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national
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IHEU
International
Humanist and
Ethical Union



Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

■ Saturday 14th January 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW



Libertarianism

Arif Ahmed

The libertarian philosophy associated with Friedrich Hayek has its philosophical roots in the classical liberalism of the nineteenth century and in the philosophical views of Hume, Smith and Tocqueville. Libertarians emphasise freedom of the individual and the rule of law, preferring limited government and a small state. They tend to oppose welfare because they claim the poor are better served by high-growth economies than with handouts. However, their detractors suggest libertarians are indifferent to community needs and the suffering of the poor, and that they protect big business and aim to enrich themselves with little concern for others. Philosopher Arif Ahmed, a self-described libertarian, will help us gain a fuller understanding of libertarianism, focusing on the philosophical basis of these ideas and their relevance to a range of modern-day ethical, political and economic issues such as immigration, drug control, and free speech.

Arif Ahmed is a senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of Cambridge, and has held visiting positions at universities in Sydney, China, and Italy. He is also a prominent atheist and has debated several high-profile religious thinkers.

■ Wednesday 25th January 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX



Recovering from Religion

Join us to hear Ruth Haydock's moving story about how she grew up

in Northern Ireland and Burkino Faso with her missionary parents. In 2013, Ruth wrote this about her experiences: "In hindsight I always felt somewhat ill at ease in church and I put this discomfort down to being a 'bad Christian'. My dad died suddenly in 2010 aged 52 and my family went into shock. I had been encouraged to believe that people could come back from the dead and that miracles were real, so I was perplexed and distraught that this could happen without God stopping it or fixing it. I had been on the road to unbelief for a while, but my dad's passing fast tracked me towards coming to terms with the fact that I no longer believed in a higher power. Losing my belief in God has taken a long time and it is not an easy process."

Ruth's negative experience of Christianity led to her setting up the first '*Recovering from Religion*' group in Scotland. This group helps and supports those who are in the process of giving up on a belief in a higher power, and people who are dealing with the emotional scars resulting from believing in a god. Ruth is a previous Chair of the Board of the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies. She is a member of Dorset Humanists.

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629



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■ **Sunday 29th January 3.00pm**
Life Centre, 713 Wimborne Rd, Moordown
BH9 2AU. Bournemouth and Poole HMD
Committee.



Pink Triangle: the gay victims of the Holocaust

A short talk by David Warden as part of the Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day. It took until 2001 for the German government to acknowledge that gay men had been victims of the Nazis. David will tell the story of Josef Kohout who was arrested at the age of 22 and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp and later to Flossenberg. Few of the 'pink triangle prisoners' survived the hunger and brutality they encountered and none of their stories emerged until the 1970s. After the war the West German government continued to arrest and imprison tens of thousands of gay men until the law changed in 1969. Since then, numerous 'pink triangle' memorials have been installed in cities all over the world.

David will light a candle during the Act of Commemoration and Humanist celebrant Maggie Pepin will give the Pledge.

Free entry but please book here if you have internet access: www.bitly.com/HMD2017 or just turn up if not.

■ **Sundays 10.15am**



Sunday Walks

Our next walk is 15th January at Abbots Well in the New Forest. 5 miles of beautiful undulating wintry heathland and forest.

Also 12th February (Darwin Day). 5 miles quite strenuous and muddy but with spectacular views from the ridge above Kimmeridge Bay. Optional visit to the new fossil museum (£8 entry).

Please check Meetup.com for further details and any last minute cancellations due to weather conditions.

Phil ☎ 07817 260498

■ **Thursday 2nd February 7.30pm** and every first Thursday evening of the month at Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ



Pub socials

Enjoy stimulating conversation over a drink or two at our pub social evening. Look out for the Dorset Humanists signs on the table.

☎ Dean 07713 858773

■ **Saturday 11th February 12.00 lunch followed by 2pm talk**

Dorset Humanists' Darwin Day at the Bournemouth International Centre



Julian Baggini 'Science without Pedestals'

Celebrate Darwin Day in style with a delicious three course buffet lunch in BIC's Purbeck Lounge, followed by a fascinating talk by our special guest writer, journalist, and co-founder of *The Philosophers' Magazine* Julian Baggini. Humanists and free-thinkers rightly celebrate the many achievements of science, however some go too far in their admiration, and make science the model for all reason. Julian will argue that the scientific method cannot provide the template for reason, partly because there is no such thing as *the* scientific method, and most importantly, science cannot be the source of ethics nor can it debunk it. By challenging the pretensions of those who elevate science too high, we can better appreciate it for what it really is and more fully understand what it means to value reason and rationality.

