

The value of life lies not in its length, but in the use we make of it.  
- Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)

## The Meaning of Life at the BHA annual conference

On the weekend of 17 June, the BHA descended on Manchester for the first annual conference in a decade. The meaning of life was the theme of the conference and over the weekend ten renowned humanist speakers gave their take on the theme to the 160-strong audience.

The programme included chemist Peter Atkins talking on the 'limitless power of science', with Julian Baggini following up by asking 'what does religion have that we don't?'

BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson and outgoing President Polly Toynbee talked about politics and humanist movements, which caused a fair amount of discussion between attendees. Stephen Law lectured on 'believing bullshit' which segued into Chris French's discussion, 'Meaning and randomness: on seeing things that are not there'. This session included a demonstration of the backwards messages in Led Zeppelin's Stairway to Heaven and Neil Armstrong's famous 'one small step' quote.

Philip Pullman took to the stage to talk about the meaning of life and the worlds he creates in his fiction. He candidly talked about his recent and controversial book *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, his dislike of fantasy, and how he makes the heroes and



"The meaning of my life is the purpose it has. And it seems to me the purpose my life has is to write books."

- Philip Pullman, BHA conference

characters in his stories so noble.

The day drew to a close with a gala dinner where Philip Pullman received the 2011 award for Services to Humanism.

The weekend also featured comedy from Robin Ince, history with Natalie Haynes, a pub quiz hosted by 'Egghead' C J De Mooi, all of which was rounded up and summarised by Richard Norman at the conference's conclusion. The entertaining, inspiring and intellectually

challenging weekend was a huge success, and the BHA would like to thank everyone who attended, all the volunteers for their assistance in ensuring the conference ran smoothly, and all the speakers who provided such stimulating debate.

You can listen to recordings and bonus interviews from the conference on the Pod Delusion website, and videos from the weekend have been added to the BHA YouTube channel.

## Philip Pullman receives an award for Services to Humanism

Best-selling author Philip Pullman, whose works include the multiple award-winning trilogy *His Dark Materials*, received the 2011 award for services to Humanism at the British Humanist Association's annual conference. Philip Pullman is a longstanding supporter of the BHA.

Since the publication of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, Pullman has also become known as a public commentator on religion, and on education and literature. He was chosen by *The Independent* for its 'Good List 2006' of '50 campaigners, thinkers and givers'; the panel of experts at *The Independent* cited the worlds he creates 'in which children see good as a matter of choices that are within their control.'

Speaking on 'faith' schools, Philip Pullman has said: 'It's vital to get clear in young minds what is a faith position and what is not - so that, for instance, they won't be taken in by religious people claiming that science is a faith position no different in kind from Christianity.'

Science is not a matter of faith, and too many people are being allowed to get away with claiming that it is, and that my "belief" in evolution is a thing of the same kind as their "belief" in miracles. What we need in schools, really, is basic philosophy.'



Philip Pullman accepts his award at the BHA annual conference



## From the Chief Executive Andrew Copson

It was great to see so many members at the AGM and gratifying for all staff to have so positive a response to all the reports on our work of the last year. With this copy of BHA News you will find a copy of the Annual Review, which will draw out for those of you who could not be present some of the key successes and challenges of the past year.

It was a year in which our subscriptions and donations income rose by almost 20% and our deficit was reduced to almost nothing, thousands joined us on the streets of London to protest against the state visit of the Pope and our Census Campaign attracted media attention unprecedented for us on a campaign issue. Although there was sadness in the loss of much-valued

supporters such as Claire Rayner and Michael Foot, we attracted a host of new Distinguished Supporters like Stephen Fry, David Nobbs, Ed Byrne, Natalie Haynes, Ken Follett and Tim Minchin. We massively expanded our online resources with websites like [www.humanistheritage.org.uk](http://www.humanistheritage.org.uk) and [www.simpleguidetohumanism.org.uk](http://www.simpleguidetohumanism.org.uk). Our events programme included such treats as Brian Cox giving the Voltaire Lecture and Ann Wroe giving our inaugural Shelley Lecture, a day conference on Humanism and the Arts and sponsored events at the Philosophy and Music Festival at Hay. We saw continued growth in our number of humanist ceremonies, school speakers, speeches on parliament by members of the humanist group there, and downloads of our educational

resources. Internally, we developed new management structures, completed a strategic review, and reviewed all our financial procedures to make us more able to sustain the growth in membership and support we have experienced in recent years.

