



Coventry and Warwickshire Humanists Newsletter February 2024

Dear Fellow Humanists

Welcome to the February edition of the Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists Newsletter. I hope that February finds you well? I also hope that you enjoyed your pancakes on 13th February? Assuming that you enjoy pancakes and also actually had a pancake on that day. Known in the Christian calendar as Shrove Tuesday and is the eve of Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. This is recognised by Christians of the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation by Satan. Christians are then required to forgo any 'spiritual weaknesses' and to cleanse themselves of food, drink and other 'sinful' habits. (Probably in readiness for all of the Easter eggs they will be consuming at the end of Lent?) I mention this as I cannot find any reference to Lent or Shrove Tuesday in any other religions, or in any pre-Christian or Pagan societies? As you may be aware, I usually try find a connection between Christian festivals and occasions and make a comparison to pre-Roman British customs. But not this time! The only comparison I could find is from a 'Secular Lent' which is primarily aimed at agnostics who still have yearnings for Christian self-restraint. Secular Lent recommends 'discipline and self-improvement', mainly with practicing yoga and/or meditation.

However, as atheists and Humanists, maybe we need to be wary of Christians imposing their recognition of Lent upon us. Likewise, when I was employed at Coventry University, my head of department always had a plateful of sweets/chocolates/confectionary etc. on his desk. Being a generous person, he always encouraged visitors to his office to partake in the confectionary. However, on one occasion in a late February I attended his office for a meeting and the plate of sweets was missing? I enquired why? And if he had scoffed them all before I came in. 'No', he said, 'I have given them up for Lent'. I replied, 'Well, I haven't given anything up for Lent – and next week, I will bring my own sweets and I won't share them with you because you will be recognising Lent!'. Thankfully, he did have a sense of humour.

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Meetings:

Thursday 15th February: This was an online meeting which we usually arrange for the winter months. It was good to see our regular members again online as we had not met since the December social event. The main issues that we debated was feedback from the Humanists UK online discussion on *The real 3,000-year history of humanist thought*. The discussion was led by Catherine Nixey, the author of 'The Darkening Age'; Historian AG Leventis and Professor of Greek

Culture Tim Whitmarsh for an exploration of the *real* 3,000-year history of humanism, chaired by Humanists UK Chief Executive Andrew Copson 3000 year history. Adrian Davis gave a very good overview and summary of the meeting. The discussion is still available on the Humanists UK website. There was also a discussion on the correspondence that I have received from Zia Nezhadzedeh (Sharo) and Kat Parker, Case Manager of Secular Rescue at the US Centre for Inquiry (CFI) Zia is an Iranian refugee who has fled Iran because of religious persecution and Kat Parker is supporting him. There is more about this issue later in the Newsletter. The meeting included highlights from members of what they have visited, watched or read since the last meeting. The meeting ended with a quiz.

Thursday 21st March: This will be our next in-person meeting at the Waverley Day Centre. It will be good to see everyone face-to-face. I offer an apology for what you may have heard about the content of this meeting. I incorrectly informed Jane Sault that Claire Elcombe Webber, the Head of Humanist Care was to be our speaker at this meeting. Unfortunately, I had got my dates mixed up, and Claire will be attending the meeting in May and not March. I apologise for any inconvenience that this may have caused. However, the subject for discussion on 21st March will be the current situation with Israel and Palestine which will be led by me and John Goodfellow. It is worth stating that as Humanists we are rationalist thinkers who willingly participate in open debate.

A Splendid Testimonial:

At the online meeting on 15th February, John Goodfellow mentioned a funeral that he recently attended. John was full of praise for the way that Bob Jelley led the funeral service. I asked John to send me a paragraph of his comments. I am pleased to include it here:

"Just before Christmas a very close friend (the wife of a much-loved former work colleague) passed away and shortly afterwards her son contacted me to say that they were planning a Humanist funeral ceremony. I suggested that they get in touch with Bob Jelley who presided at my late wife's funeral in 2015. First of all, I want to say how grateful the family were for Bob's immediate commitment and compassionate support as, together, they planned the ceremony. Secondly, at the funeral at the Oxford Crematorium, Bob guided us through the ceremony with great skill and sensitivity. I spoke to a number of mourners afterwards - most of them with, by no means, a Humanist outlook - who said how impressed they were with his leadership. I think this experience demonstrates how proud we should be of our team of local Celebrants who are providing such an increasingly important service to families in Coventry and Warwickshire and beyond."

