



## 100 Club

Recent 100 Club winners were Judith Higgs (June), Angela Singleton (July), Elizabeth Alberts (August), Eileen Akehurst (September) and Mrs Allison (October). Each received £50, and Ammerdown received the same amount.

## Happy Birthday, Lord Hylton!

The wet weather did not dampen the spirit of the 100 or so well-wishers who gathered on 17 June to mark Lord Hylton's 80th birthday. A fun evening was had by all, thanks to Ammerdown's lovely food and the excellent entertainment provided by local choir Midsomer Voices.



## A big Thank You!

Sometimes, it is difficult to find the words to thank you adequately for your generosity. We asked in the last newsletter for help to buy stackable tables for the Trevett room. We were hoping to raise £900 - you gave nearly £1,500! This means we will be able to buy much better quality tables. We have made enquiries with a number of suppliers, and will hopefully soon find what we want.

## Can you help?

Feedback from guests tells us that it is time to upgrade our loop system in the Chapel. Too many people have said they did not hear the prayers or could not follow the address. It seems, for example, that if someone sits in front of the box, the loop system will not work well at all. We have made enquiries, and the solution would appear to be to install new microphones high up on the walls so that they can capture sounds better.

If we get the chance, we would also dearly like to upgrade the microphones in the John Todd and the Trevett rooms and offer speakers the option of lapel mikes, which are so much more efficient and user-friendly. As always, any gift, however small, will be gratefully received. **Thank You!**



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The Ammerdown Centre



Newsletter

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***"Taking part in Ammerdown's Three Faiths Summer School is an experience never to be forgotten. Your faith will be strengthened, and your experience of seeing, living and being will be widened for ever."***

So writes a participant in our 2012 Three Faiths Summer School which took place in July. I wholeheartedly agree with these words. It was the fourth Summer School I myself have attended as Director of Ammerdown, and each one has been unforgettable.

I knew that my understanding of Judaism and Islam would be enhanced. What I was not quite prepared for was, firstly, the deep friendships that would develop through attending, and secondly, that my own faith would grow stronger. There is nothing like the question "Why do you as a Christian believe this or that?", asked in a totally non-aggressive way, in a spirit of genuine enquiry, to make you realise that, more often than not, there is no easy answer. The reply "Because I have been told to believe this" does not quite cut it! The question forces you to forget about staple answers and dig deep into what you really believe and why. My own experience is that it can be uncomfortable at times, but can also be hugely enriching and rewarding.

There is also nothing like questions asked by members of other faiths to make you look at your own faith tradition in a new way. I will never forget the exchange I overheard between two participants in our 2006 Summer School. One Roman Catholic nun said to a much younger female Muslim participant: "I would very much like to speak to you about how Islam treats women". The Muslim lady replied with a lovely smile: "I'd be very happy to talk about it, as it is an issue very close to my heart. But I would also very much like to talk to you about how your religion treats women!". I was inwardly cheering, thinking: "This is how honest dialogue starts..."

This year, as part of our focus on 'Pilgrimage', we had a talk on Labyrinths. The speaker brought a portable labyrinth, and we all walked it. What an extraordinary experience! The unity of purpose brought us together in a way that transcended differences. It was a very apt and symbolic end to yet another unforgettable week!

With best wishes,

Our next Three Faiths Summer School will take place from 12 to 18 August 2014, on the theme of 'charity'.



## Spotlight on Private Guests

Given that the vast majority of guests come to Ammerdown for a course or as part of a group, it can be easy to forget those individuals who come for a private retreat or a quiet time. Their feedback speaks for itself.

Maria is a carer who faces very difficult circumstances at home. She approached Ammerdown earlier this year, as she was desperate for a break but knew she could not afford our normal rates. We told her not to worry about money, and she spent four days with us. Here is what she wrote :

**“This place is a true gift from God: a place of peace, a place of prayer, a place of grace, an oasis of spirituality. Love wraps you like a shawl. Here, I met with Jesus face to face. Jesus Emmanuel, Love Divine, set upon in this heart of mine. I leave a different person.”**



Jane is a regular guest here. Here is what she writes:

**“I would like to thank you all for the extraordinary kindness and helpfulness of the staff. My health has considerably deteriorated since I was last here, but it seemed that someone was always on hand with a helpful hand, opening doors, carrying plates etc. What a lovely lot they are!... And such an important factor in making Ammerdown the special place it is”.**

And finally Sophie, another recent first-time visitor:

**“The tranquil atmosphere, steeped in history, is a real invitation to experience peace and a nurturing of body and soul that enables the healing of past wounds, which in turn augments ideas of value and worth. The warm and welcoming atmosphere also helps a lot, as do the delicious food and the beautiful grounds”.**

Maria asked us to express her gratitude to our financial supporters for making it possible for her to come at a vastly reduced rate. So **THANK YOU** everyone for your help in making such a difference to guests like Maria.



### Any bright idea?

Here is what another guest, who found acceptance and healing at Ammerdown, wrote in her feedback form:

*“People often come to places like Ammerdown with wounds, areas of their lives that don't work, messes that they can hardly begin to express into words. We believe that Jesus can meet us in all this: we do not need to sort it out and get it all polished up before we approach him. So may we have,*

*among the pictures and sculptures in the Chapel something broken? Something to help hurt people know that their very brokenness is sacred? After all, Leonard Cohen wrote:*

*“Ring the bells that still can ring.  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There's a crack in everything.  
That's how the light gets in”.*

We think having something broken in the Chapel is a beautiful idea, but it has to be done in the right way. Leaving a broken plate in a corner would only serve to make the Chapel look untidy! Can you think of anything suitable that would further enhance the prayerful atmosphere in the Chapel? If you do, please get in touch.

## New face at Ammerdown

John I'Anson is our new 'Out of Hours Duty Officer'. He replaces Mark Aldrich who moved to Swansea in June. John's role is very important, as he ensures that, during evenings and weekends, the needs of guests are attended to in Ammerdown's customary efficient and caring way.

John has a background in the RAF and, more recently, worked as instructor in the United Arab Emirates and as project manager in Iraq. He therefore knows how to deal with the unexpected – a skill that will no doubt serve him well at Ammerdown!

John has settled in remarkably well and has already received much praise from colleagues and guests for his 'can-do' attitude with a smile. Well done John!



## 2013 Courses Programme out soon!

The 2013 Ammerdown Programme, which offers over 90 day and residential courses, should be available by the end of October. Very popular course leaders such as Fr Daniel O'Leary and Margaret Silf will be back, alongside equally popular newcomers such as John Bell and Diarmuid O'Morchu. We will also offer many more 'craft and art' courses next year. Following the closure of Urchfont Manor in Devizes, many Urchfont tutors have been looking for a new venue and approached Ammerdown. 'Jewellery Making', 'Enamelling', 'Embroidery', 'Hand-Knitting' and 'Lace Making' will therefore all be on offer at Ammerdown next year.

If you have been on a course in recent years or requested a copy of the programme, you should automatically receive a brochure in the post. If, however, nothing has appeared by mid-November, please contact us. Also, please don't forget that you are welcome to request extra copies to pass on to friends and relatives. We love it when you help spread the word!