

## Extent: Spring 2022

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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## Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the Spring 2022 edition of Extent, our Folk Camps newsletter.

After two years of no events, we were really pleased to run the Craft Break in February. The Council of Management has been meeting online frequently during the pandemic, to decide if and how we could run any Folk Camps. We have wanted to ensure that our members are safe and that any events we run are as normal as possible. The Craft Break was tricky due to being an indoor event in a hotel, which ran during the peak of Omnicron, but we agreed a set of precautions with the attendees, and it was a very successful event.

We are now looking forward to our Spring weekend events and Council will be meeting often and setting suitable precautions. I expect that the covid situation will continue to change, but I am hopeful that we can have a season of Folk Camps enjoying music, dancing and singing together.

I'm honoured to have been re-elected as Chair of Folk Camps. I was previously Chair from 2012 to 2016 then left Council due to our long-standing rules on rotation of Council members, which is intended to ensure fresh faces and new ideas. I've been a Folk Camper for my whole life, so maybe I am not that fresh! I'd welcome more new faces on Council when places are next up for election in the autumn. I believe that a diverse mixture of experience, enthusiasm, new-approaches, and fresh ideas is what keeps any team working well. If you have been involved with Folk Camps for a few years and you find that Folk Camps are important to you, then please consider whether you could be part of the Committee that makes the decisions about our much-loved holidays.

There is more info on the website here: <https://www.folkcamp.co.uk/council/> and here: <https://www.folkcamp.co.uk/council-members/> and you are welcome to contact me or anyone else on Council to find out more about what we do.

I look forward to seeing you in a field somewhere this year!

**Patrick Self**

## Must-Visit Location

There will be a new site for the 2022 camps – Rolvenden. Originally slated for 2020, it's ready and waiting for us this year.

### Rolvenden

Who doesn't like a beach trip? Rolvenden, our Marquee camp this year, is just a short drive from the south coast and Camber Sands, a beautiful and expansive beach-front perfect for picnics, walking trips, or just enjoying the (hopefully) balmy weather. The more adventurous could even try some of the water sports available during the summer months!



Places for our Marquee weeks are running out fast, but there's still some tickets available. Make sure you book on and be part of it!

**Anthony Keen**

## The Unexpected Polka

Musicians Chris Jewell and Alastair Gavin introduce their new book of over 100 folk dance tunes with second parts, **The Unexpected Polka & Other Tunes**, produced with the help of the Folk Camps Society Development Fund.

We have all grown up with Barbara Wood's wonderful *Join the Band* which encouraged and enabled so many of us to join in with music workshops and ceilidh bands. As our workshop methods as staff musicians have evolved over the years, the idea of producing a successor to *JTB* has been growing in our minds – a book that would reflect the tunes currently most popular and also our preferred style of teaching which allows beginner players to stay with the workshop for longer as the tunes get harder and faster, due to the availability of easier second parts, as Barbara's book showed us nearly 50 years ago.

A single phone call at the beginning of the first lockdown proved to be all it took for us to leap into action and start compiling, arranging, arguing (very rarely!), typesetting, and recording and filming backing tracks. A hugely enjoyable process and a perfect project for us while we were locked down in our homes.

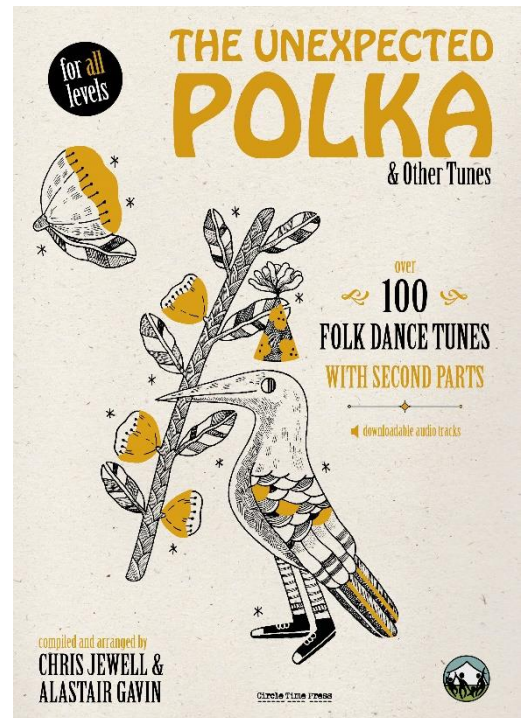
*The Unexpected Polka & Other Tunes* is in two sections. The first 'Promenade' section contains 34 tunes – some old friends and hopefully some new ones too. A variety of tune types and all with (mostly) simpler second parts. There are also a few tunes with more complex third parts to keep even experienced folk musicians on their toes. All of these tunes have audio files which are played both slowly and then at dancing speed and the links can be found on [The Unexpected Polka website](http://TheUnexpectedPolka.com).

