

COMING UP

7 pm Sunday, 14 May

Barbara Cummins

Cycling the world one pedal at a time

Our Treasurer will be talking to us about her attempt to cycle round the world one continent at a time. What started as a challenge to do one long ride



has become an obsession to cover the world land distance of 18,000 miles and cycle on every continent: at 7000 miles she still has a long way to go but has cycled on 4 continents and in 20 countries. The photo shows Barbara standing by the partnership sculpture in Reykjavik or perhaps in Florida!

Her experience of receiving nothing but kindness from complete strangers has reinforced her belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. Travelling mostly alone with tent, sleeping bag and 2 changes of clothes creates a blissfully simple life for a few months but also reinforces the pleasures of home and a comfortable bed!

Please come and share her adventure through photographs and stories of the people she has met and places she has seen.

Please note that this is an evening meeting, the first of three.

The Pavilion
Portswood Residents' Gardens
13 Abbots Way



7.30 pm Thursday 18 May

Discussion Group

What does it mean to be a 'Humanist'?

Some humanists hold that Humanism is indefinable other than it rejects belief in a supernatural power; others say it requires some form of definition for it to become acceptable.

What are the implications of being a humanist? These matters will inform our discussion at:

Joy Macfadyen's home
42 Brookvale Road,
Highfield.
Southampton SO17 1RA

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12.00 Sunday, 11 June



For our social event in June we plan to visit our old favourite the High Corner Inn in the New Forest. Once again we invite Dorset Humanists to join us.

We hope for a warm sunny day but space inside is limited should it be raining, so we advise you contact David Bothwell so that he can reserve a table or tables —

bthwill@globalnet.co.uk
023 80550204.

After lunch, a walk or stroll? We can arrange this at the time.

Looking back on recent meetings

The AGM

Norman Maclean evidently believes that the AGM is a necessary formality that is best cleared out of the way as soon as possible, for this aspect of the afternoon took little more than fifteen minutes flat. Nevertheless, he presented the Chair's written Report, Chris Robinson read the Treasurer's Report in Barbara Cummins' absence, and a new committee was elected.

They are:

- Chairman Norman Maclean
- Secretary Stephen Starr
- Treasurer Barbara Cummins
- Vice-Chair Liz Mizon
- Members Chris Robinson
- David Bothwell
- Chris Rolles

Here is the Chairman's Report:

All in all I think that we have had a very good year, despite some set backs such as David's ill health. It is good to see that he has continued, despite this, to make a major contribution and to continue to improve in health.

1) Sunday meetings in the pavilion of the Residents' gardens

- Mar 13 AGM plus a "soapbox" of 5 minute presentations*
- May 8 Prof Jane Falkingham on "Population growth — should we be worried?"*
- July 10 President and Secretary of the National Secular Society on "How secular is Britain?"*
- Sep 11 Dr Matthew Bothwell on "From Big Bangs to big Rips"*
- Nov 13 Ram Kalyam on "the role of Community radio"*
- Jan 8 Dr Rebecca Chamberlain on "The psychological value of visual art"*

It may be thought invidious to select some for special mention but I thought that May 8, Sep 11, and Jan 8 were outstandingly good.

We have continued with the practice of inviting contributions to a charity of the speaker's choice. Donations have been generous to say the least, for example £64.00 to Medact and £40.00 to the Rose Road Association.

2) Discussion groups. *Following the retirement and house move of Daniel Pallordet, Liz Mizon took on responsibility for the organisation, and these events have continued to be very successful. So thankyou Liz.*

3) Other events

These included a theatre visit to the Nuffield on October 1st to see "Shakespeare and Southampton"; a yuletide celebration at Liz and Grayham Mizon's house on Dec 11th; and another Darwin Day outing to the Blue Keys when Dr Neil Gosling provided an entertaining and stimulating account of "Darwin's Origin of Species" between courses.

Stephen Starr represented us at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday Nov 13th, and has also helped with updating our presence on Facebook.

4) Other matters

We continue to have a small sub-committee, chaired by Barbara, on the topic of how we might recruit more members. We obtained some valuable professional advice from Tim Roberts on the topic, and plan to have a small meeting with some representatives from the very successful Dorset Humanist group.

5) David Bothwell has continued to produce and circulate bi-monthly copies of our newsletter. These have become a major feature of our group, and the quality just gets better and better. So a big thankyou to David.

It is a pleasure to thank all the members of the committee for their enthusiasm and dedication throughout the year.

