



Summer 2014

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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 Spring Full Circle

March 1st 2015

Editorial

Ruth and Paul Gilman

Dear friends

After some deliberation on the future of Full Circle the trustees have decided to retain two issues of Full Circle a year in its present format. The autumn/winter issue will be replaced by a report on the A.G.M. and a statement of our financial situation which will come in a different format. Please therefore note that the final copy date for your contributions to the next issue of Full Circle is 1st March 2015 . We still welcome these as soon as possible, as we have already started editing this next edition, and it will include the material that could not be fitted into this edition. We usually publish contributions in the order we receive them. Thank you for the high quality of your contributions. Please keep them coming.

Thanks. too, to everyone who has told us why they appreciate Full Circle, and of how they like having it to hand to a friend when they are telling them about Othona. Some people also see Full Circle as an opportunity for dialogue with members, to express opinions or to share their experiences with everyone. It can embrace us all - hence the title Full Circle. Some members, including myself, have kept and treasured their copies over the years, as a reminder of Othona - a very special place and community.

Hoping to see you this summer.

With our love

Ruth and Paul

Othona West Dorset Report

Tony Jaques

Spring in Dorset, always my favourite season. But this year it began with sad news for us: the death by drowning of Bob Thorn, rector of Burton Bradstock. He'd been on sabbatical and had set off to brave the kind of 'life on the edge' that was typical of early Celtic Christian hermits, sleeping under an upturned boat on a Cornish beach. On his way back home, rowing in that same small boat, he must have been overwhelmed by high seas. This was a very consciously chosen spiritual journey, a retreat with no holds barred. I've no doubt Bob - a great raconteur and conversationalist - will have relished going right out of his comfort zone, into solitude, confident that there too he would find his God.

It's hard to grasp when someone so full of life is gone. He was a no-nonsense down-to-earth character who had survived a serious stroke-like emergency just a few years ago and would never have wanted to 'play life safe'. Many of us in the Bride Valley parishes are feeling the loss of a fine parish priest, a good friend to Othona, and a guitarist who wrote some cracking protest songs.

What else happened in recent months? Well, we've enjoyed the contributions of various facilitators new to Othona. David Talbot offered Tai Chi exercises for people during Open Space, while David Cole led a retreat drawing on the spirituality of the Celtic Christians, as also reflected in today's Forest Church movement. Linda Aspey's "Time to Think" workshop was a superb introduction to ways of listening and interacting which can help remove the blocks to our most creative thinking. Angela Schütz drew some beautiful images out of the participants on her Mandala workshop.

This last event coincided with our second exhibition as part of Dorset Art Weeks. For 16 days the chapel and library became a gallery with five Othona artists' work on show. We welcomed more than 930 visitors, many of them staying for a scrummy cream tea too. They saw

Mart Tebbs' colourful 'abstracted landscapes', Emma C Tabor's meticulous drawings and shimmering prints, Elizabeth Sayers' textile idylls of trees and landscape. Robin Shaw and Tiernan Philpot, from the vantage point of differing generations and genders, exhibited moving photos of men and men's bodies. A great team of volunteers helped make all this possible and we hope to repeat it in 2016.

Two trends you may like to know about. First we are having a growing number of private group bookings for singing weekends. The vibe around the community with lots of a cappella songs and chants and smiling singers is truly spirit-lifting. Second, we are seeing a lot of Mindfulness teaching and practice which fits very well with Othona's ethos ("an adult spirituality: down-to-earth, light-hearted, not afraid of change" as our website says). As I write this, I've just been on our first "Mindfulness for Men" weekend with Tim Stead – a real treat. Our local friend Sue Howse also continues to run mindfulness courses of varying lengths here; later this year she and Ali Tebbs will lead a "Mindfulness and Creativity" residential event.

Much mindfulness teaching is rooted in Buddhist practice, but we see it as entirely compatible with Christian (and other) spirituality too. It's exciting to realise that here is a set of skills, a contemplative approach to life, which not only spans the common ground between many religious traditions, but also has a growing raft of pukka psychology and neuroscience research to back it up. It may be one of the keys to reconciling scientists and religious folk (okay, let's be realistic, *some* of each) in the cause of human flourishing.

