



*Spring 2014*

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*Othona is 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 Summer Full Circle**

July 1st 2014

Registered Charity No. 277843

# **Editorial**

**Ruth and Paul Gilman**

Dear friends

Last March, along with Harkirat, a Sikh, and fellow member of the committee of the Braintree District Inter-Faith Forum, I (Ruth) organised a fund-raising concert of Indian sitar and tabla music, which also included an Indian meal. The concert was held in our modern church building and attended by 126 people, a full house. The evening was quite wonderful, but I found the unexpected difficulties I encountered on the way unbelievable. I was bombarded by people complaining: it was too expensive (although if less than 80 people had attended it would have made a loss), the evening time was too late for young children to stay up, the meal was too late for Baha'i people who had ceased fasting at sunset as it was the end of one of their holy days, members of our church committee complained that the church would smell of Indian food and asked me to spray Fabreeze (which gives me asthma) around the building, church members did not want to eat off plastic plates but demanded pottery plates (whilst someone who bought a ticket said that he would be happy to eat off a palm leaf which is what he did in India, and this would make the meal more authentic) and church members complained that they were not allowed to bring their own alcohol to the meal (which our Baha'i, Muslim and Sikh friends found shocking).

I write this to point out that one man's meat is another man's poison.

To a much lesser extent (thank goodness) we experience similar difficulties with editing the Full Circle. We have received the following criticisms: Full Circle should be more outward looking and contain inspirational articles about the wider world, people at Othona West Dorset will be bored by articles about people at Bradwell and vice versa, new members will be bored by articles about the past, or we

should include articles by a greater variety of widely experienced people.

In contrast to this we receive praise for the wide variety of articles and photos in Full Circle, from people who love the articles about the past and from people who feel Full Circle keeps them in touch with Othona (see Karin's comment on p.15).

We cannot please all of the people all of the time, and we can only publish what is sent to us. We also observe, from the comments we receive, that each person can only speak for him/herself, and might well be surprised at what other people find interesting. We try hard to include a wide variety of material in each issue, and have been delighted at the quality of the contributions which we have received for the last few issues (several of you have remarked on this - thank you). Special thanks, also, to those who responded to our appeal on Othona's Facebook pages for new contributors to Full Circle, as well as those regulars who replied to my email. Your efforts mean that we have another excellent (we think/hope) edition of Full Circle (see letter on p.18). We could not have managed this without you. Keep it up!

I (Ruth) have just joined the Facebook page "The Othona Community - Open Group". When I read its mission statement, which Gareth has just put on the page, I was truly impressed. Here's an extract from it: "This is an open group for all who know the Othona Community, its aims and its mission. This group is a place to meet new and old friends, to share peacefully with each other, to work at friendship, to learn from each other, and to have fun in a friendly, Christian way". Just what Othona aims to do at its centres. And just what the World needs.

Perhaps Streetbank might be something to help us achieve some of these aims in our own local communities too (see p.24 ). Many thanks to Clare Stone for submitting this information.

I also enjoyed discovering the new Facebook page "Othona West Dorset - Open Group".

We hope that Full Circle, which is available to all, including those who do not have computers, can, as well as disseminating the latest Othona news, be another way of helping to achieve the aims above. As it happens, the Trustees are looking at ways in which Full Circle can be developed (see next page) - what do you think?

Love to you all  
Ruth and Paul

***P.S. Apologies to several people who sent a contribution for this Full Circle and find that it has not been included (despite its excellence). We inserted what people sent in the order we received it, and what we could not fit in is already in the Summer Full Circle which is due to be published in July - something to look forward too.***

## **Report on the Trustee Weekend in January 2014**

**Ali Tebbs**

The Trustees met at Bradwell for a weekend meeting at which the main focus was the future of our communications. We discussed some possible improvements to our new database, which is at last fully functioning. We still haven't heard from everyone and will continue to collect updates to the data we hold – which is mostly about membership, how you wish us to communicate with you and who has visited the centres. If you haven't responded already to data requests please contact the communications team c/o Othona West Dorset. (Details on the back cover.) In due course we hope to set up a system where you can update your details and join up as a member directly online.