Too recent to be included in this Annual Review but featured on the front page of this BHA News is the revived annual conference. As well as a fantastic weekend for all those present (I've never seen such positive feedback forms!) it was – like the AGM – another great opportunity for staff to meet with members. We will certainly be repeating it – next year in Cardiff and I hope we will see as many of you as possible there.

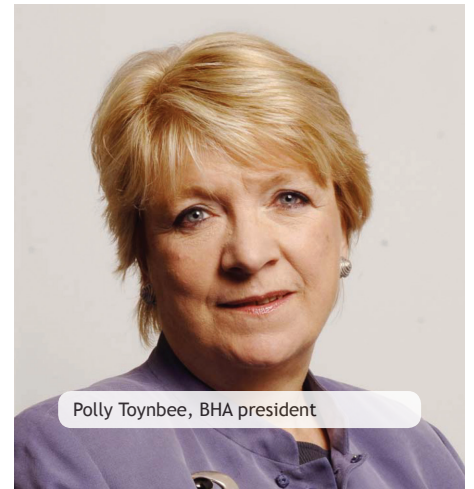
## President's reception

On 1 July the BHA hosted an event at the Guardian offices in London to celebrate and recognise the contribution that outgoing BHA President Polly Toynbee has made to the organisation and to Humanism in the UK.

Polly has been a strong supporter of our work and over the past four years has tirelessly campaigned on issues that affect humanists. In her long career as a journalist she has written and spoken on issues including the rise of religious

fundamentalism, 'faith' schools, equality, and secularism, as well as publishing a range of social commentary books.

Guests at the event included a number of supporters, trustees, and representatives from local groups, BHA staff, volunteers and interns. The evening included a short speech from Andrew Copson thanking Polly for her hard work and reflecting on some of the large-scale campaigns Polly has been personally involved in during her presidency.



Polly Toynbee, BHA president

## BHA gives evidence to parliamentary committee on the 'Big Society'

The BHA's position as the leading voice for non-religious people was cemented when Andrew Copson was called to give evidence on the 'Big Society' to the influential parliamentary Public Administration Select Committee, alongside representatives from the Church of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and the Chief Rabbi.

Andrew used this opportunity to dispel the notion that religious believers have a monopoly on active involvement in the community and volunteering, clearly stating from the outset, 'In the UK there is no difference between non-religious [and religious] people's charitable, civic or voluntary engagement. None at all.'

He described how humanist ceremonies, such as funerals 'fulfil a very big need in the community' and are attended by about half a million people each year', and emphasised the contribution of local groups which 'do work in their own local communities'.

The issue of public services was discussed, with Andrew emphasising the growing need to keep them inclusive and secular, arguing that in addition to facing direct discrimination by religious service providers, 'there's no protection for people who might feel they are coming under unreasonable pressure of a proselytising sort.'

Referring to Andrew's concern that

equality law should apply without exception to all public service providers, the Chief Rabbi aired his concerns that equality and human rights laws were somehow eroding religious liberty and he referred to the pilgrims on the Mayflower. Mr Copson forcefully countered this, stating, 'Equality and human rights were not the flag under which the pilgrims on the Mayflower had been oppressed in England. It was a religious intolerance which we risk re-importing into public services if we split them up now.'

You can watch a video of proceedings [www.tinyurl.com/BigSocVid](http://www.tinyurl.com/BigSocVid) or read a transcript [www.tinyurl.com/BigSocTran](http://www.tinyurl.com/BigSocTran).

## BHA at HowTheLightGetsIn

HowTheLightGetsIn, the ten day philosophy and music festival at Hay on Wye, this year played host to over 350 events including live performances, comedy nights and film screenings.

