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JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING.

NEWS SHEET.

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EUROPEAN JOURNEY

Having arranged to go to a conference in Luxembourg, I decided that my French needed improving beforehand. So, with memories of the Fetes de Cornouaille in Brittany and of a welcome to the Vendee and of Pierre's offer of a practise or two in Paris I set off alone (!) by car in gorgeously fine weather. Flying across to Cherbourg cut the journey to Quimper by a few hundred kilometres. On the way I passed close to Mont St. Michel which had to be visited. The chapel was well worth seeing although the surrounding houses and shops were so full of trippery nonsense that its beauty was spoilt. Once in Finisterre I toured the villages and beaches from Brest to Carnac, all very picturesque, except for one which smelt of fish and all to do with fish in factories. Everywhere could be seen the fantastic headdresses of the Breton women while the older ones of those in seaside villages wore black dress and sabots with an occasional apron - a queer combination. I saw no dancing and was unable to contact any dancers although I had begun investigating possibilities two months previously.

Rumour had it that there was to be a demonstration by the workers, against low pay, starting on Whit Saturday, but no one seemed clear when it would start, only murmuring something about barricaded roads. As I had arranged to go to La Vendee that day, some 250 miles away, I bravely set forth along the highway. After 6 miles I had to turn back: the workmen had put tractors and lorries across the road and were letting nothing pass. So having said goodbye to Quimper again I tried a smaller inland road. After 10 miles another barricade with logs of trees across the road and about 30 scruffy, dirty workers with stout sticks nearby. I spent a fairly unpleasant 20 minutes with them talking very little and jolly bad French on purpose, but, because I was a doctor with my sign on the car, and my lie about being on my way to a congress, one of the workmen accompanied me and showed me along appalling farm lanes to the other side of the barricade. By bypassing two more towns I eventually arrived back on the highway after 40 miles of extra driving - now I feel I can direct anyone along the roads of Brittany! The barricades were lifted at 5 pm but were put down again over the holiday weekend. I considered myself lucky to have gotten through.

Challons is the centre of La Vendee, a very flat area, where it blows through the year. Apart from agriculture there is some local pottery and canework; in the north salt is made from the sea, with fishing the main occupation. Again lovely sandy beaches on the Atlantic. The Mourain family have lived there for a long time as also have their relatives on both sides. Apart from Annik, who has an enormous baby 3 months old, no one spoke a word of English! Costumes I did not see although some of the old women wore bonnets known as "kisnotte" in the villages around and in the town on market day. In the north is Monmoutier an island to which one can drive at ebb-tide, encircled by a wee bit of the Gulf Stream and where mimosa trees flourish as nowhere else in the country. Certainly the water was very warm in comparison. In the south is a seaside resort, "Les Sables d'Olonne," rather like Eastbourne and Margate, well-known for its "Sablettes" the name given to local women wearing local costumes. These were in complete contrast to those worn by the girls. On the head was an enormously high lace cap, reminiscent of some headwear in eastern style in theatrical shows, a blowsy blouse of bright or pale coloured satin, a short wide black skirt above the knee, with petticoats, black cotton or woollen stockings and sabots! We did quite a bit of folk dancing at home and, on one evening, I took a class for Jeannine with a lot of girls who knew quite a bit and some new boys only one of whom had any ideas at all. However they thoroughly enjoyed their first international lesson and I enjoyed ending with Vendeen dances.

In Paris I found a busy and rather harassed Pierre. He had written out a list of where to go, whom and what to see, for which I would have liked a fortnight. There I took part in two practises which were international but which were danced entirely a la Francaise and with negligible ideas of any other technique. At one all the known Swedish dances were done for my benefit; I did teach them the Ostgota step properly and my success was assured even to being asked if it might not be possible to arrange for a small group to come over for a week teaching and demonstrating! One night there was a French Basque demonstration - most interesting, both the dances and the costumes. The Fandango was done to a different tune from the Spanish one we've been taught but with almost identical steps. There was the dance of the glass done by 4 "mummers" dressed in allegorical costume, one of which was the hobby horse. All had to do a solo dance on a small square box in the centre of which was the glass without touching it (in the style of Scottish sword dancing) but ending by standing for a split second - or more - on the glass! How anyone wearing cane panniers managed to do it so perfectly was miraculous. The costumes were changed for each dance; a striking one was a girls' dance and costume from Navarre in brilliant green and black. On the Sunday was a Breton "Pardon of St. Yves", starting with 3 hours of folk dancing by different groups of Bretons living in Paris. In all the groups the girls costumes were mixed though the mens' appeared similar. There I saw again some dances from last summer's exhibition, and also the Gavotte, Gymnaska and Labadao done as we know them. The last evening we decided to go to Montmatre to a little restaurant to eat cheeses of France. On entering the ground floor one was nearly knocked down by the smell of cheeses in cases with thick wire netting on all the walls. Upstairs in the restaurant were platters with, all told, about 100 different cheeses (and their smells). There was a dinner in progress, given to some of the gastronomic experts of Paris. The owner got up and told us all about cheeses, cheese-making, maturing, etc., which was most interesting. Never have I seen or eaten of so many cheeses before in such a short time. Below are caves specially built for the maturation of cheeses which can be viewed by application - unfortunately for me they were unable to be shown that night.

Luxembourg was the next port of call. An extraordinary town built on land divided in more than one place by ravines at the bottom of which run small rivers, where often houses have been built close to the water. 65 bridges of every type, high and low, traverse these ravines. This was once a stronghold and, in the 17th century, fortifications were built on the sides of the ravines known as "casemates", of which 21 kilometres still exist, on three separate floors, the height of the ravines being 150 feet. Having been in the hands of different countries on and off for many centuries, there isn't very much old tradition left. I missed, however, on Whit Sunday, seeing the procession at Schtanach which used to be a pilgrimage ages ago. But the procession is the only remaining part - no dances exist in this state.

The conference was very interesting, mainly from the contacts made, about 40% from behind the Iron Curtain, all of whom could speak another language except the Russians. We had the opportunity of talking to all, but the Russians had their own interpreter, and none of us knew Russian. The next conference, in 2 years, is in Moscow and I will be learning Russian before then and I'm going!

So on to Holland to my friends who had arranged for me to meet their best folk dance teacher four years ago, when I returned with "Carre of Peerdesprong" just in time for our Albert Hall show. As it poured with rain the only day I spent there we saw a wonderful Rembrandt exhibition in Amsterdam instead.

Finally a day in Antwerp. Through Pierre I had contacted the only man who knows anything at all about folk dancing in his country of which he admitted there was practically nil. Again, like Luxembourg, he explained the loss of culture and tradition due to occupation by different powers over the centuries and to the people trying to adapt to the culture of the occupying power. He had been to England and Scotland and had travelled all over Europe. Last year he had been to the Festival in Oslo. Then to Sweden. He told me of a visit of South African Flemish three years ago who had visited 7 European countries bringing with them a book of their simple dances, most or all of recent origin through legacies of their migration years ago. This book I bought. Of the Flemish dances there are about five scattered in a series of books of "international" dances, very many of them English. Prewar he had attended the Easter courses in Holland, now taken by Thora Jacques.

We discussed every aspect of folk dancing and costumes; he showed me photographs of this group and foreign groups who had visited Belgium, and the costume worn locally: really nothing specific except for a lace cap looking like a bonnet and a paisly patterned silk or wool shawl carried by the women. A visit which I anticipated lasting 30 minutes ended in a four hour discussion. He might come over with his wife to see our December show. He was also keen to visit Llangollen.

And home again after 2,500 miles of perfect driving, perfect weather until the last 2 days, making contacts, renewing friendships, seeing and taking part in many things, accepted as a friend wherever I went, and, I hope, strengthening ties in the folk dance world - helping others dance non-French dances, and I hope, putting on a sound basis a small international group at Challons. I have also enriched my own library by postcards of costumes and books on folk dances. A journey well worth while.

VIOLET CYRIAX.

LLANGOLLEN 1956.

A Correspondent

The International Musical Eisteddfod held annually at Llangollen is traditionally lucky with the weather. This year was no exception and the sun shone brilliantly on the 52,000 visitors who attended the first day. All the competitive Folk Dancing took place that first afternoon when twenty-one teams, twelve coming from overseas, performed traditional dances from their own countries.

