

August - October 2026



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DDfeLLows SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people

out & about

South London District



Music



Art/Crafts



Online



Dining Out



Walks



Games



Day Trip



Meetings



Social



Talks



Coffee Morning/
Afternoon Tea



Quiz



Film



Tasting



Wellbeing



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

We've championed friendship non-stop since 1810, with Friendship Month being one of the ways we prove just how serious we are about it.

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.

As our national celebration of Friendship Month hits its 16th birthday in September, we want to turn the UK's feel-good factor up to 10, and wave an extra big Oddfellows hello to anyone looking to meet other caring and friendly people in their area.

Teas, talks, lunches and walks – you'll find all sorts of exciting social events

Contact Details

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

and activities, plus plenty of free online events to enjoy from home. Visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/events to discover more.

Out and About

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, Around the Branches, Society News as well as one-off articles – The Numbers Game, Oddfellows in the USA, Marathon Woman Clare Rushen, Meet the Members, Official Visits and how we have developed our events in north

Kent. You can also read the story about someone who has affected all of our lives greatly. Our programme listing of events helps you to decide which you wish to attend.

Paul Fitton
Editor

Front cover: Members on an outing to Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom. You can read more about the day out at pages 18 and 20. Photo by Amy Thomas.

Regular Events - Lord Byron Branch

Stanstead Lodge, 260 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DD (weekly)

Contact: Karen Lewis: 020 8699 0929 or karen.lewis@oddfellows.co.uk

Coffee and a Chat



2pm



Members £2
Guests £3



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

Every Thursday, 2pm



Learn, have fun, and stay in touch from home

Our online events are here to stay



To see what's coming up visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/events

OEM/1024SMALL

Regular Events - Pride of Clapham Branch

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

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

Regular updates through WhatsApp and email

Knit, Natter and Craft Group



2.30pm



Free



Tuesdays - 2.30pm-5.30pm



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

Chair Exercise



5.30pm



Free



Tuesdays - 5.30pm-6.30pm



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

A bit about us

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

Regular Events - Pride of Clapham Branch

Yoga for all levels



6.30pm



See below



Every Tuesday - 6.30pm-7.30pm



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

Cinema Club



Afternoons



£5



Alternate Thursdays, PM



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

Watercolour Therapy



3.30pm



Free



Alternate Thursdays, 3.30pm



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

Thursday Friends (Clapham)



8pm



Members Free
Guests £2



Every Thursday, 8pm

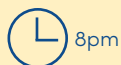


Enjoy a drink at our bar, or tea or coffee if you prefer. Our Thursday Friends group is a friendly mixed group that enjoys chat and games, as well as the occasional talk, quiz, music evening and outing. We meet Thursdays and all are welcome. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY.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

August 2026

THURS
06

Official Visit (Clapham)



8pm



Members Free
Guests £2



It's a special evening as the Pride of Clapham Branch hosts an Official Visit. This is a centuries old tradition



when South London District's Provincial Grand Master (Chairman) and fellow officials visit all Branches in the District. Karen Lewis, this year's Chairman, would love to see as many local members attend and meet her fellow officials. Branch Secretary Jane Parkin has organised a kurling (indoor curling) evening for everyone to enjoy, along with a drink at the bar, tea or coffee if you prefer. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.

FRI
07

Wetherspoons Breakfast and Museum Visits in Rochester



10am



£7.50



Tiffany's wasn't open... So we're breakfasting at Wetherspoons in Rochester instead! Unlimited tea or coffee and a full English breakfast for under £7.50! This will be followed by a walk through historic Rochester, the home of Charles Dickens and a visit to the Huguenot Museum to discover more. To finish the day, we will visit the 17th century Guildhall Museum, which has many different collections displaying the rich history of the Medway area. Book by Friday 31 July. The Golden Lion, 147-149 High Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 1EL. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

MON
10

Business Meeting



8pm



Free



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



August 2026

TUES
11

Children's Favourites with Uncle Paul!

L 8pm

£ Free



Spend an hour with Paul Fitton, who takes on the role of Uncle Mac with those Saturday morning songs that you listened to on children's favourites growing up. Music supplied by Mick Coleman. This follows the short business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

SUN
16

Andrea Bocelli: Outdoor Cinema

L 3pm

£ £17.37



Experience the power and beauty of Andrea Bocelli on a huge open-air screen in this breathtaking cinematic concert event. Andrea Bocelli: Cinema brings together unforgettable performances of songs from the movies, with stunning visuals and the emotion of one of the world's greatest voices in a truly immersive film experience.



