

# Cultured Comments

News and views from your local friendship group

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## Contact Details

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## Welcome to the latest edition of Cultured Comments

Your new edition of Cultured Comments magazine updates all members about Oddfellows in the District. It brings you news, views and you can enjoy reading about life with the Oddfellows.

Following governmental advice on social distancing, all Oddfellows events and meetings have been cancelled until further notice. We will update you.

However, the Oddfellows has been helping members this year. Branch Secretaries and Welfare Officers have been contacting members by phone, text, letter and postcard to remind them that we are here to help. I have also issued a weekly 20 page e-magazine of original stories, poems, quizzes, etc to members for whom I have an email address. Contact me – see blue box on the left – if you would like to receive a regular copy to keep you entertained. You may also keep in touch by visiting 'North London Oddfellows' on Facebook.

(Cover photo of Charles Darwin's greenhouse at Down House by Paul Fitton. Photo on this page of the view from Tower Bridge by Paul Fitton)

The Oddfellows has also organised many online presentations and quizzes via social media platforms such as Zoom, Mirthy and

Facebook Live brought to the comfort of your own home. See page 11.

We are also continuing to keep you in touch with this additional edition of Cultured Comments magazine. It is issued usually at the beginning of April and October each year.

No matter which way you choose to communicate with the Oddfellows, we are working hard to ensure to keep in touch with you and make sure that there's plenty for you to see and do and make you welcome.

**Paul Fitton**  
**Editor**

## Chairman's Letter

**Dear Friends**

**When I said, at the end of February, that we were going to have a year of change, I could not have anticipated how big that change would be.**

COVID-19 has turned our world upside down, but out of this disaster has emerged an army of people who raised funds, rallied to help those less fortunate and literally fed thousands in need.

The British spirit always emerges in time of need - very, very Oddfellowship, that aims at helping others and protecting the vulnerable and the weak. We will recover from this disaster and grow strong from it.

We must be grateful that only one member in North London has passed to The Great Lodge above. We had planned District Officers visits this year for the summer to avoid those dark

winter evenings, but now cold and damp sound attractive to once again join you in your lodges. But we must not start too soon because it is not yet over.

Please keep an eye out for others. Ask for help if you need it or if you know somebody who does, then contact the District Secretary or the Secretary of your Branch. So, stay safe, stay healthy and we will meet again.



Photo by Paul Fitton

Laurence Manning  
Provincial Grand Master/  
District Chairman

# Letters and Feedback

We started producing the weekly e-magazine when Lockdown began. So far, there have been 16 Saturday editions and about 300 pages packed with original stories, poems, presentations, quizzes, competitions, recipe and facts. There's a weekly

Joke Page too – but they're not all original! To receive a weekly copy direct to your email-box, just ask [paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk). Here's a small selection of hundreds of comments that have been received.

“The e-magazine is a good read and I learnt a lot about Carry On films! There is lots of variety and the articles were very interesting. I love the jokes too!”

**Brenda Thomason**

“I have just received the e-magazine with one of your most excellent quizzes, which brought back memories of your social events at Enfield.”

**John Spencer**

“Cannot believe it is Saturday again as your latest e-magazine has arrived. The magazines are so interesting and keep me occupied for hours and then, as a bonus, this week the Nurses Day one arrived. They really are so enjoyable. I will miss it when life goes back to normal.”

**Eileen Smith**

“I must comment about ‘Girls Holiday’ by Anna Belle. From reading Anna’s article, I have just spent the last half hour walking down memory lane to my years spent during the 60s, 70s and 80s. Some made me smile and some did bring a tear but I quite clearly recall the fun of fashion, freedom and to the 70’s hippy generation of which I was one - the 60s was the beginnings of a very changing world of attitudes and care for our planet.”

**Angie Hooker**

“What a great idea your e-magazine is. We have spent the last hour enjoying the quiz.”

**Pauline and Michael Josling**

“I look forward to the e-magazine each week, like being a kid again waiting for the new Beano to come out.”