We then turned our attention to electronic communication of various kinds. In the Facebook and Twitter age we think we are missing a trick if we don't harness those channels to spread the word, both to those who already use them but also to others who may discover Othona through those means. The outcome of the discussion is that we have

agreed to set up a dedicated Bradwell Facebook group, administered by the core, to match the existing Othona BB group, which has been renamed Othona West Dorset to match the website and programme materials. These will become the 'official' Othona Facebook groups. Each centre now has a Twitter account – @Othona Bradwell and @Othona West Dorset, which will potentially attract people whose focus is a bit different. We also intend to set up Facebook Pages for each centre, which have a quite different function from the existing groups. These will primarily be used to advertise and notify, while the two groups are there for building community through informal chat and postings from everyone and everyone. Please be aware that anything you post anywhere online might be visible to people who don't know us and will need to reflect the image we hope is true to the Othona we love. We will be posting information about this in all the existing Facebook groups once everything is set up so all the members of the different groups can choose which they want to be linked to and are clear about their functions and status. We ask you to help spread the Othona word by 'liking, sharing and retweeting' where you can, to broaden our outreach. Feel free to post your thoughts, appreciation, poetry and artwork in Facebook groups too. Increased activity raises our profile.

Full Circle is the second part of our communications strategy which is in need of some updating. Our thinking at the meeting was that there might be two standard editions of Full Circle plus a new Review of the Year in the Autumn which will give a yearly update on Community matters including a shortened form of the accounts. It will be quite different to the previous Annual Reports which have been circulated or distributed in the past – as these have been in the specified format given by the Charity Commission and used as their annual return. That work will continue. There are ongoing discussions at the moment as to how Full Circle will develop.

# **Othona West Dorset Report**

## **Theo Penfold**

My experiences of Othona began as a twelve day sabbatical and a feeling of melting by the fire, like a big hug to a weary traveller, thawing in a place of rest. The routine of meal times, such joy in eating together and such nourishing, nourishing laughter. Plumbing in the morning, new radiators, new conversation and new friendships. In the afternoon, soft freedom, to run by the beach or play music in the chapel or to just sit.

Open Space and a mix of different people - some long-standing Othona visitors, at home from home, others new faces so pleased to be here. Such diversity in conversation, such diversity people, such learning and such growth.

Towards the end of my stay, Tony and I talked of Short Term Core and staying longer. There was an audition event with feedback written by the rest of the team, an application form of searching questions, a resume with academic and employment history, and a one hour interview. I found it encouraging that things weren't taken lightly and that appropriate weight was given to deciding if I was right for Othona, Othona right for me and whether I'd fit in with an established team, both living and working together.

There has been an amazing contour to the two months that have followed, from everything being so new to a deepening familiarity with my role here, the way that Othona is run, the history and the team who shape and lead this wonderful place now.

It was amazing to be here for those first twelve sabbatical days and to contribute in table laying or washing up or in getting firewood, to really value Othona and enjoy the give-and-take of being here - it was joyfully simple and so fulfilling; real community and real sharing. But how things deepen staying longer - so much goes into an organisation like this and how much back story there is to thawing by the fire. The maintenance, the admin, the laundry, the cleaning, the food, the grounds, the finances, the IT...the problems fixed, the e-mails sent, the

towels washed, the floors hoovered, the potatoes mashed, the trees pruned, the receipts requisitioned and the computers running smoothly...the gutters cleaned, the events booked, the pillowcases pressed, the basins scrubbed, the tables laid, the grass cut, the meal-costs summed, the database installed...the rooms decorated, the phone calls answered, the washing dried, the cobwebs culled, the seasoning added, the foxes chased, the core members paid and the data backed up...

...and so it goes on, with its own rhythm and deepening complexity, with trustees and committee and the local community, those who live nearby and volunteer and the visitors who shape this place so uniquely with each event and the years that have shaped what exists today from that early vision to its continued growth and maturing. How many meetings held, decisions made and plans outworked. How much back story to a welcoming room, a home-cooked meal and a fireside conversation - how much back story to this place to be real together.

I have been amazed at how many different forms Othona takes and at how this one house and finite space manages to become and support such diverse events, all with a nourishing humanity at their core. The freedom of Open Space, to make of your time truly as you will. The gentleness of Quiet Week with its silent breakfast and great lashings of soul-nourishing poetry in the Chapel. Such creativity during our craft weekend - creative structure and so many beautiful things displayed on the last night. A full house for a choir's weekend away and the time alive with song. Winnie the Pooh themed New Year celebrations - feasting, a cooked breakfast, The House at Pooh Corner read to one another in the lounge and merrymaking at midnight. A new event, Reading Allowed offered time and space for a good book and a daily feast of Tony's reading aloud; diverse selections, wonderfully delivered with animated voices and the joy of hearing great literature come alive. And Half Term Breather showed once again a completely different Othona; so many young people, fun and games, film evenings, The Great Othona Cupcake Bake Off and two quite extraordinary evenings of music and entertainment from within the group.

