

## FRIENDS OF OURS

**St Mary's Friendship Club does what it says on the tin. Based in Hyde in Tameside, the club has been running for 10 years and provides social activities for senior citizens, enabling new friendships to be formed and old ones to blossom.**



The club is a community in its own right where members eat together, take part in team games, help out with the washing up in the kitchen, try new skills, chat and sing songs together.

Everything from guest speakers to games of bingo, arts and crafts sessions, shopping trips and meals out are all part of the club's busy itinerary. Recently, visits to places of interest such as St Helens Glass works, Portland Basin and a Christmas shopping trip to Oswaldtwistle have gone down a storm.

When the group first started there were only 10 members but this has now grown to more than 40, with people from Dukinfield, Mottram, Broadbottom, Audenshaw and Stalybridge all dropping in and getting involved.

Chairperson Barbara Gibson knows just how important the club is to the lives of its members and that it often **provides a vital lifeline, helping to combat loneliness and isolation.**

She says; "Our members tell us they really enjoy coming to the Club. Many never go out and several members are recently bereaved, which can be a very difficult time for them. We have enjoyed visits from the Fire Service, Police, a Health & Safety Officer, our local PCSOs and Age Concern; all these things are really important to the welfare of our community. "We've even had our local Chemist come and do a health talk and blood pressure tests and to offer advice on health problems."

One member, Mary, who lives alone after losing her husband and cannot go out without help, sums up the members' feelings when she says **"what are we doing next week?"**



So what's next for the club? Barbara explains; "We would like to try and enlist some younger members as most of our members are 75 plus and it would be nice to have a mixture of age groups. Our members need to be kept interested and stimulated so we need resources to purchase craft items, speakers and artists fees and for education trips and refreshments and we'd also like to create an area for quiet games, knitting and books."