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Humanists UK

national  
secular  
society

IHEU  
International  
Humanist and  
Ethical Union



# Dorset Humanists

*Atheists and agnostics for a better world*

■ **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2.00pm** Moordown  
Community Centre, Coronation Avenue,  
BH9 1TW

## It's Good to Talk: Pastoral Care for the Non-Religious



Teddy Prout

People in need of  
pastoral support,  
whether in hospital,  
hospice, prison,  
university, or the armed  
forces, should be able  
to speak to someone  
who shares their

worldview. Until recently, it has been  
assumed that religious chaplains should be  
the sole providers of this kind of service. But  
with over half of British society now  
identifying as non-religious the provision of  
non-religious pastoral care is long overdue.

The Non-Religious Pastoral Support  
Network, part of Humanists UK, has  
accredited nearly 200 non-religious pastoral  
carers who are now working in nearly 100  
healthcare and other institutions.

Teddy Prout is the Director of Community  
Services at Humanists UK. In this talk he  
will tell us the story of the network, its  
ambitions for the future, and the  
discrimination it still faces.

■ **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm**  
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

## Is There Anybody Out There?

With astronomer Bob Mizon MBE FRAS



Bob Mizon  
investigates past and  
future speculation on  
what is often called  
the ultimate question  
in astronomy. Is  
speculation on  
extraterrestrial life  
something that  
started in the 1950s?  
How can we search  
for it? How could we  
communicate with it if

it revealed itself? Could alien beings come  
to Earth? Or are we simply alone in an  
unimaginably big universe? To paraphrase  
Newton, we may be searching the beach for  
prettier shells and pebbles while the great  
ocean of truth lies all undiscovered before  
us.

Bob Mizon is a Fellow of the Royal  
Astronomical Society and co-ordinator of  
the Commission for Dark Skies which aims  
to turn back the tide of light pollution that  
has seriously affected our view of the stars  
over the last fifty years.

This is Bob's second talk for Dorset  
Humanists. His last superb talk to us was in  
June 2013 on "Images of the Unimaginable:  
The Hubble Space Telescope".

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

HMRC Charities Ref No EW10227



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



@dorsethumanists



Dorset Humanists



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

■ **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June 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

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June 3.30pm** – a walk in celebration of World Humanist Day, Southampton. See special panel opposite.

All walks are between about 6 and 9 miles and usually have an optional short cut. Please check [Meetup](#) for further details and any last minute cancellations due to weather conditions. Phil ☎ 07817 260498



## Short Talks

■ **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm** Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

## Are things getting better or worse?

David Warden and Phil Butcher will introduce two books by Steven Pinker, the Canadian-American cognitive psychologist.

Phil's talk is based loosely on Pinker's 2011 book *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* and on his TED talk on 'The Surprising Decline in Violence' which he gave while preparing the book.

David will talk about Pinker's latest book, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* in which he writes about universal human nature, humanism, the threat from authoritarian populism, religious fundamentalism, and radicalism of the left and right, but overall

his optimism for the future of humanity based on the stunning progress we have made so far.

Each talk is around 20 minutes followed by questions and discussion. See [Meetup](#) for further details.

**Calling budding speakers!** Do you have a short talk up your sleeve? Contact Phil Butcher if you would like to discuss your idea for a short talk.

✉ [phil@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:phil@dorsethumanists.co.uk)



## World Humanist Day Joint Walk & Talk

Join humanists from across the south of England in Southampton on Sunday 17th June for an early celebration of World Humanist Day. Our day will start at the Former Wool House, on the corner of Town Quay and Bugle Street (SO14 2AR) at 3.30pm with a sociable stroll around some of the historic sites of Southampton, a city known for its history as a major port and the departure point for the Titanic.

Following our walk, we'll hear from Richard Acton on 'Having More Productive Disagreements'. Richard is a former president of Humanist Students and is currently a PhD candidate at Southampton University. Attendees are welcome to stay for a meal and/or drinks.

