Otley Matters

December 2025
No 114

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MAKE SURE YOUR CHRISTMAS IS MADE IN OTLEY

Otley is set to dazzle once again this Christmas with a festive facelift for the holiday season. Alongside favourites like the Victorian Fayre and the Christmas Tree Festival, the town is getting a full tinsel tune-up: new streetlight motifs, extra sparkle on the Market Place tree, fresh uplighters to brighten the centre, and Christmas wreaths wrapped around the Jubilee Clock and the Buttercross.

This merry makeover comes courtesy of extra investment by Otley Town Council and Otley BID, who have teamed up with a group of independent fundraising residents who go under the banner Let's Light Up Otley For Christmas – a community push to give the town a proper festive glow-up.

With Otley looking better than ever, this year's Visit Otley message says it all: "Make sure your Christmas is Made in Otley" – spend the season here, shop local, and, where you can, pick gifts that are actually made in the town. You know it makes sense: It's brighter, it's bolder, and it's brilliantly Otley.

Here's a round-up of what's on when:

Christmas Lights Switch On
Monday 24 November, Market Place

This year's Christmas countdown starts with entertainment from 5.30pm, followed by the lights switch-on and fireworks at 7pm.

Santa's Grotto – A Magical Journey
Saturday 29 November to Christmas Eve, Otley Garden Centre

A jolly elf guides you through magical festive scenes to meet Santa in his grotto, where little ones can share wish lists and choose a present from his special toy shop. See: www.otleygardencentre.co.uk/santas-grotto/#bws

Otley Snowman Trail
Monday 1 December – Friday 19 December, Around town

Hunt for snowmen in shop windows across Otley. Last year, 120 businesses took part – can we beat it? Pick up a booklet in town or use the online trail map. See: www.otleysnowmantrail.co.uk

Breakfast with Santa
Throughout December, Otley Garden Centre (Blooms Kitchen)

A magical morning for families: enjoy breakfast, meet Santa, snap a photo, and choose a toy to take home. See: www.otleygardencentre.co.uk/santas-grotto/#bws

Classic Christmas Afternoon Tea
Wednesday 3 December & Wednesday 10 December, 4pm–6pm, Otley Garden Centre

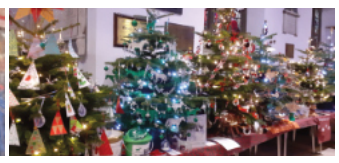
A vintage vocalist performs Christmas classics while you tuck into and enjoy a wonderfully festive afternoon tea. See: www.otleygardencentre.co.uk/christmas/



Dinner with Bowie
Friday 5 December, Tapas & Tunes

Wine and dine your way through the David Bowie songbook – Starman, Heroes, Blue Jean, China Girl, Ashes to Ashes, Changes and more.





Victorian Fayre
Sunday 7 December, noon-6pm, Around town

Otley's Dickensian Christmas tradition returns with stalls, carols, open shops and plenty of period costume. See: www.www.victorianfayre.co.uk

Super Sundays
Sunday 7 & 21 December, Around town

Two extra shopping Sundays from Otley's brilliant independents – perfect for festive foodie finds and last-minute gifts.

Otley Courthouse Christmas Designer Craft Fair,
Sunday 7 December (Noon to 4pm)

Find that special Christmas present. With all items designed and made by stallholders. Jewellery, stationery, art and crafts, and lots more!

Christmas Tree Festival
Wednesday 10 December (from Noon) to Saturday 13 December (10am-5pm), Otley Parish Church

Local groups decorate trees to raise funds for good causes, with musical performances throughout the festival.

Messiah
Saturday 20 December, Otley Parish Church, 6pm

Conductor Alex Kay directs Otley Choral Society, Ilkley Choral Society and the Yorkshire Chamber Orchestra, performing Handel's Messiah.

Yule Be Singing
Saturday 20 December, Otley Courthouse

Learn a seasonal favourite in three-part harmony in one evening with the fabulous Kevin James, plus mulled wine and mince pies!

Christmas Farmers' Market
Sunday 21 December, 9am–1pm, Market Place

Stock up on last-minute fruit, veg and artisan treats from local producers at the final market of the year.

Rudolph Run
Sunday 21 December, 6pm

Christmas illuminated tractor run from Otley to Skipton raising money for charity.

Santa Visits Kirkgate Arcade
Tuesday 23 December

Santa will make a visit to the Kirkgate Arcade just prior to the big day!

Free Saturday Parking

Leeds City Council and Otley Town Council have confirmed that all the town's pay and display car parks at Beech Hill, Courthouse Street and The Licks on North Parade will be offering free pre-Christmas Day car parking on Saturdays. The free parking dates will be Saturday 29 November, and 6, 13 and 20 December.

Please note, if you do put money into the machine on these days, you will not get a refund.

All dates and times are correct at the time of going to press. Please check as details can always change.



Christmas 2025 may not be here yet, but the Let's Light Up Otley For Christmas group is already busy raising money for next year's lights! We've arranged carol singing in the Market Place on the morning of Sunday 21 December, and we'd love to see the people of Otley come along to support us. We'll be posting further details on our Facebook page 'Let's Light Up Otley For Christmas', so please follow us!

If you'd like to donate to the Christmas lights for 2026, go to: www.gofundme.com/f/light-up-otley-for-christmas and if you'd like to get involved in fundraising for next year's lights, please message our page and we'll be in touch.



UPCOMING EVENTS

December	
1-19	**Otley Snowman Trail**
1-24	**Nativity Scene at the Navvies Memorial**
7	**Otley Victorian Fayre**
7	**Christmas Designer Craft Fair**
10-13	**Otley Christmas Tree Festival**
21	**Otley Christmas Farmers' Market**
21	**Rudolph Run**
23	**Santa Visits Kirkgate Arcade**
26	**Chevin Chase**
January	
1	**New Year's Day Wharfemeadows Park Swim**
25	**Otley Farmers' Market**
25	**Otley Designer Craft Fair**
25	**Otley Maker Space Repair Café at Otley Courthouse**
February	
22	**Otley Farmers' Market**
22	**Otley Designer Craft Fair**
22	**Otley Maker Space Repair Café at Otley Courthouse**

**Otley Market days held every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday*

Wharfedale Gardeners' Group



Our autumn season began with Andrew Ward from Norwell Nurseries, who talked about climate change and how we could find the right plants to survive in ever more challenging conditions. October welcomed Matthew Smith encouraging us to think about weeds in a whole new light! In November, Neil Barwise-Carr from Otley Garden Centre told us about his work in making the stores so successful as they expanded to seven sites over four years. In the New Year, we add Fiona McDonald, florist, and Ben Preston from Cliff Bank Nurseries to our guest speakers' list.

