



A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

national secular society



Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

■ **Saturday 10th January 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Humanism, Politics and our Future



Professor Greg Claeys
Are you fed up with bankers' bonuses, corporate giants evading tax, unaffordable housing, and incompetent government? In preparation for the May

2015 general election, Greg Claeys will be considering the policies of our political parties and how well they correspond with our secular humanist tradition of working for a better world.

Greg is Professor of the History of Political Thought at Royal Holloway, University of London and is a popular speaker on both humanist themes and politics.

■ **Sunday 25th January 2.00pm**
Lighthouse Poole BH15 1UG



Holocaust Memorial Day

HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY 27/1

The main speaker will be Warsaw Ghetto survivor Arieh Simonsohn. Dorset Humanist

Maggie Pepin will read the Pledge. Tickets are free and available from the box office 0844 406 8666.

■ **Wednesday 28th January 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, 4 Grove Road Bournemouth BH1 3AX

Escaping from Mormonism



Ben Taylor

Founded in the 1820s by Joseph Smith the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (aka 'the Mormons') demands strict obedience from its adherents, and controls

almost every aspect of their daily lives.

Former Mormon Ben Taylor will be sharing his personal experiences of being raised as a devout believer in this secretive cult, revealing how he spent most of his adolescence being routinely questioned about his 'sexual purity' by bishops, parents and peers. He was also obliged to knock on countless doors with Mormon missionaries, tithe at least ten per cent of his income to the church, and shun 'apostates'. At the age of nineteen he greatly expanded his horizons by joining the army, with his military duties having included the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace and a tour of Afghanistan.

Winter Appeal raises more than £1550!

Full story inside...

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■ **Thursday 8th January 7.30pm**
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

■ **Thursday 12th February 5.30pm for 5.45pm start**

Dorset Humanists Darwin Day at Bournemouth Natural Science Society, 39 Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth BH1 3NS

The Difference That Darwin Has Made



Professor Anthony Grayling will address our 2015 Darwin Day celebration on the topic "The Difference That Darwin Has Made". This will be an early evening

start followed by light refreshments. Limited seating! DH members £2.00; Non-members £4.00; On the door (subject to capacity) £5.00

✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

☎ 01202 558763 or see Lyn at our events

■ **Wednesday 25th February 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, Bmth

Navitus Bay Wind Farm

A talk by Sean Parsons. Navitus Bay Wind Farm is a proposed 970 megawatt offshore wind farm, situated approximately 10km south of Dorset and the Isle of Wight. Sean will claim that it will help the UK to meet its climate change targets and contribute to security of energy supply. In a typical year, Navitus Bay Wind Farm could generate enough clean, sustainable energy to power up to 700,000 homes which would

contribute to reducing the UK's reliance on imported fuels and stabilise electricity prices in the future. If approved, construction is expected to take up to 5 years to complete. The project is opposed by Bournemouth Council, fearing that it will damage the town's tourism-based economy. Sean Parsons is Navitus Bay Communications Manager.

Other local events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 14th January 7.30pm**
Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub at The Brunswick, Charminster, BH8 8PX
Free entry (donations appreciated)

Weird Science

An Introduction to Anomalistic Psychology



A talk by Professor Chris French. Ever since records began, in every known society, a substantial proportion of the population has reported unusual experiences many of which

we would today label as 'paranormal'. Opinion polls show that the majority of the general public accepts that paranormal phenomena do occur. Such widespread experience of and belief in the paranormal can only mean one of two things. Either the paranormal is real, in which case this should be accepted by the wider scientific community which currently rejects such claims; or else belief in and experience of ostensibly paranormal phenomena can be fully explained in terms of psychological factors.

This presentation will provide an introduction to the sub-discipline of anomalistic psychology, which may be defined as the study of extraordinary phenomena of behaviour and experience, in an attempt to provide non-paranormal explanations in terms of known psychological and physical factors. This approach will be illustrated with examples relating to a range of ostensibly paranormal phenomena. Professor Chris French is the Head of the Anomalistic Psychology

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Research Unit in the Psychology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London.

📧 bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org

☎ Chris Street 01425 673477

■ **Sunday 25th January 11.00am**
Sunday Assembly at the Brunswick Pub,
Malmesbury Park Rd, Bmth BH8 8PX



Wonders of nature

Speaker: Debbie Reilly from Understanding Equus

<http://bournemouth.sundayassembly.com/>

■ **6th - 31st January 2015**
Bournemouth Library, 22 The Triangle,
BH2 5RG. Check library opening times.

Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee would like to invite you to visit:

MEMORY

An Exhibition of Artworks by Simon Shaw in commemoration of the Kindertransport and Holocaust Memorial Day.

