



## PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER

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

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### News

The Brecon Beacons National Park has been awarded Dark Sky status on account of the lack of light pollution which allows viewers to see the night sky. Rob has been working on an evening activity to help enable our visitors to learn more about the night sky. Following a presentation the students can go into the grounds and see the planets, stars, constellations, the Milky Way (our galaxy), meteorites and even the distant galaxy of Andromeda.



Thanks to a grant from the Tottenham Grammar School Foundation, and with a contribution from The Friends of Pendarren, we have now taken delivery of a fleet of seven canoes. This means that we now have two fleets of canoes and so will be able to offer more options for canoeing to visiting groups. We are also waiting for delivery of a trailer to transport the canoes. This is being held back until May so that it will comply with new legislation coming into effect.

Dave, our maintenance officer, has been very busy making new guard rails to fit the tops of all the bunk beds – that's a total of 54 rails which has kept him busy for a while.

Lots of snow fell in Wales before Easter causing problems for farmers in North Wales who lost many of their sheep. At Pendarren the snow fell on the mountains and there are still patches lying on the tops. We often get asked what we do when the weather is like this – we carry on! The activities may be modified, sometimes for safety, but also because the groups want to make the most of having lots of snow.

Spring is late this year but now all the flowers are coming out together. The daffodils are as beautiful as ever and this year there has been a bumper crop of primroses covering the banks and slopes around Pendarren.



The lighter mornings in summer mean that the students sometimes wake at 4.30 am and the visiting staff have to get up and put them back to bed. Angela has been sewing linings into the dormitory curtains; the darker rooms will hopefully allow the students to sleep through until the bell rings at 7.30 am!

The heating has been repaired in the Countryside Study Centre and we hope to improve the efficiency of the heating systems in the House and Greig Annexe this summer in time for next winter.

**St Gilda's Catholic Junior School**  
**25 February – 1 March 2013**

*Marcella*

When we had just finished doing the River study and was on our journey to the caves I was really scared and didn't know what to expect. Then when we were there and I looked into the cave I was terrified and didn't want to go in. But I wanted to go in. Me and Grace stayed together because we were scared we'd get lost so we thought if we did get lost we can get lost together. Anyway we walked to the Letter Box and it looked really scary I didn't want to do it but then I thought it's all safe just do it. After that when I went through the Letter Box I was so happy and wanted to do it again. Mr Agutter said to me before I went it that it's not scary so I took his advice and he was right it wasn't scary at all.

*Poppy*

The day we went on our River Studies it was a rather cold morning. The trip there was ok but that wasn't what was troubling me. On the second activity, in the afternoon, we went caving and followed the river that flowed throughout the cave. As we were going through the mini activity called the Letter Box I went last. I thought it would have been easier for me to do it as I had watched everyone complete the task but unfortunately my head got stuck because of the huge white helmet we had to wear for safety. I didn't actually want to go through with it but the one thing that reassured me were my friends at the other end cheering me on. So I accomplished the task and was extremely proud of myself and wouldn't regret it one bit.

*Finn*

The day that we went to the high ropes, I had the goose bumps just looking at the frame for the high ropes. I could almost taste the fear sprinting through my body. The first part of the high ropes was standing on the crates but that didn't trouble me, because my group came first placed at that! The thing that troubled me was the second activity on the high ropes, I looked at the others doing the activity, and it seemed safe and secure although it didn't help; my legs felt like jelly, non-existent. A part of me wanted to do it and accomplish it but a part of me wanted to run away. When I approached the huge frame I felt my head shake over and over again. So I held onto the rope supporting me and I tugged it, and hurried across the first station of the frame, I climbed up the metal frame and desperately tried to reach for a rope. As I grabbed the first rope I finally realised my friends were cheering me on so I pulled some

confidence out of my pocket and finished the course knowing that I had accomplished something!

*Tara*

When I went on the High Ropes I was petrified because the Indiana Jones Bridge was so high and I am scared of heights! Mr Agutter kept telling me to take one more step and then I could get down and he kept on doing this until I was actually on the bridge. Then he told me to take one step across it and then I could get down. Thank goodness he meant it this time so I stood backwards on the edge of the bridge and Mr Agutter slowly brought me down. Afterwards I was so happy I had done it and really proud of myself too! I was also very scared in the cave on our River Study Day, especially when going through the Letter Box. I volunteered to go first which was nerve-racking but good as well.



