

40th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

S.I.F.D. NEWS

AUG

1986



SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

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The typing this month was done by Lily Avery. The printing, packaging and posting was organised by Doug Wells.

This month's cover is by Rachel Novak and shows a girl's costume from Poland.

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A Fixture Diary for organizers to check for duplication on dates, and also to confirm those arranged by them, is kept on behalf of the S.I.F.D. by Frank Flanagan. His address is: 124 Fairbridge Rd., Upper Holloway, London N.10. Tel: 01 272 5003.

Enquiries and orders for books, records and cassettes should be sent to Joan Rackham, 16 Bathurst Avenue, London S.W.19.

Car stickers from Judith Holloway (address above) 30p each. Please send s.a.e. 4" square.

S.I.F.D. T-shirts, all white polycotton.

Old design ('Legs'), a few available in small size only - £2.50

2nd design (Horlepiep), circular design, in red & black - £3.00 (£3.30 by post)

40th Anniversary design in black line drawing - £2.80 (£3.10 by post)

40th Anniversary design in three colours - £3.60 (£3.90 by post)

All available in small, medium, large and extra large, from Kay Leighton (address above). Cheques to be made payable to S.I.F.D.

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WOULD ANY MEMBERS WHO CHANGE THEIR ADDRESS PLEASE NOTIFY EDWINA AND MICHAEL HOLDUP, 15 NETHERBY GARDENS, ENFIELD, MIDDOX., AS WELL AS THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.

SECRETARY'S NOTES

I am sure that those who were unable to be present at the Sunday Cecil Sharp House Dance on 6th July will be interested to know that there was a presentation to Kay Leighton and Ed. Whiteley. On behalf of the S.I.F.D., Janet Woolbar thanked Kay and Ed most warmly for all the hard work they had put in to make the 40th Anniversary celebrations so successful, with particular reference to the Dance and the Boat Trip in May. The dancers present heartily endorsed her remarks. Of course, the celebrations are still going on, and will continue unabated at Sidmouth, where the Society will be represented in force.

All suggestions put forward at the Annual General Meeting last December are being actively followed up, including one about Season Tickets. The Committee have decided to experiment with one for the monthly Sunday Dances at Cecil Sharp House. As from September these will be available, initially on an annual basis. Members will be able to purchase a Season Ticket for 12 Dances at the cost of 10. Further details next month.

AUDREY WHITELEY
Hon. Secretary



S.I.F.D. MEMBERSHIP

Membership subscription expires at the end of August. Renewals are dealt with by our Membership Secretary, Roland Minton (address on page 2), who will be sending out membership forms.

Affiliated and Associated group membership also expires at the end of August. Renewals and enquiries are dealt with by Alan McLean, 6 Epsom Close, Northolt, Middx. Tel: 01 422 6498.



JOHN SAXBY

It was with the greatest sadness that we heard of the death of John Saxby last month, from a heart attack.

John, who served in the Army during the War, took part in the Normandy landings, and after returning to civilian life was a Registrar of Births and Marriages until his retirement.

He joined the S.I.F.D. in the 50s and soon became a valued and dependable member of Margery Latham's demonstration team, with a particular love of Swedish dances. Later, he became a member of Harrow Green Folkdance Club and danced with them at the Llangollen Eisteddfod and at the Etaples Festival in France, as well as many other events, both with Harrow Green and with the S.I.F.D.

Some ten years ago he suffered from the first onset of angina, which curtailed his dancing activities and led to an early retirement. Since then he devoted much of his leisure time to painting, and he showed a real talent for water colour.

His reliability in all things, combined with a cheerful and modest nature, made him a good friend to all those who came into contact with him during his many years with the S.I.F.D. and he will be greatly missed.

ALEX BEAUCLERC & GEORGE SWEETLAND

POLISH DANCE

The greatest appeal, perhaps, of Polish dance is in its infinite variety of mood and rhythm, and the degree of skill needed in its execution, but it makes it difficult to write a short article covering all its aspects.

Regional Dances. These in themselves cover a wide span from the wild leaping of the men and incredibly fast footwork of the girls, executed singly, from the Tatra mountains, to the simplest of walking, running and skipping steps from the Silesian region. In South East Poland most of the dances are variations of waltzes and polkas, the latter being danced on the flat foot, whereas in the North they have more 'hop' to them. In one region around Rzeszow the dances are distinguished by fluttering hand and shaking elbow movements, and their steps vary from easy running to more difficult turns, jumps etc. Most of these dances are for couples, but there are a number for two girls with one boy, and a few for girls only or boys only. Circle dances are most common, but there are a number for sets of four couples, or four threesomes.

