



PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER

www.pendarren.org

No. 2 December 2011

November 2011 has been exceptionally warm – in complete contrast to last year, when the snow hit Pendarren early! The Pendarren staff were prepared and had grit delivered in good time for the anticipated snow but the first dusting wasn't seen on the mountains until Tuesday 6th December. This has been a great relief to the staff, who don't have to walk two miles through the snow every day to get to and from work, and the budget, as the saving in heating oil costs has allowed us to carry out some essential maintenance tasks. Rumour has it that we shall be building snowmen and throwing snowballs in the New Year.....

The salmon were a little late in their journey up the river this year, again because of exceptional weather. They had to wait for a downpour of rain to swell the rivers before they could attempt the journey. Unfortunately, none of the Pendarren staff saw them as they rushed up in the first flood of autumn, although many of the local villagers spent hours waiting to witness the moment. Apparently, two hundred salmon were recorded in the weir pool on the Grwyne this year, a record.

A useless but fascinating fact, which may be of interest to some of our readers, is that the cave Ogof Draenen, which lies inside Bloreng mountain (across the valley from Pendarren House) was Britain's longest cave, with 70 kilometres of tunnels, but has now been relegated to second place. Britain's longest cave is now in the northern Pennines with one hundred and twenty kilometres of passage. Those of the Pendarren instructors who claimed to have been in Britain's longest cave will now have to travel north!

And lastly, for those of you who have visited recently or who will be coming in the New Year, you will know that autumn and winter have arrived at Pendarren as the soup has appeared at lunch time!

IMPORTANT! CHANGES TO BOOKING ADMINISTRATION

There will be changes to the administration of the annual booking procedure in the new year. Instead of being posted out in March, invitations for bookings will be emailed to all schools in January. We are hoping to deal with all applications electronically so please look out for your email after 9 January 2012. We are hoping that by bringing the process forward by two months, schools will have more time to organise visits in September and October.



VISITORS THIS HALF TERM:

The Green Primary School **17th to 21st October 2011**

"The Green had an exciting visit in October, immersing ourselves fully in the wonderful environment available at Pendarren and in the surrounding National Park. We were feeling, smelling, tasting, rolling, swimming and experiencing the outdoors. We had the privilege of being the last school to swim in the pool at Pendarren and we think this was colder than the Afon Mellte and Afon Caerfanell that we ended up submerging ourselves in as well!

We had two wonderful work experience girls from Hornsey who helped our children on the activities and in the evenings.

The pupils gained enormously from sharing in different activities that allowed them to raise their self esteem, work cooperatively together as well as having enormous FUN in the exceptionally beautiful surroundings that continually made the children go 'WOW look at that'.

They will be using their Pendarren Experiences to enhance and improve their school work as well as the life outside the school gates."



St James CE Primary School **17 – 21 October 2011**

"Our school, St James, had an amazing stay at Pendarren. We all found out more about each other and ourselves, our difficulties, and the Welsh culture, all through our stay. A student has quoted that "we have become more responsible children with life skills to use every day." Though it was five days of hard adventure, "time flew with the excitement of Pendarren." We rowed canoes, stood under waterfalls and it was all "wet but worth it!" We all thought times like these were a "bewildering and irresistible experience." We learnt that the teachers

hear a lot of stuff that we talk about, so they probably heard some of us say that it was "simply awesome!" It was hard work doing all these activities and at the end of the day "some of it was freezing, tiring, and some of the tracks were almost impenetrable, but at least we had a warm shower at the end." A lot of us were "surprised and intrigued by the amazing experience of nature, cooperation and companionship."

"An enjoyable and fun time to have."



Crowland Primary School **31st October – 4th November 2011**

An enjoyable week had by all, and in contrast to the forecasted weather, a dry one too! The great views from the top of Skirrid Mountain were appreciated by all, as was a rare chance to see Mr. Walker's special mountain dance. As much as it looks like slipping around I can assure you that the dance worked and the weather stayed dry!



