

FULL CIRCLE
THE OTHONA COMMUNITY
NEWSLETTER



Spring 2015

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The Othona Community is an open Christian Community, whose purpose is to provide, mainly through its two centres in Essex and Dorset, a welcoming, accepting place with a pattern of work, worship, study and play where people of different beliefs, cultures, classes, abilities and ages can discover how to live together, learn from each other, explore together the relationship between faith and life with a view to more positive action in the world, and encourage one another in caring for the world and its people.

Deadline for Summer Full Circle

July 1st 2015

Registered Charity No. 277843

Editorial

Paul and Ruth Gilman

Dear Friends,

Enclosed with this issue is the new autumn report of the last A.G.M. which replaces the November Full Circle and contains up to date news about personnel and finance.

Full Circle will continue as before, with editions published in March and July. This is your opportunity (as well as our Facebook websites) to have your say, and we hope the long gap between July and March will not put you off. Many people have told us how they keep and treasure all their paper editions of Full Circle, and that they are very glad they are continuing.

In October we attended the autumn retreat at Bradwell, entitled Spiritual Awareness and led by David Buck, of which a detailed report and some examples of creative writing inspired by the retreat, are published below. Only six of us took part, but the retreat was wonderful. A great sense of community was created between us, and new friendships formed. I (Ruth) was particularly moved by David's poem 'Old Friends' (see p. 20) which mentions how new and old friends become one. If this retreat interests you, look out for it on The Othona West Dorset programme in 2016.

Sometimes the meatier offerings on the Othona programme, are not, these days, so well attended, yet for us, many of them have been life changing, and we recommend them to you.

One such future occasion is likely to be "The Rebirthing of God" - which will take place at Othona West Dorset from 20th-22nd November 2015 and is led by John Philip Newell, a former warden of the Iona Community. In his book, John explores eight major features of a new birthing of Christianity. You can look them up on Google. In our opinion they are inspirational and they are where the world needs to go.

With our love,

Ruth and Paul

Othona West Dorset Report

Eleanor-Rose Corney

As I write to you the sun is gently warming the office and the air is filled with bird song. When night falls the owls take over. A pair have been heard calling to each other every night for the last week now. Nature is very much aware that spring is on its way. It wasn't until I moved to West Dorset that springtime became my favourite season. I moved here after my degree in the November of 2013. I spent the majority of my life growing up in a city where spring is muted somewhat. I was quite shocked to see the contrast when experiencing the season in the countryside. The air seems to be positively buzzing with activity and the landscape rapidly transforms to a sea of lush greens. As nature awakens after hibernation so do things here at Othona get busier.

We have been in a semi-closed period over winter to give us time to get on with some of those much needed to be done jobs and also to allow ourselves to gather our energies for the coming year. We now have a long list of projects completed to be proud of. Our maintenance bods have replaced radiators in four bedrooms to bring them up to the standard of the other rooms meaning that all our bedrooms are nice and toasty in the colder months. Juliet our office supremo, with the help of volunteers such as Brenda Stephenson, has reorganised and updated our library. We have already had feedback on its greater ease of use. I myself have spent time down there with a cup of tea discovering books of interest that I had no idea were in our collection. Another worthwhile pursuit has been the sprucing up of two of our big family bedrooms. They've had a repaint, new curtains, new furniture and new fitted carpets. There is a new shower going into the bathroom. The list goes on but that is a few of the highlights. Do come and visit us and take a look at our handiwork!

We have still fitted in some events in this quieter period. 'Christmas in Community' was filled with warmth and kindness, a lovely event to be part of as always. It was my second Christmas working at Othona and I thoroughly enjoyed it. We spent many evenings around a crackling fire with one out at a carol service that is held in a charming barn in West Bexington. This year at the barn there were Hebridean sheep and a handsome pony to say hello to. Christmas Day was of course

filled with lots of yummy food, terrible cracker jokes, laughter and some sadness but most of all it was filled with a strong sense of community.

Our Christmas event was swiftly followed by our 'New Year Celebrations'. This was a special New Year as we entered our 50th year of Othona at the West Dorset site. We commemorated the occasion by dressing in gold on New Year's Eve. Maintenance core member Corrina even went as far as spraying all her hair gold, it looked quite spectacular! We will be celebrating our 50 years with an Othona Gold festival weekend in July, see our programme for more details.

As we move into spring the change of season also brings a change of personnel. Daniel our caterer will be leaving us at the end of February to join the L'Arche Community in Ipswich. His scrummy vegan chocolate cake, easy going attitude and his humour will be very much missed by us all but we wish him all the very best with his next adventure.

