



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

Dorset Humanists

January 2014

A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

Winter Appeal

We did it! Dorset Humanists raised a fantastic amount for our 'Jane Bannister Winter Appeal'. See inside for more details.

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

An Audience with Andrew Copson



Andrew Copson is Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association

With legal recognition for Humanist marriages becoming more likely, new BHA schemes for non-religious pastoral support in prisons

and hospitals, and the launch of campaigning coalitions like the Fair Admissions Campaign, the BHA is extremely active on a wide range of issues.

In this talk, Andrew will introduce the BHA's current initiatives and discuss future priorities and challenges.

Part Two meeting 3.50-4.30pm

Come back after the break to discuss topics of interest to members and visitors.



World Humanist Congress – see inside

■ **Wednesday 22nd January 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel 4 Grove Road
Bournemouth BH1 3AX

A Living Wage for Dorset

Neil Duncan-Jordan Acting Chair of the Living Wage Dorset Campaign

The Living Wage is a voluntary or negotiated level of pay (currently £7.65 per hour) which provides a starting point for a decent standard of living for all workers. More than a quarter of employees in Dorset currently earn below this level and very few UK employers currently use it as a benchmark. As a result, taxpayers effectively subsidise many businesses with tax credits and housing benefit for their

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lower paid workers. Neil will present the case for a Living Wage in Dorset, and will explain how employers, workers and taxpayers would all benefit from its implementation. The Living Wage Campaign is backed by all major political parties, the TUC, many charities and several large employers. Neil Duncan-Jordan is President of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole TUC and a member of the National Union of Journalists. He works for Britain's biggest older people's pressure group, the National Pensioners Convention.

■ **Sunday 26th January at 2.00pm**
Lighthouse, Poole, BH15 1UG

Holocaust Memorial Day

Organised by Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee. The theme for this year is 'Journeys'. We hope to hear the stories of Henry Schachter who was born in Berlin in 1939 and only survived because of the kindness and bravery of non-Jews, and Gisela Thomson who was one of the 937 Jewish passengers on the SS St Louis. This event will also feature The Wessex Chorus and a short play by a BAFTA Award winning writer. Tickets free from Lighthouse ☎ 0844 406 8666
Web www.bphmd.webs.com
Email hmdbp1@gmail.com
Facebook [Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day](https://www.facebook.com/BournemouthandPooleHolocaustMemorialDay)

Dorset Humanists join Meetup.com

In addition to our well-established website and facebook presence, we've recently started promoting the group on Meetup.com. This popular site is for bringing local people with shared interests together, and we hope to reach new people who may not currently be aware of our group's aims, objectives and activities. Please join us at:

<http://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists/>

■ **Wednesday 8th January 7.30pm**



Dorset Humanists Social evening

at The Moon in The Square, 4-8 Exeter Rd, Bournemouth BH2 5AQ from 7.30pm for interesting conversation with like-minded people.

■ **Sat 8th February 12.00 noon**

Dorset Humanists at the Bournemouth International Centre proudly present

Darwin Day Lunch with Crispian Jago



The irreverent and irrepressible Crispian Jago is co-founder and co-organiser of the Hampshire Skeptics Society and Winchester Skeptics in the Pub. In his talk entitled 'How to point and laugh at

irrational nonsense' he will argue that whilst it is important to respect a person's right to hold whatever beliefs they like, ridicule of those beliefs (not the person) is not off-limits and indeed can be one of many effective ways to highlight and combat irrational thought. He writes the satirical skeptical blog 'Science, Reason & Critical Thinking' and describes himself as a 'failed bassist, ex-hippy, science-loving and music-loving godless Cornish git'. To secure your ticket complete the attached/enclosed booking form or contact Lyn Glass.

Complimentary welcome drink at 12.00 noon, lunch and talk £17 for members, £20 for non-members. Talk only 2 p.m. (including coffee) £5.00.

✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

☎ 01202 558763

🌐 <http://crispian-jago.blogspot.co.uk/>

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Dorset Humanists have raised a fantastic £1727.23 for our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal – a 116% increase on last year's total. Thank you so much for your generosity. This money will now be split between New Forest Nightstop and Refuge.

*From Paula McGoveney
Individuals, Events & Digital Senior
Manager at Refuge*

Happy New Year, and thank you so much for choosing to support Refuge. We are enormously grateful and in these testing financial times we need as much support as we can secure. £863.62 is a fantastic amount to raise and please pass on our thanks to all of those involved.

Unfortunately we have limited resources and it will be difficult for us to find a representative that could attend to collect the cheque as our staff are working around the clock to support the women and children we help. If you were able to send the cheque to our head office that would be really appreciated.

