

February - April 2026



the **ODDfellows** SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people

out & about

South London District



Members enjoying themselves at a dinner dance



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 & About**, incorporating **South Circular**, the Magazine of South London District

A Bumper Year for Recruitment

The Oddfellows has had a bumper year for enquires national, with an amazing number of people who are seeing what we are offering and are interested in finding out more.

In 2024, we significantly increased our recruitment total and the fact we have been able to keep that momentum going in 2025 is amazing and reflects the fantastic efforts that are done by everyone.

Membership Benefits

You can find out more about the Oddfellows very easily by visiting www.oddfellows.co.uk. Learn about membership benefits* such as social events, care support, money-saving offers, travel and our historical archive the social benefits of Oddfellows membership, Unity Mutual (our financial services brand), Care Helpline as well as more details about Dental and Optical Benefits, Legal Aid, Citizens Advice, Convalescence and Financial Aid and the latest national Oddfellows news.

Contact Details

District Secretary: Clare Puddefoot

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

Telephone: 01322 665496

Email:

clare.puddefoot@oddfellows.co.uk

Magazine Editor and District

Event Organiser: Paul Fitton

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

Telephone: 07851 910619

Email:

paul.fitton@oddfellows.co.uk

You are invited to send letters, contributions and photos for the magazine by the deadline of Friday 20 March 2026 to Paul Fitton.

The photo above captures a moment of concentration by members at a recent Flower of Kent Branch Whist Drive session

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 All Oddfellows benefits are non-contractual and may be withdrawn at any time without notice.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

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



10am
or 2pm



Members free
Guests £2



Weekly, 10am or 2pm



Join us for 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.

Thursday 5 February, 2pm

Thursday 12 February, 2pm –
Entertainer – see listings

Thursday 19 February, 2pm

Thursday 26 February, 2pm

Tuesday 3 March, 10am

Thursday 12 March, 2pm –
Speaker – see listings

Tuesday 17 March, 10am

Thursday 26 March, 2pm

Tuesday 31 March, 10am

Thursday 9 April, 2pm –
Musician – see listings

Tuesday 14 April, 10am

Thursday 23 April, 2pm

Tuesday 28 April, 10am

Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3JZ
and other venues

Contact: Amy on 07359 997795 or amy.thomas@oddfellows.co.uk

Coffee and Company



10am unless
shown



Free unless
shown in listings



Fortnightly, 10am plus more



Join us for our new regular get together at Bredhurst Village Hall. Free tea or coffee for first timers. All will be welcomed.

Friday 13 February, 10am

Saturday 21 February –
Portuguese Meal and Dancing

Friday 27 February, 10am –
Rainham and lunch

Friday 13 March, 10am

Friday 27 March, 12 noon –
Lunch in Tenterden

Friday 10 April, 10am

Sunday 19 April, 2.30pm –
Dreamboats and Petticoats and
Afternoon Tea

Friday 24 April, 10am

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 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, the exercises are gentle and easy to follow. The sessions last 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



£5 a month



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 £5 a 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.

Every Tuesday - 6.30pm-7.30pm



Cinema Club



Afternoons



£5



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

Thursdays fortnightly, PM



Watercolour Therapy



2.30pm



Free



Join us by putting paint on to paintbrush and feelings onto paper. Rosana settles us in a comforting atmosphere with calming background music and lovely scents as we relax and paint our artwork. You don't have to be an artist.

Thursdays fortnightly, 4.30pm



Thursday Friends (Clapham)



8pm



Members Free
Guests £2



Enjoy a drink at our bar, or tea or coffee if you prefer. Our Thursday Friends group is a friendly mixed group that enjoys chat and games, as well as the occasional talk, quiz, music evening and outing. We meet on Thursdays and all are welcome.

Every Thursday, 8pm



February 2026

TUES 03 Art Unscrewed



At the end of our one hour session, you'll have painted 'Coffee and Rain'. Email jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk for the new direct Zoom link.



THURS 05 Rosy Skinner reflects on acting with the stars



We are pleased to invite Rosy along to chat with us and tell us all about her acting days, working with different actors and actresses. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.



MON 09 Business Meeting



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 10 Flower of Kent Branch Committee and Branch Meeting



This is a members only meeting for a Committee meeting and a Branch meeting. This will be followed by a social session. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

February 2026

Photo by Diego Deiso, Wikipedia. Attribution-Shore Alke 4.0 International license.

WED
11

Art Tour of The National Gallery with Roger Turner



2.15pm



Free



Now a regular fixture in our events programme, Roger will be guiding us through a selection of paintings and sharing his vast knowledge of art with us. This time we are visiting the world renowned National Gallery.

The tour will take approximately one hour and then we will have a cup of tea or coffee in the gallery café afterwards. Meet inside the main entrance at 2pm for a 2.15pm start. Charring Cross tube and overground station is a five minute walk away. The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN. Please email Jackie on jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk to express your interest in coming along.

THURS
12

Johnny Clamp Entertains



2pm



Members Free
Guests £2



Veteran entertainer Johnny Clamp brings his sharp-wit, gags and guitar to entertain you.

Johnny has worked with all-time greats from Veronica Lake to Madonna, Morecambe and Wise to Des O'Connor and has a host of showbiz tales to reveal! Free refreshments. Stanstead Lodge, 260 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DD. Contact Karen on 020 8699 0929.

FRI
13

Coffee and Bingo



10am



Free



Join us for our new regular get together at Bredhurst Village Hall. Today's event is bingo. Free tea or coffee for first timers. All will be welcomed. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

February 2026

March

TUES 24 Quiz Night at the Montrose

🕒 8pm 💷 Free ❓

Ann and Veronica ask the questions at this evening’s quiz. This follows the short business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.



TUES 10 Whist and Music

🕒 8pm 💷 Free 🎲

Whist is a classic four-player partnership card game where players aim to win ‘tricks’ (sets of four cards). DJ Mick supplies the music. The event follows the short business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.



Photo by Jack Hamilton on Unsplash

FRI 27 Rainham Riverside Country Park Walk and Meal

🕒 10am 💷 As per menu 👣

Join us for local walk at Rainham Riverside Country Park followed by lunch at Three Mariners Inn. Book by Thursday 26 February.

Rainham Riverside Country Park, Lower Rainham Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2XH. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



March

THURS 12 **The Remarkable Colonel Samuel Franklin Cody**



Join us for afternoon refreshments in friendly company. Today, Mary Cody-Cowdrey will tell us about her remarkable relative.



