

Osney Island Residents' Association Newsletter

Island freebie day

21 September, 2–4 p.m.

In those happy days before the email group, OIRA organised an occasional 'freebie day' when anyone could leave items outside their house for the taking. A couple of residents suggested we resurrect this idea, as inclusive and simple.

The first retro freebie day will be Sunday 21 September, 2–4 p.m. Please leave unwanted items (reusable, safe) outside for this period only. If it is a success, let the committee know and we will organise other dates.

Thanks to Lesley Casey and Pauline Martin for the suggestion.

A happy ending

Joanna Jacobs, Bridge Street

The escapade of Tiger the Tabby began when he disappeared on 1 July. His owner Gerda, my next door neighbour, asked the island to check their sheds, posters were made and put around waving in the breeze. Gerda was distraught, unable to sleep or eat properly and knocking on my door in floods of tears. Tiger's brother Pezi wasn't eating either, that's how you know a cat is missing his brother.



Despite our emails asking people to search again, by the weekend it was looking bleak. The weather had been hot and all I could think was 'where was he, where had he gone?'

On 7 July, six days after Tiger's disappearance, Simon Pressey emailed the group to say he had found a cat in his shed. Gerda, as fast as her legs could carry her, went with her little red pet carrier and, yes, it was him. He returned with ne'er a hair out of place and was eating and drinking as though 'What? What happened? Um, this tastes nice'.

Good neighbours

Louise, South Street

My name is Louise and I moved onto the island almost three years ago. I was brought up in Botley so it was

lovely to have the opportunity to move back. I am in myself just an everyday person until you throw my dog into the mix. Boris is a black and white Staffordshire bull terrier. You may have seen us around.

I lived on the Abingdon Road for 21 years so coming back to live here was at first a shock to the system. I have never lived anywhere where there is such a big feeling of community spirit. I must admit to start with I was totally overwhelmed with it.

I work in a theological college just outside the city centre and have been there for 18 years.

I have four grown-up sons and six grandchildren who visit regularly and love the parks and the walks we are so lucky to have around us.

Rebecca Young, East Street

It was a fortuitous day in May when, looking at the fading fences that surround our generously sized Victorian garden, I wondered what it would be like to take them down. I was struck by the sense it made to remove the towering fence to allow more of a wildlife corridor. After a quick intro email to the neighbour who backs on to me, Eleanor and I met and stood in each other's gardens, revelling in the prospect of frogs migrating between our ponds. Eleanor even kindly proposed the idea of inserting a low gate instead of the high fence, which I knew would delight my daughters. There's always something magical about what lies beyond a gate.

So we now have the beginnings of an opening between our two gardens for wildlife to wander.

Magical days indeed.

Ambika Sarkar, South Street

Hello islanders! Hope you are all enjoying the summer.

Over the 3 years that we have been here my husband Sushanto and I have grown to love the island. We have also had the opportunity to connect with other islanders on some occasions.



I am employed with a college at the University of Oxford and am passionate about languages, culture and philosophy. Bilingual since childhood (English/French), I have master's degrees from the University of St Andrews and the University of Oxford. I have trained and taught with Alliance Française, and over the last 15 years have delivered French language and literature classes at university, GCSE and A-level and helped with 11+ entrance exams.

Outside of my work hours, I provide online and in-person French tuition classes. To try a free demo/taster class, contact me on 07880 110862.

Towpath daffodils

Jude Carroll, East Street

Here's an idea: let's replant the daffodils on the East Street riverbank.

Right now, if you walk down East Street, the outlook is grim: construction, litter, closed moorings, and a tatty path. True, things will improve in spring because we still have the remnants of hundreds of bulbs planted by island stalwarts a few decades ago. They are a welcome sight but, year-on-year, they have dwindled. This year's show was meagre.

There are plans afoot to change this. The idea is to replant the daffodils in September, specifically on Sunday 14 September and Saturday 20 September. We are sourcing bee-friendly, sustainable and robust varieties which hopefully can be enjoyed for decades to come.

Would you join the 15 people who have already volunteered to replant? No strong backs necessary. We intend to use machines to do the actual digging, so it's help with placing bulbs, refilling and reseeding.

Offers of help (including with funding, if you wish) to Jude Carroll at osneyjude@gmail.com (OIRA is contributing some funding.)

Let's make spring 2026 blooming marvellous.



