



PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER www.pendarren.org

No. 1 October 2011

This newsletter is to help keep people informed of updates and developments at Pendarren House and we hope to produce a new edition twice a term.

There have been a number of changes at Pendarren House which are outlined later in the Newsletter.

So far this term we have had some extremes of weather - a very wet September followed by record high temperatures for October, and now at the end of October there are mutterings of snow on hills to the north! We are waiting to see the first salmon of autumn jumping up the weir below Pendarren House.

VISITORS THIS TERM:

Weston Park Primary



After arriving the pupils were soon out exploring the grounds of Pendarren House. They had strange encounters with unexpected and unwanted little creatures wearing yellow/black stripy tops (buzz!!)

Others explored far away forest streams, slides and waterfalls.

A very wet River Study day but despite this pupils made the best of it discovering how rivers shape the landscape of Wales. An adventurous day was had by all exploring streams, river, caves and waterfalls. How much fun can you have in the rain and mud ?

A visit to the coast on Thursday in quite autumnal weather proved successful with many rock-pool creatures being found in their various habitats. Crabs, prawns, fish, sea-shells were all discovered. Some hardy souls got changed into swimming costumes and braved the ocean waves. Even an adult went in!

Mr Hunt's team excelled themselves with a very speedy walk up Sugar Loaf mountain on Friday morning.

Pony riding, climbing, abseil – is there nothing Weston Park pupils can't do?

Ferry Lane Primary

The pupils used a blog to keep in touch with the school, parents and friends. Messages flowed back and forth throughout the visit with words of encouragement and tales of achievements.

The pupils and staff were enthusiastic in everything they did. They swam in the Bristol Channel with clouds in the sky on a September day. Everyone got wet and muddy while taking part in a River Study session. This was followed by a well earned treat, stopping off at Brecon to ponder over 40 different flavours of ice cream from an award winning ice cream parlour.



Highgate Wood

visited with a large group of A level biology students. They visited our local National Nature Reserve and found some insect eating plants, the rocky shore of the Gower to look at zonation and the morphology of limpets, sand dunes to study succession (S Wales has the second highest sand dunes in Europe), our local stream to study invertebrates and water quality, and still found time to have a go at some adventurous activities.

John Loughborough – Year 7 Outdoor Activities

The year 7 group rose to the challenge of full day's activities, exploring many parts of a cave that were unfamiliar to those that visited in Year 6. The climbing was also off site, on the steep challenging limestone cliffs of Morlais (in the Welsh valleys) and Symonds Yat (in the Wye Valley). The mountain day saw the groups climbing up the steep slopes in the Brecon Beacons National Park to reach the summits with their spectacular views.



Mulberry Primary

'We visited in September, an ideal time of year to go, as not only was the weather not too warm and not too cold, but also we went in the third week of term. We took 26 children from Year 6, including one of the children from our specialist Provision for Autism. This meant the year 6 teachers had a great opportunity to get to know the children, especially as children have the opportunity to demonstrate skills which we do not necessarily see in the routine of the school day. As a result of the Pendarren experience we identified one child who was clearly under home pressure to prepare for entrance exams and another who had good swimming skills. Both elements we may have not identified so quickly at school.

Our children also were able to gain hands-on experiences of topics taught at school. All our children benefited hugely from the practical elements, for example River Study, as this helped embed prior learning. We just can't follow a river from source to sea in London let alone expect English speakers to understand without seeing it. On return to school, the children were able to give much clearer explanations of these topics, as well as using more technical language.

Socially, this experience was vital for our children, especially when it came to supporting each other. They developed a strong team ethos with supporting our Autistic child to a point where they helped him shower, get ready for bed and serve food: valuable life skills!

So, yet again, we have had another highly enjoyable and valuable week in Wales - a crucial part to the Mulberry Year 6 Experience in preparing the children for the big changes ahead. Year 5 are already asking us when their turn will be!

Mulberry were also the first group to try out the new indoor orienteering course in Pendarren House.

Welbourne Primary

What amazing weather, the Indian summer has arrived! A full programme of education and adventure was enjoyed by all the pupils attending. A visit to the Pendarren Tipi brought to life the story of the First Nation people of North America and how they could warm themselves by their Tipi fire. The adventure journey really was an adventure, exploring the mountain streams near the scenic Tal-y-bont Reservoir and ending with nature's own real power shower (very wet!). Pony riding proved very popular - everyone had to learn the name of their pony, brush them down and saddle them up. All sorts of adventures happened on the High Ropes, in Canadian canoes and the River Study. The river was studied from its start (the source) near the Maen Llia Stone (you know the stone!!) We followed the river as it wore away the Old Red Sandstone and carved caves in Limestone. Eventually it made big waterfalls in gritstone. Time was also found to have an evening walk under the stars and to produce some outstanding artwork. So much was accomplished by the pupils - and the rooms were kept so tidy and clean we had to take photographs to prove it. A great week was had by all.

