



Members' Lunch & AGM 2025

Eat, drink, and have your say

Saturday 8th March ❖ 1.15pm Informal buffet lunch ❖ AGM at 2.00pm Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW. Please RSVP via Meetup or email so that we know how many to cater for and ensure a quorum. Gluten-free and veg options.

Against cultural headwinds, Dorset Humanists seems to be holding its own. Our membership numbers are stable and our finances are healthy. We regularly get good turnouts for our lively events. We do a lot of great community work behind the scenes, speaking to thousands of schoolchildren about humanism, taking part in civic and interfaith events. We are a respected community organisation in the local area and a leading humanist group nationally and even internationally.

This is all possible because of your encouragement and commitment to the importance and relevance of humanism to our turbulent yet endlessly fascinating human world.

Our AGM is not a boring affair (well, there are a few boring bits but we get through those bits efficiently). It's an opportunity to look back, take stock, and look forward. We also mark the occasion by awarding one of our members with the coveted *Humanist of the Year* award!

So do join us for an informal buffet lunch at 1.15pm and the AGM at 2.00pm. Non-members are also welcome to attend but only subscribing members can vote.



AGM free food for members and guests! Photos by Aaron.





Quest

Quest is an exciting series of friendly discussions about humanist answers to some of life's biggest questions at Westcliff Hotel, 7 Durley Chine Rd, BH2 5JS. Free entry – all welcome.

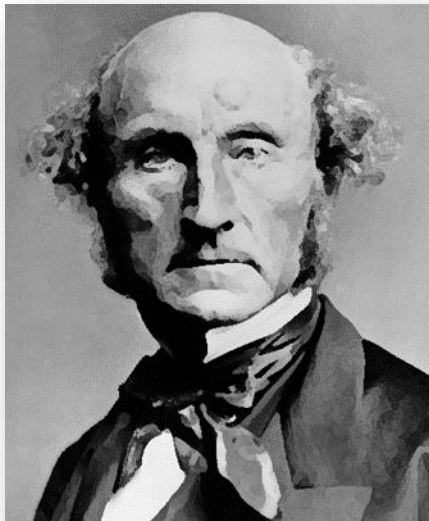


SESSION 7: PROSPECTS FOR HUMAN SURVIVAL Wednesday 5th March 7.00pm

The top six threats to human survival and how to stop worrying about them

SESSION 8: WHAT IS A HUMANIST GROUP? Wednesday 12th March 7.00pm

What's a humanist group for and how can it become a magnet for all non-religious people?



Limits to Liberty

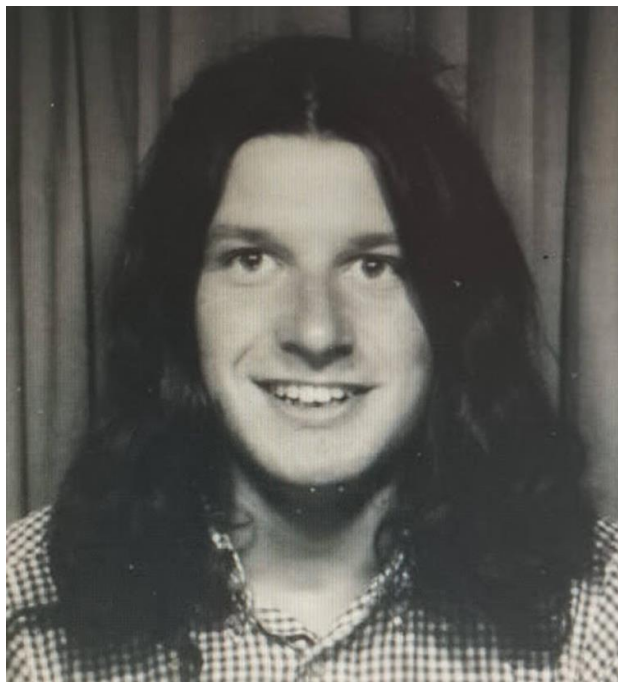
A talk by Dr Peter Connolly on John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill's book *On Liberty*, published the same year as Darwin's *Origin of Species*, should be required reading for humanists! Mill championed free speech and 'experiments in living', arguing that individuals should be free to express themselves and make their own life choices – so long as they do not harm others. But where should the boundaries be drawn? Should all opinions be tolerated? Can society restrict certain freedoms for the greater good? Peter is a member of Dorset Humanists and a retired lecturer. Details in the dates table below.