Norman Maclean

And here is the Treasurer's Report:

Members will see that the financial position of the group is very stable with an increase in the closing balance of well over £200. This is due to a modest increase in subscriptions but mainly lower costs. As informally agreed at the AGM last year the subscription will remain at £10 per person but there will no longer be a reduced fee of £15 per household. This will be effective for 2017.

	2015 (£)
Total income	618.76
Total expenditure	396.30
Loss/profit for year	222.46
Opening balance	1,321.83
Closing balance	1,544.29

Barbara Cummins

After the interval the AGM was followed by the speaker, **Professor John Micklewright on *Inequality — what can we do about it?***

John Micklewright who is an Emeritus Professor of Economics at University College London was supervised during his doctoral studies by Professor Sir Anthony Atkinson. Rather than give a general talk on inequality John chose to focus on Professor Atkinson's recently published book "Inequality. What can be done?" (Harvard University Press, 2015).

John began by paying tribute to Tony Atkinson, who had died in January this year from an incurable cancer, after an extremely distinguished career as an academic economist. Tony saw economics as a moral science and had a lifelong concern with the injustices that follow from economic and social inequality. Although Tony was a Quaker John said that in his view Tony was also a Humanist.

The book has three parts: discussion of the meaning of inequality; measures of the extent of inequality and noting how they have changed over time; and the presentation of proposals for reducing inequality together with their defence against likely criticisms. Although the literal meaning of inequality is clear, being "not equal", when it is applied to economic and social phenomena there are numerous possibilities: inequality of opportunity eg in education or employment; inequality of outcomes and incomes; restricted access to and allocation of posts such as the judiciary; and inequality of wealth eg via inheritance.

There are numerous measures of inequality but the general picture that emerges from these measures when applied to Western developed countries is that inequality has risen fastest in the USA and the UK. France has seen very little increase in inequality indicating that rises are not a necessity or inevitable.

Numerous writers have explained why inequality is bad for society and the importance of tackling it; Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian philosophy that seeks policies that result in the greatest good for the greatest number, or the argument by Wilkinson and Pickett in their book *The Spirit Level* that reducing the level of inequality will result in greater overall happiness. However, Atkinson was more concerned with the reduction of the level of inequality as a moral issue.

His proposals for reducing inequality are

- innovative and thought provoking as well as including some obvious ones. Here is a sample:
- governments should ensure technological developments are available to all, mostly through education
 - public policy should consciously aim at ensuring everyone gains a more equitable share of the national cake via actions such as trade unions to represent workers on level terms with employers
 - explicit targets for reducing unemployment and guaranteed employment at the minimum wage
 - national savings bonds guaranteeing a real rate of interest
 - an equivalent to a minimum inheritance payment to all adults
 - inheritance and gifts be taxed progressively via a lifetime capital receipts tax
 - return to a more progressive rate of personal income tax
 - a proportional or progressive property tax.
 - child benefits paid to all at a substantial rate but then taxed as income
 - government to build up investment in companies and properties to create income.

Thanks to John for introducing us to this stimulating and challenging book by Tony Atkinson.

Grayham & Liz Mizon

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Discussion Group

Twelve of us met at Catherine Griffiths' house on 16 March to consider "Should the greater good influence official policy?" Norman opened the discussion by listing what might be considered the greater good:

- 1 Limiting world population
- 2 Conserving the world's wildlife
- 3 Feeding the world's hungry
- 4 Stopping the rich getting richer and the poor poorer
- 5 Distributing the world's food effectively
- 6 Stopping war
- 7 Spreading democracy

During the discussion environmental concerns were added to the list: climate change, loss of habitats, plastics in the environment etc.

It was generally agreed that such concerns *should* influence official policies but politicians tend to be more concerned with pleasing their electorate so that they are re-elected, rather than with long-term global matters. They also have to perform a balancing act with limited finances. A wide-ranging discussion included thoughts about foreign aid, refugees, population control, technological

developments which lead to a reduced need for less skilled workers, the selfish attitudes which have caused Brexit and the election of Trump, charity fatigue and the anomaly of charitable organisations meeting in palatial places to discuss famine and poverty.

On the positive side Steven Pinker's book *The Better Angels of our Nature* was mentioned, showing how we have come a long way and violence has reduced over the centuries. There are many philanthropists doing good works, but it is hard to fight against human acquisitiveness and there is a need to think of the world as one place with the UN or groups like the EU trying to work on a world level.

