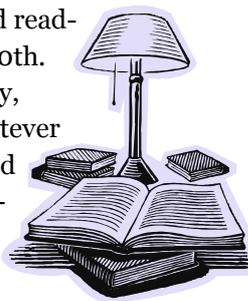




READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

You're invited to bring recommended reading to the meeting on Tuesday May 10th. Fiction or non-fiction, prose or poetry, science or art, funny or serious—whatever you've enjoyed, come and be prepared to tell us about it. Note that if you decide to buy any of the books, there's an Amazon link on our website.



THE NEW COMMITTEE

As no one was willing to stand for election as group chair at the AGM in April, it was agreed that someone would be chosen from the attendees at each meeting. As there's no chair, there's no vice-chair either, but the committee is bigger than before. The following people were elected: Denis Johnston (Secretary), John Mellis (Treasurer), John Palmer, Colleen Nunn, Michael Imison, Peter Davidson, Sue Hewlett and Tom Boles.

Marie Haworth: Thank you Margaret

As many of you know, Margaret Nelson started the Suffolk Humanist Group—as it was known in the beginning—almost twenty years ago in the autumn of 1991, and we are hoping to have “a bit of a do” later in the year to celebrate this.

To start with, half a dozen or so members met in each others homes but, as numbers grew, we needed larger premises and moved on, through rooms at the Unitarian Meeting House, Bolton Lane School (where we held our tenth anniversary, the then Mayor attending), Castle Hill Community centre—with forages to the Quaker Meeting House in Colchester for a while—to our present venue in Hawthorn Drive.

Always through the years Margaret has kept the standard of the running of the group high, making sure that everything was done correctly, never allowing things to become slipshod. She runs the ceremonies team, has trained others to become celebrants and, over the years, has officiated at hundreds of funerals, weddings and namings.

She is a member of SACRE, visits schools to discuss Humanism with the students and is a well-known speaker on Suffolk Radio, ensuring that the voice of Humanism is heard loud and strong.

For some time now Margaret has been trying to ease out of the various responsibilities in the group that she has shouldered for so long and so well, to be able to do other things she wants to do and never has time for. It is now time for change, for the newer members to take their turn in running things their way—but be warned; Margaret will be watching!

Margaret, thank you! I'm sure everyone will join me in wishing you well in your semi-retirement. You will never lose your involvement with the group. You'll still be running the website for one thing. I can't see your commitment to Humanism, and to Suffolk Humanists in particular, changing too much. But now take time to enjoy your art, photography, writing and whatever else takes your fancy.

I was instructed to publish the above “prominently” in the newsletter. Although I'd seen Marie only days before, she gave no hint that it was on its way. Newer members should know that Marie is one the group's first members, as well as being a very good friend. I'm very touched by this message from Marie and the committee. I don't plan to breath down their necks as they organise the group, and I wish everyone well.

Margaret

SUFFOLK'S SACRE

(Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education)

The British Humanist Association recently requested information about its affiliated groups in a survey, and we asked our members how they felt about the questions we were asked. The survey referred to a SACRE, and it was only when we got your responses that we learned that some of you didn't know what a SACRE is.

A SACRE is a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. Every local education authority has to have one as RE is the only subject that doesn't have a national syllabus. RE syllabuses are determined locally, following national guidelines. A SACRE's main duty is to advise the local authority on religious education and collective worship for the schools within its remit. A SACRE should also:

- require the LEA to review its Agreed Syllabus every five years;
- consider requests from schools to be released from the requirement to provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character (this is a legal requirement);
- publish an Annual Report of its work.

Suffolk's SACRE meets three times a year, usually in Ipswich.

A SACRE consists of teachers, clergy, representatives of religious organisations in the county, county councillors, and (in some but not all SACREs), humanists. Suffolk's SACRE has had a humanist member for over twenty years. I've been that member for a long time, since the previous humanist representative resigned. Most humanists on SACREs aren't full members, only co-opted, so they have no

voting rights. This was the position in Suffolk until 2007, when we introduced a new syllabus that includes humanism and secular world views. I asked if I could be made a full member, since it seemed silly that humanism should be included in the syllabus yet I wasn't treated equally with the faith representatives. It was agreed to promote me to full membership, without dissent. This hasn't been the case in other counties, where there's been strong resistance not just to making humanists full members, but to having them as members at all. The legal position is unclear.

