

2007

BLUE

SKIES!



F.S.C.

and beyond...

Introduction

Editorial

This year Forest School Camps is 60! We're almost into our fourth generation of staff – the 'virtual' great-grandchildren of our founders – an unbroken line absorbing the traditions and creating the collective wisdom. Ten years ago FSC published 'Our Story' a book of tales drawn from the great pool of memories created by 50 years of Forest School Camps. As we thought about a theme for this magazine we asked what is it; now, near the beginning of the 21st century; that we in FSC still value and want to pass on, not just to the next generation of FSC children but to people outside and beyond FSC?

At camp, sometimes the Lodge is silent as we hold hands in a circle facing each other; ninety or so clear eyed, dirty faces, young and old that we have grown to know during our time at camp. After a few minutes, we often turn and face outwards, looking out over the land that has been our home and further into the wider community and the outside world, that perhaps, we will shortly be returning to. There is a palpable, tangible feeling of the strength of the circle at our backs. What do we take with us when we leave camp? How does it influence our every day life and work? We hoped to capture a few answers in the magazine.

The theme became 'FSC and Beyond' and we asked for articles about how FSC and the Forest School have inspired you. We also wanted to hear from some of the people and organisations FSC is linked with. The result has been a real inspiration. People wrote not only about the life-changing experiences a Forest School Camp can provide but also of the energy that has been generated for action and the conviction that FSC has something valuable to share and that we have the will to share it. The diversity of form this inspiration has taken shouldn't surprise us, given our suspicion of dogma and our appetite for debate and variety. We hope you will find much to interest you and whilst there may be some offshoots whose fundamental beliefs you'll find hard to follow or that you'll disagree with, we felt it was important all should be heard. After all, a tree is known by its fruit.

We've organised the articles into three loose sections:

Reflections - FSC and Forest School from a historical perspective

Within FSC - Current stories of camp, FSC and our future and Fenwood

Beyond FSC - The things FSC has inspired, energised and supported and related organisations

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this publication, who has generously wanted to share their experiences and inspiration.

Please though, bear in mind that the opinions expressed in the following pages do not represent the views of FSC as an organisation, nor of the editorial group.

Flow Stone
Annie Holloway
Marcos Guillen

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Reflections



50 Years of Paddling

Do we paddle Canoes or Kayaks? Well actually Kayaks! But the Canoe bay at Haddenham will, I expect, continue to be called the Canoe Bay despite there never having been any Canoes in FSC's fleet. Besides canoeing slips more easily off the tongue than kayaking. In 1957, just 50 years ago, FSC ran its first canoe venture, led by Eric Gander and Angela Coombes, paddling down the Wyre from Glasbury to Tintern with a few brave souls continuing to Chepstow, where to land meant struggling through the knee high mud that is exposed at low tide.

I was a pathfinder on that camp and I still have colour slides to prove it. We had a mixture of hired canvas kayaks. A year or so later I went with Eric and Tony Ivins to a canoe construction conference. FSC had agreed that Tony and Barney Barstard (his pig man!), should build double kayaks. The selected boat was called a PBK 22 (Percy Blandford Kayak). Eventually fifteen

It Was a New Dawn in My Life

Who would have thought that, an alternate world exists beneath our feet? I am talking about caving, alternatively known as pot holling. My list of adventures started on the Mendips in October 1969, my first FSC camp. The camp began with a long drive out from Brixton. The journey was along the dark A4 and seemed endless. For some unknown reason being jammed in amongst strangers was not a bother,

boats were built, possibly over two or three years. They were built of wood and canvas and did very good service some lasting into the 1970's. They needed a great deal of maintenance and repair. Even a small rock could cause a four foot rip in the canvas, which had to be sewn and patched on the river bank. In the mid 1960's we decided to replace the fleet, a few at a time, with GRP boats (glass reinforced plastic). I purchased the first six from a firm in Stourport. They were large and rather basic and became known as bathtubs. However they carried a great deal of kit and could only be capsized with a great deal of effort. The rest of the canvas boats were replaced with various makes of boat over the next ten years.

even when we eventually got out of Victor's Land Rover and started walking upward whilst it continued to rain. I was feeling part of something wholesome. When we got to the site, my focus was on the warm glow coming from the woods, in fact gas lamps inside the hut shining outward into the black. Bread and hot soup, was more than a welcoming, it was a symbol of friendly life in the autumn wilderness. The two things I remember most about that first night were the rain



We are now replacing the GRP kayaks with Polyethylene boats. After two years of use no repairs have been required. We may at last have the nearest thing to a maintenance free fleet. Over the 50 years we have paddled on many rivers, but the records show that the Wyre and the Severn have always been the most popular. In 1971 we ran our first canoe training weekends on the Medway, one in April that Roger Brandon Jones led and one in July that I chiefted. Canoeing went into the doldrums during the late 1990's with only the weekend activities continuing, but now there is a renewal of interest and we have had successful recent activities on the Severn and the Wyre.

Marcos Guillen ●●●

and mud. During the time spent laying out our sleeping bags on single ground sheets, I suddenly felt afraid and alone. Everything was being 'accidentally' walked on and thus caked in wet and mud. Rules about boots and scraping the sides of the tent were being totally ignored. Until Victor chirped up that isn't During the brief time by the now raging fire, I worried and worried. I climbed into my wet muddy sleeping bag unhappy with the world, whilst unaware that tiredness was dragging me straight to sleep. About twenty of us camped in that leaky one hundred

and eighty pound tent; outside the UBSS (University of Bristol Speleological Society) hut.

I had connected with a few FSC'ers who were venturing underground. In fact, I still did not know what they were talking about!

The day started early, breakfast before eight, with Victor's voice echoing everywhere. Although I had never been to an FSC camp, let alone a caving camp, I knew exactly what I had to do, my focus was going to be survival! Inside that tent was a hell-hole, outside it was still raining. Everyone was sopping wet and all was happening at a pace.

It was hard to tell which of my clothes were for topside and which were for caving. Once re-dressed for caving I was given a mars bar, a helmet and a strange looking object going by the name of 'a something lamp'. It had no bulb! Not knowing what to do with it, I was shown how to put the rocks of carbide



into the bottom half and screw it back together. We then dribbled some water into the top half, and BANG, it was alight for me. How was that done? A three-inch flame roared from the 'jet'. Next, checking for leaks by running another flame around the seal, scary or what? The lamps, not just mine, would burst into flames. However, while the flames could instantly be blown out and the two halves easily tightened some more, the feeling of danger did not leave me when it was finally clipped to the helmet and the helmet strapped tightly to my head.

My life at that point was about to change and there was no going back. I was part of a group. That assemblage had flames on their heads and we were heading underground.

A short walk later, I was standing in a hollow staring at rocks. One by one my group clambered into one of the holes and disappeared. Then it was my turn. As I ducked into the hole, I was immersed in a new understanding of how the world was put together.

There was just enough light from the orange glow on my head to see several feet scrambling away in front of me. I followed. Every breath produced copious amounts of steam. I was instantly chilled from lying on cold rock. The muffled echoing sound of boots scraping and grunts and groans, suddenly replaced itself with joyful chat and dimly lit views of muddied faces. We were underground and everyone was sitting about the place as if we belonged there. I was in my element.

Anyone who has not been down a cave will have no comprehension of the voids just below our feet. It is hard even for some who have caved, to get a grip on the three dimensions. Each cave has its own unique look. Some are

smooth, some sharp, some have formations, some are bare, some have simple layouts whilst others require a decent memory. Some are for tourists; some require complex manoeuvres and skills. Some are for beginners and others are definitely not.

FSC offered me the chance to experience the unimaginable. FSC caving is, overall, at beginners' level, it allows all the skills to be improved. I have never bored of going to the same caves. I would call myself an explorer now, rather than a follower. My cave-time favourites' include

turning off my light to experience the blackness and slotting into holes, where no one else has a chance of fitting, just to see what is there!

Morphing into being a leader, i.e. having the responsibility of leading a group into a challenging environment, balancing time constraints, assessing every individual's capability or energy levels and keeping the group safe and happy, all boils down to extended skills gathered from years of caving.

I started young! When slightly older I hitch-hiked from London, kit bags in tow and would roll up to clubhouses and tag along with other caving groups. I could not get enough. Some might remember the new year winter camps I used to run, under the guise of extra cave training. I have even spent hours digging out new bits of cave. All, to gain more time underground.

The Mendips is not the only caving area. With FSC I caved in Wales, Yorkshire and on Dartmoor. All these systems are very different from each other, just as each cave is different from others in the same area. All are fascinating and worth visiting.

I cannot recommend caving as an activity for all. I do however try to persuade all to try it, if only to give their mind another view on the world. If you 'suffer' from claustrophobia, I say this ~ I have confidently persuaded children and adults to have a look. Their experience was good. Before my groups 'go downstairs', we are all of the understanding that as a group, if we need to come out, for whatever reason, we will do so. I find nervous first-timers are often enthralled by the different world they have found and forget nerves and phobias whilst settling down to enjoy nature's wonders.

Tone Nolan ●●●

How Much of Forest School is in Forest School Camps?

Sometimes at camp discussion turns to how FSC came into being and to Forest School. A few people in FSC were at the school, but for most, there is only a general impression of what it was like.

Whilst histories of the school are available, this interview with Joy Evans, who was a child at Forest School, describes her memories of this unusual form of education and what the school meant to her.

Background to some of the events, people and organisations which Joy mentions:

(OWC), bought Sandy Balls Wood at Godshill in the New Forest in 1920. Forest School was started there by the OWC in 1929.

Forest School moved to Whitwell Hall near Reepham in Norfolk in 1938. Cuthbert Rutter was the headmaster of the school.

Ernest Westlake's son Aubrey ran indoor woodcraft sessions for children in Bermondsey, south London.

Ernest Westlake, founder of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry

OWC still exists and some people camping with FSC today are OWC members.

Grith Fyrd, also founded by the OWC was two self-sufficient communities, one near Forest School at Godshill, the other at Shining Cliff, Derbyshire. Grith Fyrd became Grith Pioneers which continues to maintain links with FSC.

Andy Freedman, who lives near Joy, asked the questions.

When were you at Forest School?
I went to Forest School in 1932, when I was seven, I left after the summer term 1938.

What was the school like as a place to live?

When I first went, I was in a room in Woodcot, a wooden bungalow with Penny Nicholson (also known as Liza Banks) and two other girls, all a bit older than me. During the first holidays my father went down to help them build an extension with chaps from Grith Fyrd. He was supposed to know how, because he had built things up here (at Whiteway).

Where were lessons held?

Lessons were in Sandemans, a bungalow. A bit later on they opened another house. There were three classrooms, then there was a lean-to with a potter's wheel and a garage where we did woodwork and another hut, which the Tracker boys slept in.

Is it true the pupils made the rules and lessons were optional?

We were expected to go to lessons, but nothing much happened if we didn't. Most of us went. There

were three rules which didn't change: don't go on the road, don't go on the roof and don't go in the river without permission from an adult. All the other rules were made at a school meeting every week. We sat around and sorted things out and if someone was being particularly difficult, then the grievances would be aired.

What was the meeting like?
It was rather like a Friends' Meeting. I think usually Cuthbert chaired, but everyone was encouraged to talk; no-one was shut up.

That would have been unusual for the time. What else would have been seen as unconventional?
I suppose the fact that we were co-educational was unusual for the time. We had separate dormitories but we all used to wash in the same place. When we went swimming we all bathed in the nude, staff as well as children. That was unusual. Part of the curriculum was that once a week we did woodcraft things. We made fires. There was a wonderful natural sandpit and we built shelters out of things in the wood and learnt about camping, pitching tents and cooking over a fire.

