



Humanistically Speaking

January 2020

A local newsletter sharing a non-religious worldview

*One can admire the beauty
of our Earth without
imagining it was created by
an invisible deity*

Welcome to
Humanistically Speaking, the
public voice of Humanist
Groups within the South
Central England Humanist
Network, or SCEHN for short.

Never heard of SCEHN? ... Well, you could be forgiven for that. SCEHN is a network of Humanist Groups that are quite geographically close to each other and it exists to provide mutual support for each constituent member by sharing information, advice, skills and ideas ... With the broad objectives of helping smaller groups ... Enlivening bigger groups

Establishing new groups, and to sometimes collaborate on common projects. It also offers Humanism a bigger voice in the South of England. What's more, members of one group will be more than welcome to attend events held by other groups, so the choice available to every member is enormously increased!

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- Thought for the day
- Dear Darwin
- Chairman Interview
- And much more...

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Please send articles to: Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com



Starting Out

How it all began...

The photos record SCEHN's founding conference on November 4th 2017, which took place at a Basingstoke member's private home at nearby Sherborne St. John. Take a look at the people. Do you recognise anyone? SCEHN has already established new Groups at Reading and Portsmouth, enlivened Basingstoke Humanists with a reunion event, and is currently planning to launch a new Winchester group in March with a Bromley Humanists reunion soon after.

... So with all this, I'm very proud to say that *Humanistically Speaking* has aspirations to be the public expression of all those groups. It belongs to all its members and associates within the SCEHN network, but it is also welcoming to the wider public - and whatever their politics, their affiliations, their education ... Or indeed their *faith*



... So do feel free to reverse print the hard copy version of this magazine, and fold it into A5 size and leave copies out in public places. That way we can reach out to everyone and raise the profile of Humanism throughout the SCEHN region.

But bear in mind that this is a twelve month trial, and as it is bi-monthly, there will be just six issues to start. How successful it will be depends on your interest and to some extent involvement, so do write in with your comments, your stories, and especially your photos to The Editor, at Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com and help make your magazine the voice of local Humanism.

Best wishes,

David Brittain
Chair

South Central England Humanist Network



Announcements

Humanists in the news



Calling All Photographers and Wordsmiths ...

Your *Humanistically Speaking* magazine will depend on contributions from individuals throughout the SCEHN region, so if you enjoy writing, and might be prepared to send [short] reports of local events - or if you like taking photos of events, please do consider volunteering to be a local journalist for *Humanistically Speaking*. Email Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com to let the editor know, and we'll get right back to you ...

Do you have a special event you want to tell us about? Something coming up, or just happened?

Newsflash: Winchester Humanists Launch date revealed 5th March

Humanism is an ever growing worldview and we are very pleased to announce the first meeting of Winchester Humanists. Do come along and give your support at Winchester Discovery centre from 6pm.

Newsflash: Bromley set for Reunion Launch on 11th March

Bromley Humanists are on target for their reunion on the 11th March. Details of the time and location will be announced in the next issue of *Humanistically Speaking* - so keep your eyes peeled in the next issue for more news

Our Own Humanist House?

Now here's a poser for you: It has been suggested that Humanists UK should organise a crowd funding project to gather enough cash to buy its own site - possibly outside of London - for its headquarters.

It's an attractive idea, and it would be handy to have a *Humanist House* as an HQ ... For meetings, for training, for publishing, and for entertaining. It would also serve as a centre for journalists to refer to - a place of our own that firmly embeds Humanism on the ground, and as a depository of historical Humanist records. But of course it would cost many millions. ... Pie in the sky? One Humanist UK patron became so enthused with the idea he offered to contribute £100,000 of his own private cash, and your editor (who tells me he is very *far* from loaded!) offered to contribute £5,000.

But what do you think, and would you be prepared to contribute? Send your thoughts to the editor below to get it published in the next issue, and find out what other readers think.

