

A celebration of the life of

Dr James Hemming

1909 – 2007

Brockway Room, Conway Hall

2.30 pm, 7th April 2008

Programme

Music on entrance

Mozart – Serenade in G ‘Eine kleine Nachtmusik’

Opening Words

Caroline Black

Tributes 1

Dorothy Clark

Tony Klarner

Dr Victor Maxwell

Music

Beethoven - Trio in B Flat

Tributes 2

Thena Heshel

John White

Bill Almond

Closing words

Caroline Black

Music

Handel – Music for the Royal Fireworks

A very warm welcome to this celebration of the life of Dr James Hemming here in the Brockway Room of the Conway Hall.

James died on 25 December last year at the age of 98. It had always been his fervent wish that his body should be used for medical research. But as he died during a public holiday, this was not possible. So on 21 January, after a short simple ceremony attended by a few close friends, he was cremated at the South West Crematorium Middlesex, Hanworth. That would have saddened James. But he'd have been deeply happy if he'd known that so many of his friends would gather here this afternoon to celebrate his life.

At this point I'd like to introduce Bill and Annie Almond. Many of you will have spoken to them on the phone, but may not have met. Bill was James' godson. In fact as they discovered recently, James had two godsons but unfortunately the second - Ben Wintringham- cannot be here today. Ironic really that a humanist should have two godsons but how very typically James. Bill and his wife Annie, together with Andrew Copson at the British Humanist Association, have been instrumental in organising today. I am sure you will get a chance to talk to them after the ceremony.

James spent a great deal of time in the Conway Hall and so it's absolutely fitting that today's memorial ceremony takes place here. The Conway Hall was opened in 1929 as the home of the Ethical Society. The name was chosen in honour of Moncure Daniel

Conway who died in 1907 - he had been an anti-slavery advocate, an out-spoken supporter of free thought and the biographer of Thomas Paine. Today Conway Hall remains a hub for free speech and progressive thought. In recent years speakers such as Salman Rushdie, Will Self, Tony Benn and Mary Robinson have addressed audiences here. And the Library holds the Ethical Society's collection which is the largest and most comprehensive Humanist Research resource of its kind in the United Kingdom.

Some of you may be wondering who I am...and what authority I have to lead today's ceremony. My name is Caroline and, as James was and as many of you are, I am a member of the British Humanist Association. I have been an accredited officiant leading humanist funerals, weddings and baby namings since 2001. James though had been a member of the BHA since its formation in 1963 and had given many years of dedicated service on its Executive Committee. He had been President and was a Vice President right up his death. From the 1960s to the 1990s he played a major role in the BHA's Education Committee. During the 80s and 90s he was one of the humanist representatives on the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. He was also an Honorary Associate of the Rationalist Association and a Vice President of the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association.

For those of you who may know little about humanism, suffice to say that Humanism is a non religious philosophy of life based on a concern for humanity and the natural world. Humanists believe that we should aim to live full and happy lives ourselves and, as part of that, make it easier for other people to do the same.

James's entire life was spent in this way, as an educator and writer, James lived his life with humanism as his guiding principle. He was much admired by many members of the British Humanist Association and we shall miss his wisdom and good sense.

So today is a celebration of a unique man's life.

But James presents us with quite a challenge – over his 98 years he met so many people and there were so many facets to his life. And while he had a public life as an Educational Psychologist, he was also intensely private. People got to know him best in one to one relationships, not in the public arena. He was an agony uncle, a counsellor and a mentor on a deeply personal, private level to many people over many years.

Because of these his deeply private friendships and diverse professional activities, the chronology of James life is quite difficult to piece together. We know that he was born on 9 September 1909 in Stalybridge Cheshire. His parents were Ebenezer and Amy Hemming - James was one of their three children and their only son.

His father was a vicar - and a huge influence on James as he grew up. For the Reverend Ebenezer Hemming was no ordinary vicar. He held regular meetings with clergy from nearby parishes, when they'd debate and challenge the conventional teachings of the church. James was allowed to sit in and listen - and later to take part. He'd go on long walks with his father who encouraged him to express his ideas - which his father would question but never put down.

