

Folk Camps Extent Newsletter – Autumn 2023

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.folkcamps.co.uk> .

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

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

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Message From the Chair

The summer now seems a long time ago, and I am now looking forward to next year's Folk Camps.

Looking back, we had a few difficulties during the year, but had many successful weekend events (most had more campers than in 2022), and 3 lovely summer weeks at Peakhill Farm in Suffolk. The financial situation for the organisation was much better than in the previous 3 years. Our summer camper numbers haven't recovered yet, and we need more people so that we can expand our summer offering. If you have friends or acquaintances who you think may enjoy a Folk Camp, then please tell them about it. We are increasing our marketing reach via social media and email, but recommendations from a friend are what makes the most difference.

In summer 2024 we will return to Rolvenden, sooner than we would like, but we currently have few summer sites that we can guarantee to return to. So, if you spot a field that you think could be a summer Folk Camps site, please let us know about it.

Folk Camps is all about community, our events are about participation, rather than being in an audience. And you can be part of what makes the organisation flourish as a result of what you bring or offer.

PS: I would like to thank Anthony Keen for looking after Extent in his 6 years on Council – it's now handed over to Oscar Roberts.

I hope to see you in a field somewhere next year.

Patrick Self, Folk Camps Chair

Our Site for 2024

Next year we will be heading once again to Rolvenden for our summer Marquee Camp, the location we also used for our return year in 2022. Situated on the grounds of the Hole Park stately home, this site offers nearby tourist attractions such as the stately home itself, the nearby historic railroad in Tenterden and beaches such as Camber Sands and Dungeness.

We're overjoyed to be returning to this beautiful site for another year, and with bookings now open we hope to see you there for a new year of Folk Camps.

Google maps currently shows the 2022 Folk Camp in the field!



Members Network

We want to introduce a new section to the Folk Camps website: Members Network

This will be a place for members of Folk Camps to promote their events / bands / groups / activities etc.

If you have any kind of folk related activity, we would like to promote it for you. We expect this initiative to evolve as you provide information, but expect that it could link to your social media presence, your websites, event listings, etc. Links to and from the Folk Camps website to your presence is mutually beneficial. I'm sure that many Folk Camps Leaders, Musicians, and also many campers are already involved in activities that would benefit from being shared more widely. We intend to define "folk" very widely, actually any musical, singing, dancing, etc activity qualifies.

To be included, you need to be a governing member, which many Folk Campers are already, and if not, you can become one easily here:
<https://folkcampers.co.uk/governing-members/>

Please send information to Patrick, and I'll create a section of the website for each person that does so. Ideally, provide photos, links, information, etc. What do you normally do to promote your activities? Share it with the wider Folk Camps family via this!

patrick.self@folkcampers.co.uk

Patrick – Folk Camps Chair (and IT Co-ordinator)

We Need You!

Folk camps is a volunteer led organisation and needs your help to keep going. There are so many different ways that people can help keep our wonderful holidays going.

Council

Being a member of the Council requires a commitment to actively assist in the running of the Society. Members of the Council are expected to actually carry out some of the work necessary to make Folk Camps happen. This involves decision making and strategic thinking as well as some practical tasks depending on which committee the council member is supporting.

There is a commitment of attending one weekend and several online meetings but it is not too onerous. However, we do need more council members and will be looking to co-opt having had few applications to join council in the latest round of elections. Without council, there would be no Folk Camps.

Staffing

We are always looking for new volunteer staff to join our teams. If you staff for a Folk Camp then you are given a credit allowance, this not only helps folk camp but makes it so much more affordable. We are currently particularly short of wardens and caterers but would welcome volunteers for any role.

Each camp has a Leader to facilitate activities, such as workshops for music, song and dance or anything else that people want to do. The leader also organises the evening ceilidh by ensuring there are dances and songs.

The camp Musician arranges for music to be provided for dancing in the evening and for any workshops that need music. The Musician doesn't have to play for everything, but helps with ensuring that someone does so. The main music workshop involves teaching and providing a range of music for the variety of abilities and instruments.



The Warden sorts out the camp's domestic matters like water supply, gas and toilets. This can be fairly simple at a weekend camp but more complicated at a summer marquee camp where there is more to do. Wardens need to be aware of health and safety and be of a practical nature.

At summer catered camps the Caterer ensures that campers are well fed by organising teams to prepare meals and by giving instructions and overseeing food preparation, this involves being very aware of Health and safety in the kitchen. It is a logistics role rather than actually doing the cooking.