*Please send your announcements to:
Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com*

The Chair's Interview

David Warden



I met David at his apartment which he shares with his husband John in Bournemouth and was immediately impressed with their comfortable, and tastefully laid out home that had obviously been put together with loving care. But the place for our interview was, in fact, at the end of his garden in

what some refer to as his 'man cave' ... A grand wooden structure that has two rooms incorporating a formal study, a piano, and an absolute wonderland of books. "I think there are over 3,000 books here," he said, with a grin, "but I don't think I have ever counted them!"

David is now in his 11th year as chair of Dorset Humanists, despite his original intention of staying in post for no more than five years. Nevertheless, although he regarded his leadership of the group as time-consuming, it was also "the best job ever, although the pay is terrible - it's nothing at all" he joked.

I was impressed at his Humanist dedication, but I knew it wasn't always like that. In fact, I knew that David had been brought up in a committed Christian household, and describes himself as once being quite a pious teenager, but the first big challenge to his faith came "...when I was about 18 or 19, and ideas I had that God would manage my life began to fall apart." That coincided with a book he read that contained the phrase "*believe in yourself*". Once he decided that he was going to take charge and manage his own life, and not passively rely on God, he was able to take charge and address a growing sense of inertia about his direction in life.

Nevertheless, he still aimed to pursue a career as a C of E vicar, and he studied theology at the University of Kent for three years. But these studies exposed him to philosophers like Immanuel Kant and David Hume who made him reflect and further doubt the existence of God - and that led to a real crisis of faith for David - who was now 23 years old. His reflections on a relationship with a spirit that he could not see, hear, or touch made him begin to wonder if he *actually had* a relationship with anything at all!

As a result, his view became more atheistic, his progress towards a career in the Church came to a full stop, and he eventually adopted another career in corporate training. Nevertheless, David the atheist still considered himself Christian, albeit now in a wider, more cultural sense. That was until about twelve years later, when he decided to undertake study into the historical evidence of Jesus's life. But he would be in for a shock. Instead of finding evidence of the existence of Jesus, he

actually uncovered quite the opposite. What he discovered actually challenged the very notion that Jesus had ever existed! But the absence of Christian doctrine left a void in David's philosophical grounding, and that was filled when he declared himself a Humanist, and joined Humanists UK (then the British Humanist Association) in 2002. He was 43 by then, and I think I detected a sense of regret that he hadn't joined earlier in his life. "Humanism needs younger people..." he said "... and the energy they bring to rekindle and inspire". When asked what he thought were the big issues for Humanism today, David didn't hesitate. "It's about being recognised" said David. "Modern Humanism has been with us for about 150 years now, that's about as long as the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, and yet those faiths have been hugely more successful in establishing themselves in many people's minds. I find that very frustrating. I think Humanism is a really great idea, but we have struggled to achieve the same public profile. He now warmed to his subject and went on to say that the American Humanist, Stanton Coit, had the idea of establishing Humanist Churches in the UK, and although David felt that Coit was going a bit too far, he did think that in the long term if Humanism was going to be successful in this country, we needed to start getting some buildings to show we Humanists have a physical presence, that we are established, and that we are not hiding away "Community centers are great..." he said "...but I do think that nationally we need to start having some buildings. I also think that whilst Humanists UK does very well in getting high profile scientists - and great people - like Jim Al-Khalili and Alice Roberts - to represent Humanism, I do think we need to consider appointing leaders that have the authority to represent Humanist philosophy in the same way, for example, as the Archbishop of Canterbury can represent the Church of England to the wider nation. It needs to be for longer than three-year terms, so that they can become a familiar face on our behalf. David admitted that *that* may change the nature of the leadership slightly in a way that emphasizes Humanist issues a little more from a philosophical point of view, but he felt that the gravitas gained from someone who was a Humanist first and foremost would add credibility to Humanism, and provide a spokesperson in a way that we do not have at the moment. Does David have anyone in mind for that kind of position? He smiled again. "There are several names that spring to mind ..." he said, but he wouldn't say more than that.

