

NEWS SHEET

August 1955

The Monthly Journal of the Society for International Folk Dancing.

Chairman:

H. J. Price,  
70 Meadowcourt Rd.,  
S. E. 3.

Secretary:

Marie Le Fort,  
3 Selwyn Road,  
E. 13.

Editor:

John Fraser,  
3 Rosecroft Av.,  
N. W. 3.

---

SUBS JUDICE - TIME TO PAY

All members are reminded that their financial year, as members of the S. I. F. D., is over and that subscriptions are now due for the coming year. There are no classes this month and consequently no opportunities of paying up in person. However, if you wish to settle by postal order or cheque would you send them to the Membership Secretary, Simon Guest, 15 Earlsfield Road, Wandsworth, S.W. 18.

RETURN TO INNS OF COURT

The Inns of Court Mission hall will be available from mid-August and the Sunday night dances will return there. Dancers are reminded that (a) Refreshments will be available, and (b) the price of admission, due to rising costs, will be raised to 1/6 for members and 2/- for non-members.

CECIL SHARP HOUSE

There will be no Cecil Sharp House dance in August. The Committee announce this with regret, but the Hall, in the language of the Foreign Office, "ain't gonna be available" when we want it.

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

A full meeting of the Committee was held on July 7th last at Imperial College and, apart from matters already mentioned, the following bits of business were transacted. Items:-

Accounts Discrepancy: The sub-committee investigating this accounting oddity reported, "Eureka"! Explanation: at the end of the 1952-53 year two cheques were paid but not lodged till the new financial year, and these cheques had not been taken into consideration by the bank when rendering its statement of cash at bank.

No Trip to Manchester: The Society will not take part in Colonel Baldrey's annual show; unable to guarantee expenses, he regretfully rescinded his invitation.

Marie Thanks Manx: Marie Le Fort reported receiving three records from the Manx Society; S. I. F. D. agreed to buy copies for our own library.

Finance: Hon. Treasurer reported cash at bank on July 1st was £538.4.2. (excluding 1955 Festival). French week-end had cost about £18 over receipts.

Albert Hall Profit: Larry Howell reported a cash profit of £111.12.6. plus £30.10.11 worth of costumes and boots.

Week-ends: Thamesfield has been booked for the week-ends of September 24th, 1955, February 4th, 1956, and for Whitsun 1956.

Rogues in Brogues: The Committee continue to receive complaints from people suffering quite nasty and painful bruises about the feet and ankles. Recently one woman member was incapacitated for over a week as a result of a kick from some un-coordinated clod in outdoor shoes. If this goes on, folk dancing will be rated as more dangerous than cricket! In any case, while admitting that the odd buffet is an occupational risk in folk dancing classes, wearing heavy shoes on the floor betrays a complete lack of consideration.

Panel on Teacher Training: Dr. Cyriax reported that the Advisory Panel of Experts had made its first proposals regarding the syllabus for Grade One Teachers and that the individual experts were drawing up lists of simple dances from which the teacher trainee would be expected to make his or her choice (minimum of 25 from 5 countries) to offer for examination before the Panel.

#### DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Some forty estate agents have now been circularised with our requirements; a number of replies have been received, but, at the time of going to press, nothing suitable has come along. We can report one "near miss": quite suitable premises were located in St. Giles Circus and for a time it seemed that this particular problem was solved, but, alas, since the accommodation was several floors up and had no fire escape, L.C.C. fire regulations prohibited its use by more than 12 people at any one time! It was felt that we would hardly increase our membership under such circumstances.

The sub-committee has proceeded with the drafting of the necessary documents for incorporation and hopes to have these complete, in the rough, and ready for legal vetting and checking by mid-August. At least one charitable trust has been approached for assistance, but at this time no further information is available.

#### EARLY NORSE DANCING

In some of the Spring issues I gave various stories relating to episodes from the early history of the Norse People. These are legion and in my opinion need to be known to understand the descendants of this race whose dances we now perform. We can see them as a barbaric race not above offering human sacrifice for good seasons, keeping slaves, concubines, and in general behaving much the same as the Red Indian of the 19th Century. In my opinion the Red Indian provides a good parallel to the manners of the Norse people, with the exception that the Redskin for obvious reasons did not go seafaring. But the S. I. F. D. member more concerned with the Terpsichorean art asks, "Did they dance?", "How did they dance?". That they danced is obvious from all the church decrees forbidding them so to do. How they danced is not quite so easily disposed of. Rightly so. Suppose you ask how they dance in the 20th Century? Shall I say Quickstep, Foxtrot, Waltz? Victor Sylvester? Shall I say Ballet? Ninette de Valois? Shall I say Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers? or mention tap dancing? Even in that simpler world of the pre-12th Century parallels may be found. For the people (Present day:- ballroom) we find that wealth of dance still extant in the Orkneys, Faroes, in Norway and Sweden:- the Chain or Circle Dance.

