

# **SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING**



**WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH  
SOCIETY GROUPS & CLASSES**

**Society for International  
Folk Dancing**

**1946 - 1996**

**West Midlands Branch  
and Society Groups**



**Contributions by Group Leaders,  
Secretaries and Members**

**Edited by G. Sweetland**

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## Foreword

Our groups and classes have made a large contribution to the Society's growth in the past, and the total gain is much more than the sum of their individual achievements because we are all working towards a common goal.

We in the West Midlands formed our first SIFD group, called Selpar, in 1973 and from then, to the founding of the Heart of England and Arden Groups and ultimately the acceptance by the Society of this, their first branch area, the aims of the Society have been foremost in our minds.

It is a truism that great oaks from little acorns grow, and the West Midlands groups have certainly found that the 'oak' of a Branch structure is very advantageous. It allows amalgamation or group independence as appropriate, and flexibility of purpose, whether group intentions are aimed at 'sociability' or 'workshop' activities and meetings. It allows individual members to attend groups or classes for different personal reasons and gives them a choice of 'approach'. It provides a sound financial basis on which to build further, by helping to finance workshops and residential weekends and it creates many more opportunities for 'exposure' than a single group could achieve. Also, by affiliating to the regional Movement and Dance Associations, as in the West Midlands, groups can be advised of dance activities in other areas.

Of course, in other parts of the country, many groups are too distant from each other to co-operate in this way, and it must be said that in spite of this much has been achieved by hard work and inspiration. Perhaps, however, in the future, other groups will find they can act together in a Branch structure, as the groups here in the heart of England have done, and make international folk dance better known and appreciated by a wider public.

Sybil Chapman

## Preface

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Society for International Folk Dancing I was asked to write a short history of the Society. It was very much a personal recollection and taken largely from articles which had appeared in the SIFD News. It was then suggested that when our 50th anniversary came around in 1996 the opportunity should be taken to produce a similar publication about the West Midlands Branch and our groups and classes.

I have included the histories of the Harrow Green, Richmond and Croxley Green Groups as, although now defunct, they added much to the stature of the Society, and to use a well-worn cliché, they handed on the torch.

The Society's success in attracting group affiliations over the last ten years has been outstanding. We now have over 60 entries in our group list and clearly space would not allow featuring all of them in one publication. In the event, however, not all the groups submitted material for publication, so I have been able to use all the contributions, more or less in their entirety.

Reading them, has made me very much aware of all the hard work needed to establish so many folk dance groups in so many places throughout the country.

For the Society itself, Janet Woolbar and Jill Bransby have outlined the difficulties and successes of the last ten years and our acting chairperson, Jeanette Hull, has brought us up to date.

I would like to thank everyone who has provided material and I hope it is some recompense for them to know that their stories will be part of the Society's history.

George Sweetland

# Reports from the Chair

## Janet Woolbar 1986 - 1991

As I took over the chairmanship, plans were being finalized for the 40th Anniversary in 1986. During the year many groups organized special events, but the central celebrations were focused on one weekend in London - May 10th and 11th - a concentrated programme to encourage members from far and wide to attend. The Saturday started with a Dance Swap at Cecil Sharp House, then continued with a grand dance at Porchester Hall. Nearly every affiliated and associated group of the SIFD was represented and many members from early days joined us. The weekend was brought to an original conclusion on the Sunday by a boat trip down the Thames with the deck cleared for dancing all the way, followed by dancing on the Embankment on our return. This event was so popular that it was repeated in 1991 to celebrate the 45th anniversary.

Despite the sense of unity in celebrating this special occasion there was increasing concern about dwindling support for regular activities, notably the monthly dances. Several reasons were put forward for this, and several remedies suggested - a host to welcome newcomers and visitors, season tickets to encourage people to commit themselves to regular attendance and a new look to the programmes by having a "flavour of the month" emphasizing one country or region, or by replacing an individual MC by a group or class. Of these the last was the most successful as it tended to introduce a more varied selection of dances and involved a core of support from the group concerned. The occasional Beginners' Dances, more acceptably titled International Barn Dances were also reinstated at which many dances were called and walked through to encourage newcomers.

An additional crisis also disrupted the monthly dances and day courses when the EFDSS closed Cecil Sharp House at the end of 1986 due to financial difficulties, and it was unavailable for three years. The final Sunday dance in that November was led by Fiona Howarth who with typical sense of drama requested all participants to wear black, with a splash of colour



to represent hope. We were fortunate to find a new venue for the Sunday dances at the YWCA in Great Russell Street, and apart from two months when we danced at Baden Powell House, the Sunday dances continued at the YWCA until 1990 when the fate of Cecil Sharp House was resolved, and it was once more available for hire. The Saturday day courses also needed a new home, and thanks to connections through the Yugoslav group, we were able to move to the St. Paul's Community Centre near Lisson Grove, with only a short disruption in the monthly programme.

The retrospective display of photographs and memorabilia at the 40th Anniversary celebrations compiled by Will Green also raised the need for an archivist to preserve the history of the SIFD and in 1987 Tony Latham agreed to take this on. It had also been realized for some time that the Society's music collection was a valuable asset, and very vulnerable when largely concentrated in the hands of one person, SIFD band leader Wilf Horrocks. So we were very pleased when he agreed to publish the notation of one or two dances each month in the SIFD News. This has continued, thus safeguarding the material, and making it available to many more people. The safeguarding of dance material within the society was also considered, and by general consent it was decided that video was the most suitable medium, and procedures were put in place to record dances taught at summer schools and day courses. These are now kept for the Society's records, and are made available to participants of the courses.

1987 saw the 14th and 'final' summer school organized at Swansea by Jack Richardson. It provided an exceptionally varied programme of dances from Sardinia, Norway and Bulgaria, plus of course all the attendant activities for which summer schools had become renowned. There was of course concern over the future of summer schools and we were very grateful when a group of younger members, led by Julian Sinton, agreed to organize the next course at Aberystwyth. This time the programme included Mexican, Armenian and a general course, with some new innovations such as afternoon workshops in music, costume and fan dancing. It was a very successful venture but sadly one they did not feel they could afford the time to repeat, so it was with great relief that we accepted an offer from

Dawn and Paul Webster to organize the next course at York.

Another innovation in our 40th Anniversary year was the series of performances by various groups in the Victoria Embankment Gardens. The gardens owned by Westminster Council contained a small stage practically under the arches of Charing Cross Station, and Kay Kedge discovered that this stage was available free for performances at lunch times and weekends. Seventeen groups took advantage of this opportunity during the anniversary year, and thanks to Kay's organization many have continued each year since, apart from one year when the stage was being rebuilt and improved. This has been a good opportunity to publicize the society as also is participation in folk festivals. The SIFD has had close connections during this period with international festivals at Eastbourne and at Sidmouth where we were able to run workshops and participate in displays. The involvement at Eastbourne has increased through the years, but sadly due to reorganization of the festival at Sidmouth our participation there has dwindled. Of course, the most prominent international festival in Britain is the Llangollen Eisteddfod, and for many years we were pleased that Lucile Armstrong was one of the adjudicators of the dance competition. We were all sad when she died at the end of 1987, aged 87. She had taught us much about the roots and traditions of folk dance, and had introduced most of our repertoire of Portuguese and Spanish dances. We were very pleased when negotiations were completed to sponsor the third dance prize at Llangollen in her memory.