The day will be an excellent opportunity to meet like-minded people from the south of England as we get together to celebrate humanism and our humanist community. The event is hosted by the South Central England Humanist Network. Please RSVP on [Meetup](#).



■ **Thursday 21st June 12.30pm**  
Day's Buffet Restaurant. Join us for a lunch to celebrate:

## World Humanist Day

This popular buffet restaurant includes cuisines for every taste including Chinese, Thai, Indian, and Italian. St Peter's Quarter, 68 Old Christchurch Road, BH1 2AD (in the arcade under T K Maxx – access either via St Peter's Road or Old Christchurch Road). £9.00 per head – pay on entry.

☎ Lyn Glass 01202 767323  
✉ [lyn.glass@btinternet.com](mailto:lyn.glass@btinternet.com)

### Future dates for your diary...

■ **Weds 25<sup>th</sup> July 7.30pm** *Green House*  
How did Christianity become the religion of the Roman Empire? A talk by journalist and author Catherine Nixey.

■ **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July 10.00-4.00pm**  
*Moordown Community Centre*  
Leadership Training day for the South Central England Humanists Network led by David Warden. 'How to run a successful humanist group'. If you are interested in becoming a humanist group leader and helping your local group to succeed then you will benefit from attending this course.

✉ [chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk)

### Other events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm**  
Sandford Heritage Hall, Sandford Rd, Nr Wareham, BH20 7AJ (Next to Pine Martin Grange Care Home) 'Out of the Box' Humanist/Christian dialogue group presents

## The Future of Religion and Belief

Is God dead or is he back? David Warden will present some fascinating graphs and statistics from the Pew Research Center showing dramatic differences in the religiosity of different countries and the dramatic rise of the 'non-religious' in some societies but not in others. He will facilitate a discussion on the future of religion and belief. More information on [Meetup](#).

■ **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June 6.00pm**  
Bournemouth University Talbot Campus BH12 5BB Lecture theatre KG01  
Kimmeridge House. Hosted by Dorset for Europe and Our Future Our Choice!  
Admission by ticket only £6.00 (free for students and under 26)

## A C Grayling: 'Why Brexit Must be Stopped'

A not-to-be missed opportunity to hear and question Professor A.C. Grayling on the critically important issues of Brexit. Our Future Our Choice! is a group of young people who believe Brexit is a disaster and should be democratically stopped.

Tickets [here](#)

■ **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm**  
Skeptics in the Pub at Brunswick Pub, 199 Malmesbury Park Rd, BH8 8PX. £3

## Fallacies of Probability and Risk

This talk by Norman Fenton, Professor of Risk Information Management at Queen Mary London University, will highlight flawed decision-making in many critical areas such as medicine, the law and transport safety planning. He will explain how a simple mathematical formula, Bayes' Theorem, can help avoid most of these errors when coupled with causal models of risk.

■ **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1.30pm/3.30pm**  
Bournemouth University Festival of Learning.

## Professor Alice Roberts

Professor Roberts will give two lectures on her book *Tamed*. She will be exploring the ancient roots of the bonds between humans and species like dogs and horses, and looking at how archaeology and genetics come together to help us uncover these deep histories. Full details [here](#)





**Human Rights Champion: Dorset Humanist and grandmother Chris Smith proudly taking part in the Bourne Free March last year.**

## Could you be a Human Rights Champion?

You don't have to be LGB or T to march in Bournemouth's LGBT rights parade. All you need is a bit of passion in your guts about the way in which LGBT people are still being treated around the world: shunned, arrested, imprisoned, and executed.

Every year for the last few years, a merry band of Dorset Humanists have marched in the parade to draw attention to the human rights struggle for LGBT rights around the world.

But we would love to make a bigger impact with more numbers. Could you be a human rights champion this year?

It's not all doom and gloom however. Bourne Free is a fantastic carnival of diversity supported by dozens of different groups and major employers in Bournemouth. Those who join us are often surprised about how much fun it is to take part.