The Circle is formed without arrangement according to sex (in a narrow room it will be an oval). The step is a left close, left close, right, very similar to some of the present day Kolos known to members, and is still danced in the Faroes, Orkneys and in Norway and Sweden. The dance is performed to a song or ballad, no musical instruments are used, the hands are held at the level of the shoulders in gay lively songs, and at the level of the hips in serious ones. This was a very important distinction and, as a brief aside, I would tell all members that the Catalan Sardana requires the hands to be held at shoulder level as an absolute must. The Sardana 'played at' by many people during the



C.S.H. dance on 24th June, was a travesty of the real thing, although Ruth Sharp (who introduced it) held her hands high and finished with the correct steps, a characteristic similar to the forward thrust characterising the finish of the Vendeen dances.

To revert to our subject, these people danced in a circle and still do.

Forget your Gamel, Reinlander and Schottische and your Ostgotas and Vestgata, and consider the song dances which are a definite relic of the early, pre-courtly, pre-chivalrous Northern European Dances. The Norwegian are slightly less degenerated than the Swedish. The song is all important to the dance since it explains it. The whole attention is fixed on the song, not on the dance, the feet and arms follow the mode of the song. Dances of one sex, men alone or women alone, predominated and are still performed so, in as much as that in the Swedish Song Dances the girls, say, will make their circle, singing the words and in the chorus pick a man to skip round with; then the men will make the circle and in the chorus choose a girl. This couple dance at the end is really later than the original round. The Norwegian Song Dances such as "Eg jegg meg up till Sadurli", etc. are nearer the early form than the Swedish.

We can summarise by saying that there was originally little suggestion of a dance for separate couples, but many circle dances for men, for women and for both sexes; the movements were walking, stepping and jumping, they were sung never fiddled.

One of the Norwegian Song Dances is called Per Spelman. Now the Spelman today is the fiddler; originally the Spelman or Spielman was the minstrel or "joculator" (from which we get Joker). He was a combination of singer, musician, poet, actor, juggler and dancer - a general entertainer and leader of festivities and the oldest meaning of the word Spielman in Old German is to dance. These Spelman provided also some of the solo dances of the time in the North, old dances with mime and various hand movements from which repeatedly we hear the phrase "to dance with Jongleurs (jugglers) hands". These solo dances were greatly different from the social dances. They were a relic of the old religious dances, more elaborate, being for spectacular purposes only, and also more profane in as much as the serious religious meaning was lost. Moreover it was now a spectacle only and often described as profane, the movements were for amusement and were said to be indecent - they were popular of course. These Spielmen, well inculcated in their art, believed and lived the part, and a beautiful French legend called Del Tumbleor Nostre Dame can be quoted. It is the story of an old minstrel who can no longer sing but who dances around the statue of the Virgin Mary paying his homage in the only way left him. In 120 verses it tells how he dances now in a circle, now stationary, now with mime and gesture, now walking on his hands until he falls down exhausted.

Never once, as Curt Sachs points out, is the word dance used in the poem, Trippa, Treschen, Sauter yes but the only dance word of today mentioned is Baler.

i. e.            trepe et saut devant san mere.  
-----  
                 et met devant son front sa main  
-----  
                 les tors c'on fait en Bretaigne  
-----  
                 Lors tume les pre's contremont  
                 Et va sor ses les mains.

One other dance type must be mentioned. The present day Dervish Dance is a whirling dance. The Stone Age knew it, it was performed amongst other things to provide rain. It was danced solo and also in couples, though the couple dance was a wooing dance (as originally was

Tarantella) ending with the fast twirling. It has been danced for thousands of years and was known to the 10th Century Northlanders. It has given us the Waltz and the Hambo! The Polka is the Slav derivate.

Animal dances were already half forgotten, though the Reindeer Dance lived on in Abbots Bromley.

On May Day, processions, bonfires and dances were held to most of the Gods. To the true Summer Odin for his triumph over the Winter Odin. To Ostara from whom the name Easter is derived, and so on.

One custom was to choose a man, usually the fastest runner, to impersonate Summer Odin; he would be dressed in flowers and green leaves (The Green Man) and hid in the woods, to be found later, put on horseback, and led with songs of joy through the village. The May King was allowed to choose a Queen to share his honours at the dance and the feast.

