



Young People's Stories

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This short article gathers together a range of testimonies from young people involved with Woodcraft Folk. It includes their length of involvement, things they have enjoyed and learned, and the difference that Woodcraft Folk has made to their lives.

Introduction

Woodcraft Folk has long been a beacon of co-operative learning, teamwork, social action, and global citizenship in young people. Through its unique approach to education and personal development, it instils in participants the values of equality, sustainability, and collective responsibility. This article includes a number of interviews between young people, sharing what they do within Woodcraft Folk, what they have learnt and the impact they feel it has on their lives.

The testimonies of young people involved in Woodcraft Folk reveal the profound and lasting impact of these experiences, shaping them into active, compassionate citizens. One young person shared how being part of a Woodcraft Folk group taught them the power of working together: "We all had different skills, but by listening to each other and sharing ideas, we achieved things none of us could have done alone. I now understand how co-operation can bring about real change". These experiences go beyond the activities themselves, instilling a mindset of collaboration that young people carry into their schools, workplaces, and communities.

Social action is at the heart of the Woodcraft Folk ethos, empowering young people to take meaningful steps toward positive change. A participant reflected on this: "Being involved in campaigns and community projects showed me that my voice matters. I learned that even small actions, when combined, can make a big difference." This sense of agency and responsibility helps young people develop confidence in their ability to contribute to a more just and sustainable world.

The impact of Woodcraft Folk extends far beyond childhood, as former participants continue to uphold its values throughout their lives. The commitment to co-operative learning, inclusivity, and active citizenship ensures that young people not only gain valuable skills but also develop a deep-seated belief in the power of collective action to shape a better future. As Professor Douglas Bourn (2025) highlights, this distinctive approach nurtures a generation of thoughtful, engaged individuals ready to span the world with friendship and work toward global progress.

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In Woodcraft Folk's tradition of amplifying the voices of young people, in their own words young people share their individual Woodcraft Folk journeys.

Hernani (age 17)

Please describe how you have been involved in Woodcraft Folk

I went to Woodcraft Folk at my local group in London. I moved to another part of the country when I was 10 but still went to summer camps and other events with my friends. I have been to lots of Woodcraft centres, to Common Ground 2022, and to Venturer Camp 2023.

What have you most enjoyed?

I have enjoyed the camps, the dancing, the friends, and meeting new people from different parts of the country.

What have you learnt?

Lots of life skills like cooking and washing up. I have learnt about different cultures and also about climate change. I have learnt that everyone should be treated equally and that if others try, then everyone can be treated equally.

What difference has Woodcraft Folk made to you?

It has meant I could keep my friends even when I had to move away and still go on amazing camps and trips with them. I have really enjoyed camping which is something that my family and school friends would not take me on that experience.

How is Woodcraft Folk different from other activities you engage with?

I can be myself at Woodcraft. It is having fun and being outside which is different from other activities.

Daisy-Mae Rixon Howard (age 17)

Please describe how you have been involved in Woodcraft Folk

I have been involved through my family since I was 4 years old. I have been part of my local group and have been to every camp since I joined. I have also been to National Venturer Camps and International Camp 2022.

What have you most enjoyed?

I most enjoy the camps! Card games, slug wars in my sleeping bag, and being with my friends, campfires, merrymoots (entertainment at camp) and pea fairs. I like that everyone gives me a big cheer when I perform in the merrymoot.

What have you learnt?

I have learnt valuable life skills such as how to wash up and the basics of kitchen work and hygiene. I have learnt bushcraft skills like building a fire and keeping it going, making friendship bracelets, and a lot of good card games. I have also learnt about other cultures such as at Common Ground when we shared with a group from Zimbabwe and from Germany, and they taught us lots of their games, campfire songs, and traditions. I have learnt a lot from one of my leaders Marianne who has taught me some basic BSL (British Sign Language) as well as how to make friendships with people who are not your age.

What difference has Woodcraft Folk made to you?

It has given me lifelong friends and experiences other children don't have. I feel like I can deal with living in a field, being around bugs, and co-operating with others which I feel has helped my resilience.

When I did citizenship GCSE at school I found a lot of what we explored was similar to topics we do at Woodcraft Folk.

How is Woodcraft Folk different from other activities you engage with?

Woodcraft is different because it gives me freedom to have my voice heard, be outside in the natural world, and be with my friends. Woodcraft has helped me see how I can make a difference in the world which not many other activities do.

What would you like to see Woodcraft Folk do in the future?

Expand and have more groups across the UK as well as make more connections with other international partners.

Fred and Tom Bailey (age 12)

Please describe how you have been involved in Woodcraft Folk

We have been involved with Woodcraft Folk for 9 years. We joined our local group at Waltham Abbey and Harlow district when we were 3 years old. Our parents are group leaders. We have been involved with national and international projects such as Everyone's Environment and Kids Got Rights, been to bushcraft camps, camps with our local group, Elfin sleepovers at Cudham, and went to Pioneer Camp 2024 at Biblins.

