

April - September 2026
Issue 23



O^{the} **ODDFELLOWS** SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people

out & about

North Wales & Chester Branch



Chester, photo by Greg Ingham



Online



Theatre



Art/Crafts



Dining Out



Walks



Games



Day Trip



Meetings



Social



Talks



Coffee Morning/
Afternoon Tea



Quiz

Hello everyone and welcome to the latest edition of our Out & About

A message from our Chairman - Colin Thwaites

Hello everyone and welcome to the latest edition of our Out and About. My name is Colin Thwaites and I have been appointed as the Branch Chairman for the coming year.

I was born in County Durham in May 1945 to a mining family. Mum, dad and my brother all moved to Surrey due to dad's health. I left school at 15 and started work with British Rail. I served my apprenticeship in the workshops repairing trains. I worked my way up to be a supervisor. I stayed with the railway for 34 years until they privatised the system. I took very early retirement and redundancy.

Throughout my life, my hobby has been St John Ambulance, which I have served in uniform for over 60 years. During my time with St John Ambulance, they asked me to join a team to set up an ambulance service at Farnborough Airfield. Then I was asked by Surrey Branch to start an ambulance service, which I did for 13 years. The work was quite demanding and involved taking 999 calls, transfers from hospitals and nursing homes as well as doing repatriation for injured people who were abroad. That meant collecting them from the airports or going to Europe if they were unable to fly. I retired in 2023 and have since been involved in the St John Council, which is my chosen charity as it supports the funding of St John Ambulance.



I joined the Oddfellows in the 70s in South London District in the Pride of Clapham Lodge and was very active there. Unfortunately, I started working nights so I couldn't get to the weekly meetings. I transferred to Mid-Surrey District as it was closer to home.

While I was on a Saga holiday, I met my partner and in 2008, I moved to Colwyn Bay in North Wales. When I moved, I lost touch with the Oddfellows. Since coming to North Wales, I have continued my love for railways and I have become involved in the West Shore Miniature Railway in Llandudno.

I was delighted to discover that there was an Oddfellows group which met each week for coffee and occasional lunches and trips out in Llandudno.

Branch Meetings

Come along to our Branch meeting where you will be updated with all the Branch and Society matters. 7pm to 9pm. Douglas Place Community Centre, Woodall Avenue, Saltney CH4 8PB. Contact Denise or Caroline on 01244 675757.

Monday 27 April Monday 22 June Monday 24 August - Half Yearly Meeting
Tuesday 26 May Monday 27 July Monday 28 September

Contact Details

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Wednesday - Closed
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Llandudno Social Organiser

Volunteer/Welfare Visitor:

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Our Chairman's chosen charity for 2025 was the local animal rescue charity, Ark Angels

The charity rescues, rehomes, rehabilitates and supports animals in need.

We raised funds through various events which included raffles, sales, a fundraising afternoon and collecting coins in mini jars. Rather than presenting the charity with a cheque, we purchased goods from their 'wish

list', which included dried food, canned food, treats, toys, feeding bowls, licks (salt blocks), and some medical supplies for horses. We raised just over £1000 for them. Patsy, Michelle and Chris from the charity came to tell us about the work they do and thanked us for our support. The photos (on page 18) show some of the items purchased and members handing them over.

Regular Events

Llandudno Coffee Morning



11am



As per menu



Every Monday

Every Monday, you are welcome to join us at Gwesty Links, Llandudno for coffee and a chat. Everyone is welcome to come along. We occasionally stay for lunch and enjoy some ad hoc local trips out. The Links Hotel, 77 Conway Road, Llandudno LL3 01PN. Contact Gordon on 01492 515530.



Monday Night Chatterboxes



7pm



Free



Online
Every Monday

Members from across the Society meet to catch up and chat over a brew from the comfort of their own homes. Everyone is greeted with a friendly smile and a warm welcome. Why not come and join us? Head to Zoom and enter the Meeting ID 844 1660 9433, you don't need a password. Contact Tracey on 07774 229010.



Further events are being added, see: www.oddfellows.co.uk/events.

Please note
Deposits and payments are all non-refundable. Once a deposit has been received, Caroline, our Social Organiser, is more than happy for the remainder of the payment to be made in instalments if this helps. However, they must be made before the **full payment** deadline date. Receipts will be given for any money received.

Regular Events

Wrexham Coffee and Chat



Join us for a coffee and chat in Wrexham. We also enjoy some ad hoc local trips out, everyone is welcome. The Lemon Tree, 29 Rhosddu Road, Wrexham LL11 2LP. Contact Denise or Caroline on 01244 675757.

**First and Third
Wednesday**



Saltney Coffee Morning



Join us for coffee and biscuits along with plenty of lively chatter and laughter! We enjoy an occasional quiz and fun themed coffee mornings as well as holding raffles both free and paid for. A warm welcome awaits. Douglas Place Community Centre, Douglas Place, Saltney CH4 8PB. Contact Denise or Caroline on 01244 675757.

Every Thursday



Thursday Quiz and Games Night



Every week we team up with other branches to bring you a quiz and games night via Zoom. Just us for fun, why not put your general knowledge to the test and join in the games with friendly members from up and down the country? Not sure how to access Zoom? Just give us a call for some support - It is super easy we promise! Head to Zoom and enter the Zoom Meeting ID: 844 1660 9433, you don't need a password. Contact Tracy on 07774 229010.

**Online Every
Thursday**



April 2026

FRI
17

Dine Out at Panda Mami, Chester



1pm



£14.99
(As of 16 March)



Once again we are returning to Panda Mami, Chester for a tasty help-yourself buffet lunch. It is a critically acclaimed restaurant, where you will find delicious international food to excite your senses. Take your taste buds on a tour of authentic flavours, aromas and textures. We will meet you in the restaurant! All are welcome to join us. Book by Friday 10 April. Panda Mami Restaurant, 25 Newgate Street, Chester CH1 1DE. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.



May

WED
13

Dine Out at The Ring O' Bells, Christleton



6pm



As per menu



Enjoy a relaxed tasty meal with friends at this lovely country pub. They offer an extensive menu, as well as two-for-one pizza on Wednesdays.

A £5 deposit is required and pre-order needed by Thursday 23 April. Please also note that due to numbers, there will be a 10% service charge added to the bill. Yogesh will be your host for the evening. Ring O' Bells, Village Road, Christleton, Chester CH3 7AS. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.



May

THURS
07

A Stroll Along the Saltney Riverside



11.15am



As per menu



Please note: There is no coffee morning today due to voting at Douglas Place Community Centre. So why not come along and join us for a short walk along the River Dee. We'll be starting by 'Saltney Syd', who stands by the footpath opposite the large Go Outdoors store on the Saltney Retail Park. We will meet you there at 11.15am. We will then enjoy some refreshments/lunch at the Old Chapel Café, Saltney Ferry before strolling back. Pre-orders for food are required by Thursday 30 April. Go Outdoors, Saltney Retail Park, River Lane, Saltney, Chester CH4 8RF. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.



June

TUES
09

A Full Day Trip to the National Memorial Arboretum



9am



Members £33, Guests £40



Join us for a day at the National Memorial Arboretum. It's the nation's year-round place to remember and honour those who have served and continue to serve our nation. People from all walks of life are represented, with memorials dedicated to the Armed Forces, Emergency Services and civilian organisations.

The Oddfellows has a beautiful blue granite memorial there, honouring Society members who have fought and lost their lives in combat. Coach pick-up will be Morrison's car park, Saltney and Rossett (exact place to be confirmed). A non-refundable deposit of £15 is due by Thursday 23 April, with full payment by Thursday 14 May. The cost includes the coach and the 3pm Land Train Tour. National Memorial Arboretum, Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire DE13 7AR. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.

July

WED
08

A Day Cruising on our own Narrowboat along the Shropshire Union Canal



8.15am



Members £20,
Guests £25



Come and join us for a gentle cruise along the Shropshire Union Canal in a narrowboat, setting off from Tattenhall Marina. What a perfect way to spend time with friends. You could even get to steer the boat if you fancy a go! We'll organise bringing a picnic lunch amongst ourselves (details to follow) and stop on the way to enjoy it. There are a very limited amount of spaces, so we will need a £10 deposit to confirm your seat. We will meet you at the marina. Non-refundable payments are: Deposit of £10 payable by Thursday 14 May with full payment by Thursday 11 June. Tattenhall Marina, Newton Lane, Chester CH3 9NE. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.

July

FRI
17

A Gentle Walk from Nant Mill, Wrexham

🕒 11am

£ As per menu



Come along and join us for a lovely country walk, organised by Wrexham member Sue. The walk will go from Nant Mill, through Plas Power Woods to Bersham and back, approximately 1.5 hours, followed by refreshments at Plas Pentwyn Resource Centre, Coedpoeth, Wrexham LL11 3NA. There is a £1 car park charge. All are welcome. Book by Thursday 2 July. Nant Mill Car Park, Nant Mill Road, Off Rhos Berse Road, Coedpoeth, Wrexham LL11 3BT. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.

August

SAT
01

The Ploughman's Lunch and Talk

A strange thing happened on the way to the police station

🕒 12.30pm

£ Members £10, Guests £15



What better way to spend a Saturday afternoon than to join us for a tasty ploughman's lunch, followed by speaker Martin Gaffney, giving us an A-Z of funny stories and anecdotes as seen from the police service to the public. Martin has worked for 32 years with a major UK Police Force and although the subjects appear serious, every story contains humour/human nature and intriguing true life events. All are welcome to come along. Book and pay in full by Thursday 9 July. Douglas Place Community Centre, Douglas Place, Saltney CH4 8PB. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.



Who can you invite along to join in the friendship and fun?

All welcome

ODDFELLOWS
FRIENDSHIP MONTH
1 - 30 SEPTEMBER



To see what's on and find out more about Friendship Month visit www.friendshipmonth.com

September - Friendship Month

ODDFELLOWS
FRIENDSHIP MONTH
1 - 30 SEPTEMBER



FRI 11 Lunch at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, Wrexham



Why not come and join us for a tasty buffet lunch at the Zara Restaurant,



Ramada Plaza Hotel, Wrexham. Two courses for £12.50, starter and main, and you can add a pudding for just £3 (price correct as of February). Their team of chefs create daily menus to utilise fresh, seasonal and locally sourced ingredients. The hotel is easily accessible from the A483. Book and pay deposit of £10 by Thursday 27 August. Ramada Plaza Wrexham, Ellice Way, Wrexham LL13 7YH. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.



MON 28 Lunch at Gwesty Links, Llandudno



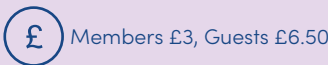
Why not join us in finishing off our Friendship Month celebrations and stay after the coffee morning for lunch at the Gwesty Links, Llandudno.



They serve great pub classics, daily specials and a fantastic light lunch menu. All are welcome to come along. Book by Monday 14 September. The Links Hotel, 77 Conway Road, Llandudno LL301PN. Contact Gordon on 01492 515530 or Caroline on 01244 675757.



THURS 17 Our Annual Ploughman's Lunch following our Coffee Morning



Following on from our weekly coffee morning at Douglas Place, why not stay and join us for annual tasty ploughman's lunch? Ham or cheese or both, you choose! All are welcome to come along. Book and pay by Thursday 10 September. Douglas Place Community Centre, Douglas Place, Saltney CH4 8PB. Contact Caroline on 01244 675757.



Wrexham Social Scene

Over the past six months, our Oddfellows group in Wrexham has enjoyed plenty of social time together. We meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month for coffee and a chat at the Lemon Tree in Wrexham. Alongside these regular gatherings, we also enjoy our more spontaneous 'off-the-cuff' cuppa and chat meet-ups, whenever and wherever inspiration takes us. And of course, let's not forget our Out and About events, which we share with fellow members from across the District.

In October, Ruth and I watched 'Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale'. What a good film! It tied up all the loose ends, bringing satisfactory closure to the various character's story lines. Watching this film led me to binge watch all six series of 'Downton' on Netflix. I had forgotten how engrossing they were. I laughed and cried throughout.

At the beginning of November Ruth and I went to the Grove Park Theatre in Wrexham to see Noel Coward's comedy 'Present Laughter' performed by a very talented cast and very enjoyable! In November, a group of five members went to Llangollen, enjoying a very nice lunch at Fouzy's, before taking our seats to see 'Blackadder Goes Forth' playing at the Llangollen Twenty Club. We had the benefit of a fine production concluding with poppies fluttering gently down onto the stage, very moving.

November also brought retail therapy for some of us, who visited The Tweedmill Outlet. After making our purchases, we met up for a snack lunch and a much needed cuppa, before heading home.

Eleven members enjoyed a Christmas lunch in December at the Ial restaurant, good food, beautifully presented, a lovely venue. A good start to the lead up to Christmas.

Four members also enjoyed an evening of cinema in December, watching a filmed live performance of an Andre Rieu Christmas Concert. This really was a musical extravaganza, generating joyful happiness and tearful emotions amongst his Maastricht audience.

Also in December, six members enjoyed a free visit to Erdigg, our local National Trust property, to view the house in all its Christmas splendour. The house was beautifully decorated, with glorious Christmas trees - a feast for the eyes! The local paper disclosed that the Christmas preparations begin in March each year, culminating in those fabulous displays, all work done by volunteers.

Tuesday 23 December had four of us taking a bus ride to Chester to make our way to Chester Cathedral, where we viewed the eighty decorated Christmas trees, which make up the highly popular Christmas Tree Festival. The ancient stone walls and stunning architecture of the Cathedral made a beautiful backdrop for the trees on display. We then enjoyed refreshments in the lovely Cathedral cafe.

Beginning of January 2026 brought Ruth and I out on a wet afternoon to the cinema to see 'Song, Sung Blue', a film based on the real life husband and wife who formed a tribute band to Neil Diamond. I was foot tapping throughout, enjoying the music and singing; it was a loving, joyous film, but tissues were required at the end! January offered another opportunity to experience brilliant singing and music, when we attended the William Aston Hall for the 'Beyond the Barricade' concert. It was a great night out, with perfect singing. It was a fabulous show, that ended on a 'high' which had the audience cheering and rising to their feet.

I am looking forward to what the next six months brings to our social calendar, but we can be sure that there will be plenty of fun and friendship to share.

Written by member Sue

Fun facts about Coffee and Tea

Did you know we drink more tea than coffee with around 165 million cups of tea drunk daily compared to 95 million cups of coffee!



Despite it being called a 'bean', coffee is actually a fruit. The 'beans' grow on a bush and are found in the centre of a berry, known as a coffee cherry.

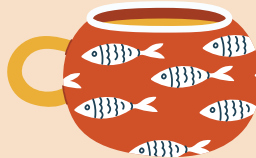
This may surprise you, but infamous composer, Beethoven, loved coffee! He was apparently quite obsessive about it, using precisely 60 beans per cup and would spend time counting out each and every bean.

Coffee is thought to date back to 800 A.D., where it was discovered by 9th century goat herders. It was said that they noticed their goats eating the plant and afterwards it appeared like they were 'dancing'.



Tea cups didn't always have handles. At first, the English made cups of tea without handles influenced by the traditional Chinese tea bowls

Fascinated by the results, the goat herder tried them himself and discovered that it made



The tea clipper Cutty Sark's hold could carry 10,000 tea chests at a time. That's enough to make 200 million cups of tea in one cargo!

The art of reading tea leaves is called tasseography, also known as tasseomancy.



Information sourced by Nescafe.com and RMG.co.uk (Royal Museum Greenwich)

Members in the Spotlight - Don Bales

I was born in Ellesmere Port and lived in and around the area all my life. I had a very loving childhood with my mother, father and sister. I recently celebrated my 95th birthday. I followed in my fathers and uncles' footsteps and was enrolled as a junior Oddfellow at just 6 months old in the Loyal Marquis of Westminster Lodge, which was in the Chester District as it was then. I can proudly say that I am the longest standing member of the North Wales and Chester Branch.

I have some wonderful memories as a child. My father was trained as a painter in the flour mills. His work also included plumbing and signwriting. That leads to a little story of one holiday we had in Rhyl. We had great difficulty finding the campsite because the name plate on the gate had faded. When we eventually found it, my father remarked about the sign not being visible. The owner said "yes I know but I can't find anybody to paint it for me" My father offered to do it for him. The next day, we all took a trip to the shops for my father to buy the special paint brushes. As my father skilfully painted the sign, a crowd gathered behind him. I remember feeling immensely proud that this was my dad. The owner was so delighted he gave my father a refund on his caravan fee.

From a young age, I was always intrigued by mechanical items. I got in a bit of trouble when I once climbed up on the table to investigate our wall clock.



Unfortunately, I got caught out when my father came home from work and the clock chimed at 6pm when it was only 5.30pm!

I left school at the age of 14 however I did help with a milk round before that when I was 13. I do recall almost being late for school on a few occasions. When I was 14, my mother thought it would be a good idea to teach me some domestic skills to put me in good stead for my future life. My mother was concerned that when I eventually did get married, my wife might not be very domesticated. I was taught to cook, clean and iron using a gas iron, even mastering a sewing machine. I went to night school to learn French later in my life.

I have had an interesting career. I worked for an ironmonger, before embarking on a five-year apprenticeship with a day release scheme at college for a company called Van Leer. This company manufactured industrial drums and containers. I then did my two-year National Service with the RAF, which stood me in good stead for adulthood. When I returned to work, I was promoted to a Foreman, earning a whopping 1 penny per hour extra in my wages! I worked for 29 years on the production line, moving to the plastics division for the last eight years and retired at the age of 61.

In 1954, I married Margaret who is two years younger than me. We had one son and a wonderful family life, enjoying some lovely holidays across Europe with

our caravan. We loved the time we spent with friends in our caravans in Venice. We went on cruises and trips to places like the East Asia, Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore. We have some lovely memories of those holidays.

My hobby has been making models in my workshop in the garage. The engine in the picture is just one of many I have created over the years.

I was asked what was the secret to my longevity and my reply is 'CARRY ON AND KEEP SMILING'.

From the longest standing member to one of the newest members, I would hope that you enjoy your time in the Oddfellows as much I have over the years.

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 telephone befriender



To find out more, contact denise.turner@oddfellows.co.uk or caroline.davey@oddfellows.co.uk

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www.oddfellows.co.uk

Members in the Spotlight - Dr Jim Hewitt

Viewed through the rear-view mirror, how could my life not have led to joining the Oddfellows in Llandudno? Every step along the way from my origins in a Salvation Army hostel in the heart of Manchester born to an unknown mother who couldn't afford to keep me, to rediscovering my birth family 60 years later.

Davina, you would have loved the reunion. Or is it the twenty-plus jobs I had after leaving school at 16? I've stacked frozen chickens in a refrigerated warehouse, sold gas fires and cookers door-to-door, dinged the bell as a jaunty bus conductor (remember them), studied as a not-so-mature student, taught English badly to A-level students, been a harassed headteacher of a local special school and finally after becoming a registered inspector of primary and special schools in Wales, retiring not knowing what to do with myself.

And then there is the peculiarity of educating myself and working for many years towards a research degree in developing the communication skills of autistic children and suddenly finding you have one such child yourself. But it's true, life's challenges, tears and laughter will always be your best teacher. The kind, generous and selfless people I have met along the way who sought only the best for those around them have been an inspiration. I guess, at heart, there are many such souls working to help others in organisations like the Oddfellows.



I was asked recently, "What are your hobbies, Jim? I struggled to answer. I have always worked full-time at whatever occupation I do, I have continuously studied hard, my wife Angela and I have raised a family - daughter and grandchildren who are alive and well and living in Chester and a son now who now leads a contented and secure life in his own flat in Colwyn Bay, supported by his lovely carers. I try to resist old father time encroaching too rapidly on me by keeping fit, though I have to confess it is more croquet and bowls these days than marathons and martial arts.

Where am I going with this? Well, we have lived in and around Llandudno for over thirty years. Beautiful as it is, and I wouldn't wish to live anywhere else, people here, as everywhere, can find themselves suddenly without contact, sometimes needing a little help and support, sometimes needing to give that help and support to others. The Oddfellows has a long tradition of friendship and mutual assistance that is needed just as much today as it has always been. People have been

helpful, encouraging and generous with me in the past and I have had a few moments I'm proud of (unfortunately outweighed by others less so) and now I want the cake and to eat it.

I want to be useful yet still enjoy myself in the company of my (odd) fellows. So here I am now, a proud member of the North Wales and Chester Oddfellows.

Congratulations to...

Junior members birthdays...

April

Phoebe

May

Sophie

June

Isabel, Jasmine, Maximus and Phoebe.



August

William John

Samuel

September

Harvey



Jim and June Middleton on their 65th Wedding Anniversary in December 2025



Pam and Ray Cook on their 40th Wedding Anniversary in Nov 2025

Peter and Marlene who celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary on 2nd April 2026

Photos of past events...



Barton Grange, November 2025



Barton Grange, November 2025



Barton Grange, November 2025



Barton Grange, November 2025



Fundraising, November 2025



Fundraising, November 2025



Fundraising, November 2025



Thursday online quiz - November 25



Eileen playing Carols at our fundraising event November 2025



*Llandudno Christmas Lunch -
December 2025*



*Christmas Meal at Flint Mountain
Park Hotel - December 25*



Pudding Taster - January 2026



*Virtual trip along the coast -
February 2026*



*The Orangery, Derwen College,
Oswestry - February 2026*



*Virtual trip along the coast -
February 2026*



*The Orangery, Derwen College,
Oswestry February 2026*



*The Orangery, Derwen College,
Oswestry February 2026*

Photos of past events...



10 minute exercise class at Saltney coffee morning



Ark Angels Charity donation



Thousands raised for Hurricane Melissa relief efforts by Oddfellows branches

The Oddfellows has donated £10,000 to support the Jamaica Red Cross' Hurricane Melissa Emergency Appeal.

Thanks to the generosity of Oddfellows branches across the UK, and with additional support from central funds, the donation will help communities affected by the devastating storm rebuild their lives.

Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 hurricane, made landfall in Jamaica on 28 October 2025. The strongest hurricane ever to strike the island, it caused catastrophic damage and impacted nearly 1.9 million people.

Essential supplies

The funds have been sent to the Jamaica Red Cross, via the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), to support ongoing emergency relief and recovery efforts. This includes providing essential supplies, shelter, and longer-term assistance to those whose homes and livelihoods were affected.

Pam Casey, spokesperson for the Oddfellows, said: "When communities are devastated by disasters of this scale, the need for swift and compassionate support is critical. We are incredibly proud of our branches for coming together to raise these funds.

"Every contribution helps people to access shelter, food, and vital services as they begin the long process of rebuilding.



"Supporting this appeal reflects the very best of Oddfellowship – standing alongside others in times of greatest need."

The Oddfellows extends sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the appeal and helped make this support possible.

Find out more

Further information about the Jamaica Red Cross' Hurricane Melissa Emergency Appeal can be found at www.ifrc.org/emergency/jamaica-hurricane-melissa

You can also learn more about how the Oddfellows raises money for good causes on our website at www.oddfellows.co.uk/about/giving-back

To find out how you can get involved with fundraising initiatives Oddfellows branches are conducting locally, speak to your Branch Secretary.

Talented trio win Educational Awards

We're proud to announce our 2025 First Degree Course Educational Award winners: Melanie Healy (Humber Wolds Oddfellows), Will Stevenson (Pride of Woolwich Oddfellows) and Emma Corbin (Worcester Oddfellows).

Each winner will receive a non-repayable bursary worth £900 per year for the duration of their studies, which can go towards anything from text books and vital equipment to helping out with rent, bills and other practical items.

Jane Nelson, CEO of the Oddfellows, said:

It fills me with pride each year when we announce the winners of the First Degree Course Educational Awards, and I'm sure that Melanie, Will and Emma will work hard and have a wonderful university experience.

University is an exciting time, but it can also be quite stressful. I hope this money will go some way to help reduce some of the financial pressures that are a reality of being a student.

Melanie Healey, Humber Wolds Branch

In October 2025, Melanie began her Asian and Middle Eastern Studies course at the University of Cambridge. The four-year course will begin with learning Arabic language skills from scratch, building up her existing French language skills and looking at French Literature.



She says she is hoping to put the money towards travelling to French and Arabic-speaking countries for internships and exchanges to help sharpen these skills.

Melanie said: "I was delighted when I found out that I'd been chosen to receive the funding, and I would like to thank the Oddfellows for the grant."

Although unsure what her career plans are at this stage, Melanie says she "would definitely like to work in a role that allows me to use my language skills".

Will Stevenson Pride of Woolwich Branch

Will started reading Geography at the University of Durham's Trevelyan College in Autumn 2025, where modules cover



topics such as climate change, physical geography, human geography, geographical research and geographies in crisis.

The money, he says, will go towards the social aspects that university life has to offer, such as the Durham University Big Band.

Will said: "Hearing I was a recipient of the award was incredibly exciting, and I am extremely thankful to the Oddfellows for the trust and generosity they have offered me."

Will also hasn't mapped out his career plans at this stage, but says that's one of the reasons the course appealed to him, given "the breadth of Geography and its wide application".

Emma Corbin Worcester Branch

Unbeknownst to either, Emma and Will have ended up on the same Geography course at the University of Durham.



Emma plans to put the money towards learning materials and field trips.

"I felt extremely grateful and lucky when I was picked as one of the successful candidates from what would have been many amazing applications," she said. "I would like to say how thankful I am. It is a great opportunity to have an award like this available."

Emma too hasn't decided which direction she wants her career to take, but thinks her chosen course will provide her with a range of opportunities.

"It's an increasingly relevant subject, considering topics such as climate change and geopolitics," Emma added.

More about our Educational Awards

Each year, our Fraternal Board chooses who will receive the Educational Awards funding, based on the applications received from members. To learn more about the awards, including the Apprenticeship Educational Award, eligibility and how to apply, visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits/care/educational-awards.

2026: Time to make a financial plan



a proud part of the Oddfellows

The year might have only just started, but we all know how quickly the calendar can flip. One minute it's spring, and the next we're wondering where the mince pies have gone.

Taking a little time now to think about your finances before the new tax year starts in April can make life feel calmer and more organised.

Where to start?

A financial plan doesn't have to involve spreadsheets or complicated formulas. It can simply start with a few questions, like: 'What do I want to save for? Am I prepared for life's surprises? Could my money be working harder for me?'

For some Oddfellows members, the focus might be on simply enjoying life or planning for the future. Others may also be thinking about the younger people in their lives – children, grandchildren, or that teenager who changes career ambitions daily.

Small, regular contributions now could grow into something meaningful later.

Start saving

Lucky for Oddfellows members, our financial services arm, Unity Mutual, is close at hand.

Unity Mutual is a regulated provider of ISAs and other savings and investment

products, which means they follow strict rules designed to protect our members.

Unity Mutual's Guaranteed Investment Bonds, including two, three and five year terms, offer fixed-rates for savers with a lump sum to invest, and Oddfellow members can benefit from preferential rates.

Alternatively, ISAs are a tax-efficient way to save or invest, whether you're building up funds to enjoy retirement or looking to help give your child a confident step into adulthood.

ISA Products available from Unity Mutual for Oddfellow members include a Lifetime ISA, a Flexible ISA and a Junior ISA, and you can also make the most of the Adult and Child Tax-Exempt Savings Plans.

Get in touch

And the good news? You don't have to figure it all out by yourself. Unity Mutual is happy to chat with you about your goals, big, small, or somewhere in between.

Our friendly staff can provide information on what is available to you. They'll talk through things in plain English, not financial jargon, so you can make decisions confidently and comfortably.

Terms and conditions apply to all products.

Find out more

Visit www.unitymutual.co.uk or call us for a chat on 0161 214 4650.

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 Denise on **01244 675757** or email **denise.turner@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**

Events at a glance

In addition to our regular events see page 4 and 5 for full details.

April 2026

Fri 17	Dine Out at Panda Mami, Chester	1pm
Mon 27	Branch Meeting	7pm

May

Thurs 7	A Stroll Along the Saltney Riverside	11.15am
Wed 13	Dine Out at The Ring O' Bells, Christleton	6pm
Tues 26	Branch Meeting	7pm

June

Tues 9	A Full Day Trip to the National Memorial Arboretum	9am
Mon 22	Branch Meeting	7pm

July

Wed 8	A Day Cruising on our own Narrowboat along the Shropshire Union Canal	8.15am
Fri 17	A Gentle Walk from Nant Mill, Wrexham	11am
Mon 27	Branch Meeting	7pm

August

Sat 1	Ploughman's Lunch followed by Speaker Martin Gaffney	12.30pm
Mon 24	Half Yearly Meeting	7pm

September - Friendship Month

Fri 11	Lunch at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, Wrexham	12 noon
Thurs 17	Our Annual Ploughman's Lunch following our Coffee Morning	12.45pm
Mon 28	Lunch at Gwesty Links, Llandudno	12.30pm
Mon 28	Branch Meeting	7pm