Finally, for me this spring ushered in my 20th year as warden here. I have to pinch myself to believe it! And by the time you read this we'll have begun Othona's 50th year at Burton Bradstock. The community received this house as a gift – from the trustees of a previous community of women – in 1965. John Cross and his family moved in as the first warden and residents one day in July. Without their sacrificial pioneering work Othona would never have established itself in West Dorset.

Our fiftieth year is a time to look forwards as well as back. We are so blessed in this beautiful location. But this is an old building, held

together with make-do-and-mend measures for almost a century (since that first women's community began). It won't necessarily stay fit for our purposes without significant re-development at some stage. We're starting to think about such things. What could be needed and how would we ever afford it? Big questions. The key answer to funding is probably that those who love Othona do – with such kindness – remember us in their wills. Our project to replace the art room has just taken a major step forward, thanks to a generous legacy from David Warwick, who led many a music week here in the 1970s. (If you read this and would like advice about helping us by means of a legacy, please contact me. I'll be glad to help.)

We aren't here to preserve old buildings unchanged, but to make possible the ongoing experiment of community. So let's not be daunted by ideas of possible re-development. Just as earlier Othona generations weren't daunted by the prospects of establishing the first regular camp at Bradwell in the 1940s. Or by taking on - here, in the 1960s - what looked like an antiquity shrouded in brambles, and making it habitable! In the coming year we'll celebrate our past, but also focus on the future - in various ways - as our golden jubilee in July 2015 approaches. Watch this space, as they say.

“Thank You” to Gail and Matthew

Esther Mannoukas

Well, it's coming to the time that we have to start saying our goodbyes to Gail and Matthew as they prepare to leave Othona Bradwell at the end of October.

When they 'left' last time many tributes were paid for their hard work and achievements at the Community. As things turned out they stayed and Othona Bradwell has gone from strength to strength in their care and that of the many core members that have worked alongside them. Visitors are always assured of a friendly welcome and of course a cup of tea! Time and effort is always given generously particularly to those less able. An example that will stay with me for ever is when two of our older friends were driven to and 'hauled' up the sea wall, provided with chairs and blankets so as to be completely included in singing and toasted marshmallows at the beach bonfire.

As community members we have developed strong and valuable friendships with Gail and Matthew but we must acknowledge the amount of work and outreach that we don't necessarily see that is done with school groups and church groups and similarly the quiet and gentle support that is given to individuals who want to simply 'come and be'.

So 'thank you' may not appear to be a big enough word to fully express what we want to say, but I am sure we will take opportunities over the next couple of months to say our personal goodbyes and wish Gail and Matthew well in their future.

News from Bradwell

Ruth Bull

Gail and Matthew Dell have shared their time, love and enthusiasm with so many people over the past few years as Warden and co-Warden, having first joined Othona as Bradwell's Deputy Managers. Now they are moving on, and as we wish them well we seek our next Warden - do have a look at the details elsewhere in this Full Circle and on the Bradwell Othona website. Bradwell has seen other Core changes too, saying goodbye to Maggie and Mike Hebden and Mees, hello to Wendy our new housekeeper and Marie in the kitchen, Dean who is a general core member but helping a lot with maintenance, and welcome back to Amanda in the garden. We are now looking at options to increase the capacity and usefulness of our Core Accommodation, Medlar Corner.

Many local people and groups have visited Othona at Bradwell in recent months, where people have enjoyed mindfulness, yoga, Spring retreat, and cleaning the beach with Conservation Volunteers. We have hosted many church groups, and the regular number of school groups learning about community life, loving our play space and freedom, crab-hunting, pond-dipping and surprising us with the number of young newts (efts) in the run-off pond from the reed bed system: amazing when you think where that water came from! This year has seen some improvements to the Norman Motley Building, the Bank,

and our grounds which are looking lovelier than ever - thanks to financial and horticultural gifts, much-welcome legacies and to the hard work of core and volunteers.

As summer approaches we are looking forward to seeing our returning visitors and newcomers - and as you love Othona why not bring as friend or share our website: remember, prices are held at last year's levels. The annual Bradwell Pilgrimage passes on 12th July, always filling the dining area with visitors taking tea and Gail's delicious home-made cakes. As this Full Circle reaches you, we still expect to have plenty of opportunities for you to stay all through the summer. There are still some space available and there is always the option of staying in one of our comfortable tents.

