



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

# Dorset Humanists

## October 2014

A PARTNER OF THE  
BRITISH HUMANIST  
ASSOCIATION

### ■ Saturday 11th October 2.00pm

Dorset Humanists, Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## The Holocaust: My Story



A talk by Henry Schachter. Henry was born in 1939 to a Jewish family living in Berlin. Soon after, his family fled to Poland and then to Belgium, where his parents took the agonising

decision to hand their only child to a non-Jewish family for his safety. His parents were later captured by the Gestapo and deported in the penultimate convoy to Auschwitz. Henry will share the moving story of how he survived the Holocaust in hiding before undertaking a journey to Britain in search of his surviving family. He will recount his early life in Belgium, his quest to find out what happened to his parents, and how he subsequently built a new life for himself in England.

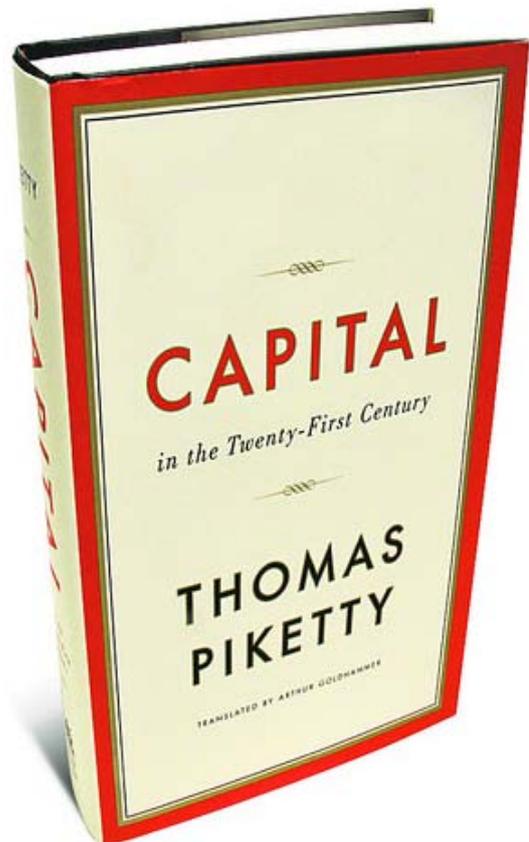
### ■ Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm

Moon in the Square, Exeter Rd, BH2 5AQ

## Social Evening

Join us at Moon in the Square on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm for an interesting chat over a drink or two and get to know other like-minded people. See you there!

☎ Dean 07713 858773



### ■ Wednesday 22nd October 7.30pm

Dorset Humanists, Green House Hotel, 4 Grove Road Bournemouth BH1 3AX

## Capitalism and Inequality

In this talk economist Douglas Lock will be presenting key ideas from Thomas Piketty's surprise bestseller 'Capital in the Twenty-First Century'. Piketty's central claim is that inequality in the world's most advanced capitalist countries is increasing and has been for at least 30 years. He also demolishes the persistent myth that we're

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living in a meritocracy in which great wealth is earned and deserved, and claims the growing inequality makes democracy unsustainable. Hailed by many progressives as an economic messiah, Piketty's ambitious goal is to change the way wealth is distributed. Among his controversial proposals are an 80 percent tax rate on the very highest earners, not to raise money for education or welfare, as he does not expect such a tax to bring in much revenue, but simply 'to put an end to such extreme incomes'. Join us to hear Douglas explain the economic ideas that have taken the world by storm, and made Piketty an international celebrity.

■ **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm**  
Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub at The Brunswick, Charminster, BH8 8PX  
Free entry (donations appreciated)

## Experiences of an Awkward Atheist



A talk by Iszi Lawrence. Hailing from a mixed background of both Christianity and Islam, Iszi Lawrence will talk to us about how superstition, belief and

reason are intermingled in comedy and everyday life. Iszi Lawrence is a comedian, illustrator and amateur historian. She is the host of [The Z List Dead List](#), voice of the Skeptics Guide to the Universe and has her own weekly podcast [Sundays Supplement](#) which she co-hosts with TV writer Simon Dunn. She is an international speaker on skepticism and atheism.