There was little money in the family and James went to a variety of schools until he was sixteen. The sequence of events is a bit hazy here, but we do know that he enrolled as an external student at Birkbeck College and got studying for his degrees - ending with his PhD. As he studied, he taught in various schools. He decided that much was wrong with the way children were taught. His argument was that current education filled young minds with facts, but taught them little about life. He'd say to his pupils 'What I am here for is to get you through your examinations, and also to prepare you for life'. His students got exceptional exam results.

All this time he was writing too. In 1947 Longmans published his first book 'The Child is Right', written with Josephine Balls. He continued to write - and then later on, to flourish as an educationalist. He instigated many initiatives on moral education, developing his views in many books and booklets including *The Betrayal of Youth* and *A*

Humanist Approach to Moral Education. He also wrote about the great questions of existence, ethics, the structure of the universe and human psychology. His books were described by the Sunday Times as: 'lively... written in a brisk firm style which matches the author's intention to cut the cackle and address himself to common sense. He concentrates on life as it is lived.'; described by the Evening Standard as 'thoughtful and thought-provoking.' By Sir Julian Huxley as; 'Both courageous and thoughtful.' All his life he was an excellent communicator – clear, direct and impassioned. He was active in the work of the Campaign for Moral Education and closely involved in the formation and work of the Social Morality Council (later the Norham Foundation), serving on its Executive Committee and on the editorial board of the *Journal of Moral Education* until his death.

Right up to his death, one of James' lifelong principles was pragmatic co-operation. His considerable success in the area of moral education was aided by his ability to work with people with a wide range of religious and humanistic beliefs. He had a particular talent for being able to 'step into another person's shoes.' This, together with his personal warmth, his patience and his wisdom, enabled him to engage in productive dialogue, and in this he was a pioneer of the inter-faith communication and understanding that has now become so widespread. His own progressive political interests were reflected in his membership of Common Wealth, an idealistic, left-wing political party which won several by-elections in the 1940s.

From the 60s on, he was an active member of his local Labour Party. He was also a member of the Green Alliance.

James was one of the many prominent writers and academics who appeared as witnesses for the defence in the trial of Penguin Books for publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In 1978 he was among the signatories to 'A Statement Against Blasphemy Law' published by the Committee Against Blasphemy Law.

James was a strong advocate of sex education, authoring *Sex Education of School Children*, published by the Royal Society for Health in 1971. In 1987, during the public debate on the notorious (and now repealed) 'Section 28', he declared homosexuality to be 'morally acceptable as a way of life'. In a BBC2 *Day to Day* programme the same year he said:

'What is necessary for children is that they should have a complete, profound understanding of the full range of human sexuality, without any special bias being put on here and there, or trying to sell one particular line or another.

Let them know honestly. If we don't tell them what the facts are through education, they will pick up distorted and garbled views from the mass media and their friends. That is the choice: whether we give children the information they need to grow up

as mature citizens, or whether we deliberately seem to be withholding part of it because it's "wicked".'

James was also a member of the Television Research Committee, set up to investigate the impact of mass media on the moral development of young people.

He was a regular broadcaster and a panel member of BBC Radio's pioneering advice programme *If You Think You've Got Problems*. He was a close friend of Claire Rayner - another well known broadcaster, who was one of his successors as BHA President.

James' contribution to education was also practical - he was a Governor of St George's Secondary Modern School in the East End and at Mayfield School in Putney. He spent a lot of time lecturing in Australia, South East Asia and also Africa - where he wrote the widely acclaimed 'Day by Day English'. He was an educational advisor to the World Education Fellowship and sat on the editorial board of its journal *New Era in Education*.

James shared most of his adult life with his wife Kay. Eventually they married on 14 August 1945 - their long and happy marriage ending with Kay's death 15 years ago. They first met at Isleworth Grammar School in the 1930s where both were teachers. They shared a deep

interest in education and worked hard. To relax there were trips on their boat moored at the bottom of their Teddington garden, and sunny holidays on Greek Islands.