Often on Sundays we'd have a picnic lunch and walk over the forest,

usually the whole school, which was only about 25 children.

What were the staff like?

They were paid 'pocket money'. There's a letter from one of them somewhere explaining that they would have to leave because they needed money to buy clothes. Beely was young and energetic. He was in the first group that Aubrey Westlake had in Bermondsey. My mother was in that group too and she became a house mother. Beely came two or three years after us and taught us woodwork. He had been in Grith Fyrd.

Where did the children come from?

Some of the children's parents belonged to the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, mine did. Cuthbert invited them to send me because they wanted someone who was...the word 'normal' was used. The others weren't abnormal, but some had been square pegs in round holes at their other schools. Other families came because they were interested in a different form of education.

Most of them had a background coming from liberal parents, but not all. Barbara my pal, her mother and sister were very 'proper' and she didn't fit in at home. Her father

owned cinemas around Cardiff. She came from a posh girls' school where she didn't fit in, but she took to Forest School like a duck to water. It did advertise and here are the brochures (see photos). I remember Peter Hedger, he was older, and Hazel who was younger than me.

What lessons did you have?

The usual ones, english, arithmetic, history, geography, french. Each child spent a day cooking in the kitchen.

Were there exams?

I can't remember. I don't think we did, but some of the older children, like Peter, did 'senior' stuff.

What was the food like?

It was cooked by the housemothers with a child helping in the kitchen on a rota. We all ate together in the dining room, staff and pupils ate the same food, which wasn't always usual then.

What else did you do?

Swimming in the river. One of the trials for being a Tracker was a cold bath every morning. No-one wore costumes, except my mother who chose to because, she said, she was too large not to.

Tell me a bit more about tests and trials.

There was a set of trials you had to pass to be a woodling, tracker or pathfinder. Quite a lot were to do with woodcraft, swimming the river, tree climbing...there was a wonderful beech tree up in the wood and a very tall Douglas fir and from the top you could see all over the forest. That was one of the places we would go on a Sunday walk.

Can you describe the philosophy of the school?

There were a lot of pacifists and socialists. Cuthbert was a Quaker. The OWC and the school were non political and non denominational. The ethical values went through the school. We learnt respect for each other and for nature.

How much 'glee' was there?

We learnt quite a lot of folk dancing and when we had camp fire we did quite a lot of singing. One wonderful

night we made a fire in Meerhay garden and watched shooting stars. The kids loved it. The singing was just part of being there, traditional folk songs, an awful lot of them. The Arise song of course. Beefy always liked 'Glad that I live am I'. John Glaister always used to sing.

Liza Banks (Penny Nicholson) wrote a diary about a tracker hike you were on. What are your memories?

The hike which Penny wrote a diary about. Two weeks every summer, for trackers and older. On that hike I was the youngest. We walked to Bristol and when we got there we could do what we liked. Catherine, Penny and I went to my Aunt's house, knocked on the door and she let us have a bath and tea.

The older children did the navigation and we all had to carry stuff, but, because I was the youngest, I just carried my own stuff and nothing else. Because the sole came off my shoes, I walked in my plimsolls and I got bad blisters, all over my feet. Beefy was very good at things like that, he sterilised a pin and popped them all. After that they were fine. I was incredibly lucky.

When the holidays came there used to be a standing camp at Godshill. All the kids from the school stayed on as a group. It was part of the OWC camp.

Looking back, what were the best things about the school?

One thing I noticed was that everyone was so friendly. It was like having a big family. There were no differences. Some of the parents were well off. Mine weren't and I had quite a big bursary. I didn't have loads of goodies or anything, but they levelled the pocket money for everybody, half a penny per year per week, so by age twelve you had sixpence a week.

How much do you think your time at the school shaped you as a person?

A lot. Must have done. Although much the same values were up here (at Whiteway), but without the camping and the woodcraft, so it's been a continuum as far as I'm concerned.

What can you tell us about the start of FSC?

I was just finishing training in London as a nurse. They had a meeting for old pupils and staff. Arthur Cobb was there and we were asking the question, what should we do about starting the school again? Unless we had the capital to make a bigger school, it would not be viable. A decision was made to use Whitwell as a conference centre and to have a camp in the grounds. This would be late '46 or early '47. I would love to have sent the kids to camp but we didn't have the money at the time.

Why did Forest School move from Sandy Balls?

It was because the Sandy Balls estate needed the school to move. I thought it was mean at the time, but I learnt since that there was a heavy mortgage to pay. They needed the income from a commercial camp site or Aubrey would have lost the estate. They bought Whitwell, but my mother said it was too near the coast. She said there was going to be another war and as soon as there's a war they will clear everyone away from the coast, 20 miles away anyway. They didn't take notice of her argument and that's what happened.

In the spring term of 1938 we were at Sandy Balls and after the Easter holiday we were at Reepham. I left at the end of that term, before the school was closed.

During the war a few children went with Cuthbert and his wife Helen to Dartington. Later they moved to London and I remember visiting them.

Is there anything you would like children at FSC now to know?

One thing I think is important for FSC came to me about 12 years ago when I was very ill. It came to me how important woodcraft is and it's necessary to know the basics of life and living, in this industrialised society, because the whole thing can so easily go boom. You need to know the basics....I learnt them. The spread of woodcraft should grow.

There's so much rubbish and stuff about, you need to know how to cope without it.

Andy Freedman ●●●



Forest School, drawn by Margery Guillen 1930's

THE FOREST SCHOOL

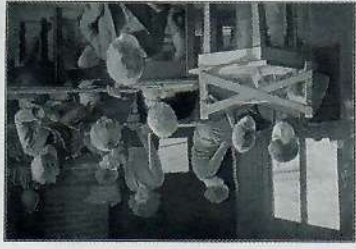
GODSHILL, FORDINGBRIDGE, HAMPSHIRE

THE Forest School provides an all-round education in a beautiful, natural environment for boys and girls from six to eighteen. This all-round education is essentially active and experimental, and makes the children ready for any life they may be called upon to live.

They make and construct, explore the countryside



Learning to ride the School ponies in the Forest



Forest School children at work in their craft room



Relaxing party on site, at the sea-side

The Forest School Open Air Bath

Summer time for the children

A typical Forest School camp in the New Forest

Pages from Forest School brochure, 1938

Stockton Down Camp

"beneath the campers' tents
lie the ancient streets
of an Iron Age settlement....."

The Legacy of Michael Stratton

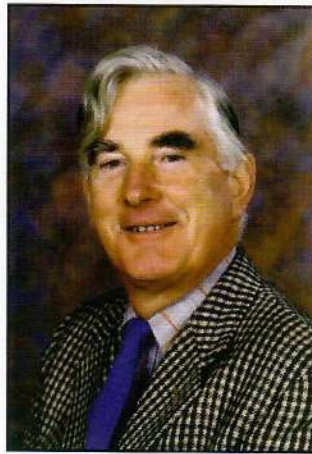
So many people regularly enjoy the FSC camp at Stockton Down in Wiltshire, but few know the story of the remarkable man behind it.

The camp, a firm favourite with young people and families, for over 40 years, occupies pastureland on an estate that belonged to Wiltshire landowner Michael Stratton. A popular, larger-than-life figure known and respected across the county, Michael took over farming the 3,500 acre Codford estate from his eccentric uncle Jack Stratton in the late 1940s. When he first heard about the work of FSC from a neighbour, he kindly volunteered one of his fields on top of Stockton Down as a camp site.

This is a site steeped in history. To the north, its sweeping views, across the Wylfe valley, to the Marlborough downs, must have brought pleasure to settlers for centuries. More exciting still, beneath the campers' tents lie the ancient streets of an Iron Age settlement known as Stockton earthworks, old Stockton village before it settled in the valley below. Half the earthworks are preserved in the downland pasture, lumpy and bumpy from excavations of hut circles and quarrying. The other half are hidden under the trees and bluebells of Stockton Wood.

Michael Stratton, who died in 2002, was keenly interested in education and young people. He was the hardworking landlord with the big cheery voice who would wave in welcome to campers as they walked down the hill past his house. Always ready to help, he provided them

with firewood and water from his reservoir. When he joined them around the campfire, listening to tales of their day's exploits, few realised that their genial host had experienced a good few adventures of his own.



Michael grew up on his father's farm in Kingston Deverill, near the springhead of the Wylfe River, during the Depression of the late twenties. His father was very hard pressed during these difficult and anxious years and the children had to help, Michael was put to work mucking out the yards and cow sheds when he came home from school. Like many of his generation, he was only too well aware of rural poverty, of big families barely surviving on a ploughman's wage - if there was any work at all.

Life took a turn for the better when, after schooling locally and at Marlborough College, he won a scholarship to read history at Magdalene College, Cambridge. The Second World War, however, interrupted his studies, and he found

himself in the Indian Army organising mule transport on arduous trails across the mountains of Burma.

Near the end of the war he was invalided out of the army with polio, but decided he must return to Cambridge to finish his degree. By 1946, his health largely restored, he was back home in Wiltshire, farming at Codford in partnership with his uncle.

Michael quickly became a leader of the community, immersing himself in activities that reflected his love of nature and the Wiltshire countryside. Among the many hats he wore over the years were those of:- a member of the Nature Conservancy Council, chairman of the Wiltshire Trust for Nature Conservation and president of the Wiltshire Rural Life Society. He was also a former governor of the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester and a former chair of governors of Lackham College of Agriculture. His services to the Wiltshire War Agricultural Committee brought him an OBE in 1972 and he was High Sheriff of Wiltshire from 1979-80.

In his retirement he spent hours tending the many thousands of trees he planted - woods that have transformed the corner of Wiltshire he cherished.

Michael was a devoted family man, husband of Phyllida and father of four sons. His son Josh, who took over management of the estate after his death, has generously continued to support the Stockton earthworks camp.

Because Michael saw himself not as an owner of the land, but as a custodian who wanted to share its pleasures with others, the camp at Stockton earthworks held a special place in his affections. Certainly FSC could not have wished for a more loyal friend.

Liza Banks ●●●



Learning by Living - FSC and The Great Turning

An End to the Tunnel

I was catching up with an old friend the other day and I got a nasty shock. He's a reasonably old man these days, in his early eighties and I've known him as a neighbour and grandfather figure since I was four.

We got talking about the 'state of the world' and I was saddened to discover that he had given up hope. Listening to the tapestry of doom and destruction he wove, I began to realize, that it was all there was for him; no chance to avert apocalypse, or any brighter future after the radioactive dust had settled. I asked him what light, if any, he saw at the end of the tunnel, what opportunities for averting cataclysm. He saw none. 'I don't deal in hope', he said. 'I'm a realist.' He was convinced that human nature was fundamentally violent, greedy and stupid.

As I said, it shocked me. Growing up, he was one of the most exuberantly joyful humans I've had the privilege of knowing. I enjoyed hearing his cackling laugh through the wall of our kitchen, his beaming smile and fierce hugs. Now here he was, wide-eyed with nervous animation, telling me that the end was nigh. It got me thinking, about what makes me so convinced that the opposite is true. What is my source of certainty that we have everything to gain in these tempestuous and trying times? Why do I feel that we have every chance of succeeding; rising above

our destructive impulses, taming our greed and our fear, and creating the society we dream of? I wondered how I was able to soothe the black panic that arose in my chest as I heard a man I had looked to for wisdom and guidance, all my life, looked to as an elder, prophesying catastrophe. How do I know that a different world is possible? The same way I know that chlorinated water is not the only kind; because I've tasted spring water straight from the source.

