

TRAVELS THROUGH TIME

Juliet Nicolson – Frostquake

Peter Moore: Hello, I'm Peter Moore and welcome to *Travels Through Time*: the podcast made in partnership with ColorGraph.

So it's early 1963. You're part of the huddled mass inside the legendary Cavern music venue in Liverpool and you decide that it's time to nip outside for a cigarette. Outside, the streets are white and the air is sharp. It's been snowing on and off for weeks. On the TV, they're describing the hills of the Peak District as looking like the Alps of Europe. You don't quite know it yet but you're living through one of the most extreme British weather events of the 20th century; an event that will linger long in the collective memory. This is a story that the writer, Juliet Nicolson, describes in her fabulous new book, *Frostquake*. In the book, Nicolson goes in search of the human stories that took place against the bitter weather of early 1963. There's the story of the poet, Sylvia Plath, in London; the campaigning journalist, Harry Evans, in the North of England. There are the models on the King's Road and, of course, there's the band in Liverpool that is poised to take over the world. Here is Juliet Nicolson taking me on a travel back through time.

Welcome to *Travels Through Time*. It's a real pleasure to be talking to you, Juliet Nicolson.

Juliet Nicolson: It's such a treat to be here. Thank you so much for having me, Peter.

Peter Moore: Well, I'm looking out of the window. The snow is falling softly, so we've got the perfect backdrop to your book, *Frostquake*. Do you want to introduce it to us and explain it in your own words?

Juliet Nicolson: I mean maybe even starting with the title, actually, which is a strange word that I didn't make up. It encapsulates exactly what seems to have happened during this winter of 1962/3 when it started to snow on Boxing Day and didn't really stop for ten solid weeks. During that time, when there was a kind of variety of lockdown in which the transport systems slithered to an icy halt, all sorts of things started happening in that quiet, peaceful place where we go when we can't rush around the roads, and the airports, and the trains. Frostquake is a term that I found in a biological dictionary, which I happen to have on my shelf; the definition of which is 'a seismic event caused by a sudden cracking action in frozen soil' [*laughter*]. It seemed to me that that was a description of what happened during the course of that very, very snowy winter nearly 60 years ago.

Peter Moore: You're right. It works so beautifully metaphorically as well because you've captured this moment, which is so full of political and social change - changing attitudes. It's quite a story. There's something you write at one point which is 'the details of these strange cold days remain vivid in the collective memory more than 60 years later'.

Juliet Nicolson: It was a winter that people remembered not just on the personal level but for, as you say, Peter, these other huge things that were going on. It was a winter with a backdrop of a cold war. We'd just emerged from the crisis of the Cuban missile threat, which had taken place in October 1962, when it was felt that we were within a whisker of a third world war and in that case, a nuclear war. The Russian intimidation was all-pervasive and Jack Kennedy, who was the President of the United States at the time, had been told in his inauguration that if a third world war - if a nuclear war were to come - a third of humanity would be wiped out. It's not surprising really when so many people were still alive who not only remembered the Second World War but also the first and the Spanish Flu that had come straight after it.

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Peter Moore: Yeah, I think you're right. At one point, there's this really disquieting pattern, which people have noticed, that in the 20th century to that point, there had been a catastrophic war every 20 years until 1960. So it seemed like, once again, things were deteriorating and I suppose that adds to this slightly eerie backdrop to the snow. We can look at snow in so many different ways because obviously, it's a vehicle of wonder and when children look at the snow, their eyes are always a little bit wider. You can go out and play in it and have the snowballs but then I think it's important to say there's quite a lot of emotional range within your book. One of the chapters which I found really touching was about Sylvia Plath, of course, who's in London in the early months of 1963. It's against that backdrop of frozen roads and slippery streets that she has her emotional descent.

Juliet Nicolson: Yes, absolutely. So beautifully put, Peter. Her relationship with the poet, Ted Hughes, her husband, had come to a dreadful end when he went off with one of their mutual friends. She was reeling from the after-effect of this breakup and had come to live in London in a flat with her two tiny children. One of them wasn't even one year old and the other one was just not even three. She was an American living in London on her own; not exactly friendless but very, very lonely. The way she coped with this spiralling despair was to write. The irony, I suppose, in this dreadful way, is that the most exquisite, and dramatic, and longlasting of all her poetry are those poems which she wrote in the winter in the snow; when it was so hard to get out and even buy milk and bread for her children, slipping and sliding all over the place, not having enough money and not having enough heat. Out of this came these extraordinary pieces of creative writing.

