



# PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER

[www.pendarren.org](http://www.pendarren.org)

No. 7 October 2012

## News

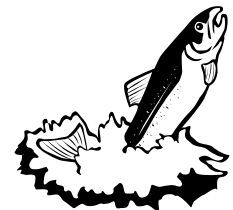
### Wildlife at Pendarren

As well as bats in the Main House, we have now discovered a Lesser Horseshoe bat living in the cleaning cupboard in the Greig Annexe. Although there is only one bat, it is technically a bat roost and so we will need a licence to continue our work to update the building. It is unusual behaviour for this species to roost alone (especially in a cleaning cupboard)!



The Pendarren slow-worms (actually a legless lizard) have disappeared for the moment but in their hiding place a grass snake has appeared. Grass snakes don't usually eat slow worms so we hope they are co-existing. Grass snakes prefer to eat toads, frogs and newts and this one probably pops up to the Pendarren pond when it is feeling hungry. Grass snakes are not poisonous and are timid, usually slithering away when they know you are close, and are therefore difficult to spot. Grass snakes are not common in the area and this one seemed to be thinking about hibernating as it is usually found by some small burrows.

The salmon are returning to their native rivers to spawn and we have been watching closely to see when they return to the Grwyne River, close to Pendarren. They have to wait for enough water to be able to jump up the weir at Llangenny. The salmon on the Grwyne all swim up together and the Pendarren staff missed them again this year – they sneaked (or leapt) past on Saturday 6 October.



### New Courses



**Heartstart** is a British Heart Foundation scheme to teach first aid to people so that they can help anyone suffering a heart attack. Next year Pendarren will be offering pupils the chance to practice first aid and CPR using manikins provided by the British Heart Foundation.

### Secondary schools:

We are offering new options aimed at secondary students in addition to the residential activity courses usually taken by schools.



Pendarren House is now a **D of E approved expedition provider**, and so we can offer schools training and assessment courses from Bronze through to Gold, either walking or canoeing. We also offer D of E residential courses.

If you have a group of students who are undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh Award, why not contact Pendarren to see what we can offer? Alternatively, look at our website.

If staff would like training we also offer training and assessment courses for the Walking Group Leader and Mountain Leader Awards.



Secondary pupils can also undertake PE modules whilst at Pendarren – we can offer **GCSE and A level modules in climbing, canoeing, kayaking, orienteering and hill walking**. The exam boards vary in their requirements for the modules, contact Pendarren if you would like to discuss any options. Students can also gain experience towards BTEC awards.

### Evening activities

Feed back from visiting staff has indicated that some evening activities would be welcome. To this end the Pendarren staff have put together some ideas for evening activities which include indoor orienteering, a nightline, nightwalk, a presentation on the night sky and art activities. When you next visit Pendarren, don't forget to ask about these activities.



### Log Books / Diary sheets

The log books, or diary sheets, for visiting schools are now available to download from the Pendarren website – [www.pendarren.org](http://www.pendarren.org) Find the downloads on the homepage. You can select your own diary pages and print them off for use either before, after or during your visit!

### National Poetry Week



National Poetry Day at the beginning of October kicked off a week of poetic celebrations countrywide. At Pendarren House, St John Vianney Primary School were visiting and they entered into the event with enthusiasm. Read on to see how Pendarren inspired some of their poems .....

**Weston Park Primary School**  
**3 – 7 September 2012**

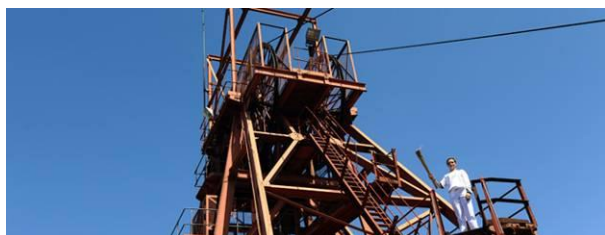
Weston Park Primary School were the first group to visit Pendarren House after the summer break, bringing the sunshine with them. Everyone was full of life and up for the challenges thrown at them. At some stage during the week everyone got wet feet from one, if not all, of the following activities: adventure journey, river study, canoeing or simply dipping their feet in the sea at The Gower. Keeping on the theme of feet, they did not stop on Thursday evening during the disco, were major moves were busted! So a big thank you to Year 6 at Weston Park for a fun first week back.



**St Aidan's Primary School**  
**10 – 14 September 2012**

St. Aidan's Year 6 had an incredible time at Pendarren House! We ate brilliant food, took part in amazing activities and faced our fears! The activities were so varied and included bush craft, making maps, visiting the Big Pit mining museum, canoeing, climbing on crates and up the biggest climbing frame ever. We also learned so much about rivers: tracking a 'real one' really brought the classroom activity to life, particularly when we went into the deep, dark caves!

It was such fun we just didn't want to leave! Thank you to all the instructors and Pendarren staff for giving us such a memorable time.



**Ferry Lane Primary School**  
**10 – 14 September 2012**

An excellent week was had by children and staff from Ferry Lane. Our week had a wet theme including a great day on the beach at Caswell splashing in the sea. The pupils were able to get to grips with their geography for the year and had a great week bonding with each other and their classteacher.



**Fortismere Gold Qualifying D of E**

The students from Fortismere returned – this time to navigate their way around the mountains with no assistance from any staff ..... they were on their own. They were well prepared and used the knowledge they had gained from their previous experiences to safely, and in relative comfort this time, traverse the Black Mountains. And at the end of day 4 the staff were very impressed that the group had demonstrated their willingness to work together throughout the expedition, supporting every other member of the team and were still in good spirits.



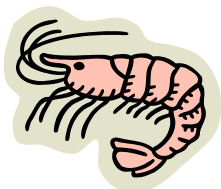
**North Harringay Primary School**  
**24 – 28 September 2012**

What can I say about the students from North Harringay except what a bunch of posers - always jostling to be in the front for the photos! But, oh, what fun! Students were baffled by the traffic jam on the way to River Study ... sheep walking down the road, later followed by two sheep dogs and a farmer in a 4x4. A soggy day down at the beach did not keep the group out of the sea. It was as if by magic that the rain stopped just as the group decided to have a splash!



### **Bruce Grove Primary School 24 – 28 September 2012**

Well done to all the children from Bruce Grove Primary for a fantastic week here at Pendarren House. All the staff who worked with them were impressed by the way they faced all the challenges with great enthusiasm. After arriving on Monday they scaled the dizzy heights of Sugarloaf Mountain and took in the fantastic views. A busy week of canoeing and climbing and many other things was concluded by a morning making maps of our local village, Llangenny. The children produced some fantastically colourful maps with great attention to detail. On the Thursday they enjoyed the best weather of the week on the beautiful Gower coast during a trip to Caswell Bay. The children found some fantastic examples of the creatures that live in the rock pools; amongst other things, they found some of the biggest prawns that Mr Walker and Mr Jolliffe had ever seen!



### **St John Vianney Primary School 1 – 5 October 2012**

Here are some of the poems the pupils wrote for Poetry Week:

Pendarren is great, not going is a big mistake.  
The food is amazing, so is caving.  
I loved being with my friends, it's like the fun never ends.  
Being in the cave with all those rocks, the time just flies in our stone box.  
The evenings are nice, the curry has spice.  
The journey there's long, so I made up songs.  
I had lots of fun, time to play and to run.  
With the canoeing you have to row, but in the end it's time to go.

*By Jai*

Pendarren is an experience to remember  
Eat plenty or your fuel will run out.  
No present is better, not even in December,  
Dinner is delicious, there's no doubt.  
Activities are so much fun,  
Rest while you can, there's a long day ahead.  
Reward yourself, fill your tum.  
Earn an award at the end then go to bed.  
Nothing is better than Pendarren!

*By Kaily*

Pendarren is fun, it ain't at all glum  
You will miss your mum but home will soon come  
So enjoy it with all your chums.

