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# Dorset Humanists

*Atheists and agnostics for a better world*

## ■ Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TB

### Conservation Ethics



A talk by Dr Rebecca Nesbit

The Earth hasn't seen an extinction on the current scale since the demise of the dinosaurs. While money pours in for rhinos, tigers, and gorillas, many plants

and insects are going extinct before they are even discovered. It's time to question some of the fundamental beliefs of conservation in order to ensure that humans and wildlife can thrive in an age of extinction.

Rebecca Nesbit writes fiction and non-fiction about science and the ethical questions it raises. She trained as an ecologist, studying butterfly migration for her PhD, and currently works with the science Nobel Prizes. She explored the risks and benefits of GM crops in her book *Is that Fish in your Tomato?*

### Talkback

Join us for our popular *talkback* circle after the break. Talkback is an opportunity to continue the discussion or get anything off your chest in a friendly environment.

## ■ Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, Grove Road, Bournemouth BH1 3AX

### Heading for Extinction and What to Do About It



A talk by Councillor Chris Rigby

"The planet is in ecological crisis: we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction event this planet has experienced.

Scientists believe we may have entered a

period of abrupt climate breakdown. This is an emergency." In this talk, climate speakers from Extinction Rebellion will share the latest climate science on where our planet is heading, discuss some of the current psychology around climate change, and offer solutions through the study of social movements.

Recently elected to BCP council representing the Green Party, Chris is a long time environmental and social justice campaigner, Greenpeace volunteer and co-ordinator of Extinction Rebellion Bournemouth.

Find XR Bournemouth on Facebook here:

<https://www.facebook.com/XRBournemouth/>



■ **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 7.30pm** and every first Thursday at Poole Hill Brewery, 41-43 Poole Hill, BH2 5PW.



## Pub socials

Please note changed venue.

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.



## Sunday Walks

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January 10.15am**

Meyrick Park & Talbot Heath - another walk exploring hidden corners of the town. This walk is about 5 or 6 miles and starts at the war memorial in Bournemouth Central Gardens. Meet at 10.15 for 10.30am start.

Please check [Meetup](#) for further details and any changes, for example last minute cancellations owing to weather conditions.

☎ Phil 07817 260498

■ **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019 2.00– 4.30pm**

Lighthouse, 21 Kingland Road, BH15 1UG Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee present:

## Holocaust Memorial Day

2020 is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The main speaker is Holocaust survivor Henry Schachter who spoke at a Dorset Humanists event in 2014. He has since told his story to thousands of children and adults. His presentation for Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 is called *Road to the Shoah*. 'Shoah' is a modern Hebrew word which literally means 'catastrophe'. Maggie Pepin and David Warden are both members of the Bournemouth and Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee and this year Ronnie Barr will speak on behalf of the LGBT community. Ronnie is also Young Humanists Ambassador for Dorset.

Free tickets available through [Eventbrite](#) or Lighthouse Box Office: 01202 280000.

■ **Friday 17th January 7.30pm**

Lighthouse, Poole

## Sandi Toksvig Live!

If you have booked but not yet paid your £20, please pay Lyn Glass at our next event on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January or as soon as possible.

☎ Lyn Glass 01202 767323

✉ [lyn.glass@btinternet.com](mailto:lyn.glass@btinternet.com)

■ **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February 12.00 noon for lunch and 2.00pm for speaker**

Dorset Humanists' Darwin Day at Bournemouth University, Kimmeridge House, Talbot Campus, Fern Barrow, Poole, BH12 5BB

## Darwin Day with special guest star Robin Ince



Robin Ince presents a new version of his tour show 'Chaos of Delight' about finding the joy in humanity, curiosity, and the universe during anxious times. The winner and co-star of the Rose D'Or and

Sony Gold award-winning *The Infinite Monkey Cage*, and, most importantly, winner of *Pointless Celebrities*, presents an artist's manifesto of delight and curiosity. Robin mashes up the two cultures of art and science in this celebration of the human mind, from Bohemians to Black Holes and Dali to DNA – another of his stand up sort of lectures.

Please join us for lunch before the show.

