

## The Newsletter of Islington U3A

**“It’s our party and we’ll smile if we want to”**

(With apologies to the 1960s hit *It’s My Party and I’ll Cry if I Want To.*)



Oh the joy of meeting other members face-to-face. Of making eye contact. Of observing body language. Of reinforcing connections.

We’re delighted to say that the Summer Party, held at The Olden Garden in Highbury on 1 September, marked the end of Zoom-only and the start of meeting each other again for *real*. As you can see from these pictures, a very good time was had by all.

We are, of course, very appreciative of Zoom for enabling half our more than 80 groups to carry on through the various lockdowns. And Zoom remains an option for anyone isolating or with mobility issues.

On Thursday 23 September, our Monthly Talks made a welcome return to the Resource Centre. Author, chartered accountant and magician, Ian Keable gave a very interesting in-person Talk entitled, like his recently published book, *The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in Eighteenth Century England*.

This Talk was also available on Zoom. Talks on the 4th Thursday of every month will continue as ‘Hybrids’, while the Talks on the 2nd Thursday will be exclusively on Zoom.

### NOT A MEMBER?

**If you’ve stopped working, start living – join us at Islington U3A.**

**We look forward to welcoming you...**

**1** [islingtonu3a.org/07784-336219](https://islingtonu3a.org/07784-336219)

## Some aspects of going green aren’t exactly appetising, are they?



Deep fried insects: protein of the future?

However, Hilary and Howard Stone, coordinators of our Green Issues group (GIG) say that while there are things we absolutely should be doing now, eating insects isn’t one of them. Yet.

We urgently need to achieve Net Zero Carbon, so GIG is developing a ‘Five Ways We Can Help the Planet and Ourselves’ Plan.

More will follow after the United Nations’ Climate Change Conference (COP26) to be held in Glasgow in November 2021, but so far this year, GIG has considered:

- How renewable transport fuels can improve air quality.
- How a leading airline is tackling Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGe) reductions.
- And how we might mitigate the effects of uncontrolled waste burning in developing countries.

Will our Plan be idealistic? No, realistic. Otherwise, we’ll remain at the mercy of wildfires, storms, and droughts.

Not to mention the hurt and incomprehension in the eyes of our grandchildren.

## The day a tortoise on the table galvanised the Play Reading group

This will come as no surprise to anyone who has ever trodden the boards: actors respond to props.

Ditto U3A’s Play Reading group it seems.

Ahead of a recent reading of Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia*, the coordinators asked the group to bring props to the session.

Theory was that this would add something to each member’s delivery of their lines. And were they ever right.

After one member placed an unbelievably realistic looking tortoise doorstop on the table, there was a distinct increase in passion and pauses, humour and pathos, light and shade.

Tortoise, of course, rhymes with Roman

playwright Plautus, and is thought to be designed to unite the modern and ancient aspects of the play.

As new coordinators Ros Lowe and Howard Lichterman observed: for such a slow-moving creature, this tortoise certainly got things zipping along.



### Learn. Laugh. Live

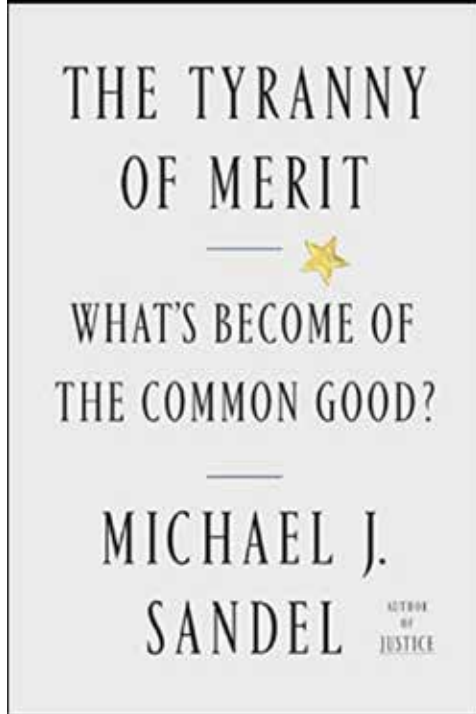
**2** [islingtonu3a.org](https://islingtonu3a.org)

## It’s taken for granted that meritocracy is a great idea. But is it?

Michael Sandel teaches political philosophy at Harvard University where he is Bass Professor of Government Theory.

Just out is his critical analysis *The Tyranny of Merit: what’s become of the common good?* And it’s the first book to be given Islington U3A’s Slow Book Treatment.

Instead of reading a whole book



and then getting together to discuss it, the Slow Book Group digs much deeper by reading and discussing just one, or occasionally two, chapters, at a time.

Then, in the seventh and last session of this fixed-term group, the Slow Book Group will consider the contrasting view put forward in Adrian Woodbridge’s book *In defence of Meritocracy*, which they will have been reading alongside the Michael Sandel.

The expectation is of some horizon-widening debate.

This blended group started with an initial face-to-face meeting over coffee on 14 September, is being followed by five fortnightly Zooms, and will end with the seventh and final session, face-to-face over a meal in December.

## Is it fantasy that science fiction can predict the future?

Not if we look back over half a dozen classic SF books published over the last couple of centuries.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* predicted organ transplants. In 1818.

Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* predicted electric submarines in 1870. 90 years before they were officially invented.

Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* predicted earbuds and flatscreen TVs. In 1953.

Arthur C Clarke’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* predicted the iPad. In 1968.

Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* predicted mood-boosting pills. In 1931.

H G Wells’ *The World Set Free*, published in

1914, not only predicted the atomic bomb but may have given the man who split the atom, Dr Leo Szilard, the idea in the first place.

As you may imagine, these books are particularly fascinating to Jenni Chan who has coordinated our SF book group so successfully for six years.

Big question is: which of the more recent SF books are predicting what, and when?



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**3** [islingtonu3a.org](https://islingtonu3a.org)

## Could walking with poles mean you’re less likely to need to walk with sticks?

It could be possible - for the very good reason that Nordic Walking gives you a whole body workout.

Whether over grass or tarmac, Jan Durbridge’s group moves with the stability, extra confidence, and reassuring rhythm the poles give rise to.

You can watch Nordic Walking in action on several YouTube videos - including one by the Nordic Walking Association.

To start Nordic Walking yourself, all you need is a bit of training up front plus some suitably flexible boots - and, of course, a pair of poles.

Jan leads four or five of her group of 20 on a walk every other week. Thoughtfully, she varies the day, giving everyone a chance to join in. London’s parks are her venue of choice.

Not surprisingly, Jan finds seeing members - some now in their 80s - enjoying walking with poles hugely satisfying.



## To a Scrabble player, this street sign in New York adds up to more than 14 points

This witty street sign with its relative Scrabble values commemorates the spot where the classic American boardgame Scrabble, brainchild of architect Alfred M Butts, was first tested on the public.

In the community room of the church on the



corner of 35th Avenue and 81st Street, to be precise.

Scrabble, or Lexiko as it was known in 1929, was inspired by Alfred’s love of crosswords and anagrams and his passion for games that required both skill and chance.

There was also the fact that he was, like so many, unemployed during the Great Depression.

Initially rejected by several commercial games’ experts, today a staggering one hundred and fifty million sets of Scrabble have been sold worldwide.

Food for thought for Islington U3A’s Scrabble group, ably coordinated by Claire Milne, who says her group plays more for enjoyment than to win and welcomes players of any ability with a relaxed attitude.