**Forest School Association 2013 Conference Report**
**Derwent Hill OE Centre October 12th/13th October**

The conference was launched by chair Jon Cree welcoming the 140 attendees. Jon congratulated the whole FS community on the continuing good work that had been done over the last 20 years in getting to this stage where FS was happening in every county in the UK. He highlighted the particularly encouraging work that was happening in urban areas in connecting children regularly with a green space nearby.

Jon then outlined the programme and some of the challenges faced by the Forest school community the conference should consider over the weekend;

- How do we raise the profile of Forest School, gain more support from the educational community and more resources?
- How do we ensure people know what Forest school looks like and compliments the many other forms of outdoor learning?
- How do we prove our worth?
- How do we continue providing support for each other in our practice to maintain quality?

This report includes precise's on the discussions, workshops and key note speeches and thoughts on the way we answer some of the challenges and move the FSA forward and the wider Forest School community. Please do dip in and out as there is lots here!!

## Keynotes

**Tim Gill**
Tim, FSA patron and writer, looked at how we make the case for Forest School in an outcome driven education community, using empirical evidence. He used the study he has recently done for the London Sustainable Development Commission and the Mayor of London, 'sowing the seeds', see
http://www.londonsdc.org/documents/Sowing%20the%20Seeds%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf
A copy of Tim's presentation is on the FSA members area of the website see
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjsn19mWL18&feature=player_embedded

Tim's slides are also on the website and attached to this report.  This was looking at what difference does children's contact/play with nature in London make to them.   He encouraged us to pursue a thoughtful approach to the evidence we may collect on impacts.  Tim's study argues for us to move to a more playful interaction with the natural world if we are to deepen children's well being, connection to nature and concern for it.

**Dr Margot Sunderland**
Margot, author of many books including 'What every parent should know' offered an up-to-date overview on psychological and brain science research on how children and young people can be enabled to thrive.  This presentation with some excellent handouts with good references to the research is on the members area of the FSA website see - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC-0r1oqhS8&feature=player_embedded and
http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/post-conference-2013-resources
Margot showed the importance of regular contact with the natural world to encourage the release of brain derived hormones that can encourage higher thinking and a greater sense of well being.  Margot's presentation was both stimulating and encouraging, there is now some compelling evidence for the importance of regular contact with the natural world to improve learning and development.

**Values, Politics and Action**
**Vicky Stewart, Richard Irvine and Mel McCree**

This last keynote of 3(!), looked at how we value Forest School, how culture influences pedagogy and lastly how the political climate might impact on Forest School.
Vicky started by examining various business terms and what a 'business' sustainability model might look like from all the economic, social and environmental aspects – related to Forest School.
Richard  then took this further relating this to power relationships between learners, teachers and the learning community and how cultutre and values influence these relationships.  Richard related this to the relationship between values and actions and how Forest School actually looks like in practice – is it truly child centred or not?.  One quote that stuck with many was 'method is action'.  Richard delved into the history of experiential learning and recommended the conference look at Jay Roberts work – beyond learning by doing'.

Mel then raised the concepts of Forest school 'ultra lite' (ie Forest School that may not be fulfilling the 6 principles and criteria eg a one off visit to a woodland) through to Forest School 'deep' that does fairly and squarely run purely according to the 6 principles and criteria.  Is Forest school ultra lite a valid way in, in the hope that eventually a practitioner will achieve the deep variety.  She also looked at the impacts of a neo liberal agenda on practice – can they really encourage freedom at forest school for true creativity.  With our schools in a neoliberal society where league tables, competition and restrictive outcome lead curricular can mean schools can't realistically meet the principles of Forest School.

See the powerpoints for these 3 provocations on
http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/post-conference-2013-resources.

The presenters then asked the conference to consider the challenges they raised which were discussed in workshops the following day – see final section of this report to read the actions that resulted from these workshops.
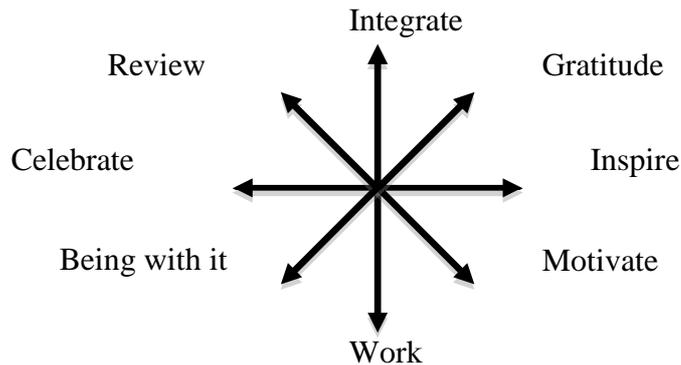
## Workshops

- **How to work with Forest School to develop community through mentoring and the art of questioning**.
  *Chris Holland – Independent Outdoor Practitioner, Storyteller and Author.*

- **Forest School in a big primary school: The perspective and challenges of a Teaching Assistant.**
  *Helen Fairest-Forest School Practitioner and TA*

- **Working with outdoor play and the natural elements – theories.**
  *Lily Horseman – Independant FS Practitioner and Trainer of Kindling Play*

- **Using technologies in the outdoors – opportunities and barriers**
  *Ian Tindall – Programme Leader Anglia Ruskin University*

- **Babes in the Woods & their families:  Working with under 3's and their families in the natural environment.**
  *Jenny Creese – Connecting Naturally Project Manager, Earth Trust, Oxfordshire*

- **Soundscapes songs and creativity at Forest School**
  *Catherine Pestano – Community Musician and Social Worker*

- **A 'hole' lot of fun! - Using hand tools to support learners ideas.**
  *Louise Ambrose and Martin Smith – FSTC FS Practitioners and Trainer)*

- **Citizen Science – ways to collect evidence for outcomes**
  *Sara Knight - Anglia Ruskin University and Sue Waite - Plymouth University*

**How to work with Forest School to develop community through mentoring and the art of questioning**.
 *Chris Holland*

Workshop notes by Aline Hill
Note – the headings in these notes form a wheel of experience that Chris was guiding us through.



### Inspire - story

We introduced ourselves and shared what had brought us to the workshop. Chris introduced himself and gave some of the story of his mentoring journey. He has been inspired by John Young of the Tom Brown Wilderness School and has been involved in their mentoring for around 4 years.

John Young looked at mentoring role of adults towards children in lots of cultures. He was struck by how traditional mentoring is often aiming to draw out what is special in a child. He was also struck by how the community collaborated in that mentoring.

Where can curiosity or questioning of the natural world lead us? Chris gave two examples of how the sequence of questions and answers that arise in us on encountering natural phenomena – a track and birdsong in this case – can draw us into the wider community in which we and that phenomena co-exist  –  a community that includes the environment itself.

So, a footprint can invoke the question of what made it, how was that creature walking, was it alone, why was it passing, why had it chosen here, what was it eating at this time of year and so on . . .

Birdsong can lead us to question why the birds are singing, and what ourselves and our groups are thinking and doing when the birds sing. Through this we can understand that there is no difference between us and birds – when they are settled, we are settled, and when we are settled, they are settled.

**Motivate – game - action**

We explored a plant with all senses except sight with the aim of being able to tell what it was – a blindfold game that allowed us to tune into other senses including trust.

We played 'I love it when' –adding favourite FS effects. We loved it when: All you can hear are the tools and the birds; You don't know who the 'naughty' kid is; When the kids notice it's different and relax into it; When it's time to step back; When the interwoven relationships begin to hold the whole group up – a basket taking on form; When the children are so absorbed they don't know you're there.

