



Monthly Bulletin — December 2025

RECAP OF RECENT NEH EVENTS

Remembrance from a Humanist perspective

North East Humanists members participated in Remembrance Day activities throughout the region.



Former NEH Chair Susan Walker led a sombre and moving event featuring poetry, song and personal reflections at the Durham Secular Salon.

‘We come together as a community to remember all those whose lives have been torn apart by war,’ she said. ‘The soldiers who fought and fell, the civilians caught in conflict, the families who waited, and those who still live with the visible and invisible scars of war.



This is a secular ceremony, open to all people, however they understand the world,’ she continued. ‘Today is not about glorifying war, but about honouring courage, acknowledging loss, and reaffirming our shared commitment to peace — and to caring for one another.

‘Remembrance is not only an act of looking back. It is a promise — that we will look after those who return, and that we will work together for a kinder, fairer world,’ said Susan.



Among the reflections, Pat Greenan movingly quoted the epitaph engraved on the Memorial of the 2nd British Division in the cemetery of Kohima (North-East India).

‘When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.’

In this month’s Bulletin:

- *Tax the super-rich!*
- *Christian RE in NI is ‘indoctrination’*
- *Tommy Robinson supporters are turning to Christianity*



Wreaths were laid across the region. Our secretary, Ian Hunter, laid a wreath at the Cenotaph in Eldon Square, Newcastle. Wreaths were also laid at the Cenotaphs at Tynemouth by Violet Sherwood, Darlington by Peter Greenwood, Hexham by Stuart Dearlove and Durham Cathedral by Irene Wilkinson.



On Armistice Day (Tuesday 11 December) Les Milne laid a wreath at Low Fell War Memorial.



Meaningful dialogue, engaging workshops, and insightful presentations – and the ‘resurrection’ of the Newcastle Council of Faith

Les Milne

Faith and community representatives, educators, young people, Northumbria Police and local authorities have gathered to celebrate diversity and strengthened unity.

The event, organised by The North East Branch of the Dialogue Society, showcased the power of shared values in building trust and inclusion across our region.

The half-day conference – held at the Divercity Hub in Newcastle - featured meaningful dialogue, engaging workshops, and insightful presentations from speakers including:

- Ms Lucy Winskell, OBE, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne & Wear
- The Very Revd. Lee Batson, Dean of Newcastle Cathedral
- Dr. Kerim Balci, Journalist, Dean of Respect Graduate School & Human Rights Advocate
- Mr. Jaswinder Singh, Director, North East Sikh Service
- Imam Raza Rahman, Faith & Spirituality Support Coordinator, Newcastle University
- The Revd. Andii Bowsher, Faith Advisor and Anglican Chaplain, Northumbria University
- Brenda Dinsdale, Hon. Life President, Newcastle Reform Synagogue

Audience comments drew attention to some of the challenges faced by the faith community such as peace, child abuse and the need to embrace all lifestyles not simply organised religion. From rich discussions to shared brunch, the atmosphere was filled with positivity, connection, and a genuine commitment to building a more compassionate and united North East.

From my viewpoint it was good to see people who have been part of events in which NEH members have participated in, such as Interfaith events, Peace walks and School talks. The only negative point I noted, was a comment by the Dean of Newcastle Cathedral that “militant” humanists wanted rid of all religious groups.

It was noted that there are plans to ‘resurrect’ (sic) the Newcastle Council of Faith.

NEH NEWS Forthcoming meetings

Secular Salon:

Jan Mole will share stories from almost a decade of pastoral support work in prisons. More information will follow in the January Bulletin.

When? 18 January 2026

Where? Merryoaks Community Hall, Durham DH1 3QF

Patriotic Millionaires: TAX THE SUPER-RICH

Great idea, pity about the event

Kate Hinton

Patriotic Millionaires UK is a nonpartisan network of British millionaires, from multiple industries and backgrounds from across the UK. Its’ mission is to ‘leverage the voice of wealth to build a better Britain by changing the system to end extreme wealth and make those with it make their fair and proper contribution.’

According to Patriotic Millionaires UK, over the last 50 years ‘new wealth creation has not trickled down as we were promised that it would. It has accrued to people who already have wealth, through their ownership of assets such as companies and property. Since 1995, the top 1 percent have captured nearly 20 times more of global wealth than the bottom 50 percent of humanity.’

I have been following the Patriotic Millionaires campaign for some time. As their name suggests, they are a group of 80+ millionaires based in the UK. What is unexpected is that they are campaigning for the government to tax them more! And they wouldn’t leave the country.

