

SIFD NEWS AUG 1995



SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

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The typing is done by Lily Avery. The printing, packaging and posting is done by Doug and Maureen Wells.

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This month's cover is by Ann Tanner and shows Welsh clog dancing. Costumes from the Pontardawe (Swansea Valley) based step-clogging side, "Dwy Droed Chwith" (two left feet). Only the boy may dance over the broom; for a girl this would be considered most improper. Other 'props' for the dance may include a candle in a bottle, a barrel lid or box on which to dance, and a red/patterned neckerchief to jump over. Each dance is individual to that dance team, although many tunes are shared.

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London SE5 OTQ. Tel: 0171 701 3785.

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ENDPAPERS ON CD-ROMS AND AUDIO CDs

Enclosed with this month's SIFD NEWS are end-papers advertising the interactive multi-media CD-ROM that is available on EC Folk Culture which was compiled by one of our Scottish members, Ken Gourlay. You may have met Ken at York last summer when he showed his wares to us.

The new CD-ROM is selling quite well and the S.I.F.D. makes a profit on the sale of each CD-ROM in proportion to our contribution to the material. It would be helpful if you could show interested parties this literature. I think that Primary School teachers might find this material especially valuable as EC Folk Culture is on the National Curriculum and they may have access to CD-ROM-playing machines.

Also enclosed are details of S.I.F.D. audio CDs which are not new recordings but some of our better old recordings which have been re-organized and produced as audio CDs. Members who use CD players might find these useful. The normal cassettes and books are, of course, available as usual through Eleanor Gordon, 92 Norbiton Avenue, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 3QP.

JILL BRANSBY, Chairperson

LLANGOLLEN 1995

The particular significance of the folk dance and instrumental competitions at the Eisteddfod is, as those who read the re-print of Lucile Armstrong's speech describing the standards by which the competitors are judged will recall, a strict adherence to their traditions and it is this which makes Llangollen unique. As anyone who has visited other folk festivals, either here or abroad, will know, there is a strong element of "show-biz" in many of them, understandable when their continuance depends on attracting a large audience, most of whom know nothing about folk dancing.

While the Llangollen authorities are obviously appreciative of the colour and action which the folkdance groups provide in contrast to the choir competitions, they should allow more time for the adjudicators' comments to be properly made as they do for the choirs, and certainly no speech such as Lucile gave in 1973 could take place now. Further, the marks for the folk music entrants were not given publically this year, presumably for lack of time.

As a personal aside; over the many years I have been to Llangollen, I have been struck by the fact that there is a kind of fashion in the groups who enter. Until some fifteen years or so ago, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, French and other North-European countries were well represented every year, but now none. More recently, we have often had several Turkish groups and Sardinian dancers, but now they have disappeared from the programme. Why should this be?

The children's matinee is the actual, if unofficial, opening of the Eisteddfod. I did not see it, but believe it was enjoyed by a young and enthusiastic audience.

A fanfare of brass instruments, followed by an ad hoc choir of participating singers and a parade of all the groups present were welcomed by the Eisteddfod Chairman, as a prologue to the opening concert. This year it was a Festival of Celtic Music and Dance (in the British Isles). Sian James, accompanying herself on the harp, has a superb voice which brings out the haunting quality of the traditional Welsh songs, but I felt her more modern items were out of place in this context.

The Taigh Ceilidh Gaelic Group from the Scottish Highlands gave a very informal presentation, with the nine dancers and singers with the three musicians sitting round a table and joining in as the mood took them. The style of dance was quite different from what is normally thought of as Scottish and was close to that of the less stylised Irish stepping. The piper, playing both the Northumbrian and Scottish pipes, was a wonderful musician, as was the girl fiddler.

The Welsh dance group was disappointing. Their music was provided by an ensemble which included a piano and guitar, their costumes unusually gawdy, and the branches with which the girls normally berate their partners in the traditional form of the dance were replaced by daffodils. The final item, which I have not seen before, appeared to feature something suspiciously like the old-fashioned go-go.

The Inis Ealgiu Dancers from near Dublin were skilled to the highest degree. Three of the girls were, I guess, about 10 or 11, and together with a boy of the same age worked very hard and were given a lengthy applause. As in the competition, I have doubts that this formalized dance can be classed as folk. The concert ended with a session by the Irish musician, Donal Lunny.

