

Autumn has begun and my thoughts are turning to CSPA, the highlights from the past meetings, the National AGM and next year's programme.

The Group had a very successful cruise on the Queen Boadicea II on the Gloucester Sharpness canal in May when the weather then was unusually kind to us. The cruise was followed by an excellent cream tea at the Waterways Museum concluding a very enjoyable afternoon.



(Photos courtesy of Patrick Phair)

The speaker at our June meeting was Amy Harris from AgeUK who told us about the services and help AgeUK could offer including planning for how we wish to be treated in later life. I still have a copies of the "What matters to me " – Personalised Care and Support Plans, if you would like one please let me know.

The theme of later life continued when at our meeting on the 5th September, Dr Ian Donald a retired consultant in Geriatric and Frailty Medicine at Gloucester Royal

Hospital talked about life in our final years. He has written a book about old age entitled “With A Light Touch” a guide to frailty. This was a very interesting and useful talk about a subject that we don’t always want to contemplate.

At the last Group meeting we discussed how our Delegate should vote at the national AGM in Coventry on 9/10 October particularly on the format for the AGM where we prefer a “live” as opposed to an on line AGM and held annually instead of every two years.

AGM Kenilworth 9/10 October 2024

The AGM was once again held at the Chesford Grange Hotel in Kenilworth where the high standard of service and facilities were very welcome.



Your delegates view

The AGM was chaired by Linda Ridgers-Waite in a more relaxed school teacher manner than last year and all but one of the 54 motions were debated. A few card votes and remissions were required and she dealt efficiently with those somewhat complicated procedures.

Our nomination for Chair and Vice Chair, Les Calder in both cases, was unsuccessful but that’s democracy. He is still on the executive by virtue of being the South West Regional Representative so he still has a voice on the Executive Council. Our other nominations were all successfully elected.

Of the 7 constitutional motions 5 were successful and 2 withdrawn, A7 on expenses for individual group members and A11 balloting by individual members. A11 was withdrawn after the nominator had heard the report on the future of Groups by the Deputy General Secretary, David Luxton.

Motions A12 and A13 on structure and recruitment were remitted and A14 on the Pensioner Magazine was lost as it was regarded as offensive and unfair on the editor. The concern we have on the ability of Capita to get things right when they take on responsibility for administering our pensions was hotly debated in motion A16 resulting in a reassurance that the CSPA will do all it can to ensure the transfer is smooth and will closely monitor the transition.

Most of the motions on pensions including the Emergency Motions on the withdrawal of winter fuel payments were carried. Motion A17 on Sibling Partnerships was lost as the idea was too complicated particularly if there was a “divorce”. Motion A18 on equalisation of the old state pension with the new state pension was carried. Uniquely, the Gloucestershire group was the only vote against this as there could be some disadvantages to women in this exercise should it come about. A29 on tapering Pension Credit, was carried but with a caution that it could have unintended consequences. The remainder of motions on Health, GP access, transport and digital exclusion were all carried including our own A42 advocating a Commissioner for Older people in England. A53 on the sale of Royal Mail was remitted. The last motion A54 on Swiss climate change discriminating against women was guillotined and will be discussed by the EC.

There were several presentations one by Connect the firm that provides professional lobbying for the CSPA but not too much could be said as there is much uncertainty with the new Government and the awaited Autumn Budget Statement, so the speaker’s crystal ball was somewhat clouded. A presentation on GDPR was depressing leaving me with the feeling that one had to invoke the Freedom of Information Act to remedy incorrect information. On the other hand, the presentation by CSIS on insurance was very encouraging especially on the new travel insurance. They will now give quotes for those over 79 but it will not be on the “fit to travel” basis for those youngsters who have not yet reached 80. The presentation on avoiding scams and phishing was very useful including the advice that answering quiz questions could lead to unwarranted access to your details and data.

All in all it was a very good AGM and the discussions were of a high standard. I met several others in the margins and sorted out the problems we have had with welcome letters for new members and membership lists. We are down to 666 when 5 years ago we were just over 1000. Most of the departures have been age related. This trend is unfortunately reflected nationally.

A full account of the AGM will appear in the Pensioner Magazine, the above is just my immediate reaction and personal reflections on the proceedings.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 5 December will be on a much lighter note than the June and September meetings, Peter Berry will be giving an illustrated talk on railways in

the Rocky Mountains but from the title there will be something for everyone. Peter is a well known railway photographer and historian and should prove to be an interesting speaker. Mince pies will be provided.

The Committee has planned next year's programme which I hope you will find interesting. We are also planning to arrange an outing, and any ideas will be welcome.

CSPA can offer information on bereavement, health, pensions and other personal matters. These leaflets are available on line at www.cspa.o.uk to members but if you have you have difficulty accessing the website I can provide printed page copies.

E Newsletter

HQ have sent me an up-to-date membership list and I have extracted email addresses for those that I do not already hold. It was a complicated job and some of you may have received the Newsletter despite stating that you did not wish to receive email correspondence. If you prefer not to receive communications by email, please accept my apologies for sending this one to you. If you do not wish email communications, can you please let me know and I will remove you from the list.

Future Meetings

Thursday 5 December Peter Berry "And the wife came too, Freight trains in the |Rocky Mountains" Railway Photos but something for everyone.

Thursday 20 March 2025 Group AGM with David Luxton Deputy General Secretary CSPA

Thursday 12 June 2025 "A417 the Missing Link" Carlyne Feguson from Keir Construction

Thursday 4 September 2025 The Star Centre Ullenwood; the work that it does

Thursday 4 December 2025 Cheltenham Camera Club photo show

Looking forward to seeing you at our meetings.

Alastair Goldie Chair CSPA Gloucestershire Group

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Meetings take place at the Civil Service Sports Club, Tewkesbury Road, Cheltenham GL51 9SL at 10.00 for 10.30