

Welcome to the Folk Camps newsletter. This issue has news from Folk Camps and information about this year's holidays.

Find out more about our holidays including prices, staffing, dates, venues and booking at the website: <http://www.folkcamp.co.uk> .

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/folkcampsholidays>.

Twitter: @FolkCamps <https://twitter.com/FolkCamps>.

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A Message from the Chairman

I hope you are keeping safe and tolerating the physical and mental pressures of the coronavirus crisis.

The good news is that the lockdown, so devastating to our Spring weekend camps, appears to be working. It appears the epidemic in the UK has peaked and is on the decline, but it is too early to say how quickly nor when we can all get our normal lives back.

The lockdown has dramatically changed the way Folk Camps Council operates. The late March Council meeting had to be cancelled and we are now using Zoom and Slack to organise our activities. One benefit of the new approach is that we can have more frequent, focused meetings as well as continuous debate on the challenging issues.

Your Council has been gathering all available information on the progression of the Covid-19 epidemic and is reviewing the current and likely future Government response. This process will culminate in a crucial meeting on the weekend of 9th May at which we will decide the fate of the various summer camps in the light of the best available evidence and our imperative to keep all our campers safe.

In the meantime, I have been truly heartened by the online initiatives of Linsey Sim and others to keep our community alive during this enforced separation. We are such a social organisation that the very thought of 'social distancing' is horrendous. Look out for more 'Lockerdown 2020' events in the coming weeks.

Finally, please take a look at the call to action on a possible Community Fund which could be so needed post-covid.

Hope to Zoom you soon!

Marcus De Frettes

What Folk Camps Council Is Doing About Covid-19

When news of a the new Covid outbreak started, few would have predicted the immense and unexpected speed and severity of its consequences. I hope you, your families and friends are managing to find your way through this crisis.

Our Folk Camps family may be better placed than many to make the best of it, being resourceful, hardy and optimistic. Many of you are already sharing messages of support, music, dance and all sorts of activities online so do keep posting on the Cold Bogmarsh Facebook group and joining in with online song sessions and ceilidhs!

Council has been working over the last two months to assess the impact of this crisis on our Society's activities and finances, and to put plans in place to preserve financial and organisational stability for Folk Camps. We are also working closely with our contractors who continue to support and help us navigate this challenge. Our thanks to them for their continuing commitment.

Much thought is going into how we continue our charitable mission during the crisis, and we are drawing strength and ideas from the whole Folk Camps community.

We are taking steps to minimise the financial impact on Folk Camps and on our campers. Folk Camps' substantial reserves exist for such an eventuality and we are assessing where they need to be used to keep us operational. An early action was the prompt cancellation of all the weekend camps up until the end of June 2020 with refunds to all campers. Many thanks to those who, unprompted, generously donated their deposits.

In these extraordinary circumstances, Council has decided to defer advertising the post of Administration Manager until later in the year to ensure continuity. We are glad that Kerstin Jewell is happy to continue in her interim role to deal with the bookings and the cancellations at this critical time.

Since most of the festival appearances booked for 2020 have been postponed until 2021, the Folk Camps Party Band project has been suspended until these rescheduled appearances go ahead. We very much hope that the new members of the band who are yet to perform live will have their moment on stage next year.

Your Council will continue to work for the wellbeing of Folk Camps and will bring you news on the summer camps in a few weeks' time. Until then stay safe, look after your loved ones and keep the Folk Camps community spirit alive.

Folk Camp Council

Lockerdown 2020

These are certainly the strangest of days with the entire planet united in its battle against COVID 19. The lucky ones amongst us get to stay safe at home and find a way to live a much smaller life than we are used to and clap each Thursday at 8pm in a heartfelt gesture of appreciation to those who fight this invisible war - the NHS and other frontline emergency services, the posties, bin men, domestic violence services, supermarket staff, delivery drivers, this seemingly huge list of essential workers who risk their lives every day so we don't have to.

The process of physical distancing and effective quarantining does not mean that we have to be socially isolated. For many in the community, and I include myself in this, our social calendars have never been fuller, with the whole world reaching out digitally the physical restrictions that once had us isolated are no longer a barrier.

Deciding to fully embrace the common solitude, I have jumped on someone's joke and called this Lockerdown 2020. As a fellow folk camper mentioned, if you consider this a lock in rather than a lock down it suddenly feels a lot more fun.

I am currently hosting a weekly Kids Ceilidh (Monday's at 4pm) with the amazing support of seasoned Folk Campers bringing joy and madness to whoever wishes to join in. Additionally, there is a weekly Song Circle although days vary depending on demand to fit around all the other virtual events.

