

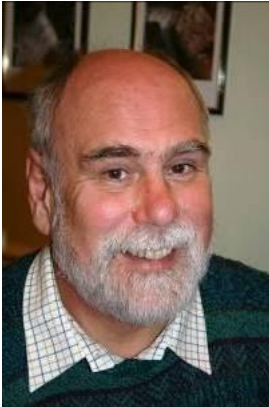
The Moral Warrior

The Voice of the United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association ...

For Forces Freethinkers.....



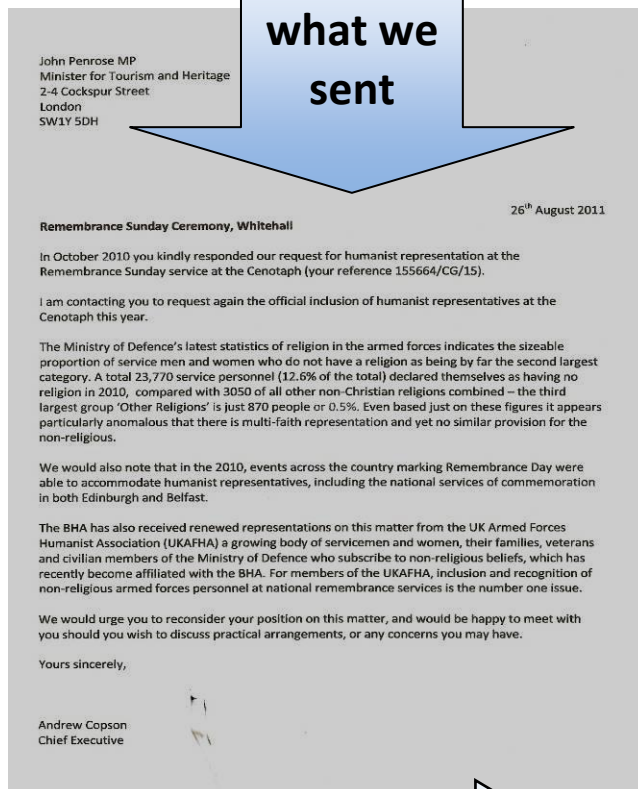
Issue 15- 30th September 2011



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY...

... The BHA tries yet again to represent Humanists at the London Cenotaph....

This was
what we
sent



This was
the
response



...And *this* is why we need to
recruit more UKAFHA members...

However, I'm sure that you would also accept that people who have no religious beliefs aren't necessarily Humanists. Nor do Humanists tend to come together in socially or geographically recognisable 'communities' as people who share the same religious beliefs or cultures often do. As a result, it's hard to position the Humanists - or anyone else - as the representatives of people without religious beliefs at the Cenotaph.

Report on next page....

No Humanists at the Cenotaph...?

John Penrose has shown a disappointing lack of understanding about what modern Humanism is about. There are in fact 67 Humanist groups scattered all over England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and they are indeed “recognisable communities”. In addition to that, there are another 29 Student groups, and 6 special interest groups – one of which is UKAFHA. But these 102 organisations are only those which are affiliated to the BHA. Scotland has its own national organisation - the Humanist Society of Scotland - and they have another eight “recognisable communities” to add to the total ... In fact, you may be interested to know that Scotland can claim over five times as many Humanists per head of population than in the rest of the UK!

... Numbers are the key to being noticed on this issue, and when it comes to the Armed Forces in particular, that means numbers within UKAFHA! Membership has more than trebled in the past 18 months. We already outnumber Jews in the armed forces, (who have official recognition) and we will very soon, no doubt, overtake the total of Sikhs within the Armed Forces, but UKAFHA is still very small, and we’ve more growing to do yet before we get proper recognition at government level.

There have, however, been significant developments in connection with our recent meeting with the Chaplain of the Fleet, The Reverend Scott-Brown, (see page 3) and it is clear that we *are* being noticed ... But those in the armed forces who are recorded on their PIR as of “no religion” in the armed forces is nearly 24,000 in total. It is the 2nd largest group after Church of England, and we are not yet pulling our weight! Clearly, there are many reasons for this, and the MoD’s favourite is that just because someone declares they are not religious, doesn’t mean that they are Humanist – which undoubtedly has some truth - but I have no doubt that there are many thousands in the Services who are not even aware of Humanism, and it is my job – and yours – to make sure that as many people as possible are made aware.