We will conclude with a reference from the tale (later a folk play) of the visit of Skadi, the storm giant's daughter, to demand vengeance for her father, the storm god, overcome by Summer Odin. To appease her Loki came forward, bowed low before her, and sprang now to the right hand, now to the left and then danced backwards and forwards while a long bearded goat made the same movements behind him, for he had fastened the creature to himself with an invisible cord. When at length he threw himself on his knees before her like a lover and the goat did likewise, Skadi burst into a fit of laughter.

#### SO-SO SOHO

The Society, once again abreast with developments, were quick to cash in on the recently held Soho Fair. Teams of our dancers gave nightly performances of continental folk dancing. The idea of the Soho Fair was conceived by the business folk of Soho as a one day farrago of music, dancing and carnival, but carried away by their enthusiasm and putting pessimistic apprehensions to the back of their minds, the enterprising organisers wove the pattern of the Fair over a whole week.

The idea of the Fair caught the imagination of the sensation seeking public, and the once dark and sinister streets of Soho were thronged with pleasure-seeking people bent on enjoying the Fair. But on the whole they were disappointed, for while the hot, dusty concrete of Golden Square echoed the music and gaiety of our dancing, the rest of Soho was particularly reticent over the whole affair. Her intriguing streets shyly bedecked with flags and ribbons were devoid of the carnival spirit and the populace was left to wander aimlessly and perplexed.

True the Society tried to enthuse the spirit of foreign climes through the medium of Ukranian, Austrian, Swedish, and a host of other national dances, but the audience, whether due to the layout of the Square preventing them seeing the dances properly, gave a singularly apathetic reception to them. Those who could see received the dancing enthusiastically, but the majority viewed it with the interest displayed by spectators watching a hole dug in the road. Still we did attract the crowds.

Afterwards when duty was done some of us wandered into Soho proper to give an impromptu show. At one time, surrounded by masses of people, we endeavoured to dance. But the pressure of the crowd was against us. There were hundreds of junior jive fanatics crying out for "Bob and his Mob", and, entering the spirit of the thing, enthusiastically "hotted-up" the Circassian Circle. Finally, giving way to the crowd who restricted dancing to a space about equal to that in a tube-train during the rush hour, we retreated to the local alehouse.



On Saturday night we did find a street where we could dance, and by the light of a single street lamp we managed to dance. Viewed by sombre buildings we attempted to bring a smile to their ominous faces with the swing of folk dances. We did collect an appreciative audience and our efforts, though viewed from the gloom, did bring spontaneous appreciation from them. For a while we were objects of delight and fantasy for some inebriated Teddy-boys, but on an invitation to dance they soon discovered they had business elsewhere.

On the whole the Society did Soho proud, and though bringing cosmopolitan atmosphere to Soho is like carrying coals to Newcastle, we did bring the spirit of the Soho Fair closer to the people.

ERIC OWDEN

#### DEMONSTRATION NOTES

Ken Ward took the team to St. Leonards Rectory, Streatham, on Saturday, July 2nd, where they danced at a Garden Fete in aid of the N. S. P. C. C. He reports that, "the team danced well, the grounds were pleasant, the audience a bit sticky - they took a lot of persuading to join in, although the Mayor of Wandsworth set a good example and danced with Joan White. (The organisers had especially asked for general dancing for everyone). There was a Master of Ceremonies who ordered everyone around in military fashion. Altogether a queer atmosphere".

I was unable to attend this demonstration as I was busy with Dr. Cyriax and Ruth Sharp attending the Dress Rehearsal and performance of the London Co-operative Playboys and Pathfinders Groups at the Albert Hall. We had, with Marie Le Fort, taught these groups of children 8 of our dances - 4 to each group - and were also responsible for the production and the costumes. Over 100 children, 7-16 years of age, took part. Need I say more?

My second delegated demonstration was at Kingston on Thames on Thursday, July 7th (a Committee night for me). Len Sawyer was my deputy this time and the occasion was a Garden Fete for the local UNA. The organisers wrote to me to say how thrilled they were with the demonstration and did hope that we would assist them again. My thanks to Ken and Len for taking over these two demonstrations and to the teams who went with them.

