



A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

national
secular
society

IHEU
International
Humanist and
Ethical Union



Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

■ Saturday 13th February 12.00 noon lunch followed by 2pm talk

Dorset Humanists present **Darwin Day** at
the Bournemouth International Centre

Predatory Dinosaurs and the Evolution of Birds



Our distinguished
guest speaker is
palaeontologist Dr
Darren Naish.

Celebrate Darwin
Day with a
delicious three-
course Italian
buffet lunch in

BIC's Purbeck Lounge, followed by an
entertaining presentation by Professor
Darren Naish. Recent discoveries of fossil-
feathered dinosaurs and early birds have
confirmed the theory that birds evolved from
a single dinosaur lineage that survived
beyond the Cretaceous mass extinction
event 66 million years ago. Darren will be
explaining the fascinating processes by
which this happened, and will also examine
the diversity, anatomy, biology and
behaviour of some of the most awe-
inspiring predators ever to walk the earth.



Darren Naish is a
vertebrate palaeontologist
whose best-selling books
include *Walking with
Dinosaurs: the Evidence*
and *The Great Dinosaur
Discoveries*.

If you've pre-booked for the three-course
Italian Buffet lunch we start at 12 noon with
a drinks reception. Contact Lyn for late
availability of the lunch option. Otherwise,
talk only at 2pm £3.00 includes coffee or tea
on arrival. £1.00 students/unwaged.

☎ Lyn Glass 01202 558763

✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

■ Wednesday 24th February 7.30pm Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX



Charles Darwin: His Life, Ideas and Influence

*Continuing our Darwin Day
theme we welcome back psychologist,
natural science lecturer, author, and wildlife
photographer David Croman. David is also
a former Secretary of Dorset Humanists.*

What drove this quiet respectable
gentleman, a pillar of his parish, to develop
and embrace one of the most radical ideas
in the history of human thought?
In this entertaining and informative
presentation, David Croman will be bringing
to life the extraordinary adventures and
achievements of Charles Darwin. He will
cover highlights of Darwin's formative years
and the 'Beagle' voyage, as well as
considering the controversies surrounding
the publication of *Origin of Species* and its
effects on Victorian society. We will bring
the evening to a close with an examination
of Darwin's continuing relevance and
importance in our lives today.

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■ **Thursday 4th March 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 increasingly popular 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. Around 25 people of mixed ages and gender attended our last social night.

☎ Dean 07713 858773

■ **Saturday 12th March 1.00pm buffet lunch followed by AGM and talk 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Annual General Meeting

☆ Includes complimentary buffet lunch

Dorset Humanists is one of the most vibrant and successful humanist groups in the country. Our AGM always has a celebratory feel and it's an opportunity to say thank you to the dedicated people who make our success possible and to renew and refresh our sense of belonging to a great community group. It's also an opportunity to make your voice heard to influence the way in which Dorset Humanists develops in the future.

In his keynote address at this year's AGM, 'Being a Humanist Today: Challenges and Choices', Chair of Dorset Humanists David Warden will say that identifying as a humanist in today's world is more important than ever. The steady decline of mainstream religion presents us with opportunities whereas the intensification of fundamentalist religion presents challenges and dangers to which humanists are well-placed to respond.

Please join us for a delicious complimentary buffet lunch at 1.00pm – a very convivial way to start the proceedings!

Do you renew by Standing Order?

If you pay your Dorset Humanists subscription by Standing Order please don't forget that our annual subscription is now £15.00 (£22.50 to include another person at the same address). Student/unwaged rate remains at £5. Our membership secretary Cathy has endeavoured to remind people of this increase but some renewals are still coming through at the old rate. If this applies to you could we respectfully ask you to increase your Standing Order or consider paying by Direct Debit? Instructions for this appear on our website. Many thanks for your help.