And yet within this diversity there are precious common themes. That feeling of humanity - honour and respect, a safe place to learn and grow. The joy of eating together and the grounding of routine in



mealtimes, all preceded by the excitement as the mealtime bell rings out. The routine of opening and closing the day together, as a group, with gentle words and warming stillness in the Chapel. The homely centrepiece of the wonderful open fire and so many winter evenings so deeply cosy. And the feeling of community in working together to prepare food and dining tables, so many great conversations over washing up or vegetables peeled: "...and behold, service was joy..."

I have asked so many questions over the last three months, often of the team, unsure where a grater or funnel or peeler belongs. Too often perhaps have I asked questions of Tony, at his desk, concentrating on the programme or the finances or on recruitment. Mostly though I have asked questions of myself and to myself and I have cherished the time and space for that. Cleaning toilets or showers or making a fire or sweeping the Chapel have been time to enjoy those questions, to enjoy the answers and the clarity I have found and to deepen my joy in mystery and in the vastness of being human.

## **Corrections to Dates in the Othona Bradwell 2014 Programme**

**Gail and Matthew Dell**

***Please note the following:***

The **Spring Retreat** takes place from **Friday 25th – Sunday 27th April.**

The **Euro Visions** weekend will be held from **Friday 9th – Sunday 11th May.**

The **Festival of Song** runs from **Friday 16th – Sunday 18th May.**

Our **Fireworks** weekend is **Friday 31st October – Sunday 2nd November.**

Please accept our apologies for the incorrect dates in the printed programme.

You will find correct details on our website: [www.othona-bradwell.org.uk](http://www.othona-bradwell.org.uk)

Please accept our apologies for the incorrect dates in the printed programme.

WE WOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU OF THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL OFFERS AVAILABLE THIS YEAR

Family Rates Available This Summer

We are offering special family rates for two of our summer weeks: *Art week*, 16-23 August and *All the fun of the fair*, 23-30 August.

A discount of 15% is available for families booking for either of these weeks. The booking should be for the whole week and is for up to two adults (this could be parents or grandparents) and their own dependant children only.

10% Discount for Early & Fully Paid Bookings

To encourage early bookings by members we are pleased to offer to members the opportunity to receive a 10% reduction in the price of their summer stay. This offer is for full week stays between 20<sup>th</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> September. To obtain this discount we must receive your booking and full payment before the end of April. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with the discount available for the two special offer family weeks.

ITEMS WE NEED

If you are visiting Bradwell this year please bring some of the following with you.....

Tea towels – if everyone who visits brings a couple of new tea towels we can replenish our stocks and relegate some of the more threadbare ones to rags!!

Jam jars with lids please.

Baby wool – we are knitting baby hats throughout the year for the premature baby unit where our grandson spent the first six weeks of

his life. The unit gets through 5000 hats every year and we thought we could help out with knitting some. Either send some wool or if you would like to knit some yourself let us know and we can send you the pattern, it is very simple and even the most basic of knitters can help.

## **Bradwell Centre Committee needs you if.....**

You would like to **join us as our committee's finance person**. You would need to be financially literate, competent in using Excel, and sufficiently experienced to assist and guide Othona Bradwell in its financial matters. Committee members meet around 5 times per year, mostly at Bradwell, and may claim expenses. We all share and support the Warden and Core in the general management of Othona, and some also take a special role such as Finance. Rupert Bragg, our present finance person who retires in September, would be happy to provide more information: email [rupert.bragg@googlemail.com](mailto:rupert.bragg@googlemail.com) or telephone 01379 855171, or you may like an informal chat with Ruth Bull or Gail (details on last/back page of Full Circle.)

### **Or if.....**

You are thinking of staying at Othona Bradwell this summer and are willing to share and support the Warden and Core by joining the Helper's Team for a week - as Team Leader to help everyone share in community, or as Chaplain to encourage and assist people to take Chapel Services. People on the Helper's Team pay their way as any other visitors do, but give a little extra to the Community. Gail or Ruth would love to hear from you if you want to know more, or with your offer of help and availability.

## **A Week Worth Attending**

### **Janet Marshall**

Of course all our weeks are worth attending but I would especially like to recommend the week "Embracing a Diverse Community" on 26th July -2nd August.