Please be assured that the money you have raised will go towards our vital work with women and children escaping domestic violence. Our services have seen a 30% cut to their funding over the last year and this is only set to increase, so every penny raised is vital to help us fill that shortfall and continue supporting the 3,000 women and children we reach on any given day.

☞ Refuge.org.uk

■ As this Bulletin went to press the New Forest Nightstop office was closed for New Year (although not the emergency service itself). We will bring you further details in the February bulletin.

☞ newforestnightstop.org.uk/aboutus.html



Car Sharing

Can you help, or would you like help?

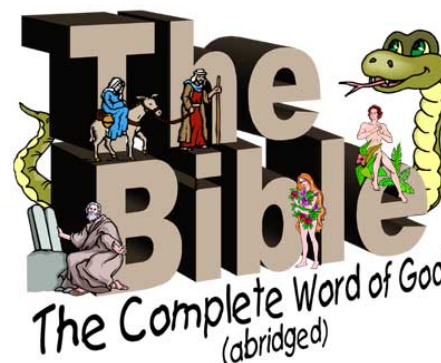
Please let us know if you are having difficulty getting to and from our meetings, and we'll try and match you up with a willing driver from your area. We are currently aware of a member in the Westbourne area of Bournemouth who would appreciate a lift and a potential member in the Wimborne area so please do let us know if you can help.

Committee Vacancy

We are looking for a member of Dorset Humanists to take on the vital role of Treasurer. This is a committee position and requires a person of integrity with a bit of spare time and some admin experience. Please ask David Warden for a full role description.

Other local events of interest...

■ **Saturday 1st Feb 8.00pm** at Sturminster Newton Arts Centre and **Saturday 22nd Feb 8.00pm** at Bournemouth Little Theatre



Written by the guys of the Reduced Shakespeare Company, three performers will take a total of 93 minutes to cover (and resolve) all the great theological questions. An irreverent, roller-coaster ride from Genesis to the Book of Revelation.

<http://www.arena-theatre.co.uk/production/58/The%20Bible%20The%20Complete%20Word%20of%20God%20%28Abridged%29>

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World Humanist Congress 2014

Oxford, United Kingdom
8-10th August, 2014

*Freedom of Thought and Expression:
Forging a 21st Century Enlightenment
8 - 10 August 2014, Oxford*

This year is your chance to take an active part in the international humanist community. The World Humanist Congress only comes around every three years and is a unique event bringing together humanists from over forty countries under the auspices of the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

Focussing on the theme of *Freedom of Thought and Expression* the organisers are assembling an all-star line up of thinkers, philosophers, scientists, technologists, performers, activists and experts for three packed days covering everything from history and human rights to emerging issues and how, together, we will build an Enlightenment for the 21st century.

Join BHA President Jim Al-Khalili; journalist and television presenter Joan Bakewell; evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins; UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief Heiner Bielefeldt; Nobel Prize winning Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka; Humanist philosopher AC Grayling; Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Religion Francesca Stavrakopoulou; UK Director of Reporters Without Borders Heather Blake; Cybersecurity and digital evidence specialist Peter Sommer; and many, many more for our biggest event yet.

The World Humanist Congress will feature:

- Three days of plenary sessions in the Sheldonian Theatre, where generations of Oxford graduates have received their degrees since the 17th century, and workshops, talks, and panel discussions in the 19th century Oxford University Examination Schools
- Three sit-down 'English picnic' style lunches and a Gala Dinner in the high Gothic surroundings of the Examination Schools, with special guest speakers


- A private viewing of the unique and eclectic collection of the Ashmolean Museum, the first university museum in the modern world, at an evening reception with special guest speakers

All this as well as the opportunity to meet fellow humanists from all around the world make the World Humanist Congress 2014 an unmissable event.

Tickets cost £299

 <https://humanism.org.uk/whc2014/tickets/>

 <http://whc2014.org.uk/>

 020 7324 3060 (BHA)



Letters & Emails

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

From Jo Adams, Chair of West Dorset Humanists

Just realised the first ever tiny meeting of what turned out to be West Dorset Humanists was here in our front room 4 years ago tonight - what a long way we've come, with 30+ signed up for David Warden's *One Life* course in 2014. Just imagine where we'll be in four years time - the Wessex Royale won't be able to contain us....! Thanks to all of you for all the work that's got us here - and Nigel Mykura most specially as the other 'surviving member' from that meeting!

