

May - July 2026



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

out & about

North London District



History



Art/Crafts



Online

Online



Dining Out



Walks



Games



Day Trip



Meetings



Social



Talks



Coffee Morning/
Afternoon Tea



Quiz



Welcome to the new edition of **Out & About**, incorporating **Cultured Comments**, the Magazine of North London District

Coming out of Hibernation

It's that time of year – a favourite time for many people after the dark winter months – when we emerge and start to think of new and varied places to go. North London Oddfellows has just the answer for you with 16 opportunities for you to socialise in the next three months.

Just look at the choices in the programme listings, mark your diary or calendar hanging up in the kitchen... and turn up on the day! With your help, the Oddfellows blazes on.

Out & About

You have plenty to read about in this 24 page edition. You can read pearls of wisdom from our regular columnists Linda Regan and Bob Sinfield and the clever words of our regular poet Jackie Ingleby-Douglass.

You may also read our regular features, such as 'Didn't we

have a Lovely Time', 'Oddfellows Memorabilia', 'Keep Young and Beautiful', 'Memory Lane', 'Society News' as well as one-off articles.

Retirement

Well, I retired from the role of District Event Organiser – and how lovely it is to look at my closed laptop every morning and poke my tongue out at it – knowing that I don't have to open it that day! I enjoyed the job and liaising with thousands of members – but life's much more relaxing now!

I must thank not just the members but colleagues, Committee members and District Trustees for their friendship and support in the past sixteen years. I'm continuing to edit *Out and About* and will continue to show how much more there is to Oddfellowship.

Paul Fitton
Editor

Front cover: Piccadilly Circus' Eros looks as if he might need an umbrella instead of a bow! Photo by Paul Fitton.

Paul Fitton's photo above shows a view from London Bridge station.

Contact Details

District Secretary: Terry Rowland

Address: North London District,
Oddfellows, Highbury Crescent
Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road,
London N5 1XA

Telephone: 020 7226 1740

Email:

terry.rowland@oddfellows.co.uk

Magazine Editor: Paul Fitton

Address: 15 Moat Close, Green St
Green, Orpington, Kent BR6 6ET

Telephone: 07851 910619

Email: paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk

Event Organiser: Jackie Lancaster

Telephone: 07788 418267

Email:

jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk

Event Organiser: Tracy Howard

Telephone: 07724 116247

Email:

tracy.howard@oddfellows.co.uk

**You are invited to send letters,
contributions and photos for the
magazine by the deadline of Friday
26 June 2026 to Paul Fitton.**

A Time to Rest

**By our Resident Poet
Jacqueline Ingleby-Douglass**

The sun shines brightly over me.
Looking round I see a bee.
Flowers, trees and birds so sweet,
looking for some food to eat.

Branches swaying on the trees
whispering softly in the breeze.
I hear a dog bark quite close by.
A screaming child is passing by.

Home time now for those in school.
Some look sad. Some act the fool.
As I sit, I've time to think,
time to eat and time to drink.

There's no hurry. All is well.
Being retired is - oh! so swell.
Worked many years, t'was all worthwhile.
Now it's time to rest a while.

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.

May 2026

FRI **01** Lunch at **The Alwyne Castle**



Photo by Ewan-M is licenced under the terms of the CC BY-SA 2.0.

Combining the best in British pub hospitality with individuality, character and quirky charm, The Alwyne Castle is the perfect setting for flavoursome food and an authentic, homely atmosphere located at the heart of London's thriving Highbury district. The Alwyne Castle is five minutes' walk from Highbury and Islington station and buses 19, 30, 263 and 277 stop nearby. Book by Thursday 30 April. The Alwyne Castle Pub, 83 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2LY. Contact Tracy on 07724 116247.

MON **18** Buon Appetito!



Ciao! For those of you who enjoy the taste of Italy, eat out with other members at Casa Mia. The family run business has served authentic Italian cuisine for over 30 years. The restaurant has a wonderful atmosphere decorated with traditional Italian surroundings ensuring a warm and authentic experience. Choices include a two course menu for £16.95. Fully licenced. Book by Friday 15 May. Casa Mia, 455 Uxbridge Road, Hatch End, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 4JS. Contact Terry on 020 72261740.



THURS **14** Warren Street Social



Our next couple of events will be BYO refreshments (wine, beer, soft drinks). Nibbles will be provided. Please let Jackie know a couple of days in advance if you would like to attend. Duchess House, 18-19 Warren Street (entrance first door on the left on Grafton Mews), London W1C 5LR. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.

