



newsletter

"A Christian Community working to encourage and inspire personal, social and spiritual development through the creative use of outdoor pursuits in the Royal Forest of Dean"

Every year as spring gets underway, we are amazed to find ourselves once again at the beginning of yet another season, and every year we are struck again by the privilege of being involved in delivering a wonderful and memorable residential activity experience to the groups that visit us.

From the office where everything is organised, to the staff and freelance instructors that work with our visiting groups, we all have a sense that we are able to offer something that can make a huge difference in the lives of the young people that visit the Centre.

Building lifelong memories, offering challenges, helping develop team work, seeing confidence levels rise and seeing the look on someone's face, when the realization dawns that they have just achieved something they never thought they could do, all go to make the work done here seem completely worthwhile!

Staff at the Centre always appreciate the feedback from leaders and groups about their time here. Over the page you can read about the experiences of several very different groups that have been coming to Viney Hill regularly over the years. They show that whatever your background or life experience, whether you come from the countryside or the city, whatever your age and ability, there is something to be gained in experiencing the challenge of achieving something new, and finding God in the beauty of his creation!

Tony Williams
Centre Manager



Groups and visitors from far and wide

This last year the Centre has been visited by a wide range of groups from an even wider area. All sorts of groups visited the Centre including church family groups, groups made up of friends, groups of young people facing difficult challenges, youth groups and schools as well as cubs, girl's brigades, scouts and organised children's camps. They came from quite a diverse area including Gloucester, Weymouth, London, Swindon, Wiltshire, Wales & the Midlands.

The diversity of groups, and the wide range of home churches, schools and colleges they come from, is one of the most exciting aspects of being here; turn the page to read about their experiences of visiting The Christian Adventure Centre, Viney Hill!





An inner city school

COPLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL
– *Shaz Chaudhry*

I have lost count of the numbers of residentials we have had at Viney Hill and, indeed, how many young people have participated in them. The young people that I worked with at Copland Community School came from a challenging inner city London environment; many young people not having gone beyond the boundaries of Brent. By bringing them to Viney Hill we had immediately taken them out of their comfort zone; no fast food outlets, no television and miles away from the nearest shop!



I have found that the Centre has given young people an opportunity to experience activities that they would not normally participate in. Through the activities and throughout the stay at the Centre young people have grown in confidence, formed better relationships with their peers and staff, encouraged and supported each other, developed better communication strategies, and above all have been given time and space away from the pressures of living in an inner city environment.

My role has changed and I now work in Hackney, with the community and 14 local schools. In November 2008 a small group of parents participated in a residential. Very much like the young people, they were challenged by the experience and left the Centre with a sense of achievement. I will be returning to the Centre in July to run a family residential.

Rehabilitation programmes

THE VOYAGE TO THE GIANTS CHAIR – *Dave Stork and SUST*

I wanted SUST members to become more resilient, raise their self confidence and self

esteem and to bond as a group; helping them negotiate with agencies within the drug treatment services. I asked the Christian Adventure Centre at Viney Hill for advice, an organisation with the confident motto ‘inspiring growth through adventure’, and to provide a programme of activities that would develop the required skills.

With funding from The DAAT, SUST and Viney Hill decided on a seven week programme in which participants would attend a full day each week of activities culminating in a three day expedition into the Welsh mountains. Six service users with leaders both from SUST and Viney Hill began their three day quest. Shackleton eat your heart out, the Antarctic’s got nothing on North Wales!

The seven week course was a success, and the expedition at the end lived up to our expectations. The Giants Chair or as the Welsh call it, Cadair Idris, is a mountain in Snowdonia, North Wales. It lies at the southern end of Snowdonia National Park and reaches 893 metres at its summit. Supported by Hannah and Steve from Viney Hill the group made it to the summit; despite the wind and snow the party became stronger and team ethics soon kicked in. Each time a member of the team started to struggle or lose confidence, there were others around to support and encourage them to keep going.



Finally the group made it to the summit and took a brilliant group photo to confirm their amazing achievement. They had trekked up through the clouds and then had the opportunity that few ever have, to stand above the clouds and look down over the Welsh countryside. I was overjoyed the group completed the trek

This expedition with Viney Hill helped us become an 'absolute team', working together and helping each other. We really bonded. The whole experience was an outright success.

