

Click image to RSVP on Meetup

The Reluctant Teacher

Saturday 13th May 2.00pm Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW

Kevin Precious used to be a teacher. He enjoyed the teaching part – it was the stuff that goes with it that was a drag. So he left. Kevin will entertain us with a funny overview of the pitfalls and pratfalls that go with his former profession, with a bit of pedagogical stuff (ooh-er!) thrown in for good measure.

Kevin is a stand-up comedian, Master of Ceremonies, and non-believing former RE teacher. He has performed his stand-up comedy routines at top venues all over the country, including the Edinburgh Fringe.

This is Kevin's second visit to Dorset Humanists. His first visit, under the banner *Unholier Than Thou: The Unbelieving RE Teacher* was in December 2019.

'Kevin's stage charisma and poise set him head and shoulders above the previous acts.' *The Times*

Universal Income or Job Guarantee?

Wednesday 24th May 7.30pm Orchid Hotel, 34 Gervis Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3DH

A talk by Steve Laughton

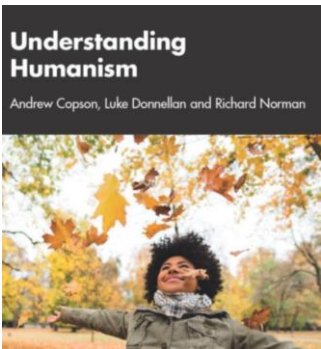
Universal Income or Job Guarantee? Money for nothing or forced labour? What exactly are economists on about? Steve Laughton will provide us with a framework for discussion. In recent decades an increasing number of economists have been suggesting that governments could introduce a universal basic income, while others have suggested a job guarantee. Some have opted for both! What problems are they attempting to solve? Jobs being destroyed by AI? Poverty amidst surfeit? Unemployment and slow growth? Too much growth? How would they be implemented? What's happened in places where they've been piloted? Who pays? These are some of the questions that will be discussed. RSVP here: [Meetup](#)

Poundbury – the good, the bad and the ugly

Saturday 10th June 2.00pm Moordown Community Centre,
Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW

A talk by John Hubbard. John is a retired English teacher, a lecturer for the U3A, an architectural historian, and a member of Dorset Humanists. He has given us numerous excellent talks on humanist themes in literature, painting, and architecture.

The Duchy of Cornwall’s development to the west of Dorchester is now in the last phase of construction. Since its inception it has been the subject of interested debate, particularly in the context of the then Prince of Wales’s views on architecture as set out in his programme and book A Vision of Britain. Is the place simply an extended piece of anti-Modernist propaganda, a living catalogue of historic building types, a sentimental theme-park, a triumph of urban planning and a pleasing place in which to live or a blot on the landscape? In this detailed and richly illustrated study, John will explore the area and its buildings and attempt an aesthetic evaluation of this project so long in the making with reference to other examples of town planning and reflect on its wider influence in the county and beyond.



Understanding Humanism

Wednesday 28th June 7.30pm Orchid Hotel, 34 Gervis Road,
Bournemouth, BH1 3DH

A talk by David Warden

Humanism is a complex and sometimes elusive concept to pin down. David aims to offer some fresh perspectives.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 13th May 2.00pm	Moordown	Kevin Precious – The Reluctant Teacher
Wednesday 24 th May 7.30pm	Orchid	Steve Laughton - Universal Income or Job Guarantee?
Saturday 10th June 2.00pm	Moordown	Poundbury – the good, the bad and the ugly <i>John Hubbard</i>
Wednesday 28 th June 7.30pm	Orchid	Understanding Humanism – David Warden

Plus social events and walks which will be announced on Dorset Humanists Meetup. Please check all events nearer the time in case of any venue changes. We respectfully ask you to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that you do not spread infection to others at our events. If in doubt, please stay at home. Videos are usually available later on YouTube.

The Enigma of Cryptography

Nearly forty people attended Daniel Dancey's talk on cryptography at the Orchid Hotel in April. You can watch the talk on our [YouTube channel](#). Daniel is the treasurer of Dorset Humanists.

