

Osney Island Residents' Association Newsletter

Open Gardens and Tea on the Towpath

Susan Hutchinson, West Street

Open Gardens is planned for Saturday 3 June. There will also be Tea on the Towpath, and, I hope, live music. More detailed arrangements will appear in due course. This was such an enjoyable and popular event last year, I hope we can match it. As ever, it relies on the efforts of many people. We have several gardens already, but two or three more would be brilliant. If you are happy to help with Tea on the Towpath, please let me know.

Gardens will be open 2.30–4.30 p.m., Tea on the Towpath in East Street 3–5 p.m.

In the past, we have gone ahead if there is light rain or occasional showers. Torrential rain, howling gales we won't.

Please contact osney.open.gardens@gmail.com if you would like to open your garden or can help with Tea on the Towpath.

OIRA annual meeting

Thanks to all who attended a packed and upbeat annual meeting on 19 April. There were interesting talks from:

- Gabby Heycock of the Fire Service (based on usual trends they would expect three minor domestic fires in West Oxford during the 6-month closure of the road)
- Simon Collings and Andrew Boag on the outcomes of Project Local Energy Oxfordshire (Osney is generating an impressive chunk of its own electricity from solar panels and the hydro)
- Julian Le Vay from the pressure group West Oxford Access on the impacts of the road closure (you can join his Facebook group at tinyurl.com/3txu9wh4, and sign up for Network Rail updates on the work here: lineside.networkrail.co.uk/oxfordshireconnect)

My Osney Supercharge experience

Anne Andrews, Bridge Street

Anne took part in Osney Supercharge (part of Project Local Energy Oxfordshire), in which Osney households were supported with the installation of solar pv panels and storage batteries. The project showed that communities like Osney have great potential for generating a significant share of their own electricity.

In spring 2022 I embarked on some insulation improvements to my Bridge Street house. This was a political decision, partly driven by misery at the absence of any public drive to improve housing stock. I also thought 'Any penny I spend on private energy generation has no chance of ending up in Putin's pocket.' The work is still incomplete, owing to the difficulties builders currently face.

The project was expanded by the timely arrival of Osney Supercharge. My six pv-solar cells and battery



are now cherished possessions, though I gathered that my installation was one of the most awkward involved. Paradoxically, this was mainly due to existing cabling in the property. An information problem emerged, solved when the battery personnel, family members and my domestic electrician pooled their knowledge.

Now I am like a teenager with her first mobile phone and check my dashboard frequently. The only damage is to the emotional me: uplift on a sunny day is regularly overtaken by the thought 'Yay – free electricity!'

Electric club car

Simon Collings, South Street

An electric charging point for the club-car space in East Street has been installed. Co Wheels can now allocate a fully electric vehicle to the bay. Once this happens islanders will have access to a cleaner, and cheaper, car-hire service. Visit the Co Wheels website (www.co-wheels.org.uk) for information on how to rent the club car.



Remembering our island neighbours

Sadly, several much-loved and respected islanders have died in the last few months.

David Hammond, West Street

Barbara Hammond writes: David Hammond came to Osney Island with his young family in August 2000. His years here were spent using his architectural skills to tackle the problem closest to his heart – climate change.

The deep retrofits he did at 34 East Street and 63 West Street show us the way to a zero-carbon energy

future. Thanks to David's genius with space, light and the art of home making, they are also houses that are lovely to live in.

Osney Lock Hydro is his biggest achievement. It took 15 years working with equally passionate islanders and West Oxford locals to get it built. He wanted the project to be accessible, informative and a catalyst for climate-change action.

In his final months, he contributed to the Osney Supercharge project, showing how we could link hydro and houses together into a smart community-energy scheme. Part of his contribution was the beginnings of a plan showing how the whole island could be heated with a cascade of heat pumps sourced from the river.

Above all, David Hammond was good at loving and caring: family, home, architecture, art, motorbikes, music and cricket. Whatever he loved, he wanted to help. David died on 4 April, aged 76. He will be much missed.

Eve and Roy Hoare, West Street

Eve spent the first 15 years of her life in India, while Roy grew up in Portsmouth. They met and married in Malta, where both were stationed: Eve as a wireless telegraphist in the WRNS and Roy in the Aeronautical Inspection Service. Roy was a 'doer' and Eve a thinker, and their shared values

of loyalty, tolerance of difference and belief in truth informed both their lives, in which they helped and supported many individuals.

Roy remained in the Air Force until he was 40, and then joined the Civil Service where he worked in rehabilitation and training for the Ministry of Labour. He said 'The Civil Service was where I really blossomed. It did my confidence good. It was like a metamorphosis really. The uniform went off like an old skin and the suit and the tie came on.'

Eve brought up their three children – Julie, Mark and Nick – before working as a primary teacher. In retirement both Eve and Roy were active in voluntary work of many kinds, most famously in helping Ilio, a Bosnian boy badly injured by a mortar, for whom they obtained treatment. They both took courses at Ruskin College.

The couple moved a lot, and also loved to travel. Both were interviewed for the Oxford Muse in 2005. Eve said 'My best years have been from the age of 60 to 70.



▲ Eve and Roy in 1954, the year of their marriage

I really grew, because when I was 62, I went on a life assessment course and suddenly realised I didn't know who I was. I had been the obedient child, worker, wife, teacher, mother, and I was always my roles.' She became a trainer on the course which involved physical challenges including a fire walk.

Eve died on 21 February aged 93, after being admitted to hospital following a fall. Roy died at home on 25 March. They had lived on Osney for 20 years.

Doreen Rawlings, Swan Street

Doreen was born on Osney and lived in several different houses on the island after marrying Gus Rawlings in the early 1950s. Their last move was to Swan Street so Doreen could be next door to her mum. They had no children and Doreen worked at Oxford University Press from the age of 14 until she retired. Gus, who had lived on the island since he was 4, is now in a care home. Doreen died on 4 April aged 95.

David Walker, South Street

Many people knew David as a delightful neighbour and a regular in The Waterman's (as was) and the Democrats. What few of us knew was his expertise as a morse coder. As a teenager David trained as a signaller and joined the merchant navy. He was torpedoed at the age of 18, during the Second World War, and was the last person to leave the ship, along with the captain.

David had what is known among morse coders as a 'perfect fist'. After he left the navy he started teaching morse code from his dining-room table. When he took a test to get his amateur radio licence the tester was so impressed he offered David a job at Lands End Radio (which controlled shipping entering the Channel).

David died on 11 February 2023, aged 96, after a brief spell in a care home in Witney. He had lived on Osney Island for over 80 years. His wife Mary died in 2018.

Missing morels, and insects

Ed Moore, Bridge Street

Last year, Jane asked me to write something on my tentative adventures in mushroom foraging. I was looking for the morel in Oxfordshire's woodland, but didn't find a single thing, so didn't write anything.

This morning, the day before the deadline for this newsletter, I was hiking along a mountain trail in Turkey thinking about what to write, because I still hadn't seen a morel. Contemplating a natty 200-word treatise on the virtues of disappointment, I spotted a morel clinging to a mossy rock on the side of the path. A sign? No, probably just a mushroom.

The bigger thing I've noticed over this week trekking through ancient Lycia is that fields and meadows here still sound like I remember them sounding 30 years ago in England – literally humming in surround-sound vividness with bees, crickets and birds. Tough old veiled ladies sell local honey and oil on upturned crates at mountain passes. That might be a bit much for Oxford, but maybe we can at least bring the bees back.

When I actually needed morels recently I got them from the excellent Pickle and Lime on Botley Road. They sell local honey too...

New neighbours

Joe Kwiatkowski, South Street

We've just moved to 21 South Street from San Francisco via a brief spell in London. I grew up in Oxford and I work on renewable energy and adjacent matters, Niki is Californian and a non-profit consultant, and Joan is nearly four and handled the move best of all. Niki is always looking for people to play music with (especially bluegrass), I have discovered Hinksey Lake and I'm looking for folks to swim with, and Joan is eager to meet any other kids on the island.