If you would like to join us as a member, or as a guest for a single talk, just let us know and we'll reserve you a place.

We meet at Beech Hill Church on the second Tuesday of the month from September to May, at 7.30pm. Please contact Christine at wharfedalegardeners@gmail.com or see www.wharfedalegardeners.co.uk

Otley 800: A Celebration for Everyone

Starting in May 2027, Otley will mark an incredible milestone – it is 800 years since the town was granted its Market Charter and its historic bridge first spanned the River Wharfe. But the Otley 800 celebrations won't just look back at history, they'll be about the people, stories and creativity that make the town thrive today.

The anniversary will be marked with a year-long programme of community and heritage events, bringing together local groups, schools, artists and volunteers to celebrate Otley's enduring sense of pride and connection. From performances and exhibitions to markets and talks, Otley 800 will showcase the best of what the town has to offer.

Organisers hope the celebrations will be shaped by the people who know Otley best – its residents and businesses. Over the coming year, local organisations and individuals will be invited to share their ideas for events, projects and activities that could form part of the programme. Everyone is encouraged to get involved, whether by helping to plan, taking part, or simply joining in the festivities when they arrive.

As preparations continue, Otley 800 promises to be more than a look back at the past; it will be a moment to celebrate everything that still connects the town today.

Find out more and stay up to date at otley800.co.uk

THE CHIPPENDALE SINGERS

Following a very successful concert at Fewston Parish Church in June, The Chippendale Singers have been rehearsing for concerts up to Christmas, although by the time this article goes to press, they will have given an afternoon performance at Pool Methodist Church. The choir performed in the church hall last year in aid of the organ fund and enjoyed the amazing acoustics so much that the choristers returned for another concert.

The choir will be back again in Otley Parish Church to sing at The Christmas Tree Festival on Friday 12 December. Once again, we hope to be joined by the children of Westgate Primary School.

We have been joined by several new basses during the past year, but there is always room for enthusiastic singers in every part – information and contact details can be found at www.chippendalesingers.co.uk

Wharfedale Male Voice Choir

Christmas is always a busy time for the choir as we have several concerts during the festive season, and we have the opportunity to sing material that we only sing at Christmas. This contrasts with our autumn season, when we have been learning new items for our repertoire ready to perform in the new year, as well as performing locally with our traditional programme.

We have been much encouraged by the influx of new members to the choir, but continually seek to recruit new members, particularly in the upper voices, so any gentleman seeking like-minded musical company on a Monday afternoon should contact Peter Roberts on 01943 463456 for more information. The ability to read music, although preferable, is not essential as we learn our parts under the expert tutelage of our fabulous Musical Director, Paul Hurst.

We look forward to seeing you.



Otley in Bloom

The dry summer took its toll on our displays. The earlier flowering displays meant lots of extra deadheading and tidying around the town and in the park. We stuck to our plans though to keep 'Otley in bloom' by planting up the remaining four 'instaplanters' around the town centre – giving much better displays of flowers and foliage. Balsam bashing featured too on the Chevin through the summer – one thing that wasn't affected by the weather!

A long-overdue renovation on a bed at the end of Weston Drive has begun, so we can eventually plant this with more wildlife-friendly shrubs and plants. The first step is to clear the rampant couch grass – the not so glamorous side of gardening!

The winter months will see us start planning and planting for spring, so if you fancy joining us, contact us on our website at www.otleyinbloom.co.uk



Otley Coffee Festival is well-established as a biannual event in coffee-lovers' and Otley calendars. It's a brilliant mix of coffee tasting and conversation, a creatives' selling exhibition, great talks and music. We are thrilled this year to have a new local sponsor: Mistal Kitchen and Chilli Barn – a wonderful destination for events and weddings at the top of Otley Chevin – and also a great stop-off for good coffee! We are grateful for their support.

The festival exhibition filled up really quickly. Otley Coffee Festival favourites Casa Espresso, Dark Woods, North Star, and Rounton return for the third time, along with Harmony, Echelon and Malawian Coffee. Coffee Care also makes a welcome return. These Yorkshire-based businesses love coffee. With their commitment to sustainability and quality, we know you will want to support them.

The creatives exhibition was very popular last time, and many Otley-based makers are again prominent with new products for you to browse. Chilli Glass and Nina Wright Ceramics complement Print & Hues, Jeanne-Louise Art and the watercolours of Martha Taylor, while, from slightly further afield, we are equally thrilled that Downtown Drawings, Crafts & Bubbles soaps and Jacoo scents are back again.
The music and talks programme is still being finalised – watch for further announcements – best done by following Otley Coffee Culture on Instagram. In response to feedback, this year, thanks to Mistal Kitchen, there will be great food to go and cakes to buy.

Early Bird tickets go on sale on 1 January for only £5.50 until the end of February. Online tickets are then £6.50 and, if there is space on the day, door tickets will be £7. All tickets are timed and will be able to be purchased here: www.tinyurl.com/yx2v64md or by using this QR code.

Bridge United Reformed Church



The Bridge United Reformed Church is looking forward to a busy Christmas period and welcomes everyone who would like to come along to any of our events over the festive season.

Saturday 29 November, 10.30am: Messy Advent
Sunday 7 December: Victorian Fayre: Information Stall, Mulled Wine & Tombola
Saturday 13 December, 7.00pm: Otley Brass Band Christmas Concert
Sunday 14 December, 10.30am: Parade and Gift Service
Sunday 21 December, 7.00pm: Carols by Candlelight
Wednesday 24 December, 4.00pm: Crib Service
Wednesday 24 December, 11.30pm: Midnight Communion Service
Thursday 25 December, 10.00am: Christmas Day Service

Please check the Bridge Church website to confirm the events are taking place, at www.otleybridgechurch.org.uk or take a look at our Facebook page – Otley Bridge Church.

The Bridge Church
THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN OTLEY



BOWLING FOR CHARITY

Wharfemeadows and Rawdon bowling clubs organised a Christmas-themed charity game on Thursday 25 September for MND at Wharfemeadows Bowling Club in Otley. Over 40 bowlers took part, all in their best Christmas jumpers and hats. Santa and his elves were also bowling. A great day was had by all and with still 12 weeks to go until Christmas Day, the people of Otley looked on in amazement!

The main photograph shows members of both clubs. The inset photograph shows our member John Tomkinson and his family. John has been diagnosed with MND and came along to present the inaugural John Tomkinson MND Trophy. Wharfemeadows won the trophy this year and £4,128 was raised.

All proceeds will go to the Rob Burrows MND Centre, due to be opened in Autumn this year.

Otley Community Larder



Otley 2030's Community Larder continues to go from strength to strength, welcoming new members each week. Open to everyone, we operate on a pay as you feel basis, with both cash and card accepted.

