

Osney Island Residents' Association Newsletter

West Oxford Walks

Louise Gordon, West Street

Little steps can bring positive changes. For me, stepping out with a local walking group has transformed the start of my week. Lara Lambert and Sue Dowe take turns leading a gentle amble along the towpath and canal to Port Meadow, in local parks, to the nature reserve.

We meet in the foyer of West Oxford Community Centre every Monday at 1 p.m. The walk lasts up to an hour, followed by a cuppa and biscuit back at the Centre. The conversation is as easy-going as the terrain, and it's a treat to share sightings of cormorants, moorhens and (far more athletic) locals jogging past. The walks are under the auspices of the Ramblers Association, with the leaders trained to accommodate everyone's pace and mobility. There is no commitment or cost, and it's a delightful way to get moving in company. For further details contact lambert3323@gmail.com or just turn up.



▲ Botley Park in November's floods

Know your neighbours

Zuzana Bates, Bridge Street

I moved here from London with my cat Topsy because of the lifestyle that Oxford offers. I met a few lovely neighbours through Chatty Wednesdays – a big shout out to Eli for organising these!

I work for HM Government. Mostly I supported setting up the UK's trade relationship with the EU post-Brexit and helping UK businesses navigate the new trade rules. It's not so much *Yes, Minister* as about delivering the government of the day's agenda while upholding the civil service code of conduct.

Outside of work, I cannot get enough of exploring the countryside on my bike. Cycling here is a joy compared with London. I also enjoy swimming in Hinksey Lake, which reminds me of my childhood in Bratislava, Slovakia. And when I occasionally miss Slovak food, I go to a Slovak restaurant, Moya, and the Tumbling Bay cafe is run by a Slovak couple. Oxford really has everything.



▲ South Street on 4 January

Melanie Walker and Ian Phimister, East Street

Ian and I moved to East Street in November 2023, having lived briefly at Bridge Street many years ago. We had decided that when the time came for us to go on 'permanent sabbatical' (or retirement as some say) we wanted to live on Osney Island again. So, while we are still both working full-time as academics at a university in central South Africa for another 2 years, we are now settled into our house and working remotely for most of the year.

We share our home with our exuberant border collie, Brodie, now well-known for his thick fluffy coat and his enthusiasm to meet and greet anyone and everyone. We love the proximity of peaceful walks, with our regular stroll being around Christ Church Meadow early every morning. The island itself, with the ever-changing aspects of the river, is magical. Its peace and tranquillity (most of the time), yet close proximity to services and the city centre, and its sense of community, make it quite wonderful. Melanie's current micro-ambition is to be able to add our garden to the Open Gardens list by 2026, having had to work from a scrappy lawn and one surviving star jasmine.

Remembering Joanna Muller

It is with much sadness that we share the news that Joanna Muller of East Street passed away on New Year's Eve.

Joanna had spent a wonderful Christmas with her daughters Louise and Georgie and their families, before dying peacefully at the JR Hospital.

Joanna had lived on Osney Island for nearly 30 years and was a much-loved friend and neighbour of many. She had been in poor health for many years but was always positive in her outlook and continued to make the most out of life – warm, friendly and with a smile for everyone.

Even when she could no longer enjoy her long walks by the river, she would often be seen picking litter by the water. Joanna loved the community on Osney Island so very much.

Joanna's funeral is at Oxford Crematorium, Bayswater Road, Headington, OX3 9RZ on Thursday 6 February, at 2 p.m. followed by a celebration of her life in Botley. Donations will be collected for Age UK and Dementia UK.

Jude Carroll, Pauline Martin, Vernon Orr, Jocelyn Wogan-

Browne write: Islanders may have been familiar with the frail but striking figure of Joanna in her slouch hat, litter-picking on East Street in the early mornings. This was just one of her contributions to our community – she was a staunch Osney Islander. She also knitted muffs with buttons inside to keep busy the restless hands of people with dementia. She listened avidly as friends filled her in on island gatherings, book-group discussions, travel tales and more. She offered in return insights from her first-floor window on passers-by, memories from her New Zealand past, from her many travels, and from her work at the Westminster Campus above Raleigh Park.