Learning by Living

Growing up, I could do a mean impression of a fool. Yes, that's right, even more of a fool than I am now. For a while, I was the kind of fool whose main concern in life was how 'hard' other people thought I was. I was the kind of fool who bowled around with his chest puffed out, talking in an exaggeratedly deep voice, with exaggeratedly aggressive intonation. In my defense, I didn't like it much. It was pretty tiring for one thing, for another, I just felt deep down; there must be a better way. So, it was a glad and joyous revelation, to encounter a better way of life and even better to actually live it, on camp.

It's easy for young men to get into a way of living where our worth is measured in destructive competition; the toughest, the fastest, the best, at the expense of the rest. It's no surprise, considering that it's such a prevalent mode of interaction in our society. So it was incredible to find a new paradigm where acceptance, equality and most startling of all, love, was the status quo. It was, like I say, a revelation, to find that young

And Beyond

male staff members were interested in communicating as well competing. More than that, they treated me like an equal. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that FSC saved my life. It feels that way. My teenage years were pretty dark and my FSC experiences were the main influence that helped me step off that dark road, onto a path I actually wanted to travel. According to mythologist Joseph Campbell, what we are looking for is 'Not the meaning of life, but the experience of living.'

Forget, for a moment, the many other gifts bestowed on me by my years in FSC; the training in childcare and woodcraft skills, the people skills, conflict resolution, non-violent communication, consensus, the leadership, logistics and management skills. Above and beyond all that, FSC has given me the experience of living. That's how I was able to feel sympathy rather than despair, as my panicked patriarch was telling me to abandon ship.

When you read this, I'll be living on a farm, near Gloucester. Ragman's Lane is an organic farm which produces apple juice, shiitake mushrooms and education. I'm doing a course in 'sustainable land use', using permaculture. Permaculture is really just an approach to the design and maintenance of living systems (from farms and forests to houses and even towns), that aims to strike a harmonious balance between the natural and human worlds. More than that, I suppose its

ultimate aim is to fuse and thereby heal that false dichotomy, the supposed separation between the human and the natural. Is a termite mound 'artificial'? They're built from cement manufactured by the termites, they're multi-storey and they even have air conditioning. The difference, I would submit, is that of balance. As deep-ecologist Joanna Macy has said, this time in history is about 'the shift from an industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization'.

I'm actually in the middle of a three-fold training, in areas that will enable me to do what I feel most drawn to. I'm interested in the apparent rift between humans and the natural world and the idea that we humans cannot be truly healthy, or even sane, unless we have a healthy and sane way of relating to the more-than-human world. I'm training in psychotherapy (the 'human givens' approach) and I've spent the last few years learning primitive skills: the cultural knowledge and ability to live and prosper communally, in nature, as humans have since the beginning.

A few years ago, I was among a small group of FSC staff that attended a family camp centered on primitive skills. Seeing that this knowledge was still being passed on, still being lived blew my mind. It's all the things you wanted to do as a child, but weren't allowed to. Now, as both a student and teacher of these skills, I have a legitimate reason to build shelters in the woods, to play with fire and cutting tools, to smear soil and charcoal on my skin in order to get closer to animals and to spend as much time as I can sitting, observing and soaking in the beauty of the natural world, in all its richness and beautiful simplicity.

It was through wanting to teach on camp that I went to my first primitive skills course; which led to me finding a passion I'm currently dedicating my life to and it's through FSC that I've had much of my teaching experience so far. My experiences on camp have

furnished me with the confidence, compassion and consideration one needs to be an effective member of a community. These skills will be my bread and meat as I spend this next year, living in communities, learning the 'earth-skills' of permaculture and primitive living. Starting next spring, my partner and I will spend a year living and learning the skills and philosophy of primitive living, as taught by an Apache elder, at a school in the US. An FSC camp is likely to be the first place I'll have a chance to begin teaching what I will have learnt in the coming year.

Skilling Up for Changing Times

Like my neighbour, I often do feel fearful about the future; the world our children and grandchildren will inherit. There's plenty to be scared about, isn't there? Even without poverty, widespread mental ill-health and social injustice, there's our society's addiction to fossil fuel and the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change.

Many of the solutions offered to us are piecemeal; elastoplast on a sundered ship. Energy saving light bulbs are a gnat on the backside of the aviation, food and transport industries. Anything less than a substantial reduction in carbon emissions will not cut the mustard where climate change is concerned. It's not either/or - we need people living consciously at the grass roots, as well as legislation. We may yearn to disengage from 'the system', but we need to find a new way of living en masse. Gone are the days when we could head for the hills.

If permaculture will help us to live, then primitive skills will help us to heal. When you live in direct relationship with the natural world, you have a profound sense of place; where you are, who you are and how you fit in to the grand scheme. How you live affects who you are. Our modern way of life reinforces our separation from the environment. It produces people so over-stimulated and under-nourished, we often feel as though we need to 'shut down' in

order to survive. I'm not a primitivist, I don't think we need to live as hunter-gatherers, but I have yet to find a set of practices more powerful than the primitive subsistence skills. They are fertile ground for self-transformation and insight and a brilliant way to introduce kids to a meaningful relationship with nature.

FSC is currently an organization highly effective in the dissemination of social technologies, the skill set needed to initiate and maintain human-scale communities. We are peerless in our ability to create socially healthy communities. This is the main strength of FSC, as I see it. We provide the experience of a new social paradigm. We are also optimally placed to provide a new ecological paradigm. If we were to do this, I think it would immensely enrich FSC's ability to affect and empower people.

To Infinity...

I was eating a meal in a restaurant a little while ago. I looked down at the sumptuous concoction of colourful ingredients and realized that none of them were native and most of them were likely to have been flown in, from various locations across the planet. I thought about the true energetic and ecological cost of the meal and allowed it to deepen my gratitude for such an expensive gift.

One day, people will sit around the fire and tell stories about the Time of the Great Turning, those days of legend, the End of the Era of Waste. I often wonder what the reply will be when at the end of the story, a child asks, 'Why did it take so long for people to do something?' Regardless of the reply, those people round the fire will be depending, for their wellbeing, on a far greater intimacy in their relationship with the natural world than is currently the status quo. They will have the knowledge, skill and humility to live in balance.

Lee Trew ●●●
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From Pixie to Pathfinder and Beyond

Since I was born my life has been intertwined with that of FSCs. Although the organisation was around long before me, I have grown up with it. My family has been associated with FSC since the late '60s and I am currently the youngest of our newest generation of campers, carrying the tradition on. Camp has long been a place for families, where parents take their children along with them, so they too can enjoy the outdoor life. It is very rare to find an activity where people from all ages can enjoy themselves together but, FSC is one of these. I camped with my parents when I was 5 and 6 and then with my brother and cousin and on my own for the rest of my life, until now, at the age of 17, I have been on 10 standing camps and many smaller ones. In total that is only around 25 weeks of my life spent on FSC, or 6 months out of 17 years. Despite this, it has still had a massive influence on my life. I've met new interesting people from all over Britain and done things most kids will never do in their entire lives. On a 2 week standing camp you can become closer to the people there, than you are to many people who you have known for years. It is such an intimate experience, where you are one with the rest of the camp, it's a cliché, but they become your family.

For most of us, FSC is a break from our intense day to day lives. It's very detached from modern society and this is what makes it so special. I have never taken any friends from my own area on FSC, perhaps selfishly, because it is my own world that I want to enjoy with my family and new people who I meet. Many people from the 'outside world' would find it hard to understand FSC and the way that it works, but for me it is the norm. On camp you do things you would never usually do, it is so eccentric, so different. I have never met anyone on camp who I didn't get on with, or even

preoccupation for making hot water on camp. John likes a shower and I like a bath so, independently, over a number of years we have been researching ways of fulfilling our dreams of hot water on demand. So we pooled [sic] our ideas and, along with an enthusiastic, although



Science on Camp

Sam Forbes ●●●

who greatly annoyed me. That is a unique experience for most of us. Camp seems to attract people who are very down to earth and liberal in their views, people on camp are the same in many ways, but then different in lots of other good ways. I know of many people who have met their husbands and wives on FSC because of this.

In 2007 I will be on my last standing camp as a 'child' for I'll be a last year pathfinder. I will have completed the journey from pixie to pathfinder, having had many an experience along the way; learning new skills, trying new things, meeting new people. It has been a very active adventure but at the same time a very relaxing experience.

For me, FSC is a haven, one that I am sure you will agree with me we don't want to lose.

occasionally bewildered, group of staff tried to heat a tonne of water in an afternoon. As members of the lodge luxuriated in the results of our collective labours, a member of the FSC Magazine committee approached and said "So, would you be prepared to write 1000 words for the next magazine?" and like a fool I agreed. After months of prevarication what follows is the result of my ponderings. But first and very foremost I would like to stress this is not a recipe for how to implement a science curriculum on camp. It is not going to advocate that all camps should approach problem solving in a 'scientific' manner. It's really not going to even advocate science on camp - we've got far more important things to be getting on with for goodness sake! Camp Science is not something to be imposed upon a lodge but should simply be a recognition that there could be an explanation for the wondrous world around us - seek it if you wish, or not, but don't just give in to the vagaries of Nature. We don't have to want to tame Nature's beauty, but it's nice to feel that we can understand it well enough to live in harmony with it.

So this summer, if you are stuck in a field with a joyous bunch of enthusiastic trackers (or not) look at the lat they're digging, the fire they can't light or the compass that refuses to point in the direction they want to go and see if a little camp science can help, alternatively pick one from below and enjoy!

1) The Thermodynamics of the Hot Tub - well this is where we came in really.

Traditionally we waste so much time, effort and fuel on camp and the end result is a tiny tank of water that goes cold in an hour. These days the hot water tank is often on a separate fire from the main cooking fire (Do you know why?) and you'll commonly see chimneys. (Should they be tall or short, fat or thin?) My own favourite variation is to utilise empty aluminium cans (if available) and lag the tank. Finally, if you have

the (mis)fortune of camping with me this summer you might experience the Mark IIIb reverse radiator heating system!

2) How to avoid Botulism - the joys of communal toiletry.

We all try to minimise dysentery but lat hygiene and hand washing techniques have seen considerable development in recent years. Dave Monk, among others, has put a lot of effort into avoiding an entire lodge sharing infections by washing their hands in a single bowl. It may be a nice social ritual but it leads to social diseases.

3) Keeping warm, keeping dry - as important for humans as it is water tanks (not the keeping dry bit obviously!)

Why are so many kids on camp cold and wet? No this isn't one on child psychology but on the fact that children need to learn that wet clothes = cold clothes. That keeping your day clothes on at night doesn't make you warm 'cos they're damp with sweat and cotton is no good for keeping warm.

4) Aerodynamics & Hydrodynamics - or how to stop a tent blowing down.

Stand in the middle of a field after a good night's gale and do a bit of practical statistics. What fraction of the flattened tents are A frame and what fraction are dome tents (Now let me guess!) Alternatively praise the Lord that the days of needing to know whether to tighten or loosen natural fibre guy lines before a storm (or was it after) are gone. I recognise that no members of staff under the age of 40 will have the faintest idea what I'm talking about here but, rest assured, it was considered important once upon a time and don't forget the 180lbbers.

5) Knots - Aye there's the rub.

Well, how many knots do you know, not by name but actually how to tie them AND why they work and what they're for. Why is a reef knot no good for a sling? How many rabbits does it take to tie a bowline? What can give you more pleasure on camp

than a well fashioned 69?

Find someone who knows one you don't and learn, even better find someone who doesn't know one you do and pass it on.

6) Coloured flames - well here's a recipe to prove me wrong.

A bit of a speciality this one, but as part of my alter-ego as a paid professional stunt scientist I need to know how to make coloured flames. If you want a go, here goes. Get hold of some Boric Acid at a chemist's (pretend that you want to sterilise some homebrew kit if they ask - they're a bit suspicious these days!) and a bottle of Methylated spirit, ca. 250 cc, (better still pure Methanol but it's harder to source and more expensive, aka Glowplug fuel) Stick two tablespoons of Boric Acid in an empty tin can and put it on a fire, the crystals will give off water, once they have LEAVE TO COOL DOWN and then wash out with a cup of meths. Then add the meths and any solid back to the Meths bottle and shake like mad.

Hopefully, when burnt at night the flames will have a spooky green colour!

Camp Science is a state of mind not a lifestyle choice - and never forget what Camp is really about; learning, sharing and making as many people as possible, including yourself, HAPPY.

Bryson Gore ●●●

The End of Camp

(In this case the end of Gormire 2006 'year of the founders')

Waking up from a last minute, hour's snooze, after watching the sunrise; I pick my way through the sprawled bodies around the fire, to do the final packing of my heap of stuff. The pathfinder site has transformed from a home to a bit of field, that used to be our home, but is now only marked by flattened patches of nettles and heaped possessions. Taking out my plastic bag of unwanted

but necessary travel items: train tickets, phone and wallet; brings the unreality of civilisation closer.

As we clear up the site there isn't much to say. The end of camp is on everyone's minds, but talking about it would mean that it was already happening. I keep remembering things we'd planned to do, conversations I'd meant to have with people and feeling like the time's already passed. Euphoric farewells in the form of group hugs took place last night with cocoa, after the ceremony of Lodge Common.

The final litter sweep, followed by the last walk away from the site, followed by a second trip assisting a woodling with bag larger than they are, takes us to the hokeykokey. Then we get on the coach. We sing as we coach, keeping our travelling bubble of camp; although some people have already checked for texts and one has even plugged himself into his mp3, saying he'd missed music (how can someone miss music on FSC?) There is a blend between sleeping and singing and frantically trying to keep every last moment of camp as full of camp as possible.

At York station there is the first contact with the rest of the world. Suddenly not every person is a friend. In the toilets there are sinks, with warm water coming out of taps; my hands lose their tracing of mud. I sing in the cubicle regardless of the presence of 'normal' people. They don't matter.

After a frantic luggage chain that is limited to 2 minutes, we are in the train. A sedate, or just plain knackered start, is transformed into traditionally raucous singing. Chants of 'give us sandwiches, GIVE US SANDWICHES, GIVE US SANDWICHES' come from a table of staff, the escort leader fulfilling their role appropriately. Too much nice singing of incidentally Christian songs worried someone who thought we might be mistaken for a Christian group, singing Plastic Jesus resolved that.

also have lodge walks, lodge games, merry-moot and perhaps a night game.

So why do I enjoy it? Firstly, caving is like exploring another world. Popping out from a narrow tube into a huge cavern is breathtaking. You see curtains of limestone which echo musically, underground waterfalls, vast stalagmites, and delicate rock straws. Secondly, caving is a physical challenge. You don't have to be especially fit, but you have to be prepared to use muscles you didn't know existed: muscles for climbing, for stretching and for wriggling on your belly. However, the reason I enjoy caving camps most of all is that they are very much part of FSC.

So yes, a caving camp is very different from a standing camp. They're much smaller and shorter, we don't have age groups (sometimes no clans either) and we sleep and cook in a cave hut; but as you can see from the typical day, there are lots of similarities too. Of course, caving as an activity is a big difference, but I don't think a cave trip is that alien to the rest of FSC. In some ways it's like a hike condensed into a couple of hours.

Like hike, you go on a caving trip for the sake of the journey, not the destination. Like hike, caving trips are very varied. They can be physically challenging or a gentle stroll, long or short, wet or dry, and (ok, perhaps I'm stretching the comparison a bit here) small and wriggly, or vast and echoing.

Like hike, there is often singing on a trip, maybe a game and like hike, when we get back to the lodge, we present reports. Above all, caving is like hike because of the way the group comes together; we have to look out for each other if we want to cave safely and enjoy it. Of course, people do get miserable or cold or scared sometimes, but they're cared for. It's hard not to feel close to someone after they've blocked a waterfall crashing down on your climb by sitting in the stream for you,

friendly people. I eventually stopped and realised I'd been walking in the wrong direction for the last 5 minutes. It made my feelings of frustration at society come to a peak and made me fairly low. Then I looked at the sky and there was the same moon that had been there on our glorious last night of camp. My feet were tired, but the weight of my rucksack felt good. Shame about the tarmac under my feet and the city around me, but it was still a beautiful night by a river and that tweak of my mindset meant I was glad to have the extra 10 minutes walking.

Bessie Spencer Vellacott ●●●

Caving in FSC

FSC is all about having fun getting wet and dirty, but getting wet and dirty down a small dark hole in the ground? Isn't that taking it a bit far?



To some, caving appears as mysterious as the course of a subterranean river. Is caving all you do on caving camps? Why do you enjoy it? Is it the same as potholing? What makes it FSC if you're not camping?

The first questions are easy enough to answer. A typical day on a caving camp goes something like this: Arise song, breakfast, rally, agree day's caving, get into kit, set off in small caving groups. Cave! Eat packed lunch outside cave, maybe a second trip. Get back to cave hut, warm up, cup of tea, cook dinner, eat, campfire, bed.

It's not all caving though. Camps are certainly centred around it, but we

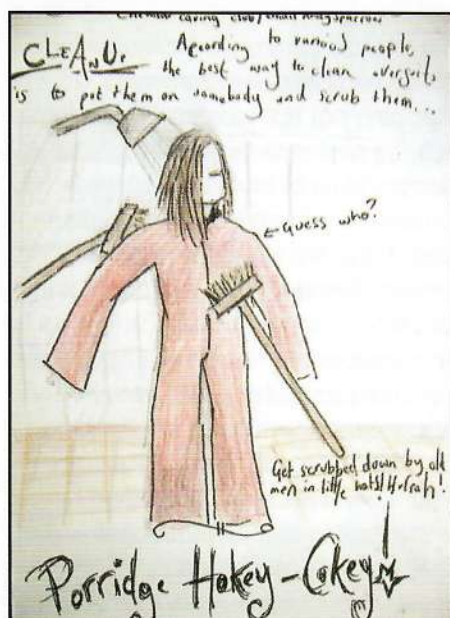
The biggest shock comes as we arrive at the pub, hoping for an island of FSC in the big unfriendly senselessness that was London. Full of FSC people, but not on our level. Many looking like everyday trendy Londoners having had showers and loud music in the background, against which singing is failing to compete. Moving to a pub down the road we could sit outside, and avoid feeling outdone in raucousness.

I don't know if our camp was so much deeper than other camps, but I know I felt like camp was far more real and far more right than London. On camp we are able to be alive and experience the moment we are existing in; instead of having to think about what is happening next, whether that bus is going to turn up, avoiding the gaze of others on the street or the tube and so on. Camp always feels too short because it is so much closer to the way we should live than the way most of us live everyday.

It was my last year pathfinder camp, so maybe there was more contemplation of my life going on than normal; but somehow it is possible to go for a long time in my day to day life at the moment, without a chance to think or be alive. I carried on in a daze for the next few days; writing diaries of camp and mending my nettle necklace (my relief at spotting a patch of nettles in London was probably quite comical), to keep me tied to reality despite the meaningless of things like checking emails, watching a screen instead of immersing myself in life, is something that feels very depressing. However, I could still feel the contact with the different way of being we have on camp.

I got slightly lost walking to where I was staying in London, through a dread of talking to any of the joggers who were out and asking where the pier was, as I knew that I smelt and had messy plaits with feathers and wool in them and also didn't want to deal with a possibly hostile stranger after an existence in a community of

or to think someone's boring when you've both squeezed through a small hole bottom first, just for the



fun of it.

When you think about what makes FSC special, ultimately it's not the tents or the fires, it's the people. Just because there's a solid(ish) roof at night and days are spent down holes, doesn't mean the people are any less crazy, loving and wonderful, or that the moments you have with them are any less special. That's why I love caving camps most of all and that's why caving camps are still very much FSC.

Bryony Hopkinshaw ●●●

Fenwood A Personal Perspective

I took a walk recently around the perimeter of what is to be Fenwood. Talking to a friend while walking, I was amazed how strong my feelings were towards the place. It is, after all, at the moment just a rather desolate, windy field in the middle of the flatlands!

Having been born half way up a Welsh hillside, I have always been happiest on land that has a bit of up and down; hills, valleys and always some interesting feature just around the corner, or in the far distance.

Ever since that walk I have been

puzzling to discover why I have such strong feelings about that large, flat field.

I have pitched my tent on Fenwood and it was the draftiest night in my time at Haddenham, just like sleeping in a large caravan park, or in the middle of a football pitch (in times of desperation we've all been there!). I'm sure no wild creature would choose to bed down in such an inhospitable place. So it's not the geography of the site!

I have warm feelings towards the Haddenham Stores site, but that is because, having been going there regularly for over twenty years, the place is now part of me. I have so many memories linking me to the grounds, the buildings and the furnishings. That is where I used to pitch my tent, that's the tree we moved with great effort all those years ago, that's where we smashed up Mick's van, that's where we dug that huge pit, this is the hedge I have been tending, and that is where I fell



into the brambles.

But Fenwood has no history, at least not for me. It's been just another field with no hedge, bounded by land drains, ploughed and sprayed once a year and planted with potato or sugar beet. Yet I have this strong affinity for and dare I say it, possessiveness towards that place.

There are two good reasons why

I should not have these feelings. Firstly, my politics and personal philosophy disapprove of private ownership of large tracts of land. Land belongs to the nation, to use and enjoy, common ownership, Diggers and all of that thinking. Secondly, it seems to be against the ethos of FSC. We are a nomadic tribe, living in harmony with the land but constantly moving on, owning as the First Nation Americans, nothing and everything. As Brother Frog said to Jumping Mouse "nobody owns the river, it belongs to everyone."

So, what is it about Fenwood? Is it, perhaps, because it is a concrete embodiment of all my feelings around living on the earth and towards FSC as an organisation?

It is said by some, that bereaved people cannot grieve properly when there is no body. It is hard to experience love in the abstract. A body is required!

Perhaps, as rather poorly evolved apes, we are just not capable, at this

early stage in our development, of feeling strong emotions towards the Earth as a totality. Rather, we can only manage to focus our feelings, on a piece of land small enough to be within the grasp of our sense of space and dimension.

Nomadic peoples have always had sacred sites they return to periodically for their significant ceremonies; to re-connect with The Land.

Poems and Thoughts

As for the 'political question', I think I can come to terms with that by reminding myself that, as an organisation, we have strong roots from which we have developed 'our ethos' which encompasses, not only our fellow campers but also determines our world view. We can do nothing else but hold this land on trust, to care for and nurture in an ecologically sound manner and finally, to pass on as a precious gift to whomever follows.

So, what is to become of our 'site of

great significance'? As I write these ramblings, it is just one day from the great plant-in. When you read this, the first of many work camps will have happened. That large boring field will have become Fen Wood. At the moment we have a structure comprising of a small group of campers who organised, through meetings and discussion (and some hard labour) the first stages of establishing the wood. Beyond them is a larger group, mostly in

virtual contact. Then there is, as always, Council. It is to be expected, indeed has to be, that the site will be developed, through the usual process of discussion and consensus forming, based on 'the assumption of good will', to the wishes and aspirations of the whole lodge.

Blue Sky
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Woodingo

WE WANT PEA FAIR!
WE'RE NOT GOING TO BED!
NO TO PORRIDGE!
YES TO EGGY BREAD!
I WANT TO PLAY SPLITS!
WIV MY OPINEL!
STINKY BEN HAS GOT THE SHITS!
I WANNA. RING THE BELL!
I want my mummy
And I don't like Clan
I want a big cuddle
And a parcel from my Gran
WE ARE THE WOODLINGS!
ATTACK ATTACK ATTACK!
WE LOVE CAMPING!
AND WE'RE NEVER GOING BACK!

