our story

50 YEARS UNDER CANVAS WITH FOREST SCHOOL CAMPS

forest school camps timeline

1906	Ernest Thompson Seton visited Britain to spread his ideas on Woodcraft
1908	Baden Powell establishes the Boy Scouts
1914-18	First World War – which shocked Ernest Westlake and others by its brutality
1915	Seton set up Woodcraft League of America
1916	Seton and Ernest Westlake set up The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry
1919	Ernest Westlake bought Sandyballs Estate at Godshill in the New Forest, Hampshire with the intention of starting a school based on OWC principles
1920	Kibbo Kift established by John Hargraves, who broke away from the Scouting movement
1922	Westlake dies
1924	Leslie Paul separates from Kibbo Kift and starts the Woodcraft Folk
1929	Forest School opened by Ernest Westlake's son, Aubrey, with four pupils and closes soon after when they all contract scarlet fever
1930	Cuthbert Rutter appointed as headmaster and school re-opens
1930's-	Margery Guillen, 'N' Brand, Ron Brand, Mary Roberts and others join staff of school
1930's	Eliza Banks, Hazel Powell and brothers, Rupert and Peter Hedger, and other children join as pupils
1932	Grith Fyrd, later known as Grith Pioneers, established by the OWC and located at the Sandy Balls Estate
1938	Forest School outgrew Sandy Balls and moved to Whitwell Hall, Reepham, Norfolk. Became independent of the OWC
1939-46	Second World War
1940	Whitwell requisitioned for military purposes. Forest School moves in much reduced form to join the school at Dartington Hall, some go to Shining Cliff Woods School
1947	A Forest School reunion camp was held at Whitwell Hall and led by John Glaister
1948	First Forest School Camp attended mainly by ex-pupils and staff from Forest School
1949	Two camps run at Whitwell
1950	Gypsy Hill College students were recruited including Margaret Brown, Susie Powlesland, Stella Hedger and Hazel Powell
1956	First fully-fledged mobile camps in Derbyshire and Northumberland
1950's	Aid Fund established
1960's	FSC expanded to run several summer standing camps and diversifies to mobile and foreign holidays
1960's	New Horizon is started by Eric Gander
1965-85	Ron Brand was General Secretary
1965	Camp stores are moved to Horton Kirby in Kent. Break with Whitwell Hall, which is then run by the FSC (1938) committee
1966	John and Susy Powlesland set up the Progressive Camps and School Association
1968-80's	Rupert Hedger becomes Chair
1970's	First potholing camps run by Victor Brooks
1972	First camp for children with learning difficulties organised by Roddy Brooks
1973	Flysheet Camps established by Alan Emmerson
1979	Camp stores are moved to Haddenham, Cambridgeshire where FSC purchase land and buildings
1985-97	Lorna English was General Secretary
1985-93	Hazel Powell was Chair of FSC
1993	Leslie Holden becomes Chair of FSC
1997	Lottie Davies becomes General Secretary
1997	34 camps advertised in the programme for over 1200 child places
1998	The story continues!

contents

also included

a short history

Here we explain the ideas on which Forest School Camps is based, the practical application of these ideas and the development of FSC over the last 50 years

THE STRUCTURES AND RITUALS THAT WE FIND ON CAMP TODAY remain very much the same as those of fifty years ago. If you could walk into a camp in 1948, you would be able to recognise the kitchen, the dining circle, the latrine and the different group sites. Eliza Banks, whose interview you will find further on, told me that she felt happy to visit camp in 1997 because she knew – 50 years on from her first camp – where to go to pitch her tent, get food and take her place at rally. It is easy to take our structures and rituals for granted, but it has become clear to me during the collection of these stories and pictures for the fiftieth anniversary of FSC that all of us need to understand why they exist and what they tell us about the reason the organisation was established in the first place.

The origins of Forest School Camps

In the early days of this century, setting up an alternative education to mainstream schools was even harder than it is today. Cities were growing fast. People were moving from the countryside to towns and cities in order to find work in the relatively new industries. Traditional activities were in decline. Craftsmen such as blacksmiths, cobblers or tailors, who made the entire article, such as a shoe or an axe or a pair of trousers, were being replaced by factory conveyor belts. And with them were disappearing the apprenticeships which many young people used to enter as soon as they were old enough. Concerns were prevalent amongst thinkers and reformers about the effects on children of this distance between them and their natural roots and about the substitution of the three R's for head, heart and hand.[1] Children needed to acquire wisdom and skill, rather than stuff themselves full of knowledge about facts and figures.

Ernest Thompson Seton was one of those thinkers. He was a Scot who went to Canada and ran a youth group for boys called the American 'Woodcraft Indians', using the technique of 'adventure training'. The way of life of the native American warrior and scouts was used to model a way of training young people to live close to nature and to prove themselves. Seton was impressed by the close-knit communities of the native Americans, the equality of their circle for eating and meeting and their closeness to nature. Above all, the tests and trials which the young men of the tribe had to go through, such as lighting fires, stalking animals, sleeping out alone, dancing and self-reliance in the wild, made an impact on his thinking. Seton felt that young people were increasingly missing this part of their education because they lived in big cities. 'This recapitulatory first hand contact with nature; this simple open air life – the life of the wilderness, the forest, the hills and the sea, which together with his social life was the chief factor of early man, is what we know as Woodcraft'[2]

Seton wrote books and pamphlets about his ideas which were published widely in Europe from 1898. He wrote the 'Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore' from which some of the ceremonials and ritualised 'Indian' names and titles are taken by FSC, for example, Keeper of the Fire, Keeper of the Purse, Chief, Clan, Lodge, and the greeting 'Blue Sky'. He founded the Woodcraft League of America in 1915 as a co-educational program for children aged '4 to 94'.Seton brought his ideas back to Britain in the early 1900s, where they were an inspiration for the establishment of youth movements such as the Scouts (1908), the Peace Scouts and the Woodcraft movement.

Many thinkers and activists were inspired to join such movements and to revive an appreciation of the importance of the natural environment to the process of education and self development. This inspiration was fuelled by the horrors of the First World War. Ernest Westlake, in particular, was one such thinker. He felt that in order to avoid the collapse of civilisation, which he saw as unstable, we must stay healthy by staying in touch with the basic conditions which had given rise to civilisation in the first place. 'Education is the result of environment, and the civilised environment represents but one stage out of many – a stage which, as it is furthest removed from the beginning, has the least kinship with children. From this we can infer that civilised society as an environment is inadequate to the education of children and that to complete their chain of development, it ought to be supplemented by the earlier stages.'[3] Westlake's solution lay in the educational use of the natural environment in combination with the biological theory of 'recapitulation', so that children would be able to follow the 'natural', primitive pattern. Free access to nature would allow children to 'recapitulate' the great stages of social development as they matured, passing though the simplicities of the Stone Age on its way to the heights of the ancient Greeks.

Logbook drawing, 1997

Westlake and Seton established the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry (OWC) in 1916. Those who led the Order took up the adventure education aspect of Seton's ideas and combined it with a pacifist and co-operative orientation which differentiated it from the more militaristic approach of other movements. The OWC had strong Quaker connections; it used consensus to make decisions and extended an equal right to all, young and old, who 'quake to speak' at meetings. However, it was agreed at its inception that the Order was to be non-religious and non-political. 'An Adventurer worships the Great Spirit, wherever it is found and under whatever manifestations or name, and for the present that shall suffice'.The group names we know - Elves, Woodlings, Trackers, Pathfinders and Waywardens - all date from early OWC days. (The name Trailseekers dates from the 1960's.) The OWC also incorporated some of the English tradition. The craft, music, drama and folk dancing on our camps and the word 'Merrymoot' represent the continuation of this tradition.

Other groups such as the Kibbo Kift Kindred (1920) and the Woodcraft Folk (1925) branched off from the OWC. The OWC also fostered groups, such as the Grith Fyrd (Peace Militia), as an alternative to war for young men. In 1924, Leslie Paul led a schism from the Kibbo Kift and founded the Woodcraft Folk, which is the second largest Woodcraft organisation in existence today after the Scouts. The Woodcraft Folk broke off in its concern that the Order was not doing enough to involve working class children. More information about these groups can be found among the books listed at the end of this chapter. The OWC in Britain exists today as a small but active group of around 200 people running family-based camps based on the idea of 'learning by doing'. Forest School was started in 1929 by Aubrey Westlake as part of this tradition.

Forest School 1929–1940

Ernest Westlake had bought the Sandyballs Estate in the New Forest in Hampshire near a place called Godshill, in order to set up a school influenced by Quakerism and the principle of learning by doing, teaching by being. He died a short time before the Forest School was established in 1929 but Aubrey Westlake, his son, carried out his ideas.The first attempt to set up the school in 1929 ended in failure when the four pupils contracted scarlet fever. In the spring of 1930, Cuthbert Rutter became the first headmaster of the Forest School when three children were enrolled. Numbers grew and several teachers were employed to teach art, music as well as reading writing and climbing trees. The children went on camping hikes in the summer terms and learnt about survival skills and the environment as part of their everyday life. Penny Nicholson (later known as Eliza Banks), Joy Roberts, Peter Hedger and Hazel Powell were among the children who attended the school and some of them tell their experiences later on in this book. A few of the people involved in running the school were Norman and Dorothy Glaister, among the original founders of the OWC, Arthur Cobb, Margery Guillen, Mary Roberts – a house mother; and Ellen Meatyard, later known as 'N' or Nellie (and also Mitch), who met and married Ron Brand, known as Beefy to us and current President of FSC. 'N' Brand describes her decision to join the School. 'Cuthbert Rutter said to me: "I want you to come and help me run my school. There are so many children in the world that need your kind of love and understanding", he wasn't interested in paper qualifications, he wanted people who could love children but leave them free to make their own decisions and learn about things because they wanted to find out all about life.'[4]

The school was in the middle of the woods in the New Forest. The children and staff all lived together and spent half their time indoors and half outside. It was as important to learn to climb the Tracker tree (if you were a Tracker!) as it was to learn your times tables. The curriculum involved maths, walking, singing, history and lighting fires. In the summer term, the children would go on hikes and in the summer holi-

Pathfinders relaxing, SUMMER, 1997

days, family and friends would come to join in summer camps. When you read Eliza Banks' story, you will see that it was as much what they learnt as the way in which the staff treated the children which made an educational difference. They were treated as equals and with respect.

There was little money to fund the school. Parents of some children would make extra contributions; some of the children went free and the teachers were paid little or nothing. The school survived largely on inspiration, determination and the odd donation from a committed benefactor, like Arthur Cobb. Life in the woodland huts was not easy, the teachers and the children did all the chores of cooking and cleaning, emptying the latrines and helping with the animals.The children had their own council and formulated many of the rules of the community. Emphasis was as much on crafts and manual work as on the mental disciplines. From all accounts, it was an intensely happy and educational time for everyone involved.

The school got too big for the Sandy Balls Estate in the New Forest and moved in 1938 to Whitwell Hall in Reepham, Norfolk, becoming independent of the OWC. Whitwell was the site chosen to hold the fiftieth year Post camps in 1997. With donations, Forest School bought the Hall and operated from there until 1940. The Hall was then requisitioned for military purposes and some staff were called up to fight. The rest of the school decamped to Dartington Hall, to share premises with another progressive school, but it was soon overshadowed and closed down.

The development of Forest School Camps

The plan was to start the school again at the end of the war and several meetings were held to discuss how to do it. In 1947 the desire to do something rather than just talk about it led to the organisation of a reunion camp at Whitwell Hall, organised by Arthur Cobb (who was a leading light in the early years of FSC) and led by John Glaister. This first post-war Forest School camp had about 30 children and was such good fun that another was organised in 1948 and two in 1949. From these early days, the tradition of running summer camps to educate children in the ways of the original Forest School has grown.

Forest School Camps continues to be run wholly by volunteers. There are now over 30 camps every year taking over 1200 children. The organisation grew in the 1950's when a

How to find out more about the origins and history of FSC and associated groups

- Steve and Caroline Bond have a collection of papers about Flysheet Camps, which they lent for this book.
- Derek Edgell wrote a thesis 'The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry 1916–1949 as a New Age Alternative to the Boy Scouts', volumes I &II, 1992.
- [1]Patrick Geddes and Arthur Thompson wrote about the importance of head, heart and hand learning in a child's life. They wrote, Evolution, London, Williams and Norgate, 1911, and The Evolution of Sex, London, Walter Scott, 1889.
- John Hargrave founded Kibbo (also Kibbo) Kift and wrote Lonecraft (1912), Tribal Training (1919), Totem Talks (1918), Confession of the Kibbo Kift (1927), The Great War Brings it Home (1919) and Young Winkle (1925). To find out more: www.enduser.co/kibbokift
- [2]Ernest Thompson Seton wrote prolifically about Woodcraft. You can find out much more about him from the Ernest Thompson Seton Institute (www.etsetoninstitute.org). His most important books were 'Birch Bark Rolls', 'The Book of Woodcraft' and 'Woodland Tales'.
- Cath Shepherd wrote a paper 'Forest School Camps – An Educational Experience', 1972.
- Daniel Simon wrote a paper 'Forest School Camps – an image of childhood over sixty years' in 1987.
- [3]The Woodcraft Way series was a series of pamphlets which discussed the nature and development of the Woodcraft movement in Britain. Some of them include:'The Forest School: The Principles of Education of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry and Other Papers' by Ernest Westlake, no.7, 1925, 1930. 'How to run Woodcraft Chivalry', London (OWC), no. 6, 1922. 'The Grith Fyrd Idea', Godshill (OWC), no. 19, 1933.'Vital Experiences from 7 to 17' by Cuthbert Rutter, Godshill, no. 20, 1936.

large number of people with left-wing ideas joined as staff or sent their children. Many teachers were also recruited, particularly a number of women from Gypsy Hill training college; women such as, Margaret Brown (Attwell), Hazel Powell (Knight), Stella Hedger (Richards) and Susy Powlesland (Michlowitz). In the main, these people were inspired by the ideas but had little experience of Woodcraft, unless, like Bob and Charley Hall, they had camped as children or been part of the Woodcraft Folk. The mixture of the original people, many from the OWC, and this new influx worked well, strengthened the organisation, and yet still left intact the secular, non-political identity of Forest School Camps.

By the late 1960s and 1970s the organisation had doubled in size, gaining credibility in an era when more and more people were looking for an alternative to urban living and were disgruntled with the education the state offered their children. During these years more splinter groups formed. Flysheet (originally the name of an FSC magazine) for example, was established in 1973 by people in FSC who wanted to offer a radical education to children from working class families. Flysheet staff paid to go on the camps the same as the children, and the children had explicit rights on camp. Flysheet camps run successfully to this day and provide an opportunity for many children to experience life in the outdoors and live in a loving and equal community of adults and children.To continue to list the offshoots of FSC here would mean little and certainly not be comprehensive.

Suffice it to say that the organisation has inspired people to set up alternative schools, educational centres and camping groups. Examples of which you will read about in the following chapters. It has led people to educate children in their own home, take consensual decision-making into the workplace and to become teachers. This is not to mention the wisdom, confidence and skills which thousands of young people have learnt and which they will carry with them through life.The basis of Forest School Camps is still the standing camps or lodges where the children learn camping and woodcraft techniques and are imbued with the living traditions of the movement. There are also highly adventurous activities, such as canoe journeys, cycle trips, pot holing, camping in the mountains and camping abroad. The programme extends to Easter and Whitsun holidays as well as numerous weekends when children can taste the experience the camps offer. The first camp for children with learning and physical difficulties was run in 1973 and continues today as an annual 10-day break for the children and their guardians. Associate camps are run for children together with their parents and guardians to camp together following FSC ethics.

The last twenty years in Britain have seen a backward step in educational practice and philosophy at state level. The emphasis on the three 'R's, exams and success or failure, leave many children under-confident. Too many are excluded because the pressures are too great and because their needs for attention, care and love are not met in the modern classroom. Parents are more desperate than ever for their children to attend FSC camps. The children who come want to come back. The organisation and what we have to offer is needed more than ever before. ■

LUCY JAFFÉ, *December 1997*

'A Centenary Tribute to Ernest Westlake, an Educational Pioneer' by Aubrey Westlake, London (OWC), no. 24, 1956.
Woodcraft Folk celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 1985 and produced 'We are of One Blood – Memories of the first 60 years of the Woodcraft Folk,' by Chrys Salt and Mervyn Wilson.

FSC publications

- 'Ritual and Tradition in FSC' produced following a discussion at Camp Chief's Conference in 1989.
- '4'N' Brand wrote the 'Early Days in the Forest School', which was privately printed by Annie and Tom Holloway in 1986.
- Eliza Banks, then known as Penny Nicholson, wrote a diary in 1935, which was published by Marcos Guillen for FSC and is called 'Forest School – A Record of a Tracker Hike, 1935'.
- 'Head, Heart and Hand – the future of FSC' was written in the late 1980's by a small group of people including Sheila Gore, Andy Freedman, Carolyn Thompson, Ed Straw, Ruth Steed, Julian Abel, Ruth Illingworth and Aaron Hatcher.
- The FSC magazine, which, at various times has been called 'FSC magazine', 'Flysheet' and 'ORG4' has been a useful source of information.
- The log books compiled by summer camps in 1997 provided much of the material for this book , as did the reminiscence session held at Haddenham in summer of 1997. These will be placed with the FSC archives at Warwick University. Access to the archives can be obtained with a letter of consent from the FSC General Secretary. Tapes and transcripts of the interviews will be stored with the FSC archives, and at the Planned Environment Therapy Trust Archive and Study Centre, based in Gloucestershire.

the first camp

John Glaister and Angela Coombes were the camp chief and caterer on the first FSC camp in 1947. Here they reminisce with Siward Glaister and Jan Brand , who both attended as children

JOHN GLAISTER: I didn't have anything to do with the [Forest] school until the camps started in '47. But they were talking about sometime restarting, and then they realised that the war had changed a lot of things, and people were beginning to get money together. Forest School staff very often didn't get paid at all. They got keep, and that was it, there wasn't anything left over to pay any wages. But after the war, well, they'd had wages in the Army, had money, and they wouldn't go back to being paid pittances. And in the end they said, well, we'll start running camps, or a camp. We had a meeting. We were going to have a meeting in Elsa Boyd's flat. I remember Glyn [Faithfull] and I had a discussion before the meeting. And I said, 'Well, we used to have camps after the summer term, in the summer, connected vaguely with folk music. And Forest School always had a lodge and a group there, to which brothers and sisters and parents of pupils used to come. 'We could try having one of these.' It wasn't originally really any idea of having it as a permanent thing. It was really a try out to see how it went, and possibly just to survive for a year or two until the school started running. Glyn made the proposal for the camp, and Arthur Cobb acted as secretary, and asked me to be camp tutor. And so that's what went ahead. On the first camp most of the children were the children of the staff.

ANGELA COOMBES : Yes, I catered the first camp. I had two daughters there, John had too.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: The staff and children actually were mostly from Forest School. Cuthbert [Rutter] died about that time, and that was another reason for another delay opening the school. Beefy wasn't [at the first camp]. I think he was not demobbed then – the first move from Whitwell when the war started was to Dartington Hall. Dartington offered them a sort of hospitality, and a share of the place. But the difference between Forest School and Dartington Hall was pretty amazing. Money wise mostly – and then of course we started Shining Cliff Camp School, and Len and Mary came up there.

What did you eat in the first camps?

ANGELA: Good wholesome food. We didn't have salads to start with. It wasn't until the more careful caterers came along. Porridge. Lots of bread and jam. Fruit, lots of fruit. It was just after the war, fruit definitely was scarce, but you could get apples, and you could get plums in season.

JOHN: The exotic food came in with – Agnes Whyte? Well, they looked at it scientifically, didn't they?

ANGELA:The clan system worked straight from the beginning, didn't it? I think if you'd gone out for the day you had your sandwiches – even bread was rationed still, in the early fifties.

