

Chichester u3a non-fiction book group

books we have read and discussed

1. Who are we now? by Jason Cowley

Jason Cowley, editor-in-chief of the New Statesman, examines contemporary England through a handful of the key news stories from recent times to reveal what they tell us about the state of the nation and to answer the question, Who Are We Now?

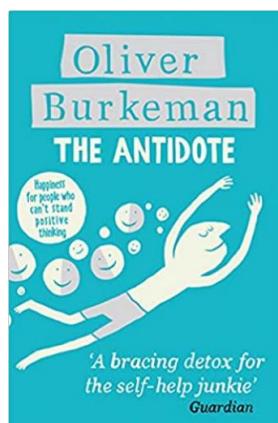
(suggested by CC)



2. The antidote by Oliver Burkeman

Is our search for happiness futile? Or are we just going about it the wrong way? In this fascinating new book, Oliver Burkeman argues that 'positive thinking' and relentless optimism aren't the solution to the happiness dilemma, but part of the problem. And that there is, in fact, an alternative path to contentment and success that involves embracing the things we spend our lives trying to avoid - uncertainty, insecurity, pessimism and failure. Thought-provoking, counter-intuitive and ultimately uplifting, "The Antidote" is a celebration of the power of negative thinking.

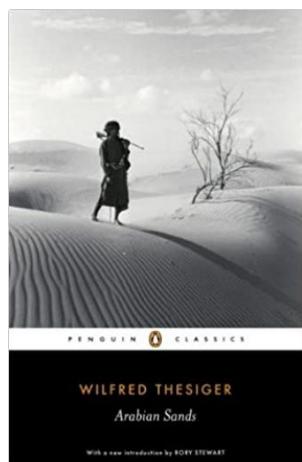
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3. Arabian Sands by Wilfred Thesiger

Wilfred Thesiger, repulsed by what he saw as the softness and rigidity of Western life - 'the machines, the calling cards, the meticulously aligned streets' - spent years exploring in and around the vast, waterless desert that is the 'Empty Quarter' of Arabia. Travelling amongst the Bedu people, he experienced their everyday challenges of hunger and thirst, the trials of long marches beneath the relentless sun, the bitterly cold nights and the constant danger of death if it was discovered he was a Christian 'infidel'. He was the first European to visit most of the region, and just before he left the area the process that would change it forever had begun - the discovery of oil.

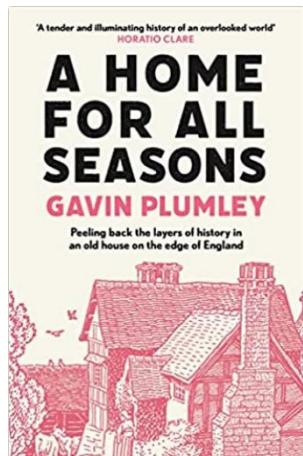
(suggested by JC)



4. A home for all seasons by Gavin Plumley

Gavin considered himself an urban being... until he met his husband, Alastair. Together, they bought Stepps House in Pembridge, Herefordshire - on love at first sight. But then came the question: 'How old is it?' With its ancient beams, the date they'd been given seemed out by centuries. As Gavin traced Stepps House through various hands and eras, he saw a past emerge that resonates powerfully with our present. Mixing history and art, memoir and landscape, *A Home for All Seasons* is grand in its sweep and intimate in its account of rural life.

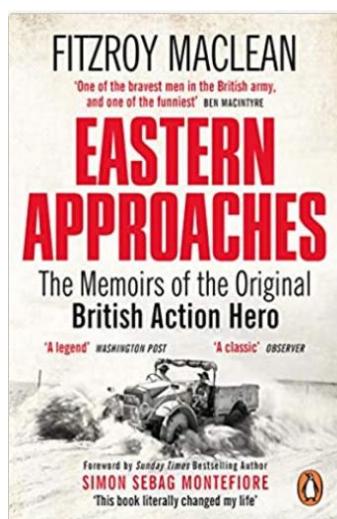
(suggested by JT)



5. **Eastern approaches** by Fitzroy Maclean

Eastern Approaches is Maclean's classic, gripping account of the sybaritic delights of diplomatic life, the thrill of remote travel in the then-forbidden zones of Central Asia, and the violence and adventure of world-changing tours in North Africa and Yugoslavia. Maclean is the original British action hero and this is blistering reading.