Featuring incredible performances of 'Maria' from West Side Story, 'Moon River' from Breakfast at Tiffany's, 'The Music of the Night' from Phantom of the Opera and many more fantastic songs. Plus special guest appearances and performances from the likes of Plácido Domingo, John Travolta, Nicole Scherzinger, Andy Garcia, Ariana Grande, Ali MacGraw, Ryan O' Neal, David Foster and Veronica Berti!

Pack a picnic, bring a blanket or camping chair and arrive early to enjoy specially curated music before the screening, creating a relaxed and atmospheric outdoor cinema experience. Book by Friday 7 August. Cobham Hall, Brewers Road, Cobham, Gravesend, Kent DA12 3BL. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

August 2026

WED
19

Flower of Kent Golf Day



10am



Free



Pedham Place Golf Centre provides a particularly exciting golf experience for golfers of all levels. Book by Monday 17 August. Pedham Place Golf Course, London Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 8PP. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

FRI
21

Lunch at the Bredhurst Bell



12 noon



£7.95



Rich with history and full of character, the Bredhurst Bell is nestled in the idyllic village of Bredhurst. Tantalise your tastebuds with the sizzling summer menu choices. Book by Friday 14 August. Bredhurst Bell, The Street, Bredhurst, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3JY. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

TUES
25

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 Summer Bee. All you need are some basic paints/crayons and paper to join in. Contact Jackie for a direct Zoom link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.

TUES
25

Kurling Night at the Montrose



8pm



Free



Kurling – a game of strategy involving a hack, stones, a curl, sweeping, a house, a button, finishing with a hammer! This follows the short business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.



September

TUES
08

Desert Island Discs



8pm



Free



What would you take to a desert island? Norman Warner shares the soundtrack of his life. This follows a short Branch business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

FRI
11

Coffee Morning in Bredhurst



10am



Members Free
Guests £3



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

MON
14

Business Meeting



8pm



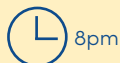
Free



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

TUES
22

Quiz Night at the Montrose



8pm



Free



Think, drink and be merry! Jackie and Maria hoist a quiz after the short Branch business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.



September

FRI
25

Sip and Paint



12.30pm



£45



Free flowing Prosecco and nibbles, or if you'd prefer free flowing tea or coffee and cake! Relax, create, sip and enjoy. Paint a canvas while sipping a cocktail or wine. No experience

needed, all painting materials provided and good vibes guaranteed. A two hour event in the pub garden. Book by Friday 11 September. The Hengist Restaurant and Cocktail Bar, 7-9 High Street, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7AX. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



TUES
29

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



At the end of our one hour paintalong session with Dulcie, you'll have painted Seagull. Contact Jackie for a direct

Zoom link by emailing jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.



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

All welcome



Circle
September for
new friendships

ODDFELLOWS
FRIENDSHIP MONTH
1 - 30 SEPTEMBER



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

October

FRI
02

Thank you for the Music: The Ultimate Tribute to ABBA



7.30pm



Members £28, Guests £30



This international smash-hit tribute show brings all ABBA's number one hits to the stage in a production like no other. The hugely popular show, now in its 21st year, with a brand-new show combining the unmistakable harmonies, colourful costumes and dazzling performances of an all-star cast.



Join us for the party of the year, come and have have the time of your life with all the hits, including 'Waterloo', 'Dancing Queen', 'Super Trouper', 'Mamma Mia', 'Knowing Me, Knowing You', 'Gimme, Gimme, Gimme', 'The Winner Takes It All' and many many more! Book by Friday 11 September. Central Theatre, 170 High Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4AS. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

TUES
06

Whist Drive at the Montrose Club



8pm



Free



Lead, trick, follow suit, trump and slam at tonight's whist drive. This follows a short Branch business meeting. The



Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

FRI
09

Coffee Morning in Bredhurst



10am



Members Free
Guests £3



There's always home-made cake, good company and conversation at our regular coffee mornings



in Bredhurst. If this is your first time, then Amy can tell you more. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

October

MON
12

Business Meeting



8pm



Free



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

TUES
20

Retirement Meal



7pm



As per menu



Flower of Kent Branch Secretary Charlie Boswell is retiring later this year. The Branch is recognising his service by hosting a meal for close members and associates. This is an invitation only event. Sophie's Choice, 149 Station Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 7AA. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

FRI
23

Coffee Morning in Bredhurst



10am



Members Free
Guests £3



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



TUES
27

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



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



Oddfellows Online Events

Discover the five Rs for a happier retirement with Dr Anna Machin

Tuesday 14 July, 7pm

Join author, broadcaster and world-renowned Anthropologist, Dr Anna Machin as she offers her expert advice on how to navigate the emotional and social aspect of retirement.

To register, type this link into your browser:
tinyurl.com/AnnaMachin2

Murder Most Austen

Tuesday 28 July, 7pm

Whether you're a fan of Austen or just thrilled by a good detective story, join crime writer and scholar Dr Lucy Andrew for this engaging talk on how Austen's works have shaped the evolution of detective fiction.

To register, type this link into your browser:
tinyurl.com/MurderMostAusten

Staying Safe from Financial Scams

Tuesday 18 August, 7pm

Financial scams are becoming more sophisticated, using new tactics to exploit trust. This talk with Unity Mutual explains how these scams work, highlights key warning signs, and provides practical strategies to help you protect yourself and your finances.

To register, type this link into your browser:
tinyurl.com/FinancialScams1

Understanding Diabetes

Tuesday 15 September, 7pm

Join us for this informative talk covering what type 1 and type 2 Diabetes are, signs and symptoms, who's at risk of type 2 Diabetes, how to access support, and how to live well.

To register, type this link into your browser:
tinyurl.com/OddfellowsDiabetesUK

More Ghostly Tales to be Told

Tuesday 27 October, 7pm

Get ready for Halloween with another fascinating evening of stories and poems by Dr Ann Featherstone, a retired university lecturer, teacher and writer who has appeared on numerous BBC programmes and documentaries.

To register, type this link into your browser:
tinyurl.com/MoreGhostlyTales



Meet the Members – Kathy Troy

‘That suits me fine’

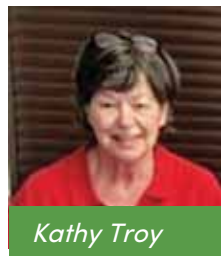
Kathy Troy was looking for a new outlet to life at the beginning of the year. She didn't want to Google 'Age UK' as she felt that she would be pigeonholed – but discovered Oddfellows and thought, 'that suits me fine' – especially as her kids call her 'Odd Socks', for obvious reasons! Oddfellows sounded cool too. 'I emailed Paul Fitton and received a warm and welcoming reply', said Kathy.

Like many people, Kathy found her first event a little daunting, walking into Dobbies in Gillingham to meet a table full of strangers. However, she knew Amy's name and introduced herself and immediately 'felt at home' with the welcome that she received. Kathy said that, 'from that first moment, everyone was lovely.'

Kathy added that, 'Amy had invited her to attend a social session or two adding that she didn't have to join straightaway. I didn't want boring – and I didn't get boring. Everything is very cheap and we get our money's worth.'

At a subsequent social session, Amy discussed future events with the members. She mentioned Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom. Kathy said, 'that is one thing that had been on my bucket list'. Everyone was lovely and it was nice to meet members from North London District, who had also been invited. In fact, I made a new friend from there who I am meeting in London later this year and who will visit me locally too.

Kathy attends local Oddfellows events regularly. This included a theatre visit to see *We Will Rock You*. She said that it was good to have somebody to go with, enjoying the company and meeting others and sharing different opinions – 'having the companionship without being married!'



Kathy Troy

‘A whole new outlook’

Kathy feels that she has gained from the Oddfellows. She said, 'It was a big bold step. It's given me a new life and a whole new outlook.' She enjoys the friendship and companionship.

She meets lovely people when hosting events to sell Avon products. However, meeting other Oddfellows is, 'me being me, not me being a host'. In fact, Kathy has been given the opportunity to entertain members and offer her Avon products at our events.

‘Amy makes everyone feel welcome’

In closing, Kathy praised Medway Social Organiser Amy Thomas. 'What a fabulous appointment in Amy', she said. 'She makes everyone welcome and is a natural talent - nothing is put on – just the spirit. There's no age difference despite the age difference! You couldn't have got a better person to do the job.'

Article by Paul Fitton

Photo by Amy Thomas

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.

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.'