**Lunch & Talk Ticket (12.00pm start): £20 for members / £25 non-members / £10 students** includes a welcoming glass of wine or soft drink, followed by a 2-course finger buffet lunch & coffee.

**Talk only Ticket (2.00pm start): £5** includes coffee or tea on arrival.

To book phone Lyn Glass on 01202 767323

✉ [lyn.glass@btinternet.com](mailto:lyn.glass@btinternet.com)



## Persephone Arbour



We are very sad to announce the death of Persephone Arbour who conducted non-religious ceremonies in the Dorset region. Persephone lived in Kimmeridge and in recent

years formed a relationship with the late Professor Jack Cohen who co-wrote the *Science of Discworld* books with Terry Pratchett and Ian Stewart. Both Persephone and Jack gave talks to Dorset Humanists, Persephone on assisted dying and Jack on science. In recent years she suffered from Alzheimer's. Her humanist funeral was conducted by one of her sons in London on 31<sup>st</sup> December. A recording is available.

## Protecting Women's Reproductive Healthcare

*At our November 'short talks' event, Debbie Sears presented her first-hand account of working on the front line in abortion services. This report contains extracts from her talk.*

I've worked within health and social services for nearly 30 years and more particularly the past 15 years as a nurse within Public Health in the NHS and for large charities. My current role is in the area of Contraception and Sexual Health for one of the UK's largest abortion providers – the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). I'll be talking to you this evening about the role of BPAS in the UK, the changes afoot with abortion, and the way in which Humanists UK have supported these changes in the past and, hopefully, will continue to do so in the future.

*“Abortion is a fundamental part of a women's reproductive healthcare. For all the women in our lives, let's make sure we protect it.”*

To start on a personal level, I thought perhaps I could share with you how I came to be involved with abortion. As an idealistic



**40 Days for Life – an American-based abortion protest organisation which operates in the UK including Bournemouth.**

student in the late 70s, I was of the belief that abortion should be allowed, I could understand why women might have one and that it should be legally provided, but it was something that I definitely couldn't do myself, it just wasn't part of my moral make up – after all, it was killing a human being. I just didn't want to be involved with it. So when I found myself with an unplanned pregnancy at the age of 22, I did a lot of soul searching and talking with my partner. We had a stable relationship and so we decided that we would marry and become parents. By the age of 31, I was the mother of three wonderful boys. When my third son was six months old, I found myself pregnant again – I was dismayed, I was exhausted looking after three boisterous boys with a husband who was usually away two nights of the week. The thought of another pregnancy and four children horrified me. I didn't think I could cope mentally or physically and therefore the impact would be detrimental to my existing family. So with the support of my husband, I had an abortion at 11 weeks pregnancy and my husband had a vasectomy.

My views about abortion had changed, I had seriously considered my options, I was upset and angry to find myself in this situation but it was definitely the right decision, for me, at that time, and these responses are typical and heard time and time again from women all over the country seeking an abortion.

*“Some people have said to me I’m a murderer and others have said I’ve saved their lives.”*

So now I’m an ‘abortionist’. Some people have said to me I’m a ‘murderer’ and other people have said I’ve saved their lives. It’s certainly a job of contrasts. Perhaps we should start with an overall picture of where we’re at in England & Wales currently. In 1967, Parliament passed the Abortion Act, later amended by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. Rather than making abortion legal, the Act makes exceptions to the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act which made abortion an offence punishable by life in prison. Under the 1967 Act, a doctor can legally perform an abortion which has been authorised by two doctors up to 23 weeks and 6 days of pregnancy if they meet the following criteria: continuing the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman and/or any existing children of her family; the child if born could be seriously handicapped. Although the Act was an important achievement which dramatically reduced abortion-related mortality, it is now outdated and not evidence-based. But let’s first get a picture of how abortion services currently work in England, Wales and Scotland.