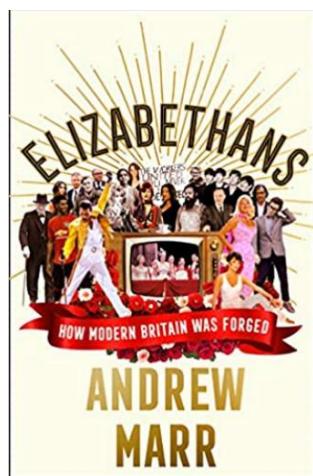
(suggested by RH)



6. **Elizabethans** by Andrew Marr

In brilliantly entertaining style and with unexpected insights into some of our sung and unsung heroes, Andrew Marr offers up a first draft of the history we are all living. This is our story as the new Elizabethans – the story of how 1950s Britain evolved into the diverse country we live in today. In short, it is the history of modern Britain.

(suggested by PIT)

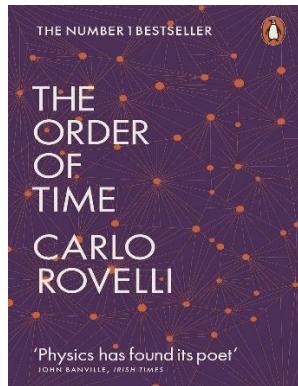


7. **The order of time** by Carlo Rovelli

Time is a mystery that does not cease to puzzle us. Philosophers, artists and poets have long explored its meaning while scientists have found that its structure is different from the simple intuition we have of it. From Boltzmann to quantum theory, from Einstein to loop quantum gravity, our understanding of time has been undergoing radical transformations. Time flows at a different speed in different places, the past and the future differ far less than we might think, and the very notion of the present evaporates in the vast universe.

With his extraordinary charm and sense of wonder, bringing together science, philosophy and art, Carlo Rovelli unravels this mystery. Enlightening and consoling, *The Order of Time* shows that to understand ourselves we need to reflect on time -- and to understand time we need to reflect on ourselves.

(suggested by PIT)

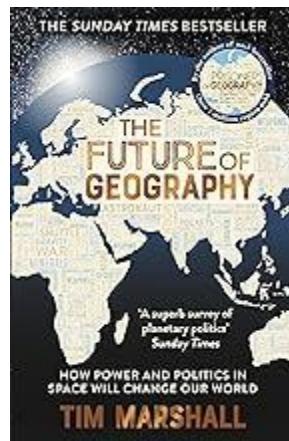


8. The future of geography by Jim Marshall

Space: the new frontier, a wild and lawless place. It is already central to communication, economics, military strategy and international relations on Earth. Now, it is the latest arena for human exploration, exploitation – and, possibly, conquest. We're heading up and out, and we're taking our power struggles with us. China, the USA and Russia are leading the way.

From physical territory and resources to satellites, weaponry and strategic choke points, geopolitics is as important in the skies above us as it is down below. If you've ever wondered if humans are going back to the Moon, who will benefit from exploration or what space wars might look like, the answers are here.

With all the insight and wit that have made Tim Marshall the UK's most popular writer on geopolitics, this gripping book shows how we got here and where we're going, covering great-power rivalry; technology; commerce; combat in space; and what it means for all of us down here on Earth. This is essential reading on power, politics and the future of humanity.



9. The coming wave by Mustafa Suleyman

Soon you will live surrounded by AIs. They will organise your life, operate your business, and run core government services. You will live in a world of DNA printers and quantum computers, engineered pathogens and autonomous weapons, robot assistants and abundant energy.

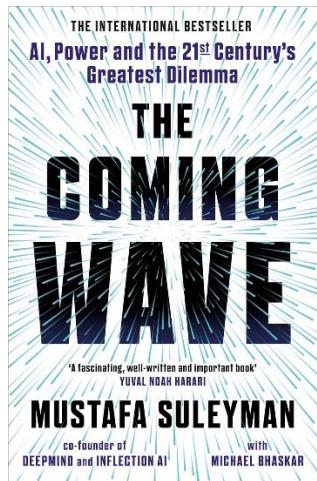
None of us are prepared.

As co-founder of the pioneering AI company DeepMind, part of Google, Mustafa Suleyman has been at the centre of this revolution. The coming decade, he argues, will be defined by this wave of powerful, fast-proliferating new technologies.

In *The Coming Wave*, Suleyman shows how these forces will create immense prosperity but also threaten the nation-state, the foundation of global order. As our fragile governments sleepwalk into disaster, we face an existential dilemma: unprecedented harms on one side and the threat of overbearing surveillance on the other.

Can we forge a narrow path between catastrophe and dystopia?

This ground-breaking book from the ultimate AI insider establishes 'the containment problem' - the task of maintaining control over powerful technologies - as the essential challenge of our age.

