



MATTERS

A message from Geoff—our new Chair



I feel very privileged to be writing my first message for OPAL Matters, as the new Chair of this fabulous organisation, and I want to start by paying tribute to my predecessor, Jane Colville. She is a force of nature who has been successfully steering OPAL for the last 10 years and we will be forever in her debt.

As part of my induction, I have been meeting with a great many different people; my excellent band of fellow Trustees, our great team of staff, some of our amazing volunteers, and a number of highly entertaining members. Also, I've managed to introduce myself to a few of Cheshire West's leading lights, including; the Lord Mayor of Chester, the High Sheriff of Cheshire, and the former Lord Lieutenant. And here's the thing, every one of them thinks OPAL is a wonderful organisation which does a huge amount of good. To quote the former Lord Lieutenant, "OPAL is a special charity – it spreads happiness, and none of us can do more than that."

Talking of the Lord Mayor, Councillor Leather has very kindly nominated OPAL as one of his chosen charities for this year, which is extremely kind and will be a boon to our fundraising efforts.

The other key thing I've been doing sounds mundane, by comparison, but it's just as important. In 2021 we took advantage of an offer for an independent review of our governance and structures, but it was put on hold, due to Covid. The Board asked me, as a new pair of eyes to finalise the task. OPAL definitely didn't need fixing, but things can always be improved and some streamlining suggested itself. I took a set of proposals to the June Board and I'm pleased to say I received a very positive response from my fellow Trustees. We are now implementing the changes and they should enable the Board to be even more effective.

Everyone involved in the charity sector knows that financial sustainability is a constant problem and we are no exception. Our Clubs have been partially supported by funding from a Cheshire West Early Intervention and Prevention contract, for the past 5 years, but it ends in September. Some pilot schemes will run for 12 months to September 2023, to establish the best way of achieving the Council's aims. We are engaged with this process, and will remodel our services if necessary, but it leaves a 12-month gap before new contracts start. I have been immensely impressed by the way my colleagues have started drawing up plans to tackle this shortfall and I'm optimistic that we will be able to do so. I haven't joined OPAL to close it down.

Geoff Hope-Terry - Chair

BREAKTIME - a brand new newsletter for carers.

OPAL's carers have begun to receive a new newsletter designed with their needs in mind. The BreakTime Plus Team hopes each month to bring some fun activities for them to do at home and highlight the list of OPAL events carers can participate in, if they can. Snippets of useful information will be added along the way, such as drawing their attention to the carers' personal budget scheme run by the Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust which can award funds of up to £200 to unpaid carers for carer breaks. For more information contact our Organisers Joy on 07547 508 280 or Maria on 07547 508324.



Focus on Carers

Carers' Week 2022

To celebrate Carers' Week, on Wednesday 8th June 2022, OPAL held an Afternoon Tea at the Deeside Ramblers Hockey Club in Tiverton with musical entertainment on a 1940s and 1950s theme.

The event was popular with carers and their cared-for. Everyone enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea with salad, sandwiches and cakes and enjoyed chatting to each other and the volunteers who also attended.



Cruising down the river : Carers' visit the Anderton Boat Lift

In addition to lots of lovely visits to farm shops, cafés and Garden Centres, OPAL carers and those they care for have enjoyed a couple of different events recently, including an afternoon navigating the waterways from Anderton Country Park. After boarding our boat on the Trent & Mersey Canal, we entered the Victorian Boat lift which took us down 50 feet to the join the River Weaver. From here we enjoyed a very pleasant mini-cruise into Northwich Town Centre and back. It was a real treat to see our beautiful Cheshire Countryside from a different perspective and a lovely informative afternoon in the sunshine was had by all.



Guide Dog Puppy Walker

As we get older, many of us find our eyesight isn't quite what it used to be, and we appreciate far more how difficult it would be if our sight was severely impaired. In July we were joined by a local Guide Dog Puppy Walker and learned about the Guide dog's journey from puppy to fully fledged guide dog. Our speaker brought along her newest recruit, Jolie, the prettiest golden Labrador you could ever wish to meet! We even picked up a few tips for encouraging our own dogs to be better behaved at home. Sadly, Jolie was the only one who wasn't allowed some of the excellent cake baked by our Carer Organiser, Maria.



Focus on the Clubs

Everyone loves chocolate

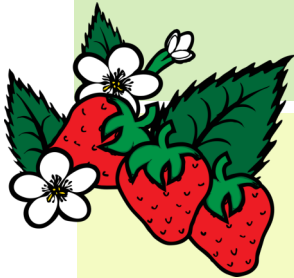
The 7th July was World Chocolate Day, so the opportunity couldn't be missed for some club members to enjoy sampling some examples of different chocolates, dark, white, Caramac, the list goes on. Did you know that white chocolate is white because it doesn't contain coco powder just the butter?

Tasting was accompanied by a cryptic quiz and some reminiscing about chocolate brands with a picture quiz.



Summer 22—Inspired by Sport!

In June Tarporley OPAL Club started new monthly chair based exercise sessions with sporty volunteer Jane. In July members celebrated Wimbledon with strawberries and cream all round! Then came the excitement of the Lionesses winning the Euros. This dominated the national conversation and there is an acknowledgment that women's football is changing fast, with women and girls now encouraged to take part. It wasn't always so easy and a Kelsall member recalls how she and a friend loved to play football and often joined in with the boys when they could, but they were told off for it by their teachers. How times have changed! The Commonwealth Games have been a hot topic of conversation too. OPAL members have been busy painting colourful Commonwealth flags in honour of the games. Sport is a unifier regardless of age!



Funding and Fundraising

Cheshire Freemasons Masons' donation

Tarporley OPAL Club was delighted to be visited by representatives of the Cheshire Freemasons and to be presented with the generous donation of £4,500 from the Masonic Charitable Foundation's Relief Chest Scheme. Receiving the cheque on behalf of OPAL, Chair Geoff Hope-Terry commented that Tim and Chris from the Freemasons were very impressed by what they saw, ... Tarporley Club is a brilliant example of what OPAL is great at.



OPAL volunteers rise to the occasion (again!)

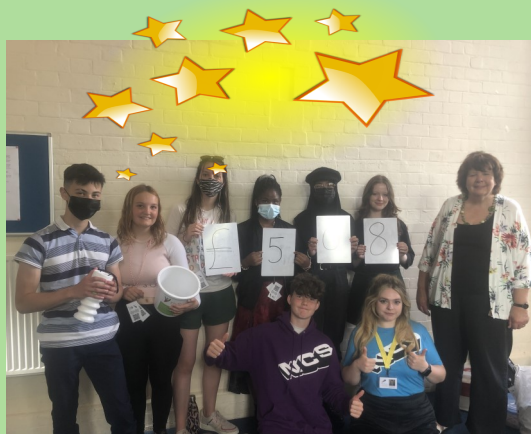


On Sunday 22nd May, OPAL got involved with the National Garden Scheme event at Manley Knoll. Manley Knoll opens its gardens as part of the scheme every year. It is an Arts & Crafts garden created early 1900 and at this time of year there is stunning colour provided by rhododendron and azaleas. Thanks to our exceptional volunteers, OPAL provided tea and cakes to a record number of attendees. By the end of the event we were running short of cups but we never ran out of cake! Thanks to every one of our STAR bakers and all those who helped on the day. It was a busy day but very worthwhile. The money made on refreshments sales will all help support OPAL Services.



OPAL receives outstanding support from the National Citizens Service in partnership with the Youth Federation

OPAL received an unexpected boost in July and August, thanks to some amazing young people who are part of the NCS which is linked to the Youth Federation. Several groups of young people chose OPAL as a charity they wanted to raise funds for and over the weeks organised numerous activities, including sponsored walks, cake sales, car washing, running bingo events and dressing up as cartoon characters. They have made hundreds of pounds for OPAL. Geoff Hope-Terry and Jane Colville have been delighted to be invited to meet these groups of young people and be able to thank them in person. They have learned how these amazing young people decided, on the basis of what they had heard about OPAL, to support us and to support older people in rural west Cheshire. OPAL have been asked if they will attend and speak at the NCS Graduation event being held for all those young people taking part and being held at Chester Cathedral in September.



Focus on Partnerships

Microsoft Office Training from SquareOne

In June OPAL was privileged to receive a day's free training in Microsoft Office for ten OPAL staff and trustees. Lisa Johnson of SquareOne Training was successful in gaining a training contract for the Accelerate Programme run by the University of Chester and she contacted OPAL with the free offer.



Lisa told us: "As a training provider, we have a passion for putting people first and it is the ethos of all that we do. That is why, when offered the opportunity to nominate businesses for our free training through the Accelerate Fund, we decided to opt for a charity that shares our values in the hope of supporting their team in their day to day roles. The warm reception in which our training was welcomed with confirmed to us our nomination of OPAL Services was a correct one and it was an absolute pleasure to train staff who devote their time to helping others."

OPAL Branches Out into the Allotment

OPAL Branching Out has offered a variety of activities over the years, with the OPAL's What's Cooking groups and pop-up craft being very popular, but this summer is the first time we have offered gardening. In May we were given the opportunity to take on one of the raised beds at Townfield Lane allotments, Frodsham. By June, we had three new members signed up and prepared to clear and plant the small plot. With the help of some volunteers at the site who cleared the access paths, and lots of plant donations, we were able to establish the plot in record time. In addition to the members who enjoy attending the Monday morning working group, we are inviting members to come and see what we have achieved and enjoy the beautiful surroundings, with the opportunity to meet and chat and boost wellbeing in beautiful surroundings. Whilst our plot is small (just the right size to get started!), the Good Shed Project is also on the Townfield Lane site and offers sessions on the community wellbeing plot for those who want more of a challenge and it has been great to meet with them too. For further details, contact Julie Ennis (OPAL Organiser) on 07512 632515.



Frodsham Festival



Staff, trustees and volunteers were out and about fundraising at Frodsham Festival in the Park at the start of July. The weather had been rainy in the morning but brightened up for the afternoon start. With a good turnout OPAL's stall did well with 'Water and Wine', 'Play your cards right' and 'Hook a Duck', which was a favourite with the kids who queued up to play. We also had some lovely items for sale, thanks to everyone for their donations of prizes and help on the day. We raised £400 for OPAL.



Monster success! Following a spot of seed planting at the Clubs back in May, the members' sunflower competition is hotting up. We have reports of a 7 footer emerging in one garden!

Malpas Community Event

On 28th July, OPAL attended a Community Engagement event in Malpas that was part of work being undertaken across parts of rural West Cheshire to address social isolation and loneliness. This work forms part of the work of some nine Community Care groups and OPAL is involved with two of them. Around a dozen different organisations were there and residents were signposted to local activities to support wellbeing. OPAL staff, volunteers and trustees were on hand to explain what we provide and to collect feedback. OPAL Chair Geoff is pictured here sharing ideas with Alison Langley from Healthwatch, who also attended.



OPAL welcomes a new Trustee - Julian Waring

OPAL is pleased to welcome Julian Waring as a new trustee. Julian is a retired teacher who was also a senior examiner for GCSE, ensuring that standards were consistent throughout the country. On retiring from education he joined the board of an adoption agency and is still active in the field. His wife is an OPAL volunteer with the Frodsham Club.

A date for your diary!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
9th November, 5pm

Further details will be announced nearer the time.

Think about me, not my age