"Enlightening, mesmerising at times..." Nigel

"Great talk... And a bit scary. So many threats in the world today." Barry

"I was fascinated, especially by the history of the subject." Jonathan

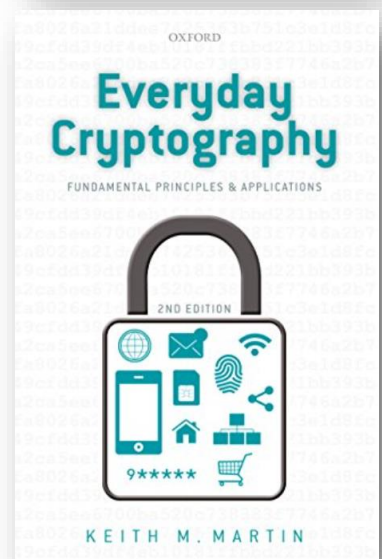
Daniel provided us with an introduction to the basic principles and applications of cryptography and cryptanalysis, an overview of its history and evolution, and he explained how modern cryptographic systems are used to protect information in various settings.

He explained a range of cryptographic techniques including the Simple Substitution Cipher (a very basic technique of substituting letters for others), Steganography (hiding a secret message in another message or object, including tattooing the head of a slave!), Symmetric Encryption (where the same key is used to scramble and unscramble the message), and Asymmetric encryption.

One of the key themes of the talk was the importance of cryptography in everyday life, and how individuals can take practical steps to protect their own privacy and security. Daniel provided practical advice and guidance on topics such as secure online browsing and password management (such as selecting at least four or five random words, e.g., cat.gown.road.fork)

Daniel also spoke about post-quantum cryptography which focuses on developing cryptographic systems that can resist attacks by quantum computers. Quantum computers use quantum mechanics to perform calculations much faster than ordinary computers, and their potential impact on cryptography has been a subject of intense research. Many of the most widely used cryptographic algorithms are vulnerable to attacks by quantum computers. This is because these algorithms rely on mathematical problems that can be efficiently solved by quantum computers. Post-quantum cryptography seeks to develop new algorithms and protocols that are resistant to quantum attacks, even when quantum computers become widely available.

Images on the right: Daniel has donated *Everyday Cryptography* to the Dorset Humanists library. Bottom right is the Enigma Machine used by the Germans during the Second World War.



Uganda Humanist Schools

An update by Chris Smith. Chris is a trustee of the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust and a member of Dorset Humanists.

Uganda Humanist Schools Trust is one of the charities being supported by our Dorset Humanists Annual Appeal. Please contact David on chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk for details of how to donate or look out for collections at upcoming events. More information is available at our Saturday events at Moordown or visit their website.

In February, the schools started the new academic year in a timely manner, with good attendance and, although to different degrees, improved fee income.

I know that things change, all the time. In Uganda this seems particularly marked. As a UHST trustee it can be something of a roller coaster, balancing the many positives with the inevitable challenges.

Lately, we have seen the colonial legacy still influencing government legislation. Unrest on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo affects the most westerly Katumba school and community. As well as direct violence, with clashes between different armed groups, Congolese refugees arrive in the area, swelling the number of children wanting schooling, with no additional fee income, although for now this problem has receded. A recent BBC Africa Eye programme highlighted shocking cases of sexual abuse of underage girls, particularly in the north of the country, where for years the Lord's Resistance Army (a Christian nationalist group) held sway. The problem may be less marked in other areas, but it is there. Girls need to be in school. All these difficult issues have been in my mind lately.

Yet there is change that signals progress. The Katumba appeal, for the addition of



Building a new washroom at Katumba with home-made bricks

secondary provision at that Community Humanist Primary, has started positively, with donations often accompanied by heart-warming messages of support. At Isaac Newton High School the long-wished-for playing field is under construction, thanks to one couple making a significant restricted donation. The schools are now formally registered with the Ugandan government as the Organisation of Humanist Schools of Uganda (OHSU). In Kasese, a good-sized town to the south west, near Queen Elizabeth Game Park, there has been a change of governance at the existing Humanist Schools. This will allow a much closer relationship with our Trust. So far we have only felt able to give small grants for materials, such as text books. As the school's leader, Robert Bwambale, is a significant figure in Ugandan Humanism, this change should prove to be of particular and mutual benefit. The long-postponed conference for all the existing and potential UHST schools is now planned for later this year, with the principal focus on the Humanist ethos. I look forward to keeping you updated.

Webare, Munonga (Thank you) Chris Smith

<https://ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/>



Bob Mizon MBE

We are very sad to report that Bob Mizon has died. Bob, a passionate astronomer, was one of our regular lecturers. Over the years he has given us numerous fascinating talks on the Hubble Telescope, Comets, and, most recently, Seven Weird Moons in our Solar System.