The days are getting warmer and brighter as we look ahead now to an exciting, event packed, 50th year at Othona West Dorset. We hope we will get a chance to see many Othona regulars sometime this year and to meet those new to the community. And I myself look forward to another season working at Othona and being a part of this landmark year.

News from Bradwell

Mark Russ

Daffodils are emerging, primroses dot the ground by Medlar Cottage, and birds are announcing the slow arrival of spring. 2015 has only just begun but already we've welcomed so many warm and interesting people. In early January, a group of young climate change bloggers from all over England were brought together by CAFOD to be trained in effective campaigning methods. Our winter Bargain Break was a fun filled week of food, games, creativity and fellowship. All of this, and particularly the cabaret and candle-lit dedication on the Thursday night, brought much needed warmth to what's been a cold and wet February.

The community in residence has grown in recent months. In November, Tim, Marie and Wendy were joined by Hana, a PhD student

at Anglia Ruskin, and her husband Mirsha, who recently completed his PhD in cybernetics. Their enthusiasm for permaculture, community and washing up knows no bounds. At the beginning of January, community sojourners Mark and Adrian arrived and will be staying until the end of August. With the return of Amanda from her wintering in Spain, there'll be eight of us. For the next six months we're also joined by Pete who'll be working two days a week carrying out much needed on-site maintenance and clearing up.

There is a good energy amongst the core, and the relative quietness of the winter season has given us time to strengthen ourselves as a team. At the local pub we were treated to (or subjected to, depending on who you ask) an Elvis impersonator, and last week we enjoyed an evening of amateur dramatics and amazing pavlova at the local village hall. We've also started a series of informal Lent study sessions on the Book of Ecclesiastes. We're not sure about everything being 'meaningless', but we're all agreed that 'there is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil'. We're looking forward to spending several days at Othona West Dorset in March, equipping ourselves with the fortitude for what will most likely be a very busy summer.

There's a lot of work to do, but everyday something gets done. Spring cleaning is under way, the Bank is gradually being de-cluttered and the scaffolding is coming down from the Solar Building. Perhaps the most exciting news is our plan to acquire a number of yurts - large comfortable tents that will include a wood burner.

Amidst the change, many things stay the same. The natural world continues to delight us - we have been graced with several sightings of barn owls haunting the borrow dyke – and magic chocolate pudding remains as popular as ever. Come and see us soon!

Mark and Adrian's 'Purposeful Adventure'

Mark Russ

Adrian and I were first introduced to Othona Bradwell by the wonderful folks of St George's Tufnell Park. We quickly fell in love with the place, so much so that we celebrated our marriage here in 2013. A couple of

months after the celebrations, we met together with the elders of my Quaker meeting in Hampstead. I'd requested a 'meeting for clearness', a process of group discernment, because Adrian and I had a question – how are we called to live? What is our priority as a couple? Through asking searching questions in an atmosphere of deep listening, clarity emerged. We felt called to leave our jobs and flat in London, and spend a year visiting and volunteering in faith-based intentional communities in the UK and abroad. This decision didn't come entirely from out of the blue. We'd had experience of intentional community through involvement with L'Arche, as well as Corrymeela and Othona Bradwell, and we took inspiration from Tobias Jones' travels in community, chronicled in his 'Utopian Dreams'.

We gave ourselves a year to put our plans together. Talking it over between us, Adrian didn't want it to be a 'gap year', but definitely wanted it to be an adventure! I was happy with that, as long as it had a sense of purpose, and wasn't just an extended holiday. From then on, we were pursuing a 'purposeful adventure'. Before jumping in headlong, we began dipping our toes in the water, taking a weekend here and a week there to visit communities that could potentially provide us with a longer stay. We spent a week in rural Portugal at the Mount of Oaks Community, helping dig vegetable plots, wandering through abandoned pomegranate orchards and sleeping in a shack being audibly devoured by termites. We visited Tobias Jones' own community in Somerset, 'Windsor Hill Wood', and witnessed what a wonderful place of welcome and healing a community can be.

In July 2014, we packed up our things, said our goodbyes, and travelled to the US to spend eleven weeks at the Quaker Intentional Village – Canaan, a co-housing project in rural upstate New York. We found ourselves in the role of 'hearth-keepers', inhabiting the communal Farmhouse and providing a warm welcome to community members, guests and strangers alike. We were often overwhelmed by the generosity of our hosts, and found time to visit other communities and travel to Boston, New York City and Washington DC. In November we found ourselves in the West Midlands, staying in two quite different communities, Carrs Lane Lived Community and Eadie Community House. We were able to volunteer with several wonderful organisations, including St Chad's Sanctuary, working with asylum seekers. Now we find ourselves at Othona Bradwell. This is, as far as we know, the final and longest stop on our purposeful adventure.