**Jacqui Lowther**

“E-Magazine 4 is yet another excellent publication and it has something for everyone! Particularly enjoyed your articles about North Shields and especially the interview with Hilton Valentine (of The Animals). Many thanks for all your efforts to keep us amused and entertained during this awful pandemic.”

**Alan Coombe**

“Another excellent read. Particularly Alan Coombe's recollections of a 10 year old, child evacuee.”

**Norman Warner**

“I have to tell you how much I am enjoying the e-magazine. I have especially enjoyed the quizzes, most of which is definitely my era!”

**Lyn Rolph**

“Another good read. Thank you for providing such a good distraction for us with such interesting articles (I loved Aunt Gertrude!) and activities to keep us amused. I will try to listen to the forthcoming online talks.”

**Brenda Thomason**

“Thanks for new magazine. Keeps what brain cells I have working for now. Enjoyed singing the Music Quiz songs in my head as I worked them out.”

**Alan Pitts**

## Join the conversation@OddfellowsUK

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



[facebook.com/OddfellowsNorthLondon](https://facebook.com/OddfellowsNorthLondon)

# Oddfellows E-Magazine

**I have produced a weekly e-magazine for members in North London District since lockdown began.**

The Saturday production is designed to help online members through current times. Keeping you in touch.

Each 20 page edition is a little 'Digest for Readers'! Each e-magazine is jam-packed with original stories, presentations, members' contributions and feedback, recipes, poems, quizzes, puzzles, jokes and riddles plus featured Oddfellows membership benefits, advice and updates.

You can find links to Oddfellows online sessions on Zoom, Mirthy and Facebook Live. These include presentations and activities such as quizzes, coffee chats and weekly Yoga. The District has a monthly Quiz prize of a £20 voucher (issued when lockdown ends). There has been a competition to win prizes of Family History research, Oddfellows solar powered calculators and an Oddfellows Sunflower Seeds Giveaway offer.

To receive a regular copy straight to your email inbox every Saturday, request a copy by emailing [paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk).

'E-magazine 5 is such a superior production and personally I have found meal times to be an intrusion when I've been spellbound by Norman Warner's exciting account of his father's wartime

experiences in the Royal Navy, your interesting article on the London beer flood of 1814 or the 'Cockney Afternoon'. Incidentally I appreciate your decorum in not giving a literal translation of Brahms and Liszt! Alan Coombe.'

These are examples of articles and a poem featured in the Oddfellows e-magazines.

## Does he love me?

By Jackie Ingleby-Douglass

Does he love me? Does he not?

Do I care? No not a jot

He stole my money and my heart

My mother warned me from the start

said I was pretty and so sweet,

then he swept me off my feet.

Way to go girl, friends did shout,

then drank and sang and fell about

toast the bride and toast the groom

they're fighting in another room

behind closed doors he was a cad

wicked evil and so bad

But I care not, why's that? You say,

because I know I'll have my day

The money wasn't mine to take

the bank account was just a fake

I'd spiked his drinks was that a sin

mixed in crushed up warfarin

I'm so pretty and so sweet

what I did was pretty neat.

## Water Torture

The white, frothy mass dripped bit by bit onto his head and up his nostrils, making him want to open his mouth and scream for help. He wanted to lash out with his arms but he could not because the torturer had his knee pressed firmly in his back. Suddenly, icy-cold tentacles slid over his head, steadily increasing their pressure. He began to choke and shake violently, his lungs gasping for air. His mind grew blurred and he imagined he was spinning through space. His whole body went numb with cold and he leaned against a white surface that was cold and hard. A great foaming cloud swept over his face as he bowed his head, only to have it dragged up again and the torture reapplied... Finally the cloud lifted - and he saw his mother smiling at him. 'Well', she said. 'That's your hair washed for another week!'

## I'm not that old... am I?

### Part One of Two

By Paul Fitton

Well I'm not old enough to remember the knocker-upper - but can you remember some of the old workers from the past? Way back. Way back to the... 1950s!