Stoically positive, Joanna lived life courageously and, despite her illness, was determined to do and experience all that she could. She will be much missed by her many friends and family in the UK and overseas. She is survived by her two devoted daughters, sons-in-law, four grandchildren, and by Rafi, their black labrador.



West Oxford Academy is 30

Fiona McFarlane and Ian Tullis

Tuesday 4 February marks the start of the thirtieth term of the all-ability non-selective WOA. This is a low-risk opportunity (1 hour of your time, £3 or £12 for all six short talks, including a drink, very relaxed) to learn something completely unexpected.

In previous years the WOA has looked backwards (Making burnt scrolls from Herculaneum readable) and looked forwards (Rocket science and the future). It has looked downwards (Building toilets in Ghana). And taken a sideways glance (What a lock-keeper does when you are not looking). There has been music (What I know about music), and dance (A history of Argentinian tango). WOA is rarely about cars. But it can be (Formula One from back to front). It has jokes (I set up a panto. Oh no I didn't!) And more than 200 other talks. (With thanks to Susan Hutchinson for facts from the archive, and also to all the speakers since 2006, and all those to come.)

Give WOA a go this term

Tuesdays, 8.15 p.m. in West Oxford Community Centre. There's a 20–30 minute talk by a local resident, followed by questions and informal discussion over a glass of wine. The whole thing lasts only an hour, and costs £3. Cash only please, and change is helpful.

Weekly talks from 4 February:

- Rotten Romans
- Home education in a schooling culture
- Critical thinking about the weird
- Junkyard geniuses
- Why my mother was born in the Congo
- West Oxford Bowls Club

For more details contact:

westoxfordacademy@gmail.com

Open Gardens and Tea on the Towpath

Susan Hutchinson, West Street

Summer feels a long way off but it will come and – weather permitting – Open Gardens and Tea on the Towpath will happen in June. If there are dates which clash with other events or half term, please let me know. My initial plan is for Saturday 14 June.

If you would consider opening your garden, please email me: osney.open.gardens@gmail.com or phone 01865 428323. Everyone is welcome to join in. Provisional offers are not binding, and gardens don't have to be manicured: the overall aim is variety. New gardeners are particularly welcome.

I am also starting to plan Tea on the Towpath so please get in touch if you can help. As well as volunteers to help on the day, I would particularly welcome help in the week leading up to the day as there is quite a lot to do.

For photos from last year see:

osneyisland.org.uk/open-gardens-2024/



▲ Tea on the Towpath

Osney Chatty Wednesdays

Eli Harriss, Bridge Street

Chatty Wednesday takes place on the third Wednesday of the month from 6 to 8 p.m., usually at The Holly Bush. It's our chance to get to know our neighbours, put faces to the names on the mailing list, and chat to each other. Time and venue may change as the days get lighter and The Holly Bush garden becomes available again, so look out for my emails. Please come along! Chats coming up: 19 February, 19 March, 16 April, 21 May, 18 June.

Musicians' call

John Tatlow, South Street

Colour by numbers: whatever your instrument, whatever your competence, bring your colouring piece, and let's jam. If you agree, we'll post on social media. Contact: johntatlow@gmail.com

See my video: youtu.be/xl7_yobayp0

Artists in Wonderland talk

Mark Davies, local historian and author

Thursday 8 May, 1–2 p.m., West Oxford Community Centre

During Artweeks I will host a visual treat of a lunchtime talk about the Pre-Raphaelites in Oxford.

Many Oxford people and locations (including Botley) helped and inspired these young artists as they struggled for acceptance. For instance, Thomas Combe of Oxford University Press was a crucial early patron. He also oversaw the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, whose author Lewis Carroll befriended and photographed the artists and their families. My relevant books include *Alice in Waterland* and *Alice's Oxford on Foot*.

Tickets (when available): £7 (WOCA members £5) www.woca.org.uk All proceeds to West Oxford Community Centre.

Allotments news

Verity Wilson, Field Secretary, Twenty Pound Meadow

Our two allotment sites are quiet in winter, but now is the time for pruning, feeding, pulling grass out of the beds, chitting potatoes and starting a few seeds in the greenhouse. Weeds start growing at 10°C so a light hoe is in order once the ground is drier.