It was overwhelming to see so much new material all in one afternoon and the few S.I.F.D. members present found it impossible to memorise all the details of dance, dress and music.

Miss Maud Karpeles and Miss Marjorie Penn had the difficult task of adjudicating the dance events and they placed the Grupo de Danzas Vascas "Goizaldi", from San Sebastian, first. This all male team of Basques performed exciting dances with sticks and daggers and held everyone so enthralled that the adjudicators forgot to give them the time signal. A lively and noisy group of Spanish dancers from La Coruna took second prize. The third place was awarded to Vascan, Czech dancers from Moravia, who deserve mention for their energetic Highwaymen's Dance, which, performed with hatchets, was reminiscent of Goralski.

It was disappointing that there were no dance teams from Scandinavia in the Eisteddfod and that the Rumanian team had to cancel their trip at the last minute.

The rest of the Eisteddfod was devoted to singing, both solo and choral, and instrumental competitions. An excellent loud-speaker system made it possible to listen to the beautiful singing and playing without having to suffer the heat inside the marquee. Each evening there was a concert when competitors and well known guest artists performed. It was interesting to see other dances from the teams' repertoires.

There was always so much going on everywhere in the Eisteddfod that one was bound to miss some of it. Even now with a few amateur snaps, a pile of souvenir newspapers, and press photographs still coming in by post the whole Eisteddfod presents a picture so full of colour, music and friendliness that it will take a long while to absorb.

This international gathering has now been in existence for ten years, much the same length of life as our Society. Is it not time that we got together to make more use of this wonderful opportunity that occurs on our doorstep each year?

DEMONSTRATION NOTES

We had two demonstrations for the afternoon of Saturday, June 30th. The Hospital Demonstration Team led by May Hendrie undertook one for me. This was our fourth appearance at the annual Garden Fete at Enfield Vicarage and I understand that all went well.

The second demonstration was at Staines, Middlesex, where the full Swedish team lent variety to the Sports Day of Messrs W.E. Sykes Ltd. We danced on the sports field with our three musicians ensconced on a low wooden platform nearby. All went very well until halfway through the programme, when a sudden gust of wind blew the music off the music stands and across the field. We dancers didn't see what had happened and wondered why the music suddenly went hay-wire. Dr. Cyriax thought it would help if we danced two instead of four turns each time until we caught up with the musicians, and gave orders accordingly. Mr. Mattson didn't agree and chaos reigned for a second or two. We sorted ourselves out and made a miraculous recovery. I don't know what the audience made of it. The rest of the programme went well.

Saturday, July 7th, was another busy day for the team. We went to Belmont School, Mill Hill Village, to dance at a charity Garden Fete, run by Mill Hill Toc H in aid of their Hospital Film Fund. They hope each year to make enough money to hire films for the following year to take round to hospitals and old people's homes. We did not claim expenses for the show. Our programme in the afternoon was Austrian, Portuguese (a team organized by Steve from Lucille Armstrong's classes) and Swedish, and in the evening German, Estonian (Aili Estrat's team) and Balkan. John Fraser acted as compere, and I think it all went over very well. In between the two halves of the programme, we went to yet another Garden Fete at St. Andrew's Vicarage, Southgate. Steve and Dr. Cyriax transported us by car, just four couples and musician, and we arrived in time for hurried refreshments, much needed, before contributing twenty minutes of dancing to the afternoon's other entertainments. We were very well received and enjoyed dancing there. We arrived back in nice time to change and run through the Kolos for the

benefit of two new members of the team. We were very pleased to welcome Dorothy Weir and John Hughes, established demonstrators, but new to the Kolo team. My thanks to Aili for supporting us in this venture, and to the Portuguese dancers, some of whom were demonstrating for the first time, to Margaret Harris, who came specially to help with the Balkan, and to all members of the team for their good work. Carolyn Symes, latest member of the folk dance world and daughter to Bob and Rita, made her debut here and behaved beautifully.

MARGERY LATHAM

FUTURE DEMONSTRATIONS

August 24th.	Russell Square - for the Holborn Borough Council.
August 25th.	Aylesford Paper Mills, Ditton, Kent.
September 1st.	Telecommunications, Wanstead.