Future dates for your diary:

■ **Weds March 23rd 7.30** Green House Hotel 'Thinking Fast and Slow/How to Think Effectively' Phil James

■ **Saturday April 9th 2.00** Moordown 'Blasphemy by the Back Door' Andrew Copson, Chief Exec British Humanist Association

■ **Weds April 27th 7.30** Green House Hotel 'The Heart of Humanism: Thinking Clearly about Ethics and Human Flourishing' Estelle Goldie

■ **Saturday May 14th 2.00** Moordown 'Ancient Stoicism & Modern Humanism' Professor Chris Gill

■ **Weds May 25th 7.30** Green House Hotel 'Good without God: Why morality presupposes atheism' Jonathan MS Pearce

■ **Saturday June 11th 2.00** Moordown 'The God Confusion (Agnosticism)' Dr Gary Cox

■ **Weds June 22nd 7.30** Green House Hotel 'Ten Ways the Universe Tries to Kill You' Astronomer Steve Tonkin

Other events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 10th February 7.30pm**
Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub, Brunswick Pub, Malmesbury Park Road BH8 8PX

The Science of Happiness

David Warden will cast a skeptical and critical eye over the burgeoning science and psychology of happiness.

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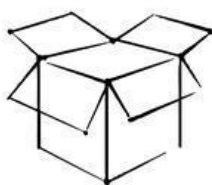


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David is chair of Dorset Humanists and a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development. Last autumn he ran a well-attended 6-week evening course on the science, philosophy and psychology of happiness, well-being and human flourishing. *"A very well-run course, extensively prepared and researched, professionally presented."*

■ Wednesday 2nd March 7.30pm

Black Bear Hotel, 14 South St, Wareham BH20 4LT. Free entry - small donation appreciated. First Weds of the month.



Out of the Box

'Out of the Box' is a successor to Purbeck Open Lectures (POL). It has been set up by a small group of POL

supporters in collaboration with Dorset Humanists. This launch is for a trial period of 4 months. 'Out of the Box' will be a forum to explore the journeys that different people make to arrive at a set of beliefs or worldview. It will provide opportunities for people to share their journeys with others rather than try to convince them that their destination is the only right place to be.

At the inaugural meeting we heard Ruth Haydock's amazing story of how she grew up in Northern Ireland and Burkino Faso with her missionary parents. Ruth was severely traumatized by belief in evil, demons, and witchcraft and it has taken her years to recover from religion and to discover the liberation of Humanism.



At our 2nd March meeting we will hear the story of John MacDiarmid. John was born into a strong Roman Catholic family. On leaving school he went on a journey of initially being lukewarm about his faith,

travelling through various forms of agnosticism and pitching camp for a while at atheism. As a student he re-evaluated his beliefs, in the light of his travels and

became an evangelical Christian, a position he still holds. John is Minister of Poole Christian Fellowship and he has attended our 'One Life' course.

Notice

We are very sad to announce the death of **John Rawlings**. John was a regular attender at Dorset Humanist meetings with his close friend Liliane Gunn. John was a passionate supporter of animal rights and he followed a strict vegan diet. There will be a memorial meal at Mad Cucumber vegan restaurant on 27th February. Please contact David Warden if you are interested in attending.

March for Men

■ Sunday 20th March

Thanks to member Bob Harley for bringing this event to our attention.

Bournemouth Hospital Charity's March for Men event is returning to Bournemouth Seafront on 20 March and aims to raise thousands of pounds for a new piece of imaging equipment that will benefit men with prostate cancer at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital (RBH).

Money raised from the event will be used to fund men's health projects at the hospital including the purchase of a new Olympus image management hub. This will be used alongside the hospital's da Vinci Robot, used in complex major surgery to treat men with prostate cancer.

March for Men encourages men, women and children to walk, run or march 1km, 5km, or 10km walk, along Bournemouth seafront and lower gardens. Hundreds of people took part last year helping to fund the template biopsy machine which has benefited over 100 men with prostate cancer since it was bought last year.

If you'd like to inspire a group of Dorset Humanists to take part please tell us!

Details on how to sign up: Follow link [here](#)

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Nicky Morgan attempt to muzzle BHA – please take action



The Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan is planning to prevent campaign groups such as the British Humanist Association from raising complaints about faith schools which break the law in their admissions procedures.

In its 2015 report for the Fair Admissions Campaign, 'An Unholy Mess', the BHA found that virtually all religiously selective state schools in England are breaking the law. At the time, the Department for Education welcomed the BHA's efforts to expose problems in the system and to uphold both the law and government policy.

Without the BHA's objections, several schools would still be breaking the law by selecting on the basis of race and/or gender and several would still be selecting on the basis of whether or not parents arrange flowers or help clean at church.

Nicky Morgan now characterises such complaints as 'vexatious' – an entirely misleading description of objections which went through the formal process and about 87% of which were upheld by the Adjudicator.