May 2026

TUES 19 Tracy and the Beans Talk at our Highbury Coffee Morning!



11am



Free



Espresso yourself at the first of our regular Highbury coffee mornings. Join your host Tracy and sip, slice and socialise



with other members. Coffee mug photo by Paul Fitton. Book by 15 May. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Tracy on 07724 116247.

TUES 26 Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



Have you never painted anything before, or do you think that you can't paint? Give this online lesson a go! At the end of our one hour paintalong session with Dulcie, you'll have painted this Peacock. All you need are some basic paints/crayons and paper to join in. See what we've been up to recently on page 11. Contact Jackie for a direct Zoom link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.



FRI 22 Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom



11am



Entry free, pay for their own fare and food



This year's theme, 'Fairy Tales in Belgravia', will bring a sense of magic to the area, with displays inspired by nostalgia, imagination and other-worldly charm. Meet at Victoria train station and it's a 10 minute walk to the start of the displays. We will stop for lunch at 2pm at Big Easy at the Kings Road in Chelsea, taking advantage of the £11 weekday set menu which includes an



alcoholic or soft drink with the price. This is a free event but attendees pay for their own fare and food. Event organised by South London District for all members. Contact Amy on 07359 997795 for full details. Victoria Station, Victoria Street, London SW1V 1JU. Book by Thursday 21 May.

Photo by Loco Steve is licensed under the terms of the CC BY-SA 2.0.

May 2026

WED 27 Drawing in Waterlow Park

L 11am

£ Free



This is a wonderful opportunity to learn some gentle painting or drawing skills, or improve on the ones you already have. Don't worry if you have never drawn or painted anything before, be brave and come along! We are delighted that Lucy Feilden will be running this workshop for us. Lucy is both a landscape artist and art teacher (Hampstead School of Art, Camden School for Girls, Channing) with exhibits of her work in various galleries including Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.

Over two hours, Lucy will individually guide you through the principles of landscape drawing and painting, starting with some sketches. For those who already have some knowledge, this workshop will help you expand your skills using different techniques and build your confidence in painting outside. Basic materials will be provided. However, you may like to bring your own materials - a sketchbook, colour pencils, chalks or watercolours, but travel light as you may be moving about.

Meet at 11am on the terrace outside the café for a brief introduction before venturing into the park. The nearest tube is Archway on the Northern Line and buses run up the hill (turn left and walk up the hill to the bus stop) from there to Lauderdale House (263 and 210). Lauderdale House, Waterlow Park, Highgate Hill, London N6 5HG. Please let Jackie know on 07788 418267 if you would like to join this class a few days in advance.

June

FRI 12 Lunch at The Alwyne Castle

L 1pm

£ As per menu



We've lunched at The Alwyne Castle, a pub full of character, a few times this year and welcome new starters as well as regulars to enjoy good company and friendship. The Alwyne Castle is five minutes' walk from Highbury and Islington station and buses 19, 30, 263 and 277 stop nearby. Book by Wednesday 10 June. The Alwyne Castle Pub, 83 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2LY. Contact Tracy on 07724 116247.

June

THURS
18

The Perfect Playground



Michael Gilbert returns to present part two of his trilogy - The Perfect Playground. The Crystal Palace was surrounded by 200 acres of parkland. Its landscape included thousands of water features. Its life-sized models of prehistoric animals and large-scale events, festivals and sporting fixtures attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors. Today the future of the site is still under debate. Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield, London EN2 6TG. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.

TUES
23

Art Unscrewed



At the end of our one hour paintalong session with Dulcie, you'll have painted Watchful Cow. See what we've been up to recently on page 11. Contact Jackie for a direct Zoom link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.



TUES
30

Brew La-La! Highbury Coffee Morning!



Our regular Highbury coffee mornings continue. Join your host Tracy and sip, slice and socialise with other members. Don't be latte! Photo by Paul Fitton. Book by Friday 26 June. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Tracy on 07724 116247.



July

THURS
09

Warren Street Social



This month, please bring your own liquid refreshments (BYO) - nibbles will be provided. Duchess House, 18-19 Warren Street (entrance first door on the left on Grafton Mews), London W1C 5LR. Please let Jackie know on 07788 418267 a couple of days in advance if you would like to attend.

July

THURS
16

Char and Chat!



Come along for a cuppa with friends at the Enfield Baptist Church. Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield, London EN2 6TG. Please let Jackie know on 07788 418267 at least three days before if you will be attending.

