

Monthly Talks (October 2022 to September 2023)

Here is a record of our monthly meeting talks in iU3A's tenth year. For more recent talks, go to our web page [here](#). What appears below is almost exactly what appeared on the website immediately after each meeting.

October 2022



119. October 2022: Elizabeth Crawford, OBE, gave us a fascinating presentation about the **Suffragettes** with special reference to local Islington women who were involved. It was salutary to hear that the campaign took 62 years to achieve its goal. In the 19th century it was taken for granted that voters were male and it took the combined efforts of several women's rights groups over many years to bring about change. With a combination of writing pamphlets, lobbying, travelling widely for public meetings and later resorting to direct action, public opinion was slowly and painfully changed. Many women were imprisoned and subjected to violent force feeding which left some with permanent injuries. We owe them so much. Over 50 members joined the zoom presentation and it will be available on our website after today. For further information see Elizabeth's website: womanandhersphere.com.



120: October 2022: Dame Frances Cairncross: The trouble with News. Dame Frances started her presentation by reminding us about the unprecedented changes which have taken place in the way news has been distributed since the invention of the internet. Smartphones have only been around for 14 years and they have changed everything. Young people receive most of their news by social media and do not regularly watch the news on the BBC or other platforms. Frances made a case for the importance of the "red tops" who present nuggets of important news in bite-size accessible bits. The tabloids and local papers are struggling with falling readerships and we need to find innovative ways of supporting them by inventive selective subscriptions. The British press has the advantage of using the medium of English, the most widely spoken language in the world, and some invaluable brands such as the Royal Family. Some news includes a "public good" such as promoting clean air, and there is therefore a case to be made for government subsidies and for us to pay something too.

November

121 - No meeting, cancelled.



122: November 2022: Professor Lloyd Peck: How have animals survived in Antarctica for 20 million years? We were delighted to welcome Professor Peck and a few of his animal friends on a second visit to Islington U3A after eight years. He is a polar marine biologist known principally for his research into the biological adaptation of animals in extreme cold. He told us about his 20 visits to Antarctica over the last 30 years and his many underwater dives. He identified oxygen as a factor in polar gigantism, and problems with protein synthesis as the cause of slow development and growth in polar marine species. The presentation included some salutary statistics about global warming and the effects of sea level rises but the audience enjoyed his engaging presentation enhanced by some wonderful slides. You can view the PowerPoint material [here](#).

December

No meeting

January 2021



123: January 2023: Rosemary Brown: Following Nellie Bly, her record breaking race around the world. Our January speaker didn't just do theoretical research when writing her book but retraced Bly's footsteps herself. In 1890, Bly circumnavigated the world faster than anyone ever had — alone and carrying only a Gladstone bag. Having been given only two days to get ready for the trip, she covered 21,740 miles by ocean liner and train in 72 days — beating the fictional record of Phileas Fogg in *Around the World in 80 Days*. 125 years later, Rosemary set off to retrace Bly's footsteps on an expedition registered with the Royal Geographical Society.

This talk brought the book and Bly's remarkable achievements alive. Her undercover reporting, advocacy for women's rights, and crusades for vulnerable children undoubtedly helped make the Victorian world a better place. You can see Rosemary's slides [here](#).

February



124: February 2023: Christopher McKane: The Birth of The Times. Our room at the Resource Centre on Thursday was turned into a London Coffee House for an hour when Christopher gave us all a facsimile of the first edition of the Times and we were invited to peruse it and join in the discussion about the contents.

The first issue of what became The Times was published on 1st January 1785. It was called the Daily Universal Register and was published by John Walter I. We learned about some of the early printing methods and how the newspaper was distributed — in a time when less than half the population was literate. Christopher had a distinguished career on the Oxford Times, the Birmingham Post, the Times (two stints) and the Independent, of which he was a founder staff member. It was an entertaining and enlightening presentation and there is more to be learned from Christopher's book, which is readily available: *The Thunderer: the Life and Times of John Walter II*. Christopher's photos can be seen [here](#).



March



125: March 2023: Margaret Hodge: Dirty Money. Dame Margaret has spent the last couple of years exploring "Dirty Money". Incredibly, £350 billion is lost to our economy annually, of which £200 billion is due to fraud. Huge sums of money were stolen by fraudsters under the furlough and bounceback

schemes during the pandemic. Britain has become the "go to" country for Russian and other questionably-acquired money from around the world and we are no longer the most trusted jurisdiction in Europe. Deregulation failed to replace lost industries and use of tax havens has grown. The "kleptocrats" make huge donations to the Conservative Party and use their ill-gotten gains to buy property and companies in the UK. Dame Margaret campaigns for regulation of the system to register companies — there are 4000 children under 2 on Companies House registers! So we need smart regulation, tough enforcement, transparency and accountability and there is support for these changes across all political parties.