National or 'Great' Dances. There are five of these, and most demand a fairly high degree of skill and agility, but they are so beautiful and cover all moods, and with such lovely music that most dancers, once they have sampled them, feel it worth while to work at them. These dances originated in different ways; from a region or town as did Kujawiak (province of Kujawy) and Krakowiak (Krakow); from pagan customs surrounding harvesting, as did Oberek; or from court circles as did Polonez. Mazur was said to have been developed from the latter by those wanting a more lively dance, and both peasant and court versions evolved. All these dances eventually spread throughout Poland, and some of them abroad as well. Krakowiaks were danced in several other European countries including Germany and France. Mazur (Mazurka) has become part of dance language all over the world, and Polonez (Polonaise) to a lesser degree also.

Originally, these dances had no set versions but were, of course, based on certain steps and rhythms. The variations would be called or indicated by the male half of a leading couple, and the rest would follow. Nowadays these dances rarely appear purely socially any more in Poland. Dance groups wishing to keep them alive by practising and performing them must make their own versions. This can sometimes lead to over-elaboration, but people who dismiss any sort of arrangements or choreography, if they prefer to call it that, as simply "not done" in folkdance circles would have this glorious dancing die out, because that is the only way it can be kept alive.

Most Polish folk bands these days consist of violins, clarinet, accordion and double bass. Amongst the older surviving instruments, a type of bagpipe is sometimes found in the North, and also the devil's fiddle, an elongated stringed instrument which is thumped on the ground as well as bowed. In the South, the cymbalon can be found, and in the Tatra mountains a more primitive type of violin than in the West is used.

A cross section of dances amongst those which have been taught to S.I.F.D. members at some time or another might be as follows:-

Regional

Zagrodnik - from Silesia in the South. Sets of four threesomes with easy running and walking steps.

Sztajerek - from the Sacz, South East area. Circle dance for couples; a type of waltz with lots of body movement.

Dziadek - from the Kurpie region in Central Poland. Circle dance for couples; slow limping steps followed by brisk accented runs and turns.

Walczyk and Polka - from Lublin in East Poland. Circle dance for couples. a very pretty waltz followed by a fast skipping polka

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National

Krakowiak. Circle and line dance for couples; energetic, but based on easy gallop steps and holubic (hops on one foot with the other beating against it).

Polonez. Circle and line dance for couples; a walking dance easy to join in socially, but for those wishing to delve deeper it has more subtlety of rhythm than at first appears, and with many differences between court and peasant styles.

BETTY HARVEY

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40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Victoria Embankment Gardens.

In the June SIFD NEWS I commented on the displays on 1st, 7th, and 8th June. The month continued with a two-hour Show on Sunday, 15th June, when three groups combined to give a wide variety of dances and costumes. They were Merton, Woodvale, and Watford, with Wilf Horrocks and his excellent band to provide most of the music. There was a lot of good dancing, but I am not singling out anyone for particular praise or criticism. As I have said before, the groups are not competing with each other, and the Society is very grateful to all who gave their time to practise hard and to perform. However, in spite of this rule, I must just mention the really lovely Bulgarian costumes worn by the Watford group - no mistaking their authenticity!

On Sunday, 29th June, we had two contrasting groups. Lykion ton Hellinidon (an all-female team) did Greek dances, with one section performed by Greek children. The other group was Kalinka from Richmond, who wore a variety of costumes from the U.S.S.R. and performed dances from the Soviet Union, some of which are in the Society's repertoire.

The Barnet group's performance was changed from 22nd June to 6th July. I was not able to attend on 6th July because of an S.I.F.D. Committee Meeting, but I am told that it went off well.

Our final show will be on 19th July, when Rainmakers from Stevenage will be putting on what promises to be an interesting programme.

If anyone is interested in putting on a repeat demonstration in the autumn, let me know. One group has already arranged to do this.

Sidmouth Celebrations

The actual foundation day of the S.I.F.D. is 31st July and this is, of course, an awkward day for any major celebration, being holiday time. However, as about 50 or 60 S.I.F.D. members appear to be going to Sidmouth Festival, the Committee have been considering various ideas for a short get-together there on the Sunday afternoon, 3rd August. A leaflet will be prepared and, we hope, circulated to all S.I.F.D. members present at Sidmouth. I will let you know next month how it all went.

More Mugs

The present set of special S.I.F.D. mugs are almost sold out, and negotiations are well in hand for the production of another set with a different design. I hope they will be ready about the end of October.