Nicky Morgan says that local parents can object but the BHA has pointed out in a letter to her that the complexity of the Admissions Code means that expertise is required to lodge accurate objections and it is difficult for the average parent to have the time to acquire such expertise, or to see the process through. Objections from civil society organisations such as the BHA help ensure that parents are not unfairly denied places for their children at local schools.

What can Dorset Humanists do?

You can very easily support the BHA's action on this by emailing your MP – please do so today. The BHA has made it very easy. Please follow this link: [MP email](#)

Winter Appeal raises £1500



Our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal this year has been a great success. The final total raised is £1,494.89 which is a fantastic effort. Many thanks to everyone who so generously donated.

Dorset Humanists has raised thousands of pounds in previous years for worthwhile charities. The appeal is named in memory of Jane Bannister who was Chair of Dorset Humanists until 2009.

Mosaic is a Dorset-wide charity offering a pathway of support to bereaved children, young people and their families. It also works with young people who are facing the death of a loved one. It provides individual, family and group support. Every child has the opportunity to attend a residential weekend programme where they can meet others and share their experiences. The charity receives some Local Authority funding but all other money has to be raised from alternative sources including donations from local groups. A representative from Mosaic spoke at our Saturday 9th January meeting.

New Forest Nightstop provides the only emergency overnight accommodation for homeless 16-24 year olds in the homes of trained and approved host households around the New Forest. David Warden is pictured above with Jude Todd, Manager of New Forest NightStop.

We will shortly make arrangements to pay the proceeds to our two chosen charities.

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Dorset Humanists at Holocaust Memorial Day

Humanist celebrant Maggie Pepin (pictured above) spoke at this year's 'Don't Stand By' Holocaust Memorial Day event at the Bournemouth International Centre. These were Maggie's words:

"I look at you today, humans all of you, of all faiths and none. Every last one of you is unique. And yes, we're all very different and we do all believe different things. The one thing we do have in common is that, irrespective of persuasion or belief, we are all human beings and our similarities are greater than the sum of our differences. It is the affirmation of and respect for our common humanity which is the crucial first step in understanding our responsibilities towards others. We're all responsible. No-one can afford to stand by. So this pledge is for all of us.

We pledge ourselves to give equal value to each and every person,

However different they may be from us.

To establish justice and peace,

To feed the hungry and heal the broken,

To welcome the refugee and the stranger,

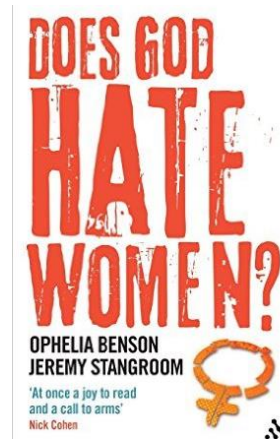
To console the bereaved,

To bring hope to those in want,

So that all may rejoice in liberty.

That is the right of every human being.

Women, Religion, and Humanism



In January, Moordown Community Centre was packed to hear Jo Adams's engaging, amusing, and excoriating presentation on women, religion, feminism, and humanism.

In their book *Does God Hate Women?* (2009) Ophelia Benson and Jeremy Stangroom claimed that 'Every major religion's texts were written at a time when women were regarded as little better than talking cattle. They worship a god who is a male and who gangs up with other males against women. They worship a thug.'

Jo argued that only two religious traditions have been fair to women: Quakerism and Unitarianism. For the remainder, she presented a mass of shocking evidence, including the following:

- "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a woman." Jewish Prayer
- "Women should be available to men at any time, even on the saddle of a camel." Boqul Sawm, Muslim Brotherhood Imam
- "Man has his gaze turned outward – he must work, make money – and woman must be focused inwards, where her children are, where her home is. If this incredibly important function of women is destroyed then everything will be destroyed." Patriarch Kirill, Russian Orthodox Church
- Buddha originally refused to ordain women as nuns, saying allowing women to become nuns would cause his teachings to survive only half as long – 500 years instead of a 1,000. Buddhist nuns are subordinate to monks. Some forms of Buddhism teach that women must

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be reborn as men before they can enter Nirvana.

