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national
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IHEU
International
Humanist and
Ethical Union



Dorset Humanists

Atheists and agnostics for a better world

■ **Saturday 8th October 2.00pm**
+ **Part Two meeting at 3.50pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation
Avenue, BH9 1TW

Broken Trust and Damaged Minds



Dr Peter Naish

There can be little doubt that many people have been harmed by the predatory sexual activities of Jimmy Savile. The nature of child abuse often leaves victims with profound psychological damage that affects them for life, yet there is huge variation in the extent and nature of the impact on the victims, with some apparently suffering little long term harm. Why do different people respond so differently to trauma, and what factors can help us to be more resilient? To solve this puzzle Peter Naish will consider a wide range of evidence including everything from brain architecture to the new science of epigenetics. Along the way we will hear some sad stories, putting a very human face on the science of the neural response to trauma.

Psychologist Dr Peter Naish, now allegedly retired, retains academic links with the Open University, and the Sackler Centre for Consciousness Science at Sussex University. After a lifetime that has included working for the Home Office and Ministry of Defence, he has settled down to a comfortable mix of research, expert witness work and a busy speaking schedule.

■ **Wednesday 26th October 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX

The Human Scale



In this talk John Hubbard will explore our relationships to houses and homes. While many animals seek refuge and shelter or create spaces and territories for rearing their

young, humankind is unique in the variety and intricacy of the places it calls home. However, our homes are so familiar that we often take them for granted, and ignore the collections they house, which are often museums of the self and a map of our connections to the world. What we do with interior space is as significant as our movements in the wider, less controlled exterior.

John will consider the evolution of the concept of the private home and through the history of architecture, gardens, gender, and material culture, will explore the similarities that even the grandest and most humble of houses share, and reflect upon what these say about our concept of ourselves as a species and as individuals existing in a complex evolved society. The buildings considered will range from Kingston Lacy, Longleat, Wilton, and Stowe to local family homes in flats and houses.

John Hubbard has taught English and History of Architecture at Bournemouth School and BSG for many years. He spent a sabbatical year researching the Bankes/Kingston Lacy archive at the

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Dorchester History Centre. He is a published poet and he has given many interesting talks to Dorset Humanists over the years including a brilliant presentation of Thomas Hardy's 'poetry of unbelief'.

■ **First and third Sundays 10.15am**



Sunday Walks

Our popular walks are led by Aaron Darkwood and Phil Butcher.

16th October – New Forest Rhinefield
7 miles. Tall trees and rare British reptiles.

6th November – an Hour by the Stour
2 miles plus 2 miles near Littledown.

20th November – Studland Peninsula
7 miles around the flatter parts of Purbeck.

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

■ **Thursday 6th October 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

■ **Saturday 12th November 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

The Evolution of Religion



Dr Michael E. Price, Senior Lecturer in Psychology. Is it adaptive to believe in a higher power? The consensus among evolutionary psychologists is that religiosity is a non-ad

aptive by-product enabled by psychological mechanisms that evolved for purposes other than religion itself. However, a great

deal of scientific evidence now suggests that religion offers survival benefits, and that being religious can actually increase your life expectancy. So, why is there a positive relationship between religiosity and survival, and does this relationship suggest that religiosity is in fact an adaptation? Addressing these issues can produce valuable insights for both the religious and non-religious alike.

Dr Michael Price is Senior Lecturer in Psychology, and Director of the Centre for Culture and Evolution, at Brunel University London. His research focuses on the evolutionary psychology of human social behaviour, morality, and religiosity.

■ **Wednesday 23rd November 7.30pm**
Green House Hotel, Grove Road, BH1 3AX



'Filling the Void'

Incorporating our 20th anniversary celebration!

Join us for an inspirational evening of poetry and music with our special guests Jonathan MS Pearce, who has edited a volume of poetry for humanists and atheists called *'Filling the Void'*, and Gareth Howells of award-winning folk band *Bemis*, with his son Louis. Jonathan and Gareth will deliver an eclectic selection of their favourite poems from the book, and Gareth and Louis will provide the musical entertainment.

Later in the evening David Warden will present a brief review of some of the highlights of Dorset Humanists over the past 20 years, and remember those who made it possible.

Wine and light refreshments will be available.

South Hants Humanists

If you live within striking distance of Southampton why not pay our sister group a visit? Details of their meetings can be found [here](#) and their website is [here](#).

Also read their autumn [newsletter](#).

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Other events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 5th October 7.30pm**
Black Bear Hotel, 14 South St, Wareham
BH20 4LT. Free entry – small donation
appreciated 'Out of the Box' presents:

Religion in School: Problem or Opportunity?