GENERAL TALK: And vegetarians were catered for, which was very far thinking for the time, 1950. Yes, they got a bit of cheese – we didn't take much notice – I can remember poor old Arthur [Cobb] , he was a vegetarian. I'm sure he was. And I'm sure they used to put a lump of cheese on his plate. Because he was always late, wasn't he? He never arrived on time – he missed every meal– surprised, a smile on his face, he used to greet everybody.

looking back

I first attended FSC in 1947. Apparently there was an advert in the New Statesman which must have appealed to my parents as I was dispatched at Peterborough Station into a train already containing several children with Rupert Hedger. I have only vague memories of that camp. I do remember all the camps as being great fun and an important part of my life. I experienced a secure and happy period at Summerhill during the war years but was transferred into the conventional school system about 1946.

I remember life becoming very regimented and constrained afterwards and FSC was a welcome release from that. There was much continuity in the early years of the camps – always at Whitwell Hall, Reepham, with many of the same people, children and leaders, there each time and we did many of the same things every year.

I have no memories of ever being bored or fed up but then I can't remember it ever raining all day! I can still feel the camaraderie of the camp fires and hear the songs we used to sing. It is not easy to say what my experiences taught me. Perhaps a tolerance of fellow human beings but I might have learnt that already. I know that my fellow campers widened my horizons by hearing about their lives (remember those days were pre-TV and I lived in suburban Leeds). Certainly I learnt new skills (and not only in the kitchen), gained a healthy respect for knives and axes, independence and confidence in the dark (oh those night games!). All of which have remained with me. As a child I very much took everything for granted. Only later did I fully appreciate the energy, patience and organising skills of the leaders.

MIDGE FAIRHURST (BEANLAND)

Camp fire, BLACKDOWN, 1981

Arthur he must have been quite keen, because he dug a hole once, in the middle of the camp. And right smack in the middle of everyone. It was near the kitchen. And we didn't know what it was for, but apparently it was for an oven. And he dug this hole – he spent most of the camp digging this hole. And then one night he came along and fell in it. He cursed and said, 'Who put this hole here?'. He broke his ankle, didn't he? – I think he did, yes – of course there was a lot of swearing going on. It didn't end up as an oven – no, he never got there. Do you remember the camp where some boys dug up a canister of something or other nasty? That was Rupert [Hedger] digging, that's when he came across this thing and opened it, and you've never seen such awful, awful, awful, awful blisters. Mustard gas. A canister of mustard gas left over from the army occupation.

JOHN: There were two camps in '48. Peter [Hedger] ran one lodge – Watersmeed it was called. That was the lower one. And I [John Glaister] ran the other, Yew Tree up near the house. They'd got too many people for one camp, so they split it into two.

JAN BRAND: I can remember that we did camp down by the water, because we made that wonderful dam. Did a proper job of damming, and of course we upset the entire agricultural community. We felled trees twice that girth, dug trenches across, made a wonderful swimming pool, but we forgot that that water was needed for the farms. And irrigating the land.

JOHN: The trouble was, Siward was in the Woodcraft Chivalry, and I was in the Woodcraft Folk. And we met weekly doing camping activities, and we competed in camping skills.

SIWARD GLAISTER: Night games – bit of a rough and tumble. Take out great cans of cocoa and something to eat as well. We stayed there for the night, didn't we.

JAN: Yes, we used to bivouac until it was dark. The whole lodge

extracts from summer camp log books

You just can't really explain it, can you? It's a golden part of you deep inside, untouchable and precious.
GWEN TRESIDDER /STAFF *Teifiside One 1997*

Last night I watched the moon set. Fan asked us to imagine the personalities of the four winds. The north of course, is dark and empty and therefore full of potential. The east is dawn, beginnings, sparks of energy. The south is fullness, ripeness. The west is ending dissolution. Although I think the winds are different, the north very powerful, fearsome, the east cold, the south balmy and the west wet. FSC seems to remove unnecessary layers of pretension in me, but I fear that the pared down version of myself is unacceptable. No disguises or not such effective disguises. And there is something about elements, elemental. It seems a saner way to be, but risky.
MEG TAYLOR, *Borrowbeck One 1997*

My first rally, there was an old old camp chief with a long white beard. He called my name and I was really shy. He asked me what to do with cutlery on clan. I said, 'Wash it'. 'No!' (I was so embarrassed. I didn't know at all.) And then this girl said, 'Leave it outside your tent.'
ANON, *Irish Mobile 1997*

We built small rafts and made mini fires on them. After we set them alight, we let them float down the river. They took our bad feelings away to make space for happy thoughts. The sight of twenty rafts floating away in the moonlight will always stay in my mind.
ANON, *Irish Mobile 1997*

One of my best memories is of an elf hike. We went to a fairy cave surrounded by ferns, trees and water dripping from the root above. In the back of the cave, there were two kit-kats that the fairies had left for us.
JOSIE GRITTEN, *Harlech Two 1997*

did it. Stalking. And then you'd see the light and you'd get up and run, but of course there would be great holes in the ground, and you'd just run, and you'd just fall straight in. And they'd be waiting for you on the top. They were just sitting there, just waiting for you to fall into it, and jump on your head.

ANGELA: One of the tests was where you had to stalk, and you'd do that first, in the daylight, and you really had to creep, and it was wonderful, because you had to get in unnoticed, and so those skills went into the evening activity. And so people were more inclined to see how close they could get unobserved. But there was an occasion when people realised that the way to do it was just to charge.

JOHN: The first camp was very much based on the Order [of Woodcraft Chivalry], and there was always a rally in the morning, which would have been sort of after breakfast, but before the morning activity started. Then it reached the stage where we needed to do something other than go to Whitwell, so we started the hike. The first one week was from Whitwell, and we did a week walk round the coast with John Blanchflower and Rene Lonsdale.

JAN AND SIWARD: Norfolk was a wonderful place for hiking, everybody was so hospitable, and we could go to any farm and say, 'Put us up,' because our leaders were hopeless. They'd no idea about what to do, and so we would go ahead, and we'd say, 'Look, John, we're going to stay at this farm tonight, and they've kindly said we can do this and do that.' That's right, they came out – one lady brought us out tins of her own canned fruit, and at that time, you know, it was oh, what a treat.

ANGELA: Socks and jerseys were worn. But if you were a newcomer you got up early in the morning because you couldn't sleep, you were cold, you went rushing off in the long grass and got saturated, you came back to your tent, you took everything off, you put on another clean lot, you went off again, equally saturated, and by about nine o'clock in the morning on the first day everything – everything – was wet and stuffed back in the rucksack. So that's really why we had inspections.

JAN: If we were on top of the staff, washing was a very lowlight activity. That was a waste of time, washing, you know. You wanted to get on and dig some holes, wooding and things like that were the highlight.

JOHN: We suddenly discovered that there was a group, a Woodcraft group, in Czechoslovakia still. And got in touch with them, and found that they are very much an Ernest Thompson Seton group. They've got tepees, and they camp in these tepees in the summer, and they have these sweat lodges and very Indian things. Well, you see, the Order changed. This was really quite largely due to our old man [Norman Glaister]. When we joined the Order in 1924, my father took the family and various close friends along to Godshill. It was an organisation such as he'd been looking for – for something that could involve the whole family – and that was not just a sort of physical thing. There was a place in it for adults, if you like, not just for staff. And the Order then started a sort of wayfarers' circle, which was a group of adults who met after the main camp, adults who met and discussed it. And that was when they would discuss education, politics, finance and things, and they did get round to saying to themselves, I suppose, 'Well, you know, it's all very well talking about it, can we do something about it?' And that's how Forest School started. They already had a sort of education theory. Ernest Westlake, who founded the Order, had his own ideas about the bringing up of children, which were developed and added to in this Wayfarers

Robert Curwen,
HAMPSHIRE, 1935

memories of camp

I remember the long evenings by the fire – the children are all in bed. This is my time – the fire is low there is quiet talking – then singing then everyone is quiet at the same time. I slip into a reverie. I am totally at one with the earth – the world – the past is present I feel totally 'centred' in and of the moment – there is only now and yet the whole of human past is here for thousands of years people have done what I am doing – nothing changes

Pathfinders off on hike, CORNWALL, 1995

Circle, and they started Forest School. Then the Forest people, they got together and had a camp one time at which they discussed the political situation, unemployment and so on. And the question arose about educating older people. Could you get the benefit of a woodcraft education at a later age? They decided it would be a good thing, when you'd finished your education to have a break and go back to nature. It would be a bit more concerned with actually doing things in a primitive sort of a way. That's how Grith Pioneers, or Grith Fyrd, as it was called then, started. Arthur Cobb bought Shining Cliff Woods, and Grith Pioneers took it over when the Greenwood Committee lost interest.

ANGELA: We try to run it [Shining Cliff Woods] and do two things. We try to keep all the woodcraft education idea going by letting groups use it for educational purposes, camping and so on. But we are also trying to preserve the woods, which we've recently discovered are a site of special scientific interest. We're not going to last forever, and the people in the organisation [which runs Shining Cliff], are really not people with an educational thing, their concern is for the woods.

JAN: It's very different to get the sort of person that will get things going right from the beginning, have a real child-focussed interest in it.

JAN AND SIWARD: Extraordinary man, Eric [Gander]. He wanted to do it his way. He was given restrictions. He liked to be freer – a wild gander chase with Eric. He likes a mobile with not very many children on it, because you pass through very quickly and quietly, it's quite exciting. You'd go back and do for instance down the Thames to Southend – and going through London at night. We stopped the night on Tower Bridge pier, and all night long a little man kept coming and telling us, 'Don't forget you've got to be off by six o'clock in the morning.' All through the night he kept coming. We didn't sleep anyway, because it was a bit cold and a bit hard.

SIWARD: The last camp I actually went to Beefy was camp chief, and we spent hours talking about things, hours and hours talking. All the members of staff were good sociologists, but they couldn't bloody well camp. And I remember Jen and I having to leave a meeting because the wind was getting up and we had to batten down the tents.

JOHN: One of your special heroes was Jim, he took the Trailseekers off for a walk, and they found a railway tunnel in Derby, and they lived in it for three days, and they came out absolutely black. But they'd found all sorts of treasure. These long black coats, lamps and everything, and they'd lived in this tunnel. They hadn't seen daylight for three days. And Siward had to go and prise them out, they didn't want to come. They wanted to stay for the rest of the camp – they thought it was magnificent.

GENERAL TALK: We used to hire the village hall and invite the locals in. It went down quite well, till we got Vladimir, who played the piano, and all the paint fell off the walls. This huge Pole called Vladimir. People were invited to do their turn, you see, and somebody played Chopsticks on the village piano, and he pushed everybody aside, 'I play ze piano!' And, brrm, this grandiose performance of Rachmaninov, you know. And everybody sat with their mouths open. It was a wonderful, incredible performance. And the whole village hall shook and vibrated. The ivories were leaping off the keys and so on. It was wonderful. ■

extracts from summer camp log books

These are things I like about camp:
Getting letters from home
Going on hike
Cooking on fires
Sleeping in tents
Handing out letters
Serving food on clan
Having group fires
Putting up tents
Doing camp activities like making friendship bracelets and bead necklaces.
When I go home I will miss camp.
HOLLY ROUGHAN (7 1/2 YEARS OLD/ELF) *Teifiside One 1997*

My mother was a member of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry and they made their own costumes with American Indian fringers, and plaits in their hair and everyone had an Indian name. Then they all ran wild round Sussex.
FAN *Borrowbeck One 1997*

Winter kite camp with Dave Monk as a Woodling. The closest I got to flying a kite was holding on to the guy ropes of my own tent...as an Elf, 1977, he couldn't undo the top of the sleeping bag so for three day he slept in his army kit bag. He went home after two weeks not having changed socks for two weeks.
SIMON ABBOTT, AGED 26, *Longtown Two 1997*

My introduction to FSC was a staff training weekend at Stanton Downham, where I was lulled to sleep by nightingales under the pine trees (1973). My first camp was Whitwell with Tony Ivins – camping in the Georgian walled paddock, the old garden and greenhouses; canoeing on the gravel pits, and night hikes to the coast sleeping on the cold sand dunes. I moved into mainstream FSC at Hawick 1977 – those fabulous baths in the town we all found excuses to visit after the miserable weather aloft.
ANNE HARRISON (COSSEY), *Harlech Two 1997*

1950 tracker

Bridget Bos (Harrison) first attended camp as a tracker in 1950. Her parents sent her to FSC to complement her formal education, and for companionship during the summer holidays.

AS A NAIVE 13 YEAR OLD, I HAD NEVER CAMPED BEFORE – MY parents had never encouraged any involvement in the God, King and country basis of the Girl Guides. I did not fancy it either I suspect, since we had enough of uniforms at school without donning yet another for fun.

My parents saw an advert for FSC in the Daily Worker, I believe. I presume that being an only child, born and mostly brought up in London, with both parents working, it seemed a good idea to try an original, progressive-looking set-up in the wilds of Norfolk to broaden my horizons. I can still picture myself, complete with all the recommended clothing and brand new, framed greycloth rucksack, queuing against a huge brick wall alongside Liverpool Street Station amongst chattering young strangers who all seemed to know each other.

Highs and Lows

During first camp being awed and frightened when a staff member tipped scalding water over her feet and promptly jumped into a huge cow pat to cool/protect them.

Receiving O'level results on a wet rest day at Shining Cliff during two week Derbyshire hike. Rain pounding on a two man tent and agreeing with my companion to pretend I couldn't come out because I was so upset at having failed seven subjects and passed only one, which was actually the reverse of the truth.

Somehow, we knew we were each a valuable if individualistic part of our groups: age groups – tracker etc; as well as cross-camp groups – supper duty, wash-up; leisure groups. These groups were in turn dependent upon others to form the whole camp – a microcosm of the outside world. No competition, rather recognition of each and every member's contribution and mutual nurturing of those countless communal actions.The camps were not about education in any formal sense. The adventures (night raiding, simple coach trips out of camp site world; the test and trials; the practical work assignments; woodcraft and camping lore; country dancing; camp fire; the rhythmical conduct of the day) all gradually impress upon the participant the all important need for personal patience, and effort leading to achievement. Not to be top dog over others, as so often in school or work environment, but rather to be top dog for oneself.

Thus you admire and are delighted when others show great skills at map reading or axemanship. ■

Woodling hike, MONTGOMERY 1969

extracts from summer camp log books

We held a minutes silence for FSC 50 years sitting in a field of ragwort which we were passing at the time. The pathfinders organised an amazing night game in the dunes and the central base was in the middle of a huge sand bowl where we built a fire. After cocoa and before going back to the site, we broke up the circle by all walking outwards into the dark and sitting by ourselves all round the edge of the sand bowl. You could hear the sea crashing and there were beautiful shooting stars overhead. Gradually people came back to the fire.
KATY CAWKWELL, *Irish Mobile 1997*

On hike we slept in a tent with 18 of the Woodlings. It was awful because the boys never went to sleep.
ANON, *Borrowbeck Two 1997*

At camp my best thing is swimming. Because you can climb up the waterfall. And it's really deep at the end, and shallow at the beginning.
ANON, *Borrowbeck Two 1997*

Long host summer camps on the Isle of Arran – Beefy ubiquitous and omnipotent – finding a lobster in a rockpool and cooking at it in a six gallon. And it still goes on... thank god
SIMON SHEPHERD, *Harlech Two 1997*

On a lodge walk, me, Chris and one other discovered a wasps' nest. Chris proceeded to poke and smash the nest with a stick. The angry wasps decided to take it out on me and the other boy, while leaving the bringer of their destruction unscathed. The wasps got inside my T-shirt and stung me 9 or 10 times. I had my first introduction to Waspeeze.
DAN GRITTEN, *Harlech Two 1997*

Staff cuppa discussion: one mini mars bar each for the journey; one mini mars bar each for the treasure hunt; one mini mars bar each for doing the boxes.
Borrowbeck One 1997

early days

Eliza Banks (Penny Nicholson) was a pupil at Forest School in 1935 and again in 1937. Here she remembers the unique nature of the school,and also why she continues to camp with FSC

I ADORED THAT SCHOOL. WHENEVER MOTHER CAME TO FETCH ME FOR the holidays I used to go and hide. There was a hundred acres of wood. We knew every inch of the wood as children, because we were, you know, up all the trees. And it was very romantic for us, and never to be forgotten. In the eighties, I went across to California, and I went to see Ted Lewis, who was at school with me – he was a well off man living in a posh house with swimming baths and things, and we spent the whole of my visit there sitting on the gravel outside, drawing maps of this wood, talking about our time together at school. We had not met for thirty, forty, fifty years, or whatever it was. And it was really lovely. He said it had changed his life, he'd never had such a time in his life. Some of us at Forest School didn't enjoy it, but others were absolutely changed out of all recognition.

My mother was at least fifty years in front of her time. She sent my sister to a very conventional school, and she took one look at me and thought that I wasn't into that sort of thing, and sent me to a very unconventional school. It had just started, and I was one of the first six pupils. Forest School was a brand new thing. Only people who were radical thinkers, and in these days you'd be called progressive, or you'd be called way out or drop out or hippie. It was much more outrageous than anything that you see now going on nowadays.

IRISH CYCLE MOBILE, 1988

The rest of society was very much more staid and structured. In those days you'd be outraged to see how we were out of camp. We were swimming, my dear, naked. As children we never noticed until people came to visit the school, they said, 'Oh!'. We hiked through the lanes and roads of villages and things, people stared at us and jeered at us, and children laughed. It was co-ed. That in itself was pretty daring. We slept in the same rooms. It changed a bit later on.

Cuthbert Rutter was the headmaster. And he was so lovely old Cuthbert – Kirk we called him. Very good man. Adoring

memories of camp

One of the things that reminds me of being a Pathfinder – all the tension and excitement that surrounds the late night sitting round the fire when the staff have gone. Everything goes very quite and still and it's not like being in any other group or staff – everyone's wondering who will want to snog them or who will snog who. Usually it seemed to happen then and there round the fire – public

FSC programme, 1970

Trailseekers, MONTGOMERY, 1981

him as a person, being so just and down to earth and sensible and approachable. Like you hope to be as staff on camp.

When I was at camp recently, sitting in these enormous circles – there were 100 at camp, it was the biggest camp I'd ever been on almost – I found myself, on one side was Clare Hedger, and on this side was Jake Holloway – she was the daughter, of course, of Peter I was at school with, and he was the grandson of Beefy – and I thought, 'Oh my God, look at it. It goes on and on'. Beefy was only about eighteen when he was leading us.

Total freedom for me, because I came from a home which was quite rich, and I had a nurse, and I was always being looked after. And I was very puny and miserable, over- protected, if you like, adored little thing. And at nine I was suddenly sent to this school where that wasn't what it was like at all. It was basic, quite a shock for me. The beds were hard. I remember spending my first night there calling for somebody to bring me a glass of water, because nobody was taking any notice of me. I felt so free , I still go back. at the age of 77, to Forest School Camps, where I can wander about if I want, or sit with people if I want, or do things if I want, and then if it's my turn on clan I'm doing things, I'm actually practically peeling spuds or getting billy cans in a decent state, or carrying water.

I'm sure, looking back on my life, that my time at Forest School caused me to be the sort of person I am. I can talk to anybody, at any time, anywhere, about anything. I'm unshockable. Oh, the other thing it did teach me was that if you keep on at something long enough you will get there.

Never mind how many blisters you've got, or whether you're exhausted, you will manage. The great thing about Forest School itself was that it was very poor. There was no money. It's probably a myth that [Cuthbert] started the school with £5 in his pocket. I know it cost my mother £33 for a term, for me to go to school, which not only paid for me, but it paid for somebody else as well. We lived on porridge and herring and potatoes and an enormous quantity – I've never forgotten the great square packs of compressed dates that used to come, – obviously a very cheap way of buying dates. You could cut them with a slice, through. We had a very, very good diet there. We had black treacle on our porridge, and of course everything in those days was fresh, was organic, came from the next farm, or we grew it.

We did actually build with our own hands. We learnt to lay bricks and put up matchboarding. I loved the practicality of it. You've only got to look at a monastery and see men sitting on hard benches and eating bread and water, or whatever they do, to bring the community together. It causes people to – to commune, if you like. And directly things become a bit rich, – you get a better tent than somebody else, or you don't have to actually go all the way up the hill to get the water, then you begin – things begin to slide a bit. And because the camps have become richer and richer, and the people at the camps, the children, come from families which are richer and richer, I suspect that the atmosphere must be different, because the hardships are almost becoming artificial. But in our day it was real.

Anyone under about thirty years old cannot remember what's called the countryside before it became a business – agri-business. The tele-culture has indoctrinated the children, I think, so that they're very good at doing what I call games. I

extracts from summer camp log books

Pathfinder takeover day. 11am. The now temporarily redundant staff group sit round the eating circle with a pot of coffee and fags. Five or six conversations run simultaneously, nails are being painted, Ruth is cutting garlic, Owen Aaronovitch is visiting and chatting to Andy and Nico. Words flow freely, into one another freely, cross and across.Bryson is wearing two hats. People are drifting to other activities now, only two threads running now, hats to dresses, to coffee to lost tobacco. Andy has a groovy shirt, it's 15 years old, a cutting knife, Garry's finished in the lat, Meg and Linda are massaging. It's coming back down to tasks now, decorating boot laces, special friends, beer money, Bryson has no worries, down to five people now, one conversation. Here's something I didn't realise before: that meetings never actually end! By sitting here documenting the meeting all people have left at some point and now they are all coming back, but there has always been at least four present. I assumed that I would be left alone to conclude but instead I now have the thing building up again. Some threads are picking up again: log decoration, beer money. Some are new: First Aid, margarine. Of course, this is not a normal day, the staff are relaxed. This is a staff group working at the peak of perfection, at ease with themselves and each other, exploiting the transient space to associate and create. The dressing up of Andy is starting to come together. Ziggy wants to be henna painted; she's decorating her log. 'I want to do everything and have everything done to me.' What's the word for what's going on here? Is it a watershed, nexus, fulcrum? Whatever the word, this is it, definitely, that part of the camp, at this point, we all know, without having to say it, that the staff group is a happy one, that we have what is required to take the camp through the last four days of camp without anxiety. Merrymoot sketch is being discussed. 50th Anniversary celebrations, the birthday cake has been baked, the pathfinder/staff supper is well on its way to happening. Snatches of song and

was very fascinated at camp at all the many, many games which were used. But there was nobody around that I could see, nor had any interest in what they were actually in that valley for, or the ground under their feet. Our childhood had no telly in it. It only had what we could touch and see and feel and smell. Life for all children these days has become second hand. It's become a vicarious living, so you see the fish on the telly, or you see the sheep.

I did remark to somebody at camp [in 1997],the decibels, the noise that the children are making, it doesn't feel to me like real exuberance, it's something they've learnt off the telly. It's the kind of screaming you get when the Beatles come on. And it's a new sort of noise to me. I may be wrong, but it struck me.

There was one girl I was sitting next to in the eating circle, and I said to her, 'Oh my goodness, you've got a plateful of white food.' She had just mashed potato and bread, nothing on it. I said, 'Do you always eat white food?, don't you like coloured food?' She replied, 'Oh no, I don't like coloured food.' I then asked, 'Do you only have white food at home?' 'Well, sometimes I have fish fingers.' 'Well, they're white inside, aren't they? Don't you have any tomatoes, nothing ?' And she herself looked very white. She was a pale girl – she was a Woodling, I think. But she represented a child who had known nothing else but that kind of what I consider to be real poverty, poverty of spirit, poverty of food. It really upsets me terribly, because we at least had what I call proper food, however poor we were. It was real fish, it was herring with bones in it. That was the cheapest fish you could buy. And it was a real piece of meat. Even if it was mostly bone, you boiled it until everything came out of it. ■

a generation

Hazel Powell (Knight) attended Forest School and returned as a staff member in 1950. She was Chair of FSC 1985 to 1993. She continues to camp with her children and grand children

I CAME TO FOREST SCHOOL WHEN I WAS FIVE, BECAUSE MY OLDER brother was already here. So I was at Forest School for one year in the New Forest, and then we moved here to Whitwell Hall, and I had a year here, and then we all left. My other brother had joined us at that stage, so there were three of us here, and I have some of my brother's school reports at home, the sort of nice things Cuthbert wrote to fee paying parents.

I started camping [with FSC] in the same year as Susy Michlowitz and Stella Hedger – only she wasn't Hedger then – and Margaret Brown. The four of us all came from Gypsy Hill Training College – 1950. My parents belonged to a group called the Kibbo Kift, which was a very similar group to the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, except that it became involved in Douglas Social Credit, and therefore became a political party. ■

Trailseekers, SHINING CLIFF 1976

tune rise and fade effortlessly among the group the way speech and song weave without boundaries so beautifully, it's impossible to describe it adequately.

'Now money, it ain't scarce, baby
Now work, it don't get hard'

Activities happening concurrently: bread being buttered; bread being sliced; friendship bracelet is being woven; Sarah is tying little cones onto a twiggy branch with cotton; a pebble is being carved and polished; a pebble is being painted with nail varnish; the smell of pear drops; a photo has been taken, and another; staff check clues are being written; a lat bucket has settled for a while on its way to the lat; the church bells will ring and the sailors will sing; a pixie has become a lion; the cake is displayed, many oohs and aahs; Fan rests on Nico, they talk inaudibly and intimately. This has been like this for 100 minutes now. I have recorded 0.2% of half of what is happening, have I captured even that much of the essence of this lovely morning?

'Even the cripple forgets his hunch' (the jug of punch)

Everyone laughs.

One of the strangest things is the way this staff flows, it's a flow through time, it has content, of course, but it has quality, a richness that runs through the rises and falls the volume or amplitude, if you like, what is it? I think, and this is not easy for me, but I think it must be love. Pure, unselfconscious, freely given, received, and shared, love. Is that what FSC does for the grownups? Does it provide an environment and a path through two weeks of time, in which they learn, relearn, live, relive, release, reveal, hold and build love for one another? I think it does. The staff group appears to have captured a child-like state of innocence with one another. I guess the songs, the clans, and all the rituals and routines developing as they do like the river through the rock, are the fabric woven to hold this all up.

whitwell hall

Tony Ivins lives on the Whitwell Hall estate where Forest School Camps was based from 1938. Agnes Whyte has camped since the 40's and has catered many times

TONY IVINS: I was born on July 3rd, 1915. my father was a civil servant, actually working for the Headquarters of the G.P.O., which excluded him from taking part in the First World War, because his was a reserved occupation. I suppose that's how I came to be born in 1915. Late teens, I got very interested in lightweight camping and we used to go off on trips together. It was on one of those trips that we found ourselves at Forest School at Godshill. Lovely country, you probably know it well. The River Avon flowing by it and so on. About the time that the war is coming along. I was R.A.F. and spent the next five years abroad. Luckily survived that. After the war was ended, wondering what to do, came up here for a weekend just after Forest School bought the place. So I proposed myself. So that's how I settled into the place.

AGNES WHYTE: Arthur Cobb is the real saving at this stage [1945/6]. He put the money into it.

Why don't Forest School Camps still own Whitwell Hall?

TONY: Forest School Camps (1938) is the name of the company – organised as an educational charity.

Why did they become separate?

AGNES: The Camps people decided to move their equipment to London, because it was easier. The camping people moved away and left Arthur Cobb interested, and Tony resident in the Hall.

TONY: John Comer had a farm, a property he owned at Lenwade. He was interested in what we were doing, and through him we were able to use the camp site, which we went on doing for several years until eventually he died and the place was sold.

AGNES: After the war – Tony kept the place running on pigs.

TONY: I started pig breeding and fattening, which was a very good trade for the ten years after the war.

IRISH CYCLE MOBILE, 1988

Jonathan, Sam, Kenneth and Michael, MEERHAY, 1935

memories of camp

FSC was always something which was mine and I guarded it jealously from my non-FSC friends, such was the gap between my home self and my camp self that I couldn't bear the idea of the two worlds meeting as that would expose my dual life. But camp was where I was truly me – especially as being amongst strangers meant I could re-invent myself every camp, as the person I would rather be, my more ideal self. As an adult my everyday life is constantly informed by camp. and my true self as developed by FSC is the real, everyday, all-year-round me. Where, and who, would I be without it?

AGNES: I joined FSC because my sister was a war widow, and read the Spectator, or some such thing, and saw it advertised, and as a teacher knew that her sons needed males. They were either at the first or second Forest School camp. So my whole family's been involved ever since. I'm on the committee here at Whitwell. We understood woodcraft in those days. They had a great many more tests in those days. Those have all disappeared. I've camped all my life. My mother was a vegetarian, and was born in camps in 1900. It's a family instinct. I can't avoid camping, though I now borrow a bed from Tony. Then the split up came, and I was asked to be on the committee here, and driving a car it was easy to get here. Haddenham came, and you can get to Haddenham by car easily, with Pete [Brooks] and Sophie [Smiley] and their two boys as passengers There was something called Agnes's pudding. You got hold of the boilers for the day, and you put in suet puddings with raisins in them – no extra fruit in them. They were called Agnes's puddings for a long time. They were so lovely because they were in a sort of milk tin – that wartime milk was sold in – so they were no trouble. We were all right camping here at Whitwell, because Tony had got a wonderful garden going, so we were able to have fresh vegetables. Dried fruit salads were invaluable, but then they became so expensive. I don't expect you've met dried prunes and apricots and things, have you? What did we do about cocoa? It had to be boiled, didn't it? We had a tuck shop, yes. I catered at the Welsh border one year, and I catered in the New Forest the year Hazel's twins were born, and we were snowed on. I know we had great trouble clearing the kitchen the next day, because under one pile of snow you'd find the milk bottles, and under another pile of snow you'd find something else.

Woodlings, IRELAND, 1995

TONY: I suppose in a way the main activity I introduced was canoeing, and I made the first lot of canoes, you see. And that was the great activity of the camps – well, it still is, isn't it? We used to go over to the River – on the part of it which ran through the farm of our friend John Comer – and canoed there.
AGNES: Tony was the Treasurer, and Ron Brand ran Council meetings, which didn't take place here. We met here. This is where I met Leslie [Holden], and helped, you know, repair canoes together. It was jolly cold in the Hall in those days. ■

Morning rally, 1995

memories of camp

My best friend and I shared a bivvie that leaked – so Victor Brooks seemed to spend a whole day carefully fixing it with a huge piece of plastic wrapped round a log in the middle so we were left with only half a tent. We spent the whole camp telling everyone that it isn't usually this bad – FSC is actually brill. Greta looked after us like a mum, but Victor used to get us up at 6am to country dance, in our shorts, in the rain! Ten years later he was on camp with me again. And as he reminisced and talked about Galloway, he recalled the two girls in a bivvie. He said 'I don't suppose they ever camped again!'

the woodcraft way

This is an extract from one of the many articles written by Ron Brand or Beefy as he is known within FSC. He was pivotal along with Arthur Cobb, in the development of FSC after the war

THE SMALL GROUP OF ADULTS WHO STARTED THE CAMPS DID SO because they wished to preserve a little of the spirit of Forest School. They also wished to camp with their own children in a way which they thought worthwhile. It was important to them that they followed the so-called 'Woodcraft Way of Life'.

Had you asked them what was special about that they would have had some difficulty in defining exactly what they meant, for it is not easy to explain why you like to lie on your back near a camp fire, or to prepare a meal over a smoky one, or even to face the rain on a mountain top. Nor was it easy for them to define what merit there was in a small community which appeared to allow so much freedom to the individual that some folk thought it was a licence. They felt sure that they enjoyed doing the things they did, in camp under the open sky, and that it gave them and their children a profound sense of peace and contentment. Inevitably, others noticed that they gained poise as well as pleasure from camping and so they joined them, and thus the camps grew in size and number.

Since those early years we have grown and we have changed, but the battle has not rested only on whether we could manage increased numbers but on the need to preserve the pioneering spirit and inspiration of those first days. We are still learning to live the 'Woodcraft Way of Life' and we are striving to understand why we wish to do so, so that we can adapt ourselves to the changing situations of modern times.

We believe that there is something intangible and even instinctive for a child to wish to live the simple life, and we are convinced that our kind of educational experience is an essential prerequisite for citizenship in a world which offers so much boredom.

Is there a child anywhere who given the chance would not willingly set up his tent and light his own fire, and follow the ways of the woods, were he allowed to do so? Perhaps I make it sound too easy, as if any child could do it, given the means....take a tent or shelter, find a site, light a fire, and away we go for an adventurous and purposeful woodcraft experience with Mother Nature doing the rest. I wish it were so simple!

Education, even at camp, is a complex process which involves individuals living in society, which means community, and we all know what kind of society we live in these days and how difficult it is to inspire a feeling of community in a world gone mad in the search for technological efficiency. (excerpt from FSC magazine No.2 1960's) ■

Making a bower, 1996

extracts from summer camp log books

I played in the haybox at Radnor when I was two. It was my car. But when I came back five years later, it was only a small chest.
NICK, *Irish Mobile 1997*

Wow! What can I say? It's strange to think that it's only been going on for 50 years as it seems to be always there. For me, FSC has taken me from six to sixteen, and hopefully even further. It really is the be all and end all of my holidays. Camp is love and life. I always grow up in the two weeks and love it.
DAVID FULLER (PATHFINDER, SECOND YEAR), *Harlech Two 1997*

My first camp was as a Woodling on a Beefy camp in 1963. I remember homesickness, Ken Stapley (who never stopped talking) the elephant skit at Merrymoot and a lot of Brandon-Jones'; Halls (Charley, Bill and Jim) and Tests and Trials...

Memorable memories of camps over the years include: continuous rain at Bearwood in 1968 with Victor Brooks in swimming trunks, and incredible solidarity for Jan Tauber (Czech staff) when Prague was invaded that August; the whole lodge holding hands walking through a wood at Montgomery to try and see the badger (wonder if the badger had any idea we were coming?) at night; and rally in a tree at Brecon on a kite-flying camp at Easter (1976?). Friendships, jolly japes, mellow moments and with these a life-long belief in the FSC educational ethos; these will mingle meaningfully with many other momentous memories in my mind forever.
LUCY SHEPHERD, *Harlech Two 1997*

This was my first ever FSC camp, I really enjoyed it, especially our Trailseeker Hike! Where we ran into some emus and ostriches! I'll definitely go to another FSC camp!
SALLY MACGARRY, *Borrowbeck Two 1997*

a sense of community

Charley Hall camped from 1948 to 1970 every year, running many camps as camp chief. He started camping when a young boy, together with his brother Bob

I WAS A NON-CHIEF CAMP CHIEF. I BELIEVED IN DISPERSING responsibilities. And even Pathfinders, to me, were potential staff, and I treated them as semi-staff.

In my day the sons and daughters of leading communists, but mainly academics – through Arthur Cobb, Cambridge, many Cambridge communist lecturers sent their children to Forest School Camps. I recommended Forest School to them. Sam Aaronovitch, his youngsters came. Well, they're now B.B.C. and all that, you know.

Ron Brand introduced me to Forest School. He was at a training college in Wandsworth, which I attended, and he attended. I was a committed Communist. Ron Brand came up to me one day and said, 'Why haven't you asked me to join your group?' I said, 'I didn't know you were a communist.' He said, 'Uh,' Well, anyway, he eventually was in a communist group. The first camp was '48, and there was Ron, and there was Anne [Brand] and Jan [Brand] and Siward [Glaister], and all these were Woodlings.

I was born also in a village, but it was a mining village, and on Sunday everybody traipsed along the main street with their silver knobbed canes and their bowler hats. These were miners and foundry workers. In our neighbourhood, you were either a boy scout or a girl guide, or Church of England, or Catholic Church, or Methodist. And we were a very unorthodox family. Bob [Hall] was too young for me to drag him to camps. He was five when I was fourteen or fifteen. And we were a family of six brothers. I used to take them on expeditions into the Pennines from County Durham at the time. My father bought an ex-service bivouac. I was born in 1914, so I would camp in the field next to our house at six or seven. I'd have my breakfast brought to me by my father. But gradually, as I got older, I would go on expeditions – just the neighbourhood children, like Huckleberry Finn, you know? If they weren't washing in the horse trough near us, I'd send them home for more supplies so my mother would shove them in the bath, you see. But I learnt to cook then. But in my family, a communist father could cook, clean, bath babies, change nappies, he was an enlightened follower of Edward Carpenter.

In general I was wanting this sense of community, this strength of unity and purpose, which was first learnt in the peer group, and then learnt in the clan, and then learnt in the evening activities. I think that is the strength of Forest School. I think that is the strength of the community. Well, if you close a pit, close a shipyard, where's the community? Where is the community? And Thatcherism has had a lot to answer for in this concept of individuals.

I taught at the first comprehensive in Newcastle, and I introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Well, what's the Duke of Edinburgh's Award but FSC? We got small tents and rucksacks and I divided them up into groups for cooking. I applied (FSC's) principles as far as I could. It's like where Ken Hoy used to run the Field Study Centre there, in Epping Forest. Waltham Forest, which is one of the most deprived of Inner London Boroughs, sends all of its primary school children, has

BAYFORD, 1978

memories of camp

Rally? If you could take rally out of a camp – you would lose that feeling of the camp being a family. It would be just a camp

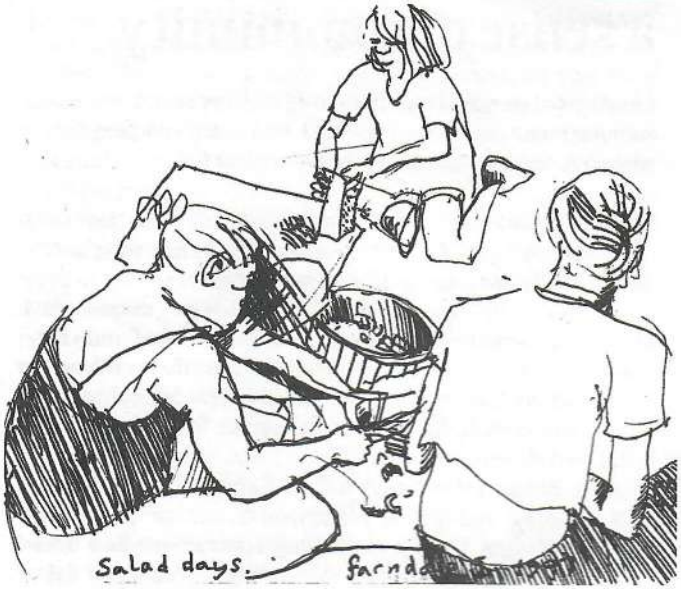
Making music, BLACKDOWN, 1981

the chance to go to a summer camp, under, you know, canvas. Albeit not FSC necessarily, but nonetheless that experience.

Angela [Coombes] was my companion in those days. In the Lake District there was plenty of burns and other places, but in Scotland you had to find a burn or a tarn, and Angela and I would strip off and get in. The kids would look at us. They were all teenagers, of course. And then the next night they were all undressed and in before us.

Bill Wickstead came up to me. He said, 'I was at your horrible ski camp in Scotland.' I said, 'Horrible?' The burn was so bloody cold, we washed in the snow. This was in the winter in Scotland. We washed in the snow, and we had an Australian woman. She was a ski expert. Jenny Abbott Smith. Big, strapping lass. She was our ski instructor, and we had a bloody good time for a fortnight. But it was tough.

