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Elizabeth Gowing

Speaker – 24 September

Unlikely positions in unlikely places - a yoga journey around Britain

Elizabeth Gowing was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, and subsequently trained to be a teacher and completed her MA at the Institute of Education, University of London.

She worked in primary education in Hackney, Lambeth and Islington as well as in education policy before moving to Kosovo in 2006.

There she co-founded the charitable NGO The Ideas Partnership which empowers and supports people in need in Kosovo in the fields of education, health and social welfare. She is also the owner of the Sapune social enterprise, offering employment to village and minority community women and support to the education of their children, and promoting Kosovo's traditional craft of filigree.

She is the author of five travel books, of which four are about Kosovo and the Balkans. She has also translated two books from Albanian - the biography of Yugoslavia's longest-held political prisoner, Adem Demaçi, and the memoirs of Hasan Prishtina.

In 2016 the President of Kosovo awarded her the Mother Teresa medal for her humanitarian work. In 2017 she was named by British Prime Minister Theresa May a 'point of light' for volunteering around the world. In 2018 the new Kosovan President gave her Kosovan citizenship by decree.

She is a frequent contributor to Radio 4 and speaker to groups in the UK.

She says:

My talk tells the stories from my explorations of yoga. I am not a likely yogini; I am too fond of chocolate and To-do lists, and sometimes fall over on my mat. So this is not a 'how to' talk - it's given by an explorer rather than an expert. Sometimes funny, sometimes touching, it evokes the characters and communities met along a fascinating journey, from dogga (yes, yoga with your dog) to my dripping day of 'hot yoga', hanging upside down in aerial yoga, to yoga in prisons and with asylum-seekers, children and Stand-Up Paddleboards. It will be of interest to those who love Britain – its quirkiness and its multiply layered communities, from inner city community centres to exclusive spas. It will also be loved by the 'armchair yogini' and the armchair traveller. It's a light introduction to some mind-bending ways that ancient positions can find new homes, and ordinary and extraordinary people in crisis can find peace and a sense of belonging.

Eric Jackson

Speaker – 22 October

Eric Jackson has been actively engaged in family and local history for over thirty years and has written many articles for various publications on some of the subjects of my talks. He was a trustee of the Federation of Family History Societies, a trustee of the Pontefract & Ackworth Almshouse Charity and secretary of the Pontefract & District Family History Society. He was a magistrate for twenty four years and has a keen interest in the history of the office of Justice of the Peace. He enjoys travel, meeting new people and helping them in their research.

He says:

"Remember, remember the 5th of November, gunpowder treason and plot" - but what do we really know about the events of 1605 that created our modern bonfire night celebrations? This talk details the background as to why dissident factions sought to assassinate King James I and the entire British establishment by blowing up Parliament during the State Opening.

It tells who the conspirators were and why the plot failed; how the plotters were caught and what their ultimate fate was. Could the plot have succeeded? The talk examines a modern-day reconstruction of the planned explosion and what the result would have been.

Sam Loveday

Speaker – 26 November

"Social Distancing in 17th Century Derbyshire"

– topical, if nothing else!

A brief synopsis:

In 1665-66, the plague ravaged the small Peak District village of Eyam. The village quarantined itself whilst the disease ran its course and this act of heroism and self sacrifice is something that we can all understand after our experience over the past few months. This virtual walking tour will tell Eyam's story from outbreak to isolation and resolution, drawing parallels between the Seventeenth Century and our experience of Covid-19 today.

Sam Loveday is a history teacher who is also a member of the British Guild of Tourist Guides. He conducts tours all round the Heart of England, in particular the Peak District, the Cotswolds and Herefordshire.