



## PENDARREN HOUSE NEWSLETTER

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

No. 17

October 2014

### NEWS

Pendarren had a very successful Autumn Term with **bookings** for every week, starting at the very beginning of September and continuing right up until 19 December. It has been incredibly busy at times, with every bed filled in all three accommodation blocks, but it has been even more rewarding to see so many young people enjoying the benefits of a visit to Pendarren.

**Website** There are still a few vacancies for smaller groups – if you would like a late booking, please contact us or look at our newly re-vamped **website** for availability. The website is still growing, let us know if there is anything you would like to see on there.



The **Tour of Britain** cycle race passed through Crickhowell on Stage 3 which ran from Newtown in Mid-Wales to Blaenavon. The route on Stage 3 was 111 miles long and finished with a hill climb up 'The Tumble'. Many primary schools who have visited Pendarren may know it as the long hill driven up on the way to Big Pit Mining Museum.

At the beginning of September, the Celtic Manor Hotel in Newport hosted the **NATO Summit**. Huge security operations saw 13 miles of fencing erected around the Manor Hotel, 10 miles of fencing in Cardiff city centre and hundreds of police and security officers working in the area. Weston Park Primary School, who visited us during that week, had a detour to avoid the traffic delays!

**Salmon and sea trout** were spotted jumping the Llangenny weir below Pendarren on Friday 3 October in their annual migration up river to spawn. Two Pendarren instructors were watching them jump whilst having a chat, when a 'log' about 3 metres from them moved – it was an otter that had been watching the fish all the time!



Any schools visiting during **September** were lucky enough to experience exceptionally warm and dry weather. Records show that this was the driest September in Wales since 1959. At the other end of the scale, the tail end of **Hurricane Gonzalo** hit Wales during October but the group of Duke of Edinburgh Gold students using the sheltered Pendarren campsite had no problems.

For any pupils visiting and taking part in **Bushcraft**, we have now bought some new camouflage tarpaulins for shelter building, as well as clearing some areas of the grounds to create some new bushcraft areas.

There have been some changes in the domestic **staff** at Pendarren and the new staff will be starting in the New Year.

**Reclaiming the lawn** – the rhododendrons and laurels had taken over half of the lawn leading to the low ropes course so they are having a severe haircut. By spring we should have another flat grassy area for students.

Our summer visitors, the **house martins**, have headed off to Africa for their warm winter break, but our resident tawny owls and green woodpeckers will be heard around the grounds all year round.



**Visiting in 2015?** In January, staff will be busy giving Pendarren a facelift. Apologies to those who liked the 1970's décor but we thought it was time to move on!

4<sup>th</sup> July is **Open Day** at Pendarren.

## Friends of Pendarren

The Friends of Pendarren have purchased:

Binoculars to view the night sky, including a x25 pair through which you can see the moons on other planets!

Wildlife habitat boxes – the dormouse boxes now in the hazel trees and the bat boxes high up on a pine tree are awaiting their new occupants which should arrive in the spring. Other boxes for hedgehogs and barn owls will follow.

## THANKS TO

The pupils from Mulberry Primary School and Lancasterian Primary School for our new display:



Cal Shaw and the staff and pupils of Chestnuts Primary School who donated two boxes of books to the Pendarren library.



Hen Thomas – see “A Parent’s View” later in this Newsletter.

## OUR VISITORS

### Weston Park Primary School 1 to 5 September 2014

This week was immensely enjoyable! The children from Weston Park loved the caving, especially Sarah's passage, because we got so wet and our wellies filled with water. Sliding down the waterfall was a "life changing experience" for Matilda and Uma who described it as "such a beautiful sight". The two girls agreed that going to the beach was a blast. The waves were really big and strong and "when we jumped over them we felt like we were flying". Canoeing was a personal highlight for Katie, particularly when the boats were separated and they had the opportunity to go canoeing by themselves. Scarlet loved the caving and visiting the waterfall. She loved rolling down the river all at the same time.

Nell adored caving, as it was so fun. She said that doing the letterbox was like a slide. She went first and she said that she loved helping other people get through after her. Kate liked facing her fear in the caving experience. She also loved the letterbox because even though you didn't know where you were going you had to push yourself along to get out the other side.