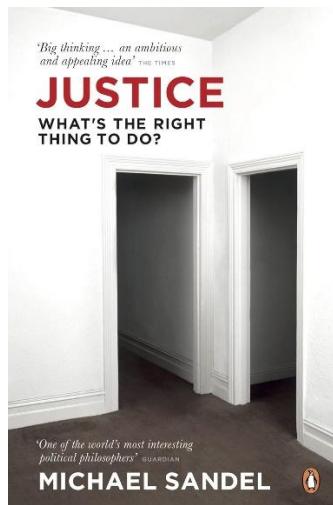


10. Justice, what's the right thing to do? by Michael Sandell

Michael Sandel's *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* invites readers of all ages and political persuasions on a journey of moral reflection, and shows how reasoned debate can illuminate our lives.

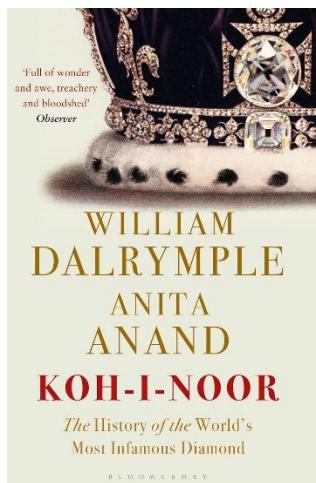
Is it always wrong to lie?
Should there be limits to personal freedom?
Can killing sometimes be justified?
Is the free market fair?
What is the right thing to do?

Questions like these are at the heart of our lives. In this acclaimed book Michael Sandel - BBC Reith Lecturer and the Harvard professor whose 'Justice' course has become world famous - gives us a lively and accessible introduction to the intersection of politics and philosophy. He helps us think our way through such hotly contested issues as equal rights, democracy, euthanasia, abortion and same-sex marriage, as well as the ethical dilemmas we face every day.



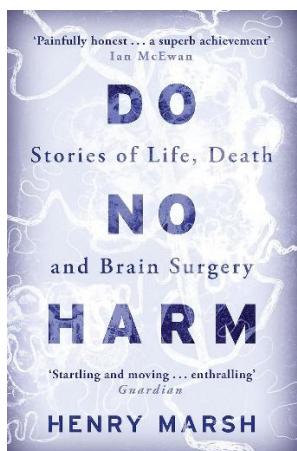
11. **Koh-i-nor**, by Anita Anad and William Dalrymple

The history of the Koh-i-Noor may have been one woven together from gossip of Delhi bazaars, but it was to become the accepted version. Only now is it finally challenged, freeing the diamond from the fog of mythology that has clung to it for so long. The resulting history is one of greed, murder, torture, colonialism and appropriation told through an impressive slice of south and central Asian history. It ends with the jewel in its current controversial setting: in the crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, which was deemed too contentious to be used by Camilla, the Queen Consort, in King Charles's coronation.



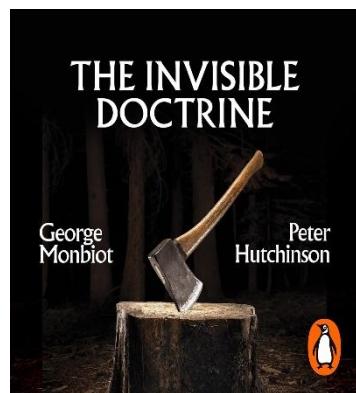
12. **Do no Harm**, by Henry Marsh

“Do no harm” offers an unforgettable insight into the highs and lows of a life dedicated to operating on the human brain, in all its exquisite complexity. With astonishing candour and compassion, Henry Marsh reveals the exhilarating drama of surgery, the chaos and confusion of a busy modern hospital, and above all the need for hope when faced with life's most agonising decisions.



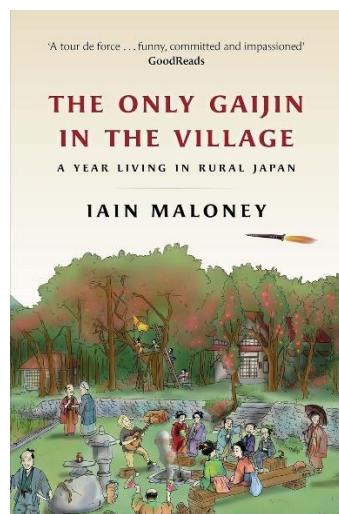
13. The invisible doctrine, by George Monbiot

We live under an ideology that preys on every aspect of our lives: our education and our jobs; our healthcare and our leisure; our relationships and our mental wellbeing; even the planet we inhabit – the very air we breathe. So pervasive has it become that, for most people, it has no name. It seems unavoidable, like a natural law.