📧 [bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org](mailto:bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org)

☎ Chris 01425 673477

### Committee News

We are delighted to announce that **Neil Grant** has been co-opted onto the DH committee. Neil's background is business training and he established the very popular local discussion group *Café Philo*.

■ **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm**  
West Dorset Humanists at the Wessex Royale Hotel, 33 High St West, Dorchester  
£3.00 entry



## Can There Be an Ethical Politics?

A talk by Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate Ros Kayes.

☎ 07921 311518

📧 [westdorsethumanists@hotmail.com](mailto:westdorsethumanists@hotmail.com)

■ **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2.00pm**  
Dorset Humanists, Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

## Create your own Cult: the Scientology Way



A talk by Martin Poulter. Martin's talk is a thoughtful look at the evidence of how Scientology operates. Scientology has been described in the States as "ruthless, litigious and lucrative" and in this country as "corrupt, sinister

and dangerous", yet it boasts global success and has made hundreds of millions of dollars. Thanks to the Internet, it now faces an unprecedented global opposition. The scary secrets of Scientology and its recruitment methods will be exposed in this talk. It will be useful for anyone wanting to set up their own lucrative cult. Martin first encountered skepticism while a teenager. He has a Philosophy and Psychology degree from Oxford University and a PhD in Philosophy of Science from the University of Bristol. He has been a Scientology-watcher since 1995, when he was threatened with legal action over material he posted online.

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■ **Wednesday 26th November 7.30pm**  
Dorset Humanists, Green House Hotel, 4  
Grove Road Bournemouth BH1 3AX

## The American Nightmare

Heroic Failure in the drama  
of Tennessee Williams and  
Arthur Miller



A talk by John Hubbard.  
This talk, focusing on *Death  
of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*,  
*A Streetcar Named Desire*  
and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*  
will explore the ways in  
which these two writers use  
struggling characters to

undercut the complacent assumptions of  
post-War America and the so-called  
'American Dream'. Heroic failures, with  
whom we can fully sympathise, depict a  
deeper and more complex humanity. John  
has been a course tutor for the U3A and  
has taught English and Drama at  
Bournemouth grammar schools over the  
last twenty-five years. He's a member of  
Dorset Humanists and has given us  
memorable talks in the past on Thomas  
Hardy, George Eliot and E M Forster.

## Sunday Assembly

Bournemouth's first Sunday Assembly was  
well-received and well-attended, and the  
next assembly is at 11.00am on 26th  
October at Rooper Hall, 5 Victoria Park Rd,  
Winton, Bournemouth. Everyone Welcome.  
Free Entry (Donations Appreciated).

## One Life

Once again our 6-week evening course  
exploring Humanism and Atheism has  
proved popular with both existing members  
and external applicants. For further details  
please contact David Warden or visit  
[http://dorset-  
humanists1.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/one-  
life-course-exploring-humanism-and.html](http://dorset-humanists1.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/one-life-course-exploring-humanism-and.html)

## Ray Sherwood

We are very sad to announce the death  
of Ray Sherwood, aged 86, who was a  
member of Dorset Humanists. Ray, a  
schoolmaster, was described as  
'philosophical' and after much  
searching he found a home in  
humanism. He raised his family on  
humanist principles and taught them to  
his pupils. He discovered organised  
humanism after his wife had a humanist  
funeral. He came regularly to meetings  
for as long as he could. He became a  
headmaster who never gave up  
passing on the gift of learning. Even  
during the last year he helped primary  
school children who were needing a  
push to catch up. First and foremost he  
was a teacher but Ray was also an  
accomplished painter, poet, natural  
scientist, geologist, and interested in  
architecture and music. He willingly  
shared all his knowledge and took a  
firm moral stand. A true gentleman, he  
was still acute and never forgot  
obligations to others.