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 5 th March	Westcliff Hotel, Durley Chine Rd	Quest session 7: The top six threats to human survival and how to stop worrying about them
Thursday 6 th March	Wetherspoons	Friendly pub social
Saturday 8 th March	Moordown	Informal members' lunch and annual general meeting. Everyone welcome. Lunch from 1.15pm. AGM 2.00-4.00
Wednesday 12 th March	Westcliff Hotel, Durley Chine Rd	Quest session 8: What's a humanist group for and how can it become a magnet for all non-religious people?
Friday 21 st February	Westcliff Hotel, Durley Chine Rd	Humanists in the Hotel Bar – informal social event. Just turn up.
Saturday 12 th April	Moordown	"Limits to Liberty" A talk by Dr Peter Connolly on John Stuart Mill

Plus other social events and walks which will be announced on Meetup. Please check all events nearer the time in case of any changes.



This is your life!

After our delicious Darwin Day Lunch, David Warden conducted a “This is Your Life”-style interview with Dorset Humanists member Roger Eede.

Roger Eede may look like an unassuming bloke but David was astounded to discover the adventures which Roger had had in his younger days and how his long flowing locks were lost in the South of France.

Roger was born in 1953 in Lyndhurst in the New Forest. He’s had a lifelong love affair with motorbikes and his Dad bought him his first motorbike when he was just ten years old. He described himself as being a rebellious teenager. Teenage life was motorbikes and girlfriends – in that order of priority. He spent a year in Exeter mixing with students where he developed a bug for travel. At the age of 18 he set off on his travels, first to Athens – his favourite city – and then on to Israel to spend a year on a kibbutz. This was in 1973 where he witnessed the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. He subsequently hitchhiked to Nice/Antibes where he blagged his way into a job as a crew member on Norman Wisdom’s boat. It was a condition of the job to have his lovely long hair cut off. He sent his hair back to his mum who kept it for many years.

Returning to England, he described himself as ‘guitar playing hippie’ and decided to go on the ‘Hippie Trail’. The Hippie Trail was an overland journey popular among members of the counterculture movement from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s. Travellers embarked on this route seeking spiritual enlightenment, adventure, and an escape from Western societal norms. It extended through countries such as Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Nepal. Common destinations included Istanbul, Tehran, Kabul, Peshawar, Lahore, Delhi, Varanasi, Goa, and Kathmandu. Travellers often journeyed by hitchhiking. The Hippie Trail largely came to an end in the late 1970s due to geopolitical changes, notably the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the same year, which made the route unsafe for Western travellers. Roger hitchhiked to Istanbul and then Iran when the Shah was still in power. He recalls going to nightclubs in Tehran. In 1977 he made it to Afghanistan and Kashmir where he lived on a houseboat. ►

David asked whether the Hippie Trail was all about sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll'. There were certain tales of smoking 'black hashish' and Roger was into Bob Dylan. After a nasty bout of Delhi belly with no medication, he flew back to England. He'd been keeping a journal of his travels but sadly decided to pulp the journal to avoid being compromised about substance use abroad.

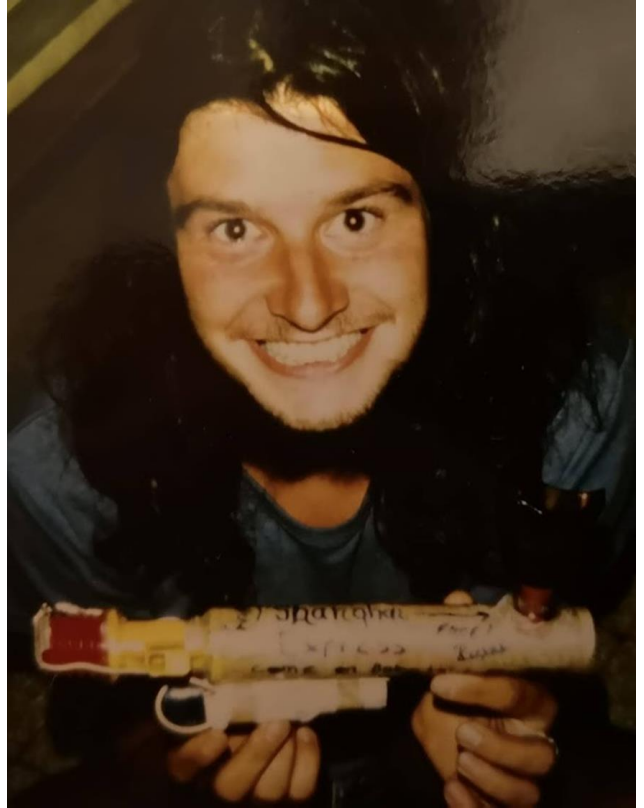
After a year in Dusseldorf in Germany, he spent nine months building greenhouses in Guernsey and he was particularly proud of a stint working in a circus in the Midlands in a *Planet of the Apes* show. He also worked for a wealthy publisher who trusted him with his Ford Mustang and fifty quid to entertain the au pair on nights out in Bournemouth.

