



## PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER

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

No. 8 December 2012

### News

#### Trees

We received 450 trees from the Woodland Trust in October and, with Pendarren staff supplying the spades, the pupils of Mulberry Primary, Stroud Green Primary, Chestnuts Primary and Belmont Junior Schools set about planting the trees adjacent to our existing wood. The sheep have generally behaved themselves and not eaten the trees; they will soon be taken off the field to go back to their farm for a couple of months. In their absence we will be erecting a fence to protect our new wood. More trees will be on the way in spring.

In the grounds we have a variety of trees including three giant sequoias, horse chestnut, sycamore, fir trees, scots pine, oak, beech, hazel, cherry, ash, larch and poplar. Many of the trees at Pendarren are very old and recently we have lost a mature oak, a silver birch and a sycamore. In addition to this the larch and ash trees are struggling with disease and so we could lose more trees. If your school would like to donate and plant a specimen tree then please get in touch, you can bring it with you or arrange to have it delivered here.



#### Weather

The weather this autumn has not been as cold as some previous autumns. We have had some snow on the mountains but it has not affected the activities for the pupils.

#### Wildlife

A pine martin was recorded in Wales for the first time in 40 years. The last one was found near Talybont on Usk, just up the valley from Pendarren House and is now in Cardiff Museum (one of the best museums in Britain if you are ever visiting). Pine martins are very rare and elusive creatures, they are one of the mammals that the Vincent Wildlife Trust is working on to learn more about its distribution and habits.



We received a license to evict the solitary bat in the Annexe cupboard – by November it had departed, probably to join its fellow bats hibernating in Agen Allwedd across the valley. Last winter over 500 Lesser Horseshoe bats were recorded in this cave. We have blocked the large ventilation holes in the wall (required when the building used to be a stable) which will help us to reduce heat loss from the Annexe.

## **St Ignatius RC Primary School** **22-26 October 2012**

The coach arrived at Pendarren House and the pupils of St Ignatius all looked very excited. A welcome followed and a tour of Pendarren House. Imagine just one gentleman living here when it was built in 1876! He was not all alone, however, he did have servants to look after him. The house maintains the look and feel of a country manor house of old - very grand.

After lunch everyone was issued with waterproof jackets, trousers and wellington boots before setting off to explore the countryside around Pendarren.

The pupils met with many varied challenges during the week. Mountain and adventure walks, high ropes and canoeing. They also learnt about community living, helping with chores and keeping their rooms tidy. Bushcraft provided an opportunity to learn practical skills by making shelters and cooking on a campfire. Local culture and history was appreciated with visits to Big Pit Mining Museum and the market town of Abergavenny. So much to explore, so much to learn.



## **Mulberry Primary School** **5-9 November 2012**

Mulberry Primary School pupils arrived for a week of education, fun and challenge. Monday was very busy with some pupils walking along the local River Grwyney, taking in the lovely scenery, and others building shelters and toasting marshmallows over a campfire. In the evening, it being the 5th November, everyone went outside to see the bonfire - Guy Fawkes Night! The bonfire burnt brightly and there was a firework display with rockets

and brilliant flashes of all colours; not to mention some very loud bangs. Pupils wrote their names in sparkly red, orange and silver. And that was just Monday! During the rest of the week, rivers, caves, waterfalls and the seaside were all explored and studied. There was also time for pupils to be challenged on the high ropes, climbing high, testing their nerve and balance and 'learning the ropes'. A brilliant week! Pupils left us some art work of the fireworks to use in displays.



## **Stroud Green Primary School** **12-16 November 2012**

Pupils of Stroud Green Primary School were extremely helpful when, shortly after their arrival, they helped plant about 100 trees which were donated to Pendarren by the Woodland Trust as part of their Jubilee project. The children were very enthusiastic and most trees were given names, for example "Robby the rowan tree".

Everyone was kept warm during the bushcraft session afterwards, sitting round the open fire and drinking scrummy hot chocolate which was made on the fire. Some people even had seconds. It's safe to say that pupils and the miner at Big Pit had a good laugh together when the pupils arrived with their waterproof jackets smelling of smoke. The miner wanted to know if it was safe to take the children into the coal mine!

Everyone really enjoyed Daniel the story teller whilst the Pendarren quiz was popular too.



**Chestnuts Primary School**  
**19-23 November 2012**

The pupils of Chestnuts Primary School have had an action packed week including; mountain climbing, bushcraft, high ropes and more at Pendarren House. We faced our fears and headed straight on with our activities. After the ruthless weather of the mountain we experienced a power cut throughout the whole of the house for 5 hours!

As well as me, I think that everyone had a fantastic, energetic time. We hated having to leave Pendarren house; it was so much fun!