**Work/doing**

We played Kim's game, sitting in a circle round ten objects on a blanket. Chris drew more and more detailed answers from us with a mixture of open questioning and direct questioning. We quickly noticed that we needed the different perspectives around the circle to fill in the full picture. A holistic approach to observation!

**Being with it**

We had a break – some stayed with the game and the group. We had a bit of time to think about it.

**Celebrate**

Might have missed this bit!

**Review**

We discussed our learning, and Chris shared some models that he uses.

*How can our FS build community?*

Share fire, food, research, talk, play, sense of place, role models of stewardship & mutual respect, equality, less barriers, starts during the preparation for the programme, drawing older people into programme who have time to sit and be interested, drawing soldiers back into civilian life.
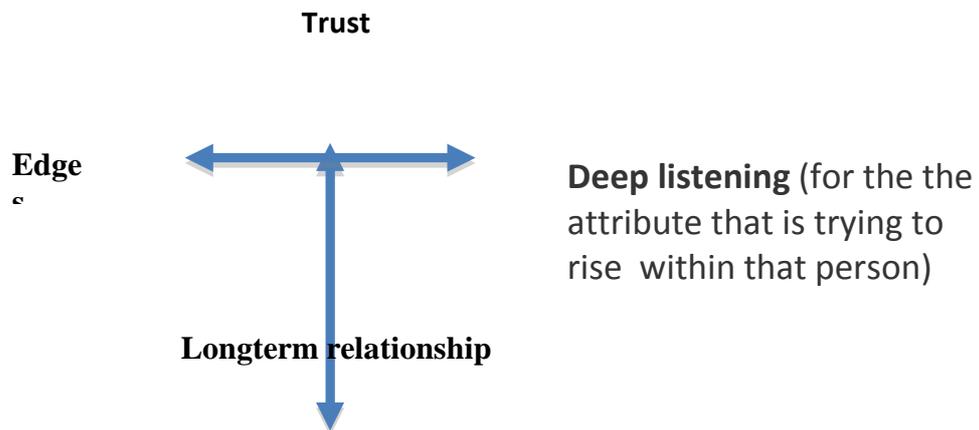
*Questioning*

Chris uses **80% open questions, 18% focussed questions, 2% unanswerable 'mysterious' questions**. He advocates **answering a question with a question**. As a questioner, he comes from a place of **genuine inquisitiveness**, and didn't try too hard in Kim's game to remember all the answers. He gave us **time to answer**. We discussed how **tone** of questions was important (integrating Margot Sunderland's lecture, I think we're looking for calmly alert –seeking system

switched on.) We discussed how it was important to be able to **accept** all answers to a question.

There was a level of meta-cognition implicit – did we know more or less as a community? How did we manage to be sure about things that turned out to be wrong?

### *What is mentoring?*

Chris talked about Mark Morey's 4 corner stones of mentoring

**Trust**

**Edges**

**Deep listening** (for the the attribute that is trying to rise within that person)

**Longterm relationship**

### Integrate

We started to do this in the review      section – thinking about how what we were discussing related to our practice, our observations, and our interests. Maybe a challenge will be to look at aspects of questioning, mentoring and community within our practice and broader life.

### Gratitude

A common thread in everyone's gratitude was for the FS community that was emerging and developing during the workshop and the conference.

Here is Chris's precis;
• A gratitude round of I like it when.... (focussed on the fab things that happen in Forest School
• Intros, who we are and where are we from.
• Inspiring talk about how forest school sessions are community in action and how FS community has potential to develop community with other people in the forest school sessions, with other people around the edge of the sessions - (aunties, uncles, parents, other 'expert' or brought in session leaders artists etc..and also with the natural world. What if it were the trees that were making us protect the little forest school areas from development etc, and not us going into the woods to play and protect the trees?
• we played Kim's game where objects are hidden under a blanket and then revealed for 30 seconds. note down what was there. Use art of questioning to draw out info from the group. Have another look at the objects. Used this

activity to illustrate art of questioning.
• tea break
• Unpacked the game - what did we learn from this game?
• reviewed the art of questioning
• Intro to 4 Cornerstones of Mentoring (after mark Morey) - Long term relationship, edges, trust and deep listening.
Gratitude round of what i received from the workshop was grateful!

**Forest School in a big primary school: The perspective and challenges of a Teaching Assistant.**
*Helen Fairest*

In total 14 of us met to discuss this topic… and discuss we did.
The group of 14 included TAs, HLTAs (some also Level 3 Forest School Trained), reception class teachers, an assistant head, an independent practitioner, a volunteer forest school leader, and an information gatherer all of whom had very varied and equally delicious favourite desserts ranging from Cadbury's dairy milk, to profiteroles, lemon meringue to apple pie (we struggled to find agreement over the cream/ice cream/custard accompaniment.)
After a little time spent knee patting to a Cherokee song, we spent a little time outlining the various settings in which we work and then we looked at key challenges which Helen and others have come across delivering forest school programmes in primary schools. These came under 5 themes, around which people gathered to discuss and generate possible solutions.
Themes and snapshots of discussions:

**The approach of people coming into Forest School differing greatly from the Forest School ethos.**
*Discussions included the training people offer to staff and parents. Leading by example – it seems to work, particularly for passing on dialogic approaches. Discussions with senior management teams: not being afraid to presume they do not understand the Forest School principles – "it is unlikely that you will be teaching granny to suck eggs". Ways of responding when staff withdraw children from Forest School as a sanction.*

**Forest School being seen as a pedagogy not just an activity (fire, tools work, shelter building, etc.) and a non-teaching Forest School leader (independent practitioner or TA for example) being regarded as just an activity provider but not as a pedagogue.**
*Discussions included conversations to have with SMT, offering staff experiential sessions in the woods, giving them the opportunity and permission to play. Using recent research (Margot Sunderland's work now springs to mind) to influence discussions. Giving all staff in the wood clear roles; observing the children is a real eye opener to what the setting and the chance for child initiated play can really offer children. Highlighting specific areas to observe that week, e.g. looking for examples of collaboration, leadership, flow and focus, lone play, mark making, empathy, etc.*

**The real and perceived pressures to fit sessions to the curriculum. Particularly from year 1, how can we justify the time in Forest School?**

*Discussion included giving PSHE time to Forest School, highlighting the links specific Forest School activities can have to the curriculum through the Risk Benefit assessment. How much time, if any, should Forest School sessions be given over to structured adult led activity in order for the time to be justified? At what point does it become 'outdoor learning'? Pressure to link Forest School to classroom topic seemed to be something commonly felt and even more difficult to achieve whilst keeping to the Forest School child initiated criteria for good working practice.*

**Making Forest School work with large groups of children in the woods and ratios of 1:10. Is it possible, how can we make it possible?**

*Discussion included dividing the group and creating smaller seating areas for small group reviews. Giving adults in the group an observational role. Empowering other staff to manage the fire or use tools, (with the FS leader still responsible for safety).*

**Making a fresh start: helping children and adult to leave the morning, the class dynamic, labels and modus operandi behind.**

*Discussion included the use of song as children arrive in the wood, method of getting to the site – "why walk across the field when you can fly!?". Meeting strange characters in the wood, a dragon who has lost his fire, a witch who needs a new magic potion, an explorer who needs a map. Using smaller groups as a way of giving the teacher a break from children or vice versa!*

The second half of the session we spent outside, first singing and then exploring some of the situations we had discussed earlier through role play which gave fodder for even more meaty discussion and problem solving.