A huge thank you to the many residents who donated produce from their allotments, gardens, orchards and community spaces this year. Donations are still welcome during opening hours. Our outside planters are thriving thanks to local volunteers and Katie from Courtyard Planters, who supplied the herbs and pollinator-friendly plants.

We benefit from 40 volunteers, but we're seeking additional help on Saturday mornings, Friday mornings and Tuesday afternoons.

Finally, Otley Social Club will be open from 2pm–4pm on Tuesdays this winter, offering visitors to the Larder a space to wait, chat and relax out of the cold, until 24 February 2026. Larder opening hours: Tuesdays, 2.30pm–7.30pm and Saturdays, 10.30am–1.30pm. Email: larder@otley2030.com

OTLEY COMMUNITY LARDER

Advent and Christmas at Otley Parish Church

Otley Parish Church warmly invites you to join our celebrations this Advent and Christmas. Each Sunday in December, we'll explore the great themes of the season: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, with services at 10.30am (and a traditional 8.30am Holy Communion on 7 December). On 14 December, children and families are especially welcome at our Nativity All-Age Service at 10.30am, followed by our joyful Christmas Tree Carol Service at 4pm.

On 21 December, come and sing your favourite carols at our traditional Service of Readings and Carols at 4pm. Christmas Eve brings two much-loved Christingle Celebrations at noon and 4pm. Then on Christmas Day at 10.30am, we gather for a joyful All-Age Holy Communion, celebrating the birth of Jesus.

We'd love you to come and share in the hope and light of Christ this Christmas. All are welcome!

Christ at the Centre
OtleyParish CHURCH

OTLEY METHODIST CHURCH

Our Mission strapline is *'Our Mission Continues'*, and we are delighted that Otley Common now owns and manages the former Otley Methodist Church premises. We continue to meet in the Wesley Hall, Sunday by Sunday, at Otley Common. We are a welcoming people – why not give us a try?

We will be at the Victorian Fayre. Come and take a photo of you and your family dressed up as nativity characters. Great idea for a personalised Christmas card!

Our Carol Service on Sunday 21 December at 10.30am is a rich blend of traditional carols, items from our singing group, drama, reflections and prayers. A real treat for the senses led by our Minister, Rev. Cameron Stirk.

Our annual Christingle service on Monday 22 December at 6.30pm is a treat for all ages. Come along and share in the fun.

On Wednesday 24 December, we hope to carol sing at the Buttercross from 11am-noon. Come and join us!

On Christmas Day, our 10am Celebration Service, led by our Minister, Rev. Cameron Stirk, lasts just under an hour. Put on the turkey and come and join us in celebrating love born amongst us!

At Otley Methodist Church, Our Mission Continues. Why not come along to see what's happening?

25/26 NAT2N FIXTURES

6 DECEMBER - HULL (A)
13 DECEMBER - MACCLESFIELD (H)
20 DECEMBER - SCUNTHORPE (A)
10 JANUARY - TYNEDALE (H)
17 JANUARY - WHARFEDALE (A)
24 JANUARY - DARLINGTON MP (H)
31 JANUARY - BILLINGHAM (H)
14 FEBRUARY - SHEFFIELD TIGERS (A)
21 FEBRUARY - ROSSENDALE (H)
28 FEBRUARY - HULL IONIANS (A)
14 MARCH - PRESTON GRASSHOPPERS (H)
21 MARCH - FYLDE (A)
11 APRIL - HULL (H)
18 APRIL - MACCLESFIELD (A)
25 APRIL - SHEFFIELD (H)

MATCHES DECEMBER - FEBRUARY KICK OFF AT 2PM.
FIXTURES IN MARCH & APRIL KICK OFF AT 3PM.

OTLEY RUGBY CLUB

OTLEY R.U.F.C.

FILMS FOR WINTER AT OTLEY COURTHOUSE

We're into the new Autumn/Winter season with a huge range of films at Otley Courthouse.

Otley Film Society starts its 2025-26 season with an eclectic mix of films on Thursdays at 7.45pm.



Guest tickets are £5.00 and can be purchased on the night of the film. NB: these tickets are cash only.

4 Dec: **If Only I Could Hibernate** Mongolia - drama (Cert 12)
18 Dec: **Small Things Like These** Ireland - period drama (Cert 12)
8 Jan: **A Real Pain** US/Poland - comedy drama (Cert 15)
22 Jan: **Holy Cow** France - comedy drama (Cert 15)
5 Feb: **Touch** Iceland/Japan - romantic period drama (Cert 15)
19 Feb: **September 5** Germany/US - docudrama history (Cert 15)

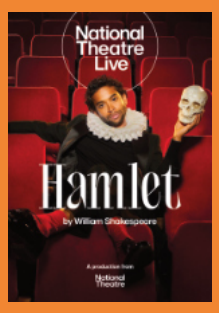
The Courthouse's Movie Matinees continue on Thursdays at 2.00pm. Tickets £6 are bookable on the Courthouse website, or available on the door.

11 Dec: **Bridget Jones: Mad About The Boy** UK - romcom drama (Cert 15)
8 Jan: **A Complete Unknown** US - docudrama music (Cert 15)
29 Jan: **Waterloo Sunset** UK - documentary (Cert PG)
12 Feb: **Small Things Like These** Ireland - period drama (Cert 12)
26 Feb: **The Red Shoes** UK - romcom drama music

Other films (see Courthouse website for more details and more films)

19 Dec (7.30pm): **3,000 Feet** UK - documentary followed by Q&A (£12/£10)
23 Dec (3.00pm): **Paddington in Peru** UK - animation (£6/£3)
23 Dec (7.30pm): **It's a Wonderful Life** US - romcom drama (£6)
11 Jan (3.00pm): **The Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker 2018** ballet (£9/£8/£4.50)
12 Feb (7.30pm): **Renoir: Revered and Revilled** art exhibition on screen (£9/£8)

WHAT'S ON AT OTLEY COURTHOUSE?



Saturday 10 January, 7.30pm: **Blindfold** *(Tickets: £15)*

In this ghost story by BAFTA-nominated Tom Needham, a century-old haunting resurfaces as letters from the past reveal hidden secrets.

Thursday 19 January, 7.00pm: **National Theatre Live: Hamlet** *(Tickets: £15/£13)*

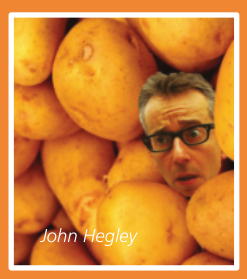
Olivier Award-winner Hiran Abeysekera stars in a fearless, contemporary Hamlet, a sharp, darkly funny reimagining of Shakespeare's tragedy exploring duty, doubt, and power.

