

February - April 2026



the
ODDFELLOWS SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people

out *&* *about*

North London District



History



Art/Crafts



Online



Dining Out



Walks



Games



Day Trip



Meetings



Social



Talks



Coffee Morning/
Afternoon Tea



Quiz



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

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.

Paul Fitton
Editor

Front cover: Oddfellows members enjoying lunch in Enfield
andrewridleyphotography.co.uk

Paul Fitton's photo above captures a moment at the Korean Gardens immersive exhibition.

**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 All Oddfellows benefits are non-contractual and may be withdrawn at any time without notice.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.*

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

Eat, Drink and be Merry



**Isn't it great to see happy people
with smiling faces waving while
enjoying our Bonfire soup in
our rooms at Warren Street in
November. Feasting and fellowship!**

Social Organiser Jackie Lancaster hosts a
monthly gathering. Members bond and

enjoy lively, cheerful conversation with
food and drink. Our next events are 12
February, 12 March and 9 April.

You can find out more from Jackie at
jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk or on
07788 418267.

February 2026

TUES

03

Art Unscrewed



5pm



Free



Online



At the end of our one hour session, you'll have painted 'Coffee and Rain'. Please note the later starting time for this session only. Email Jackie for the new direct Zoom link at jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk.



THURS

12

Drinks and Nibbles at Warren Street



5.45pm



Members £5
Guests £10



We will have a red themed evening to celebrate Valentine's Day! Please book with Jackie if you would like to come along. (Please note that this event now starts at the earlier time of 5.45pm). Book by Monday 9 February. Duchess House, 18-19 Warren Street, (Entrance first door on the left on Grafton Mews), London W1T 5LR. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.



WED

11

Art Tour of The National Gallery with Roger Turner



2.15pm



Free



We have so far visited Tate Britain and Wallace Collection with Roger. Our next guided art tour will take place at the National Gallery and will include our taking a detailed look at six masterpieces of the Renaissance period including Jan Van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Wedding' and Andrea Mantegna's 'Triumphs of Caesar'. The tour will take approximately one hour and then we will have a cup of tea or coffee in Muriel's Kitchen 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 at jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk to express your interest in attending.



February 2026

March

THURS 19 Sydenham 1854 and The Crystal Palace



2pm



Free



Michael Gilbert's fascinating talk explores the amazing background to one of Victorian Britain's greatest achievements. Part two of his trilogy. Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield EN2 6TG. Please let Jackie know on 07788 418267 if you will be attending.



THURS 12 Drinks and Nibbles at Warren Street



5.45pm



Members £5
Guests £10



Join us for our regular Warren Street get together. You will find a warm welcome and good company, so if you haven't been before, we would love to see you. Please book with Jackie a week before if you would like to come along. This event now starts at the earlier time of 5.45pm and will finish at 8.30pm. Duchess House, 18-19 Warren Street, (Entrance first door on the left on Grafton Mews), London W1T 5LR. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.

WED 25 FEB A Fond Farewell to Paul Fitton - Celebratory Drinks



1.30pm



First drink free, pay for what you order



The Trustees of the North London District Branch would like to invite you to join them in wishing Paul a happy retirement on 25 February. He has put on some really wonderful events over the past 16 years for us and we will miss him. The Branch is delighted to buy you your first drink. Please pay for what you order yourself thereafter at the bar. Nearest tube/overground:



Highbury and Islington. Several buses stop outside (St Paul's Road/Highbury Road bus stop CT). Book by Wednesday 18 February. The Alwyne Castle Pub, 83 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2LY. Please let Jackie (jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk) or Terry (terry.rowland@oddfellows.co.uk) know if you would like to come along by emailing them.

March

THURS
19

Char and Chat!



2pm



Free



Join your host Jackie Lancaster for an afternoon of tea and lively chat. Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield EN2 6TG. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.

TUES
24

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



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



April

THURS
09

Drinks and Nibbles at Warren Street



5.45pm



Members £5
Guests £10



Easter eggs from the Easter Bunny! Along with our usual drinks and great company. Please book with Jackie if you would like to come along. This event now starts at the earlier time of 5.45pm. Book by Monday 6 April. Duchess House, 18-19 Warren Street, (Entrance first door on the left on Grafton Mews), London W1T 5LR. Contact Jackie on 07788 418267.

April

TUES
14

London's Burning!
The Blitz and The Great
Fire: A Guided Walk



11.15am



Free



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. In September 1666, a four day fire destroyed roughly 4/5ths of the medieval city, including St Paul's Cathedral. In December 1940, the German Luftwaffe attempted to recreate the conflagration, with incendiary bombs and high explosives.

Find out about firefighting procedures in 1666 and 1940 and hear eye-witness accounts. See what remains and what has been changed forever. The walk takes two hours and finishes at The Monument to the Great Fire of 1666 at Fish Street Hill. Meet at the National Fire Fighter's Memorial at the corner of Carter Lane and Peter's Hill at 11.15am for a prompt start to the walk at 11.30am. The nearest tube is St Paul's. National Firefighter's Memorial, Carter Lane, London EC4V 5EY. Please let Jackie know at jackie.lancaster@oddfellows.co.uk that you would like to attend at least one week in advance (book by Tuesday 7 April).

