November 2026 - January 2027

THE ODDFELLOWS SINCE 1810

making friends, helping people

out & about

South London District



Music
Art/Crafts
Online
Online
Dining Out
Walks
Games
Day Trip
Meetings
Social
Talks
Coffee Morning/ Afternoon Tea
Quiz
Film
Tasting
Wellbeing



The photo above shows 25 happy and smiling faces at the Children's Favourites music night. See page 18. Photo by Paul Fitton

Welcome to the new edition of Out and About, incorporating South Circular, the Magazine of South London District

Friendship Month

This year's Friendship Month was yet another huge success. The occasion is an annual national awareness campaign celebrated throughout September. With plenty of taster events, our local Branches hosted various activities. New members who joined received a Love to Shop voucher.

If you are looking to expand your social circle or find an activity near you, you can visit www.oddfellows.co.uk to find a local group, check the Oddfellows Events Finder to discover scheduled walks, coffee hours or talks, or request a Free Membership Pack. It's easy, just call the national line at 0800 028 1810 to request a localised events diary and information pack. You can also read about our current events and discover more about the Oddfellows in this magazine.

Contact Details

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You are invited to send letters, contributions and photos for the magazine by the deadline of Friday 11 December to Paul Fitton.

Sharing and helping

I hope that you enjoy this issue and in particular that you find an event that you would like to attend. Please feel free to pass this publication to anyone you think would be interested in joining Oddfellows, or just 'drop it off' at your local library or GP surgery. Please let me know – see above - if you would like any more copies to share.

Magazine Contributors

You'll notice one or two changes to the magazine. I would like to thank regular columnists Linda Regan and Bob Sinfield for their past contributions. They now write exclusively for North London District, whose magazine I edit. You may also read another humorous and evocative poem from our Resident Poet Jackie Ingleby Douglass.

Paul Fitton
Editor

Front cover: Members on an outing to Rochester. You can read more about the day out at page 15. Photo by Amy Thomas

Regular Events - Lord Byron Branch

Stanstead Lodge, 260 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DD (weekly)
Contact: Karen Lewis: 020 8699 0929 or karen.lewis@oddfellows.co.uk

Coffee and a Chat

Every Thursday, 2pm



2pm | £ Members £2 Guests £3

Join us for afternoon refreshments in friendly company. You've no need to book, but if we know that you're coming, we can look out for you. You're welcome to bring a friend too. It's easy to find us and parking is available in surrounding roads. We'll be in the first room on the left as you enter the building through the main entrance.

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/1024SMALL

Regular Events - Pride of Clapham Branch

Regular events address: Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY.

Contact: Jane Parkin: **07791 942969** or **jane.parkin@oddfellows.co.uk**

Regular updates through WhatsApp and email

Knit, Natter and Craft Group

Tuesdays - 2.30pm-5.30pm



2.30pm | £ Free

Join us every Tuesday anytime between 2.30pm and 5.30pm for our knit, natter and craft group. Whatever you are into, it is more fun doing it with friends in our historic hall. Tea, coffee and encouragement provided free of charge. It's a lovely way to spend an afternoon with friends or making new ones. This is the members' group, so please share your ideas and enthusiasm. This is event is free for Oddfellows members and non-members are welcome to come along and try before you join. Just five minutes' walk from Clapham Common underground station.

Chair Exercise

Tuesdays - 5.30pm-6.30pm



5.30pm | £ Free

The weekly exercises are aimed at improving core fitness, strength and mobility and to prevent falls. Do not worry if you have not done much exercise for a while as the exercises are gentle and easy to follow. The session lasts up to an hour.

A bit about us

The Oddfellows is a friendly society with Branches across the UK. Through friendship and social events, we help our members get more enjoyment out of life, and offer care, advice and support in times of need. Find out more at **www.oddfellows.co.uk** or call **0800 028 1810.**

Regular Events - Pride of Clapham Branch

Yoga for all levels

Every Tuesday - 6.30pm-7.30pm



6.30pm £ See below

Join us for our weekly yoga session as our teacher, Margherita takes us though some moves to help improve mind and body. The class lasts an hour. The charge is £15 (£25 for guests) a calendar month, payable on the first class attended in that month. Non-members may have a taster session before joining. No need to book just come in loose fitting clothing. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.

Cinema Club

Alternate Thursdays, PM



Afternoons £ £5

We visit Clapham Cinema every fortnight to catch the latest films. Special price of £5 for afternoon showings. Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, Clapham, London SW4 0AT. Times vary so please contact Jane via WhatsApp on 07791 942969.

Watercolour Therapy

Alternate Thursdays, 3.30pm



3.30pm £ Free

Spend a relaxing 90 minutes painting in watercolours with a background of soothing fragrances and calming music with Rosana. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.

Thursday Friends (Clapham)

Every Thursday, 8pm



8pm £ Members Free Guests £2

Enjoy a drink at our bar, or tea or coffee if you prefer. Our Thursday Friends group is a friendly mixed group that enjoys chat and games, as well as the occasional talk, quiz, music evening and outing. We meet Thursdays and all are welcome. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.

November 2026

TUES 03 Official Visit and Music Quiz

8pm | £ Free

We have a very special date for your diary! Our District leadership team is making their official visit to Flower of Kent Branch. Visits like these are a wonderful tradition that remind us that we are part of something much bigger. It is an ideal opportunity to meet the people who help steer our Society, catch up with fellow members, and find out what is happening across other Oddfellows Branches. Whether you are a regular face at our meetings or haven't been by in a while, we would love for you to join us in making our guests feel completely at home. The occasion precedes a Music Quiz. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

THURS 05 Thursday Friends (Clapham) with Bob Sinfield

8pm | £ Members Free, Guests £2



Enjoy a drink from our bar, and enjoy the talk NO LAUGHING MATTER? What is so funny about the news? Writer and performer Bob Sinfield explores the relationship between comedy and current affairs, charting the course of TV and radio satire from TW3 to Mock the Week, exposing the pitfalls of poking fun at serious subjects and revealing what happens when the comic becomes the butt of the joke. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.

THURS 05 Fort Borstal Tour and Lunch

10.30am | £ £10 including lunch



Join us for a chance to explore one of the best preserved and least known of the Palmerston Forts, Fort Borstal. Closed to the public for most of its history, the current owners have invited us for a special tour of some of the fort's features with an explanation of how it has been used through the years including its most recent purpose as a vineyard and event space. Tour time 10.30am to 12.30pm with a welcome warm drink and a light hot lunch following the tour with a chance to ask any questions. If travelling by car, use postcode ME1 3QS. This is via the prison car park just to be aware you aren't going the wrong way. Book by Wednesday 4 November 2026. Fort Borstal, 1 Fort Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 3GA. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

November 2026

FRI 06 Behind the Cigar and the Siren Suit

2pm | £ Free | Online | Q&A



John Strange Spencer Churchill is Winston's little known brother. Winston claimed in later life that of all people, his brother had been the greatest influence on his life. Meet the mind that moulded history in Ian Hutt's presentation. Contact Paul for the Zoom code on 07851 910619.

FRI 13 Coffee Morning in Bredhurst: Robert Flood's Chatham

10am | £ Members £2, Guests £3



Learn about the story of the part of Rochester called Chatham from guest speaker Robert Flood. Chatham Intra is a microcosm of the history of the Medway Towns. A place of industry, pubs, the Jewish community, the LGBT communities and all points in between. There's always homemade cake, good company and conversation at our regular coffee mornings in Bredhurst. If this is your first time, then Amy can tell you more. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

MON 09 Business Meeting

8pm | £ Free



Business Meeting and if we have time it's followed by a social with either a game of darts, cards or a chat. Colfeian Sports Club, Horn Park, Eltham Road, Lee, London SE12 8UE. Contact Karen on 020 8699 0929.

TUES 17 Quiz Night

8pm | £ Free

Phil Hotchkin will separate the smartypants from the baggy pants as your host for tonight's quiz. This follows a committee meeting and a Branch meeting for all members. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

November 2026

TUES 24

Art Unscrewed

4pm | £ Free | Online



Dulcie will take you through a step by step process during this hour of painting and at the end you will have painted some fabulous pink flamingos! The Zoom login is the same every month now. If you need the login details please call Jackie on 07788 418267 at least one day before.

FRI 27

Local Business Showcase in Bredhurst

10am | £ Members £2, Guests £3

The perfect blend of a vibrant coffee morning, shopping, and delicious treats. The local business stalls include the Brownie Edit for homebaked happiness, Garden of England Blooms' seasonal floral arrangements and Haus of Rayment's unique lifestyle pieces. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



SUN 29

Christmas Market at Fort Borstal

3pm | £ Free entry

The Christmas Market at Nucleus Winery at Fort Borstal features local makers' stalls, handmade goods, festive food and drinks and the lighting of giant Christmas trees. Book by Friday 27 November 2026. Nucleus Winery, Fort Borstal, 1 Fort Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 3GA. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



December

TUES 01

Quiz Night

8pm | £ Free

Sip and think as Jackie and Maria put your brain to the test at tonight's quiz. This follows a short Branch meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

December

THURS 03

Christmas Wreath Workshop

9.30am £55



A perfect activity to create your own beautiful unique real Christmas wreath in a decorative colour of your choice. To book your place, contact Garden of England Blooms on Facebook or Instagram or Amy Thomas. Cost Includes all materials, one hot or cold drink and a festive brownie. Book by Wednesday 2 December 2026. Coffee Shop, Rochester Airport, Maidstone Road, Chatham, Kent ME5 9SD. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

FRI 11

Jingle all the Way to the Bredhurst Bell

12 noon £ £20.95 two courses £23.95 three courses

Tuck into seasonal feasts, raise a glass (or two) of something seasonal, and soak up the kind of cheer you just can't wrap in paper. Whether you're here for the roasties, the reunions or the excuse to wear sequins in daylight, your Christmas is covered. Book by Friday 27 November 2026. Bredhurst Bell, The Street, Bredhurst, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3JY. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



FRI 11

The Weekend Starts Here!

2pm £ Free Online



Oddfellows Happy Hour at Christmas, hosted by Paul Fitton! Old friends, new memories - just one click away on . Don't worry about cleaning your room - just push the mess aside, wear your favourite Christmas clothes and let's screen share some laughs together! Email Paul (Page 2) for the Zoom link.

December

FRI 11 Live Music from Cover2Cover

7.30pm | Members £5, Guests £8

Cover2Cover is a greatest hits revival band presenting some of the most memorable hits from the past 70 years. You'll want to stay on the floor dancing all night. Gents, shine up your dancing shoes and ladies, bring either a partner, or a handbag to dance around! A Christmas charity event. From 7.30pm for 7.45pm to 11.15pm. Book early with Charlie Boswell for this popular event. Book by Thursday 10 December 2026. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.



MON 14 Business Meeting

8pm | Free

Business Meeting followed by our Christmas Social Colfeian Sports Club, Horn Park, Eltham Road, Lee, London SE12 8UE. Contact Karen on 020 8699 0929.

TUES 15 Christmas Social

8pm | Free



Get ready to jingle and mingle at our annual Christmas Social! Join us for a festive evening packed with holiday cheer, delicious treats, and great music. It is the perfect chance to unwind, celebrate the season, and make wonderful memories with fantastic company. Throw on your favourite festive attire or your most delightfully ugly Christmas sweater. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

FRI 18 Coffee Morning in Bredhurst

10am | Members £2, Guests £3



There's always homemade cake, good company and conversation at our regular coffee mornings in Bredhurst. If this is your first time, then Amy can tell you more. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

December



TUES 22

Art with Dulcie

4pm | £ Free | Online



Dulcie will take you through a step by step process during this hour of painting and at the end you will have a produced 'River Winds' in the style of Van Gogh. The Zoom login is the same every month now. If you need the login details please call Jackie on 07788 418267 at least a day before hand.

MON 11

Business Meeting

8pm | £ Free

Business Meeting and if we have time it's followed by a social with either a game of darts, cards or a chat Colfeian Sports Club, Horn Park, Eltham Road, Lee, London SE12 8UE. Contact Karen on 020 8699 0929.

TUES 12

Music Bingo

8pm | £ Free



Music Bingo replaces traditional numbers on a bingo card with song titles and artists, where players mark off tracks as the Mick and Jackie play short audio clips. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

January 2027

FRI 08

Coffee Morning in Bredhurst

10am | £ Members £2, Guests £3

There's always homemade cake, good company and conversation at our regular coffee mornings in Bredhurst. If this is your first time, then Amy can tell you more. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

FRI 22

Coffee Morning in Bredhurst

10am | £ Members £2, Guests £3

There's always homemade cake, good company and conversation at our regular coffee mornings in Bredhurst. If this is your first time, then Amy can tell you more. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

January 2027

TUES 26

Art Unscrewed

4pm | £ Free | Online

Dulcie will take you through a step by step process during this hour of painting and at the end you will have painted three beautiful mackerel. The Zoom login is the same every month now. If you need the login details please call Jackie on 07788 418267 at least one day before.



TUES 26

Quiz Night

8pm | £ Free



Tonight is not about high stress or serious brain power - it is about good company, terrible guesses, and a little bit of friendly rivalry. Grab a drink, find a comfy spot as your host Colin asks the questions. This follows a short Branch meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

Join the conversation @OddfellowsUK

Share your news, start a conversation or simply stay up-to-date! If you're on Facebook, make sure you've liked and followed our Oddfellows social media pages.

Find us at: f SouthLondonOddfellows

Our Virtual Doors are Open

Thinking about becoming an Oddfellows member, but want to know more first? Join us at one of our online open days.

Hosted by members, we'll take you through what to expect from membership, what the Oddfellows is all about, what's offered at local branches, and we'll answer any questions that you may have along the way.

How to register

Here are the dates of our next open days. They're free to attend and last around one hour.

- Tuesday 10 November 2026 at 11am
- Wednesday 9 December 2026 at 2pm
- Thursday 14 January 2027 at 11am.



Image by Peter Olexa from Pixabay

'It was a good balance of fun and informative, and I felt comfortable and part of the group.'

- Open Day guest

If you would like to register, visit **www.oddfellows/events** and scroll down to Virtual Open Days. Click on the day you'd like to attend and fill in the registration form. We'll then send you an email to confirm your place and a reminder closer to the time.

Need help with Zoom?

Our open days are held on Zoom. If you haven't tried Zoom video-conferencing before and would like help on how to use it, let us know. You can email the Events team with any questions on **events@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

A Community spirit shines at Medway Oddfellows Friendship Month Coffee Morning By Paul Fitton

Medway Oddfellows (Lord Byron Branch) recently teamed up with local entities Diamond Gem and Rocket & Rolls to host a spectacular community coffee morning event.

Held as part of the Oddfellows' annual Friendship Month campaign, the gathering was specifically designed to combat local isolation, promote companionship, and bring Gillingham residents together under one roof.

The event took place on Friday 11 September at the bustling Bredhurst Village Hall. Thanks to an overwhelming turnout and an energetic buzz, organiser Amy Thomas is already declaring the morning a massive success.

A Powerful Local Collaboration

The event's success relied on a seamless partnership between several prominent community figures:

- Medway Oddfellows provided a vital social platform, sharing information on local community events, companionship networks, and regional support systems
- Diamond Gem hosted the joint pop-up space and meticulously organised a vibrant multi-stall market. The market featured unique local vendors, including boutique clothing, artisanal candles, skincare, and stunning floral products from Garden of England Blooms. Modern publishing and lifestyle brand Colour Me Complete also added a touch of joyful escapism to the mix with their self-care-focused colouring books
- Rocket & Rolls, the popular local catering company kept attendees happy and fed, supplying a mouthwatering variety of homemade cakes, fresh pastries, and savoury cheese scones.
- Charity and Community: In a generous show of support, the village hall's on-site charity shop opened its doors early especially for the gathering. A charity raffle was also drawn during the morning to raise funds for ongoing local community efforts.

Voices from the Community

The warmth of the morning was reflected in the glowing feedback from organisers and attendees alike:

- 'Well what a success!', Amy Thomas, Oddfellows Medway Social Organiser
- 'Was such a lovely morning! Today was amazing. Thank you to everyone that came', shared the team at Diamond Gem
- 'It really was a lovely morning', agreed a representative from Garden of England Blooms
- House of Rayment added, 'Was so lovely to meet you all!'

Don't Miss the Next One

Due to popular demand, we organised another joint venture at Bredhurst Village Hall on Friday 9 October.

If you missed out on the fun this time, there is no need to panic. The next joint event will be held at Bredhurst Hall on 13 November and regularly thereafter. Amy is currently tracking RSVPs to get a headcount for the next batch of cakes, so be sure to let her know if you plan on attending! You can look forward to another wonderful morning of good company, hot coffee, delicious cake and activities.



Didn't we have a Lovely Time... the Day we went to...

Visit to Rochester

Tiffany's was closed… so the day started with Breakfast at Wetherspoons. A leisurely stroll saw noses pressed up against the Candy Bar window, which sells traditional sweets. A full day saw visits to historic Rochester and included a visit to the Guildhall Museum to experience the Making of Dickens exhibition. Members were treated to an immersive journey using lighting, and sound effects to transport them to Victorian England. A full and hot summer's day.



Breakfast at... Wetherspoons. Photo by Amy Thomas

To the Fore!



Charlie Boswell organised Flower of Kent's Golf Day at Pedham Place, 9-hole par 3, Golf Centre in Swanley on 19 August.

The final score was Charlie Boswell 31, Garry Ramsay 31 and Peter Stacey 35. Playing off a handicap, Garry played exactly to that, with +4 off 9 holes.

Garry said that, 'It was great to meet up with Peter and Charlie and exchange news and memories of days gone by.'

Andrea Bocelli: Outdoor Cinema





Members enjoyed a breathtaking outdoor cinematic concert by renowned Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli. The venue was Cobham Hall in Gravesend on a very hot Sunday afternoon in August. The songs featured Maria and Moon River.

Around the Branches By Paul Fitton

Clapham

Jane Parkin kicked off September's Friendship Month events with a well-supported Ploughman's Lunch in our hall at Clapham. 31 members and new members were full of praise for Jane's efforts. Seven extra guests on the day entailed a quick run to M&S for Branch Secretary and Social Organiser Jane!

Diana Wee, 'enjoyed the merry lunch and refreshing chat with friends'. Corina expressed her enjoyment, saying, 'Thanks for an enjoyable lunch. Such a good turnout. Great!'

With five weekly events being held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, members in Lambeth and Wandsworth are not lost for something to do. Our hall in Stonhouse Street opens its red door for crafts, exercise and Yoga on day one followed by Thursday social evenings. Thursdays also alternate between watercolour therapy and cinema visits at the local Picturehouse. You can find out more in our opening pages or by contacting Jane Parkin on 07791 942969.



Rosana's Watercolour Therapy sessions help members to relax. Selfie by Rosana

An earlier special event was the District Officers' Visit in August. This celebrated tradition attracts members eager to meet our District Chairman, who this year is Karen Lewis and other top officials – and it's always a fun evening. A game of kurling was a bonus. 'A fun night. Really enjoyed doing something different', said local member Jenny Salmon. Gloria added, 'I really enjoyed the Pig Racing and I loved the Kurling – but we really need more practice'!



Lorraine Mann (left) and Gill Mann brightened up the Kurling evening. Photo by Jane Parkin

Medway

Local Social Organiser Amy Thomas hosts members with coffee mornings at Bredhurst Village Hall and lunches at the neighbouring Bell. More than just socials, the meet ups entertain members with craft events and recently, an Avon pop-up stall. Bredhurst is an idyllic little village in Kent.

Amy organises outside events for members, which you can read about in Didn't We Have a Lovely Time. You may also read about Amy's extra-special September event - Medway Friendship Month - in this edition.

Forest Hill

If you're passing Stanstead Lodge in Forest Hill on any Thursday at around 2pm, why not drop in for light refreshments and to catch up on the latest Oddfellows gossip?

The Oddfellows has over 200 years of building friendships, helping people forge lifelong relationships and reduce loneliness by bringing local people together. These regular face-to-face gatherings provide a supportive, inclusive network for members. Karen Lewis can tell you more on 020 8699 0929.

Lee

Why not take an active role in the Oddfellows? Why not join a committee? You can build skills, gain hands-on experience and make a difference, shaping the direction of your local Branch community. Lord Byron Branch is not only looking for new members – but also new faces to join their active committee. Once again, Karen can advise. See previous paragraph.



Avon display. Photo by Amy Thomas

Sidcup

Charlie Boswell organises regular entertainment at the Montrose Club in Hurst Road. About 30 members meet every fortnight to have fun, with recent events including quizzes, whist and a more physical indoor kurling.

Music events have been Desert Island Discs with Norman Warner's choices and Uncle Paul's Children's Favourites. Mick Coleman span the discs.

250 toes tapped to songs that you heard when you were growing up, such as The Laughing Policeman, Nellie the Elephant and Michael Holliday's Runaway Train, each coming with a comical or entertaining anecdote from Paul Fitton. An enjoyable night of fun and laughter with banter thrown in for free!

What records would you take to a desert island? One of the September highlights was Norman 'Robinson Crusoe' Warner sharing the soundtrack of his life. He selected 20 tunes from his 20s for members to enjoy. Norman said that his stand out three songs were:

- Dancing Queen and 'having the time of my life'
- Forever Autumn – The Moody Blues, 'an all-time favourite band, who I saw live at the O2 in 2010'
- It Started with a Kiss – '1982 marked the birth of my first son - and so life goes around again!'

Branch Secretary and Social Organiser Charlie Boswell also arranges outside events. The most recent has been a Golf Day at Pedham Golf Centre in Swanley. You can read more about that on page 15.



Happy, smiling faces at the Children's Favourites evening. Photo by Paul Fitton

Reflections and Gratitude

Looking Back and Moving Forward

A Message to Members from last year's Grand Master

To all my friends, colleagues and members of the South London District.

As I am currently the Immediate Past Grand Master of the Order, and serving what should be my final year on the board, I have been asked by Paul Fitton to put pen to paper re my thoughts relating to my time in office.

To put it bluntly, whilst I was expecting a busier year than I had previously encountered, neither I nor any of my board colleagues were mentally prepared for what came to light towards the end of last year. I don't really want to dwell on that, as it is now past news, but going forward, we have got to be prepared for the inevitable changes that need to be put in place to secure our Society's future.

That was the major downside of my year, closely followed by my planned AMC in Eastbourne being cancelled and having it replaced by an electronic AMC from the Board Room in Manchester!!

Not your usual year as GM!!!

However, the big plus, and something I will always remember, was my Grand Master's Weekend celebrations with the Cockney sing song on the Friday night, and which culminated with the dinner/dance in Old County Hall. The wonderful scenes of people enjoying themselves against the backdrop of the Thames and government buildings all lit up as dusk approached and night took over will stay with me forever.



While everyone who came expressed not only how wonderful the whole weekend was, there were also a lot of positive comments that the pie, mash, liquor and jellied eels served on the Friday night were better than they expected. I think that we got a few converts there!!

In relation to the above I feel that I cannot close this article without expressing my profound thanks not only the South London District and the Committee of Management as a whole, but individually to my sister Gillian and Clare Puddefoot for the many hours they put in making sure things went as planned on the night.

Thank you all for a memorable year.
John Mann

Charlie Boswell – Hanging up the Boots!



The name Charlie Boswell stands out in South London Oddfellows (SLD) circles. In 1969, Charlie began a journey with his Lodge and District that would culminate in a historic 57-year career. Charlie remains one of the most dedicated and impactful figures in our history.

Growing up in Hoxton, Charlie led a great East End boy's life. He did paper rounds and ran a market stall from the age of 13 to 16. He played football regularly and enjoyed music. In his early teens, he bought Ray Charles records, moving on to the Yardbirds, the Animals, Otis Redding and then Tamla Motown. His love of music has never tired.

Charlie started as an apprentice in BT on 16 August 1965. He recalls a time in 1957 when he had, as on most days, ended up in a café in Bethnal Green. He was with a senior technician named Terry. Teas and breakfasts were being had by all and sundry. In came a guy, a mate of Terry's, who sat on their table. 'Hello Terry', 'Hello Charlie' was verbally exchanged between the two of them.

After chatting for about five minutes, old Charlie gave young Charlie a ten bob note and asked him to go and buy everyone there a tea. Charlie continues the story. 'When we left the café Terry said to me, 'Do you know who that was?' and I said that he seemed important. 'That's Charlie Kray', he said, to which I replied. 'Who the heck is he?' Terry replied, 'Ask your dad', which I did and dad told me that the Kray family were part of the east end's folk lore!' His older brother told him that he had scored at a darts match when his dad's Simpsons team played darts against the Kray's pub team!

Charlie met his wife Eleanor in 1969 which is where his Oddfellows life commences after seeing the John Howard Cricket Club play for the first time, meeting amongst others Roger Burley. That led to one of his great passions playing Cricket for the Lodge team, taking on the roles of Fixture Secretary, General Secretary and Vice-captain for 3 years then eventually captain for 8 years. In January 1972, he married Eleanor. Their first house was in Strood, Kent.

He had joined the John Howard Lodge in 1969 and took an active part in Lodge activities from the word go. Undertaking all degrees and going through the Lodge chairs, he became Social Secretary of the Lodge and the District's South Eastern group. Charlie has continued organising social activities to this day.

Charlie has undertaken an overwhelming number of other roles too. These include: Secretary of the Flower of Lambeth Lodge (2002-2011); Secretary of the Elsa Lodge (2002-2010); Assistant Secretary of Lord Byron Lodge (2010-2014); Trustee of John Howard Lodge in the 1980s; Trustee of the Flower of Kent Lodge (South London District) (1996-2009) and Secretary from 2010 continuing; Secretary of the Flower of Kent Lodge (St Mary Cray and Dartford District) (2009-2010), Trustee from 2010-2013); and Secretary of the Aged Members Pension Fund {2001-2020).

Charlie received an SLD Merit jewel in 2005 for meritorious service, culminating in the District's highest honour of Provincial Grand Master (District Chairman) in 2007.

This was all achieved while Charlie's telecommunications career continued. He rose to become Duty Manager at BT's Network Control Centre in their London Network Operation Unit. After leaving BT in 1998 he subsequently became a Telecommunications Specialist as a Network Controller with Tell IT and undertook other Telecom roles in different companies before taking a deserved early retirement from Telecoms in 2004.

A second retirement, this time from Oddfellows duties, means he has had 64 years plus of paid employment. It's not a record but still a very long time. Now Charlie hopes to have more time to pursue his hobbies. These are: bridge, travel, reading, golf (more tee time!), bowls and now watching cricket and football. Of course, we must not forget Charlie's biggest hobby – his family. More time to spend with his wife Ellie, three children, eleven grandchildren and travel even more.

So, Charlie, all members thank you for your incredible dedication over the years. Your contribution to members and dedication to Lodge business and activities has been immense. May your next chapter be your most rewarding yet.

The Boat

Bobbling, shuffling, rubbing, pushing, jostling as you push away with your oar. Slowly, the boat pulls away slowly, an object of irresponsibility, majestic of its kind, independent of thought.



No rudder, no captain, no engine, just itself… and yourself. Alone to do as you please, with the wind on your back, the bows into the wind, the oars to your side, the pull as you move to the open sea, the unknown destinations of unknown waters. You and your boat passing seabirds. The steady swell of the water, the rhythm with the oar.

A splash of red on the horizon, a glow, a light piercing the gloom of evening. You are your own floating island on the open sea. You navigate your every move of the jolting, lurching boat. As it is caught by the current, you pull, you sweat, to command the vessel. You control your small floating island as the boards of the boat hide pools of water.

After endless toil, the boatkeeper blows his whistle and calls your number to 'Come in'. With mixed feelings of relief and sorrow, you pull slowly into the dense maze of other jolting, shuffling, pushing rowing boats in Danson Park boating lake!

Winston Churchill and the Oddfellows – Myth or Fact?

By Paul Fitton

Historical records and directories list Winston Churchill among the famous statesmen and leaders who belonged to the Oddfellows. However...

Churchill joined the Loyal Waterloo Lodge No. 96 of the National Independent Order of Odd Fellows in 1907, an offshoot of the Oddfellows and maintained his membership for the rest of his life until 1965.

Like his memberships in other groups, such as the Ancient Order of Druids or Ancient Free Gardeners, his participation was largely honorary or inactive.

He was also an officer in the British Army, a historian, a writer, and an artist. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and was the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States.

The legacy of the wartime prime minister is reflected within the international network of the Oddfellows (IOOF), including active Branches named after him, such as Sir Winston Churchill Lodge No. 32, operating under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the Phillipines.

If you are interested, lifetime member Ian Hutt is presenting Behind the Cigar and the Siren Suit about John Strange Spencer Churchill, Winston's little-known brother. Winston claimed in later life that of all



Photo by Yousof Karsh

people, his brother had been the greatest influence on his life. You can meet the mind that moulded history in Ian's Zoom presentation on 6 November at 2pm. Contact paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk for the direct Zoom link.

Letters and Feedback

Poetry in Motion

Out&About magazine has just dropped into my porch and I read it with interest each quarter.

Your resident poet, Jackie Ingleby Douglass, asked for follow ups to her poem 'My Man', offering a tempting prize! As I've always enjoyed poetry writing then I've penned these few lines below.

My Man

You look back to your Wedding Day.
It seems so very long ago.
The altar where he stood so tall.
Your Dad and you, approaching slow.

He turns and smiles, p'raps winks his eye.
You blush a little, take his hand.
You say your vows, blink tears away.
Your finger wears his wedding band.

The years have passed, your children born.
You've bought a flat, and then a house.
And money's tight, and time too short.
You're mother, cook, nurse - wife, of course.

You've had your ups and downs, I'm sure.
Known grief and loss and love and pain.
But looking back, you'll smile and say,
I bet I'd do it all again.

All the best.
Dot Pullan

Pig Racing and Kurling in Clapham

'Thanks for such a lovely evening. We really enjoyed ourselves and hope we play it again.' ***Ben and Gloria***

'Thanks for the lovely evening.' ***Sophia***

'I enjoyed the evening – and the Kurling was fun too.' ***Marie***

'Lovely evening. Good practice for further fun evenings.' ***Helen***

'It was a great evening. Thoroughly enjoyed it. Will take part again. The Kurling was great. Need more practice!' ***Corina***

... and for Clapham's Ploughman's Lunch for Friendship Month...

'Thank you for a smashing event' ***Maureen***

'Great event. So well attended.' ***Helen***

'Thank you for organising and setting up today.' ***C***

'Thanks for all your work today. I really enjoyed it.' ***Sylvia***

'Thanks for lunch today. I really enjoyed it.' ***Marie***

'Thanks for a wonderful afternoon. It as so good to see so many people. Everything was so well organised.' ***Gloria***

'Many thanks for your hospitality. I thoroughly enjoyed the lunch.' ***Jenny***

The Ultimate Sacrifice

423 members of Clapham Lodge enlisted for World War One.
33 of these members died.
The central wooden memorial board at Oddfellows Hall in Clapham records their names.
This research intends to add a little about their lives.



Arthur (left) with his brother

Arthur Thomas Cottis

Arthur Thomas Cottis was born on Monday 29 March 1897, the same day as England beat Wales 4-0 in an international football match. He was christened on 13 June at Holy Trinity Church on Clapham Common. This Georgian church was where The Clapham Sect led by William Wilberforce and a group of upper class evangelical Christians campaigned for the abolition of the slave trade in the 19th century.

At that time, the family lived at 53 Ellerslie Road in Brixton. Parents Thomas (33), a compositor printer and Alice Sarah (34) had moved from Coggleshall in Essex with eldest son William Edward in the mid-1890s. They were at the same address 10 years later with a third son, Leslie Harry, born in 1901. William was an apprentice electrical fitter and Arthur and his younger brother were still at school. Just a few years later, Arthur would enlist.

He signed up in Lambeth and joined the 16th (County of London Battalion) Queen's Westminster Rifles as a Private. The 16th were transferred to the 56th London Division, reforming in Hollencourt in France in February 1916. It remained in Flanders and took part in 5 battles which were phases of the Battle of the Somme 1916.

The second of these was on Saturday 9 September 1916 in the Battle of Glinchy, where it was likely that Arthur lost his life. Ginchy village was a mass of shattered masonry and shell holes. However, the town had strategic observation posts overlooking the entire battlefield.

The artillery barrage began at 7am on that day and the London Rifle Brigade (169 Brigade, 56th Div) advanced from the south eastern edge of Leuze Wood against Loop Trench at 4.45pm. The assault met with heavy barrage, suffered very heavy casualties, were unable to overcome the stiff German resistance and were forced back.

They were reinforced by the Queen's Westminster Rifles (1/16th London Regiment) who took over the extreme right of the Division at 11pm. At 7am and again at 3pm the Queen's Westminsters had made unsuccessful local attempts to gain the previous day's objective.

On Sunday 10 September at 7am, 1/16th Battalion, the London Regiment attacked south east from Leuze Wood. The attack was halted by machine gun fire from Loop



The Battle of Ginchy 9 September

Supporting troops move up in single file to support the attack.

In the foreground a soldier ducks as an explosion occurs on the left.

This item is available to share and reuse under the terms of the IWM Non Commercial Licence

Trench and the Combles Road. A 100 yard advance by one company at 3pm was beaten back. Likewise an attempt to bomb up the trench leading to the Quadrilateral failed.

Arthur was killed in action on 10 September 1916, aged just 19. He was buried at Serre Road Cemetery No 2, department de la Somme, Picardie in France. His family were sent the Allied Victory and British War medals. The Queen's Westminster Rifles lost 1219 dead of all ranks during the war.



South London's Biannual Meeting

South London District's Officers and Branch delegates meet twice yearly to discuss national and District business. This summer's discussions were held at Oddfellows Hall in Ruxley in July. Here are the highlights.

The Committee of Management had met five times since the previous District meeting to discuss key business. The Officers reported on the District's properties, membership, the Oddfellows national Annual Moveable Conference (AMC), Distress Grants, financial statements and development.

Jacqui Worley, Chairman of the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) motioned that it's business should close and be centralised within the District. Jacqui added that the WAC had been going for a long time and had made a difference to large and especially small charities, which don't receive as much as publicity. This proposal was agreed and the WAC's funds would be transferred to the District's charitable fund. The Chairman thanked the members of the WAC for their work.

Annual Movable Conference

This year's national AGM for all Oddfellows Districts was conducted online via Zoom. The Officers reported on business, summarised below.

This year's national AGM for all Oddfellows Districts was conducted online via Zoom. The Officers reported on business, summarised below.

Nationally, John Mann's annual sojourn as Grand Master (Chairman) of the Society had come to an end. This marked another year that a South London District member has held that position. John continues as the Immediate Past Grand Master.

Richard Davies, who like John is a member of Lord Byron Branch, was elected as a Unity Special Arbitrator. Richard was also nominated for two more Committees - Investigation and Benevolence.

Various items of business were discussed. These included:

- The appointment of Simon Gallimore as CEO.
- The appointment of Pamela Casey as Secretary of the Order.
- Training and development on Branch Development for staff, including Event Organisers and Branch Secretaries.
- Care and Welfare: the Oddfellows continues to work with Home Instead and Bluebird Care for the needs of members requiring care packages as well as stays at the three dedicated convalescent homes; 29 children are being supported by the Orphan Gift Fund, including nine attending college or university.
- Several targeted recruitment campaigns were delivered in 2025. 2200 information packs were requested during the year; email remains an important information communications tool and by the end of last year, the Oddfellows head 93 local Facebook pages and an Oddfellows Instagram page was introduced.
- Investments were discussed.
- Recruitment and membership were successful. Last year, 2245 new members were recruited nationally helped by advertisements appearing across national lifestyle magazines and digital advertising; 248 events were offered nationally as part of Friendship Month in September 2025 – 42, or 17% of these were promoted by South London District; and various recruitment awards were presented, including Bury St Edmunds and Colchester District Lodge who increased membership by 74 last year.
- Making a Difference Awards were made for Achieving Together and Enriching Lives Socially.
- The charity within the Oddfellows is called the H A Andrews Memorial Fund. It was agreed to help fund research at Wythenshawe hospital.
- Various items of business had been agreed by the Benevolence Committee, one example being 5 awards made totalling £2250.
- The Unity Investigation Committee examined the proceedings of the Main Board, Commercial Board and Fraternal Board meetings and all of the questions that the committee raised were comprehensively answered to its satisfaction.
- You may read an update to our funding of the Oddfellows Lifeboat at Sheringham on page 28.

Oddfellows Memorabilia

Paul Fitton continues his regular look at Oddfellows Memorabilia

The Loyal Hugh Boswell Lodge was founded in 1891. Members met fortnightly on Fridays at St Luke's Schoolroom, Rosemary Road, Peckham.

The Lodge was named after The Reverend Hugh Boswell Chapman. You can understand why when you read of the remarkable person that he was. An Anglican priest, progressive politician, and prominent social reformer, he served as the Vicar of St Luke's from 1885 to 1905.

Boswell held some key roles and had many accomplishments, establishing local community support programmes. Following his tenure in Peckham, he was appointed Chaplain of the Savoy Chapel Royal off The Strand. Members visited the Chapel several years ago to learn of its unusual status as the private Royal Chapel of (now) His Majesty King Charles.

Boswell had a career too. He was elected to the London County Council as a member of the Progressive Party representing Camberwell North from 1889 to 1892. His philanthropy came to the fore too. Boswell dedicated his life to combating poverty in south London through municipal governance and parish work. His lineage belonged to the Chapman baronetcy family, historically connected to pedigree lines tracking prominent English church and civic leaders.

100 years ago, Hugh Boswell Lodge had 223 members with an average age of 36. The last historical documents that I can find are from 1959. It seems that the Lodge closed very soon after that date with Clapham Lodge taking its membership. The official documents were deposited with Lambeth Archives in 2001.



This wooden cabinet for the Loyal Hugh Boswell Lodge No 7042, is painted with the names of Past Grands (Branch Chairmen) from 1891 to 1925. It also shows the Lodge dispensation, its authority to operate as an Oddfellows Lodge in a framed pictorial scroll. Open, the cabinet is 190cm wide, is 8cm deep and 86cm high.



Above is a wooden-panelled pair titled 'A List of Past Grands' for the Lodge. The hand-painted display boards cover the period 1926-1959 and measure 82 x 60cm.

RNLI Sheringham

Update By Paul Fitton

The Oddfellows has had a long tradition of supporting lifesaving on the water. Record show that the first involvement was in Cleethorpes with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in 1868.

We have also funded three lifeboats at RNLI Sheringham since 1961. However, as reported previously, safety concerns following a structural survey of the lifeboat station building and landslide concerns has closed operations there during refurbishment. The lifesaving duties are currently being shared by neighbouring stations at Wells and Cromer.

A new steel frame and concrete structure are being installed and the expected reopening of the lifestation is May 2027, following the extensive remedial works.

This will tie in with the date of the new Oddfellows-funded Atlantic 85 inshore lifeboat. This will bring our total funding to £1,125,000.

However, because of the way the RNLI works, they have said that all future funds would go into a general fund to support National Independent Lifeboat Association (NILA) stations around the country. Whereas the RNLI operates as one unified, large organisation running hundreds of stations and a coordinated fleet across the UK and Ireland, NILA acts as a collective association and unified voice for over 50 separate, standalone independent lifeboat organisations that do not belong to the RNLI.

East Anglian Group Conference will continue to manage the support fund on behalf of the Oddfellows with an annual bursary being made to the Sheringham station. If you wish to donate, please do so by cheque made out to The East Anglian Group Conference Lifeboat Fund or by bank transfer - sort code 30-99-77 account 01391357. Please send your cheque via Clare Puddefoot (see page 2).

The Oddfellows B-953 Lifeboat

The Oddfellows Lifeboat was launched in action three times in early August. The latest Shouts for the B-953 have included:

- A two-hour rescue on 3 August 2026, a 'Medical Evacuation from Vessel'. The station was tasked by Dover Coast Guards to a 36ft sailing vessel in the River Crouch, in which a single crew member had a suspected dislocated hip. The Lifeboat arrived on scene and placing a crew member on board, took the vessel in tow to Burnham Marina where the most beneficial casualty extraction resources was available. South Woodham Coast Guard team and East of England Ambulance service attended the casualties and recovered him from the vessel taking him to hospital. The lifeboat then returned to service.

- A shout to a vessel aground on 9 August. The crew were tasked to a Rigid Inflatable Boat having run aground at 1130 on the approach to the River Crouch. The one adult and two children on board had been

attempting to drag the craft free but had become tired. The Lifeboat launched and attended, standing by whilst the vessel refloated on rising tide, and then escorted it to Burnham Yacht Harbour. Safety advice was given to the skipper. The Lifeboat rehoused and was made ready for service at 10:00UTC. The operation lasted two and a half hours.

The B-953 has also been launched on eight exercise launches, which has including some key moments for members of crew such as two crew members undertaken a navigator assessments who pass outs, a Tier 1 Crew member who pass out, and a maiden service call for one of the station's crew members on the most recent launch.

The Lifeboat Operations Manager has expressed the crew's gratitude to the Oddfellows for the privilege of being entrusted and the opportunity to operate the B- 953. He remarked on how well she performs.

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The Penge East Railway Incident of 1918

By Paul Fitton

The Oddfellows has a vast amount of material available online for members to access. Hundreds of thousands of pages of the society's magazines, documents and directories hold a wealth of information.

One hundred years ago, we read of a member from our District who was involved in a train incident. The archive reveals:

'The many friends of Bro Alfred E Johnson, Past Provisional Grand Master of the South London District, will hear with deep regret that he was seriously injured in the Penge railway accident on the night of Tuesday 18 June 1918. Bro Johnson sustained compound fractures of both legs, and now lies in Beckenham Cottage Hospital, Beckenham, Kent.

'The report which reaches us states that he is cheerful, and going on fairly well, but it will necessarily be a considerable time before he is about again. His many friends in the Unity and those who have met Bro Johnson at the Annual Moveable Conference will join in sincere wishes for his complete recovery.'

Other sources advise us that the train operator was the South Eastern & Chatham Railway. However, wartime press restrictions meant that minor or non-fatal train accidents during 1918 rarely made the national headlines to keep transit networks appearing fully operational for troop movements.

Historical databases do record the occurrence but primary and secondary causes remain unlisted. Local archives and photos indicate that the incident involved a double derailment near the station, a collision with debris. Seven people were injured with no fatalities, although one account mentions that one person died. There was no published formal investigation.

Christmas Parties by Paul fitton

It's nearly that time of year again!

Oddfellows means a lot of things for a lot of people. Many members talk today about charabanc trips and coach outings, sports days and cricket matches, days out and social activities and children's Christmas parties and dinner dances. Here are two memories from nearly 100 years ago.

Beryl Whipp recalls Children's Christmas parties. 'I wonder if any of the older members remember the lovely Christmas Parties Oddfellows used to give to us Juniors in the 1930s?

'To me it was the 'Best Party'. My father used to take my cousins and myself to a hall in London. I cannot tell you the exact place. Many children would gather and all would be given a lucky number ticket. In ground, games would be organised - and then sit down to a good tea.

'Afterwards, a rare treat. A Brother Oddfellow would show us films: Laurel and Hardy and Charlie Chaplin gave us fun and laughter. Then the lucky numbers would be called and those who had their number drawn out would receive a lovely gift. As this was taking place, parents would be arriving to take their children home.

'We might have been disappointed if we did not receive a prize but as we left, everyone would be given a bag of sweets. We went home tired but happy. Good memories!'

Aren't Beryl's childhood memories lovely. A different time. Simple things – and to close gently, I remember receiving a letter from another member who recalled the Oddfellows Christmas parties in the 1930s - and the sheer joy she had when playing with a golden balloon. Happy Days!



Outdoor Events

All outdoor events are subject to weather conditions. It is essential that you book in advance for all events and provide up-to-date contact details, enabling us to notify you promptly of any changes or cancellations.

Members Benefits

Don't forget, if you have opted for the benefits package you are entitled to make a claim following a visit to the dentist or optician.

Little Peter

By our Resident Poet
Jackie Ingleby-Douglass

Little Peter`s on the stage,
in the Christmas play.
He didn`t want to do it,
but his teacher had last say.

Joseph, wise man, sheep or lamb,
baby Jesus, Mary.
Which one are you my little love,
as all these parts do vary?

Shepherd, King, bright light, star.
How I wonder what you are.

Front of stage as bold as brass.
Now I see the rest of class.
You start singing, full of cheer,
bringing smiles to all who hear.

You lead the choir strong and loud
making me so very proud.

The Numbers Game

280,600 Insurance members in the Oddfellows *

39,000 Branch-based members who are supported by social, care and financial benefits *

More than **£148,000** raised for good causes by our Branches nationally in 2025

5 social events organised by our local Clapham Branch every week

0900 0148 822 is the number of the Oddfellows Care and Welfare Helpline **

* as at 1 January 2026
** see page 37



Used Stamps

Jane Parkin is collecting used stamps for Many Tears Animal Rescue Charity. She would love to receive your used stamps. Please send them to her at Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY.

Many Tears is based in Carmarthenshire in Wales. The charity has dogs in foster in homes throughout the UK as well as resident horses, ponies and donkeys. You may find out more at www.manytearsrescue.org.

Keep Young and Beautiful – Part Seven©

By Paul Fitton

This time, we are looking at growing old gracefully.

It's true, isn't it. Over 70s have the best eyesight. I seem to have become quite invisible when out – except to other over 70s. They always give a knowing nod and 'hello'. Everyone else ignores me.

Do you still think that friends who you haven't seen for a long time haven't aged well? Hmm! just remember that they are probably thinking the same about you! This was brought home to me on a recent dental visit.

I noticed that the name on the medical diploma hung on the wall in the waiting room was the same unusual name as a girl from primary school. However, the aged dentist that I saw couldn't have been the same person. I asked her if she attended Elmwood in the early 60s. She replied that she did. Wonderful! I told her that she was in my class – and she asked me what I taught! Oh dear!



Just a few hair-raising points. A friend said recently that he has the same amount of hair that he always has had. It's just rearranged differently. He dyes it grey too, for that 'air of sophistication'. Being 1.86/6'2" I doubt that any member knows that I have a bald spot. Unless they are taller than me, of course. A former member used to rub black Kiwi shoe polish on his bald spot (true) whilst another had some rabbits tattooed on his bald head. He said they look like hares from a distance (not true)!

To close, just a few general points about aging. When I retired from the civil service in 2009, an older work colleague said that he must be doing something wrong. He had attended my father's retirement party as well as mine!

I don't know if it's the same for you but I've reached the age where the patient information leaflet that comes with medicines is far too interesting.

… and lastly, a riddle: What goes up but never comes down? (Answer at foot of page.)

Answer: Your Age

Meet Grand Master Debbie Jex



For Debbie Jex, the Oddfellows has been part of her life for more than 50 years. Recently elected as Grand Master, she remains characteristically modest about the honour.

"I know it's a huge honour and I am immensely proud," she says. "But half the time I'm just the District Secretary at Reading Oddfellows until somebody reminds me I'm the Grand Master."

Debbie first joined the Society as a child when her parents became members. However, it was in 1993, when she became Lodge Secretary, that her deeper involvement began.

"That's when I got pulled in," she jokes.

Over the years, the Society has provided much more than a role. It has become a source of friendship, connection and lasting memories.

"It's not just a job now, it's a way of life. It's a huge part of my social life, a huge part of my friendship group."

Looking back, Debbie believes the relationships she has built through the Oddfellows have enriched her life.

"I've attended some lovely events and made friends with lots of lovely people all over the country. So it's definitely enriched my life."

As Grand Master, Debbie sees her role as representing and championing members.

"I'm there to champion our members and make sure we're doing the best we can for them."

She is also excited about meeting members across the country and helping more people discover the support and friendship the Society offers.

"I'd like more members to know what a wonderful caring and benevolent Society this is."

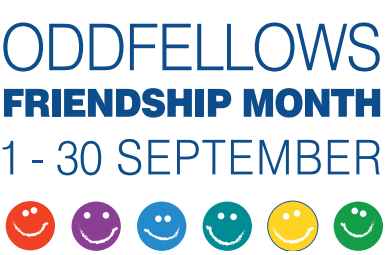
After decades of service, Debbie's message remains simple:

"The Oddfellows is there for you if you need it."

Read the full interview on the Oddfellows' website at: www.oddfellows.co.uk/news

Friendship Month 2026: celebrating connection, community and companionship

Another Friendship Month has come to a close, with Oddfellows branches across the UK welcoming members, friends and guests to a wide range of free and low-cost taster events designed to bring people together and celebrate the value of friendship.



From coffee mornings and social lunches to walks, talks and special gatherings, September provided countless opportunities for people to reconnect with existing friends, make new connections and enjoy good company.

Keep friendships warm

This year's campaign focused on the importance of staying in touch as we move into the colder months, when opportunities to get together can sometimes reduce and feelings of isolation can become more common.

The campaign struck a chord with people across the country. Branches reported strong attendance at events and were especially pleased to welcome newcomers discovering the Oddfellows for the first time.

"A huge thank you"

Pam Casey, Secretary of the Order, said: "A huge thank you goes to every branch, volunteer, organiser, member and guest who helped make Friendship Month 2026 such a success.



Concord Oddfellows celebrated Friendship Month in style at their popular coffee morning in Aldershot.

"Your enthusiasm and willingness to reach out to others demonstrated the positive difference that friendship can make in our communities."

Steph Hopes, Branch Secretary for Concord Oddfellows, said: "We welcomed several people who had never attended an Oddfellows event before. By the end of the morning, everyone was chatting as though they'd known each other for years. It was a fantastic atmosphere."



Handforth and Altrincham Oddfellows met up for a round of adventure golf.

Sharon Hulse-Cottle, Branch Secretary of Handforth and Altrincham Oddfellows, said: "Our members did a brilliant job of helping newcomers feel at ease. By the end of the event, there was a real buzz in the air. It was lovely to see new faces becoming part of the group."

Expert support

Friendship Month also helped raise awareness of the wider benefits of friendship. During the campaign, expert anthropologist Dr Anna Machin supported the initiative by sharing insights into the importance of maintaining meaningful relationships and making time for regular face-to-face contact.

While Friendship Month may be over, the opportunities certainly aren't. With a busy programme of events planned throughout autumn, winter and beyond, there are still plenty of ways to meet new people, try something different and strengthen existing connections.

You can always find details of upcoming local and online events at www.oddfellows.co.uk/events



Birmingham Oddfellows shared positive messages of friendship at its events.

Important update to some membership benefits

As part of our regular review of the services and support we provide, three discretionary, non-contractual membership benefits were withdrawn on 16 September 2026.

The benefits affected are **Legal Aid Scheme, Accidental Death Benefit** and **Emergency Financial Aid**.

The change applies to new Standard, Extra Benefits and Young Oddfellows members joining from 16 September 2026, and to existing Standard, Extra Benefits and Young Oddfellows members when they renew their membership.

Existing members will continue to have access to these benefits until their renewal date.

Any claims, applications or cases already received and in progress will continue to be considered and fulfilled in accordance with the relevant benefit terms and conditions.*

As with all member benefits, the Society regularly reviews its offering to ensure it remains relevant, appropriate and sustainable. While these three discretionary benefits have been withdrawn, no other membership benefits have been affected.

The Society remains committed to providing members with valuable support, friendship and opportunities to connect with others.

Members who have questions about how this change affects them or their membership can contact the Membership team on **0800 028 1810** for further information, or email **membership@oddfellows.co.uk**

Apprenticeship Educational Awards

If you're starting an apprenticeship, the Oddfellows' Apprenticeship Educational Awards could help with some of the costs along the way. Each year, up to three eligible members can apply to receive a non-repayable bursary of £250 per year for the duration of their apprenticeship.*

The award can be used towards expenses such as textbooks, equipment, rent, bills and other practical costs.

To apply, members must have at least five years of continuous Oddfellows membership (which can include Young Oddfellows membership) and be starting their first apprenticeship. This is a discretionary benefit and applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

To find out more or request an application form, contact your Branch Secretary as soon as possible. Applications must be submitted by 31 December each year.

*Terms and conditions apply to all Oddfellows benefits, which are non-contractual and may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Financial benefits are awarded at the Society's discretion, not guaranteed, and claim applications may be declined. For full details, call 0800 028 1810 or visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/member-tcs



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 Clare on **020 7735 2770** or email **clare.puddefoot@oddfellows.co.uk.**

Oddfellows 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

EDCWA50223

Branch Contacts and Meetings

District Meetings

District Secretary: Clare Puddefoot
Address: South London District, Oddfellows, 240 Clapham Road, London SW9 0PZ
Telephone: 01322 665496
Email: clare.puddefoot@oddfellows.co.uk

District Committee Meetings take place monthly. Bi-annual District Meetings are held for Branch Deputies.

Magazine Editor: Paul Fitton
Address: 15 Moat Close, Orpington, Kent BR6 6ET
Telephone: 07851 910619
Email: paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk

Branch Meetings

All members are invited to attend Branch business meetings. These start at 8pm and are followed by social events by 9pm with refreshments and a chance to socialise. Non-members may not attend the business meetings.

Flower of Kent Branch

Secretary: Charlie Boswell
Correspondence Address: 12 Garden Avenue, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4LF
Telephone: 020 8306 8846
Email: charlie.boswell@oddfellows.co.uk
Meeting/Social address: The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ.

Business Meeting dates:
Tuesdays 3 and 17 November, 1 December 2026 and 26 January 2027.

Lord Byron Branch

Secretary and Social and Development Officer: Karen Lewis
55 Kilmorie Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2SS
Telephone: 020 8699 0929
Email: karen.lewis@oddfellows.co.uk
Meeting address: Colfeian Sports Club, Horn Park, Eltham Road, London SE12 8UE

Meeting dates:
Mondays 9 November and 14 December 2026 and 11 January 2027.

Social address: Stanstead Lodge, 260 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DD

Social and Development Officer for Medway: Amy Thomas
Telephone: 07359 997795
Email: amy.thomas@oddfellows.co.uk
Social address: Bredhurst Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3JZ

Pride of Clapham Branch

Secretary: Jane Parkin
Correspondence Address: 18 Glendale, Swanley, Kent BR8 8TB
Telephone: 07791 942969
Email: jane.parkin@oddfellows.co.uk
Meeting/Social address: Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY

Meeting dates:
Thursdays 19 November and 17 December 2026 and 21 January 2027.

At a glance

Weekly Events

Every Tuesday	Knit, Natter and Craft Group (Clapham)	2.30pm
Every Tuesday	Chair Exercise (Clapham)	5.30pm
Every Tuesday	Yoga for all levels (Clapham)	6.30pm
Every Thursday	Coffee and a Chat (Forest Hill)	2pm
Every Thursday	Thursday Friends (Clapham)	8pm

November 2026

Tues 3	Official Visit and Music Quiz	8pm
Thurs 5	Fort Borstal Tour and Lunch	10.30am
Thurs 5	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Thurs 5	Thursday Friends (Clapham) with Bob Sinfield and No Laughing Matter	8pm
Fri 6	Behind the Cigar and the Siren Suit	2pm
Mon 9	Business Meeting (Lord Byron Lodge)	8pm
Thurs 12	Cinema Club Clapham	Afternoon
Fri 13	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst: Robert Flood's Chatham	10am
Tues 17	Quiz Night	8pm
Thurs 19	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Tues 24	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Thurs 26	Cinema Club Clapham	Afternoon
Fri 27	Local Business Showcase in Bredhurst	10am
Sun 29	Christmas Market at Fort Borstal	3pm

December

Tues 1	Quiz Night	8pm
Thurs 3	Christmas Wreath Workshop	9.30am
Thurs 3	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm

At a glance

December

Thurs 10	Cinema Club Clapham	Afternoon
Fri 11	Jingle all the Way to the Bredhurst Bell	12 noon
Fri 11	The Weekend Starts Here!	2pm
Fri 11	Live Music from Cover2Cover	7.30pm
Mon 14	Business Meeting (Lord Byron Lodge)	8pm
Tues 15	Christmas Social	8pm
Thurs 17	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Fri 18	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst	10am
Tues 22	Art with Dulcie	4pm

January 2027

Thurs 7	Cinema Club Clapham	Afternoon
Fri 8	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst	10am
Mon 11	Business Meeting (Lord Byron Lodge)	8pm
Tues 12	Music Bingo	8pm
Thurs 14	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Thurs 21	Cinema Club Clapham	1.30pm
Fri 22	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst	10am
Tues 26	Quiz Night	8pm
Tues 26	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Thurs 28	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm

Bookings and Cancellations

We kindly encourage early booking for all events to avoid disappointment. Please note that, where charges apply, full payment must be made in advance. A place at an event will only be confirmed once payment has been received.

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