Our first summer speakers come from Grassroots, encouraging visitors in "Embracing a Diverse Community" from 26th July to 2nd August, a chance to focus on issues highly relevant to the needs of our modern world and to the meaning of the Othona Community - and have plenty of fun and dancing too. Our programme tells you all about the musical events, looking through telescopes, art and the seashore, a fresh look at the old fairground stalls - come and join All the Fun of the Fair! The full programme is on our website, or more paper copies are available from Othona Bradwell.

We look forward to welcoming everyone to the Bradwell Open Day on Sat 9th August when members of the Bradwell Centre Committee and Core will be there to share your ideas, hopes and dreams for Othona - and for you to meet friends, and enjoy the bouncy castle and strawberry cream teas too.

Summer is close - don't let it pass you by.

With love from all at Bradwell.

Bradwell Job Vacancy - Warden

The Othona Community has a vacancy for a new Warden at Bradwell and would like you to help by spreading the word via your local community and friends and family. We hope to spread the word as

widely as we can, so please direct interested people to the Bradwell website www.othona-bradwell.org.uk where the vacancy is listed. The link to the actual page containing the job description & application form is at www.othona-bradwell.org.uk/vacancy/Resident-Community-Warden. This will give you an idea of the range of skills needed for this job in case you know someone you think might be interested.

**Resident Warden
Othona Community
Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex**

We are now seeking a full-time residential Warden to lead and manage our Essex centre. The ability to relate to and make welcome our visitors, and to maintain a healthy community life for those you live and work with is essential. The key tasks are to: manage day-to-day operations of Othona Bradwell (including supervision of staff and volunteers); oversee administration, financial management, catering for up to sixty visitors, and maintenance of buildings and grounds.

What we offer in return:

- A deeply satisfying lifestyle in a beautiful coastal location
- Simple accommodation in self-contained chalet, with all meals included.
- Modest salary (c. £14,000) & annual contribution to personal pension scheme
- Flexible hours with 2 days off per week; 28 days annual holiday
- There is also the opportunity for the Warden's spouse or partner to take on employment at Othona Bradwell.

Please visit <http://www.othona-bradwell.org.uk> for full details.

Closing date: 31 July 2014

If you are interested send your application electronically to communitysecretary@othona.org

The First Artist Joke of the Season

Angenita Hardy-Teekens

A painters' retreat in a landscape I know so well. Must be good. The landscape around Othona in Bradwell is empty, full of lines and rather stripy. It quite often reminds me of Mondriaan. Having lived and worked in Bradwell the landscape is well and truly part of my own visual history.

Lately due to older children, the luxury of a part time job and a very supportive family I have been able to spend more and more time painting.

So I had to go to Othona to try and capture the essence of that emptiness. I would recommend a very early morning walk. You will see colours you didn't know existed and a light so weightless that it feels barely there. Subtlety all around. This can however change in the space of a second.... into a thunderstorm and heavy rain.

Not having to cook, shop, polish shoes and be everybody's diary is so relaxing that even a day in Othona on my own feels like a week's holiday. But then I had work to do. Last year I was invited to show my work in Walton on the Naze Tower. But I only had a handful of paintings and Michelle who runs the tower had given me a whole floor. "Oh", she said, "About 18 paintings will be enough". No pressure there then.... the exhibition being in September and it now being May.

So work there was. Early morning walk, sketching and a place in the Bank building to set up easel and paint. It worked well. Now being home the paintings have changed and changed again. Painting is like sculpting in colour.

Meeting up with Lesley, Janet, Ian and Sheila, James and Rosemary, other artists who were there, was refreshing, as we shared work, duties and meals, the usual Othona joy.

Amanda showed me around the gardens, and these look so good and well kept. Mouth-watering colours and flavour. What could be better than eating colour?

Which is exactly what we did during our last meal. We were served the first artichoke, a beautiful sage-grey green, of the season, dipped in melted butter and balsamic vinegar. At that moment I wasn't sure; did I come here on an artist's retreat or to sample excellent food. Either way I didn't mind. As far as I am concerned eating is just as much a creative experience as painting.

