



Reading Group

Spring Newsletter 2023

Dear All,

Spring has sprung, and I have finally warmed up with the energy to write to you all.

As you will be aware from the recent edition of **The Pensioner**, last year's CSPA AGM remitted the motions on Group Structure and appointed a Working Party made up of the Great and the Good. They have published their first findings in a report on page 5 and going forward are asking for the views of members and any other ideas, to stem the flow of Group closures and the loss of local contacts amongst members.

I am proposing that the April meeting of the Reading group is to be held on Monday the 17th at our usual time of 2.00pm in the Abbey Baptist Church in Reading. I have invited **David Luxton, CSPA Deputy General Secretary**, to join us to give an update on policies going forward. If you have any views on the Working Party Report please come along or get in touch and we can put them to David at this meeting. Comments can be sent to me on my usual addresses for inclusion. Please note this is not our usual second Monday in the Month meeting day as the Hall is not available due to the 10th being Easter Monday.

I hope that many of the 500 plus Group members will join in as the meeting will also take the usual AGM form with Group officer appointments for the next year. On a local basis here in Reading, I am struggling to attract more than 15 people to attend on a monthly basis and whilst we do have interesting speakers (my words) it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep coming up with ideas as well as affording the recent increase in Hall Hire and Speaker Fees. I can contact happily contact members re the programme of meetings going forward but only if I have email addresses for information.

Recently we had a very entertaining meeting, and even singalong, with a local folk singer. She pointed out that the historic derivation of a lot of songs we know, from all around the country, are actually connected with news being circulated regarding crimes and in the most part, the hanging of miscreants. Think of *By Yon Bonnie Banks*, *Green, Green Grass of Home*, *Delilah*, (the Welsh pseudo National Anthem) and *Young Roddy MacCorley*, from over the Irish Sea. You might never sing them again with that background.

This month we invited a local photographer and a local historian who publish on Facebook. Their presentation on areas of Reading, past and present, was extremely interesting, including the presence of a WW2 pillbox in Caversham, actually attached to a house! As they progressed around Caversham they pointed out strangely named, for no apparent reason, houses. Following that trip they took us up London Street, pointing out the various "closes", some now blocked off or built over and others still in use after many years. From the top at Whitley Pump, they then returned to town showing Southampton Street with its streets off and a strange open space opposite St Giles Church, which appears to be an old cemetery. If anyone knows anything about it, please contact me to pass on the information.

The recent Budget has provided some interesting comments from our fellow pensioner organisation, the **National Pensioners Convention**, which we are affiliated to. Their Chair commenting, "The Budget was hugely disappointing for millions of older people who are still struggling to meet rocketing bills with an inadequate state pension. The Chancellor started his speech by saying the government was providing a 'safety net for older people' but you would be hard pressed to find it in the detail. Whilst the government has extended energy support for another three months, there is little understanding that most older people use their heating all year round because their homes are damp and cold".

Of course, we will receive an addition of 10.1% to our State Pensions from April this year, as the percentage is based on the inflation figure announced in the preceding September but following the retention of 2021, there was no update for the "missing" percentage not paid in April 2022. Civil Service Pensions are to be increased as well but at time of writing I have no available information on the figures.

Our continuation as a Group depends on contributions from members in the area and if you have not offered a contribution recently, please do so by contacting the Membership Secretary, Avril Bird, 5 The Drive, Reading RG6 1EG, giving your name and address and Membership Number if available., or by bank transfer to HSBC, Sort Code 40 38 04, Account Number 22057867 addressed to Reading Group of Civil Servants Pensioners Alliance with your name as a reference.

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