



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 13th May 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

A walk with our Ancestors

Human Evolution and Archaeology



Emeritus Professor
Norman Maclean

An illustrated talk beginning with an account of early human evolution from ape-like ancestors including chimps, the proliferation of many hominid

species in Africa, and our subsequent move out of Africa prior to emigrating around the globe. Norman will talk about the crucibles of civilisation in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, the Indus valley and China. He will also briefly discuss the cultures of Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age peoples, and will illustrate these with some ancient artefacts which he will bring for display.

Norman Maclean is an Emeritus Professor of Genetics at Southampton University, a BHA eminent humanist, Chair of South Hants Humanists, and author of many popular nature books including "Silent Summer" and "A Less Green and Pleasant Land".

Part two meeting 3.50pm

Please see EGM details next column →

■ Saturday 13th May 3.50-4.30pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Extraordinary General Meeting

There will be a short EGM after Norman's talk to discuss and vote on a proposal for Dorset Humanists to become a partner of the LGB&T Dorset Equality Network.

Members only may vote. Please contact David Warden if you will not be present but want to cast your vote. Please see email from the BHA in this Bulletin and further information in our April Bulletin.

■ Wednesday 24th May 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

Why Everyone should be a Feminist

Men and women should have equal rights and opportunities, yet women still earn less than men in Britain and are grossly underrepresented in our company boardrooms. Is this because women naturally prefer roles which attract less pay, or does our social structure still privilege men? Do existing cultural gender stereotypes harm men as well as women? Frances Hawkhead will provide some thought-provoking answers to these and other questions via a brief history of feminism. Frances is a lecturer in English, Communication & Media at Bournemouth University.

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)

■ **Thursday 1st 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

■ **Sundays 10.15am**



Sunday Walks

21st May Studland Peninsula. 7 miles mainly on the beaches of Poole Harbour and Shell Bay, and crossing Godlingston Heath with a visit to Agglestone Rock. The walk passes Fort Henry where Churchill and staff watched the D Day preparations. **11th June** Joint walk with South Hants Humanists and lunch at High Corner Inn in the New Forest.

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

Phil ☎ 07817 260498

■ **Wednesday 17th May 7.30pm**

Friends Meeting House 16 Wharnccliffe Road, Boscombe, BH5 1AH. £2.00-3.00 donation requested.

Continuing our popular new 'short talks' programme by DH members.

Two Views of Morality

Short talks by John Kingston based on neuroscientist Sam Harris's book *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (2010) and by Phil Butcher based on social psychologist Jonathan Haidt's book *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012).

Please check [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for further details

■ **Saturday 20th May 12.30-4.30pm**
Moordown Community Centre

Dorset Humanists Development Day

Dorset Humanists is an influential and respected group locally which gives recognition to non-religious people whilst promoting a rational, ethical, compassionate, and scientific approach to matters of human concern. But with politicians and bishops still insisting that this is a 'Christian' country we need to do more to ensure that the thirty percent of non-religious people in our local area have heard about the positive approach of Humanism.

With this aim in mind we are excited to announce our first 'Dorset Humanists Development Day'. This is an opportunity for members and supporters to put their heads together and come up with some great ideas to build on our success. At our AGM in March we briefly explored some unrealised potential including special interest groups, building better links with other groups, increasing member involvement with additional roles and support teams, growing our membership and increasing our visibility and influence across Dorset. A majority at the AGM indicated their interest in having a special day to put some 'flesh' on these ideas. So here it is! We hope you will give it your full support by coming along.

The format will be table discussions in small groups, giving everyone the chance to participate by exchanging thoughts and ideas. There will be a mid-session break for complimentary teas, coffees, cakes and biscuits.

David Warden will introduce the day which will be facilitated by Membership Development lead Aaron Darkwood.

Please confirm your attendance on [Meetup](https://www.meetup.com) or contact David or Aaron.

✉ aarondarkwood@hotmail.co.uk

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

Future dates for your diary:

- Saturday 10th June 2.00 Moordown 'Tolpuddle – a radical, revolutionary and religious Dorset village' David Nunn
- Thursday 15th June 6.00pm West Dorset 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 tippie of your choice, and maybe a hat debate.
- Wednesday 28th June 7.30pm Green House Hotel 'Secrets of the Magic Circle'. An hour of fun, fantasy and flim-flam with Richard Rawlins.

