

Suffolk Humanists Monthly Bulletin

February 2020

Darwin Day 2020

Darwin Day is actually the 12th February but we will be celebrating with a dinner on the evening of Tuesday 11th February.

This will be at the Swan Westerfield at 7.30 pm

If you have not already let me know that you are coming please do before Sunday 9th.
(denisjohnston@btinternet.com or 01394387462).

Thinking of Darwin and looking at various websites I see that a few cities hold Darwin Day Lectures.

Perhaps next year we could have one in Ipswich, possibly at University of Suffolk.

A high profile speaker would be good but not essential and I am sure some of our members could suggest a suitable name.

Let us know.

January meeting.

Our January meeting had to be cancelled at the last minute due to the stormy weather which forced the closure of the Orwell bridge and the subsequent chaos on the roads around Ipswich.

Our original speaker for the evening, Martin Simmonds of Suffolk Refugee Support will now come later during the year.

RE or PE?

No, not Physical Education. In quite a number of Suffolk Schools PE now stands for Philosophy and Ethics.

I was recently involved in a SACRE exercise to see how often and how prominently the teaching of Religious Education (RE) featured on the websites of Suffolk Schools.

Although it is a compulsory subject some schools failed to mention it as part of the curriculum at all but what came as a rather pleasant surprise was the discovery that it has been replaced by PE or sometimes Philosophy, Ethics and Religion (PER) at a number of schools.

Looking more closely, those leading the way seemed, in the main, to be the independent schools i.e. fee paying. Perhaps this tells us something about the priorities of those who have money!

However there were also a few academies that also seem to have substituted RE with PE or PER.

Quite a number of RE teachers I have met have degrees in philosophy and I suspect that it is they who are driving this change.

That said they are probably changing cautiously because although academies are free to set their own RE syllabus they remain subject to various conditions to ensure that it is balanced and

broadly based, and which:

* promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils; and

*prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Every syllabus must also 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Last week the University of Suffolk hosted the annual Holocaust Memorial Day event. This year's theme was "Stand Together" and several speakers reminded the audience of lessons to be learned from the events of 75 years ago. One talk was about the arrival in Harwich of several thousand Jewish refugee children and described how they were welcomed and supported by the people of Suffolk and Essex - people who at the time were themselves suffering considerable post-war hardship. This was sharply contrasted with the situation today regarding refugees from the conflict in Syria.

Another speaker, this time from the Roma community, spoke of the persecution that group suffered. She told how some Roma - including herself whose grandfather was Jewish- had Jewish backgrounds and related how during the war Roma gypsies had smuggled Jewish children out of harm's way - often adopting them later.

Northgate High School again put on the results of a series of in depth studies. This year they included their work with local Holocaust survivor Frank Bright, various art exhibitions and a "Stand together for a better world" project. Their

presentation finished with a superb solo trombone adaptation of music from "Schindler's List".

Suffolk Constabulary and Suffolk and Norfolk Victim Care updated the audience with the local situation regarding race relations and violence towards minority groups.

Afterwards the St Helen's Primary School choir entertained with a range of songs from across the world and in a range of different languages.

Forthcoming events

February 11th Darwin Day Dinner. 7.30 at the Swan Westerfield.

Wednesday, 12th February 2020: Humanists UK Darwin Day Lecture
Chris Packham CBE will be the speaker at this year's Humanist UK Darwin Day Lecture. Doors open at 18:30 for a 19:30 start at Troxy, Commercial Road, London E1 0HX. Tickets available from Humanists UK.

Tuesday 18th February . A panel session and discussion on "Faith in Ipswich". This will be from 6.30 pm to 8.30pm in the Mayor's Parlour, Ipswich Town Hall, Ipswich, IP1 1DH

Taking part will be representatives from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Humanism, the Constabulary, Ipswich Borough Council and others from the voluntary and health sectors.

If you would like to attend and/or send in a question for the panel, please email the Chair of the Panel – Robin Herne (robin.herne@wsc.ac.uk) by no later than 12th February.

February 29th - monthly lunchtime meeting, 12.30 pm, Duke of York Woodbridge. As ever please let us know if you are coming.

Suffolk Humanists

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