

August - October 2026



the
ODDfELLOWS SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people

out & about

North London District



History



Art/Crafts



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

Friendship Month

Having a good set of friends around you makes all the difference to your happiness. That's why, every September, we stage our national celebration of friendship. It's all about bringing people together to enjoy each other's company, and promote the benefits of getting involved in a local friendship group such as the Oddfellows.

Teas, talks, lunches and walks – you'll find all sorts of exciting social events and activities, plus plenty of free online events to enjoy from home. Visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/events to discover more.

Sharing and Helping

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 Tracy Howard

know if you would like any more copies to share. (See contact details on opposite page).

Out & About

I hope that you enjoy this issue and in particular that you find an event that you would like to attend.

We don't have a table of Contents – but I can tell you that we have our regular contributors Linda Regan, Bob Sinfield and Jackie Ingleby-Douglass entertaining you. In addition, you can read all of your usual favourites: Didn't we have a Lovely Time, Oddfellows Memorabilia, Keep Young and Beautiful, Memory Lane, Society News as well as a new regular feature, called The Numbers Game and one-off articles such as Oddfellows in the USA.

Paul Fitton
Editor

Front cover: Members on an outing to Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom. You can read more about the day out on pages 12 and 13. Photo by Amy Thomas.

The photo above shows members on a guided tour of London's City – London's Burning – see page 12.'

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

August 2026

TUES
11

**Great Coffee -
Better Company!**



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. Book by Friday 7 August. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Tracy on 07724 116427.



THURS
13

**Summer Spritz at
Warren Street**



5.45pm



Members £6
Guests £10



Join us in Warren Street for a Summer Spritz (wine and soda) and some snacks. Duchess House is a three minute walk from Warren Street tube station. Book by Thursday 6 August. 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 if you would like to attend.



August 2026

THURS
20

The Perfect Playground



2pm



Free



Michael Gilbert returns to present part three of his trilogy about the Crystal Palace. The Perfect Playground tells the story of the grounds and the great fire. 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. Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield, London EN2 6TG. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.



WED
26

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



Have you ever 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 paint along session with Dulcie, you'll have painted this Summer Bee. All you need are some basic paints/crayons and paper to join in. Contact Jackie for a direct link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.

FRI
28

Lunch at The Alwyne Castle



1pm



As per menu



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 Monday 24 August. The Alwyne Castle Pub, 83 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2LY. Contact Tracy on 07724 116427.



September

ODDFELLOWS

FRIENDSHIP MONTH

1 - 30 SEPTEMBER



THURS
10

Friendship Month at Warren Street



5.45pm



Members £6
Guests Free



September is Friendship Month and the ideal time to bring someone to Warren Street who has never been before. Or, if you have heard of Oddfellows and would like to give us a try, please do come along - we would love to meet you! Duchess House is a three minute walk from Warren Street tube station. Book by Thursday 3 September. 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 if you would like to attend.



TUES
15

Come for the Coffee, Stay for the Connections!



11am



Free



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 11 September. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Tracy on 07724 116427.



TUES
29

Trip to Romford Dogs and Lunch



10am



Members £12
Guests £22.50



Fancy a flutter at the dogs? Join us for a thrilling afternoon at the iconic Romford Stadium. We will be leaving the Islington Lodge at 10am prompt in a minibus to arrive in time for you to place a bet before having a three course lunch. We will return to the Lodge by approximately 5pm. Tickets are £12 for members which includes the lunch (drinks not included) and transport. Secure one of the limited places transferring the cost of your ticket to the Lodge bank account (details from Terry or Jackie). Book by Tuesday 8 September. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267 or Terry on 020 7226 1740.



September



TUES
29

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



At the end of our one hour paint along session with Dulcie, you'll have painted a Seagull. Contact Jackie for a direct link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.

October

THURS
01

Lunchtime Concert at Lauderdale House



1pm



Free



Lauderdale House's Chamber Opera Ensemble in residence start a new season of lunchtime concerts in the beautiful Long Gallery, overlooking Waterlow Park. Doors open at 1pm and the concert starts at 1.15pm. The concerts finish at 2pm. Jackie will be upstairs in the Long Gallery. Please let her know if you would like to attend. Lauderdale House can be reached by 263 or 210 bus from Archway tube station (five minutes up the hill) or from Golders Green on the 210 (25 minutes). Book by Thursday 24 September. Lauderdale House, Waterlow Park, Highgate Hill, London N6 5HG. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.

FRI
02

Lunch at The Alwyne Castle



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 Monday 28 September. The Alwyne Castle Pub, 83 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2LY. Contact Tracy on 07724 116427.

October

THURS
08

Cheese and Wine at Warren Street



5.45pm



Members £6
Guests £10



We will be tasting some cheeses from around the world! Drinks to accompany the cheese. Duchess House is a three minute walk from Warren Street tube station. Book by Thursday 1 October. 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 if you would like to attend.

