

The Moral Warrior - Special Issue



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

Issue 9- 30th November 2010

For Forces Freethinkers

SUNDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2010 ...

... AT THAT HOUR!



ROLL OF HONOUR
1939 - 1945

H. ADAMS	A. JACKSON
H. ALEX	A. JONES
L. BOND	F. A. JENNINGS
T. BLACK	L. D. KENNEL
T. BLACK	D. LANG
J. BRILL	C. LEVY
P. C. BROWN	A. SPINA
R. CANTLE	A. A. HAYWARD
F. C. SMITH	A. MITCHELL
W. T. CARLES	F. WELLS
L. DAVIS	L. WELLS
C. D. DYER	D. DENMAN
P. W. GOSWING	G. SWAN
S. ENGLAND	P. PHILLIPS
F. FITCH	W. FINCHLEY
J. R. FITCH	J. FITZ
A. GREEN	J. T. HOLLINGTON
C. GREENEY	F. R. VENN
A. GARDNER	T. GIBSON
A. HALLING	L. TAYLOR
E. HALLWAY	C. HOLLISON
A. H. HARRIS	A. S. TERRY
A. J. HODGKIN	P. T. TAYLOR
G. HONEY	R. T. WHITE
W. H. HUNT	E. L. WOODRIVE
C. D. JACKSON	

Dear Member,

Sunday, the 14th November was the biggest day in the history of UKAFHA so far, because that was the day when Humanist representatives from all over the UK were able to play their part in paying tribute to those who made such enormous sacrifices playing their part defending our country. It was such a symbolic – and moving – moment, not just for me, but for so many others who were finally able to show their respects - as Humanists. And to all those who died, regardless of religious belief. I have no doubt at all that this year UKAFHA has started a campaign that every year will spread ever wider until the Government finally allows humanists to stand alongside their religious counterparts and join in the ceremony in London. It was a moment that I shall never forget, and I would like to thank the Bedfordshire Humanists for allowing me to lay the wreath in Bedford on behalf of UKAFHA and the Bedfordshire Humanists. It was an honour that Bedford kindly allowed me, but one I will not repeat. These moments really belong to the local groups, and next year Bedford Humanists will nominate someone else for the honour.

The Remembrance Sunday events this past month has turned out to be much bigger and more successful than I had expected, and there is so much to report, that I have decided to postpone two articles that I promised last month: The article from our Secretary, Henry Cummins, about *What made an Anglican establish UKAFHA?*, and *Should Humanists Celebrate Christmas?* They will have to wait until the New Year issue of the *Moral Warrior*, so I hope you will not be too disappointed!

At the end of this issue there is a reminder about the forthcoming AGM at Ampert House on 31st January, plus some readers letters.

But first of all, we will concentrate on a selection of reports /comments/and letters from the Remembrance Ceremonies that happened all over the country during November, starting with a press release from the BHA, followed by comments from participating groups in alphabetical order - and ending with observations and comments from members of the public.

But I warn you - these are unadulterated and unique – and may sometimes express views that you and I may not share. However, they are all sincere and passionate ... Some of them you will agree with, some will move you, and some will make you smile ... But above all they provide fascinating and unique perspectives, about Humanists everywhere ... Clearly, it has – understandably - not been easy for some humanists.

... And if you would like to comment on any of them, you only have to email it to [humanistsinfoxholes@yahoo.co.uk!](mailto:humanistsinfoxholes@yahoo.co.uk)

Remembrance Sunday *The Final Roll of Honour*

- **Bedfordshire**
- **Belfast**
- **Chilterns**
- **Edinburgh**
- **Essex**
- **Farnham**
- **Milton Keynes**
- **Lancashire**
- **Richmond**
- **South Hants**
- **Stockport**
- **Watford**

From ... The BHA: A Press Release

For the first time humanist representatives will lay wreaths at the official Remembrance Sunday commemorations in Edinburgh and Belfast this year. However a request from the British Humanist Association (BHA) for armed forces humanists to be included at the Cenotaph in London has again been refused.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport dismissed the BHA's request, citing 'limited space at the Cenotaph' and a need to receive permission from the Royal Household as reasons to continue the exclusion of representatives of humanist servicemen and women. In its response, the government stated that it had invited 'fourteen faith leaders' to participate, and was working closely with the 'Faiths Unit' at the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure 'faith representation' at the ceremony.

