

Rethinking the NHS: A Clinician's Roadmap to Efficiency

Saturday 13th January 2.00pm Moordown Community Centre, Bournemouth BH9 1TW

A talk by Dr Barry Newman - everyone welcome

Our events are free to attend – a voluntary donation of around £3 is appreciated to help with our expenses. Join us in the café during the break and browse our humanist library.

Drawing on his extensive experience, retired intensive care consultant Barry Newman will address the critical challenges facing the NHS, including long waiting lists and the financial strains from compensation claims. He proposes a radical shift in management, advocating a change in the way the NHS is strategically and operationally managed. This insightful talk will be of interest to everyone who wants to understand the NHS's current crisis and realistic proposals for reform. Barry Newman is a member of Dorset Humanists Committee and he leads our School Visiting Programme.



Festive fun at the Marsham Court Hotel – Dorset Humanists' annual dinner in December. Special thanks to Aaron (far left) who was our game show host and Sandra (next to him) who organised the event.

Challenging Progressive Myths about Israel

Wednesday 31st January 7.30pm, Orchid
Hotel 34 Gervis Rd, Bournemouth BH1 3DH

A talk by David Warden

Our events are free to attend – a voluntary donation of around £3 is appreciated to help with our expenses. Join us in the bar afterwards.



On 7th October 2023, Hamas massacred over a thousand ordinary people in Israel – one of the worst pogroms since the Holocaust. It has declared its desire to do this "again and again". The General Secretary of the United Nations, António Guterres, said that October 7th "did not happen in a vacuum". Indeed it did not. The conflict has been ongoing for 100 years. The Israeli response has been widely criticised and hundreds of thousands of people have joined protests across the Western world in support of the Palestinian cause.

In this controversial but informative talk, David Warden will challenge some of the progressive myths about Israel, including the belief that Israel is a manifestation of "White European settler colonialism", that Israel is "Western compensation for the Holocaust", that "Palestinians had nothing to do with the Holocaust", and that "Israel is occupying Palestine". Drawing extensively on the history of the region, especially the first Arab-Israeli War in 1947-1948, David will make a case for Israel based on what actually happened in history and the legitimate desire for distinct ethnic groups to be able to live safely and securely in their own homeland. He will suggest that there is a solution to the conflict but only on the basis of Enlightenment humanist values such as pluralism, peaceful co-existence, economic partnership, and secularisation.

David is the humanist representative on the Bournemouth & Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 13 th January 2pm	Moordown	Rethinking the NHS <i>Barry Newman</i>
Sunday 21 st January 10.15am	Shell Bay Walk	A gentle walk of about 7 miles to explore the forest and seashore on the south side of Poole Harbour. See Meetup.
Sunday 28 th January 2pm	Lighthouse, Poole	Holocaust Memorial Day – <i>David Warden will conclude the ceremony</i>
Wednesday 31 st January 7.30pm	Orchid	Israel: Challenging myths <i>David Warden</i>
Saturday 10 th February	Moordown	Darwin Day lunch with guest speaker Catherine Nixey
<i>Plus other social events and walks which will be announced on Meetup. Please check all events nearer the time in case of any changes.</i>		

Fragility of Freedom

Holocaust Memorial Day 2024



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

Sunday 28th January at Lighthouse, Poole, 2.00-4.30pm

Organised by the Bournemouth & Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee

Admission is strictly by ticket only. The event is free but there will be an opportunity to make a voluntary donation at the end. See link below to get your free ticket.

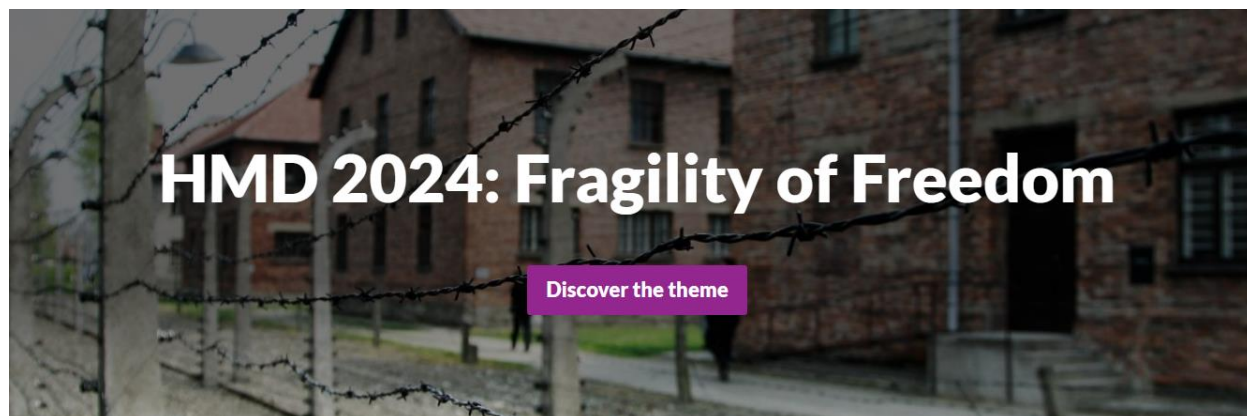
There's rarely been a more important time to take a stand against genocide. Dorset Humanists has taken part in this event for many years. Maggie Pepin was the humanist representative until David Warden took on this role. Please support this event if you can by registering for your free ticket. The event remembers all the groups who were targeted by the Nazi regime including Jews, Roma, disabled people, and gay people.

The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 is 'Fragility of Freedom'. We will be remembering the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda (7 April 1994 – 15 July 1994) and the 70th anniversary of the Roma Genocide in Auschwitz (2nd August 1944). We will also be hearing from one of our Muslim committee members who experienced the fragility of freedom very recently when she tried to escape from Sudan.

The main part of the programme will be devoted to hearing the testimony of a Holocaust survivor as told by his daughter. The number of Holocaust survivors who are still alive to tell their stories is dwindling fast and those who are still alive are reluctant to travel very far. Our speaker is from an organisation called [Generation 2 Generation](#) which provides speakers to tell their family Holocaust stories using eye-witness testimony.

Admission is strictly by ticket only and tickets are now available on [Eventbrite](#). They will also be available from the Lighthouse Poole box office on 01202 280000 from the first week in January.

Please click [here](#) to get your ticket.



Click the image to find out more about this year's theme or visit

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/this-years-theme/>

[Bournemouth & Poole Holocaust Memorial Day Committee](#)

Notice of AGM

Call for proposals and potential committee members

Dorset Humanists Annual General Meeting with a complimentary members' lunch will take place on Saturday 9th March 1.15pm at Moordown Community Centre. Everyone is welcome but only subscribing members can vote. Membership is just £15 a year or less.

Dorset Humanists is run by a volunteer committee of up to twelve people. Please contact David if you are interested in joining the team. Committee members are expected

to take on a specific role which suits their skills and abilities and support our events as far as their personal commitments allow. The committee meets at least four times a year.

If you would like to make a formal proposal to the AGM please send this in writing to David Warden by the end of January so that it can be given proper consideration. This also includes any charities you would like Dorset Humanists to consider supporting through our Annual Appeal.

chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

Pastoral Team

Dorset Humanists is a caring community and we recognise all the informal help which members give to one another, such as going out of your way to help others get to our events or offering friendship. We also have a small pastoral team who are willing to respond to the pastoral needs of our members (that's people who have paid an annual subscription to join). This might be the need for a listening ear, help with a financial difficulty, support after leaving a high control religion, a friendly visit in your home or care home, or something else. We can only help if we know what our members need so you, our members, are our 'ears on the ground'. Our pastoral team will endeavour to help or find someone who can. Our pastoral team members are:

Cathy Silman – Former Secretary of Dorset Humanists and a Citizens' Advice Bureaux advisor. Tel: 07817 695615

Susan Bryson – An honorary life member of Dorset Humanists and an experienced therapeutic counsellor. Susan now lives in London but she can be contacted by phone. Tel: 079802 776234

David Warden – Chairman of Dorset Humanists and a qualified therapeutic counsellor. Email:

chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

Mobile: 07910 886629

Could you join our pastoral team?

We urgently need another person to join our pastoral team. If you have relevant skills and/or experience and would like to help please contact David. A DBS check may be asked for. You should be a paid-up member of Dorset Humanists and committed to our caring and inclusive ethos. Ability to drive in and around the BCP area is an advantage.

Hardship Scheme

Occasionally, it's been brought to our attention that members of Dorset Humanists have been in need of financial assistance to get them through a difficult patch. For example, someone on benefits who has had to move home and cannot afford associated costs such as a removal van or someone who, temporarily, has no money for basic necessities. If such cases come to the attention of the pastoral team we may be able to assist through our Hardship Scheme.



Humbug: How to spot invalid reasoning in yourself and others

Fifty-two people attended Daniel's Dancey's excellent talk on logical fallacies at our festive December meeting at Moordown Community Centre. Daniel explained that a logical fallacy is the use of faulty or invalid reasoning in the construction of an argument.

Why should we learn about logical fallacies? Daniel said that knowing about logical fallacies can help you recognize when someone is trying to deceive you, or when they're wrong without realizing it while attempting to persuade you of something. Many arguments rely solely on logical fallacies to support their claims. Think of logical fallacies as tools for critical thinking. Learning to spot them can be like having an antivirus for your mind, helping you detect flawed reasoning and avoid accepting false information. Understanding these fallacies can enhance critical thinking and help us engage in more productive and truthful discussions. Daniel said "I believe that this subject should be taught in schools, as it can be both interesting and useful in preparing people for life. In a world where many people try to persuade you of different things, having the tools to understand when they might be using fallacious reasoning is essential."

It's worth noting that not every statement described using a logical fallacy is necessarily incorrect. It's possible to make a bad argument using logical fallacies for something that happens to be true. So, when you notice someone using a logical fallacy, it doesn't automatically mean that everything they've said should be disregarded. Critical thinking and discernment are key.

Daniel said: "I also think that learning about logical fallacies is lots of fun. On Wikipedia you can see a very long list of logical fallacies and I'm definitely not covering all of them today. But I do recommend reading up on them."

Why would someone fall for a fallacy? Most fallacies tend to appeal to emotions or some form of logical bias, which is essentially a cognitive bias towards believing certain things, even when there isn't a solid reason to do so. An excellent example of this is confirmation bias, where people are inclined to believe things they already think are true or like. So, when someone presents a fallacious argument on a topic you're already biased towards, you might not notice it. Additionally, you might not be aware of the fallacy or ▷

realize that the argument is untrue, which is why learning about logical fallacies can be helpful.

Who uses logical fallacies? Politicians and salespeople are examples of individuals who clearly employ logical fallacies in their attempts to persuade you. However, it's not limited to them. In fact, most of us use logical fallacies in our everyday conversations because we don't meticulously scrutinize every word before we say it; that would be exhausting. So, we all use them to some extent, which is why it's valuable to be aware of them.

Daniel covered at least eighteen fallacies and faulty or invalid reasoning habits including the following:

1. **Affirming the consequent** – this is a formal logical fallacy whereby someone argues that because B is true of A ("My car won't go because it is broken") therefore A is always caused by B ("When cars don't go it is always because they are broken").
2. **Argument from authority** – an informal fallacy whereby someone believes something because it is propounded by a supposed authority figure such as the Chairman of Dorset Humanists.
3. **Ad hominem attack** – not considering an argument but destroying the reputation of the person making the argument.
4. **Straw man argument** – distorting or misrepresenting an opponent's position making it easier to refute.
5. **False dichotomy** – ignoring other options.
6. **Bulverism** – assuming that a person has bad motives for arguing something (attributed to C S Lewis, derived from a fictional character named Ezekiel Bulver).
7. **Tu quoque** (Latin, pronounced too kwoh-kweh) – deflection by accusing the other person of being just as bad.
8. **The overwhelming exception** – adding so many conditions that you destroy the possibility of doing something.
8. **Fallacy fallacy** – just because a case for something contains a fallacy does not mean it is incorrect.
9. **Thought-terminating clichés** – "Brexit means Brexit", "Levelling up" etc.
10. **Argument from ignorance** – "You can't prove there is no God...".
11. **Courtier's reply** – "You can't possibly have the expertise to know...".
12. **Argument from anecdote** – "This medicine cured me therefore it is effective".
13. **Cherry-picking** – "10 of my patients got better after drinking my medicine" while ignoring the 80 who died.
14. **Appeal to emotion** – "'The profits from this medicine go to providing toys for adorable puppies".
15. **The naturalistic fallacy (or appeal to nature)** – "It's 100% natural therefore it's good for you".
16. **The gambler's fallacy** – "You haven't won the last ten games so you must be due a win" or "You're on a winning streak so keep going!"
17. **Circular reasoning** – "Even the devil believes in God" therefore you should too.



Humbug: Something deceptive or false
Daniel looking cheerful in his festive hat

LGBTQ Refugees in Africa

Can you help?

The Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, which is run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), hosts 200,000 refugees. Among that vast number, there are hundreds of LGBTQ people who have fled persecution from highly religious countries such as Uganda which have harsh anti-gay laws.

