



OUR ROOTS

THE STORY OF THE FOREST SCHOOL 1929-1940



CONTENTS

INFLUENCES	2
THE SCHOOL AT GODSHILL	8
TEACHING & LEARNING	12
AN INVITATION	16
FOLKMOOT CIRCLE	18
AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW	20
WILD LIFE	22
HIKES & CAMPS	24
AN EARLY HIKE	26
RECOLLECTIONS	28
THE MOVE TO WHITWELL HALL	34
EVACUATION TO DARTINGTON	40
CLOSE CONNECTIONS	41
ANOTHER STORY	42
TESTS & TRIALS	44
MAY THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN	46

INTRODUCTION

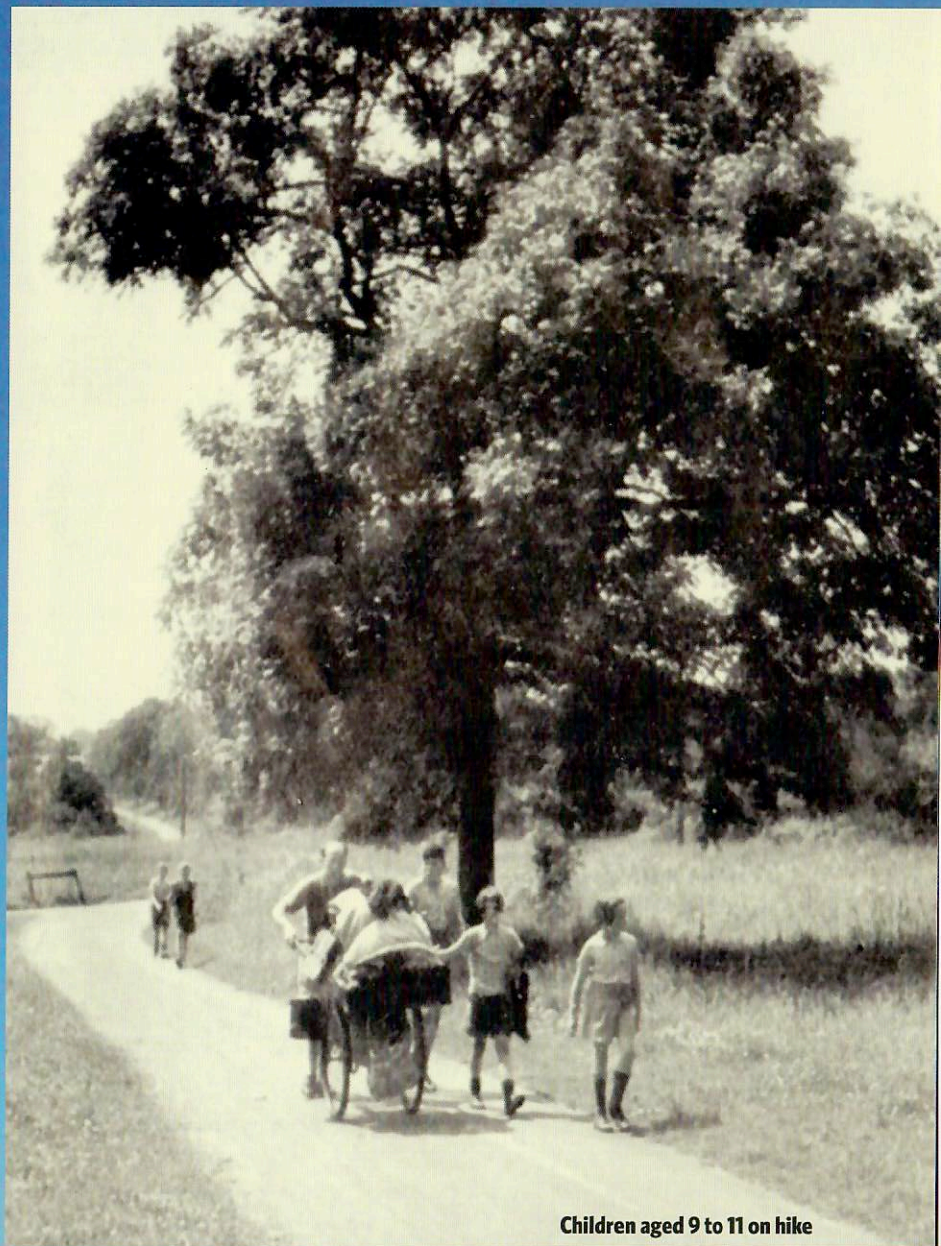
'Our Roots' tells the story of The Forest School, 1929-40.

The Forest School was an unusual educational experiment that was both ahead of its time and of its time. Although its existence was short-lived, its influence is still felt today in the flourishing organisation that is Forest School Camps.

There are numerous accounts of The Forest School – written by ex-pupils and staff, trainee teachers and education graduates and Forest School campers – exploring the origins of Forest School Camps. We decided it was time for a fresh look at the school, drawing on both old and new material and giving plenty of space to images as well as written text.

We have used some of the extensive collection of photographs, letters, interviews, drawings and prospectuses that we have collected, together with extracts from existing written accounts.

We hope to convey the essence of the Forest School – what it was like, what it meant to staff and pupils and how its spirit lives on in Forest School Camps.



Children aged 9 to 11 on hike

INFLUENCES

The role of a teacher is an important element in a child's life. In the early twentieth century, a generation of free thinkers and innovators were championing a new method of nurturing a child's education

Ernest Westlake 1855-1922

Ernest Westlake was born into a Quaker family in Fordingbridge, Hampshire. An only child, he was educated at a school in Scarborough and at University College, London, where he studied science. His main interest was field geology, and he later became a Fellow of the Geological Society as well as a Fellow of the Anthropological Institute.

In 1891 he married Lucy Rutter, also from a Quaker family, and they had two children, Aubrey and Margaret. Westlake spent many years abroad studying geology before moving, in 1919, to Sandy Balls, Godshill Ridge, a large estate of woodland on the edge of the New Forest.

The First World War had a profound effect on him and transformed him into a proselytising and radical educationalist. In 1916 he founded the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry (OWC) partly as a response to the perceived threat to civilisation posed by the war. As well as starting the OWC, Westlake wanted to start a school to put his ideas about woodcraft and education into practice. He managed to buy about 40 acres of land on the Sandy Balls Estate in the New Forest, but died before he could see a school established there. His son Aubrey, however,

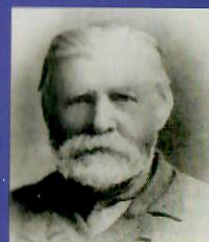
made sure that his wishes were carried out and the Forest School opened in 1929.

Ernest Thompson Seton 1860-1946

Ernest Westlake was influenced by the work and ideas of Ernest Thompson Seton. Seton was born in South Shields, Durham. His family emigrated to Canada when he was six years old. He was interested in art and natural history, and he established himself as a wildlife artist in his twenties. He became well known in Europe and North America as a naturalist, writer and artist. He was passionately interested in native Americans and what they had to offer young people – especially those who lived in cities. As well as writing and illustrating many wonderful books about nature and wildlife, Seton formed the 'Woodcraft League of America', a precursor of both the OWC and Baden Powell's Scouting movement. Both Seton and Westlake believed in the educational value of woodcraft – a first-hand contact with wild nature.

The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry

The OWC was founded by Ernest Westlake and the first Grand Chieftain was Ernest Thompson Seton. It was a co-educational, non-political, non-denominational



Ernest Westlake, aged 66. Jean Westlake describes her grand father Ernest as a 'remarkable' man

How to construct a teepee from 'Two Little Savages: A Book of American Woodcraft for Boys' by Ernest Thompson Seton, 1908





An early folkmoot,
Sandy Balls estate

organisation that practised woodcraft both as a form of education and as a way of life within a caring community. Lodges – assembled members – were established around Britain. Members of the Lodge were divided into: troops of Elves, 4-8 years; packs of Woodlings, 8-12 years; tribes of Trackers, 12-15 years; companies of Pathfinders, 15-18 years and fellowships of Wayfarers, adults. Each group had its own uniform, tests and trials, badges and shoulder knots. An emphasis on ceremony, language and occasion all contributed towards the establishing of a Lodge. The activities for each Lodge were carefully mapped out. There were ritualised activities. There was also a specialised terminology and even a special signal – the woodcraft whistle – and a watchword: 'Blue Sky'.

Sandy Balls became the chief OWC camping site. The first camp was

held there in the summer of 1920 with a group of 12 boys aged 12-13 from the Smoke Tribe, a Woodcraft group based in south east London. The camp ran for a month. These boys experienced, for the first time, a primitive environment. An annual folkmoot for the various lodges around the country was held there.

The OWC still exists today and celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2009.

Aubrey Westlake 1893-1985

Aubrey Westlake, Ernest's son, was a GP in Bermondsey. He was involved in the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry as a young man. He organised and ran the first OWC camp. He inherited Sandy Balls when his father died in 1922 and took over the leadership of the OWC until 1933. He was known as Golden Eagle and his wife, Marjorie Harrod, as Appleblossom. As Chieftain and Lady they wore ceremonial robes for special occasions.



Aubrey and Marjorie
Westlake in Woodcraft
uniforms, circa 1920's

As well as running a busy medical practice in Bermondsey, Aubrey Westlake was interested in a wide range of ideas and practices including: education, social and monetary reform, conservation and complementary medicine and healing.

He was instrumental in realising his father's dream of starting The Forest School at Sandy Balls. He chaired the company that owned the school which opened in 1929. He sent his children to the school and acted as the school doctor. His cousin – Cuthbert Rutter – was the school's headmaster.

The progressive school movement

The first progressive schools in Britain were established at the end of the 19th century. These provided an alternative to the public schools which offered (predominantly) boys a traditional or classical curriculum plus games and sport, the prefect system and corporal punishment. The 'New Schools', including Bedales (founded in 1893) and King Alfred School (founded in 1897) promoted the idea that education should be concerned with much more than just classwork and lessons. They placed emphasis on the value of learning by doing, and on the school as a child-centred community. Progressive schools wanted to make the curriculum more relevant and useful, and to make teaching methods less formal. Relationships between teachers and children, as well as relationships between children, were considered vitally important.

After the First World War, more progressive schools were founded, including Summerhill (1921), Dartington (1925), Forest School (1929) and Kilquhanity (1940). This second wave of schools was even more experimental than its predecessor. This can be seen in the establishment of self-government via the school council, where rules and discipline were enforced without the traditional authoritarian government and attitudes of the public school. This democratic ethos was a fundamental plank of the progressive school movement.



Most progressive schools were boarding schools (King Alfred School is an exception) and co-educational. For the first progressive schools, manual work in the school grounds and on the school farm provided the alternative model to the public school games field. In the later wave of schools, children were left very much to their own devices, particularly in the 'ultra' progressive communities like Summerhill, where they did not even have to attend lessons.

There was a parallel New Schools movement on the continent. This is reflected in the New Education Fellowship to which most progressive schools belonged. *New Era*, the journal of the New Education Fellowship, was published in three editions, French, English and German. In Germany, Kurt Hahn founded Salem School in 1919. After leaving Hitler's Germany, Hahn went on to found Gordonstoun in Scotland in 1934. Hahn's schools were not like the English progressive schools. The ethos at Gordonstoun centred around the idea of character building through a prescriptive daily timetable that included cold showers and plenty of physical activities including seamanship. Hahn went on to found the Outward Bound Movement based on 'education through adventure'.

One common feature of all these schools



Woodcrafters dancing in the festive circle, Sandy Balls

Most progressive schools were boarding schools (g Alfred School is an exception) and educational. For the first progressive schools, manual work in the school grounds and on the school farm provided the alternative model to the public school games field. In the later years of schools, children were left very much to their own devices, particularly in the 'ultra' progressive communities like Summerhill, where children did not even have to attend lessons.

There was a parallel New Schools movement on the continent. This is reflected in the New Education Review, a journal to which most progressive schools contributed. *New Era*, the journal of the New Education Review, was published in three editions, French, English and German. In Germany, Kurt Hahn founded Gordonstoun in 1919. After leaving Hitler's Germany, Hahn went on to found Gordonstoun in Scotland in 1934. Hahn's schools were not like the English progressive schools. The ethos at Gordonstoun centred on the idea of character building through a prescriptive daily timetable that included cold showers and plenty of physical activities including seamanship. Hahn went on to found the Outward Bound movement based on 'education through adventure'.

One common feature of all these schools

was the charismatic headteacher who was often larger than life. Working alongside them was inspiring but not always easy. It is hard to think about individual schools like Summerhill, Dartington, Kilquhanity or Gordonstoun without the names of the men who moulded them – A. S. Neill, Bill Curry, John Aitkenhead and Kurt Hahn, and of course, Forest School and Cuthbert Rutter.

Theories and ideas

Together with the progressive schools' concepts of child-centred education and learning by doing, two early twentieth century theories influenced Ernest Westlake's views on education. First, the biological theory of 'recapitulation' advanced by the American psychologist Stanley Hall. This claimed that 'in its growth to maturity the child recapitulates the great stages of social development in the history of the race'. Hall's theories led Ernest Westlake to believe in the vital significance of the natural environment in education so that young people could connect with the origins of their existence. Secondly, the sociologist Patrick Geddes argued that learning needed to be made more relevant for children. He called for an educational programme based on Heart, Hand and Head. Thus the three H's would replace the traditional three R's.

'Educational practice should concern itself with the progressive needs of the child's physical life up to the age of fourteen. He should learn to take care of himself in the forest and in the field; to take part in the ordered and obviously useful work of a small farm; to make and do things with his hands; to compete with his equals and then to co-operate with them; to watch the clouds and the stars and the storm; and to feel the strength of the winds, and to speculate about them'

NORMAN GLAISTER AT THE CONFERENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, 1926

THE FOREST SCHOOL is inspired by the educational ideals of the late Ernest Westlake (who founded the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry) and is situated on the Sandy Balls estate in pine and beech woods on the western edge of the New Forest, overlooking the Avon valley.

The school seeks to prepare the minds and bodies of its children—girls and boys—so that they may be equipped for contact with every phase of experience of modern life.

The child of the Forest School learns to understand that the Avon valley, which spreads out as a picture before his eyes, is an epitome of the whole of civilised life. It is the progressive exploration and understanding of these surroundings and human activities which determine the instruction given at the Forest School.

A hidebound conventional approach to education is avoided, the school methods being based on the belief that in the fullest self-expression is to be found the most rational road to learning; natural curiosity leading to inquiry, and inquiry—capably and sympathetically directed—to the comprehensive quest of knowledge.

At the Forest School the child is brought into touch with realities and is helped by a practical pursuit of the primitive arts to realise that he can learn by doing. The teaching of subjects required for examinations is not neglected, but is made subsidiary to the development of a healthy grasp of real life.

The school organisation is based on the grades of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, ranging from Elves, who are from 5 to 8 years of age, to Pathfinders, who are from 15 to 18, and every method is employed to make school life a joyful adventure, with the end always in view of producing an adult at harmony with himself and his environment and able to assume without undue effort, when the time comes, the fullest responsibilities of citizenship.

FEES. The inclusive fee for board, tuition, laundry, books, and normal medical attention is thirty guineas per term, payable in advance.

A reduction of 10% is made when a whole year's fees are paid in advance. A reduction of 5% is allowed for the second member of the same family, and 10% for subsequent members. The fees for children whose parents are members of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry are also subject to a reduction of 10%.


Headmaster: CUTHBERT K. RUTTER, B.A. (Cantab). with whom parents desiring an interview should communicate at The Forest School, Godshill, Fordingbridge, Hants.