TUES
21

Highbury Coffee Morning!



Gossip – but don't spill the beans at our monthly coffee morning in Highbury! Enjoy a relaxing morning with host Tracy. Book by Friday 17 July. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Tracy on 07724 116247.

TUES
28

Art Unscrewed



At the end of our one hour paintalong session with Dulcie, you'll have painted Beach Umbrella. See what we've been up to recently on page 11. Contact Jackie for a direct Zoom link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.



THURS
23

National Gallery with Roger Turner



Earlier in the year Roger took us on a guided tour of the National Gallery (choosing five wonderful works of art to talk about). It was such a success that we have asked Roger to do another talk for us and we are delighted that he said yes! Different paintings this time. We will have refreshments in the gallery's Muriel's Kitchen café afterwards. Meet at 2pm for a 2.15pm start in the Sainsbury Wing entrance by the pillar on the left. Nearest tube stations to the National Gallery are Charing Cross and Leicester Square. The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN. Please book your spot on this tour with Jackie on 07788 418267 in advance.



Chairman's Letter

Here we are at the end of my term of office. I had the honour of receiving the title of Provincial Grand Master of North London District in 2023 and have continued in the role for 3 years.

North London District is in remarkably good shape. As Chairman I am grateful to every member of staff and of course to each of you as Members for that fact. I am also very grateful for all the time put in by our District Committee, a very worthy band of volunteers with nothing but Oddfellowship at their hearts.

May I ask you to look back on this past year and reflect on the enjoyment and benefit that you may have derived from Oddfellows.

It may have been a memorable event that you attended that gave you much pleasure, a wonderful meal that you enjoyed in convivial company, or a face to face or Zoom presentation that you found extremely interesting. Whichever it was, all of these

experiences come together to create our wonderful friendship organisation.

We have many membership benefits too, of course. Not just optical and dental reimbursements but Convalescence Benefit, the Orphans' Fund and Distress Grants and many more.*

My best wishes to you and your families for the future.

**Lyndon Adolph
Provincial Grand Master
(District Chairman)**

****Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. All Oddfellows benefits are non-contractual and may be withdrawn at any time without notice. For more information visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/terms-conditions or call 0800 028 1810.***



Oddfellows Memorabilia

Paul Fitton continues his look at past Oddfellows items

I have seen a jewel like this sell for £600. This one was 'Presented to PGP John Williams by the Brothers of the Lord Palmerston Lodge as a mark of respect for past services 11 April 1876'. The Lodge was part of Dover District, in Kent.



Calling All Foodies!

Warren Street Socials

New faces have joined our monthly Warren Street soirées this year. Members braved the rain to attend the January session while the February social had a Valentine's theme.

Our table is always filled with the warm hum of conversation. Laughter bubbles up among the friends, punctuating shared stories while they savour the delightful taste and texture of

the food. A moment of connection, bringing smiles and comfort to everyone gathered around the table. Have a word with host Jackie Lancaster, who organises the monthly socials in our Warren Street Rooms: Call or call **07788 418267** or email **jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk**.

Photos by Jackie Lancaster



*Valentine's table -
Photo by Jackie Lancaster.*



*Our member Loraine enjoying
herself at a Warren Street social.*

'Eton' out in Harrow

We're continuing our traditional meals out in Harrow with a meal at Casa Mia in Hatch End, Pinner in May. We've visited this delightful family-owned restaurant a few times before. It has a traditional Italian menu in an Italianate decorated space with arched windows and ceiling beams. See the listings in this magazine.

Lunch in Highbury

We've booked tables at The Alwyne Castle in Highbury a few times this Spring. It's a pub with a cosy atmosphere with outside seating as well as indoor tables and a conservatory dining area. We've hosted two successful events there recently so it comes highly recommended. See the listings for dates and times.

Coffee and Friends make the Perfect Blend

Good times happen over good coffee and Tracy Howard is looking forward to meeting members at the monthly coffee mornings that she has arranged in our Highbury Crescent Rooms. There's a cup of coffee with your name on it waiting for you to sip while you socialise - although tea is available too! When are these events taking place? Well, the dates are 19 May, 30 June and 21 July at 11 am. You can find full details in the events listings in this magazine and at www.oddfellows.co.uk/events.



Art for Art's Sake



'Goldfish' - A painting by member Isabel Glasscock from a recent Art Unscrewed session.