Bobby Wilson, a gay refugee from Uganda and pictured on the right, lives in a compound with 40 other people. But even here they are not free from homophobic discrimination and abuse. Their meagre monthly food ration consists of 2kgs of maize, 2kgs of sorghum, and 1 litre of cooking oil. They manage to survive on single meals a day but this poor level of nutrition leads to compromised immune systems and susceptibility to health problems such as ulcers. A small donation enabled Bobby and his friends to buy a goat and some other provisions for Christmas. They slaughtered and roasted it, and served it with rice, Irish potatoes, chapatti, sodas, maize, and some chicken. They were able to decorate their tent with some tinsel and balloons. Bobby has a mobile phone and they were able to play music through blue tooth speakers. David Warden and John Hubbard had a lively conversation with the group via WhatsApp video on Christmas Day.

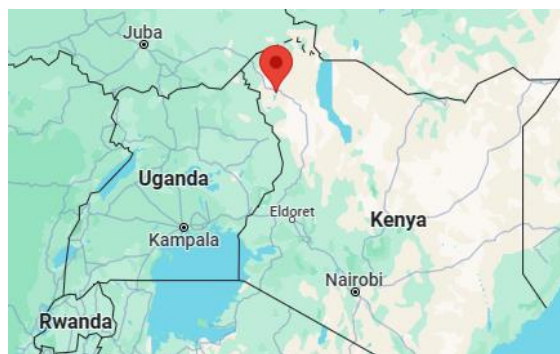
To support better nutrition, they need about £14 per person per week. This would buy rice, sugar, maize flour, wheat flour, tomato paste, tomatoes, cooking oil, onions, spices, beans, charcoal, and spaghetti. Donations can be sent instantly to them via PayPal.

David Warden is in regular contact with Bobby but he can't feed 40 people on his own. If you can help with *any* amount, please click the orange button. Thank you!

chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk



Bobby Wilson (on the right), a gay refugee from Uganda, contacted David Warden via Twitter



Kakuma refugee camp is in north west Kenya

**Click here to donate £14
or more**



Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Paul Entwistle

There was an exchange about climate change just before I left the December meeting at Moordown. I have just checked the website of the Royal Society, and they have prepared answers on many of the obvious questions. I think it is worth referring people to this site as a convenient source of information. I appreciate that not everyone has access to the internet but hopefully most people can access this website:

<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/climate-change-evidence-causes/>

From Roger Eede about our festive dinner at the Marsham Court

I thought last night's yuletide dinner was excellent. Very well spirited and largely, I must say, to Aaron's very humorous poem and gaming expertise, David's opening words of wisdom and his yearly round up, and Simon's Master of Ceremonies eloquence and glass tapping skills. It was just what we all needed. I'd also like to say what a good choice of venue. Our own room, wonderful service and food and beautifully laid out tables. A big thanks to Sandra for pulling it all together. Great to see so many folk in their seasonal finery. So glad that I could simply mix, enjoy and make up fibs in the game! Best wishes to one and all.

From a local parent about how a faith school tried to make attendance at a church service mandatory

My children attend a local faith-based academy which was forced upon us because our first choice was slightly further away.

The headteacher, during our meeting before they started, assured us that although the school is linked to the church, they had children from other religions going there too and were accommodating to their needs. When I said "And those of humanists too?" he laughed, but I decided that it was because he was ignorant of humanists rather than because he was mocking. Anyway, I was reassured that it wasn't like a faith school where they would have religious teachings. I told him that my children wouldn't need excluding from the weekly assemblies despite there occasionally being a religious aspect to them because I felt that would do more harm than good and also, I am happy with them having RE because they learn about all faiths.

But recently, one of their weekly assemblies was to be held in a church. I emailed the school and said that as this would be wholly religious in a place of worship then on this occasion I would like my children to be at school and not at the service. The school said it was mandatory for them to be there and that if they weren't it would be seen as non-attendance and marked accordingly. I told the school that my children are perfectly happy to be at school and if they continued to insist, I would attend the school with them at the normal time and wait until they were let in. If the school insisted on marking them down as absent, I said I would contact BCP council to find out who I need to complain to and that I would also be getting in touch with Humanists UK and the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science to get advice and help (legal and otherwise) with this matter. It is something that I would engage media in (both social and print media) to highlight the fact that a school which we had no other option in sending our children to is engaging in forced worship. This country has freedom of religion, but also freedom FROM religion and I'm pretty sure that if a child from a family with a non-Christian religion wanted them *not* to go to a church, they would be accommodated. ▷

My children will not be forced into a place of worship just because the school has decided to do something there. They will engage in visits to places of worship if it fits into academic criteria, in the same way as they will learn about all different religions in class, but this was a 'service'. The ACW (Act of Christian Worship) at school is morning assembly I assume. I would imagine that it has an element of worship which my children do not have to participate in. It's markedly different to going to a consecrated church.