In his talk at the AGM Colin Hodgetts (published in FC Autumn 2013) asked what members of the Othona Community might do in response

to the many challenging issues we face as a society. He suggested we spend the next year listening at a deep level, which may lead to deeper understanding and a less judgemental attitude. The Grassroots team from Luton who some years ago led one of the most stimulating, varied and lively weeks we have had at Bradwell, would be a good place to start the listening. They have first hand experience of living in the very diverse community of Luton, its richness and its problems. Come and enjoy!

***There will be separate activities for children during this week so that parents can attend the Grassroots programme.***

Here's more about the week:

## **Embracing A Diverse Community**

Grassroots is an ecumenical Christian charity concerned with building community in the diverse context of Luton. This week marks the return of the Grassroots team to Othona, where those who were able to attend their first visit found the week a fascinating and challenging as well as enjoyable experience.

Throughout the week, the Grassroots team will lead workshops and reflections centred on their engagement with people from a diversity of faiths, cultures, nationalities and backgrounds. They will explore the highs and lows of living and working in such a mixed community, and how they strive to embrace both the challenges and blessings which emerge. By sharing some of the story of their work in Luton, the Grassroots team aim to encourage others to relate to their own communities, to seek opportunities to bring people together in creative, sensitive and enjoyable ways.

Participants can expect a week of interactive sessions, building confidence and exploring ideas of how to break down barriers as we live out our faith in a plural and changing world. If you're seeking a "one size fits all" definitive solution, this week is not for you! Instead our focus will be discovering together how to be a presence and companion, creating opportunities to encounter difference, and venturing out to the margins to see who we might meet there. Discover more about Grassroots at [www.grassrootsluton.org.uk](http://www.grassrootsluton.org.uk) and

don't miss this special opportunity to focus on issues highly relevant to the needs of our modern world and to the meaning of the Othona Community.

## **The Beach Near Othona West Dorset**

**Photo by Emma Tabor**



# Butterfly

Paul Winter

*As five year olds on a school “nature walk” we gathered from a field chrysalises attached to grass stems. They were placed in jam jars on the classroom window ledge. The beautiful insects that appeared were Burnet six spot daytime flying moths, “butterflies” to us children (a very similar species has five spots). Years later, on writers’ retreat at Othona, Dorset, after dark, glow worms, and then, on a sunny day from the grassland surrounding the buildings, these moths appeared to awaken dormant memory.*

Moths of the daytime glow worms of night  
Our pencils are sharpened of what shall we write  
Of the joy and the laughter that catches the breath  
Or the void and the darkness on facing love’s death  
Tall grasses waving fescue and rye  
Ascending the stem the larva will die  
Spinning from silk a fine silver screen  
Hides from our eyes metamorphosis unseen  
Childhood’s cocoon caught in a jar  
The wonder of life sustained from a star  
Watching imago emerge from a shell  
Transformed into beauty as if by a spell  
Knapweed and scabious trefoil and clover  
Where can we dance when summer is over  
Where can we fly warm sun on our wings  
While high in the ether a skylark sings  
Come through the woodland down to the strand  
Pick up a pebble curl round the hand  
Skim the dark waters with many a leap  
Then plunge to the depths for ever to sleep  
Burnet butterfly five spots or six  
A universe soup of particle mix  
Seizing the moment living the day  
Tomorrow tomorrow is far far away  
Burnet butterfly six spots or five  
There’s no elixir to keep us alive

Till the sun in its splendour swallows the earth  
Red giant reclaiming our nebula birth  
Burnet butterfly the black and the red  
Voices are stilled companions are dead  
Taunt me with memories of long long ago  
Untrammelled by burdens of what I now know  
Burnet butterfly the red and the black  
This is my journey I cannot turn back  
From meadow to hedgerow and then the broad track  
Leading to Lethe – there's no turning back

***Editors' note: Thank you so much for sending this , Paul. We love its beauty and the food for thought it contains. We'd love to receive more poems from Othona West Dorset's writing events.***

## **A Documentary Made in Bethlehem**

**Karin Theis**

***Editors' note: We were delighted when Karin wrote "I just love your little magazine. It connects me to Othona at all times of the year."***

In December I went to Israel and Palestine and this trip was very exciting and interesting and frustrating at the same time. I made a 30 minutes documentary in Bethlehem, which was broadcasted on German television on 28<sup>th</sup> December. I am pleased to say that I got very positive feedback from people I didn't even know who had seen it on television. As many as four of them thanked me for my *courage* (all of them actually used this word) to film the situation in the West Bank as it actually is (all of these spectators had been there themselves). This made me happy on the one hand, but on the other hand it shocked me and made me think a lot about my profession. Do you need courage to say what you see? Is Journalism, with the guaranteed so-called freedom of press, really so one-sided and mainstream, in the case of Palestine: so pro-Israeli? And in regard to which subjects do I myself have, as we say in German, "scissors in my own head", meaning, when do I look at situations with rose tinted glasses or,

unconsciously or on purpose, paint a picture which excludes certain facts?

