



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 10<sup>th</sup> June 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW



## Tolpuddle and its Martyrs Radicals, Revolutionaries and Religion

A talk by David Nunn with Eric Austen. How did a small Dorset village come to be internationally recognised as the birthplace of modern British Trade Unionism? And how did six agricultural workers, with nothing more than their labour to offer, come to challenge the might of the British Empire, the aristocracy, and powerful land-owners, causing the Government of the day to back down? Six brave men and their families helped change the balance of power, and their influence continues on into today's environment of challenging employment relations, as Trade Unionists face up to the current Government radically reducing their rights. Adding further spice to this story, religion was also inextricably entwined with these influential events.

Our main speaker David Nunn is a government scientist, trade union rep, and an active member of West Dorset Humanists. Eric Austen will provide some context from the point of view of a radical Christian.

## ■ Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

## The Magic and Sorcery of Alternative Medicine



Having previously revealed the 'Real Secrets of Alternative Medicine' to us, Richard Rawlins will step aside and allow his alter-ego Professor Riccardo, a master of illusion and mind-reading marvel from the Department of

Quackademic Medicine, to present an awe-inspiring demonstration of 'The Magic of Alternative Medicine' - a reality-defying performance that the multi-billion dollar complementary medicine industry would rather you didn't see!

As a psychological illusionist and member of The Magic Circle, retired surgeon Dr Richard Rawlins does not deny that he sets out to take advantage of his medical experience of non-verbal means of communication, body paralanguage, chronemics and advanced telepathy to entertain and entrance, but what is reality and what is deception? As Richard says, "You must be the judge."

Richard's career has included being a lecturer in anatomy at King's College and a specialist surgeon at Guy's Hospital. He has served as Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Health Quality Services, the BMA's Clinical Audit Committee, and the UK Consultants Committee.

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



[dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk)



[@dorsethumanists](https://twitter.com/dorsethumanists)



[Dorset Humanists](https://www.facebook.com/Dorset-Humanists)



[meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists](https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists)

■ **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 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. We warmly welcome regulars and newcomers.

☎ Dean 07713 858773



## Sunday Walks

**11<sup>th</sup> June lunch at 12 noon** at High Corner Inn in the New Forest with South Hants Humanists followed by an optional New Forest walk. Please sign up using the sign-up sheet at our meetings and/or via our page on [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) so that we can confirm numbers.

**16th July** - Circuit of Holes Bay starting in Poole. About 7 miles. Includes Upton Park.

**20th August** - Circuit of Christchurch Harbour starting at Tuckton bridge. About 8 miles. Includes Mudeford Quay and Hengistbury Head.

Please check [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for further details and any last minute cancellations due to weather conditions.

Phil ☎ 07817 260498

■ **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 7.30pm**  
Friends Meeting House 16 Wharnccliffe Road, Boscombe, BH5 1AH. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

*A 'Short Talks Special' to coincide with World Humanist Day*

## Terry Pratchett

Phil Butcher will provide an introduction to Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* books, especially covering his views of science, religion and death. Sally Hawksworth will talk about Diversity and Equal Rights (or Rites) in Terry Pratchett's books.

## Humanism in Star Trek

Aaron Darkwood will give a short talk about Humanism in the Star Trek universe created by humanist Gene Roddenberry.

### Future dates for your diary:

■ **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June 6.00pm** West Dorset Humanists Pub Social at Brewer's Arms, Martinstown, DT2 9LB (just outside Dorchester). A get-together for like-minded people in West Dorset to chat, have something to eat, a beer or tipples of your choice, and maybe a hat debate.

■ **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June Winton Carnival**  
Volunteers required to help erect and then staff our Humanist tent and display. This is always a fun day out and an opportunity for us to promote Humanism in our local area.

■ **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July Bourne Free Festival**  
Volunteers required to walk in parade, help with our tent and display, and engage with the public! 'Straight allies' are very welcome to come along and support this high profile LGBT equality event. The parade is just one hour, starting at 11am.

■ **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1.00pm** visit to the Museum of Jurassic Marine Life, Etches Collection, at Kimmeridge, near Wareham. 1.00 pm start - £15 includes buffet lunch, talk by fossil collector Steve Etches, and museum entry. Please sign-up at one of our meetings and/or Meetup page so that we can confirm numbers for lunch and coordinate transport arrangements to Kimmeridge.

■ **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 7.30pm** Green House. A talk by Dorset Humanist member Carol Wilcox on Land Value Tax. Carol is Secretary of the Labour Land Value Campaign.

■ **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August:** International Conference in London on 'The Rise of Populism and its Threat to Secularism, Democracy and Human Rights' hosted by Humanists UK (the new name for the BHA – see next page) followed by a conference dinner in the evening. [IHEU website](https://www.iheu.org).

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

## Other events of interest...

### ■ Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm

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

## Science and Religion: Worlds Apart or Together?

Keith Fox, Professor of Biochemistry in Southampton University, a practising Christian and Associate Director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, will discuss whether science and religion are opposed or complementary ways of looking at the world. He will also discuss how he has come to practice as a scientist and live with a faith in God. 'Out of the Box' is a dialogue group for Humanists and Christians.

### ■ Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 12 noon / 1.15pm

Friends Meeting House, 16 Wharncliffe Road, Boscombe BH5 1AH. We have been invited to join the Quakers for a light lunch commencing 12 noon before the play detailed below commencing 1.15pm. No fee is charged but donations welcome for 'Freedom from Torture' dedicated to the treatment and rehabilitation of survivors of torture.

## Feeding the Darkness

### Shining a Light on State-Sanctioned Torture through Story, Poem and Song

This critically-acclaimed play by Journeyman Theatre is based on extensive research into the dark world of state-sanctioned torture and its stark impact on victims, perpetrators, families and those who collude in the 'process'. The following day is the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

## Humanism in schools

Chris Street and David Warden presented humanism to around 200 students in seven separate groups at Priestlands School in Lymington. Cathy Silman revisited

Bearwood School and spoke to 180 children from age 5 to 11 in three age groups. Cathy spoke about naming ceremonies and used the 'Circle of Life' clip from *Lion King* as a starter for two older classes. It proved to be a good stimulus to discussion about celebrations in life. David Warden and Cathy Silman are also planning to do some joint visits with the Christian schools workers who spoke to us at the Green House last year. We are also attending an RE Conference in Dorchester at the end of June.

## Dorset LGB&T Equality Network partnership

At our EGM in May, members of Dorset Humanists voted in favour of becoming a partner of the Dorset LGB&T Equality Network. David Warden met with lead officer Alan Mercel-Sanca to plan first steps. Alan will promote awareness of Dorset Humanists on key panels and forums including the NHS, local authorities, and Prejudice Free Dorset. He has also put us in touch with Dorset Race Equality Council so that we can explore partnership with this equality group. One tangible piece of work we can be involved with is to be 'eyes and ears' across Dorset with regards to instances of discrimination against the LGB&T community. Alan will provide us with a questionnaire which can be used for this purpose.



The British Humanist Association is updating its image to better reflect today's world and appeal to new and wider audiences. This change is the culmination of a long and sensitive data-gathering process, working with non-religious people across the UK to help enhance our work for a tolerant world where rational thinking and kindness prevail. The British Humanist Association is now known as 'Humanists UK'. Partner groups branding is under discussion.

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

## A Walk with our Ancestors

### Human Evolution and Archaeology



Emeritus Professor Norman Maclean delighted us at our Moordown meeting in May with an ambitious and wide-ranging talk on early hominid history, human wanderings and early civilisations.

Charles Darwin assumed that we were

descended from chimps but it is now believed that both humans and chimps have a common ancestor, not yet identified, which existed perhaps 13 million years ago. We share 90% of our genome with chimps but our cerebral hemispheres are much more convoluted than theirs and this is correlated with intelligence. Whales and dolphins have a similar brain to humans and are thought to be more intelligent than chimps. Other hominid characteristics not shared by chimps include our puzzling loss of body hair (which may be accounted for by female sexual preference) walking on our hind legs (not an unqualified success to which anyone with back pain will testify), use of tools made from wood, bone and stone (apes do show a little use of tools), use of fire to make meat-eating more palatable and also to protect against lions, specialised hunting techniques, burial of the dead often with ritual, life in grassland rather than woodland, and a more communal life. Our readiness to engage in sex indicates our relatedness to the bonobo chimpanzee.

The Neanderthals were very much like us except shorter and stockier. They evolved in Europe and were descended from *Homo erectus*. We interbred with them but why did they disappear? Theories include a volcanic eruption or a virus like HIV which only affected them.

An extraordinary find in 2013 in a South African cave, now known as *Homo naledi*, suggests that the genus *homo* (that is, humans) may be up to 2.8 million years old.

Numerous human species predate *Homo sapiens* but they are all now extinct. They include *Homo habilis* (2 million years ago), *Homo rudolfensis*, *Homo rhodesiensis/heidelbergensis*, *Homo ergaster/erectus* (1-2 million years ago) and *Homo floresiensis* (so-called 'hobbits' on account of their small size). Remains of a number of hominid species were found in the 1970s in the Denisova cave in Russia including *Homo sapiens*, *Homo neanderthalensis*, and an unknown hominid species which shares its DNA with aboriginals indicating that they wandered all the way to Australia. We know from cave art that there were aboriginals in Australia 60,000 years ago.

Human migration out of Africa started perhaps 500,000 million years ago and *Homo sapiens* appeared about 200-300,000 years ago. The Neanderthals (image left) evolved in Europe up to 250,000 years ago and died out about 50,000 years ago.

Over the last 800,000 years, well within the period of human history, there have been at least nine European Ice Ages with hot periods in between. Norman suggested that what should really concern us is another Ice Age.

In the second part of the talk Norman discussed the Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, and early civilizations. One crucible of civilization was the Fertile Crescent (modern Iraq to Egypt) where crop species like wheat evolved about 9,000 years ago. Further east from about 7,000 years ago the Indus Valley civilisation flourished (modern Pakistan). One of its main cities Harappa was made from brick and it had sewage and irrigation systems. Egypt flourished from about 5,000 years ago.

A land bridge from Russia to North America, the Bering Strait, allowed hominids to travel by foot and by sea all the way down the western coast of America to Patagonia. Charles Darwin encountered their descendants, the Fuegians, and brought some of them back to England.

Recommended reading: Chris Stringer *The Origin of our Species*; Yuval Harari *Sapiens: a Brief History of Humankind*; Jared Diamond *The Third Chimpanzee*.

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



[dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk)



[@dorsethumanists](https://twitter.com/dorsethumanists)



[Dorset Humanists](https://www.facebook.com/Dorset-Humanists)



[meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists](https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists)

# Why everyone should be a feminist



Bournemouth University lecturer Frances Hawkhead provided an absorbing account of the history of feminism at our Green House meeting in May. Rebecca West's definition of feminism

set the tone for the evening: "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute." (1913) A more prosaic definition is provided by writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: "Feminist: A person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes." In that sense at least, we should all be feminists.

The history of feminism has been divided into four 'waves'. First wave feminism is dated from Mary Wollstonecraft (image above) who wrote 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' in 1792. It called for basic rights for women such as education and the right to work. In the 1850s three women, Bessie Rayner Parkes, Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon, founded Queen's College which allowed governesses to hear lectures which had previously been inaccessible to them because they were delivered in Greek and Latin. Emily Davies also founded Girton College, Cambridge. Opponents of education for women claimed that women's brains are naturally inferior because they are smaller. Philosopher Herbert Spencer believed that university education for women would cause disease, namely, menstrual disability and 'anorexia scholastica'.

By the 1880s, women were accepted into universities but not awarded degrees until 1920 (Oxford) and 1948 (Cambridge). Mathematician Philippa Fawcett challenged the belief in male intellectual supremacy when, in 1890, she beat all the men in the Cambridge tripos by a margin of 13%.

Women were considered to be mere chattels. They were the property of their husbands and they had no property rights of their own. The Married Women's Property Acts in the late nineteenth century progressively improved women's rights in this regard. In 1918 women over thirty with their own property or married to a landowner were given the vote. This right was extended to all women over twenty-one in 1928.

Women's ability to work was established during the First and Second World Wars but even in the 1950s and 1960s women were expected to give up work when they got married in order to look after their husbands. It was believed that women were genetically created to do housework and lobotomy was recommended for depressed housewives. Second Wave feminism challenged these views. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* complained that man is 'the default human being' and Betty Friedan in the *Feminine Mystique* (1963) described marriage as 'a comfortable concentration camp'. The Women's Liberation movement of the late 60s and 70s fought for the basic rights to work and equal pay and also a woman's right over her own body. The Equal Pay Act was passed on 1970. Second Wave feminism diversified into black feminism, lesbian feminism, and working class feminism. Men's gender studies also appeared.

Third Wave 'post-feminism' represented a backlash. 'Girl Power' promoted raunchy 'ladettes' and the right to dress scantily and to be a Katie Price lookalike. This movement in turn was criticised as harking back to the old gender divide and being complicit in maintaining the same old system. By 2007, Rosalind Gill was calling for a 'new feminism'. Fourth Wave feminism is recovering the lost histories of women whose achievements have been forgotten or wrongly accredited to men.

📖 'We should all be feminists' Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie [Ted Talk](#)

📖 'Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Differences' Cordelia Fine

---

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



[dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk)



@dorsethumanists



Dorset Humanists



[meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists](https://meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists)

# Dorset Humanists Development Day

Our very first 'development day' generated a huge number of ideas for members to take forward. This initiative was facilitated by our membership development lead Aaron Darkwood who is working to help create member-led support groups that report to the committee. The committee will give every support it can but this initiative depends on you the members to make things happen! A number of members have already indicated their interest in getting involved. If any particular area appeals to you please get in touch (Aaron's contact details bottom right).

Ideas for improving our **diversity** included the following:

- A Dorset Humanists Open Day – a special event to attract the public
- Debates by young people
- Partnership with Dorset Race Equality Council
- Posters/leaflets at language schools

Ideas for improving our **communications** included:

- Write-ups in newspapers and magazines
- Open evenings, bring a friend day, short introduction to humanism talk
- Public debates on BHA campaign topics
- Posters in university buildings
- Car stickers, button badges, wristbands, t-shirts
- Use existing connections within colleges and the University
- Give talks at the University

Ideas for improving our **marketing and publicity** included:

- Poster and leafleting team to distribute to cafés, hotels, community centres, pubs
- Press releases for big name speakers

- Roundabout/billboard/bus advertising is expensive but we could explore charity status to get a reduced price
- Build a humanist centre (would depend on some large legacies!)
- Humanist stall and leafleting in town centre
- Develop our website
- Radio exposure
- Letter writing to local press

Ideas for members' **special interest groups** included:

- A scheme to recycle, sell, or give away items no longer wanted.
- Book club
- Yoga group
- Wellbeing group
- Repair café
- Death café to discuss all matters relating to this often taboo topic
- Theatre trips


Ideas for **increasing member numbers** included:

- Bring a friend or family member day
- Clarify what membership means
- Community action
- Local band at DH events

Ideas for **general support** included:

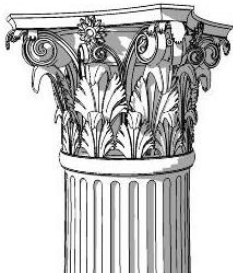
- Technology support
- Help with catering
- Joining the Meet and Greet and pastoral teams
- Developing our car share scheme pool

 [aarondarkwood@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:aarondarkwood@hotmail.co.uk)

 07851 239787

---

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



# Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From Aaron Darkwood*

As many of you know, I was forced to move out when my landlady sold my flat. This caused many issues and time ran out before I found anywhere. A 'mayday' was launched for helpers to help me move and I was overwhelmed by humanist volunteers who joined me in the effort. A big thank you goes out to David Warden, John Hubbard, Phil Butcher, John Kingston, Neil Grant, Cathy Silman, Debbie Coveney, Sally Hawksworth, Chris Smith, Mel and Paul, Sam Cox, Andy Allflatt, Carolyn Gardiner and Dean Robertson who gave up their Sunday mornings to help a humanist in need. This was a great demonstration of community and friendship.

---

## Book review

*God Created Humanism* (2017) Theo Hobson

Theo Hobson attaches the label 'secular humanism' to liberal democracy, human rights, and moral universalism and calls this the public creed of the West. He claims that it was inspired by Christianity but that it is incoherent when it tries to cut itself off from its Christian roots. His main argument in defence of this thesis is his claim that morality cannot be a natural phenomenon. He makes no mention of the work of Frans de Waal who has shown through fieldwork studies how what we call 'morality' is an evolutionary feature of all mammals, especially chimpanzees and other primates (*The Bonobo and the Atheist: in Search of Humanism Among the Primates*). Hobson also defines Christianity itself in liberal terms, having written a book called *Reinventing Liberal Christianity* (2013).

Conservative expressions of Christianity are anything but liberal and universalist. The church is inherently authoritarian, exclusivist and patriarchal but Hobson ignores all of this. He also ignores most of the Greek classical tradition which inspires so much of what we call humanism. He fails to engage with almost all of the writers who have tried to articulate Humanism in the twentieth century including Harold Blackham (UK) and Corliss Lamont (US). Like so many Christian writers he is obsessed with knocking Dawkins and Hitchens and his book is full of patronising put-downs of the 'new atheists'. There is justification perhaps in claiming Christian inspiration for some elements of Humanism but ultimately Hobson's thesis is muddled and unconvincing. *DW*

## Direct Debit – a plea to all members

If you renew your annual membership of DH by cash or cheque please bear in mind that this creates work for our volunteer Membership Secretary Cathy Silman who has to send you an annual reminder. If all of our members joined by direct debit Cathy's workload would reduce dramatically. Next time your membership is due please visit our website and click on the 'join' tab in the menu ribbon and follow the simple process. Our service provider GoCardless is an FCA Authorised Payment Institution ref no. 597190. Dorset Humanists does not hold your bank details.

## Humanist pastoral care

Dorset Humanists has introduced a pastoral support service. Please contact Susan Bryson on 07980 276234 or Cathy Silman on 07817 695615 if you ever need help with a small task, or help with transport, or just someone to talk to. If either Susan or Cathy are unavailable or unable to help they will endeavour to find someone who can. Please make contact and we will do our humanistic best! As this a new venture please also come forward with your suggestions as to how we can develop this support service.

---

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



[dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk)



[@dorsethumanists](https://twitter.com/dorsethumanists)



[Dorset Humanists](https://www.facebook.com/Dorset-Humanists)



[meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists](https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists)



Dorset Humanists  
**Chairman's View**  
June 2017



**T**he big story of the 2017 election, largely ignored by the media, is that both of the two main parties have drawn a line under the libertarian political ideology which has done so much damage to our economy and society since 1980. The ideology which inspired Reagan, Thatcher, Clinton and Blair has been dropped – at least in the manifestos of the parties seeking office. Both parties have promised an industrial strategy, hundreds of billions in infrastructure investment, a massive housebuilding programme, action to tackle the ever-widening ratio of executive to shopfloor pay, a rise in the minimum wage, and a form of stakeholder capitalism. Both appeal to ‘the common good’ rather than selfish individualism. This break with the past has split the Labour Party in two whereas Theresa May might just get away with redefining Conservatism in communitarian terms that pre-date Thatcher. Her key adviser, Nick Timothy, has had ‘conversations’ with Maurice Glasman who was an adviser to Ed Miliband. No wonder she has been accused of nicking his policies. The post-Thatcherite political philosophy taking shape is rooted in human values and shared prosperity rather than a libertarianism which abdicates human control of everything to inhuman market forces. It will take decades to repair the damage that was done by this ideology and powerful vested interests will do everything they can to impede its overthrow. But the fact that the political rhetoric has changed should, I believe, be welcomed by humanists.

**O**ne of many intelligent questions asked by students during my visit to Priestlands School was ‘What’s the point of Humanism?’. It’s not easy to reduce Humanism to one single ‘point’ but I’ll have a go. For me, the point of Humanism is to help organize my thoughts and feelings about what it means to be human. It is to hold up an ideal of how we can live good and fulfilling lives based on our own intelligence and natural empathy rather than supposed revelations from imaginary gods. Humanism has always been based on the premise that a rational and creative alternative to religion, rooted in a tradition of ethical thought, has more to offer than pure individualism. I sometimes explain that a humanist group is like a secular ‘church’ – bearing in mind that the Greek root of ‘church’ simply means ‘gathering’ or ‘assembly’. A humanist group can stand apart from, and be critical towards, the prevailing culture rather than be totally immersed in it. When we do this, we may find some surprising alliances with other groups committed to human values and the common good.

---

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



[dorsethumanists.co.uk](http://dorsethumanists.co.uk)



@dorsethumanists



Dorset Humanists



[meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists](https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists)