

## **The Othona Community in early summer.**

How many of you remember Othona in its earliest days? Who has lived in this area long enough to recall that “cold but brilliant March Saturday afternoon” in 1946 when a Church of England priest, so recently an RAF Chaplain in WW2, walked down to the Chapel of St. Peter’s on the wall on “by coincidence on the very day the area had been de-mined and the approach was safe and open for the first time in several years”? As Reverend Canon Norman Motley wrote in his book **Othona – Much Ado About something**, “On that vivid afternoon we came under the spell of that ancient building and of the whole area of the Blackwater Estuary....At the moment I entered the building I knew we were at home. There are times when one knows with a certitude deeper than purely rational processes and knowledge.” Not only did Norman gain permission from the Bishop of Chelmsford to help rehabilitate and use the chapel during periods of residence of the Community in the summer months; he also overcame the challenge of finding a place nearby “where a mixed group of people could spend residential periods with us.” These were people of all faiths and none, all ages and backgrounds, many who had so recently been fighting that terrible war – from both sides. With tents, camp beds, lamps and elsan toilets bought for a few shillings, by early July they were ready to open “to people who were prepared to rough it.” How different our early summer looks at Othona now – come and see! And yet we are still, in essence, the same – a mixed group of people seeking to experience community together for a visit or a short stay, enjoying work, worship, study, play, good food and friendship.

Othona is a part of Bradwell-on-Sea, and over the years many people from Bradwell and the surrounding villages have come to see this strange community, have returned, become involved and now contribute to the ever-widening circle of friends from near and far who feel they belong. Our group of European volunteers have moved on. Debbie and Richard are now resident members alongside manager Tim Fox and a growing group of volunteers who support open community events such as Working Weekends. Volunteers also give invaluable assistance to our resident Schools Groups in May/June, when children from Essex and London stay overnight for fun and education in this unique setting. If you plan to visit Othona during these weeks, best ring first if you would like a cuppa or a meal as this is the only time when Othona is not open to all-comers in order to safeguard the young visitors.

The half-term residential activity week is fully booked and promises to be great fun: contact Othona if you want to join in for a day. This year the open weekend 6<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> July includes the Bradwell Gathering on 7<sup>th</sup> July from 10.30am with a Pilgrimage, activities, refreshments, stalls, based on the Pilgrimage and Festival: [www.bradwellfestival.com](http://www.bradwellfestival.com) All Welcome!

**HOT OFF THE PRESS: SATURDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JUNE 1pm – 3pm, BBQ AT OTHONA**

**ALL WELCOME - ADULTS £7, CHILDREN £5.**

**We are Beside the Sea: HIGH TIDE 3.15PM – perfect for Beach Fun and Tide Fight!**

Lots of ideas, information and details of our Programme can be found on our new Website <https://www.othonaessex.org.uk/Home>, or 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.**