



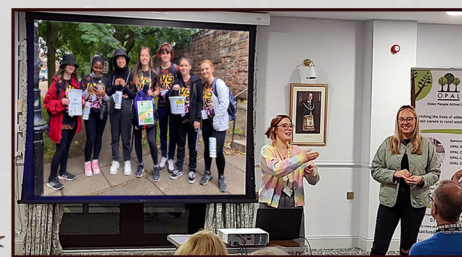
MATTERS

A Message from the Chair of OPAL - Geoff

Autumn is a busy time for the Chair of OPAL and here are just some of the things I've been involved in. We recently held our Annual General Meeting, at The Cheshire View covering 2021/22 and I was in the hot seat. It felt a little odd as I didn't join the Board until March, but looking back over the year was very enlightening. The Annual Report was entitled 'Post Pandemic – The Return Journey', which pretty much sums up the strange times we've lived through. To still be here, delivering our brilliant services, is a testament to the fantastic efforts of everyone involved. The AGM provided a great opportunity to say a massive 'thank you' to our wonderful



supporters, whether they be: volunteers, staff, partners, funders, donors or any of those lovely people who come along to our fundraising events. Not forgetting, of course, my magnificent trustee colleagues, who work tirelessly to keep OPAL successful. Afterwards, we were treated to two superb presentations. The Youth Federation's Leah Owen and Jess Norton described some of the activities youngsters got up to as part of the National Citizen Service (NSC) programme. They did a massive amount of fundraising and have donated a truly staggering £4,000 to OPAL. Then Councillor Lynn Riley gave an excellent overview of developments in the important and influential Care Community Steering Groups. I'm very grateful to all three of them.



It was a return fixture with Leah and Jess who had kindly invited Jane Colville and I to the NCS graduation in Chester Cathedral. It was an amazing ceremony and, with hundreds of youngsters in attendance, a bit different from our AGM. I doubt the Cathedral has ever seen anything like it and I was pleased to be able to make a short speech, thanking them for their support and describing the services they'd helped to fund. Elsewhere, the Westminster Estate generously allowed OPAL to use Eaton Park for a very successful charity dinner. We had a star-studded guest list with Jeannie France-Hayhurst, Cheshire's High Sheriff, opening the evening, Jackie Weaver, who ran a Quiz, and Sir John Timpson who gave us a splendid speech about his life and experiences. My table was so full of famous people, the only name on the seating plan I didn't recognise, was mine!



Also, I enjoyed my first fundraising Soup Lunch, in Tarporley. I was bowled over by people's generosity in time and money to support of OPAL. It's what makes us so special.



Finally, our great staff team has some new members. Hello to Bev, who's been one of our fabulous volunteers, plus Alice, Alison, Debbie and Yvette. A warm welcome to all of them and Season's Greetings to the readers of OPAL Matters from everyone here.



opalmatters@opalservices.org.uk



Introducing New OPAL Services

OPAL TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Following changes in the Council's commissioning intentions, OPAL is delighted to announce that we have been awarded funding for 2 new services: 'OPAL Telephone Friends' which will operate across rural areas of west Cheshire and 'OPAL Good Neighbour Plus' which will operate in Tarporley and include regular Club sessions. Each service is funded with a £10,000 grant for Oct- 2022 to Sept 2023 under the Council's Home Support Grant Scheme and will be administered by Cheshire Community Action.

The first of these services to be launched is OPAL Telephone Friends. This is a free service aimed at older people who have great difficulty leaving their home but would like someone to chat to over the phone on a regular basis.

Through Telephone Friends individuals are paired up with one of our fantastic volunteers who rings them weekly for a general chat and to see how they are. This provides a lifeline of friendship and telephone companionship, offering a vital link with the outside world.

If you know anyone who could benefit from this service please get in touch.

Alternatively, we are always looking for new volunteers for this service.

Just 15-20 minutes of your time a week could make a massive difference to an older person's life. If you're empathetic and good at talking on the phone, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact janet.handley@opalservices.org.uk or 07592 464856 for more info, or use our online enquiry form.



FUNDRAISING

Norley Methodist Church Fundraiser

In mid-October, Norley Methodist Church organised a concert featuring a collection of musicians who perform regularly at Castle Park Arts Centre in Frodsham.

There was almost a full house on the evening, and those who attended enjoyed a varied musical programme including Michael Gough, a guitarist who performed a selection of his own compositions, the Hoppin' Frogs who entertained the audience with a mix of American, British and Irish folk music, and the Keith Singleton Jazz Trio with their wonderful guest vocalist, Annie Long, who performed a selection of jazz songs from 'the Great American Songbook'.

Several OPAL volunteers were in the audience, including our Chair, Geoff, who said a few words about the work of OPAL. An amazing total of £725 was raised on the evening for OPAL! A very big thank you to everyone at Norley Methodist Church who organised the event, to the musicians, and to all who attended and donated!

Pictured here are the musicians who performed on the evening, also OPAL Chair of Trustees, Geoff Hope-Terry, and Rev'd Andrew Emison, The Minister at Norley Methodist Church.



OPAL receives valued support from MCBF

We were bowled over by the recent news that once again OPAL is to receive grant funding from the Marshes Community Benefit Fund. This funding will enable OPAL to support older people and their carers in our local community and will see us linking two of our successful services: OPAL Branching Out and OPAL GoOnLine. OPAL Branching Out offers people opportunities for people who have experienced challenging life changes to re-connect with what is going on in their communities. OPAL GoOnLine supports older people and carers to become more confident and competent in the use of communication technology.

These services already work closely together so we are enormously grateful to MCBF and we look forward to being able to provide services across Frodsham, Helsby and Elton. Anyone interested should visit our website for more information and/or contact us on 07512 632 515 or 07779 283 591



Soup Lunch

OPAL ran one of its very popular soup lunches in November. Around 60 people attended Tarporley Community Centre to enjoy homemade soup and cake, all in good company. The food was prepared by OPAL staff, volunteers, trustees and everyone seemed to have a good time. We raised just over £450, this will help with the running costs of our services. Keep a look out for the next one, probably in the Spring.



Ho Ho Helsby

On 3rd December OPAL took part in the Ho Ho Helsby event and organised a lively stall in the Community Centre. The stall displayed some wonderful Christmas gifts cards



and trinkets along with crocheted blankets produced by our industrious members. Visitors to the stall enjoyed the 'Water or Wine Bottle' game and 'Play Your Cards Right'. Throughout the afternoon we were serenaded by choirs and bands of all ages and we really got into the Christmas spirit. Hats off to the Ho Ho Helsby organisers for a brilliant event.

Helsby

In September, Helsby OPAL Club visited Spirit of the Herd Pony Sanctuary in Alvanley. Members had a go at grooming the ponies. All the horses have been rescued



and rehabilitated and groups are invited to come and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of being with the horses and helping to care for them. Members always enjoy the physical activity sessions, this autumn they had fun with a parachute.

Frodsham

Frodsham Club members have had a busy time over the last few months, crafting and making snow globes and Christmas cards. They also took part in the Frodsham Christmas Tree Festival when members chose a 'Remembering the Queen' theme. Club members joined forces with the Branching Out Craft Group and made some origami Paddington Bears, wooden crowns and decorated luggage labels with photos of our late Queen and the Royal Family on one side and members memories recorded on the other, all of which had a red, white and blue theme. Roger Hanslip from Lady Heyes came to talk to Frodsham Club valuing some items and doing an 'Oldest, Rarest and Most Valuable' quiz with wooden, glass and ceramic objects, it was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.



Malpas

The re-opening of Malpas OPAL Club has been eagerly awaited. Christmas smells filled the air with our festive pomander-making activity, using oranges and cloves.



Later members enjoyed a game of left and right, followed by a couple of very competitive games of carpet bowls. There was a delicious meal made by Harvey's caterers and before everyone said their goodbyes, members took part in a quick Christmas pantomime quiz.



During December we were happy to welcome our new organiser, Alison and our members enjoyed a musical hour, performing some Christmas carols and poems.

Tattenhall

Our Tattenhall OPAL members have been making Christmas tree decorations with origami, in the shape of a lily flower, paper stars were painted and then accessorised with glitter and Christmas cards were then made to take home. Throughout December, members enjoyed Christmas carols accompanied by our very own flautist followed by a Christmas dinner. In the final week we had a drop in party with a buffet, Christmas bingo and other festive games.

Kelsall

In October, Kelsall OPAL Club enjoyed an 'Antiques Roadshow' theme day when members and volunteers brought in some interesting items for discussion and enjoyed a 'Guess the Value' quiz. They also enjoyed an unusual cuppa with a tea tasting of 10 different teas from around the world, including Spicy Chai, Green Tea, Malty Biscuit, Assam and Ginger. People's favourites varied but there were definitely some converts!

Creative Autumn and Halloween themed crafts included leaf printing and collage, marsh-mallow pumpkins, origami treat pouches and toilet roll pumpkins. The Kelsall Club Christmas tree



theme was '1950's Retro' with members bringing in their vintage decorations.

Tarporley

This Autumn we've been getting our hands dirty at the Tarporley OPAL Club, planting pots of spring bulbs to take home. Roll on March and fingers crossed for a beautiful display of daffodils!

November was a very musical month, with two live performances. Our members had a lovely time singing along with Ken Walker, who performed classic songs



from across the decades for us, including some requests. Toes were tapping

again the following week, when we were treated to

some traditional Irish music by John Lynch and his very talented friends, who played plenty of jigs. Members also made their own stunning Christmas baubles, with the help of our wonderfully crafty volunteers.



OPAL SERVICES

OPAL Carers

In December, we took out Eric, our first cared-for person in a wheelchair, along with his wife and carer, Maggie. Phil and Geoff debuted their wheelchair lift skills and it all went perfectly.

Maggie and Eric have not been outside of Frodsham together for several years and so you can imagine how much pleasure they got from their trip to the Tarporley Garden Centre.



STAFF NEWS

Fond Farewell

We will be so sad to see Julie Ennis leave our staff team at Christmas, although she assures us she will remain connected to OPAL as a volunteer. Julie has been responsible for establishing our successful Branching Out service that has been in place for around five years now. Her place is being taken by Alice Leech.

OPAL Welcomes:



Bev Stubbs - Go Online

I worked in computing all my working life, starting as a computer programmer through to lecturing with West Cheshire College. On leaving the college I joined the NHS where I used my IT skills instead of teaching. I retired at 60, then looked around for something to do that would

help people and to be able to use my IT Skills. I saw an ad for GOL sessions in Tattenhall, went along and joined as a volunteer working with Jean Toyn. I have now joined OPAL part time as I found I really enjoyed getting out for a few hours a week and meeting lots of different people. Some of my hobbies are sewing memory bears, crocheting baby blankets and making specialty cake for my family.



Yvette Owen - Comms Officer

I have several part time jobs and my own photography business. During the pandemic I started working on the NHS 119 Helpline. I did this job for 21 months and during that time spoke to many vulnerable, isolated elderly people whom I wasn't really able to

help in a meaningful way, which was upsetting and frustrating. When I saw the job for Communications Officer advertised, I thought it looked like perfect role for me and how wonderful to work for such a vital organisation. My mother-in-law absolutely loves her time at the OPAL Clubs

OPAL Branching Out

OPAL Branching Out started a new group in Helsby in September. Be Creative was the idea of two volunteers, Pam and Jean, who together with the OPAL Branching Out organiser Julie Ennis, devised a varied programme for the Autumn Term. All sessions are suitable for people with no experience and all materials are provided, along with tea and biscuits. So far, people have turned



The group has also created some Christmas decorations.

their hand to decorating pots, planting bulb, and mindful painting.



OPAL What's Cooking

In December OPAL What's Cooking in Farndon, welcomed Chef Alex from charitable organisation 'Vegetarian for Life'. Our members enjoyed a colourful display outlining just how delicious, versatile and economical cooking with vegetables can be. Alex cooked up a warming carrot, orange and coriander soup, followed by an enticing vegetable terrine served with cous cous and pitta bread. A naughty but nice sticky toffee pudding for dessert and there was definitely nothing left.

"I really enjoyed this morning, Alex cooked delicious food which I thoroughly enjoyed"

(Eileen, one of our members)

More enticing recipes can be found at:

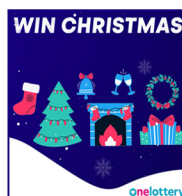
www.vegetarianforlife.org.uk



Alison Shackleton - OPAL Organiser



From door to door rent collecting, teaching swimming and the activities person for a couple of nursing homes mixed in with a dose of admin work and clerking you have most of the requirements for an OPAL Organiser. You also need to have a sprinkling of humour and the ability to let your hair down for entertainment purposes. When I'm not doing this I enjoy being outside walking dogs, skiing, cycling and singing.



Every week one player wins a cash prize of about £12 and a chance to win up to £25,000 on our OPAL Lottery

Since July 2021, our supporters have raised £1957 for OPAL

www.onelottery.co.uk/support/opal-services

Tel: 01865 678679