Saturday 31 January, 8.00pm: **Right Down The Line: The Gerry Rafferty Songbook** *(Tickets: £25)*

Gerry Rafferty's musical legacy comes alive in a live performance, taking audiences through his iconic songs and timeless storytelling.

Friday 6 February, 8pm: **The Breath** *(Tickets: £18.50)*

Formed in 2016, The Breath pair Ríoghnach Connolly's impassioned vocals with Stuart McCallum's subtle guitar in emotionally rich alt-folk exploring love, memory, injustice and grief.



Saturday 14 February, 8pm: **New & Selected Potatoes** *(Tickets: £17)*

John Hegley, poet, comic, singer, and songwriter, brings a greatest-hits show of funny, clever poems on love, family, art, the sea, and even potatoes.

To book tickets, see: www.otleycourthouse.org.uk or call box office: 01943 467466.

Otley COURTHOUSE

Shadow Brewing

September saw Shadow Brewing celebrate the fourth anniversary of opening their taproom on Boroughgate in Otley. After taking on a long-abandoned shop, the team have worked hard to create a space for beer lovers, music fans and the wider community.

Owner Ian Shutt said: "We're so grateful to everyone who's supported our taproom over the past four years. What we're most proud of is the impact we've been able to have on the local area. From sponsorship of sports teams, hosting community groups, to our dedicated support nights, our underlying principle is that we're here to be a positive part of our community. We're generally only open to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings, so if anyone thinks they can make use of our space outside of that, please do get in touch!"

See: www.shadowbrewing.co.uk or email: hello@shadowbrewing.co.uk

WOOLPACK STUDIOS

From January, Woolpack Studios will offer new fortnightly Tuesday evening courses. Richard Sabey will run a course in 'Reading Music for Beginners' aimed at people who might play an instrument (but not necessarily), but lack confidence in reading the notes and rhythms of written music. It will be presented in a fun, accessible and non-intimidating way. Jennifer Pugh will run a 'Ukulele For Beginners' course and an 'Acoustic Guitar for Newer Players' course. All courses will start from Tuesday 13 January. For details or to sign up, please contact richard@woolpackstudios.co.uk or jennifer@woolpackstudios.co.uk

Woolpack Studios' usual programme of weekly community music groups and Saturday courses will also continue. On Saturdays, starting 10 January, there is the opportunity to learn either songwriting or the ukulele, in small group tuition. No experience needed for songwriting sessions (10.30am–12.30pm). For ukulele, there is the choice of 'Beginners Plus' (10am–11am), suitable for learners who know basic chords and want to take it further, or 'Improvers' (11.30am–12.30pm), for players who want extra challenges, such as more complex chords, tablature or finger-picking.

Community music groups are the Otley Ukulele Orchestra (Mondays 7.30pm), The Rock Orchestra (Tuesdays 7.45pm), and the Woolpack Studios Community Choir (Thursdays 7.30pm). New members are always welcome – please get in touch if you'd like to try any of our groups. (Rock Orchestra has limited availability, but all others are open to anyone.)

Woolpack Studios are also available for:

BAND REHEARSAL SPACE: Two fully equipped rehearsal rooms are available to hire from as little as £13.50 per hour.

INSTRUMENTAL AND PRODUCTION TUITION: 1–1 tuition is available for guitar, ukulele, clarinet, saxophone, bass guitar and music production.

MUSIC PRODUCTION: recording and production services in a soundproof and acoustically treated studio, also suitable for voiceovers, podcasts, meditation/therapeutic recordings, audiobooks, etc.

For more information, contact richard@woolpackstudios.co.uk or see www.woolpackstudios.co.uk

WOOLPACK STUDIOS
MUSIC FOR THE COMMUNITY



Otley Knitters

If you look in the Courthouse window on a Saturday morning, you can see us knitting, crocheting and chatting. Much of what we create is for ourselves, friends and family, but some items are for sale in aid of 'The Smile Train', an international children's charity which provides free cleft palate care to children in over 70 countries.

Calling ourselves 'Stitches for Smiles', we book tables at local agricultural shows and craft fairs and sell a wide range of items: hats, scarves, bags, children's clothing, and much more. It was the idea of a lady in Keighley 16 years ago, and this year we have raised over £1,000.

Supported now by groups in Skipton and Rawdon, we would be very happy to pay for a table at your church or other event to show our goods. Find us on Facebook at Stitches for Smiles, The Smile Train Otley and Skipton.

Otley Archaeology & Historical Society

Otley Archaeology & Historical Society gives a warm welcome to members old and new. We meet at 7.30pm at The Bridge Church, Manor Rooms. Membership is £15 and Guests £3. We meet on the second Thursday of each month, and we also try to organise several trips out.

For more information, contact: Johndenise2023@outlook.com, telephone: 01943 461554 or just come along to a meeting.

Royal Wharfedale Lodge: "Family First"

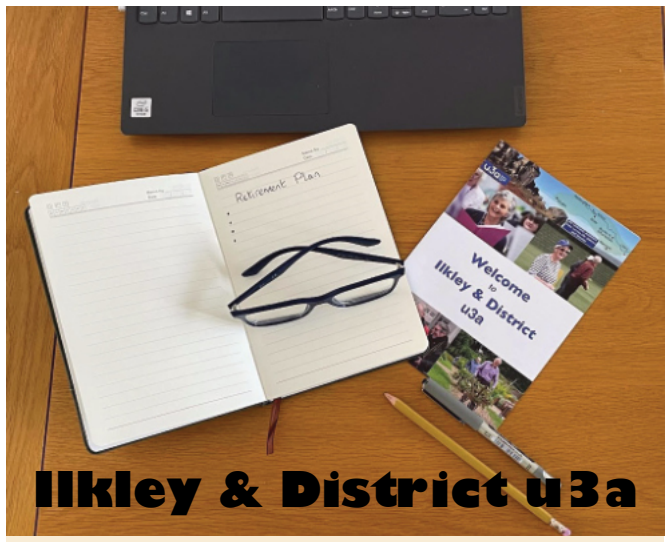


We have a saying in Freemasonry: "Family First, Work Second and Freemasonry Third." Any Mason will tell you that a journey through Freemasonry can only thrive when our wives, partners, our family and loved ones are supportive and involved.

The time you might afford to Freemasonry will be partly taken up by regular social, family and charitable events. These events are the backbone of all Masonic Lodges.

From the Universities Scheme and New and Young Masons Clubs to special interest Lodges, Freemasonry gives members many opportunities to make a wide circle of friends for life. Finding bonds with people who share common interests and meeting people from all different backgrounds are just some of the ways Freemasonry can help cultivate lasting friendships.

