

## A word from the Chair



Well, quite a lot has happened since our autumn newsletter in November, especially the changes in the political landscape following the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 47<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America on 20<sup>th</sup> January. Who knows what this will bring and how his new administration will affect the rest of the world, Europe and the USA's Special Relationship with the UK ... I suppose we shall just have to wait and see. Meanwhile, closer to home, there has been no movement on offering concessions to mitigate the effects of means-testing the Winter Fuel Allowance, while there has been a lot of speculation and off-guard commentary from senior political figures about the long-term future of the Triple Lock in again opening up arguments about intergenerational fairness in pitting the interests of working age people against those of pensioners. It does

seem that our interests are on the backfoot and so whilst this is no more than rumour and speculation at the moment it does mean that we must as an organisation, together with other like-minded organisations, remain very much on the alert to protect pensioners' interests along the lines of our conference motions last October. Finally, having recently merged with Bath and taken Swindon and North Wiltshire under our wings, we are now in discussion with CSPA Head Office to extend our reach to include Salisbury and South Wiltshire, and maybe Dorset, to harmonise our boundary with CSPA's Southern and Wessex regions of which more anon. Meanwhile, as we look forward to the green shoots of spring, I hope you enjoy the virtual stroll of Bath below to remind us of some of the joys which this Georgian city offers.

**A virtual stroll around Georgian Bath, a treasure trove of history and architectural beauty, to highlight some of its most iconic landmarks and notable figures.**



Let's start our journey at the magnificent Bath Abbey, an architectural marvel with its stunning stained-glass windows and intricate stonework. Adjacent to the Abbey are the Roman Baths, a testament to the city's ancient history. The baths are incredibly well-preserved, allowing visitors to step back in time and experience the grandeur of Roman life. The

Roman Baths are not only a historical site but also a place where one can feel the presence of ancient traditions and the way of life that once thrived here.

Next, we'll stroll to the charming Tea Rooms, perfect for a delightful break with a cup of tea and some delicious scones. The Tea Rooms offer a cosy ambiance, reminiscent of the Georgian era, providing a perfect spot to relax and immerse oneself in the city's rich heritage. From there, we can head towards the picturesque Pulteney Bridge, one of the few bridges in the world with shops built into it. The view from the bridge is simply breathtaking, especially on a sunny day. The flowing river below and the bustling shops above create a unique and captivating atmosphere that is truly one of a kind.

Our journey wouldn't be complete without visiting The Royal Crescent, a sweeping crescent-shaped row of terraced houses that epitomizes Georgian architecture. The grandeur of these buildings, with their iconic facades and meticulously maintained gardens, is a sight to behold. As we walk through these historical sites, we can also take a moment to appreciate the contributions of Ralph Allen, Beau Nash, and John Wood the Elder. Each played a pivotal role in shaping the city's unique character and charm. Ralph Allen's innovative use of Bath stone, Beau Nash's influence on the city's social scene, and John Wood the Elder's architectural genius all left an indelible mark on the city's history.

In addition to these landmarks, Georgian Bath is also home to several lesser known yet equally fascinating sites. The Assembly Rooms, with their grand chandeliers and elegant ballrooms, offer a glimpse into the fashionable gatherings of the past. The Circus, another architectural masterpiece by John Wood the Elder, is a circular arrangement of townhouses that exemplifies the harmony and balance of Georgian design. The Holburne Museum of Art, located at the end of Great Pulteney Street, houses an impressive collection of fine and decorative arts, showcasing the cultural richness of the Georgian period.

This city, with its rich tapestry of history, culture, and architecture, has so much to offer, and it's a privilege to share its story.

## Membership & Treasurer's Report to AGM March 2025

Finances are in good shape so we can continue to provide a subsidy towards the cost of a standard carvery lunch at our meetings held at the Toby carvery. The Bank balance on 31st December was £2525.37. This includes the funds from the now closed Bath Group of £1612.03.