### **A typical woman’s journey in seeking an abortion**

A woman takes her pregnancy test at home or in a healthcare environment. On finding that it’s positive she may decide immediately that continuing with the pregnancy is not an option for her and know that she wants an abortion. She may be uncertain and want to discuss things further with her husband, partner, family, friends, GP or she may not want to discuss her pregnancy with any one at this stage. Whatever stage she’s at, she can arrange an appointment either through her GP or phone a central line to make an appointment directly, usually through Marie Stopes International or BPAS. She is assured complete confidentiality. Her details will be taken over the phone and an appointment offered. This might be a

telephone consultation or she may attend a clinic. Her reasons for requesting a termination will be discussed and documented as well as medical history and possible treatments. These consultations are generally carried out by counsellors and/or suitably qualified midwives or nurses.

In early gestation (less than 10 weeks since their last menstrual period) most women can be offered medical or surgical treatments. For later gestations women usually opt for surgical methods.

Before any treatment can proceed a woman must have two certificates (HSA1 and 2) signed by two different doctors stating that they ‘fit’ the criteria for being ‘allowed’ an abortion. Most women will never see these doctors – it’s all done remotely via computer. This is an unnecessary cost and completely outdated.

*“In England we would like to see abortion decriminalised...”*

Abortion is a time-sensitive treatment and although it’s generally a very safe medical procedure, it’s usually safer the earlier it is performed. Treatment has to be performed in licensed premises such as hospitals, GP surgeries, Marie Stopes International or BPAS premises. There are two parts to treatment, the 1<sup>st</sup> in clinic and the 2<sup>nd</sup> at home 24-48 hours later. The treatment induces a miscarriage. Surgical treatment involves vacuum or suction aspiration [which removes the uterine contents through the cervix] and this is a day case performed in clinic with local anaesthetic or conscious sedation. Most women recover within a day or two.

### **Humanists UK supports change**

Humanists UK supports the rights of women and girls to dignity and personal autonomy, and accordingly their rights to choose and access safe and lawful abortion, regardless of the circumstances of their pregnancies. In recent years, it has intervened in several cases concerning Northern Ireland’s restrictive abortion laws and it played a massive part in last year’s success by supporting activists and hopefully getting



those laws overturned. We would like to think that by Spring 2020 women will be able to access safe and legal abortion care in Northern Ireland but until that's in place they are still having to travel to England for these services.

In England we would like to see abortion decriminalised. Decriminalising abortion does not mean deregulating abortion but means that services could be organised in the same way as other health care procedures such as attending hospital for a hip operation or cancer care. Options would be discussed with health professionals and documented and then you would be consented for treatment.

### Christian protesters

Bournemouth's BPAS clinic in Ophir Road provides both surgical and Early Medical Abortion (abortion pill) procedures. It has been on the same site for 42 years. It's a busy clinic with approximately 120 women accessing services at the clinic each week from around the country. Women are often subjected to anti-abortion protesters. '40 Days for Life' is an American-based Christian organization that organises grassroots campaigns against abortion. They say their purpose is to have peaceful, prayerful pro-life activism to stop women from having an abortion. And whilst most of us respect a right to peaceful protest, this is all about intimidation, right at the gates of the clinic.

The discussion about abortion exists at a number of levels but rarely does it reflect the reality and diversity of the tens of thousands of women who come to us for advice about unplanned pregnancy every year. Sadly, stereotypes often prevail. Women are often cast as feckless and irresponsible for seeking abortion after finding themselves with an unwanted pregnancy – or career women interested only in their own personal goals. Recent comments and campaigns by politicians opposed to abortion often imply that women do not know what they are doing when they request an abortion and need protecting from themselves, or that what they are doing is morally wrong – and that their

pregnancies need protecting from the women themselves.

One in three women will have an abortion. They are not a particular 'type' of woman. They are women of all ages and all circumstances. They are mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends. They will be women we all know. Contraception fails and sometimes we fail to use it properly. These women do not have abortions because they do not know what they are doing or because they have no sense of right or wrong. They have abortions because it is the right thing for them and their families at that time in their lives. Only the woman herself can make that judgment – not the banner-bearing protester outside, the health secretary, or even the doctor or nurse providing her care.

We live in a country where the majority of us support a woman's ability to make a choice when faced with an unplanned pregnancy but where a vocal and determined minority have the potential to undermine a women's access to care if we're not careful. Abortion is a fundamental part of a women's reproductive healthcare. For all the women in our lives, let's make sure we protect it.



