



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 14th March

Lunch 1.15pm AGM 2.15pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Indian-style lunch & Annual Meeting

We'd love you to join us for a **free** lunch at 1.15pm. Then from 2.15pm listen to reports on our activities over the past year and discuss plans and priorities for the year ahead. The AGM provides a great opportunity for all members to influence how Dorset Humanists grows and develops in the future, so please come along and contribute your ideas. If you wish to propose a motion for debate and vote at the AGM, or nominate yourself or another member for a committee position, please contact us. Only members can vote so join soon! There are currently two vacancies on the committee. We welcome nominations from members with skills and time to offer and the ability to work well in a team. *Please note start times.*

■ Wednesday 25th March 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, Grove Road BH1 3AX



2015 Election Special

To avoid disappointment please turn up early. Numbers will be strictly limited.

With **Kim Fendley** (Parliamentary candidate for North Dorset Labour Party), **Michael Plummer** (Parliamentary



Tony Tiffany 1940-2015. We are very sad to announce the death of Tony who launched Dorset Humanists in 1996. More inside.

candidate for Bournemouth West Liberal Democrats), **Elizabeth McManus**, (Parliamentary Candidate for Bournemouth West Green Party) and **Martin Houlden** (Parliamentary candidate for Bournemouth West UKIP). We also anticipate a representative for the Conservative Party.

As the nation gears itself up for the general election on Thursday 7th May, we present a pre-election party policy event. Five panelists representing the five main political parties will each have ten minutes to convince you their manifesto is most able to deliver the kind of society which humanists

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



dorsethumanists.co.uk



@dorsethumanists



Dorset Humanists



meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists

desire. To gain our support they will need to offer appropriate policies on humanist marriage, assisted dying, faith schools and the contracting-out of public services to religious groups, as well as demonstrating broader considerations of human wellbeing and fairness relating to housing, welfare, a living wage, taxation, austerity cuts, immigration, the NHS, employment, energy and the environment. Which party will come out as the most humanist? Join us at this pre-election special to gain a better appreciation of our parties' plans, challenge the panelists in the Q&As, and cast your 'vote' in our mock election.

■ **Sunday 15th March 10.30am**

Start from Bournemouth Pier approach 10 miles or shorter

Hengistbury Walk

Fourteen happy humanists joined our last walk! The next one is a ten-mile leisurely walk to Hengistbury head starting out from Bournemouth Pier. Breathtaking views looking out across to the Isle of Wight and Hengistbury head which will be in view for most of our journey. Those wanting to make this a little shorter can join us at Boscombe pier on the roundabout at 11:30, or alternatively leave us at Southbourne. We will cover Boscombe pier, Southbourne seafront, the head itself and the sand spit. Frequent stops for photos, drinks breaks, snacks and a sandwich. More dates for your diary:

Holes Bay 5th April – 7 miles

Old Harry 19th April – 11 miles

Walks Disclaimer: Walks are led by Aaron for and on behalf of Dorset Humanists. No liability can be accepted. All persons attend at their own judgement. Full details of the nature of the walk are available so that individuals can assess their own abilities. Walks will often have 'escape' points where you can join for part of the walk, and then leave via bus or other public transport. All walks are for adults.

☎ Aaron - Message via Meet-Up or phone 07851 239787

■ **Thursday 2nd April 7.30pm** and every first Thursday evening of the month at 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

■ **Saturday 11th April 2.00pm**

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Why Secularism Matters



A talk by Keith Porteous Wood Executive Director of the National Secular Society.

The National Secular Society (NSS) has been campaigning against religious privilege and for a secular society since 1866. Keith's talk will set out the National Secular Society's view of secularism and religious privilege and why the need for a secular state is more pressing than ever. He will also consider why achieving this aim has become more difficult, how changes to the traditional religious lobby and vested interests have changed and how the National Secular Society has responded. This will be an opportunity to learn more about the National Secular Society's work including its current campaigns on education, equality and human rights.

In 2007 Keith received the Distinguished Service to Humanism Award from the International Humanist and Ethical Union for his work in building up the National Secular Society and campaigning for secularism both nationally and internationally. Dorset Humanists is affiliated to the National Secular Society.

