

Cambridge Woodcraft Folk Annual Report

2011-12



CoCamp

This was an amazing achievement. An ambitious international camp totally focused on Co-operation, a precursor for the International Year of Co-operation in 2012, and a brilliant experience, especially for our teenagers and young adults.

Cambridge district was heavily involved with Venturer Jess Finn on the Board which oversaw the event and a large contingent of 80 participating from Cambridge. That said the length of the 10 day event put off some of our younger families from booking and only 7 Elfins and 12 Pioneers attended. However there were also 15 Venturers, 18 DFs and 27 adults young and older.

We invited our friends from CHAP in Peru to join us at CoCamp and went to a lot of effort to raise the money to enable four of them to join us. Visa problems arose and delayed their arrival but after more delay (and Simon's intervention with Border Control) they all arrived.

We also had a very large delegation of 35 Catalans with us in our village at Cocamp. This group were very lively and mixed very well with us but there were then 120 of us. This number is at the extreme end of the number for whom we had equipment but also meant we had very large rota groups which proved unwieldy for our DF rota leaders to manage.

The Awards for All grant helped provide equipment and financial support especially for those with more limited income. It also enabled us to experiment with harmony singing with the help of Ro Whitehead and Neil Harris.



Penguin Pioneers

The St Matthews Pioneer Group currently has 21 members, still with far more boys than girls, but still with lots of vitality and enthusiasm. After Easter we will lose three members [Christian, Tom and Jake] and gain two from Elfins [Jessica and Innes], so it's goodbye and hello, and we wish them all well. We will also lose Christian's father, Chris Hemming, from our group of helpers. He has been an invaluable member of our team over the last few years and will be sorely missed - thanks from all of us.

Over the last year we have continued the trend of more joint sessions with our own Acorn Elfin group. I think this is partly due to the logistics of meeting at



the same time in a limited space, partly because quite a few parents / carers have children in each group, and partly because it's been proved to work well. Recently we have had two consecutive science based evenings for Pioneers and Elfins which were a great success and ran very smoothly, and they involved a lot of adult helpers in more active roles than is sometimes

the case - which can only be a benefit to all. On a more selfish note, it's good for me to get to know some of the Elfins before they move up to the Pioneer group.

Other highlights of the previous twelve months include two spectacularly wet events - a BBQ last July which was cancelled at short notice because of severe weather warnings, which nevertheless saw a few hardy souls watching the rain pummeling the surface of the paddling pool at Newnham; and the first evening of the Regional Pioneer Camp at Thorpe Woodlands where about 30 tents had to be put up in a continuous downpour on a dark Friday night. Thankfully the weather improved as the weekend passed and we were able to take down the tents when they (and we) were dry.

We have fashioned chopsticks and whistles, carried out a quiz on the streets, and visited the University Observatory for the third time in four years - and have been thwarted by the clouds each time. We'll try again in the autumn. Several visits to Milton Country Park in daylight and darkness have use of their wide open spaces and fire pit, courtesy of Chris Goodwin - a definite friend of Woodcraft.

Several of our group plus Pioneers from the White Eagles had an adventurous bivvy in the Cudham woods, and a larger group also went there for a sunny weekend in November when we had a fabulous walk on the Kentish Downs.

A few of the group were at the summer International CoCamp, and some said it was the best camp they'd ever been to. It was unforgettable and certainly heroic in concept, but I suspect the hard working adults may have a slightly different view, and debates have continued long after the event.

And finally in the grand tradition of messy play, we coloured our mosaics made of pasta. Not quite rivalling the Roman craftsmen, but pretty good fun. We look forward to the lighter evenings and more outdoor events, and as always we thank all the pioneers and helpers who make it happen every week.

Chris Thompson

White Eagle & Jungle Pioneers

Some of our long-established Pioneers have moved on to Venturers, and we welcomed a large number of new Pioneers, some moving up from Elfins, and some new to Woodcraft. The old hands have introduced the new Pioneers to old favourite activities, including wide games, crafts, singing and those tricky chords on the ukulele (with the very able help of Huw), and of course the annual bivvy in the Beechwoods. We were very lucky to gain a chef as a parent who has done some great cooking, have had bush-craft instruction from specialists, (rather messily) made our own carbon footprint trails, and enjoyed more than a few games of 'were-fairies'.

Many of our Pioneers went on Spring Camp, Pioneer Camp, Pioneer bivvy at Cudham, and Cudham in November. A number of Pioneers also had a fantastic but exhausting time at Co-Camp in the Summer.

In March 2012, after 28 years of meeting there, we held our last meeting at Morley School, because financial pressures had forced the school to seek more lucrative bookings. Many current and former Elfins and Pioneers are or were pupils at the school, and leaders have often been school parents, so the ending of the association between Woodcraft and Morley has touched more than just the current members of these groups with



sadness. We have been lucky, however, to have been able to move seamlessly to a great hall at another school and are looking forward to a new relationship which we hope will be as long and amicable as that with our previous school.