Peter Moore: Yeah, I think so. There's a quote from Sylvia where she writes 'the weather affects me intensely' and maybe this is one of these things that when we're looking at the art or we're looking at the poems, we forget the context that they're written in. It's always difficult to make that connection between weather and events because sometimes it can seem too frivolous in a way.

Juliet Nicolson: Yes, of course. As you say, the joy of it and the magical transformation of a familiar landscape into something Narnia-esque is really what almost all of us respond to initially; while the joy and delirium of rushing around in this frosty whiteness can stay with children and maybe they don't have to go to school. This was a time, in 1962, when coal fires were still the means to heat the house. There was no central heating or anything like that and, of course, pipes were bursting all over the place. I remember myself queuing in the street for a standpipe to get water in a kettle to take home to pour into our baths. So it's a double-edged thing, a snowfall.

Peter Moore: It is. And there's this another quality of the book, which is really enjoyable, is this sense of simultaneous experience because as we know that – because the book's like a panorama, you'll dive in on a particular story which will enliven a theme – but we know that as Sylvia Plath might be writing her poems in London, you and your father for example are having your escapades on these frozen lakes, and I have to ask you about this story when he takes you out over the water.

Juliet Nicholson: Yes. Well we were at school in London but at the weekends we went down to spend the weekends in Kent, which was one of the places that was most dramatically affected by this unprecedented snow. The winds were so huge, the drifts were the height of four men. Kent and Sussex particularly affected by this. We had a lake near our home, which had frozen over, miraculously deeply, and my father and I went to walk on it. We had not skates, shops had sold out of skates months before, but we had wellington boots, so we slithered along – I can

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remember it as I speak it to you now, absolute moment by moment – as we walked out into the middle of the lake. I started to put my feet on top of his feet as we walked further and further into the middle and suddenly he slipped and I slipped with him, and he was a tall big-built man and he crashed on top of me who was eight and quite small and slight. And unconscious I was, lying there on the ice. And actually, for years afterwards my father would mention that incident as one of the worst, because he thought that was it.

Peter Moore: He thought he had crushed his daughter. And I think you finish that paragraph with “Thank goodness my mother never found out.”

Juliet Nicholson: Well that was his initial reaction. I had barely come around. I was still seeing Tom and Jerry type stars in front of me.

Peter Moore: Well, he’s got good instincts for self-preservation. *[Laughter]* Okay, well what could have been quite tragic is happily for us a charming anecdote. I want to get into the format of this podcast now which is hopefully going to take us to some more really lively stories. I know it will do. It begins with me asking you this question, which I ask of everyone that comes on, which is if you could travel back through time, which year would you pick?

Juliet Nicolson: If I could travel back through time, I would love to return to the winter of 1962/3 because it was a very important and significant winter in which I was eight years old.

Peter Moore: Perfect. Well, let's do this in three scenes. Where would you like to go first, please?

Juliet Nicolson: First, I'd like to go to a scene in which I actually appear but I would love to go back there just almost as an observer.

Peter Moore: It's a bit like Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* this one; to look back at a former self maybe.

Juliet Nicolson: It is. It's looking back on my younger self; not to have a conversation with her or anything but sort of knowing secretly what I know now, nearly 60 years later, and that little girl, aged eight, obviously had no idea about. We were living in London, just off the King's Road, right down at the very end where it's actually called World's End. Every morning, I would take the bus to school on my own which made me feel extremely grown-up. In this very snowy winter, quite often, the bus wasn't running and I had to get a lift with my dad. The diesel in the buses would freeze up. When it was running, I would take the bus and the bus conductor gave you a ticket from an enormous machine that he had hanging around his neck on a great sort of strap. Out of the machine, he would roll a ticket. There was something terribly sophisticated, I felt, about holding my own ticket and sitting on the top floor of a double-decker bus, number 328.

Peter Moore: This seems very advanced to me, I must say, at the age of eight.

Juliet Nicolson: Very advanced?

Peter Moore: It does! I mean eight-year-olds, nowadays, to put them on a bus would seem very brave, I think.

