

## FOLK CAMPS SOCIETY

Folk Camps began life in 1961. A few friends decided to enjoy a week's communal camping with their families and indulge their shared interest in folk song and dance. Within seven years it was a not-for-profit limited company and a registered charity. Since then it has gone from strength to strength.

Our object is *“to preserve, for the benefit of the public, English (and other) folk music, dance and song, to make them known and to encourage the practice of them”*. We run upwards of 12 camps per year lasting anything from two days to four weeks. Some are centred on village halls; for others the focus is a large marquee. Although most of those attending our camps will live under canvas during their holiday, one of our “camps” is actually building based, appealing more to our older members whose camping days are over.

Our members come from all over the British mainland and we have held camps in Scotland, Northumbria, the Lake District, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Peaks, the Forest of Dean, and North and West Wales, as well as throughout the softer, warmer southern half of England. We even organise camps abroad and in recent years have been to France, Holland and Germany.

The people attending our camps are of all ages - from new-born babies to octogenarians and most camps, apart from a few special interest ones, are true family affairs. Everybody over 18 attending one of our camps is required to become a member of the society and all camps are pre-booked. Indeed, some of the summer camps are so popular that they are fully booked before March is out. We never accept bookings on site.

Our summer family camps take two forms: “hall” camps and “marquee” camps. A hall camp will normally run for two weeks and be based on a rural village hall. The campsite will be adjacent, either on the village playing field or a local farmer's field. All activities - eating, workshops, craft work, singing, playing music, dancing and socialising take place in the hall. We normally cap the attendance at 100.

The marquee camp is not dissimilar but tends to be in a more remote location, a field in beautiful countryside, away from centres of population, and usually lasts for four weeks. A large marquee fulfils the same function as the village hall. A marquee camp will cater for around 125 people per week.

On camp, all tasks – cooking, cleaning the hall, the marquee, the lavatories, washing pots and pans, peeling mounds of potatoes, etc. - are shared; everyone over 12 has a duty. We take pride in leaving a field and any premises at least as clean and tidy as they were when we arrived and can supply excellent references. Each camp has three or four “staff” – all unpaid – a leader, a warden, a caterer (where necessary) and a musician, although normally at least half the campers are musicians.

The 2- 3- or 4-day weekend camps are all hall-based but are self-catering. Some offer a more specialist approach such as the singers' or the musicians' weekends or the craft camp.

The society is run by its members via an elected council of 9 trustees. We have the services of five self-employed contractors, all Folk Campers themselves, who handle bookings, camp logistics and equipment, catering, site-finding and publicity.

We are a very happy group, committed to the joyous business of making music, singing and dancing. The three keywords of our society are three Cs – Camping, Community and Creativity.