Queen of the Road

By Paul Fitton



What did you do on Tuesday 26 May? Put your feet up to watch TV, or sit out in the back garden? I can tell you what Flower of Kent Branch life-long member Claire Rushen did. Claire covered 26 miles and 385 yards in this year's London Marathon.

'It was fantastic! I loved it', said Claire. 'The crowd were amazing.' A couple of days afterwards, Claire said that she was, 'not feeling too bad now. A bit achy and tired, but busy parading round work in my medal and driving everyone mad! Ha! Ha!

This wasn't Claire's first marathon. 'I've run three with my running bestie Shelly, and other friends too. Venice, Amsterdam and the Norfolk Mammoth Marathon. This was the first one I've done solo though.

I run regularly, so my training plan involved increasing mileage slowly to a plan and friends took turns running with me and keeping me company.' Claire adds, 'I don't think I'm finished with running marathons yet... but we shall see! It does take up a lot of time training.'

Claire ran in the London Marathon for Anglia Care Trust. They are a great charity who support people with housing, staying safe, being heard and with their health and wellbeing in Norfolk and Suffolk. 'I've volunteered with them for the last seven years as an Appropriate Adult', said Claire, 'going into police stations when a child or vulnerable adult is arrested to ensure their rights are being protected and respected and help them understand what's happening.'

All money raised for Anglia Care Trust goes into their Empowerment Fund, which is used to help service users with expenses not covered by other grants or benefits, such as clothes for an interview, or toys for a child when the family have fled domestic violence.

If you wish to donate to Anglia Care Trust, Multiservice charity, contact Paul Fitton at paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk or on 07851 910619.



Around the Branches

Lord Byron Branch

Lee, Forest Hill and Medway

Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom

Members travelled from the Gillingham area on 22 May to meet up with others from South London and North London Districts for the beautiful Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom. Medway Social Organiser Amy Thomas led everyone to see magical floral street displays with

many shops blooming too. Amy said, 'What a day we had out in London, taking in the fabulous displays! This was followed by a lovely lunch at Big Easy on the King's Road. It's been decided this will be an annual event so I'd say that makes it a success!'

Article by Paul Fitton



Photo by Amy Thomas.

Our day out in Tenterden

'We had a lovely time last Friday on our day trip to Tenterden', reports Amy Thomas. 'Transport was free for those with a bus pass. We admired the beautiful Kent countryside while riding the bus, then lunch at Peggotty's Tea Room and some incredible finds in the local charity shops.'



Forest Hill

Why not join friendly faces every Thursday afternoon in Forest Hill? Tea, coffee and chat in Stanstead Lodge, the large white community house in Stanstead Road. Meet District Chairman Karen Lewis, who hosts the meet-ups. The chat will bring a smile to your face. See page 3 for further details.

Lee

Lord Byron Branch holds its monthly business meetings at Colfe's Sports Ground in Lee. Members who live in Lee, Green, Grove Park and Hither Green may particularly be interested in attending to learn more about the Oddfellows.

Flower of Kent Branch Sidcup



Around thirty members had a great evening kurling at the Montrose Club in Sidcup on 21 April. Kurling is a form of the original curling game adapted so that it is played on a smooth, flat, indoor surface instead of on ice.

This year's Winter Olympics' event was very popular and successful for GB's athletes. There are 21 rinks in Scotland and three in England – Preston, Cambridge and Tunbridge Wells in Kent. Well, we all have to start somewhere.

Fortnightly upcoming activities at Sidcup's Montrose Club include music evenings

based on Childrens' Favourites and Desert Island Discs, a Quiz and a Whist Drive.

The Branch has also arranged a Golf Day at Pedham Place in Swanley on 19 August. You can obtain further details about this and all other Branch events from Charlie Boswell on 020 8306 8846.

Pride of Clapham Branch Clapham

There's plenty going on for members in Lambeth and Wandsworth. Five events every week! There's the three Cs – Craft, Coffee and Chat, as well as chair exercises, Yoga (only £15 a month, or £25 for non-members), watercolour therapy sessions, cinema visits and games evenings, all thoroughly enjoyed by members.



The cinema visits are fortnightly at Picturehouse in Clapham and cost just £5. Viewings have included Disclosure Day, The Sheep Detectives, The Devil Wears Prada II and Rose of Nevada. Quite an eclectic mix!

The Branch is hosting the District Officers' Visit at 8pm on Thursday 6 August. This annual event is always special and a little bit different. You can look forward to playing Kurling too. A full house is expected.