"OK," I said, "What do you put Dorset Humanists' success down to?" David didn't pause for long before answering. "I think enthusiasm is important. If you've got a passion for it, that's the first step, and what comes after is really just dedication and hard work." Then he laughed. "Oh, yes ... you also need good diplomatic skills ... but there is also a lot of pleasure to be had, and it is very rewarding on a personal level." I closed by thanking David for his hospitality, and his candid and revealing responses to my questions... A fascinating insight to one of the UK's most successful and respected Group leaders.

This is only a summary of the main issues discussed, the full video recording of the interview can be seen online at www.DorsetHumanists.co.uk

David Brittain



Group Events:

Dates for your diary

Monday 3rd February: 7.30pm at The Southsea Village, Palmerston Road, PO5 3PP Portsmouth Humanists host Gerry Williams from Portsmouth's Dignity in Dying.

Wednesday 5th February: 7.30pm at The Phoenix Art Space, 10-14 Waterloo Place, BN2 9NB Brighton Humanists host Laurie Church - 'Stop the Traffik' modern slavery.

Wednesday, 5th February: From 7.30pm at the Hop Blossom Pub, Long Garden Walk, GU9 7HX Farnham Humanists host their regular Think, Link and Drink evening.

Thursday 6th February: From 7.30pm at Poole Hill Brewery, 41-43 Poole Hill, BH2 5PW Dorset Humanists regular social night.

Tuesday, 11th February: From 7.00pm at the Riverside Centre, Newport, PO30 2QR the Isle of Wight Humanists host Ray Metcalf "A Critical Review of Jehovah's Witnesses"

Tuesday, 11th February: From 7.30pm at the Guildford Assembly Room, Ward Street, GU1 4LH Guildford and Woking Humanists host Dr John Nichols presenting "A (*slightly biased*) *brief history of humanism*"

Wednesday, 12th February: Guildford and Woking Humanists may be organising a special Darwin Day celebration. Dates/times location TBA, so seek out the Guildford and Woking Humanists website nearer the date.

Sunday, 16th February: 7.00 for 7.30pm Daniel Hall, Farnham, Long Garden Walk, GU9 7HX Farnham Humanists host David Hepper from Population Matters about the pressures population growth places on the environment. Preceded by a brief AGM.

Thursday, 20th February: From 7.30pm at the Oakwood Centre, Headley Rd, Woodley, RG5 4JZ Reading Humanists host Will Bose from Faith to Faithless about those who struggle leaving religion in the UK.

Tuesday, 25th February: From 7.30pm at Muchos Nachos, Crown Inn, 140 Whyke Rd, PO19 8HT Chichester Humanists open event

Wednesday, 4th March: 7.30pm at The Phoenix Art Space, 10-14 Waterloo Place, BN2 9NB Brighton Humanists - Dr. Michael Irwin '90 Plus – when is life complete?'

Wednesday, 4th March: From 7.30pm at the Hop Blossom Pub, Long Garden Walk, GU9 7HX Farnham Humanists host their regular Think, Link and Drink evening.

Thursday, 5th March: From 7.30pm at Poole Hill Brewery, 41-43 Poole Hill, BH2 5PW Dorset Humanists host their social night.

Thursday, 5th March: From 6.00pm at the Winchester Discovery Centre, Jewry St, Winchester SO23 8SB. The launch of Winchester Humanists – free light buffet provided, and open to all members of Humanists UK in Winchester & South Hants.

Tuesday, 10th March: From 7.30pm at the Guildford Assembly Room, Ward Street, GU1 4LH Guildford and Woking Humanists ask "Who Are the Young Humanists?"

Tuesday, 10th March: From 7.00pm at the Riverside Centre, Newport, PO30 2QR the Isle of Wight Humanists host TBA.

Wednesday 11th March: From 2.00pm at the United Reform Church at 20 Widmore Rd, BR1 1RY. Bromley Humanists reunion – free light buffet provided, and open to all.