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



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

Other local events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 11th March 7.30pm**
Bournemouth Sceptics in the Pub at The Brunswick, Charminster, BH8 8PX
Free entry (donations appreciated)

Quacks!

Doctors of Delusion, Medical Mavericks and Healthcare Hucksters

In this talk, Dr Richard Rawlins tells of some of the more egregious practitioners of pseudo-medicine, purveyors of false promises and fraudulent charlatans who have preyed on the vulnerable and gullible down the ages.

📧 bournemouth.scepticsinthepub.org
☎ Chris Street 01425 673477

■ **Thursday 26th March 2015 – 7.30pm**

West Dorset Humanists at the Wessex Royale Hotel 32 High West Street
Dorchester DT1 1UP £3.00 entry

Quakerism and Humanism: similarities and differences

A talk by Hazel Hudson. Hazel has been a Quaker and a Humanist for many years and is a member of the British Humanist Association.

☎ 07810 360700 or 07411 077058
westdorsethumanists@hotmail.com
www.westdorsethumanists.org

■ **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. 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 Stravakopoulou**, 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. We would urge anyone interested in going to purchase their tickets as early as possible.

📧 humanism.org <http://goo.gl/V6uYTD>

☎ 020 7324 3060

Please let David Warden know if you are going.

■ **QED Weekend of 25-26th April**

Palace Hotel, Manchester. £99 for the full weekend (£69 for students and under 18s).

QED is a science and skepticism convention. Great speakers from the worlds of science and entertainment will be there for a weekend celebration of science, reason and critical thinking. Don't delay – [grab your QED ticket today](#)

Dorset Humanists joins IHEU



Dorset Humanists is now an associate member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union based in London. Founded in

1952 in Amsterdam by Harold Blackham, Julian Huxley and others, IHEU is the sole global umbrella organisation embracing Humanist, atheist, rationalist, secularist, skeptic, *laïque*, ethical cultural, freethought and similar organisations worldwide. It's an international NGO with representation on various UN committees and other international bodies. It seeks to influence international policy through representation and information, to build the humanist network, and let the world know about the worldview of Humanism.

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



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)

Tony Tiffany

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Tony Tiffany who was the founder of Dorset Humanists in 1996. Tony died peacefully on 14th January after two months in hospital. A trained Humanist celebrant, Tony conducted thousands of non-religious ceremonies in the local area and he attended our meetings as often as his busy schedule allowed.

Tony was born in Northampton in 1940, one of four boys. His youngest brother was killed in a bicycle accident at the age of 15. He used this early experience of bereavement to inform his work and it added an authenticity to his empathy for grieving families.

He just missed having to do compulsory National Service and when he left school he started a printing apprenticeship. People in the printing industry still mention him with great respect for his skill and professionalism. At one stage he went to Holland as he had found a job printing money (for the proper authorities). On his return to the UK he set up a graphics and picture framing business. He was very successful but when it became too stressful he sold the company for a healthy sum. He subsequently moved to Bournemouth to become a full-time carer for his cousin Dennis who had a learning disability. He also decided to become a Humanist celebrant. In this work he was a pioneer and found great satisfaction helping many thousands of grieving people with his well-crafted words and gentle humour.

Tony's interests included cordon bleu cookery, amateur dramatics, reading obscure books on all kinds of weird and wonderful subjects, and singing in the Bournemouth Male Voice Choir.

Tony was admitted into hospital in November with a high temperature and suspected septicaemia. There were many interventions and complications, along with times when he seemed to be making a good recovery. He showed great strength and didn't complain but said several times that he'd had enough and was ready to go. He died peacefully on 14th January.

He married and separated twice, and leaves two children from his first marriage. His funeral ceremony was conducted by Daphne Seymour-Hammond and Keith Shirland.

■ There will be a memorial gathering at Tony's favourite restaurant Casa Pepe in Holdenhurst Road, Bournemouth on Tuesday 31st March at 7.00pm. Please contact Keith or Daphne if you intend to go (see Letters for contact numbers).