AUGUST PROGRAMME

<u>Inns of Court Mission, Drury Lane, W.C.</u>	6.30 - 9.30 p.m.
Sunday, August 19th	M.C. Ken Ward
" " 26th	M.C. Roly Minton

The Hall will not be available on August 5th or 12th.

There will be no dance at Cecil Sharp House in August.

It is hoped to resume Scottish classes in September, provided there is enough support.

Note: Kolo evening Chelsea Community Centre, 28th August, 7.30 - 9.30 p.m.

".... GREEN IN JUDGEMENT"

After the last Committee meeting I caught a night train for Edinburgh arriving there deep, as Psmith would say, "in alluvial deposits." I removed the outer layers as best I could at the hotel ("Baths may be had by special arrangement with the Management: Charge 1/-") and made my way to the Music Rooms to the ninth annual International Festival of Dancing organised by the North British Ballrooms Association. This is, today, a really big affair. In its first year the Festival attracted some 600 entries; this year there were 5,200 from 14 countries - spread of course over many sections: Highland, Traditional Irish, Ballroom, International Folk and Stage, the last including tap, ballet, acrobatic, character, Greek, modern stage or musical and the intriguing-sounding "Solo National." In addition to the hundreds of certificates for honours and merit and handsome engraved shields for second and third places, there were some 61 individual and group trophies to be won - some of considerable value.

Before recounting my ordeal in adjudicating the junior and open international folk dance sections I would like to refer to the so-called "solo national" section. I sat in on two of these sections (13 -15 yrs and 15 - 18 yrs) expecting - well I wasn't quite sure what to expect! In the event I endured the antics of some 50 young ladies arrayed in a variety of strictly unauthentic costumes. They performed a series of tired and unimaginative semi-balletic routines spiced here and there by almost recognisable basic steps. I would have loved to have watched the faces of our expert panel had they been present to view the succession of "Norwegian peasants," "Hungarian peasants," "Yugoslav Peasants", "Russian peasants" - invariably presented as a sort of Volga boatwoman. Spain too took a beating: quite a number of "Yotas," a "Tangillo," which looked reasonably authentic and one terrific number called, I think, "Spanish peasant," danced with timbrel to the music of Neapolitan Tarantella! Now while this stuff is quite pernicious it also reveals the paucity of imagination of the average dance teacher. In any case why these teachers neglect the rich mother lode of traditional folk dance and/or think they can improve upon it is beyond me. I must say however that I really enjoyed the Senior Natural Movement section since, apparently this sort of stuff demands a good figure and the briefest of flimsy costume. And shades of "Arise and the Wounded Bird," the bow and arrow motif kept recurring; I remember one "Hiawatha (more like Laughing Water in a Jeff Chandler picture) and one "Diana the Huntress."

I remember reading in a recent Fandango an editorial discussing the pros and cons of the desirability of attempting to adjudicate international folk dance competitions. I have always thought that it could not be a very objective business. However I arrived armed with some five headings

... under which points could be given. To my great delight I found already prepared a stencilled sheet, nicely laid out, listing some fifteen headings. This was the work of the previous adjudicator, our old friend Colonel Baldrey. I adopted this system with one alteration since I felt it made for some continuity of judgement and also made the thing that little bit less subjective. It is always on the cards that a number of our members may one day be called on for adjudication in this field and consequently may find this type of score sheet of interest and value.

"Entrance, Deportment, Atmosphere, Choice of Dances, Rules of Competition, Rehearsals (this I altered to Music), Technique and Body Control, Formation, Team Work, Flow, Enjoyment, Mistakes, Dress, Audience Appreciation, Exit."

There were six entries for the Junior section -under sixteen. England: a junior school team from Durham which did La Russe and a modified Rapper Sword dance to piano accompaniment. Scotland: one country dance team and one Highland team of little tots complete with full pipe band all in the same tartan; they made a grand showing and brought the house down. Ireland: a team of young girls in short purple costumes, black shoes and stockings dancing to a fiddle. The Ukraine: this was the youngest team - four tiny mites in full costume who danced a charming flirting routine finishing in traditional style; music the accordion. Wales: a large contingent from Port Maddox representing two styles of Welsh dancing in two different costumes; music the harp.