By contrast, humanists in Scotland were issued with an invitation from the Royal British Legion Scotland to participate in the parade and lay a wreath on the stone of remembrance, humanists in Northern Ireland have been given permission to join with other representatives in the service being held in Belfast, and in at least nine areas in England, local humanist groups will be participating in remembrance events.

BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson commented, 'It is welcome that, for the first time, humanists in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be included in official ceremonies on Remembrance Sunday. But it is disappointing that humanists have again been rejected from the Cenotaph.

'We know from our work with the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association the contribution non-religious servicemen and women make in this area and the desire to give thanks and mark the sacrifices of earlier generations is likewise not limited to those who believe in an afterlife.

'We believe it only appropriate that, just as the nation gathered and gathers together in times of national crisis, that the remembrance services commemorating those who fought and died for their country should be inclusive of all people.'

From Bedfordshire Humanists: Letter to a local Newspaper

For the first time this year, a request from local Humanists to be allowed to lay a wreath at the annual Remembrance Day observance was granted. I was happy to attend, along with a number of like-minded people. But my heart sank when I read the opening words of the Order of Service: 'We are here to worship Almighty God... and that the whole world may acknowledge Him as Lord and King.' I wasn't. Nor, I suspect, were the group of Sikhs standing nearby. I was here to pay tribute to all those who lost their lives so that I and millions like me could enjoy the freedom and security that we have today.

But we were well into the second page before the fallen got a mention.

Christian congregations have, of course, every right to pay their respects in their own way in the churches. But is it appropriate to suggest that in a civic ceremony, headed by the Mayor, it should be acknowledged that not all the dead were Christian, nor are all those who wish to acknowledge their sacrifice, and that a more inclusive form of ceremony could be considered for future years?

Yours sincerely, Charles Baily, Chair, Bedfordshire Humanists

From ... Belfast Humanists: Press Release

The members of the Belfast Humanist Group would like to thank the Lord Mayor, Councillor Pat Convery, and the Royal British Legion NI, for granting our request to be included in the Remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph.

This year is the first time that Humanists have been included in the Remembrance ceremony in Belfast.

Humanists now feel that the service and sacrifices of non-religious people are being granted the same respect and recognition as is shown to others. Since more than 20,000 current UK armed forces personnel have registered themselves as of no religion, there are good grounds for including Humanists in Remembrance ceremonies.

The Humanist wreath-laying delegation consisted of Lynda Foy (whose father served in the army); Iain DeBoys and Lt Col JN Scott TD, RAMC (who served in Iraq). Another member of the Belfast Humanist Group is Bill Vance (86) a veteran of the WW2 Burma campaign.

The wreath laid by the Humanists carried the inscription: "For those who gave their lives for us. We shall remember them. On behalf of all Humanists in Northern Ireland and the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association."

We would also wish to thank the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association (www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk) for their help and encouragement.

LES REID, Chair, Belfast Humanist Group

From ... Belfast Humanists: A Report



Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph, Belfast City Hall 14-11-10 saw perfect weather. Cold but not icy, dry, and sun shining throughout. A Guard of Honour was furnished by The 2nd Battalion the Royal Irish Regiment, whose band (TA) played superbly; music that flowed and touched, and enhanced the ambience of the occasion which was also well-attended by members of the public. 19 wreaths were laid by local dignitaries such as Lord Mayor, Secretary of State, RN, Army, RAF and RFCA; then a further 45 on behalf of an amazing range of organisations including, yes, best wine kept for the last, number 45, a wreath laid on behalf of UKAFHA. Lynda Foy laid the wreath, wearing her late father's medals with RBL permission, flanked by Iain DeBoys and Noel Scott.

Then back to City Hall for tea and biscuits, and 'washup'. We shared feelings of exhilaration, yes; but also the gratitude of remembrance tinged with a curious sense of pride. In the privilege of being there at all, and as representatives of the countless 1000s of the Fallen who were in fact Humanists all their lives and at the time of their deaths, whether they declared this or not (mostly not), or were even aware of it.