Other events of interest...

- **Wednesday 3rd May 7.30pm**
Black Bear Hotel, 14 South St, Wareham BH20 4LT. Free entry – small donation appreciated 'Out of the Box' presents:

Buddhism for Beginners

Is Buddhism a religion or a philosophy? Did the Buddha really exist? What are Buddhism's main teachings and what can we learn from them of relevance to our lives today? Christine Hawkrige, a member of Dorset Humanists and our speaker for the evening, will try to answer these questions and respond to any questions you may have. Christine was born into a Church of England family and lost her faith at university. In the 1970s she met and married a Cambodian engineer, which led to an abiding interest in Buddhism and an ongoing attempt to live by its precepts.

'Out of the Box' is a dialogue group for Humanists and Christians.

Humanism in schools

Our schools team members Cathy Silman and Chris Street visited Stourfield Junior School on 29th March. The school wrote:

"Thank you so much for coming into school today. I thought the talk you and Chris gave was fabulous. It is so important for the

children to value and respect other people's beliefs and you got that across brilliantly. The children got a lot from the talk and were asking me questions long after we left you. I would love to have you in every year to speak to our year 6 children as I thought you made Humanism's values very clear but also made them think about what being good means."

David Warden also visited Winton & Glenmoor Academies to present Humanism to a hall full of 15 year old boys and girls.

Direct Debit – a plea to all members

We are very appreciative to all of our members for their support in joining Dorset Humanists. If you join or renew by paying cash or cheque, however, please bear in mind that this creates work for our volunteer Membership Secretary Cathy Silman who has to send you an annual reminder. Cathy is happy to continue in this role but 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.

Help wanted

One of our members is facing imminent eviction and homelessness because his landlady is selling the property which he currently rents. If you, or someone you know, can offer help or a possible solution please contact our pastoral team.

Susan Bryson on 079802 776234
Cathy Silman on 07817 695615

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

Memories of a Former Sri Chinmoy disciple

Our Moordown speaker in April Alice Herron spent twenty-seven years as the devotee of the Indian guru, Sri Chinmoy. It was a very personal account but she has also read hundreds of testimonies of former members. It started as a fairly benign meditation group but developed, Alice said, into a 'high control group'.

Alice's journey started in the heady days of the late 60s when groups like the Beatles were turning to Eastern religion. Guitarist John McLaughlin became a disciple of Sri Chinmoy in 1970. McLaughlin collaborated with Carlos Santana, also a disciple of Sri Chinmoy. After a meeting in Glasgow, Sri Chinmoy 'looked directly' at Alice and in that instant she formed the belief that she had come into contact with her 'true spiritual master'. The rules of the group were quite strict – no drink, no drugs, and no sex. Alice was already married and had a daughter. There was no way she wanted to be celibate! However she was given an ultimatum to join and take on the rules, or else she would not be allowed to attend. That night she had a dream and in her dream Sri Chinmoy was holding her hand and she interpreted this as a 'sign' and so she joined.

Sri Chinmoy had disciples all over the world and Alice had the exciting opportunity to travel to New York and other places. At this stage the approach of the group was described as 'Hinduism-lite'. There were no thought police. Alice believed she had a soul and that her soul was on a journey towards 'God-realisation' and that her soul would unite with the Infinite. She believed that Sri Chinmoy was someone who had made that journey and he had been reincarnated to help others to get to this perfect state. She also believed that Sri Chinmoy had 'occult vision' and that he had the power to know what was going on in her mind.



Sri Chinmoy had 'a bit of a crush' on Princess Diana

After three years she was fully initiated by Sri Chinmoy and given her spiritual name. She was directed to love 'the Supreme', devote herself to 'the Supreme', and surrender to 'the Supreme'. After a few years Sri Chinmoy added another principle which he said was even more important than these three, and that was obedience:

"Obedience is of paramount importance. If you obey your master, no matter how imperfect he may be, then the Absolute Lord Supreme will be able to illumine you and fulfil you in his own way. Start your spiritual journey with obedience. If you have the inner strength to obey your master, you will be the happiest person."