Beefy and I took the first group of people to go Hungary after the Hungarian revolution. As I remember it, there was 45 kids. When we were going through West Germany we counted up all the passports, and there was 45 kids, 44 passports. What to do? The East German border coming up. Dogs, machine guns, the lot, right. So quick crisis meeting, 'What are we going to do? Spread the kids out all over the train. So all the kids went in every direction, on came the East German border police. We went to East Berlin and changed at Budapest. So on got the German police being very efficient, 'Passports'. So, big pile of passports. 'No, no, no. Your passports.' Beefy gets his passport. 'Your passport. Where are the people for these passports?' 'They're all over the train.' 'No, no, no, no, no, we want to see one passport, one person, 'right?' So we went on with this, but eventually gave up, you know. So we'd get six kids together, you know, 'This is him, right, look, that's him.' And then they'd split, and there was just chaos, so they gave up. We had one extra person. We got to Berlin, changed for the train to Budapest, got to the Hungarian border, same thing. Anyway, we were very pleased about that, we'd managed to take an extra child all the way to Hungary for three weeks camping at Lake Balaton, which is very nice, and get them all the way back. So much for the Iron Curtain. FSC destroyed it on that one! ■

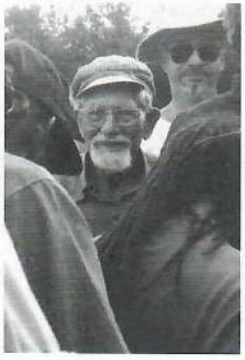


Logbook drawing, 1997

memories of camp

I remember seeing him off on his first camp with a group of strangers. I often think about the trust that parents have in us in relation to their children. How much FSC has meant to them in their lives. Any photo makes you think of all sorts of moments on camp and you can look at photos of children and almost share what they are doing without knowing who they are. How children grow up in FSC and go on to run camps

John Glaister, 50 YEAR POSTCAMPS 1997



memories of camp

When I started in FSC I remember meeting Ali [Compton] once, and then bumping into her sometime later. She remembered my name. Her care and interest in new people stays with me. Something to copy

memories of camp

How children always love playing in the water/river at camp. The freedom to play and the enjoyment of water fights, being able to get wet and dirty

horton kirby

Bob Hall has camped since a child. He first joined the Woodcraft Folk and then FSC. He was instrumental in maintaining Horton Kirby where FSC stored equipment 1965 -1979

I WAS BORN ON 29TH AUGUST, 1923, IN BURTLEY, IN COUNTY DURHAM. My father was a sheet metal worker. My mother was a pitman's daughter. Her father dug coal out of the bowels of the earth, I think he was probably born about 1860, and at the age of 12, i.e. 1872, he'd go down a coal mine and he worked down that coal mine till he was 70. Those were days when my grandparents would probably live in one and two rooms, and most of their possessions you could get on a handcart.

I can remember camping on Marsland Rocks on the beach at the age of five, hanging a stocking up in my tent, and my oldest brother, Charley, who's camp chief in FSC, put a penny in it. And I woke the next morning to that glorious penny. I went into an apprenticeship in Vickers at the age of fourteen. They were racing to re-arm because there was war on the horizon. I spent seven years in there learning the trade of an engineer.

I joined an organisation called the Woodcraft Folk. We were all the kids of parents who came out of the Co-operative movement. We used Indian names. I was Buffalo. I burnt my capitalist English name – and I spent something like five years of my life before the 1939 war going around with the open palm saying, 'Peace.' or 'How!'

So I would get on my bike, and I would camp nearly every weekend from probably Easter through to the end of September. It was the area of freedom. And I don't believe the crap that some people put out, which is that you walk up to the top of the mountain to be nearer your God. I think the joy and pleasure of getting up there is that the factory drops away, the workshop drops away, the office drops away, right? The Sainsbury's and the bingo hall and the pub and that, and what we call and term the motor car, and the fax machine, as they have now – all those drop away. But you are aware then of your insignificance, really, in this large world of ours. So basically that was a very important part of my education, which had nothing to do with the middle class academics, or the educators.

When you were in the Woodcraft Folk, you had full rights to speak and to vote at the age of 16. 16 year olds in FSC are in an area of education in schools in which they are kept in some respects as children, whereas we were forced out to work at 14, so we were forced into the world of men. We didn't work as hard as them, we weren't as clever, but if we didn't listen to them we didn't learn. Our education came from the people round us.

I got into FSC through my brother, Charley, who's nine years older than me. Ron Brand and Charley Hall, all came out of the forces – just as Rupert [Hedger] came out and they went into teacher training colleges. And they got into education. In 1960, I said, 'Hey, I think I'll come to one of your camps. How's that?' I went on camp with Beefy who was camp chief. There was certain confusion, because I'd lit fires, and I'd never thought about how I lit them. And I'd cooked off fires, because I did that alongside the river as an urchin before ever I got into the Woodcraft Folk, you know. We would go down and light a fire and get an egg from Mum and fry it and a slice of bread, and think we were living well. But I had to say to Beefy, 'What do I say?' 'What do I do?' And then I'd have to go back and do

Serving lunch, CORNWALL, 1994

memories of camp

There are those days at camp which are wet – in reality we'd probably much rather not be there but somehow we just carry on and keep going and surprisingly quite often manage to be quite cheerful about it. Well I guess that's yet another thing that FSC is about!

Unpacking after camps, HORTON KIRBY, 1970

it. And I suppose at the end of it. I found the kids fascinating.

I think most parents make an absolute cock up of bringing up their children, but with luck, their children will be reasonable adults despite them. But I wouldn't presume to be able to do any better. There's loads of things that I've learnt from kids. And I've never been afraid of them, and I've never been afraid to tell them I'm wrong when I'm wrong, and I think that's important. If you don't like people, don't get into FSC, because that's the main ingredient. You can teach them the woodcraft, but you can't teach them to love people, and you can't teach them to love kids.

As far as I'm concerned, the FSC is not the FSC that I joined. There is a lot of difference, because I don't think any organisation can entirely keep out the influences of society. It tends to reflect a lot of the good or the bad that's in society. And I always used to work on the theory, even when I was in FSC, that you had three roads you can take in life, which is you can either be a revolutionary, trying to change society, or you can be a reformer that applies poultices to it and makes things easier and more helpful and more reasonable, but maintain the structure of poor and rich, or you can carve a niche out of society for yourself. I think in the last ten to twenty years, there has come into FSC an element of dropping out. Dropping out, not from the basis of a cause, but dropping out because one just doesn't want to be bothered to do.

As FSC expanded, we needed to buy equipment, and mainly all the equipment was housed at Whitwell, and Tony [Ivins] had control of the finances and control of equipment. We realised that we could not get control of Whitwell, so we needed a place to store equipment.I had a friend who had an old coach house in a place called Horton Kirby, which is near Dartford in Kent. And we got that. I ran [Horton Kirby] for ten years, basically, with absolute control. I developed it into bays.

The biggest thing that struck me when you went on a camp, if you went on prep, you got twenty packages tied up in hessian or tea chests or old boxes or metal chests, and all you wanted was probably a bog roll and a trowel, because you wanted to dig a bit of cat hygiene, or you wanted a frying pan, or you wanted a ten pint in order to make tea, or cook a breakfast or something, and you could start on the first package, and it might take ten packages before you got to it. So the boxes and the method was evolved by me in my head, and my greatest assistant in that was Marcos [Guillen]. The old axe boxes, they were commercial boxes that came out of Vickers. ■

Elves and Pixies, BORROWBECK, 1997

Dining circle, BLACKDOWN 1988

memories of camp

That special feeling of being very alive and very much yourself and very much in tune with the environment

Morning rally, MONTGOMERY, 1981

camp experience

Marcos Guillen has been camping with FSC since early childhood. He describes the running of the early camps and also talks about mobile camps

MY MOTHER [MARGERY GUILLEN] TAUGHT AT FOREST SCHOOL because she was in the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry (OWC). She taught at Forest School for a year and a half. My father was a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, and was of those Spanish people who were welcomed at Whiteway Colony in Stroud, which was called a Trotskyist colony, but whether it actually was it certainly was left wing. I was born in '41. My sister was born in '40, and she was evacuated.

My mother was the first woman to run a standing camp. It's not quite true to say that. Angela Coombes had sort of been Camp Chief for Eric Gander at earlier camps. Right until the end of the fifties when we started expanding, the Camp Chiefs were all the same. There was a very small group of them, Beefy [Ron Brand], Rupert [Hedger], John [Glaister], Glyn [Faithfull], possibly Roy Twilley. They did it year after year after year.

Camping at Whitwell – and we had two camps running on the same site at the top of the field and at the bottom of the field. Quite good fun, really. '51 was the first year we ran a camp elsewhere, which was at Tylehurst in Sussex. We were driven out by pigs. It was a lovely site. I used to enjoy it. There was a school across the road that had a large lake, and they let us come and swim in it. Then we had a site in Royston which was three miles from Whitwell. That would have been sort of up to the mid fifties, and by that time we were running our own camps, and odd hikes and river trips, John Glaister was keen on running river journeys. There was a rowing trip down the Thames.

Woodling Group hike, IRELAND, 1995

In the late fifties, I went on a canoe trip with Eric [Gander] on the Wye. We were intending to do the whole length of the Wye, it was before the days of modern waterproofs. One boy, I remember, had polythene bags, but they were the latest thing. We looked at them with amazement. We just had kitbags, and if they got wet, everything got wet.

The year after that Eric ran the first foreign camp in

memories of camp

Not knowing how to use the handles and set of nesting billies – getting it wrong, and spilling that precious hot tea water. Mortification and embarrassment. Give up and go wooding – not wanting to pick up the damp bits of wood because of the slugs and the fungus and woodlice. But when I did return with an armful of wood –I was so proud

Shelter tent, IRELAND, 1995

memories of camp

It's near the end of camp. The people look weary. Kagoules still on, though the rain's stopped. The fire is smoking a wet wood smoke. A flag's flying. It's a bit like a muddy battlefield. In the foreground a child rushes along, carrying the tape recorder. He's hurrying to a waiting group who in spite of the wet, weary days still have the energy and spirit to start dancing

Cleaning caving lamps, WALES, 1970'S

Switzerland, 1958. He did all sorts of naughty things like sending off the whole camp hitch-hiking into Italy for two days. Annie Holloway was on that camp, I remember. It was more of a hike and hitch-hike, and catch a train, and catch a bus, and all sorts of things. We went all the way from Basle to Italy, across the mountains.

I ran a camp myself in '72, when I ran a camp Switzerland. I ran a number of foreign hikes for the next fifteen years. I went to Iceland. Eric Gander had been to Iceland in '62, when he cycled across Iceland. Murder on bicycles. There's all little lumps of lava. Absolutely incredible.

I wouldn't say we starved in Iceland, but once we'd left Reykjavik, the food that we carried with us was all the food we had. We had ran out of certain things, which you might consider basic, and ended up with excesses of other things. I mean one camp we had an excess of oats, porridge oats. So we invented ways of making oatcakes in all sorts of different ways. I remember we also had an excess of powdered milk at one camp. People were eating powdered milk by the spoonful. You lived on porridge. It's a wonderful place, walking in Iceland, because the maps are completely inaccurate. They tend just to do maps that look pretty. And you'd come across a valley, and it just wasn't marked on the map. And the compasses didn't work very well, because it's volcanic, so magnetic rocks. The second camp was a bit better, because we'd got some photogramatic maps that had been made by the Americans during the war.

Oddly enough, one of the earliest memories that I can clearly remember was the night game. From Whitwell it was a two day activity, virtually, because you used to walk in the afternoon to a place called Bandeswell Heath, about three miles from Whitwell, and then you'd arrive there in late afternoon. Everybody would be carrying a groundsheet and a sleeping bag, and go to sleep on the ground. I can remember this high wall along the road, and then this heathland behind it. And we'd all go to sleep and be woken up at ten o'clock at night and play this wonderful night game. I can remember once halfway through the night game there was all this shouting, and I didn't know what it was all about, and then all sorts of whistles blowing, and we all stopped. Apparently the local people in the village had heard all this noise and had come out, and they were paranoid about the time, because it

memories of camp

Leslie Holden was Camp chief, and I remember a strong feeling of his calm, serenity and sense of holding things together – and I have always wanted to emulate the qualities that Leslie represents. I have much to learn, and a long way to go! But I do have a goal. The first year that I staffed I found difficult, and I still find aspects of staffing difficult, and find that I am constantly striving to improve – but the first year I staffed I was aware of being surrounded by wisdom and experience, and it was a good start for my future staffing years

memories of camp

Rivers can be central or peripheral or non-existence at a site. At Montgomery the river seemed to influence the mood and rhythm of the camp that straddled it. When it was slow lazy and warm, I remember relaxed staff cuppas sitting in it in 1976

memories of camp

Wet mornings and early starts – hearing an arise song in tandem with rain beating on the outside of my tent. Cooking self cook lunch: burnt onions, uncooked pasta bits of charcoal floating in the angel delight

wasn't that long after the war, and they thought the Russians were invading.

We didn't really have very good waterproofs in those days. Certainly in the latter days, the common waterproof was cycling capes. And before that you just had ordinary sort of gabardine macintoshes that you used at home. There's a very distinct time, I think from the mid-fifties, when camping clothing began to come in. The first anoraks. But before that they were just wearing jackets like school jackets, just as you would have worn at home. I can certainly remember having an anorak in 1957, and that was the first bit of camping clothing I had. And in '58 a pair of walking boots. Ordinary leather shoes. And I think before you went to camp you probably put nails in them, just to give you more grip. Made an awful noise on station platforms.

The tents were mostly just ridge tents. Just pin pole ridge tents, without a fly sheet, made of cotton, quite light. Separate ground sheet, and quite a few people had ones with painting on them, so they were quite colourful. There were a few single pole tents. It wasn't until the sixties that people tended to have tents with fly sheets. Tapered tents came in in the early sixties. For a long time most people used blankets not sleeping bags, but then there were a lot of Government surplus flying suits which were made into sleeping bags. By the end of the fifties you could buy good sleeping bags reasonably priced. There was equipment before that, but it was so expensive that virtually nobody had it. A few children turned up at camp with suitcases.

In the early days the camps were slightly more structured, in the daily programme. There used to be tent inspection. You'd go back in the groups, and the group chief, the group staff would go round and inspect every tent, and look in to make sure. To a certain extent it was a practical thing, because equipment wasn't so good, but if it wasn't sorted out and pulled out on your groundsheet – because it was not sewn in, in those days – there was much more chance of your stuff getting wet and mucky. Whereas nowadays, with modern tents and flysheets and groundsheets, unless there's been a real storm and everything is wet, you know they're going to be dry.

There were all these periods of quite good distinct woodcraft sessions. There would be Woodcraft 1, Woodcraft 2, Woodcraft 3, and so forth, at various times during the camp. You would have had at least two woodcraft sessions. And a group cooking day before you went on hike. Every camp was structured the same, as I can remember. A general activity which was dropped was that there used to be, certainly from Whitwell and from one or two other places, a whole day coach trip from the camp. In those days we went to a place called Wells next to the Sea on the north Norfolk coast. The staff stayed up the night before making sandwiches. And everybody would go and play in the sand or swim or whatever, and eat sandwiches on the beach. And then we'd get in the coach and go back again.

The other thing I can remember is that you normally expected your parents to send food parcels – sweets and cakes and biscuits. I must admit the other year Ruth [Steed] was saying that somebody had been sent a food parcel, and Ruth had insisted that the person share it round the whole camp or something. I thought, oh dear, that wasn't the idea at all. You may have given it to your best friend or something, but you didn't pass it round.

John Glaister, Jan Brand, Angela Coombes and Siward Glaister reminiscing, 1997

memories of camp

Circles, and fires, and people listening and communicating is a really important and integral part of FSC but what epitomises it?

On clan, LONGTOWN, 1982

I seem to remember that we managed to sort of go on twenty four hours a day, pretty well. I don't seem to remember going to bed as a young staff. There certainly wasn't the insistence on bringing back drinks to the camp. Partially I suppose it was – there weren't cars – so many cars around. For many years you didn't have drink – not because you didn't want it, or someone banned it, you only drank when you came off from hike.

Arthur Cobb deliberately went out to get children that were less advantaged, but there's always been this great core of middle class children. And there's always been people, such as Alan Emmerson [a leading figure in setting up Flysheet Camps] and Eric [Gander], who have wanted to provide for other people. I mean we have made efforts to try and recruit, never with any great success. And I think part of the problem is not always so much that the people we want to attract can't afford the fees. Even if we were to help them, they don't see it as something that they want to do or to send their children to.

I remember a canoe camp a good many years ago, and there were three children from a Barnardo's home in Ireland which we'd deliberately recruited, and I was talking to them, and they said, 'Well, it's OK, but we want to get back home' because they all had their own rooms, they all had their own television sets in their rooms, they had as much food as they could want. They'd lived with their parents in a house without any heating, and it hadn't got anything, and then they had gone to this Barnardo's home for whatever reason, and everything had been lovely. They didn't want to go anywhere else. I think people like Alan Emmerson found that to a certain extent he had to provide much more creature comforts on some of his activities than we would. ■

extracts from summer camp log books

Elf conversation:
Saskia: 'Let's run down the hill.'
Oliver: 'Yes, naked!'
'Go Oliver!'
Farndale One 1997

My first camp memory was as a Woodling in 1955 at Wales when Beefy was the Camp Chief. He broke his leg. It was a very wet camp. My mother had bought very cheap tents which leaked and I remember being almost continually soaked the whole camp.
ROD GRITTEN, *Harlech Two 1997*

Long Mynd, Easter 1970. The morning of April 1st we are woken not by the arise song but by Woodlings shouting 'Beefy says all the Pathfinders have got to get up. There's four inches of snow'. In the kitchen four inches of snow makes normal things difficult. Finding the fire is OK but getting wood is hard and locating the wet pit takes a while. Hot gloves, ladles, fish slices are impossible to find. The adults wore overcoats with string belts and the scene was like a Woodcraft version of Dr. Zhivago.
Borrowbeck One 1997

I'm sitting in a semi-conscious circle of people under a dark sky, staring into a large, warm fire. No sound but a few quiet voices, a guitar gently playing and the loud crackling of the fire as the wood turns from the dead flesh of a tree to red hot but black charcoal and then to grey lifeless dust. I feel sorry for people that haven't had the chance to experience all this. For me it's part of life, even though it's only for two or three weeks of the year. A seriously invaluable learning experience.
BECKA GOULD, *written at 2.40am at the staff-pathfinder fire*
Radnor Two 1995

catering capers

Janet Rothery (Forsey) started camping in 1959. Here she recalls the many challenges of catering and surviving a flood on camp

IT IS INDEED SOME YEARS AGO SINCE I CATERED FOR A STANDING Camp but even so the memory is fresh in my mind. There is the agony of trying to remember from year to year just how much of this and that will be needed. Caterers handbooks are an essential for this, but you have your own recipes too that you want to use. You might need to go to a wholesale place to get huge tins of baked beans or huge quantities of sugar, in which case you need a letter of introduction. You have to remember odd things like hay for hay boxes and steri-tablets for the drinking dustbin! You have to remember that you need a lot of cheese for a hundred people if you are doing a cheese dish or a lot of sausages if you are doing bangers and mash. You have to be ready for any emergency too.

One time at Harlech someone got hold of a cardboard box and slid down the hillside on it. Everyone wanted to do it. Staff and Pathfinders, Elves and Woodlings. I thought what fun it all was until it dawned on me that the boxes were coming from my sacred Caterer's tent.

Another time it poured down cats and dogs just when we were doing fried fish in batter. I can picture to this day several bedraggled folk digging a two foot trench round the fire place and other valiant campers holding tin trays over the hearth to enables us to fry the fish with spitting fat all over the place.

