# Osney Island Residents' Association Newsletter

## What makes Osney special?

*This question was answered for me by Mark Van Oss's email offering his skeleton Rodney as a party guest, or as a speeding deterrent. Rodney's diary is filling up nicely.*

*Here are some other answers.*

*Florian, Bridge St, new to OI:* The peace and quiet, especially in the night, despite living so central. Also the fantastic close proximity to the city centre, the train station, the motorway and all other needs of a modern life.

*Mark, East St:* Oxford's last village.

*Maria, West St:* You don't realise how much you appreciate something until it's gone. One of the first lovely things we did when we moved to Osney was to walk across the little bridge at the end of Swan Street.

*Violetta, South St:* The first missing, then found, cats.

*Robert and Susan, West St:* We have lived on Osney since January 1991, and we still fondly recall walking down West Street for the first time, more interested with every step, to look at a house for sale. Like Douglas Adams, number 42 has given us the answer to 'life, the universe and everything'.

*Jaz, East St:* I find endless inspiration in the ways people have decorated their houses. From an African land-snail door knocker to a frosted-glass toucan silhouette, every doorway has its own character. This and the whimsical appearance of pre-loved treasures and surplus produce left out for neighbours to take.

*Masha, Doyley Rd:* Good neighbourliness, friendliness and the ability of all of us to ask for help in our beautiful email, and we will be given it.

*Eleanor, Bridge St:* We live in a village, with trees, gardens, old houses, a friendly community, and beautiful country walks starting from our doorstep — and yet we're less than half an hour, on foot, from world-class research libraries, terrific cultural activities, and transport links that can take us anywhere in the world.

*George:* We love watching the world go by right outside our windows. Beyond the boats of all shapes and sizes, the river is alive with geese, ducks, swans and the occasional brave swimmer. It has been a joy to watch one particular swan family grow from fluffy cygnets into fully fledged, independent adults.

*Zoi, formerly West St*: We had to leave Osney when our rented house went up for sale. We miss it a lot and often. The natural border of the tiny island makes the community tight-knit, and the people of Osney are all unique. I met many people in my 20 months of residence and not one of them was boring. I miss the large willow tree at the end of West Street, and, I'm not gonna lie, having Alden's at walking distance.

*Elin (7), South St*: Osney is special because I live here.

*Jude, East St*: What makes it special? The wonderful requests for weird and obscure things then, blow me, someone can offer it.

What makes it special? It's a great discussion starter ('I live on an island') when I'm on a long-distance walk in a shared hut at the end of a long day.

What makes it special? I can have an idea ('let's replant daffodils') then there's the infrastructure, funding and neighbourly help to make it happen.

What makes it special? All the different doors in a late evening stroll.


Rodney

## Christmas events

### Carol singing

Matt Dyson, Bridge Street

**Sunday 7 September, 4.30 and 5.10 p.m.**

After last year's popular visit to Tumbling Bay Court (<5 mins walk), we will have two phases of Osney carol singing this time. Come for one or, even better, both.

- For the Tumbling Bay Court session, meet outside The Holly Bush at 4.30 p.m.
- For the standard island route, meet at the pub at 5.10 p.m, and we'll visit those who have requested a carol. Such requests can (but need not) be accompanied by the offer of some small refreshment, especially for children.

Children are welcome, accompanied by at least one adult per group. We usually end in The Holly Bush for a final carol or two. No particular singing skill is required, and the words to the carols are provided.

- **Who would like a doorstep carol?** Send me your name, address, and whether you want a specific carol. Please do ask, whoever you are and whatever your background, we'd love to sing to you!
- **Who wants to sing?** You can just turn up on the day. But if you can please drop me an email and let me know if you are coming to one or both routes. matthewdyson@yahoo.com

### Advent calendar

Debbie Hall, East Street

It's nearly time for the Osney Island Advent calendar, so this a call for volunteers. For each date between 1 December and Christmas Eve, one household puts a decoration or artwork in their front window, anything with an Advent, Christmas or winter theme. So, like opening the 'windows' on a traditional Advent calendar, we have a seasonal window for each day of Advent. The decorations stay up until Christmas.