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Juliet Nicolson: But there was nothing to fear. What was there to fear? We didn't think there was anything to fear. My brother was three years younger than me and he also took the bus up the King's Road on his own, aged five. Oh no, no, we were very independent [laughter]. I remember walking from the bus stop to my school, which was just off the Gloucester Road in London, with the snow pricking my face. We didn't have any uniform at my school and so I had a dress which was very 60s in that it was something called a shirt-waister. It had no waist. It was bright red and it had silver buttons all the way down the front and I wore this dress as often as I could. I had a balaclava, which covered most of my face, and mittens lined with rabbit fur. My favourite lesson was English and my English teacher was always late. She would come running into the classroom, honestly, at a tilt with her red hair in a bun already falling out and all around her face and our exercise books, that she'd taken home to mark with her red pen, in a paper bag that was already dripping and falling from the snow. She would sit on the desk, not behind it, and read us stories. I don't ever remember doing any grammar which may be why my publisher has such a problem when I turn in my books [laughter]. It was the stories that she would tell us. Her name was Mrs Fitzgerald and her first name, which we didn't know at the time, was Penelope. She was glamorous because she lived on a houseboat on the River Thames in Chelsea and her eccentricity, and her mystery, and her dishevelled, wonderful, Bohemian appearance was just so unlike anybody else that we were taught by. What she would read us was Dickens. She would read *A Tale of Two Cities* and she would talk about the tricoteuse and she'd talk about the French Revolution. She was also a history teacher and so in this particular book, obviously, literature and history were all wrapped up in one. It was an absolutely mesmerising experience with her sitting on this desk with this snow still dripping out of her holey boots. They had holes in the bottom of them. When I was eight, in that classroom, I thought that the boots had holes in because she didn't care. We had these new words which were 'with it', and 'super', and 'groovy' [laughter] which we all used as often as we could and I thought she was all those things. The grown-up me is sitting in the corner of this classroom after accepting your invitation, Peter, to return in time to be there again but what I didn't know was that she was living in abject poverty in this boat which was so full of holes itself - not just her boots but her house, her home, her boat - that it was beginning to tilt into the River Thames. I didn't know that she was living with her alcoholic husband. I didn't know that the reason that she was popping little bits of chalk into her mouth, as she spoke to us, was not because she was odd, and marvellous, and strange (all of which she was) but because she was hungry. This completely unforgettable character, this woman who'd introduced me to a love of reading, of literature, of writing, of history, was going to become one of our most famous novelists many years later. Penelope Fitzgerald won the Booker Prize.

Peter Moore: She certainly did. She is the author of *The Blue Flower* and so many other magical works. I think 'magical' is the right word really to imagine being taught by her as an English teacher. Was she, at this point, published at all or was she just a teacher? Was that just a profession for her or was she doing what Aldous Huxley did when he taught for a year at Eton, for example?

Juliet Nicolson: Oh no, it wasn't like that at all for her. No, no, no. She was earning the money. She had two daughters, a bit older than I was, but still young children. She had this husband who had been a very distinguished man of law but during that winter, he was found to have stolen something from his office. He was arrested, barred from the law and lost his job. She was going through catastrophe but I think that while she was in the classroom and seeing that we, her students, were entranced by what thrilled her too, which were these great, great classic stories that she was having the privilege of passing on to us, I think she felt that. I think she was in a sort of vacuum when she was there in the classroom.

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Peter Moore: I mean I'm sitting here with a great big smile on my face because this is such a great projection of what it must have been like in this cold, London environment inside the little schoolroom with a magical teacher. It's got all these elements that you have to find appealing.

Juliet Nicolson: Hermione Lee's masterly biography of her has just taken me back and filled in gaps that I obviously didn't know about when I was little. There was a very beautiful funeral she had - a memorial service - in St. James', Piccadilly which I went to. It was very, very grand - this grand Wren church - for our slightly scrumpled schoolteacher. In that memorial service, they very brilliantly played her voice at an interview that she'd done on the BBC and it came through the whole sound system. I remember sitting in that church listening to this voice - the power of the voice - just absolutely back in my eight-year-old self again.

Peter Moore: This is really brilliant. I should ask you as well, for listeners who have not read any of Penelope Fitzgerald's novels, do you have a good place for them to start? I should just ask you this as a sideline as we're going.

Juliet Nicolson: Well, you really should read *Offshore*. I think everybody should read *Offshore* because it is the story of her heartbreak but also anybody who's listening to your podcast, Peter, and is a history lover, gets a very, very vivid detailed sense of life in the King's Road of what those cafes were like and of this incredible duality of the old guard. There were the bowler-hatted, umbrella-furled smartypants, who lived in the posh end of the King's Road, looking aghast and askance at the skirts walking out of Mary Quant's shop at the top end of the King's Road. Her descriptions of the great fashion parade that was beginning to take over this ancient walkway of the King's Road in Chelsea are second to none and they're firsthand. She must have been writing them in the early '60s when she was my teacher.