Application for the detailed prospectus should be addressed to the Headmaster, or to the Secretary, James F. Sowerby, F.C.A., 20 Wormwood Street, E.C.2 (Telephone: London Wall 3393).

Proprietors: Forest School Limited; Directors: Aubrey T. Westlake, B.A. (Cantab.), M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Chairman); J. Norman Glaister, M.B., B.S.; Cuthbert K. Rutter, B.A. (Cantab.)



This early prospectus, left, clearly reflects some of the ideas that influenced Ernest Westlake's views on education



‘A child at the Forest School is not forced to learn anything unwillingly, but being **free to explore** the environment, and finding himself in the company of friendly and well-informed elders he begins his true education by asking endless questions’

THE FOREST SCHOOL PROSPECTUS, 1931

Woodling Point: This pine tree was planted on the grave of Ernest Westlake in 1923 as a symbol of resurrection. The name ‘Woodling Point’ was chosen by Westlake as a special place for the Woodlings. The group would go out for a morning walk and at some point they would stop and have their break. This photograph was taken on a visit in 2009 to Sandy Balls, the first site of the Forest School

prospectus, left,
ts some of the
fluenced Ernest
ews on education

THE SCHOOL AT GODSHILL

'The school is situated in a beautiful pine and beech wood, 200 feet above the sea, overlooking the Avon valley on the Western edge of the New Forest. The school estate, 100 acres of woodland, is a veritable children's paradise' SCHOOL PROSPECTUS

The site and accommodation

The school was initially opened in 1929 by Paul and Margery Abbatt with four pupils. It had to close after only several weeks due to an outbreak of scarlet fever. It re-opened in 1930 with Cuthbert Rutter as headmaster.

It is impossible to describe the Forest School without reference to its setting which was an integral part of the educational ideal of Ernest Westlake. All the written and verbal accounts of the school mention the surrounding woodland. Many of the former pupils have hazy memories of lessons while retaining vivid recollections of time they spent outside in the woods. Geoffrey Knight (who was at both Sandy Balls and Whitwell) says he remembers very little but recalls a 'flag raiding game played in the woods after dark one night. We slept out after the game under a large coniferous tree which was very climbable.'

'I was expecting the school to be a large building, but to my surprise it was just a small wooden bungalow in the middle of a pine wood.' Thus N Brand (née Nellie Meatyard) describes her first sight of Forest School. The school moved to Whitwell Hall in Norfolk in 1938. According to N Brand 'Forest School was by now finding it very difficult to go on living in the woods at Godshill.'

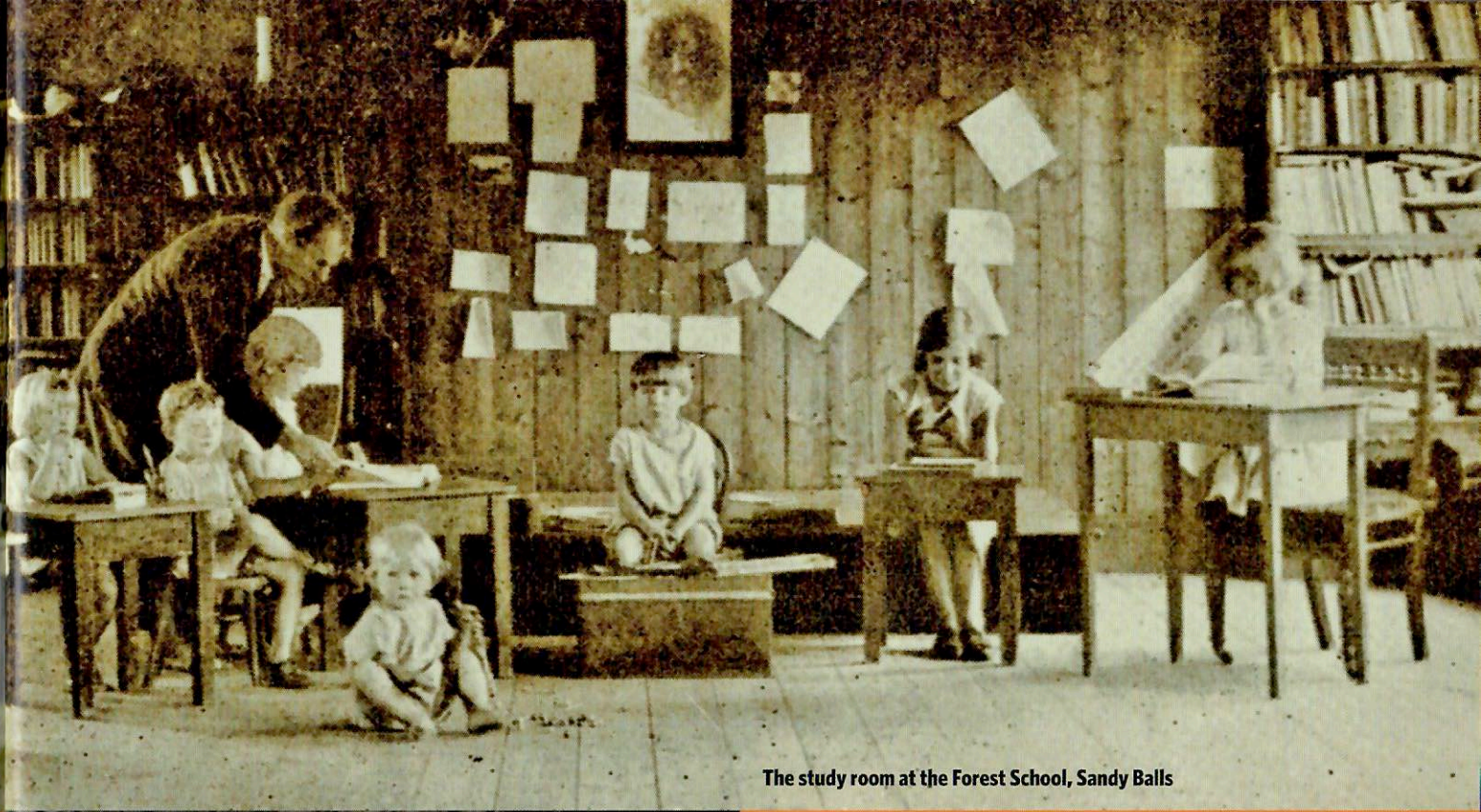
The teachers

Cuthbert Rutter was Forest School's first and only headmaster. He, like Westlake, was a Quaker, and his teaching experience included borstal and work in Bethnal Green, at the time a poor area of London.



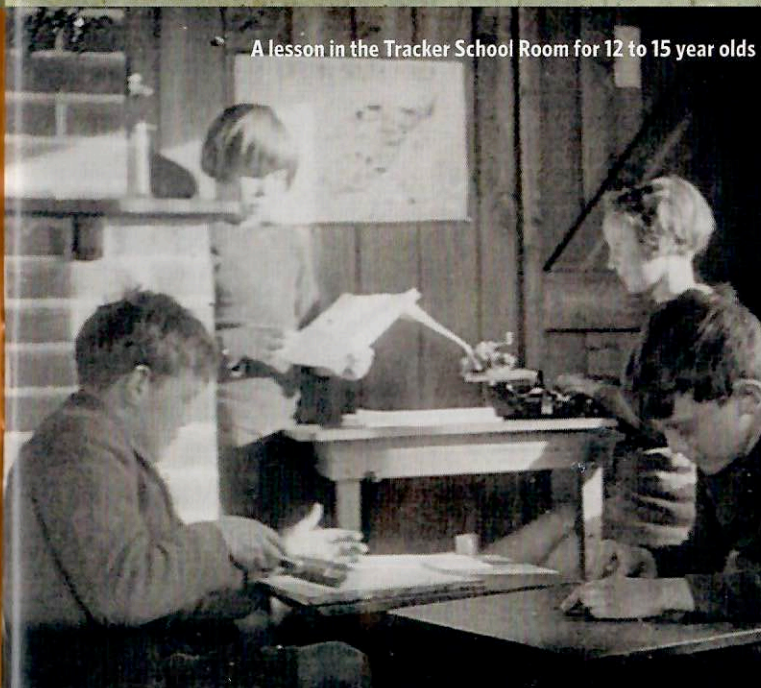
He became responsible for putting the idealistic theories of Ernest Westlake into practice. He was clearly both a charismatic individual and a gifted headmaster. His early death just after the end of the Second World War was a great sadness for all those involved in the by now defunct Forest School.

Over the ten-year lifespan of the school, about 50 adults were involved as teachers and house-parents. Many of the staff were invited to join the school by the headmaster, including N Brand, Margery Guillen and Ron Brand. The latter two were both members of the OWC, as was Cuthbert Rutter. Ron Brand was also involved with Grith Fyrd. Teaching qualifications and experience mattered less than an idealism suited to the ethos of the school. Cuthbert Rutter, according to N Brand 'wanted people who could love children but leave them free to make their own decisions and learn about



The study room at the Forest School, Sandy Balls

became responsible for putting the idealistic
 ries of Ernest Westlake into practice. He was
 rly both a charismatic individual and a gifted
 mester. His early death just after the end of
 Second World War was a great sadness for all
 e involved in the by now defunct Forest School.
 Over the ten-year lifespan of the school, about
 dults were involved as teachers and house-
 nts. Many of the staff were invited to join the
 ol by the headmaster, including N Brand,
 gery Guillen and Ron Brand. The latter two
 e both members of the OWC, as was Cuthbert
 er. Ron Brand was also involved with Grith Fyrd.
 hing qualifications and experience mattered less
 an idealism suited to the ethos of the school.
 bert Rutter, according to N Brand 'wanted
 ole who could love children but leave them
 to make their own decisions and learn about



A lesson in the Tracker School Room for 12 to 15 year olds

**‘The Forest School does
 not set itself to prepare
 every child for some
 academic examination.
 The curriculum is
 therefore broad and
 elastic, combining
 routine with freedom’**

EARLY PROSPECTUS

things because they wanted to find out all about life.' They were paid little – only £45 a year in 1940 – and their bed and board for term time only. Staff were expected to participate in chores inside and out.

Some of the teachers' names are still familiar to members of Forest School Camps – notably Ron Brand, known as Beefy, and Margery Guillen.

Beefy was a member of the Grith Fyrd group which was based in the wood at Sandy Balls and was also a member of the OWC. He joined the school as housefather of Meerhay, and was an active staff member until the school moved to Whitwell Hall. He married Nellie, known as N. Their first child, Jan, was born at the school, an event remembered by Jean Westlake, a Woodling pupil at the time. Beefy, like many of the original members of the school, was very keen that it should re-open after the war. Sadly, these hopes never materialised.

Margery Guillen, who taught Arts and Crafts, was also a housemother and led some of the school hikes. Margery had joined the OWC in the 1920s. In the mid 1930s, she left the Royal College of Art, where she had been studying, and taught for a few years at the Forest School. She did not follow the School's move to Whitwell Hall, but remained active in both the OWC and Forest School Camps.

The pupils

The school was small. There were never more than 30 to 40 pupils at a time. By 1940 there were 26 children. It was co-educational. The age range was 5–18, although many of the pupils only attended the school for a few years.

Michael Parker was at the school from 1935 to 1937. He had been at a prep school on the South Coast where he was very unhappy. He stayed for two years before going to City of London Boys' School, and, according to his sister, Barbara Tizard, was very happy at the Forest School, partly because he only went to English and History lessons and didn't have to participate in organised games.

Liza Banks attended the school from 9 to 12 years old, when she was then taken away and went abroad. She did return when she was 15 but only for one term, though she said she was 'very pleased to be back'!

Joy Roberts joined the Forest School in 1932 when she was seven and left six years later in 1938.

Hazel Powell (Knight) was at the school between the age of five and seven, with her two brothers Keith and Geoffrey. Keith attended from the age of nine to 12. None of the Knight children moved with the school to Norfolk, going instead to Summerhill.

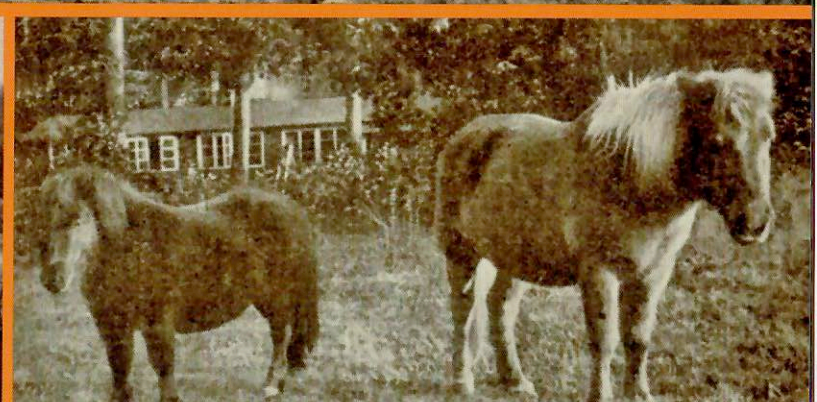
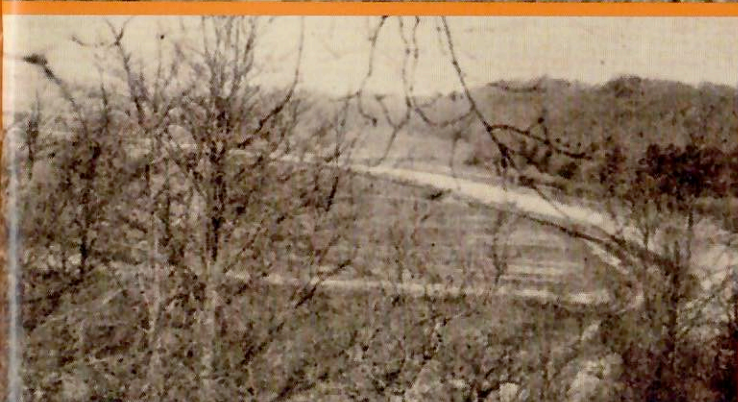
Jean, Martin and Keith Westlake were the children of Aubrey and grandchildren of Ernest Westlake. Jean has written a wonderful account of the school in her book '70 Years a-Growing' which is a mine of information about the Forest School. She was at the school for two years from 1935–1937.

Most of the pupils were from middle class families who were aware of prevailing liberal ideas about education and society. Some parents were wealthy, but not all. N Brand, in her account of the school, mentions 'two boys from Bermondsey, a poor working class area of London, and a mentally handicapped girl' as part of the original group of pupils. The fees were £30 a term, rising to £35 a term by 1938. (The cost of fish and chips in London in 1930 was one and threepence.)

WINTER TERM CLOTHES LIST FOR BOYS AND GIRLS Forest School, Godshill, Fordingbridge

3 prs vest and 3 prs pants or	2 prs indoor shoes or slippers (preferably leather)
3 prs combinations	1 clothes brush
3 prs navy shorts (3 prs knickers and shirts for girls if worn)	1 hair brush and comb
3 navy jerseys	1 tooth brush
1 navy blazer	1 loofah or flannel
4 prs woollen stockings	2 prs braces or 2 belts
3 prs pyjamas	
3 shirts with open collars (boys)	All clothes should be clearly marked.
1 dressing gown	Wellingtons are also allowed and have been found a comfort for occasional use by children who have them.
1 doz handkerchiefs (clearly marked)	
1 overcoat	
1 mackintosh	
2 prs strong walking shoes (1 extra pair laces)	A dozen stamped addressed envelopes should be included in the kit

Top: Clay modelling for all ages
Bottom right: The Forest School pet ponies
Bottom left: View of the Avon Valley from
the Forest School woodlands



TEACHING & LEARNING

Extracts from the 1931 prospectus show clearly what the children at the Forest School were being taught. It also portrays the unique ethos of the school

The emphasis on self expression, growth and freedom is common to all the progressive educational experiments of the time – Summerhill and Dartington for example. What is unique to the Forest School is the emphasis on woodcraft, the outdoor life and the natural surroundings of the school. The natural environment drove the curriculum. The outdoors was the living classroom.

