



CROYDON & DISTRICT GROUP NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2024

**** APRIL IN JANUARY **** Linda Regan the actress, Yellowcoat April in Hi-De-Hi, will tell us about her career as a TV, film and stage actress and as a crime writer at our January 9th meeting. She is sure to be entertaining so note the date in your diary and join us, see page 4.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear CSPA Members,

Welcome to the January 2024 newsletter of the CSPA Croydon Group.

On behalf of our Croydon Group Committee I wish all of you a happy New Year, also a more prosperous one following the Chancellor's decision to fully implement the triple lock. Most importantly, I would like to thank all of our subscribers, meeting attendees, raffle participators and committee members, for helping to make 2023 a successful year for our Group. Without them, our Group could not exist. Attendance at meetings is now approaching pre-Covid levels, and we have two additional members of our Group committee. I also wish to express condolences to the families and friends of members that passed on during the course of 2023.

We continue to have more subscribing members to our Group than attend our monthly meetings at Ruskin House. We are very pleased that members choose to subscribe, and I can assure you that if you are able to attend our meetings you will be made welcome.

(cont...)

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I would like to join / renew my membership of / make a donation to / the Croydon & District Group of the CSPA:

Name _____ Phone No. _____

Address _____

Post Code _____ e-mail _____

Please return to

The Treasurer, CSPA Croydon & District Group, 58 Forster Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 4LQ

Our programme for the coming year, as detailed on the back page of this newsletter, aims to cater for the interests of the widest possible range of our members. Some of our CSPA business-focussed meetings are now simulcast on Zoom for those that cannot attend in person, and we are aiming to simulcast some of our professional guest speakers in 2024, subject to their agreement.

You are probably aware that both the 2022 and 2023 National AGMs, and a 2023 working group, addressed the future organisation and structure of both regions and local groups. Local groups have been confirmed as continuing to play a key role in the CSPA's democratic structure, but work will be necessary to strengthen and rebuild groups. Plans to start work on this task in spring 2023 were deferred pending AGM 2023 decisions, and also because of the considerable resource required for setting up the new CSPA membership database. However, details of some of the first steps to be taken in early 2024 appear in the December 2023 edition of The Pensioner.

If you have any suggestions or comments that you wish to make about our Croydon Group, or are willing to volunteer to support our committee, please let me or our Secretary, John Hickey, know.

David Owen, Croydon Group Chair private.drdauidowen@btinternet.com
164 Littleheath Road, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 7SF Tel: **020 8657 1073**

TREASURER'S REPORT

We hope that you are enjoying the festive season and wish you all a Happy New Year. We have enjoyed our first full year of meetings at Ruskin House and the lower costs have helped Croydon Group to strengthen its finances so as to be viable for the immediate future in spite of inflationary pressures. We continue to be fortunate in receiving donations from members, some very generous. This is something we cannot rely on and therefore it's important that we strive to keep our Group membership numbers from falling too low. Numbers are slightly up upon last year, so, as they say, so far so good.

We do hope that those Group members who have attended meetings have found the speakers stimulating. We hope that you all will renew for 2024. We understand that some members, for various reasons, cannot attend our meetings but to those who cannot do so we say a sincere thank you, as without your membership the Group would eventually cease to function. As David says in his message, he aims to simulcast more of our meetings on Zoom so that members with computers or smartphones can participate at home.

Croydon Group is self-financing and is not subsidised from national CSPA funds. I am pleased to say that our annual subscription remains at £5.00 per member or £6.00 to include one's partner. You may send a cheque (not cash please) payable to CSPA Croydon and District Group, to me at 58 Forster Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 4LQ, tel: 020 8650 5712. Please enclose your details, preferably with the membership form at the bottom of page 1.

Alternatively, payment may be made directly into the Group's bank account which is Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-91-72, account number 01042787, account name CSPA Croydon and District Group. Kindly insert your name in the reference field when arranging payment so as to clearly identify you and, if you are a new member and on-line, please email your details to me at billbohudson@btinternet.com. I shall acknowledge all renewals providing I have your email address.

I will also take payments at our meetings. You may attend two meetings while deciding whether to join the Group.

