November 2026

CSPA
CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONERS' ALLIANCE
Bristol, Bath & West Group

A word from the Chair – Stuart Tarr

Well here we are not long back from the Kenilworth AGM now looking forward to Christmas and whatever the New Year might bring. The latter responding to the Prime Minister's recent statements to address shortfalls in health and social care and transition the state pension Triple Lock into an Adjusted Triple Lock from April 2030 on which further details to maintain its value relative to average earnings over time are awaited (in response to which Bristol, Bath and West submitted a last minute emergency motion supported by the Executive Council to maintain the earnings link at its current value of 35% of average earnings).

Meanwhile, whilst the mechanics of this are being worked through to obtain the best possible outcome, the government has committed to ensuring that the state pension rises each April by the highest of the existing Triple Lock's three measures: consumer price inflation (CPI), average wage growth, or 2.5%. Which, from April next year, will mean a 3.9% increase based on average earnings taking the full New State Pension to £13,036 a year to exceed the personal tax allowance of £12,570. However, the personal tax allowance will be adjusted to ensure no tax is paid by those pensioners whose state pension and other income does not exceed £13,036 with a taper after that. For most of us, who retired before April 2016, the old or Basic State Pension will rise to £9,989 (3.9%), while Civil Service pensions will rise by 3.5% based on September's CPI rate of inflation.

Finally, before handing over to Martin to say a few words about the Kenilworth AGM. You may seen from a recent CSPA newsletter that I was unsuccessful in the all-member ballot to join the Executive Council (EC) falling short by a couple of hundred votes. This was my final attempt in three successive years, having tried last year and the year before, so with that result in mind and with many thanks to those who voted for me I have decided not to put myself forward again but to concentrate on doing the best that I can for the Bristol, Bath and West group.

Secretary's notices – Martin Robertson

Stuart has asked me to summarise the Kenilworth AGM for you. Generally I would say that it was a good session with lots of interesting and relevant motions debated and were won or lost on their merits. Most significantly;

Sadly, but unsurprisingly, our monthly subs will go up to £3.50 for individuals and £4.90 for joint members from April 2027

The Executive Council were instructed to continue working toward incorporation as a company limited by guarantee.

Capita's abysmal administration of the Civil Service Pensions Scheme came in for severe criticism. David Luxton gave a good exposé of the work the CSPA and other bodies have being doing to help those affected.

The EC were instructed to work with government and other bodies towards the delivery of a National Basic Care Service, although it was unclear what the totality of such a service would include.

Our group submitted three motions

Not to increase the state retirement and associated CS pension age - **A20 supported;**

To investigate and report on a Stamp Duty Relief for downsizing pensioners - **A37 remitted;**

Our last minute emergency motion to maintain the value of the state retirement pension relative to average earnings (35%) - **EM2 supported**.

In the margins of the CSPA AGM last month one of our colleagues was lucky enough to win a brand new laptop PC which he did not want. With the agreement of your chair and treasurer I offered him a fair price which he graciously accepted with the result that our group is now the proud owner of a shiny new laptop. This means we now have our very own email address and that we can conduct Teams meetings without me having to beg the loan of a laptop from my son!

Our new group email address is below; Don't worry if you send stuff to my old personal address for the time being – I will still respond or action, if needed. If you would like to attend our next meeting virtually please email me at our new email address and I will send you an invitation. You will need to have Teams loaded on your PC or mobile phone and much as I'd like to help sort out technical issues on the day it won't be possible to do so.

Our new group email is;

cspabbw@outlook.com

Our next meeting will be on 10h December at 11am at our usual location: The Toby Carvery, Almondsbury, BS32 4QB. Please let me or Colin Fender know if you intend to come in person so that we can plan the somewhat limited seating.

I will continue to distribute emails from our affiliated groups including the NPC GAS (National Pensioners Convention, Gloucester and Somerset), along with relevant news articles from the PCS, Prospect and WASPI.

As usual, we ask that if you have any articles of interest for future editions of this newsletter please send them to me. I've got one of two articles on the back burner but we enjoy reading of your experiences – a couple of A4 pages with a photo or two would be plenty.

Membership Secretary's and Treasurer's Report – Colin Fender

A problem Not Spoken About

A couple of weeks ago we had a visit to our retirement village from Dr Nikki Cotterill, Professor in Incontinence Care at the UWE who gave a very concise and meaningful talk on the problem of bladder or bowel leakage in adults of all ages. Not a subject I was particularly aware of but as one gets older, I can perceive the problem more easily.