An obituary has been published by the International Dark Sky Association which can be read [here](#).

Thanks to his longstanding friends Maggie and Jim Pepin for letting us know. We have sent condolences to his wife, Pam.



Paul Entwistle's informative talk on Britain's Housing Crisis will be published as an article in next month's *Humanistically Speaking* magazine. Photo by Aaron.



Seventeen people joined our recent walk from Wareham to Corfe Castle. Photo by Aaron.

Could you volunteer as a humanist pastoral carer?

From Clare Elcombe Webber, Head of Humanist Care

Non-religious pastoral carers across the country are making a big difference in supporting people in need, and improving the diversity and reach of chaplaincy and pastoral care services. We would love to see more people join our network to help support the increasing number of non-religious people in the UK.

We are looking for people who are committed to a humanist approach to life, have good interpersonal skills, and want to be a positive support to people in their hour of need.

Would you be able to help us spread the word to humanists in your area/group who might be interested in volunteering as pastoral carers?

If so, please help us through your meetings, mailings, newsletter or social media to publicise this upcoming opportunity.

The next Pastoral Care Training Course will take place in Bradford on Saturday 3 & Sunday 4 June 2023. Prospective volunteers can read more about becoming a pastoral care volunteer on the Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network [website](#).

People who would like to volunteer, but who can't make those dates, can be first to hear about future training opportunities by registering their interest on [this online form](#).

Thank you for spreading the word about how to get involved with the Non-Religious Pastoral Care Network. We're grateful for your help.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us via training@humanistcare.org.uk



University news

David Warden, humanist advisor to the Bournemouth University and Arts University Bournemouth Faith & Reflection Team, took part in a 'Spirituality and Wellbeing Fair' on 17th March. David runs a 'Philosophy of Life Café' in the Faith & Reflection Centre covering topics such as the philosophy of friendship, happiness, and mental health. He hopes to seed a new humanist group at the two universities this year. David also took part in an interfaith event at St Luke's Church (below) and he was interviewed by Revd James Sharp about his journey to humanism.



View from the Chair

David Warden
Chairman of Dorset Humanists



Gestalt is a concept in psychology that refers to the idea that we tend to perceive things as organized wholes rather than as a collection of separate parts. The word 'gestalt' comes from the German word for 'shape' or 'form'. The concept emphasizes that perception is not just a passive process of receiving sensory information, but an active process of organizing that information into meaningful patterns. This means that our perceptions are influenced not only by the stimuli themselves, but also by our expectations, beliefs, and previous experiences. I think this sheds quite a lot of light on how our worldviews and political positions are constructed and maintained, even in the face of conflicting information. Once you have adopted a worldview, especially if it provides esteem and security within your social group, then it's usually going to take a lot more than inconvenient facts to loosen the mortar or undermine the foundations. Most likely, you will repel inconvenient facts by downplaying them, denying them, straw-manning them, shooting the messenger, playing whataboutery, and numerous other defensive and distracting strategies.

A very clear example of this happened in the aftermath of the 2016 EU referendum. Prior to the referendum itself, there was an openness to arguments on both sides of the debate. But opposing gestalts developed and hardened during the campaign and thereafter it became almost impossible for the two gestalts to positively engage with each other. We settle into tribes, ramp up the rhetoric, preen ourselves on how virtuous we are, and seek total victory over our evil and stupid opponents. It's as if we are in *The Matrix* (a 1999 dystopian film) and our entire way of seeing things has been pre-determined. If you 'take the blue pill' you will remain blissfully unaware of your false consciousness whereas if you 'take the red pill' you will wake up to the truth of your situation. It's a handy metaphor, but who can say which pill is more in tune with reality?

The way out of this dilemma is open and deep listening to what your opponents are saying. It requires the courage to doubt, to be a sceptic, to question your own favoured nostrums and the *Matrix* you are inhabiting. It requires the courage to be a heretic and potentially to be burned at the stake by your own tribe for what you perceive to be the truth – which is usually much more complex and nuanced than any settled gestalt would suggest. It requires following the argument wherever it leads, a Socratic principle which underpins the humanist way.

Dorset Humanists is pretty good at this. Occasionally, someone comes along who is so 'blue-pilled' they find our openness to other ideas objectionable and even dangerous. But on the whole, we manage to keep the channels of communication open between different gestalts. This is one of the reasons I love Dorset Humanists. It's a relatively safe space for heretics and freethinkers and that's how it should be.