

# Cambridge Woodcraft Folk Annual Report 2010-11

It is time to report on all our activities for the last year. A busy year in which we added a new Pioneer group but settled back to just three Elfin groups when the Squirrels merged with the Badgers. With three sets of Elfin and Pioneer groups, but just the one Venturer group for the City there will soon be pressure on that group to expand or split into two.

But that is the future, for now we can report that we have lots of new children and their parents, all getting to know what we do and how we do it. With a constant stream of newcomers we try to make sure that there are training opportunities. A number took part in "Learn to Play the Woodcraft Way" instruction early in the year and have found this very useful in running group nights.

A number of long standing members have been helping newer groups get going, and others help run particular activities. We are indebted to people like Gill Miller and Huw Richards but also many others whose children are now adult but retain their involvement with help for groups and camps. There



is a move across the country to engage young adults, especially those who have been through Woodcraft as children, in helping run groups and we are lucky to have some involved with us in Cambridge.

We had another busy year as you will see from the reports from the groups. One point to note is that many of them are now running group night activities outdoors when ever possible, right through the winter. There were camps and trips to residential centres for each age group and many of our groups also organised weekends away for themselves. We once again ran a café on the Oxfam Walk and also had a big contingent helping in the children's area at Latitude Festival.

Summer camp was once again in the beautiful Ringstead Bay setting. Unfortunately the weather was "challenging" with a particularly big storm, but we and our tents survived. The dynamics on the camp suffered but we have subsequently spent time reviewing our camping principles and practice for the benefit of future camps. Thanks are needed to everyone who



worked so 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 Co-op Group who helped with financial support.

**Richard Robertson**  
District Co-ordinator

## Peace Pioneers

The Peace Pioneers came in to existence in the Autumn of 2010, though, at that time, the group was just called the Histon Pioneers.

A number of Chipmunk Elfin's - also based in Histon - were turning ten and two of the Elfin leaders, with the generous help of various other adults, turned their efforts to the establishment of this new group:

A venue was secured; meetings took place; a programme of activities began to form; Gill Miller-Willis passed on her knowledge and experience by running a Pioneer training session (thank you Gill); largely by word of mouth a group had formed, and the first session took place, in September with 8 girls and one boy, a gender imbalance which is gradually shifting as boys join.

*There is almost always fun and games, finding interesting facts about interesting things and more. One of my favourite activities was cooking, particularly when we made the apple and black berry pie. The week before cooking that, we went out to collect a few ingredients the apples and blackberries. That, also, was very fun.* **Megan**

The children had fun comparing different bubble making recipes, and learning ceilidh dance steps with Huw and Claire Richards (thank you). The children were then outdoors again, at Milton Country Park's wonderful Wild Place, for a fire-lit evening of damper bread, marshmallows, games and song.



Three of the sessions after half-term were devoted to meeting up with other groups: there was an Elfin and Pioneer groups get together at the lovely Firefly Green in Histon,

a joint Pioneer group ice skating session on Parkers Piece, and a joint Pioneer group session at the Beechwoods, again involving those three essential elements: fire, food and fun. Other sessions included pumpkin pie making, a discussion on peace, a talk from David Chandler of the RSPB, outdoor torch games, and putting up a tent in near-blizzard conditions (thank you Richard R).

2011 began with the naming of the group: a democratic process which saw Peace Pioneers being voted for as the group's name (thanks Steve). Subsequent sessions have consisted of djembe drumming, learning about star constellations, Chinese New Year food tasting and games, and Valentines Day themed cooking. More collaborative sessions are also planned for this term.

*We are a recently formed group of pioneers. We chose our name because one of our main focuses is peace, with each other and the within the world. In our song that ends our sessions we have included something about peace. It helps remind us to have peace in our thoughts when we leave and go about our week.* **Martha**

The group benefits from having the active involvement of parents: the recent planning meeting was well-attended, and ideas were plentiful; the Summer term is already shaping up with further ideas from parents, and the overall feeling is one of buoyancy. The children, in a short space of time, have bonded well as a group: they interact well with each other (and with the adults), are enthusiastic, interested, and helpful.

*Pioneers is active, Its also great fun too!  
you get your share in EVERYTHING,  
Not many children do!  
So i'd like to say a big thank you, to Richard and Sally too,  
For making me feel welcome, so here it is ...  
THANK YOU!!!  
I don't know how make it so fun, for everybody too! So I just wanted you to know that.....  
PEACE PIONEERS, I LOVE YOU!!!!*

**Evie**

Thank you to everyone - adults and children - involved in the formation, and continuation of Peace Pioneers.

**Richard Ash and Sally Mattson.**

## Rheumatic Penguin Pioneers:

The group is now almost full again with 19 regular members. Numbers have varied throughout the year and some former members have dropped out, some have gone up to Venturers [goodbye and bon voyage to Faye and Tiggle,], and others have joined or come up from the Elfin group. Success brings its own problems..... and it is now a delicate balancing act to work out how and when to share the large and small rooms with the Acorns. The pressures will ease in the summer when more outdoor sessions are possible. Our other dilemma is the continuing excess of boys over girls - currently 13 : 5. This imbalance is a feature of the local school as well - though not as pronounced. With the group almost full any prospective new boys [apart from those coming from the Elfin group] are being added to a waiting list, whilst new girls are accepted. This policy may change with discussion, or with changes in numbers as the year passes.