Apprenticeships – before you take on a staff role at a camp, it would be expected that you would work as an apprentice so you understand how the role works and what to do.

Duties at camp

A camp duty is part of the community feel of a Folk Camp; if you don't want to be in the kitchen then there are other helpful activities that the warden can arrange for you to do. Some are for a part of just one day, and others are shorter periods spread over several days. It takes everyone to make the camp run smoothly and all roles are important.

Workshops

The workshops offered at each camp are so important. Workshops depend on what is offered. There is normally a singing workshop each day and often dancing workshops such as morris or rapper sword. Each camp is different as the campers have different skills. Last year one summer camp held varied workshops including rapper and singing but also crochet, fungi identification, painting, advance fiddle, fabric painting and there have been on camps with origami workshops, poetry and yoga... it needs everyone to think of what you can bring to camp – it is amazing to share a skill with your fellow campers.

News From the Catering Team

Another successful summer of camps and many thanks are due to the caterers who have overseen the cooks of the day team. Thanks also to Jenny Hopper who stepped back into her role as Provisioner for 2023 after temporarily stepping down.

We have been trying to develop the menu to accommodate changing diets and new rules around allergies and food preparation and food hygiene. Each year it becomes a bit more difficult. Many people now have allergies and intolerances. Whilst we try to cater for everyone and know that being sure the food suits each person is important, we do need to consider what we can and can't do. We ask that anyone who has dietary issues please note this down on the booking form. Please discuss the issues with the caterer before you arrive on camp so that the different menus can be considered, and any adaptations made.

Our menus are designed to cater for a variety of diets, but we must stress that we are using a "camp kitchen" and cannot guarantee that any meal would not be contaminated with different food items. This is not dissimilar to a disclaimer on processed food. We do try our best to be aware of everything that is in each dish but due to the nature of the kitchen this cannot be guaranteed. There will be "special diet" food provided on a separate table in the marquee, and we request that only those who have been identified to the caterer take food from this area.

Fridges – we no longer will be able to store campers' food or drink in the camp kitchens, this is for two reasons – 1) there is limited space and 2) hygiene. If you need to bring your own food to camp for your own dietary needs or preferences which you need to keep chilled, please find your own solution for next year. Small camping fridges can be easily purchased or a food cool box with bags of ice from a nearby supermarket may be the solution.

Advertisement: Logistics Manager

Folk Camps are seeking applications for the role of Logistics Manager. This is a self-employed, part-time, contract position. It combines activities previously carried out by more than one person.

Responsibilities include:

- Book venues for Folk Camps (village halls and fields: most are repeat bookings each year)
- Book facilities needed for each event (marquee, toilets, gas, rubbish removal/skips)
- Order food and drinks for the summer camps according to menus and camper numbers from catering company and supermarket
- Order other items required on summer camps such as cleaning products
- Develop relationships with local suppliers for fresh fruit and vegetables, bread and cakes, dairy and meat orders, prepare them for order and supply numbers in plenty of time
- Provide all hygiene products such as hairnets and beard protection, gloves etc.
- Coordinate the catering paperwork (food hygiene, menus, etc) for summer camps
- Take surplus food back to cash and carry at end of camps and dispose of food through sale to campers or donation to worthy cause
- Liaise with other contractors and council
- Attend Folk Camps Council working weekend and other on line meetings

For many events we use the same suppliers each year, but our summer week-long sites are often at new locations, which requires finding new suppliers. For some of these (e.g. a summer farmer field), fee negotiation may be involved.

Skills required:

- Be organised: track venue bookings and payments, ensure all provisions are provided
- Initiative to overcome unexpected supplier mishaps
- Develop good working relationships with suppliers, other Folk Camps contractors and Folk Camps Council

For 2024, our summer camp is at a previously used location, so many suppliers can be the same as in the past.

More information from Patrick Self and Liz Cooper via the office.
Applications deadline: 31 January 2024.

Working Weekend 2023 Report

At the end of September Council members, admin managers and Folk Camp contractors met in Northamptonshire for a working weekend. We discussed the past year and what improvements can be made to ensure successful years ahead for the society and all its members.