Pendarren was great, cheesecake we ate.  
With all our mates we stood on crates  
Our confidence we did inflate.

Pendarren is over, I liked eating "clover"  
It was a great long sleepover but I'm back on my sofa  
Because Pendarren is over.

*By Nell*

Don't forget  
You'll get wet.  
It's very dark,  
But a little spark.  
Slippery rocks,  
Lots and lots  
Loads of limestone,  
None of this at home.  
What am I?

*(Find the answer at the end of the newsletter)*

*By Blerta*



## The six senses of Pendarren!

### Smell

The smell of the forest- green, damp grass.  
The clean fresh smell following the rainfall.

### Sight

The sight of the enormous, grand staircase covered from top to bottom in fluffy, peach carpet.

The golden rays of the fiery red sun raining on the mountain towering above us.

### Taste

The deliciously smoky bacon.

The fruity sensation of the sticky strawberry cheesecake melting in your mouth. Mmm!

### Sound

The happy noisy chitter chatter of the children in the other dormitories.

The cooks in the kitchen banging and clanging.

### Touch

The rough, cool, bumpy rock that we slid down.  
The dark, squidgy mud slipping and sliding in my hands.

But the most important sense of all.....

### A SENSE OF ADVENTURE!

*By Bridie*



The children also thought up slogans for Pendarren!

The perfect place to come if you want fun! *Milo*

Pendarren, feel the free, feel the damp and feel the cold! If you like freedom, wetness and coldness then this is the place for you! *Cayo*

A home from home. *Jai*

Pendarren House is the place to be,  
For fun, action and activities! *Emily*

Pendarren is fun, educational too  
So do come along but you may step in poo!  
*Abbie*

## Lancasterian Primary School

8 -12 October 2012

Lancasterian pupils had a great week. Here are their recommendations:

“Pendarren was a unique experience and I enjoyed every bit of it. I loved watching my friends conquer their fears as well as me conquering my own. I cannot wait until I come back.” *Celeste*

“Pendarren was an awesome experience for me. I enjoyed doing all the activities, such as canoeing and room inspection. It’s the best experience I’ve had in a long time and to all the people coming next year with Lancasterian school, GOOD LUCK.” *Rifah*

“Pendarren is a great experience and I think ever child should be able to have this opportunity.” *Kumeo*

“Pendarren is the best place ever. It was so cool I hope I can come here again and as there lots of other things to do.” *Thierry*

“Pendarren is a wonderful place in Wales and many children would want to go here in the future. I would want to turn back time and start all over again. This is the best place ever.” *Tyrese*

“Pendarren is a once in a life time experience, that I have only just completed. Normally at school you don’t do exciting things like climbing and caving, but in Pendarren you do anything. My favourite part of it, should I say exciting and awesome activity, was the caving because you could go in the water. And the water would stay in your wellies. I don’t mind telling you, if you can get through Pendarren you can accomplish anything.” *Johnatan*

“Pendarren is a very good place to visit. There’s lots of activities to do and it’s basically a good place to enjoy yourself. If you get the chance to come to Pendarren House you do lots of activities including climbing, bush craft, costal visit, river study – caving, and high ropes... So, as you can see, there are lots of things to do, so please come.” *Eimal*

“Pendarren is a very hard and a very fun place to go to but once you’ve paid, there’s no turning back! All the activities are hard but if you push yourself to the limit you can do anything” *Rhys*

“Canoeing to rock climbing, tuck shop to room inspection; at Pendarren everything is fun. I felt very independent and that nobody was stopping me. My favourite activity was canoeing and caving because of the excitement. I’m so happy I came!”  
*Gulizer*

“At Pendarren I’ve had the best time ever and I will never forget the experience. I hope this has set the trend for all Lancasterian’s groups that came to this great place”  
*Kai*



### **Alexandra Primary School 15 - 19 October 2012**

The week here at Pendarren started with one of the most important lessons that any young person should be taught. This imperative life skill was practically demonstrated during the bushcraft session on Monday afternoon and I can now honestly say that, after much practice, the children of Alexandra Primary can successfully toast a marshmallow on a stick using an open fire. They will never go hungry again!