April



126: April 2023: Fiona Chesterton: Secrets Never to be Told, Unravelling a Century and a Half of Family Secrets. Fiona Chesterton used to be an Islington resident but was welcomed back from Cambridge to tell us the gripping story of how an unexpected inheritance triggered an investigation into her own family history and that of previously unknown relatives in Canada. Her research involved several trips to Canada and she discovered how illegitimacy blighted the life of her distant English-born cousin Jessie Heading and the writer herself. Jessie's grandfather was Fiona's great great grandfather. Jessie had emigrated to Canada under the auspices of the Girls Friendly Society to be a domestic servant — one of thousands deemed 'surplus' women. Jessie

had a short-lived marriage and brought up a little boy (of unknown paternity) alone. He, William Underwood, eventually died intestate. After 17 years of official inquiry, his estate was shared between ten distant cousins, Fiona being one. This talk was warmly received and many members bought copies of Fiona's book *Secrets Never to be Told*. We have recorded this meeting and you can find the links here: [126-1](#) and [126-2](#). Or just the slides can be viewed here: [126-Secrets](#)

May



127: May 2023: Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell: The Discovery of Pulsars: A Graduate Student's Story:

We were privileged to listen to Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell's presentation about the discovery of pulsars. The story of her identification of these extraordinary bodies, and the reaction of the scientific community and the establishment, is well known but it was enlightening to hear from her first hand about how someone else was honoured for the discovery. It was salutary to hear how women were regarded in professional life during those days! Also she gave us,

scientists or non-scientists, some amazing facts about pulsars which were presented in a way we could all make sense of. We have recorded this meeting and you can find the links here: [127-1](#) and [127-2](#).

June



128: Bob Gilbert: The Missing Musk. Bob made a welcome return and we were entertained by his accounts of travelling extensively in his search for answers to unsolved botanical mysteries. He made a special study of lichen, which is now known to comprise many different organisms and of which there are 50,000 species. It is found worldwide in every terrain and in many colours. We learned about mutualism, which enables different species to live together. Bob brought some copies of his book *The Missing Musk*, all of which were eagerly snapped up by

members. We appreciated a very engaging and interesting presentation. You can see the recording(s) of this meeting on our YouTube channel here: [128-1](#) and [128-2](#).

July



129: Professor Sarah Wilson: Art History: The Beautiful Game. Professor Wilson accompanied her fascinating talk with many slides of work by contemporary artists including Picasso, Fougerson and others. She showed how art can claim to be the richest academic discipline, crossing over literature, philosophy and politics, and argued that art is increasingly political rather than aesthetic. Her presentation was well received by the audience.

We have recorded this meeting and you can find the links here: [129-1](#) and [129-2](#).

August



130: Graham Bennett, Our Wonderful West End Theatreland. We were delighted to welcome Graham on his second visit to one of our Monthly Meetings. Last time he spoke about Diaghilev and this time about the history of the West End theatres. There are 40 of them in this small area and there used to be even more. We learned about the first theatres in Elizabethan times and Shakespeare's players, who became the famous King's Men — and their battles with the Puritans, which led to theatres closing for 18 years. After the Restoration performances recommenced, carrying on until censorship was introduced in 1737, lasting 230 years. The Music Hall's popularity triggered the building of many theatres in Victorian times including Shaftesbury Avenue, which did not exist previously. The cull of these buildings which took place in the 60s and 70s robbed us of many beautiful theatres; luckily the campaign to save Ally Pally Theatre succeeded. Graham's Talk was most interesting and entertaining and was enhanced by his slides (copy not available due to copyright restrictions).

September 2021



131: Michael Crick, The selection of parliamentary candidates and the ramifications of this crucial process:

We welcomed Michael to our September Monthly Meeting to share his current interest in the selection of parliamentary candidates and the ramifications of this crucial process. For some time he has felt that the system is under-explored and deserves scrutiny. While some notable parliamentarians waited for years before being selected others found themselves selected at the first attempt; the national party machines are influential in the process and this does not always lead to the best people being chosen. There is excessive

concern about whether the candidate is local, rather than testing whether they are skilled enough to hold the executive to account and scrutinise and amend legislation. In other words we need talented and intelligent people as they are likely to stay in power for decades, and will have to deal with climate change and other huge issues. A confident regime in the centre thrives on discussion and even dissent, so party managers should welcome rebels and candidates from all walks of life. With online voting by constituency associations there is less probing and questioning and we should press for more open processes. Recording links: [131-1](#) & [131-2](#).