Peter Moore: Wow! Perfect. As we've taken our listeners into a classroom, it seemed only right that we send them away with a little bit of homework, so that's a good novel to go and enjoy. Let's move on to your second scene. We're going to leave Mrs Fitzgerald's English class behind. Where would you like to go next, please?

Juliet Nicolson: Well, I can hardly resist going to meet The Beatles. I have been a Beatles' fan since 1962 when the first of their records came out, *Love Me Do*. In the winter of 1963, at the very beginning of the winter, they were not really known outside Liverpool and the Northern clubs that they were playing in. Four joshing, irreverent, gum-chewing, cigarette-smoking, chicken sandwich-eating foursome [laughter] were on stage behaving in a way that pop groups just didn't. Also, they were sort of gorgeous, and flirty, and loved their audience, and were clearly having the time of their lives. In Oldham, in the Astoria Ballroom, this was the moment that everything began and I would like to have been not only in the audience that night but I would like to have joined them where they went afterwards. What happened was that the word had got out that their record, *Please Please Me*, had gone to number one in some of the music charts. The capacity of the Astoria Ballroom was 800 but three times that many had turned up that night. There was mayhem and they had no professional security or anything like that. There were a few moonlighting cafe owners who volunteered to be security guards but this one girl broke through the moonlighting cafe owners. She managed to get onto the stage with The Beatles, who were singing *Please Please Me*. at which 75 other fans, furious that this one woman had got so close to these idols, that they also burst through and the black dress that she was wearing was ripped from her back. Someone got a photograph of it, which I've actually put in my book, with this exposed back of this woman and you can see her underwear underneath it with these sort of crazy young women who have all simultaneously fallen in love with this band from Liverpool. After the event, they were invited to go back to a house that belonged to a friend of Paul's dad.

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The reason that they'd accepted to go back and have a cup of tea in this unlikely place, as they'd never heard of this family who owned this house before, except that it belonged to a friend of Paul's dad, was because there was a promise of cheese sandwiches and chocolate cake and they were starving. The facilities, at that time, in the dressing room of bands that were on these tours were hopeless. They all shared one room. It was an absolutely very, very basic thing. So with the prospect of being invited back to a nice warm house with cheese sandwiches and chocolate cake, they said, 'Amazing!' So I would like to have gone back with them to this house which was owned by a family called the McCanns. I spoke to Liz McCann, who was 11 at the time, and she knew about The Beatles because they'd been on the local Granada television. Her father came back and he said, 'The Beatles are coming back for sandwiches and cake.' *[Laughter]*. Quick, quick, quick. Mrs McCann quickly, quickly rustled up the sandwiches and in walked these lads who were just so funny and charming said, 'Hello, Liz! (aged 11) How are you, love?' *[Laughter]*. They sit down on Liz McCann's three-piece suite. They light the fire in the sitting room and they eat the sandwiches. Liz told me this, just not very long ago and 60 years later, that she sat on her leather sofa staring at Paul McCartney as if she'd never seen a human being, or a god anyway, in her sitting room before. He was wearing a green polo neck sweater. She couldn't take her eyes off him. She said to me that, at that very moment, she knew what love meant *[laughter]*.

Peter Moore: Listen, where do you start with this? I think it's, again, almost equally charming. We could talk about The Beatles all day but I think one thing that you've captured here, which is so important, especially about this moment when The Beatles were appearing out of Liverpool and they were coming into the national conscience which would soon be a global phenomenon, is that they were very funny. We can be very serious about The Beatles now and look at how they changed culture and how they did things with musical arrangements and so on but it was this sense of cheekiness, and difference, and willingness to break conventions. I know there's that famous interchange between George Harrison and George Martin when he says, 'The problem is your tie, for a start.' It's this kind of irreverence for the slightly older established generation. I think you probably see a bit of that in this scene.

Juliet Nicolson: Absolutely. I mean here was a generation, a young generation of teenagers, who had not known war. They were different. They didn't have all that baggage and they were looking for people of their own generation to represent them. There were others. I mean Cliff Richard was singing then very successfully but he didn't have the kind of looseness and the sort of spontaneity. Somehow or other, he was quite old even though he wasn't old. What that generation wanted was Elvis. They wanted that but he was over the other side of the Atlantic. Where was our Elvis? Where was this 'you can anything you want really and you can even eat a cheese sandwich onstage and get away with it'? It was that sort of failure or refusal to observe the conventions and the propriety. Their hair was so long and you could barely see their eyes. Philip Norman, the great biographer of The Beatles, said, 'Their hair was like a Grenadier's busby.' *[Laughter]*. It interrupted their eyelashes *[laughter]*.