Christian and Humanist perspectives

Hilary Bond, Schools and Children's worker
for the Parish of Wareham and Cathy
Silman, retired teacher and member of
Dorset Humanists Education Group

The question of whether religion has any
place in schools is a highly controversial
one engendering strong feelings both from
those who see it as a good thing and those
who do not. Schools themselves are to
some extent bound by law in this respect, in
terms of the current requirement for worship
opportunities in schools, and the demands
of the national curriculum. These factors
could be seen as presenting a problem,
especially in an area like Purbeck where the
vast majority of schools are church schools,
or they could be seen as an opportunity for
the local faith communities to help through
our children and young people in making a
good society.

Whether your involvement in education is
current and direct, or whether you were just
once a school pupil; whether you are a
person of any faith or none, come and join
the discussion and maybe we can all be
part of the solution.

'Out of the Box' is an open discussion group
for people with both religious and non-
religious viewpoints. It's a successor to
Purbeck Open Lectures (POL) and has
been set up by a group of POL supporters
in collaboration with Dorset Humanists.

■ In September, David Warden presented
Humanism to over 1,000 pupils at Thomas
Hardye School in Dorchester as part of their
RE programme. He answered 'Big
Questions' and told the story of how Darwin
made it possible not to believe in a creator
God.

■ **Wednesday 12th October 7.30pm**

Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub,
Brunswick, 199 Malmesbury Park Road
Bournemouth BH8 8PX

Reality Bending

James Brown on hypnosis. Hypnosis has
been shrouded in mystery for years and the
reasons why it works, or at least appears to,
are as numerous as they are contradictory.
In this demonstration and talk James Brown
will show you what is really going on when
someone is hypnotised. Sleep, trance, and
relaxation are all synonymous with hypnosis
but during the course of the evening James
will prove that they are not needed at all
and that hypnosis really isn't how it
appears. James has a background in
psychiatric nursing, magic, con artistry,
persuasion and hypnosis. His work life is
divided between lecturing, performing and
consulting.

■ **Wednesday 19th October 7.30pm**

Southbourne Literary Society, Trinity
Methodist Church, Southbourne Road, BH6
5AQ

Bombs, Bloomsbury, and Bertrand Russell



A talk by David Warden. In 1940 Bertrand
Russell was condemned by an American
court as 'morally unfit to teach philosophy'.
He was subsequently awarded the Order of
Merit by George VI and the Nobel Prize for
Literature. Russell was one of the greatest
philosophers and rationalists of the
twentieth century. The grandson of a Prime
Minister, he did pioneering work in
mathematics and logic as well as
campaigning for women's suffrage and
against nuclear war. He was twice
imprisoned for his activities and married
four times. David will explore this great life.

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Refugee Awareness

Report by Aaron Darkwood on our joint meeting with Sunday Assembly - a unique opportunity to hear some true life accounts of things happening in the real world

What a moving occasion our Refugee Awareness evening turned out to be. I had heard pastor John MacDiarmid's account of meeting refugees on a Greek island as part of a Christian mission before but I was no less moved by his story the second time around. It included stories of children who had lost parents and overflowing boats that had only just managed to cross the Aegean Sea. Some never made it at all. The audience was silent and captivated as they took it all in. Hearing all this in person from someone that many of us know had a much bigger impact than any BBC news report.

Open University Student Union President Chris Pane delivered a very emotional account of his trip to the Calais camp. He had, on his own initiative, decided to do something rather than watch others say that "something needed to be done". He collected goods, hired a van and went with helpers to the camp to try and dispense aid. Chris held back tears at one point as he recounted chatting to refugees - one of whom was killed the following day by French protestors. He related how the camp was torn down in places by French authorities and how French citizens had taken it upon themselves to demolish the camp.

Simon Bull, Humanist Celebrant and Green Party Councillor added his input to the evening, summing up what Bournemouth was doing to aid refugees locally. His revelation that we had housed just two refugees in the past year met with gasps from the listeners who were shocked and ashamed that we had not done more.

The Q&A session allowed us to explore some of the complex issues raised by the speakers in more depth and highlighted the fact that this subject needed far more than the few hours we had available to us.

 [Sunday Assembly Bournemouth](#)

Population Matters



Eric Rimmer delivered a hard-hitting talk about the world's burgeoning population at our September Moordown meeting. He informed us that 30,000 species go extinct every year because of human expansion and that the sustainable carrying capacity of the Earth is just 2 billion humans – not 7 billion rising to a projected 10 billion during this century. He said we urgently need to bring down world population and the only non-catastrophic way to do this is by implementing a one-child family policy globally.

For further information and advice on what you can do to help visit the Population matters website [here](#).