The days when you were served at a garage by a petrol pump attendant? They usually wore blue or grey overalls and walked out of the forecourt kiosk wiping their hands on an oily rag before asking, 'How many gallons, sir? 19s 6d for 4 gallons - and a 6d tip if he was lucky!

Night watchmen too! I can't remember the last time I saw an old man with a walrus moustache wrapped up in an overlarge overcoat with a muffler around his neck and his knobbly-boned hands warming over a crackling, yellow and red-flamed brazier.

I remember my Grandma's window cleaner in the 50s. He wore his oversized, black demob suit and a white shirt with no collar as he cleaned the glass. He resembled Pa Broon. He used to swing his old, wooden A-framed ladder around corners in the back yards without dismounting... until one day he didn't turn up, having fallen and broken his arm.

Can you remember tramps? I remember one with a scruffy beard and a scruffy tweed suit but with no shirt. Ruddy brown face, chest and hands. He carried a dark, stripped branch about a metre long... well, it was a yard long in those days! Tied onto the end of his stick was a red handkerchief with white spots. What mysterious objects did he possess in there? I've always wondered what his story may have been.

The excitement of hearing a steam roller and running to see the magnificent machine trundle backwards and forwards squashing anything in its path. Throwing anything you could find - no litter in those days - into the path of the heavy roller and watch to see what had happened after the mighty wheel had passed. The driver in his castle, sweat running down into his open necked shirt as he pulled

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out a dirty handkerchief to mop his brow, as he steered dexterously with one hand. Remember the 'cure-all' smell of the hot tarmac too?

The itinerant knife grinder, with his bicycle on its stand, pedalling to sharpen the knives and garden tools. He performed like a one-man band, legs and arms in constant motion. He always finished with the question, 'Anything else lady?' Reeling off a long list of Household items that could be sharpened.

French onion sellers. Black beret, hooped George Chisholm style tops. Black trousers and a string of French onions around his neck with more hanging each side of the back wheel of his black bike with a white mudguard. Classic! I remember my Mum telling me about the French Onion seller who came into her parents' pub in the 1920s. He frightened their cockatoo so much by pulling his knife so noisily across the bars of the cage that Cocky died instantly on the spot.

The parkie! In his brown, single-breasted, light cotton coat. You'd think that no one could see you when you were up to no good, like pulling a leaf off a privet hedge in the park, when a voice would pierce the air from a quarter of a mile away with, 'OI! YOU!' You'd run away in the opposite direction to the shout - and then he'd suddenly appear on the path right in front of you from behind a bush.

I can remember the milkman with his horse and cart from the late 50s. My Dad used to race to the horse to beat everyone else to the manure carrying his metal bucket and spade... and running, I used to try to keep up with him, with my rubber beach bucket and rubber spade. Five years later, the horse and cart had been replaced by a Fred the milkman with his electric United Diaries milk float. He didn't need to knock as you could always hear his whistling. What was his usual tune again? I recall my Mum leaving me with some money wrapped up in a note that read, 'Ask Fred for a receipt.' Well I was good at reading - but that was a new word for me and it took Fred some time to understand when I kept asking him for a 'ressipt' before showing him my Mum's note. He roared!

The binmen with their bin lorry with corrugated metal sides that rolled up. They wore leather sleeveless jackets and sou'westers and always rolled their white shirt sleeves up, whatever the weather. In those days, they'd walk all the way around to the back of the house before hoisting the metal bin full of ashes and rubbish wrapped in paper.

Ashes! The dusty coalmen. All the flying dust as the coalman dumped the sack by the coal bunker with its small trap door. Someone in the house usually had the job of shovelling all the coal in the top. The coalman was covered in coal - but if he took his peaked cap off to wipe his dirty forehead, his bald head would be as white and clean as a whistle!