The OWC system of tests and trials were adopted or adapted for use in the school. Thus the 'Tracker Tree' had to be climbed in order to progress into the Tracker group. The lone vigil test – a night alone in the woods together with a written account of the experience – had to be passed before entering an older group. Jean Westlake recalls a Woodling trial that consisted of swimming across the river holding a lighted candle in your mouth, and silence tests that lasted for a whole day. The 'Deeds', 'Honours' and 'Adventures' of the OWC were used as recognition of merit rather than conventional prizes.

Perhaps the most direct expression of the centrality of woodcraft was the emphasis on camping. The 1931 prospectus states that 'camping, when the weather is suitable, is a normal part of the school routine.' Members of staff led hikes in the summer term and these were considered a part of the curriculum.

There were also summer camps for the whole age range of pupils and their siblings. Barbara Tizard, sister of one of the pupils, remembers being sent on these camps although she was never a pupil at the school. She went for three years running, 1936, 1937 and 1938, the last of which was at Whitwell. She remembers these camps as 'tightly organised with activities for groups, campfires and proper camping in tents with

groundsheets'. The camps always ended with a Night Game that she found terrifying. She used to go home and insist on sleeping on the floor.

An early prospectus of the Forest School contains a section entitled 'The Curriculum'. This begins: 'The Forest School does not set itself to prepare every child for some academic examination. The curriculum is therefore broad and elastic, combining routine with freedom.'

A further extract from the curriculum addresses the various subjects covered:

SCIENCE: For the juniors, nature study is made the basis of particular scientific studies. All the children necessarily become acquainted with the elements of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, botany, geology, geography, history and sociology. Specialisation will be allowed in scientific subjects only for older scholars who may need it in connection with a future career ... the method of observation, experiment and deduction is used in all scientific work.

LANGUAGES: Conversational contacts with a linguistic expert in at least 10 modern languages is available at all times.

ARTS: Art subjects comprise drawing, painting and modelling for all ... Needlecraft is taught to all, boys and girls alike, who are required to help in making their own school uniforms.

DANCING, SINGING, ACTING and DRAMATIC WORK and INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC are regarded by the Forest School as essential means for self expression ... also, under the heading **OCCUPATIONS** children study and take part in gardening, the simpler forms of farming and agricultural life and the crafts which go to the making of the homestead.



Pot making at Whitwell Hall

**‘The aim of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry
is to give children a world they want’**

THE FOREST SCHOOL, BY ERNEST WESTLAKE, 1930

**‘The object of the Forest School is to train children
for life in this world. There are two worlds –
that which is (the real world) and that which is to
come (the ideal world). Our school will try to meet
the claims of both’**

THE FOREST SCHOOL, BY ERNEST WESTLAKE, 1930

EXTRACTS FROM THE PROSPECTUS OF THE FOREST SCHOOL ...

The Forest School offers boys and girls an education based upon opportunities for full personal development. A boy or girl entering the school between, say, the ages of five and eight, achieves this by those progressive stages which were clearly defined by the late Ernest Westlake, the originator of an educational ideal which a group of his followers have now realised. The children of the Forest School are influenced by twentieth century culture in a primitive environment suited to their age. The school-house is situated in a beautiful pine and beech wood, 200 feet above the sea, overlooking the Avon valley on the western edge of the New Forest. The school estate, 100 acres of woodland, is a veritable children's paradise.

AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

A child's life at the Forest School is regarded as a joyful adventure. Happiness, which is a child's birthright, follows from personal satisfaction of achievement and the natural life of an organised group.

It furnishes a progressive series of environments which call forth at each stage the highest powers of which the child is capable, and fit him for further conquests. His personality is developed along 'evolutionary lines in surroundings graduated in accordance with the historic stages of human culture, so that having mastered the earlier and simpler conditions of the child-life of humanity, the child may be gradually led up to the mastery of adult modern conditions.'

The school thus produces children who are true to nature - boys who are real boys, and girls who are real girls - and fits them to take their places in society.

The child who passes through the school is equipped to make contact with every phase

of experience of modern life. Good habits are acquired as a matter of course in the Forest School. Understanding of social usage leads to pleasant speech and polished manners.

Subject to the requirements of community discipline, each child in the Forest School has the greatest possible liberty. The leaders of the school observe the child's natural aptitude and provide a means for its expression and growth. A child at the Forest School is not forced to learn anything unwillingly, but being free to explore the environment, and finding himself in the company of friendly and well-informed elders, he begins his true education by asking endless questions.

The child is led to answer his own questions, either by observation, experiment, or searching in a book. Questions interesting to a group of children give rise to a 'project' lesson needing active cooperation. The Forest School child is thus brought into contact with realities, and contact with reality is the essential stimulus to all true mental development.

THE FOREST SCHOOL METHOD

In place of formal examinations for promotion from class to class, the children complete 'woodcraft' trials and tests. These trials in each grade are related to the natural stages of mental development.

The children train their sense perceptions, sharpen their wits, or cultivate moral and social qualities - knowledge being always acquired for personal or social ends. There are no set tests for those under eight years of age, where the method combines systematic occupations with free development.

The school staff act as leaders of groups rather than school teachers. They help and influence the children rather than coerce them into doing merely adult activities in a childish manner. The duty of the leader is to provide each child with the opportunity and

material for self expression. Development of personality in the group is the end in view.

There is a complete spirit of give and take between leaders and children. The children are made to feel that they are taking part in the organisation of the school, and the attendance at 'councils' develops the capacity of self-government. No prizes are offered for school work. Recognition of individual merit is by way of 'Deeds', 'Honours', and 'Adventures'.

HEALTH AND DIET

The health of each child is the foremost concern of the school management. Hygiene habits are inculcated. There is adequate medical and psychological supervision. A certificate of physical fitness for active out-of-door life may be asked for on entry. The usual health form is required after vacations. The Forest School seeks to establish a traditional hardihood. Each child is expected to do gymnastic and rhythmic exercises and to play the school games according to season. The school work, as far as possible, is carried on in the open air. Camping, when the weather is suitable, is a normal part of the school routine. The fare is simple and wholesome. The school diet is based on a scientific system which provides all the elements necessary for perfect health during the growing period. All dairy products are obtained from farms in the neighbourhood, and an ample supply of fresh vegetables and fruit is obtainable from the school gardens and local small-holders.

SCHOOL TERMS

The school terms and vacations follow the usual practice. Camp schools are organised for the Easter and Summer vacation. The Summer Camp is held partly in the New Forest. The fee for children attached to the Forest School is one and a half guineas per week; for other children two guineas.



Pupils and teachers
learning a country dance.
Photographed at Sandy Balls

‘The ultimate aim will be to develop as many as possible of the child’s instincts, faculties, and potentialities as are not antagonistic to the society in which he lives. We shall encourage him to **look upon the world** as Adam did in God’s first Garden; not to echo the past, but to interpret the present and **learn of Nature** and of God rather than of men living or dead. This freshness of spirit and outlook we believe to be incomparable in value, and shall ever keep to the forefront’

ERNEST WESTLAKE, AT THE CONFERENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, 1923

AN INVITATION

To the Members of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry And Their Friends NEWS FROM THE FOREST SCHOOL BY CUTHBERT KIRK RUTTER

The children of Forest School are enjoying life. They range in age from 3 to 15. You will find them busy in the schoolrooms, in the woods, in the first school home of "Woodcot" on the river and on the farms of Godshill. At Woodcot they cook once a week in turn for the community under expert guidance; in the schoolroom they study the three Rs; in the woods they become observant and hardy; in and on the river they swim and row; on the farm they learn patience and perseverance. During free times they follow handicrafts of their own choice. The potter's wheel, the carpenter's bench and music singing and dancing find a place amongst their chosen occupations.

The school is now a lodge of the Order and includes adventurers of all grades. Deeds are freely claimed, disputed and tried for school lessons and out of school work. The children are happy in their work. So also are the staff.

Dorothy Glaister, MA Cambridge, who took mathematics for her degree, knows how to make arithmetic interesting. Alison Hoggett who plays and teaches violin and piano conducts the singing and the dancing. Nellie Meatyard makes Nature Study fascinating. The Head Master finds delight in directing English subjects which includes Bible reading. Work in the school garden and on the farm is under the supervision of Allan Hoggett.

The school has recently acquired "Meerhay" and let it until required for future use by the school itself. "Meerhay" is an extensive building on the edge of the woods. "Pope's Farm" is now also school property. This includes two acres of grass land as well as the thatched house on the right hand side of the main gateway into Sandy Balls wood. The bungalows on the left of the main gate now constitute the class rooms and children's studies. This latter property with its acre of orchard and garden is available by the generosity of Professor J.R. Bellerby the effect of which is to make the rental of £35 a year into a bursary for a Forest School child. With these three additional properties Forest School is in a position to accomplish the aims of the Order as laid down in Part 4 of its original programme.

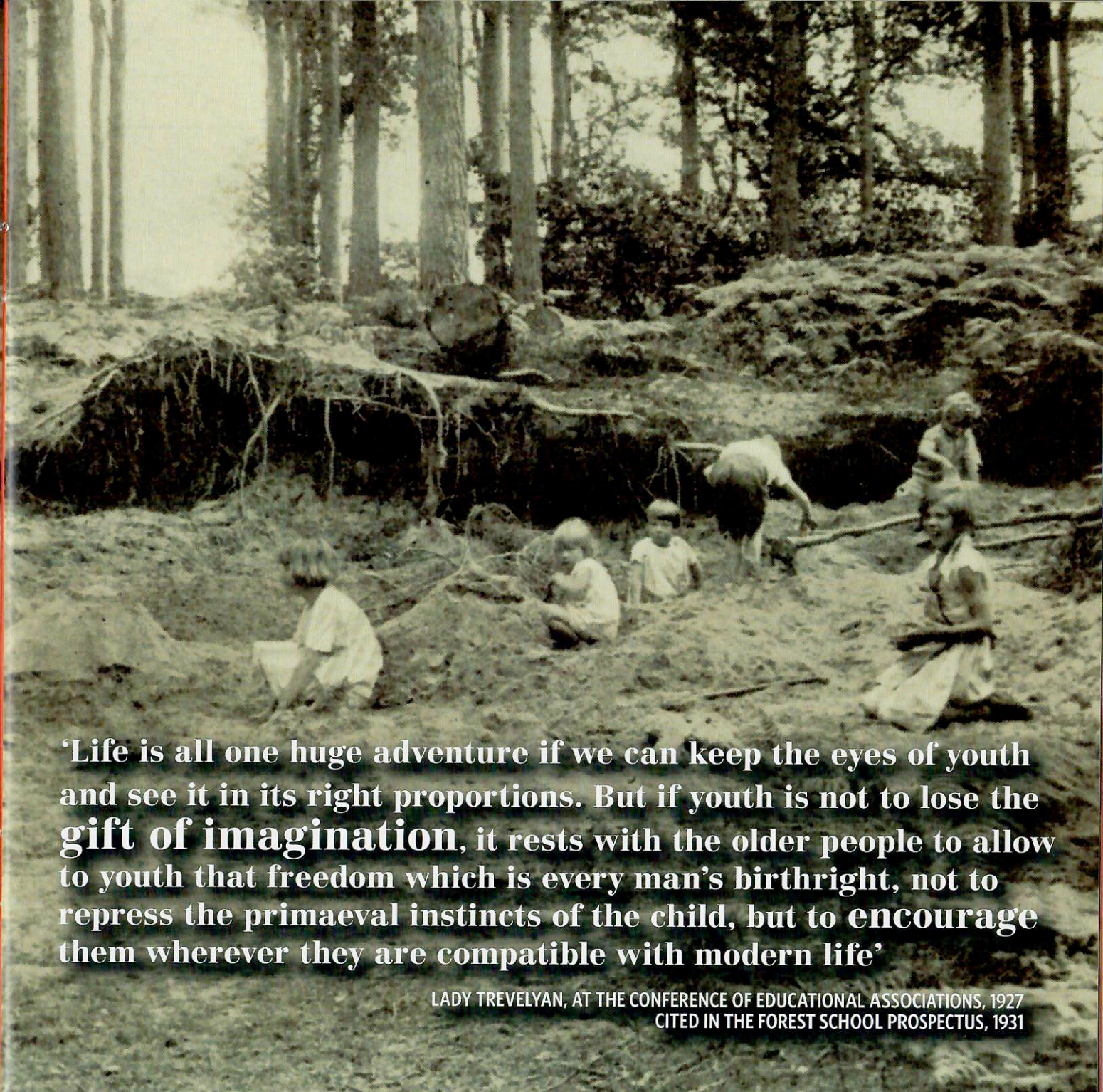
To the accomplishment of these aims all members of the Order are committed. Please therefore make the work of Forest School known far and wide. Further information will gladly be sent to anyone interested and anyone able to visit the school will be made welcome.

Nowadays you can spend a week-end at Godshill very cheaply without the necessity of bringing equipment. A Youth Hostel of the Youth Hostel Association is now open. You can join the association by sending 2/6d annual subscription to Jack Catchpool, Welwyn Garden City Herts. You can then use the Youth Hostel at 1/- a night. The Hostel provides bed, blankets and cooking equipment.



The sand pit on the Forest School Estate, pictured above

The letter on the left was written by Cuthbert Rutter, headmaster of The Forest School. It illustrates the close link between the school and the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry



‘Life is all one huge adventure if we can keep the eyes of youth and see it in its right proportions. But if youth is not to lose the gift of imagination, it rests with the older people to allow to youth that freedom which is every man’s birthright, not to repress the primaeval instincts of the child, but to encourage them wherever they are compatible with modern life’

LADY TREVELYAN, AT THE CONFERENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, 1927
CITED IN THE FOREST SCHOOL PROSPECTUS, 1931

The sand pit on the Forest School Estate, pictured above

The letter on the left was written by Cuthbert Rutter, headmaster of The Forest School. It illustrates the close link between the school and the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry

FOLKMOOT CIRCLE

'A child who has had the experience of a woodcraft education has touched **life's basic essentials**. He has learnt what life is like without a burden of expensive extras. When he has grown up enough to be ready to buy any of them he happens to require, he will appreciate them all the more for having begun without them. What is more, he will not fear to do without them again, if it suits his purpose to do so'

WOODCRAFT DISCIPLINE, DOROTHY REVEL, 1930



THE FOLKMOOT CIRCLE

This natural amphitheatre was chosen by Ernest Westlake as the setting for the Ceremonial Circle, including a 'council fireplace', which the Order of the Woodcraft Chivalry used for their Folkmoos. The ceremony for the opening and closing of Folkmoot was devised by Golden Eagle (Aubrey Westlake) in 1924 and has been used ever since as the basis for not just the OWC, but also the recent International Woodcraft Gatherings.

Whilst many visitors have found the name 'Sandy Balls' strange or funny, it is a descriptive term and relates to the hills of sand over gravel, with clay below formed in the Eocene period. The name has been known since the time of Henry VII. Giant's Grave is, perhaps, the biggest of these sandy balls and nestling in its side is the Folkmoot Circle.