The Open competition which was also the grand final of the Festival, included four Highland teams, one Scottish country team, three Irish teams, the Manchester Ukrainians, the Estonians from Bradford, the Latvians from Manchester, an English team again from Durham (and again the Rapper,) an American Square team from a nearby U.S. Air Force base and a visiting group from Luxembourg, the "Ucht la Veille Groupe Folklorique."

The large number of Scottish and Irish teams rather terrified me but fortunately the standard of dancing and presentation varied considerably, several teams made one or more bad and obvious mistakes and it was not too difficult to differentiate between them. With the exception of the first five teams in the open section the standard of dancing was below that which we would expect in our Albert Hall shows. The footwork of the Irish teams was as one expected, impeccable, but, their enjoyment practically nil! I commented on this and was more than pleased to be backed up by the Irish adjudicator himself.

In the Junior section I placed Wales first with 89 pts, the Scottish Highland team (the wee yins) second with 88 pts, Ireland third with 85 and the Ukraine fourth with 84 pts. I was relieved to find general agreement with this result.

The open competition for the very handsome Challenge Cup (held by the Ukrainians) and the Baldrey Perseverance Cup (for the runners-up and held by the Kamolins Team, Latvia) finished as follows:-

1. "Orlyk" Group, Ukraine, 92 pts - difficult stuff done superbly.
2. "Kalev" Group, Estonia, 88 pts - Kivi Kasukas and Tulyak - mimed and danced delightfully and with sincere enjoyment.
3. Jean Carnie School, Edinburgh, (Highland) 87 pts.
4. "Kamolins" Group, Latvia, 85 pts - music and male costume suggestive of Romanian influence?
5. The Luxembourg Team with 84 pts.

The final ordeal of the evening came after the prizes had been presented and the hall virtually cleared. The T.V. crew who had been making a tele-recording demanded, for panning away purposes, shots of the adjudicator at work, close-ups and all.

I was interested to learn on return to London that our friends in the Glasgow group sent over a team to the 1955 Festival and took fourth place with 90 pts. We are barred from Llangollen but there is, as yet, nothing to stop us entering a team or two in the Edinburgh festival. It seems to me that our Balkan group or our number one Swedish team would almost certainly have been placed this year - the great failing with most groups was under-rehearsal.

J.F.

TIME MARCHES ON!

Members will be pleased to learn the the Society has, belatedly, presented Jack and Joan Richardson with a wedding present. Most appropriately this took the form of a clock - just to remind Jack and Joan of the time which elapsed between the idea and its execution.

Jack writes: We should like to thank all the members of the S.I.F.D. who so kindly subscribed to our wedding present. We have bought a clock and a set of three green flower vases with the money and they are now all in place in our dining room. It is very difficult to know how our thanks can be passed on to those who subscribed. We do hope, however that they will all have a chance to come to see us and the present in the near future.

Again, with many thanks to you all,

Yours sincerely,

Joan Jack

SOME REFLECTIONS on BULGARIAN FOLK DANCING.

Folkdancing in Bulgaria is very much alive even today when almost everyone has a radio and there is a cinema in nearly every village. Every saint's day and at certain traditional times of the year, everyone joins in a horo on the village square or in the main street of a very simple type, danced flat-footed and abounding in energy. The best dancers of the village try to outdance each other in speed and intricacy of movement, and a rachenitsa is always danced. Even in Sofia where one might reasonably expect folkdancing to be almost extinct, there is one quarter where dancing takes place every Sunday. Ritual dances are performed to greet the Spring, on Midsummer Day and the Nastinaka, the Fire dancing, still takes place every year although many people believe it to have died out completely.