What have you most enjoyed?

Tom: I enjoyed going to Barcelona and Austria as part of the Kids Got Rights project. I liked when we were with our international friends and we had an evening where we shared snacks from different countries.

Fred: I most enjoy doing bushcraft and making things. I have made so many cool things that I know my friends at school do not know how to make. I like going to bushcraft camps and meeting with friends.

What have you learnt?

Tom: Lots of skills with bushcraft, fire lighting, and using bushcraft knives. I have also learnt about children's rights and how important they are and which countries don't have the UNCRC (UN Convention on Rights of a Child).

Fred: I have learnt a lot about children's rights, making things at bushcraft camp, and also about our environment. I have learnt how to show other people how to play "How bad are bananas?" to teach them about our carbon use.

What difference has Woodcraft Folk made to you?

Tom: I made a lot of new friends and enjoy going camping. The first time I ever went on a plane was to the Kids Got Rights weekend in Barcelona.

Fred: I have made lots of friends and been to lots of different places. I have met people from other countries and then met them again at Common Ground international camp.

How is Woodcraft Folk different from other activities you engage with?

Way different from school. The activities show that adults trust us to make things at bushcraft and also how to have conversations with different people.

At Woodcraft we can have fun and learn at the same time.

What would you like to see Woodcraft Folk do in the future?

Tom: More bushcraft camps and activities.

Fred: Make more change for the environment.

Sadie Lamont (age 19)**What have you most enjoyed?**

I have most enjoyed my participation in DFs (District Fellowship). I was inspired to go after meeting a few DFs at camp 100 when I didn't think I would come back to Woodcraft. I'm really glad I came to DFs and realised there's another side to Woodcraft than wide games because the responsibilities I've been able to take on as a DF have given me a lot of confidence and purpose.

What have you learnt?

Being given the opportunity to help co-ordinate events, lead workshops and have responsibility for the well being of others has given me a lot of unique experiences for a young person. I have developed admin and communication skills that are really transferable to my every day life. Through my involvement in Woodcraft I've also gained an understanding of my skills what I'm passionate about.

What difference has Woodcraft Folk made to you?

Woodcraft has made a massive difference to my life, I've met some of the coolest people I know and developed some really genuine friendships. The skills and experience that I have obtained from my position on DF committee as Safeguarding Rep and various other roles for Woodcraft have helped me gain opportunities outside of the organisation.

How is Woodcraft Folk different from other activities you engage with?

Woodcraft Folk's strong emphasis on Youth Voice is what has given me the opportunities I have had. Being trusted with the impactful tasks I have been is really empowering.

What would you like to see Woodcraft Folk do in the future?

I would like to see Woodcraft Folk putting more emphasis on diverse membership so a broader range of people can experience the benefits that I have.

Astrid Taylor (age 12)**Please describe how you have been involved in Woodcraft Folk**

I have been going to Woodcraft Folk in Cardiff since I was an Elfin, so six years now. I have been to Common Ground, Pioneer Camp and a district camp at Biblins. I am part of the planning team for Camp 100 and we've been to Darsham and Height Gate for meetings.

What have you most enjoyed?

I have really enjoyed meeting new people and forming close friendships with people who are often a different age or from a different school to me. I also really enjoyed meeting international

delegates at Camp 100 as it shows how much language does not really matter in making friends.

What have you learnt?

I've learnt to be more myself. I've had the opportunity to meet lots of different people which has inspired me as I have seen how unique everyone is. It's shown me that you can be yourself and that's OK.

What difference has Woodcraft Folk made to you?

I feel I have gained more independence and confidence to lead group nights but also to apply these leadership skills when working with other groups, such as in school.

How is Woodcraft Folk different from other activities you engage with?

Unlike other activities such as sports clubs which have quite a narrow focus in Woodcraft Folk you do a wide range of activities. This has helped me to feel more confident when approaching new activities and I've found new interests.

What would you like to see Woodcraft Folk do in the future?

I would like to see more ethnic diversity within Woodcraft Folk. My school is very diverse and this has given me an understanding of different perspectives.

The Author

Lauren Karstadt has been involved with Woodcraft Folk her whole life, starting out as a 6 month old woodchip at a summer camp with New Barnet District. In 2017 Lauren joined the Woodcraft Folk staff team as a development officer for the new groups project in the east of England, since then her role, skills, knowledge, and experience have developed, becoming Programme Manager at the end of 2020. Throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns Lauren worked with a group of volunteers to develop our digital youth work offer and is currently the project manager for Woodcraft Folk's centenary camp.

Reference

Bourn, D. (2025). From international friendship to international solidarity. In D. Bourn, & R. Palser (Eds.), *Span the world with friendship: Progressive education, internationalism and the Woodcraft Folk* (pp. 103-126). UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800088498>