Sheila, who runs a gallery in Southend, had a few jokes for us. Her experience as a commercial artist for years is vast. She gets asked a lot of questions about her work. The most frequently asked question is: "I like this painting and would like to buy it but can you take a bit off?". "I can take my coat off but not my bit," she answers.

Please come to the opening of my exhibition in the Walton-on-the-Naze Tower, 13th September 6-8. It runs till 4th November. Apart from, hopefully, good art you will also be in a historic monument with fabulous views over the Stour, Harwich, Felixstowe and beyond. Sadly no artichokes afterwards but there are some great fish and chips shops near the beach. You are all very, very welcome.

Mouthwatering Colours

Photos by Diane Bragg



Archbishop Visits Othona

Many thanks to Kevin Bruce for these photos of the recent visit by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, to Othona Bradwell.



Sir John Tavener – a Musical Mystic

28 January 1944 – 12 November 2013

Fiona Heyes

Sir John Tavener, the English composer, died at his home in Child Okeford, Dorset on 12 November 2013. He was 69. It had often occurred to me that Tavener's compositions shared Othona's ethic of being open to all faiths and none, rooted in the Christian heritage, his music often sparkling with an essence of the Divine, though frequently in colours and densities to which we are unaccustomed. I understand he was born into a Presbyterian family, then experienced the Catholic Church for a few years, before being received into the Russian arm of the Orthodox Church in 1977. Just as his beliefs in God moved from Western to Eastern traditions, so too did the flavour of his music, and, in his latter years both he and his music became even more universal.

Tavener is regarded as a classical composer, although he managed to widen his appeal through various means, a record contract with the Beatles Apple label, a commission (Prayer of the Heart) for Björk, and a nomination, along with cellist Steven Isserlis, for the 1992 Mercury Music Prize (for best album from the United Kingdom and Ireland) with The Protecting Veil. Alongside other nominees like Erasure, Simply Red, U2 and Saint Etienne that year, the winner was Primal Scream with their album Screemadelica. Such up-front coverage, greater than is normally expected for a classical composer, brought him to the attention of the world.

The vast output of compositions by Tavener began in 1958 with Duo Concertant for Trombone, and, though he wrote both secular and sacred music, the larger part was sacred choral music. His choral works ranged from melodious 'traditional' works for choirs to sacred chants. Tavener has the ability to engage with your emotions with much of his work, and fellow composer John Rutter praises him for "being able to bring an audience to a deep silence". There is certainly a meditative quality about his music. Ikon of Light is composed in such a way that the string trio "can be thought of as the soul yearning for God" and a choir so luminous it might appear to represent the

answering God, with the silences of reality separating them. At the other end of the emotions is The Lament of the Mother of God at the Cross from The Protecting Veil, written for cello and orchestra, a piece of such astonishing anguish that I suggest that only those with a very strong emotional base should contemplate this as a meditation at Easter.

As far back as 1968, aged 24, Tavener was described as "the musical discovery of the year", and "among the very best creative talents of his generation". His inspired writing was enviable. Tavener said "I wrote The Lamb in 1982 while being driven by my mother from South Devon to London. It came to me fully grown so to speak, so all I had to do was to write it down. It was inspired by Blake and by my three-year-old nephew, Simon". He gave Simon The Lamb for his third birthday.

Tavener felt that his openness to inspiration was totally fulfilled in The Veil of the Temple, composed in 2003 and premièred at Temple Church in London. An extraordinary work calling on the services of four choirs, several orchestras and soloists, it's based around orthodox vigil services, and is seven hours long, designed to be played through the night until dawn breaks. The piece was inspired by his wish "to remove the veils that hide the same basic truth of all authentic religions" and the texts he used were Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish and Native American. "By the act of writing The Veil I understood that no single religion could be exclusive. The Veil has become light – there is no longer any veil. This tearing away of the Veil shows that all religions are in the transcendent way inwardly united beneath their outward form."