#### SOHO FAIR, 10th-16th JULY.

We took part in this week's celebrations in Golden Square where every evening, except Monday, we filled one hour of the evening programme with the help of our friends from other groups: Estonians, Poles, Scots, American Square, Spanish and Portuguese, Greek, English, and last but not least, Harrow Green. Our teams contributed Austrian, Italian, Russian, Lithuanian, Swedish and Ukrainian items. Perfect weather helped to make it a great success by bringing large audiences. (My telephone was kept busy by people saying they hadn't been able to get near enough to see the dancers). My entire stock of old leaflets, now once more up to date since we are returning to Inns of Court for Sunday dances, was quickly exhausted. On Thursday evening after the show we were asked if we could arrange for all the teams to be filmed in Eastman Colour on Saturday afternoon. It was rather short notice since most of the dancers had already gone home, and a very small Friday class didn't help. I couldn't actually plan our teams until I saw who turned up, and I had some bad moments trying to get people who fitted into costumes and who knew the dances and who had time to change, etc. We could have Golden Square for only 25 minutes between fixed items and we managed to fit in dances from 12 countries. I think all dancers deserve a special compliment on their team work on this occasion. I do hope the film is worthy of their efforts and that half of it won't be left on the cutting room floor. My grateful thanks to all the groups and our demonstration

teams for their co-operation throughout the week, and to Larry Howell who transported all the costumes to and fro, Dr. Cyriax being on holiday.

I found the highlight of the week was after all the official programme was over on Saturday and having shed all my responsibilities and baggage (we left it at Piccadilly Underground), we proceeded, still in costume, to find a quiet backstreet (gathering our audience like the Pied Piper) where we danced until 11.30 p.m. Roland Minton was our humorous compere and Mourie provided the music. A pity there were no fairy lights hung across the street to give it a carnival touch, but what we lacked in illumination we made up for in high spirits. It was great fun and well worth the hazards of getting home, alone and in costume from Piccadilly.

MARGERY LATHAM

#### CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

I would like to express my very sincere thanks to the Society for their great kindness in allowing me to include an American Square Dance Call during the Sunday evening monthly dances at Cecil Sharp House up to date.

Such an opportunity, I assure you, is of great value to me. Of course, I suppose that I am rather young, but have been calling since before I left school, and it is one of my greatest wishes one day to assume professional status.

So I am certain you will agree that the wonderful opportunities afforded me on these Sunday occasions by extremely tolerant M.Cs and dancers earn my most grateful thanks.

Last but not least, my thanks go to the musicians who play my music so well.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard Chalk,  
London, N. 2.

#### DANCING IN AUGUST

The Harrow Green Folk Dance Group are fortunate in having a hall that we can use for 52 weeks of the year. Knowing the difficulties the S. I. F. D. have with Carlyle School shutting during the holiday months, all members are cordially invited to the classes every Wednesday throughout August. Each Wednesday from 7.30-10.0 p.m. we have general dancing and a teaching period between 8.30 and 9.00.

The exception to this will be on Wednesday, 10th August, when Wasyl Kaminsky, leader of the Ukranian Folk Dance Group will be coming from Reading to teach. On this evening the teaching period will be extended.

Now, how to get there: the nearest underground station is Leyton on the Central Line; from there it is a 2d Trolleybus ride (Nos. 687 or 685) to Woodhouse Road, and then a 2-minute walk round the corner to Trumpington Road School, Ramsay Road. If more details are needed don't hesitate to drop a line to:-

Ron Coultrup, Hon. Sec.,  
126 Ramsay Road,  
E. 7.

PROGRAMME

Date	M. C.	Class
Wednesday, 3rd August	Peter Lilley	Estonian
" 10th "	Wasył Kaminsky	Ukranian
" 17th "	Les Norris	French
" 24th "	Les Hutchins	Norwegian
" 31st "	Ron Coultrup	New Members Evening

THAMESFIELD, HENLEY--ON--THAMES

As you will have seen from the proceedings of the Committee, we have been fortunate in obtaining Thamesfield again for next Whitsun. There will also be a week-end there on September 24th - this is now fully booked, though you can put your name on the waiting list - and probably on February 4th. Jack Richardson will be pleased to take your bookings as soon as you like.

-----

AUGUST PROGRAMME

Dances at Inns of Court Mission, Drury Lane.

Time: 6.30 - 9.30

Music: Mourie Pfeffer

Sundays	August	M. C.	Mourie Pfeffer
	14	M. C.	Roland Minton
	21	M. C.	John Hughes
	28	M. C.	

Inns of Court Mission is at the junction of Drury Lane and an alley called Broad Court, just south of Long Acre. Nearest L. T. station, Leicester Square or Holborn.

There will be no classes at all during August.

Classes in Scottish dancing at Churchill Gardens Estate, Pimlico recommence on Sunday, September 4th, at 3.30.

Classes at Carlyle School, Hortensia Road, recommence on Tuesday, September 6th, at 7.30, with a Balkan class.

N.B. There will be no dance at Cecil Sharp House during August as the hall is not available.