We're settling in well, and feel like we're a good fit. As to what will happen in September, we're still waiting for clarity to emerge!

Our travels in community have taught us many things: setting up a community is hard work; make room for the Spirit and you will be guided; fruit tastes so much better in the country where it's grown; there are a lot of good people in the world; laughter and silliness are vital; conflict happens so plan for it; everyone needs to feel listened to; community is really, really important, and can only be grown through love.

We look forward to meeting more and more Othona-ites in the months to come, to tell you our stories and hear yours in return. You can find out more about our adventures on my blog - ***jollyquaker.com***.

Extract From Full Circle 1966 **submitted by Brenda Motley**

Editors' note: *Whilst cleaning out bookshelves Brenda found an extract from the Full Circle of 1966 which was edited by Grace Taylor and reproduced on a romeo. Brenda kept it because she used part of it, including some words written by Norman Motley (Othona's founder) which she edited, for a chapel service which she led. We are quoting these here because, to us, they seem so fresh and relevant to today.*

"This year will be the twentieth session of the Community at Bradwell, and the second at Burton Bradstock.

One is often tempted to ask what we have achieved.

Fundamentally, the test of our work is whether people leave the place more whole than when they came; whether people are more integrated mentally, physically and spiritually, through coming, and the place itself (the Community) is more whole through their participation.

Grandiose schemes abound for transformation of society, and while the kingdom has come - it is still coming - and will (and does) come as people are made new in the power of the Spirit of God.

I am sure that Othona must confront people with the great issues of our time - and, where possible, give guidance to equip them to become involved in the world that is coming to birth.

But we must take seriously The Spirit. He is the continuation of God - Father - Son - in time - in events - IN US. If Emmanuel means "God with us", Whitsun means "GOD IN US". Horizon - unlimited. Resources - unlimited. Freedom - from ecclesiasticism - from political domination - from all fear - and from all the things which can hold men in captivity.

The mission of Jesus was to liberate people - to proclaim to captives of all kinds - freedom. And we in our turn must take freedom out. This is God's gift - the freedom of the Spirit - through the indwelling of Him who makes all things - and all men new.

Othona believes it to be the truth .. and we shall not falter, by the Grace of God."

Proposed Memoir of Norman Motley Janet Marshall

Othona was founded by Norman Motley in 1946. He died too young in 1980. Had he lived he would be 102 today so it is no surprise that those who knew him in person are fewer every year.

We have Norman's account of how he was moved to begin and lead Othona and how the Community developed up to the 1970s, and we have some of his own words from articles written for the Community in the 70s. These are in "Much Ado about Something" and "Letters to a Community", both of which are available from either centre. What we don't have is a picture of Norman through the eyes of others. So before the living witnesses leave us let us have a memoir of Norman Motley as others knew him. Inevitably most of the memories will focus on his later years but any portrayals of the younger Norman

will be especially welcome. Also Othona was only part of his life so memories of Norman connected with all the other spheres such as Toc H, his life at St Michaels in the City and as Priest in Charge at Navestock would all be very welcome.

Would you like to contribute to this? We'd love to hear from you. The project is to collect as much material as possible and then decide how it should be organised and made available. So you don't have to write a perfectly rounded article. If it is easier to record your memories as a series of random notes that will be helpful too.

How can you do this? Ideally if you can send your memories via computer that would be helpful, if not, typed or hand written material would be equally welcome. Contact details are at the end of this article. What are we asking for? It might help to prompt your memory by rereading the "Letters" or "Much Ado". If you refer to quotes or events from either book would you please give us the page number if you can, so that we don't have to search through every time. The hope is to produce a memoir that will merit publication. We trust you will understand that we probably shan't be able to include all the material we are offered, so please don't be offended if your contribution is not visible in the final edit.

So could you ask yourself questions such as:

1. How did you come to meet him? What was it like encountering NM for the first time?
2. What was his personal presence like? How did you feel in his company? Do you have favourite stories that illustrate his character?
3. Was there a private NM in contrast to the man people knew as a priest and as a community leader
4. There is no doubt many people found Norman an inspirational figure. Can you capture some of what he said and did which explains that inspiration to those who never knew him.?
5. We all have contradictions in our characters. Did you see these in NM. What were his greatest strengths and weaknesses?
6. He was shaped partly by experience of RAF chaplaincy in the Second world War and by post war concerns about reconciling the divided nations and Christian churches, about social need in the UK and nuclear proliferation internationally. How did these express themselves in your experience of NM ?
7. Why was he important to you?