Highlights of discussions:

- We have decided to add a “Members Network” section on the website so everyone can share news of gigs/events and information on ‘folk’ projects.
- A new mass email software has been chosen and trialled.
- A more reliable and economical website/ email host was decided upon.
- Inbetweeners camp will be reinstated for 2024 as this falls in the May half term. The field and hall are available, but no organised activities will take place. (see Website for more details: Inbetweeners Miserden).
- Camper’s Guide will be emailed out for every Summer and weekend camp this year confirming specific camp information and with helpful checklists and top tips.
- Prices for next year were decided and we have tried to keep the cost down for campers. With inflation running at 9% in September, Weekend Camp charges have been increased 5% and Summer camp charges have risen less than 5%.
- A new contractor position of Logistics Manager was created combining the 2 roles of Provisions Manager and some of the Sites Managers roles. This is advertised within this issue of Extent.
- Agreed to look into options to change the end of the financial year (currently 31 August) to give Kerstin, Admin manager, more time to deal with camp payments before year-end accounts preparation.
- The AGM will be a hybrid meeting this year – in person and online attendance, to help more Governing members attend.

Folk Camps Party Band: A Year in Summary

In case you haven't heard, the "FOLK CAMPS PARTY BAND" was set up in response to Council's request in 2017 for projects which would fulfil the charitable aims of folk camps. The idea of the band was to promote Folk Camps to the festival-going public as well as to educate and encourage a new generation of Folk Camp musicians.

The band consists of a core of professional musicians with others, including children and young people, who together make up a 22-piece ceilidh band. If you haven't seen or heard the band, there are videos on the Folk Camps website as well as on Facebook and Instagram. What an incredible summer we have had! To have 'headlined' the Ceilidhs at Chippenham, Cambridge and Towersey Festivals is an amazing honour and achievement for us. Images and videos of the band have been used by these festivals widely on social media, on their websites and even briefly on BBC reports of Cambridge Folk Festival!

Our sincere hope is that this exposure will continue to help put Folk Camps on the map, encourage past campers to return and new people to try it out. As well as the promotion side of things we are also thrilled that our members are obviously gaining so much in terms of education and experience. We have had several members playing professionally for ceilidhs with other bands, one became an apprentice musician at camp this year (and did brilliantly), while another has used Party Band material in an arrangement for their music degree.

A number of our younger members have been motivated to work hard to improve their playing by taking extra lessons. The general standard of musicianship in the band has increased massively and five of the teenagers who were in the band at the beginning have decided to pursue a career in music. The enthusiasm, support and community spirit of the band is an essential part of what we do. I think this energy is part of what has made us so successful. It's a tangible thing that people want to be a part of. I know that the family and friends of the members have also benefited from this and are all more interested in playing, dancing and of course, coming to camp.

I'm thrilled to say that 2024 is also looking exciting for us with definite bookings at Sidmouth Festival and Towersey Festival. We are still waiting on quite a few other possibilities so watch this space! Unfortunately running a band of this size is very expensive! The payment we receive from our festival appearances doesn't begin to cover the cost of running the band. Whilst we are incredibly grateful to Folk Camps for the financial support they offered in the beginning, this is no longer an option. We now have to find ways of supplementing our income in order to keep the band afloat. We are doing this in a number of ways:



- By recording and notating all parts and having zoom meetings we now make do with just 1 weekend of face to face rehearsal each year.
- As part of our rehearsal weekend, we held a public ceilidh in Byfield near Daventry, This was a great success – we managed to raise money to help fund the rehearsal as well as to promote Folk camps to a captive audience. We were particularly grateful to those Folk Campers who came along to support us, some of whom travelled a very long way! We hope to make this an annual event so please come and support us next year if you can.
- Another source of income which we hope will expand is from our Kofi Page <https://ko-fi.com/folkcampspartyband>. Your contribution, whether it's a one-off payment or a regular subscription is invaluable. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts and hope to make you feel proud to be a part of our journey.



Folk Camp Poetry

Song Circle

Familiar sounds in a circle

Moving around.

Traditional tunes mingle

With new words from

Old and young.

The certainty of life

Revels in the rhythm.

Community gathers;

To hear The Sound of Silence...and harmony

Performance rotates.

360 Degrees of evening ritual.

Cocoa

Sweet and hot;

A comforting treat

Of warmth.

Chocolatey sensation

Sliding down your throat.

Goodness knows how good it tastes,

When cold in a tent.

Describing Folk Camp

A place familiar

But nomadic in nature

A camp set up with

Structure, rhythm, and music

Re- emerging as....

our home for summer.

New surroundings to explore,

New friends to meet,

Old friends to greet.

Every member has a role to play..

and a place to stay.

Tunes emerge, dancers surge,

And fill the space with laughter and joy.

