



*Summer 2013*

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*The Othona Community is an open Christian Community, whose purpose is to provide, mainly through its two centres in Essex and Dorset, a welcoming, accepting place with a pattern of work, worship, study and play where people of different beliefs, cultures, classes, abilities and ages can discover how to live together, learn from each other, explore together the relationship between faith and life with a view to more positive action in the world, and encourage one another in caring for the world and its people.*

**Deadline for Autumn Full Circle**  
**November 1st 2013**

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## Editorial

Dear friends

At our ecumenical church, where people hold a diversity of views, there are some people who tell me that I have to believe that the Earth is flat - not literally, but some things I am asked to believe are as impossible for me as that. Thank you to David Birdseye for stimulating a discussion on Christian beliefs, and to Tony Sinden for his most helpful response (see p 23). Tony points out that The Sermon on the Mount is all about what we should DO, and not what we should believe.

Last week at our church house group I explained that Othona is rooted in the Christian faith, but is open to people of all faiths and none. Our minister remarked that Othona's approach is unusual, and perhaps unique. Amen to that, and thanks to Othona, where over the years many of our wonderful speakers have reinforced my view, and increased my confidence in what I had already decided was right: that, like Jesus, we should strive to accept everyone and treat them lovingly, and that we should not try to force them to take on our beliefs (not always easy to do).

As to what we DO, I am delighted to say that the new Bradwell planning group, of which I am a fringe member, is including in its plans a number of strategies for helping people in need. This has always been one of Othona's aims. There are also times when the constant urge to improve, and to do more and more, which I sometimes hear in sermons, can make one feel weary, and I am glad that the programmes of both our centres include times "just to be", like "Open Space" (13th - 17th Aug), "Quiet Week" (15th-21st Sept), "Gourmet Chicken Soup for the Soul" (22nd-29th Sept), which are all at Othona West Dorset, and at Bradwell "A Time to Simply Be" (22nd-27th July).

Hoping to see you this summer.

With our love  
Ruth and Paul

# Othona West Dorset Reflections

**Juliet Hilary**

Summer greetings from Othona West Dorset. It is a pleasure to live and work here in such beautiful surroundings. When I was a volunteer, back in August 2012, a visitor asked me “But how will you cope in the long dark days of winter and the wild winter storms?” which I thought was surprisingly pessimistic as the sun shone down on us. The truth is that just as the natural world around Othona reflects the inner workings of us, we reflect it, and all aspects of our true natures are held by this strange elemental world of wild sea crashing onto the shingle, sounding at times like it is about to sweep up the lodge and take it out to sea, by the still fresh June mornings with skylarks singing in the meadows, by the grace and simple beauty of our quiet times in chapel, by the sharing of the core group as we make a decision together.

There has been big change since I came to Othona, yet I am realising that change is the name of the game, as a constant flow happens. Like the sea below us, what is community here ebbs and flows. Like a heart breathing in and out, sometimes we are down to 3 on the ground, rarely we are up to 100. And then always we operate within the wider concentric circles of community: our members, our visitors, those who email, ring or write to us, those who pass Othona on the road, those who keep Othona in their thoughts and prayers.

The sense of continuity is also linear, if you like. I am privileged to be here now. But everything I do needs a nod from me to the past core, members and volunteers who have shaped it the way it is, and a nod to the future ones to come; I am just in this static moment of a long thread of Othona people. I also need to think how a thing I’m thinking of doing will impact my colleagues and Othona as a whole, as if that overall Othona is an entity all of itself, a wide umbrella truth, a sense, an essence, a gift in the moment.

For me, with a love of nature, the grounds and view consistently bring me back to the gift of the moment. A swallow connecting earth to sky,

the to-and-fro-ing of the great spotted woodpecker parents as they feed their hungry noisy chicks, the scent of may and elder blossom, reminding me of summers past, intricate beauty of columbine flowers, of egg and bacon (common bird's foot trefoil) in the grass, and yes, in the winter, the wildness, the bleakness, the concentration needed not to slip in the mud (and luck).