In his own time Norman would have been accustomed to deferential obituaries and memoirs which gave a partial airbrushed version of their subjects, but Othona has always been more of a “warts and all” fellowship so we hope to arrive at a three dimensional picture of Norman, realistic as well as respectful. Please give us your living impression of the whole man. He would have recognised that saying of the early church father, Irenaeus of Lyons: “the glory of God is the human being fully alive”

Please send any contributions to Jan Marshall.

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Open Source Spirituality?

Tony Jaques

Ten years ago I wrote a short article (in this very magazine) about a kind of ‘Open Christianity’, emerging right across the world, albeit under many different banners. As if, I suggested, a *movement* were springing up spontaneously in lots of places at once. I identified seven main aspects of openness, summarised by these headings (in no particular order).

- Being open to all the varying strands of Christian tradition
- Being open to the radical spirit of Jesus
- Being open to all the faiths, the prophetic and wisdom traditions of the world
- Being open to new insight from all branches of human understanding
- Being open to uncertainty and humility
- Being open to the challenges of peace and justice
- Being open to personal transformation

Writing that in 2005, I felt it was exciting to live in a time when such openness is possible for us... in ways it frankly wasn't for our ancestors. But I knew any Open Christianity poses uncomfortable questions for much of church tradition. It challenges all the institutional defensiveness, the blinkered attitudes to scripture, the racism and sexism and lack of imagination that still bedevil so much of church life.

(Not to ignore the challenges for those of us who are instinctive liberals too. How open are we to the workings of the Spirit in the lives of other Christians, however strange their ideas or beliefs seem to us? And what are we *doing* to turn all our fine forward-looking sentiments into action that helps change the world?)

In the years since 2005 I've become aware of 'open source' as a concept and a way of working in our multi-connected world. (Some of you reading this will know much more about it than I do.) Dating from 1998, **open source** is the preferred term for computer software that's offered free of charge in the public domain and where the *source code* – the equivalent of Coca Cola's secret recipe, you could say – is not hidden, not secret at all. It's available for anyone who wants to get involved with a virtual community of people across the world who are developing it.

This isn't just a weird minority sport for geeks; it's the way some of the leading internet resources are developed and supported. Among the best known examples of open source material are the browser Mozilla Firefox, and the Android and Linux operating systems. (And as it happens Othona's new database system relies on another suite of Open Source software known as CiviCRM.) So behind these household names are... not monolithic corporations, but loosely-knit ever-changing networks of people who exchange ideas, propose new features, solve glitches as they arise, critique their own shared achievement as they go along.

As I learnt a bit about Open Source, I found myself not just interested but *moved* by it. Why? Open Source, as a way of growing a shared body of resources and understandings, seemed strangely familiar. Isn't this, I wondered, what is happening for many of us in terms of spirituality? Just as no Microsoft can hold a monopoly on all powerful software, so no religious institution – any longer – can hold a monopoly on the resources and understandings of faith. They are out there. And we, the people, are handling, exploring, sharing and debating them... no doubt sometimes mistaking and misusing them too. Like the online forums in which software geeks tackle every newly discovered glitch in Firefox, we're trying to support each other, sort out snags and pool our best discoveries. This is what I observe quietly going on among people who visit Othona. In reality it is what goes on within many a church or

other faith community - however much the powers-that-be may delude themselves they are still holding the reins as in former times.

My prediction is that this open source freewheeling approach will affect and change every faith tradition in the world, in ways we can barely imagine as yet. For historical and cultural reasons I'd suggest it is impacting on Christianity earlier than most other traditions. But surely it won't stop there. The future is collaborative and tomorrow's religion will differ from yesterday's as radically as Wikipedia differs from the multi-volume Encyclopaedia Britannica my parents were so proud of.

Search on the internet and you'll find various people running websites *called* Open Source Religion, Open Source Spirituality, Open Source Christian and so on. They bagged the domain names, good for them. But they're not necessarily examples of what I'm getting at. And of course they can't corner the market – that wouldn't be open source at all! I think the vast majority of people who are already actually *practising* open source spirituality have never heard the term!

Let me end with an explicit, if simple, theological idea. In spite of every past claim to 'unique revelation', every attempt to assert religious authority, every knee-jerk prohibition – isn't God, Spirit, whatever we call the ultimate reality, by definition the great Open Source?

The Psalms (Part 1)

Colin Hodgetts

As I write this I am in the middle of giving a six-week course on the psalms and finding that six one-hour sessions won't be enough to cover all the ground. They have been part of my life for sixty-five years.