Jake Holloway

A couple of thoughts

I love being able to walk around in the quiet dark, especially under a starry sky, I always feel so safe at camp.

Driving home from camp this year alone, I couldn't bear to put the radio on and break the magic post camp spell - then I realised I hadn't given a thought to anything in the outside world (apart from a few close people), FOR 17 DAYS, couldn't even remember what the news had been full of then. What a fantastic de-stresser!

BS Jo Murray

Annie Holloway

JUST SITTING
When the conversation settles into silence
And the logs crumple to no substance,
Occasionally sending up slow-motion sparks
Into the soft night air,
For a while we just sit together.
Having done what had to be done,
Having said what had to be said.
We're just sitting.
Nothing happens.
But a nothing of such infinite presence.
Intense without tension,
Wise without thinking,
Loving with no object.
We're just sitting.
Together.

Beyond Beyond Beyond



'1649, St George's Hill...'

Onesixfournine is of course 1649 in words. The year 1649 saw many momentous events in British history such as: the foundation of the Commonwealth, replacing monarchy as the British form of government and the accompanying beheading of Charles I. It also saw the publication (and imprisonment of the authors) of the Levellers' manifesto 'An Agreement of the Free People of England', a document which paved the way for many of the civil liberties we hold dear today, like freedom of speech, equality under law and the universal right to vote.

Another group, the Diggers, wanted even more radical reform of social structures and they are perhaps the main reason we chose to name our discussion group after this year. The Diggers believed in the dissolution of all government, the abolition of private property and the bottom-up restructuring of society into agrarian, egalitarian, self-sufficient communes. They not only declared their belief in these things, they acted on their beliefs, squatting common land at St George's Hill in Surrey and elsewhere and planting it with vegetables and other food crops during a time of record food prices and widespread hunger - hence 'Diggers'. They were the original British grass-roots direct action movement, founding around ten separate communities across England before being ruthlessly crushed by the landowning classes, with full state support, who hired mercenaries to attack them, destroyed their crops and homes, arrested and imprisoned them without charge, and on

occasion framed them for sexual deviance. Like FSC, The Diggers had strong links with the Quakers, and advocated non-violence and an ecological and implicitly spiritual relationship between mankind and the natural world which would seem rather familiar to today's Forest School Campers.

1649

At Postcamps in 2004 there was an almighty discussion about the implications of marching against the war on Iraq under an FSC banner. This debate was one of the most amazing and profound decision making processes it has ever been my privilege to take part in. Around fifty people, ranging from grizzled FSC veterans and grey-bearded luminaries to pathfinders with fire in their bellies, all had a chance to speak their piece and did so with passion, lucidity, perspicacity, and humility (mostly...). We listened to each other and decided, collectively, on the best thing to do, for the good of the lodge. Consensus! Often elusive but so satisfying to apprehend. We decided that FSC is a children's camping organisation and should take children camping. Everything we do should be aimed at making that happen; anything else is outside of the remit of FSC and indeed outside its powers as an organisation. FSC has more than enough on its plate just running our camps with a staff of volunteers.

However, the community that has arisen around it has a life of its own. The people around the circle were still left with our collective opposition

to the Iraq war. Collective - that was the thing. Not everybody in FSC may have felt the same way and nor did that matter. Here we had a group of people with social consciences strong enough to stir them into action! So we all wrote our email addresses on a piece of paper and agreed to keep in touch about acting collectively. '1649' was born.

Our first task was to establish what this new group would and would not be for. We immediately concurred that although the group would remain open to FSC staff who wanted to get involved, there should be no connection with FSC beyond that. We agreed to have no ideology, only a methodology, which is as follows: we make decisions by consensus; there should be no exclusive focus on any one issue, but an openness to any suggestions for action by members; any action proposed must be positive, non-violent, and potentially at least, fun and no actions would ever be carried out in the name of the entire group, which exists only to facilitate discussion of its members' concerns. This last precept is very important; all of the protests and other actions carried out by members of the group since it began in September 2004 have been made by individuals making personal choices, in nobody's name but their own.

So we set up a new forum, an e-group, to communicate amongst this broadly like-minded group of people about ways we might help to address environmental and social injustice of all kinds. The first topic of discussion was 2005's G8 Summit

experienced it. We have the courage of our convictions!

The FSC way, evolved through community building around outdoor childcare, can, it seems also be turned to other tasks that do not revolve around self-interest and making money. The direct actions undertaken by members of 1649 over the last two years have been entered into in something of the spirit of a work camp; there may be no kids to look after, but there is another important task at hand. Sharing that common goal in the face of challenges and adversity is just as enriching and life-affirming an experience as ever.

Since the G8, members of 1649 have dressed as vampires and held a ceilidh blockading the entrance to the DSEI arms fair in London's Docklands, complete with a banner that read 'Corporate Bloodsuckers Go Home'; run a kitchen at the Climate Camp at Drax, the largest coal-fired power station in Britain, held to demand urgent government action to tackle climate change and most recently taken part in the occupation of a short-haul airport in Nottingham, to highlight the glaring contradictions in the government's mad plans to massively expand the aviation industry, in spite of the fact that this will guarantee the UK fails to meet its CO2 emissions reduction targets.

Direct action is not to everyone's taste and indeed not everyone on the 1649 group takes part in it. However, history shows that direct action is always a crucial element in bringing about massive social change; the kind of change now required to prevent global warming on a truly disastrous scale. As Tony Blair himself says, we have perhaps ten years to tackle this problem; after that it will be too late. But so far more hot air is all any politicians have given us. No single task in all of human history has ever been as important as this and if we don't do something about it now – who will?

Then on Wednesday, the first day of the Summit, we dressed as Pirates and blockaded a road that leads from Edinburgh to Gleneagles, to prevent the delegates from getting to the Summit. We stayed there, clinging tightly together and singing pirate songs, for about two hours



before the police removed us, arresting three of us. For many of us it was our first taste of direct action. Had it been effective? It was difficult to say but one thing it had done was show us, that we are not in fact powerless to act against the injustices of the world. The whole experience had also shown us that the common culture we had learned on Forest School Camps provided us with skills and tools for working together efficiently in trust and shared understanding, that most people have not had a chance to learn. To listen to one another and find that solutions built through dialogue and consensus have more power and a truer understanding than those made by individuals; to question authority and to see that we should always be able to play a part in decisions which will affect us; that conflicts should never be resolved through violence; the value of collective action and communal living; the value of the natural world and of a close relationship with it; FSC has taught us all of these things and more. The time we have spent in the communities built on our camps over the years has demonstrated, tangibly, the possibility of alternative lifestyles more sustainable and more compassionate than the ones we lead the rest of the time. We can believe in it because we have

in Gleneagles, Scotland. As well as the mainstream Make Poverty History campaign, there was also a mass mobilisation of protest groups of all kinds around the Summit itself. It emerged that there would be a 'convergence centre' – a campsite – somewhere near the Summit that would accommodate all of the left-wing, non-hierarchical groups that wanted to make their voices heard by the world's power elite. Camping! Just what we do best, we thought, so a posse of about 25 of us buckled our swashes, grabbed our best Pirate costumes, jumped on bikes, trains and minibuses and made our way up there to do what we could to help.

The 'Horizone' campsite was intended to be a model of self-governance and sustainability, with decisions made by consensus and food cooked in 'barrios'. Everybody was expected to help out with the day-to-day running of the camp, which we took to like ducks to water. Because opposition to the G8 can be made from so many different quarters, the site was a raggle-taggle assemblage of green groups, peace activists, human rights concerns and anarchists, from all over Europe and the world. We attended direct action training workshops and discussions with the likes of George Monbiot on climate change and trade unionists from Colombia and India on the human rights and environmental abuses of the Coca Cola Company in their countries.



Our little band decided to take action ourselves. On Monday we helped to shut down the Trident Nuclear weapons base at Faslane in a mass blockade; we sang and we danced a lot and generally had a lovely time.

Some people in FSC have become concerned about the activities of members of the 1649 group, even though we have done everything we can to distance ourselves from the organisation and be a discrete entity (it should also be borne in mind that we do not in any case act on behalf of the 1649 group itself, only ever on behalf of ourselves as individuals). I have two things to say about these concerns; firstly, if you don't like us acting on our consciences, you shouldn't have brought us up this way and secondly, do you have any better ideas? If so, then you are most welcome to join the e-group and share them with the rest of us. I am immensely proud of the sacrifices and contributions members of 1649 have made to the movement for global justice, to opposition of the shameful arms trade and most of all for our small part in confronting the terrible promise of climate change if we carry on with business as usual in the industrialised nations.

Blue Skies

Leo Murray ●●●

trees@leomurray.co.uk

In Support of a Dream

John Simonds died twenty two years ago in a car accident and a Trust was set up in his memory. He was 19 at the time. Initially a dream arising out of tragic circumstances, the Trust is now recognised nationally for its services to education in the countryside. FSC made this dream come true. In the year following John's death, Beefy and Rupert Hedger ran the first of ten annual international work camps. These attracted a large contingent from overseas, particularly from Eastern Europe. Each year a major project was attempted on the almost derelict site at Rushall Manor. Weekend work camps, which still take place, happened in the spring and autumn. We discovered that the Trust's objectives: to encourage a love of the countryside, leadership and self confidence in young people; were



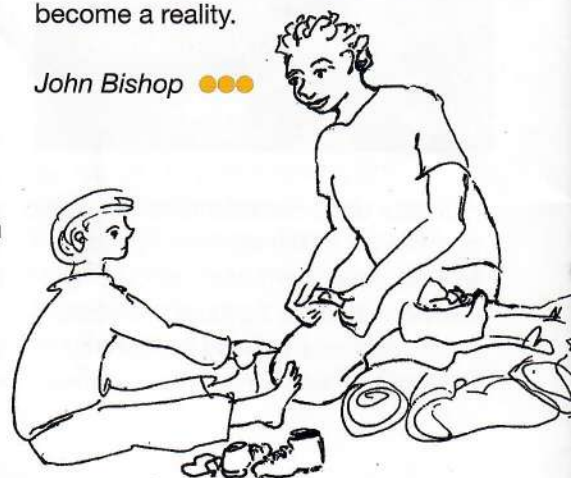
happening before our eyes through FSC. Major works were achieved and lasting relationships formed.

- The Manor Farm site has been fully restored with thatched barn, bunkhouse and kitchen. Pathways, suitable for people with disabilities, have been laid between the stable and the kitchen
- The facilities at the Manor are well equipped with good levels of equipment for educational work
- The pond and surrounding land have been landscaped, with dipping platform, tree and hedge planting
- The farm has been organic for 7 years and is able to teach about sustainable and rotational production
- There is a fulltime staff of 2, and 10 trained part time teachers
- The Trust is run from a well equipped office
- A river studies programme has been developed and equipped. A new site has been established within a beautiful conservation area by kind permission of the landowner, Anna Newton
- All teaching is done to meet National Curriculum targets. Work is being done with the applied science GCSE course
- Full health and safety checks and risk assessment are routine
- Walks and woodland trails have been opened up with permitted paths
- The site is used for 450 DoE campers and scouting organisations and FSC

- Around 8,500 school children come on day visits; 40% from secondary schools
- Many children receive free or subsidised visits and free transport is provided occasionally
- Leadership training is undertaken at Cre8-it and DoE camps
- More than 15 young people have benefited from at least a week's work experience including the disadvantaged
- A successful pilot project with a local nursery school has been carried out. The work was commended by OFSTED and won a National award for excellence in outdoor education.
- 180 places at Cre8-it, a summer holiday club for 8-12 year olds, were led by 15 young people all under the age of 22
- Seven schools camps have been hosted here
- The farm open days raised £27,500 for the Reading MS Society
- The Trust is working to establish school partnerships with Kulika, a charity working in Uganda with organic farmers and schools.
- The Trust's investment reserves are almost 3 years normal expenditure, 25% held in cash.
- The work of the Trust has been recognised by SEEDA. John Bishop has been awarded 'Farm Visitor Champion' for 2007.

