



The Ammerdown Centre  
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## DATES FOR YOUR 2010 DIARY:

### Open Gardens

11am to 5pm,  
5 April, 3 May, 31 May,  
30 August

### Summer Fete

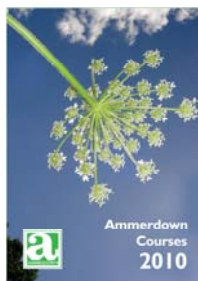
2pm to 5pm  
Sunday 13 June

## Ammerdown 100 Club

The recent winners were Bridget Edgely (October), Beryl Shannon (November) and Hans Popper (December). If you would like to find out more about this great way of raising money for the Centre, please turn to the response form.

## 2010 Programme

All supporters should have received our 2010 programme, but if you have not, please contact us or use the response form to request a copy. Feel free to ask for extra copies to pass on to friends and neighbours. Hopefully they too might be tempted to visit and have a taste of the special 'Ammerdown experience'!



## A big Thank You

Guests who were here over Christmas had the pleasure of 'inaugurating' our re-upholstered chairs in the lounge, for which supporters generously contributed over £1,000. Most of the chairs badly showed their age, so we are ever so grateful for your help in re-furbishing them. We kept to the colour red, in order to brighten up the room, and made sure the chairs are all properly padded again! They look lovely, and have greatly enhanced the lounge. Thank you!

## Can you help?

We would very much like to buy a projector and large screen for the Chapel, that we could also lend to others. When outside groups have used theirs to project songs, prayers or visuals, we have seen how much they can help to enhance worship.

The central focus brings people together in a new way, and also works wonders at creating an atmosphere of prayerful attentiveness as well as encouraging creativity. The total cost for a screen and projector would be £800. We would also need a laptop, which would cost around £550. If you are able to help, any gift, however small, will always be gratefully received. **Thank You!**



The Ammerdown Centre



# Newsletter

January 2010

In the evening of Boxing Day, on a beautifully clear night, everyone taking part in the Christmas Houseparty gathered outside Ammerdown's Chapel for what proved to be a magical occasion: we lit up and released several Sky Lanterns (miniature hot air balloons), and watched them slowly rise into the air and drift away, bringing light to the dark sky.

These lanterns, specially ordered for the occasion, are said to date back hundreds of years in Asian Custom, with people making a wish as the lantern is released, believing their troubles are carried away with the glow.

For us, the Sky Lanterns provided an opportunity to give thanks for the fellowship we had experienced throughout the Houseparty, to remember people who could not be with us, and to make a wish for the year to come.

We had just had a candle-lit service of thanksgiving, focusing on the many things that we too often take for granted in our daily lives - from the roof over our head and the food on the table, to the love and care of our family and friends. Watching the lanterns light up and slowly rise into the night, we felt amazingly privileged to be there, together, witnessing an enchanting sight... One of those special occasions when time seems to stop for a moment!



It was also a time when we remembered our dear friend Bob Playfoot, who was with us last Christmas but who unfortunately lost his battle against cancer in October 2009. He had been a strong supporter of Ammerdown for many years, helping in all sorts of ways, including as volunteer gardener, and he will be greatly missed.

The occasion also brought to my mind the quote by Meister Eckhart: "What good is it that Christ was born 2,000 years ago if he is not born now in our heart?". My prayer at the beginning of this new year is that we will not wait until Christmas Day to celebrate the arrival of Christ, but that we also all strive to be more 'Christ-like' every day of the year...

With best wishes,

Bénédicte Scholefield - Director

## Giving thanks for an excellent year!

In spite of the difficult economic climate, 2009 has been a good year for Ammerdown. This is all the more remarkable because, in January, our biggest client of the year (worth £38,000 in income) cancelled. We prepared ourselves for a very tough year and prayed that God would see us through.



Well, He certainly answered our prayers! Not only have we more than made up for the cancellation, but we have welcomed a lot of new groups who had never been before, have shared some very special moments with guests, and have continued to receive excellent feedback from visitors. The Thank You cards and personal notes keep coming, each telling an uplifting tale of how Ammerdown has touched our guests in a special way.