The early years were among the happiest years of her life but after eight or nine years Alice had her first crisis. She noticed the emergence of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' and this upset her very much because she felt she was being sidelined. She was also told that Sri Chinmoy's partner, who had been revered as Divine Mother of the Universe, had 'fallen' and that she was no longer 'God-realised'. Alice was shocked because she had been told that once a person achieves 'God-realisation' they cannot fall from that state. Over time she became totally distraught and humiliated. She believed that Sri Chinmoy, whom she believed to be God incarnate, had lied to her about the true situation. However, in order to relieve her cognitive dissonance she decided to become an even more devoted disciple.

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

As time went on Sri Chinmoy became more and more ambitious. He decided that he wanted a Nobel Peace Prize. He got his disciples to organise free peace concerts in grand venues all over the world such as the Albert Hall where he played twenty different instruments so badly that most people walked out. The concerts had nothing to do with peace – it was just a massive PR stunt to get himself nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. The attempt failed to win him the prize which was won by Al Gore in 2007.

Alice became increasingly aware that there was an 'in-group' of younger girls and that she was in the 'out-group'. She couldn't understand this because the people in the in group didn't seem more spiritual or more devoted than those in the out group. She decided to leave but this was very difficult to do because one day you would have a thousand friends and the next day you would have a thousand enemies. But she found accounts on the internet of young women, friends whom she believed, who claimed to have had long-term sexual relationships with Sri Chinmoy and money to remain silent. Suddenly this explained why there had been an 'in-group' and an 'out-group'. And it now became clear to Alice why Sri Chinmoy's partner had to 'fall'. Alice said 'the scale of the hypocrisy beggars belief'.

Outside the group Alice found new friendships with ex-disciples. Sri Chinmoy died in 2007 but his followers believe that he still has occult powers. Alice believes that all religious leaders should have to be accountable and scrutinised. She said there should be financial checks and an enquiry into all the allegations about sexual impropriety, not just denial, and that his followers should be prepared to condemn Sri Chinmoy and the way he behaved.

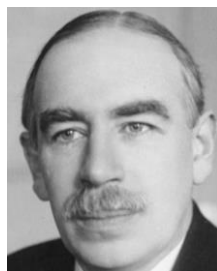
■ Right to reply: See Letters & Emails for a letter from the Sri Chinmoy Centre.

Further reading and viewing

Space Between the Stars Deborah Santana
Cartwheels in a Sari Jayanti Tamm
Saved by our Son Conference speech by Russ and Gunilla Bradshaw (YouTube)

Brexit & Trump

A report of Steve Laughton's talk



John Maynard Keynes
The Darwin of Economics?

After the financial crisis of 2008, the Queen famously asked 'Why did no one see it coming?'. At our Green House meeting in April, political economist and member of Dorset Humanists Steve Laughton

revealed that none of the so-called expert economists who advise governments in the US and UK saw the great financial crisis (GFC) coming. But there were twelve heterodox economists, building on the foundational work of John Maynard Keynes, who publicly predicted the crisis. They include Wynne Godley (co-author of *Monetary Economics: An Integrated Approach to Credit, Money, Income, Production and Wealth*), Michael Hudson (author of *Killing the Host: How Financial Parasites and Debt Destroy the Global Economy*), Steve Keen (author of *Debunking Economics*), and Ann Pettifor (author of *The Production of Money: How to Break the Power of Banks*).

"Mainstream economics is like creationism – it doesn't correspond to reality."

Steve introduced four key concepts: Equilibrium, Effective Demand, Credit, and Distribution. **Equilibrium** is the belief that supply and demand will always come into perfect balance through the price mechanism. For example, if apples are too cheap no producer will want to produce them but if they are too expensive no consumer will want to buy them. If the price is just right, however, the perfect number of apples will be produced and purchased. The same logic was applied to the jobs market. If workers offer their labour at the right price then unemployment will be abolished. According to this logic there should be no trade unions and no minimum wage.