Chestnuts Primary

Pupils of Chestnuts Primary did not give their staff a minute to sit down for a well earned cup of tea – what with taking part in activities during the days, followed by indoor orienteering and a fire in the tipi in the evenings. It was hard to imagine how they managed to eat their evening meals, as they were constantly picking and eating wild blackberries!



Fortismere – Year 8 Outdoor Activities

After an afternoon of working in their groups to solve physical and mental challenges, the Fortismere pupils were off scaling the peaks of the Brecon Beacons and canoeing on the River Wye and the canal. The weather was challenging and so the coasteering session was changed to a caving day, which was a very wet trip. Their support and encouragement for one another meant that the weather did not interfere with their determination to enjoy themselves!

Alexandra Primary

Good weather accompanied Alexandra Primary Year 6 on their visit to Pendarren. Pupils and staff were keen to explore the grounds of Pendarren House on arrival and enjoyed teambuilding and visiting the Tipi. The next day Canadian canoeing skills were learnt by all and a hectic game of Canoe-Polo was played. (Maybe we will make it to the Olympics). A few nervous moments but lots of smiles and laughter filled the week. A daily talent show proved very popular (watch out X-Factor!) as did the visit to Big Pit. Everyone had a big splash exploring the forest streams and I've never seen such muddy faces the day we studied the river on its journey through the mountains. Pupils had also enjoyed a bracing dip in the Pendarren swimming pool. Shrieks of delight were heard for two evenings at the poolside, even those who thought it a bit chilly at first were to be found jumping in and having a great time. They set a new record for the Friday morning walk along the local Grwyney River. They certainly surprised the Pendarren teacher how quickly they walked back to Pendarren House - having just phoned him pretending they were lost!

Stroud Green Primary

Stroud Green Primary were the first group to try our new Bushcraft session, building their own shelters and fires. Stroud Green also kindly sent us a blog of their Pendarren Diary, here is an excerpt:

'Today we did a river study. We started with a lesson about the water cycle and the life of a river. We discussed what things we should look for during the day's adventure. We went in mini buses to the top of the mountains and found the source of the river Avon Mellte. The peat bog was like a sponge and it felt squishy. The stream here was small but we found other small tributaries that joined up and the river gradually got wider, faster and stronger. When the river crossed from old red sandstone to limestone we discovered that it started to go underground into caves. We even got to follow the river into caves which were very dark indeed. When we turned off our torches it was pitch black. We had to crawl on our tummies to wriggle through small spaces. It was scary and exciting all at once. We all got wet and muddy. Mr Agutter told us that the mud had special qualities that were used in expensive mud packs. We were all fooled, especially Ms White who agreed to smother her face with gooey mud to test its magical properties.'

STAFFING

Martin Skinner, Head of Centre, retired after 17 years service at Pendarren House. In its 40 year history as Haringey's Outdoor Education Centre it has only had two Heads of Centre. At present Andy Lewington is the Acting Head.

THANKS

Resources for the coast day from Mrs. Benghiat and Earlham School. These have been well received by many pupils.

Interactive whiteboards and computers from Lancasterian Primary School. The computer suite in the Countryside Study centre was rather old but now pupils are able to save material onto USB memory sticks.

Mr. Sophos: donation to The Friends.



DEVELOPMENTS

We have been working to improve our service and make your stay more enjoyable.



As a result of your feedback we have:

- purchased new waterproofs
- insulated the loft in The Firs
- The staff shower in the Annexe has been temperamental for a while and has now been replaced.
- The showers in the house and annexe have been redecorated and the thermostats serviced.
- There is now WiFi internet access in the staffroom, and internet access in classroom 1 and the Annexe common room (you will need a laptop or similar). We were hoping to achieve internet access in the Countryside Study centre but the fibre optic cable may be too costly to replace.

CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION

We have made changes to the forms used for your school bookings – please make sure you read all forms sent out to avoid confusion over costs and deadlines. If you have any copies of the old forms, please destroy them. The new forms can be found on the Pendarren website.

The new Primary Option Choice form has a space on the bottom if you would like to add any comments to tweak your activities.

The parental consent form has been changed too. Please make sure that parents / guardians complete both sides. As a result of the new consent form we hope to be able to include some pictures in the next newsletter.

Website

The website www.pendarren.org has been updated and we intend to develop a new site at some stage. The Downloads section contains a number of forms that you can download to complete prior to your visit, these include:

- all the latest administration forms
- primary handbook
- secondary handbook
- the primary and secondary diary sheets
- dormitory lists
- consent forms for pupils and leaders
- The Firs - booking forms

On the homepage is a link to **current availability** (2011-12) if you would like to bring a group.