The luckiest episode happened at a camp near Fordingbridge in the New Forest one year. Beefy was my Camp Chief and I trusted his advice that the clear green grassy area in the midst of heathery gorse clumps was the right place for the kitchen circle. Was he testing me I have often wondered since? Getting organised was a bit of a rush, as it always is, and I had no time to pitch my own tent properly. I sort of hitched it up on top of some gorse and shoved vital things inside for the time being. The large birthday cake, uniced, at this stage, was balanced at the back of my tent on the gorse. Various things happened, as the evening wore on, and at last, at about midnight, I crawled into my sleeping bag absolutely shaking with exhaustion. I decided to re-pitch the tent in a better position next morning, set the alarm for six, an fell into a fitful sleep. After about an hour there was a tremendous tropical storm. When it subsided, I struggled out of the tent to join in the general mêlée and discovered that the whole kitchen circle had become a pond. The mugs and things were floating about, and, heavens, what was happening in the Caterer's Store tent. I rushed in, and, helped by others, rescued things and put them in an emergency tent for the rest of the night. In the morning there was a lot of soggy sugar and so on, though most things had been rescued in time and carried to higher ground. The good thing was that, because of my inefficiency, the large and rather expensive Camp Birthday cake was unscathed, precariously perched, on its gorse bush. ■

On clan, HARLECH, 1997

Rupert Hedger, TEIFISIDE, 1972

memories of camp

I remember some very wet moments – some miserable but many exhilarating. Radnor 1978 as a Tracker left on clan with 2 pathfinders during staff cuppa when suddenly after 12 days of rain a torrent of water came shooting down the field ready to drown the kitchen fire. Galloway 1979 a number of afternoons in the pouring rain in the shelter tent and a wet first day of hike ending by a Scottish loch with no firewood, one primus and a tin of beef stew provided by Victor (as caterer)

Watching country dancing, WHITWELL HALL, 1959

teacher training

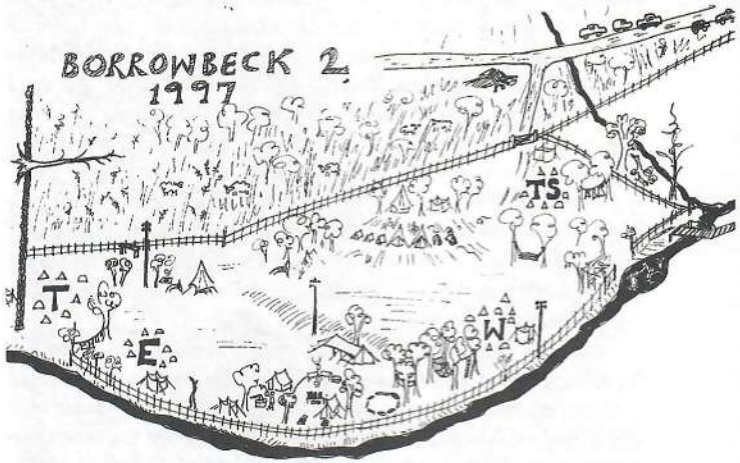
At Post camps '97 Margaret Brown and Susy Powlesland, who both trained as teachers in 1950's, discuss camp together with Angela Coombes and Megan Gritten

MARGARET BROWN: I saw an advertisement on the board which had been sent to the college by Ron Brand, saying that these camps were being held in Norfolk, and they needed young staff members. They were going to run a staff training course. Christmas holiday of 1949–50, and it was held in Ashdown Forest.

SUSY POWLESLAND: There were four of us Margaret, Stella Richards (Hedger] and Gwenda Hobart and myself who went from Gypsy Hill Training College, which specialised in free school education.

MARGARET: When we got there, we were surprised by the sort of people we met. They were very unusual. Some of them were walking about with no shoes on, and in shorts – and this was late December, early January. And some of the people were Peter and Rupert Hedger, Tony Ivins, Ron Brand, John Glaister, Marjorie Guillen. As far as I was concerned, I was absolutely bowled over by the whole thing. And you've got to remember the date. We had spent our childhood and early adolescence during the war, so that we didn't have a teenage in the sense that people nowadays think of teenage. I had a very plain and humdrum, conventional upbringing, and there weren't things like raves and clubs to go to or anything, it was just school, and we went to the pictures occasionally. We went for walks, and cycle rides. It was like another world. Not just their bare feet– their whole approach to life – there was such a strong feeling of community and togetherness. I remember nights when we couldn't bear to part from each other to go to our respective beds and rooms. My memory is of Whitwell Hall. Big roaring fire in the hearth, and old beaten up sofas and old rugs, not all tidy and civilised like it is now. And we were all sitting around with blankets over our knees talking and talking about life, the universe and everything, all night. And then getting up at dawn and watching the sun rise. And those people were bigger than life to my eyes. John Glaister and Tony [Ivins] Beefy and both the Hedger young men.

I think it's important to say that the people who came – believed in children learning by doing, and in teachers who



Camp drawing, BORROBECK, 1997

Margaret Brown,
POST CAMPS, 1997

memories of camp

During my late teens (late 70's – early 80's) – as a pathfinder and young, new staff member, I camped each Easter with Phil Cutler, Tim Newth and Simon Fardoe etc. – they were hilarious and my memories of those camps are of non-stop laughter

memories of camp

The smells of camp and the contrast of the quiet of between meals for the clan when the rest of the camp is out of sight

Escort party, FORDINGBRIDGE STATION, 1935

were interactive with children. There weren't other organisations of this sort around at all. Forest School Camps was quite unique.

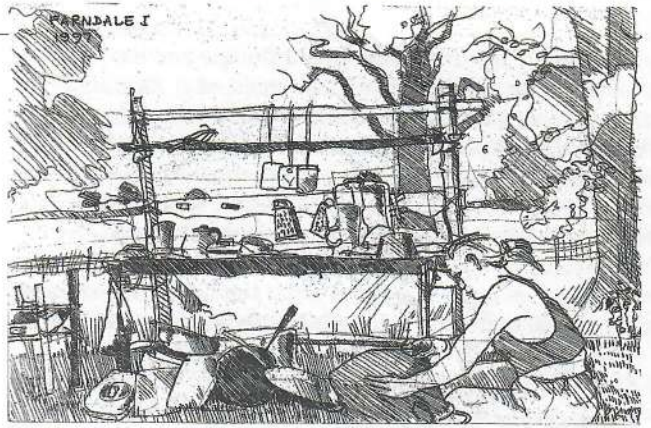
SUSY: The food was very limited, because it was just after the war, and it was still rationed. And one of the crimes that used to take place constantly on camp, especially between the Woodlings and the Elves, was to steal sweeting. It was known as steal sweeting, because people brought their rations of sweets, and any sensible Woodling or Elf leader collected them in, and kept them and doled them out day by day, because if they were in the tents, people were tempted to pinch each other's sweets.

MEGAN GRITTEN: There was a story about my dad when he was eight, and there was, you know, about five Woodling boys all sitting in the tent with big sticks. The staff was saying, you know, 'What are you doing?' And they said, 'Oh, we're waiting in case of a raid.'

MARGARET: Arthur Cobb ran everything. He did all the administration at that time. And it was only a few years later that he began relinquishing parts of it. And it was then I became first staff secretary, because he allowed that bit to go, and he still recruited all the children, and did all the organising and all the finances and everything. But bit by bit jobs were taken from him. A year or two later I was a storeman, and I remember going with John Glaister to spend something like £200 on tools in London. Mostly ex-Army stuff. It was just after the war, there was lots of ex-Army stuff. Dixies and all sorts of things.

SUSY: And some of them I bet are still around.

MARGARET: I bet they are, because it was really sturdy stuff. Families were not so well off in those days, either. And quite a lot of people couldn't afford to buy a tent, and FSC kept a stock of khaki ex-Army tents. Very heavy, but very sturdy, and absolutely rainproof of course.



Kitchen drawing, FARNDALE, 1997

ANGELA COOMBES: It was just after the war, bread was rationed. And butter was rationed. Sugar was rationed. Always porridge. We managed to get bacon, I don't know how. So you had to take the children's ration books to get the ration.

SUSY: Most of them were pretty well off, those children. They were nearly all middle class, and that continued for a long time until somebody suggested that we should have an aid fund so that we could bring in children who couldn't afford to come.

MARGARET: So that's how Aid Fund started. By that time [the fifties] I was working for the [Leicester] Family Service Unit, so some of the children from the families that I worked with

memories of camp

My children persuaded me to start camping in 1975 when I went to Arran. I remember a very early camp. I was still feeling a very new girl. There were two boys, about ten or eleven years old, who were at the end of their tether. There was no way of settling the argument. Tears were pouring down their faces. Suddenly two members of staff appeared and enfolded them in their arms. There was no saying 'you naughty boys'. They were so supportive. I thought that was wonderful

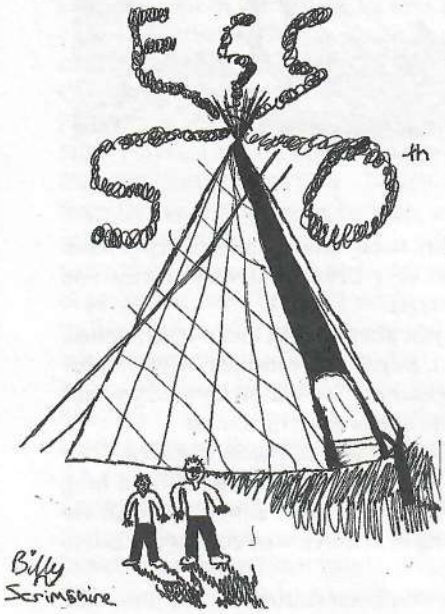
LORNA ENGLISH

memories of camp

Meeting my partner and knowing her brothers in FSC and realising we had camped together 10 years before we had met proves the continuity of FSC as a growing and living place to be

POST CAMPS, 1997

came. People like Peter Harris and Dougie and his younger brother Philip, they came in turn. I remember meeting Peter after the camp, and we went out for a coffee together. I said, 'Well, what did you think about the camps?' He said, 'There wasn't much there when you got there, but I didn't want to come home.' He came for several years. And of his whole family of six boys,he was the only one who didn't go on probation. I think you should tell the story of lighting fires with your Woodlings.



Celebrating 50 years , LOGBOOK DRAWING 1997

SUSY: I was staff member, a leader of a Woodling group in Ashdown Forest.

MARGARET: But I should just interject here that Susy was not awfully good at lighting fires.

SUSY: I was! I was very good at lighting fires. As you will see, too good on this occasion. Anyway, off we went into the Ashdown Forest. I showed the children that you could use birch bark, as well as twigs. And I asked them for the sake of their skills to each light their own fire individually. So there were ten or twelve little fires. And I said, 'Not too close together.' There were quite a wide area of little fires. After we'd lit them we noticed there were other little fires popping up where we hadn't lit them. It was peat. And we set fire to the whole area. Peat fire runs underground and comes up again. So we ended up having to ask the Fire Service. I rushed down to a phone box, phoned up for the fire hose. All the children got a ride back on the fire engine.

SUSY: A bit later on, a few years later we started Woodling adventures because we felt the Woodlings weren't all getting enough practice at using their camping skills. So we instituted little groups of Woodlings with one member of staff going out of camp, apparently miles, but actually, you know, you'd just go round the road and end up over there in the bushes. Obviously you cared for the children's safety, but they had to do the fires and cook the meals and I'm sure Woodlings are the same still, they tended to cook the potatoes and eat those, then cook the sausages and eat those, then the wood ran out, and so you waited an awfully long time before you got any peas heated up. Woodlings really enjoyed it, and so did members of staff, because you learnt a lot about the small group of children.

MEGAN: I did that last year actually. An experience! We weren't that far away from each other, the different groups. And about twelve o'clock at night a member of staff came down with about three Woodlings to say that their tent had collapsed. So I had eight Woodlings underneath one fly sheet, and there was this horrendous thunder storm, and the Woodlings were so scared. I just realised that we wouldn't be getting any sleep, so in the middle of the night I got them all up and we walked all

extracts from summer camp log books

The Charing Cross tube London constantly disgorged people. Somehow, it's an adventure getting out of the station with all your packs of tents, rucksacks. But it's so nice to see familiar faces. If you don't see friends, FSC labels and style of people put you on the right track. 'Hello, how are you? Have you got the green medical form, the pocket money and food for the coach?'.

It is very nice to be greeted by the prep camp the first day. Having the locations of each group fixed, and some tea in an urn and then the serious business of getting our tents up in a circle.

Breakfast is very nice, lots of porridge, not undercooked, fried bread, and beans, tea, juice.

Yesterday was very long – our group went to the farm for a swim having had a wash all over with shelter tents. They all went up and had a splashy and sunny time.

But behind us were clouds of not grey but thunderous black, that swept down in big blobs and rain that found every crack in a waterproof. All afternoon it rained. Lunch was soup and bread. It rained and rained.

It was challenge to the old folk. Could you get a fire going with water pouring through the kitchen, spades, buckets, only just got it up to steam. Jack got the fire going by placing the sticks close to the fire.

Colin dug ditches.

Later that night the river rose again and again. We had to move a group away from the river.

10.30pm to 11pm the flash floods filled the river to brimming and the order went out to move, we put the kids into the shelter tent. We moved the tents to high land, and in the almost pitch black too.

Our own party went on and we talked round the fire, it is a time to make friends. It was about 2.30am. I made myself tea and found my tent and flopped into the sleeping bag. Hardly had time to take off pullover and

Susie Michlowitz, Brenda Hobart, Barbara Josephs and Mary Rogers, GYPSY HILL, 1950

the way back to the camp. They thought it was a big adventure.

ANGELA: We didn't have sleeping bags, we had blankets and blanket pins. We had to make them in an envelope.

SUSY: Glyn [Faithfull] was a great camper. And apart from being inspirational, he also had lots of useful practical things to tell you. And I remember being shocked once when he stood up at rally and said, 'If you feel cold in the middle of the night, get out and pee, because then you'll feel much warmer when you go back to bed.' It works, it works.

GENERAL TALK: Eric Gander taught me what to do if you have diarrhoea. You eat boiled rice and plain dark chocolate, and it stops. And it's true. My main memory of Marianne Faithfull is – some music started up nearby, and Marianne was going on, 'I can't sleep, I can't sleep.' The others somehow dropped off anyway, but not Marianne. And Peter said to her, 'You know the best thing to do if there's something like that keeping you awake, music. The best thing to do is to listen to it.' 'Oh,' she said, 'Thank you.' And then she said the next morning, 'That was magic. I did just what you said Peter, and I fell fast asleep.' Clarissa Cobb [Issa Cochran], who was Arthur Cobb's youngest child, used to bring her tortoise to camp, and it had a tent. And the tent was attached to the shell by a piece of string. The way you could find the tortoise was to find the piece of tent material that was its tent.

GENERAL TALK: I don't think there was a lot of tent visiting in those days. It was very much frowned upon.

SUSY: When I said we were old fashioned girls, that's not true. We were radical people and we had joined a radical organisation. But it's the times – however radical and progressive you are, you're still influenced by the times you live in to a certain extent.

You went up and set up a school yourself, didn't you?

SUSY: I suppose it came about because we [my husband John and I] had children, and as they got near the age of five, we could neither of us quite face the thought of the school, because we knew what schools were like. Then we got a bit of backing by other people who were also interested in doing something different. ■

trousers and I was asleep. Next day, Merry moot day!

You don't realise but we had been packing all morning, washing smelly wet sleeping bags and clothing. Then they went to the launderette.

The last day was Lodge Common Council. The wonderfully constructed fire with circle of all the children and staff round sitting on logs. Jack and Vic lit the fire using brands of fire to represent the four winds the spirit of fire.

It's blazed up obediently, the smoke curling slowing from the wet wood. Eventually it lit furiously and we all sang.

We had a staff party. I retire gracefully soon after midnight to let the younger set frolic a bit. The jug of joy with a bit of sunshine went round and food and all. It was as if we had been friends for months and months. We even joked and talked a lot. We discovered how to make friends. A shared experience. Pathfinder helpers had grown in maturity with in this space of time.

Packing and getting the children up, 'Been to the lat?' 'Had your medicine?' 'Have you got everything packed?' The tents in carefully folded heaps. Then the final rally, the Hokey Kokey.

The bus back, journey back OK. Lots of eager parents. A word in your ear or hello, 'Where is the luggage?' 'How was it?' 'We heard about the rain.' Parents need assurance. We are upbeat, economical with the truth a bit, but we also give useful advice. The child did improve and had veggie food. Parents do say how grateful they are too.

EXTRACTS FROM KEN WILKINSON'S DIARY, *Hodore Camp 1997*

mobile camp

Margaret Brown and Tony Brown ran the 1956 Derbyshire mobile, which Josephine Wright (Bornat) and Marcos Guillen attended as teenagers

GENERAL TALK: We started at Shining Cliff. Near Ambergate, where we camped for two nights – before we set off. We camped at the top of the Winnetts, didn't we, where it was very wet, but enjoyable. We walked down the Winnetts to find another camp site in the town, Castleton, only to be told by the local police that the only place we could camp was at the top of the Winnetts, so we walked back up again in the pouring rain. The Winnetts Pass is called that because it's very, very windy, so we were all a bit exhausted when we got up the top. And we camped back at the same farm.

MARGARET BROWN:Tony and I led from the back. It was our principle that the children should find the camp sites. Actually it was because we couldn't keep up with them. They were all pretty active youngsters, and it was quite hot at times. They were a fairly competent lot, and they did find most of the camp sites for us, and then we caught up with them and agreed that that was a good place to stay.

MARCOS GUILLEN: We were divided up into groups, given money by Margaret and Tony, did our own shopping and our own cooking. I remember in a cooking group, they'd all been sorted out, with people going with their friends, and there were still four of us left over. And it was myself, Jill Glaister, the French boy, Vincent, and the Scots boy, David. And so we made one cooking group. We did very well, because Vincent had this vast rucksack, so we could buy huge quantities of bread, and stuff it into his rucksack, keep on putting it in. And the Scots boy, David, who went into a shop and would sort of knock them down and know about how to ask for bits of bacon and things like this. And Jill Glaister, who was marvellous at cooking. And I could light fires. So it worked out very well.

On clan, CORNWALL 1994

GENERAL TALK: You could buy food in every little hamlet or village. Well, they were sometimes a bit alarmed when these nine or eleven people came in with three adults – crowded into the shop. Especially when David started bargaining over the price of plum jam and things like that. I remember going down to Castleton to try and get into the caves on night. We did go down into the Blue John mine. It's very exciting. You can hear the water falling over the waterfall ahead of you. Jill Glaister walked in great big boots all the time, and had a minute tent. It was so minute that if she was in it she daren't touch the sides. So most of the time when it was pouring with rain, she stood outside that tent with a cycle cape around her, crouching down and making a little tent of that.