Unlock your creativity and transform a blank canvas into your masterpiece, Dulcie's monthly paintalongs allow you to spend a relaxing hour following her brush strokes and guidance. The result? A painting and a feeling of satisfaction with your own version of the original as you find your inner artist.

You can read about future events, including the three paintings that we will be copying this

quarter - Peacock, Watchful Cow and Beach Umbrella - in the programme in this edition.

Although acrylic paints would be most suitable for the sessions, you may use any media you wish - oils, watercolour or gouache too. Some at the class use crayon or coloured pencil and even ink and charcoal. Regarding brushes, perhaps a couple of sizes, up to half an inch. It would also be a good idea to keep a hair dryer to hand to speed dry during the painting session.

You should also have a palette knife or similar handy. If not, perhaps a kitchen knife, bit of hard cardboard or canvas wood sticks are also suitable. You may also require a sponge for some sessions too.

Suitable materials may be bought reasonably from suppliers such as Works or Smiths/Jones as well as specialist art shops and the internet. The sessions last an hour and are presented online via Zoom. You may visit www.zoom.com and add Meeting ID: 209 274 1626 or contact Jackie for a direct link at jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.

Bob Sinfield Salutes Maureen Lipman

I'll never forget my night with Maureen Lipman. Don't worry, it was all above board and in full view of seven million people, each of them glued to BBC1 for 'The Russell Harty Christmas Party'.



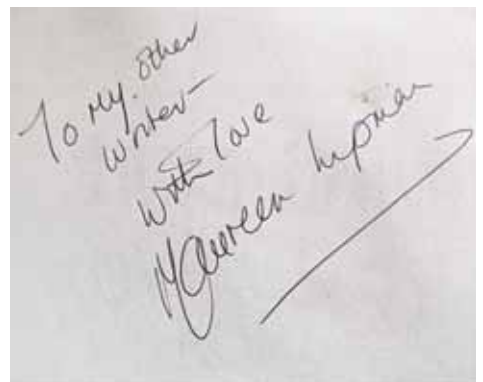
This annual event featured celebrity guests performing their party pieces. 1981's outing included Patrick Moore playing his xylophone with Deryck Guyler on the washboard and Raymond Baxter in full 1920s drag, singing "I Went to a Marvellous Party". For the finale, a choir of MPs (including David Steel) offered a medley of carols, led by Anita Harris. I am not making this up.

One notable absentee from the Parliamentary chorus was the then Prime Minister, Margaret Hilda Thatcher, so it fell to Ms Lipman to don a blonde wig, navy blue suit and court shoes for a scurrilous take-off of the Iron Lady. Until that point, very few people knew about Maureen's powers of mimicry, let alone her ability to caricature the Tory leader... but I was one of them.

The reason I remember all this so clearly is that Maureen had asked me to write her script. This was particularly generous of her as she already had a writer of her

own at home: her husband, the esteemed playwright Jack Rosenthal. As a fledgling scribbler, eager for work, I'd had the cheek to contact her in the hope that she might give me a leg-up, so to speak. Previously, I'd written sketches for topical radio shows like 'Week Ending' and 'The News Huddlines' but this was my maiden voyage on the choppy waters of television - live television at that! I couldn't believe my luck.

It was all going tremendously well until the break between the camera rehearsal in the afternoon and the evening transmission. There had been much appreciative laughter from the honourable members at the run-through but later it emerged that one of their number was most aggrieved and had raised a complaint with the producer. To our astonishment, the complainant was none other than David Steel, the last person we'd thought would take exception to a send-up of his main political opponent - but the nature of his objection made perfect sense when we heard it: he wanted us to include a joke about him. For a politician, anything's better than being ignored!



We had to think of something - and fast. I, the great writer, was totally stumped but quick-witted Maureen came up with a line about the Liberal leader and his SDP cohort Shirley Williams. So, one hour later, the viewing public and a rapturous studio audience heard her refer to them as Sapphire and Steel. It was funny that night, anyway.

To this day, I remain a huge fan of Maureen Lipman, not just for her considerable acting skills but also for her immense kindness and encouragement. Whenever we've run into each other since, she's taken one look at my bald head, dropped into her Thatcher voice and said, 'Well well, if it isn't my old friend Norman Tebbit!'

Update on RNLI Sheringham

You'll recall that we reported last year that all activity at Sheringham RNLI has been suspended after analysis of a structural survey of the lifeboat station building resulted in serious safety concerns. The Oddfellows has paid for three lifeboats, a number of refits and works in connection with the station and support for the volunteer crews at the lifeboat station for 64 years.



