# Dorset Humanists

A partner of Humanists UK

National Secular Society Affiliated group

Dorset Humanists Bulletin – December 2025 *One world, one life, many perspectives*



# Jokes, Jazz & Jingle Bells

**Saturday 13th December 2.00pm. Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW**

Why do humans laugh, and what does humour reveal about us? Join us for a festive exploration of laughter across history and cultures — from the ancient world and the Renaissance to the jokes we share today. Barry Newman's talk will dip into philosophy, take a light-hearted look at cultural differences, and round off with a friendly joke competition to vote for the funniest. Bring your best joke! Seasonal cheer guaranteed — with mince pies, mulled wine, and our own jazz duo Phil and David. Barry Newman leads our school visiting team and he has given us many informative and entertaining talks in the past on ethics, science, beauty, and the NHS.

**Free entry - all welcome. Complimentary mince pies and mulled wine. We will be collecting money for our Humanist Appeal for a local foodbank and humanist schools in Uganda. Chris Smith will update us on the Uganda Schools. Please bring cash or card.**

Email: chairman@dorset.humanist.org.uk
Phone: 07910 886629
HMRC Charities Ref No EW10227

Click for events

Click for website

# Festive dinner at Marsham Court

**Thursday 18th December 7.00pm  Marsham Court Hotel, 3 Russell Cotes Road BH1 3AB**



Join fellow humanists for dinner at the Marsham Court Hotel – contact Sandra Lucie-Smith on ☎ 07779 769108 or email sandra.luciesmith@live.com to reserve your place and your 3-course menu choice.

The cost is £33.95 per person. Concessionary rate available for paid-up members on a very low wage or means-tested benefits. Please inform David Warden (07910 886629) or Cathy Silman (07817 695615) if you would like to take up this concessionary offer.

Partners welcome. Dress code: smart casual – festive wear optional. Please bring cash or card if you would like to donate to our Appeal.

# Humanist Café: The Meaning of Love

**Saturday 10th January 2.00pm. Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW**

Love is something every one of us longs for – yet it's also one of the most misunderstood aspects of being human. The humanistic psychologist Erich Fromm called it an "art" we must learn; religions present it as a divine command; psychologists see it as the cornerstone of emotional development. But what does love look like from a humanist point of view — without gods, dogma or fairy-tale expectations?

**This event isn't about idealising love — it's about understanding it honestly, deeply, and humanely. Whether you're partnered or single, young or old, flourishing or struggling, this theme speaks to something universal in us all.**

# Dates for your diary

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| Saturday 13th December 2pm | Moordown | Jokes, Jazz & Jingle Bells with a talk on humour by Barry Newman, plus jazz, mince pies and mulled wine. Bring your best joke to share. |
| Thursday 18th December 7pm | Marsham Court | Festive dinner – see details above |
| Saturday 10th January 2pm | Moordown | Humanist Café – The Meaning of Love. |
| Friday 16th January 7.30pm | Westcliff Hotel | Informal social in the hotel bar. Hosted by Lyn and David. |
| Sunday 18th January 11am | Hurn Forest | Easy 4-mile walk plus Avon Causeway pub. Full details on Meetup. |
| Thursday 22nd January 7.30pm | Westcliff Hotel | The Challenge of Forgiveness – a discussion led by Simon Whipple |
| Please check all events nearer the time on Meetup in case of any changes. | | |



# How Should We Remember the Dead? A Humanist Exploration

*At our Moordown event in November, Simon Whipple led a thoughtful and wide-ranging session on how different cultures remember those who have died, and what a distinctively humanist approach to remembrance might look like. The session included four short rounds of small-group discussion, with lively contributions from members.*

## Funerals and "Last Rites"

We began by exploring funerals and wakes. Most felt funerals should remain public events, allowing anyone with a connection to attend, while wakes are usually invitation-only due to space and cost. On the question of a humanist version of "last rites", the consensus was that while we don't need religious ritual, there is a need for compassionate end-of-life companionship. Several suggested that humanists could strengthen pastoral support for those nearing death.

## Memorials and Monuments

We then considered whether everyone should have a permanent memorial. Views were mixed: some value headstones or plaques for their historical and personal meaning, while others noted that families now disperse geographically, leaving many graves neglected.

Practical, useful memorials – such as benches – were seen as more appealing.

## Ceremonies of Remembrance

Simon described a variety of global traditions, from China's Qingming Festival to Mexico's Day of the Dead, and asked whether humanists should have an annual ceremony to honour the dead. The idea received interest, particularly as a way to remember loved ones collectively without religious language.

## Remembrance Sunday

Finally, we turned to Remembrance Sunday. A closing vote showed a preference for a more reflective, less militarised commemoration, similar to the German model, though several felt the existing tradition still has value. The session concluded with two emerging themes: the importance of humanist pastoral care at the end of life, and a desire to shape remembrance in ways that emphasise reflection, compassion, and the human cost of war, rather than military display.

**Tell us what you think: should Dorset Humanists have a "Day of the Dead" ceremony? What would that look like?**



# Getting There

## The heyday of the ocean liner in the twentieth century

**John Hubbard gave us a superbly crafted talk on ocean liners at our Westcliff Hotel event in November.**

In his concluding remarks, John asked what does this industry say about us as a species? Perhaps it demonstrates, he said, our capacity for ingenuity in design and engineering on a grand scale to serve fundamental purposes of communication and sociability. It shows our capacity to create coherent teams of people with different skills from mechanical engineering to interior design to realise vast and complex projects. Projects which have to withstand some of the greatest stresses the vast oceans and weather systems can conspire to create.

These awe-inspiring vessels betrayed too, in their time, the ways in which our world's social inequalities can appear entrenched, but which also provided gateways through emigration to hopes of advancement and greater prosperity.

They also reflected social change over time and a more inclusive clientele, while at the same time perpetuating the luxury afforded to the immensely wealthy.

Nowadays, our use of passenger ships confirms our fascination with the world in which we live and our desire for first-hand experience of it and of different places and cultures, however brief port days might be. It provides a lived form of education. It grants space for sociability, for storytelling, and for friendships. It also teaches us to slow down and take time, but in some of its stories it will always remain a warning to be aware of hubris in the face of natural forces greater than we are ourselves.

**You can watch the whole talk here on Dorset Humanists YouTube.**

# Notice of Dorset Humanists AGM



**Dorset Humanists' Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 14th March, 2026 at Moordown Community Centre. As in previous years, we plan to have an informal lunch at 1.15pm prior to the AGM starting at 2pm and ending no later than 4.30pm.**

Our AGM is held to consider reports from the officers, approve the accounts, elect a new Committee, and conduct any other business including the Chairman's *Humanist of the Year* award. A quorum for conducting business at the AGM is twenty members. A 'member' is someone who is up to date with their annual subscription.

Nominations for the committee must be received by the Secretary no later than the end of February. Nomination forms are available for this purpose. If the number of committee nominations is equal to or less than twelve then the entire list is presented to the membership for a block vote. If the number of committee nominations exceeds twelve then ballot papers will be presented to the members with brief statements about each candidate. Arrangements are made by the Secretary to count the votes immediately. Candidates with the lowest number of votes are eliminated.

A separate election is then held for the office of Chair. Candidates for the position of Chair must have served on the committee for at least one year. If more than one nomination for the office of Chair has been received the candidates will have the opportunity to speak for no more than 5 minutes in support of their nomination.

Formal motions for debate at the AGM must be submitted to the Secretary, preferably no later than the end of December so that they can be published in the January Bulletin. Formal motions must be proposed and seconded at the AGM.

## Could you join Dorset Humanists Committee?

Each year, our committee is elected at the AGM. We welcome nominations from members who share our enthusiasm for Dorset Humanists' future.

We're particularly keen to hear from members who:

- Have a strong understanding of humanism and its values
- Bring skills in organisation, communication, or group facilitation
- Are reliable team players with a spirit of cooperation and goodwill
- Share our vision of Dorset Humanists as a flourishing community
- Can commit to attending most of our meetings and taking an active part in our programme of events

If you're passionate about helping us grow and thrive, please contact David Warden before the end of January to arrange an informal conversation about what's involved.

Dorset Humanists currently has a full and active committee, but we always welcome expressions of interest from members who share our vision and could contribute particular skills in the future.

## Contact details

secretary@dorset.humanist.org.uk
chairman@dorset.humanist.org.uk



# Letters & Emails

*It's your column…*

### *Appreciation of Dorset Humanists*

Just to tell you we have moved to Devon to be near our daughter and grandchildren. So I am sad to say I have to leave Dorset Humanists. Although I only attended a few meetings, I really enjoyed your newsletters and excellent summaries of the talks I missed. I think you do an absolute great job running the society, and hope you continue. Please keep me on the mailing list. I have looked for the nearest Humanist society, and it is the Exeter one, but appears not to be nearly as active as yours.

All the best, Paul Lurie, Swanage

### *Assisted Dying: Is the House of Lords engaged in filibustering?*

I thought you might be interested in an email exchange with my MP. Sir Christopher Chope's response suggests that he considers the correspondence closed, whereas reading the response from the Leader of the Lords, my sense is that she is frustrated by the behaviour of some of her fellow peers. A worrying situation for those of us who feel that prolonging the suffering of the terminally Ill is not in the best interests of our society.

Best regards, Michael Sandison

**From The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Basildon PC, Lord Privy Seal, Leader of the House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW**

The role of the House of Lords is not to frustrate or filibuster legislation but to undertake effective scrutiny and, if agreed, propose amendments to be considered by MPs. With Government Bills, the Chief Whip would normally discuss with the main Opposition Party a reasonable timetable for a Bill to ensure that proposed legislation is properly scrutinised before being returned to the Commons.