John Tavener used an exceptionally wide palette when it came to texts/ lyrics for his works. Apart from his secular texts, the many sacred/ religious texts he used were the Bible (Vulgate, New Testament in Greek, Septuagint), the Latin Mass, the Orthodox Liturgy, the Torah, the Qur'an, the Hadiths, the Rig-Veda, the Samaveda, the Upanishads, Rumi, the Chester mystery plays, Cardinal Newman, St Andrew of Crete, St Ephrem the Syrian and St John of the Cross. In this he was greatly helped by his "spiritual mother" in Yorkshire, Mother Thekla, a Russian Orthodox abbess. It was she who, at Tavener's request, adapted the words from the Orthodox funeral service and Hamlet for

Song for Athene, played at Princess Diana's funeral, but originally composed in 1993 for a Tavener family friend, Athene Hariades, who was killed in a cycling accident. Tavener said "In the graveyard after the funeral I heard the repeated Alleluias and then I heard a melody for the verses. I wrote the whole piece down when I got home". Shûnya (Sanskrit – void), composed in 2002 takes us into the world of Buddhist ritual reverberating with temple gongs. "In the Buddhist tradition this (Shûnya) is not a 'nothingness', but rather a vision of Paradise as an ultimate spiritual extinction - an Uncreated Bliss. The 'Supreme Extinction' of Shûnya is both Void and Plentitude. It should be regarded as an intensification or exaltation of all that is perfect and positive, and at the same time, a total negation of all we know." Then, in 2003, as part of Tavener's ongoing response to the September 11th attack on the Twin Towers, he composed The Beautiful Names, the 99 names of Allah found in the Qur'an, sung in Arabic, which was premièred at Westminster Cathedral in 2007.

On 21 January 2013 Tavener won the 2013 Prize for European Church Music, awarded for the "deep spirituality" of his music, rather than for attachment to any particular creed or denomination. There are not many composers who have obituaries featured in publications as varied as The Times, Christianity Today, New Musical Express, the Church Times, The Gramophone, Ultimate Classic Rock and The Evangelical Universalist. There was even a mini biography on the Led Zeppelin site, which only goes to show that Sir John Tavener will be missed by more people than is usual for a classical composer. I offer you this last quote to consider, from a 1999 interview on Morning Edition, Tavener told reporter David D'Arcy, "We seem to have lost our contact with the primordial, the idea of call as divine revelation as opposed to something that's learned by the human intellect, something that, if you lay yourself completely open and you just open your heart completely, something will actually come into it". Thank you for opening your heart Sir John and sharing with the world what came into it.

Hymn of Community

Ruth Bull

When I work with head or hand
I give a bit of me.
When we work together we
Build community.

In my upper room I pray
For guidance.... empathy.....
But sharing in our worship we
Glimpse community.

Give me books: I'll study hard,
Improve my memory.....
But freely sharing what we know, we
Learn community.

I'll play solo - hear my song
Or let me simply be.....
But sharing, swapping, laughing, we
Make community.

Work and worship, study, play:
A blend of mystery.....
But as it comes together, we
Grow community.

Tune Caswell - "Glory be to Jesus" as from Anglican hymns Old and New

Holy Ground!

Jan Marshall

O world invisible, we view thee
O world intangible, we touch thee
O world unknowable, we know thee
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.

Step into the main building at the Othona Community at Bradwell-on-Sea Essex, especially at a mealtime, and the phrase Holy Ground is probably not the first which would spring to mind. Noisy, lively, even daunting are better descriptions, especially if you are expecting the more conventional hushed atmosphere of a traditional retreat house. However there are of course times of tranquillity and peace. Walk to the nearby Chapel of St Peter's on the Wall built by St. Cedd in 654CE and the sense of timelessness and the atmosphere of prayer will enfold you. It is what the Celts called a thin place, where the barriers between the physical and the spiritual realms are more permeable.

By the end of the Second World War there were three burning issues which the Founder of Othona Norman Motley, felt he had to address in however small a way. One was the tragically damaging fear and hostility between the different Christian denominations (interfaith issues had not really arisen at this time), the second was to start a process of healing and reconciliation in the aftermath of war and thirdly he wanted to find a place where in his words "people of all ages and social groups, of all beliefs or none, could come together and rediscover the meaning and reality of the good tidings of God". In other words somewhere that John V Taylor's "Go-Between God" could be more readily experienced. The purpose being to then return to everyday life with renewed vitality and hope.