Community Project funding available to Humanists

We have been advised that humanist groups are eligible to receive £2000 for a community project. The main conditions are that the project would have to be done in partnership with a faith group, benefit the local community, and the organisations involved would have to match the funding amount with a further £2000. Contact David Warden if you have any creative ideas and can draft a project proposal.

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FREEDOM OF THOUGHT 2013

A Global Report on the Rights,
Legal Status, and Discrimination Against
Humanists, Atheists, and the Non-religious



Freedom of Thought 2013

The International Humanist and Ethical Union has published a major new “Global Report on the Rights, Legal Status, and Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Non-Religious”.

Freedom of Thought 2013 is the first report to look at the rights and treatment of the non-religious in every country in the world. Specifically, it looks at how non-religious individuals – whether they call themselves atheists, or agnostics, or humanists, or freethinkers or are otherwise just simply not religious – are treated because of their lack of religion or absence of belief in a god. It focuses on discrimination by state authorities – systemic, legal or official forms of discrimination and restrictions on freedom of thought, belief and expression.

“Atheists and humanists are a large and growing population across the world [but] the overwhelming majority of countries fail to respect the rights of atheists and freethinkers... In the worst cases, the state denies the right of atheists to exist”

In building this survey the authors have used the global human rights agreements that most affect freethinkers as freethinkers: the right to freedom of thought, conscience,

or religion; the right to freedom of expression; and, to some extent, the rights to freedom of assembly and association. Its results show that the overwhelming majority of countries fail to respect the rights of atheists and freethinkers. There are laws that deny atheists’ right to exist, revoke their right to citizenship, restrict their right to marry, obstruct their access to public education, prohibit them from holding public office, prevent them from working for the state, criminalize their criticism of religion, and execute them for leaving the religion of their parents. In the worst cases, the state denies the rights of atheists to exist, or seeks total control over their beliefs and actions.

Atheists (those who do not believe in any god), and humanists (those who embrace a morality centred on human welfare and human flourishing that does not appeal to any supernatural source), and others who consider themselves non-religious, are a large and growing population across the world. A detailed survey in 2012 revealed that religious people make up 59% of the world population, while those who identify as “atheist” make up 13%, and an additional 23% identify as “not religious” (while not self-identifying as “atheist”). The report by the Gallup International Association is in line with other recent global surveys. It shows that atheism and the non-religious population are growing rapidly – religion dropped by 9% and atheism rose by 3% between 2005 and 2012 – and that religion declines in proportion to the rise in education and personal income which is a trend that looks set to continue.

The report argues that just as speaking out in support of one’s *religious* convictions and moral values can be of fundamental meaning and importance to the individual, so too can advocating the core *humanist* values of democracy, freedom, rationalism, human rights and secularism. The report is free to download:

<http://freethoughtreport.com/download-the-report/>

Gallup Survey:

<http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf>

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Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
January 2014



Belief in witchcraft, spirit possession and other forms of the supernatural can easily lead to children and other vulnerable people being blamed and subsequently abused for bad luck and misfortune. Forms of abuse can include being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation. In December, Bob Churchill from the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) provided us with a harrowing report of witchcraft in Africa, often aided and abetted by Christian pastors who make a fortune from witchcraft ministries. He highlighted the case of pastor Helen Ukpabio who promotes the belief that children can be witches. In one of her books, *Unveiling The Mysteries of Witchcraft*, she writes "If a child under the age of two screams in the night, cries and is always feverish with deteriorating health he or she is a servant of Satan". Such symptoms are common in a region where there are high rates of malaria and other health problems. The Basic Rights Counsel Initiative, a human rights organisation based in Nigeria, has documented horrific cases including children having a hot iron placed on them, oil poured over them or being forced to drink dangerous concoctions in order to drive the "witchcraft" out. Sonja Eggerickx, president of IHEU, has spoken out against abuses related to witchcraft on many occasions. She explains that "Officials are often under pressure to turn a blind eye to witch-hunting and to ignore these false, malicious witchcraft accusations, in case they are accused of undermining religion. It is important that the authorities know that there are others who see these crimes for what they are: abuses of basic human rights and human dignity, based on nothing but superstition."

In the UK there have been dozens of faith-based child abuse investigations and in 2012 a 'National action plan for tackling child abuse linked to faith or belief' was launched. The action plan, developed in co-operation with faith groups, states that "This is not about challenging people's beliefs, but where beliefs lead to abuse that must not be tolerated." A national action plan against faith-related child abuse which does *not* challenge the underlying beliefs which lead to abuse seems unlikely to be effective.

Your response to our Winter Appeal was amazingly generous – thank you. This will help to make a difference to the lives of young homeless people, and women and children fleeing domestic abuse. Jane Bannister would have been very proud.

David Warden

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