Here is Corina with the bag that she made at one of the art and craft sessions. Photo by Branch Secretary Jane Parkin. Jane can also tell you more about Clapham Branch's fun events on 07791 942969.

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

Members from South and North London Districts met to enjoy Belgravia and Chelsea in Bloom on 22 May. Medway Social Organiser Amy Thomas organised the day out to see the fabulous florals 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.

Charlie and Ellie Boswell appear on one of Amy Thomas' photos. You can see more photos of the day on the front cover and in Around the Branches on page 18.



Freda Lingstrom

A woman who affected all our lives

By Paul Fitton

While researching one of North London District's (NLD) documents, I discovered an Oddfellows link to a remarkable woman – a woman who may well have influenced your childhood.

The document was from 1909. NLD was based at 14 Red Lion Square, Bloomsbury in London WC2. The Provincial Corresponding Secretary, now termed District Secretary, was a prominent member called George L Lingstrom.

Born to a Swedish father in Brighton in 1869, George lived in Victoria Road, Wood Green with his wife Alice and three daughters, Elsie, Freda and Marjorie. While two became teachers, Freda was a successful commercial artist – her artwork is sold for £thousands - who pioneered children's television during the 1950s.

Freda became Director of Children's Television at the BBC in 1951. She introduced and developed the five programmes in the Watch with Mother series. Can you remember them? Starting with Monday, they were: Picture Book, Andy Pandy, Bill and Ben, Rag, Tag and Bobtail and the Woodentops closed the week on Friday.

Freda was born in 1893. She lost her fiancée during the first world war. She studied at Central School of Arts and Craft before producing travel posters

for British railway companies and the Norwegian and Swedish governments. She was also a novelist. This combination led her to a post as an illustrator and author for a children's magazine called Junior.

Later, as Assistant Head of BBC Schools Broadcasting, Freda created and produced Listen With Mother in 1950. Working with her friend Maria Bird, with whom she created Westerham Arts, Freda produced Andy Pandy as her first programme. She scripted the series and Maria wrote the music and narrated.

Freda commissioned many more children's programmes, including Crackerjack [CRACKERJACK!] and Harry Corbett and Sooty. They were aimed at education and entertainment.

Freda and Maria lived together at the beautiful Chartwell Cottage with its lovely views in Westerham in Kent. Freda was awarded the OBE in 1955 and died aged 95.

Was Freda an Oddfellow? I don't know – but I am still looking!

Due to copyright reasons, I have been unable to include any of Freda's travel posters in this article. However, you may search for them online if you wish. They are quite remarkable.

Memory Lane

Lee in the 1930s - Part two

By Barbara Phipps

The shops in Baring Road must have been private houses at one time for apart from the shop entrances, they all had front doors at the top of a flight of about three stone steps. Next door to Savin's was Capon's. This was an open fronted shop, painted red and Mr Capon sold bicycles and all the accessories necessary for the cyclists. It was also where people would take their 2-volt wireless accumulator to be charged; there were lines of them being charged all at once. I can remember seeing cycles hanging from the roof of the shop and although it was my ambition to own one that was to be many years in fulfilling. My brother Bob bought his first man's bike there.

That shop held a kind of fascination to me as it was dark and dingy inside. Mr Capon was a short man dressed like Mr Savin in rolled up short sleeves and waistcoat to which was added the headgear beloved of all working men, the flat cap. He wasn't a man one as small child would speak to, although one knew him by sight and one's parents might pass the time of day with him. And then there was Mrs Goodsall, Dame Goodsall, as my granny used to call her, a tall thin lady always dressed in black. She sold dry goods like fruit and star biscuits.

Next was the barbers. The windows were permanently blacked out by having been



painted on the inside. As to what went on in such an establishment was a complete mystery and it never occurred to me to wonder. That is until a whisper went round that the barber, his name escapes me, had committed suicide. That must have been the first occasion on which I had heard those dreaded words 'committed suicide' referred to, and such a shameful happening. That shop with its blacked-out windows for ever afterwards evoked a feeling of stark terror to me.

Next there came two houses and their gardens, a family named Day living in one of them. Tommy Day was in my class at school, but I know nothing of him or his family.