These are remarkable achievements for a Trust which started with vision and no money 24 years ago. It all happened because the two men who helped found FSC saw that they could make someone else's dream become a reality.

John Bishop ●●●



Nets first started to be seen on some camps in the late '90s, I am informed that Caroline Whalley and Dave Monk salvaged some trawler nets from a quay at Lowestoft and took them to an Easter camp at Danbury Woods. These nets went to Haddenham and some camps had cargo/trawler nets sent out in addition to the standard equipment. They were used for a variety of purposes but in my experience they were best enjoyed when tied to trees at a low level. It was noticeable that, particularly the younger age groups had fun on these nets and that they are the most agile clambering about them.

There were some initial ventures making large net areas, using all the nets and ropes that could be found. These were largely driven by Leo Murray and others who had experience with rock climbing or through working as tree surgeons. It was fun, and speculation about the potential of net climbing started to happen. I remember talk of Ewok villages, whole camps up in nets and enormous zip lines. We even dreamt of a team game based on the paint ball craze where nobody touched the ground, we were toying with the idea of calling it Jungle Warriors.

One day I was sent a brochure by a supplier for ecological survey equipment and in this magazine they were offering nets to catch various animals for sampling and study. I looked up the company that manufactured these nets on the internet and it turned out they made all kinds of nets. I passed this link over to Leo and he phoned them up. It wasn't long before he was the proud owner of a 4m x 4m green polypropylene net with 45mm gauge squares (woven together rather than knotted which makes the nets lighter and more comfortable) with a 2 ton breaking strain! This was the leap in technology that really spurred

progress. The nets came with a thick perimeter rope and several individual lengths of similar rope about 2m long. This allows us to tie them up amongst trees that are in a variety of different arrangements.

These nets were taken on a few camps and their impact was instant. It wasn't hard to get others excited



mat and several large reels of wide polypropylene webbing.

The webbing turned out to be an inspired buy as it has allowed us to make strops. These loops of webbing allow us to firmly attach ropes to trees in a way that does not damage the living part of the tree (the cambium) just beneath the bark. They have come in useful on numerous occasions. We have even developed a method of scaling vertical stems with no branches with the use of two strops.

After this, it was possible for some really impressive net arrangements to be set up. Some of the best experimenting happened on FSC Easter camps at Danbury Woods.

Postcamps was also an opportunity to see what we could do. We have surprised ourselves by how easy it is to set up extensive and exciting net installations and by how high we can set them up!

Through experiences we've had whilst camping we have developed systems of getting tension on ropes and nets whilst suspended in trees, found out which knots are appropriate and how we can supervise net climbing activities. All of these net climbing practices are new to science and are strongly linked to the creative play experiences of FSC camps.

Over the past few years the kit collective have sent their equipment out to be used on FSC camps and net activities have become commonplace on standing camps. After refining skills on FSC camps, interest in net climbing started emerging from further afield. In 2004 we were invited over to the Czech Republic, for their annual tree climbing competition; it was to be held in the biggest park in Prague. We organized our trip over there but in order to identify ourselves we decided that we had to give ourselves a name, so we decided to call ourselves Monkey-Do.

once they had got into a net and had a bounce. From our initial trials, consensus rapidly reached the point, where it was obvious that we needed more nets and ropes. The barrier was that few of us had much money. The only way that we could get the equipment that we needed was to pool our funds. It was at this point that the kit collective came into being. The kit collective was founded by a group of friends who met through FSC. It started in around 2000 and since the concept was agreed, money has been donated by people, whenever it was required. Now the kit collective is established, others, who have not experienced FSC camps, have seen the benefits of the arrangement and have also contributed either kit or funds.

The big domed building was created to symbolize the dawning of a new millennium by showcasing all sorts of technology and stuff in East London. It was widely considered to be a flop and so in 2001, it was closed down and the entire contents were sold off. Vic Doggart and Leo were present and were able to boost the booty, by purchasing a load of equipment including karabiners, climbing helmets, 4 large crash

With so much innovation and interest in net climbing and Monkey-Do; we decided to set up a website that explained what we do. It explains the techniques and equipment that we use and there is a large gallery section that shows what we have done in the past, it may be viewed at www.monkey-do.net.

As Monkey-Do has evolved, more formal procedures for net installation have developed. We have produced safety guidelines, so that we can provide a better service on FSC camps and at events outside of FSC. We are currently committing all our funds to training and developing safety management.

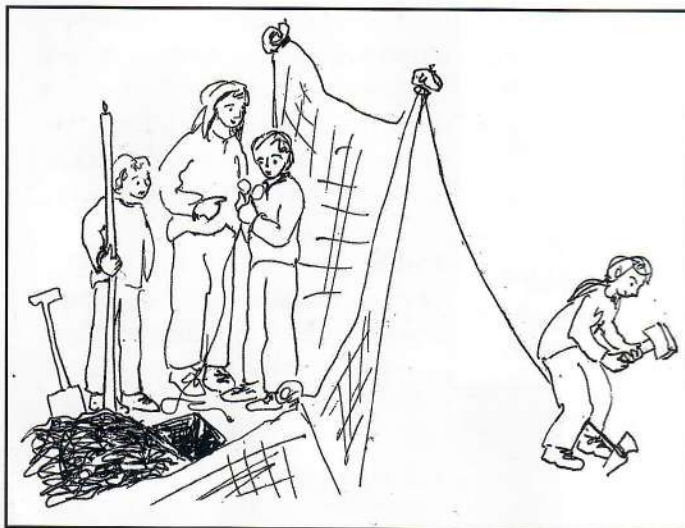
Monkey-Do is now a team of well trained climbers and supervisors who run tree climbing events, most of these people are FSC campers. Non-FSC people who have worked with Monkey-Do have commented on the high levels of trust and teamwork shown by Monkey-Do; these qualities undoubtedly come from the FSC way.

If you have never been up in the nets, give it a try the next time you get a chance. They can be like giant hammocks that can be shared between ten, for a tranquil commune with the forest canopy; or they can be like a wild adventure playground set in the treetops, for the bouncier souls amongst us. Hopefully the future holds more opportunities for net climbing on FSC camps. Furthermore it is expected that Monkey-Do will have more opportunities to work in the burgeoning industry of environmental play in the UK and the rest of The World.

Ben Rose ●●●

Education in the Environment

Education in the Environment was a small outdoor education company, based at Beale Park, on the River Thames, a few miles north of



Reading. I employed myself originally and paid on a piecework basis all those who worked for me. I formed Education in the Environment in 1996 and ran it until 2002. The education office at Beale Park was closed down in 2004.

It had its roots with work begun by Gyles Morris and Jan Holloway running school events and children's parties based at Beale Park, a Bird Park aimed at family visits with an attached organic farm. When they wanted to move on I took over the concept and was given a desk and the run of the park, in exchange for a payment to the park, for events I organized and a promise along the lines of not ruining their reputation. The park benefited from being able to advertise that they had an 'education department' (necessary for many grant applications!) and they made a bit of money. I benefited by having a good resource of land I could play with, an easy venue to advertise, a free desk and a temporary mooring for my boat. Aggie Forster, Jenny Dingle and Flow Stone soon joined me as key people without whom it never would have taken the form it did.

In the 6 years it ran Education in the Environment grew slowly but steadily. In the first year I had made £300 profit from 12 months work. By the last year we had over 6000 child visits and a turnover of £65,000 (though remember turnover does not equal profit!). We had 4 main areas of activity: birthday parties, school

programmes, holiday activities ("wild days") and camps; with side shoots such as: activities for children with special needs, animal care, home educated children's activities, adult programmes, talks, visits to schools etc.

After I left other programs were added, including a GNVQ in animal care run by Aggie Forster and work with children excluded from school.

FSC influence on the concept

Without a doubt FSC had a major direct and indirect influence on what we did. Firstly (and obviously) it started by being frustrated with one job, chatting with an FSC friend who knew another FSC friend who knew..... (Actually until I emigrated to Austria, I can say I have got every job in my life from FSC people!). Secondly, a large percentage of the staff, including all the key founding members, were FSC people whom I had met on camps and invited to come and work on this idea. Furthermore, without the years of experience of being on camps, I never would have had the knowledge and confidence to run such a centre.

FSC influence on activities

Minimum equipment, maximum exposure! A general attitude of 'is this fun?' and 'what will they learn?' We would spend an hour and a half pond dipping with a class of 5 year olds, not the usual 15 minutes. Much of what we chose to do would not have been out of place on a camp. Everything was outside regardless of the weather. The favorite birthday party and holiday activity themes were building dens and lighting fires! But other themes included natural dyeing, self cook, days in the woods and night walks. Other less FSC themes such as pirates, spaceship and animal parties benefited

speaking, the technical quality of this stuff is pretty patchy (I'm thinking of some of my own contributions here) but all of it is nevertheless imbued with at least something of



the inimitable quality of camp. Like catching a whiff of wood smoke, an FSC song, however badly sung and scratchily recorded, has a magical power to evoke summer fields filled with damp, happy children and mud. I felt like this material deserved a new forum.

Like a book of spells, an enchanted energy surrounds the FSC

songbook. However, it is by itself entirely inadequate, as while at the campfire having one's nose stuck in the book detracts from the purity of the experience of singing in a group and once away from the campfire, if one forgets the tune, the words are no good at all. What was missing was a way to help people learn the songs in the songbook whilst away at home on their own, so that when they came to take their place at the fireside, they would already be prepared to launch into full flight.

All of this added up to my best idea in ages; the Virtual Campfire. It is an online learning resource and campfire fix for FSCers to access at any time of day or night so long as they can get on the internet. It currently has nearly 300 tracks available to listen to, or to download for free, sung, collected and donated by a wide range of staff over the last couple of years. My favourite bit is the interactive part; like the singing horses, I persuaded a bunch of (in my humble opinion) FSC's best singers to get together and record some songs on a multitrack, with each different part recorded

do, to experiment and challenge themselves as well as the children. In the way a camp chief might work with group chiefs, giving them the freedom to run it as they saw fit within certain safety guidelines. Staff payment was flexible and based on what made us happy rather than maximum profits. This in itself was interesting; can you keep an FSC philosophy whilst being paid? I felt that the answer was 'yes' but only if the staff had freedom of choice and that this was not a day out job.

Conclusion

It was six very tiring but very enjoyable years that taught us all a lot. From it other ideas have spun off and other organizations have been influenced. More importantly, many children had a real experience of life outdoors, away from a world dominated by electronic toys.

Jeremy Cossey ●●●

Virtual Campfire

A few years ago someone sent me a link to a web page that had a cartoon of some horses on. Clicking on each horse caused the horse to start singing; clicking again made them stop singing. Each horse sung a different part of a kind of four-part harmony. It was bizarre and beautiful and gave me an idea immediately.

FSC's long oral tradition of folk music around the campfire began to be recorded by the Glee Committee during the early '90s with the audio tape *The Next to Come In*, which was followed a few years later by *Now That's What I Call Glee:2*. Some of the material on those tapes was truly sublime and they both helped to popularise many of the classic campfire songs of today. These days almost nobody has audio cassette players. However, as I investigated further, I discovered that all sorts of different FSC staff had been recording campfire songs, in various different environments but especially at Glee Camps. Broadly

from the underlying philosophy of group games and challenges, the we all win or all fail idea.