When was the last time that you saw a bus conductor? I remember when I was about five stepping onto a bus all by myself - well you could then, couldn't you - two pennies clasped in my little hand asking the conductress if I was on the right bus for North Shields. I can still remember the angry look on her snarling face as she bit back with, 'The other side' and pressed the bell for the driver to start before I had a chance to leap off 'her' bus. Fortunately, the roads weren't as busy then as I remembered my, 'Look Right, Left and Right again' instruction and as 'the

road was clear, walked quickly to the other side of the road'.

.... and this all started from my Dad mentioning that he remembered the knockerupper! Do I remember the knocker-upper? Nah... probably still in bed!

### Paul Fitton 2020

Email [paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk) to see stories and poems such as these and much more.

## Oddfellows Memorabilia

Continuing Paul Fitton's regular look at Oddfellows memorabilia. The Oddfellows celebrated its centenary in 1910.



*This medal was presented in commemoration of the centenary for the Annual Movable Conference (AMC).*



*A South London District Juveniles Medal presented that year. It measures just over an inch, or three cm and has its original box.*

# 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 Angela on **020 7354 4748** or email **angela.hooker@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@manchestercab.org



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](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits/care)  
for care and welfare information**



# Social distancing doesn't mean no socials...

One of the great things about the Oddfellows is sharing good times with friends.

*Why not  
join in?*

Although we can't see each other face to face right now, we're doing lots of great stuff online.

Visit [www.oddfellows.co.uk/events/](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk/events/) to find out what's on this week or contact your local Branch.

# Penfellows - Find a new Penfriend with the Oddfellows

**Did you have a penfriend in your schooldays? The Oddfellows would like to rekindle those feelings and memories and help members make new friends with Penfellows.**

This great new service is safe, confidential and your details will not be released without your permission.

Many members may be looking for something new in their lives at the moment and what could be better than making a new friend. You can correspond by letter or email. It's up to you.

The focus of our new club is to help Oddfellows members find genuine penfriends within the organisation in a safe and secure environment.

To find your new penpal, simply write a short note about yourself and email it to [paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk) or post to Paul Fitton, 15 Moat Close, Orpington, Kent BR6 6ET. Your profile should be up to 120 words. You may wish to include your interests, the area where you live, your general age, ie Senior, your gender and the gender of the person with whom you wish to correspond.

Only Oddfellows member may join. The service is free to members of the Oddfellows.

The profile administrator will check each profile for appropriate content to ensure



Penfellows is a family friendly and a safe place to meet genuine friends. Junior members under the age of 18 years must provide parental consent.

You don't have to give your contact details until you are comfortable with the responses. All initial contact is made confidentially through the profile administrator.

To join Penfellows, email the following details to [paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk)

Name, general age, interests, preferred gender (if any) of your Penfellow and parental consent (if aged under 18 years).

To link up with a Penfellow profile, email the following details to [paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk](mailto:paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk)

The Penfellows reference number shown by their profile entry.

Penfellows for Oddfellows members:  
Safe and confidential.

Penfellows © Paul Fitton

## Time to say “Thank you!”



**It's true that lights shine brightest on the darkest of days as, since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, we've witnessed countless acts of kindness and the best of humankind.**

Jane Nelson, CEO, says, “Oddfellows has its own very special brand of friendship which goes a long way in helping our members through some difficult times, and these past few weeks have been extremely difficult for so many people. We are incredibly proud of each and every one of our Branches and all our volunteers for the fantastic way that they all rose to the challenge, and we can't thank them enough for their efforts.”

As with other local organisations supporting older or vulnerable people, including many who live alone or who

are shielding, our volunteers make a huge difference to the scale of help we can offer, such as making welfare check-in calls, organising essential shopping and providing company through befriending and online events.

Once again, our most heartfelt thanks go to the individuals who have given their time freely to be a friend to those in desperate need. We will not forget your kindness, and we hope that their example continues to inspire many others to offer their help where possible, long into the future.

