

November 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 Rd., E.13.	Editor: John Fraser, 62 Loudoun Rd. N.W.8.
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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Nearly 50 members attended the AGM at Imperial College on October 20th last completing the business at 10.55 p.m.

The Chairman reported that the Society had enjoyed a good year and one in which much progress had been made in several directions. The special sub-committee on development had completed the first half of its work and was most active in its search for premises. The Advisory Panel had worked hard and the syllabus, certificates, etc., for accredited teachers were now in draft form. The Society had published more records. He thanked all those people who had assisted in these various activities. He also paid tribute to the musicians, the Wallace Collection and Mourrie Pfeffer. Course held at Ilkley and Canford had been successful and had brought new members to the Society. It had been a busy year for demonstrations, the Society participating in the Soho Fair, the Hendon Show, T.V. and films in addition to its usual round. The growth of the Library had been disappointing but he hoped for greater expansion in the coming year. A special committee on costume had been set up. The sub-committee on music and instructions had done excellent work: it had completed 18 out of 19 dances in preparation for a forthcoming book which should be available by Christmas.

Looking into the future he hoped it would be possible to stage a Royal Albert Hall show next autumn. He hoped that it would be within the means of the Society to publish a printed bi-monthly magazine to replace News Sheet. More records would be issued and a further book covering the dances involved would be prepared. The Chairman concluded by saying that he hoped that by the next AGM the Society would be incorporated and in its own premises. He appealed to all members to work together for the Society as a whole and promised ample opportunities for "jobs for all."

The Secretary reported that the Committee had met 12 times and had worked hard and well together. The appointment of Simon Guest as Membership Secretary had been very successful. She thanked all the many back-room boys and girls who had contributed to the Society's successes. A gift of several books on national dances and costumes had been received from Bulgaria. We had reciprocated in kind. The Society had received a request for assistance from Yorkshire in connection with its International Theatre Week. Her Scottish classes had been successful but badly required more men.

The Treasurer's Report and Balance Sheet was tabled. Jack Richardson queried some seven items. After a long discussion these points were cleared up and the amended papers revealed a sum of £157.5.10 in hand exclusive of the Albert Hall account. The assets of the Society were estimated at £478.4.9. The financial papers together with the explanation for the discrepancy between the accounts for the year ending 30.8.53 and the years beginning 1.9.53 will be issued with this News Sheet. The auditor, David Rasbash spoke briefly and urged a much closer check on both receipts and payments. Larry Howell presented the Royal Albert Hall accounts the gist of which was that the balance now stands at £531.17.6.

Margery Latham reporting on Demonstrations expressed concern at the dwindling numbers of the Team and the fact that the majority did not regularly attend the Friday class. She was also concerned about the problem of musicians; she recommended a weekly class of half an hour for musicians. The Meeting approved this suggestion. The Reports were adopted, and the Accounts approved.

The Secretary reported the results of the election of officers and Committee. Bert Price, Marie Le Fort and John Fraser were returned unopposed to the positions of Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively. The elections for the six committee places resulted as follows:- Simon Guest (61 votes - out of 61 votes cast), Margery Latham (58), Penny Leach (44), John Hughes (44), Bob Symes (44) and Mary Guest (41).

Before dealing with the Motions on the Agenda the Meeting indulged in a brief procedural discussion as to whether the Constitution would permit the use of proxy votes on this occasion. The interpretation that while the Constitution specifically prohibited proxy voting on a poll, by implication, - since votes by proxy were normal procedure - proxy voting on a show of hands was permitted, was rejected by 22 votes to 8 with 14 abstentions.

A Motion standing in the names of Jack Richardson and Peter Van der Linde, deploring the fact that the programme for autumn 1955 had not reached members generally by September 21st, even though it was available to certain non-members in August was debated. It was pointed out that the printed leaflet upon which the offending programme had appeared was primarily intended for non-members, and that members had received the vital part of the autumn programme, viz. the programme for September, in the September News Sheet. The Motion was adopted by 17 votes to 8 against with 16 abstentions.