Fact is, as I see it, that there is almost nothing of Palestine left to the Palestinians, even though the West Bank is supposed to be their territory, but occupied since 1967 by Israel. The Jewish settlers, a high percentage of which are ultra-orthodox Zionists, are sitting on Arab land. The Palestinians have no say in the matter, they just loose one square metre after the other. At the moment, only 22% (other sources speak of 40%) of their original land still belongs to Palestinians. This makes me sad and angry. Please read "Mornings in Jenin" by Susan Abulhawa. It's the best novel about the recent history of Palestine, starting in 1948, the founding of the State of Israel, which in Arabic is called "nakba", the catastrophe. 750,000 Palestinians lost their homes and became refugees in camps, many of them until this day. The novel is translated into 19 languages.

I don't mean to say that any of this is new, but being there touched me even more than I had expected. The whole city of Bethlehem is surrounded by a wall, 20 feet high, part of the Israeli so-called defence system. And beyond that wall there are Israeli settlements, all around. I talked with the Mayor of Bethlehem, who is - maybe one wouldn't expect it - a woman, mother of five, and a Christian. We went to a classical Christmas concert together, at the Catholic church, right next to the nativity church. Young musicians from all over Italy had come to show their empathy with the walled-in city. I must admit: sitting in Bethlehem, where Jesus is said to have been born, the little Catholic girl inside of me, coming from a Catholic village and raised with Bible stories, some of which, of course, were set in this same town, was deeply touched. And the grown up Karin was happy to be here, as a journalist, among the friendliest people (yes, I know, I am not supposed to idealise the Palestinians, but in general they are, at least to my experience, a very open, generous, hospitable people), listening to wonderful music and forgetting for a moment the injustice and violence outside.

After the concert I visited a peace group, Tent of Nations, initiated by a Christian Palestinian, who had been to university in Germany. His motto is: **we refuse to be enemies**. Admirable, when at the same time



he has been threatened for years with the appropriation of his vineyard by the Israeli government.

Fortunately, there is a peace movement in Israel, too. I hope that these positive forces will one day, and may this day come soon, be stronger than the destructive, negative ones of the hardliners.

## **Growing old Gracefully and Disgracefully**

**Flavia Miller**

We gathered together from afar,  
One by bike and some by car.  
We hoped to learn with poise and grace  
How to grow old with disgrace.  
Poor old Jan could not attend  
But my mail her notes did send.  
She could not join, as woe, alack  
She'd had a horrid hearty attack.  
Sheila sat us in a a ring.  
I'm glad she didn't make us sing.  
We talked about the skills we had  
And of the things which make us sad.  
We questioned was there afterlife,  
And would we know a fork from knife.  
We talked about our failing sight  
And would we die alone at night.  
The afternoon we all had free,  
Some watched birds and some the sea.  
It was a time to simply be,  
To sit and rest and drink some tea.  
The evening came and we could be  
In the chapel by the sea.  
Peace and calm we all could share,  
Knowing of God's loving care.  
Anne the evening did enhance,  
By teaching us to circle dance.  
With feet to tap and toe to point  
You soon forgot that aching joint.  
The time has come to say farewell.

I've put on weight my clothes can tell.  
I'll miss the friends I've made this week;  
I'll miss the soup, potato and leek.  
Safe journey home to all of you,  
And when you're standing in a queue  
Just think of dignity and grace  
And put a smile upon your face

## **Re “Mum, Me” - Two Letters**

Dear Ruth and Paul,

I wanted you to know how much I have enjoyed David Birdseye's "Mum, Me ...." pieces. These works are witty, cleverly written, beautifully balanced and, best of all, show his knowledge of God's Word with accurate Biblical references, e.g. Genesis 24 v.64. This made me laugh out loud; I hasten to add that I have never smoked in my life, but I know that "Camel" is a brand name .... the play on words with Rebekah's dismounting from the beast of transport is very comical.

I'm sure the Almighty God does not find offence with D.B.'s humorous sketches, because I'm convinced he has a sense of humour too; for where else does Mankind acquire this delightful characteristic?

To conclude, I hope that there are more of D.B.'s oeuvres of this kind in the pipeline.