Wednesday morning saw me up early, to get to the Folk Instrumental Preliminaries. With all ten entrants present, it was a most interesting competition. All but one of the music groups were attached to the dance parties, i.e. Romania, Sakha Republic, Wales, Russia, Czech Republic and Italy, the exception being the first Czech group. In addition, there was a duo from the Ukraine (Reading) and two soloists from the Yemen and Northumbria. There is insufficient space to cover this competition in detail, so I trust a few notes will convey the main points.

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The first Czech group (six men) were good musicians but their sound was lacking in vitality. The Romanians were truly professional in their presentation but in general I thought them a little too "slick". The musicians from the Sakha Republic (Siberia) must have been almost impossible to judge. With three men and two girls, their first item was on Jew's harps with vocal accompaniment, and the second used percussion only - two upright cylindrical drums and various "shakers". The sound was fascinating, but how do you tell if there was a mistake?

A girl on the violin and a man on the cymbalom represented the Ukraine. Both were good musicians and produced a real folk sound. The Welsh group from Anglesey were a joy. Their costumes were authentic and beautifully made. They played Welsh melodies with zest and skill on totally traditional instruments. The balalaika and accordion quartet from Russia were pleasant to listen to but not, I think, outstanding. The Czechs from Liberec were my own favourites. Three fiddles and a small bass, played in the folk manner, and two girl singers, produced the wonderfully strident and vital sound of true European folk music, and they also seemed to actually enjoy playing for us.

Finally, we heard two soloists, a man from the Yemen on el ud (lute) and a woman on the Northumbrian pipes. Three competitors were chosen to appear on stage in the pavilion for the finals. After the adjudication, I later got the actual marks - Romanians 95, Liberec Czechs 94, and the Yemenite lute player 89.

Immediately following the presentation of the awards, the main competition of the day, the Folkdance Groups, is staged. Again, this was of a high standard this year and there were only three last-minute withdrawals, leaving 22 groups to compete.

"Les Mouettes, Morges, Switzerland". The two items were well danced by the eight couples. The chief point of interest with this group was the wide, straw hats worn by the women with a round knob in the centre which must have some significance. A figure which must have been quite difficult for the men occurred at the end of the second item, when the men picked up the girls (a la Jemptpolska) but the girls facing out and using the men's linked arms as a swing. (83).

"Capo d'Armi, Lazzaro, Italy". The first item was loaded with symbolism. Six men with coats made of sheep's fleece and cow bells at their waist circled round to form two lines and fought stylized battles with a man with a shepherd's crook, and each in turn submitted to this father figure. Next, a dance which according to the introduction depicted the men hanging ribbons outside a girl's front door and if she took one in itse owner was the chosen man. However, the item looked like a maypole dance, with the men performing wild leaps at the end. A very energetic group. (85).

"Turopolije, Velika Gorica, Croatia". The girls' costumes were noteworthy - one of the less wellknown Croatian types with multi-coloured socks, wide bell-like lace-edged skirts, headdresses, and the gold coins on their chest, displaying their wealth. With the men in more typical wide, white trousers and black waist-coats, they danced first a Kolo with the local variation of the drmes step, and then a trio for one man and two girls, forming a circle and the girls "flying" at the end. (84).

"<u>Ffidl Ffadl, Llangefni, Wales</u>". The Welsh groups are often very traditional in their attitude to their culture, and this was no exception. To two harps, three couples in authentic and attractive costumes danced a most sedate measure and then, in complete contrast, accompanied by a fiddle, a very lively clogging dance. (90).

"Doina Folk Ensemble of Students, Bucharest, Romania". Their first item was a very well performed Calusari, but the girls preceded it with a hora, thus it was a suite. The second item was also a suite, this time from Transylvania. The men's costumes were impressive, with the helmet-like headgear with its crest of

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feathers. The women wore contrasting black and white, and their dancing in couples was very fine indeed. The programme now prints the names of dances which the groups are <u>supposed</u> to be performing. Since it stated that the Romanians were doing two suites, how come it was not noticed, since it is well known that only two separate and contrasting dances are allowed? (80).

To be continued next month.

GEORGE SWEETLAND



VICTORIA EMBANKMENT GARDENS, L'ONDON

Sunday, 25th June, Doina East European Folkdance Group and the London Turkish Dancers. There was a difficult beginning and end. Unfortunately, the stage's own musical equipment broke down, but very wisely the performers had recorded their music and were able to use their own equipment, so the show was able to start roughly on time. A further setback occurred at the end when the last dance had to be cut out because the cast of the following operatic performance were agitating to get on stage. Doina therefore had to end on a slightly low-key penultimate dance instead of the flourish and excitement of the planned last dance. Dances were from Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary in appropriate costumes. Thanks to all dancers of the Doina Group.

Because of members being away on holiday, the Turkish Dancers were rather depleted in numbers. However, they are now very fortunate in having their previous leader, Ibrahim Tastaban, back with them. They danced twice, with a change of costume. Many thanks to them all for supporting the S.I.F.D.

Sunday, 2nd July, Balaton Hungarian Folk Dancers and the Philhellenes Greek Dancers. In contrast to the week before, this performance started off in the rain, which turned to drizzle, and then became dry. Both teams disregarded this little inconvenience and started on time. There was a small but enthusiastic audience, including a few Hungarian au pair girls who helped the dancers by uttering authentic Hungarian ethnic cries at the right moments. The Philhellenes did three groups of dances - from the Greek mainland, from Pontic (Black Sea area), and dances from the Islands, all in appropriate authentic costumes. Thank you, Balaton and Philhellenes.

Saturday, 8th July, Central London and Croxley Green (Herts) General International Folk Dancers. These two groups performed dances from a variety of European countries. Central London chose Swiss, French, Manx and Norwegian for their first set, with a change of costume in the second half for dances from Romania, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria including an unusual "Spoon Dance" from Bulgaria with genuine Bulgarian carved spoons. Croxley Green did Romanian, Polish, German, Israeli, Spanish and Serbian in their first half, and Israeli, English, Scottish andRomanian in the second. Finally, all dancers came on stage for the Russian dance, Walenki. For both groups, Richard Mellish was the very able compere. Many thanks to all dancers for taking part.

KAY KEDGE Demonstration Secretary



MUSIC. Another two tunes from Wilf Horrocks on p.12. Don't forget to let Wilf know if you would like the music for a particular dance. His number is 0181 642 3629.

S.I.F.D. DAY COURSES

As usual, there will be no S.I.F.D. Day Course in August, but members will be pleased to know that we have found new accommodation. From September, day courses will be held at Turnhalle Arts Depot, 26 Pancras Way, London N.W.1 (between St.Pancras and King's Cross stations) and that, consequently, we will be able to revert to Saturdays. The September course will be Irish Sets, with Geoff Holland (see Anne Leach's article below).

MAGGIE O'REGAN

IRISH SETS

Sets are dances of the Irish tradition. They are completely different from the straight backs and pointy feet of the more familiar "Ceili" style, and thereby hangs a tale....

In the early part of the century, the sets were subjected to a concerted effort by the Church and secular authorities to do away with them. The introduction of the high "Ceili" style was part of that campaign. That we can learn sets today is thanks to the work of collectors in the last twenty years or so who have gone out into the villages and learnt the sets from the old-timers who remember dancing them in their younger days.

The S.I.F.D. Day Course on 9th September is an exciting opportunity to join in this remarkable revival and to learn sets from a very experienced teacher, Geoff Holland.

ANNE L'EACH



MILTON KEYNES INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

We are delighted at the success of our first full festival since 1992. The gala night on Sunday was a sell-out, with extra chairs having to be brought in as well as people standing down the sides. The Slovak, Bulgarian and Spanish visiting groups proved to be truly excellent, as did the U.K. groups. They all blended well together to produce three very high quality concerts.

The workshops were also very well supported and the idea of splitting the classes into advanced and intermediate worked very well. I hope those S.I.F.D. members attending the advanced classes felt they were worth coming to. It was also inspiring at the Saturday night dance, which was also packed out, to see so many people, mostly new to international dancing, joining in and having a thoroughly good time. We need a hall three times the size next time, but it is a good start.

We had a farewell barbecue on the Monday night with all the dancers, hosts and helpers in the grounds of Bradwell Abbey and we were only sorry to have to call a halt at 11 p.m. to all the impromptu music, dance, singing and general celebration. The groups were also well received in local schools.