Our day here has opportunities for the sacred in the moment and sacred stillness. Seedtime and Harvest in the chapel are essential times. The grace in the middle of a meal, a moment of shared spoken or unspoken thankfulness. Greeting visitors and helping them to settle in. In the winter, when visitors arrive in the dark, their joyful surprise at seeing the sea in the morning. Sharing together. Unexpected insights and connections when doing "community sharing opportunities" (jobs). Worries and tensions falling away as the indescribable thing that is Othona does its work and being witness to that. Letting my heart and mind expand outwards with the endless view of sky and sea. The sense of coming home after having been away.

*Juliet is now the core member with special responsibility in the office at Burton Bradstock*

## **Living together in Peace?**

**Tony Jaques**

As I wrote this the media – and many conversations – were still full of the murder of drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich and its repercussions. It brought out some pretty nasty responses up and down the country, but also some encouraging ones. You may have heard about the mosque in York where the Muslim worshippers responded to an ugly English Defence League demonstration by inviting EDL members in for a cup of tea and a chat. What better way to show the revulsion most Muslims felt at what happened in Woolwich? But elsewhere, of course, somebody had persuaded the men who killed Lee that they were serving their religion.

Down here in rural Dorset one can feel a long way from this sort of front line, but the human and religious issues don't go away. The attitudes that can lead any of us – all of us – to distrust and even demonise people who differ from us, these can be just as prevalent in 'nice' places like the sunny south coast of England as in the well-known inter-communal flashpoints of the world. Turning the world into 'them' and 'us' is one of our primal human survival mechanisms... and one of our greatest spiritual stumbling blocks.

While I was thinking about all this, I attended a eucharist (communion service). The readings demonstrated for me how we all have scope for helping our religious traditions and cultures evolve healthily. The gospel reading (Mark 10:35-45) had Jesus putting two of his disciples right about their ambition and competitiveness. Good stuff, expanded into a short homily by the priest leading the service.

But before the gospel reading we'd endured one of the most unpalatable Old Testament passages, full of ethnocentricity and violence. "Thank you God for choosing one lot of special people and by the way let's crush (literally) anyone who's not in our camp." Just the sort of thing that could get you under suspicion as a 'preacher of hate' ... if you put it on the internet today about people of another faith. (Nobody there had specifically chosen such a reading, I'm sure. It was simply one of those recommended for that day by the Church of England lectionary.)

Of course, if you hold those two readings together, allowing one to serve as a critique of the other, it helps a bit. In this way the Bible illustrates how a religious tradition can, does and must evolve. After all, Jesus grew up in a country under the boot of the occupying Roman army and their collaborators. Especially against that background, the Jewish religious culture in which he was raised would have given plenty of support to a proud and sometimes aggressive "our God is better than yours" attitude. He probably faced that anger and superiority in himself, saw through it, and certainly showed a different way. (Though there's evidence in the gospels that even he struggled with this!)

But still I wonder how long churches founded in his name will continue saying “This is the word of the Lord” about statements of undisguised bigotry, like that Old Testament reading. Christianity isn’t the only religion with shameful and violent baggage from its past – far from it. But it’s up to others to wrestle with the shadows within their own traditions. How do we put our house in order?

Perhaps one of Christianity’s opportunities in our time is to be one of the traditions showing the way in re-thinking many of its own ‘sacred cows’. Being unafraid to say: “that’s how we used to see it, but we were mistaken even then”. In particular today I’m thinking of the way the Christian church took on the Hebrew idea of ‘God’s chosen people’ and applied it to Christians instead! Whereas Jesus’ example and teaching challenged that idea from top to bottom.

(Incidentally if you don’t know of it, may I commend the work of the Christian Muslim Forum and Julian Bond its director, a friend of Othona? The forum is a real force for good at this testing time, with numbers of signed up members growing all the time. They have a good website and a Facebook presence as well.)

## **Bradwell Report**

**Inken Riemer**

Hi you! I’m supposed to tell you a little bit about what it’s been like to be a volunteer at Othona so far.

Having been an “Othona baby” all my life – the first time I came here I was about four weeks old – deciding what to do with the gap between finishing my Abitur, the German equivalent of A-Levels, and continuing with further education was fairly easy. I hadn’t been able to come here for my last summer break and so I was eager to make up for it this year and wrote an e-mail to Matthew and Gail, asking to volunteer for about three months over the summer. I was looking forward to seeing

all my favourite places again and making new experiences that I never had the opportunity to as a normal visitor.

By now I have been here for a little less than three weeks and I have had to take on a few tasks that I had carefully avoided in my previous years, one of them being actually getting up early enough to not only attend breakfast, but help making it. None of it turned out to be as daunting as I had always thought, though it took a lot internal convincing to get out of bed at 7.20 am. Thankfully that's been the exception, not the rule.

One of the great advantages of having come here all my life was how easy it was to get acclimatised again, though of course it meant that I was even less prepared for everything that wasn't quite how I remembered it. I had never before been here during school weeks and after I had been generously warned from everyone, that it was quite an undertaking, my first experience turned out to be very anticlimactic. I was quickly assured that this had to have been the most well-behaved school class in years. They turned out to be right. Nonetheless I enjoyed all the school classes so far and got quite a lot of practice making sandwiches, which will surely come in handy back home.

Spending five days a week helping out in the kitchen and with housekeeping has given me a new appreciation for my formerly rather abstract understanding of how much hard work goes into keeping this community the place that I have loved all my life and I'm glad I chose to participate in it, if for no other reason than not to would have deprived me of a couple of very entertaining dinner conversation.

For me, being here for such an extended period of time and spending it with a core of all together nine people – me included – has been very different from coming here for a few weeks during summer break, in the sense that I feel a different obligation towards this place now, that brings with it a very different way of being connected, to this place and to the people that I am currently spending most of my time with. Thank you, it has been so much fun and I'm looking forward to discovering new traditions, that I have never heard of before. I had no idea there was an actual toaster at Othona.



# **A Mid-Life Gap Year, volunteering in Peru and Essex**

**Amanda McKenzie**

I have come to Othona as a volunteer in the second part of my planned gap year after 36 years working as a children's and neonatal nurse in the NHS, running a home, bringing up two children and volunteering with various local charities and Quaker committees. My gap year has fulfilled several life-long ambitions; the first to travel abroad and work for a children's charity (one of the reasons why I trained to be a children's nurse), the second to visit Lake Titicaca (a childhood dream) and thirdly to live in an intentional community.

My five months volunteering in Peru for the british based charity Kiya Survivors, working with children with disabilities and their families in the high Andes rural communities, has been a life changing experience. Apart from being a tourist in Europe I had not travelled further a field. Living and working in Peru enabled me to completely immerse myself in a different culture and experience an alternative way of life. It was also extremely satisfying to find that I could actively do something to help some of the children cared for by the charity.

With the help of Kiya's co-ordinators in Peru I was able to organise surgery and investigations in local hospitals and mission clinics for several of the children cared for at the Rainbow Centre in Urubamba. The surgery was for relatively minor conditions but because children with any disabilities or special needs are not socially accepted and are hidden away, especially in the poor rural communities, they usually do not receive even basic medical attention. After being involved in their day to day care and watching the amazing progress they made following their surgery I found it very difficult to leave the children at the end of my placement.

The Rainbow Centre is situated in the Sacred Valley in the Andes and I had many wonderful opportunities walking and climbing in the mountains and the high plains to explore the history of the many historical and spiritual sites. I am sure you can imagine returning to

England and coming to Othona has been a huge contrast, but it is proving to be equally exciting and fulfilling.

I first learnt about Othona when I was exploring the idea of living in an intentional community as an alternative way of life and I saw the warden's position at Bradwell advertised in the Quaker magazine. I visited on several occasions and instantly fell in love with the landscape, the marshes, the chapel and the ethos and history of the community.

After making the decision to have a gap year I applied to the community for a voluntary placement. I arrived at Othona in April having spent two weeks visiting family and friends following my return to England. I had assumed I would be sharing general duties, cooking and cleaning, but I was absolutely thrilled to be offered the opportunity to be 'the gardener' for six months. I love gardening, but at home it always seems to be relegated to the bottom of the job list, and I have to admit I actually hate food shopping, cooking and cleaning! I can't believe I get to do something I love everyday and get fed three wonderful meals as well, I feel so fortunate. Working in the vegetable beds, polytunnel and herb garden has been so exciting and to be entrusted with helping to design and plant out the new labyrinth garden is an absolute privilege.

Everyone has been so kind and helpful. Getting to know everyone involved in the community, listening to their stories and sharing the experiences of visitors and guests is really enjoyable. Watching the garden change and grow on a daily basis as the seasons change is so exciting, and harvesting the first crops for the kitchen from the polytunnel has been thrilling and satisfying. Being able to take time to step out to the sea wall and experience the vastness of the sea and the sky and sitting quietly in the chapel are very special moments. I am so looking forward to seeing the garden develop over the coming months and meeting the community and sharing the magic of Othona with all the visitors and guests over the summer.

Taking a Gap Year (due to NHS politics I was actually forced into resigning my job) has proved to be one of the best decisions I have ever made and I hope to continue to explore other options in the future. I have really enjoyed all my experiences over the last few

months, I have learnt so much about the wider world and my place in it. I have also learnt that I do not need to be 'in charge' and busy all the time, and that it is good to have time to go on long walks, time to think and even time to read in the daytime and not feel guilty about it! I have also learnt not to feel worried about what might happen next and to wait and see where life leads me, although I do feel a very strong pull to go back to Peru and to the children there. But who knows what life may bring, I am happy to wait and see.

## **Bradwell Centre Open Committee Meeting**

**Ruth Bull, Bradwell Centre Committee**

You are all invited to join our annual Bradwell Centre Open Committee Meeting on Saturday 10th August 2013 from 2.30-4pm at Othona Bradwell. As well as catching up with news about all that has been going on at Bradwell recently, you will have the opportunity to share how the year has felt for you. Committee Members will be there to hear your views and your suggestions on ways we can keep the Community moving forward through changing times, in the lively and open way we love.

## **Database Update**

**Ali Tebbs**

I'm pleased to tell you that the new Othona Database is under construction and will be available for us to load data soon. If you have asked for email communication only it will kick in when the system is up and running. If you get an email or letter about all this please respond promptly so we can be sure we are loading only the very best data! Email [membership@othona.org](mailto:membership@othona.org) with any changes from now on, or send a note to Membership, Othona West Dorset.

## **Othona and Its Humble Beginnings**

### **Mary Boone (daughter of John and Norrie Robson)**

I have been connected to the Motley family since 1943 when Norman was our rector in Stisted. I was three, and Janet (M) was a baby. Since then family life for us has never been far away from the Motley family. Being church secretary, Mum was often at the rectory in Stisted. She also played the organ at church services. Dad helped whenever he could. He also had a fruit farm at Stisted. He was a member of the A.R.P. and as the war progressed he was busy making sure that everyone had their blinds closed and was safely indoors during the air raids. Bombs dropped all around us and, until the war ended in 1945, he gave first aid, whenever needed, till help arrived.

After the war Norman, Dad and a small group decided to look for a suitable site to have a camp based on Christianity to bring back hope for all those still reeling from the losses suffered during the war. Many had lost family members, their homes, their incomes and their towns. People were at their lowest. London was the hardest hit, but people were so incredibly resistant. Whole streets were damaged in places. Norman's parents lived in London and we used to visit them whenever possible. I remember many happy times spent with the WHOLE Motley family in Forest Gate.

In 1946 an initial site was found by the road leading to the chapel at Bradwell (a basic site which was used for one year) with accommodation in some Nissan huts. It was on a farm road close to the chapel. Then another site was found, which seemed much more suitable, behind the sea wall, close to the sea and fairly sheltered. The army supplies from the war meant we could have a fair few family-sized tents and a couple of huts to make a dining room, kitchen and common room, and later Ladies' and Men's huts. The "three spivs", strapping young East End lads, helped so much with their muscles and energy, as well as a few local members who pitched in.

Although it was fairly “Spartan” for a few years, because of the spirit of the people (and God’s guidance), the word soon got around that this Christian community was unique, and great for families too. No radio, no TV, but we had great discussion groups, music afternoons from a gramophone, acting and concerts, groups doing vegetables, groups doing washing up, groups doing maintenance, and many lectures on the sea wall. No alcohol was allowed and there were limited exits to the pub in the village!!

As the camp in the 40s and 50s was accessed only by the track by the sea wall people were often required to dig someone out of the mud, or tow someone out with our tractor!! People who were arriving by train from Southminster or by bus into the village were met by jeep. Supplies, mail etc. were also brought in from the village, or beyond in Norman’s car.

During the 40s/50s we had the Motleys, Wilkinsons, Gingells, Locks, Stoddarts, Thompsons, Johnsons, Audrey Day, Brenda, a few German and French students and more people I can’t remember. Grace and Len Taylor and family joined later. The cook for many years was my mum, ably assisted by Grace and many others during the 50s and some of the 60s, when Mum and Dad lived nearby in the one of the farm cottages by Bradwell aerodrome after our farm was sold. Dad was also warden from there for a while.

Going to chapel at night was a tour in itself, taking the water carrier to the tap by the chapel by lantern light. The service was by candle light (with Lady the labrador snoring at the back!!). Basic toilet facilities over the bridges were an adventure. The job list was read after breakfast and EVERYBODY was expected to help with the chores (even though, at times, they had to be rounded up). The cooking supplies had to be carefully watched so that everybody got their fair share at meal times.

Important to mention was the Christian message which came over loud and clear, and helped SO MANY PEOPLE to get on track with their lives. Some had very little money and were accommodated at a nominal figure. These people wouldn’t have had a holiday otherwise. Bert Biertenshaw managed the money in those early times.

Rodney Larnar came along in the 60s with his two children (twins) and took people out in his boat when weather permitted. Audrey Vinnicombe arrived in the late 60s and she was often in charge of beds and bedding in tents and huts, and kept an eye on young people who took too much bedding (a lot of it was army supplies).

During the time that Norman was at St. Michael's Cornhill I remember the Lord Mayor of London and other dignitaries came down to Othona to a banquet lunch. This was a challenge, but it all went well, and Norrie Robson and all who helped her did a great job.

After chapel in the evenings it was lovely to sit with our cocoa and listen to some music ably played by Martin Riemer and David James and others on their guitars . It was lovely to wind down before going to bed. Occasionally there was a bonfire on the shell ridge, and most people enjoyed going to these, a special experience.

I emigrated to Australia in 1970 because my parents had gone a year before. I was back in 1983 for a while, and enjoyed picking up with some previous friends and many new ones, including the Aldridges, Richard and Pat Syms and others. A part of me is never far away from Othona Bradwell, its experiences and many who were part of the beginning years. The basic core and all their hard work were essential to it all. The Christian message that was conveyed by Norman in the early years is still central to both centres. Long may it be the main focus to strengthen so many lives and give them a purpose from God. I will continue keeping in touch with Othona and those special people who will always hold a special place in my heart, and hope to be over from Australia whenever I can to revisit so many people and places, and great memories.

In the early 80s I remember Reg Motley helping get the Bank building repaired and painted (he became ill soon afterwards and passed away). The Motley era lives on through Janet M. and Brenda M. and family, and I pray it will be special to others in the future.

# Seedtime at Othona: March 2013

Mavis Gregson

## **Editorial from Fiona Heyes:**

*At the Roll Up Your Sleeves event at Othona West Dorset in March, Mavis Gregson, one of the willing workers, offered us the following at one of the morning Seedtimes in the Chapel. I thought how lovely it would be to share her thoughts with the entire Community, so persuaded her to give her permission for it to be reproduced here. The poem is from "Illuminations, small bronze", a pamphlet Mavis published in 2005.*

Below are a few lines, very simple lines, which I wrote in trying to capture for myself the special atmosphere at St Peters by the Wall, the little Saxon chapel near Othona, Essex. I love the silence there. And in the silence here at Othona, Dorset, I feel the same quality, whether I sit alone, or am here in the circle, watching the candle flame dance in a kind of delight on the faces of the small ceramic figures at the centre of our group.

What I receive is a heightened sense of simply being, in the moment, open to grace and peace, to what the moment brings next.

My lines are extremely simple: a description of that tiny Chapel, an atmosphere rather than an articulated thought. Some of the words for colours are old though, and will not be familiar. They are the names of natural pigments, discovered and used by monks in the north-east to create their gorgeous holy books as acts of devotion, manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels.

These are the same monks who sent St Chad to bring Christianity to the East Saxons, as I understand it, in the early seventh century, and built St Peter's. Orpiment yellow, carbon dark for the black outlines, verdigris and vergaut, shades of blue-green.

These ancient words are there because I love the sense of connection they give in the silence of our present, backwards to those before, and forwards to those who will come. Briefly I am able to step outside my own pathetically frail span of life, and am enriched by a continuity of faithfulness, meditation, grace, love.

The path to the chapel  
is margined by corn:  
orpiment yellow

is a lead point line  
carbon dark.

The chapel's walls  
are straight  
are silent

are lapped  
by the sea:  
verdigris  
vergaut.

Silence bears on the ear  
thick as a second skin pulsing.

Air lifts, withdraws, with the body's pace  
stirs dust, sharp in the slant of light.



# **Recent archaeological results from Othona Bradwell**

**Paul Gilman**

The Othona Community, as most members will be aware, is named after a Roman Fort that was located to the south of the Bradwell community site, around St Peter's Chapel which is largely built of materials from the fort. The fort was built in the late 3rd century AD and was occupied until sometime after 400. Until relatively recently, most of what we knew about the archaeology of the fort came from trenches that were rather crudely dug in the interior of the fort in the 19th century, and a narrow section that was excavated through the west wall of the fort in 1948. Moreover, about two thirds of the fort's area has been lost to coastal erosion, and the rest is protected as a scheduled monument, to preserve the archaeology of the site for future generations.

Even less was known about the archaeology of the surrounding area, although it was assumed that, like similar forts, Othona would have had a settlement outside the walls to accommodate the families of the soldiers and traders providing services to the garrison. Recent geophysical and fieldwalking surveys have provided indications of activity outside the walls of the fort, whilst a borehole survey has provided evidence of how the landscape looked in Roman times. The fort was then situated in an excellent defensive position on a low promontory, with salt marsh and tidal creeks on three sides.

Although the fort is now effectively off-limits for further excavation, construction of new buildings at the Othona community have provided opportunities to investigate the extent and the nature of the extra-mural settlement. Firstly, in the early 1990's excavation took place ahead of the building of the new main building. A few prehistoric features were uncovered but most of the evidence came from the Roman period. This included a dense network of ditches and gullies, pits, post-holes and a hearth, dated to the late 3rd to late 4th centuries, and originally interpreted as evidence for horticulture and drainage.

In 2009, excavation again took place, but further to the south, in advance of the new 'solar' block. Once more, some prehistoric remains were found, but the main interest centred around two phases of ditched enclosures, dated to the late Roman period. Part of a small outbuilding was also found, with an unmortared rubble stone foundation, suggesting the superstructure would have been made of wood. The enclosure ditches are rather different to the features found in the early 1990's, prompting reinterpretation of the earlier discoveries. It is now thought that the edge of the ancient salt marsh in late Roman times ran about 25-30 metres to the north of the 2009 excavation area which would then have been on dry land. By contrast, the gullies found in the 1992-3 dig are now interpreted as natural drainage features in the salt marsh.

Finds from the 2009 excavation include two coins, dated to about 330-340, brick and tile fragments, sherds of pottery, building stone, sea shells, and animal bone. The pottery was mostly made locally but did include two small pieces from imported wine amphorae. The animal bones were of particular interest, with most of the bones (9.5 of the 10 kg recovered) being of cattle. Furthermore, the cattle bones came almost entirely from the heads and feed of the animals. This suggests they came from prime butchery waste, as the ends of the animals would have been removed from the carcasses during skinning, perhaps to prepare for the use of the hides.

The results of the 2009 excavation, with the discovery of the enclosures and especially the evidence of the animal bone, suggest that the area north of the Roman fort was used for the herding, killing and butchery of cattle. It is presumed that the cattle would have provided meat and leather for the occupants of the fort.

Both of these excavations were carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit. More details, and plans of the 2009 work, plus a short bibliography, can be found in the excavation report. This is by Philippa Sparrow, 'Othona: Roman extra-mural activity at the Othona Community site, Bradwell-on-Sea', published in Volume 2 for

2011 of *Essex Archaeology and History* (the transactions of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History).