John Goodfellow – Well done Bob Jelley

Audrey Raishbrook 90th Birthday Celebration – 9th March 2024

One of our stalwart and popular supporters, Audrey Raishbrook will be celebrating her 90th Birthday on Saturday 9th March, 2024 from 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm at the **Standard Triumph Club, Herald Avenue, Coventry CV5 6UB**. All members and supporters of Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists and their guests are invited. To assist with catering arrangements, please respond as soon as possible directly to Audrey to confirm attendance on either 07498 220984 or 024-7671-1839

Humanists in the community: new study to measure contributions of non-religious

A new study conducted by the University of Warwick seeks to uncover how much the non-religious contribute to society. This study examines the extent to which non-religious forms of identity, including humanists, are related to 'trust, wellbeing, and involvement in the community.'

Humanists UK, a charity dedicated to promoting happy, ethical lives and advancing freedom of choice, thought, and expression, has over 1,000 active volunteers who contribute significantly to local communities across the country. The survey takes around 15-20 minutes to complete, will ask

questions about worldviews, wellbeing, belonging, trust, and engagement with voluntary activities – to garner information about the ‘social capital’ of the non-religious.

[The study](#) is being conducted by Dr Steven Kettell (University of Warwick), Dr Siobhan McAndrew (University of Sheffield) and Professor David Voas (University College, London). It is an independent study and is not being funded by any external organisation, agency, or individuals.

To date, the contribution of the non-religious to society has been vastly overlooked in favour of platforming the contribution of the religious, partly because the non-religious often do not volunteer in the name of being non-religious (e.g. for secular organisations). Also, because many non-religious people work for and volunteer their time with charities and organisations with a religious basis which adds to the myth that the non-religious do less community work.



During the Covid-19 pandemic Humanists UK mobilised its members, supporters, volunteers, and local groups and urged them to volunteer with Covid-19 mutual aid groups and/or the NHS, including to donate food and hygiene products to those in need. One third of Humanists UK’s members reported in Humanists UK’s own survey that they had volunteered formally or informally at the height of the crisis.

Humanists UK Director of Public Affairs and Policy Kathy Riddick commented:

‘We welcome a new study into the contribution of the non-religious. We know that the non-religious donate and volunteer just as much as religious people, but all too often this contribution remains invisible. We look forward to seeing the new evidence collected by this study.’

Adrian Davis came across a similar survey to ensure that the Humanist worldview is included in the study.

Worldview Study: <http://tinyurl.com/worldviewssurvey2024> from **Coventry University**

What is the purpose of this study?

We are conducting research to better understand what the worldviews are of people around the world – crucially including nonreligious individuals of different backgrounds too.

Who is carrying out the research?

The study is being conducted by Dr Valerie van Mulukom (Coventry University), Roosa Haimila (University of Helsinki), Dr Annick de Wit (Utrecht University), and Dr Hugh Turpin (University of Oxford).

What happens if I agree to take part?

You will indicate your agreement with 128 statements that reflect different perspectives on the world, and a few demographic questions. The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Campaign for Zia Nezhadzadeh – ‘Sharo’:

Early in January I received an email out of the blue from Zia Nezhadzadeh under his nickname ‘Sharo’. The email was an appeal for support for his campaign against religious persecution in Iran. (The details are outlined in the letter below from Kat Parker from the Centre for Inquiry (CFI) in the United States). I replied to Sharo requesting further information and explaining that I was a Humanist and a volunteer of a small branch of Humanist UK and that I have limited experience and wherewithal to provide any direct assistance. I have since received the letter below from Kat Parker who is the Case Manager, Secular Rescue of the CFI. I have passed on details of Sharo’s situation and a copy of Kat Parker’s letter to Andrew Copson. Andrew has now replied thanking me for bringing Sharo’s case to his attention and that he has passed on Sharo’s case to Humanist International who are best place to look into this case. I will keep you apprised of any further developments with the situation of Zia Nezhadzadeh (Sharo)

"I work at the Centre for Inquiry (CFI), a non-profit organization that promotes reason, science, and secular values in the United States and around the world. CFI participates as an NGO at the United Nations Human Rights Council, where we fiercely challenge blasphemy laws and the myriad ways by which atheists are oppressed, ostracized, and persecuted. One of our programs is called "Secular Rescue," and I am its Case Manager. Secular Rescue assists secularist writers, bloggers, publishers, and human rights activists who are under threat of violence or imprisonment because of their nonreligious views or activism.