For more information contact Simon at: shawsimon7@gmail.com or visit www.simonshawart.com

■ **Tuesday 27th January 4.00pm**
Bournemouth Gardens, near War Memorial

70 candles for 70 years

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz the Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee will be unveiling a plaque in Bournemouth Gardens. This event has been chosen as one of the seventy events to host the lighting of one of the specially designed candles to mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The candles will symbolically link commemorations taking place across the country, to highlight how the UK will keep

the memory alive for this significant 70th anniversary year. Walter Kammerling will be the candle lighter. The specially designed candles will be lit at selected Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) commemorations across the UK, from Stornoway to Southend-on-sea, and from Belfast to Bristol. 70 candles for 70 years will help to draw attention to the range and diversity of activities taking place across the country, and bind local events into the UK Commemorative Event.

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



QED (Question, Explore, Discover) is a science and skepticism convention. Fantastic speakers from the worlds of science and entertainment will be there for a weekend celebration of science, reason and critical thinking. Every ticket entitles the holder to entry the full programmes for Saturday 25th April and Sunday 26th April, including our popular Saturday night entertainment.

Appearing live at QED 2015 for your entertainment and enlightenment will be **Matt Dillahunty** (host of *The Atheist Experience* TV show, former president of The Atheist Community of Austin, Texas, and prolific debater of religious apologetics), **Mitch Benn** – musician, comedian and star of BBC Radio 4's *The Now Show*, **Natalie Haynes** – comedian and writer whose work encompasses lessons from history and humanist philosophy, **Dr Lucie Green** – a physicist and science broadcaster best known for her work on *The Sky At Night* and *Stargazing Live*, **Professor Bruce Hood** – an experimental psychologist and author who has published extensively in the fields of superstition, supernatural belief and cognitive development *and many more*. If you're not able to make it to the full weekend, Friday 24th April will be a free

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full-day event, open to all. Further details of this, and other additions to the QED programme, will be announced in due course. So, don't delay – [grab your QED ticket today](#)

■ 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 over 19-21 June 2015. We have more speakers and entertainment still to announce, with 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. Given the speed at which World Humanist Congress tickets sold out last year, 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.

Winter Appeal tops £1550



We raised a fantastic £1557.32 for our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal. A massive thank you to all of our generous contributors. This amount has been split equally between New Forest Night Stop and Refuge,

each of which has received £773.66. Our Winter appeals have now raised over £4,000.

In addition, Dorset Humanist **Richard Ferguson** has volunteered as a driver and support worker for New Forest Nightstop, following the presentation about this charity from Jude Todd in September. We send our best wishes to Richard as he undergoes the necessary training (see his letter).

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. New Forest Nightstop was established in 2003 and is a team approach to homelessness.

Refuge is committed to a world where domestic violence is not tolerated and where women and children can live in safety. Refuge aims to empower women and children to rebuild their lives, free from violence and fear.

newforestnightstop.org.uk/aboutus.html

Refuge.org.uk

Dorset Humanists donates £200 to Humanist Schools in Uganda

At our December meeting, Steve Hurd provided an encouraging update as to the progress of the Humanist Schools in Uganda. We donated £200 which will help with the construction of boys' hostels. (See Steve's letter for more details.)

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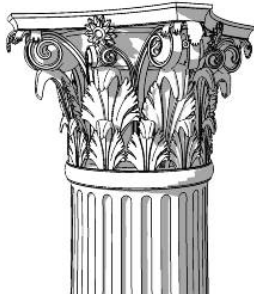
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Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Dorset Humanists member and Liberal Democrat Councillor Roger West

Trying to make Britain a secular society is only one step of the journey we are on. I believe our democratic system needs a complete overhaul. It will only be our young people who can, if encouraged, think clearly without prejudice or self-interest. I recently witnessed our Youth Parliament in action in the House of Commons and Dorset Humanists is right to consider setting up a young humanists group.

I have good relations with the three schools in my ward: The Bourne Academy, Kingsleigh Primary School and Hillview Primary School. I took six pupils and a teacher from the Bourne Academy to a Liberal Democrat dinner as my guests where the speaker was Vince Cable MP. Pupils are also going to attend our Darwin Day event in February at the Bournemouth Natural Science Society to hear Professor Anthony Grayling speak on the subject 'The Difference that Darwin has Made'.

I have been a Member of Dorset Humanists for many years and appreciate the feeling of fellowship. Like the Humanists, the Liberal Democrats realise that to make a real difference to our society we must engage with our youth by letting them hear some challenging thoughts delivered by good speakers. I am looking forward to our first meeting on 10th January at Moordown Community Centre in the New Year where we shall be addressed by Professor Greg Claeys on 'Humanism, Politics and our Future'.