- “Women who do not dress modestly lead young men astray, corrupt their chastity and spread adultery in society, which increases earthquakes”. Iranian cleric, Kazem Seddiqi This led to ‘Boobquake’ on April 26, 2010 in which 200,000 people at various locations in the US and Canada tried to provoke seismic activity by dressing immodestly. Dr Peggy Helwig, a research seismologist at the Seismology Lab in Berkeley confirmed that ‘Not only did all of the earthquakes on Boobquake fall within the normal range of magnitudes but the mean magnitude actually decreased slightly. Maybe God actually approves of hot pants, after all.’
- “The truth is that male religious leaders have had – and still have – an option to interpret holy teachings either to exalt or subjugate women. They have, for their own selfish ends, overwhelmingly chosen the latter. Their continuing choice provides the foundation or justification for much of the pervasive persecution and abuse of women throughout the world.” Former US President Jimmy Carter

‘So why’, Jo asked, ‘do women go on subscribing to religion?’. She suggested that “Women are in an abusive relationship with religion... religion has battered women’s self-esteem”. She compared it to the Stockholm syndrome – a psychological phenomenon in which hostages develop positive feelings toward their captors – and also the ‘Mrs Doyle syndrome’, named after the housekeeper in the Father Ted sitcom.

Jo also posed the question “Isn’t being Humanist enough? Why do we need feminism too?”. Seth Andrews, a former Christian broadcaster who now produces videos and radio podcasts for TheThinkingAtheist.com, has defined feminism as ‘the advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men’ and a feminist as ‘a person who supports feminism’. Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pittman Hughes have defined a feminist as ‘anyone who recognises the equality and full humanity of women and men.’ If we accept these definitions of feminism then it seems self-

evident that we need feminism as well as humanism – indeed they can be seen as two side of the same coin.

Jo quoted World Bank research figures (2011) which reveal that women represent 40% of the world’s labour force but hold just 1% of the world’s wealth. She also drew attention to the fact that only 22% of UK MPs are women. Mariella Frostrup has quipped “In the UK there are more blokes called Dave and Nick in government than there are women MPs.” We also learned that gender-based violence causes more deaths and disabilities among women aged 15 to 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war.

A number of key female humanists were mentioned including US suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton believed organized Christianity relegated women to an unacceptable position in society. She explored this view in the 1890s in *The Woman’s Bible*, which sought to correct the fundamental sexism which Stanton believed was inherent to organized Christianity.

Jo also quoted Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai: “Extremists have shown what frightens them most: a girl with a book”.

Additional reading and resources

Woe to the Women: The Bible, Female Sexuality and the Law (2004) Annie Laurie Gaylor

Women Without Superstition: No Gods - No Masters – Collected Writings of Women Freethinkers (1997) Annie Laurie Gaylor

Infidel (2007) and *Heretic* (2015) by Ayaan Hirsi Ali

United Nations Network on Women and Gender Equality www.un.org/womenwatch/

■ Jo Adams was chair of West Dorset Humanists 2009-2014. She is a member of the Women’s Equality Party and was formerly chair of the National Sex Education Forum and an Adviser to the Department of Health on Sexual Health and Teenage Pregnancy.

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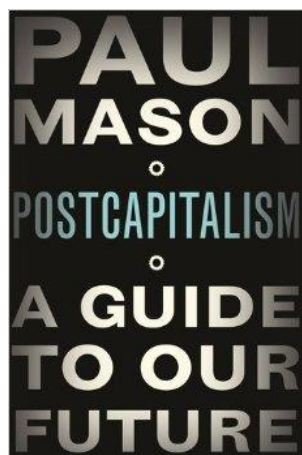
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Postcapitalism: The End of Work?

Economist Doug Lock gave us plenty to think about in his Green House talk on Postcapitalism. In this article, David Warden tries to draw some of the threads together.



In preparation for Doug's talk I read Paul Mason's *Postcapitalism: A Guide to our Future* (2015). This is a dense and difficult book with a lot of material about Marx and Nikolai Kondratiev. Mason's big ideas, however, include the notion that

GDP per person, which has remained flat for most of human history, is on an increasingly upward curve and the line on the graph will, eventually, be vertical. At this point, we will have arrived at the point of unlimited abundance – 'free stuff' – for everyone. Intelligent machines will produce not only cars but everything including sandwiches and sirloin steaks. This will herald the end of capitalism because unlimited abundance disrupts the main assumption of classical economics which is that goods are scarce. Unlimited abundance will also inaugurate the end of work. We will all be able to compose poetry or contribute knowledge to Wikipedia.