Finally, I say a very heartfelt thank you to Janet Woolbar and the Committee for the incredibly beautiful Polish pictures (2) which were given to me at the Dance on Sunday, 6th July. It was a complete surprise, and I am extremely grateful to have such lovely and unusual examples of Polish art to remind me of the 40th Anniversary of the S.I.F.D. Many, many thanks.

KAY LEIGHTON

Edith Cripps has recently been into hospital for a hip operation. We all wish you a speedy recovery, Edith, and hope that the operation was a great success and that you will soon be fully mobile again. Best wishes, and we hope to see you back on the scene again.



S.I.F.D. BERT PRICE PROFICIENCY AWARDS

So that members living a long way from London might be given a chance to obtain Silver and Gold Badges in the S.I.F.D. Bert Price Proficiency Examinations (which, until now, have always been held in London), it had been hoped to arrange examinations early this year in the Midlands area. Unfortunately, Nutbrook Group, who originally offered to be hosts, were unable to go ahead with this, and so the plan had to be shelved. However, if out-of-London groups are still interested in the idea, would they please get in touch with Frances Horrocks, 53 Southway, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey.

There has been a request for a specialist S.I.F.D. Teacher's Certificate and Badge for the Balkan countries. The Sub-Committee have discussed this and propose to call it the South East Europe Teacher's Certificate and candidates would need to have at least three Silver Badges drawn from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. They would also be required to submit a list of 50 dances which they are prepared to teach; have a knowledge of the music, rhythms, costumes; prepare a term's syllabus; write dance instructions; as well as demonstrate their ability to teach.

As we have no Silver Badge syllabus at the moment for Bulgaria and Greece, these will need to be prepared.

We would like to know:

(a) how many people would be interested in taking the Silver Badge examination for Bulgaria and Greece

and (b) how many people would be interested in going further and taking the South East European Teacher's Examination

Please write to Frances Horrocks (address above).

BADGE SUB-COMMITTEE



FOR SALE

"Embroidery. Traditional Designs, Techniques and Patterns From All Over The World", by Mary Gostelow. Marshall Cavendish Editions. 288 pages, many colour illustrations. As good as new. 29 x 22 cm. £5.00 (New, £9.95).

Jenia Graman, 39 Stanley Road, East Sheen, London S.W.14. Tel: 01 876 0514. Best time to telephone, between 9 a.m. and noon. Or evenings, except Mondays. Or leave message on Answering Service.

Whatever changes the Eisteddfod has undergone, and what the future holds, two attractions are unalterable. The beauty of the setting, and the friendliness of the local people, are always there.

It is true that social contact between the dance groups and visitors has now almost disappeared, and the representation from abroad - this year there were five parties - compares badly with that in the past (18 in 1958, 16 in 1960). Also, the opening concert on the Tuesday evening can now no longer be relied on to feature a professional folkdance ensemble. Conditions have, of course, altered with time, but the organisers seem to have no conception that this deterioration requires drastic remedies. It is possible that the intention is to phase out the folkdance competition, but this would certainly be a miscalculation from all points of view.

On the brighter side, there was a slight improvement on last year, with dance parties from Norway, Sicily, Sardinia, Turkey and the Basque region in the competition.

The first group on stage were the Norwegians, accompanied by accordion and fiddle (not, I think, of the Hardanger type), and their costumes were authentic. Their dances were not part of our repertoire, but were well executed, although somewhat unexciting. In the adjudication they were given 84 marks.

Next came the Sicilians, Marsala Antica. They offered what seemed to be a completely choreographed item with, I quote, the men dressed as farm workers and the girls as rich women. Based on tarantella movements and steps, the dances were performed with verve and vigour, with an emphasis on the flirting elements. (73 marks).

The Turkish group from Izmir showed two(?) dances for men from the Black Sea area, to the music of a small kemence-like fiddle. The regional costumes were predominantly black, with calf-length boots, tight trousers, except for the very loose seat, and a waistcoat hung with metal ornaments which jingled as the team danced, accentuating the rhythm. Unfortunately, there was no clear differentiation, and even the adjudicators were unsure if one or two dances had been demonstrated (the rules require two distinct dances). (80 marks).

"Salesiano" from Sardinia, performed two well-contrasted dances. Both began with the couples in tight lines, and moving into a circle using the peculiarly Sardinian footwork of fast, small steps kept very close to the ground. The second dance then changed its character, with each couple in turn having a solo piece, utilising different movements. The costumes were especially attractive; those of the men in black and white giving an impression of the medieval world. They danced to the music of an accordion and harmonica. They were given 86 marks.

The Basques, Kemen-Taldea from Irun, were outstanding. The two dances for the men in the group were quite different and neither was simple. In white knee breeches and head-scarves, and red waistcoats, they first demonstrated a sword dance, originally religious in intention. Some used long swords, and the others carried two short dagger-like weapons, their hands covered with lace-edged cloths. Each section danced in turn, their leaders featuring the very high kicks typical of the region.

Next came a hoop dance by the Basques. Each 'side' catapulted itself into a whole series of fast and furious steps and figures, while energetically thumping the opposite man's hoop, rather like a Morris stick dance.

This group also appeared in the evening concert, and again were most entertaining. Six men supported a large chest on their shoulders while a seventh performed leaps and jumps on the top. I would not care to learn that one! A fishermen's dance, it takes place on St. Peter's (Pedro) day. The item ended with the girls, dressed in black, performing a dance with fish baskets, and then, with the men now in black smocks and berets, a festival dance for couples.

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The Basques also, I understand, appeared on television, no doubt in the usual strange format thought appropriate for folkdancing by B.B.C. producers. I saw this being filmed, and in its entirety it was very interesting.

As last year, I must point out that it is not my intention to denigrate those dancers from the British Isles or those of the emigré groups, but since they can be seen very easily at other festivals, I will not take up space describing them.

The folk instrument competition has in recent years been one of the most enjoyable parts of the Eisteddfod, most of the action being in the preliminaries, which this year were held in the Town Hall well away from the Field. All the competitors take part so that one does not miss the often very good performers who do not appear in the finals.

Among those eliminated were two Danes on violin and guitar, who gave us a selection of folkdance tunes which was very pleasant and easy to listen to. The other disappointed entrant was a fine player on the Northumbrian pipes, who accepted his defeat most philosophically.

The Izmir group entered a solo musician on a short reeded pipe, the sipsi I believe, which really needed the addition of the dance to appreciate it. In passing, perhaps I should add that because of the difficulties already mentioned I was unable to contact the groups to obtain the correct names of the dances and instruments. But the reception given to the Bolivian quintet, "Rumillajta" folk band, was so rapturous that I was able to corner their English manager and extract this information.

The instruments included a whole range of pan pipes, up to four feet long, each with a specific name, but generically known as zamponas. Also there were the small 10-stringed charango, the quena, an end-blown bamboo flute, a drum, the bombo, and a guitar. That this group was the 'real thing' was absolutely clear. Except for one member, they were diminutive and wore their costumes as if they were part of their everyday life. They were extremely talented, swapping repeatedly from one instrument to another and back again. The mood of the music changed equally quickly from plaintive song melodies to happy dance tunes.

Regular Eisteddfodites might be interested to know that there are plans to replace the old marquee with a more permanent centre with a much larger stage and more facilities.

On a personal note, I enjoyed my visit as always. Visiting my favourite pubs, and the Catholic Centre where one can get the cheapest and best snacks in town, I was able to renew acquaintance with the many friends I have made in Llangollen over the years. On the way back to London we stopped at Shrewsbury, and there, to my delight, disguised under the heading of an International Music Festival, were a number of dance groups. In the afternoon there was an open-air performance in the Castle grounds, and we were able to see a genuine Sri Lankan group and some very good Hungarians, the 'Ovari Ciazdasz', together with a real folk band (hurdy gurdy, bagpipe, tamboura, etc.). I was very tempted to stay on and see the Poles dance in the evening.

Finally, has anyone seen a lost Nigerian choir? They were known to have arrived in London, but somehow vanished off the face of the earth between here and North Wales. How do you lose that many people?

Adjudication

The adjudicators, Lucile Armstrong, Professor Roger Pinon, and 'Nibs' Mathews of E.F.D.S.S., were given only 10 minutes or so to arrive at a decision on the winners of this difficult competition. Perhaps this is indicative.

Folkdance Parties

Ukrainian group 'Hoverla', Derby - 90
Basques, Irun - 88
Colne Royal Morris Men, Lance. - 87

Folk Instruments

Rumillazta - Bolivia - 98
Turkey, Izmir (pipe) - 94
Robin Bowen (Welsh harp) - 91

GEORGE SWEETLAND

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lily,

I have been one of the few mentioned by Kay Leighton in the July NEWS who have watched several of the Victoria Embankment Gardens demonstrations, and been impressed by the hard work of the groups and some very good dancing. It is indeed a pity that more members of S.I.F.D. groups and classes haven't come along, particularly those who have themselves taken part on other dates. Taking a long cool look at other people taking to the stage, instead of looking only inwards at one's own efforts, can be very beneficial, both to learn from others' good points as well as their bad.