For me it is John V Taylor in his book "The Go Between God" who most clearly describes how this Go-Between creates Holy Ground within and between men and women and their surroundings within the context of everyday life. He asks "But what is this force which causes me to see in a way I have not seen? What makes a landscape or a

person or an idea come to life for me and become a presence ---- which makes two beings aware of each other and sets up a current of communication between them?”. What is it that transforms a you and me relationship into I and Thou? This spark or current of communication which creates holy ground within and between us is for Christians called the Holy Spirit, but it goes by many other names in other beliefs and cultures. Although we have all experienced these amazing moments of recognition when we suddenly see something as if for the first time, when the light suddenly dawns and transforms how we see and feel, there are certain circumstances and conditions which facilitate these times. It was to create such a time and space that Othona and many other centres have come into being.

The Othona Community now has two centres in Essex and West Dorset. Both are open all year and offer a range of activities from family and child centred weeks to quieter study and retreat like times. Nature, art and other forms of creativity often feature in our led weeks, and are all embedded in a background of caring and acceptance of the individual and their needs. We have found over the years that the sense of being needed and useful is of tremendous importance to wellbeing, so from the beginning our visitors become not just guests but members who take part in the everyday running and upkeep of the centres. Helping with washing up or veg. prep quickly breaks down barriers of shyness. For some, the removal of everyday pressures and especially the absence of continuous noise from radio, TV, PCs etc is quite a culture shock but it fosters better communication between individuals and the self. Put crudely this absence of gadgets, useful as they are, perhaps allows the spirit to get a word in edgeways. Scott Peck pointed out in his book *The Different Drum* “There is no such thing as instant community and it takes a great deal of work for people to feel safe”. As he says “Community is a safe place precisely because no one is attempting to heal or convert you, to fix you or change you. Instead the members accept you as you are. You are free ---free to become your whole and holy self”. Sometimes we achieve this Holy Ground and of course many time we don’t but it must be our ultimate aim.

Perhaps unsurprisingly when asked what is most special to them about Othona Bradwell many will say it is the walk from our enclosed

field out onto the wide open space of the Blackwater estuary and then through a wild flower meadow to the Chapel. It provides time to walk and talk, time to reflect, time to become aware of the beauty of earth and sky, time to just be. We all need to allow more time to just to be. Perhaps then we would realise as Francis Thompson writes in his poem, The Kingdom of God,

“The angels keep their ancient places;
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
Tis ye, tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many splendoured thing.”

We might even see the shining traffic of Jacobs ladder pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross or see Christ walking on the water not of Gennesareth but Thames, or even on the River Blackwater or Chesil Beach and all the other sacred places and holy ground which go unrecognised!

Response To a Response to a Response.....

Rosemary Wells

I was very interested in David Forgan's article in the Autumn 13 issue of Full Circle, re the tension between doing and believing. I would have thought the Beatitudes were about the spirit in which we act rather than the acts themselves but, be that as it may, for me there has always been a tension between faith and love. I do not come from a credal church. I grew up in the Methodist church which rarely, if ever, uses the simple creed. I then became a Quaker. So I relate to two traditions within Christianity which are not dependent on credal statements. I know from my fellow Quakers how inhibiting they find the expectation in a credal church of assent to certain propositions about Jesus. Having said that, Methodists have definite expressions of belief/faith which if you grow up in it you absorb through the pores of your skin, mainly through hymn-singing! ('Methodism was born in song' began the intro to the old hymn book.)

When I was 13 I collapsed with a kind of illness and the way I was looked after at that time made me realise the love of God - operating through a person. But as soon as I intuited this, I asked myself: What is love? It was as if, even at that age, I was aware that human beings are so different from each other that what is loving, kind, helpful, to one is not necessarily so for another.

Recently I read a book by Adrian Smith called 'The God Shift'. His theme is that for many today, the very word 'God' is a stumbling block, it carries with it so much cultural baggage. He says, 'Every generation has to create the image of God that makes sense to their world'. For me the tension is between love and faith.

