

# FRESTONIAN GALLERY

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## WELCOME TO FRESTONIA

PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXT BY TONY SLEEP

BOOK LAUNCH & EXHIBITION

WEDNESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

6-9PM

“On 31st October 1977, Freston Road, a squatted street of derelict houses in Notting Dale, West London, declared independence from the United Kingdom. We appealed to the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to prevent evictions by the Greater London Council.

The new nation-state called itself The Peoples Free Independent Republic of Frestonia. It adopted the motto ‘we are all one family’ (although for extra gravitas the Latin ‘*nos sumus una familia*’ was preferred). Ministers of State were appointed, postage stamps were issued, and foreign visitors were issued with visas. This was partly a publicity-stunt inspired by the old Ealing comedy “Passport to Pimlico”. It was a joke aimed at getting the press and public to see the squatters as human rather than parasites. Beyond that, it was an affirmation of creativity, resilience, community and self-determination in difficult circumstances.

Frestonia was another place and another time, but one that should not be forgotten. It showed how people who had nothing to lose still had something to offer. Most people who lived there and survived (many did not) still feel a sense of gratitude for the experience. We learned something about ourselves and others that our leaders, our society and the world remains generally blind to. In all foreseeable futures, we will all become somewhat Frestonian, or else.”

*Tony Sleep*

**Copies of the book, as well as a limited Special Edition (with signed print by Tony Sleep) are now available from the gallery – Contact: 02039041865 / [gallery@frestoniangallery.com](mailto:gallery@frestoniangallery.com)**

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