TUES
13

Highbury Coffee Morning!



11am



Free



Gossip - but don't spill the beans at our monthly coffee morning in Highbury! Enjoy a relaxing morning with host Tracy. Book by Friday 9 October. Highbury Crescent Rooms, 70 Ronalds Road, Islington, London N5 1XA. Contact Tracy on 07724 116427.

THURS
15

Char and Chat!



2pm



Free



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 07788 418267 at least three days before if you will be attending.

TUES
27

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



At the end of our one hour paint along session with Dulcie, you'll have painted 'Ramshackle Hut and Poppies'. Contact Jackie for a direct link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.

FRI
30

Lunch at The Alwyne Castle



1pm



As per menu



Our popular meeting place, The Alwyne Castle opens its doors for us again. We welcome new members and 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 Monday 26 October. The Alwyne Castle Pub, 83 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2LY. Contact Tracy on 07724 116427.

Chairman's Letter

Welcome to the latest edition of Out and About.

Let me introduce myself as the new North London District's Provincial Grand Master (District Chairman).

Many long-standing members will already know me, as I have been an Oddfellow since birth and am a fourth-generation member. My great-grandfather chaired his local branch in 1910, which was the centenary year of the Oddfellows.

Both my mother and grandfather served as North London District's Provincial Grand Master (District Chairman). I previously held the role in 2005, and this is my second time serving as District Chairman.

I have held several roles within the North London District, including serving as a District Trustee for over 20 years, a role I continue to hold.

I currently serve on the Investigation Committee, a national Oddfellows committee that asks questions of the Board of Directors on behalf of members.



Alongside the social side of the Society, The Oddfellows also has business and ceremonial aspects. If you would like to take a more active role in these areas, please contact our District Secretary Terry Rowland on 020 7226 1740 for further information. We remain a unique society, owned and governed by our members.

I hope to meet many of you at events throughout the year. In the meantime, I wish everyone a good summer, and it is lovely to finally see some warm days and sunshine.

Nicholas Norman

Memories of the 60s

By Charlie Boswell

The first LP I ever bought was Otis Blue (mainly because of My Girl). It cost about £1 10 shillings in 1966. My wage was £7 3 shillings a week. Mum took £2 10 shillings for keep.

Previous to that from about 1963 I had purchased Ray Charles, The Animals and the Yardbirds singles. Watched the Animals when they came down to the 100 Club in Oxford Street in 1964/5. Think it was about 5 shillings to get in.

On another matter if any of you have Sky Movies there is a film called the Street. It's about Hoxton Street where I lived for the first 22 years of my life. There are five people in the film that I know, one of whom (Alan outside Paula's Café) that I still meet up with today. His brother was my best friend back in the day.

Yours truly ran a market stall on Saturdays from 1962 to 1965 earning 10 shillings.



Around and About

We've had some fun this summer.

In addition to our days out, members have regularly enjoyed meals in Highbury district and our rooms in Warren Street as well as light refreshments in Enfield and our hall in Islington.

This photo above shows happy Enfield members who heard Michael Gilbert's second presentation about the Great Exhibition of 1851, covering the move to Crystal Palace. Michael is returning to present the third part of his trilogy on Thursday 20 August.

Jackie Lancaster has also hosted monthly meet-ups at Duchess House in Warren Street. Our room is filled to capacity each time. A glass of wine and some appetizers has been a lovely way to unwind in the late afternoon/early evening of this beautiful summer.

Look for the opportunities to make friends, eat and be merry in the listings in this edition of Out and About, or at www.oddfellows.co.uk/events.



Georgie Welford enjoying life at Duchess House. Photo by Jackie Lancaster.

Picture above: Members at Enfield Baptist Church in Enfield – photo by Jackie Lancaster.

Canvassing Opinion

This summer has been about art. We've painted the town red and many other colours too.

Not only have we provided online painting instruction every month but we have also helped members explore their talent at an exclusive outdoor tutorial in Waterlow Park in Highgate.

Roger Turner is taking us on our second visit to the National Gallery this year

where he will delve into the background of five carefully-selected canvases. More about that in the next edition.



In the meantime, enjoy Jackie Lancaster's photos from the various classes this year.



Ever been Gobsmacked?

Twenty years ago, Pride of Islington Lodge held annual pantos at their Crescent Rooms home in Ronalds Road. A theatrical company called Gobsmacked Productions performed for members and their families.

The company showcased Aladdin in 2004, when '123 youngsters (aged from two to 92) all played their part with hissing and booing at the appropriate times... I still haven't worked out how the gorilla fits into the story but it all added to the fun.' This was free for Members with a request for donations to a charity raffle.

The following month, the Branch sponsored an encore of Aladdin and a Christmas party at the Richard House

Children's Hospice in East London. This proved so popular that the company agreed to perform twice on the same day so that half the children could enjoy the panto while the other half enjoyed a Christmas party and face painting, before swapping. The Branch presented a cheque for £250 and a 'rather heavy collection box'.

