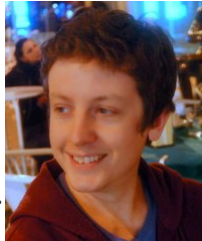


Coming up

2 pm Sunday 21 January

Matthew Bothwell

Matt is currently Outreach Astronomer for the University of Cambridge. He writes, 'The discovery of planets orbiting distant stars is one of the most important astronomical discoveries ever made. In the 20 years since the first planet was discovered around a nearby star, astronomers have catalogued thousands of these 'extra-solar' planets.



'But how many of them would be suitable for life? I will discuss how astronomers search for these planets, and the quest to discover life elsewhere in the Universe.' He has chosen for his title:

Strange new worlds: searching for another Earth

Last time he came to talk to us, in January 2016, his subject was 'From Big Bangs to Big Rips', when he appealed to a wide audience.

The Pavilion
Portswood Residents' Gardens
13 Abbots Way
Highfield, SO17 1QU



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7.30 pm Thursday 25 January

Discussion Group

What can humanists learn from religion?

Some humanists dismiss religion out-of-hand, but is it salutary to reflect that some aspects of religion can inspire humanists? What can we learn from Buddhism or Hinduism? Might not Christianity or Islam have lessons that we can learn from?

We explore this intriguing issue at Chris and Toni Rolles' home at:

19 Blenheim Avenue
Southampton
SO17 1DW

Noon, Sunday 11 February

Down House



Our last visit to Darwin's home was in September, 2011. There are many current members who have not visited this splendid house and garden (at least with South Hampshire Humanists) with all the memorabilia associated with this

great man's work.

No charge if you are an English Heritage member, otherwise £10 for 60+. A table has been booked in a pub nearby, and there is a possibility of travelling by mini-bus, depending on the numbers wishing to go.

Please let Chris Robinson know as soon as possible if you plan to come:

chrisrobinson153@btinternet.com, or
01329 235272.

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Recent events

On Sunday, the 12th of November, Professor Sally Munt gave us a talk on 'What does it mean to be Human?' in which she gave an account of the history of man's philosophical view of his place in the world. I use the term 'his' with some point here, as for most of Western history, Man and Woman have been considered separate and Woman's place in the inexorable hierarchy has been viewed by philosophers and theologians as subordinate to Man.

Sally started with the Greek thinkers, especially Aristotle, and their 'Scala Naturae', which put Man at the top of the tree of existence, bettered only by the Gods, and higher than animals and plants, by virtue of his better reasoning power. Women and Slaves were subordinate, but this was because of their lesser intellectual standing. The natural world, animate or inanimate, provided manifestations of the gods.

By the medieval period, this was replaced by

the 'Chain of Being'. A single God was deemed to have spontaneously created a natural order of all living things. Implicit in this view was that all life was created by god, with Man placed at the top of the list, and given dominion over women, animals and all natural resources. God had created man and all other life immutable, and evolution was impossible. Further, man was defined as Western European males, and only those who were Christian. Women, people of other races and faiths were held to be less than human. This view of the world gave rise to many problems, many of which are still with us today: Women had no legal standing, and no right to property. Western countries had a moral responsibility to colonise countries whose religion, culture and races were considered inferior. The immutability of man's position in the world was also reflected in Descartes' idea of man as Transcendent, and Linnaeus' classification of all living things.

So where does this leave man's view of what it means to be Human in the modern world? Contorted and self-centred. Professor Munt has reacted to this world view by becoming a Buddhist, but perhaps Humanists can share much of her revulsion of the dominant philosophy in our own world view.

Stephen Starr

Discussion Group

On 16 November nine of us met at Anne and David's house to discuss Should we be prepared to compromise our privacy in the interests of national security? Chris Rolles introduced the theme by contrasting post-electronics with pre-electronics, pointing out that the problem had become more acute with the arrival of the Internet with its easy access to information. The discussion that followed was broader than the topic suggested, dealing with general privacy matters rather than just national security — quite apart from personal anecdotes!