I have also met many people who share the Humanist philosophy ... Who may even *call* themselves Humanists or freethinkers ... But who don’t feel the need to join a Humanist organisation ... And John Penrose has given the answer to this question. If you want change, you have to be noticed, and to be noticed, you need numbers, because big numbers convert to pressure. Religious groups have long understood this, and are very effective at lobbying Parliament for this

STOP!

***Whatever you are
doing...***

***This is an important announcement
about UKAFHA’S NEXT AGM ON 28TH
JANUARY AT AMPORT HOUSE***

Don’t forget that you are invited to attend UKAFHA’s 2nd AGM, and there will be lots to talk about. Let Tarquin Shipley know that you plan to attend on tarquinshipley@hotmail.com and he will be delighted to place a booking for you.

Remember, this is the only time when all members can meet, exchange ideas and establish contacts, so please do come along if you can ... If you are in uniform, and want advice on whether you can get official release, ask Tarquin ...

and that ... If we Humanists want to be noticed, we really do need to join, because until we do, there will always be some bias or discrimination against Humanist ideas. I doubt, however, that this is malicious, so much as unaware.

If we want more recognition for Humanists ... If we feel we have something of value to contribute ..., If we want Humanism properly represented in the Armed Forces ... If we feel threatened by the increasing imposition of religious values upon us, then we must stand up and be counted. There are well over 100 UKAFHA members now, but we need many more! So be proud that you are a member of UKAFHA, put up the posters I sent you, pin up copies of *the Warrior* wherever you get permission, and if you know others who share your view, show them this issue, and invite them to join UKAFHA. We have made much progress over the past months, but there's a long way to go, and with more members progress will doubtless accelerate.

... You never know, we might even be granted representation at the London Cenotaph one day, and then we can pay proper tribute to everyone who suffers in war!

Meeting with the Chaplain-in-Charge

It was a real pleasure for Andrew Copson and me to meet the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Reverend Scott Brown, and his deputy the Venerable Martin Poll in Portsmouth on the 7th September.

Several issues were discussed, and it became clear that Scott is the Chaplain representing all three services at the moment – a post which switches from year to year, and from 1st January 2012 will be taken over by the Army in the guise of The Reverend Jonathan Woodhouse, who is based in Andover. Scott is obviously fully aware that there are a significant number of non-believers within the forces ... And he was also of the opinion that Humanists should be treated in the same way as any other philosophical – or religious

– organisation. It was clear quite early on that he had accessed our website, and opened past issues of the *Warrior* ... And I felt he was quite stung by some of the remarks made about the posters that we withdrew. But he did make it plain that he would circulate advice to chaplains in the forces to show a little more sensitivity towards the non-religious at remembrance services in future, and he offered to accept a form of words that would be inclusive of all philosophies, including Humanists, and other non-believers. This issue has since been considered by the UKAFHA committee, and it has been decided that – if he's not going to take the religion out of it (which he won't) - then respectful references in remembrance services to ... "... and those of no religion" would be appropriate.

We also discussed the issue of Garrison Celebrants, and he and Martin Poll both seemed very positive about this. In fact, they seemed to agree that this could be a positive advantage for local

Andrew Copson kindly took this photo!



The Reverend Brown is in the middle, and the Venerable Poll is on the right. ...You've probably guessed that I'm the one on the left looking rather worryingly like Santa in disguise!

commanders, who may wish to discuss moral and philosophical issues with their local GC. Clearly, there is much work to be done here, and I am hoping that we might be able to agree some sort of joint statement to local commanders and CofE Chaplains that might make it easier for GC's to play an active and supportive role on behalf of service personnel who are non-theistic. Personally, I found the meeting very encouraging overall. It was not a breakthrough, but it was cordial and positive. Moreover, we will never agree on our respective philosophies ... But mutual respect and equality, and freedom from discrimination for non-believers would be a very good start. What actually transpires is anyone's guess, but both gentlemen struck me as sincere and honest ... Whilst I advised *them* that we Humanists really *don't* want to pillory vicars or burn down churches ... Well ... Most of us don't!

So ... What can you do to help the cause?

... Here are ten ideas (but they are not Commandments!)