Eileen Brennan

We are very sad to announce the death of Eileen Brennan on 8th February at the age of 89. Eileen was a longstanding member of Dorset Humanists and very active in Bournemouth U3A. She had a strong interest in philosophy, religion and politics. The rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza was a particular favourite of hers. Eileen was born on the Isle of Wight and her father was a professional soldier. Consequently, the family moved around a great deal including to Ireland, Kent, Wiltshire, Sussex and Bournemouth. In the War, Eileen was a telephonist for a field army hospital when soldiers were returning from the D-Day landings. She also worked for BAe at Hurn Airport. Eileen lived in Moordown. She never married but leaves a brother and two nieces. Eileen's funeral will be conducted by humanist celebrant Daphne Seymour-Hammond at Bournemouth Crematorium on 20th March and 11.15am.

Young Humanists

We are thinking about starting a Young Humanists Group. We'd like to attract young people roughly 10+ and/or 14+ who are interested in science, technology and philosophy, who are curious about the world and who believe you can live a good life without believing in God. For the first meeting (date to be confirmed) we could invite Bournemouth Natural Science Society to lead an 'evolutionary detective trail'. If you know of a young person who might be interested please email Cathy Silman. catherinesilman311@btinternet.com

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

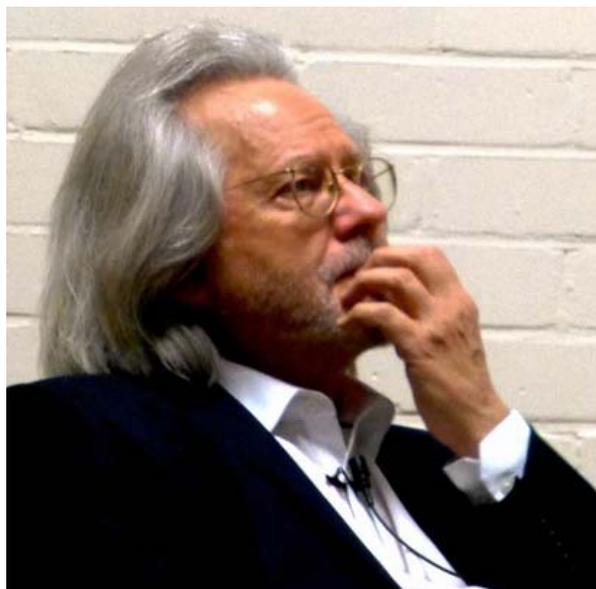
Darwin Day 2015

On 12th March, 100 members and friends gathered at Bournemouth Natural Science Society to hear A C Grayling's delightful talk on the revolution in human thought which took place between Copernicus and Darwin. We publish below edited extracts from Anthony's talk – also available on YouTube.

The ideals and outlook of Humanism are as old if not older than Socrates. In my view Socrates was the first president of all Humanist associations.

Copernicus was one of the two great pillars of the transition of thought – from Copernicus to Darwin – that occurred between the middle of the 16th century and the middle of the 19th century. Copernicus's book *On the Revolutions of the Heavens* was published just before his death in 1543. Darwin was the keystone of the arch – the clincher at the end of a process of thought. His book *The Descent of Man* made it clear that we are descended from earlier forms. The impact of this view on Darwin's contemporaries was extraordinary.

A moment of fracture in the hegemony over the human mind by religious orthodoxy had come in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittenberg. These were hammer blows in the marmoreal [marble-like] structure of the Church's hold over what was permissible to believe. Constantine had declared in 313 that Christianity was permissible. By 317 Christianity was the *only* religion which was permissible. At this time Christian patristic writers wrote apologetics – defending the doctrines of the church. By the high medieval period there was no longer any need to write apologetics because by that time it had become quite literally a criminal offence not to believe those doctrines. You didn't have to persuade anybody. You just killed them if they said they didn't agree with you. It was extremely dangerous to be unorthodox and to fail to be orthopractic – to fail to practise your religion. Observance was required. So by the time of Luther it was a totalitarian ideology and people found it extremely difficult to see the world differently. They were so firmly supplied with a thick pair of conceptual spectacles



Professor A C Grayling - a pensive moment before addressing our 2015 Darwin Day celebration Photo by Aaron

that the world just couldn't look any other way.

There's parallel in our own day. Catholicism and Islam are both conscious of how effective early indoctrination is. It's a very painful process for people to break away from those beliefs. So if we compare a Muslim in a Muslim-majority country today with a Christian in the 13th century you will see there is a great commonality. That is why Luther was such a revolution. He was jolly angry that the Church was selling indulgences so that you could get a million years off purgatory for ten bob [50p]. The big mistake of Bernie Madoff [an American financier convicted of fraud] was that he promised returns in *this* life. If only he'd copied what the Church has been doing successfully for centuries [laughter].