## Jane Bannister Winter Appeal

Our Winter Appeal has raised thousands of pounds in previous years for a diverse range of charities including Refuge for Women, New Forest Nightstop for homeless young people, Michael House hostel, and Mosaic for bereaved children. The appeal is named in memory of Jane Bannister who was Chair of Dorset Humanists until 2009.

This year, following discussion at one of our *Talkback* meetings, Dorset Humanists committee has selected two charities for our Winter Appeal this year; Hurting to Healing and End of Life Companions. We hope you will give generously to our appeal.

## Hurting to Healing

Hurting to Healing was formerly called *Dorset Action on Abuse*. Its mission is to relieve the enduring suffering and distress of adult survivors of all forms of childhood abuse. This includes physical, emotional, psychological or sexual violation, financial abuse, deprivation and neglect of a child's human rights and needs. H2H provides a range of therapeutic services including one-to-one counselling, therapeutic and well-being groups, and creative therapies programmes.

Ongoing cuts in NHS services continue to increase the number of referrals of clients with chronic complex difficulties. A surprisingly large number of H2H clients have been diagnosed by the NHS with serious mental health conditions yet some of its clients have struggled for decades to get help to overcome their symptoms and distress. Clients report that compulsory Personal Independence Payment assessments, often followed by drastic cuts or threats of cuts to their benefits, are increasing their feelings of hopelessness and suicidal risk. H2H services provide much needed, safe, reparative, therapeutic relationships.

*"I had felt hopeless for a very long time. The counselling I received may have actually saved my life. I am now usually living with a sense of hope."*

Hurting to Healing is a recipient of the prestigious Queen's Award 2012.

Three members of Dorset Humanists do volunteer work for Hurting to Healing.

<https://hurting2healing.org.uk/>

## End of Life Companion Volunteers at RBH

The End of Life Companion service was established at Royal Bournemouth Hospital in 2017 during Dying Matters Week. With the ethos that no-one should die alone, the volunteer companions are there to support patients in the last days of their life,

especially those who may have no relatives or visitors able to be by their side.

The companions, already long-serving volunteers at RBH, also provide support for patients' families and loved ones, offering comfort, reassurance and a listening ear to those in need.

Your donations could help fund a comfy chair, a collapsible bed for relatives, a portable music player for patients' favourite music or relaxing tracks, boxes of tissues, or a fund toward taxi fares late at night for volunteers who do not have transport.

Watch a short video here: [Hospital volunteers](#)



## Letters & Emails

*It's your column...*

*From Maria, Toronto Humanists*

Happy New Year to David and fellow Humanists. I hope 2020 will be as good as possible for all of you and that you'll find good health, happiness, and good luck. Best wishes from Toronto!

*From Carol Wilcox*

I too love to read the bulletin and regret that I don't get to meetings. I was very pleased to see Prue Plumridge's Modern Money Theory talk summarised but here is one thing I would like to add. As someone who has campaigned for Land Value Tax (LVT) for decades and who is a recent convert to MMT, I regret that LVT advocates do not understand that public expenditure is not funded from taxes, and equally that MMT advocates do not understand that taxes have other purposes than revenue raising. Prue listed those other purposes as: controlling inflation, income redistribution and curbing bad behaviour (sin taxes). There is another important one: Pigouvian taxation, which raises the price of goods which create negative externalities. The



land market is the most dysfunctional market we have. It is the reason why we have people living (and dying) on the streets and a large proportion of the population kept in poverty by spending more than 50% of their income on keeping a roof over their heads. LVT is the answer.

*From Bob Churchill, Humanists International*

The time has come to say a fond farewell. It's been 7½ years, 8 General Assemblies, 8 Freedom of Thought Reports, 1 new name for 'IHEU', 1½ World Humanist Congresses, 5 new websites, I think I've travelled to at least 18 countries for Humanists International in that time, I've kept 16,665 emails, there are 59 separate PowerPoint presentations in my presentations folder, which means I've given at least that many talks [including a Dorset Humanists talk on Witchcraft in 2013]. And it's all happened over a period in which we've seen 8 repealed blasphemy laws, 50 new member organizations, far too many incidents of terrible persecution and violence, but also thousands of new humanists joining the international movement, supporting our work, and finding their national organizations wherever they are in the world.

