



Gloucestershire Group

Gloucestershire Group CSPA Newsletter 7 April 2025

Welcome to our Spring E Newsletter when the weather has turned more springlike despite a chilly wind but plenty of sunshine. I hope I don't regret saying this.

We held our AGM on 20 March when the present Committee was re-elected but we would still like fresh blood to join us.

Our main speaker was David Luxton the Deputy General Secretary CSPA and Kevin Billson our Regional Representative.

Kevin introduced himself and reported that he was supporting existing groups and trying to reopen closed groups particularly the Oxford Group which is close to our group. We have a contact in Oxford and we keep him informed of what we are doing but it is quite a distance to travel to meetings.

Our own Group business was conducted with the membership of the Group at 634, HQ having "cleansed" the membership list. We are now receiving welcome letters for new members so our membership secretary can send out our own welcome letter with dates etc.

The Treasurer reported that we had a healthy balance but extortionate bank charges by Lloyds mean an annual charge of nearly £150. The Treasurer is still looking for a less expensive account but digital exclusion (he lives in the countryside) makes internet access difficult. Our funds at present are sufficient for the next 3 years but we still rely on donations towards coffee, tea and hall hire.

The Chairman reported that we had not done any campaigning as the change of government had taken place at the general election and was settling in. He expressed disappointment at the cut in winter fuel payments and the freezing of tax thresholds not to mention increases in essentials like energy and water charges. County Council rates have gone up but if there is any comfort in this, the Gloucestershire rise is amongst the lowest in the country. We can also expect an increase in the State Pension of 4.1% and Civil Service pension of 1.7% from 7 April 2025 so that is some good news.

David Luxton then brought us up to date on these items as well as the difference between the "basic" state pension and the "new" state pension mainly because civil servants at the time were contracted out and had SERPS. A fuller explanation of this is in a new CSPA podcast conversation with Lord Bryn Davies a leading pensions expert. It is at www.cspa.co.uk.

Capita is to take over administration of the Civil Service Pension scheme from

December 2025. Capita were in the headlines a few years ago for being responsible for a significant data breach. CSPA through the Cabinet Office have kept pressure on Capita to ensure a smooth transition from Mycsp but when we are told they will be using the latest AI technology, one wonders.

Digital exclusion is still a major problem and CSPA have been active with Later Life Ambitions (LLA) to try to ensure that members are not excluded. HQ have been working with LLA on protecting the triple lock on pensions, social care, funding accessible public transport and a Commissioner for Older People, this topic being based on our motion at the AGM.

Post Retirement marriages and pensions for life are still being pursued but the numbers involved has severely reduced and we are not very optimistic about a satisfactory solution.

Social Care is a broken model and causes huge problems for many members. CSPA has been campaigning with AgeUK and LLA to seek a solution. One is already available and has been since 2013 in the form of the Dilnot Report but never implemented by the previous or present government. Work on the NHS is being done particularly in accessing GP surgeries.

David finished by reminding members of some of the other benefits of CSPA namely the travel insurance scheme which seems to be popular as it is based on a "fit to travel" basis. It is open

to those up to age 79 to enter the scheme and no age criteria thereafter.

For the future, new ways of conducting membership ballots are being looked at and we have already commented on that and economies in printing AGM reports in the Pensioner Magazine.

David went on to answer several questions from members including on the McCloud Remedy.

David and Kevin were thanked by the Group for attending.

HQ Circular 968

HQ Circular has just been published, it is very long and includes items on:

Chancellor's Spring Statement; Letter from Chair of CS Pension Board; Recent LLA meetings with MPs; Women and Equalities; State of Ageing Report; NPC Digital Working Party Report and many more items. It is too long to attach (9 pages) but you can access it on the CSPA website members area www.cspa.co.uk under Group and Branch News – GC 968.

Outing to the Perry Pear Centre

Twenty three members and guests attended the Perry Pear Centre at Hartpury on a warm sunny day. After a very interesting introductory talk by Jim Chalmers he led the group on a gentle



walk round the orchard pointing out different varieties of pears including the pear tree which each year is “Wassailed”, a custom to ensure a rich crop, A delicious array of cakes was provided and a welcome cup of tea, not to mention a sample of perry.



The Wassail tree

Forthcoming Meetings

Thursday 12 June The A417/419

Missing Link Carolyn Ferguson Keir Construction.

Thursday 4 September Star Centre, Ullenwood The work they do.

Thursday 4 December Cheltenham

Camera Club show. Topic to be selected.

Newly Elected Committee:

Alastair Goldie Chair/Secretary
Membership Secretary Dorothy Bunting
Minutes Secretary Maureen Smith
Treasurer Ken Lovett 01285 831748

Looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting on 12 June. As usual the meetings will be held on Thursdays at 10.00 for 10.30 at the Civil Service Club, Tewkesbury Road, Cheltenham GL51 9SL. If you require any further information please contact me.

Best wishes,

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