Love is something we all relate to. Virtually all human beings, except the extremely deprived, have some concept of what it means to love and be loved. It crosses all boundaries whether people are of faith or non-faith. And in these terms, the meaning and purpose of life is how to grow in love through the travails of life's journey. Love involves insight, understanding and awareness, as well as general helpfulness and compassion. As an example, in my Methodist Sunday School we were taught, 'Do not worry about what the neighbours say. Only be concerned about what those whom you respect say. Take notice of that'. How many people whose lives are dominated by what others think of them would feel quite differently about themselves had they been taught that. Another teaching we had in the Sunday School was that God was out there in the world ahead of us, preparing the way, if you like. As an adult, I learnt that John Wesley called it 'prevenient grace'. God was in the world bringing good things about and we were to face the world, expecting to find him there. It took away the fear of the unknown. The world was not some big dark entity over against us, but the place of God's activity, and we were to join him in it.

Faith, as we know, means trust, but it is often confused with belief, which has come to mean assent to certain statements about the nature of Jesus. It seems to me that trust is what we need, especially when life becomes insecure. We lose a job, or the rent goes sky high, or we contract an illness. Life suddenly becomes precarious and faith kicks in that there will be an answer somehow. Love, is how we live our everyday lives; how to live lovingly when faced with the endless

pettiness of humdrum lives, difficult neighbours, impossible colleagues, workmates etc.

After I read 'The God Shift ' I wrote a poem which expresses some of the direction in which I find I'm veering.

And, of course, it reflects Paul's great hymn to love, in I Cor 13 that ends, 'now abides faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love'.

The God Shift

Yes, from faith to love
The focus changes.
Why faith? It is but trust
That all who would have life
Must know.
But love - that's an art,
A complex subtle thing
That must be tried, risked,
Wrenched from out the jaws
Of failure and despair.

Faith presupposes God out there
Who in the end will justify
The wrack and pain, injustice of it all,
And bring it all to good.
But love, love stands at the centre
Of who we are
Asking no other purpose
But to be itself,
Wresting good out of the darkest pain,
Laughter out of the absurdity of life,
Joy in the small essentials.

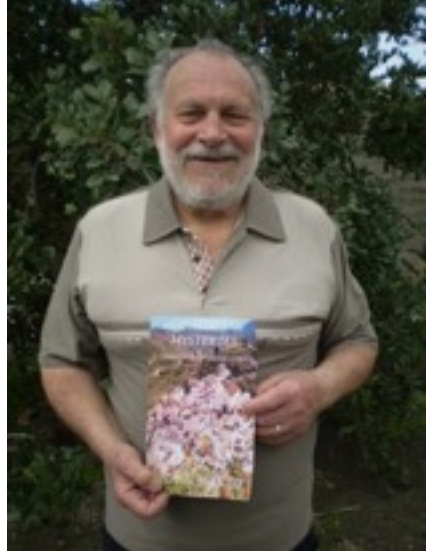
More Andalucian Stories



“More Andalucian Mysteries” by John Hardy is a second collection of eighteen short stories set in southern Spain, mainly in the Axarquía in Andalucía, where John lives. The first volume, “Andalucian Mysteries”, was published in December 2013.

To learn more about the stories, and how to buy your own copy of the book, which is also available as an e-book, and to view photographs of John and the wonderful countryside where he lives, go to his website www.johnhardybooks.com

John holding his first book



An Othona Regulars' Table Called the Virtual Stoep

Martin Riemer

One of the attractions of Othona is the informal time you can spend sitting next to others, talking about or listening to more or less serious subjects. A good place to do this is the Stoep at Bradwell where one can also drink, knit, read, smoke, ...

Those of us living further away miss this opportunity. So we have set up a Virtual Stoep on Sunday nights 9pm UK time - first we just typed and read and now we can talk and listen too - even see some of us - on a computer or smart-phone on WiFi somewhere in the world or on a European land-line phone - and you can smoke, drink, knit, read, ... and there isn't even a dress code if you don't switch on your web-cam.

