

Address Box as requested



CSPA BRISTOL GROUP Members Newsletter Aug 2022

A Word from the Chairman: Hello colleagues, I do hope you and your families are keeping well in this lovely summer heat and are enjoying this wonderful summer of sport. World athletic champs, Commonwealth games, The Lionesses and of course the Westminster blood sports. Hopefully promises made regarding pension increases will be kept by the eventual winner whoever she or he may be.

We had a successful and enjoyable meeting at the Toby carvery in July. The nine colleagues expected to attend reduced to five at the eleventh hour due to covid. Meetings at the carvery are proving to be cost effective when compared to meetings at the CSSC. We should consider using the carvery to host the Bristol AGM meeting in addition to our usual lunch next March.

My usual plea. We need a Secretary and in addition anyone who is prepared to step from the shadows to provide support to undertake some of the tasks which individually are not particularly onerous.

The 2023 AGM where we will need to elect a committee plus officers is not that far away so please come forward. My 'great days out in London' article in the previous newsletter were so well received that I have been asked for some more. These follow at the end. Apologies to those without easy access to the internet. **I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting at the Civil Service Club on Tuesday 6th September at CSSC starting at 10am.**

The State of the State Pension (SP)

The state pension age will rise again for everyone to 67, and then to 68. This despite the fact that life expectancy has stalled and people in more deprived areas may need to stop working earlier and die younger than those in wealthier regions. The Government's decision to abandon its triple-lock promise last year led to the sharpest real-terms drop in income for the nation's retirees since 1980. There's also the stark difference between the basic rates of the old and new state pensions that has left many (on the old) feeling short-changed. Pensioners who retired before April 2016 get a basic rate of £141.85 a week, while those who retired under the new, reformed system can get £185.15. It's obviously not as simple as this but it all contributes to a feeling of injustice and confusion over what is fair and what isn't. But the fact is if we get a 9% rise in State pensions (if) in April 2023 the difference will look dreadful. The old SP will be £154.62 per week, the new SP £201.8 a difference of £47 per week or £613 per year. This is going to be an interesting period ahead, expect a motion or three at the conference this year.

The Southwest Inter Group Meeting was held at the Jury's Hotel in central Exeter on 14th June 2022 the meeting was chaired by Les Calder our new Regional Rep with David Luxton from CSPA HQ as guest speaker. There were 10 members in attendance from Exeter, Plymouth, Bath and Bristol groups, with apologies from Weymouth group. **David Luxton Deputy General Secretary** gave an update on CSPA priority campaigns and the New CSPA programmes including the (hopefully) soon to be released updated national web site. The big issue this coming autumn will be the Civil Service pension campaign especially the anticipated 9% rise from April 2023. The press is already complaining that 'we' will be receiving vastly huge pension increases based on the projected inflation figures by September. Members might be asked to write to their MPs for support in campaigns.

David pointed out that the average CS pension was only £8104. Male pensioners average is £11046 and female pensioners as low as £5104. There was discussion round the proposed Constitutional Amendments to reserve two EC posts for women candidates. There was some opposition from East Devon member Barbara Roberts – conference in October could be interesting.



The hotel put on a very good hot buffet lunch which was much appreciated.

All our groups are in the same difficult position - not having enough active members. Plymouth Group seemed to fair slightly better; having lost two committee members in 2021 had two new committee members at this year's AGM and have about 10 members coming to meetings – so not bad. Bath is in a slightly worse situation regarding officers than Bristol and they also have to find another venue as well. David apologised

for the fiasco with the Travel Insurance company which CSPA thought had been sorted. It turns out the company were not expecting the volume of interest which there was. David is now looking to source a different insurance group. However, the point was made that whichever insurance company was chosen, all quotes to members would be on the basis of their medical history. All the motions Bristol Group proposed for the AGM in October were considered very suitable. The assembled group above, left to right, Geoff Ferguson (Plymouth); Stuart Tarr, Jean and Colin Fender (Br) ;Mr and Mrs Roberts (East Devon); Julian Hardenburgh (Bath); David Luxton (HQ);Les Calder (Reg Rep and Chair east Devon) and Clive Roberts(east Devon). We presented the motions Bristol group has raised and all were 'approved' as highly relevant. These motions have been submitted and now included for the in AGM Kenilworth; 12 and 13th October 2022 and are: - **(motions –A20, A26, A38, A41, A48)**

Digital Exclusion because of Telephone Land Line Loss; This AGM instructs the Executive Council to seek Government assurance to re-state its commitments and to set out a range of initiatives to ensure that the elderly (and the vulnerable) are not put at risk of digital exclusion by plans to digitise all telephone services from 2025. Current access to important public and commercial services on which their health, personal security, management of finances and quality of life depend are threatened. Key among those concerns is the need to safeguard the well-being of those not connected to the internet who depend on current (conventional copper) telephone land lines to access these services against the plans to digitise telephone services from 2025 which will render analogue-based devices redundant and unusable. **(Composite motion A38 and A39)**

State Retirement Pension Triple Lock Pension Increase Guarantee; This AGM instructs the Executive Council ask Government to reaffirm its commitment to honour the State Pension Triple Lock Guarantee for the remainder of this Parliament as pledged by the Work and Pensions Secretary, in a statement to Parliament made on March 21st, 2022, and by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his 26th May Statement to Parliament on the Cost of Living Support, that benefits will be uprated by this September's CPI and that the triple lock will apply for the state retirement pension. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/cost-of-living-support>]. **(Composite A20)**

