

Stroud Valleys Woodcraft Folk New Members Pack



www.stroudwoodcraft.org.uk

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Woodcraft Folk Aims and Principle (abridged)

A&P.1 The Woodcraft Folk is an educational, empowerment and advocacy movement for children and young people, open to all, with the aim of building an environmentally sustainable world built on children's and human rights, equality, friendship, peace, economic & social justice and co- operation.

A&P. 2 Education for Social Change

We seek to develop in our members a critical awareness of the world. We will work to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills necessary for them to act to secure their equal participation in the democratic process that will enable them to bring about the changes that they feel are necessary to create a more equal and caring world.

As an educational movement, we believe that equal opportunities should extend to all aspects of activity and participation in the Woodcraft Folk. We will combat oppression or discrimination in our movement, whether on grounds of age, class, gender, race, sexual orientation or for reasons of disability. We will educate our members so that they may take these issues into the wider community.

A&P.3 A Co-operative and Sharing Attitude to Life

We believe that to further our aims it is vital to approach our educational work through the principles of co-operation. To achieve this we will provide a programme which ensures that our members practice co-operation through all the activities in which they participate.

A&P.4 International Understanding

Our motto is 'Span the world with friendship'. We will therefore encourage and develop international understanding and friendship through our educational work and by our exchanges between children and young people of different lands.

A&P.5 The Rights of the Child

We respect and defend the rights of children and young people, and we encourage them to participate responsibly and democratically in all aspects of Woodcraft Folk.

A&P.6 Religion

The Woodcraft Folk welcomes all children, young people and adults, who wish to become members of the movement, and it asserts the right of all its members to practice the faith of their choice providing it does not contravene the aims and principles of the movement.

A&P.7 One World

The Woodcraft Folk will encourage an understanding of the need to protect our environment and the use of the world's resources. With this aim we will seek to encourage our members to protect our urban and rural environment in the interests of all.

A&P.8 A world at Peace

Because of our international outlook and concern that all shall enjoy the right to freedom from the immorality of war and want, the Woodcraft Folk is dedicated to the cause of peace.

A fuller statement of the Aims, Principle & Programme (APP) can be found online at: <http://www.woodcraft.org.uk/resources/aims-principles-and-programme>

Our Groups and Democratic Structures

Groups

We currently run five groups, divided (somewhat flexibly!) by age:

- Under 6 (Budding Woodchips)
- 6-9½ years (Sycamore Elfins and Willow Elfins)
- 9½-12 (Acorn Pioneers)
- 13-16 years (Buttercup Venturers)

Groups usually have five key role holders: Coordinator (keeps things running); Membership Leader (holds everyone's details); Finance Leader (collects the termly subs); Guardian (makes sure everyone is included) and Activities Leader (organises the programme of what the group is going to do). You will be able to get involved in your group in many different ways: planning, supporting or leading sessions; taking on a key role within your group; bringing snacks or drinks; helping with fundraising; attending meetings or training; welcoming new members.

Stroud District

Your group is part of Stroud Valleys District. The District has a strong committee that supports all the groups to run. There are regular District meetings where information is disseminated, events are planned and decisions are made - all parents are invited and encouraged to attend.

Sessions and Activities

Group Sessions

All groups enjoy a varied programme including games, adventures, drama, cooking, discussions, projects, crafts and singing, as well as following an educational programme based on awareness of local and global issues. Groups often choose a theme for the term's programme that is underpinned by a cause, environmental or social issue. Groups meet to plan the term's programme together, involving the needs and ideas of the children, and creating many outdoor opportunities and annual rituals in our local rural and urban environments.

Sessions are usually 1½ hours long. Some groups meet every week and some every two weeks. There are usually between 10 and 20 children in a group.

District Activities

Camp

The co-operative ethos and creativity of Woodcraft is at its best on camp. We hold our camp every year on the last bank holiday weekend in May so we can have 4 nights and three whole days. Parents are very welcome, but a good number of young people attend without their parents. We choose a theme each year on which to base our Wide Game, which always involves weaving a complex story, dressing up, and chasing each other through the woods! We organise ourselves in to mixed-age groups called Clans and all camp chores including cooking for everyone are done in these Clans. Through the weekend, children invent and practise their acts for the 'Merry Moot' variety show on the last night.

Bonfire

In the winter we have our annual bonfire, which embraces creativity in the dark! Groups make fire sculptures, lanterns for a parade and the Venturers take us on a Scary Walk! We provide hot food and drinks, and we sing songs around the bonfire.

Sausage Sizzle

At the end of the summer term, all the groups organise their fire and frying pans, gather on Selsley Common and have a bit of a feast of sausages (including vegetarian options!) and celebrate the year as a District together.

Moving Up Ceremonies

When children reach the age for going in to the next group (e.g. from Elfins to Pioneers at about age 9½) they 'move up' in a simple celebration attended by all ages. These ceremonies are usually in the spring, and again in the summer at the Sausage Sizzle.

The wider structure of Woodcraft Folk (WF)

The Woodcraft Folk is a UK-wide organisation, founded in 1926. It provides a range of services to support local groups. Many of the activities, training and resources available have been developed by volunteer members, and continue to be delivered on a voluntary basis through national, regional and district events. The Woodcraft Folk is part of an international movement of organisations with similar values, called the International Falcon Movement (IFM-SEI), and young people from Stroud Woodies have in the past attended international camps, in places such as Finland.

