

**COMING UP**

**7 pm Sunday, 10 September**

**Dr Chris Rolles**

**My life in paediatrics**

**C**hris qualified as a doctor in 1965 and was very influenced and impressed as an undergraduate by several paediatricians. The only route into paediatrics in those days was through membership of The Royal College of Physicians, which he obtained in Stoke on Trent. He came to Southampton in 1977 as the only NHS paediatrician. He retired in 2000.



His talk will cover the transformation of paediatrics during his professional life; some of the development of services for cystic fibrosis, ME and autism; and some interesting overseas projects he became involved in.

He hopes to illustrate his talk with personal anecdotes and experiences.

It promises to be a fascinating insight into the life of a paediatrician.

The Pavilion  
Portwood Residents' Gardens  
13 Abbotts Way  
Highfield, SO17 1QU



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**7.30 pm Thursday 21 September**

**Discussion Group**

**Should the 'Age of Consent' be lowered?**

**I**n Europe the Age of Consent (at which sex is permitted) varies from 14 to 18; elsewhere it can be as low as 12, and in some Islamic countries sex is only permitted between couples who are married.

The Law in different countries varies according to what forms of sex take place.

It is said that both boys and girls reach sexual maturity earlier than formerly — does that mean that they are more mature emotionally?

We discuss this issue at Veena Spratt's home at: 42 Springford Gardens, Lordswood, Southampton SO16 5SW.

(It is behind The Princess Anne Hospital).

**2.15 Saturday, 28 October**

**Wipers Times** at Salisbury Playhouse  
*Wipers Times*, written by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman (from Private Eye), is a touring production following their recent sell-out London season. The play gives us another face of war, one grounded in fact, that men weren't constantly and hopelessly under bombardment, disillusioned and ground down but found time to imprint their own personalities and humour in a way that made war easier to cope with.

The cost will be £17.50 and we have 12 tickets plus reserved seating in the Hawkings Lounge from **11.30 am** for a light lunch from their reasonably priced menu of salads, jacket potatoes and sandwiches. The central long stay car park is adjacent.

Places are available on a 'first come, first served' basis from Chris Robinson on 01329 235272 or [chrisrobinson153@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisrobinson153@btinternet.com).

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**RECENT EVENTS**

**Secularism in France**

**O**n 9 July Professor Michael Kelly came to speak to us about secularism in France and led us through an excellent analysis of current secular beliefs, saying that France is the fourth most atheistic country in the world. He quoted a number of modern French writers: Michel Onfray's *Atheist Manifesto*, *The Book of Atheist Spirituality* by André Comte-Sponville, *The Disenchantment of the World* by Marcel Gauchet, and others on the declining role of religion in society. They advocate that we should turn the page on religion, lay it to rest in peace, stop being obsessed by it and move on to live in a secular world.

Mike contrasted the UK and French definitions of Secularism:

**Secularism**

- The principle that, in a plural, open society where people follow many different religious and non-religious ways of life, the communal institutions that we share (and together pay for) should provide a neutral public space where we can all meet on equal terms. (Humanists UK)

## Laïcité

- Freedom of conscience, freedom to show one's convictions, while respecting public order;
- Separation of public institutions and religious organisations;
- Equality of all before the law, regardless of beliefs or convictions. (Observatoire de la Laïcité)

Mike went on to trace the history of laïcité from the French enlightenment (Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot) of the 18th century, with its crusade against the crushing nature of religion. Then on to the 1789 Revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity; the Rights of Man and the suppression of the Catholic Church. The Law of Separation of 1905 followed the Dreyfus case which had discredited the army and the church. And now in the modern era laïcité is a cherished principle in all parties across the political spectrum.

He concluded by listing seven varieties of laïcité from the 'antireligious' to a more 'open' pragmatic view in the last twenty years. AB

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## Discussion Group

### Human Rights - is it in our best interests?

The evening, 20 July, proved very stimulating as most of the members had not read or really thought about the human rights as written in the UN's Universal Declaration, so this was a good opportunity to give them some thought.

Firstly we wanted to decide the purpose of the Declaration: were they laws, aspirations, or a bench mark? We agreed that some were absolute rights which should be fundamental to all societies. Examples of these are; equality before the law, freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of belief and religion.

Others we decided were more aspirational, especially for poorer nations. Rights to rest and leisure, to social security, and to adequate living standards are examples towards which many third world countries are working.

The list is invaluable as a bench mark against which countries could be judged and judge themselves. Clearly freedom from torture is one some western nations are not abiding by nor seem intent on doing so. Freedom from slavery has still to be achieved world-wide.

The reservations the group had though were several. Some rights seemed in conflict with other rights. The Declaration was grounded in the culture of the West. There was no mention of the rights of people without full capacity such as children or mentally handicapped people, though it may be elsewhere in

the Declaration. We did spend time discussing some medical issues where individual rights were in conflict with the common good or even the best interest of the individual.

So "Are they in our best interests?" This question led to the obvious conundrum of the right to asylum. Like most of the world we had no answer other than "Yes" for small numbers but "not so sure" when numbers grow.

It seemed our pragmatic natures lead us to agree with Tom Donaldson who wrote "The obligations and burdens imposed by the rights must satisfy the fairness – affordability test", though what is "affordable" is another huge debate.