Everyone is already talking about next year, and names are being received from hosts and others who are desperate to be involved. Thank you to all those S.I.F.D. members who were able to give us moral and active support in so many different ways, and we look forward to an even better festival next year. We are already in touch with a Romanian group whom we reluctantly had to turn down this year.

NEXT YEAR'S FESTIVAL IS DEFINITELY ON. DATES TO BE ADVISED.

JILL GOURLAY and DON ALLISON

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 1994-95

Here are the membership figures for the year from the 1 September 1994 to the 31 August 1995:

	1994-95	1993-94
National members	585	565
Overseas members	44	38
Total membership	629	603
Associated Classes	22	20
Affiliated Groups	41	39

This year has seen a pleasing overall increase of 26 in individual membership and an increase of two in the number of Affiliated Groups. Changes in Overseas members and Associated Classes are relatively small but slightly above last year's figures. We have a total of 13 Honorary Members (same as last year).

The SIFD NEWS production and distribution Team, (Lily Avery, Editor, Michael and Edwina Holdup, envelope preparation and Doug and Maureen Wells, photo-copying and dispatch) currently handle 614 copies of the SIFD NEWS per month, including two copies to each affiliated group.

As agreed at the AGM in London on the 4 December 1994, the subscription rates for the year 1995-96 (unchanged from 1994-95), due on the 1 September 1995 are:

	£
Town Member *	14.00
Joint Town Members	19.80
Country Member	10.50
Joint Country Members +	14.00
Junior Member	2.30
Life Member ++	165.00
Group Affiliation	23.30

- * Address within a radius of 30 miles from Central London or Central Birmingham.
- + Any two members living at the same address.
- ++ Subject to two years continuous membership and Committee approval.

If you would like a receipt please enclose a stamped addressed envelope otherwise I shall assume that one is not required.

Many thanks to many members and groups for prompt renewal of subscriptions.

This year has seen a commendable performance of the Royal Mail service in which as far as I am aware there was only one occurrence of a non-delivery in which I had a letter returned to me; this one incident was where I had inadvertently omitted the Post Code so the system really works well!

Best wishes for Happy Dancing for 1995-96.

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Alan Morton Honorary Membership Secretary & Groups Liaison Officer

CETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lily,

Just after Easter, together with Alan and Margaret Morton, we spent a most interesting and enjoyable week in Palma de Majorca coinciding with the World Folkdance Festival sponsored by Palma City Council and the Tourist Promotion Department.

The Festival is held biannually, usually around Easter, having been in the past tried in July when, for the dancers, it was found to be too hot. We have been three times before and this time were joined by Alan and Margaret. Each visit has been thoroughly enjoyed, and also we took a few days afterwards to see a little more of the beautiful scenery of Majorca. This time of the year, the weather is very pleasant and not too hot and it is too early in the year for the midges.

There were around forty different groups from twenty-six countries taking part. Dancing can be seen on specially constructed stages in several squares around the town, and one can always obtain a very good view. Meanwhile, competitions are being held in a very compact and comfortable theatre where one can watch, all free of charge. The Festival starts with a parade in Palma with all of the dancers taking part. The highlight of the holiday was the parade of 1500 dancers into the Bullring for the announcements of the results of each event held in the competition (no bulls this time!). The winners of each event gave a repeat performance of their winning entry. These three enjoyable hours were also free of charge.

The competitions were classified into International Overall, Costumes, Musical accompaniment and Dance, and a Children's section. Ruanda took first prize with a spectacular drum display, followed by the group "Sa Colla" from the island of Formentera, with "Varna", a group from Bulgaria, coming third. Sweden won the Costume Section, with Norway second, and "Esclafits" from Majorca were third. We were very proud to see that one of our members, Mr. Allenby Jaffe, was part of the adjudication team.

We took some time off to spend an afternoon in Selva, a little way inland, where we had the good fortune to meet Jaime Beltran again, who taught Majorcan dances at the Swansea Summer School in 1983. He presented a superb performance of local dancing by the Selva Group.