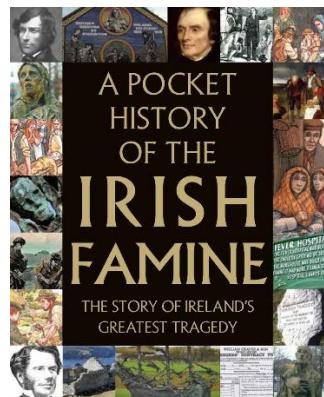
14. The only gaijin in the village by Iain Maloney

In 2016 Scottish writer Iain Maloney and his Japanese wife Minori moved to a village in rural Japan. This is the story of his attempt to fit in, be accepted and fulfil his duties as a member of the community, despite being the only foreigner in the village. Told with self-deprecating humour, this memoir gives a fascinating insight into a side of Japan rarely seen and affirms the positive benefits of immigration for the individual and the community. It's not always easy being the only gaijin in the village.



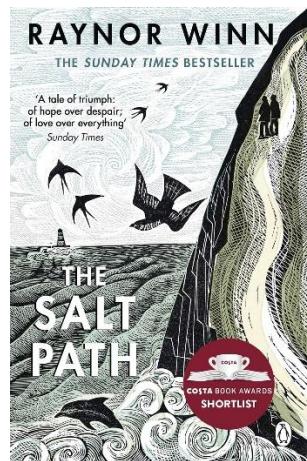
15. A pocket history of the Irish famine by Fiona Briggs

The Great Famine, an Gorta Mór in Irish, was a period of mass starvation, disease and emigration in Ireland between 1845 and 1852. Often referred to as the Irish Potato Famine, particularly outside Ireland, as around forty percent of the population were reliant on this crop. Over a million people died and over a million more emigrated, often in appalling circumstances. This book explains what happened before and during the Famine, with an account of the consequences of this epic tragedy.



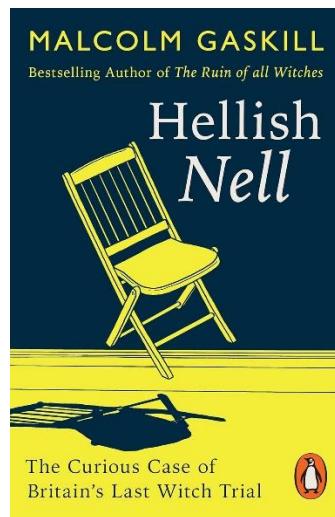
16. The salt path by Raynor Winn

Just days after Raynor learns that Moth, her husband of 32 years, is terminally ill, their home is taken away and they lose their livelihood. With nothing left and little time, they make the brave and impulsive decision to walk the 630 miles of the sea-swept South West Coast Path, from Somerset to Dorset, via Devon and Cornwall.



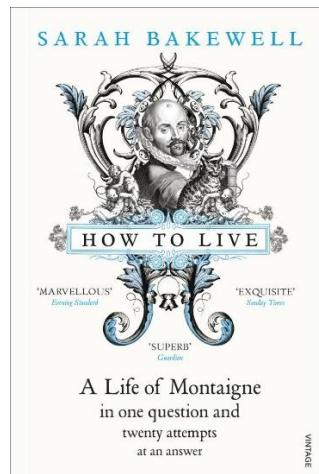
17. Hellish Nell by Malcom Gaskill

One of the last criminal trials using the 1735 Witchcraft Act was, improbably, in London in 1944. The accused was Helen Duncan, a middle-aged Scotswoman. This is her extraordinary story.



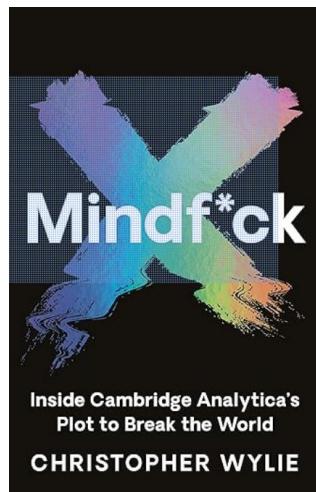
18. How to live, a life of Montaigne by Sarah Bakewell

This question obsessed Renaissance nobleman Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-92), who wrote free-roaming explorations of his thought and experience, unlike anything written before. Into these essays he put whatever was in his head: his tastes in wine and food, his childhood memories, the way his dog's ears twitched when it was dreaming, events in the appalling civil wars raging around him. The Essays was an instant bestseller, and over four hundred years later, readers still come to him in search of companionship, wisdom and entertainment - and in search of themselves.