When, in the mid-1970s, I became chaplain/warden of Othona, Bradwell, I found that there was no common way for the Community to sing the psalms. Members of the C of E were stuck with Anglican chants. A few punters might be *au fait* with plainsong. The sprung rhythm of Gelineau settings had made little impact and Taizé chant had not yet come on line.

I worked quite fast and by 1976 had set fifty psalms and fifteen canticles. The choice of psalms was based on a list made by a Ripon

Hall worship group led by the chaplain. We theological students were used to working our way through the Psalter day by day, month by month. Despite CS Lewis's spirited defence of this practice we resented having to sing "Blessed shall he be that taketh thy children : and throweth them against the stones" on the 28th evening of every month. This is the final verse of psalm 137 that begins "By the rivers of Babylon", a psalm that, in a Rastafarian setting, became a hit. This is my version of the first six verses:

By Babylon's rivers we sat down and wept,
remembering Zion.
On willows that grew there we hung up our harps,
remembering Zion.
For there those that carried us captive away
called for a song;
our captors required of us joy: "Sing a song,
a song of your city."
But how could we offer a song of the Lord
on alien soil?
My right hand shall wither, O city of peace,
if I should forget you.
My tongue shall adhere to the roof of my mouth
should I forget you,
not setting the city of God before all,
before every pleasure.

These words have been a regular companion of mine. They were on my lips as I worked at settling Vietnamese refugees. I sang them at a service in Cairo cathedral at a time when refugees were pouring out of Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea, many of them meeting regularly in the cathedral crypt, and when Julia and I were working in Ethiopia with refugees from South Sudan.

What I was attempting has a respectable pedigree. Early copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* contain a full set of metrical psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins. Most of them are in common metre, a huge limitation on the music that can go with them. In 1781 Thomas Warton criticised them as "obsolete and contemptible," "an absolute travesty and "entirely destitute of elegance, spirit, and propriety".

- 1 When we did sit in Babylon
the rivers round about,

Then in remembrance of Zion
the tears for grief burst out.

- 2 We hanged our harps and instruments
the willow trees upon:
For in that place men for their use
had planted many one.
- 3 Then they to whom we pris'ners were
said to us tauntingly,
Now let us hear your Hebrew songs
and pleasant melody.
- 4 Alas! said we, who can once frame
his heavy heart to sing
The praises of our living God,
thus under a strange king?

Others set out to improve on them. This is the opening of the Brady & Tate version:

- 1 When we, our wearied limbs to rest,
sat down by proud Euphrates' stream,
We wept, with doleful thoughts oppressed,
and Zion was our mournful theme.
- 2 Our harps, that when with joy we sung,
were wont their tuneful parts to bear,
With silent strings neglected hung
on willow trees that withered there.

And this from the Scottish Metrical Psalter:

- 1 By Babel's streams we sat and wept,
when Zion we thought on.
- 2 In midst thereof we hanged our harps
the willow-trees upon.

The *Complete Anglican Hymns Old & New*, which contains 920 hymns and songs, has one Brady & Tate metrical psalm and Psalm 23 to the tune 'Crimond' from the *Scottish Metrical Psalter*. None from Sternhold and Hopkins. The Methodist *Hymns & Songs* has three B & Ts, five from the *Scottish Psalter*, but again, S & H: *nil points*.

One handicap these authors faced was the necessity of making their verses rhyme. I decided to dispense with rhyme, except where it could be used without distorting the original, but to stick strictly to a metre within each individual psalm so that there would be no difficulty in fitting words to tune. The tunes came second. The challenge was to compose something that would be easy to learn without being trite. 'Simplicity' was the watchword! The challenge was also to avoid what I call metre plugs, words like 'did' that are usually superfluous but employed to keep the feet in step.

Sweet Peas at Burton Bradstock drawn by Geoff Langwith

At Othona's West Dorset centre many species of rare wild flowers can be found, including bee orchids.



Spiritual Awareness Retreat 6th-9th October 2014

David Buck

I started baking the cake last Christmas.

All the ingredients were assembled - the flour, butter and eggs; I mixed in the sultanas, currants raisins, glacé cherries and mixed peel . . . not forgetting the brandy and a few 5ps to ensure a children's message.

However before cooking in the oven I needed to entice Andrew to contribute his creative musical talents, not only for the last Session, but also to play for us at the Service afterwards. He was tempted and attracted by the idea of playing in the 'oldest Church in England'; so I baked the cake and gave Andrew a preliminary foretaste of the contents; much to my surprise he wanted to join us for all four days.