During November, they took a bus across Scotland and England to promote the campaign. I attended an event in central Newcastle on a cold, drizzly morning. It was almost a case of one man and his dog without the dog! There was a handful of the public, a photographer and a



media man. Plus, of course, the bus driver and a representative of the campaign who offered us a small flag, some stickers and bars of chocolate!

Ian Gregg, former Chairman of the Newcastle headquartered bakery and fast-food chain, said in a press release: 'We hope the Chancellor uses this Budget to raise taxes on the wealthiest



people first - those who can most afford it - instead of ordinary people who can't.'

'People in the North East, and across the UK, want to see a fairer and more equal society. Almost a quarter of neighbourhoods in the North East are highly deprived while the wealth of a small few has increased hugely.'

I felt it was shame that it wasn't more of a celebratory event, because it is a great campaign which should be getting more publicity. The redistribution of wealth seems absolutely

essential to tackle some of the issues our country and region are facing, never mind the rest of the world. It would also be a practical demonstration of the principles of fairness and justice.

If you'd like to know more about Patriotic Millionaires UK, click [here](#)

Thanks Jan!

Moira Turner

After nine years, Jan Mole, one of NEH's longstanding trustees, has retired from her role as a volunteer Humanist Chaplain at HMP Durham.

Jan trained as a member of the Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network, (NRPSN), a group within what was then the British Humanist Association (BHA - later Humanists UK). It was set up in response to requests to address the inequality of support available to people in hospitals, prisons, and other institutions who until then only had access to support from religious chaplains. So, when Jan did her training in London in December 2015 she was something of a pioneer.



Having thought of options for placements Jan approached HMP Durham and was accepted in 2016 to be part of their chaplaincy department. One of the first things she had to do was to read and memorise the layout of all the buildings – there is no helpful signage in a prison.

Jan very much enjoyed the work, and it wasn't long before she became a valued member of the team alongside her religious colleagues. Soon realising that, as might be expected, there were no books pertaining to Humanism in the prison library Jan

arranged for some to be delivered.

She was always happy to share her knowledge with others and in 2018 was one of three Non-Religious Support Network members who gave a talk to North East Humanists. She also attended prison pastoral support meetings organised by HUK throughout the country.

During Covid, as happened with many other institutions, Jan was barred from going into the prison. She wasn't idle though – she contributed some of her experiences for *Being There*, a book written by Jo Mutlow, another NRPSN member. As soon as restrictions were eased, she was once again in demand.

Jan was also one of the contributors when a call went out for NRPSN members to provide a recording to be broadcast on National Prison Radio.

In 2022 she was included in the presentation of a major award won by the HMP Durham Chaplaincy team for support services in the prison.

Early every Friday morning Jan travelled to Durham from her home in Darlington, and now she will be able to indulge in a well-deserved lie-in! Well done Jan – we wish you a very happy retirement!

Any unwanted clothing?

Staff at HMP Low Newton are appealing for clothing for women in custody. They are particularly keen to have

- Trainers
- T-shirts
- Sweatshirts and hoodies
- Track suit bottoms, joggers, leggings
- Coats (winter, padded, waterproof, warm, sports)
- Dressing gowns, pyjama sets, slippers and sliders
- Hats, scarves, gloves, thermal socks

They do not need high heels, dresses or dress coats.

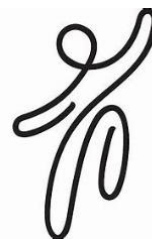
If you can help, please drop them off at the Merryoaks Community Centre, Durham DH1 3QF.

HUMANISTS UK NEWS

Supreme Court rules exclusively Christian RE in NI is 'indoctrination'

The Supreme Court has unanimously ruled in favour of a non-religious father and his child that the exclusively Christian teaching of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship in Northern Ireland are 'indoctrination'. This is therefore discriminatory under human rights law. This ruling will have wide-ranging implications for the teaching of RE in Northern Ireland and for collective worship across the United Kingdom.

The case is known as *JR87*, and the original judgment in the High Court of Northern Ireland in 2022 was that 'religious education and collective worship are not conveyed in an objective, critical, or pluralistic manner in Northern Ireland [schools].' However, the Northern Ireland Department of Education appealed at the Court of Appeal last October. It ruled that while the RE curriculum was not objective, critical, or pluralistic, this was not sufficient to conclude there



had been a breach of human rights law as this didn't amount to indoctrination. The Court also ruled that the right to withdraw was not stigmatising. Northern Ireland Humanists intervened in the case.

The father and child appealed this decision to the Supreme Court, which has now ruled that a curriculum not being 'objective, critical, or pluralistic' and its being 'indoctrinating' are 'two sides of the same coin'. The Court also ruled that the right of withdrawal is clearly stigmatising in a context where no other children are withdrawn. Parents having a 'reasonable apprehension' of such stigma is 'sufficient' enough to mean they do not have to have actually withdrawn their children, and found that stigma does indeed occur.