Tickets £25 includes 12.00 noon welcoming glass of wine or soft drink followed by 3-course Italian buffet lunch in the BIC Purbeck Lounge. Talk only at 2pm £3.00 includes coffee or tea on arrival.

☎ Lyn Glass 01202 767323

📧 lyn.glass@btinternet.com

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Other events of interest...

■ Wednesday 1st February 7.30pm

'Out of the Box' group at the Black Bear Hotel, 14 South St, Wareham BH20 4LT. Free entry – small donation appreciated.

Pentecostalism – the inside story

Rob and Anna Richards

This month our Christian-Humanist dialogue group has the opportunity to hear first-hand stories about the phenomenon of Pentecostalism and the 'Charismatic Movement'. Pentecostalist church leaders Rob and Anna will explore the boundaries between rationalism and spirituality which will be of interest to believers and sceptics alike. 'Out of the Box' is a dialogue group for Humanists and Christians. The emphasis is on listening, learning and respectful discussion.

■ Wednesday 8th February 7.30pm

Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub, Brunswick, 199 Malmesbury Park Road Bournemouth BH8 8PX

The Psychology of Ghosts and Hauntings

Professor Chris French. Opinion polls repeatedly show relatively high levels of belief in ghosts even in modern Western societies. Furthermore, a sizeable minority of the population claim to have personally encountered a ghost. This talk will consider a number of factors that may lead people to claim that they have experienced a ghost even though they may not in fact have done so.

Professor Chris French is a British psychologist specialising in the psychology of paranormal beliefs and experiences, cognition and emotion. He is the head of the anomalistic psychology research unit at Goldsmiths, University of London and appears regularly in the media as an expert on testing paranormal claims.

■ Saturday 25th March 8.00pm

Lighthouse, Poole

Shappi Khorsandi

BHA President and comedian Shappi Khorsandi is celebrating the fortieth anniversary of her arrival in Britain. Tickets £15 (less for seniors). Lyn Glass will have a sign-up sheet at our meetings.

☎ Lyn Glass 01202 767323

✉ lyn.glass@btinternet.com

'One Life' in Poundbury

David Warden will lead another 'One Life' course about Humanism in Poundbury, Dorchester in January and February. Contact David Warden (contact details at bottom of page) for any availability.

Humanism in schools

Cathy Silman has been invited to take a Humanist assembly at Pokesdown Primary School on 17th January. Also, following a joint presentation at our Wareham dialogue group on 'Religion in Schools', Cathy has been invited by church schools worker Hilary Bond to deliver some sessions on Humanism to children in two Purbeck schools in January and early February. Cathy will start with the 10-11 year olds and then, hopefully, this will be followed up with some sessions with younger children. Cathy will briefly introduce Humanism and then take a theme such as homelessness to talk about humanist values.

■ You will have the opportunity to hear and discuss Cathy's and Hillary's presentations on 'Religion in Schools' at our Green House meeting in February.

Accommodation wanted for one of our speakers

Could you offer accommodation to a visiting speaker from another humanist group? His name is Peter Marchant from Isle of Wight Humanists and he will be speaking to us on Wednesday 22nd March.

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Amnesty International

Marilyn Jarrett, Secretary of the Guildford Amnesty International Group, gave us a very informative talk on Human Rights Day in December.

Amnesty has 7 million members today and the UK is the largest section with 750,000 members, 231 groups, and 400 youth groups. Amnesty is funded mainly by donations although it does receive some government funding.

“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

In 2003/04 Amnesty expanded its focus to include women’s rights. It campaigns against practices in some countries whereby, for example, if a rape has been committed the man gets off scot free if he marries the victim. Amnesty campaigns against forced early marriage – as early as eight or twelve years old in some countries. Pregnancies resulting from such early marriages can lead to death for the mother. In Burkino Faso a new law has been passed making 18 the earliest age of marriage for girls.



Amnesty also runs a campaign against the death penalty in countries such as China, North Korea, Iran, and the USA. It also focuses attention on arms control – there are 875 million guns in the world and 12

billion bullets are produced every year. The UK supplies 7% of the world’s arms.



Amnesty’s ‘Stop Torture’ campaign includes protests against judges using confessions obtained via torture. 141 countries still use torture.

Marilyn also informed us about Amnesty’s refugee campaign. A refugee is somebody who:

- Fears being persecuted
- Has left their country
- Is unable to safely return to their country

An asylum seeker is somebody who:

- Claims they are a refugee
- Wants to find safety somewhere else
- Has asked the Government of the country if they can stay

There are 21.3 million refugees in the world today – 86% of whom go to developing countries. Most refugees today originate from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. The major host countries for refugees are Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Ethiopia. Of the 10 million refugees displaced in 2015 nearly 90% found safety in a neighbouring country, leaving 1 million who urgently needed resettlement elsewhere. In 2015-2016, the UK took 40,000 refugees of which 2,000 were from Syria. Germany took 800,000 and Sweden took 170,000. The UK is, however, the largest financial contributor to the refugee camps – having contributed £65m.

