

S.I.F.D.

NEWS SHEET

August 1957

Chairman: H.J. Price Esq.

Hon. Secretary: Miss M.J. LeFort

Hon. Editor: J. Ungar Esq.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

On Sunday, July 28th, a special half-hour demonstration will be held at Cecil Sharp House, from 6.30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

The programme will include Balkan, Polish, Spanish and Swedish dances, as well as - it is hoped - other items.

This demonstration will be followed by the usual end-of-the-month dance until 9.30 p.m.

MORE MEMBERS!

Once again the cry goes out: "More members!" We have heard this often enough, but much too many members have just ignored it - in at one ear and out at the other!

It is however not just idle chatter; it is essential that within the next 6 months or so every existing member should introduce at least one of his or her friends, and convince them that they ought to join the SIFD.

It is only thus that we can support our aims and continue to increase and spread our "fame". It is a fact that in the last 4-5 years our reputation has constantly been growing as an authority on Folk Dancing of all countries, and it is only by ever increasing numbers that we can properly continue our work, or rather our hobby!

We hope, of course, that the Croydon and Newcastle projects will leap ahead with great success - but the original London group must always remain a reasonable size.

So its up to you, members! Let us see how many new members you will bring in September, when the new SIFD year starts - and don't forget to renew your own subscriptions, either!

APOLOGIA

I do not know who, nor why, but some people are said to have taken offence at last month's leading article. If anyone felt that some remarks were offensive, to them I tender my sincere apologies! The subject matter of the article was one which has been discussed often in the past by many members of the Society, and is a controversial one, but a good argument never hurt anyone. So I hope any remarks made in News Sheet will in future be taken in the spirit they are intended!

J.U.

NOTES AND NEWS

Mr. Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, with his Swedish Ministerial escort, is reported to have joined a group of folk dancers dancing round the maypole. Mr. Nehru was apparently on an official visit to Sweden.

You will all be pleased to hear that Ilse Striegel and her son, Martin, are continuing to be very well. Father, too, is doing fine!

It would seem that there is a very considerable amount of dancing going on in Canada. Perhaps we should look towards the senior Dominion for further expansion?!

We appeal, once again, for further contributions to News Sheet. Interesting articles, letters to the Editor, your photographs of folk dancing events, reports of anything interesting you see on your holidays, will all be welcome!

Next month may see some production difficulties for News Sheet, because of the summer vacation at Imperial College. Hence the advance notices for September in the Programme page.

Holiday in Austria: Last year Heinz and Ilse led a tour of some of our members through parts of Austria. At long last their combined efforts have produced a diary, extracts from which will be published in News Sheet.

A series of articles on costume starts this month, compiled and written by Mary Saunders. It is hoped to include sketches in future instalments to illustrate some of the points made. This month's article is to serve as an introduction.

PEASANT COSTUME THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

No.1 - The origins of Costume

(the first in a series of occasional articles on peasant costume)

It is generally thought that man began to clothe himself for three main reasons - as a protection against the elements, out of modesty, and for decoration. The decorations of primitive man, and of the so-called "backward" cultures today, make perhaps the most interesting study. In ancient times warriors tattooed their bodies in order to display their victories, while hunters wore the teeth and bones of their victims for the same reason, a necklace of bear teeth being the insignia of manhood. In one African tribe a disk of wood is worn by the wife as a symbol of her husband's authority; in another tribe the members pluck their eyebrows so as to lessen their resemblance to ostriches! Some aboriginal Australians had much the same idea in blackening their teeth so as to lessen their resemblance to those of a dog. Of course, quite different and more beautiful ornaments, feathers, coloured beads, shells, and metal jewellery, for example, are worn by both men and women to attract the opposite sex.

For a long time tribes that had learned to make cloth - wool, cotton, and linen - wore it only draped or wrapped around them, although even in this stage of development there were differences in the manner of draping, as there still are today. People who used the skins of animals had to cope with pieces of an awkward shape, so they fitted the garment more or less to the shape of the body.

Many features of peasant costume today are inherited directly from very early times, although the history of each country has also played its part in modifying and enriching its dress. The leather sandals worn in Balkan countries today are fashioned in exactly the same way as when men first learnt how to make shoes from the skins of animals. In India and other Southern countries, the costumes are still made mainly from a straight piece of cloth draped in a characteristic way, as for example, the sari.

In Central Europe and the Balkans, shirts, blouses, skirts, trousers and headdresses are very often decorated with lace or embroidery at all the openings, on the hem, cuffs, collar and belt. It has been argued that these embroideries are meant as a sort of magical protection against all the evil forces waiting to attack the body from without. We can see costume here as a protection of the body from the "evil Eye" which is so vividly present to

many peasant communities, from whom the pagan past has never really departed. Blue and red are often the predominating colours, red being supposed to confer protection, and blue being regarded as beneficial, probably because it is the colour of the sunlit sky.

History has superimposed itself on ancient forms. Some traditional Austrian peasant costumes show distinct court influence, while in regions of the Balkans white costumes are decorated entirely in black in memory of a historical battle which is perpetuated in this way for centuries.

Although traditional costumes do survive intact in many countries, in others they are becoming less elaborate as people caught up in a mechanical age, and with easy entertainment, have less time and inclination to devote to their ancient traditions of peasant art.

S.I.F.D. DANCES IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

A letter from member Ian Grant, now at The High School, P.O. Box 292, McBride, British Columbia.

I thought that I was the westernmost country-member, but have just read in the June News Sheet that I am beaten by Len and Beryl Sawyer by a matter of some 300 miles or so.

Only a few members will remember me by name, as I only had one year (1955-56) in London, between overseas jobs. However, being a keen EFDS member and also Scottish dancer, I managed to learn a fair amount of the SIFD repertoire by attending most any and every class and dance, and also thanks to very kind extra tuition by Charles Steventon and Margaret Harris.

Result: we have a very keen Dance Club in the school here, and Karapyet, Hopak, etc., etc., are now danced in the "Rockies"! Nor are these particular two dances inappropriate here, as about 10% of our inland population in the West are Ukrainians.

As a concert, we have already staged the necessarily rehearsed Oxdans, and Jota Realita. Successful dances outside the SIFD repertoire have been: a Morris stick dance, the "Rigs o' Marlow" and the North Skelton Sword Dance from the EFDS. These are both so excitingly enjoyable that I suggest the SIFD try them when at Cecil Sharp House, where the swords and sticks can surely be borrowed, and the music is recorded.

As a staged Scottish dance, I found that "Hamilton House" was

best, insofar as it is the only one I know which is in a set without a "down the centre" figure - so difficult to do on a stage, and it was both easy to learn, and impressive to watch.

...Here it is exactly like a Western film - I live opposite a saloon with swing doors and dusty windows; inside it there are hats 2 ft. wide - my neighbour is the pool-room, the railroad passes close by, the stations have no platforms and the engines have everything bar the kitchen range, even to a peal of bells. Roads have no surface, and every journey begins and ends in a scream of engine or brakes and a cloud of dust, the aim being apparently "drama in movement", a legacy from the cowboys, who, by the way, are still numerous and in authentic kit! Favourite expressions are "Oh brother!" and "Holy Cow!"...just like the films.

Square dancing is also popular, but the style of the traveling step is disappointing. What must have once been the lively skip-change-of-step of Scottish or Irish dancing has degenerated to a smooth shuffle. Thus the dancing, though fast, is rather "flat" in comparison with what it could be.

That's all for now, except that, although life is very pleasant here, one still misses London, and the SIFD. Wishing you all great success, Yours, Ian Grant.

NOTES FROM MEXICO - LAS CANACUAS by Mildred Hall Walter
(Continued from last month)

Dominguez is very enthusiastic about the festival. Some of what is given here is direct, but free, translation of his material. He says that among the many musical manifestations of the mountainous regions of Michoacan in the region of Uruapan, Las Canacuas occupies a position of eminence for its beauty, its variety, and for the distinctiveness of its melodies, a series of songs in the Tarascan language, which are executed in a progressive order and in a traditional manner. Las Canacuas is an ancient ceremony, having lost the form and meaning of many of its words, due to endless oral repetition. Las Canacuas means "the crowns" in the Tarascan language, a name probably given because, in certain seasons of the year, the young women adorn the head with wild flowers for this ceremony.

The little town of Paracho, on the highway leading to Uruapan, is presumed to be the one which has kept this ceremony alive through the more than four hundred years since the Conquest, since it is the home of musical families, who are also the makers of fine musical instruments. Among the people of Paracho have been many

accomplished composers, also, and their indigenous music is among the finest to be found in the Republic.

A quotation from Edward Ruiz, a much earlier writer, is included in the Album. Ruiz writes: "On the following day, another party of very intimate nature took place in the home of the newly-married couple. Young men and women gathered; the girls with lovely wreaths of flowers in their hair and the young men carrying beautiful wreaths or sprays of flowers. They began to dance, not without having first given gifts for the new household to the bridal couple. During the dance, a piece of bread shaped in the form of a small child was passed from hand to hand, and many allusions to this child were made in their songs. The fiesta is called Las Canacuas, and it is still shown in various towns of Michoacan."

The ceremony in honour of Dominguez, a representative of the Secretariat of Public Education of Mexico, was given in 1923, in the town of Paracho. The songs he heard are listed by the first words of the song: Buenas Tardes, Good Afternoon; Ofrecimiento, Offering; Flor de Canela, Cinnamon Flower; Tata Ninito, Dear Friend; Compradito, Companion; Indito, Little Indian; Jarabe Serrano, Mountain Jarabe; Flor de Changunga, Changunga Blossom; Que Bonitos Mejicanos, What Pretty Mexicans; Lo Mejor, The best; El Dia (Fecha de Las Canacuas Ofrecidas), The Day (date of the ceremony of Las Canacuas); Adios Tata, Goodbye Friend; and Adios...Adios..., Farewell, Farewell...

The Tarascans call their young women guaris. In Paracho, at the time of the above festivities, the guaris gathered with the musicians at the home of the wealthiest inhabitant. There they had gay music for their own entertainment until the arrival of the honoured guest. The guaris were dressed in their festive regional costume which is composed of a white blouse with beautifully and brilliantly-coloured embroidery made by themselves, a full skirt of black or of deep blue wool, the deep bright blue rebozo with white silk stripes worn crossed at the back and tucked in at the front, a white apron with drawnwork, also fashioned by the wearers. Around their necks, they wore brilliantly colored paper leis; and in their hands they were carrying their lacquer trays, covered with a napkin on which was laid flowers and fruits of the season, pieces of handiwork and every kind of wooden miniatures; incrustated guitars, mandolins of fine wood, windmills, trumpets, boleros, combs, little brooms, etc., all in excellent taste and perfectly fashioned.

After a series of choreographic evolutions, actions and movements which the guaris made during Las Canacuas, for a finale, one of them drew near the honored guest and did a graceful dance. She carried in her hand a spray of marigolds entwined with leaves of

corn. She offered it to the guest, but when he tried to take it, she retired with grace and with gentle malice, repeating this phase several times. In olden times, the marigold was the symbol of virginity; therefore it was her duty to preserve her spray of flowers without losing a single petal.

In the second act, all of the guaris bowed to all of those present and especially to the honored guest. Then came a solemn moment; that of the petition. It is traditional that whatever they ask of the honoree, he must grant it in order not to lose all respect and honour among the townspeople.

Las Canacuas has degenerated today, and in Uruapan there are groups who use, instead of the ancient melodies of the Tarascans, songs in bad taste drawn from the theatres of the citified revues. Dominguez has only the Ofrecimiento and the Flor de Canela, Compradito, and Arbol Frondoso and La Flor de Changunga, which are, however, genuine musical gems full of indigenous Tarascan feeling.

FROM THE EFDS JOURNAL:

"Dutch Dancers in Clogs"

Miss Wil Hovinch, Weiver 49, Krommenie, Holland, writes:-

A friend of mine always sends me the magazine of the English dance and song, and I always enjoy reading it. When I read the last one, I read something about a Dutch clog dance in "Reviews".

In the first place, "Hakke Ioone" is misprinted here. It should be "Hakke Toone". Hakke or hak means the heel of a shoe (or clog). "Toone" or "toon" used to be the word for toe. The Dutch word "toon" is more or less slang now. At the moment you see this dance in Holland called "Hakke Toone" or "Hakke Teen".

There are still dancers in Holland who wear clogs, when they dance. There is a group in Gelderland in the east part of Holland and they wear clogs when they dance. I saw them myself two years ago, when they came to Amsterdam. They are all older people, I mean they are not in their twenties, and those people are used to wearing clogs, they wear them like I wear shoes. I shall never dance in clogs, because I can't even walk in them, and because I only dance the English dances.

I think it is going to be the same with the clogs as it is with the costumes. For example, in Marken the younger people

are more and more going to work in town in the factories, etc. They don't wear their costumes then, because they don't want to be looked at all the time. A man who lives in Marken told me that in former times they all were fishermen and went out together.

Formerly many more people wore clogs, because they were cheaper, but times have changed so much.

DEMONSTRATION NOTES

June is always a busy month for the demonstration teams as so many organizations have Garden Fetes and out-door Festivals, where folk dancing is the obvious attraction. The Swedish team paid a return visit on Friday, 21st June, to Phyllis Court, Henley, where they danced in the early hours of the morning, at this annual Swedish Ball. Last year you may remember we did this demonstration after the Swedish Church Midsummer demonstration. This year it was a little better and the team went immediately after the Friday class. I was unable to go but I understand that the dancing was greatly appreciated, that the team enjoyed themselves and that they were all conveyed there and back without mishap by our fleet of car owning dancers.

The Swedish Church Midsummer Eve was the next day, Saturday, June 22nd. I think the dancing was better than usual, although we always dance well at the Swedish Church. We are 'on our mettle', as it were, and the Swedish meal with the traditional glass of Schnaps, provided by Dr. Cyriax before the dancing, puts us in the right mood. We always dance our whole Swedish repertoire, and this year we had an extra couple, so we all had a chance to rest for one dance each. The following Saturday, June 29th, the Swedish team were out once more. This time for the EFDS Dance Festival at Tonbridge Castle. There was a large audience to watch and to join in the dancing, and very colourful it all looked in this lovely setting. We did Fjallnashalshe and Dalldars finishing with a Hambo at double the usual tempo. It certainly got us off the ground quickly!

I would like to thank Barbara Spinks, our new violinist, for playing at all three of these demonstrations, and the Willie Wallace Collection for plating at the first two.

On Saturday, July 6th, we had three teams out. Ken Ward was in charge of a Balkan team which went to a Garden Fete at Blackley,

Northants. I had a very warm letter of appreciation from the organizer thanking me for sending "such a charming team who danced so beautifully".

Dorothy Weir was in charge of the team who went to the U.N.A. Annual General Meeting Garden Fete at Hampstead. One member arrived late, and so Les Avery made his debut in the team in his place. My thanks to Les for helping us out. Again I had a letter congratulating us on the dancing of the team!

Margaret Harris took the third team to Ivinghoe Youth Hostel and I hope her own notes on it will be included in this report.

The weather was extremely kind to us on all of these out-of-door occasions, but it made up for it on Saturday, 13th July, when the team went to All Saints Annual Garden Fete at Hampton. The rain started just before we reached Hampton Station and we were drenched before we could reach the ticket collector. We sheltered and waited several minutes for the local bus, boarded it and then had a 15 minute wait before it left the station (we could have walked the distance in 10 minutes had it been fine). The field where we should have danced was a sea of mud, so we were accommodated in the small church hall. Only a few hardy souls were left to watch us, but they were very appreciative and joined in Fyrmanna Schottische with gusto at the end. It was all very disappointing for the organizers who had worked so hard.

My thanks to all members of the teams for their hard work and co-operation during this strenuous month.

I should also like to thank the Swedish team for the lovely bouquet of flowers, and all the friends who so kindly wrote to me. Please forgive me for not replying individually but there just hasn't been time.

Margery Latham

Future Demonstrations:

Thursday, July 23rd.	I.F.L. Wood Green.
Sunday, July 28th.	Cecil Sharp House demonstration from 6.30-7.
Thursday, Aug. 8th.	Islington Borough Council, Arlington Sq. N.1.
" " 15th.	" " " , St. Mary Magdalene Gardens, N.7.
" " 22nd.	" " " , Thornhill Sq. Gardens, N.1.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Nominations for Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and six ordinary members of Committee must be made in writing and received by the secretary not later than 30th September. These must be accompanied by the written consent of the member to act. The subscriptions of the proposer, seconder and member nominated must have been paid by September 30th.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Subscriptions are due on 1st September and should be sent to Mr. K. Ward, 4 Robertson Street, S.W.8.

S T O P P R E S S

The classes at Carlyle School will commence on Tuesday, September 10th with an advanced Balkan class - not on September 3rd as stated on the programme.

MONTHLY PROGRAMME

August-September 1957

Motto: More members mean more fun for all!

There will be no dance over the August Bank Holiday Weekend.

Dances at Inns of Court Mission, Broad Court, Drury Lane, W.C.2.

Time: 6.30 p.m. - 7.30 p.m.

Music by Mourie Pfeffer
A.N.D.Others

Members: 1/6d. Guests: 2/-

<u>Sundays</u>	11th August	M.C. Ken Ward
	18th August	M.C. Simon Guest
	25th August	M.C. Mourie Pfeffer
	1st September	M.C. John Ungar
	8th September	M.C. Mourie Pfeffer

Dance at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, N.W.1.

There will not be a dance at C.S.H. in August, instead there will be a special Friday evening dance as follows:

Friday 6th September, 7 p.m. - 10 p.m., M.C. Simon Guest

Music by The Wallace Collection

Members: 2/6d. Guests: 3/-.

Classes will re-start on the 3rd September, and Wednesday classes will again be followed by general dancing. Masters of Ceremonies for the first two Wednesdays in the new term will be:

4th September	Erik Owden
11th September	Bob Symes

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