

Cambridge Woodcraft Folk Annual Report 2009-10

Cambridge Woodcraft Folk, is now in its 30th year and our numbers are on the rise again. We cover all ages from 6 to 21 and in 2009 two new Elfin groups were started, bringing us back up to four. As these children grow older it seems likely that we will soon need to create at least one new Pioneer group as we only have two at present. Our other two groups are Venturers for age 13-15 and District Fellows (DFs) for 16-21 year olds.

During 2009 much energy, but also lots of fun, was taken up with raising money to enable a group of 14 to travel to Peru for an international camp run by our Peruvian friends from the 2006 Global Village project in Kent. During the year we were also involved with trips to Cudham and Lockerbrook, the Oxfam Walk, Spring Camp, Strawberry Fair, Elfin Camp, Regional Pioneer camp and this year's Summer Camp which was also shared with others in our region.

We have often failed to take up opportunities on offer for our youngsters to get involved in national activities of the Woodcraft Folk but 5 of our Pioneers have joined the steering group for the national TREE (Training, Representation, Equality and Engagement) project which aims to develop consultation and involvement of our young people in the running of the organisation.

Woodcraft Folk is a young people's organisation but the younger ones need

our group leaders and parent helpers to run the groups and make sure the big events are planned and run well. We are lucky to be able to have young adults willing to help run our activities and also call on the experience of older adults whose own children have grown up. But parents new to us have much to offer and we are developing training opportunities to complement the learning-by-example which happens all the time.

Thanks are needed to all those individuals who worked hard this year to help us run group nights, camps and other activities, keep the admin going and the finances straight. And thanks to the organisations who helped with financial support especially the Co-op Group.

Richard Robertson, District Co-ordinator



Venturers

The Venturers continue to thrive. They are a lively, enthusiastic group with just over 20 members, most attending group nights regularly. The Venturers have



enjoyed a variety of activities during group nights this year including lantern making, ice-skating, preparing a panto for the Elfins, night hikes, cycle rides, pancake making and the ever popular chocolate fondue. A particular favourite was burning a large willow figure (made the previous group night) on a camp-fire at the Beechwoods helped along by a very enthusiastic chanting song led by DF Philip Richards.

Until the end of the summer term group nights were exuberantly helped along by DFs David Smith and Mikey Sargeant who we were sorry to lose to other commitments. We continue to have regular help from DFs Tertius Fulton and occasionally Patrick Kelly. As well as group nights Venturers also enjoyed attending Spring Camp, and the Oxfam Walk. The summer was a particularly busy time with a trip to Darsham in June for which the Venturers managed (KP) the food

themselves (with support from Helen Wilkes) and Folk Marshalled (activities) themselves as well, fitting in a long walk, crabbing, swimming, and a fancy dress party around the campfire.

Some Venturers attended Summer Camp at Henham while others went on the Peru trip. During the summer the Venturers also organised their own cycle rides, picnics and a camping trip to Norfolk. At autumn half-term the Venturers spent a weekend at Lockerbrook, joined by a few others from Norwich, again KP'ing and

Folk Marshalling themselves (with support). Activities included a long walk and a Halloween party.

The group has gelled together very well with a lot of co-operative working and support for each other. New members have been made welcome and have settled in very quickly. The Venturers are looking forward to attending National Venturer Camp this summer where they will meet and get to know Venturers from all over the country.

Ingrid Wesley



Rheumatic Penguin Pioneers

The Pioneer group has expanded considerably in 2009 and now has 17 regular members. The increase has been mainly due to Elfin members coming up, though one or two 'newcomers' also joined. Peter left us to join the Venturer group in July. More Elfins - there are now four groups - will be waiting in the wings during the year and it is expected that a Pioneer waiting list will have to be drawn up soon, something that hasn't happened at St. Matthews for several years. With the continuing success

of Elfin groups the pressure to set up new Pioneer groups can only increase, but for the moment the Rheumatic Penguins are thriving at near full capacity.

Last year's events included the Regional Pioneer Camp at Thorpe Woodlands where Pioneers from Cambridge, Diss, Luton and Leyton filled most of the available camping space, orienteering at Wandlebury, cycling to

Reach Fair (for the intrepid few), and a series of events at Cherry Hinton Hall hosted by the City Council Children and Young People's Participation Service (CHYPPS) - many

thanks to Paula Bishop (mother of Pioneer Max) and her young colleagues for organising this, it was tremendously popular & great fun.

