



PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER

www.pendarren.org

No. 4 April 2012

Snowdrops came and went and now the lambs are in the fields, daffodils are nodding in the breeze and there's frog spawn in the pond; spring is definitely on the way. Lambs appeared early in the fields around Pendarren, some in February, but on higher ground they are only just being born.

There has been very little snow – unlike the last two winters, no staff had to walk to work this winter (2 miles round trip through the fields). It also meant that no courses had to leave early or were postponed due to the weather. It was still cold at times, though!

Like the rest of the country, we had unseasonably warm weather at the end of March. The schools visiting Pendarren had a fantastic time, wearing t-shirts on some days. Let's hope that we haven't just experienced the 2012 Welsh summer!

Sadly, a dead otter was found on the road just a few hundred metres from Pendarren House. It was a young male which had been hit by a car. Otters are protected under UK and European Law so the death had to be reported to the Environment Agency, who collected the animal and transported it to Cardiff University where the "Otter Project" will study it for information regarding health and diet. Before the otter was taken to Cardiff, the visiting students had a unique opportunity to see this secretive, nocturnal creature. We feel privileged to know that otters are re-establishing themselves in the river close to Pendarren House.



Last year Peter Desmond and the Steel Band members of Haringey Young Musicians visited Pendarren for Martin Skinner's leaving party and the Pendarren Open Day. This year, members of the Youth Jazz Band visited for a practice and activity weekend. The ladies working in the kitchen enjoyed the visit very much and expressed a wish to have live music as they worked every day! See below for an account of their visit.

Activities

The Night Sky – some schools took the opportunity of the clear night skies to do a bit of star gazing. Seven Sisters Primary discovered the beautiful constellation of ... Seven Sisters. In March there were no less than 3 planets easily visible in the evening sky – Venus, Jupiter and Mars. Saturn and Mercury were there too, but Saturn is faint and Mercury is always low in the sky near sunrise or sunset and therefore harder to spot.



National Science and Engineering week, which took place this year between 9 and 18 March, shines the spotlight on how science, technology, engineering and maths relate to our everyday lives and helps to inspire the next generation of scientists with fun and participative activities. With this in mind, we hope to develop the night sky as a winter evening activity and to find ways to include maths in the diary sheets. Allegedly we have a telescope in the attic somewhere, when we locate it we will see if it can be put into use!

VISITORS

St Gilda's RC Junior School 13 - 17 February 2012

6D from St Gilda's reached Pendarren on 13th February 2012. This was during the national half term, therefore we were the only class there for the week. Not that this was a setback because we had so much fun! Each person, if asked individually, would say they would have been ready to stay at Pendarren for longer.

On the day we arrived we were shown to our rooms and after lunch started out on our first activity, Creoso. After each group had returned we discussed our views and adventures. We ended the day with a night walk and our energy had been well and truly used up. (To prove this Samuel said that he felt tired!)

Our activities included high ropes, canoeing, river study, visits to Big Pit and Skenfrith Castle and we finished on Friday morning with a local walk which gave us one last chance to look at the beautiful countryside. Each event resulted in a sense of satisfaction, exhilaration and achievement.

I am sure that Pendarren will last in the memories of each person in 6D, no matter how forgetful we are, and once again thank you to all the staff who guided us through the experience.

Adair, 6D



Bruce Grove Primary School 20 – 25 February 2012

Life at Pendarren – By Sugar Loaf Dormitory
Once we arrived at Pendarren, we felt out of our comfort zone but jolly and excited. When we had finally settled in we discovered that Pendarren was a beautiful place and calm.

In the Sugar Loaf bedroom the beds are extremely cosy, there is a lot of storage space for clothes and shoes. The curtains and carpet make it easy to relax. There is a unique view.

The activities we attended during the week were wonderful, enjoyable and interesting. We did

canoeing, climbing mountains, standing under water falls and going to Big Pit.

Pendarren experience for Skirrid Dormitory
At Pendarren, children learnt and enjoyed vital skills. There were a variety of different activities including; canoeing, walking, rock climbing, abseiling, river study and a whole lot more ...