Perhaps the best description of what James experienced in his marriage to Kay is found in 'Sex and Love' written by James and Zena Maxwell (and Zena is here today). This was published in 1972 – this is the final paragraph of that book;

It is said that 'All the world loves a lover'. What is more important today is that a lover loves all the world. The loving couple, the loving home, the loving society, and the loving world form one complex fabric to which every personal life can add a little. In such a climate of tenderness, passion and reciprocal caring the world can be reborn and 'the age of Aquarius' blossom into peace, fulfillment and creative vigour for all who dare to encounter life in its richness and depth.

James Hemming led an extraordinary life and now some of his friends and former colleagues are going to pay their personal tributes. There are six speakers in all. We'll hear from them in two trios with a musical interlude between.

James was very involved with the World Education Fellowship and several members are here today – Dorothy Clark has known James

through this association and she is going to speak first Dorothy will be followed by Tony Klarner, Kay's nephew and finally Dr Victor Maxwell, who has been friends with James and Kay for over 50 years, will pay his personal tribute.

Dorothy Clark

It is a great privilege to say a few words in memory of James who was a great friend and who I admired so much. He was an amazing speaker who created a long lasting impact on the minds of Educators throughout the World.

I first met James at a World Education Fellowship Conference in Scotland almost 40 years ago - it was a tricky conference with some Travellers invading the proceedings but James in his usual manner calmed everything down and restored order to quite a difficult situation.

James played an enormous part in helping me get my Masters degree at Southampton University for which I do thank him most sincerely – he was so wise in giving me advice particularly over my contribution to the discussion and also over what I should wear to the seminars – I was at that time an Inspector of Schools for Surrey and attending the University on a Wednesday and I felt I could attend in casual Student's Clothes

but James was very insistent I should look like an Inspector and seen to be taking things seriously – I am sure he was right.

As an Inspector of Schools I ran many courses for Headteachers and James was kind enough to be one of my regular main speakers and I was so grateful as he was so inspiring and stimulating.

His book the Betrayal of Youth – Secondary Education Must Be Changed in 1980 led him to speak to Headteachers all over the country – he certainly was an inspiration to the Surrey Headteachers and they strongly agreed with many of his ideas and I am sure the Headteachers today would still be in agreement. He felt that the secondary education system was seriously out of step with the needs and aspirations of modern youth and of contemporary society and in later discussions with him he did think things had advanced in some areas but he still felt a major weakness is that secondary education is still too competitive.

He was so concerned with the less successful pupils and with their feelings of inferiority and rejection. He was very concerned about the testing of pupils and the league tables for schools. He agreed examinations are necessary when a young person's future depends upon the acquisition of particular skills

but they should not be the be-all and end-all of secondary education. He was totally against homework and said free time at home should be used to socialize with one another – even now the teachers unions are calling for homework to be scrapped for primary school children and cut back for teenagers as the pressure often makes children miserable.

As well as writing many books and lecturing all round the world with enthusiasm and a fresh approach to education and life in general James often talked to me about providing “New Age” texts for newly independent African countries over 40 years ago - countries prepared to embrace African – not European culture – called the Day By Day series – this series was set out to realistically advise the teacher, providing security and confidence and were bold, practical and highly successful published by Longmans. It was wonderful to think Abigail from Zimbabwe who looked after James in Orione House remembered learning English through this Day-By-Day series – she told me it was very easy.

When Kay passed away and James was living on his own I undertook typing his articles for magazines and newspapers and I also undertook laundering his shirts – I often wondered what happened when I was away but he never let on – is there

anybody else who took on the typing and the laundry here – please let me know – it would be fun to compare notes.

Finally I must mention about the Solar Energy Society – Dennis, my husband was a member and James who was always interested in new innovations joined the society. They were invited to attend monthly meetings in the House of Commons to discuss energy sources and as always James made some outstanding contributions concerning alternative energy and conserving the planet.

James will be sadly missed – he was one of my very best friends.

Tony Klarner

I first met James on his wedding day. He married my father's sister, Kath Klarner. The ceremony was held in Market Harborough, with the reception at her parent's home.

Over the years we saw Kath and James fairly regularly. When we lived at Tring, I can remember them turning up on a tandem, and on a summers day only to pleased to have a drink, jump into a bath and get a change of clothes.