Today, I write in support of Zia Nezhadzadeh's application for the Australian Special Humanitarian Program visa. Zia is an Iranian-born atheist-humanist author, blogger, and YouTube content-provider whose subject matter focuses on criticism of religion—primarily Islam—and the promotion of humanist values and strategies. As such, Zia and his family (wife and young son) have been subjected to harassment and threats from individuals and organizations who wish to silence him. The Nezhadzadehs fled Iran for Turkey and have been living there since 2016.

In Iran, both blasphemy (against Islam) and apostasy (abandonment or renunciation of Islam) are considered crimes that are effectively punishable by imprisonment or capital punishment by the state, as well as informal shunning, harassment, threats, violence, and vigilante actions against anyone labelled an "apostate" or "blasphemer." Iran is the second most discriminatory nation (Saudi Arabia being first) to sanction apostasy as a crime punishable by death.

Secular Rescue works to protect atheist rights activists who bravely promote a peaceful, secular, and tolerant worldview through their writings and activism. Our program supports freethinking bloggers and rights advocates who shine a light on the evils of religious extremism, forced conversions, and the suppression of free speech and freedom of conscience in countries where religious dogma is law. According to the U.S. Department of State's 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom, in Iran: *The penal code provides for hudud punishments (those mandated by sharia), including amputation, flogging, and stoning, and specifies the death sentence for proselytizing and attempts by non-Muslims to convert Muslims, as well as for moharebeh ("enmity against God") and sabb al-nabi ("insulting the Prophet or Islam"). According to the penal code, the application of the death penalty varies depending on the religion of both the perpetrator and the victim... HEADQUARTERS Center for Inquiry Transnational 3965 Rensch Road Amherst, New York 14228 United States The law prohibits Muslims from changing or renouncing their religious beliefs. The only recognized conversions are from other religions to Islam. Sharia as interpreted by the government considers conversion from Islam apostasy, a crime punishable by death.*

In 2013, the Iranian regime admitted to torture of political dissidents and activists in Iran. The 2019 Humanists International Freedom of Thought report ranks Iran poorly, stating:

Expression of core Humanist principles on democracy, freedom and human rights is brutally repressed; 'Apostasy' or conversion from a specific religion is outlawed and punishable by death; 'Blasphemy' or criticism of religion is outlawed and punishable by death; It is illegal to advocate secularism or church-state separation, or such advocacy is suppressed, It is illegal or unrecognised to identify as an atheist or as non-religious; Expression of non-religious views is severely persecuted, or is rendered almost impossible by severe social stigma, or is highly likely to be met with hatred or violence; Government figures or state agencies openly marginalize, harass, or incite hatred or violence against the non-religious; It is illegal to register an explicitly Humanist, atheist, secularist or other non-religious NGO or other human rights organization, or such groups are persecuted by authorities.

The same report states several more items of importance to Zia's situation, including,

...the government jails and periodically executes dozens of individuals on charges of “enmity against God” (moharebeh). Although this crime is framed as a religious offense, and may be used against atheists and other religious dissenters, it is most often used as a punishment for political acts that challenge the regime (on the basis that to oppose the theocratic regime is to oppose Allah)...

In 2019, amid an ongoing campaign aimed at silencing foreign-based activists, agents of Iran’s Intelligence Ministry arrested the brother of the U.S.-based activist Masih Alinejad. The Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) “has documented dozens of cases of activists’ and journalists’ family members being harassed and detained” as part of the Iranian intelligence strategy to “to muzzle criticism of state policies,” and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) have denounced Iran’s recent crackdown on protesters against the regime to the UN Human Rights Council.

In late 2015, Zia was arrested and detained whilst driving his taxi. A mullah customer took exception to Zia playing music in his car. Zia refused to turn it off (though he did lower the volume). The mullah directed him to an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) barracks, unbeknownst to him. There he was detained for five days, physically assaulted, questioned on his beliefs, and reprimanded for his “insolence.” Eventually, on the fifth day, he was released on the grounds there was not enough evidence to charge him with anything substantial. Zia believes he has been under surveillance since that time.

On November 5, 2016, Zia’s home was raided by IRGC officers. Zia was visiting and staying with a friend in hospital, but the officers seized his computer, an external hard drive, and flash cards, where he stored his writings.

On November 11, Zia and his family fled to Turkey, arriving the following day. On November 26 a summons arrived at his home in Iran, and was retrieved by his neighbour. The charges are directly related to what the agents would have found on the items they seized, and are as follows:

1. insulting religious sacrosanct
2. cursing the Holy Prophet of Islam
3. promoting propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran

Fleeing to Turkey, however, has not made his situation less precarious, as Islamic extremists operate there to punish, kidnap, or murder those they consider apostates or blasphemers. On December 9, 2020, well-known social media atheist-activist, Arsalan Rezaei, an Iranian national, was stabbed at his Turkish home by two members of the IRGC; he reportedly died of his injuries the following day. Zia is understandably fearful the same fate awaits him at any time.

