

Suffolk Humanists Monthly Bulletin

April 2019

"Cosmic Evolution"

Next meeting 9th April

Our next meeting will be a talk entitled "Cosmic Evolution" by Mike Whybray of the Orwell Astronomical Society.

Mike writes: 'Carl Sagan once said: "We are an example of what hydrogen atoms can do, given 15 billion years of cosmic evolution." OK, so he rounded the current best estimate of 13.77 billion years up a little! I'll take you back in time from the universe as we know it to the point it began, and look at the evidence for that evolution. Also asking what came before the universe and ask if that question makes any sense. And maybe touch on the question as to whether anyone else out there in the cosmos is asking the same questions.'

Time and place: 9th April, 7:30 pm (upstairs) at The Thomas Wolsey, 9-13 Peters Street, Ipswich, IP1 1 XF

March meeting.

In a change of venue we held our March meeting at the The Thomas Wolsey in St Peter's St. Ipswich. As the numbers attending have increased recently the EEFA Centre (and Arlington's) were becoming rather 'tight' but the level of ambient noise, mainly from the traffic outside was often a significant problem. The new venue proved to be more spacious and very quiet although being upstairs, still does not allow easy access for those with disabilities.

The theme for the meeting was "Religious Education in Suffolk Schools". Denis began by providing some context showing how and why

there was such a profusion of different types of schools - some faith based, some faith supported and why even those that do not have a 'faith character' are still required to teach RE and why it is still mandatory for schools to have a "daily act of worship of a broadly Christian character".

This led up to a summary of the recent Commission on Religious Education (CoRE report) which provided a new framework for RE in English schools but which was rejected in a very off-hand manner by the government.

Finally, quite a number of our members (myself, George Bethell, John Mellis, John Palmer and Peter Wells) have all been involved with school visits in recent months. We shared our experiences, our understanding and concerns about what is actually happening at the chalk-face.

May meeting.

On May 14th we will have the postponed talk about the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust that was originally scheduled for January.

This will be by the Trust's Chair, Steve Hurd.

We are keen to have a good audience. So please do your best to come along.

UHST helps schools in Uganda working to offer liberal, humanist education to needy children. Founded by Ugandan Humanists and run as charities, the schools are inclusive and do not discriminate on grounds of religion, social or ethnic background.

UHST currently supports three schools: Isaac Newton High School, Katera, Masaka; Mustard Seed School, Busota, Kamule; and, Kasese Humanist Primary School.

Steve will talk about the challenges of promoting a humanist ethos in schools in a highly religious country. The meeting will be on May 9th at 7.30 pm at the Thomas Wolsey, 9-13 Peters Street, Ipswich, IP1 1 XF

Exploring Secularism?

Given the ire that the word "secularism" seems to attract these days I was delighted to receive an email from our local SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) promoting details of an education pack provided by the National Secular Society.

Although specifically designed for teachers it provides clear and comprehensive information about secularism that everybody should be familiar with. Have a look at

<https://exploringsecularism.org/uploads/exploring-secularism---a-guide-for-teachers.pdf>

Our website:

For many years Margaret Nelson blogged relentlessly and kept our website up to date. For some time however she has been unwell and no-one else has had the same enthusiasm or ability to keep up the momentum. At the same time other forms of interactive media (e.g. Twitter) have substantially replaced websites as centres of interactive debate. I've recently updated some of the articles and would now like to give the website something of a makeover. My current thoughts are to make it less of a blog and more a reference site possibly with a new 'look and feel'. If there are any particular topics or changes that you think would be useful please let me know.

A tale of two planning submissions

I was recently peripherally involved with a planning request by members of the Ipswich Syrian Community. They had recently purchased the Mulberry Tree pub in the centre of Ipswich which they wished to turn into a community centre with a prayer room. This designated it as a place of worship i.e a mosque.

A campaign was launched against this and a large number of formal objections submitted. A disturbing number of these were of the ".. send them back to where they came from.." type but the bulk, possibly a hundred or so, opposed the plan on the more legitimate bases of potential problems due to parking, noise, congestion etc.

What drew my attention was that last year the former Odeon Cinema directly across the road from the Mulberry Tree was purchased by the evangelical Hope Church. They had applied for (and obtained) permission to convert the cinema into a place of worship, in this case a church.

The former Odeon building has at least 6 times the floor area of the Mulberry Tree and as a cinema had a capacity for seating 1500. It has no parking spaces whereas the Mulberry Tree has parking for at least a dozen vehicles.

Was there a similar campaign to oppose this? No. How many objections were submitted in this case?Two.

Future meetings:

9th April: Cosmic Evolution - Talk

27th April: Monthly lunch (Woodbridge Duke of York 12:00 noon)

14th May: Uganda Humanist Schools Trust talk

25th May: Monthly lunch (Woodbridge Duke of York 12:00 noon)

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