Civil Service Retirement Pension Increases to Counter Rapid Inflation; This AGM instructs the Executive Council to task Government to raise public sector and civil service pensions in April 2023 by this September's Consumer Price Index rate of inflation which some economists are now forecasting may exceed 9%. **(Motion A26)**

Accessing NHS Services; This AGM instructs the Executive Council to seek from Government significant improvement to access to GP appointments. Against the background of the difficulties in making timely GP face-to-face appointments and access to lengthy hospital waiting lists, will the Government set out its plans

for improving access to GP surgery appointments, hospital referrals, diagnostic and treatment services, and social care at-home and in-care homes provision, so that the elderly, frail and vulnerable are not placed at a disadvantage taking into account their special needs compared with the population as a whole. **(motion A41)**

Care Allowance Claims; This AGM instructs the Executive Council to seek from Government a commitment to examine the ways in which claims for care allowances could be automatically awarded to those in need, initiated in the first instance by notification from social care or GP services, and/or to introduce a much-simplified claims process compared with the current complex, overly bureaucratic and lengthy procedure that often results in much-needed benefits remaining unclaimed. **(motion A48)**

Pension Credit - 2 August 22 -extracted from 'Money Saving Expert' by Rosie Hamilton

It's a national tragedy that close to one million pensioners, many of whom have been paying into the system for years, are missing out on an average income boost of £3,300/year via pension credit. Pension credit is a benefit aimed at retired people on low incomes and can be worth £1,000s a year. Plus, if you can claim it, you gain access a whole raft of other benefits including council tax discounts and free TV licences for over-75s. **It's NOT automatic so you MUST claim** –You can apply online via **www.Gov.uk** if you've already claimed your state pension, but otherwise you'll need to phone the Pension Service on 0800 99 1234.

Postage Stamp Changes by January 2023:- Royal Mail stamps are changing, so what should you do with your old stamps? We're adding barcodes to all our regular 'everyday' stamps. These are the stamps (pictured below) that will be very familiar to you. They feature the profile of Her Majesty the Queen on a plain coloured background. The barcodes will enable exciting new services by connecting physical stamps to the digital world through the Royal Mail app which you can download. We're giving you plenty of notice about this change and any non-barcoded stamps you have will still be valid until 31 January 2023. If you won't be able to use all of your stamps by that date you



can swap them out for new barcoded ones. **Note:** Special Stamps with pictures on and Christmas Stamps without a barcode will continue to be valid and don't need to be swapped out. See web site: <https://www.royalmail.com/sending/barcoded-stamps>

More Great days Out in London

1. Tower of London area. (Underground Tower Hill north side London Bridge south side)
The Tower itself is of course free to CSSC members plus guests. The new this year garden Installation is worth seeing although the drought has not helped.
2. Tower Bridge is available for visits and tours and times when the bridge is lifted are listed online.
3. All Hallows just around the corner in Bywood Street is the oldest church in the city dating back to 675AD. Older than the Tower - it is a gem.
4. Sky Garden. It is free but has to be booked in advance. It is located in a building known locally as the walkie talkie you cannot miss it! Lovely garden great views across London.
5. HMS Belfast. Opposite the Tower on the south bank is a WW11 Town class light cruiser. An Imperial War Museum asset nicely preserved and well a worth a look.
6. The Imperial War Museum (IWM) area (underground North Lambeth).
The IWM is a wonderful museum and free to enter. It is continually improved and updated. This year a new WW11 and Holocaust exhibitions have been added.
7. Opposite the IWM is ST Georges RC Cathedral worth a look and one of two Cathedrals in the London borough of Southwark.
8. Garden Museum. This is located a short stroll away in Lambeth Palace which is the London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Royal International Air Tattoo – 15th to 17th July 2022

Article by Group member, **Jenny Morris Royal Observer Corps Association National Secretary.**



Friday started with a clear blue sky as I drove to RAF Fairford at 5am with the temperature rising. Luckily no holdups and bypassing the public traffic queues I enter the special participants security gates. The RAF police and sniffer dogs did a thorough check of my car, boot, and bonnet. In charge of a small team of Royal Observer Corps Association volunteers and our Royal Observer Corps National heritage display we had to be on site every day before 7am to set up the original and unique equipment we used during WW1 and the Cold War

from 1958 to 1991. After unloading our cars, we had to park up before the public gates opened at 7.30. The photos give a flavour of the kit we used and the interest from the passing crowds. We had a prime position with a frontline view of the



flying. Our visitors included several past members from afar New Zealand and Connecticut USA. Other callers were eager to tell us of their parents, grandfather and in one case great grandfather service. All information to be recorded to add to our research and archive records for future generations. We were also honoured with a visit from the publicity team of the Republic of South Korean Air Force Display Team the Black Eagles. Winston Churchill, members of the Parachute Regiment and the Special Constables who were interested to hear about the special constables of WW1 whose role was spotting aircraft and thus were the very beginnings of the Observer Corps that was formed in 1925. The flying displays were magnificent the Black Eagles were the star performers even outshining the Red Arrows. The Reds took the opportunity to do flypasts accompanied by some of the aircraft marking special anniversaries. Driving home for the final time at 8pm on Sunday evening having fried in the blazing sunshine I was looking rather pink but feeling very uplifted by the comradeship we had shared and the people who had appreciated and listened to how we had been there for them during war and peacetime. We look forward to doing it all again next year 14th – 16th July 2023. www.rocatwentytwelve.org

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