Alice Reid, Deb Hempstead, Patrick Campbell-Preston, Lorraine Irving, et al.

Cambridge Venturers

The Venturers have had a good year, with a mix of outdoor activities, crafts, and looking at social issues. Sometimes they even combined them, with a visit to

Reworks community bike workshop for a "Scrapheap Challenge" to build bikes and race them. Later, Green Tech, another Reworks project, came and showed us how to make rocket stoves and a geodesic dome big enough to fit most



of the Venturers. Quite a lot of them also got into the House of Wool woven across the hall and up to the rafters.

Former Venturer Nancy told us tales of her time teaching in Malawi, and another night her mother Maggie talked to us about UK homelessness. Jon Nott visited from the national Woodcraft General Council to talk about Project Koodoo at a debate hosted by the Venturers for the district.

Cooking remains very popular as do all kinds of arts and crafts plus also music sessions. Outdoor activities are popular too, with punting, swimming, walks, a barbecue, and wide games at Wandlebury.



Other highlights of the year included a particularly good panto for the Elfins (thanks Nancy), Halloween at Lockerbrook, with some rather fine pumpkin lanterns, and midnight ice skating at Alexandra Palace. Special thanks are due to Claire for driving the minibus back at 3 in the morning!

Several Venturers have moved on to DFs and new ones joined, and the group as a whole is younger than before. We also lost our wonderful volunteers Ros and Ludi, who each moved away for reasons of work. We still have a very good set of helpers, though, including parents of both current and former Venturers. Thank you to them, and to everyone who has helped organize an activity or run a camp. Also Fiona for helping me out at Lockerbrook as KP.

Finally, there was a good showing of Venturers at Annual Gathering. It's good to see them widening their scope to work with the national organisation, and there may well be more than one familiar face on the national Venturer Committee after the elections in June. Go Venturers!

Peter Westlake



Acorn Elfins

The ebullient Acorn Elfins group have once again had a fantastic year of fun and varied activities. Popular outings have included old favourites such as the now-traditional walk during a crisp autumn evening at Lode to pick apples and blackberries and a night-line session (with a bonfire) at the ever-popular Beechwoods. We've also discovered pastures new, such as Milton Country Park's 'Wild Place' where the fire is once again a welcome feature and the wide safe field an attractive area for games.

In-hall sessions have included experimenting scientifically, baking... and eating(!), sewing, singing, sticking, painting, sharing, planting, thinking, running, hammering, laughing and talking... it's been great. We've been especially lucky to have so many regular keen Elfins keeping the group so dynamic and are particularly grateful to the enthusiastic parents (and our resident DF helper, Jack) who all contribute so willingly to make each night different and interesting and keep the Acorns thriving.

Justine McLachlan

Badger Elfins

The group has had a busy year with many of the weekly meetings held outdoors, even through the winter. There was also lots of drama, puppetry, making costumes and shadow theatre. We were joined by several new children but lost others moving up to Pioneers. Having to leave Morley School after such a long association there was sad but our new venue is proving really good.

Chipmunk Elfins

We are going strong with a full group and lots of support from parents. We are well balanced by age and gender, have a couple of regular Woodchips and a Pioneer, homeless until we can get the Pioneer group re-launched.

We have quite a tight structure that serves us well for group nights, with a different overall coordinator and an activities coordinator each week. We made a new banner with a jigsaw puzzle design, with each Elfin contributing a section. Our talking stick is huge and dripping with beads, because that is the way they wanted it. We have so much opportunity to do things outside: walks in woods and fields and our Firefly Green for fires, picnics, obstacle courses and wide games. We played Capture the Flag in Homefield Park in pitch dark. One parent is a sheep farmer and in February we visited their lambing sheds with over 200 lambs and ewes and an orphan pen where lambs could be fed and cuddled. We have been to the Crossing Keeper's Hut for an evening of lantern and giant mobile making. Bonfires too, cooking Bannock Bread over the fire.



Communal creative activities always go down well and allow individuals to be themselves. We made a Fantasy Island where animals escaping a man-made catastrophe could find refuge, and we took this one to the Latitude Festival Woodcraft Folk children's tent. We made a toy camp and sewed sleeping bags and tents for teddies. We had a stone session, making dens for painted stones and cooked rock buns of course!

We did a shadow puppet show and had a doodlefest.

Our links with our community have continued, although we still feel like a well-kept secret. Again we had a float in the Feast Parade and a stall at the Feast Market where we ran sessions of Viking braiding, tin can lanterns and friendship bracelets. Aided by Huw, we sang for the very frail residents of Midfield Lodge where the Elfins went round unprompted helping find places in songbooks, turning pages and singing. A local ornithologist visited and we enacted a flock of starlings trying to migrate to Africa, encountering hazards on the way. We visited Tony Hillier's metal sculpture garden, saw him welding, and met his hens.