**Lea Valley Primary School**  
**25 February – 1 March 2013**

Pendarren was the best trip ever - Souhail

It was brilliant. Thank you I had a great time  
- Kiera

I had the greatest time ever including when I  
went rock climbing. Thank you - Abraham

I had the best experience of my life. I would  
really wish to come again. I liked rock -  
climbing and canoeing the best thank you -  
Rebecca

I loved this week in Pendarren, I loved it so  
much I would definitely want to go back!!! -  
Deniz

This week was a once in a lifetime experience. I loved the mountain walk. It was like I was in heaven - Kiri



### **Earlham Primary School 4 - 8 March 2013**

This year Earlham brought eleven students and, of the eleven, three celebrated their birthday whilst at Pendarren! They celebrated in style with a chocolate fudge cake and a sing song around the camp fire. The week was packed with activities which were enjoyed by both the children and staff. On Friday the children reflected on their week at Pendarren and came up with the following:

"If you come to Pendarren you'll be up and about from the start"

"If you want to defeat your fears this is the place to come"

"If you want an adventurous week come to Pendarren"

"By the end of the week you felt proud of yourself"



### **Highgate Wood School 4 - 8 March 2013**

Highgate Wood students and staff had a great week at Pendarren House. They took part in an Adventure Journey at Blaen y Glyn; a walk over Pen y Fan mountain; canoeing from Monmouth to Redbrook on the River Wye; caving in Porth yr Ogof and orienteering in Coed Cefn woods.

"When I first came to Pendarren I wasn't quite sure if I was going to like it but by the end I didn't really want to leave! I talked to people I never normally talk to. I was really happy because I overcame my claustrophobia in the cave, woo! Pendarren gives you lots of opportunities you would normally never have. Thank you Pendarren!" - Gloria

"I liked Pendarren House because I got to know new people and it gave me a boost of confidence. If I get the opportunity to come back... I will!" - Anton



### **St Ignatius Primary School 11 - 15 March 2013**

St Ignatius Primary School visited Pendarren House in March. On their return to school, the pupils wrote about their experiences. A small selection is included here.

*At the start of the week we were all welcomed to Pendarren but did you know that every morning you are woken up by the sound of a bell? On Tuesday we went on a journey to a coal mine museum called Big Pit. I found out that horses working at Big Pit never saw daylight down there once they were chosen for their job. They were forced to work in the dark to keep the Welsh coal supplies happening - Robel*

*On the High Ropes we climbed on top of the crates and when we fell we were held up in the air by the ropes - Venus*

*We went on Bloreng Mountain walk and saw a frog in a frozen pond - Wisdom*

*It's interesting to know that at Pendarren House all the bedrooms are named after Welsh mountains. Bloreng, Sugar Loaf, Pen-y-Fan and Table Mountain - Filip*

*The gardens at Pendarren are really beautiful and the flowers smell so nice - Faith*

*The food is always luxurious it was a dream come true! The breakfasts from Cheerios to hash browns and for dinner lamb curry, the chocolate fudge cake and scoop of ice-cream for dessert mmmmm ! – Oliver*



**Heartlands High School  
11 - 15 March 2013**

I have been to Pendarren three times now, this is my third time. I have enjoyed my three times here but this has been the most successful so far. The Pendarren staff are amazing for a start, I think that if we didn't have the people like Alex and Neil and in addition people like Mr. Walker and such, as well as the food staff, the Pendarren experience would not be the way it is now. I love Pendarren and I am considering work experience here or building a career as an instructor. It is certainly better and more fun than becoming an accountant but don't tell any accountants that. If my word isn't enough to go on, then maybe some quotes from the group who came with me will tell you how I, and I'm sure many others, feel.

Gabby- It's really made me feel confident in myself and has given me the strength to carry on and try new things as well as never give up.

Marsha- I never thought I would climb a mountain but the staff and my friends played a big part in encouraging me to get to the top. I am pleased that I went to Pendarren this year.

Kacper- I just loved the whole Pendarren trip. It was awesome especially the caves. Firstly I was a bit scared but I didn't give up and came in the dark big cave.

Lauren- We went in a cloud, how many people do you know can say that? I thank Pendarren

for giving me an opportunity to say that in a conversation.

Netty - I LOVED Pendarren because it was a great opportunity to make new friends and have lots of fun! I also learnt a lot of things about myself, including that I did not like the cold! I'm very glad I came and that I learnt a lot of new things.

Megan - I LOVED Pendarren too! I've NEVER been before so for me I REALLY enjoyed it and when I got covered in water I still enjoyed it and I'm SO glad I came.

Trina- I love Pendarren because you get to have fun out doors and I got to challenge myself to face my fears and be brave.

Juan- I loved Pendarren I've never been before, it was amazing. We had a lot of fun. It was like being in a dream.

Miss Mudd- I had a fabulous week in Pendarren, it was a great opportunity to get to know everyone better, to face my fears in the cave as well as test my patience in the canoes. I got to see what it will be like to be a mum as I had 11 little pupils saying 'miss....' all day every day!! I am really looking forward to my next visit in June!!