A big thanks to everyone attending the workshop for entering into the session whole heartedly and offering some real solutions to the challenges proffered.

## Working with outdoor play and the natural elements – theories.
### Lily Horseman

Each grasping a palm sized 'memory jogger' found on the journey into the woodland site,  while Lily introduced the basis of the workshop making links to the 4 compass points along with the elements: Earth, Fire, Air and Water;

We were given the opportunity to share our memories (the ground from which we, as facilitators and practitioners grow). We explored the affordance our chosen piece gave us.  We explored the 'invitations' they provided: social, practical, emotional, physical, spiritual and playful. Lily shared some Theories that underpin this; Compound Flexibilty, Brown (1984) and Loose Parts & Affordances, Nicholson (1978)

Leaving the West and securing our 'Earth element' in a calico treasure bag, we ventured to the South; to the dragon's flaming breath and the element of fire – representing challenge, risk taking and 'being wild'. Looking at Mortlock's Adventure Theory – Comfort:Challenge:Fear (1984); Flow, Csikszentmihalyi (1996).  We were given the opportunity to create our own state of 'flow', either independently or in small groups, to push our individual boundaries, taking ourselves out of our comfort zone, to optimize our learning potential – to a place where time is lost and focus is at its greatest. For some these were physical challenges, whilst others chose tool use to hone woodland skills or singing in rounds. Here we faced the dargon's fiery breath, passing through a flaming gateway to each receive our reward – a dragon's eyeball.

Venturing north now – to the element of air, focussing on imagination, fantasy, invisibility, non intervention and 'holding the space'. Intervention Styles, Hughes – Play Wales, Else et al.  Exploration of levels of intervention: do we set ground rules or create group agreements? Can children decide the content and intent? Do we provide opportunities or indeed 'hold the space' for children to invent and create? Feathers afforded us all the power of invisibility and enabled us to take on the challenge of daring to enter the Eagle's Nest. Regional variations of this game were recalled along with regional words for forest flora and fauna; illustrating how former imaginations have created subtly different games and names across both time and space.

We found ourselves heading east and the final element of water – looking at the theories : Bob Hughes; IMEE (1996) we reflected on how our understanding is made up of 1 Part Intuition, 1 part Memory, 1 Part Experience, 1 Part Evidence. A dragon's tear held in the palm enabled us to reflect our gut feelings,

encouraged us to listen to our heart, whilst also to our head – prompting us to reflect with our whole brain.

The natural wooden resources Lily used to illustrate theories, which were initially secured in and then laid upon circular pieces of illustrated calico, enabled clear understanding of the works of her chosen theorists, whilst also being in perfect harmony with our surroundings.

## Using technologies in the outdoors – opportunities and barriers
### *Ian Tindall*

Please note that all images of or by children on this page involve only my own children and were not taken in school settings or during school activities. This limitation is due to compliance with the data protection act.  This is taken from my blog written after the conference see

Derwent hill centre is owned by Sunderland county council way over in the east of up north, it nestles in lovely valley just over the water from Keswick and is a wonderful place to hold a conference. They have a good list of resources and publications about outdoor learning here.



My background includes a lot of experience of working outdoors with children and working with digital technologies in the classroom and in a wide range of online learning contexts. Like many teachers most of what I have done has been purposefully linked to curriculum such as; taking digital cameras into the field and using them to catalyse the learning experience by placing the children in the role of scientific explorer / journalist and giving them tools they can use to capture and share their experience. The current set of mobile or portable technologies evolved rapidly, we have gone from a field notebook and pencil to increasingly high definition digital cameras and today apps such as iRecord Ladybird that enable anyone, who has a smart phone or tablet, to identify an insect by photographing it and rapidly comparing it with a database. They can learn about it from the stored information and then upload a photo of the sighting that automatically has location data attached to it. Somewhere in the depths of a university a new dot appears on a map and the scientific data has expanded.

There are many similar initiatives including http://www.ispotnature.org We have moved a long way from scribbling on soggy or muddy notepads. The potential to use portable technologies to contribute to real world research in the field may offer benefits in terms of increasing motivation to learn, developing ICT skills, developing curriculum knowledge and learning how to capture and present information.

Most children and adults appreciate a record of special moments. In the photo below the boys were a few hundred meters off shore having kayaked out to a reef. We didn't have a waterproof camera so our only camera was back on the beach when they encountered this cormorant. Fortunately it stayed for ages and I was able to paddle back and get our camera to capture the moment but the boys wished they had a waterproof camera especially when it let them follow it underwater. In outdoor settings there are many opportunities to have special moments, unfortunately mobile devices are not cheap and are fragile so they are often not allowed on field trips or in local outdoor learning situations. It is often the teacher or other staff / helpers who are tasked with recording a school trip, that is better than no record but teachers are often very preoccupied with ensuring all goes well and the capturing of a record may be sporadic. A tough shockproof and waterproof camera would make it feasible for children to capture special moments and a record of good times.



During one of the presentations we were reminded that a child has a different

perspective to an adult, that was the case here - this spider was a speck in the distance to adults but a 6 year old spotted it straight away and took a 'Deadly 60' photo.



The next two added to the deadly 60 album and really helped embed the difference between two snakes, first a baby grass snake...



...then a more dangerous viper. The vague banding on the grass snake had been enough to cause some uncertainty but seeing the two images together clarified the differences. Both images were captured by the same child but were taken several months apart.



The outdoors is an inspiration place for Art, the next two images both were the result of setting out to create an image that could be used for a celebration card. A small selection of baubles were the only brought items, seaweed, shells and cuttlefish bits made up most of the tree.

A very simple way of bringing some outdoors into the indoors was a birthday message made from daffodil petals. It was too windy outside to get the petals to settle so they were brought indoors.



Talking to people at the Forest Schools conference it seemed there was a wide range of contexts in which people used technologies outdoors. I felt like there were sensible overlaps such as a "Forest School" area in school grounds also being used for other curriculum related activities. The notion of a "Wholegrain full flavour" or "Full fat" Forest Schools approach and other more diluted versions was raised in a workshop and was an ongoing discussion focus. As a newcomer to the FSA and its work I was interested in whether use of portable technologies would be seen as intrusive into the ethos, whether they add to the flavour or detract from it. Everyone was so friendly and talkative at the conference, being in an outdoor setting and talking to people about their philosophies and experiences provided some great insights into what were often imaginative and interesting approaches to enhancing learning.

It is clear there is a place and a need for increasing connectedness with the outdoors, as I write this another study has appeared. The RSPB study concludes that only 21% of children could be viewed as being "connected to nature". Linked from that article is a page where Yale have published a useful collection of related articles and other documents, it covers outdoor settings as diverse as recess play areas, residential trips, sport, gardens and topics such as impact on cognitive development, assessment scores, behaviour, well-being. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/nature-

based-learning/Research/childrens-contact-w-outdoors.pdf

The Council for Learning Outside the classroom have also a collection of useful links including a recent Ofsted report: Learning outside the classroom: How far should you go?

Photography discussion.

