

Next
meeting
13th July

7.30 pm in Room 4 at Castle Hill Community Centre, Ipswich:
HOW CAN WE HELP TO MAKE POVERTY HISTORY?
Come with cuttings and articles to inform the discussion. 'Let's consider some sort of action—not all talk and no action.' (EC member Derek Mason).

7th September meeting at Castle Hill—'Pick a Subject'. Members choose a card and we have to discuss whatever subject is printed on it. We did this at our AGM, and had a really good evening.

Thought for the Day on BBC Radio Suffolk (95.5, 95.9, 103.9 & 104.6 fm) at about 7.25 am on 18th July, 6th and 25th August, and 19th September.

Suffolk Humanist News

SUFFOLK HUMANISTS
The Suffolk Humanist Group

July 2005

West Suffolk Cemetery Christians

Margaret Nelson

They're running out of burial space in Bury St Edmunds; the borough cemetery is almost full, so the Westerleigh Group plc, owners of West Suffolk Crematorium, are providing a cemetery in their grounds at Risby.

On 6th July I had a phone call from someone at the crematorium office, asking if I'd participate in the opening ceremony for the new cemetery on the 21st July. I said I'd be happy to, then I got an email with the proposed 'order of service', as follows:

Opening Address & Welcome by the Mayor

Hymn: Praise my Soul The King of Heaven

Reading : Ecclesiastes 3, from Revd. Gregory Webb, Team Rector and Rural Dean of Thingoe

Jo Donlevy, Civil Celebrant (TBA)

Reading : Revelation 21 v 1-7 (TBC), from Rev Val Spencer, Methodist minister

Margaret Nelson, Humanist Officiant (sic) - Poem

Prayers, led by Father Philip Shyrane, Roman Catholic Priest (to be confirmed)



Lords Prayer (sic)

Hymn: Thine be the Glory

Prayers

Rev Richard Titford representing CRUSE

Blessing, Revd. Gregory Webb

Final Address, Richard Evans, Managing Director of Westerleigh Group Plc

Now, we get on fine with the staff at West Suffolk Crematorium (by 'we', I mean the Suffolk Humanists' Celebrants Team), so it goes against the grain to pick a fight with them, but I had to tell them why it wouldn't do. I wrote, 'Your new cemetery will provide additional burial space for people from Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area, now that the town cemetery is almost full. The town cemetery isn't a church cemetery; it's a

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Suffolk Humanist News

BHA AGM



Michael Imison

The BHA stands to lose its pre-eminent position in the provision of secular ceremonies and the finance to support it. This meeting wishes to see clear action to re-establish an effective system of ceremony provision across the country with a happier ethos and a firmer financial footing

Simon Allen

Suffolk Humanists' Chair Michael Imison attended the British Humanist Association Conference and AGM in Newcastle last month in a personal capacity. This is his report:

Just under eighty people attended the conference in a comfortable little hotel in Gateshead, not far from the Angel of the North. Nearly sixty of these were 'delegates', a misnomer since all of them, like myself, had come as individuals and not as representatives of local groups. Nevertheless I did get an opportunity to speak up for Suffolk as I delivered a piece that Margaret had written, at Jemma Hooper's invitation, about the workings of our group. This seemed to go down well and it was decided it should be put on the BHA website.

The conference in general had a more positive tone than the one I attended two years ago and I got the impression that the officers and staff were quite anxious to let the membership have their say and address their concerns. An obvious example was a session entitled 'How the BHA promotes Humanism' which was meant to feature Hanne Stinson. In fact she asked the audience to form themselves into groups and to tell her what the BHA should be doing to promote Humanism. Jemma Hooper whose responsibilities at the BHA include promotion was not even included in the session.

As previously, some of the most interesting sessions were about international humanism and Leo Igwe in particular made us feel how easy humanists have it in this country compared with the violence and intimidation he faces in Nigeria. Most disappointing was David Boulton, the television producer, brought in at the last minute to replace our President Linda Smith who was unwell. He has a book

'The trouble with God' which sounds like a good aggressive piece of humanistic argument. In fact he wants us to identify God with our own inner sense of values and to establish a Republic of Heaven which retains religion but makes it subject to human concerns. Not surprisingly he is a member of the Sea of Faith group of religious humanists.

The conference was followed by the AGM of the BHA. Prominent among the staff reports was that of Marilyn Mason the Education Officer who sadly will be leaving in February. The general picture was of a static membership whose subscriptions do not cover the cost of the organization despite very stringent cuts in expenditure. The deficit is being funded from reserves. A donation of £25 per member would solve the current financial problem.

