



SOUTH LONDON GROUP NEWSLETTER FOR THE PERIOD JULY – DECEMBER 2025 (FORMERLY THE CROYDON GROUP)

The South London Group of the CSPA is the local group for CSPA members in this area.

HQ currently has up-to-date email addresses for only about a third of CSPA members. Should CSPA need to write to members who are on-line, money would be wasted unnecessarily. Savings can be made now if you opt to receive newsletters by email. However, arguably the most important reason for giving HQ your email address is so that you can log into the CSPA website and access the wealth of useful and interesting information available there.

If you do not receive any email communications from HQ currently then it is likely that they don't have an email address for you in the system. To get yours added, email enquiries@cspa.co.uk giving your full name, postcode and, ideally, your membership number. When your email has been added (allow 2 weeks) go to the CSPA website www.cspa.co.uk. Click the red Members Area button, enter your email address and then click "Forgot Password" to set up your password.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear Group Members,

I hope that you are keeping well, and that you have been able to enjoy the prolonged warm spring and early summer. I would like to thank those of you who have already renewed their group subscription, attended meetings, and contributed to our raffles. I would also like to thank our committee of eight for their continued efforts on your behalf.

The project to transfer national 'no group' members from closed groups into nearby active groups is now mainly complete south of the Thames. However, the project is at an earlier stage north of the river for various reasons. This project aims to progressively reduce the number of unrepresented members without a voice in the CSPA's democratic processes.

Now that we have welcomed members from the former Lewisham, part of Epsom, and Bromley Groups, our Group AGM in April agreed that we should rename our group to the South London Group. The administrative tasks required to implement this change are now in hand. You will find details of our monthly meetings in Croydon at the end of this newsletter. Outreach meetings, advertised in The Pensioner, have taken place in Sutton and Lewisham.

The next will be on 29th July at the Richmal Crompton pub near Bromley South Station starting at 11:00 am. We hope that members in the area will come along and meet us.

I would just like to remind you that the Charity for Civil Servants, formerly the Civil Service Benevolent Fund, continues to assist retired civil servants and their immediate dependents experiencing difficulties. By partnering with other charitable organisations, they can now offer support on a far wider range of issues including free debt advice from FCA-approved staff, advice to carers, counselling for bereavement and other issues, and the traditional grants to those in extreme financial hardship. Much of this support is available to all without reference to your financial situation, but grants are usually subject to an analysis of your finances. Please take a look at www.cfcs.org.uk or call Freephone 0800 056 2424 Monday to Friday 10 am to 3 pm.

David Owen, South London Group Chair private.drdavidowen@btinternet.com
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SECRETARY'S COLUMN

In the last group newsletter, I outlined just some of the campaigns CSPA is involved in to protect the value of your pension and to safeguard and develop existing services that pensioners rely on. But CSPA is not just about this. Here, I detail some of the other benefits provided to you by CSPA.

Did you know that, as a member of CSPA, you can get 10% off your car insurance with CSIS, the Civil Service Insurance Society? They also provide discounted home insurance and a simple "fit to travel" scheme. Their other products include bicycle, caravan and even pet insurance. Free initial advice on wills, trusts and lasting power of attorney (POA) is available to members from Harvey Howell Solicitors. Advice on wider legal issues can be obtained from Lyons Davidson Solicitors. Financial advice, on the same basis, can be obtained from Quilter Financial Advisors. For free computer support, members can contact BC Technologies.

For more information on all these schemes, take a look on Pages 40-41 of the Summer edition of The Pensioner or go to the CSPA website, member's section. There, you can also log into the Benefits Hub where you can access deals negotiated on shopping discounts, gym membership, hotel stays etc.

Yes, CSPA is a strong voice campaigning and protecting the value of your Civil Service pension. But it also provides so much more.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

We are pleased that 83 CSPA members have subscribed so far to our (renamed) CSPA South London Group this year including some new members from areas outside Croydon.

The name of our bank account is now CSPA South London Group; the account number is unchanged. This name should now be used if paying into the Group's bank account or on cheques.

If you have not joined the Group this year and would like to do so, the subscription is £8, or £10 to include one's partner. Bank charges are lower if you can pay directly to the bank as described below, but you can pay by cheque if you prefer. A cheque should be made payable to CSPA South London Group and posted to me at 58 Forster Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 4LQ. Please include your name, address and your email address if online. No cash please. I will acknowledge all payments provided I have a valid email address.

If paying directly into the bank, the Group's account is with Lloyds Bank, account name CSPA South London Group. The sort code is 30-91-72, the account number 01042787. Please insert your name in the reference field so I can identify you. If you are online please email me at billbohudson@btinternet.com so that you can be added to the Group's mailing list.

Or simply come along to try one of our meetings and you can join there if you wish to do so.

Bill Hudson, Hon Group Treasurer billbohudson@btinternet.com

DISABLED PERSONS RAILCARD

A Disabled Persons Railcard is a discount card for people with various disabilities. It gives 1/3 off rail fares for the cardholder. If they are travelling with an adult companion, the companion also gets a the discounted fare. The card costs £20 for one year or £54 for three years.

You can apply online or by post, and choose between a digital or physical card. The application form for use when applying by post is included in the Railcards brochure available at some railway stations or directly from Network Rail. To be eligible, you need to provide proof of your disability, and you need to check details of eligibility and of the proof required online or in the brochure.

You may not have thought of applying for the card if you are hard of hearing and wear a hearing aid. You can demonstrate a hearing impairment by submitting a copy of the front page of your NHS battery book or a copy of your dispensing prescription from a private hearing aid supplier.

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW IN A WHEELCHAIR

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If you are going to have an accident perhaps it is preferable to be somewhere beautiful. I was on the square in front of Santa Croce church in Florence, didn't notice the kerb at the edge of the square and fractured my heel bone. My holiday souvenirs comprised a CD of X-rays and scans of my foot, an enormous pair of paper trousers to go over my plastered leg in a shade of azzurro, the Italian national colour of blue, and a wheelchair, fortunately also in azzurro to coordinate with the trousers.

We had booked for Chelsea Flower Show but decided to sell our tickets as we could anticipate so many problems. However, the tickets failed to sell, so, as we couldn't bear to waste them, we decided, with some trepidation, to go.

The forecast promised a rather cold day with several showers, so I put on layers of warm clothes, topped off with a quilted anorak. My only concession to being well dressed was that I had found some smarter trousers to replace the enormous blue paper ones.

After being confined indoors, the Uber drive to the show was a joy, past gardens filled with roses in full bloom. There were no queues at the Embankment entrance to the show. However, the main entrance is near the North End of the Main Avenue, where most of the show gardens are located. We were going in the opposite direction so had to weave our way slowly through hordes of people coming towards us. We must have been the only people who had looked at the weather forecast as almost all the women were wearing light flowery summer dresses. None seemed have any warm or waterproof clothes though I suspect most had a folding umbrella hidden in a handbag.

Chelsea Flower Show is one of the best places to restore your faith in people's good nature. If Mike left me for a few moments, someone immediately offered to push my chair. This could be a problem. One of the popular things to do at the show is to spot the BBC presenters who appear on Gardeners' World and watch while they record for the Chelsea programmes. The presenters were out in force and we saw Monty Don (though disappointingly without his dog), Arit Anderson, Rachel de Thame and Toby Buckland. Monty Don was preparing to make a recording and as soon as the waiting crowd saw me they cleared a path and pushed me to the front where I would have the best view. After several minutes I realised that it would be some time before Monty recorded, so decided to move on. However, as I tried to manoeuvre my chair backwards through the crowd, helpful people pushed me forward again so it took quite an effort to escape!

Fortunately the same kindness and thoughtfulness were apparent when we were looking at the show gardens, with people making way so that I could have a good view. I had resolved not to pick up any leaflets as carrying things is awkward in a wheelchair but leaflets about the gardens were thrust into my hands giving me no chance to refuse.

The show seemed a little less crowded than in previous years. We shared a restaurant table with a garden designer from Manchester who comes to the show for three days every year. We also met a man, probably in his 60s, who looked as if he had come straight from his garden without bothering to change and told us that he was an internet influencer with thousands of followers!

You may have seen some of the wall to wall coverage of the show on the BBC so I won't attempt to tell you about it. Suffice it to say that we thought we would stay for only about two hours but stayed for seven. The weather forecast turned out to have been pessimistic. There was sun for much of the day and just one sharp shower which fortuitously sent us into the main marquee in time for a good look at the displays.

At 8:00 pm loud speakers announce that the show is closed and that visitors should leave. Cream blinds are pulled down on the shops in Eastern Avenue. Now for a Chelsea secret. As it is impossible for staff to distinguish between day visitors, stall holders and visitors attending evening events it is possible to stay on after official closing time.

After the crowds have left, you can look at the show gardens in more detail. As dusk falls and lights begin to come on a different showground emerges, with the paler flowers glowing. Main Avenue is blissfully quiet, apart from the chatter and laughter from corporate hospitality events.

The picture was very different on the Ranelagh Gardens lawn. Refreshment kiosks were still open and this year offered free fish and chips to the exhausted staff who had been working all day. Lobster and champagne were also available though not free! Old Louis Armstrong classics boomed out over the loud speakers and there was a party atmosphere. We realised that it was high time for us oldies to leave. To quote from the Wallace and Gromit film title, "A Grand Day Out".

Brenda Jones, Newsletter Editor

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CROYDON GROUP PROGRAMME JULY – DECEMBER 2025

We meet at Ruskin House, Coombe Road, Croydon, CR0 1BD

Meetings start at 11.00 am with refreshments available before the meeting, so do come early!

8 July	London Fire Brigade will advise us about how we can improve fire safety in our homes and about the devices available to help with this. They will illustrate the importance of fire safety by telling us some of their experiences.
12 August	How to read the English Country Church – The Tudors to the Commonwealth The Revd Dr Nicholas Henderson returns to continue his series of talks to help us to look at church architecture and features with greater understanding.
9 September	Mandating Meeting for the CSPA AGM in October. We shall go through the AGM motions published in the Autumn edition of The Pensioner (please bring this if possible) and decide how our representative will speak and vote.
14 October	Vision Foundation. This organisation provides support in a variety of ways for blind and partially sighted people and for those whose vision is deteriorating, showing how there is life after sight loss. Its services cover the Borough of Croydon but other organisations are active in Sutton, Lewisham and Bromley.
11 November	CSPA Annual General Meeting Report. Our delegate to the CSPA Annual General Meeting will report back on the outcome of the motions debated and current priorities. You may wish to bring your copy of the Autumn Pensioner.
9 December	Christmas Social Do come along to the Ruskin House bar at 12.00 pm to enjoy the company of other members and, of course, the buffet, which will again be provided by committee members. The bar will be open and drinks are very reasonably priced. Last year's social was lively and much enjoyed.