The cost of cameras has dropped considerably over the last 10 years but fragility remains an issue with many models. Tough cameras (shock and water resistant) are available but do cost more than basic cameras such as flipcams. One delegate confirmed that they are a good investment and reduce the worry about breakage considerably.  The camera shown below belongs to my daughter (aged 27) it has tumbled 5 meters down a steep mountain slope, been dropped on the floor and in mud several times, been used on many snorkeling adventures, snowboarding trips etc. and has outlasted three other non-tough digital cameras that were only used by adults and were looked after carefully. There is a compromise in that the zoom and resolution is not as high as similarly priced standard cameras but for most purposes they are absolutely fine. The issue of image stabilisation was raised, young hands do not always stay steady, one of the problems with lower quality cameras is blurry images that are often caused by relatively low shutter speeds and a little bit of wobbling by the photographer. A camera with built in image stabilisation can reduce this significantly.

The fragility of technologies can be mediated without a huge investment, it is clear that many portable technologies are suitable for outdoor use by children but should we be using them in Forest Schools?

The legal side...
The value of capturing photographs was not disputed, there were issues about what is captured. The data protection act requires organisations to protect personal information, this includes photographs and video. The base-line appears to be that no publicly available information should enable a child to be identified, if a photo is published on a school server it must not be linked to other information (names, addresses, etc) about those appearing in it. There should be an organisational policy that explains acceptable usage. Parents should be consulted as to whether that are happy for their children to be photographed and for the images to be made publicly available. Even with parental permission any images must not include or be linked to other data, including meta-data that might not be overtly visible, that could lead to the child being identified. There is also an obligation for data to be stored safely and

securely. ICO advise:

"Do not disclose personal information(including photos) on a website without the individual pupil, member of staff or governor being aware. We recommend you get consent before publishing photographs on a website."

The data protection act does not cover images captured for personal or recreational use:

"Images captured by individuals for personal or recreational purposes, such as with a mobile phone, digital camera or camcorder, are exempt from the DPA. If a parent makes a video of their child in a school play for their own family use, this is not covered by data protection law. A school may still have a policy restricting the taking of photographs or other images (for instance, for child protection reasons or to prevent disturbance), but we stress that this is not a data protection issue."

http://www.ico.org.uk/for_organisations/sector_guides/~/media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Research_and_reports/report_dp_guidance_for_schools.ashx

The interpretation of this into school policy varies, it is common for schools to include a clause that permits photos to be taken but not to be shared publicly in places such as Facebook, YouTube, Blogs or other open access spaces.

**Please note do not take my guidelines, above and below this statement, as having any official status these are my own interpretation of the act - you must make your own interpretations and act lawfully in accordance with specific wording of the original policy and any policies in use by your organisation.**

In my opinion the taking of images by staff or pupils with the intent of sharing them via a school server or any other server that would provide public access should be done in-line with parental permissions, the data protection act and organisational policy. It appears that data collected for personal use can be captured but should not be shared. This would seem to enable children to use their own devices, or those owned by an organisation, to capture images that are to be used on a secure password protected server or for personal use. The grey area is whether to restrict the capture of images of children for personal use when they, or their parents, have asked the setting not to publish such images. Obviously in group settings unintentional capture of such a child can occur, given the data protection act also requires data to be stored securely some settings will delete such images as soon as they are taken. Schools are often risk averse, many schools protect children and staff by locking personal phones or cameras away during the school day. It was pointed out that the risk

of inappropriate images being captured is extremely low and should be considered in the light of other more tangible risks such as walking children to an off site event or carrying them in a minibus. The risk was also compared to activities in a Forest Schools situation where children learn to use tools such as; knives, axes, hammers and learn how to light fires and cook on them. Be the risk in the physical world or the virtual there is a need to learn how to handle risk, locking technologies away does not develop good skills in that respect.

The concept of locking away mobile technologies is in stark contrast to the attitude of many who are pushing new frontiers of learning. In this video on child led learning Stephen Heppell mentions getting mobile devices out on display on the desk rather than being locked away. The development of an ethos of mutuality, collegiality and trust is critical to enabling this kind of approach.

Cameras are fairly safe in respect of sharing images, however; mobile phones or tablets enable images to be shared within seconds of being captured. Their use could then be seen as higher risk as there is a reliance on trusting children not to share images publicly and this can be difficult as children around the age of 9-12 are often part of social networks and very keen to show their friends what they have been doing. The Forest Schools ethos seems to be one of developing mutual respect and trust, this is particularly important in outdoor activities where working as a team is important. Where image capture technologies are used it would make sense to overtly extend this to encompass mutual respect in relation to the capture and sharing of images.

It seems that there are good reasons for enabling staff or children to take photographs of their Forest School experiences for a range of purposes. It also seems that the Forest Schools ethos is useful for developing mutual respect and that could feed on into promoting respect back in the normal school setting. The question I did not manage to resolve is whether technologies are likely to disrupt the Forest School approach. Some practitioners clearly felt that technology is just an integral part of every day life and would not be disruptive. Others did not feel technology was something they would purposefully use although several I talked too reported that they did not mind being photographed by children when in the midst of storytelling, demonstrating forest skills or any other part of their day. I did not meet anyone who told me they would rather not have technologies in use during their sessions. In some outdoor learning activities the technology may drive the activity - capturing and recording wildlife or taking a daily record of plant growth to make a stop-gap animation. In Forest Schools the role appears to generally be secondary to the main activities, i.e. that of

recording good memories.

The issue of convincing senior management of the value of Forest Schools was mentioned and photographs were seen as playing a valuable role in providing evidence of what was done and what was achieved. A photograph of mud sculptures shows which Art learning outcomes have been met, photos of children helping and supporting each other relate to well-being, trust and feeling safe at school, video of campfire singing or playing percussion on 'found instruments' (sticks, stones, pine cones etc.)  shows where the music curriculum is being implemented and can link to the science curriculum.

There can be issues with video files can be large and this can be an issue on some school servers where space is a priority. They  may often be only temporarily saved then deleted later by technicians to free up space. The price of storage has plummeted over recent years, this shouldn't really be a pressing issue for a well functioning ICT service.

Another use of cameras that was mentioned is the capture of images via web-cam, these are permanently connected to the internet and may stream live video or a series of still images captured every 30 seconds or even a few hours apart. For a relatively small investment schools can set up nesting boxes that are monitored by web-cam, this can provide a lot of interest for children and gives them the feel of being part of something that they might see on TV. This one aspect that residential centres offering Forest Schools experiences might consider as it could be of interest both before and after visits to the centre and would not disrupt the Forest School day in any way.

Audio recordings.
There are several variations on fairly inexpensive products that are very similar, often called sound tins or talking buttons, these are small devices that offer the opportunity to record short snippets of audio this may vary between a few seconds and up to around a minute, 40 seconds is fairly typical. They can be used by children or adults to record a little of the outdoors and bring it indoors, the recording can then be locked so it can't easily be over written and they can be stuck to a wall display or many other surfaces. Children of all ages can easily record the gurgling of a stream, duck quacks, Mooos, Baaaahs, birdsong, rushing wind, rustling leaves, the crackle of a campfire etc. This can then be brought indoors and used to enhance a record of a trip or as sound effects during story reading, mixed into a music track and many more creative approaches to using audio. They can also be taken outdoors, children could pre-record an audio clue

to leave as guidance for others to help them find their way around an outdoor trail or to highlight things to look at at particular spots - "Stand with your back to this button; somewhere in front of you is a nest made by forest ants - find it and take a photo without disturbing the nest or getting bitten."

Many digital cameras have the capacity to record good quality audio, iPods, iPads and a host of other portable devices do the same. This opens up the possibility of capturing and using longer soundscapes although the interfaces are less intuitive and may be not so suitable for younger learners. Soundscapes can be excellent for prompting recall and are particularly useful for visually challenged children.