Bill Hudson, Hon Group Treasurer

GROUP SECRETARY'S REPORT

What can you get for just 79p per week these days? Not a lot. But I'm pleased to say it does buy you membership of CSPA, both the National organisation and the Croydon local Group. The latter's activities are well covered elsewhere in this newsletter. Nationally, CSPA negotiates with the Cabinet Office and provides you with guidance on all pension matters. But it also delivers a wide range of goods and services (see cspa.co.uk). In addition, it campaigns and lobbies on issues important to pensioners. Here are just some:

- **SOCIAL CARE:** There has been delay after delay, and so we urgently call for a National Social Care Service integrated with a National Health Service that remains free at the point of delivery and for a comprehensive plan to address the chronic workforce issues in the social care sector;
- **STATE PENSION:** For the government to maintain the State Pension triple lock and hold the pension age to healthy life expectancy rates;
- **HOUSING:** In line with the Local Government Association, we want a specialist 'Task Force on Housing for Older People' with local authorities and private landlords being compelled to make homes more adaptable, at minimum cost, as their inhabitants' needs and requirements change with ageing;
- **TRANSPORT:** We call for increased investment in local bus and rail services, for updated concessions and for improved accessibility and assistance for older people on all bus and rail stock and facilities;
- **DIGITAL EXCLUSION:** The government should play its part in encouraging banks to maintain free withdrawal services, adopt more easily accessible tools and provide local banking hubs where necessary;
- **OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER:** Such a post to be set up, so as to hold the government to account and provide a voice, at the highest level, for older people.

Thanks to you, and your 79p per week, CSPA can make the case for pensioners to be heard and valued and for their concerns to be addressed.

John Hickey, Croydon Group Secretary

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SOME CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS FROM MAXINE LEYLAND

The Croydon group has had a good year. We have settled in to our new base at Ruskin House; the talks have been interesting and our speakers have enjoyed answering our questions; it has proved we are awake.

Members have been away on holiday, some to far-flung destinations, cats have been adopted and old friendships strengthened after the strain of lockdown.

Freedom Passes have been out and about. The 50th anniversary of the Freedom Pass was celebrated in September. I celebrated my own Freedom Pass by taking it from Rye to Brighton via Hastings and Eastbourne, a 55 mile journey. The Freedom Pass isn't just good for us. When we use it we spend money in shops and cafés. We are good customers; we arrive, eat and leave, making room for the next customer. We don't spend an afternoon with a laptop having bought one cup of coffee. That is not helping the cafe owner make a living.

Christmas seems to start earlier every year. Supermarkets are making the most of our willingness to spend and Christmas follows on seamlessly from Halloween. My Christmas shopping is almost completed. I am heavily dependent on charity shops, or I buy a book token and two small KitKats – one to send and one for me!

CROYDON GROUP PROGRAMME FOR 2024

The Group meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at **Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Rd, Croydon CR0 1BD, at the junction with Park Lane**. This is less than ½ mile from the Fairfield Halls and well-served by local buses, details from Brenda at brenda@jonesmb.plus.com **Tel: 020 8688 2189**. The meeting starts at 10.30am (except in December, see below) but come early to have time to sign in, say “hello” to other members and have tea or coffee with a superior quality biscuit !

9 January	Linda Regan , actress and author, April in Hi-de Hi, will tell us about her career as a TV, film and stage actress and crime writer.
13 February	Brian Freeland, one of our most entertaining speakers last year, returns with his talk “ Women of the Raj ”. His career as a theatre impresario included eight long theatre tours of the Indian sub-continent, which began his fascination with the history of British India and his extensive research into the lives of these women.
12 March	How to read the English country church . The Revd Dr Nicholas Henderson returns for the second in his series of talks to help us to look at church architecture and features with greater understanding. This talk will deal with the period from the Normans to the Tudors.
9 April	Croydon Group Annual General Meeting . Time to take stock of where the Group is, to outline future plans and to elect officers. There will be a guest speaker from Head Office. <u>Please note: all CSPA members in this area are invited to attend.</u>
14 May	Vision Foundation: Croydon Branch . This organisation helps local people with sight problems, often due to age-related conditions, in a wide variety of ways. It provides support, advice and training with equipment, and social activities to counter social isolation and to show that there is life after sight loss.
11 June	Local policing . A local police officer will talk to the Group about crime and crime prevention measures in Croydon.
9 July	John Hickman from the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society will talk about the work of local artist Evacuates (a name he invented for himself) Phipson and about the exhibition of his work in 2023. Copies of a book about him will be available at a reduced price of £10.
13 August	Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance . A representative will give an illustrated talk about how the service responds to emergencies and saves lives.
10 September	Mandating meeting for the CSPA AGM in October . We shall decide how our representative will speak and vote on the AGM motions published in the Autumn edition of The Pensioner (please bring this if possible).
8 October	Wildlife along the River Wandle . Derek Coleman is co-author of the favourably reviewed Wandle Companion and Trail Guide, covering the history of the river and what can be seen there. He will talk to us principally about its wildlife.
12 November	CSPA Annual General Meeting Report . Our delegate will report back on the outcome of the motions debated and current priorities
10 December	Christmas meeting . The Group’s Christmas Social. Do come along to the Ruskin House bar at 12.00pm to enjoy the company of other members and, of course, the buffet, including home-made delicacies provided by committee members.