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LICHFIELD **GARRICK**
Theatre & Studio

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Professor Rex Harris

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7:30 pm on Thursday 20th November 2014

in the Main Theatre of the Lichfield Garrick, Castle Dyke, Lichfield

The 25th Erasmus Darwin Memorial Lecture - **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN BRAIN - A TALE OF TWO DARWINS**

Professor Sir Colin Blakemore

Professor of Neuroscience & Philosophy,
School of Advanced Study, University of London.
Emeritus Professor of Neuroscience,
University of Oxford

Colin studied medicine at Cambridge and did a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. He worked at Cambridge, then Oxford, and was Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council, before he moved to the School of Advanced Study in 2012. His research has been concerned with vision, development of the brain and plasticity of the cerebral cortex. He leads a major project aimed at integrating philosophical and scientific approaches to the study of perception. He often broadcasts on radio and television, and writes in the national press about science and science policy. He was knighted in 2014 for "services to scientific research, policy and outreach".

Among the many subjects that Erasmus Darwin tackled in his efforts to "enlist the imagination under the banner of science" was the question of the emergence and progression of living things. He envisaged a natural unfolding of life towards perfection. This view of evolution contrasts with his grandson Charles' messy, random process of Natural Selection. Colin will consider the evolution of the human brain. It is very big, but not as large as the brains of elephants, whales or even Neanderthal man. The fundamental features of our nerve cells and our cerebral cortex are very similar to those of a mouse, and most of the so-called unique characteristics of human cognition have been demonstrated in other species. Yet there clearly is something distinctive about human beings. Elephants can't talk. Whales haven't invented science. And we got rid of Neanderthal man!

On this crucial question of the special nature of the human brain, Erasmus might have been closer to the truth than Charles.

Very few tickets are still available from the LichfieldGarrick Box Office

For further information, please see our website at www.LSES.org.uk