**Sex, love and robots – it’s all a part of Being Human 2016**

Martian autopsies and an evening of urban shamanism in south London’s Cross Bones Graveyard for the ‘outcast dead’ lend a fun element to the serious business of UK humanities research.

They are among the hundreds of events in this year’s nine-day Being Human festival (17–25 November) which highlights the richness and vitality of humanities research and the ways it benefits society. And with just 12 weeks to go the full programme of UK events has been published online today ([http://beinghumanfestival.org/press/](http://beinghumanfestival.org/press/)).

The festival is led by the School of Advanced Study (SAS) at the University of London, in partnership with the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the British Academy. Its ‘hope and fear’ theme for 2016 has stimulated a rich variety of events.

And to top it all Professor Sue Black, a world-renowned forensic anthropologist whose job is normally to identify human remains, will perform an H G Wells-inspired Martian autopsy at Dundee University to showcase the impact of the literary imagination on scientific endeavour and the scientific imagination on literary practice.

‘We are proud to fly the flag for humanities in the UK, which help preserve and extend 5000 years of research and development into what it means to be human, says Professor Sarah Churchwell, Being Human’s new director. ‘The Being Human festival will showcase the best and most innovative aspects of that research across the country by taking knowledge out of the lecture hall, out of the archives and the libraries, and putting it to work in the public sphere, for the benefit of all.’

Festival curator Dr Michael Eades says that the events can be broken down into five broad categories: Journeys of hope and fear; War and peace; Sickness and health; Hidden spaces, hidden voices; Science, technology and the future. (You can read his blog with comprehensive descriptions here).

Highlights from the 2016 programme include a conversation with a former prisoner of Islamic State (University of Exeter), a vertigo-inducing installation in the towers of the Tyne Bridge (University of Newcastle), ‘Fright Friday’ at Oxford’s Ashmolean Museum (University of Oxford) and stories of perilous refugee journeys told through music, dance and drama (Queen Mary, University of London).

There are also a number of designated ‘hubs’ for festival activity outside London. Universities in Dundee, Liverpool, Leeds, Nottingham, Swansea, Exeter and even Paris (our first international venture) will coordinate festival activities and put forward regional ambassadors to champion the festival. Many will be held in unusual venues as well as museums, galleries and cultural and community centres across the UK, in a programme that includes poetry workshops for adults and young learners, a ‘moveable feast’ in Paris, one year after ‘the Bataclan’, and an adults-only session on sex, love and robots.

The festival aims to be topical, and to demonstrate the capacity of humanities research to shape and engage with contemporary public debates. The free-to-attend public events responding to the ‘hope and fear’ theme of Being Human 2016 will reflect this ambition.

‘Being Human returns for its third year in 2016,’ says Dr Eades. ‘This year the programme is themed around hope and fear, which has given researchers across the country an opportunity to respond to some of the biggest issues facing humanity today, and to show how their work is making a difference. From people working with refugees to those changing our understanding of conditions such as dementia, this year’s festival really highlights depth and diversity of research in the
humanities. It has been incredibly exciting putting the programme together over the past few months.’

Find out more about the festival at www.beinghumanfestival.org and follow the latest news about the festival on Twitter at @BeingHumanFest.

-Ends-

Notes to Editors

1. For all enquiries, please contact: Maureen McTaggart, Media and Public Relations Officer, School of Advanced Study, University of London +44 (0)20 7862 8859 / maureen.mctaggart@sas.ac.uk

Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts & Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, Being Human is a national forum for public engagement with humanities research. The festival will highlight the ways in which the humanities can inspire and enrich our everyday lives, help us to understand ourselves, our relationships with others, and the challenges we face in a changing world, and foster world-class knowledge that is vibrant, vital, and accessible to all. For more information, please visit www.beinghumanfestival.org or follow the festival on Twitter at @BeingHumanFest

3. The School of Advanced Study (SAS), University of London, is the UK’s national centre for the promotion and support of research in the humanities. SAS and its member institutes offer unparalleled academic opportunities and facilities across a wide range of subject areas for the benefit of the national and international scholarly community. In 2014-15, SAS welcomed 805 research fellows and associates, held 2,073 research dissemination events, received 23.1 million visits to its digital research resources and platforms and received 213,456 visits to its specialist libraries and collections. The School also leads the UK’s only nationwide festival of the humanities, Being Human. Find out more at www.sas.ac.uk or follow SAS on Twitter at @SASNews.

4. The Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: ancient history, modern dance, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, English literature, design, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98m to fund research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. www.ahrc.ac.uk

5. The British Academy is the UK’s expert body that supports and speaks for the humanities and social sciences – that rich variety of disciplines that study peoples, cultures and societies, past, present and future. It funds research across the UK and in other parts of the world, in disciplines ranging from archaeology to economics, from psychology to history, and from literature to law. The British Academy seeks to raise understanding of some of the biggest challenges of our time through policy reports, forums, conferences, publications and public events. The Academy receives around £30m a year in Government grants to support its work. But it operates autonomously as a Fellowship of more than 1,000 of the world’s most eminent scholars in the humanities and social sciences, elected for their outstanding
research. For more information, please visit www.britishacademy.ac.uk. Follow the British Academy on Twitter @britac_news.