If you're interested in becoming a Freemason, or just want to learn more about us, check out www.royalwharfedalelodge.co.uk or email secroyalwharfedale1108@gmail.com



Ilkley & District u3a

Retirement isn't the end of busy, purposeful days – it is a new chapter. u3a offers friendly local groups where people share skills, learn together, stay active and have fun. u3a is for people who are no longer in full-time work who want to keep their minds active, stay physically well, and enjoy life in the company of others. It's about friendship, learning and purpose – with the emphasis on enjoyment!

Do I need qualifications? No. Learning at u3a is about curiosity, not certificates.

Can I join if I'm still working part-time? Yes – many members combine part-time work or caring with u3a activities.

What if I don't know anyone? Most people join alone. Groups are welcoming and it's easy to make friends.

Discover what's on offer at Ilkley & District u3a by chatting to our members at either our Drop-In sessions at The Core or come along to one of our monthly coffee mornings.You will be warmly welcomed and it is possible to attend a couple of taster sessions before deciding whether to join. Our current membership is £15, magazine subscription included. More information can be found on our website at www.ilkleyu3a.org (Look for the Otley section on the Home page) or find us on Facebook and Twitter.

Volunteers needed for a local community-based charity

Do you have a few spare hours each week and would you like to give something back to our older community and make a difference to their lives?

Otley Action for Older People (OAOP) is a long-established and successful community-based charity, providing a wealth of daily activities and services to our members. We are always recruiting volunteers; however, in particular, we are looking for people willing to drive their own cars.

Otley Action runs a Car Scheme that is supported by our volunteer car drivers. The Car Scheme drivers provide transport to our members to various medical and personal appointments and occasionally shopping too. Any fuel costs incurred are reimbursed.

If you would like to join Otley Action as a volunteer car driver, please get in touch with the office on 01943 463965. Alternatively, please email info@otleyactionforolderpeople.org.uk





The 2026 Otley Show will soon be here! This historic show began in 1796 and is the oldest one-day agricultural show in the country.

We are planning a fantastic day full of family fun and entertainment. Accompanied children aged 16 and under now enjoy free entry, which is great value for families.

At the heart of this treasured show are the traditional livestock classes – Cattle, Sheep, Horses, Eggs, Produce and Handicrafts, Farriers, Rabbits, Hamsters and, all being well, a Poultry Show. Closing date for entries is 17 April 2026. You can download schedules for the main classes from the website www.otleyshow.org.uk. For the popular Dog Show, entries are taken on the day.

Contact Show Secretary Claudia on 07828 763632 or admin@otleyshow.org.uk

Friends of Chevin Forest

The Friends of Chevin Forest is a group of volunteers from Otley and the surrounding area who work to maintain, improve, and promote the Chevin Forest Park. We organise and run conservation sessions and public events throughout the year. To find out more about us and our future events, visit our website at www.chevinforest.co.uk or sign up to our monthly newsletters using this QR code.

Beech Hill Church



We've got lots planned at Beech Hill Church this Christmas time:

Family Carol Service | Sunday 21 December
10.30 -11.30am

Our Family Carol Service is a bit more fun and quirky, with a few more carols aimed at children – ones that they might sing at school (or ones you used to!) Followed by festive refreshments.

Carols by Candlelight | Sunday 21 December
5pm - 6pm

Carols by Candlelight is our more traditional carol service with well-known carols. We'll get out the candles, dim the lights, and enjoy singing and hearing the message of Christmas. Followed by festive refreshments.

Christmas Day Service | Thursday 25 December
10.30am - 11.30am

Something new this year – we're having a Christmas Day Service: a short service with carols and a Christmas message. No children's groups (we'll keep it short) and no festive refreshments (we don't want your sprouts to burn!)

Please check: www.beechhillchurch.org.uk for more details.

Otley Men's Forum

Attendees at Otley Men's Forum enjoyed a varied programme of talks in the autumn. Subjects included how Saudi Arabia came into being and what, to a westerner, it looks like now to live there, and Capability Brown's time at Temple Newsam.

We start off the New Year on Thursday 8 January, with one of our regular speakers giving us a presentation entitled Great American Songbook. Having had a lot of contact with famous people in the pop music business, he has many interesting anecdotes. There are then talks until Easter at forthrightly intervals. The titles are: 22 January: Travels in Iran, 5 February: The Wild West Part 2, 19 February: Trees after the Ice Age, 5 March: Annual General Meeting, 19 March: The Gray Years 1990 - 1997, 2 April: My Career as a Probation Officer.

For over 50 years the Forum has met every other Thursday morning (except in summer), to hear a talk or presentation on many varied subjects with a chat over a coffee and biscuit. If you would like to be entertained and educated by our eclectic mix of presentations for an hour with a cuppa and chat, just turn up at Beech Hill Church, Otley. Doors open about 9.45 am for a 10am start. Cost is £5 per session, including coffee and biscuit.

New Members are always welcome. For more details, please see: otleymensforum.com



Become a Volunteer Puppy Trainer in Otley

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People is expanding its puppy training programme and is looking for kind-hearted volunteers in Otley to help raise and train puppies who will transform the lives of deaf people. Volunteers provide a loving home for 6 to 18 months, teaching pups basic skills and socialising them, with full support and all costs covered by the charity. No experience needed, just time, commitment, and a love of dogs. You'll gain new skills, meet new people, and change someone's life forever.

Visit hearingdogs.org.uk/volunteering/puppy-training or call 01844 348129 to find out more.



The annual Otley Squash Club Handicap Tournament was won by Tom Stephenson after a very close five-set encounter with last year's winner, Oli Pearson. The two had come through very competitive semi-finals earlier in the evening against Jai Bryant and Sam Yeates in the culmination of a competition that included nearly 60 Club Members over the last 3 months. Tom commented: "I am proud to win this Trophy and enjoyed meeting players of different standards in a format that made every game competitive and good fun."

Otley Squash and Racketball Club is adjacent to Otley Rugby Club and Otley Cricket Club and welcomes players of all ages and abilities.



Otley Town Crier Competition Rings Out for Peace and Celebration

Otley was full of life on Sunday 21 September, as bellmen from across the country gathered for the 2025 Otley Town Crier Competition. Organised by Otley Town Council and hosted by local bellman Terry Ford, the event brought together tradition, performance, and a shared message of peace.

In the first round, the Town Criers performed their 'home cry' to promote the areas they represent. The second round was the subject cry; this year, the designated theme was 'Day of Peace', as the competition fell on the UN International Day of Peace. The theme gave criers the chance to get creative and they didn't disappoint. Each one brought their own take on the theme, making for a thoughtful and entertaining afternoon.

Between the rounds, the National Youth Folk Troupe of England (NYFTE) took to the market square with a brilliant performance that had the crowd smiling and tapping along. This complemented all the fantastic acts that were performing as part of the Otley Folk Festival over the weekend, too.

