



Bedford and District Newsletter

March 2024

I hope this Newsletter finds you all well.

We have a year of politicking to look forward to, it being a year in which we have a General Election.

There have been two by-elections recently already with apparently surprising results, so we have started well.

From my point of view, the whole world seems to be in chaos, we still have wars going on in more than one area of the world, we have global warming, floods, droughts, and electioneering in the USA where, now, they only have Biden and Trump to choose from.

I was lucky enough to have two weeks of holiday in America very recently, and the arguments there had already started, but luckily for us we couldn't understand how the TV worked, nor could we understand their election system, so I think we should feel lucky we have what we have.

As editor, I write articles in this newsletter that I find interesting to me and what I think you all might find useful and interesting. I am always open to including anything any of you read, or just know. It is a newsletter for the group.

Romy Neeves - Editor

Chair's Report

This newsletter report is by way of an appeal to all our group members. On several occasions in recent Newsletters, I have highlighted the decline in membership of the CSPA, and the need to recruit new members if the CSPA is to survive. In 2011 the CSPA had some 63,000 members. That figure now stands at around 42,000, and continues to decline by some 1,500 members per annum. In addition to Civil Servants retiring every year, official statistics indicate that there are some 450,000 retired civil servants living in the UK, so in theory at least, there is a large pool of potential CSPA members if we can attract them. Both our own Bedford and District Group and the Clacton and District Group have proposed a similar scheme for a grassroots local campaign by members, which has been accepted by the CSPA Executive, as a pilot project. If it works, then it can be rolled out to other groups and/or members without a group. I should like to start our own scheme after our group Annual General Meeting on 15th March 2024. We therefore need volunteers. I can assure those who do volunteer that their input to the scheme is minimal – a one off commitment which can probably be achieved in a couple of hours in your own locality. If you are interested or willing to help, then please contact me for further information. My contact details are at the end of this newsletter. We all joined the CSPA for a reason personal to each of us. Please now help us to keep our organisation in existence into the long term, for the benefit of all who are already members, and for those who are about to retire, or who are still working.

John Abington

Transport

A trial to simplify train fares is adding more than £100 to the cost of some journeys on one of Britain's busiest railway lines.

The price hike was revealed by analysis of tickets sold by London North Eastern Railway (LNER) for travel on the East Coast Main Line.

This follows the introduction of a two-year trial advertised as offering "simpler fares". The campaign group Railfuture describes the scheme as "awful", while the train travel website "Seat61.com" said it was designed to "allow big price increases".

LNER pledged to "make adjustments so that as many people as possible can access the right ticket at the right price". Under the trial, the cheapest available tickets for some single journeys between London's King's Cross and Edinburgh have gone from £87 to £193.90 if purchased on the day of travel.

Health

I am sure we would all want to wish King Charles the very best wishes for a good outcome in his treatment for cancer.

I read this week in the i newspaper that a wearable drug pump that delivers medication to Parkinson's patients 24 hours a day to better manage their symptoms is being rolled out on the NHS soon.

The treatment option means many patients will no longer have to take multiple tablets, which can top 20 a day in some cases.

The infusion, known as foslevodopa-foscarbidopa, is administered through a cannula under the skin and is controlled by a small automatic pump worn by patients 24 hours a day. It works by turning the drug into "happy hormone" dopamine, which in turn improves how the brain transmits messages. It will help ease movement-related symptoms in Parkinson's patients who are no longer responding to oral medication to nerves that controls movement. Great News!

Martha's Rule

The NHS in England will roll out "Martha's Rule" from April to give patients and families access to a rapid review if they are worried about a condition getting worse.

The escalation process, which formalises access to a critical care team for a second opinion, will be advertised throughout hospitals.

At least 100 NHS trusts are expected to bring in the rule, with the programme evaluated throughout this year and next, before extending it to all acute hospitals, subject to government funding.

The move follows the death of 13-year-old Martha Mills in 2021. She developed sepsis while under the care of King's College Hospital in London.

A coroner ruled that she would most likely have survived if doctors had identified warning signs of her rapidly deteriorating condition and moved her to intensive care.

Continuity of care 'benefits patients'

Seeing the same GP improves patient health and reduces the workload for family doctors, according to one of the largest studies of its kind by Cambridge University and the Includic business school.

It found that continuity of care meant people waited on average 18 per cent longer between visits, compared with when patients saw different doctors.

People did not take up more GP time and the findings were particularly strong for older patients, those with multiple chronic illnesses and those with mental health problems.

Breathtaking

As the official Covid enquiry grinds on, I would recommend watching the ITV three-part drama "Breathtaking" which looks at how frontline medical staff coped as government and NHS management dithered in March 2020. It's a timely reminder at just how frightening this time in our lives was and like The Post Office scandal, demonstrates just how untrustworthy governments, of any colour, can be.

Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus – or in English, False in one thing, false in everything.

Safety - For your information

A few weeks ago, I had a little scare! We have an open fire the ashes of which are cleaned out every day. I put said ashes into a cardboard box in the utility room when they are cold. Or so I thought. The following morning when I got up to make a cup of tea, I couldn't see down the stairs for smoke. The alarm on the landing hadn't activated but the ashes must have still got some heat in them and had smouldered all night burning through the box. When I opened the door, sparks began to fly. We quickly got a metal shovel and heaved them through the door. I told my daughter-in-law the story as a funny anecdote, but she told my daughter who did not think it funny. She made an appointment with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service who paid us a visit and reviewed completely all the hazards in the house.

Who knew an unclean oven could be a hazard? I did not get a lecture about my stupidity but I have learned a valuable lesson about the potential dangers in the home. I would highly recommend anyone who has not had one of these visits to contact their local Fire Service and book a visit. You get free fire alarms fitted and a carbon monoxide detector into the bargain!

Additionally, they give you a very handy booklet which deals with all sorts of safety issues, the obvious ones such as cookers, chip pans etc., but to emollient creams sometimes used to prevent or treat dry skin conditions and to trip hazards.

The man who always calls me "duck"

Peter Garratt is retiring from the committee so I thought it was a good opportunity to get a back story from the person who has been with the CSPA longer than many of us, he joined in 1993.

Pete joined the CSPA when he retired from the Ministry of Defence police, although he continued with other policing jobs, at Cardington Hangars, Securicor etc. He lived next door to Alf

Evans and curious about where he went off to all dressed up, spoke to Alf about this who then encouraged him to join. Pete became an assistant to Alf at the AGM in Coventry as a teller for a couple of years, and when the chief scrutineer retired, Alf took his place with Pete, again, as his assistant. Pete ended his activities at the AGM as chief scrutineer. He made many friends during his involvement with the NEC and remains friends with Brian Sturtevant, but many of them are no longer with us.

One of Pete's hobbies was collecting ties! On shopping in Bedford for a present for his wife, he noticed the unusual tie being worn by the sales assistant in Millman, the jeweller. The story behind this was that the chap had been a wicket keeper for England and was wearing a commemorative tie. Peter cheekily asked him if he had any spare ones, and the man had dozens. On another occasion he noticed the tie being worn by a GPO delivery driver and asked him if he could have it. Of course, it being a part of the uniform this was impossible but the kindly GPO chap put Pete in touch with the secretary to the head man at Milton Keynes. She couldn't supply that one but she sent him a "Penny Black" commemorative tie. They have never met but she keeps in touch with Pete. He has about 150!

I asked Peter about the best moments in his career and could easily have sat and listened to him for hours. He started work at the MOD in 1968, he's 90 now. During his time, he accompanied all the Royal Family, visiting dignitaries etc., and was involved when the bombs went off in Downing Street.

However, he said his "crowning glory" time was during the "Ban the bomb" era when the Molesworth Peace Camp and the Rainbow Children were a big issue. Pete and his cohorts were posted to Lincoln in what was termed "Station X" two weeks before the mission with instructions to tell no one where he was being posted to "not even his wife". 1500 police and troops were deployed to the site to secure the seven-mile perimeter for the MOD. Molesworth was one of the two British bases to house cruise missiles and was a focus for protests, along with Greenham Common

in Berkshire. Molesworth is now a non-flying facility under the control of the United States Air Force (USAF) and is one of the two Royal Air Force (RAF) stations in Cambridgeshire currently used by the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). Pete believes Michael Heseltine was the MP for Defence at the time.

On searching Google for information about Station X I discovered that Lincolnshire was home to many Bomber Command airfields during the Second World War, giving rise to the nickname "Bomber County" so perhaps this was the reason for the base for all these troops and police!

Peter said his worst job was supporting the SAS during the Iranian Embassy siege.

One interesting question he put to me was "did I know why labels on clothes were always stitched on the left-hand side? It is for unsighted people so that they know their clothing item is on the right way round!! Who knew

However, I had trained my grandchildren to put their pants on with the label at the back!

I am sure we all wish him the best and he will continue to come to the lunches.

Romy Neeves

Bedford and District Group Annual General Meeting – will be on 15th March 2024 at 12.00 at the North End Club, Roff Avenue, Bedford. Lunch will be served at 12.30 – 1pm. Nominations for Officers and the Committee will be accepted on the day, but if you can send any in before that by email, it will be gratefully accepted. Parking is difficult at the Club so the early bird etc., etc.

Romy Neeves, Editor.

PS – What do you call a jacket on fire? A Blazer

The medic said Red Riding Hood was making progress but she wasn't out of the woods yet!

Boom, Boom!!

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