Full details can be obtained by emailing me at tree.linsey@gmail.com

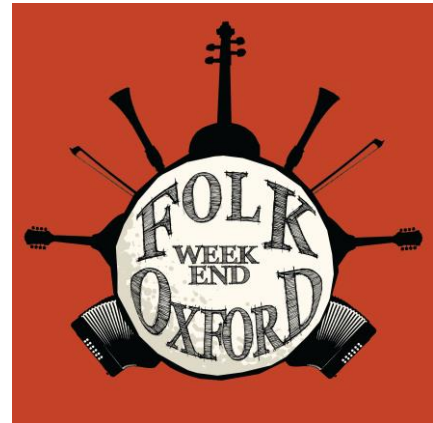
Linsey Sim



Kitchen Ceilidh in Association with Oxford

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I bought my ticket to the Folk Weekend: Oxford's Kitchen Ceilidh in association with Oxford last Saturday. I knew that Jenny Newman and Andy Glass, two out of Three Sticks, would be playing. I knew the music would be good and had seen a quick 'taster' on Facebook.

The Lockdown has given me new IT skills, so I managed to link into the event on Zoom easily. My front room was connected to Jenny and Andy's house and the Folk Weekend: Oxford headquarters – there was Cat and Euan McGill; and rooms all over the country and beyond. Lots of very friendly smiling faces. Jane Bird was excellent as mistress of ceremonies.



To start with, it was clearly an odd situation for Caller Andy Rouse. He could see only snippets of people and not hear anyone! He gave it his absolute best and his wife too. We were treated to a great programme of music and dancing. Some of the dance names were forgotten in the whirl of it all, but I do remember dancing Rosa and the Swedish Masquerade, and a Scottische to a tune of Jenny's.

Pushing aside the coffee table during the half-time raffle and musical interlude, Jenny playing the fiddle for Jen's clog dance made a big difference. I got the hang of scrolling the live video feeds on my tiny tablet. At the end of each dance our microphones were briefly unmuted for us to show appreciation. It was so lovely to hear all the voices and applause.

My partner was a handsome, well-loved Teddy in pyjamas. He was downstairs sitting in the front window cheering up passers-by when dragged into action on the dance floor. To make up a four, Elmer the Elephant and a Little Penguin were happy to oblige. During the Circassian Circle, I was able to progress to myself, and then to myself and then to myself again! I didn't get lost or annoy anybody!



We ran on over our time quota, with 2 cheeky extra dances. By the end of the evening, the screens were full of soft toys. Special mention should be given to 'Gladys' the mop head. The Teddy dance is now a ceilidh phenomenon.

I can honestly say I was glad I was there. Cat McGill confirmed that 200 dancers took part, not including the soft toys.

It was so joyful, so uplifting, and for someone isolating alone, was a point of real and hilarious contact with lovely people. I was able to say hi to several Folk Campers who added to the contact by messaging and texting. As an event it genuinely worked. Although nothing can completely recreate the social contact of a physical dance, Zoom can certainly connect people. I was more impressed than I thought I would be.

Immediately there was call for more! And Cat will be running another Kitchen Ceilidh on May 1st.

Contact info@folkweekendoxford.co.uk for more details.

Judith Jenkins

News from the Bunker

We know that many of you were excited to go and see the Folk Camps Party Band at their ceilidhs across the country this summer, such as at Chippenham, Towersey, Oxfolk and Stroud. Of course, due measures put in place during the Pandemic, these events have all been postponed until 2021.

However, we didn't want you to be without a little joy in these difficult times! So, in the meantime, take a look at a little video of released at the end of their 2019 season that covers highlights as well as some interviews with the players on why they love performing with the Party Band so much.

The video can be found on their Facebook page, or through this [link](#).

Secondly, the leaders of the Folk Camps Party Band, Jenny Newman and Andy Glass, are also part of Solstice, the long-running folk-rock band. Their latest release includes a few familiar folk camp faces! Check out that video [here](#).



[Link 1: <https://www.facebook.com/FolkCampsPartyBand/>]

[Link 2: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=982297978820162>]

[Link 3: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=670044793744739>]

Community Fund Camper Support

Community fund to assist hard up families to attend camp

At the FCS AGM, there were expressions of interest in a mechanism to provide help to campers in financial hardship. The current crisis will likely create even more cases so it would seem the right moment to consider launching a fund to address this.

Council would like to hear from governing members who would be interested in joining a working group to investigate how this could be done (funding, allocation, anonymity).

Given that Council has its hands full at the moment, this would need to be a self-supporting task group, with a small measure of input from Council.

Please contact Anne Guthrie (anneguthrie@folkcamp.co.uk) if you would be interested in helping set up and run such a group.

Anthony Keen



Continue the Digital Camper Experience!

As you have seen from many of the articles in this season's Extent, in an effort to stay connected whilst apart, so many people have come together to create amazing digital spaces where campers can still enjoy themselves, share music, stories, and keep our folk community going.

Linsey Sim has already committed an amazing amount of time and effort into fostering these online spaces and kickstarting 'Lockerdown 2020'. We've got the ceilidhs; we've got the song circles. What else is missing from the 'digital Folk Camps' experience?

Workshops of course! No camp would be without them.

Do you have an idea for a workshop that could be run online? Maybe lessons on song-writing, or teaching the steps of a new dance remotely? If you've been already considering something, let Folk Camps give you the nudge you need.

We encourage all of our community to hold digital workshops that we can all share together. If you'd like to run a workshop, be sure to post it on Cold Bogmarsh, the Unofficial Virtual Campsite on Facebook, run by council-member Sue Malleson.