Ulysses



**Belmont Junior School**  
**19-23 November 2012**

An exciting week was had by the students and staff from Belmont Junior School. With the wet weather and roads flooding, along with trees cutting the power to Pendarren, this meant that they had to face both the challenges put their way by the Pendarren Staff as well as the elements. Here are some of the students' comments;

I learnt at Pendarren that you have to do your own things like making your bed and serving food. Also I was scared of heights but I went on the high ropes, it was high and I conquered my fear.

I have learnt that Wales is more muddy than anywhere else in England.

In Pendarren I learnt that the world is muddier than you might think and I learnt to walk in pitch black and not to be scared.

I learned that you need independence for secondary school. And I learnt what an outdoor experience is like.

**The Willow Primary School**  
**26-30 November 2012**

The Willow Primary School had a great time when they visited Pendarren House. The pupils spent a bit of time before leaving writing a few lines about their adventures.

“Pendarren is the best thing I’ve done, but the days have gone, and its time to go. See you another time everyone! It’s been so so great, hope you had fun.”  
Kelsey

“Canoeing was extremely fun but there was no sun and the day looked glum. The food was yum but I missed my Mum, but I still had a lot of fun.”  
Justin

“Pendarren can be the most exciting place to be; its an exciting place to visit. You do so many wonderful activities. You get four full days of joy. This is the best place ever!”  
Jennifer

“Perfect, delicious food is served on your plate,  
Exciting adventures await you,  
Nicely cleaned, fresh rooms are to be kept cleaned,  
Defeatable challenges help face your fears,  
Amazing adventurous caves.  
Relaxing, comfortable bed.  
Remember the exciting activities.  
Extremely exhilarating rivers.  
Never be afraid ! “  
Aishah

“Pendarren is a beautiful place to have fun. If you don’t come, you will make the biggest mistake in your life. Come and learn and see how exciting and fun it is.”  
Ozan

“Pendarren is a place is a place where you have lots of fun. I advise you to bring lots of clothes, most of the days your clothes are going to get wet. When you leave you are going to feel like you are leaving your sweet home again.”  
Priye



**Earlsmead Primary School**  
**3-7 December 2012**

Earlsmead pupils had an excellent week at Pendarren, with weather ranging from warm and sunny on the beach, enabling the children and staff to paddle vigorously in the cold December sea, to a very cold, extremely windy, snowy morning up on top of the Blorenge in the sun again. The students also made an excellent job of decorating Pendarren's Christmas tree. Thank you.

Here are some of the children's thoughts about their week:

'I had a great time in Pendarren. I loved all the activities even the hard challenges'

'We were able to see another side of ourselves'

'On a normal day I would never go rock climbing in a blindfold, but today I reached the top and I felt proud of myself'

'I enjoyed everything especially the food'

'My favourite was Croeso, it means welcome in Welsh. Even though I fell in pooh, I enjoyed it!'

'I really enjoyed the rock pooling because Long Hau was really kind to me and Matama by giving us one of his crabs because we didn't catch anything'

'It challenged me to the limit, especially climbing the mountain in the snow and wind'



**Crowland Primary School**  
**10 – 15 Dec 2012**

"Pendarren was a fun five day experience when you live with friends. The activities are great and require team work and sometimes independence. My favourite

activities were caving, rock climbing and croeso. Bedrooms also need team work tidying up and keeping the house clean. The Pendarren House makes you feel special by comfortable bedding, tasty food and a disco party." Jevon

"The Pendarren experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I learnt so much, the history of Wales, how things were made and new interests. I've learnt how to be more independent because we all made our own beds and served food by ourselves. I also made new friends as we were put into groups and bedrooms with people we usually wouldn't be around with. The nature was fantastic. We learnt what we could do if we didn't glue our eyes to something electronic. I now know the adventures of Wales. I know the activities that are out there. The highlight - the BEST part - was doing the rock climbing. It was simply amazing. I did really good when doing it and it helped with social speaking, teamwork and trust. Overall it was great fun and it helped with the social aspect." Vicole

"A week of the Pendarren experience is a lot more than anyone could ever imagine. If it's winter, spring, summer or autumn every child has a week of dreams while visiting Pendarren. While in Pendarren, I learnt a lot of things like how to rock climb and master the high ropes. Also Pendarren teaches you all the basics of life, the different types of rock and how to make a fire in the woods. It's amazing! But the experience is not just all the activities. It's the helping, the independence and sharing a room 24 hours. Overall the Pendarren experience is a once in a lifetime chance that is joy and happiness to all children." Ivan

"My favourite Pendarren experience is caving, the best part was the letter box. I also enjoyed rock climbing because I was fast and accurate to achieve my aims. My favourite was the beach because we played ball but not so good because it was cold. Friday (today) we go home, Pendarren is good ..." Felip





## **Bounds Green School 17-21 December 2012**

The staff of Bounds Green School requested the last week of term specifically as they enjoy the Pendarren Christmas Experience so much. As well as the delicious Christmas dinner, there is a visit from Father Christmas!

The pupils enjoyed action-packed full day activities to make the most of the daylight, eating their lunch out of doors all week. Although the weather was cold, they canoed, studied rivers and got wet on an adventure journey. They travelled home, happy but exhausted, on the very last day of term.