After Pat and I were married Kath would regularly visit us whilst James was away at conference, but he came whenever he could, because he loved being amongst the family and on those occasions hardly stopped talking. He also made a special trip to attend my 60th birthday when we lived near Bury St.Edmunds.

From when our boys were toddlers, we were invited down every summer for a trip on the river. This was usually to the Swan at Thames Ditton for lunch followed by a trip further up river. I can still picture James as he skippered the boat through the locks, with Kath his trusty mate.

As the boys grew older James would interrogate them for their opinions on various matters, especially whilst he was writing 'You and your Adolescent'. There was nothing he liked better than a good debate, on education and topical subjects. I remember one occasion following lunch at the Swan, James and I started to discuss the pro's and con's of being in Europe. Pat, Kath and the boys gave up on us and went and sat outside in the sun.

After Kath died, James tended to lose himself in his work, as if he was lost without his soul mate. After helping him sort out Kath's effects etc, we tended to keep in touch more by phone,

because he was always so busy. He did come down on one occasion and visit us at Holland on Sea. Whilst on this visit we took him to see where he had lived as a boy in Manningtree. The Old Rectory was now an 'old fashioned tea rooms', but the garden still ran down towards the river with lovely views. Although the Rectory was still standing the church across the road where his father had been vicar had been demolished and houses had been built in its place. We also saw the churchyard at Mistley, where his father was buried.

James was a very knowledgeable person, who continued to expound his theories, particularly about education, right up to the end. On our last visit to him at the home in Hampton Wick, he was most interested about how his Great Great Nieces and Nephew were getting on at school and university.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Annie and Bill for all they did for James to make his last months as comfortable as possible. James will be long remembered by all our family, for being a fine man with strong convictions, with a great enthusiasm for life.

Dr Victor Maxwell

My wife Zena and I had known James for almost 50 years. Zena first met him when they were both on the same panel of speakers at a health education conference and they became firm friends almost on sight. When Zena invited him to our home, I was privileged to join this friendship which lasted to his death. He was the perfect friend-always most interested in what we were doing, how our children were progressing and sharing our difficulties concerning them. He became an 'honorary' uncle. Our daughter Karen was much influenced in her decision to study Psychology at University by her contact with James. He was always available for advice and suggestions but never ever interfered. He became a very important part of our lives. He was invited to our son Andrew's 18th birthday fancy-dress party- a gathering of both family and Andrew's friends. James arrived to stay with us looking very smart in a dark, formal grey lounge suit clutching a tiny case-so small we wondered what he could possibly have planned for his fancy dress. As the guests arrived James came down stairs, still wearing the formal grey suit and as he got to the bottom of staircase he pulled a black silk stocking over his head and announced that he was a gangster!

We shared interests and many happy trips on the Thames together with Kay in his boat resulted. Later, after Kay died we frequently took him to the Richmond Theatre usually having supper before the performance. These meals were often hair raising-partly because he always ate so slowly that we were afraid of missing the play and partly because of the topics of conversation which were often controversial! He always spoke in a loud and penetrating voice, a habit which many deaf people have and the topics he raised were usually sensitive-the role of the church, sexual mores, the troubles in education and politics. Many heads were turned towards us at these meals!

He could be relied upon to give sound advice. He was generous with his time, money and even his house. The only time Zena and I became really critical of James - and told him so- was when he took in a totally unsuitable young man as a free lodger when his single parent mother could not cope. James was certain he could influence the boy for the better which he sadly failed to do and his life style and even his home was greatly disrupted. James , most reluctantly, eventually agreed that we had been right, not believing that anyone could behave as badly as this boy and upset that he had been unable to produce any improvement. He had an enormous faith in the innate goodness of humanity.

In October 2003, whilst James was staying with us on one of his many medical forays, he wrote a short poem about friendship which I should like to read.

Headed 'Victor and Zena, it reads:-

Without close friends
Life is all loose ends,
From here to eternity
With friends we are set free
To explore Life's mystery
So let's be friends, you and me. Signed James with love.