Your child / children will learn how to be more independent and responsible. Also they will come back knowing how to fend for themselves at such a young age.

If you are planning on sending you child to Pendarren House they must be prepared to experience the most unforgettable moment of their lives!

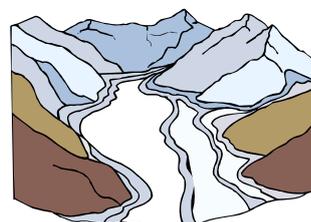


Alexandra Park School 20 – 22 February 2012

Mr Jonathan Lister, Year 13 Director of Studies for Alexandra Park School, brought a small, but exclusive, group of Year 13 students on an A' Level Geography field trip. Due to school constraints they could only come on a Thursday through to the Saturday.

The course allowed students to visualise the classroom theories and bring them to life. The students found that getting physically involved makes you like it more and demands your attention. The specific examples from the field helped their understanding and the ability to go the extra mile whilst seeking additional information made what they saw interesting and enjoyable.

The group were a credit to their school, especially in the way they conducted themselves whilst interviewing fellow Year 13 Geography students from the local comprehensive school in Abergavenny.



Seven Sisters Primary School 27 February – 2 March 2012

An excellent week was had by the pupils and staff from Seven Sisters Primary School. The pupils were a credit to their staff and school in the way that they approached all the challenges put in front of them and in their wonderful behaviour and good manners (as commented on by the coach driver and support staff in the centre).

Here are some of the comments from the students at their end of week review:

'What I have learnt about myself is that I have to conquer my fears and if I don't I can't achieve.'

'What I have learnt about myself is that when I give up I must try and try and try until I achieve my goal.'

'The person who most impressed me most was Taniha, because when we were doing the high ropes she was scared when she got up high and she kept on going and she kept on saying that she wanted to come down. We were trying to encourage her and she got up higher and she got 13 (crates high).'

'The person who impressed me the most was Maria because she is new to the group and is trying really hard.'



Earlsmead Primary School 5 - 9 March 2012

Earlsmead Primary School arrived at Pendarren with 32 Year 6 pupils for a week of education, adventure and fun. Pendarren House and its grounds were explored on Monday, we had a walk in the woods and a campfire in the tipi. Fantastic views were seen walking on Sugar Loaf Mountain, which was quite a challenge but well worth it. (We made friends with a big Husky dog). We did canoeing and learnt about the Canadian Indians, and played canoe games. Big Pit mining museum was very interesting, the miners were our guides. They knew everything and were funny. Ponies were used in the mines

and only had one holiday a year! Climbing – another challenge and so exciting. Wednesday was the best when we went to the coast as the sun shone brightly all day. We walked the coast path, had lunch on the beach and found sea creatures in the rockpools. The Pendarren teacher showed us a fish that walks on the sand!! We all had a big splash in the sea even though it was a bit chilly. That evening we had a disco with DJ Orrsome. On Friday morning we did the local river walk. Miss Becka and Mr Orr walked very fast!



Blanche Nevile School 12 – 16 March 2012

The sunny weather prevailed for Blanche Nevile this week as the KS4 students embarked on their week at Pendarren. A glorious day of sunshine on Monday meant that the views from the top of Sugarloaf were spectacular, a perfect demonstration of temperature inversion (KS4 geography students will know all about these). The weather held up for the rest of the week and a great time was had by all in the sunshine. There was a sleepless night for a few after they requested a ghost story from Pendarren staff. This was followed by an extended tour of the house to show the modifications that have been made to the building over the years, descriptions of how the house used to look and how the servants were integrated in the family. Make sure your butler is not drinking your wine!!

Well done to all the students and staff for a fantastic attitude to challenge and overcoming challenges. A huge amount of determination and willingness to try new things was evident from everyone. Thanks for a good week.