So the cake went in a tin in my 'office larder' and was largely forgotten over an extensive period of planning for my 80th Birthday celebrations. During the summer I injected a few more tasty morsels and on Monday 6th October in the Othona Lounge, we cut the cake into the first of seven slices. By sharing ***Spiritual Moments***, we began a group dynamic, which gave us our first blessing of 'Belonging' together. As we cut the second slice, the group 'Opened its Personality', firstly, on Tuesday morning, with Ruth and Hazel's beautiful renditions of the 23rd Psalm and 1 Corinthians 13, and then after a ***Silent Breakfast***, through the readings of everyone's chosen piece. The Peace Garden view from the Solar Building Library - even in its rather chaotic present state of re-drainage (most noticeable when it rained) - formed a background to spiritual ideas about ***Giving***, as a prime example of the Community 'Giving Time'; but in the ultimate, came the idea of: 'Blessed are those who ***Give of Themselves***'.

The rest of the day was given over to ***Spiritual Awareness through Writing***; two more slices of the cake, but in this case the Group exceeded all expectations! Although there were alternatives - and I half expected Neil to write a piece, which gave you the perspective of the cake from a sultanas viewpoint(!) - everyone wrote something from the standpoint of a Gospel character. I had not expected them to complete

these writing exercises that day, especially when it came to Poetry, but the energy and dedication to the task in hand rewarded us all with a variety of contributions and our joy was complete when Neil's self-proclaimed 'rubbish poetry', was given almost spontaneous but unanimous group acclaim at the end of the day.

The only downside was that our periods of Silence for Thought, Contemplation & Prayer fell by the wayside - although Hazel and I did escape for brief moments of **Peace & Quiet**, in my case to attempt to write a poem, which started:

Two Candles on the Altar,
Yet but a single flame,
That burns its life in parallel
And each one hides my name.

A verse which proved useful to Andrew in his slice of the cake on *Creativity* through music - his bad writing managed to change 'hides . . .' to 'bears my name', which through divine providence provided an improvement! However it was Andrew who rightly observed the lack of 'Silence' early the following morning and we arranged a most perfectly tranquil **Silent Lunch**. That was taken after an extensive session on **Spiritual Awareness through Presence**, when we extended our range in the direction of **Real Spiritual Experiences**. My joy was complete with Ruth's enthusiastic response to my special experience in writing 'What of Old Friends'; this joy was combined with the Group being very moved by Richard Rohr's piece which can loosely be described by: 'The Mind can do **this** and **this** but it can't do **That** . . . but The Spirit Can!'

The final creative slice came through Andrew's music, when he not only managed to get us to sing in tolerable harmony but had us combine in pairs to put my 'Candles' verse (above and below) into music. Paul and I were very proud of our efforts - which we managed to sing together (and quietly celebrated each evening with a glass of wine together) - and were conveyed into musical notation by Andrew from pretty oscillating curves drawn below each line. I even managed to complete the uncompleted poem, lying half awake in the Solar Building two nights later, finding myself quietly singing the refrain to myself.

However the cake was still not finished; it had not been iced. So we put it back together and Andrew iced it! The rain had poured down all

day Wednesday, but soon after our silent lunch, the sun came out and at 5.45 pm we held our Service in the **Cathedral of St Cedd**, with the setting sun's rays streaming through the open door as we worshipped and Andrew played, as many people had never heard before.

The Wedding Cake was iced and decorated with larks and candles, with blessings and memories and we felt:

Peace be unto us, and to all this day.

. . . and when we cut the cake Thursday morning, to summarise our experience, the cake was light and airy, full flavoured, delicious - an Angel Cake.

Only one thing wrong: In the excitement of reaching a close, I forgot the punch line, which I had so carefully written down; so here it is, better late than never:

The slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the Highest Things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge of lesser things.

St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Summa Theologica.

Two Candles on the Altar copyright David Buck

Two Candles on the Altar
Yet but a single flame,
That burns its life in parallel
And each one bears my name.

One candle burns so brightly,
The other struggles on.
They represent two people,
And yet they are like one.

So positive and brilliant,
That firebrand beckons me;
But I can't ignore the foundling,
For that other self feels free.

I focus on that weak link,
She mustn't fade away;
With all my power I will her,
To brighten up my day.

Then the lifeless candle brightens,
A spark of flickering hope -
Has she, *Forgotten Talent*?
My spirit rises up.

The fire-crest now forgotten
Has more to say no doubt;
But has he reached potential?
Is his glamour fading out?

His strength I never doubted!
Can this be the path I tread?
But the shadows now are longer,
And what was there is dead.

She is now transformed;
His light is fading fast;
She carries on for both of them;
He's scorched his brilliant past.