Inevitably the standard of dancing has varied a good deal as (rightly so) everyone who wished has been given the opportunity to take part. Just as inevitably, I suppose, the image of the S.I.F.D. was not on every occasion enhanced. I could wish that one group giving dances from a country renowned for the extreme vigour of its men, and grace of its women, in their dancing, would not take to the stage before it has acquired at least a little of those qualities, plus some aptitude for wearing costume convincingly.

On the latter subject, I feel rather strongly that although group leaders should always, of course, strive for authenticity, that is not an end in itself. Unfortunately, our English faces don't always fit the part! Middle-aged ladies really should not wear flower and ribbon headdresses over "English" hair-dos. Better it is to go without if the older women's type of headdress is not available. Likewise, men who don't have the right posture and bearing, apart from a great deal of aptitude for the dance, should be deflected, if possible, from wearing too elaborate a costume, and in particular strange little caps or hats. The latter can sometimes tip the balance alarmingly towards the absurd to an outsider's eye.

This is just one more hazard that we who are tackling all these dances from other countries must struggle with - at least when we are publicly representing the S.I.F.D. What we do at our own dances and parties is quite another matter.

Yours, with every good wish,

BETTY HARVEY
30 Regent Square, London E3 3HQ

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Dear Lily,

I have been reading in SIFD NEWS how the Victoria Embankment Gardens shows have been so enjoyed, even if there were problems - weather etc. On 15th June, when I was due to play, we had bright sunshine certainly, but just as Merton, Watford and Woodvale Groups were literally poised with one foot raised ready to start, my accordion came to grief! The left-hand bass strap came adrift; I could not use the accordion and there was panic!

It is not the sort of thing you imagine could happen, especially at such a time, and I was even more shattered when examination of the damage revealed that I would not have been able to repair it quickly because the strap, which takes the full strain of my arm opening the bellows, needed to be rivetted to a metal clamp. Tina Meech and Stella Wentworth, also playing that afternoon, were beginning to look a little worried, but fortunately for all concerned Peter Long was nearby and had not only the tools but the ability to make the repair in a very short time, and then it was "On with the Show".

Thank you very much Peter; what a good job you were there!

Yours truly,

WILF HORROCKS
53 Southway, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey.

Dear Lily,

The 40th anniversary celebrations sounded great fun. I was so sorry to miss it all, but have enjoyed reading the accounts of events and letters in SIFD NEWS.

Re Memorabilia; Will Green has sent me by mistake a programme of "See-How They Dance" at Birmingham Town Hall, 12th April (year not given). If the owner will contact me, I will return it to him or her.

Best wishes to all friends,

ELIZABETH BRIDLE
56 Chequers Road, Minster on Sea,
Sheerness, Kent ME12 39L

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SUNDAY DANCES at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London N.W.1.

Aug. 10th M.C. Uri Gerson (mainly lines & circle dances)
Sept. 7th M.C. Eleanor Oakley

7 to 10 p.m. Admission £2.20 for S.I.F.D. members. £2.80 for non-members.

The Interval Dances on 7th September will be led by Audrey Whiteley and will start with a recap of the Lakeland clog dance steps taught at the Jure Day Course, and finish with some circle dances.

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WHAT'S ON

Aug. 1st/8th SIDMOUTH FESTIVAL. Enquiries to Festival Office, The Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 8HL

Aug. 17th BALKAN & ISRAELI WORKSHOP (Harrow Folkdance Group) with Liz Mellish. 7.30 to 10 p.m. Harrow Arts Centre (opposite Harrow Weald 'bus garage), 356 High Road, Harrow Weald.

Aug. 17th/21st MORECAMBE & LANCASTER INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE FIESTA. Information from Mr. T.Flanagan, Director of Publicity & Amenities, Town Hall, Morecambe, Lancs.

Aug. 20th DUNAV BALKAN GROUP will be playing in the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall, London, 12.30 to 2 p.m. Spontaneous dancing.

Aug. 23rd/30th Charles & Joy Stevanton will be teaching General International Folk-dancing at the HOLIDAY FELLOWSHIP CENTRE, SCARBOROUGH. Wilf Horrocks will be providing the music. Enquiries to H.F.Holidays, 142/144 Great North Way, London NW4 1EG. Tel: 01 203 6411.

Sept. 17th CZECHOSLOVAK DANCE EVENING COURSE, 7 p.m. at United Reformed Church Hall, Wakefield Street, London W.C.1. Jiří and Růža Špak, choreographers of the folkdance group "Třebíčan", will teach dances from Horácko, the border region between Bohemia and Moravia. Admission £2 including light refreshments.

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ALL MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF SIFD NEWS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE EDITOR - IN WRITING - BY 15TH AUGUST.