The data protection act seems to be less concerned with audio data although care should be taken as far as any pupil's names being mentioned if audio is to be posted on a public site.

Several delegates mentioned using walkie talkies in outdoor learning / Forest School sessions. These are relatively inexpensive and do not link to public networks in the way that mobile phones do. This enables pupils to explore communication at a distance without staff needing to worry overly about inappropriate usage.

Digital microscopes were also mentioned as a useful tool. These can be purchased for £45 + for a reasonably decent USB unit and can open up a new perspective on the outdoor micro world. It can take a fair bit of patience to capture good images but they can be very useful field devices or for examining specimens indoors. I did not hear anyone promoting their use as part of a pure Forest Schools experience.

The fact that many Forest School activities focus on pure nature and do not involve 'electricity' was discussed. This really is the pure undiluted approach and there are many arguments in favour of electricity free days. it is not unusual for children on residential visits of any sort to have no access to TV. Few actually feel downhearted about that once they are on the trip and many will learn that TV is not an essential as far as having a good time goes. An electricity free experience takes that a step further and I can very much see the value in that even as far as walking in the dark without torches. Activities like that really bring children into a very different world to their normal one. Managing to survive with minimal help from technologies could well be 'character building' and develop self reliance skills.

For many years schools lead the way with technologies, home ownership of a range of mobile devices is now common, use of iPads, games consoles and smart phones starts at a very young age and today many schools struggle to keep up. The rate of development of technologies is not slowing, there is a progress towards more ambient an un-intrusive technologies  wearable devices and gesture control are arriving it seems inevitable that children will be subject to increasing immersion in technologies both at school and at home. Against that backdrop I think there is a clear case for a wholegrain Forest School core to continue to provide an oasis in a sea of technology. I am also torn between that and my intrinsic instinct to make good use of technologies and the opportunities they offer.

My conclusion during the conference was that 'enhancing well-being' was the main goal of everyone I talked too. Many of the accounts of activities I heard were about children deeply immersed in what they are doing, stress levels lowering, intense focus on task, bravery overcoming fear, smiles appearing and targets being achieved. Cziksentmihalyi describes this immersive experience as a state of flow where engagement with task is so deep and all consuming that a sense of timelessness might be experienced. He also suggests that this state of being is in itself intrinsically rewarding and that flow could be seen as an optimal learning state. The ideas emerged from a background in climbing, many lovers of sports such as climbing, surfing cycling, diving etc. are very familiar with feeling 'in tune', 'on fire', 'stoked', musicians, singers, storytellers and all sorts of people light up when they are in the flow of the moment. Technologies are far from being an essential element of Forest School but they can be used to good effect without causing disruption to core values and aims. In my experience flow can be achieved easily when children use well designed technologies for activities they feel are important, it can also be achieved just as easily in non-electricity days deep in the woods.

To an outsider Forest Schools could initially seem like a lightweight add on, a 'lets all just play and have fun and make friends' holiday from real learning. The reality is that Forest school practitioners are highly skilled at using carefully crafted activities that can help change who young people are. It seems to be working very well as it stands and I am not going to advocate any hasty changes to implant technologies into the approach. I would still endorse their use particularly for retaining a record of the experience. I have a single faded and folded photograph that is all that survives of a junior school YHA trip to Once Brewed youth hostel in the early 70s, it is not a good photo, a few kids and a student teacher as small toy sized figures playing Frisbee in a field. When I look

at it I smell the smell of the field, the sound of the river, the hurt of a hailstorm, a walk above Crag Lough in slanting sleet, games of chess in the evening, the sounds of dishes being washed, children's laughter, the tramp of boots along a wall tramped by Romans and much more comes flooding back. I spent a lot of time out doors and visited that area many times with parents and friends but that photo is so valuable in bringing back that particular moment. I wonder whether the value of such things to children being brought into the forest, perhaps from an inner city for the first time, is well worth the slight compromise of letting a little bit of electricity into a Forest Schools day.

The video below reminds me so much of values and experiences many UK children are somewhat removed from, it traces the life of a djembe drum from the cutting down of the tree to the use in bringing the village together in celebration. About mid way through there is a lovely vignette of children playing vibrant rhythms on junk instruments. It shows elements that bond a community particularly the whole community event in the closing minutes. If Forest Schools practitioners can help children touch that spirit of communal effort and joy through days of adventure and a few hours of singing round a camp site the children are very likely to return to school as different people - that is an outcome that many traditional lessons can not claim.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hrvli_wCT0&feature=player_embedded
(child centred learning from Stephen heppel
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lVPLIuBy9CY&feature=player_embedded
(FOLI there is no rhythm without movement)

**Babes in the Woods & their families:  Working with under 3's and their families in the natural environment.**
*Jenny Creese – Connecting Naturally Project Manager, Earth Trust, Oxfordshire*

- Introduced Connecting Naturally project:
    - 3 year BIG lottery funding - £350k
    - Working with 10 CC's with families whose children are under 5 but majority are aged from birth to 3.
    - To engage families with nature through creating wildlife gardens within the centres, running sessions within the settings, moving to sessions further away but still local enough for families to visit in their own time and offering training for parents and staff
    - The idea of the project is to create long lasting connections to nature
    - CN is funded through Natural England's Access to Nature grant – the whole aim of this grant is to open up nature to more people
    - How? CN has taken some of the Forest School principles
        - Sessions are open to everyone
        - Children and adults have an innate interest in nature and the world – CN is constantly working with families to provide sessions which play to their interests
        - regular visits – fortnightly for most centres
        - using local outdoor spaces
        - achievable tasks for children and adults – which are based in real things
        - encouraging parents to learn new skills, increasing confidence and self esteem

- Group discussion of the benefits of working with families and under 3's
    - Working with the whole family – the project although focusing on children under 5 also includes siblings and extended family as it runs throughout the year, for 3 years.
    - Parents engaging with their children outside
    - Learning new skills and knowledge with their children  - seeing in real life how much learning happens in the natural world
    - Creating a connection with families to their local environment which for some will change their perspective and habits

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o  Parents not only benefiting themselves from the physical, emotional and mental benefits of spending time in nature and the outdoors but seeing how their children benefit.

- We used a diamond ranking activity to look at the difference between what children think is important in the outdoor compared to adults. The resources which were ranked for each group were: water/mud, sticks, snack/hot chocolate, books, ropes, magnifying glasses, fire, tools, trowels and buckets.

- Outside we looked at different resources which can support play for children and adults, discussion around what had worked or not worked for people in their settings.