Two candles on the Altar,
Aligned aside the Cross;
Together we're supported,
And neither one is 'Lost'.

Old Friends

copyright David Buck

What of Old Friends?
That they do have within,
A little bit of you
That mirrors them but yet,
Combines the very essence of a love
That shares a moment, an occasion, a joke or just
A past remembered pleasure.

What of old Friends?
How come you joined
So long ago, and yet

It's only yesterday
You shared that walk,
That pint of past enduring glory
And undiluted joy.

What of Old Friends?
They're there forever,
And remain intact,
Against the flow
Of ever hastening time
And so the joy of new ones
Enter in,
To start the process
Whereby New Friends
Join the Club
Where 'new' and 'old'
Become again as one.

The Empathetic Sense?

Andrew Watkinson

How many senses do we have? The conventional answer is five but how many others have come and gone during the endless slither of evolution?

What has happened to the subtly incredible abilities which lead the salmon to its birthplace, the swallow to the Sahara, the eel to the Saragossa Sea?

When one sense weakens others surge forward and we perhaps start to feel the reality, the essence, the song of our fellow-journeymen's lives.

A few souls have the gift (or curse?) of truly stepping into the being of others – a glorious badge of humanity not present in the spider with the fly, the lion with the gazelle, the jihadi with his victim.

Is this a blessing which God longs to pour upon humanity, which he sent his son to exemplify, the next essential sense? That we should see and be seen as we truly are, love and be loved as we crave to be loved, free to lay ourselves open without fear of scorn or disapproval.

Can spiritual awareness mean nurturing and listening to the sensors telling us about the buzzing, humming, pulsating souls all around us?

Stones

Paul Gilman

First found so many years ago
Brought here from quarries far and wide
Assembled by the Romans, as we know,
To make a fort at Blackwater's side.

But then the Roman tide it ebbed
Stones in ruined walls were left
Until arrived at last St Cedd
To weave another warp and weft

Where once the company of brave men¹
Kept watch and looked for glory
We living stones say our Amen
And build our love to St Peter's story.

1. The Roman garrison at Othona was the *Numerus Fortenses*, which can be translated as 'the company of brave men'.

Bradwell Sea Shells drawn by Geoff Langwith

How many different types of shells can you find on the beach?



6,5,4,3,2,1 Words for a Happy Partnership submitted by David Buck

- 6 - I am sorry, I was wrong
- 5 - You did that really well
- 4 - What do you think?
- 3 - I love you
- 2 - Thank you
- 1 - Us

Mum, Me and Community

David Birdseye

MUM: Oh no! Surely not! Oh dear - what's it all coming to?

DAVE: Mum... Mum?...

MUM: Oh for goodness' sake! It makes you want to slit your throat, it really does... God help us all. Oh my God!

DAVE: Mum!! If you find the News so distressing then just switch over, or preferably, off.

MUM: No, I like to keep abreast of things... see what's going on in the world. Oh, for Heaven's sake... No!!

DAVE: (turns volume down with remote)

MUM: What did you do that for? I was enjoying that...

DAVE: No you weren't. You were on the verge of a heart attack.

MUM: Well, no wonder, what with the way things are going.... I mean - we never used to have all this. Terrorism and torture... Corruption...

Paedophobia... I mean to say...

DAVE: Mum - there's a periodical on sale called Positive News. How about me taking out a subscription in your name?

MUM: I bet that's a hefty read. All of four pages, probably. And half of them - adverts for rubbish you don't need.

DAVE: Not at all. It focuses on the sunnier side of life, unlike most of today's media. One issue ran a true life story about an unlikely alliance between a dog and a rabbit.

MUM: So what's positive about that? Just imagine their poor offspring. The confusion. They'd end up spending all their time and energy chasing their own tails down some hole.

DAVE: Mum - you have this tremendous talent for focusing on the negative. But it's not ALL gloom and doom out there.

MUM: Well it is in here. From the moment I got up, nothing but problems and worries. Sometimes I think... if it wasn't for the option of suicide... then I'd top myself.

DAVE: Oh God, here we go. Look, Mum - why not try pondering the more positive aspects of existence? You're forever dwelling on man's inhumanity to man.

MUM: Well, I admit that women can be just as bad. Even worse. I mean - remember that whatsername? That Myra Brady? Dreadful! And back at school - what some of the girls used to write on those toilet walls! Worse than the boys! Still makes me blush, to this day. No, it's what I say... they're not all sugar n'spice and all things nice, neither,

women, girls... And who was that awful girl with the pigtails? That's it! ... Dorothy Armiger! Her with her nasty little chum. Mavis whatsername...