Highgate Wood School
12 – 16 March 2012

Some comments from the Year 9 students at Highgate Wood:

'My week was amazing! The kind of things we do in Pendarren are things that you just can't do anywhere else. Me and my friends applied together and came together. We got to know each other so much better. Pendarren has not only taught me about my friends but about myself. I've never thought I could do anything physical but after doing the activities I realised I can do everything, it was all in my head. I'm so much happier just generally (I don't know why?!) Sleeping in dormitories is very fun (if sometimes tiring). Thank you so much Pendarren.' – Martha

'During my visit to Pendarren I learnt a lot about myself. I learnt to try new things and push myself, I learnt that I can do things that I would never have expected myself to do. I have also made new friends that I wouldn't have at school. Overall I enjoyed myself a lot and would recommend other schools to go.' – Ella

'During my visit to Pendarren I enjoyed being with my friends for the whole five days. However I was really terrified from most of the activities, but I faced all of my fears and did it. And at the end I felt really proud of myself, so did my family when I told them.' – Nurselim

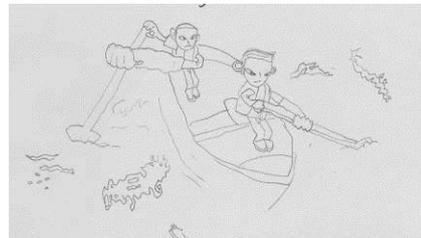


St Ann's Primary School
19 - 23 March 2012

Some comments from the pupils at St Ann's Primary School:

'Today we hiked up Bloreng Mountain. It was very exhausting, but we pulled through it!' – Tariq

'I had a great time for my first day. I experienced climbing on the top of a mountain, the view was spectacular, you could see England from the top.' – Miles



Mountains in all different shapes and sizes
Open Rivers
Under water old red sandstone
Naughty sliding and slipping
Trapped in all different ways
Amazing features, especially fossils
Improving from skills
Never giving up and always trying to help each other – Sophia

'It felt good to achieve something you are scared of, and to face my fears.' – Michael



Lea Valley Primary School
19 - 23 March 2012

Here are some quotes from the staff and pupils at Lea Valley Primary:

'I fell in the water and it was really funny' - Kayla

'We found crabs, prawns, a starfish and a five bearded rockling fish' - Naska

'The beds are very comfortable' - Jenée

'Our bedrooms were good fun' - Azat

'The storyteller was really descriptive and funny;' - Mahmud

'We all had a fabulous week. Thank you, Pendarren for a wonderful time' - Mrs Beyoglu

'When we were rock climbing I was a bit scared because I'd never done it before – but I had a go and in the end I could do the purple one' - Gurkan

'I was so happy that I could get to the top of the rock wall' - Malissa

'I really enjoyed the challenges we had to do when we were caving' – Reanne

'We worked together as a team to make the canoe go where we wanted it to' – Behije

'On my birthday we went to the beach and Pendarren gave me candles on my cake' - Eric



Risley Avenue Primary School 26 – 30 March 2012

'The Pendarren experience was awesome. Pendarren is definitely a place to remember!' - Lucy

'I will never forget the experience that I had from Pendarren. It was so much fun! What I loved most, was abseiling because I conquered my fear - which was heights' – Yi Bing

'I really loved the rock climbing. It was something I had never experienced in my whole life. It also put a smile across my face like a Cheshire cat. I couldn't believe I got to the top!' - Sabrina

'I loved my experience in Pendarren because the activities made me become more confident and independent' - Charome

'Pendarren was a fantastic experience. I liked the way they made me smile' - Ernold

'I enjoyed the tuckshop because there were so many sweets, chocolates, drinks and souvenirs which I was able to buy' - Aaron

'Pendarren was a fantastic experience. It helped me with conquering my fears' - Daniel

'I loved the dinner ladies at the Pendarren House. What I like about them were their hellos, their chocolate cakes and most importantly their beautiful smiles' - Saida

'During my stay in Pendarren, I enjoyed the coastal visit the most because it was fun and exciting. I enjoyed finding sea creatures such

as star fish, crabs, fish and shells. I also loved the canoeing! This experience helped me to become more independent' - EYZA



Blanche Nevile School 26 – 30 March 2012

A group of 15 students, aged between 11 and 14, from Blanche Nevile School visited Pendarren House with the aim of making new friends when the Year Sixes go to secondary school in September. What with the weather being sunny, the pupils did not need any encouragement to get wet. Pupils were attacked by a splashing monster (Neil) on Monday while trying to fill up their water bottles from a spring. On Tuesday, at the beach, everyone dipped their toes in the sea. Standing under a waterfall and canoeing were all wet affairs too! In fact, the only day they did not get wet was Friday, during Bushcraft, where they managed to make fires and were brave enough to drink nettle tea.