Colonel Samuel Franklin Cody was a sharpshooter, trick-rider, who became famous for his unique manned war-kites and was the first person to fly a plane in the UK. A remarkable man and an Oddfellow! Mary will show her vast collection of photos, postcards, posters and other ephemera in her telling of Cody's incredible life, including his relationship with Buffalo Bill Cody, of Wild West fame. Stanstead Lodge, 260 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DD. Contact Karen on 020 8699 0929.

FRI 13 **Coffee, Company and Cards!**



The three Cs! Join us for our regular get together at Bredhurst Village Hall. Free tea or coffee for first timers. All will be welcomed. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

TUES 24 **Art Unscrewed**



At the end of our one hour session, you'll have painted 'Umbrella in the Rain'. Email jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk for the new direct Zoom link.



TUES 24 **Flower of Kent Branch Annual Summomed Meeting**



Flower of Kent Branch is holding its Annual Summomed Meeting this evening. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

Further events are being added, see:
www.oddfellows.co.uk/events.

March

FRI 27 Tenterden Lunch

 12 noon  As per menu 

Time out in Tenterden for lunch. Full details from Amy. Book by Thursday 26 March. Venue to be confirmed. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

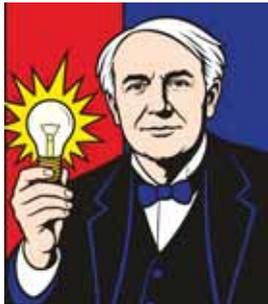


April

THURS 02 Blasts From The Past

 8pm  Free 

Bob Sinfield dresses in character as Pepys, Darwin and Edison. In between talking about his acting days. Come along and let him entertain you. Oddfellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY. Contact Jane on 07791 942969.



April

TUES 07 Quiz Night at the Montrose

 8pm  Free 

You can expect the 'Spanish In-Quiz-ition', with John Dawson asking the questions! This follows the short business meeting. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.



THURS 09 Peter Clarke Entertains over Coffee and a Chat

 2pm  Members Free
Guests £2 

Join us for afternoon refreshments in friendly company. Oddfellow member, Peter Clarke plays well-loved standards from the great American songbook on clarinet and saxophone. Stanstead Lodge, 260 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 1DD. Contact Karen on 020 8699 0929.



April

FRI 10 Coffee and Card Games



Join us for our regular get together at Bredhurst Village Hall. It's card games today. Free tea or coffee for first timers. All will be welcomed. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



MON 13 Business Meeting



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 14 London's Burning! - The Blitz and The Great Fire, a Guided Walk



Our favourite City Guide, Chris Wilkins-Malloy has another treat in store for us. This walk explores how the City of London was changed by two 'Great Fires' in 1666 and 1940. The walk takes two hours finishing at The Monument. Meet at the National Fire Fighter's Memorial at the corner of Carter Lane and Peter's Hill, London EC4V 5EY at 11.15am for an 11.30am start. The nearest tube is St Paul's. Please book with Jackie Lancaster at jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk by 7 April.



Join the conversation @OddfellowsUK

Share your news, start a conversation or simply stay up-to-date! If you're on Facebook, make sure you've liked and followed our Oddfellows social media pages. Find us at [f OddfellowsUK](https://www.facebook.com/OddfellowsUK)

April

SUN
19

Dreamboats and Petticoats and Afternoon Tea



2.30pm



Free



Indulge in a classic afternoon tea with a rock 'n' roll twist! Book by Friday 17 April. Bridgewood Manor Hotel, Blue Bell Hill, Chatham, Kent ME5 9AX. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.



TUES
21

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



At the end of our one hour session, you'll have painted 'Three Women in Morocco'. Email jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk for the new direct Zoom link.



TUES
21

Curling Night at the Montrose



8pm



Free



Curling - 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.

April

FRI 24 Coffee and Company



10am



Free



Join us for our regular get together at Bredhurst Village Hall. Free tea or coffee for first timers. All will be welcomed. Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst, Gillingham ME7 3JZ. Contact Amy on 07359 997795.

FRI 24 Live Music from Cover2Cover



7.15pm



Members: £5
Guests £8



Celebrate St George's Day with Cover2Cover - a greatest hits revival band presenting some of the most memorable hits from the past 70 years. You'll want to stay on the floor dancing all night. Tickets available from Charlie Boswell and Mick Colman. Meet at 7.15pm for 7.40pm to 11.15pm. Book by Thursday 23 April. The Montrose Club, 158 Hurst Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9AJ. Contact Charlie on 020 8306 8846.

SUN 26 The Shoop Shoop Show The Cher Collection



7.30pm



Tickets £29.17



Get ready to experience a Cher show like no other! 'Turn Back Time' with The Shoop Shoop Show - The Cher Collection, an exhilarating music-led production with a party atmosphere is led by international powerhouse vocalist Rachael Hawnt, the winner of ITV's Starstruck. The show spans every decade of Cher's incredible career, so be prepared to be dazzled by disco hits and pop rock chart-toppers.



With incredible custom-made costumes, jaw-dropping production, choreography and a world class live band, The Shoop Shoop Show - The Cher Collection will have you singing and dancing the night away. Subject to availability. Cost: Tickets £29.17 - dress circle and stalls, saving £6 on booking fee. Book by Friday 24 April. Aldwych Theatre, 49 Aldwych, London WC2B 4DF. Contact Paul (see page 2 for details).

Around the Branches - Clapham

Nearly 30 members enjoyed a slap-up Christmas fish and chips meal at Oddfellows Hall in Belmont Close. A great evening and a party atmosphere.!

Jenny Salmon wrote, 'We have to thank all of the team – Jane, Jim, Dick, Sid and Sylvia – for such a wonderful time and for the lovely meal that they provided. We are grateful for all your hard work and dedication to the members at Clapham. We thoroughly enjoyed our meal and the lovely people who made it so exciting. That's what we called Brotherly/Sisterly hospitality.'

Branch Secretary Jane Parkin says that, 'Ten new members have joined the Branch this year. The ploughman's lunches have been the most popular events this summer. The art unwinding sessions on Thursdays regularly had six attendees. The weekly Chair Exercises I do go down well. We have had up to ten members attending, with that number practising the Yoga session that follows.

The fortnightly cinema numbers vary. Members have seen *Wicked*, *Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere*,

One Battle After Another, *High to Lowest* and many more.

Members have the advantage of taking up several weekly events, such as crafts, yoga, chair exercises and a social evening, or fortnightly cinema visits and relaxation sessions involving painting, music and fragrant oils.

Helen Joyes really enjoys Oddfellows social sessions. She said, 'I was made to feel very welcome when I joined and I liked that I have made some strong friendships. I enjoy that I can bring some crafts along to keep busy but am equally happy just sometimes sitting and chatting over coffee and cake. I mainly go on Tuesday and we also play games and cards. The film every other Thursday is a great resource as is the Water Colour Therapy. The Thursday evening meeting is a chance to relax with a drink, catch up with other members and also play games - Scrabble, Trionimos, dominoes. You can dip into either day and still feel welcome. I really enjoy my time there.'