But enough of all this....what have we actually been doing? A lot of events last year were shared with the White Eagle and Jungle Pioneers. Together we had weekends at Cudham in February - a long time ago now but who can forget those badgers; at Lockerbrook in October - a fantastic time, a sunny, windy walk and too many fire alarms; and at Thorpe Woodlands for the Regional Pioneer camp with groups from Cambridge, Diss, Luton and Norwich. Both groups also went to Norwich in March for the Regional Pioneer day - thanks to Dani for organising it and to Simon for braving the labyrinthine rail ticketing system. And in May a few of our group joined the White Eagle and Jungle Pioneers on their sponsored walk to raise funds for pump aid. I'm sure their own report will have much to say about this so I won't steal their thunder. Suffice it to say that we helped raise over £1500 and were very very tired afterwards. The children carried their own gear and rucksacks and

bivvied outside at Eversden on the Saturday night - which was mercifully dry.

Now that there is a new Peace Pioneers group, we hope to arrange lots of activities involving all three groups. It's a great way to make new friendships [which may go forwards into Venturers and DFs] and to see what's going on over the fence.

Some of the highlights of our own group were the ever popular trip to the rope swings at Harlton woods, making new bags from old bags, going to the Corn Exchange to the anti-bullying gig where one of the bands featured Pioneers from St. Matthews, and a session on marbling which produced wonderful results despite a certain lack of forward planning as to what to do with 30 dripping wet sheets of paper when you have to clear up and leave the building in 2 minutes. We all look forward to the next year, and many thanks to all the pioneers and all the helpers who make it all possible.

**Chris Thompson**



## White Eagle and Jungle Pioneers

Our big event this year was our sponsored expedition. We spent a series of group nights learning skills (first-aid, map-reading, survival), planning the route and menus, and practicing carrying heavy packs. Finally in June we set off early one Saturday morning with the majority of the White Eagle and Jungle Pioneers, plus some Penguin and Diss Pioneers. They all walked for 25 miles over two days with no complaints. They led the walk, read the map, coped with blisters,

scrapes and knocks, had a wild time on the Harlton woods rope swings, made their dinner and washed up, sang themselves hoarse and finally bivvied out overnight, before donning their rucksacks again for the long walk home. And then there was a glorious spread and cups of very welcome tea on Lammas Land, complete with bunting and Welcome Back string between two trees. The Pioneers made a fantastic sum of £1700 in sponsorship for PumpAid, and retained a wonderful sense of achievement and companionship for themselves.

In the autumn term we rose to the challenge of applying for Action Project funding from the Woodcraft TREE Project. TREE gives successful project applications a sum of money which will enable them to run a project which will benefit their community. The first challenge was to refocus our minds from raising money to give to good causes, to think of projects which might involve our action, would benefit our community, but might need some monetary input to run or get going. Eventually we came up with the idea of asking for money to buy some instruments, which we could then learn to play, which will benefit our Woodcraft community, but hopefully we might get proficient enough to take them busking to raise money for a wider community. We were delighted to have been awarded £350 and are now the proud custodians of a clutch of ukeleles and djemba drums, and are intermingling music sessions in our group nights as we learn to play.

Besides all this we have been carrying on with all our favourite activities: night walks and wide games, craft, cooking and information sessions, and had a wonderful time with



other Pioneer groups at Regional Pioneer Camp in June and at Lockerbrook in October. We have said goodbye to some of our long-standing Pioneers and leaders and wish them as happy and stimulating a time at Venturers as they have given us at Pioneers.

**Alice Reid**

### **Elfin Camp**

The 2010 camp was once again a great success and introduced many new Elfins to the fun of camping together. The Venturers also love to help set up and run the weekend, remembering their time as Elfins being looked after by the previous generation of Venturers.



## Badger Elfins

We have had a very busy year at Badger Elfins, as we have now merged with the Squirrel Elfins, and therefore welcomed lots of new elfins, making the group 26 in total!

We have spent each session getting to know the new elfins, and playing games which will welcome them all.

The summer term was spent outdoors as much as possible, with wide games always the favourite activity. Cooking in the Beechwoods was a popular evening, and we were joined by Huw to lead the singing.

We held a very successful evening looking at Childrens Rights, with help from Ben (a Venturer) and Rosie (a DF). The children were very engaged in the evening, and took time to reflect on the issues. A parent helper suggested making sushi was a life skill that all our elfins should have, therefore we obliged, and the Badger Elfins are now competent sushi makers!

This term we have a theme of re-using. This started with a newspaper fashion show. Elena and Shirley had a wedding fashion show, whilst Sam, Herbie and Gabe designed clothes with fantastic head wear!

We continued with our theme of re using by all bringing in an item of old clothing and making our first Badger Elfin banner. We also had a try at spelling our names out in semaphore with flags made from old clothing.

With Indian music and food, we introduced



the issue of street children in India to the group. The elfins designed henna designs, and created newspaper bags, whilst also having a game of Kabadi...a very busy and popular evening!