During the rest of the week the children visited Big Pit, our local mining museum, and developed a greater understanding for the life and work of mining in the Victorian era; constructed their own sky-scrapers during the high ropes; took a “shampoo advert” style shower under the secret waterfall at Blaen-y-Glyn and had the most practical geography lesson ever on the river study day.

Well done to all the children and staff for a good week. I will leave you with some quotes;

Instructor: “You’ve made my week.”  
Pupil: “You’ve made my life! Thank you Sir! I mean, Carl!”

Mother to Teacher (2011): “He went to Pendarren a boy and came back a man”



### **Welbourne Primary School 15 – 19 October 2012**

Welbourne Primary School's Year 6 visit to Pendarren House was a very busy week. Upon arrival, pupils took their luggage to their rooms and had a quick lunch. After receiving Pendarren outdoor jackets, over-trousers and wellington boots they set off to explore Pendarren House grounds, gardens and the local environment. They visited the Nicky Harrison Sensory garden where the mint leaves smelled minty fresh. The adventure journey and high ropes were both exciting and fun. The River Study day was very educational. The Mellte River was explored on its journey through the mountains of the Brecon Beacons as it grew from a trickle to a river, carving out a spectacular landscape above and below ground. Rocks of sandstone and limestone were identified and collected. The evenings were very busy with diaries, a night walk and some exceptional craft-work where badges and mosaics were produced by the pupils. On Friday, before getting on the coach to return to London, they took part in a bushcraft session – learning about living in the outdoors, making shelters, preparing a campfire, drinking hot chocolate and eating toasted marshmallows....yummy!!! A very busy week indeed.



The children made these Welsh dragon decorations; the kits are available to buy on the internet.



The instructions are easy to follow. Why not consider having an art activity for an evening session during your Pendarren Experience?

### Welsh Dragon Decoration Sewing Kits (EV527)

#### Contents

2-Piece Felt Circle Templates  
Pre-cut Self-Adhesive Felt Pieces  
Needle & Yarn  
Coloured Ribbon  
Fibre Stuffing  
Assorted Sequins

#### Instructions

1. Loop the ribbon through the hole at the top of the template and tie a knot to secure.
2. Peel the backing from the large white self-adhesive felt semi-circle and attach to the design as shown (Tip - ensure the holes around the edge line up).
3. Begin stitching the two templates together, leaving a small gap wide enough to push the fibre stuffing into the design.
4. Using the relevant picture below as a guide, peel the backing from the self-adhesive felt pieces and attach to the design.
5. Carefully glue the sequins onto the design. Allow to dry.
6. Carefully insert the stuffing (tip - you might find the flat end of a pencil is useful for this), then finish stitching the design and your decoration will be ready to hang!



www.bakerross.co.uk  
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Warning! Not suitable for children under 3 years - small parts, long cord & functional sharp points. Choking hazard.

## John Loughborough School 22 – 26 October 2012

An excitable bunch of year 7s came for a week of personal and social development. They pushed themselves to the limit walking up the mountains, sliding down them, crawling under them and floating on and above them. A song is being produced for school and we hope to preview the lyrics here in the next newsletter. The group have been challenged and came through showing that they are ready for all that their new school can throw at them. Well done!

Here is a selection from their diaries;

### My Wales Poem

I came to Wales to explore the world  
To see all the insects and snails  
To be adventurous and to be expressive  
To love and care for all that's there.  
I came to Wales to be close with my friends  
To play with them  
It was a great experience (Thank you!!!!)  
Adventure walking was wet and icy cold  
Mountain walking was really scary and tiring  
Canoeing and rope climbing was absolutely  
mind blowing  
And caving was like a maze.

*By Shyann*

'Finally the hardest challenge was the maze, who invented it? Kids stranded by themselves, finding their way, it was nerve-wracking because I thought I would never be found. – It was amazing!'