Will this projected future be a utopia or a dystopia? Doug Lock highly recommends Kurt Vonnegut's 1952 debut novel *Player Piano* (1952) which depicts a dystopia of automation. The story takes place in a near-future society which is almost totally mechanized, eliminating the need for human labour. He also recommends Martin Ford's 2015 book *The Rise of the Robots: Technology and the threat of mass unemployment* which paints a more optimistic future in which education is extended to the age of twenty-five and everyone retires at forty.

Neoliberalism, which is the big macro-economic system which has been in place since the rise of Reagan and Thatcher, is at odds with the rise of 'free stuff' because free stuff doesn't generate profits. Neoliberalism has allowed global tech monopolies like Google and Microsoft to make vast profits and avoid paying tax. Neoliberalism also resists automation whilst there is cheap labour to be exploited.

Part of the 'big picture' painted by Doug Lock is that the neoliberal era which commenced in 1980 has, in terms of economic growth, productivity and income equality, significantly underperformed the 'corporatist' era from 1950-1980. We are now in a period of economic stagnation and continued systemic risk from the largely unreformed financial sector. Neoliberalism has 'nowhere to go'. For further reading on this Doug recommends *The Macroeconomic Impact of Liberal Economic Policies in the UK* (2015) by Ken Coutts and Graham Gudgin (Cambridge Public Policy Strategic Research Initiative).

Doug thinks it's naïve to think we can just go back to the pre-1980 era. He says we need new ideas. Let's hope this is what is motivating the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, who has assembled a team of advisers including Joseph Stiglitz (former World Bank chief economist) and Mariana Mazzucato (Professor of Economics at the University of Sussex). Mazzucato has exploded one of the central dogmas of neoliberalism – that we should shrink the state – by making it clear in her book *The Entrepreneurial State* (2013) that consumer goods like the smartphone are based almost entirely on state-funded science.

We have had the TINA doctrine ('there is no alternative') drummed into us. But if neoliberalism is not working there must be other options. We can't continue on a trajectory of economic stagnation, wealth concentration for the top 1%, the housing crisis, unpayable public debt, systemic risk, tax evasion and the undermining of democracy by global elites without some form of fightback. Whatever happens, Dorset Humanists will continue to keep you informed and stimulated to think about our uncertain human future.

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Chairman's View

February 2016



Last summer a good friend of mine, Diane, was sharing a motorway journey with two friends. They never reached their destination. A moment's inattention resulted in their car slamming into the car in front. The passenger in the back seat wasn't wearing his seat belt and he was thrown against the passenger seat occupied by Diane. She managed to get out of the car and an off-duty police officer advised her to lie down flat on her back. On the trip to hospital inside an ambulance Diane sensed all feeling leaving her legs. She spent the next twelve weeks flat on her back in Poole Hospital and she's now in the spinal unit at Salisbury Hospital learning how to live a new life from a wheelchair. During my research for our Happiness Course I learned about the remarkable human capacity for 'hedonic adaptation'. Lottery winners and car-crash victims, despite the inevitable highs and lows of euphoria and depression brought about by critical events, usually return to a stable state of happiness not far removed from their starting point. This is certainly true of Diane who was in very high spirits when we visited her. "There's a lot more to life than walking!" she announced breezily. We spent some time in Horatio's Garden, a beautiful space created in memory of a seventeen-year-old hospital volunteer, Horatio Chapple, who was killed on a school expedition by a polar bear. I needn't advise you to avoid polar bears but next time you get into the back of a car please remember to wear your seat belt.

Thank you so much for your generous donations to our Winter Appeal. Our donation to Mosaic, the Dorset charity for bereaved children, will help to fund residential weekends at Leeson House near Swanage. This is a fantastic setting for children. I have vivid memories myself of staying there as a young boy. If you'd like to know how much these weekends mean to bereaved children please look at the [Residential Weekends](#) tab on the Mosaic website. Our donations will also help homeless young people in the New Forest area with emergency accommodation.

Please take action to support the BHA's objection to the government's latest loony proposals to ban civil society organisations from helping parents ensure that they are not unfairly discriminated against when trying to get their children into local schools. Despite widespread illegality, the government wants to make it harder for objections to be raised. It's easy to email your MP - just follow the link on page 4 of this bulletin or visit the BHA website. Thank you. *David Warden*

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