Gobsmacked repeated both visits the following year with Cinderella. Through raffles and members' donations, the company were sponsored to perform at a third venue, the newly-opened Shooting Stars Children's Hospice in Twickenham. Cinderella attended a lot of balls that year and must have tried on so many glass slippers!



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.

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

London's Burning Guided Walk

After meeting at the National Fire Fighter's Memorial at the corner of Carter Lane and Peter's Hill, our favourite City Guide, Chris Wilkins-Mallopy took us on an exploration showing how the City of London was changed by two 'Great Fires' – in 1666 and 1940. In September 1666, a four day fire destroyed roughly 4/5ths of the medieval city, including St Paul's Cathedral. In December 1940, the German Luftwaffe attempted to recreate the conflagration, with incendiary bombs and high explosives. Chris explained firefighting procedures in 1666 and 1940 and told of eye-witness accounts. The walk finished at The Monument to the Great Fire of 1666 at Fish Street Hill. A lovely sunny day out. You can see a photo of the day out on page 2.



Members blooming. Photo by Amy Thomas.

Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom

Members from North and South London Districts met to enjoy Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom on 22 May. The day out allowed members to see the fabulous floral displays at London's largest free flower festival, which completely transformed the neighbourhood's streets alongside the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.





2026's theme 'Out of this World' displayed an intergalactic wonderland with spectacular floral displays inspired by the allure of space travel, astrology and spiritual symbolism. This year was the 21st anniversary of the flower festival, with over 145 of Chelsea's best retailers, restaurants and hotels adorning themselves with creative designs.

You can see another photo of the day on the front cover.

Drawing in Waterlow Park

Lucy Fielden, a landscape artist and art teacher guided us through the principles of landscape drawing and painting, starting with some sketches. Lucy has exhibited her work in various galleries including the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.



Bob Sinfield Remembers Spike Milligan

You might be wondering what on earth I'm doing in this picture, sitting scantily clad on a park bench, apparently chatting to a statue. I will explain. Firstly, it was a scorcher of a day so not much leg attire required and secondly, this statue (to be found in St Stephen's Park, Finchley) is of my comedy hero, Terence Alan Patrick Sean Milligan, known to us all as Spike.



Bob Sinfield (right!) with Spike.

Never meet your heroes. Isn't that what they say? As a lad, mine were the Goons and in later years I did meet one of them. Peter Sellers died when I was young, Harry Secombe and Michael Bentine both lived near me though our paths didn't cross... but in the 1990s, I was to encounter and spend an hour with my favourite member of the troupe. And I have the tape to prove it.

Back then, I was hosting an in-flight audio show for Cathay Pacific when I got a call from the producer asking me if I'd like to interview the great man. I was in two minds, given his reputation with interviewers he didn't like. One of them, the splendid Lynsey de Paul on Capital Radio, had asked him what was his most embarrassing moment and he said, 'This is it!' Even so, I couldn't really refuse, so come the day, I greeted this frail and elderly figure who regarded me with deep suspicion before announcing, 'I'm not a cretin, you know!' Oh dear, bad start.

It took him a while to settle into the studio and things began to improve when he realised I'd done my homework. I encouraged him to talk about his Anglo-Indian roots and the culture shock of swapping Poona for Lewisham in the '30s.

His war years had been well documented but he seemed happy to discuss the experiences which reputedly 'drove him mad'. Of course, he wasn't mad, far from it, but his manic depressive (now known as bipolar) condition drove him on to achieve comic brilliance, first with the Goons, then as a solo performer.

The word 'unique' is among the most overused in the language (second only to 'genius') so I won't resort to either. I'll just say he was a pioneer of modern surrealist comedy and he was the best at what he did. 'But then,' as he said, 'so was Hitler.'

Towards the end of our time together, I surprised Spike by playing one of his records which he hadn't heard since the day he made it. Girl on a Pony wasn't even a funny piece, more like a sentimental ghost story. 'I haven't even got a copy of this. Can you get me one?' I assured him that we could and the session ended on a high.

One of the toughest things to get right in comedy is the exit line, but Spike was more than equal to the task. When I thanked him for coming in, he simply held out his hand and said, 'That'll be a pound.'

Linda Regan

It was only when I started doing talks for the wonderful Oddfellows Branches, that I found out that my late husband (Actor Brian Murphy), and his father, had both been members of the establishment.

In their honour I am going to dedicate this column, and even the next few, to some fun stories about Brian. Many of you will remember him as his character George, in the smash hit sitcom *George and Mildred*.

Brian and I met in a play called *Wife Begins at Forty*. The play is centred around a young fortyish woman married to an older husband. She gets bored and decides to leave him. She goes off and has French lessons and flamenco dancing classes and leaves him sitting at home watching television.

Toward the end of the play, she realises she is still in love with him and comes back. The last twenty minutes of the play is hilarious, high comedy, as they finally get back together.