Around the age of 26 or 27 he experienced what he described as a nervous breakdown. He'd had an adventurous time but he didn't know where he was going in life. All his mates had mortgages and kids and he was living with his grandmother. He said 'it all added up to zilch'. Buddhist chanting helped him to recover from this difficult phase.

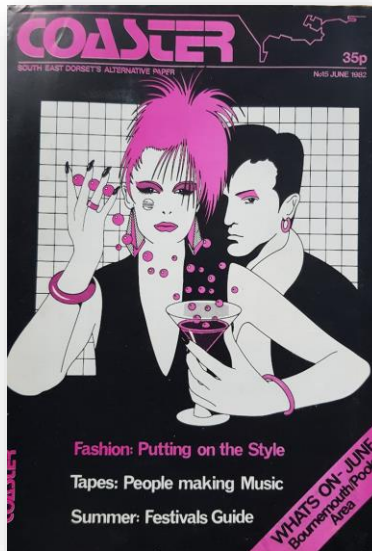
1981 was a watershed year. Roger came to Bournemouth where he met someone called Harriet and decided to launch *Coaster* which became a popular What's On magazine. It was published out of premises in Exeter Road and then Austin House in Westbourne which, as 'Crystal Studios', became a hip place for young people to hang out.

Roger started the Green Party locally – then called the Ecology Party – and today he is the local Chairman. He also started a gardening business which he ran for 45 years and concurrently he worked for Christchurch Council. Active in the union movement, he was a shop steward for 25 years and President of the local GMB union for 5 years. He also bought a taxi which he drove for 10 years.

Roger married in 1991 and he has a grown-up daughter. Today he remains active in green politics and the Ramblers Association. What advice would he give to his 18-year old self? He would gladly do it all again.



A slightly manic Roger in Israel. What on Earth could that pipe be for?!



◀ *Coaster* magazine had a circulation of 1,000-2,000. All the type-setting was done on a manual typewriter.

▼ Roger with a fabulous Harley! His favourite film is *Easy Rider*.



Committee nominations

We received 11 nominations for the 2025/26 committee by the end of February deadline stipulated in our Constitution. Members will be invited at the AGM to vote for the entire list of 11 names. A separate vote is taken to elect a committee member to the role of Chair.

Simon Bowden is standing down from the committee because he is moving out of the area. Simon is our current Secretary and we are very grateful for his contribution to Dorset Humanists over many years of membership.

- 1. David Warden** has been Chair of Dorset Humanists since 2009. He produces the bulletin, co-ordinates our events programme, and leads our pastoral team. He is an Honorary Member of Humanists UK and Editor of *Humanistically Speaking* magazine. David is willing to stand again for election as Chair.
- 2. Lyn Glass** has been our Vice Chair since 2013. She was also our 'Speaker Finder' for many years and she often hosts our pub nights. Lyn is a former Chair of Poole Arts Trust (Lighthouse), and board trustee director of BH Live.
- 3. Daniel Dancey** is our Treasurer (since 2021) and Webmaster (since 2023). Daniel works in software engineering.
- 4. Simon Whipple** has been finding guest speakers for our events programme since 2021. He is a retired solicitor specialising in Social Welfare Law.
- 5. Phil Butcher** is our main audio-visual technician. He organised our walks and short talks programme for a number of years. Phil worked for over 40 years in the nuclear industry.
- 6. Barry Newman** has been the humanist representative on the Dorset Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and takes the lead in our school visiting programme. Barry is also on our publicity sub-committee. He is a retired intensive care consultant.
- 7. Sally Hawke** has been on the BCP Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. Sally is a retired teacher.
- 8. Dean Robertson** is one of our pub night hosts and event chefs. Dean is an independent financial adviser.
- 9. Steve Neel** is taking over from Simon Bowden as our Secretary, combined with the Membership Secretary role. Steve is also on our publicity sub-committee.
- 10. Sandra Lucie-Smith** organises our festive event at the Marsham Court Hotel and hosts social nights at the Westcliff Hotel.
- 11. Roger Mann** is one of our regular event volunteers and he is also on our publicity sub-committee.

