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DATES FOR YOUR 2010 DIARY:

AMMERDOWN OPEN DAY

24 November
11am to 4pm

100 Club and Summer Draw

Recent 100 Club winners were Pam Jones (August) and Bill Furness (September).

The Summer Draw raised £218 for the Centre—thank you to everyone who bought tickets. Margaret Hatwell won 1st prize (£100), Eleanor Waxler 2nd prize (£50), and Beryl Gover 3rd prize (£25).

A big Thank You!

We never cease to be heartened by your amazing generosity. In the last newsletter, we asked for help to purchase a new carpet for the Chapel, as the current one really shows its age. We estimated it would cost up to £1,200. You gave a magnificent £1,695! **THANK YOU SO MUCH.** Our carpet supplier is now looking into the best material to cope with wax stains, and we hope to have the new carpet laid by the end of November. Any money left over will be used to buy new worship resources, such as books, CDs and display material. A real treat for us!



Photo courtesy of the Somerset Guardian

Can you help?

Ammerdown believes in the power of feeding bodies as well as souls, which is why we are this month highlighting a particularly urgent need that has just arisen in the kitchen: the potato peeler machine is on its last legs!

Now, if you think of the huge number of potatoes that get peeled every year in Ammerdown's kitchen, you will easily understand why our catering team is saying they cannot function without a machine that will do it for them...

These machines are surprisingly expensive, though: £1,600 is the estimate given by our supplier of industrial catering equipment. Yet, this is probably one item that our kitchen cannot do without. This is why we are turning to you to ask for help to buy the kitchen a new potato machine peeler for Christmas. If you are able to help, any gift, however small, will be gratefully received. **Thank You.**



The Ammerdown Centre



Newsletter

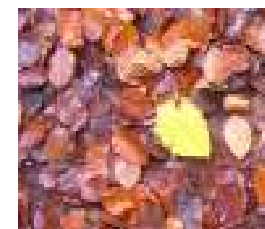
October 2010

It is not often that guests at Ammerdown go around wearing badges of various colours that say "You can talk to me", "Do not talk to me" or "Only talk to me if I talk to you first"... This was our experience in August, when 75 autistic people 'descended' on Ammerdown for four days for the *Autescape* conference. Organised exclusively by and for autistic people, this annual event is the only one of its kind in Europe, and is described as "a retreat from the demands of mainstream society and an escape to an autistic friendly place".

The event took us months of careful planning. As autistic people find it hard to cope with the unexpected, every aspect has to be thought through well in advance. Also, our staff has to be made fully aware of the sensitive nature of the group. It can indeed be difficult: two years ago, a member of staff was asked for more milk at breakfast time and replied in her usual way "No problem, love, I will do it straight away". Unfortunately, the guest became extremely upset at being called 'love', since the member of staff did not know her at all and therefore could not possibly 'love' her...

In spite of all the difficulties, we feel privileged to be the chosen 'autistic friendly' venue for *Autescape*. After all, a key aim of Ammerdown as a charity is to reach out to vulnerable or marginalised people, and to offer them true hospitality. The feedback from *Autescape* that Ammerdown is a very special place where their members feel free to be themselves, without fear of being judged or mocked, is therefore music to our ears.

Judgement is clearly an issue that autistic people have to contend with a lot. At one of my morning prayers during *Autescape's* stay, I reflected on 1 Corinthians 12 – how we are all given different gifts. One guest commented with sadness in her voice: "The trouble with our society is that it cannot cope with difference. One is either 'normal' or 'weird'."



We are therefore glad that, for a few days, our autistic guests can escape the pressure of having to behave as society expects them to. And we are thankful to everyone who supports the Centre financially. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to offer *Autescape* vastly reduced rates, which has meant that many more people were able to afford this year's *Autescape's* retreat at Ammerdown. **Thank You.**

With best wishes,

Bénédicte Scholefield - Director

Reporting on our 2010 Three Faiths Summer School

"I have learnt more this week than in my whole year at school" (Benjamin, 13)
"I have felt more emotional more times this week than in a very long time, due to the depth of the sharing and the enrichment I have been given."