## **Book Recommendation**

**Fiona Heyes**

### **The Selfish Pig's Guide to Caring by Hugh Marriott ISBN 978-0-7499-2986-2**

Two years ago, despite being retired, I found myself with a full time job as a Carer. Many of you will also have found yourselves in this role, or may will do so in the future. Whilst on a good day it's an amazingly worthwhile job, there are those days when you would rather resign, but you never filled in an application form or even had an interview for the job, so you just have to stick with it don't you?

At a recent visit to Othona West Dorset, I discovered the answers to all the questions I'd been asking but had failed to get a reply to, and some I hadn't even thought to ask, between the covers of Hugh Marriott's strangely titled book "The Selfish Pig's Guide to Caring", which I bought from their well stocked bookstall. The title doesn't actually mean that Hugh believes you to be either selfish or a pig, as the pig reference is more about the person you're caring for, your PIGLET, "Person I Give Love and Endless Therapy To".

The book is a delight to either read from cover to cover if you have the time and inclination, or just dip into a chapter that's relevant to where you are now, from "Is there anyone out there?", "Officialdom and Chaos Theory" or "Tips which the experts don't give you". Hugh's writing style is wonderfully conversational, humorous and inclusive, so much so that I wondered if he'd been reading my mind! He's been there, still is there as far as I know, caring for someone and all that entails. He's filled in 56 page Government forms, dealt with the issue

of retaining as much independence for his PIGLET as safety allows whilst he remained sane, and is acutely aware of his own role as a carer in our society, which invariably focuses on “the patient” whilst the carer is an invisible mobility aid, deemed to be rather less important than a zimmer frame and with as few feelings.

This book will surreptitiously instil you with a sense of professionalism and self worth, equip you to deal with those days when you feel that you want to resign – or worse, and encourage you to keep your mind, body, spirit and health in tip top order, as well as the person you're caring for. It will also give you some laugh out loud moments when Hugh shines his light on our own misplaced perceptions of ourselves and the complexities of just being human beings. No matter where your caring lies in the scale between a weekly visit to a lonely neighbour, or a 24/7 doing absolutely everything for someone complete with auxiliary helpers and lifting equipment sort of caring, you can achieve a greater sense of well being for both yourself and the person you care for through these pages, get an understanding of what those Government forms are actually asking, and find out where to get that brilliant gadget that would make the world of difference to you both.

You are not alone in your caring any more, Hugh Marriott might well become your companion of choice as you journey through this previously unknown land. He knows the geography intimately and has years of real experience to share with you if you let him.

# Wise Reflections

David Birdseye

Seek truth in meditation  
And not in mouldy books  
Look up at the sky to find the moon  
And not in muddy brooks

Don't stand and stare at your navel  
Avoid those sinking sands  
They say that Cain slew Abel  
But you've no blood on your hands

Seize the moment. Do it now.  
Don't wallow in regret  
Life's too short to scrape and bow  
For petty etiquette

There's fire smouldering in the hearth  
It's never yet too late  
Can't gauge the worth of a given path  
By gazing at the gate

Keep your chin up, grin and bear  
And always count your blessings  
There's some unfortunate out there  
Whose lot is more distressing

I vouchsafe this wisdom, come what may  
And obtain no bold objection  
"I really must act on it, one fine day"  
I remark, to my own reflection

## **A Sprig of Blossom For Chapel**

**Photo taken by Madelaine, wife of Simon**

*Editors: David Birdseye submitted this photo of himself holding the “sprig of blossom” which he had been asked to take to chapel that day. We love it.*



# A Response to “Mum, Me and Theology”

Tony Sinden

*Editor's note: Tony sent the article below in response to David Birdseye's conversation in the last edition. It's enriching to get a response and also to know that there is somebody out there reading our magazine - more like this please.*

This a contribution to the discussion between belief and practice: the fact that the Sermon on the Mount contains no things to believe, only how to live and love.

Here in Hoddesdon, where we live, the Jehovah's Witness Assembly Hall is just round the corner, so we often get callers. I have what I think is a perfect response:

Anna my first wife had multiple sclerosis. Eventually we had to hire someone to look after her while I was at work and the children at school. Amongst those who applied was a young woman, Marlene, who I soon discovered was a Jehovah's Witness. So I said "We are Christians. Are you going to be happy working here with, for example, that cross on the mantelpiece?" She said she would not have the cross in her home, but as this was our home, so be it.