We agreed that we must cherish and dig-in this opportunity to promote and promulgate Humanist values, ideals and outlook within Service life. In doing so our aim must be to be integrated into those

massively important principles of unit cohesion, morale, and welfare provision that is a (the?) main contribution of chaplaincy services at present; as well as unflinching commitment to the needs of injured and maimed and their families, and those who will be the Fallen for future generations.

Perhaps a good start is at this melancholy end-point; with the legitimatisation, promotion and provision, in the dignified and professional way 'drilled' into Humanist celebrants, of Humanist funeral ceremonies being fully accepted in the context of 'Full Military Honours', buglers and all.

Can't wait till next year! Thank you for all your help.

Regards, Noel Scott

From ... The Chilterns Humanists: A Report

Over 250 people gathered in the rain at the Manor Waste in the middle of Wendover this afternoon for the Remembrance Day ceremony. There were another 200 or so RAF personnel, scouts, guides, etc, some as young as 5 or 6, so a total of around 500. I had emailed the dozen or so Chiltern Humanist members living in Wendover, but there were only five of us there,

The ceremony is organised by the local British Legion, and I had gathered the impression that it would be non-religious, with the local vicar only saying the "age shall not weary them" bit. The ceremony started with the RAF personnel marching up the High Street under the command of an archetypal Sergeant Major; they stopped on two sides of the War Memorial. It was quite militaristic, and took me back to the square bashing in my National Service days, but I suppose that is inevitable - we do as a nation have to have a military presence. The scouts, etc lined up in the road. The rain lessened.

It was well run. The twenty or so of us with wreaths were lined up, services first, then local councillors, local groups, which was where I came in, about twelfth in the line, followed by scouts, guides and others. I had obtained my wreath from the British Legion. I had written on the card the following inscription " On behalf of Chiltern Humanists and the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association. For those who gave their lives for us. We will remember them".

The ceremony started to my disappointment with a shortish prayer from one of the local vicars. Then came a longer statement by the other vicar which was unexceptional until a reference to God at the end. A British Legion representative then said the "Age shall not weary them" bit. The Last Post was sounded followed by a two minute silence. We then took it in turns to lay our wreaths on the War Memorial. The ceremony concluded with a short prayer by the first vicar, the RAF marched off and we all went home.

From ... Edinburgh Humanists: A Report

A small group of very wet HSS members, family and friends took part in the Remembrance Sunday parade in Edinburgh this year – led by the sprightly Archie Beveridge (89) who carried the HSS/UKAFHA wreath. Archie served with Ack Ack Command in the UK and then led a company of men and equipment (searchlight, radar and Bofors gun) through France, Germany, Holland and



Belgium in WW2.

Marilyn Jackson said "It was wonderful to meet Archie at our October conference, when I announced that the Edinburgh Group had, after previous refusals, been invited to participate. Indeed, Archie brought family and friends who made up half our number!

I'm so pleased that Archie found the experience a good one, in spite of the rain, and hopes to come back to Edinburgh next year to lead a larger HSS contingent."

From ... Essex Humanists

Attached are the photographs taken of Essex Humanists' wreath presentation. My husband Ron Oatham presents the wreath on our group's and - this year - the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association's behalf, at The British Legion in Rayleigh, Essex.

Best regards, Marie



From ... Milton Keynes Humanists: A Report



**Milton Keynes Humanists
come to show their respects!**

REMEMBRANCE DAY - On Sunday 14th November 2010 seven members of MK Humanists attended the Remembrance Day Ceremony at the War Memorial on Church Green Road, Bletchley, to remember those who lost their lives in two World Wars and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. We laid our wreath on behalf of Humanists and other people of no religious faith, remembering that many of the war dead had no particular faith to begin with or lost their faith while enduring the horrors of war.