Lawyers Against Poverty

Hannah Price, West Street

I live in Osney with my husband, two sons and our dog Buzz. In my day job I work as an employment lawyer, but since 2015 I have been involved with Lawyers Against Poverty. This charity, started by Oxfam, supports legal action on issues such as women's rights, refugee rights and land rights. I have hugely enjoyed providing training on UK employment rights to women's refugee groups in Oxford. We are now offering these legal confidence sessions to local community groups and small charities, on topics such as data protection, equality law and charity law. To find out more, visit lawyersagainstpoverty.org or do get in touch with me: hannah.price@lewissilkin.com.

Invest in the cargo-bike revolution

Jamie Hartzell, Pedal & Post

Pedal & Post's blue cargo bikes are a familiar sight in Oxford. The company is now seeking investment so that it can expand its Oxford operations and launch in Reading. This is a fantastic opportunity to become a part owner in an innovative business. Cargo-bike delivery helps cut greenhouse gas emissions, and reduces air pollution and traffic congestion.

Full details of the share offer can be found on the Ethex platform: www.ethex.org.uk/invest/pedal-and-post. There is a chance to meet Pedal & Post's founder and CEO Chris Benton and to learn more about the share offer at 6 p.m., 11 May, The White House, 38 Abingdon Road, OX1 4PD. You can register for the event on Eventbrite: <https://tinyurl.com/2pzcvkrn>

A timely royal book

Elizabeth Newbery, North Street

You may know me as a potter but my main work is writing books and educational resources for historic sites. *Kings and Queens: Real Stories* (tinyurl.com/2pjz8jz6) has recently been published by Scala for the Royal Collection Trust – just in time for the coronation, though obviously we didn't know the queen was going to pass away during production.

Chatty meet-ups in the pub

Eli Harriss, Bridge Street

I've lived on the Island for nearly 13 years, to state my credentials, and we're now entering the fifth year that I've held the 'chatty' evenings at The Holly Bush. I started these in 2019 when I returned to the Island feeling *slightly* lonely and wanting to get to know my neighbours. These monthly events have proved to be so popular that I'm carrying on. We've had good discussions about current affairs, air-fryer recipes, holidays...all sorts of topics.

There will be one more Chatty Thursday indoors, on 11 May from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. Then I'll switch to Chatty Wednesdays again for 14 June and 12 July, outside in The Holly Bush garden, away from the noise of the 8 p.m. quiz. I'll be wearing either my fluorescent yellow cycling jacket or a red fedora to be recognisable (or recognisably daft-looking), and I'll email reminders. Hope to see you there.

Artweeks on Osney

Elizabeth Newbery, Simon Pressey and Joss Alexander are showing pots and paintings: Venue 418/419 @ 3 North St. 19–21 and 26–29 May, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Do pop in for a coffee and chat.

Garden party

Tara Howard, West Street

I am organising an evening drinks party on Friday 7 July, 6–9 p.m., in the Lock Hydro Garden. The event will be ticketed, with proceeds in aid of the Oxford Food Hub. Canapés generously donated by Waste2Taste caterers. Layla Moran MP will be attending.

Ticket sales will open later this month. Details to be announced on the email group. All enquiries to tara@tarahoward.com



Two Binsey walks

Mark Davies, local historian

Saturday 1 July, 2 p.m. A LyrAlice walk through city, suburb and meadow (part of Alice's Day, see the Story Museum website). A 3-mile urban-to-rural walk through the Oxford of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice' and Philip Pullman's 'Lyra'. The walk passes university buildings, Jericho, the Oxford Canal and Port Meadow, to reach the treacly hamlet of Binsey. Free, but advance booking essential: oxfordtowpathpress@gmail.com

Sunday 2 July, 2 p.m. Walking to treacle (part of Oxford Festival of the Arts: artsfestivaloxford.org). A riverside stroll of 2+ miles from Osney, following the route of the famous boat trip of 1862 on which the story of Alice was first told. The walk ends at the Treacle Well at Binsey, where the Oxford Children's Book Group will be hosting a range of activities throughout the afternoon. Price to be confirmed.