In February of 2018, Zia successfully took an aggressor to court for threatening his life. The defendant is an Iranian national. Zia and his family receive ongoing threats from Iranian Islamists in Turkey, who wish to carry out Islamic justice against him, or have him sent back to Iran where such justice would surely be metered out.

Being an atheist or simply someone who no longer follows Islam in Iran is dangerous and once a charge such as blasphemy or apostasy is known—whether formal or informal—the person’s life is in grave danger. Zia’s life is at risk if he is required to return to Iran.

Zia has exercised his human right to reject his religion and speak about it publicly, and to criticize abuses by the Iranian government. Consequently, he has become a prime target for harassment, punishment, incarceration, and a very real risk of execution. It is our judgment that he would be apprehended and charged immediately upon return; his life and liberty imperilled. We strongly support Zia’s application for asylum. Because of the danger to Zia, his wife, and son—reported in his application and supported by evidence—and the oppressive reality of present-day Iran, we believe their very lives depend on their being granted asylum.

Sincerely, Kat Parker Case Manager, Secular Rescue, Centre for Inquiry

Humanist Philosophers and Thinkers: EM Forster - Following on from previous monthly overviews of the lives of Bertrand Russell, Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine, for this month I have chosen the author EM Forster who was a prominent member of the British Humanist Association.

EM Forster

Edward Morgan Forster is an English author and a Humanist. Born on 1st January 1879 and died on 7th June 1970. Best known for his novels, particularly *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924).



He also wrote numerous short stories, essays, speeches and broadcasts, as well as a limited number of biographies and some pageant plays. He also co-authored the opera *Billy Budd* (1951). Today, he is considered one of the most successful of the Edwardian era English novelists.

After attending Tonbridge School he studied history and classics at King's College, Cambridge, where he met fellow future writers such as Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf. He then travelled throughout Europe before publishing his first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, in 1905.

Many of his novels examine class difference and hypocrisy. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 22 separate years.

Among Forster's ancestors were members of the Clapham Sect, a social reform group in the Church of England. He attended as a day boy Tonbridge School in Kent, where the school theatre has been named in his honour, although he is known to have been unhappy there.

At King's College, Cambridge in 1897–1901, he became a member of a discussion society known as the Apostles (formally the Cambridge *Conversazione* Society). They met in secret to discuss their work on philosophical and moral questions. Many of its members went on to constitute what came to be known as the Bloomsbury Group, of which Forster was a member in the 1910s and 1920s. There is a famous recreation of Forster's Cambridge at the beginning of *The Longest Journey*. The Schlegel sisters of *Howards End* are based to some degree on Vanessa and Virginia Stephen. Forster graduated with a BA with second-class honours in both classics and history.

In 1904, Forster travelled in Greece and Italy out of interest in their classical heritage. He then sought a post in Germany, to learn the language, and spent several months in the summer of 1905 in Nassenheide, Pomerania, (now the Polish village of Rzędziny) as a tutor to the children of the writer Elizabeth von Arnim. He wrote a short memoir of this experience, which was one of the happiest times in his life.

After leaving university, Forster travelled in Europe with his mother. They then moved to Weybridge, Surrey, where he wrote all six of his novels.

In 1914, he visited Egypt, Germany and India with the classicist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, by which time he had written all but one of his novels. As a conscientious objector in the First World War, Forster served as a Chief Searcher (for missing servicemen) for the British Red Cross in Alexandria, Egypt.

Forster spent a second spell in India in the early 1920s as private secretary to Tukoji Rao III, Maharajah of Dewas. *The Hill of Devi* is his non-fictional account of this period. After returning to London from India, he completed the last novel of his to be published in his lifetime, *A Passage to India* (1924), for which he won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction. He also edited the letters of Eliza Fay (1756–1816) from India, in an edition first published in 1925. In 2012, Tim Leggatt, who knew Forster for his last 15 years, wrote a memoir based on unpublished correspondence with him over those years.

Forster was awarded a Benson Medal in 1937. In the 1930s and 1940s Forster became a notable broadcaster on BBC Radio, and while George Orwell was the BBC India Section talks producer from 1941 to 1943, he commissioned from Forster a weekly book review. Forster became publicly

associated with the British Humanist Association. In addition to his broadcasting, he advocated individual liberty and penal reform and opposed censorship by writing articles, sitting on committees and signing letters.