The festival, which has been described as 'like TED, but with more fluffy armchairs, tents and English accents' included three BHA supported philosophy panels. Polly Toynbee led a discussion with analytic philosopher Peter Hacker, postmodernist Christopher Hamilton and New Statesman culture editor Jonathan Derbyshire on *The End of Ideas*, exploring whether we can create a new Enlightenment that matches the excitement of the past.

## BHA and GALHA stand together

This year has again seen the BHA working in conjunction with GALHA (The Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association) on the running of stalls at Gay Pride festivals around the country. Successful events have already taken place in Birmingham and London, with more planned for Nottingham, Brighton, Manchester, and Cardiff later in the year.

Paul Allen, co-ordinator of the joint stalls said: 'There are various reasons for people visiting our stalls. Some are just after the freebie items like pens and postcards, nothing more. There are those who can't look at you and just 'sneak' a leaflet for bedtime reading. There are many teenagers with harrowing stories of religious homophobia to tell, as well as parents seeking information for their own children. There are those who have been to a non-religious funeral and want to ensure that they can have one for

Later in the week the session on *Visions of Disaster and Perfection* investigated what environmental journalist Paul Kingsnorth and cyborg and scientist Kevin Warwick see for the 21st century – from a technological golden age to an environmental apocalypse.

On the closing day BHA Distinguished Supporter Philip Pullman, and novelists Gwyneth Jones and Frank Furedi discussed whether fantasy is an escape from a hostile world or a way of dealing with the realities of every day.

Videos from all the sessions can be found online at The Institute of Art and Ideas website: <http://iai.tv>.

themselves. What is striking is the number of times that I have heard volunteers set out the basics of humanism, only for the reply to be "Oh! I guess I'm a Humanist!"



GALHA Chairman Adam Knowles and former mayor of London Ken Livingstone.

## The place of religion in public life

Can religion be restricted to one's private life? Would a truly secular society place intolerable restrictions on religious believers? These questions and many more were raised during the Humanist Philosophers' conference on 'Religion in Public Life' held on 16 July at Conway Hall in London.

The aim of the conference was to bring together humanist philosophers, Muslims and Christians to present their reflection on the topic.

The event concluded with a panel discussion where all parties put across their final arguments and were challenged by members of the audience in a final question and answer session.

## Bob is visiting the Uganda Humanist Association thanks to IHEU

Bob Churchill, our former Head of Membership and Promotion, is pleased to be working from September with the Uganda Humanist Association (UHASSO). He'll be based in Kampala for at least six months on a voluntary basis, thanks to some targeted, forward-thinking funding from the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU).

'There are great projects being run by UHASSO,' Bob tells us. 'BHA members are familiar with the schools and have helped the Emitos girl's football team, and the Uganda Humanist Effort to Save Women. I'll be working with local humanists to build the core association so we can do more of this marvellous work.'

Uganda Humanist Schools Trust has launched an urgent appeal for the Mustard Seed School to buy an adjoining school.

## Richard Dawkins and PZ Myers in conversation

The BHA hosted an armchair discussion between author and BHA vice-president Richard Dawkins and PZ Myers, American biology professor and the author of the blockbuster science blog Pharyngula.

Around 1000 people attended the evening where two leaders in their field discussed everything from religion and atheism to science, cartoons and Oprah Winfrey overdubbing David Attenborough's *Life*.

Both speakers spent some time during the event talking about the proof they would need to convince them about the existence of god. Myers told us that 'there is no evidence that would convince me of the existence of a god.' He went on to explain that even though we may talk about gathering evidence for god we haven't found the right hypothesis yet and we need to identify not only what proof would look like, but what it is that you are trying to prove. He said: 'You could say my god is the being that would shout out through the atmosphere that 'I exist', but that is not a god that is proposed by any religion.'

He and Dawkins went on to discuss the importance of using the scientific method to come to conclusions, Dawkins noting that to resort to a supernatural explanation of something is to give up all aspiration to investigate it.

The full video from the discussion as well as the question and answer session is available on the BHA YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/user/BritishHumanists](http://www.youtube.com/user/BritishHumanists)

They need to raise £22,000 by the end of August to purchase the school. For more information or to donate visit [www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org](http://www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org).



