

A ROUGH GUIDE TO DF HISTORY



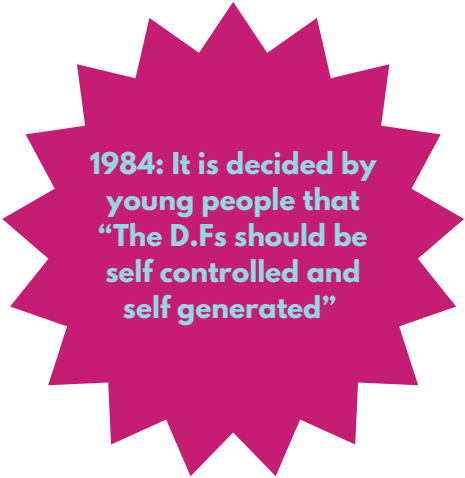
1970s

The DFs were created in the 1970s on the recommendation of Jess Cawley and the Woodcraft Folk's Education Committee, but also due to the work and thought put in by under 25s involved in National Council.

The aim was to encourage retention of members post 16 years, and to find a middle ground between being a young leader and continued social and educational activities.



1977: District Fellowship replaces Senior Venturers as 16+ age group



1984: It is decided by young people that "The D.Fs should be self controlled and self generated"



1983: 21 registered DF groups

The UN designated 1985 as International Youth Year encouraging a flurry of DF activity. Plans were made to hold a festival type weekend, inviting musicians like the Pogues and Billy Bragg. DF committee also attempted to hold a series of meetings to discuss whether the age range should be extended to 25 and the introduction of regional groupings. At the conference that was actually held DFs discussed anti-apartheid campaigning and discrimination against lesbians and gay men.



1987: First DF Committee elected



1988: First weekend long DF conference organised by and for DFs (Althing equivalent)

1980s

**1990: First
DF Camp**

**1996:
Rainbow
Network
Established**

**1997: DF
organised
trip to
Peru**

**1999: Quarterly
DF committee
meetings
become open to
all DF members**

In the 90s the DFs received support from National council in the form of the development worker, Michael Bond. Who helped them with admin and organisation.

Creating a DF Pack:

Part of this support was to help facilitate the creation of the DF Info Pack. This was made up of 10 sections: Woodcraft Folk, Setting up a group, District Fellows, Camping, Personal Relationships, Development Education/International, Youth Rights, Environment, Health and Equal Opportunities. It was aimed directly at young people for their own use and written by their peers.

1990s

2000s

2001:
**International
Camp - MEST
UP debut**

1999 - 2002:
**Summer
Madness
Brighton based
DF music festival**

**2002: DF
strategic review
- Grooving to a
Phatter Bassline**

2001:
**[www.spanthat
world.com](http://www.spanthatworld.com)
goes online**

**2007: DFs move
away from a
regional
committee
structure**

**2003: Fairer Fare is
introduced. Event
prices are increased
by 5 pounds and the
money raised is used
to support travel
costs**

2010s

**2009 - 2014 Woodcraft
Folk Project: TREE -
Training,
Representation,
Engagement & Equality
occurs. DFs publish
several rough guides
including the A to Z of
Good Discussion**

**2017: DFs
smash Yarl's
Wood
Immigration
Centre**

The 2010s were a major period for activism and the DFs were involved with many of these movements. From national demonstrations for free education and living grants to people's marches for climate and jobs.


They continued to organise musical fundraising events, such as Span That World with Music.

In 2018, a documentary called In My Youth was filmed by Martha Shepard recording the experiences of DFs and their opinions of the movement at Spring Awakening.


The covid-19 pandemic meant that many DF events had to be cancelled and left a huge gap in knowledge as members aged out without the chance to pass on information.

However, it was not the end. As early as 2021 one of the largest DF Camps in years was held, thankfully covid free due to extensive precautionary measures.

Since then DF's has introduced new events such as the dinner party themed Autumn Nocturne and revived itself with both things and social events returning to an almost quarterly schedule.



The question
now is: What
comes next?



In 2027 it will be
the 50th
anniversary of
the DFs. How shall
we celebrate it?

2020s

INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE?



Digital Archives:

Woodcraft Folk Heritage holds some early DF material, while Spanthat.world contains documents from around 2017. To fill some of the 40 year gap between these I have been kindly given access to Jack Brown's DF files which contains scans of DF News from 1995 to 2009. Old Facebook pages are also an interesting source, particularly the DF page and the People's History of the Woodcraft Folk.

Physical Archives:

The main Woodcraft Folk archive is held at UCL in their special collections which you can book to visit.

There are also small collections held at the Marx Memorial Library and an oral history collection at the British Library. However, for info on the DFs the best collections are often in people's homes, so maybe try talking to some kinsfolk.

This zine was created by Delilah Wallbank, based on research I conducted for my chapter on DFs written for the 100th anniversary Woodcraft Folk book. This is the slightly edited 2nd edition adapted for use at Camp 100 in 2025.