We discussed, among other things: Catholics in Australia and allegations about sexual goings-on; James Bond and his intrusion into the privacy of individuals; the Naval Criminal Investigation Service; WikiLeaks and the encrypted anonymising network that makes it harder to see where communications are coming from or going to (costing five police officers to investigate); Identity cards; Banks and businesses, and their willingness to divulge people's credit worthiness; and closed circuit television. We also discussed whether clergy and doctors must be prepared to break confidentiality in certain circumstances.

We agreed that sadly we have to accept a loss of privacy in the interests of national security, and that the Internet is just about impossible to control in a

free society. A clear majority was in favour of the introduction of identity cards, which would make it simpler to identify individuals who are a threat to society.

Judging from the fact that it was 9.45 pm before people departed, they must have found it an interesting evening!

Yuletide

On 10 December, 21 of us gathered at Flat 10 The Atrium, bringing loads of delicious food. In spite of being packed in like sardines people seemed to enjoy themselves and the occasion was enlivened by a quiz that got people moving around to look at the pictures. We ended up with a recording of Tom Lehrer's *Vatican Rag*.

Theatre Trip

For our theatre outing in October 12 of us went to Salisbury Playhouse where we enjoyed a convivial lunch together before seeing a performance of *The Wipers Times* by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman, described as the true and extraordinary story of the satirical newspaper created in the mud and mayhem of The Somme. It is a well researched play with short scenes and fast moving action portraying the awful life in the trenches, the camaraderie of the men and the amazing feat of producing a newspaper in those circumstances, under fire and gas attacks, for some two years between 1916 and 1918. Some senior officers considered the paper treasonable but it was a huge success with the troops on the Western Front. It was poignant, subversive and full of gallows humour. A thought-provoking play; a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit and a sad reflection on the futility of war.

Many thanks to Chris for organizing this enjoyable event.

AB

In the summer term of 1988 a 12-year-old boy Sean Mcloughlin wrote the following poem as part of a class room exercise:

*Orange and green;
It does not matter,
United now. Don't
Shatter our dream.
Scatter the seeds of
peace over our land,
so we can travel
hand in hand
across the bridge
of hope.*

Sean died in the bomb blast in Omagh in August 1988.

Thanks to Veronica Tippetts for drawing our attention to this. She read the poem at the UN Peace celebrations in Southampton.

NEWS

In September, Crispin Blunt MP was elected as the first Conservative Chair of the All Party Humanist Group in parliament, while Baroness (Joan) Bakewell was elected as his Labour Co-Chair.

The Home Affairs Committee investigating harassment and intimidation near abortion clinics heard evidence that anti-choice protesters have blocked women from accessing abortion clinics and have threatened staff. The Home Secretary Amber Rudd has announced a review into the behaviour of anti-choice campaigners outside English and Welsh abortion clinics, and whether further police and civil powers are needed to prevent the harassment and intimidation that has been occurring.

Jersey has announced plans to extend legal recognition to humanist marriages, as part of the move to also give legal recognition to same-sex marriages. With Scotland and the Republic of Ireland having legal humanist marriages, Guernsey considering the same, as well as the on-going legal case in Northern Ireland, there is a real possibility that soon England, Wales and the Isle of Man will be alone in these isles in denying legal recognition to humanists.

In a stunning attack on the values of state schools, the Archbishop of Canterbury has stated that the education system 'lacks clear, internal and commonly held values', and that in 'schools that are not of a religious character, confidence in any personal sense of ultimate values has diminished'.

Around the globe 85 countries report that severe discrimination has been exhibited against non-religious individuals, with several having seen humanists and atheists murdered for their beliefs over the past year.

This past year has seen humanists murdered by mobs in Pakistan, the Maldives, and India. In Pakistan, multiple humanists have been sentenced to death for blasphemy, and a number of bloggers were 'forcibly disappeared' by the state. In Saudi Arabia, a man was sentenced to death 'for atheism' over a Facebook post, while others remain on death row. In Malaysia, the Government has been 'hunting down' atheists, after a photo of a gathering gained publicity. More generally, thirteen countries have laws on the statute books punishing apostasy or blasphemy with death.

Victoria, Australia's second most populous state, has passed legislation legalising assisted dying for terminal patients who have less than six months to live. From 2019 onwards patients who have been resident in the state for over 12 months will be able to request a doctor to administer a lethal drug.