The allotments are open on a Sunday morning – if you are not an allotment holder you can walk in and look around. We have several vacant plots. These are overgrown and wild and would be best suited to a group of neighbours or friends. Happy gardening to all plot holders (verity.wilson@yahoo.com)

St Frideswide Church

Rev. Rachel Cross

It was wonderful to see so many of you over Christmas. If you would like to find out more about St Frideswide Church and Christianity, you are cordially invited to share a light supper and some time exploring the meaning and practice of Christian faith. Wednesday 12 March and the four following Wednesdays, 7–7.30 p.m. supper, 7.30–8.30 p.m. discussion. This event is suitable for anyone who knows nothing about Christianity and everyone who thinks they know everything about Christianity. To find out more or reserve a place, please contact Rev. Simon Cross: simon.crossb757@duck.com

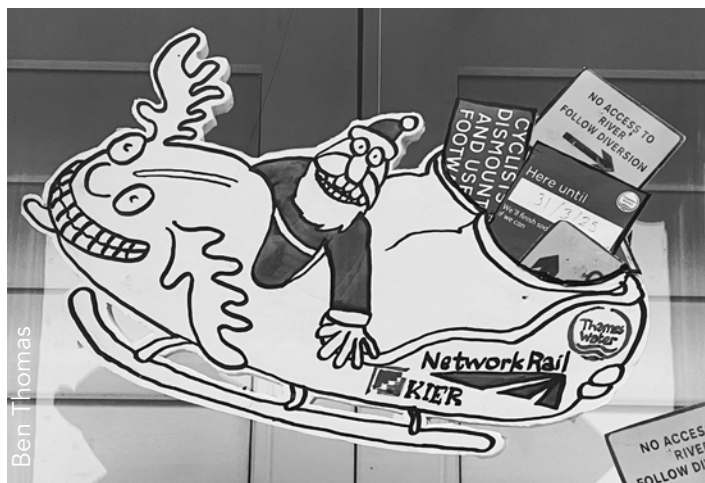
A reminder about cat litter

Please dispose of cat litter in your green bin/purple bag. Not in the public bins or the storm drains.

Festive events

A big thank you to:

- Matt Dyson for organising carol singing around the island – well attended despite Storm Darragh – and to the households who requested carols and provided refreshments
- Debbie Hall for coordinating the island's living Advent calendar, and all those who took part. You can still see the windows at: osneyisland.org.uk/advent-calendar-2024/



▲ Ben Thomas' West Street window summed up living in Osney (with inspiration from Ed McLachlan)

OIRA Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will take place at 7.30 p.m. on 23 April at St Frideswide Church. Details, including speakers, to be confirmed by door-drop and email group nearer the time.

OIRA subscriptions

Jula Turner, Bridge Street

Many thanks to everyone who has returned their OIRA subscription envelopes. It is much appreciated and helps support the newsletter and website. We have so far received £556 from 106 households.

If you haven't yet returned your subscription envelope, don't worry. They will be gratefully received at any time. If you've mislaid the envelope you can still contribute (minimum £4 salaried, £1 concession) through the door of 102 Bridge Street. Please identify your subscription with your house number and street.

Directory of local suppliers

This list is compiled from islanders' recommendations only. The list is online at: osneyisland.org.uk/directory-of-local-suppliers Local shops and services are listed at: osneyisland.org.uk/local-shops-and-services

Please contact Jane Buekett to submit additions or changes.

Baby kit

Baby kit for hire: 01235 280081, www.babycomes2.co.uk

Bicycles, repairs and accessories

Jon Wyver: 07842 901873, info@oxbicycles.co.uk, www.facebook.com/oxbicycles (will deliver and pick up in Oxford free of charge).