TONY BROWN: I came to a training weekend in December '55. Here at Whitwell. We spent about five days on the training camp. That's where I met Susie Powlesland (Michlowitz) and she taught me how to light a fire. And then Margaret and I kept meeting, and then we got married in the July. ■

extracts from summer camp log books

The night game is incredibly ritualistic. It seems important that none of the staff know what's going on
Borrowbeck One 1997

I remember lying in hospital, not able to sleep, just after our first child was born, and thinking 'We can go to second fortnight!' I left hospital, crazed and elated, bought a map, hired a car and we drove to Montgomery. The first morning after we arrived, I threw myself into digging a lat; Chris Potter suggested this wasn't appropriate. Breast feeding in midges was not fun, but it was really precious to be so secure among friends in an intensely painful (breast feeding) and joyful time. Last year, Thomas (my son) came and got me at staff cuppa because some of the children were taunting one of the waywarden girls. He couldn't bear it. I can still remember the look on his face.
Irish Mobile 1997

The first camp that I can remember was at Long Mynd –about 1965. I remember walking towards a tent which seemed enormous miles above my head and somebody was cooking in it – my memory might be playing tricks. I can also remember that my sleeping bag got lost after it had been taken away to some mysterious place to be dried. Dad [Peter Hedger] expertly fashioned me a sleeping bag by pinning blankets together.
CLAIRE KAYE [NÉE HEDGER], *Borrowbeck Two 1997*

After 6 camps, it is hard to imagine not going away for 2 weeks a year, to live in a field with no electricity, gas or running water, with 80 other people of all ages, and being myself! From the day the programme falls through the letter box, and I've found people I know in the photos from last year, the time is spent planning, thinking about and waiting for these two weeks to come.
Irish Mobile 1997

camping abroad

Jess Hoskins joined FSC 30 years ago. She ran the the first mobile camps in Greece and also catered at camp. Jess has worked on several FSC committees

I GOT INVOLVED IN FOREST SCHOOL THROUGH NANCY VELLACOTT, WHO thought, quite rightly, that the children and I, who were on our own by then, needed something like FSC. It provided us with an extended family, and activities which we learnt to love. As the children grew up they were surrounded by the kind of values that I wanted them to meet and appreciate. Things like mutual concern and friendship and equality of status. And pleasure in simple living, which is rather an old fashioned virtue, but I think it's important. And learning to be in close touch with the natural world.

I was lucky, because of my knowledge and experience of Greece, to be able to extend the range of foreign camps which I did five or six times I think. And I justified that to myself and everybody else by saying that this was a unique way of getting to know a foreign country, by travelling simply and living very close to its land and people, its ordinary people, which it has always seemed to me tourist centres and hotels and so on don't really provide. I helped with the administration and served on Council and various committees. And that was fun. It isn't often you can say committees are fun, but FSC people are so nice that you make firm friendship through that kind of work. I am no longer really equal to the physical demands of camping, and I couldn't really adapt to the role of being a camp Elder. I've got grandchildren camping now.

Within Forest School though, there was some discussion about whether foreign camps were a good thing or not. Can you tell me a bit about why there was some debate?

I think there was fear of something like an elite growing up. Obviously foreign camps are expensive comparatively, and it meant people digging into their pockets and begging their grandparents. But some people could afford them without any trouble, and I think there was fear of instituting a kind of privilege. I'm thinking in particular of a lad whose parents were filthy rich, but they didn't have much to do with him, they just sent him off on group holidays. But I felt we were helping him quite as much as the others who had scraped to come on these camps, because – well, just because we weren't staying in hotels, we weren't flying everywhere. He was learning a kind of travel that his parents would never have introduced him to.

Victor Brooks and trackers, MONTGOMERY, 1969

I noticed that looking through the programme that women still cater and men run the camps, even today.

There weren't in my day that many women who ran camps full stop. Yes, but I can't say I set out to strike a blow for freedom or emancipation or anything. I just wanted to do this camp, and that was it. ■

extracts from summer camp log books

The part of FSC I have always enjoyed the most is the caving. I'm a staff member now but I have been caving since I was very young.

One time I remember particularly is my first sump. I was about 10 or 11 and went down with a group that included my older sister Catherine to attempt Sump 1 of Swildons. Sump 1 is only about a metre long and has a piece of rope running through it that guides you through.

I sat at the side psyching myself up for ages before I had the courage to do it. We had been told to put our heads to one side and just pull and we'd be through but I was so scared and so hyped up nothing anyone said would have made the slightest difference. More than anything, I wanted to back down and not go through but it was a matter of pride. My sister had already done a sump before – so I had to do it.

Finally I took a deep breath and dived in. My helmet got stuck because I hadn't put my head to one side and I thrashed violently with my legs in an attempt to free myself. In my panic I lost hold of the rope. I was stuck tight under the water and running out of breath. I had no rope to guide me, I couldn't see and I was so terrified I could no longer tell forwards from backwards. I truly believed I was about to die.

Suddenly my helmet came free and the force of my thrashing took me that extra 30 cm to the other side. I emerged from the sump feeling like I'd been to hell and back and expecting the hero's welcome that one who has narrowly escaped death's clutch deserves. Instead, I found my sister in fits of laughter saying, 'And there was a perfect example of how not to do a sump!'

MARTHA TAYLOR, *Irish Mobile 1997*

new horizon camps

Extract from an article by Eric Gander, written in 1974 describing New Horizon, a group born out of FSC but with different aims

MEETING OFTEN AND ALL THROUGH THE SEASONS OF THE YEAR was our desire. A few years ago this was thought impossible, impracticable and undesirable for the children within FSC so New Horizon emerged as a local group allied to, and with the good wishes of, Forest School. We are now [in 1974] running over 80 meetings a year, weekends and even day camps, also some 10 major camps of 10 days, a fortnight or more.

We believe that our enjoyment, community spirit and ethics form the basis of a way of life. The needs of the children, and not the needs of a staff group, are our prime concern. We wish to broaden their outlook both geographically and socially. This is possible only to a limited extent if a child attends one single camp a year. We aim to introduce our members to the handling of all sorts of boats on the water, to the sea and its tossing wave, to the darkness and hazards of mountains, to snow and ice, and the gentleness of the countryside.

We aim to learn by doing, rather than to learn by playing. In a conventional standing camp, we feel that too often activities must be 'organised' to fulfil 'test and trial': rather like experiments at school, they lack the driving force of the urgent need of the moment. In our camps we prefer to see group activities derived directly from the basic needs of existence: the need for food, shelter and protection from the hazards of nature. We believe that children in our care are physically safer in the risks we take than when crossing the roads of Britain.

FARNDALE, 1996

Most of our camps, even those of 30, have only two staff, and often they cater, to form an economic group of four, with the children. Staff have no privileges, no early cup of tea. We believe our duty is to keep overhead expenditure down to a minimum. We have no 'Special Fund', but by keeping our camps cheap and good value for money we have attracted a number of working-class children.

We started at an advantage, a knowledge of FSC experiences, and we have sincerely tried to adjust them to our needs. Here and there we may have progressed and in turn our experience may be useful to FSC. ■ *(New Horizon no longer run)*

Coming back from hike, CORNWALL, 1994

memories of camp

A kitchen fire, small groups, a tea urn on the table, the heart of camp beating quietly. The smell of smoke and the feel of home

Messing about, HORTON KIRBY, 1972

flysheet camps

Flysheet Camps were set up in the 1970's attracting many experienced staff from FSC. Flysheet still exists and runs camps annually

EXTRACTS FROM THE INAUGURAL MEETING IN 1973: We discussed whether to create a separate organisation to run camps like the one at Shining Cliff this summer. It was agreed that we set up an autonomous group, to be called Flysheet Camps. We see our activities not in rivalry with, but complementary to FSC.

We discussed the question of who goes on the camps and concluded provisionally that we were attempting to create something like a microcosm of society in our camp communities. That is to say, a majority of children and young people from working class families. We did not want our camps to be made up solely of 'problem' children, sponsored by Social Services departments, nor on the other hand are we at all happy with the current social composition of Forest School Camps.

On camp, FLYSHEET, 1977

Pea fair, 1977

COMPOSITION OF THE CAMPS: A model of collective responsibility for all the staff was developed, moving away from the traditional leadership role of camp chief. Flysheet ran camps where the staff paid to go the same as the children. This kept the overall cost down and made the camps accessible to working class children In later years, explicit rights and responsibilities for children and staff were established.

SCOTTISH FLYSHEET: This group had similar aims to Flysheet Camps and was set up in the early eighties on a smallholding near Dumfries. Children from the nearby towns of Lockerbie and Dumfries have regularly participated. ■

memories of camp

My first Pea Fair; the camp chief announced that the first person to run round the whole Teifiside site naked he would give a colour T.V. I was on clan. A couple of hours later, while I was in the middle of one of those Woodling – stereotype reinforcing jobs like buttering bread, my clan chief stripped in the kitchen, and sprinted along the field, up the bracken bank, up and back along the ridge to the kitchen. He then asked the Camp chief 'where's my telly?' The Camp chief had some excuse, and I can't remember how it was resolved, but my fond memory is of the clan chief, arguing with genuine anger, still naked

Pot-holing, WALES, 1970's

blackdown hills

Roddy Brooks established annual camps for children with learning and physical difficulties .The camps were held at Blackdown Hills, and are now run at Hodore in Sussex

THERE WAS A MOVEMENT IN MY MEDICAL SCHOOL, WHO DISCOVERED what was happening in the sub-normality hospitals nearby - Dickensian backwaters. People never went out of hospital. I felt some of the kids would benefit from FSC. Most of the technical life around them had no meaning in terms of consequences. The television was just a moving box. Being close to the ground you learn to understand it. Children could understand more of what was happening in life. Food appeared on trolleys at 12pm. They ate it and then it goes away. There was no causality in it. There was no-one providing holidays for people with learning difficulties then.

After long negotiations, I took 11 kids with moderately severe difficulties, all mobile and half incontinent. Eight out of the eleven had Down's syndrome. I ran a camp with nursing hospital staff and RAF equipment. There were organisational problems and so, knowing it worked, I went to Council and said I want to run this camp in FSC for children in private homes. Sell the idea direct to parents. Council agreed after much discussion. I ran a camp on the edge of the Blackdown hills, a long away from public roads so if wandering took place, then the children did not end up under a tractor. It was a hard camp. The kids slept in 180lb tents, which is still the basis for those accommodating to camp. Staff would sleep in with the kids to deal with problems during the night. The camp was a success and we carried on from there, introducing a one night hike. Since then other providers are offering holidays for learning difficulties kids. This partly explains why more children with severe learning difficulties are coming on the camps. This has hampered intergration within standing camps because to survive camps you have to be independent of others for part of the day. This is difficult if you are doubly incontinent and immobile. ■

On clan, BLACKDOWN 1988

memories of camp

My best explanation is something about a deep-seated peace and contentedness that being on camp brings me. There are extremely hard and challenging times, and loud and excitable times but those few moments that you can grasp alone where all my ions feel like they're pointing the right way. Another thing is having camped religiously as a child, but been somewhat peripheral in more recent years, is that enormously comfortable feeling of 'coming home' – finding and re-discovering roots, without all the shit that gets thrown up with families

memories of camp

Today, 2 years later – some people from my pathfinder group – are my closest friends I have. Dennis has written a song about FSC which I feel summarises friendship on FSC the chorus to which I'll hope I'll always remember:

'But the mud is getting muddier
and the water's getting wet
and I never realised just how dirty you can get.
But these happy dirty people are the best I've ever met
and it's still getting better
and it's not over yet'

ritual and taboo

This extract from Flysheet magazine, No. 6, 1976, explains the belief in making a place for everyone in the camp community and wider society. Written by Beefy [Ron Brand]

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE AT CAMP, I LAUGH WHEN I HEAR THE FRANTIC yells of 'tablecloth!' when a daring elf or Woodling transgresses by crossing the dining circle. I understand why these malefactors do it, but the tribal part of me shudders that a taboo has been broken, for it isn't easy to step aside from the practised years of reverence for custom and tradition. Naturally, I rationalise by giving most excellent and logical reasons why it is not proper to cross the circle when we are at meals.

Similarly, I have a 'gutty' reaction to those who sit on the ground and who do not face the rest of the lodge when we are eating or meeting together. I try not to make too big a thing of it, but I wish they would not gather so ostentatiously in snug little groups, backs to the majority of us, absorbed in their own tight conversations.

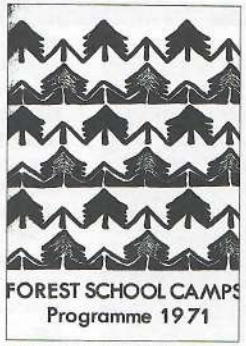
True, the unity of camp depends on the unity within the groups which form it, but there are times when each group, and each member of that group, must consciously endeavour to build the unity of the larger lodge group, at the time when the whole camp is drawn together as a composite unit.

The readiness to accept social disciplines on the strength of what is good or what is bad for the whole group in which one finds oneself, or what is 'done' or not 'done' is surely a recognition of the need for 'self-discipline' without which we would be hard put to it at camp. In many respects, the problems which face the educationalists of today are those of convincing the conformists that there is a need to provide the non-conformists with a place by the fire –and that no school group or social unit – should be so large that it cannot easily be accommodated around a camp fire, thus providing the non-conformist with an opportunity to listen to the heartbeat of the community and to learn what is 'done' and what is not 'done'. ■

Drying tents, HADDENHAM 1997

memories of camp

...the ordeal of giving a group report in front of (seemingly) hundreds of other people. I remember the dry mouth and increasing heartbeat as the groups were gone through and my turn approached, the desperation to be witty, concise or at least coherent and audible, and the sinking back down onto the log, waterproof trousers rustling, to a chorus of muttered blue skies, if lucky, a thank you by name (!) from the camp chief. As an adult member of staff I can still become tongue-tied in this situation, but the support of the circle and the acceptingness on camp means I can enjoy rallies now and see them as a model of a decision-making meeting



Programme, 1971

memories of camp

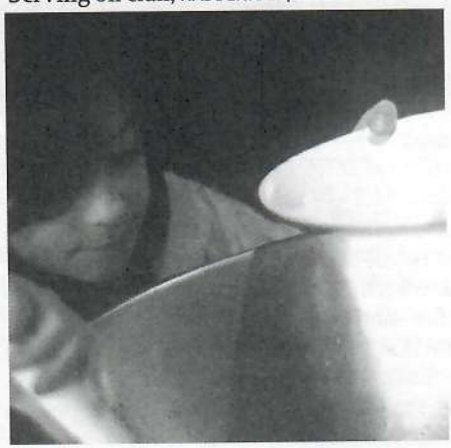
I only remember the fun! The very best bit was becoming staff and getting to be part of 'their gang' – such an immense privilege – and more laughter!

pot-holing

Victor Brooks was born in 1918. He became a doctor after the war and started camping in 1965. He established pot-holing camps as a regular event in the FSC programme

AS A YOUNGSTER I'D LIVED ON DARTMOOR. I USED TO GO OUT ON my own, and there's a railway into Dartmoor. I used to go out with two macs, I'd put one on the ground, and the other one on top of me, and that was that, you see. And I was mad about Dartmoor and the outdoor life. I heard about something called Woodcraft Folk. I went along to them and found that they were pleasant but not my thing. So I heard about Forest School Camp, and I thought, 'This is marvellous.' We sent Roddy [Brooks] along, and then Greta [Brooks] got involved. I was running a single handed general practitioner service on my own, and I got a terrible telegram, 'Please come.' Snowdon. It was a terrible camp. It rained, rained, rained. Dejected, fed up, and she said, 'We want you to come and help.' I got there somehow, hitch hiking. The group chief had gone to camp out of dedication, but he was sick. And the other chief was the storeman, and the storeman was working to death, so I was made a group chief, right?

Serving on clan, HADDENHAM, 1995



At the fiftieth elders lunch, I said, 'You're Monty Rosen, you're the silly bugger who took us to what's his name on the wrong side, where it rains, instead of the other side.' So he said, 'Yes, and there was another silly bugger, that I found lecturing his group on how to put a tent up, and it was on a quagmire. And I put my tent on the top of a hill where it was nice and firm.' And so I said, 'There was two silly buggers at that camp, weren't there?' From then on I was caught.

The one thing that I look back with gratitude – no, with pride – is establishing on a very firm base pot-holing. My idea is that if you did pot-holing, you could not be a normal Forest School Camp. It has nothing to do with wooden fires outdoors, it wasn't anything to do with tents. We used to go down on to the Mendips together, usually with Peter [Brooks] and Jan [Brooks], and sleep out there, and then we'd discuss each of our pot holes that we were going to do, and how we would do it. We'd plan time by time by time. And we wanted to combine it with walking, in the case of Dartmoor.

The children were self picked. It's mud and cold and miserable and all the rest of it. And so that got the ones who would be bloody minded – Pathfinders, right – and they were fantastic. And the number of potential camp chiefs that came out of that were very high. And of course I ran them as a real bloody sergeant major. ■

winter on dartmoor

The base camp site was on the bank of the River Tay among disused mine workings; overgrown and now barely discernible. Our water came from the leat which once served machinery, our camp fire was sheltered inside the broken walls of an old building.

Tents clustered together in the little clearings wherever there was room; the very hardy slept out under a groundsheet. Our hose pipe froze solid and had to be thawed out in the river overnight.

One morning Victor woke the clan at 4.30 a.m. The idea was to get breakfast over by 8.30 a.m. to make the most of daylight. He admitted afterwards it had been meant to be 5.30, but he misread his watch and didn't dare tell the clan when he found out. The idea didn't work anyway as everybody subsequently needed a rest in the middle of the afternoon.

'Get this inside you,' Victor ordered, at breakfast, ladling out huge helpings of porridge. 'Have as much as you want,' said Maggie. That's the sort of caterer I like. Cross-cutting, splitting, chopping; wood, wood and more wood. There had to be enough ready for the fire to last the long hours of darkness. We kept the camp-fire going all day. It was known as the day-fire, and was a centre for all those not working in the kitchen.

All the time we had in our minds the 'Big Push' over the top of the moor to Buckfastleigh.

Victor co-ordinated our efforts and checked and re-checked the destination of every item of equipment down to the last tent peg. The moor was white with frost and ice and a dusting of snow.

What a glorious walk! Mile upon mile of wild beautiful country. The ground was hard from the frost and we walked

under canvas

Issa Cochran (Cobb), Arthur Cobb's daughter, first went camping in 1949, aged three. Here she provides a glimpse of her father's love and dedication to Forest School Camps.

I'VE GOT A VIVID MEMORY OF BEING IN A TENT WITH HIM [Arthur Cobb], and noticing there were a few wasps. We'd just had this great drill about how you stay very calm when there's a wasp around, and you don't flap about, it'll just go away. There were rather a lot of wasps in the tent. And I dug him in the ribs and said, 'Daddy, there's an awful lot of wasps in the tent.' And he said 'Oh, just go back to sleep, they won't hurt you.' And I did this two or three times, and finally he realised the tent was full of wasps, and he sat up and a wasp stung him on the top of the head. So after that we got out of the tent pretty quick. But Forest School Camps really was his life and his love. And I remember all the note paper with the headings all over the place, and any that got spoilt I would draw on the back of, so this logo, the green leaf, the pine trees and the tents are imprinted on my memory, because they were there from such an early time. I know that he used to go off to meetings endlessly, and there are stories of him in a boiler suit camping out in Whitwell Hall, writing up the minutes of the meetings. Being staffing secretary he had a lot of work, sleeping over there. I went nearly every year till I started staffing, I think.

Then what happened? Well I think I had a break from it. I think I'd had enough by that time. But my children went again in the early eighties for a short time. Interests change, things – different directions. ■

FOREST SCHOOL CAMPS

1956

ANNUAL PROGRAMME

FOR BOYS & GIRLS AGED 6½ to 18

Camp	Dates
WHITWELL 1 WALSIS 1	Wednesday 1st August to Wednesday 15th August
WHITWELL 2 WALSIS 2 ROYSTON 2	Friday 17th August to Friday 31st August

FOR BOYS & GIRLS AGED 14 to 18

FIRST HIKE	Wednesday 1st August to Wednesday 15th August
SECOND HIKE	Friday 17th August to Friday 31st August

These will be on the lines of the Derbyshire Light-weight Hike of 1953 and the Mountain Hike in the Lakes, 1955; they will pass through hilly country, but there will be no rock climbing. Light tents and rucsacs required.

NEW FOREST CAMP	Monday 30th July to Monday 13th August

This will be a small and special camp for boys and girls aged 8½ to 18. Light tents are required.

straight over the usually treacherous bogs. The low sun shone in our eyes.