What Luther was asserting was liberty of conscience. Luther's claim was that there are no intermediaries between the individual and the deity. To assert independence from the intermediary structure [the Church] was a massive revolutionary step. This led to the realisation that if you are entitled to liberty of conscience in religious matters then you are entitled to liberty of thought more generally. Luther didn't come out of nowhere. A couple of decades before in 1492, Niccolò Leonicensis published *De Erroribus Plinii* which no doubt you were reading in the bath last night – 'On the Errors of Pliny'.

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

[Pliny the Elder's 37-volume encyclopaedia *Natural History* completed in the year 77 had, for centuries, served as the Western world's primary source of scientific information and theory.] Leonico noted a large number of errors in Pliny's work which by itself was quite a significant moment. The general view was that the remote past was a golden age and it was a very serious matter to disagree with the ancients. So Leonico's book was a revolutionary dart.

Even so, when Copernicus wrote his book about the revolutions of the heavenly bodies the preface stated that the Sun isn't literally at the centre of the universe – this was just a 'model' to get rid of Ptolemy's epicycles. For anyone to assert that they believed the literal truth of the Copernican model was in danger right up to Galileo's time. Galileo's problem was not only that he had provided empirical proof by looking through a telescope but that he taught it. And that's



what got him into trouble. He would have been burnt if he hadn't recanted and he was put under house arrest for the rest of his life. And this shows you that to be an enquirer and seeing with your own eyes through a telescope what the truth of things was and to be told by the Church all you have to do is read Psalm 104 "He has laid the foundations of the earth so that it may not be moved for ever". As it says these things in the Bible then it doesn't matter what you see – it ain't true.

These brave people started a chapter in human thought which was brought to a conclusion by Darwin. Until then, people thought that the earth was at the centre of



Simon Whitlock, A C Grayling, Dean Robertson

the universe and that humans were the pinnacle of creation. It was all about us. Life was an exordium, a preface to eternal life. A great deal of medieval literature was *contemptuous mundi* [contempt of the world]. The devil and his minions were always after you. Even if you sneezed your soul would dart out of your mouth and you had to get it back in quick. Hence we say 'bless you'. Any little slip and you could be in big trouble. So you had to obey and pray to achieve eternal life.

The Renaissance changed that conception. It said if you look at the world you will see beautiful flowers and hear beautiful music and read poems. Medieval art depicted the virgin birth and the crucifixion. Renaissance art was landscapes, portraits and people.

The idea that it was all about *us* was very severely challenged by the idea that we might not be quite literally at the centre of the universe. In 1571 a supernova, a new bright star appeared in the constellation of Cassiopeia. This was gobsmacking for people who thought the fixed stars would never change. How could a new star appear showing change and mutability? You get this sudden vertiginous sense that you're moving about in empty space.

So the cracks began to appear in the edifice and all the evidence began to accumulate. The 17th century was a time of great tumult. Descartes, who was famous for his saying 'I think therefore I am' [laughter] and Francis Bacon were responsible for thinking through scientific methodology, establishing that the only authority over speculation is empirical evidence. It's a sad reflection that Isaac Newton spent far more time trying to crack the numerological code of the Bible than he

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

ever spent on physics. There was an explosion of communication in the early 17th century among informal networks of scientists and thinkers. By the second half of the 17th century these networks had become formalised into institutions such as the Royal Society (1662) and this was the key thing that Francis Bacon had urged that there should be a community of scientists and that there should be publicly-funded institutions to support scientific work. The victory of science had been achieved – science as a respectable, important, productive and forward-looking enterprise.