A portrait of EM Forster by Dora Carrington 1924-25

Forster was open about his homosexuality to close friends, but not to the public. He never married, but had a number of male lovers during his adult life. He developed a long-term relationship with Bob Buckingham (1904–1975), a married policeman, which lasted for 40 years. Forster included Buckingham and his wife May in his circle, which included J. R. Ackerley, a writer and literary editor of *The Listener*, the psychologist W. J. H. Sprott, and for a time, the composer Benjamin Britten. Other writers with whom he associated included Christopher Isherwood, the poet Siegfried Sassoon, and the Belfast-based novelist Forrest Reid. He was a close friend of the socialist poet and philosopher Edward Carpenter. A visit to Carpenter and his younger lover George Merrill in 1913 inspired Forster's novel *Maurice*, which is partly based on them.

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After a fall in April 1961, he spent his final years in Cambridge at King's College.

Forster was elected an honorary fellow of King's College in January 1946 and lived for the most part in the college, doing relatively little. In April 1947 he arrived in America for a three-month nationwide tour of public readings and sightseeing, returning to the East Coast in June. He declined a knighthood in 1949 and was made a Member of the Order of the Companions of Honour in 1953. At age 82, he wrote his last short story, *Little Imber*, a science fiction tale. According to his friend Richard Marquand, Forster was critical of American foreign policy in his latter years, which was one reason he refused offers to adapt his novels for the screen, as Forster felt such productions would involve American financing.

At 85 he went on a pilgrimage to the Wiltshire countryside that had inspired his favourite novel *The Longest Journey*, escorted by William Golding. In 1961 he was one of the first five authors named as a Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature. In 1969 he was made a member of the Order of Merit. Forster died of a stroke on 7 June 1970 at the age of 91, at the Buckinghams' home in Coventry, Warwickshire. His ashes, mingled with those of Buckingham, were later scattered in the rose garden of Coventry's crematorium, near Warwick University. (*This is something that Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists should celebrate!*)

Colder Than Here – A Play Directed by Jacqueline Campbell at the Bear Pit Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon 12th to 16th March

Jacqueline has taken time out from her busy rehearsal schedule to provide this interesting and useful synopsis and overview of this interesting play. I hope that as many Humanists as possible can go to see this marvellous play:

“Colder Than: Here, which I’m lucky enough to be directing for the Bear Pit Theatre in Stratford Upon Avon in March, is a play by Laura Wade which looks at some of the themes familiar to all Humanists - relationships, love, nature, looking after each other, living well and dying well.

It focuses on six months in the life of the Bradley family, who live in Leamington. Myra and Alec have two grown up daughters, Harriet and Jenna. They’re an ordinary family. They have their family jokes and stories, they laugh, they bicker, they fall out, they make up. But, for them, everything takes on a new meaning. Because Myra has cancer, and only has six to nine months to live.

The play follows them as they gradually come to terms with this. Myra handles the situation with humour, grace and incredible resilience, and focuses on planning the perfect funeral - complete with natural burial and a cardboard coffin, to the bewilderment of her family.

I fell in love with this play some years ago and am thrilled to have the chance to direct it with a cast who are giving beautiful and moving performances. The play is funny, tender and uplifting, and we’ve been incredibly lucky to have input from Laura Wade, who has won numerous awards for her writing for stage and screen.

As a funeral celebrant, I’ve found *Colder Than Here* to be truthful and so real in the way it shows how people deal with the prospect of death. It’s a gem of a play and, if you’re interested, it’s on at The Bear Pit from 12-16 March, with a matinee performance on the Saturday”.

Poetry Corner

This month, Audrey Raishbrook has chosen *Tewkesbury Road* by John Masefield
***Tewkesbury Road* - John Masefield**

*It is good to be out on the road, and going one knows not where,
Going through meadow and village, one knows not whither or why;
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in the keen cool rush of the air,
Under the flying white clouds, and the broad blue lift of the sky.*

*And to halt at the chattering brook, in a tall green fern at the brink
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and the foxgloves purple and white;
Where the shifty-eyed delicate deer troop down to the brook to drink
When the stars are mellow and large at the coming on of the night.*

*O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the homely smell of the earth,
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, and joy past power of words;
And the blessed green comely meadows are all a-ripple with mirth
At the noise of the lambs at play and the dear wild cry of the birds.*

Film Review:

Bob Marley: One Love - A biographical drama film based on the life of the reggae singer and songwriter, from his rise to fame in the mid-1970s up until his death in 1981. The film stars Kingsley Ben-Adir as Marley, alongside Lashana Lynch as Rita Marley, and James Norton as Chris Blackwell. An excellent bio-pic of the iconic singer

The Taste of Things - a 2023 French historical romantic drama film starring Juliette Binoche and Benoit Magimel. Set in 1885, it depicts a romance between a cook and the gourmet she works for. Based on the novel by Marcel Rouff *La Vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant, gourmet (The Passionate Epicure)*.