The second 'Progression' section contains another 80 tunes from the many folk genres including Morris, Playford, and international, as well as some Folk Camps favourites like *Levi Jackson* and *The Northern Lights*. All have second parts and many are to be found on our [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) so you can play along or just hear how they sound.

As a beginner musician, it is great to know that some point during your Folk Camp holiday the tunes you have been practicing all-year-round will be played, and you will have the opportunity to play them with everyone else in the morning music workshop, or join in with the band playing them for the early evening dancing, so we do hope that our book might take its place as a regular resource at Folk Camps, and even beyond, and that you enjoy using it as much we enjoyed putting it together.

The book is available for £15.00 + p&p from [www.theunexpectedpolka.com](http://www.theunexpectedpolka.com).

**Alastair Gavin**



## Catering at 2022 Camps

We have recently had a meeting to discuss catering this summer at camp. During our meeting, we were discussing how diets have been changing over the past few years and so many more people have started to eat more vegetarian or vegan food and are eating less meat.

**We would like you to make sure that you have updated your food preferences and dietary requirements for camp when you book.** This is important for ordering food in advance, and we do like to get in touch if you have important dietary issues such as allergies.

Please contact the office if you are not sure if your food preference has been updated on your booking.

We are making sure we keep up to date with food standards agency requirements and have all had additional training about allergies.

We have tweaked the menu a little to try to make it easier for Cooks of the Day but also to recognise changing tastes of campers. Please do send an email in if you have suggestions about camp food – it is not always easy to please everyone, but we are trying to keep adapting as needed!

Please make sure you bring lunch containers if you wish to go out for the day and want to take a packed lunch.

## Liz Cooper and the Catering Team



## **Folk Camps History Boxes**

At this point, Folk Camps has a long and storied history. Many of the memories of camps passed are handed from one camper to another through the songs we sing and the stories we tell – but there is also, if it can be believed, photographic evidence of these long-lost days.

Members of the Folk Camps Council currently hold what has been referred to as the 'Folk Camps Archives'. These number several boxes full of photos, meeting minutes, newsletters, and all kinds of Folk Camps paraphernalia.

It is vitally important that we preserve this key part of our society's history. However, it is also clear that this job is not one undertaken lightly, and requires someone who has the time, passion, and care to treat our history with the respect it deserves – as well as organise it thoughtfully!

So, as with all Folk Camps tasks of the utmost importance, we turn to the membership for help.

Do you feel you could take up the mantle of 'Folk Camps Archivist', or do you know someone that might be suitable? If so, please contact Kerstin Jewell or a member of the Folk Camps Council to put your name in the hat!

**Anthony Keen**

## **Could you Be the New Graham & Steve?**

### **We Need You!**

For many years, the venerable Steve Porritt and Graham Clements have been the dream-team responsible for overseeing Folk Camps equipment, setting up and breaking down our sites, as well as looking for potential future camp locations.

However, all good things must come to an end, and the pair will be retiring from the roles this year. Naturally, Folk Camps Council are busy looking for a person or persons to replace them.

The roles are paid, such is their importance to the running of Folk Camps. They also involve having a space of some kind to hold the equipment that helps us run our camps.

If you feel like you are up to this task, please reach out to Kerstin Jewell or a Council member to make your interest known.

Do you feel like you are up to some of what is described, but not all? Don't discount yourself! Council is open to any and all suggestions for taking on parts of the role, splitting it amongst several people, or any other ideas for making the role work for you and Folk Camps.

### **Anthony Keen**



## Obituaries

### Dennis Conner

Dennis and Betty Conner were introduced to Folk Camps soon after they joined an international dance class in Watford, where they met the Finns and the Rogers families. With a young family in tow, their first camp was Kingston, Dorset in 1965. When they camped on the Gower two years later, and with the most recent addition to the family just six weeks old, high winds finished off the tents.



For the next 20 years, Folk Camps was the family holiday of choice every summer, and a welcome two-week break for Dennis from the demands of his work as Engineering Design Manager for a major building contractor. They continued to attend camps regularly until 2011 when Dennis ably cooked fried breakfasts for the entire Sledmere camp almost singlehanded while on breakfast duty.