Wider Woodcraft Folk activities

There are opportunities to join in activities with other Districts at camps and fun days. There is also a rich programme of training offered by WF. Opportunities like these will be advertised from time to time through SVWF Google Group emails.

Each District is part of an Area Network and then also part of a wider Region. Stroud is part of the OSG Area Network, which also includes Oxford, Swindon, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Banbury; and part of the South West England Region. The OSG Area Network arranges annual training events or camps, and a fun day out at "Levellers Day" in Burford, Oxfordshire, every year on a Saturday in mid-May.

Regions have their own Gatherings that all members of the region are encouraged to attend. There are roles on the regional or national Councils that members can also stand for. Annually there is a gathering of the Woodcraft Folk for the whole of the UK. At the Annual Gathering members and delegates from groups or districts vote for motions that are put forward before the event and the General Council is elected. The General Council is the trustee body made up of members of the Woodcraft Folk who oversee the running of the organisation and its finances.

Joining Stroud Valleys Woodcraft Folk

We invite potential new members to attend a "taster" session or two, free of charge before deciding whether it is right for them. Parents are welcome to stay at all of our sessions. Please complete the Membership and Health form and bring it to your first session, so we have contact information and the child/young person's details including any relevant information about health concerns or additional needs. This will be held in the group file, available at sessions in case of emergencies.

Subs and attendance

These are currently set at £5 per term plus £2 per session (£1.50 each for siblings). Lower income families are welcome to pay £3/term plus £1/session instead. This is requested at the beginning of each term and should be paid promptly. Where finances are an concern, however, we offer to agree an amount that is affordable.

We all have busy lives and competing commitments, but if members do not attend sessions on a regular basis there is a social impact on the group. There are often waiting lists for places, so please do talk to your Group Membership Leader if you have any issues about attending the group at any time.

Parental involvement

There is no one person or group of people who are responsible for making Stroud Valleys Woodcraft successful. It is a truly co-operative movement, made possible by the ideas, time and energy given by volunteers.

Each week there will be a number of volunteers to take on various roles in running a session. The rota is decided by the group each term at a planning meeting, which you should try to attend. *By joining SVWF you are agreeing to share the responsibility of running your group and to take part in sessions.* If you would like more information about this, please talk to your Group Co-ordinator.

Parents/guardians of SVWF members are expected to participate in supporting sessions in some capacity, ideally at least once a term, and parents must become members of the Woodcraft Folk (known as "Kinsfolk") themselves. This can be done online at www.woodcraft.org.uk. At the time of joining you will also need to complete a free DBS check, or provide details of an existing current DBS certificate.

Your WF membership gives access to the range of Woodcraft resources, training opportunities and news, as well as being part of a great organisation. We require our Kinsfolk to be WF members in order to comply with our Safeguarding policy and the terms of our public liability insurance.

There are also opportunities to take part in District activities. You can represent your group at District meetings, help with events such as the bonfire and camps, and take on a key role in your group when you are ready. The best way to get to know how to do something is to get stuck in, but we also aim to offer training and support for parents so they are more confident and better equipped to lead sessions and deal with any issues that may arise.

Safeguarding and Protecting Children in the Woodcraft Folk

Members volunteer their time to provide a safe and fun atmosphere for children and young people to explore, create, learn and make friends. To support weekly group night activities it is important that members follow the procedures as described in the Woodcraft Folk Health and Safety Policy (available online).

The Woodcraft Folk Safeguarding Policy (available online) states that each group should produce its own local policy and action plan for ensuring that safe practices are actively implemented. You will be given a copy of the local action plan by your Group Membership Leader when you start to volunteer.

The underlying themes of the policy include:

- Any form of physical violence or abuse, whether committed by or inflicted upon either adults or young people is not acceptable within the organisation. It also means that we do not countenance verbal insults or destructive criticism.
- Safeguarding children requires good child care and good group-work practice. It is a requirement in the Woodcraft Folk that all adults involved with children should create a safe and open environment wherein social relationships can be confidently discussed and in which all members of the organisation may grow. Children are safer where they feel confident in themselves and in their group.
- Adults must accept the responsibility to exercise due care in all activities, so that young people are not exposed to risk through adult negligence or incompetence.
- The Safeguarding policy also describes how adults will be vetted when working with children and young people within The Woodcraft Folk. References will be sought for all volunteers as to their suitability to volunteer with children and young people.
- Everyone who wishes to volunteer with children and young people in groups or other activities is required to complete an online DBS Disclosure check.
- Volunteers who have contact with children will be asked to declare any criminal convictions they may have which involve abuse against children, however old these convictions may be. This is an exemption from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

All adult volunteers must:

- abide by the local Child Protection Policy

and are required to:

- become a member of the Woodcraft Folk, giving them insurance cover, access to training, and the right to participate in decision-making etc;
- complete a DBS check, including a declaration that they have no convictions, or criminal proceedings pending, which would render them unsuitable to be volunteering with children.

Where unrelated prior convictions or cautions exist, these should be declared in confidence and do not automatically preclude the person from involvement in Woodcraft Folk.