None of it would, of course, be possible without a first class team of staff and volunteers, always willing to go the extra mile and unfailingly courteous to guests, as evidenced by this letter from a Methodist leader: *"Many members of our group have commented on the innate friendliness of everyone on the staff. After a morning's work in the hot kitchen, the chef was all smiles at the servery - and even the washers up doing the chores shared a friendly comment. Throughout our stay, your staff and volunteers could not have been more helpful"*. The prayerful and financial support of our friends also counts for a lot, so many thanks for all your help in making Ammerdown such a special place. We now pray that 2010 will be another very good year for Ammerdown!

## A "truly magical" Christmas

Our Christmas Houseparty was once again tremendous fun for all involved - staff, volunteers and guests alike. *"We became a true community"*, writes one guest, *"in which people felt free to contribute spontaneously in ways they would not have been able to do otherwise - as evidenced by the fabulous pantomime"*. Another guest, new to Ammerdown, wrote: *"For me, it was just the right and a wonderful balance between many interesting and varied activities, being sociable and having quiet times for myself. Once again, thank you"*. And finally: *"The food was better than ever - even though I thought last year's standards would be impossible to beat!"*

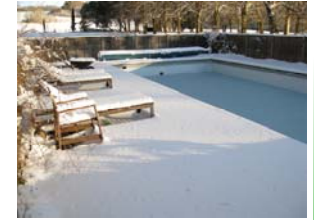
We will do our best to ensure that next Christmas continues in the same 'magical' vein. And if you would like to be with us, our advice would be to book soon, as the Christmas Houseparty books up very quickly...



## Ammerdown the new Winter Spa Resort?

We may not have had a white Christmas, but snow fell with a vengeance in early January! Fortunately, it came at a very quiet time for the Centre so the fact that most staff were unable to come to work on several days was not

too huge a disruption. And it allowed us to take some wonderful photos of Ammerdown in the snow - including a frozen swimming pool! We are now considering re-positioning Ammerdown as an exclusive winter spa resort - what do you think?....



## Enhanced Interfaith Dialogue

At the end of November, over 30 people involved in interfaith dialogue came together at Ammerdown for a weekend of learning and sharing experiences. It was jointly led by St Ethelburga's in London and faithnetsouthwest, and was the first residential event of its kind. It was also extremely good value, as Ammerdown decided to subsidise the event to make it more affordable to interfaith workers, who are not known to be flushed with money!



All this may explain why the event proved so popular, quickly reaching the upper limit of 30 participants. Many travelled from afar - including Scotland, Sweden and Germany! There were also several Jewish and Muslim participants, who added great richness to the sharing of personal stories and insights.

It was Ammerdown's first foray into formal training in interfaith dialogue, and we were delighted to see the weekend unanimously highly rated. The formal training in a wide variety of techniques for facilitating dialogue - from the importance of careful planning to tools for handling conflict - was very well received. Equally valuable were the opportunities to share personal experiences of what works best. There was a real 'buzz' in the Centre throughout the weekend, which included two very late nights in the Bar/Lounge, with conversation flowing freely until the early hours - and laughter too! In fact, the weekend was such a success that we have decided to run it again this year, on 26 - 28 November. Therefore, if you know anyone who might be interested, please ask them to check our website or contact us. We will also be holding this year our bi-annual Three Faiths Summer School, on 7 - 13 July. It is open to all Christians, Jews and Muslims, and has been described by a past participant as 'life-changing'. Please ask to see our leaflet if you are interested.

## Continuing Fr. Bede Griffiths' Tradition

Our last 'external' event in 2009 was one that is very close to our heart: the Advent Retreat of the Bede Griffiths Sangha. Fr. Bede, one of the great spiritual leaders of the 20th century, came in person to Ammerdown, as evidenced by a very faded photo of him sitting in the Chapel. In his life time, by honouring the truth and wisdom of both the Eastern and Western traditions, he reached out to countless people, many of whom could not find God in the traditional churches. It would have been a great honour to welcome Fr. Bede at Ammerdown, and it is a great honour to welcome here every December the members of the Bede Griffiths' Sangha - a network of like-minded people dedicated to furthering Fr. Bede's vision.