*By Daniel (writing about the caving)*

'It was a little scary and everyone was excited at first but after a while it became cold and very scary. In a split second we all became friendly and nice to the staff because they were so kind and we all enjoyed ourselves. There were very challenging things to do.'

*By Sena (writing about the adventure walk)*

Then we had canoeing – WOW! – that was one of the best experiences I have ever had in my entire life. Straining to push the boat we came first after playing a game where you have to try not to touch the edges with your paddle, boat or any part of your body. Then there is my canoe partner, Naquane, this boy is a true joker, everything we did wrong the youngster had something to say. It was truly an experience.

*By Dylan (writing about canoeing)*

## DEVELOPMENTS



### Tree Planting

We are expecting 450 saplings to be delivered from the Woodland Trust at the beginning of November, and we will be looking for some help to plant them before the weather becomes too cold. They will need some protection too as our sheep may fancy a change from grass and be tempted to snack on a bit of hazel, or ash, or oak, or blackthorn .....

**Refurbishment to the exterior of the Main House** is on-going. Builders have been busy renovating the upper floors of the house which has included repairs to the roof, gutters, bargeboards and windows, and then repainting. The scaffolding is now on the last leg of its journey round the house, covering the dining room on the ground floor and Blorenge, Skirrid and Pen y Fan dormitories.

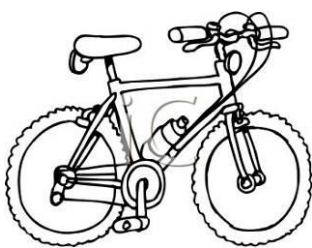
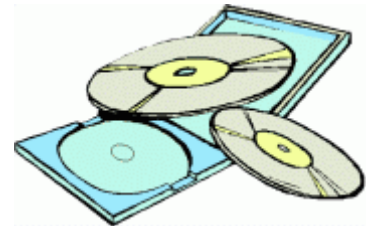
In the **Greig Annexe**, some bunk beds have been raised to create more space for storing suitcases and clothing. This has made it less cramped for visiting students. There have also been repairs to the drains which has cured some long standing problems with the Greig Annexe, and will be appreciated by those who stay in there! We have also opened up the stair well to create more light, making the space more open.



**Notice boards** have been bought and put up in the Common Room of the Greig Annexe and on the first floor landing in the Main House. The weekly programme and other notices are displayed on the boards and they can be used by visiting staff. The boards also have an integral white board which can be used for any other messages or reminders.

### Resources for parents and parents' evenings

As there is no longer a Centre brochure, there have been many requests for information on the Centre which can be given to parents. Some of this information, such as a kit list, is now on the website. We have also put together a collection of photographs which can be used for parents' evenings or other similar presentations. This will be available to download and we will be emailing schools about this shortly. If you would like any other information or resources to assist on parents' evenings please let us know.



**The Firs** is becoming increasingly popular for use by visiting activity groups, for example, mountain bikers and canoeists. The biggest problem faced by such groups is having a place to store and dry the equipment they use during their stay. Fortunately, The Firs has a large garage which has space for a drying room so the Pendarren staff have been working hard to build one on a very limited budget. Knauf Insulation of Torfaen and T&J Demolition of Wolverhampton have generously donated insulation and boarding for the project.

## FRIENDS OF PENDARREN

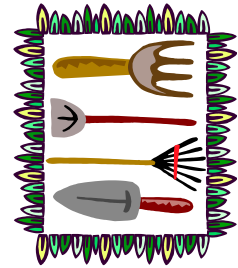
Since our return from the summer break, we have been very lucky to receive donations from schools and individuals, as well as funding from the Friends of Pendarren for several ventures.



For some time we have been trying to set up a small library for use by visiting pupils. At the beginning of September, after a visit from their Year 6 pupils, Weston Park Primary School very kindly donated both books and a book stand to jump start the project. Wards Coaches, our regular coach company, collected both books and book stand and brought them down to Pendarren, along with the staff and pupils from another primary school! The books are now available to borrow during your stay at Pendarren.