**Esther Chesterman**



## Acorn Elfins

We have had an exciting year here at Acorn Elfins, the highlight of which for many of us was organising our own trip to Darsham in October. Despite only having one car between us, we all finally made it to the sea, we are grateful to Nick who spent all day driving back and forth!

This year we have lots of new faces and are pleased to have more girls join our group. Also it's good to have some younger Elfins, to better balance the age range. We have enjoyed many activities this year, both new ideas and old favourites. When we asked the children, three activities were by far the most popular: apple picking, swimming and going to camp.

In September we said goodbye to Richard, who needed a little more time for all his other Woodcraft hats. So with a bunch of enthusiastic but completely inexperienced parents at the helm we launched forth into the autumn term. It has been a steep learning curve, but with support and help from experienced Woodcraft friends things have settled down really well. With grateful thanks to all our busy parents who remain so committed, and enable our group to move on, and as always, have fun.

**Hilary Connors**

## Chipmunk Elfins

The Chipmunks began in September 2009 with a lot of enthusiasm, hard work, and solid planning from the group co-ordinators Tina, Richard, Sally, Helen and Steve. The children in the group have been brilliant, always enthusiastic, lively, and friendly.

The challenge after such a successful beginning has been to keep it going but this has been made easy, mainly by the children themselves but also by the high level of parental support. Naturally some have moved on, but the places have been filled, we have 18 (7 boys and 11 girls) and a number on the waiting list.

We were very pleased that Nick joined us as a leader during the year. This was very timely as Sally and Richard departed to form the Peace Pioneer group in Histon, which is going strong. Well done and thanks!

A weekend at Darsham was arranged in Feb 2010 and was fully booked. Amongst the enjoyable activities was a show entirely thought up and arranged by the Elfins themselves. It was a great surprise and wonderfully entertaining. The Chipmunks decorated their own Woodcraft Folk float in the Histon Feast Parade which raises funds for local groups and charities and brought a great feeling of belonging to the community. And as always we had a stall at the Feast Market to raise a few pounds for ourselves, but also gave an opportunity to publicise the new Pioneer group. We had a special plot allocated to us to



plant in the new community woodland between Histon and Oakington and many Elfins showed up with a spade to plant many saplings each. So in several years' time you can enjoy this wood and think Woodcraft Folk! We have enjoyed special links with

Milton Country Park and Chivers.

Clan sacks were introduced to the group to create an air of calm and engagement as children arrive for a group night, and it has been a resounding success. Huw continued to support us through the year with his music, and we have continued

this bonding habit with singing at almost every session

We have especially sought to forge stronger links with the other Elfin groups in the district and have hosted the Badger Elfins at Firefly Green for an extremely well attended bonfire. The Badgers reciprocated by inviting us to their recent residential to Cudham. We will be hosting the Acorn Elfins for another bonfire at Firefly Green in the coming weeks. Many useful ideas have also been exchanged with the Acorn Elfins which has helped keep the group nights fresh and original.



Finally, the Chipmunks give the hugest and warmest of thanks to one of the founders who left the group at the end of last year, Tina Davenport. It was with her enthusiasm and commitment and unbelievable hard work that enabled our group to start up and keep going with such momentum during the first year. She was very much right at the core of the group, and gave so much encouragement and support to everyone involved. She is sorely missed and the whole group sends her much love and best wishes.

**Steve, Helen, and Nick**

## Cambridge Venturers

The Venturers had a year full of activity but the highlight was V camp – the national camp for Venturers which only happens every three years. This event is almost entirely planned and organised by DFs (from all over the country). They always have some new ideas and this year they issued the camp's own currency – vennies – to everyone for spending in the cafés and at other central activities. They then manipulated the value of the vennies day by day. One of the days all the adults on the camp were spirited away leaving the Venturers and DFs to work things out without us – reported to be an interesting experiment!



Another innovation was to change camp time to one hour ahead of the outside world with impressive results. Midnight was actually only 11pm. Getting up at 10am was actually 9am. But the social interaction was perhaps the key to the success of the event.

*It was a really good experience and a great camp. I got to know lots of people from other districts all over the country. It was my first chance to meet them and I'm really looking forward to CoCamp.*

**Natalie**

The 28 of us from Cambridge formed a village at V camp with Norwich and Luton from our region, plus others from Barnet, Eastbourne, Newham, Hounslow and Waltham Forest. The Norwich contingent included 5 teenage refugees who made a big

impact on the camp and also had a great time



*I loved V camp, nearly everything about it: travelling up on the train with all the Venturers; having time to enjoy the view from the field across to Derby; feeling welcome among all the wonderful young people there; spending my vennies in the cafes with friends old and new; taking part in a performance poetry workshop; baking a cake for the cafe; dancing, and drinking mint tea in the chill out tent. And if that was how good it was for an adult helper, think how amazing it was for the Venturers!*

**Judith**



At half term in October we had a trip to Cudham in Kent and had a great time with some of the London, Luton and Norwich Venturers we shared the V camp village with. Everyone hopes to these links will be remade at CoCamp 2011

**Richard**