The folkmoot circle, initially established in the 1920's, is still in use today. This photograph was taken in February, 2009. It is one of the few original sites on the Sandy Balls estate that would be recognisable to the former pupils of the first Forest School. The rest of Sandy Balls is now a holiday centre

AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW

The unconventional approach of education at the Forest School attracted attention. Here are a couple of contemporary articles printed in the national press in the 1930's

THE WOODLANDERS by Tom Stephenson

Somewhere in the West of England fourteen blithe and healthy youngsters are enjoying a journey of adventure and discovery. Day by day they are tramping through the countryside, each carrying his own kit. Every night they are pitching their tents in a different place and round the camp fire discussing the events of the day and the prospects of the morrow.

Actually they are at school, or rather they have extended the confines of their school to include three counties through which they are roaming and learning as they go. For a fortnight, as a part of their school curriculum, these fortunate children are tramping through lovely and historic

scenes seeing for themselves much that others will never even read about.

The past weekend I spent among these happy trekkers and sat round their camp fire. On the western edge of the New Forest, on a wooded height overlooking the winding Avon, we had pitched our tents in the grounds of the Forest School. In fact, one of the pupils, a vivacious, freckled, sandy-haired lad, had led us to the site, a green space amongst the trees cleared by the children themselves to serve as a festive circle.

It was obvious this was no ordinary school. Here there was no regimentation, no stern command or reproving voice, but a happy tribe in which the tiniest toddler addressed the head as 'Cuthbert' and other members of the staff answered to 'Beefy', 'Bert' and 'Allan'.

Like the adjacent Grith Fyrd camp, where unemployed men were discovering a new life, the school was a practical attempt to apply the principles of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry.

These people believe that 'the child has a life of its own to live, that he is something more than an imperfect adult to be improved into a stock pattern as soon as possible, that a school should not be a factory taking in children as raw material and turning out commercially valuable citizens but rather a place where children may find the right and natural conditions for their further growth.' They seek to train the children 'in self help and simplicity of living so that later in life they will neither desire riches, nor to obtain them at the expense of their neighbours,' and to teach

them self direction under conditions of freedom, and aversion to the spirit of militarism - 'civility to those above you, dominance to those below you.'

On the Sunday morning we attended the monthly lodge meeting of the tribe, which embraces the whole school, scholars and staff. The Keeper of Fire set alight the pile of wood with something of the ceremonial that may have been practised when fire was a newly discovered god to be carefully served and tended. After a short reading, leaders' reports were received, and then members of the tribe were asked to relate any deeds they had performed so that the meeting might decide if they were worthy to be inscribed in the records.

'Tich', a bright, sharp-featured Woodling, a marked personality for all his brief years, told of his share in the making of a trek cart, and it was agreed this should be recorded. Then Sam, a little older although not quite so confident, mentioned that in the wet weather, by cutting a channel he had drained a muddy path and made it more passable, and this was also deemed worthy of record. Then the marshal reported that all preparations had been made for the fourteen days' trek which was to begin next day. From the school they would make to Cranbourne Chase, and thence to Shaftesbury, the ancient Shaston perched high on the hill ...

Happy children with forest and blue skies and green grass instead of stuffy classrooms.

Saturday, July 6th, 1935



Outside the sunny sleeping room

They live in huts in a forest: sleep out of doors in the summer - THESE CHILDREN HAVE TO BE THEIR OWN MOTHERS!

Written by Winifred Pryke 'who tells of another of the strangest schools you've ever heard of'

In the New Forest is a school founded in memory of a strange Quaker who thought that all children should be reared in the wild surroundings of a wood. There, children from the age of three up to the age of eighteen are divided into three groups. The youngest are the 'elves', the next group are the 'woodlings', and the eldest group are the 'pathfinders'. The average home today has 'too much mechanized softness in it to make children develop properly.' Those are the views of the headmaster.

From the very start, therefore, of schooldays the children are expected to do their own domestic work, provide their amusements, and make their own toys and apparatus. If they refuse to do it, nobody is prepared to do it for them. So that's that.

The school is comprised of a great number of small huts all dotted about in the forest. A different subject is taught in each hut, and the children have equipped most of them. One German girl last term wanted to study chemistry. "You need a large table for that," said the tutor. So the girl set to work and made herself a large table. In another hut the children sleep in the winter. In the summer they mostly sleep out of doors. There is water laid on which can be heated for baths but there is no main drainage, and staff and children use earth closets. "Which is just as it should be," said the headmistress.

Up at seven o'clock in the morning, the children tidy their rooms and then go and get their breakfasts. Until recently each child was responsible for washing its own clothes - or going dirty. But some parents complained, as most of the boys preferred to remain dirty,

and if you wear the same shirts for a term they are bound to be a bit strange at the end of thirteen weeks or so, whatever your offspring may think. So now the staff keep an eye on the washing problem. The girls, on the whole, are quite fussy over cleanliness.

Lessons start at nine or thereabouts. Until the age of twelve children as a rule do not attend them regularly, but after that age they get an urge to work, and then they have to promise to attend a fixed number of times. On Sundays all the children have a 'pack' lunch and are then at liberty to go off into the forest and eat it when and where they like. Children and staff prepare the lunch, of course.

Last term several 'treks' were organized and carried out by the children. These 'treks' are a regular spring and summer feature of the school life. The 'pathfinders' set off with packs on their backs which include food and sleeping bags for the night, and walked a hundred miles to the sea. The younger groups with an adult in charge set off and walked sixty miles in six days. They built themselves a handcart with two bicycle wheels and a bedstead frame on which to put the heavier things, as the 'elves' and 'woodlings' are at the age when they do not like carrying things. Sometimes a 'trek' is taken to a factory or a large town if the children are interested. The children discipline themselves, holding their own meetings each week. Only three things are taboo by the school: roofs, roads and the river. To be allowed to use the boats on the river you have to pass a test. The test is a voluntary capsizing of your canoe while you are fully clothed and the bringing of it and

paddles safely to the shore. The children are far stricter with themselves than any adult would be, and often it is necessary to soften the punishment meted out to an offender. I visited the school on a lovely hot day and talked to the history master outside his private hut while he had his lunch in the sun. By our side a pretty naked eleven-month-old baby crawled about the pine needles. He was the history master's son. There is another baby of the same age at the school - also the son of one of the masters. 'We give no moral or religious training,' he said to me. 'It isn't necessary. A happy child will always want to see others happy. And most of the children here are very happy.' The children say that it's no fun being naughty at this school, and so they cease to want to be,' was another remark. Biology was very popular last term. A young goat died and the 'woodlings' decided to dissect it. The dissection was carried out in one of the classrooms. After a fortnight of interesting investigation of the entrails, the smell got a little strong, so the carcass had to be removed to a more remote spot. Unfortunately, the children did not find out the cause of death this time.

'Just one very large family - that is the aim of the school - and none of the softening processes of civilisation!'

If your clothes feel dirty - wash them.

If you are hungry - go and get some food.

If you want a toy engine - build it.

That was the dream of the Quaker who wanted such a school - and here in the New Forest his dream has come true.

From the Daily Mirror, Tuesday, October 12th, 1937

'We were allowed to **sleep out at night** if we obeyed certain rules. No one was to be disturbed or woken either at one's going or coming back ... we took blankets and put them on the bilberry bushes which made a lovely springy mattress, the school beds were plain boards under the mattresses, and the mattresses were hard too. We lay talking, watching the pine branches, dark against the **lightness of the summer night sky**, surrounded by the smell of peat, earth, bracken, bilberries, heather ... we woke to sunlight and were back in school only just in time for breakfast'

DOREEN DENTON-THOMPSON, PUPIL

**'Hide and Seek' in
Sandy Balls wood**

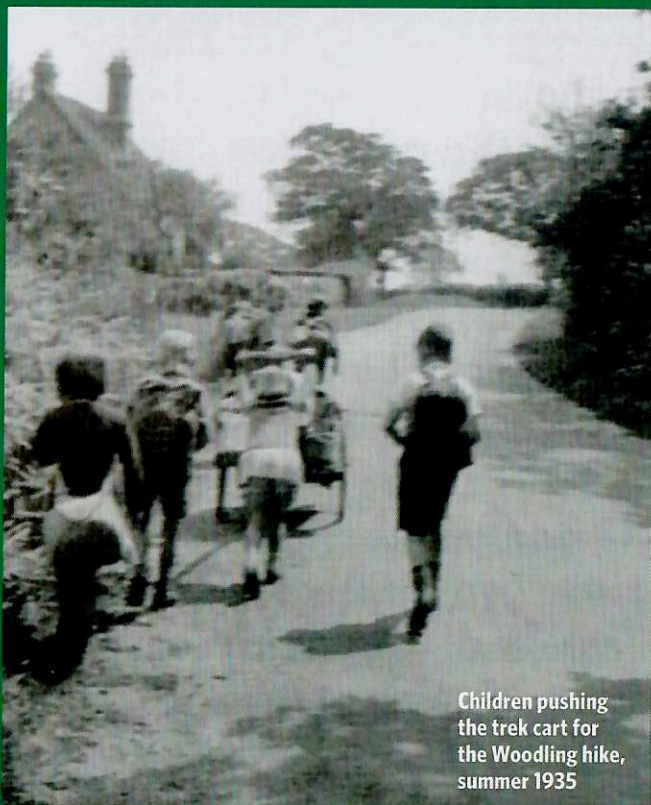
**'Unrivalled facilities
for healthy and
adventurous recreation
are provided both in
the school woodlands
and in the New Forest.'
From 1931 prospectus.
The children spent an
enormous amount of
time outside, playing,
eating meals, camping
- and doing school
work. The outdoor life
was an integral and
important part of the
Forest School life**



HIKES & CAMPS

Hikes were an important part of the school year. The pupils went off in their age groups with two or three members of staff for several days in the summer term

N Brand who joined the staff of the school soon after it opened, describes the very first hike that she led together with Cuthbert, the headmaster. 'We travelled across country, stopping at night to pitch tents, light fires, cook our evening meal and to bathe in rivers or pools'. Every summer after that, all children went on hikes. **Liza Banks** has written a first hand account of a tracker hike in July 1935. This hike was led by **Ron Brand** and **John Glaister**, with 13 tracker pupils aged between 11 and 15. Many of the former pupils have vivid recollections of this aspect of life at the Forest School. **Joy Roberts**, for example, recalls the hike that **Liza Banks** wrote about. As the youngest, aged 11, she only had to carry her own stuff and nothing else. She remembers getting bad blisters and **Beefy** popping them with a pin. **Jean Westlake** was on **Margery Guillen's** **Woodling** hike and remembers the terrible midges in the forest.



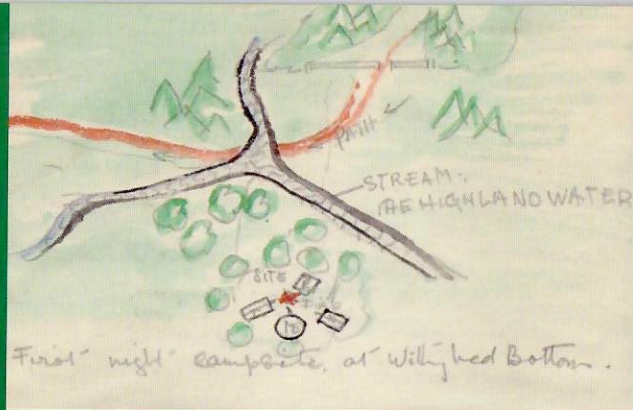
Children pushing the trek cart for the Woodling hike, summer 1935



9-11 age group with Cuthbert Rutter on hike. Notice the use of the trek cart to carry equipment too heavy for the Woodlings to carry on their backs. It was pushed or pulled by both children and staff

AN EARLY HIKE

Margery Large (Guillen) wrote an account of a Woodling hike that she led in 1936 with seven Woodlings. She encouraged all the children to draw each other and here are some of their sketches



We started on July 2nd at 8.40am. There were nine of us, as follows: Jean Westlake, Jonathan Cooper - woodlings; Joyce Edwards, Rosemarie Roberts, Raymond Roberts, Douglas Knight, Michael Parker - initiated members of the pack; Margery Large - leader; Norman Leaske - probationary member

GOING VIA BLISFORD, AND BROOMY WALK

Having trouble with the trek cart over trackless country. We had lunch near the Ringwood, Romsey Road, and then made our way to Withybed Bottom where we camped in the fork of two streams, the head streams of the Limington (Lymington) river. When we pitched our tents it was about 4.30 and Joyce, Rose and Margery volunteered to walk to Newtown for food. When we got to Newtown a labourer told us there weren't any shops in Newtown, and anyway it was early closing day. We walked on to Minstead and found a shop and a farm. Laden with provisions we were much slower on the way back, getting into camp at 7.30. We had mostly tinned food that night, as it was so late. We had settled down about 10.00

MILEAGE: Godshill to Withybed Bottom 10 miles, Withybed Bottom to Minstead and back 5 miles

FRIDAY We rose early. Ray lighted the fire. We got away about 10.00, going via the enclosure and a second class road. Then through the Knightwood enclosure, and had lunch. Then leaving Norman to take the trek cart by way of Lyndhurst, we followed our stream to Brockenhurst, mostly by pushing our way through the undergrowth. Meeting Norman as we came out on the road we went to Brockenhurst and had a drink of cocoa as we were all very wet. We had kippers for tea, and Jon found a patent trout trap in the stream

MILEAGE: Withybed Bottom to Brockenhurst 10 miles

SATURDAY We rose at about 7.30. Ray lit the fire, after shoes had been dried and the camp tidied, it was 10.00 before we set out. We walked all along the

road to Beaulieu and had lunch by the river outside the Abbey. A swan was rather vicious so we moved our place several times to evade his attractions. We went round the Abbey in the afternoon. Other visitors volunteered information. It rained pretty hard most of the time. We then went to the shop in the general store. The shop keeper was very friendly and told us he had seen the Trackers go by a few days before. We loaded the cart high with food and decided to make for Exbury instead of Bucklers Hard as we had intended! We were very tired when we got to the stream, so we camped near the road by the bridge. The camp was in bed by about 8.00 and I walked up to the village of Blackfield to ring the Harbour Master of Bucklers Hard to see if we could go across the river from Gilbury Hard. I also rang Cuthbert. When I got back I found that Norman had been regaling the camp with Vampire stories.

MILEAGE: Brockenhurst to Blackfield campsite 8 miles

SUNDAY We got breakfast over early and sent two parties out to explore for campsites not so near the road and a third party set out for the village to phone the Harbour Master again. The party saw Cuthbert as they got to the village. When we got back we made tea for the visitors Robert and Cuthbert and when they left us we set out. Norman to mind the site. We had a bathe and lunch and then walked along the coast as far as the Cadland beach. We returned early and made a good meal of sausages and figs. Ray was very unruly in the evening and tried to show off for the people on the road. We saw the Hindenberg Zeppelin go over. Danced Selengers Round and went to bed.

MILEAGE: To the sea and back 5 miles

MONDAY We packed up our rucksacs and put tents etc in the cart and parked them at the farm. [The farm people and an old couple from America named Shelly, they are crofters, very simple charming folk]. We walked through Blackfield and picked up the Calshot bus just

outside Fawley. We met and an airforce man in Calshot, who told us to be at the grand room at 2.00 and a guide would meet us. We duly turned up at 2.00 after lunch on the beach. A young corporal took us on an extensive tour of the RAF training centre, showing us the sea planes landing and taking off. Speed boats darted about the outlook towers. The armoured boats, the boats for loading planes, the yachts that the RAF men use, the parachutes, the machine gun practice place, the armory and lastly took us in two planes that were in the hangar for repairs. All this took about two and a half hours. We walked back through Fawley and bought provisions in Blackfield. We pitched our camp in the same spot and made a good meal of fish, potatoes and cherries.