At the start of the last scene, I had to come down a staircase backwards, wearing an appealing negligee, while he is downstairs in shirt and boxer shorts looking for romantic music. On one particular performance, after a very sunny day, things didn't quite go as normal.

What I didn't know was, as that day had been full of high sunshine, Brian had been out and had sunbathed under a very large tree. Consequently, he hadn't managed to get an even colour, due to the tree's branches shadowing some of him. Also, he doesn't tan, but like me, with his pale



white skin, he goes a bright strawberry pink in colour.

As I, in my sexy negligee, was coming down the stairs backwards, I obviously couldn't see him. I normally got a few whoops from the audience when I appear, but on this occasion all I could hear was laughter from the audience. He had obviously removed his trousers and was down to his boxer shorts, so his legs were in full view.

In the play, I get to the bottom of the stairs and have to turn round as his character says to my character: 'You look lovely,' and I am supposed to reply, 'So do you.'

As I turned around, I came face to face with Brian's legs. They were striped red and white from the shade of the tree he had sunbathed under. He said the line, 'You look lovely.' I was now fighting giggles, I just couldn't say my line, 'So do you.' So, I turned to the audience and said, 'His legs look like a tube of Signal toothpaste.' That got a massive laugh, and Brian and I spent the whole scene on the sofa, giggling, and with me trying to avoid touching his striped and burnt legs.

Life as an Oddfellow in the USA

By Paul Fitton

Bang! A man emerged who was to transform Oddfellowship in the US. Thomas Wildey was a Londoner, born in 1782. He was orphaned age 5 and lived with an uncle from 1796. Thomas was initiated into the Odd Fellows in 1804 aged 21, quickly rising within the organisation. Unsurprisingly, he was a proponent of the Oddfellows Orphan Fund.

Wildey emigrated to America in 1817. An outgoing man, he sought other Oddfellows in a Baltimore newspaper advert. A few people responded and the founders were Wildey, Solomon Chambers and his son John, two south London mechanics/boat builders, a blacksmith, a comedian and a vocalist. Oddfellows indeed!

They established Washington Lodge No 1 at the Seven Stars tavern in 1819. The minutes state that the manner of institution was 'ancient usage'. This consisted of ceremonial obligations as set by Manchester Unity Oddfellows.

Their first new member was shrewdly selected. He was a retired actor who held the Seven Stars. Documents show that, 'lodge meetings were accompanied by merry making and mirth and that the wares of the tavern were freely indulged in'. No change there then!

The organisation grew and six Lodges were formed by 1821, including bases in Philadelphia and Boston. Members, largely mechanics, sought charters from the Oddfellows in Manchester.



Thomas Wildey

Thomas Wildey is considered as the founder of American Oddfellowship. He held the position of Grand Sire, now Sovereign Grand Master, of the Grand Lodge of the United States and died in Baltimore in 1861. A monument was erected to him in the city in 1865. It is a statue on a 52 feet high Doric column.

In 1842, the US Oddfellows sought independence from their British counterparts. This was largely because they were governed by Oddfellows in another country. American Oddfellows wished to continue a strict ceremonial process, which was becoming of lesser reliance in Britain. As a result, the American body severed its connection to Britain in 1843.

The US Lodges continued their traditions and ceremonial meetings. They wore long

robes and frightening masks and jangled chains at initiation ceremonies to subdue new members. They even used skeletons in their ceremonies! In 2013, an Iowa Lodge tried to sell a coffin for \$12,000. The advert didn't mention that it contained a skeleton! The sale was stopped and the skeleton respectfully disposed of.

By 1861, there were more than 200,000 members in the US. However, membership fell dramatically during the American Civil War (1861-1865) resulting in closed Lodges. Fortunately, the Oddfellows successfully brought people together after the war and by 1889, the Oddfellows had Lodges in every American state.

The Numbers Game

£1,101,536 donated to UK medical research since 1971 through our HA Andrews Memorial Fund

Around **39,000** Branch-based members nationally

2,500 member volunteers help run the Society and support our services around the country

815 social events organised nationally every month by...

91 Oddfellows Branches nationwide*

37 years ago, members of Pride of Islington Lodge/Branch staged a 24-hour darts marathon in aid of the Vikki Harris Laser Fund, raising £1,500.

16 social events organised by North London District in the next three months.

By 1939, the Oddfellows had become the largest of all fraternal organisations worldwide, including the Freemasons. Total membership is about 600,000 in about 12,000 local Lodges across the United States today.

My Man© By our Resident Poet Jackie Ingleby-Douglass

I think I'll start to write a rhyme.
I must be quick there's not much time.
He'll soon be home and in a mood,
Shouting loudly, 'Where's my food?'

He does work hard I must admit
from early morn till night.
But when he's home he'll stomp around
and try to start a fight.

He has his meal and falls asleep
I have to creep about.
He wakes himself then scowls at me
and then he rushes out.