WHY WE WERE THERE: We think that it is important to remember those who gave their lives so that we can live in a free country. We were also there because we would like to see fair representation of Humanists and the non-religious at public occasions, equal to the representation of people of other religions or beliefs. We share two of the objectives of The Armed Forces Humanist Association - to make Remembrance a pluralist societal ceremony incorporating those of all religions or beliefs and none, and to conduct positive engagement, not adversarial challenge. Humanism is a 'religion or belief' in terms of Article 9 of the Human Rights Act, which makes illegal official discrimination between those with religious and those with nonreligious beliefs under UK law. Persistently excluding Humanists from public occasions is in breach of the legal principle of non-discrimination set out under the Act. It also ignores the considerable contribution that humanists make to society, not least as members of the armed forces. Much national communal activity organised by government and others is still conducted within a religious (and broadly Christian) framework, in spite of the mass of evidence suggesting the irrelevance of religion to the lives of a majority of the population.

From ... Lancashire Humanists: A Report

Bullets & Bombs Don't Discriminate - and Yet ...

I am pleased to say when LSH contacted Royal British Legion [Preston] to participate in Remembrance Sunday by laying a wreath [also] on behalf of UKAFHA [UK Armed Forces Humanist Association] we were met with a much more open-minded attitude than some Humanist Groups elsewhere in the country experienced.

According to the MoD's own figures 12.5% of all service personnel are registered as 'No Religion' – the largest single group after 'Christian' - and yet there is no specific reference to the 'non-religious' who also gave their lives. And put in real terms - it is statistically probable that at least 35 of the service personnel killed in Afghanistan will have been 'of no religion'.

It is because of this LSH were proud to be asked by UKAFHA to seek permission to participate in Remembrance Sunday's solemn occasion by laying a wreath with the message: *"This wreath is laid by Lancashire Secular Humanists and also on behalf of the United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association. For those who gave their lives for us. We will remember them."*



Lancashire – Ian Abbott

British Legion [Preston] is to be congratulated for recognising that the very real and considerable sacrifices made by our service personnel should not in any way be diminished by religious outlook of those individuals.

What a pity the same couldn't be said of the ceremony itself!

Apart from Colonel Stam; delivering Binyon's moving *'They shall grow not old ...'* and John Hughes The Burma Star Association's poignant 'Kohima Epitaph' it was a Vicar – a Priest – a Reverend – and a Deacon delivering the whole of the open air ceremony on Preston's 'Flag Market'.

We had a prayer – a hymn – a bible reading – another prayer [with an outrageously patronising touch 'praying for "... the mentally distressed and for those whose faith in God and humanity has been weakened and destroyed..."] – two more prayers – the Lord's Prayer – another hymn – an 'Act of Commitment' prayer.

THEN The Last Post – 'Binyon' – two minutes silence – 'Kohima Epitaph' – Reveille.

Followed by another prayer – another blessing – and The National Anthem.

Then the laying of the wreaths and ending with a march past.

It is bad enough: from a Secular Humanist perspective; that, apart from the [frankly] insulting reference mentioned above, there was no acknowledgement of any other than Christian sacrifices even though that very morning BBC Radio Lancashire had been highlighting the fact that – during WW II – more Sikhs took part than all the Scottish, Welsh & Irish combined.

The best we Humanists could do was stand in dignified silence; and remind ourselves that any discomfort we might be feeling was infinitesimal in comparison to the sacrifices we were there to acknowledge ... but also glance around and note with interest the number of uniformed personnel 'not participating' too.

We'll be back next year - And the next - And the next - Until they remember everybody! Ian Abbott

From ... South Hants Humanists: A Report

On Remembrance Day held in Southampton on 14 November David Bothwell, wearing both red and white poppies, said these words as printed in the order of service:

'On behalf of South Hampshire Humanists (SHH) and the wider humanist community, including the United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association, we remember all those men and women, civilians as well as armed service personnel, who have given their lives for the cause they believe in. We hope their deaths will not be in vain and that their sacrifice will lead to a more peaceful and happier world'.

David also laid a wreath with a card naming South Hampshire Humanists. Last year he spoke as the mayor's humanist adviser; this time he was invited as a representative of the local humanist organisation. He hopes that an invitation to SHH will become part of the tradition, and that we might use this precedent to contact other councils in our area that celebrate Remembrance Day, suggesting that a humanist be invited to contribute to their proceedings, such as in Winchester and Portsmouth.

Many people attend these occasions and if for no other reason it is a way of promoting our name and drawing attention to the presence of people without a religion. The secretary of the humanist armed forces association mentioned above was delighted that their name was mentioned, too. He estimates that around 10% of men and women in the forces state that they have no religion.