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

Free-market economics, a revival of the neoclassical school of economics which preceded the 1929 Crash and the Great Depression, is partly inspired by French economist Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832). Say's Law asserts that 'supply creates its own demand' because when goods are sold this produces an income for the seller who can then buy other goods. You may remember discussion in the 1980s about 'supply-side economics' which is based on this belief in the key role of supply. Keynesian and post-Keynesian economists argue however that **effective demand**, not supply, is the key variable which determines the overall level of economic activity. When wages are suppressed then demand is reduced. This is partly because wage-earners have a higher 'marginal propensity to consume'. A wage earner will spend most of her money on goods. A millionaire will spend some of her money on goods but the rest will go into unproductive hoarding in tax havens or into speculative investments. Post-Keynesians argue that allowing the free market to determine wages creates a vicious spiral: lower *pay* and increasing *inequality* reduces *demand* which reduces *sales* which reduces *production* which reduces *jobs* which increases the supply of *workers* which reduces *pay* and so on.

One way to sustain demand in a low wage economy is to increase **credit**. Banks are only too happy to increase the supply of credit because of the permission they have been granted to create money out of thin air and then lend it out for a steady return of *interest* (also known as 'economic rent' because it extracts money from others on the basis of a scarce or controlled commodity). Banks are especially pleased to extend credit for the purposes of mortgages because pushing up the price of housing is much easier and more lucrative than the laborious business of investing in industry. German banks invest in productive industry. UK banks prefer to operate on the basis of 'casino capitalism'.

The fourth key concept is **distribution** which refers to whether the national cake is going to wages or to profits. In the post-war era which broadly followed Keynesian economics, the wage share was higher and

we had higher economic growth. If wages are too low people try to support their spending via credit but an economy can't go on creating credit forever. At some point the bubble will burst. Taken as a whole, the post-1980 period of Thatcher/Reagan and Blair/Clinton has seen lower economic growth and an increasing number of financial crashes. When the last bubble collapsed in 2008 and private credit dried up, government debt had to increase in order to prevent total meltdown. Hence government debt did not 'crash' the economy as claimed by David Cameron and Nick Clegg during the 2015 election campaign. The spike in government debt in 2009 was *caused* by the crash.

"Money from a National Investment Bank will make a return not just for the bank but for the whole economy."

A key economic policy being put forward by Labour in the forthcoming election is the creation of a National Investment Bank which will invest £500bn in the UK economy. There was some debate as to whether this will simply inflate the National Debt. Steve explained that a National Investment Bank will create money out of thin air which is what private banks do every time they make a loan. The crucial difference is that a National Investment Bank will invest in productive industry and house building whereas private banks have shown their unwillingness to do this.

On the question of what led up to the election of Donald Trump, Steve explained that it was the transfer of manufacturing to emerging economies by multinational companies which led to the US 'rust belt'. It was this, together with Bill Clinton's deregulation of finance in 1999, which led to Trump.

On the question of what led up to UKIP and Brexit, it has been suggested that the main culprit was Tony Blair who allowed early free movement of labour from the east European accession countries. The vast majority of Greeks, Bulgarians, and Spaniards move to the UK because they have to in order to find work.

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

Steve explained some of the options we have for Brexit including the EEA and EFTA. 'Hard Brexit' means gaining full control over immigration from the EU, losing full access to the single market, the ability to make independent trade deals, and, in the absence of a free trade deal, reverting to World Trade Organisation rules. WTO tariffs are very low on industrial goods (about 2.5%) but higher on some products such as vehicles (up to 10%) and higher still on agricultural products (20%). UK manufacturing has, however, already benefited from a long overdue fall in sterling. Steve, whose master's thesis under Professor Steve Keen is about exchange rate policies, argues for a much greater fall in sterling in order to help revive UK manufacturing. This is also being campaigned for by industrialist and author John Mills.

If Britain is broken, it was broken by unregulated finance, a wage share which is too low causing inequality and lack of demand, and a fetish for a strong currency which makes us uncompetitive. We urgently need a National Investment Bank, we need to increase the share of the national cake going to wages, and we need a 25 per cent devaluation to make sterling competitive.

See [Meetup](#) for a further reading list.



Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Teddy Prout, Director of Community Services, British Humanist Association

The BHA is very supportive of local groups doing exactly this sort of thing [becoming a partner of the Dorset LGB&T Equality Network]. I would encourage you to make contact with LGBT Humanists and have copied in the secretary in order for them to

provide you with any support you might need. Do, please, let us know how it goes.

From Peter Torpy, Sri Chinmoy Centre

I am writing to you in a spirit of good fellowship to express my concern over the inflammatory manner in which an event being held by Dorset Humanists is being publicised, contrary to your usual practice of restraint and decorum. I know that Dorset Humanists are good people, committed to civilised discourse on matters of reason and faith which are certainly deserving of careful attention. I feel, however, that in the present instance you may have been misled or misinformed, or may have given in to rank emotionalism on a subject which demands nicety of judgment. I refer to the event billed as "Memories of a Former Cult Devotee with Alice Herron", with the accompanying claim that it will "reveal the darker side of life in a cult". In truth, it may reveal little more than the darker side of Alice Herron, who is not an accurate resource.

In our nearly 50-year history in the UK, we've always acted peacefully and lawfully, and have enjoyed good community relations. We're a peace-loving group which is committed to doing good and valuing the good inside each human person.

As an organisation concerned with science, reason, ethics, compassion, and understanding, Dorset Humanists should not advertise the event with Ms Herron using inflammatory terms and depictions. Such terms and depictions, in addition to being inaccurate as applied to us, are also hurtful and offensive. I am concerned that in consenting to proliferate Ms Herron's eccentric and alarmist views, you would be surrendering to a reactionary mindset rather than remaining true to the type of thoughtful discourse for which Dorset Humanists are greatly admired. I appeal to your sense of conscience and ask you to please cease and desist from depicting us falsely, inaccurately, and hatefully.

■ This is an edited extract of Mr Torpy's letter. The committee took the decision to modify our publicity for this event. Dorset Humanists does not necessarily endorse the views presented by our guest speakers.

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)



Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
May 2017



Humanists pride themselves on being rational but researcher Professor Philip Tetlock (University of Pennsylvania) has found that there are two very different kinds of reasoning. *Exploratory thought* is 'evenhanded consideration of alternative points of view' whereas *confirmatory thought* is 'a one-sided attempt to rationalize a particular point of view' (source: Jonathan Haidt *The Righteous Mind* p88). Tetlock has concluded that conscious reasoning is carried out largely in order to persuade people rather than to discover the truth. I'd like to challenge all of our members and supporters to bear this distinction in mind during the election campaign and to cultivate exploratory thought. If you find yourself having a political argument try listening to yourself to identify which mode of reasoning you are using. Are you more interested in winning the argument than finding out the truth? If you enjoy reading newspapers try buying two opposing ones on the same day and expose yourself to the worldview of your political adversaries. If you hear a snippet of a political speech on the news go to YouTube and watch the whole thing or download the entire transcript. If you have time, get hold of the manifestos and subject them to critical scrutiny. If you still have time to spare, read some books - and not just the ones which confirm your own worldview. Above all, don't allow people to make the election into a beauty contest. Jeremy Corbyn may not have the 'right image' to be Prime Minister but is his diagnosis of what's wrong with Britain the right one? You may have heard the Tories dismissed as 'far right' or Labour as 'hard right' but is this frame of reference still useful? Shouldn't we be thinking now in terms of those who create wealth for the common good and those who extract it and hide it in offshore tax havens? In a so-called 'post-truth' world we need, increasingly, to go 'post-media' in order to find out the deeper meaning of things out for ourselves. The humanist way is to go to the sources and to use our critical thinking skills, including continuous assessment of our own models of the world, in order to cultivate *exploratory thought*.

The Sri Chinmoy Centre objected to our use of the word 'cult' in our publicity for Alice Herron's talk because they considered this to be 'hateful speech'. Dorset Humanists does not have the resources to get into a legal fight about the definition of a word and so we took precautionary action. However, I have claimed for a long time that this word can be used in a descriptive sense for most religions including Christianity and Islam.

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



dorsethumanists.co.uk



@dorsethumanists



Dorset Humanists



meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists