

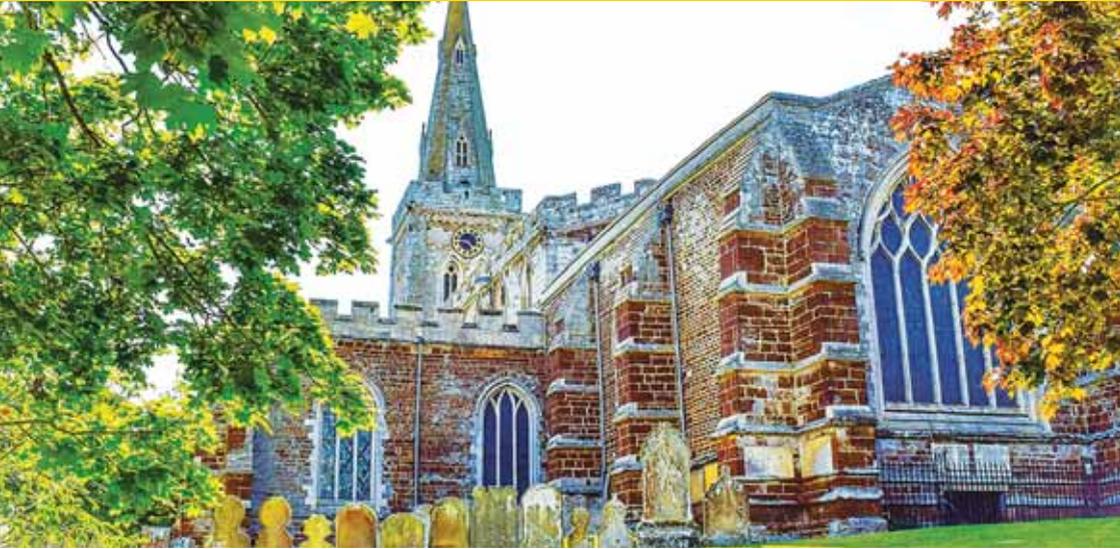
January - March 2026
Winter Issue



the
ODDFELLOWS SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people

out & about

Making friends across 5 Shires District



St Mary the Virgin Church, Finedon



Travel



Social



Games



Dining Out



Music



Talks



Quizzes



Friendship



Walk



Meeting



Coffee Morning/
Afternoon Tea

www.oddfellows.co.uk



5 Shires



Lunch at Ibos Turkish Restaurant - Thursday 12 March

Welcome to the Winter edition of your Out and About

Hello all

I can't believe I'm already doing the Winter Newsletter! The last couple of months have flown by.

We are now conducting second interviews with the Social Organisers for Bedford and Grenville Lodges so unfortunately the introductions will have to wait for the next newsletter

although I am sure you will meet or hear from them before then.

The plans for the District Lodge are coming together. Kingston House in Bedford which will be the main office for the district, is undergoing some refurbishments to include disabled access and bathroom. I can't wait to share the before and after photos with you.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New year!

Yours in friendship

Em

Who are the Oddfellows?

Currently, the 5 Shires District is Bedfordshire, Buckingham, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire. Each Branch has many social events as they can fit in. Through friendship and social events we help our members to get more enjoyment out of life. With the help of the Unity office in Manchester we offer care and support in times of need. We welcome every one of all ages – our youngest being toddlers and the eldest 100 years. To find out more please visit www.oddfellows.co.uk or call 0800 028 1810.

Branch Contacts

5 Shires District

District Secretary: Emily Ellis

Postal Address: Kingston House, 106a Bedford Road, Wootton MK43 9JB

Telephone: 07970 793978 **Email:** emily.ellis@oddfellows.co.uk

Assistant District Secretary: Sarah Wetherell

Telephone: 07708 197285 **Email:** sarah.wetherell@oddfellows.co.uk

Bedford Loyal Bedford Branch

Social Organiser to be confirmed, in the meantime contact Em or Sarah.

Postal Address: Kingston House, 106a Bedford Road, Wootton, Beds MK43 9JB

Meets on the third Wednesday of the month.

Buckingham Loyal Grenville Branch

Social Organiser to be confirmed, in the meantime contact Em or Sarah.

Meets on the first Monday of the month at The Lace Community Centre, Catchpin Street, Buckingham MK18 7RR.

Hitchin Loyal Albert Branch

Secretary: Sam Johnson

Postal Address: 8 Nuns Close, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1EP

Telephone: 07984 530287 **Email:** samantha.johnson@oddfellows.co.uk

Meets on the third Monday of the month at 8 Nuns Close, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1EP at 7.30pm

Wellingborough Loyal Victoria Branch

Social Organiser to be confirmed, in the meantime contact Em or Sarah.

Meets on the second Monday of the month at Finedon Independent Wesleyan Chapel, Affleck Bridge, Finedon, Northants NN9 5LZ at 7.30pm

If you would like to attend any of the meetings or events at any Branch, or would like further information, please contact the District Secretary via phone, email or post at the contact details given above.

Note: Colour coding of branches is used – corresponds to articles later in the magazine: **Dark Blue** = District **Brown** = Bedford **Blue** = Grenville
Orange = Albert **Purple** = Victoria

Albert Branch Regular Coffee Morning

Coffee Morning at Hitchin



10.30am



Free



Come and join friends and members of Albert Branch for coffee and cake in the lodge rooms. Kettle will be on from 10.30am. 8 Nuns Close, Hitchin SG5 1EP. Contact Sam on 07984 530287.

28 January

25 February

25 March

Social Evening at Hitchin



7pm



Free



Join friends and members of Albert Branch for their social evening. 8 Nuns Close, Hitchin SG5 1EP. Contact Sam on 07984 530287.

19 January

16 February

16 March

January 2026

THURS
08

New Year Coffee Morning at Granello Lounge



10.30am



As per
menu



Start 2026 with friends and members of Albert Branch for a coffee and slice of cake (if you wish) at Granello Lounge. No need to book and all are welcome. Granello Lounge, 21 Brand Street, Hitchin SG5 1JE. Contact Sam on 07984 530287.

TUES
13

Coffee Morning at Poplars Garden Centre



10.30am



As per menu



Please meet in the café and join friends and members of Albert Branch for a coffee and chat at Poplars Garden Centre Café, followed by a walk around the garden centre if you wish. Poplars Garden Centre, Harlington Road, Toddington, Dunstable LU5 6HE. Contact Sam on 07984 530287.

February

THURS 05 Coffee Morning at Poplars Garden Centre



Please meet in the café and join friends and members of Albert Branch for a coffee and chat at Poplars Garden Centre Café, followed by a walk around the garden centre if you wish. Poplars Garden Centre, Harlington Road, Toddington, Dunstable LU5 6HE. Contact Sam on 07984 530287.

TUES 10 Acrylic Painting Session



Back by popular demand! Following the success of our last painting session, Sarah is back to lead us step by step to create a lovely acrylic painting which is yours to take home. Cost: £15 to include all equipment and unlimited tea or coffee and biscuits. Book by Tuesday 3 February. 8 Nuns Close, Hitchin SG5 1EP. Please let Sam know on 07984 530287 if you'd like to come along.

March

TUES 03 Brunch in Biggleswade



Join friends and members for a coffee and cake or brunch at Rosso Lounge. No need to book, all welcome. Rosso Lounge, 15 Market Square, Biggleswade SG18 8AS. Contact Sam on 07984 530287.



THURS 12 Lunch at Ibos Turkish Restaurant



Join friends and members of Albert Branch for a two course lunch at Ibos Turkish Restaurant for £13. Ibos Restaurant, 11 High Street, Hitchin SG5 1BH. Please let Sam know on 07984 530287 if you'd like to come by Friday 6 March so we can reserve a table.



Bedford Branch

Regular Coffee Morning

Coffee Morning at Wixams Garden Centre (Seasons)



Come and join us for a brew, cake or brunch and enjoy the conversation and laughter, maybe make new friends! Seasons Garden Centre, Bedford Road, Wilstead, Bedford MK45 3HU. Contact Sarah on 07708 197285.

7 January

11 February

11 March

January 2026 March

WED 21 Bedford Social Evening



Join members and friends of the Bedford Branch at the newly refurbished meeting room and meet the new Social Organiser Samantha Henderson. Enjoy a cuppa with cake and a chat with new friends. Kingston House, 106a Bedford Road, Wootton, Bedford MK43 9JB, Contact Sarah on 07708 197285.

WED 18 Bedford Social Evening
Guest Speaker Canine Partners



Tonight there is a talk from Canine Partners about the work that they do and the training their dogs go through. Come and meet the dogs as well as enjoying a cuppa with cake and a chat with new friends. Kingston House, 106a Bedford Road, Wootton, Bedford MK43 9JB, Contact Sarah on 07708 197285.

February

WED 18 First Aid Training



Join members and friends of the Bedford Branch, learning life saving skills with the St John Ambulance. The evening will include CPR and the use of AEDs. Please note that CPR training does mean kneeling on the floor - on mats. Book by Wednesday 11 February. St John Ambulance HQ, 34 St John's Street, Bedford MK42 0DH. Contact Sarah on 07708 197285.



Grenville Branch

Regular Coffee Morning

Social Afternoon at Lace Hill Sports & Community Centre



12 noon

£

£2.50 Lunch donation

Join members and friends of Grenville Branch for their monthly meeting. With lunch and a speaker to be confirmed. Lace Hill Sports & Community Centre, Catchpin Street, Buckingham MK18 7RR. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.



5 January

2 February

2 March

Bring, Buy and Swap Jigsaw Fundraiser and Drop in Coffee Morning



10am

£

Free

Join members and friends for our monthly jigsaw fundraising event and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. We continue to raise funds for local charities and our Provincial Grand Master's (Chairman) charity. Jigsaws not your thing? You are still very welcome to pop in for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat. Buckingham Library, Verney Close, Buckingham MK18 1JP. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.



6 January

3 February

3 March

Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre



11am

£

As per menu

Join us at this independent garden centre on the third Wednesday of the month for a coffee, tea, cake and a catch up - even stay for lunch afterwards if you fancy it! Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre, Tingewick Road, Buckingham MK18 4AE. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.



21 January

18 February

18 March

Victoria Branch Regular Coffee Morning

Coffee Morning at Seasons Garden Centre

 10.30am  As per menu 

Join members and friends of the Victoria Branch for a cuppa and chat with cake. The coffee shop serves coffee and an array of snacks. Seasons Garden Centre, Cranford Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering NN15 5LZ. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.



21 January

18 February

18 March

January 2026

MON
12

Social Evening - Table Top Treasure Hunt

 7.30pm  Free 



Join members and friends for a table top treasure hunt with a cuppa and cake. Finedon Independent Wesleyan Chapel, Affleck Bridge, Finedon NN9 5LZ. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.

FRI
30

Victoria Branch Social Lunch at The Ock 'N' Dough

 12.30pm  As per menu 

Join friends and members of the Victoria Branch for lunch at The Ock 'N' Dough, Farm Road, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 4UF. Please let the secretary know on 07970 793978 if you are coming by Friday 20 January.



February

MON
09

Social Evening - Rock 'n' Roll Bingo



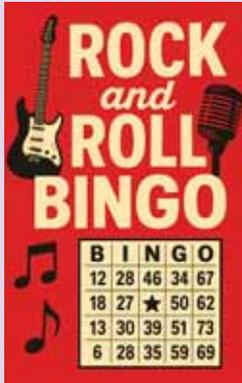
7.30pm



Free



Join members and friends for Rock 'n' Roll bingo with a cuppa and cake. Finedon Independent Wesleyan Chapel, Affleck Bridge, Finedon NN9 5LZ. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.



March

MON
09

Social Evening - Beetle Drive



7.30pm



Free



Join members and friends for a beetle drive followed by a cuppa and cake.



Finedon Independent Wesleyan Chapel, Affleck Bridge, Finedon NN9 5LZ. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.

FRI
27

Games Over Lunch Social



11am



Free



Join members and friends for games at the Finedon Independent Wesleyan Church. Everything from indoor bowls to Boggle. Starting at 11am, bring a packed lunch, tea or coffee provided. Finedon Independent Wesleyan Chapel, Affleck Bridge, Finedon NN9 5LZ. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.

FRI
27

Victoria Branch Social - Lunch at The Lilacs



12.30pm



As per menu



Join friends and members of the Victoria Branch for lunch at The Lilacs, 39 Church Street, Isham, Kettering NN14 1HD. Please let the secretary know on 07970 793978 if you are coming by Friday 19 February.



District Meeting

Third Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm

Join members and friends for our monthly business meeting. Kingston House, 106a Bedford Road, Wootton, Beds MK43 9JB. Contact Emily on 07970 793978.

20 January

17 February

17 March

Interested in volunteering?

Helping others is at the heart of being an Oddfellow and that's exactly what our wonderful volunteers do. There are lots of ways you can get involved as a volunteer, from one-off help to regular support.

You can help us by:

- Welcoming members, guests and speakers at events
- Helping prepare refreshments
- Being the volunteer host at external events
- Organising events as part of a social committee
- Joining the Committee of Management
- Becoming a Volunteer Welfare Visitor or befriender.



To find out more, contact Em by phone on 07970 793978 or email emily.ellis@oddfellows.co.uk

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 **The Oddfellows** SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people
www.oddfellows.co.uk

REFER A FRIEND

Share the love and make someone smile

To refer someone you know and make their day, either fill in the Refer a Friend form available from your Branch Secretary, or call Membership on 0800 028 1810, or visit our Members' Area at www.oddfellows.co.uk



*Terms and conditions apply to the Refer a Friend offer. It cannot be used in conjunction with any other member offer. For full terms and conditions and for details of the rewards visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/offers.

Ref 1644

Oddfellows Members: Do you need help?



None of us know what is around the corner...

Local Care and Welfare Support

To request contact from a Welfare Visitor and for local help and information about Branch benefits and benevolence contact Em on **07970 793978** or email **emily.ellis@oddfellows.co.uk**

Oddfellows Citizens Advice Line

Call 0800 0149 821*

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm

Email: oddfellows@citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk



Run by Citizens Advice for Oddfellows members, you can access free, confidential, independent advice on welfare benefits, money and debt issues, consumer problems, housing, fuel bills, employment issues and many other issues.

*The Oddfellows cannot provide legal advice and accepts no liability whatsoever for advice provided by Citizens Advice, which is an independent advice agency. If you have any queries about the advice you have received or wish to make a complaint then you should contact Citizens Advice directly. Citizens Advice operate a formal complaints process.

Care and Welfare Helpline

Call 0800 0149 822

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

Monday to Thursday, 9.30am - 4.30pm, Friday, 9.30am - 4pm

Email: care@oddfellows.co.uk

Run by the Oddfellows Care and Welfare Department, you can access information and guidance on issues such as accessing health and care services, supported housing, support for carers, and planning for later life. The helpline will try and identify any Oddfellows benefits or services in the community which may be of help to you.

**Visit our website page at www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits/care
for care and welfare information**

Albert Branch News



Firstly, a very Happy New Year and hope you all had a lovely Christmas!

Does anyone recall seeing us pop up in the local press? Following a successful Friendship Month back in September, we featured in seven local newspapers!

We had a great time celebrating and took part in a painting session, had lunch at a Thai restaurant and were joined by speakers from the Guide dogs at our coffee morning. Sage the dog was a very popular visitor!

At the time of writing, we are getting ready for the festive season our plans include our Christmas lunch at the golf course, taking part in the Christmas Tree Festival and going to see 'Goldilocks And The Three Bears' pantomime - photos to follow in the next Out and About or take a look on our Facebook page for a sneak peek!



The Social Organiser for the Hitchin area will continue to be the lovely Sam. As we enter into the New Year there will be many changes but these will not affect you the members or the events being held in your area.

Victoria Branch News

Victoria Branch continue to be busy with meals out, games afternoon and of course coffee and cake at any given opportunity. From our younger members to our active recycled teenagers and everyone in between.

The Social Organiser for the Victoria Social Branch will be Maria Kelly who is busy lining up a number of activities for

you to enjoy. Once we get to the New Year her contact details will be on the website and Facebook page. During the next few weeks, although Maria has been an active Oddfellow for a few years, she will be having her induction to the Society.

Maria is a mum of two beautiful boys - both junior members who you may recognise from previous newsletter.



Make the most of your membership



Your membership provides you with a great range of benefits...

Standard £25 a year membership* gives you access to...

- Local social events
- Care & Welfare Helpline
- Oddfellows Travel
- Oddfellows news by email
- Branch Care & Welfare Support
- Oddfellows Citizens Advice Line
- Money saving partner offers
- Benevolence Grants
- Emergency Financial Aid (Household)
- Convalescence & Carer Support (after 2 years' membership)
- Accidental Death Benefit
- Legal Aid Scheme
- Educational & Apprenticeship Awards
- 24/7 access to our historical online archive

£35 a year membership* provides you with additional benefits of...

- Optical benefit of up to £30 every second year of membership (after 1 year's membership)
- Dental benefit of up to £30 every membership year (after 1 year's membership)

For more information visit: www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits.

*Terms and conditions apply to all member benefits and services.

For full details, visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/terms-conditions, or call us on 0800 028 1810.

Unity Mutual: A brand-new website and exciting Oddies member benefits

Unity Mutual, the financial arm of the Oddfellows, is delighted to have launched a brand-new website.

The fresh design reflects its updated brand identity, but more importantly, it has been built with accessibility and inclusion at its heart – a continuation of the Oddfellows’ ethos.



Whether looking for information on savings, investments or life insurance, the new site is easier to use, clearer to navigate and designed so that everyone can get the most from it.

Unity Mutual has partnered with Recite Me to introduce a full suite of accessibility tools, allowing visitors to customise their browsing experience. These include a text-to-speech function, styling features and translation options, which ensure their online services are available to all –

including those who may face barriers due to disability, neurodivergence or limited English language ability.

James Gilliver, Chief of Operations at Unity Mutual, explained: “Accessibility is extremely important to us at Unity Mutual. Our new website reflects our promise to inclusivity, ensuring all customers can access information in the way that best meets their needs.”

“But it’s not just about accessibility. We’ve also worked hard to make our content clearer and more engaging, so you can feel confident in understanding your financial choices. Our aim is to empower you and your family to make informed decisions about saving for the future.”

An extra reason to take a look is that Oddfellows members can currently benefit from special Guaranteed Investment Bond rates, available exclusively through Unity Mutual.

To see the new website, its new accessibility features and for more information about its products and rates, go to www.unitymutual.co.uk/oddfellows, and discover how Unity Mutual can help build a brighter financial future.

Thank you for saying 'yes' to friendship

This Friendship Month, we've been encouraging people to say 'yes' to trying new things, making new friends, and discovering all the brilliant things happening at our Branches throughout the nation.

It's safe to say, September 2025 has been another fabulous celebration of friendship. The Oddfellows' CEO, Jane Nelson, said: "Friendship Month 2025 has once again demonstrated what the Oddfellows is all about, and I'm thankful of every single

person up and down the country who had been a part of it."

"Saying 'yes' to trying new things can be daunting, but you've all done an excellent job of showing how positive it is to be a part of friendship groups like ours. So, thank you for saying 'yes' to helping make your Friendship Month events a success, whether that's organising events, serving cups of tea, or simply making people feel welcome and comfortable. It all adds up to another wonderful Friendship Month."



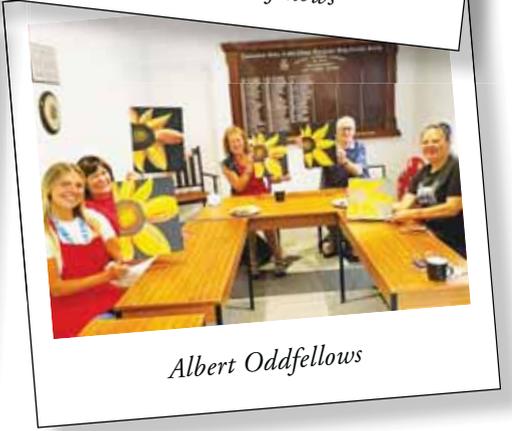
Birmingham Oddfellows



Bradford Oddfellows



Brighouse and Huddersfield Oddfellows



Albert Oddfellows



Derbyshire Peak Oddfellows



Cambridge Oddfellows



Heart of the West Oddfellows



Concord Oddfellows



Halifax Oddfellows



Sudbury Oddfellows

Application deadlines approach!

Whether it's enhancing careers or highlighting fantastic people, the Oddfellows has a number of ways we can give our members a boost – but we can only do so if we hear about them.

Deadlines for applications to be submitted for two of our wonderful schemes are fast approaching – the Apprenticeship Educational Award and the Making a Difference Awards.

Apprenticeship Educational Awards



Each year, the Oddfellows grants up to three Apprenticeship Educational Awards, which consist of £250 per year for the duration of the apprenticeship.*

Eligible members must apply via their Branch. If you, or someone you know, has been an Oddfellows member for five or more years, which includes Young Oddfellows membership, and started or plan to start an apprenticeship in 2025, get in touch with your Branch Secretary.

