has given me further lines of enquiry to follow.

From Sheena Nayton in Sydney

Just to say sorry I did not attend the AGM, I am in Australia visiting my son and grandchildren. I hope the AGM went well and will read the bulletins to keep up to date with what is going on. Thank you for all your hard work for Dorset Humanists, you and all the team are doing a grand job and it is much appreciated.

From Gordon Edwards, New Zealand

I would like to subscribe to your bulletin and would be grateful if you could arrange this. I 'escaped' from the UK in 2006. I joined an atheist group in Wellington that supplied good monthly newsletters but meetings are 400km away. Five years later I joined New Zealand Atheists, Rationalists and Humanists which has its HQ in Auckland, about 25 minutes across the Harbour bridge from North Shore where I live. The membership is rather less than 100. We have a branch meeting near me each month – membership about 20 and I receive a monthly magazine.

Over here there is concern about evangelism in schools and 'charter schools' with mostly unqualified teachers which are open to religious teachings. Also that churches and church-related charities sometimes operate businesses which are tax-exempt. 'Destiny Church' is run by a former bricklayer Brian Tamaki who receives a salary of just over \$100,000pa. Members must pay 10% of income – if not they are "stealing from God".

I hope to be in the UK in 2016 and should be able to visit Dorset Humanists.

Dean Robertson comment on Facebook

It's amazing how the Internet has changed communication. I've been having an interesting one-to-one chat with an atheist Rastafarian in Ghana. I don't know how I would have done that 10 years ago. No wonder some religious countries are scared of it.

From Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association

We have recently appointed an additional staff member who will be taking on the new role of Groups, Sections, and Membership Coordinator. We are committed to supporting our local groups and sections to develop and expand. We hope that a member of staff dedicated to supporting the work that you do will help achieve this aim. We are delighted to announce that Blakeley Nixon was appointed to this new role in March. Blakeley has worked at the BHA as an Administrative Officer for a number of years.

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Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
April 2015



I was anxious about two possibilities before our Election Special event: one, that our panellists would not all turn up and two, that our venue would be overwhelmed with visitors. Neither of these worries materialised and we had a great night covering a broad range of political issues including climate change, the economy, proportional representation and Palestine.

Humanists have a list of policy requirements which we will continue to press at every election including bishops in the House of Lords and religious discrimination in schools. But we also have a keen interest in what is often called 'the common good'. Despite the divisiveness of religious beliefs, many religious people also seek a society based on the idea of 'the common good'. One of the best recent books on this topic is *Just Money: How Catholic Social Teaching can Redeem Capitalism* (2014) by journalist and commentator Clifford Longley. I find Catholic doctrines, rituals and superstitions distasteful but I was struck by how much common ground there is between this presentation of Catholic social teaching and Humanism. Longley discusses 'what it means to be human' and 'how we can best promote human flourishing'. In the executive summary he writes that 'market fundamentalism drove the world to the edge of the precipice in the crash of 2008' and that 'enormous damage - up to \$30 trillion's-worth - resulted. The public is still paying the price'. 'Despite the catastrophe of 2008', he notes, 'neoliberalism remains the default orthodoxy among professional economists'. Steve Laughton will pick up this theme at our April Green House meeting. He will argue that a decent future for everyone - full employment, a living wage, decent pensions and greater equality - are achievable but not without a fundamental challenge to the prevailing economic orthodoxy.

Longley states that 'neoliberalism is a false ideology that has to be confronted'. In the ITV leaders' debate it seemed that the three women leaders - Nicola Sturgeon, Leanne Wood and Natalie Bennett - were prepared to confront the prevailing orthodoxy on cuts and austerity with Nigel Farage blaming all of our ills on uncontrolled immigration. Meanwhile, the 'Westminster consensus' seems to be in favour of slightly more or slightly less of the same medicine. The fundamental choice is about economic theory - will you vote for Milton Friedman or John Maynard Keynes? Don't miss Steve's talk later this month. *David Warden*

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