



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

# Dorset Humanists

## August 2014

A PARTNER OF THE  
BRITISH HUMANIST  
ASSOCIATION

### ■ Thursday 14th August 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, 4 Grove Road  
Bournemouth BH1 3AX

## Freethinker's YouTube Delights

*More Hidden Treasures from YouTube*



Dean Robertson will once again be presenting an eclectic selection of entertaining and enlightening clips from the vast archive of

atheist, rationalist, humanist and skeptical lectures and discussions which are now available on YouTube. We've uncovered a wealth of fascinating new material since last year's popular YouTube event that is guaranteed to ensure another stimulating and enjoyable evening!



A number of Dorset Humanists will be attending the World Humanist Congress in Oxford 8-10<sup>th</sup> August along with 1,000 delegates from around the world. Our Indian friend **Swami Manavatavadi** will

also be attending and there will be an opportunity to meet him at our Green House meeting on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August. Please do come along if you can and stay for a drink afterwards. Swami Manavatavadi is director of a small secular humanist school in Kurukshetra, Haryana (100km from Delhi). We have had a friendship link with this school since 2003.

### ■ Every first Thursday of the month

Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ



## Dorset Humanists Social Evening

Our next social evenings will be at Moon in the Square on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August and

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm. Join us for an interesting chat over a drink or two and get to know other like-minded people. See you there!

☎ Dean 07713 858773

### ■ Saturday 13th September 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## Making Sense of Animal Rights



A talk by Emeritus Professor Norman Mclean. The relationship between animals and humans has been the subject of differing philosophical views for thousands of years and the controversy continues

today. Science has shown beyond doubt that we are part of the same evolutionary continuum as all other life on earth, sharing behaviour, physiology and many of our genes with our animal cousins, yet even the most passionate animal rights campaigner would be unlikely to argue that a cockroach warrants the same rights as a human being. So how should we treat other animals, whether farmed, domesticated, or wild, and

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

Website: [dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk) Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists

what rights should we accord to the diverse range of species with which we share our planet? Is a vegan lifestyle the only moral choice? In this presentation, Norman will explain the important role played by scientists in providing us with a strong evidence base for improving animal welfare attitudes and practices, and argue that, as a minimum, animal rights should include rights to exist, to hold territory, to reproduce, and to be free from unnecessary pain and exploitation. He will also examine controversial topics such as intensive farming, badger culls, hunting for sport, and the use of large numbers of laboratory animals in medical research and product testing.

*Other local events of interest...*

■ **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> August 7.30pm**

Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub at The Brunswick, Charminster, BH8 8PX  
Free entry (donations appreciated)

## Beyond the Syringe

*Secrets of Alternative Medicine Exposed*

A talk by Dr. Richard Rawlins FRCS. Since time immemorial humans have been concerned about our health and well-being. For early civilisations it seemed obvious that the gods, spirits and stars were the cause of illness and disease. The Age of Enlightenment ushered in more critical analysis and we now expect medicine and healthcare to be evidence-based.

Yet a third of the UK population indulges in alternatives to evidence-based medicine and at least £500 million is spent every year on implausible treatments. There is no satisfactory way of differentiating between a sincere practitioner of complementary or alternative medicine, a dissembling quack, and an out and out fraudster.

In this presentation Richard Rawlins reviews how conventional, orthodox, mainstream medicine has evolved from esoteric, hermetic, and arcane origins and now provides the best possible care in the light of current knowledge and understanding.

📄 [bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org](http://bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org)

☎ Chris 01425 673477

## Are your subs up-to-date?

Membership subscriptions are a vital part of financing our activities, and we'd like to thank all our paid up members for supporting us and helping finance our group's success. Renewing your membership promptly reduces committee administration time which enables us to concentrate our efforts on organising more stimulating events and activities instead. If you normally pay at the beginning of April and haven't renewed yet we look forward to hearing from you. If you're not sure when your renewal is don't worry – you'll receive a reminder from our membership secretary when your payment is due. *Many thanks!*

☎ Cathy (membership) 01202 740550

☎ Simon (treasurer) 07786 318863

## Dorset Humanists invited to attend First World War Commemoration Service

On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August, David Warden and Lyn Glass represented Dorset Humanists at a Civic Service to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the First World War. We were invited by the Mayor, Councillor Chris Mayne. The Service was led by Rev Dr Ian Terry, Civic Team Leader of the Town Centre Parish and The Mayor's Chaplain, Councillor Roger Marley. The Mayor felt that it is important for all faiths and beliefs to be represented and welcomed us to be a part of this commemoration.

## First secular civic service for Dorset held in Ferndown

In a first for Dorset, Ferndown's civic service this year was not held inside a church but on a playing field. The town council asked David Hewitt from the British Humanist Association to officiate at a secular service on King George V Playing Fields. The Mayor of Ferndown, Councillor Mike Parkes and Town Clerk, Vanessa

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

Website: [dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk) Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists

Ricketts said they were delighted with the positive response from around 200 attendees. Councillor Parkes said: "Whilst I have my own faith, nowadays specifically religious ceremonies do not always engage everyone and as I like to do things a bit differently, I thought an inclusive approach to the Civic Service would be more appropriate including thoughtful readings, classical music and a focus on celebration rather than thanksgiving."



