



## Monthly Talks (October 2021 to September 2022)

Here is a record of our monthly meeting talks in iU3A's seventh 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 2021

Missing

### November

Missing

### December

Missing

### January 2022



**102. January 2022 — Steve Richards: A reflection on the new political year and an introduction to his latest book: *The Prime Ministers We Never Had*.** Steve Richards, political commentator, author and columnist, drew a record number of our members to his online presentation on 20th January. In his usual inimitable style (including a couple of impressions!) he gave us insights into the psyche of our leaders. His analysis of the current febrile atmosphere at Westminster was fascinating. Members who wish to follow Steve's ongoing commentary of current affairs might enjoy his weekly podcast which usually appears on Tuesday mornings; or look out for his live shows at Kings Place which can be attended in person or online. Steve's latest book *The Prime Ministers We Never Had* is out now and widely available. To see the recording click [here](#).



**103. February 2022 — Mark Mullally and Sally Schofield: Keeping you safe from frauds and scams.**

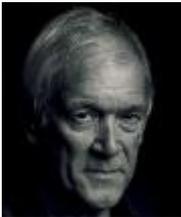
A total of 67 people joined us on Zoom to listen to the two speakers from NatWest bank. They explained the difference between a fraud and a scam — in fraud cases money has been taken from someone's account without permission and the bank always refund the money, whereas a scam happens when someone is tricked into handing over money: these cases are sometimes refunded. More than half of victims are over 55 but anyone can be affected. Victims are targeted and their information is obtained and then the criminals use befriending and grooming techniques. They are very convincing and persuasive but we should remember to "take five" before responding to any suspicious or unexpected message, and not to open any unknown attachment or link. Investment scams have robbed people of large sums of money, as have Romance scams. It is essential to seek independent financial advice if unsure. Remember that banks never phone to ask for passwords or pin numbers. It is easy to check phone numbers of companies or banks by looking at their websites. [Here](#) is a link to some useful organisations. To see the recording of this meeting click [here](#).

### February



**104. February 2022 — Mark Lewis: Sentinels of the Sea: The amazing history of lighthouses.** Pharology enthusiast Mark Lewis took us on a fascinating tour of lighthouses, from the Pharos of Alexandria circa 280 BCE, one of the seven wonders of the world, to today's unmanned, hi-tech versions. Naturally the Romans played a part, and in the UK the Dover Pharos of 1AD is still standing. The oldest working lighthouse in the world is only 100 years younger: in Corunna in Spain. Unsurprisingly the British were among the first to regulate them, setting up Trinity House in the 16th century: Mark recommends a visit to its current location in the City. The first offshore lighthouse was the Eddystone, marking a treacherous rock 18 miles off the shore at Plymouth. (Its designer, Henry Winstanley, had previous experience as an inventor and a conjuror and general eccentric!) We heard too about the lives of the lightkeepers: their bible sized rule book, their way of life, some enmities, many tragedies, some mysteries. This engaging talk is now available for the next month [here](#).

## March



**105. March 2022 — Peter Cox: The John Lewis Story: how to create an Ethical Business.** In an action-packed history of the John Lewis Partnership we learned that the most significant features were introduced not by John Lewis himself (who was more curmudgeonly than we might imagine, perhaps owing to being orphaned before he was eight), but by his son, Spedan. In a history encompassing both world wars, bombs and fires, and shell shock, we followed Spedan Lewis's enlightened management practices (including decent wages and bonuses, which had to be kept from his father in a secret set of accounts), the inspired design in the 1930s for the rebuilding of 'Peter Jones' in Sloane Square after it had been burnt down in WW1, the involvement of Barbara Hepworth in the decoration of the rebuilt John Lewis store in Oxford after it had been flattened in WW2, the introduction into the company of Mr Wait and Mr Rose whose grocery has ever since been an important part of the company, and much more. Bringing us up to date, we were reminded of the difficult trading conditions of the last ten years and of John Lewis's ground-breaking new Chairman Dame Sharon White and were left with the impression that the ethos engendered by Spedan Lewis in those early days is still flourishing. Peter's book *Spedan's Partnership: The Story of John Lewis and Waitrose* is available from Amazon. The recording can be viewed [here](#).



