

The Othona Community

Annual General Meeting Minutes

September 22nd 2018

Ruth Bull opened the AGM with a reading of Psalm 42 from Othona Psalms.

Colin Hodgetts (Chair of trustees) welcomed all members and friends of the Community. Apologies were received from Ali Tebbs, Paul Seckleman, Fiona Heyes and Ruth Gilman. Minutes of the previous AGM on September 23rd 2017 were approved and signed.

Finance and Accounts

Colin welcomed Javed Salim, Partner at Alwyns our accountants who presented a summary of our accounts. Copies of the accounts were made available to the AGM. The accounts are draft and subject to amendment. When they are finalised they will be put on the website. Members expressed concern that the Accounts have not been available since 2016. We will make sure that all accounts are on the website.

Trustees and Officers of the Othona Community.

A vote of thanks was given to Ali Tebbs now retired from the trustee board for all her work.

Colin announced his retirement as trustee and chair.

Clare Gough has been elected as new chair and introduced herself. Clare was a doctor and has long experience as a senior manager in the NHS. Initially governance will be one of Clare's priorities.

Update on replacement for Full Circle

Tony Jaques explained that the replacement for Full Circle is for those who aren't online or prefer printed copy. Everyone else has access to websites and social media to get their Othona news. Debbie and Tony were tasked with producing a twice yearly bulletin. Tony handed out draft copies to show the format. There will be one bulletin sheet for each centre. Questions were asked about the possibility of including contributions from members who saw Full Circle as a members magazine. The drafts are a first development.

There was a lively discussion, with a number of people, mainly from Bradwell, contributing. The main views expressed were:

- If we lose sight of Community it becomes an efficient service delivery. Work, Worship, Study and Play balance Othona, and there seems to be a shift away from Work in the Summer Season.
- Work is not just "doing jobs" but being welcoming.
- There is a sense of working together- doing duties, work projects, and caring for one another, serving and being served. Working Weekends are always well attended.
- Attending, sharing and leading Worship in the Chapel give life to the Community.
- Communication binds the Community together, should be 2-way, and using all possible media to supplement face-to face conversations, particularly for those living far from Othona. Emails about activities and events motivate people to come, and bring more visitors. The replacement for Full Circle, and the inclusion of more information on websites are areas for development. At Bradwell reaching out to local people has increased our numbers and profile in the village.
- Democracy is a global concern. Othona is rooted in democracy, and should take ownership of this, so people feel encouraged to take responsibilities - hopefully with voting for Committees in future.

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- There are practical actions for the Trustees and Committees to consider. Disability is not just about physical access but means inclusion of people with other disabilities such as mental health, sight and hearing loss and hidden disabilities. There should be hearing loops.
- Prices to stay at Othona are high for families. This is an ongoing matter: at both Centres there are child concessions/free places at times, and Bradwell includes a number of Volunteers, including young people, who stay free of charge. Groups bring in more money, but also new Members.

This continues ongoing discussions held at Bradwell through meetings, emails and letters. There will be opportunities to continue the input from Members through communications and meetings.

Colin closed the session thanking people for contributions and saying that the trustees appreciate the need to listen to members.

Highlights of the Year -

Othona Bradwell Tim

Tim talked about the popular half term weeks, and the success of the Simply Be.events. He reported on the success of the young people,Volunteers Action for Peace part of the Erasmus project. Tim thanked Paul Winter and his team for their support and help with this project which will continue in 2019.

The new parking facilities have made a real difference to accessibility at BOS. Tim gave thanks to all the people who come and volunteer. It is essential as a way for people to experience what Othona is about and enables us to do what we do,.

Othona West Dorset Tony

Tony explained that at OWD there is less distinction than at Bradwell between community and 'outside group' weeks. OWD is planning to reduce the number of weeks with events this winter so the core can carry out important maintenance and other work. This is a financial risk but will give the OWD core vitally needed time to review and renew various aspects of how they live together and how the centre operates. As at Bradwell, so in West Dorset we try to keep the experience of community fresh.

Regarding communication, Tony recalled that the options within the Othona network are now far wider than they were when he started as a warden. We now have emails and texts, online booking, the Sunday chatroom, Othona Facebook groups anyone can post on, Facebook forums, other social media, as well as the printed news sheet we are now trying out. The amount of effort core members at the centres devote to communications is immensely more than it ever used to be.

Thanks to Colin

Before the closing worship Tony spoke about the debt of thanks Othona owes to Colin Hodgetts, who led the first year-round community at Bradwell in the 1970s. It was a time full of tree-planting, animal husbandry and connecting spirituality to the land around us, beginning themes that are strong in the community to this day. And he found time to compose the Othona Psalms which for many of us have become *the* psalms we know and love.

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After leaving Bradwell in 1979 Colin went on facilitating weeks at both centres when invited and then, in 2012, became a trustee and took on the chairmanship. To this role he brought experience from numerous other projects and charities that he has founded and/or worked for – as we can read in his recently published autobiography “Action! A cleric off the leash”. We all wished Colin and his wife Julia a fulfilling retirement in Edinburgh and he was presented with a card and voucher for concerts at the Queens Hall Edinburgh.

The talks and discussion were followed by a short service.

Note on Accounts

The 2017/18 accounts have been amended and are on the website

AGM 2019

The Othona community AGM in 2019 will be on Saturday September 21st. Please note that this will be at a new venue, as St Andrew's Churches not available. The address is BOST, 1 Coral Street, London SE1 7BE, in the Rotunda. This is very near Waterloo. For more information on Bankside Open Spaces Trust and our new AGM venue check out the website www.bost.org.uk