Should you the reader be interested or affected the following website could be worth a visit and if you want the App on a smartphone, it is free: - www.confidenceapp.uk.

The work is all part of Bristol Health Partners research and care.

Finally, if you would like to donate any amount to group funds, you can do so by cheque to Colin Fender, Honorary Treasurer CSPA Bristol, Bath and West, Flat 304 Stoke Gifford Retirement Village, Edward Parker Road, Bristol BS16 1YF or by bank transfer to Civil Service Pensioners Alliance Bristol, Sort code 52-10-07, Account number 90010841. This will be put to good use to support group participation, as it has this year, and administrative costs.

Christmas Cracker - Christine Sherriff

Christmas 1955 Singapore

It's all my fault. I plead guilty. I did it, and it's the same story repeated over and over again. They'll never let me live it down.

Oh why? Oh why Mother, did you have to call him Christmas Walker? Yes I know it was your present from Dad. On Christmas morning you were delighted to have him as a surprise present, but admit it please Mum, that it was rather a mouthful of a name for such a small yellow budgerigar.

You were determined however to teach him how to speak. For months you drove us to distraction, repeating his name, until at last the poor creature got it right.

“My name’s Christmas Walker.”

“My name’s Christmas Walker.”



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“My name’s Christmas Walker,” and so it went on and on and on…..

I had to admire Mum’s persistence. Having been in the army with the nickname ‘Hi Fi Eileen’ Her voice would have taken her far and had she been promoted she would have made a brilliant sergeant major. In truth she remained an army cook, and Dad often said ruefully that he saved the regiment from her, and her barked orders were now reserved for him.

Thrilled that her pet had got his name right Mum started teaching him other phrases:

“One, two, three, four, five…..”

“Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie.”

“Ring a Ring of Roses.”

His repertoire was growing by the week, and he would cock his head to one side, and chatter away just as she did.

I was afraid of him to begin with. At night, once the windows were shut, he would be let out of his cage. I would forget that he was there, and he would swoop down from the curtain pelmet and land on my shoulder. He would then viciously peck my ear lobe. He took delight in hearing me scream .

Mum used to laugh at my distress but soon taught me how to get Christmas to sit on my finger by placing it under his chest, forcing him to step onto it. So slowly I lost my fear of him and he became a playmate.

However I wasn’t the only one he entertained. Our Chinese maid Ah Ling worshipped him. She taught him to perform a very clever trick, which turned out to be very profitable for her. Using tiny pieces of paper, she would

draw Chinese symbols on each of them. Scrunching them up into minute balls, she put them into an empty matchbox.

After vigorously shaking it, and chanting whilst she did so, she would place the matchbox in front of Christmas, and tease it just open. Ah Ling coaxed him to delve into the box with his beak.

He was a clever bird, and knew that he would get a reward if he gave the first selected ball of paper to her. She would sing his praises and give him a fruity exotic treat, (melon was his favourite).

We were puzzled by the scrunched up pieces of paper that he selected. In her broken English we soon got the gist of what Ah Ling was up to. Like many Chinese she was hooked on gambling and on each piece of paper was a horse's name. She said he was a lucky bird and he picked many winners for her using this method.

Early one morning, many weeks later, before Mum and Dad had got up, I was mooching round the flat. Ah Ling had commenced her daily tasks, and she always started by flinging open every window. She busied herself sweeping, dusting and then washing the floors.

I, however, was feeling particularly wretched. I was six years old and was recovering from a complicated bout of mumps. I hadn't been to school for three weeks and was very, very bored. There was no television in those far off days, and Ah Ling noticed me listlessly moving around. She stopped her work and kindly made me a breakfast of tasty fruit tit bits.

As I was eating I thought of the budgie. He liked fruit and I wondered if he would like to share mine. I uncovered the cage and he perked up.

"My name's Christmas Walker."

I let him out, and do you know what he ignored my fruit tit bit? He didn't even say goodbye.

Mum wasn't the only one who went crackers when she found out.

(Triptych with kind permission of Bob Prince)

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

Stuart Tarr (Chair) stuart.tarr@hotmail.co.uk Colin Fender (Membership & Treasurer) colinfender@btinternet.com and Martin Robertson (Secretary) cspabbw@outlook.com