- 1. Change your personnel information record to "Humanist", if you haven't already done so.***
- 2. Put up UKAFHA Posters at every MoD notice board where you can get permission. In Training Centres, in libraries, in ships and in offices – and don't forget the mess or the HIVES!***
- 3. Print off copies of the Warrior, and hand them out or leave them anywhere that you think someone might be interested.***
- 4. Hand a copy of this issue to someone you know who is over eighteen and a fellow sympathiser (whether in uniform, a veteran, a dependant, or an MoD civilian) and invite them to consider joining UKAFHA (it's still free at the moment!) ... But do respect those who don't share your view ... We are not Jehovah's Witnesses!***
- 5. See pages 1 & 2 of this issue. Send a letter to John Penrose expressing your disappointment about the Cenotaph decision, and especially make it clear if you are currently in uniform - and also make sure you ask for a response by letter (if you copy your letter to me it will be placed as an addendum to the next Warrior issue).***
- 6. See page 4. If you haven't already done so, make a donation to the UKAFHA fund (just £10 from each member will make all the difference)***
- 7. Attend the UKAFHA AGM on 28th January.***
- 8. Join the BHA (Look up info@humanism.org.uk to apply).***
- 9. See page 4. Buy a UKAFHA wristband from Tarquin, and wear it with pride!***
- 10. Tell us if you feel you have been discriminated against because of your non-religious view (in confidence, if you wish).***

THANK YOU...

A big "thank you", to all those who so generously donated some of their hard-earned cash to the UKAFHA cause, amongst them, Bill Connelly, Frank McGrogan, Jim Rider ... and Oxford Humanists, so very generously had a whip-round after my recent presentation, and donated £52. My thanks to all ... If you would like to make a donation to the cause, please contact Blakeley Nixon or Tamsin Van Dyken at BHA HQ, on 020 7079 3580, and they will take your credit card details...

... And make sure they know that your gift is for the special UKAFHA fund. But please do let me know as well, and you'll get a special message from me as well as a thank you letter from the BHA.



.... Proud to be a member of UKAFHA?

Now you can wear an especially made UKAFHA wristband, in BHA green, so that it can be used by all three services ... and let the world know that you are a Humanist, and proud to be a member of UKAFHA

Send a cheque for £2 per wristband to D Shipley to 7 Alder Rd, North Colerne, Chippenham, SN14 8PJ and of course provide a return postal address.



Introducing John Dalglish...

- UKAFHAs new Vice Chair with special responsibility for Civil Servants...

Born and brought up in an Edinburgh estate, I worked in jobs ranging from cleaner and dockyard labourer to chef in an Italian restaurant. Eventually I had saved enough to go to St Andrews University where I studied the philosophy of logic along with medieval history. It seemed a natural transition to the Ministry of Defence; which I joined as a civvie at the age of 27. I have worked in Andover, Corsham and Abbey Wood for the past ten years in posts ranging from finance to project management, outer office and international relations. I'm currently tasked to outsource much of a project team's work but have been temporarily seconded to look at the more radical options for the future of DE&S.



Made to go to church into my teens, I was always the one to ask the awkward questions. Despite my non-religious views I was tolerated by the local church and became youth group leader. The tolerance of my 'Marxist tendencies' ended when I got involved at national level as mission secretary and tried to spend money helping people instead of enhancing church buildings. At university my neighbour was an evangelical creationist who'd come to study microbiology. I watched his beliefs transform while myself coming into more conflict with the church, this time enduring public vitriol for my failure to bend rules for the local Christian Association.

My upbringing helps me reason with Christians on their own terms and I've had experience of working successfully to secure recognition and rights for non-Christian groups in the face of chaplains opposing change. I'm opposed to state-funded religious schools but I see the Christian right in Britain beginning to predominate; due as much to the terminal decline of more liberal beliefs rather than any real spread of fundamentalist views. I believe that to create a new age of religious dogma and superstition just needs a prolonged period where most rational people do nothing to create a more positive future.

I once thought it would be fun to run a boot-camp for Christian fundamentalists whose families are unhappy with their extreme views – not to destroy the beliefs but just to challenge the individuals on their own terms and expose them to a wider world. I've mellowed over the years. I'm married, have two young daughters and am currently more interested in non-religious summer-camps for the kids.

After a decade in the Civil Service, I'm not really a fan of committees – but I like to get the job done.

Editor's note: If you would like to make contact with John, please email him direct on john.dalglish988@mod.uk, and he will be delighted to hear from you!!

Comments from the Floor...

From John Clack, Tidworth

I have recently returned from Afghanistan. I am an atheist, and note that the 'non-religious' religious category is now the second most common according to the DASA statistics. Whilst deployed I was subjected to lots of mandatory briefings. One was by a padre, and rather than following the plot of the others and explaining admin, timings, and contact details - he launched into a patronising 10 minute sermon. There is also a weekly mandatory parade, led by padres. My local commander has also recently made a church parade a 3-line whip.