Jane Parkin is the Branch Secretary, who can tell you more on 07791 942969.



Aderonke (left), then Mel and Eytayo with Corina in the background.

Around the Branches - Flower of Kent Branch at Sidcup



The Montrose Club in Hurst Road opens its doors every fortnight for members to meet up. Charlie Boswell hosts events along with lively banter from Branch Chairman John Dawson.

The branch hosted the District Officers' Visit in November, when officials were welcomed by the 30 members attending. Paul Fitton's high-spirited Quiz resulted in a win for Clare and Gill from the visiting officials, beating off Branch Secretary Charlie Boswell's team who somehow claimed 77 out of 75 points, before a steward's enquiry!

The Branch's first December event was Curling. No! not a visit to the hairdresser – but a precision team sport where players slide their 'stones' towards a circular target (the 'house') at the other end of the floor, aiming to place their stones closer to the centre ("button") than their opponents can manage for points. The game is like chess on ice. It requires strategy, teamwork and skill to place stones effectively and knock opponents' stones out, scoring points for stones closest to the centre after all stones in an 'end', or round, are played.

Live band Cover2Cover performed on 12 December. The greatest hits revival band played some of the most memorable hits from the past 70 years. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening, either dancing with a partner, around a handbag, or tapping feet and watching the dancers and enjoying the company.

The third December event was the Branch's Christmas celebration. See Paul Fitton's photos. Secretary Charlie Boswell hosted a music quiz about Christmas number ones. For every collective correct answer, Charlie



donated to the SAM Fund. The charity raises funds to provide chronically sick or disabled children with a chance to spend quality time with their families on an expenses paid holiday of a lifetime. The charity has received donations from the Branch for a number of years with great support from John Cupman.

You can find out more about local Branch activities from the Secretary, Charlie Boswell on 020 8306 8846 or at charlie.boswell@oddfellows.co.uk.

Around the Branches - Lord Byron Branch at Forest Hill, Lee and Medway

Medway

Lord Byron Branch has rejuvenated social activities in the Medway area in recent months. The Branch's decision to appoint a local Social Organiser has paid off. Amy Thomas organises regular social meet-ups at Bredhurst Village Hall, where members meet for a friendly tea or coffee and themed events. Bredhurst is a tiny village that retains a traditional village feel and members are welcome to try our events there and meet other friendly faces.

Things don't just stop there though! Springtime allows us to go further afield with musical shows in Maidstone and Chatham and a walk in Rainham on the agenda too.

Interested in making new friends? Well you can call Amy on 07359 997795 or at amy.thomas@oddfellows.co.uk.



*Christmas wreath making
at Bredhurst.*

Forest Hill

In addition to her Branch Secretarial role, Karen Lewis organises popular events for our community in and around the SE23 district – that's Forest Hill! Karen hosts weekly events at the Stanstead Lodge, a large, white Grade II listed mansion on the south circular (Stanstead Road), between Catford and Forest Hill.

This Spring sees visits from veteran comedian and raconteur Johnny Clamp, clarinettist Peter Clarke and Mary Cody-Cowdery, whose relative was the first person to fly in England – and an Oddfellows member! Karen can tell you all about our events on 020 8699 0929 or at karen.lewis@oddfellows.co.uk.

Lee

Branch Secretary Karen can also keep you advised about the many Oddfellows membership benefits*, such as care and legal advice, help with certain medical expenses and much more.

Although the Branch no longer holds social events in Lee, the Branch committee meets monthly to conduct business. If the administrative side of the Oddfellows appeals to you, why not have a word with Karen.

* Terms and conditions apply.

Frank Butler By Linda Bristow

Frank Butler was a lifelong member of the Oddfellows Loyal Flower of Kent lodge and an enthusiastic sportsman. He played football and cricket for local south London teams including the Lodge in South London District Oddfellows Cricket League. In 1934, aged 18, he was given the league award for the best batting and bowling averages and was very proud of his achievements. When he passed away in 2005 he left the trophy to me, his daughter.



Join the conversation @OddfellowsUK

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

Find us at  OddfellowsUK

Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to...

The Clowns' Museum

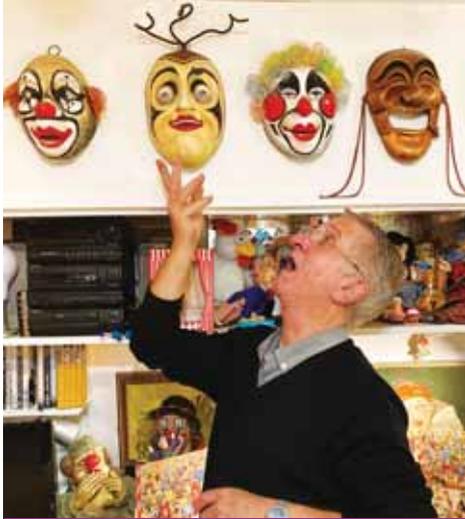


Photo of the Clown Museum's Curator Mattie Faint by Paul Fitton.

The Oddfellows has had a link to The Clowns' Museum since our first visit over ten years ago. In that time, the museum's curator, Mattie Faint has visited Oddfellows Branches all around London and presented online sessions to tell us about the amazing delights of the Clowns' Museum, as well as his own theatrical career, short films about the museum and the Life of Joseph Grimaldi – the most popular entertainer of the Regency era.

Now housed in a Georgian house in Clerkenwell, the museum is a real delight. Members entered into a house packed with clown memorabilia and stories. The clown costumes ranged from a delicate suit made

over 150 years ago to one of the famous Coco the Clown's outfits. Then there were the Clown eggs, recording unique clown faces on painted eggs, some 80 years old, to act as a copyright, ensuring no two clowns have the same look. Every item had a tale to tell, most interestingly by Mattie.

Another great Oddfellows day out for our members. The morning and afternoon sessions were linked by all members meeting for lunch inbetween each visit.

Korean Day

Twelve members enjoyed our Korean Day, which was in two parts. We started with a visit to the Korean Cultural Centre, off the Strand, to see an immersive exhibition and then strolled for a meal at Little Korea in Soho's Chinatown.



Strolling Through Korean Gardens reimagined the country's rich garden heritage through a contemporary lens. This is a rare opportunity to encounter the philosophy, beauty, and poetic sensibility of traditional Korean gardens through digital projections in an immersive soundscape, sensory environments and



- **Railway Firsts:** Showcasing groundbreaking innovations in railway history
- **Wonderlab on Wheels:** Offering engaging hands-on activities to explore the science and engineering behind railways
- **Your Railway Future:** Uncovering some of the more hidden roles in rail and encouraging people to consider a career in rail to shape the next 200 years.