The next shop, on the corner of Baring Road and Summerfield Street was Frost's. This was a grocery-cum-oil shop and I can still recall its bare floor boards and pungent smell of soap and oil and string. This establishment was run by Mr & Mrs Frost, a couple of indeterminate age who both wore warehouse coats. I seem to see

Mrs Frost in my mind's eye as a grey-haired lady wearing her grey hair in a bun but of Mr Frost, I can remember nothing.

And then Jenner's grocers sold meat off the bone etc. King's the bakers. Behind the shops was Clark's dairy where men drove their horse and chariots from dishing out milk from churns or pushing little carts delivering bottled milk. My uncle Arthur had such a round and on Saturdays, I would help him. On one such occasion after he had finished his round, he told me to hop in the back and close the door. He then raced down Baring Road with me in the back bumping all the way down to the recreation ground, Northbrook Park. I was rather glad to alight from the cart but he told me to make sure no one was watching.

On the next corner was the public house, The Summerfield, a centre of the social

life of the three streets community, for I can't recall any other place, apart from St Mildred's Hall, where social activity of any kind took place. The opal glass in the windows of the pub had cockerel engraved on them and for the life of me, I could not relate the cockerel with the name of the pub nor with the name of the brewer - Courage. I still can't, although no doubt there is a simple explanation. There was a certain tremor of dread to be experienced by walking on the wooden doors let in the pavement to the cellar of the Summerfield, they creaked, even the weight of a child and were therefore avoided at all costs lest they opened and hurled a small girl into the beery darkness from whence she would never ascend.

Opposite the pub was a row of old shacks one of which was used by the local cobbler but my granddad would mend his own shoes and probably ours.

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.

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.

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*

96 social events organised by South London District in the next three months by...

...**3** Branches

*January 2026

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!

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.

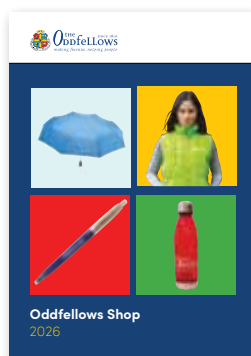
For anyone who enjoys getting outdoors, there are handy pieces like the waist pack and the hiking boot bag, both designed with repellent fabrics, ventilation panels and practical pockets. You can find other accessories, including branded pens, notebooks, umbrellas, scarves and gloves—simple items that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





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.

Three of my relatives aged over 90 have fallen four times in the past ten years, resulting in three 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.

Making Waves in Medway

By Paul Fitton



South London District has had a strong foothold in the Medway area of Kent as many members live in the area. We have 56 members with an ME postcode, mainly in Chatham and Gillingham and that number is growing all the time!

It's growing since the appointment of a local Social Organiser, Amy Thomas. Amy has rejuvenated Oddfellows life in the area with meals, coffee mornings, days out, walks, theatre trips as well as regular meet ups at Bredhurst Village Hall.

Amy has made use of local press and social media to increase awareness



New Social Organiser Amy Thomas.

of the Oddfellows in the area and membership has increased as a result. She communicates proactively with local regulars, offering them some great opportunities to meet other friendly faces.

If you haven't joined in any of the local activities yet, you can contact Amy on 07359 997795.

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.

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.



Handshakes and Gladrags

By Paul Fitton

It's a special evening when our Branches host official visits. This is a centuries old tradition when South London District's Provincial Grand Master (Chairman) and fellow officials visit all Branches in the District. Karen Lewis, this year's District Chairman, would love to see as many local members attend and meet her fellow officials.

The District Officers' official visits are always fun – don't think of them as being dry events. They are a celebrated tradition of the Oddfellows, offering all members a chance to visit other Branches, broaden their social circles, share ideas and experience different communities.

Today, South London District has three Branches, or what were termed Lodges. These are:

- **Lord Byron**, which covers south east London and the Medway area of Kent, where we have many members. The Branch is based in Lee, regularly at Forest Hill too. The area Lord Byron covers in London is Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich
- **Flower of Kent**, whose members meet fortnightly in Sidcup, many coming from Bexley and Bromley and neighbouring boroughs

- **Pride of Clapham** has its own hall in London, SW4 and most members who attend the Branch's five weekly activities live in Lambeth and Wandsworth.

However, 100 years ago, South London District comprised of nearly 100 local Lodges in the boroughs covered by Byron and Clapham today. District Officials used to have a very busy time. In addition to business affairs, they used to make Official Visits. The assiduous Howard Coombe, a Provincial Grand Master between the wars, used to visit all 92 Lodges in South London District every year! Quite time-consuming, especially when you consider that most would travel by public transport.