Wishing you blessings for 2014,

Yours sincerely,  
Susan Russell

Dear editors,

I have just been handed the Autumn 2013 Full Circle magazine and read it throughout. Very interesting, I thought. And then I reached the final contribution by Mr. David Birdseye. Well! Whether that's his real name and whether this conversation is genuine I have no idea, but do

you know one thing ..... this is comedic genius. I have not laughed so hard for as long as I can remember. And he concludes the pieces with a very sound Biblical observation. Mixing theology with humour is most difficult, as I know only too well. My late husband was an ordained minister. He would have loved this brilliant dialogue.

Many thanks for a quality newsletter `and the best laugh I've had in ages. Keep it up !

Yours,  
Margaret Westwood

## **Mum, Me and Eternity**

**David Birdseye**

MUM Oh my God! Whatever next?  
DAVE What now?  
MUM Well, have you heard the latest?  
DAVE Probably not. Why?  
MUM Well, apparently Michael Jackson's ghost has popped up, testifying that his death was an accident.  
DAVE Whose death?  
MUM His own.  
DAVE Well, I guess he should know best.  
MUM He says it wasn't that doctor's fault.  
DAVE So is he appearing for the defence or for the prosecution?  
MUM Well, it doesn't say. But, I mean, do you believe in all this?  
DAVE All this what?  
MUM Well, ghosts .... people coming back .... life after death ....  
DAVE Err ... the short answer is - I tend not to believe in death.  
MUM What!?! Well, all I can say is that if your Dad didn't die back in the 50's, then he's been a long time down that pub.  
DAVE What I mean is - I suspect that death is only apparent to those left behind. The living .... the bereaved, and so on.  
MUM So who's filling all the cemeteries if it's not a whole bunch of dead people?  
DAVE I'm suggesting that cemeteries are full of bodies, not people.  
MUM Well, all I know is that where my body is, that's where I am.

DAVE Well, I tend to take different view.

MUM Why? What makes you think you know best?

DAVE It's not about knowing best, more to do with personal experience.

MUM But when you have you been dead? You never told me about it ...

DAVE I didn't die - I had a couple of O.B.E.s

MUM Is that some sort of illegal drug?

DAVE No, Mum. It stands for out-of-body experience.

MUM Well, Dave, let's face it - what with the amount you used to drink, it's a wonder your body ever let you back IN. I mean to say ....

DAVE Mum, I was NOT drunk at the time.

MUM Well, perhaps you found yourself out of your body due to the shock of being sober.

DAVE Mum, people of all kinds have had O.B.E.s. It has nothing to do with drugs or alcohol, necessarily.

MUM Well, I've never been out of my body; I can barely get out of the bed, let alone anything else.

DAVE The point is, having an O.B.E., one is more inclined to view the body as the vehicle, rather than the person.

MUM Huh! Some vehicle they fobbed me off with. This one would never pass an M.O.T. Only good for scrap.

DAVE Alright - so, tell me: when your body fetches up in the scrapyard, what becomes of you, yourself?

MUM Well, hopefully, that's the end of it all. Lights out. You won't get me popping back again as a ghost. No thanks.

DAVE So you don't believe in some continuation of life after death?

MUM You said just now that you don't believe in death.

DAVE You know what I mean - life after death of the body.

MUM No, of course not. Anyway, how could that happen? Walking around with no legs to walk with? I mean to say ....

DAVE Well, the Old Testament refers to the everlasting God, and the New Testament refers to everlasting life, for those who believe in Christ.

MUM Well I don't believe, so that lets ME off the hook.

DAVE The Bible speaks of everlasting punishment - Hell.

MUM Well, they can't frighten me with that. I've already done 86 years of it, so I know the ropes.

DAVE Here we go again .... doom and gloom ....

MUM Well, I mean to say .... all the worries I've had ....

DAVE But Mum .... What about all the good bits?

MUM What good bits? Did I miss something?

DAVE Well, what about your childhood? And then meeting and marrying my father? Those earlier years?

MUM Well .... and that leads to another thing ....

DAVE (groan) Oh God - what now?

MUM Well, as you well know .... after the death of your Dad I remarried. And that was a whole other sorry chapter.

DAVE So, what are you leading up to?

MUM Well, if there is an afterlife, what happens if we all meet up together?

DAVE What are you babbling on about now?

MUM Well, let's face it .... your Dad was always a bit of a puny bloke. Always being excused P.E. at school. but at least he had youth on his side when he died.