Alan and Margaret made the snap decision to come with us, and I am glad to say they enjoyed it so much that they can't wait for the next event in 1997. In a conversation with a taxi driver (who else!) we were told there is also a folk-dance competition in nearby Soller, and he suggested that on application to the Town Council (Ajuntament de Soller) it may be possible to have a grant for expenses to take part. This takes place in July-August so it will be hot work.

Hope to see youin Majorca in two years' time!

JOYCE & BILL SHARP 6 Girton Way, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Herts WD3 3QN

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ALL MATERIAL FOR THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF SIFD NEWS MUST REACH THE EDITOR IN WRITING BY 17TH AUGUST 1995.

Please print in BLOCK CAPITALS all names of people, places, dances unless typed.

ORIENTAL DANCE COURSES WITH CHRISTINE HALL

Christine Hall is tutoring an evening of belly dancing for beginners at the Hastings Adult Education Centre on 26th September. This is a "women only" evening and costs £5. On Tuesday, 17th October, Christine will teach an evening of Chinese fan dancing, suitable for absolute beginners, £5.

Also in Hastings, she is giving a four-week Oriental Dancing course on Tuesday evenings, starting 14th November. Christine explains: "During this course, we will explore several forms of Oriental dances, such as Egyptian veil dances, belly dancing, Chinese fan dancing, ribbon dance, dancing with zills, canes etc. I will adjust the course contents to what the students would like to do most". This course is suitable for women and men, and costs £18. This four-week Oriental Dancing course will be repeated in Rye on Wednesdays, starting 27th September.

For information and booking of these courses, contact the Hastings Adult Education Centre, Tel: 01424 442222.

Other courses and workshops by Christine Hall include "Chinese Fan Dancing for Beginners" in Tunbridge Wells on Friday evening, 29th September; "Middle Eastern and Belly Dancing" in Cranbrook, four hours on Saturday, 30th September; "Middle Eastern and Belly Dancing for absolute beginners" in Tunbridge Wells on Friday evening, 6th October; "Chinese Yang Ge Ribbon Dancing" in Northampton on Sunday, 8th October; "Middle Eastern and Belly Dancing", four hours on Saturday, 4th November.

Contact numbers are: Tunbridge Wells Adult Education Centre, 01892 527317; Cranbrook Adult Education Centre, 01580 713640; Northampton Arts Development (Linn Dhaidan) 01604 232295.

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Christine has sent in some interesting and informative articles on "Dancing With Props", the first two of which are shown below and overleaf (not for re-publication, copyright retained). Ed.

DANCING WITH PROPS by Christine Hall.

Fans

Many Asian peoples have folk dances involving fans; of these the Chinese have probably the greatest wealth of movements. Dance fans are made from wood and silk, usually in bright colours and often decorated with sequins. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to buy dance fans in Britain. So next time a friend of yours goes on vacation to China, ask them to buy you a couple in a department store in Beijing. Don't even attempt to use paper fans; they cannot withstand the strain. Silk is extraordinarily strong.

When you start practising the fan dances, you will find that your wrists ache, and you may have to stop after just five or ten minutes. But your wrists will soon get stronger.

Fan dances are performed in several Chinese provinces, but the best can be found in the North-eastern provinces of the former Manchuria, where the dance is performed with one fan in each hand. Fan dances can be lively or dramatic. Groups can achieve amazing effects, involving enactments of waves of the sea, blizzards and thunderstorms. On a more basic level, many Chinese enjoy procession dances, incorporating just two or three movements, usually based on the cross step.

Historically, both men and women have done fan dancing, often in mixed groups, but nowadays more women than men dance with fans.

DANCING WITH PROPS, Cont.

Canes

Both men and women dance with canes, often in mixed groups. Folk dances can be line, circle or pair dances, or any combination of these. The cane is a thin flexible stick, crooked at one end like a walking stick. It is often decorated by a spiralling gold or silver coloured ribbon or sticky tape, which produces amazing effects during fast swinging movements. The cane is the stick the camel drivers used to speed up the slow animals. Sticks come in different lengths. Short ones are useful for indoors practice (less likely to knock over the vase and bring down the chandelier) but the longer ones enable you to do a wider variety of movements. Choose one which reaches just to your hips, which is a good compromise.

There were periods in Middle Eastern history where men were forbidden to carry swords; they continued their sword dance practice by substituting camel sticks which nobody could forbid. As a result, many sword dance movements have been incorporated in the cane dances.