The British Humanist Association holds meeting in London every year for SACRE representatives, most of whom are probably not local group members. I never attend, as my mobility problems make this difficult, though I usually send a report.

It's hard to say how many schools are covering humanism and secular world views as they're supposed to, since the introduction of the new syllabus. We haven't been inundated with requests for speakers, and we know that many schools treat RE as a low priority. It's often taught by poorly resourced non-specialist teachers—in some cases, not fully qualified teachers, but teaching assistants. Some secondary schools try to fulfil their obligations with one-day conferences for Year 10 and older students, to make up for what they haven't covered. This isn't what was intended and isn't the best way to deal with the subject.

Denis Johnston, our group secretary, is going to take over from me as the humanist representative on Suffolk's SACRE. I hope he'll enjoy it as much as I have.

Margaret Nelson

Colleen Nunn: Uncaged Monkeys

The Uncaged Monkeys arrived at the Ipswich Regent on 2nd May for what was billed as "A Night of Science and Wonder". The evening was hosted by Robin Ince and the audience was treated to presentations by Matt Parker, Ben Goldacre, Brian Cox, Simon Singh, Helen Arney and Adam Rutherford. Topics discussed ranged from bar codes to the big bang and included multiverse theory, the placebo effect, genes for ear wax and hidden messages in Moby Dick, amongst much more! This was an entertaining evening, and not just for science geeks!

Regional meeting

Several committee members will attend a regional groups meeting in Cambridge on Saturday 7th May. Jeremy Rodell, the Chair of South West London Humanists, will be there. Jeremy has taken the lead role in examining the relationship between the BHA and local humanist groups, and he will be talking about the current consultation and answering questions.

We expect to hear about the second stage of the BHA's consultation at this meeting.

Obituary: Margaret Blount

Margaret and her husband Tom used to live in Martlesham, where they were keen members of the Suffolk Humanist group in the 1990s. Tom died six years ago, and is buried in the graveyard at St. George's Church, St Cross South Elmham, near Harleston in North Suffolk, where he and Margaret moved to live with their daughter. The people at St. George's were very helpful about allowing us to have the funeral and interment there.

A few weeks ago, Margaret, aged 94, phoned to warn me that the rabbits have been very busy at St. George's so we must be careful where we tread when we bury her. That was typical of Margaret; she was a practical woman who liked to have everything properly organised. Having checked that I knew her daughter's current address, and that I knew about the rabbits, and that her family knew where everything was, Margaret died in her sleep. Her funeral is on Tuesday 10th May, and I shall be officiating.

Margaret was a highly intelligent woman who was brought up to think that "brainwork" was more important than "craftwork". Her sister went to university, while Margaret developed practical skills. A few years ago her daughter Caro wrote a magazine article called *Infinite Taking of Pains: The 'sides-to-middle' world of women*, in which Margaret is extensively quoted about sewing, knitting, and making-do-and-mending. Thrift was second nature to people of Margaret's generation; its value is now being learned by young people on tight budgets. She spoke about recycling hand-me-down clothes with clever stitchcraft, and mentions using parachute silk for underwear.

Before he met Margaret, Tom was a confirmed bachelor who swore he'd never marry, but she won his heart. They enjoyed many happy years together, raising two daughters (Jane and Caro), enjoying classical music, gardening (Margaret had very green fingers) and good home grown, home made food. Jane believes that her father and mother lived as long as they did because of her mother's skills in the vegetable garden and kitchen. I think she's probably right. MN

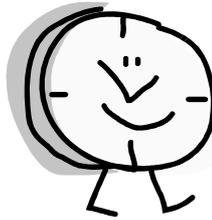
*Hands, leave all your activity,
brow, forget all thought,
for all my senses
are about to go to sleep.*

From 'Beim Schlafengehen' by Herman Hesse

John Mellis: treasurer's report

Our current membership is 70 and I would like to thank all our members for their support last year. I'm happy to report that our finances remain reasonably healthy with a last reported bank balance of March 30th 2011 of £1034.67 and cash-in-hand of £135.61. Our main source of income is membership subscriptions supplemented by ad-hoc donations of money at our monthly meetings. Principal outgoings include the hire of our meeting room at Pinewood Hall and occasional expenditures on publicity materials such as our recent flyers about making 'No religion' returns on the census forms, and our 'For a Good life Without God' car sticker campaign. The expenses for the latter were met through a generous donation from one of our members, for which we were very grateful. Membership subscriptions for 2011-12 are now due, and we look forward to another year of interesting meetings.