MILEAGE: to Calshot and back 5 miles

TUESDAY We got up at about 7.30 parked our kit at the farm again and made our way out to the sea, sending the Trackers greetings from Exbury and making garlands on the way. We found the Lepe beach quite deserted. We bathed, had lunch, played tip and run, bathed and wrote letters and made our way back to Exbury, where we commandeered the only shop for about three quarters of an hour, every one buying their meal for sixpence. Jean and Joyce managed to get the best meal for themselves. Poor old Douglas came off worst, he got a tin of beans, and an apple and a lot of sticky sweets. Everyone ate their meal, washed and were in bed by 8.00 without being told except Ray who was such a disturbing influence it was decided that he crawl round the camp on hands and knees 25 times to subdue him. He had just done this and got to bed when we found we had an audience. Cuthbert, Flea and Leslie had been watching from afar and now came down and had some tea and told us the latest news. They did not stay long, and after preparing Wednesday's lunch, Norman and I retired to bed early for once.

MILEAGE: Blackfield to Lepe and back 7 miles

WEDNESDAY We made an early start and made for Hythe, following the Southampton Water for a mile and seeing a liner go out. We had ices in Hythe and ate our lunch just outside the town where we could see the Majestic and other big boats. We went on to Dibden to shop at the village store, we bought all we could there and went on to a farm to buy lettuce etc. We called in at a cottage on the way for bread and later stopped the bakers van and got more. We explored one stream but found it rather stagnant. So we went on to another stream where Ray found a super site. We had a salad tea and afterward some people went exploring the stream. When we were all in bed I saw an aeroplane go over trailing a red gas balloon.

MILEAGE: Blackfield to Dibden 6.5 miles

2ND THURSDAY It had been raining all night and everything was very wet. We managed to have breakfast in the dry, then it started to rain. We got our tents and packed up, having to wait half an hour for Jonathan to tie his shoe up. We set off in heavy rain, when we were about a mile away Jean discovered she had left her rucksack behind. Jean and Michael returned for it, the rest of the party went on. Norman waiting someway up the road for the other two. At Beaulieu Road Station we sheltered under a tree and met an old man under a big umbrella, we got friendly with him and he agreed to take us to his dugout about 3 miles up the Lyndhurst Road. We were soaked through by now and set off when Jean and Michael had at last caught up with us. We found the dugout half filled with water. It was an old army ammunition dump, made of concrete and level from the road. Our friend, whom we afterwards found to be Charlie Philips, son of Ruben Philips, the last of a family of musicians who had grown quite well to do by playing the violin to crowds. He was a real forrester. He lit a fire for us in the hut, but in a few minutes we were smoked out so we removed the fire to the outside, got water from a nearby cottage and made some tea. We had our lunch together over the tea. Old Philips told us all about his violin and about other things also, while we were having lunch. A forestry man called up to see us and stayed a while to chat and help drain the dugout. We took the wet clothes over to a cottage kept by Mrs Knight and had a cup of tea and talked to her, then the rain stopping a little. Mr Philips left us and we got the shelter ready for sleeping. Ray

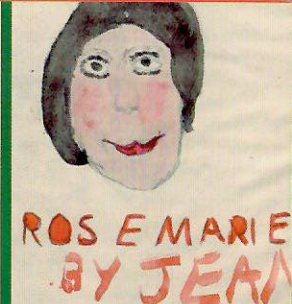
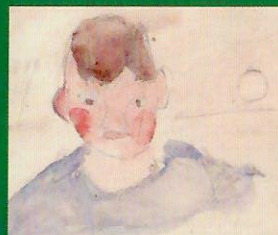
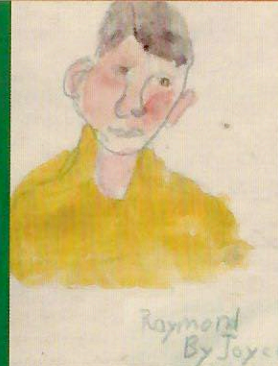
and I went to Lyndhurst to get some food and to phone Cuthbert. When we got back we had our meal and received an invitation for the girls in the party to sleep in the cottage. I went up and saw the very beautiful garden of the house where Mr Philips worked as gardener and drank several kinds of home made wine. At 9.45 as had been arranged, after a pack meeting, we all went to the cottage. The boys went to the garage and I and the 3 girls slept in the kitchen. I had a sort of short bumpy couch and the others had the floor. Our good hostess was afraid that foxes might jump in if the window was left open, so we had no windows open and a hot fire going all the time.

MILEAGE: Dibden to Matley Dugout 4 miles

2ND FRIDAY At 6.30 Mrs Knight lit her fire and made us a pot of tea. She made Jean some cocoa - she didn't want tea, and she insisted that I took the boys some in a jug as I went out to wake them. We took our dry clothes and went back to the dugout and made a fire with a sack of dry sticks that Mrs Knight had given us. We saw Mr Philips looking for his pipe and took a snap of him. We packed up and fetched the rest of our clothes from the cottage and received some dandelion wine from the good lady. We shopped in Lyndhurst, then Rosemarie took the map and got us to Minstead safely with frequent stops on the way to shelter from the rain. Jean took the map and led us to the Rufus stone. We had lunch and then a heavy rain came and we kept fairly dry by sheltering under a tree. We moved on towards Fritham encountering another storm on the way, however we had seen it coming and found a good shelter in time. We camped by the stream that runs out of the top of North Bentley wood. We sent two adventurers out to beg some matches and when they returned got a fire going by the method that old Philips had told us. We got to bed early. **MILEAGE: Dugout to North Bentley 7 miles**

2ND SATURDAY Most people got rather wet in the night but Michael, Doug and myself kept very dry in my tent. We had bacon and oranges for breakfast and then heated some water and everyone scrubbed their nails. The tents were almost dry when we packed up at 11.00. Michael leading took us out through the Royal Oak village, past Islands Thorns and Crock Hill woods. We had lunch on the road that leads past Pitts wood.

MILEAGE: Bentley to Godshill 5.5 miles



RECOLLECTIONS

Jean Westlake is the daughter of Aubrey Westlake and grand daughter of Ernest Westlake. She went to Forest School in 1935, when she was nine years old, and attended for two years

The following is an extract from an interview held in 2009 with Jean. Participating in the conversation were Cath Shepherd, Hazel Powell, Marcos Guillen and Caroline Jefford

JEAN There were three things you were not allowed to do at the school - the three R's. You weren't allowed to go on the road, go to the river by yourself or go on the roof ... the only time we were allowed on the roof was doing tarring. On Sundays all the children had to go out for the day ... I was at the school in 1935 and 1936. I remember the Woodling hike - the mosquitos and the time it took to boil water. We took tents with us - ants everywhere!

MARCOS Not ordinary ants, wood ants

JEAN Yes, imported for pheasants

CATH Do you remember lessons?

JEAN We didn't have to go if we did not want to - I always went to all lessons. I remember Wilfred Smith the riding teacher left and no-one knew why. There were fires in the rooms - I was in charge of the fire in the bedroom. There was only one child the same age as me - Joycie Edwards - her 7 year old brother became a priest.

I came from a school where there were 40 children in one year. I was a bit lonely after having so many friends

CATH Do you remember much about the teachers?

JEAN I remember Largery (Margery Large who became Margery Guillen), Cuthbert

slept on the floor - I thought it very strange for a headmaster to do that! I had a grudge against Beefy because he slung me into the river and I landed flat on my stomach! Teddy Lewis and Peter Hedger did outrageous things with the ants! The Woodling Hike in 1936 - there were about six or seven Woodlings. We had to write up each night what we did during the day. The midges were terrible in the forest - we used eucalyptus oil to try and stop them. I didn't think it was very healthy drinking stream water
CATH Do you remember what songs you sang?

JEAN No I don't

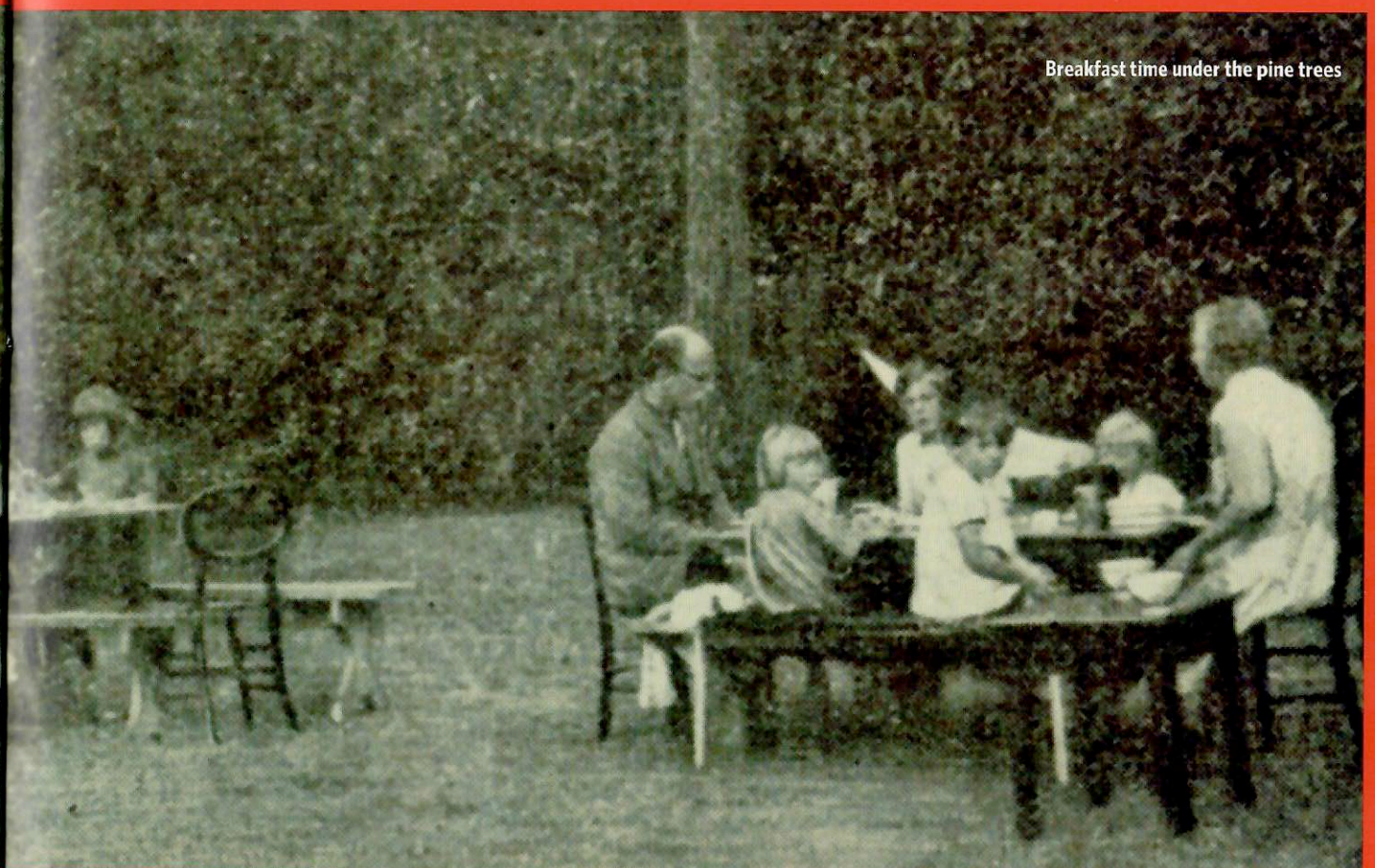
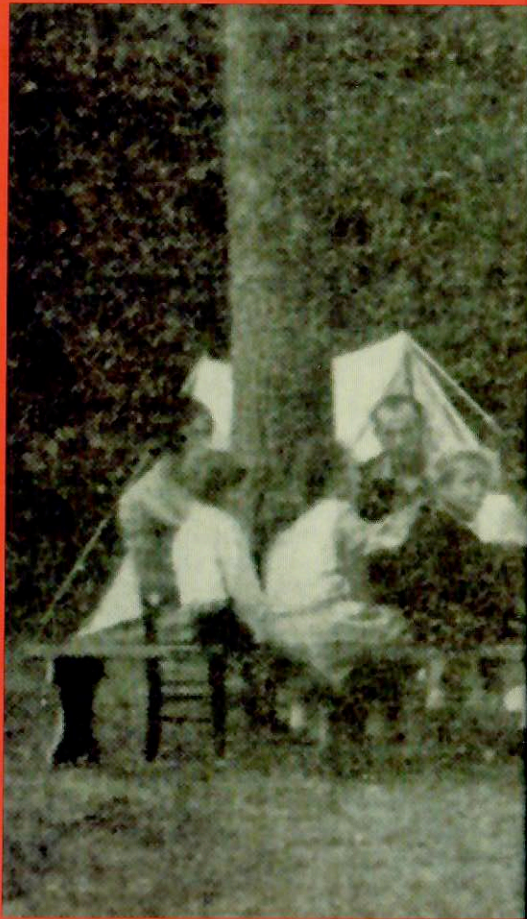
HAZEL We used to sing Kibbo Kift songs in the car

JEAN Two babies were born at Forest School - Jan Brand (son of Beefy and N Brand) and Tristram England. They didn't go to hospital

CATH Did your father (Aubrey Westlake) have much to do with the school?

JEAN He was the Chair of the Board. He came to inspect the children's health. The children never washed their hands - they didn't bother. There was plenty of hot water ... at Meerhay all the children had baths in the same water. I remember a performance of the Mikado in the village hall in Godshill - we had to make the hats. Joy Roberts had a lovely, lovely voice. I remember the boys rode horses without saddles

CAROLINE What about tests and trials?



Breakfast time under the pine trees

JEAN On Woodling afternoons we did trials - like swimming across the river with a lighted candle in our mouth and the test of silence for the whole day - others would try to make you talk. Making fires of course. I don't think we did tests and trials in winter. We used to do a lot in the forest - there was a place called Mexico land on either side of a stream. I hated raiding games - didn't know what was underfoot. There were plenty of adders - can't remember anyone getting bitten - the boys used to stick them to the ground with forked sticks. We often saw snakes swimming in the creek.

‘There were three things you were not allowed to do at the school. The three Rs. Not allowed to go on the Road, go to the River by yourself, or go on the Roof’

JEAN WESTLAKE, PUPIL

Interview with Liza Banks

My parents were in touch with a small group of intelligentsia in the 1920s - lots of new ideas including education. My sister was a feminist and twenty years older than me. I was among the first of six pupils at Forest School. I went when I was nine years old and stayed until I was twelve - when my mother took me away because we were going abroad. I loved it there and used to hide when my mother came to take me home. I made a fuss at first - I was the spoilt youngest child at an artistic and posh home with a nanny. I wasn't frightened of the woods because I wasn't a townie - I knew the country. Everything was allowed there except being a nuisance. No formal lessons - don't remember arithmetic.

We washed outside in cold water. Outside there was an earth closet that Cuthbert emptied once a week. Cuthbert worked very hard. We all helped to cook in clans. Food very basic for example: herrings, cheese, eggs, porridge, dates in a cube - you had to slice them up. Bread from the village shop. Plenty of food. Everyone helped with cleaning. Taught by Nellie to look after the edges - the middle looks after itself'. We were filthy dirty, tried to keep as clean as possible. Used Sunlight soap.

Staff were very caring - the Quaker ethos. Children made rules and punishments in School Council.

I can't remember when there were weekends or timetable but I remember going off for walks, climbing trees and carrying food. I remember walking to Salisbury with Peter Hedger and Catherine with no money and walking back barefoot until a parent gave them lift in a car. I remember the staff were very worried and we were given a 'talking to'.