The Firs, Self Catering at Pendarren House

The Firs is always in demand through the summer months and this year is no exception. It is already fully booked for June and August, with a few weeks in May, July and September still available. As the winter months are less popular, we have decided to reduce the price per night for the months of November, December, January and February – with the exception of the Christmas / New Year holiday. If you are interested in booking The Firs, either for yourself, a family group or a school / college party, please contact Pendarren for availability and download a booking form from our website – www.pendarren.org

We have already had groups using The Firs as part of their programmes of study from school or college. Here are some comments:

Hackney Community College **13 – 16 March 2012**

Students from the BTEC Travel and Tourism course visited Wales to contrast this area with their own. During their stay they visited tourist attractions such as Big Pit and Llangorse Multi-Activity Centre as well as taking part in some activities at Pendarren.

They were eager to give some feedback on their stay:

- I had a fantastic time here. I enjoyed everything - things and activities. I would love to come back again.
- I would also recommend other students to come over here. Thank you.
- This was the best experience I've had. It's so entertaining that I will come back again. Perfect view, lovely, comfortable accommodation. This is a **must** to come, guys!
- I had a good time at Pendarren House. A fantastic experience and would definitely recommend it to other students.
- I had a great time. Great activities and clean accommodation.
- I've had the next best thing to a "Big Brother Experience" having spent time with my classmates at the Firs in Pendarren House. Very friendly staff. Recommended.
- I had a wonderful time, hope everyone can come and have the same experience as me!
- The accommodation was better than I expected – I give it high ratings and the instructors were friendly.

Park View **23 – 25 March 2012** **A' Level Geography Field Studies**

After weeks of waiting, finally the day arrived - we were going to Pendarren. After a 5 hour drive, we arrived at the Firs; the cottage where we would spend our stay.

The accommodation was luxurious, the rooms "tidy - you know it", and the surrounding area "beautiful", "sublime" and "revitalising".

On the second day of our stay, we climbed the mountain Pen y Fan and Fan y Big in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The challenge was exciting, at times exhausting, but once

completed very rewarding. The 15 mile walk was "awesome", "exhilarating" and the views were "breathtaking". The walk itself was tiring, but the views and the feeling of accomplishment afterwards was more than worth it.

The blissfully warm weather was an added bonus, as was the celebratory can of coke waiting for us at the end.

It was a teambuilding experience that brought us closer, and will be an experience we will always value and remember.

Weekend Visits to Pendarren House

As well as The Firs, Pendarren House and The Greig Annexe can be booked for the weekend for use by groups. We recently held a familiarisation weekend for newly qualified teachers and school staff which was joined by employees of Haringey Council.

NQT Weekend **24 – 26 February 2012**

A tiring and exciting weekend was had by various staff from across the borough. We had staff groups from Lordship Lane and Weston Park primary schools, Newly Qualified Teachers from across the borough as well as peoples from various departments in the council. We were also privileged to have two Councillors giving up their time to attend as well. The weekend was used to show people the opportunities available at Pendarren as well as the chance to network with other Haringey staff and have fun. People had a go at many different activities available at Pendarren from scaling the heights on our high ropes course to looking underground in some of our local cave systems - as well as relaxing and sampling the hospitality at our village pub.

Haringey Young Musicians – Jazz Band **23 - 25 March 2012**

Haringey Young Musicians Stage Band have had a refreshing and exhausting weekend, combining intense rehearsal for their end of term gig with a caving trip and a walk on a Sugar Loaf Mountain. The weather has been glorious and Steve our guide has been enthusiastic, kind, patient and informative. We have received an extremely warm welcome from the Pendarren staff and the food has been great. The experience has helped us bond as musicians and friends.