We are also very sad to announce the  
death of **Joy Collier** who was a  
longstanding member of Dorset  
Humanists.

## A C Grayling to speak at Dorset Humanists Darwin Day



Professor Anthony  
Grayling will  
address our 2015  
Darwin Day  
celebration on the  
topic "The  
Difference That  
Darwin Has Made".  
This will be an early

evening start at 6pm to 7pm followed by  
food. Venue to be announced. Thursday  
12th Feb 2015. Booking details to follow  
nearer the time.

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## British Humanist Association AGM

*Lyn Glass and David Warden represented Dorset Humanists at the BHA AGM in July*

**Isabel Russo**, head of humanist ceremonies, informed us that humanist weddings in Scotland now have a 10% share of the market which compares to just 0.2% in England. If, as expected, humanist celebrants in England are given the legal power to marry people we will need many more celebrants to cope with the demand. The demand for humanist funerals is also expected to grow.

**David Savage**, head of pastoral support, challenged the common belief of religious chaplains in prisons and hospitals that they can cater for the pastoral and spiritual needs of everyone, whether religious or non-religious. David pointed out that 96% of chaplain visits to people in hospital are to religious people. He argued that pastoral care in such settings should not be a religious function. The BHA is trying to influence attitudes and provides an introductory training course. The humanist pastoral support pilot at HMP Winchester is now going permanent.

**Pavan Dhaliwal**, head of public affairs, updated us on the many areas in which the BHA is trying to influence public policy and have a presence such as assisted dying, animal welfare (ritual slaughter and pre-stunning), humanist hustings, the United Nations Human Rights Council where the BHA has speaking rights, the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group, the

'Christian country' debate, and media coverage. There were 1,000 Parliamentary mentions of Humanism in debates regarding humanist marriage and the contributions of humanists and atheists to British society.

**Richy Thompson**, faith schools and education campaigns officer, updated us on the BHA efforts to ensure that schools teach evolution not creationism, that there is transparency with regard to free schools, and that schools should not be permitted to 'redact' exam papers in order to conform to religious dogma.



**Sara Passmore**, head of education promotion, revealed that the recent *That's Humanism!* videos had one million views in the first week. She also reminded us that the BHA sent Alom Shah's book *The Young Atheist's Handbook* to every secondary school library in England and Wales (nearly 5000 copies). Through a national training programme for humanists to go into schools [one of which was held in Bournemouth] Sara has encouraged volunteers to work strategically with teachers to ensure that children can adopt a positive self-identity as humanists rather than the negative position 'I don't have a religion'. On the difficulty of getting into schools, a member of the audience suggested a 'Trojan Horse' approach such as offering another area of expertise or a portfolio of skills and speaking topics. Sara suggested that RE should not be taught as a list of religions but facilitating children to access and reflect on their own beliefs and the beliefs of others.



**Andrew Copson**, Chief Executive, informed us that membership of the BHA has increased and that finances are on a firm footing. He said that 'active promotion of

Humanism should resonate with a majority'. Echoing the report by David Savage he said

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there was 'huge latent demand for pastoral support' and that currently we're not able to satisfy this demand. There is overprovision of religious pastoral support but so far there has been zero response to funding for humanist provision from grant bodies. Andrew predicted that 'legalisation of assisted dying is inevitable' because 80% of the public support it (including 70-80% of religious people).

The AGM also debated the following motion proposed by **North East Humanists**: "The British Humanist Association [amended by the Board to 'This meeting'] believes that society has a moral responsibility to look after the welfare of those who, through no fault of their own, find themselves disadvantaged and in need of the assistance of the state. It further believes that the current programme of financial austerity, with its cuts to welfare spending, is having a disproportionate effect on the nation's poor, who are now bearing the main burden of the attempt to reduce the economic deficit. It, therefore, encourages all humanists to support campaigns that oppose policies and practices which make the poorest, and least physically and psychologically able, pay to solve an economic problem which is not of their making." There were views for and against the motion which was defeated (31 for, 50 against, 23 abstentions).