You can see last year's windows at osneyisland.org.uk/advent-calendar-2025, and previous years' too. All we need is 24 volunteers from around the island. Everyone is welcome to join in. If you are interested, or want to find out more, contact me: debbietheduck@hotmail.com by mid-November.

Ceramics sale
Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November, 11 a.m.–5 p.m., 3 North Street
West St and North St ceramic studios are having a joint Christmas sale. Three makers: dishes, pots for plants, ceramic Christmas-tree decorations, small sculptures, incense trays and paintings plus free mince pies.

West Oxford Arts and Crafts Market
Saturday 28 November 11 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday 29 November 11 a.m.–4 p.m., WOCC
Free entry, 25 local artists and makers selling paintings, prints, jewellery, textiles, ceramics, wood, photography, books, glass, rushwork, decorations, cards, calendars. And Tumbling Bay Café will be open throughout.

St Frideswide Church
Rev Rachel Cross
Christmas! The countdown of shopping days, playing calendar Tetris trying to see everyone beforehand. Time seems to speed up the closer we get to 25 December. In contrast, the church enters into Advent season, an invitation to pause, make room for reflection and look for the light in the darkness.

You are warmly welcome at our Advent and Christmas services:

Advent Sundays: 10.30 a.m., 29 November, 6, 13, 20 December

Christmas carol service: 5.00 p.m., 20 December

Crib service: 4.30 p.m., 24 December

Family Christmas celebration: 10.30 a.m., 25 December

## Osney Home Guard

Peter Smith, Arthur Street

The photo shows Osney Platoon, West Company, 6th (City of Oxford) Battalion of the Oxfordshire Home Guard, in 1944. The grandson of A. V. Corbey from Bridge Street, who served in the unit from June 1940 to December 1944, owns the photo. He is trying to identify as many faces as possible. If you have a relative who served in this platoon during the war please contact me at wolvercoteww1@btinternet.com

Another branch of the Home Guard, the Upper Thames Patrol, guarded the river from London to Lechlade. The Thames was part of the defensive line set up in 1940 in case of invasion. In our neck of the woods, it apparently operated from the Sea Cadet base on the island. Does anyone recall the Sea Cadets being here?



## On rising from the nearly dead

Marion Hanbury Brown, Bridge Street

In May, I contracted septicaemia from an unknown source in Guernsey, on the way back from a cycling holiday in the Loire Valley. Hotel cleaners found me unconscious. After more than 3 months, first in Intensive Care Units in Guernsey and the JR, then in Didcot Community Hospital, I returned home. A network of friends, family and neighbours has supported me in every manner possible, thank you all.

I am now pottering down to the lock without a stick and to the yoga centre for chair-based yoga, and adjusting to the loss of vision in one eye. The glorious weather held out for my brother and partner visiting from Australia, and with their assistance I managed two swims at Hinksey pool, marvellous. I had a trip to Aston Pottery with another friend in time for the vibrant dahlias and asters.



## Every body tells a story

Ally Stott, West Street

Biodynamic craniosacral therapy (BCT) is a gentle, hands-on form of bodily healing that is suitable for people of all ages and stages of life. I initially encountered it 20 years ago, and went on to train as a BC therapist.

Unresolved stressful or traumatic experiences from birth and throughout life can be held unconsciously in the body,

creating imbalance and dis-ease that can restrict our natural capacity for wellbeing, ease, enjoyment of life and healing.

People come for BCT for many reasons including chronic fatigue, depleted immune system, healing from injury, menopause transition, IBS, soul-loss, headaches, chronic pain, stress.

As an established practitioner I listen with all my sense to you, and the *whole* of your body. Bodies like to be listened to and the wholeness already present as you amplifies when it is remembered. Over a number of sessions deeply held somatic patterns or blockages can release, enabling more ease and vitality, within the garden of conditions that is your body's unique journey through the cycles of life.