After the parade, we engage with hundreds of residents and visitors to Bournemouth at our brightly decorated tent in the Lower Gardens. It's our showcase event of the year when Dorset Humanists is open and visible to the world.

Will you sign up and be part of it this year? Sign-up sheets are at our meetings or email David Warden.

■ Saturday July 14<sup>th</sup> 10.00am

## Bourne Free Festival

Meet at our Dorset Humanists tent in lower gardens at 10.100am for a 10.15am departure to walk to the start point on Eastcliff. Sign up in advance to get a Dorset Humanist T shirt, or if bringing friends they can wear a plain white one on the day. Sign up now on [Meetup](#). Also, volunteers are needed to help set up and run the stall.

■ Dorset Humanists is a partner of the Dorset LGB&T Equality Network and of Humanists UK LGBT section.

*From Carolyn Gardiner, one of our champions last year*

Last year was the first Pride Day I've attended. I thoroughly enjoyed the day. I had not heard of the rubber-clad puppies before but a bunch of us from Dorset Humanists followed them in the Parade. Much to the amusement of friends and family I found myself in a photograph with them featured in a gay magazine. They were such a fun bunch of guys and one woman. They didn't bite and engaged well with the crowds lining the streets who also seemed to thoroughly enjoy the parade.

I am not gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual but a mature woman who enjoyed nearly 49 years of a happy marriage. My mind was broadened when nearly 30 years ago our daughter at 19 disclosed to my husband and I that she was gay. She and her partner could not be more loving parents of their adopted son now aged 5. I am a firm believer in equality for all. I look forward to this year's event with my Dorset Humanist friends whether gay or not.



## Living Better Together



*A personal view by  
Richard Scutt*

I thought that Alan Hayes' talk to us at Moordown Community Centre only scratched the surface of this important topic and I believe that more should be made of it. After all, we humanists want to make things better in the world and we believe that applying humanist ideas in our dealings with other people and encouraging them to do the same, will provide perhaps the best way we have come across to get us towards living more peaceful and therefore contented lives.

Unfortunately there are formidable obstacles which make me wonder if we humans will ever get there – or even close. One of our regular members always says that ideals like this are doomed because of human nature and I think he has a point when one considers human features like self-preservation, self-interest, our instinct to protect and advance one's own, lack of empathy, apathy, bigotry, lack of willingness to compromise, greed, economic regimes which reward greed, partisanship, national self-interest, differences in culture and beliefs and so on. The fact that so few issues in life are clearly black or white doesn't help. How are we ever to overcome these to the point where humanity ceases to make such a pigs' breakfast of peaceful co-existence? Yet we must try. No doubt much intellectual and caring effort has been put into the subject and I just wonder if it is something we at Dorset Humanists could explore further.

If Humanists UK membership is 55,000 that represents something less than one member per thousand of UK population, yet 50% plus are not religious. This brings me to my hobby horse that, sadly, most of the non-religious find religion, or any alternative, irrelevant – so how do we engage them? Perhaps we should re-emphasise the common ground with religions, most of whose members do want the same kind of world that we want (love thy neighbour as thyself, golden rule etc.)

whereas the other version (do unto others before they do it to you) seems more and more prevalent.

■ Phil Butcher and David Warden will be presenting a more optimistic view of the human situation at our Short Talks meeting in June based on the work of Steven Pinker and, time permitting, Hans Rosling (see events listings).

## Dorset Humanists Choir



Who is this angelic choirboy?

More than twenty potential choristers turned up to the inaugural meeting of a possible Dorset Humanists Choir at our last Moordown meeting. Choirmaster Bob Burke had the choir up and

singing in less than an hour! You do not need to be an accomplished singer to join the choir – all are welcome. If you or a friend are interested in joining in please contact Simon Whipple.

✉ [simon.whipple@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:simon.whipple@hotmail.co.uk)

## Humanist pastoral care

Dorset Humanists has 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 Susan or Cathy are unable to help they will try to find someone who can.