Mustard Seed School, Uganda

## The changing face of funerals

The buzzword at this year's National Funeral Exhibition in June was choice: choice for grieving families in securing the type of funeral that best fits their needs. The range of exhibits certainly indicated a trend towards more personalisation of everything surrounding funerals, from motorcycle and push-bike hearses to the now familiar biodegradable wicker coffins and even pouches for carrying the ashes of a loved one in your wallet.

The exhibition was a chance for the new Head of Ceremonies to get more of a feel for the funeral industry in general, and for the Ceremonies department to staff our stand and get among the funeral directors and funeral arrangers to make our presence felt nationally. Thanks go to willing helpers Martin Wooller, Edgar Harwood, Martin Fowkes, and particularly to Victoria Denning for her great work in

decorating the stand.

Of course, when it comes to a focus on the personal and creative, BHA Humanist Ceremonies has been at the vanguard of the drive to provide carefully tailored celebrations of a life lived - a welcome alternative to the ubiquitous formulaic religious services of old. Other service providers in the industry have followed our example, and delegates at this year's exhibition were of the opinion that this movement for greater personalisation and choice was gathering renewed pace, now driven by consumer demand.

The advent of various new funeral services websites was testament to the increased number of families starting their research into funerals online rather than with a visit to a funeral director, a trend that suits Humanist Ceremonies extremely well. With our strong web-

presence and tailored celebrant web-pages already in place, it appears that our ability to reach those seeking a humanist ceremony directly through the internet is perhaps our greatest marketing strength.

In time it appears we may all even have to decide not just between burial and cremation, but between cremation and the emerging practice of resomation. This new, more environmentally friendly alternative to cremation that has the backing of industry giant Cooperative Funeralcare, uses alkaline hydrolysis to break the body down chemically into sterile liquid and bone ash. And if that doesn't appeal, you may prefer cryomation, where the body is frozen with liquid nitrogen to -196 degrees Celsius before being shattered and vacuum-freeze-dried to a powder. The choice will be yours.

## Accord event with UCL on religion in education

The University Tests Act of 1871 brought to an end religious discrimination in universities in the UK for non-theological courses. Prior to the Act colleges at Oxford, Cambridge and Durham Universities restricted fellowships and places to study to Anglicans.

On 15 June University College London and the Accord Coalition held a debate titled 'Religion in education: towards division or inspiration?' The event featured Andrew Copson and Accord Chair Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, as well as former Secretary of State for Education and Skills Charles Clarke and former Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari. The evening was chaired by UCL Political Science lecturer Dr Sherrill Stroschein.

The event focussed on the ongoing debate over the role of religious organisations in schools, and whether it remains appropriate, so long after 'faith' universities were banned, for 'faith' schools to continue to be able to discriminate in admissions, employment, governance and teaching.



Andrew Copson addresses the audience at UCL.  
Photo reproduced courtesy of Robert Chadwick, [www.robertchadwick.co.uk](http://www.robertchadwick.co.uk).

## BHA is pro-education, pro-rights, and pro-choice

The BHA was delighted to be invited to a parliamentary reception hosted by the sexual health charities fpa and Brook, in recognition of its contribution to promoting and trying to secure high quality personal, social, health and economic education, including Sex and Relationships Education, to all young people – regardless of whether they

attend an inclusive school or a 'faith' school. However, as much as we are working to promote rights and education, there is a growing threat not only to education but to women's rights to access free, safe and legal abortions.

Perspectives from the religious right are often not transparent – a clever trick to persuade that objections are not really

religious but secular and shared medical or social concerns. Often the arguments are made using biased and unproven 'evidence'. The BHA has been working closely with the grassroots pro-choice movement to try to prevent a US-style religious attack on education and choice.

Watch this space for ways you can get involved too.

# AHS Student Federation holds fourth Annual General Meeting

The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies (AHS), which is facilitated and supported by the British Humanist Association, held its fourth Annual General Meeting in July. The AGM was held as part of a weekend-long conference in Southampton, hosted by University of Southampton Atheist Society.

