



'A Voice for Older People in Gloucestershire'

Welcome to GOPA's Summer 2008 newsletter



Farewell to Bob Stanbanks

Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly (GOPA) is very sad to announce the passing of our dear friend and colleague Bob Stanbanks, who many of you will have known from the numerous committees and organisations he gave his time and energy to.

Bob was a founding member of GOPA, a former Chair and, at the time of his death, Treasurer. He was a stalwart supporter of community issues in his home patch, the Forest Of Dean, and was the type of person who left a mark wherever he went. We shall miss Bob greatly and extend our heartfelt condolences to his widow, Chris.

From a personal point of view and as the Facilitator to GOPA, I will always value his friendship, together with his unswerving loyalty and support, especially when GOPA experienced "difficult times", and we had a few of those during the early years. As the Chair of GOPA he was faced with some situations that needed an assertive touch, never once did he raise his voice, but everyone knew that having made a decision, that was it; and invariably proven to be the correct one.

All of GOPA's members will miss Bob's wonderful philosophical approach to life, displaying considerable empathy for other people's problems whilst retaining an objective and positive attitude to his own. His lovely sense of humour will be sorely missed too, as will his ability to hit the nub of a problem with uncanny accuracy.

For those who didn't know Bob so well, let me tell you a little of this man who was raised in Manchester, of his love of the railways and, following retirement, about his work, which was driven by a strong desire and considerable passion to improve the lot of many people.

He had worked at Power Stations all over the country, and finally became the 'Construction Audit Manager', responsible for England and Wales, based at the Central Electricity Generating Board, at Barnwood. During his working life he achieved professional qualification in Law, Accountancy, Business Management, Project and Contract Management and Engineering.

Having retired early in 1994 on medical grounds, he became an even very busier person, not allowing his considerable health problems to affect his activities, until really the last eighteen months. Prior to his Father moving into a Care Home, Bob (and Chris) provided regular respite care.

On a number of occasions, Bob was asked to either respond to a radio link up, or to give a telephone interview to the local press. However, he was not one to seek the limelight, giving only those interviews that helped to bring the cause of those in need into the public domain.

Coming from Liverpool, I mentioned to Bob how I had enjoyed going on the Overhead Railway, my favourite journey being from the Pier Head along the length of the Docks. "The Docker's Umbrella", Bob said, reminding me of the other name it was affectionately known. Then he said "My dad took me and our kid on it in December 1954 on the very last time it ran". A treasure that we both had appreciated, it seemed way ahead of it's time, but was lost to 'progress and the cost of maintaining it' as Bob put it.

During the last eighteen months, Bob began to find it hard to hold a pen to write or a paintbrush to refurbish his model railway, and he had even cut his feet a couple of times without realising it. The cause of which was testing his Doctor and the specialists that supported him.

Eventually it was established that it was nothing to do with his current medication, being diabetic or related to his medical history. It was actually due to a vertebra in his neck being out of alignment that was slowly applying pressure to the spinal column, which if not resolved would eventually sever the column, with all the obvious results. The fact that Bob could collapse without warning, due to the extremely low blood pressure, meant that an operation was urgently needed, as the fear was that a fall could result in the bone in his neck moving.

The sad irony is that the operation was successfully carried out at Frenchay Hospital, only to have a chest infection and subsequent medication combined with Bob's low blood pressure, which all resulted in his body being unable to sustain him to recover.

GOPA was lucky to enjoy his tremendous drive, ability and commitment, as did many organisation, all of which I am sure would say that they gained a huge amount from him, and would wish to have Bob remembered.

Chris has asked that her thanks and appreciation be expressed through this newsletter to those who were able to attend the funeral and for the many wonderful cards and letters that she has received in tribute to Bob, they have been a great comfort to her.

These are some of the commitments Bob maintained during his retirement.

- **Senior Persons User Group (Chair for a number of years)**
- **Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly (Chair, Deputy Chair and Treasurer)**
- **Review Panel for the Forest of Dean District Council Services**
- **Forest Accommodation Working Group (i.e. Sheltered housing/modifying homes)**
- **Forest Voluntary Action Forum – (Trustee)**
- **Warden Services Working Group**
- **Cheltenham Housing Policy Working Group**
- **Hospital Admissions & Discharge Group**
- **Short term Respite Care Sub-Group**
- **Affordable Warmth Working Group**
- **Falls Prevention (Chair for a period)**
- **Dean Leaf Group (Chair for period)**
- **Warden Services Working Group**
- **Joint Planning Initiative**
- **Locality Planning Team**
- **Rural Transport Initiative**
- **Joint Community Care Forum**

He assisted the local amateur dramatic society productions, usually as the Director and doubling up as the Stage Manager as well. He always enjoyed his model railway, often repainting and updating his considerable collection.



He was also very involved with the Gloucester Folk Museum, repairing and regularly servicing their model railway. Together with his mate Andy, he was in the process of rebuilding a steam-roller (traction engine); having previously repaired and maintained it, taking it to steam rallies. They also serviced and maintained a 1938 Fire Engine and various motorbikes too.

Bob was a very special person and I firmly believe that we have all been enriched from knowing and working with him.

Mick Churchward GOPA

Biography: Merci Rebati, GOPA Forum Co-ordinator

My role within GOPA: To help set up older persons' forums in each district, thus enabling older people to have an effective mechanism for having a say in influencing local policy and services.

To recruit, train and co-ordinate volunteer facilitators who can talk to older people in their locality, with the aim of learning, amongst other things, what services they might in future wish to see offered by local care homes.

Work: Originally from a linguistic background, I have worked as an interpreter and translator and have taught French and Spanish.

I come to the role of Forum Co-ordinator following 5 years' employment within the voluntary sector. In my previous role as Development Officer for Volunteer & Community Action (Stroud District), I supported, represented and promoted local groups. As well as working at a grass-roots, local level, I was involved in several district and county-wide partnerships such as the Older Persons' Partnership Group, Stroud Health & Wellbeing Partnership, Stroud Local Strategic Partnership, Compact Working group, to name but a few. Although my role required me to cover the whole spectrum of voluntary sector matters, I have always had a soft spot for older persons' issues and am very pleased to have been given this opportunity to help make a difference.



Gloucestershire Service Users Forum

Hello, I am Nadia Novali.

I have recently taken the post of Project Coordinator for the **Gloucestershire Service User Forum**. You may have heard of Samantha Hoad, who was my predecessor.

The Forum has been developed for people in Gloucestershire, who use Services provided by the Community and Adult Care Directorate to ensure that people get actively involved in the selection and training of Social Care staff and are consulted on the services they receive from Gloucestershire Social Services.

Currently, the forum includes people with a physical disability, mental health issues, learning disability, sensory impairment and older people.

Mencap and GOPA were awarded the contract from Gloucestershire County Council three years ago; both groups have wide experience in their field to be able to work together and deliver the service outlined within the remit.

Other than working with the county council, the Forum has established excellent working partnerships with a variety of other organisations like University of Gloucestershire, whose Tutors are, amongst other aspects, welcoming the opportunity to involve Service Users from all backgrounds in the delivery of training and providing case studies within their Social Work Degree Course.

The individual groups have a representative who is attending the Forum reps meetings, which are held bi-monthly. The next meeting will be held on 17th July 2008.

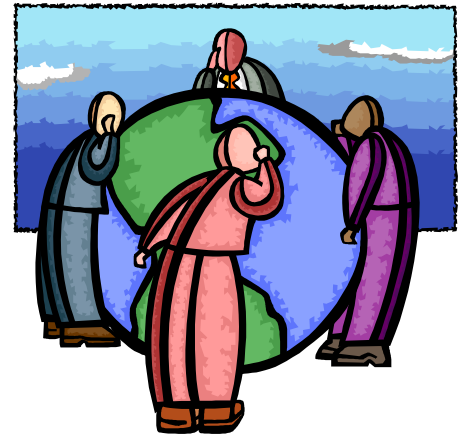
Mick Churchward is the GOPA representative. If you would like to know more about the Forum please don't hesitate to contact me.

I would be pleased to give you more info or even come to visit you in Day Centres or Forum meetings to give you a small presentation and try to answer any questions you may have.

Best wishes, Nadia.



Would you like to have a say in improving the lives of older people?



Older people are fast becoming the majority group in society but they often feel that their voices remain unheard. As a consequence, they can feel powerless to influence decisions that affect the services they receive locally.

You can help GOPA address this by working with us in a number of ways:

- **Help set up an Older Persons' Forum in your district**

GOPA is hoping to establish a network of independent Forums across the county to enable older people to really influence local policy and discuss issues of concern. We need vibrant individuals, over 50 years old, with a can-do attitude and effective team-working skills to help us drive this forward within their own district.

- **Become a Volunteer Facilitator**

GOPA is working with partners on the Partnership for Older People Project (POPP), which is exploring how care homes can be opened up and become a community resource, benefiting both care home residents (who can feel quite isolated from the surrounding community) and the local community (who may not otherwise have access to certain services). We are looking for older people who can seek out the views of their peers in the local community to find out what services they would wish to see made available to them locally. If you possess the following qualities, then this could be a very interesting and rewarding role for you:

- Sympathetic, effective listener
- Ability to feedback views in a clear, concise manner
- Good local knowledge
- Ability to use initiative in seeking out new opportunities for engaging with older people
- Effective team-working skills (Facilitators will work in pairs)
- Over 50

You will receive appropriate training and will be supported by GOPA's Forum Co-ordinator, Merci Rebaty.

If you would like to know more about either of these roles, please contact Merci on 01452 313999, or e-mail: forum@gopa.org.uk

- Work one to one with older people as an older person's advocate

We call our volunteers *advocates* because they are *unconditional allies* on behalf of older people.

- Do you feel strongly about older people's issues?
- Do you enjoy using communication skills and influencing others?
- Could you be an older person's "voice"?
- Would you enjoy researching an older person's rights and options and providing them with good information enabling them to make informed choices which improve the quality of their life?

Advocacy work doesn't require legal experience as it is not advocacy in a legal sense. This vacancy requires experience in the University of Life, and a desire to serve others. It is highly rewarding and interesting volunteer work that will help to keep your mind young and active, ideal for someone who wants to help others in their retirement.

If you would like to know more about this role, please contact Katey on 01452 332830, or e-mail: advocacy@gopa.org.uk

For all the above roles, GOPA will reimburse volunteers for out of pocket expenses.

Biography: Katey Nixon, POPP Advocacy Coordinator



I first trained in advocacy in March 2003 and volunteered for three years with CATG the Gloucestershire advocacy service for people with learning disabilities. It wasn't long before I realised that advocacy was a vocation for me, but I was working as a computer programmer at the time and making the transition wasn't easy financially. However my partner was very supportive and so in April 2006 I went to work at Gloucestershire Lifestyles doing two part time jobs – Volunteer Coordinator and PSD (Physical and Sensory Disability) Social Care Support Worker. At Lifestyles I gained the necessary experience to work as an Advocacy Coordinator and working for GOPA was a logical next step. In my spare time I am doing a Health and Social Care degree with the Open University and I also write. At the moment I have come up with a concept for a new children's cartoon series and am attempting to write some scripts so I can sell it to a TV company.



POPP Advocacy Service

The POPP advocacy project which aims to bring advocacy into care homes in Gloucestershire is now well underway. We are currently developing contacts with care homes in the Forest, Tetbury, Gloucester, Cirencester and Chipping Campden and we expect to have four of these care homes fully integrated into the scheme by the end of May. We have recruited another 3 volunteers bringing our volunteer-force up to eight. We now have advocates in a wide range of areas across the county with the notable exceptions being Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. We will be working on recruiting advocates in these areas in the next few months.



The Best Kept Secret in Social Care?



Because advocacy is such a confusing word it is the best kept secret in social care. Do you know what an advocate does? Many people think advocacy is legal work, but in the social care field it is used in a different sense. In social care, an advocate is an unconditional ally on behalf of the person they support. They are paid staff or volunteers who support vulnerable people to make their opinions and wishes about decisions in their lives, heard by others. An advocate will often find themselves researching information in order that the client can make an informed decision.

GOPA provides an advocacy service which is independent and free to any older person in Gloucestershire. Anyone is eligible for this service if they are over 50, live in the County and would like support resolving an issue. You might want to use our services if you need to make a decision in your life but don't have the right information, or if you are struggling to put your point across to a bank or utility company.

Or perhaps you feel that your views and feels regarding decisions that affect your life are not being heard by other family members, your care workers or social services; we can help here too to enable your views to be listened and responded to.



If you have a problem you would like to talk over, give Katey a call on 01452 332830.



Carers Emergency Scheme

What is the Carers Emergency Scheme?

The Scheme is run in partnership between Gloucestershire County Council, Carers Gloucestershire and the Forest of Dean District Council Careline. The Scheme offers peace of mind to you as a carer, in that should an emergency occur, the person you look after will be supported. The Scheme provides 2 levels of response depending upon need;

- **Level 1**—You are asked to nominate 2 contacts (e.g. family members, friends or neighbours) who would be willing to check on the person you look after if you are unable to because of an accident emergency or illness.
- **Level 2**—If you are looking after someone with high care needs, you have the additional option of having a support worker provided in an emergency by the County Council, to take over your role. This service would be provided for up to 48hrs.

How do I access the Scheme?

- **Level 1**—If you want to nominate 2 contacts then you can get in touch with Carers Gloucestershire on 01452 386283. A member of staff will go through the details required and will enrol you.
- **Level 2**—If you feel you would benefit from the additional service offered through the County Council, then you will need to have a carer's assessment and emergency support plan completed.

This can be done by contacting the County Council Adult Services Helpdesk on 01452 426568 or the Children and Families Helpdesk on 01452 426565 or by getting in touch with the social worker or mental health care coordinator who supports the person that you care for. The assessment will establish whether or not you are eligible for the service.



How does the scheme operate?

You provide basic Information about yourself, the person you look after and the action required in the event of an emergency. This Information is then passed into the Forest Careline. You are then issued with a card.- like a credit card - with a unique identification number on it. The card also displays the Forest Careline number. In an emergency this number is called and the workers at Careline carry out the instruction you have given.

To register for the scheme or for further information, please contact the numbers shown above.



FAIR SHARES



Fair Shares Gloucestershire is a registered charity which aims to create strong, healthy communities with self-empowered people. This organisation was specifically established with the aim of using time to rebuild communities

Fair Shares manage five 'time banks' in Gloucester, Newent, North Cotswolds, Stroud and Stonehouse, reaching over 700 people. The 'time banks' create informal systems of neighbours helping neighbours, reaffirming the bonds of reciprocity upon which community depends.

'Time banks' provide people and community groups with access to the services and skills they need in day to day life, and enables them to offer their own skills and time to help others, free of charge. People 'deposit' time in the time bank by spending a few hours helping somebody or doing community work. They are then able to withdraw time from the time bank when they need help themselves. This creates a community of support and values each person's time and skills equally. This approach involves many more people than traditional volunteering programmes and also attracts participants who would not normally be involved in 'volunteering'.

For further information please contact Lawrence Hughes on 01452 541337 or fairshares@btconnect.com

If you or your group / luncheon club etc. would like to feature in our next Newsletter, or would like a link on our website www.gopa.org.uk (currently being updated) then we would love to hear from you.



Submissions are required by the beginning of September, you can send them to:

Freepost RRLS_CHUT_LACC

GOPA

14b Norbury Avenue, Matson

Gloucester

GL4 6AH

Or

E-mail: admin@gopa.org.uk



Surf-At-Ease



Corinium HR Management have just launched their new venture **Surf-At-Ease**, aimed at people in the local community who feel that need assistance in accessing email and the Internet.

Surf-At-Ease will provide supported learning to give people the skills and understanding they need to enable them to e-mail their friends and relatives, to shop online, to undertake online research, and to access social websites; drawing attention to the need of safety and security when using the internet.

No previous computing experience is necessary - sessions will be undertaken at the individual's own pace, tailored to their own needs, and, for those who want it, advice on buying and setting up a home computer connected to the internet, can be provided.

Surf-At-Ease will be run at Corinium HR Management's premises at Barton Hall,
Gloucester Street, Cirencester from
Tuesdays and Fridays, 10.00 to 11.30am.
4 x 1.5 hours sessions - £70 (dates agreed individually)

For more information contact Liz on 01285 650106

Please note that GOPA has no first hand knowledge or experience of this Company and therefore GOPA is only giving information and NOT a recommendation.



Have you ever volunteered?



Independent Age are a charity that help older people (or people over 40 who have disabilities) by donating a regular payment to supplement low income. The amounts are quite substantial, and they do not affect benefits due to a "charitable disregard", something brought in by Gordon Brown several years ago. Once on their books they give further help with necessities such as optician or dentist costs as well as providing a twice yearly clothing parcel.

To qualify you need to be 65 or over and have done voluntary work in your past (or present) life! The contact details for this helpful organisation are:

**Independent Age
6 Avonmore Road
London
W14 8RL
Telephone: 020 7605 4200**

If you or your organisation would like to be involved in the work of Gloucestershire Older Persons' Assembly and you haven't yet registered your interest OR feel that you could like to be involved in Forum development in your locality: Or would like to become a trained advocate, or are in need of advocacy, then please contact: Mick Churchward, Merci Rebaty, Katey Nixon or Sharon Swift at:

GOPA, 14b Norbury Avenue, Matson, Gloucester, GL4 6AH.

Tel: 01452 313999

Advocacy: 01452 332830

Fax: 01452 312800

info@gopa.org.uk

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GOPA wishes to thank the following organisations for their support: Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester City Council, Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust and Senseon.