As these two comments demonstrate, our 2010 Three Faiths Summer School proved once again a highly enjoyable, educational and emotional experience. From 7 to 13 July, 44 Christians, Jews and Muslims came together at Ammerdown for a week of shared activities, lectures, worship and... fun! One Muslim guest admitted: *"I wasn't at all sure about coming. I did not know whether I would be able to take part in Jewish or Christian worship. But during the week I became more and more relaxed. The Jewish and Christian prayers really spoke to me. I found myself opening out and being able to breathe (and also being in tears on occasion!). In the words of Rumi about interfaith dialogue: "The lamps are all different, but the Light is One."* We could not agree more! If you are interested, the next Three Faiths Summer School will take place on 3 - 9 July 2012 – just before the Olympic Games!



2011 Ammerdown Programme of Courses now out!

Our 2011 programme of courses will be out in print shortly, but you can see it straight away at www.ammerdown.org. We will run over 80 courses next year, so we hope that there will be something of interest for everyone!



Choosing the cover photo was, as always, a challenge. In the end, we settled for this photograph of two guests walking up to the Monument just outside Ammerdown. Private guest Cliff helped make the final decision by telling us that, out of the initial selection, this was the photo for him. It spoke, he said, of Ammerdown helping people on their journey: *"Whatever journey you are on, however grand or humble your destination, come to Ammerdown and allow yourself to walk alongside fellow travellers. Your journey need not be a lonely one. Nor does it need to be too busy. Take time... Take stock.... Come to Ammerdown!"*

We hope that you will follow Cliff's advice and visit us in 2011...

If you would like a 2011 brochure and have not received it by mid-November, please ring us on 01761 433 709 or email us at centre@ammerdown.org.

Helping to secure the long term future of Ammerdown

We have been very heartened by the response to our new Legacy leaflet, encouraging supporters to make a bequest to Ammerdown in their will. Rosemary is one of the supporters who responded. She has now arranged for 20%

of the value of her house to be given to Ammerdown after her death. She writes: *"I can't think of a better cause. I feel a very special connection with the Centre. It has helped me tremendously, and I think that it's a very genuine place, where people are trying to make the world a better, happier place, in a realistic way and with humility. I know that the money I leave will be used with care and love - because Ammerdown helps many different people, and because it stands for acceptance, dialogue and renewal."* If you have not received our legacy leaflet and would like to see it, you can request a copy via the response form.

Two new faces at Ammerdown

Marta and Fabian are two young Christian overseas volunteers who have joined us for a year. Marta is from Hungary and Fabian from Germany. They have both settled very well, and both are already proving invaluable members of the team. Marta has just turned 19. It is her first time away from Hungary and from family, so it took courage on her part. But she has already grown enormously in confidence, and her English has improved by leaps and bounds. Fabian, who is 18, is spending a year at Ammerdown instead of doing military service. He has already immersed himself in the local culture: he is very keen on sporting activities, so some members of staff have decided to initiate him into the intricacies of a very Somerset sport... skittles!



Sculpture now in place... at long last!

You may recall our request several months ago for financial help to commission a stone sculpture for the empty 'niche' above Ammerdown's main entrance. Ian, a neighbour and a professional stone mason, kindly offered to do it free of charge. His offer was gratefully accepted but of course, with Ian doing it in his spare time, it took rather longer than anticipated. Still, it was well worth the wait! Ian has produced a stunning piece of art, using the beautiful stone that your generous gifts enabled us to purchase. The sculpture is now in place. We hope you will approve!



Ammerdown Open Day on 24 November

Even though Ammerdown has been going for over 35 years, the Centre is not as well known within the local community as it could be. We have therefore decided to hold an Open Day on 24 November, from 11am to 4pm, to give everyone an opportunity to see our excellent facilities... and sample our delicious home-made cakes! If you know people who live locally, do please extend an invitation to them. And if you do live locally, could you please tell all your friends, and also maybe display one or more posters advertising the day? (You can request copies via the response form) And why not come along yourself? It would be great to see you!