**St Michael's and St Ann's CE Primary Schools  
18-22 March 2013**

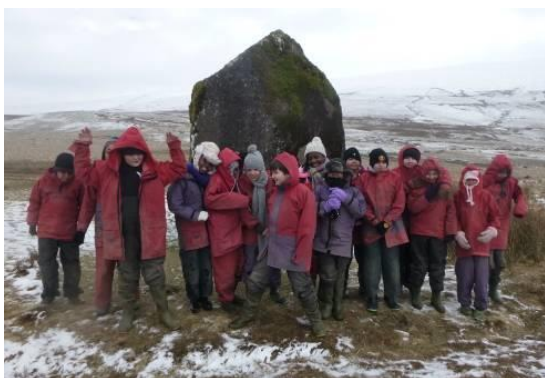
This week saw the coming together of two schools in one trip to Pendarren. Both schools (managed by one executive Head Teacher) mixed the pupils in the activity groups so that the children not only developed better relationships with their class and schools mates but also had the opportunity to develop new friendships with

children from another campus. It was good to see the pupils offering encouragement and support to those they had just met, and new friendships being formed almost instantly. The opportunity to use all that the South Wales landscape has to offer was not missed; the coastal visit, to explore life in the rock pools, and the river study day, cementing knowledge on the water cycle and basic geography were two particular highlights of the week.



**Lordship Lane Primary School**  
**24-28 March 2013**

Due to Good Friday being on March 29, Lordship Lane pupils and staff arrived on the afternoon of Sunday 24 and left on Thursday 28 March. There was still snow on the tops on the mountains and so, wrapped up nice and warm, the children did a River Study session and broke ice puddles at Maen Llia. The pupils were enthusiastic about all the activities they participated in and filled every minute exploring and enjoying the environment around Pendarren. They especially enjoyed “Sardines”, an activity that needs lots of people and lots of hiding places!



**Buxton School, Leytonstone**  
**Duke of Edinburgh Qualifying Expedition**  
**9 - 11 April 2013**

Congratulations to the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's award participants from Buxton School who successfully completed their qualifying expedition with us this week. Two teams of students ventured out into the countryside for a two day expedition, navigating their way from Llantilio Crosenny to Longtown. Many meals of pot noodles and copious amounts of cereal bars were consumed over the duration of the expedition, giving the participants the energy they needed to carry all their equipment throughout the 30 kilometre (approximately) venture. Well done to all those who took part.



**OTHER GROUPS**

**Chichester Canoe Club**  
**The Firs**

Early in March Chichester Canoe Club made use of Pendarren's self-catering facility at the Firs - our well appointed and cosy secluded bungalow.

They paddled on the local rivers on Saturday and on the Sunday went to the Cardiff International White Water Centre to practise their skills. This is only 1 hours drive away from Pendarren.

“Fantastic! All the amenities we needed and in a great location. We will be back! “

“Many thanks for an enjoyable stay!



## THANKS TO:

A small group of Coleg Powys staff and students spent some time with us during the Easter holiday to make a promotional video of Pendarren for use in schools. The group, who travelled from the Newtown campus, gave up their holiday time to do this and we are very grateful for the hard work and long hours they put in to make it happen.



Thanks also to Dan Warner for organising the loan of some IT equipment and to Risley Avenue Primary School for looking after it over the Easter break.

And, continuing on an IT theme ..... we have extended the WiFi at Pendarren so that it is now available for teachers staying in the Annexe as well as those in the House. Coverage is extended in the House from the Staff Room to the Common room and Lounge. For any groups using the Countryside Study Centre, WiFi is now available there, too!



## OTHER NEWS

**Heartstart** – all the instructors have now undertaken the training to deliver Heartstart courses and so we will soon be offering this to visiting schools. Pupils will be able to gain certificates in a variety of life saving activities. If your school would like to run Heartstart courses for pupils then contact the British Heart Foundation for free training and resources.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Anoria Simmons, of Devonshire Hill Primary School, who has been shortlisted for Teacher of the Year Award from 26 000 nominations. Anoria has accompanied many pupils to Pendarren over many years. The winner out of the final three nominees will be announced in May.

Daniel Morden, our storyteller, whose most recent book TREE OF LEAF AND FLAME has been nominated for The Welsh Books Council Tir Na Nog Prize.

## FRIENDS OF PENDARREN

A fence has been erected around the newly planted saplings to protect them from the sheep that graze the field. The cost of the fencing has been covered by the Friends of Pendarren.



## AND FINALLY .....

Coming soon to the area around Pendarren:

Abergavenny Cycling Festival, with our local cycling star Becky James, July 2013  
[www.abergavennyfestivalofcycling.co.uk](http://www.abergavennyfestivalofcycling.co.uk)

Hay on Wye Literary Festival, May/June 2013  
[www.hayfestival.com](http://www.hayfestival.com)

Man versus Horse Marathon, June 2013  
[www.green-events.co.uk](http://www.green-events.co.uk)

Llanwrtyd Wells Bog Snorkelling World Championship, August 2013  
[www.green-events.co.uk](http://www.green-events.co.uk)

Brecon Jazz Festival, August 2013  
[www.breconjazz.com](http://www.breconjazz.com)

Green Man Music Festival, August 2013  
[www.greenman.net](http://www.greenman.net)

Brecon Beast (mountain bike event), September 2013  
[www.breconbeast.co.uk](http://www.breconbeast.co.uk)