I think also FSC had a lot to do with the young age at which we encouraged children to do things, the trust we had in their abilities. The belief that 6 year olds can collect kindling and light fires; that a wheelchair user needs more support, such as a better built latrine, but can still enjoy camping in a field; that the outside is not fundamentally dangerous but needs understanding and guidance and that bruises, knocks, nettles and wasps were normal. The very high return rate of the children and the scarcity of complaints showed that we were answering some need.

Obviously of all our activities the camps we ran were the most directly influenced by FSC: learn to pitch your own tent, log circles, 6 gallons and 10 pints, campfires, axes and saws, night games, singing etc. We had late night staff cuppas and the same end of camp exhaustion. With time the standing camps gave us children pushing our boundaries as well as their own. As we began to grow our own trackers, pathfinders and staff we started caving, backpacking in Wales and Scotland and doing cycle-touring in Britain, France and Denmark. All ran similarly to the FSC equivalents.

FSC influence on company

organization

No-one should be turned away on the basis of cost. Although we had a set price in the programme, parents were invited to pay less if it was too much and we created our own aid fund, mostly from donations of more affluent parents. The problem at times was having parents step forward to claim help.

The events set in our programme for the schools and holidays were chosen by the people who would run them, rather than just telling staff what they will do. This flexibility allowed each person to offer what they most wanted to

separately so that the listener at home would be able to listen to individual parts, learn them, then switch them off and sing them themselves.

I didn't do this by myself. Apart from all of the singers, musicians and sound recorders who have made the library what it is; there is one person without whom the Virtual Campfire would still be just another idea scrawled on a post-it and stuck up on the whiteboard 'for further attention'. Jack Freedman's wizardry is almost entirely responsible for the actual machinery of the website itself, and has just re-launched the Jukebox page as a standalone mp3 player, which has meant yet more work for no reward except the warm green glow of the virtual fire. If you like it, you can buy Jack a drink next time you see him. He's earned it.

Since going on-line in July 2006 to the time of writing (the beginning of December) the Virtual Campfire has had nearly 4000 unique visitors, and over 13,000 song downloads. The library of songs continues to grow all the time and I have no doubt it will eventually be in the thousands, as recording glee becomes easier and more popular. After all, there are now glee meetings in Manchester, Sheffield, Cambridge, Bristol and Scotland, as well as back here in the big smoke. I plan to do a Lomax-style tour over the next couple of years where I visit these bastions of the oral tradition and collect their musical offerings for the Virtual Campfire. See you at a Glee meeting soon...

love, blue skies, and green fire
Leo Murray

www.virtualcampfire.co.uk

The Virtual Campfire is open to any submissions of campfire songs, old or new, from any FSC campers. To contribute please email leo@virtualcampfire.co.uk

Magdalen Farm Project

As a woodling, I spent most of a camp at Montgomery, building and cooking in a bread oven, made out of an old oil drum in the bank leading to the pathfinder site. The other half of the time was spent wallowing in the river, trying to keep cool from the heat of the 1976 summer. On returning home I spent the remainder of the holiday, building a smaller oven in my parents back garden, cooking flapjacks for friends and family and anyone else who happened to be passing.

Last summer here at Magdalen we completed our first cob pizza oven, a clay, sand and straw mixture once a traditional building material of the south west. Reaching over 700 degrees, the oven is capable of cooking the most delicious pizzas in about a minute. To date over 2000 primary school children, from all over the country, have harvested many of the ingredients for and then created and baked their own pizzas. I can still be found tending to the fire in the oven, over 30 years later, often to the detriment of the project's accounts or trustee's report!

Those very strong, happy, inspiring memories of: learning by doing, building confidence and self esteem, developing values and attitudes in the kitchen or digging a lat on camp; have had an enormous influence on my career path.

I became director of the Magdalen Project and Forest School Camps has had a strong influence on the educational philosophy, staff structure and infrastructure of the site.

Our courses reflect the balance of educating the head, heart and hand; offering both practical and cerebral activities, enabling many children who may seem difficult in the classroom, to engage and flourish in the outdoors.

Our teacher training courses encourage teachers to teach outdoors in the school grounds,

valuing the important contributions of the formal, informal and hidden curriculum to a child's development. Even the kitchen, on occasion has opted to use one of my 6 gallon dixies when having to cook for a large party of wedding guests! Ruth you would be proud.

On a Thursday night the river Axe valley echoes with the sounds of 'This Land is Your Land' or 'In a Cottage in a Wood' as up to 60 primary school children, many having camped for the first time, enjoy a camp fire and a time for reflection. With talking stick in hand, the circle is quiet for each child to be listened to, before singing 'It's Time for Man to go Home'.

Now, with our new outreach programme, many of the schools in Dorset, Somerset and Devon are experiencing aspects of the FSC/ Magdalen mix on a regular basis, within their schools.

My children camp and we hold an FSC camp here once or twice a year. Even though I no longer camp formally, it's only because I have been lucky enough to build FSC into my everyday life; sharing much of what has made the FSC experience special to me, with many others. The eclectic FSC mix of people, landscapes and opportunities has been invaluable to the development of me and the Magdalen Project.

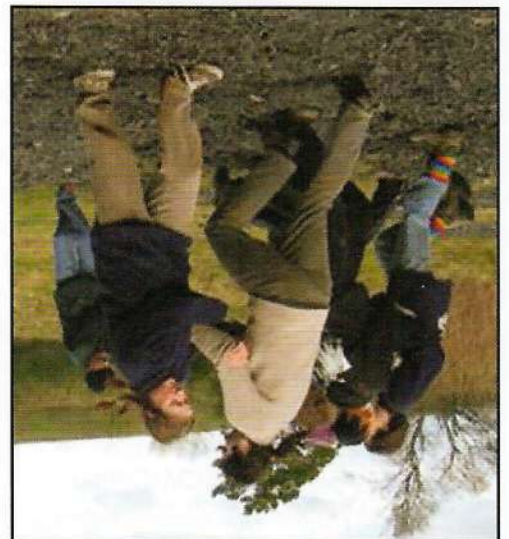
Thank you and blue skies,
Gyles Morris

Cut a Shine

'Cut A Shine' is more than a just a noun, in fact it's a verb: to cut a shine – a phrase borrowed from our Appalachian cousins, from deep in the mountain communities of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Surrey County, Virginia and Kentucky.

There, for past generations, Barn Dance, Country Dance, Folk Dance, whatever you choose to call it, was and is more than just a novelty dance

to be pursued in fields in fancy dress. There a Ceilidh is not just for Christmas, it's for life. Nestled amongst the Moonshine stills and old log cabins; the clawhammered banjo and drone stopped fiddlin' of the mountain musicians played a pivotal and crucial social role in the mountain communities. These were the days when one would don the best in Sunday dress, polish up



one's hob nailed boots and head over to the local clapperboard barn dance, maybe to meet one's future spouse (if you were unlucky enough not to have met one at a family gathering). Then danced 'til dawn – until all the fine shine had been cut from your boots.

Maybe our forebears were onto something. All that energy, participation and interaction; true social dance in it's purest form involving all old and young, that can be: chaotic, or done to perfection, wild or restrained, but always, at it's heart, honest and fun. Why keep it bracketed, forgotten, tucked away in a niche library or only rolled out at weddings and corporate events? Surely, with the right approach, the right marketing, imagery, 'branding' and incorporating the right personalities, it could be rolled out to new, more mainstream audiences? Moreover, what if the form were to be contextualised in more modern and 'traditional' nights and events? Barn Dance followed by African Dance music, Rock n' Roll music, Hillbilly Bands and DJs

– always keeping the emphasis on the energy, interactivity, and social nature; a breath of fresh air from the isolationist, individualistic DJ-hero-worship nightclub we have all, unfortunately, become accustomed to. This is what I believe the Cut a Shine collective have achieved. From a lifelong involvement with, coaching in (you know who you are) and enjoyment of country dance, the wild, fun, anarchic 'folk' nature of the dance has been captured, repackaged and exported to an unsuspecting audience. Without the need to be austere, erudite or perfectionist and at its root, a solid appreciation and love of the music and form – a novel approach for a new crowd has been created. There are literally hundreds of Ceilidh bands up and down the country, the majority of which probably know a hundred more tunes and dances. This is not the point. The point was and is, I think, to engage the trendy, unsuspecting and uninitiated into the mayhem and raucous fun of a good Ceilidh, as an alternative to more mainstream events. To this end, the project seems to have been a success. Having spotted a 'gap in the market' for some dressed up fun at the UK's Mainstream Music festivals, Cut a Shine have performed at Bestival (twice), Secret Garden Party, Lost Vagueness, LoveBox weekend and StokeFest. There have been performances at various East London functions, such as the Bethnal Green Working Men's Club and Gaz's Rockin' Blues – all interspersed with Cut a Shine's own nights at venues where you wouldn't normally expect to see traditional dance – Warehouses, Bars, Music Halls and Clubs.

Cut a Shine owes a debt of gratitude to the FSC community. It was born out of the harmonious musical friendships cultivated within the glee community, fomented at Glee Camp dances, conceptualised at legendary FSC Ceilidh after parties and first put into practice at events in 2004/2005. Initially as a way to

supplement a party – an ice breaker, an early attraction, the outcome was that it soon took on a shape of it's own and Cut a Shine was born (in fact, at a fateful night at Cecil Sharp House when I got the date wrong for a dance there).

The question is: are we drawn to FSC because it incorporates the values we wish to exhibit, or do we camp because we share those values and our presence re-asserts them within the community? Do I country dance and like folk music because I went on Forest School Camps, or do I go on Forest School Camps because I like folk music and dance? If Forest School Campers are amongst the lucky ones who know what fun country dancing is, do we then not have a moral imperative to share that with others?

The fact remains: we all learned country dancing at school and at FSC and we know which one influenced Cut a Shine. I love it that you can't be poncy about country dancing when you dance on a sloping, thistly field, where you might be pushing a wheelchair in a doh si doh or holding a pixie on your hip and that when you get too far away from the cd player you can't hear the music at all. It is much more like our Appalachian friends and drunken peasant beans than most current UK folk dance. It's that experience that taught all of the Cut a Shine crew to have the irreverent approach, that goes down so well and helps our audience bury their demons of country dancing, in the school hall with the scary headmistress.

Postscript: the origin of the name 'Cut a Shine' comes from a Folksways recording of a Banjo player called Clarence Ashley from West Virginia, in a song called Shout Lulu: *How many nickels does it take? To see little Lulu's body shake It takes a nickel and takes a dime To see little Lulu cut a shine.*

Joe Buiski ●●●

World Woodcraft

You may have heard, over the years that, some members of Forest School Camps have taken part in International Woodcraft Gatherings, in the Czech Republic and in Britain.



This is how it started:

Early in 1990 the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry (OWC) received a letter from the Woodcraft League of Czechoslovakia (as it then was). Their leader, Martin Kupka, wrote to tell us about the League, which had been formed as a result of the teachings of Ernest Thompson Seton. He said they had been meeting in secret for 40 years, under the Hitler regime and then under Communism. Following the revolution they were free again and had read about the OWC in a magazine. 'We would like to meet you' he said. 'Please come and see us.'

We felt that this opportunity should not be missed, so we arranged to take our summer holiday at a time when Martin told us his group would be camping in the Sumava Mountains. We drove through Belgium and Germany, camping on the way, and arrived in Czechoslovakia, armed with a map on which a dotted line was marked. We followed a track up into the forest covered mountains, 'where the track ends you will find us,' we had been told and we did indeed come to the end beside a stream. Through the trees was a mountain meadow with a group of teepees, and across the stream came a dozen or so young people, the boys in loin-cloths and hand-made cotton shirts and the girls in cotton dresses of a Native American style. Martin Kupka was with them.