My ultimate aim would be to see a secular armed forces; although this is unrealistic (at least in the short-medium term), at the least I would like to ensure that atheists are not forcibly subjected to religious ceremonies, and Christian lectures on morality,

From Carol Armstrong, Cambridge

I have been following Sandhurst on BBC4 – how things have changed, especially for women since I was commissioned in 1968! I do remember, how at the WRAC College Camberley, we had chapel every morning and didn't think too much about it then. Having been brought up in Northern Ireland church was a normal part of the fabric of social life and I think the authority of the church was more accepted in those days even on the mainland. However, more than 40 years on and thinking more for myself than I did then I was struck by the Padre giving the moral guidance to potential officers. No doubt many of them are religious in their own way but I know from my experience of enlisting soldiers that there are many more nowadays who profess to have no religion and so I imagine that there are potential officers of the same ilk.

As someone long retired I don't feel I have the right to get on my high horse about having a Humanist input at Sandhurst but I would love to hear the opinions of serving officers who are humanists.

Introducing Roz Mercer...

- UKAFHAs new admin support...

Roz will deal with special UKAFHA projects from time to time, and at the moment is dealing with civilian Humanist Groups who have volunteered to support UKAFHA at Remembrance Ceremonies....



Roz was born in London but is a country person at heart; always a lover of wildlife and animals and without being an activist is passionate about their treatment and well-being. A great admirer of Richard Dawkins in his role of an evolutionary biologist. She says that after having read a few of his books she realizes how ignorant she is.

Roz came into Humanism late. Brought up in a happy Christian family but as she grew older and wiser began see the anomalies and the nonsense of all the superstition and then finally after 9/11 rejected the whole package. Now a proud Humanist Roz tries to explain to all those who want to listen the importance of the ethics of Humanism and why it makes perfect sense to follow its path.


She feels strongly about UKAFHA as she admires the great bravery of all our troops and is glad to be helping the cause.

If you would like to ask a question about UKAFHA, or enquire about any new UKAFHA projects, do ask Roz - her email address is roz.m@ntlworld.com

News from Across the Pond!!!

... Will something like this happen in the UK one day?

On Monday, October 3 from 6:30PM to 8PM at Harvard Divinity School, Jason Torpy, President of Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF), and Dave Plummer, Chair-Elect of the COMISS Network on Ministry in Specialized Settings, join Greg Epstein, the Humanist Chaplain at Harvard, to discuss the issue of Humanist Chaplains and Chaplain support for Humanists in the armed forces. The New York Times recently featured this topic in an article covering the rise of Atheists in the military and the issues surrounding military Humanist Chaplains, while Stars and Stripes recently covered the MAAF and its role in developing Humanist communities at installations around the world. Mr. Plummer represents Chaplains trying to reconcile their Christian backgrounds with the need to support all service members, including atheists.



Humanist Military Chaplains?
How to Support **Atheists** and Religious Minorities in the Armed Forces

Greg Epstein
Harvard Humanist Chaplain

Jason Torpy
President
Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers

Dave Plummer
Chair-elect of the COMISS
Network on Ministry in Specialized Settings

HUMANIST CHAPLAINCY AT HARVARD
MILITARY ASSOCIATION OF ATHEISTS AND FREETHINKERS
Harvard Divinity School Sperry Room
6:30 - 8PM
Monday, Oct 3rd
Harvard Divinity School
AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

If there is anything you don't agree with in this magazine, don't be shy - say so. Tell us what you think ... and it will be published in the next issue of the Warrior

Don't just sit there!!
Don't just sit there!!

UKAFHA: What's it all about?

... If you are not religious, there are many thousands like you in the Armed Forces! And if you feel that religious values have too much influence within the ethics of the Armed Forces, the United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association may well be for you... We are a new organisation, and our sole aim is to provide support, a sense of comradeship - and a voice - for Forces personnel and their families who do not feel the need for religion in order to live a moral life, and who feel, perhaps, that there should be an alternative voice for non-religious people in the Services.

... UKAFHA people aim to live their lives according to rational ideas based on observation, knowledge and compassion for their fellows, all founded upon their shared humanity, and not any particular dogma from "on high". They assert that it should be a fundamental right of any Humanist to pursue their own happiness, their own fulfilment, and in their own way, whilst respecting the rights of others to do the same.

