

February 12th 2021

What to do in Half Term?

We are all much more conscious of our mental health and wellbeing than we used to be ...and rightly so. With this in mind, rather than keep to the usual newsletter format this week, we wanted to focus on ways for families to spend time together next week and to have fun – despite everything else that’s going on!

With the help of Fry Class, and with some ideas courtesy of the The Guardian newspaper, please find some suggestions that might be useful for planning next week. If you are happy for us to share some photographs in the newsletters after half term, please email them to office@williampenn.co.uk

Whatever you end up doing next week, please have an enjoyable and restful time, and a break from the usual routine!

Celebrate Global Festivals and Culture

Where mealtimes are seeming increasingly similar, some families are celebrating festivals from around the world. This might include making decorations, dressing up and usually some kind of cooking. Riley M has been making meringues which would be a great Valentines dessert.

Some dates coming up are:

- Chinese New Year on 12th February (paper lantern-making and dumplings)
- Valentine’s Day on the 14th (cards and decorations)
- Pancake Day on the 16th February
- February in normal times means Mardi Gras carnivals in Europe, New Orleans and most of all Brazil, and the Sapporo snow festival Japan. These are great reasons to make costumes, artwork and traditional food, and dance to appropriate music.
- National Chip Week (20-26 February), is a chance to get creative with veg and potato varieties and toppings.



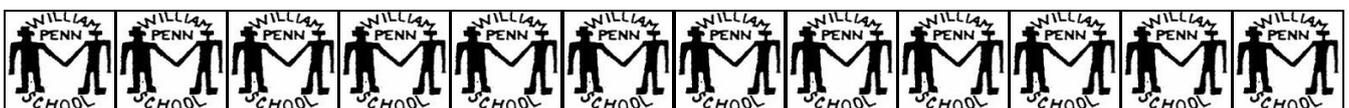
Or you can invent your own festival!

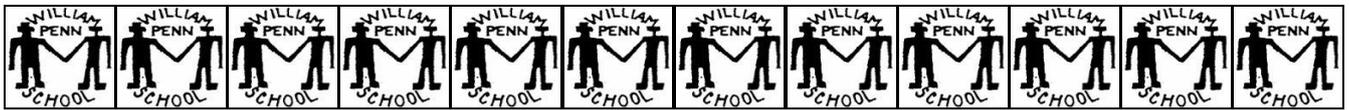
Making More of a Walk

We are so lucky to be surrounded by such fantastic countryside, and getting plenty of fresh air and exercise are key ways to support our physical and mental health. Many of you will have ways of making walks ever more interesting, or maybe biking, scootering or horse riding as suggested by Hattie.

Your walks might include some of the following:

- **Make a list of things to find on a walk** (an example might be a stick in a particular shape) as suggested by Stanley B





- **Guess the animal** (with yes and no answers to questions) which can be adapted to reflect particular interests of children.
- **Count animals** – see who can see the most of a particular sort of animal or perhaps find the most different types as suggested by Cherry B
- **Spies** involves the children secretly following the adult(s) while remaining hidden: they dart from tree to tree, ducking to avoid being spotted.
- **Pirates**, fallen trees make good ships for make-believe playing
- **It is always fun to invent your own family games whilst on a walk but for additional inspiration there are some guides that can be purchased such as [Treasure Trails](#) produces downloadable, themed walk booklets (£9.99)**
- **Virtual walking (or running)**
If you can't go out for a walk, you might be able to build up quite a journey by walking a fixed distance in the house each day, like Rufus H.



Picnics, Whatever Time of Year

Picnics in the winter and spring can be fun too. As long as everyone is warm, taking a flask for hot drinks and even food can make a walk in to a memorable picnic. Suggestions include hot chocolate as well as the usual coffee or tea, hot food such as pasta or even frankfurters in hot water to make picnic hot dogs. Scarlet D and Cherry B have been baking 'blondies' and these would be lovely to include with the picnic.

Nature Walks and Crafts

Collecting pine cones, getting your bearings from moss – it usually grows on the north side of trees – and following animal tracks all add interest to a walk.