We are now pleased to advise you that:

- The RNLI are committed to reopening a refurbished station and engineering and planning has commenced
- The North Norfolk District Council has extended the lease on the land that the station sits, to 25 years
- The Oddfellows has an agreement with the RNLI for us to sponsor the next Lifeboat at Sheringham and this has been now been manufactured
- Current planning suggests that the station will be completed and open towards the end October 2026

- The existing crew continue to operate and train from Cromer and this will continue.

Your continued support and donations to the Oddfellows restricted fund for Sheringham Lifeboat and Station is valued. East Anglian Group Conference manages this support fund on behalf of the Oddfellows. Donation can be by cheque made out to The East Anglian Group Conference Lifeboat Fund. Please send your cheque to Tracy Howard at North London District, Oddfellows, Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, London N5 1XA.

Didn't we have a Lovely Time

By Paul Fitton

Songs of Stage and Screen

Members stepped out of the busy streets of Covent Garden into the beautiful Actor's Church – St Paul's - for a free lunchtime concert celebrating the magic of stage and screen. The music featured a mix of favourites from Les Mis, Prince of Egypt, Sound of Music, West Side Story, Wicked, Lord of the Rings, Gladiator, Sound of Music and more.

Vivienne Jones loved the concert. She said, 'Amazing performance. Tissues out. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming'.

Sing Along Christmas Carols at Lauderdale House

This outdoor event was cancelled due to heavy rain.



Photo of the internationally acclaimed Kosmos Ensemble by Jackie Lancaster.

Lunchtime Concert at Holy Trinity Church

Kosmos Ensemble glided through exciting music from several European cultures as well as vibrant Asian melodies into hot-blooded tango. The Grade I listed Holy Trinity Church in South Kensington, is

an 'oasis of calm within the busy area of Albertopolis'. The richly decorated screen behind and above the altar served as a beautiful backdrop for the concert.

London Silver Vaults



Photo by Can Pac Swire and is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic licence.

After organising about 1750 events as District Event Organiser, Paul Fitton's final Inter-District trip was with 18 members to see the magnificent London Silver Vaults in Holborn.

The secure underground chamber has the largest collection of silverware for sale in the world. Visitors have a choice of purchasing thousands and thousands of items. How can this be safe? Originally a safe depository for London's wealthy aristocracy, the site now houses about 30 sellers in cell-like rooms of different sizes behind an incredible oval-shaped heavy metal door three feet thick and four feet steel walls! Unsurprisingly, no burglary has ever taken place there.

Many familiar faces have passed through the huge steel vault doors: Mick Jagger, Princess Margaret, J K Rowling, Liberace, Anthony Hopkins, Diana Ross, Woody Allen and Gregory Peck, to mention a few. Royal families, including the British nobility shop in the underground arcades.

With so much to see, it wasn't surprising that some members bought some silver items. The visit was an incredible experience.

Our party lunched at The Cittie of Yorke in Holborn. One of London's most unusual pubs, it was rebuilt in 1923 in a medieval style, influenced by the Arts & Crafts Movement and styled to look like an Olde English baronial hall. It was a lovely way to sign-off and as usual, still see members from different areas of London meet and exchange contact details to see enjoy each others' company at future Oddfellows events.

Art Tour of the National Gallery

Art expert Roger Turner walked through the UK's premier art gallery to reveal hidden delights in several paintings on display, such as Renaissance artist Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Wedding, one of only nine of his works remaining.

The event was so popular with members that Roger will be talking about more paintings at the National Gallery on Thursday 23 July (see page 8).



Photo of members at the National Gallery by Jackie Lancaster

The Green, Green Grass of Home - Part One

By Jacqui Lowther

I spent my young school days in Cardiff as all my Mother and Father's family are of Welsh stock, including them.

My brother and I were born in London, not Wales and this was due to the very bad unemployment that existed in the '30s.

Our Dad thought he would have more chance of a job if he went to London so they both walked there from Cardiff. It took them a week, sleeping under haystacks and barns, if they were lucky.

Unemployment was rife all over the country also, it was extra hard for the Welsh and Irish as the Londoners thought that they were taking their jobs. This meant men queuing very early in the morning at building sites to see if they wanted any extra men and hoping the Foreman liked the look of you. Our Dad was a bricklayer and extremely lucky to get a week's work, but even that was in the lap of the Gods, because if it rained, men were 'rained off'. Most times he would only get a day or two days' work.