Cold Bogmarsh can be found through this link [here](#).

As well as that, as we all have more time on our hands, now is the perfect opportunity to reminisce using the Unofficial Folk Camps Archives to while away the hours! Take a look [here](#).

Anthony Keen



[Link 1: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1632638373688403/>]

[Link 2: <https://www.facebook.com/UnofficialFolkCampsArchive>]

Obituaries

Sheila Baker 1932-2020

After meeting at the local folk-dance club Sheila and Gordon Baker started Folk Camping back in 1968 at Uplyme and hardly had a year without a camp – Porlock, Morfa Nefyn, Alnwick, France with Mains Unies and later multiple visits and crazy times at St Denis. After Gordon's death in 2000, Sheila carried on enjoying the craft camps at which she excelled with all her silk painting, quilting, sewing and artistic skills at Symonds Yat and Halsway (contributing a panel to the Halsway quilt).

The lifelong friends she made at Folk Camp added a special extra dimension to her life which I am sure is true for most of us. Folk Camp was always the thing to look forward to and she had the most fun and her best times at camp with family and friends.



After a debilitating stroke 10 years ago, she was no longer able to camp. Her departure at the end of February was timely, being a week before the arrival of the pandemic and happily Viv and Paul and families were able to be with her to the end.

Jean Blomfield 1932-2019

Jean Maria Newbrook was born in London and was proud to be a proper Cockney. Her family moved to Guildford when she was three and with the hardships of war, she grew up resilient and happy.

As an active teenager, and lover of the outdoors, Jean quickly became involved in the Guildford Phoenix Cycling group which naturally led to enthusiastic participation in the local YHA group which included much folk music, singing and dancing. She loved the community spirit and could always be relied upon to get a sing a long started (probably with "The Tailor's Breeches").



Here she met John Blomfield (also known as Tex in those days) and they soon married. Children followed; Sara and Julia; and YHA holidays with a toddler and baby didn't work so well! Then Jean saw an advert in a magazine for a group camping holiday with music and dancing, where children were welcome, and campers would make their own entertainment. So, in August 1963, with a three and a one-year-old, they went to the camp. There the Blomfields found likeminded people camping in a field with a small marquee, sharing the workload of running the camp and coming together to socialise, dance, sing, play music and with same community spirit she had found in the YHA.

She immediately volunteered to run an under 5's singing session, after the evening meal, so the parents could get the washing up done, and thus "Aunty Jean Sessions" were born and she continued to run them long after Julia and Sara were children. More recently Folk

Camps published a book of Jean's children's' songs and games called "In A Cottage, In A Wood".

Within a year or two of that first holiday, the camping group formalised themselves, a governing Council was formed with Jean as one of the Founder Members. They called themselves "Family Camps". Jean served on council for some 10 years and "Family Camps" grew rapidly (later changing to Folk Camps).

Husband Tex had begun calling dances in his YHA days so that coupled with being a morris man meant he soon found himself leading camps. Jean also regularly served camps as the caterer. In 1976, Jean found herself being asked to step in as warden, at Studland Bay, at the last minute, and thus her "wardening career" began. Also, on two other occasions she stepped up to the plate; once as leader and once as musician when the designated staff had to leave – completing the "Grand Slam"!

Sara and Julia just grew up with a serious addiction to Family Camp holidays with Julia naturally slipping into the role of musician aged 17.

In the early days Jean took up the accordion, encouraged greatly at camps by Bryan Bonnett and Alan Corkett. This led to several family barn dance bands and also playing for England's Glory Morris Team. Her love of singing meant she was always part of at least one choir, and this naturally flowed into Folk Camps; always contributing to the sing-a-round; part of any singing workshop and a stalwart supporter of the Singers' Weekend Camps.

Jean began making homemade wine in the 60's and it wasn't long before the house in Evesham (where the Blomfields moved to in 1965) resonated with the gentle popping of fermenting demi-johns of wine made from virtually anything that grew! In the 80's Jean became Chair of The Evesham Wine Circle and during her term in office she was made "Guardian of The Vineyard" in Dreux near Paris (twinned with Evesham). At camps, Jean could be relied upon to share a glass of her elderberry wine with anyone willing.

In 1993, after Jean retired from her work as a laboratory technician, she spent three months as an Au Pair in Dreux helping to care for an elderly gentleman, and in return enjoying French life, language and wine!

Jean was a regular camper until 2000 when she contracted MRSA, which compromised her health and mobility and she was no longer able to camp. However, she thoroughly enjoyed dropping in on various Beckford weekends to say hello to old friends.

On 4th September 2019 Jean died peacefully after a year-long battle with cancer. At her memorial service, good friend Dave Brown led us in singing "The Tailor's Breeches" for her committal, so that she could go out singing. There were several Folk Campers present (and many in spirit) to send her on her way.

The world is a richer place because Jean lived, and she was always proud of the part she played in the birth and growth of Folk Camps.

Julia Day,
Proud daughter and Folk Camp musician