

The Othona Community – Rolling out the Summer Season 2023.

Have you noticed the vibrant swell of people of many different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds and ages, who become part of the life of our villages as the Summer Season rolls out? Perhaps you see a familiar face, or a new arrival, buying an ice-cream from a village shop or sharing a drink in one of our local pubs? Summer visitors are returning to Othona, often enjoying not only the Community, but the community.

In June we welcomed a private booking of a group from a mixed Christian Orthodox youth organisation, with their leaders. They all had as great time – from the Sister enjoying a peaceful time sketching by the Chapel, to the more active group hiking along the sea wall with their picnics – and all sharing worship, lectures and reflective times together in this national annual event. Younger people also had a great time at Othona over half-term, a time when all are welcome, and as usual we included those from a URC Church in Milton Keynes. Yes, the inevitable Bottle Rockets, (surely you’ve made and fired one?) fun on the beach, and making new friends. As well as private bookings and open community times as shared in our Programme, we offer residential opportunities for school children – both local and further afield. Here they may be away from the family home for the first time, discovering the fun of shared dormitories, a lively programme of fun/educational activities such as bread-making, beach wildlife and outdoor games (oh yes – and Bottle Rockets!) Also in June – The Essex Book Festival celebrated the Chapel and landscape, with celebratory tea, walks, talks and a book launch.

That it is now possible to offer such a variety of activities to such a diversity of peoples and in relative comfort is thanks, in so many ways, to those who came before us to Bradwell and founded the Othona Community here despite all odds. A couple of extracts from “Othona, Much Ado About Something,” by our founder Norman Motley, hints at the challenges they faced. “The local agent...did, however, offer us a triangular low-lying area on the immediate point where the river turns south into the sea. It was salty and useless for cultivation and in some parts, swampy, but we accepted it with gratitude, and in the spring months attempted to drain the dampest parts so that we might be able to erect some Nissen huts....” “The morning and evening trips to the chapel, became also the water fetching parade when numbers between a dozen and seventy, according to the time of year, would secure a receptacle of some kind – buckets, water cans, small baths – and line up before and after the service for the precious water which had to be taken to the Community for *all* purposes.”

No need to drain swamps or fetch baths of water if you would like to join any of Othona’s activities as the Summer Season rolls out this July and August – although there are always other tasks for those who stay, or volunteer: Othona still could not run without you. As the Scything Week ends, so we share with the local Churches in the annual Bradwell Pilgrimage, with the main activities on Saturday 1st July. A Quiet Day run by Brigid Main on Weds 19th July precedes a much noisier time with the Camp DoReMi Shape Note Singing with Werner Ullah from 20th – 23rd July and the return of Wild Worship from Monday 24th to Friday 28th July, led once again by Rachel Summers, spaces now only available for day visitors. July ends with a Wellbeing Weekend led by Beverley Hodgson, from 28/30th, leading into the Environment Week led by Penny Davis, starting on 31st July. For more details of all these events, and activities taking place throughout August too, do take a look at our website or pick up a leaflet locally.

Debbie and Richard Sanders are our Warden/Managers, Othona is accessed through East Hall Farm, East End Rd, Bradwell on Sea (electric entry gate, collect free exit token from the office.)

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