In 1991 financial restrictions in the ILEA led to all adult education dance classes being demoted to workshops. This affected all the classes in the London area, and meant that although the authority continued to provide a venue for classes, they no longer paid either the tutor or musicians. Fortunately all the SIFD teachers involved continued to give their services free, so no class had to close, and at least the reduced fee charged to the students made the courses more affordable so numbers have been maintained.

During this time all the local education authorities have become more stringent in their requirements for the accreditation of teachers, so it has become increasingly important to set up a scheme for training new teachers. The SIFD teachers'

syllabus was brought up to date in 1987, including provision for a teacher's certificate for S.E. European countries, and was revised again in 1991. It is encouraging that many younger members who gained their qualification are already putting their skills to good use.

## **Jill Bransby 1992 - 1995**

The keynote for 1992 was stringency as it became apparent that our financial position was very precarious and that we were eating into our reserves. Without positive action we would have lasted about two years more and would not have reached our 50th year. The committee worked very hard changing procedures to save money on administration and publicity, and attempted to introduce a budgeting system with detailed forecasts so that we could manage our limited resources to the best effect. With the additional help of donations, increased subscriptions, sales of a cheaply produced new tape (C8) which used some recycled and repackaged material aimed at a new market, we could see a huge improvement in our financial position by 1994.

Activities were not curtailed. Two Summer Schools were held in York in 1992 and 1994, ably run by Dawn and Paul Webster, at the lovely campus of the College of Ripon and St. John. At the first we studied Swedish, Romanian and Israeli dances and at the second, Italian, South American and Bulgarian. Jack Richardson organized a Swansea Reunion in 1995 which was blessed by the wonderful summer weather. Groups have continued to dance at the Victoria Embankment Gardens, and a landmark of 10 years of performances at this venue was reached in 1995. Our involvement with the Eastbourne Festival has increased during this period and we now run the International social events and workshops and have some input in the International Team events.

Under the CCPR banner, the Society presented displays, workshops and manned stands at Dance World '94 and '95 at the Barbican and Olympia respectively - in 1996 we will be at Wembley! We also took part in Ballroom Blitz at the Festival

Hall and various other regional dance events. The big event in 1995 was the Spotlight on Dance which celebrated the CCPR's 60th Anniversary at the Royal Albert Hall. Our item, a Romanian sequence called Hai Le Joc, was skilfully produced by Frances Horrocks and rehearsals for the eleven participating groups took place in Birmingham.

The West Midlands Branch celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 1993 at Avoncroft College and the Society held its AGM in Birmingham in December of that year. Many activities such as day courses and dances take place in London, but there are many other events which our groups run in other areas. There have been dances, safaris, day and weekend courses, weekends away and demonstrations all over the country during this period. Our teachers have continued to travel to teach many groups.

Our success as an umbrella organization has increased with more groups than ever allied to the Society (63 in 1994/95). The Committee has been considering how we can use this great strength to enable growth and further development of the Society, following a Strategy review carried out in 1993. Whether this will involve more devolution in the future is uncertain but I do think that more awareness of the importance of the work of the Society is needed at the grassroots level. We do matter, we are still here 50 years on, and with your help we will continue to flourish. Congratulations to all who have played a part in our history and may our future be golden!

## **Jeanette Hull - 1996**

### **The Golden Anniversary Year**

From the original small London-based dance club we are now a national society with more than 60 classes and groups around the country. Although 640 may seem like a small membership, the total number of people dancing regularly in the groups and classes is estimated at nearly 2000 - and another 6000 or more watch our performances or join in just once a year at public events.

1996 has seen anniversary dances around the country, with the summer school giving an opportunity to mark the exact

date of the Society's foundation with a specially decorated cake. A tape of seventeen of the Society's favourite dances was produced this year, under the title 'Fifty Dancing Years'.

All of this has happened through the efforts of successive generations of teachers, group leaders, committee members and helpers who were willing to give their time to keep the Society going - we owe them all a big vote of thanks.



We're on in 2 minutes,  
and please remember  
if you're odd...

How do you  
suppose they tell  
the  
difference?



# West Midlands Branch

## **'Selpar', 'Heart of England' & 'Arden' Groups**

International Folk Dancing in Birmingham dates back to the late 1960's when Fred Steed ran a night school class in Handsworth Wood. When this folded, Bob and Pam Kimmins tried to start a new group at Kings Heath but this unfortunately fell victim to the power cuts of the "three day week." Sybil Chapman herself also taught a class for a while at the Birmingham Athletic Institute. But International Folk Dancing can really be said to have taken off in Birmingham when Sybil launched Selpar at Selly Park in September 1973. A concerted attempt to establish SIFD influence in the Midlands was instigated by Margery Latham during her Chairmanship of the Society; in 1974 she came to Selpar's inaugural dance and from then on influenced every effort in the international dance world by the Midlands. Many of the founder members have since done much to promote the cause of 'International' and to spread knowledge of the Society.

During the next five years many of the SIFD specialist leaders, including Ken Ward, Betty Harvey, Gaye Saunte, Fiona Howarth and Peter Oakley, visited Birmingham to give day courses. Eventually, in September 1978, another international dance group was started at Simon Digby School in Chelmsley Wood, moving the following year to Lyndon Schools, Solihull, and later becoming the Heart of England Group. This came about partly through attendance at many courses in London, Bristol, Manchester, etc., as well as prompting by Doreen Bramick, a cheerful and inspirational dancer who bubbled with keenness and attracted many people to the then monthly dances, 80 or more people being a common sight during the short time before her untimely death. Heart of England has continued to flourish, for a long time under the joint leadership of Rod Perkins and Alf Garton, and now being very ably and enthusiastically guided by Elisabeth Hobro with occasional contributions from individual members.

More day courses, demonstrations, safaris and sponsored dances were held throughout 1978 and 1979 and in October of that year 'Birmingham' became the West Midlands (and to date,

only) Branch of the SIFD.

In the following years, many more day courses were held, too numerous to name, but together resulting in a huge increase in Birmingham's repertoire of dances, and soon, in late 1984, the Arden Group, under the leadership of Grace Pittman, was inaugurated. Another innovation in 1984 was the production of the first Branch Newsletter, which has appeared annually ever since.

The three groups of the West Midlands Branch sent several dancers to join other members of the Society in the celebration of the CCPR's Golden Jubilee at the Royal Albert Hall in April 1985, and were also much involved in the 1995 Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Demonstration highlights in the Midlands have been for the West Midlands Movement and Dance Association biennial festivals, firstly at Birmingham's Central Hall, and, since its closure, in Wolverhampton and Solihull.

Mention must also be made of the biennial Branch weekends away, at venues ranging from Shropshire to Abergavenny and, the latest, at Dovedale in March 1996. These are always very popular, attracting old and new Midlands members and Society friends from further afield - including Pembrokeshire!