**106. March 2022 — Quentin Peel: The French Presidential Election: Continuity or Revolution?** It was good to welcome a large group of members in person for this meeting at the Resource Centre, as well as those on Zoom at home. Quentin drew on his long experience as a journalist and political observer to give us an insight into the background to this year's French elections. Macron is ahead in the polls and is not seriously threatened by any of the other candidates, whether from the left or from the right. The war in Ukraine introduced the issue of security and this has strengthened the existing incumbent. The Round 1 elections will take place on April 10th and there are 12 candidates of whom only two will go forward to the 2nd round. This will be followed by the legislative elections for the National Assembly in June. Macron, who is only 44, has a tight-knit team around him and is good on detail so is well-informed on all the issues. His approval ratings are just under 30% and many dislike him. There are two outstanding difficult areas for him — Gilets Jaunes are still a destabilising threat and also there is social inequality and rural discontent. Macron's government spent generously on the pandemic and did better than Germany overall. He would like his second term to establish him in history as "Mr Europe". The recording can be viewed [here](#).

## April



**107. April 2022 — Tessa Havers-Strong: LGBT Life in Islington.** As director of Islington's Forum+ Tessa took us through its 20-year history. Forum+'s prime aim has always been to reduce isolation and loneliness and to increase understanding of the lives of LGBTQ+ people. It offers a wide range of cultural activities (poetry, book, film and cookery clubs, for example), as well as: supporting victims of hate crime; offering training and consultancy for local businesses, police, and others; collecting evidence to ensure everyone's needs are identified; celebrating achievements and generally sharing experiences. Their outreach work includes a junior citizenship scheme, and a joint initiative with Arsenal FC for year 6 pupils. Tessa reminded us that Islington has a rich history of gay rights activism with the first UK protest for gay rights taking place here in 1970, and the first openly gay MP (Chris Smith) elected in 1984. She reminded us too of the significant role played by Harriet Harman and the Labour government which in 2008 brought together in the Equality Act a wide range of rights relating to race, faith, disabilities, sexuality, pregnancy, age, and gender reassignment. She also gave a helpful definition of 'hate crime' explaining that there are five protected characteristics (including race, disability, religion, and sexual orientation) for which people found guilty of a crime in which this is a factor can be subject to a 'penalty uplift', a more severe penalty. This was a most informative talk leaving us very appreciative that this activity is taking place. You can view Forum+'s website [here](#) and the recording of the meeting [here](#).



**108: April 2022 — Bob Gilbert: Rewilding Islington.** It was good to see Bob Gilbert in the flesh after his entertaining zoom presentation 18 months ago. As before he was as amusing as he is knowledgeable and drew on his experience both as a comedian, as a director within Islington Council, and as a campaigner for inner city conservation. Referring to gloomy figures of decline in native species of many sorts, Bob pointed out that rewilding requires us to find ways of living alongside nature — in cities as much as in the countryside. He invited us to envisage the landscape of Islington, part of the 'bowl bisected by the Thames' that is London, a slope running from Highgate in the north down to Finsbury in the south, once covered with woodland, mainly hornbeam, part of a wider forest that encompassed Epping, Hainault and Hatfield. The woodland in Islington was cleared to offer grassland to fatten up the animals being driven to London markets, driven down a way that became hollow with all that footfall. He suggested we look beyond the buildings in our streets and envisage Islington as a habitat, seeing the parallels between its tall buildings and cliff faces, home to pigeons (the descendants of ancient rock doves) as well as swifts, and house martens. Sand martens love riverside cliffs but also live along canals and in drains in walls. Kestrels have nested near Montem school to the great enjoyment of pupils if not their teachers. Peregrines live here too, sometimes leaving a headless pigeon as evidence. Cliff plants also flourish here: lichens, ferns, mosses (we were taken through the amazing contents of 1g of moss), Clerkenwell cress, London rocket, and even ivy-leaved toe flax from Sicily mountain slopes (after escaping from the Chelsea Physic garden). London is richer in its biodiversity than much of its surrounding countryside. How can we enhance this biodiversity? Green walls, brown roofs, drainage swales, green corridors, perhaps even 'daylighting' our covered rivers. Leaving areas of uncut grass in our parks, replacing fences with hedges, leaving some areas with no development (brownfield sites house very many of the country's insects). Bob reminisced about the biodiversity in Drayton Park railway sidings. But we need to complement nature, not supplant it: nature reserves can be a mixed blessing if they ignore and obliterate native species already in situ, replacing them with more generic wild flowers (as did the Olympic site). After an animated Q and A Bob mentioned his books, *Ghost Trees* and *The Green London Way* and promised to come again. You can view the recording [here](#) (unfortunately only part of the meeting was recorded).

