

Suffolk Humanists Monthly Bulletin

December 2021

Meetings update

There are no reports of meetings as the pandemic continues to rage. I started drafting this newsletter in October when the number of cases looked ready to exceed those of the peak earlier this year although fortunately hospitalisations and deaths were well down.

Since then most of my family and a substantial number of friends have been infected and although the main covid symptoms were short lived (we were all double/treble jabbed and one previously infected) in my case the tiredness that followed lasted for many weeks

What seems clear is that it is going to take more than vaccines to get the numbers down.

Today (it is now early December) we know that a new variant (Omicron) has evolved. Whether or not this is a bad or a good thing we do not yet know but if it is mild it may mean that we can live it much as we do with the common cold and it may have the positive effect of displacing more serious variants..

Like many I am in awe of just how much is now known about this and similar diseases and how vaccines have been developed to deal with it. But perhaps I am even more amazed by the power of evolution that caused the problem in the first place.

Peace Tree

I was invited by the Quakers to take part in a ceremony to rededicate the Peace Tree in Kingston Field in Woodbridge. The ceremony which took place on 21st September in blazing sunshine mainly involved community groups providing statements. I based ours upon the International Humanist and Ethical Union Statement on Peace

"As Humanists we believe that human beings can give meaning to their own lives without appeal to gods or the supernatural, and we work for the

development of a more humane society based on reason and compassion.

Humanists recognize that war and violence are human problems. Wars are started by humans and they can only be ended by humans.

That is why throughout history and across the world Humanists have worked to build peace. The Epicureans of ancient Greece and Rome argued that genuine peace must come, in the words of Lucretius, "By words, not arms". These ancient Humanists recognized that genuine peace is more than just the absence of war between nations; genuine peace requires tolerance between communities, respect between individuals, and, ultimately, peace and harmony within the human heart".

Zoom call with Cambridge Humanists

We used to (occasionally) meet with Cambridge Humanists and Andrea Lorenz their secretary contacted me recently to compare notes and see how we were getting on. We had an interesting chat and it is clear that most local groups are struggling at the moment. In Cambridge they have a weekly Sunday morning informal meetup for a chat at a local cafe which attracts half a dozen or so. An interesting observation was that issues that used to be mainly championed by humanists e.g. LGBT rights, dignity in dying, womens rights etc. now have their own pressure groups.

Can you face another Zoom meeting?

We haven't been able to meet face to face for a long time now and despite being double jabbed, boosted and infected I am still uncomfortable about meetings in enclosed poorly ventilated places. This is not because I am at all worried about getting infected, it is that anything that might encourage others to spread covid still seems irresponsible.

However I'd be happy to arrange some sort of get together (over Zoom if necessary) if members are keen to take part,.

Drop me an email to let me know.

Christmas sorted?

Two of our local humanists (both former committee members) have published books recently. They are:

Scotland's Science: Stories of pioneering science, engineering and medicine (1550 - 1900) by John Mellis.

How did a small nation on the northwest fringe of Europe produce such an outpouring of scientific genius? From John Napier to James Watt, James Young Simpson to Joseph Lister, Mary Somerville to Lord Kelvin and James Clerk Maxwell, this book tells the stories of the pioneering scientists, engineers and medical doctors who drove Scotland's scientific awakening and enlightenment. They made some of the most insightful discoveries and innovations that have shaped our modern world.

Dark Energy: A Brad Willis Adventure ' by Tom Boles.

When two explosions occur killing three people, the scientific community is on full alert. The explosions appear to be unrelated. Their only connection is that they happened in scientific centres of excellence in Switzerland and the United States. Brad Willis knows that he must uncover the secret to save more lives from being lost.

MI6 calls on Willis to use his background as an astronomer to infiltrate the site of the Large Hadron Collider to discover the truth behind the

claims. When Willis starts to uncover the facts, everyone is under suspicion... until they start dying. The situation gets worse when he uncovers the murders are related to a potential world-changing discovery of a new sub-atomic particle, that has the potential to manipulate commodity markets worldwide.

If you have the time (and love statistics)

I came across this intriguing American website about non-religiosity in the USA. <https://www.secularismandnonreligion.org/> One article "Love thy neighbour:...or not" is about how adherents of different belief systems viewed each other. It is based on a large survey and (amongst other things) explores how/why atheists are the most hated group in America. A fascinating result is that atheists turn out to be the group that dislikes other groups the least. I'd love to see what the results would be from a similar UK or European study.

Upcoming events

We have none of our own local events planned but you may be interested in the following.

Holocaust Memorial Day:

Holocaust Memorial Day remembers victims of the Holocaust and genocides carried out since. It is hoped that this will be a live event held in "The Hold" at the University of Suffolk on 27th January 12.30 pm.

Darwin Day:

This will be on the 12th February. Following last years event which attracted over 3000 viewers it is expected that Humanists UK will again hold an on-line lecture . Details yet to be announced.

I understand that the annual UN Celebration of Human Rights will not take place this year

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