Anyone is free to lay a wreath at the ceremony, but only a few are allowed to speak. In Southampton this year it was a representative from each of the seven main religions, and a humanist. Is this not progress? Quite a privilege, too!

Good wishes, David Bothwell

From ... Stockport and Watford Humanists



**President of Watford Humanists,
John Dowdle, lays a wreath**



Stockport Memorial

From ... South West London Humanists: A Report

For the third year running, SW London Humanists laid a wreath as part of the Remembrance ceremony in Richmond, where we meet. We have received a warm welcome from the British Legion and now have a routine where they order a wreath for us automatically, using as centre piece with our logo.



Jeremy Rodell lays a wreath at the Richmond Memorial

This is the main ceremony in the borough and was attended by the Major and the local MP (Zac Goldsmith) among others. A couple of hundred people attended this year, and the rain largely stayed off. It's preceded by a march through the town, led by an RAF cadet band. Unfortunately the ceremony itself is in the form of a brief Church of England service, with candle-carrying robed figures accompanying the vicar and his curate and a couple of hymns (including the rather good "Oh God Our Help in Ages Past", which I resisted singing as there was a press photographer present) and the Lords Prayer. It's always a moving ceremony, especially the silence and the Last Post. Among those laying wreaths this

time were the police, scouts etc and people from the Jewish Ex-Servicemen, the Freemasons and the local Rotary Club, as well as me. At the end, the procession marched back through the town to the British Legion Club, where there was a free drink for everyone involved and some fund-raising activities.

I confess to feeling rather a fish-out-of-water at this event, both as someone who has never served in the armed forces - or even the scouts - and as a humanist. But I think it's important that we're there, that we're seen as playing a responsible role in the local community and that we remember all the non-religious people who have perished in war. And I have not seen any hint of opposition to our presence, least of all from the local vicar, with whom my wife and I had a long conversation.

Yes, it would be better if it were a secular ceremony, but I'd rather use our ammunition in our current campaign against new local faith schools than sound a note of discord in what is, for all its faults, a moving remembrance event that brings the local community together.

Jeremy Rodell, Chair, SW London Humanists

From UKAFHA: Letter to a local (Beds) newspaper

I would just like to extend - and place on record - my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Bedford Branch of the Royal British Legion for allowing a Humanist to participate in Sunday's remembrance ceremony - this year, for the first time ever. Clearly, the service is religious in nature, but the sacrifices that have been made - and continue to be made - by our armed forces (and civilians too, sometimes) simply transcend religious divides. About one in eight of servicepeople are recorded by the MoD as being "of no religion" - which means that it is very likely that about 40 of the fallen in Afghanistan so far were not religious.

It was with a sense of great pride and gratitude to ALL those servicepeople who sacrificed so much in our name - regardless of belief - that I felt so honoured to participate. In the end, we are all flesh and blood, and neither the bullet nor the bomb makes any distinction.

Thank you, British Legion, for your tolerance, your open-mindedness, and your generosity.

When you think about it, it is a reminder of some of the precious things that our armed forces are fighting so hard to protect.

David Brittain, Chaplain, United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association (UKAFHA)



UKAFHA & Beds - David Brittain

Your messages in

Remembrance makes for an even happier Humanist ...

From Bill Connelly, Lichfield, Staffs...

... I have dipped into a number of religions trying to find the one which most accurately fitted with my own core beliefs only to realise that, while many have attitudes and behaviours to which I aspire, I do not need to have to pledge allegiance to a God in order to be the best person I can be. That said I do not feel the need to be combative towards those who choose to have a religion as long as I am not subsidising their choices and they are not limiting mine, in this context I am content with the Moral Warrior title for the newsletter.

As a Scot I am also pleased that my home Country and our Celtic cousins have taken the first steps towards formally recognising the contribution made by all its sons and daughters and no longer limits themselves by historical religious parameters. As has been alluded to in the UKAFHA newsletters Church and State within the UK are very intertwined with the boundaries, in some cases, being deliberately blurred, hopefully England and Wales will find the enlightenment to follow suit in the very near future.

I am a humanist and have unknowingly been for many years, I have now removed the labels given by others and have chosen my own.