Downhills Primary School **7th – 11th November 2011**

Downhills had a great week with the children learning about themselves and how they interact with each other; about how they cope with different challenges and how to use these feelings to help themselves and their peers.

These are some of their comments on the week:

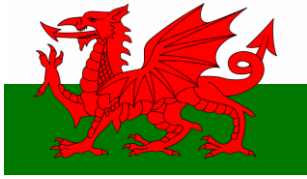
'I have done lots of exciting and scary things ... and have also learnt how to be away from my family'

'I learnt how to be independent'

'Pendarren is the most fun place I have ever been'

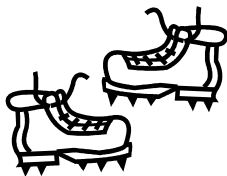
'I have learnt that us children should know that our parents do everything for us'

'the people who went to Pendarren will be experts on Wales.'



Fortismere School
7th - 11th November 2011

Well done to the Year 9 Fortismere group, it was in at the deep end with an adventure journey on the first afternoon to which all rose to the challenge. With full day activities for the next three days there was a great opportunity to learn a great deal about the activities - even if the learning was to tie up your boots and then they won't fall off is you step in a boggy puddle! A full day Bushcraft session allowed the groups to explore more of their surroundings and to try their hand at some open fire cooking, as well as shelter building, fire lighting, and many other things too.



Belmont Junior School
14-18 November 2011

The excited but apprehensive pupils from Belmont Junior School had viewed the information on the website, marvelled at other children's spectacular pictures and listened to stories and tales told by past visitors to Pendarren. However, the question on arrival remained, "Are the stories about Pendarren being an amazing and memorable experience true?"

These are some of the comments made by the children:

"Pendarren is a once in a lifetime trip. There are sensational activities to do like: high ropes, abseiling and mountain walks!"

"You can face your fears when you come to Pendarren, like if you are scared of heights."

"The kind and wonderful teachers make you feel like you are at home."

"Pendarren is magical, wonderful and exciting!"

"I will remember Pendarren for ever! This has tightened my bond with my friends."

"Pendarren gives you the opportunity to do activities that you cannot do anywhere else."

"I have learnt to overcome my fear of heights and that you can have fun with nature. For me Pendarren was an extraordinary and sensational place!"

"Bloreng Mountain was breath-taking; it was like I was above the clouds!"

"A fantastic experience that I will remember for ever!"

"I feel proud of myself that I have conquered my fear of heights. I will never forget this week it will stick with me for ever!"

"There's spectacular food: chocolate mousse, roasted potatoes and pizza is very yummy!"

"There was a story teller named Daniel Morden he hypnotised the audience with his amazing story telling!"

"Pendarren is incredible; each day you do a selection of exciting activity: abseiling, rock climbing and a lot more!"

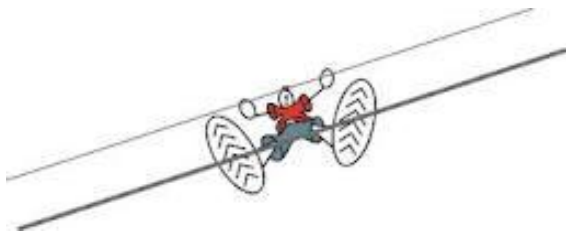


North Harringay Primary School
14 - 18 November 2011

We had an amazing week with our Year 5 pupils! The weather was so warm and sunny that we played in the sea - on a November day! Even the teachers got completely wet, although it took some gentle persuasion to get Miss Hassan to join in.

The pupils revelled in all the challenges set for them, especially leaping off the trapeze during their High Ropes activity.

All gained tremendously from their time at Pendarren which will be valuable experience for their future.



St John Vianney Primary School
21 - 25 November 2011

Mrs Butcher brought her 17th group to Pendarren - is this a record? The students had to work together and listen to information carefully so that they could achieve up in the air; underground; in and on the water and on horse back!

The room inspections were amazing both in how clean and tidy the pupils had made the rooms but also in the original song and dance welcome routines performed for the Room Inspector. We will have see if they can keep the school and their own bedroom as clean and tidy!