Sunday, 15th March: From 2.00pm at The Pavilion, Residents' Gardens, Highfield SO17 1QU Southampton Humanists present "A Year Doctoring in Papua New Guinea: Wasted time?"

Sunday, 15th March: 7.00 for 7.30pm at Daniel Hall, Farnham, Long Garden Walk, GU9 7HX. Farnham Humanists host Deborah Laven The Life & Legacy of Charles Bradlaugh (MP, founder of the NSS)

Tuesday, 24th March: From 7.30pm at Muchos Nachos Crown Inn, 140 Whyke Rd, PO19 8HT Chichester Humanists host Dr Giulia Felappi discussing 'Stoicism: Passions and Emotions as Mistakes in Judgement'.

Out and about



Focus on a Humanist event

A Pagan Ritual?

Several Portsmouth Humanists got up early on a cold 21st December morning to see the midwinter sun rise at Southsea Beach. A fire was lit, food was eaten, champagne was consumed, and photos were taken as we welcomed in the real New Year. It turned out to be a lovely, crisp, sunny day, and there was much fun and joy as everyone watched sunrise on the day when the sun “stands still” (solstice) after its apparent march south, and begins marching north.

A pagan ritual? You can call it what you like, but the winter solstice has always been a big moment in the year, marked by ritual and feasting, and for some it is a mystical re-birth event. For Portsmouth Humanists, it was quite simply an inspiring experience, and a wonderful, warm moment shared with good friends.



Participating Groups - Is your group listed?

Search the below group for more information

-  Basingstoke Humanists
-  Brighton Humanists
-  Bromley Humanists
-  Chichester Humanists
-  Dorset Humanists
-  Farnham Humanists
-  Guildford Humanists

-  Horsham Humanists
-  Isle of Wight Humanists
-  Portsmouth Humanists
-  Reading Humanists
-  South Hants Humanists
-  Humanists UK (National Org)
-  Winchester (*to be confirmed*)

Humanistically Speaking

What do you think?



David Brittain
*Executive editor for
Humanistically
Speaking
Chairman of SCEHN*

Humanistically Speaking is a magazine produced under the auspices of the network of those Humanist Groups that are listed on Page 7. You will find all sorts of information about events - past and future - throughout the region. But it is more than just an information sheet for the network, and we hope it will be also an entertaining read that also enables every Humanist to express themselves in a way that they have been unable to hitherto. Our hope is that we can foster a community spirit between all Humanists in the area by encouraging engagement through letters, opinions, comments, quizzes and interesting challenges that everyone can engage with. But it will be still more even than that. There will be two versions of the magazine available. The first is a broadsheet to be read on your tablet or laptop, and the other will be exactly the same, but published so that it can be printed in A4 size, and folded and stapled into a short, A5 booklet that can be read anywhere ... And handed out to people at public events, left at public places, given to friends, sent to other organisations, and offered to schools, colleges and universities.

So *Humanistically Speaking* is aimed to serve everybody. It will never evangelise, but it will invite people to better understand what Humanism is about, know where their local Humanist centre is, and where to go to find out more if they wish.

But producing hard copies of *Humanistically Speaking* costs money, and whilst individuals are encouraged to print as many copies as they wish, we need to have A5 sized copies published and circulated to groups for onward circulation.

If you like the idea, and would like a magazine like *Humanistically Speaking* to thrive, please consider sending in a donation. Just £10.00 will pay for 50 copies, £25.00 will help cover postage and packing, and £50.00 will help cover competition prizes, and travel costs for reporters who will travel from group to group to gather stories. Please donate to the Basingstoke Humanists account number 33031168, sort code 30 98 97 and let us know how much you have sent via email

Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com and every donation will receive a receipt, an acknowledgement and a very big thank you.

Humanistically Speaking has just started, but we have big ideas. If you like what we do, please help us achieve them.

Humanism is about tolerance, kindness, knowledge and friendship, and although Humanistically Speaking is for Humanists, everyone is welcome to read and contribute, regardless of faith or belief.