Marilyn also informed us about Amnesty’s campaigns on behalf of individuals such as Saudi blogger Raif Badawi who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes simply for blogging about free speech. In the coffee break we had the opportunity to write personal cards to be sent to prisoners.

For further information and how to get involved please visit:

www.amnesty.org.uk/get-involved
www.amnesty.org.uk/giving/join/adult

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Dorset Humanists 'Jane Bannister Winter Appeal'

Our Jane Bannister Winter Appeal this year is in support of Michael House and Mosaic. We hope you will give what you can to these two very worthwhile local charities.

Our Winter Appeal has raised thousands of pounds in previous years. The appeal is named in memory of Jane Bannister who was Chair of Dorset Humanists until 2009.



Supporting bereaved children

Mosaic is a Dorset-wide charity offering a pathway of support to bereaved children, young people and their families. They also work with young people who are facing the death of a loved one.

Mosaic provides individual, family and group support. Every child has the opportunity to attend our residential weekend programme where they can meet others and share their experiences. Dorset Humanists' donation last year went specifically to support this wonderful residential weekend at Leeson House near Swanage.

The charity receives 30% Local Authority funding allocated to support for bereaved children in Dorset. All other money has to be raised through applications to The Big Lottery, Children in Need, charitable trust grants, fundraising, corporate sponsorship, individual support, and donations from local groups.

MICHAEL HOUSE

Rebuilding Lives

Michael House is more than just a hostel; it's a home and our mission has always been to help anyone who is vulnerable. We are a dry house, offering supported accommodation to both male and female residents.

Michael's Mission

- To provide emergency and longer-term accommodation to homeless people and provide related day services.
- To provide encouragement, advice and support to our clients in an environment which enables them to gain a greater sense of self-worth and to move towards a more independent life.
- To work in co-operation and a collaborative way with the relevant statutory agencies and with other voluntary organisations.

£250.00 will provide care and support for one homeless person for one month.

Homelessness has been a major problem in the Bournemouth area over the last twenty years and we always operate to full capacity. Official Rough Sleeper Counts, which tend to minimise the situation, are consistently in double figures. Soup kitchens have been crowded throughout this period. By providing respect, care, and support to all residents, we aim to restore self-esteem, assist with life skills, access further education, facilitate training for employment to enable individuals to rebuild their own lives and reintegrate back into the community. Michael House is a place where our residents feel "safe, warm and inspired".

giftaid it

Please consider gift aiding your donation. Forms available at our meetings or from Simon 07786 318863.

Please donate at our meetings or send a cheque made payable to 'Dorset Humanists Winter Appeal' to Simon Whitlock, Flat 3 Park Court, 47 Western Road, Poole, BH13 6ES. **Closing date end of February.**

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Dorset Humanists Review of Aims

Our mission, vision, aims, and values were adopted in 2013. A 'Review of Aims' has been prepared to take stock of where we are now and to outline some fresh proposals. It was drafted for initial consideration by the committee on 13th December 2016. The committee has agreed some proposals for immediate implementation. Others require a consultation period and decision at the 2016 AGM.

For implementation:

1. Expand the wording of our aims to improve clarity
2. Formalise a 'meet and greet'/events support team
3. Create a committee role to lead a publicity and marketing team with a remit to improve awareness of Humanism and Dorset Humanists
4. Add a diversity aim and create a committee or non-committee diversity officer role to advise on how we can improve our diversity - particularly with regard to age and ethnic diversity
5. Add a pastoral aim to help meet the pastoral needs of our members and appoint a co-ordinator

For consultation and vote at the AGM:

1. Adopt a new vision for Dorset Humanists to replace the previous vision which was focussed on society as a whole rather than our group. Draft wording to be agreed.
2. Implement a discount for Direct Debit membership to reduce admin and improve retention. Details to be finalised.
3. Formalise event donation request: £2 (members) and £3 (visitors).

The full 'Review of Aims' document will be available from our January meeting and we welcome comments. If you can't get to meetings please request a copy via email or post if you don't have email.



Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Garry Taylor

I enjoyed immensely Dr Price's talk on the evolution and psychology of religion. But I think David Warden's criticism that Michael Price's talk was somewhat unbalanced is not a position I would share. I'm sure Michael if pressed would have accepted that there are aspects of religious belief that can cause disillusionment, but the main thrust of his talk were the benefits that religious belief gives people; that its advantages are a more positive and optimistic view of life. I also disagree that in times of great sadness and distress religious belief can cause harm; on the contrary, having faith that the injustices of this world could be rectified in a future existence can be a comfort and solace. Whether this is true, or not, is impossible to either prove or disprove, but the psychological need may be necessary for vast swathes of humanity. That the universe has no purpose or meaning and is indifferent to our fate seems somewhat disturbing. Maybe as humanists we should recognize, if we don't already, that none of us hold the truth in the palm of our hands.