A Motion that the Meeting consider the draft documents of incorporation stood in the names of John Fraser and Laurence Howell. The proposer submitted a verbal amendment to the effect that the Meeting would accept the drafts and instruct the Committee to proceed with incorporation. Jack Richardson opposed this amendment claiming that it was out of order and completely altered the substance of the Motion. A discussion on semantics and procedure followed until John Fraser withdrew the amendment. He felt that since it was already 9.20 pm there would not be time for a full-scale debate on such an important topic, he agreed that the Motion as worded had undoubtedly restrained members from submitting considered constitutional amendments and he hoped that sufficient support would be forthcoming for an Extraordinary General Meeting called specifically to debate the Memorandum and Articles of Association and to carry the whole matter of incorporation further. The Meeting then proceeded to a general discussion of the drafts. It gave its opinion on several points and these opinions will be incorporated in amendments to the draft documents submitted to the Extraordinary G.M.

Simon Guest moved a vote of thanks to the members of the Development Sub-Committee for the very hard work they had put into the preparation of the papers. The Meeting closed at 10.50 with a vote of thanks to Jack Richardson for his traditional hospitality and members adjourned to sample the same.

Post Script to the Chairman's Report:-

The Editor cheerfully admits the soft impeachment that he is "not a dancer," but feels compelled to point out that in the Society such a distinction is by no means unique!

Extraordinary General Meeting

At the close of the AGM the requisite number of signatures was obtained for the summoning of an Extraordinary General Meeting, and in view of the feeling of the Meeting this special G.M. is likely to be held on Thursday, December 1st next. Further details will be forthcoming.

MORE ABOUT SIERRA LEONE

My journey from Liverpool to Freetown took 9 days aboard the Elder Dempster liner "Aureol," a well-appointed vessel. Towards the end of the voyage a "Carnival Night" was held. We all wore paper hats and became unusually gay. Also, later in the evening people were invited to entertain their fellow passengers. For 3 or 4 days beforehand I had been instructing a small group on the intricacies of "Little Man In A Fix," "Laura" and the "Hammersmith Fellows." For the last my 3 male companions were Nigerian students who, after initial difficulties, proved enthusiastic pupils.

On Carnival Night the demonstrations were well received, though when I called for general dancing there was a certain reluctance. This may have been due to the type of audience which included African Paramount Chiefs, Salvation Army officers and missionaries. "Excuse me, Chief, would you care to do 'Laura?'"

The music for the dances described above was provided by a pianist, a remarkable fellow going to Nigeria for his second tour as a Leprosy Control Officer. This job involved working with the lepers, helping them to lead as normal a life as possible. I never hope to meet a more interesting and likeable character. He also possessed a good singing voice.

One of the passengers was a lady mission worker who saw my folk-dancing display; she later asked me if I would assist the Mission in Freetown by teaching some dances to African children. To this I agreed. So began 4 months of hard work trying to teach a few of our simpler dances to African boys and girls aged 10 - 16. Believe me, attempting to impart some sense of European rhythm to young Africans, whose musical and rhythmical instincts are so different from our own, is no joke! To boot I had no music, no assistance and a murky hall whose floor threatened to capsize at any moment. Still, hard work produced fairly encouraging results and, even though I had to sing the tunes for them, we achieved something. We were reaching the stage when I simply had to have some sort of music and also assistance in controlling the often unruly throng. After trying for many weeks to obtain these essentials from the Church authorities, without success, I eventually handed in my resignation in the hope that that strong measure would induce them to act. But they never did, and I wasn't even thanked for my efforts.