As a child I was unaware of what the school was trying to do. I hadn't been to school before, but had shared a governess and learnt to read and write although never read very well. After I left the Forest School I went abroad and then was sent to a young ladies seminary, a day school where they had proper teachers, proper essays and so on. Socially it was awful. I nearly got expelled for explaining how babies were made. I was very influenced by Forest School because it gave one values. Looking back, it was utterly basic - no frills, no money. We were taught to see how little of everything could be used. There were no outside influences like television or telephone.

I went back for one term when I was 15, and went on hike to Bristol - I was so pleased to be back! Then I went to Queens College in Harley Street. I wanted to do medicine but could hardly read and write. Then went to London Polytechnic to cram for London Matric. I was never lonely at Forest School - if you wanted privacy you could just go into the woods.

05.11.07



Forest School pupils outside Whitwell Hall, 1939

Joy Evans (Roberts) remembers

... the weekly woodcraft sessions that were part of the curriculum when the pupils learnt about camping, pitching tents and cooking over a fire. She also recalled the tests and trials that had to be passed in order to move from Woodling to Tracker to Pathfinder groups. She comments on the importance of woodcraft in her later life.

FSC magazine, 2007

Interview with Keith Knight and Hazel Powell

Brother and sister Keith and Hazel were pupils at the school in Godshill. Keith was a pupil from the age of nine to 12 and Hazel attended from the age of five to seven years old. Their brother Geoffrey was also at the Forest School for one year. Their parents were members of the Kibbo Kift – the Greenshirt movement

KEITH: We had a den of four boys – I was bullied by the older two and protected by Ted Lewis

HAZEL: When I went, I was homesick for three weeks then OK. In my report it said that I found the half term too long but I don't remember being unhappy

KEITH: We had lessons in the schoolhouse – Peter Hedger had private lessons. I remember the practical lessons. I left before getting qualifications

HAZEL: I remember swimming in the creek, going for meals and playing outside. I remember the ponies ... there must have been rules at Forest School but it was more lax than Summerhill – it was much smaller and a greater staff to pupil ratio and had better surroundings.

All three Knight children left Forest School and went to Summerhill

A School report: autumn term 1936

Cuthbert Rutter, the headmaster, wrote detailed reports on all the pupils of the Forest School every term. The following extract is from a report he wrote on Hazel Knight when she was an Elf at the school

ELF ROOM: Hazel is developing a real desire to learn and her chief difficulty is lack of confidence. When she has convinced herself 'I can't do it', it is difficult to persuade her to make any attempt. She is, however, definitely showing more independence and self-assertion in dealing with her contemporaries and I think it will soon extend to her activities. I think that what she needs is to feel that we take a real interest in her – but at the same time to be given every possible opportunity to develop self-reliance and initiative.

HANDICRAFTS: She has made a doll's house in the Woodling room during the term and has been very persevering in the face of difficulties and very little help or encouragement

MECRAFTS: The improvement shown in Hazel during the term has been phenomenal. She is now healthier and happier. She has developed cleanliness and tidiness in her person and in her room and belongings. She has slowly acquired the idea of the necessity of these things and at times makes an effort to carry them out. She has grown, put on weight and appears quite robust.

HEALTH: Medical inspection found Hazel in very good health. Weight five stone 10lbs. Gain nine and a half pounds. No one is making more striking all round improvement and progress at Forest School than is Hazel Knight. She has found the term too long and it may be wise for her to have a holiday of a few days at home in another term. In many ways it would seem a pity to make more drastic break in her school life. If she was definitely promised 'a half term' it would probably make all the difference to her. No doubt this could easily be arranged. It is her own request and it seems a very sensible one.

Ted Lewis remembers his time at the School

When I first arrived at Forest School I was not yet twelve years old. Twelve was a magic age when one passed from Woodling to Tracker. About six of us resided at Woodcot in one large room. It was the custom of the school to have a weekly house meeting in the quiet room. This was the large room in Woodcot and was designated as quiet since it was the only space in which one could study, read, or do anything else of a quiet nature without being disturbed by anyone. Not too long after my arrival, I recall becoming particularly obstreperous at one such meeting. I became more and more disruptive until even Cuthbert's celebrated patience was exhausted. Finally he turned to me and said: 'Teddy, hold your peace'. Never, before or since, have I recieved a

more crushing reprimand. I don't recall my actual response, but I suspect that I shut my mouth and kept it shut. I recall Cuthbert's tolerance as almost endless and I knew that to have pushed him to such lengths, my behaviour must have been outrageous.

Tree travelling: there was a wood of pine trees into which the Trackers would disappear, jumping from tree to tree. My recollection is that I was a little fearful of this, but most of the others seemed entirely fearless and able to go on for miles.

Food: I remember a lot of different foods, some of which I can still taste in my memory. By the time I did kitchen duty at Meerhay I was permitted to take an active part in the cooking. I particularly liked to make Shepherd's pie. Suet pudding with treacle

was memorable. Sunday morning breakfast consisted of eggs, bacon, fried bread and stewed tomatoes. I enjoyed all but the tomatoes, to which I took a groundless dislike. Bert Mackenzie looked with mild disdain on those who put treacle on porridge, insisting that salt was the only spice for porridge, but I don't think he made many converts.

The class building had three rooms. A large central room was used by the younger children, who were the majority. One end was for the Trackers. I seem to remember about six tables, each of which with a bench made by its occupant. The other end of the building was for senior students. For some reason, the Trackers developed an objection to passing through the little kids' classroom on the way to our own, and decided that a private entrance would be in order. A stairway was then erected leading into the window. The Trackers were delighted with this arrangement, but I am not sure the staff or the visitors had the same reaction.

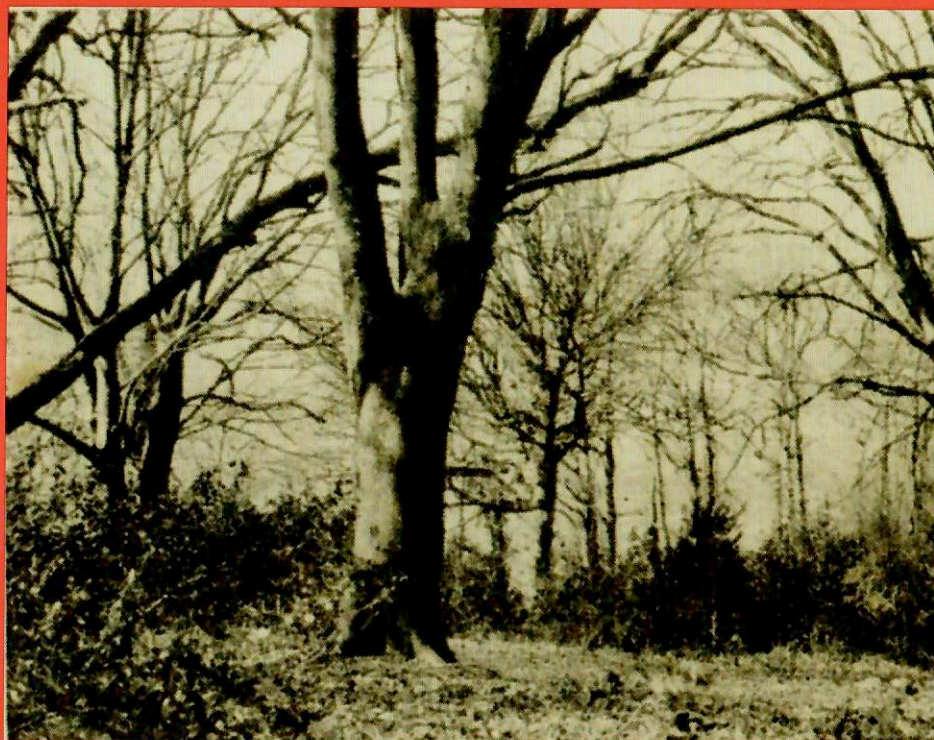
Several of the staff spoke Esperanto. I recall an occasion when two of the members of staff carried on a conversation in Esperanto in my presence. I left, thinking I was intruding on a private conversation, but later realised that I had shown interest in Esperanto and they were trying to show me what it sounded like in practice. Many of the staff had strong views on many subjects, including world peace. Many were members of the League of Nations Union, which we were all encouraged to join. I obtained a small diary for the year 1936 containing the charter of the Union and various other items of interest. I started bravely enough with the New Year, but tapered off until the final entry in May.

Making one's own instrument before learning to play on it



‘The staff were poor – they were paid only £30 a year and their keep. For this they were expected not merely to teach, to encourage their young charges to **dance, sing, camp** out, make music and paint but to clean the wooden schoolrooms and living quarters, help with the farm work, do washing and sewing and virtually any job that needed to be done’

WILLEM VAN DER EYKEN AND BARRY TURNER
ADVENTURES IN EDUCATION, PENGUIN 1969



A teacher at the School

Marcos Guillen speaks about his mother, Margery, who was a member of staff at the Forest School

My mother was born in 1913, her father was a solicitor. She went to the Royal College of Art in the 1930s but left when her father was ill – with the intention of going back. She had joined the OWC in the early 1920s. Forest School wanted an art teacher and she was invited to teach there in 1933 (or 1934). She was there for a few years but did not go to Whitwell. She was housemother for Meerhay and taught painting, textiles, bookbinding – everything to do with arts and crafts. She led hikes and wrote an account of one in 1936. She did not talk much about the pupils – she remembered Peter Hedger as eccentric. She got on with Cuthbert and said he did not like teaching but did like being with the children. Everything was discussed in the school council meetings – there were no separate staff meetings. The school had a lodge of the OWC, she and several other staff were members. She kept in touch with Joy and Mary Roberts and visited Whiteway where she met my father, a Spanish refugee.

Interview 09.08.08

THE MOVE TO WHITWELL HALL

In 1938 Forest School left the New Forest and moved to bigger premises, Whitwell Hall in Norfolk. It did not stay there long as the Army took over the school buildings in 1940

Whitwell Hall was a large Georgian house set in extensive grounds ideal for the outdoor life. Not all the staff and pupils transferred from Godshill to Whitwell. As a result of the Second World War the School was evacuated from Whitwell Hall never to return. After the war, in 1947, the first Forest School Camp was held at Whitwell Hall - the first of many

Margaret Potts, a pupil at Whitwell

I remember sleeping in a large dormitory with large windows looking out over the garden. There was a terrace in front of the house which I remember being told, by other pupils, one had to jump from to be accepted. It was daunting to me at seven but I did manage to do it and was immensely proud of myself. Another thing one was challenged to do, was to go down alone into an old ice house partially underground which was supposed to be haunted. This I did and was terrified when a loud screech greeted me but delighted when a barn owl flew out.

I suppose we were divided into age groups similar to the Forest School Campers. I know that I was an Elf but there was also a group called Cubs, I think. Older groups went camping from the school and on hike. Lessons - at least academic ones - were optional for under eights. I remember the school room, the top floor of a farm

building, specifically a white blackboard which was written on with coloured chalks - something I had never seen before. There was a large room downstairs with a grand piano in it which I remember as a music room. It had a wooden floor and we would be given polishing pads to put over our shoes and had great fun sliding about on the floor to polish it.

One activity, for Elves at least, was relaxation in the garden. We were taught to lie on the ground and relax all our muscles so that our arms and legs could be lifted and dropped floppily to the ground. This ability has stood by me ever since.

There was an area in the grounds which I remember as a wild wood. It was probably only a shrubbery but I loved to wander about in it. I remember the School Councils when anyone, staff or pupil, could air their complaints which were then discussed by all, a gathering which Forest School Camps, I believe, still carries on with. I was impressed, even then, by this.

On Saturdays we walked into Reepham, about one and a half miles away, to spend our pocket money. I remember a craze for buying newly baked loaves and eating them without accompaniment on the way back to school. I remember there being two or three ponies and rabbits and that we called all the staff by their Christian names - most unusual for those days.

Letter, 2010



Slightly surreal photomontage
published on the cover of the
school's 1938 prospectus

**'The adults at
the School are
in an unusually
real sense the
friends of
the children.
They are ready
to play with them,
to laugh with them
and to be laughed
at by them'**

**FOREST SCHOOL PROSPECTUS,
CIRCA 1938**

**List of the staff at Whitwell Hall
published in 1938 prospectus**

CUTHBERT KIRK RUTTER, M.A.(Cantab)

Headmaster, English and Social Studies

HELEN RUTTER

House Mother

R. LUBIENSKI, PH.D., L.S.

Mathematics, Languages, Riding

MARY VEAR, B.SC.

Science

LEONARD VEAR (Certificate of the United Engineering Institutes)

Carpentry and other Crafts

ANTHONY IVINS (Diploma in Poultry Keeping)

Garden and Estate

MARJORIE KYLE (Certificate of New Conservatorium of Music and Drama,
Melbourne, Australia)

Music and Kindergarten

MABEL WARD (Diplomas in Institutional Management and High-Class
Cookery, Edinburgh College of Domestic Science)

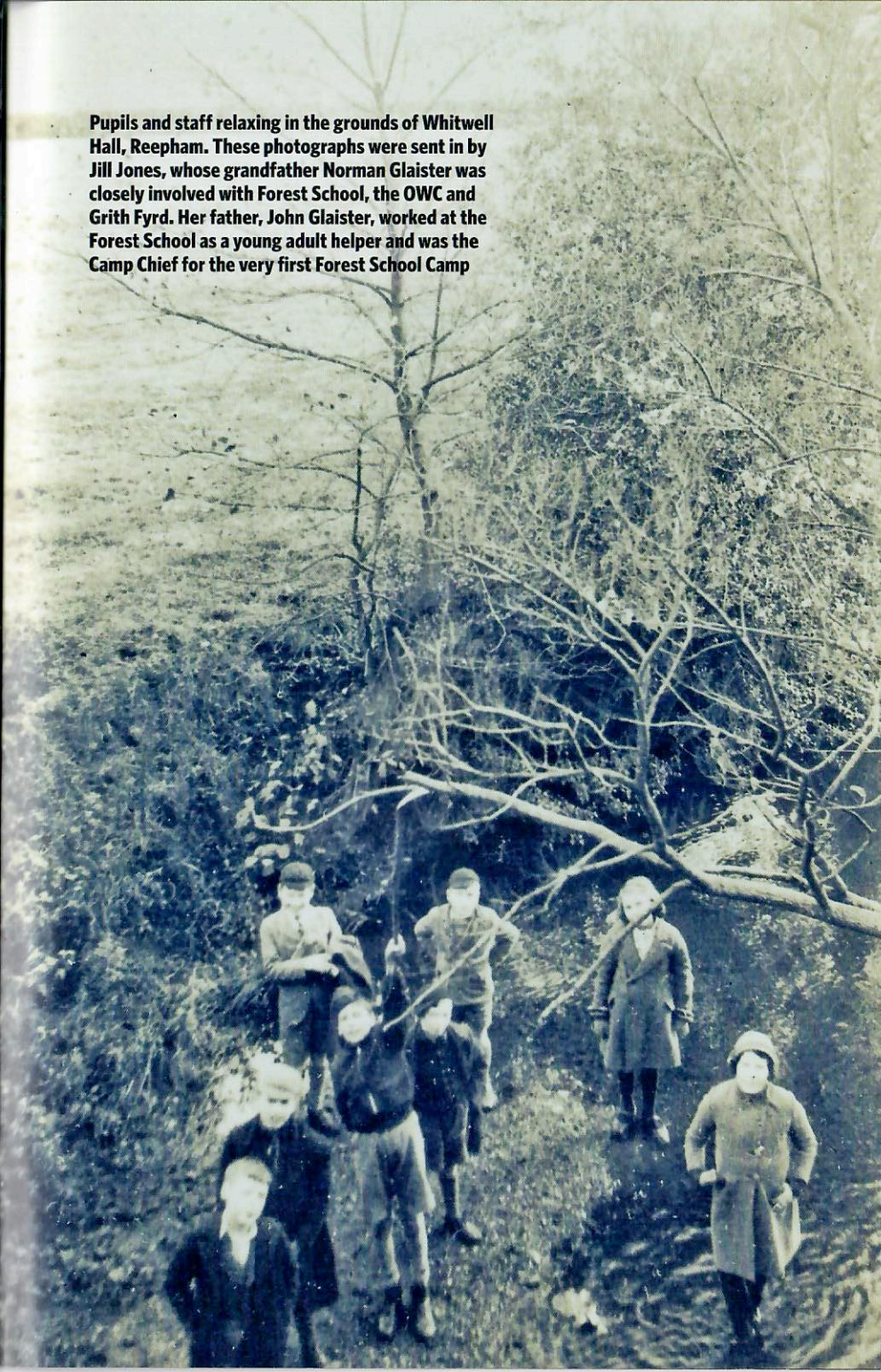
Asst. House Mother



‘The School provides an environment where each child can maintain continuous and **uninterrupted growth**; he may learn by **actual experience** happily to integrate himself into the community, and slowly, strength, mastery and knowledge is the fruit of this successful personal experience ... technique is improved when the habit of **free imagination** has been established and the **child’s ambition** is to do more finished work.’