To the pub he makes his way
and has a drink or three.
He stays till late then staggers home
and starts to pick on me.

I cook and clean and do my bit
but often wish to do a flit.
The love has gone. It's just a sham.
I think I'll run home to my mam.

I write my rhymes and count to ten,
then think that I'll go home again.
Am I foolish? Am I wise?
Answer me and win a prize!

The Green, Green Grass of Home - Part Two

By Jacqui Lowther

... Londoner Jacqui was staying with family in Wales when war was declared. She and her brother were heart-broken to learn that 'Mammy' had gone back to London without them...

My brother, Georgie and I started school in Grangetown, Cardiff, the week after War was declared on 1 September 1939. Thinking about it now, how lucky we were as the school was in the same road that we lived in so not too far to walk.

We all had to take our little gas masks which were housed in cardboard boxes with a long piece of string which went over our shoulders for easy carrying. Our teachers said we had to practise what we were expected to do if or when an air raid siren sounded. Each class was divided up into groups of six or eight in alphabetical order. Group one would consist of surnames beginning with A, B and C. Group two would be D, E, F and G and so on. I was in Group eight, the last group as my surname began with V. As the teachers called out a number in their class, that group went home and in five minute intervals the rest of the groups walked

home. When the 'All Clear' sounded we had to return to school. On a few occasions, as Georgie and I were in the last groups of our classes, we discovered that on reaching home, the All Clear would sound and we would have to turn straight around and walk back. There was a particular occasion which I remember very clearly, on returning, the siren sounded again so the Head Mistress told us all as we were again leaving to stay home this time and come back tomorrow.

In January 1941, we experienced a blitz as the Germans came again and again to bomb the Cardiff docks. We had to sleep in a brick built air raid shelter. These had been built in 1940 and located in various streets, ours was just across the road. In the morning, we would all trudge back to the house to wash and change for school and adults for work. On the way to school we would meet up with our friends and we would all look for shrapnel in the gutters, remnants of the previous night's big guns firing at the Luftwaffe planes overhead and when we got to school, proudly show what we had collected.

Read the final part in the next edition.



Free Online Events for all to Enjoy

We host around 60 free online events on Zoom each month for everyone to enjoy, not just our members. Our own District hosts the Art Unscrewed sessions.

It's our way of helping people to stay connected and explore interests, no matter their location. They include presentations, exercise and relaxation, quizzes, musical and art guidance sessions.

You'll need to register for some sessions – just check the event details to see what's required. If you're unsure about anything, you can always contact the Oddfellows host.



We hope you enjoy meeting up with friendly people from across the UK, and sometimes beyond. Everyone's invited to take part, so please spread the word. Find out more at www.oddfellows.co.uk.

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 Finsbury Park boating lake!

Slips, Trips and Falls

By Paul Fitton

Slips, trips and falls (STFs) are often seen as a joke. Look at all the slapstick comedy from Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy. However, STFs are no laughing matter.

The NHS tells us that one in three adults over the age of 65 who live at home will have at least one fall a year. This rises to one in two for the over-80s.

Four of my relatives aged over 90 have fallen six times in the past 10 years, resulting in four broken hips, a broken knee and a broken wrist. I know of several Oddfellows members who have slipped, tripped or fallen in recent years too. I'm learning from these experiences as I'm not getting any younger either. You can too.

During winter, slips, trips and falls are more likely to occur due to wet and icy surfaces and the cold affecting someone's mobility. Two members slipped on the same icy steps at a wintry event two years ago.

An STF injury involving an older person can be more serious and may require a greater recovery time. Reactions are slower and we can't 'defend' ourselves when falling as we used to be able to do. It is therefore important to be aware of potential risks and hazards.

What are the risks and hazards?

It's said that the three most common causes of STFs occur in the shower, when walking a dog and when using steps.

In the past year, one friend has broken an ankle while standing on one leg while shaving the other leg – a slip. Another broke a wrist when her dog's lead entangled her legs – a trip. The third was badly hurt when standing on a small stool to adjust her curtains – a fall.

Potential hazards exist around the home. For example, loose rugs, uneven, slippery or wet floors, poor lighting, trailing wires and clutter. It's important therefore to be aware of and reduce these risks.

How can you reduce the risks of falling?

You can anticipate potential risks:

- Reduce clutter and loose wires
- Throw away rugs
- Be aware of obstacles on the floor – including pets
- Concentrate when using stairs
- Don't overstretch when reaching for an item
- Don't be afraid to seek advice from friends, family or health care professionals about your home environment and act upon it. Better to have handrails fitted, use the correct walking aid, etc
- Be careful when using sharp tools and with hot liquids in kitchens and gardens
- Clear up spills on floors immediately
- Walk carefully on wet grass and wet leaves on paving slabs or wooden decking
- Always use a secured ladder or low steps – never a stool or a chair

- Exercise gently at home, such as standing up and sitting down from a chair or bed and walking on the spot at your chair as well as daily constitutional
- Speak to the relevant health professional if you are concerned about your

mobility, sight, or hearing, or any type of dizziness which could lead to a fall.