KIT LIST

Note that a drinks bottle and bed linen are now on the kit list; download the latest version from the website.



Bed linen

Pendarren House has not been immune from the cuts in government spending and so we are trying hard to make savings where possible, whilst at the same time raising the quality of what we deliver. This is not an easy task but the schools who have visited over the last few months have been very supportive. We now request pupils to bring bedlinen to reduce the cost of laundering 50 sets a week. A core theme on the courses at Pendarren House is that pupils learn to become more independent, pupils making their own beds fits in well with this ethos.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

In Classroom 2 our **Natural History collection** now has a fine display cabinet, and there is also a **Junior Library** in this room.



We have redesigned the **waterproof kit** and **climbing kit store** areas.

We have replaced **climbing equipment** and **canoeing equipment**.

The tall **chimney stack** on top of the Annexe has had to be rebuilt; it was decided to rebuild in its original style to maintain the unique character of Pendarren House.

New Activities:



Bushcraft is a new activity which has gone down well.

An **Indoor orienteering course** has been set up in the house, this can be used for teaching map reading as well as problem solving with English and maths themes. We intend to develop more new activities in the near future.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS and COURSES

NQT weekend – 25 26 February 2012

A chance to visit Pendarren House and explore the opportunities to enhance Learning Outside the Classroom and to have a go at some adventurous outdoor activities. Transport to and from Haringey, full board and instruction for only £45. See the Downloads section on the website for more details and booking form.

This October half term we will be insulating the loft in the Annexe.

It is likely the booking procedure for 2012-13 will be brought forward to early 2012 to allow us time to market any vacancies in September; many primary schools prefer this month for year 6 due to the benefits leading up to SATS.

The Firs is now open year round for bookings and we intend to build a drying room in the adjacent garage.

D of E expeditions

At present we can offer D of E training and qualifying expeditions to Haringey schools. We hope to be able to offer this to other schools from next Easter. If your school is looking for an expedition next summer then please get in touch. Pendarren has a campsite and is well situated for expeditions in the Black Mountains.

Saving money

To save money without affecting your visit we have been looking closely at reducing energy costs such as connecting lights to movement sensors and fan heaters to timers. We do not intend to save money by turning the heating down in winter, in fact the opposite, we want you to be comfortable during your stay. We just need to try and ensure that the heat that is produced does not escape as quickly! We carry out regular checks on the oil and electricity consumption so we can monitor which measures are the most effective.



FRIENDS OF PENDARREN

The Friends of Pendarren is a charity set up by supporters of the centre to enhance the education of Haringey's pupils by developing relationships between staff, parents, pupils, and the local community, and by engaging in activities and fund raising to develop the facilities available for pupils at Pendarren.

They have achieved some great things for Pendarren since being set up including raising funds for the Tipi, the pond, the Story Teller (Daniel Morden), Nicky Harrison Sensory garden, and providing cameras so that pupils can go home with a record of all their achievements.

Previous Friends newsletters are on the website, more news soon.

HWYL (that's Welsh for Goodbye!)

That's enough from Pendarren for the moment, signing off is Stroud Green with the final day of their blog:

'This morning we were rudely awoken half an hour earlier at 7am. We had lots of jobs to do - finishing our packing and tidying up. Our breakfast this morning was delicious. We had sausages and hash browns. We all loved the dining hall because it was just like a restaurant all week and we had flowers on the table every day which made us feel glamorous. Evening meals were our favourite meal of the day but this morning's breakfast was lovely too. After our breakfast and chores we went in the minibuses to Abergavenny. It is a market town and quite different to Haringey. We walked round the old castle and we pretended to be the rebellious Welsh attacking the castle. Then we visited the Butter Market. We had the chance to do a little bit of shopping before heading back to Pendarren House for a final meeting with Mr Agutter, Ms Young and Mr Lewington. We got settled on the bus and all the Pendarren staff waved us goodbye. We felt really sad to be leaving. On the bus back, we started missing Wales. We thought about some of the things that we liked best about Pendarren and what we learnt during our time there:

We loved our spacious rooms and our own bathrooms.

We always had the time to wash every day after long hard work.

We learnt how to overcome our fears. Caving conquered my fear of the dark.

We can try new, different things out of school.

We learnt how to work and communicate with others we wouldn't normally mix with.

When things are scary, if you give it a go it is not so scary anymore.

I am capable of doing anything I want to if I put my mind to it.

I should not be frightened of things I have never tried.

When life knocks you down, it is best to get back up again.

Working as a team works better than working on your own, because you can share skills and ideas.

When you make a mistake, just try again- that is how you learn.

You get to learn to look after yourself better.

I learnt I was really good at canoeing - I never knew I would be good at that.

It was an experience of a lifetime. Would we recommend the Pendarren experience? Yes we would!

Pendarren House Team October 2011

PS Some things that have not changed – the cakes are still here!!

