

The Othona Community – February 2022.

Do you know who is there, down by St Peter's Chapel, tucked away behind the sea wall? So many local people don't have any idea who, where or why there is a presence in that out-of-the-way corner of Bradwell-on-Sea.

Othona has grown and developed since our founder, Canon Norman Motley, first came to The Chapel at Bradwell in 1945. "The moment I entered the building I knew that we were home.....the other task ahead was to find some place where a mixed group of people could spend residential periods with us." (From Norman's book "Othona, Much Ado About Something.") He found that place, and soon the Othona Community began to meet each summer – then for all the school holidays – up to now, when Othona has warm and welcoming buildings for day and residential visitors all year round.

But "visitors" is not always the right word. Many do visit, enjoy a cuppa and a chat, and make their way home. They may not call in again until perhaps, many years later, they return to bring a friend, and find that, although the old place may have changed, the welcome is the same – not intrusive, not doctrinal, but some describe it as being part of an extended family. Othona's history is rarely written down, tending to rely on the ancient tradition of folk tales. So many conversations start with "Do you remember when....."(Audrey did this, John said that, a group of volunteers built those....) Othona grew, developed a Dorset Centre, and now does much communication online.

Our Founders had Vision. In 1941 Norman, an RAF Chaplain frustrated by the lack of relevance of the Church to his bewildered congregation, started no-hold-barred answerback meetings, which drew in all manner of people, so they formed a "Nails Movement" to keep them together as the war ended, using a crude symbol of welded nails as their emblem. They believed in "the dream of a centre where, after the war, people of all kinds – especially those linked with the 'Nails,' could meet and perhaps implement the dream of a creative reunion where constructive thinking and subsequent activity could take place." People who make a commitment to Othona may still receive the Nails. Many still have a vision for our future into the 21st Century, with all its joys and troubles, its need for faith, hope and Christian love.

So now we had Nails holders, their families, and a body of people who had previously been on opposing sides in the recent war, with those from differences strata of society, coming to this meeting place to become one Community. The word spread, and Church groups came to visit and share that blend of Work, Worship, Study and Play that gives a wholeness to Othona. Families brought friends, who brought their families - and we're into 4th and 5th generations, as well as constantly seeing g new faces: local people, groups, schools, passers-by, older and younger, able-bodied and less able, all nationalities, all faiths and none. Everyone is welcome to share their name and contact details to go on our mailing list as a "friend." Those who are willing to pay their £12 a year are "Members" which gives people a sense of belonging and helps support our work – but all who enjoy Othona **are** the Community.

Look on the Website for news, and for the 2022 Programme, including Feb half-term.

To learn more about Othona or to make booking or a donation, do take a look at our website. Tim Fox is Warden/Manager, with Debbie and Richard Sanders. Email bradwell@othona.org. Website: www.othonaessex.org.uk. Telephone 01621 776564.