The group accounts for 2024 will be formally presented at the AGM in March. Full details will be available at the meeting. They are now audited and full details emailed to CSPA National Treasurer. Donations towards our running costs are always welcome and if you wish to donate towards the Group costs, please send cheques to Group Treasurer as below: - (payable to CSPA Bristol Group or by BACS to NatWest Bank, sort code: - 52-10-07; account no: - 90010841 with reference 'CSPA Bristol').

Membership at year end was about 1580 members allowing for the departures and arrival of new members across the wider group, this includes Bristol; Bath; Weston Super Mare; Swindon and Taunton. We have had 8 new members since October 2024. In the welcome letters I ask new members to share their email address with our secretary to enable wider, easier and fast communications of news of interest to all members on his email list.

### A Visit to the Van Gogh Exhibition at the National Gallery, London

As a birthday treat for my wife (she's 21- again) we recently visited the Van Gogh Exhibition at the National Gallery in London. The exhibition is now finished but it was so popular it was kept open all night on its last night and I feel sure it will soon be repeated in some form or another. Here's my take on the exhibition, and I have to confess that as an experiment I've used an AI (Artificial Intelligence) tool help draft my text.

#### The Paris Period

Moving through the exhibition, visitors are transported to Van Gogh's Paris period, a time of significant transformation and experimentation. The vibrant colours and dynamic brushstrokes that characterize his later works begin to emerge during this phase. The gallery walls are adorned with scenes of Parisian life, still lifes, and portraits that capture the bustling energy and diverse influences of the city.



#### Arles and the South of France

One of the most captivating sections of the exhibition is dedicated to Van Gogh's time in Arles and the South of France. This period is marked by some of his most iconic works, characterized by their intense colours, bold brushwork, and emotional resonance. The gallery space is designed to evoke the sun-drenched landscapes and vibrant atmosphere of the region, with immersive installations that transport visitors to the heart of Van Gogh's world.

#### The Sunflowers and Beyond

The "Sunflowers" series, perhaps Van Gogh's most famous work, is presented in all its glory. The radiant yellow hues and intricate details of these paintings are mesmerizing, reflecting the artist's fascination with the beauty and symbolism of flowers. Alongside the sunflowers, other masterpieces such as "The Bedroom," "Starry Night Over the Rhône," and "The Café Terrace at Night" are displayed, each revealing a different facet of his genius. The exhibition provides insight into the emotional and psychological state of Van Gogh during this prolific period, highlighting his struggles with mental health and his enduring passion for art.

### **Conclusion: A Journey Through Art and Emotion**

A visit to the Van Gogh exhibition at the National Gallery, London, is an unforgettable experience that offers a profound connection to one of the greatest artists of all time. From his early struggles to his final masterpieces, the exhibition beautifully captures the essence of Van Gogh's art and the indomitable spirit that drove him. As visitors leave the gallery, they carry with them not only the memory of breathtaking artwork but also a deeper understanding of the man behind the paintings. This exhibition is a testament to the enduring power of art to inspire, move, and transform.

I wish it was possible to reproduce many more of Van Gogh's works here but my favourite is Starry Night (above). I'm also quite pleased with the AI experiment – it's rather impersonal in the end product but I will seriously consider using it again for producing business-oriented correspondence.

### **Prosaic stuff**

On more mundane matters your committee looks forward to seeing you for our AGM at the Toby Carvery, Thornbury, on Thursday 13 March at 1100 so please let Colin or myself know if you plan to attend. We will also try to setup a Zoom meeting session so that you can participate from afar – we just need to do a bit of testing first. I can only send out the Zoom details by email as I don't have everyone's postal address so if you'd like to join in please email me: [martin@mjlrobertson.org.uk](mailto:martin@mjlrobertson.org.uk) and I'll add your name to my list for this event and for forwarding the steady stream of helpful emails I get from CSPA Head Office and our sister organisations such as the Bristol Older Peoples Forum.

### **Finally, if you need to get in touch, our contact details are:**

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