James and Tom loved the caving experience. They embraced the challenges of crawling through small holes. They said that they felt a bit curious and a tiny bit scared as they went in, but this quickly became excitement as they left the caves wet and proud. The waterfall was also a personal favourite for Jude, who said "going down the river face-first was amazing. I got completely drenched!"



### Crowland Primary School 8 to 12 September 2014

Pupils from Crowland Primary School had a great time when they visited at the beginning of the autumn term.

"Monday afternoon was to do rock climbing which was scary at first but really fun. On Tuesday we went to the beach to collect fishes and crabs and other sea animals." - Bosolo

"On Monday it was a bit scary to do the climbing because it was giant (the wall). But when my friend went on it, it didn't look so scary. When it was my turn it was easy. I went up and it was fun. On Tuesday we went on high ropes and canoeing, the canoeing was very fun." - Olivia

"When I went to do the climbing I was nervous to climb to the top, but then Miss Mortimer said to me that she would do it too. I wanted Miss Mortimer to do it so I did it without any problems. We went to do high ropes and we were so scared to climb. But we had lots of fun. We did canoeing as well.

PENDARRREN IS THE BEST !! " – Luna



### South Haringey Junior School 15 to 19 September 2014

I enjoyed Pendarren because I learnt about nature and all its beauties. The activities we faced were challenging but all of us gave it 100% to every challenge we faced. I enjoyed living by myself and with my friends because the fun never ended.  
Ali G

I enjoyed it when me and my friends were going through the cave. There were little holes in the cave that I had to go through and I enjoyed getting dirty with mud. I recommend that if you want to go next year it will be a delight.  
Samira



Well it would be difficult to summarise the experience of Pendarren in one paragraph, though if I had a go it would sound a bit like this:

Pendarren is one of the greatest opportunities for kids in Year 6 to make new friends. The children are put in sleeping rooms and daily activity groups which makes it easy to craft friendships and learn about other people. As the day has a simple yet effective routine, children get used to doing things independently without being told when to do what they had to do, as long as they got to the common room in time. From canoeing to high ropes and coastal visits there is a range of amazing activities that will definitely keep you entertained. Hamza

My experience of Pendarren was one I will never forget! The activities are angled at the perfect point in South Wales! From high ropes to caving. The staff are friendly and the food is amazing! I recommend every child to go. Matilda



### **Ferry Lane Primary School 15 to 19 September 2014**

I thoroughly enjoyed abseiling, rock climbing, orienteering and much more. I like how Pendarren House treats the children as well as the adults. Pendarren House helped me overcome my fear of canoeing! I'm happy to go canoeing any time, any were. Also I learned how to dress myself and take care of myself without my mum.

For me Pendarren House is a journey of a life time. I've made new friends, I've found if I put my mind to it I can overcome fears and much more. You should believe in yourself, come to Pendarren you will love it: Emerson

My favourite activity was everything! I overcome my fear of heights. Pendarren is an outstanding place and I loved every day I was there: Yaren

Pendarren has been one of the best moments of my childhood so far. It was so fun but the best bit was the abseiling because I overcome my fear of heights. I found out that I had more confidence in myself than I thought I did. I felt so happy when I reached my goal. It was so fun and I'll treasure it all my life! Ameera



*Picture by Rojin – climbing crates*

### **Devonshire Hill Primary School 21 to 25 September 2014**

#### **Pendarren Song**

by Marcy, Angela and Pedro

I would like to thank Pendarren for helping me overcome my fears

I would like to thank my teachers for letting me come this year

I would like to thank my group for supporting me when I was scared

Some things were really hard but at least I tried my best.

Pendarren is such an amazing place to be in, to be in a lovely place, where you can do lots of things, try new stuff and eat wonderful meals.

Thank you Pendarren for all the teamwork we did with you

Without you we wouldn't be learning these skills, teamwork, it's all about teamwork with you!

The magical adventure that had helped me feel so strong

Climbing Sugarloaf Mountain was not scary at all

All the games that we played were all about teamwork.