**May**



**109: May 2022 — Amy Foulds: What does home mean to you?**

**Collecting and displaying ideas of home.** Amy Foulds is Collections and Library Manager at the Museum of the Home (previously the Geoffrye Museum) and vividly brought home to us that very much more than the name has been changed. From the previous focus on how homes of 'the middling classes' looked, the emphasis now is on how homes feel and look to as wide a range of people as possible — including, for example, people

facing eviction. The aim of the museum team is to be as inclusive as possible, so they are developing an archive of photos and recollections, and co-curating displays with local communities. We can see the difference straight away in their current exhibition of Cleaning, which includes aspects of the sexual politics around that. They have an East and South East Asian programme in which community co-producers work with local communities (Kingsland Road itself being home to a visible and vibrant Vietnamese community). When the pandemic lockdowns changed what 'home' meant to many, the museum was keen to capture that and has collected thousands of photos from across the country of people at home. Those familiar with the museum will be pleased to know the beautiful gardens have not been lost in the major recent building works, and indeed will feature as part of a Tealeaf trail during the Chelsea Flower Show, for which the Museum is developing a community tea blend which will be available for sale. A new sustainable garden has been created on the roof. But it is in the rooms themselves that the greatest differences are beginning to be seen. One new addition is the 1970s West Indian Front Room, curated by Michael McMillan. The museum is also actively seeking advice and input, information and memories from a group of Hackney residents. A group of Community Authors run workshops and offer safe spaces for people to tell their stories. One very colourful exhibit that loudly and beautifully extols the very different tone of the museum today is a set of curtains designed by Althea McNish, one of the first African women of colour to gain recognition in the UK. As for Geoffrye himself, although not a slave trader he did invest financially (and profitably) in slave trading companies. On his death he left money to found the almshouses that the museum now occupies. As he had no connection with the museum itself the change of name is not controversial.



**110. May 2022 — Robin Nicholson: The impact of climate change on architecture: 40 years working with Ted Cullinan.**

Architecture has been accused of being largely put 'to the glory of God, Tyranny and Big Capital', Robin Nicholson told us, and certainly it was not until the C20 that it was involved in housing for people other than the very wealthy.

By contrast, the Cullinan Studios, an architectural cooperative founded in the 1960s after Ted Cullinan spent a scholarship year in California among the hip poets, music and new thinking of the time, developed a radically new approach, and Robin (who joined them in 1980) took us on a whirlwind tour of the thinking that still typifies their work.

The underlying ethos is that buildings — and, crucially, the spaces between them — need to be 'composed' in cooperation and co-design with the people affected by them.

Robin reminded us of scandalous local examples of the opposite of that, including the Lexicon Tower in City Road, a high rise residential block which, despite being exquisitely detailed in many respects, has no opening windows, sunshades or balconies, relying entirely on air-conditioning. This was refused planning permission by Islington but was one of the many approved by Boris Johnson when London Mayor.

He showed us examples of Cullinan Studios' radically different approach, from the 1960s to today. These include student accommodation at the UEA built in the 1960s, the Lambeth Community Centre commissioned by radical local GPs in the 1980s, the Centre

for Mathematical Sciences in Cambridge, the Weald and Downland Museum, Bristol Harbourside and many more. Photos of these can be seen in the slide deck [here](#). The consultation process for Bristol Harbourside included a whole day Citizens Jury, and you will see from the photos how much attention has been given to incorporating views of landmarks like the SS Great Britain and the Cathedral, while screening out ugly modern buildings such as the Colston Tower.

Robin talked persuasively of the impact of architecture on behaviours within buildings (reducing bullying in school toilets for example) and even more fervently of the need to incorporate climate change into the thinking behind every new building. He suggested that many buildings in the city will be 'stranded assets' and that it will be a challenge to find ways of using existing tower blocks when buildings of 8 storeys or even 5 are a much more sustainable and efficient use of space.

In response to a question about the recently approved development plans for the Holloway prison site he believes it will be a C21 slum.

This was a fascinating talk and we look forward to Robin visiting us again.

## June

Cancelled

## July



### **113. July 2022 – Caroline Bressey: Living together in Victorian**

**London.** Caroline gave us an interesting and detailed presentation about the history of multi-cultural communities in London especially during Victorian times. She showed how people of various ethnic backgrounds have always lived and worked together and forged friendships and business and personal relationships. A close look at one particular street in Highbury showed many trans-race friendships, marriages and much mutual support.

Professor Bressey's research and her current book project focus on the multi-ethnic communities at that time; she uses material from the National Census and, among other sources, asylum patient records. The presentation was fascinating and triggered several questions from the audience.

## August

## September 2022