So, look around and identify slip, trip and fall hazards, take action and keep under review.

Keep Young and Beautiful - Part Six©

By Paul Fitton

We're looking at some of the physical effects of aging today. I wonder how many you can relate to?

Do you remember the hall of mirrors at the funfair? The classic attraction with curved glass mirrors designed to make you look exceptionally tall, short, thin, or wide – or all of them at the same time! Well, that's what I see when I look into the full-length mirror at home. Tell the truth – is it the same for you?

Have you noticed those stairlift adverts that are always on television? They drive me up the wall.

Here's another thing. How's your hearing? I am sure that young television producers have no idea what it's like for older viewers. Background sound effects, unnecessary music playing while actors talk... sorry whisper and mumble. Well, rather than wear hearing aids, I thought that the answer would be to press the sub-title button on the remote. I've now discovered that I need glasses as the subtitles are too small!

Isn't it funny how hats become too big and jumpers too small?

Do you remember the excitement when you were a child, of standing with your back to the door frame and stretching yourself as high as possible while your mum or dad marked your height with a biro? You probably carried on the tradition by doing this for your children too. Well my wife does this for me now, except that the biro marks are lower each time.

Speaking of my wife, she complimented me on my new crocodile shoes last week. I was barefoot.

These days, I have to complete a 20-page risk assessment every time that I go to the loo. By the time I've completed the task, it's usually too late!

... and finally. My wife asked me if I'd like to go upstairs and make love. I replied, 'I can't do both'!

More next time.

The Shoop Shoop Show

By Paul Fitton

You can't beat a great night out – and 23 members certainly had one at The Shoop Shoop Show at the Aldwych Theatre in London's West End in April. The performance covered decades of Cher's career, including disco, pop-rock, and songs from the Dancing Queen album. It was my final event arranged as District Event Organiser.

All were able to enjoy The Shoop Shoop Show – The Cher Collection, starring ITV's Starstruck finalist Rachael Hawnt. The performer is widely praised as an 'amazing' and 'authentic' tribute, more than just a tribute act. Rachael's incredible powerhouse vocals, stunning costumes, and high energy kept the audience dancing to Cher's biggest hits.

The quality of Rachael's performance? Well, her vocal accuracy, mannerisms, and ability to command the stage were precise. The audience had to pinch themselves to check it wasn't really Cher! The



show's band was world-class live and the impressive dancers and fast-paced, high-energy and interactive atmosphere added to the truly memorable occasion.

To top it all, Oddfellows' early purchasers had seats for under half price!

To soak up the atmosphere, enjoy Carol Rowan's great photos and read some of the feedback from members.

"Cher Show was really good."
Charlie Boswell

"Thank you for arranging the visit to the Cher Show. I thoroughly enjoyed it, so much fun and wonderful audience participation. Also enjoyed the company of the other members."
Barbara Brett-Brooks

“ Cher (Rachael) has a beautiful voice that carried easily around the auditorium. Her numerous costumes were magnificent, very bright and sparkly. This included various great wigs, black curls, redhead, blonde – all looking fabulous. I thoroughly enjoyed the evening singing and dancing along. We were allowed as it was interactive. Rachel even congratulated people whose birthday it was on the night – coming into the audience several times to shake people’s hands. Wonderful.”

Lorraine

“ My daughter and I had a great time watching The Shoop Shoop Show. It was one of the best tribute acts that we have seen since Tina. Rachel Hawnt was brilliant as Cher and so was the band. A mixture of comedy and beautiful music so thank you Paul for a wonderful night out.”

Barbara Fenner

“ The show was fantastic and Rachael was brilliant. We really enjoyed it.”

Carol Rowan

“ The Cher tribute act was very nice and authentic. The singer, Rachael, was very professional and quite a few of her songs were very lively and good to dance to. The Oddfellows around me were good company.”

Indra Sikdar

“ Sunday was an absolute HOOT brilliant fun good music and humour I loved it! Thank you again for arranging it.”

Kate Alderson

“ Thanks Paul for booking the Shoop Shoop Show for us good seats and among a crowd of very active dancers and we all danced with Cher. The music was vibrant and the atmosphere was hot and lively. I’m glad I went although now I’ve toned down a lot from joining activities in the evening. The evening has enlightened my mental outlook that you are never too old to dance and never too old to enjoy.”

Diana Wee

Oddfellows Shop



The Oddfellows Shop has a variety of branded merchandise including clothing lines, umbrellas and various accessories.

The clothing selection covers everything from cosy knitwear and soft shell jackets to easy care office shirts and classic polo tops.