Find out more at www.allystott.co.uk

## The buzz we need

Will Scarratt, Bridge Street

Under constantly shifting skies, a queen bumblebee flies into the garden to collect pollen from a late-flowering tomato plant. She grabs the anther cone in her hooked, black jaws and legs, and makes a loud buzzing noise as pollen pours out of the flower, like salt from a shaker.

This buzzing noise made to release pollen is something only bumblebees and some solitary bees can do. It is known as buzz pollination. The bee achieves this by unhooking her wings from the internal flight muscles and vibrating the muscles rapidly at roughly 300 Hz. An electric toothbrush will have the same effect on the flower.

A couple of weeks earlier, I saw a honeybee try its luck on the flowers but to no effect. Honeybees cannot unhook their flight muscles to do buzz pollination and so cannot pollinate plants like tomatoes, blueberries and peppers.

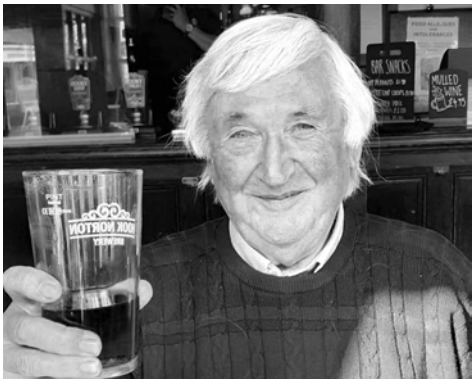
Having emptied the tomato flowers of pollen, she flies high into the distance to find a small burrow or crevice to overwinter.

## Remembering Noel Martin

27 December 1939–7 September 2026

Pauline Martin , Bridge Street

Noel and I moved to Osney at the start of his retirement in 2021. He had held the post of Head of Chemistry at Peter Symonds College, Winchester, for over 30 years. Noel loved everything about this new life: he sang tenor for Cathedral Singers of Christ Church and Oxford Bach Choir, enjoyed a game of bridge, pursued his love of real ale with a small group of dedicated enthusiasts but was predominantly a home-loving, family man – celebrating our Diamond Wedding earlier this year. His health deteriorated slowly over several years which he disregarded entirely until sudden onset pneumonia a few weeks ago proved too much for his weakened



constitution. We are grateful for the superb care of John Radcliffe Hospital and Beaumont Care Home and the many kind messages of condolence, each a real comfort.

## Osney Open Doors

Osney Island commemorated its 175th anniversary in September by taking part in Oxford Open Doors, with an exhibition of historical artefacts at the Demos, and popular walking tours of the island led by Sarah Parker. Photos here: osneyisland.org.uk/175th-anniversary-of-osney/

## Vishuddha Yoga news

James Pritchard

More than 150 visitors enjoyed free yoga classes and tours of our East St yoga centre during Oxford Open Doors. Many people remember the previous building, used as a studio by artist Hugo Powell. The new copper-clad building won a RIBA award in 2023, and, as well as yoga enthusiasts, visitors came to explore the architecture and green technology.

Last year local historian Sarah Eddie researched the history of 16 East Street from the nineteenth century, when it was part of the garden of The Swan pub on Bridge Street, through building of a Morris vehicle workshop, use by Wiggins Dairy and purchase by Hugo Powell in 1969. Regular students are enjoying the history emerging as a mural in the entrance corridor. The artist Milena Lebedeva also teaches Vinyasa and Ashtanga yoga at Vishuddha.



## Local history talk

Friday 20 November, 7–8 p.m., Dean Court Community Centre, Botley

Mark Davies talks about the history of two neighbouring island hamlets: Binsey and Medley. In aid of Against Breast Cancer Abingdon.

## West Oxford Academy

Fiona McFarlane, South Street

Next term will begin in February 2027. The six talks will be at 8.15 p.m. at West Oxford Community Centre, usually on a Tuesday. This is a low-risk opportunity (1 hour of your time, £3, or £12 for all six talks, including a drink, very relaxed) for attendees to learn about things of a rather random nature.