Enthusiastic greetings were exchanged, and we were escorted to a teepee which we were invited to use during our visit.

There followed four happy days of getting to know each other and learning about each other's organisations. We swapped songs and folk dances: Czech, Native American and British. They particularly liked 'Annie Laurie' and 'Three Blind Jellyfish'.

During our visit the boys constructed a very solid bridge over the stream which we had the honour of opening in the name of Czech/British friendship.

Then it was time to make the journey back to civilisation and England. Firm friendships had been made.

The following year we returned with our son and younger daughter for another wonderful week's camping in teepees, culminating in the group's Council Meeting with its impressive opening ceremony. In the darkness the Keeper of the Fire, a 14-year old boy, made fire by working with a bow to create a spark to ignite his prepared kindling; the silent suspense as we all waited for the first sparks to glow was palpable. Incidentally, he had been practising for most of the day to make sure he would not fail.

During our visit we had discussed the possibility of them coming to visit us in England, and they had dismissed the idea as hopeless. However, two years later we had wonderful news: the Czech government would pay the coach fares for 20 Woodcraft League members to come to England.

They duly arrived in July and camped in our garden for a week, visiting London and various places (a letter to the Queen got us a discounted group ticket to Windsor Castle), then they spent a week at the OWC camp in Cornwall (stopping off to visit Stonehenge on the way). During this visit it was decided to institute international gatherings of as many Woodcraft related groups as could be managed.

The first of these gatherings was in 1994 in the Czech Republic. Present were members of Forest School Camps, Woodcraft Folk and OWC,

all from the U.K; members of the Woodcraft League from both Czech Republic and Slovakia and from the USA came Barbara Witemeyer of the Thompson-Seton Foundation and Dee Seton Barber, the daughter of Ernest Thompson Seton and her husband Dale.

Three years later the second International Gathering was held at Sandy Balls in the New Forest, the home of Ernest Westlake (founder of the OWC) and now home of the Westlake family. Again, as many Woodcraft groups as possible were present; we were even visited at one point by some rather bemused Brownies who happened to be walking through the woods with their Brown Owl. Unfortunately we



have never been able to involve the Scouts.

Since then there has been a second visit to the Czech Republic and a fourth Gathering in Hampshire in 2005. There have also been informal visits to and fro between Czech, British and American Woodcraft members. There is also news of other groups in Poland.

During the series of gatherings, the name 'Blue Sky! World Woodcraft', was agreed in recognition of our common heritage.

Negotiations have begun for the fifth International Gathering in, we think, 2008 in the Czech Republic, and there are thoughts of a sixth beyond that in Britain.

Let us hope the friendships and ties forged so far remain strong and extend to more groups and more nationalities.

Mollie Pringle O.W.C. ●●●

One Step Beyond

I am interested in how an FSC derived/inspired programme of activities could be used within the state school system to facilitate social inclusion in that subset of a school population that are 'in danger of exclusion'.

This is not a new idea, think Grith Fyrd and Norman Glaister's earlier work with people with mental health problems. In addition many of this country's therapeutic communities have their roots with A.S. Neill's Summerhill or Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth. These also feature in FSC's heritage as having inspired our forefathers, or having stemmed from the same teachings.

It will also be true that, at any given time, there will be FSC staff bringing a little or a lot of Forest School philosophy into their 'work', paid or voluntary: Gyles Morris' work at Magdalen Farm; Flow Stone's activities with home educated children and Frontiers; the whole education department at Beale Park was once infused with FSC and historically, Flysheet camps and Kids Under Canvas to name some of the most obvious. However, where it happens, it is in an ad hoc and fragmented manner. The idea I want to explore concerns the creation of a training programme for educational professionals, who have little or no experience of an FSC approach, but who have a will and a need to create inclusive, adventurous programmes within their schools.

I have begun to understand that FSC is about social education. I fought this conclusion for years because I felt that this avenue of thought was, generally within FSC, leading to the degradation of importance of the activities, caving, canoeing and mountain walking, but now I accept that the activities are a means to an end and that the end is about society.

The original Forest School imparted skills and knowledge within the democratic social framework but,

our inheritance comes through the camps, which are learning holidays with activities structured towards inclusion, for staff and kids and families. The act of taking part, wholly taking part, in an expedition or activity with people of all ages who are not all family and not chosen by you is an adventure which necessitates openness of mind.

An adventure that encompasses a range of learning experiences but is in the nature of a social experiment and so is open ended. It is quite the opposite, in fact, of the modern vogue in lessons which state at the outset the desired 'learning outcome'. The initial responses of a group of teenagers having walked (some strided, some dragged their feet) to the summit of a mountain may range from 'can't wait...' to 'never going to do that again' but the other outcomes? For those that 'helped someone else', 'accepted help', 'talked candidly to another', 'were listened to', 'learnt that wet feet will be dry again by bedtime', 'began a lifetime fascination with bog plants'... the outcomes are as many as there are participants, as many as there are minutes in the day and people to live them.

Our predecessors were more enamoured of the experimental than we often are in these litigious times. In the spirit of experimentation, I have looked back on key moments in my FSC history and concluded that FSC has allowed me to diverge from the path mapped out for me by my upbringing. It has contrived for me hardships and something to struggle against, given me friends and magic moments. It has allowed me intimacy with the world I share.

I feel like I have seen the world in a grain of sand and I have stood in the eye of a storm.

FSC is a safe place to experiment with... drugs, alcohol, sex? No! For me FSC was a safe place to experiment with my soul.

At FSC we are 'purveyors of fine experience', adventurers in soul

and self. We peddle opportunity. Whilst guiding the hand we prime the canvas of intellect and let the heart teach itself. Two weeks at camp growing-up. Thirty seven weeks at school being programmed. Quality and quantity.

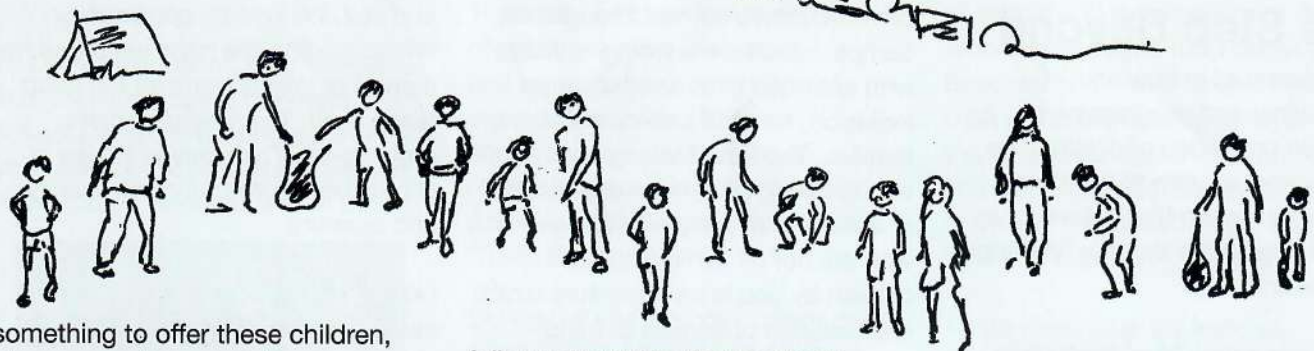
I know we have tried and in some cases succeeded in integrating children with special, social needs into our camps. Children referred by social services or through individual staff and supported by our aid fund. I have referred such a child myself but my well intentioned intervention was doomed because, although the camping model is, empirically, a fine vehicle of social inclusion, the 'modern' FSC camp has severe limitations.

At camp we assume compliance with our conventions and we assume a baseline of social behaviours that are both mature and sophisticated. Neither are unreasonable assumptions given the social classes from which we mainly draw our campers and also the large population of established and experienced campers in each lodge. However, the celebration of difference is little more than a worthy aspiration, through no fault of our own.

FSC is a small self selecting population of like-minds and the children of like-minded people. We run a very similar programme of events in a very similar way, year after year. We do this very successfully. FSC is not at all easy to break into unless you know the social code. In other words, unless you come from that narrow band of society from which we draw most of our campers. Not impossible; just not easy.

Also, the 'modern' FSC camp is, in my opinion, a bit bogged down in dogma; too much 'everyone does', joining in, 'it's how we do things', tradition... - Nice in its way, but a limitation none the less.

Yet I really believe we have



something to offer these children, whose experiences define them as outside our social grouping. Maybe a distillation of the FSC experience; a cocktail of: learning by doing, assumption of good will, non-didactic teaching, use of consensus and the participation in useful work; could, if delivered in a usable format, become a useful tool for the social inclusion of children on the brink (and their peers) in mainstream schools.

So, accepting that FSC is not the answer but that FSC has an answer and that the camping/woodsman model is only one of many activities that can facilitate social inclusion: 'It aint what you do, it's the way that you do it.' A framework could be developed, guidelines that might be used to create activities to be delivered by enthusiastic teachers, offering 'experiences for the soul'.

Starting from the hypothesis that there is a 'need' to address social exclusion within mainstream schools and a 'vacuum of understanding' as to how this could be achieved.

Hoping for at least a glimmer of acceptance that, the 'normal curriculum' is neither accessible nor appropriate for children close to the edge of total dysfunction. We could demonstrate the importance of an 'experience rich' parallel curriculum for those children of all ages and abilities who show 'mis-fitting' behaviour. This could be delivered under the guise of PSME or PE but would need more time tabled time than either of these get! This time must not be resented but, the belief that the parallel curriculum will reap rewards and foster success within the main curriculum; despite reduced exposure; must be embraced. It

follows, therefore, that accurate diagnosis of a child's difficulties is important, if, for instance, a child is recalcitrant due to a learning difficulty such as dyslexia or is struggling with english as a foreign language, where targeted assistance within the main curriculum is available, then reduced exposure to such teaching should only be offered if other needs present. The parallel curriculum, although it would do no one harm, should be a targeted resource and not a dumping ground.

Although the intention is to develop a course for teachers, the means and materials will need to be developed in real school situations. Hence it will be necessary to find schools willing to partake in the experiment.

From the onset of any pilot scheme, accurate records must be made of the participants' progress in both the main and the parallel curriculum. The periodicity and method of testing should fit with the school's existing methods so as not to increase workload unduly. In addition records of curriculum activities, successes and failures will need to be made and presented in a manner that clearly supports or refutes the assumptions. Ideally, along with participating schools, we would attract the interest of a university research department, or similar body, to assist with this 'research' and (assuming that the pilot programmes succeed in demonstrating improving outcomes for the target group) to help create a programme that will, in time, be followed by others.

However, these 'others' will not have experienced learning-by-doing first hand. Therefore, in order that the message is not

susceptible to excessive dilution or misinterpretation and to be sure to engender sufficient self-awareness in the trainee teachers that they can be comfortable in a non-authoritarian environment; the training programme must take the teachers on a learning journey so that they can understand that the curriculum is about the learner's journey.

We will be teaching teachers to live a deference that lets each life unfold, understanding that 'you can't pull a bud into flower'.

It may prove difficult for those raised in the modern mindset to run 'risks' with the experimental. As FSC people, not adverse to a few risks, we also have work to do... developing our own thinking and broadening our own horizons as we progress beyond the 'we've always done it like that' and develop our risk assessments to transcend 'well we haven't killed anyone yet'. We need to learn how to foster skills within a moral framework that does not assume the persuasiveness of the camp environment. We must learn to mesh our group work and social conscience seamlessly with skill acquisition. Marketing, packaging, advertising, funding will all be considerations, as will location, equipment and facilities but imagination will be the strongest tool in the onset... ideas not authority... I believe our time is about to come again. The sine wave of edu-fashion is turning away from the one-size-fits-all model; the misfits are too many to be ignored for ever.

Aggie Forster ●●●