Oxford Open Doors 2025

13 and 14 September

Is there a building in Oxford, normally closed to the public, that has always intrigued you? Oxford Preservation Trust has been organising an Open Doors weekend, in partnership with Oxford University, since 2007. It's not just university buildings – you can visit all sorts of sites that are not normally accessible – the Mini plant, the fourteenth-century painted room on Cornmarket Street, and many more.

This year Open Doors falls on 13 and 14 September. Check out the website to see what's going on: www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/oxford-open-doors

On Osney Island the hydro will be open, as will the Yoga Centre, which will also be offering free classes (bookable from 24 August): www.vishuddhayoga.org

History of 16 East Street

The Vishuddha Yoga Centre on East Street has commissioned a history of the site on which it stands, and plans to create a mural on the ground floor depicting its story. Copies of the history can be read in the Yoga Centre. Below is a brief summary.

In 1851, when Osney island was developed for housing, 16 Bridge Street and 16 East Street were sold as one site to publican William Bateman Timms. He built the Swan pub on Bridge Street, with river access and outbuildings on East Street. In the following years there was a succession of landlords and ladies, one notorious for after-hours opening, another committing suicide using cyanide, while a third doubled as lock keeper and saved a number of people from drowning.

In around 1926 a garage for the repair of motor cars was built on 16 East Street, where it operated until 1939, when the pub also ceased trading. After this 16 East Street was owned by the Wellington Dairy in Jericho, which delivered milk door to door, and used the former garage as a depot.

Sculptor Hugo Powell bought the site as a whole in 1969, lived in 16 Bridge Street and used the milk depot as a studio for the next 45 years, until his death.

Chatty Wednesdays

Eli Harriss, Bridge Street

Osney Chatty Wednesday takes place on the third Wednesday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at either The Punter or The Holly Bush. It's our chance to meet each other and chat as neighbours. We talk about all sorts of topics, such as football, economics, pottery, mime courses, cats, recipes, local building works, holidays and beer. Look for the table with me wearing a fluorescent yellow cycling jacket so as to be recognisable.

I'm Eli, I live on Bridge Street, and I organise this to encourage us to make friends with each other and build the community. There'll be emails on the mailing list about exact locations each month. Chats coming up: 20 August, 17 September, 15 October, 19 November, 17 December.

Allotments news

Verity Wilson, Field Secretary, Twenty Pound Meadow

There are some plots available at Twenty Pound Meadow, across the Botley Road. If you are toying with the idea of taking on a plot or half plot, now is a good time to have a look around and see what lovely food crops you might grow: courgettes, potatoes, beans, artichokes, beetroot, salad crops, cucumbers... The site is open to all (as is the shop) Sunday mornings 10 a.m.–12 noon.

For those who already have an allotment a reminder that rent collection will be the first three Sunday mornings in September. Please come along to Twenty Pound Meadow and pay by card. Online payment is not available.

St Frideswide Church

Rev. Rachel Cross

St Frideswide is here for the community of Osney and Binsey and for the sacred moments in local people's lives. Thankful for God's love and faithfulness, we celebrate new life, welcoming both babies and newcomers into the community and church. We stand with those experiencing grief, suffering and disrupted lives. And we celebrate weddings as local couples begin a new chapter.

Located in the middle of the neighbourhood, St Frideswide co-experiences the many impacts on this community as the station roadworks continue. And we continue to seek practical solutions with Network Rail and the bus companies for the unsatisfactory situation with the bus stops outside the church.

From the archive

Longer-term residents will remember the raft race around the island, from days when health and safety were less of a consideration. The last one I remember was in 2001. These photos look as if they date back a little earlier than that. Someone may remember? Gender balance and healthy living were clearly not priorities.



Getting to know our neighbours

Violetta Splitter, South Street

On a lovely summer day in June some newer residents and a few families from the southern end of the island gathered in Oatlands Park for an informal picnic (with lots of cake and other delicious food). The idea was for some busy working people to meet their neighbours. We had a fabulous afternoon together and the chance to get to know each other a bit better. The kids had great fun building a tent around the climbing frame too.

Thank you, Jane, for the initiative and for bringing the Osney community closer together.



Open Gardens and Tea on the Towpath

Susan Hutchinson, West Street

We were again lucky with the weather and – as usual Osney bakers excelled. The gardens were lovely and it was great to visit some new ones. Thank you as ever to everyone who contributed and made the day so enjoyable.

