

Osney Island Residents' Association Newsletter

Join in our Christmas events

Osney Advent calendar

Debbie Hall, East Street

Every year in December we have a living Advent calendar on Osney Island. The households taking part are allocated a day between 1 December and Christmas Eve. When your day arrives, you put a seasonal decoration or artwork in your front window. It can be anything with an Advent, Christmas or winter theme – like the windows on a traditional Advent calendar. We have done this for the last few years, and the windows from previous years can be seen on the island website: osneyisland.org.uk/advent-calendar-2024

All we need is 24 volunteers (or more – we can double up on some days). Anyone on the island is welcome to join in. If you are interested, or would just like to find out more, please contact Debbie Hall at debbietheduck@hotmail.com by mid-November.



Carol singing

Matt Dyson, Bridge Street

7 December, 5 p.m.

The tradition of carolling around the island will be back again this year. This is one of the most tinselly and good-kind-of-indulgent events on the communal festive calendar.

Anyone who wants to join in this family-friendly event should meet outside The Punter at 5 p.m. on Sunday 7 December. We'll visit any house on the island that has requested a knock and a carol. Such requests are often (but not necessarily) accompanied by the offer of some small refreshment. Children are welcome but should be accompanied by an adult. For the last few years we have ended in The Holly Bush for a final carol or two, and we hope to do something similar again. No particular singing skill is required, and the words to the carols will be provided.

Who would like to receive a doorstep carol? Please tell me your name, address, and whether you want a specific carol. We'll do our best.

Who wants to sing? All are welcome, including people turning up on the day. But if you think you are coming, please drop an email to say.

matthewdyson@yahoo.com

West Oxford Community Christmas Market 29 and 30 November, WOCC

The West Oxford Community Christmas Market will be held at the West Oxford Community Centre on Saturday 29 November (11 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and Sunday 30 November (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). There will be the usual (unusual!) selection of locally produced items of all kinds: clothing, pottery, cards, paintings, woodwork, jewellery, books, and more. The Centre's WOCA Weekly newsletter will provide a more detailed outline of exhibitors in the coming weeks.

Wellbeing in West Oxford

Laura Hancock, Oxford Wellbeing Co-operative Oxford Wellbeing Co-operative has launched at Makespace Central in Park End Street. It brings together local practitioners to make affordable wellbeing support available to everyone — especially those who might not usually access it.

The launch event at Community Works, Park End Street, was filled with music, food and conversation, marking the start of a grassroots movement centred on connection, care and community healing.

The co-op is now running regular activities including drop-in women's groups, talking-therapy sessions, and a mix of Ayurvedic massage, restorative yoga and community gatherings designed to build resilience and belonging.

For details or to collaborate on local wellbeing projects, contact oxfordwellbeingproject@gmail.com or sign up to our newsletter: tinyurl.com/mr2x5b7a

You can find us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).



▲ The co-directors during a Q&A at the launch party

Daffs on the towpath

A big thanks to all who helped plant a huge number of spring bulbs on the East Street towpath. Many of the bulbs are native species and include daffodils of various kinds, and bluebells. Most of the planting was done in two weekend sessions and was fun and neighbourly as well as requiring a bit of muscle. Despite plenty of chat a lot of work got done. There was even some archaeology, with one group digging up an old iron horse-riding spur.



Jude Carroll did the organising, including sourcing bulbs, grass-seed, topsoil and equipment. She says of the volunteers: 'I was particularly pleased by the range in age and time living on Osney. Young and old, venerable long-termers and newcomers'.



Thanks also to those who donated funds, including Saïd Business School, OIRA, local residents and both our councillors.

Now we just have to wait for the spring...

Pet-sitting services

Robyn Stevenson Haigh, South Street

Hello! I'm Robyn (aged 9) from South Street and have recently set up a pet-sitting business with my friends Frankie, Armelle and Daphne. The money we raise is all donated to WWF to help save endangered species and our neighbours have been very kind to have already supported our services. We particularly enjoy walking, feeding and playing with dogs, cats and many more. If you are interested, please message my mum, Bea on 07854 625905. At the moment we are only available on Friday from 4 p.m. or at the weekends any time from 10.00 a.m.