The AHS elected a new Executive, which will lead the organisation for the next 12 months. Jenny Bartle, from University of Bristol Atheist, Agnostic and Secular Society, was elected President; Dom Blacklock, from UCLU Atheist, Secularist and Humanist Society was elected Treasurer; and Michael Paynter, also from Bristol AASS, was elected Secretary. The outgoing Executive were President Richy Thompson, from Oxford Atheists, Secularists and Humanists; Treasurer James Murray, from Leeds Atheist Society; and Secretary Nicola Jackson, also from Leeds Atheists.

In addition to the AGM and much socialising between the students, the conference also featured a talk from BHA Vice President Dr Evan Harris; the first UK public screening of Hollywood blockbuster *The Ledge*; a debating workshop with Andrew Copson; a choral workshop run by BHA Choir members Emma Bell, Chloë Clifford-Frith and Stewart Dean; and



Mike Paynter, Secretary, Jenny Bartle, President, and Dom Blacklock, Treasurer

other training workshops on freshers' weeks and leadership.

The AGM came at the end of a great year for the AHS, during which it grew from 14 to 32 member societies. BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson commented, 'We are delighted with how the AHS has been growing, and have full confidence that the new team will be able to continue this growth. We look forward to working with them over the coming 12 months to ensure that the AHS goes from strength to strength.'

## Bishops in the House of Lords

A panel debate was held at House of Lords on 29 June by the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG) on the topic of 'the place for Bishops in a reformed House of Lords'. The panel expressed a range of views on their retention or exclusion, however most concluded the Government's proposals as they stand are unsatisfactory.

The debate was held in response to the Government's proposals for reform of the House of Lords, which includes a proposal to retain reserved seats for

12 (from 26) Bishops of the Church of England in a reformed chamber, with a 20% appointed and an 80% elected membership. Chaired by Lord Warner, arguing for the retention of the Bishops were Christina Rees, a member of the Church of England Synod, and Paul Bickley, senior researcher at Theos, a public theology think tank. The case for removing the reserved places for Bishops was proposed by Chris Bryant MP, Shadow Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, and the BHA's Chief Executive Andrew Copson.

Chris Bryant MP stressed that parliamentarians are only legitimate if they have gained support at the ballot-box, and urged any reform to result in a 100% elected chamber. Mr Bryant described how the Bishops were granted their place in Parliament by Plantagenet monarchs because the Church was a significant landowner. Now times had changed, the Bishops were wasting their time conducting parliamentary duties and should really focus on pastoral matters.

The debate was recorded and the full discussions can be found on the Pod Delusion website [www.poddelusion.co.uk](http://www.poddelusion.co.uk).



Lord Warner, All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group Chair

## Donate

The BHA employs the only person working full time to end 'faith' schools, and see them absorbed into the inclusive schools sector.

Our campaigner is currently working in support of six local campaigns against faith schools; is supporting parents as they grapple with the discriminatory school admissions system; and is trying to get the Education Bill amended to reflect our concerns. We need to raise £40,000 to ensure we can continue this vital work.

**You can donate online at [www.humanism.org.uk/donate](http://www.humanism.org.uk/donate)**

You can also donate by telephoning 020 7079 3580 with a credit or debit card, or by returning this form with a cheque made payable to 'British Humanist Association' to 'British Humanist Association, 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD'.

I enclose a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_

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## BHA People

*A regular feature introducing some of our staff, volunteers and distinguished supporters*

### Zena Birch

Newly Accredited BHA Humanist Wedding Celebrant

[www.zenabirch.com](http://www.zenabirch.com)

### What first interested you about the BHA?

In my early twenties I read a book by Kurt Vonnegut called *Slaughter House Five*, he fascinated me and as I devoured his other books I learnt more about him. He was honorary president of the AHA and his Humanism struck a real chord. I found the BHA website and I have never looked back.

### How has being a humanist influenced/affected your work?

I attended a humanist funeral and was exceptionally moved by the ceremony. We were there to celebrate the life of the one we loved and all differences melted away as people shared both their joy and their grief. Then friends of mine asked me to marry them in California, it was a truly unique experience and I realised that this was something I wanted to be part of. I applied for the Humanist Celebrant training program and changed my career.

### What do you think is the most important thing about being a humanist?

Being open and continuing to learn and discover. Listening to people, being unafraid of experience, exploring, defending injustice. But mostly, doing our best to live well. It's not just about being a humanist, it's about being a human.