Competition Results:

1st Place: Eliza Anderson-Watson (Barnoldswick)
2nd Place: John Griffiths (Sleaford)
3rd Place: Mark Northway (Cromer)
Best Dressed Crier: Rennie Chivers (Colchester)
Best Dressed Consort: Denise Chivers (Colchester)
Best Ambassador: Mark Northway (Cromer)

It was a fantastic event with plenty of laughs and applause, a celebration of a tradition that continues to bring people together. The day had a real community feel, with Shadow Brewing helping to create bottles of 'Bellman Blonde' for the goody bags, and The Black Horse providing a tasty lunch.

A big thank you goes to all the judges, especially the Otley Poets, who kindly stepped in at the last minute to judge two of the categories. Congratulations to the winners, but also a heartfelt thanks to all the participants who travelled to be part of the competition.

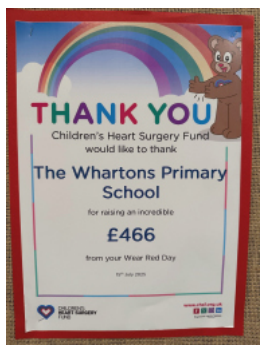
OTLEY ALL SAINTS SCHOOL WILL BE 50!

Otley All Saints Church of England First School, Lisker Drive, was officially Opened in July 1976, but it took in its first pupils on 26th April 1976. The headmistress was Mrs Doreen Hudson, and her deputy was Mrs A Lawrie.

At Easter 2026, the school will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its opening. If anyone has any old photographs, information or memories of the life of the school over the past half-century, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact the school at: office@otleyallsaints.co.uk

Whartons Primary School



Pupils, staff, and families at Whartons Primary School in Otley came together on 15 July and raised an impressive £466 for the Children's Heart Surgery Unit, showing remarkable generosity and community spirit. The fundraising event united the whole school in support of a cause that provides life-saving treatment and essential support to children and their families. Throughout the day, pupils took part in fun and educational activities designed to raise both money and awareness.

Headteacher Julia Dickson expressed pride in the school community, saying: "We are incredibly proud of our pupils and thankful to our families for their generosity. Supporting the Children's Heart Surgery Unit is a cause close to many hearts."

The funds raised will help the unit continue its vital work. Whartons Primary extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed.

Otley Lions

Otley Lions are looking forward to a lively run up to the festive season. We will be assisting Santa at Waitrose between the 21 and 23 December before he goes off for the big day.

We will also be collecting soft toys to help us with our all-year-round fundraising efforts. Any donations of soft toys would be greatly received at our Otley Lions Bookshop on Mercury Row.

Otley Lions is part of the Lions Club International aiming to make a positive impact on the community. For more information contact Jonathan on 07712 447366.

OTLEY 2030

Since Otley 2030 achieved charitable status in March 2023, we have received funding to deliver several successful local projects, including the Weston project and Otley Community Larder. We have recently focused on building capacity on our trustee board to bring a range of skills and experience, and to ensure all our work contributes to our aim of supporting Otley's response to the linked climate and nature crises, as well as addressing issues of social inequality. While continuing to develop our current projects, including setting up a pop-up information hub at Otley Common and other public venues, we're hopeful that a large grant application to the Energy Redress Scheme will enable us to provide a home energy reduction advice and support centre in Otley.



If you are interested in finding out more about our projects, please visit www.otley2030.com, where you can also sign up to our mailing list and donate to support our work.

OTLEY 2030
A community creating a better world

Happy Juicers, Happier Pigs



The trailer load of pulp represents what was left after two tons of apples were squidged to make 1,000 litres of apple juice – all in just one weekend! The pulp will feed a local herd of pigs, ticking a box or two for sustainability. This year's harvest was very heavy and we were all kept busy. Also to be noted is the arrival of our third Shropshire ewe with a borrowed ram, hopefully increasing the flock in spring 2026. Another sustainability tick!

The fence line across Sinclair's Field, completed earlier this year, was planted up by the Orchard Project, Otley Rotary Club, Friends of the Chevin Forest and Otley's 2nd Scout Group with a double mixed hedge – all 150 meters of it. An excellent collaboration that, in a few years, will provide a wildlife corridor right across the field. That's got to be another tick.

Finally, courtesy of Wayzgoose Morris Dancers, our annual Fairy Frightening (aka Wassailing) will take place on 10 January at 2pm. Keep an eye on our Facebook page @otleychevinorchardproject for details nearer the date or email us on chevinorchard@gmail.com

Otley Chevin Orchard Project
A Community Venture

Chevin Balsam Bashes Make a Difference

Have you noticed a tall, sweet-smelling, pink-flowered plant that seems ever more common alongside rivers, roads and railways? It's Himalayan Balsam and it colonises other areas as well, with increasing amounts on Otley Chevin. An invasive species, as the name suggests, it smothers native species. To counter this threat, 'Balsam Bashing' has become critical and this summer there were three bashes in Otley. Volunteers pull the balsam up by the roots – it comes free easily – and break the stems to ensure it doesn't re-root. Significant areas can be cleared and, if done in July or early August, before the seed heads develop, this can stop it spreading. It can also be sociable and fun.

The Friends of Chevin Forest recently organised two bashes and Prince Henry's Grammar School also bashed on the Chevin as part of their community outreach Timanyane Day. The Friends of Chevin Forest's weekend bash attracted a great group of volunteers – 18 strong – who cleared a large area near the Lower Shawfield Car Park. The Friends and the Town Council, with support from Mistal Kitchen, which opened specially for the volunteers, also facilitated a community balsam day where groups from Menwith Hill and Otley Town Council used corporate community time to help their local area.

Penny Redwood from Friends of Chevin Forest said about the event: "There's something very satisfying about Balsam Bashing with a group of people and seeing the difference that we made to Miller Lane. And fun! They were a cheerful crowd to work with! We uncovered so many native species that hopefully will now have a better chance of flourishing. Thank you, everybody." Richard Hughes, Chair of Otley Town Council, who joined in the bashing, was pleased to have been a part of the day. "There will be more days like these", he said, "and my plea is that more people join these events. We have to work hard to keep the balsam down until scientists find another solution."



More information about the Friends of Chevin Forest can be found at www.chevinforest.co.uk

TOWN MAYOR'S *Christmas Message*



Christmas in Otley has always been very special. It is worth taking a moment to thank everyone involved, from the volunteers who put on events like the Victorian Fayre – always a highlight in the event calendar – and the Snowman Trail, to the businesses who decorate their shopfronts. In addition, Otley BID and the other fundraisers who contribute to the Christmas decorations, the staff at Otley Town Council who organise the Christmas Lights Switch-on event and firework display, the many churches in Otley that offer services during the festive period and the charities and volunteer organisations who take care of those who need it most.