However, this is a Private Members Bill and the Government remains neutral on the issue. With such Bills it is the responsibility of members who participate in tabling amendments and contributing to the debates to consider how the Bill progresses so that any amendments passed can be considered by MPs.

Your constituent asked that you pass his views onto the 'appropriate people'. Mr Sandison's plea to you is for those Lords taking part in the proceedings to fulfil their responsibilities of scrutiny without engaging in any form of filibuster so that the Bill can return to the House of Commons in good time. You may wish to share his comments with other Peers who may have more influence in persuading those colleagues who have been involved in debate.

To assist the House the Chief Whip announced last week that almost every free Friday between now and 24 April will be used for this Bill, which means that the House will be sitting on most Fridays. In line with the above, the Government is not seeking to prescribe how the Bill should progress within this time, but I am sure my colleague Lord Falconer of Thoroton, who is the Sponsor of the Bill in the Lords, will be discussing with other Lords how to make good use of the additional time that has been made available.



# Humanist Café

Coffee, cake and conversation

*Free entry – open to all*

The perfect antidote to social media

**Starting in January, our Saturday afternoon meetings at Moordown Community Centre will have a different vibe.**

Following on from the success of our *Compass* series, we want to give all our members and visitors the chance to meet in a relaxed, friendly environment with coffee, cake, and conversation.

Each café-style session will have a theme, a short introduction from the facilitator, and suggested questions to keep ideas flowing. Each month we'll explore an interesting aspect of the human journey – in the same spirit as *Compass* – drawing on philosophy, psychology, and the best scientific thinking to illuminate the tricky business of being human. Our aim is to cultivate the art and virtues of good conversation: curiosity, listening, humour, humility, and kindness.

**Humanist Café is about building our humanist community in an open, welcoming way.**

## What to expect

- Coffee, tea and cake on arrival (homemade contributions welcome!)
- Small-table discussions
- A relaxed, inclusive atmosphere
- A place to learn new things, share stories, and make friends

## Our humanist ethos

- Listening to others
- Being open-minded
- Sharing the time fairly
- Speaking with kindness
- Asking questions with curiosity
- Making everyone feel welcome

## Could you help?

Our venue may be a bit echoey, but with your help – a few tablecloths, table decorations, and good company – we can turn it into something special. If you'd like to help host, bake, or enliven the room, please get in touch.

chairman@dorset.humanist.org.uk



# A point of view

## David Warden

Simon Whipple's recent talk on remembrance raised an interesting question for us: should Dorset Humanists develop its own way of honouring those who have died? The idea resonates with many cultural traditions, from the colourful celebrations of the Mexican Día de los Muertos to Day of the Dead festivals once held by humanists in nineteenth-century London. These examples are intriguing, but they come from times and cultures very different from our own. For example, humanists do not imagine the dead returning to enjoy food and drink. Nor, perhaps, do we yet have the depth of community connection that some traditions rely on. So what would a humanist form of remembrance look like for us, here and now?

At its heart, remembrance is about gratitude. It's a way of acknowledging those whose presence, work, and friendship helped shape the community we belong to today. Dorset Humanists was founded in 1996 (our 30th anniversary is next November), and many people who were once central to our group are no longer with us. They gave inspirational talks, chaired meetings, offered hospitality, volunteered with publicity, welcomed newcomers, or simply brought warmth and humour to our gatherings. Yet as time moves on, new members join us who never knew these people at all. Memories fade, even of those who made major contributions. If we're not careful, our past becomes scattered across individual recollections – a kind of unwritten archive held only in the memories of those few of us who have been around a long time.

Rather than borrowing rituals from elsewhere, Dorset Humanists could take a different path: a remembrance grounded in our own story. For some years now, at each AGM, we have taken a moment to acknowledge those who have died in the previous twelve months. This is simple, sincere, and entirely fitting. Next November, as part of our 30th anniversary commemorations, we could gather these memories into a short presentation, as I did at our 20th anniversary at the Green House Hotel. This would be an act of gratitude, storytelling, and community identity — not a religious ceremony, but a recognition that human communities do not spring from nowhere but from human effort.

When time and energy allow, we could also create a Dorset Humanists Memory Book, a historical record honouring those who helped build the group we enjoy today. Such a book would help keep our collective memory intact as the years move on.

If Dorset Humanists develops a tradition of remembrance, it should grow organically out of our own history, people, and values. Not ritual for its own sake, but community memory. These ideas are possibilities for us to consider.

**I hope you'll join us for the launch of our Humanist Café in January. It's a new way of doing humanist events and marks a small but important culture shift. It's experimental, and we'll learn as we go. If it works, it will deepen friendships and help build a humanist community fit for the future.**