Currently, under the Chairmanship of Malcolm Cox, the Branch has continued to maintain the high standards of its founders. Among those who have made notable contributions to these, to name only a few, are Alf and Peggie Garton, Rod and Barbara Perkins, Grace Pittman, Dennis Hunt, Leslie Haddon (now in London), Juliet Mackintosh and, of course, Sybil Chapman.

Mavis Lowe



*It's quite logical, really...*

# Group Histories

## **Harrow Green International Folk Dance Group**

As Harrow Green has figured so largely in the Society's past, I feel a few words about the group is justified here.

The Society's first affiliation in 1950; indeed, the constitution was changed at Harrow Green's request to admit them and with a membership of some 100 to the Society's 200 or so, it was of some moment. Many of the Society's hardest workers began their dancing at Trumpington Road School.

Movement away from East London in the 50's led to ex-members founding groups in the Essex area, including Havering which continued to function until this year. Together with problems with public transport, this loss of members resulted in a move to Oxford House in Bethnal Green in an effort to step up recruitment. Membership continued to fall however and the group became almost moribund, but with Roland Minton's help and the inspiring teaching of traditional English dances by Peter Oakley, appointed as permanent teacher, I managed to keep the group going for another twelve years. Apart from other activities we took part in several festivals in France and in the 1971 Llangollen Eistoddfod. It was with great sadness that we finally had to concede that even with the enthusiasm of Kelsey Blundell, our then teacher, we would have to bring the curtain down in 1982.

George Sweetland



## **Richmond International Folk Dance Group**

Noel Hale, known to many SIFD members in the 50's as director of music at the Canford Summer Schools, had for some years thought of forming an International Folk Dance Group in Richmond when he discussed the idea with Bert Price in December 1958. As the result of various meetings held that winter Margaret Colato (now Webb), Joan Walton (now Guest) and Simon Guest were invited to be instructors of the proposed group.

The group opened officially and formally on 27th February 1959 and due to good advance publicity was attended by 28 adults and 8 children - a very encouraging start.

From the beginning it was planned to hold a children's class early in the evening and follow this with the adult instruction. This system was used throughout the life of the group and was found to be quite practical although making a long evening for the instructors.

During those early days at the Cee-Ell School of Dancing a great deal of hard dancing was accomplished and a group spirit was born.

After a successful first year the group reopened in a larger hall and the possibility of providing a team for the Society's Albert Hall show gave a welcome sense of purpose to the group.

In addition to taking part in two "See How They Dance" productions the group gave demonstrations in aid of World Refugee Year. Such demonstrations usually featured Basque dances, a speciality of the group, and both the adults and the children took part.

The class disbanded in late 1961 when the teachers had to relocate. During this relatively short life 62 different dances were taught, 66 regular meetings were held and the adult class performed 700 dances - the children, 565. Most frequently performed was Neapolitan Tarantella; those were the days!

Simon Guest

## **Zivko Firfov Group**

The group has its origins in the Balkan class taught by the late Philip Thornton when the Society centred its activities at the Carlyle School in Hortensia Road, Chelsea. When the Society transferred all its classes to the Adult Education Authority Philip felt unable to submit to the bureaucratic requirements and so I was asked to take over the class. It remains a class despite its title, and the original conception of performing authentic folk dances, avoiding choreography whenever possible, remains.

Philip encouraged me to go to Yugoslavia, and armed with a letter of introduction to Zivko Firfov, who was director of the Ethnomusical department of the Folklore Institute of Macedonia in Skopje, I made my first visit to Macedonia in 1957. Zivko and I became friends and he helped me a great deal on my regular visits over the years, and arranged for me to study the dances. He also helped to start the costume collection because I did not want to perform regional dances in public in mixed costumes.

The group flourished - it had a committee and everyone was involved in its activities as far as it was practicable. It established a collection of some 150 dances from Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia - a large collection of recorded music both private and commercial and sets of regional costumes, both group (some costumes were given to us in Yugoslavia in addition to our purchases) and those in individual ownership. Some are very old and very valuable. We had several names - Slava (when dancing Croat) - and Opanki, but eventually Zivko agreed to become our president. From time to time we had a music group playing traditional instruments, but musicians are by nature nomadic individuals!

On two occasions we were invited to appear at folk festivals in Macedonia - in 1971 in Skopje and in 1976 in Bitola where we were the first foreign group to appear. We were treated as a Macedonian group, and were invited to several villages. On both occasions we appeared on TV, and had coverage in the newspapers.

The group pioneered Yugoslav dances in this country and travelled a great deal in the 1960's to the 80's. We organized

workshops and concerts for teacher training colleges and clubs and appeared at various festivals. We also had good links with the Yugoslav Embassy and agencies, and took part annually at the celebration of the Yugoslav National Day.

We are currently recording our dances on video; these are for the use of the group and are not intended for commercial use. The making of some commercial dance cassettes with a booklet is under consideration.

Despite the turmoil in the former Yugoslavia we seem to be able to remain on good terms with the London based nationals of the new republics - we can remain impartial and non-aligned politically.

Croat and Serbian dances seem to have been neglected for some time, the group hopes to remedy this imbalance.

Ken Ward

## **Folkestone District National Dance Group**

Where to begin? In 1816 Jane Austen wrote, *'It may be possible to do without dancing entirely. Instances have been known of young people passing many, many months successively without being at any ball of any description, and no material injury accrue either to body or mind - but when a beginning is made - when felicities of rapid motion have once been, though slightly, felt - it must be a very heavy set that does not ask for more.'*

Looking through scrapbooks and papers reminding me of costumes, demonstrations, parties, Royal Albert Hall, Handbells, Hooden Horse, Morris, Castles, Cymbal, Bonfires, Maypoles, Hops, Processions, Polish Harvest Festival, Czech Fish Ceremony, Austrian Silk Scarves and Braces, Swiss Cowbells, Swedish Sleigh Bells, Macedonian Tupan and Zurla, Firfov's sandals, Romanian Pottery, Cathedrals, Bagpipes, Giant Processional Figures, Wine, I find an SIFD programme for "See How They Dance" 1963. So many memories!

The Folkestone District National Dance Group was formed in 1950, led and organized by its founder, Mrs. Olive Field (who is still a member). The group affiliated to the SIFD and the EFDSS and was responsible for the formation of the

East Kent Morris Men and the revival of the Hooden Horse in 1953. The Hooden Horse is one of the oldest survivals of Kent's pagan past. It lately accompanied the carter and waggoners carolling or handbell ringing at Christmas.

In the beginning an enthusiastic teacher approached the Kent Education Committee with a proposal for an International Folk Dance class specifically for teachers, which the Committee agreed to sponsor, and later the class was opened to everyone. We now meet every Tuesday in the United Reformed Hall, Folkestone except for Christmas, Easter and three months summer holiday. For the last few years we have been kindly invited to Ann and John Whittaker's home during this time, when we polish our Kentish Hops.