19. Mindf*ck by Christopher Wylie

The book is a first-hand exposé from Wylie, a key insider and the former research director at Cambridge Analytica (CA), who became a whistleblower. Readers appreciate this unique, insider perspective on how data was weaponized for political gain.

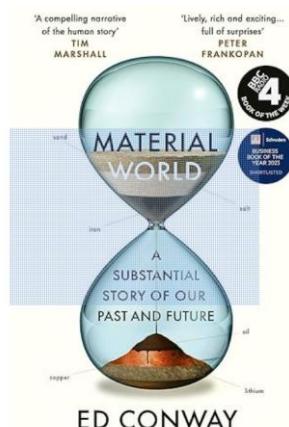


20. Material World by Ed Conway

Sand, salt, iron, copper, oil and lithium. They built our world, and they will transform our future.

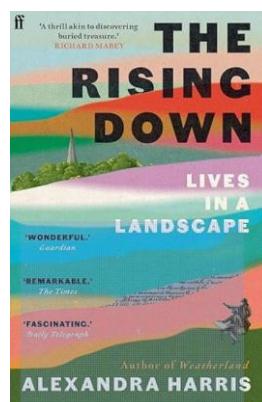
These are the six most crucial substances in human history. They took us from the Dark Ages to the present day. They power our computers and phones, build our homes and offices, and create life-saving medicines. But most of us take them completely for granted.

In Material World, Ed Conway travels the globe - from the sweltering depths of the deepest mine in Europe, to spotless silicon chip factories in Taiwan, to the eerie green pools where lithium originates - to uncover a secret world we rarely see. Revealing the true marvel of these substances, he follows the mind-boggling journeys, miraculous processes and little-known companies that turn the raw materials we all need into products of astonishing complexity.

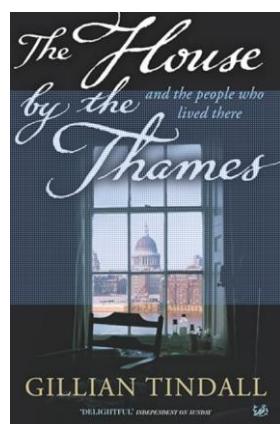


21. **Rising Down** by Alexandra Harris

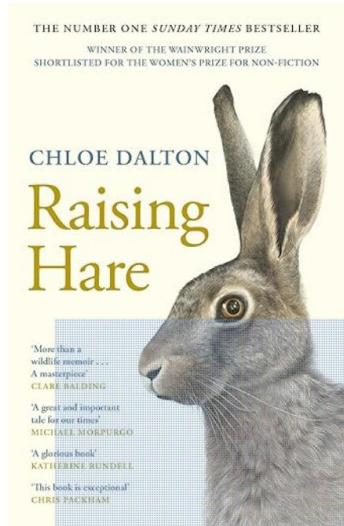
When Alexandra Harris returned to her childhood home of West Sussex, she realised that she barely knew the place at all. As she probed beneath the surface, excavating layers of archival records and everyday objects, hundreds of unexpected stories and hypnotic voices emerged from the area's past. These electrifying encounters - ranging from those with the painter John Constable and the modernist writer Ford Madox Ford to the lost local women who left little trace - inspired her to imagine lives that, though seemingly distant, are deeply connected through this shared landscape. By focusing on one small patch of England, Harris opens vast new horizons.



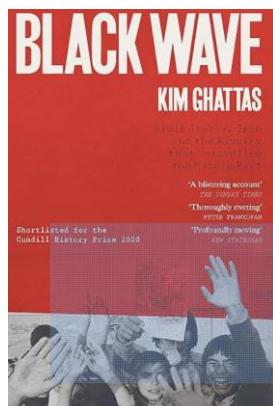
22. **The house by the Thames** by Gillian Tindall



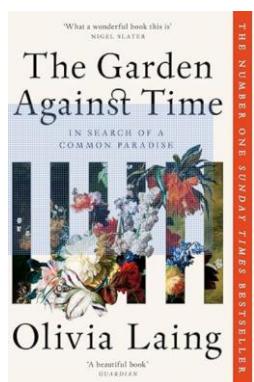
23. **Raising Hare** by Chloe Dalton



24. **Black Wave** by Kim Chatas



25. **The Garden against time** by Olivia Laing



26. Mudlarking by Lara Maiklem