April

THURS
16

Char and Chat!



2pm



Free



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



TUES
21

Art Unscrewed



4pm



Free



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



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 3 for details).

Chairman's Letter



I am starting my final letter to members as District Chairman by looking back at my first in 2023. When my journey began, we had just come through the pandemic and the merger of our four local Branches in north London.

Since then, our achievements have been remarkable. Our incredible District Trustees, diligent Management Committee and enthusiastic paid officials have worked exceptionally hard to bring the best of the Oddfellows to you all in a professional manner. Their personalities

and enthusiasm have helped to support and motivate members. I wish to thank them all for their undaunting support despite their heavy workloads. It is much appreciated by me as well as all members.

From our very beginnings in 1810, the Oddfellows has made sure that members and their families have had someone to turn to should they fall on hard times. This continues today. The Oddfellows remains a not-for-profit and mutual, owned by our, approximately, 350,000 UK members, not shareholders. It means our products and services reflect their needs.

It really has been an honour to contribute to the growth and success of this organisation and be part of its credits and successes.

What will the future bring? Well, I've appreciated our team of officials but the strength of any organisation lies in its members. I hope for Oddfellows it brings nothing but happiness and health and all members working together to maintain and grow the membership so that North London District continues to thrive.

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

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.

Oddfellows Memorabilia

By Paul Fitton

Continuing our look at Oddfellows Memorabilia, we are going to look at a connection that may well have influenced your childhood.

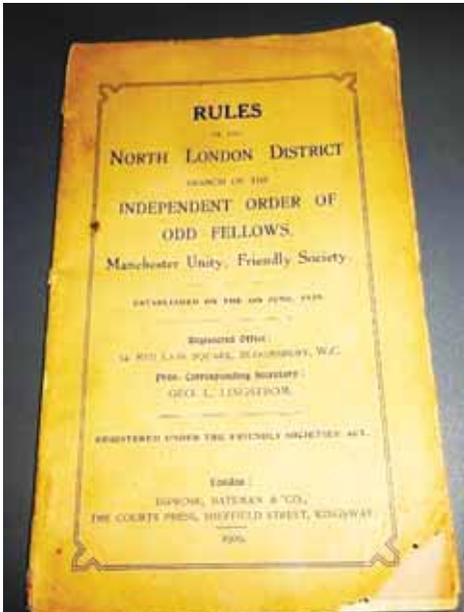
Here is the front cover from the Oddfellows Rule Book for North London District from 1909. You will see that it shows the official address as 14 Red Lion Square, Bloomsbury, WC2. The Provincial Corresponding Secretary, now termed District Secretary, was George L Lingstrom.

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, 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, including Andy Pandy.

Freda died in Westerham aged 96. You can read more about her remarkable career as an artist and television executive online.



Oddfellows North London District Rule Book cover 1909.



Freda Lingstrom.

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

The Clowns' Museum

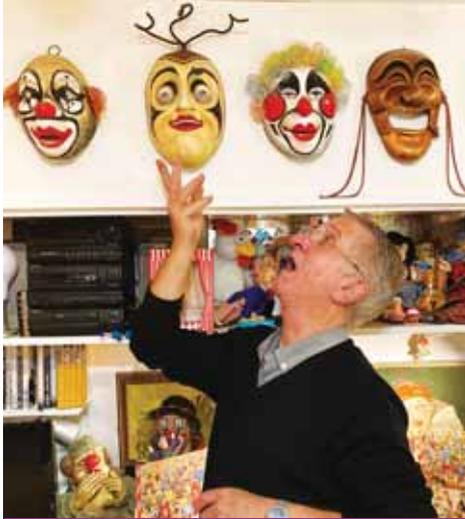


Photo of the Clown Museum's Curator Mattie Faint by Paul Fitton.

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 he 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 was a rare opportunity to encounter the philosophy, beauty, and poetic sensibility of traditional Korean gardens through digital projections in an immersive



- **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.

soundscape, sensory environments and 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:



Memories of The Krays and Darts

By Charlie Boswell

I was a 17 year old apprentice in BT working down Bethnal Green Road. As was the case, on most days we ended up in the café. I was with a senior technician named Terry Westbrook. Teas, coffees and breakfasts were being had by all and sundry. In came a guy (mate of Terry's) who sat on our table. 'Hello Terry', 'Hello Charlie' was verbally exchanged between the two of them.

After chatting for about five minutes, Charlie gave me a ten bob note and asked me to go and get everyone a tea or coffee, whatever they wanted. When we left the café Terry said to me, 'Do you know who that was?' and I said that he seemed important. 'That's Charlie Kray', he said, to which I replied. 'Who the heck is he?' Terry replied, 'Ask your dad', which I did and dad told me that the Kray family were part of the east end's folklore.