We still maintain our English and International interests. Our badge is a Tudor Rose supporting a pair of buckled shoes. Visits too, from Europe still continue although not as regularly. Evra Jordan and Christine Hall are currently responsible for our teaching sessions and we are lucky enough to always have a live band. Our members can be found at SIFD day courses and summer schools, the most recent being the Jacy Tacy day, Eastbourne and York.

The first demonstration took place in 1951 for a local WI in a garden, since then we have danced in castles, cathedrals, halls, old folks homes, football grounds, cliff tops and, of course, the Royal Albert Hall. Recently we have been leading young French children in the delights of English folk dance at a local language school (an experience for both us and them) and also Austrian trainee teachers.

Our first visit overseas was with ANSCA - Sports & Culture Association (we were the Culture!) to Middleburg our Dutch twin town on the island of Walcheren. We took English dances, Handbells, Morris and a Scottish Pipe Band. On a return visit the Dutch Folk Dancers came from Goes, a neighbouring Walcheren town. Their leader invited us to their International Festival. We attended this subsequently and there met, among other groups, the Salzburg Volkshochschule. Then followed various interchanges to Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland and Jugoslavia culminating in our own Folkestone International Folklore Festival 1961 and alternate years until the Falklands War. Our festival is another

story, suffice it to say that we learnt many dances, some songs, customs, music and above all made many friends. Private and family visits still continue. We have some experience of radio and film work. In Prague the Russian director said, 'Stop! I have no more film'. Last year Evra Jordan appeared on Polish Television comparing Easter Customs.

This year we have welcomed six new members and are therefore still looking forward to many more years of International Dance.

Olive Field  
Barbara Bradford

## **Croxley Green International Song and Dance Group**

In 1951 Kathleen Munroe-James, a teacher at Malvern Way Infants School, at Croxley Green near Watford, started an International folk song and dance group for the children at the school. Later Kathleen organized one week courses at several venues including one at Duntisbourne Youth Hostel which was attended by Alison Whisker (née Poyton) now a member of the High Wycombe group. At that time we were living at Stanmore, and when Kathleen started an adult group at Malvern Road School in 1962 my wife and I joined. Both the adult and junior classes continued to meet until, very sadly, Kathleen died in 1971.

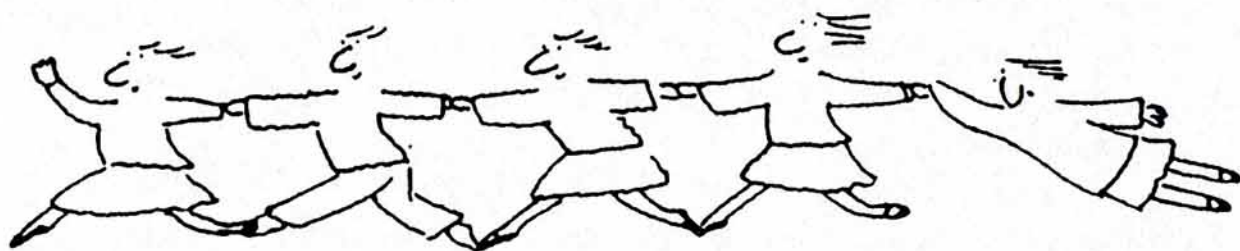
Kathleen made an important contribution to SIFD affairs including being the secretary for a short time and helping at the summer schools at Swansea. She was especially interested in introducing and promoting dances from Majorca and Mexico and on several occasions arranged for Alan Stark, an accomplished exponent of the dances from these countries, to visit Croxley Green for teaching sessions. Kathleen also played a major role in the "See How They Dance" festivals at the Royal Albert Hall. In the 1963 festival children from her school performed a suite of dances from Lithuania and in 1964 she was one of the four producers. Her adult group danced a very lively tarantella and in the Mexican 'Los Viejotas' the children mimicked the movements of old men.

In the last Albert Hall show in 1966, Kathleen was co-producer with Ken Ward and she also danced in the Polish item. Her young class did dances from Lithuania while the adults performed Mexican dances including the slow and graceful dance for women 'La Sandunga' which later became a favourite demonstration dance. As part of the Mexican Suite I well remember the small figure of a fifteen year old girl, Sarah Buckley, standing alone in the centre of the vast Albert Hall singing 'Ciclito Lindo'. Music for the show was provided by the Rickmansworth Grammar School Band under their music teacher David Peacock. Through Kathleen's initiative, and as the Croxley Green Folk Dance Band, they recorded several of the Society's records.

As a consequence of the group's many demonstrations and performances Kathleen built up an extensive wardrobe of costumes of many countries. These were made under her direction by the needlewomen amongst the adult class and parents of the children. Also there were many accessories such as the gourds made of papier maché for 'La Sandunga'.

The interest which Kathleen promoted in International folk dancing was far reaching and still survives. Several of today's dancers and workers for the cause came either directly or indirectly from Kathleen's group. Judith Payling (present treasurer of the SIFD), Kay Kedge, Audrey Whiteley, Mona Graham and Jennifer Cant all took their first steps at Croxley Green. Shortly after Kathleen died I formed a group at Stanmore where Alan and Margaret Morton started dancing. Joyce Sharp's group is also a direct descendant of the original Croxley Green Group. Thus, with only a short break, Croxley Green has been a centre for international folk dancing for almost 45 years.

Ken Poyton



*The second part is a bit faster.*

## **Barlow International Folk Dance Group**

Barlow rose, like the phoenix, from the ashes of a group led by Colonel Henry Baldrey and his wife Pat.

The Baldreys held a class every Monday except when it was a holiday, at Trafford Public Hall and they also published a monthly magazine, 'The Folkdancer', as well as organizing exhibitions for several local dance groups including Russian émigré and Israeli groups. Initially these shows were held at the Kings Hall, Belle Vue, which was an Albert Hall in miniature and ideal for these shows.

But in 1963, the cost of hiring the hall was raised so that it was impractical to continue and so the old Trafford class had to close, but fortunately this was only temporary as Alan Williams had suggested the formation of a new group at the Barlow Hall Evening Centre and it was decided to include the name of Barlow in the group's title.

Kathleen Dickinson

It was in September 1965 that Alan Williams started his evening class along with Mavis Archer. They were both members of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society demonstration team and while touring the continent had learned several international dances, mainly German in the early days. Eventually they decided it was not right to keep these dances to themselves and to start a class.

It was a coincidence that it was so soon after the closure of Colonel Baldrey's class but as Alan had already been asked by the Colonel to take over the teaching of his class, there was no problem. Many of the members of the old class joined the new group and they included Alma Barber who continually tried to persuade me to come along and try it. My many other commitments made this difficult but I finally went to the last class of the 1965/66 season - and waited impatiently for the following September to come.

The class was already affiliated to the SIFD and Margery Latham took an interest in our welfare and came to teach day courses for us several times. Ken Ward also came in November 1967 and introduced us to the delights of Balkan dancing which

was very new to us then.

We were asked, about this time, by the SIFD and through Margery Latham, if we would consider becoming a branch. This was discussed by our committee and although we were honoured to be asked we declined, partly because our membership fees were a lot lower than the SIFD. Thus the honour of being the first SIFD Branch went to Birmingham.

