



100 Club

Recent winners were Sue Eames (March), Richard Morgan (April), Wally Harbert (May) and Paula Button (June). All received £50, and Ammerdown received the same amount to support its work.

New face at Ammerdown

Stuart joined Ammerdown's team in June as our new (part-time) gardener. He has a wealth of experience in garden design and maintenance, most recently for Shaftesbury City Council, and says that gardening is much more than a job for him: it's a passion! Stuart has already made his mark on our gardens and has exciting plans for the future - including design work on our 'Peace Garden', which is still very much a 'work in progress'.



Sad farewell

Our dear friend Ken Biggs passed away in April, aged 86. Ken's firm, Ken Biggs Contractors Ltd, handled the original conversion of Ammerdown House's stable block into a residential centre back in 1972/73, and again the extensive refurbishment in 2004/05. Ken had therefore been involved with Ammerdown since its very beginnings and remained a loyal and generous friend throughout, supporting the Centre in all manner of ways, including time and advice. We felt very touched when Ken's wife asked whether we could host the wake because 'Ken loved Ammerdown so much', and were very glad to be able to show Ken and his family our love and respect in this very special way.

A big THANK YOU

You will have read on page 3 that, thanks to your unfailing generosity, we now have brand new towels for guests, including extra large 'bath sheets' available on request. THANK YOU to all who sent a donation.

Can you help?

Our next project for guests' bedrooms is the provision of mattress toppers and cosy soft blankets - all part of making a stay at Ammerdown an even more comfortable experience! As always, every gift, however small, will be gratefully received. Many thanks in advance.

The Ammerdown Centre
Ammerdown Park
Radstock BA3 5SW

Phone: 01761 433709

Email:

centre@ammerdown.org

Website:

www.ammerdown.org

Registered Charity No.
1010244



The Ammerdown Centre Newsletter
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There are events which we find interesting but which we eventually forget; and there are events that stay with us for the rest of our lives. Our open evening in May with three Palestinian community workers is definitely one I will never forget.

Jalal, Abed and Shukri (from left to right on the photo) all work with young people in their local community to help build peace and create a better future for their children and grandchildren. All three have very painful stories to tell about growing up and living in Palestine. What makes them different is that the horrors they and their loved ones have experienced have made them determined to do everything they can to break the vicious circle of hatred and violence that besets their country and the surrounding region.



I was particularly struck by what Jalal, Headmaster of a large boys' primary school, said in answer to a question about what we in Britain can do to support the Palestinian cause. He told us to stop thinking in terms of being 'pro-Israeli' or 'pro-Palestinian', and to be 'pro-PEACE' instead. And he went on to say that being 'pro-PEACE' means starting with making peace within our own hearts, and then within our own families and communities. In other words, he was challenging us in the audience to work harder at making peace happen where we are, before worrying about peace elsewhere in the world.

This is exactly what he, Abed and Shukri are committed to doing in their own town. To use Jalal's words, "we want to create change in our community so that our people do not remain stuck in the past. I used to be full of hate but my father showed me that I would never be free as long as I had hate in my heart. Now I no longer have hate, and I am free. This is what, in turn, I want to teach the boys at my school, and what you too can teach others, wherever you live, wherever you work."

For me, who has led such a sheltered life compared to what these three men have experienced and continue to experience, it was a truly humbling and inspirational message. We all know that peace has to start within our own hearts. But does it?

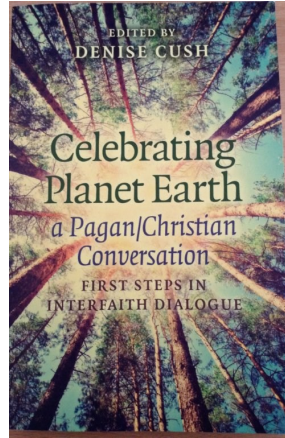
With best wishes,

Ammerdown Director

'Celebrating Planet Earth' – new book out!