Pendarren is such an amazing place to be in, to be in a lovely place, where you can do lots of things, try new stuff and play with your friends.

Thank you Pendarren for letting me have fun, yeah.

Thank you Pendarren for the teamwork we did without you we wouldn't be here.

Teamwork is all about teamwork with yoooooooo, yeah!



*Picture drawn by Alexie from a photograph taken whilst out on activities*

### **St Mary's CE Primary School 29 September to 3 October 2014**

St Mary's pupils and teachers had a fantastic time when they visited Pendarren. They participated in a range of educational and adventurous activities. There was canoeing on the Brecon and Monmouthshire canal and the High Ropes challenge where the pupils could "face their fears" of high places. The mountain streams of Blaen y Glyn, nestling in the lower reaches of the Brecon Beacons, were explored in an Adventure Journey. There was also climbing outside on the Pendarren climbing tower and indoors in the Rock Room. There was a full day of challenge and learning away from Pendarren on the River Study – following a mountain river on its journey and investigating the varied terrain and geological environments of the Forrest Fawr Geo Park. They also had time for orienteering in the beautiful grounds of Pendarren House.



### **Alexandra Primary School 6 to 10 October 2014**

Pendarren is the best and the countryside is beautiful.

I enjoyed the Pendarren Experience because I've never been surrounded by the countryside and animals.

I enjoyed the river study because I got to climb through lots of different layers of rock.

I enjoyed the Pendarren Experience because it was a chance to be independent and see how it will be when you are an adult.

What I like about the Pendarren Experience is you learn how to face your fears.

I like Pendarren because I get to learn about teamwork with my friends.

I feel sad about leaving Pendarren because the countryside is better than London.

I enjoyed my Pendarren Experience because I worked with different people and not just my friends.



### **Bruce Grove Primary School 13 to 17 October 2014**

My experience in Pendarren was a trip to remember because it makes you independent and work as a team it also teaches you to make decisions. The best thing about Pendarren is that you get a fun week in Wales but the sad thing is the week goes by quick. With all the fun there is no time to miss home, because you forget about it outside having fun.

I recommend it to children so they can get away from home and learn lots of new things. It's better than playing on the X-box and PS3. There are many different adventures and learning how to roast marshmallows. So it is worth going!  
Christal



## Local Cave Leader Course

18 October 2014

Five candidates attended their Local Cave Leader Revalidation course run by Pendarren House. Candidates on this course already hold the cave leader qualification but every 5 years they have to attend a course for further training to ensure they are still competent to lead groups underground. This award is administered by the British Caving Association and is one of the qualifications required to lead groups underground.



## St James CE Primary School

13 to 17 October 2014

This week has been one of the best experiences of our lives. We have learned a lot of new things like; how to save people's lives on the first aid course; a lot of people learnt how to face their fears; and most importantly, we learnt how to work as a team. We had to work as a team on the high wire when we were standing 14 metres off the ground and could fall any second! We worked as a team when we were canoeing to try not to tip the boat over and fall in (most people did fall in and Izzy lost her wellies in the river). Pendarren has been so fun and we would love to do it again but sadly we have to go home. Evie and Eve



## Highgate Primary School

20 to 24 October 2014

Another wonderful week was had by the students and staff from Highgate Primary School. The Head, William Dean, visited the pupils to see them for an evening of fun and games as well as visiting Big Pit with the students.

## Andrew Sophos - SAS Martial Arts

28 October – 2 November 2014

Andrew brought two groups to Pendarren – firstly a family group and secondly a group of martial art advocates. Both groups enjoyed the location and travelled around locally visiting landmarks and beauty spots. Andrew is a regular visitor to The Firs, bringing diverse groups with him, and intends returning in 2015.



## Chestnuts Primary School

3 to 7 November 2014

Chestnuts had a brilliant time at Pendarren during the first week in November. The bedrooms were immaculately tidy and there was even a bonfire on Wednesday evening (5<sup>th</sup> November) with the Moon shining bright and the stars twinkling. The children said the food was brilliant and the activities were very exciting. They learnt a lot about mountains, rivers and the countryside. Mabel was inspired to write a poem.