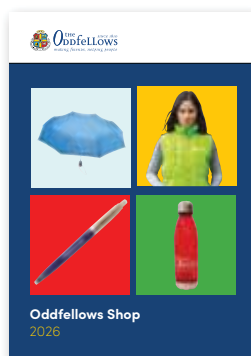
For anyone who enjoys getting outdoors, there are handy pieces like the waist pack and the hiking boot bag, both designed with repellent fabrics, ventilation panels and practical pockets. You can find other accessories, including branded pens, notebooks, umbrellas, scarves and gloves—simple items that are surprisingly useful.

You can also purchase ties, badges and cuff links with a more traditional feel, and special commemorative designs.

These sit nicely alongside keepsakes such as the coronation mug and Jubilee mug, which mark important moments in the organisation's history and the nation's celebrations.

Bags, stationery, other drinkware and even calendars round out the offering, giving members plenty of choice when it comes to picking up something functional, affordable and nicely branded.

The full brochure may be viewed at www.oddfellows.co.uk then search, using the magnifying glass for 'Oddfellows Shop'. Alternately, you may email Shop@oddfellows.co.uk or call 0161 832 9361.





Oddfellows Memorabilia

Paul Fitton continues his regular look at Oddfellows memorabilia

This large Oddfellows creamware ceramic jug is nearly two hundred years old.

Produced in 1832, when William IV was on the throne, it is decorated with transfer printed crests and mottos showing Oddfellows' imagery and symbols. It is hand-painted in overglaze enamels with pretty, colourful flower sprays and floral springs to the large body and pale blue line decoration.

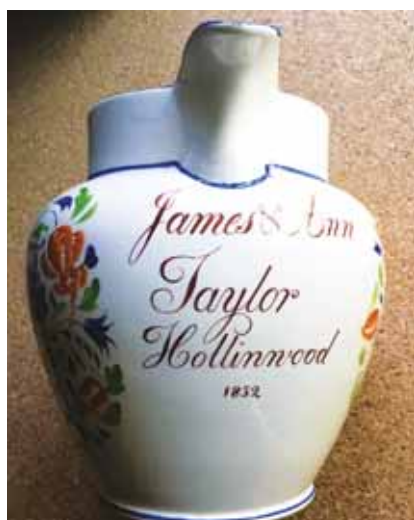
The text shows that the vase was specifically made for James and Ann Taylor of Hollinwood in 1832. Hollinwood is part of Oldham, close to the Oddfellows hub of Manchester. In the early 19th century, Hollinwood transformed rapidly from an agricultural moorland village into an industrialised hub for textile finishing, coal mining, and early cotton

weaving. Driven by the opening of the Hollinwood Branch Canal, the area shifted from rural sheepherding to intensive early manufacturing.

James was probably a member of Miners Lodge. Formed in 1818, members met at the Golden Buck in Hollinwood on the fourth Saturday of every month. Miners Lodge was one of six in Newton Heath District. The Lodge Secretary at that time was James Simpson.

Who knows, perhaps Olympic gold medallist swimmer Henry Taylor from Hollinwood is a relation of James and Ann!

Although much Oddfellows ceramic ware was produced in Sunderland, I believe that this jug may hail from Staffordshire. It is 8¼" or 21cms high.



Members take centre stage

Look out for some familiar faces this summer!

Throughout June and July, the Oddfellows is running an upbeat new advertising campaign across the UK aimed at reaching the nation's retirees.

Built around the theme of 'real people, real joy, real experiences', the campaign shines a spotlight on the authentic friendships and shared laughter found within our local groups.

Member models

Members from Leeds, Derbyshire Peak, Mersey, Handforth and Altrincham, Mid-Staffordshire, Nottingham Trent, and Ormskirk and Southport Oddfellows all stepped forward to help.

They spent an exciting day at a professional studio shoot in Manchester working alongside an experienced production crew.

"It was such a fun day," said Andrea Jenner from Derbyshire Peak Oddfellows. "There was lots of laughter and interaction with Oddfellows from other areas."

Carol Pitchford from Leeds Oddfellows agreed, adding: "It was lovely to meet up with a crowd of strangers who then became friends."



Spreading the word

The adverts will be appearing on Facebook and Instagram, online via Rest Less and Saga, and in upcoming print editions of People's Friend, Saga Magazine, Yours, and Woman's Weekly.

Spokesperson for the Oddfellows, Pam Casey, said: "We wanted the campaign to reflect the real people at the heart of our Society. Our groups are places where people can simply be themselves, enjoy real companionship, and feel genuinely supported."

How you can help

While we hope this campaign inspires more retirees to give us a try, as members, you're our best ambassadors. If you know someone who would benefit from our social events, travel opportunities or welfare support, please encourage them to head to www.oddfellows.co.uk/retirement to find out more.

Celebrating our 2026 Making a Difference Award winners

We are thrilled to announce this year's incredible Making a Difference Awards winners: Richard West of the Royal Berkshire Branch in the Reading District, and husband-and-wife duo Roger and Susan Williamson of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk District.

The Awards highlight the wonderful ways our members go above and beyond to ensure their branches are the best they can be for their fellow members.