- Barriers and how to overcome them. Each group thought of 5 barriers and pasted to the next group to solve them:
    1. Staffing/ratios – high! Parents and carers encouraged to volunteer at nursery groups
    2. Non walking (as a conscious choice) – this caused a lot of discussion!
    3. Physical needs (nappies, naps, snacks) – designated areas, policies and procedures, changing mats/potties taken, sanitizer spray
    4. Inappropriate clothing – information session before going out, clothes/wellie bank, emergency shelter, take spare clothes
    5. Risk perception – pre-visit chat, photos/video, information, props

    1. Weather – provide correct clothing and spares, have a contingency plan, being prepared!
    2. Transport – local to the families, use community/school minibus, signposting public transport to parents, contact with their neighbors to car share
    3. Culture/class "not for us" – taking it to them ie delivering informal session in a know/safe place, taster sessions
    4. Other priorities – value for money, better sleep, be realistic!
    5. Not seeing benefits or reasons – providing opportunities to show people through talks and taster sessions, showing them (through their children), engaging one core parent/family who will spread positive experience through word of mouth

    1. What if my child runs away - risk assessments, policies, clear boundaries, 123 where are you, ratios, communication with parents

2. Safety issues, risk, will my child be safe – risk assessments, permission forms, communication with parents, H&S policy, ratios, controlled introduction of activities/tools
3. Where do I go? – meet somewhere familiar, google maps, go together for first session in bus or walk together as a group
4. Not knowing what/how to do it – intro sessions, small achievable tasks, modeling behavior, give jobs, positive language/attitude, supportive environment
5. Having the right clothes to wear – kit list, layers, carry spares, let group know of cheap deals

**Soundscapes songs and creativity at Forest School**
*Catherine Pestano*

What a fabulous weekend! My contributions (in case you would like to have me sing any down the phone at you!) were:

1.      A creative and collaborative 'community music' workshop, looking at rhythm, sounds in nature, vocalising, mindfulness, collaborative composition and songwriting, suitable for primary and secondary ages. Handout attached.

2.      Campfires song and actions: Tall Trees. From Circle dance for dementia who also have a November training day if you would like to learn more. *www.circledanceindementia.com*

3.      Closing plenary song Pt 1: Ukrananian frog song by Marianna Sedowska where you added in your own improvisations about what you were taking away.....
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN2cjaVX_m4&list=PL0A01AA1098DC0F79

4.      After lunch Closing plenary activity 2: Spiral Travelling song (Native American) and spiral circle dance from Come together songs by Hagara Feinbier.

Or to find local Natural voice singing facilitators in your area please look on www.naturalvoice.net

**Resources**

Resources for kids action songs and games: There are many and a good music shop will have a huge selection of A and C Black's series or the Singing herlock series but also some more unusual ones are: *In a Cottage in a Wood*, available here: http://www.folkcamps.co.uk/publications.asp

And a book and DVD  *John Kanakanaka* available at £10.99 plus the DVD costs. You can order these by phone from EFDSS, 0207485 2206, or by emailing websales@efdss.org

General inspirational books: John Holt *How children learn* and *How children fail*.

A handout of what we did in the workshop follows.

| Intro | Clarify session overview,  intros group learning agreement (safety, establish climate for creativity and play; freedom, no compulsion, never force) and remind people of this later before sharing. |
|---|---|
| Warm-ups 1 | Clap clap slap name echo game Similar with sound Again with body percussion. Think of nature sound and all make together, then one more round as above |
| Forage |  Find sound makers in nature without causing harm (I also put out a few natural objects on a cloth) bring back and display and investigate sounds we can make with them. Explore more than one sound from the item. |
| Scribbling | Make ongoing sounds with a nature instrument and put up hand to share a memory of a nature sound (all who wish to). |
| Rhythm ex | Demonstrate the all try in three small groups. Write Nature words on post-its. Use as a score over a steady count (4 is easy) and also include silence as one option. Play one version then move the post-its round and play again.  Once people have the idea divide into small groups and create a small rhythm to share with us all. Once we have shared everyone can all play along with the rhythms created, jamming together. Acknowledge each contribution kindly with applause. |
| Mindfulness sensory exercise | Sitting strong, longer out-breath than in-breath over a few counts.  Listen to sounds nearby, then far away, then inside the body. Become aware on the scents around you in the air, the feel of the sun and breeze on your skin, open your mouth how does the air taste? What do you feel in your body and with your body? What can you see around you? Colours, light and shade. On a sheet of paper draw out seven headings sight, hearing, taste, smell, kinaesthetic (movement), mood/feeling, touch, and write words associated with this. (you could always do a brainstorm on a flipchart or discussion if not wanting kids to write). Then take one of these areas and tell a story about a moment or a memory. Share a few of these. |
| Create | In the same rhythm groups as earlier put something of your fruits from the last exercise into the rhythm pattern that you had. Have a beginning middle and end. Share. |
| Break | - |

| Warmup2 | Imagery to prepare the body and mind – Tree, roots, branches, stretching and visualising. Breathing in and out filling and then releasing. On the release begin to add sighing and extend the sighs to include lots of 'notes' as high as we can go then as low. Notice a comfortable area of your voice.  The  make one solid note and hold till I cut it off with my sign. Repeat a few times to hear the different combinations (no wrong note all are fine) on ah or oh or uh. |
|---|---|
| Sustain | A 'search and reflect' piece that helps group connection, listening and collaborating: 30 secs we will all make sustained notes and adjust according to how we are hearing. This can include silence. Repeat once or twice. Comments on the sounds we make, the pieces we created together. It is usually a pleasant surprise. |
| Haiku | On nature shapes I printed some ancient Nature Haiku for examples and inspiration. We all took one and read it but you could just share a couple if you didn't want kids to have to read.  I outlined the structure:<br>Line 1 introduces the subject<br>Line 2 provides colour, description, atmosphere<br>Line 3 concludes – this may be sweet, surprising, tranquil, but feels like a moment in time. |
| Solo quest | Mindfulness breathing again, send out your awareness to connect with nature in all its beauty and wonder. Cultivate a sense of compassion for yourself and compassionate connection with nature. In this mode, walk out for 5 mins or so on your own and have a go at capturing a moment. *Return on an agreed call (howl of wolf, er... that would be me!)* NB Kids of primary age generally don't need to write their thoughts down to recall them - it is we older ones, whose anxiety gets in the way, who need to write! I have done this with kids as young as 6 to great effect and joy. |
| Sharing | Come together again and ask how it was. Invite some to share, not all need to. Enjoy and celebrate all contributions. |
| Soundscapes | In new configurations of small groups so working with different people, take one of the Haiku and create a piece that uses it in spoken form , at least 30 secs long, with a beginning middle and end. Share these as a large group and acknowledge. |
| Reflections | Q and A, other ideas or uses in your settings or with your particular needs, reflective responses and thoughts, all comments welcome. Closing sharings to acknowledge the times we have spent together today. |

| Closing | Invite private contemplation - think of what you have experienced and if there is anything that sits uncomfortably with you just shake it off and leave it here.  Think of something you enjoyed about your own creativity or working with others today.  Claim it and keep it in yourself to draw on again.  We will sing a travelling song (Native American), make rhythmic sounds and walk in a circle, preparing to end our session and leave with these experiences. Thank you all! *Ah hey ee ah ho*, *hey ya ho*. |
|---|---|

One contributor Grace Hall commented:

*I really enjoyed Catherine's workshop. It was led in a very Forest School style, so I felt very able to participate (but no pressure to!) and also had a chance to contribute my own ideas and ask questions. I feel that I will be able to use many of the ideas in my own setting - some with young and some with older children as there was quite a mixture of ideas. I am planning to 'share by doing' at our Hampshire FEN meeting tomorrow, and with my work colleagues.*

Thank for working with me those who were there and any questions about this (whether or not there) please do get in contact. Many of the approaches here I learned from the wonderful (sadly no more) Goldsmiths College Community music training programme established by Phil Mullen.

I honour the influence on my practice.