Peter Moore: The other thing as well about this period of history with The Beatles is that you realise how off-the-cuff it was. They'd nip into Abbey Road and record an album. It would take a day and then they'd be off somewhere else. I suppose we have a dovetailing here, actually, with the cold weather because there's this slightly comedic Scottish tour that they go on a month earlier on in January, where they're watched by - I don't know - six Scottish farmers in a small pub or something like this *[laughter]* but they have to endure the cold by sleeping on top of one another in what they call The Beatle Sandwich, where they have to kind of revolve round so they can exchange the heat.

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Juliet Nicolson: That's right. I mean it was very, very unsophisticated. The snow, the weather and the ice - if you're crossing Snake Pass, your windscreen blows out and you're already lying on top of your drum kit, you're not the world superstars that you would be by the end of that year. There they were singing in front of the Queen Mother in November.

Peter Moore: I quite like the fact, in the book, that The Beatles are like a looming character, if I can use that cliché to describe them, because they're always the four lads from Liverpool who are on the edge of people's vision throughout the first half of the book and then they start to appear in their own right with *Please Please Me* and the other songs.

Juliet Nicolson: What I really hadn't quite focused on is the fact that Liverpool was so cutting edge itself. It's on the edge. It's on the Mersey. Icebergs were floating up and down that Mersey but the other side of the Mersey, or across the Atlantic, is New York, this neon-lit world. The ships that were going between the ports, as they had done for centuries, between Liverpool and New York were bringing back the kind of tantalising glimpses of blue jeans and bootleg records. Liverpool had a kind of awareness of possibility that perhaps even London was needing to catch up with. It was also the city of tremendous writers and painters and it was a hugely cultural melting pot at that time.

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Peter Moore: As I said before, we could talk about The Beatles because I'm a fan as well and I know that you write in the book that you can almost arrange the autobiography of your life around various Beatles' songs that were being played at important moments but we do have to charge on. We've got one scene left. Where would you like to go for your third and final scene in these early months of 1963?

Juliet Nicolson: Well, this is about a month later, after The Beatles have had their number one. We've moved now towards the end of the winter on to 21st March and to the House of Commons in London. I would like to go, that night of 21st March, in the company possibly of David Dimbleby who was a young news reporter of the time. With no difficulty at all, he managed to walk that evening into the public gallery of the House of Commons to watch a debate. He wasn't aware that he was going to be sitting in the public gallery at some kind of moment-changing event but as it happened, it was the evening in which this rumbling Profumo crisis, which had been the talk of the town but not published in the newspapers, suddenly erupted in the Chamber of the House of Commons.

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Peter Moore: So I should, at this point, get you just to frame what the Profumo crisis was as we have listeners everywhere and not just in the UK. Although, people might know about this crisis everywhere but it was so important in the context of 20th-century history. What was it about?

Juliet Nicolson: John Profumo was a Member of Parliament and the Minister for War in the Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's Conservative government. John Profumo was rumoured to have had an affair, a year earlier in 1961, with a model called Christine Keeler. She, in turn, was rumoured to have slept with a Russian naval attaché called Ivanov, who was suspected to be a spy. The implication was that John Profumo had had pillow-talk with Christine Keeler, had told her some secrets as Minister for War, which she had then passed on to the Russians. It was a time in which everybody was extremely jumpy about Russia but also about spies. It wasn't reported in the press because the establishment protected itself and the press was too frightened of libel and of printing any stories without any evidence. It was reaching a sort of crescendo. One other thing that was significant was that the Leader of the Labour Party, Hugh Gaitskell, had died in January 1963 and been succeeded by far more straight-talking - I don't know if one might say maybe 'man of the people' but certainly a Beatles' fan - Harold Wilson. There was a sort of feeling that it was going to be more possible to attack this elitist, establishment, Conservative government. That night of 21st March, an ally of Harold Wilson, a close friend of his called George Wigg, and one of the few female MPs, Barbara Castle, asked some questions about Christine Keeler who had vanished from a court trial that was going on at the time to do with two of her boyfriends, who were Jamaican and Antiguan drug dealers. It was a side story but it was a way in which George Wigg MP and Barbara Castle MP could ask a question without directly making any allegations against Profumo. They raised the name of Christine Keeler. David Dimbleby said to me that when the actual name of Christine Keeler was uttered in public in the hallowed Chamber of the House of Commons for the first time, there was an absolute rush of oxygen leaving the place. Everybody gasped. The enquiry was coming close enough for the Speaker of the House, as soon as the close of business on the night of 21st March came to an end in the Commons at 1 o'clock in the morning, to rush around to Profumo's house and got him out of bed. He brought him to the House of Commons at the crack of dawn and said to him, 'Did you sleep with Christine Keeler?' John Profumo said, 'No, I didn't. Sorry, the Chief Whip said, 'You're going to have to come to the Commons in the morning and tell the House that you're innocent.' Of course, he was guilty as hell. If it was me and I was allowed to be there, even if David Dimbleby had gone home to bed, I would have stayed all night in the public gallery in order to retain my place.