I thought I could work with her, and engaged her. The first day on her own, I showed her Anna's jewel box and asked her to chose whatever she thought would be appropriate for Anna to wear. She chose a brooch with hearts entwined - a lovely thought, but also actually Anna's silver medal from years of blood doning earlier - another thing the Jehovah's Witnesses have a theological reason for not doing.

I don't know about Marlene's theology. I do know that she filled our house with loveliness for years.

***Consider this: there is not a single word in that sermon (on the mount) about what to BELIEVE, only words about what to DO. It is a behavioural manifesto, not a propositional one. Yet three***

***centuries later, when the Nicene Creed became the official oath of Christendom, there was not a single word in it about what to do, only words about what to believe.***

***Chris Meyers, Saving Jesus from the Church, (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), page 14.***

*(Submitted by Tony Sinden)*

## **Ethiopian Lady**

**Photo by Chris Stotesbury**

*Editor: Chris took this photo on a visit to Ethiopia and submitted it after reading Colin Hodgetts article about Ethiopia in the last edition.*





# Remembering Edward Robinson

by Tony Jaques

Edward Robinson was one of the first ‘new visitors’ I met in my first year here (1995). We came to value him for his many stories of remarkable people he had known and his dedicated whittling by the log fire of an evening, producing lovely wooden pendants, ear-rings and spinning tops – sold always in aid of projects to support the rainforests (and their indigenous people) from which so many hardwoods come. (His poem “A Point of Balance”, which we print on page 26, accompanied each little wooden top.) Many Othona folk treasure both words and woodcarvings they received from Edward.

As an author and a former director of the Alistair Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, he was ever interested in those moments when human beings encounter ‘the numinous’ – some inkling of a larger or deeper reality beyond the mundane world, which may change the perceiver’s life, while resisting any attempt at precise description. Theologically Edward had most sympathy for the apophatic approach – we can’t say what God is, only what God is not – with a particular esteem for the likes of Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa.

This sense of the hiddenness of the divine was perhaps the key to Edward’s work as a sculptor in wood and occasionally bronze. It was a privilege for us to have some of his works as a highlight of our Dorset Art Weeks exhibition last year. By that date he was in a wheelchair after one or more strokes, but we were delighted that he got here to see the exhibition and make his final Othona visit. At his funeral I suspect everyone learnt something new about this eminent but modest man, who touched so many other lives in his own long and productive one.

Edward died peacefully at home on 30th May. Our particular sympathies go to his widow Wendy.

# A Point of Balance

by Edward Robinson

*(Edward used to carve small wooden spinning tops. He would give a copy of this poem to anybody who bought one.)*

Like planets in their wandering courses,  
    each one of us has an orbit  
    in which we are designed to move.

But first we need to find that point of balance  
    on which our life is meant to spin.

There is no balance without movement.

Perhaps the top can help us find that point.

Or spin it for a friend,  
    as others will light a candle, or, in Tibet,  
    may turn a prayer wheel.

Give your top space to roam,  
    and freedom to enjoy the dance  
        it was created for;  
to glimpse, it may be, for a moment  
    that infinite circle,  
of which we are told the centre is everywhere  
    and the circumference nowhere.

And in the end, perhaps, it may achieve  
    in sleep  
    the stillness of pure motion.

**A.G.M.**  
Notice of the  
**2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
of  
**The Othona Community**

To be held at 2.00 pm in the Lower Hall, St Andrews Church,  
Short Street, Waterloo SE1 8LJ

on  
Saturday 28th September

<http://www.stjohnswaterloo.co.uk>

Fully accessible

1.30pm – arrival with tea or coffee.

2.00pm - AGM

Followed by the Annual Service and a bring and share  
tea.

**Please note the change in timing this year  
as we must vacate the hall by 5.00 p.m.**

**LOCATION:** Between Waterloo and Southwark Stations. From Waterloo walk down Waterloo Rd., turn left up “The Cut”. From Southwark Station turn right down “The Cut”. Short St. turning is almost opposite the Young Vic Theatre. Buses 63, 45, to Blackfriars Rd.

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