Thanks for the treats for our non-human Afghan hero's!

From Mike Prince, New Forest

Hi David, Could you put a little note in the next edition thanking all of those who sent items to the dogs in Afghan? We had a great response and the RAF Police Dogs are very grateful.

The Godless Warrior, and Pagan Christmas's ...

From Vexen Crabtree, Andover, Hants

Two points resulting from the last newsletter; please feel free to publish if you have the space!

1. **Newsletter title:** 'The Godless Warrior' is a good and hard-hitting title that will engage readers, and challenge the old (confused) saying that there 'are no atheists in foxholes'. But, I think that far more people would pick up 'The Moral Warrior' out of curiosity. The *Godless* title sounds too religion-centric, whereas 'The Moral Warrior' could surely be something anyone could read, regardless of beliefs. The draft constitution says one of our objectives is to advance the understanding of humanism (2a), which is probably achieved better with the friendlier *Moral* title.

2. **Should Humanists celebrate Christmas?** Christmas combines sun worship, polytheism, pagan nature religions, Christianity and other myths and traditions, into one multicultural, multi-faith melting-pot of a festival. When Christians complain it is too pagan, or when lay folk complain it is too religious, or when both groups complain it is too commercial, they are all in need of realizing that Christmas is a commercial fusion of nature-based festivals. The whole idea of decorated Christmas trees and gifts are purely pagan and commercial, even the Nativity stories are ancient pagan stories, combinations of Mithraism, and Roman and Christian myths.

The main outstanding issue in the West is the Christian assertion that it has something to do with the Christian figure of Christ or his birthday. These elements should be disclaimed. Firstly, the paganism inherent in Christmas, such as decorating trees, is warned *against* in the Bible (Jeremiah 10:2-4). Second, there are no Christian birthday celebrations in the Bible at all. Thirdly, early Christians celebrated Christ's birthday in April or May - it was only changed to match with 25th of December, a major pagan holiday, by Emperor Constantine, in order to harmonize Christianity with paganism, as major pagan celebrations on the 25th had already occurred for hundreds of years at least. For these reasons, many Christian Evangelical churches command their adherents not to celebrate Christmas and it has been outlawed a few times by Christian rulers in history; i.e. by the Scottish reformers of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

In addition to all of its rich history, Christmas has now become largely a secular holiday and a family-oriented commercial enterprise with many tacky, entertaining, mass-produced, plastic and branded items that are suitable for everyone. The non-religious can celebrate the commercial and social event, Christians can pretend Christmas has something to do with Christ, pagans can celebrate nature, and all can be happy. The critics largely concentrate on the portions of Christmas they don't like, and claim that those portions ruin the rest of it. As long as no-one tries to "capture the flag" and exclude others, then there need be no modern conflict over the nature of Christmas. There are even alternative and well-known names for Christmas - for example, Yuletide - which can be used according to taste.

In answer to the question 'Should Humanists celebrate Christmas', the answer is a resounding YES! The real question is: Given its pagan roots, should Christians celebrate Christmas?

Our Queen is a victim too...

From Jim Rider, Honiton, Devon

I offer you my thanks and support for what you are doing for thousands of service personnel both serving and retired. Well done indeed.

You are absolutely right to take the stand that you have and I hope that the action that you are taking at the Remembrance parade in Bedford this year will open a lot of minds and spark wide discussion. I have taken part in the Cenotaph (Whitehall) service many times and it would be very fair and reasonable now for there to be a Humanist wreath laid.

Having spent thirty three years as a Royal Marine I retired as a Captain in 1994 and at the end had become very uncomfortable with the continual underlying false assumption that we were serving in the name of a god rather than the Queen and her dominions. There is such a confused and mixed up 'religion ethic' in the forces and, I feel, it is largely down to the Queen being the head of the C of E as well as the Monarch. The Queen and 'we' are very much the victims of history. Very few service personnel believe that there is a god. Saying you did so was just a condition of service for most of us but we did not give it much thought.

One of my jobs involved me being a member of the Royal Household (on the Royal Yacht) and I have a great regard for our very professional, kind and thoroughly decent Queen. I strongly suspect that she has no delusion about the misery religion continues to inflict on humanity and her subjects and would support you and us if she could. However she is the principal victim of history.