Catherine offers workshops and please send her your suggestions for Forest School compatible campfire songs as she is putting together a book to complement existing offers. Contact  details: Catherine.pestano@gmail.com

07981 298 541

**A 'hole' lot of fun! - Using hand tools to support learners ideas.**
*Workshop Report (by Dave! Alias Louise Ambrose and Martin)*

A tranquil spot on the edge of reason (or should I say – next to the car park!) a beautiful canopy with a hint of pink to set the scene. Some uncertainty and trepidation – the uncertainty from Mr Cree not remembering the workshop name and some trepidation from the new-be, wood-be Hole-makers! We started with a quick flit down memory lane to romance about proud moments of objects made using tools. With bonds starting to form and the ice melting away we then focused our attentions upon an array of woodland objects to tantalise the taste buds of creativity. From coat hangers to mice to secret boxes and dice, they were all rather nice. Cameras were out, as they wandered about, with lots of chit and lots of chat, lots of thought into the process of how to make that .......stop, stop!, I'm starting to rhyme, which is fine…umm but not all of the time?!.

Now the creative juices were truly flowing, it was time to get down to the serious business of what the workshop was about. In true Forest School style everyone gathered in a circle. In a provocative manner, a wooden stump was placed in the centre and with a quick draw from its sheath a knife was stabbed into the top of the block for all to see. The circle was divided into four and each small group was given a controversial statement to be considered and then disseminated to the rest of the circle for discussion. These are the statements and the answers that the groups came up with:

*"Tools are essentially dangerous"*
Short Answer – No.
Long Answer – Still No, but the factors below can cause them to become dangerous if not considered:

1. The Tool User – their competency and skill level, awareness, strength, stamina, dexterity
2. Instruction – skill level of instructor, level of supervision, misconceptions held, ability to adapt tasks appropriately
3. The Environmental Conditions – temperature, weather conditions, surfaces, surrounding activities

4. Inappropriate tool selection – the wrong tool for the task or one which is badly maintained or has been abused.

### *"You have to use tools at Forest School"*

Short Answer – Yes

Long Answer – Everyone agreed that you should not try to use tools at Forest School if you do not feel confident and competent yourself with them first. Also, in true Forest School ethos – tools are not essential to use within a Forest School programme. However it was also agreed that if we as Forest School practitioners deny learners experiences because of our own lack of skill, then we are limiting their opportunities and therefore their learning. So with that in mind, our role as professionals is to identify our own learning needs and focus on developing them so we can support the learners effectively, whether that be in tool use or any other aspect. We also all thought that tools were lovely and hold great potential for building learners creativity, awareness and self esteem.

### *"The younger the child the less capable they are at using tools"*

Short Answer – Not sure – as it depends on the child.

Long Answer – No. An individual's abilities are not necessarily age –related but rather experience related. E.g. If a child has been appropriately supported to use a knife from age 3 onwards – by the time they are aged 10 they would have 7 years tool use experience and therefore would have developed strength, stamina, dexterity, coordination and awareness throughout this experience. Meaning this 10 year old may well have better developed knife skills than an adult who has never used a knife to whittle before. To successfully facilitate any experience at Forest School the practitioner has to be aware of individual's needs and their stage of development/ability. In regards to using tools, factors to consider would include: attention span, physical strength & stamina, dexterity & coordination, awareness of self and others, and ability to understand instructions. With this information the practitioner can now select the most appropriate tool and technique for the user and task and also modify the item to suit the learner's capability.

### *"If a tool can do a job, then it must have been designed for that purpose"*

Short Answer – Yes, No & still not sure!.

Long Answer – There was no simple answer to this, as this statement unlocked more questions than answers! We explored tool design and function, materials tool are made from, blade shapes & bevels, heat treatments and temper. It was recognised that some tools are very job specific whilst others are multifunctional in their design. When selecting a tool for a task there is always a trade-off –

specialised tools are more efficient at doing a very specific task, whilst multifunctional ones generally can be used for a wider range of tasks but are less efficient at them. There is also the quality of tool to consider – which affects price, function and longevity of a tool. Some tools may be modified to be used in a different way to originally intended or to undertake tasks other than its normal remit. If this modification is undertaken it is essential that there is awareness of the tools design, the properties of its materials, and the manufacturing process of the tool. Without this awareness, any modifications to its use could cause the tool to break, affect its function or encourage unsafe practices – all of which could cause harm to the tool user. The age-old discussion of using potato peelers on wood at Forest School ensued – we resolved that although peelers will work successfully on some materials, they are not designed for this purpose and therefore using them in this way is not helping facilitate safe tool practices. Using peelers on vegetables (rather than wood) is a more appropriate prelude to using woodworking tools.

Phew! With those messages explored we got down to the real business of doing stuff – how to make 'oles in stuff and how to 'old it still, so that it's safe!. We looked at 4 different options of clamping objects in the woods – they were all very expensive.....the top end one would cost about £3.99! The cheap end potentially £0! They all involved a log block and various attachments! The most multifunctional option is the legendary 'Louma Log' – Forest School's answer to the black and decker workmate! You can download the first edition of the free pdf of the Louma Log here – **www.birchwoodlearning.com/links**



Then we looked at different options for hole making at Forest School –

| Tool | Pro's | Con's |
|---|---|---|
| Cordless Drill | • None – they're rubbish, unless you just want to make holes...... but this is | • Battery limited<br>• Does not allow user to feel the forces of drilling a hole – therefore limits |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Forest School! (Process not Product!) | • learning<br>• Heavy<br>• Difficult to control by novice user<br>• Environmentally bad – plastic & electric & battery metals! |
| Hand drill (eggbeater) | • Light<br>• Readily available<br>• Can change drill bit size<br>• Interesting mechanics - gears | • Requires good coordination & fine motor skills/strength<br>• Cannot use large diameter bits due to chuck size and mechanical ratio |
| Bit & Brace | • Many old braces can be found of good quality for low cost<br>• Good feedback from drill bit<br>• Can bore large diameter holes<br>• Mechanically efficient | • Requires good coordination & mild strength – but easier to assist<br>• Modern bits are hex drive and thus will not fit in old style chucks<br>• Modern braces are often not good quality and still do not fit new bits<br>• Old bits of good condition are at a premium and harder to find |
| Gimlets | • Used in hand – so full comprehension of forces felt<br>• Come in a range of small sizes<br>• Metal specifically designed with appropriate temper<br>• Auger screw thread pulls the cutting edge through the wood rather than having to push it | • Originally designed as hole-starters for screws – so not cleanest of holes cut<br>• Cheap imports may be of inferior quality and wrong temper<br>• Need to ensure work is not held in spare hand. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Reasonable price<br>• Handle ergonomically designed to aid leverage | |
| Palm Drill | • Used in hand – so full comprehension of forces felt<br>• Will potentially work in end grain as well as cross grain<br>• Sharp and holds edge well due to being made of High Speed Steel | • Need to ensure work is not held in spare hand.<br>• Only one size of drill bit available<br>• Temper of high speed steel has low flexibility and hence can sheer off<br>• Requires rotational strength and dexterity in the hand to control it |
| Eyed Auger | • Used manually – so full comprehension of forces felt – concepts of friction and leverage<br>• Metal specifically designed with appropriate temper<br>• Auger screw thread pulls the cutting edge through the wood rather than having to push it<br>• Handle is a stick- so leverage can be adjusted for user | • Single sized bit<br>• Very difficult to get hold of and therefore very expensive now |
| One-Eyed Chuck | • Used manually – so full comprehension of forces felt – concepts of friction and leverage<br>• Auger screw thread pulls the cutting edge through the wood rather than having to | • Still in production – but coming soon! |

| | push it<br>• Chuck is able to take modern hex drive auger bits of all sizes<br>• Comes with handle which allows appropriate leverage | |
|---|---|---|

The final section of the workshop was – playtime! Very clear instruction was given…..that it was important, to not just talk about doing stuff but in



order to understand it was to have a go! The focus being NOT on PRODUCT but on the PROCESS. This is probably the hardest thing that adults are able to understand. That said, there were some good discussions….and some



lovely cock ups….which led to more discussions….and some more discussions about tool practices …. Which led onto some more discussions about the importance of understanding that any training should not be prescriptive and understanding can only take place through experience, questioning, more experience and more questioning …so on and so forth….