Activities at St Matthews ranged from enamelling (great to see the concentration on young faces as such delicate work is going on), paper towers, and gathering and classifying litter from the streets of East Cambridge (part of an ongoing series of activities related to waste and recycling which continues into 2010). The year ended with skating at Parker's Piece - a joint event with the White Eagle Pioneers which is becoming a regular fixture in the winter calendar.

Thanks to all our Pioneers and all those who helped over the year. Chris Thompson



White Eagle & Jungle Pioneers

'What a lovely group!' I looked up from sorting the Pioneer and Elfin shelves at Morley to see Gill glowing with pleasure at the 20 or so Pioneers juggling and unicycling and spinning plates. Over this year, White Eagle and Jungle Pioneers has continued to flourish, fortunate to have a consistent group of adults and a very cohesive and inclusive group of children.

This year has seen a busy mix of old favourites such as sleeping out in the Beechwoods and the regional Pioneer camp in Thetford Forest, along with group nights such as games, swimming,



crafts and learning about children's lives in other countries. One controversial group night was when we invited Baby Milk Action to give a presentation about their work. Some parents felt that campaigning was not what Woodcraft Folk was all about. There was a healthy exchange of views over email and a firm invitation to all

have been to Huw's guitar workshops so, with the help of Paul, we can now run our own singing sessions.

The group is confident and well functioning and all parents help at least once a term. The role of helpers, who are on the rota to help but have not been involved in planning, continues to need more explanation. Perhaps they sometimes feel at a loose end. The best thing would be to come to planning meetings and take part in the thinking about each night. We have had two attempts at planning with the Pioneers, and although useful, we have found we still need an adults' meeting to ensure those ideas that are practical can be put into practice! A plea to parents would be to become a member of Woodcraft Folk as this makes planning group nights and especially outdoor events much easier.

Alice Reid, Claire Cameron, Simon Cox

parents to attend planning sessions to shape the programme for the term. Our fundraising efforts this year is focused on Pump-aid, the charity that provides low cost technology to bring clean water to African villages. The Pioneers will be organising an arduous overnight expedition in May and are learning the necessary skills to do this such as first aid and map reading.

Five of the group are involved in the National Tree Project steering group and in January went to a residential weekend in Birmingham to meet up with other Woodies to take part in reshaping the Woodcraft Folk. Several group members



Chipmunk Elfins

In February 2009 emails started to fly around, *'...it has been a secret dream of mine to start a Woodcraft Folk group in Histon..'*, *'Histon needs Woodcraft..'*, *'How do we start?..'* It is such a pleasure to be reporting now on a successful first term of the Chipmunk Elfins.

Before we started, Hilary Sutton gave us lots of help and advice and ran an 'Introduction to Woodcraft' session, providing the opportunity for us as a group to affirm the Aims and Principles. In fact, one family decided against Woodcraft as a result, feeling that the commitment to peace was not for them. Hilary has supported the setting up of our group in many ways.

We started in September and now have 8 boys and 12 girls, well balanced by age, bursting with life energy and cooperating and playing brilliantly together.

We introduced the first night the Woodcraft call and made a collage of the pine tree logo, made a 'span the world with friendship' frieze and did some games in the garden of the hall where we meet - in the centre of the village. The next few weeks found us getting to know each other, making a talking stick, choosing a name for the group, having a dusky walk collecting apples, sticks and leaves and climbing trees. We had a very exciting evening pitching Vangos in the garden and 'camping' with torches, songs and cocoa. We had a session on stars and made up our own constellations. We had a nightline and fire at the Beechwoods and made an amazing variety of lanterns out of tin cans, card, bottles and sticks. Each Elfin made a section for our group banner. We were very keen to try to make the group cohesive and really 'Woodcraft' right from the start and structured this first term around the 'I Begin' badge. The Elfins rounded this off with making a scrapbook of all the things they had enjoyed.

We applied to the Parish Council for a place to have a fire, and were quite surprised to be given enthusiastic permission to use a lovely little piece of parish land, within walking distance of our hall. When the children thanked her the councillor said, 'don't thank me, this land belongs to the community, and therefore to each of you, to enjoy and take care of'. There were a few

gobsmacked young faces! We had our first fire the night before the blizzard. The stars were out and the ponies in the next field watched curiously over the fence. Naturally, Huw was invited. We must acknowledge the wonderful support from Huw Richards. He came to every second group night with his guitar to teach us songs and chords, helping us to start our own 'Chipmunk Elfin songbook with chords in singable keys' and shared his Elfin experience with us in many other ways.