To read more, click [here](#)

Lost boys: a personal journey through the manosphere

The Holyoake Lecture 2025, with James Bloodworth, chaired by Felicity Hannah

We know that men today face unique challenges and vulnerabilities. Boys' attainment in schools continues to lag far behind, the NHS and charities continue to report on men's mental health and loneliness as hidden crises in society.

If boys are being failed, who is responsible? Is it a lack of role models, the aftershocks of the pandemic, or the pull of technology? Certain media platforms in 2025 appear to actively funnel users towards hateful content, much of it misogynist, racist, religiously extreme, and ultra conservative.

In an era of profound social and political shifts, old certainties about masculinity have been swept away, leaving a void that, for some, has been filled by a sprawling, sinister collection of online subcultures. This is the 'manosphere', promoting paranoid conspiracies, aggressive misogyny, and anti-expert thinking.

James Bloodworth spent five years investigating these movements, and the lecture will detail his immersive journey into specific subcultures – including 'pickup artist' boot camps, incel forums, and far-right online networks – to reveal the dangerous recruitment funnel that exploits male loneliness and a crisis of identity.

When: Thursday 4 December 2025, 19:00–20:30

Where: YouTube Live - £5. Book your Livestream ticket [here](#)

World Humanist Congress – an appeal

The 2026 World Humanist Congress will be held in Ottawa, and in a bid to enable more people to attend, Humanists International has today launched the Congress Scholarship Fund. Donations will be matched, up to \$10,000.



The fund will help cover travel and accommodation for those who could not otherwise attend and create opportunities for collaboration and shared action.

It will strengthen our global movement of humanists working for democracy and equality.

If you want to know more, or to give to the fund, click [here](#)



OTHER NEWS

Assisted dying

Palliative care and choice must be at the heart of the assisted dying debate

Letters from Guardian readers in response to a piece by Rachel Clarke, a palliative care specialist

The CEO of Hospice UK, Toby Porter, has stated that the government's £100 million in hospices, announced last December, would probably not have materialised without the terminally ill adults bill. He recently told a special Lords select committee that the bill has sparked more conversation about end-of-life care than at any point in his long career.

The health minister, Stephen Kinnock, similarly acknowledged that the bill has been a catalyst for long-overdue improvements in palliative care, rolling the pitch for another announcement in the coming weeks. We know this has been the case around the world, as experts from the UK and Australia highlighted recently.

Dianne Hayter
Labour, House of Lords

Rachel Clarke describes in vivid detail the many failures of our end-of-life care system. But what she doesn't acknowledge is that even the best palliative care has its limits. That's precisely why we need assisted dying to be part of the conversation.

Rebecca Gillanders
Colchester, Essex

To read the full selection of letters, click [here](#)

To read the piece by Rachel Clarke which opened this discussion, click [here](#)

NSS renews calls for disestablishment as less than 2% of English population attend church at least once a month

The National Secular Society has renewed calls for separation of Church and state, after new figures from the Church of England revealed the Church's continued decline.

The CofE's 2024 'Statistics for Mission' report released yesterday, 'by almost every measure, in almost every diocese, Church of England attendance and participation was still significantly lower in 2024 than in 2018', prior to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

The figures demonstrated declines in CofE baptisms, marriages and funerals since last year, which the NSS said reveals the Church's 'rapidly diminishing relevance in British society'.



Less than 2% people in England attend church at least once a month

The report said the speed of recovery in church attendance and participation since the pandemic has slowed, 'with smaller increases in attendance from 2023 to 2024 than in previous years'.

Average Sunday attendance at CofE services remains just over 1% of the English population. The CofE estimates its 'worshipping community' (those who attend church at least once a month) to be less than 2% of the population of England, while people aged 70 or over make up 'a considerably larger proportion' of this community than England's population.

To read more, click [here](#)

Tommy Robinson supporters are turning to Christianity, leaving the Church in a dilemma

Gareth Talbot does not necessarily believe in God, but he's started going to church. He felt compelled to do so after taking part in one of Tommy Robinson's rallies in September.

'I never thought I had to choose before, but now I'm feeling like Christianity could be replaced, so that's why I feel the church needs support,' the 36-year-old from Bradford says.

Gareth talks about the church in England being under 'threat', as he sees it, mainly from Islam. He says his concern is about the extreme elements of Islam, not the religion as a whole.

He also makes claims about all the Christmas markets in London being renamed 'festive markets' and about some areas of the country becoming 'fully Muslim', as other reasons for



feeling a need to engage more with Christianity.