Richard West: Reading's 'guardian angel'



Debbie Jex and Richard West

Presented with the 'Enriching Lives Socially' Award by Deputy Grand Master (Deputy Chair) Debbie Jex, 88-year-old Richard West helps to bring joy and positivity to his fellow members in all he does in organising and hosting social events.



Since joining the Reading District in 1992, Richard has worked tirelessly to build a varied and exciting social programme for his fellow members.

Alongside his late friend Doug Walters, Richard helped establish popular singing and exercise groups, and even relaunched a folded group in the nearby village of Pangbourne, which is now in its tenth year.

From coordinating monthly quizzes to organising glamorous annual trips to the Ascot Races, Richard pours his heart into everything he does.

For many, his efforts have been transformative. "We have a number of ladies who say the choir has become a lifeline for them," Richard shared. "I like seeing them enjoy themselves. You can see how it benefits them individually."

Debbie Jex is also Reading Oddfellows' Branch Secretary. She added: "I don't know where we'd be without Richard. His energy is boundless and his enthusiasm even more so. One member has even described him as a 'guardian angel'."

Roger and Susan Williamson: A wonderful team



(L to R) Roger Williamson,
Susan Williamson, John Mann
and Alison Schultz

The Oddfellows' Grand Master (Chair), John Mann, presented the 'Achieving Together' Award to Roger and Susan Williamson. Both in their 80s and Oddfellows members since 2008, the couple's commitment and kindness are renowned at their Branch.

Both take a seat on the King's Lynn Oddfellows' Committee of Management, ensuring members' voices are always at the heart of decision-making.

Roger, a Trustee and three-time Past Provincial Grand Master, hosts walks,

bingo sessions for up to 40 members, and a popular monthly quiz.

Meanwhile, Susan coordinates the kitchen, manages supplies, and runs the raffles.

The couple were incredibly modest about their win. "Initially, I thought it was a joke because the letter turned up on the first of April," laughed Roger.

Susan added: "We're only doing what anybody else would do, but it's nice to know that people appreciate it. To win the award together is special."

Branch Secretary Alison Schultz praised their selflessness, saying: "They offer friendship to so many in the way Oddfellows should, and treat everyone with consideration, kindness and compassion."

Shining examples

Richard, Roger and Susan are proof that our Society thrives because of the generosity and warmth of our members.

Thank you to all who go above and beyond to help and support others within their Branch.

You can find out more about
our Making a Difference Awards,
including previous years'
winners, at [www.oddfellows.co.uk/
makingadifference](http://www.oddfellows.co.uk/makingadifference).

It's never too early to talk about money

At Unity Mutual, the Oddfellows' financial services brand, we believe it's never too early to talk to the young people in our lives about their finances.



Today's younger generations have a lot to consider, with rising costs, student debt and spending temptations online. Simple chats about saving, budgeting and planning ahead can help young people feel more confident about money as they grow and become more independent.

Passing on more than money

Helping younger family members financially is wonderful, but sharing knowledge can be even more valuable.

Explaining different saving tips, how debt works, or pensions and retirement, gives younger generations practical lessons they may not hear elsewhere. Even small conversations can leave a lasting impression.



Don't wait to save

One way to encourage good saving habits is through a Unity Mutual Junior ISA*, which allows children to start saving and is a great way to introduce them to finances and investment.

Opened by a parent or guardian, family and friends can contribute up to £9,000 per tax year, with any growth free from UK tax. All the money saved belongs to them and once they reach the age of 18 can be put towards things like university costs, driving lessons, or even a deposit on their first home.

Making money conversations normal

The best financial lessons are often the simplest ones. Talking openly about saving for goals, comparing prices, or handling debt helps children develop healthy habits. Younger family members are more likely to feel confident about money if the adults around them discuss it calmly and honestly.



To find out more about Unity Mutual and the products we offer, visit www.unitymutual.co.uk or call 0161 214 4650.

*Terms and conditions apply to all our products. Capital at risk with investment products.



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

August 2026

Tues 11	Great Coffee - Better Company!	11am
Thurs 13	Summer Spritz at Warren Street	5.45pm
Thurs 20	The Perfect Playground	2pm
Wed 26	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Fri 28	Lunch at The Alwyne Castle	1pm

September - Friendship Month

Thurs 10	Friendship Month at Warren Street	5.45pm
Tues 15	Come for the Coffee, Stay for the Connections!	11am
Tues 29	Trip to Romford Dogs and Lunch	10am
Tues 29	Art Unscrewed	4pm

October

Thurs 1	Lunchtime Concert at Lauderdale House	1pm
Fri 2	Lunch at The Alwyne Castle	1pm
Thurs 8	Cheese and Wine at Warren Street	5.45pm
Tues 13	Highbury Coffee Morning!	11am
Thurs 15	Char and Chat!	2pm
Tues 27	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Fri 30	Lunch at The Alwyne Castle	1pm

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.
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