

# Our History

Ray Davey was the founder and first community leader of Corrymeela. During World War II he joined the YMCA to provide spiritual and physical support for troops. Ray was captured and incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp in Dresden and there bore witness to the bombing of that city.

This experience profoundly changed him. The bombing of Dresden affected Ray deeply, underscoring the futility and destructiveness of all conflict. While a prisoner, Ray thought about building community amidst conflict.

After the war, he was appointed the first Presbyterian Dean of Residence at Queen's University. He was an engaging and committed chaplain, and created events where students could experience a sense of community and gathering.

Ray and his students, became concerned at the sectarian tensions that were brewing in Northern Ireland during the 60s and wished to establish a place of gathering, an "open village where all people of good will" could come together and learn to live in community.

In 1965, it became known that a site outside Ballycastle was up for sale— a site that had an old Dutch-style holiday house on it. This Ballycastle property was purchased by Ray and the students for £7,000 in early 1965. The money was raised within 10 days. The current site was officially opened on October 30, 1965. "Corrymeela" was already the name of the area when the community purchased the property.

The word Corrymeela can be interpreted in different ways— "Hill of Harmony," "Hill of Honeysuckle," and "Lumpy Crossroads" are three of the possible interpretations.

From its first days, Corrymeela has been a place of gathering, work, faith and discussion; bringing people of different backgrounds, different political and religious beliefs and different identities together. We believe that there is strength in gathering and that, when we can be with each other in commitment, no difference is great enough to break us. In the early days of Corrymeela, hundreds of volunteers gave up their holidays, weekends and summer breaks to host events, seminars, camps and conferences, as well as to literally build the Ballycastle site. In time, staff members were employed who ran the site at Corrymeela and ran programmes in the wider community.

Corrymeela has always had a healthy combination of three types of people who have invested in making it what it is. People who, like the early founders, had their own careers but who dedicated many, many hours to the work. Those who had the

time to volunteer for longer periods of time on-site and invest in the lived community of Corrymeela. And full-time staff whose skill, expertise and leadership gave shape to the permanent work of Corrymeela.

We are honoured to continue this tradition. Now, 55 years after we began, we have almost 40 full time staff, we have a cohort of 20 year-long volunteers and interns, and we have hundreds of other volunteers who come for shorter periods of time. Many of our volunteers have been working on the site for decades, generously giving time and service to the work. The Community of Corrymeela has grown too, with 170 members, 70 associate members and thousands of friends around the globe. Together we make commitments to be engaged with the world at its points of fracture, faith and potential.