The committee of the Friends of Pendarren approved the purchase of resources for the Nicky Harrison Sensory Garden, so we now have more tools so that several people can be kept busy gardening at any one time. The committee also agreed to continue to subsidise the storytelling sessions by Daniel Morden, to continue to purchase cameras for use by visiting staff and pupils and to buy CDs so that the photographs taken can be available to all.



A recreational visit to The Firs by a group of staff from Lea Valley Primary School resulted in them leaving a barbeque for use by other groups. Many thanks to Tom Watts, their Site Manager, for this donation.



Andy, our Acting Head of Centre, has allowed us to use some of his amazing photographs of the local area for use in the Pendarren 2013 calendar. The calendars are now available at a bargain price of £3.50 from the Pendarren House shop. If you would like a copy, contact us and we can deliver one for an additional £1.00 to cover postage.

The next meeting of The Friends of Pendarren is on the morning of Friday 9 November at Pendarren House. If you are interested in the work of The Friends, please contact us for more information.



## VISITORS

We are busy looking ahead to summer 2013, having already received lots of enquiries and some bookings for July and August 2013. To date we have several weeks booked by Youth Groups and families using The Firs. If you would like to visit Pendarren during the summer holidays, please contact us to see which dates are remaining or, alternatively, look on the website.

## PENDARREN AND YOUR SCHOOL WORK

Have you ever wondered how the Pendarren Experience can be linked in with your planning? We asked one of our regular visiting teachers how she linked the visit with her classroom work:

*As well as providing an opportunity for adventurous outdoor activities and for personal development, our annual trip to Pendarren is at the heart of our Year Six Geography Curriculum. The work that we do in the weeks leading up to the trip is a mixture of activities that you might do with any child embarking on a journey and ones that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum Programme of Study for Geography.*

*We begin by looking at a selection of maps on the whiteboard to see what different types of information can be found. We find the different countries of the British Isles, their borders, their cities. We look at a road map and find the possible routes to South Wales and the directions we will be travelling in on our way there and back. Out in the playground, we play a game called Cardinal Cones which is part of Tops Outdoors pack that covers eight point compass directions.*



We have some lessons which try to give a flavour of the cultural identity of Wales. We touch briefly on coal mining and the effects of the closure of the pits, the climate, the language, the National Parks, the celebration of singing and the arts.

Our map work lessons cover scale, map symbols and six figure grid references. We mainly use an OS map of the area around Pendarren. The children are far more interested in exploring the map knowing that this is a place that they are actually going to see. Again, we have games to make the activities livelier- a team game identifying OS symbols and photo and full scale orienteering around the school grounds.



We cover rivers, the water cycle and the geology of the Brecon Beacons in preparation for River Study Day. This work is recapped in the lesson at Pendarren which gives some pupils a second chance to grasp it and the Pendarren teachers a chance to extend learning for others by explaining in greater depth. We use an old video of a programme called River Flight, which is a helicopter journey along the entirety of the River Usk. We briefly touch on plate tectonics and if there is time, the children do individual research on either volcanoes or earthquakes.

Our final lesson presents to the children the idea that different people have different views about the environment. The children look at a mocked up letter from Powys Council proposing building a new housing estate on Sugar Loaf Mountain. Some of the class come out to hot seat the opinions of different interested parties – a walker, a pub owner, a builder, a farmer. We look at the controversial building of the path on Pen y Fan and the work of the National Park Authority.



I think that when the class finally get to Pendarren, they understand and appreciate their surroundings much more and are excited to see their classroom learning come to life. They greet Old Red Sandstone like a long-lost friend, they point out features that they know the OS symbol for and they are keen to see all the mountains. I have even heard heated discussions on the minibus as to whether we are on an A road or a B road!



AND FINALLY .....

Do you know the answer to Blerta's riddle?

It is Porth yr Ogof .