Some numbers: ten gardens and Osney Hydro were open, all different and full of character. We raised nearly £750 for OIRA for production of the newsletter and to support other events. After some reflection, it was decided to have a break next year but Open Gardens will be back in 2027.

See osneyisland.org.uk/open-gardens-2025/ for photos of the gardens, gardeners and tea.



OIRA subscription envelope

You will have received an envelope with your newsletter asking you to make a voluntary subscription to OIRA. This pays for the newsletter printing, website platform, Bridge Street planter repairs and the AGM, as well as any local projects OIRA helps fund.

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 Shepheard, MJ Construction (Abingdon): 07834 321274, mjconstruction@hotmail.co.uk (larger jobs)

Carpenters and flooring

Carlos Pereira: carpenteroxford22@gmail.com

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

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

Mark Morris, Botley: 07970 342375 (small jobs, minor electrics and plumbing)
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, courtcandyshop@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: 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
Oxtech Facilities: 07868 190748, www.oxtechfacilities.com
Remloc Plumbing and Heating: 01235 536345 (Abingdon)

Simon Crowther Plumbing and Heating: 07709 102328, sjcplumbheat@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/](http://oxfordaerials.co.uk/) (installers and repairers)

Upholsterers

Anna Burt: annaburt@gmail.com
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

Torrion Slaney: 07746 356307

Windows

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

OIRA info

Get in touch

If you are interested in joining the OIRA committee please contact the chair or any other committee member. Alan Goodwin will be standing down as chair before the next AGM. Anyone who would like to stand or to know more about what the role involves please contact us.

And if you have an idea for the wellbeing of the island community that you would like the committee to fund, again please get in touch.

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, Alison Burdett alison.burdett@gmail.com (email list), Alan Goodwin (chair) 07765 034918 alan@alangoodwin.co.uk, Eli Harriss gekh2@yahoo.co.uk, Maria Holt (treasurer) mariaholt@yahoo.com, Philippa Lanchbery planchbery@icloud.com, Karen Schoenemann 07718 632742, Jula Turner 07971 881258.

Newsletter and website editor

(and secretary): Jane Buekett (janebuekett@yahoo.co.uk, 01865 251454/07716 408085). Newsletter distribution: Anna Truelove.



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor Susanna Pressel

Jericho & Osney Division

susanna.pressel@oxfordshire.gov.uk

August 2025

Moorings on the riverbank in East Street

The Environment Agency (EA) says that they can no longer allow boats to moor in East Street, because the wooden planks attached to the riverbank are rotting and therefore unsafe for mooring and also a trip hazard for boaters. The project to restore the moorings and repair the bank will be done as soon as possible, probably in 2026.

Network Rail (NR)

The work towards reopening Botley Road is on schedule. We should have one of the new 4-metre-wide pedestrian and cycle tunnels open this month! They are now, at last, working long hours and 7 days a week. They hope to get rid of that puddle and provide better facilities at the bus stop by the church soon. However, there is unfortunately still poor visibility for people exiting Osney Island. Please advance with care and be especially cautious when using the pedestrian crossing; there have been many reports of cyclists and even cars not stopping at the red light. The next residents' meeting is on 27 August at 5pm in the Kings Centre, Osney Mead. NR is now putting out two e-newsletters each week. You can subscribe through the website. If you want to contact them, please write to Oxfordfeedback@networkrail.co.uk or phone 03457 114141.

Thames Water

Some houses on the Island, notably in South Street, have had sewer problems, especially after heavy rainfall. People are worried these problems may get even worse when nearby developments are occupied, for instance when the Said Business School opens its Global Leadership Centre in the former Osney Power Station. I have persuaded Thames Water's asset management department to set up an online meeting to discuss this on 31st July. Please join the OIRA email group if you want to read reports on this meeting and to hear about future events.

Goodbye to our councils

Within the next two years or so the city and county councils will both be abolished. One new council (a "unitary council") will be created in their place. Do you want this to be one large council covering the whole county? Would you prefer a smaller council, with the city continuing to govern itself, but on somewhat wider boundaries? Or a north Oxfordshire council (including the city) and a south Oxfordshire council? Please tell us. There is more information on the city and county websites. The deadline for comments is 12th August.

Small grants

Councillors each have a small budget to give out to local groups. I will be giving some money towards the cost of the spring bulbs for the riverbank. I'd also be very happy to give some money for things like a regular fun football kickabout for girls or mixed teams, inspired by the Lionesses. Is anyone able to run this? Do you have other ideas for events or activities?

Susanna