Finally our discussion was challenged by the idea that though governments may choose to act or not they have little power over the huge international multinational companies who are a law unto themselves.

You can view and download the Declaration of Human Rights (there are 50 of them) by accessing:

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

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## Letters

### Equal Rights?

The local Group enjoyed an interesting discussion, at the Maclean's house, and based around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("UDHR"). This is a fascinating topic for me, since I consider myself a 'hard' scientist, concerned for most of my life with evidence-based observation, and pragmatic issues. And this topic, taken at a gallop, in a social setting, proved to be soft as butter in the sun.

Aside from such distractions as the use of language (eg "universal", when just 1-in-4 countries declared the principles), we quickly uncovered the following issues:

- 1 Though the UK is close to 'best in class' as regards recognition and adherence, it's not difficult to identify circumstances in which every one of the 30 clauses is breached, or (for example in the case of national emergency) readily breachable.
- 2 And again, there are classes in the UK that don't enjoy equal rights by any stretch. Such as unborn fetuses, various age bands of children, pregnant women, temporary

immigrant workers, hospital patients, prisoners, wards of court, mental patients, those with terminal illness, etc. Often decisions are made for them, or they are in some way disenfranchised.

3 Despite their professed inherent 'goodness', religious groups often raise significant conflicts regarding the terms of the UDHR, as do those with 'quasi-religious' belief issues which are sometimes cloaked in medical, or sociological arguments. Everyday examples include abortion; or circumcision (which is, apparently, 'benign' compared with FGM).

4 Similarly, enforced health-care, such as fluoridation, and mass inoculation.

5 Semi-slavery, whether due to repayment of huge pseudo-loans, or computerised time-logging.

6 CCTV surveillance, and clandestine bugging.

7 Collection of Big Data, by everyone, of everything you touch on your phone and pc.

8 Activities by huge corporations (eg Walmart, with annual revenues as big as the GDP Belgium), regardless of location.

9 The impact of computerisation and the internet – sometimes benign, often not. And operating well ahead of any governmental comprehension or legislative process.

10 The absence of the right to a pollution-free environment.

And these issues were just those uncovered in our 90 minute review. So in conclusion, it seems that while there's little in the original version to disagree with, after 70 long years the UDHR now needs an urgent update. And on the heels of that, a second realisation. Where today is the moral leadership to mirror that which our forebears shared in their essentially humanistic Declaration of Rights at the UN in 1948? (Incidentally, this amazing international co-operation was chaired — oh wondrous times! — by Eleanor Roosevelt).

Tim Roberts

## News

The Government may have dropped its proposals for a crackdown on harmful religious supplementary schools, which would have also covered illegal schools, following pressure from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and the Church of England.

NHS England has announced that it wants to cease funding homeopathic remedies and other

treatments proven to have no efficacy, and has launched a consultation on the matter.

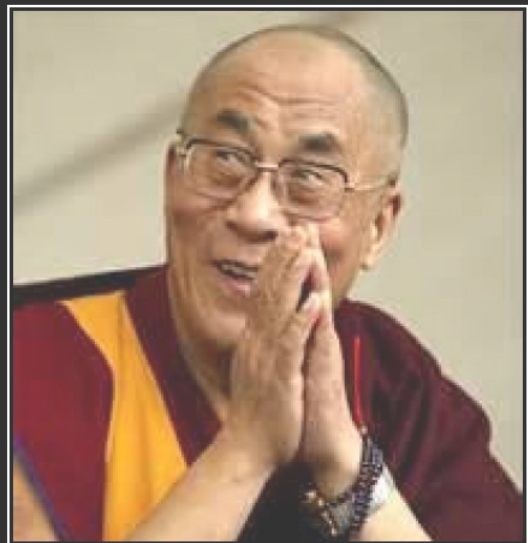
More British people are becoming non-religious, according to the National Secular Society's initial analysis of the latest British Social Attitudes survey. Data hidden within the report, which was published last week, suggests that just over half of British people are non-religious. The proportion of those sampled who declared they had no religion was 51%. After weighting for various other factors, the data suggested that 53% of the British public was non-religious.

Councils across Wales no longer hold prayers as part of their official business after the National Secular Society won a court battle over the practice.

NSS analysis of new research from the BBC has revealed that almost none of Wales's local authorities now holds official prayers during meetings.

Legislators in Malaysia's northeastern state of Kelantan have voted to allow the public caning of those who break strict Islamic laws. The state's legislature approved amendments to its sharia code which will allow the punishment to take place.

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**AGNOSTIC**  
BELIEVE NOTHING QUESTION EVERYTHING

Is the Dalai Lama really a humanist?

|           |                        |          |  |  |
|-----------|------------------------|----------|--|--|
| 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 Veena Spratt's       | Should the 'age of consent' be lowered or raised?  |
| OCTOBER   | Saturday 28            | 2.15 pm  | Theatre trip                             | Wipers Times at Salisbury Playhouse  |
| 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

|          |                  |                 |                           |              |
|----------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Contacts | Secretary        | Stephen Starr   | bookrover@virginmedia.com | 023 80362517 |
|          | Treasurer        | Barbara Cummins | barbara130400@hotmail.com | 01256 844301 |
|          | Newsletter       | David Bothwell  | bthwll@globalnet.co.uk    | 023 8055204  |
|          | 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 .....

.....

Telephone ..... email .....

Signature ..... Date .....