*From Eric Austen, Milborne St Andrew
[extracted from a much longer email]*

I was, as ever, interested to read the monthly Dorset Humanist newsletter. I was also, as ever, interested to read your letter [Chairman's View].

As regards the 'Meaning of Life', a mortal life lived fully is to me what LIFE is about and I know that is true for many, I think all, of my Christian friends as it is for many people that I meet whether religious or not. Life after death if it is true is a bonus not a substitute.

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From Richard Scutt

I was shocked to see this sign outside a church hall in Broadstone and I decided to attend the meeting. I was horrified to have to listen to a presentation from which I learned that Humanists were responsible for all the dreadful things that had befallen Britain since World War Two. You know, decriminalisation of homosexuality, free love outside marriage, challenging God and all that stuff. All backed up by Old Testament slides and threats of retribution.

I just about managed to contain myself till the end but then, trying to be polite and measured, I was able to point out how wrongly the speaker had portrayed us and to give an idea of what we are really about. All received in silence except for the speaker stuttering that he did not mean to say that all Humanists were evil. I left leaflets and asked the congregation to read them as open-mindedly as they could.

At the end, one very pleasant man [the church leader] did ask for a few words on our own and he more or less distanced himself from what had been said by the speaker. David Warden later met the church leader who agreed to present a more balanced view of Humanism at a future meeting based on our Humanist literature.

Bust of Atheist MP Charles Bradlaugh unveiled in Portcullis House

A newly commissioned portrait bust of Charles Bradlaugh MP (1833-91) was unveiled recently in Portcullis House. Sculpted by Suzie Zamit, the bronze bust was donated to the House of Commons by the National Secular Society, which Bradlaugh founded in 1866 (150 years ago this year).



Charles Bradlaugh was first elected to the House of Commons in 1880 for Northampton. He attempted to take his seat in the Commons on several occasions, but was prevented from taking the Oath of Allegiance because of his well-known atheism. One attempt led the Serjeant-at-Arms to imprison him temporarily in a cell in the Clock Tower.

Each of Bradlaugh's failed attempts to take his seat led to a by-election in which he was re-elected. After six years, and having been elected four times, Bradlaugh was finally allowed to sit in the House of Commons. In 1888, his Oaths Act passed as a Private Members Bill, ensuring that MPs had the option to take their seats through a non-religious affirmation.

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Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
January 2017



Humanism has no future if the world's resources cannot be shared equitably and fairly. People cannot live fulfilling lives if they cannot earn enough to repay education costs, buy a house or rent affordably, start a family, and save for a pension. This may sound like old fashioned socialism: take from the rich to give to the poor. But unfettered capitalism redistributes wealth in the opposite direction, like a game of Monopoly, from the bottom to the top. This has been called 'the Matthew principle': "Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." (Matthew 13:12). People with an abundance of social capital, as well as financial capital, will do well in life almost regardless of personal effort or merit. Whereas those who strive and work from a disadvantageous starting position will find it increasingly difficult to get onto any ladders of ascent. To keep the game going you *have* to redistribute.

Unfettered financial capitalism works like a vacuum cleaner, extracting and siphoning wealth for the wealthy, sucking demand out of the economy, and building up dangerous asset bubbles. It also buys off democracy through lobbying, campaign donations, and revolving doors. Goldman Sachs former employees now run central banks including the Bank of England and the European Central Bank. 2016 was the year in which a critical mass of people in the UK and the US demanded a change in the economic operating system to a form of capitalism which is more responsive to democracy, industry, and social values. It used to be called social democracy but in the 1990s social democratic parties merged with the neoliberal Thatcherite consensus which is now falling apart. This explains the appeal of 'populism' but it remains to be seen whether the populists have any genuine answers to the current economic impasse. We'll bring you talks, discussions, and commentary as 2017 unfolds starting with Arif Ahmed's talk on libertarianism.

For the past two years at least we have been given the impression that the refugee crisis is a European crisis. I was surprised to learn, from our Amnesty speaker, that 90 per cent of refugees are hosted in what we would consider to be poor countries. The million or so refugees that needed to be resettled have been resettled – the majority in Germany. I was also surprised to learn that the UK has taken as many as 40,000 refugees – but only 2,000 from Syria. Marilyn Jarrett's talk was a useful corrective to the distorting lens of the media.

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