**Lyn Glass**, Vice Chair of Dorset Humanists, spent break-times expertly lassoing people to come and visit Dorset Humanists, including Pavan Dhaliwal and Alom Shaha who has promised to visit us in May 2015. Lyn has also succeeded in persuading A C Grayling to speak at our 2015 Darwin Day celebration. More details in subsequent Bulletins.

*Could you train to become a humanist weddings celebrant? Can you help to campaign locally to get non-religious pastoral support for people in hospital and other settings? Can you join our schools team? Do you have the ideas, energy, enthusiasm and skills to help set up and run a group for Young Humanists?*

## Dorset Humanists Schools Education Project breakthrough

In an exciting development, Chris Street and David Warden met up with a senior consultant with Jan Lever Education and Training Ltd, based in Poole, to discuss ways of incorporating Humanism into their educational resource on Religious Education for primary children called 'Discovery RE'. The product is already established in over 500 schools around the UK but they are keen to involve the humanist perspective on the key questions that are raised.



## Making a Will?

If you are thinking or making or amending your Will, have you considered leaving a legacy to the BHA or to Dorset Humanists? A generous legacy in the past helped us to purchase audio-visual equipment.



## Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From David Bothwell, South Hants Humanists*

There was a period when Hampshire and Dorset Humanists, sometimes Farnham Humanists as well, joined together for a summer walk or stroll ending up with a lunch – I can recollect at least four such occasions, all of them very enjoyable. We would like to have one next year. Our programme for 2015 includes a visit to the RSPB reserve in Arne on Sunday 14 June. Would some people from Dorset care to join us? We haven't yet worked out the details but I imagine that we will aim to be there by 10.30 or so, walk around one of the trails and maybe have a picnic somewhere en route or afterwards. May we hope to see you there? [Contact Lyn Glass]

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Dorset Humanists  
**Chairman's View**  
October 2014



**H**umanists believe that we have only one life and that this life can be richly fulfilling. This is only possible, however, when the basic requirements of life are available: food, shelter, work, money, education, health services, transport and so on. In Britain, education and health services are organised along social lines, albeit imperfectly. But the allocation of money and especially housing are organised along anti-social lines with a striking resemblance to a casino or a game of Monopoly. As more and more wealth accumulates at the top, more money flows into speculative housing bubbles which fuel economic instability, financial crashes and chronic recessions. When I started work, it was easy for clerical workers and bus drivers in their early twenties to stop renting and get a mortgage. Today, first time-buyers are usually in their mid-thirties and many people are forced to live with parents into their thirties and forties. Renting, especially in cities like London where the jobs are, is extortionate. 600,000 people in Britain are homeless at the same time as 740,000 residential properties are left empty, often for investment purposes. Builders have enough land to build 400,000 homes but they don't build because land is hoarded like gold. According to the 2011 Census we have 66 million bedrooms in Britain for a population of 55 million people. Young people struggle to get housing whilst many older people occupy overlarge houses. The tax and benefits systems reward this pattern of ownership. Housing is organised more rationally and equitably in countries with lower inequality and rent controls but we have followed the American model where free market fundamentalism is twinned with its religious counterpart.

No wonder the Scots wanted to leave the UK but now that they've decided to stay perhaps we have an opportunity to invigorate our democracy and re-introduce some rationality into the distribution of wealth and housing. Three ideas suggested by Professor Danny Dorling in *All that is Solid: The Great Housing Disaster* (2014) are a land tax to discourage people from hoarding land, council tax bands which go right to the top of the housing ladder, and a maximum rent as a counterpart to the minimum wage. Let's debate these issues and ideas in the run-up to the General Election and demand that politicians govern according to rational, social and humanistic principles.

*David Warden*