Transgender Awareness

"One of our best events ever!"
Dean Robertson

More than eighty people packed into the Green House Hotel at our Wednesday evening event to hear about the difficult, dangerous, and lonely journeys of people born into the wrong gender and those who identify as 'non-binary'. The audience was astonished to hear about the bureaucratic hoops you have to leap through in order to persuade the UK's Gender Recognition Panel to grant your destination gender status. Jay, a trans man, went to Bournemouth School for Girls but he always knew something was missing. He first came out as a lesbian but over the years he has successfully transitioned to his new gender as a gruff-voiced bearded man and is the first person to have played pool for both the Dorset ladies and men's teams. His old teacher was a bit startled when she met him at a school reunion! BSG is now much more accepting of trans pupils. Kevin Turner, an NHS sexual health worker, provided a factual, entertaining, and graphic account of the transition process to complement the human stories from the panel.

For more information visit <http://www.rainbowbournemouth.co.uk/>

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David and Aaron go to GRAM

David Warden and Aaron Darkwood attended the Group Representatives Annual Meeting at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 17th September. The British Humanist Association has around seventy groups and sections and many of these were represented on the day.

Dorset Humanists made quite an impact thanks to Aaron's flair for marketing. He set up a small display of our leaflets and this generated a lot of interest. We were also very distinctive in our Dorset Humanists t-shirts!

David attended the **faith schools workshop** led by BHA Faith Schools and Education Campaigner Jay Harman. This workshop focussed on how a local group like Dorset Humanists could effectively campaign against any proposals to increase the faith schools sector. Jay said the difficult thing is knowing about proposals and consultations which often are not well publicised. He added that grassroots campaigns are more effective than the BHA complaining about a local proposal.

Can you help? If Dorset Humanists is to become aware of local proposals for new religiously-selecting faith schools we need volunteers to do the ground work on local demographics and church intentions and to 'keep their ears to the ground'. Jay is sending out a toolkit containing advice and ideas.

Sarah Gillam, the BHA's new Director of Communications, gave a presentation on how to promote a humanist group. We picked up some useful ideas such as asking who we are trying to attract (our target audience) and finding out how to reach them. We could strategically target people who are less well-represented in our group such as younger people, families, and different socio-economic groups. **Can you help?** It would be good, for example, to set up a 'young humanists advisory group' to generate ideas and actions that could help us to attract and retain more people in the



18-35 age group. If you are in this age group please come forward with your ideas!

Teddy Prout, Director of Community Services, suggested in the Q&A session that all groups could mark **World Humanist Day** on 21st June with a banner and/or t-shirts stating 'I'm a Humanist. Ask me why'. Aaron immediately came up with a ten-point plan of how the BHA could mastermind this and he got the biggest round of applause of the day!

Aaron attended the **Supporting Apostates** workshop led by Imtiaz Shams, an ex-Muslim who has set up the group 'Faith to Faithless' which is now part of the BHA. Imtiaz explained the horrors faced by people wanting to leave their faith, up to and including ending their lives because they were unable to choose to live the life they wanted. One of the key ideas he suggested was putting an ad in the paper asking for "Anyone who has left their faith, to get in touch". He said it really is that easy. He also said that Meetup is a great site for persons of ex-faith to go to, as they will have left their own community, be lonely and seeking friends.

Aaron has suggested that in order to take these and other ideas forward we need a planning day in January, with lots of input from members, to review our aims and strategy for the year ahead.

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Old Harry to Swanage walk. From left: Massimo, Ralf, Paul, Jim, Carolyn, Stephen, Aaron, Huw, Jacqui.

Dorset Humanists appreciated by...

Carolyn Gardiner (in photo above, middle)

I thought people might like to hear how much I value being a member of Dorset Humanists. It was through DH that I discovered Humanist Celebrant Maggie Pepin who conducted a wonderful celebration of my husband's life nearly two years ago. My husband, an atheist, died suddenly at the age of 71. I count myself fortunate in having enjoyed a long happy marriage (nearly 49 years). Many friends and relatives commented that it was the "best funeral" they had ever attended. I could not have wished for a better service.

It was five years ago that Jane Bannister, former Dorset Humanists chairwoman and a member of a U3A philosophy class I attended, who told me about the group. From the start David's welcoming smile and ability to remember names has impressed me. I continue to enjoy listening to stimulating talks both at Moordown Community Centre and the Green House

hotel. I've also enjoyed two Darwin Day talks, socials at the Moon in the Square, a beach barbecue and am currently undertaking the 8 week One Life Course for a second time.

The last five months has been particularly good with new friendships made after doing many DH scenic walks lead mainly by Aaron Darkwood. Aaron and Huw have become particularly good friends. I have felt flattered to be invited to swim in the sea with them and enjoy carveries at the Suncliff Hotel. A few of us had a boat trip from Poole Quay along our wonderful Jurassic course recently. Walking, swimming and socialising with new friends has been a real tonic and I find myself feeling happier.