The Church is so insidious as it seeks to control society and gain privilege. There is going to be a right fracas and we are right to make waves.

I wish you strength in your efforts and am doing my little bit here in Devon.

UKAFHA gets bigger, and no more Naval Prayer for me!

From John Craig, Commander UK Mine Countermeasures Force, Arabian Gulf

Excellent news about the membership increasing: a 50% increase in a relatively small time-scale is very impressive and, hopefully, will generate a 'critical mass' that will increase visibility and improve membership even more.

I continue to 'nuisance leaflet' the main reception in Portsmouth Naval Base's Flotilla Command, Sickbay and Dental surgery, and have even convinced the Chaplains (C of E, RC

Stop Press!!

Coming in the next issue

- **Henry Cummins: What made an Anglican establish UKAFHA?**
- **Should humanists celebrate Christmas?**
- **Introducing the first Forces celebrants ...**

and C of S) to allow me to place leaflets in the Chaplaincy drop-in centre. If that doesn't represent a growing acknowledgement of our role, I don't know what does!

I will be leading a Remembrance Service for the 300 Brits under my Command out here on Sun, but you will be pleased to hear that – as a result of my now renowned reputation – the Parade Commander has already asked my permission for someone else to read 'The Naval Prayer'... a request I was only too happy to support!

Best wishes during the busy Remembrance season, where again you are clearly making serious headway, and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM in Jan...

UKAFHA's First AGM draws nearer still

It's a rather astonishing thought that for all the impact UKAFHA has already had over the past six months, that it doesn't even formally *exist* yet! This is a reminder that UKAFHA's first ever AGM will be held at the ***Tri-Service Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre*** at ***Ampport House***, which is just a few miles from Andover, in Hampshire on ***Monday, 31st January*** next year. The details have yet to be sorted, but it will commence at 10.00am – and the, the main business – to debate and decide what sort of organisation UKAFHA will be – happens between 14.00-16.00 hours when the constitution will be formally decided. Either way, UKAFHA will formally exist, and we will have a much better idea of the path the organisation will take. ***Once that decision has been made, the die will be cast, and one way or another I expect UKAFHA will never be quite the same again!*** It is therefore very important that - if you want to play your proper part in founding this Humanist group - that you make every effort to attend. Normal mess arrangements will apply, and overnight accommodation is still available at the moment to anyone who wants it. But if you do wish to attend, please register with me as soon as you possibly can. All you have to do to express an interest is email me at humanistsinfoxholes@yahoo.co.uk and state whether you will wish to stay in the mess the night before ... ***But please do let me know as soon as possible if you plan to come.***

Help UKAFHA expand - fast!

... If you know of any colleagues in the MoD who share your 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. ... And don't forget to keep your stories/comments coming in ... Especially if you feel that you have been disadvantaged in some way by a system which doesn't know how to deal with those who – like you – live decent and honourable lives, yet who may feel marginalised because they simply do not feel the need to worship someone they cannot see, cannot hear, cannot communicate with, and cannot influence ... And who has doubts about those who say they can!

Tell your friends that we exist, and that we are here to help fellow Humanists connect. Offer them hard copy of these newsletters for them 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, I'd be very interested to hear them

This has most certainly been yet another dramatic month for UKAFHA. I am so very proud of what we have done this month, and I am deeply grateful to all those who participated. We made a difference!!

... If you enjoyed this newsletter, please tell your friends, and if you didn't, tell me. In the meantime, until the next issue, wherever you are and whatever you are doing, take care, keep safe, and enjoy the Winterval ...

*David Brittain,
Chaplain of UKAFHA*

... Humanist thought for the month

"... It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe.

Thomas Payne (1737-1809)

***Psst! Thinking about joining UKAFHA?
Email humanistsinfoxholes@yahoo.co.uk and
find out more. All current or retired Service
People, or MoD Civil Servants can apply!***

UKAFHA Representatives:

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

Army: Lt. Colonel Henry Cummins email: henrycummins@yahoo.com

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

Civil Service: Robert Jandy, email: rjandy.cmt@defenceacademy.mod.uk

Chaplain: David Brittain email: davidbrittain13@hotmail.com