

Monday 21st June , 8pm

Fred Taylor:

Exploring the planets: why bother?

The American space agency, NASA, has sent many unmanned probes to explore our planetary neighbours in the Solar System. Now the European Space Agency, which includes the UK, has its own smaller, but growing, planetary exploration programme. What are we trying to do? What will we gain from it? Is it worth the trouble (and the money)? Fred Taylor is Halley Professor of Physics at Oxford University and Distinguished Visiting Scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology. He is involved in American and European space missions to all the planets of the classical Solar System and is the author of several books, including *The Cambridge Photographic Guide to the Planets* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Monday July 19th, 8pm

Simon Woods: *Should medicine help us have a good death?*

Do terminally ill people have the right to medical assistance to end their lives? Questions of terminal illness, assisted suicide and euthanasia are often in the news, raising questions about personal autonomy, quality of life, and the sanctity of life. Simon Woods is a bioethicist, whose first career was as a cancer nurse. Now part of the PEALS staff, he has written and broadcast widely on end of life issues.

Newcastle Café Scientifique is organised by the Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Institute, at the University of Newcastle (www.peals.ncl.ac.uk) and is part of the national network of Café Scientifiques (www.cafescientifique.org). PEALS can be contacted on 0191 241 8614 or via peals@ncl.ac.uk

Café Scientifique 2003-4

Back for our fifth series, and better than ever, Café Scientifique offers monthly conversation about science controversies, accessible to anyone from sixth formers to senior citizens. Come and hear local heroes and visiting stars re-examine what we might all take for granted and explain what's coming next. Come along to Newcastle's Live Theatre (Broad Chare, Quayside) at 8 pm - at £3 and £1 (unwaged) the secrets of the universe are the cheapest show in town!

Monday 22nd September 2003, 8pm

Tim Harper: *Nanotech and me: what is it and why should I care?*

Governments and corporations around the world are spending billions on nanotechnology but have you ever stopped to ask why? Is nanotechnology all about tiny robots in 50 years time, or can it make a real and positive difference to our lives? Tim Harper explains what nanotechnology is, and isn't, where it is already in use in our daily lives and where it will take us in the coming years. Tim is the founder & President of CMP Cientifica, the world's largest nanotechnology information and consulting company. He co-authored the *Nanotechnology Opportunity Report™*, described by NASA as "the defining report in the field of nanotechnology" and was described by Time Magazine as "the face of European nanotechnology".

Monday 20th October, 8pm

Matt Ridley: *Nature via nurture*

The debate over the relative contribution of genetic and environmental factors to human personality and behaviour is one of the most interesting and heated issues in both the biological and social sciences. What difference does parenting make? Do we have free will? What can the study of animal behaviour suggest about human society? The latest book from the author of *The Red Queen*, *The Origin of Virtue*, and *Genome* gives a fascinating insight into the history of this controversy, and the latest experimental evidence. We are proud to welcome back the speaker who launched our first Café back in January 2000 to talk about his recent work.

Monday 17th November , 8pm

Catherine Blackledge:

The vaginal revolution

In the past, science has misrepresented female sexual anatomy, reducing its remarkable complexities to the notion of a passive vessel - in terms of both sexual pleasure and reproduction. However, this idea of the vagina as a passive vessel is one of science's greatest misconceptions. The true structure of female genitalia is now being revealed, as is the dynamic nature of the vagina's role in sexual reproduction. The result is nothing less than a vaginal revolution. Author of *The Story of V*, Catherine has a science degree and PhD, has worked as a science and medical journalist and a freelance broadcaster.

Monday 19th January 2004, 8pm

Cindy Engel:

How animals keep themselves well

Why do dogs eat grass? Why do cattle dig and lick at clay? Why is it important for us to know? Understanding the ways animals manage their own health in the wild can help us improve our own health and that of animals in our care. Author of *Wild Health*, Cindy has a PhD in animal behaviour, has been an associate lecturer in environmental science with the Open University for 15 years and is a regular contributor to the livestock health and welfare debate.

Monday 16th February, 8pm

Louise Parker: *Access to medical information: public interest vs. privacy*

Patient information gathered from medical records or directly from the individuals themselves is vital for health research. The 'One Thousand Families from Newcastle Study' started in 1947 and still runs today: findings contributed to 1960s slum clearances. The vast majority of the study participants - now in their 50s - are proud to be part of the research and supportive of its continuation. But in future, similar projects may be threatened both by current legislative proposals and changed attitudes to participation in research. Should individuals have the right to veto the use of information about themselves in research studies and what would their veto

mean for the rest of us? Louise is Professor of Paediatric Epidemiology at Newcastle University and a member of the Thousand Families Study Steering Group. She is also associate research director for R&D at the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

Monday 15th March, 8pm

Joao Magueijo:

Faster than the speed of light?

Everyone knows that the speed of light is fixed. It's one of the constants of nature and the basis of the most famous equation of all, $E=MC^2$. But some leading physicists have come up with the shocking possibility that the speed of light might change in time during the life of the Universe. Could Einstein be wrong, after all? Deceptively simple, Variable Speed of Light (VSL) theory came to Joao during a bad hangover one damp morning in Cambridge. Reader in Theoretical Physics at Imperial College, Joao was described by the New York Times as 'having the makings of a champ'.

Monday 10th May, 8pm

Cafe Philosophique: *Distress in Children*

This extra meeting is a pilot to see if there is interest in a regular café philosophique in the City. The discussion will be introduced by Dr. Joel Yoeli, a philosopher and practising child psychologist, who will cover issues such as autism, ADHD, conduct disorder, behaviour problems, and bullying, and the process of assessment and classification. Are we asking the right questions about the difficulty adults have with children? What can we learn from philosophical debates? As usual, no prior knowledge needed, just an open mind!

Monday 17th May, 8pm

Elaine Perry: *Medicinal plants in mind*

The prospect of new and safer treatments for preventing or treating disorders of mind and brain, based on plant medicines, is the motivation behind the Medicinal Plant Research Centre, a collaboration of the two Newcastle Universities. Elaine is Professor of Neurochemical Pathology, and has over 25 years' experience of researching brain diseases including Alzheimer's. Come and hear how the traditional uses of plants like sage and lemon balm have inspired modern clinical trials into how plants can enhance memory and mood.