"The whole course was a brilliant experience and the things that we have done would have never crossed my mind beforehand. I will try anything these days and I feel confident in all aspects of my life. It's something I would do again, the team work was brilliant and everyone worked together."

Christina Lawlor - SUST team member

A church family weekend

ST MARY'S, WOTTON UNDER EDGE
- Shirley Wyse

St Mary's, Wotton under Edge, revisited Viney Hill in 2006 after an absence of about 10 years. Camps had been arranged previously and were very successful in bringing all ages together. It was decided to return!



Since our first visits, the site has been updated and expanded and has become an ideal place for all members of the congregation to get together. Our camp is unique in its arrangements, we believe, as we accommodate residential campers, plus an away day on one day. This enables the hardy and able to stay for the weekend, but then those 'non-campers' come and enjoy the facilities just on the Saturday. Tea and sunshine are the features emphasized for the day visitors, with gentle/moderate walks nearby. Archery embraces all ages so often our day visitors join that activity team.

Under 8s, either day or camping, have their own activity organisers supplied by the Viney Hill team, and over 8s of a

strenuous disposition can kayak, abseil etc.

The team in the office at Viney Hill has been very flexible in accommodating our needs to run our camp like this. We have a designated instructor who 'minds' us over the weekend which makes for easy communications.

We love the open air, the campfire, the static tents, and the great kitchen. We are near enough to Wotton to have day visitors, and for people to go home in a hurry if needed; *but while we are there we have the great feeling of being away from it all. We value the gentle ambience of the Christian ethos of Viney Hill and the feeling of being supported in all we do.*

Friends Group

OXFORD FRIENDS
- Lars Christensen

We have been going to Viney Hill, as a family, for four years. It has such a lot to offer every one of all ages. Our three children (now 12, 11 and 8) look forward to their annual camping trip with much excitement.



Initially we went along with a friend who was invited as part of a large group of ninety children and adults. That first year we occupied the house and the camping meadow.

We had such a good time that we thought we would book it ourselves the following year and get some of our own friends to come along. We haven't looked back. We book the meadow and a group of about thirty adults and children come along. The appeal of camping without having to erect your own tent seems universally popular!

The location of the site is excellent, as it has immediate access to the Forest of Dean.





The activities (for those over 8) are well organized and very enjoyable. For us, it is an opportunity to expose the children to outdoor adventure pursuits that might otherwise be difficult to organize closer to home.



For those who decide not to be adventurous there is beautiful countryside around and a good smattering of walks, bike paths and tourist attractions not too far away.

Cooking facilities are excellent and there is plenty of space for willing helpers! This is in an onsite prefab building, which is a boon if the weather proves to be less than clement.

Staff are very helpful in the planning of the weekend with recommendations of activities suitable for your particular group and while you are there with practical suggestions to make the most of your time at Viney Hill.

Staff News

The work at Viney Hill would not be possible without a dedicated staff team and an amazing group of volunteers. As with any organization the staff lineup changes from time to time, with staff members moving on to other challenges, and new people joining our staff team and bringing with them skills and talents that compliment the ongoing life of the Centre.

Julie Williams, who has been organizing our group's activities and bookings for the last 6 years, is away from us now for 12 months adoption leave as she settles in a new addition to the family in the shape of Owen, 2. We miss her



LUCY

hugely but her absence is compensated by the arrival of **Lucy Crick**, who has very ably stepped into the gap.

Hannah Wilmott who has been with us firstly as a gap year student, and then staying on as an apprentice instructor will be leaving us to begin a university course and church placement to train in youth work. Hannah will be sorely missed both by staff members and groups alike. We have no doubt she will be an asset to whatever organization she works for!

This year we were also joined by **Geoff Cater**, formerly of Bristol Fire Service who will be leading some activities and also ably helping with site maintenance, assisted by **Matt Herron**, a regular weekly volunteer who has quickly become an invaluable asset to the Centre. Both these new staff members, and those that



MATT



GEOFF

have been here a while know that it would be a much harder job without the regular volunteers that come to the Centre for our annual works weekend and also at other times to drive for us or do various jobs around site; or just commit to praying for us throughout the year. We would like to thank them for their amazing, continued support for the work we do!

The Christian Adventure Centre,
Viney Hill, Gloucestershire. GL15 4NA.
Tel: 01594 516162
Email: info@vineyhilladventure.org
www.vineyhilladventure.org
Charity No. 1102939