DAVE (groan) Where's this leading, I wonder?

MUM The point is, they were like chalk and cheese, your Dad and Cyril. Strong as an ox, he was. Hide like a rhino ....

DAVE Okay! Okay! So they were different. So what?

MUM Well, but Cyril was in his 80's when he kicked the bucket.

DAVE Mum, I know all this ....

MUM Well, if there's life after death, then which one of them am I married to? They may be having a right old punch-up even as we speak.

DAVE If that's so then my money is on Dad. He's nipper on his feet. Far less weight on him. And he's had longer to prepare.

MUM But I don't want to be the cause of no trouble upstairs, so to speak. And what happens if they fight to the death over me, given that they're both already dead? Do they know?

DAVE Well, then the fight's declared a draw, and they both have to return here, to resolve their differences.

MUM But then what becomes of me?

DAVE You enter the afterlife single. "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage".

MUM Well, I don't fancy being a spinster for all that eternity.

DAVE But Mum - you may bump into some gorgeous angel who takes a right fancy to you. Maybe Michael Jackson himself.

MUM Not on your Nellie! Let's face it - he was a lunatic and a half. I'd rather be stuck with your Dad. Or even Cyril. Anyway, all this talk of death has made me sleepy. Goodnight.

DAVE Goodnight mum. Sleep well.

## **Homelessness**

### **Paul**

The first time I came in contact with homeless people was many years ago at Burton, when the Dadds were wardens. Passing tramps could come and stay for a night or two. They were referred to as Wayfarers (much better name), and one of the huts was fitted out with a bed, electric kettle, light, etc. They got an evening meal, breakfast, and some sandwiches. I found them very friendly to chat to, but they did have sad stories (there but for the grace of God go I). One little man had been a butler, and went on to join Pilsdon Community. Another man, very smart and clean shaven, said he had a friend who would put him up in the winter, but once the spring came he was off on his travels. His wife and children had been killed in a road accident. I asked him where he had slept the other night - under our hedge - but how are you so clean and tidy - I can always find a public toilet. I could never look like him, after sleeping under a hedge.

Pete would not take them in if they were drunk and abusive. One lunch time a Scotchman, turned up, well over the eight. He cleared the terrace in minutes, with a few Fs. Pete and I managed to get him in the car. It was a warm sunny day so we took him to Burton beach, and made him comfortable on the sand to sleep it off. We had only been back a short time when he reappeared on the terrace wanting to entertain the guests with a few songs. Someone had given him a lift back! We took him this time way past Abbotsbury. It was warm weather, and he would come to no harm.

In Southend on Sea, we have a very good organisation for the homeless called HARP. It was started 20-odd years ago by some of the churches, first as a night shelter, then a day centre, with a few volunteers. It still has volunteers, but is now a professional charity,

getting funds from the local council, and the government, but still gets much of its food and helpers from churches. They have half way houses, advice on debt, drugs and other problems. Because of the large numbers of people on the street in the winter months, HARP could not cope, so 3 years ago they asked the churches if they would open their doors in the cold weather. We now have 7 churches that take it in turns to be open each night. The guests arrive at 7:30 to have tea/coffee, biscuits and sometimes cake. At 8-30 they get a hot supper, a sweet, and continuous cups of tea. Then they can sit and chat, and play games like chess, dominoes etc. They go outside regularly for a smoke. At 10:30 it is lights out and sleep, on thin foam mattress, sleeping bags and blankets. In the morning they get cereals, a hot breakfast, and plenty of toast and tea/coffee. They leave with a tube of mints, banana, and a packet of paper handkerchiefs. There are woolly hats, gloves, socks, and other warm clothes if they need them. There is a community among them. Many know each other from the streets. If one is playing up and a bit difficult they will calm him down, or tell him off. They share each other's tobacco, and if one is old and cannot walk well they will help him to the centre. One night a guest could not get himself up once he lay down, so two others slept each side of him, so that when he wanted to go to the toilet, they would help him. Most nights there are up to 24 guests including 4 to 6 ladies. The last few weeks I have noted we are getting East European couples coming to the shelter. One couple, who came last year, have found a job and home, and have joined the Church and come as helpers. Of the 7 churches, one is a Methodist Church and the other 6 are evangelical. They never try to convert the guests or push their faith. I have been very impressed by the love and genuine concern that they show.