Eight years previous to this I used to go with my dad and older brother to score for their darts matches. Dad's firm Simpsons were based in Stoke Newington and they played in a local darts league against other pubs and clubs. Eric Bristow came from this area and his mum used to work with my dad. His cousin Frankie lived in an adjacent block of flats and we played football

together. I used to love going to these darts matches; plenty of Pepsi's and bags of crisps. When we turned up at matches a couple of times the opposition would see me go and get the chinks to score and frown. A typical comment would be. 'Can the boy score?' To which the old man would reply, 'A lot better than you mate!' My brother informed me recently that in one of these teams was Charlie, Reggie & Ronnie Kray. My dad never used to bat an eyelid.

I think it was when I was 18 that I was in the Blind Beggar on a Saturday night, with Chas, my best mate at the time and two girls. The music was always good in the pub. However, the atmosphere on this night was terrible. After an argument with Chas I convinced them all that we should leave and I paid for a cab to take us down the Green Gate pub in Bethnal Green Road. On the Monday in work Chas came up to me and said, 'You knew.' I replied, 'I knew what?' He then told me that the Krays had all been taken in and been charged. I honestly knew nothing: just that the atmosphere was terrible.

In 1975 Charlie Kray was released and ended up managing a band in Dirty Dicks near Liverpool Street. He was jailed again in 1997 for smuggling cocaine and died in prison in 2000.

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.



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 dedicated group of long-serving 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 photo tours, 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, Ducktours amphibious vehicles and for the bicentenary boat trip in 2010, when our largest attendance of 149 sailed along the Thames.

A massive thank you to all members and work colleagues.

Bob Sinfield Remembers Bob Monkhouse



Bob Monkhouse (left) with Bob Sinfield.

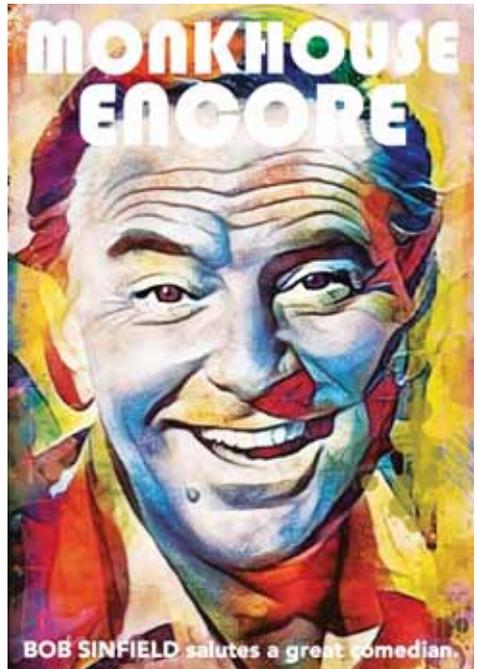
There are few things I enjoy more than addressing the Oddfellows on the subject of Bob Monkhouse. I know a thing or two about the man because in the last few years of his life, I got the chance to work with him on a variety of comedy enterprises.

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 stints on television and radio programmes, including a nod to his almost obsessive



Bob Sinfield is a broadcaster, writer and performer.

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 school days 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.

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

" We love receiving *Out & About* magazine and enjoy reading the 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

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.

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.

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 your Branch Secretary Terry Rowland on 020 7226 1740.

Oddfellows Citizens Advice Line

Call 0800 0149 821*

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm

Email: oddfellows@citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk

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

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

Care and Welfare Helpline

Call 0800 0149 822

(free to callers from any landline or mobile number)

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

Email: care@oddfellows.co.uk

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

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

At a glance

February 2026

Tues 3	Art Unscrewed	5pm
Wed 11	Art Tour of The National Gallery with Roger Turner	2.15pm
Thurs 12	Drinks and Nibbles at Warren Street	5.45pm
Thurs 19	Sydenham 1854 and The Crystal Palace	2pm
Wed 25	A Fond Farewell to Paul Fitton - Celebratory Drinks	1.30pm

March

Thurs 12	Drinks and Nibbles at Warren Street	5.45pm
Thurs 19	Char and Chat!	2pm
Tues 24	Art Unscrewed	4pm

April

Thurs 9	Drinks and Nibbles at Warren Street	5.45pm
Tues 14	London's Burning! - The Blitz and The Great Fire: A Guided Walk	11.15am
Thurs 16	Char and Chat!	2pm
Tues 21	Art Unscrewed	4pm
Sun 26	The Shoop Shoop Show - The Cher Collection	7.30pm

Traditional Terms

Grand Master (GM): Chairman

Provincial Grand Master (Prov GM): District Chairman

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

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

Immediate Past Provincial Grand Master (IPPGM):

Immediate Past District Chairman

Past Provincial Grand Master (PPGM): Past District Chairman

Lodge: Branch

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