The exhibition is touring various locations in Britain until the summer of 2026.

A dozen members visited the exhibition at Paddington and Victoria stations. The photo shows some of the members at Paddington Station.

storytelling. The exhibition brought to life celebrated gardens such as Soswaewon, Bokildo, and the Secret Garden of Changdeokgung Palace.

A stroll through London's lively Trafalgar Square, taking in the bustling Christmas Market, took us to Lisle Street and Chinatown where we savoured the culinary delights of Little Korea restaurant.

The three photos show members wearing traditional South Korean costume.

Railway 200 Exhibition

The touring exhibition allows visitors to discover the past, present and future of railways on the incredible exhibition train, Inspiration. Curated in partnership with the National Railway Museum, Inspiration's exhibition carriages are:



A Thank You On Retirement

I have been asked to write about my time as Oddfellows Event Organiser. Here goes!

Me, Myself and I!

I left my civil service career in 2009 aged 55, not intending to work again. However, that was before I discovered the Oddfellows. When I advised my family that I'd be working for them, my father, originally a Manchester man, said that his grandfather was an Oddfellow. I discovered subsequently that he had been the Provincial Grand Master of Eccles District in 1904.

At that time, I felt like a Junior member myself, most members being older than me! So, I set off on a journey that has taken me through to 2026. Now, I am one of those older people that I looked up to 17 years ago!

Members and work colleagues

I have been proud and pleased to meet some wonderful and friendly people and work with some helpful colleagues. It's the members who make the Oddfellows what they are but behind the scenes, there's more work than members imagine performed by a group of long-serving, dedicated officials and volunteers. Without these members, the Oddfellows wouldn't function.

The Oddfellows isn't just a network of friends, it's an organisation that helps with its care, benevolence and financial help.



Just have a look at www.oddfellows.co.uk to see all of the many membership benefits that are available.

Events and Magazines

I worked for South London, North London and St Mary Cray and Dartford Districts, organising Inter-District events bringing members together from all around London. I established new social groups and helped existing Lodges/Branches with their own events. These have largely involved presenters and musicians along with other activities. I have hosted, presented or publicised nearly 1800 events and loved every one, meeting lovely people everywhere and enjoying seeing friendships emerge between members.

Out & About magazine has also been fun to produce and is hopefully well-read

before being assigned to a piece of string on a hook in the loo!

The Pandemic

Those dark times of the pandemic arrived in 2020 and government restrictions didn't allow people to meet up. What to do? Well, I tried to keep members together by producing a weekly E-magazine of 21 pages which ran for 106 editions. This was packed with original stories, poems, quizzes and puzzles to keep over 1000 members happy as each edition dropped into their email in-trays every Saturday.

The Oddfellows also started to Zoom social events into members' homes – about thirty a week at its peak. I was pleased to be part of this and of the thousands of Zooms that have been held, have the second and this highest number of viewers at a session, with 98 and 92. My colleagues and I have continued to Zoom regularly and the Oddfellows provide 15 online outlets every week.

It was an honour to receive a national Making a Difference Award at the Oddfellows Annual Moveable Conference in Scarborough in 2021.

Events Outlined

In the last 16 years, members have enjoyed nearly 150 District events, over 80 walks, tours and phototours, 15 annual boat trips, nearly 500 online Zoom socials and well over 1000 local events comprising meals, presentations, musicians, quizzes and activities. Most events involved food, from refreshments at local events

to pub meals after District events in and around London.

Nearly all ticket prices were negotiated at lower than group rate. Visits to Hampton Court and the Tower of London, for example, had 75% discount and members benefitted from free entry to Paradise Wildlife Park. Our two exclusive pods on The London Eye were at less than half price.

Just a few examples of our visits are: Buckingham Palace and Gardens and Exhibitions (biennial), Westminster Abbey, House of Commons, Big Ben (Elizabeth Tower), Kensington Palace, Clarence House, St Paul's Cathedral, Madame Tussauds, The State Apartments of Speaker's House, The Royal Mews, Apsley House, Wellington Arch, Houses of Parliament, The Jewel Tower, as well as ten visits to National Trust properties.

The list continues but to select a few highlights: Biggin Hill Heritage Hangar and a flight accompanying a Spitfire, the Beating the Retreat ceremony, Wembley Stadium and exclusive tours of the unique SS Robin for over 100 members over three days.

Other events included exhibitions, theatre, concerts and variety shows. Our annual boat trips included memorable voyages on the Waverley Paddle Steamer and Ducktours amphibious vehicles.

A massive thank you to all members and work colleagues

Ten (and More!) Famous Belgians

A talk by Melanie Gibson-Barton

Melanie Gibson-Barton is a popular presenter who has visited us locally and via Zoom for several years. She has a love for Belgium, as you'll be able to tell from the description here.

Melanie's mystery talk entitled 'Ten (and More!) Famous Belgians' began with a request that the audience keep secret the names she shared with us during her fun and informative talk.

Melanie showed us that the people of the tiny country of Belgium, not given their independence until 1830, are famous for more than their chocolate, chips and beer. The colourfully illustrated, wide-ranging talk gave the stories of men and women born through the centuries to present day in the area covered by present-day Belgium, a country just 14% the size of the United Kingdom. There were indeed many more than just ten famous Belgians in a variety of fields such as music, the arts, sport, science, invention and heroism. The time flew by as

Melanie presented the stories of her choice of almost 80 famous Belgians enabling Melanie to prove that there are many reasons to be grateful to this tiny country, with plenty 'I didn't know that!' moments.

The 'Ten (and More!) Famous Belgians' talk fits within a suite of talks by Melanie about the history and culture of Belgium based on Melanie's personal knowledge of the Belgium built up through previously splitting her time between living in Kent and living in Bruges, Belgium.

Melanie has been giving talks for several years to the National Trust, U3A, history groups, church groups, Women's Institutes, Soroptimists and retirement social groups such as Rotary, CSMA, ARAs and PROBUS – 'live' and in Lockdown via Zoom.us - and tells us she has the privilege of meeting new audiences to entertain and inform every day. Her range of currently seventeen talks can be viewed at www.toonstelling.com.

REFER A FRIEND

Share the love and make someone smile

To refer someone you know and make their day, either fill in the Refer a Friend form available from your Branch Secretary, or call Membership on 0800 028 1810, or visit our Members' Area at www.oddfellows.co.uk



*Terms and conditions apply to the Refer a Friend offer. It cannot be used in conjunction with any other member offer. For full terms and conditions and for details of the rewards visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/offers.