There are numerous blogs and books that give ideas:

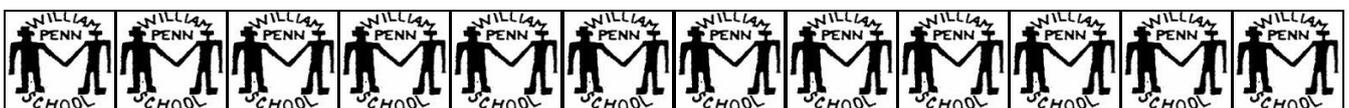
- getoutwiththekids.co.uk suggests a game where a blindfolded person is led to a tree to feel, moved away, then asked to guess which tree it was when the blindfold is removed.
- Lonely Planet's magical **Wild Things** book is full of nature craft ideas, from creating fairy outfits from leaves and flowers to turning logs into dragons.
- The **National Trust's Go Wild** series of books has activities suited to different types of landscapes
- **Born To Be Wild**, by Hattie Garlick, arranges its hundreds of things-to-do suggestions by season.

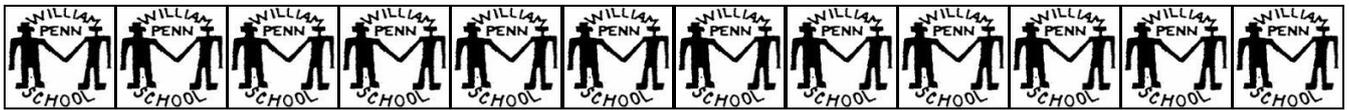
Star Gazing

One of the few advantages this lockdown has over last spring's is the chance for children to be out in the dark without staying up too late.

A few obvious constellations and some space science for stargazing can soon be learned from stargazing apps, websites and books such as National Geographic's **childrens' space hub**, and skymaps.com, which has monthly printable maps of the night sky.

Older children can study astronomy and astrophotography through online events at the upcoming **Northumberland Dark Skies festival** (12-21 February).





Holiday at Home

There are ways of holidaying at home. Changes of menu can make an exciting variation at dinnertime. Some families have tried cooking food from a different country each week - maybe [Ghanaian jollof rice](#), [Mexican tamales](#), or [Hawaiian bacon-wrapped waterchestnuts](#), learning about the various cultures along the way.

A holiday atmosphere can be achieved with a change of habit or activity. For example, a Scandi holiday vibe can be created by sitting around a campfire on sheepskins and blankets with hot chocolate, making up Viking stories.



Camping in the garden can be exciting, but if February is too cold, you can camp indoors, setting up a den in the living room and sleeping there, eating camp food and reading by torchlight.

Garden birdwatching

Printed out [spotter sheets](#) and binoculars, garden or park birdwatching can ignite a passion birds. Half-term coincides with [National Nest Box Week](#) (14-21 February), so you may be able to paint and hang your own (£4.49 from [Primrose](#)).

The [RSPB's Big Schools' Birdwatch](#), asks pupils to

submit garden survey results by 22 February.

The [RHS](#) is a great source of ideas for getting children involved in gardening activities.

Virtual Travel

Almost every attraction or destination has created virtual tour content over the past year, so here are a few to start with. Queensland's [Barrier Reef](#) has a new [children's microsite](#) with games including one that involves clicking on as many plastic bags as possible in 30 seconds, while not disturbing the jellyfish. [South Africa's Thanda Safari website](#) has game drive films and staff stories, and children can listen to live bush noises on Singita reserves' [Singita Sounds](#).

[Chester Zoo's virtual zoo days](#) have amassed 17 million viewers so far, [Edinburgh Zoo](#) has live webcams, and lovers of farm animals will like the [videos posted by Sacrewell Farm near Peterborough](#). [Glasgow Science Centre](#) posts free films and lessons, and the [London Science Museum](#) has some brilliant online games (we love Launchball).

You can watch locals' tours of [Siena](#) and [Rome](#) on [Italy4Real's](#) website, or book [a virtual interactive backpacking](#) getaway on Zoom to destinations including [Japan](#) or [Swedish Lapland](#) thanks to Oppidan Education's partnership with tour operator Original Travel (£20 an hour, over-eights).

Other Ideas

Lucas B suggestion is enjoying writing his own book, which is a really good idea to show great imagination. It provides some really good opportunities for artwork when it comes to the illustrations too!