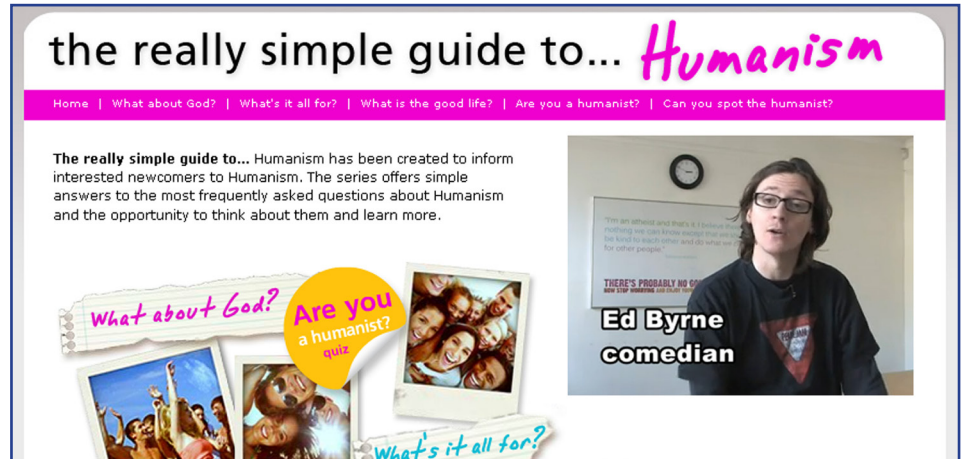
To learn more about becoming a BHA Humanist Celebrant, visit [www.humanism.org.uk/ceremonies](http://www.humanism.org.uk/ceremonies).

# The really simple guide to Humanism

*The really simple guide to Humanism* is a new online learning resource that has been created to help the wider public understand Humanism. The interactive website has already had over 1500 visitors since its launch and offers simple answers to the most frequently asked questions about Humanism. The website also

features videos of humanists including writers Sue Blackmore, Zoe Margolis, and David Nobbs, neurobiologist Colin Blakemore, comedians Ed Byrne and Lucy Porter, philosopher A C Grayling, and journalist Polly Toynbee.

You can visit the website at [www.simpleguidetohumanism.org.uk](http://www.simpleguidetohumanism.org.uk)



## BHA meets senior officials at Department for Education

Andrew, Naomi and Campaigns Officer on Faith Schools and Education Richy Thompson have held a number of meetings with senior civil servants at the Department for Education over the last two months.

Concerns raised by the BHA included admissions and the number of complaints we receive from parents who have been unfairly discriminated against by the admissions system. We also discussed employment, and how the Education Bill will allow more 'faith' schools to religiously discriminate when appointing, remunerating and promoting all of

their staff. We brought up our concerns about the Bill removing Ofsted's duty to specifically inspect schools' contribution to promoting community cohesion and argued for religious education to become a national curriculum subject, with a consistently high-quality syllabus focusing on non-religious as well as religious beliefs. Finally, we discussed our concerns about the teaching of creationism in schools.

The meetings were positive, and we look forward to further discussions taking place in the future.

## BHA works to amend Education Bill

The BHA has been working over the past several months with members of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG), to which we provide the secretariat, to amend the Education Bill and end state-sponsored discrimination against the non-religious.

In June, we briefed peers ahead of the House of Lords second reading of the Bill, and subsequently saw our concerns raised across parties and religious beliefs. Areas discussed included school admissions, community cohesion, homophobic bullying and the proliferation of 'faith' schools.

Subsequently to the debate, we worked with members of the APPHG to draft amendments to be brought at the Committee Stage. APPHG Secretary Baroness Massey of Darwen tabled an amendment to make Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, including

Sex and Relationships Education, a statutory subject in all schools, including 'faith' schools; to replace state schools' requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship, typically of a broadly Christian character, with inclusive assemblies for all children; to end the ability of 'faith' schools to discriminate in admissions; and to remove the presumption, introduced by the Bill, that all new schools will be less accountable Free Schools or Academies, as opposed to state-maintained schools. APPHG Vice Chair Baroness Flather tried to amend the Bill to reverse the removal of the duty for Ofsted to inspect specifically on community cohesion.