Ref 1644

Bob Sinfield Remembers Bob Monkhouse



Bob Monkhouse (left) with Bob Sinfield.

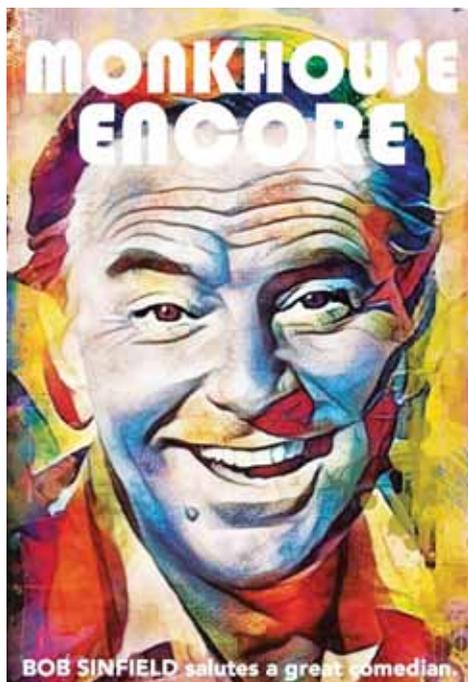
There are few things I enjoy more than addressing the Oddfellows on the subject of Bob Monkhouse. I know a thing or two about the man because in the last few years of his life, I got the chance to work with him on a variety of comedy enterprises.

It all started in 1999 when I was asked to write the script for a radio tribute to the much-loved American comic Bob Hope. I needed to find a celebrity narrator and Monkhouse seemed the natural choice as he and Denis Goodwin had written jokes (unpaid) for Hope across several decades, virtually every time he visited the UK. Luckily for me, Bob M jumped at the chance to present the show, despite a bulging diary of TV and after-dinner speaking engagements. He was also massively helpful with background information and couldn't have been kinder.

And it didn't stop there. Once we'd given up Hope, so to speak, he offered me the chance to interview him for a Radio 4 retrospective on his own life. This

involved a trip to Monkhouse Towers (better known as Claridges), an impressive pile just outside Leighton Buzzard. As expected, the house was festooned with TV, radio and film memorabilia, to say nothing of his famous joke books, a set of encyclopaedia-sized volumes, all colour coded according to subjects (yellow for estate agent gags, I noticed).

Our association - or Two Bob Bit as I call it - continued and only came to an end with the great man's death. In 2001, he was given just two years to live, following a diagnosis of prostate cancer. As much as he could, he filled every minute of that time with live appearances as well as



Bob Sinfield is a broadcaster, writer and performer.

stints on television and radio programmes, including a nod to his almost obsessive love of the cinema in a series cheekily entitled *The Oscars - 70 Odd Years*.

All this positive energy was typical of a man who refused to let misfortune get him down. Bob had suffered many tragedies in his time but whenever possible, he'd simply laugh them off. One of my favourite Monkhouse jokes concerns his miserable schooldays when he was mercilessly bullied. He said, "They tried flushing my head down the loo. It took a while. They put me in feet first."

And during his final guest spot on Michael Parkinson's chat show, he neatly summed himself up with the phrase, "Comedy is what I'm for." As ever, his wording was spot on.

If you'd like further insights into this extraordinary performer (as well as a lot more mirth), I can offer you the chance to win my book, *Monkhouse Encore*. All you have to do is be the first to answer this multiple choice question (no Googling please): was Bob Monkhouse born in (a) Ickenham, (b) Twickenham or (c) Beckenham? Send your reply to me at doctorsinuk@yahoo.co.uk and I'll dispatch a copy, post haste and postage free. Good luck and if you're quick and correct, happy reading.

The Bounder!

By our Resident
Poet Jackie Ingleby-
Douglass

She couldn't write a poem today,
She couldn't find the time.
She couldn't find the words to say,
She couldn't make them rhyme.

She thought she was so clever.
She thought she was so smart.
She thought it's now or never
She thought right from the start.

She didn't see him coming.
She didn't like this game.
She didn't really like him.
She didn't know his name.

He came and stood beside her.
He stood right by her side.
He handed her some hankies.
He told her open wide.

She knew he was a bounder.
He never told the truth.
He put his arms around her
And then pulled out her tooth.

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.

Linda Regan

Is it just me, or does anyone else get moments when every head around you is staring at you as you have made a faux pas.

So, this week I truly showed myself up.

I am reasonably useless with modern technology and I need to keep up with it as I am writer and actress. Also, I want to.

I have a friend who is totally brilliant at it. One phone call later and we had to arranged to meet. She said she would introduce me to a couple of tricks that, with one click of thumb, or finger, could help my Instagram, where I promote my books.

I watched with fascination, (and a note book by my side), as she pressed a button, then another, and a song came up on a picture of one of my book covers. She, quite rightly, told me music would draw people's attention to the page. I was thrilled. Then she showed me a couple of other tricks, and again I made notes. I happily paid for our dinners, thanked her, and made my way back to the train station.

On the train, I started reading the notes I had made. Firstly, I had learned how to add little pictures with messages on my phone. I wrote my friend a message, added a picture of a dancing bear and a thank you, and pressed send. I congratulated myself. Next, I wanted to check on the music I could add on my book covers. My notes said – 'Write name in toolbar, then list of songs. Pick the song and it will

adhere itself to your book cover'.

I brought up the picture of my book cover, and following my notes, I started to write my name, Regan, in the box that came up, following my note instructions that said write name in box.

I got as far as RE, then from out of seemingly nowhere, my phone burst into a rendition of 'Remember You're A Womble'. Loud wasn't the word. It echoed all around the heaving, train carriage. And I had no idea, nor had I written it in my notes, how to switch it off.

My cheeks were burning, I was pressing buttons like mad, and apologising to the carriage full of, eyebrows raised, commuters.

Next a young man came over. He pressed something and the noise stopped. "Would you like me to delete it from your song memory?" he asked me.

"Oh, yes please", I told him. "I never want to hear it again. I am so embarrassed".

"Would you like a song to replace it with?" he asked. "You can choose anything". "Oh, can I? Thank you. I choose, 'Tomorrow there is Hope'. I told him. It is a beautiful song by Anita Harris".



It seemed the right choice, because despite my technical inadequacies, I will not give up. Tomorrow there is hope. We now live in a technical world, and no matter what age we are, we must never stop trying. Making mistakes is part of learning.

However, I definitely won't experiment with technology on a crowded train again.