I am not sure of the sequence of events in 1968 but problems with the local authority over non-Manchester residents attending the class led us to become independent, but we were for the moment allowed to use a small hall. I had worked with Veronica Hartt before and knew that she had experience of stage dancing and asked her to come along. Frank Dowling came to Manchester to study music and joined the group. He became interested in Balkan dancing and complemented Alan's Western European repertoire.

In 1970 the school required our hall for a registered evening class so we moved to the hall of the Wilbraham Road Congregational Church in Chorlton, but kept the Barlow name.

In the summer of 1971 we ran our first dance at Rivington Old Tithe Barn, near Bolton, and this became a popular annual fixture for about ten years; starting with a 'hike up the pike' and an impromptu dance around the beacon before a hot-pot supper in the Barn followed by social dancing for all, including the general public.

That same year in November, Veronica and I started a class in Wythenshawe at Terry Dowling's Social Centre. Later, Veronica ran it alone and after several metamorphoses it is still running, now as a demonstration group, in Withington, with many of the dancers belonging to both groups.

In 1972 Alan told us that he had been asked to lead an International dance class at the Billingham Festival and wanted our support. In the event he had to decline, as he was beginning to have back trouble, but Veronica and I went anyway and have been going there nearly every year since. Alan found he could no longer teach and Veronica and I took over the teaching with the help of other members, while Alan was made President of the group.

Since then the group has been lucky to have had the expertise of George Wignall, who had learned many dances in



the USA and eventually went back there because his wife, Andea, was American. Then Enid Mitchell took over the teaching and her total recall of obscure dances was amazing but unfortunately she too developed back trouble. However, by that time, Julie Korth had joined us on her removal to the north-west and she became our instructor, also restarting a children's class which Alan and his wife had at one time run. May she long continue!

Philip E. Lloyd

## **Merton Park International Folk Dance Group**

Joy and Steve Steventon together with their children Wendy and Philip moved to the Merton Park area in 1966. By 1970, having found no folk dance group in the area, they decided to start their own. Fortuitously, Wilf Horrocks became available and was willing to play for them, and the local adult education director was sympathetic to the opening of a class. Thus "Merton Park" started that September in a local school with 12 people. Over the years the class grew in size and became "advanced" so that Under 30's and Over 30's beginners' classes became viable. Currently there are classes at Merton, Cheam, Sutton and Kingston, with a total membership of about 100.

In the early years sets of costumes, Swedish, English and Italian were made for the demonstration teams and many members made their own personal costumes from other countries. Demonstrations were given locally to social groups, church and scout groups and dances were run for local organisations on the style of international barn dances with a demonstration team. A specialist Spanish group was also formed where jotás, Andalucian and other dances from Lucile Armstrong's repertoire were learnt. Costumes were made and Spanish dances performed at various events. The group also took part in the Jubilee year events, in the Albert Hall shows and in events at Sidmouth. Each year in June the Group goes on "Safari" with the Woodvale Group. Members and friends tour around Surrey, Sussex or Kent and dance on village greens, outside pubs and similar venues. In July, Merton usually combines with the

Woodvale and Iberian groups to put on a performance at the Embankment Gardens. In all these events music is ably provided by Wilf Horrocks and his accordion.

Members have also done their bit in helping to run the SIFD by providing a chairman, secretaries and members for the main and subcommittees.

Time, though, eventually catches up with us all, and teaching of the Merton class has passed to Philip Steventon and his wife Brenda, who also started the classes at Sutton and Kingston. 'Mum' continues to teach and 'Dad' plays the accordion at Cheam.

This October we all look forward to participating fully in the SIFD's 50th Anniversary Dance.

Charles (Steve) Steventon

## **Woodvale International Folk Dance Group**

Congratulations to the SIFD on their 50th Anniversary.

In the early days of the Society, Ian and Jean Willson and Ernie and Eileen Nolan used to go to the monthly dances at Cecil Sharp House and they were also involved with the Harrow Green Group.

They were very keen but when they all moved to Kent found they didn't like all the travelling involved when attending dance events in London. There were barn dances in the area but no 'International'. I cannot trace the date but there was a Society safari in Kent and a lot of the 'natives' liked what they saw. Ian, Jean, Ernie and Eileen took the plunge and held an international dance in Borough Green. Many SIFD members supported the dance and it was a great success. There was plenty of local interest and so, tentatively, in November 1967 they started Tuesday night meetings. Such was the response that by January annual memberships were being issued. Help with music and teachers was given by the SIFD and Harrow Green and Ian could play the 'squeeze box'.

The four founders continued to run the group until Ian and Jean moved to Harrogate leaving Ernie and Eileen to run things on their own. They still attended the SIFD Sunday dances but now they brought 'Woodvale' with them. The Society liked

seeing the youngsters dancing and approached Ernie to run the January costume dance. A coach load came from Borough Green and the New Year costume dance with Ernie as MC became an annual event.

Throughout the history of Woodvale (30 years old in July 1998), we have received much assistance from the SIFD, their recognized teachers and from Harrow Green. In fact, two things have kept Woodvale going, the hard work of the committee and the encouragement and support of the Society.

We are still invited to run a dance at Cecil Sharp House once a year, usually in February or March. It is both an honour and daunting to be asked but very rewarding to receive words of thanks and approval at the end of the evening.

Nowadays Woodvale is very much involved with Merton Park and I have to single out for thanks Wilf Horrocks who has played for every one of our Spring and Autumn dances over the years. In fact we have made him an honorary life member of the group as a mark of our gratitude.

The SIFD does a wonderful job of co-ordinating all the various international folk dance groups around the country, and through its initiative many dances from all over the world will be preserved which otherwise might have been lost. The SIFD News is a vital organ for keeping in touch and up to date with events. Thank you, all who are involved with the News and with running the Society. Now go for the 'ton'!

David McKie

## **The London Turkish Group**

[Editor's Note : I understand from a conversation with Mavis Sayers that the founding of the Turkish Group was prompted by a chance meeting between Bert Price and Cengiz Karahan, its original teacher. This was followed in 1970 by several meetings at a school in Pimlico before the group became more formally established.]

The original teachers of the London Turkish Folklore Group included two brothers of the Karahan family, Cengiz and

Atila, both of whom were educated at the prestigious American University, Robert College, in Istanbul. The University has a highly regarded folklore faculty, covering both singing and dancing as well as the playing of traditional instruments.

Cengiz Karahan taught in the early days of the Group around thirty years ago and was joined by another Robert College graduate, Hamdi Ataoglu, playing saz and duval (folk drum) and other instruments as well as teaching. Both spoke excellent English.

Later Cengiz returned to Ankara and in 1971 one of his brothers Atila and his wife Aydan joined Hamdi in teaching the Group which met at the Gateway School, Lisson Grove. By now it had established itself as a class with talented Turkish teachers, who were good communicators, and live music and a good social and international atmosphere. As such, it attracted Turkish students resident in and around London as well as British and other nationals.