We asked the Elfins what they would like to tell you. *'I liked the digeridoos, fake camping apple pie making, badges banner-making, games, Lode birdfeeders, pizzas, Lode, the fire with the horses, Woodcraft!'*. *'I liked singing and sprinkling stars and trying to make a connection and what the picture could be'* *"When I started Woodcraft I felt very welcome and warm."*, and *"I like it all"* - from several Elfins and one of the parents! We have a great group of parents who have lots of ideas and many are being drawn in to run some of the activities at sessions. We are looking forward to sharing ideas and

experiences with the other Elfin groups in Cambridge during the next year.

Right from the start our group nights have always begun with singing the Envoi. Overheard from one of our smallest Elfins on a walk, "tum tum tum ti tum fashioning of a new world". So that's a good start.

Richard Ash, Tina Davenport, Steve Vine
Sally Mattson,
and Helen Wilkes.



Squirrel Elfins

A new Elfin group was formed in Cambridge in April 2009, meeting in the south of the City. From the start the group took around 18 boys and girls aged from 6 to 9, all but one of whom were new to Woodcraft. We have enjoyed plenty of outdoor activities including trips to the woods, singing, bonfires, games in the park, tracking and a night walk. We have even made the most of the snowy weather and included sledging in our programme in January. We have also had many fun nights indoors including cooking, circus skills, woodwork and making and sailing boats. Many of the group attended the spring and summer camps and we also ran our own residential weekend to Darsham in November where we walked all the way to the sea!

Anna Clarke

Acorn Elfins

Our group enjoyed the usual wide variety of activities in 2009. In the hall there were fantastic craft and cooking sessions and our trips out included walks, night lines and camp fires. The group's weekend at Darsham in March went very well and once again was a great chance to bring the adults together. In the summer term we had a set of meetings in the woods of Cherry Hinton Hall where the City Council's CHYPPS team used us as guinea pigs for their new programme of outdoor activities including making whistles out of elder and hazel, fire lighting from sparks and making hot chocolate using kelly kettles. It made us realise that we should be doing more woodcraft!!



The autumn saw major changes for our group. Six turned 10 and joined the Pioneers, six more left to help start the new Chipmunk Elfins and three others went off having moved or wanting to take up other activities. That left just two children in the group. However we had a number of youngsters who wanted to join and Richard handed over the Pioneers and became an Elfin leader for almost the first time. By careful management we have built numbers to 18 and rebalanced the group on gender having started with rather more boys than girls.

Richard Robertson

Badger Elfins

This year the report is being written by us, the two oldest Badger Elfins, George and Oliver. We all agree that this year has gone very well. Oliver said *"ice skating was COOL and fun"* He enjoyed whizzing around and getting COOL. Joseph really enjoyed the camp fires and hot chocolate. After making bird feeders Jonathon said he *"loved making animals"*.

At Darsham we were lucky enough to have an artist in residence (Issam Kourbaj who is Sami's dad), who made lots of art with us. We also went on various trips, such as a walk and going to the beach. Atticus said *"Darsham was cool"* and Sam said *"I think we should go to the beach more at Darsham"*.



Back at Cambridge, amongst lots of other trips, we went to Coleridge park and ate hot jacket potatoes in the dark! Poppy, a very friendly new Elfin, said *"I like the camp. I liked where we did the walk and the jacket potatoes"*.

In the autumn our program was mainly outdoors. Jude liked doing the outdoor stuff and Herbie said that he would like to do 2 weeks indoors and 2 weeks outdoors. Elgan especially liked doing the outdoor games and Lily liked all the night walks, whilst Shirley enjoyed the best game ever - Capture the Flag!! Hopefully everyone enjoyed our fair-trade evening. Well we know Hannah did. She liked making fondue out of chocolate!

Most recently we did circus skills with Ian and Gill. Beth quoted *"I liked the circus skills because of the diabolos and I am learning how to juggle. Lily learnt how to use the juggling sticks"*. We have included comments from most of the Badger Elfins, but not all, because a few were too busy enjoying themselves with circus skills.

Finally we've really enjoyed Elfins but we're very excited about going up to Pioneers after Easter.

Blue skies. Oliver, George and all the Badger Elfins

Eastern Region Summer Camp

An avenue of sweet chestnuts opened on to a wide sweep of parkland, the setting for Regional Summer Camp in August. With nothing but woods, grass land and ancient trees as far as the eye could see, and only horses for neighbours, Henham Park near Southwold was a beautiful setting for a gathering of 160 Woodies. They came from Brightlingsea, Diss, Lowestoft, Leighton Linlade, Luton, Norwich and Waveney Valley, as well as Cambridge, and camped in three villages.