## One Life

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

- 1 Humanist Beliefs and History** Tuesday October 7<sup>th</sup>
- 2 The God Debate** Monday October 13<sup>th</sup>
- 3 Secularism and Religious Privilege** Tuesday October 21<sup>st</sup>
- 4 Ethics & Morality without Religion** Tuesday Nov 4<sup>th</sup>
- 5 Prospects for Happiness** Tuesday November 11<sup>th</sup>
- 6 Possibilities for a Good Society** Tuesday November 18<sup>th</sup>

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

# Peter Tatchell



*On a warm July day, over 100 people packed into Moordown Community Centre to hear Peter Tatchell talk about organised religion and human rights. These are extracts from his talk.*

I chose as my theme today the contention that organised religion is the greatest global threat to human rights. I'm thinking particularly, but not exclusively, of the human rights of women and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. I make a distinction between institutional religious power and many individual people of faith. We need to be careful to acknowledge that all religious people are not the same. Some people of faith have been great pioneers of human rights and freedom such as Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador who championed the rights of the poor and for his pains was murdered. I think of Martin Luther King who led the black civil rights movement in the United States. There are good people who do support human rights in all faiths and indeed no faith. But when I look at organised religion – the institutions and leading authorities within the faith – nearly always they are on the wrong side and often the defenders and perpetrators of human rights abuses.

In the United States extreme Christian fundamentalists have led the fight to deny women reproductive rights – abortion, surrogacy, donor insemination. They have led the fight against same-sex marriage and sex education in schools. They have led the fight against provision of condoms to stop the spread of HIV.

Christian fundamentalists in Nigeria promote witch-hunting hysteria. Children who are disobedient are branded as possessed by devils or a child who stutters – it is thought to be the devil inside the child and they are subjected to physical violence to beat the devil out of them. In Nigeria

---

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

Website: [dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk) Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists

there are draconian new anti-gay laws which ban LGBT organisations.

In Uganda, Christian churches including the Anglican church have played a major role in orchestrating new anti-gay laws. Any kind of same-sex contact – including kissing and cuddling, leads to an automatic mandatory life sentence. Life imprisonment for a kiss.

In Russia, there's a close relationship between Putin and the orthodox church. Putin sees the church as a useful ally to crack down on liberal values and they see him as their man in the Kremlin. New anti-gay laws in Russia prohibit any kind of gay visibility. LGBT teachers and lecturers are sacked simply because of their sexuality or gender identity.

Overall, the religious group that suffers the greatest persecution are in fact Christians. In Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria, Christians do suffer very severe persecution. There are frequent violent attacks on individuals and on their homes and churches.

I respect the right of other people to hold their faith but we need to recognise that wherever religion has power nearly always it abuses it to persecute others who don't conform to its particular tenets.

I'm not intrinsically anti-religionist but are we all equal before the law or not? An imam in East London said that gay people are enemies of Islam and should be killed. He was not taken to court. The police did not want to upset the Muslim community and stoke the flames of Islamophobia. But if they're inciting violence and advocating murder there should be no exceptions.

A global peace and unity conference – an Islamist event backed by Boris Johnson and the Metropolitan Police – often features preachers who preach that women should be forced to wear the hijab, that girls should undergo genital mutilation, that gay people should be killed, that Muslims who don't conform to their hardline views should be put to death. Because they are religious they are given extra licence.

Organised religion has opposed equality on every issue: the age of consent, repeal of Section 28, rights of LGBT people to serve in the armed forces, civil partnership. But

the hopeful sign is that in a recent poll 55 per cent of people of faith supported same-sex marriage.

I've always defended the right of people of faith to hold their point of view. I've defended the right of street preachers to say that homosexuality is wrong. It's shocking that Harry Hammond, a Bournemouth street preacher, was convicted. It's a free society and they have the right to say that – providing they are not inciting violence against others. A housing worker in Manchester wrote on his Facebook page that he opposed same-sex religious marriage. The Housing Trust sacked him for bringing the Trust into disrepute. I think that was absolutely wrong. He shouldn't have been punished.

We defend religious people. What a shame that defence is not reciprocated. They would not like the law to say that Christians have fewer rights yet they are prepared to defend and even demand that on the grounds of faith they should be able to discriminate. We have fantastic equality laws in Britain yet all those equality laws have exemptions notably when it comes to LGBT people. Faith-run schools, hospitals, nursing homes, shelters for the homeless are permitted in law to discriminate against LGBT people in certain circumstances. They may refuse to employ or provide a service to a gay person. I don't accept their right to discriminate and to be above the law but that's what they've won. They have persuaded the majority of politicians that because they hold a faith the laws on equality and discrimination that apply to everyone else should not apply to them. To me, in a democracy, we should all be equal before the law.