In 1938, Our Dad's Stepfather wrote to him, (no phones in those days) and said that he could get him a job working with him on a building site in Cardiff, so he promptly bought himself a cheap second bike and pedalled all the way back to Cardiff (The Green Green Grass of Home).

He lodged with his Mother and Step Dad and hoped one day to save enough money so that he could rent a place for us all to live. Meanwhile he sent our Mam a Postal Order every week for her to pay the rent and buy groceries. We had a basement flat in Shepherds Bush (they are now called Garden Flats). She also had a part time job in Cadburys in Hammersmith. As a perk for the staff, she was allowed to purchase delicious, scrumptious Cadbury chocolate Swiss rolls for a penny every Friday night at finishing time.

In 1939, Mam took us on the 'Milk Train; from Paddington to Cardiff to spend our school holidays with our Dad. The week-end she returned to take us back to London, War was declared.

Our Grandparents, our parents and Aunts and Uncles all got together and had a long discussion well into the night and decided that London would be one of Hitler's prime targets (which proved to be very true). So, it was decided that it would be safer for the children (us) to remain in Cardiff.

My brother, Georgie and I were heart-broken the next morning to be told that 'Mammy' had gone back to London without us, but, we were consoled with the fact that it would only be a few more weeks as the war wouldn't last that long!

Read part two in the next edition.

Linda Regan

What joy, it's spring. This is my favourite time of the year. I particularly love the month of May. Not only are a multitude of beautiful flowers and trees in full bloom, spreading their colours for promises of the sunny days to come, but also because the month of May gives us two free days: Bank Holidays.

Seems appropriate, as we Londoners are surrounded by beautiful listed houses and gardens, that many of us choose to visit these on, bank holiday days. The gardens, then, are in full bloom.

I have to admit to visiting Chartwell House, last year (The Manor home of Winston Churchill). It was full of history and beautiful flowers, but what brought a smile to my face was the very large 'NO SMOKING', sign displayed in the house. I wondered if the man himself was looking down, still with a cigar in the corner of his mouth, shaking his head and grinning at the thought of the many cigars he himself had smoked in there.

Bank holidays are a chance to take a day to ourselves to do what we like. Not everyone has a holiday though, as when I looked up why bank holidays came to be, it goes back years. Apparently, In the year 1871, they were declared as Bank Days as all the banks closed on these days, in order to count their money (It wouldn't take them a full day to count mine!).

Going even further back, as far back as Roman days, May Days, as they were named then, were given for prayer, to give thanks to the God of Flowers. I wonder if the God of Flowers is our influence still, and why many people choose to visit gardens or garden centres, or even do

their own gardening on the now Bank Holiday days.

And going even further back, the Gaelic communities had the two holiday days down to pray and ward off evil spirits. I have a clear memory of a weekend spent in Dublin, which I spent mostly in bed with only aspirin to keep me company, trying to ward off the effects of the spirit of pure brandy, given to me as a welcome to Dublin, and known to the Gaelic community as *fire water!*

In England, May Day marks the end of the first year of the Northern hemisphere, and was originally celebrated by maypole dancing, where people, wearing bells and flowers on their shoes, danced and weaved in circles, with each other, around flower decorated poles. Moving forward in, to post-war days, people danced in their streets on May Days in praise of having to do no work and there being no war. The women often danced using their brooms as their partner. Could this street dancing, perhaps, be the origins of the Notting Hill Carnival, I wondered, although now it takes place on August Bank Holiday.

Also, these days, pole dancing has taken on a whole new meaning. With many pole dancing clubs opening up around London and the suburbs, I wonder would our modern pole dancing dancers, perhaps, now, be better, danced on the days of a full moon!

Linda Regan is a film, television and stage actress, columnist, speaker and a successful novelist. Linda's husband Brian Murphy was an Oddfellow.



Keep Young and Beautiful - Part Five[©]

By Paul Fitton

Here is some more much-needed travel advice for the older teenagers among us.

Using public transport can be good, or bad after a certain age. I recall the first time that someone offered me their seat on a bus. Offended, I managed to politely decline, through gritted teeth. I was aged 62. Roll forward ten years and I stand on a crowded tube today, staring steely-eyed at the much younger pensioners sitting down on 'my' chair, hoping and praying that they'll smile and politely offer it to me.

These London Freedom passes are good, aren't they. Free travel on buses nationwide and free train and tube travel in London and its peripheries. If only we could use them to take taxis too. Well, I suppose that you could use them in a taxi – but then you'd have to be able to run away very quickly. That may not suit everybody.