This book is the result of a weekend of conversations held at Ammerdown in 2014 between a group of Pagans and Christians. The event was organised and subsidised by Ammerdown as part of its charitable objective to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation. The hope was that the participants would explore their respective preconceptions and prejudices, learn more about each other and find ways of working together to protect and celebrate Planet Earth. The event exceeded all expectations: as the Chair of the event pointed out in her concluding remarks, although this was not the first time that Christians and Pagans had attempted dialogue, all involved felt that something new and special had happened, which could and should be built upon. In particular, participants felt that the insights gained during the weekend should be shared more widely – hence the idea of a book. The book was released in June by Moon books in both print and e-format, and has already attracted very positive reviews. One reviewer called it “a feast and a gift to us all”, another described it as “a very interesting and compelling discussion”. The cost is £11.99.

The last words of the concluding chapter are worth recording, because they encapsulate perfectly what the conversation was about. Editor Denise Cush writes: *“Has the Pagan/Christian dialogue anything to offer to those who do not identify with either tradition or are 'non-religious'? I would suggest that realising that environmental activism benefits from a deep (spiritual?) motivation, that ritual and ceremony can have transforming power, that story and myth contain important truths, and that people who do not agree about some fundamental aspects of reality can nevertheless enjoy each other's company, share rituals and work together, is an important message for everyone.”*



Ammerdown is “pure indulgence”

Josie Brown is one of our most popular creative tutors, specialising in calligraphy. She was at Ammerdown in June encouraging amateur artists to use different kinds of surfaces – from glass to wood – on which to write their messages. Not only did the ‘students’ produce some stunning art works (see photo) but Josie was once more enthused about Ammerdown. *“As a creative arts tutor at the Ammerdown Centre, I always thoroughly enjoy my time there, revelling in the relaxed atmosphere that is so conducive to being creative, allowing time for yourself and yet achieving a lot too. Recently I heard two of my regular students, who I know have done a lot of residential courses elsewhere, saying that*



Ammerdown had become their favourite venue. The words 'soothing ambience', 'wonderful' and 'lovely' were used repeatedly and with great emphasis! As for me, whenever I describe Ammerdown, I summarise the whole experience as 'pure indulgence' - because I always feel pampered with delicious food, excellent accommodation and incredibly helpful and friendly staff.”

Our bedroom make-over is nearly complete!

Regular guests have noticed the difference in our bedrooms and bathrooms and tell us they love it! Here are some of the highlights:

- All our bedroom linen is now pristine white throughout;
- New pillows on every bed
- Smart new hospitality trays
- New lovely soft towels – small, large and extra large (!)
- New bath mats and shower mats (see photo)

Last but not least, we have finally managed to find the perfect information folders for our bedrooms. You may recall that, last year, we asked supporters for help to purchase smart folders to



hold the various brochures and information sheets we provide for our guests. Unfortunately, finding the right product (stylish and not too formal) proved a lot more difficult than expected. It was well worth the wait, however, as we are delighted with the folders we eventually found: they are green (to match Ammerdown's colour!), with handy pockets and Ammerdown's logo printed on the front cover.

It is thanks to your generosity that we were able to purchase these folders and buy the new towels. We are truly grateful to have so many committed supporters who take pride in how Ammerdown looks and feels just as much as we do!

Jewish/Muslim dialogue at Ammerdown

In June Ammerdown offered its facilities free of charge for a two day conversation between 10 influential Jewish and Muslim British leaders wishing to discuss the state of Jewish/Muslim relations in the UK and pave the way for future collaboration. The event was organised by *New Horizons in British Islam*, a newly launched think tank. The group tells us that they all felt the quality of dialogue achieved was remarkable: robust and honest, yet succeeding in avoiding the 'blame' game. *“Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your warm hospitality and support. We found the facilities quite amazing. The venue you have is a tremendous asset to the voluntary sector.”*

One of the Jewish leaders commented that it was very rare to find both a group and a place so open and safe that conversations could be had at levels of depth and trust that would never be reached under normal circumstances. He felt it happened with this group and this place. We, in turn, feel privileged to have been able to help.