We also know that Christmas can be a difficult time for those who have lost loved ones, so our thoughts go out to all those who feel the absence of someone who was special to them.

So, on behalf of all the volunteer Councillors on Otley Town Council and my wife Denise, we would like to wish all our residents and everyone who visits Otley a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please do your best to attend the local events, go to a church service, volunteer some of your time, donate to charity if you are able and do your best to support local businesses by shopping locally whenever possible!

TOWN MAYOR'S NEWS



At time of writing in early October, it has been an honour to represent the Town at civic events in Morley and Wakefield, Yorkshire Day in Bradford and Ilkley, visit Menwith Hill, attend Otley Sings, Otley Choral Society Haydn's The Creation, Otley Music Festival, SwanFest, Otley Carnival, Otley Cycle Race, the Town Crier Competition, Otliensians Rugby Club, meetings of Otley Rotary Club, Macmillan coffee mornings, meet residents of Adlington House, celebrate the opening of the refurbished Blooms restaurant at Otley Garden centre, the new House of Pottery and VeloVirtual in Manor Square and represent the town at the Visitor Economy conference in Leeds.

In terms of the Mayoral charities, we have raised £300 so far for Prostate Cancer Research – with a special note of thanks to the organisers of SwanFest – and have met with representatives of the Royal British Legion locally to discuss how they would like us to support them directly.

If you would like to follow the Mayor on Instagram, then follow @mayorofotley.

HONORARY CITIZENS

Otley Town Mayor Cllr Paul Carter is pleased to issue a call to the townsfolk of Otley to nominate candidates for Honorary Citizenship.

The Mayor said: "Honorary Citizenship is the highest acknowledgement that the town can give to those who have performed exceptional, committed service to the community for a period of many years. The list of Honorary Citizens is distinguished, and only those who have provided exemplary service achieve such status."

There is no form to fill in; nominations should be in the form of a supporting letter and sent to the Executive Officer, Otley Town Council, Otley Core Resource Centre, Unit 11 Orchard Gate, Otley, LS21 3NX, no later than midday on Wednesday 11 March.

If you have any queries, please contact the Executive Officer at the above address or by telephone 01943 466335 or email: eo@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



Hello everyone, I am James Laycock, and I joined Otley Town Council as Deputy Town Clerk in July 2025.

My duties at the Council include servicing the Environment and Sustainability, Trade and Tourism and Community Development committees, as well as deputising for the Executive Officer. I also work closely with colleagues in managing the Otley Town Council allotment sites and other assets, and will be responsible for producing Otley Matters. I am really looking forward to working alongside the community on projects and events that provide a direct benefit to Otley.

In my spare time, I enjoy sports, reading and spending time with my family.

To contact me, my telephone number is 01943 466335 or email: deputyclerk@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Otley Achievement Awards

The Otley Annual Achievement Award showcases the work of hardworking individuals within the town by recognising both a young person and an adult who has achieved something outstanding – be it academically, musically, sporting or artistic – overcome some form of adversity, or helped to make a difference in the local community.

If you know of anyone who has achieved something outstanding or made a significant contribution to our town during 2025, then we would like to hear from you by nominating them now for the 2025 Otley Achievement Award.

This award celebrates achievements made during the year, with the winner recognised with a certificate. To nominate someone, please complete and return a nomination form available from the Otley Core or email a request to eo@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk.

The deadline for nominations is midday on Wednesday 11 March. Please return all nominations to the Executive Officer or email: eo@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk

OTLEY TOWN COUNCIL MESSAGE BOARD

CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

Otley Town Council offices will close at 1pm on Wednesday 24 December and reopen at 10am on Friday 2 January.

The public toilets in Orchard Gate will close at 4pm on Wednesday 24 December. The toilets will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

ROOMS FOR HIRE

Otley Core Resource Centre has rooms and exhibition space available for hire. The exhibition space is also available for use by charitable organisations as an indoor venue free of charge.

Should you wish to enquire about any of our facilities or make a booking, please contact a member of the Core liaison staff on 01943 466335 or email admin@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Book the Box!

Otley Council takes bookings for the red telephone box in Market Place. Applications to use the space could be for engaging with residents, for promoting local community projects, for information giving or displaying items of interest, and requests are welcomed from schools, local charities, or recognised community groups.



Applications supporting the arts, such as local artists creating a pop-up art gallery, or commercial organisations will also be considered. To find out more and details of how to Book The Box, please visit www.otleytowncouncil.gov.uk

OTLEY FOOD BANK

Otley Core is a donation point for the Otley Food Bank. Please help local people in crisis by donating items of food which have a long shelf life. A shopping list is available at the collection point. We thank you for your support.

Joint Otley Town Council & Community Police Surgeries

Otley Town Councillors and Community Police hold a joint Surgery every month from 11.00am until noon at Otley Core. These take place on either Wednesday or Saturday. The dates and times for December to February are: Wednesday 10 December, Saturday 10 January and Wednesday 11 February.

If you have any queries or issues you'd like to discuss in a friendly and relaxed environment, why not call in? No appointment is necessary.



Advertise Your Event at Otley Core

If you are a voluntary, youth, community or charitable organisation in Otley and would like to advertise an upcoming event, please send an A4-sized poster to admin@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk and we will display it in the windows of the Otley Core.

There is also a larger window space available to advertise your activities and events – please contact a member of the Core Liaison team on 01943 466335 for more details and make a booking.

Buttercross Charity Stall Hire

The Buttercross in Market Place is available for hire, free of charge, to all charitable organisations on Fridays and Saturdays. Anyone interested, please contact a member of the Core liaison staff on 01943 466335 or email admin@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



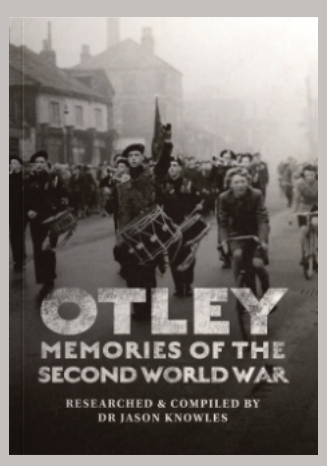
Otley Bellringers

The bellringers at Otley Parish Church hosted a very successful event during Heritage Weekend in September, when we welcomed 66 visitors to the bell tower. They climbed the spiral stairs for a half-hour visit, first to our recently redecorated ringing chamber, where, after a brief explanation of how the bells work, the ringers demonstrated how they are rung. Next, they climbed up to see the workings of the historical church clock, then higher still to the belfry to see the eight bells. We thank our visitors for their enthusiasm and their generous donations to the belfry fund.