Anne Bothwell

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Social



It felt like a hot Summer's day on the 9 April when eleven met at The Chestnut Horse at Easton, Winchester for lunch and a walk.

We welcomed Jill from Basingstoke Humanists. There were just two from Basingstoke (Barbara is a member of both groups), so we will have to do more to persuade the Basingstoke group to join us!

The food was excellent and leisurely, we had a separate room lending itself to audible conversation, and afterwards the less lame among us went on a modest walk along the Itchen led by Steve Starr.

It was a most enjoyable way of relaxing.

A man climbs fast to the roof of his house which is being over-run by flood waters. A boat comes by and the person in it offers to take the man. The man replies: "No thanks. God will save me." The water keeps rising and reaches the man's neck. A helicopter comes by to save the man and he replies: "No thanks. God will save me." The man drowns and goes to heaven. There he asks God: "I believed in you. Why did you not save me?" God answers: "I sent you a boat. I sent you a helicopter. What else did you want me to do?"

JANUARY	Sunday 8	2.00 pm	The Pavilion	Becky Chamberlain on The psychological value of visual art
	Thursday 19	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Liz Mizon's	Students are right to have a 'no platform' policy or is free speech an absolute?
FEBRUARY	Sunday 12	12.30 pm	Blue Keys in Northlands Rd	Darwin Day lunch + talk from Neil Gosling, an evolution-development biologist from The University of Southampton
MARCH	Sunday 5	2.00 pm	The Pavilion	AGM + John Micklewright on Inequality, what can be done?
	Thursday 16	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Catherine Griffiths'	How much should the 'greater good' of the whole world influence government policy?
APRIL	Sunday 9	12 noon	Chestnut Horse	Pub visit + walk with Basingstoke Humanists
MAY	Sunday 14	7.00 pm	The Pavilion	Barbara Cummins on Cycling the world one pedal at a time
	Thursday 18	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Joy Macfadyen's	What does it mean to be a 'humanist'. Does it have consequences?
JUNE	Sunday 11	TBA	High Corner Inn	Pub visit + walk with Dorset Humanists
JULY	Sunday 9	7.00 pm	The Pavilion	Professor Mike Kelly on Secularism in France
	Thursday 20	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Norman Maclean's	Equal opportunities for all; is it in the country's best interests, can we afford it and should that not matter?
AUGUST			NO MEETINGS THIS MONTH	
SEPTEMBER	Sunday 10	7.00 pm	The Pavilion	Chris Rolles on My life in paediatrics
	Thursday 21	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Venna Spratt's	Should the 'age of consent' be lowered or raised?
OCTOBER		TBA	theatre trip	
NOVEMBER	Sunday 12	2.00 pm	The Pavilion	Sally Munt on What does it mean to be human?
	Thursday 16	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at David Bothwell's	Should we be prepared to compromise our privacy in the interests of national and international security?
DECEMBER	Sunday 10	noon	Yule Party	At Liz and Grayham Mizon's home

Winchester Skeptics in the Pub

7.30pm on the last Thursday in the month at The Winchester Discovery Centre, Jewry Street, SO23 8SB.

Contact <http://www.hampshireskeptics.org> for information about events

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	Discussion Group	Liz Mizon	liz.mizon@btinternet.com	023 80769210

Humanist Celebrants

W=Weddings
N=Namings
F=Funerals

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South Hampshire Humanists: Membership Application/Renewal 2017

The normal annual subscription is £10 per person. For existing BHA members joining South Hampshire Humanists **for the first time**, the rate for the first year only is £5 per person.

Please choose between the following options —

(a) Transfer electronically direct to:

Name:	South Hampshire Humanists
Account No	13910981
Sort code:	560068

Please include you own name for identification purposes.

Please also email the treasurer [barbara130400@hotmail.com] and the secretary [bookrover@virginmedia.com] that you have done this. For a new application please also let them know your contact details as below.

OR

(b) Hand cash or cheque (payable to South Hampshire Humanists) to the Treasurer at a meeting.

OR

(c) Post a cheque to: Barbara Cummins, 33 The Street, Old Basing, Basingstoke RG24 7BX

I/We enclose £ for 2017 membership plus (optional) donation of £

I/We agree that this personal information may be kept on computer. (Please initial)

Are you a member of the British Humanist Association? YES/NO.

Name(s) [please print]

Address

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Telephone email

Signature Date