We hope that the rest of their school life isn't going to be impacted in this way by a religion that we are not part of. Should they get older and make their own mind up that they want to be part of the Christian faith then that will be up to them, but until that time, we do not wish them in any circumstances to be part of any worship ceremony and any religious education should be impartial and factual about all faiths, religions and associated superstitions.

A little while later I got a call from the Deputy Head who noted my concerns, especially that if I were a member of the Jewish or Muslim community it wouldn't have got to this level. She was non-committal about that, but I'm sure that children of parents with no faith are not 'seen' like those from theist ones. She came back with a counter-offer stating that my children could go to an IT centre and do some online learning. I didn't point out that this had been my own suggestion because I thought it best that she thought she was suggesting a compromise rather than just caving in. So it all came good in the end without any intervention by Humanists UK or Dorset Humanists.

A friend suggested that my children could have learned to 'take a loss' and show humility in accepting that you can't win all your battles, but I feel strongly that organised religions shouldn't be allowed unfettered access to young impressionable minds to spread their disinformation.

'Happy Yalda' from an Iranian humanist

'Happy Yalda' is a greeting associated with Yalda Night, an Iranian festival celebrated on the longest and darkest night of the year, on the eve of the winter solstice. Yalda Night is a time of joy and celebration, marking the victory of light over darkness and the renewal of the sun. It's a cultural festival observed by various communities, especially in Iran, Afghanistan, and some Central Asian countries, as well as among Persian communities worldwide. During Yalda Night, families and friends gather together to eat, read poetry (especially the works of the Persian poet Hafez), and enjoy each other's company until well after midnight. The feast typically includes watermelon, pomegranates (see image below), and a variety of nuts and dried fruits, which are symbolic of the Sun and the warmth of life. The greeting 'Happy Yalda' is a way of wishing someone joy and happiness on this special occasion.



Happy Yalda! Pomegranates and *The Little Book of Humanism*



View from the Chair

David Warden

Chairman of Dorset Humanists

One of the ways in which religion creates strong commitment in its devotees is by making strenuous demands such as wearing distinctive clothes in public, prohibiting the consumption of certain foods, avoidance of profane cultural practices, sacrificial financial commitment, intellectual submission to improbable beliefs and so on. Humanism makes few such demands, but it's not a cost-free worldview option. So what are the obligations that come with calling yourself a humanist?

The first obligation of a humanist is to make strenuous efforts to think rationally and with attention to evidence and logical thinking skills. Although I was unable to attend Daniel Dancey's talk on logical fallacies (and even though he took my name in vain during his presentation!) I was able to catch up on YouTube. I was very impressed by its elegant structure and instructive content. As Daniel said, learning and practising critical thinking skills is one of the ways in which humanists can install a software antivirus in the mind. It is far too easy in our social media-addled world to fall prey to groupthink, black-and-white thinking, virtue-conferring beliefs, and many other vices of the mind. Humanists should be exemplary good thinkers, exhibiting complexity and nuance rather than bombast and certainty. One fallacy Daniel did not mention is the egocentric fallacy: the belief that because *you* believe something it must be true.

The second obligation of a humanist is to reflect on whether one is living a 'good life'. There are many different aspects to this but it cannot mean simply living your life for the sake of nothing other than personal gratification. It has to include trying to make the world a better place in some way, whether through personal kindness or by raising good kids or by engaging in useful and meaningful work. Few of us can fix the world, but we can make life a little more tolerable and bearable for our fellow travellers on Starship Earth.

There are many other humanist obligations such as continuous learning, intellectual curiosity, the pursuit of knowledge, civic and democratic engagement, building meaningful and positive relationships with other people, as well as the pursuit of personal fulfilment and happiness. One of our aims at Dorset Humanists is to provide ways in which we can develop a meaningful humanist identity together and make humanism more widely known as an effective operating system for the human species. We can only do this if all of our members play a part, so far as they are able to do so. Some of our members speak in schools, others provide pastoral support, others help with organising and planning, some prepare food, many are regular attenders at our events, and many make regular donations. Dorset Humanists is only as strong as every contribution our members make and we're stronger together. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for every contribution you make, whether great or small. 2024 will no doubt be another challenging year for the human species. Let's make it a more humanist year if we can.