Cane dances are lively, cheerful, playful, and may be aggressive.

CHRISTINE HALL

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Oct.1st ISRAEL'I DANCE DAY in Bristol with Anat Sharabi, including some dances from Worcester. St.Paul's Hall, Beauley Road, Southville, Bristol. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Further information from Daphne Allen, 01273 392757 (may be Answerphone).

Oct.7th FRENCH DAY COURSE, organized by Frith Folk, with Simon and Joan Guest at St.Peter's Church Hall, Fairfield, Buxton, Derbyshire. 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. with usual breaks. £5. Contat: Pat Phillips, 01298 24450.

Oct.14th RAINMAKERS 19TH ANNIVERSARY DANCE, 7.30 to 11 p.m. at Ickleford Village Hall. M.C.: Jill Bransby. Band: "Jacob's L'adder". £5. Tickets and further information from Richard Thom on 01438 316651 (may be Answerphone).

Oct.21st GREEK WORKSHOP with Natassa L'emos at The Place, L'ondon. PLEASE WOULD THOSE INTENDING TO COME L'ET ME KNOW OF THEIR PREFERENCES. What would you like Natassa to teach? DIKI GLEESON, 0181 363 1506.

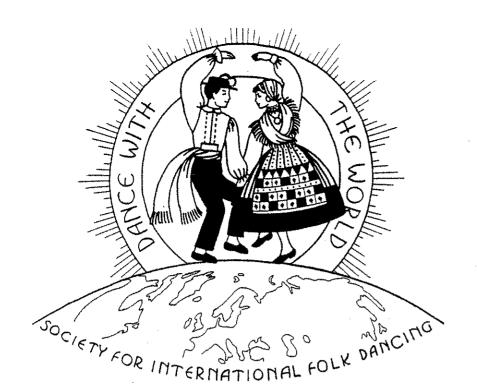
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50TH ANNIVERSARY

For the S.I.F.D.'s fiftieth birthday next year, we plan to produce a new cassette tape of a selection of dance tunes reflecting the variety and development of the Society's repertoire to date. We should like to invite all members to propose for inclusion, dance tunes which might prove popular and useful and of which we don't already have a good recording.

If you would like to suggest a tune, or tunes, for the souvenir tape, please let me or any other Committee member know as soon as possible.

ANNE L'EACH Flat 2, 233 Camden Road, L'ondon N7 OHR



S.I.F.D.SHOP

NEW STOCK OF SWEAT SHIRTS in light grey or jade, in Medium and Large sizes. Design, "Dance With The World" (see drawing opposite reduced in size). Price £14 each plus £1 post & packing.

From: Claire Steeley, 34 Broadwater Avenue, L'etchworth, Herts. SG6 3HF.

I do think Claire Steeley is doing a grand job and I am sure it adds to the interest and sales, the sterling efforts she has made to add little exotic extras. In case anyone may not have thought of it, I am sure she would welcome any interesting/foreign items from, e.g. holidays, or unwanted gifts. Just a thought! Well done Claire!

DIKI GLEESON

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NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

CONSTITUTIONAL MOTIONS

The 1995 A.G.M. will be held at Cecil Sharp House at 4 p.m. on Sunday, 4th December. Any constitutional motions should be sent to me to arrive before 30th September. My address is listed on p.2.

COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

I would also like to remind you that Jill Bransby, and at least one other Committee member, will retire in December. Nominations for Chairperson and other Committee members should also be sent to me. It would be good to have genuine volunteers coming forward - the usual procedure has been the press gang!

PUBL'ICITY

If you are going to any festivals this summer, or doing any public demonstrations, you could help the Society grow by taking along, and distributing, a few leaflets. George Sweetland has stocks of leaflets listing all Associated and Affiliated classes/groups, and explaining what the S.I.F.D. is, so please call him (number on p.2). I'll be at Sidmouth, where I have found the best method is to talk to relevant workshop leaders and either persuade them to make an announcement that there are classes for this type ofdancing in the U.K. and leaflets available at the door, or to let you make the announcement yourself.

GROUPS LIST

An up-dated list of Associated /Affiliated groups is attached, including all changes notified by the time of going to press. If you haven't received an application/renewal form and would like one, please contact Alan Morton.