Having now returned to the church he used to attend as a child with his grandmother in Little Horton, Bradford, Gareth says he wants to take more of an interest in what is going on there.

'It's not that I've found God,' he says. 'I've never felt you need to go to church to be a Christian, but

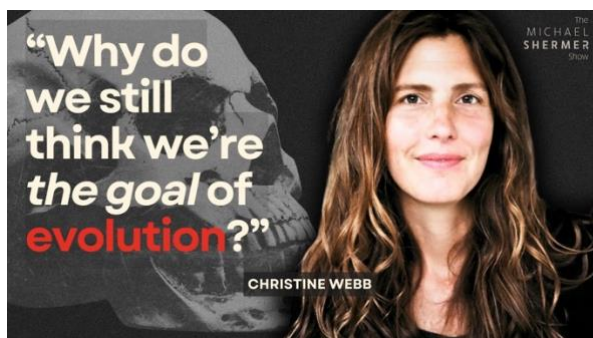
it's always been the Christian religion that's kept our values and freedoms, and that's why I need to support it now.'

All this has left the Church of England, an institution steeped in national history and culture, but which has undergone decades of declining attendance at its services, grappling with fundamental questions.

How does it challenge what some see as misrepresentations of Christian values, while welcoming potential new churchgoers?

To read more, click [here](#)

The Myth of Human Exceptionalism: Why Humans aren't as Special as We Think



In this episode, Harvard primatologist Christine Webb challenges one of our deepest beliefs: that humans stand apart from the rest of nature. She traces the roots of human exceptionalism from Aristotle and Descartes to modern science and explains why we still cling to hierarchies of intelligence.

While most critiques of human exceptionalism focus on our moral obligation toward other species, Webb argues that they overlook what humanity stands to gain by letting go of its illusions of uniqueness and superiority.

To watch/listen, click [here](#)



Apostasy in the UK: leaving a high-control religion

With Dr George Locke

This talk explores the personal and social challenges of leaving religion behind in contemporary Britain. Despite an increasingly secular society, walking away from faith – especially fundamentalist or high-control communities – can carry serious consequences. Apostasy isn't just a private decision; it can lead to fractured families, lost friendships and, in some cases, total ostracism. Drawing on lived experiences, including her own journey as a former Jehovah's Witness, Dr Locke examines what it really means to stop believing in a world where religion shapes identity, culture, and community.

Dr Locke is a member of Peterborough Humanists, and previously ran Sheffield's Café Scientifique. She now works at Trinity College, Cambridge as an administrator. She is an active volunteer with Faith to Faithless, a Humanists UK programme that supports individuals leaving high control religions.



When: Thursday 4 December 2025 at 7.30pm

Where: Tyneside Irish Centre, NE1 4SG

Pay-as-you-feel (suggested £5).

CONTACT US FOR MORE

North East Humanists

All of the latest information about North East Humanists is available on our [website](#). You can also follow us on social media via [Facebook](#) or [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#). Interacting with us there is a great way to help spread the news about Humanism.

Please consider a membership with us if you do not already have one. Our fees are very low, but they really do support so much local grassroots work, as we hope you see in these bulletins.

The monthly bulletin is free for members and supporters of North East Humanists. If membership is more of a commitment than you can make, you can be a supporter if you just [sign up to our email list](#). For NEH members without email, the bulletin is printed by Mike and Moira Turner and sent by post. Contact them on 07740 427132 to arrange this if you need it.

Durham Secular Salon

This local group is run by Susan Walker. Contact her at 0191 384 1432 or susan.walker@northeast-humanists.org.uk if you would like to attend events here.

Teesside Humanist Group

If you would like to join this group, please [contact us](#) for more details. You can also follow them on Twitter [@TeesHumanists](#) or like the [Teesside Humanists](#) group on Facebook run by Terry Waites and Ben Collier.

Humanist Funerals:

The death of a close relative or friend can be traumatic, the feelings of shock and loss deep. The funeral is an opportunity to reflect on your feelings with love and respect. Also, to celebrate the life of the person you have lost, to express gratitude and appreciation, to say goodbye with care and dignity.

While acknowledging the sadness, a Humanist funeral ceremony celebrates life, for we believe that life itself is the greatest cause of all to celebrate. Our ceremonies are non-religious and based on the life-affirming values of love and concern for others.

We also offer support for *Baby Namings, Weddings and Vow Renewals*

We can provide celebrants through the Tyne Wear Celebrants Group, those accredited by Humanists UK, and other individuals serving the North East region.

For more information, please contact Ian Hunter (Secretary, North East Humanists) on 07969165024, ian.hunter@northeast-humanists.org