The present bells were cast in 1921, but there have been bells ringing changes at the church for about 300 years, calling parishioners to prayer, marking weddings, funerals and national events. We welcome prospective recruits; learning to ring takes patience, persistence and concentration, but it's fun as well as challenging.

For details, see our webpage at www.otleyparishchurch.org or Facebook at Otley Bells.

Memories of the Second World War



To mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan Day, an updated second edition of the book *Otley – Memories of the Second World War*, written by Dr Jason Knowles, has been published by Otley Town Council. The book was designed by The Yorkshire Wordwright with production by Print Crew, both Otley-based.

With new chapters, the book features a wide selection of photographs and is a story of individuals, families and the people of Otley in wartime and draws on memories of Otley residents, personal stories, news reports and archive material.

A limited stock of this new book is currently available from Otley Core, priced £15. You can order your copy by emailing admin@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk or by telephone 01943 466335.

The book would make an ideal gift for anyone with an association with Otley and an interest in the history of the town.

CONTACTING YOUR COUNCILLORS

ASHFIELD WARD



Tom Featherstone (Lib Dem)
tom.featherstone@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



Gareth Dibble (Lib Dem) t: 07951 254927
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PRINCE HENRY WARD



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colin.campbell@leeds.gov.uk



Ray Smith (Lib Dem) t: 07946 800946
ray.smith@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk

DANEFIELD WARD



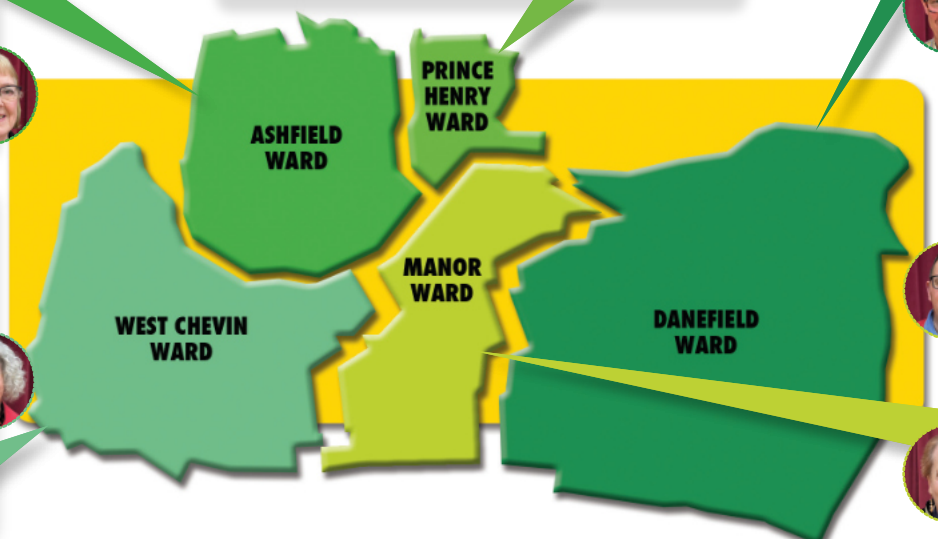
Mick Bradley (Green) t: 01943 467871
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Sue Stepan (Green)
sue.stepan@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



Richard Davies (Lab)
richard.davies@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



WEST CHEVIN WARD



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Linda Hoare (Lib Dem)
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Jo Allen (Lib Dem) t: 01943 461899
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MANOR WARD



Nigel Gill (Lab)
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Paul Carter (Lib Dem)
paul.carter@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



Penny Robinson (Lib Dem)
penny.robinson@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk



Back row left to right: Terry Ford (Town Bellman), Cllr Colin Campbell, Cllr Gareth Dibble, Cllr Linda Hoare, Cllr Tom Featherstone, Cllr Richard Davies, Cllr Nigel Gill, Cllr Sarah Hughes.
Front row left to right: Cllr Penny Robinson, Cllr Jo Allen, Cllr Richard Hughes (Chair of Council), Cllr Paul Carter (Town Mayor), Cllr Mick Bradley (Deputy Town Mayor), Cllr Sylvia Thomson, Cllr Sue Stepan. Apologies given: Cllr Ray Smith.

All councillors work in a voluntary capacity

LEEDS CITY COUNCILLORS

Should you wish to speak with Cllr Colin Campbell, Cllr Ryk Downes or Cllr Sandy Lay, please ring 07973 521547 or email colin.campbell@leeds.gov.uk

CONTACTING YOUR MP

Should you wish to speak with the MP for Otley and Leeds Northwest, Katie White, please email katie.white.mp@parliament.uk

TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS December 2025 - February 2026

Assets **Human Resources**	**1 December 2025**
Audit	**2 December 2025**
Planning **Trade & Tourism**	**8 December 2025**
Traffic & Transport **Neighbourhood Plan**	**15 December 2025**
Planning **Environment & Sustainability**	**12 January 2026**
Policy & Resources **Full Council**	**19 January 2026**
Planning **Community Development**	**9 February 2026**

All Town Council meetings are held at the Otley Core Resource Centre, 11 Orchard Gate, Otley. All meetings usually commence at 7.00pm but times are subject to change. Please check www.otleytowncouncil.gov.uk or the windows at the Otley Core Resource Centre for meeting times. Members of the public are encouraged to attend. By prior arrangement with the Executive Officer, members of the public may arrange to address a Committee or Council meeting before it starts its agenda. Please contact the Executive Officer on 01943 466335 or by email: eo@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk for further details.

ALLOTMENT RENT BILLS 2026

Rental bills for 2026 will be sent out in December and should be paid by 31 January 2026.

Please note that bills will be sent out via email for all allotment holders who have registered a current email address with us. **It may not be too late to register your email address – just send an email to allotments@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk giving permission for the Council to store your email address and we will send out your bill electronically.**

If you have decided not to renew your tenancy for 2026, will you please let us know as soon as possible on 01943 466335 or email allotments@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk to avoid being billed for the coming year.

Christmas Greetings

Otley Town Council would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year in 2026.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK



Otley Town Council's *Otley Matters* community newsletter has been delivered to all households in the LS21 area since 1996. This quarterly publication arrives in March, June, September and December and provides local people with news and information on community groups, events and activities in the area.

Otley Matters is also available to pick up in locations around Otley and to read online at *www.otleytowncouncil.gov.uk/community/otley-matters/*

Let us know what you think about your *Otley Matters*, and leave your ideas about features, topics and groups that you would like to read about in future editions. Please email: *otleymatters@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk*



ARTICLES FOR NEXT EDITION

To have your organisation, group or event included in the ***Otley Matters*** March 2026 edition please contact James Laycock for the editorial date in early January on 01943 466335 or email *otleymatters@otleytowncouncil.gov.uk*

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Otley Matters is distributed to over 8,000 properties