In conclusion, when you look at Britain and around the world, organised religion is the single greatest threat to human rights. I think we need to support those within faiths who challenge that. We need to build alliances between humanists, secularists and people of faith with liberal, compassionate values to stand up to those with power and authority.

■ Dorset Humanists donated £250 to the Peter Tatchell Foundation which seeks to promote and protect the human rights of individuals, communities and nations, in the

---

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

*Website: [dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk) Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists*

UK and internationally, in accordance with established national and international human rights law.

You can donate to the foundation at [www.petertatchellfoundation.org](http://www.petertatchellfoundation.org)

Or write to:

Peter Tatchell Foundation  
Studio 5, Disney Place House  
14 Marshalsea Road  
London SE1 1HL

Watch the whole event here:  
<http://youtu.be/2h0aV5Fs6vc>



## 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 Peter Tatchell*

Huge thanks to you and everyone at Dorset Humanists for hosting me yesterday. It was a terrific turnout – thanks to your publicity. Well done. Great Q and A. Massive thanks for the £250 donated / raised for the Peter Tatchell Foundation A wonderful help. Gratitude also for the bottle of wine. Very thoughtful. Your kindness is much appreciated. After I left you, I went to Bourne Free briefly, then got the bus to Studland and had a lovely stroll along the beach. A pleasant chill-out for a hour or so.

Warmest wishes, Peter

*From Sara Passmore, Head of Education and Promotion, British Humanist Association*

We would like to thank your local group for your hard work over the past year. The British Humanist Association is growing, and we are making huge progress in our campaigning for a secular state and for equal treatment of everyone regardless of religion or belief. We are proud of the success we have had and this couldn't have been achieved without the hard work and

commitment of local groups. This year has already been eventful, with the Government ruling that Free Schools and Academies can no longer teach creationism as science, the ongoing debate around the role of faith schools and the Prime Minister's comments on 'Christian Britain' each attracting the media spotlight. With your support we have been able to make a real difference.

*From Paul Stubbington*

My friend and I have been attending various Dorset Humanist meetings over the last few months and it's been a great way to learn and think about new topics. My mum, who's a committed Christian, accepted an invitation to the debate "Did Jesus really rise from the dead" and she thoroughly enjoyed it, so thanks for all the work you put in preparing for the debate. I'm really disappointed that I'm not going to be able to make it to the meeting with Peter Tatchell. Having read his "Battle for Bermondsey" some years ago and seen him attempt a citizen's arrest of Mugabe, he's an extremely brave man and it would have been a privilege to have met him. I'm hoping that the meeting will be videoed. If it is, would it be possible to view it somehow? [Yes, see *You Tube* section below]. Once again many thanks for everyone's excellent work making Dorset Humanists what it is.

## Dorset Humanists on YouTube



Eighteen videos of Dorset Humanists events are now available on YouTube. So if you missed any of these

excellent events, including the recent debate between Peter Hadfield and David Warden, you can catch up with them here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQq413GBwrUQXHlkfTijrOQ/videos>

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

Website: [dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk) Twitter: [@dorsethumanists](https://twitter.com/dorsethumanists) Facebook: Dorset Humanists



Dorset Humanists  
**Chairman's View**  
August 2014



**A** Humanist group partly exists to realise Thomas Paine's demand: "You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it." It was always going to be an unequal fight for me to debate science and climate change with heavyweight science journalist Peter Hadfield. I'm happy to concede that he won on the night but I'd like to think that the event opened up some space for critical views to be heard in a humanist forum. I don't think that comparing the critics to creationists is the best way to frame this debate but Peter used this tactic with devastating effect. Peter also said we can't wait for all the uncertainties to be resolved. This is not what I am advocating. Politicians need to act on the best scientific advice available but this does not mean that 'the debate is over'. If it emerges that the human signal in climate change has been exaggerated or that positive feedbacks are cancelled by negative ones this would be very good news. At the very least it would buy us time. Peter was right, however, to extend our horizon beyond the doubling of CO<sub>2</sub>. What happens when it's tripled or quadrupled? Parents and grandparents may be able to think a couple of generations ahead. As humanists, we have an obligation to think 1,000 years ahead. If Greenland and West Antarctica are going to melt over that timescale for want of different energy solutions then it's right for us to experiment with different solutions now, however inefficient or inconvenient to start with. But at the same time we still need to consider all the relevant scientific evidence regarding climate sensitivity and not give in to those who wish to deny further debate. To adapt Tom Paine's phrase, this would make us slaves to the current consensus and preclude the possibility of it ever changing.

**I**t will be exhilarating to meet humanists from across the world at the World Humanist Congress in Oxford and to meet up with our friend Swami Manavatavadi who runs a small secular humanist school in northern India. The school operates in a holy Hindu town and regularly faces opposition and harassment. Over a year ago, a student teacher at the school was abducted by a Maoist group. I hope you will come along to our Green House meeting on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August where there will be an opportunity to meet him.

*David Warden*