DAVE: Mum! The point is, there's also goodness in the world. Love, kindness, fellowship... That's why I sometimes go into Community.

MUM: I always assumed you went there to get away from me.

DAVE: Um...Er...Well,no... that's not the entire truth...

MUM: So why do you keep going back there? What's the attraction?

DAVE: Well, as I say, fellowship. meeting with kindred spirits...

MUM: Hrumph! I know only too well the kind of spirits YOU get kindred with. That bin out there - it's a disgrace. Nothing but bottles. Bottles and cans. I don't know... where did I go wrong? Tell me.

DAVE: (Groan!) Mum - I visit Othona for various reasons. And YOU could come too. You don't have to be a Christian.

MUM: But you tell me it's a Christian Community...

DAVE: Yes, okay... it was founded on Christian principles. But it's open to everyone. Anyone that comes with respect...

MUM: So what makes it Christian, dare I ask?

DAVE: Well, it was founded by a Christian minister, and, err... well Jesus himself said "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them". So we get together, at Othona.

MUM: Hang on a minute! You told me you have TWO centres.

DAVE: That's right - one in Essex, the other in Dorset.

MUM: So then how does THAT work? I mean... if Jesus is in the midst of you? Even HE can't be in two places at once. Surely not! I mean... he could be in Essex, presumably, phoning himself up in Dorset. I mean to say...

DAVE: Now you're being just plain silly, Mum.

MUM: Well... I never could figure it. One minute you're at Burton Bradwell, the next you're at whatsit... Bradstock-on-Sea. I mean, what do you DO there?

DAVE: All sorts. It depends on whether there's a specific theme. But we also have chapel services, and everyone shares the chores.

MUM: What sort of chores?

DAVE: Cleaning, washing-up,veg. prep., laying tables...

MUM: Huh! Sounds more like a concentration camp to me. And you pay for that? You could do all that here, for free. Those Mormons must have seen you coming. The cheek!

DAVE: What Mormons?

MUM: Well, they were the original founders, so you told me.

DAVE: I most certainly did not!

MUM: Yes you did! What was their leader's name? Mormon Motley?

DAVE: (Groan) Mrs Malaprop meets her match. Or is it Spooner?

MUM: Pardon?

DAVE: Never mind. It's not just chapel and chores, Mum. The next event I'm going to is Exploring Celtic Themes.

MUM: Huh! the only theme that lot explores is punch-ups with that other lot of thugs - those Rangers. I've seen it on the T.V. Atrocious!

DAVE: Mum, it has nothing to do with football.

MUM: Well, anyway. You won't catch me paying to go there and do their chores for them. I've more than enough of my own.

DAVE: But Mum - you could take the opportunity to get away from here for a while. In Community. If you like I can make you a booking. Why not come along and explore Celtic themes?

MUM: Not likely! I'd rather explore the kitchen cupboard. And you won't get ME scrubbing toilets, and potatoes, and pots and pans, AND paying for the privilege. Not on your Nellie! If you do go off to that place I'll prepare you a packed lunch. I'm sure those Mormons don't feed you properly. Anyway, I'm about ready for the Land of Nod, so I'll be saying goodnight.

DAVE: Goodnight Mum. Sweet dreams.

Memories of Martin Morris

Tony Sinden

I have just returned from the Funeral Mass for Martin Morris. Matthew Dell and Roger Neville were also there. Martin's association with the Community began in the 1990s when I was treasurer, but we were also building the Norman Motley building, making significant improvements at BB, and re-writing out trust deed, so I needed help, and that's exactly what he provided. He did all the work while I was swanning around getting involved in everything else. In those pre-computerised days we used to hold meetings at New Cross station when he handed over what he had done for me. Without him I could not have managed. He was always such a positive person, and such fun to work with. All my sympathy goes out to his new wife, and I shall miss him.

A.G.M.

**Notice of the
2015 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

of

The Othona Community

**To be held at 2.00pm in the Lower Hall, St Andrews
Church, Short Street, Waterloo SE1 8LJ**

on

Saturday 26th September

<http://www.stjohnswaterloo.co.uk>

Fully accessible

1.30pm - arrival with tea or coffee

2.00pm AGM

Followed by service and a bring and share tea

Please note that we must vacate the hall by 5.00 pm

LOCATION: Between Waterloo and Southwark Stations. From Waterloo walk down Waterloo Rd., and turn left up "The Cut". From Southwark Station turn right down "The Cut". Short St. turning is almost opposite the Young Vic Theatre. Buses 63 and 45 to Blackfriars Rd.

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