The rhythms of Bulgarian dances seem very strange to English ears but they are quite simple once the ear has tuned in to them. Each region of Bulgaria has its own particular character and dances, and horos frequently vary from village to village. The Macedonian dances are graceful and lyrical, as everyone knows who attends the kolo classes, but they also include virile sword dances and steps where the men leap into the air and roll from one knee to the other. I was lucky enough to meet an old Macedonian of 75 who showed me how he danced in his village; he had, incidentally, come to Sofia to help the State Ensemble study the Macedonian Sword Dance. Thracian dances are totally different. The men dance with the top part of their bodies bent over and they drum their feet on the ground at great speed, interspersing this tropoli step with large movements all executed with great energy and spirit. The dances from the Shop area around Sofia, such as Kopanitsa, are very fast and complicated, the whole body shaking at great speed. The Shop and Thracian dances are perhaps the most spectacular dances in Bulgaria, calling for great virtuosity on the part of the dancers. The dances from Dobrudja area in the north are, on the whole, slower and heavier. The men twist and shake their bodies as they repeat the tasks they perform on the farms in their dances. Still other towns have very individual kinds of dance. Round Pomorie, a fishing town on the Black Sea, the dance repeats one extremely simple step, while the horo line imitates the movement of the waves on the beach and the dancers cry like sea birds and the wind along the seashore.

The men's steps in a horo or rachenitsa are the most interesting to a foreigner since they are almost always the most spectacular. It is only in a very few areas that women's dances are found that are on a par with the men's steps. There is however, one thing which all Bulgarian dances, whichever area they are from and whether danced by men or women, have in common; that is the terrific vitality and enjoyment with which they are danced and which always communicates itself to the onlooker. Because of this spirit in their dancing, it is impossible to stand and watch for very long and it is certainly impossible to forget a Bulgarian horo or rachenitsa.

Cynthia Dance.

(Cynthia has just returned from a six-week visit to Bulgaria as a guest of the Folk Dance State Ensemble and consequently has had a superb opportunity for detailed observation of folk dancing in that country. Ed;)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The A.G.M. will be held on Thurs; Oct; 18th 7.30.p.m. at The Imperial College. Members are reminded that nominations for Officers and Committee are governed by the following constitutional requirements;-

"The Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and six ordinary members of the Committee shall be elected according to the following procedure. Any member of the Society may be nominated by members provided that each nomination (a) is in writing signed by two members, (b) contains the written consent of the member to act, if elected, (c) is received by the Secretary of the Society not later than Sept;30th, (d) the subscription for the following year of the person nominated, the proposer and seconder are paid not later than Sept;20th... (If an d where elections are necessary) the Secretary shall send out voting papers to all members... entitled to vote at the A.G.M. that year. The voting paper shall be returned in an unmarked envelope together with a note signed by the voter indicating his name and address, so as to be received by the Secretary no later than seven days before the said meeting... The Committee shall be deemed to be elected in the following order; Chairman, Hon. Sec; Hon. Treas; ordinary members of the Committee. For each office the voter shall indicate his preference by number one, two, three and so on. The Chairman who is elected is the person for whom the highest number of voters record their first preference. If he is also a candidate for another office or for ordinary membership pf the committee, the votes recorded in his favour for these other offices shall be disregarded and the voter shall be deemed to have voted for the person next highest in his order of preference. A similar procedure shall... be adopted if any candidate is nominated as Treasurer or ordinary member of Committee in addition to Secretary, or as ordinary member of Committee in addition to Treasurer. The Sec; Treas; and six ordinary members of Committee elected shall be the candidates receiving the highest number of votes for these positions by the above procedure."

Marie Le Fort.
Hon; Secretary.

SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE.

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1956/57 are now due, these should be paid by Postal Order or cheque and sent to;- Simon Guest (membership secretary) 46, Holmbury Court, S.W.17. Until your subscriptions are paid you are of course unable to participate in the business of the A.G.M. or the nomination and election of Officers and the Committee.

WEDNESDAY ADMISSION CHARGE UP.

The Committee have reluctantly decided that the charge of 1/- for members for admission to Wednesday classes be increased to 1/6; more-over, to maintain the differential between members and non-members, that since the admission charge for members is now 1/6 for all functions except Cecil Sharp House, the corresponding charges for non-members shall be increased to 2/-. The Committee have taken this step (a) because the Wednesday classes have been losing an average of 10/6 per night over the past 10 months and (b) because the L.C.C. have warned us that the hire charge for Carlyle School is shortly to be reviewed - upwards...