Here is a stream of memories from that week, in no particular order:

The Pioneer bivvy - we had a countdown at midnight for Sean's birthday. On the walk we stopped at a windmill.

We walked to the beach and made a Woodcraft Folk symbol out of pebbles.

I found a plastic cup and filled it half with sand half with water and threw it into the sea and it made a huge splash.

I liked making corn dollies.

I loved the horses.

I liked making my tee shirt. First of all we put lots of elastic bands on the tee shirts, then Huw put them into the dyes next to the water tap, we left them for a bit and rinsed them, took off the elastic bands, and hung them out to dry. Then they got the summer camp design screen-printed on.

I loved the waterslides. I liked cooking. I liked my rota a lot. The Pioneer bunting between the tents.

Firing rockets was well good. The waterslides were really slippy with washing up liquid. I loved squirting people with water as they went down. Then we ran out of water which was really annoying.

I had my cool socks (the best rota) henna tattooed.

I liked playing the guitar with Huw, and singing around the campfire, of course.

I loved having hot chocolate every night.

I liked Josie's bird. I helped painting the leaves and me and Herbie found stones for the eyes and the beak.

The end of camp show! I liked my bit - the evil toilet tent - and Seal and Isabel had their arms behind them - and someone behind each of them making them eat jam and



cleaning their teeth. Ha! Simon's horse impression. And I liked the DFs dressing up as girls. The diabolo show. My bit was the best - 16 tons. Oh and Elfin rules - that was so funny. Which was the one with Seamus and the three campers, Seamus was funny. Mum's song. The Mamma Mia thing - the dancers were so funny.

I climbed over the fence with Simon - he had some cucumber and carrots to feed the horses.

I heard David's story Hilary the Woodchip and it was very brilliant and David was the best.

I got three wasp stings - my first ones ever, one walking round the estate, one spraying them with suncream, one pouring out tea.

I got none.

I got stung trying to kill them with apples.

I was annoyed Sion wasn't there, and Sam.

Who had a shower? Nah. Well, they were really nice.

The sky lanterns - one of them was fine but the other one set fire to itself and landed in a tree. It was scary, but the first one was cool. No, it was really cool when it went into a tree because everyone was really scared.

The Tooth family (minus Dom who was having fun in Peru. We missed you!)



Peru 2009

Event: International Festival of Children's Rights
Host: Club Infantil 23 de Mayo CHAP
Date and Venue: August 2009, near Cusco, 11,000 feet up in the Andes
Woodcraft Folk: Cambridge (14), Edinburgh, (1), Birmingham (4)
Others: Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Austria

The camp was not easy, quite basic really, but everyone was so friendly and mixed well.



I have never been somewhere and felt more welcome and more special and lucky than how I felt as I got off the bus to find everyone who'd already arrived rush towards us and help us with our luggage and ask us questions and just seem excited that we were there.

The camp and trip was challenging but inspiring. It was winter and our breath condensed and then froze inside our tents over night but we had these really BRILLIANT Summit 5000 sleeping bags donated by Vango.

The best part was living on camp with the

Peruvians and others, really getting to know them and their cultures in a way you wouldn't get just travelling around

The camp food was basic but it was good to learn about the food our Peruvian hosts ate on a regular basis. When we ate out in Cusco and Lima after the camp the food was mostly 'kay rico' (delicious)! The scenery was beautiful and in Cusco the architecture was magnificent and the markets full of lovely things. After the camp we stayed in Cusco and went on a trip to Macchu Picchu. Walking up to the steps to the site was like climbing stairs and took almost two hours. Then we followed a path through bushes and then suddenly THERE were the Inka buildings and the famous peak right in front of us. AWESOME



We had a great time and learnt a lot about child exploitation, enslavement and labour. The discussions on children's rights were a really



interesting part of the event and made more meaningful as we could see children helping their families at work, especially looking after animals, serving in shops and markets. Not getting much education though. There were children in traditional dress earning money by posing for photos and lots of quite poor people.



At the end of the trip we stayed with CHAP families in Lima, a massive city of 8 million. When the CHAP kids came to England for Global Village they asked why our houses had sloping roofs. In Lima it hardly rains and all the houses have flat roofs, often unfinished so they can build another storey on top. We visited a school where there were so many children they were two shifts. One used the classrooms in the morning then went home and the second shift used the classrooms in the afternoon.

Cambridge Woodcraft Folk

bea, ben, bron, chris, dom, dominic, erica, kate, jack, julie, martin, nancy, patrick, richard