Almost half (49%) of private faith schools have been judged as failing by Ofsted due to concerns over leadership and the promotion of 'British values', new official statistics have revealed. According to the figures, 49% of private faith schools were judged to be less than 'good' at their most recent inspection.

The Isle of Man Government has published the results of a consultation held on proposals to remove restrictions to accessing abortion services on the island. The overwhelming majority of respondents favoured the removal of restrictions, with 87 % agreeing that a woman should have an unrestricted choice to request an abortion up to 14 weeks of pregnancy and 73.2 % believing that abortion should be available in some circumstances.

Lancashire County Council has voted to end the provision of non-stunned meat from religious slaughter in its local maintained schools, in spite of vociferous lobbying from local mosques. Humanists UK lobbied in support of the move.

*Humanist greetings
to you all
and best wishes
for the
New Year*

JANUARY	Sunday 21	2.00 pm	The Pavilion	Matt Bothwell on <i>Strange new worlds: searching for another Earth</i>
	Thursday 25	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Chris & Toni Rolles'	What can humanists learn from religion?
FEBRUARY	Sunday 11	tba	Visit to Down House	
MARCH	Sunday 11	2.00 pm	The Pavilion	AGM + Charity on refugees
	Thursday 22	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at David & Anne Bothwell's	Abortion — what should be the humanists view, especially in the light of recent medical advances?
APRIL	Sunday 15	12 noon	Chilbolton (Abbots Mitre)	Pub lunch + walk
MAY	Sunday 13	7.00 pm	The Pavilion	John Harding on <i>A life of crime: reflections on working with offenders</i>
	Thursday 24	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Catherine Griffiths's	What would be our ten commandments for today and in the future?
JUNE	Sunday 10	tba	Hawk Conservancy, Andover	
JULY	Sunday 8	7.00 pm	The Pavilion	Roger Brown on <i>Current developments in Higher Education</i>
	Thursday 19	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Liz & Grayham Mizon's	How can a country be governed in the era of fake news?
AUGUST			NO MEETINGS THIS MONTH	
SEPTEMBER	Sunday 9	7.00 pm	The Pavilion	Speaker TBA
	Thursday 20	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Veena & Arjun Spratt's	Is Britain a democracy?
OCTOBER	TBA		Theatre trip	
NOVEMBER	Sunday 11	2.00 pm	The Pavilion	Steve Rolles: <i>After the war on drugs?</i>
	Thursday 22	7.30 pm	Discussion Group at Joy Macfadyen's	Death and dying — what do we think about our own death and that of others. What comfort can humanists give?
DECEMBER	Sunday TBA	noon	Yule Party	TBA

Winchester Skeptics in the Pub

7.30pm on the last Thursday in the month at The Winchester Discovery Centre, Jewry Street, SO23 8SB.

Contact <http://www.hampshireskeptics.org> for information about events

Contacts	Secretary	Stephen Starr	bookrover@virginmedia.com	023 80362517
	Treasurer	Barbara Cummins	barbara130400@hotmail.com	01256 844301
	Newsletter	David Bothwell	bthwll@globalnet.co.uk	023 8055204
	Discussion Group	Liz Mizon	liz.mizon@btinternet.com	023 80769210

Humanist Celebrants

W=Weddings
N=Namings
F=Funerals

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South Hampshire Humanists: Membership Application/Renewal 2018

The normal annual subscription is £10 per person. For existing Humanists UK members, joining South Hampshire Humanists **for the first time**, the rate for the first year only is £5 per person.

Please choose between the following options —

(a) Transfer electronically direct to:

Name:	South Hampshire Humanists
Account No	13910981
Sort code:	560068

Please include your own name for identification purposes.

Please also email the treasurer [barbara130400@hotmail.com] and the secretary [bookrover@virginmedia.com] that you have done this. For a new application please also let them know your contact details as below.

OR

(b) Hand cash or cheque (payable to South Hampshire Humanists) to the Treasurer at a meeting.

OR

(c) Post a cheque to: Barbara Cummins, 33 The Street, Old Basing, Basingstoke RG24 7BX

I/We enclose £ for 2018 membership plus (optional) donation of £

I/We agree that this personal information may be kept on computer. (Please initial)

Are you a member of the Humanists UK? YES/NO?

Name(s) [please print]

Address

.....

Telephone email

Signature Date