Sierra Leone itself is a backward country compared with our own civilisation. When I spent a few days leave "up-country" the 220 mile rail journey took me nearly 22 hours! At the smallest incline, after several attempts to surmount it, the driver and fireman would descend to sprinkle sand on the rails so that the wheels would grip. Coming back I decided to hitch-hike, but this proved worse, since it took 1½ days. Between Daru (where I had been staying) and Freetown there are 5 ferries to be crossed, all manually operated. At the first one I had to wait over 5 hours whilst repairs were carried out, and as the ferrymen cease work at 7. pm I was obliged to abandon my journey until the next day. Eventually I reached Freetown but not before spending two hours mending a broken main spring!

The country is divided into two sections: the Protectorate and the Colony of Sierra Leone. The latter includes the capital and is perhaps 70 miles in circumference. It is the stronghold of the Creole population, (people of mixed descent), whilst the Protectorate contains about 15 different and distinct tribes. These are as follows:

Fula	Koranko	Sherbro
Krim	Limba	Su-Su
Kissy	Loko	Temne
Kroo	Mandingo	Vai
Kono	Mende	Yalunka

Of these the Temne and the Mende tribes are amongst the largest and most intelligent. An absorbing study can be made of their various customs and way of life. Indeed their social structure in some cases is quite different from our own. In Europe the living unit is the family, but in Temne life it is a whole section of the tribe. In fact their language contains no word meaning "family" but I digress from folk-dancing, though one could ask with reason, "Is anthropology within our scope?"

MALCOLM FISHER

DEMONSTRATION NOTES

Our first demonstration of the New Year was on October 8th at UNA Lambeth Branch, held at the Methodist Hall, Brixton, where we danced for 1½ hours demonstrating and teaching; the audience was mostly elderly and I was rather dubious about their joining in! They had no doubts at all and joined in with enthusiasm. One elderly lady insisted on dancing with hat clothes and gloves on and they had two overhead heaters going full blast. The organisers eulogised to such an extent in the speech of thanks at the end that I was overcome with embarrassment. Enquiries were received from the Methodist minister for teachers or demonstrators to go to his "Over Twenty Club" and get a folk dance group going there. He was most enthusiastic. My thanks to the team for their strenuous efforts.

MARGERLY LATHAM

CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

May I beg a bit of space to answer Peter van der Linde's letter in last month's issue?

First I should like to thank him for his criticism; so many people think but can't be bothered to write. I did actually have three adverse reports on these demonstrations. I make no excuses, but I think it only fair to say how or why it happened.

First I must say that I had no intention of putting on a show of Albee Hall standards. I knew it couldn't be done with the people available and no rehearsals. I wanted village green stuff suitable for a fair. We had been promised a gaily decorated square and a generally festive atmosphere, and the general public joining in.

I had to face unexpected holidays cropping up which deprived me of many of our usual teams and we were supplemented by members of Harrow Green who nobly came to our aid. The two groups are not used to dancing together and did not dance as one team. The quick rehearsals beforehand which I had hoped would remedy this were not allowed by the heads of the British Associated Cinemas Ltd., whose building we were using as changing rooms.

As for presentation, the organisers had asked specially that there should be no introducing over the microphone. Just a straightforward dance programme. I collected comprehensive notes on the dances from the various group leaders, and was told that these would be printed in the programme to explain each item and encourage the sale of the programme. This wasn't done. In fact we were constantly asked to cut items because other people had been over time!

Again in the case of the entries and exits, these are comparatively easy if one is doing only one item. The English team in particular had come direct from a festival in France, fully rehearsed and intact as a team which was why they were invited. We had changing time and costume bothers which hampered our efforts.

Well there it is: after weeks of work, with committees, sub-committees endless telephone calls and letter writing, more worry than I've had even with Albert Hall rehearsals, and only token expenses, the result was not "up to standard." I accept the "rap over the knuckles," and hope that I have at least learned something from my mistakes.

Margery Latham

Sir,

After spending, or should I say wasting, a considerable length of time at the AGM, I am left to wonder how incompetent the Society can become. No end of time was wasted with trivial questions and facetious answers.

The Treasurer's report, both written and verbal, was pathetic, and instead of being a factual report on the state of our finances, developed into an obscure discussion between the Treasurer and various members present. It precluded the uninformed and left them bored and bewildered.