If you are a paid-up member of Dorset Humanists and interested in joining our team please have a word with David Warden or any committee member about what skills and time you could offer. We welcome approaches from members in under-represented demographic groups but we operate a strictly non-discriminatory process. You would be invited to attend committee meetings as a co-opted member in the first instance without obligation. You could then be nominated for the next committee election in March 2026.

Dorset Humanists Impact Report 2024/25

Aim 1

Promote Humanism understood as a non-religious ethical worldview

Aim 1: Humanism is now a **mandatory element** in the local RE curriculum. Our **school visiting team** has made **80** visits and spoken to around **4,000** pupils about humanism in Bournemouth, Poole, Christchurch, Salisbury, and further afield in Dorset. We take a leading role in producing an **online humanist magazine** with global reach. **481** people subscribe to our YouTube channel which has **144** videos, **1,096** people subscribe to our Meetup site, and our monthly bulletin is sent to **771** subscribers.

Aim 2

Develop, and serve the needs of, the Humanist community in Dorset

Aim 2: We hosted around **22 guest speaker events** on a wide range of topics and we have recently introduced the **Quest** series of discussions about humanism and related topics. We held a barbecue in a member's garden in June to celebrate **World Humanist Day** and a charity fundraising afternoon tea in the Chairman's garden in August. Our **pastoral team** and **Hardship Scheme** are available to help members. **Kate Domaille** conducts humanist ceremonies. Our **walks programme**, which we plan to resume in 2025, promotes fitness and friendship and our **social events** in a pub and a hotel bar promote friendship and connection. Our **Dorchester humanist group** holds monthly discussion events.

Aim 3

Promote the public understanding of science

Aim 3: We continue to host events of scientific interest including a talk on transhumanism and a talk on whether we can trust science by science journalist Tom Whipple.

Aim 4

Be a force for good in our local community and globally

Aim 4: We raised **£2,240** for charities including **Hope for Food** foodbank, **Humanist Schools in Uganda** and **LGBT refugees in Africa**. David Warden spoke at the **Bournemouth Remembrance Service** and at the Bournemouth & Poole **Holocaust Memorial Day** event.