I would like to thank David for all his hard work which was recently recognised by the British Humanist Association. I have also been impressed by Aaron's enthusiasm and work in his role as David's assistant. Dorset Humanists is such an inclusive charity with activities/events which I know I will continue to enjoy with new friends sharing similar ethics and values.

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Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Roger West – a member of Dorset Humanists and an elected member of Bournemouth Council from 1999-2015. Dorset's councils are considering reducing the number of local authorities in the county from nine to two and want to hear residents' views about the changes being proposed. Roger argues that the proposals before us are not radical enough.

Does our present system work? No. To try and build on our already broken and undemocratic system seems futile to me. We have national political parties controlling local government and in Bournemouth we have a leader who is not directly accountable to the residents. Residents feel disengaged and my evidence is the poor turnout in local elections.

There should be accountability at all levels. We should consider an elected mayor for Dorset with responsibility for managing the whole of Dorset. This would enable a more strategic approach which is very much needed. I also should like to see elected Chief Constables with centrally funded budgets. This would break the link between Councils and the Police to their mutual benefit. The Police Force should be independent. There would then be no need for a Police and Crime Commissioner. I see no reason why the same approach should not be taken with the two emergency services, Fire and Rescue and Ambulance. This way there could be no hiding behind committees.

Housing is one of the most important issues facing society. Poor housing creates social problems. Residents should have access to an affordable home, which has decent sized rooms, and where children can have their own space. Homes should be energy efficient and have storage space. They should be near facilities like shops, doctors,

libraries and buses. Parking provision should be minimal as land is scarce. Our homes should not be looked at as an investment. Capital spent on housing is capital lost to business. Sale of council houses should be stopped. Our society is deeply fractured. We have houses in the conurbation that are large and some have enormous gardens. These do not generate social cohesion, as they need the car to function. Then we have families living in cramped one-bed flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation which must create huge social problems. We have night shelters for those who have no home – if not, it is the street. We do not look after those who have drug and alcohol problems in a respectful manner, which creates more problems.

I have severe reservations about the modern role of a councillor. I have come to the conclusion that all that is needed are a few councillors/senators for the County whose role would be to provide a debate on a subject prior to the decision of the Mayor. Area Forums, Civic Societies, Chambers of Trade and Environmental Committees could address local democracy.

Council Tax is a broken system that should be replaced. The obvious candidate is to have Land Value Tax.

■ Full version of this email is [here](#).
The Council consultation can be found [here](#)
and the closing date for responses is
Tuesday 25th October.

Parent's name withheld to protect the anonymity of his child

Thank you for taking the time to send me details about Dorset Humanists' education team. I will indeed send the suggested text to Parley First School's Head. I was quite frustrated with the way RE had been taught to such young impressionable minds and the consequent confusion (and concern) that this produced in my child. I guess there's nothing you can do about a curriculum that seems to allow such material to be taught to very young children but at least the balance could potentially be redressed. I hope they contact you.

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Dorset Humanists **Chairman's View**

October 2016



A boy at Thomas Hardy School came up to me after my presentation on Humanism and asked me whether I would change my mind if I was presented with scientific proof that God existed. It was a good question and I had no hesitation in replying that I would, of course, be prepared to look at the evidence and change my mind if the evidence was compelling. Christians tend to oscillate between the claim that there's incontrovertible evidence for God and the fall-back position that evidence, inasmuch as there is any, needs to be complemented by faith. Faith means intellectual submission to an orthodoxy which has been placed beyond question. The best schools, including open-minded faith schools, encourage children to ask questions and to evaluate truth claims. The humanist concern is about schools which discourage critical questioning. We'll be discussing this topic with Christians at our dialogue meeting in Wareham on Wednesday 5th October. (Details in 'Other events'.)

I'm currently reading Frans de Waal's enlightening book *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates* (2013). Bonobos are my favourite cousins, not least because of their endearing tendency to make love not war. De Waal provides compelling evidence that morality is based on the social instincts we share with other mammals. Morality is, therefore, bottom-up not top-down. It won't be exactly the same everywhere but there are constants such as fairness and empathy and the social policing which instils morality in children and grown-ups. Humanism helps to promote this naturalistic appreciation of ethics and morality.

There are, at most, only 50,000 bonobos left in the wild compared with 7,461,493,384 humans at the time of writing. Humans are dramatically crowding out the planet and leaving precious little room for other large mammals. Population Matters speaker Eric Rimmer's proposed solution of a global one-child policy is dystopian and unrealisable. There are different estimates of the human carrying capacity of the planet depending on the size of each individual's ecological footprint. Optimism (not utopianism) is in the DNA of Humanism and we will continue to bring you talks and discussions which address this and other critical issues facing humanity. One thing we know for sure: there will be no dramatic return of a supernatural saviour. It's up to us.

David Warden

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