Back now to my political battles where I am trying to make Bournemouth a better place by having open democracy.

From Debbie Sears

Some of our members might be interested in the Saturday run I've done a couple of times in Poole Park. It's a wonderful example of community spirit and volunteering to get people interested in getting and keeping fit with running. It's a weekly, free, worldwide event for all abilities – an amazing set up that has a weekly turn out of 400+ in Poole Park alone (with other venues locally). Perhaps some of the Dorset members may like to have a go in the New Year to burn off all that excess festive cheer!

<http://www.parkrun.org.uk/>

From Richard Ferguson

Regarding the Jane Bannister Winter Appeal you may be interested to know that I have been in contact with Jude following her presentation about New Forest Nightstop with the result that I have now volunteered as a driver and support worker and am due to undergo the necessary induction training in early January. It would be absolutely true to say that without that presentation I would not even know of Nightstop so you may wish to record this action in some way to the 'value' that Dorset Humanists has donated to Nightstop.

From Carol Mary Fraser, Norwich

Enclosed small donation toward the Jane Bannister Appeal. I still remember the few stimulating Saturday talks I attended and two lovely social events [one was Angela and Frances' Garden Party] and was sorry my stay in Dorset was too short to get to know you all better.

I like the proximity of Norwich, a vibrant wee city with more than a dash of the alternative/ radical flavour about it which appeals to me. I have joined the Norfolk Humanist group - much smaller than Dorset of course but I enjoy being among like-minded souls (oh my, should that be entities, or something like that?). I have only been to one meeting – an excellent talk by Rupert Read on climate change and the need to act to save the earth for future generations.

Norwich has started Sunday Assemblies, like many other places, on the international

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launch day in September. A debate seems to have been sparked here among the humanist fraternity over Sunday Assemblies – are we barking up the wrong tree trying to imitate a ‘church’ gathering? I don’t know where you stand on this issue but do we really want or need a secular ‘church’ service? Are there not other ways for Humanists to socialise?

All best wishes to you and all the Dorset Humanists. Keep in touch – I enjoy reading the bulletins.

From Swami Manavatavadi

■ Swami Manavatavadi has just attended the 9th National Conference of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on the East coast of India. Dorset Humanists recently provided laptops and desks for his humanist school in Kurukshetra near Delhi.

We are returning to Kurukshetra after attending the 9th FIRA National Conference. The national secretary general of FIRA and the Kerala Rationalist Society recommended to give me a position in the FIRA Steering Committee and during the General Assembly they declared my name as the Northern joint secretary. I humbly declined but our associates accepted this offer as a great achievement after 18 years of humiliation and oppression. More good news is that I have been requested to start a children's programme in the State of Odisha which is one of the most backward and poor states of the country where poor parents are unable to provide education to their children. Instead, they help their parents earn an income by working as child labourers in the crop fields. I have assured them I will help them in this noble mission.

Kindly say our Namaskars to all our well wishers there.

From Jim Al-Khalili, President of the British Humanist Association



The British Humanist Association has had a fantastic 2014, with a lot to be grateful for in our work in education, our resources for schools, our pastoral care

volunteers programme, and right across our ceremonies network. It's also been a year with more visibility than ever for our campaigning work, balancing public debate with humanist perspectives on ethical and political issues. Not to mention the incredible joy of hosting the World Humanist Congress, which brought together humanists from all over the world and dozens of brilliant speakers to drill down into our chosen theme of freedom of thought and expression.

There's still plenty to do in 2015, and moving into an election year, we will be busier than ever before. Our campaigns on things like stopping 'faith' schools, changing the law on assisted dying, and our work to secure legal humanist marriages, are all going at full steam as we slide into the new year, and, though it won't be easy, we hope these campaigns will continue to gain traction as we progress through 2015.

And if you're really stumped for ideas for resolutions this New Year's Eve, one I'd suggest is joining the BHA if you haven't already and helping us do even more to pursue our goal of ensuring a secular state without discrimination. This is a year with everything to play for, and not only does joining the BHA infuse the organisation with vigour and stamina, but your membership is a financial contribution which helps us to campaign hard, day-in, day-out, for the kind of society we would all like to live in.

Think back on a 2014 of ups and downs but still, a-million-and-one reasons to celebrate that improbable yet marvellous fact that you are alive in a world of such wonder and beauty, friendship and love. From me and everyone at the BHA: Happy New Year!