Aim 5

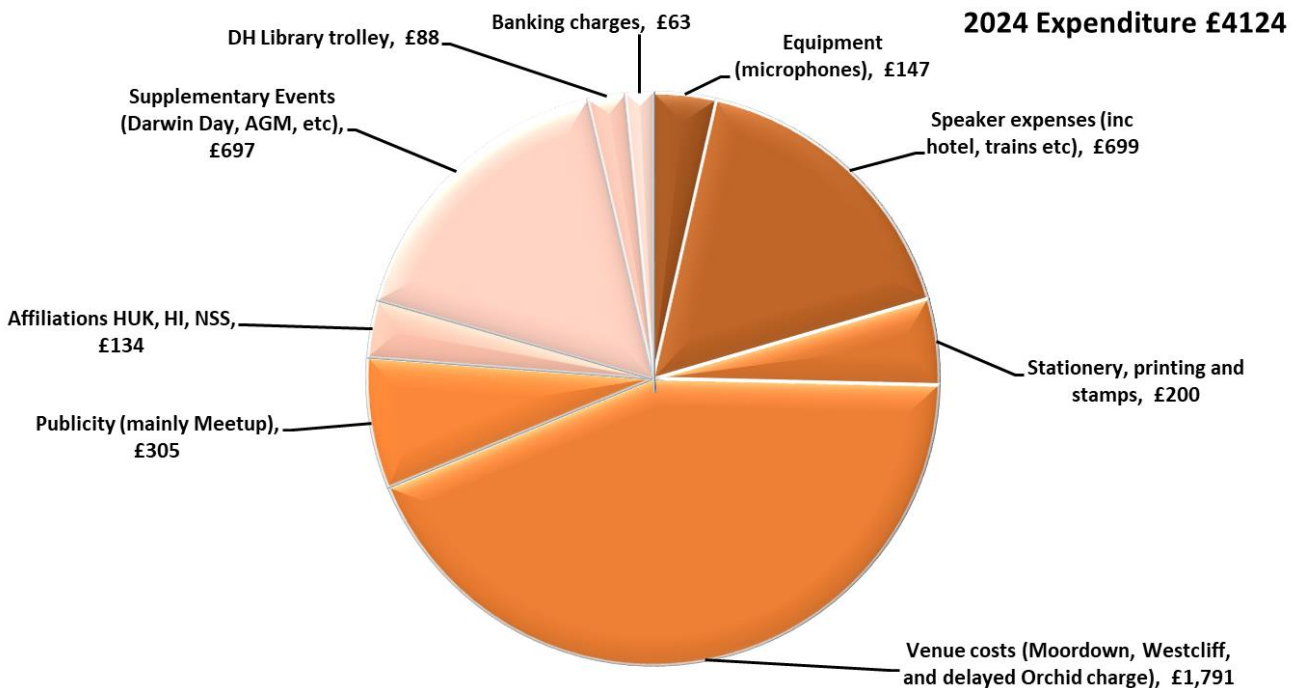
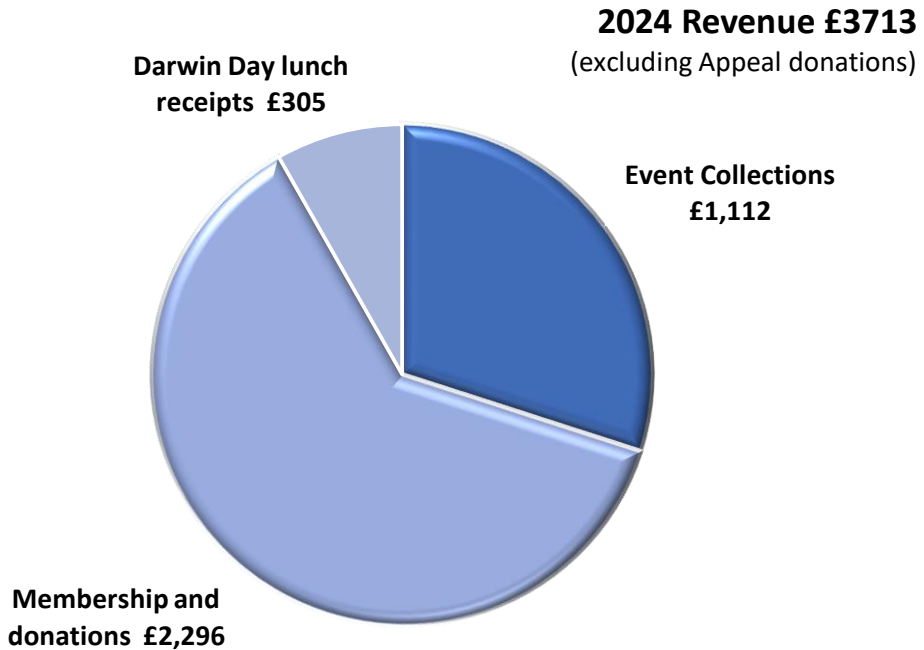
Support the work of our partners

Aim 5: Simon Whipple, Aaron Darkwood and David Warden have attended online meetings of the **Local Groups Working Together** initiative. We pay subs to Humanists UK, the National Secular Society, Humanists International.

If you like what we do, please show your support and solidarity by becoming a member for an incredible £15 a year. 187 of you already have – thank you!

2024 accounts simplified

Our treasurer Daniel Dancey will present definitive accounts for member approval at our AGM on 8th March. These indicative graphs are for illustration purposes only. If you would like a copy of the formal accounts please email treasurer@dorsethumanists.co.uk





Letters & Emails

It's your column...

From Penny Jennions on Darwin Day

Many thanks to you for a great Darwin Day. Superb food and company. These things take a lot of organising and work, so thanks to you and all the helpers. And an extraordinary tale of Roger's life, brilliantly put together.

It was so very nice to see Barry Newman again, and personally thank him and his colleagues for saving the life of my wife Trish in 2012. I told him they gave us nine and a half more years together. (We were together for 53 years).