Returning to 2026, the Officers visits are 6 August at Clapham with kurling, the indoor version of curling as an added attraction and 3 November at Flower of Kent with a music quiz.

The Oddfellows operates a nationwide network of 91 Branches across the UK. Many of these branches cover large geographical areas. You can find your closest branch wherever you are reading this and view their schedule of social activities using the Oddfellows Branch Finder tool at www.oddfellows.co.uk, or contact your Branch Secretary, who will be pleased to help you.

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.

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

Oddfellows Advice Line

Call 0800 0149 821*

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm

Email: oddfellows@citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk



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

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

Care and Welfare Helpline

Call 0800 0149 822

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

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

Email: care@oddfellows.co.uk

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

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

Branch Contacts and Meetings

District Meetings

District Secretary: Clare Puddefoot

Address: South London District,
Oddfellows, 240 Clapham Road,
London SW9 0PZ

Telephone: 01322 665496

Email: clare.puddefoot@oddfellows.co.uk

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

Magazine Editor: Paul Fitton

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

Telephone: 07851 910619

Email: paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk

Branch Meetings

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

Flower of Kent Branch

Secretary: Charlie Boswell

Correspondence Address: 12
Garden Avenue, Bexleyheath,
Kent DA7 4LF

Telephone: 020 8306 8846

Email:

charlie.boswell@oddfellows.co.uk

Meeting/Social address:

The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road,
Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ.

Meeting dates:

Tuesdays 14 and 28 July, 11 and 25
August, 8 and 22 September

Lord Byron Branch

Secretary and Social and

Development Officer: Karen Lewis
55 Kilmore Road, Forest Hill,
London SE23 2SS

Telephone: 020 8699 0929

Email:

karen.lewis@oddfellows.co.uk

Meeting address: Colfeian Sports
Club, Horn Park, Eltham Road,
London SE12 8UE

Meeting dates:

Mondays 10 August, 14 September
and 12 October.

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

Social and Development

Officer for Medway: Amy Thomas

Telephone: 07359 997795

Email: amy.thomas@oddfellows.co.uk

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Pride of Clapham Branch

Secretary: Jane Parkin

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Email: jane.parkin@oddfellows.co.uk

Meeting/Social address:

Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close,
Clapham, London SW4 6AY

Meeting dates:

Thursdays 20 August, 17 September
and 15 October.

At a glance

Weekly Events

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

August 2026

Thurs 6	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon
Thurs 6	Official Visit (Clapham)	8pm
Fri 7	Wetherspoons Breakfast and Museum Visits in Rochester	10am
Mon 10	Business Meeting	8pm
Tues 11	Children's Favourites with Uncle Paul!	8pm
Thurs 13	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Sun 16	Andrea Bocelli: Outdoor Cinema, Gravesend	3pm
Wed 19	Flower of Kent Golf Day	10am
Thurs 20	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon
Fri 21	Lunch at the Bredhurst Bell	12 noon
Tues 25	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Tues 25	Kurling Night at the Montrose	8pm
Thurs 27	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm

September - Friendship Month

Thurs 3	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon
Tues 8	Desert Island Discs	8pm
Thurs 10	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Fri 11	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst	10am
Mon 14	Business Meeting	8pm

At a glance

September - Friendship Month

Thurs 17	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon
Tues 22	Quiz Night at the Montrose	8pm
Thurs 24	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Fri 25	Sip and Paint	12.30pm
Tues 29	Art Unscrewed	4pm

October

Thurs 1	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon
Fri 2	Thank you for the Music: The Ultimate Tribute to ABBA	7.30pm
Tues 6	Whist Drive at the Montrose Club	8pm
Thurs 8	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Fri 9	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst	10am
Mon 12	Business Meeting	8pm
Thurs 15	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon
Tues 20	Retirement Meal	7pm
Thurs 22	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	3.30pm
Fri 23	Coffee Morning in Bredhurst	10am
Tues 27	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Thurs 29	Cinema Club, Clapham	Afternoon

Booking and Cancellations

Please remember the importance of early booking for all events to avoid disappointment or cancellation due to lack of support. Please note that a place is not guaranteed at any event until full payment has been received.

The Oddfellows is the trading name of The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Manchester Unity Friendly Society Limited, incorporated and registered in England and Wales No. 223F.
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