Hamdi was good at the dances from the Black Sea as well as Silifhe (wooden spoons) and dances from Gazi-Antep, whilst Atila was excellent on the really ancient Erzurum dances (such as Bas Bar and Ikinci Bar) from Eastern Turkey.

Lucile Armstrong encouraged these teachers and the class generally and attended the class into her eighties, after her hip replacement operations, and until her death. As students the teachers often stayed at her house.

Hilton Calpine also supported the group and encouraged other members. He had travelled across Turkey and made a collection of recordings, films and instruments, inspiring others to travel to Turkey and study its culture. He learned to speak Turkish fluently and to play the zurna. David Swinton played the duval, the two providing live and authentic music, an extremely good support for the group, until Hilton's sudden death.

In 1973, another graduate from Robert College, Sait Senfoglu joined Hamdi, and around this time the dance group from Robert College visited the UK and gave a spectacular performance at Cecil Sharp House. This was a great success and helped to make Turkish folk dance better known within the SIFD.

In 1974 Hamdi and Sait led the group in dancing at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod with both Turkish and

London performers. With Huseyin Turkmenler, another accomplished saz musician, Hamdi toured the UK as part of a Turkish folk music quartet. The group continued to attract Turkish musicians, often students studying in this country. At this period the group were still meeting at the Gateway School and enjoying a time of stability - 'It was like having a party every Thursday night'.

The Adult Education Authority of the then GLC gave publicity to the group in their prospectus as well as facilities for an end of term concert, which was well supported by the public, thus affording extra publicity. This was the time when Sait took over the teaching from Hamdi, who would come in from time to time to play the saz. Sait was assisted by other Turkish teachers including Halil Celebioglu from Ankara. Subsequently after Sait returned to Turkey the teachers included Atilla Altinoz and Omer Erdem. Atilla specializes in the Halay dances and also plays the duval and accordion (for Kafkas dances) and has taught at day courses and Omer is a very good exponent of the Sihfke dances. Ibrahim has been teaching the group over recent years and is a versatile teacher with a very good knowledge of the Kafkas dances.

With him we have performed at Guildford and Leicester Universities and at Imperial College, often with Turkish musicians, as well as the regular Victoria Embankment Gardens performances. This year we took part in the Muswell Hill Street Festival with a barbecue at Ibrahim's house afterwards. Nuhet Sakalle (who used to teach sometimes when she was last working here) is now back. She joined in the street festival with great enthusiasm almost as soon as she arrived and will be teaching this term.

We are still in touch with the Karahan family and Cengiz, our original teacher, visited the class last year.

We are still seeking to continue the philosophy of good enthusiastic Turkish teachers with teachers and musicians working together to create a good social atmosphere - not forgetting the visit to the pub afterwards!

Pauline Welch

## **Hursley International Folk Dancers**

Hursley International Folk Dancers otherwise known as HIFD, concentrates mainly on Balkan and Eastern European dances (in particular from Bulgaria, Romania, the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Greece and Israel), although some dances are included from Western and Northern Europe and other countries around the world. The club organizes several courses a year by visiting expert teachers from various countries.

HIFD is a subsection of the IBM Hursley Club and meets at the IBM Club House at Hursley Park a few miles south of Winchester: non-IBM guests are welcome to attend. Meetings run from 7.30 pm until 10.00 pm on Thursday evenings throughout the year. Courses are usually held during the day at weekends.

HIFD was founded in 1972 by Madeleine and Syd Chapman, following their return from the USA where they started folk dancing. They had found it an enjoyable way to spend an evening and meet other people with similar interests. Shortly afterwards, some of the members started to meet on a second evening in the week to learn and practise dances that were more difficult than those danced on the social evenings. This soon turned into a demonstration team which, over the years became a very successful performing group appearing at festivals and private functions all over the South of England. Due to the changing commitments of members the performing group is no longer operating. However the aim of the club is still to encourage people to enjoy folk dancing by being in contact with other people and sharing their experience of music and dance and to provide one of the more fulfilling and flexible ways to keep fit in today's world.

Terry Clowes

The club can always be contacted via the IBM Hursley Club, Hursley Road, Winchester, Hants., SO21 2JN Telephone: 01962 815933

## **Bristol International Folk Dance Group**

The Bristol group was founded in 1974. It came about after I had rediscovered International Folk Dancing at Swansea in 1971 and 1973: in desperation at having no access to International between summer schools, I wrote to the SIFD News appealing for advice and help. George Sweetland came to the rescue, offering to come and do a 'starter day course', and give us a basic repertoire of dances to work from.

I then took the bull by the horns and started a group - meeting monthly in the first year. I was appalled at the idea of actually teaching, but once we got going it was about bearable, with the encouragement and support of my friends. The class was fortnightly in the second year and then became a weekly Local Education Authority evening class. Since then we have never looked back (well, hardly ever!), with numbers steadily increasing. In the early days we struggled to reach the viable size for LEA support but now it is nearly always over 20 and sometimes over 25. Pat Skinner and Heather Strong, besides me and my husband Roger, were at that first day course and are still with us, as well as four others who joined the group between 1975 and 1980.

We used to do quite a few demonstrations, though invitations have fallen off lately (I wonder why?) On several occasions in the 70's and 80's Dennis Hunt and his family came and played for us at events including a memorable performance of Israeli dances at the Bristol Little Theatre. Other demonstrations that stay in the memory include the one in a field so big that our "coming on" music ran out before we got to the middle; the one where we had to remove empty cans from the grass before dancing; the one where children sitting on the wall above us pelted us with bits of grass and other rubbish; the one where the battery of our host's PA was running down and Windmill got slower and slower and deeper and deeper . . . . but they have all been fun.

Since that first day course we have had at least one each year, with many different teachers including Frances Horrocks, Sybil Chapman, Kelsey Blundell, Janet Woolbar and Garry Karner, all of whom helped us on more than one occasion. Since Anne Marshall took over organizing in 1993, courses have been

more frequent. Anne has also been the leading light in setting up an informal Balkan 'Tuesday Group' which was further boosted when James and Jacky Webb moved to Bristol. The success of the Tuesday group has enabled us to meet the needs of a strong band of Balkan enthusiasts, yet continue to offer a general class and go on bringing in new recruits.

In November 1995 we had a big 21st Anniversary Dance, with nearly 100 people, many in costume, as well as our own 'tame band'. It was a great success and we welcomed a number of our friends from other parts of the SIFD world, including George Sweetland and Frances Horrocks to both of whom we owe so much for our beginning. Now we wait to see whether there are another ten new enrolments in September, as there have been for the last two years. If so we shall be over-full, as many of last year's intake plan to re-enrol.

As I look back over 22 years of BIFD I feel a sense of satisfaction. We have had our difficult times, as well as joy and even excitement, but now the group seems well settled, in congenial premises in a local school, and is in good heart.

Hilda Sturge

## **Newport International Folk Dance Group**

[Editor's Note : In her letter Sue Clark has reminded me of her introduction to International folk dancing by Charles Collingwood at a Cecil Sharp House dance in 1954 when she was 'well and truly hooked' and of the many enjoyable times at dances at the Inns of Court and Floral Street, Society weekends at Dunford, Bisham Abbey, Summer Schools at Swansea and Albert Hall Festivals and at Harrow Green events. Now read on!]