... UKAFHA people don't pretend to know all the answers to life's greatest questions, but they recognise that only rational thought has any hope at all of resolving them. They also assert that religious dogma - on its own - has failed to provide any answers beyond the ancient texts. Humanism stands for the free pursuit of happiness through relationships, the pursuit of learning through science, the pursuit of understanding based upon the scientific, rational approach, which can be applied to many of society's great issues. And all of this based upon values founded on our appreciation that this is our only life, and that we all have a right to make the best we can of it, unclouded by ancient superstitions and prejudices...

... UKAFHA people want Remembrance Services to include references to the fallen who were of no religion ... To have a Humanist voice within the hierarchy of the Armed Forces alongside the religious authorities ... To ensure that servicemen and women are not coerced into attending religious observances ... And to provide non-religious ceremonies for service personnel and their families wherever they are required.

Help UKAFHA expand - faster!

... If you know of any colleagues in the MoD who share these views, let them know about UKAFHA. Tell them about our aims to gain proper recognition in the Armed Forces on behalf of the 20-odd thousand Service people who think just like you. Every new member we register increases our credibility at the MoD's top level. And remember, there is no membership fee at the moment.

Tell your friends that we exist, and that we are here to help fellow Humanists connect. Offer them hard copy of these

- Advertisement -

Holiday Apartment for Hire

Catalkoy, Kyrenia, North Cyprus



Brand new wheelchair accessible 3-bedroomed garden apartment which sleeps 6, and situated on a small development. Large open-plan living room/kitchen/diner, 2 double bedrooms, 1 twin bedroom, master en-suite, family bathroom and large patio overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and the 25 metre communal and children's pools. Facilities include AC, Wi-Fi, 32" HD LCD flat screen TV (with English channels), I-pod dock, microwave, washing machine, dishwasher, hairdryer, safe (laptop size).

Location. Close to the village of Catalkoy, about 8kms East of Kyrenia. Kyrenia (Turkish - Girne) is an old town on the North coast of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). It has a fantastic harbour with lots of bars and restaurants; it's like stepping back in time.

2011 Rental Terms.

Jan - Mar, Nov - 16 Dec: £250 per week.

Apr - Oct, 17 Dec - 7 Jan 12: £350 per week.

Interested? For more information, email: blueseavista@hotmail.co.uk

newsletters to read ... Better still, get them pinned on to notice boards wherever you get permission, including HIVE centres ... And if you want copies of the bi-monthly BHA News to hand out or put on display, please do ask, giving your address details, of course

... And as always, if you have any other ideas, please do make contact with me...

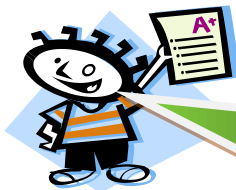
That's it. Until the next issue, wherever you are, make the best of every minute you have – for your family, your friends, and everyone who depends on you – including you!

David Brittain
General Secretary, UKAFHA

... Humanist thought for the month (#15)

"Happiness is the only good. The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here. The way to be happy is to make others so."

Robert Ingersoll (American humanist philosopher)



Stop press!!

Coming in the next issue...

- * **Just who is going to be on the roll of honour for Remembrance Sunday, 2011?**
- * **What exactly will Garrison Celebrants be doing?**
- * **What will be the main issues at the AGM?**
- * **And of course, whatever you want to say...**

UKAFHA Representatives:

Chairperson: Lt. Col Henry Cummins email: henrycummins@yahoo.com

Navy Representative: Cdr. John Craig, email: johncraig7@live.com

Army Representative: Major Tarquin Shipley email: tarquinshipley@hotmail.com

RAF Representative (1): Sqn. Ldr. Steve O'Kane, email: steve.okane647@mod.uk

RAF Representative (2): FS David Wilcock, email: david.wilcock855@mod.uk

Veterans Representative: Robbie Thompson, email: wildwoods@hotmail.co.uk

Civil Service Representative: John Dalgleish, email: john.dalgleish988@mod.uk

General Secretary: David Brittain email: davidbrittain13@hotmail.com

Notice: Commander John Craig is currently posted in the USA, and we need someone to deputise for him in his absence as the Navy representative. If you wear Navy Blue, call yourself a Humanist, and are a member of UKAFHA, this could be your chance to fill the breach. Anyone interested should contact me on my personal email address, davidbrittain13@hotmail.com. Thankyou!