I wonder if any body has come across the Simon Community? I only came across them the other day. Started in 1962 by Anton Wallich Clifford. They are based in Islington and Kentish Town. The community has volunteers and homeless people living together, and visitors find it difficult to tell the difference. They run street cafes, with tables and chairs, food, newspapers, games and chat. Early morning tea runs on Sundays and Mondays around the West End. Sandwiches and pasties start the day. In their homes they give meals, wash clothes, and people can relax indoors. Finally, they say about giving to beggars, it is a personal choice. What may be more important is to consider that many homeless people have not had any positive human contact for some

time, and they are likely to be feeling vulnerable, isolated, and ignored. Remember that they are just like you, and at least take the time to acknowledge their presence.

I wonder if our community could make contact with the Simon Community and invite them to come and tell us about their experiences.

## **Streetbank**

**submitted by Clare Stone**

*So what's all this then?*

Streetbank is a site that helps you share with and borrow things from your neighbours. Streetbank is meant for everyone. It is not for private benefit - for individuals to make a profit or professionals to sell their services. It is for the common good. Of course, you may already share things with your neighbours, in which case, don't let us stop you!

*But why would I want to do that?*

Well since you ask, communities that help each other are closer, nicer, and friendlier to live in. Streetbank can help make your neighbourhood a nicer place.

*How do I start?*

Sign up with your name and postcode (or address if you live outside of the UK), add one item, skill or recommendation and see all the items within one mile radius of your home. It's all completely free and you can cancel your account at any time if you don't like it.

*Help, there's no one in my area*

Congratulations! That means you're a founder member and have won a badge! Streetbank is still quite new but is growing quite quickly. If you take a chance and be the first other people will soon follow.



*Do I have to add something?*

Yes you do. The price of membership is that you must contribute at least one thing. It doesn't have to be special, a book, DVD or piece of gardening equipment is likely to be valuable to someone somewhere.

*What can I add?*

Just about anything that can be lent, given away or any skill that you may possess. In the past people have added books and DVDs, CDs and gardening equipment, old sofas, chairs, tables and filing cabinets to give away, computer games, back issues of magazines, French lessons and language tuition, Computer help, bicycle repair, etc, etc. Of course you don't have to stick to these ideas and we would encourage you to be creative, in fact we quite like wacky!

*Can I make requests?*

Yes you can. If you have an event to organise, or just need some help moving a piano Streetbank is for you.

*Tell me again, what's in it for me?*

People are happier when they are are connected to each other. As we've grown richer we've become more and more disconnected until now most of us don't know our next door neighbours. Helping someone out is a great way to make friends and build community spirit.

*So tell me, why did you make Streetbank?*

The aim is to get people involved in their community, to foster altruism, a generosity of spirit and volunteerism. It is to help local needs to be met by local solutions, reducing poverty by building community. It makes sense environmentally. It helps people to reuse things, and for things that are under-used to be used more, and that all helps to reduce consumption. It also makes sense economically. If there are 100 houses on your road and each of them uses a ladder maybe once a year to clean the guttering, they probably don't all need their own ladder. One ladder shared between everyone should be enough.

*Can you be more concrete?*

Yes. You also get access to a huge range of things which people in your neighbourhood are lending or giving away, and you can accept offers of help which people have made. For example, if you add a DVD you may gain access to a whole DVD library.

*Like it used to be?*

Yes, in the olden days.

*So why do I need Streetbank?*

By joining Streetbank you are saying to your neighbours, I'm interested in my community and I'm happy to lend a few of my things and help out in a few small ways. Knocking on a stranger's door is quite a bold thing to do. Streetbank reduces the barrier.

*Will I get tons of email?*

No, you can choose exactly how much email you get in the email settings page. We'll send you a weekly newsletter with everything that's new in your area and you can turn on other types of email too if you want to. You can turn off all email, and even leave Streetbank if you like with a single click (though we hope you won't)

*How much does it cost?*

It's free.

*How do you make money then?*

We don't, we probably won't ever, but if it were to get really successful we'll turn it into a social enterprise.

*So this is all done out of a desire to make the world a slightly nicer place to live in?*

Yes, exactly. We hope you enjoy it!

***The Streetbank website can be found on Google***

**A.G.M.**

**Notice of the  
2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

of

**The Othona Community**

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

on

**Saturday 27th September**

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

**Fully accessible**

**1.30pm - arrival with tea or coffee**

**2.00pm AGM**

**Followed by Annual Service and a bring and share tea**

***Please note that we must vacate the hall by 5.00 pm***

**LOCATION:** Between Waterloo and Southwark Stations. From Waterloo walk down Waterloo Rd., and 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 and 45 to Blackfriars Rd.

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