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

Letters and Feedback

" I enjoyed Linda Regan's column in the last edition. I feel I must add to Linda's knowledge. There are indoor spiders and outdoor spiders. If you put an indoor spider outdoors, it will beetle back in (excuse the pun) or die of the cold. Also, daddy longlegs are arachnids but not spiders. "

Julian Burrows

" Amazing performance. Tissues out. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming'. Feedback about the Spring and Summertime Concert at St Paul's Church - the Actors' Church - in Covent Garden. "

Vivienne Jones

" I laughed so much at the story in the last edition about the TV remote being taken to work in the briefcase instead of the mobile phone in the last edition! "

Myrna Williams

" Thank you for the Out & About magazine. It contains so much interesting news. "

Dave and Zandra Bown

" I've been fascinated, after Anne-Marie Brennan's Zoom session about her Life as a 14th century Re-enactor. "

Jennie Ipswich

" I have been a member of Clapham Oddfellows since we moved to London two years ago and I have been met with friendship, fun and laughter at every meeting. Thank you so much to Jane Parkin for providing such a friendly, caring atmosphere! "

Ann McDermott

Keep Young and Beautiful - Part Four

By Paul Fitton

I do hope these regular advisory articles help you, even if you are learning from the errors of others' ways! Today, we'll look at the physical, mental and general trials and tribulations of growing older as well as giving some good advice.

Here's a tip I learnt in December. If your birth year starts with '195', or earlier, don't wrap Christmas gifts on the floor.



How's your hearing? Do you think that television actors mumble and whisper and do you wonder if the background music during dramatic scenes is there purely to annoy you? Do you need to play the volume on your television so high that your neighbours don't need to turn theirs on? Well, there is a way around it. You can add subtitles to your screen. However, I

hope that your eyesight is good enough to read them, otherwise it's another trip to Specsavers for a 'higher-spec' pair of glasses!

Memory? Tell me about it. I rang a company the other day and was given option after option. When I finally got to speak to someone after a thirty minutes' wait, I'd forgotten why I rang them.

Fancy a statistic? Well, married women who ask, 'which dress suits me best?' live longer than the husbands who give their opinion.

Did you attend any of our events over Christmas? I heard of one of the members at an Oddfellows dance asking, 'Where have you been all my life?' The reply, 'I wasn't born for half of it'!

To close, here's some good advice. My Dad lived to 98 and used to say, 'Don't get old'... but then, it's better than the alternative.

Until next time.

Used Stamps

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

Memory Lane By Joyce Austin

Our Dad was the proud secretary of the Loyal Lord Byron Lodge for over fifty years, succeeded by Karen Lewis. When the Juvenile section was started (1932 or thereabouts), my brothers Don, Alan and I were the first members, myself as eldest, being number one.

Every year the South London Juvenile Sports was organised and we all took part. Unfortunately, I can't remember the venue but since we had no car the whole family went by tram and 'bus. One year, I think it was 1938, a cup was given by the family of Bro A T Richardson as an award for a girls and boys handicap sprint of 220 yards. Allowing myself (at 99) to be boastful, I was the winner. I think the cup must have been kept with the regalia in the Lodge room because I don't remember it being at home after my photograph was taken.

Many years later, probably the late fifties, my husband and I with our

young family travelled from our home in Buckinghamshire to Lee to see our parents, and it was Sports Day. We all went along and I met the young lady who won the cup that year! One of our annual special days was the Lodge cricket match at Meopham. All the team and family supporters went by charabanc (coach) and the sun always shone. There was always a terrible hold-up at the narrow Rochester High Street, no Commercial Road then, and some of the men would leave the coach on the hill at Strood and walk into Rochester to stretch their legs.

After the match we were all welcomed into the function room of the local public house which I seem to remember was called 'The Cricketers' for refreshments, and then we had a sing-a-long. We children learned all the words of the old traditional songs and strangely enough, remember them still.

Medway Events

Amy Thomas has arranged additional events to those at Bredhurst.

Saturday 21 February – Portuguese Meal, 7pm, 72 Ordnance Yard Road, Upnor Road, Lower Upnor, Rochester ME2 4UY. £10 deposit, book by Thursday 5 February.

Friday 27 February – Rainham Walk and meal at the Three Mariners Inn, 1pm. £5 deposit.

Friday 27 March – Tenterden Lunch, meet at Maidstone bus station at 10.30am to catch the 10.49am bus to Tenterden. Book with a £5 deposit.

Sunday 19 April – Dreamboats and Petticoats and Afternoon Tea at 2pm. £36. Call the booking office on 01634 201333 and quote 'Oddfellows'. 10 tickets reserved.

Oddfellows Cricket

By Paul Appleton in Australia

I came across the March 2021 edition of the Oddfellows publication, undertaking some research into the Lord Byron Lodge. To my surprise, I read in Letters and Feedback, this response from Roger Burley:

‘I was really stimulated by Leslie Needham’s interesting account of his ‘Almost a Century in Oddfellowship’ and most particularly his reminiscences of playing cricket against the Lord Byron Lodge who were ‘One of our fiercest opponents’. I’m sure that I must have played against Leslie because I was chosen by Lord Byron to make the numbers up (even though I couldn’t field and couldn’t bat) and played in a dozen or so games in the 1960s and 1970s. The ‘Byron’ had such a powerful side though about five of the team came from the same family, the ‘Ash’ family who all would have been worthy of playing for any of the minor counties teams. Other strong players were Bill Gristock, Johnnie Ovenden, Jim Slaughter, Bert Appleton and Jim Horton.’

The surprise was not so much reading about the Lord Byron cricket team, but reading about the Ash family, Bill Gristock, Jim Slaughter and Bert Appleton. I knew each of these men and one in particular because he was my father! I was also a member of the Lord Byron cricket team and accompanied by father to many matches around south London in the mid-late 1960s. However, Roger

Burley, Johnnie Ovenden and Jim Horton are unknown to me.

The Oddfellows summer cricket season in south London was very much part of the summer scene. I should add though that not all matches were played in South London. I can recall the Lord Byron cricket team travelling to Stockbury, Kent on numerous occasions to play the local team. In particular, I can remember the whole cricket team attending my sister’s christening in August 1958 in Stockbury Church. The team also travelled on a couple of occasions to Dover Castle, where members played the prison warders. At various times the team included: Bob Ash, Harold Ash, Alan Appleton, Bert Appleton, Martin Appleton, Raymond Appleton, Peter Boshier, Johnny Boshier, Alfred Green, Bill Gristock, Derek Herman, Jimmy Hough, Alan Pillans, Frank Quarry, Jimmy Slaughter, Eric True and Terry True.

