

The Othona Community in August 2022. Written this time by Ruth Bull.

Here's a taste of Othona Time Travelling in Community together.

Let's start with the past.

August is traditionally the liveliest of months at Othona. During July 1946 our founder Norman Motley furnished old huts at East Hall farm "armed with £200... blankets at five shillings and pillows at one shilling....elans closets and culinary utensils." They were ready to open for the first time, with influential weekly speakers and a "very mixed bag" of people staying, including a few from the Answer Back Meeting who held the 'Nails' - a symbol of community for military personal who had encountered Norman's unique style of RAF Chaplaincy; some people from the International Voluntary Service for Peace (forerunners of our current European student groups) German prisoners of war not yet repatriated, and several teenage Russians and Armenians from France alongside local students and Parishioners. From the start, the pattern of the day was established to include Work, Worship, Study and Play – bringing together people from all these backgrounds and ages, aiming to understand, and to experience Community from different perspectives, but united at Bradwell where Norman, who loved this 'holy place' found that "even in midsummer one can walk along the sea wall without meeting another soul and with only the wail of seagulls overhead."

Moving to the present - has anything changed?

Practically yes, the elsan toilets are not missed, we now have flush toilets and showers all round, various types of purpose-built accommodation – and we have replaced those old grey five shilling blankets with duvets. The pattern of the day is still pretty similar, with shared meals, daily worship in the Chapel, shared work, now of a different nature to the old "structural work" but just as necessary to keep the Othona running and support the current Warden Managers. "Play" brings people together in a way no lecture can do. Picture an autistic Ukrainian refugee lad joyfully playing football with an Italian student – no need for a common spoken language. Picture a group of Quakers of all ages learning how to create beautiful tie-dye cloths; a gathering of people whose common ground is to sing and play music together, or the fun of creating celebration cakes and trifles for all occasions. Right now there are young people enjoying work experience at Othona: gardening, caring for the chickens, helping with cooking delicious homemade meals with fresh ingredients from the polytunnel – and resident groups of school children learning community skills and having fun. OK, there is now more awareness of Health and Safety and Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, overseen by Trustees and Committees, but Othona is still a place where people can experience the freedom of the open air, the sea, the unique wildlife, and making new friendships that often last a lifetime.

Looking to the future – where do you think we should go?

I ask you this question, because Othona will only develop as a Community if people, whether German, Russian, Ukrainian, Bradwellian or from St. Lawrence, on school work experience or visiting with a club for older people, come together to look at what Othona has offered and will offer. Our foundation is in Christianity, but our inclusive lifestyle means that you will see Catholics sharing meals with Buddhists, and agnostics having free discussions with Christians. You will meet people who are passionate about saving the planet, and those who see the small steps we might take to contribute – whether challenging the local authority about the tortuous route to gain planning consent for a second wind turbine, or

swimming from Bradwell to Mersey Island to raise money for its construction. Some people garden, some clean, some cook, some observe the world and all its current troubles and remember why Othona exists – and will continue to exist through Faith, Hope and Loving Charity. Paul Coleman is now moving on from his role as Bradwell trustee and chair but others will fill his shoes and help guide this ship to her next adventure. For now, summer is here and there is a great Programme - do take a look.

The Programme is on the Othona's Bradwell website, or if you prefer a paper leaflet, pick one up locally. Here you will see that in August we have a Wellbeing Week, there are weeks for Art and for Music, the ever-popular Astronomy Week, and a relaxing Bank Holiday Weekend to finish the month.

To learn more about Othona or to look at the Programme, and make booking or a donation, do take a look at our Website. Find us down the track through East Hall Farm East End Rd – through the wind-powered electric gate; don't forget your exit token to use on the way out. Debbie and Richard Sanders are our Warden/Managers, assisted by Phil, Chris, Peter and volunteers.

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