And now a musical interlude. James loved music. His friend Pat Williams - who unfortunately cannot be with us today – wrote to Bill about James' love of music. This is what she wrote

James spoke of music in terms which made it plain that for him this was a language he innately knew and which had for him a clarity which went beyond – and in a way existed before - words. I wish I could remember more of what he said. On one occasion he was describing to me how he could understand, through music, the person through whom that music had come- that is to say the composer. And he could understand too he said the experience from which the music came. He said that

when he and another person listened to music together, he could share in the mind of the other person because they were being held together in the music. So that at the end of listening say, to a Beethoven quintet, it would be quite in order for him to thank that other person for a wonderful conversation, even if no words had been exchanged.

We are now going to listen to part of Beethoven's Trio in B Flat, music James adored. I invite you to listen to this in the same way James would have done – intently, thoroughly and entirely.

Music

And now three more speakers

Firstly the respected broadcaster Thena Heshel, who worked with James during the Seventies – Thena also has a rather wonderful little surprise for us at the end of her tribute.

Then John White - John got to know James from working with him for 30 years on the British Humanist Association's Education Committee and he and Lucie became close personal friends with James.

Lastly James's godson Bill Almond will give a final tribute

Thena Heshel

I have been asked to speak about James as a broadcaster. He was one of the stars of a counselling programme which I produced on Radio 4 for several years in the seventies, when the idea of people discussing their intimate feelings on air was novel and controversial. Our recording sessions had more in common with a therapeutic encounter than a more conventional broadcast

In 1971 Radio 4 began to broadcast a weekly counselling programme in which listeners were invited to discuss personal problems with a panel of experts in the studio. The problems were selected on the basis that these were the kind of difficulties in human relations that were common to many people, jealousy between siblings, inability to make meaningful relationships, difficulties with work colleagues or neighbours. In setting up the programme I wanted the problems to be such that within a relatively short discussion, experts could advise on at least the first steps towards the solution for the problems they brought to us. I had already found a wonderful woman GP Wendy Greengross who possessed an almost unnerving insight which made her able to diagnose the underlying reasons for the problems people presented. But I also needed

someone an expert with a non- medical background, and I am eternally grateful for my colleague Jocelyn Ryder Smith, for suggesting that I consider James Hemming who had contributed some very thought provoking talks on personal philosophy to Woman's Hour. I had never met James, but had heard his wonderful warm voice, and when I met him quickly realised that his personality matched the voice.

Jocelyn Ryder Smith told me that James had talked about success and failure in the 'personal philosophy' series in which he said the following; "deep down we all have a profound sense of uncertainty about ourselves...we all feel inadequate at times because we all start weak and small in a big strong world and first impressions go very deep.. but failure is a part of success. Success is good for us because it peeps up our confidence. But it's our failures that teach us how we can adjust better to life. It can't just be someone else's fault. There is no such things as a person who is a failure. We must never identify ourselves with our failures."

And in the studio listening to people who brought us their problems, it was James who time and again found the words to reassure them and try to remove their feelings of guilt and failure. I recall his response to a man who had come to talk about his chronic inability to manage money, which meant that

he had brought himself to the verge of bankruptcy but still seemed incapable of holding onto any cash he earned through his varied freelance activities. Listening to him in the studio I felt irritated as doubtless his long suffering wife must have done with more justification - that he couldn't get a bit of control into his life. James, after listening to this man's account of his early life in a very strict children's home, said 'your behaviour is very understandable. You have had order imposed on you naturally you now need to kick over the traces nobody could possibly blame you for that' and then he went on to suggest strategies for managing his money more sensibly.

This was the essence of the problems programme - finding relatively simple step by step solutions to everyday problems. James did not believe in frightening people let alone threatening them with the nemesis that might await their bad behaviour. A woman came to talk about her difficulty in persuading her nine year old daughter who suffered from a squint to wear her glasses. Would it she asked be a good idea to put up a picture of an ugly adult woman with a bad squint in her daughter's bedroom so she could see what she might look like if she refused to wear her glasses. James immediately agreed that putting up a picture would be a good idea but suggested that she should put up the picture of the Greek singer Nana Mouskouri who famously made a point of wearing

glasses on stage and looked very attractive. As James said 'when you've got fear or a positive incentive the positive incentive is superior to the fear as we have found in work related to smoking or drugs. The positive approach is much more fruitful'.