From Wendy Goddard on Darwin Day

Thanks for organising such an excellent event. I really enjoyed it and it was good to meet such interesting people.

From Aaron Darkwood

Dorset has some of the most spectacular scenery in the country and, after a year's absence, these scenes are missing the attractive figures and expeditionary explorers of those intrepid Dorset Humanists. That's right, the walks are back on. But 'you' make these events! From April through to September our walks and outdoor agenda takes place, but we really want to know you're up for it. Some walks will be flat, some will be undulating and others will build muscles on your muscles, but for every foot of elevation climbed, the magnificent vista blossoms before you. So earn those views, climb every mountain (or hill) and make it known that you want in on this year's exciting programme. It just wouldn't be the same without you.

If you're new to Dorset Humanists, and we are very fortunate to have many new faces join us this past year, we typically run outdoor



events including walks, bike rides, barbecues, and this year we have a bumper plan shaping up. Focusing on the walks, they are in and around Bournemouth, once or twice a month, venturing out to Dorset, the Isle of Purbeck, and even down to Portland or the New Forest. Car sharing is usually available, and if you are able to offer lifts please make it known on that event's Meetup page. Other events involve buses. Our walks are generally fair weather walks, they are for fun. If it rains, then we might postpone it. Do absolutely check on Meetup before setting out for changes.

I will lead many of the walks but some will be led by others. If you want to lead a walk do let us know. When we start posting them online, please sign up on Meetup as it helps to know which are popular, how many are coming, and if everyone can get there okay. See you on the first one!

From Chris Atkins on David Warden's talk "What is the point of religion?"

Thank you for sending Greg the transcript of what I now know was an excellent talk. I found it fascinating to read and, as I have one foot in both camps, Agnosticism and Christianity, it has given me a lot to think about. I suspect I will re-read your words many times in an effort to clarify what I truly believe and again I thank you so much for sending it.



View from the Chair

David Warden
Chairman of Dorset Humanists

Professor Greg Atkins, who was our 2020 Humanist of the Year, now co-hosts a discussion group in Martock called “Anvil” which meets on the fourth Friday of the month at 10am to 12noon. Last Friday, 28th February, I was invited to speak on the question “What is the point of religion?” alongside an Anglican priest called Jonathan. He was very friendly and we got on well with each other. My general answer to the question is that religion probably evolved in order to address existential fears such as the fear of abandonment and aloneness, fear of suffering and death, fear of loss and change, fear of meaninglessness, and fear of having to take responsibility. The existence of supernatural agents can help to assuage these fears. If God is conceptualised as a loving father who will never abandon you, this will help to assuage your fear of abandonment and times of loneliness. This is certainly how religion worked for my mum, although there were also times when she found relief in a glass of whisky. Human beings are also troubled by loss and change. We like novelty but we also want things to stay the same. It troubles me that the part of Boscombe where my grandparents had a draper’s business, near the Victorian Arcade, is now an ugly shopping centre. Our sense of history is rooted in familiar streets and buildings. If they’re obliterated to make way for commercial development there’s a sense of loss, as if part of our history has been erased. Religion gives a sense of permanence. Ancient churches and cathedrals, which are usually listed, help to maintain this sense of continuity. Given that religion provides a whole package of remedies for such existential fears, why would anyone become an atheist? Perhaps the main reason is that it all sounds too good to be true. Children have invisible friends and it comes naturally to them to introject consciousness into their teddy bears. I still possess this magical talent! But on the whole we grow out of such childish things. And millions of people grow out of having God as their invisible father-protector.

This may be all well and good, but our existential fears don’t go away. So how does an atheist or a humanist deal with existential fears? Humans evolved as social primates and the best way to ensure that we are not alone and abandoned is to nurture and maintain social bonds and connections. Sometimes these bonds and connections are broken, but we can mend them and we can make new ones. So the humanist answer to this existential problem is simply to be the social primates that we are. Part of our life’s work is to create and maintain these social bonds. (The talk transcript addresses more of these fears.)

Jonathan, the Christian speaker, took a different line. He said that Christianity provides a story which “provides access to the transcendent”. This is one of those frustratingly vague and nebulous concepts which those of a spiritual bent like to waft around like incense. It speaks of human dissatisfaction with the life and the world we have, and the yearning for something else, something beyond. To this, I can do no better than to quote my husband’s take on life and all of the wonders it affords: “Isn’t this enough?”