That reminds me of the time when I was waiting at a bus stop and a jogger ran by. One old lady joked with her friend, "I can't remember when I was able to raise my legs that high!" I chortled.

My parents used to make use of their Freedom passes when not using their car. They told me of a conversation they had with a fellow bus passenger, who proudly declared, 'I'm 79 you know.' They smiled

at each other and politely carried on the conversation but without telling her that they were in their 90s and on their way to their regular dance!

Well, that's public transport done. You could always use your car, as long as you can remember where you parked it! A teacher at my school, noted for his forgetfulness, 'borrowed' the school minibus one weekend to help him with his part-time antiques business. After purchasing some items, he returned to the car park, only to find an empty space. No minibus! It had disappeared. He searched and searched, eventually giving up and calling the police. Well, he thought, at least he would have more time to build up his antiques business if he was sacked for using and losing the school minibus.

The local constabulary rang him later the following day. They had found the vehicle. He returned to the spot they said, in the car park. It was exactly where he had left it the day before! Memory plays some strange tricks!

Let's finish our travel-related feature for the older person with the fact that when we retire, our friends say that we all travel more. They don't say that it is to the doctors and hospital.

Until next time.

Oddies autumn getaway to Llandudno

Join us as we take a trip to Llandudno, North Wales, on an Oddfellows-hosted group holiday with Alfa Travel.

Oddfellows members and guests will take in some breathtaking scenery during a four-night stay at the Hydro Hotel from Saturday 26 September to Wednesday 30 September 2026.

From £369 per person, half board, the price includes coach pick up and drop off from locations across the South East via Reading, or a self-arrival option.



Outstanding natural beauty

Two optional day trips are included in the price of the holiday.

On day two, you'll head by coach to the Isle of Anglesey, where the entire coastline has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. You'll call at the seaside town of Beaumaris with its mix of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

On day four, the second day trip will head to Caernarfon, home to Wales' most famous castle and a UNESCO World

Heritage Site. Afterwards, you'll venture into the Snowdonia National Park, calling at Llanberis, situated at the foot of Mount Snowdon, and Porthmadog.

Relax in great company

We'll be organising some group drinks and times to dine together during the stay, and enjoying the hotel's evening entertainment, but your days will be largely free to plan as you please.

The hotel has a large entertainment suite with a dance floor and entertainment most evenings, and there are sun lounges and a games room with a snooker table.

You'll also find spectacular views over the bay or over the town to the Snowdonia mountain range from many of the hotel's bedrooms and from its Looking Glass Bar.

Interested in joining us?

This group holiday is open to any members and their guests and will be hosted by our Oddfellows Travel coordinator and South East Lancashire Branch member, Emma Gorst.

For any enquiries, and to find out how to book, get in touch with Emma by calling **0161 214 4634**, or email travel@oddfellows.co.uk.

Please read and understand Alfa Travel's terms and conditions before booking at www.alfaholidays.co.uk/booking-conditions.

Support with fundraising and donations

Donating to good causes is a cornerstone of Oddfellowship, and symbolises what it is all about – helping to improve lives through friendship and support.

It's a thread that runs right through every Branch of the Society. Whether it's members dropping some spare change into a collection at a coffee morning, or the HA Andrews Memorial Fund supporting cutting-edge medical research projects, it all adds up and contributes to that ethos.

Branch donations add up to huge 2025 total



Reading Oddfellows donated £4,300 to Camp Mohawk

Oddfellows branches and members are avid fundraisers. In 2025, more than £148,000 was handed over to a huge range of wonderful causes throughout the country.

Beneficiaries included schools, charities for people with special needs, animal sanctuaries, causes to improve health conditions, lifeboat and air ambulance

charities, and one branch provided the funds required to buy state-of-the-art medical equipment.

As well as handing over funds, many members bought and collected for foodbanks, including tinned goods and other long-life foods, toiletries and further everyday items.

To find out how you can get involved with Branch fundraising initiatives, speak to your Branch Secretary.

£10,000 raised for Hurricane Melissa relief efforts

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

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

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

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



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

HA Andrews Memorial Fund recipient announced

In October 2025, representatives of the Oddfellows visited the impressive facilities at the Manchester Cancer Research Centre (MCRC) to present a cheque for £67,068 to Prevent Breast Cancer, courtesy of our HA Andrews Memorial Fund.