Peter Moore: It's one of the moments of absolute political drama, isn't it? Because even though the story in itself, and you did an admirable job of condensing it down to a few minutes there because it's quite complicated and there are various characters, the simple fact of the matter is that there's a culture of protection within what you might term 'the establishment'. Stories are not told that could be told and friends look out for one another but I suppose what David Dimbleby was saying, when he said that Christine Keeler's name was mentioned, was that, in an instant, there was a paradigm shift. Now, things are going to be fair game that weren't before. Is that right as a summary?

Juliet Nicolson: That is absolutely right. One cannot really claim that the world changed or society changed within a matter of ten weeks during one winter but at least I felt, as I was looking at the course of those events of that winter, that light was shone on issues that could never be switched off again. There were many of them during that winter but one of them was this chief thing of the establishment protecting its own. It just wasn't going to go on being possible. Neither the press nor the public were any longer going to tolerate the fact that just because you'd all been at school together, or you were all in one government together, or you all

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spoke in a certain way, or you were all members of a certain gentleman's club, or you weren't a woman, were you going to be able to get away with this anymore. It just wasn't going to happen anymore. So when Profumo did come the following morning and had to sit in front of the packed House (and me up in the gallery with time travel) *[laughter]*, he made a statement in which he categorically denied that he had had anything other than friendship as a relationship with Keeler. As he sat down, having made his statement and having lied so brazenly to the House, Harold Macmillan, who was sitting next to him, just moved his body over and just patted him on the back. 'Well done, my boy.' Of course, it was outrageous and the press, from that day onwards, just went absolutely at it, hell for leather. Three months later, Profumo, again, had to return and say he had lied and resigned immediately.

Peter Moore: That was the end of his career.

Juliet Nicolson: Yes. Macmillan himself was gone by the end of the year through health reasons and he was succeeded briefly by another Conservative Prime Minister, Alec Douglas-Home, but only for a year and then Harold Wilson was elected prime minister. Through him, all sorts of reforms, to do with capital punishment, decriminalisation of homosexuality, legalisation of abortion and all sorts of reforms that needed to be done were done under his tenure. It all began and the light was being let in on bad practice through that winter.

Peter Moore: It's difficult to write a book like this that roams so widely but because you've got this argument of change, whether it might be through the Windrush generation finding their feet, or through the pill giving women more agency and choice over what's going on in their lives, or The Beatles changing the mood of Britain, or the politics changing, all these things do seem to have a seedbed in this time. I've got one last question which takes us back into a bit of material history, if anything, which is if you could put your hand back through the past, having visited all these places, and pick up one tangible object to bring back today, what would you like?

Juliet Nicolson: I would love to put my hand deeply into the very, very holey and raggedy rucksack that Mrs Fitzgerald used to cart about with her as she came into the classroom. From that, I would like to retrieve her little notebook in which I feel sure she was writing the detail of those moments and which, nearly 20 years or so later, she would turn into her magnificent novel.

Peter Moore: That's a wonderful object to ponder and to think about. Maybe it existed and well... we'll just have to imagine. Juliet Nicolson, this has been so much fun and we shall leave it here.

Juliet Nicolson: Thank you so much, Peter. I've had a lovely time talking to you.

Peter Moore: That was me, Peter Moore, having a hugely enjoyable trip back to 1963 with Juliet Nicolson. Juliet's sparkling new book is called *Frostquake* and it's been charming the critics over the past few weeks. It's available right now and we really do suggest that you check it out. To find out more about this episode and to see a fabulous colourised image of the snow in 1963 from ColorGraph, do head to our website which is tttpodcast.com. If you did enjoy this episode, then please do consider leaving us a review on Apple Podcasts or just writing to let us know. We always do love to hear from you. We'll be back though with another episode next week but from me, for now, that's it. Thank you very much for listening.

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