From Steve Hurd, Chair of the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Please express my gratitude to Dorset Humanists for being so welcoming on Saturday 13th December, for the perceptive questioning and for generously donating £200 towards the work at the Humanist schools in Uganda.

You may have seen from the news section of our website that we are pre-occupied at the moment with the construction of boys' hostels at Isaac Newton School, Kateera

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and Mustard Seed School. I propose, with your permission, to put the money you have sent towards additional works at these sites. The Mustard Seed Site need a fence to provide security and bunk beds for the boys to sleep in and at Isaac Newton School, Kateera we want to add solar power and lighting so that the boys are do not need to use paraffin lanterns, which have been the cause of several dormitory fires in Uganda.

To keep costs down I put regular updates on the schools on our news blog and the FaceBook page below.

We are organising an International Friendship Week at the schools. Should anyone in your group be interested there are outline details on the website: <http://www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/schoolandcommunity/friendship-week/>

I am hoping to identify visiting party members by the end of January and will send further details to anyone interested in joining in the activities. (See more details below.)

Visit Uganda in 2015



The next International Friendship Visit to the Humanist Schools in Uganda will be in June 2015 (Dates to be arranged in discussion with participants). We aim to identify the party of visitors by the end of January 2015.

We piloted the first Friendship Programme in November 2009, and it proved to be a great success. In July 2010 we expanded the programme with 8 visitors from the UK, and in June 2012 we had a visiting party of

12, including 6 staff and students from Newcastle-under-Lyme College. A number of supporters have indicated they would like to take part in 2015.

Participants make their own way to Uganda. They stay in basic hotels near the schools. Visitors have an opportunity to contribute to or lead activities that suit their personal interests and talents.

The schools favour participatory activities which give students an opportunity to listen to, practice and improve their spoken English and to learn other skills. The sorts of things we envisage include short illustrated talks on topics of interest and a range of supporting activities, such as discussion groups, debates, music, arts, drama and sports. There will also be an opportunity to discuss the work and needs of the schools with students and staff.

It is clearly a long way to go for a week so we expect people may want to combine the trip with a wild life safari. One possibility is to share an escorted safari, of which numerous are offered by reputable travel organisations. There may also be the possibility of staying on in one of the schools to help out.

You will need to arrange your own travel insurance and flights.

The schools will provide daily lunches with local food, shared with staff and students. A donation to the schools to recompense them for these costs would be appreciated by them.

Participating in the Friendship Week activities will give you a good insight into rural schooling in Uganda and a feel for their development and funding needs. The students will benefit from having an opportunity to speak with first language English speakers.

If you are interested please get in touch.

Steve Hurd 01782 750338
E-mail: stevehurd@uhst.org

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Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
January 2015



My mother Sadie, who died in May aged 89, confidently expected a reunion with her departed relatives. She was a convinced spiritualist and always said she would come back to *prove* to me there's an afterlife. I'm still waiting! Whatever you think of such beliefs, how do humanists cope with the belief that death is final? In a way it's not, because my parents left such a rich store of memories, photographs and relics. They are still very much woven into the emotional fabric of our family life even though they are no longer physically present. I have no need of anything more and a posthumous reunion sounds macabre. Deaths in my family can cause tension because of our differing beliefs but my Anglican brothers and I were able to hammer out a compromise Christian-Humanist funeral which satisfied everyone. My mother attended several meetings at Dorset Humanists but maintained a simple faith which helped her get through each day. She often said that *The Children's Bible* was about the right level of scripture for her. One evening several years ago she asked me to read it to her so we started at Genesis. When I got to the bit where Adam died at the age of 930 even my mother's scepticism was roused and we abandoned the reading project. She always put on a good show and turned herself out like the Queen every day (on a fraction of the Royal budget). In the 1940s she and my father won many ballroom dancing trophies at the Bournemouth Pavilion and she helped win the war by working in munitions in Westover Road. A long life, lived to the full.

So-called 'New Atheism' was launched some years ago by single-author books like *The God Delusion* (Dawkins) and *God Is Not Great* (Hitchens). These books were widely criticised as polemical and lacking theological sophistication. A second generation of 'new atheism' books has been emerging including *The Christian Delusion*, *The End of Christianity* and *Christianity is Not Great*, all edited by former Christian preacher John W Loftus. They contain essays by many well-qualified contributors and they critique Christianity from every conceivable angle. I recommend them.

After 27 years of partnership John and I finally got our green marriage certificate – the culmination of a process which started in 1957 with the Wolfenden Report. It's sobering to learn, however, that in 42 of 53 Commonwealth countries it's still illegal to be gay. The global struggle for LGBT rights has a long way to go.

David Warden

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