

The Othona Community in December 2020.

Bradwell-on-Sea is an unusual village – there is only one other like it, and that is the village of Burton Bradstock, on the Dorset Coast. When the Othona Community's founder Norman Motley first entered the Chapel of St Peters on the Wall, Bradwell, he said "I knew that we were home." Eighteen years later, when Norman was investigating a disused retreat house as the option of a second Othona Community centre in Dorset, "The very first look convinced me that this was for us." Interestingly, he used the terms "we" and "us" not "I" and "me," when recognising our two villages as places where the Othona Community would be based. Was it just the places – or was it something about the people of our two villages that created an atmosphere of welcome, inclusion and love, that has sustained these Communities within communities all these years.

Norman died nearly 40 years ago, and we must rightly move on, with a vision of Christian community that springs afresh from each generation. No longer do we have instruction to all those aged 14+ that they must attend daily lectures – although the old Lecture Hut still stands. It has been recreated into an Education Centre beside the sea, fit for all the school children, individuals and groups who are fascinated to learn about the local wildlife and to observe and paint in its art room, once the Covid situation is behind us. We still look forward, and although I hesitate to share with you the intended late Advent Weekend and Christmas and New Year opening, because all may change, you are encouraged to look at the Othona Essex website or telephone the Centre for an update of December activities. Our team are still here, as Bradwell is their home, with Tim, Debbie and Richard on furlough, living alongside our Volunteers – including those from Europe who have had a most unexpected years' experience of the UK.

But Norman does still inspire us – and who would not be inspired by such words as he wrote for Christmas 40 years ago: "God cares and is involved with us, and in us, and we see the extent of His caring in the presence of 'the only begotten of the father' - Jesus Christ – 'full of grace and truth' as St John puts it. If God be with us, who can be against us? This is not a question of hiding our heads in the sand and using an escapist religion to shield ourselves from the impact of reality. Rather it is a realization that not only is all not lost but, on the contrary, the best is yet to be....we shall not be overcome. The opportunities of caring and doing are limitless, and there is a sense in which in this age, disturbing as it is, is a great age in which to be living." ("Letters to a Community" by Norman Motley.)

Options for opening are limited but Othona Bradwell is now offering you a **Paycation**.....like a vacation, but you pay for a day or two's imaginary holiday with your Othona friends, to support the Community you love, according to your means. Only with generosity like this will Othona be able to survive and thrive – Thank You! Details and opportunities to donate are on the website.

Tim Fox is Warden/Manager, with Debbie and Richard Sanders. Want to visit?—See Website www.othonaessex.org.uk - then ring Othona at Bradwell (it's down East End Rd and through East Hall Farm) on 01621 776564. Free Parking for all visitors to Othona—just ask for an exit token to leave through our wind-powered gate.