Wicked Little Letters - A British black comedy mystery film with an all-star cast including Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley, Anjana Vasan, Eileen Atkins, and Timothy Spall. Based on a true scandal that

stunned 1920s England, the story centres on two neighbours in the seaside town of Littlehampton. A series of obscene letters begin to target the other residents, with suspicion falling upon one person. As the outrageous letters continue to escalate. She risks losing both her freedom and custody of her daughter. A female Police Officer is determined to find the real culprit.

The Settlers - a 2023 revisionist Western drama film. In 1893, an indigenous South American Indian, a British soldier and an American mercenary, embark on an expedition on horseback to delimit and reclaim the lands that the State has granted to wealthy sheep farmer. What appears to be an administrative expedition turns into a violent hunt for the natives of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago. The selknam genocide lies at the core of the film

Days of Heaven – First released in 1978, an American romantic period drama film written and directed by Terrence Malick, and starring Richard Gere, Brooke Adams and Sam Shepard. Set in 1916, it tells the story of lovers who travel to the Texas Panhandle to harvest crops for a wealthy farmer. They lay claim to the fortune of the dying farmer by tricking him into a false marriage.

Dune: Part Two – An epic sci-fi fiction film and sequel to *Dune* (2021), it is the second of a two-part adaptation of the 1965 novel *Dune* by Frank Herbert, and follows Paul Atreides as he unites with the Fremen people of the desert planet Arrakis to wage war against House Harkonnen. Starring Austin Butler, Christopher Walken, Rebecca Ferguson and Josh Brolin.

Perfect Days - Hirayama works as a public toilet cleaner in Tokyo. He repeats his structured, ritualized life every day starting at dawn. He dedicates his free time to his passion for music, which he listens to in his van to and from work, and to his books, which he reads every night before going to sleep. His dreams are shown in flickery impressionistic sequences at the end of every day.

City of God - a 2002 Portuguese-language epic crime film adapted from the 1997 novel of the same name written by Paulo Lins. The plot is also loosely based on real events. It depicts the growth of organized crime in the Cidade de Deus suburb of Rio de Janeiro, between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1980s. Most of the actors were, in fact, residents of the favelas.

Shoshana - Follows two British police officers in their hunt for charismatic poet and Zionist freedom fighter Avraham Stern, who was plotting to evict British authorities. Starring Irina Starshenbaum, Harry Melling and Aury Alby

Lisa Frankenstein - a 2024 American comedy horror film, starring Kathryn Newton, Cole Sprouse and Liza Soberano. The plot follows a misunderstood teenage goth girl who witnessed her mother's brutal axe murder and reanimates a Victorian-era corpse and works to make him into the man of her dreams.

The Promised Land - Though many had already tried and failed to realize the hopes of King Frederik V for the wild heath of Jutland to be tamed and cultivated, a low-born ex-army officer believes he has the necessary mettle to triumph over the inhospitable soil, roving thieves and many other obstacles. His most formidable enemy proves to be the landowner who knows that any progress on the heath will cost him his power. Starring Mads Mikkelsen, Amanda Collin and Simon Bennebjerg,

Boys in the Boat - A sports drama based on the bestselling non-fiction book written by Daniel James Brown, *The Boys in The Boat* (directed by George Clooney) is about the 1936 University of Washington rowing team that competed for gold at the Summer Olympics in Berlin. This inspirational true story follows a group of underdogs at the height of the Great Depression as they are thrust into the spotlight and take on elite rivals from around the world. Starring Joel Edgerton, Al Ulbrickson Sr. and Callum Turner.

Hamlet - Two-time Oscar nominee Ian McKellen stars in this thrilling and uniquely modern take on Shakespeare's classic tragedy.

Eureka - The film is narrated by Eureka, a woman who became a migratory bird to create a connection between the years 1870 and 2019 and the United States, Mexico, and the Amazon rainforest. Starring Viggo Mortensen, José María Yazpik and Chiara Mastroianni.