And James was very forward looking. In a December 1973 programme a woman came in to talk about her concern about how to combat the general commercialisation of Christmas and asked how to get her children to understand that it is a time for giving not just for getting bigger and better presents. In response to this James said that it was time we got to understand that the earth had limited resources and we had to learn to be content with less, and if we did not teach our children this lesson we would not be adequately preparing themselves for the world in which they be living as adults.

So James was 'green', he was compassionate and above all he made us all feel better for the contact with him. I still remember with gratitude his response when I arrived in the studio having forgotten all the scripts and James explained that for someone like myself newly pregnant with our first child my brain like an old fashioned switchboard occasionally had to deal with more messages than it could handle. Call it 'maternal amnesia', he suggested, and now many years later when it is 'senior

moment' which cause me to forget, I still think of James' words and smile to myself.

One final memory of James .He was talking in the studio to a woman whose complaint was that she found her husband boring. One of the other experts listening to her account of the many things she did while her husband was content just to sit and read the paper , said that she was rather like an adolescent with a zest for life and many enthusiasms. James demurred. 'Her enthusiasm for life love for life is not an adolescent weakness. It is a splendid thing.' And he went on to quote Carlisle; 'Happy men are full of the present'.

Can I please now ask John White to come and talk to us about James

In the BHA Office we used to have a poster on the wall from the Norwegian Humanists. It was of the Happy Humanist shouting "Humanists say Yes to life!"

James's life was a personification of that poster. Those of us who worked with him have memories of his enthusiasm, his wisdom, his laugh and his warm personality. He was also the most **positive** person I have ever known.

You will know that today the BHA is represented on high-level Government advisory and policy-making bodies. We are there because the BHA has a reputation for responsible, constructive dialogue. The foundations of that reputation were laid by the pioneering work of James Hemming.

He was deeply concerned about the need for moral education and rethinking on the place of religion in schools. His successes in this area arose from that very positive outlook and outgoing personality. He not only looked for the best in every person he met but gently and persistently sought out common areas of agreement, regardless of the person's worldview. He thus secured the cooperation of important allies.

You have heard that he was active in Common Wealth. In it he got to know its joint founder, Richard Acland. James discovered Acland shared his deep concern about the lack of moral education in our schools. He did not see it as an obstacle that Acland's interest arose from his Christian views. James soon persuaded him to co-operate in publishing a pamphlet on the subject which then appeared over both their names.

A similar experience occurred with Howard Marratt, who was Chairman of the Free Church Council and the RE Council.

James secured his co-operation to produce this booklet on “The Common Ground of Moral Education.” These initiatives led to his participation in the formation of the multi-belief Social Morality Council and his involvement in the appearance of the Council’s “Moral and Religious Education in County Schools.” He was very much aware that the reforms we sought in education could only be secured by seeking this kind of consensus. He followed up these efforts to broaden the base of support for our aims with his work on the RE Council and in the Standing Conference on Inter-Faith Dialogue in Education where he found a like-minded ally in Rabbi Hugo Gryn who prided himself on being a “harmoniser” between people of different world-views.

James recognised that there is little use in being positive if you are then unable to communicate your views and in this celebration of his life today we ought to remember his many books which are witness to his outstanding ability as a communicator. Their titles, “Instead of God” and “Individual Morality,” for instance, make clear the humanistic thrust of their ideas.

All of us who worked with James not only felt affection and respect for him but we also felt admiration for his work as an author, especially his ability to explore deep and complex

subjects in an immensely readable way through a writing style that had great clarity, humanity - and humour.

To illustrate these qualities in his writing, I should like to close by reading just a few lines from the section entitled "Person in Cosmos" from his book, "Instead of God," where he is emphasising that each one of us is part of the life-stuff of the universe, made up of the same elements as the stars

Our entire bodies and brains are made of a few dollars' worth of common elements: oxygen hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, plus enough calcium to whitewash a chicken coop, sufficient iron to make a two-inch nail, phosphorous to tip a good number of matches, enough sulphur to dust a flea-plagued dog, together with modest amounts of potassium, chlorine, magnesium and sodium. Assemble them all in the right proportion, build the whole into an intricate interacting system, and the result is our feeling, thinking, striving, imagining creative selves.