Most significant for me was the following motion proposed by Simon Allen,

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July 2005

Romford 6th Form Girls hear about Humanism

I was invited to talk to 6th formers from The Frances Bardsley School for Girls, Romford, as part of their RE 'retreat' at St Gabriel's Conference Centre, Ditchingham, on 5th July. It was the second time I'd been there.

I spent an hour in a question and answer session with about 37 girls and the staff members.

After coffee, I stayed to play Diversity, the Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource board game (Suffolk Humanists played it last year), with Cynthia Capey from SIFRE.

My impression was that, with one or two exceptions, the girls were open-minded and interested in hearing about humanism. They asked some very thoughtful, intelligent questions.

Several girls said they'd never heard of some of the religions featured in the game. They were expecting a Buddhist speaker the next day.

The Head of 6th Form asked for more information, and has been given 'A Short Course in Humanism'.

MN



Girls from The Frances Bardsley School for Girls, Romford, play Diversity at St. Gabriel's Conference Centre, Ditchingham

Suffolk Humanist People

Colchester member Douglas Bell has been mugged and had his shoulder dislocated, then had a minor heart attack while he was in hospital. Since he can't drive, and he

used to give lifts to Cliff Johnson, we've decided to meet in Colchester in October. If you can suggest a suitable venue for a small group, please get in touch.

Member Linda Smolowitz

has been seriously ill and had to have several operations. We're glad to hear she's on the mend, but, as she says, she's 'not had a very good year.'

Please get in touch to offer car-free members a lift to meetings, or to ask for a lift.

West Suffolk Cemetery Christians (Continued from page 1)

public facility, available to people of all faiths and none. I'd assume that yours will be too. So why have an opening ceremony that's essentially Christian?' I ended, 'I'm very disappointed that you haven't seized the opportunity to make this a ceremony that's relevant to the whole community, and not just a part of it. My

hesitation is not just because of my personal feelings; it's about a matter of principle.'

After consulting team colleagues I'll tell the people at West Suffolk that I can't participate. Depending on how they react, I'll probably write to Mr Evans, the Managing Director.

You think you're making progress, then something like this happens!



Phone 01473

658828

A Humanist Entertainment

Member Yvonne Peacock and her friends in Rowhedge have raised funds and entertained villagers with several evenings of readings and music on seasonal themes. Marie and I have been very impressed, and it gave me an idea about a new way to raise awareness of Humanism. Unless it's about some local issue that's made people hot under the collar, a public meeting can be a waste of time, but if you offer people entertainment you might get their attention—and inform them into the bargain. How about an evening of readings on a Humanist theme, telling the story of the development of our philosophy? The committee has agreed it's worth a try, and Yvonne has agreed to help us.

It won't be like a concert party, and it'll only involve a few people. Yvonne says, 'We need people who are used to public speaking and with a sense of humour, about four good voices – people who don't mind playing around. We don't need lots of rehearsing., just three or four serious get-togethers and some researching. The space really matters. Not too big. An informal space.' I thought of going to other organisations, or to village halls or community centres.

Michael, Yvonne and I will be getting together soon to begin making plans. Watch this space.

MN

BHA AGM (continued from page 2)

an ex-member of the BHA celebrant network, and carried over overwhelmingly: 'Having regard to the number, worthy of concern, of ceremony officiants who have resigned their accreditation (of whom I am one) resulting in a detrimental effect to the network, this AGM calls on the Executive committee to report to the membership the complete results of a working party to be set up to investigate this. The BHA stands to lose its pre-eminent position in the provision of secular ceremonies and the finance to support it. This meeting wishes to see clear action to re-establish an effective system of ceremony provision across the country with a happier ethos and a firmer financial footing.'

Hopefully the concerns that caused Margaret Nelson, David Mitchell and others to leave the network will now be addressed.

BHA members can read a report of the Conference and AGM in BHA News, which has given a positive spin to events. However, not everyone was happy. It remains to be seen whether the working party Michael refers to will be able to get to the bottom of what went wrong, and whether the BHA's officers and EC will accept their findings if they do.

It seems highly unrealistic to expect BHA members to donate £25 each. Quite a few struggle to pay the basic subscription.

Margaret

People exist for each other.
So either improve them or
put up with them.

Marcus Aurelius

SUFFOLK HUMANISTS

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The Suffolk Humanist group is
affiliated to the British Humanist
Association, the National Secular
Society, and the Suffolk Inter-Faith
Resource.