## Sun explains Humanism!

*Report by Aaron Darkwood*

Britain's second highest-selling newspaper had a massive piece on Humanism on 22nd May. Certainly an opportunity to capitalise on. Having a full page spread explaining what Humanism is to 13 million readers is a massive gift of media coverage, brought about by Dale Winton's funeral.

Read the article [here](#)





## Brexit and Democracy

*Jonathan MS Pearce and David Warden debated Brexit and Democracy at our May Green House meeting.*

David set out why he believes it was right to vote Leave. He started his speech by quoting Wolfgang Schäuble, former Minister of Finance (Germany) and member of the Eurogroup: “Elections cannot be allowed to change economic policy.” David said this is one of the most disturbing things he’s ever heard which goes to heart of why he thinks we were right to leave the EU. He continued: “I believe we should maintain democratic control over economic policy – unlike the EU”. He claimed that “The EU is not a democracy – it’s a crackpot Utopian project that’s had its day” and that “the EU’s economic ideology has caused economic ruin and this is highly dangerous for the future of Europe”.

David traced the rise of the economic ideology of neoliberalism which promotes privatisation, financial deregulation, and austerity and which is indifferent to unemployment and extreme inequality. Neoliberalism was hardwired into the way the EU operates from the time of the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and is essentially irreversible because the EU is impervious to democratic protest. Following the great crash of 2008, the euro was exposed as an economic straitjacket. The Eurozone is locked into policy responses which have devastated the economies of Greece and other European countries and which is stoking xenophobia and dangerous right-wing populism across Europe.

David also explained Overt Monetary Financing (OMF) – also known as ‘People’s QE.’ The core element of this is that with our own central bank the UK can never run out of money and the government can stimulate economic activity without adding a penny to the national debt or stoking inflation. The UK can decide democratically to move beyond neoliberalism because we

have the ultimate weapon: our own currency.

In his opposing speech, Jonathan MS Pearce asked “Has Brexit represented a win for democracy? In short, no. We have a representative democracy whereby we democratically vote for a local MP to represent us in Parliament by voting on issues on our behalf, issues that are often too complex for us to become experts on in any meaningful way. We voted for MPs who overwhelmingly supported Remain.” He said “The EU referendum was advisory – not legally binding – but the government took it to be legally binding”.

“One of the most important variables that contributes to making sound decisions is good information which seems to have been in short supply during the referendum – largely due to misinformation”. Jonathan said that “a series of significantly misleading articles misled the British public when they voted to leave the EU... right-wing media are feeding misinformation and dictating the discourse”.

“What I am trying to say is that the EU debate and vote was not about democracy but about who controls and disseminates the information”.

“All along, I have argued that the whole thing was better seen as a referendum on immigration”.

“I am an internationalist. I don’t want to continue to see a regression into nationalist politics as we are seeing in Poland and Hungary. Progressive, collaborative politics is being shunned in favour of shrinking back into our tribal domains. We won’t solve international problems without working together internationally”.

“The EU is undoubtedly representative – more so than many national parliaments including Britain’s. The European Parliament is made up of MEPs from all 28 member states, each elected using various forms of proportional representation. The European Commission itself is made up of civil servants recruited from all the member states. National parliaments should call their own government ministers to account for what they do in Brussels. It is up to the national press and broadcasters to fill the



public in on what goes on in Brussels. There are opportunities for direct citizen involvement in EU matters. Citizens can lobby their own MEPs and it is often individual complaints that lead to groundbreaking legal judgements by the European Court of Justice. If an EU-wide petition attracts more than 1 million signatures the Commission must bring proposals before the Parliament.”

“Clearly the EU structure has defects when assessed by the normal standards of Western democracy but I would argue that the British Parliament, with its unelected House of Lords and an unrepresentative House of Commons in terms of the balance of parties to votes cast) is even less democratic.”

“National parliaments have all agreed to pool sovereignty in the EU institutions. National governments, through the Council of Ministers, are the most powerful influence in shaping EU decisions. The EU is or working to be a democratic organisation. It has failings but national governments have as many if not more.”



## Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From John Kingston after the debate between David Warden and John Macdiarmid*

John Macdiarmid said that only through God could we avoid ethical relativism. He gets his objective knowledge of what is good from God.

I simply asked him how he knows that what God tells him is good is actually good. Either he has some other means of judging this, in which case he does not need God after all, or he defines "Good" as "what God wills". If the latter, to say "God is good" is meaningless. It is the same as saying "God is God". So we do not actually know

whether God is good or bad. Unfortunately, John did not attempt an answer to my question.

On separate occasions I have asked an evangelical Christian and a Jehovah's Witness what they would do if God told them to kill a particular race of people and their response has been that God must have a good reason for it, so they would accept it.

*From Geoff Kirby after a debate on God for West Dorset Humanists with David Warden and Dave Pegg*

I want to thank David Nunn on behalf of everyone at last evening's debate for setting up this very successful event and facilitating the two-hour debate. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole evening! I doubt that anyone actually changed their view on the existence of God – that debate has been going on for over two thousand years so a breakthrough was unlikely last evening. However, the two speakers and some very thoughtful questions from the audience gave us a lot to think about.

*From Mark Horsford, Chief Executive, Michael House, about our Winter Appeal*

On behalf of all at Michael House, I thank you for the generous gift of £487 recently received. It is so wonderful to know that we have friends like you who acknowledge the work that is being done by the team at Michael House to help our residents and those in need.

*From Beth McFetridge, Corporate Fundraising Assistant, Mosaic – Supporting Bereaved Children*

I would like to thank you and everyone at Dorset Humanists for your kind and generous donation of £487. Without the generosity of people like you we would not be able to continue to provide different pathways of support such as the Residential Weekend. The benefit the children and young people get from spending a couple of days with other children who have been through similar experiences is immeasurable and forms a hugely important part of the work we do.





## Dorset Humanists **Chairman's View**

June 2018

**I**n our recent debates with Christians it has become increasingly clear to me that any old argument will do when it comes to their defence of belief in God. Religion provides powerful psychological rewards including the belief that the Universe was created especially for human beings, that the creator of the Universe is personally looking after your interests, that all of your moral debts have been paid, and that you will live forever in paradise. For men there's an additional powerful effect: the enhancement of male power which comes from being chosen to join God's elite corps and dispense spiritual benefits to others. You could call this the ultimate spiritual Viagra. Rational objections to belief are almost powerless against this array of psychological rewards. What then is the point of debating with religious believers? I think it's a good thing to do regardless of the slight possibility of people changing their minds. As humanists, we should be well-informed about the rationalisations given for belief otherwise we can be dismissed as ignorant atheists who have no answers for the big human questions. Religious believers do think that their claims are evidence-based. We should know how to counter their claims. And making friends across the divides of different worldviews is also a good thing in itself. It contributes to human understanding and peaceful co-existence.

**I**n our EU debate, Jonathan Pearce and I found common cause against neoliberalism – the political and economic ideology which has dominated the globe since around 1980. One of the beliefs of neoliberalism is that economics is a neutral science. Economics, however, is anything but neutral. It is largely enslaved to neoliberalism. Another is that economic policy should be insulated against government and democratic elections. This is one of my chief complaints against the EU as exemplified in the quotation by Wolfgang Schäuble, "Elections cannot be allowed to change economic policy." Unfortunately, in the wake of the EU referendum, more and more people have come to share this dim view of democracy. There is widespread vilification not only of politicians but also of ignorant and xenophobic voters. The problem with this trend is that the more we vilify the participants in democracy and the more trust we put in so-called economic 'experts', the more power we unwittingly give to powerful actors who are more than happy to see democracy wither. One way to counter this trend is to reinvigorate democracy by public education and debate. Dorset Humanists, an educational charity, will continue to play its part. *David Warden*