Such ordinary elements; such extraordinary results!

And now finally Bill Almond, James' godson, is going to speak

I should like to thank you all so much for joining us here today, for the Celebration of the Life of James, my godfather and supportive friend.

Although I was away at school and abroad for most of my working life, and although James was intensely busy, he always made time for catching up.

In my early days, he would mostly visit my family, and sometimes Kay came too, but I did get some trips in the boat at Broom Water as well! After Kay died, James entertained Annie and me mainly at the Arts Club - he was always waiting to greet us, and always very smartly dressed!

Our conversations over lunch would include a thorough review of what Annie and I had been doing. I was never sure that James approved of my working with large international organisations, but he always wanted to know what we were trying to achieve, and what the difficulties were. He impressed us as such a pragmatic person, and he often came forward with very sensible suggestions on how we could address some of the problems.

Annie and I saw much more of *him after we settled back in

England in 2000. By then, sadly, Kay was long gone, and James was struggling with house and garden. Peter Hale was a Trojan, and gave him precious support. James's hearing and eyesight were failing fast, and he was deeply frustrated. It was so difficult for him to keep up with the things he cared about most - the world's huge and growing problems. To address these, he wanted People getting on with People, and acceptance of the desperate need for co-operation, regardless of political and religious differences.

In the last few years, I have learned much about James's early days, and his amazing successes in achieving his higher education, his degrees, and his professional qualifications, package by package, mostly as an external student of Birkbeck College. I have to thank Victor Maxwell for much of this information which he obtained by recording a series of interviews with James in August, 2005.

The development of James's career, stimulated by his determination to change traditional teaching systems, is a fascinating story. The self-driven transition of a vicar's son with sporadic formal education

- to an English and PE teacher,
- to a writer of pragmatic English language teaching manuals in Africa,
- to a leading Humanist, and a writer on child

development, and on issues of morality,
-to an internationally renowned Educational Psychologist.
It all adds up to an amazing life!

He claimed that his health and fitness was due to a book he discovered in his father's library. This book, by Arbuthnot Lane, led to his early take up of the vegetarian diet - that, and, of course, lots of walking!

As you will see from some of the photos displayed, James remained incredibly fit and strong until the early hours of 12 October 2005, when he fell and broke his neck. He was in Kingston and Teddington Hospitals until Feb 2006, when he moved into Orione House. They were wonderful with him. And after an initial patch, they got his medical sub-problems sorted. To our great relief, he stopped asking to go back to Broom Water, and he would repeatedly tell us how happy he was to be in Orione House.

One of our moments of great pleasure occurred during lunch at Orione House. Annie and I and James were just finishing our fish and chips when a staff member, Abigail, joined us with a big smile of delight. "James" - she said, "I have just discovered that the book from which I learned English at school in Zimbabwe, called 'Day-by-Day English', was written by you!".

James was delighted!

Even in his last few years, it was always a joy to see his incredible spirit and the sense of humour he would apply to his own frustrating situation. As Ursula Harrison put it when she heard the sad news of James dying on Christmas Day: “What a day he picked - but, then, he always had style!”.

So, special thanks: to Peter; to Victor; to Orione House; to Caroline; to the British Humanist Association; AND, again, thank you all for being here today for the Celebration of the Life of James Hemming.

Bill and Annie would now like you all to join them (next door) for tea and to continue to share great memories of James over refreshments. And as we approach the end of this ceremony let us finish again with James - one of his poems, a sonnet entitled On Being 80

How shall we honour gifts of mother time,
Sometimes all hell let loose, sometimes sublime?
The range of living is a sweet excess
Leaving, at last repose. and thankfulness

In early years, time is a gentle rain;
A whole twelve months before we're here again.
Later, a storm that roars and sweeps along;
A year no sooner started than it's gone.

Yet at any moment may turn out pure gold,
Fresh spring of beauty we can then enfold.
In this way, life and history are made;
Something is built whose worth shall never fade.

In 80 years, to date, our story's told.
We grow a little stiff, perhaps, but never old.

Music – Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks