

S.I.F.D.

NEWS SHEET

June 1957

Chairman: H.J. Price Esq.

Hon.Secretary: Miss M.J. LeFort

Hon.Editor: J. Ungar Esq.

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### OUT AND ABOUT...

From May onwards people in this country are out and about rather more than in the months immediately preceding. This spirit of the season seemed to have brought out only a few more of our members than usual for the halfyearly General Meeting of the Society, though this time we did not have to wait very long for enough to turn up to constitute a quorum.

Because this meeting represents such an important event in our calendar, we have slightly extended the deadline for News Sheet and you will find some comments on this subject on later pages.

May has also seen another Surrey Crest week-end, which is certainly an "out and about" affair, and our YHA enthusiasts are again extending their wanderings far and wide more often.

Our friends in Newcastle, who will probably form themselves into a branch of the Society, write that they had a most enjoyable evening recently, "recapping" the dances which Margery and Bert taught them over a weekend some weeks back.

Elsewhere in News Sheet you will find a Square Dance report from our good friends Len and Beryl Sawyer, who have now settled down in Canada - their address is 466, West 16th Street, Vancouver, Br.Columbia, Canada. Beryl writes: "We are very happy, love Vancouver - it is a beautiful city and the people are very friendly. "Good luck and we hope to hear from them again soon!"

J.U.

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### THE DEMONSTRATION SECRETARY WRITES...

We had three teams at the concert given at Caxton Hall on Monday, 13th May, by the International Cultural Association.

The Swedish team opened the concert with three dances, and were followed by dancers from Burma, Estonia (our friend Aili's team),

Ceylon, India and Spain - the latter a solo dancer, not from our group. Our Balkan team came next, and we had a tight squeeze on a very small stage, with perilous moments, when we had to avoid the grand piano, the feet of the "mike" and the footlight ramp. We should have been much more comfortable with a team half the size, but at least we afforded a contrast with the other items, which were mostly solo, or small teams.

The concert was followed by a Ball and cabaret; during the latter programme our Iberian group presented two Jotas, which started off at breakneck speed, but recovered halfway through. All things considered, the dancers acquitted themselves remarkably well!

This was a well intentioned evening, with a pleasantly varied programme. The high spot, as far as I was concerned, was the performance by H.R.H. Prince Tiao Khampan, Ambassador from Laos, who played on a native wind instrument which, from where I sat, looked something like a woven cricket bat; I should have liked to see it closer. (Philip Thornton tells me that this is actually a series of pipes bound together, and is the forerunner of the organ. It is only to be found in Laos and parts of Malaya).

My thanks to all the teams who took part, and for their good-humoured acceptance of the totally inadequate cloakroom accomodation.

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Margery Latham.

AT THE GENERAL MEETING...

...it is usual for the Hon.Secretary to read out all the apologies for absence... This time, although only some 15% of the members attended, only one thought it worthwhile to apologise to the Meeting! The Meeting approved by acclamation the suggestion by the Hon.Sec. that this letter should be published in full - to stir the conscience of all others... So here you are:

"It is with much regret that I have to write an apology for absence from the half-yearly general meeting. I am afraid that a Thursday is impossible for me during term time, so I hope you will forgive my unavoidable absence. All best wishes for the success of the meeting and a full attendance. Yours sincerely, Barbara Turpin". (Editor's note: Miss Turpin is better known to us all by her nickname of "Dickie").

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NOTES AND NEWS

The Hon. Treasurer informed the General Meeting that he would be unable to continue his full duties because of prolonged ill-health. The Committee has already co-opted Richard C.W. Beckford to act as Assistant Treasurer.

The Annual Accounts for the year ending 31.8.1956 were rejected by the General Meeting because of certain small inaccuracies, and these accounts, after revision, will be discussed again together with the accounts for the year ending 31.8.1957, at the Annual General Meeting in October.

Horror! (From the Daily Telegraph). In America they are selling a garlic stick, shaped like a lipstick, to rub round the inside of salad bowls. But if a girl makes a mistake when packing her evening bag for a party...

Buried Treasure: The "Barkstead Treasure", reputed to have been hidden in the Tower of London in the 17th Century is the subject of renewed digging and investigations by an archeological team from the Ministry of Works.

Book Review: The SIFD's first book of dances was reviewed in the EFDS Journal by our old friend Kenneth Clarke, as follows: "This excellent and meticulous booklet excited many nostalgic memories for me. It was on many of the dances in this volume which I, until then a determined non-dancer, cut my teeth, both as a dancer and as an M.C. For me, therefore, it was an aide-memoire, and as such I found it completely satisfactory. The authors themselves wisely acknowledge in the introduction the limitations of the printed word where authenticity of character is desired, but within those limitations this book should prove a joy and boon to those who teach "national dances". One very small query concerns the description of "Hakke Toone" as a clog dance. All Dutch dancers with whom I had contact have always insisted that clogs were for work only, and that a Dutchman would never, under any circumstances, wear them to dance!"

Congratulations to Charles Dellow, on his engagement last February to Miss Audrey Mansfield, of Welling, Kent. Charles completes his National Service in July of this year, and he and Audrey hope to be married early in 1958. Our best wishes to them, and we hope they will both come and dance a lot!

TOTEMLAND SQUARE DANCE CONVENTION  
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

From Len and Beryl Sawyer

When we heard that a Square Dance Convention was to be held here in which 16,000 dancers from Vancouver and the surrounding districts would participate, Len and I decided we would be among them.

As we had been told the Hall would quickly fill, we arrived early and passed the time viewing the groups of team photographs displayed around the Hall. The Clubs, apparently, delight in designing their own costumes. There is even a "Saturday Afternoon Clinic" held in Vancouver at which a lecture is given on "Square Dance Fashions". One Club was photographed wearing dresses and shirts designed to give the effect of a totem pole - a collection of which is one of Vancouver's attractions - when each member climbed on the shoulders of the next. The most popular material for dresses appears to be organdie over layer upon layer of (expensive) stiff, nylon petticoats - this combination gives a good view of the long, lace-edged drawers at the call "swing your partner". The most fascinating piece of equipment for the men was an inch-wide tie in a pastel shade in which was woven gold and silver threads - "The latest thing, boy!"

As the dancers drifted in, we were dazzled by the splendour of the women's crinolines, some of which stood out at an angle of nearly 90° to the wearer owing to the layers of petticoats, but on the whole the ladies kept their "can-can" petticoats to a more moderate number. I must say I thought the men did not really take advantage of their "fashions"; they were, for the most part, dressed in jeans and check shirts.

The evening began with a banner parade by various Clubs which began very well but wound up in chaos until photographic order was re-established. The photograph taken, the sets formed up.

The orchestra included a twanging double-bass which gave the music depth and rhythm. There were twenty callers in all, some of whom sang calls, a few in duet, each well-known and popular. Everyone on the floor knew the dances but as we did not recognise one - although several of the figures were familiar - we retired to the balcony for a bird's-eye view.

The style was smoother and, to us at least, conveyed less expression in comparison to teams seen at home - the impression was that these dances were well known and often performed. To quote a leading executive of the Metropolitan Square Dance Council, "The

original Canadian settlers would have to look hard to recognise square dancing as it is now". In its present form it is "smoother, more graceful, less rowdy and less formal than original square dance forms. Square dancing started originally in France and the calls grew with the dance. The calls do not commemorate any event now, although they may have at one time. From the French peasant, the square dance moved two ways - it was taken to the French Court, whence it was adapted by neighbouring countries into their folk dances. Actually a square dance is one of the best examples of international mingling available; it is a mixture of European, Irish, Scottish and North American Indian folk dances - with a bit of Mexican tempo thrown in."

So, it just goes to show if you alter a dance enough and dance it long enough you have a "new", authentic style. (We wouldn't say this but for the fact that we are an ocean and a continent away).

SWEDEN AND ITS TRADITIONS... by V. Cyriax

(Continued from last month)

The Swedish people have always had a great love of beauty, art, learning and inventions. In spite of this materialistic age, many ancient arts and crafts are still preserved, we can still find lovely jewellery, ancient folk costumes, imposing statues and beautiful old buildings.

Very much alive is the search for further knowledge, as well as a great feeling of appreciation for Sweden's great men - Linnacus the botanist, Ling the physical educationalist, Milles the Sculptor, Dalen the inventor of the Aga cooker, and of the buoys which automatically light up at dusk...

These peoples are, however, still Vikings at heart, and large numbers of them still emigrate and seek their fortune abroad. They travel abroad with a thirst for knowledge and a genuine desire to learn, and thus have acquired a much broader outlook than many other countries.

Sweden has been a democratic State for centuries, and its type of government has not changed over the last 25 years. And last, but not least, Sweden was the first country to accept the emancipation and equality of women, as early as the 19th century.

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

ABSENT FRIENDS

May is nearly past, and another of the Society's general meetings has faded into limbo. One wonders what changes it has wrought, if any.

Judging from experience of this and past meetings, attendances have been poor and policy decisions few. It is perhaps comforting to reflect complacently that this is an indication that all is well; that the membership is content. But are they really content? Or are they just content for someone else to do the work, falsely confident that a willing nucleus will ensure the continuance of the Society's existence for ever.

It is understandable that the very pleasant attractions of other engagements make tempting general pressure on the available spare time of members. But this does not excuse failure to attend the Society's general meetings.

The provision of classes at Carlyle School; the Sunday dances at Cecil Sharp House and Inns of Court Mission; the formation and administration of the 'splinter groups'; the continual search for headquarters and new halls; the Albert Hall Festival and numerous other demonstrations; the support of new groups now arising in various parts of the country; these things all bring problems, which require good machinery if they are to be overcome. The occasion for the overhaul of such machinery, and for the settlement of policy is at these meetings.

Moreover, it would be difficult to convince the Committee that our members are 100% against (say for example) an increase in the subscription rates or the admission charges, when only 15% of them attended the last meeting.

But it goes much deeper than this. Apathy strikes at the very vitals of the Society. Absence from a meeting is but another manifestation of the general lethargy which is gradually replacing the original vital interest; of doing as little as possible to satisfy one's dwindling conscience. It may be that older members, disappointed because progress seems slow, are inclined to lose interest very quickly. Too many members allow themselves to callapse under the ills of yesterday and the disillusionments of today. There is no excuse for such conduct. Instead we should get the facts and push on from there, reviewing the past and planning for the future. In that way better tomorrows will inevitably follow.

It would be no exaggeration to say that at the present time a dozen determined people could dominate the Society's meetings. The result would be that our accredited representatives would not be truly representative. As it is, even with a fairly representative representation, the Committee often have to decide what they think the membership want. Thus their duty to interpret and translate into action the wishes of the membership, whose varied and sometimes conflicting interests must at all costs be resolved if we are to make any progress at all, is made more difficult to carry out with "absent friends".

The Committee has been strongly criticised (and just as strongly defended) in the past over many controversial issues. If more members took a more active part in Society affairs, the Committee would be less likely to misinterpret the views of the membership for they would know what those views were. Intelligent guesswork can be very interesting, but it is no substitute for knowledge.

The Committee is now one of the most important sections in the Society, but it is not a panacea for all its troubles. To solve the Society's problems it is not merely enough to set up a Committee. It can moderate and guide the creative energy of individual members, but it can never be a substitute for them. However we twist and turn, we can never escape the responsibilities that are ours, as members of this Society, that always some individual must think hard, laboriously accumulate knowledge, and have the inspiration and energy from which alone the solutions to our problems can come.

The remedy for all our troubles lies in the hands of the members. Are we going to see our "absent friends" at the next general meeting? I sincerely hope we will.

Yours most sincerely,

Richard C.W. Beckford.

Sir,

COMBINED OPERATION

On Saturday, May 11th a team of nine (five members of S.I.F.D. and six of Harrow Green - yes, I can count) went in the name of S.I.F.D. to dance at a Maytime Festival at Gomshall in Surrey.

The Queen of the Tillingbourne Valley, selected from the May Queens (and attendants) of Abinger, Albury, Chilworth, Peaslake and Shere, was crowned and we were photographed with her. There was a fancy dress parade, Maypole dancing, handbell ringing, sideshows, and us.

It was all very friendly, we were met at the station and taken along in cars. We had a hut in which to change which was large enough to rehearse flying Kreutz König in, and we had tea in the V.I.Ps tent. Oxdans was performed by Charles Steventon and Peter Lilley, really a combined effort, but Steve came off worse as H.G. have their own innovations (don't worry, Pug, the spirit of the dance is unharmed). Every member of the team enjoyed the afternoon, S.I.F.D. members had a change of musician as Harry de Caux played for us. I only had one comment on the programme, "There's something wrong, I know all those dances. I shan't have to learn anything on the floor"!

My thanks to the team and to S.I.F.D. and H.G.

Ruth Sharp.

Extract from letter concerning demonstration on May 11th.

"... The performance was very much appreciated by all sorts and kinds of people and a lot of them have made a point of telling me how much they enjoyed it..... I think that if to feel truly rewarded for your efforts you need to feel that you are appreciated in what you perform you should be enjoying a comfortable glow of satisfaction. In case you are in doubt please allow me to thank you officially and also personally, but always sincerely for coming down on what I am glad to say was a most successful occasion.

Yours sincerely,

A.G. Acton Pierce "

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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS.

The Iberian Group which still meets every Monday, will have its meetings of June 3rd and 10th at St. Simon Zelotes Hall, Milner Street, Nr. Sloane Square (Pont Street).

The Hungarian Group will meet at the Polish YMCA, Kensington Gardens Square, W.2. at 3 p.m., on the following Sundays:

June 2nd  
June 16th  
June 30th  
July 7th

On Friday, July 12th, there will be a Hungarian class at 7.30 p.m. at Carlyle School, Hortensia Road, Chelsea.



The Polish Group continues with its extremely successful classes at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday evenings at the Chelsea Community Centre, King's Road, Chelsea, under the expert guidance of Kostek and Ziutek. This group is very much alive, and we wish it well for continued progress.