Together; we clamped, we drilled, we discovered about some properties of sycamore as a wood, we sawed we clamped some more, we split with knife and wedges, we discovered about end grain and we experienced forces. There were some highs, there were some lows but there was lots of determination. By the end we created a whole candelabra of tealight holders, experimental yoyo design, the complexities of mice, played the xylophone, laughed & chatted.



Conclusion:  No blood, no tears, hopefully some new understanding, a revitalize desire to use tools and lots more questions to explore.

**Citizen Science – ways to collect evidence for outcomes**
*Sara Knight and Sue Waite*

This workshop emphasized the need to be critical of research and looking for surprises in any research that doesn't chime with our passions can be more revealing – "its not all a bed of roses"  so what do we need to look for.

Here are some thoughts for a framework for citizen research with headings to consider;
What is the PURPOSE/ AIM
CONTENT
PROCESS/PEDAGOGY
OUTCOMES
BARRIERS/CHALLENGES
DIFFERENCES
Does it Focus on SECONDARY or PRIMARY sources

Here are some sources of literature;
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- Norfolk 5 studies: http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/Teaching-and-learning/Environmental-and-outdoor-learning/Forest-school/Case-studies/index.htm

Methods used to yield primary data for different pruposes

- Observation
- Pre and post (standardised) tests
- Interviews
- Visual methodologies (e.g. photos, videos)

- Active Reviewing
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Good from Woods research framework
- Priorities Assessment Tool

Thinking research through thoughts!
- **P**rior beliefs made visible
- **O**pen mind kept
- **W**hile doing the research, question
- **E**xamine outcomes critically
- **R**eflect on their meaning

Tools
- Observation
- Pre and post (standardised) tests
- Interviews
- Visual methodologies (e.g. photos, videos)
- Active Reviewing http://reviewing.co.uk/
- Appreciative Inquiry http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/
- Good from Woods research framework
  http://goodfromwoods.wordpress.com/the-tool-kit/
- Leuven well being and involvement scales:
  http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/documents-ldtoolkitleuven.pdf
- Nvivo software: supports qualitative and mixed methods research
  http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx
- Early years practitioner research from the EEL project:
  http://www.crec.co.uk/research
- Priorities Assessment Tool sjwaite@plymouth.ac.uk


Methodologies were discussed and the group felt a template would be a useful tool to get people thinking – to this end Plymouth University and the Sylvanus trust are developing something to help people involved in any research related to education in woods called Good from Woods – be they practitioners or researchers in the field – see
http://www.silvanustrust.org.uk/index.php?page=good-from-woods

**The Forest Education Network (FEN)**

FEN England acts as a forum for exchange for those with an interest in the wide range of learning opportunities in relation to trees, woods and forests. The Network is hosted by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) and works in collaboration with those representing the wood culture, education delivery providers and also with professional bodies such as the Forest School Association.

Member benefits include:

·        Member updates on news, projects and initiatives related to trees, woods and forests including the activity of other members through a regular **FEN bulletin** and through other communication and networking opportunities.

·        Support for member events and activities by promoting meetings, events and resources.

·        Provide an opportunity to make connections and join in with a range of **activities** at local, regional and national level.

·        Help members to engage with other bodies, partners and stakeholders to develop opportunities to work together.

More details can be found on the website. Web: www.lotc.org.uk/fen/  Email fen@lotc.org.uk. See our latest FEN Bulletin Issue 6 October 2013

## Conference outcomes and questions

Action Points generated by participants at Values Politics Actions Sunday workshop discussions.

| Action | Who |
|---|---|
| Respond to discussion in web forum member's area | Richard Irvine |
| Share useful info e.g. guidance for vols / assistants, parents, schools / settings. | Anyone who wants to - send to someone in Website working group |
| Upload useful info and guidance shared to website | Website working group |
| Seek representation from working teachers and local champions - to advisory group | Directors / Exec Local groups - nominate |
| Write / collate guidance notes for Heads | Mike Murphy and Charlotte |
| Parents Section on website Link to FEI. Quality photos. *(needs clarification: this and Who)* | Vicky Wood to FSA - talk to Cathy FSA group |
| Marketing plan (see notes on flipchart? what? share the FSA marketing plan so far? *needs clarification*) Individual tasks on marketing plan | Task Groups, to look at specific parts of plan. |
| Form task groups as in the above: marketing, website, business (*and whatever else is on that plan - needs clarification*) | Advertise on web and email to all members to ask for volunteers for Task Groups. |
| Small business advice | Website working group Business working group |
| Seek representation - political champion/s - to advisory group | FSA board |

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| Action | Who |
|---|---|
| Join Project Wild alliance - Wild Network | FSA board (Mel McCree is member - can represent in Wild Network if needed? |
| Map of FS providers / FSA members on site will help identify gaps. | Membership working group to link with Liz Knowles work. |
| School sports funding - advice on use for FS needed. | Website funding page - |
| Contact sites offering outdoor learning advice / resources to schools - reciprocal links. Join marketing group. | Katie Hugi |
| Provide guidance on how FS fits within OL / OE | no person identified to action. |
| Sticking to our shared values and being diplomatic! | Everyone |
| Share and use case studies. | Exec to put out call to membership. |
| Research group to have structured discussion and agreed methods. | Vicki Stewart |
| Research school / setting / practitioner motivations for choosing Forest School | Research group |
| Investigate FS awards:<br>• Individual - links to ASDAN, JMA etc.<br>• Annual, national awards - Like LOtC, RFS etc. | Consult with Beth Gardner and Charlotte Teviotdale (volunteered by Alex D-C) |
| Establish Early Years and other interest groups. | Jane Dallard from near Worcester |
| Investigate pricing, pay, conditions and professional recognition. | Marketing and Endorsement groups - consult OEAP |
| Assisting with fundraising and grant applications | Fundraising working group |

| Action | Who |
|---|---|
| Working with other countries | FSA board and others |
| Establish research group | FSA board |
| Insurance and working with big companies | FSA board and working group |
| Small business advice | Working group - FSA |
| Establishing FS free schools | Geoff Mason |
| Links with government - establishing FSA as point of contact for govt enquiries on FS. Much as scouts, woodcraft folk etc. are informally consulted by civil servants. | Make use of knowledge of HMI on advisory board. |
| Different statements on quality FS for different sectors | All?  FSA put to membership? |
| More honest case studies on why not worked | All/research group |
| Look at the 'Forest School for All' strapline statement – discuss 'the all' bit! Does this need clarifying further | FSA initiate discussion |
| Registered practitioner comes in at one part of spectrum of ultra lite -→ wholegrain.<br>**Where is the stage you become registered?**<br>All stages are still under the FS family tree.<br>Define light -> whole but not pejorative.<br>Review description of level of FS | Working group & membership.<br>(Vicki Stewart has MA research on OE / FS relationship) |
| Gathering evidence of outcomes on website | Research group |
| Raising our profiles | All |

The conference closed with a summary of the key challenges we all face and of the actions outlined above, finishing on the Ukranian Frog song!  See http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/post-conference-2013-resources

*'quality Forest School for all'*