WHITWELL HALL PROSPECTUS

Pupils and staff relaxing in the grounds of Whitwell Hall, Reepham. These photographs were sent in by Jill Jones, whose grandfather Norman Glaister was closely involved with Forest School, the OWC and Grith Fyrd. Her father, John Glaister, worked at the Forest School as a young adult helper and was the Camp Chief for the very first Forest School Camp



Wendy Rodway

I went to Forest School, Godshill, when I was nine, in 1937, and then to Whitwell for a couple of terms. When war was declared I refused to go back to school in case Germans invaded.

I lived just outside Stroud at the Whiteway community. I went to Forest School because I became friendly with the Roberts family - Mary was a teacher at the school.

I remember Douglas (Keith) Knight went to Summerhill. He came back to Whitwell for the summer camp complaining that Summerhill was full of rules. At the Forest School the rules were made in the school meeting - mostly safety rules. The meetings were once a week.

I remember Beefy as a housefather used to inspect beds every day.

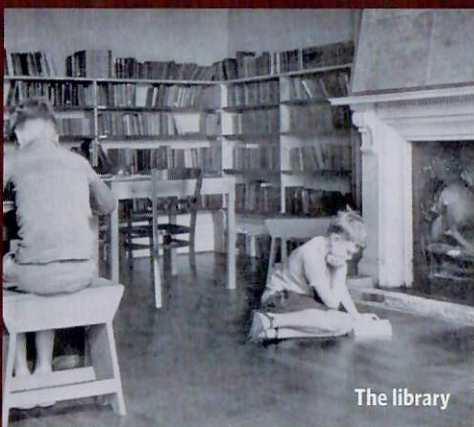
I don't remember lessons or learning anything. I do remember playing outside in the forest, and doing tests and trials - mainly at camp.

I wasn't homesick but my younger brother Peter was. He loathed the school. He had been ill when small and was very withdrawn.

Most children made simple pipes and played them. On Saturday morning we all had jobs. We polished the floors in the music room listening to gramophone records. At 11am everyone finished their jobs and we had cocoa and a sing song.

I remember some country dancing and sewing afternoons inside - we sewed aprons. Also, each child made a stool to sit on. Mine had a seat with a lid.

Phone interview 29.03.09



A discussion on Forest School

This extract is from a 1945 report, discussing the future of the Forest School

An informal meeting of those specially interested in the future of Forest School and its relations with the Order was held. 'Desmos' explained that might it not be possible to reopen Forest School. Although the house at Reepham had been given up by the army, which had paid rent throughout the war and also compensation for the burnt stables, the financial position would be very difficult. Under the new education act the accommodation and equipment standards were considerably higher than before the war. There was plenty of space at Reepham, but the buildings would need a lot of money spent on them before they would reach the new standards. A large proportion of existing schools would not reach those standards, but the Ministry of Education would probably refuse permission for sub-standard schools to open or reopen, especially experimental schools, to which it did not seem favourably inclined. There seemed little hope of qualifying for a grant, and without that it was probable that the school could not be run for less than about fifty children, each paying about £50 a term - a very high fee for an unknown school. It was agreed by everyone that if Forest School should reopen the Order could not claim any degree of authority over it, since it was clear that neither staff nor children would come from Order members, nor was it reasonable to expect that the school should be run as an Order lodge, even though woodcraft education was part of, or basic to, its teaching. Order members would be warmly interested in such a school and willing to help as far as possible.

Pinecone magazine, 1945, Order of Woodcraft Chivalry



The weekly school council meeting.
Decision making in the round

**‘The weekly school council, in which all
participate, is an important vehicle for planning, justice,
and custom and deals with all community matters’**

SCHOOL PROSPECTUS, 1938 WHITWELL HALL

EVACUATION TO DARTINGTON

After Forest School was closed down, the school moved to share the premises of the well known progressive school Dartington Hall in Devon. This arrangement lasted for a short time only

Forest School at Dartington Hall 1940

Pupils and three full time members of staff were evacuated from Whitwell in Norfolk to Dartington Hall School in Devon in the summer of 1940 because the army took over Whitwell Hall. Dartington Hall was started in 1925 by a wealthy couple, the Elmhirsts, who had bought the enormous but derelict Dartington estate. The school was one part of their ambitious project to combine farming, the arts and traditional crafts. It was much bigger (and richer) than Forest School, with separate junior and senior school buildings. It held many of the same progressive educational ideas as Forest School but without the emphasis on woodcraft.

Twenty seven children moved from Whitwell to Dartington in the summer of 1940 – three Pathfinders, two Trackers, seven senior Woodlings, twelve junior Woodlings and three Elves.

Margaret Gobbett (née

Potts) was an Elf at Whitwell when the school was evacuated. She writes 'I remember very little of the journey except climbing on to a coach, and that we had to leave most of our belongings behind. At Dartington School we were housed in the then new Junior School building, which seemed very large and bright. Each child had his or her own room, which seemed very grand. I don't remember much of our time there. It was probably only a few weeks as Forest School closed after the summer term. However I do remember there was an enclosure in the grounds in which grass snakes were kept.'

18 of the Forest School children were 10 or under and they lived in Boarding House 1. They attended the junior school which was a mile away from the senior school, where the older children were accommodated. The younger children settled in more quickly than the older groups, particularly the pathfinders, who were not happy with the arrangement. Cuthbert Rutter,

the headmaster, went with the school to Dartington, and was based at the senior school.

The only person left behind was Tony Ivins the Estate manager of Whitwell Hall. He stayed there, clearing up after the school had left, until he was called up by the RAF. Several members of Forest School staff wrote to Tony from Dartington, including Susie Dommen (who was to become his wife).

Soon after the school arrived at Dartington she wrote: 'We had five Dartington kids here, but they have just moved out. The school is emptying itself rapidly – many are already in America ... there are a good number of evacuees from London in different parts of the school ... I wonder often how and when it will all finish.'

Forest School only stayed in existence for a few weeks in Dartington and then was forced to close. It never reopened.

Dartington Hall School did continue throughout the war and after, only closing in 1987.

THE ORDER OF WOODCRAFT CHIVALRY

The umbrella organisation that both spawned and remained intimately connected to Forest School was the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry. Founded by Ernest Westlake in 1916, the OWC, still going today, is 'a way of life which includes all aspects of the personality of man and his search to find a whole, balanced life in harmonious social fellowship and in harmony with his environment.' [Jean Westlake]

GRITH FYRD

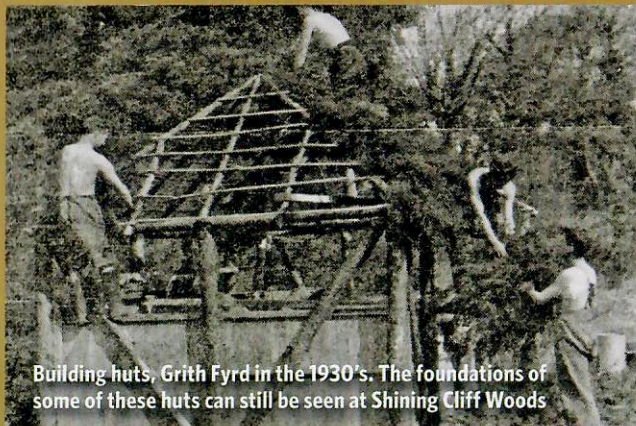
Grith Fyrd (Anglo Saxon for Peace Army) ran camps for unemployed men at Sandy Balls and Shining Cliff. Grith Fyrd was a project developed at Sandy Balls by the OWC during the great depression of the 1920s and 30s. Based on the Ephebe scheme of ancient Greece it trained unemployed men from the ages of 18 to 25. They pooled their resources - unemployment benefit and skills - and built a thriving community in the woods. Some men eventually left to set up another Grith Fyrd camp at Shining Cliff in Derbyshire. Both camps became redundant in the late 1930s with the outbreak of the Second World War. A 1932 Pathé newsreel exists featuring the work of Grith Fyrd at Sandy Balls.

Q CAMPS

Q camps were for 'juvenile and adolescent delinquents' and were run under the auspices of Grith Fyrd management.

SHINING CLIFF SCHOOL

A small school was set up on woodcraft lines during the war, in huts on the Shining Cliff site. It was run by members of the OWC including Len and Mary Vear who had taught at Forest School. From a promotional leaflet we learn that the school was for children aged from five to eleven and was open all year round. The emphasis was on individual expression and 'self reliance and hardyhood through swimming, camping, trekking and woodcraft games'. It closed in 1946.



Building huts, Grith Fyrd in the 1930's. The foundations of some of these huts can still be seen at Shining Cliff Woods

NEW COMMERCE GUILD

The New Commerce Guild was a scheme that promoted the exchange of members' skills and services without using money. It ran throughout the 1920s and 30s and came to an end during the war. Several of the names connected to the OWC and Forest School are listed among the members of the New Commerce Guild, for example the Glaisters and the Rutters.

KIBBO KIFT

Founded in 1920 by John Hargrave, this movement advocated outdoor education and open air camps combined with the idea of Social Credit. Members of this movement wore, and were known as, Green Shirts and they adopted political activism in the 1930s.

In 1935 they changed their name to the Social Credit Party of Great Britain.

WOODCRAFT FOLK

Founded by Leslie Paul in 1925, the Woodcraft Folk is directly descended from the Kibbo Kift Kindred. It still exists today, running camps on Woodcraft lines for young people. It has had close links with the Co-operative movement since it started.

SCOUTING FOR BOYS

The Boy Scout Movement was started by Robert Baden-Powell, in 1907. Baden-Powell was influenced by his experiences in the Boer War. He had observed the significance of messenger scouts for the British Army and inaugurated a movement based on a programme of informal education combined with outdoor practical activities. The movement became instantly popular - by 1908 there was a rally of 10,000 scouts, and by 1910 the organisation had spread worldwide, with scouting movements in at least fifteen countries.

FOREST SCHOOL CAMPS

FSC evolved directly from the Forest School and currently runs a programme of over thirty camps a year.

ANOTHER STORY

This conversation took place in the old music room of the Forest School at the reunion organised at Whitwell Hall, 25 July 2009. The discussion centered on Beefy (Ron Brand) who was a key figure both at the Forest School and Forest School Camps

Jan Brand, Joy Evans and Wendy Rodway in conversation with Cath Shepherd

JOY Beefy left the school at Godshill and never came up here (Whitwell Hall)

WENDY He left because he had to earn some money. Wasn't Anne on the way?

... and they moved into Fordingbridge

JAN That's right. Anne was born in Fordingbridge

CATH Did he keep in contact?

JOY Oh yes. He came to the summer camp.

JAN What really happened was that the war intervened ... he hadn't been able to save a great deal from working at the Forest School and with the war coming we moved into a new house in Chesington in Surrey. Then he was called up. He started off as a medical orderly in the RAF and after a period of time he qualified as an officer and he specialised eventually in what were called codes and ciphers and he in fact went on D-Day plus 1, one day after the official landings and landed in Port Aubasson in France. There, they had to set up signals units to keep the communications going. During that period he was posted to India where he had a whale of a time and then to Italy in Capri. So he had some wonderful times when he was in the RAF

JOY I heard that when he was in India that one of his responsibilities was to organise

sanitation and health of the camp and I thought Forest School was very good training for that!

JAN Absolutely! A perfect background – plus the fact that he had been a medical orderly. He was away for nearly all of the war and like many housewives, my mother (N Brand) had to bring up her family completely on her own. We lived in an area that was recognised by the Germans as producing a lot of high engineering devices that were helping the war and so they were aiming their V1 flying bombs in our direction. So our family went to live with N's mother in Wincanton in Somerset and we stayed there until after the war. When Ron was demobilised he needed a career and he chose to do a one year emergency training scheme for teachers at Wandsworth College, and that's where he met Andy Anderton, Charley Hall, Roy Twilley, all of whom were great campers. And in his usual way he persuaded them to consider Forest School camping and they were here at Whitwell Hall for the second Forest School Camp

CATH You remember him at the school?

JOY Oh yes!

CATH What do you remember?

JOY He used to take our woodcraft. I remember him before he came to the school as he was in Grith Fyrd. So was Len Vear and George Coombes. He was our Tracker leader and took us on hikes and he used to teach woodwork

CATH Where did he learn his woodcraft?
JAN Grith Fyrd – Len Vear was keen on woodcraft

JOY He was one of the Bermondsey boys wasn't he? He was one of Aubrey Westlake's Smoke Tribe and he camped at Sandy Balls

CATH Beefy's parents must have been keen for him to have been involved

JAN It's slightly vague how he got in. I think it was through Aubrey Westlake and his association with Sandy Balls

JOY Did you know your grandmother was quite an exceptional woman in Bermondsey?

JAN Beefy's mother I remember was a gentle person. I don't recall any mention of her involvement in this

JOY No, but she would have wanted her children to be involved

JAN Yes. His brother Lewis was very keen and had a caravan at Sandy Balls for years. They used to go to Sandy Balls quite regularly and helped to start up the Grith Pioneers.

CATH That's quite a logical progression isn't it? OWC, Grith Pioneers and then Forest School. A lot of the staff were OWC weren't they?

JAN A lot of them were but not my mother. Her first job when she left school was to be companion to Mrs. Rutter who was from Wincanton. She did everything for her. She saw an advertisement for housemother at Forest School and got the position. Her booklet* is better than my memory of what happened



Taken at the first summer camp held after the school had disbanded. John Glaister ran the camp at Whitwell, 1947

JOY My mother was involved in the Order. She joined the school as member of staff, first as housemother at Woodcot – probably after Beefy and Nellie got together

JAN Norman Glaister was a psychiatrist wasn't he?

JOY That's right. John and Mary's father died in the flu epidemic after the war. Their mother married again and had Siward and Brian. They were all very keen on Morris dancing. My husband and I spent a weekend at Shining Cliff during the war. We went swimming in the reservoir and he went blue – it was so cold

CATH Going back to Beefy. He was at the school for a short time – four or five years?

JAN Yes, that's right. I was born in 1936 and

my sister was born in Fordingbridge in 1937. Then we moved to Chesington

JOY I remember seeing the Northern lights from Meerhay. We used to have a fire in the garden

WENDY We went on trek with Cuthbert and Roland from here [Whitwell Hall]. Was it 1938 or '39?