Exhibition on Screen: Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse – An opportunity to see some great works of art on the big screen. This dazzling film takes a magical journey from the gallery to the gardens, to Giverny and Seebüll and other glorious grounds favoured by artists.

Films Still on the Circuit:

American Fiction: Thelonious 'Monk' Ellison is a respected author and professor of English literature. Insecure of his academic standing, while his latest novel is failing to attract publishers, who claim Monk's writing 'isn't Black enough.' In a fit of spite, Monk concocts a novel embodying every Black cliché he can imagine. A major publisher immediately offers the biggest advance he's ever seen. As the novel is rushed to the printers and Hollywood comes courting, Monk must reckon with a monster of his own making. Starring Jeffrey Wright and based on the Percival Everett novel 'Erasure'

Zone of Interest: An interesting investigation into the domestic dream of Nazi Germany in this penetrating rethink of Holocaust cinema, inspired by the Martin Amis novel. A family live in their beautifully ordered house and garden. But audible from behind the wall are the sounds of mechanised death from Auschwitz. Has been suggested for an Oscar nomination

Poor Things: This film has received some glowing reviews. A science fantasy black comedy based on the novel by Alasdair Gray. Starring Emma Stone, Mark Ruffalo and Willem Dafoe. A young Victorian woman crudely resurrected by a scientist following her suicide, runs off with a debauched lawyer to embark on an odyssey of self-discovery and sexual liberation.

The Holdovers: An American Christmas comedy-drama film starring Paul Giamatti, Da'Vine Joy Randolph and Dominic Sessa. Set in 1970, it follows a bad-tempered history teacher at a New England boarding school who is forced to chaperone a handful of students with nowhere to go on Christmas break.

(Oscar Night will be on Sunday 10th March – many cinemas will be showing the favourites over the next 2-3 weeks in case you missed any of them)

Preview of TV Programmes and Films:

Monday 26th February:

21.00 – BBC1: The Way – the 2nd episode of this exciting serial from Michael Sheen.

23.15 – BBC2: Apostasy – Excellent Drama starring Siobhan Finneran, Sacha Parkinson and Molly Wright. A young Jehovah's Witness is shunned from the community when she becomes pregnant, leaving her mother and sister to question their relationship with the faith.

Tuesday 27th February:

22.40 – BBC1: Kin – Two episodes of this enthralling drama of the Irish crime family. **Also 23.30**

23.15 – BBC2: Loving - Drama based on a true story. After marrying and starting to build a home together in the late 1950s, a mixed-race Virginia couple are arrested and banished from the state. They then mount a court battle to have their status declared legal.

Wednesday 28th February:

21.00 – BBC4: Rise of the Nazi's: Dictators at War – A further episode of this docu-drama

22.15 – BBC4: Anna Karenina – BBC play first broadcast in 1961. In 1880s Russia, Anna Karenina sacrifices her marriage when she has a passionate affair with an army officer. Dramatisation of Tolstoy's novel, starring Claire Bloom and Sean Connery.

22.25 – BBC3: Only You – A heart-warming comedy-drama. Starring Laia Costa and Josh O'Connor

22.40 – BBC1: Boarders – A new comedy-drama series. Five black inner-city teenagers are offered scholarships to a prestigious boarding school - but will they be able to leave their old worlds behind and thrive in this new one? **Next episode at 23.25**

Thursday 29th February:

22.10 – BBC4: Doctor Zhivago - David Lean's epic romantic drama, starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie set during the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Friday 1st March: - A good night for fans of Queen on BBC4

21.00 – BBC1: Would I Lie to You – a compilation the best parts of the current series

21.00 – BBC4: Queen: The legendary 1975 Concert – 22.05 – Freddie Mercury: A life in 10 Pictures – 23.05 – Queen at the BBC – 00.05 – The Story of Bohemian Rhapsody

22.15 – BBC3: The Miseducation of Cameron Post - Comedy drama starring Chloë Grace Moretz. In 1993, teenager Cameron Post is caught in the back seat of a car with another girl, and is sent to an evangelical camp that promotes gay "conversion therapy". While there, she befriends her fellow outcasts and rebels against the camp's abusive programme. Not to be missed!

22.45 – ITV1: Rocky – the first of the Rocky franchise starring Sylvester Stallone

23.05 – BBC2: The Impossible - Drama based on a true story, starring Ewan McGregor and Naomi Watts. The holiday of a lifetime in Thailand turns into a nightmare for a family separated by the deadly 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. With the area a devastated wasteland, the struggle begins to find out who has survived.

Saturday – 2nd March:

21.00 – BBC4: Prisoner - Two more episodes of this enthralling Danish drama set in a prison that is due for closure. **The next episode is at 22.00**

23.55 – BBC2: Sicario - Crime thriller starring Emily Blunt and Josh Brolin. The war between Mexican drug cartels and the American authorities becomes increasingly vicious. A highly regarded female FBI agent is sent in to bring down the ruthless gangs. She soon learns that her by-the-book approach to the job might not work in a world where nothing is quite as it seems.

Sunday 3rd March:

20.00 – BBC1: Call the Midwife – another episode of the popular sit-com

21.00 – BBC1: Death in Paradise – another episode of the cheesy Caribbean crime series – I only watch it for the sun! The perfect antidote to a British winter

21.00 - ITV1: Trigger Point – The final episode of the anti-terrorist crime series

22.45 – BBC2: True Things - Drama starring Ruth Wilson and Tom Burke. A benefit claims officer is lonely, bored and unfulfilled, until a charismatic client she dubs "Blond" arrives on the scene and blows up her world. Intoxicated by the unpredictable ex-con, she embarks on an obsessive and volatile relationship that sends her down a dark and dangerous path.

00.20 – BBC1: Brooklyn – Another showing of the excellent film adaptation of the Colm Toibin novel of a young Irish girl emigrating to the USA. Starring Saoirse Ronan and Domhnall Gleeson

00.20 – BBC2: After Love – A woman suddenly finds herself a widow following the unexpected death of her ferry captain husband, but the day after the funeral she discovers he had a secret across the English Channel in Calais. Drama, starring Joanna Scanlan

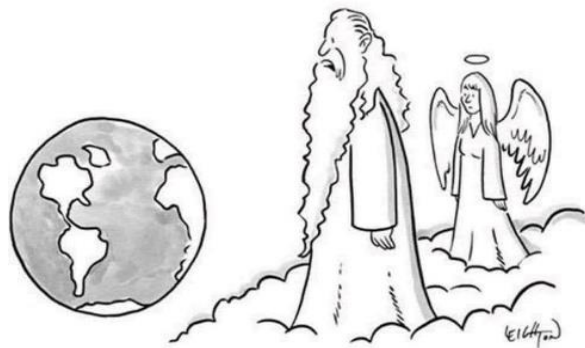
Monday 4th March:

21.00 – BBC1: The Way – The 3rd episode of this enthralling serial from Michael Sheen

22.00 – BBC4: Navalny: Storyville – A documentary that follows Alexei Navalny and his team as they unravel the plot against him, find evidence of the Kremlin's involvement, and prepare to go public with their findings. Very appropriate considering Navalny's recent unexplained death

00.10 – BBC2: The Souvenir - Romantic drama starring Honor Swinton Byrne, Tom Burke and Tilda Swinton. In 1980s London, a student has a relationship with an affluent, worldly Foreign Office employee. The romance starts off well, but suspects her partner is merely using her for money.

A Few Cartoons – Thanks to Glyn & Heather Evans:



"I'm starting to prefer the ones who don't believe in me."

A Few Funnies to Finish With:

I am going to open up a new restaurant that fuses the best of Chinese and Middle Eastern cuisine
I will call it – ‘Wok Like an Egyptian’

If the Romans were such an advanced civilisation – why is there no Latin word for the internet?

I was thrown out of the cloning exam – I was copying the kid next to me

I went to a school for magicians – but I failed the final exam – They were all trick questions

One of my friends stole my new platform shoes, I know who it is – because he can’t look me in the eye

What do you call a large bird of prey that is unwell? Illegal

I wasn’t sure how comfortable my new couch would be – But sofa so good

My wife was telling me that I am of average intelligence – Now, that is just mean!

I went to the doctors to tell him that I feel like a supermarket. He asked how long I have felt like this
– I replied, ‘Since I was Lid!’

Court Clerk: Are you here about your hearing?

Me: ‘No, my hearing is fine. I think it is about that theft that I committed

My cousin Stephen always introduces himself as ‘Stephen with a PH’. That’s because he is slightly acidic

WARNING!!

The AA have warned that anyone travelling through icy conditions should take a shovel, extra clothing (including scarf, hat and gloves), blankets/sleeping bag, 24-hour supply of food and water, de-icer, rock salt, torch, spare battery, petrol can, first aid kit and jump leads

I felt like a right idiot on the bus!



"I spend way too much time commuting to work."