The money will fund an innovative breast cancer prevention research project for two years.

Carried out by University of Manchester PhD student Anthony Wilby and Dr Hannah Harrison, the project is aiming to discover alternative preventative breast cancer therapies for pre-menopausal women.

The HA Andrews Memorial Fund, which was set up in 1971 to back UK-based medical research projects and organisations, has donated over £1.1m

since its launch. Head to www.oddfellows.co.uk/ha-andrews to find out more about the Fund, including previous recipients.

The very best of Oddfellowship

Spokesperson for the Oddfellows, Pam Casey (pictured below at MCRC), said: "The work the Oddfellows does for charities and good causes always astounds me. It reflects the very best of Oddfellowship and it makes me incredibly proud.

"Donating to good causes, no matter how big or small, or how much we can contribute, can make a huge difference. Our efforts might well have saved a life, put some food on a young family's table, or simply have made someone's day a little brighter.

"Thank you to everyone who has helped in any way. You're all a huge credit to yourselves and the Society."



For more on how the Oddfellows raises money for good causes, visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/about/giving-back

Spring clean your finances for the new tax year

The start of the new tax year on Monday 6 April might sound like an event reserved for accountants, but at Unity Mutual, the Oddfellows' financial services brand, we believe it's a time everyone can make the most of.

Here are some simple ways to spring clean your finances and get on top of your money for the tax year ahead.

Make the most of your ISA

Every adult receives a fresh £20,000 ISA allowance at the beginning of each tax year, so if your savings are lying dormant, why not move them somewhere your interest is protected from tax?



For those comfortable with investment risk, the Unity Mutual Stocks and Shares Flexible ISA* offers potentially higher growth than traditional Cash ISAs (capital is at risk).

Guaranteed returns, less hassle

If you have a lump sum sitting idle or an investment coming to maturity, a Unity

Mutual Fixed Rate Bond* provides a predictable, low-effort option. Simply deposit your money for a set term to secure a guaranteed return.

Even better, Oddfellows members benefit from preferential rates on our 2, 3, and 5-year Bonds.

Make savings work harder

With many banks still offering low rates, a quick comparison is essential to ensure your money is working for you. Even moving savings to a higher-interest account with your current provider can significantly boost your balance over the year.

Find out more

Unity Mutual has over 200 years of experience managing Oddfellows members' funds, and our friendly team is on hand to help you navigate the year ahead. Visit www.unitymutual.co.uk to find out more.

**Terms and conditions apply to all products. With stocks and shares, your investment can go down as well as up meaning your capital is at risk.*

New tax year, new scams

Stay vigilant against common scams such as fake HMRC tax rebates or urgent payment requests for 'unpaid tax'. While these communications can look genuine, always verify them by going directly to the official government website.



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 your Branch Secretary Terry Rowland on 020 7226 1740.

Oddfellows Citizens Advice Line

Call 0800 0149 821*

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm

Email: oddfellows@citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk

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

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

Care and Welfare Helpline

Call 0800 0149 822

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

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

Email: care@oddfellows.co.uk

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

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

At a glance

May 2026

Fri 1	Lunch at The Alwyne Castle	1pm
Thurs 14	Warren Street Social	5.45pm
Mon 18	Buon Appetito!	1pm
Tues 19	Tracy and the Beans Talk at our Highbury Coffee Morning!	11am
Fri 22	Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom	11am
Tues 26	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Wed 27	Drawing in Waterlow Park	11am

June

Fri 12	Lunch at The Alwyne Castle	1pm
Thurs 18	The Perfect Playground	2pm
Tues 23	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Tues 30	Brew La-La! Highbury Coffee Morning!	11am

July

Thurs 9	Warren Street Social	5.45pm
Thurs 16	Char and Chat!	2pm
Tues 21	Highbury Coffee Morning!	11am
Thurs 23	National Gallery with Roger Turner	2pm
Tues 28	Art Unscrewed	4pm

Traditional Terms

Grand Master (GM): Chairman

Provincial Grand Master (Prov GM): District Chairman

Provincial Deputy Grand Master (Prov DGM):
District Deputy Chairman

Provincial Corresponding Secretary (Prov CS):
District Secretary – responsible for administering Branches

Immediate Past Provincial Grand Master (IPPGM):

Immediate Past District Chairman

Past Provincial Grand Master (PPGM): Past District Chairman

Lodge: Branch

Brother and Sister: Traditional term used in Unions, Guilds and Fraternal organisations to suggest mutual support and family

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