St Ignatius Primary School
21- 25 November 2011

Well done to all those involved with the trip this term. After an unfortunate delay leaving Tottenham, we welcomed the return of a visiting staff veteran, Mr Coffey. Alongside him to learn the ropes we were pleased to meet two new members of staff: Ms Kelleher and Ms Emin. The children learned to bake bread on the fire and build a shelter purely from sticks and leaves in their bushcraft session; took a practical look at the water cycle on the river study day and learned about mining with a trip to Big Pit. The unanimous highlight of the week for all the children (and St Ignatius staff!) was that after many years on school visits, Mr Coffey finally fell in the canal whilst canoeing (and he remained surprisingly cheerful)!!!



Stamford Hill Primary School
28 November- 2 December 2011

"The week started wet and windy but it didn't put off Stamford Hill pupils who were to be found balancing high up on the High Ropes and striding across Blorenge Mountain.

On Tuesday, the day started with room inspection. Blorenge, the large boy's dormitory, was the tidiest it has ever been seen! Outside in challenging weather, the pupils tackled Llangattock Mountain and canoeing on the Brecon canal. After the evening meal everyone walked down the lane in the dark. Many sparkling stars were seen, along with the moon, Jupiter and a shooting star.

Wednesday and off to the coast to study the seashore. The weather proved better that day as the headland walk revealed fantastic views of the sea, cliffs and crashing waves.

Some brave locals were to be seen surfing the waves on their surfboards. Too windy to have lunch on the beach but everyone was soon busy on the sand creating some extensive engineering projects. Next, hunting for creatures in the rock-pools. It had been quite stormy recently so at first it was difficult to find anything but soon crabs big and small and various fish and shrimps were on display. Having studied their catches and returned them to their habitats pupils enjoyed a splash in the waves. In the evening at Daniel Morden the story teller visited. He kept everyone enthralled with his stories. Not too scary?

On Thursday horse riding was on the programme which the pupils enjoyed. They had to learn how to look after the pony before riding out on to the mountain. The pupils had time to tend the school's plot in the Sensory Garden. Some weeds had to be dug up, and the plot tidied up. In the evening pupils dressed up warmly and went outside to sit around the campfire. Orange flames leapt to the sky and red embers glowed as Miss told a scary story.

Friday came too soon for many and everyone visited the local market town of Abergavenny. Local shops were visited and pupils commented how friendly people were.

All the pupils had a great time at Pendarren House and thanked their teachers for looking after them throughout the week.

The Christmas tree has been installed in the Main Hall. Thank you to Mr Indge, the Pendarren Maintenance Officer, for putting it up, and thanks to Stamford Hill pupils for decorating it.



Haringey Sixth Form Centre 28 November - 2 December 2011

Tuesday consisted of making full use of our new indoor orienteering course before venturing outside to tackle the outside course and the weather! Due to the high winds and rain, High Ropes became instead a very enjoyable trip to Big Pit with the added bonus of having the whole place almost to themselves. In fact it was such a stormy day that the trip to the coast had to be postponed to Wednesday and we joined Stamford Hill Primary pupils on the coach who were also hoping to enjoy the day at the coast.

Luckily the weather was a bit kinder to us at the beach, we took the chance to walk in the sea and found some impressive fish in the rock pools! Everyone thoroughly enjoyed their week at Pendarren and it was a great opportunity to take some fresh air and escape the city.



St Francis De Sales Junior School 5 - 9 December 2011

We arrived on a beautiful sunny day (it was hard to believe that it was only a few weeks before Christmas!) Things changed later in the week, though, with gusts of wind up to 70 mph and pouring rain. We had to put weights in our shoes to keep us on the ground!

'It was a shame that it was too wet to go in the caves, but we still had fun (and got wet) splashing in the puddles.' - Lynord

We had encounters with new animals, *"The horse riding was relaxing, the horses did all of the hard work, so I finally had a rest."* - Sydney

The new skills that we learnt will really help us for our future in secondary school; *I*

learnt that I can push myself forward to do some amazing things, if I really try' - Anita

There was plenty of time for laughter, too; 'canoeing was so funny when some people dropped in the canal, but I was so proud that I learnt how to steer' - D'Jean

For lots of different reasons, we'll all remember our week at Pendarren! We hope the year sixes of the future love it as much as we did!