My connection with the Lord Byron Lodge extends to beyond just cricket matches and spans the period 1955–2006. They grey matter can still recall details of individuals some of whom are no longer with us who were prominent in the lodge in the early part of this period of time! Pauline Pillans was one such person.

I am happy to have an email exchange with those who may wish to contact me at paulappleton@tallpoppy.com.au.



Interested in volunteering?

We couldn't run all our events without our wonderful volunteers. There are lots of ways you can get involved as a volunteer, from one-off help to regular support.

You can help us by:

- Welcoming members, guests and speakers at events
- Helping prepare teas/coffees
- Being the volunteer host at external events
- Organising events as part of a social committee
- Joining the Committee of Management
- Becoming a Volunteer Welfare Visitor or befriender

Want to deliver a new activity?

We encourage all our members to arrange events for other members and friends. If you'd like help to run a new event, like a book club, singing group, a one-off walk in the country or coffee morning, get in touch and we'll support you every step of the way.

If you're interested in finding out more about helping us as a volunteer, contact Clare by phone on 01322 665496, email at clare.puddefoot@oddfellows.co.uk

“Supporting events as a volunteer makes me feel more committed to the Oddfellows and what I do. I enjoy meeting up with other members/friends, any outings that take place, the lunches and some of the talks are especially interesting”.

Cynthia, volunteer

Bring friendship to your front room



There are many reasons that might prevent you from being able to attend some of our events in person. A clash in the diary might mean something else takes priority, you might not be able to spare the cost this time, or perhaps you just want to stay close to home that day.

We want people to enjoy the benefits of friendship no matter what. That's why Branches all over the country host around 50 free online events each month, ranging from talks, arts and crafts and games, to exercise and meditation sessions. These online events are a great opportunity to catch up with familiar faces and meet new and interesting people from all corners of the country from the comfort of home. You might even discover a new favourite hobby.

What's coming up online

We have lots of national online events that all our members can enjoy, the events below are just a flavour.

Tuesday 3 February, 7pm - 'Being Cheerful' with Nancy Radford

Register in advance for this meeting at www.oddfellows.co.uk/online-events/
Or use this link to register directly on Zoom: <https://tinyurl.com/BeingCheerfulOddfellows>

Tuesday 24 February, 7pm - 'Hedgehogs - In Need Of Your Help' and 'Getting Connected' with Stephen Powles

Register in advance for this meeting at www.oddfellows.co.uk/online-events/
Or use this link to register directly on Zoom: <https://tinyurl.com/HedgehogsOddfellows>

Tuesday 17 March, 7pm - 'An Introduction to British Sign Language (BSL)'

Register in advance for this meeting at www.oddfellows.co.uk/online-events/
Or use this link to register directly on Zoom: <https://tinyurl.com/BSLOddfellows>

Anyone is able to attend an Oddfellows online event, no matter where they live so spread the word.

All our online events are hosted on Zoom. If you haven't tried Zoom video-conferencing before and would like help on how to use it, let us know. You can come to me, or email the Events team on events@oddfellows.co.uk, with any questions and we'll help you get logged on and ready to join in.

To find out about all upcoming in-person and online events, including online events hosted by other branches, go to www.oddfellows.co.uk/events or ask me to send you a list by email.

District Secretary Clare Puddefoot

Friendship: the constant that carries us forward A message from our CEO, Jane Nelson

Another year has passed by so quickly at the Oddfellows, and it reminds me how fast life moves. However, in a hurried world, friendships really do slow the pace and bring us back to what truly matters.

Life for each and every one of us feels richer in good company. Even between get-togethers, friendships keep us hopeful. They anchor us through life's ebb and flow – deepening our joy in good times and supporting us in challenging ones. True friends celebrate our successes, steady us when we falter, and offer a sense of belonging.

Life may change, but lasting friendship remains a constant that grounds us, making everything a little brighter. And whether near or far, genuine connections help us navigate life with resilience, laughter, and warmth.

Remember every friendship begins with a simple moment of connection, and we all have the power to create new ones or welcome others into our community who seek companionship. Please always stay open to new friendships in 2026 and nurture the ones you treasure.

If you're a member and see a new face at one of our social events, offer that warm welcome we're known for. A friendly chat, a check-in, or an introduction can ease first-visit nerves and help turn a new space into a familiar one. These small acts show that we want people with us for the long run.

Throughout 2026, let's hold on to what gives our Society its strength – the belief that shared friendship creates a place where people feel supported, valued, and at home.

Friendship is the bedrock of our Society. So together, let's continue building a welcoming community where every friendship can begin.

This will be my last turn of year message to you all as of course I retire in May. I want to thank each and every one of you for your support and friendship over the years and I wish you, your friends and your families a very happy and healthy 2026.

Yours in friendship,

Jane Nelson, CEO, the Oddfellows

A warm welcome to Simon, our CEO Designate

In October 2025, the Society appointed Simon Gallimore as Chief Executive Officer Designate. He's currently working alongside Jane Nelson, our CEO, ahead of assuming full responsibilities in May 2026. Read more at: www.oddfellows.co.uk/news/welcoming-our-new-ceo-designate



Talented trio win Educational Awards

We're proud to announce our 2025 First Degree Course Educational Award winners: Melanie Healy (Humber Wolds Oddfellows), Will Stevenson (Pride of Woolwich Oddfellows) and Emma Corbin (Worcester Oddfellows).

Each winner will receive a non-repayable bursary worth £900 per year for the duration of their studies, which can go towards anything from text books and vital equipment to helping out with rent, bills and other practical items.

Jane Nelson, CEO of the Oddfellows, said:

It fills me with pride each year when we announce the winners of the First Degree Course Educational Awards, and I'm sure that Melanie, Will and Emma will work hard and have a wonderful university experience.

University is an exciting time, but it can also be quite stressful. I hope this money will go some way to help reduce some of the financial pressures that are a reality of being a student.

Melanie Healey, Humber Wolds Branch

In October 2025, Melanie began her Asian and Middle Eastern Studies course at the University of Cambridge. The four-year course will begin with learning Arabic language skills from scratch, building up her existing French language skills and looking at French Literature.

She says she is hoping to put the money towards travelling to French and Arabic-speaking countries for internships and exchanges to help sharpen these skills.

Melanie said: "I was delighted when I found out that I'd been chosen to receive the funding, and I would like to thank the Oddfellows for the grant."

Although unsure what her career plans are at this stage, Melanie says she "would definitely like to work in a role that allows me to use my language skills".



Will Stevenson Pride of Woolwich Branch

Will started reading Geography at the University of Durham's Trevelyan College in Autumn 2025, where modules cover



topics such as climate change, physical geography, human geography, geographical research and geographies in crisis.