Amendments at Committee Stage are not voted upon; however the BHA will work to ensure these areas are readdressed at the Report Stage that will follow in the autumn.



## From the Chair

Our Annual Conference in June was a great success, with many valuable insights into how humans and humanists find meaning in their lives. This includes understanding our humanity as well as examining moral and other issues on a scientific basis so that we can make rational decisions as to how we live together and ensure the future of the planet for our children.

As I write the Murdochs are appearing in parliament to answer questions about their business. This emphasises the links between vested interests and politicians. What News International has been doing is not just making a profit by selling newspapers, but also increasing influence in the interest of building their empire. Where have we seen that model before?

Like with belief organisations, we don't just want to see a fourth estate that is fair to individuals, we also don't want it to have undue influence on the processes of justice or politics. This has to be regulated away from the frenetic political arena.

What we don't want is a so-called 'Big Society' dominated by religious and other power groups. We want an 'Open Society' where a secular government favours no-one for religious reasons. An Open Society where the government does not subcontract the delivery of

public services to organisations with a particular agenda and discriminatory policies, but makes access available to all and delivers unbiased services.

Separately, as discussed at the recent conference on the place of religion in public life, we would not wish to discriminate against belief groups having their say in public debates about moral and other issues in society. What we would want is that they do not have privileged involvement in the decision making or wider public debate.

We do have issues in the UK that we are fighting for, but on the whole we do not have to face the sort of political regimes and religious intolerance that many of our fellow humanists worldwide are facing day in day out. I am therefore looking forward very much to meeting humanists from all over the world at the World Humanist Congress in Oslo in mid August, which I shall be attending with other members of the BHA team and trustees. This is particularly important because the next meeting of the Congress in three years time will be hosted by the BHA in the United Kingdom. We are already planning and looking forward to it.

I hope that you all have a great summer.

Robert Ashby

## Miriam Karlin retrospective

The BHA was sad to hear of the news of the death of actor Miriam Karlin.

Karlin appeared in iconic films such as *A Clockwork Orange*, *Children of Men*, and *Room at the Top* and was a devoted political activist. As well as being a BHA Distinguished Supporter she was a patron of Dignity in Dying, a body that campaigns on assisted dying.

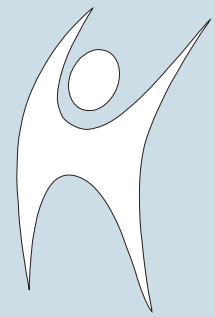
Miriam Karlin described herself as 'a former Jew, now a humanist', and to the BHA as 'a born again atheist'. She also said 'The only certainty about life is that it ends in death.'

BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson said, 'Although very recently her time in residential care prevented her from being active, Miriam always remained in close and supportive contact with us and telephone calls with her were a joy for her strong and principled opinions and consistent support for our work.'

## Dame Barbara Mills' humanist funeral

BHA celebrant Caroline Black lead Dame Barbara Mills's funeral on 8 June at Golders Green Crematorium. She writes: 'I had led her brother-in-law Dick Clark's funeral in 2006 and so had met Barbara and her family before. I had been shocked to hear of Barbara's sudden death, after a devastating and unexpected stroke.

'Barbara achieved so much in her life as a barrister, a QC, as the first female director of public prosecution, and as a committed socialist. The funeral was one of the largest I have led and included many well-known faces from politics and the legal profession. She had been a guest on Desert Island Discs in 1993 so the music had in effect been selected by Barbara – Hayden's Nelson's Mass, Mozart's Requiem and Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag, a cheerful, cheeky piece to leave to.'



## Local and groups review

### Devon Humanists

Following an enquiry from a religious education teacher from Exmouth College, a member of the Devon Humanists group went along to talk to a group of 14 – 15 year old GCSE students about Humanism.

The college is now thinking about future plans to include the humanist perspective into more of their lessons on themes including human relationships, death, medical ethics, and philosophy.

