

NEWS SHEET

July 1959

Journal of the Society for International Folk Dancing

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Deadline for News Sheet - the fourth day of each month.

EDITORIAL

This month there was very nearly no News Sheet at all, for the simple reason that being very busy I had no time to spend in research for material. This should not be very important. The dictionary definition of an editor is 'one who superintends for publication', but this particular editor writes, thinks, chews her biro and superintends here own material for publication.

During eighteen months as editor I have received for publication from members, apart from Group or Society notices, seven articles (all from the same person), one piece of music, one set of dance notes, and seventeen letters (so of the latter were not sent originally for inclusion in the News Sheet).

This is not a very impressive total. Surely members have something of interest to pass on to the News Sheet. Details of holidays abroad are always winners, even if the subject of dancing is never mentioned. Everybody seems to be specialising nowadays; surely members have learnt something of interest about the dance, costume, country, customs, and ways of the land of their choice. Does nothing amusing or interesting ever crop up at their classes, does no-one ever say a funny thing which is worth repeating?

As things stand at the moment the News Sheet is developing into a continuous and onerous chore for me alone. No sooner is one edition put into the post for typing than the next one is begun. This means that I, its almost sole contributor, will become stale, disheartened, and dull, and that the News Sheet will become a monotonous monologue. It also makes each month, for me, lose its individuality, and as a consequence this month's edition headed 'July', contains an article dealing with a custom honoured in June.

This is a mistake which is not important; what is important is that the News Sheet must have some new blood injected into it, otherwise its reading public will lose interest, and the News Sheet will become a timetable to be consulted only when absolutely necessary. So members, over to you for anything you can give me, please.

SOBOTKI

Sobotki, an old pagan festival, falls on June 24th, St. John's Day. It is very special for it falls right in the middle of summer and is celebrated with all manner of customs, both pagan and relig. To act in the proper manner on this day is to ensure success throughout the whole year.

Crops and animals must be honoured, and fishing boats are blessed and sprinkled with holy water.

Although St. John's Day is kept in a strictly religious manner, St. John's Eve is a day for feasting and for celebration. Bonfires are lit, and houses are decorated with flowers and leaves. Certain plants are said to flourish only on this day, and the young people go into the woods in search of them. Marriage divinations are also doubly true if discovered on St. John's Eve.

All night the young people dance and play games round the bonfires, which must be lit in a special way. Wreaths of flowers, decorated with candles are launched upon the streams and lakes by the girls, and as the wreaths, brilliantly illuminated by the glowing candles, float away, the boys attempt to retrieve them by wading, swimming, or even with the aid of a boat. A boy who is successful in catching a wreath is said to be the future husband of the girl to whom the wreath belonged. A girl whose wreath drifts away unrecovered, or whose wreath is caught in an eddy is doomed to spinsterhood for another year.

Both sexes leap across the bonfires and then run straight to the streams where they swim and play in the water. After this they return to the fire for feasting, singing, dancing, and games.

POLISH COSTUME FROM CRAKOW.

Women's Costume.

White blouse with full sleeves gathered into a cuff with a frill at the wrist edge, often decorated with white embroidery. The neck is gathered into a band, and a frill is sewn on which comes up the neck about four inches wide. This may be of stiff lace or embroidered in white.

The bodice is of a solid colour, black, wine, green, etc., and is usually of heavy velvet. It is richly decorated with embroidery, beads, and sequins. The edges are usually decorated with silver braid or with coral beads. The designs are usually floral, although Polish emblems such as the peacock or the eagle may be used. Pre-dominant among the floral motifs is the poppy, the cornflower, and the ear of corn. The bodice has a fairly low round neck and laces down the front. Most Krakowian bodices appear with a series of embroidered flaps at the waist, about four inches long, but a recent visit to Poland by one of our members revealed the fact that none of the costumes exhibited in the Polish museums had these flaps, excepting those from the Gorrall. This seems to indicate that the flaps are a recent innovation, and that to be truly authentic, one should make a Krakowian bodice with a plain band falling from the waist about 4" wide. Long coloured ribbons are sewn onto the right shoulder.

The skirt should be made of a very fine woollen material, brightly coloured or white as the background, and covered with roses. These roses should not be woven in bunches, simply scattered all over the skirt. The skirt is full and may be gathered or simply pleated.

The boots are either black or red, and are shaped to the leg, lacing right up the front.

Aprons may be worn. These are simple, small ones in white with possibly an edging of white lace or white embroidery at the hem.

The head-dress is a wreath of country flowers for the unmarried girl, and a white kerchief for the married woman. Several rows of beads should be worn.

Men's Costume.

White shirt with full sleeves gathered into a cuff, and a fairly wide collar. A length of red ribbon goes under the collar and ties in a bow at the front.

Trousers are of striped material, usually red and white, and are of the breech variety, worn tucked into a black boot.

The jacket is usually sleeveless and reaches to about knee level. It has a small standup collar. It is of a solid colour, green, blue, etc., and is of woollen material. The jacket meets from the collar down to the waist, where it is fastened with a hook. It has revers of a contrasting colour, and the whole coat should really be lined throughout with this same contrasting colour. A slit pocket is on each hip with a lined flap. The back skirt of the coat is cut into three or four waist length flaps. Every edge on the coat is decorated with coloured braid, and the front is decorated with tassels or small pearl buttons. Often the pocket flaps are decorated in a similar fashion and a tassel may decorate the top of each back flap.

A small cape is sometimes worn, either over the coat or simply over the shirt, although the latter is fairly unusual. The cape is decorated in a similar manner and is fastened at the neck only.

A wide leather belt is worn with one or two loops of circular gilt medallions hanging from the belt on the left side. This belt is often tooled into elaborate patterns.

The hat is very similar to a mortar board; the hat part usually in red with a blue band. Large peacock feathers at the side.

Long red or black boots complete the costume.

THE DANCE FERTILITY

Margery Latham has given permission for me to print the following in the News Sheet. She swears it is true, anyway it makes a good story.

For seven years Margery has had a large honeysuckle plant in her garden which has never bloomed, and until last week there had been no sign of bud this year.

Last Wednesday evening, Margery went off to her class, and during the evening a dance was put onto the programme which was new to her. As she danced she asked the instructor who was next to her what type of dance it was, and he replied that it was a very old dance, and so far as he knew it was some form of fertility dance. Apparently she made some suitable reply and carried on dancing, possibly with rather more abandon as she caught the hang of the dance. Apparently, I say, for Margery made no report on the matter; what she did report, however, is that the next morning on visiting her garden, she discovered the honeysuckle plant to be one mass of blossom.

THE GOURMET

Margery's Kommittee Kakes.

(Thoroughly recommended by committee members,
nationality obscure).

2 oz. butter	1 tabl. syrup
8 tabl. icing sugar	Grated orange peel
8 handfuls of any type of crisp cereal (using your discretion on the size of your mitt, though).	
1 cup cocoa	

Melt the butter and syrup in a saucepan over a low heat. Remove from heat and add the sugar, stirring to dissolve it, and until it thickens into a sticky solution. Shake in the cocoa and stir. Add the cereal and orange peel, and stir well.

Drop spoonfuls onto a greased plate, pinch into pyramid shapes, and allow to set.

Serve with plenty of cups of tea or coffee since they are rather thirst making.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

THE IBERIAN GROUP

The Iberian Group performed two more successful demonstrations in April. The first of these was a cabaret at the Royal College of Surgeons Staff Ball on April 17th, and the other was at a social evening at Whetstone Congregational Church on April 25th. The group received a hearty vote of thanks on both occasions, especially from the Whetstone audience, who had apparently never seen Spanish dancing at such close quarters, and enjoyed it very much.

Another demonstration is planned for June 23rd, at the Chelsea College of Science and Technology. The group also plan to stage a group full-length show at Eltham Little Theatre, S.E. London, on October 3rd, and will appreciate the support of S. I. F. D. members.

Wedding bells are ringing for four members of the Iberian group this summer. Two dancers, Carol Wearn and Sid Askill are to be married on June 20th, and Elizabeth Houser is to marry Phillip Allcock group chairman and guitarist, on July 4th. Elizabeth and Phillip met at the Iberian Group classes over a year ago.

(Since this news came in just too late for the June edition, Carol and Sid will be married by the time of this announcement. The best wishes of the members of the S. I. F. D. go out to both couples. Ed.).

The group has recently been learning two new dances: an exciting flamenco dance, and a charming Majorcan one. The second, called "Mateixas" is an unusual but charming one, and is supposed to represent Majorcan peasants parodying a court dance. The dancers, if they have any breath to spare, sing while they dance:

"Sa vida des figueral
es vida molt de vertida
cuint figues tot lo dia
ies vespres un bonball"

The programme of Iberian classes for the September term has now been arranged. The group will have classes on two evenings a week, on Monday at Hugh Myddleton School and on Thursday at Christopher Hatton School, Islington. The Monday class will begin with the beginners' hour, taught by Margaret Colato, followed by an hour of advanced teaching by Patricia Regan. The third hour on Monday will be devoted to revision and rehearsal, and preparation for the group show. The Thursday class will last two hours, the first to be an intermediate class, and the second to be for flamenco dancing.

All S. I. F. D. members are welcome to join the Iberian Group, and should see Margaret Colato at Hugh Myddleton School at 7 p.m. any Monday.

SALUTE TO THE COLLECTORS

Twenty-one Guns

We would like to take this opportunity to salute collectively all those whose onerous task it is to collect Society subscriptions and monies. If we could fire twenty-one guns in their honour we would willingly do so and hang the expense.

Without the collector the Society could not function. If it were not for those weekly peregrinations the Society would be without the cash which enables it to carry out its numerous affairs.

Collecting money seems easy enough but it has attractions for only a few. The hardy types (like the Treasurer) take the queries, groans, vehement protests and grievances in their stride. Others wilt under the barrage and retire with a feeling that to carry on would be inviting a break-down.

There is no kudos in collecting; no limelight. On the odd occasions when there are plaudits it is the Society's officers who receive them. The collector works behind the scenes unsung and unhonoured.

In fairness, however, let it be said that the people who appreciate the worth of the collector are the members of the Society's Committee. Most of them have been through this initial grind themselves. You will find ample testimony in those who carry odd lists of payments around in the pages of the Minutes.

There is little the Committee can do to show its appreciation in tangible fashion. In any case, there is nothing that would adequately reward these people for the yeoman service they perform.

A poor or indifferent collector can do incalculable harm to the Society. A conscientious one is a more valuable asset than diamonds or rubies. If our small tribute inspires these nameless souls to carry on with their weekly efforts we shall have done something to repay the debt the officers and our members of the Society owe them.

RICHARD BECKFORD.

NOTICES

For many years now Mr. and Mrs. Titheridge have sat at the entrance to Inns of Court, Drury Lane, and collected the money as the dancers came in. Week after week they have performed this duty, always with a smile and an obvious interest in the dances. It is therefore with sincere regret that the Committee have now to announce that Mr. and Mrs. Titheridge have asked to be released from this duty. That they should want to is very understandable, and the good wishes and grateful thanks of the Committee on behalf of the S.I.F.D. go out to them.

In respect of the above, we are calling for volunteers for this rather boring job, since if there is no-one to collect the money, there can obviously be no dance.

See How They Dance.

Once again a date looms large upon our programme. Wednesday, December 9th, Royal Albert Hall. The Committee are already considering items for this big show, and all members are asked to keep this date free, and to be prepared to help in any way which may be desired of them.

The L.C.C. school term finishes with the end of June, but some alternative accommodation has been secured during July at 6 Bolt Court, Fleet Street, on each Monday and Wednesday. Details of these have already been circulated.

The end of term party is fixed for Wednesday, July 29th, at Bolt Court. If you are in town be sure to attend, wear your folk costume, and bring along a few refreshments. This will be almost your last chance to dance until September, so make the best of it.

For Sale.

Lady's Roadster bicycle for sale. Hercules. Excellent condition, three speed. Has only been used on holiday. Please write, if interested, to:- Pamela Mason, 20 Kingdom Road, Hampstead, N.W.6.

SUNDAY DANCES FOR JULY

Inns of Court, Drury Lane.

July 5th	M.C. Simon Guest
July 12th	M.C. Richard Beckford
July 19th	M.C. Ken Ward

Cecil Sharp House.

July 26th	M.C. Margery Latham
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