What we need now are more speakers. We ask for a 20 minute talk, PowerPoint available, on pretty much any subject that you are knowledgeable/enthusiastic about and that others will be interested in. Then we chat about it. Last term we ranged from AI to continental church organs. Repeat speakers are welcome. Please volunteer to the organiser Iain Tullis at iain.tullis@gmail.com Thank you!

## New home for the Boat Club

Fiona Ravenscroft, South Street

We've been on the hunt for a new place to keep our boats, as the South Street garage has been sold. Luckily a wonderful West Court resident stepped up to save the day.

Last month, Boat Club members gathered to haul and carry boats, and set up our brand-new space, securing the future of this fantastic community facility (photos at osneyisland.org.uk/news).

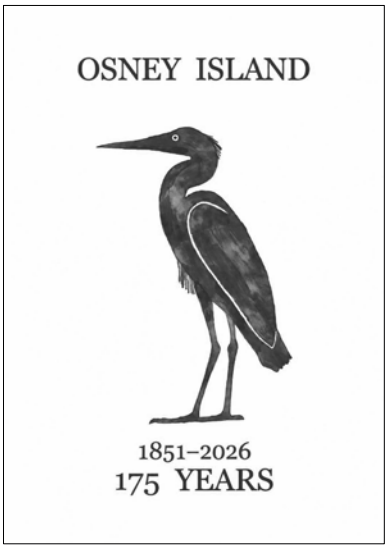
As next spring approaches, keep an eye out for details of how to join. Whether you're an experienced paddler or looking to try a kayak or canoe for the first time, you will have easy access to the water and enjoy a different perspective on our city.




## Osney Island tea towel

Eleanor Dickey, OIRA secretary

In honour of the island's 175th birthday we're printing tea towels with this design in blue on 100% organic cotton (50 × 70 cm) and selling them for £6 each, profits to support OIRA. We have some extras, so if you did not pre-order and would like a tea towel(s), please contact e.dickey@reading.ac.uk




## Osney Chatty Wednesday

Eli Harriss, Bridge Street

Osney Chatty Wednesday carries on into 2027, 7–9 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month, meeting at the big table in The Punter. It's a safe space for Osney neighbours to have a drink, a chat and get to know each other. Look for me in the yellow high-vis jacket. Chats coming up: 18 November, 16 December, 20 January, 17 February, 17 March.

## Outdoor lighting

Several islanders have mentioned that they are disturbed by neighbours' outdoor lights. Please remember to turn off any exterior lights (front and back) overnight. This also reduces the harm to wildlife caused by night-time lighting.

## Demos Riverside Room

The Democrats Club new licensed function room is open for hire, with a capacity of up to 50 guests. Contact hello@the demos.co.uk

## Message from Cllr Susanna Pressel

Members of the residents' email group get a weekly news update from me by email. In the past I have included an insert in the newsletter, but this repeats information from the email, so I am not sure how useful it is.

If you don't have internet access and would like me to continue the printed insert, please let me know: 01865 554001.

## OIRA subscription

It's the time of year when we ask for a small donation (£4 per household, concessions £1) to OIRA to support the newsletter, website, planters and events. See the enclosed flyer for how to pay by BACS, or by cash. If in doubt contact Maria Holt, the treasurer.

## Directory of local suppliers

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

## 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

Alison Burdett alison.burdett@gmail.com (email list), Eleanor Dickey (secretary) e.dickey@reading.ac.uk, Maria Holt (treasurer) mariaholt@yahoo.com, Philippa Lanchbery planchbery@icloud.com, Sarah Parker (chair) sarahparker_29@hotmail.com 07834 772016, Karen Schoenemann 07718 632742, Kate Stewart kate.stewart1908@gmail.com.

### Newsletter

Newsletter and website editor: Jane Buekett (janebuekett@yahoo.co.uk). Newsletter distribution: Anna Truelove.

Copy deadline for next newsletter: 22 January.