### Essex Humanists

The Essex Humanists group visited Epping Primary School in June to speak to two groups of 9 – 10 year olds. The day was a great success. Although timing was tight, with only 35 minutes being available for each class, the teacher has asked the Essex Humanists to come back next year.

### North East Humanists

North East Humanists made the public impact they sought during Humanist Week 2011. The week's theme was 'Humanism and Humanitarianism'. Speakers included Martin Bell and Maryam Namazi and saw a hugely successful comedy night, film night, and high profile fundraising at Newcastle's railway station cheekily billed as "Humanism for Commuters".

### Norfolk Secular and Humanist Group

Norwich – revealed as 'the most Godless city in Britain' in the 2001 census – in June had a humanist stand helping to promote peace in the atrium of the central library.

This was among 35 stands at The Peace Camp, an annual get-together of protest groups, charities and other organisations. The group also organises a stand at the annual Burston Strike School Rally to commemorate the longest strike in history.

This issue edited and designed by Sara Passmore and staff editorial team. Please send contributions for the next issue – news, views, quotes, and cuttings of interest to other humanists – marked ‘For publication’ – to editor@humanism.org.uk or ‘The Editor, BHA’ by 1st September 2011.

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The British Humanist Association is a registered charity which exists to promote Humanism and support and represent people who seek to live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs.

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## Upcoming Events

### Holyoake Lecture with Raymond Tallis, 18 October, Manchester

*Increasingly, it is assumed that human beings are best understood in biological terms; that, notwithstanding the apparent differences between humans and their nearest animal kin, people are, at bottom, organisms.*

The BHA in association with the Greater Manchester Humanists is pleased to announce that tickets are now available for the 2011 Holyoake Lecture in Manchester.

Presented by Raymond Tallis, author of *Michelangelo's Finger: An Exploration of Everyday Transcendence* and *Aping Mankind. Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation*

of Humanity, this year's lecture will explore arguments against biologism.

Tallis will argue that 'the degrading image of man as just another animal is not only inaccurate but contrary to the spirit of Humanism.'

Tickets for this will sell out fast, so make sure you don't miss out on what will be a fascinating discussion.

The event will be held at Friends Meeting House Main Hall, Manchester. A reduced ticket price is offered to BHA and Greater Manchester Humanists members and students.

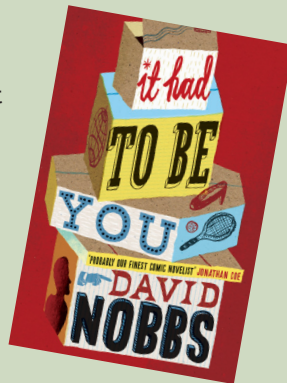
Further details and tickets available at the BHA website or call 020 7079 3580.

## Win! Win! Win!

We have a copy of David Nobbs' new book *It Had to be You* to give away to the first person drawn out of a hat who correctly answers the question:

Who wrote the song from which David Nobbs' book takes its name?

Email your answer to editor@humanism.org.uk or post to 'Editor, BHA News', 1 Gower Street London WC1E 6HD by 1st September 2011.



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## Did you know?

The Burston Strike School was at the centre of the longest running strike in British history, between 1914 and 1939.

In 1914 pupils of the school marched in support of their two dismissed teachers, whose effort to get farm workers to join the union and complaints about conditions in the school, particularly dampness, inadequate heating and lighting, and general unhygienic conditions brought them into conflict with the School Managing Body and the Church of England running the school. An alternative school was started on the village green and in part of the carpenter's shop and the strike continued for 25 years.

In 1949 the Strike School was registered as a charity and a September rally has been organised by the Transport and General Workers' Union and supported by other unions every year since 1984.

DISCLAIMER: Humanists do not agree about everything and some readers will disagree with some views expressed in this newsletter. The opinions of individual humanists are always interesting but are not, of course, necessarily BHA policy. On occasion we include inserts with BHA News. Many of these are part of reciprocal arrangements that allow us to send our leaflets to other organisations' subscribers. We only accept inserts we think may be of interest to some of our readers, and will not include material promoting causes we oppose. Please do not assume that inserts imply BHA involvement with the cause or campaign, unless otherwise stated.