In March we went to where we wandered for hours in huge woods and were spellbound to find ponies apparently wild. During planning, the Elfins challenged the 'one essential teddy only' rule. Why only one? They had a

civilised debate which reached a consensus: more than one teddy, but people have to be sensible. The teddies were to take part in the Saturday night Darsham Show - and they certainly did!

Steve Vine, Nick Walters and Helen Wilkes

District Co-ordinator

We celebrated the district's 30th year in 2011 and it was perhaps one of our busiest as this re-cap of the year shows. Coordinating all this has been a

Lockerbrook family trip	Annual Gathering	Oxfam Walk café	Spring Camp	Elfin Camp	Regional Pioneer Camp	Latitude	Co-Camp	30th Anniversary	Picnic & Ceilidh	Pioneers - Cudham	Venturers - Lockerbrook	DFs - Darsham	Regional Gathering	Beechwoods work day	Venturers - Aly Paly	Ice skating	Minibus training	Chipmunks - Darsham	Tent Repair Day	Pioneers - Height Gate	
Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar										

challenge but also a privilege as we are one of the strongest districts in the country in terms of numbers and activities, but also collective experience. This includes our young adults some of whom have been in Woodcraft Folk far longer than me. Being able to turn to members young and old for skills, help or advice is really important. Having newer members who are prepared to take on responsibilities is even more heartening.

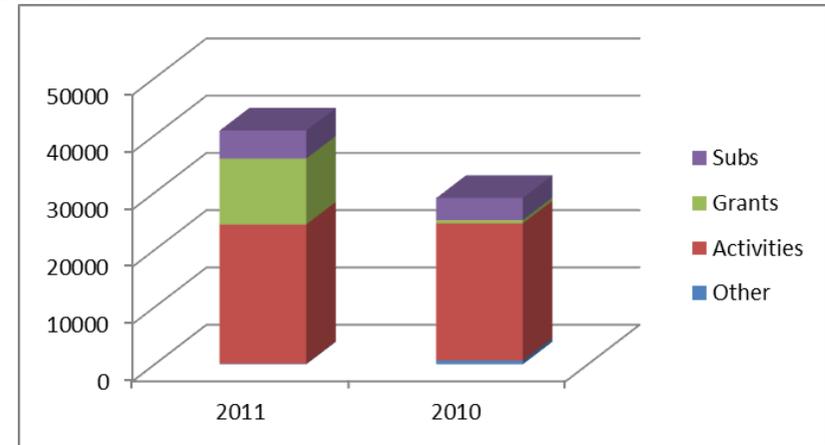


I recently ran an Introduction to Woodcraft Folk session in which our aims and principles are discussed. The first of them is *“The Woodcraft Folk is an educational movement for children and young people designed to develop self-confidence and activity in society, with the aim of building a world based on equality, friendship, peace and co-operation”*. It is always impressive to see our young adults, who we can remember as Elfin, now taking on huge responsibilities such as they did at Cocamp. Well done to them and to all those who have been running our groups and district over the last 30 years.

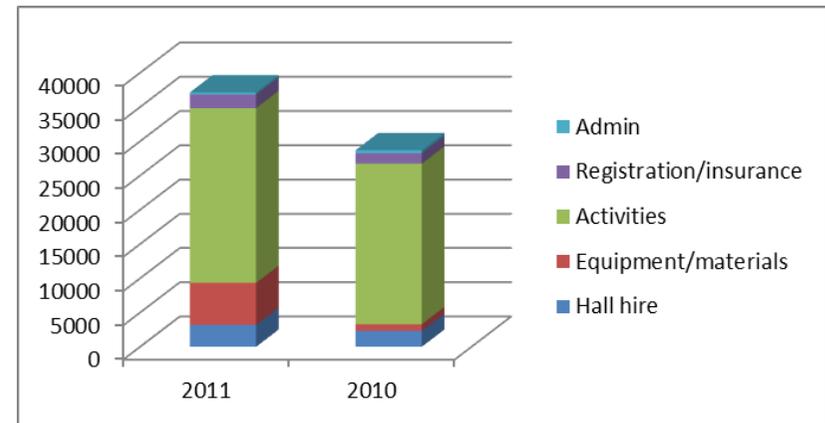
Richard Robertson

Finances - year to 31 December 2011

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



During 2011 we were grateful to receive grants from the Coop Group for general support; Woodcraft Folk TREE Project for community musical instruments. And for Cocamp, Awards for All, the CoCamp Solidarity fund, Diss Woodcraft Folk and many of our members all helped with funds to equip us and get us all there.



LOTTERY FUNDED