Dennis enjoyed all kinds of folk dance, music and song, but a particular interest was international music and dance, especially Balkan and Israeli. He played piano and guitar initially and later took up the accordion. His interest in portable recording left behind a considerable number of song session recordings and musical performances, as well as much more from the 1960s onwards.

Behind the scenes, Dennis fully supported Betty during her stint as Chair of Folk Camps in the mid-1970s. Following an abortive open competition for a logo, an excellent design by Sally Phillips was commissioned. Dennis painstakingly drew out the design and prepared the proofs for printing purposes, and this logo with only slight modification is still used.



Dennis remained very active until a stroke at the age of 87, regularly attending November AGMs with Betty, and keeping in touch with friends made at the many camps they enjoyed. He attended the anniversary celebrations at Fowlmere in 2018, wheelchair-bound though he was.

Betty survives Dennis and for the past three years has been well cared for at a residential home in the village of Ellington, near Huntingdon.

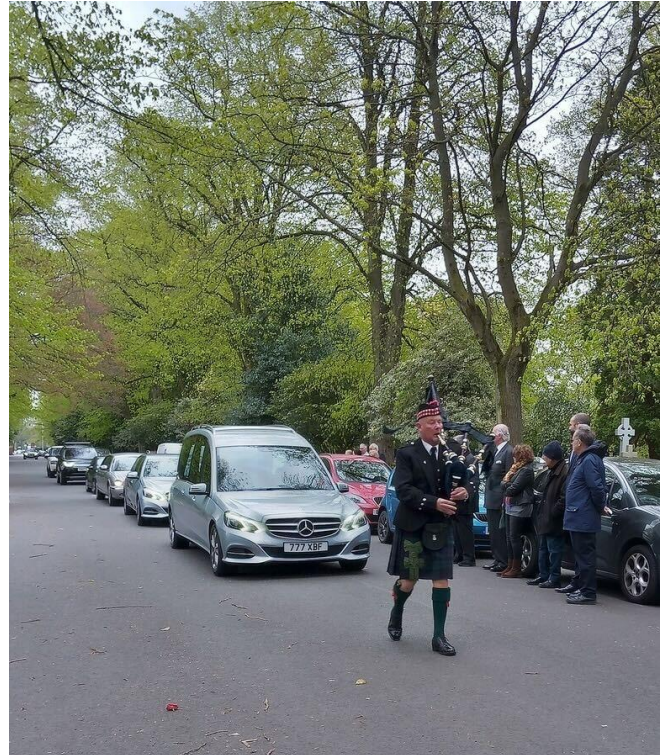
### Nigel Conner

## Alex McClure

Former Leader and Musician Alex McClure died on 28 March after a long illness which he handled with great fortitude and strength.

Alex was an excellent folk musician and had a wonderful singing voice, and his involvement in folk music lasted his whole life.

He met his wife, Susan, in 1973 at a London folk club. Folk music remained central to their lives, and they spent many holidays with the Folk Camps, allowing Alex also to pursue his interest in hill walking as well as singing and playing music. Over his lifetime, Alex did a lot of effective, voluntary work as a member of the Folk Camps Council and as leader of various camps. He was a Council member for a number of years during which he brought wise investment and other financial advice to Folk Camps.



His memorial service included a recording of Alex singing his own song "Leaving Brodick Harbour" about Arran, friendship and memories, and one of his most notable songs he often sung at Folk Camp.

Here are some of the comments paying tribute to Alex and their memories of his time at Folk Camp and on Council.

- *"Alex was one of a small number of traditional Scottish musicians and singers who became involved in Folk Camps. He had a wonderful voice and was one of the finest singers of Scottish ballads I have come across. He was also a very accomplished and versatile musician. In addition he was a very loyal folk camper - opening his wonderful 'historical' home in a leafy suburb of Birmingham to FCS for committee meetings. Many happy memories of song and music sessions with him - particularly in France" – Keith Gregson*
- *"He gave a lot of time to Folk camps and encouraged many people to sing (even me!) I remember him teaching us the song about Leaving Brodick Harbour which inspired me to take a trip to the West Coast of Scotland and across to Arran!" – Anne*
- *'He was always very encouraging about my singing.'* – Sue
- *'Alex was a great encouragement when I first dared to sing.'* – Eileen
- *"I was also on Council at the same time as Alex and went to the same folk camps in UK, France and the Netherlands. He was always really helpful and I learned a great deal from him on Council from finance to being a Director." – Claire*
- *"Alex was one of those rare people, who was totally honest, honourable & trustworthy, who gave of his time & himself to anyone or any organisation who needed his skills, knowledge & help. It has be a privilege to count him as a true friend." – Roger*

## Claire Mycock