JOY That summer term when we had the measles

WENDY Well, I know that I went to one camp here. I only did two camps – my first camp was definitely in Godshill

CATH I was wondering if Beefy or Cuthbert had any contact with people in other countries?

JOY Well there is a theory that those big

ideas travelled – like Darwin for example. People like William Morris had ideas that were a reaction to industrialisation. Thompson Seton studied American Indians and came up with the Woodcraft idea. He spread that to Europe. Baden Powell took it and thought Ah! Great for training young soldiers. He'd just been through the Boer War and realised how good the trackers were there. The Woodcraft idea rang a bell with Ernest Westlake and they got together. Thompson Seton gave a talk in London which Ernest Westlake went to, and then went into it more

* Early Days in the Forest School By 'N' Brand, Waymark No 1, published by Forest School Camps, 2003. Available as a download on the FSC website

TESTS & TRIALS

Tests and trials were an important feature of the OWC and the Forest School - here are some for Woodlings and Pathfinders. We contrast these with some of the FSC test and trials that have evolved and that may be familiar to FSC campers

These are some of the original tests and trials from the OWC in the 1930's

WOODLING TRIALS

The set are on two levels - once the initial trials have been passed, the Woodling progresses to the Deft Woodling stage. The first set for a new Woodling child is as follows:

1 The trial of lissomness

Must demonstrate at the Pack pow-wow some suitable dance or a bout of wrestling. In the latter, fitness of body as well as skill is to be judged. Two other similar deeds are required

2 The trial of nimbleness

Must be a 'hare' in a Pack paper-chase (or its equivalent) and a fair start and a good trail, and get home without being caught. Or, must give a bout of boxing at the Pack pow-wow, winning the applause of the Pack for lightness of foot. Two other similar deeds are required

3 The trial of cleanliness

Must pay attention to his personal hygiene while a Cub - i.e. to teeth, nails, regular habits, fresh air and exercise, tidiness of dress etc

4 The trial of the homeland guide

Must know what is meant by foot-, cart-, iron-, speech-, and light trails; making

also a circuit of the Pack Hunting Ground* so as to report, on return, the nature of the boundaries - whether trails, blazes or other features. Sketch maps should illustrate the account given. *Any defined area used by the Pack for its normal activities

Having proven himself in the Trials, the child becomes a Woodling and replaces the light green shoulder-cord by a dark green. The Woodling may now speak in the Pack pow-wow and count Deeds towards proficiency Degrees

DEFT WOODLING TRIALS

These include:

- 1 The trial of quick sight
- 2 The trial of keen smell
- 3 The trial of sharp hearing
- 4 The trial of noiseless tread
- 5 The trial of the questioning mind
- 6 The trial of the thinking hand



DEFT WOODLING TRIALS

These include:

- 1 The trial of quick sight
- 2 The trial of keen smell
- 3 The trial of sharp hearing
- 4 The trial of noiseless tread
- 5 The trial of the questioning mind
- 6 The trial of the thinking hand

PATHFINDER TRIALS

- 1 The trial of lissomness & the trial of fitness
- 2 The trial of the thinking hand
- 3 The trial of the adventurous rover
- 4 The trial of the homeland guide

Having proven himself in the Trials, he becomes a Pathfinder and adds the dark blue strand to his shoulder cord

TRIED PATHFINDER TRIALS

- 1 The trial of the lone virgil
To make a pilgrimage alone to some commanding eminence, or to a lonely spot on the seashore, or to an ancient shrine, e.g. Stonehenge, so as to be there for a sunrise and a sunset

2 The trial of the knight or lady errant

The Pathfinder must survey the Lodge Territory with a view to discovering such facts concerning neglected persons, things or causes as they think it within their power to set right, and to submit the same to the Court of Chivalry, who will duly consider them and apportion them to whatever individual or group they think most capable of tackling them

3 The trial by attainment

Having attained proficiency in some craft, dance or any other thing, the Pathfinder must teach the same to two Pathseekers - the Court of Chivalry to decide whether they have attained after instruction to the necessary standard

4 The trial of the creative fancy

The Pathfinder must create or produce according to their range of imagination either some new form or a fresh departure in Lodge activities, or some new ceremonial, or a dramatic presentation, or a festival, or some camp fire stories or tales, one of which will be accepted and carried out by the Lodge or by one of its Divisions

5 The trial of the master mind

The Pathfinder must organise and carry out successfully either a camp for not less than four persons and lasting at least three days, or a field day involving as many as possible (at least two divisions) and lasting one whole afternoon

Here are some of the current tests and trials at Forest School Camps

WOODLING TESTS

The Woodling must have satisfied a group chief in general camping proficiency and has shown that skills learned have been put to good use

- 1 TENDL TEST Pitch and strike an 'A' or 'Bivvy' tent. Trim a standing tent for a wet night and a windy day
- 2 TOOL TEST Demonstrate the correct way to hold a knife and use it to peel the bark from and point a green stick (ash, sycamore for example). Know the Laws of the Wood Pile
- 3 FIRE TEST Light a fire and boil half a pint of water. Matches to be more or less unlimited (say 12). Paper may be used, not more than about six square inches if fir or holly is not available. Candles, paraffin, mothballs, workshop shavings, brands from other fires etc. may not be used

WOODLING TRIALS

To qualify as a deft Woodling the candidate must pass the Woodling Tests and one trial from each section, plus one complete section of the Trial Sheet. There are 10 sections, with 4 or 5 trials in each. Here is an example:

THE SILENT ONE

- Carry a 12 word verbal message
- Show a good standard in stalking
- Remain silent for one hour, including a meal time
- One other trial, such as to show a good standard in following a trail

This photograph was taken at Radnor in 2008 on an afternoon of firelighting challenges for the whole camp. Here are some of the Pathfinder group. The Lodge was silent for the afternoon and everyone made their own fire and stayed by it. This is an example of how the old tests and trials can be newly interpreted into a Lodge challenge

MAY THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN

The procedure of the Lodge Council held at the Forest School in the 1920's and 30's is echoed in today's ceremony held at the end of every FSC camp

Procedure of the Lodge Council at the Forest School Lodge in the 1930's

The members of the Lodge assemble in age groups, the officials remaining outside the circle. At the appointed time the Marshal calls for silence while the Officials file slowly in, in the following order: Marshal, Recorder, Keeper of the Honours Tally, Gleeman, Keeper of the Fire, Lodge Master

LODGE MASTER 'Let the Keeper of the Fire light our Council Fire'
Silence

The keeper of the Fire kindles the Fire

KEEPER OF THE FIRE 'Behold our Fire, it Leaps, it Burns, it Glows
So may the Great Spirit Leap and Burn and Glow within us'

LODGE MASTER 'Blue Sky!'

Lodge responds

The Lodge Master welcomes any Visitors

This is to be followed by a suitable reading by any member of the Lodge who feels that the matter is in the true spirit of the occasion.

The Keeper of the Fire is to receive indication of the reading prior to the Lodge gathering

Opening Song

LODGE MASTER 'Let the Tally Keeper produce the Tally Stick'

Tally Keeper approaches and offers the Tally Stick

The log of the previous meeting is then read by the Recorder and duly signed

Then follows - Lodge Council report and group reports, in the following order -

Elves, Woodlings, Trackers, Pathfinders, Waywardens, Wayfarers

Deeds to be claimed

A suitable talk on Woodcraft might be inserted here

Any other business

Glee. Conducted by the Gleeman

Short Silence. Closing song

LODGE MASTER 'Let the Keeper of the Fire scatter our Fires'

KEEPER OF THE FIRE 'Behold! the Fire of our Council is burnt low

May the Great Spirit of Love and Understanding permeate our Lives'

LODGE MASTER 'Blue Sky!'

Lodge responds

Close



els
gathering

The word Lodge refers to the OWC Lodge that was the unit within the original Forest School. Lodges comprised of officials together with members of the Lodge. Lodge Common Council is held on the last night of a camp. There is a tradition of collecting the ashes from the fire at Lodge Common Council and taking them to the fire of the next camp to keep alive the spirit of FSC

acknowledgements

PUPILS AND TEACHERS AT THE FOREST SCHOOL

Please note these lists might not be inclusive - we have tried to list everyone

PUPILS Keith Bains, Margaret Brett, Anne Chase (babe), Meena Cook, Diana Cook, Jonathan Austin-Cooper, Robert Curwen, Michael Davies, Doreen Denton-Thompson, Sonia Denton-Thompson, Ruth Edwards, Ormond Edwards, Wendy Gabbot, Michael Gates, John Geller, John Glaister, Margie Glaister, Betty Gillard, Catherine Graves, Sam Graves, Edward Grimsey, Vinter Girteen, Peter Hedger, April John, Kathleen Jolley, Hazel Knight (now Powell), Keith (Douglas) Knight, Geoffrey Knight, Mulli Kularatne, Maya Kularatne, Adrian Lees, Edward Lewis, Elspeth Monroe (sub-elf), Robin Monroe (sub-elf), Harold Montgomery, Ronald Montgomery, Penny Nicholson (now Eliza Banks), Robert Nelson, Norman Palmer, Michael Parker, Robin Parsons, Len Phillips, Philip Piggott, Tania Reichenbach, Joy Roberts, Alisdair Skeggs, Jon Vear, Jean Westlake, Keith Westlake, Martin Westlake, Barbara Willis, Pat Woodruff, Kenneth Wright

PUPILS THAT WENT ON TO DARTINGTON IN 1940

Pathfinders - Barbara Gleeson, Pamela Hutchinson, John Harrison
Trackers - Herta Fischer, Pauline Shillabeare
Senior Woodlings - Jonathan Joyce, Diana Cuslee, Roma Lubienski, Rosemary Philpott, Anne Garland, Virginia Sneyders, Tessa Ward
Junior Woodlings - Susan Bird, David Bonar, Margaret Vereker, Joanna Shillabeare, Sue Bird, Penelope Fearon, Gilly Youngman, Brenda Vereker, Tom Wisdom
Elves - Margaret Potts, Margaret Anne Gittens, John Youngman

TEACHERS AND HOUSEPARENTS

Paul Abbatt and Marjory (née Cobb), Cor Bochova, Elsa Boyd, 'N' Brand (née Meatyard), Ron Brand (Beefy), Dick Chase, Kay Chase, Linda Cedargreen, Joyce Cooper, Ralph Cooper, Margaret Dickerson, Leslie England, Dorothy England (née Scott), Margo Falk, Roddy Fisher, Dorothy Glaister (née Revel), Alan Hoggett, Sue Ivins, Tony Ivins, Norman Kearns, Hilda Kularatne, Margery Large (Guillen), R.F. 'Bert' MacKenzie, George Parsons, Phyllis Parsons, Elizabeth Parker, Helen Price, Robert Powell and Stella, Mary Roberts, Joan Russell, Cuthbert Rutter, Helen Rutter, Ilse Reichenbach, Mary Scholes, Horace Smith, Frank Stone, Len Vear, Mary Vear, Tony Wells, Marjorie Westlake, Wilfred (horse riding instructor) and his horse Pizarro, 'Greensleeves' an extra staff member who looked after two Munroe sub-elves

IN PREPARING THIS PUBLICATION, MANY THANKS TO

Liza Banks, Clive and Lynden Bowen, Hazel Powell, Marcos Guillen, Maggie Beach, Nelleke van Helfteren, Jean Westlake, Carolyn Thompson, Andy Freedman, Polly Shields, Sally Ivens, Joy Evans, Wendy Roberts, Jan Brand, Keith Knight, Margaret Gobbett, Jill Jones, Joanna Bornat, Nick Tigg, Lucy Shepherd, Jayne Jenkins, Institute of Education archivists, Dartington Hall archivists, Barbara Tizard and of course not forgetting all those generations of seasoned campers who have slept under canvas with Forest School Camps

This publication was compiled and edited by Cath Shepherd and Caroline Jefford, 2011

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jean Westlake (2000) *70 Years a-growing* Hawthorne Press
Jean Westlake (1988) *A Handbook for Sandy Balls* Sandy Balls Press
N Brand *Early days in the Forest School* Waymark no.1 www.fsc.org.uk
John Grayson *Grith Fyrd Camps: An Experiment in Community Building* www.fsc.org.uk
Penny Nicholson (Liza Banks) (1997) *A Record of the Tracker Hike 1935* Forest School Camps
W. Van der Eyken & B. Turner (1969) *Adventures in Education* Penguin
Ron Brand (1977) *Camping: posters, fact sheets, things to do* Magpie Packs in association with Thames Television
Robert Skidelsky (1969) *English Progressive Schools* Penguin
Forest School Prospectus' (various)
Forest School Camps (1997) *Our Story: 50 years under canvas with FSC*
Ernest Thompson Seton (1903) *Two Little Savages: A Book of American Woodcraft for Boys*
Order of Woodcraft Chivalry (1927) *Woodcraft Chivalry* The Woodcraft Way Series No. 3
Ernest Westlake (1930) *The Forest School* The Woodcraft Way Series No. 7
Order of Woodcraft Chivalry
Aubrey T. Westlake (1933) *Heart, Hand, and Head* The Woodcraft Way Series No. 18
Order of Woodcraft Chivalry
Winifred Pryke, article in The Daily Mirror Newspaper (October 12, 1937) *These Children Have To Be Their Own Mother*
Dorothy Revel (1930) *Woodcraft Discipline* The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry
Ernest Westlake with an introduction by J. Norman Glaister (1930) *The Forest School* The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry
FSC Magazine (1975)

DISSERTATIONS

Cath Shepherd (1972) *A history of Forest School Camps*
Polly Shields *Finding a place for Forest School (1929-1940) in the history and future of education*
Daniel Simon (1989) *Forest School Camps: an image of childhood over sixty years*

You can see a film about Grith Fyrd camps at <http://www.newforestgateway.org/TVFilmVideo/VideoPlayer/tabid/174/VideoId/64/ARMY-OF-PEACE.aspx>

PICTURE CREDITS

Where it has been possible to attribute the source we have included. Apologies for any omissions. Please note the quality of photographs varies as some images are reproduced from original documents.

Front cover, pages 2, 3, 8, 9: Jean Westlake
Inside covers, pages 6, 18, 40, 44, 46: Caroline Jefford
Pages 4, 11, 14, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 33: School prospectus 1931
Pages 1, 13, 32, 34, 38, 39: Whitwell Hall prospectus 1938
Pages 26-27: Margery Guillen, Jean Westlake
Pages 30-31: Sally Ivins
Page 36-37: Jill Jones
Page 41: Reprinted from the Hampshire Advertiser & Southampton Times, 30 June 1934
Page 43: Hazel Powell and Keith Knight

'My main memories of those early folkmoths were of scents, sounds and colours ... we added our little voices, and arms in salute to the great crescendo of sound of the Order Watchword, 'Blue Sky' at the beginning and ending of each camp rally and joined in the Goodnight Song when age groups of children retired quietly to bed at the appointed time ... later, when we were old enough, we pitched our own little tents, lined our camp beds with bracken which lulled us to sleep with its dusty fragrance and were wakened in the morning light by the haunting Arise Song which echoed through the sleeping camp'

JEAN WESTLAKE, PUPIL

**‘A child’s life at the Forest School
is regarded as a joyful adventure.
Happiness, which is a child’s birthright,
follows from personal satisfaction of
achievement and the natural life
of an organised group’**

FROM FOREST SCHOOL PROSPECTUS, CIRCA 1931

This publication is a celebration of the Forest School
It has been produced for the members of Forest School Camps
www.fsc.org.uk



COVER Top photograph: Summer lessons in
the garden with the Elves (5 - 8 year olds)
Lower photograph: Camping out,
the Woodling Hike, summer 1935