*Pendarren in Wales*

Pendarren is the best week of my life,  
Exciting activities all day long  
Never ending, I wish that was true,  
Daring activities all day long,  
Action and fun every day,  
Running around in muddy fields,  
Rosie cheeks after a lovely day,  
Everlasting exhaustion every day,  
Never want it to end, though I will be glad  
to see my family





## A Parent's View

To all at Pendarren House

On Monday morning I was back at school where I work as an LSA supporting Year 6 children. The same time last week I had been travelling by coach to Pendarren House, accompanied by our Year 6 teachers and 37 children who were extremely excited by the adventure awaiting them. The atmosphere was electric with anticipation!

From the moment the coach pulled up in front of the large Victorian house we all felt welcome in our temporary home. After a few ground rules the fun started with an afternoon session of orienteering, immediately giving the young children a clear taste of what was to come!

Over the next few days our small groups were skilfully instructed through tasks such as mountain walking, discovering river sources, caving, high rope skills and canoeing, bushcraft shelter making, fire starting and marshmallow toasting! The leaders' knowledge, expertise and hands on approach enabled the girls and boys to quickly grasp the activities by the horns and throw themselves into the experience with gusto and verve.

The children took such pride in themselves and their peers, working closely together in teams, constantly encouraging each other to push themselves onward and upwards, literally! Often facing and conquering deep rooted fears.

There was an exceptional atmosphere of camaraderie, bonded with much laughter, determination, no blood, much sweat, a few tears (there was no time for home sickness!) but mostly a great sense of achievement.

Our Chestnuts Primary School 'Conkers' thoroughly enjoyed the Pendarren House experience. It has equipped them with life skills, to recognise a challenge and given them the tools and confidence to overcome their fears in life, whatever it throws at them!

I enjoyed myself immensely and spent most of my time with a grin from ear to ear ..... except while we were on the River Walk when my fear of enclosed spaces almost put a stop to the fun in the caves! Luckily I was in safe and understanding hands and trusting our 'guide' completely, managed to 'man up' and get on with exploring with the children. My own three boys couldn't believe it when I got home and told them I'd managed to go into a cave!

All three of my sons have been guests at Pendarren over the last 12 years. Fred (22) and Herbie (20) recall their visits with fondness, both managing to overcome a fear of heights when abseiling. My youngest Walter (10) stayed there only a few weeks before I did and takes great pride in his new 'task', laying and clearing the table at mealtimes!

Watching these young people gain confidence as the days progressed has been a pleasure and a privilege. They returned home changed people having had the space, time and opportunity to be free to explore the environment and their own capabilities, both physically and emotionally..... Thank you all for making our stay so wonderfully special!

Best wishes

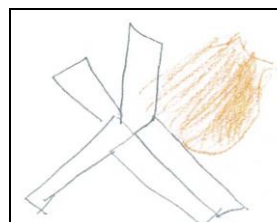
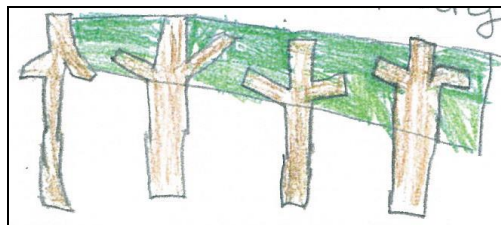
Hen Lomas

## Welbourne Primary School

3 to 7 November 2014

On Monday the third of November when I had just arrived at Pendarren I thought that it was going to be boring. When I met Alex I knew that it was going to be fun with her. My first activity was bushcraft and we had to build a shelter and try and sell it. I really enjoyed bush craft because we learnt how to make a shelter.

Annabel





Pleasant, I have enjoyed my journey!  
Ecstatic about new things  
Nothing to be scared of  
Determined to overcome my fears  
A drive through the beautiful countryside  
Racing through the cold clear stream  
Rain drops on your face  
Endless activities to keep you occupied  
No fear, I am brave!

Kayla



**Seasons  
Greetings**

***From everyone at Pendarren House***

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