When Vic and I were married I moved to Newport and imagined my dancing days were over, but it was not to be. They say that if one door closes another is opened. Soon the opportunity came for me to lead a class which had been doing a little Scottish dancing for the last twenty minutes of each session and permission was given to introduce International instead of Scottish.



It wasn't long before our class was taking part in local and county rallies but instead of a Keep Fit item we danced. Our first programme was Danish Schottische, Windmill and La Virginita. We wore simple patchwork skirts over leotards, matching head scarves, white socks and Keep Fit slippers.

The seeds were sown.

Shortly afterwards I opened an International Folk Dance class and after five weeks with only one pupil we closed. But the seeds had fallen on fertile soil and I was invited to run an eight week course for primary school teachers. At the end of the course two of the teachers, Nuns of St. Joseph, offered me the use of their school hall if I would start a group. They were sure they could get support. As a result, in September 1974, Newport International Folk Dance Group was born with Margery Latham, Irene Keywood, Kathy French and Derek Mulquin travelling down to give us support.

We have had our ups; we have had our downs; but mostly it has been ups.

I remember we danced for one W.I. group and received the magnificent sum of £5. We danced in the rain for Carnival, we danced in old people's homes, at motels for German and Russian nights and on TV. There was our first barn dance where bales of straw caused us to sneeze all the way through the evening. Sometimes the group had only six members and at others it could raise over 20 for a demonstration allowing us to show some of the bigger Swedish dances such as Vava Vadmal or Langdans fran Narke.

Regular contact was kept with our 'sister' group, the Bristol IFDG which Hilda Sturge had launched a couple of weeks after I launched Newport.

One year Sybil Chapman came down to give us a day of Hungarian dance and brought several of her Midlands group with her. That was our first contact with folk dancers beyond the Severn Bridge. As many of you will know there has been a steady stream of members attending workshops, courses and summer schools across the country ever since.

In 1968, three years after Vic and I left Newport, a daughter club was born in Pembrokeshire.

The circumstances were quite different. I had arranged for a Welsh clog dancer to perform at our village concert for the

NSPCC but a knee injury caused him to cancel. It was Vic's idea that I should try to find some dancers to fill in the ten minute spot. With great difficulty this was achieved and in October, wearing the Italian costumes which I possessed, we danced Sicilian Tarantella, Raksijaak and Fyrmannadans and received a tremendous reception. Pembrokehire IFDG was born. In preparing for the concert we rarely had more than two of us present at a time and it wasn't until the day of the concert itself that we had our fourth member. This was Mark Howells of Newport who happened to be spending the weekend in the area. Mark had learned the dances from Judith Morgan, also of Newport, who had checked the details with me over the phone.

PIFDG has always been small, often with only four members attending, and with a maximum, if we are lucky, of fifteen. This, of course, has influenced our programme. As a general rule the first half of every session is Israeli/Balkan and then, after our refreshment break, couple dances or small sets. Unfortunately we don't often get a chance to dance the many four couple sets available to us let alone the bigger dances.

Regularly our members join the Midlands Branch for weekends away and some of us are planning to go to London for the Golden Jubilee. Every Christmas we have a 'family and friends - bring a plate' dance party and every New Year a non-dancing dinner is held.

This year is our tenth birthday and a major celebration is planned. Meanwhile we shall continue dancing most weeks of the year and fulfilling our busy programme of dancing for those less fortunate and less healthy than ourselves.

Sue Clark

## **Rainmakers International Folk Dance Group**

The Rainmakers International Folk Dance Group started in Stevenage in September 1976 when the dancing of Mayim Mayim broke the drought. Needing a larger hall it moved to Letchworth in the early 80's.

Under the leadership of Jill Bransby and three other Chairmen and several hardworking committees the club has flourished. We have fifty-two paid-up members and an average attendance of twenty-nine people on Friday evening. I was astonished to find over a hundred dancing displays recorded in the club scrap book during the past ten years besides participation in various other events. I will mention in detail a few of the more memorable occasions since 1986.

On Sunday, May 3rd 1987 we were asked to dance on the terrace of the Barbican Centre, London, as part of a folk weekend. The first display went well but because dwellers in the surrounding flats complained about the music, before our second spot, when rain began to fall, we were asked to move inside - the only dance group to do so. We were sent up to the Conservatory and were delighted to find a large, appreciative audience had followed us.

The next notable display happened in April 1989 in Hemel Hempstead. It was memorable for a different reason. Whilst the display/joining-in session was going on a fight broke out amongst intruding drunken youths. It developed into a riot, but the Rainmakers finished their spot and went home when the police arrived. Jill was calling dances with beer cans flying passed her head.

Wearing their Dutch costumes a group of Rainmakers spent the whole of a cold March day in 1992 in Van Hague's Garden Centre, Ware, periodically giving displays of Dutch dances and earning a useful fee for club funds. As a result of this a small group was asked to dance at a Dutch wedding in Woking in May 1993. The team was treated to champagne and generally had a lovely time.

We are probably the only SIFD club to have learned the cancan (wearing outlandish costumes with 'HAPPY BIRTHDAY' spelled out on bottoms) to surprise two male Rainmakers on their birthdays in 1992 and 1993. Needless to say they were

astounded!

The group of Rainmakers involved will never forget the episode when they nearly appeared on London Weekend Television's 'Barrymore Show'. Jill was telephoned out of the blue and asked if we knew any German dances. Apparently the club had been seen at a Hitchin town twinning event. Jill agreed to the audition and set about finding enough dancers. A hasty rehearsal was held at Jill's house and within a week the team was on a bus going to the studio.

The audition went well. It took all day but the Rainmakers enjoyed the experience and filled in the time dancing to tapes. Jill had to sign a contract to promise, among other things, that our dancers would perform as required and also that the group would not undertake any more TV contracts in the meantime!

'The Bavarian Dancers' as they had been dubbed duly went to London again on February 22nd but this time the team had even less idea of what they were supposed to do. The Rainmakers then spent a tiring afternoon carrying out the choreographer's ideas that were frequently revised. Finally they ended up with Kreuz Koenig being danced to the Hammersmiths music and including some flying, the Hammersmiths, Steirigger and Untersteirrer Ländler danced to a polka and a routine of clapping stamping and pointing to the tunes of Anchors Aweigh and Tulips from Amsterdam with the Von Skrapps singers. Thoroughly confused the Rainmakers returned to Hitchin by 7.00 pm.

On Wednesday the party had to leave by 7.30 am to spend the whole day at the LWT studios on the South Bank. After some refreshment they were put through their paces and to their relief told that the Anchors Aweigh item would be omitted.

After lunch Jill was whisked away to talk to the writer in preparation for the interview with Michael Barrymore which also was rehearsed.

At the dress rehearsal they discovered that Anchors Aweigh was back in. Barrymore danced Untersteirrer Ländler with Jill and did it very well.

The recording began at 7.00 pm and the Rainmakers with Willy Messerschmidt's Bierhaus Band and the Von Skrapps were to provide the Grand Finale so they had a long wait during the recording of the rest of the show.