No Time by Kieron Winn

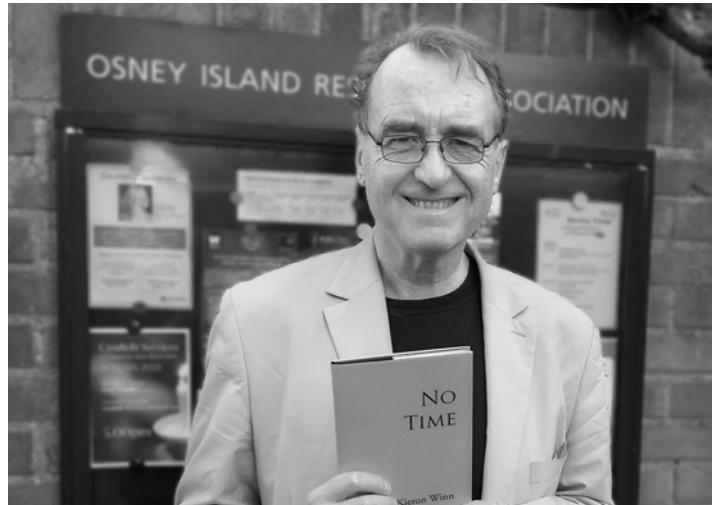
Longstanding Bridge Street resident Kieron Winn has a new book of poems out. *No Time* includes work first published in magazines such as *New Statesman*, *The Spectator* and *The Times Literary Supplement*.

No Time explores how the malleability of early life evolves into shape and pattern. Some poems mark the conjunction of public and private events, others the joys

and losses of middle age. Titles include 'In Blenheim Park', 'In a Boars Hill Graveyard', 'OX1' and 'View from the Bedroom Window', set on Osney Island. The cast includes the Beatles, Rembrandt and the Voyager 1 probe, and Yeats's 'Sailing to Byzantium' is rewritten by A. E. Housman, T. S. Eliot and Philip Larkin.

Kieron's first collection of poems, *The Mortal Man*, was praised by, among others, Melvyn Bragg and Clive James.

Copies of *No Time*, a hardback, can be bought directly from Kieron (kieron_winn@hotmail.com) for £13.50 (cash/card).



Meet the Drakes

John and Debbie Drake, West Street

We're visiting from Athens, Georgia, USA – a lively university town known for its music scene (home of R.E.M. and The B-52s) and the University of Georgia, where John is a biology professor. We're spending 2025 in Oxford while John works with the Oxford University Pandemic Sciences Institute and Balliol College as part of a sabbatical year.

Since arriving in January, we've thoroughly enjoyed our time living on Osney Island. Some of our favourite experiences have been Chatty Wednesday, Open Gardens, and Tea on the Towpath – such lovely ways to meet neighbours and soak up the local community spirit. John also enjoyed running the Oxford Half Marathon.

We're here until the end of December and are incredibly grateful for the warm welcome and hospitality we've received. Thank you for making Oxford feel like a home away from home.



The ivy bees of South Street

Will Scarratt, Bridge Street

Walking down South Street in late September, I was captivated by the flurry of activity in a front garden. A vibrant swarm of male ivy bees (*Colletes hederae*) were zigzagging around a nesting site, making a loud humming sound, waiting for the emergence of female bees. Their fluffy ginger thoraxes and striped abdomens made for a colourful autumnal spectacle.

As autumn arrives, ivy bursts into bloom, providing essential food for late-flying insects. The ivy bee, scientifically described in 1993 and first recorded in the UK in 2001, has quickly spread across Britain, largely due to the absence of parasites that target them.



▲ Ivy bee feeding on ivy

Although not social insects, ivy bees nest in large aggregations. Their nest sites are formed of hundreds of small burrows leading to complex chambers where females stockpile pollen to lay their eggs. During cooler weather, their activity gradually declines, but on sunny days, you can still spot these fascinating insects bustling around ivy. Autumn wouldn't be the same without them.

Wildlife tip

Artificial light is one of the factors known to be reducing wildlife numbers. To protect moths, bats and other nocturnal creatures, turn off any garden or outside lights and make your garden a dark space at night.

Flooding update

The low river levels following the dry summer mean there is no imminent threat of flooding this early in the season. But if you live in a flood-prone part of the island and have flood protection kit such as a pump and flood gates, now is the time to make sure you know where they are and that they are in good working order.

There is a WhatsApp group providing updates and info during flood events to residents in South Street, Doyley Road, Bridge Street extension and the north end of West Street. If you live in those areas and would like to join the group please contact Jane (07716 408085).

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme reports that it is making good progress and construction should start late next year.



From the archive

This photo is in the island archive but we have no information about it. Can anyone throw any light on what the event might be? The group seems to be assembled in Bridge Street outside The Holly Bush, the clothing

suggests 1940s, and some of the children are wearing labels. They are too cheerful for evacuees, who would in any case have arrived by train. Are they heading off on some kind of outing?

Osney Chatty Wednesday

Eli Harriss, Bridge Street

Come, have a drink, chat and meet your neighbours. Osney Chatty Wednesday takes place on the third Wednesday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at The Punter. Look out for me in a fluorescent yellow cycling jacket and be sure that you're at the table where Osney neighbours meet and chat. Do you want to talk about football? Or property renovations? Holidays, cats, corsets, sausages, the US Civil War, hiking, hoarding, drumming and mime workshops: we always have intriguing conversations on a Wednesday evening.

I've lived on Bridge Street for 15 years, and I organise this monthly event to encourage us to make friends with each other and strengthen the community. Chats coming up: 19 November, 17 December, 21 January 2026, 18 February.