The week at Pendarren will be remembered by Ms Naughton particularly as she was woken up in the small hours of Wednesday morning (2.30 am, actually) by an owl impressionist!



Bounds Green School 12-16 December 2011

Bounds Green pupils were the last group to visit Pendarren before the Christmas holidays. Very high winds and some snow was forecast but all were hopeful that this wouldn't deter the special guest due to visit at the end of the week. More of their visit will be included in the next newsletter.

The Firs at Pendarren

Ms Saunders, previously a member of staff at Rokesly Junior School before her retirement, stayed in the self catering bungalow, The Firs with a family group.

Here are some comments from them:

'I have been coming to Pendarren House since I was at school. I always have a fabulous time. It is an amazing facility.'

'Such a lovely place in a lovely spot. We want to keep coming back for many years to come.'

'I always have a brilliant time here, lovely location, fantastic staff and great fun!!'

DEVELOPMENTS

After feedback from visiting staff, **notice boards** have been put up on the House landing and in the Annexe common room. Each board is **part pin board and part white board** and can be used by staff or pupils for the duration of the visit.

Additional insulation has been put in the roof space of **The Firs** which resulted in a comment that "the insulation in the loft has made a big impact; it was almost too warm!!"

The Annexe loft has also been insulated, this was completed during the October half term, and indications are that the building is already much warmer.

As some of you may be aware, Andy Lewington is a keen photographer and some of his amazing shots have been used to make a **Pendarren 2012 calendar**. This is selling well, and the money raised is going towards funding projects and equipment for the visiting pupils. One of the first purchases will be resources for the Annexe for use during the evenings. If you would like to buy a calendar, please contact Pendarren. The cost is £4.50 to include postage.

You may notice on your next visit that some of the **safety equipment** has been replaced. All of the equipment used at Pendarren has a limited life span and must be renewed regularly. The most recent purchases are new climbing helmets – you may not notice these, however, as they are the same colour as the last batch!

Pendarren is hoping to become more involved in running, or assisting with running, **Duke of Edinburgh courses**; either expeditions or residentials. There has been association with Duke of Edinburgh in the past but Rob Walker, one of our instructors, has previous links with the scheme and is bringing new knowledge and enthusiasm to the Centre. Please contact us for further information or details of courses.

NQT and Haringey employee weekend – 24 – 26 February 2012

There will be a weekend course for newly qualified teachers in February 2012, to introduce them to Pendarren and what it can offer. The course will also be open to the many Haringey employees who have expressed an interest in visiting, including those working in schools, Alexandra House, the PDC, River Park House, the Civic Centre and so on. The cost is £45.00 per person and will cover transport. Further details are available on the Pendarren website or you can ring for information. Places are filling fast, so don't delay!



THANKS

Special thanks to Miss Cansdale, of Mulberry Primary School, for reviewing our diary sheets and to Mrs Butcher, of St John Vianney Primary School, for sending us copies of their diary. This is all part of the work that Pendarren staff are carrying out to identify where we can support the work of schools.



WRITING COMPETITION

The pupils of St Mary's Priory Catholic School will be visiting in July 2012 so their Headteacher, Mrs Collins, and class teachers have asked them to take part in a writing competition in anticipation of the trip. They have been asked to explain the benefits of visiting Pendarren for Haringey children. We are hoping that we will be able to include some of the winning entries in a later newsletter.

And finally

A visiting teacher asked her Year 6 pupils to write a piece entitled 'The Best Thing That's Ever Happened to Me.' The huge majority chose to write about their visit to Pendarren House. Obviously, everyone at Pendarren House is thrilled that the visit was so memorable however, the teacher had to rethink the title!



***Nadolig Llawen a
Blwyddyn Newydd Dda***

***Festive greetings from all of the
staff at Pendarren House***