At last Barrymore came on to introduce his final guests. Their leaders descended the staircase and were interviewed. The Von Skrapps went into their Tulips from Amsterdam routine, (what had this song to do with a German theme we wondered). The Rainmakers appeared dancing Steirigger to the Tulips tune because Willy's band could not play the right tune properly, followed by the much dreaded Anchors Aweigh episode. However, they coped well and looked very nice in their German costumes. Hammersmiths went well to its proper music and two couples danced Kreuz Koenig, followed by Untersteirer Landler with Barrymore taking over as Jill's partner. The sequence ended with a German toast, 'Ein, Zwei, Zuppe' and clashing of beer mugs. Hats flew off and Terry's mug broke. It was over and we all went home wondering when or if it would go out on TV. A week later Jill received a letter from LWT containing a cheque for £500. On April 8th another letter arrived, thanking Rainmakers for their efforts and professionalism but, it went on, "constraints of time and editing difficulties have made it impossible for us to transmit the piece". Ah well - some Rainmakers had an interesting experience and earned a huge fee for our club funds.

We have connections with two bands that play for International Dancing, Cloudburst from North Herts/Beds, (Jill's own band) and Jacob's Ladder from Cambridge. Musicians from both bands joined Rainmakers on a visit to Bingen (Hitchin's twin town) in Germany in September 1994. They performed Mexican dances, which the Germans requested, having seen them at Hitchin, and English dances, at the Wine Fest. For five days the group were entertained and gave displays. All who went came back very tired but they had enjoyed it very much.

A singing group called Songs Plus has been meeting for almost two years. They sing Czech, Israeli, French and German songs at our parties and dances. The annual Hitchin Gathering is a major event and much rehearsal and preparation is needed for it.

Also twenty five day courses have been run in the last ten years all by SIFD teachers including ten by Janet Woolbar.

Now Rainmakers look forward to celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the club very soon.

Betty Lee

## **Nutbrook International Folk Dance Group**

Nutbrook was founded in September 1979. Within six months we had been asked to give a demonstration, albeit to the Brownies. On 1st May 1981, just eighteen months after beginning we went to Ösnabruck to represent Derby City Council and displayed English dances in the festival there. It was a great time with many memories for the twelve of us who went. Many of us chose drinks mats with views of Derby to take as presents for our hosts but discovered that we were only to stay with two!

Another hilarious item which was quite worrying at the time concerned the temporary stage which had been erected outside the Cathedral. As we danced we heard hammering from underneath. Bits of the stage were breaking and it was being repaired while we danced. 'Dance right - hole to the left' and the like were the instructions we gave to each other. The most frightening aspect was dancing on the enormous stage in the impressive concert hall.

Nutbrook has forged links with a Swedish group, a Romanian group and a French team. We have had visits from a Norwegian team, a Danish team and a group from Grenoble. For our tenth anniversary, in 1989, we had a marvellous weekend of dance. We invited teachers from three foreign groups with whom we had contact and had workshops and a big party. A most enjoyable weekend.

In the following year, 1990, we went to Orebro, Sweden, to a Folk Festival and stayed for the Midsummer festivities. Teams from many countries took part, the most memorable of which was the Ivory Coast group with their stiltman. The highlight of the Midsummer weekend was the day at Annaboda. A stage had been set up in the natural amphitheatre and hundreds of people sat on the slope listening to many different kinds of folk music. A gradual drift up the slope led to the barbecue and the level area for dancing. At around 10.00 pm the teams (indeed everyone) gathered behind the maypole which was carried in procession to the lake. There it was raised amid the singing and traditional line dances. (Was the fly swatting traditional?) It was followed by an eerie, but enchanting, episode. Across Lake Annbosjön came a haunting song with a low plaintive sound from the traditional long horn. Was it a love song? It sounded like this in its romantic

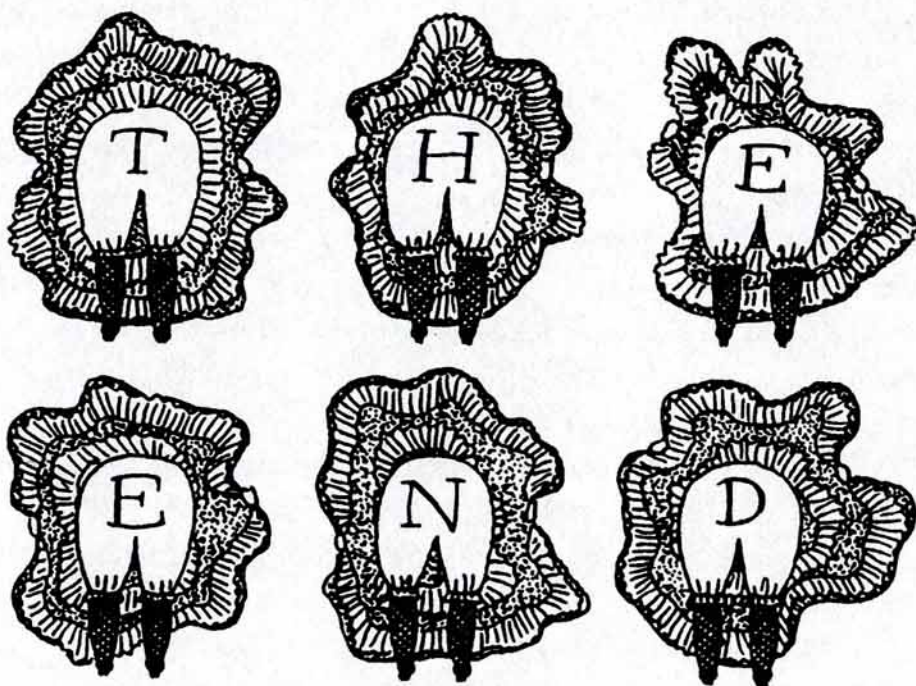
setting. But no, it was the cow girl calling the cattle home. A wonderful experience.

Our next major effort was the visit of Purtata in 1994. They managed to visit us from Romania after a lot of heartache, bureaucracy and phone calls to Bucharest and elsewhere. After all the panic, worry and planning, the team from Medias actually arrived. With them we visited Denby Pottery, Bass Brewery Museum, Wirksworth Well Dressing parade, Alton Towers and Rufford Country Park. At each venue they gave displays of dance and music. They also gave us a workshop of Romanian dance (held in Southwell) which was very successful. It was followed by a fish and chip supper and a concert and a spontaneous visit to an English pub.

Memories of this visit include the problems with the group bus reported by a 3.00 am phone call, "Sorry, we've broken down in Norfolk!" The bus limped up to Nottingham while we had to get spare parts from Sheffield. Then we encountered the temperament of the musicians; was it the gypsy temperament or the highly strung artistic professional temperament? The strongest memory is of the quality of the dancing; extremely well rehearsed and colourful.

Nutbrook has organized, from its beginning, two day-courses every year all taught by very good teachers, and thus we have built up a good repertoire of Scandinavian, European and Balkan dances.

Gillian E. Morral



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