Osney Lock Hydro

You may have noticed that the hydro still isn't running. This is because the lack of flow in the river. If rainfall increases as we move into winter it should restart. In the meantime power is still being generated by the solar panels on the roof.

The digital display giving info about the hydro has been upgraded with a bigger, brighter screen thanks to a grant from Low Carbon Hub.

News from St Frideswide

Rev. Rachel Cross

It was good to meet those who attended the recent Botley rail works gathering at St Frideswide Church to share concerns and frustrations about the ongoing situation. This remains a challenging period for our community. St Frideswide continues to engage with Network Rail regarding the bus stop outside the church – an issue we raised even before works began. Our concern about the narrow pathway and our suggested solutions have been ignored until now. But, with support from Lord Hendy and the Lord Bishop of Oxford, Network Rail agreed to submit plans for an extended bus stop. We have been waiting for these since May. We still don't know what they are proposing and are frustrated about the long delays, and the destruction of our rewilding efforts by the overspill from the bus stop.

Minor crimes in the area

If you witness or are a victim of petty crime in the area, such as drug dealing or car break-ins, please report it online to Thames Valley Police. Our neighbourhood policing team can respond to patterns of crime if they are aware of them.

Subscription envelopes

Maria Holt, West Street

Thanks to everyone who has dropped off the brown envelopes with their subscription to OIRA (£4 waged, £1 unwaged). This is entirely voluntary and your support is much appreciated. It pays for the newsletter, the website, the planters in Bridge Street and one-off Osney ventures.

Please contact the committee if you have any ideas for community projects.

And if you haven't yet paid your subscription it is not too late. Don't worry if you can't find the OIRA envelope – just pop it through the door of 22 West Street in any envelope marked with your house number and street. Sorry, we can't currently take electronic payments.

Your island needs you

OIRA committee

Resignations and retirements mean we need some new volunteers to join the OIRA committee. It's free, it's sociable and it helps to make Osney the community it is. Duties are not onerous. You need to attend six one-hour meetings a year plus the AGM and take an interest in island affairs – anything more is up to you. If you have ideas to bring and would like to make a difference to island life, contact one of the current committee (contact details on the website and at the end of this newsletter).

We are also looking for a new chair. At the April AGM Alan Goodwin announced he would complete his seven-year stretch on or before the April 2026 AGM. No current committee member will be standing for the position, so we're looking for new blood. Again, if you might be interested, contact any of the committee.

Directory of local suppliers

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

Local shops and services are listed at:

osneyisland.org.uk/local-shops-and-services

If you contact someone in the directory and find they are no longer working, please inform Jane Buekett so they can be removed.

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, 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

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

OIRA Newsletter Supplement – Autumn 2025

East Street willows

We managed to stop the contractors from pollarding the willows in the summer, when birds might have been nesting. They are at last coming back on 1st December. They say they will be in East Street all week. They think they can "keep disruption to a minimum" as far as parking is concerned. They have promised to deliver a letter to each household to ask people to move their cars and free up different spaces each day. I hope no car owners are away that week.

Drug-dealing

Several people have witnessed drug-dealing on or near the Island in recent weeks. The local police are aware. Please report all suspected sightings and any other crime or anti-social behaviour. The more we report, the more police attention we will get. Please phone 101 – or 999 if it is a crime in progress, even a minor one. Alternatively, incidents or concerns can be reported on the Thames Valley Police website.

Our excellent neighbourhood police team have promised to hold a "have your say" drop-in event soon, probably under a gazebo on the towpath in East Street. I hope they will do a letter-drop to announce the date and time. In case they don't, please join the Osney Island email group, if you can, to hear about this and other important events.

News updates

There is a lot of recent news and information about the area (Network Rail work, Thames Water work on Osney Bridge, the congestion charge starting on 29 October, the new shop at 67 Botley Road.....) which I won't include here, because I have been sending it out each week to the Osney Island email group, which most residents belong to.

Road works

Disaster was narrowly averted recently, when it looked as though North Street and South Street might both be closed to traffic at the same time. Thames Water needs to come back to do some more work to the sewers at the junction of Bridge Street and the eastern half of South Street. The County Council has promised to make sure North Street will be open at that time. I am trying to get it re-opened permanently as soon as possible.

Refuse and recycling

Every household should have 2 large bins (or a supply of bags) and 2 small dark green bins for food waste. If you don't have these, or if you have any other problems, please contact me or email recycling@oxford.gov.uk You can also phone the city council on 01865 249811.

There is now a free textile recycling scheme, which raises money for a charity and which you can book online at www.oxford.gov.uk or request by phoning 01865 249811.

Keeping warm and well

There is a range of support available to help you stay warm, well and independent in your home this winter. There is advice about energy bills from Better Housing Better Health and funding for energy efficiency measures like loft and cavity wall insulation and more. Please see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/keepingwarm for more information or contact me.

Susanna