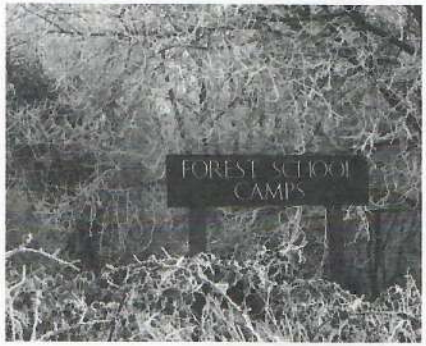
Ten minutes later we were in thick mist and the visibility was twenty-five yards. That's Dartmoor!

ROGER BRANDON JONES

... It was hard very hard for the staff. You had to eat and eat to keep warm and going. The mainstay of our morale was a supply of 14 hot water bottles. No rain at all. Below freezing practically 18 hours a day, but the culmination was a three-day hike over the back of the Moor during an extended anti-cyclone: stars twinkling all night with a thin, sharp moon coming up in the morning; breakfast over before dawn every morning, children going to bed at 6 p.m. dead tired although not dead beat, and older staff quietly filling a hot water bottle – and all the time the flow of the river.

VICTOR BROOKS

Winter, HADDENHAM, 1995



sister and brother

Josephine Wright (Bornat) and Richard Bornat , camped as children in the 1950's. Josephine compares FSC with the Woodcraft Folk and Order of Woodcraft Chivalry camps

JOSEPHINE WRIGHT: I went to my first camp in 1955. I was thirteen. We may have heard about FSC through Charley Hall. We found out about the Woodcraft Folk through the Daily Worker, My first impressions of the Forest School Camp was how similar it was to what we did in the Woodcraft Folk in fact. The differences were that in the Woodcraft Folk , the whole camp, would camp together, all age groups. They didn't allow the children to do the cooking. We came to Forest School, and we did everything. Now, I thought at the time how much better it was

My impression of FSC was it was always more anarchic than the Woodcraft Folk. And the main thing – which persists, and you can see it here – is that in various ways Forest School continues to attract young adults. Forest School gave you a holiday in the summer, paid your fares, and £3 pocket money at the time, in the early sixties. If you were a student you could go off and camp with children for a couple of weeks in the summer. I still remember the weight regulation. The pack had to be less than 22 pounds. And I remember my Dad weighing the pack, and actually, you know, ever since I've used that weight. It's a good limit. I also went to an Order of Woodcraft Chivalry camp, which was held in Dorset, Golden Cap. The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry is very similar in origin to the Woodcraft Folk, but it tends to be more of a family organisation.

RICHARD BORNAT: I was a Woodling in 1955. Arthur Cobb was my group leader. He used to do things like force us to write postcards home, which of course I should have done, but I didn't. And tidy up our tents and things. We did fire lighting, and we went on a Woodling adventure. All we did was we took groundsheets and we slept out the other side of the woods. My most exciting camp was in 1957, when I was thirteen – I went on a Northumberland semi-mobile. Ron Brand was the camp chief. We were in a valley called Happy Valley. We'd been there two or three nights and it started to rain. It rained for days and days and days, and there were lots of boulders washed down the stream. And you could hear these things coming down the stream. It must have been quite bad weather. We were in our tents, and people were coming round with food. We never got out of our tents for a couple of days, it was that bad. And it washed away half the road. It was great, it was absolutely fantastic. We were perfectly all right on our little knoll, but it washed away the road. ■

Leslie Holden, LONGTOWN 1994

woodling bedtime

They were all in their tents. Generally I talk to two or three each evening, and by that time most of them are quiet. I sat down in the entrance of one in which two boys were deep in conversation; they stopped; I waited.

'Arthur, do you believe in ghosts?'

'I don't quite know. I don't see why not.'

'Bill's just seen one.'

'Yes. He came from the Tannery direction and walked towards the house.'

'What was he like, Bill?'

'He walked slowly. He stopped and looked back. Then he went on again with his head bent down.'

'Did you say anything?'

'Oh, no, Arthur.'

A long pause, and Chris said, 'What do you think Arthur?'

'I came here 29 years ago. I never heard of any ghost here. But I'll go and wait for him.'

'What will you do if he comes?'

'I'll have time to think while I'm waiting. I might say, 'I'm Arthur Cobb. What's your name? I love Whitwell. 'I'll try to say it gently. I want him to talk to me.'

They spoke suddenly at the same time. 'When will you go, Arthur?' 'Won't you be scared?'

'Once I would have been scared. I lived in a country road, and some evenings I stayed at school till late. I never told my father how scared I was. Later on, for a whole year I lived deep in a wood in the very middle of England. And the more I thought, the more I wondered why people should be afraid of a poor, sad ghost.'

'He might do something to you, Arthur.'

'Yes, I suppose he might. But you must take risks sometimes. And he might be scared of me, at first.'

'Can we come with you, Arthur.?'

ARTHUR COBB. *extract from FSC Magazine article 1970*

childcare

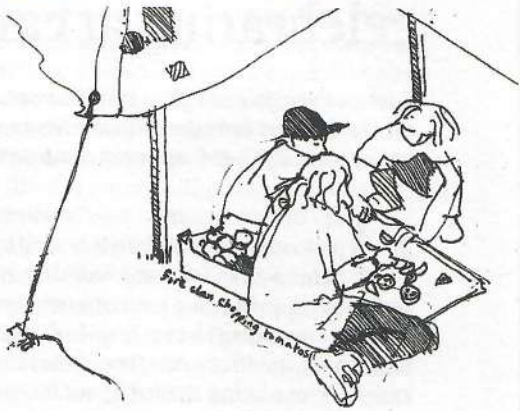
Greta Brooks started camping in 1961. She made a big impact on childcare within FSC,and wrote the following in1974. The principles apply to the present day

FSC CARES. MAYBE THAT SOUNDS TOO OBVIOUS TO MENTION BUT IN an organisation that disapproves of rules one has to go back to fundamentals, and the fundamental of child care is caring. We aim to allow children to experience for themselves a primitive way of life in a close-knit community and to involve them in adventurous activities. Such things can be dangerous, so our second aim should be to care for the children and each other in such a way that each child takes every opportunity to grow into wholeness and we cause no trauma or physical damage. We will not succeed but aims are a necessary prelude to action.

Once I am at camp I become so involved in what is going on that I have little time to spare for working out general principles or attitudes, so I have got into the habit of thinking about these things between camps. It seems to me that there are two things I can do to improve my child care at camp before I ever get there. One is to prepare and equip myself so that I can remain active and resilient whenever the British weather throws at us what it often does and the other is to try and think myself into being in the child's shoes in all sorts of different situations.

The first is self-explanatory. The second is simple enough too. Anywhere at any time I try to imagine how I would feel if I were – an Elf dumped with strangers in the middle of a field after a long train journey; or a Woodling lying awake in a my tent because I don't need as much sleep as the rest of my group; or a Trailseeker who still occasionally wets the bed; and so on.

As a result of these imaginings and of several years camping with FSC I have drawn up a list of queries to be used on the site, every day, every other day, or whenever I feel the need.The kind of thing I mean:



Shelter tent, 1997

Does every one know how to use the lat?
Is there a loner in the group?
Is the group over-tired?
Who is homesick?
Do we all have a dry set of clothing?
Is life interesting?
Have we any problems?
And many, many more.
Then there are supplementary questions that follow them:
Does it matter?
Should I be doing something about it?
What do the other leaders think?
Should I discuss it at Staff Cuppa? ■

extracts from summer camp log books

Woodling: tent inspections, playing with wood chips for hours, being taught songs by camp chief, waking up Andy Stillman in the middle of the night to get permission for a drink of water... staff telling us ghost stories on hike, staff loving us, us loving them, for a whole fortnight.

Trailseeker: obsessive kindling collecting (just in case!), singing camp songs all year, bras.

Tracker: Surprised at kind Pathfinders, love vibe lasting.

Pathfinder: Always hungry! Begging for pathfinder suppers, burning all logs on last night and fire jumping, sleeping out and burning bottom of Susie's sleeping bag (three years running) guerrilla tactics when raiding store tent, crawling behind while others distract staff at front, severe hikes, water rationing and sharing rucksacks.

Staff: hysteria when pathfinders refused food one year the caterer wouldn't let them have anything other than bread. An elf stuck a huge sheep skull on her front bivvie pole and took home a pile of bones (some still furry). I remember first time staffing being a revelation on all fronts. 'Nuff said!

A future hope: I hope the ship is still floating when my children need it – we all need this thing, whatever it is.
SALLY DAVIN EASEY, *Teifiside One 1997*

celebrating at camp

Daphne Carré joined FSC as staff 25 years ago and has led many camps. She recounts the 50th anniversary celebrations held at her camp in 1997, and also prep camp on the Isle of Carna, 1978

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME IS THE philosophy of children learning by doing, that I've been able to take into my working life, I don't mean just 'learning by doing' in a kind of osmosis type of way, but actually children being shown how to do things and experiencing them in the outdoors. Another of the reasons that I continue to camp is I love being in the big outdoors for a fortnight, somewhere like Borrowbeck, surrounded by the mountains. I have made a lot of very good friends, very close friends.

I ran Borrowbeck Two with Tina Usherwood. I'd like to describe the day and leading up to the day. We started the day, with a rally, which we intended to look back on the historical side of Forest School Camps. Jake Holloway (his grandfather was Beefy) conducted an interview with Eliza [Banks], which took us through some of the things to do with the school and the way they lived and things. By the time we'd got all our visitors there, I think we were 100 people –but you could have heard a pin drop in that rally. Everybody was so involved and listening. We assembled at the camp fire, and that was the time that we asked anybody who'd got ashes from various camps to put the ashes on. We put on our special log that had been sent out to us from Haddenham, and then the final – almost the final touch – was that we actually had fifty candles which we lit. By then it was dark, and it was just magical, absolutely magical. We talked about the past, we talked about the present, and our camp as it is now, and now we'd like to launch ourselves into the future, and asked everybody to look to the stars. At that moment a large rocket sparkled in the sky, as we launched ourselves into the next fifty years.

Logging, LONGTOWN, 1982

Tell me about your most memorable camp?

I'm sure it was '78. This was the second of the Carna camps that were run. Carna is an island in Loch Sunart off the south west of Scotland. The feature I remember that was special about this camp, was the prep camp. It had been suggested that it might be a good idea to camp on the other side of the island, so the next day the four of us managed to get all the equipment by boat round to

first memories reprinted from FSC magazine 1974

I remember Rod smoking two cigarettes at the same time – one up either nostril....And I remember how my emotions plummeted so amazingly. I laughed and cried all the way through camp, and only vaguely understood why.
MAGGIE BEACH, *memories of first camp (1971)*

We had a couple of scorching days for Prep camp. Jim made some test digs for wet and dry pits. When he had found what he considered an easy place to dig, I started, full of youthful zest. Even to my inexperienced eye it looked like a dried up pond full of rushes etc. I managed to dig down about 5ft. for each pit with no difficulty, then a lat, not quite so deep; then I rested and it rained for 24 hours and we never saw the pits or the lat again for the whole fortnight.
HORACE GILKES, *first camp (1969)*

My first camp was a permanently damp affair. I was not adequately equipped – my ski anorak probably worked wonders for its original owner on the slopes of St Moritz, but for the soft rain of Arran it was worse than useless. My idea of stout shoes – a pair of old school moccasins held together with string – were wet for the entire fortnight – along with most of my other clothes. I was very cold, having only two sweaters, and even colder at night. I didn't know what a clan was. I didn't realise staff cuppa was important since no one told me and I was too dumb to ask why everyone gathered together after lunch for a chat. My idea of a rest was a sleep in my tent, so that's what I did. My knowledge of camping, never having done any , was vague, but increased painfully under Woodling instruction, and I ended the fortnight being able to pitch a tent.
JILL HUDSON (NOW MONK)

the other side of the island. By the end of the day we'd duly managed to get a fireplace dug and the main food tent up. The next day was the day that the camp was meant to arrive. Well of course, it's not just like getting the shops to deliver your stores, it's really quite an undertaking to get your food on to Carna. So the caterers set off to get the food order, and decided that a third person would be useful. They said to me not to worry if they didn't get back until the same time as the camp arrived, because they weren't really sure how long it was going to take them to load all the food and things.

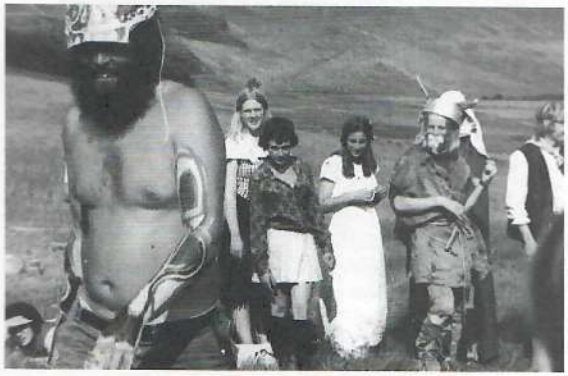
It was the most beautiful sunny day, absolutely magical day, but with quite a wind blowing. I did the sort of things that you would normally expect to do on a prep camp in the morning. I made sure there was wood prepared for a camp fire, dug a lat, and, watched the tide beginning to come in. The wind was beginning to rise considerably. The only food I had, was bread and peanut butter. So as the morning went on and I got a bit tired, I had a peanut butter sandwich.

I filled up the six gallon dixie with water and got the fire going–a really good fire, to get the water boiling – because I did want to greet the camp with tea. It was a good wind, so we were getting through the wood fairly quickly. And the waves were increasing, and the water was coming up gradually. And the area to be designated as the kitchen area was actually beginning to get smaller and smaller.

Then we got to the point whenit was still nice and sunny, but the wind was really blowing hard. I can clearly remember one moment when the food tent and the shelter tent, were about to take off! I remember standing hanging on to the doors of the tent till this really big gust of wind had died down, in the hope that I could manage to stop the tent being totally ripped to pieces by the gale, and everything getting blown away. All the time the water was coming closer and closer to the kitchen fire. By this time it was about two o'clock. Nobody on the horizon. And the water got higher and higher. And finally, there was a gentle hiss as a wave finally splashed into the kitchen fire and totally put it out. I thought there was nothing for this, and I lifted my nice boiling six gallon dixie to higher ground.

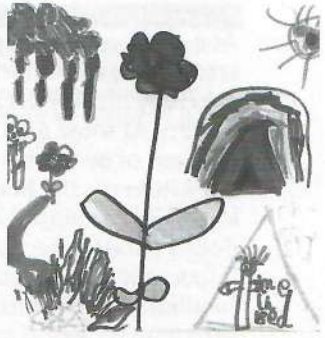
I don't know if you've ever worked hard in extremely windy conditions all day – it's extremely exhausting. I sheltered behind the shelter tent and ate yet another peanut butter sandwich. I was just beginning to get a little bit emotional about all of this – but I took a very firm hold of myself and said, 'The whole staff of this camp is with the camp, they must be all right. All you've got to do, your only responsibility is actually to keep hold of yourself and not to fall to bits'. At one moment I saw a yacht in the distance going across the horizon, and I felt like waving. I did feel rather as though I was on a desert island. The time was getting on. I was having a bit of a rest –before walking back across the mountain. At this moment, I looked up into the hills, and I noticed the sheep beginning to move in a way which wasn't quite the way that the sheep would normally move, unless they were being frightened by a human being. So my mind began to think, 'There's somebody else on this island. I am not on this desert island on my own, totally and utterly.' I heard this voice calling, 'Daphne, Daphne', and it was Dave Monk, who came bounding down out of the mountains. It was quite an emotional reunion that I had with him. And it was explained to me at this point that due to the weather conditions, they would actually have to have the camp on the other side of the island! ■

TEVIOTDALE, 1975

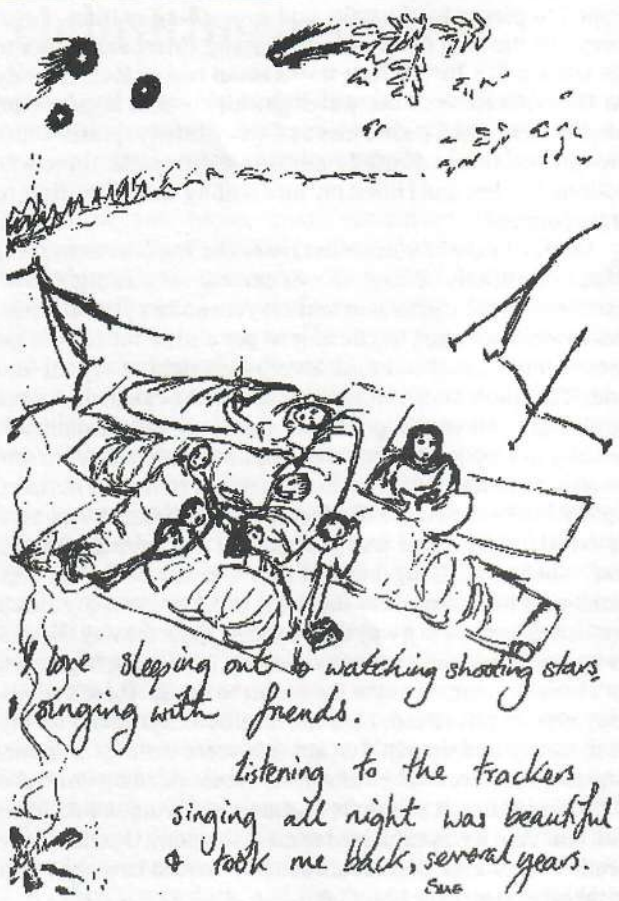


memories of camp

Spontaneous fun and games and off-the-wall madness as in this (probably clan games) photo representing the sanity of FSC that is such a necessary balance to the insanities of our everyday world that we feel mainly powerless to change



Camp drawing, 1997



camp notes

Leslie Holden has camped with FSC for many years, he has been chair of FSC since 1993. Here is an extract from his diary kept whilst on Montgomery 1, 1988

IN THIS YEAR 1988, I HAVE JUST COMPLETED MY NINETEENTH standing camp, as camp-chief, in a row. I have enjoyed being at them all. The FSC experience has only intensified and grown deeper as the years have passed by. I must have camped directly with some four hundred staff, some sixteen hundred children. Before that I was learning in another way by staffing in groups with George Coombes, Margery Guillen, Beefy, and with Bob Hall. I camped many times with Bob, and learned a lot from him about campcraft, people, and enjoyment.

Friday was wet. High wind all evening, kitchen fire blows flame and sparks horizontally, but little rain. By 12pm the wind tends to gale. Elves, Woodlings, Trailseekers, Way Wardens, mums, tents checked. At 11.30pm Nancy's flysheet gone she joins us. 2am woken by wind battering flysheet. Now full gale. Get up to check site. Meet displaced trackers and Giles. Last coming down hill. Their site with all but two tents down. Trackers move to


Canoeing, 1970'S

memories of camp

At camp we are living in our own little FSC world away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. We create a microcosm of society. At some point during a camp I like to step out of our world and look down on it. The kitchen is the heart of the camp – I don't know which camp this is or where it is but it doesn't matter because one of the important things about camp to me is the familiarity of the kitchen. So that wherever the camp is I feel at home!