Peter Desmond

DEVELOPMENTS

The Greig Annexe

There has been some work on the landing and corridor to brighten the entrance. Currently work is being carried out on Usk dormitory when a window of opportunity presents – Dave, the Pendarren Maintenance Officer, can only work when there are no groups in residence!

At the start of the Easter break, the Pendarren Instructors were to be found at the rear of The Annexe claiming to be in search of the elusive link between Wales' longest cave system, Ogof Draenan, and Pendarren House. After many man hours digging sludge, all they succeeded in finding was an old deposit of fuel oil and the missing link with the Pendarren sewer systems. It is hoped that their efforts were not wasted and that the damp problems in the Annexe will now be alleviated!

Annual Booking Process

Following changes to the annual booking system, which now requires the return of a booking contract along with a deposit payment, it is satisfying to see that we are nearly full for the coming academic year. There are a few weeks still available in both the House and Annexe. If you missed out on returning your booking application but would still like to bring a school group to Pendarren during 2012 / 2013, please contact Pendarren for available dates. If a Monday to Friday residential is not suitable, contact us anyway and we will see if we can accommodate your group's needs.

We have had some cancellations which have resulted in there being a few weeks available in May and June. For details of all available weeks, see the Pendarren website.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

Pendarren House is gearing up for the start of the expedition season; hopefully this lovely weather will continue for Fortismere students who are coming to undertake their Gold training in April. Time to dust off the maps, polish the compass and spring clean your stoves!

We are hoping to be able to buy some new equipment for groups in the next few months: tents, stoves and sleeping bags, amongst other things, for those who need to borrow or have forgotten their own kit.

Summer Availability Duke of Edinburgh 'Open Expeditions'

Places are still available on our 'open' expeditions for the first two weeks of the summer holidays. The dates are:

Fast-track Bronze	£195	Saturday 22 nd – Thursday 27 th July 2012 Saturday 29 th July – Thursday 3 rd August 2012
Silver training	£180	Sunday 23 rd – Thursday 27 th July 2012 Sunday 30 th July – Thursday 3 rd August 2012
Silver assessment	£110	Monday 24 th – Thursday 27 th July 2012 Tuesday 31 st July – Thursday 3 rd August 2012
Gold training	£220	Saturday 22 nd – Thursday 27 th July 2012 Saturday 29 th July – Thursday 3 rd August 2012
Gold assessment	£180	Sunday 23 rd – Thursday 27 th July 2012 Sunday 30 th July – Thursday 3 rd August 2012

Accommodation for non-camping nights, food for training courses and refresher days and campsite fees are included. Some equipment is available to borrow from the centre by arrangement at no extra cost.

If you have a group and would like a different date, please contact the centre. We are able to offer walking expeditions in the Brecon Beacons National Park, and canoeing expeditions down 100 miles of the beautiful River Wye.

Please contact the centre for further details.

National Governing Body Awards

Pendarren also runs National Governing Body courses at different times of year. These are nationally recognised courses for people who wish to lead groups walking, climbing and caving in Britain. Examples are Mountain Leader, Walking Group Leader, Single Pitch Award and Climbing Wall Award. Forthcoming courses include:

Mountain Leader Award

Training (expedition north Wales)	28 July-2 August 2012	£420
	27 October-1 November 2012	£420

Walking Group Leader Award

Training	5-7 May 2012	£195
	7-9 September 2012	£195

For details of the Local Cave Leader Award Level 1, Local Cave Leader Award Level 2, Local Cave Leader Revalidation Workshop Level 1 and 2, and the Climbing Wall Award, please see the website.

Secondary Schools

Pendarren is open for bookings at any time if funding cover is a problem. This term Alexandra Park School and Park View have both arranged shorter courses to study Geography.

You can also use Pendarren for:

GCSE	Climb, canoe, walk, orienteer;
BTEC	
A Level	Geography, biology and history
D of E	
Reward courses	
Specific groups that may benefit from an out of school experience	

You could also combine a subject with general outdoor activities e.g. music.

The Summer School Programme is a government funded scheme to help some pupils with the transition from Year 6 to Year 7. If you are interested in running such a course, Pendarren has availability in the summer holiday.

And finallyPendarren staff trying to find the lost tunnels!