Building and roof repairs

Rob Cassettari, North Hinksey Builders: 01865 242312/07977 152884/07900 881511, robnhc@virginmedia.com
Everest Roofing Ltd: 01865 881685, enquiries@everestroofing.co.uk
Brian French: 07957 315303 (local general builder and plasterer: takes on small jobs)
Paul Hackett, P & R Roofing Ltd (Horspath): 01865 875523, info@prroofingoxford.co.uk, www.prroofingoxford.co.uk
Mark Mavrommatis: 07970 974792 (installs new windows, repairs old ones)

Tim Mera, KM Builders Oxford:
01865 608649, 07462 971475,
k.mbuildingservices@yahoo.com,
kmbuildersoxford.co.uk
Oxford Roofing and Maintenance:
01865 820323, 07468 429000,
oxfordroofingandmaintenance.co.uk
Richard S. Pocock: 07766 026648 (general
builder)
Mike Shephard, MJ Construction
(Abingdon): 07834 321274,
mjconstruction@hotmail.co.uk (larger jobs)

Carpenters and flooring

Steve, Amazon Flooring: 07899 918015
Leo Eastley: 07496 701244,
leoeastley@gmail.com (cabinet maker/
carpenter, lives on Osney)
Jonathan Everett, Lockwood Carpentry:
07597 952381, j.everett.lwc@gmail.com
Bill Spires: 07786 672492 (carpenter
willing to take on smaller fiddly jobs)

Car repairs and MOTs

Oxon Autos in Grove near Wantage
(will come to you): 07899 762949,
oxon.autos@live.co.uk, oxonautos.co.uk

Cat sitting/feeding and dog walking

Shirley Gibson (also housework, shopping,
companionship): 07510 991213 (Binsey)

Chimney sweep

Martin Simmonds: 07762 816185,
enquiry@ashlogs.com, www.ashlogs.com

Cleaners

C&S Cleaning Services: 01865 872395,
07824 159855
Edna: 07548 384737

Computers

Bill Baxter, The Animated Laser Company:
07774 412944 (noon to midnight, Old
Marston), bill@animatedlaser.co.uk
Bill Richardson: 01865 376100,
bill@macfaction.co.uk (Macs)
Mac Simple: 01865 580886/07974
321064, www.macsimple.co.uk

Damp

Damprot Renovations Ltd: 01865 742144
Stonehouses:
stonehousewaterproofing.co.uk

Electricians

Baldwin Appliances: 01865 377484,
www.baldwinappliances.com
Jamie Cooke: 07775 700300,
JC.Electrical@hotmail.com
DEC Electricians: 01865
725453, mail@decoxford.co.uk,
www.dec-oxfordltd.co.uk
Andy Webb (A W Electrical Services,
Yarnton): 01865 377171, 07931 127982

Footcare in your home

Kate Reid: 07952 127534

Garden compost and manure

George: 01793 575100/07831 437989,
info@muckandmulch.co.uk,
www.muckandmulch.co.uk

Gardening services

Jason: info@oxfordgardenservices.co.uk
(tree surgery)
Rory Whelehan: 07341 849035,
rory@rorlyn.co.uk (gardener, lawn/hedge
cutting, general tidying)
Clive: 07787 741968
Heather: 07522 856744 (one-off or
regular jobs, heavy or light work including
pruning)

Green builders and installers

Energy My Way: 08453 713181,
www.energymyway.co.uk
JoJu Solar: 01865 403336,
www.jojusolar.co.uk
Next Generation Renewable Energy Ltd:
01993 810130, office@ngre.co.uk

Gutter clearing

Ben's Gutters: 0800 917 3157/07778
240161, info@bensgutters.com,
www.bensgutters.com
Greg Zasuwa: clearviewforyou@gmail.com
(also window cleaning)

Handymen

Jeremias Döbeli: doebeli@me.com
(carpenter by training, lives on Osney)
Andrew Russell: 01865 453497/07977
837675 (painting, decorating and garden
maintenance)
Colin Stanley, The Small Odd Jobs
Company: 07804 908545

Home hairdressers

Sally Horton: 07815 445229
Nadine Wright: 07824 660184

Locksmith

Ross Blaikie, Lockforce
Oxford: 07588 844042,
www.lockforce.co.uk/locksmith/Oxford/

Newsagent delivering to Osney

Mr Patel, Court Candy Shop, 65
Woodstock Rd, Oxford OX2 6HJ:
01865 515506/07917 990029,
court candyshop@googlemail.com

Painters and decorators

Steve Brierty: 01491 836762/07850 357414
Paul Buckle: 07920 099196
John Chappell: 07985 490970
Dan Driscoll: 07934 718788,
danieldriscoll63@gmail.com (also home
repairs)
Sam Gordon: 07976 516941 (plasterer)
Brendan McCarthy: 07982 614633