If you weren't at the AGM and would like copies of all the reports, please email or send a stamped addressed envelope to the secretary.



Ten minute topics

After the business of the AGM was done with, members were asked to suggest topics for discussion, ten minutes each. They included:

With reference to the royal wedding, does being humanist make us republicans? Though there's no direct connection between republicanism and humanism, it seems that quite a few of us are that way inclined.

The French have banned the burqa in public; should we do the same? Seems that although we don't like the burqa, we don't think it should be banned in the UK.

New BHA President

Renowned philosopher, broadcaster and author, Prof. A C Grayling will succeed Polly Toynbee as President of the British Humanist Association in July. Anthony Grayling will be the first academic philosopher to hold the office since A J Ayer in the 1960s. He recently published *The Good Book: a Secular Bible*, which "draws on the wisdom of 2,500 years of contemplative non-religious writing on all that it means to be human". Buy it through the Amazon link on our website and we get commission.

SUFFOLK HUMANISTS & SECULARISTS

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Newsletters & Ceremonies

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The Suffolk & N E Essex
Humanist group was founded
in 1991 to promote
Humanism and Secularism,
and to provide fellowship,
education and support for
non-believers in Suffolk and
North East Essex. We
changed our name to Suffolk
Humanists when the Essex
group was formed, then again
in April 2008, to reflect the
importance of secularism
when religious organisations
are being increasingly
assertive.

We're affiliated to The British
Humanist Association, The
National Secular Society, and
Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource
(SIFRE). The group is a
member of SAVO—the
Suffolk Association of
Voluntary Organisations.

Sympathetic non-members
are welcome, but by joining
us you'll help us to raise
awareness of Humanism and
Secularism, and to challenge
the increasing influence of
religion in public life, the arts
and the media.

The Suffolk Humanist
Ceremonies Team, which is
independent of the BHA
network, has an unblemished
record for high standards. We
provide non-religious
ceremonies for all occasions.
For more information, see the
contact details above.

HUMANISM: an ethical approach to life without religion; Humanists think we can be good without God.

SECULARISM: the belief that religion should have no place in civil affairs; that the church and state should be kept separate.

Dates for your diary - note them now!

Meetings are on the second Tuesday of every month from 7.30-10pm in the lounge at Pinewood Community Hall, Laburnum Close (signed to Pinewood Surgery), Ipswich, IP8 3SL, near the A12/A14 Copdock interchange and Copdock Tesco. The car park is at the end of the close on the right, after the surgery. For detailed directions, or to request or offer a lift, please get in touch. Refreshments are provided. Members and guests are invited to make a small donation, to help pay for the room hire.

10th May—Read any good books lately? See page 1 for details.

Noon on Saturday 14th May—Pub Lunch at The Duke of York (formerly The Seal), Woodbridge.

Please let Denis know if you plan to come by Tuesday 10th (our meeting), so he can book a table. Family and friends very welcome.

14th June—Meeting arrangements are unconfirmed, but it may be an outing. Details to follow.

Saturday 2nd July, from 3pm—Bring a plate tea party in Elmsett. Bring a folding chair and a plate of food to share for tea in the garden, weather permitting. As this is a private venue, please phone 01473 658828 or email margaret@suffolkhands.org.uk for an invitation and directions.

12th July—Climate Change. Our guest speaker will be Prof. John Midwinter (BSc & PhD in Physics, Hon. DSc, Fellow of the Royal Society). He'll address the following questions:

- What is the truth about climate change? (the scientific evidence)
- What are the implications for us?
- How can we reduce our personal fossil fuel consumption?
- What are the possibilities for large scale renewable energy in the UK?
- Tipping points - the real worry behind the climate change debate.

Meetings will continue on the second Tuesday of every month at Pinewood Hall. Details to be announced.

NEWSLETTERS

Please note that I'll only produce four newsletters this year, at the beginning of May, August, November and February, plus an additional notice about the AGM in April 2012. Please make a note of the programme as you receive them.

Contributions are very welcome as emails or Word documents (see my email address to the right). If you don't have a computer, typed articles may be posted—ask for my address.

If anyone with desktop publishing experience (or who'd like to learn) is willing to edit at least one newsletter a year, please get in touch. I'm happy to give advice and help as I don't know how much longer I'll be able to continue as editor, due to progressive visual impairment.

The next newsletter deadline is Monday 25th July.

MN