The money, he says, will go towards the social aspects that university life has to offer, such as the Durham University Big Band.

Will said: "Hearing I was a recipient of the award was incredibly exciting, and I am extremely thankful to the Oddfellows for the trust and generosity they have offered me."

Will also hasn't mapped out his career plans at this stage, but says that's one of the reasons the course appealed to him, given "the breadth of Geography and its wide application".

Emma Corbin Worcester Branch

Unbeknownst to either, Emma and Will have ended up on the same Geography course at the University of Durham.



Emma plans to put the money towards learning materials and field trips.

"I felt extremely grateful and lucky when I was picked as one of the successful candidates from what would have been many amazing applications," she said. "I would like to say how thankful I am. It is a great opportunity to have an award like this available."

Emma too hasn't decided which direction she wants her career to take, but thinks her chosen course will provide her with a range of opportunities.

"It's an increasingly relevant subject, considering topics such as climate change and geopolitics," Emma added.

More about our Educational Awards

Each year, our Fraternal Board chooses who will receive the Educational Awards funding, based on the applications received from members. To learn more about the awards, including the Apprenticeship Educational Award, eligibility and how to apply, visit www.oddfellows.co.uk/benefits/care/educational-awards.

2026: Time to make a financial plan



a proud part of the Oddfellows

The year might have only just started, but we all know how quickly the calendar can flip. One minute it's spring, and the next we're wondering where the mince pies have gone.

Taking a little time now to think about your finances before the new tax year starts in April can make life feel calmer and more organised.

Where to start?

A financial plan doesn't have to involve spreadsheets or complicated formulas. It can simply start with a few questions, like: 'What do I want to save for? Am I prepared for life's surprises? Could my money be working harder for me?'

For some Oddfellows members, the focus might be on simply enjoying life or planning for the future. Others may also be thinking about the younger people in their lives – children, grandchildren, or that teenager who changes career ambitions daily.

Small, regular contributions now could grow into something meaningful later.

Start saving

Lucky for Oddfellows members, our financial services arm, Unity Mutual, is close at hand.

Unity Mutual is a regulated provider of ISAs and other savings and investment

products, which means they follow strict rules designed to protect our members.

Unity Mutual's Guaranteed Investment Bonds, including two, three and five year terms, offer fixed-rates for savers with a lump sum to invest, and Oddfellow members can benefit from preferential rates.

Alternatively, ISAs are a tax-efficient way to save or invest, whether you're building up funds to enjoy retirement or looking to help give your child a confident step into adulthood.

ISA Products available from Unity Mutual for Oddfellow members include a Lifetime ISA, a Flexible ISA and a Junior ISA, and you can also make the most of Guaranteed Investment Bonds and Tax-Exempt Savings Plans.

Get in touch

And the good news? You don't have to figure it all out by yourself. Unity Mutual is happy to chat with you about your goals, big, small, or somewhere in between.

Our friendly staff can provide information on what is available to you. They'll talk through things in plain English, not financial jargon, so you can make decisions confidently and comfortably.

Find out more

Visit www.unitymutual.co.uk or call us for a chat on 0161 214 4650.



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. Biannual 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.

Lord Byron Branch

Secretary and Social and Development Officer: Karen Lewis

55 Kilmorie Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2SS

Telephone: 020 8699 0929

Email: karen.lewis@oddfellows.co.uk

Meeting address:

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

Meeting dates:

Mondays 9 February, 9 March and 13 April 2026.

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

Social and Development

Officer for Medway:

Amy Thomas

Email: amy.thomas@oddfellows.co.uk

Telephone: 07359 997795

Social address:

Bredhurst Hall, Hurstwood Rd, Bredhurst, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3JZ

Pride of Clapham Branch

Secretary: Jane Parkin

Correspondence Address: 18

Glendale, Swanley, Kent BR8 8TB

Telephone: 07791 942969

Email: jane.parkin@oddfellows.co.uk

Meeting/Social address:

Odd Fellows Hall, 27 Belmont Close, Clapham, London SW4 6AY

Meeting dates: Thursdays 19

February, 19 March and 16 April 2026

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 10 and 24 February, 10 and 24 March and 7 and 21 April 2026

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	Thursday Friends (Clapham)	8pm
Alternate Tues and Thurs	Coffee and a Chat (Forest Hill)	10am and 2pm

February 2026

Tues 3	Art Unscrewed	5pm
Thurs 5	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM
Thurs 5	Rosy Skinner reflects on acting with the stars, Clapham	8pm
Mon 9	Business Meeting	8pm
Tues 10	Flower of Kent Branch Committee and Branch Meeting	7.15pm
Wed 11	Art Tour of The National Gallery with Roger Turner	2.15pm
Thurs 12	Johnny Clamp Entertains, Forest Hill	2pm
Thurs 12	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	4.30pm
Fri 13	Coffee and Bingo, Bredhurst	10am
Thurs 19	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM
Sat 21	Portuguese Meal and Dancing, Medway	Evening
Tues 24	Quiz Night at the Montrose	8pm
Thurs 26	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	4.30pm
Fri 27	Rainham Riverside Country Park Walk and Meal	10am

March

Thurs 5	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM
Mon 9	Business Meeting	8pm
Tues 10	Whist and Music, Sidcup	8pm
Thurs 12	Colonel Samuel Franklin Cody, Forest Hill	2pm
Thurs 12	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	4.30pm

At a glance

March

Fri 13	Coffee, Company and Cards! Bredhurst	10am
Thurs 19	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM
Tues 24	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Tues 24	Flower of Kent Branch Annual Summoned Meeting	8pm
Thurs 26	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	4.30pm
Fri 27	Tenterden Lunch	12 noon

April

Thurs 2	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM
Thurs 2	Blasts From The Past, Clapham	8pm
Tues 7	Quiz Night at the Montrose	8pm
Thurs 9	Peter Clarke Entertains, Forest Hill	2pm
Thurs 9	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	4.30pm
Fri 10	Coffee and Card Games, Bredhurst	10am
Mon 13	Business Meeting	8pm
Tues 14	London's Burning! - The Blitz and The Great Fire, a Guided Walk	11.15am
Thurs 16	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM
Sun 19	Dreamboats and Petticoats and Afternoon Tea, Chatham	2.30pm
Tues 21	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Tues 21	Curling Night at the Montrose	8pm
Thurs 23	Watercolour Therapy with Rosana	4.30pm
Fri 24	Coffee and Company, Bredhurst	10am
Fri 24	Live Music from Cover2Cover, Sidcup	7.15pm
Sun 26	The Shoop Shoop Show - The Cher Collection, West End	7.30pm
Thurs 30	Cinema Club, Clapham	PM