Note. Sturdy footwear recommended. There is no public transport from Binsey: participants will need to make their own homeward arrangements.

Osney Island Boat Club

Fiona Ravenscroft, South Street

Membership is open for the Osney Island Boat Club. The club gives islanders the opportunity to take to the water – no experience necessary. Members have access to two kayaks, a Canadian canoe and a new sit-on kayak for kids and small adults (kindly donated by islanders). Whole families or individuals can give it a try.

The boats are stored on the island, with easy access to the river. They are suitable for beginners or more experienced boaters. Membership is open to all islanders and other local households for just £50 per year per household, with a one-off £30 joining fee. If you'd like to find out more, please contact me: osneyislandbc@gmail.com.



▲ The launch of the new kayak last year

Allotments news

Verity Wilson, Field Secretary, Twenty Pound Meadow

When I wrote in the February newsletter, flood water was swirling through both allotment sites. Now some plots have again been under water while others are waterlogged. This is the first time since 2007 that the Twenty Pound Meadow site has flooded in spring. We must expect unpredictable weather in the future and adapt.

Despite all this, we have welcomed new gardeners, many of whom live on the island, and we now have a sizeable waiting list. I urge all plot holders, new or long-serving, to take heart and begin work as soon as is possible on their patch. The grass and weeds are now growing apace.

St Frideswide's Church

Rev. Rachel Cross

We are so pleased to be working with West Oxford Food Larder, Oxford Food Hub and the Seacourt Bridge Pub to provide a free community meal in the church, 4–6 p.m. every Friday. On average we serve 60 meals each time. Around half the people stay and eat in the church while the other half take away. Somebody recently said that the meal has become a family habit, all of them sitting down on a Friday to enjoy food provided by someone else after a busy week at work. This is 60 meals worth of food that would otherwise go to waste.

We love welcoming all who come along. And it is such a variety: people walking past on their way home from work, students and those who just want to sit and chat. Do come and check us out for yourself. We would love to see you.

Directory of local suppliers

The list will appear in the February newsletter and is online at: osneyisland.org.uk/directory-of-local-suppliers

Please contact Jane Buekett to submit additions or changes.

OIRA info

Bridge Street noticeboard

To display something on the noticeboard (no larger than A5) contact Julia Marsh julia.marsh@btconnect.com or put it through her door at 26 Bridge Street.

Osney email list

To join the residents' email list, moderated by Alison Burdett, contact: osiramanager@gmail.com

OIRA committee

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Osney Abbey

The housing redevelopment at the end of Mill Street is revealing some exciting remains of Osney Abbey, which was founded in 1129 and lasted until the 16th century. This was the southern end of the Abbey precinct. Archaeologists have so far found two stone-lined water channels with in-situ timbers and part of a massive wall.

It was a large and rich institution, involved in finance and loans, so it needed unusually thick walls for security. There are more excavations to come. Fortunately some of these remains, including the wall, can be preserved, because they lie between two of the blocks of flats.

I'm hoping to arrange a visit to the site. Please contact me if you might be interested in coming along.

New footbridge

There are still a few bureaucratic hurdles to be overcome before they can start building the new cycle and footbridge over the Thames to Oxpens Meadow, mainly because inflation has caused an increase in its cost. They hope it will be delivered by March 2025.

Station works

Work to divert the utilities under the railway bridge is going according to plan, and we are trying to improve conditions at the Osney Island westbound bus stop. There is now CCTV to keep an eye on people in the pedestrian tunnel. The Botley Flyer free bus service into town is working well, though it could do with more passengers. Please phone 01865 768329 to find out more, or contact me with any questions.

Osney Bridge

Thames Water's contractors are planning to start work on replacing the temporary water pipe in June or July and hope to finish by next spring. They do realise that they need to try to do the disruptive work while the rail bridge is closed and that many people will be furious if there are lane closures, while Botley Road is fully open.

Dates

Willow Walk should be open again by the time you read this. Hinksey Pool will reopen in mid-May. My ward surgeries are still from 11am to 12 noon on the first and third Saturday of each month at Jericho Community Centre (first) and WOCC (third).

Susanna