

# Suffolk Humanists and Secularists

Newsletter February 2018

## Darwin Day 2018

### Darwin Day Dinner 2018

Our usual haunt - Arlington's - is currently closed in the evenings so instead we have made arrangements to have our Darwin Day Dinner at The Swan at Westerfield.

Details are:

Date: Tuesday 13th February

Time: 7.30 pm

Their website is

<http://www.debeninns.co.uk/swan/>

Please let me know by Thursday 8th February if you are planning to come along. My email is [denisjohnston@btinternet.com](mailto:denisjohnston@btinternet.com) My phone number is 01394 387462

### Meeting with Ipswich Quakers.

Our January meeting was supposed to have been at Arlington's as usual but at lunchtime, a few hours before, we heard that Arlington's had decided to close in the evenings for the rest of January. As we had already arranged for Barbara Richardson-Todd of Ipswich Quakers to come along we had to make some re-arrangements. Barbara suggested using the library at the Friends Meeting House and so we all went along there for what was a very interesting meeting with her and two of her colleagues.

Barbara initially outlined the history of the Quakers in Ipswich and the origin of their rather fine building but most of the discussions were around how Quaker thinking had evolved over recent years. The early Quakers were best known for their plain dress, their refusal to swear oaths and a belief that they should follow their own inner guide rather than rely on a strict reading of scripture or the word of clerics. The consequence of this lack of loyalty to the crown and to the

established church meant that many were persecuted and even executed. Others fled to America mainly settling in the State of Pennsylvania founded by William Penn. Then as now the Quakers had very radical outlook emphasising peace and social justice above 'religiosity'. Over the years they have diversified considerably and although there is a strong thread of Christianity many describe themselves as non-theistic and even atheist. Although I thought I already knew quite a bit about the Quakers as I have known quite a few over the years (and had one or two Quaker schoolteachers) there were still surprises. For example although I was familiar with the role of silence that characterised Quaker meetings I was surprised to learn that their funerals held to the same pattern and did not have a formal structure with prayers etc.

Barbara has asked if a few of us could come along and talk about Humanism at one of their meetings later in the year which we are happy to do.

### Visit to Thomas Paine's house in Thetford - Tuesday 13th March

Some time ago we had meeting about the philosopher and politician Thomas Paine who was born in Thetford in 1736. We have arranged a visit (and talk) to where he was born on the evening of Tuesday 13th March. Due to space constraints the visit will be limited to 20 people and as there is some cost involved we also ask for a contribution (£5) if you can afford it. If you are interested in going please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements to share travel. [denisjohnston@btinternet.com](mailto:denisjohnston@btinternet.com). (01394 387462).

## Our new meeting place

As it became increasingly obvious that we cannot rely on Arlington's being available in the future in January the committee took the opportunity of visiting a possible new venue. This arose because EEFA (the East of England Faiths Agency) along with some other charitable groups has been offered the use of several empty rooms above the offices of the former Co-op Funeral Parlour in St Helen's Street. The building was vacated after the Co-op moved its operations to Boss Hall Road. It now just has a small 'front-office' on the ground floor.

Not only are there several rooms that can be used for meetings (we held our January committee meeting there) but there is a larger room that can easily accommodate more than 20 people. It is equipped with a screen and is ideal for talks and lectures. The site also also has its own secure parking which we can use.

A significant downside however is that the rooms are upstairs and the only access is via a double flight of stairs with an intermediate landing. This means that at the moment it may not be accessible to wheelchair users or to others with physical disabilities. This is a concern not just to us but to the other potential users. Fortunately there are a number of 'stair climbing' solutions available but these would need to be tailored once a specific need was identified.

We now hope to have our first meeting there in April.

## Holocaust Memorial Day

This year's event at the University of Suffolk attracted well over a hundred people - so many that there was standing room only. The meeting started with a reading from Anne Frank's Diary by Sarah Llewellyn Member of Suffolk Liberal Jewish Community and was followed by contributions from Suffolk Refugee Support, Alert International and several excellent presentations from pupils of Northgate School. The event remembered not only the victims of the Holocaust but addressed the many other instances of genocide that have taken place since including those that continue today.

### Another reminder : Articles for 'Bumper Editions' of Newsletter

Our first 'bumper edition' edited by George Bethell will be out in March. If you have something you would like to contribute please let us have it by mid February. Send to [shands.editor@gmail.com](mailto:shands.editor@gmail.com)

### Meanwhile: Dates for your diary (to be held at Coop Funeral Parlour)

April 10th: The Margaret Atwood trilogy "Oryx and Crake"

May 8th: Bertrand Russell

June 12th: Artificial Intelligence

July 10th: BHA or NSS presentation

August 14th: AGM and barbecue

Sept 11th: The ethics of being a vegan

Nov 13th: War poetry

### Saturday lunchtime meetings - Duke of York last Saturday of each month at 12:00 noon.

Next one is February 24th.

Let me know if you are attending :

[denisjohnston@btinternet.com](mailto:denisjohnston@btinternet.com) or 01394387462

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