Usually we are a good handful of Othona members who come and go over usually 2 hours, from teenagers to folks well past the legal pension age - just the typical Othona mix; members from the UK, France, Spain, Russia, Germany, USA, Korea, ... (I probably forgot a few). Members from the other side of the world find it a bit more difficult to join in, especially if it is already Monday morning and time to start work. The maximum number of participating members we ever muster has been about 20. On special Virtual Stoeps like on AGMs, New Year's Eve or parties and events we see a lot more faces but not everyone joins in the virtual conversations.

On normal Sunday nights we share our thoughts and experiences. Those on a computer can share a look at interesting subjects, images, videos, books ... on the WWW - together with everyone else - in our own time. We exchange the latest good and, at times, sad news and try to help each other and others when possible. There can also be a time of silence, creative thinking, ... just like on the Real Stoep. Since January 2013 I have tried to summarise the main subjects we've been discussing - of course if no one objects - normally only using first names or no name unless it's someone who wants or needs to be

mentioned with full name. This summary I "publish" on the "closed group - members only" called Othona Forum - on Facebook, to give others a chance to share what's been going on e.g. interesting events, new publications, weather conditions (after all, Othona is quite British!) floods, international affairs - in short all that you can get involved in at Othona. Over the year those summaries became a bit more detailed at times to highlight more than just subjects. Often a link to a web-site of interest is included in those summaries.

And last but not least: The Virtual Stoep is only virtual and the Real Stoep is a lot more flexible as you can go to Chapel when the bell rings, go for a swim, join lecture or other activities ...
- but it's a lot better than having no Stoep at all!).

See or hear you on the Real or Virtual Stoep ...(Martin Riemer - spelt with lie! like in Diesel!)

Obituaries

Tigran Navassardian

It really is time that I wrote to inform you of the death of my husband TIGRAN NAVASSARDIAN on 1 November 2012. I imagine that only Janet Marshall remembers us; she was a schoolgirl when we first knew her.

Tigran came from Paris to Othona in the fifties, one of many young people from across the Channel in those days. Tigran and I came to know each other at Othona; not a simple courtship as he lived in Paris and I in London. It all worked out however and Norman Motley married us in his church, St Michaels Cornhill, in July 1962.

As Tigran was an interpreter we moved to Geneva where he worked at the United Nations for almost 30 years before retiring when we came to live in London. Our children enjoy very different careers, John, an aero-space engineer is in Paris, Jennie is a nurse and has a hypno-therapy practice in Geneva and Helene is with Christies in London. We celebrated our Golden Wedding in July 2012 having been fortunate to enjoy a full and happy life together. Soon after in August Tigran

began to feel unwell and in a few short months he died of a brain tumour..

We always read, with interest, news of Othona: we had a particular penchant for Bradwell where we met, but we also stayed at Burton Bradstock. I am glad to see that the Othona spirit lives on and, needless to say, Othona has a special place in my heart. Obviously this notice is intended for anyone who knew us, probably not many as I am approaching 80 and Tigran would have been 81 this year. I simply wanted to share with you our story, part of Othona's rich history.

Jean Navassardian

Othona at Greenbelt 2014

Tony Jaques

The Greenbelt Festival is a remarkable annual event over the August Bank Holiday weekend. It's less well known than Glastonbury or WOMAD, but at least as interesting, with music, arts, spirituality, social justice, comedy, ideas, ethical goods... Lots of Othona people love this festival (see greenbelt.org.uk)

After many years in Cheltenham, the festival site moves this year to Northamptonshire, near Kettering. And for the first time there will be an official Othona presence. We'll have a stand in the G-Source tent, alongside many other groups and organisations - everything from promoting fair trade coffee to solidarity with lesbian and gay Christians.

If you're at Greenbelt do come and see us! Best of all, tell us in advance that you'll be there, give us your mobile number, and we can arrange a meet-up time for as many Othona friends as possible. Email or text to: corrina@othona-bb.org.uk or 07768 965621 (Corrina Taylor has been a core member at both Othona centres and will be one of the team representing us at Greenbelt.)As the Greenbelt website says: **Greenbelt is...** Engaged with culture, inspired by the arts, sustained by faith, we aspire to be an open, generous community. "Greenbelt ranks alongside Glastonbury as my favourite festival gig of the summer." — Mark Thomas

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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