The most controversial issue in the Society's history fizzled out at one salvo from Jack Richardson. Though I fail to see Jack's point, surely the issue at stake is whether the Society wants incorporation or not. Jack's point of order over the verbal amendment, though probably done sincerely from his point of view, was nothing but a delaying tactic over the real issue. Sooner or later the issue must come before the Society's members. What is the sense of spending considerable time in debating over the articles and memorandum, if at the end of it the idea of a Company is rejected? Surely the real issue is, is it a good thing for the Society to become a Company Limited by Guarantee or not. Let's decide that and then be prepared to debate the articles and memorandum afterwards. After all it is the principle of the thing most people vote on, not the technicalities of Company law.

One other point I would like to add is about the shortage of dancers for demonstrations. Has any effort been made to encourage people to dance at demonstrations? Or any attempt to organise demonstration rehearsals? Also why isn't it made generally public when the Society is asked to give demonstrations? Wouldn't this encourage some volunteers?

Erik T. Owden

(Re Incorporation: the Society resoundingly approved the principle of this at the General Meeting in May last. We can only assume that it is now ready, or will be at the Extraordinary Meeting, to debate the "words.")

ED)

PERSONAL COLUMN

Members will be pleased to learn that our Estonian teacher, AILI EISTRAT has given birth to a bouncing baby girl, Karin.

JOHN UNGAR is reported to be making excellent progress after his attack of polio. He wishes to express his warm thanks to all those members who have sent his messages of good cheer.

APOLOGIES

Apologies are herewith offered for any typographical failings in this issue. For a number of reasons it became necessary to cut the stencils on our own typewriter which a. is a portable, and b. has a vicious "o" and "c". ED.

NOVEMBER PROGRAMME

CLASSES AND DANCES AT CARLYLE SCHOOL, Hortensia Road, Chelsea, S.W.10.

Time: 7.50 - 9.50 p.m.

Music: Mme. Barbara Duleba.

<u>TUESDAYS</u>	Nov. 1	Balkan Class	Phillip Thornton	
	Nov. 8	Social Dance		M.C. Bert Price
	Nov. 15	Balkan Class	Phillip Thornton	
	Nov. 22	English Class	Thora Jacques	
	Nov. 29	Balkan Class	Phillip Thornton	
<u>WEDNESDAYS</u>	Nov. 2	Ukranian Class	Irene Fyffe	M.C. Mouric Pfeffer
	Nov. 9	German Class	Joan Richardson	M.C. John Hughes
	Nov. 16	Italian Class	Irene Fyffe	M.C. Bob Symes
	Nov. 23	Norwegian and Danish Class	Irene Fyffe	M.C. Ken Ward
	Nov. 30	Swiss and Dutch Class	Irene Fyffe	M.C. May Hendric
<u>FRIDAYS</u>	Nov. 4	No class		
	Nov. 11	Swedish Class	Dr. Cyriax	
	Nov. 18	Swedish Class	Dr. Cyriax	
	Nov. 25	Spanish and Portuguese Class	Steve and Margaret	

CLASSES IN SCOTTISH DANCING given by Marie LeFort, Churchill Gardens
Estate, Pimlico, S.W.1.

SUNDAYS, 3.30 - 5.30 p.m.

N.B. There will be no class on Nov.20 as the hall will not be available
on that date.

DANCES AT INNS OF COURT MISSION, Drury Lane, W.C.2.

Time: 6.30 - 9.30 p.m.

Music: Mouric Pfeffer.

<u>SUNDAYS</u>	Nov. 6	M.C. Roland Minton
	Nov. 13	M.C. Simon Guest
	Nov. 20	M.C. Mouric Pfeffer

DANCE AT CECIL SHARP HOUSE, Regents Park Road, N.W.1.

Time: 6.30 - 9.30 p.m.

Music: Wallace Collection

<u>SUNDAY</u>	Nov. 27	M.C. Margery Latham.
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