## **OTHER VISITORS**

### **Bancroft's School under 12's Rugby Tour**

Bancroft's School brought a team of under 12s to play two fixtures against Welsh schools, and to visit the Liberty Stadium to watch the Ospreys play Toulouse. Pendarren House provided full board and some adventurous activities for the pupils in between the rugby matches.

This report is from one of the pupils:

We were told to arrive at school for 6:30 and we departed at 7:00. It was a 5 hour trip. We wore our playing kit because as soon as we got there we were given lovely food and went straight into a match. The school played a great game. We won most of the rucks, mauls and had most of the possession. Luckily we won it. It was even better because we knew we earned it. The score was 25 – 17. This was a great start to the tour. The home team very kindly let us change and shower and then we headed to our brilliant accommodation in the mini buses. We had a great night. We had a lovely dinner, followed by a quiz. After that excitement, we headed up to bed.

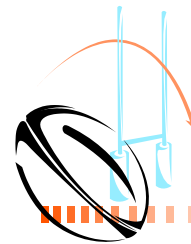
The next morning we woke up to the delight of having a cooked breakfast and as soon as we had eaten all we could, we headed up a hill to an amazing set of activities. There was leap of faith, abseiling, rock climbing, and Jacobs's ladder. Unluckily I didn't have the chance to do Jacob's ladder because we had to get ready to go and see the Ospreys vs Toulouse Heineken cup match! It was amazing and luckily it ended with the right result, an Ospreys win.

Later on that day we had another delicious meal and in the evening we went to a local forest to do orienteering in the dark. It was great. When we returned we went straight to bed and got to sleep practically straight away.

The next and final day of our rugby tour started with another lovely cooked breakfast and then we packed away and got ready for our second match of our tour against Merthyr RFC. Although playing some great rugby we lost the match. We scored 3 tries and controlled most of the match but it wasn't enough; they were just much more experienced than us. We ended the tour by going to their clubhouse and were kindly given sausage and chips.

Overall our trip was a great success and everyone had a great time. My favourite moment of the trip was the Ospreys match. There was such a great atmosphere at the game and the icing on the cake was the fact that they won.

Joseph



## **THE FIRS AT PENDARREN**

The Firs continues to be popular in the summer months. We have some bookings over the next few months but there is still plenty of availability and there is a reduced rate from November to February. If you fancy a visit to The Firs, why not look at our website to see when it is free?



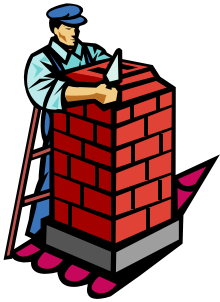
## DEVELOPMENTS

### AALS Inspection

An Inspector from the Adventure Activity Licensing Service visited Pendarren House during the last week of term and accompanied a group of pupils from Bounds Green School, with their Pendarren instructor and teaching staff, on an adventure journey activity session. Afterwards he discussed the work of the Centre, and the operating procedures involved with Andy, the Head of Centre. At the end of his visit he concluded that Pendarren House had passed the inspection and granted a licence for the next two years.



### Refurbishment of the Main House



The refurbishment work continues. There is only a small team of builders so the work is progressing, albeit slowly. Dave, the Pendarren maintenance officer, has been crafting inserts to replace rotten pieces of some of the ornate bargeboards. One of the chimney pots on the main roof required repairs, which has meant some very interesting scaffolding!

The emergency lighting throughout all of the Pendarren buildings has also been refurbished.

### Kit

Some of the waterproofs and wellington boots were beginning to show their age, so we have purchased new waterproofs and wellies for the winter.



### FRIENDS OF PENDARREN



The Friends of Pendarren have continued to support the work of the Centre by buying two replacement cameras for use by visiting groups. This saves the schools the worry of bringing their own cameras, or of ensuring that pupils don't lose or damage their own! The cost of a CD is £2.50.

Pendarren currently has a CD copier which can do several copies at a time. This is now quite a few years old and, especially as photographs taken by the new cameras take quite a lot of disc space, it is hoped The Friends will help out by buying a DVD copier so that in future we can supply DVDs instead.

A selection of games and board games have been purchased by The Friends for use by visiting staff and pupils. They will be stored in the House and Annexe Common Rooms.

Thanks also go to:

Jan, Rhys and Rosie Withers for their donations of a bookcase, books, games and a CD player. If you have any used games and books suitable for pupils aged 9-16 that you would like to donate, please get in touch with Pendarren. The coach travels to Haringey every week and so any donations can be picked up along with one of the visiting schools.

Daniel Morden has donated copies of his books to be included in the Pendarren library. All books can be borrowed during a visit to Pendarren. Look out for them in the Common Rooms.

### *And finally ....*

Andy will be in the borough on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013. If you would like him to call at your school, please phone the Centre to make arrangements.