Easter camp, LONGTOWN, 1982


Camp in a tree!, 1996

Kitchen fire, SHINING CLIFF, 1975

shelter tent, in good humour. Fiona and Sam's tent flattened, occupants peacefully sleeping and quickly re-housed. On main site the first-aid tent, store-tent and shelter flysheet were down, and left down. Several Woodling and Trailseeker tents were down. Re-housed on sites. Most of these group staff up and about. Paul and Gary found sleeping in kitchen tent, after worried search through fallen first-aid tent. Kitchen tent held, with attention. Nice warm and weary party in here. Most elf tents hold. Wind still high at 6am, but no longer gale. Many tents down by now, lots of equipment blown across site. Hay box blows over, kitchen logs blow across fire. At least 6 staff up all night, others sleep little. Waywarden and Pathfinder sites stay secure. A very enjoyable night. ■

off to camp

Nog Hafter has been camping since she was a Woodling. She starts by describes her feelings about seeing her own children off on camp

IT'S BROUGHT BACK MANY MEMORIES, YOU KNOW. THE DROPPING them off at the station, and the escorts and just being allowed to be a complete prat away from your parents is so important. And playing with pen knives. She comes back with these stories about what she was doing, and I'm thinking, 'Yes, I remember that.' Which is great. I've started camp chiefing again, because I want FSC to continue, and although I don't enjoy it that much, in fact I really enjoyed it two years ago, which is why I'm going to camp chief again next year. I think we're more conscious now of some of the safety issues. We're becoming a more child centred organisation. ■

Camp fire, BORROWBECK, 1997

extracts from summer camp log books

When I was a trailseeker, my mum was a staff. We used to go to Horton Kirby where there was a whole room full of tent pegs from floor to ceiling.
NICO BROWN, *Borrowbeck One 1997*

FSC is class, it's cool and it's alright. I like night games, I hate the food, merry moot's cool and so is pathfinder takeover day but I would like Woodling takeover day and I like dying my hair blue.
GEORGE, *Teifiside One 1997*

I hate morning rally. It is so long.
JANE TWISS, *Harlech Two 1997*

I don't like clan because you miss out everything else.
LILY, *Harlech Two 1997*

Ten years ago on Farndale, I woke up and the whole site was flattened and soaking. We had to move into the barn. I went to town with Lyndsey to dry 80 sleeping bags and for supper it was 120 portions of fish and chips and onion rings wrapped in pages from Mayfair. Funny that. Slept with fleas in the barn rolling down in top of each other. I used to worry about the rain all the time. Singing songs is the best thing to do in the rain.
NICK S-K, *Longtown Two 1997*

My first camp was Longtown and I always thought that Wales was just over the mountains and we must not go over because we'd need a passport. I also thought if we saw over it, it would be completely different.
ANON, *Irish Mobile 1997*

Why is it that I only eat ginger cake on camp?
BJ, *Farndale One 1997*

Worst memory: standing on the station before camp not knowing anyone.
LAURA (TRACKER), *Harlech Two 1997*

socialist sunday school

Stef Pixner has just started camping again with her child after a 20 year break. She was born in 1945 and was introduced to FSC through the Socialist Sunday School

WHEN I WAS CAMPING ON FARNDALE THIS SUMMER, THERE WAS someone there who was one of the oldest members on the camp, but it turned out that I'd staffed him when he was ten. And the reason that I discovered we were on the same camp was because he said, 'Well, when we were at Montgomery in 1967, the farmer's dog ate the sausages when we were on hike.' The story in fact was,we went off, and came across a laconic farmer leaning over a gate and said, 'We've got a bunch of kids, can we stay with you?' And he said, 'Grand' – only in Welsh. So we set up camp in this place.

We had quite a few kids you'd now call special needs kids. And one of the children was a little boy who lived in a children's home, and he had all the special Forest School Camp kit, and he obviously didn't feel too brilliant, so he boasted about everything. He could do everything, you know, he could ride a horse, and he could milk a cow, and he could do everything. So we turn up, and the farmer gets the measure of him straight away, and the first thing the farmer does is put this little boy on the back of a horse, and slap the horse's back. And that's bareback. He obviously knows the horse is a child loving horse. And so this boy got just what he wanted, because he got the attention. It's true, the farmer's dog stole the sausages. And in recompense, the farmer invited us staff to go back and drink whisky with him in the farmhouse later that night. ■

music and other things

There wasn't many guitars at camp, was there, in the early days of Forest School. I think because no-one could afford a guitar in those days. Ron, the American guy, he had this wonderful Italian song, which we all sang. We didn't discover till years later that it was a kind of Fascist war cry. I don't know, but we sang it again and again at camp, it just had a wonderful tune. Do you remember? dah-dah-dah. And we all thought it was some revolutionary call to arms, but it wasn't, no. It even had something like 'fascisti' in it, which we didn't even recognise. It was the song of the Fascist International Brigade.
SAM CUTLER

If you look at FSC purely from the point of view of the music and the repertoire, in the forties and fifties – and early sixties, when I started – you had this extraordinary repertoire, which was hymns, white gospel, music hall, Salvation Army, what you heard on the radio, German marching songs. There was Woody Guthrie. There was Jimmie Rodgers. Forties, fifties Americana, that drifted in. Nobody was buying records much, so it was terribly obscure. And then Bob Dylan hit. And that – in the musical history of Forest School Camps – that was huge, because suddenly it was like you could have a guitar and sing a song, and it was acceptable. And then it all took off. And then the funny thing to me is that in the seventies and eighties it was very, very uncool to sing traditional FSC songs. You sang Gary Glitter and T Rex songs on camp. I think because kids of our generation who are now coming through, there's a certain amount of values being re-adopted, but they want to sing 'Blowing in the Wind'.

The Communist Party and left wing politics features very dominantly. And the idea that you can leave that out of some explanation of what FSC's doing and make

post camps '97

A discussion at anniversary post camps 1997, between Andy Freedman, Steve Rathborn, Francis Cooper and Lucy Jaffé. Here they share their memories of life at camp

ANDY FREEDMAN: I was at a rather dubious boys' grammar school in south London, and life at school was extremely rigid and Victorian, but there was a guy, John Tizzard, who camps who I was a friend of. In 1967 I went on my first camp at Long Mynd, and I've been camping ever since. One of the things that is special about camp is, apart from issues about living close to nature – the elemental nature of camp (which I think is brilliant) – the contact with earth, water, fire and air – which you don't get generally in civilisation – are the unique relationships which are possible between staff and kids, and also between staff and staff, and kids and kids. I mean the extraordinary contrast between being at school and the eye-opening dimensions of going to camp and seeing that people could have other kinds of relationships with adults that weren't purely of an authoritarian nature, was brilliant. And there was a sense in which some of the ethics behind FSC were ahead of the generation of love and peace. That was how it struck me in the sixties.

Was there something that you did as a Pathfinder that made you think, 'Oh yes, I want to carry on.' Was there a particularly good camp, or was there a particularly good moment of your last summer as a Pathfinder?

Well, partly it was a natural progression, because I wanted to carry on camping. I wanted to be part of the spirit. Pathfinders do actually spend quite a lot of time doing things with young children which they wouldn't in their regular lives. I remember being the clan chief for the day. This was before Pathfinder Takeover Day. When I came into the organisation people were questioning tests and trials already, because of the competitive nature of it. It was a moment of transition, the mid to late 60's.

Other things were changing as well, tent inspection was regarded as a bit too militaristic – but the food of course then was still much the same. I mean there was lots of spam and margarine and Mothers Pride bread and floppy lettuce and baked beans. That's a really remarkable change that's taken

Drawing made at camp, 1997

it purely educational, or turn it into some sort of psycho babble thing, which really gets up my nose. I mean I was aware of that, although I wasn't a politically driven person, but my initiation was through my cousins – Steven and Caroline [Bond] – their parents were Communists. Ralph was a Stalinist. Caroline and Steven heard about FSC and New Horizon at Socialist Sunday School in about 1960.
SIMON SHEPHERD

My mother [Nancy Vellacott] in particular was somebody who knew how to make or mend anything. It was a thrilling experience for us. It was just two weeks in the year, and we would come back trying to sort of prolong the whole thing in our sort of rather stony back garden, trying to hammer in the tent pegs and light fires and carry on with the songs and so on and so forth, and planning where we were going to go next year.
JULIA VELLACOTT

I remember Sam [Cutler] taking me on hike when I was a Woodling at a Devon camp of Beefy's. He made us walk this incredibly long hike it must have been twenty miles. I remember getting to the site. Of course we had no food at all. But Sam's ingenious idea was for us to cook nettle soup, so you'd got these Woodlings going round collecting nettles. And finally got this soup after this twenty mile hike.
ADRIAN MATTHEWS

place in the organisation, then people expected camp food to be really basic. In terms of what made me want to carry on – I knew the staff – they were my friends. People like Peter Hedger, who I camped with at least a couple of times when I was a Pathfinder, did really reformat my view about middle aged people, whom I had thought were old and boring and dull. And he was a revelation in terms of his relationship with a seventeen year old. It could be on a much more equal basis. He talked to you in a way that was one-to-one rather than being hierarchical. The absence of orders, and just feeling part of a heritage that went back to the original days of Forest School. Talking to Peter about how the organisation had evolved, and just watching him treating six year olds the same way that he treats eight year olds and seventeen year olds, was a real model. In fact a few years ago, when the 'Heart, Head and Hand' document came out, which talked about learning by doing, he talked a great deal about teaching by being. He was a living example of teaching by being.

One of the other things that's interesting now, is that because our kids are old enough to go to camp on their own without us, there is this extended family of Forest School Camps, they have relationships with people, other adults that I know, and their children. It's like a village, but you don't move away from it. There is a family – none of those words quite sum up the structure. It is independent of place as well obviously. Camp is a place in your head. You're at camp with those people, in a sense, all the time, all through your life. It's amazing that our kids are getting the things that we've worked towards for other people's kids over the years. And they're really benefiting from that. It's immensely satisfying and pleasing.

LUCY JAFFE: I find standing camps quite frustrating because the pull is to the centre and to the people, and sometimes it's at the expense of not really looking out and seeing what trees there are, what valley we're in, who the people are who live around. That's one of the reasons I love mobiles, because I love going out into remote places and walking and being close to the elements – going camping on the top of a mountain with nobody else around – with a group of people who've never done that before. And then you have your face shoved into the mud. I want to be out there with the wind and the rain. I love those Dartmoor camps, the pot-holing camps, where you go and pothole one day, and then the next day you're walking up on Dartmoor in the icy wind and rain, and this bleak, bleak landscape.

ANDY: As a child, I camped from the age of about twelve to seventeen. Most of the camps were mobiles. When I came back as staff, I started staffing standing camps, and discovered something in standing camps that I hadn't consciously thought about as a child. I really enjoyed the community, and the wide nature of what was going on. And also the opportunity to have time to yourself. I think on the mobiles you're going from A to B, and even if mentally you tune out, physically you've still got to make that journey. On a standing camp you can tune out during the course of the day if you want to. And I've always been able, without leaving the site, to enjoy the surroundings and find a degree of solitude – maybe only for five minutes, maybe for half an hour or so, but within the site. The mobiles I've been on, the numbers I suppose have been twenty or thirty, normally, and it's harder to get lost. It's a more intense experience on a mobile.

memories of camp

I remember 1978 when it rained every day so the young boys just stood in it in swimming costumes and played water football, and booed when the sun showed its face for the one and only time. I often had my tent by the river over the years and the noise settled me at night with its rushing tinkling

Programme, 1972

memories of camp

The first time on a camp at lodge common council and looking around this tight circle of people. After the 2 weeks – all these faces, now so familiar, all musing over various events on camp and feeling shell-shocked, but in a wonderful way. I was just thinking what the hell has just happened to me? Unbelievable but totally wondrous

STEVE RATHBORN: I first camped with Forest School Camps in 1959. I was an Elf, and I came to Whitwell, and I suppose I can genuinely say that it changed my life in a whole lot of ways, not the least being that my parents came to visit me in the middle of the camp, and liked the idea of Norfolk so much that they moved here. My father jacked in his job to move up here, and switched to teaching. I get a bit confused with my early memories. I think my Elf and Woodling memories probably merge together. I certainly remember enjoying clan immensely. In fact going up to the kitchen every day and signing on for whatever clan happened to be that day.

The first memory I have of camp is travelling up to Norwich on the train, getting out of the coach, being disgorged, and sitting under the oak tree over there. That actual oak tree. With all our rucksacks and everything, while we were sorted out into groups. Then going down to the dining circle, sitting in our groups, and then wandering off to the sites. I clearly remember, as an Elf, sharing a bivvie and being very careful about not touching the sides whenever it rained. On that first camp – I'd actually come with a school friend, when my parents came to visit half way through the camp, Tim, the friend, said to them that he'd been really unhappy and he didn't like it, and he wanted them to take him home. So they did. And I felt, as they were going, really quite bereft. This is awful and appalling, why weren't they taking me too? And five minutes after they'd gone I completely forgot about them and had a ball. The second week was much better, because Tim wasn't there. And it's made me wonder a bit ever since about the wisdom of taking a friend from a different world into the FSC world, because they don't always blend. And I think there's a lesson also to be learned there, that you can be an FSC type person some of your life, you can be another type of person other parts of your life, and some bits of different experiences blend and some don't.

LUCY: One of the things I remember is looking up to people like Ruth Illingworth because she was an older person and thinking she was really funny and witty and had the handle on life and everything. I was a Pathfinder. And then about three years later I found myself staffing with her, and in effect I was her peer, her colleague. That was something I could never have with my parents.

STEVE: The first time I took Tom (my son) on a full two week summer camp he was a Pixie. He was four. The first day or two I was there on prep camp. There weren't too many people around and everybody knew him. When the camp arrived, and there were now lots and lots of people around, and lots of interesting things for a four year old to be off and doing, the first day or two I worried a little bit, you know, about his safety and so on. There was a river on site, there were fires all over the place. But it suddenly struck me after a couple of days that it really didn't matter where he was, because there was always somebody near and around, and people were keeping an eye on him. It wasn't just the staff who were doing it, older children were doing it. There's that sense of caring that I suppose is reminiscent of the best families and the best villages. We manage to do so much in this particular environment of the outdoors – would we be capable of generating the same sense of belonging, of refreshing oneself, of re-examining oneself, re-inventing oneself in an urban environment?

memories of camp

More recently, as an adult, these experiences are less miserable and I now regret a camp where I haven't had to trench round the fire and the catering tent with rain pouring down and food to be cooked

memories of camp

I always find preparing for hike makes me nervous. All the deciding what I am going to take, where we are going to go and hanging about waiting for everyone winds me up. Once we get going, I love it. The walking and excitement give me a sense of freedom. Finding a hike site is the biggest thrill. Now I'm addicted to constant hike – mobile camps

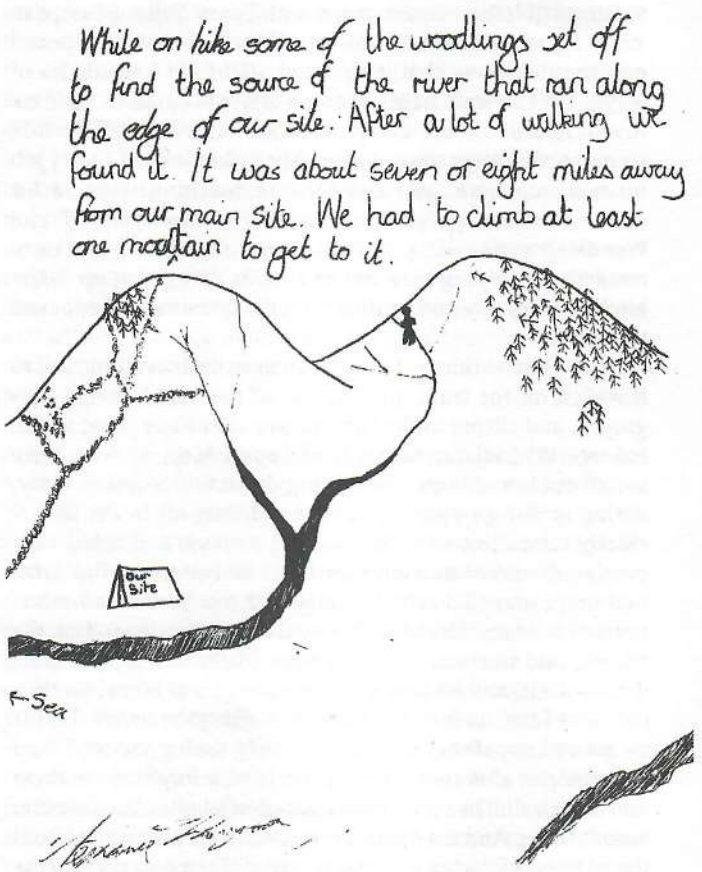
memories of camp

A kitchen fire, small groups, a tea urn on the table, the heart of camp beating quietly. The smell of smoke and the feel of home

FRANCIS COOPER: I started when I was twenty three. I think my first camp was a weekend camp where Andy was camp chief. I really didn't have a clue what I was coming in to, and I'd got none of the kind of cultural background which you have in terms of the whole pocketful of songs, and language as to what things were and what things meant. So it took me a couple of years really to catch up on just those basic things before I even started to realise what I was becoming part of.

Has anyone spoken about the flood at Radnor in 1985? I vividly remember the night before, when the storm came in. We were in the catering tent banging on the boxes, and there was lots of really loud singing and there was a huge rain.

I've been on lots of camps where there's been good singing and there's been a good sort of feeling, but this was somehow enhanced by the weather, and there was this big electric sort of feeling. I'm not sure what time we went to bed, but we went to bed while it was still raining. The next thing I knew Dan Cooper was knocking on my tent, and it was about three in the morning. And he said, 'Francis, Francis, you've got to get out. The field's flooded.' And I think I told him to go away, politely, and he said, 'No, really, the field's flooded. We're abandoning the camp.' And I opened my tent, and saw where there had been the field there was now all this water pouring over it. It was almost biblical, because we were right down low, and we had to just stuff all our kit into black bin liners, and got off the site. But the river that we'd been swimming in at prep camp had been this peaceful ally in our camping, and had now become this sort of deadly thing, screaming past, ripping things up as it went. ■



Woodling hike, 1997

Kitchen fire, SHINING CLIFF, 1978

memories of camp

Snatching quiet moments to oneself even though surrounded by people

Swimming, 1980'S

FOR YOUR INTEREST – HOW THIS INFORMATION WAS GATHERED

The Members Committee of FSC suggested a book was produced to celebrate 50 years of camping under canvas with Forest School Camps. 25 people attended a reminiscence workshop at Haddenham in July 1997 and a notice was put in ORG4 (ORG4 is a quarterly newsletter for active FSC staff). At summer pre-camps, people volunteered to be scribes for the summer camps. A letter was sent to all summer camps asking them to keep a log book of some activities during camp. Every camp celebrated the 50th anniversary at camp with a special birthday, a shared silence and a ritual burning of a log from the same tree. Over the summer a series of interviews were conducted with a selection of people involved in FSC. Edited excerpts from the interviews are included in this book. In September two events were organised – an anniversary post camps was held at Whitwell Hall where over 300 people camped for the weekend; a reunion elders lunch and a ceilidh were held later in the month.

We would like to thank everyone who sent in photographs and drawings, the summer scribes and those who agreed to be interviewed. We hope you find it an interesting read.

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Photographs: Lisa Banks, Gwynnie Griffiths, Lucy Jaffé, Andy Freedman, Caroline Jefford, Dai Lewis, Dave Monk, Jill Monk, Andy Stillman

All of the written material, transcripts and tapes of the interviews will be available at Warwick University where the FSC archives are held

Further copies of this book can be obtained from:
'Our Story', c/o 40 Miles Avenue, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 8LG
at the cost of £3.50 including p&p

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Our Story is here and now and way back when. Our Story is your story, young, old, short and tall. Our Story is the camp you've just done and the first hike ever planned. Memories of camp range from the practical everyday – a damp night in a tent, solo lighting of a fire, first words uttered at rally, a song – to the mystical and mind-changing – an intense conversation with an elder, a grateful return from hike or a child expressing delight at a new-found skill.

Our Story is published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Forest School Camps, which is an educational organisation for young people. From the small beginnings of a progressive school in the New Forest to a camping organisation which provides places for over 1200 children every year, FSC has always provided a unique educational experience in the outdoors for adults and children alike.

Most stories about Forest School Camps are passed on by word of mouth, told and retold, and rarely committed to paper. Our Story provides a glimpse of camp through interviews, log books kept at 1997 summer camps, extracts from old FSC magazines and photographs and drawings. This book is just a drop in the collective ocean of tales.