Interested in becoming an Oddfellows member volunteer? Speak with your Branch Secretary, or take a look at [www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits/social/volunteering/](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits/social/volunteering/)

# Our emergency appeals

**At times of crisis, the Society has always looked for ways to help. Which is why, when our friends in Australia were fighting against bush fires at the end of 2019, our members rallied to offer their support.**



Reflecting on the donations, Oddfellows CEO Jane Nelson said: “Thank you again to all who have contributed to the Appeals, and for enabling those in need to receive the support they so desperately need, as well as to draw comfort from the knowledge that they have not been forgotten.”

We're pleased to tell you that the total amount raised by our members was £7,600. This money has gone directly to those affected, to help rebuild communities and provide valuable support.

We also launched our Coronavirus Emergency Appeal, in support of The Silver Line and the National Emergencies Trust's critical work during the pandemic. Both organisations work hard to ensure help and comfort is provided to those who desperately need it.



# We'd love to see you at our online events

**Just because you aren't able to come along to our usual face-to-face events at the moment, doesn't mean that you should have to miss out on all of the fun!**

Lots of our Branches are hosting online events, open to members from across the country, through Facebook Live or Zoom video conferencing. Don't have a smartphone or a computer with a camera? There's a phone-in option as well, so it's accessible to all.

Whether you're looking for exercise motivation with our Seated Yoga class, hosted by Swansea and Bridgend, or you'd like to test your general knowledge with Ipswich's weekly trivia quizzes, there is something for everyone. If you're struggling to get set up on Zoom, our Branches are on hand to help.



Give your local Social Organiser a call and they can talk you through the process. It's a free-to-use video conferencing tool, and it's a great way for you to stay in touch with your fellow members.

Facebook is another option. Lots of Branches have their own Facebook page updated regularly with events, news, fun quizzes and a little bit of humour to keep us smiling through these tough times. If you haven't liked your local Oddfellows page yet, get in touch with your Branch Secretary to ask for the link.

## Oddfellows Travel Unveiled

Despite there being restrictions on how and where we can travel at the moment, we're busy behind the scenes creating a brand-new line-up of short breaks, longer trips and cruises for 2021 under the new name Oddfellows Travel (formally Active Travel Club).

Rest assured, we're still working with our trusted third-party travel partners, Fred. Olsen, Warner Leisure Hotels, Haven and Leger Holidays who are ABTA and ATOL

protected, so you can be confident your booking is in good hands.

When you're thinking about taking your next trip, don't forget to look at what we have to offer. Whether you're a foodie, a culture vulture or a history buff, we hope to have a holiday that you'll love.

Visit Oddfellows Travel at [www.oddfellows.co.uk/travel](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk/travel)

# Hello fellow Oddfellows

**My name is Jackie Lancaster and as many of you may already know, I am working with North London as a social organiser.**

I was born in University College Hospital in Euston and have lived most of my life in North London. I now live in Finchley with my husband, Ian, and our black Labrador, Bella. Our four children have flown the nest now.

I worked in Manchester in the early 90s for several years at the BBC, which was then on Oxford Road. I worked on the production team for Janet Street Porter, a formidable boss, as you can imagine! My daughters also went to Uni there, so I know Manchester very well and am looking forward to getting up there to meet the Unity team and do my induction when lockdown is finally over.

I've worked in events and production in some form or other most of my life until I started working in the charity sector, and eventually became the Director of the Lord Mayor's Appeal for Dame Fiona Woolf (only the second female Lord Mayor of London in 690 years!).

I have several hobbies, painting and cooking being the two I love most. You may have seen some of my recipes in the e-magazine that Paul Fitton sends out every Saturday.



I really hope to be able to meet all of you in person too, though it has been lovely to talk to some of you on the phone, it's not the same as having a cup of tea or glass of wine together. I'm looking forward to hosting some events and getting to know you.

Please do get in touch if there is something you would like to see in the events calendar in the future (speaker, venue, outing etc.) All suggestions gratefully received.

Until then, best wishes, and keep safe.

**Jackie**

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