The Branch's deadline for submitting applications for consideration is **Wednesday 31 December 2025**.

*Each case is reviewed on personal merit. For previous recipients' stories, details on eligibility and how to apply, visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/educational-awards

Making a Difference Awards



Want to shine a light on those special people at your Branch who go above and beyond? Every Branch has them, so make sure we hear about their brilliance.

Any member can nominate a fellow member, so if there are people at your Branch who make a difference, speak to your Branch Secretary to find out how you can nominate them.

The deadline for Branches to submit their shortlist is **Saturday 31 January 2026**, so get your nominations in as soon as possible so they can be considered.

To find out more about our Making a Difference Awards, the categories, nomination process and the prior winners, go to www.oddfellows.co.uk/makingadifference

If you've missed these deadlines this time don't worry, just make a note for next year!

At a glance

Orange◆ = Albert, Brown● = Bedford,
Blue■ = Grenville and Purple★ = Victoria

January 2026

■ Mon 5	Grenville Branch Social Afternoon	12 noon
■ Tues 6	Bring, Buy and Swap Jigsaw Fundraiser and Drop in Coffee Morning	10am
● Wed 7	Coffee Morning at Wixams Garden Centre (Seasons)	10.30am
◆ Thurs 8	New Year Coffee Morning at Granello Lounge	10.30am
★ Mon 12	Social Evening – Table Top Treasure Hunt	7.30pm
◆ Tues 13	Coffee Morning at Poplars Garden Centre	10.30am
◆ Mon 19	Albert Branch Social Evening	7pm
Tues 20	District Meeting	7.30pm
★ Wed 21	Coffee Morning at Seasons Garden Centre	10.30am
■ Wed 21	Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre	11am
● Wed 21	Bedford Social Evening	7.30pm
◆ Wed 28	Albert Branch Coffee Morning	10.30am
★ Fri 30	Victoria Branch Social – Lunch at The Ock ‘N’ Dough	12.30pm

February

■ Mon 2	Grenville Branch Social Afternoon	12 noon
■ Tues 3	Bring, Buy and Swap Jigsaw Fundraiser and Drop in Coffee Morning	10am
◆ Thurs 5	Coffee Morning at Poplars Garden Centre	10.30am
★ Mon 9	Social Evening – Rock ‘n’ Roll Bingo	7.30pm
◆ Tues 10	Acrylic Painting Session	10.30am
● Wed 11	Coffee Morning at Wixams Garden Centre (Seasons)	10.30am
◆ Mon 16	Albert Branch Social Evening	7pm
Tues 17	District Meeting	7.30pm
★ Wed 18	Coffee Morning at Seasons Garden Centre	10.30am
■ Wed 18	Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre	11am
● Wed 18	First Aid Training	7.30pm
◆ Wed 25	Albert Branch Coffee Morning	10.30am
★ Fri 27	Victoria Branch Social – Lunch at The Lilacs	12.30pm

At a glance

Orange♦ = Albert, Brown● = Bedford,
Blue■ = Grenville and Purple★ = Victoria

March

■ Mon 2	Grenville Branch Social Afternoon	12 noon
■ Tues 3	Bring, Buy and Swap Jigsaw Fundraiser and Drop in Coffee Morning	10am
♦ Tues 3	Brunch in Biggleswade	10.30am
★ Mon 9	Social Evening - Beetle Drive	7.30pm
● Wed 11	Coffee Morning at Wixams Garden Centre (Seasons)	10.30am
♦ Thurs 12	Lunch at Ibos Turkish Restaurant	12 noon
♦ Mon 16	Albert Branch Social Evening	7pm
Tues 17	District Meeting	7.30pm
★ Wed 18	Coffee Morning at Seasons Garden Centre	10.30am
■ Wed 18	Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre	11am
● Wed 18	Bedford Social Evening - Guest Speaker Canine Partners	7.30pm
♦ Wed 25	Albert Branch Coffee Morning	10.30am
★ Fri 27	Games Over Lunch Social	11am

Learn, have fun,
and stay in touch
from home

Our online events are
here to stay



To see what's coming up visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/events

OEM/1024A6

The Oddfellows is the trading name of The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Manchester Unity Friendly Society Limited, incorporated and registered in England and Wales No. 223F.
Registered Office: Oddfellows House, 184-186 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WB