Pests

Avenge: 02865 246195/07879 405060
(based in Binsey)

Plumbing and heating

APV Boiler Services: 01865 377264
Byron Morris, Avid Heating (boiler repairs
etc.): 07899 629629, 01865 703303,
www.avidheating.co.uk
Jules Jones: 01993 778244/07790 961395,
reallygoodplumbing@outlook.com
Ivan Kilbee: 01235 847527 /07771 787585

Mark Morris, Botley: 07970 342375 (also
electrics)
Oxtech Facilities: 07868 190748,
www.oxtechfacilities.com
Remloc Plumbing and Heating: 01235
536345 (Abingdon)
Simon Crowther Plumbing and Heating:
07709 102328, sjclumbheat@gmail.com

Removals

A. G. Jacob and Sons: 07977 963929,
www.agjacobandson.co.uk
House and Carriage: 01608 811444/07769
585988
Martini Moves: 07495 908330/07887
631348, www.martinimoves.com,
martinimovesremovals@gmail.com

TV aerials, wi-fi and satellite dishes

Oxford Aerials: 01865 400141,
<https://oxfordaerials.co.uk/> (installers and
repairers)

Upholsterer

Adriano Ribeiro: 07771 560658 (Cowley,
will collect small items)

Window cleaning

Mark Jennings: 01865 848904/07773
159198
James Middlebrook, Transparent
Window Cleaning: 07957 410771,
messageTWC@gmail.com
Torridon Slaney: 07746 356307

Windows

Oxford Refurbished Sash Windows, John:
info@sashrefurbcompany.co.uk (refurbish
the wooden frame and insert double-
glazed panels)

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

Andrew Boag andrew@boag.org.uk,
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(email list), Maureen Egeneli 07816
580990, Alan Goodwin (chair) 07765
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251454/07716 408085). Newsletter
distribution: Anna Truelove.

Osney Island newsletter supplement – February 2025

Network Rail (NR) project

We know now that we will have to wait until August of next year for Botley Road to be reopened to traffic, though from August of this year there will be a 4 meter-wide tunnel for pedestrians and cyclists to pass through (on the north side), instead of the current narrow tunnel. I have written to ask how they will make sure cyclists and motorcyclists dismount when going through the tunnel.

At the three meetings they held on Thursday they apologised profusely for the long delay and admitted that they should have done more survey work at the start of the project and that their communication with the public was poor. They promised to improve communications and their website. They said that digging out the massive inverted Victorian brick arch had added 6 months and that Thames Water's delays had cost them an extra 12 months. The Minister of State for Rail and the CEO of Network Rail listened to a lot of upsetting accounts of the problems caused by the closure from members of the public and from local businesses.

The Treasury has guaranteed the money to finish the new bridge and the new track and platform, but there is not yet enough money for the smart new western station we were promised. There will, however, be access from the western side, as there used to be.

North Street closure

The building project on the site which was formerly part of the Democrats Club in North Street is, of course, far smaller than the NR one, but it is also causing considerable annoyance. We had expected the development to be finished by September, but work has apparently been held up by bad weather. Now the builders have said that they intend to close the road from 27 February until 6 December! This is to connect water, sewage and electricity. I have asked the County Council to refuse permission for such a lengthy closure. In fact, the builders' representative now says it needs to close fully only during March and April (still bad enough). The rest of the time it can be a "relaxed closure", which means that it can be open during the evenings and at weekends. To mollify the poor residents somewhat they have agreed to stop monopolising so many parking spaces.

Abandoned bicycles

I have been asked to arrange for another sweep to pick up abandoned cycles, which are clogging up the badly needed bike racks. An officer from ODS will be tagging any bikes that look abandoned. A few weeks later he will pick them up. If you see a tag on your bike and you wish to keep it, just remove the tag.

Textile recycling

If you are in the Osney Island email group, you will have already had the good news that the City Council is bringing in a new, free, kerbside collection of textiles for recycling. From 31 January onwards you will be able to book a collection from your home, using a form at www.oxford.uk, where there is already a lot more information. If you don't have internet access, please contact me – I'm hoping they will make a phone number available as well.

Best wishes

Susanna Pressel (City Councillor)