



Journal of Co-operative Studies

2025 Special issue: Celebrating the centenary of the Woodcraft Folk – Call for papers

Guest editors: **Doug Bourn**, Professor of Education, University College London, **Thomas Boxall**, Trustee on General Council, Woodcraft Folk, **Deborah McCahon**, Chief Executive Officer, Woodcraft Folk, **Aggie Taylor**, Trustee on General Council, Woodcraft Folk, and **Delilah Wallbank**, Trustee on General Council, Woodcraft Folk.

Aims of the special issue

In 2025, the Woodcraft Folk, the co-operative movement's children's and youth organisation, will be celebrating its centenary. Whilst articles about the organisation have featured in past issues and other journals concerned with youth and socialist movements, this is the first time the Woodcraft Folk has been the focus of a special issue of any journal.

This special issue is now calling for papers that address both the organisation's history, current practices and position within the wider co-operative and labour movement. The Woodcraft Folk has played a major role in promoting a progressive approach to informal learning by children and young people, being the first co-educational youth movement and having a distinctive philosophy based around education for social change.

The editors welcome submissions ranging from full academic articles/research papers (7,000 words), short articles (2,000-4,000 words), and short think pieces (approx. 1,000 words).

Key dates

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| 31 Jan 2024 | Deadline for extended abstracts (1,000-1,200 words) for academic articles and short papers; outline suggestions for think pieces (500-800 words, or in full). |
| | Email to: d.bourn@ucl.ac.uk and aggie.taylor@woodcraftfolk.org with Submission for special issue in the subject line, and include in your email the type of submission being made (research article, short paper/practitioner paper, think piece). |
| 31 Mar 2024 | Initial decisions and invitations for submission of full papers |

Celebrating the centenary of the Woodcraft Folk – Call for papers

The Woodcraft Folk was formed in 1925 and has a proud history of engagement with international movements. Its motto has been 'Span the World with Friendship'. Its first leader, Leslie Paul produced an array of publications that had influence beyond the organisation including Republic of Children (1938). Initial decisions and invitations for submission of full papers. Its educational work based on weekly group nights, outdoor activities and major camps have been a feature of its activities since its earliest days. It has had a close relationship with the cooperative movement for most of its history, but this has by no means been a straightforward relationship with tensions at various times.

In more recent years the Woodcraft Folk has putting greater resources to developing its work young people and young adults. This has resulted in the organisation being today very much a youth led movement.

There have been a few studies in aspects of the history of the Woodcraft Folk but compared with other youth movements, it has not been the subject of a major study. A planned edited academic book is planned for the centenary that focuses on themes such as internationalism, distinctive Folk culture and being a progressive educational movement but this special issue provides opportunities for articles, interviews, and discussion on both the history and current practices of the organisation.

Potential topics for contributions to a special issue of the Journal of Co-operative Studies might include (but are not limited to):

The origins of the Woodcraft Folk in relation to other social movements of the time, including Kibbo Kift, and comparisons with other young organisations such as Scouts and Guides.

In-depth analysis of how the Folk developed within a specific area and the impact this has had on wider labour and co-operative movement in the region.

The role that young people play within the organisation today and the extent to which it provides a model for youth empowerment.

Telling young people's stories: how they use Woodcraft Folk learning in other spheres of their lives.

The role of women within the organisation and the extent to which the Folk can be seen as the first anti-sexist youth movement in the UK.

Being gay in the Woodcraft Folk – opportunities and challenges and support provided to young people who wish to come out about their sexuality.

Co-operative learning – what this has and continues to mean as a distinctive pedagogical approach within the Folk.

The role of Woodcraft Folk in creating social change, historically and today.

Woodcraft Folk in relation to other youth organisations (similarities and differences).

Short pieces, including possible autobiographies, on how the Folk has influenced personal, social, political and intellectual development.

The relationship between Woodcraft Folk and Co-op Academies Trust (e.g. green education).

Think pieces about the future of the Folk.

Space, place and activism: the importance of political spaces for young people.

The value of outdoor education and the contribution the Folk has and can play. Reflections on Woodcraft Folk from other perspectives (e.g. a co-operative lens, co-operative education).

Bibliography: Some existing publications on the Woodcraft Folk

- Brown, O. J. (2007). *Who was Leslie Paul?* CreateSpace.
- Davis, M. (2000). *Fashioning of a new world: A history of the Woodcraft Folk*. Holyoake Books.
- Edwards, S. (2018). *Youth movements, citizenship and the English countryside: Creating good citizens, 1930-1960*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harper, P. (2016). *A people's history of Woodcraft Folk*. Woodcraft Folk.
- Kraftl, P. (2015). *Geographies of alternative education: Diverse learning spaces for children and young people*. Policy Press.
- Mills, S. & Kraftl, P. (2014). *Informal education, childhood and youth: Geographies, histories, practices*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Palser, R. (2020). *Education for social change: The politics and pedagogy of the Woodcraft Folk in the inter-war years*. Richard Palser.
- Pollen, A. (2015). *The kindred of the Kibbo Kift: Intellectual barbarians*. Donlon Books.
- Salt, C. & Wilson, M. (1985). *We are of one blood: Memories of the first 60 years of the Woodcraft Folk*. Co-operative Retail Services and London Region Member Relations Committee for the Woodcraft Folk.

[Submission guidelines for authors](#)