This has been an incredible period in my career and in life. Humanists International and the movement as a whole has developed so much over these past years, and I'm proud to have been part of that evolution. Very few roles allow you to make so many great and inspiring friends from all over the world, and I'm full of gratitude for the opportunity of meeting, working and befriending everyone in the international movement.

I think we've achieved a lot together. However, there are challenges to humanism, human rights, and justice globally that I think we didn't even fully understand as an organization back in 2012. These are challenges that the world must face, and which the humanist movement must face together. Humanists International is in good hands, including your good hands, we are pulling together as a global movement, with ever greater

capability, conviction and courage, and I have confidence that this trend will continue.

This is a renewed organization, a growing membership, a necessary social movement. You are part of it. So, be fully part of it. Be authentic. Respect each other and the role you play within the movement. Be a champion for others. Be inventive. Be effective. Be kind.

*From Luke Donnellan, Humanists UK's Head of Education, to school visitors and SACRE reps*

As we come to the end of another year, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for all the amazing work you've done, and continue to do. I'm so impressed with our network of school speakers and SACRE reps, both in terms of its growth and impact. And we've had a record-breaking year all round.

Over the last 12 months, [Understanding Humanism](#) has attracted more followers, views, and downloads than in any other year. Our online courses have been taken by thousands of learners. We launched a new website, [Assemblies for All](#), to help teachers deliver inclusive, meaningful, and relevant school assemblies. And, thanks to you, we've visited more schools than ever before.

Without your contribution, we wouldn't have had nearly the impact we've had this year. So thank you. You're not just educating young people about humanist beliefs and values – you're improving the understanding of humanism for the foreseeable future. Together, we're inspiring confidence and curiosity for a whole generation. That's something to be proud of. Here's to another wonderful year!

■ Dorset Humanists has a team of school visitors and SACRE reps. We spoke to nearly 4,000 students in 2019! SACREs (Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education) determine local RE syllabuses. Dorset Humanists has ensured that Humanism is included in local syllabuses. Would you like to join our team of school visitors? Please contact David Warden if you are interested.





## Dorset Humanists **Chairman's View**

January 2020

**I**t was a privilege to take part in the *Many Faiths Living Better Together* secondary schools project organised by Development Education in Dorset (DEED) and Dorset Race Equality Council. I made new friends, and reinforced existing friendships, in the Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities. Given the fact that some interpretations of Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity are very liberal and humanistic I felt in good company. Perhaps the biggest gap was between me and the ex-Catholic Irish Muslim. We got on fine on a personal level but from a humanist point of view I found some of her beliefs irrational. For example, she stated that the Quran contains science and that the angels which accompany her everywhere she goes are invisible because they are 'made of light'. Aside from this however, I was shocked to hear about the amount of abuse and hatred she has to put up with on a daily basis in Bournemouth. She wears a full-length gown and head covering but her face is uncovered. She explained that she dresses like this so that people will not be distracted by her clothes but will engage with her 'inner' self through the medium of her face. I couldn't help thinking that her style of dress was responsible for the hostile attention she attracts in public places but people in Britain should be free to wear whatever they like without fear of abuse and intimidation. Our 'many faiths' panel helped to educate hundreds of local students about the values of tolerance, respect, and friendship across the boundaries of belief and dress codes, and we demonstrated how to disagree without hostility or hatred.

**S**ome environmental activists have been stating that "the planet is burning" and, in reference to last year's fires in the Amazon Rainforest, that "the planet's lungs are on fire". Rainforests are responsible for one-third of the Earth's oxygen production and the hellish scenes from Australia over the last few weeks have been shocking and sobering. As we move on from our national obsession with Brexit, Dorset Humanists aims to give more focus to environmental crises in our 2020 programme, starting with two 'extinction' talks lined up for January. We may not agree with everything our speakers have to say but we encourage our members and supporters to inform themselves as fully as possible and to think critically about the science and the solutions. We wish all of our members, supporters, and readers a happy New Year.

*David Warden*