And that set the scene for what happened next. The 18th century Enlightenment was predicated on the idea that the method of thinking which had proved itself in the natural sciences should be diffused into all other areas. But the one stumbling block was that there was no way of understanding how the universe and life might have originated. It seemed an uncrackable puzzle. There was no conception of just how antique the world is – billions of years seemed unimaginable until the world of Lyell and others began to support the idea. And this is the thing which Darwin saw early on and he kept his mouth shut. Sheer anxiety made him ill for most of his life as if an idea was blocked in his alimentary canal – the idea that these ancient intuitions about evolution were actually true. So when he published the *Origin of Species* in 1859 Darwin had the mechanism [natural selection]. The really revolutionary thing was *Origin of Species* – this put the capstone on this process of thought which had begun with Copernicus. We were no longer at the centre of the universe and we were no longer at the pinnacle of biological creation. We were one kind of animal among other animals on a minor planet. Where Charles Darwin sits right up there on the peak of Parnassus [a mountain in Greece] with all those other great minds – Newton, Boyle, Copernicus and Bacon – he put the last great piece of the puzzle in place. For centuries if not millennia we had looked in the wrong direction. So what we celebrate today is that he turned our heads to look in the right direction.

<http://youtu.be/ds8JmMw786o>



Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Jeff and Christine Goodwin

Christine and I were so sorry to learn of Tony Tiffany's death. We admired the work he undertook and indeed his very special character. We had been aware of his participation in the development of Dorset Humanists since its rebirth in 1996 having attended those early gatherings at The Friends' Meeting House along with Dennis and Jane Bannister, David Croman and Ros plus one or two others. Tony was always most gracious and welcoming whenever we met him. He will be a great loss to Dorset Humanists.

From Keith Shirland, Humanist celebrant

Tony was a very popular man both in our business and generally. Tony's funeral ceremony, conducted by Daphne Seymour-Hammond and myself, was warm, uplifting and of course, well attended. Knowing there were many unable to attend the ceremony and many more who may not have known, it was always Daphne's and my intention to hold a memorial event afterwards. I have booked Tony's favourite restaurant Casa Pepe on Holdenhurst Road for Tuesday evening 31st March at 7.00pm. Tony was quite specific in his instructions for his funeral and wanted no tributes so this will also be an opportunity for those wishing to speak in his honour without infringing his wishes. Those who knew Tony can be assured of a warm welcome. As much as Tony would have liked, he made no provision for this event and so I respectfully ask that those wishing to attend be prepared to pay for the meal and drinks of their choice. We need to know how many are attending so **please let us know by 24th March at the latest** if you intend to come along. ☎ 01202 548656 or 01202 062807 or 07719 727123

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



dorsethumanists.co.uk



@dorsethumanists



Dorset Humanists



meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists



Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
March 2015



I was very sad to learn of the deaths of Eileen Brennan and Tony Tiffany. Eileen was always very bright and enthusiastic and Tony was our 'founding father'. Tony conducted thousands of Humanist ceremonies in the local area and many people have come to hear about Humanism for the first time by attending a Humanist ceremony. Some of our members will recall early get-togethers at Casa Pepe and it will be poignant to remember Tony there on 31st March. Please do let Keith or Daphne know by 24th March if you intend to go along (see *Letters* for contact details).

The brutal murder of secular writer Avijit Roy in Bangladesh is a chilling reminder of the risks faced by fellow humanists in other parts of the world. Our Indian friend Swamiji received another death threat on 5th March. I am very proud to announce in this issue of Dorset Humanists *Bulletin* that we have become an associate member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union to show solidarity with humanists and secularists around the world and to support the work of this global organisation.

As part of a reading programme to learn more about Islam and Islamism I have just read *Radical* (2012) by Maajid Nawaz. I would put this book in the same category as Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel* as a 'must-read' for humanists. It's the gripping autobiography of an Islamist who gradually becomes disillusioned with his former beliefs and who now advocates building a grassroots, transnational youth-led movement to promote democracy. Nawaz has started this work in Pakistan with a social movement called Khudi. The word 'Khudi' refers to a 'sense of awakening' and the betterment of society. Khudi's mission is not just to stand against extremism but also to 'challenge and undermine the arguments used by extremists and to refute the religious justifications they put forward'. He is also the co-founder of Quilliam, a counter-extremist think tank.

Talking of democracy, is democracy in crisis in this country? Are the main political parties really 'all the same' who can do little more than tinker with the neo-liberal anti-state consensus forged thirty-five years ago? Are we mostly at the mercy of globalised capital and transnational corporations? Does any party have a compelling vision for 'the common good'? We're doing our bit to facilitate public discussion of the issues in our Election Special meeting at the end of March. You'll have to turn up early to get in. *David Warden*

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



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)