

Suffolk Humanists Monthly Bulletin

Our next event:

"Annual General Meeting & Social"

Next event "AGM" : 13th August, 7.30 pm.

Place: Thomas Wolsey pub, St Peters Street Ipswich (upstairs room on left).

In recent years we have had AGMs at the homes of members with a social event afterwards. This year we thought we would meet in the usual place (Thomas Wolsey) and those who wish can stay around afterwards for a chat and a drink in a historic and very convivial environment.

Report on July Event: "Great Thinkers"

Once we had sorted out who was supposed to be at our meeting and who was supposed to be at the "Leavers of Ipswich" Brexit meeting in the next room we started this experimental evening.

The original idea had been for everyone to bring along the name and some information about some "Great Thinkers" and take turns giving clues until somebody got the right answer.

It turns out that there is a product called "The Thinking Game" which consists of a set of cards with names of Great Thinkers and information about them. So we used that as well as the names of Great Thinkers that members had brought.

The process prompted a lot of "I didn't know that" comments and generated much follow up discussion. Amongst the range of thinkers were Margaret Mead, Theodore Adorno, Rachel Carson, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Goodall, le Courbousier, Jane Austen, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Confucius, Max Weber, Barbara Hepworth and (no surprise) Charles Darwin.

The idea could probably be developed further and the cards we used could have benefited from

having more information on them. Where members had researched and brought along their own "Great Thinkers" it worked better.

Legal Challenges to SACREs

Most years I go along to the meeting for School SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) organised by Humanists UK. Every time there is discussion on how best to increase humanist representation and a sharing of experiences. Although many SACREs do now accept Humanists there remains a hard core of SACREs which have consistently refused to acknowledge the right of Humanists to be members. This is because the relevant legal wording in the 1994 Act states that SACRE members should represent "Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations".

In 2017 this strict interpretation of the wording was legally challenged in Wales, The Vale of Glamorgan Council which had initially refused to accept a Humanist SACRE representative backed down when faced with a legal challenge and accepted that a Humanist had the same rights to sit on the SACRE as those in religious groups. The Welsh Government then issued guidance clarifying that Humanists have the right to be full members of all SACREs in Wales.

The same process has now been repeated in England where Rachel Taggart-Ryan applied for full membership of Greenwich Council's SACRE. Its sitting members again rejected her application on the grounds that humanism was not a religion.

Rachel sent a 'letter before action' to them arguing that she had been discriminated against.

When Greenwich Council again refused to admit her, Humanists UK instructed solicitors. Faced with the formal legal challenge Greenwich Council backed down and accepted Rachel onto the SACRE.

Whether the UK parliament will follow in the footsteps of the Welsh Assembly remains to be seen but if not I think we can expect to see more activity like this in the near future.

Another legal challenge after academisation

In a separate legal challenge a couple, Lee and Lizanne Harris, have just launched a judicial review against Burford primary school.

This school was originally a normal LEA school but was taken over by a Church of England trust in 2015.

At the school's church-led assemblies the parents say children have been encouraged to participate in prayer, Christianity has been taught as truth and biblical stories such as the crucifixion have been acted out.

There will now be a judicial review against Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust which runs the academy.

At the moment schools are on holiday but it looks as if next year could prove to be a very lively time.

September 12th (THURSDAY): Visit to Orwell Park Observatory.

Mike Whybray and another member of the Orwell Astronomical Society Ipswich (OASI) will host a visit of Suffolk Humanists to the Victorian observatory situated at Orwell Park School in Nacton, IP10 0ER.

To comply with school Safeguarding requirements we must meet at 8:15pm at the entrance gate two entrances along to the left of the main school gates - see the GREEN map pin here:

<http://oasi.org.uk/OASI/Visit.php> where you will be let in to park inside the security gates. Please DO NOT attempt to enter the school via the main front entrance.

We will also have: Guided tour of the observatory. History of the observatory. The instruments at the observatory, how they were used historically and how they are used nowadays.

If weather conditions permit we can view the night sky using the Tomline Refractor - including Jupiter, Saturn and the Moon.

Access to the observatory is via about 100 steps up a spiral staircase (with a pause at about 60 steps!). Note: there are no toilets at the top.

We need to know by at least 6pm on 12th September if you will be attending. Please contact me (Mike Whybray) by email at whybray@btinternet.com or phone 01473 659679 or via Denis.

Other future talks and events

Saturday 31st August: Pub lunch, Duke of York, Woodbridge.

Tuesday October 8th: Lines of sight: On the trail of W.G.Sebold at the Norwich Museum (to be confirmed)

Tuesday November: 12th Evolution of art in war

Tuesday December 10th: Ancient Winter traditions

We are also planning to visit Down House in the autumn.

Suffolk Humanists & Secularists

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